

## Three-Time 121

Chapter 121: 121. As long as you don't mind being sisters with me

Lin Xueqing was completely confused, "Who is the Fourth Prince?"

She knew that Qian Country had four princes, but she had never met them.

Why would that person want to marry her?

Lin Boyan pulled Lin Xueqing into the room and sat down, sighing deeply, "It's all my fault for insisting on staying in the capital city to serve in office, I didn't plan your marriage early enough."

Lin Xueqing looked at Lin Shuzhi, and her eyes instantly turned red, "Dad, I don't want to marry the Fourth Prince, he will have many women, right?" The answer to this question is self-evident.

Because Duanmu Chen intended Lin Xueqing to be his Imperial Concubine.

From any angle, this was something that Lin Shuzhi and Lin Boyan could not accept.

Even if Duanmu Chen let Lin Xueqing be his main wife, they wouldn't be willing to accept it.

There was only one precious daughter in the family of four – how could they send her into the ruthless royal family?

"Dad, I'll resign from my position, and we'll return to our hometown." Lin Boyan said with a serious face.

Lin Shuzhi frowned, "If you do that now, it will only offend the Fourth Prince, and the emperor will think that the Lin family is ungrateful. The result may be even worse."

Also, Lin Bojun had previously offended the Second Prince.

"We can't let Xueqing marry into the royal family!" Lin Boyan's expression was furious. At this moment, he didn't care at all if his future might be tied up by Xueqing's marriage; those were all secondary matters.

Lin Xueqing's mind was chaotic. Her father and brother were her pride, but she always felt that she was just an ordinary person.

She never expected that such a thing would happen to her one day.

"Don't be afraid, your father won't let you jump into the fire pit," Lin Shuzhi comforted her daughter, but he was only calm on the surface. He couldn't even decide if he should regret his impulsiveness to resign his office years ago or regret that he allowed his two sons to stay in the capital city.

If they followed the first choice, he would have earned himself fame by now, and maybe wouldn't be so passive in this situation. But at the same time, his daughter might be an object of desire for even more people...

“Xiaoliang...” Lin Boyan suddenly remembered what Su Liang said, “She seems to have a good relationship with the Fourth Prince. Could we ask her for help to persuade the Fourth Prince to give up on marrying Xueqing?”

If it were any other time, Lin Shuzhi and Lin Boyan wouldn’t have wanted to trouble Su Liang. But now they really had no choice. They had no connections, and since Lin Bojun had saved Qin Yujin, it wouldn’t be appropriate to ask Duke Qin’s mansion to intervene. The only person they knew who could speak with the Fourth Prince was Su Liang.

“Sister Su slapped the Second Prince at Huguo Temple today...” Lin Xueqing said in a muffled voice, “He deserved it. He tried to take advantage of her!”

Lin Shuzhi’s expression condensed. The Fourth Prince Duanmu Chen and the Second Prince Duanmu Ao had always been at odds.

“You two stay at home and don’t go out. I’ll go find Liang girl and ask her.” Lin Shuzhi stood up and walked out after saying.

After a while, Lin Xueqing suddenly remembered, “Sister Su moved today, she’s not at the Tea House anymore!” But when she ran out, Lin Shuzhi was already far away, and Lin Xueqing didn’t know where Su Liang’s new residence was.

At the Marquis Zhongxin Mansion.

Xing Yusheng was helping Old Madame Xing get out of the carriage, and they were still talking about Lin Xueqing.

It was mostly Old Madame Xing talking, and Xing Yusheng agreed with all the praise she was expressing.

“Mother.” Xing Ji came towards them, glanced at Xing Yusheng, and saluted Old Madame Xing.

Old Madame Xing smiled happily, “You’re going out?”

Xing Ji nodded, “The emperor has arranged an assignment.”

It wasn’t a good assignment, seemingly simple, but in reality, a little carelessness could easily lead to big problems.

Old Madame Xing, however, looked at Xing Yusheng, “You go back first. I have something to say to your father.” Xing Yusheng nodded and left.

“Mother, if it’s not an urgent matter, let’s talk about it when I return.” Xing Ji said.

Old Madame Xing snorted lightly, “It’s urgent.”

Xing Ji sighed lightly, dismissed the servants, and personally took Old Lady Xing back to her room.

“Yuyu is not young anymore, what do you plan for his marriage?” Old Lady Xing asked.

Xing Ji hesitated for a moment, "The Qin Family will arrange it for him. I have no objection as long as my father-in-law and brother-in-law think it's good."

Old Lady Xing glared at Xing Ji, "You really don't have to worry! Isn't Yuyu your own son?"

Xing Ji looked helpless, "Mother, even if we want to plan a marriage for Yusheng, we have to pass the Qin Family's hurdle first."

Old Lady Xing nodded, "That hurdle has already been crossed. It's your turn to act now."

Xing Ji frowned, "Mother means..."

"Your father-in-law and eldest brother-in-law have found a good girl for Yuyu. I have seen her today and I am very satisfied," said Old Lady Xing, "This matter needs to be settled as soon as possible. If Yuyu's uncles step in, it will make our Xing Family seem like no one is available. You should go propose marriage for Yuyu."

Xing Ji was puzzled, "Whose daughter is she?"

"The Lin Family, daughter of Lin Shuzhi," Old Lady Xing said, "What do you think?"

Xing Ji's expression changed slightly, "Of course the Lin Family is good, but Lin Shuzhi doesn't know about this, does he?"

"It was only brought up in the past few days," Old Lady Xing said.

"Today, I went to the palace and met the fourth prince who was seeking the emperor's permission for marriage," Xing Ji said.

Old Lady Xing furrowed her brows, "What does that have to do with us..."

Suddenly her voice stopped. "Is he seeking marriage with Miss Lin?"

Xing Ji nodded, "The emperor has agreed, and I was there at the time."

Old Lady Xing's face stiffened, "Is it too late?"

"The imperial decree has not yet been issued," Xing Ji said.

"Do you intend to snatch the girl away knowing that the fourth prince wants to marry her?" Old Lady Xing looked annoyed. If only they had acted two days earlier.

Xing Ji asked, "Does Yusheng like Miss Lin?"

"Of course," Old Lady Xing sighed several times, but at this point, she felt that the promising marriage had slipped away.

"Then I will go to the palace to ask the emperor for the marriage decree for Yusheng," Xing Ji said.

Old Lady Xing was dumbfounded, "Are you tired of living?!"

It would be fine if Xing Ji didn't know that the fourth prince was seeking the emperor's permission for marriage. But he did know!

How would the emperor feel about Xing Ji competing with his son for a woman?

“Mother, you only need to tell me if you really want Yusheng to marry Miss Lin?” Xing Ji asked.

“What I want most is for the family to be safe and sound!” Old Lady Xing said. “I understand,” Xing Ji nodded, “Mother, go back and rest. Leave this matter to me.”

As soon as the words fell, Xing Ji turned and strode out. Old Lady Xing looked anxious, “Where are you going? Don’t be impulsive!”

“I’m going to the palace to ask for permission,” Xing Ji said as he walked away.

Old Lady Xing recalled that her reckless son had slipped away to fight wars for days without returning when he was younger, which had scared her to death.

Old Lady Xing then went to find Xing Yusheng and told him about Xing Ji’s plan to go to the palace.

Xing Yusheng was surprised, as he had always felt that Xing Ji was not very concerned about him and had been somewhat cold towards him.

“Does Father think that the more arrogant he is, the more reassured the emperor will be about him?” Xing Yusheng said.

Old Lady Xing slapped Xing Yusheng, “Nonsense! Your father is doing this for you!”

Xing Yusheng’s face looked a little strange, “Then let’s wait and see if he can get things done first.”

“If it doesn’t work out, will you give up?” Old Lady Xing asked.

Xing Yusheng sighed, “I don’t mind eloping with Miss Lin, but that would be extremely irresponsible. At this point, I just hope that the emperor cancels the marriage decree for the fourth prince. Even if she doesn’t want to marry me afterward, she would still have other options. If the emperor really agrees to my father’s request, I will tell the Lin family that if they don’t agree, I will propose to withdraw from the marriage once the storm has passed. I promise not to cause any trouble for the Lin family.”

Old Lady Xing held Xing Yusheng’s hand and let out a long sigh, “Let’s discuss this when your father comes back.”

Su Liang first went with Qin Yujin to the Qin’s residence, and after applying acupuncture treatment, they left. They followed the address given by Chang’an and found their new house.

Qi Jun, who had driven her there, left.

Su Liang carried the vegetarian dishes for Ning Jing, pushed open the slightly ajar door, and walked in.

It had been renovated and cleaned recently; although the winter was bleak, there were many cypresses planted, and greenery could be seen everywhere.

This was Ning Jing’s request for many trees.

The architectural style was simple and elegant, which Su Liang thought was nice.

She went through the front hall and found Ning Jing fishing on the lake in the backyard...

From a distance, the scene looked like a beautifully frozen painting.

Su Liang walked over, and Ning Jing heard the footsteps. He glanced back, his gaze lowered to the food box in her hand, and he stood up, putting down his fishing rod to walk towards the pavilion next to him. "Are there any fish in the lake?" Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing shook his head, "I don't know."

"These are vegetarian dishes from Huguo Temple, but they've become cold." Su Liang said.

Ning Jing opened the food box and spread it on the stone table, "I didn't have lunch."

"If I didn't come back, you would have stayed hungry?" Su Liang was speechless.

"I planned to roast fish." Ning Jing said.

Su Liang asked, "Where's the fish?"

Ning Jing replied indifferently, "Maybe in the lake."

Su Liang thought: So, you won't eat unless you catch a fish, huh? Sure enough, Ning Jing hasn't changed, still so laid-back.

"You lived in Huguo Temple for several years before, right?" Su Liang recalled. Ning Jing nodded, and he was quite familiar with these vegetarian dishes.

"I met Nian Ruxue today," Su Liang said.

Ning Jing focused on eating and didn't react.

Su Liang then told him about how Nian Ruxue had tricked her.

Ning Jing frowned, "What about Duanmu Ao?"

"He's alive, just crippled," Su Liang said.

Ning Jing nodded, "Good."

"You don't have anything to say about Nian Ruxue?" Su Liang was curious.

"She's just a stranger, there's nothing to talk about." Ning Jing shook his head.

Lin Shuzhi arrived at the tea house first and learned that Ning Jing and Su Liang were not there. The tea house manager told him the location of their new house, so Lin Shuzhi hurried over.

Su Liang was in the room packing her clothes when she heard Ning Jing talking to someone.

"Little Liang, Xueqing is in trouble," Lin Shuzhi sighed solemnly as he saw Su Liang coming out.

Su Liang's expression changed, "I watched her go home. How could something happen?"

Lin Shuzhi shook his head, and Ning Jing said, "Duanmu Chen has asked for an

Imperial Decree to marry her as an imperial concubine.”

Su Liang frowned, “Has the Imperial Decree been issued?”

“Not yet, but it’s coming soon.” Lin Shuzhi’s face was bitter, “You know the Fourth Prince; is there any way you can...”

“I’ll go find him!” No sooner had Su Liang finished speaking than she disappeared.

Lin Shuzhi looked at Ning Jing, who appeared calm, “Master, don’t worry; she won’t let Xueqing marry Duanmu Chen.”

“What about you...” Lin Shuzhi wondered if Ning Jing needed to go and protect Su Liang.

Ning Jing shook his head, “She can handle it herself.”

Duanmu Chen came out of the palace in a good mood. He heard from Chang’an that Ning Jing and Su Liang had moved into their new house, which he had gifted them. He smiled slightly, “If they have any complaints and they don’t mention them today, I won’t acknowledge them tomorrow.”

“There’s one more thing.” Chang’an said, “The Second Prince went to Huguo

Temple today and was carried down the mountain.” Duanmu Chen straightened up suddenly, “Is he dead?” Chang’an shook his head, “No, just unconscious.”

Duanmu Chen looked disappointed, “Who did it?”

“I don’t know. There were quite a few people at Huguo Temple today, including the son of Marquis Zhongxin and the young lady from the Qin’s residence. Su Liang was also there.” Chang’an said.

Duanmu Chen was stunned, “Su Liang? Didn’t you say she was moving today?”

“She went to Huguo Temple with Miss Qin, and Ning Jing moved by himself,” Chang’an said.

Duanmu Chen raised his eyebrow, “Could it be that Duanmu Ao was beaten by Su Liang?”

Chang’an indicated that he thought so too.

Duanmu Chen laughed, “Interesting. I knew she couldn’t stay out of trouble after coming to the capital. Well done. Next time, I hope she kills him outright.”

“We’ll see about that next time.”

A familiar female voice suddenly came from outside the door.

Duanmu Chen and Chang’an both looked startled.

“Miss Su? How did you...” Chang’an was shocked to see Su Liang pushing the door in.

“Sorry for intruding,” Su Liang said.

Duanmu Chen's eyes narrowed, thinking how Su Liang had managed to enter his residence during the day like it was an uninhabited place? It seemed that his guards were too useless and needed to be strengthened.

"What's the matter? You're in such a hurry to see me?" Duanmu Chen asked without offering Su Liang a seat.

"I heard that the Fourth Prince wants to marry Lin Xueqing as a concubine?" Su Liang got straight to the point.

Duanmu Chen was very surprised, "How did you know?"

"Your Highness, it doesn't matter how I found out. Is it happening?" Su Liang asked.

Duanmu Chen nodded, "Yes, but I don't think it has anything to do with you." "It does. She's my friend." Su Liang said.

Duanmu Chen looked puzzled, "What do you mean she's your friend? Are you and the Lin family..."

"Your Highness, we have a partnership. I came to see you today for a negotiation. What do you want to let go of marrying Xueqing? Tell me your conditions." Su Liang said.

Duanmu Chen looked at Su Liang, his eyes narrowing slightly, and then laughed slowly, "It's not impossible, but I'm afraid you won't agree to my terms."

"Let me hear it," Su Liang said indifferently.

"If I don't marry her, will you be my concubine?" Duanmu Chen asked, his eyes deep.

Su Liang nodded, "Fine, as long as you don't mind us being sisters."

"Sisters?" Chang'an had a strange look on his face.

Su Liang explained seriously, "If I were forced to marry a man I didn't like, my only way to avoid hurting him would be to turn him into a good sister — the kind you'd find in the palace. You know what I mean.."

Chapter 122:122. Appropriate Candidate

Duanmu Chen's face darkened, gesturing for Chang'an to leave.

At the moment the door closed, Chang'an was not worried about how Su Liang might be treated impulsively by Duanmu Chen, but rather worried if Su Liang would harm Duanmu Chen.

"Sit." Duanmu Chen coldly snorted.

Su Liang sat down, looking indifferent. "Fourth prince, can we talk properly now?"

"I do not care what your relationship is with Lin Xueqing; the things you are seeking will not be possible," Duanmu Chen said with a stern face.

Su Liang's eyes narrowed slightly, "Everything depends on people's efforts. As long as His Highness is willing, I don't think it's completely impossible."

"If you had come yesterday, even if it was just before I went into the palace, we might have been able to discuss it for the sake of our past friendship," Duanmu Chen said. "But now, I have already asked my father for the Imperial Matrimonial Decree. Can I go back into the palace and tell my father that I was just talking nonsense before? Or is it that in just half a day, I suddenly changed my mind, and the Imperial Matrimonial Decree is no longer needed? Do you think I can bear the consequences?"

Duanmu Chen wanting to marry Lin Xueqing had nothing to do with affection; it was purely for the sake of benefit and advancement.

What he talked about now was the awkward situation at hand.

If he had never sought the decree in the palace, it could have been as if nothing had happened.

However, since the decree had been issued but not yet made public, it had indeed happened in reality and could not be easily cancelled if he wanted to.

Su Liang frowned, "YOU need a suitable reason."

Duanmu Chen sneered, "Would you kindly tell me what reason would make my father understand my wavering actions?"

Su Liang fell silent.

From a practical and rational perspective, she could understand Duanmu Chen's motive for wanting to marry Lin Xueqing.

As an ambitious prince, his actions served to expand and consolidate his power. Furthermore, he had good judgment in choosing a family that was currently not of high status but had great potential.

But Su Liang couldn't accept it because the Lin family didn't want to climb the social ranks, and she was friends with Lin Xueqing. Lin Shuzhi had even personally sought her help.

That was why she had appeared before Duanmu Chen.

There was a certain impulsive aspect to it, but when she calmed down, she knew it would be difficult to resolve the current predicament.

Since it had been initiated by Duanmu Chen, it was not something that could be easily ended.

Su Liang proposed a deal, but the precondition for Duanmu Chen's agreement was that it had to benefit him more than marrying Lin Xueqing would.

The problem was, once he agreed to Su Liang, he would have to bear serious consequences first.

In other words, Su Liang could not offer a price that satisfied Duanmu Chen.

Moreover, this matter could not be evaluated solely in terms of right or wrong. As a prince with his sights on the Dragon Throne, his actions were in perfect accordance with his own interests.



Duanmu Chen sighed, "Su Liang, don't blame me for not giving you face. At this point, even if you really want to take Lin Xueqing's place and marry me, it wouldn't help."

Su Liang nodded, "I understand your thoughts. I just want to ask, if I had stopped you before you entered the palace, would you have given me face?"

Duanmu Chen was straightforward, "If the price you had offered at that time was satisfactory, I wouldn't have minded selling you face."

Give, no.

But to "sell," yes.

Su Liang nodded, "Alright. What if I give you a suitable reason to call off the marriage later and it won't affect you?"

Duanmu Chen's eyes narrowed slightly, "You're not thinking of making Lin Xueqing pretend to be sick, are you? Or perhaps, really make her sick?"

Su Liang was silent, which meant Duanmu Chen had guessed correctly.

Duanmu Chen glared at Su Liang and said irritably, "So being sick for a long time and not being able to recover is better than marrying me? In your eyes, am I a catastrophe?"

Su Liang's expression was calm, "Fourth Prince, let's have a proper talk. Talking about feelings is a waste of time, especially when there aren't any to begin with."

With a dark face, Duanmu Chen said, "If you really want to do it that way, I can't stop you. If you can offer a suitable price later, I can even cooperate with your acting. But I hope you won't be so naive. If she doesn't want to be my

Imperial Concubine, the next person who takes action against her might be Duanmu Ao."

"That would be simple," Su Liang snorted lightly. "Just kill her."

Duanmu Chen was speechless, "So I should thank you for showing mercy to me then?"

Su Liang shook her head, "It's not the same thing. I won't think you should die just because you want to marry Xueqing. You have your stance, and I am willing to compensate for your 'loss' and continue working together later."

Duanmu Chen's expression lightened slightly, "I can't stop the Imperial Matrimonial Decree. For the matters afterward, come and talk to me once you have a plan."

Su Liang got up, preparing to take her leave, when she heard Chang'an's voice outside the door, "Master, someone from the palace has arrived. The emperor has ordered you to enter the palace immediately."

The faces of Duanmu Chen and Su Liang both changed.

"Fourth Prince, please," Su Liang bowed.

Neither she nor Duanmu Chen knew why the emperor had summoned him to the palace.

Su Liang's intention was to have Duanmu Chen seize the opportunity and cancel his marriage to Lin Xueqing no matter what.

Duanmu Chen ignored him, changed his clothes, and left the house.

After Duanmu Chen left, Su Liang secretly left the Fourth Prince's mansion. She wanted to see Lin Xueqing, but with the current situation unclear, she decided to return home and find Duanmu Chen later to ask about the situation.

The Imperial Palace.

When Duanmu Chen met Emperor Duanmu Yi, he noticed that Marquis Zhong Xin, the former Bei Jingwang, Xing Ji was also present.

Duanmu Chen sensed that something was not right. Xing Ji had been present when he had requested the Imperial Matrimonial Decree.

After bowing, Duanmu Chen asked respectfully, "May I ask, Father, what you have instructed me to come for?"

Duanmu Yi glanced at Xing Ji, "Marquis Zhong Xin, you explain it to Chen!"

Xing Ji slightly turned to face Duanmu Chen, restrained his eyes and said, "Earlier today, when I returned to my mansion from the palace, I met with my mother and mentioned the good news of the Fourth Prince's marriage. I learned that Miss Lin was the one my mother had chosen to be the wife of her eldest grandson."

Duanmu Chen was stunned. This was completely beyond his expectations.

Xing Ji continued, "My son is stubborn and said he would become a monk if he couldn't marry Miss Lin. I had no choice but to come before the emperor and ask for his grace."

Duanmu Chen never expected that someone competing with him for the same woman would be from the Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion, which ought to keep a low profile!

Although Xing Ji claimed it was his mother and son who pressured him, the fact that he stood here and spoke these words showed that he believed the not yet public Imperial Matrimonial Decree could be withdrawn, and it would be better for Lin Xueqing to marry his son instead!

For a moment, Duanmu Chen began to doubt whether Xing Ji had lost his mind, or ate bear hearts and leopard guts, thinking that Duanmu Yi wouldn't dare to kill him.

On second thought, Duanmu Chen realized that Xing Ji's actions might not be unintentional. He was straightforward, without any twists and turns, just like the time he went to battle without military power, unafraid to expose his strength and courage.

The Lin Family, however promising, and Lin Xueqing, a mere woman, were not worth Duanmu Yi's attention.

Just as Duanmu Chen began to wonder what Duanmu Yi's intentions were, Duanmu Yi spoke, "Xing Loyal Minister is filial and loves his son, which I can understand. However, it's a matter of who comes first when it comes to a woman being courted by two families. After all, there is no marriage agreement between the Xing and Lin Families, but I have already promised to grant Chen a marriage. This matter is up to Chen!"

Duanmu Chen's heart leaped!

"If Chen is willing to give up, I would be happy to fulfill Xing Crown Prince. But if Chen is unwilling, Xing Loyal Minister must not say more!" Duanmu Yi said.

"Yes." Xing Ji nodded.

Duanmu Chen was unsure whether Duanmu Yi wanted him to stick to his guns or let go, but he was certain that Xing Ji was not someone Su Liang had invited, and Su Liang probably didn't know about Xing Family's move either.

But as long as he gave up the marriage, he would be doing Su Liang a favor.

Whether Su Liang was satisfied with Xing Yusheng marrying Lin Xueqing, or whether she would negotiate with Xing Yusheng again, had nothing to do with Duanmu Chen anymore.

With this thought, Duanmu Chen respectfully said, "Father, I am willing to let Marquis Zhong Xin's son and Miss Lin marry."

Duanmu Yi's expression did not reveal any emotions, "That's very good. I will grant the marriage between Xing Crown Prince and Miss Lin."

Xing Ji knelt down to express his gratitude.

Duanmu Yi looked at Duanmu Chen again, "Your second brother was attacked and injured in the back mountain of Huguo Temple. This matter has been handed to you, and you must find the real culprit."

With mixed feelings, Duanmu Chen accepted the task and left the palace with Xing Ji.

"Thank you, Fourth Prince, for your kindness," Xing Ji said.

Duanmu Chen shook his head, "It is my father who takes pity on Marquis Zhong Xin."

As they were about to leave the palace gate, Duanmu Chen suddenly said, "Father has ordered me to investigate the attack on the Second Prince. I heard that Xing Crown Prince was also at Huguo Temple at the time. I would like Marquis Zhong Xin to inquire if Xing Crown Prince has any clues, please inform me."

Xing Ji agreed, and the two parted ways.

Once seated in the carriage, Duanmu Chen rubbed his forehead, "Chang'an, check everyone who went to Huguo Temple today. I just sold Su Liang a favor, but I haven't received any benefits yet, so I can't sell her out. We need to find a suitable person to take the blame, who is skilled in martial arts and might have a conflict with Duanmu Ao."

Chang'an, who was driving the carriage, had a thought, "I can think of someone suitable!"

"Who?" Duanmu Chen asked.

Chang'an lowered his voice, "Miss Nian Ruxue, the fourth daughter of the Nian family. Recently, there have been rumors that she will participate in this year's Military Exam, so she must be skilled in martial arts, even though we've never seen her. The Second Prince encountered Miss Nian Ruxue, who was alone admiring the scenery in the back mountain of Huguo Temple, and attempted

to assault her. Miss Nian defended her chastity and had no choice but to fight back, injuring the Second Prince and escaping.”

Duanmu Chen chuckled, “It sounds reasonable.”

“But was it really the Second Prince who attacked Miss Su? What if the Second Prince tried to assault Miss Su, and she fought back, wouldn’t the Second Prince know who hurt him?” Chang’an said.

Duanmu Chen snorted, “You think Duanmu Ao hasn’t woken up yet? Father naturally knows he’s awake, and since he claims he doesn’t know who attacked him, that’s why there needs to be an investigation.”

Chang’an suddenly realized, “Yes! The Second Prince must be hiding something and doesn’t dare to tell the Emperor!”

Duanmu Chen’s eyes were deep, “The real culprit would then be temporarily set as Nian Ruxue. Find good evidence and witnesses. Su Liang owes me another favor..”

Chapter 123: 123. Best Brothers

Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion.

Upon hearing that Xing Ji had returned, Old Lady Xing felt uneasy, “I don’t know what he said in the palace, or whether the emperor is angry. Sigh! At his age, he’s still so impulsive!”

Xing Yusheng consoled his grandmother, “Don’t worry, grandmother. If the emperor wanted to punish him, he wouldn’t be able to return.”

Old Lady Xing glared at Xing Yusheng, “All of this is for you!”

Xing Yusheng coughed lightly, “Grandmother, don’t misunderstand, I absolutely don’t mean to curse my father.”

Xing Ji arrived at the entrance and overheard the last sentence of Xing Yusheng, frowning slightly.

“How did it go?” Old Lady Xing asked anxiously.

Xing Ji’s expression remained calm, “The Imperial Matrimonial Decree will be issued soon.”

Upon hearing this, both Old Lady Xing and Xing Yusheng’s faces turned grave!

Before, the only one seeking the Imperial Matrimonial Decree was the Fourth Prince, so they thought that Xing Ji’s words meant that nothing had changed.

Xing Yusheng furrowed his brows, “Su Liang may not know about this matter yet. She has a good relationship with Miss Lin; if she speaks to the Fourth Prince, there may be a turning point.”

Xing Ji had heard the name Su Liang mentioned by Old Lady Xing many times, knowing that she was Xing Yusheng’s savior and good friend. It was her who relayed the secret information from the Fourth Prince to Xing Yusheng, which allowed the Xing Family to navigate this crisis smoothly.

At this moment, Xing Ji thought about Duanmu Chen’s performance during his second visit to the palace. He unexpectedly agreed to give up Lin Xueqing, which was beyond Xing Ji’s expectations.

Because Xing Ji knew very well why Duanmu Chen wanted to marry Lin Xueqing, and Duanmu Chen had no reason to do Xing Ji or Xing Yusheng any favors.

It was hard to say how Duanmu Yi viewed this matter, but Xing Ji knew that if Duanmu Chen didn't voluntarily give up, Lin Xueqing would only be able to marry him.

Based on his understanding of Duanmu Chen, Xing Ji couldn't help but suspect that something or someone had changed Duanmu Chen's mind during his palace visits.

After hearing Xing Yusheng's words, Xing Ji guessed that Su Liang was likely the one who made Duanmu Chen change his mind about marrying Lin Xueqing.

Old Lady Xing sighed deeply, "You shouldn't have gone to the palace again. Regardless of the emperor's favor for the Fourth Prince, we never had any agreement with the Lin Family regarding this matter. With the Fourth Prince in the race, would the emperor's words easily change? You carelessly trying to snatch a woman from the Fourth Prince for Yusheng will definitely make the emperor dissatisfied with the Xing Family."

Xing Ji snapped out of his thoughts, sat down beside Old Lady Xing, and shook his head, "Mother, you misunderstand. I didn't make myself clear just now. The

Imperial Matrimonial Decree is for Yusheng and Miss Lin."

Old Lady Xing looked at Xing Ji incredulously, and after a while, she slapped him on the back of his head, "You really never give me any peace!"

The shock on Xing Yusheng's face turned into joy, "Really? What about the Fourth Prince?"

"He gave up for some reason. Otherwise, it wouldn't be your turn," Xing Ji said, without taking any credit for himself. Indeed, he had only brought up the matter and tried to fight for it, but the final decision lay with Duanmu Chen.

Xing Yusheng froze for a moment and blurted out, "It must be Su Liang who talked to the Fourth Prince! Otherwise, he wouldn't suddenly give up!"

Old Lady Xing breathed a sigh of relief, "Since the Fourth Prince gave up on his own, the emperor will likely not blame us. However, we need to be cautious when dealing with the royal family. Su Liang has a deep connection with the Fourth Prince. If she really mediated this situation, that girl has a great ability!"

Normally, when people hear that an unmarried girl has a close relationship with an unmarried man, they would think about romantic affairs.

But Su Liang and Duanmu Chen were different.

Although Xing Ji had never met Su Liang, he could tell from her previous actions and this incident that she was of great value to Duanmu Chen, which was why Duanmu Chen repeatedly gave her face at crucial moments.

Knowing Duanmu Chen's personality, there was no way he would compromise his career for romantic feelings.

"So, the marriage is settled." Xing Ji said, "As for the Lin Family side, I'll go talk to Lin Shuzhi later."

"I'll go too." Xing Yusheng said, "This marriage hasn't yet sought the opinion of the Lin family. If they don't agree, I'll just call off the engagement once the storm has passed."

Xing Ji frowned, "Didn't mother say that Yusheng likes Miss Lin?"

Xing Yusheng nodded, "That's a separate issue. I like Miss Lin, but Miss Lin may not want to marry me. Marriage should be based on mutual willingness; otherwise, it will end in resentment."

Upon hearing this, Old Lady Xing instinctively looked at Xing Ji, only to see his expression suddenly darken. He stood up and said, "Make your own decisions about your matters. In an hour, follow me to the Lin Family."

Old Lady Xing sighed. At that time, Xing Yusheng's mother was suddenly granted the marriage to Xing Ji. They had neither fallen in love over time nor become resentful partners; their entanglement ended with Qin Xiangzhi's death after many years. Xing Yusheng didn't know much about the details.

Xing Ji walked to the doorway, suddenly stopped, and turned back to look at Xing Yusheng, "The emperor ordered the Fourth Prince to investigate the attack on the Second Prince at Huguo Temple. Do you know anything about it?"

Xing Yusheng's eyes flickered. Of course, he knew.

Xing Ji walked back, "Did you do it?"

Old Lady Xing hurriedly explained, "No! Yusheng is good-natured and not like you when you were young, always fighting people. Besides, Yusheng doesn't know martial arts."

"I heard that the Second Prince once tried to assault Miss Qin of the Qin Family." Xing Ji said.

Old Lady Xing had told Xing Ji this, intending to remind him to be careful and arrange more guards for the girls in the family when they went out.

Xing Ji implied that Xing Yusheng might have arranged for Qi Yan and Qi Jun to beat up the Second Prince as a way to take revenge for Qin Yujin.

"What if it was me?" Xing Yusheng asked, not out of defiance but because he believed that Su Liang had done what he wanted to do.

"Yusheng, what are you talking about?" Old Lady Xing frowned.

Xing Ji looked at Xing Yusheng, his eyes slightly condensed, "It wasn't you, but you know who it was."

"I don't know." Xing Yusheng shook his head.

Xing Ji nodded, "It's Su Liang. The death of her family is related to the Second Prince."

Seeing that Xing Ji guessed it, Xing Yusheng didn't deny it, "It's not because of past grievances. It's because the Second Prince saw Su Liang's beauty and wanted to take advantage of her. Initially, the Second Prince had his eyes on

Nian Ruxue, but she deliberately drew his attention to Su Liang to save herself. As a result, Su Liang was pursued by the Second Prince, and Nian Ruxue escaped. When she saw her cousin, she even denied having seen Su Liang.

Shameless!”

Only then did Old Lady Xing learn about this matter and couldn't help but frown, “How could that Miss Nian of the Nian Family be so vicious? She should know very well what kind of person the Second Prince is. If Su Liang didn't have such great ability, wouldn't she be ruined?”

Xing Yusheng said so much because his stepmother still hadn't given up on her son's pursuit of Nian Ruxue.

Although Xing Yusheng didn't have a close relationship with his younger siblings, he didn't want a person like Nian Ruxue to marry into the Xing Family and disgust his grandmother.

“I know.” Xing Ji said, “I'll send someone to tell the Fourth Prince that you saw Nian Ruxue leaving the back mountain alone, looking somewhat uneasy, before the Second Prince was attacked.”

Xing Yusheng hesitated for a moment, but Xing Ji had already stepped out of the door.

Madam Xing held Xing Yusheng's hand with a heavy heart, “Your father does care about you.”

Xing Yusheng awkwardly changed the topic.

When Duanmu Chen returned to the mansion, he saw Su Liang still in his study room, thinking that she had never left.

In fact, Su Liang had left but returned before reaching home. Not knowing when Duanmu Chen would come back, she decided to wait for him here.

“It seems that you are really concerned about Lin Xueqing's marriage.” Duanmu Chen did not waste words, “But there has been an unexpected situation.” “What?” Su Liang frowned.

“I told my father to give up, but at the same time, Lin Xueqing got another Imperial Matrimonial Decree.” Duanmu Chen said.

Su Liang's face changed, “It's not Duanmu Ao, is it?” She had thought before that Duanmu Ao might target Lin Xueqing for revenge against Lin Bojun.

“Duanmu Ao was injured by you today, so he has not been involved yet. If he did not get into trouble, it is possible that he would have interfered.” Duanmu Chen snorted, “It's your good friend, Xing Yusheng.”

Su Liang was very surprised, “He asked the emperor for the Imperial Matrimonial Decree?” That bold?

Duanmu Chen shook his head, “His father.” He then told her that Xing Ji knew that Duanmu Chen wanted to marry Lin Xueqing, and after Duanmu Yi agreed, Xing Ji went back to the palace not

long after returning home, claiming that his son had set his sights on Lin Xueqing and that if he couldn't marry her, he would become a monk...

Su Liang was still surprised, but she had heard that Xing Ji had been a fierce man in his youth.

She originally thought that Xing Ji and his son Xing Yusheng had a very bad relationship, but she did not expect him to stand up for Xing Yusheng.

"In that case, it's not bad. You have a good reason to give up, showing your magnanimity and courtesy." Su Liang's eyebrows relaxed, and she smiled slightly.

Duanmu Chen sneered, "It seems that you agree to Lin Xueqing marrying Xing Yusheng?"

Su Liang nodded, "I do agree. But if the Lin family and Xueqing don't want this marriage and she wants to choose another good husband, then let the crown prince find a reason to cancel the engagement. He's easy to talk to."

Duanmu Chen chuckled, "Of course, he will listen to you since you treat him so well."

Su Liang did not think that Xing Yusheng should listen to her, but she understood Xing Yusheng. He was kind-hearted and would never force a marriage if Lin Xueqing didn't like him.

But Su Liang did not feel the need to explain so much to Duanmu Chen.

Although there were unexpected situations in the middle, it all turned out well, and Duanmu Chen did indeed fulfill Su Liang's request.

Duanmu Chen nodded, "I need to think carefully."

Chang'an knocked on the door, "Master, Marquis Zhong Xin has sent someone to say that Prince Xing saw Miss Nian alone walking out of the back mountain of Huguo Temple today, looking anxious."

Duanmu Chen's expression was playful, "I see. Thank Marquis Zhong Xin and

Prince Xing for providing this important clue."

After Chang'an left, Su Liang's expression was indescribable. She heard Duanmu Chen explain the reason for the incident.

"I guess Duanmu Ao won't mention you because he doesn't have clean hands in your family's murder case and doesn't want it to be brought up again." Duanmu Chen said, "Be careful, Duanmu Ao will definitely try to assassinate you next." Su Liang was very calm, "Let him come."

"As for my father, I will say that the biggest suspect is Nian Ruxue." Duanmu Chen smiled, "Your good friend Prince Xing provided crucial clues."

Su Liang briefly told Duanmu Chen about the situation at that time, which had indeed involved Nian Ruxue.

Upon learning the truth, Duanmu Chen coldly snorted, "She can't be blamed anyway! If she wants to argue, have Qin Yujin testify that Nian Ruxue never saw you on the back mountain. Let's see how she can wriggle out of that!"



Just then, Duanmu Chen had a thought, “After all, it’s not a glorious matter, and it’s detrimental to the royal family’s reputation if outsiders know about it. Since someone from Huguo Temple saw her with Duanmu Ao, it’s unknown if he has already forced her to do something. For Duanmu Ao’s reputation and Nian Ruxue’s innocence, why don’t I suggest to my father that she be married to Duanmu Ao as an Imperial Concubine?”

Su Liang coughed lightly, “The Fourth Prince’s idea is very interesting. If it works, they will be a match made in heaven and a pair of despicable people.”

Duanmu Chen suddenly asked, “What would Gu Ling think if he knew that his former fiancée was getting married?”

Su Liang thought, I’ll go back and ask him right away.

Upon returning home, Su Liang found Ning Jing fishing by the lake again.

“You’re really idle.” Su Liang walked over.

“I want to eat fish.” Ning Jing said, “How did it go?”

“It has been resolved.” Su Liang told Ning Jing about the whole process. At the end, she mentioned Duanmu Chen’s plan to frame Nian Ruxue.

“What do you think?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing pulled up his fishing rod, a small fish struggling in the setting sun.

“Can it be eaten?” Ning Jing asked.

Su Liang shook her head, “Too small, let it grow bigger before eating.”

Ning Jing released the small fish back into the lake, watching it swim away happily, and said, “I’ll fish it up again next month and see how big it is.”

“If Nian Jincheng finds out about Nian Ruxue’s situation, will he turn against you?” Su Liang asked again.

Ning Jing’s expression was indifferent, “If he turns against me because of this, he might as well give up his eyes since he’s blind. You can dig them out for me; I’ll use them for fishing.”

Su Liang coughed lightly, “Aren’t you best friends?” Ning Jing glanced at Su Liang, “My best friend now is you..”

Chapter 124: 124. Braised Fish

The sky gradually darkened.

Su Liang did not plan to go to Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion to find Xing Yusheng today.

At this point in the development of the matter, she trusts Xing Yusheng’s character.

But she has to inform Lin’s family as soon as possible, otherwise they might be too worried to get through this.

Ning Jing and Su Liang rode horses to Lin's house at dusk.

At the entrance, they saw a carriage parked there, and the person standing next to it was Qi Jun.

"Mr. Ning, Miss Su!" Qi Jun saw them, greeted them with a smile.

Su Liang dismounted and asked, "Is your old lady here?"

She was thinking that marriage was such a big matter, it wouldn't be Xing Yusheng coming alone.

Qi Jun shook his head, "The old lady didn't come, the Marquis and the crown prince came together."

Many things happened today, and Su Liang knew the inside story, so did Qi Jun, and there was no need for more words.

Su Liang thought about it, Lin Xueqing's grandmother and mother had both passed away, so her marriage would be discussed with Lin Shuzhi, and it would indeed be more appropriate for Xing Ji to come.

Qi Jun took the horses of Su Liang and Ning Jing and tied them to the nearby trees.

The Lin family's old housekeeper hurriedly invited them in, saying that Marquis Zhong Xin and Lin Shuzhi were in the study, Xing Yusheng was with Lin Boyan, and Lin Xueqing was cooking in the kitchen.

"What do you want to eat?" Su Liang asked Ning Jing.

Ning Jing answered in one word, "Fish."

"Not today." Su Liang finished speaking and went to find Lin Xueqing.

Ning Jing stood silently in place for a while before turning and walking away...

Qi Jun was puzzled when he saw Ning Jing come out alone not long after entering the house.

"Where can I find fish?" Ning Jing asked Qi Jun.

Qi Jun was stunned, "To eat? At the restaurant..."

As soon as he finished speaking, Ning Jing disappeared.

When Su Liang saw Lin Xueqing, she was cutting vegetables.

Initially intending to cut them into thin strips, but she had unconsciously chopped them into mince.

"Xueqing." Su Liang entered the room.

Lin Xueqing looked back at Su Liang in a daze, her eyes filling with tears, and she dropped the knife and hugged Su Liang, "Sister Su...why aren't you a man?"

Su Liang gently patted Lin Xueqing's back, "If I were a man, I would definitely marry you."

Lin Xueqing choked back her tears and said, "I would rather become a nun than serve one husband with other women and be someone's concubine."

For her, it was a life without dignity and hope.

Su Liang let go of Lin Xueqing, "Your matter with the fourth prince has been cancelled."

Lin Xueqing stared in disbelief, "Really?"

"Don't you know why Marquis Zhong Xin and the crown prince are here?" Su Liang asked.

Lin Xueqing shook her head, "I don't know. My father and my brother were both in a bad mood, and I wanted to make something for them to eat and find something to do for myself. When did Marquis Zhong Xin and the crown prince arrive?"

Su Liang rubbed her forehead, alright, this silly girl had no idea what had happened.

It was normal for Xing Yusheng not to talk to Lin Xueqing. If he went directly to her house and said he was looking for her, Lin's father and brother might want to beat him up.

Su Liang let Lin Xueqing sit down and start the fire, while she looked at the finely chopped meat mince and decided to make dumplings.

She talked to Lin Xueqing about what happened today while cooking.

"Anyway, the fourth prince is not a good person." Lin Xueqing frowned but did not say anything.

Su Liang nodded, "He is an ambitious man, all for his own interests."

When she heard Su Liang say that the marriage was changed to Lin Xueqing and Xing Yusheng, Lin Xueqing was dumbfounded, "Are they here to propose marriage?"

Su Liang looked at Lin Xueqing whose face was astonished, without any other emotions.

"What do you think about marrying the crown prince?" Su Liang asked.

Lin Xueqing was somewhat at a loss, things changed too quickly, and it took her a while to react.

But because Xing Yusheng was Qin Yujin's very close cousin and Su Liang's friend, in Lin Xueqing's view, his character was guaranteed.

So Lin Xueqing's attitude towards Xing Yusheng was completely different from her attitude towards Duanmu Chen.

"Why does he want to marry me?" Lin Xueqing asked such a question after calming down a little.

Su Liang smiled, "Unlike the fourth prince, the crown prince wants to marry you simply because he likes you. Actually, he and his grandmother ran into us at Huguo Temple today. They were on their way to see you. His maternal family's elders thought you two were very suitable and wanted to help him propose."

"Ah?" Lin Xueqing's eyes widened, "He came just to see me? What does he take me for?"

Su Liang understood that Lin Xueqing felt like she was being kept in the dark, as if she was being selected by others.

"What do you think of Old Lady Xing?" Su Liang asked Lin Xueqing about her feelings.

Lin Xueqing thought for a moment and frowned, "She's very kind, it seems like she really likes me. By the way, the crown prince also explained to me that he and you are just friends, and he won't pursue you. At that time, I suspected he wanted to compete with Ning Jing for you!"

Su Liang said, "You don't have to worry about being manipulated in marriage matters again. I didn't know about Marquis Xing's request for an imperial marriage grant in advance, but if you really don't want to marry the Xing family's crown prince, I can talk to him and find a suitable time for the Xing family to withdraw the marriage proposal."

Lin Xueqing was stunned, "But if the Emperor grants the marriage and the Xing family withdraws, wouldn't it be considered disrespectful to the imperial power and disobeying the edict?"

"There will be a way for this kind of thing," Su Liang said. "But if you are willing to marry the Xing family's crown prince, things will be even simpler."

Lin Xueqing's little face was tangled, "I...I don't know... What do you think, Sister Su?"

Before Su Liang could say anything, Lin Boyan's voice came from the outside, "Little sister, come out for a moment."

Lin Xueqing was somewhat alarmed, "What is my big brother calling me for?" "Go ahead." Su Liang tidied Lin Xueqing's clothes.

When Xing Yusheng saw Lin Xueqing, his eyes instantly brightened up, and he bowed, "Miss Lin."

"Crown Prince Xing." Lin Xueqing returned the salute.

Knowing that Su Liang had arrived, Lin Boyan figured Lin Xueqing should have heard about some matters. He sighed softly and said, "Little sister, Crown Prince Xing has something to say to you." With that, he walked away.

Only Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing were left in the courtyard, bathed in the faint glow of dusk, with an awkward atmosphere lingering in the air. The two remained speechless for a moment.

"I just wanted to say that my marriage proposal was sincere, but if you are unwilling, just let me know, and I'll find a way to cancel it without causing any trouble for you." Xing Yusheng said solemnly. This was his original plan.

But after saying it, he still felt some regret.

Reason made him say these words, but deep down, he hoped for a good outcome.

"There's no need to rush to reply. A lot has happened today, so you should rest well first." Xing Yusheng said and then took his leave.

Lin Xueqing watched his retreating figure, furrowed her brows, and didn't notice Lin Boyan approaching as she turned and ran back into the kitchen. Lin Boyan heard Lin Xueqing's voice, "Sister Su, what should I do?"

Xing Ji and his son Xing Yusheng walked out side by side without talking.

Before they even left the house, they ran into Ning Jing.

Xing Yusheng's gaze dropped, noticing Ning Jing holding a fish, and asked curiously, "What is this, Young Master Ning..."

"Fish." Ning Jing answered in a single word.

Xing Yusheng: ... He wanted to ask why Ning Jing was carrying a fish to the Lin family, not what Ning Jing was holding. He wasn't blind!

Ning Jing simply walked past them and moved on. Xing Ji asked Xing Yusheng,

"How is your relationship with him?"

"Not much." Xing Yusheng said, "He doesn't like to socialize."

"What did Lin Boyan say?" Xing Ji asked again.

Xing Yusheng said, "He said that as long as Miss Lin is willing to marry me, he will not object."

"If you like her, show it properly, and don't always make the worst arrangements before taking any action." Xing Ji said.

Xing Yusheng's steps faltered. His Grandmother Xing had said that his personality was somewhat pessimistic and needed to change.

"Emotions can't be forced." Xing Yusheng sighed softly.

Xing Ji had already stepped out of the door, and it was unclear whether he heard the sigh or not.

When Ning Jing came in with the fish, Su Liang was cooking, and Lin Xueqing was nestling around her, insisting that Su Liang help her decide what to do.

Su Liang remained silent.

The intimate manner between the sisters was very warm.

Ning Jing stood at the kitchen doorway holding the fish, and his thin lips parted lightly, saying, "The fire is on."

Lin Xueqing immediately let go of Su Liang, turning back in surprise, "Where is the fire?"

Ning Jing walked in, "In the stove."

Lin Xueqing: .

"Where did the fish come from?" Su Liang asked.

"The restaurant." Ning Jing said, "It's a regular restaurant."

"How do you want to eat it?" Su Liang hadn't eaten fish in a long time either.

Su Liang shook her head, "It's too complicated, let's make it a red-braised fish."

"Wait until the small fish in our lake grow up, and we can make squirrel fish," Ning Jing said.

Lin Xueqing, who was listening on the side: ... Aren't these two definitely a couple? Their tone is clearly that of an old married couple!

At dinner, steaming hot and plump meat dumplings were served, along with red-braised fish and three other dishes.

Lin Shuzhi poured some alcohol, specifically toasting Su Liang, “Miss Su, thanks to you for helping us with this matter. Otherwise, we really wouldn’t know what to do.”

Su Liang drank a glass of alcohol, laughed, and told Lin Shuzhi not to be so formal.

When it came to the marriage between Lin Xueqing and Xing Yusheng, Su Liang, as Xing Yusheng’s friend, did not say anything in his favor, allowing the Lin family to decide for themselves..

Chapter 125: 125. Excellent Vomit, Heaven-made

Ning Jing and Su Liang returned to the mansion given by Duanmu Chen, deep into the night.

Many things had happened today, and she had not had time to take a close look at this new home, nor had she checked the items Duanmu Chen had given according to the contract.

Initially, the black and white contract with red fingerprints specified items like “a mansion in the capital city, the mansion must have a garden and a pond, ten different kinds of fruit trees and flowers planted; one hundred ancient books; two BMWs; one catty of Tribute Dahongpao tea; five rare types of wood; seven rare types of jade stones; nine precious types of cloth, etc.”

Ning Jing who was in charge of moving had checked and said, the fruit trees were there, whether they could bear fruit would only be known by spring and summer. There were quite a few types of flowers given, but only two kinds had already bloomed.

There were exactly one hundred ancient books in the study, not one more, not one less.

The two horses that could be barely considered as BMWs were in the stables.

However, there was no Tribute Dahongpao tea.

The wood, jade stones and cloth were all available.

The other furniture, daily necessities, were all very complete.

“Do you still want the Dahongpao tea?” Su Liang asked.

Presently, the biggest tea trader in Qian Country is Ning Jing herself, and the Tribute Dahongpao tea supplied to the royal family also comes from the Ning Family.

Ning Jing nodded, “Yes. If he can’t provide it, one condition can be waived today.”

Su Liang’s lips slightly curved, “Very well. I need to look for Duanmu Chen tonight, otherwise knowing his temperament, I’m afraid he’ll deny it tomorrow.”

A little time was left before midnight. Su Liang took another careful look at the items in the mansion, there were no other major issues.

She changed into men’s clothes and asked Ning Jing if she wanted to come along.

“No.” Ning Jing’s voice drifted from next door.

Though not on the small side in the capital city, the mansion has five courtyards fit to reside in. But Ning Jing chose one closest to the garden with the best scenery, the same courtyard as Su Liang's, similar to the time in Su Family's village.

Su Liang also agreed that this was best.

It made things convenient. Both had to teach each other many things. Being separated only by a wall, they could converse without even facing each other.

Also, to keep their secrets, both did not employ any servants. They had to do everything themselves, including cleaning. The courtyards currently not in use could be left idle.

Secondly, it was safer. After the Ning family members in Xunyang were cleared out, the troubles now lay with Su Liang.

As the last scion of the Su Family, she already had an old hatred with the second prince, and new enmities were added today. There would be no peace in the days to come.

Su Liang crossed the garden, left alone through the back door and headed towards the fourth prince's mansion.

After Su Liang's departure, Ning Jing got up and silently followed her.

Su Liang's covert infiltration of the fourth prince's mansion during the day made Duanmu Chen realize that his security had a huge loophole, so he reconfigured his defenses after returning from the palace.

At this moment, Duanmu Chen had not gone to rest yet, he was still in the study looking at the answer sheets of past imperial examinations.

Duanmu Yi had stated that in this year's imperial examination, all his adult sons had to take the examination on the same day as the scholars, and he would personally review the prince's answer sheets to see what their talents were like.

For this reason, Duanmu Chen studied by the night lamp every day after returning to the capital city, barely stepping out when he was free.

Noises came from the window. Startled, Duanmu Chen looked cautiously in that direction, only to see a familiar figure approaching.

Duanmu Chen let out a sigh of relief, but his tone was annoyed, "Su Liang, what are you treating the fourth prince's mansion as?"

"Just a reminder for His Highness the fourth prince, you need to strengthen your guards, be careful of assassins." Said Su Liang.

Although Duanmu Chen agreed with Su Liang's view, he was still a bit upset, "I have done what you asked me to do, as you wished. What are you doing here in the middle of the night? Can't you say it tomorrow?"

"There's something that needs to be clarified today." Su Liang smiled, "Firstly, I would like to thank His Highness the fourth prince for fulfilling the contract, but there might be something you have missed."

Duanmu Chen furrowed his brows, ‘What?’

“One catty of Tribute Dahongpao tea.” Su Liang said.

Duanmu Chen’s face darkened, “What kind of fine tea would you and Ning Jing want to drink that isn’t available? The entire palace doesn’t even have a catty of Dahongpao now, but it might be available in the Ning Family! And yet you are asking me for it!”

Su Liang laughed lightly, “If the fourth prince admits he really didn’t provide it, then it’s easy to talk. Whether we have it or not has nothing to do with the fact that the fourth prince promised to give it but did not.”

Duanmu Chen’s eyes narrowed slightly, “What are you proposing?”

“In our cooperation, the accounts must be cleared, so as to avoid me taking advantage of His Highness the fourth prince. That wouldn’t be good.” Liang said seriously. “If His Highness the fourth prince cannot provide the Dahongpao, then he can offset it with something else.”

Duanmu Chen snorted lightly, “Offset it with what?”

Duanmu Chen glared at Su Liang, “I knew you had no good intentions coming over in the middle of the night! Must you tally it so clear?”

Su Liang raised an eyebrow, “If your Highness the Fourth Prince is talking about our friendship, then, how about we just cancel all the debts between us? I have no objections.”

Duanmu Chen suddenly had the strong desire to smash his inkstone into Su Liang’s face...

Upon hearing Su Liang’s voice in the room, Chang’an, there for delivering late-night snacks, felt a pang of dread. Because not long ago, Duanmu Chen had said that if Su Liang came by again and acted as if nobody else was present, they’d all be good for nothing...

Upon hearing Duanmu Chen calling, Chang’an walked in with the late-night snacks, only to see Su Liang, dressed in men’s clothing, standing in the room.

She smiled at him, “Sorry for the interruption.”

“Do you want some?” Duanmu Chen asked Su Liang.

Su Liang shook her head, “I dare not to. Lest after I finish eating, the Fourth Prince declares it as a chargeable service, equal to a pound of Da Hong Pao tea, that would be a big loss for me.”

Upon hearing Su Liang’s words, Chang’an saw his master grab his inkstone and hurl it towards her, which gave him a fright!

Su Liang caught the inkstone steadily, placed it on the table next to her, and smiled slightly, “If this is a gift for me, I refuse. I only want Da Hong Pao.”

Chang’an: ... He knew the drill now. There was indeed no Da Hong Pao available, and as of this morning, Duanmu Chen proclaimed that he would not be accountable for the tea if Su Liang didn’t find it or didn’t come to claim it by the next day.



“Are you planning to participate in next month’s Military Exam?” Duanmu Chen asked Su Liang, his gaze icy.

Su Liang nodded, “I do intend to.”

“If you spar with Chang’an, I will agree to cancel one condition,” said Duanmu Chen.

‘Surely Su Liang will refuse,’ thought Chang’an.

Unexpectedly, she agreed readily, “Very well, I appeal to Guard Chang for his guidance.”

Chang’an coughed lightly, “Actually my last name is Yuan.”

“Alright, Guard Chang’an, please.” Su Liang started moving outside. Chang’an: .

Duanmu Chen, with interests piqued, opened the window, “Fight in the courtyard. Chang’an, if you lose, you can go back home and farm.”

Chang’an steeled himself, asking Su Liang if she required weapons.

Su Liang bent down, drawing two long and slender pointed knives, which glinted with an eerie cold light in the dim night.

Both Duanmu Chen and Chang’an focused intensely.

Chang’an, equipped with a long sword, started sparring soon after.

Duanmu Chen rose from his seat and stepped outside. He stood under the portico, watching intently.

This wasn’t his first time seeing Su Liang in action. However, all previous occasions had been brief, revealing only her daring spirit and brilliant intellect rather than her true capabilities.

As one of Duanmu Chen’s most trusted allies, Chang’an undoubtedly had great martial prowess.

Duanmu Chen knew some boxing and martial arts but was quite mediocre. At first, it seemed to him that Chang’an has the upper hand, with Su Liang constantly on the defensive.

Half a quarter of an hour later, the tables turned. Su Liang switched to offense and her moves were incredibly precise. It was as if she had completely seen through Chang’an’s strategy. Though she held twin blades in her hands, occasionally she used one as a sword, creating diverse and flexible techniques.

The spar lasted a quarter of an hour in total, with Su Liang on the offensive throughout.

“It’s just a spar. I trust the Fourth Prince is satisfied?” Su Liang sheathed her knives and turned to Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen nodded slightly, not insisting on seeing a clear winner, “That’s enough for today.”

“So, my two favors owed to the Fourth Prince are now cleared,” said Su Liang.

Duanmu Chen grimaced, ‘What two? We agreed on offsetting only one!’

“The Da Hong Pao tea cancels one out, and just now the Fourth Prince requested I spar with Chang’an, agreeing it would offset one condition. That makes two,” Su Liang asserted.

Duanmu Chen was speechless, “What I meant was, if you spar with Chang’an, I agree to offset one condition with the Da Hong Pao tea!”

Su Liang shook her head, “Either we offset both conditions, or deliver the Da Hong Pao to me before midnight.”

Chang’an could feel his master’s urge to hit Su Liang with the inkstone again...

“Chang’an!” Duanmu Chen growled.

Chang’an immediately responded.

“Go find a red robe!” Duanmu Chen commanded.

Chang’an was left in disbelief.

Su Liang remained calm, “I suppose that would do. However, keep in mind that it must weigh exactly one kilogram, not a fraction more or less. And it has to be bright red, not rose or date red, nor can it contain any other color. There is one quarter of an hour left before midnight; I’ll wait here.”

Feeling Duanmu Chen’s gaze, Chang’an was speechless. Where could he find a purely red robe that weighs exactly a kilogram in just a quarter of an hour? Who would make robes that aren’t of a single crimson color without so much as a hint of other colors? For warding off evil spirits?

Seeing Chang’an hesitant, Duanmu Chen returned to his room with a dark expression, picked up his inkstone, and headed outside only to hurl it at Su Liang once again, “Take it then!”

Su Liang caught it, held it in her hand, nodded and smiled, “Thank you, Fourth Prince, for everything today. I hope our future cooperation will be just as pleasant. I will take my leave.”

Finished speaking, she turned around with the inkstone and left.

Seeing Su Liang’s figure disappear into the night, Duanmu Chen’s anger subsided. He turned to Chang’an, “How is her strength?”

Chang’an replied seriously, “Miss Su’s strength is not to be underestimated.”

Duanmu Chen pondered, “Who exactly taught her martial arts? If she had this kind of strength before she went to the Su village, the Su family would not have had any trouble.”

“Could it be Ning Jing?” Chang’an asked.

Duanmu Chen snorted, “They’ve only known each other for half a year. If Su Liang learned martial arts in just half a year and fought you to a draw, would you still have the face to live?”

Chang’an: ... He knew it, he would definitely be scolded in the end. But honestly, he felt that Su Liang’s martial arts couldn’t be judged by ordinary standards. Her skills were not necessarily advanced, but she was, indeed, very strong.

Chang'an reported his feelings to Duanmu Chen. Duanmu Chen turned back to his room, "It's a pity. I finally made her owe me a favor, actually two at once, but they were cleared immediately. But her weakness is obvious; she values loyalty. She will need my help again in the future."

When Su Liang returned home with the inkstone, she saw that the light was still on in Ning Jing's room, as if he had been reading since she left and hadn't gone to bed.

She went to the door without knocking and simply told Ning Jing what had happened with Duanmu Chen tonight.

"His inkstone is not bad, do you want it?" Su Liang asked.

The door opened a crack, and a slender, fair hand reached out.

Su Liang placed the inkstone on the hand, the hand retracted, and the door closed again.

During her first night in her new home in the capital, Su Liang slept quite well. She woke up early in the morning to train.

The training ground was very large and suitable for horse riding.

After Su Liang ran a few laps, she returned to find that Ning Jing had heated up some water. She bathed, changed clothes, and made breakfast just as the sun was rising.

"I need to visit lady Xing today, are you coming?" Su Liang asked.

"No." Ning Jing still refused.

Su Liang nodded, "That's fine then. If you have nothing to do, you can go play with Zhengzheng."

Ning Jing shook his head, "I have something to do today."

But he didn't seem to feel the need to explain.

Su Liang didn't ask. After clearing up after breakfast and packing the gifts for lady Xing, she rode out alone.

When she arrived at the Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion, the palace maid who had come to present the Imperial Matrimonial Decree, had just left.

Having been instructed by Xing Yusheng, the servants of Xing Mansion were very respectful to Su Liang and took her straight to lady Xing.

Xing Ji and his son Xing Yusheng were both present.

Originally, after giving his greetings, Xing Ji intended to leave, but when he heard that Su Liang had arrived, he sat back down.

"Liang girl, come here!" lady Xing, who was holding the bright yellow Imperial Matrimonial Decree, called Su Liang over with a hearty smile.

Su Liang walked over and paid respects to Xing Ji.

"No need for formalities, I should thank you for your help to the Xing family and for your care towards Yusheng." Xing Ji was very courteous. His eyes looked at Su Liang with a hint of scrutiny.

lady Xing pulled Su Liang to sit by her side and told Xing Ji to do his own thing. She criticized, "What's with you, even as an elder, haven't even prepared a gift, only uttering insincere words."

Xing Ji nodded, "I am sorry for the lack of respect, I will make up for it next time." With that, he left.

lady Xing sent Xing Yusheng away, then asked Su Liang for help in making a match for Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing, to create opportunities for them to cultivate their relationship.

"You know our Yusheng. He never likes to force people. But with matters of fate, if he doesn't take initiative, I fear he will miss his opportunity. I really like Xueqing, and when she enters our home, she can move out to live with Yusheng if she wants more freedom. I wouldn't stop her." lady Xing sighed, "At this age, having seen so much, I'm clear that even families have their disagreements. Forcing people together can constrain their actions but not their hearts. What's the point? I just wish for the well-being of my children and grandchildren. Everything else is secondary."

Su Liang nodded, "Children and grandchildren have their own fortunes."

"That's exactly right." lady Xing held Su Liang's hand, laughing, "I always feel that you're our Xing family's lucky star. Also, there's something I need to explain to you today."

Su Liang listened as lady Xing brought up the incident when Xing Yusheng had been poisoned.

"I only have one son. He was willful and loved to have fun in his younger years, often going out. He first met Miao's daughter who is now his concubine. She's a minor official's daughter and a distant relative of the Nian family. The former emperor arranged a marriage for Ji, and he didn't have a choice but to accept. He was meant to break it off with Miao's daughter, letting her find someone else to marry, but she was set on Ji. She didn't cry or make a fuss, she just refused to marry anyone else, insisting on keeping herself for Ji." lady Xing looked wistful.

"My daughter-in-law, Qin Xiang, is a high-born girl. She married afar into our family and was always good in every aspect, I liked her. But just after her marriage, she found out from gossiping servants that Ji had a previous lover. Being someone with a lot of pride, she's had a thorn in her side ever since then. "

"When Ji married Qin Xiang, he promised his father-in-law and brother-in-law that if Qin Xiang had a son within five years, he would never take a concubine in his life. I was unhappy about this, but since Ji had promised Qin family, and knowing his temperament, I had no choice but to accept it. Qin family made that request because they knew exactly what kind of person Qin Xiang is."

“I hoped that Ji would forget Miao’s daughter and live happily with Qin Xiang. In the initial two years, Ji didn’t look for Miao’s daughter, and she didn’t look for him. He and Qin Xiang got along very well, and she became pregnant with Yusheng. ”

“I’ve always hoped that Miao’s daughter would hurry up and marry, so there won’t be complications. But she hasn’t done anything wrong, she just doesn’t want to get married. Her family sees this as a way to climb up to Ji, so they let her be. I can’t force her to marry someone.”

“In that year there was a prolonged and heavy rain in the north of Qian Country. Miss Miao went out to pray and her carriage rolled off the mountain, Miss Miao disappeared. Instead of going to find her, Miao’s family went to Xing Ji.

“After three days, Xing Ji managed to rescue Miss Miao. I was thinking back then, if Qin Xiang quarrels with Xing Ji, I would be the bad person and find another place for Miss Miao as soon as possible.”

“But Xing Ji and Miss Miao didn’t have anything going on, and he didn’t plan to take Miss Miao as his concubine. Nevertheless, Qin Xiang insisted on letting Miss Miao enter the household. Qin Xiang considered herself as the one who ruined the union between Xing Ji and Miss Miao, and after giving birth to Yuyu, she no longer let Xing Ji touch her.”

“Between the three of them, each one was more stubborn in character than the last. Many things happened, and it’s unclear who was right and who was wrong. Yuyu believes that his father had done his mother wrong, that’s why he is still sulking.”

“As for the matters when Yuyu was poisoned, I figured out after my return, it had something to do with Miss Miao, but it wasn’t her doing it, it was a cunning maid by her side who was instructed by her family members.”

“I’ve dealt with all those people. After all these years, although I’ve always disliked Miss Miao, I’ve come to understand her. In her heart, there’s only Xing Ji, she’s timid, bull-headed, but she’s not a bad person. Otherwise, when Yuyu was sick for so long, I would have suspected her already. She doesn’t like Yuyu, but she really doesn’t have the guts to harm him.”

Lady Xing let out a deep sigh, “I’m not trying to whitewash Miss Miao, perhaps she’s just very good at hiding things, which I failed to notice. We conducted thorough investigations back then, and Xing Ji did not spare her any face, affirming that if she was involved he would kill her himself. But charges can’t be fabricated without any evidence. She doesn’t get along with Yuyu, so they should just live their separate lives in the future. Xing Family’s descendants don’t have to worry about promotions anymore, it’s not a bad thing that there’s no kingdom for them to fight over.”

Su Liang did not distrust Lady Xing's words. At this point, there's no need to cover up for anyone. If Miss Miao really were a wicked woman, how could Lady Xing, being as clever as she is, allow her to stay by Xing Ji's side and raise her granddaughter and grandson?

As for the tangled relationships between Xing Ji, Qin Xiang and Miss Miao, one could only say that fate is unpredictable.

In Su Liang's view, most weddings dictated by imperial decrees do not end well.

Even outsiders could say that Qin Xiang was sent by the court to monitor Xing

Ji. They had contradictions right from the start of their marriage.

Young Miss Qin from the capital city. It was only natural that he would fall in love with a gentle and attentive girl who was infatuated with him in his youth.

The subsequent complications, whether of feelings or responsibilities, once certain things happened, there was no turning back.

"I've unconsciously ended up chatting for so long. I'm aware that the Lin family must feel that the Xing family is complicated and fear that Xueqing will be wronged when she marries in. Regarding this, please reassure them. As long as I'm alive, I'll have the final say in the Xing family." Lady Xing said with a serious expression.

She mentioned so many past incidents of the Xing family to Su Liang, essentially only wanting to tell Su Liang that although Xing family might be more complicated than Lin family, they weren't that scary.

Lady Xing knew that the Lin Family trusted Su Liang very much. This marital arrangement was facilitated by Su Liang, but still, there were variables. She didn't want Xing Yu Sheng to miss out on Lin Xueqing.

"Lady Xing, don't worry. I will explain these situations clearly to the Lin family." Su Liang nodded, "Xueqing often goes to visit Yu Jin. The crown prince Xing should accompany Old Master Qin more often."

Upon hearing this, Lady Xing immediately smiled. Lin Xueqing went to the Qin family, allowing Xing Yusheng to go along too, allowing both to have more contact with each other and develop feelings.

In this world, there are plenty of blind and mute marriages. The Xing family receiving a matrimonial decree and being willing to give Lin family a choice was indeed a significant advantage in the eyes of the Lin family.

After Lady Xing invited Su Liang for lunch, she left the Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion and went to Duke Qin's Mansion to give Old Master Qin acupuncture.

Duanmu Chen went to the palace again to report the assault on Second Prince Duanmu Ao at Huguo Temple.

"Has the real culprit been found?" Duanmu Yi asked.

Duanmu Chen didn't nod, "I have only found the person with the greatest suspicion, but there is no direct evidence. If the Second Prince has any clues, maybe we can confirm whether this person is the real culprit."

"Who?" Duanmu Yi asked.

Duanmu Chen respectfully replied, "Fourth miss of the Nian Family, Nian Ruxue."

Duanmu Yi's eyes slightly narrowed, "What evidence is there?"

Duanmu Chen explained, "The crown prince of the Marquis Zhong Xin's Mansion saw Nian Ruxue coming out of the back mountain of Huguo Temple by herself, appearing uneasy, his subordinate also saw it. The young mistress of the Qin Family, Qin Yujin along with Miss Lin Xueqing was searching for a girl they lost. They also saw Miss Nian, she said she went to the back of the mountain alone to see the scenery and did not encounter anyone." Actually, this did not count as evidence, but Duanmu Chen stopped talking here.

He knew that Duanmu Yi had once had a private meeting with Nian Ruxue alone. However, this was a secret, Duanmu Ao surely didn't know about it, otherwise, he wouldn't have dared to tease Nian Ruxue at the Huguo Temple.

Duanmu Chen conjectured that Nian Ruxue and Duanmu Yi didn't really have a relationship, otherwise, Nian Ruxue would have entered the palace by now.

But despite the cancellation of Nian Ruxue's marriage contract with the crown prince, it indicated Duanmu Yi's intention to have her.

Now, Duanmu Chen didn't actually say anything, yet he left enough room for imagination.

Duanmu Ao was well-known to be a lustful person.

Nian Ruxue was a beautiful and lone young lady.

If the two of them were alone on Huguo Temple's back mountain, what could happen?

If nothing happened, why would Nian Ruxue attack Duanmu Ao?

Even if Duanmu Ao just touched Nian Ruxue once, in Duanmu Yi's eyes, she would be considered dirty.

Even if the event of "Nian Ruxue hitting Duanmu Ao" indicated Nian Ruxue's loyalty towards Duanmu Yi.

"Your Majesty, I haven't yet asked Miss Nian about this matter, shall I summon her to the palace now? The clues are very vague, it may just be a misunderstanding, and the person who injured the Second Prince might be someone else. But I'm thinking, if someone intended to harm the Second Prince, the culprit left him alive even when the Second Prince was unconscious, which is rather strange." Duanmu Chen said with a serious expression.

Emperor Duanmu Yi's expression was as cold as ice, "No need to inquire further. This issue ends here."

Duanmu Chen nodded, "Yes."

"Draft a decree, Nian Ruxue will be given to the second son as a side consort. Go to the Nian family's residence today and deliver the matrimonial decree." Duanmu Yi said in a cold voice.

Duanmu Chen looked surprised, then said soberly, "Yes, Your Majesty.."

Chapter 126: 126. Congratulations Congratulations

Today, when Su Liang arrived at the Qin Family, she heard from Qin Yujin that Old Master Qin's hand could already move.

This was good news.

The Qin Family was very grateful to Su Liang. After the needling session, Qin Yujin invited Su Liang to stay and play at their house. Su Liang didn't refuse and went to Qin Yujin's place and told her what happened after leaving the Huguo Temple yesterday.

Qin Yujin was dumbfounded.

Because neither the Xing Family nor the Lin Family had sent any news, the Qin Family didn't know anything about it!

"Such a big matter, Xueqing didn't say it, and neither did my cousin! If Xueqing were really ordered to marry the Fourth Prince, it would be terrible!" Qin Yujin frowned and sighed, "I can't blame them though. Xueqing must be the most scared, and nobody expected this to happen."

As Qin Yujin finished speaking, she hugged Su Liang tightly, "I'm so grateful to have you, Liang Meimei!"

Although Su Liang had only briefly mentioned her finding the Fourth Prince, Qin Yujin knew that it must not have been that simple.

Being as astute as the Fourth Prince, he would have agreed to give up Lin Xueqing only if Su Liang had offered something in return.

Qin Yujin was worried for Su Liang, "You didn't promise the Fourth Prince any excessive conditions for Xueqing's sake, did you?"

Su Liang chuckled lightly, "No. The Fourth Prince owed me a jin of top-quality Dahongpao tea, and since he can't give it now, I'll just write it off this time."

Qin Yujin held her forehead, "You were actually able to make the Fourth Prince owe you a jin of Dahongpao. You're truly talented."

Su Liang thought to herself that the real talent was Ning Jing. He probably had figured out early on that the Duanmu Chen couldn't afford it. When Duanmu Chen saw the long list, the Dahongpao



was not conspicuous, and he was eager to use Su Liang to investigate the case, so he signed the contract.

“That’s good then. I was worried that you might have promised to marry the Fourth Prince so that Xueqing wouldn’t have to,” Qin Yujin said.

It wasn’t that Qin Yujin was overthinking. Duanmu Chen had actually considered this, but was soon deterred by Su Liang’s “threat”.

Qin Yujin cheered up again, “That’s great! Once Xueqing marries my cousin, we’ll all be one family! But since this happened all of a sudden, would Uncle Lin disagree? I’m sure Xueqing is also bewildered by it.”

A maid reported from outside the door that Xing Yusheng had arrived.

Su Liang got up, “I should go back first. You can ask Xing Crown Prince about the other matters, he knows it best.”

Qin Yujin wanted to keep her there, but Su Liang said she had other things to do at home.

The two went out together, and Xing Yusheng had already entered the courtyard. Upon seeing Su Liang, he smiled, “My grandmother said to invite you to our house whenever you have time.”

Su Liang nodded, “Alright.” She had always thought that Xing’s old lady was a good person.

After sending Su Liang off, Xing Yusheng asked Qin Yujin, “Do you want to go visit Miss Lin?”

Qin Yujin teased Xing Yusheng, “Isn’t it my cousin who wants to go?” Xing Yusheng’s face flushed slightly, “It seems you already know.”

“The engagement has been set, so if my cousin wants to go to the Lin Family, feel free to go. My presence would be more of a hindrance,” Qin Yujin said with a smile.

Xing Yusheng shook his head, “It’s better for cousin to invite Miss Lin to our house.”

“Oh? I get it. Cousin must be afraid of Uncle Lin and Brother Lin keeping an eye on you, which would make it hard to talk to Xueqing, right?” Qin Yujin laughed, “So many things happened yesterday, I’ll go see Xueqing now and invite her to our house tomorrow.”

Xing Yusheng nodded, “That would be great.”

Su Liang didn’t mention Nian Ruxue to Qin Yujin, so Xing Yusheng told her about it.

“That was discovered by the Fourth Prince and has nothing to do with us. If anyone asks me, I’ll tell the truth. The person who lied and harmed others was Nian Ruxue, and any bitter consequences are her own doing,” Qin Yujin said with a cold glint in her eyes.

Xing Yusheng sighed softly, “Then, cousin, about Nian Jincheng...”

Qin Yujin frowned, “Maybe he and his sister are not on the same path, and he was just deceived by Nian Ruxue. But after this incident, I found that many of my feelings for him might not be genuine.

You can't truly know someone just by looking at their appearance. If I like him without truly understanding him, that kind of liking is just illusory and wishful thinking."

Xing Yusheng didn't expect that Qin Yujin's admiration for Nian Jincheng had cooled down so quickly because of Nian Ruxue.

But it was a good thing.

Nian Jincheng led a solitary life, and his only friend rumored to be Gu Ling. Anyone with secrets would surely have secrets of their own. As for the actual relationship between him and his sister Nian Ruxue, outsiders had no way of knowing.

In fact, Qin Yujin's feelings for Nian Jincheng were indeed one-sided, remaining only in her own fantasies. When faced with even the smallest confrontation with reality, they dissipated.

Xing Yusheng half-jokingly said, "Actually, Miss Lin's second brother is quite good."

Qin Yujin hesitated for a moment, then came back to her senses and held her forehead, "Cousin, you focus on marrying Xueqing first, and don't worry about me!"

But on the way to the Lin Family in a carriage, Qin Yujin couldn't help but think of Lin Bojun. When she had encountered trouble and was in her most desperate and frightened state, a tall and powerful man came to her rescue like a knight in shining armor. He was also a military commander, but his temperament wasn't cold at all. When he didn't smile, he looked quite imposing, but when he did smile, he revealed his white teeth, two parts simple-mindedness and eight parts warmth and sunshine. It made her feel at ease...

When Su Liang returned home, Ning Jing was nowhere to be found. She thought he had gone fishing again and went to look for him in the garden.

But there was no sign of him.

When Su Liang returned to her room to change her clothes, ready to look for Zhengzheng, she heard some noise in the courtyard.

There was Ning Jing, holding a hammer in one hand and an axe in the other.

"You're at home?" Su Liang thought he had gone out.

Ning Jing replied, "I'm hungry."

Su Liang frowned, "You didn't have lunch?" He could have gone out to eat, gone to Zhengzheng's house, or even the Lin Family's house, as they were all not too far away. Alternatively, he could have prepared something simple by himself.

"I was busy doing something and forgot," Ning Jing explained.

Su Liang originally thought to just forget about the food, but when she arrived at the training ground and saw that Ning Jing had "replicated" the training equipment from the Su Family Village for her, she silently went to make him something delicious.

Wan Hui and her husband Lu Yu brought their son Zhengzheng along with many precious and dried goods as gifts.

The Wan Family was in the food business, including various culinary ingredients.

When Su Liang mentioned Cheng Yun at the Huguo Temple, Wan Hui was surprised and said she would bring Zhengzheng there the next day.

In the evening.

Nian Ruxue and Nian Jinxing were at the house of Old Lady Nian, spending time happily with their grandmother.

“Xuexue, the Military Exam is next month,” the Old Lady Nian asked, “Are you confident?”

Nian Ruxue smiled lightly, “Grandmother, don’t worry, I won’t disgrace the Nian Family.”

Nian Jinxing looked skeptical, “Little sister, are you planning to use some tricks? I’m well aware of your martial arts skills, they’re simply not enough.”

Nian Ruxue’s face stiffened, “Big brother, what do you mean by that?”

Nian Jinxing smiled sarcastically, “I’m just praising you. You’re the smartest among us in the Nian family. If there’s any trick you can use to bluff your way through the Military Exam, teach me as well. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if our siblings both became the Martial Arts Champion and the runner-up?”

Old Lady Nian lightly slapped Nian Jinxing, “Cheating in the Imperial examination is a grave crime, don’t talk nonsense.”

Nian Ruxue was somewhat annoyed, “Big brother hasn’t even seen me practicing martial arts, so he just assumes I must be incompetent?”

Nian Jinxing stood up and reached for Nian Ruxue, “Come on, let’s go practice outside!”

Nian Ruxue’s face turned cold, “I am not in the mood today. Grandmother, I’ll go back first.”

Watching Nian Ruxue leave, Nian Jinxing sat back down.

Old Lady Nian glared at him, “She’s about to enter the palace, what’s the point of provoking her? Your future will depend on her.”

Nian Jinxing grinned, “Xuexue looks like my aunt, and my aunt is an Imperial Concubine. Maybe it’s because the Emperor wants to enjoy the company of both the aunt and niece from the Nian family that he...”

Old Lady Nian’s face darkened, “Shut your mouth! What kind of filthy language are you using? You’re becoming more and more inappropriate!”

Nian Jinxing hurriedly placated Old Lady Nian, slapped his own mouth, saying that his brain had gone bad and that he just spoke without thinking, not intentionally.

Old Lady Nian sighed, “Which man doesn’t like a young and beautiful woman? Your aunt didn’t give birth to a son, so the Emperor doesn’t pay attention to her as much. In a few years, he might forget about her. Letting Xuexue enter the palace is all for the future of the Nian family. If she participates in the Military Exam and gets a good rank, she will be more favored by the Emperor and her position in the palace will be higher. Isn’t that better?”

“Grandmother, you’re right.” Nian Jinxing nodded, “But, I’m afraid that if she doesn’t have real abilities and somehow gets exposed, it will be a disaster!”

Old Lady Nian’s eyes sparkled, “Don’t worry, Xuexue will make the Nian family proud. ”

Suddenly they heard a servant announce that the Fourth Prince has arrived with an Imperial Decree, and the Nian family members hurriedly gathered in the front hall.

Duanmu Chen sat in the main seat, smiling.

Nian Jinxing went over to exchange pleasantries, and Duanmu Chen said with a smile that it was good news.

The Nian family members all breathed a sigh of relief. Old Lady Nian thought it might be possible for Nian Ruxue to enter the palace earlier? This would be good since it would mean the Emperor truly liked her.

When everyone had gathered, Duanmu Chen deliberately asked, “Why isn’t General Nian here?”

Now there was only one general in the Nian Family, which was the second son of the family, Nian Jincheng.

“My second brother has been ordered to go south,” Nian Jinxing said.

“Oh, I forgot about that for a moment.” Duanmu Chen said as he stood up, picked up the bright yellow scroll beside him, looked at the kneeling Nian family members, unrolled the Imperial Decree, and began to read.

Nian Ruxue also thought it might be the Emperor asking her to enter the palace earlier.

But when she heard the content of the Imperial Decree, the Nian family members were all dumbfounded, and Nian Ruxue went crazy!

“Your Highness, the Fourth Prince, is there a mistake?” Old Lady Nian looked up and asked.

Duanmu Chen’s face darkened, “What do you mean by this? My father, the Emperor, has bestowed a marriage upon the Fourth Miss Nian, are you Nian family not pleased with it? Or do you look down on my second brother the Crown Prince?”

Nian Jitang, the patriarch of the Nian Family, hurriedly expressed his gratitude.

“Fourth Miss Nian, receive the decree!” Duanmu Chen looked at the kneeling Nian Ruxue and a cold sneer flickered on the corner of his lips.

Nian Ruxue’s face turned pale and she knelt motionless.

Duanmu Chen snorted coldly, “Is Fourth Miss Nian going to defy the decree?”

With her head bowed, Nian Ruxue raised both of her hands and choked with emotion, “Nian Ruxue receives the decree, thank you, Your Majesty, for your imperial grace!”

Duanmu Chen watched Nian Ruxue’s hands tightly clutching the Imperial

Decree, his tone darkened, “Everyone, stand up. Congratulations to Fourth Miss Nian. In two months, you will be called the Second Prince’s Concubine, ha-ha.”

The word “little” deeply stabbed Nian Ruxue. She was not even willing to be a side consort of the Crown Prince, and now she was unexpectedly granted a marriage to the lustful and incompetent Second Prince Duanmu Ao! And she was still a side consort!

Everyone in the Nian family, including Nian Ruxue, didn’t know how this outcome had occurred.

I heard that Fourth Miss Nian has superb martial arts skills and will participate in the Military Exam. Were you the one who helped my second brother? This is the fate of heaven, congratulations, congratulations!”

By the time Duanmu Chen left with his entourage, Nian Ruxue was still kneeling on the ground, clutching the Imperial Decree.

Nian Jitang, with his face dark as coal, kicked Nian Ruxue to the ground and pointed at her, cursing angrily, “You slut! Can you not seduce men? You even dared to provoke the Second Prince?! Are you satisfied now?”

Chapter 127:127. Xiao MUYUN

“I didn’t seduce the Second Prince...” Nian Ruxue’s face was pale, and she couldn’t stop crying.

Nian Jinxing sneered, “The Second Prince was injured. You said you hadn’t seen him. So how come there is today’s imperial marriage?”

It was originally agreed that Nian Ruxue would enter the palace, but the emperor suddenly changed his mind and married her to the Second Prince, which was obviously related to what happened in the back mountain of Huguo Temple yesterday.

Duanmu Chen just said that the imperial marriage was Nian Ruxue’s own fault.

Everyone in the capital city knew that the Second Prince was an errant prince. Who would believe that a woman who had a relationship with him was innocent?

Nian Jitang roughly dragged Nian Ruxue up and took her into the front hall, closing the door and telling the servants to get lost.

Old Madam Nian and Nian Jitang’s couple sat there with serious faces. Nian Jinxing’s expression was uncertain as he looked at Nian Ruxue, who was crying non-stop on the ground, “What exactly happened? Explain it clearly!”

Nian Ruxue choked out, “Yesterday, my carriage broke down so I let Siqi go back and inform them to send another carriage to pick me up. I went alone to the back mountain of Huguo Temple to enjoy the scenery, but I didn’t expect to meet the Second Prince there...”

Nian Jitang cursed angrily, “Fool! Fool! Fool!”

Madam Nian gritted her teeth, “You used to be praised for being smart. How could you be so muddleheaded? If the Second Prince touched you, how could the emperor still want you?”

“No! The Second Prince didn’t touch me!” Nian Ruxue tearfully said, “I swear!”

Nian Jinxing sneered, “He didn’t touch you, so you injured him to escape? You’re unexpectedly fierce and courageous!”

“It wasn’t me!” Nian Ruxue hated bitterly at this moment. The one who hurt the Second Prince must be Su Liang, who was with Qin Yujin!

After leaving Huguo Temple, Nian Ruxue thought that any problems afterwards would have nothing to do with her, but she never expected that an imperial marriage would fall from the sky!

“If it wasn’t you, then who?” Nian Jinxing ridiculed, “If you know anything, hurry up and clarify!”

Nian Ruxue’s expression changed constantly. She didn’t know how badly the Second Prince was injured, nor what he had said to the emperor.

If the Second Prince said that he had something to do with her, and she hurt him in self-defense, this imperial marriage would happen, she would push Su Liang out, and no matter how she defended herself, nobody would believe her. That’s right, the Second Prince must have lied, otherwise it would never end

like this!

Duanmu Ao had a grudge against Su Liang, so he could directly say that Su Liang attacked him without mentioning Nian Ruxue, which would only displease the emperor.

This was also the reason why Nian Ruxue was confident that Su Liang would be the one in trouble next, and she just had to enjoy the show.

Nian Ruxue couldn’t understand Duanmu Ao’s thoughts about suddenly arranging the imperial marriage.

At this moment, Nian Ruxue suspected that Duanmu Ao was harming her, but she never thought that the real catalyst for this imperial marriage was Fourth Prince Duanmu Chen, who had nothing to do with the affairs of Huguo Temple. She thought Su Liang was just an orphan girl and it didn’t matter if she offended her.

But Su Liang, who had just returned to the capital city, was not without a background.

Old Madam Nian slammed the table heavily, “Xuexue! What are you hiding? Did the Second Prince really tarnish your innocence?”

Nian Ruxue came back to her senses, “Grandmother, the Second Prince really didn’t do anything to me yesterday. I swear! Someone appeared at that time, and I took the opportunity to escape. I don’t know why the Second Prince was injured, nor what he said to the emperor!”

Nian Jinxing narrowed his eyes, “Someone appeared at that time? Who?”

“It’s Su Yuanzhou’s granddaughter, her name is Su Liang. She’s skilled in medical skills and was treating Old Master Qin. She went to Huguo Temple with Qin Yujin yesterday.” Nian Ruxue said.

“Su Yuanzhou?” Nian Jitang frowned, “Didn’t his whole family die out?”

“I don’t know why there’s still a surviving member of the Su Family, and she’s in the capital city. But the matter of the Su Family is related to the Second Prince, or else he wouldn’t let me go as soon as he saw Su Liang!” Nian Ruxue said with red eyes, “Grandmother, father, mother, elder brother, what I’m saying is true! Yesterday, I told you that I hadn’t seen the Second Prince because nothing happened between us, and his injury had nothing to do with me. I was afraid that if I told the truth, you would blame me for being careless! I don’t have the courage to hit the Second Prince!”

Nian Jinxing’s expression was indescribable, “Then what’s the deal with this imperial marriage? Someone must have said something to the emperor.”

Old Madam Nian said angrily, “The Second Prince was just injured. The emperor would naturally ask him about the cause. I think the Second Prince is trying to tarnish Xuexue’s innocence in order to possess her!”

The atmosphere was silent.

Even Nian Ruxue began to doubt whether what her grandmother said was the truth.

Nian Jinxing thoughtfully said, “Initially, the Su Family’s entire family died mysteriously. Perhaps the Second Prince didn’t mention that Su Liang to the emperor at all, fearing that the old case would be overturned and become a big issue. If it were me, I would get rid of Su Liang secretly so that there would be no loose ends. But the Second Prince still had to explain why he was injured, so he pulled you in. The emperor knew his nature, so if he only said that in his love for beauty, he impulsively offended you and was accidentally hurt by you, the emperor must believe him. When the Second Prince’s attendants were dismissed, they only saw the Second Prince and you together, not knowing that Su Liang appeared later, otherwise, they wouldn’t have let the Second Prince get hurt.”

The faces of the Nian Family members turned ugly, and Nian Ruxue was gritting her teeth in hatred!

Nian Jinxing sighed, “You were touched by the Second Prince. How could the emperor possibly want you again? Blame yourself for being careless.” “He didn’t touch me!” Nian Ruxue was furious.

Nian Jinxing scoffed, “Why are you being angry with me? If you have the ability, tell the emperor. Do you think the emperor will believe you?”

Old Madam Nian looked disappointed.

Nian Jitang wanted to tear Nian Ruxue apart.

Madam Nian sighed repeatedly, blaming Nian Ruxue for being careless and getting into such trouble. It not only ruined the Nian Family’s original plan but also displeased the emperor. It was simply more harm than good.

Nian Ruxue listened to the accusations, so angry that she almost vomited blood. The outcome was even worse than accepting her fate and becoming the Crown Prince’s Imperial Concubine!

All blame goes to that bitch Su Liang! If it wasn't for her injuring the Second Prince, how could it have escalated like this!" Nian Ruxue gritted her teeth, "I'm going to write a letter to my second brother. As long as he achieves great success, he can ask the emperor to revoke the decree!"

"Even if the imperial marriage is canceled, you won't be able to enter the palace again," Nian Jinxing sneered.

"If I can't enter the palace or marry a prince, I want to be the main wife!" Nian Ruxue's eyes were red, as if she was making a vow.

When Su Liang and Ning Jing found out that Nian Ruxue was married to Duanmu Ao as an imperial concubine, the news was already known to everyone in the capital city.

Many people sympathized with Nian Ruxue, as they were all aware of Duanmu Ao's character.

Su Liang sighed softly, "If Nian Jincheng were in the capital city, he might ask me to clarify for Nian Ruxue that there is nothing between her and the second prince, risking defying the imperial decree and asking the emperor to retract the marriage edict. If I say Nian Ruxue was trying to frame me at that time, would Nian Jincheng think I'm slandering her?"

Ning Jing's expression was indifferent, "You have a lot of free time, teach me Medical Skills."

Su Liang: ...Understood, Ning Jing's meaning was — what's the point of saying so much nonsense?

If anyone said that Ning Jing didn't care about Nian Jincheng, Su Liang wouldn't believe it.

However, Ning Jing didn't care about Nian Ruxue at all, and for now, Nian Ruxue couldn't affect Nian Jincheng. So for Ning Jing, none of her matters were worth paying attention to.

Ning Jing had already learned quite well the acupuncture and moxibustion that had been taught earlier.

Su Liang would write down the textbooks she had learned when she studied medicine in her previous life according to her memory for Ning Jing to read.

Ning Jing had already read what Su Liang had written and needed explanations.

The morning passed in this way, and Su Liang went out alone in the afternoon, riding a horse to Duke Qin's Mansion.

Upon arriving and seeing Lin Xueqing and Xing Yusheng there, she was not surprised at all.

After finishing the acupuncture, Lin Xueqing wanted to leave with Su Liang, and Xing Yusheng also said it was time to take his leave.

"Cousin, please send Xueqing home for me." Qin Yujin winked at Xing Yusheng. She had arranged for a carriage to pick up Lin Xueqing from her house this morning, so Lin Xueqing couldn't return by herself, creating an opportunity for Xing Yusheng.

"I want to ride a horse with Sister Su! Let's go shopping!" Lin Xueqing grabbed Su Liang and wouldn't let go.



Su Liang shook her head, "Your senior brother is waiting for me at home."

"Why are you in such a hurry to go back since you're not marrying my senior brother?" Lin Xueqing launched a counterattack.

Su Liang: ... Can't refute.

"You guys go have fun." Xing Yusheng indicated that he understood Su Liang and Qin Yujin's intentions, but there was no need to be in such a hurry.

"Why don't we all go to my house?" Su Liang suggested.

"Great!" Lin Xueqing's eyes lit up, "Father was talking about finding a day to go and warm up the house for Senior Brother Ning and Sister Su! I've been wanting to see it!"

So the three young ladies rode in the carriage, Xing Yusheng rode Su Liang's horse, and they all went to Su Mansion.

On the way, Qin Yujin mentioned the matter of Nian Ruxue being granted a marriage, sighing softly, "I really didn't expect it."

It was not a question of whether they sympathized with her or not, but rather that she had known Nian Ruxue since she was a child and felt quite sentimental seeing her end up like this.

Lin Xueqing spoke seriously, "One should always be true to oneself in dealing with people and things. This is her own doing."

The silent Xing Yusheng nodded beside her, thinking that his fiancée was indeed a sensible and good girl.

"Sister Liang, you should be very careful. The second prince probably won't let you off easily." Qin Yujin was worried.

Su Liang smiled slightly, "I have a plan." The next time she saw Duanmu Chen, she would ask him about the progress of the matter they had discussed earlier. She had come to the capital city to investigate the cause of the Su Family's death and seek justice for them.

It was initially determined that the former second prince's wife, who was said to have been killed by Su Yuanzhou, was the granddaughter of the current Prime Minister, and a first cousin of Duanmu Chen on his father's side.

Duanmu Chen may not have cared about his deceased cousin, but he would definitely want to deal with the second prince, who was the crown prince's full brother. On this matter, he and Su Liang shared a common enemy.

The carriage reached the main street of the capital city, and Su Liang asked Qi Jun to stop at the Wan Family Restaurant.

She had sent Wan Hui a cookbook earlier, and Wan Hui said that after adding the new dishes, the business of the restaurant had been booming lately.

Su Liang thought that preparing a table of dishes for guests was a bit troublesome, so it was better to ask the restaurant to deliver ready-made dishes later.

The carriage stopped, and Su Liang got out, asking Qin Yujin and Lin Xueqing to wait in the carriage, saying that she would be back shortly.

After ordering the dishes and setting the delivery time, Su Liang was about to leave when she was stopped by a strange young man, “I thought I recognized Miss Su. My young master has invited you.”

Su Liang was startled, “Who is your young master?”

“Miss Su doesn’t recognize an acquaintance?” The young man looked surprised.

Su Liang knew in her heart that this person must have known the Original Master. Since she was about to investigate the affairs of the Original Master’s family, it wouldn’t hurt to meet whoever came to the door.

Su Liang left the restaurant, telling them to go home first as Ning Jing was there. She had something to deal with and would go back by herself later.

Xing Yusheng wanted to ask further questions, but Su Liang had already turned and reentered the restaurant.

Thinking that nothing would happen in the bright daylight and the busy restaurant, and that Su Liang always had her own opinions and was very powerful, Xing Yusheng left Su Liang’s horse behind and got in the carriage, heading to Su Mansion first.

“Miss Su, please come in. My young master is inside.” The young man led Su Liang to the door of an elegant room.

Su Liang pushed the door open and saw a man in brocade robes with his back to her, looking at the calligraphy and painting hanging on the wall.

The sound of the door closing rang behind her, and the man turned to look at Su Liang, his eyes filled with surprise and delight, “I didn’t expect that you would still be alive.”

Su Liang’s expression was calm, “I’m sorry, but I lost my memory after suffering a severe injury before. May I ask who the young master is?” The man in brocade robes froze, “You don’t remember me?”

Su Liang nodded.

The man in brocade robes sighed softly, “My grandfather is the current Prime Minister, and my name is Xiao Muyun..”

Chapter 128: 128. The Way of Entertaining Guests

Su Liang didn’t know Xiao Muyun, but the character “Yun” reminded her of the lover’s knot the original master placed in the book.

The lover’s knot, woven of red silk thread, was outlined with light blue silk thread in the shape of the character “Yun”.

The man in front of her, who claimed to be Xiao Muyun, had delicate features, fair skin, and was cultured and refined. He wore a blue brocade robe, held a jade fan, and had a tassel made of light blue silk thread.

Seeing Su Liang looking at the tassel, Xiao Muyun's expression was melancholic, "This was a gift from you to me."

With that sentence, he hinted that his relationship with the original master was unusual.

And that made Su Liang certain that Xiao Muyun was the man the original master had on her mind.

However, the death of the entire Su Yuanzhou family was due to the Second Prince's wife.

And Xiao Muyun was the brother of the Second Prince's wife.

The biggest question now was, how did the original master, a commoner's daughter, meet the son of the Xiao prime minister's mansion and become so familiar with him?

"How did we meet?" Su Liang asked bluntly.

Xiao Muyun invited Su Liang to sit down and poured her a cup of tea, "At

Huguo Temple, you picked up my fan, and when I went back to find it, we met."

Su Liang asked again, "What was our relationship before?"

Xiao Muyun sighed inaudibly, and without answering Su Liang's question, he counter-questioned, "I don't know how you are doing now? Are you already married?"

Su Liang shook her head, "I'm doing well, and I haven't married."

Xiao Muyun's expression brightened, "Then, where were you before? Did you return to the capital city alone?"

"A friend helped me quite a bit," Su Liang said, "I lost my memory and want to know what happened in the past and how my family died."

Xiao Muyun gave a bitter smile, "I also want to know why my sister died so suddenly. I thought you would know something, but I didn't expect that you have forgotten everything. "

"What was our relationship?" Su Liang asked again.

"If the Su family hadn't had an accident, you would already be a part of the Xiao family." Xiao Muyun looked intently at Su Liang.

Su Liang was stunned for a moment, "Given the disparity in our social status, were you trying to make me a concubine?"

Xiao Muyun shook his head, "Although I am a son of the prime minister's mansion, I am a bastard. My birth mother was originally a servant in the prime minister's mansion, and now I hold a leisurely position in the Ministry of Rites. I had a wife before who died in childbirth two years ago, leaving a newborn daughter behind. I originally wanted to marry you as the second wife. But I didn't expect that so many things would happen later, and I thought you were already dead."

Su Liang frowned, "With my background, even as a second wife, your family wouldn't agree, would they?"

Xiao Muyun sighed, "It's all up to people. I'm not very ambitious, and the wife I married before was arranged by my family. When marrying again, I could make some decisions."

As he spoke, Xiao Muyun's expression darkened, "In fact, I had the best relationship with my older sister who married into the Second Prince's mansion. She was the legitimate eldest daughter and the most favored. She always looked out for me, her bastard brother. I only told her about our situation, and she said she wanted to meet you and help speak up for us in front of our elders. But who would have thought..."

In response to Xiao Muyun's emotional recollections, Su Liang simply said one word with a calm expression, "Oh."

Xiao Muyun shook his head and laughed bitterly, "You're really different from before. When I saw you come in just now, I almost thought I was mistaken."

"Everyone says that my grandfather was the one who killed the Second Prince's wife. Do you think so too?" Su Liang asked.

Xiao Muyun's expression darkened slightly, "Anyone with discerning eyes knows that my elder sister's death was suspicious, and your family's death was even more inexplicable. But now that my sister is buried peacefully and you have lost your memory, what happened that day no longer has any witnesses."

Su Liang changed the subject, "Apart from this tassel, have I given you anything else?"

Xiao Muyun nodded, "There's also a sachet containing calming herbs that you specifically blended for me. I kept it under my pillow all the time."

Although Su Liang still thought it would be difficult for the original master to marry into the Xiao family, even as a bastard's second wife, these things were not absolute.

If the Xiao family was open-minded, if Xiao Muyun could truly persuade them, and if the Second Prince's wife's influence in her natal family could help, the possibility could not be ruled out.

But there were no ifs in reality.

All these assumptions would never happen now. The original master was dead, and the Second Prince's wife was also dead.

Now, all Su Liang knew about the original master's past with Xiao Muyun came from his one-sided account.

There were two people who knew the truth about the matter. As Su Liang's memory loss was already known, Xiao Muyun might not be telling the truth when he recounted the past, as there was no way to verify the authenticity of his words.

Su Liang was very calm at this moment because even if what Xiao Muyun said was true, she was not the protagonist of the story. She was just an outsider, investigating the experiences of the Original Master in her life.

No matter whether Xiao Muyun's feelings for the Original Master were genuine or false, Su Liang could not ask for the things that the Original Master personally gave away.

However, she wouldn't hand over the Original Master's relics to Xiao Muyun before all the truths were cleared.

"Liang'er," Xiao Muyun reached out to hold Su Liang's hand, but when he saw her cold eyes, he hesitated and withdrew his hand with a sigh, "You don't remember me anymore..."

"If I still remember you, would the previous agreement still count?" Su Liang asked Xiao Muyun.

Xiao Muyun nodded without hesitation, "Of course! As long as you agree, I'll go back and talk to my family today! Don't worry, I will find a way to clear the obstacles and marry you!"

Su Liang shook her head, "Don't get excited, I don't remember you anymore."

Xiao Muyun's face stiffened.

"I used to have only a doctor for a grandfather, and now I have nothing. The past was just my foolish dreams; Master Xiao has forgotten about it as well." Su Liang stood up as she finished speaking.

Xiao Muyun tried to pull her again, but Su Liang dodged him.

"Liang'er, if you've forgotten, I can tell you everything!" Xiao Muyun's eyes were persistent.

Su Liang turned around and sat down again, "You can tell me, I'm listening."

Xiao Muyun was stunned, and after a moment, he sat back down, sighed, "It's a long story."

Su Liang remained calm, "There's no rush, take your time."

The more he said, the more she could judge whether there was anything unreasonable in his story.

Xing Yusheng, Qin Yujin, and Lin Xueqing arrived at the entrance of the Su Mansion, only to find the doors locked during daylight hours.

"Is Young Master Ning at home?" Qi Jun was doubtful.

Xing Yusheng thought that Ning Jing should be at home, just not going out. Su Liang locked the door from the outside when she left and didn't give them the key.

Qi Jun knocked on the door, but there was no response.

So he climbed the wall to look for Ning Jing.

When he found him, Ning Jing was practicing on the Plum Blossom Piles at the Training Ground in the back.

Even when the handsome man was doing woodworking, he was still pleasing to the eye.

"Young Master Ning!" Qi Jun greeted him, then explained why he appeared here.

Ning Jing straightened up, holding a saw in his hand. The cold light on his jade-like face made Qi Jun feel suddenly uneasy.

"I don't have the key, enter through the back door," Ning Jing said.

Qi Jun: ... This way of treating guests is very unique.

When Qi Jun returned, Xing Yusheng and the others didn't mind at all. They took a detour to the back alley of the Su Mansion.

The back door was ajar, and it opened with a push.

The three of them went in to find Ning Jing, but he was not in the training ground, the garden, or the courtyard.

Lin Xueqing blinked, "Could Brother Ning have gone to find Little Sister Su?"

Xing Yusheng pressed his forehead, "Is anyone treating us as guests?"

Lin Xueqing shook her head, "You are a guest, but I'm not. I am family with

Brother Ning and Little Sister Su, so there's no need for politeness." Qin Yujin chuckled, "Cousin and Xueqing will soon become family as well." Lin Xueqing's face turned red, "Who's becoming family with him?"

Xing Yusheng spoke with a hint of laughter, "Since they're not here, why not go and see my mansion? It's right next door.."

Chapter 129: 129. I have to go find him

For a transmigrator who had lived two lifetimes, the love story of the original master, as described by Xiao Muyun, sounded trite and commonplace to Su Liang.

In one sentence: The illegitimate son from the Prime Minister's Mansion, who has little presence, falls in love with a gentle and graceful girl from a small family after losing his wife, and they secretly vowed to spend their lives together.

Xiao Muyun seemed touched as he recounted the story.

Su Liang listened calmly.

"This fan represents the beginning of our fate and has never left my side," Xiao Muyun held the folding fan in his hand and looked at Su Liang with a bitter smile, "I thought that you were forever gone, but to my surprise, you are still alive. But you are alive, and yet you've forgotten me, forgotten everything between us."

At Xiao Muyun's sorrowful sighs, Su Liang thoughtfully asked, "When disaster befell the Su Family, didn't you check whether I was dead or alive?"

If someone cares so much, at the very least, they would want to see the body.

Xiao Muyun sighed deeply, "By the time I received the news, the remains of the Su Family had already been collected. Everyone said that the entire Su Family was wiped out."

Su Liang thought, the key issue was, if the Su Family was murdered, how could the original master, a helpless girl, escaped? And who took her to the Su Family Village?

If it was indeed the second prince who made the move, he surely wouldn't have left anyone alive. There must be a person who helped the original master.

But according to all known information, there was no hint of who this could be.

"Where are my family members buried?" Su Liang asked.

Xiao Muyun replied, "On Wangxiang Mountain outside the city, there is a cemetery."

"Who buried them?" Su Liang asked again.

If the second prince was convinced that it was Su Yuanzhou who killed the second princess, why would he allow the Su Family to be properly buried?

Xiao Muyun looked ashamed, "It was the fifth prince. He has always been frail and sickly, and your grandfather was taking care of his health. After the incident with the Su Family, the fifth prince arranged for the burial of the bodies. It is said that because of this, he even had a conflict with the second prince. Later, he fell sick and never left his home. If it hadn't been for the fifth prince, it is hard to imagine what would have happened. I was powerless at that time."

Su Liang was taken aback, the fifth prince mentioned by Xiao Muyun aroused her attention.

She had initially planned to discuss the matter of the Su Family with Duanmu Chen in the next few days. Although the two had previously agreed to "cooperate" on this matter, they hadn't gone into detail.

Xing Yusheng had once sent Qi Yan to the capital city to investigate the news about the Su family, but he only focused on Su Liang, the Su Family lady that few people knew, and did not pay attention to many key points.

Therefore, this was the first time Su Liang heard about the fifth prince's relationship with the Su Family.

Her intuition told her he was very important.

"Liang'er? Are you alright?" Xiao Muyun looked at her with concern.

Su Liang returned to her senses and shook her head, "I'm fine. Is there anything else you want to tell me?"

Xiao Muyun sighed, "I can't think of anything else for now. I would often visit your grave to talk when I'm free, but I never thought, the person buried there was not you."

Every time Xiao Muyun expressed his emotions, Su Liang would promptly change the topic, "Is your family still investigating the cause of the second princess's death?"

Xiao Muyun gave a bitter smile, "So much time has passed, what can we find now? Even if we found something, what difference would it make?"

"To comfort your sister's spirit in heaven." Su Liang said.

Xiao Muyun was taken aback, "You're right. But my grandfather and father both let the matter rest. As a powerless illegitimate son, what can I do?"

Su Liang looked at Xiao Muyun.

His sorrow didn't seem fake.

But it was utterly useless.

He had just said that the second princess was kind to him before she got married. If this was his reciprocation, Su Liang could only say that perhaps Xiao Muyun was acting in line with the times, preserving himself, but his inherent cowardice was clearly shown.

Not bad, but in Su Liang's eyes, this man was incapable, only understanding the romantic and mournful things, longing for an easy life.

His past with the original master sounded very romantic.

But when he heard that the original master was dead, he didn't even have the courage to take one look.

He had reasons for all his actions, and those reasons were reasonable.

Exactly because of this, Su Liang felt, this man was entirely unreliable. He lacked ambitions. Though he could share wealth and riches, he couldn't share adversity.

"Liang'er, are you blaming me?" For the third time, Xiao Muyun tried to hold Su Liang's hand.

Su Liang looked indifferent, "I forgot. The things you said, to me, they all seemed like someone else's business. You already regarded me as dead, from now on consider me really dead."

Su Liang stood up to leave after her words, Xiao Muyun blocked her path, looking hurt, "You are clearly alive, and heaven has allowed us to meet again, how can I pretend as if nothing happened? As I've said, I can marry you, what else are you unsatisfied with?"

Su Liang's eyes narrowed slightly, "Mr. Xiao, please step aside."

"I won't allow it!" cried Xiao Muyun, his eyes red, "You promised to marry me long ago, now you want to back out, I won't accept it!"

Su Liang found this very annoying. She found him rather obnoxious, but he was the original master's lover. She couldn't just hit him because of a disagreement. She figured it would be best to sever ties and avoid him in the future.

But Xiao Muyun insisted that Su Liang had hurt him, demanding an explanation, which gave her a headache.

Just then, there was a knock at the door, disrupting the strange atmosphere in the room.

"Who is it?" Su Liang asked.

"Me." A familiar voice came from outside.

Su Liang, feeling as if she'd received a pardon, quickly maneuvered around Xiao Muyun to open the door and let Ning Jing in. She closed the door and sighed in relief.

Xiao Muyun's expression changed when he saw Ning Jing. "Liang'er, who is this man?"

Su Liang, who had initially released Ning Jing, grabbed his arm again, "This is the friend I told you about, who has helped me a lot."



Xiao Muyun noticed Su Liang's hand on Ning Jing's arm and his face darkened.

"You guys..."

Su Liang nodded, "As you can see, after losing my memory, I fell in love with him.

Ning Jing looked slightly rebellious and brushed away Su Liang's hand.

Su Liang grabbed his arm again, "But he doesn't accept my feelings, so we can only be friends for now."

Xiao Muyun frowned, "You..."

Su Liang was firm, "But I won't give up!"

Xiao Muyun looked at Su Liang in disbelief, "Would you rather pursue a man who doesn't love you than be with me?"

Su Liang looked regretful, "Feelings can't be forced. I forgot to introduce him. He is Ning Jing, the head of the Ning Family, a leading merchant in Xunyang and the top candidate in the recent exam. He'll be taking the Imperial Civil Service exams soon. If he's willing to marry me, I'll be the mistress of the Ning Family, with a lifetime of wealth I couldn't possibly spend. I might even have the chance to become the Top Scholar's wife. I know you care about me, and seeing me doing well should make you happy for me, right?" Xiao Muyun looked furious, "But he didn't promise to marry you!"

Su Liang playfully swung Ning Jing's arm, "Is it impossible for us?"

Ning Jing gave Su Liang a cool glance, "Who knows what the future holds?"

Su Liang laughed lightly, "Mister Xiao, you heard him, there is hope for us to be together. Wish me well, and hope that you find a suitable lady soon.

Farewell, we won't meet again."

With that, Su Liang opened the door, leading Ning Jing away with a triumphant air.

Xiao Muyun was left behind, a look of gloom on his face as he ripped apart a fan hanging off his robe.

Once outside the door, Su Liang let go of Ning Jing, "Why are you here?" "Buying fish." replied Ning Jing.

"Where's the fish?" Su Liang asked. Just as she finished speaking, a waiter walked out of the kitchen holding a fat fish.

"Didn't Prince Xing and the others go home?" Su Liang remembered that she had forgotten to give Xing Yusheng the key.

Ning Jing instead asked, "What was that all about earlier?"

"Xiao Muyun." Su Liang replied with three words.

Ning Jing, having seen the love token embroidered with the character for "cloud", immediately understood the situation.

“Since you knew I was here, it means you must have seen Prince Xing.” Su

Liang stated, “Did you come to buy fish and take the opportunity to find me?”

Ning Jing nodded, “I want to eat fish, you should go back and cook it.”

Su Liang: ...Alright then, it’s almost time. I can take the reserved food back and entertain my friends. The fish can be an additional dish.

With a food box in one hand and the fish in the other, Ning Jing led her horse, and they headed home.

“Do you know the fifth prince?” Su Liang asked. Ning Jing nodded, “I do.”

“What’s his name?” Su Liang asked again.

“Duanmu Ze.” Ning Jing replied.

“Is he a good person?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing shook his head, “I don’t know.”

“Xiao Muyun said the Su Family was buried by Duanmu Ze, do you think he was the one who sent ‘me’ back to my hometown?” Su Liang wondered.

“I don’t know.” said Ning Jing.

“I think it might have been him. Perhaps he knew something about what happened back then.” Su Liang said, “I need to find him and ask him..”

Chapter 130:130. True Purpose

Qi Jun was waiting at Su Liang’s house, and when he saw her coming back with Ning Jing, he hurried to the neighboring house to look for Xing Yusheng. Xing Yusheng had already shown Qin Yujin and Lin Xueqing the house he planned to live in after getting married. It was considerably smaller than Su Liang’s place, but it had everything, many pine trees were planted, and it was quite elegant.

“Xueqing, do you like it?” Qin Yujin asked with a smile.

Lin Xueqing nodded subconsciously, blushing when she realized her response, and seeing Qi Jun appear not far away, she quickly said, “Su sister and Ning senior brother are back, let’s go over there!”

Lin Xueqing ran away, and Qin Yujin gave Xing Yusheng a thumbs up, indicating that the mansion was a great addition.

The fish they brought back was still alive, and Ning Jing was responsible for cleaning it up.

By the time Lin Xueqing and the others came over, Su Liang had already started stewing the fish.

"It smells so good!" Lin Xueqing hugged Su Liang out of habit, "Su sister, tell the truth, did Ning senior brother go to pick you up? Su Liang shook her head, "He didn't pick me up."

Lin Xueqing paused, "Is there someone else?"

Su Liang pointed at the fish in the pot, "This one."

Lin Xueqing held her forehead, "It's obvious that Ning senior brother is worried about you! Why won't you both admit it?"

Su Liang smiled, "Is that so? Then you'll have to ask him about it."

Lin Xueqing turned her head and saw Ning Jing standing at the door, so she asked him, "Ning senior brother, did you miss Su sister when you went to find

Ning Jing nodded, "Yes."

Lin Xueqing's eyes lit up, "Ning senior brother, you admit you like Su sister!"

Su Liang coughed lightly, "He admitted he likes me, like a brother kind of like." Lin Xueqing: ... Why is there no shyness at all? What's with this openness?

At dusk, Su Liang hosted guests at her home in the capital city for the first time.

The dishes were plentiful, but only the fish was prepared by her personally.

Lin Xueqing was looking forward to it and was about to taste it, but the fish in the middle was replaced by Ning Jing in front of him.

Su Liang was speechless, "Don't be so stingy."

"They all say they're not outsiders." Ning Jing's face was plain.

Lin Xueqing laughed secretly, "I get it! Ning senior brother doesn't want us to eat the dish Su sister made by herself!" Su Liang asked in a faint tone, "Can I eat it then?"

Ning Jing shook his head, "No."

Qin Yujin couldn't help but laugh, "I didn't expect Young Master Ning to be like this when he's with Sister Liang." She found it adorable!

Ning Jing only ate that fish.

Xing Yusheng asked Su Liang who she had encountered at the restaurant.

"Someone I knew before, Xiao Muyun from the Prime Minister Mansion, do you know him?" Su Liang asked.

Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing shook their heads together. They had only been in the capital city for a short time.

Qin Yujin nodded, "I know, he is the second son of the Xiao family, the brother of the late second prince's consort. Did he give Sister Liang any trouble?" "No." Su Liang shook her head, "What else do you know about him?"

Qin Yujin said she only knew that Xiao Muyun was talented, but he had never taken the Imperial examination. He once had a wife who had died in childbirth, leaving behind a daughter.

As the sky darkened, Xing Yusheng, and the other two left.

Su Liang turned around and saw Ning Jing standing there quietly, so she asked him, "Why did you eat that fish alone?"

Ning Jing was cold but not impolite.

Although Xing Yusheng and the others really didn't mind, Su Liang found it strange.

"I accidentally broke the fish's gall bladder." Ning Jing said.

The fish gallbladder broke, and the taste must be bitter. Su Liang, being a good cook, rarely tasted the food during the cooking process and didn't notice it.

Su Liang held her forehead, "You could have just told me directly. Why did you eat a bitter fish? I wouldn't have made it if you had told me earlier." "I wanted to try it. The taste is quite unique," said Ning Jing.

"Conserving is a good habit, but don't do this again next time. It's not good for your health," Su Liang said seriously.

When Su Liang returned to the kitchen and tasted a bit of the fish soup left in the pot, her face wrinkled in bitterness.

Regarding Ning Jing's act of eating a bitter fish without changing her expression, Su Liang had only one comment: "Truly extraordinary."

That night, Su Liang was thinking about the fifth prince and considering when to look for him.

Chang'an appeared, saying that Duanmu Chen had invited Su Liang to talk about something.

Seeing that there were no lights on in Ning Jing's room, Su Liang thought she was asleep and didn't call her, so she went with Chang'an.

Duanmu Chen was having a late-night snack, and he was holding a book in his hand.

"Sit." He was much calmer tonight than usual.

After Chang'an served tea and withdrew, Duanmu Chen put down the book and chopsticks and looked at Su Liang, "I didn't expect that you had some history with my cousin."

Su Liang frowned, "Were you spying on me?"

Duanmu Chen shook his head, "It was for protection. Duanmu Ao will definitely not let you go."

"I've lost my memory," said Su Liang, "You should know Xiao Muyun better than me. I didn't expect that you knew nothing about his connection with 'met.'"

Duanmu Chen snorted, "I'm not close with him. He's an ordinary, law-abiding person."

The two words accurately described Su Liang's impression of Xiao Muyun.

Ordinary, meaning incompetent.

Law-abiding, or viewed from another angle, craving for a comfortable life, with no courage to take any risks.

“Regardless of the past, I know you can’t possibly be interested in him anymore. If he keeps pestering you, you can handle it yourself. It’s not appropriate for me to intervene,” said Duanmu Chen, “I presume you’ve already learned that the funeral arrangements for your family were taken care of by my fifth brother.”

Su Liang nodded. She only learned about this today and planned to visit the Su family graves tomorrow.

“Duanmu Che’s mother had been the emperor’s favorite woman, but she passed away several years ago due to illness,” said Duanmu Chen, “Nian Ruxue bears some resemblance to her.”

Su Liang had heard Duanmu Chen mention before that Nian Ruxue caught the emperor’s eye and was supposed to enter the Imperial Harem. So this was the reason behind it.

“Although my fifth brother is weak and sickly, with an introverted temperament, his position in my father’s heart is quite special. That’s why he was able to help the Su family back then, and Duanmu Ao dared not do anything to him,” Duanmu Chen said.

Su Liang nodded, “I understand now. Did the fourth prince find any clues to the death of the second prince’s wife:

Duanmu Chen shook his head, “With the death of your family and your memory loss, there’s no way to investigate it anymore. If you can recover your memory, it might be much simpler. I suspect that Duanmu Che knows something, but since I don’t have much interaction with him, it’s not appropriate for me to ask him.”

Su Liang understood, “Should I ask him?”

Duanmu Chen nodded, “You’re the most suitable person to do so. Perhaps it was all arranged by Duanmu Che for you to leave the capital city and go to Bei’an County. You can approach him under the guise of treating his illness.” “Alright, I’ll give it a try.” Su Liang had already planned to do this.

“Since we’re cooperating, make sure to inform me of any new information in a timely manner. If I find out anything on my end, I’ll tell you too,” Duanmu

Chen said as he picked up the book again, “That’s all for now. You can go back.”

Su Liang got up and was about to leave when she turned back, “Could the fourth prince remove the spies who are watching me?”

Duanmu Chen snorted, “What are you trying to do behind my back?”

“In that case, if I find any lurking people and kill them when I’m not in a good mood, don’t blame me,” Su Liang said indifferently.

Duanmu Chen frowned, and Su Liang had already left.

“Master, by letting Miss Su approach the fifth prince, what if she ends up working directly with him?” Chang’an expressed his concern.

Duanmu Chen’s eyes were deep, “Do you think that Duanmu Che has the heart of a Bodhisattva? He’s always been secretive, and now Su Liang can help me find out the truth about him.”

Chang’an’s expression changed, “So the true purpose of inviting Miss Su is...?”

Duanmu Chen looked at the book in his hand, “Duanmu Ao is nothing but a waste. I always feel that Duanmu Che will be a threat to me someday. My father has been protecting him well, and he may not necessarily be genuinely ill. Only the orphan of the Su family can get close to him..”