

Three-Time 131

Chapter 131: 131. Let her get lost

Ten miles from the capital city of Qian Country, there was a high mountain named Wangxiang Mountain.

Legend has it that a tragic war took place here a hundred years ago. The soldiers who died far from their homeland were buried high on the mountain, where they could gaze at their hometowns, which is why it was named so.

On the mountaintop today, there is a huge rock engraved with many names that have become illegible due to the passing of time and weather. This rock is known as the Wangxiang Stone.

As the sun rose, the thick fog in the mountains gradually dissipated. Su Liang, holding a basket, stopped mid-hill.

In the chill of early spring, fresh plants had yet to sprout, yet there were a few sparse patches of dull green visible amidst the struggling pine trees that grew from the gray-black crevices in the rocks.

In a graveyard, Su Liang found a gravestone inscribed with ‘Grave of Su Yuanzhou’. She set down the basket and wiped the dust off the stone tablet with a handkerchief.

The sunlight illuminated half of Su Liang’s face, and a cold wind blew against her. A sudden wave of sadness filled her heart.

Su Yuanzhou hadn’t returned to his hometown for many years but always thought about it. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have sent money and goods to Su Daqiang’s family, fearing that they might suffer.

Unfortunately, he would never return.

Ironically, the relatives he cared for so much turned out to be a group of ruthless predators who had killed his only granddaughter upon her return to her hometown.

Su Liang didn’t bring any paper money. She took the food and wine out of her basket, placed them in front of Su Yuanzhou’s gravestone, arranged the chopsticks, and poured a cup of wine, sprinkling it on his gravestone. When Su Liang looked up, she saw Ning Jing standing near another smaller gravestone not far away.

She approached and found the inscription to be “Grave of Su Liang”.

“Do you think there would be bones inside?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing replied with a question, “Do you want to dig it up and see?”

Su Liang shook her head, “No, I’ll go directly to the fifth prince instead. He should know best.”

There were no graves for the original master’s parents here, as they had died in a foreign land when the original master was very young. Su Liang only knew that her father was named Su Hongzhao, but she had no information about her mother’s background or full name.

Before leaving, Su Liang bowed deeply toward the Su Family graves and silently vowed: If you were wronged in death, I will find the truth and seek justice for you.

On the way down the mountain, Su Liang asked Ning Jing, “Do you think, if I go directly to the fifth prince’s mansion, Duanmu Che would meet with me?” Ning Jing shook his head, “I don’t know.”

“But sneaking in might be rude,” Su Liang sighed slightly. “Never mind, I’ll go knock on the door and see if he’ll meet me.”

Fifth Prince Duanmu Che didn’t have much presence in the Royal Family.

However, the cunning Fourth Prince Duanmu Chen never underestimated Duanmu Che.

It showed that Duanmu Che was not just a sickly prince.

After giving it some thought, Su Liang finally decided to pay Duanmu Che an open visit.

Asking Ning Jing if he would accompany her, he still refused.

The fifth prince’s mansion was not far from the fourth prince’s mansion, but the surrounding environment seemed quieter.

In broad daylight, the vermilion doors were closed, and no one was around.

Su Liang stepped forward and knocked on the door. After waiting for a while, she finally heard footsteps from inside, and shortly after, the door opened. An old, short, and plump man saw Su Liang and his expression changed.

This person recognizes me... Su Liang thought.

The door remained ajar, the old man did not speak but frowned at Su Liang, waiting for her to start the conversation.

“My family name is Su, and my name is Liang. I am here to request an audience with His Highness the fifth prince,” Su Liang spoke politely.

The old man’s expression turned dark and he retreated inside, slamming the door shut again!

Su Liang frowned and heard the old man’s voice from inside, “Young lady, please wait! Allow me to report to my master!”

Su Liang wondered if the old man might know about her previous departure from the capital city and thought she shouldn’t have returned?

As Su Liang patiently waited outside the fifth prince’s mansion, the old man’s reaction made her feel that her meeting with Duanmu Che might not go smoothly.

The old servant hurriedly entered the rear garden and saw a wheelchair not far away. He took a deep breath, slowed down, and approached it, “Master.”

A young falcon with a white head, brown wings, white tail, and white legs perched on the man’s shoulder in the wheelchair. At the sound of the voice, it spread its wings and flew away.

“The visitor is Su Liang, the granddaughter of Old Doctor Su Liang. She was the one you sent me to bring back to the northern village of the Su family. I don’t know when she returned to the capital city,” the old servant reported.

The wheelchair remained still, and after a moment of silence, a low voice said,

“Tell her to leave.”

The old servant sighed deeply but seemed unsurprised. “I shall send her away and tell her never to come back.”

The door opened, and Su Liang saw the old man from before standing inside, only showing his head, with a stern face, he said, “Please leave quickly, and never come back again!”

Without giving Su Liang a chance to speak, he closed the door heavily again.

Having the door shut in her face, Su Liang left.

When the old man saw Duanmu Che again, he was given a task: to find out if Su Liang had met with Xiao Muyun after returning to the capital city.

The old man didn’t know where Su Liang was, so he investigated Xiao Muyun’s whereabouts and quickly came back to report: Su Liang had met with Xiao Muyun at Wan Family Restaurant the day before, and they had been alone in a private room for half an hour.

After returning home, Su Liang thought things through and decided to write a letter to Duanmu Che, informing him that she had lost her memory and stating her purpose for coming back to the capital city, as well as asking for his help in providing clues and investigating the cause of death for the Su Family.

After writing the letter, Su Liang went to the Fifth Prince’s mansion again. After knocking on the door, she slipped the letter through the crack in the door and left.

As long as Duanmu Che saw it, he might meet with her afterward.

Soon after Su Liang left, the letter was picked up by the old man and given to Duanmu Che. The order he received was: burn the letter, he no longer wants to hear Su Liang’s name and would not care for her life or death anymore.

As usual, Su Liang went to treat Old Duke Qin with acupuncture that day. His body was recovering, and he looked at Su Liang and said a mumbled “Thank you.”

“Relax, Old Duke. Take good care of yourself and you’ll get better,” Su Liang said with a gentle smile.

When Su Liang left Duke Qin’s mansion, she “coincidentally” met Xiao Muyun shortly after.

Xiao Muyun was stunned by Su Liang’s elegant and regal appearance as she rode her horse with a straight back in her simple and elegant long dress.

However, before he could say anything, Su Liang turned her horse around and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Upon returning home, she went to spar with Ning Jing.

After a few rounds on the training ground, Ning Jing said that Su Liang had too many distractions in the capital city and had been neglecting her martial arts training. Her previous progress was still far from complete, and the Military Exam selection was just around the corner, but she lacked focus.

Confronted with Ning Jing's criticism, Su Liang nodded in agreement but said, "I don't know if Duanmu Che has seen my letter and will meet with me."

Ning Jing frowned, "Su Liang."

"Huh?" Su Liang was taken aback, "I heard what you just said. I'll definitely take my martial arts training seriously from now on."

"Not later, but now," Ning Jing walked towards the Plum Blossom Pile that he had set up not too far away. "Come here."

A moment later, Ning Jing stood on a pile in the center, beckoning Su Liang,

Su Liang steadied herself, jumped on a pile not far from Ning Jing, and threw a punch at him.

The two fought on the Plum Blossom Piles, with Ning Jing's feet not moving at all, only using his upper body to attack Su Liang.

Su Liang circled around Ning Jing, trying many different moves, but all were effortlessly countered by him.

In the end, Su Liang gave up from exhaustion, while Ning Jing still stood steadily on the wooden pile, calm and composed.

"Great God, I was wrong," Su Liang admitted her recent errands had indeed kept her from focusing on her training, and her performance suffered.

Although, even without any slack, she would still not be a match for Ning Jing.

"Do you think that Duanmu Chen's plot to bring you back to the capital city is just to deal with Duanmu Ao?" Ning Jing landed on the ground and looked at Su Liang as he asked.

Su Liang shook her head, "Duanmu Ao, that pervert, doesn't have much ability to hinder Duanmu Chen. It's the Crown Prince he wants to bring down. The Crown Prince and Duanmu Ao are half-brothers."

"There's more to it," Ning Jing said.

Su Liang's eyes narrowed, "Do you mean... Duanmu Che? Duanmu Chen purposely talked to me and asked me to find Duanmu Che."

"Why doesn't Duanmu Che see you?" Ning Jing asked.

Su Liang thought for a while and replied, "If he was the one who arranged for 'me' to escape in the first place, he probably hoped that I would hide in my hometown forever and never return to the capital city, thinking that it would be a foolish act of seeking death?"

“He may not have seen your letter, and even if he did, he may not believe it,” Ning Jing said.

Su Liang sighed, “But perhaps only from him can I get the clues I need.”

“When you make a name for yourself in the Military Exam, he’ll come to you,” Ning Jing said.

Su Liang’s expression turned serious, “Right. Duanmu Chen clearly has ulterior motives. It’s better to delay what he wants me to do. For Duanmu Che to believe that I can truly avenge the Su Family, I must prove it with my capabilities. Talking more will be useless. To deal with people from the royal family, I must first have some bargaining chips; otherwise, I’m just a pawn. I’ll seclude myself for training, and regarding treating Old Duke Qin with acupuncture every day, can you help me with that?”

Ning Jing nodded. His acupuncture skills had already reached a certain level.

Seeing that Ning Jing was about to leave, Su Liang stopped him and then stood on the pile he had previously stood on, beckoning him, “Come here..”

Chapter 132:132. I don’t want to hear that name anymore (Updated)

Although Su Liang was quickly defeated by Ning Jing and had to change to another wooden stake, they did not stop.

Sparting on top of the Plum Blossom Pile requires extreme concentration.

When they were practising martial arts before, they were wielding weapons, so there were fewer leg techniques. The Plum Blossom Pile was specially created by Ning Jing for Su Liang to make up for her weaknesses.

It wasn’t until dusk that the two left the Training Ground. Su Liang analyzed her shortcomings, while Ning Jing listened but said nothing.

Deep into the night, there was still no news from anyone regarding Su Liang.

She knew that Ning Jing was right after all.

The letter she sent to Duanmu Che might not even be read, or even if he did, he might not believe it.

Since she had to ask for help, she couldn’t just sneak into the prince’s mansion without notice and perform martial arts in front of Duanmu Che to prove that she was not weak.

All the Su Family members were dead, investigating the truth and seeking vengeance had to be done, but not rashly. She was dealing with people from the Royal Family, which required caution and more importantly, she needed enough strength.

From this perspective, there was no difference for Su Liang whether it was

Duanmu Chen or Duanmu Che.

The next day, Su Liang resumed her life when she was in Su Village; practising martial arts and reading when tired. She no longer worried about Duanmu Che and his affairs.

In the afternoon, Ning Jing went to Duke Qin's Mansion alone, claiming to administer the acupuncture treatment for Old Duke Qin on Su Liang's behalf. The Qin Family was very surprised.

Qin Yujin asked, "Is Sister Liang not feeling well?"

Ning Jing nodded, "She seems to have been infected with something and has broken out in a rash, so she can't go out."

Originally, he wanted to say that Su Liang was just busy, but felt that it would not be appropriate, as it might make them feel that Su Liang didn't take Old Duke Qin's illness seriously.

After all, Su Liang believed there was no difference whether it was her or Ning Jing who administered the treatment.

However, the Qin Family had never heard of Ning Jing's Medical Skills before, so naturally, they had doubts.

Qin Yujin looked worried, "Is it severe? Do we need to call an Imperial Physician? I'll go and see Sister Liang!"

Ning Jing shook his head, "It's serious, but she can treat it herself. She can't have contact with anyone for the time being."

Although he didn't say it directly, he implied to Qin Yujin that it might be contagious.

Qin Yujin sighed deeply, "What has happened? She was fine two days ago."

"Yesterday, she went to worship her grandfather outside the capital city. When she came back, she had the rash," Ning Jing explained.

Qin Yujin frowned, "Maybe she accidentally touched some poisonous plants on the mountain."

Since Su Liang couldn't go out and Qin Yujin couldn't visit her, their problem was temporarily solved.

The Qin Family members watched as Ning Jing skillfully administered needles to Old Duke Qin, exactly as Su Liang would have done.

"It turns out that Young Master Ning is also a doctor! Truly hidden talents!" Qin Kang exclaimed.

Ning Jing shook his head, "I only know a little, and am still learning."

The Qin Family thought he was being modest.

After finishing the treatment, Ning Jing left, saying that he would come again tomorrow and asked Qin Yujin to inform Lin Xueqing and Xing Yusheng not to visit Su Mansion for the time being.

Qin Yujin agreed and assured him that they would wait until Su Liang had recovered before meeting.

Ning Jing left the Duke Qin's Mansion alone on his horse. Not long after, he "encountered" Xiao Muyun.

Xiao Muyun had waited for Su Liang at the agreed time and place yesterday, but only saw Ning Jing. She asked him, "Where is Liang'er?"

Ning Jing frowned slightly, “Without a betrothal, addressing her by her given name is ruining her reputation.”

Xiao Muyun’s expression darkened, “We had an agreement long ago; she just forgot!”

“If she forgets, it ceases to exist.” Ning Jing said coldly.

“Ning Jing, don’t try to justify yourself here. You don’t like her, so why don’t you break up with her? What are your intentions?” Xiao Muyun sneered.

Ning Jing was silent for a moment before saying, “I want to break up, but she doesn’t agree.”

Xiao Muyun’s face immediately turned colorful, too angry to speak.

Ning Jing rode his horse around and left with a flourish.

“Young Master...” Xiao Muyun’s subordinate whispered, “Let it go.” Xiao Muyun shot him a cold glance, “When is it your turn to teach me how to behave?”

The subordinate’s expression was filled with fear, “I dare not.”

Ning Jing returned home and told Su Liang that her good friends knew she had developed a rash and couldn’t go out or see anyone.

Upon hearing this, Su Liang not only didn’t think Ning Jing was wrong for making up a lie without her consent, but instead gave him a thumbs up, “This excuse is brilliant! Xing Yusheng and Xueqing are dating, and they always drag me into it, let them play by themselves!”

Thus, every day, Ning Jing went to give Old Duke Qin his acupuncture treatment, while Su Liang stayed home to practice martial arts. Only occasionally, Ning Jing secretly brought Zhengzheng back to see Su Liang and then sent him away again.

After three days, Duanmu Chen sent Chang’an to find Su Liang. At that time, Su Liang was resting and reading in her room, so Ning Jing stopped Chang’an outside.

“Mister Ning, I’m sorry to disturb you, but my master wants to see Miss Su,” Chang’an said politely.

“She’s sick.” Ning Jing repeated the excuse he told Qin Yujin to Chang’an. Chang’an was surprised, “When... can she get better?”

From inside the room, Su Liang’s voice came out, “About ten days to half a month.” This way, when she finally goes out, she can directly participate in the Military Exam selection.

Chang’an didn’t expect it to be this situation, so he directly asked Su Liang,

“What about that thing the master talked to Miss Su about before...?”

Su Liang sighed, “I went there twice that day, but I couldn’t get in.”

Chang’an nodded, “I understand. Miss Su, please take care and rest. I will inform my master. Goodbye.”

As he was about to leave, Chang’an remembered something and asked, “Has the Second Prince been causing any trouble for Miss Su recently?”

"I haven't gone out of my house, so there's no trouble," Su Liang said.

Chang'an then left.

Su Liang came out of her room, "It's strange that Duanmu Ao hasn't tried to kill me. Nian Ruxue would have a hard time not blaming me too, as she tried to kill you through Yanyun Building before, this time..."

Speaking of Yanyun Building, Su Liang thought, the current leaders should be Yan Shiba and Yan Shiqi, based on her previous "relationship" with them, they wouldn't accept the task to kill her, right?

Ning Jing shared his opinion, "Duanmu Ao is desperately searching for someone to treat his illness, and Nian Ruxue doesn't have money."

Su Liang coughed lightly, "You might be right."

She had crippled Duanmu Ao, which was something he couldn't make public. However, as a lecher, he couldn't accept his fate, so he must be seeking treatment in secret and temporarily ignoring Su Liang's problems.

As for Nian Ruxue not having money, Su Liang felt it may not necessarily be true, but it was highly likely. She had previously hired an assassin from Yanyun Building to deal with Gu Ling, and someone might have been pulling strings behind the scenes. Logically speaking, a young lady of a prominent family shouldn't have that much cash. Also, Yanyun Building doesn't refund their fees even if a mission is cancelled.

Su Liang thought that Nian Ruxue claiming that the mission was canceled could be a lie to Nian Jincheng. But at that time, Yan Shiba had an accident and lost contact with Yanyun Building, making it impossible to confirm the matter.

Su Liang quickly put the matter to the back of her mind and continued to attend to her own business.

Chang'an returned and reported to Duanmu Chen that Su Liang was sick and couldn't go out or see anyone.

"She's a doctor herself." Duanmu Chen frowned, but thought that it wasn't strange for a doctor to get sick.

However, Duanmu Chen found it odd that Su Liang happened to be sick at this time.

"Duanmu Che actually refuses to see her." Duanmu Chen snorted lightly, "She won't give up easily."

"But Miss Su is sick at the moment, so she can't go to see the fifth prince for the time being," Chang'an added.

"What a coincidence. Is she playing some trick?" Duanmu Chen's gaze narrowed slightly.

Chang'an shook his head, "I haven't found any flaws in this. What's the benefit for her to fake being sick and not going out? Is she afraid that the second prince would send someone to kill her?"

Duanmu Chen shook his head, "I don't think so. If she dares to provoke Duanmu Ao, she would not be afraid, even wishing for Duanmu Ao to cause her trouble so she can counterattack."

"I also can't forcefully demand to see Miss Su," Chang'an said.

"Forget it. She will come out eventually, and she will definitely go to see Duanmu Che. We'll talk about it later," said Duanmu Chen.

The first day of the second month came in a blink of an eye.

After that day, Su Liang stayed indoors, focusing on martial arts practice and reading.

Ning Jing only went out once a day, to Duke Qin's Mansion.

Old Master Qin was now able to speak normally and sit up, but he could not walk for the time being. Qin siblings and Xing Yusheng would wheel Old Master Qin to the garden to enjoy the sunshine when the weather was good.

Lin Xueqing visited frequently, getting along well with Xing Yusheng. Old Master Qin couldn't stop smiling whenever he saw her, evidently very satisfied with this yet- to-be-married granddaughter-in-law.

Xing Ji and Qin Kang had officially proposed a marriage together with Lin Shuzhi.

The date for the Imperial Matrimonial Decree had not been set yet. Lin Shuzhi said they had to wait for his second child to return from the south to the capital before discussing the wedding date, which both the Xing and Qin families understood.

The ingredients needed by Su Liang were all arranged by Wan Hui to be delivered regularly. Also, whenever there were new materials at Yang Family's Embroidery Workshop, they would be sent to Su Liang first. The only thing she needed to worry about in her daily life was cooking.

Wan Hui once suggested arranging a cook for Su Liang, but Ning Jing refused.

Su Liang agreed with Ning Jing's decision. She and Ning Jing could not live with others, as their conversations would not be as unrestricted. The martial arts techniques that Ning Jing taught her, as well as the various knowledge, were not to be revealed to outsiders.

The martial arts selections would start on the fifth day and continue until mid-month.

The semi-finals for the Military Exams would be held concurrently with the Civil Examinations. The top thirty would be selected.

The finals would take place the day before the Civil Examination Palace Test, and the top three would be chosen.

Su Liang asked Ning Jing whether she must show up in person to register. Su Liang planned to visit Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing and then go to Duke Qin's Mansion to re-examine Old Master Qin after she had finished her registration. She would have dinner at Wan Hui's place, and meeting Zhengzheng.

In this way, they could complete all the necessary social tasks within a day and continue their seclusion the next day.

At the Military Exam registration site, a long queue had formed early in the morning.

The queue was filled with men from beginning to end.

Similar to past years, women who wanted to participate in the Military Exams had a separate registration point, which encouraged women to participate without having to queue up.

This was because, as Ning Jing had mentioned to Su Liang, there were female generals in other countries who had openly mocked Qian Country's women for only knowing how to embroider. Due to this, the royal family hoped more female martial artists would stand out.

It wasn't that they really wanted women to fight, but rather to save face. Most people in Qian Country did not genuinely advocate for women to learn martial arts, as women were still tightly bound by strict doctrines and rules.

One slender and delicate-looking young man in the crowd was ridiculed and urged to go to the women's registration area instead.

Unaffected by the ridicule, the young man remained emotionless.

When Nian Ruxue appeared near the registration site with her maid, it immediately caused a stir.

"Is the fourth Miss Nian very skilled in martial arts?"

"Who knows?"

"Very skilled! I heard that she hides her abilities well and has been trained by General Nian!" "Could there be a female Martial Arts Champion this year?"

"Who knows!"

Nian Ruxue seemed to be completely unaffected by the Imperial Matrimonial Decree. When she appeared in public, she was meticulously dressed, and with a smile, she walked straight towards the women's registration point.

Looking at the empty registration book, Nian Ruxue asked gently, "Are there no other people coming?"

The officer in charge shook his head, "No. Miss Nian, do you want to participate?"

Nian Ruxue nodded, "Yes."

After registering Nian Ruxue's information, the officer handed her a number plate.

After the registration ended, the participants would be assigned to groups according to their number plates through a draw.

With a faint smile on her face, Nian Ruxue listened to the compliments from the surroundings.

Just as she was about to leave, she saw a familiar face entering her line of sight, causing her expression to change in an instant!

"Miss, isn't that..." The maid recognized Su Liang, who had been with Qin Yujin before.

Nian Ruxue stayed near the registration table without leaving, watching Su

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Su Liang hadn't expected to meet Nian Ruxue here, and the onlookers were all inquiring about her identity, but no one knew who Su Liang was.

"Miss Su, are you also here to register for the Military Exams?" Nian Ruxue's smile deepened.

Su Liang nodded, filled out the registration form, and received her number plate, number 111.

"Miss Su, since we happen to meet here, would you like to join me for some tea? My treat," Nian Ruxue said softly.

Su Liang turned away, "I don't have the time."

Nian Ruxue's eyes dimmed slightly as she watched Su Liang walk away. She left with her attendants soon after.

News of Nian Ruxue's participation in the Military Exams, along with Su Liang, the granddaughter of the allegedly deceased Su Yuanzhou, soon spread throughout the entire capital city.

At the Fifth Prince's Mansion.

The old Imperial Physician took Duanmu Che's pulse, wrote a prescription, and urged him to take the medicine on time.

"Thank you," Duanmu Che's expression was always indifferent.

After hesitating for a moment, the old Imperial Physician said, "Does Fifth Prince remember Su Yuanzhou from before?"

Duanmu Che's eyes narrowed, "Why mention him now?"

The old Imperial Physician said, "I thought everyone in his family was gone, but it turns out that he has a granddaughter who is still alive. When Old Duke Qin had a stroke and asked me to go over, I saw the girl at Duke Qin's Mansion.

Her name is Su Liang."

Seeing the old servant frowning by his side, the old Imperial Physician continued, "To my surprise, the medical skills of that girl from the Su family are quite outstanding, particularly her acupuncture technique. It's truly amazing. Yesterday, I went to see Old Duke Qin, and his recovery was quite good. He will be able to get up soon."

Duanmu Che furrowed his brows and remained silent.

"Should I invite that girl from the Su family to come and treat Your Highness? Perhaps she might have some helpful methods," the old Imperial Physician said respectfully.

"No need," Duanmu Che replied coldly.

The old Imperial Physician turned around and sighed.

After he left, the old servant hesitated before finally asking, "Should I investigate that Su Liang again? If her medical skills are indeed outstanding, maybe..."

“For the last time, I don’t want to hear that name again,” Duanmu Che’s gaze turned slightly cold..

Chapter 133: 133. Uncle Ning and the Kid

Su Liang went to Lin Family first according to the original plan.

Lin Shuzhi was very happy to see her.

Lin Xueqing repeatedly confirmed that Su Liang’s rash had left no trace, which was excellent news.

Su Liang felt a little guilty, as she hadn’t actually developed any rashes and had just used it as an excuse not to go out.

“Congratulations, Xueqing. I look forward to attending your wedding.” Su Liang said with a smile.

Lin Xueqing’s cheeks flushed, but she still openly admitted that she thought Xing Yusheng was a good match for her.

She specifically mentioned that once they were married, they would become neighbors with Su Liang, something she was looking forward to.

“Xueqing, you didn’t agree to marry Crown Prince Xing just to become my neighbor, did you?” Su Liang frowned.

Lin Xueqing quickly shook her head, “Of course not! A decision like marriage should be taken seriously. My father, my elder brother, and Yujin all say he’s a good person, and you’re friends with him too. I think he’s quite nice and genuinely likes me. He knows a lot and has been to many places. I enjoy cooking, and he’s willing to help me out, just like you and Ning Jing do.”

Su Liang nodded, “Not bad.”

Some things may seem ordinary at first glance, but life is made up of all kinds of trivial matters coming together.

Sometimes, it’s the seemingly insignificant little things that reveal a person’s character and attitude towards you.

Xing Yusheng isn’t a dominant person, and his past hasn’t been smooth. The warmth provided by his family has also been limited. Therefore, he will double his efforts to repay whoever treats him well.

Xing Yusheng is a man who cherishes and longs for tranquility.

At the same time, Xing Yusheng’s background enables him to have the conditions to achieve the peace he desires.

And because of some special reasons, he has become a noble with no future prospects.

Each of these aspects alone might not be unique, but combined together, they are quite rare.

This is also the main reason Su Liang thinks Xing Yusheng is suitable for Lin Xueqing.

As for the undecided wedding date, Su Liang didn't think it was a big deal. In her eyes, Lin Xueqing was still young. After getting married, she would have to face the matter of having children, so it wouldn't hurt to wait another year or two.

After all, it was an imperial decree granting their marriage, it's a done deal. Duke Qin's Mansion and Marquis Zhong Xin's Mansion may appear low-key now, but they are not to be trifled with lightly.

Lin Xueqing insisted on Su Liang staying for dinner. She had learned many new dishes from Su Liang's recipes and cooked them quite well.

Ning Jing estimated that Su Liang would be at Lin's house and arrived just in time for dinner.

After lunch, Su Liang and Ning Jing left Lin's house and went to Duke Qin's Mansion.

Old Master Qin was in good spirits. Seeing the two of them appear, he immediately smiled and waved at them, looking kind and amiable.

Su Liang took Old Master Qin's pulse, and his recovery was going well. In another ten days or so, he could try walking on the ground slowly.

Just as the acupuncture session ended, Qin Yujin came running in and saw Su Liang with a smile, "The Military Exam registration is today. I was wondering if you could go!"

Su Liang showed Qin Yujin the registration card for the Military Exam.

"I really admire you; you're so amazing. Xueqing taught me some self-defense techniques, but I haven't quite grasped them. I'll need your guidance when you have time," Qin Yujin said with a smile.

Su Liang agreed without hesitation.

"Xueqing and I have made plans to cheer for you together during the exam," Qin Yujin said.

Su Liang nodded, "You're welcome to come and watch."

Although Su Liang had seen Nian Ruxue today, she didn't mention it, and Qin Yujin didn't ask.

After having a cup of tea at Qin's house, Su Liang and Ning Jing took their leave.

Both of them didn't ride horses today. Su Liang declined Qin Yujin's offer to arrange a carriage for them. She hadn't gone out for a few days and wanted to walk around on her own.

The content of their "conversation" on the road was the Romance of the Three Kingdoms story that Su Liang had only begun telling last time.

As Su Liang talked about "borrowing arrows with straw boats," the two side by side walked through the bustling marketplace.

A sharp arrow pierced through the air and shot towards Su Liang's back!

Ning Jing's eyes narrowed, but he made no move.

Su Liang dodged while pushing away a passerby.

The arrow penetrated through the bluestone slab and stuck firmly in it, displaying its tremendous power.

Ning Jing looked back in the direction the arrow came from and saw no one suspicious.

Su Liang pulled the arrow out of the ground. There were no particular marks on it, and the material was ordinary.

She hadn't used any Martial Arts and appeared to have avoided the arrow merely by luck.

As the two left with the arrow, the brief commotion subsided, and the marketplace returned to its original order.

"Someone's watching, better not go find Zhengzheng for now," Su Liang said.

The two walked home through the alleyways, with Su Liang continuing her unfinished stories as if nothing had happened.

Once they entered the house, Su Liang held up the arrow, examined it several times, and handed it to Ning Jing, "Who do you think it was?"

Ning Jing shook his head, "I don't know. It could be Duanmu Ao, Nian Ruxue, or perhaps Duanmu Che."

"You..." Su Liang looked at the center of Ning Jing's eyebrows, "It seems like it's been a while since I've seen someone with a darkened forehead on you, and this time you didn't foresee any danger for me either?"

"It's because I haven't seen many people lately." Ning Jing said indifferently. Originally living in the capital city, he rarely saw people since it was a place that appeared prosperous on the surface but was filled with bloodshed and killing in secret. Some treacherous people left him confused and disgusted.

Although he had special abilities, he no longer rejected them, but he wouldn't deliberately go out to find someone in need of saving.

He was once lost, but he had long learned to use his ability without letting it control his life.

"Then why didn't you notice when you see me every day?" Su Liang was puzzled.

Ning Jing shook his head, "Today's event, you could protect yourself, and there was no danger to your life."

Su Liang was taken aback, "That's true."

What Ning Jing saw always required his intervention.

But Su Liang was different now from before.

"Would you see one of Duanmu Ao and Nian Ruxue with darkened focus if you looked at them now? Is one of them planning to kill me?" Su Liang asked.

“It won’t happen today, because it doesn’t require my help.” Ning Jing said. “Never mind.” Su Liang shook her head, “We’ll talk about it next time.”

Su Liang didn’t go to Wan Hui’s house. While she was making dinner, she heard Zhengzheng calling her.

Ning Jing secretly went and brought Zhengzheng over.

“Auntie!” Zhengzheng happily pounced over, hugged Su Liang’s leg, and raised her little face, “Uncle Ning said Auntie misses me a lot!”

Su Liane smiled and bent down to Dick uD Zhenzzhenz. “Yes.”

“Zhengzheng misses Auntie too!” Zhengzheng said cheerfully.

After making dinner, Su Liang added a Shrimp and Egg Custard Soup for Zhengzheng.

Considering Ning Jing’s principle that he couldn’t eat less than others, Su Liang made two bowls.

“Why doesn’t Auntie have eggs?” Zhengzheng was puzzled.

Su Liang, who was drinking soup, almost choked. Children spoke without filter, making ambiguous remarks!

“She doesn’t like it.” Ning Jing said.

“But it tastes so good!” Zhengzheng expressed his confusion.

Su Liang thought for a moment. It wasn’t that she didn’t like to eat it, but it was especially made for children. Ning Jing always wanted a share of even the children’s food, so that’s why she made two portions.

So, Su Liang said seriously, “It’s not that I don’t like it, it’s because I’m not a child.”

Zhengzheng blinked, “Is Uncle Ning a child?”

“You ask him.” Su Liang chuckled.

Zhengzheng looked at Ning Jing, waiting for his answer.

Ning Jing nodded calmly, “Yes, I am.”

Zhengzheng laughed and fell into Ning Jing’s arms, “Uncle Ning is such a big kid!”

Su Liang facepalmed. The Great God had excellent mental resilience. As long as he didn’t feel embarrassed, others would be the ones who felt embarrassed.

Zhengzheng played until he was tired and fell asleep on Ning Jing’s shoulder, who then took him home.

For the next three days, Su Liang didn’t go out and had a fulfilling and peaceful time, with no one breaking into the house.

On the fifth day of the second month, the Military Exam officially began.

This was always the busiest time in the capital city.

Scholars who had come to take the exam arrived one after another, and those who came to participate in the Military Exam from all over the country also gathered here.

Inns, restaurants, and tea houses were all booming with business.

Like other days, Su Liang got up to exercise, made breakfast, ate with Ning Jing, and the sun had just risen.

She was changing clothes when she heard Lin Xueqing's voice outside.

When Su Liang came out, she saw her friends had arrived.

Xing Yusheng said that his grandmother was going to go see the excitement, but since it was crowded today, he persuaded her to wait a few days. Xing Yusheng handed Su Liang the sword he had brought, "Try it."

Su Liang took it, and it looked simple and heavy but was unexpectedly light.

She unsheathed the sword, flashing cold light, with a very thin blade. The words "Luoying" were engraved on it.

Su Liang was surprised internally. She knew that Ning Jing's most formidable swordsmanship was called Luoying Sword, which she had learned but was still far from mastering due to its intricacy and complexity.

As for this sword, whether it was related to the Luoying Swordsmanship, she couldn't ask Ning Jing at the moment, and only thanked Xing Yusheng.

Xing Yusheng shook his head, "No need. It's a gift from my father to you upon our first meeting. He gave it to me this morning and said you might be able to use it recently."

Su Liang thought that Xing Ji only gave her the gift today; this Luoying Sword might be something he had just acquired or had found specifically for her.

Su Liang handed it to Ning Jing, "What do you think?" Ning Jing didn't take it but said only one word, "Good.."

Chapter 134: 134. Putting On An Act of Profundity

"Don't misunderstand, he was talking to Zhengzheng while playing with the child," Su Liang explained.

Xing Yusheng smiled, "We all understand."

Su Liang: ... She doesn't care what they think.

The preliminary trial of the Military Exam was held in West City. There were many people, and no Combat Stage was set up. Instead, a large square was divided into separate areas.

Two people from the same group would compete, one eliminated and the other advanced, and the advanced would enter the next round of trials.

On the first day of the preliminary trial, two rounds of selection would be held, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and more than half of the participants would be eliminated in one day.

As there were limited spaces, not everyone could compete at the same time, so they had to take turns entering the arena.

Qi Yan and Qi Jun went ahead to check Su Liang's group assignment.

Suddenly, Qin Yujin pulled at Su Liang's sleeve, "Is that Nian Ruxue?"

Following the direction of Qin Yujin's gaze, Su Liang first saw the maid of Nian Ruxue whom she had met twice before. Standing next to the maid was a delicate young man, but with obvious curves showing through, it was obvious at a glance that she was a woman, and her stature was no different from that of

Nian Ruxue.

The reason why Qin Yujin was not sure was because the person was wearing a delicate silver mask, revealing only the eyes and lower jaw.

"Is it her?" Qin Yujin frowned, "Why is she wearing men's clothes and a mask?"

Su Liang expressed her confusion.

Soon, people around them started discussing, saying that Nian Ruxue participated in the Military Exam and dressed in men's clothing with a mask to hide her face to avoid her opponents treating her like a woman and holding back.

"Miss Nian is here to compete with us openly and honestly, which is really admirable," one man said loudly, "I don't know about anyone else, but if I were to fight against Miss Nian, I wouldn't be able to bear to hurt her with such a beautiful and captivating appearance!"

A group of men joined in the commotion.

For a moment, Nian Ruxue was treated as a goddess-like existence by many men.

This time, everyone's expectations for Nian Ruxue in the Military Exam suddenly skyrocketed.

There are always oddities in crowded places.

Soon, someone said that compared to Nian Ruxue who also participated in the Military Exam, Su Liang was not as magnanimous, and it was hard to guarantee that she would not use her beauty to confuse her opponents.

Hearing these words, Lin Xueqing was furious!

Her sister Su was here to compete, not to confuse her opponents. If an opponent was disturbed by Su Liang's beauty, how could it be her fault? It meant that the opponent's mind was not good enough, and it would not be a grievance if they lost.

"This is blatant discrimination!" Lin Xueqing was indignant, "They think that if a woman fights against a man, even if she wins, it's not because of her real abilities, but because of her looks! On what basis do they demand Su Liang to dress as a man and cover her face? To put it that way, I think those people should cover their own

faces, lest if Su Liang loses, it would be because their ugly faces scared her and affected her performance!”

Xing Yusheng couldn't help but laugh and nodded repeatedly, “Xueqing's point is very reasonable.”

“Fair competition, what does it matter whether it's a man or a woman? Nian

Ruxue is just putting on an act, while Su Liang is truly open and honest.” Lin Xueqing declared that those who admired Nian Ruxue and belittled Su Liang would have their faces slapped!

The Qi brothers returned and reported that Su Liang was assigned to the tenth group, with four people in total. Two would be selected in the morning and one in the afternoon. After two rounds of elimination, the final winner would advance to the next day's selection.

“The first ten groups are starting, right over there, Miss Su should go quickly!” Qi Yan pointed in a direction.

Xing Yusheng asked Qi Jun, “What about Nian Ruxue?”

Qi Jun said Nian Ruxue was not in the same group as Su Liang, and her order was quite far behind.

Su Liang's first opponent was a tall, strong man of the power type.

The referee introduced the ages of both parties.

Su Liang had just turned fifteen.

The opponent was thirty-four and a half, which happened to be within the maximum age limit for the Military Exam.

This competition between a man and a woman who were about twenty years apart was the first of its kind in the history of the Military Exam.

Before the fight began, the man sneered and said, “Little girl, I won't show you any mercy!”

Su Liang's expression remained calm, “Me neither.”

Among the participants in the preliminary selection were people of various skill levels, which Su Liang already knew.

However, she didn't expect that the first opponent she met was quite skilled, strong indeed, but also agile.

Several other groups nearby had started and quickly ended their fights, and they all gathered around to watch Su Liang's match.

“I didn't expect her to be so amazing!”

“It's a pity for both of them to meet in the first round. No matter who loses, they're both unlucky. They both had the potential to make it to the final battle!”

Everyone discussed excitedly. It was rare to see such an exciting competition in the preliminary selection round.

Xing Yusheng asked Ning Jing in a low voice, “Could someone have deliberately arranged a strong opponent for Su Liang's first match?”

By doing so, not only could they gauge Su Liang's strength, but they would also have a chance to eliminate her quickly.

Although the Imperial examination in Qian Country was strictly controlled, the Military Exam preliminary selection had many participants and more relaxed rules, so it wouldn't be difficult for someone to manipulate the outcome.

Moreover, random grouping was like "destiny", leaving no traces for others to find.

Ning Jing didn't answer Xing Yusheng's question but silently watched the fight.

"Go, Auntie!" Zhengzheng rode on Lu Yu's neck and waved his little hands, cheering with all his might.

The two seemed evenly matched.

Qi Jun whispered to Xing Yusheng, "Miss Su is not using her full strength, she is probing the opponent."

Xing Yusheng felt the same. Although the opponent had an imposing presence, Su Liang seemed to handle the pressure with ease.

Just as Lin Xueqing let out an exclamation, thinking that the tall, strong man was about to hit Su Liang, he was knocked down to the ground by Su Liang's cunning roundhouse kick!

Everyone stared in astonishment as the comparably delicate and fragile Su Liang defeated the strong man.

Meanwhile, the defeated man came to terms with the fact that Su Liang's strength was greater than his own. He never had a chance to hurt her; he was constantly being suppressed by her.

He wasn't resentful, nor did he want to continue fighting. He admitted defeat, handed over his sign, and disappeared into the crowd.

Su Liang, wins!

Lin Xueqing and Qin Yujin, one on each side, hugged Su Liang, even more excited than her.

Zhengzheng smiled brightly, "Auntie is the best!"

The next match was in the afternoon, and Su Liang left after her match.

Xing Yusheng asked Qi Yan and Qi Jun to stay and pay attention to any strong opponents, especially Nian Ruxue's first match, to see how powerful she was.

Xing Yusheng didn't care about Nian Ruxue, but he knew she did not get along with Su Liang. Her engagement to the second prince would inevitably cause trouble for Su Liang, so she was a potential enemy to watch out for.

Duanmu Chen didn't appear, but sent a subordinate to watch and report back to him. The subordinate was not well-known in Chang'an.

Wan Hui invited them to the Wan Family Restaurant and reserved the best private room for them.

Everyone raised their glasses to toast. Besides Ning Jing, who remained aloof, everyone else was beaming.

“Feels like I’ve already secured the title of Top Scholar.” Su Liang laughed.

“Aunt will become the Top Scholar.” Zhengzheng always knew how to catch on to the main point.

Lin Xueqing smiled, “I believe Sister Su will definitely become the Top Scholar.” Xing Yusheng nodded immediately, “Me too.”

Qin Yujin joked that their souls were perfectly in tune and added that she was also confident in Su Liang.

Su Liang looked at Ning Jing directly, “What about you?”

Ning Jing shook her head, “The opponents are unknown; don’t be blindly over-confident. ”

Zhengzheng giggled, “Just be confident!”

Everyone laughed.

The first round of the competition ended after noon, eliminating half of the competitors in half a day.

Qi Yan and Qi Jun only came to the restaurant afterward.

“Miss Nian’s opponent was very weak; she defeated them with one move and pushed them out of bounds,” Qi Yan snorted, “I think there’s something wrong with the grouping!”

Qi Jun shook his head, “Hard to say. In the three large groups, Miss Su and Miss Nian aren’t in the same group, they might only encounter each other at the very end.”

“Could Nian Ruxue cheat by bribing someone, so she always gets paired with weak opponents?” Lin Xueqing asked.

“But judging from today’s groups, it might not be anything shady, perhaps it’s just a coincidence,” said Qin Yujin.

“Anyway, I think she’s the type to use underhanded tricks,” Lin Xueqing said, “Even without any issues, she’s no match for Sister Su!”

Su Liang coughed lightly, “Don’t praise me too much behind closed doors. Ning Jing knows my strength very well; he doesn’t think it’s certain.”

Zhengzheng, the little cutie, raised her small hand and said loudly,

“Definitely! ”

Ning Jing looked at Su Liang, his expression calm, “Don’t disappoint Zhengzheng.”

Su Liang rubbed her forehead, “I’ll do my best.”

On the first day of the Military Exam, the whole city was discussing it, talking mostly about Nian Ruxue.

A noble lady enjoying a life of luxury, yet unafraid of hard work and dedicated to martial arts practice.

She had never shown her martial arts skills before, remaining humble and low-key.

To ensure fairness, she dressed as a man and wore a mask.

Some even elevated the notion, saying that with such beauty and hard work, Nian Ruxue was striving to bring honor to Qian Country.

The above were all examples of the wonderful reputation Nian Ruxue had in the capital city.

There were few mentions of Su Liang. Those who did, some talked about the mystery of her resurrection, while others used her to highlight Nian Ruxue's generous spirit.

Only a few who had witnessed Su Liang's strength personally today believed that she could make it to the end without accidents.

The Nian Family.

After the marriage grant, Nian Ruxue was treated coldly by the old Nian matriarch and Nian Jitang and his wife. But today, their attitude towards her had improved.

A maid brought Bird's Nest soup for Nian Ruxue, saying that the old matriarch ordered her to drink it.

"Put it down." Nian Ruxue said indifferently as she groomed herself in front of the mirror, showing no joy.

The maid put down the Bird's Nest and quietly left the room.

At the door, she bumped into someone.

"Eldest Young Master!" The maid quickly stepped back.

Nian Jinxing grabbed the maid and pushed her out, shutting the door behind him.

The maid almost fell and stood outside looking uneasy.

"What are you doing, brother?" Nian Ruxue asked with displeasure.

Nian Jinxing walked up to Nian Ruxue and leaned in close, looking into her eyes as he whispered, "How did you do it?"

Nian Ruxue leaned back and frowned, "I don't understand what you're talking about."

"You can deceive others, but not me!" Nian Jinxing sneered, "I know your true ability!"

Nian Ruxue stood up and snorted coldly, "I had good luck today and faced a weak opponent. Can't you stand to see me succeed, brother?"

"How could I not? You're my dear sister." Nian Jinxing picked up the mask from the table, covered Nian Ruxue's face, and laughed, "But I don't want to end up like Nian

Jincheng, being played by you. You're the smartest person in the Nian Family. I'll give you one more chance; tell me, what did you do?"

Nian Ruxue's face turned icy, "Am I really so unbearable in your eyes, brother?"

"There's no need for such empty words, they only hurt our feelings," Nian

Jinxing scoffed. "Since you won't tell me, I'll take this mask away." Nian Ruxue stared at him, "What the hell are you up to?"

Nian Jinxing suddenly closed in, grabbed her by the back of the neck, and whispered menacingly in her ear, "Dressing as a man and wearing a mask, acting so mysterious, you don't seem like my sister who always thought herself the most beautiful woman in the world, and hoped all men would be bewitched by her! Those reasons might fool others, but don't I know you better?"

Nian Ruxue's face darkened, "Think what you want!"

"I do have a daring guess, brother, and I wonder if you'd like to hear it?" Nian Jinxing let go of Nian Ruxue, put the mask on his face, and barely hid the wickedness in his eyes, "The one who really participated in the Military Exam isn't you, but a stand-in you hired.. Am I right?"

Chapter 135: 135. A Word is Final (Second Revision)

"Enough!" Nian Ruxue's expression showed her embarrassment, "Second brother isn't home, eldest brother has nothing to do, so he has to make fun of

Nian Jinxing's eyes narrowed slightly, suddenly he laughed, "You're angry already? I'm sorry, I was just joking with you earlier. When are you leaving in the afternoon? I'll go with you and cheer you on."

Nian Ruxue took back her mask, her face was cold as she said, "The legs are on my elder brother, if you want to go, just go. Can I stop you?"

Nian Jinxing stared at Nian Ruxue's eyes, after a moment, he walked to the side and sat down, "In that case, I won't go."

"Whatever you want!" Nian Ruxue put down the mask and went into the inner room.

When the maid came over to serve water, Nian Ruxue changed her clothes.

After cleansing her face, she reapplied her makeup, prepared to go out, Nian Jinxing was still in her room and hadn't left.

Nian Ruxue did not put on her mask but held it in her hand and left the room. Nian Jinxing followed, his expression was peculiar.

Not until they got in the carriage, except for Shiqi, who had been serving Nian Ruxue for many years, nobody else appeared.

The siblings each occupied one side of the carriage. Nian Ruxue closed her eyes in pretended sleep, Nian Jinxing glanced at her from time to time. No one spoke.

The noise grew louder as they got closer, they had arrived at the Battle Arena in West City.

Nian Jinxing was the first one to get off the carriage, smiling. He reached out to help Nian Ruxue.

Nian Ruxue looked at him, the iceberg-like face also revealed a gentle smile. She stepped off the carriage leaning on Nian Jinxing's arm.

The appearance of the siblings, looking at each other and smiling, seemed unbelievably harmonious and warm to outsiders.

"Fourth sister, eldest brother is blind, don't take it to heart", said Nian Jinxing, as he accompanied Nian Ruxue towards her battlefield.

Nian Ruxue held her mask in her hand without putting it on.

Compared to the morning, it attracted more men's attention, and many amazing gazes were cast in her direction.

Nian Jinxing saw it and chuckled softly, saying in a low voice, "Fourth sister is so talented and beautiful, to marry the second prince and become an Imperial

Concubine, is really a pity. If fourth sister can get a good ranking in the Martial

Arts Examination, there might be a chance to change this engagement." "Thank you for your concern, elder brother", Nian Ruxue's smile did not reach her eyes.

Nearing the Battle Arena, Nian Jinxing chuckled lightly, "I am here to see your superb techniques, sister. Don't disappoint me."

Nian Ruxue did not answer.

The competition will start in a quarter of an hour, everyone in each group was checking in.

People who passed the first round, if they did not check in on time for the second round, would be immediately disqualified, and their opponents from the same group would be directly promoted.

Both Nian Ruxue and her second-round opponent had shown up. The opponent was a tall and lean man with quite a bit of a Jianghu Hero's demeanor.

There were no seats at the sidelines, the viewers could only stand in designated areas. Those who disrupted the order would be immediately driven away.

Nian Ruxue, as one of the only two female competitors, had to wait till the fourth round to go on stage, but plenty of spectators had already gathered around her battlefield in advance, all of them being men.

Nian Jinxing was annoyed by this chaotic environment, when he heard someone say "Su Liang is over there, the competition is about to start," he asked Nian Ruxue if she wanted to go over and take a look.

She had already checked in and was not on stage for the time being.

"Okay," Nian Ruxue nodded slightly, "Let's go and see."

Nian Jinxing knew Su Liang. It was Nian Ruxue, who once claimed it was Su Liang who had injured Duanmu Ao behind the Huguo Temple, resulting in her being granted the marriage.

While walking towards Su Liang's Battlefield, the crowd was large. Nian Jinxing carefully protected Nian Ruxue to prevent her from being bumped into.

"Elder brother doesn't need to act this way," Nian Ruxue whispered softly. Nian Jinxing's smile was mild, "Isn't this what the fourth sister likes?"

Soon thereafter, the siblings caught sight of Su Liang as well as Qin Yujin, Lin Xueqing, and others watching from the sidelines.

The two walked over, Nian Jinxing squeezed his way next to Qin Yujin. He smiled and greeted "Miss Qin".

Qin Yujin, who was absorbed in the fight, suddenly saw Nian Jinxing and gasped, subconsciously leaning towards Lin Xueqing.

A dark glint flashed across Nian Jinxing's eyes, which went unnoticed by anyone.

"Master Nian," Said Qin Yujin, having recovered from her surprise, she nodded slightly in greeting.

"Does Miss Qin know Miss Su Liang well?" Nian Jinxing asked with a smile.

"Yes," Qin Yujin answered offhandedly, continuing to watch the fight.

Xing Yusheng noticed this, took Qin Yujin's place and came over to greet Nian Jinxing.

Ning Jing glanced at Nian Jinxing coldly and then withdrew her gaze.

Nian Ruxue didn't squeeze into the crowd. She just stood on the outskirts watching the man dressed in black the entire time.

Su Liang had returned home in the afternoon to change into a black suit, which accentuated her thin and straight figure, as well as her aloof demeanor.

The sight of her bare face caused many men to lose focus for a moment, but they also felt an awe that kept them at a distance.

The opponent in the first round used fist-fighting techniques, and so did Su Liang. Neither of them used weapons.

But weapons were allowed in the Martial Arts Examination, and there were no restrictions on their type.

The opponent in the second round used a short knife, and Ning Jing brought Su Liang a spear from the carriage.

The short knife required close contact to be useful, whereas the long spear directly increased the distance between the two fighters, which was an excellent counter to the short knife.

The match didn't last long, it ended with Su Liang using the spear to knock her opponent out of the arena.

There were people cheering loudly.

Others claimed that Su Liang won owing to her superior weapon rather than her impressive techniques.

Lin Xueqing whispered to Ning Qing, “Sister Su is hiding her real skills, right?” For those who do not understand spearplay, it looked like Su Liang barely moved her feet.

Ning Jing nodded lightly, confirming Lin Xueqings guess.

As the opponent used a weapon and so did Su Liang, there was no unfairness at all.

Su Liang could switch weapons based on her opponents’ choices – this was her prowess.

Ning Jing had cautioned Su Liang not to reveal too much of her strength when it was unnecessary; enough was enough.

Thus, although Su Liang had won two rounds, defeating two formidable opponents, the onlookers did not fully perceive the ferocity and dominance of her techniques.

Lin Xueqing’s eyes brightened, “I knew it!”

Upon hearing her, Xing Yusheng pushed Qin Yujin who stood in the middle away and smiled at Lin Xueqing.

Qin Yujin: ...He truly treats her like his sister, without any formality at all!

Su Liang descended from the stage and spotted Nian Ruxue on the fringe. She was still dressed in the men’s clothing from the morning, with no mask on, and was smiling faintly at Su Liang.

Once the Nian siblings had left, Su Liang received her friends’ congratulatory remarks, ruffled Zhengzheng’s hair, and decided to head home.

When she saw Nian Ruxue in masculine attire wearing a mask in the morning, Su Liang momentarily doubted if it was really her. To her surprise, Nian Ruxue showed up in the afternoon, sans mask, proving that it was indeed her.

Su Liang was reminded of the time on the back mountain of Huguo Temple when Nian Ruxue was harassed by Duanmu Ao but he dared not lay a hand on her. Whether Nian Ruxue was skilled in martial arts was not necessarily related to this. After all, their statuses were worlds apart.

Su Liang lost interest in watching Nian Ruxue’s matches for the moment, as they’d Cross paths sooner or later if Nian Ruxue wasn’t eliminated.

By evening, Su Liang had returned home, read a few pages of a book, and was preparing dinner when she heard Qi Jun’s voice and came out of the kitchen.

“Miss Su, Master instructed me to update you on the second round,” Qi Jun said with a smile. “Miss Nian still wore her mask during her match. Although her opponent seemed powerful, he was much weaker than the two you faced today.

She defeated him effortlessly.”

Then, Qi Jun informed Su Liang about a few impressive contenders they had noticed while watching the competition, focussing on their weapons and whom she might face the next day.

The groups were fixed from the start, so it was possible to anticipate who she would compete against in each round.

“Understood, thank you.” Su Liang asked Qi Jun to wait, picked eight freshly made steamed buns, and asked him to take them back for Old Lady Xing and Xing Yusheng to try.

Upon returning to the mansion, Qi Jun delivered the steamed buns to Old Lady Xing. Xing Ji and Xing Yusheng were both present.

Xing Yusheng was wonderfully recounting the day’s battles of Su Liang to Old Lady Xing, while Xing Ji was silently listening on the side.

“These steamed buns were made by Miss Su and she asked me to bring them back for Old Lady Xing and the Crown Prince to taste.” Qi Jun presented the buns.

Old Lady Xing was delighted beyond measure, “That girl is a wonderful cook!”

She picked one up and handed it to Xing Ji, “You taste it!”

Xing Ji took a bite and nodded faintly, “Very tasty.”

Xing Yusheng suddenly remembered something and told Xing Ji, “Su Liang really liked the gift you sent and asked me to convey her gratitude.”

Xing Ji raised his bun, “Gift received.”

Xing Yusheng let out a soft grunt, “I didn’t ask you to have this...”

Old Lady Xing couldn’t help but chuckle. Of late, she had noticed a slight thaw in the relationship between the father and son, which relieved her greatly.

Though very few nobles from the capital city attended the first day of the Military Exam in person, whoever needed to be informed was promptly updated.

The two female participants, Nian Ruxue, and Su Liang, attracted maximum attention during this Exam.

Prior to this, the name “Su Liang” was scarcely known in the capital city. However, after today, everybody knew that Su Yuanzhou had a granddaughter alive and well, who was skilled in martial arts and was quite fearsome.

Duanmu Chen, who had been actively following the Military Exam, showed no surprise at Su Liang’s performance. In fact, he was quite sure that she was holding back her true strength.

What surprised him instead, was Nian Ruxue.

“When that woman appeared wearing a mask in the first round, I thought she had found a substitute and planned to have someone unmask her.” Duanmu Chen scoffed.

Chang’an was taken aback, “That can’t be right? A mask can’t hide the entire face. If there was a substitute, even with a mask on, people who know her would recognise her. Moreover, Miss Nian didn’t wear a mask during the second round. She might have done it to clear any doubt?”

Duanmu Chen snorted, “Since it’s her, then she’s just putting on an act and seeking attention!”

Chang'an hesitated.

Duanmu Chen grumbled, "Just say what you want to say!"

Chang'an then voiced his thoughts, "Today, both the opponents that Miss Su faced were formidable, but Miss Nian's opponent was much weaker by comparison. Sir, could this have been just a coincidence?"

Duanmu Chen's eyes glinted as he straightened his back, "This year's Military Exam selection has been overseen by the Crown Prince. Even if we smell a rat, I can't get involved. The competition is open to the public throughout. It is normal to have many weaklings on the first day. As the competition progresses, it will be clear who is truly talented!"

"To be honest, sir, I am eagerly waiting for Miss Su and Miss Nian to compete against each other," Chang'an said.

Duanmu Chen laughed coldly, "So am I."

Nian Mansion.

During the still of the night, Nian Ruxue lay in bed with her eyes wide open.

A shadow approached hers quietly when she suddenly sat up and whispered,

"Why are you so late?"

The shadow sat beside the bed, and said, "Fourth sister."

Nian Ruxue sighed lightly, embraced the shadow, and said, "Fifth sister, I didn't blame you. When didn't show up at the agreed time, I was worried that something had happened to you."

"When do you need me to step in, Fourth sister?" The shadow asked.

After pondering for a moment, Nian Ruxue said, "Today, I have dispelled some people's doubts. From now on, just hide in my room.

With a little disguise, even if the mask falls off, no one will discover."

"Good," the shadow replied. "Just remember what you promised me, Fourth sister."

"Rest assured," Nian Ruxue softly stroked the shadow's hair. "The engagement with Gu Ling was a misunderstanding by her mother, who thought it was me who saved her. I wanted to clarify, but then, you ran into an accident. Guts mother died and their family suffered greatly. You have been wronged a lot, and I always felt guilty about it."

"All that is in the past; now, all I want is to find him." The shadow muttered.

"You know, Second brother knows him the best. Earlier this year, Second brother went to the north on a mission and they met secretly," Nian Ruxue said softly. "I know where he is. Using you, Fifth sister, is my last resort. There are always people trying to manipulate my marriage. Now, I'm being framed and forced to marry that lecherous Second Prince. If I don't become the Martial Arts

Champion, I'll never be able to turn the tables.”

“Don't worry, Fourth sister. After my accident, you're the only one who didn't forget me, and you were the kindest to me. I'll help you.” The shadow promised. “After this, you tell me where Gu Ling is, I'll find him, and never come back.”

Nian Ruxue nodded seriously, “Deal..”

Chapter 136: Beating Dogs Stick

On the second day of the Military Exam.

After yesterday's elimination, only a little over a hundred people were left.

Today was still divided into two rounds. Su Liang's order was quite early, and she already knew who her opponent would be.

As a result, Su Liang and Ning Jing didn't bring all eighteen types of weapons in the carriage with them. She just chose the long knife she wanted to use and went.

However, Su Liang's third opponent was not as strong as the previous two, so the result was without suspense.

This situation was not unusual. During the elimination stage, whether or not one could advance depended greatly on the grouping.

After the competition, Su Liang went straight home and did not meet Nian Ruxue.

Today, after Nian Ruxue dressed as a man and wore a mask again, everyone was used to it and didn't find it strange.

In the afternoon, the fourth and final elimination round selected thirty people to enter the following ranking competition.

This time, Su Liang met a tough opponent.

It was Luo Rong, a young swordsman who had become famous in the jianghu over the past two years.

In the first three rounds, Luo Rong had defeated his opponents with just one move, earning him the nickname “One Slash Luo Rong”. He was one of the most eye-catching martial artists besides the two women in the Military Exam.

Today, the size of each battlefield had increased a lot compared to yesterday, and it was not as chaotic. There were even more spectators.

Wan Hui gave Zhengzheng some water so that his throat wouldn't be dry when he cheered for Su Liang later.

After quietly switching positions with Qin Yujin without being noticed by Lin Xueqing, Xing Yusheng looked down at the delicate hand holding his arm and smiled faintly, “Su Liang will definitely be able to do it.”

When Lin Xueqing heard Xing Yusheng's voice, she turned her head and saw that she had grabbed the wrong person, her face flushed, and she quickly let him go.

Xing Yusheng thought to himself, he wished his second uncle would hurry back so that he could marry his young wife.

Just as the Order Officer was about to announce the start of the martial arts competition, a guard in full armor and a waist sword walked up, "His Highness the Crown Prince has ordered that from now on, all martial arts competitions involving Miss Nian and Miss Su must be held on the Combat Stage!"

There was only one Combat Stage in the center of the square, which was originally for tomorrow's ranking competition.

Qin Yujin guessed, perhaps the emperor and the crown prince had learned of the two highly skilled women in this year's Military Exam and wanted to promote them.

After all, the female general who had once mocked Qian Country's women as knowing only embroidery came from Yin Country, which was now pressing its army at the southern border.

For many years, conflicts have continued between the two countries on the border. Nanping Prince colluded with Yin Country, and the smuggled iron ore also went to Yin Country. The current situation remains unclear as the stalemate continues.

All along, Qian Country has encouraged women to participate in the Military Exam to take back the pride that was once lost.

As a result, in this selection of the Military Exam, both Su Liang and Nian Ruxue received some preferential treatment, and the officials in charge were very polite towards them.

Following the Crown Prince's command, Su Liang's martial arts competition was moved to the high Combat Stage.

Someone struck four drums around the Combat Stage, and soon, most of the spectators on the square gathered around.

Lin Xueqing sighed, "So many people. I would be trembling with fear just standing up there."

Seeing Su Liang empty-handed, the Order Officer asked loudly, "The competition is about to begin, will Miss Su not use any weapons for this round?"

"Yes." At Su Liang's words, she bent down and pulled out two sharp knives from the outside of her calves, took a few steps, and adopted a fighting posture.

Qin Yujin's eyes sparkled, "Sister Liang is so beautiful and cool!"

By that time, some opportunists had already opened a betting pool on who would win this round, and many placed their bets.

Betting had been going on since the start of the Military Exam, and no one cared.

There were people betting on Su Liang's victory, but even more were betting on Luo Rong's victory.

In the previous three rounds, Su Liang's strength did not seem particularly strong, and she gained the most attention only because she was a woman.

Meanwhile, Luo Rong's performance in the first three rounds was very impressive.

Xing Yusheng instructed Qi Yan to place a bet of 1,000 taels for Su Liang to win.

Seeing Lin Xueqing seemed interested, Xing Yusheng smiled, "500 taels are yours. I'll lend it to you, and you can return it to me when you win."

Lin Xueqing quickly shook her head, "No need."

"It's settled then." Xing Yusheng knew that Lin Xueqing didn't really want to win money; she just found it fun. Of course, watching others bet was different from betting one's own money.

The competition began.

With fierce moves and great speed, Luo Rong launched an sword attack on Su Liang!

Su Liang stood still, as if motionless.

"Sister Su!" Lin Xueqing saw Luo Rong's sword approaching Su Liang.

With a spin, Su Liang precisely dodged Luo Rong's attack and, with a counterattack, stabbed through Luo Rong's sleeve from a tricky angle!

"Wow!" Lin Xueqing exclaimed, "Strike when the enemy least expects it. Sister Su taught me that! If she attacked early, Luo Rong would've seen through it. She had to choose the perfect timing!"

Hearing Lin Xueqing's analysis, Xing Yusheng was somewhat surprised,

"Xueqing, you know a lot."

Unable to listen any longer, Qin Yujin said, "Focus on the competition." In a blink of an eye, Su Liang and Luo Rong had fought several rounds.

Those who had confidently bet on Luo Rong to win began to have doubts.

It seemed that Su Liang's moves were restrained and not as intimidating as Luo Rong's, but no matter what moves Luo Rong used, Su Liang could always narrowly dodge them. However, Luo Rong couldn't avoid Su Liang's blade every time.

"We're going to lose." A martial artist who bet on Luo Rong to win let out a long sigh.

"I really misjudged her. I didn't expect this young girl to be so powerful." said the elder with regret.

He was Luo Rong's master and accompanied him to the Military Exam to seek a good future. He originally thought that there would be no problem in entering the ranking competition, even considering breaking into the top three. But he didn't expect to meet such a strong opponent in the elimination match.

Such bad luck.

By the time Su Liang's blade was pressed against Luo Rong's neck, and he was forced to the edge of the Combat Stage, the fight was over.

Luo Rong's face was unsightly as he shouted, "I admit defeat!"

Su Liang withdrew her blade, and the Order Officer announced the result of the contest.

Cheers erupted, but some were depressed due to losing money.

Luo Rong stepped down from the Combat Stage and left with his master.

Su Liang watched his retreating figure, deep in thought.

Duanmu Chen stayed home today, but his subordinates continuously reported the latest developments in the Military Exam, particularly focusing on Su Liang and Nian Ruxue.

When Chang'an came to report again, he said that he had met Su Liang and brought back her message, "Miss Su has a suggestion for Master."

Duanmu Chen raised his eyebrow, "Oh?"

"Miss Su suggests adding a Challenge Contest after the ranking competition. At that time, if any eliminated martial artists have objections, they can have one chance to challenge anyone they choose. If they succeed, they can take their place. It would be more fair this way." Chang'an said seriously.

Duanmu Chen's eyes slightly narrowed.

Chang'an continued, "I also think so. Miss Su's opponents in these four rounds have been quite strong, at least two of them could have originally entered the top thirty. Especially today's Luo Rong; his swordsmanship is very impressive, but unfortunately, he had bad luck and met Miss Su so early on."

Duanmu Chen was deep in thought, "Father may or may not be aware of the problems that exist in the rules that have been passed down for so many years. Those eliminated commoners due to bad luck are not what the emperor cares about. What really matters and would be remembered are the top three."

Chang'an furrowed his brow, "But as long as they enter the top thirty, they would all have official titles. This opportunity is very important for them." Duanmu Chen chuckled, "Indeed. In that case, I'll go to the palace to see Father and discuss this matter."

As he said, the higher-ups do not necessarily know about this issue; they just don't care about it.

You first need to have a high enough status to have the opportunity to express opinions and make suggestions.

As this was a right thing to do, Duanmu Chen didn't need to worry about being blamed; on the contrary, he could seize this opportunity to express himself.

Su Liang didn't leave after her match, as she heard the Order Officer say that Nian Ruxue's contest would start soon and she wanted to watch it.

Qi Yan said that Nian Ruxue's opponent was quite strong this time.

Right before the contest started, Nian Ruxue appeared, still dressed as a man and wearing a mask, with a maid following her.

“We’ll know if she really has some skills after this match,” Xing Yusheng whispered.

“I always feel that if her Martial Arts were really formidable, she wouldn’t have hidden it so deeply before,” Qin Yujin, who had known Nian Ruxue for many years, felt something was amiss.

The competition began, and Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing didn’t hear Qin Yujin’s words, as they were focused on the Combat Stage.

From Su Liang’s position, she could only see Nian Ruxue’s back.

Both used long swords. Su Liang found this match quite exciting, disregarding her opinion of Nian Ruxue and judging it solely by the contest itself.

There were two types of swordsmanship: one that was domineering and powerful, and the other that was elegant and sharp.

The latter described Nian Ruxue.

Su Liang was surprised; she had underestimated Nian Ruxue.

As the cheers resounded, the contest ended with a stunning victory for Nian Ruxue.

Amidst the continuous praise, Nian Ruxue left the Combat Stage with her maid and went away.

Lin Xueqing frowned, “She is indeed quite formidable.”

Su Liang and the others also walked toward the outside of the square.

She asked Ning Jing, “What do you think of Nian Ruxue’s martial arts?” Ning Jing’s expression was indifferent, “Not so much.”

“Her swordsmanship is very pleasing to the eye,” Su Liang commented. Ning Jing shook his head, “Too many flashy moves, don’t learn them.”

“If we encounter each other later, what weapon do you think would be most suitable for me to use?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing replied with three words, “Dog Beating Stick..”

Chapter 137:137. Duanmu Che also came

Su Liang couldn’t tell if Ning Jing’s words were insulting or not.

Because she did have a long stick as a weapon, which Ning Jing made by hand.

At that time, she casually named it, saying “Let’s call it Dog Beating Stick.”

Using stick techniques to deal with Nian Ruxue’s swordsmanship, Su Liang thought about it and found it quite interesting, so she accepted Ning Jing’s suggestion, “Alright, I’ll use the stick when I fight Nian Ruxue.”

Within two days, after four rounds of one-on-one elimination matches, thirty-six people were selected.

The ranking matches followed, where the top thirty could attain the title of Martial Arts Scholar, and the last six would be eliminated.

According to the rules of previous years, those who had been eliminated in these two days would have to wait another three years to participate in the Military Exam. If they were over the age of thirty-five by then, they would have no more chances.

In the restaurants and inns, there were quite a few who thought it was bad luck that led to their early elimination. Among them were those who had practiced martial arts diligently for many years, traveled thousands of miles to the capital city, and were strong but did not gain anything.

The burly man that Su Liang encountered in the first round and Luo Rong whom she encountered in the fourth round were such cases.

But no matter how upset or unwilling they were, the rules were there, and the results were set.

Just as quite a few of the eliminated martial artists were planning to leave the capital city, sudden news spread:

The emperor decreed that after the end of the ranking matches, a Challenge Contest would be added, giving all the eliminated participants a chance to challenge the winners of the Military Exam. If they succeeded, they could replace the original winner.

If multiple people challenged the same martial artist, they would be grouped together and compete to find the strongest challenger, who would then have the only chance to challenge their target.

Luo Rong's master was overjoyed, "That's great! With your strength, as long as you choose your opponent well this time, you should at least be able to achieve the title of Martial Arts Scholar!"

With his spirits lifted, Luo Rong, who had been disheartened, put down his luggage and decided to seize this last opportunity.

The entire capital city was buzzing with discussions about this unexpected news.

For those martial artists who were genuinely skilled but had poor luck, it was good news indeed.

However, for some martial artists who had managed to enter the ranking matches by luck, they couldn't help but feel a sense of crisis.

The title of Martial Arts Scholar that originally only needed another six eliminations was now uncertain.

As Su Liang finished making dinner, Chang'an arrived, informing her that Duanmu Chen had already persuaded the emperor to adopt her proposal, and the rules of the Challenge Contest had been announced to the public.

"Thank you, Your Highness, for speaking up for fairness," Su Liang said with a smile.

Chang'an's mouth twitched slightly.

Before coming, Duanmu Chen had instructed that if Su Liang thanked him, he should take the opportunity to ask for some good food.

But Su Liang did not thank Duanmu Chen for helping her, instead elevating him to a noble and righteous level. It sounded very reasonable but also made it clear that this wasn't Duanmu Chen helping her.

It was just a suggestion, and it was up to Duanmu Chen whether to mention it or not. He had the right to choose. His actions showed that it was beneficial to him rather than for Su Liang or the civilian martial artists.

This point, Su Liang was very clear about.

Since Chang'an had come all this way and even smelled the aroma of the food, he couldn't return empty-handed, so he chuckled, "What delicious food has

Miss Su made? It smells so good."

Su Liang instantly understood Chang'an's hint.

Out of gratitude for Duanmu Chen's good deed, she generously let Chang'an take one of the meat buns she had made back with him.

Not long after, Duanmu Chen, who tasted the delicious meat bun, expressed that his overall cooperation with Su Liang was very pleasant.

After finishing the meat bun, Duanmu Chen mentioned Nian Ruxue.

"It's strange that if she's really that good, with her personality, how could she possibly hide her strength without showing off?" Duanmu Chen had some understanding of Nian Ruxue.

She was once Gu Ling's fiancée, rumored to marry into the Crown Prince's Residence as an Imperial Concubine, but later seduced the emperor and was now granted marriage to the Second Prince.

Just from these events alone, she could be determined as absolutely not simple.

After thinking for a moment, Chang'an said, "She has never encountered any troubles, so she can't just blatantly show off her martial arts skills for no reason, right? If she practices martial arts in secret and wants to shine during times like this, it would make sense. Hasn't Master said before, the more capable one is, the more they should hide it? Being seen through by others is both foolish and dangerous."

Duanmu Chen scoffed, "That was my evaluation of Su Liang. If Nian Ruxue were as strong as Su Liang, she wouldn't have been granted marriage to

Duanmu Ao."

"This subordinate was wondering, if Miss Nian Ruxue were to become the Martial Arts Champion this time, or even just place in the top three, would her marriage arrangement with the Second Prince change?" Chang'an asked.

Duanmu Chen's eyes sparkled with wisdom, "As long as they are not married, anything is possible. If she is truly that capable, Father will certainly look at her differently."

“This subordinate still believes that Miss Su Liang has a greater chance of coming out on top.” Chang’an said.

Duanmu Chen sneered, “Nian Ruxue encountering Su Liang this time is not a good thing for her. As long as she loses to Su Liang, even if one gets the top spot and the other the second, she will still be overshadowed.”

Nian Mansion.

It was late at night, and all was quiet.

Nian Ruxue and the fifth miss of the Nian family, Nian Ruting, lay side by side on the bed, leaning on each other and whispering softly.

“In the future, you and Gu Ling can find a paradise and live the life you want.” Nian Ruxue said softly.

Qin Yujin had once mentioned Nian Ruting to Su Liang.

As the fifth daughter of the Nian family, her beauty surpassed Nian Ruxue by a great extent. But three years ago, she had an accident falling off a horse, injuring her leg and disfiguring her face. She was sent to the countryside for treatment, and it seemed as if the Nian family had forgotten about her.

Now, Nian Ruting’s leg had fully recovered, and her facial scars had disappeared. Her eyes were quite similar to Nian Ruxue’s but even more delicate, her skin like congealed cream.

“That’s something I’ve always dreamed of.” Nian Ruting’s eyes sparkled with emotion. “After helping Fourth sister in the Martial Arts competition, I’ll go find him. Do you think he’ll really accept me, Fourth sister?”

“As long as he knows you saved his mother back then and that you’re the one who should have been engaged to him, he will accept you. My second brother said that he values promises above all else,” Nian Ruxue said.

“Mhm. Does Fourth sister have someone she likes?” Nian Ruting asked.

Nian Ruxue sighed, “I have no control over my life, so I can only keep my heart and seek a good future, contributing to the Nian family. Sometimes I envy Fifth sister, although she had troubles back then, she was lucky enough to be taken as a disciple by a master and has learned great skills. Not like me...”

“Fourth sister, don’t belittle yourself. In my heart, you’re always the most beautiful and best,” Nian Ruting said with a serious expression.

Nian Ruxue embraced her and sighed deeply. “Since I can’t be free, you have to live freely and joyfully on my behalf.”

“Mhm!” Nian Ruting nodded heavily.

But Nian Ruxue’s eyes flashed with a hint of jealous light that disappeared quickly.

Su Liang was experimenting with a new poison based on the toxic scriptures given to her by Xing Yusheng. She didn't look up when she heard a knock on the door and said one word: "Come in."

Ning Jing had just taken a bath, her half-dried hair hanging down her back, and entered the room.

Su Liang glanced over and said, "You never took off your human skin mask? Or did you put it back on immediately after washing your face? Won't it get dirty? How do you maintain it?"

Ning Jing sat down across from her, her expression faint: "I did wash my face."

Su Liang nodded, "I understand, washing two faces at once. It would be interesting if you could take off the mask now and show me."

Ning Jing shook her head, "I can't."

"You're the boss, do as you please." Su Liang showed she was curious about the other person's real appearance but could live without it. "Did you come to me for anything?"

"I want to finish listening to Romance of the Three Kingdoms," Ning Jing said.

"I'm not free tonight." Su Liang's poison experiment, which she had been working on all night, had failed and turned into a black lump...

Su Liang looked disappointed and had to temporarily give up. "As fate wills it, let's continue the story then."

"A walk outside under the moon?" Ning Jing suggested.

Su Liang got up, grabbed her cloak and said, "Let's go."

Su Liang told her story as they walked through the garden, out the back door, and wandered the quiet streets of the capital in the middle of the night.

The moon was bright, and the two shadows stretched, collided, and separated, adding a touch of silent spirituality to the moonlight.

By the time Su Liang yawned for the third time, Ning Jing said they would stop for today and continue the story next time.

The two returned home after the third watch of the night.

Su Liang went to bed immediately, thinking that if she didn't perform well in tomorrow's martial arts competition, it would be Ning Jing's fault.

The third day of the Military Exam.

As expected, their friends came, and Lin Xueqing noticed Su Liang yawning, asking if she had stayed up too late reading the night before.

"It was more like storytelling too late," Su Liang said.

Lin Xueqing was surprised. "Su sister, you can tell stories? Who were you telling stories to so late at night?"

"Who else could it be?" Qin Yujin laughed lightly, glancing at Ning Jing.

“Wow! Brother Ning, you actually kept sister Su awake to tell you stories?” Lin Xueqing glared at Ning Jing. “If sister Su loses today’s martial arts competition, it’s your fault!”

Su Liang nodded, “That’s what I think too.”

Ning Jing looked calm, “She won’t lose.”

The group arrived at the Battle Arena, where it was already packed with people.

Before the ranking matches began, they heard someone shouting, “The Crown Prince has arrived! The Second Prince, Fourth Prince, Fifth Prince, and Sixth Princess have arrived!”

Su Liang’s eyes lit up. “Duanmu Chen also came! If he sees me competing, he’ll finally meet me, right?”

Ning Jing’s brow furrowed slightly. “Su Liang.” “Hm?” Su Liang was puzzled. “What’s wrong?” Ning Jing glanced at Su Liang and shook her head. “Nothing..”

Chapter 138:138. How could it be her?

As for Duanmu Ao’s undisguised hostility, Su Liang was calm.

In broad daylight, what could he do to her?

Su Liang glanced to her side and caught Xiao Muyun’s eye. His face lit up, and he started to come over.

Su Liang: ...I hope he doesn’t make a scene in public, how annoying!

The next moment, a familiar figure appeared next to Xiao Muyun and said something to him.

Xiao Muyun frowned and turned away.

Su Liang looked back and saw Duanmu Chen smiling faintly. His gaze swept past her as he followed the crown prince and the second prince towards the viewing seats beside the Combat Stage, reserved for the royal family and nobles.

The one who had timely sent Xiao Muyun away was Chang’an.

Su Liang knew that Duanmu Chen must not want her to be entangled by Xiao Muyun again, so he had stepped in to help.

The princes and princesses were already seated in the viewing platform.

The young man in the middle, who bore a resemblance to Duanmu Ao but was a bit thinner, was the Crown Prince of Qian Country, Duanmu Cheng.

Su Liang recognized the second and fourth princes, so the other man sitting in a wheelchair must be the fifth prince, Duanmu Che, whom Su Liang wanted to meet.

Duanmu Che’s appearance was the most outstanding among them, but he looked pale and weak, with a very poor physical condition, reminding Su Liang of Xing Yusheng when they first met.

Sixth Princess Duanmu Qianqian was dressed gorgeously, with delicate makeup and porcelain-white skin, exuding an air of aristocracy.

“Fourth brother, you suggested changing the rules of the Military Exam to Father Emperor yesterday. I should thank you for that.” Duanmu Cheng looked at Duanmu Chen sitting on his right with a smile that did not quite reach his eyes.

Duanmu Chen’s expression remained unchanged, “Crown Prince, you are too kind. I just want to select talents for Qian Country, and I dare not take credit.”

Duanmu Cheng naturally felt displeased because Duanmu Chen had gone directly to the emperor to make a suggestion, bypassing him who was in charge of this Military Exam.

Moreover, whether it was on the surface or secretly, Duanmu Chen, who had made remarkable achievements in recent years and repeatedly gained important positions, was Duanmu Cheng’s biggest competitor.

Although Duanmu Cheng had the rightful status of the first legitimate son, his father had not been the first legitimate son either but had eventually ascended the throne.

Therefore, Duanmu Chen definitely had a chance.

Especially after breaking the iron mine smuggling case, he had won the emperor’s favor. In the eyes of Qian Country’s officials and common people, he had become the most talented prince among them.

Hearing Duanmu Chen’s words, Duanmu Cheng’s smile faded even more,

“Father Emperor is very busy with state affairs. Since he entrusted the Military

Exam to me, if you have any ideas, Fourth brother, just come to me directly.” These words were meant to be unfriendly, and Duanmu Chen knew it very well. Still, his expression did not change; he just smiled and said, next time for sure.

Duanmu Ao was more blunt, “Old fourth, mind your own business, and don’t overreach!”

Duanmu Chen frowned, “Thank you for the warning, Second Royal brother. I will keep that in mind. How is your health, by the way? Miss Nian Ruxue has been performing brilliantly in the Military Exam. I must congratulate you first.”

Duanmu Ao’s face darkened at this, “I’m fine! You don’t need to worry about me!”

Seeing this, Duanmu Chen realized that he had struck a nerve with Duanmu Ao, who was embarrassed and angry. He must have been quite ruthless with Su Liang!

Duanmu Chen secretly rejoiced in his heart, yet his face remained unchanged, taking the initiative to apologize, “It’s my fault for being nosy, Second Royal brother, please calm down.”

However, Duanmu Cheng asked Duanmu Ao, “Second brother, do you not like Miss Nian Ruxue?”

Duanmu Chen narrowed his eyes, trying not to laugh. He almost forgot that Nian Ruxue was originally a concubine Duanmu Cheng wanted to marry. After several twists and turns, she was granted to Duanmu Ao.

It shouldn't have been a big deal, but when Nian Ruxue amazed everyone in the Military Exam and displayed her talents, how could Duanmu Cheng feel happy about it?

Duanmu Ao was in a bad mood and did not notice Duanmu Cheng's unhappiness. He snorted and said, "Father Emperor granted us to get married, so how can I not like her?"

His demeanor suggested that he didn't want to do it, but he had no choice.

Sixth Princess Duanmu Qianqian noticed the tense atmosphere and quickly smiled, "Crown Prince, isn't it time to start the Martial Arts competition?"

Duanmu Chen discreetly glanced at Duanmu Che, who was sitting beside him, as quiet as a statue, then shifted his gaze back.

There had been a few clashes amongst the princes, but when the people outside the viewing platform saw them, they appeared to be smiling and chatting casually, with an air of harmony.

Duanmu Cheng motioned, "Let's begin."

All thirty-six advancing martial artists stepped onto the Combat Stage, where they drew lots to determine their groups and order.

The dark-coloured attire Su Liang wore today had been specially made for her by the Yang Family's embroiderer in the capital city. It fit her like a glove and was low-key but exquisite.

Duanmu Cheng's gaze fell on Su Liang, and he asked Duanmu Chen, "Is that Miss Su Liang?"

Duanmu Chen blanked for a moment as if he'd just understood, then searched the Combat Stage with his eyes for a while before nodding, "There are only two women; since I don't see Miss Nian Si, this must be Miss Su. She's wearing black so I almost didn't notice her."

He acted as though he was seeing Su Liang for the first time today.

Duanmu Cheng chuckled, "I heard that Miss Su had been living at her old home in Bei'an County since she left the capital two years ago. I remember that Fourth Brother went to Bei'an County for an investigation several years back and even became sworn siblings with the previously estranged Seventh Prince of the Ning Family from Xunyang. Now Ning Jing has become the head of the Nian Family. I thought you two would have known each other already."

Upon hearing this, Duanmu Chen knew that Duanmu Cheng had been keeping tabs on him, but he kept a straight face, "Due to the Imperial examination, I did meet Ning Jing in Bei'an County but never got to meet his sworn sister."

"Is that so?" Duanmu Cheng clearly didn't believe Duanmu Chen's words.

However, Duanmu Chen wouldn't admit it. If Ning Jing and Su Liang both excel in the Civil and Military Exams, and people perceive them as being aligned with him, it wouldn't be a good thing for him.

To cooperate in secret, one must distance oneself publicly – that was a tactic for concealing one's true strength.

“Wasn’t it Miss Su’s grandfather who caused the death of the former Second Imperial Concubine? That matter...” Duanmu Qianqian seemed to suddenly remember this and hesitated to go on.

Duanmu Cheng sighed, “Sins have their origin, debts have their debtor. That matter has no direct connection with Miss Su.”

Duanmu Qianqian smiled, “Crown Prince and Second Prince have such broad minds, otherwise, she wouldn’t have the chance to participate in the Military

Exam.”

Duanmu Chen knew that Duanmu Qianqian’s words were not spoken without ulterior motives. She had feelings for Nian Jincheng and had always been on very good terms with Nian Ruxue, so she naturally didn’t like Su Liang stealing Nian Ruxue’s limelight.

“Why hasn’t Xuexue arrived yet? I hope that nothing goes wrong, as she is this competition’s most focused on.” Duanmu Qianqian was worried that she couldn’t see Nian Ruxue.

As soon as her words fell, Nian Ruxue arrived right on schedule.

Duanmu Chen secretly observed Duanmu Cheng and Duanmu Ao’s reactions one was resentful, the other smug, although neither showed it clearly.

Fascinating... Duanmu Chen secretly made up his mind to ensure Nian Ruxue marries Duanmu Ao and not allow any complications to arise.

With everyone now present, the draw began.

The ranking competition was a points-based system.

It would have a total of ten rounds.

Each round would be a one-on-one pairing determined by drawing lots, with the winner receiving one point and the loser receiving zero.

If two people who had previously fought and obtained a result were drawn into a group again, the previous loser could choose to fight again or concede directly.

After ten rounds, the bottom six scorers would be eliminated, with the top thirty receiving the title of martial artist scholar.

The top ten would enter the final round to compete for the top three spots.

Then a newly added Challenge Contest would reduce the luck factor of drawing lots for the groupings during the martial exam, ensuring fairness.

Thirty-six people, each round consisting of eighteen matches.

Just as the lot draw was about to begin, Duanmu Cheng suddenly spoke up,

“Give the number one lot to Miss Su Liang.”

Suddenly being called out, Su Liang felt speechless, as if these people had come to watch her perform. Just because she was a woman, she had to start the first round.

However, it was just the order that was arranged at the forefront, and other aspects did not affect much.

Su Liang took one of the two number one signs, and the one who drew the other number one sign was her opponent.

After the draw, the groups were formed, and Su Liang's opponent was a pale and thin young man.

She had heard Qi Yan mention this person before. He was the grandson of the old Imperial Physician from Duke Qin's mansion that they had met before, named Gao Jiabao. Because he was born weak and sickly, a martial arts master was specifically hired for him. Although his foundation was poor, his comprehension was excellent, and he was also an opponent that Su Liang needed to be aware of in this military exam.

Nian Ruxue was in the tenth round.

Since Su Liang didn't have a weapon with her, Ning Jing spoke a word to Xing Yusheng after identifying the opponent.

Soon, Qi Yan ran off and fetched a pair of maces for Su Liang from Ning Jing and Su Liang's carriage.

Normally, martial artists were best at a single type of weapon and wouldn't easily change to others.

The slender Su Liang held a pair of maces in her hands as she stood on the combat stage, which appeared quite disharmonious at first glance.

Gao Jiabao's weapon was a long whip.

The contest was about to begin.

Duanmu Chen looked at Duanmu Che and asked with a seemingly casual smile, as if to avoid neglecting him, "Which one does Fifth Brother think will win this match?"

Duanmu Che stared at the figure in ink-colored clothes on the combat stage, his thin lips slightly parted, and countered, "What does Fourth Brother think?" Duanmu Chen smiled, "I hope Miss Su will win."

Duanmu Che's voice was devoid of any fluctuations, "That depends on whether she really has the ability."

Because of his fair skin, his short stature, and the fact that he used a whip as his weapon, Gao Jiabao had been laughed at by some self-proclaimed macho men.

However, when his long whip started to sway in the wind, no one would treat him as a weak and powerless sickly youth anymore.

The contest began, and Su Liang and Gao Jiabao quickly engaged in battle.

As both weapons used in this match were unusual and the differences between them were significant, the audience found it quite interesting.

In previous matches, no matter what weapon Gao Jiabao's opponent used, they would eventually have their weapon snatched away by his whip, which was also his signature move.

But Su Liang held a weapon in each hand, so Gao Jiabao could only target one.

After several probes, the mace in Su Liang's right hand was entangled by the whip.

Gao Jiabao tugged forcefully, but Su Liang did not struggle or give up her weapon. Instead, she let herself be drawn closer to Gao Jiabao!

With a change of expression, Gao Jiabao wanted to retract his whip, but Su Liang was already close. She turned the tables by using the mace to tighten the entanglement even more.

If he wanted to avoid it, he had to give up the whip.

Gao Jiabao wasn't willing to let go and got hit by Su Liang. The two were then pulled together by their entangled weapons to engage in close-quarters combat.

Gao Jiabao's adaptability was excellent. Although he was in a passive position, he could still dodge Su Liang's attacks and constantly tried to separate the weapons. Otherwise, he could only defend and hardly attack Su Liang.

"Don't judge people by their appearance; the old Imperial Physician's grandson is quite powerful." said Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Che stared at Su Liang, his lips tightly pressed together, without uttering a word.

Ning Jing's gaze swept over Duanmu Che's face, he pinched Zhengzheng's little face and whispered something into his ear.

Among the crowd watching the fight silently, a child's innocent and crisp voice suddenly rang out, "Aunt, I'm hungry!"

Hearing this, Su Liang no longer clung to the fight and suddenly dropped the mace in her right hand, and Gao Jiabao retreated two steps unprepared due to inertia.

Su Liang's eyes calmed down, and she increased her offensive, pushing relentlessly!

With his whip yet to be unfolded, Gao Jiabao retreated continuously, unable to counter Su Liang's attacks at all.

In the end, he reached the boundary of the Combat Stage, and just as his whip was finally ready to be used, Su Liang's mace was heavily smashing towards his brow!

Duanmu Cheng sat up straight as many in the audience held their breath!

But Su Liang wasn't using the wooden maces Ning Jing made for her. Instead, she used the ones cast from black iron that he had someone else make later. If this hit landed, it would cause either death or severe injury.

Just before hitting Gao Jiabao's head, Su Liang stopped her hand, asking calmly, "Will you admit defeat?"

Gao Jiabao nodded, "I admit defeat."

Su Liang withdrew her hand, turned around and picked up the other mace.

“First round, first match, Su Liang wins, scoring one point!” the Order Officer shouted loudly.

Gao Jiabao breathed a long sigh of relief, wound his whip around his arm, and stepped down from the Combat Stage.

After years of practicing martial arts, this was his first time encountering an opponent who dual-wielded weapons. He was almost entirely suppressed by Su Liang during the entire fight, which made him deeply realize the weakness of the weapon he relied on the most.

Duanmu Qianqian smiled and said, “Miss Su Liang is really awesome! However, isn’t it a bit unfair for her to use two weapons against martial artists who are only using one? I don’t get it, what do you think, brother Crown Prince?” Duanmu Cheng looked at Duanmu Chen, “What does Fourth brother think?”

Duanmu Chen smiled, turned to Duanmu Che and asked, “What does Fifth brother think?”

Duanmu Che watched Su Liang walk down the Combat Stage. He naturally handed the pair of maces to a young noble with an outstanding appearance and cold temperament. Then, he picked up a cute little child next to him, and gently patted his head with a smile...

“Fifth brother?” Duanmu Chen called again.

Duanmu Che looked back, his expression indifferent, “If Sixth sister feels it’s unfair, she can ask the Crown Prince to require every martial artist to use dual-wielded weapons from now on. It would be more interesting that way.”

Duanmu Chen coughed lightly, “Not everyone can use dual-wielded weapons, and having more weapons doesn’t necessarily mean being more powerful. Fifth brother, don’t tease Sixth sister. If we truly required everyone to use two weapons, many martial artists would be unsure of how to attack.”

“Fourth and Fifth brothers, you can just say it directly. Why mock me? I already said I don’t understand.” Duanmu Qianqian pouted, still smiling, “So it seems you all think Su Liang is the most formidable? She can dual-wield weapons and even uses different weapons in every match.”

“It’s too early to tell after just one match,” Duanmu Chen shook his head, “I’m most looking forward to seeing Lady Nian in action; it’s bound to be exciting.”

Duanmu Che looked at the elderly servant standing nearby, “Crown Prince, I’m tired. Can we go back?”

Duanmu Cheng nodded, “Alright. Fifth brother, go back and rest quickly. Take good care of your health; Father Emperor is most concerned about you.”

Duanmu Chen knew that Duanmu Cheng’s last sentence was deliberately said for his ears...

The old servant came forward and led Duanmu Che away from the Viewing Platform.

The second match was about to begin, and Su Liang planned to watch for a while longer.

Zhengzheng wasn't actually hungry, but Ning Jing had asked him to remind Su Liang to speed up the fight and hurry down.

When Su Liang looked back at the Viewing Platform, Duanmu Che was nowhere to be seen, but she didn't pay it any mind. She planned to investigate the matter after the Martial Arts Exam ended.

As Duanmu Che got into the carriage, he asked the old servant driving the carriage, "Did you know about her participating in the Martial Arts Exam from the beginning?"

"Yes. Only two women participated, so it would be hard not to know. But since Master had mentioned that he didn't want to hear that name again, I never brought it up," the old servant sighed.

After a long silence, Duanmu Che spoke again, muttering to himself, "How could she be that foolish girl who lost all her family members yet still thought of Xiao Muyun..."

Chapter 139:139. Why do we have to wait

The second round of the competition began, and Su Liang watched very carefully. Every martial artist that would come next could be her potential opponent.

After Duanmu Che left, there were still people on the viewing platform watching Su Liang.

Duanmu Cheng laughed and said, "I just saw Crown Prince Marquis Zhong Xin.

Why not invite him to sit with us?"

Duanmu Chen knew Duanmu Cheng was not kind-hearted upon hearing this.

Although the seats on the viewing platform were not exclusively for the Royal Family, it would be fine for Xing Yu Sheng to sit any other time. But right now, only princes and princesses were present. If Xing Yu Sheng sat side by side with them, what would that mean?

This made Duanmu Chen aware that in the past, the Xing Family of Bei Jingwang Mansion had become the only collateral heirs of a different surname preserved in the iron mine smuggling case, and some people might think that he had warned the Xing Family or secretly formed an alliance.

After all, Duanmu Chen was the first to know the truth of the iron mine smuggling case and understood it the most.

In fact, it's not entirely wrong to think this. Although Duanmu Chen had discerned the Emperor's intentions and decided to leak information to Su Liang, which in turn spared the Xing Family, he believed he was indebted to the Xing Family. So, if they were to take sides, the Xing family should help him.

At this moment, Duanmu Chen detected Duanmu Cheng's intention but did not speak.

He thought that as long as Xing Yu Sheng's mind wasn't muddled, he wouldn't sit here with them.

Who knew, just after Duanmu Cheng finished speaking, Duanmu Qianqian said with a full smile, "The crown prince came with Miss Qin from the Qin Family, and his fiancée, Miss Lin, also came."

It was then that Duanmu Chen noticed Lin Xueqing standing beside Xing Yu Sheng.

Lin Xueqing was hugging Su Liang's arm, leaning half of her body on Su Liang, and whispering something intimately.

Seeing this, Duanmu Chen still felt a little regretful in his heart, but he never really had genuine feelings for women, only calculating who would be most helpful to him if they were married.

"Forget about it then," Duanmu Cheng dispelled the thought of inviting Xing Yu Sheng to sit with them.

"Why not invite Xuexue to sit with us! She'll have to wait a long time too!"

Duanmu Qianqian suggested, "Soon, she'll be part of the Royal Family too."

It made sense.

Duanmu Ao immediately nodded, "Alright!"

Duanmu Cheng's expression was unchanged.

Duanmu Chen thought there would be a good show to watch...

Instead, the maid that Duanmu Qianqian had sent over didn't bring anyone back.

"Miss Nian said that her turn is not until later in the day. She plans to leave now, as the Old Lady Nian has a headache today and has requested the Imperial Physician. She is worried and intends to go back to see her. She will certainly apologize to Master for another meeting," the maid respectfully said.

At this moment, Nian Ruxue had already left.

Duanmu Qianqian was a little disappointed, "Well then. Xuexue is always the most filial, how could I blame her?"

Duanmu Chen casually mentioned, "Miss Nian drew her lot and watched Su Liang's first match before leaving. It seems she takes Su Liang as her opponent very seriously."

Upon hearing this, Nian Ruxue's so-called urgency to go home seemed somewhat unreasonable.

If she was so filial, why didn't she leave immediately after drawing her lot?

Even if she was paying attention to Su Liang and wanted to watch her match, by the time the second match was about to end, Nian Ruxue hadn't left after watching the first match.

Instead, she left when Duanmu Qianqian sent someone over to invite her.

Duanmu Ao's face darkened, feeling humiliated. It seemed as if Nian Ruxue was avoiding him. Was she still not willing to marry him after the wedding had been granted?

Duanmu Cheng thought the same and laughed, "Let's just forget about it."

After watching the second match, Su Liang thought that the strengths of the two martial artists were not as good as Gao Jiabao.

At present, in the ranking matches among the 36 martial artists, there must be some who made it in just because of good luck in the grouping.

Military exams were different from civil examinations.

The quality of writing had a fixed standard of evaluation and evaluators who had subjective preferences.

As for martial arts competitions, the strength or weakness could be seen at a glance, and even laymen could clearly see the outcome.

Su Liang heard a voice from not far away saying, "If these two make it into the top thirty, you should go challenge them. It's guaranteed to be no problem!"

She looked back and saw it was Luo Rong, who she had defeated yesterday, and an old man.

Luo Rong nodded slightly towards Su Liang, and Su Liang returned the gesture with a smile. They greeted each other before she turned her attention back to the next match.

Seeing the friendly interaction between the two, Luo Rong's master was a bit surprised. They came early and saw the match between Su Liang and Gao Jiabao. He couldn't help but exclaim, "This Miss Su is really amazing, even though she is said to have grown up in the capital, she seems to have the boldness of a Jianghu martial artist."

Approaching noon, more than half of today's first round of point-based ranking matches have been completed.

As princes and princesses were leaving, people dispersed, and the next competition would begin in an hour. Nian Ruxue would be participating in the first match.

Su Liang's group still went to Wan Family Restaurant to eat and rest.

After eating, Zhengzheng became sleepy and fell asleep in Ning Jing's arms.

With some time left, Lin Xueqing and Qin Yujin went shopping, with Xing Yusheng following along.

Wan Hui also wanted to go for a walk, so she grabbed onto Lu Yu's arm and left.

In the end, only two adults and a child remained in the private room, with the little one sleeping soundly.

"I'll continue telling the story for you." Su Liang thought that she should hurry up and finish the story so that she wouldn't be dragged out for a night stroll later.

Ning Jing gently patted Zhengzheng's back, "Okay."

There was a soft couch in the room, and Su Liang leaned on it while continuing to narrate the Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

As she spoke, her voice suddenly stopped. Ning Jing looked over and saw that she had fallen asleep with her eyes closed.

Ning Jing looked around the room, unable to find any blanket.

He carefully placed Zhengzheng next to Su Liang and took off his outer robe to cover them both.

He sat at the table and took out a book from his chest that he hadn't finished yet and resumed reading.

Fifth Prince's Mansion.

After Duanmu Che returned home, he ordered his subordinates to investigate

Su Liang. He learned that she had just returned to the capital from Bei'an County with Ning Jing when she "secretly met" Xiao Muyun at the Wan Family Restaurant.

It has also been discovered that she has a newfound sworn brother, who was kicked out and then returned to wipe out the entire Ning Family, becoming the head of the Ning Family, and who had already passed the preliminary Imperial examination and was about to participate in the main examination: Ning Jing.

Su Liang returned with Ning Jing to the capital and is now living in the same mansion with him.

At that time, Ning Jing took Crown Prince Bei Jingwang Xing Yusheng's token to participate in the Imperial examination in Bei'an County.

Now it has been found that Su Liang not only knows Xing Yusheng but has also treated his illness, as well as the illness of Old Master Qin. She is a guest of honor in Duke Qin's Mansion and has a close relationship with Lin Shuzhi's family.

Today, Duanmu Che witnessed Su Liang's martial arts competition, and Xing Yusheng, Qin Yujin, and Lin Xueqing all came to watch. Duanmu Che guessed that the person who took the double maces from Su Liang after the competition was Ning Jing.

All of this left him both amazed and puzzled, as the Su Liang he once knew seemed like a completely different person now.

"We found out that Miss Su seems to have lost her memory due to an injury," said one of Duanmu Che's subordinates.

Duanmu Che frowned, "Lost her memory? Then why did she come back to the capital?"

"Maybe someone told her that her family was gone, and she thought something was wrong, so she came back?" said the old man.

Duanmu Che snorted, "Are you speaking up for her?"

The old man sighed, "I just think that Miss Su is really different from before. Maybe we shouldn't hold such a strong bias against her anymore. Today, we saw her strength, and her medical skills are excellent. Maybe something special happened during that period of more than a year that she was away. Last time, the Old Imperial Physician suggested inviting her to treat the master. Why not ask her for help?"

Duanmu Che didn't respond, but asked another question, "Whose child was she holding today?"

"We checked it out. The people Miss Su is connected with include a Miss Wan Hui from the beer merchant family in Qingyang City. The child is Wan Hui's son who was originally married to a pottery merchant's family, the Li family. Four years ago, she got divorced, and it was said that Li's family head insisted that Miss Wan was already pregnant when they divorced, and the child was his, so he didn't let go." the old man explained.

"Why would Su Liang know them?" Duanmu Che asked.

Lu further investigation,” the old man said, “Miss Su took the initiative to visit last time, indicating that she must have something to ask the master. If the master is willing to see her, she will surely come.”

Duanmu Che was silent for a long time and said, “If she really wants to ask me about those things, she will come again.”

The old man paused, “But the master has made it clear before that he didn’t want to see Miss Su. It was all a misunderstanding. Wouldn’t it be better for me to explain it to her secretly?”

“No need.” Duanmu Che shook his head, “She is the one eager to see me, not the other way around. If she gives up just because she was not allowed in last time, it’s not worth my effort.”

As the old man tried to persuade him further, Duanmu Che pushed his wheelchair into the inner room.

The first afternoon of the ranking competition.

Duanmu Che, who had left early in the morning claiming tiredness, returned to the scene.

Duanmu Chen guessed that Duanmu Che’s unusual behavior might have something to do with Su Liang.

However, as the match was about to start, Xing Yusheng and his group appeared, but Su Liang and Ning Jing were nowhere to be found.

Duanmu Chen noticed that Duanmu Che’s eyes had fallen on Xing Yusheng’s location, which confirmed his suspicion.

Nian Ruxue appeared just before the competition began, dressed as a man and wearing a mask.

In the first match of the afternoon, Nian Ruxue won.

It was the first time Duanmu Chen had seen Nian Ruxue’s skills, and he was quite surprised.

Duanmu Qianqian cheered for Nian Ruxue, sighing in admiration, “Xuexue has hidden her abilities really well. Previously, everyone said she only knew some fancy but useless moves, but it turns out she was just being modest.”

Seeing Nian Ruxue stepping down from the Combat Stage, Duanmu Ao stood up, “I’m going to see Miss Nian and check on her grandmother.”

Duanmu Chen smiled, “Take care, Second Brother.”

He watched as Duanmu Ao approached Nian Ruxue, who noticeably tried to put some distance between them.

Duanmu Chen’s smile deepened. Now that Duanmu Ao had a legitimate claim to Nian Ruxue, would that lustful man be able to restrain himself? Even if there were some issues, it was clear that his lust hadn’t diminished.

“I didn’t do anything to you, what are you afraid of?” Duanmu Ao snorted.

Nian Ruxue lowered her eyes, "The Second Prince suddenly called for me, I was just frightened for a moment."

"Let's go. I'll take you back." Duanmu Ao's gaze fell on Nian Ruxue's white nape, and he swallowed.

"No need. Your Highness, please go back and watch the competition, I need to go home and take care of my grandmother." Nian Ruxue refused.

Duanmu Ao's expression darkened, "Are you ordering me?"

"Not at all." Nian Ruxue shook her head, "I'm just worried that people might gossip."

"We'll be married in just two months, what's there to be afraid of?" Duanmu Ao scoffed.

Upon reaching the edge of the square, Duanmu Ao boarded Nian Ruxue's carriage and ordered it to set off.

"Why are you still wearing a mask? Take it off." Duanmu Ao reached out to remove Nian Ruxue's mask.

Nian Ruxue instinctively dodged, and Duanmu Ao smirked wickedly, "Are you afraid I'll eat you? Even if I did, it would be justified now."

With that, he lunged at Nian Ruxue.

The carriage shook violently, followed by a muffled groan, and then Duanmu Ao's furious roar and a crisp slap, "Shameless wretch! You don't appreciate any kindness! Am I not good enough for you?"

"Miss..." The maid's face was full of fear.

"Get out!" As soon as Duanmu Ao's words fell, the sound of clothes being torn echoed, and the next moment, a person was thrown out of the carriage and heavily hit the ground!

The carriage had just reached a busy area, and although many people had gone to watch the martial arts competition, there were still quite a few people around who had noticed the Nian Family's carriage.

Many people witnessed a disheveled Second Prince, Duanmu Ao, falling from the carriage before passing out.

Duanmu Ao's attendant was riding behind the carriage and rushed over with a changed expression, checking Duanmu Ao's condition, and then loudly inquiring, "Miss Nian, what did you do to my Master?"

At this point, the onlookers knew that Nian Ruxue was inside the carriage.

But Nian Ruxue didn't show her face, and only her voice came from inside the carriage, "The Second Prince accidentally fell out, perhaps due to a recurring injury. You should quickly take him to see a doctor."

The attendant's face stiffened, and he didn't argue any further and quickly left with Duanmu Ao.

The Nian Family's carriage continued on its way.

News of the Second Prince and Miss Nian's unknown activities inside the carriage, and the disheveled Second Prince being thrown out, spread quickly.

When Nian Ruxue returned home, she hurriedly entered her room and closed the door, saying she wasn't feeling well and didn't want to see anyone.

As the wardrobe door opened, another Nian Ruxue walked out.

These past two days, Nian Ruting, who had been disguising as Nian Ruxue, had her clothes torn by Duanmu Ao and looked upset, "Fourth Sister, I hit the Second Prince, and I've caused trouble for you."

Nian Ruxue stared at Nian Ruting in disbelief, "What happened?"

Nian Ruting looked annoyed, "That lecher, he insisted on taking me home. I couldn't refuse him in public and let him get on the carriage. I thought he wouldn't dare do anything in broad daylight, and even if he took off my mask, he wouldn't find out, but who knew he would start touching me in the carriage..."

"Why didn't you just endure it?" Nian Ruxue blurted out, but when she saw Nian Ruting frown, she realized she had said the wrong thing and quickly explained, "I mean, you should have tried to deal with him and endure your impulsiveness for the time being. Of course, the priority is to protect yourself, but you can't beat him up in public. Now we're in a huge mess!"

Nian Ruting looked uneasy, "What should we do? Will the Emperor punish you, Fourth Sister?"

Nian Ruxue's expression was solemn, "When I was given the marriage decree, the Emperor probably thought I had beaten Duanmu Ao. You hit him again today, it will still be blamed on me!"

"I had no other choice..." Nian Ruting's eyes reddened, "Fourth Sister, I'm sorry, I really didn't want to cause trouble for you."

Nian Ruxue closed her eyes and pulled Nian Ruting to sit down beside her on the bed, "How could I blame you? I'm just scared, and I don't know what to do..." ...

Wan Family Restaurant.

Su Liang and Zhengzheng were still asleep, and Ning Jing let the others go ahead to watch the fight. He didn't leave because his clothes were still covering Su Liang.

Not long ago, Duanmu Ao was thrown outside the Wan Family Restaurant.

Although Ning Jing did not look outside, he heard the noise from downstairs.

Zhengzheng woke up first and stared at Ning Jing with sleepy eyes, stretching out his hand, "Uncle Ning..."

Ning Jing got up and walked over, picked up Zhengzheng, and patted him.

Su Liang also woke up, sat up, and Ning Jing's clothes fell off her.

"What time is it?" Su Liang got up and handed the clothes to Ning Jing.

Ning Jing tried to give Zhengzheng to Su Liang, but Zhengzheng held onto his neck, insisting, "Uncle hug!"

"I need to put on my clothes." Ning Jing said.

Zhengzheng grinned and said, "Auntie can help Uncle dress! Daddy always helps Mommy with her clothes!"

This comparison was quite imaginative.

"Stretch out your hand." She gestured for Ning Jing to extend his left hand and helped him put on one sleeve.

Ning Jing switched Zhengzheng to his left hand and put on the right sleeve.

Su Liang fastened his belt for him and commented, "Great God, your waist is so thin."

She had helped her comrades with their clothes in her previous life, so it wasn't a big deal. It was just to make Zhengzheng happy.

Seemingly dissatisfied with Su Liang's comment, Ning Jing retorted, "Your waist is the thin one."

If outsiders heard this, it would naturally sound somewhat ambiguous. After saying that, Ning Jing also realized it wasn't quite appropriate and furrowed his brows slightly.

However, Su Liang seriously measured her waist with her hand and nodded, "Indeed, I am too thin. I need to eat more. "

"What does Auntie want to eat?" Zhengzheng asked with a serious little face. Su Liang smiled and said, "I want to eat meat."

Zhengzheng grabbed Ning Jing's hand and handed it to Su Liang, "Meat, Auntie, eat it!"

Su Liang made a disgusted face, "It's all bones, not tasty."

Zhengzheng patted Ning Jing's head with his small hand, "Uncle Ning, you need to eat more too, Auntie likes them chubby!"

Ning Jing:...

The three of them went to the west of the city. On the way, Ning Jing mentioned how Nian Ruxue had thrown Duanmu Ao out of the carriage in public.

Su Liang was quite surprised, "Strange. That time in the back mountain, it was just her and Duanmu Ao, she didn't dare to do anything to him. Why is she so brave today?"

Ning Jing didn't say anything.

Su Liang seemed to think of something, "Perhaps, it was because I showed up before it was time for them to take action last time. But I would have thought, with Nian Ruxue's character, she should

have been clear about what would happen if Duanmu Ao got on her carriage and thus prevented it.” Ning Jing’s expression was indifferent, “Maybe, it’s a substitute.”

Su Liang was stunned, “What?”

“Substitute.” Ning Jing repeated again.

Su Liang was amazed, “But she took off her mask during the first day of the competition...” and then it hit her, “Her first three opponents in the preliminaries were all very weak. If she switched people later on, it would be possible for her to deliberately take off her mask on the first day to dispel other’s suspicions.”

“Nian Jincheng said that she only knows superficial martial arts.” Ning Jing said.

Su Liang frowned, “It’s not impossible that she secretly learned from a teacher and her true strength was even hidden from Nian Jincheng. But when I look at all of her recent actions together, they still seem weird. She should be someone who likes attention, but in the past two days, she has always arrived just before the start and left quickly after the match, only greeting Yu Jin from a distance.” “What do you want to do?” Ning Jing asked.

Su Liang thought for a moment and said, “Even if she’s a substitute and not

Nian Ruxue, every citizen of Qian Country has the right to participate in the Military Exam. For now, we won’t do anything. If Duanmu Ao being beaten also goes unnoticed, even if I don’t meet her in the ranking matches, we’ll inevitably have to face off in the final. At that time, I’ll try to find a way to publicly verify her identity.”

“Why wait?” Ning Jing asked.

Zhengzheng imitated him, “Why?”

Su Liang smiled and pinched Zhengzheng’s chubby little face, “There’s a saying, ‘Higher you stand, harder you fall..’”

Chapter 140: 140. Just a hairpin

By the time Ning Jing and Su Liang arrived at the Battle Arena with

Zhengzheng, the afternoon contests were more than halfway through, leaving only four groups remaining.

During the intermission between the two matches, Chang’an went to Duanmu Chen’s side and whispered a few words.

Duanmu Chen raised his eyebrows and gave him a look.

As soon as Chang’an left, Duanmu Chen saw Su Liang and Ning Jing appear by Xing Yusheng’s side, with Ning Jing holding a smiling little child in her arms.

At first glance, they looked very much like a sweet, loving family of three.

Duanmu Chen’s gaze landed on Duanmu Che’s face, and sure enough, he saw him looking towards Su Liang’s position.

“Sixth sister.” Duanmu Chen suddenly turned his head to call out to Duanmu Qianqian.

“Fourth imperial brother, what’s the matter?” Duanmu Qianqian looked dutiful.

Duanmu Chen smiled, “You have a good relationship with Miss Nian, do you know who her master is?”

Duanmu Qianqian blurted out, “It should be General Nian who taught her, right? Before, when I would look for Xuexue to play, she often mentioned wanting to learn martial arts from General Nian but didn’t have the time. I just didn’t expect her swordsmanship to be so good and never revealing it, it’s so humble and truly rare.”

“Indeed.” Duanmu Chen agreed. If Nian Ruxue had been hiding her skills just to shine in the Military Exam, he would have to look at her differently.

The next competition began.

Su Liang focused on watching the competition, occasionally sharing her thoughts with Ning Jing, such as admiring a particular move and wanting to try practicing it when she got back.

Ning Jing rarely offered his opinions. Every time Su Liang spoke to him, he would slightly lower his head, leaning towards Su Liang, looking far from close, and even as if Ning Jing’s neck was uncomfortable and occasionally tilting to the side...

When the four matches ended, the results of the first day’s ranking matches were out.

Although there were still nine more days of competition, those who had watched the whole day’s matches already had a list of strong contenders in their minds.

Most people believed that Su Liang and Nian Ruxue had the strength to advance to the final competition and even make it into the top three.

And the participation of these two women made this Military Exam quite unique and highly anticipated by the audience.

When Duanmu Che was pushed away from the Battle Arena in his wheelchair by his old servant, he glanced at Su Liang’s direction again.

The old man whispered, “Master, should I go and find her?”

“I don’t want to repeat what I already said.” Duanmu Che said indifferently, “If she doesn’t come to find me again, let’s pretend to be strangers.”

The old man sighed deeply and left with Duanmu Che.

On the way home, Su Liang and Ning Jing learned that the news of Duanmu Ao being thrown out of Nian Ruxue’s carriage, disheveled in public, had spread like wildfire.

“Someone must have fueled the fire.” Su Liang said. It hadn’t been long.

She guessed that it might have been done by Duanmu Chen since he was very concerned about the movements of his “enemies.”

Although suspicious, they had not yet confirmed that the Nian Ruxue participating in the Military Exam was a fake.

Now, Su Liang was watching the events unfold. The more things that happened to Nian Ruxue, the more likely a mistake would be exposed.

Last time, Duanmu Ao was injured at Huguo Temple, but no one had seen it happen.

This time, on the bustling main street, the second prince fell out of a carriage and fainted, and it was from a woman's carriage. If there was no reasonable explanation, how would he save face?

Duanmu Chen, who had sent Chang'an to secretly instigate trouble, received news about Duanmu Ao again: he was summoned into the palace late that night.

"Master, if the emperor is looking for the second prince regarding today's incident, will he still protect Nian Ruxue?" Chang'an asked.

Duanmu Chen sneered, "Protect her? With Duanmu Ao's beastly nature, he probably just wants to ravage Nian Ruxue now. But after all, Nian Ruxue has a status and must be married first before he can do as he pleases."

At this moment, in the Imperial Palace, Duanmu Ao knelt before Emperor Duanmu Yi with a gloomy expression on his face.

"What happened today?" Duanmu Yi asked coldly.

Lowering his head, Duanmu Ao said, "I couldn't control myself after thinking about being engaged to Miss Nian and offended her."

Duanmu Yi's face darkened, and he grabbed the inkstone and smashed it on the ground in front of Duanmu Ao, "You fool! You've lost all the face of the royal family! "

"Father, please forgive me. I already have an intimate relationship with Miss Nian, and it's my fault, not hers. Now I just hope to advance the wedding date, so that outsiders can't gossip anymore," Duanmu Ao said.

Duanmu Yi looked at him, "How is the injury from last time?"

Duanmu Ao's expression stiffened, but he gritted his teeth and said, "It's much better."

"The Yin Country wants to have peace talks with the Qian Country, and the envoy will arrive soon, including General Man Ya," Duanmu Yi said coldly.

Duanmu Ao was stunned.

General Man Ya was a famous young female general in the Yin Country, and even the entire world. She was also the one who had once publicly ridiculed Qian Country's women for only knowing how to embroider.

"The participation of the two women in this Military Exam will soon be known all over the world. When Man Ya comes, there will be a big fuss. Qian Country can't afford to lose face again! Do you understand?" Duanmu Yi said coldly.

Duanmu Ao nodded subconsciously, "Yes, Father."

“Behave yourself lately and don’t provoke Miss Nian. As for the wedding date, it will be decided after the Military Exam and negotiations with the Yin Country,”

Duanmu Yi said.

Soon after, Duanmu Ao walked out of the palace with a sullen expression.

Duanmu Chen soon received the news.

“It seems that father wants to protect Nian Ruxue,” Duanmu Chen thought,
“but only for the time being.”

Chang’an frowned, “If Miss Nian really shines in the Military Exam, can she reject or change the imperial marriage decree?”

Duanmu Chen snorted, “It’s not impossible. That’s why it’s even more important to tie her tightly to Duanmu Ao and not let them separate. If she is capable and ambitious, after marrying Duanmu Ao, she might instigate conflicts between Duanmu Ao and Duanmu Cheng. Wouldn’t that be interesting?”

Changing the subject, Duanmu Chen asked, “Any movement from Duanmu Che?”

Chang’an shook his head, “No. No one has come out since the Fifth Prince returned home today.”
Fifth Prince’s Mansion

It was late, and Duanmu Che was still reading.

“Master, you should go to bed,” the old man persuaded.

Duanmu Che turned a page of the book and suddenly asked, “Is the letter Su Liang sent that day still here?”

The old man hesitated for a moment before shaking his head, “As per your order, master, the servant burned it.”

“You never read what she wrote?” Duanmu Che asked.

The old man sighed, “No. Back then, I also had a deep prejudice against Miss Su and thought that there would no longer be any connection between us, so I didn’t bother reading it.”

Seeing Duanmu Che’s silence, the old man tentatively said, “Why doesn’t the servant find Miss Su now? Since she is a martial artist, it would be convenient for her to come at night without anyone noticing.”

Duanmu Che’s face darkened slightly, “I said it before, wait for her to come find me again!”

The old man sighed again, “Yes. Master, you should rest early since you have to go watch the competition tomorrow morning.”

Duanmu Che put down his book, “Not going.” He then entered his inner chamber.

The old man looked at the silhouette projected on the folding screen, his expression filled with helplessness.

It was deep in the night, and the weather was chilly in spring.

Su Liang hadn't gone to bed yet, and was discussing the day's competition with Ning Jing on the training ground.

Learning from others' techniques was not an easy task, but Su Liang had always been good at learning and mastering other people's strengths as her own. Ning Jing was an excellent master and practice partner for her.

The two finished their fight and left the training ground together. They walked around the Garden Lake three times while Su Liang finished telling the story of Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Afterward, they went to rest.

Before they went their separate ways, Ning Jing asked, "What will you tell next time?"

Without thinking, Su Liang said, "Journey to the West."

"What kind of story is that?" asked Ning Jing.

With a serious expression, Su Liang explained, "A monkey, a pig, a river demon, and a monk traveling together to obtain scriptures. Are you not interested now?"

Ning Jing shook his head, "If you aren't tired, I'd like to start listening now."

As Su Liang rolled her eyes she told him, "Go to sleep, you can find anything in your dreams."

Ning Jing once told Su Liang these same words, she had never forgotten them, and finally had a chance to use them back against him.

The second day of the rankings.

Duanmu Che did not appear, and Su Liang still didn't end up in the same group with Nian Ruxue. But they both won their individual matches.

Duanmu Ao came and, in front of Duanmu Cheng and Duanmu Chen, laughed and said that there was nothing going on between him and Nian Ruxue, they were just playing around yesterday.

Duanmu Chen expressed that as long as Duanmu Ao was happy, it was all good.

Anyways, watching Duanmu Cheng's fake smile was quite an amusing sight...

That evening, the Nian Family received news that Nian Jincheng was on his way back to the capital.

Duanmu Chen sent Chang'an to inform Su Liang of the same news, with more details.

"Nanping Prince has been captured and beheaded, Yin Country wants to talk peace with Qian Country, and the envoy will return to the capital with Nian Jincheng. It seems he has accomplished a great feat this time, and if he learns that Nian Ruxue has been granted in marriage as a concubine for Duanmu Ao after returning, he will probably stand up for her," said Su Liang.

Ning Jing didn't say anything about this, but he secretly went to the Lin Family and informed them that Lin Bojun was safe and should be back by the end of the month, so they should feel at ease.

In a city in the southern part of Qian Country.

Nian Jincheng walked out of Yin Country's envoy's residence with a dark face, while Lin Bojun, waiting outside, greeted him with a sympathetic look. However, his words were difficult to hide the mockery, "Did that woman with the surname Wood tease General Nian again?"

Nian Jincheng snorted lightly, "Bo Jun, if you continue to gloat, I'll arrange for you to deal with Mu Ya."

Lin Bojun hurriedly raised his hands in a salute, "No, no, no! General Nian, please don't scare me! I have someone I love, and I'm waiting to go back to the capital to propose marriage! Besides, General Mu Ya wouldn't care for me!" "Which young lady is it?" Nian Jincheng asked.

The two had a good relationship, and they had become good friends while carrying out their mission together.

Lin Bojun grinned and hooked Nian Jincheng's shoulder, "I'll tell you, but you can't tell anyone else. It's Duke Qin's daughter, but it's just me who has feelings for her."

Nian Jincheng nodded, "A perfect match. You have made great contributions, and after we return, His Majesty will certainly reward you greatly. You can ask His Majesty to arrange a marriage for you."

Lin Bojun's expression turned serious, "That won't work! What if Lady Qin doesn't like it? And the credit for killing Nanping Prince belongs to both of us, not just to me."

Nian Jincheng shook his head, "Even though my official position is higher than yours, you don't have to act like this. In the end, you were the one who discovered Nanping Prince, captured him, and beheaded him. The greatest contribution is yours."

"It was just luck," Lin Bojun said.

Nian Jincheng frowned, "In any case, I will report the truth to His Majesty. There's no need for further discussion on this matter."

The two had argued over this issue many times before, so Lin Bojun knew that Nian Jincheng was honest and upright, so he didn't say anything more.

Lin Bojun was holding a brocade box in his hand. Nian Jincheng glanced at it but showed no interest in asking about it. Lin Bojun took the initiative to open it for him. Inside were three wooden hairpins, very delicate and clever.

"For Lady Qin?" Nian Jincheng casually asked.

Lin Bojun grinned, "One is for my little sister. One is for Miss Qin, if she agrees to be with me. And the last one is for my junior brother!"

Nian Jincheng was taken aback, "Your junior brother..."

"His name is Ning Jing, my father's disciple." Lin Bojun laughed. Now that the Ning Family was no longer in trouble and the Xing Family had transitioned peacefully, there was no need to hide their relationship with Ning Jing. Nian Jincheng was puzzled, "The hairpin, you are giving it for him to wear?"

Lin Bojun burst into laughter, "Of course not! Misunderstanding! I heard that there was a famous woodcarver in the city today, so I took the time to buy these three. Actually, this one is meant for a little sister, but I must have my junior brother deliver it! They are a pair!"

Nian Jincheng immediately understood that it was for Su Liang. However, Lin Bojun did not know that Nian Jincheng had already met Ning Jing and Su Liang.

"Where does the craftsman live?" Nian Jincheng asked.

"Are you going to buy one for your sister? It's too late today. We're leaving early tomorrow, and there may not be enough time. It's my fault for not asking you sooner if you wanted one," Lin Bojun said.

Nian Jincheng shook his head, "I'll go and see, I can pay extra."

The next day, when the team was preparing to leave, Nian Jincheng returned from shopping and held a wooden box, which contained three wooden hairpins.

One of them was for Nian Ruxue.

The other two were a pair, meant for Ning Jing and Su Liang.

Just as Nian Jincheng dismounted, the wooden box in his hand was snatched away.

A silver-belled laugh rang out, "General Nian must have bought these hairpins for me. I accept them with a smile!"

Nian Jincheng frowned, "Please return the box, General Mu."

The woman wearing half a mask opened the wooden box, took out the hairpins, and threw the box back to Nian Jincheng, "I'll take the hairpins, and you can have the box."

Nian Jincheng's forehead twitched, "General Mu, those hairpins are for my sister and a friend; please return them."

"What friend?" Man Ya asked, "I heard that you only have one friend, who seems to have the surname Gu. Is it him?"

Lin Bojun looked at the hairpins in Man Ya's hand and quickly stepped forward, "General Mu, last night I told General Nian that after returning to the capital, I might soon get married. He bought it as a congratulatory gift for me!"

"I see." Man Ya laughed and walked over, "Here, I'll give it back to you!"

Nian Jincheng reached out, just as he caught it, Man Ya snatched the hairpin he was wearing and walked away.

"It's your waist sword!" Man Ya glanced at the hairpin, then at the sword on Nian Jincheng's waist, looking astonished, "I like this one!"

It was a birthday gift from someone to Nian Jincheng, and his face darkened. "General Mu, please return it!"

“General Nian, you can’t be so stingy? Is this how men in Qian Country treat their guests? It’s just a wooden hairpin; is it because your friend with the surname Gu gave it to you that you can’t bear to part with it?” Man Ya laughed and asked.

Lin Bojun initially thought that Man Ya was genuinely interested in Nian Jincheng, but now realized that she was up to no good! Who didn’t know who her friend with the surname Gu really was?

‘General Mu, please return my hairpin,” Nian Jincheng said, his black hair flowing down and his expression cold.

But Man Ya pretended to insert the hairpin into her hair, “I won’t give it back!”

Nian Jincheng slapped Man Ya’s hand, catching her off guard, grabbing her wrist, and snatching back the hairpin.

“General Mu, in Qian Country, we treat our guests this way: there are some things we can give, but you can’t take!” Nian Jincheng said firmly, before turning to order the team to move out.

Man Ya stood there, staring intently at Nian Jincheng’s retreating figure. A moment later, she snorted coldly and turned to walk toward her horse. Lin Bojun secretly gave Nian Jincheng a thumbs up. What he said just now was excellent!

As the two walked side by side, Lin Bojun looked at Nian Jincheng’s hairpin and laughed, “If that woman had broken your hairpin just now, I think you might have killed her.”

Nian Jincheng shook his head expressionlessly, “Not that far. It’s just a hairpin.

At most, I’d break one of her legs..”