

Three-Time 18

Chapter 18

[Plum Blossom Screen] After Yanyu left, Su Liang took the used bedding to the backyard to dry on a tree. After thoroughly cleaning the room, the unpleasant smell of blood finally disappeared. At dusk, Bai Xiaohu brought two of his playmates to see Su Liang. "My mother told me that Su Xiaoming's house is yours now?" "There are still so many pears on their tree! We all saw them!" "Such big pears!" Su Liang smiled lightly, "Can you all climb trees?" The three boys nodded enthusiastically. "Ning Jing." Su Liang called for Ning Jing. The window was open, and Ning Jing's cold, indifferent voice came from inside the room, "I'm not going." "Then heat up some water and cook the porridge." After Su Liang finished speaking, she left with Bai Xiaohu and his friends. After borrowing a large bamboo basket from the Bai family, they walked over the wooden bridge. While walking, they heard the three children discuss that the heavy rain had damaged two bridges in the village, which needed to be repaired. Each family would contribute and also offer labour. As they crossed the bridge, they ran into Lei Zheng and Su Bai. Upon seeing Su Liang, Su Bai showed courtesy. He mentioned the bridge repair but did not ask the two wealthy individuals, Ning Jing, and Su Liang, to contribute more money. Instead, he stated that since her family couldn't offer labour, they would have to pay an extra person's wages. Su Liang directed Lei Zheng to visit Ning Jing at home. ... Upon hearing a knock, Ning Jing got up to answer it. After hearing Lei Zheng's request, he went back to his room to fetch money. "We need to pay for an extra person's labour." Lei Zheng counted the money and found it insufficient. Ning Jing shook his head slightly, "We can offer labour." Lei Zheng was taken aback, looking unconsciously at Ning Jing's slender physique, clean clothes, and flawless face... "I'll do it," Ning Jing said, and then he went back inside. Lei Zheng was puzzled, Ning Jing, who barely had a few coins to his name, actually decided to labour himself? Lei wondered how such a person could perform manual work! ... Su Liang set foot in Su Daqiang's courtyard again, which became cold and quiet in just a few days, similar to a house long abandoned. Bai Xiaohu and the others competed with each other to climb the tree. The pear tree was not too tall, and Su Liang told them to be careful. One of the boys plucked a golden pear, bit off a large chunk, and then remembered to ask Su Liang, "Can I eat it?" "Go ahead." Su Liang said and walked towards the main room. Neither she nor Ning Jing planned to live there, and they didn't want anything from the house. Considering they needed money, she decided to sell everything off after checking all items. In this world, even used goods can be sold without difficulty. As for the house, she decided to keep it for the sake of the pear tree. The shabby dwelling of the original master, where he lived for over a year, had collapsed after a heavy downpour. The backyard had a neat vegetable plot, certainly maintained by the original master. Su Liang lifted and steadied the fallen bean pole, picked a handful of beans, two eggplants, and returned to the front yard. Each of the three boys had finished eating a pear and were tucking the picked pears into their pockets. Bai Xiaohu saw Su Liang climbing the tree with ease and was astonished, "Can you climb trees too?" Su Liang simply smiled without answering, picked a pear, wiped it with her sleeve, and took a bite. The juice was sweet. In the end, they picked a basketful of pears. There were still some small ones left on the tree. "Can I take one home for my grandpa?" The slightly shy Boy Erniu pulled at his clothing and asked. "As much as you can carry is yours." Su Liang smiled. The other two looked at Bai Xiaohu, somewhat in disbelief. Bai Xiaohu lifted his chin and grinned, "I told you, Sister Su Liang is very generous!" They took off their jackets, filled their pockets with pears, and ran off. Su Liang carried the basket and walked home with Bai Xiaohu under the fading sunlight. When it was

time to part ways after crossing the bridge, Su Liang turned to Bai Xiaohu and said, "I have a favor to ask your family." ... By the time she returned home, it was already dark. Su Liang entered the kitchen where the aroma of bubbling porridge filled the room. Ning Jing stood facing away from the entrance, his arm moving slightly, busying himself with something. After putting down the pears, Su Liang went over to see Ning Jing with a frown, stirring a large basin of dough... "What are you trying to do?" Su Liang asked, puzzled. "Making pancakes." Ning Jing put down his chopsticks, a hint of embarrassment flashed through his eyes. "I saw you doing it. I added too much water, then added flour, and then realized there was too much flour..." Su Liang: ... he doesn't need to be this industrious... The shredded radish on the side was finely and evenly cut. The vegetable basket was empty. The flour bag was nearly empty as well. "Tomorrow we'll go to town to buy some stuff." Su Liang took over the basin of dough. But Ning Jing said, "We need to repair the bridge tomorrow." Su Liang paused, "Didn't we pay for that today?" "They need labour, so I'll go." Ning Jing calmly stated. Su Liang looked at him, deep in thought, "Are you... experiencing life?" "Experience?" Ning Jing shook his head slightly, "It's just life." "Fine. So you go and repair the bridge, and I'll go into town." Su Liang affirmed his grounded lifestyle. Bai Peng came over to confirm the message that Bai Xiaohu had brought. "I don't understand how to sell these household items either. Uncle Bai, help sell whatever you can and keep twenty percent of the money as a reward for the trouble," said Su Liang. Bai Peng agreed and said he would handle it early the next morning, leaving the bridge repair work to his younger brother. Su Liang gave Bai Peng several pieces of the baked white bread he had made, but Peng declined repeatedly. "Uncle Bai, take it. I won't be home tomorrow, and Ning Jing is going to fix the bridge. Come over to our place for lunch," said Su Liang. Bai Peng was surprised, "Lei Zheng asked Ning Jing to fix the bridge? That's both exhausting and dirty. He isn't equipped for that! I'll talk to Lei Zheng and offer some more money." Su Liang shook her head, "Just call him Ning Jing. He wanted to do it." ... That night Su Liang moved back into her old room, writing on a couple of pages before bed. She also wrote two new medicinal diet recipes, intending to sell them at the Feiyan Restaurant the next day. As for the gambling house, she might visit it for fun but wouldn't actually stake money there. ... Early in the morning, just before dawn, Ning Jing was called away. He stood out amongst the strong men of Su Village, holding shovels, and felt out of place. Except for Bai Xiaohu's uncle Bai He, no one dared to talk to Ning Jing. Someone muttered, "If he can't even afford a few coins, he is poorer than my family! Does he look like he can work?" However, when the real work began, this "pretty face" shocked everyone. How is he not afraid of getting dirty? He's so strong! He actually hasn't complained about being tired? In short, Ning Jing proved through his actions that although he might be handsome, he was not weak or delicate. As a result, a new village rumor started circulating about Ning Jing's upbringing: Even though he came from a wealthy family, he had been mistreated because he lacked the love of his parents. After a while, someone shouted, "Master Ning, your wife is looking at you!" Ning Jing looked up and saw Su Liang waving at him in the distance. Su Liang waved at Ning Jing and continued on her journey to the village. Discovering that Ning Jing had a good temperament, someone shouted, "When will Master Ning become a father? He owes us a round of drinks!" Ning Jing was taken aback. When he didn't respond, assuming he was shy, everyone started laughing. ... Su Liang carried a half-basket of pears and walked toward the town. Halfway there, while taking a break to drink water, she saw a carriage. "Which way to Su Village?" The coachman asked loudly. Su Liang pointed out the direction and quickly continued on her way. When the carriage arrived at the village, it stopped in front of Su Daqiang's house, and a girl in a peach-colored jacket got out. The door was locked. With no sign of anyone at home, an old woman from the neighboring house came out to ask who she was looking for. "Is this Su Xiaodie's house?"

Asked the girl. "Ah, yes!" The old woman confirmed. "Where are her family members?" The girl asked, furrowing her brows. "They owed money to loan sharks and were all sold to the mines!"

Said the old woman, "What do you want with Su Xiaodie?" The young girl didn't answer, quickly rushed back to the carriage, whispered a few words, then came back to ask the old woman what day Su Xiaodie had been sold and who owned her house now. The old woman scoffed upon hearing that the girl's master had paid a deposit and was looking for Su Xiaodie to collect the embroidery. She pointed to the other side of the creek, "The embroidery was done by that girl, Su Liang, who married and moved over there. Now this house is hers! Su Xiaodie didn't know how to embroider at all!" "Su Liang?" The girl repeated the name, pulled out several copper coins, and handed them to the old woman. ... By noon, the men repairing the bridge were all sweating heavily. Among them, Ning Jing, who had been working without slacking, still looked fresh. Bai Xiaohu ran over, "Big Brother Ning! Someone's here to see Sister Su Liang!" Lei Zheng looked up at the sky and announced a break, telling everyone to come back after lunch. Ning Jing returned home with Bai Xiaohu and saw a carriage parked at the front door, with a girl in a peach-colored jacket standing nearby. When the girl first saw Ning Jing's face, she was smitten. "If you need anything, ask Big Brother Ning! He's Sister Su Liang's husband!" Bai Xiaohu announced loudly. The girl snapped out of her trance, her face a little red, and spoke softly, "My young lady ordered a double-sided embroidered plum blossom screen. It has been a while since it was due for delivery, so we came to pick it up ourselves." Ning Jing was unfazed, "Who did you make this agreement with?" "Su Xu's family, they received five silver taels as advance payment," the girl said. "You should look for them then, it has nothing to do with Su Liang," Ning Jing said. The girl's face stiffened slightly, "But I heard that previous embroidery was done by Su Liang..." A young woman's voice came from inside the carriage, "Young Master, that Plum Blossom Screen is very important to me. If you deliver it, we can negotiate the price." Bai Xiaohu harrumphed, Master Ning and Sister Su Liang don't need money! Master Ning goes to work because he's a real man, not a pretty face! The next moment, he saw Ning Jing nod, "Fine." The girl's face lit up, "Then hurry and give us the plum blossom screen!" "A million taels of gold," Ning Jing's lips slightly parted. The girl's eyes widened, she looked at Ning Jing incredulously, "What did you say?" "Isn't the price negotiable?" Ning Jing countered. "But that doesn't mean... a million taels of gold? What kind of joke is this?" The girl was visibly annoyed. Ning Jing maintained his calm demeanor, "My wife's embroidery is worth this much, non-negotiable. If you can't afford it, no need for pleasantries."