

Three-Time 201

Chapter 201: 201. No need to practice

“Little girl, it’s not a good idea to follow that guy.” Peng Wei said, his expression serious.

Su Liang was stunned, “What’s wrong with him?”

“He’s Ning Jing’s friend, but he wants to abduct you. There’s something wrong with his character.” Peng Wei said.

Su Liang: ... What nonsense did Ning Jing tell this old man?

Su Liang tried to ease the situation by saying she was not interested in that person.

“That’s good. Even if you don’t want Ning Jing, you can consider my grandson.” Peng Wei took the opportunity to start “promoting” his precious grandson.

Su Liang chuckled, “If that day comes, I’ll consider it.”

“It seems like you really like that Ning kid!” Peng Wei sighed.

Su Liang: ... Let him think that way then.

She had already had dinner and returned to chat with Peng Wei.

Originally, she wanted Ning Jing to leave Ping’an Temple, go back to Xuanbei City, and inform Xing Ji and Lin Bojun to be on alert for people from Liang Country suddenly attacking.

But Ning Jing didn’t leave, saying that the most important thing tonight was to protect Peng Wei from any possible assassins.

Su Liang thought so too. Staying here alone, while also protecting the seriously injured Peng Wei, would be too risky.

Considering Xuanbei City’s defenses had always been good and Peng Wei was still alive, Wei Yao probably wouldn’t start a war for now. Su Liang decided to wait until daylight to talk about going back to the city.

After checking Peng Wei’s pulse again, Su Liang told him to rest well and recuperate for a while with proper medication.

“I’ll go to Master Pu Qing later and make some medicine for you. Once it’s ready, I’ll call you.” Su Liang said.

“Little girl, I really can’t thank you enough for this.” Peng Wei said, visibly moved, “I have one more request and I hope you’ll agree to it.”

Su Liang readily nodded, “Let me hear it.

Peng Wei sighed deeply, “It’s about my son, Peng Qian. He survived the accident years ago, but his health has never been good, and it’s even worse recently. Initially, when I heard that Su Yuanzhou’s

granddaughter was not only the Martial Arts Champion but also had excellent Medical Skills, I thought it was an exaggeration. It was only after meeting you that I realized I underestimated you!"

"Elder Peng, do you want me to treat your son?" Su Liang asked.

Peng Wei nodded, "Yes! I went to many famous doctors, but there is no improvement."

"Medical, with no end to learning. No one can say they can cure every disease. And I don't know any details about your son's health," Su Liang said seriously, "but I promise to try, if I see him in the future."

Peng Wei's face lit up with joy, "That's great!"

Su Liang thought the conversation would end here.

Who knew Peng Wei would immediately follow up with, "Little girl, why don't you go to Liang Country with me?"

Su Liang frowned, "That's too dangerous for me."

If people like Wei Yao caught Su Liang and threatened Xing Ji, anything could happen.

Peng Wei quickly said, "As long as I'm alive, I'll protect you!"

Su Liang glanced at the frail Peng Wei, "Old sir, I believe what you said, but it seems you're currently struggling to protect yourself."

"Don't misunderstand, I'm not just doing it for my son." Peng Wei explained, "I also want to prevent the two countries from rekindling war, which would only play into Yin Country's scheme."

Su Liang pondered this thought.

Peng Wei continued, "If I don't go back tomorrow, Liang Country's army will quickly be led astray by Wei Yao. If I return, but I'm bedridden from my serious injuries, Wei Yao could shut me away or even kill me. I need to be alive, stand up, and appear before people to stop Wei Yao's plan!"

Su Liang looked puzzled, "So, old sir, you want me to protect you?"

"This young lady is really smart!" Peng Wei nodded, "I've always been straightforward. As long as you help me get rid of Wei Yao this time and reclaim military power, I'll do my best to avoid a war between Liang Country and Qian Country for the rest of my life! Your Qian Country doesn't want to go to war either, right?"

"The purpose of war is also peace," Su Liang sighed softly.

Peng Wei's face changed, "It's rare for someone as young as you to have such insight!"

"I'll consider Elder Peng's proposal and give you an answer before dawn," Su Liang said as she stood up. "Rest for now."

After hearing the door close, Peng Wei breathed a long sigh of relief.

Su Liang told Ning Jing about Peng Wei's request.

"All right," Ning Jing nodded.

Su Liang raised her eyebrows, "So readily? Are you going with me?" "What do you think?" Ning Jing replied coldly.

Su Liang coughed lightly, "Yes, great god, I need your protection when venturing into danger. Please do not refuse."

Ning Jing looked at Su Liang, and her thin lips opened slightly, "You're the old one."

Su Liang laughed softly, "So the great god also has an idol burden and doesn't like being called old? I was just showing respect."

"Enough with the nonsense," Ning Jing said indifferently.

Su Liang quickly replied, "I have to ask Uncle Xing for permission. I am under his command and cannot act recklessly." "You go tell him," Ning Jing said. Su Liang was stunned, "Now?"

"Before dawn," Ning Jing said.

Su Liang asked subconsciously, "Do I go alone?"

"Only if you don't want me to accompany you, and then we can collect Peng Wei's corpse together," Ning Jing said.

Su Liang felt a bit embarrassed, "Then let's do that." She still relied on Ning Jing, and it had become a habit. This habit was very bad and needed to be changed.

"Actually, I think Master Pu Qing might be a master," Su Liang said, "Cheng Yun's martial arts skills are quite good."

"It was taught by his master," Ning Jing said.

Su Liang was surprised, "How do you know?" She had never heard of it.

"Cheng Yun told me," Ning Jing said. "I thought he was closer to me," Su Liang said.

Having said that, Su Liang was about to leave.

Her medicinal materials were not complete, so she had planned to ask Master Pu Qing for available medicine before giving the medicine to Peng Wei.

Now that they were going back to the city, it was no longer a problem.

"If you encounter someone, just avoid them," Ning Jing told Su Liang.

Su Liang waved her hand, "I know, I'll leave it to you to handle. Go ahead, be careful."

As the words fell, a gust of wind blew, and Su Liang disappeared at the door.

Ning Jing picked up the leftover chicken bones on the table, wrapped them in oil paper, and planned to take them away when she left the next day.

Although she was more casual with Su Liang, leaving the chicken bones would be too provocative.

After tidying up, Ning Jing didn't go to interrogate the two traitors because it was unnecessary. Many things Peng Wei already knew in his heart, and those two people wouldn't dare admit anything to save their lives.

Taking off her outer clothes, Ning Jing lay down on the small bed prepared by Su Liang.

The bed was a bit short, her feet dangling in the air. She covered herself with a quilt and closed her eyes to pretend to sleep.

Su Liang took the small road down the mountain, keeping an eye out, but she didn't encounter anyone.

By the time Su Liang returned to Xuanbei City, it was after midnight.

As she was alone and wanted to enter the heavily guarded military camp, she felt it was risky. To avoid causing unnecessary chaos, she returned to the general's mansion first, removed her disguise, changed her clothes, and went to find Xing Ji.

The guards at the General Mansion didn't know when Su Liang had left. They thought she had been at home the whole time. Although they didn't understand her sudden decision to go to the military camp in the middle of the night, they didn't dare to ask too much. Two guards volunteered to accompany Su Liang to the camp.

Su Liang agreed, and they quickly arrived at the nearby military camp. As soon as she announced that she had important matters to discuss with Xing Ji, she was let in without any obstacles.

Xing Ji had already fallen asleep, and Su Liang met Qi Jiang first.

When Qi Jiang woke up Xing Ji, he acted as if the enemy was approaching, thinking that Liang Country had attacked.

"It's not Liang Country attacking, it's Miss Liang coming!" Qi Jiang said, "There must be something important."

Xing Ji's expression became serious, and he immediately got out of bed.

Everyone else left the room, leaving only Su Liang and Xing Ji.

"Where did you go today? What happened? Are you alright?" Xing Ji looked at Su Liang, checking if she was injured subconsciously.

Su Liang shook his head, "I'm fine. But indeed, a big incident happened."

Then, Su Liang told Xing Ji about the attempted assassination of Peng Wei by a trusted confidant on the way to Ping'an Temple.

Upon hearing this, Xing Ji's expression changed, "Who did it?"

"I suspect it was Wei Yao. General Peng also thinks it was his son-in-law trying to eliminate a threat, and at the same time, use his death to provoke Qian Country and reignite the war," Su Liang said.

"You happened to save General Peng," Xing Ji suddenly felt puzzled, "You left a note and went to Ping'an Temple today?"

Su Liang nodded and explained, "There is a little monk named Cheng Yun in Huguo Temple who is my friend. He is the junior disciple of Master Pu Qing from Ping'an Temple. Yesterday, I went to Ping'an Temple to visit Master Pu Qing, but unfortunately, I didn't see him, so I went again today."

Xing Ji was stunned, "Cheng Yun? Yu Sheng mentioned that you are friends with a very beautiful little monk from Huguo Temple."

"We had saved the young master of the Wan Family together, who was kidnapped by the Li Family, one of the top four businesses. He's the same Zhengzheng who is often with us," Su Liang said.

It was a lot of information to process.

But Xing Ji quickly understood, "I see. So Cheng Yun asked you to bring a letter or an item to his master? Next time, you should clarify such things, or else we will be worried about you."

Su Liang immediately nodded, "Okay."

Then the two continued to discuss the matter of Wei Yao and Peng Wei.

After learning the full story and finding out that Wei Yao had secretly colluded with Yin Country with plans to kill Peng Wei and frame Qian Country, Xing Ji's face darkened, "Like father like son indeed!"

Back then, when Xing Ji had captured Wei Teng, it was also due to Liang Country, under the influence of Yin Country, launching an unprovoked attack on Qian Country.

At that time, the commanding general of the Northern Borderlands of Qian Country was the rebel general Gai Yun, who had been captured and executed for smuggling iron mines. Behind Gai Yun was the Nanping Prince, who had secretly collaborated with the royal family of Yin Country for many years. During that battle, Gai Yun fell ill, which led to Qian Country's continuous defeats.

Looking back after the truth had been revealed in the iron mine smuggling case, it was clear that Gai Yun had been harboring ulterior motives.

After that incident, Wei Teng was stripped of his position because he had secretly colluded with Qian Country and waged war on his own initiative without the approval of the Liang Country royal family.

Wei Yao's chance to rise to power after his father's downfall was completely due to his father-in-law Peng Wei.

"So that's the situation," Su Liang snorted, "Poor old Peng Wei. If he hadn't survived today, Wei Yao would have annihilated his entire family." Such wild ambitions.

"Now that you are back, what about Peng Wei...?" Xing Ji asked.

"Oh, he is being protected by that big brother who likes to pick mushrooms," Su Liang said.

Xing Ji's mouth twitched slightly, "One day, you must introduce me to this master."

"I'll have to ask him first," Su Liang said.

Xing Ji let out a deep sigh, "But Peng Wei can't stay in Ping'an Temple for too long without returning. If he goes back, he will not escape Wei Yao's clutches given the current situation."

Su Liang mentioned Peng Wei's request for her to return to Liang Country with him.

Xing Ji frowned, "Absolutely not!"

Without Xing Ji's earnest persuasion, Su Liang nodded, "I understand that it's very dangerous. But I did plan to go there once to deal with Wei Yao, otherwise, there will be no peace in the North. However, on my way back, I thought of another solution."

"What is it?" Xing Ji asked.

"Let Peng Wei pay me to assassinate Wei Yao," Su Liang said seriously, "As long as Wei Yao dies, Peng Wei can stabilize the Liang Country army, and many problems will be solved."

Xing Ji nodded, "It is a solution to have Wei Yao killed. But hire you? No matter how much money he offers, I will not allow you to take the risk!"

"It's just a figure of speech. I don't lack money, but he should offer any treasures like the Luoying Sword in exchange, right? After all, I saved him, and he still hopes for me to save his son," Su Liang said.

Xing Ji rubbed his forehead, "Those are just worldly possessions, not worth you taking the risk!"

"Why would Uncle Xing choose to go on a lone mission into enemy territory back then?" Su Liang retorted.

Xing Ji gave a wry smile, "Fine, fine, fine, I admit it, I was reckless in my youth, alright?"

Xing Ji was not without attachments, as he still had his mother at home.

But at that time, he thought that if Qian Country fell, there would be no more home for him. So, he charged forward in a burst of passion.

"Why not have Uncle Xing go? You have experience capturing his father," Su Liang suggested.

Xing Ji sighed, "Given my current status, it would be very irresponsible to do such a thing rashly."

If caught by people from Liang Country, it would be disastrous.

"Just a joke." Su Liang said, "Uncle Xing, don't be nervous. Let my big brother go to Liang Country's military camp to pick mushrooms! He's very good!" "Who is he?" Xing Ji asked curiously.

"A friend of Ning Jing from the jianghu." Su Liang said. Ning Jing was Ning Jing's friend, as he had told Peng Wei himself.

“You’d better think it over.” Xing Ji said solemnly, “Although Wei Yao wants to kill Peng Wei, Peng Wei may not forget his daughter and grandson, and may want to spare Wei Yao’s life.”

Su Liang thought for a moment and said, “I don’t think it’s possible. If my daughter gets involved with such scum who wants to destroy my whole family, I will chop him up and let my daughter get out of her misery sooner or later.

And Peng Wei knows that there is a woman spy from the Yin Country by Wei Yao’s side, and he is infatuated with her. It can be imagined that the day Peng Wei dies, Wei Yao would probably get rid of his wife.”

Xing Ji nodded, “It makes sense. I just want to remind you that even if you appreciate Peng Wei’s character, after all, your positions are different. Keep your guard up.”

“If Uncle Xing doesn’t object, let’s settle it. As for how to act, I’ll discuss it with my big brother later. If he doesn’t agree to be the assassin, maybe I’ll really go to Liang Country with Peng Wei. We’ll know how to act when the day breaks.” Su Liang said and left.

Xing Ji got up, “I won’t say anything more. Be careful, don’t risk your life for anything. Even if we really go to war with Liang Country, we are not afraid.” “I understand.” Su Liang replied and then left.

She found a pharmacy, got some medicine for Peng Wei, left some silver, changed her disguise, and went back to Ping’an Temple.

Su Liang hardly rested during the whole journey, and by the time she returned to Ping’an Temple, there was still an hour before dawn.

The courtyard was quiet, and Su Liang knocked on the door, “Brother?” The door opened immediately, revealing Ning Jing.

There was no light in the room, and Ning Jing’s eyes seemed even colder under the moonlight.

“Nobody came?” Su Liang asked after entering the room.

Ning Jing nodded, “Someone came.”

“Did you take care of them all?” Su Liang gave him a thumbs up, “I’m not surprised.”

“What did Uncle Xing say?” Ning Jing asked.

“Although he is very worried about my safety, he did not stop me after learning the truth.” Su Liang said.

“You don’t go, I’ll go get Wei Yao’s head.” Ning Jing’s expression was indifferent.

Su Liang was surprised, “When did you think of this?”

“After you left.” Ning Jing said.

Su Liang reached out, "It seems that we brothers have a tacit understanding. I thought so too, that it could be done like this."

Ning Jing looked at Su Liang's hand, "What are you doing?"

"Oh." Su Liang immediately withdrew her hand and said with a light laugh, "At this time, we should shake hands. It's a habit in our world. Forget it."

"Shake hands? Why?" Ning Jing asked.

Su Liang thought for a moment and said, "It probably means that heroes have the same vision, brother, you are really smart, more or less. But on the other hand, I have great confidence in your ability, but I still think it's very dangerous. Are you sure?"

Before Su Liang saw Ning Jing answer, she lowered her head and saw a beautiful hand with slender knuckles in front of her.

"What's that for?" Su Liang asked unconsciously.

"What do you think?" Ning Jing countered.

Su Liang laughed, "Great God, you're really curious about the other side." She then naturally reached out and diagonally held Ning Jing's four fingers, shaking them, "It's like this."

Su Liang's hand loosened and she heard Ning Jing ask, "How many shakes?" Su Liang: ...

Knowing Ning Jing's character, Su Liang thought for a moment and said, "Generally two or three times."

"Okay." Ning Jing looked as if he had remembered it.

Su Liang felt that this kind of thing didn't need to be learned...

Su Liang thought for a moment and said, "With such a great achievement, it wouldn't be too much to ask the emperor for a leave to go home for a while, right?"

Ning Jing reached out again, "I was thinking the same thing."

Su Liang held her forehead, "Great God, you don't need to practice shaking hands...."

Chapter 202: 202. Smoked Meat and Steamed Bun

Ning Jing insisted, and Su Liang reached out. This time Ning Jing held her four fingers and shook them rhythmically three times.

Then Ning Jing took the initiative to let go, and said indifferently, "Your hand is too small, it should be like this."

Su Liang was stunned for a moment before realizing that Ning Jing was referring to their handshake – the first time she held his hand, and the second time it was the other way around, with Ning Jing thinking the latter was more appropriate.

Suppressing a smile, Su Liang nodded and said, "It's true. Generally, ladies extend their hands first, and men shake hands, but it doesn't have to be that strict."

"I'm sure I want to go." Ning Jing abruptly continued the conversation from Su Liang's previous question.

"In that case, it's settled," Su Liang said seriously. "When will you leave for South City?"

"Now." Ning Jing said, glancing out the window.

The sky was beginning to brighten, and a mist hung in the courtyard, the trees barely visible.

"Great God, please be careful," Su Liang said solemnly.

"Mm. Let Peng Wei stay in Ping'an Temple, I've already talked to him about everything else." As soon as Ning Jing finished speaking, he left.

Su Liang stood inside the door, watching Ning Jing's slender figure quickly disappear into the hazy morning mist.

Turning around to close the door, she saw the table clean and tidy, the bowls and dishes neatly put away, and the bedding on the bed unchanged from when she left.

Su Liang picked up the medicinal materials she had brought from Xuanbei City and went to the next room.

Peng Wei was sound asleep, his face pale as paper.

With great care, Su Liang held his wrist, which hung by his side, and felt his pulse.

After all, Peng was an old man who had suffered a serious injury. Although he had been treated in time, his condition was not good at the moment.

Without waking Peng Wei, Su Liang quietly closed the door and went with the medicinal materials to find Master Pu Qing.

"Benefactor Wen, how is Peng's physical condition?" Master Pu Qing asked as soon as he saw Su Liang.

Su Liang shook her head, "Not very good, but not too bad either."

Master Pu Qing sighed slightly, "Amitabha."

When Su Liang proposed decocting medicine for Peng Wei, Master Pu Qing called a monk, handed him the medicinal materials, and told him how to

decoct the medicine, asking him to serve it when it was ready.

As the monk left, Su Liang emerged from behind the bookshelf, "Thank you, Master." Decocting medicine took time, but she needed to go back and watch over Peng Wei. Even though it was already daylight, Wei Yao might not send any more assassins, but it was better to be prepared.

"When the medicine is ready, I will send it over with breakfast," Master Pu Qing said.

After expressing her gratitude once again, Su Liang returned.

Peng Wei was still asleep, and Su Liang decided to take a short rest to recharge her energy.

Even with good stamina, one could not withstand staying up all night.

She lifted the blanket and lay down on the small bed without taking off her clothes, her feet hanging outside, making it easier to get up at any time.

Covered by the blanket, warmth enveloped her, and Su Liang quickly fell asleep.

When she awoke again, it was when Master Pu Qing came to deliver the medicine and breakfast.

Sun had risen, dissipating the dense fog.

Today was the fifteenth of April, the busiest time at the temple for burning incense, and there were already many pilgrims on the mountain.

Standing under the corridor, Su Liang could smell the incense wafting in the air.

After handing over the items to Su Liang, Master Pu Qing went into the room, took a glance at Peng Wei, and came out.

“Benefactor Wen, are you traveling here? Are you planning to return to the capital city of Qian Country?” Master Pu Qing asked.

Su Liang nodded, “I should be going back in a few days. Master, do you have any message for Cheng Yun?”

Master Pu Qing took out a thin cloth-wrapped package from his sleeve, which appeared to be a book. “Please trouble Benefactor Wen to pass this item to my disciple.”

Su Liang took it and replied, “No problem, Master. I will make sure it reaches his hands.”

Master Pu Qing clasped his hands together, “Thank you.”

After the old monk left, Su Liang entered Peng Wei’s room again and woke him up.

Peng Wei had just woken up, still somewhat dazed and seemingly unaware of where he was.

“Old man, do you remember that your son-in-law tried to kill you by bribing someone close to you yesterday?” Su Liang got straight to the point.

Peng Wei’s expression changed abruptly, and he became sober, “Little girl, where’s your brother?”

Su Liang sat down by the bed and picked up the bowl of medicine, “He’s gone to South City to retrieve Wei Yao’s head. Didn’t he tell you about it?”

Peng Wei drank the medicine without saying a word.

“You better not go back on your word, old man. There’s no turning back now,” said Su Liang.

Peng Wei’s face turned cold, “What do you mean? I wish I could tear that beast apart with my own hands!”

Su Liang nodded, “That’s right! He’s bullied your daughter, harmed your son, and tried to kill you. If you still can’t bear to let him die, then just be prepared for your entire family to die at his hands!”

Her words were harsh but realistic.

Peng Wei was now completely awake and could no longer have any hope for Wei Yao.

After finishing a bowl of medicine, Peng Wei grimaced, “That was so bitter! Do you have any sugar?”

Su Liang: ...She didn’t expect such a fiery old general to be afraid of bitterness...

But she did have sugar – her own secret recipe for herbal sugar pills. They were sweet and refreshing, primarily used for freshening breath when there was no opportunity to brush teeth or rinse the mouth while traveling.

Su Liang went to the next room and opened the medicine box. She saw an oil-paper package inside, and without opening it, she knew it contained chicken bones. She had forgotten about it, but Ning Jing was always a detail-oriented person.

Su Liang took a bottle with sugar pills and gave one to Peng Wei.

“Tasty! Do you have more?” Peng Wei eagerly stared at the white porcelain bottle in Su Liang’s hand.

“You can have one more before breakfast, ” Su Liang gave him another one.

She set the remaining pills aside and served breakfast.

A light vegetarian breakfast from the temple was quite enjoyable – plain porridge, small dishes, and wild vegetable steamed buns.

Su Liang thought the steamed buns were not bad. There were four in total. She ate two and left one for Peng Wei and one for Ning Jing, so they could taste them when they returned.

When Peng Wei wanted another steamed bun, Su Liang solemnly said, “You shouldn’t eat too much at this time. Drink more porridge.”

When it was time to drink porridge, Peng Wei sat up on his own and stopped letting Su Liang feed him. He was not used to it.

“Can your brother do it?” Peng Wei asked Su Liang.

Su Liang snorted, “Of course he can, very much so.”

Upon hearing this, Peng Wei’s eyes flickered, “Little girl, tell me the truth. You and your brother, you two don’t have that kind of relationship?”

“We’re siblings, old man. Don’t think too much, it’s not good for your recovery,” Su Liang chuckled.

Peng Wei shook his head, “You didn’t blush at all, so it must not be the case.

But he must be interested in you, he just doesn’t dare to show it because of Ning Jing. Otherwise, how could such a powerful master follow you around and do whatever you want?”

“No, no, no,” Su Liang shook her head, “Old man, that’s not how it works. He’s serving someone else’s interests, so he’s dedicated to Ning Jing. If you suspect he has feelings

for Ning Jing, I'd say that's more reasonable. Now that I think about it, I wonder if he's actually into my fiancé?"

Peng Wei looked at Su Liang as she seriously pondered, his brow furrowed in frustration, "Little girl, stop teasing!"

"I'm not joking," Su Liang said with a straight face.

Peng Wei's mouth twitched, "Forget it, forget it. I don't understand you young people's affairs."

Changing the subject, Peng Wei mentioned his son again, "You promised to treat my son yesterday. Do you still stand by your word?"

"Of course," Su Liang nodded.

"That's good. Once everything settles down and if all goes well, I'll arrange for Peng Qian to come to you. Although he has some trouble moving, I shouldn't have asked you to go to Liang Country last night." Peng Wei sighed deeply, "I hope you don't mind what I said last night."

Su Liang smiled, "I understand. It's just an anxious father's heart, no harm done."

"What a great girl. Too bad you're not my granddaughter," Peng Wei bluntly expressed his deep regret that Su Liang wasn't born into his family.

"If there comes a day when the world is at peace, I wouldn't mind calling you Grandpa Peng," Su Liang smiled.

Peng Wei understood her meaning. Even though they are in a cooperative relationship now, their positions are fundamentally different, and unnecessary involvement on the surface wouldn't be good for either party.

"I hope I can live long enough to hear it." Peng Wei looked worried. He was worried about himself, his family, and the future and fate of Liang Country.

However, looking at Su Liang's vibrant face, Peng Wei couldn't help but feel that it was not only a blessing for Qian Country to have such an ambitious and discerning general, but also for Liang Country...

After breakfast, Su Liang let Peng Wei continue to rest.

According to what he had discussed with Ning Jing the night before, Master Pu

Qing sent two capable disciples to head to Feng City to inform the Liang Country's army that Peng Wei had narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in the temple yesterday and was saved by Master Pu Qing. It was urgent for the guard general of Feng City to send someone to escort Peng Wei back.

Monks don't lie.

But Master Pu Qing was not a rigid old monk; after Peng Wei explained the root of the matter to him, he agreed to his request.

The two monks who were heading to Feng City to report the news had already set off.

If everything went smoothly, Ning Jing would kill Wei Yao before Peng Wei's return. After Peng Wei's return, he would tell everyone in person that the ones who wanted to kill him were from Yin Country, attempting to frame Qian Country, who was originally in peace talks with Liang Country, and provoke a war between the two countries.

Such news would definitely be believed by the people of Liang Country, as it was completely in line with the cunning and shameless nature of the people of Yin Country. They had done this many times before, and Liang Country had suffered greatly.

This was precisely the reason why Wei Yao insisted on having Peng Wei die somewhere between South City and Xuanbei City.

Not only was it because Peng Wei disagreed with him and might obstruct his plan.

It was more importantly because he needed to capitalize on the tragic death of Peng Wei, the high-ranking general with the most military prestige, to give him a reason to wage war on Qian Country and an opportunity to win over the military's heart.

Otherwise, if Wei Yao suddenly ordered an attack on Qian Country for no reason, Peng Wei would not be the only one to object.

Now, the key to the matter was whether Ning Jing could successfully eliminate Wei Yao.

Feng City.

The South City Gate was open, and the common people could still enter and exit freely.

Quite a few people wanted to go to Ping'an Temple to offer incense today, and they did not encounter any restrictions.

The city was not very peaceful, as Liang Country had given this city to Qian Country, and the army would soon move away. The common people had the option to stay or leave.

Some left, planning to settle in other parts of Liang Country.

Others stayed, believing Peng Wei's words that Qian Country would not treat them badly and that they should not worry about the disputes, focusing instead on living their own lives.

Wei Yao's secret schemes were naturally not known to others.

Originally, according to the plan, after Peng Wei's death yesterday before returning to the city, he would have shouted and led his troops to attack Xuanbei City after Peng Wei's corpse had been returned.

Unfortunately, something unexpected happened.

The confidant he had bought off from Peng Wei's side had not sent back any messages.

Last night, he arranged for master assassins to go to Ping'an Temple to eliminate Peng Wei, but all were gone by almost noon.

Without Peng Wei's corpse, he could not send troops, or he would be considered crazy. After all, he had just taken it upon himself to let Wei Hao compete against Su Liang, the Martial Arts Champion of Qian Country, losing a

city in the process, and had Peng Wei to negotiate. Why would he attack without reason?

Wei Yao was extremely anxious.

“Damn it! Damn it! Damn it!” Wei Yao paced back and forth in the study, his face grim. “What the hell is going on? Why is that old bastard’s life so tenacious? Or is there a master protecting him?”

Wei Hao sneered, “In my opinion, Grandfather might have already lost trust in Father long ago. He has a very powerful old friend whom I’ve seen once before. Perhaps he’s by Grandfather’s side now!”

Wei Yao’s face stiffened, “Could it be that he already knows it’s us...”

Wei Hao shook his head, “Father, you’re too nervous. Even if Grandfather knew, what of it? This is a family matter, and there’s no enmity involved. Who else could he rely on but you, since his son is disabled? When the time comes, let Mother come out and cry a few times, and I’ll kneel down and beg for mercy on your behalf. Won’t the old man just let bygones be bygones? Moreover, would he dare to publicize such a thing? If Father gets in trouble, the Peng Family has no good outcome either!”

Wei Yao nodded repeatedly, “You’re right! But I’m just not willing! It was a great opportunity – the people of Qian Country all believed we were short of food and wouldn’t dare to fight!”

Wei Hao sighed, “Isn’t it? It’s all thanks to that old man Grandfather. He’s so old, he should just enter the earth early and let us go our own course! He should be able to understand that I am the most important person to him!”

“You have the surname Wei, and he has the surname Peng. Loving you? It’s nothing but a pretense!” Wei Yao said coldly.

Wei Hao agreed, “If Father hadn’t had Uncle crippled back in the day, Grandfather wouldn’t have cultivated Father, and all the good things would have gone to his own biological son first! If he has to choose between me and Peng Fan now, of course he will choose Peng Fan! So don’t blame us for being heartless!”

“Enough about these useless things!” Wei Yao frowned. “For now, we can only wait for that old bastard to come back and then decide what to do.” “Father, do you know what my biggest regret is?” Wei Hao asked.

Wei Yao shook his head, “What?”

Wei Hao’s eyes flashed wickedly, “Originally, if we captured Xuanbei City, what I wanted to do most is to catch the woman who defeated me that night, rape her first and then kill her. Hahaha! I can’t help but feel excited thinking about her face!”

Hearing this, Wei Yao clenched his fists, “No matter what, we have to get rid of Peng Wei, frame Qian Country, and only when our plan succeeds can you do whatever you want!”

What the Wei father and son did not know was that their “conspiracy” was overheard by someone.

Knocking sounded on the door.

“Who is it?” Wei Yao’s expression tensed.

A voice from his trusted attendant came from outside, “Master, there is news from Ping’an Temple!”

Wei Yao’s expression changed, “Come in quickly!”

The door opened, and as Wei Yao looked at the person entering, he eagerly asked, “What happened? Is Peng Wei dead?”

“Dead,” Ning Jing said softly.

“Great!” Wei Yao and Wei Hao, father and son, high-fived each other, their expressions excited.

Ning Jing moved quickly, taking advantage of their unguarded moment, and pierced both their necks with a sword!

Ning Jing’s attack came from Wei Hao’s back, facing Wei Yao. Wei Yao stared at him in disbelief, “You...”

Ning Jing continued with his previous words, “I mean, you.”

‘Who are you...’ Wei Hao was already out of breath, and Wei Yao spat blood non-stop.

Ning Jing didn’t answer, pulled out his sword, and the father and son collapsed together. Wei Yao struggled for a moment, opened his mouth wide, spewed a mouthful of blood, twisted his neck, and stopped moving.

Ning Jing threw down the sword in his hand.

It was indeed the weapon of Wei Yao’s trusted subordinate. And that subordinate was arranged by his secret lover from Yin Country.

Ning Jing quietly left the General Mansion, took off his disguise, removed his mask, and walked into a small shop with ease.

“Ah, the young master is here again.” The old man selling meat still remembered Ning Jing’s previous visit a few days ago, and he cheerfully asked him what he would like today.

“Two pieces of smoked meat,” Ning Jing said.

“Alright!” The old man weighed the meat and told him the price.

Ning Jing paid the money, said no need for change, and took a clean basket. He placed the smoked meat inside, covered it with a cloth, and left the shop, walking through the main street of South City toward Ping’an Temple.

By the time Ning Jing left the city, two monks who had rushed to deliver news from Ping’an Temple had already gone to the General Mansion.

Finally, in the afternoon, Su Liang saw Ning Jing return.

“How did it go?” Su Liang asked hurriedly.

Ning Jing nodded slightly.

Su Liang's eyes lit up and he smiled, "I knew it, nothing can go wrong with the Great God taking action. What kind of assassin is Yan Shiba? Compared to you, he is weak."

"I will tell Yan Shiba," Ning Jing said.

Su Liang was very composed, "I dare say that to her face. Is Wei Yao's head in that basket?"

Ning Jing handed the basket over, and Su Liang took a look. He coughed lightly,

"Alright, alright, I understand. After sending Elder Peng away and returning to Xuanbei City, I'll make you something delicious."

Putting the basket down, Su Liang said, "I'm off to tell Elder Peng that his beloved son-in-law is dead."

Ning Jing spoke up, "I also killed Wei Hao."

Just as Su Liang was about to leave, he paused and came back, closed the door tightly, and asked Ning Jing with furrowed brows, "This wasn't part of the plan you discussed with that old man, was it?"

Ning Jing nodded, "He said not to harm Wei Hao."

"Did you find out that Wei Yao and Wei Hao, father and son, conspired to harm Elder Peng?" Su Liang frowned, "In that case, his death is not unjust, but that old man will probably be very sad because he was once his beloved grandson, but in the end, he turned out to be a heartless and ungrateful person."

After speaking, Su Liang planned to go and explain to Peng Wei. As he was about to leave, he came back again, picked up a cooled steamed bun from the covered bowl on the table, and handed it to Ning Jing, "This is breakfast I saved for you. The taste is pretty good.."

Chapter 203: 203. Just let her go.

After Su Liang finished speaking of Wei Hao's death, she saw the light in Peng

Wei's eyes dim instantly as he lay there in a daze, not asking any questions, slowly closing his eyes.

"Old Peng, my brother personally heard the father and son conspiring against you, and Wei Yao himself admitted that he harmed your son. I need not say more about their intentions. Wei Hao is just like his father, they both want to see your dead body so they can step on you and seek the better future they want." Su Liang said softly.

A clear tear slid down Peng Wei's cheek.

Su Liang sighed deeply, "My brother is a straightforward man who clearly distinguishes right from wrong. He did not inform you about killing Wei Hao.

But even if we did not cooperate in this way today, as a general of Qian Country, I would not show any mercy or pity to the Wei family father and son, nor would I spare a person who deserves death for your sake. They do not even seek the interests of Liang Country but their own selfish desires and inflated ambitions, plunging countless common people into the flames of war.”

As she finished, Su Liang stood up, “I’ve said everything I need to say. If you can’t accept Wei Hao’s death and blame it on us, then I have nothing more to say. Someone should soon come and take you back to South Wind City.”

Su Liang reached the door when Peng Wei on the bed opened his eyes and called out to her, his voice sounding much older and tired, “Young girl...” Su Liang turned around and came back, standing by the bed.

Peng Wei’s eyes shimmered with tears as he looked at Su Liang, “Actually, after the assassination attempt yesterday, I knew that the person who wanted to kill me was not only Wei Yao, but also my grandson, who must have known about it.”

There were many things that Su Liang didn’t know, but Peng Wei, who was now looking back, understood them all clearly.

He was not unaware of his grandson’s character.

But after all, he had watched him grow up and they shared blood ties, so Wei Hao knew how to act spoiled in front of Peng Wei.

For Peng Wei to personally say “Kill Wei Hao as well” to Ning Jing was absolutely impossible.

If Wei Hao were still alive, Peng Wei would be willing to give him another chance to reform, even if it was not rational.

Now, Peng Wei had no choice but to face reality.

And deep in his heart, beneath the pain, he even felt a sense of relief.

If Wei Yao was dead and Wei Hao alive, Peng Wei did not know if he could ever face him without any grudge in the future.

After all these events, Peng Wei felt the most indebted to his son and grandson. If it hadn’t happened today, Wei Yao could still have remorselessly harmed Peng Qian, and Wei Hao might have done the same to Peng Fan...

Peng Wei sighed deeply, “Young girl, you’re not doing this for me, so I have to thank you both publicly and privately. Without you, I would have died yesterday and couldn’t have survived today. How could I blame you for doing the right thing?”

Su Liang sighed lightly, “If Old Peng thinks so, then I am relieved.”

“No matter what, you’re my lifesaver, and you’ve prevented Liang Country from falling into misfortune again.” Peng Wei looked serious, “I promise to do what I’ve said. As long as I’m alive, I’ll do my best to prevent battles between Liang and Qian countries.”

Su Liang nodded, “I believe that.”

When Su Liang returned to the adjoining room, she saw Ning Jing lying on the small bed, feigning sleep.

She coughed lightly, "Great God, I've slept in that bed."

"Mm." Ning Jing did not open his eyes, and his voice sounded inexplicably more languid, "I slept in it last night too."

Su Liang was stunned, "You slept in it last night and then restored it to its original state?"

"What's wrong with that?" Ning Jing countered.

Seeing that Ning Jing seemed to be asleep, Su Liang took out the four treasures of the study from the medicine box with a light touch.

She wrote out a prescription for Peng Wei.

In addition to the prescription, Su Liang also gave him all the ready-to-use medicinal herbs she had.

"Young girl, that sugar..." Peng Wei was a little embarrassed.

Su Liang gave Peng Wei the small bottle of sugar pills she had brought and casually said a lucky phrase, "I hope the old gentleman will have peace, joy, happiness, and sweetness in the future."

Peng Wei looked moved, "Such a good girl, what a pity she's not from our family..."

Su Liang: ...

When Su Liang returned to the adjacent room once more, she had just sat down when she heard footsteps outside.

Through the crack of the window, Su Liang saw Master Pu Qing leading a group of Liang Country soldiers into the courtyard.

"Old General Peng!" "My old bones have a big life, I won't die."

"Who did it?"

"It was the two I brought with me. They confessed that they were bought by Wei Yao's original concubine from Yin Country for a large amount of money."

"Damn! That bitch! She must have been the one who caused the deaths of General Wei and Young Master Wei!"

"You... What did you say?"

"Today, General Wei and Young Master Wei were assassinated at the General's Mansion, both died. Old General, you must hold on!"

"Old General!"

"Old General!"

"Quickly come over, carry the old general away, and find a doctor!"

The noise from the neighboring room finally subsided after a series of chaotic footsteps faded away.

Su Liang looked at Ning Jing, who opened his eyes, sat up, got out of bed, and tidied up the beddings.

“You didn’t sleep?” Su Liang stood up and put the stationery into the medicine box.

Ning Jing shook his head, “It was too noisy. Let’s go.”

Su Liang carried the medicine box on her back, and Ning Jing picked up the basket. Just as they were about to leave the courtyard, they saw Master Pu Qing again.

“Are you two going down the mountain?” Master Pu Qing asked.

Su Liang nodded, “Yes, it’s time to go back. I’ll pass on the letter you wrote for

Cheng Yun when I return to the capital.”

Master Pu Qing nodded, “Thank you, Benefactor Wen. I have a small gift for you, I hope you will accept it.”

As he said this, Master Pu Qing took out a book from his pocket and handed it to Su Liang.

Su Liang took it.

It was a very worn-out book. Only half of the cover remained, many of the interior pages were damaged, the paper yellowed, and the writing faint.

“This is a medical scripture I obtained many years ago by chance. I give it to you, Benefactor Wen, in the hope that it will be useful to you.” Master Pu Qing smiled.

Su Liang quickly thanked him, “Thank you, Master. I will study it carefully.” After putting the worn-out book into the medicine box, Su Liang and Ning Jing bid farewell to Master Pu Qing and left Ping’an Temple.

Today, Che Yun accompanied his mother to Ping’an Temple to worship and listen to Master Pu Qing’s lecture. They also ate vegetarian dishes in the temple, walked around, and were about to leave when Mother Che went to the front hall to pay her respects to the Buddha one more time.

Che Yun knelt and prayed beside her, listening to his mother muttering, “Protect my son,” he restrained his eyes, stood up, and helped his mother up, “Mother, let’s go.”

As soon as they left the front hall, Che Yun saw two people walking not far away, he found them strangely familiar.

“Yun’er, what are you looking at?” Mother Che asked.

Che Yun withdrew his gaze, shook his head and said, “Nothing, I mistook them for someone else. Let’s go.”

But he actually hadn’t made a mistake. He saw Su Liang, or more precisely, the “Wen Liang” siblings.

From the day Peng Wei left Xuanbei City, Che Yun hadn’t seen Su Liang again. He heard from Lin Bojun that she was arranged by Xing Ji to carry out some secret tasks outside the city.

“It’s too mysterious.” Che Yun thought to himself and unintentionally spoke it out loud.

Mother Che asked again, and Che Yun found an excuse to change the subject.

After Su Liang and Ning Jing went down the mountain, they found their horses, which they had left at the foot of the mountain the day before, and rode back to Xuanbei City.

After entering the city, the two secretly returned to the General’s Mansion.

“Uncle Xing might be here, you should hide first.” As soon as Su Liang finished speaking, Ning Jing disappeared.

They didn’t want Xing Ji to know that Ning Jing had come because they couldn’t let him know that Ning Jing was a master, fearing that he would connect it to Gu Ling.

Lin Bojun wouldn’t think like this because he had known Ning Jing for a long time and knew about his martial arts skills last year.

Su Liang, carrying a basket and a medicine box, walked into the courtyard and saw Xing Ji and Lin Bojun sitting and playing chess in the courtyard, obviously waiting for her.

“Xiaoliang!” As soon as Lin Bojun saw Su Liang, his face lit up with joy, and he threw down the chess pieces to greet her, “Are you alright?” Xing Ji looked behind Su Liang, but no one else came in.

“How’s it going? Did everything go smoothly?” Xing Ji asked Su Liang.

Su Liang smiled, “Everything went smoothly. There will be news soon that Wei Yao and Wei Hao have been assassinated and died, and Peng Wei has been seriously injured.”

Xing Ji was taken aback, “Wei Hao too...”

In his understanding, if Su Liang was working with Peng Wei to kill Wei Yao, Peng Wei probably wouldn’t agree to kill his own grandson as well. Su Liang nodded, “Like father, like son.”

“It must be that mushroom-picker who took matters into his own hands, right?” Xing Ji quickly guessed.

Su Liang shrugged, “Can’t help it, he’s a chivalrous man who hates evil, so when he sees someone who deserves to die, he just takes care of it.” “What did Peng Wei say?” Xing Ji asked.

Su Liang shook his head, “No need to worry, the old man is a reasonable person. He was just blinded by his emotions before. He has thought it through and accepted the reality.”

“That’s good.” Xing Ji breathed a sigh of relief, subconsciously reaching out to

pat Su Liang on the shoulder, but then changed direction halfway and patted Lin Bojun instead, “If Peng Wei takes control in Liang Country, it will be a good thing for us.”

“However, he is old and injured, so if he’s summoned back to the capital city by the royal family, he won’t have a choice.” Su Liang didn’t say it to Peng Wei’s face, but he

didn't really believe in Peng Wei's promise. Because everything hinges on whether Peng Wei can make the decisions.

"Yeah!" Xing Ji sighed, "But getting rid of Wei family's father and son who colluded with Yin Country is always a good thing. You deserve a big credit for this!"

Su Liang laughed, "Of course. Uncle Xing, please write a memorial to the emperor quickly. I've worked hard these days, and since Liang Country and Qian Country can't go to war in the short term, I want to ask the emperor for a month's leave to visit my hometown."

Xing Ji was not surprised and nodded with a smile, "Absolutely, I support you.

You've done so much lately; you definitely deserve a break. You've lost weight."

Lin Bojun asked, "Xiaoliang, are you going back to Su Family Village? Do you still have relatives there?"

Su Liang nodded, "My family is there, so of course I have relatives, as well as some friendly neighbors. I mainly want to take a break in a different environment. "

Lin Bojun sighed, "If the emperor's decree doesn't come, my wedding will have to be postponed."

Before leaving the capital city, the three Lin brothers had already settled their marriages.

According to the order of their birth, Lin Boyan's wedding was in March, and by now, he was already married. Lin Bojun and Su Liang both missed the wedding wine.

Lin Bojun's own wedding was scheduled for the end of April, and today was already April 15th. It would take him several days to get back to the capital city.

Xing Ji had previously asked the emperor to let Lin Bojun return to the capital city to get married first, but there was still no reply.

"Second Brother Lin, don't worry. Maybe there will be news today." Su Liang comforted Lin Bojun.

As soon as the words were spoken, a voice came from the entrance to the courtyard, "Someone has arrived from the capital city." Xing Ji straightened up, and Lin Bojun's eyes instantly lit up.

The two hurried off to the military camp.

Su Liang didn't care who or what message came from the capital city. He brought the smoked meat into the kitchen and then went back to his room to change clothes.

By the time Su Liang came out again, the kitchen was already smoking, and Ning Jing was lighting the fire.

"What do you want to eat?" Su Liang rolled up his sleeves.

Although claiming herself to have worked hard, she actually felt a bit guilty because most of the tasks still relied on Ning Jing.

"Guess." Ning Jing said only two words.

“That’s a lot, but the ingredients are limited, so we’ll just make do with whatever we have.” Su Liang remarked that Ning Jing’s taste was quite picky, liking only delicious things...

Anyway, there was nothing that Ning Jing didn’t love to eat that Su Liang made.

Ning Jing lit the fire, and Su Liang made four dishes and a soup, and specifically cooked a separate bowl of fried egg white soup noodles for Ning Jing.

The two sat in the room, closed the door, and opened half of the window so that Su Liang could be seen from the outside.

“Thank you, Great God, for making my mission to Xuanbei City so smooth.” Su Liang raised her glass filled with water.

Ning Jing’s cup was filled with alcohol; she picked it up, didn’t clink with Su Liang, took a sip, and put it down, “After returning home, practice martial arts well. I can’t protect you forever.”

Su Liang agreed, “I know. In case you get injured or sick one day, I’ll have to protect you.”

Ning Jing paused with the chopsticks in hand, glanced at Su Liang indifferently, and said nothing.

Su Liang had lunch at Ping’an Temple and was not hungry now. She just accompanied Ning Jing to eat a little bit.

“Today, Uncle Xing sent a document to the capital city, and after the Emperor responds, it will take us about half a month to go back,” Su Liang sighed. “I’ve missed Lin Big Brother’s wedding wine, and I probably won’t be able to attend Lin Second Brother’s either. Yu Jin will definitely pinch me. Fortunately,

Xueqing’s wedding is in the middle of June, so we have time.”

There wasn’t much of each dish made by Su Liang, and Ning Jing finished eating all of them.

As soon as she put down her chopsticks, she heard Lin Bojun’s excited voice from outside, “Xiaoliang, I’m going back to the capital to get married!” Su Liang was not surprised.

Ning Jing went into the neighboring study room and opened the door. She saw Lin Bojun rushing in with a beaming face.

“I was originally thinking that if the situation here was not good, I would definitely stay and help Uncle Xing. Fortunately, you were here. I didn’t expect things to go so smoothly, and I feel like I came here for nothing, as there was no place for me to use my martial arts!” Lin Bojun said with a full-faced smile, deeply bowing to Su Liang, “The Emperor would allow me to go back to the capital because you have solved almost all the troubles. Second Brother must thank you a lot!”

Su Liang smiled and said, “No need to be polite. Tell Yu Jin that I couldn’t make it to your wedding wine, and the next time we meet, ask her to pinch me a bit lighter. ”

Lin Bojun laughed loudly and promised to convey the message.

Su Liang went back to his room to grab something and handed it to Lin Bojun, "This was given to me by Master Pu Qing of Ping'an Temple to deliver to Little Monk Cheng Yun of Huguo Temple. Second Brother, you'll be going back first, so please help me bring this over."

Lin Bojun took it and promised to deliver it.

Before long, Lin Bojun set off for the capital with his followers.

In the evening, the news of Nan Feng's city lord, Wei Yao, and his eldest son's assassination and death reached North Xuan City.

Some generals of Nan Feng City originally wanted to keep the news secret, but now that Peng Wei was in charge, he said that Qian Country wouldn't attack, and if they did, it would be falling for the schemes of those traitorous dogs in Yin Country.

Peng Wei ordered that the army of Liang Country withdraw from Nan Feng City as soon as possible according to the original plan, and complete the handover with Qian Country before discussing the details of peaceful coexistence.

The latest royal intention of Liang Country was also to avoid war and increase trade between the two countries.

On that day, Xing Ji submitted a document explaining the changes in Liang Country and asked for Su Liang's vacation.

When the time came, Xing Ji sent Su Liang and Che Yun with troops to take over Nan Feng City and spent several days reorganizing the defense arrangements.

The army of Qian Country was still in Xuanbei City, with only 20,000 troops arranged in Nan Feng City.

Xing Ji decided to station Che Yun in Nan Feng City after admitting defeat, so he brought his parents over.

Su Liang continued treating Che's father with acupuncture every other day.

At her suggestion, Xing Ji decided to start building an official road between Nan Feng City and Xuanbei City.

In this way, if there were a war in the future, the troops and horses could get there faster if the road conditions were good.

The effects of the new training method were evident in a short time.

Xing Ji organized a contest between the soldiers trained in the new and old methods, and overall, the physical fitness of the former was better than the latter.

This way, no one would object, as all the soldiers began training with the new method.

On the day Xing Ji's document arrived in the capital, the Wan family father and son finally returned to the capital as well.

Wan Cong had people carry Wan Shan into the palace to report back.

Duanmu Yi saw them and didn't make things difficult for them, he only said that his original intention was for them to go back to the capital to rest for a while and reunite with their families.

As Wan Cong listened, he felt a great deal of hatred but could only respectfully give his thanks and asked to kowtow to the Empress Dowager.

"My mother is not feeling well these past few days. You should go back and rest first. I will arrange for Imperial Physician Gao to treat your father," Duanmu Yi said calmly.

"Thank you greatly for the Emperor's grace," Wan Cong lowered his head even further.

He didn't dare to ask, and Duanmu Yi didn't intend to tell him either.

Wan Lin, who had been secretly executed by Xing Ji's men, had already been sent back to the capital.

The Empress Dowager was truly sick, and the Empress was also sick, crying and demanding to see Duanmu Yi every day.

In the cold palace, the former Crown Prince Duanmu Cheng was also sick.

But Duanmu Yi was in a good mood. As Wan Cong thanked him and took Wan Shan away, Duanmu Yi suddenly smiled and picked up a document, "You guys probably don't know yet, right? General Wei of Liang Country is dead, and Su Liang won a city back for Qian Country. To reward her, I'm going to let her go out and have some fun for a while. That girl is young, and although she is steady in handling affairs, she also loves playing, haha."

Upon hearing this, Wan Cong felt so enraged that he almost spat blood.

After they left, Duanmu Yi put down the document and muttered to himself, "How could she be a spy if she's this capricious? She's so capable, I'll just let her be.."

Chapter 204: 204. Going Home

It was late April.

Xing Yusheng took Lin Xueqing to Duke Qin's Mansion early in the morning, and they happened to bump into Old Master Qin as he was leaving.

He had agreed with Lin Shuzhi to go fishing at a beautiful lakeside spot in the city.

"Miss Qing, has your second brother sent a letter?" Old Master Qin asked cheerfully.

Lin Xueqing shook her head, "There have been no letters these days. However, my eldest brother said that the emperor has approved my second brother's return to the capital to get married."

"He'd better not be late; otherwise, I'll have to hit him with my cane for making Yujin worry all the time," Old Master Qin said with a smile, walking out the door with steady steps, not needing anyone to support him.

When Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing found Qin Yujin, she was sitting in a pavilion in the Garden, gazing blankly and pulling at a flower, with petals scattered all over the ground.

Lin Xueqing took the flower away, "It didn't offend you."

Qin Yujin came to her senses, looked at Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing, and said with a hint of disappointment, "You guys are here."

Xing Yusheng chuckled lightly, "Qing'er, I told you, cousin wants to see someone other than us."

Lin Xueqing glared at Xing Yusheng, "You might as well go to Xuanbei City." Xing Yusheng was stunned, "Why should I go?"

"You can try to experience my second brother and Yujin's feelings of being separated in different places, and then you won't make sarcastic remarks." Lin Xueqing said, looking at Qin Yujin's expression.

"Exactly." Qin Yujin nodded, "I think Xueqing is right."

Xing Yusheng cleared his throat and stood up, "Alright then, I will leave for Xuanbei City today and see if my father and Su Liang need any help. I'm going, Qing'er, don't stop me."

As Xing Yusheng walked out of the pavilion, his pace got slower and slower.

Qin Yujin and Lin Xueqing covered their mouths and giggled while watching his retreating figure.

"How many more steps do you think Cousin Xing will take before turning back?" Qin Yujin asked softly.

Lin Xueqing put on an arrogant face, "Who cares! If he wants to leave, let him."

Of course, it was Xing Yusheng who lost. Hearing Lin Xueqing's words, he turned helplessly, "Qing'er, are you really willing to let me go?"

"Your father left, Su Liang left, my second brother left, why can't you just leave?" Lin Xueqing retorted.

Xing Yusheng conceded, "You have a point, but I am not cut out to be a general. Going there would only add to the chaos, so I cannot go." He then turned back.

After sitting back down in front of Lin Xueqing, Xing Yusheng said with a smile, "But when we get married, if Qing'er ever wants to go to the northern region for fun, we can go together."

Qin Yujin stood up sadly, "I won't disturb you two."

Lin Xueqing quickly grabbed her, "Let's all go to Su Liang's house together!" Qin Yujin frowned, "But she's not home."

"Brother Ning is, though. My eldest brother told me he has a day off today, so he must be at home. Su Liang has been away for so long, and we haven't visited Brother Ning." Lin Xueqing said.

"Ning Jing..." Qin Yujin hesitated, "I feel like he doesn't like noise, and without Liang, he probably won't welcome us, right?"

“No, Brother Ning is really nice. Let’s go, let’s go.” Lin Xueqing insisted, determined to take Qin Yujin out for some fun.

Qin Yujin finally gave in, agreeing to go to Su Liang’s house. There was no need to notify them in advance.

“By the way, let’s check on our mansion. A few days ago, I took Qi Yan to plant some trees; I wonder how they’re doing now,” Xing Yusheng laughed.

Lin Xueqing stepped on his foot without a word, her eyes warning him not to show off their love in front of Qin Yujin!

Xing Yusheng cleared his throat, thinking his little wife was getting more and more fierce, but also so adorable.

With Qi Yan driving, the three of them arrived at Su Mansion, unsurprised to see the gate tightly closed.

But it didn’t matter, Qi Yan climbed over the wall, opened the door, and everything was fine.

They had always entered this way when visiting before.

The Mansion was filled with trees, which were lush and beautiful this season.

When the three of them arrived at Su Liang’s courtyard, the gate and Ning Jing’s door were both open. An open book lay on the stone table in the courtyard.

“Brother Ning?” Lin Xueqing called out, but no one answered.

“He didn’t sneak out, did he?” Xing Yusheng suggested.

“If Brother Ning went out, he should have taken the book into his room in case it got wet in case it rained,” Lin Xueqing said.

Xing Yusheng immediately nodded, “You’re right. He’s probably fishing in the Garden.”

So, the three of them went to the Garden together.

From a distance, they saw someone swimming in the lake.

Xing Yusheng sighed, “I really didn’t expect that Ning, who usually seems like an immortal, would be so...lively when he’s alone at home.”

Look at that strong figure and flexible arms, like a free fish. It made Xing Yusheng want to jump in and swim a few laps too.

Lin Xueqing’s expression was strange, “Ning used to be afraid of water because of a drowning accident when he was a child.”

Qin Yujin chuckled, “It seems that he’s not afraid anymore.”

Lin Xueqing shouted towards the lake, “Brother Ning! We came to see you!”

The person in the lake suddenly raised his head and then dove down, disappearing from sight.

The three approached, but still no one surfaced.

Lin Xueqing's expression panicked, "Brother Ning, are you alright?" And then she pushed Xing Yusheng, "Quick, go in to check! Did I scare Brother Ning?"

Without a word, Xing Yusheng took off his shoes and outer clothes, just about to jump in when there was a splash on the other side of the lake. A soaking wet person with his back turned to them climbed ashore.

"Brother Ning, you're alright! You scared me to death!" Lin Xueqing patted her chest.

Qin Yujin also let out a sigh of relief and quickly turned Lin Xueqing around, avoiding looking at the impropriety.

"Ning Jing, what are you doing? Are you teasing us?" Xing Yusheng picked up the clothes on the ground, speechless.

"Who let you come uninvited? I'm going to change." Pretending to be Ning Jing, Qi Jun tried to make his voice sound colder. He left quickly without letting Xing Yusheng's group see his face.

Xing Yusheng and the others didn't suspect anything, thinking that Ning Jing was not welcoming them, even complained a little that he wasn't a good friend."

Just as the three were about to sit in the pavilion and wait for Ning Jing to get ready, they heard Qi Yan's exclamation from not far away, "Ajun?"

"Has he gone mad? Ajun went to Xuanbei City with Su Liang!" Xing Yusheng blurted out, then subconsciously looked at "Ning Jing's" back. His eyes narrowed, and he rushed out of the pavilion.

Qin Yujin and Lin Xueqing looked at each other, both not knowing what had happened.

Qi Yan blocking Qi Jun head-on was something Qi Jun hadn't anticipated. As twins, even without seeing Qi Jun's face, Qi Yan could recognize him.

And at this moment, Xing Yusheng had also finally realized that something was wrong.

Blocked on both sides, Qi Jun had no choice but to give up pretending, confessing honestly, he looked at Qi Yan and weakly said, "Brother." Turning around, he called out to Xing Yusheng, "Master."

Xing Yusheng looked at Qi Jun, who had just emerged from the water, with disguise traces still visible on his face. Because he had soaked for too long, some of the Disguise Medicine had become ineffective, so it was obvious that it was Qi Jun.

This was also why he hid as soon as he heard Lin Xueqing's voice and deliberately raced ms DaCK to tnem when ne surracea.

Xing Yusheng was almost laughing in anger, "What did you call me? I dare not accept. You're really something! I asked you to go to Xuanbei City with Su Liang, but you never left the capital and didn't even give us a word! Do we even exist in your eyes?"

Qi Jun quickly explained, "It was Master Ning who asked me to stay in the capital pretending to be him, because he wanted to go to Xuanbei City with Miss Su. I have been following Miss Su's orders."

Xing Yusheng snorted, "Did Su Liang personally tell you to keep this from me?"

Qi Jun immediately nodded, "Yes!"

Xing Yusheng was baffled, "Those two! I kindly helped arrange aid for Su Liang, and she and Ning Jing really know how to have fun! Since they can't be separated even for a day, if they don't get married and consummate when they return, this matter won't be over!"

Qi Yan kicked Qi Jun from behind, "You didn't even tell me. Wait until we get home, see how I'll deal with you!"

Qi Jun wanted to cry but had no tears. He was bored every day and didn't have much to do. Today the weather was good and there was no need to work at the Ministry of Revenue, so he just came to the garden to relax and swim. Who would have thought Su Liang's friends would suddenly miss Ning Jing and pay a visit.

Qi Jun had actually imagined many scenarios for pretending to be Ning Jing and meeting Xing Yusheng, and even practiced what to say. In the end, it was just his overthinking.

"If you don't hurry up and change your clothes, put on your disguise!" Xing Yusheng also wanted to hit Qi Jun.

Qi Yan just pulled Qi Jun away.

When Xing Yusheng returned to the pavilion, he saw Qin Yujin and Lin Xueqing looking puzzled, as they had not heard the conversation between the three men, but saw Qi Yan kicking Qi Jun.

"What happened?" Lin Xueqing frowned and asked.

Xing Yusheng told the truth, Ning Jing wasn't home at all, he had run away with Su Liang.

The two young ladies were dumbfounded.

After a long while, Lin Xueqing sighed, "I knew it, Brother Ning shouldn't know how to swim."

Qin Yujin couldn't help but smile, "They're so sweet! Who would dare say their fake marriage isn't real? I saw it long ago that Ning liked Liang!"

Lin Xueqing nodded repeatedly, "Of course! They used to deny it, but now we've caught them red-handed! When they're back, they should get married! If Brother Ning dares to deny it again, I'll cut ties with him!"

Xing Yusheng laughed lightly, "He probably wouldn't mind cutting ties with you."

Lin Xueqing's gaze came over, and Xing Yusheng immediately changed his tune, saying seriously, "Actually, I think the same as Qingqing."

Qin Yujin said solemnly, "We must not let any more people know about this matter, or it will be very troublesome."

If Ning Jing hadn't become an official, it would have been fine. Now he is a royal official. Impersonating him could be considered a crime to deceive the king.

However, because they discovered the secret of Su Mansion, the three of them found it quite amusing, and Qin Yujin temporarily put aside her thoughts of Lin Bojun.

This day Qi Jun didn't go to the restaurant for lunch. Instead, he enjoyed the delicious food prepared by Qin Yujin and Lin Xueqing.

The two young ladies took their role-playing seriously and enjoyed it.

Listening to Lin Xueqing calling him "Brother Ning," Qi Jun felt a bit uncomfortable, and his master's gaze was terrifying.

Before leaving, Qi Yan asked Qi Jun, "Does father know about this?"

Qi Jun shook his head, "I don't think so. I have no chance to tell father."

Qi Yan sneered, "How could father not recognize you?"

Xing Yusheng nodded in agreement.

Qi Jun thought for a moment and said, "If Miss Su and Master Ning really don't want father to know, they must have a way."

Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing sent Qin Yujin home first.

At the gate of Duke Qin's Mansion, Qin Yujin got out of the carriage and bid them farewell.

Just as Qi Yan was about to turn the carriage around and leave, he suddenly brightened up, "General Lin!"

Qin Yujin paused, turned around, and saw a tall figure striding out of her house. Wasn't it Lin Bojun, the man she had been thinking about?

Lin Bojun returned to the capital city without seeing his family first and came to Qin Mansion to tell Qin Yujin that he was back and ready to get married as promised.

However, he was informed that Qin Yujin had gone out, which left Lin Bojun quite disappointed. Just as he was about to leave, he saw Qin Yujin returning.

Qin Yujin stared blankly at Lin Bojun. Lin Bojun rushed to her side in one step, grinning, "I'm back."

Qin Yujin nodded gently, "Mhm."

"I'm back!" Lin Bojun looked at her intensely.

Qin Yujin nodded again, "I heard."

"Why don't you look at me?" Lin Bojun asked her when he saw her keeping her head down.

Qin Yujin raised her head, tears in her eyes, "What's so good about looking at you?" As she spoke, she pushed Lin Bojun away and ran into her house, lifting her skirt.

Lin Xueqing, who was leaving in the carriage, heard her brother's voice and quickly lifted the curtain, surprise and delight on her face, "Second brother!"

However, she only saw Lin Bojun chasing Qin Yujin back into the Duke's Mansion...

Xing Yusheng burst into laughter, "Qingqing, your second brother needs to coax his cousin. Let's go first!"

Lin Xueqing pouted, "It's just like second brother, not even married yet and already ignoring me. Fine, I don't care about him anymore! Let's go!" She couldn't help but laugh, "It's so nice! I know Yujin was not worried about the wedding being delayed. She was worried about second brother getting in trouble at the border. She won't be at ease until she sees him in person!"

Xuanbei City.

Su Liang had not yet received Duanmu Yi's reply, so she couldn't leave for the time being.

In the meantime, she went to Ping'an Temple again to tell Master Puqing that she had entrusted the items to a reliable person, Cheng Yun.

One day, when Su Liang went to give acupuncture treatment to Che Yun's father in Nancheng, a guest arrived at Che's house.

Su Liang and the guest looked at each other in surprise, both startled.

Che Yun looked puzzled, "You two, know each other?"

Su Liang smiled, "Do you know each other?"

Lian Shun, who had come from afar, laughed heartily, "I know, you know each other."

Su Liang didn't expect that Lian Shun, who lived far apart, and Che Yun would be good friends.

"Actually, I heard you were in Xuanbei City and came here specially to see you." Lian Shun laughed, "I just arrived and thought I'd stay with Beibei for a while."

Che Yun shook his head, exasperated.

Su Liang expressed her understanding, "You call him Che Beibei because he calls you Lian Shanshan? Makes sense."

"Haha, you guessed it!" Lian Shun, looking much healthier than when he left the capital, laughed, "You must be very curious how we met, right? Once, we both appealed to the same famous doctor. For the sake of who should go in first, we had a 'polite' exchange."

Su Liang understood. Lian Shun was for Duanmu Che, and Che Yun was for his father. As for "courtesy," it must mean becoming friends through conflict.

Che Yun sensed that Lian Shun's gaze at Su Liang was unusual, but he didn't point it out.

"Will you be staying here for a long time? How about accepting me as a little soldier?" Lian Shun half-jokingly asked Su Liang, "I feel bored after returning home. After all, the Lin Family was once a prestigious military family. I plan to revive the glory of the family!"

"I support you," Su Liang nodded. "Join the Che Beibei brothers. I'll be leaving soon."

Lian Shun was surprised, "Leaving? Going back to the capital?"

Su Liang smiled, "Yes, going back to get married. It's too far away, you guys can buy your own alcohol and drink, I won't be inviting you. Farewell." With that, Su Liang left.

Lian Shun watched Su Liang's retreating figure and sighed.

Che Yun bumped into Lian Shun, "Interested in her?"

Lian Shun's tone was faint, "Is that not allowed?"

"It's not up to me to say, she just told you herself, it's not possible!" Che Yun dragged Lian Shun back, "Stop thinking about it, I think she must really like Ning Jing. By the way, have you met Ning Jing? Is he good-looking?"

Lian Shun thought of someone and shook his head with determination, "He's only about a hundred times better looking than you, not as good as me." The two had just met and started fighting in no time.

Su Liang returned to General Mansion in Xuanbei City and told Ning Jing that Lian Shun had arrived.

"He came for you?" Ning Jing asked.

Su Liang shook her head, "He and Che Yun are good friends. They said they plan to join the army in Xuanbei City. It's good if he really has the heart to do so. He should achieve something."

This was just a minor episode, and Su Liang quickly put it out of her mind. With less to do in the army, she began to focus on practicing her skills.

The next time she saw Lian Shun was five days later when Xing Ji sent for her.

As the eldest grandson of the Old General Lin, Lian Shun's willingness to join the army was naturally welcomed by Xing Ji.

Lian Shun had a straightforward and unrestrained personality, which Xing Ji quite liked in the younger generation. He planned to cultivate Lian Shun well, so he specially submitted a memorial to the emperor.

Upon seeing Su Liang enter, Xing Ji let Che Yun and Lian Shun leave.

"Good news?" Su Liang asked.

Xing Ji nodded, "The emperor has granted you leave, but only for half a month. After staying in Su Family Village for half a month, you must set off for the capital. "

Su Liang muttered under her breath, "So stingy."

Xing Ji just laughed and didn't say anything. He knew Su Liang had a sense of propriety and didn't mind her talking like that in front of him.

"Do you know Lian Shun?" Xing Ji asked.

Su Liang nodded.

"What do you think of him?" Xing Ji asked again.

Su Liang said, "We haven't interacted much, but his character is good."

Xing Ji laughed, "Since you said so, I have to cultivate him well. Once these young people can stand on their own, I can go back to the capital to hug my grandchildren."

Su Liang bid farewell to Xing Ji, and as soon as she walked out, she saw Che Yun and Lian Shun still waiting for her not far away.

"Do you need me for something?" Su Liang asked.

Che Yun smiled, "Is General Su going to leave soon?"

Seeing Su Liang nod, Lian Shun invited her to drink alcohol together to celebrate her new journey.

"Maybe next time." Su Liang refused, "I want to set off early."

Che Yun and Lian Shun could only give up.

"I've been keeping an eye on your brother's situation, but unfortunately..." Lian Shun sighed.

Che Yun gave a bitter smile, "Thank you for your efforts. Even if there is no clue now, I believe my little brother is still alive."

"Great God? Let's go, let's go home!" Su Liang called to Ning Jing as she entered.

Ning Jing came out of the study with a bundle in hand, having already packed Su Liang's luggage.

After Su Liang rode alone out of the city, she met up with Ning Jing in the valley where they had stayed before and set off together toward Bei'an County..

Chapter 205: 205. I am going to die

As they approached Bei'an County, the weather got much warmer than before, and the flourishing vegetation showed a thriving scene.

Since leaving Su Family Village last time, until now, Su Liang finally experienced the feeling of being carefree again.

By the time they entered Feiyan Town, it was already afternoon.

Both of them dressed up as men and went to Luoyan Restaurant for a meal.

The signature dishes were still the ones that the restaurant had bought from Su Liang last time. Su Liang and Ning Jing ordered them all and the taste was quite good.

After the meal, they bought some daily necessities and took them back to the village.

At halfway, Ning Jing took the small path to avoid people, while Su Liang found a place to remove her disguise and walked on the main road alone.

Nearing the entrance of the village, Su Liang saw many people coming out of Su Family Village, dressed neatly and joyfully in groups.

She saw the heavily made-up matchmaker with bright blushes on her cheeks, talking excitedly, and swinging her handkerchief in the air, "Nowadays, which girl in our surroundings doesn't want to

marry into our Su Family Village? Even girls from the town and the county want to marry here! Our village is a blessed place; we have produced two top scholars!”

This matchmaker was the one who had arranged the marriage between the original master and Ning Jing.

In just half a year, the matchmaker had gained a lot of weight and panted while walking, clearly showing that her business was doing very well.

Someone in the village was holding a wedding ceremony today. Now, as the guests left, the matchmaker was at the village entrance to send off the relatives.

A few people noticed Su Liang, who was riding on horseback.

However, as many people leaving the village were from other villages and had come to attend the feast, no one recognized her for a while.

It wasn't until the matchmaker looked up and saw Su Liang that she let out a shriek, which scared everyone. Then she opened her huge mouth, the powder on her face falling off and her thickly drawn eyebrows shaking, her eyes narrowed into slits, looking exaggerated as if performing in an opera. She shouted in a roundabout way, “Su, the Top Scholar, is home!”

In an instant, Su Liang became the focal point, and even an old man subconsciously wanted to kneel down for her, as it was rumored that she had become a high official in the capital city.

Su Liang dismounted, reached out to support the old man, smiled, and said, “I just came back to take a look. There is no need for formalities.”

After making sure the old man was steady on his feet, Su Liang led her horse through the village entrance's archway under the eager gaze of the villagers, and her name was mentioned again and again.

The villagers all recognized Su Liang, and before long, the news of the Martial Arts Champion's return spread.

When Su Liang first crossed over to this world, it was autumn, and the barren season was soon upon them.

Now, it was summer, and the stream running through the village had risen a bit. The clear water and lush aquatic plants were accompanied by children playing by the stream.

Green mountains, clear waters, peace, and tranquility.

Su Liang saw the bridge that had once been destroyed by a rainstorm and subsequently repaired by Ning Jing and others.

Then, she quickly arrived at the bridge leading to her home.

A surprised call came from the opposite bank, “Liang girl?”

It was Bai Da Niang, carrying a basket and about to cross the bridge. With a beaming face, she hurried over.

“Da Niang, I'm back,” Su Liang felt very close to Bai Da Niang and her smile was as warm as ever.

Bai Da Niang looked Su Liang up and down, her expression excited, “Why are you back now? I heard from Lei Zheng that you became the Martial Arts

Champion and even became a General!”

Su Liang nodded, “Yes, His Majesty granted me leave to visit my hometown, so I came back to stay for a few days.”

“That’s wonderful!” Originally planning on going to work in the field, Bai Da Niang decided to walk home with Su Liang instead. “Where’s Young Master Ning? Didn’t he come back with you? Have you two gotten married yet?”

Su Liang shook her head, “Not yet. He didn’t come back this time.”

Qi Jun was still in the capital pretending to be Ning Jing, so they could not let anyone know that Ning Jing was in Su Family Village.

“How long will you stay this time? Will you leave soon? My two boys have been talking about you and Ning every day. I’ve grown calluses on my ears listening to them!” Bai Da Niang laughed.

“How is Zhuzi? Where are those two?” Su Liang asked.

Bai Da Niang nodded again and again, “Zhuzi is doing well, and now he’s even wilder than his brother! Thanks to your and Ning’s blessings, both our boys are studying now and are at school at this moment! ”

“Did their second uncle get married?” Su Liang chatted with Bai Da Niang about their daily lives as she saw her own front door appearing in her sight.

Mother Bai chuckled and said, “He just got married last month, to a girl from the town. As for the second one, he’s still thinking about studying and plans to take the exam next time! His in-laws are very supportive, and we don’t expect him to work and make money, so just let him be!”

Bai He once studied, but later gave up due to poverty at home and needing money for his nephew’s illness. Now that he has a family and is financially stable, he has picked up his studies and aspirations for a successful career again.

Su Liang thought it was a good thing, and it was never too late to have a dream.

Mother Bai was even happier upon hearing Su Liang’s approval. She specifically mentioned Liu Huilan, the widow Bai He once liked, saying that after marrying the carpenter from Liu Family Village, she was living a good life and was now pregnant, rumored to be having a chubby little boy.

“That’s nice.” Su Liang smiled.

“Little Tiger’s mother is also pregnant, and we’re all hoping for a little girl this time!” Mother Bai was much more talkative than before.

Su Liang hurriedly congratulated her.

When they arrived at the front gate, it was locked and covered in dust. Mother Bai cleaned it off and said to Su Liang, “Since it’s just you returning, it’s not worth cooking. Just come to my house and eat whatever you want, I’ll cook it for you!”

Su Liang whispered, “Actually, I have a guard with me, but he doesn’t like meeting people.”

Mother Bai immediately understood, “Alright, you decide. If you want to come to my house, you’re welcome anytime. Little Tiger’s mother doesn’t work in the fields anymore and is at home. I’ll go back now and tell your uncle; he always talks about you!”

Without entering the house, Mother Bai left with her basket.

Su Liang opened the front gate, brought in the horse, and closed the gate behind her.

At the same time, she heard the sound of the back door opening, knowing that Ning Jing had also arrived. He took a longer detour.

Standing in the courtyard, Su Liang felt everything was so familiar.

The pine tree planted last year didn’t seem to have grown much, but it had “fattened” a bit and had a few more shades of fresh green.

Various weeds had grown in the sparsely filled courtyard, some of them quite tall. Su Liang bent down to pluck a foxtail grass and wrapped it around her finger.

She unloaded the items from the horse’s back and led it to the backyard. There, she saw the vegetable patch, unattended and full of weeds, but also filled with some vegetables that had grown from last year’s fallen seeds.

There were two round and purplish eggplants that were already ripe.

The pumpkin vines had climbed onto the roof. Tender green pumpkins hung from the tendrils, shining in the sunlight as if their damp fuzz was gently dancing in the wind.

Su Liang and Ning Jing tied up their respective horses in the stable, and she excitedly shared with Ning Jing the happy news she had learned from Mother Bai.

After listening, Ning Jing nodded slightly, “That’s nice. I saw a lot of mushrooms in the forest at the foot of the mountain.”

Su Liang chuckled, “That’s also good news. Let’s clean up the house first, then go pick them and make chicken stew.”

By the time the two returned to the front yard, they each carried the ingredients originally placed on Ning Jing’s horse, and Ning Jing also held a freshly picked large eggplant in his hand.

The kitchen was dusty, needing cleaning. They placed the ingredients under the eaves to avoid sunlight.

Ning Jing took a bucket, planning to go to the backyard and fetch water to clean the kitchen first.

Su Liang had a foxtail grass still wrapped around her finger. She rolled up her sleeves, preparing to pull out the weeds at the kitchen door first.

At that moment, they suddenly heard the sound of the door opening from the room that had initially been a firewood room but was later cleaned up for Yan Shiba's stay. This abruptly changed the previously relaxed and happy atmosphere.

Su Liang turned around, thinking it was Yan Shiba just coming in.

However, the person who came out of the room was not Yan Shiba. Ning Jing furrowed his brows and called out, "Uncle Liang."

The skinny, gray-clothed old man's eyes swept over Su Liang's face, and upon seeing Ning Jing, his expression brightened, "Young Master!"

"Why are you here again?" Ning Jing asked the old man.

The old man glanced at Su Liang again, "I initially planned to go to Qian Country's capital city to find the Young Master. I just happened to pass by here, so I decided to take a rest."

Su Liang understood from the old man's gaze that they wanted to talk privately, asking her to leave.

She went to Ning Jing's side, took the bucket from him, and said, "You two talk, I'll go fetch water."

Watching her figure disappear into the backyard, the old man came over and looked at Ning Jing. "Young Master has lost a lot of weight."

Ning Jing shook his head slightly, "I haven't."

"Let's go inside and talk," the old man said.

As the two entered the room, the old man looked outside and closed the door.

"Sit down, Young Master," the old man pointed to the only chair.

"I don't want to sit," Ning Jing refused. "Haven't I told you before? I don't want Uncle Liang to come here again."

"It's a coincidence," the old man explained. "I was going to the capital city of

Qian Country, and I just happened to pass by and wanted to see if Young Master was still living here. What if the Ning Jing in the capital was an imposter? I didn't expect you to come back today!"

"What do you want with me?" Ning Jing asked.

"Does Su Liang know about your identity?" the old man lowered his voice.

"You don't need to worry about that. Answer my question." Ning Jing's voice was slightly cold.

The old man sighed, "Always hiding like this is not a long-term solution, Young Master. Why not come back to Liang Country with me? Over there, you can walk around openly and do whatever you want, without having to put yourself in such a difficult position!"

Ning Jing shook his head, "I've already said it before."

“But...” the old man hesitated, and after a moment, he bent his knee and knelt in front of Ning Jing. He raised his hand and slapped himself hard, “I should die! King Yue found me and asked about Young Master’s whereabouts. Seeing his earnest longing, I...”

Seeing Ning Jing’s eyes turn cold, the old man quickly said, “Young Master has a grudge against King Yue, but he truly cares about you. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have asked me to bring you to him. I can assure you that he never intended to use you for any ulterior motives!”

“Just leave, I don’t want to see you again,” Ning Jing said coldly.

“Young Master...” The old man’s face looked bitter. “I’m doing all this for your own good! Are you bewitched by that woman? She hid herself so deeply before; her motives must be significant. She might betray you someday!”

Ning Jing’s eyes narrowed slightly, “Get out! I won’t say it a second time!”

The old man’s eyes dimmed, and he slowly stood up. “It’s all my fault for doing something that displeased Young Master. I’ll leave now and tell King Yue that you don’t want to be disturbed.”

As the old man finished speaking, he left the room, walking slowly, and glancing back three times at each step. However, he didn’t hear Ning Jing call for him and left with a disappointed look.

Su Liang returned from fetching water in the backyard just in time to see the old man’s figure leaping over the courtyard wall. She felt that something must have happened, but she didn’t eavesdrop on Ning Jing’s conversation with the old man.

“What did Uncle Liang want with you?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing’s expression was calm, “It’s nothing.”

Not believing that it was nothing, Su Liang was surprised that Ning Jing intended to hide it from her. However, she didn’t pursue the matter, and carried the water bucket to clean the kitchen.

Ning Jing was weeding the courtyard.

After Su Liang tidied up the kitchen, she heard a knock on the door. She opened it and saw two little boys shouting for her in unison, “Sister Su Liang!”

Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi, the two brothers, had grown taller. They looked different after schooling, wearing identical blue shirts, carrying small satchels, and each having one hand behind their back.

With a smile, Su Liang rubbed their heads and said, “You’ve both grown up.”

Then, the brothers showed the hands they had hidden behind their backs, revealing two bunches of brightly colored wildflowers to Su Liang, making her eyes light up.

“These are for you, Sister Su Liang!” Zhuzi said with a grin. “We heard you were back after school, so we rushed home. My brother even tripped on the way!”

Bai Xiaohu gently kicked Zhuzi’s leg. The boy had reached the age where he cared about his dignity and didn’t want others to know about his embarrassing moments.

Ning Jing was in the backyard. Su Liang accepted the flowers and invited the two boys in, giving them the gifts she had specially bought for them—two sets of stationery.

Bai Xiaohu and Zhuji were very happy to receive the gifts. Now they both enjoyed reading and writing and had become the “well-behaved, studious children” in the villagers’ mouths. It was a great honor for their mother, who was very proud of them.

Actually, it was because of the influence of Su Liang and Ning Jing. The couple served as role models for the brothers, who longed for the wider world even though they had never left Bei’an County. They were determined to study hard and become great people like their Sister Su Liang and Brother Ning Jing.

When the young brothers wanted to help clean the courtyard, Su Liang persuaded them to leave and promised to visit their house in the evening.

Zhuji ran out and then ran back, poking his head through the door, his eyes sparkling as he said, “Sister Su Liang, you must come!”

Su Liang smiled and nodded, “I’ll definitely go.”

Watching Zhuji leave, she took two bouquets of wildflowers to the backyard and handed one to Ning Jing, “This is for you.”

If they knew Ning Jing was back, they would definitely give him one too.

Ning Jing had removed the disguise from his face and took the bouquet of flowers, lifting them to his nose and smelling them.

Su Liang picked a tender yellow flower, bent its stem, and stood on tiptoe to tuck it into Ning Jing’s hair. Stepping back, she nodded in satisfaction, “So beautiful.”

Ning Jing couldn’t see the little flower on his head, had no notion to take it off, and didn’t get angry. Instead, he reciprocated by picking a flower for Su Liang, tucking it into her hair, and said, “Not bad.”

Su Liang snorted lightly, “Yes, you’re the most beautiful.” Then she went back to the front yard.

It wasn’t until the evening that they had cleaned the house. The two bouquets of wildflowers were placed in vases on the windowsill, and the small flowers on their heads hadn’t fallen off.

As usual, Ning Jing started the fire, and Su Liang cooked.

In the meantime, Bai Xiaohu brought a bowl with six steaming white and plump steamed buns – three with shepherd’s purse and egg filling, and three with radish and pork filling.

Compared to before, the buns alone showed that the Bai Family’s living conditions had really improved.

However, since Su Liang returned today, Bai Damu specially steamed buns with pure white flour filling and made both meat and vegetable fillings, thinking she would like them. Usually, they ate mixed flour at home, but having meat more often meant their situation had improved a lot.

Su Liang made crispy eggplant and vegetable and shredded pork noodles for

Ning Jing, which he loved. They ate dinner in their usual spots, paired with the steamed buns from Bai Damu, making Su Liang feel like she had never left.

The moonlight outside the window was perfect. After eating a steamed bun, Su Liang looked at the little yellow flower on Ning Jing's head and laughed, "Shall I make you a little yellow hairpin? I never returned the favor for the wooden hairpin you gave me."

Ning Jing nodded, but said, "I won't wear it if it's ugly."

"I'll do my best." Su Liang was determined to make Ning Jing wear it, otherwise it would be a waste of effort.

After dinner, Ning Jing cleared away the plates and went to the kitchen to wash them, also heating some water.

Su Liang stopped by the Bai Family for a while and chatted with them, then checked Bai Xiaohu's mother's pulse before returning, saying she would come back for dinner the next day.

When she came back, Su Liang laid the bed, took the damaged medical book gifted by Master Pu Qing and prepared to continue reading.

Ning Jing had bound a blank book for her, and Su Liang read and copied the legible content, completing some parts based on her own understanding. Unfortunately, there were still many contents that Su Liang was interested in, but couldn't be deciphered due to the severe damage to the pages.

Su Liang was fully focused, reading and writing. After writing three pages, she heard Ning Jing knock on the door.

"Come in." Su Liang didn't look up, busy drawing a medicinal herb she had never seen before.

Ning Jing entered and sat down, not disturbing her.

It wasn't until Su Liang finished drawing the herb, placed a bookmark, and gently closed the book on a piece of silk that she looked at Ning Jing, "What's up?"

Ning Jing nodded, his thin lips slightly parted, saying four words, "I'm going to die."

Su Liang was startled and instinctively leaned forward. Across the table, she grabbed Ning Jing's arm and took his pulse.

But soon she realized that he couldn't suddenly have a terminal illness or be poisoned, and that wasn't what he meant.

Su Liang let go of Ning Jing's wrist, threw it back, and frowned, "Did Uncle

Liang tell someone else about your identity and hiding place today?"

Ning Jing lifted his arm, which Su Liang had slammed onto the table, and straightened his sleeve. He nodded, "Yes."

Su Liang sighed deeply, "Big trouble. You have to die quickly, abandon this identity, or who knows what will happen."

More and more people are related to them now. If it was just Su Liang, it would be fine; she could hide after taking her revenge. But the Qin Family, Xing Family, Lin Family, Wan Family, and even

many people in Su Family Village couldn't bear the consequences of being implicated with the rebellious Gu Ling.

Su Liang realized that Ning Jing hadn't told her immediately during the day, not because he wanted to hide it, but because he didn't want to ruin her good mood.

However, this matter needed to be done quickly, before Su Liang returned to the capital. As long as "Ning Jing" was dead, even if someone knew that Gu Ling once impersonated him, there would be no evidence.

"It's just as well that I'm on an approved leave for half a month from the emperor. I'll stay in Su Family Village, but you'll have to work harder and go back to the capital to kill yourself." Su Liang looked helpless, "Oh, and 'frame' Duanmu Cheng. I'll take revenge on him when I return to the capital.."

Chapter 206: 206. Auspicious Day and Time

Originally thinking that the half-month vacation could be spent leisurely and comfortably, a significant accident occurred on the first day.

However, since the accident had already happened, the only thing to do was to quickly solve the "problem" and avoid leaving any hidden dangers.

After Su Liang made up her mind, Ning Jing said nothing.

She stood up, "The water is heated, you can go take a bath and then have a good sleep. We'll depart before dawn. I'll prepare some food for you to take with you."

"You," Ning Jings voice paused momentarily, "Can you stay here alone?"

Su Liang scoffed, "I know you think I'm weak, but who isn't weak compared to you? Moreover, I can't always follow you. It's settled then; you have to do that thing yourself. "

The death of "Ning Jing," in fact, was bound to happen sooner or later. After all, someone couldn't wear a human skin mask for a whole lifetime; it was just happening earlier than planned.

As for his real identity, they couldn't let more people know, so the "suicide" could only be completed by Ning Jing himself.

"Alright," Ning Jing nodded and then left.

After bathing, Ning Jing not only changed his clothes but also washed them and hung them in the backyard to dry. When he came back to the kitchen to put away the wooden tub, he saw Su Liang kneading dough.

"There's no need for you to start the fire, just go get some sleep, and I'll call you when it's time." Su Liang said without turning her head.

Ning Jing put down the wooden tub, draped his semi-dried hair over his head, and stepped out of the kitchen. Gazing at the bright moon in the sky, he sighed quietly and returned to his room.

Dawn was approaching.

After a sleepless night, Su Liang entered Ning Jing's room, "Great God? Great God, wake up?"

Upon Su Liang's third attempt at patting Ning Jing's shoulder through the quilt, he slowly opened his eyes.

"How can you sleep so heavily?" Su Liang felt a bit strange, but only muttered a sentence before telling Ning Jing that the dried food was ready and that he could set off.

After getting up and washing up, Su Liang had already set out breakfast. Piping hot white porridge, tender and fragrant egg pancakes, and mixed vegetables.

On the side, Su Liang had prepared meat buns for him to eat on the road.

"We'll need to find a corpse, right?" Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing nodded, "You don't have to worry about it."

"You're right. I won't interfere. You can handle it yourself." Su Liang yawned as she spoke.

After Ning Jing finished eating, Su Liang handed him various medicines, explaining how to use each one.

As dawn broke, Su Liang led Ning Jing's horse out of the stable and handed it to him, "You should go, be careful."

Ning Jing looked at Su Liang's sleepy face, which appeared even more soft and languid in the misty morning fog.

Ning Jing asked her, "Is there any ritual for farewells on your side?"

Su Liang was stunned for a moment, and then laughed. She took a step forward, gently hugged Ning Jing, said, "Take care," and then let go. Their bodies didn't touch intimately; it was just a slight bump of the shoulders.

Ning Jing's expression was slightly startled.

Su Liang smiled and said, "Just like this. You better hurry up and go, don't let anyone see you."

"Be careful, don't sleep too deep at night." Ning Jing said before leading the horse towards the back door.

Su Liang ran to open the back door and watched Ning Jing leave. When he looked back, she waved at him again.

Ning Jing got on his horse and headed towards the back mountain.

It was only when his figure disappeared from her sight that Su Liang turned around, closed and bolted the door, yawned, and went back to her room to sleep.

Su Liang slept till approaching noon before waking up. She opened her eyes, sat up, looked around at the familiar environment, and remembered yesterday's events. She rubbed her face and lamented, "Damn Uncle Liang, he's really not a good person!"

As Su Liang stepped out, she heard voices outside the gate.

She went to the kitchen to wash her face with cold water briefly, tidied her hair, and walked over to open the door, seeing Su Bai, Su Dakuan, and Old Master Bai sitting under a tree outside.

As soon as Su Liang appeared, the three of them got up quickly, dusted themselves off, and walked toward her with smiles on their faces.

"Uncle Bai, Grandpa Dakuan, Mr. Bai." Su Liang smiled and greeted them like always,

Su Bai's expression was full of excitement, "I just learned about your return when I came into the village this morning. I couldn't believe it! Yesterday, I had to go to the county town to meet the County Magistrate, and it got so late, so I didn't come back."

Because Su Village had produced two top scholars and opened a free school, Su Bai, as the Martial Arts Champion's uncle, had quite a reputation in front of the Town Chief and the County Magistrate.

Su Liang laughed, "I'm just coming back to rest for half a month and then I have to go back to the capital."

Upon hearing that Su Liang returned to their village from such a long distance to rest, the three of them felt warm and appreciated, knowing that she truly considered this place as her home.

Su Dakuan asked about his woodworking disciple Ning Jing.

"He's doing well. He's an official in the capital city, so he can't leave easily. I was ordered to go to the north for some work, and after finishing it, I came back to stay for a few days," Su Liang said.

Mr. Bai chuckled and said, "We all heard about it. Miss Liang defeated the number one warrior of Liang Country and helped Qian Country win back a city!"

Their eyes seemed to say: This is the girl that our Su Village has raised; she's truly extraordinary!

Su Liang invited them into her house, but they all declined, saying they just wanted to see her and would not go in.

In fact, the three of them had already arrived early, knocked on the door once without any answer, and thought Su Liang might still be sleeping, so they waited outside for a long time.

"Just wait a moment." After Su Liang spoke, she turned around and went back in, soon returning with two boxes of tea leaves.

She handed one box to Su Bai, the other to Su Dakuan, and smiled, "This is from Ning Jing."

Mr. Bai had received his share the previous night, and it was exactly the same.

They were all specifically taken from the Ning Family store in Xuanbei City by Su Liang. As the future Mistress of Ning Family, of course, she didn't need to spend any money.

“Such valuable tea leaves, we are not worthy...” Su Dakuan could tell the box’s value just by looking at the exquisite carvings on it.

“Did you forget what Ning Jing’s family does? He sells tea leaves, and this is from his own business. It didn’t cost him any money,” Su Liang said. Su Bai grinned, “The young master of Ning family still remembers us, he is truly thoughtful. ”

“Tell Mrs. Bai that I’ll be coming over for lunch,” Su Liang said.

Upon hearing Su Liang’s words, Mr. Bai’s smile caused his eyes to narrow, and he nodded like pounding garlic, “Yes! Yes! Yes! I’ll go and kill a chicken right now!” He walked away with light steps.

Su Bai promptly invited Su Liang over to his house for dinner that night.

Su Liang readily agreed, “Sure, I’ve been meaning to ask Uncle Bai about the school. ”

“Alright, I’ll have your aunt prepare a great meal, and we’ll have a couple of drinks,” Su Bai hurriedly said.

Su Dakuan, who originally had to sell his house due to illness, now lived in a cave in the back mountain with his grandson Erniu.

Thanks to Su Liang’s treatment, Su Dakuan’s health had improved significantly, and with his exquisite woodworking skills, many people were willing to hire him, especially knowing that he had once taught the Top Scholar Ning Jing woodworking.

Erniu and Little Tiger were both attending school, and after this spring, Su Dakuan had repurchased his former land and built a new house. Now, he and his grandson were living a good life, and he looked years younger.

Upon hearing Su Liang’s plans to have dinner at Bai Family and Su Bai’s home, Su Dakuan quickly invited her to come over to his house the next day, saying that he would kill a sheep for her to eat.

Su Liang waved her hand in refusal, “Don’t bother killing it now; I can’t eat that much. Why don’t we wait until the New Year? Tomorrow, when I come over, I want to ask you about some woodworking stuff. I want to make something.” Su Dakuan said it was fine for Su Liang to come over anytime.

After sending off the visitors who didn’t even enter the house, Su Liang closed the door, stretched lazily, glanced at Ning Jing’s room, and murmured to herself, “It’s about time I learned to be independent. Even without him, I have to live my life well.”

When Little Tiger and Zhuzi returned home from school and heard Su Liang was coming for lunch, they dropped their school bags and ran to call her. “Sister Su Liang, it’s lunchtime!” yelled the two kids, leaning on the door. They never expected the door to be unlocked, and they both fell to the ground with a thud.

It probably wasn’t too embarrassing for them since they fell together. They got up and happily ran up to Su Liang.

“My grandma made chicken soup!”

“We have mushrooms too! They’re delicious!”

Su Liang thought to herself, Ning Jing must be looking forward to picking mushrooms from the forest, but he’s too late. She would pick the mushrooms when she had time, dry them, and bring them back to the capital city. As Su Liang locked her door and walked to Bai’s house, Little Tiger and Zhuzi chatted on either side of her.

Su Liang asked what they had learned today, and Little Tiger recited a poem in response, swinging his head.

Zhuzi picked up a tree branch, wrote Su Liang and Ning Jing’s names on the ground, and excitedly asked, “Sister Su Liang, when are you going to have a baby? My mother is going to give us a little sister!”

Su Liang:… “Ning Jing” had to die, impossible to have a baby.

On second thought, she found the idea amusing. Even if he were alive, their relationship was far from the point of having children together.

But Zhuzi insisted that Su Liang give him an answer.

Su Liang thought about it and said, “Let’s leave it to fate.”

Upon arriving at Bai’s house, the courtyard was filled with a pleasant aroma.

Today, Bai He returned to the village with his new wife, who was very shy and didn’t know where to put her hands when she met Su Liang.

Su Liang joked, “I’m not a man, what are you afraid of?”

The new Dr. Lai Diusnea ana sala m a mosquito-like voice, “Isn’t Su Liang so beautiful, like a fairy.”

Everyone laughed.

Madam Bai specifically took Su Liang aside, saying that she would set aside a portion of the food for Su Liang to take back to her guard. Madam Bai hadn’t told her family about this.

Su Liang said it was not necessary, as she had sent the guard out with a message last night.

The lunch was lively, and Su Liang even drank a cup of alcohol brewed by Mr.

Bai.

Returning home in the afternoon, Su Liang didn’t know what to do. If Ning Jing were here, she would have practiced martial arts early in the morning, then sparred with Ning Jing before getting tired and reading.

With her planned daily routine disrupted, Su Liang decided to skip practicing and went back to her room to read, intending to resume martial arts practice the next morning.

Dinner was eaten at Su Bai’s house.

Su Bai gave Su Liang a detailed report on the village school, including the number of students, their ages, the number of teachers, and their wages.

“Since it’s free, some adults also go to learn to read. As you suggested, we even hired an old account keeper to teach us bookkeeping, and many people went to learn,”

said Su Bai with a smile. "It was agreed that if anyone committed a crime or did something bad, their children would not be allowed to attend the village school, and the village's atmosphere has improved a lot. All thanks to you."

"Actually, it's all because of Ning Jing," Su Liang said with a smile.

Su Bai asked seriously, "Are you and Young Master Ning really getting married this time? We heard that you two got engaged again in the capital city. Some people even said that if it weren't for Ning Jing, you would have married some prince. Is that true?"

Su Liang shook her head, "Not at all. I come from a humble background, and it's not easy to enter the royal family."

Su Bai said solemnly, "Being with Young Master Ning is great. You two are well-matched in every way. He's kind-hearted, and his family is simple."

Su Liang nodded, "Yes, he's all by himself." Soon the Ning family would have no one left, and all their property would be hers, how delightful...

After discussing the serious matters, Su Liang announced that she would visit the school the next day and left.

Su Bai insisted on accompanying her home, and Su Liang eventually agreed.

On the way, Su Bai mentioned Su Liang's grandfather and asked if she had ever considered moving Su Yuanzhou's grave back.

"Home is where the fallen leaves return," Su Bai sighed. "I'm just mentioning it to you. If you don't want to bother, just forget it."

"I'll think about it," said Su Liang. Relocating graves is indeed troublesome, but Su Yuanzhou was indeed the first generation to leave the village. Judging from his many years of care for Su Daqiang's family, if he could die in peace, he would definitely return.

But Duanmu Cheng still wasn't dead. Su Liang was afraid that if she really moved the Su family's graves, it would cause a commotion and attract some people who might try to cause harm. She decided to deal with those people first.

"If you need help, just say the word. There are plenty of people in the village who would help with your family matters without hesitation," said Su Bai. Su Liang nodded, "Alright, when the time comes, I won't hesitate to ask for help."

If she really wanted to move Su Yuanzhou's family graves back to the village, she would undoubtedly need help from the villagers.

Su Bai escorted Su Liang to her front door and watched her go in before leaving.

Su Liang read a few more pages before going to bed.

Early the next day, Su Liang went for a run and did some exercise, then practiced martial arts after breakfast. Without Ning Jing's supervision, she felt somewhat uncomfortable, lacking someone to spar with and feeling like something was missing.

For lunch, Su Liang went to Su Dakuan's house. Although not as grand as slaughtering a sheep, the old man killed a fat chicken to treat her.

Returning home from school, Erniu recited the poems and texts he had learned seriously, and Su Dakuan's face was filled with satisfaction. "The teacher says Erniu has potential for studying. I must live a few more years to support his education."

Erniu furrowed his brow, "Grandpa, my name is Su Mingcheng."

Su Dakuan laughed, "Look at this child, after studying, he won't let us call him by his nickname."

"Su Mingcheng, what do you want to do when you grow up?" Su Liang asked with a smile.

Erniu puffed out his chest and said, "I want to be like Brother Ning Jing, become a top scholar, and be an important official! Then I'll take my grandpa to the capital city to enjoy a good life!"

Su Liang gave a thumbs up, "Ambitious."

In the afternoon, Su Liang said she wanted to make a hairpin, and Su Dakuan gave her a piece of scrap wood from a good piece of wood and taught her how to use a carving knife.

Feeling that she had learned the skill, she took the tools home and started making the hairpin.

As a result, just like the bracelet she had made for Ning Jing last time, the finished product had a natural and rustic look, appearing clumsy and not at all dexterous.

Su Liang carved the flowers on the hairpin again, feeling that her craftsmanship was only ten times worse than Ning Jing's...

The village didn't have the materials she needed to add color to the hairpin. Su

Daqiang told her they would have to go to the county town to buy them, so Su Liang set the hairpin aside, planning to work on it when she went to town next time.

In the blink of an eye, three days passed, and the news of the Martial Arts Champion's return to the village spread.

That day, the County Magistrate of Bei'an County paid a special visit to Su Liang, but she wasn't at home. Instead, she was picking mushrooms in the forest with Mrs. Bai.

The County Magistrate waited a long time before finally seeing Su Liang return. He was very respectful towards her, bringing along several gifts as well.

Su Liang politely invited the County Magistrate for tea, hoping that the official would care for the villagers. To maintain appearances, she only accepted two boxes of desserts and returned the valuable gifts.

After seeing off the County Magistrate, Su Liang spread out the mushrooms on a large sieve borrowed from the Bai Family and placed them on a stone table in the courtyard to dry in the sun.

She would bring the mushrooms back inside before the sun set, and then put them back out when the sun came out the next day.

After drying them for three consecutive days, she harvested a small basket of wild dried mushrooms.

Calculating the time, Ning Jing would soon arrive in the capital city.

Ever since that day when Xing Yusheng and Qi Yan had intruded upon him swimming, Qi Jun never went swimming in the lake again.

Even when Lin Bojun and Qin Yujin got married, he just sent a gift and left without attending the wedding feast, afraid of being discovered.

Knowing that Su Liang was going to stay at Su Village for a while, Qi Jun counted the days. By the time Su Liang and Ning Jing returned to the capital city and he completed his mission, it would be at least the end of May or early June.

That night, Qi Jun lay on Ning Jing's bed, just closing his eyes when he suddenly heard a faint noise on the roof.

He opened his eyes abruptly, his expression tensing as he sat up. Had the trouble he was expecting finally arrived after all these days?

An assassin wearing a mask broke through the window, and Qi Jun drew his sword to meet the attacker.

A moment later, the vase on Ning Jing's windowsill shattered on the floor.

The intruder had impressive martial arts skills. Qi Jun knew he was no match for him and tried to find an opportunity to escape. He couldn't be killed, and it would be even worse if people found out that he was an imposter.

But every time he tried to break free, he failed, and he now had two wounds on his body. Just as Qi Jun was thinking that he had failed Su Liang and Ning Jing's expectations and would meet his end tonight, the assassin suddenly stiffened and fell to his knees!

Qi Jun was stunned, and in the next moment, he saw another person enter and pull a knife out of the assassin's back.

Looking at the figure, he seemed familiar.

"Master Ning?" Qi Jun's face lit up with joy.

Ning Jing's face now bore Qi Jun's features. "You've worked hard." He said as he bent down to tear off the black cloth covering the assassin's face, revealing a scar on his cheek.

"Luckily Master Ning returned, otherwise I would not see tomorrow's sun." Qi Jun heaved a great sigh of relief, "I wonder who sent this person."

The assassin, who hadn't yet died, looked at them in disbelief, "You two... are deceiving the emperor!"

"Sixth Prince's man." Ning Jing stepped on the assassin's head with his foot.

The assassin suddenly widened his eyes, his expression displaying obvious panic, "I... I'm not!"

He had fought with Ning Jing before, and the scar on his face was a gift from Ning Jing, but he didn't know it himself.

"Qi Jun. "

Hearing Ning Jing call him, Qi Jun's expression became serious, "What do you need, Master Ning?"

"Su Liang wrote a letter to me and sent you to deliver it. You left Bei'an County six days ago, traveling day and night to arrive tonight. You will return to the Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion after giving the letter to me." Ning Jing said calmly.

Qi Jun was stunned for a moment before realizing that Ning Jing was asking him to leave.

Su Liang had left him some wound medicine. After treating his wounds, Qi Jun washed off the disguise, changed into clean clothes, and packed his belongings.

"Master Ning, shall I leave?" Qi Jun stood outside the door with his luggage.

"Yes, I'll give you the gift of thanks another day." Ning Jing's voice came from inside the room.

Qi Jun smiled, "No need to be polite, take care, Master Ning."

As he walked out of the courtyard, Qi Jun turned back and said with a smile, "Master Ning may not know yet, the auspicious date that Old Master Qin chose for you and Miss Su is the sixth day of the sixth month. When Miss Su returns in a few days, you'll be able to get married! You'll be faster than my master and his wife!"

Upon hearing this, Ning Jing expressionlessly stabbed the assassin on the ground and replied to Qi Jun with a single word, "Okay.."

Chapter 207: The time of death has come.

Ning Jing knocked out the assassin sent by Duanmu Che and locked him up, tending to his wounds to prevent him from dying.

When he pushed open the door to Su Liang's room, it was pitch-dark inside. He stood at the entrance for a while, still able to smell the faint scent of herbal medicine, similar to Su Liang's own fragrance.

Without entering, Ning Jing closed the door again, fetched some water from the kitchen, and returned to his room to clean the bloodstains left from dragging the assassin away.

After tidying up, he noticed a few specks of dried blood splattered on the bed curtains.

Ning Jing didn't bother with it, he changed the bedding, washed up, and went to bed.

Early the next morning, he didn't even eat breakfast, and headed to the Ministry of Revenue on time.

Ever since Ning Jing joined the Ministry, the place was filled with a refreshing tea fragrance every day.

After handling some simple tasks, Ning Jing decided to “leave work” and have a meal at Zhengzheng’s place.

When he arrived at the entrance of Wan Family’s house, he found the main door tightly closed. As he knocked on the door, an old housekeeper came out and quickly paid his respects.

Ning Jing remained silent.

Respectfully, the old housekeeper said, “Old Master has been thinking about little Young Master Zhengzheng. Miss and the Brother-in-law took the opportunity to accompany the young master back to Qingyang City while Miss Su Liang is not in the capital city. They haven’t returned yet!”

Actually, Wan Hui went to inform Ning Jing about taking Zhengzheng away and met Qi Jun instead. Fearing that the child would recognize him, he lied about having a cold and didn’t allow Zhengzheng to get close. After a brief conversation, Wan Hui and Lu Yu took the child away.

Qi Jun had forgotten about this matter as Ning Jing’s arrival last night was too sudden.

That was also why Ning Jing had not asked about it, fearing there might be misunderstandings due to a lack of knowledge about the situation.

“I was merely passing by to have a look. Sorry for the disturbance.” Ning Jing turned around and left as soon as he finished speaking.

At Wan Family Restaurant, the manager greeted him with a smile upon entering, “Lord Ning, you’re early today. Why don’t you have some tea upstairs first? Will you have the usual dishes for your meal?”

Ning Jing nodded slightly and went upstairs.

During these days Qi Jun had been impersonating Ning Jing and eating at the restaurant daily, a private room was reserved for him. The restaurant staff assumed that Ning Jing knew where to go.

Ning Jing had no idea, but he guessed it was the same room Wan Hui had treated them to meals before, with the best furnishings and views.

As expected, he guessed correctly. As soon as he pushed open the door, a waiter followed in with hot tea.

Ning Jing opened the window overlooking the street and sat down by it. He didn’t drink the tea, but he was indeed hungry. He finished the food Su Liang had prepared for him, filling his stomach on the way, and hadn’t eaten since yesterday afternoon.

Four dishes and a soup were all Ning Jing’s favorites. Qi Jun, while impersonating Ning Jing, didn’t dare to let loose and merely ordered all the dishes be cooked according to Su Liang’s recipes, declining any other dishes.

Last night, when Xing Yusheng saw Qi Jun returning home and learned that Ning Jing had returned, he went to share the news with Lin Xueqing in the morning. The two went to Su Mansion to look for Ning Jing. Finding no one there, they headed to Wan Family Restaurant instead.

Upon entering, they inquired and learned that Ning Jing was dining upstairs, so they both headed up.

“Brother Ning, may we come in?” Lin Xueqing knocked on the door from outside.

A faint voice came from inside, “No.”

Lin Xueqing held her forehead, but Xing Yusheng had already pushed the door open.

“Why are you...” Lin Xueqing entered the room, realizing something was wrong midway through her sentence and quickly changed her words, “Aren’t you lonely eating alone? I heard Ajun came back last night, especially to deliver a letter for Sister Su. Did she say when she’s coming back?”

They couldn’t mention Qi Jun impersonating Ning Jing, fearing that the walls had ears.

“In another half month.” Ning Jing replied calmly.

Half of Su Liang’s leave had already passed, but it would take her another seven or eight days to travel back to the capital city.

“That’s pretty soon!” Lin Xueqing cheered up, “You two are getting married on the sixth day of next month. Sister Su has always been busy and hardly has any free time, so Yang Yu said she would prepare the wedding dress for her. I want to personally embroider a red wedding veil for her; it’s almost done, but don’t tell her in advance!”

Xing Yusheng heard about this for the first time and blurted out, “What about yours?”

“Of course, I’ve already prepared it.” Lin Xueqing replied. Xing Yusheng smiled with delight, “I can’t wait to see you wearing it.” Lin Xueqing glared at him, “What’s the rush? Wait for it.”

Ning Jing, who was sitting across from them, passed over her unfinished vegetarian spring roll.

Xing Yusheng found it strange, “You’re only giving it to us because you can’t finish it, right?” Ning Jing never knew the meaning of “politeness.”

“Eat one to keep your mouth shut,” Ning Jing said.

Lin Xueqing touched her forehead, “Ning senior, do you really have to look down on us like this? Even if Su Liang isn’t here, you don’t have to be so displeased with everyone, right? We came to visit you out of the kindness of our hearts!”

“He just wants to talk about love with you. Find a place where no one else is,” Ning Jing bluntly stated.

Xing Yusheng coughed lightly, though he couldn’t really say that she was wrong.

“Ah, I get it!” Lin Xueqing suddenly exclaimed, “Ning senior, you’re clearly jealous!”

Xing Yusheng nodded solemnly, “I think so too! Since Su Liang isn’t here, of course he’s annoyed to see us together.”

Ning Jing gave them a cold glance, "Are you two done?"

"You don't even bother to refute, Ning senior! I knew it; you must like Su Liang!" Lin Xueqing was overjoyed, "Oh dear, time is really running out. I haven't finished embroidering her bridal veil, I need to embroider a pair of mandarin duck pillowcases for you two! I'll go home and do the embroidery right now!"

Xing Yusheng smiled, "Ning Jing, I also have a gift for you two. It's a pomegranate tree from our family's old Prince Mansion garden. I heard you like plants and flowers? Pomegranates symbolize many children and blessings, which is quite fitting. I'll have it sent over within the next two or three days. Select a spot in your home for it today."

Xing Yusheng: ...Alright, it's true that those grapevines produce delicious fruits. They were specially transplanted from the old Gu Family mansion of Marquis Chang Xin.

"By the way, my father said to let you come to see him when you're free; he has something to tell you," Lin Xueqing said.

Ning Jing nodded slightly, "Got it."

After Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing left, Ning Jing finished his meal and went home.

Ning Jing spent the entire afternoon busying himself in the garden, clearing away dead branches and leaves, pruning wildly overgrown branches, loosening the soil, and watering the plants.

Thinking of the pomegranate tree Xing Yusheng said he would send, as well as the grapevines, Ning Jing went ahead and not only selected a spot but also dug the holes for the trees, just in case.

At dusk, he went to the Lin Mansion.

The Lin family was just about to have dinner; seeing Ning Jing, they added another pair of chopsticks. He was not polite, coming over to eat was his intention.

Now, with two new daughters-in-law, the Lin family was a little bit livelier than before.

Ning Jing took his seat and congratulated Lin Bojun and his wife.

Not only did Lin Xueqing know that Ning Jing and Su Liang had both been to Xuanbei City, but Lin Bojun and Qin Yujin also knew, but they didn't tell Lin Shuzhi and Lin Boyan.

Now that Ning Jing was back, Lin Bojun breathed a sigh of relief, fearing that Qi Jun's fake identity would be discovered.

"During our time in Xuanbei City, Xiaoliang gave me a letter from Master Pu Qing of Ping'an Temple for his disciple Cheng Yun. I delivered it to Huguo Temple the day after I returned, " Lin Bojun said.

"Did Cheng Yun say anything?" Ning Jing asked.

Lin Bojun laughed, "He just asked when Xiaoliang would return to the capital. I said it would be soon."

After dinner, Ning Jing went to the study room with Lin Shuzhi.

“Xiaoliang will return at the end of the month, right? The wedding is set for the sixth day of the sixth month. It mustn’t be delayed,” Lin Shuzhi said with a smile on his face.

He had initially planned to divide the family property equally between his two sons after Lin Xueqing got married. Their daughters-in-law came from noble families, and the Lin Mansion was too small, lacking even a proper garden. They had already bought a new house, but it didn’t seem right to separate right after their sons’ marriages.

To his surprise, both the daughters-in-law didn’t want to split the family, because they had a good relationship with each other. Considering they didn’t have children yet, they thought it would be too lonely to live apart. Since the Lin brothers were always busy with official affairs, the two brides found it nice to have each other’s company.

Lin Shuzhi is now quite content, just waiting to hold his grandchild.

Ning Jing nodded, “There will be no delay.”

Lin Shuzhi’s expression turned serious, “Your marriage this time isn’t just for fun, is it?”

“Master, you sought me out to discuss this matter?” Ning Jing asked.

“What else could it be? This is the most important!” Lin Shuzhi said, “You two living together without being married is not appropriate. Although I know there’s nothing going on between you, I hope there will be. Anyway, what are your thoughts on this?”

Ning Jing’s expression was calm, “The matter of marriage is more about how she feels.”

Lin Shuzhi was taken aback, “Well, you’re not wrong. So what does Xiaoliang think?”

“She feels that she is still young,” Ning Jing said.

Lin Shuzhi slammed the table, “I knew it! You must be pushing the responsibility onto Xiaoliang again, saying that she’s unwilling. I think it’s you who has a problem!”

Ning Jing frowned slightly, “It is my problem.”

Lin Shuzhi asked impatiently, “Tell me, what’s wrong with you?”

“I,” Ning Jing’s voice paused, “I haven’t found the meaning of marriage yet, and I think it’s great to be her brother and friend.”

Lin Shuzhi stared at him, “Are you even a man?”

Ning Jing nodded, “I should be.”

Lin Shuzhi was simply dumbfounded, “What do you mean, ‘should be’? You’re a man, don’t you want to marry her and be like Bo Yan and Bo Jun, living harmoniously as a married couple with children in the future?”

Ning Jing was momentarily shocked, “Master, are you talking about that kind of thing?”

Lin Shuzhi snorted, “Yes, that kind of thing. Haven’t you ever thought about

Ning Jing shook his head, “I haven’t thought about it yet.”

“Well, think about it now. Do you want it or not?” Lin Shuzhi, a scholar, never expected today’s conversation with Ning Jing to take such a strange turn.

“Right now, I can’t think of it,” Ning Jing said.

Lin Shuzhi couldn’t help but complain, “You might as well become a monk!” “Master, don’t worry. We know what we are doing,” Ning Jing said.

“Don’t be ignorant of your blessings when you’re surrounded by fortune. You’ll regret it if you lose Xiaoliang one day!” Lin Shuzhi waved his hand, “I don’t want to chat with you anymore. I’m angry. Go back and think about what I’ve said!”

“Alright.” Ning Jing stood up and said goodbye to Lin Shuzhi.

On the way home, Ning Jing saw the brightly lit brothel in the distance, and while riding his horse, he whispered three words, “That kind of thing...”

On the third day after Ning Jing returned to the capital city, he went to Huguo Temple to find Cheng Yun.

Cheng Yun still looked the same, a serious and handsome little monk. His beauty had spread beyond Huguo Temple and became famous in the capital city.

“Ning benefactor, Su benefactor will be back soon, right?” Cheng Yun accompanied Ning Jing to watch the clouds at the back mountain of Huguo Temple.

Ning Jing looked up at the scattered white clouds blown by the wind and nodded, “Soon. Do you have something you want to ask her?”

“Yes, I want to ask Su benefactor about Master’s health and whether Master has returned.” Cheng Yun’s expression was serious.

“You can ask her when the time comes.” Ning Jing said, “During these days, has Yan Shiba come to see you?”

“Since last meeting Su benefactor, Yan benefactor hasn’t come.” Cheng Yun said, “I think she’s already let go and won’t come again.” He couldn’t help but reveal a smile.

Clearly, Yan Shiba’s harassment was very troubling for this little monk, and he was very happy that she didn’t show up again.

Ning Jing didn’t say anything more. After having a vegetarian meal at Huguo Temple, he went down the mountain.

Halfway down, he encountered a group of people heading up the mountain.

Among them was someone he knew, Wan Cong, the eldest son of Wan Shan.

It was the auspicious time for the entire Wan Family to go to Huguo Temple to pray for blessings for Wan Shan.

It wasn’t the first time Wan Cong had seen Ning Jing’s face. But before, Qi Jun

had always avoided confrontation.

“Isn’t this General Su’s fiancé, Mr. Ning?” Wan Cong smiled, “General Su is coming back soon, right? I heard that you two will get married on the sixth day of the next month, congratulations! I wonder if I could have the honor to attend the wedding banquet?”

Ning Jing nodded, “You can.”

“When General Su returns, I’ll have to trouble her with treating my father. After all, I’m afraid no one in the world knows my father’s condition better than her, right Mr. Ning?” Wan Cong alluded.

Ning Jing nodded, “Indeed.”

His attitude made Wan Cong’s anger increasingly difficult to vent but he dared not do anything during the day.

“Excuse me.” Ning Jing walked around them and continued down the mountain.

A moment later, he turned back and asked Wan Cong, “I heard that your brother went missing. Do you need help in finding him?”

Wan Cong could hardly maintain his facade, “Mr. Ning, you really have a Bodhisattva’s Heart, but you don’t need to bother yourself with this! Let’s go!” By now, everyone in the Wan Family knew that Wan Lin was likely dead.

Ning Jing knew what Wan Cong’s insinuation meant, and Wan Cong was painfully aware that Ning Jing understood everything and was deliberately insulting him!

“Damn!” Wan Cong gritted his teeth.

One of his cousins came over and whispered, “Big brother, why not take care of Ning before Su Liang returns? That way, we can teach Su Liang a lesson and not let her think that our Wan Family is made of softies!”

Wan Cong shook his head with a stern face, “The Empress repeatedly instructed us to behave and not cause any more trouble! The Fourth Prince hasn’t become the crown prince yet, but things might still change!”

“Big brother, you’re being confused! If we don’t take action now, it will be too late! The Empress is just afraid of further angering the Emperor. As long as we’re careful, who would know? We must act quickly to avoid complications!” said Wan Cong’s cousin.

Wan Cong’s expression changed, and he subconsciously looked back. Ning Jing was no longer in sight.

Hearing his grandmother calling for him to hurry up, Wan Cong gave a meaningful look to his cousin. They would discuss this later.

When Ning Jing returned home, he went to see the assassin sent by Duanmu Che. After carefully examining him, he asked, “What is your relationship with

Huang Bo?”

The assassin had already woken up, his eyes dark and staring coldly at Ning Jing, “He’s my father. I’m his only son! The one who saved Su Liang was my father! At first, the master was disgusted with Su Liang and didn’t want to save her. My father discovered her alive and brought her back. Master agreed to take her in just to maintain his image in my father’s heart!”

“You mean, I can’t kill you?” Ning Jing’s expression was indifferent.

“Su Liang owes my father a life-saving favor!” the assassin said coldly.

Ning Jing nodded, “I’ll tentatively believe what you said is true. But your father saved someone else, not me, and you wanted to kill me. This has nothing to do with Su Liang.”

“Do I have a choice when the master orders?” the assassin counter-questioned.

“With your father protecting you, of course, you have a choice.” Ning Jing replied.

“Then why haven’t you killed me yet? What the hell are you up to?” the assassin snorted.

Ning Jing did not answer. He lifted the limp assassin and looked at him once more, “Barely passable.”

The assassin’s face turned pale, “What kind of ghost are you playing? Ning Jing knocked the assassin out with a slap. He changed the assassin into his own clothes and washed his face clean.

Then, Ning Jing removed his human skin mask, applied it to the assassin’s face, and trimmed his sideburns.

At midnight, Ning Jing sat quietly in Su Liang’s room.. Hearing the movement nearby, he sighed softly—the time had come...

Chapter 208: 208. The Death of Ning Jing

Ning Jing heard a cold laugh coming from the next room, where two men were talking.

“Why did he have to pick Su Liang of all people, that bitch!”

“I thought there was a master protecting her, but it went so smoothly!” “Did he really send the master to protect Su Liang? Serves him right, haha.”

“Would that Su Liang suspect our Master...”

“She has no evidence! Let’s go!”

The neighboring room returned to silence.

Ning Jing waited for about a quarter of an hour before going over.

He entered through the back window and was greeted by a strong scent of blood, as well as a faint whiff of aphrodisiac incense.

After taking an antidote made by Su Liang, Ning Jing saw the body he had arranged to replace him in the dim moonlight.

The lower half of the body was on the bed, the upper half hung over the edge, and the head was on the ground. The waist had been slashed several times, almost cut in half.

Bright red blood spread across the floor, forming a dark lake.

Ning Jing stood in a clean corner, not going closer. He could see two lines of bloody footprints on the ground.

Besides the wounds on the waist, there was also a stab wound on the chest.

A large patch of blood splatter had stained the nearby bed curtains, covering the blood drops left by the assassin that night.

Ning Jing carefully approached, sliced off both hands of the body, grabbed one of them, dipped it in blood, and wrote the character “Cheng” on the inner part of the bedsheet. He did not complete it, leaving out two strokes.

Then, Ning Jing tore off a piece of the bed curtain, wrapped up the two hands, and left the tragic scene.

He went out of the mansion for a bit, and when he came back, he no longer had anything in his hands.

Daylight came.

The gate of Su Mansion remained closed, and passersby took a glance but didn’t notice anything unusual. Su Liang’s house was large, but only she and Ning Jing lived there. She wasn’t at home, and Ning Jing rarely went out.

The weather today was overcast, and thick dark clouds filled the sky as if a thunderstorm was approaching.

The carriage from Marquis Zhong Xin’s Mansion parked outside Su Mansion, with Qi Jun as the coachman. Another carriage followed, driven by Qi Yan, carrying a gnarled pomegranate tree and several servants to help, blocking the entire alley.

“Master, it seems Ning Jing didn’t go to the Ministry of Revenue today, and the door is bolted from the inside,” said Qi Jun, who had once been Ning Jing’s double and knew his daily routine, finding it quite strange. As it was not a day off, Ning Jing would always lock the door from the outside when leaving.

Xing Yusheng lifted the curtain of the carriage. “Maybe he took leave? It’s even better if he’s at home. Bring the tree in. I mentioned it to him yesterday, and I wonder if he has chosen where to plant it.”

Qi Jun leaped over the high courtyard wall and opened the door from inside.

Xing Yusheng got off the carriage and entered the mansion on foot.

Qi Yan led Xing Family’s servants, slowly pulling the carriage and transporting the pomegranate tree into the mansion.

“Take it straight to the garden!” Xing Yusheng ordered. “I’ll go find Ning Jing to see if he’s there.”

Qi Yan took the servants to deliver the tree, while Qi Jun followed Xing Yusheng toward the main courtyard.

As they entered, Xing Yusheng joked, “I heard last night my father-in-law gave Ning Jing a good talking-to, urging him to be more responsible about the marriage. Otherwise, he’ll be forced to become a monk!”

Marquis Zhong Xin’s garden was in full bloom, with several rare flower varieties found in the capital city. Xing Yusheng had been picking flowers early in the morning and delivering them personally to Lin Xueqing for several days, and today was no exception.

Xing Yusheng had originally planned to bring Lin Xueqing along to deliver the tree to Ning Jing, but she had plans to go shopping with her sisters-in-law.

Xing Yusheng had found out about Ning Jing being lectured by Lin Shuzhi the night before, through Lin Xueqing’s casual banter.

Qi Jun’s smile froze on his face when he saw the glaring bloodstains under the eaves, and he immediately shouted, “Ning Jing!”

“Why are you yelling like that? He’s not deaf!” Xing Yusheng said. As he walked forward, he saw the bloodstains on the ground and his face paled. “Ning Jing!”

The two rushed over. Qi Jun protected Xing Yusheng and kicked open the half-open door to Ning Jing’s room.

A chill breeze blew.

The sight of blood filling the room almost made Xing Yusheng faint.

Qi Jun stormed in, went around the folding screen, and saw the corpse lying in the pool of blood by the bed. He cried out in a lost voice, “Ning Jing!”

“Impossible... this can’t be!” Xing Yusheng, deathly pale, stood in the middle of the blood, staring at the gruesome corpse, shaking his head. “He’s very skilled, how could he be dead... That’s not him... It must not be Ning Jing! Ajun, you have to check, is it really him?”

However, from their angle, they could clearly see the face on the ground with closed eyes, undoubtedly Ning Jing.

Xing Yusheng’s gaze shifted, noticing the bloody arm in the puddle without a hand...

He leaned on the nearby table to avoid fainting.

Qi Jun got closer and found that the other arm on the corpse was also missing its hand, both having been chopped off.

Then, Qi Jun saw a blurred word stained with blood on the bedsheet and shuddered, blurting out, “It was the Eldest Prince!”

Qi Yan looked puzzled, "What are you doing at the Ministry of Justice?"

Qi Jun took a deep breath, shook his head with a grim expression, "Brother, you'll understand when you go to the door." Then he followed Xing Yusheng out.

Qi Yan walked to the gallery with an inexplicable expression, looked at the blood on the ground, frowned, and when he saw the situation in the room, he couldn't believe it, his eyes widened, "Young Master Ning!"

When the officials of the Ministry of Justice received the news of Ning Jing's murder, they doubted their own ears.

As a court official killed in his own home, it was definitely a major case. Almost the entire Ministry of Justice was dispatched to hurry to the Su Mansion.

The news spread quickly: Ning Jing, the top scholar, was killed at home last night.

The whole city was in shock.

Lin Xueqing, who was shopping, heard Ning Jing's name from passers-by. At first, she didn't hear clearly what had happened. When she did, she was dumbfounded and couldn't believe it. She rushed to the Su Mansion without a care.

Xing Yusheng knelt in front of the Imperial Palace during the day, seeking an audience with the emperor.

When Duanmu Yi received the report, he didn't know what Xing Yusheng wanted to do at first, so he let people investigate and quickly report back.

As a result, when he learned that Ning Jing had died, the pen in Duanmu Yi's hand rolled to the ground, and he remained silent for a long time.

In the end, Duanmu Yi did not allow Xing Yusheng to enter the palace, but instead sent someone to tell him that the Ministry of Justice would handle the case fairly and investigate the truth, and that he should go back immediately.

Xing Yusheng instinctively felt that Duanmu Yi knew that the death of Ning Jing was related to his son and wanted to protect Duanmu Cheng. He wanted to kneel and not leave at first, but on second thought, he realized that someone might destroy evidence and hurried back to the Su Mansion.

When Duanmu Yi learned that Xing Yusheng had left, he summoned Duanmu Chen with a dark face.

Duanmu Chen, who had been living a secluded life recently, had just heard about Ning Jing's death and felt it was unlikely. He wanted to go and see for himself, but it wasn't the right time for him to come forward.

When someone from the palace arrived, Duanmu Chen hurried to the palace.

As soon as Duanmu Yi saw Duanmu Chen, he brought up Ning Jing, but did not doubt the authenticity of his death, only asking who he thought would kill Ning Jing.

Duanmu Chen lowered his eyes, "Your son, dare not say."

Duanmu Yi snorted coldly, "Speak up!"

Duanmu Chen then let out a deep sigh, “The minister still doesn’t know how Ning Jing died, but if there is any suspicion, the minister thinks that the Eldest Prince, the Wan Family, and... the Fifth Prince all have motives to kill Ning Jing.”

Duanmu Yi was well aware of the great enmity between Duanmu Cheng and Su Liang. Since Su Liang was not in the capital city, killing her fiancé Ning Jing would be the most ruthless way to take revenge on her.

Although the Wan Family’s current decline was due to Duanmu Yi’s arrangement, the person who really suppressed the Wan Family and left them with no resistance was Su Liang. Moreover, Duanmu Yi had long guessed that Wan Shan’s “stroke” was caused by Su Liang.

Since the Wan Family couldn’t kill Su Liang, choosing to kill Ning Jing to vent their anger had a clear motive.

And Duanmu Che, who wanted to get Su Liang, had done some foolish things that revealed his unscrupulous nature. If he hadn’t given up on Su Liang, it would make sense for him to want to remove the obstacle of Ning Jing.

“I had thought that with Ning Jing’s wealth, there must be a master by his side.” Duanmu Yi said coldly.

Duanmu Chen sighed deeply again, “After the father told me what Su Liang did in Xuanbei City, I guessed that there was a master by her side, otherwise it would not have gone so smoothly. Now it seems that maybe Ning Jing had sent his own guardian to protect Su Liang.”

Ever since Duanmu Chen met Ning Jing, he had always suspected that Ning Jing was more than just a literati, but he had never found any evidence. The possibility that Ning Jing had a master by his side was much greater than the fact that he himself, a son of a wealthy merchant family who had been bullied and expelled from his home, was an extraordinary master.

It’s worth mentioning that mastering martial arts does not happen in a short period of time.

Therefore, Duanmu Yi thought that Ning Jing managed to regain control of the Ning Family because he met someone with great skills after reaching rock bottom.

Even after Duanmu Chen finished his speculation, he believed that Ning Jing must be genuinely dead.

The fake death he initially suspected was becoming increasingly implausible. Ning Jing and Su Liang were just about to marry. Where could they find a corpse that looks exactly like him?

“Wan Cong.” Duanmu Yi looked at Duanmu Chen and said those two words.

Duanmu Chen immediately understood. No matter whether it was Duanmu Cheng or Duanmu Che who did it, they couldn’t be linked to the royal family for the sake of saving face. So, Wan Shan’s eldest son Wan Cong would be the best suspect. Originally, Wan Cong was already under heavy suspicion. Even if it was not him, the “evidence must be conclusive”.

"I will make the arrangements at once." Duanmu Chen said respectfully, "However, I heard that it was the crown prince Xing Yusheng who first discovered Ning Jing's corpse. If he saw something, he would definitely tell Su Liang."

"I will send someone to call her back. She is a smart person, she knows what to do." Duanmu Chen said coldly, "If she doesn't care about the royal family and me, she's not worth our time anyway. Off you go. When you meet Xing Yusheng, tell him not to talk nonsense."

"Yes, I will take my leave." Duanmu Chen bowed before turning around, looking a bit somber.

Although Wan Cong was highly suspicious, he felt it wasn't him. The person he suspected most of killing Ning Jing was Duanmu Che...

But clearly, Duanmu Yi still wanted to protect Duanmu Che and his already abandoned son, Duanmu Cheng.

As he walked out of the Imperial Study, Duanmu Chen pondered a question: Did Duanmu Yi arrange for a "suspect" so quickly because he genuinely cared for his two sons or was it just for saving the royal family's face?

Duanmu Chen sighed deeply. After Duanmu Ao's death, he felt deeply troubled, like he was treading on thin ice. He felt that Duanmu Cheng's faction intended to kill him, and even Duanmu Che would not tolerate him.

There were indeed troubles along the way, but he had well-trained masters protecting him, and no accidents had occurred.

What he never expected was that Ning Jing would die.

Duanmu Chen wondered how Su Liang would react when she found out about Ning Jing's accident. Even though he suspected that Su Liang and Ning Jing didn't actually want to get married, the two of them had the deepest friendship and understanding he had ever seen in his life.

Given Su Liang's personality... Duanmu Chen looked up at the overcast sky and felt that a storm would come when Su Liang returned.

Officials from the Ministry of Justice were astonished by the scene and kept silent after discovering the bloody character on the ground.

Lin Xueqing was stopped by Qi Yan and did not see Ning Jing's corpse. She cried to the point of almost fainting and was taken back home by Xing Yusheng.

When Lin Shuzhi saw Xing Yusheng, he wanted to ask something but couldn't utter any words. He couldn't help but cry, tears streaming down his face.

"Uncle, please take care." Xing Yusheng whispered.

Lin Shuzhi murmured, "After Ajing was expelled from home and went missing, I was always worried about him... I had a terrible dream where he left, calling me master and saying goodbye, but I couldn't see his face clearly... He came back safe and sound, and I was truly happy. Just last

night, I told him to stop being like this and how wonderful it would be for him to be with Xiaoliang... How wonderful it would be..."

Ning Jing sat alone on the top of Wangxiang Mountain, gazing northwards, with dark clouds swirling above his head.

A newly engraved Spirit Tablet was beside him, with five characters engraved on it, "Ning Jing's Spirit Tablet".

He looked down at the tablet and whispered, "In this world, there are some who care about you. Though it might be late, let them send you off this time." As he spoke, his gaze shifted back to the north, "I wonder if she would cry if I were dead..."

Chapter 209: 209. Nothing much to see

The whole day was gloomy, and by the time night fell, thunder flashed and heavy rain poured.

The grand entrance of Su Mansion hung with white lanterns, wobbling unsteadily in the wind and the rain.

The carriage of Marquis Zhong Xin stopped. Qi Jun held up an umbrella, helping Xing Yusheng off the carriage.

The door of Su Mansion was open, but as they tried to enter, they were stopped by two government soldiers, "By the Emperor's decree, until the truth of Lord

Ning's murder case is clear, no irrelevant people are allowed in!"

Xing Yusheng's face turned ashen, "What did you say? I'm an irrelevant person? Say that again?"

Qi Jun swiftly held back Xing Yusheng, urging him to calm down, and said to the two soldiers, "My Master is a close friend of Lord Ning and wants to handle his post-mortem affairs."

If Old Madame Xing hadn't found it hard to believe the news of Ning Jing's death and sent someone to fetch Xing Yusheng home, he would not have left Su Mansion at all.

He didn't expect that when he returned after an hour, he couldn't even get himself in.

Ever since Xing Yusheng saw the tragic corpse and the bloody characters that day, he had been burning with rage. He yearned to storm into the palace and tear Duanmu Cheng into pieces!

Now being stopped at the door, Xing Yusheng's first thought was, the Emperor is covering up for Duanmu Cheng! It must be so!

The two gatekeeping soldiers said that the Emperor had already arranged for someone to handle Ning Jing's post-mortem affairs and asked them to leave.

"Out of my way! I'd like to see who dares stop me today!" Xing Yusheng was strung tight and lost his rationale.

Qi Jun quickly hugged Xing Yusheng, even disregarding the umbrella. Both men were exposed in the heavy rain, getting drenched in no time.

But the chilling wind and cold rain did not quench the burning fury in Xing Yusheng's heart. He wanted to break free from Qi Jun's grip. Su Liang was not around, and he wanted to keep the night vigil for Ning Jing.

"Prince Xing, please do not make it difficult for us. If you barge in, it would be a violation of Imperial decree." One soldier reminded Xing Yusheng.

Qi Jun knew it was serious and determined to take Xing Yusheng back. The last time he saw Xing Yusheng so reckless was when Qin Xiang passed away. Xing Yusheng misdirected his anger towards Xing Ji, almost causing a fallout between the father and son.

Just then, a warm voice came from inside the gate, "Please invite Prince Xing for a conversation."

Under a large black umbrella, Duanmu Chen's face flickered under the lantern for a moment before he turned around and retreated.

Obviously, Duanmu Chen could make decisions. The two soldiers who were originally blocking the way stepped aside.

Qi Jun released Xing Yusheng, quickly picked up the umbrella and shaded him from the rain.

Xing Yusheng nevertheless, pushed it away, "No need!" He said and strode into the gate.

Not far from the gate of Su Mansion was a rock garden, crafted using rare stones transported from the southern lake bottom. It appeared very unique during the day.

At this moment, under the heavy rain, the stones splashed with a chilling watery glow.

Duanmu Chen stopped, took the umbrella from Chang'an and gestured him to leave with his eyes.

So, Chang'an left.

Qi Jun followed Xing Yusheng over and heard Duanmu Chen say, "Prince Xing, have your guard wait outside the gate. The Emperor has a message for me to relay to you."

Qi Jun frowned, only to hear Xing Yusheng say, "Ajun, you go out!"

"Yes." Qi Jun watched Xing Yusheng walk towards Duanmu Chen. He turned around and left.

Duanmu Chen offered his umbrella to Xing Yusheng, but Xing Yusheng snorted coldly and refused, "I dare not trouble the Fourth Prince! Just say what you have to!"

Duanmu Chen didn't persist, he held the umbrella for himself, looked at Xing

Yusheng exposed in heavy rain, sighed and said, "During the collection of Ning Jing's body, the coroner accidentally spilled water on his bed, soaking the bedding."

Xing Yusheng glared with fury, "This is clearly destroying the evidence! Jun and I both saw the bloody characters on the sheet!"

Duanmu Chen's face remained calm, "I understand that Prince Xing was a good friend of Ning Jing. When you saw his tragic death, you were in shock, and if you made any mistakes, it can be understood."

Xing Yusheng clenched his fists, "Fourth Prince, don't forget that Su Liang helped you! Do you need to shield the murderer? What good does that do you?"

"Heir-apparent Xing, mind your words. I did not shield anyone; I didn't see the bloody character you mentioned when I arrived. I was kindly reminding you not to act impulsively and do something irrational. Think about your aged grandmother, think about your beloved fiancée, you two are getting married next month, you wouldn't want extra troubles to invite disaster, would you?" Duanmu Chen's eyes were deep and obscure.

Xing Yusheng looked at Duanmu Chen coldly, but did not answer his words.

Duanmu Chen sighed deeply, "Ning Jing was a rare talent, excellent in all aspects. The emperor intended to entrust him with great responsibilities, but alas, fate is unpredictable. His death is also a great regret to me. Oh right, the murderer has been found, it's Wan Shan's eldest son, Wan Cong, the evidence is irrefutable. Before you arrived, someone has already gone to the Wan mansion to arrest him."

Xing Yusheng's face showed mockery, "Wan Cong? What unshakeable evidence?"

"This matter, after Wan Cong confesses, will be made public." Duanmu Chen said.

Xing Yusheng snorted coldly, "And then what will he do?"

"For murdering an official appointed by the court, he cannot escape the capital punishment." Duanmu Chen said.

"How ridiculous!" Xing Yusheng remarked disdainfully.

Duanmu Chen looked at Xing Yusheng, and suddenly said an incomprehensible sentence, "I really envy that the Heir-apparent Xing has someone to protect him."

"What do you mean?" Xing Yusheng asked coldly.

Duanmu Chen looked at him and said, "I can understand Heir-apparent Xing's grief and anger, but I hope you can calm down. Although your father is very capable, if you recklessly cause trouble, I'm not sure what the consequences will be."

"Is the Fourth Prince threatening me, trying to keep me quiet?" Xing Yusheng mocked.

Duanmu Chen nodded, "It's just advice for you. I am also a friend of Su Liang, I don't want you to get in trouble."

"Friend? Does she acknowledge you as such?" Xing Yusheng retorted.

"There are many kinds of friends." Duanmu Chen said, "I have said everything that needs to be said, if Heir-apparent Xing has come to his senses, please leave."

"What if I don't want to leave?" Xing Yusheng asked coldly.

Duanmu Chen frowned, "If you don't leave, I'll say some things I shouldn't have. What I just said were the Emperor's instructions. But like you said, I

didn't want Ning Jing to die, I didn't want Su Liang to dislike me, and I hoped the true murderer would die a horrible death. Just like you."

Xing Yusheng narrowed his eyes, hearing Duanmu Chen whisper, "But you should know the Emperor's attitude by now, at least on the surface, a certain person cannot be the murderer. You can secretly tell Su Liang what you saw, even if you don't, I will. As for what she decides to do, it's no longer within our control. The irrational actions you are taking now are doing no one any good. I have said all that I had to say, you better take care of yourself."

When Qi Jun saw Xing Yusheng come out, he hurriedly went up to greet him,

"Master!"

"Let's go." Xing Yusheng looked back at the door one last time, his face cold as he got into the carriage.

On the way, Xing Yusheng said he wanted to visit the Lin Family. "Should we first go back to change your clothes, Master?" Qi Jun asked.

"Never mind, let's go home."

As soon as the words fell, Qi Jun heard Xing Yusheng thumping against the carriage, knowing that his calmness was merely superficial.

When they were about to reach the Marquis Zhong Xin mansion, Xing Yusheng lifted the curtain of the carriage, and looked in the direction of the Imperial

Palace.

If it was a clear day, he would be able to see the gleaming glazed tiles of the Imperial Palace from here.

But now it was pitch black, nothing could be seen clearly.

"Ajun, our Xing Family also has a share in the land of the Qian Country."

Hearing the faint voice of Xing Yusheng from behind, Qi Jun's heart pounded,

"Master, you mustn't talk nonsense."

"Can't I even speak the truth now?" Xing Yusheng snorted, "Duanmu Chen is right, I really am useless, I don't have much ability, I haven't done anything remarkable, I don't have any big ambitions. But I really can't stand the superiority radiating from his bones, as if the word 'royal' is the sky, and under that sky, we are all mere ants."

Qi Jun was terrified and quickly looked around, afraid that someone else might hear it.

"When I left Su Liang's house just now, I suddenly had an idea." Xing Yusheng spoke softly, "Why not persuade my real-powerful father to seize the imperial throne? After all, he now holds the military power of Qian Country."

Qi Jun looked astonished, he pulled the reins to halt the carriage about three meters away from the main gate of the Marquis Zhong Xin's mansion, "Master, you're not joking, are you?"

Xing Yusheng let down the carriage curtain, "I will discuss this matter with Su Liang. It is with her help that the Xing Family has reached the stability of today. If she needs it, I am willing to do anything to repay her."

The next day, the weather cleared and the sun was splendid.

A piece of news quickly spread through the capital city: Wan Cong, the eldest son of Uncle Wan Shan, had murdered Ning Jing. He had argued with Su Liang over his refusal to leave Xuanbei City to return to the capital. He had harbored resentment and brutally murdered Su Liang's fiancé Ning Jing to vent his anger. The evidence was conclusive, and he confessed his crime last night. He would be executed on a chosen date soon.

The common people spurned Wan Cong and mourned the death of Ning Jing.

The atmosphere in the Imperial Palace was very eerie.

The Empress Dowager and the Empress did not create a fuss, because there was real evidence that Wan Cong had killed Ning Jing. Although Wan Cong, under severe torture, admitted to his involvement, he insisted that it was not instigated by Duanmu Cheng.

But Duanmu Yi was convinced that the mastermind behind it all was Duanmu

Cheng. That blood word was seen by Xing Yusheng and Qi Jun. A few days ago, Wan Cong and his grandmother had been allowed to visit Duanmu Cheng in the cold palace.

Even the Empress Dowager and the Empress had to suspect that it was Duanmu Cheng who had instructed Wan Cong. At this point, they could only abandon Wan Cong and protect Duanmu Cheng first.

Su Family Village.

Su Liang led a very leisurely life, but she rarely cooked since Ning Jing left. She often went to the Bai Family for meals.

One day, Su Liang went to the county town to go shopping and ran into Hu Er. Invited by his warm invitation, she dined with him.

During the banquet, Hu Er took the chance to thank Su Liang again for her help. With Su Liang's introduction, he got in touch with the Wan Family and now did a grain business in the north. He was quite successful, coming off as an upright merchant, a stark contrast to his former image.

"Miss Su and Mr. Ning will be married soon, right? I've prepared a gift to congratulate them and was thinking about sending it to the capital city in a few days. Today, I ran into Miss Su, but it's a shame I didn't bring the gift with me, could I visit the village tomorrow?" Hu Er said with a smile.

Su Liang smiled and nodded, but she was thinking that at this moment, "Ning Jing" might already be dead and there would be no wedding. Someone would likely soon come to convey the bad news.

As they parted, Su Liang remembered her promise to help Che Yun to find his little brother. She told Hu Er of Che Xiao's age and the red birthmark on his neck.

Hu Er took it seriously and said he would lookout for him and would send someone to notify Su Liang if he has news.

As Su Liang rode home, a woman suddenly sprung out as she entered the village. Had Su Liang not pulled the reins in time, she would have knocked the woman over.

Su Liang frowned and looked closely. It was a woman with a worried face and white hair who seemed familiar, but she couldn't remember where she had seen her.

"Miss Su! Oh, Miss Su!" The woman knelt on the ground and wailed, "Please, Miss Su, let my poor daughter come back! Without her, I can't live on!"

Su Liang remembered at that moment, she had indeed seen this person before. It was Liu Xiaoyue's mother.

When Liu Xiaoyue was unfortunately captured by Gai Huai'an and was tortured nearly to death, her family had discarded her in a pigsty to die after her narrow escape and return home.

Su Liang had not forgotten this matter.

Now Liu Xiaoyue had started a new life with Yang Yu, and Su Liang understood very well why this woman was looking for Liu Xiaoyue. It wasn't for the person, it was for the money.

Su Liang was wealthy and generous. The Liu family surely thought that Liu

Xiaoyue was placed somewhere by Su Liang to live a good life. They wanted to repair their relationship and continue to mooch off her.

"Liu Xiaoyue is already dead. If you can't live without her, then stop living." Su Liang coldly retorted, avoiding the woman and riding away on her horse.

On her return home, Su Liang was unlocking her door when she heard Zhuzi's clear voice from afar, "Sister Su Liang! Come and have dinner tonight, my mom is making steamed buns!"

"Sure!" Su Liang laughed, waved to Zhuzi, and went inside.

That night, Su Liang used the yellow paint she bought from the county town to carefully dye the little flowers on her carved wooden hairpin. She put it aside to dry.

The next day, as Su Liang was getting up to practice, she spotted the bright yellow spot and murmured to herself, "When you're dead, should I cry a few times? What if I can't shed tears..."

That day, Hu Er delivered wedding gifts for Su Liang and Ning Jing. Knowing that they were both wealthy, he gifted a set of fragrant wood Dragon and Phoenix Pendants he had found while out for business. The seller claimed it was an antique that he would never sell if not for his urgent need for money.

Upon seeing it, Hu Er decided to gift it to Su Liang and Ning Jing, feeling it suited them perfectly.

"I really like it, thank you." Su Liang said sincerely. It was quaint and exquisitely carved, with a hint of woody fragrance.

Another day passed and Su Liang's half-month vacation came to an end. She packed her things, informed Su Bai and the Bai Family, telling them she would leave early tomorrow morning and there's no need for them to send her off.

Bai Xiaohu and Zhuizi, who were reluctant to part with Su Liang and missed their Brother Ning Jing, asked her when she would come back.

All Su Liang said was that she would return.

In the middle of the night, the knock on the door woke Su Liang up.

As she sat up, she already guessed who it was.

After she went out and opened the door, she saw a group of government soldiers standing outside. Their leader was someone Su Liang had seen in the palace, a young head of the Forbidden Army.

"Greetings, General Su!"

Su Liang frowned, "Did you come from the capital city? What's the matter?"

The young leader, named Fang Tongling, stated that they were sent under the Emperor's order to fetch Su Liang back to the capital.

"I was planning to head back early tomorrow. When did you set out from the capital city, did something happen?" Su Liang asked, frowning.

With a deep sigh, Fang Tongling voiced, "General Su, my condolences. Ning Jing has passed away."

Su Liang looked incredulous, "What did you say? Who died?" "Ning Jing, Mister Ning." Fang Tongling repeated.

"Impossible!" Su Liang shook her head, "When I left, he was fine!"

Fang Tongling then explained to Su Liang that Ning Jing was brutally murdered by Wan Shan's son, Wan Cong, who was now in custody and awaiting execution.

"I don't believe it, I don't... He wouldn't die... How could he die..." Su Liang mumbled, her head lowered. "I need to go back. I was going back tomorrow..."

No, I need to return to the capital now, he's waiting for me at home..."

As she spoke, Su Liang turned and began to walk back. She staggered and nearly bumped into the stone table.

Fang Tongling and his men waited outside the room without entering.

Su Liang went back into her room, closed the door, and took a breath. Acting sorrowful was laborious, and she couldn't really cry about something she knew would happen.

At the table, Su Liang sat staring at the belongings she had packed earlier during the day, planning to slip away quietly before the others woke up. She preferred traveling alone as it spared her the need to play-act. It was just too tiresome.

Suddenly, she remembered something she had forgotten. Su Liang went to the storeroom and retrieved a pack of dried mushrooms.

As she reentered her room and shoved the mushrooms into her bag, a familiar voice came from the inner room, "What did you just get?"

Su Liang rushed in to see a familiar figure standing by the bed. In his hand, he held a wooden hairpin adorned with a bright yellow flower, which made his slender, fair fingers look even more delicate.

"How did you get back again?" Su Liang looked at the intricately carved wooden mask on the man's face. "Isn't it about time you showed me your true face, Crown Prince Gu?"

The voice of Gu Ling, who had lost his disguise as Ning Jing, was deeper than when he had first posed as Ning Jing, and sounded magnetic, "There's nothing worth seeing."

Su Liang snorted, "If you're going to be so secretive, we're done! We part ways from here!"

Gu Ling lowered his head slightly, pinched the bottom of the mask with two fingers, and lifted it....

Chapter 210: 210. The Moonlight is Truly Beautiful

Su Liang's eyes were filled with anticipation.

Gu Ling was the first person she had met in this world and her most important friend. They had been living together for more than half a year. Prior to that, he always lived with Ning Jing's identity, and she only knew about his good looks but hadn't seen his true face.

However, when Gu Ling took off his mask, his black hair fluttered, revealing his full face. Su Liang rolled her eyes to the sky, "You're insane!"

She hadn't expected that the face behind the mask would be one she wasn't unfamiliar with. It was "Wen Gu" who had disguised himself when he was with her in Xuanbei City.

Gu Ling looked at the furious Su Liang and gently opened his thin lips, uttering four words, "For safety reasons."

Despite herself, Su Liang kicked Gu Ling in the leg, lightly snorting, "You're clearly teasing me on purpose. If you've disguised yourself, why wear a mask? Trying to be mysterious!"

Gu Ling nodded slightly, "Double safety. Teasing you is also true."

Su Liang narrowed her eyes, staring at Gu Ling, her tone deep, "Is teasing me fun?"

Gu Ling nodded again, "It's interesting. Don't you think?"

Suddenly, Su Liang revealed a faint smile, "Yes, it's really interesting. Now, immediately, remove the disguise and let me see what you look like, otherwise, don't blame me for not recognizing you! I'm going back to the capital anyway to mourn my late fiancé. You'd better let me see clearly who you are, or else..." "Okay," Gu Ling said.

Su Liang snorted lightly, "That's more like it. In consideration of our past pleasant cooperation, I won't hold it against you. Hurry up and remove the disguise!"

Just then, Fang Tongling's voice came from outside, "General Su, are you alright?"

Su Liang furrowed her eyebrows; she had almost forgotten about the Forbidden Army outside the door.

"Never mind." Su Liang snatched the Little Yellow Hairpin from Gu Ling's hand, originally meant for him, "Wait for me to see your true face before considering whether to give it to you. If it's not good looking, then no gift. It's not very safe right now, so I'll leave first. If you want to stay and rest, feel free to do so, but we can't leave together."

"That's fine," Gu Ling said, "You go first, I'll come and find you."

Su Liang glanced at Gu Ling's face again, silently kicking him a second time before turning to leave.

Gu Ling lowered his head, looked at the two footprints on his robe, and didn't care.

Fang Tongling didn't hear Su Liang's response and, afraid something was wrong, climbed over the wall to enter.

Just after touching the ground, he saw that the light in Su Liang's room had been extinguished. The door opened the next moment, and she walked out carrying a bundle, her pale little face revealing a chill in the moonlight.

Fang Tongling quickly bowed, "General Su..."

"I'm going to ride a horse, and follow you back to the capital," Su Liang said, heading towards the backyard.

Soon after, the sound of horseshoes was heard, and Su Liang rode away, Fang Tongling led his men to catch up. After crossing the bridge, they headed towards the entrance of the village.

Amidst a few barks, the quiet little village returned to its peaceful state at midnight.

Su Liang's room lit up again, Gu Ling, holding a red candle, walked out from the inner chamber, and saw a paper packet on the table.

He ignited the oil lamp on the table with the red candle, gently blew out the wax candle and placed it aside. Opening that paper packet, he smelled an enticing meat aroma.

It was the game which Su Liang, Little Tiger Zhuzi, and Erniu had hunted while playing on the mountain yesterday. She had only kept one plump wild rabbit and let the children take the rest home.

Originally planning to leave the next morning, Su Liang had marinated the wild rabbit during the day and let it cool, intending to take it with her on the journey.

Gu Ling went to the kitchen, where the water in the vat was still full. After scooping water to rinse his hands, he returned to his room, sat down at the table, tore off a rabbit leg, took a bite, and nodded slightly. It was a familiar taste, definitely made by Su Liang. She had her own secret marinating ingredients, which were different from those used by Aunt Bai.

Gu Ling ate half of the rabbit, wrapped the rest, and tidied up the table out of habit. After washing his hands again, he returned to the room he had occupied for a long time.

Everything was still the same. The bedding was stored in the closet. He had taken it out to air for a night when he returned half a month ago, but had left after only one night.

Gu Ling took out the bedding and spread it out. After washing up, he lay down to sleep.

The next day, before dawn, he got up, took the half rabbit and left for the back mountain.

As the sun rose in the east, Gu Ling stopped beside a large, inconspicuous stone in the shady part of the mountain. He took out Su Liang's medicine hoe he had brought from home and began digging up the weed-covered land next to it.

If Su Liang were there, she would have known what the box Gu Ling was digging out was.

She had seen it before, Gu Ling's treasure, but it couldn't be sold or discovered, as they were all related to the original Gu Family.

Among them was a jade hairpin that Gu Ling's mother had once given to Nian Ruxue, then put in Su Liang's hair by Nian Jincheng, and Uncle Liang had taken it away and returned it to Gu Ling.

Gu Ling crouched down, took out the key, and opened the box. Everything inside was still there.

He took out a long brocade box, opened it, and inside was the jade hairpin that Su Liang had once worn.

In addition, Gu Ling took out a jade token engraved with the word "Changning" from the box, locked it again, buried it back in its original place, and restored it to its original state.

On his way down the mountain, not yet home, Gu Ling saw Bai Xiaohu and Zhuizi wandering around, and heard them calling for "Sister Su Liang."

Though the main gate was locked, both children knew that Su Liang must have left.

After a while, the two brothers ran away, and Gu Ling quietly descended the mountain, entered through the back door, and returned the medicine hoe to its original place.

Noticing that two eggplants were almost ripe, Gu Ling picked an empty basket, took them down, and put them in, then picked a tender pumpkin the size of a forearm.

At dawn, Su Liang had already left Bei'an County and was galloping in the direction of the capital city. Fang Tongling and his party were almost left behind, but they still followed her closely.

Su Liang planned to shake off these people, but she couldn't be too obvious, nor could she take an unusual path, as it would arouse suspicion.

After a day and night of rushing, even Fang Tongling and his men could hardly bear it, and their horses needed to drink water and eat hay.

Finally, they saw Su Liang stopped in front, and Fang Tongling breathed a sigh of relief, urging his horse closer, "General Su, let's rest for a while. No matter how anxious you are, you have to take care of your health!"

Su Liang didn't say anything, dismounted, and went into an inn.

Fang Tongling specially booked a guesthouse for Su Liang, and they stayed next door, so she could ask for anything at any time.

Su Liang rested for a while, and the waiter brought hot water and meals. She ate alone, and it was already dark outside.

After a simple wash, Su Liang went to bed to sleep, as she had to continue rushing the next day.

Before going to sleep, she thought of Gu Ling and didn't know when he would catch up.

In the middle of the night, Su Liang suddenly woke up from her dream, sensing someone by her bed. Her eyes were alert, and her hand had already gripped the dagger under her pillow.

"It's me." A not-so-familiar voice.

Su Liang loosened her grip, lifted the quilt and sat up, dressed neatly.

Seeing Gu Ling still wearing a mask, Su Liang snorted lightly, "Is there another disguise under the mask?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "No." Su Liang's eyes brightened slightly, "Then take it off!"

"Really want to see?" Gu Ling asked.

"Nonsense!" Su Liang glared at him, "We've known each other for so long, and I don't even know what you look like. Do you think it's appropriate?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "It's not. Let's go then." Su Liang was startled, "Where to?"

"Change places, I'll show you." Gu Ling said.

"I can't just disappear for no reason now." Su Liang said as she put on her shoes and got off the bed.

"Come back before dawn and don't get discovered." Gu Ling opened the window.

In the summer night, there was a faint scent of flowers in the breeze.

Su Liang followed Gu Ling, and after several leaps, they left the inn, walked through two small alleys. and she noticed that Gu Ling was carrying a basket in his hand.

The two didn't go too far, and finally stopped in a quiet grove.

Su Liang thought that now she could finally see the other person's true face.

Who would have known that Gu Ling would take out a round eggplant from the basket, "It's ripe, it will spoil if we don't eat it."

Su Liang: ...She wants to smash someone's head into an eggplant!

Seeing that Gu Ling also brought tools and seasonings for roasting eggplants, Su Liang really had no words.

"I have something to tell you." Gu Ling said, gathering a bunch of firewood and starting a fire.

Su Liang sat down next to him, opened the cloth cover of the basket, and saw a familiar pumpkin. It had originally hung on the vine at the back wall of her house; she had stared at it for half a month but didn't get to eat it before she left.

"Just say it." Su Liang said.

Gu Ling asked at the same time, "Can the pumpkin be roasted?"

"This one is too tender; it won't taste good roasted. I was going to make pumpkin egg-filled dumplings, but I didn't have time." Su Liang frowned, "Is this the important thing you want to tell me?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "No. I want to find Uncle Liang."

Su Liang was stunned, "You drove him away half a month ago. Why do you want to find him again? Are you going to Liang Country to join your grandfather?"

"I don't want to hide like this anymore." Gu Ling said, cutting the washed eggplant in half and handing it to Su Liang.

Su Liang took out her sharp knife, wiped it clean, crossed it over the fire, put the eggplant on it, and pulled out a couple of sticks to keep the fire from getting too big.

"Didn't you enjoy the secluded life before?" Su Liang asked, "Now that Ning Jing's identity is gone, it's actually very simple for you want to find another place to hide."

With Gu Ling's strong abilities, there's no need to worry about being discovered by others as long as he doesn't want to be.

Although Su Liang was objectively analyzing Gu Ling's situation, he countered,

"Do you really want to part ways with me?"

"That's not the same thing." Su Liang shook her head, "I just don't understand why you want to find Uncle Liang. If you don't want to hide anymore and choose to go to Liang Country, we can only part ways."

"I want to remove the rebel label." Gu Ling said.

Su Liang suddenly realized, "You plan to use your grandfather to negotiate with the Qian Country's royal family so they won't bother you anymore?"

Gu Ling nodded slightly.

"Great idea!" Su Liang immediately agreed, "Didn't Uncle Liang say that your grandfather values you a lot? From your attitude, you must not believe it. No matter what intentions he has for finding you, as a powerful prince in Liang Country, if he is willing to negotiate with the Qian Country royal family and declare to the world that

you are under his protection, the Qian Country royal family may not continue to hold onto you. After all, it was your father who rebelled, and you didn't do anything!"

The Qian Country royal family can't catch Gu Ling, let alone kill him. But because of Gu Family's rebellion, he can't openly appear in public. He certainly can't go anywhere with a group of assassins following him, since he's still at the top of the Qian Country royal family's wanted list.

Furthermore, the biggest problem isn't even with him.

If Gu Ling were alone and went anywhere, it wouldn't be a big issue if he were discovered. If he were bored, he could even tease the Qian Country royal family by moving around everywhere, making it impossible for them to catch him and infuriating them.

The key is that Gu Ling's sensitive identity makes it impossible for him to openly interact with anyone.

The Qian Country royal family can't catch him, but anyone involved with him won't have an easy time.

"I should have known not to drive Uncle Liang away at the beginning." Su Liang said, "No, Ning Jing's identity had to die first; otherwise, there would be problems. Now it's perfect. After I finish roasting the eggplant and you eat it, you can go to Liang Country to find your grandfather! You won't be able to catch up with Uncle Liang anymore!"

As Su Liang spoke, the eggplant softened. She took out a small knife, cut a few slits, and sprinkled Gu Ling's seasoning evenly on it. The scent immediately filled the air.

Once the eggplant was roasted, the two of them took half each, using a cloth to hold it, and prepared to eat.

Su Liang stared at the wood carving mask on Gu Ling's face, with a look that seemed to say, "I want to see how you can eat with a mask on."

This time Su Liang didn't say anything, Gu Ling held the eggplant with one hand while the other hand's two fingers pinched the bottom of the mask, lifting it up, and smoothly took it off.

The moon was directly overhead.

The white moonlight shed through the gaps of the trees and sprinkled on Gu Ling's face. Su Liang stared blankly, not knowing what Gu Ling looked like before, but now that she looked at his face, she felt it was just right, perfectly matching the title of "Capital City's Number One Beauty," and his character.

Ning Jing's features were gentle, while Gu Ling's face had a few more appropriate angles, as if carved from marble, making him look colder. His eyebrows were like ink paintings, his eyes like cold stars, his nose was high, and his thin lips were slightly pursed.

Su Liang thought that "skin as smooth as cream" was only used to compliment women, but now she truly felt that some people were born with ice-cold muscles and jade bones, even just sitting in this desolate forest, in ordinary clothes, they were still stunningly beautiful.

"Have you seen enough?" Gu Ling's thin lips opened slightly.

Su Liang came back to her senses, coughed lightly, “Great God, having such a face is truly enviable! If you hadn’t hidden yourself before, countless women would have gone crazy for you!”

Su Liang suddenly understood Nian Ruxue’s obsession with Gu Ling.

Seeing Gu Ling start eating roasted eggplant, Su Liang realized that she also had half an eggplant in her hand which had burnt her right hand a bit.

Su Liang held the grilled eggplant with her other hand and took a clean pair of chopsticks that Ning Jing had brought, eating and asking Gu Ling, “Do you take after your father or your mother in appearance?”

Gu Ling said, “Both.”

“Then they must both be exceptionally beautiful.” Su Liang said.

“Are you envious of me?” Gu Ling asked while looking at Su Liang.

Su Liang smiled, “Not really, I’m just complimenting you for being beautiful. I’m quite satisfied with my own appearance.”

Gu Ling finished eating and wiped her hands with a handkerchief, asking Su

Liang, “Would you be infatuated with me?”

Su Liang nodded, “Yes, if we didn’t know each other, and I saw such a stunning beauty like you, I’d have to remind myself to run away as fast as I could!” Gu Ling paused, “Why would you run?”

“Don’t you know the old saying? The more beautiful the person, the more likely they are to deceive others.” Su Liang said seriously.

Clouds covered the moon.

Gu Ling’s face was half-lit, half-shadowed, “I haven’t lied to you.”

Su Liang smiled brightly, “I’m just kidding. Everyone loves beauty, and having such a peerless beauty as my brother makes me feel better. If Great God, you could give me a smile, that would be even better.”

Seeing Su Liang’s sparkling eyes, Gu Ling was silent for a moment, “I’ll try to learn later.

Su Liang held back her laughter, giving a thumbs-up, “Great God, your habit of learning is admirable, and I look forward to the results of your learning.” “What about the gift?” Gu Ling asked.

“Oh, right.” Su Liang took out the little yellow hairpin, stretched out her hand, and inserted it into Gu Ling’s hair. After examining it, she nodded repeatedly, “It looks good!”

After roasting and eating another eggplant, the two put out the fire and stood up.

Su Liang stepped forward, and just like last time, gently hugged Gu Ling and quickly separated, “This is our farewell. I hope everything goes smoothly for you in the future.”

Gu Ling bent down to pick up the basket on the ground, “I didn’t say I was leaving.”

Su Liang held her forehead, “Didn’t you say you were going to find Uncle Liang and your grandfather?”

“Yes, but not now.” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang: ...Indeed, she didn’t say she was leaving tonight; it was her own assumption, awkward...

“Do you want to escort me back to the capital city? It’s really not necessary.” Su Liang said.

Gu Ling asked in return, “How do you make the pumpkin egg-filled dumplings?”

Su Liang exclaimed, “You want to make them yourself?”

“I can’t waste the pumpkin at home.” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang chuckled lightly, “Okay, I’ll tell you how to make them, and you’d better remember.”

By the time they walked out of the woods, Su Liang had detailed the process of how to make pumpkin egg-filled dumplings for Gu Ling.

When they reached a small alley not far from the inn, Gu Ling stopped.

“I’m going back, I need to get back on the road tomorrow. Great God, you should find a place to make dumplings and eat.” Su Liang waved her hand.

“Tomorrow night, at the hour of Hai.” Gu Ling had disappeared as soon as the words fell.

Su Liang was stunned for a moment, realizing that Gu Ling was going to personally make dumplings and share them with her?

Not only did the Great God become even more beautiful, but she was also willing to cook... Su Liang looked up at the sky, thinking about how beautiful the moonlight was..