

Three-Time 261

Chapter 261: "Sooner or later we will catch him. "

Su Liang went for a workout early in the morning, with Ren Dong accompanying her. When they finished, they saw Qi Jun standing by the training ground.

"Master, I have reunited with my brother, and I have written a letter to my father." Qi Jun said with a smile, as he was ready to return to "work."

Su Liang nodded, "You can take a break now."

Qi Jun held his forehead, "There's nowhere else for me to go. My brother said he doesn't need me anymore, so he asked me to hurry back here..."

"The north is cold, why don't you go and send winter clothes to your father and Uncle Xing?" Su Liang suggested.

Qi Jun was stunned. Su Liang had previously asked Qi Jun to visit his father in Xuanbei City when she went back to Su Village, but he refused at that time, thinking that Su Liang had no one else to rely on.

"You can discuss it with your brother again?" Su Liang waved her hand, "I'm not driving you away, just giving you a break. There's nothing important here, and I have no plan to go back to being a general for now."

Knowing that Su Liang truly cared for him and that he was genuinely worried about his father at the border, Qi Jun agreed, "I'll talk to my brother and see if I should go to Xuanbei City."

As he was about to leave, Qi Jun turned back and asked, "Master, what about you and Miss Gu?"

Su Liang smiled lightly, "What do you think?"

Qi Jun said seriously, "As long as Master likes her, it's a match made in heaven!"

"You should also start thinking about your own marriages." Su Liang looked at Ren Dong and then at Qi Jun, her expression serious.

Upon hearing this, Ren Dong and Qi Jun instinctively exchanged glances. Ren Dong blurted out, "Master, I'm not familiar with Qi Guard!"

Qi Jun cleared his throat, "Yes, Ren Dong is not involved with me in the way Master thinks. "

Su Liang blinked, "What are you thinking? I meant that you should each consider your own future marriage. If you find someone you like, let me know. I'm not asking you to solve this within the two of you."

Ren Dong looked down and counted ants.

Qi Jun looked up at the clouds.

Su Liang silently walked away.

At about noon, Qi Jun appeared again, saying that he had discussed with Qi Yan and decided to visit his father, Qi Jiang, in Xuanbei City. Actually, Xing Yusheng suggested that Qi Yan should go too, but both brothers agreed that one of them should stay and watch the home.

“The old lady is going to write a letter to the Marquis and prepare warm clothes. I’ll pick them up from Marquis Mansion later and then leave.” Qi Jun said.

Su Liang took out a package and handed it to Qi Jun.

Qi Jun accepted it, opened it, and found that it was filled with medicine, “Is this for me to defend myself?”

Su Liang shook her head, “It’s for your father. The cold weather in winter might cause a recurrence of his old injuries, remind him to keep warm and not take it lightly.”

Qi Jun and Qi Yan had previously asked Su Liang to treat Qi Jiang’s illness, so she knew his physical condition very well. He had suffered a severe injury in his youth and had never fully recovered, leaving lingering health issues.

Qi Jun felt touched, “Thank you, Master!”

“Here’s something for you.” Su Liang took out two white porcelain bottles, “One is for stopping bleeding and healing, the other is for detoxification. Take them for self-defense.”

Qi Jun hurriedly took them, “I’ll be careful on the road.”

“There’s no need to rush back. You can stay with your father and celebrate the New Year there.” Su Liang said.

Qi Jun nodded, “Okay.”

As he was leaving, Qi Jun ran into Ren Dong.

“Take care, Guard Qi.” Ren Dong said.

Qi Jun nodded, “Thank you, Miss Ren Dong. Please take care of the Master’s affairs in my absence.”

After the conversation, the two of them brushed past each other in silence.

Nowadays, many people in the capital city are paying attention to Su Liang’s pursuit of Gu Ling, which has directly led to better business for Wan Family Restaurant. Quite a few diners come here when they have nothing to do, just to enjoy the scene.

Approaching noon, besides the two street-side private rooms reserved by Gu Ling and Su Liang, the first and second floors of the Wan Family Restaurant were filled with customers.

Old Master Qin and his fun-loving second grandson, Qin Yuyan, were sitting in a private room on the second floor. Qin Yuyan kept looking out, “Why isn’t she here yet?”

Old Master Qin told him to sit down, “You should behave, or your father will beat you.”

Qin Yuyan chuckled and sat down next to Old Master Qin, “It was clearly you who wanted to come, and I’m just accompanying you out of filial piety. How come it’s my fault?”

Old Master Qin coughed lightly, "I haven't eaten out in a long time, just wanted a change of taste."

"You just want to see how your favorite Miss Su Liang is pursuing the beauty Gu Ling!" Qin Yuyan pointed out directly, "I also want to see. I wanted to pursue Miss Su Liang, but my father kicked me out. You all said I lacked self-awareness. Who would have thought that even the stunning and talented Miss Su Liang would be rejected one day? Haha!"

As soon as Qin Yuyan finished, Old Master Qin hit him with his cane, "Do you think you're comparable to Gu Ling?"

Qin Yuyan looked up at the sky speechlessly, "You and my father both like the Su Family girl. I can accept that, but what relation do you have with Gu Ling?" Old Master Qin smiled slightly, "Gu Ling is the one our Liang girl has her eyes

"

Qin Yuyan's mouth twitched, "But sir! He hasn't taken a liking to your beloved Liang. Shouldn't you dislike him instead?"

Old Master Qin calmly stroked his neatly trimmed beard, "That young man not taking a fancy to Liang? He must be pretending."

Qin Yuyan: ... So the point is, Liang is the best, most beautiful, and most outstanding, right? Although, admittedly, he also thinks that's true...

"Su Liang, the Top Scholar, has arrived!"

There was a commotion at the entrance, and Qin Yuyan rushed out immediately. He saw two beautiful young ladies entering the restaurant hand in hand. They were even wearing the same material for their skirts, a light smoky purple color, but with different cuts, looking like twin sisters.

One was Su Liang, and the other was Yang Yu. Yang Yu had customized their matching sister outfits.

"That must be the rumored Miss Yang, right? She's beautiful and capable. I have to ask Su Liang to introduce her to me." Qin Yuyan set his sights on Yang

Yu.

When Su Liang and Yang Yu went up to the second floor under everyone's gaze, they saw Qin Yuyan standing outside a private room, waving enthusiastically at them, "Miss Su! My grandfather is here too!"

Upon hearing this, Su Liang and Yang Yu went over together to pay their respects to Old Master Qin.

"This is Miss Yang, right? My name is Qin Yuyan. You should be familiar with my sister Yu Jin. She mentioned you before." Qin Yuyan smiled gracefully.

Yang Yu politely greeted him, then went inside without glancing at him, following Su Liang to meet Old Master Qin.

When Old Master Qin saw Su Liang, he happily invited her and Yang Yu to sit down, telling them not to stand on ceremony.

“My grandfather came to watch how you’re pursuing Miss Gu!” As soon as Qin Yuyan opened his mouth, he “betrayed” Old Master Qin.

Old Master Qin really wanted to kick Qin Yuyan out.

Su Liang lightly laughed, “Thank you for your concern, Grandfather Qin.”

“Did you really set your sights on that Gu Family boy?” Old Master Qin asked Su Liang.

Su Liang nodded, giving a definite answer.

“Just because he’s good-looking?” Qin Yuyan asked.

Again, Su Liang nodded, “He’s exceptionally good-looking.”

Old Master Qin couldn’t help but chuckle, “You’re really quite shameless, girl!

Haha! ”

Qin Yuyan gave a thumbs up, “A heroine among women, I support you! But I have to ask, does Miss Yang have any marital arrangements?”

Yang Yu, who had been listening to Old Master Qin’s conversation with Su Liang, suddenly found herself being addressed by Qin Yuyan and was startled.

Old Master Qin skillfully picked up his cane and hit Qin Yuyan again, “All day long, causing trouble! You go stand outside, and when the Gu Family boy arrives, invite him over. Tell him I have something to talk to him about!”

Qin Yuyan silently got up and walked out. Just as he reached the door, he suddenly turned back and winked at Yang Yu.

Yang Yu immediately lowered her head, and heard Old Master Qin ask her amicably, “Does Miss Yang have any marital arrangements?”

Su Liang coughed lightly, “Not yet, but she’s not a good match for Second Young Master Qin.” Actually, there was an arrangement, but the difference in social status was a minor issue. If Nian Jincheng found out that someone was eyeing his wife, he would probably explode.

“Did you hear that? Go stand outside!” Old Master Qin waved a hand in disgust at Qin Yuyan.

Qin Yuyan actually turned around, opened the door, and left.

Old Master Qin’s expression changed instantly as he looked at Su Liang with a smile all over his face, “How about I be your matchmaker and help you get connected with that Gu Family boy?”

Su Liang smiled and said, “Thank you, Grandpa Qin. But there’s no need for now.”

“That child has always been a loner, but he’s definitely a good kid. I think you’re a good match,” Old Master Qin laughed.

Upon hearing this, Su Liang couldn't help but ask, "Grandpa Qin, have you seen what he looked like when he was a child?"

Old Master Qin nodded, "Of course, I've seen him. He was even more good-looking than the fairies in the paintings. I even held him in my arms. He was not happy at that time, haha!"

An image of a disgruntled little boy appeared in Su Liang's mind. He was still childish now, but it just didn't show on the surface.

As they were chatting, dishes were served. With nothing else to do, Qin Yuyan stared at the door, "Is Gu beauty not coming today?" He then ordered his attendant to go outside and inquire.

Soon, the attendant returned with news, "Second Young Master, we found out that Marquis Chang Xin went to Huguo Temple today!"

Qin Yuyan entered with a playful expression, "Miss Su Liang, you see, Gu beauty knew you were coming today, so he deliberately avoided you!"

Su Liang looked "surprised" and said, "He went to Huguo Temple? I asked him yesterday to go to Huguo Temple with me to watch the clouds, but he refused.

He went anyway? Then I'll go there now!"

Old Master Qin: ... This girl is really infatuated!

Qin Yuyan: ... As expected, being beautiful allows you to do whatever you want!

Yang Yu: ... Knowing the truth, she had to work hard to keep calm and not laugh out loud...

"Grandpa, should we go to Huguo Temple too?" Qin Yuyan suggested excitedly.

Old Master Qin waved him over to sit down and told him not to cause any trouble. Then he turned to Su Liang and said, "Go ahead, if you really like him, capture his heart as soon as possible!"

So, although the diners in the restaurant didn't see Gu Ling, they did see Su Liang leave again. Soon, word spread that Gu beauty went to Huguo Temple, and Su the Top Scholar chased after him.

Su Liang left without Ren Dong, and she and Yang Yu rode their horses in the direction of Huguo Temple.

It was approaching noon, and there were not many people at the foot of the Huguo Temple. They tied up their horses and climbed the steps.

As they walked, just as Yang Yu was about to talk about Nian Jincheng, she saw

Su Liang's eyes suddenly become alert, glancing at the woods on the right.

Yang Yu immediately stopped talking and walked while recalling the self-defense techniques Su Liang had taught her.

A few more steps and two masked men suddenly appeared, blocking their path.

One of them bowed and said, "Miss Su, the Master of Yanyun Building invites you! Please come with us!"

Hearing the word "Master," Su Liang knew that they were from Yan Shiqi's group. Gu Ling's message last night informed Su Liang that Yan Shiba was under Yan Shiqi's control.

Su Liang appeared calm and said, "Many people know that I came to Huguo Temple today. If I suddenly go missing, it will cause suspicion from the emperor. Please go back and tell your Master that we'll meet at Jingyue Lake at midnight."

Clearly, the two masked men hadn't expected Su Liang's reaction. After looking at each other, they didn't know whether they should make a move. Yan Shiqi had instructed them to take Su Liang by force if she resisted, but she didn't resist...

In the end, the two assassins decided to report back to Yan Shiqi before leaving.

Yang Yu let out a sigh of relief, pulled Su Liang to walk quickly, and whispered,

"You should stop interacting with people from Yanyun Building in the future.

There's nothing good about assassins."

Yang Yu's brother, Yang Feng, was killed by Yan Shiba. Although it was later revealed that Yang Feng wasn't a good person, he was still the brother Yang Yu relied on. Even if Yan Shiba helped save Nian Jincheng, Yang Yu could never be friends with the likes of Yan Shiba.

Su Liang nodded, "Indeed. Don't worry; I know what I'm doing."

Su Liang never intentionally provoked Yan Shiba. She initially saved him to use him against Yan Sui. Later, Gu Ling was able to kill Yan Sui partly because Yan Shiba had already injured him, weakening his strength. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been easy for Gu Ling to win, and Su Liang's safety would have been seriously threatened.

Now, Su Liang didn't think Yan Shiba was a good person, and she always hoped that he wouldn't harm the little monk Cheng Yun. Even when she sought Yan Shiba's help, it was because he owed her.

"You're not planning on saving Yan Shiba, are you?" Yang Yu still seemed worried, "Wouldn't that be making enemies with the entire Yanyun Building?

It's too dangerous."

"It's not because of Yan Shiba. Yan Shiqi is a madman. He first targeted Gu Ling and now me, hiding isn't the solution," Su Liang shook her head. "Let's talk about it in Huguo Temple."

Understanding her intentions, Yang Yu knew that Su Liang wanted to discuss a strategy with Gu Ling.

The two of them arrived at Huguo Temple and inquired about Gu Ling, who was with Master Pu Hui. However, Master Pu Hui had stated that he would not see any other guests that day, so Su Liang and Yang Yu were stopped.

The two then went to the temple's Vegetarian Hall for a vegetarian meal.

The little monk familiar with Cheng Yun thought Su Liang had come to find him again, so he informed Cheng Yun, who then came over.

"Miss Su, did Little Tiger return home safely?" Cheng Yun asked Su Liang about Bai Xiaohu as soon as he saw her.

Su Liang nodded, "Yes, you can rest assured. Thank you for your help earlier."

Cheng Yun asked if Su Liang needed his help, and she asked him to find out when Gu Ling would leave Master Pu Hui and to make sure Gu Ling went to the back mountain to meet her.

Cheng Yun was puzzled, "Miss Su, you came to find Mr. Gu?"

Su Liang nodded, "Yes, I have important matters to discuss with him."

Cheng Yun agreed, "Alright. When Mr. Gu comes out, I will convey your message."

After that, Su Liang took Yang Yu with her to appreciate the scenic views on the back mountain.

Gu Ling had played several games of chess with Master Pu Hui, had a vegetarian lunch with him, drank some tea, and then took his leave.

Just as he stepped out, Cheng Yun approached him, "Mr. Gu, my dharma name is Cheng Yun. Miss Su Liang is looking for you, she's waiting at the back mountain. "

With Master Pu Hui still nearby, Gu Ling frowned slightly, "Please tell her that I don't have time." He then attempted to leave.

Cheng Yun furrowed his eyebrows, "Mr. Gu, you should go and see her. Miss Su must have urgent matters to discuss with you."

Gu Ling had been worried that the honest little monk would give up after being declined, and then he would have no excuse to go to the back mountain to find Su Liang. Upon hearing Cheng Yun speak again, he sighed and shook his head,

"Fine, I will go to explain things to her."

Cheng Yun led Gu Ling towards the back mountain, not knowing that Gu Ling was even more familiar with the area than he was.

When they reached the back mountain, they saw Su Liang and Yang Yu sitting in the pavilion.

"Miss Su, Mr. Gu has arrived." Cheng Yun said.

Su Liang got up to greet him, "Thank you."

Cheng Yun nodded slightly and turned to leave.

After taking a few steps back, he saw Su Liang go to grab Gu Ling's arm, but Gu Ling avoided her touch. Cheng Yun looked puzzled, unable to understand the situation, and quickened his pace to leave.

"Marquis Gu, the desire for beauty is universal. I am not a ferocious beast, I just want to invite you to sit down." Su Liang appeared "hurt" before suddenly lowering her voice and rapidly saying, "On the way up the mountain earlier, people from Yanyun Building approached me; I have agreed to meet Yan Shiqi at Jingyue Lake tonight at midnight."

Gu Ling's expression remained indifferent, "Miss Su, please have some self-respect. If you touch me again, don't blame me for being impolite." His tone then softened, "Don't go."

Su Liang sighed, "Marquis Gu, what kind of girl do you like?" Lowering her voice, "Yan Shiqi won't let it go."

Gu Ling's face remained calm, "Please don't ask such boring questions again, Miss Su." His voice lightened, "I will find him."

Su Liang understood. If she did not go at that time, it was highly likely that Yan Shiqi would show up in person. If Gu Ling secretly followed Yan Shiqi, he would discover his hiding spot. As for being monitored by the Emperor, that was not an insoluble problem.

Yang Yu silently turned to look at the edge of the cliff, unable to watch the two people who were too engrossed in their act...

"Marquis Gu, I just want to be friends with you. Why must you distance yourself so much?" Su Liang's expression was serious.

Gu Ling's indifferent expression turned his back to Su Liang and walked away,

"I don't want to be friends with you."

Su Liang laughed at Gu Ling's retreating figure, "If not friends, how about being husband and wife?"

Gu Ling paused briefly, knowing full well that Su Liang was acting, yet his heart raced. He desperately wanted to turn around and agree with a single word "Yes," but his rationality told him that it was impossible, as it would look very strange since someone was watching in secret...

However, Gu Ling could not bring himself to say any words of rejection, so without looking back, he walked on.

Su Liang sighed as she watched his retreating figure, "What a beautiful flower on a high mountain! Sooner or later, I will pick him!" Gu Ling, who hadn't walked far: ...I hope sooner....

Chapter 262: 262. Kill with a borrowed knife, good friends reunite

Su Liang sat next to Yan Yu, both facing the misty cliff not far away.

Yan Yu couldn't help but laugh, then she consciously looked around, lowering her voice, "Flower picker? Su Liang, you're really something! A living, breathing lustful female bandit! "

Su Liang stretched out her hand, holding Yan Yu's chin, and winked at her, "Little beauty, just follow me."

Yan Yu laughed and leaned on Su Liang's shoulder, "Tell the truth, did you really fall for someone's beauty? Taking advantage of them through acting!" Su Liang pushed Yan Yu away, coughing lightly, "What are you talking about? I am a decent person."

“What decent person claims to pick flowers in broad daylight!” Yan Yu continued to laugh, finding Su Liang and Gu Ling very amusing. Even though they were obviously acting seriously, she found it hilarious.

“What’s wrong with picking flowers?” Su Liang looked serious, “I’ve even cut down trees.”

The two spoke softly, and when Yan Yu had laughed enough, they both got up and left.

The clouds behind the Huguo Temple were indeed beautiful, but Su Liang wasn’t really there to see the clouds.

After coming down from the mountain, there was still time, Su Liang decided to visit Wangxiang Mountain again. Su Yuanzhou’s family’s tomb had been relocated to their hometown, and she had arranged for trees to be planted on the original site to see how they had grown.

Su Liang sent Yan Yu home first, and then called Ren Dong to accompany her out of the city.

After dismounting at the foot of the mountain, the two walked up together. Ren Dong couldn’t help but ask, “Master, why did you bring back the fake coffin at that time?”

With her usual expression, Su Liang replied, “That was my life.”

Ren Dong was slightly startled. She thought Su Liang meant that the fake coffin had allowed her to live and saved her life.

But in fact, Su Liang wanted to set up a tomb for the original master.

As the sun was about to set, Su Liang stood at the location of Su Yuanzhou’s family’s graveyard, which was now a pine forest.

She had specifically instructed people to plant pines and cypresses since other trees would have lost their leaves during this season.

In just two months, there was no trace of the original graveyard, as if the pines and cypresses had always been there.

In the early winter, even the green of the pines and cypresses was as dim as the sky.

Su Liang walked around and confirmed that each tree had survived.

Watching her, Ren Dong thought Su Liang was mourning her deceased family members. She noticed a touch of bright color not far away and found a cluster of wild chrysanthemums blossoming among the withered grass. The small yellow flowers were vibrant and swaying gently in the wind.

Ren Dong took out her dagger and cut the wild chrysanthemums, removing the dead leaves and dust from the petals. Hearing Su Liang calling her, she hid the flowers behind her back as she turned around.

“Let’s go,” Su Liang walked out of the pine forest, her face calm, “It’s getting late.”

“Yes,” Ren Dong nodded. Seeing that Su Liang had already walked ahead, she instinctively held the flowers over Su Liang’s shoulder and presented them in front of her.

Su Liang was stunned, “For me?” She smiled and accepted them. “They look nice.”

Ren Dong rubbed her hands awkwardly, “I just saw them over there...”

“We’ll clean them and dry them for chrysanthemum tea when we get back,” Su Liang carried the flowers as she walked forward.

Ren Dong’s lips twitched and a hint of a smile appeared in her eyes. She quickly followed Su Liang.

By the time they returned to the city, it was dark and Su Liang went to Wan Family Restaurant for dinner again.

However, Gu Ling still didn’t show up. Ren Dong heard someone say that the beautiful Gu had gone to play by Jingyue Lake in the afternoon.

After having dinner, Su Liang also packed a few dishes for Yan Yu.

“Will that person be alright tonight?” Yan Yu asked Su Liang.

Su Liang shook her head, “Don’t worry, Yan Shiqi can’t do anything to him.” Gu Ling went to Jingyue Lake during the day, making it easier to justify going back at night.

Marquis Chang Xin’s Mansion.

Approaching midnight, the secret guard hiding in the tree yawned, watching from afar at Gu Ling’s room. He was used to Gu Ling rarely going to bed early.

But tonight was different from other nights.

Suddenly, he saw Gu Ling’s door open, and Gu Ling walked out. The secret guard’s expression changed and in the next moment, Gu Ling leaped into the air towards a certain direction.

The secret guard hurried to catch up, and soon saw Gu Ling leaving the Marquis Chang Xin’s mansion.

When it was confirmed that Gu Ling was heading towards Mirror Moon Lake, the secret guard still didn’t know what he was going to do.

The night at Mirror Moon Lake was quiet, and at this time, even the sound of insects and bird calls was difficult to hear.

The secret guard saw Gu Ling stopping in a tree and observing attentively. He chose to hide in another tree at a safe distance and looked towards the edge of Mirror Moon Lake, his eyes narrowed, there were people there!

Under the dark night, a silver mask shone brightly, quite conspicuous, and the mask only had one eye hole. That must be Yan Seventeen, the master of Yanyun Building!

But at this distance, the secret guard could not hear Yan Seventeen’s voice, only seeing him standing by the lake with two people, seemingly waiting for someone.

“Master, it’s already past midnight. Maybe that person won’t show up,” said one assassin.

Yan Seventeen clenched his teeth, “Could she think that I wouldn’t dare to touch her?”

“Should we go to Su Mansion?” suggested another assassin.

However, Yan Seventeen narrowed his eyes, recalling how every time he mentioned capturing Su Liang to accompany Yan Eighteen, Yan Eighteen couldn’t help but laugh wildly, as if really looking forward to him going to trouble Su Liang. Did this mean that Yan Eighteen was certain that if he went after Su Liang, he would end up in trouble himself...?

Yan Seventeen was a bit hesitant. Although it was recently heard that Su Liang was pursuing Gu Ling, his train of thought was that Yan Eighteen’s good sister actually had the same taste in men, and he didn’t think of the possibility that Gu Ling could have been the deceased “Ning Jing”. After all, Yan Seventeen’s understanding of the relationship between Su Liang and “Ning Jing” was far worse than that of Yan Eighteen’s.

Yan Eighteen’s words just made Yan Seventeen deeply suspect that there was an expert protecting Su Liang.

Another quarter of an hour passed, and still, no one showed up. Yan Seventeen finally decided to give up. Ever since that night he was repelled by Gu Ling’s palm, Yan Seventeen had wavered on his original plan, not daring to go after Gu Ling again, and even being very cautious about looking for Su Liang.

After all, what he wanted from Yan Eighteen was already under his control, and capturing Gu Ling or Su Liang had little practical meaning for him. To a large extent, he had lost his rationality due to being provoked by Yan Eighteen. After being suppressed by Gu Ling’s strength, Yan Seventeen’s rationality slowly returned.

He couldn’t make any more trouble... At this moment, Yan Seventeen decided to leave the capital with Yan Eighteen first, find a place to marry her, and when Yan Eighteen became pregnant with his child, where else could she run?

With this thought, Yan Seventeen said, “Let’s go!”

The secret guard kept watching. Seeing no one show up and Yan Seventeen about to leave, Gu Ling followed him secretly, and so did the secret guard.

After several twists and turns, Yan Seventeen entered a mansion.

The secret guard saw Gu Ling leave and head towards the Imperial Palace.

In the middle of the night, Gu Ling sought an audience at the palace gate. Duanmu Yi sensed that something had happened, so he didn’t get angry and let Gu Ling in.

“This humble official went to Mirror Moon Lake today for leisure and lost my mother’s jade pendant. I found it late at night and went back to find it, only to see Yan Seventeen by the lake as if waiting for someone.” Gu Ling reported that he had followed Yan Seventeen and had confirmed the location of Yanyun

Building’s assassins. He asked Duanmu Yi to send people to encircle and rescue Nian Jincheng.

Duanmu Yi never expected that the situation would develop in this way; before this, he still doubted whether Nian Jincheng was really in Yan Eighteen's hands.

However, no matter what, Duanmu Yi would not let Yanyun Building off.

Every country had assassin organizations, but the unwritten rule was not to provoke the royal family, so everyone would live in peace.

The time Yan Eighteen had kidnapped Nian Jincheng and Nian Ruting while simultaneously severely injuring and humiliating the fifth prince, Duanmu Che, was a serious provocation against the royal family's authority.

"How many people do you need?" Duanmu Yi asked Gu Ling.

"To deal with Yanyun Building, ordinary soldiers would be sent to their death. Only masters could stand a chance in battle," said Gu Ling.

Duanmu Yi's eyes were fixed, "You go back first, I will make arrangements."

Gu Ling knew that Duanmu Yi didn't want him to see the power of the royal family's masters, as this was a matter of utmost secrecy.

However, Gu Ling had already achieved his goal. Even if Yan Eighteen was in that mansion, it didn't matter to Gu Ling. He didn't see the black mist on Duanmu Yi's forehead, meaning that even if someone died tonight, they were all people who deserved to die.

After leaving the Imperial Palace, Gu Ling went straight back to his mansion. Duanmu Yi's spies were watching him, and he didn't have contact with anyone else or go to other places.

However, this secret guard originally should have reported to Duanmu Yi after his shift was over at midnight, about Su Liang chasing Gu Ling to Huguo Temple during the day, and a shocking conversation the two had on the back mountain. But he had yet to find the opportunity.

The night was deep and silent.

Over a dozen shadows left the Imperial Palace, quickly heading in one direction.

After returning from Jingyue Lake, Yan Shiqi prepared to leave the capital city that night. To prevent Yan Shiqi from making a scene, he arranged for her with sedatives and had her sleep through it, ordering two trusty men to take her away first in case it delayed their journey.

"Can... can I not leave?" Nian Ruting couldn't help but ask Yan Shiqi, "I didn't do anything wrong. I want to stay and find Gu Ling. You also want me to be with him, right? So that Yan Shiba won't..."

Already in a bad mood, Yan Shiqi heard Nian Ruting's deluded expectations, and slapped her, "Shut up! Either leave or I'll kill you right now!"

Nian Ruting covered her face and lowered her head, not daring to say another word.

A subordinate came to report that the brothers in the capital city had gathered, and they were ready to depart. This was because after Yan Shiqi had wrested the position of Master from Yan Shiba, he had not yet purged Yanyun Building of those with ulterior motives. He planned to return this time to

rectify Yanyun Building, so they took all the assassins in the Qian Country's capital city with them this time.

Yan Shiqi put on his mask, "Let's go!"

As soon as his voice fell, the sound of arrows breaking through the air rang out. Yan Shiqi's eyes narrowed, and he saw more than a dozen dark figures approaching menacingly and emitting a murderous aura.

Unprepared, the first wave of arrows immediately killed several assassins.

Yan Shiqi had no idea that these people were the personal guards of the Qian Country's emperor. Presuming that they were masters sent by Su Liang, he thought that Su Liang tricked him into going to Jingyue Lake tonight in order to secretly follow and find his hidden location. The former "friendship" with Su Liang had made Yan Shiqi careless!

In fact, if Yan Shiqi had known that these masters were sent by Duanmu Yi, he would have certainly chosen to betray Su Liang and expose her collusion with

Yan Shiba.

Unfortunately, Yan Shiqi didn't think that far, and Duanmu Yi's personal guards couldn't possibly reveal their own identity, even deliberately concealing it. As a result, Yan Shiqi firmly believed that they were all sent by Su Liang.

On one side were professional assassins, while on the other side were also, essentially, professional assassins.

When the two sides met, it was inevitably a bloody and life-or-death battle .

Nian Ruting hid herself at the beginning of the fight, hoping to find an opportunity to slip away.

As he found the opponents to be highly skilled and ruthless, with a growing number of casualties, Yan Shiqi also became focused on escaping.

Finally, when Yan Shiqi was cornered by three people, he found Nian Ruting hidden there, and without hesitation, grabbed her to use as his human shield.

It was dim, and Duanmu Yi's personal guards could not see Nian Ruting's face clearly. Duanmu Yi had instructed them to capture Yan Shiba alive. Being the only woman on Yan Shiqi's side, Duanmu Yi's personal guards mistakenly believed that Nian Ruting was Yan Shiba. They had no time to think about why Yan Shiba was so weak, and they did not use lethal force.

This finally gave Yan Shiqi the opportunity to breathe, and after getting struck by a sword, he broke through the window and left.

"Help... help..." Nian Ruting, covered in blood, weakly called out twice before falling unconscious.

In the end, only Yan Shiqi managed to escape. All other assassins of Yanyun Building in the capital city were eliminated.

The battered Nian Ruting was brought to the palace and presented before Duanmu Yi.

Very few people knew the true appearance of the female assassin leader Yan Shiba, and Duanmu Yi's personal guards had not seen Nian Ruting's face clearly either.

After wiping the blood from Nian Ruting's face, Duanmu Yi stared at her and frowned deeply, "Fools! She is not Yan Shiba at all!"

"Your Majesty, forgive our mistake. There was only one woman there." A

woman, wearing a mask and with a dark red Shaoyao embroidered on her collar, knelt down and pleaded guilty.

"Wake her up!" Duanmu Yi said with a solemn face.

Nian Ruting, who had already been seriously injured, was forcibly awakened by someone, lying on the ground, trembling all over.

"Why are you still alive? Where is Nian Jincheng?" Duanmu Yi asked sharply.

Nian Ruting was pulled to her knees, and after seeing her surroundings and Duanmu Yi's face, she seemed to have found her savior, "Your Majesty... Your Majesty... Save me!"

"I'm asking you, where is Nian Jincheng?" Duanmu Yi's eyes were cold.

"Nian Jincheng..." Nian Ruting, having lost too much blood, her consciousness was already somewhat blurred, "He... I don't know... I don't know... Gu Ling... I want to see... I want... to see Gu Ling..."

As she spoke, Nian Ruting fell into unconsciousness once more.

Duanmu Yi's expression changed when he heard Nian Ruting mentioning Gu Ling's name. After a moment of silence, he spoke again, "Take her to treat her injuries."

As soon as the people left, the bloodstains on the ground were quickly cleaned up.

Duanmu Yi sent someone to summon Gu Ling to enter the palace immediately.

When Gu Ling received the news, it was already daylight. Dressed in plain clothes, he walked through half of the palace in the morning mist and met Marquis Duanmu, who looked exhausted.

"Last night, I had dispatched people to eliminate more than a dozen Yanyun

Building members hiding in the capital. Yan Shiba was not among them, and Yan Shiqi escaped with serious injuries. There was no trace of Nian Jincheng," Duanmu Yi said coldly.

Upon hearing this, Gu Ling knew that there must be a group of highly skilled masters with Duanmu Yi, otherwise, they would not be able to compete with Yanyun Building.

"However, there's one person who might know something." Duanmu Yi looked at Gu Ling and said, "You should know her, she claimed to have saved your mother many years ago, and your mother arranged a marriage for you because of this, but there was a misunderstanding and the wrong person was chosen."

Gu Ling's face was calm, and he listened as Duanmu Yi sighed softly, "Miss Nian Ruting of the Nian Family was supposed to be your fiancée. She was also forced by Nian Ruxue to get involved

in that incident, and it's not that she was innocent. Later, she fell into the hands of assassins and had a narrow escape from death. If you plead for her, I will pardon all her crimes."

Gu Ling's expression was indifferent, "There was indeed a misunderstanding that year. My mother didn't arrange my marriage as a reward for someone giving her a little help."

Duanmu Yi frowned, "What do you mean by that?"

Gu Ling replied, "My marriage with the Nian girl was actually arranged by Gu Yuan. He conspired with Nian Jitang in secret, and in order not to arouse the emperor's suspicion, he feigned gratitude towards my mother and even took her hairpin as a token for the marriage agreement. Nian Ruxue was chosen by the Nian Family to marry into the Gu Family, and Nian Ruting was not chosen because she was not as shrewd as Nian Ruxue. If it were truly arranged by my mother, she would never have gotten the wrong person."

Duanmu Yi's face darkened, "Is that true?"

Gu Ling nodded, "Every word I say is true, please let the emperor see the truth. The Nian Family indeed had the intention of rebellion, but it had nothing to do with Nian Jincheng. He was loyal to the emperor, but was despised and hated by the Nian Family, including Nian Ruting. After committing serious crimes for her own selfish desires, she deliberately tried to accuse Nian Jincheng and have him jailed. This woman is lawless, unscrupulous, and vicious in heart, yet she has survived in Yanyun Building to this day, either joining hands with those heinous assassins, or being their plaything. The so-called marriage agreement has nothing to do with me from the beginning, and I find all the women in the Nian Family repulsive."

Duanmu Yi seemed to be thinking. What Gu Ling said about Nian Ruting's deeds was true. As for the inside story of the marriage agreement between the Gu and Nian families, it was the first time Duanmu Yi had heard of it.

However, given the reasonable and well-founded arguments made by Gu Ling, and even going so far as to say that he finds them repulsive, Duanmu Yi's original plan to give Nian Ruting to him was naturally unfeasible.

Duanmu Yi sighed, "In that case, when Nian Ruting wakes up, I will have someone interrogate her thoroughly, in the hope of finding Nian Jincheng's whereabouts. You can go."

Just as Duanmu Yi's voice had dropped, a report came from outside the

Imperial Study, "Your Majesty, someone outside the palace claims to be Nian Jincheng."

Duanmu Yi's face changed slightly, and seeing Gu Ling's brow furrowed as well, he ordered, "Go to the Side Palace."

Gu Ling went to the Side Palace, knowing that Duanmu Yi did not want him to meet Nian Jincheng face to face and tip him off.

Yang Yu was nervous throughout the morning, as today was the day Nian Jincheng was scheduled to return to the capital.

"Will the emperor believe it?" Yang Yu asked Su Liang again.

Su Liang was making dumplings, “Don’t worry, your man is just sometimes foolish, not stupid.”

Yang Yu touched her forehead, “I’m just afraid he’ll slip up and give something away.”

Su Liang was very calm, “He’s been taught how to answer such simple questions. Just say he doesn’t know anything else, and there won’t be any slip-ups. Don’t scare yourself. Come help me make dumplings.”

“I don’t have an appetite.” Yang Yu shook her head.

Su Liang snorted lightly, “This is a loving meal I made especially for Gu beauty, your man should be able to eat it too.”

Yang Yu hesitated for a moment, then sat down next to Su Liang, “Alright.”

Approaching noon, word had spread throughout the capital that Nian Jincheng had returned, and people were talking about it.

When Gu Ling and Nian Jincheng came out of the palace together and arrived at the Wan Family Restaurant, it caused a stir.

The two friends, who had not been seen together in public for many years, seemed to have passed the emperor’s test and restored their identities.

When they went up to the second floor, Su Liang came out of a private room, holding an exquisite food box in her hands, “Marquis Gu, this is a delicious meal I made for you, please give it a try!”

The onlookers watched with glittering eyes: ...It’s starting again! It’s starting again! Big news! The Top Scholar Su actually cooked for Gu beauty! Will Gu beauty throw the box on the ground?

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “I don’t need it. Please don’t do this again, Miss Su.”

However, Nian Jincheng next to him bowed and said, “Miss Su, it’s nice to see you again.” He took the box from Su Liang and patted Gu Ling on the shoulder, “Aling, don’t disregard Su Miss’s kindness.” Then he pulled Gu Ling into their private room and thanked Su Liang, “Thank you!”

The onlookers: ...No doubt, Gu beauty won’t eat it, it will all end up going to Nian Jincheng.

What the onlookers didn’t know was that, after closing the door, the box was in Gu Ling’s hands. He opened it and put it on the table, the plump dumplings steaming hot, and there was even a small bowl of Su Liang’s special dipping sauce, very vinegary.

“It’s been a while since I’ve had this.” Nian Jincheng sighed, grimacing in relief and picked up his chopsticks to eat.

Gu Ling moved the box in front of him, “This is mine.”

“Weren’t you not wanting it?”

Gu Ling didn’t answer, but continued eating the dumplings, and in the end, didn’t share any with the begging Nian Jincheng. The atmosphere in the room, where the rumored reunion of friends was taking place outside, was unspeakable “warm.”

Meanwhile, in the next room, Yang Yu thought that Nian Jincheng was finally safe, and had eaten the dumplings she had personally made. She felt a great weight lift off her heart, and her smile was especially sweet....

Chapter 263: 263. Let's change positions.

"So what's next?" Yang Yu asked Su Liang.

Su Liang laughed lightly, "How about I arrange a heroic rescue of the beauty?"

Yang Yu was stunned for a moment, "Are you going to save Miss Gu? Her strength seems to be stronger than yours!"

Su Liang shook her head, "What are you thinking about? I'm talking about you and your lady."

Yang Yu's face turned red, and she laughed again, nodding slightly, "Oh." "What are your thoughts?" Su Liang asked.

Yang Yu looked serious, "My thoughts are, I'll listen to whatever you say."

"You're acting like I'm the elder here," Su Liang commented, "Your lady must have her own thoughts and be quite anxious."

At this moment, in the room next door, Nian Jincheng was discussing with Gu Ling several ways for her to meet Yang Yu, with a heroic rescue of beauty being one of them.

When Nian Jincheng finished, Gu Ling had just finished her dumplings and put down her chopsticks.

"Aling, what do you think?" Nian Jincheng asked.

Gu Ling immediately rejected Nian Jincheng's ideas, which had a strong sense of design, "There's no need to make it so complicated. After you meet, just send a matchmaker to propose a marriage."

Nian Jincheng furrowed his brows, "Xiaoyu is next door, we'll meet in a while, and propose marriage tomorrow?"

Gu Ling shook her head, "What's the rush? Wait a few days."

Nian Jincheng sighed, "Of course I'm anxious, you wouldn't understand. Tell me honestly, do you still only treat Su Liang as a friend and sister?"

Gu Ling replied coldly, "Mind your own business."

Nian Jincheng: ...her ability to annoy people has improved again, he missed the gentle and cute Yang Yu even more...

When Gu Ling and Nian Jincheng left, they were stopped by Su Liang again. Nian Jincheng couldn't help but glance at the room behind Su Liang, but he only saw a piece of light purple fabric, feeling disappointed.

"Lady Gu, did you enjoy the dumplings I made?" Su Liang asked with a smile. Gu Ling showed no expression, "You can ask Nian Jincheng."

Nian Jincheng, who was suddenly called out, coughed lightly and said, “Miss Su’s cooking skills are really good, very delicious. But Aling didn’t like it, so I ate them all.”

Onlookers: ...as expected!

Yang Yu: ...It must be fake, they must have shared them.

There’s no justice!

“What does Lady Gu like? I’ll make your favorite next time.” Su Liang maintained her smile.

Gu Ling walked past her and said indifferently, “I would prefer for Miss Su to stay away from me.”

Su Liang “sadly” turned around and went back into her room and closed the door.

Nian Jincheng followed Gu Ling away.

The phrase “I’d like you to stay away from me” quickly spread throughout the capital city of Qian Country. It became a famous scene on the path of Su, the Top Scholar, pursuing the beautiful Gu. It was talked about for years.

Seeing Su Liang return, Yang Yu frowned, “Weren’t his words a bit too much?”

As she finished speaking, Su Liang couldn’t help laughing, “I taught him that line before, and told him to find an opportunity to use it! Isn’t it classic?” Yang Yu: ...What’s the point of this? What’s the point?

Su Liang laughed lightly, “Our goal isn’t marriage, it’s to establish a connection and avoid being involved in marriage arrangements.”

Yang Yu furrowed her brows, “Will it continue like this?”

Su Liang nodded, “For the time being. As I publicly pursue Gu Ling, if the emperor wants me to marry someone else, I can fully justify my refusal to comply by choosing death. The initiative is on my side. If the emperor forces the issue, he will be criticized.”

Yang Yu pondered and nodded, “Indeed, that’s the case.”

“There is no sign that the emperor will interfere in Gu Ling’s marriage for now, but it doesn’t mean he won’t in the future. His identity is special—being a Qian Country servant and also Liang Country’s King Yue’s grandson—and he is unparalleled in beauty,” Su Liang said, “If he does not interfere, so be it. But if the emperor wants to arrange a marriage for him, all he has to say is that he has been moved by me. And the emperor would have no reason not to indulge us.”

Yang Yu’s eyes brightened as she clapped her hands, “Well said! This plan is brilliant!”

However, after a moment, Yang Yu furrowed her brows again, “Why not just get married sooner?”

Su Liang laughed and shook her head, “Our relationship is not like yours with Nian Jincheng, so why should we get married? That fake marriage in the village didn’t mean much. If we were to announce it to the world, it would not end well. Moreover, there’s a woman who is in love with him and is a Poison

Master; if I were to marry him, I might be poisoned on our wedding day.” Yang Yu held her head, “How can there be such a thing?”

“It’s true.” Su Liang stated that she only wanted the process of pursuing Gu Ling, and all he needed to do was keep rejecting her before Duanmu Yi made any further moves.

“So, be honest with me. Do you really not like Gu the Beauty?” Yang Yu asked earnestly.

Su Liang nodded, “I like him!”

Yang Yu’s expression brightened, only to see Su Liang’s frank gaze, then said,

“He’s my favorite friend; beautiful, strong, and very secure.”

“With him being so good, haven’t you ever been moved?” Yang Yu said she didn’t quite understand.

Su Liang thought about it, “In my eyes, he is a brother, master, friend, and family member, but I’ve never been moved. Maybe it’s because we’re too familiar?”

Yang Yu sighed softly, “I think you just haven’t had your epiphany yet. I really don’t understand you two, just take your time and play.”

Su Liang then asked Yang Yu, “What does being moved feel like?”

Yang Yu thought for a moment, “It’s like... seeing him makes you happy, and thinking of him makes you can’t help but smile.”

Su Liang immediately shook her head, “I’m sure I haven’t. I feel very calm when I see him, and he probably feels the same when he sees me.”

Duanmu Yi believed Nian Jincheng’s words, at least on the surface, as there were no gaps in his story. Indeed, Yan Shiba never appeared again, and now Yan Shiqi ran Yanyun Building. Nian Jincheng’s claim of “internal strife within Yanyun Building” was quite credible.

Duanmu Yi said that Nian Jincheng’s position would be restored. He would rest for three days and then go to the army. The originally sealed Nian Mansion now belonged to him alone.

Nian Jincheng did not refuse, but did not return to the Nian Mansion either. Instead, he planned to live with Gu Ling at Marquis Chang Xin’s Mansion.

Upon arriving at the Marquis Chang Xin’s Mansion, they found that the place was vast, but only one courtyard could accommodate people. The other dilapidated buildings had been demolished, and Gu Ling hadn’t allowed any more construction.

There were large open spaces where flowers and trees had been planted. After the fire, they were destroyed and removed, leaving only a few scattered ancient trees.

“Where will I stay?” Nian Jincheng asked.

“You’re getting married, aren’t you? I don’t have a place for you two to live.” Gu Ling said.

Nian Jincheng nodded, “I’m only staying for a few days. Once we’re married, I’ll naturally move in with Xiaoyu. She has a house in the capital city!” Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “Aren’t you afraid of being called an inverted husband?”

After the previous events, Nian Jincheng had long since abandoned his earlier seriousness. He replied nonchalantly, “I don’t mind.”

Gu Ling told Nian Jincheng to clean up a junk room in the courtyard himself.

Nian Jincheng held his head, “How can I be considered a guest in your place? Won’t you help me?”

“I didn’t invite you.” Gu Ling picked up a book, implying he could love it or leave it.

Nian Jincheng had no choice but to roll up his sleeves and clean up by himself.

“Do you believe Nian Jincheng’s words?” Duanmu Yi asked Duanmu Chen.

After some thought, Duanmu Chen nodded, “This minister’s son thinks there is nothing wrong with it. Given Gu Ling’s temperament, he is unlikely to collude with an assassin leader like Yan Shiba. If he wanted to save Nian Jincheng back then, he might have been able to steal into Heavenly Prison himself. If there’s as much inside information as Nian Jincheng said, it all makes sense.”

Yan Shiba admired Gu Ling and kidnapped Nian Jincheng. After that, there was turmoil in Yanyun Building, Yan Shiqi usurped the throne, pursued Yan Shiba, and Nian Jincheng escaped during the chaos. Nian Ruting had been in Yan Shiqi’s hands and was not killed.

Nian Ruting had woken up and claimed she did not know what had happened back then. That night, after being thrown off the cliff at Wangxiang Mountain, she fell into Yan Shiqi’s hands. Yan Shiqi originally wanted to kill her, but because of her infatuation with Gu Ling, Yan Shiqi felt she was like his own feelings for Yan Shiba, so he spared her life and made her a maid.

Nian Ruting’s words indirectly confirmed some of the things Nian Jincheng had said.

As for Nian Ruting’s earlier claim that Nian Jincheng knew Gu Ling’s whereabouts and had secret dealings with her, she could not produce any evidence and had to admit that it might have been fabricated lies that Nian Ruxue told her to deceive her.

Duanmu Chen had wanted to win over Nian Jincheng a long time ago. After getting to know Su Liang, he grew to like this kind of reliable partner even more. Unconsciously, his original self-interest-first mentality had undergone some changes, at least in terms of achieving his goals, he was not as unscrupulous as before.

“What do you think should be done with Nian Ruting?” Duanmu Yi asked

Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen respectfully replied, “This woman’s family not only has a treasonous heart, but she has also cheated in the military exam, committed the great crime of deceiving the emperor, and has been with the bandits in Yanyun Building for several months. In my opinion, she deserves to be sentenced to death. ”

However, Duanmu Yi said, “Her face is even more beautiful than Nian Ruxue’s.”

Duanmu Chen intuitively knew that Duanmu Yi wanted to give Nian Ruting to Gu Ling, but he didn’t know that Duanmu Yi had already tried to do this, only to be reasonably rejected by Gu Ling.

“Let it be, just as you said, send her to her death.” Duanmu Yi made a decision.

Duanmu Chen was slightly surprised but didn’t dare to ask more.

“You have a good relationship with Su Liang. When you have a chance, persuade her not to always chase after Gu Ling, it’s making her a laughingstock. I value her greatly, so let her pay attention to her words and deeds.” Duanmu Yi frowned and said.

Duanmu Chen respectfully agreed.

After leaving the palace, Chang’an then took Duanmu Chen to Su Mansion by car.

“Father Emperor told you to be mindful of your influence and not to always chase after Gu Ling.” Duanmu Chen got straight to the point.

Su Liang countered, “Whose influence am I affecting?”

Duanmu Chen rubbed his forehead, “As a court-appointed official, your behavior makes people laugh.”

“Now I’m just a doctor.” Su Liang said, “Who is laughing at me? Does Crown Prince find it funny?”

Duanmu Chen’s mouth twitched slightly, “I don’t find it funny, but Father Emperor dislikes seeing it.”

Su Liang nodded, “Alright, I will continue.”

Upon exchanging glances, Duanmu Chen smirked, “Actually, I feel the same way. Anyway, I’ve told you the message, but if you don’t listen, there’s nothing I can do. Let’s see if Father Emperor does anything to stop you.”

Last time Duanmu Chen came, he didn’t quite understand why Su Liang would chase men. After hearing Chang’an’s explanation, although he was speechless, he later thought it made sense. Su Liang was already different from others, and her pursuit of Gu Ling had no downside for Duanmu Chen. If Gu Ling could be won over, Duanmu Chen thought it would be a good thing.

While talking, Duanmu Chen mentioned Nian Jincheng again and told Su Liang about his experiences, exclaiming, “He is quite lucky. I thought he would be hard-pressed to return safely since he was controlled by Yanyun Building, but he had already escaped.”

“General Nian is very upright, and I don’t think his loyalty needs to be doubted.” Su Liang said.

Duanmu Chen was not surprised that Su Liang said this, because they had dealt with Nian Jincheng in Bei’an County before, “Father Emperor asked me to host a banquet at my mansion the day after tomorrow to welcome Marquis Chang Xin and General Nian. You won’t find an excuse not to go,

right?” Su Liang smiled, “If Miss Gu is going, I will definitely be there on time.” Duanmu Chen stood up to leave, “I don’t need to ask more then.”

“Crown Prince, be sure to arrange for me to sit next to Miss Gu at the banquet!” Su Liang called out to Duanmu Chen’s retreating figure.

Duanmu Chen grumbled, “Dream on! According to Father Emperor’s intention, I have to arrange for you to sit far away from each other. You figure it out yourself! ”

“Then, I’ll just swap seats with General Nian at that time!” Su Liang said.

Duanmu Chen shook his head and left with a wave, really speechless.

Then Su Liang went upstairs and said to Yang Yu with a smile, “A great opportunity.”

Yang Yu showed a puzzled look, “What’s a great opportunity?”

“Wait for the banquet in two days, I will take you with me. At that time, I will ask Nian Jincheng to swap seats with me, so I can sit next to Miss Gu, and you will have a chance to get to know him.” Su Liang winked at Yang Yu.

Yang Yu couldn’t help but laugh, “That’s right! It makes perfect sense!”

“Dress up nicely. If all goes well, shortly after the day after tomorrow, Nian Jincheng will be able to send a matchmaker to propose marriage,” Su Liang said, feeling as if she was about to marry off her own daughter.

Yang Yu was, of course, very happy, and immediately went to choose her clothes.

The next day, Su Liang went to the Wan Family Restaurant on time as usual, bringing a dish she had made herself. Still, Nian Jincheng accepted it while Gu Ling claimed that he didn’t eat. When Nian Jincheng didn’t get a bite, he admitted he ate it and praised it as delicious...

Su Liang didn’t let Yang Yu show her face and meet Nian Jincheng. After Gu Ling left, she found the medical book he had repaired for her in a vase.

On the day of the banquet at the Crown Prince’s Mansion, Xing Yusheng and

Lin Xueqing came looking for Su Liang to go together. When they saw her and Yang Yu, Lin Xueqing couldn’t help but praise, “Su sister and Xiaoyu look so beautiful today!”

Su Liang, who usually had no makeup on, had carefully applied makeup today, and the appropriate makeup made her delicate little face even more brilliant and charming.

Xing Yusheng laughed loudly, “This is called ‘dressing to please a lover’! I didn’t think that you, Su Liang, would have a day like this!”

Su Liang thought to herself that on the surface, she was chasing Gu Ling, but in reality, she was working hard to help bring Yang Yu and Nian Jincheng together.

“Xiaoyu, you’re dressed up so nicely, be careful not to attract unwanted attention,” Lin Xueqing joked.

With a helpless look, Yang Yu replied, "With my identity, I'm not qualified to go. But Su Liang insisted that I accompany her."

"What do you mean, not qualified? You're the richest girl in Qian Country! If you were a man, I would definitely want to marry you," Lin Xueqing said, hugging Yang Yu's arm.

Xing Yusheng: ...His family's Qingqing always liked to get close to her sisters, and now there was another Yang Yu who sent her beautiful dresses every day. Fortunately, they were girls...

The banquet at the Crown Prince's Mansion invited all the young people from the capital city's influential families.

Su Liang and Yang Yu arrived riding horses, and as soon as they entered, they heard people say that the Marquis Chang Xin and General Nian had already arrived.

The guests were all sitting in the lakeside pavilions in the back garden of the Crown Prince's Mansion. A beautiful young maid led Su Liang and Yang Yu to their seats.

As a result, Su Liang and Yang Yu had just sat down when Su Liang got up again and went toward the table where Gu Ling was sitting.

The onlookers wore playful expressions, and they saw Su Liang walk to Nian Jincheng's side, "General Nian, can you switch seats with me?"

Duanmu Chen: ...I can't even bear to watch...

Onlookers: ...So bold, so exciting, so fierce!

Gu Ling's beautiful eyebrows furrowed slightly, "No."

"Marquis Chang Xin, I'm asking General Nian." Su Liang gave Gu Ling a sweet smile. He glanced at her then lowered his head to pour tea.

Nian Jincheng stood up, "Since Miss Su likes my seat, let's switch." He also patted Gu Ling's shoulder as he spoke.

In the eyes of the onlookers, Nian Jincheng seemed to be concerned about his friend's lifetime affairs, intentionally trying to bring Gu Ling and Su Liang together.

Then, Nian Jincheng strode towards Su Liang's original seat.

And Su Liang elegantly sat down next to Gu Ling, "This is the most beautiful view."

"I am Nian Jincheng, may I ask for the lady's name?" Nian Jincheng asked seriously as he looked at Yang Yu.

Yang Yu blushed slightly, "My last name is Yan, and my single name is Yu." "Miss Yan, nice to meet you." Nian Jincheng's eyes were burning.

Yang Yu's face turned shy, "General Nian, I have long admired you."

On the other side, Gu Ling stood up to leave, "Your Highness the Crown Prince, I'm feeling unwell and would like to leave early."

Duanmu Chen hurriedly tried to keep him from leaving.

Su Liang reached out and grabbed Gu Ling's arm, "As a humble doctor, I should examine your pulse, Marquis Gu. Please sit down and let me check it for you.."

Chapter 264: 264. Concerning the headache of the beauty

Under everyone's watchful eyes, Gu Ling shook off Su Liang's hand and said, "Miss Su, please behave yourself."

Su Liang sighed, "Everyone knows that I am a doctor, and you all heard that Marquis Gu himself said he was feeling unwell. I was trying to diagnose him out of goodwill. What was he thinking?"

Duanmu Chen: ...Although it seemed to be the case, who didn't know that Su Liang took advantage of the opportunity to take advantage of Gu Ling's beauty? Can she really justify herself like that?

The onlookers watched with amused smiles, enjoying the gossip.

Xing Yusheng spoke, "Marquis Chang Xin, let Su Liang take your pulse quickly. Don't be afraid of seeking medical treatment!"

Nian Jincheng stood up and addressed them, "Aling, didn't you say last night that you couldn't sleep because of a headache? Miss Su is well-intentioned, and her medical skills are excellent. Let her take a look at you."

Hearing Nian Jincheng's confirmation, Duanmu Chen made Gu Ling sit back down and whispered, "If you find it inconvenient here, I can arrange for you to go elsewhere and have Su Liang diagnose you there."

At this point, if Gu Ling refused, it would be considered "concealing his illness." If he didn't let Su Liang take his pulse right now, he would have to accept Duanmu Chen's special care and be alone with Su Liang.

Actually, Gu Ling thought the latter was a pretty good deal, but according to the script of this play, he couldn't choose it.

So after a moment of silence, Gu Ling looked at Su Liang's smiling eyes and calmly placed his right arm on the table, "Then I'll trouble Doctor Su."

Addressing Su Liang as a doctor reminded others that she should concentrate on her work and not touch him inappropriately...

Interesting, very interesting... Xing Yusheng couldn't help but laugh and said to Lin Xueqing, "They really are a perfect match! I just love seeing Gu Ling's uncomfortable expression!"

Lin Xueqing, however, tugged at Xing Yusheng's sleeve, signaling him to look in another direction.

Xing Yusheng looked and saw Yang Yu sipping tea, with Nian Jincheng's eyes practically glued to her face!

Xing Yusheng blurted out in surprise, "General Nian?"

As a result, Nian Jincheng had absolutely no reaction, clearly not hearing him!

People sitting nearby also noticed – Nian Jincheng was obviously smitten with the girl Su Liang brought along!

Xing Yusheng said, dispiritedly, “I intended to plant flowers but they didn’t bloom; unintentionally, I planted willows, and they grew into a shade.”

Lin Xueqing couldn’t help but smile, quietly saying, “As long as they become a couple, right?” Looking at the embarrassed expression on Yang Yu’s face, she clearly had feelings for Nian Jincheng too. The mystery of fate was truly incredible.

On the other side, Su Liang had already taken Gu Ling’s pulse; it didn’t take too long. She asked seriously, “Marquis Gu, did you have a bad rest today?” Since Nian Jincheng had spoken on his behalf earlier, Gu Ling just nodded.

“How long has this been going on?” Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling’s thin lips answered, “Three years, with occasional flare-ups.”

Duanmu Chen frowned, “For three years, has Marquis Gu never seen a doctor?”

Su Liang shook her head slightly, “It’s just an occasional occurrence, and each time, it doesn’t last very long. Marquis Gu didn’t think it was a big deal. Am I right?”

Gu Ling looked at Su Liang, nodding his head slightly.

“But recently, there have been severe signs affecting Gu Ling’s sleep. It must be treated promptly,” Su Liang said in all seriousness.

Duanmu Chen asked, “Can it be cured?”

Su Liang pondered for a moment, “Let me administer a few acupuncture treatments for Marquis Gu, and see how it goes. It shouldn’t be a big problem.”

Not only others, but even Duanmu Chen believed her and advised Gu Ling to cooperate with Su Liang’s treatment as soon as possible, not to be careless about his health.

Xing Yusheng initially thought that Gu Ling was making things up, and Su Liang was just seizing the opportunity to hold him. He didn’t expect the situation to develop to this point. The turning point was Nian Jincheng’s statement that “Gu Ling had a headache and couldn’t sleep at night.” All in all, it seemed quite genuine, just very coincidental.

Yang Yu felt a bit surprised as well, not knowing whether Gu Ling was truly having a headache, or he was acting as planned with Nian Jincheng.

After Duanmu Chen had persuaded them, Gu Ling nodded, but said, “I’ll look for other doctors to consult.”

Yang Yu: ...Keep pretending, keep pretending, just keep pretending...

Duanmu Chen received Su Liang’s threatening gaze and lightly coughed, “Marquis Gu, do as you please.” He dared not help Su Liang pursue Gu Ling, for Duanmu Yi would be unhappy.

Then, Nian Jincheng stood up again, “In that case, I’ll have to trouble Imperial Physician Su to treat Aling later. We’re always welcoming Imperial Physician

Su and Miss Yang to our mansion as guests.”

Duanmu Chen heard Nian Jincheng mention Yang Yu out of the blue and glanced over, noticing everyone’s expressions. It seemed like Nian Jincheng had taken a liking to Su Liang’s companion, Yang Yu.

In other words, Nian Jincheng was not only concerned about Gu Ling’s health, but he also seemed intent on matchmaking him with Su Liang. Plus, he was trying to pursue Su Liang’s sister?

Duanmu Chen: ...Although Nian Jincheng was someone he wanted to win over, and Yang Yu was the head of the Yang Family, it would naturally be a good thing if she could marry Nian Jincheng. However, Nian Jincheng’s character had really changed a lot!

As for Nian Jincheng’s invitation, Su Liang gladly accepted.

As such, if Gu Ling were to decline again, it would seem very unmanly of him.

Therefore, he reluctantly kept quiet and tacitly agreed to it.

The beginning of the banquet was so colorful, while the rest of the formalities seemed rather dull.

Throughout the banquet, everyone kept their eyes on Su Liang and Gu Ling. Su Liang chatted with Gu Ling with a smile, never crossing any boundaries. Gu Ling rarely spoke, occasionally nodding in response.

Gu Ling, who looked like a heavenly beauty even dressed in a simple sackcloth, and Su Liang, who was stunningly dressed for today, sat together — one cold and aloof, the other bright and charming — it was such a feast for the eyes.

Even Duanmu Chen couldn’t help but sigh — if these two could get together, how beautiful their children would be!

Since there were people around, Su Liang only asked Gu Ling normal questions that a suitor would ask. For example, she asked him whether he had visited many places during his previous travels, what books he liked to read, what food he liked, his favorite colors, etc.

Only when asked “whether or not” type questions would Gu Ling nod or shake his head as answers. He remained silent for other questions.

As the banquet ended, Gu Ling got up to say goodbye to Duanmu Chen and prepared to leave.

Since Su Liang had forgotten her medical box today, she said to Gu Ling, “Marquis Chang Xin, you may go back first. I’ll return to my mansion to get my medical box and visit you for the treatment.”

Nian Jincheng walked over quickly, “How can we trouble Imperial Physician Su like this? We should be the ones to visit Su Mansion and request Imperial Physician Su to treat Aling.”

Su Liang chuckled, “That’s fine too. Marquis Gu and General Nian are always welcome to visit my mansion. I’ll prepare the best tea to entertain you both.” It was well-known that Su Liang sold tea.

As the guests began to leave, Yang Yu came over and took Su Liang’s arm.

Nian Jincheng’s gaze followed, and their eyes met — a tender moment of love indeed.

Seeing this, Su Liang paused and furrowed her brows slightly, "Thank you for your hospitality, Your Highness the crown prince. Now we'll take our leave." She then left with Yang Yu, without watching Gu Ling walk away for once.

Nian Jincheng's gaze followed Yang Yu's figure, and Gu Ling's expression was indifferent, "What are you looking at?"

Nian Jincheng blurted out, "That Miss Yang...she should be unmarried, right?"

"So it's you who wants to visit Su Mansion. You can go by yourself." After saying that, Gu Ling walked out.

Nian Jincheng hurriedly followed, "Aling, I've already said it, if you don't go, it will be very rude, and I won't be able to visit either. Please consider it for my sake, will you?"

After the guests had left, Duanmu Chen sat alone in the lakeside pavilion, deep in thought about today's events at the banquet, "It's just...too much of a coincidence. "

Chang'an brought over hot tea, "Master, General Nian has changed a lot after experiencing those previous calamities!"

Duanmu Chen nodded, "Indeed. Nian Jincheng has changed a lot. However, he has always been a smart person, just fooled by those people in Nian Family and not clear-headed. After a narrow escape from death, it's normal for him to become more mature."

"Marquis Gu is so determined to keep Miss Su away from him!" Chang'an laughed, "But who is Miss Su? She always gets what she wants!"

Duanmu Chen said with a smile that wasn't a smile, "Watching from the sidelines today, I actually think Gu Ling doesn't necessarily dislike Su Liang; he may just have never dealt with women since childhood, so he's repelled by women getting close."

Chang'an nodded, "Exactly, Marquis Chang Xin used to be a loner. Let alone women, he didn't even deal with men. Only that General Nian, who he has known since childhood, but before the Gu Family's incident, they rarely appeared together in public. I originally thought Gu Ling intended to become a monk, but just hadn't taken his religious vows."

Duanmu Chen's eyes narrowed slightly, "Become a monk? If he intended to become a monk, he wouldn't have returned to the capital this time. I think he's just naturally introverted and it may be related to the former Gu Family."

Chang'an was confused, "What else is there with Gu Family besides the rebellion?"

Duanmu Chen scoffed lightly, "I just heard about it. There's no way to verify."

The previous Marquis Chang Xin, Gu Yuan, was not a simple scumbag."

After Su Liang and Yang Yu left the crown prince's mansion on horseback, they went straight back to Su Mansion.

They dismounted at the entrance, and Ren Dong came to the front, leading the horse to the stable.

Su Liang and Yang Yu walked side by side, saying nothing, and Yang Yu couldn't help but laugh.

Su Liang snorted lightly, "Are you so happy about reuniting with your lover?"

Yang Yu glared at Su Liang, "It's not because of that, it's just that today's events were so interesting."

"It's still the same thing." Su Liang pointed out that Yang Yu and Nian Jincheng were completely in the state of being in love.

Yang Yu glanced back, seeing that Ren Dong hadn't caught up, she pulled Su

Liang and asked, "Was today's matter pre-arranged by the two of them? I mean Gu Ling's headache."

Su Liang nodded, "Don't bother asking, of course it was pre-arranged.

Otherwise, how would your man be so clever and well-coordinated?"

Yang Yu held her forehead, "Achen isn't that stupid, alright?"

"I'm not saying he's stupid. But if it wasn't pre-arranged, at that time, Nian would have been glued to you and wouldn't have been able to pay attention to me and Gu Ling."

Yang Yu's expression paused, "That's true."

Although there was no prior arrangement, without asking, Su Liang knew that Nian Jincheng mentioning Gu Ling's inability to sleep at night due to headaches must have been Gu Ling's plan.

Su Liang simply went along with it. And Gu Ling's purpose was naturally to have a proper chance to meet Su Liang openly, as it was always inconvenient to talk in the restaurant.

Headache" is an excellent excuse, not only does it not require symptoms under normal circumstances, but sometimes it doesn't even need a clear cause. Even if another doctor couldn't identify anything wrong, they couldn't accuse Gu Ling of faking. In any case, Su Liang's medical skills were universally recognized as the best, and others couldn't see any issues, so they could only blame their own lack of skill.

Furthermore, the fact that acupuncture was needed for headaches was even more reasonable and logical. If medicine was needed, a prescription would suffice, whereas acupuncture required face-to-face interaction, and Su Liang was the most skilled in this technique, Gu Ling could only turn to her.

If Su Liang hadn't brought her medical kit today, she would have simply gone to Marquis Chang Xin's mansion and then let Gu Ling come to her "for treatment" the next day.

The reason was simple, there were spies around Gu Ling. Going to Marquis Chang Xin's mansion would make him watched. But if he came to Su's Mansion Yuanming Pavilion, even if spies sneaked in, they could only stay far away.

In any case, as long as Gu Ling showed reluctance to come, and was brought by Nian Jincheng, that was fine.

Duanmu Yi learned about the events at the crown prince's banquet, furrowed his eyebrows, and ordered the Imperial Physician Gao to go to Gu Ling's mansion for diagnosis, under the pretense of "since Marquis Chang Xin is

unwilling to let Physician Su treat him.”.

Upon receiving the order, the Imperial Physician Gao was ready to go to Marquis Chang Xin’s mansion.

Gao Jiabao frowned, “What if Su Liang made it up to get in touch with the beautiful Gu Ling?”

Hearing this, the Imperial Physician Gao glared at his grandson, “What nonsense? The headache issue was said by Marquis Gu and General Nian themselves. Doctor Su would never falsify such matters. If she said Marquis

Guts headache needed acupuncture, then it must be true!”

Gao Jiabao: ...Understood, whatever Su Liang says is right, even if it’s not.

“So, I presume that Grandpa is helpless in dealing with Marquis Guts illness? Gao Jiabao smiled slightly.

Old Doctor Gao played with his beard and said calmly, “Although I am much older than Dr. Su, my medical skills are truly not as good as hers. She is a genius, a prodigy, a ghostly talent.”

Gao Jiabao: ...Enough with the praise, she’ll have calluses on her ears from hearing it daily...

When Old Doctor Gao arrived at the Marquis Chang Xin Mansion, Nian Jincheng was dragging Gu Ling out to visit Su Mansion.

After learning that Duanmu Yi had arranged it, Gu Ling thanked him, and then had Old Doctor Gao take his pulse.

As a result, no matter how Old Doctor Gao examined him, Gu Ling’s body appeared very healthy and without any problems.

“How about it?” Nian Jincheng looked somewhat anxious. Not because he was worried about Gu Ling’s health, but because he was afraid that Old Doctor Gao would expose the ruse.

Old Doctor Gao sighed deeply, “Throughout the years, I’ve seen many cases of headaches, and there are quite a few with unknown causes. Although there is an anomaly in Marquis Gu’s pulse, I can’t quite pinpoint it. I need to consult with Dr. Su once more.”

Nian Jincheng nodded, “Thank you, Old Doctor Gao.”

“Marquis, it’s best to have Dr. Su treat you as soon as possible.” Old Doctor Gao looked serious. Su Liang liked this boy, so of course, he had to help bring them together. In terms of medical treatment, Su Liang was an expert among experts and wouldn’t be questioned by laymen.

So, after sending off Old Doctor Gao, Nian Jincheng and Gu Ling rode their horses to Su Mansion. Along the way, Nian Jincheng even stopped by the most famous pastry shop in town to buy some pastries as gifts, all of which were Yang Yu’s favorites...

Ren Dong opened the door and invited Nian Jincheng and Gu Ling in before closing it again.

Su Liang was reading a book by the window on the second floor of Yuanming Pavilion, while Yang Yu was downstairs making tea.

Ren Dong led Gu Ling and Nian Jincheng closer, “Master, Marquis Chang Xin and General Nian have arrived.”

Su Liang peeked out from the second-floor window, then set down her book and leaped down, her dress fluttering, landing right in front of Gu Ling.

Gu Ling knew Su Liang was putting on a show, but his heart couldn’t help but overflow with joy – he liked the feeling of Su Liang deliberately getting close...

“Marquis Gu, seeing me doesn’t make your headache worse, does it?” Su Liang joked.

Gu Ling replied indifferently, “Dr. Su is joking.”

Su Liang invited her “guests” in. She asked Yang Yu to accompany Nian Jincheng for tea on the first floor, while she took Gu Ling to the second-floor study to give him acupuncture.

Upon entering, she closed the window.

This room was originally Gu Ling’s, and there was even a small rabbit he had personally carved sitting on the windowsill.

With no one else around, Su Liang sat down casually and looked at Gu Ling, humming, “Gu beauty, your acting is quite good!”

Gu Ling nodded, “Likewise.”

“Shall I give you a few acupuncture needles? In case someone finds out.” Su Liang’s lip corner hooked slightly.

Gu Ling looked at her and said, “I’m hungry, I want to eat fish.”

Su Liang held her forehead, “Is this the real reason why you faked a headache? To come and have a meal!”

Gu Ling nodded, “I haven’t been eating well lately, and I’m getting thinner.”

Su Liang was speechless, “I really can’t tell. It’s not mealtime yet, I should be giving you acupuncture, not cooking fish.”

“I want to eat Fried Fish Nuggets.” Gu Ling casually lay down on a lounge chair, “You like me so much, and since I’m visiting your home, you should serve your best dishes to please me. Hurry up..”

Chapter 265: 265. Intimate contact triggered by a folding fan

Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu, who were sitting opposite each other and eating dessert from time to time, looked puzzled when they heard footsteps and saw Su Liang coming down alone.

“Did you finish treating Marquis Gu so quickly?” Yang Yu thought they were going to talk about something, but Su Liang came down as soon as he went up.

Su Liang, keeping a smile on his face, replied, "I haven't treated Marquis Gu yet. As it is his first visit, he is the most distinguished guest. I need to prepare some delicious dishes to entertain him. After he tastes them, I will then treat him."

With that, Su Liang walked out the door.

Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu exchanged glances, and Yang Yu couldn't help laughing. "Xiaoliang must have begrudgingly agreed to it; it must have been the request made by the person upstairs."

Nian Jincheng wasn't surprised at all. "They enjoy playing it their way, so it's not something for us to worry about. Who should I invite to be the matchmaker for our marriage proposal?"

Yang Yu's face turned slightly red, "There is no need to rush, let's talk about it in a few days."

Nian Jincheng said seriously, "No, I am just that kind of person who sticks to my decision. Setting the wedding date as soon as possible will put my mind at

”

ease.

Yang Yu gently nodded, "Very well, then I'll wait."

Nian Jincheng sighed softly and complained about his "good brother." "Xiaoyu, you have no idea what kind of life I lead in Marquis Chang Xin's residence. It's almost like living in the wilderness. Aling is not someone you want to live with, only Su Liang can put up with him."

Yang Yu showed great interest and asked for details.

After Nian Jincheng thoroughly criticized Gu Ling's annoying behavior, Yang Yu couldn't stop laughing, while Gu Ling's faint voice could be heard from upstairs, "I can hear you. Don't come over today."

Nian Jincheng immediately pointed at the ceiling and complained to Yang Yu, "Xiaoyu, did you hear that? What kind of good brother is he? It's all misunderstanding from outsiders. I can't wait to get married, so you can take me in and let me live a good life."

Yang Yu: ...Her beloved has indeed changed a lot since they first met. She has seen the transformation bit by bit and is very pleased that he has become more and more adorable, even acting a little spoiled with her.

While sweet affection was filling this side, Su Liang was chopping fish heads in the kitchen on the other side. The fish were temporarily "borrowed" by Ren Dong from the kitchen of the neighboring Xing's Mansion, along with some other ingredients.

As Ren Dong helped Su Liang with the fire, she couldn't help but ask, "Master, what do you like about Marquis Gu?"

With a light hum, Su Liang replied, "Besides his good looks, what else does he have?"

After hesitating for a moment, Ren Dong said weakly, "This subordinate thinks that Marquis Gu's temperament is not very good."

While smiling, Su Liang retorted, "That's right. I've always liked men who give me the cold shoulder; I enjoy the sense of conquest."

With her knife dicing the fish, she swiftly chopped an entire fat fish into evenly sized chunks. After cleaning, drying the water, coating, and frying the pieces, the Fried Fish Nuggets she had prepared were ready.

Ren Dong: ...Her master is indeed extraordinary, even liking men who don't pay attention to her. It was too bizarre, but of course, she wouldn't dare say it out loud...

If Duanmu Chen were here to hear Su Liang's exact words, he might suspect that Gu Ling and "Ning Jing" were the same person. That's because when Su Liang once said she liked Gu Ling but was rejected, she employed the same reasoning.

However, it's harmless to speak this way to Ren Dong, as she had never met "Ning Jing" or seen their interactions together. Moreover, as for Su Liang's affairs, she wouldn't voluntarily discuss them with others.

Ever since returning to the capital city this time, Su Liang had only cooked a few times. As long as she's frying today, she prepared not only the Fried Fish Nuggets but also four types of Vegetable Tempura, which included pumpkin slices from her own backyard back in Su Village.

Ren Dong couldn't help but taste the delicious aroma and Su Liang asked her to taste the flavor for her.

After trying a piece, Ren Dong praised Su Liang's cooking skills as the best in the world.

Su Liang countered, "What am I not the best at in the world?"

Ren Dong immediately nodded, "Master is the best at everything in the world!" Su Liang put a few pieces of each dish on a plate and handed it to Ren Dong.

Having caught the plate, Ren Dong asked, "Should I deliver this to Marquis Chang Xin?"

Shaking her head, Su Liang replied, "This is for you." She then divided the remaining food in half, one portion was for her, and the other half was for Gu Ling.

Su Liang carried a tray with four plates of fried food into the Yuanming Pavilion. Nian Jincheng immediately stood up, "You're too kind, allowing me to bother you and even going to the trouble of preparing food."

He then tried to take the tray.

From upstairs, Gu Ling's voice called, "Nian Jincheng, dare to touch it?"

Nian Jincheng didn't withdraw his hand, continuing to reach for the tray.

However, he was pulled back by the endlessly laughing Yang Yu, "That's for Gu Beauty. You're not as pretty as her. Don't make a fuss."

Just as Su Liang stepped onto the stairs, Ren Dong carried the remaining half of the fried food and placed it in front of Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu. "We get some too?" Yang Yu looked pleasantly surprised, "It smells so good!"

Nian Jincheng picked up a piece of fried fish and put it into his mouth, nodding, "I got to eat it before Aling." But as he said that, he was pricked by a fishbone...

Su Liang placed the hot fried food on a table next to Gu Ling, maintaining her smile, “Gu Beauty, please CIO me the honor of tasting the fruits of my labor.”

Gu Ling, who had initially been laying down feigning sleep, sat up and went over to the table. She wiped her hands with a napkin, picked up a pair of chopsticks, and initially reached for a piece of fried fish but ended up taking a piece of pumpkin tempura instead, “Is this... from our backyard?”

Seeing that Gu Ling had stopped pretending, Su Liang sat down across from her, picked up a piece of pumpkin to eat and nodded, “Yes, our family’s old pumpkin, so delicious!” She hadn’t tasted it before when she cooked it, but now found it sweet, soft, and incredibly tasty.

Gu Ling finished a piece and gave a slight nod, “Indeed, very delicious. We should make this again next time.”

Su Liang snorted, “Great God, now that I’m the only one cooking and you’re not washing the dishes, this isn’t right, right?”

Gu Ling shook her head, “It’s not that I don’t want to; it’s inconvenient. I’m just cooperating with the plan you proposed.”

Su Liang: ...That’s true.

“You can make a note first.” Gu Ling looked at Su Liang as she spoke.

Su Liang raised her eyebrows, and then listened to Gu Ling continue, “For every time I owe washing dishes, I’ll make up for it later.”

Upon hearing this, Su Liang burst into laughter, “Alright, considering your attitude is acceptable, I’ll make a note. But how can this be made up for? The dishes after this should be washed by you anyway, so how can it be considered making up for the current ones?”

Gu Ling’s hand paused for a moment before she continued to enjoy her food earnestly. Her heart, however, was anything but calm. ‘The dishes after this should be washed by him,’ she thought. That ‘after’ seems to be indefinite...

“What did you say about making it up?” Gu Ling managed to keep a calm expression.

Su Liang thought for a moment and said, “Well, for every time the skilled Great God owes dishwashing, he should make something for me, anything will do.

How about that?”

Previously, Gu Ling had made Chinese knots, but Su Liang had to “buy” them from her. After a few times, Su Liang took it as a given that to get Gu Ling’s handicrafts, an exchange was necessary.

Gu Ling nodded. She picked up her napkin, and in the blink of an eye, folded it into a little mouse like Su Liang had learned, placing it in front of her, “This is for today’s dishes.”

Su Liang picked up the remaining fried food and left, “Don’t eat anymore.” Gu Ling pursed her lips lightly as she took her napkin back, “I was just joking.”

Su Liang returned to her original position, stating, “In any case, you must make me satisfied; otherwise, it doesn’t count.”

“Fine.” Gu Ling nodded, “When will the pumpkin seeds be roasted and ready for me today?”

Su Liang: .

Downstairs, the young couple shared Su Liang’s fried food. Upstairs, Su Liang didn’t eat much, leaving the majority for Gu Ling.

“What should we do next?” Su Liang asked seriously.

Gu Ling put away the plate and took out a box of tea leaves from the cupboard. Without speaking, Su Liang ordered the people below, “Ren Dong, bring hot water. I need to make tea for Marquis Chang Xin.”

The hot water was prepared in advance, and Ren Dong brought it up quickly, not entering the room as Su Liang came out and received it.

After placing the hot water on the table, Su Liang sat down and said, “You can make your own tea.”

Gu Ling began to brew tea. His movements were elegant, and each of his fingers seemed to be playing a piano, truly mesmerizing.

Seeing the admiration in Su Liang’s eyes, Gu Ling asked, “What are you looking

Disappointed, Su Liang said, “Are you the Snow Lotus from Tianshan

Mountains, so beautiful but cold? Can you smile just once?”

Gu Ling shook his head. “No.” He would only smile when Su Liang used his

“Smile Card.”

“Anyway, you still look great,” Su Liang said with sincerity. “It doesn’t make sense that no one is crazy about you. By the way, Duanmu Chen said that the emperor is going to execute Nian Ruting.”

At first, the conversation was pleasant and focused on Gu Ling’s interests, but Su Liang unexpectedly brought up Nian Ruting.

As the aroma of tea filled the air, Gu Ling poured Su Liang a cup and had a sip for himself before speaking again. “It’s good if she dies.”

“I thought the emperor would use Nian Ruting to annoy you,” Su Liang pondered.

Gu Ling gave a slight nod. “He has, before.”

Gu Ling then recounted the day when Duanmu Yi asked him to enter the palace. The two had been trying to communicate but didn’t have the chance to say much. Especially for Gu Ling, this matter wasn’t worth mentioning.

“No wonder,” Su Liang nodded. “Nian Ruting is truly obsessed. According to you, she only met you a few times, and she was young back then. How could she be so infatuated? But to be honest, overall, the emperor isn’t completely oblivious. He is quite reasonable at times.”

Gu Ling maintained a calm demeanor. "There are a few masters around him, probably like Ren Dong's master, Shaoyao."

Su Liang's eyes narrowed, as this is a more pressing concern. If Duanmu Yi wanted to move against them, it would be troublesome.

The current peace might be disrupted at any time. Fortunately, Duanmu Yi had secretly showed some intentions towards Su Liang, but still very restrained and had not done anything outrageous. Even though he didn't trust Gu Ling, he only probed him on the surface without actually causing any difficulty.

Now, Su Liang no longer made naive remarks about finding chances to escape or become self-reliant without relying on Gu Ling. Reality dictated that she needed Gu Ling, and they were the best partners. But she never slacked off and continued to enhance her strength at all times.

After drinking tea and catching up, an hour had passed, and the sun was about to set.

When Gu Ling and Nian Jincheng left the Su Mansion, Nian Jincheng was still holding a food box, which Su Liang had given as a heartfelt gift.

Upon returning to the Marquis Chang Xin's Mansion, Nian Jincheng asked Gu Ling, "I want someone to propose marriage to Miss Yang for me. I don't know who to choose."

"Old Duke Qin," Gu Ling suggested.

Nian Jincheng hesitated for a moment. "Will Old Master Qin agree to help?" "You can try," Gu Ling replied.

Nian Jincheng thought that if he could enlist Old Master Qin's help, it would undoubtedly be the best option. Old Master Qin was one of the most well-respected nobles in the capital city and could showcase how much Nian Jincheng valued Yang Yu.

Although Nian Jincheng believed that he was not close to Old Master Qin, he thought of someone else: Lin Bojun, his former colleague who had a great relationship with him and was now Old Master Qin's grandson-in-law.

Today, Lin Bojun was not at the Crown Prince's banquet, but he had sent someone to invite Nian Jincheng to drink together the next day.

The next day, Nian Jincheng went early to Wan Family Restaurant and waited for a while before Lin Bojun arrived.

After exchanging pleasantries and congratulating Lin Bojun on becoming a father, seeing Lin Bojun's radiant face, Nian Jincheng wanted to get married even more.

Nian Jincheng would return to his military post tomorrow, and Lin Bojun was delighted. "With General Nian back, I might have a smaller chance of being blamed by the emperor when I ask for leave."

Lin Bojun didn't inquire about where Nian Jincheng had gone and what he had done during these months of disappearance. As long as the emperor had no doubts and Nian Jincheng didn't say anything, he wouldn't ask.

After a few drinks, Nian Jincheng put down his cup and said, "Bo Jun, I have a favor to ask of you."

Lin Bojun was somewhat surprised, "If General Nian needs my help, just say it." Nian Jincheng then told him that he had met a girl he fancied the day before.

Lin Bojun was genuinely surprised this time, "That's great! Which lady is she from?"

Nian Jincheng smiled, "You should know her, she's Miss Yang Yu from the Yang Family, who currently resides at Su Liang's Mansion."

"Miss Yang Yu?" Lin Bojun laughed loudly, "I really didn't expect that. I've heard Yu Jin and my sister mention her often, and I've seen her too. She's a talented and beautiful girl, and General Nian has a good taste. But, as you said, you need my help. Does that mean you want me to be a matchmaker?"

Nian Jincheng coughed lightly, "Not quite. I'd like to ask Old Master Qin to be the matchmaker, as he has a good relationship with Su Liang, and maybe he can put in a good word for me."

Lin Bojun understood and nodded repeatedly, "No problem! Leave it to me! I'll tell my wife when I go home, and I'm sure she'll be happy to see it happen too!"

Lin Bojun had not grown up in the capital city and only met Nian Jincheng after joining the army. However, he had always admired Nian Jincheng's sense of justice, and the two had similar personalities.

Nian Jincheng offered a toast of gratitude, and Lin Bojun also sighed, saying that he had grown a lot after going through the ordeal.

When Old Master Qin learned that Nian Jincheng wanted him to be the matchmaker and that he intended to marry Yang Yu, and upon hearing Lin Xueqing say that Yang Yu also had a fondness for Nian Jincheng, he agreed without hesitation.

Qin Yuyan, the second young master of the Qin family, lamented that all the good girls had been taken and that he was destined to be alone, only to be hit by Old Master Qin with his walking stick.

Soon, news spread throughout the capital city: General Nian Jincheng, who had just returned, was going to get married!

Before the incident, Nian Jincheng was one of the most outstanding young talents in Qian Country's capital city, and many young ladies from prestigious families wanted to marry him, including Sixth Princess Duanmu Qianqian.

Now that he was suddenly getting married, the people naturally took great interest in his wedding.

Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu's story also became a hot topic: In order to pursue the beautiful Gu Ling, Top Scholar Su Liang forcibly requested to swap seats with General Nian at the Crown Prince's banquet to sit next to Gu Ling, which led to General Nian sitting beside Miss Yang, the good friend of Top Scholar Su. It was love at first sight, and infatuation at second...

After their engagement was officially set, Nian Jincheng seemed to have a spring in his step.

One day, Nian Jincheng accompanied Gu Ling to the Su Mansion for treatment of his headache, and they happened to meet Yang Yu, who was about to go out.

Gu Ling saluted Yang Yu and said, "I'll get rid of this idiot soon."

Nian Jincheng snorted, he was about to win the beauty, while someone was still being indecisive with Su Liang, not knowing who the real idiot was.

Yang Yu looked serious, “I will take good care of him. Can I ask Marquis Gu to treat Su Liang a little better?”

Gu Ling nodded, “In gratitude for Dr. Su’s treatment, I’ve brought a gift.” Both Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu were curious, but Gu Ling didn’t reveal what the gift was.

Soon after, Su Liang received Gu Ling’s gift – an iron fan.

Su Liang opened it and said speechlessly, “Sending me a fan in the dead of winter, what are you thinking, Great God?” Then he waved the fan towards Gu

Ling, “Cool enough?”

The next moment, several silver light rays shot out of the fan, flying towards Gu Ling’s face.

Su Liang was dumbfounded, while Gu Ling had already dodged behind her.

“Are you okay?” Su Liang turned around, her face full of concern, checking Gu Ling’s condition.

But the two were too close and bumped into each other reflexively, reaching out to hold each other.

The hidden weapon fan specially made by Gu Ling was thrown on the ground. Su Liang was about to push Gu Ling away, when she heard him say, “I was startled.”

So, Su Liang gently patted Gu Ling’s back, “I’m sorry! It’s all your fault for not making it clear! ” After saying that, she pushed Gu Ling away, turned around, picked up the fan, and couldn’t put it down, “Great God, you can actually make hidden weapons? Why didn’t you say it earlier? Give me ten more!”

Chapter 266: 266. A promise is a promise.

Gu Ling savored the surprising embrace, silently watching Su Liang focused on studying the concealed weapon fan he gave her. It felt good.

If it was said that he envied Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu about to get married, it was true.

Yet Gu Ling was also enjoying his current situation with Su Liang. Though they were often acting, their well-coordinated performances brought another kind of enjoyment. Besides having to occasionally suppress the desire to get closer, everything else was perfect.

And Gu Ling’s self-restraint was mainly because Su Liang was still young.

No matter at what age women in this world marry and have children, Gu Ling insisted on complying with Su Liang’s point of view.

“Great God, I don’t want ten fans, can you make me nine other different concealed weapons to make it round?” Su Liang looked up and smiled at Gu Ling.

Gu Ling shook his head, “I can’t.”

“It’s really rare to hear these two words from the Great God’s mouth,” Su Liang stated with surprising “generosity”, “Then give me a discount, five kinds.”

Gu Ling shook his head again, “No.”

Su Liang showed disbelief.

Gu Ling took out another folding fan that was a little bigger from the same series, opened it casually, and gently fanned it twice, “Maybe in the future.”

Su Liang laughed lightly, “That’s what I mean. With the Great God’s intelligence, once you grasp the principle, you can quickly make three to five different ones.’

“I want to eat ribs.” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang immediately stood up, folded the fan in an instant, tapped it lightly on her arm, bowed slightly, her smile sweet, “Yes, sir!”

Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu, who were an unmarried couple and no longer needed to hide their relationship, were holding hands and taking a stroll by the lake. Seeing Su Liang coming out of the Yuanming Pavilion and heading towards the kitchen, they were not surprised at all.

“I’m going to help Su Liang.” Yang Yu let go of Nian Jincheng’s hand.

Nian Jincheng clasped her hand again, “Go ahead. It’s tough for Su Liang to deal with an elm knot like Gu Ling.”

Upon hearing the man who was once a true elm knot mock Gu Ling, Yang Yu laughed and ran away.

“Su Liang, Gu Ling likes you, right?” Yang Yu asked solemnly.

As she was blanching the ribs, Su Liang nodded, “Of course. We are each other’s favorite friends.”

Yang Yu blinked, “Can’t you take it a step further?”

Su Liang, holding the spoon, paused for a moment, frowned in thought, and then laughed, “He has no interest in women, and doesn’t even see me as a woman. We are like brothers.”

Yang Yu was speechless, “What if he changes his mind? Sees you as a woman, and pursues you, would you accept?”

“Ah, this...” Su Liang imagined Gu Ling pursuing her, she burst into laughter, “You’re thinking too much, it’s impossible. We know each other so well, just thinking of becoming that kind of relationship makes me feel goosebumps all over. It’s too awkward.”

Before Yang Yu could say anything, Su Liang laughed and said, “Do you know what he’s more interested in than marrying and having children?”

Yang Yu shook her head, indicating she didn’t know. Despite actually knowing him for quite a while, she had hardly any direct interactions with Gu Ling.

With a slight curve at the corner of her lips, Su Liang said, “He wants to experience childbirth for himself, haha.”

Yang Yu was flabbergasted, “You... he... you guys...” Unable to comprehend, she decided not to question or comment anymore, and just let it be.

Su Liang cooked steamed ribs with sticky rice, which she hadn’t made before. Because she had received a fan weapon today, she was in a good mood and wanted Gu Ling to have a good meal, so that he could make her some new hidden weapons.

Just as the ribs were about to be done, she suddenly heard Ren Dong’s voice from outside, “Master, someone from the palace is here.”

Su Liang frowned instantly, and Yang Yu also had a bad feeling.

“Let them in the front hall first.” Su Liang ordered.

Ren Dong shook his head, lowering his voice, “The person who came said he was here to find Marquis Chang Xin, the emperor ordered him to enter the palace immediately, I didn’t dare to refuse.”

Su Liang glanced at the steaming and aromatic ribs, sighed, and said to Yang

Yu, “You and Nian can eat this.”

By the time Su Liang removed her apron and left the kitchen, Gu Ling had already descended the stairs and was ready to leave.

Two guards from the palace came with an oral message. They only told Gu Ling that he must enter the palace immediately without stating the reason.

Su Liang walked over with a smile, “Marquis Gu hasn’t received his acupuncture treatment yet today. After finishing your tasks, could you make another trip here?”

Gu Ling responded with a calm expression, “Thank you, Imperial Physician Su. I must take my leave now.”

Nian Jincheng wanted to follow him, but a glance from Gu Ling signaled him to stay. The emperor had not asked for him.

Watching Gu Ling disappear from her sight, Su Liang turned around and saw Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu standing behind her, looking worried.

“Could the emperor be intending to cause trouble for Aling...” sighed Nian Jincheng.

Su Liang smiled, “You never know why the emperor asked for him. Don’t worry for nothing. Go eat the ribs while they are still hot.”

“Aren’t you eating?” Yang Yu asked Su Liang.

Su Liang shook her head, “I’m not hungry, I’ve already tasted it.” Upon returning to Yuanming Pavilion, Su Liang found that Gu Ling had left both fans on the table.

Sitting down, she could not figure out why Duanmu Yi would summon Gu Ling and decided to stop pondering over it.

Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu ate the ribs that Su Liang had originally prepared for Gu Ling. Then, Nian Jincheng left to wait for Gu Ling at the Marquis Chang Xin’s Mansion.

Duanmu Yi smiled warmly, “Imperial Physician Su has been administering acupuncture for you these past few days. Has your headache gotten any better?”

Gu Ling nodded slightly, “In response to the emperor, I am much better.”

“That’s good.” Duanmu Yi nodded, “Previously, your maternal grandfather, King Yue of Liang Country came to Qian Country to plead on your behalf. Out of respect for King Yue, I pardoned you. Now that you are well, you should see King Yue and assure him that I kept my promise. There are some matters regarding cooperation between both countries that King Yue brought up but didn’t discuss in detail. You take a trip and finalise it with Emperor Liang.

Seeing that he is your cousin, it should be easy to talk.”

Having said that, Duanmu Yi handed a folded paper to Gu Ling.

Gu Ling accepted it and saw that it listed the conditions for peaceful coexistence between Qian and Liang Countries.

In fact, when Situ Xian, King Yue of Liang Country, had discussed with

Duanmu Yi previously, they had already agreed on everything, The details that Duanmu Yi gave to Gu Ling were based on the original agreement, asking Liang Country to make more concessions and give more benefits to Qian Country.

“Marquis Gu, I have confidence in your capabilities and hold great expectations of you. Do not disappoint me,” said Duanmu Yi with a smile.

Gu Ling closed the paper and nodded slightly, “I will do my best to fulfil the emperor’s trust.”

Duanmu Yi’s smile deepened, “Good, very good! I knew I wasn’t wrong about you! If this mission is successful, I will reward you generously! The entourage has been arranged. You shall depart tomorrow morning!”

When Gu Ling left the palace, he bumped into Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen asked Gu Ling if his head was still hurting, to which Gu Ling responded that it was much better.

It was only when Duanmu Chen met Duanmu Yi that he found out Gu Ling was being sent as an envoy to Liang Country. He was momentarily stunned. Since everything had been arranged, it wasn’t something that Duanmu Yi decided on a whim. Yet, there was not a word about it beforehand.

“My son, what do you think?” Duanmu Yi asked Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen responded seriously, “Your Majesty is wise. This journey of Marquis Chang Xin not only showcases your magnanimity but also tests his loyalty to Qian Country. However, I have some doubts.”

“What are your doubts?” Duanmu Yi asked.

Duanmu Chen furrowed his eyebrows and said, "If Marquis Chang Xin successfully accomplishes the task given by Your Majesty, making Liang

Country agree to our terms, could it be a deliberate act by the Liang Royal Family in collusion with Marquis Chang Xin? They sacrifice some interests to let him earn Your Majesty's trust and favor?"

Hearing these words, Duanmu Yi laughed, "Now, this is what a crown prince should be considering. I was afraid that you had become soft-hearted and sentimental after becoming crown prince, only talking about fairness and justice."

Duanmu Chen was taken aback and quickly responded, "If there were any mistakes in my actions, I beg Your Majesty to correct me."

In fact, when Duanmu Yi mentioned sending Gu Ling to Liang Country, the first thought that came to Duanmu Chen's mind was: Duanmu Yi undoubtedly did this to separate Gu Ling and Su Liang.

However, of course, Duanmu Chen couldn't show it. He started talking from the perspective of Qian Country's interests, but he didn't expect to get reprimanded by Duanmu Yi.

A cold sweat broke out on Duanmu Chen's back. Indeed, even Chang'an had commented that he had become milder than before, which was clearly not what Duanmu Yi wanted.

At this moment, Duanmu Chen would of course not think that Duanmu Yi allowed Gu Ling to leave out of jealousy. Even if this was a factor, it wouldn't be the main reason.

From the perspective of Duanmu Chen as the crown prince of Qian Country, sending Gu Ling to negotiate with his cousin and grandfather in Liang Country was a very good chess move. Su Liang's pursuit of Gu Ling may have merely advanced the timeline for Gu Ling's trip to Liang Country, but there was no direct cause-and-effect relationship.

"I'm aware that you have a good relationship with Su Liang," Duanmu Yi looked at Duanmu Chen and said indifferently, "But don't forget that you will be a ruler and she a subject."

"Yes, Your Majesty, I will bear this in mind," Duanmu Chen said respectfully.

It was then that Duanmu Yi responded to Duanmu Chen's previous question, "If Gu Ling completes the task I assigned to him, it may be due to his own abilities, or perhaps because the Liang royal family wants to pave his way. But whether or not I trust him depends on me. Regardless, the outcome will be advantageous to Qian Country."

"Yes, Your Majesty is wise, I have been short-sighted," Duanmu Chen responded.

"I also want to see just how close Situ Xian is with his grandson," Duanmu Yi let out a light humph.

Duanmu Chen then asked, "May I ask who Your Majesty plans to send to Liang Country with Marquis Chang Xin

"Lin Boyan, Lin Bojun, one scholar and one warrior. What do you think?" Duanmu Yi inquired.

Duanmu Chen immediately thought of the wives of the Lin brothers, both of whom were pregnant, but of course, he did not dare to suggest to Duanmu Yi to choose someone else. “They are both talented and loyal individuals. There is no one more suitable for this trip to Liang Country.”

Duanmu Chen knew that the Lin brothers were talents highly valued by Duanmu Yi. One was a scholar and the other a military commander. Their families lived in the capital city and had marriage ties with the Duke Qin Mansion, the Ministry of Industry, and the Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion, so there would be no disloyalty. Both of them had even been considered by Duanmu Yi as potential candidates for son-in-law.

After leaving the palace, Chang’an noticed that Duanmu Chen looked unwell and asked if something had happened.

Seated in the carriage with a cold expression, Duanmu Chen responded,

“Nothing. Has there been any recent news about Duanmu Che?”

Chang’an replied, “I was about to report to the Master, the fifth prince entered the palace earlier today.”

Duanmu Chen’s face fell. He suddenly felt that his position as the crown prince was not entirely secure...

Upon learning that Gu Ling was set to leave for Liang Country in the early morning, Nian Jincheng immediately suggested that he should ask the emperor to send troops to escort Gu Ling.

“Get a grip,” Gu Ling said calmly. “The emperor won’t allow both of us to go.”

“Those assigned by the emperor are definitely there to monitor you!” Nian Jincheng frowned.

“It was bound to happen sooner or later,” Gu Ling didn’t find today’s events too surprising and didn’t think Duanmu Yi had sent him to Liang Country because of Su Liang.

“So you’re really leaving for Liang Country tomorrow?” Nian Jincheng looked upset. His once unwavering loyalty to the royal family had changed. Now, all he felt was that Gu Ling’s journey was fraught with danger.

Gu Ling nodded, “If I have to go, I’ll go. Why are you so anxious?”

“I always feel that the emperor means no good,” Nian Jincheng voiced a thought that could be deemed “treasonous”.

Gu Ling remained calm, “He is the emperor, it’s not for us to judge him as good or bad.”

“What about Su Liang?” Nian Jincheng asked.

Gu Ling shook his head, “She is stronger than you are. Take care of yourself.”

Nian Jincheng: ...He was asking about Gu Ling’s relationship with Su Liang! Never mind, Gu Ling always had this attitude of “I would rather die than confide in you”...

“The ribs are delicious,” Nian Jincheng commented.

Gu Ling squinted his eyes and threw the paperweight at him, “That’s mine.”

Nian Jincheng caught the paperweight and tossed it back, “Su Liang invited me to eat. ”

Gu Ling threw it back again, “Disappear.”

Nian Jincheng sensed that Gu Ling was angry, and silently disappeared with the paperweight.

Logically, Gu Ling wasn’t very surprised about his trip to Liang Country and chose to accept it. He himself had planned on dealing with some matters in Liang Country. However, the thought of being separated from Su Liang filled him with irritation.

At dusk, Su Liang rode on a horse, carrying a big container of food, and brought Ren Dong to Marquis Chang Xin’s mansion.

Gu Ling and Nian Jincheng were about to go out for dinner at Wan Family Restaurant. When they saw Su Ling, Nian Jincheng patted Gu Ling on the shoulder, “Aling, I’m going to have drinks with Bojun, make sure to treat Miss Su properly, be polite.” And he left.

Gu Ling asked indifferently, “Why is Imperial Physician Su here?”

Su Liang smiled, “I haven’t given Marquis Chang Xin his acupuncture treatment today, so I came over. I also brought some dishes I made.”

“Imperial Physician Su is too kind. Please.” Gu Ling turned and walked inside.

It was Su Liang’s first time visiting the mansion of Marquis Chang Xin. As she walked around, she found the place to be deserted with large swathes of open land. There were a few trees, but it was quiet.

Su Liang took the food container from Ren Dong, asking her to wait outside while she followed Gu Ling into a room.

All the windows and doors were closed, finally blocking the prying eyes of outsiders. Su Liang sighed softly, “I heard you are going to Liang Country?” The news had already spread throughout the capital city.

Gu Ling nodded, “I want to eat ribs.”

Su Liang held her forehead, “Help yourself. It’s steamed ribs with rice flour. I made another portion for you.”

Gu Ling took out the food from the container. It was still warm. There were meat dishes, vegetable dishes, soup, main food, and his single-person dinner. The food container also carried the five-spice pumpkin seeds fried by Su Liang, a few bottles of medicine, several medical books, and Gu Ling’s fan.

“The emperor is not just sending you away because of me, right?” Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling shook his head, “Of course not.”

“Though definitely you are being sent away because of me,” Su Liang sighed softly, “Great God, I am sorry. I did not expect this. I originally wanted to ask the emperor to ‘chase’ you to Liang Country, but the emperor would surely not agree. Now I am not a general, but an imperial physician, and I can’t leave the capital easily.”

After tasting the steamed ribs, Gu Ling nodded slightly, “Not bad.”

After a few bites, Gu Ling looked at Su Liang and said, “I will be back before the New Year.”

Su Liang sighed, “The Emperor is sending the Lin brothers to accompany you so that you can come back as soon as possible. The sister-in-law and Yu Jin are

When Gu Ling had finished eating, he put down his chopsticks, stood up, and looked silently at Su Liang.

“What’s wrong?” Su Liang was taken aback.

Gu Ling opened his arms, “Aren’t you here to say goodbye?”

“Oh,” Su Liang reacted, stood up and hugged Gu Ling, “Take care, Great God. I’ll make you something delicious when you come back.”

“I want to eat rabbit,” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang nodded, “No problem! You can have it any way you want!”

There was a faint smile in Gu Ling’s eyes. He let go of Su Liang, “You can leave now.”

Just as Su Liang was about to leave, Gu Ling asked, “Will you see me off tomorrow morning?”

Su Liang considered, “OK, I will see you off tomorrow morning. I’ll express my love for you in public, ask my two brothers to take care of you on the road, and bring you some warm clothes. I heard it’s quite cold in Liang Country.” Su Liang laughed, “I just thought of something. Tomorrow I’m going to say something tough in public, ‘You can become a monk, but you’re not allowed to fall for anyone else!’”

Gu Ling faintly responded, “That sounds good. I look forward to it.”

“When you’re leaving, will you say something like I choose to be a monk?” Su Liang joked.

Gu Ling reached out and tapped Su Liang’s forehead, “You’re the one who’s going to be a monk.”

Su Liang pretended to be disappointed, “Great God, don’t you want to experience what it feels like to shave your head? Look at Cheng Yun, he’s still handsome after shaving his head. Great God, even without hair, you’d still be an absolute stunner. You should be an incredibly good-looking monk.”

Gu Ling was indifferent, “Stop imagining.”

“Yes, sir.” Su Liang said seriously, “But I really want to go to Liang Country with Great God to see the snow.”

“Next year?” Gu Ling asked.

Su Liang nodded, "A promise is a promise.."

Chapter 267: 267. Must repay kindness

The break of dawn was nearing, and Su Liang got up.

A large suitcase was placed on the first floor of the Yuanming Pavilion, filled with clothes, shoes, socks, and cloaks for Gu Ling, all provided by Yang Yu with a friendly sentiment.

By the time Su Liang had prepared pumpkin pancakes and packed them in a box, Ren Dong had already placed the suitcase on the carriage.

Committed to playing her role fully, Su Liang quickly applied a light layer of makeup, donned a new skirt, got into the carriage, and left the mansion.

The news that Marquis Chang Xin was ordered to travel to Liang Country had already spread the previous day. Accompanying him would be the youthful Lin Boyan who had already risen to the position of Minister of Rites, and also the military commander Lin Bojun.

Many common people had gathered near the city gate to watch the excitement, discussing whether Su Liang would come to say goodbye, even some thought Su Liang might follow Gu Ling to Liang Country.

Therefore, when Su Liang's carriage appeared, it immediately stirred up a commotion-

"Master, Marquis Chang Xin hasn't come yet." Ren Dong said.

Su Liang responded with a nod, indicating for the carriage to pull over and wait.

Suddenly, they heard people shouting, "They are coming! Marquis Chang Xin is coming! "

Su Liang lifted the curtain of the carriage and saw an entourage approaching led by an armored Lin Bojun. Lin Boyan and Gu Ling were both seated in a carriage.

The crowd made way for them. As the entourage drew near, Lin Bojun, seeing Su Liang waving at him, instructed them to stop.

"Second Brother Lin, I have come to see you off." Su Liang smiled.

Lin Bojun glanced behind him, then loudly announced, "Marquis Chang Xin, my little sister is looking for you!"

Gu Ling did not reveal himself but simply answered coolly, "Many thanks to Doctor Su for seeing me off."

Lin Bojun released a sigh, "Little Liang, forget it. Whatever good things you have, just give them to me. Marquis Chang Xin does not want them!"

Su Liang shook her head, "That won't do. I've prepared winter clothes for

Marquis Chang Xin. Second Brother, I ask for your help in bringing them along. Please take care of him on the road and don't let him catch a cold."

Hearing this, Lin Bojun smiled and ordered people to take down the suitcase from Su Liang's carriage, placing it on their luggage carriage.

Then, under the gazes of everyone, Su Liang carried a food box and walked over to Gu Ling's carriage, lifted the curtain. Everyone only caught a fleeting glance of Gu Ling's profile before Su Liang actually went inside!

Gasp and exclamations reverberated, leaving Lin Bojun torn between laughter and tears.

However, ever since Su Liang began pursuing Gu Ling, Lin Bojun, who originally harbored suspicions about Ning Jing's death, started to wonder more about whether Gu Ling had any connection with the deceased.

Although Lin Bojun knew it was not impossible that Su Liang fell in love with Gu Ling at first sight, he happened to see Gu Ling's back a few days ago, and it looked so much like Ning Jing's. Additionally, his frail and scholarly disciple disappeared for over a year and suddenly returned as a master, with a character quite different from before, which was abnormal in itself.

However, Lin Bojun has kept quiet about this matter, not revealing his suspicions to anyone, including Lin Shuzhi and Lin Boyan. He initially wanted to ask Su Liang about it, but after much hesitation, he decided not to. He trusted Su Liang implicitly, probing too much into her secrets might not be a good thing.

"These are pumpkin pancakes. They're still warm." Su Liang put down the food box, then leaned over to hug Gu Ling, who was sitting in the carriage, and gently patted his back, "Please take care of the two brothers of the Lin family, and take care of yourself too. Please come back soon."

Then, Su Liang, in a premeditated manner, staggered and jumped out of the carriage.

To the watching crowd, it naturally seemed as if Gu Ling had pushed Su Liang out, and they sighed at Gu Ling's lack of romantic sentiment.

As for Gu Ling, he indeed reached out, intending to hold Su Liang, but she moved too quickly. With a flutter of the curtain, she was already out...

Gu Ling sighed softly, their departure from the capital left an emptiness in his heart. He opened his lunch box, picked up a piece of pumpkin pancake and tasted it. It no longer seemed as sweet as it once was.

Su Liang stood firm, speaking to the carriage, "Gu Ling, while you're in Liang Country, avoid falling for anyone else. If you decide to become a monk, I won't stop you. But if you ever choose to marry, please consider me first!"

The onlookers stared in amazement.

Lin Boyan, inside the carriage, couldn't stand listening to this. He opened the curtain and, with furrowed brows, looked at Su Liang. "Xiao Liang, go back quickly, it's time for us to leave the city."

Su Liang smiled, waving his hand, "Take care, eldest brother Lin. Come back early! "

"Hmm," Lin Boyan glanced at Gu Ling's carriage and then calmly let the curtain fall back. He had always been careful and thoughtful, and he knew the real Ning Jing since childhood, as did his brothers. If Lin Bojun could notice something unusual, he

could feel it, too. In fact, in his mind, he had already guessed the truth after Gu Ling appeared, but he didn't bother to ask Su Liang about it. He just played along.

Therefore, in Lin Boyan's eyes, Su Liang pursuing Gu Ling was mostly an act, probably to facilitate their travels and solve potential arranged marriage issues.

Given this, Gu Ling was on their side and they could trust him completely. This was Lin Boyan's current thinking. As for the past, the people, and the incidents, they were all in the past.

Su Liang watched the departure from the city until they were out of sight, and then he rode the carriage back home.

With Gu Ling gone, Su Liang suddenly had a lot more free time and seemingly nothing he wanted to do. So, he went to visit Madam Xing at Marquis Zhong

Xin's mansion, and then Old Duke Qin at the Duke Mansion.

At sunset, Su Liang rode to Lin Mansion.

Since both brothers had left on a journey, Lin Xueqing decided to return to her maiden home to look after her sisters-in-law. Naturally, Xing Yusheng followed her.

Su Liang took the pulses of both sisters-in-law and assured them they were in good health and that he would visit every other day.

Qin Yujin was fine as she had married a military commander, and was prepared mentally for Lin Bojun's eventual deployment. Madame Min, Lin Boyan's wife, was unable to lift her spirits as she had not expected her husband would leave on a long journey at this time. She asked Su Liang if Lin Boyan's journey would be dangerous.

In a serious tone, Su Liang reassured her, "Rest assured big sister-in-law. Big

Brother is trusted by the emperor and is accompanying Marquis Chang Xin to Liang Country. The current relations with Qian Liang are quite good. The emperor of Liang Country is the uncle of Marquis Chang Xin and King Yue is his grandfather. There will definitely not be any problems."

Petting her swollen belly, Madame Min sighed softly, "Will my husband return before the baby is born?"

Su Liang nodded, "He's expected to return before the new year."

Madame Min finally showed a small smile, "That's good."

After they had dinner, Lin Shuzhi said he had something to ask Su Liang, and they went to the study.

Su Liang sat down and laughed lightly, "Master, you look good."

Lin Shuzhi shook his head, "If Boyan and Bojun hadn't gone to Liang Country, I would be feeling even better."

"Master, don't worry too much. Both brothers will be fine on this trip," Su Liang said seriously.

Lin Shuzhi's gaze deepened suddenly, "Every time you call me 'master', I think of Jingjing."

Su Liang fell silent and stopped speaking. At this point, she wasn't surprised that some in Lin's family would be suspicious of the relationship between "Ning Jing" and Gu Ling.

Keeping it from them initially was not a lack of trust, but rather a move to protect them, because Gu Ling's identity was dangerous before being pardoned. Knowing too much might not be a good thing.

The development of things to this point was not entirely as planned by Su Liang and Gu Ling, many times they had improvised.

Gu Ling's impersonation of "Ning Jing" in Pingbei City last year was accidental.

Prior to meeting Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing at Qianshan Academy, Gu Ling had no idea that Ning Jing knew them and was close to them.

"Master, I'm sorry." Su Liang sighed.

Lin Shuzhi rested his arm on the table, lowering his voice, "No matter what you are hiding, I believe you must have your reasons. I won't blame you. But now you must tell me the truth. What exactly happened to Jingjing?"

Su Liang took a deep breath and unraveled the entire story to Lin Shuzhi.

Learning that the real Zhen Ningjing had killed himself after being driven out of his house, Lin Shuzhi's face turned grim, his eyes reddened.

After listening to Su Liang's explanation, Lin Shuzhi remained silent for a while, then sighed deeply, "I see. No wonder when I saw Jingjing last year, I felt like he had changed a lot. At first, I didn't dare to believe it... Turns out he was already gone by then..."

"Master, may you mourn in peace. I didn't really know Ning Jing, but I've met some people from the Ning Family and have learned about his past. The pain of living might have been too much, leaving this world could be a kind of release." Su Liang stated.

Lin Shuzhi gave a bitter smile, "The poor kid lived a hard life surrounded by a pack of wolves and tigers. He was thoughtful from a young age. When I lost contact with him, I had a lingering fear that we might never meet again."

"Please forgive Gu Ling and I for deceiving you for so long." Su Liang apologized.

Lin Shuzhi shook his head, "How can we blame you two? As Jingjing's benefactor, Gu Ling had once saved him, and I knew about it. Jingjing mentioned it once when he was alive. I'm sure he'd be glad to know now that the gift he sent was well used. While I don't know Gu Ling that much, their life experiences seem to be somewhat similar. It's just that Gu Ling is much more resilient than Jingjing."

While speaking, Lin Shuzhi sighed repeatedly, "I should actually thank you. Since meeting you last year until now, you two have helped the Lin Family navigate through difficult times several times over. If not for you, we wouldn't enjoy today's peaceful days. Perhaps it's destiny. You and Gu Ling are like the big gift Jingjing left for our family, our saviors."

“It’s too polite of you to say that, master.” Su Liang smiled.

Lin Shuzhi sighed again, “You were right to hide the truth from me at first, given Gu Ling hadn’t been pardoned yet. If you had actually confessed, I would be living in fear every day. But now it doesn’t matter anymore. Gu Ling’s identity has been restored. You’ve arranged everything well. Even if outsiders suspect something, they can’t find any evidence.”

Su Liang nodded, ‘Yes, thank you for your understanding, master.’

“However,” Lin Shuzhi suddenly frowned, looking at Su Liang, and asked, “Be honest with me, what is truly the nature of your relationship with Gu Ling? Is your pursuit of him merely a performance, or is it real?”

Playing innocent, Su Liang asked back, “What does master think?”

Lin Shuzhi huffed softly, “Don’t tell me that you two are brothers. Jingjing...Gu Ling has already said that to me before.”>

Su Liang nodded, “That’s precisely it.”

Lin Shuzhi held his forehead, “You two...each one weirder than the other! Alright then, keep playing. Nothing wrong with the way things are now. And at least if the emperor arranges any marriages, you two will have an excuse to refuse.”

“Exactly.” Su Liang laughed lightly.

“Since Gu Ling is one of ours and he’s highly skilled, he can look after Bo Yan and Bo Jun on their journey. With him there, I won’t have any worries.” Lin Shuzhi said.

Su Liang hesitated and then asked, “Would my eldest and second elder brother have guessed already?”

Lin Shuzhi nodded, “Only Qingqing is clueless, and she didn’t suspect a thing. Yu Sheng didn’t know Jingjing, so your brothers probably guessed some of it but they never mentioned it. During this trip, the three of them being together, maybe they’ll talk about it.”

The Lin Family father and sons were special, being among the few in the world

who truly knew the real Zhen Ningjing. And they had been closely involved with Gu Ling, who had been pretending to be “Ning Jing”. Some servants of Ning Family in Xunyang City knew Ning Jing, but they had very brief contact with Gu Ling who was pretending to be “Ning Jing”.

Lin Xueqing didn’t think much about all this. The truth is, she trusted Su Liang wholeheartedly.

After revealing the truth to Lin Shuzhi, Su Liang felt much lighter.

Back at home, she was aware of someone in her room as soon as she entered.

Her eyes filled with caution, Su Liang held the short knife in her sleeve. Then, a familiar voice called, “Little sister Liang.”

Upon opening the door, Yan Shiba was sprawled on Su Liang’s bed in a dramatic pose, winking at her, “Little Liang, your sister missed you so much!” Su Liang was unimpressed, “You seem fine.”

At her words, Yan Shiba jolted upright, angrily pointing at Su Liang, “You sly girl! After all these years of wandering, I can’t believe I fell into your trap! I kindly searched for your lover, only to find out that you’ve been fooling me all along! I can’t stand being deceived! Tonight, it’s either your life or mine!”

Su Liang was calm, drew her sword, and pointed it at Yan Shiba, “Alright. Come on then.”

After zooming around in frenzy for a moment, Yan Shiba collapsed back on the bed, “You rotten girl! Wicked girl! I can’t believe you wished me dead! And you didn’t even bother to rescue me when I was in trouble?”

Su Liang sheathed her sword, walked over and sat at the table, “Do you think you would be here if I hadn’t intervened?”

Yan Shiba narrowed her eyes, “What are you implying?”

“I set a trap for Yan Shiqi, nearly killed him with the emperor’s help. If not for this, wouldn’t your chance for freedom be non-existent?” Su Liang said neutrally.

Upon hearing this, Yan Shiba laughed, “No wonder! No wonder that scum came to harm! I thought he died!”

The only reason Yan Shiba could return to the capital to find Su Liang was because she rebelled against the people Yan Shiqi arranged to guard her. Their successful escape was due to the fact that Yan Shiqi had disappeared, and all of Yanyun Building’s assassins in the capital were gone.

“What brings you here?” Su Liang asked.

Yan Shiba gave an ambiguous smile to Su Liang, “To fulfill a promise! Little Su, you saved my life multiple times, so I’ve come to repay you!”

Su Liang was speechless, “No need.”

“Tell me the truth, have you and the handsome Gu become husband and wife yet? I know you two are stubborn! Is handsome Gu leaving the capital today for Liang Country? I can kidnap him back to sleep with you, how about that?” Yan Shiba said as if joking.

“Not at all.” Su Liang shook her head, “Stop your nonsense, let the matter rest.”

“Really don’t need it?” Yan Shiba looked disappointed.

“Do whatever you need to.” Su Liang stood up to dismiss her.

Yan Shiba nodded, “I need to go visit my younger brother, then I will come to find you.”

“No need to come, thank you.” Su Liang refused.

Just as Yan Shiba was about to leap out of the window, she suddenly turned around, “Little Liang, technically I should bring Gu Ling to you, and add in some stimulating drugs to spice things up for you guys to have a good pleasure. That’s what our deal is right?”

Su Liang was exasperated, “How dare you?!”

“Anyway, I must find an opportunity to repay you. Just you wait! Haha!” With that, Yan Shiba leapt out of the window and disappeared into the night.

Ren Dong, from below, asked, “Master, are you okay?” Su Liang answered, “I’m fine, you can go to sleep now.”

Su Liang sat by the window, staring at the tranquil lake, she became worried about how Yan Shiba, a crazy woman, might drug her and Gu Ling with aphrodisiacs...

After a while, Su Liang shook her head, “What nonsense! I’m a doctor, how can I be at her mercy!”

Before bed, Su Liang thought about studying all the aphrodisiacs and love potions of this world the next day to avoid being affected, and also to inform Gu Ling as soon as possible.. Now that a poison master was interested in him, it would be disastrous if he accidentally consumed something...

Chapter 268: 268. This woman absolutely cannot stay

On the second day after Gu Ling left, Yan Shiba did not come to Su Liang again. Su Liang was used to her unpredictable and untraceable ways, so she specifically asked Ren Dong to go to Huguo Temple to make sure Cheng Yun was not kidnapped. Other than that, she didn’t care much.

Su Liang asked Ren Dong to find her all kinds of love potions and their corresponding antidotes, regardless of the cost.

Ren Dong was a little confused, not understanding what Su Liang was up to.

“Don’t ask so much, just go find it.” Su Liang handed Ren Dong two banknotes. Ren Dong took them, “Alright, I’ll give it a try.”

It took Ren Dong three days to find several kinds of aphrodisiacs for Su Liang. There were those specifically for brothels, those sold at high prices in the black market, and even so-called imperial harem secret fragrances. Ren Dong felt embarrassed when describing the effects the seller claimed...

Seeing Su Liang’s interest in the special medicinal items on the table, Ren Dong hurriedly reminded her, ‘Master, be very careful, some of them can be harmful by just a touch, and others by just a whiff...’

Su Liang took out her homemade gloves, protective clothing, and gas mask,

“Don’t worry, I’m prepared, and if all else fails, there’s always the antidotes.”

Then, Ren Dong watched as Su Liang, “fully equipped,” delved into the analysis and research of the special and sensitive drugs.

Although knowing that Su Liang was a professional, Ren Dong insisted on being there all the time, fearing that something unexpected might happen due to carelessness.

Apart from going to check the pulse of the two pregnant sisters-in-law from the Lin family every other day, Su Liang rarely went out.

Ren Dong would secretly enter the palace to report to Duanmu Yi about Su Liang’s whereabouts every three days, and most of the things she said were true.

For instance, recently, Ren Dong honestly told Duanmu Yi that Su Liang was researching aphrodisiacs, but as for the purpose, she was not sure.

Yang Yu and Nian Jincheng's wedding date was set in the twelfth lunar month, leaving only a little more than a month. Both of them were busy preparing for the wedding.

On a chosen day, Yang Yu accompanied Nian Jincheng on a trip back to the Nian Mansion, where he had lived since childhood, and listened to him recount many past events and the various people of the Nian family in his eyes.

Originally, Nian Jincheng did not want to mention those people and those things, but after he did, he felt that some knots in his heart seemed to dissipate. He had always longed for understanding, acceptance, and a warm home. Now, this wish could soon come true.

"Right, didn't Gu Ling tell the emperor that the Nian family intended to rebel?

What happened to the ones who were exiled before?" Yang Yu asked Nian Jincheng.

Nian Jincheng shook his head, "There may be new arrangements, but the emperor never mentioned it. "

At first, the entire Nian family was exiled because of Nian Ruxue and Nian Ruting's crimes of deceiving the emperor. Later, Nian Jincheng himself got into trouble and had to change his identity. There was no news about the Nian family afterward.

Yang Yu sighed, "I'll arrange for someone to inquire about the place they were exiled to."

Nian Jincheng nodded, "That would be good."

Unexpectedly, the next day, Nian Jincheng was summoned to the palace and told that the Nian family members had disappeared.

The place of exile in Qian Country was located in the impoverished and bitterly cold region of the west, guarded by government soldiers. Recently, when Duanmu Yi secretly sent people to execute the Nian family members on the basis of information from Gu Ling that Nian Jitang had long harbored intentions of rebellion, the Nian family members escaped just one day before they arrived! Without the help of a skilled expert, it would have been impossible!

"Who do you think leaked the news, Lord Nian?" Duanmu Yi's eyes were deep and unfathomable.

Nian Jincheng wore a respectful expression, "In reply to Your Majesty, I have long severed ties with those people. Perhaps, it was the work of Nian Ruxue, who fled out of guilt."

"Nian Ruxue?" Duanmu Yi's face darkened. He had a secret relationship with her, and he even almost took her as a concubine. At that time, he thought she was a perfect example of a well-educated lady. Later, it turned out that her boasted martial arts were mere showboating, but she was quite skilled at manipulating people's hearts.

"I'm just guessing; she's the only one I can think of right now." Nian Jincheng said respectfully, "At that time, she managed to escape, perhaps with the help of an expert."

Duanmu Yi snorted coldly, “Even your grandmother was taken away. Perhaps, as you said, it was Nian Ruxue colluding with someone.”

After leaving the palace, Nian Jincheng first went to Yan’s residence and then went to Su’s residence with Yang Yu.

Su Liang was still studying aphrodisiac drugs, wearing strange clothes, with her face covered and no skin exposed all over her body.

“Don’t come in.” Su Liang in the Study, raised her hand and pointed to her room, “Talk over there, I can hear.”

When Nian Jincheng mentioned the disappearance of the exiled Nian family members, Su Liang blurted out, “Nian Ruxue?”

“I think it is likely to be her.” Nian Jincheng said, “But she couldn’t have done it alone; she must have conspired with someone secretly.”

“Do Nian family members have any value to save?” Su Liang expressed her confusion, “Nian Ruxue is not a person of deep affection and loyalty. Moreover, the timing is so coincidental.”

Nian Jincheng sighed, “Indeed, it is very strange.”

“I’ve heard Gu Ling mention before that he thought you might have been picked up by the Nian family.” Su Liang said.

Nian Jincheng was stunned for a moment, and after a brief silence, spoke again, “Actually, I have also suspected that I was picked up by them, but those people are not kind-hearted and wouldn’t have raised a child for no reason. I should be their biological child, just despised by them.”

Yang Yu held Nian Jincheng’s hand, but Nian Jincheng shook his head, indicating he was alright, merely talking about his feelings. But these feelings would no longer affect his mood.

After the two left, Su Liang called for Ren Dong, “Go and find Song Qi.”

Song Qi was brought back from the southern city of Jiaye by Ning Family’s old housekeeper to act as a steward, and had been in the capital city for some time after meeting Su Liang.

A few days ago, Su Liang had asked Ren Dong to find medicine for her and had mentioned that Song Qi could help. He provided Ren Dong with different channels, and when it came to doing business, he was indeed very talented.

Upon hearing that Su Liang wanted to see him, Song Qi hurried over, putting down his work.

He first reported the recent situation of the capital city’s shops. Under Su Liang’s suggestions and Song Qi’s management, the overall revenue of the shops in the capital increased, as did their reputation.

“Thank you for your hard work.” Su Liang said, “What we produce is for consumption; safety is our top priority, so don’t let anyone exploit it.”

Su Liang had mentioned this before and was now reminding Song Qi again. After all, she was, in name, the head of the Ning Family, and if someone were to target the Ning Family's stores, it would be very troublesome.

After discussing business matters, Su Liang gave Song Qi another task—to help her find medicine.

Before, she was looking for aphrodisiacs, and now Su Liang asked Song Qi to find various “black medicines” in secret circulation, such as aphrodisiac incense, knockout drugs, laxatives, poisons, etc.

“This subordinate will try his best.” Song Qi agreed. There were all kinds of people in the capital city, and as long as one had enough money and connections, they could buy whatever they wanted.

After Gu Ling left, Su Liang hadn't been in the kitchen again. Instead, she busied herself with reading and making medicine and felt very fulfilled.

Song Qi was very efficient, continuously providing Su Liang with various kinds of medicines. Su Liang didn't want to poison anyone; her primary goal was to learn and be prepared, in case someone wanted to poison her.

That day, Duanmu Yi sent someone to invite Su Liang to the palace to treat Sixth Princess Duanmu Qianqian.

Previously, in order to frame Su Liang, Duanmu Qianqian stabbed herself and forced Su Liang to confess using Bai Xiaohu, but she failed, resulting in the complete demise of the Wan family. The Empress Dowager was bedridden, and the Empress's power was usurped, effectively banished to the Cold Palace, while Duanmu Qianqian, the princess soon to marry, hadn't set foot outside the palace gate since the incident.

This was Su Liang's first visit to Duanmu Qianqian's palace – a place of luxury and wealth – but the eunuchs and palace maids all hung their heads and tightened their faces.

“Your Highness, Dr. Su has arrived.” A palace maid reported.

Through the delicate bead curtain, Su Liang saw Duanmu Qianqian lying on the couch, but she seemed not to hear and did not invite her in.

“Perhaps Her Highness is asleep. You should wait, Imperial Physician Su.” The Palace Maid lowered her head and whispered.

Su Liang's expression was calm, “Alright.” She then turned and left.

The Palace Maid hurriedly followed her, thinking Su Liang was leaving. However, she saw her sit down in the courtyard and take out a book from her medical box to read.

Seeing the Palace Maid staring at her with wide eyes, Su Liang smiled faintly, “No need to prepare tea. Just call me when the Sixth Princess wakes up.”

“Ah... Alright...” The Palace Maid subconsciously complied and went back in. Soon after, the sound of shattered porcelain was heard from inside.

The Palace Maid came out again with her slapped face covered. Inviting Su Liang in, she said Duanmu Qianqian had woken up.

As the bead curtains were pulled apart, Su Liang approached Duanmu Qianqian while holding her medical box, "Greetings, Sixth Princess."

Duanmu Qianqian was terribly skinny. She gestured with a gloomy gaze for everyone else to leave when she saw Su Liang.

"I heard that Nian Jincheng is marrying a low-born merchant's daughter next month?" Duanmu Qianqian asked coldly.

Su Liang smiled gently, "Yes, she is my friend. General Nian fell in love with her at first sight and then deeper at second, it's all fate."

Duanmu Qianqian gritted her teeth, "Su Liang, you did this on purpose, didn't you?"

Su Liang feigned incomprehension, "What do you mean, Your Highness?"

"You tried to get back at me by having some random woman seduce Nian Jincheng!" Duanmu Qianqian said coldly.

Su Liang's smile deepened, "Your Highness really flatters me. I'm not that capable of controlling who General Nian likes."

Duanmu Qianqian's face turned white with anger. Then Su Liang said, "But our score is indeed unsettled."

As the words fell, Su Liang took out a silver needle. Duanmu Qianqian's expression changed, "What are you trying to do?"

"Treating Your Highness." Su Liang said seriously, "It may hurt a bit, but nobody would believe it if I wanted to kill you."

"You haven't even checked my pulse yet!" Duanmu Qianqian dodged Su Liang's needle.

"Oh, I forgot. Please sit down, Your Highness. I'll check your pulse first, then apply the needle and medicine." Su Liang's smile was gentle.

"I'm not sick, I don't need your treatment! Get out!" Duanmu Qianqian pointed at the door.

"Alright, I'm busy too. Please think carefully before you want to see me again, Your Highness. Otherwise, when you see me, you want to chop me to pieces but can't do anything. It's really uncomfortable!" Su Liang patted Duanmu Qianqian's shoulder, causing her to shiver involuntarily.

After packing up her medical box, Su Liang left to report to Duanmu Yi. She said plainly that Duanmu Qianqian refused her treatment and she wouldn't force it.

Duanmu Yi didn't say anything but let Su Liang leave the palace.

In fact, Su Liang felt sympathy for the princess marrying far away. However, the incident of Duanmu Qianqian colluding with the Wan family to capture Bai Xiaohu made any reconciliation impossible. This debt would be settled sooner or later. In Su Liang's view, helplessness could never justify harming others.

This was just a minor episode, Su Liang didn't mind. But that night, Duanmu Qianqian died!

As dawn approached, Ren Dong woke Su Liang up, saying someone from the palace had come, and the emperor had ordered her to enter the palace immediately.

Unaware of what happened, Su Liang met Crown Prince Duanmu Chen at the entrance of the palace, who was also in the dark as she was.

When Su Liang was taken to Duanmu Qianqian's palace, she wondered if Duanmu Qianqian would try to frame her again with the same trick. However, when she entered, she saw Duanmu Qianqian's cold body.

Duanmu Qianqian was strangled with a thin wire, and there were no traces of struggle or fight. Only half a footprint was found under the window. The palace maid who was keeping watch at night said that Duanmu Qianqian was in a bad mood and did not want to see them, so they didn't stay by her bedside. They heard a noise in the middle of the night, went in to check, and found that Duanmu Qianqian had been murdered.

Upon hearing the news, the Empress Xiao Wan hurriedly pushed away the maid who was helping her and threw herself at Su Liang, "It's you! You killed Qianqian! I'll kill you!"

Duanmu Chen quickly stood in front of Su Liang, holding back Xiao Wan,

"Mother, the matter has not yet been investigated. Please calm down."

"Get away! I've lost my two sons, and now my only daughter is gone... How can I be calm?" Xiao Wan sat down on the ground, bursting into tears.

Su Liang had already walked to the side of Duanmu Qianqian's body, bending over to examine the strangulation mark on her neck, which showed nothing unusual.

Not long after, Su Liang and Duanmu Chen went to the Imperial Study to see Duanmu Yi, and Duanmu Che, the fifth prince, was also present.

Duanmu Yi had loved his daughter very much, and with her impending marriage to Liang Country, Duanmu Qianqian's sudden death made him extremely angry. He looked at Su Liang with a dark face, "You have had a grudge against Qianqian in the past and had a quarrel with her during the day. Now you are the prime suspect, do you have anything to say?"

Duanmu Chen, with his eyes narrowed, was not sure whether Duanmu Yi was really upset and irrational, or trying to take the opportunity to cause trouble for Su Liang...however, this incident could not have been Su Liang's doing.

It was getting light outside.

Su Liang remained calm, "Last night, this humble official was at home and never left. The maid Ren Dong, who was bestowed to me by the emperor, can testify."

“As far as I know, she does not live with you. How can she testify?” Duanmu Yi asked coldly.

Unable to bear it any longer, Duanmu Chen spoke up, “Father, although there have been some conflicts between Doctor Su and the Sixth Sister, she did not instigate them. Your son believes that she would not do such a thing. If she really wanted to harm the Sixth Sister, she would not have attracted suspicion to herself.”

Hearing that, the silent Duanmu Che suddenly gave a cold laugh.

Duanmu Yi asked coldly, “Che’er, what are you laughing at?”

Duanmu Che looked at Su Liang playfully, “Father, I just suddenly thought of some past events. When the bastard son of Prime Minister Xiao, Xiao Muyun, was killed, the greatest suspect was Doctor Su, who had a grudge against him. Yet everyone said that if she had done it, she would not have left any evidence pointing to herself. The second prince was also murdered, and Doctor Su, who had a longstanding feud with him, was a prime suspect. But in the end, the blame fell on the eldest prince. Not long after, the eldest prince disappeared, and Doctor Su happened to be away from the capital city. Last night, the Sixth Sister was poisoned, and instead of feeling sad for the Sixth Sister, the Crown Prince is in a hurry to exonerate Doctor Su, who is the most suspicious. It is really confusing.”

Duanmu Chen’s face stiffens, and Duanmu Yi frowns deeply.

Duanmu Che snorted coldly, “Ever since this Miss Su returned to the capital, the Second Prince, the Eldest Prince, and the Sixth Sister all had accidents, and they all had grudges with Doctor Su, not to mention significant grudges. Once may be a coincidence, but for it to happen repeatedly, even if she did not do it herself, is it really that she is completely innocent? She, who was once a delicate young lady who had been away from the capital for more than a year, has changed into a talented woman who is not only skilled in martial arts and medical skills, but also highly intelligent. Those who bear grudges against her have all met a bad end, yet Father still believes her. Your son has nothing more to say.”

Duanmu Chen knew that something was seriously wrong. He was well aware of Su Liang’s involvement in some matters, such as the fate of Duanmu Cheng and Duanmu Ao. But she had been very careful not to leave any handle. However, when similar things happened too many times, it led to the current situation in which Duanmu Yi’s suspicion was aroused, even without any evidence.

Su Liang was put under house arrest in the Imperial Palace, unable to return home or contact anyone.

Duanmu Chen dared not plead for Su Liang rashly, and could only watch the changes.

“Father, that huge stone that fell from the sky may not have been placed there by someone.” Duanmu Che pondered, “If Father thinks that Su Liang is important for Qian Country, even if she commits a mistake, he will not hold her accountable. Her high-profile pursuit of Gu Ling may not be a form of reverse psychology towards Father. After all, what one cannot get is always more desirable.”

Duanmu Yi's face darkened like ink as he listened to Duanmu Che continue, "I really can't help but suspect that she's a spy sent by someone else, although I don't know how she managed to look exactly like Su Yuanzhou's granddaughter. Su Yuanzhou's daughter-in-law was of unknown origin, and Su Liang was also born outside and brought back later. What if, from the beginning, she was not Su Yuanzhou's granddaughter at all? Or perhaps she has a secret twin sister."

"Lately, I have indeed been irrational towards Su Liang." Duanmu Yi coldly admitted, "What do you think should be done with her?"

"Whether she is a spy or a phoenix star, the safest way is to get rid of her." Duanmu Che stared intently, "Our Qian Country is strong, and it is only a matter of time before we become a unified nation. Why do we need a woman? If she is really the phoenix star and has another master, it would be a huge threat to Qian Country! In less than a year, she has won over many ministers, including the Crown Prince."

"Didn't you like her before?" Duanmu Yi asked.

Duanmu Che shook his head, "I was just infatuated for a while. Now when I think about it, many things were done deliberately by her. She is too good at conquering people's hearts, and I was inadvertently affected. Now I am sober.. Father, for the sake of Qian Country, this woman must not be allowed to stay!"

Chapter 269: 269. Su Liang's Counterattack

The Sixth Princess Duanmu Qianqian, who had been betrothed to Liang

Country, was murdered within the palace in the dead of night, and Su Liang was placed under house arrest. The truth about the previous incident where Duanmu Qianqian falsely accused Su Liang after being injured had not been publicized in order to protect the reputation of the royal family. This led many opportunistic people to assume that it could very well have been Su Liang who killed Duanmu Qianqian.

Lin Xueqing was distressed, "It couldn't possibly have been done by Su Liang!"

Xing Yusheng was also anxious, but he tried to reassure Lin Xueqing, "Su Liang is so smart, she is sure to come up with a way to prove her innocence."

Lin Xueqing frowned, "But that's something Su Liang didn't do at all, where would any evidence come from? Why is it that some people just can't stand to see Su Liang doing well!"

Xing Yusheng sighed, "That's because she's too good, so those unscrupulous insects hide in the shadows, trying to ruin her."

"So, are we just going to wait? After all, this time it's the princess who was murdered, what if the Emperor truly doesn't believe Su Liang?" Lin Xueqing looked worried.

Xing Yusheng held her hand, a once unthinkable thought crossing his mind: if his father were the emperor, Su Liang's status would be equal to that of a princess, who would dare to harm her then?

But Xing Yusheng knew that this thought was unrealistic, not what his father wanted, nor what Su Liang want. He sighed deeply, planning to wait and see, “In the worst-case scenario, there’s always the gold medallion granting immunity from death at my grandfather’s.”

If things reached the point of requiring the death immunity gold medallion, Su Liang’s prospects would be ruined. Even though she might not care much, there is a difference between wanting to give up herself and being forced to give up because of a fabricated accusation.

Outside the palace, Su Liang was once again pushed into the limelight, but in the palace where she was confined, she remained calm.

Called into the palace before daybreak, Su Liang thought perhaps a noble had fallen ill, so she brought her medicine box, in which were also two medical books she had recently been reading.

Therefore, when Duanmu Yi was ushered in and saw Su Liang reading a book with rapt attention, her side profile serious and beautiful, he unconsciously treaded lightly and his suspicion towards her began to waver.

Although Duanmu Yi had reprimanded Duanmu Chen for his changed, gentler ways of handling things, ever since Su Liang appeared, Duanmu Yi had been considering a question: Can one’s character be wholly trusted, and is it unchanging?

Sensing his gaze on her, Su Liang turned to see Duanmu Yi, closing the book and rose to salute him.

Duanmu Yi walked over with a cold face and sat down, “Stand up. I am here to listen to your defense. Have you thought about what to say?”

Su Liang remained calm, “Your Majesty, it’s something I haven’t done, and also haven’t had the chance to investigate. I slept alone last night, with no one by my side. All of these are against me. I can only defend myself by asserting that I had no motive to kill the Sixth Princess. However, due to some past incidents, people might think that I do.”

Duanmu Yi said coldly, “You should be very clear about how I have treated you.” Su Liang nodded, “Indeed, Your Majesty has bestowed utmost trust upon me, and has always been lenient and generous. I keep this kindness engraved in my heart.”

“I actually don’t believe that you killed Qianqian. But I want to ask you, did you really do nothing about Ao’er and Sheng’er’s affair?” Duanmu Yi looked at her piercingly.

Even though Duanmu Che’s analysis sounded reasonable, Duanmu Yi had his own judgement. Su Liang’s enmity with Duanmu Qianqian was insignificant; the ones who truly harbored deep hatred for her were Duanmu Sheng and Duanmu Ao.

“I admit,” Su Liang began to speak, and Duanmu Yi tensed up. He heard her sigh, “The Eldest Prince and the Second Prince are responsible for the death of my entire family. I knew this long ago, and it was Fifth Prince who informed me.”

Upon hearing Su Liang mention Duanmu Che, Duanmu Yi’s eyes narrowed, and she continued, “As Your Majesty knows, the Fifth Prince is my savior, having rescued a barely breathing me and arranged for me to fake my death. When I returned to the capital after suffering from memory loss, I wanted to clarify the situation and pleaded several times for the Fifth Prince to tell me the truth. I even knelt in front of him.”

Duanmu Yi interrupted Su Liang, "You're saying you knelt and pleaded with Che'er to tell you the truth?"

Su Liang nodded, "Yes."

"What did he say?" Duanmu Yi asked coldly.

"The Fifth Prince said that he saw the Eldest Prince meeting secretly with the former second Prince's wife and he speculated that my grandfather's death resulted from knowing some secrets and they were all silenced." Su Liang replied.

Duanmu Yi's face turned grim, "You knew about this from the very beginning!" "Yes." Su Liang nodded.

"So, you plotted time and time again to strip Cheng'er of his position as crown prince and kill Aoao, didn't you?" Duanmu Yi asked sharply.

Despite feeling pressured, Su Liang's expression did not change, and shaking her head, she said, "I confess that when I first discovered the truth, I yearned to take revenge on those who did this to my relatives."

"What audacity!" Duanmu Yi coldly exclaimed.

Su Liang sighed slightly, "That was just my thought. I am self-aware. I may stand out in the Military Exam due to my martial arts but there are many masters in the world who are more formidable than me."

"You mean, you know what Cheng'er and Aoao did but did nothing?" Duanmu Yi said, clearly disbelieving.

Su Liang shook her head slightly, "I have thought about how to take revenge. Initially, since the Fifth Prince saved me and was favored by the Emperor, I planned to help him seize the position of the crown prince."

Duanmu Yi said coldly, "You were clearly helping Chen'er all the time."

Su Liang sighed, "Indeed, I met the Crown Prince in Bei'an County, but how could that compare to the life-saving kindness of the Fifth Prince? However, I

intended to be loyal to the Fifth Prince but he despised me greatly."

"Che'er has made it clear that he likes you." Duanmu Yi coldly huffed.

Su Liang shook her head, "That happened later. At first, when I went to the Fifth Prince to investigate the truth behind my family's death, he was deeply prejudiced against me and withheld his help. He demanded that I kneel down and thank him before he would speak. Moreover, he repeatedly humiliated me. That is all true. Later, when I distinguished myself in the Military Exam, the

Fifth Prince suddenly changed his attitude and wanted to marry me. Honestly,

I am still unsure what kind of person the Fifth Prince really is."

Duanmu Yi remembered that at first, Duanmu Che did indeed say some negative things about Su Liang, but later, he insisted on marrying her.

“Ning Jing’s death...” Su Liang took a deep breath, “As per my knowledge, it was also related to the Fifth Prince.”

Duanmu Yi’s face turned grim, “What proof do you have?”

“I know about the blood word.” Su Liang said solemnly, “The son of the Wan Family wanted to kill Ning Jing to take revenge on me. It is true, but the person who actually killed Ning Jing may be someone from the Fifth Prince’s camp. When I returned to the capital, I found a jade pendant in the garden which was dropped by Huang Bol’s son, the old housekeeper of the Fifth Prince’s Manor.”

“Where is that jade pendant? Why didn’t you tell me?” Duanmu Yi asked coldly.

“That jade pendant is in my house.” Su Liang said calmly, “I still don’t know whether the blood word with half of the Eldest Prince’s name was written by Ning Jing before her death, or written by the murderer who cut off her hands using her own blood. I did not submit it to the Emperor nor did I publicize it because the Fifth Prince had saved me and I was unsure who the real murderer was. Since the Emperor believed it was the Eldest Prince, I did not want to complicate the matter further.”

Duanmu Yi recalled that at the time, Duanmu Cheng insisted that he had nothing to do with Ning Jing’s death. The son of Wan Cong confessed under severe torture, but he kept saying that it was not Duanmu Cheng who ordered them to kill, and they did not speak to Ning Jing, so she could not know who they were. Furthermore, they did not cut off Ning Jing’s hands... Could it be that everything they said was true and there was another party involved that night? Perhaps, the real culprit was hiding in the dark and set Duanmu Cheng up...

Su Liang had evidence and did not claim Duanmu Che was the murderer, but at this moment Duanmu Yi thought about Duanmu Che’s clear and forceful arguments today, his obvious infatuation with Su Liang in the past, and his almost overt intention of wanting to “destroy her if he could not have her”.

Duanmu Che claimed that the deaths of Duanmu Sheng, Duanmu Ao and Duanmu Qianqian were all related to Su Liang and it sounded reasonable.

But Su Liang said that from the very beginning Duanmu Che knew about Duanmu Sheng’s affair with his brother and sister and conspired with Duanmu Ao to wipe out her family. He even told her about it openly. Ning Jing’s death is related to Duanmu Che and she had evidence for it. The blood word could potentially have been left deliberately by Duanmu Che’s men after they cut off Ning Jing’s hands to frame Duanmu Sheng!

Su Liang took a deep breath, looking directly at Duanmu Yi with a candid expression in her eyes, “Your Majesty, I admit, the disasters that befell the Eldest Prince and the Second Prince seemed like retribution for their evil deeds and I was pleased to see that. But I did not harm them. As for the murder of the Sixth Princess, I had absolutely no involvement. I cannot prove that I did not kill the

Sixth Princess, but I believe that Your Majesty will surely find out the truth and bring it to the Sixth Princess's spirit in heaven. Then, I won't need to prove my innocence."

Duanmu Yi looked at her deeply, "Are you hinting that it was Che'er who killed Qianqian and framed you?"

Su Liang nodded, "Having heard the fifth prince's accusations against me, along with Ning Jing's mysterious death, I indeed suspected if the fifth prince had done something. Up to now, my impression of him is erratic and extremely paranoid. When I initially hid that jade pendant, I hoped we would clear our bad blood, severing all links. Until today, I still thought the same. But what transpired today made it seem as though the fifth prince wishes ill upon me."

Duanmu Yi's face turned gloomy, and after a long silence, he stood up, "Where is the jade pendant hidden, and how can it prove that it belongs to one of Che'er's subordinates?"

"The person's name is on the jade pendant," Su Liang replied, "It's buried under the pomegranate tree in my garden."

Duanmu Yi stormed away, and Su Liang, watching his figure vanish from her sight, resumed reading her book, releasing a relieved sigh.

It was Gu Ling who hid one of Huang Bo's son's jade pendants in the garden, stating it might come in handy someday.

Su Liang could not help but marvel, the Great God indeed is remarkable. The reason Gu Ling did not kill Duanmu Che at that time was not because Su Liang wanted to repay a favor but because if Duanmu Yi's third son met with a mishap, especially when the three sons all had grudges against Su Liang, she would inevitably face great trouble. Particularly because she was on the same side as Duanmu Chen and Duanmu Yi sensed this, he would likely suspect Su Liang was colluding with Duanmu Chen to remove obstacles for the power struggle.

Keeping Duanmu Che alive was to make him a scapegoat if Su Liang was once again suspected of harming Duanmu Cheng and Duanmu Ao. This was highly likely to happen, considering those two were Duanmu Yi's sons and held deep hatred towards Su Liang from the familicide incident.

The current situation proved just this.

As for the favor Su Liang had mentioned, it was written off as soon as she treated Duanmu Che and saved his life.

There was actually another piece of evidence, but Su Liang couldn't mention it—the missing hands on "Ning Jing"'s corpse.

That night, Gu Ling chopped off both Huang Bo's son's hands, discarded them somewhere else, primarily to prevent revealing that it wasn't Ning Jing from the hands, as one's hands, other than the face, were mostly exposed to the public. "Ning Jing," being a scholar, would have great differences compared to the stand-in, who had rough calluses and wounds on his hands.

Those hands were surreptitiously thrown into the lake of the fifth prince's garden by Gu Ling the same night and were likely just bones by now.

If they could be found, Duanmu Yi would certainly believe, “Ning Jing” was killed by Duanmu Che, framing Duanmu Cheng. Hence, suspecting that Duanmu Cheng was harmed by Duanmu Che would be very reasonable.

Unfortunately, Su Liang shouldn’t have known this, nor could she proactively mention it. It’s unlikely for the skeletal hands at the bottom of the lake in the fifth prince’s garden to be discovered, it’s all up to fate now.

Duanmu Yi found the jade pendant buried beneath the pomegranate tree at the

Su Mansion. He sent men to investigate Huang Bo and his son, learning that Huang Bo’s son had disappeared for quite a while. Huang Bo had gone to look for him and never returned, and the housekeeper of the fifth prince’s mansion had already been replaced.

Huang Bo’s son vanished around the time Ning Jing was killed.

Based on the “facts” that Su Liang presented, Duanmu Yi could not help but suspect that Duanmu Che had sent Huang Bo’s son to kill Ning Jing, framed Duanmu Cheng, then silenced the culprit.

The murderer of Duanmu Qianqian left only half a footprint, providing no leads. However, judging by how the murderer could come and go freely in the palace, either their martial arts were very high, or they were very familiar with the guard deployment everywhere.

Duanmu Yi didn’t want to believe that Duanmu Che was behind this all along, merely taking revenge on Su Liang. But after hearing Su Liang’s words, his suspicion towards Duanmu Che grew heavier and heavier.

Su Liang after being put under house arrest in the palace for three days, was secretly approached by Xing Yusheng who sought out Crown Prince Duanmu Chen. Duanmu Chen urged him to do nothing, the current matter was too serious, the more was said in front of Duanmu Yi, the more mistakes could be made. After all, the Qin family still had a life-saving token reserved for Su Liang.

On this day, under the order of Duanmu Yi, Su Liang was transferred from the palace to the Heavenly Prison, concluding the verdict for Duanmu Qianqian’s death.

Duanmu Chen secluded himself, it wasn’t that he didn’t want to save Su Liang, but at this moment, he had to stay out of the situation to avoid implicating himself so that he could have the opportunity to help Su Liang later.

Neither the Qin Duke Mansion nor the Xing and Lin families did anything; they were just waiting to use their life-saving token.

Duanmu Che made another visit to Duanmu Yi in the palace.

Duanmu Che spoke respectfully, “Father, I suspect that the eldest prince is possibly alive in Su Liang’s hands. How about if I visit her in the prison, to see whether she might reveal anything?”

“That’s fine. You go.” Duanmu Yi nodded.

In the depths of the Heavenly Prison, the air reeked of blood. Su Liang, with disheveled hair, was tied to a column. Her clothes were heavily stained with blood.

As Duanmu Che entered, he had the prison officers stay away. In the gloomy prison cell, only he and Su Liang remained.

Duanmu Che approached, reached out to grab Su Liang's hair, forcing her to lift her head. His eyes were predatory and he sneered, "Unexpected turn of events for you, isn't it?"

Su Liang pursed her lips and glared coldly at Duanmu Che, remaining silent.

"Ning Jing is dead, and now you've set your eyes on Gu Ling. Do you know how much I hated it when I saw you smiling so pleasantly at Gu Ling that day? Clearly, your life now is granted by me, yet you dare to reject me? I've treated you so well, yet you see me as an enemy." Duanmu Che's voice was melancholy, "In that case, I might as well take back the life I've granted you. Hehe." "It was you... who killed the sixth princess..." Su Liang's voice was low.

Duanmu Che reached out and strangled Su Liang's neck, laughing coldly, "It's quite simple, isn't it? Who made you antagonistic to all three of them – the brother and sisters? I can no longer stand watching you chase after Gu Ling, hear about how much you like him. But don't worry, I'll send him to accompany you in the underworld. Don't look at me like that, you won't have a chance to see father again. No need to count on the Qin family's golden amnesty, because I've been looking forward to this moment for too long. I've come to send you on your way! You should have been hanged from the start!"

Duanmu Che suddenly tightened his grip, "I'll tell father that during the interrogation for the whereabouts of the eldest prince, I accidentally used excessive force in a moment of urgency."

Just then, Duanmu Che was forcibly pushed back, falling onto his side. In disbelief, he looked at the person who suddenly appeared out of nowhere – it was Su Liang!

Standing behind Su Liang were Duanmu Yi and Duanmu Chen. Duanmu Yi looked at Duanmu Che, disappointment plain in his eyes, "All to frame Su Liang, you even killed Qianqian?!"

The person who had been impersonating Su Liang, Ren Dong, was untied from the pole and shook her head, indicating she was fine.

This show was directed by Duanmu Yi because he wanted to know if it was Duanmu Che who killed Duanmu Qianqian. And now, he had his answer. No more evidence was needed.

"Father... it wasn't me!" Duanmu Che scrambled up in a panic, "It's Su Liang who set me up!"

Duanmu Yi didn't want to hear another word from Duanmu Che, "Chen'er, take people to search the Fifth Prince's mansion. Leave no stone unturned. If there is anything suspicious, report it to me immediately!" With that, he left with a stern face.

Duanmu Chen responded respectfully.

If Gu Ling was present at Su Liang's side at this moment, Su Liang would definitely give him a big thumbs up. It seemed the pair of hands at the bottom of the lake at the Fifth Prince's mansion would be revealed soon.

Meanwhile, Gu Ling, who was nearly at Bei'an County, was playing a game of chess in the carriage with Lin Boyan when he suddenly sneezed.

Not long after they had departed from the capital, Lin Boyan had confirmed that the “Ning Jing” he encountered before was Gu Ling in disguise. When he asked, Gu Ling admitted it.

Lin Boyan looked at him with a calm expression, “Xiao Liang prepared so many clothes for you, and you’re still feeling cold?”

Gu Ling shook his head slightly, “No, I’m not cold. Perhaps someone is thinking about me..”

Chapter 270: 270. Please don’t hurt me

Xing Yusheng arranged for Qi Yan to drive over to pick up Su Liang, who left the Heavenly Prison with Ren Dong and returned home.

As she pushed open the gate, a burning fire basin came into view.

“Sister Su, step over the fire basin, and all the bad luck will go away!” Lin Xueqing stood on the other side, waving at Su Liang.

Su Liang lifted her skirt and stepped over the fire basin, only to be hugged tightly by Lin Xueqing, “I hope the person who hurt Sister Su will disappear!”

Su Liang chuckled and patted Lin Xueqing’s back, “Every person has their time to die, everyone will disappear eventually.”

Xing Yusheng standing nearby facepalmed, “Su Liang, you really are heartless; it’s as if nothing happened to you.”

“Otherwise? Should I cry and wait for you guys to save me?” Su Liang retorted.

Xing Yusheng shook his head, “No matter what happens, you always solve it on your own. We worried for a few days, but it was all useless.”

Su Liang smiled, “It’s because I know that even in the worst-case scenario, someone will come to save me with a life-saving token, so I’m not afraid, and I can calmly think about how to solve the problem.”

In fact, the main credit should go to Gu Ling... Su Liang thought, but she couldn’t tell anyone about some things she and Gu Ling had done previously.

The marks left by Duanmu Che pinching Ren Dong’s neck were still purple and green. The moment Su Liang returned to Yuanming Pavilion, she fetched a bottle of ointment for Ren Dong and told her to treat it as soon as possible.

Wan Hui brought Zhengzheng over to see Su Liang, and only relaxed after seeing that she was unharmed. Zhengzheng happily told her that his grandfather was coming to the capital city for the New Year, and his uncles and cousins were also coming.

Wan Hui ordered the restaurant to deliver a feast, and everyone celebrated Su Liang’s escape from danger together.

While they were in high spirits, Duanmu Che’s life was not so good on the other side.

He was “escorted” into the palace by Duanmu Yi’s people from the Heavenly Prison, with no chance to return to the Fifth Prince’s Mansion.

If one could say that Su Liang was simply under house arrest in a cold palace for three days, Duanmu Che was more like being imprisoned. The doors and windows were sealed, and heavily guarded soldiers would not allow him to step out of the room.

However, outsiders only knew that Su Liang had been cleared of suspicion and released and still didn't know who the real culprit behind Duanmu Qianqian's death was. Duanmu Yi has always valued the reputation of the royal family, and only a few people knew about it in the first place, and then a gag order was issued.

Su Liang was not surprised by this, and even guessed that Duanmu Yi would eventually spread the word that it was the doing of the Yin Country royal family in secret, trying to break the marriage alliance between the Qian and Liang countries. This explanation seemed very reasonable, and it also made sense for the Liang Country's side as well.

As for the marriage alliance between the two countries, it would not be canceled just because a princess had died. Without Duanmu Qianqian, there would be other diplomatic princesses.

Under Duanmu Yi's orders, Duanmu Chen brought people to thoroughly investigate the Fifth Prince's mansion and took control of everyone in the mansion.

Receiving a report from his subordinate, Duanmu Chen entered Duanmu Che's study and saw that the normally hanging calligraphy and paintings were replaced with pictures of Su Liang. There were more than ten pictures of her from front, side, and back angles, with half of them being intimate pictures of Duanmu Che and Su Liang together.

Chang'an was dumbfounded, "Fifth Prince... Are you... out of your mind...?"

Duanmu Chen said coldly, "Take them down, pack them up, and send them to the palace for Father to see."

Before this, Duanmu Chen thought that Duanmu Che had come to his senses and planned to compete with him for the Crown Prince's position. However, he didn't expect that the calmer Duanmu Che seemed on the surface, the crazier he was deep down.

This was not a bad thing for Duanmu Chen. It was well-known that Duanmu Che used to be the child Duanmu Yi loved the most, and if Duanmu Che had vied for power, it would have posed a great threat to Duanmu Chen, even without the support of his maternal relatives.

But clearly, Duanmu Che's physical health had improved, but his mental illness had only become worse.

He had it too easy... Duanmu Chen thought. Duanmu Che had been protected by Duanmu Yi since he was a child, and apart from being sick, he could get whatever he wanted without anyone daring to offend him, including Duanmu Cheng and Duanmu Ao, who would avoid him.

On the other hand, Duanmu Chen was not born of the legitimate wife and had to be cautious since childhood, fearing that he would say a wrong word or do a wrong deed. He had to dodge Duanmu Cheng's faction while carefully showing his abilities to Duanmu Yi.

Furthermore, having seen the fickleness and disloyalty in the royal family, Duanmu Chen had always believed that one could not have both fish and bear's paw. If he wanted power, he had to give up feelings; otherwise, he would be dragged down by them.

Duanmu Che, who always got what he wanted, could hardly be said to have fallen into Su Liang's hands; rather, Su Liang's appearance merely exposed Duanmu Che's dark, selfish, paranoid, and morbid nature.

In the study, besides Su Liang's portraits, Chang'an also found a cloth doll hidden in the desk's secret compartment, covered with birth dates and filled with needles.

It was obviously the witchcraft that the world, especially the royal family, despised the most.

When Chang'an brought the cloth doll to Duanmu Chen, he instinctively shuddered, recalling the scene he had witnessed as a child in the palace, when a concubine was beaten to death for a similar reason...

"I don't know what this is..." Chang'an's voice trailed off when he flipped the cloth doll over. saw the writing on its back. and silently held it up in front of Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen could only say that he shouldn't be surprised that Duanmu Che targeted Gu Ling with the cloth doll.

It was because Duanmu Chen was here today due to Duanmu Che killing

Duanmu Qianqian and framing Su Liang. And based on the gibberish Duanmu Che said in the Heavenly Prison when facing Ren Dong disguised as Su Liang, he was obviously provoked by Su Liang's enthusiastic pursuit of Gu Ling.

Duanmu Chen even thought that maybe Duanmu Che initially planned to secretly scheme to seize the position of the Crown Prince or even the Imperial Throne. In that case, he could do whatever he wanted, and his chances of getting Su Liang would naturally be greater. However, Gu Ling's return and Su Liang's change of heart caused Duanmu Che to lose his sanity.

Pictures of Duanmu Che and Su Liang intimately hung on the wall, and a Gu

Ling cloth doll full of needles was hidden in a secret compartment. If Duanmu Che only wanted Gu Ling dead, Duanmu Chen would barely consider him human. However, Duanmu Che's first target was actually Su Liang, which was truly insane!

"Pack this up as well, and send it to the palace for Father Emperor to see," Duanmu Chen ordered.

After the search of the study and Duanmu Che's residence was completed, Chang'an asked Duanmu Chen how to search other places.

"Dig up the garden and see if anyone is buried there," Duanmu Chen suddenly thought of the missing Duanmu Cheng and decided to dig up the ground, hoping for some new discoveries.

Chang'an asked, "Should we search the lake in the garden?"

Duanmu Chen nodded, "Search it! Thoroughly search all places where people and things can be hidden!"

Late in the night, Duanmu Chen received a report of a new discovery and personally went to the Fifth Prince's Mansion once more.

Seeing the two skeletal hands pieced together, Duanmu Chen's eyes shrank fiercely, and he immediately thought of Ning Jing, who had been murdered several months ago.

Chang'an whispered, "Should we inform Miss Su? I'm afraid this might be Young Master Ning's..."

Duanmu Chen let out a deep sigh, "Present it to Father Emperor. As for Su Liang, let's talk about it tomorrow."

Before the morning court session, Duanmu Yi saw the painting of Su Liang, Gu Ling's witchcraft doll, and the pair of skeletal hands, one by one.

This perfectly corroborated what Su Liang said about picking up the jade pendant of Duanmu Che's most trusted subordinate in her own garden. As for "Ning Jing" having his hands chopped off, it certainly wasn't done by Duanmu Cheng or Wan Cong. That meant the half-blood character must have been left by Duanmu Che's men.

Looking at the pile of hand bones, Duanmu Yi was furious, deeply suspecting that Duanmu Cheng's disappearance had something to do with Duanmu Che! Duanmu Yi had known everything from the beginning and was constantly stirring up trouble in secret, doing everything he could to frame Su Liang!

When Duanmu Yi learned that Duanmu Che had killed Duanmu Qianqian just to frame Su Liang, he had completely lost hope in this son.

One by one, the evidence that proved Duanmu Che was insane was brought to Duanmu Yi. "Ning Jing's death was indeed related to him. He cursed Gu Ling and even wanted Su Liang dead. The calmer Duanmu Che appeared in recent months, the crazier he became inside.

That completely deterred Duanmu Yi from looking for Duanmu Che to talk today, not wanting to see him anymore. Instead, he instructed Duanmu Chen to visit and inquire whether Duanmu Che was related to Duanmu Cheng's disappearance.

"You're here to laugh at me." Duanmu Che, with disheveled hair, looked coldly at Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen sat near the door, looked at Duanmu Che's appearance, and sighed deeply, "Fifth brother, why bother?"

"Stop pretending! You dare say that you don't want Su Liang?" Duanmu Che sneered.

Duanmu Chen shook his head, "Don't think that everyone is like you. You clearly disliked her at first, was it worth going mad over?"

"I can't control it..." Duanmu Che said gloomily, "She must have poisoned me and bewitched my heart..."

Duanmu Chen sighed, "You killed Ning Jing, right?"

Duanmu Che muttered, "I wanted to kill him, but it failed. However, it succeeded as well, hehe."

Duanmu Chen snorted, "Was it because Wan Cong took the lead, and you reaped the benefits, even falsely accusing Eldest Imperial Brother?"

“What did you say?” Duanmu Che looked up at Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen shook his head, “The evidence is irrefutable, so I won’t ask about this. Father Emperor sent me here to ask if you are related to Eldest Imperial Brother’s disappearance?”

Duanmu Che clenched his teeth and said, “Of course Su Liang did it! How could

Su Liang possibly let Duanmu Cheng go! She must have already killed Duanmu Cheng! ”

Duanmu Chen shook his head and got up, “Forget it, I knew you would say that.

You said that Qianqian was killed by Su Liang, but it was you who killed her. She was our own sister, how could you do it?”

As Duanmu Chen left, he ignored the accusations that Duanmu Che was making against Su Liang: Xiao Muyun was killed by Su Liang, as well as Duanmu Ao and Duanmu Cheng.

Duanmu Chen sneered in his heart. In fact, he also thought that the deaths of Duanmu Ao and Duanmu Cheng were related to Su Liang, as if she was secretly taking revenge. However, her tactics were clever, with motives but without leaving any evidence. The fact that Duanmu Che had killed Duanmu Qianqian was enough for Duanmu Yi to blame it all on him.

That is to say, after this setback, although Su Liang appeared to be very passive, she had managed to clear all the previous doubts about her.

Although Duanmu Che seemed to have the upper hand, his own actions were not clean, and he was obviously regarded as someone to be guarded against by Su Liang long ago. She even left a trick for him, causing him to lose everything.

At this moment, Duanmu Chen marveled at the depth of Su Liang’s schemes, but did not fear her. He simply reminded himself once again to win her over and not to offend her. This must be the lucky star sent by Heaven to clear the obstacles for him to ascend to the throne.

Regarding the matter of the white bone hand, Duanmu Chen had asked for Duanmu Yi’s instructions, and then personally went to inform Su Liang after leaving the palace.

As for how to deal with Duanmu Che, Duanmu Chen did not ask Duanmu Yi because it was no longer important. Not to mention that Duanmu Che could not escape, if he really caused any more trouble, he would only die faster.

Lin Xueqing had originally brought the Chinese knot that she had made for Su Liang to talk to her. When Ren Dong said that Duanmu Chen had come, Su Liang guessed what it was about and let Lin Xueqing go first.

When Lin Xueqing left, she bumped into Duanmu Chen and saw Chang’an carrying a wooden box. She thought it was a gift for Su Liang and didn’t think too much about it.

After sitting down on the first floor of Yuanming Pavilion, Chang’an put the wooden box on the table and then left.

“What is this?” Su Liang asked knowingly.

Duanmu Chen sighed before speaking, “It’s Ning Jing’s hand.”

Su Liang's expression changed slightly, "What did you say?" As she finished speaking, she opened the wooden box, saw the hand bones inside, and frowned deeply, "This is..."

"It's Ning Jing's hand. It was dug up from the lake in the garden of the Fifth

Prince's Mansion." Duanmu Chen said, "Wan Cong killed Ning Jing, and Duanmu Che's men cut off his hand, wrote half of the blood word, and framed it on Duanmu Cheng."

Su Liang closed the wooden box and did not speak.

"Father Emperor ordered me to hand this over to you." Duanmu Chen said.

"How does His Majesty plan to deal with Duanmu Che?" Su Liang asked. Duanmu Chen shook his head, "I don't know, but he should not die."

Duanmu Yi would not execute his own son for any reason, whether it was the previous Duanmu Cheng, Duanmu Ao, or the current Duanmu Che.

Su Liang was not surprised. Even ordinary parents would want their children to live, no matter how serious their mistake.

Duanmu Chen told Su Liang about the things that were found in Duanmu Che's mansion, "You don't need to look at those, Father Emperor has already ordered them to be burned."

Su Liang nodded, "I might have thrown up if I saw the paintings you mentioned. "

Duanmu Chen suddenly frowned, "He didn't send someone to assassinate Gu Ling, did he? I forgot to ask about that, but even if I did ask, he wouldn't admit it."

Su Liang scoffed, "How skilled is Miss Gu? If someone goes to kill her, they will never return."

Duanmu Chen's mouth twitched slightly, "Indeed, Gu Ling is very strong. Do you think she is perfect?"

However, Su Liang shook her head, "Not really, she is not perfect."

Duanmu Chen was curious, "What are you not satisfied with about her?"

Su Liang nodded slightly, "Everything else is perfect, except for the fact that she doesn't like me."

Duanmu Chen got up to leave, but turned back at the door, standing there and looking steadily at Su Liang.

"Does Crown Prince have any other orders?" Su Liang asked.

Duanmu Chen's eyes narrowed slightly, "I'm saying, you're so infatuated with

Gu Ling, if Gu Ling never accepts you, you won't end up becoming as crazy as Duanmu Che, will you?"

Su Liang snorted lightly, "Comparing me to Duanmu Che, you are insulting me.

But it doesn't matter, thank you for the Crown Prince's concern."

"Just joking." Duanmu Chen shook his head and really left this time. It was indeed a joke, he knew Su Liang was not the same kind of person as Duanmu

Su Liang was just about to arrange for Song Qi to go back to the Ning Family in Xunyang City, so he called him over, handed him the pair of bone hands, and asked him to bring them back and put them in “Ning Jing”’s coffin.

In a few days, the news that Duanmu Qianqian was killed by the Yin Country’s spy was indeed reported. It was even said that it was the female general of the Yin Country and the imperial concubine of the crown prince, Man Ya, who arranged for the person to kill Duanmu Qianqian and frame Su Liang who had once defeated her.

This news had nothing to do with Su Liang. It was Duanmu Yi who sent people to spread it. Because he had learned from Ren Dong that the poisoning of Gao Jiabao in the army that time was done by Man Ya’s spy.

As a result, Man Ya was splashed with dirty water, but it was not wrongful. She had indeed done similar things. It was not publicized last time, so it just happened to be used to blame her this time.

Su Liang did not let Ren Dong go to steal the Yin Country to kill Man Ya because Man Ya was pregnant. But that doesn’t mean that the accounts between them don’t have to be settled. Time will tell, there will always be opportunities.

When Gu Ling and his party arrived in Xuanbei City, it was a snowy day.

Xing Ji arranged for them to stay in the General’s Mansion, and Gu Ling stayed in the same courtyard where Su Liang had stayed before. He said he liked the pine tree in the courtyard.

Lian Shun brought good food and wine to find Gu Ling, and also brought Che Yun, and called Lin Bojun. Lin Boyan wasn’t used to the cold weather in the north, and he had a cough these two days.

“Gu beauty, do you remember me? We met in Huguo Temple’s back mountain in the capital city ten years ago. I wanted to play with you, and you asked me to stay away from you! Haha!” Lian Shun was very familiar with Gu Ling and sat close to him.

Gu Ling’s expression was faint, “I remember, I was watching the sunset, and you suddenly hugged me from behind.”

Lian Shun coughed lightly, “I just wanted to play with you! You are so good-looking! I even treated you to the oranges from my family’s garden!”

Gu Ling nodded, “I didn’t want them, but you insisted on giving them to me, and I thanked you at that time.”

Seeing Che Yun and Lin Bojun both laughing, Lian Shun didn’t feel embarrassed. He tilted his head and leaned it on Gu Ling’s shoulder, sighing, “I went to discuss with my grandfather about abducting you and bringing you home that day. My grandfather tied me to a tree and beat me. It is unforgettable.”

Gu Ling stood up when he heard the words, and Lian Shun almost fell to the ground.

“Do you like men?” Gu Ling asked with a faint expression.

Lian Shun blinked and smiled brightly at him, “Yes, I like you!”

Seeing Gu Ling frown, Che Yun hurriedly helped Lian Shun explain, “He’s just joking, he has a girl he likes. Gu Marquis, you should know her, Su Liang from the capital city! But she rejected him!”

Gu Ling nodded slightly and sat back down, "Is that so? Miss Su, she said she likes me."

Che Yun and Lian Shun were both dumbfounded.

Lin Bojun lowered his head to eat his meat, thinking that this person was really good at pretending and really wanted to hit him!

Did Su Liang say it herself? She said she likes you?" Lian Shun grabbed Gu Ling and interrogated him.

Gu Ling nodded, "Wherever I go, she always follows me, and she even sends me the dishes she makes herself. I told her to stay away from me, but she seemed not to hear."

Lian Shun slammed the table and stood up angrily, pointing at Gu Ling, "Ahhhhh! You're too much! Su Xiaoliang likes you, she's actively pursuing you, and you're acting troubled! You don't think Su Xiaoliang is good enough for you, so who do you want to find? Or do you really like men?"

Gu Ling's expression remained calm, "It's too noisy. Even if I like men, I wouldn't like you. Don't worry."

Lian Shun: ... I really want to hit him!

Lin Bojun couldn't stand it any longer, "Brother Lian, sit down quickly."

"I said it a long time ago," Lian Shun's voice was desolate, "I can accept that Su Liang doesn't like me, but the man she likes in the future, at least has to be someone like Gu beauty. Otherwise, I won't accept it. I didn't expect, I really didn't expect that she really likes you. I tell you Gu Ling, Su Liang is my best friend, and you cannot hurt her!"

Gu Ling pushed Lian Shun away, who had come close again, and said faintly,

"Please tell your best friend not to hurt me.."