

Three-Time 281

Chapter 281: 281. The sudden bestowment of marriage

Deep into the night, Situ Xie's study room.

"No one came for that fan." Situ Xie's facial expression darkened, " Su Liang seems gentle, but she's highly calculating. Duanmu Yi might have sent her for you and the mechanical secret scroll."

Mu Yu, sitting in a dark corner, spoke out, "If my master hasn't shown up, could it be that the fan is not his at all? If it is his, he must be right here in Yao City. He wouldn't wait so many days to reveal himself."

Situ Xie's face changed, "It couldn't be Su Liang's scheme..." Recalling how Su Liang, filled with smiles, had said earlier that day to find a good artisan to meet her, Situ Xie felt increasingly certain that the fan weapon was related to her! If Duanmu Yi sent Su Liang to find the descendants of the Mu Family and the mechanical secret scroll, Su Liang wouldn't have waited until now to act!

The development of events left Situ Xie confused, still not knowing who the fan came from. He hoped it was from Mu Yu's master, as that's the person he is waiting for.

"Should the prince want me to meet that woman from Qian Country?" Mu Yu asked.

Situ Xie raised his hand, "No. If you meet her, you will fall into a trap. Even if she hasn't seen you, she may guess your origin. Let's watch and see how things unfold."

Su Liang and Gu Ling walked deep into the pagoda forest of Qingjing Temple again on the agreed-upon day, but they didn't encounter Old Man Mu. They didn't linger and soon left.

Su Liang always thought Old Man Mu would abandon the ancestral teachings and take Gu Ling as his disciple. His absence doesn't mean the matter is over; maybe he was just delayed by something else.

Not long after returning to the mansion, Situ Yao came to see Su Liang, saying that the Crown Prince Mansion will host a banquet for the baby's full month birthday and inviting her to attend.

"Okay." Su Liang promptly agreed, "Will your cousin also be there?"

"My aunt's son will be there. As for whether Gu Ling will be there, I have no idea. The invitation has already been sent to Ning Xiangyuan." Situ Yao smiled, "If Gu Ling doesn't go, will Doctor Su also not go?"

Su Liang shook her head, "I will definitely go. Every time I go to Qingjing Temple to find him, I either end up playing chess with Master Xuanqing or take a walk in the pagoda forest. It's not fun at all."

Situ Yao couldn't help smiling, "Then Doctor Su, please also persuade Gu Ling to attend the banquet tomorrow. Oh right, there's another thing I need to ask Doctor Su, the Crown Prince wishes to see that weaponized folding fan, I wonder if Doctor Su can bring it to the banquet tomorrow?"

“This...” Su Liang held her forehead, “That’s so unfortunate.”

Situ Yao paused, “Is there any inconvenience?”

“I broke the fan.” Su Liang sighed lightly, “I only accidentally tore it a bit at first, but I couldn’t resist, I was really curious about the mechanism inside, so I disassembled it.”

Last time they met, Su Liang took back the disassembled fan from Old Man Mu. But until today, when Su Liang met Situ Xie, the fan bag around her waist contained her own fan.

Hearing this, Situ Yao proposed to take a look at what disassembled fan looks like since she was quite curious.

Su Liang directly took it out for Situ Yao and showed her. The fan face was shredded, and the fan bones were also split in half, and a delicate little mechanism could be seen inside the fan’s grip.

After Situ Yao left, Situ Xie quickly learned that Su Liang had disassembled the fan herself.

This made Situ Xie start to question whether Su Liang really knows about the descendants of the Mu Family and the secret scroll.

The next day, as Su Liang accompanied Situ Xie to the Imperial Palace to treat Situ Han, she brought up the issue of her disassembled fan on the way and asked if Situ Xie had found a skilled artisan.

“Fortunately, I don’t think I’ve damaged the interior mechanism of the fan. As long as we find a suitable craftsman, it should be able to be restored,” Su Liang said with a smile.

Situ Xie, upon hearing this, told her he had people searching, but no one had found an artisan capable of handling this yet. Meanwhile, he began to suspect Su Liang deliberately disassembled the fan to get him to bring Mu Yu to her...

After treating Situ Han again, Su Liang suggested that his condition had improved significantly and that she should return to her country. She offered to teach her acupuncture technique to the physicians of Liang Country.

Situ Xie was surprised that Su Liang was willing to pass on her special abilities. Situ Han, now able to speak normally, insisted that Su Liang personally treat him until he was fully recovered, stating that he wouldn’t trust anyone else with this task.

However, Su Liang had already made up her mind to leave, “Emperor Liang, I will leave behind the methods of acupuncture and the prescription. If all goes well, it should return to normal by the time of the New Year.”

Situ Han still persisted, “Did Emperor Qian say when he sent Divine Doctor Su to us, to cure me and then return?”

In actuality, Duanmu Yi didn’t say that, but Su Liang could only nod, “Yes.”

Situ Han tugged at the corner of his mouth, still not daring to laugh openly. “Divine Doctor Su is such a talented person. If she could be my Liang Country’s servant, how wonderful would that be? I

heard that Divine Doctor Su's mother has an unknown origin? Perhaps she really is a woman from the Liang Country, otherwise, why would she give Su such a name?"

Upon hearing this, Su Liang realized that Situ Han seemed to want to win her over. However, if she were to stay in Liang Country and not return, it would be considered treason against Qian Country.

However, Situ Han didn't wait for Su Liang to reply, but changed the topic,

"Divine Doctor Su has treated me, and I have always thought about what kind of thank-you gift I should give you. Gold, silver, and jewels are all too vulgar, and Divine Doctor Su doesn't lack them. Last night, I suddenly thought of the most suitable gift."

"Emperor Liang is too courteous. What I did was just following orders." Su Liang said, but she was quite curious about what Situ Han was going to give her.

When she first met Situ Han, he had a twisted mouth and skewed eyes, but now his features were gradually returning to normal, and she could see that he resembled Situ Xie.

However, since they were nominally uncle and nephew, it was normal for them to look similar, and it wouldn't make anyone suspect that they were father and son."

After Situ Han regained the ability to speak normally in these three days, the impression he gave to Su Liang was that he was not merely a puppet of Situ Xie, even though he seemed to trust Situ Xie very much."

At the moment, what Situ Han was saying obviously hadn't been discussed with Situ Xie beforehand, because it was Situ Xie who asked what Situ Han was going to give Su Liang.

However, Situ Han just played coy, "I'll keep this a secret for now, I want to give Divine Doctor Su a surprise."

Su Liang smiled, "Thank you, Emperor Liang, I'm already looking forward to it."

When Su Liang left the palace, Situ Xie did not accompany her, stating that he still had matters to report to Situ Han, and asked Su Liang to leave first.

According to the agreement with Situ Yao, Su Liang went to the Crown Prince's Residence, even brought a gift which Ren Dong prepared as a matter of courtesy. There was no particular motive, She just wanted to "know" the members of the Liang royal family a bit, as she was likely to have dealings with them in the future. It was safest to know your allies and enemies well.

"Uncle Emperor, there's no need to ask. I have plans, and you'll know when the time comes." Situ Han waved his hand with an indifferent expression, refusing to tell Situ Xie what he was going to give Su Liang.

Situ Xie frowned, "That woman is skilled and has deep plots. Your Majesty, you must be careful when dealing with her."

Situ Han showed displeasure, "Is Uncle Emperor trying to teach me how to handle things? Uncle Emperor, why don't you first tell me why General Lin, who came from Qian Country, nearly lost his life on Wolong Snow Mountain?"

Situ Xie sighed, admitting that it was due to severe negligence on Situ Min's part.

“Uncle Emperor, there’s no need to accompany Divine Doctor Su to the palace every day. If you have time, it would be better to manage those unruly grandsons more.” After saying that, Situ Han stated that he was tired and asked Situ Xie to leave.

After leaving the palace, Situ Xie also attended the banquet at the Crown Prince’s Mansion.

Crown Prince Situ Chao was a bit disappointed when he learned that Su Liang did not bring the fan with her. He publicly declared that whoever could find Master Mu who sold fans would be generously rewarded.

Watching him, Su Liang thought that compared to Situ Xie’s eldest grandson, Situ Jing, this Situ Chao was more prone to show his emotions and seemed rather unintelligent.

Gu Ling did not attend the banquet, and Situ Chao made a few snide remarks about him.

When Su Liang left the Crown Prince’s Mansion, it was still early, and she went to the Qingjing Temple on the way.

When she saw Master Xuanqing, he was sitting alone drinking tea, and Gu Ling was not there.

“Master, has the Marquis Gu already left?” Su Liang asked.

Master Xuanqing laughed heartily and said, “Benefactor Gu has gone for a stroll in the Pagoda Forest. Would Benefactor Su like to play a few rounds of chess with this old monk?”

Quickly waving her hand Su Liang responded, “I’m not skilled at chess, I won’t make a fool of myself.”

Yet Master Xuanqing insisted on inviting her again, seemingly believing Su Liang was being modest.

Hence, Su Liang ended up playing a round of chess with Master Xuanqing, and it ended quickly.

“Does Benefactor Su find playing chess boring?” asked Master Xuanqing.

Su Liang nodded, “In real life, one cannot avoid scheming and jostling for power. I don’t have any interest in also fighting these battles on the chessboard.”

Master Xuanqing responded with a slight smile, “Benefactor Su, you are indeed a thoughtful person.”

Noticing this old monk had a good impression of her, Su Liang didn’t hurry to leave and began chatting about Master Pu Hui in the Huguo Temple of Qian Country, and the little monk Cheng Yun she knew.

When Gu Ling returned from the Pagoda Forest, he saw Master Xuanqing giving Su Liang the strand of Buddha beads he was wearing on his hand.

You should know that Gu Ling played chess with this old monk for several days and Master Xuanqing didn’t give him anything.

After returning to the mansion of King Yue, Su Liang chased Gu Ling to Ningxiang Residence again.

“Why did Master Xuanqing give you the Buddha beads?” Gu Ling asked.

“Because he likes me.” Su Liang said, as she removed them from her hand and studied the tiny beads inscribed with scriptures; she quite liked them.

Gu Ling glanced at Su Liang and asked, “Can we leave now?”

Su Liang shook her head, “Emperor Liang isn’t letting me leave, he wants me to cure him first.”

The plan sure to leave the city after she entered the palace, had been discussed with Gu Ling. They were certain that all Situ Xie had, was half a piece of waste paper and there was no need to snatch it. There was no point in staying in Liang Country anymore, so they decided to leave. Even though it was too late to return to the capital city of Qian Country to celebrate the New Year, Gu Ling was tired of his life in Yao City. Once they left Yao City, they could live more freely.

However, Situ Han did not agree, and Su Liang could not leave her patient halfway through his treatment.

“Situ Han said he wanted to give me a big gift and kept it a secret. I wonder what it could be.” Su Liang said, “It should be within a day or two. I’ll ask to leave after I get the gift.”

Gu Ling wanted Master Xuanqing’s Buddha Beads. Su Liang readily agreed to give them to him, “Wear them, but don’t let others see them. After all, you refused to accept my proposal, so how can you accept my gift? You agreed to eat late-night snacks only after I pretended that Nian Jincheng asked me to take care of you.”

With that said, Su Liang waved her hand and returned to Han Xiangyuan.

Situ Xie had been unable to grasp any of the events that occurred since the appearance of that weaponized fan.

“Prince, why don’t I go see Su Liang? Let’s see how she reacts. Maybe only when I show up will the master come out.” Mu Yu proposed this again. He clearly understood that without the other half of the secret scroll, the scroll in Situ

Xie’s hand was worthless and his alleged identity as the descendant of the Mu Family also had no value.

After a long silence, Situ Xie coldly said, “Very well. I will arrange an identity for you, to meet Su Liang and help her fix her fan. Your name will be Zhao Yu.” The surname was a common one.

“Yes.” Mu Yu respectfully responded.

The next day, Su Liang went shopping with Situ Yao, and they visited the Treasure Pavilion in Yao City.

Su Liang took a fancy to a delicate mask; it was light in her hand and she stated she would buy it for Gu Ling.

She also liked a beautiful antique fan pendant and decided to gift that to him as well.

When Su Liang and Situ Yao left the Treasure Pavilion, Ren Dong and Situ Yao’s maid were carrying so many gift boxes they could hardly manage.

A piece of news quickly spread through Yao City: the Divine Doctor Su spent lavishly just to see a smile on the beauty, Gu Ling.

After returning to King Yue's mansion, Su Liang sent a bunch of rare and antique treasures she'd bought to Ning Xiangyuan, placing them all in his room while Gu Ling was absent.

When Situ Yao mentioned this to Situ Xie, Situ Xie began to suspect that Su Liang's pursuit of Gu Ling was not a pretense. After all, he only knew that these two had known each other for a long time and had lived together, but given Gu Ling's temperament, he might indeed regard Su Liang just as a friend.

In the evening, Situ Xie took Mu Yu, who was dressed simply, to Han Xiangyuan.

"This is the craftsman I found, surnamed Zhao, who might be able to help Divine Doctor Su restore that fan," Situ Xie said with a smile.

"That's excellent!" Su Liang's eyes fell on Mu Yu; his appearance and demeanor were very similar to what Old Mu had described. There was no doubt that this was the errant son Old Mu had mentioned, and he was indeed with Situ Xie.

Actually, Su Liang was a little surprised that Situ Xie would bring Mu Yu to see her. All she could say was that things were going more smoothly than she had anticipated.

Su Liang produced the dismantled fan, "Master Zhao, see if you can repair or replicate it."

Mu Yu held it in his hand and examined it closely, then nodded, "The mechanism is not complicated, but it's very intricate. I'll do my best." "So, do you have confidence, Master Zhao?" Su Liang asked.

Mu Yu nodded again, "I'm seventy percent sure I can make a similar one."

"That's excellent," Su Liang smiled, "If you really can make it, I will certainly reward you handsomely."

Situ Xie said cheerfully, "Divine Doctor Su, you don't need to be so formal. He has agreed to work in King Yue's mansion, so he is not an outsider."

When Mu Yu proposed to take the fan away, Su Liang readily agreed, being so agreeable that Situ Xie suspected something was up.

At nightfall, Ren Dong informed Su Liang that Mu Yu was staying in a guesthouse in King Yue's Mansion.

When Su Liang went to deliver late-night snacks to Gu Ling and mentioned it, Gu Ling said to do nothing for now. How to deal with Mu Yu was Old Mu's business.

When Su Liang left, she took with her the heap of gifts she had given to Gu Ling. Though, in fact, Gu Ling had already accepted them; they were simply being stored at her place for the time being.

The next day, as Su Liang was preparing to go to the palace to give Situ Han an acupuncture treatment, someone from Liang Country's Imperial Palace arrived.

Then, Su Liang finally found out what the "surprise" Situ Han had for her was...

“The emperor issued a decree during this morning’s early court, designating Gu Ling, the son of Princess Ning Yu, as Prince Ning, adopting Divine Doctor Su as his adopted daughter, conferred the title Princess Yu Heng, and granted a matrimonial decree for them.

Su Liang was a bit taken aback, never expecting that Situ Han would grant a matrimonial decree to her and Gu Ling. Was this his gift to them?

On the other hand, although she and Gu Ling were both nominally from Qian Country, Gu Ling’s mother was Situ Han’s cousin. If he made Gu Ling a prince and didn’t force him to stay in Liang Country, it would be acceptable in name.

And outsiders didn’t know what illness Situ Han had. Maybe they all thought that Su Liang was his lifesaver. So, on the pretext of repaying a kindness, Situ Han adopting Su Liang as his adopted daughter and conferring her as princess would be acceptable.

Although Duanmu Yi would certainly be furious, he couldn’t do much about it publicly.

“Divine Doctor Su? Divine Doctor Su?” Situ Jing called out twice before Su Liang came back to her senses.

“What?” Su Liang was a bit confused.

“The imperial matrimonial decree... Will you accept it?” Situ Jing asked.

Su Liang’s expression became serious, “Of course I will accept it! Give it to me quickly!”

Chapter 282: 282. Actually, he really likes me.

Su Liang returned to Han Xiangyuan, carrying the Imperial Matrimonial Decree with her. Upon entering, Ren Dong immediately asked, “Mistress, do you think Emperor Liang might have ulterior motives?”

If Su Liang and Gu Ling, as servants of Qian Country, accepted the conferment by the Emperor of Liang Country, that would make them citizens of Liang Country in some sense.

Gu Ling’s mother’s lineage is the Royal Family of Liang Country, but Su Liang had no original connection with Liang Country whatsoever.

Su Liang put the Imperial Decree on the table, her eyes slightly cold, “Lord Gu should refuse.”

“Then, Mistress, you should refuse this decree. If our emperor finds out, who knows what he might think?” Ren Dong was worried about the possible troubles Su Liang could face when she returned to Qian Country.

Su Liang turned to her, a smile on her face, “Everyone in the world knows I am infatuated with the beautiful Lord Gu. The only reason I accept this decree is because I want to marry him, and there’s no other meaning to it. It would seem strange if I were to refuse such a good opportunity, don’t you think?”

Ren Dong frowned, ‘Subordinate still believes Emperor Liang is up to no good.’

Su Liang was heading out, "I need to go to the palace to give him his treatment."

Only yesterday, Situ Han had instructed Situ Xie not to accompany Su Liang to the palace daily, but to look after his own grandson instead.

Today, Situ Xie did not accompany Su Liang, but she still ran into him in the palace. He had arrived beforehand.

Upon seeing him, Su Liang bowed, "Ling'er is at Qingjing Temple, I wonder if he has accepted the Imperial Decree? His majesty, the King Yue, will check."

"Please let Marquis Chang Xin know that after we are married, I will definitely treat him twice as nice." Su Liang said with a serious look on her face.

Both Situ Xie and Situ Han laughed, filling the air with a jubilant atmosphere.

However, the moment Situ Xie left, Situ Han said to Su Liang, "Uncle thinks it is extremely inappropriate for me to confer and decree marriage for you and Gu Ling. It will surely displease Emperor Qian, what do you think?"

It was a glaringly apparent fact that Situ Han and Situ Xie were not of the same heart.

Su Liang was uncertain whether Situ Han knew Situ Xie was his biological father and not his uncle. If Situ Han was unaware, it would make sense why he was wary of Situ Xie. No emperor would want their uncle to possess such vast power.

To Situ Han's question, Su Liang responded with a smile, "How could our emperor possibly be displeased with such a kindness from Emperor Liang?"

Situ Han chuckled, "Since you say so, I feel relieved. However, shouldn't you change the way you address me?"

Su Liang was momentarily taken aback, should she call Situ Han her stepfather? She just couldn't bring herself to say it...

"No matter, once you're married to Gu Ling, you can simply call me Royal Uncle." Situ Han said with a smile.

Su Liang sighed softly, "I'm not sure if Lord Gu would agree to marry me."

After Su Liane had finished treating Situ Han, she was getting ready to leave when she heard someone report that Gu Ling had arrived, carrying the Imperial Decree.

Situ Han told Su Liang to return first, as he wanted to have a serious talk with Gu Ling.

Su Liang locked eyes with Gu Ling but could not figure out what he intended to do. The events of the day had taken them by surprise, leaving no chance for them to meet and discuss. Regardless, she didn't have to worry, because no matter the outcome, it wouldn't make much difference to her.

After she left the palace, Su Liang returned to Prince Masion. Situ Yao came over with some homemade desserts to find her.

"Grandfather said cousin had gone to the palace, I wonder if he will accept the arranged marriage." Situ Yao sighed a little, her concern for Su Liang apparent.

As it stands now, since Gu Ling is a servant of Qian Country, if he were to reject Situ Han's conferment and marriage decree, it wouldn't be considered defiance. The same goes for Su Liang. She could refuse as well. However, she has always been playing the part of a pursuer infatuated with Gu Ling, so accepting it would be reasonable.

Su Liang shook her head, "Lord Gu has no feelings for me. He should refuse. But I won't blame him. I don't want to force him either."

Situ Yao gripped Su Liang's hand, her expression serious, "You are so good, my cousin will definitely see that. I think you two are a match made in heaven."

"What about you? Do you like our crown prince?" Su Liang asked Situ Yao about her feelings with a slight smile.

Situ Yao was taken aback, then said, "I've heard a lot about him and think he's quite good. He has good character, talent and ability. Importantly, he's good friends with you, which gives me peace of mind."

A voice came from outside the door, "Mistress, Lord Gu is back."

Su Liang quickly got up and walked a few steps towards the door, then sat back down, "What should I say when I see him?"

Situ Yao suggested that she could ask Su Liang on her behalf.

"Forget it, it's better if I go myself, after all, this concerns both of us." Su Liang took a deep breath and headed out.

Entering the Ningxiang Residence, Gu Ming came out of Gu Ling's room. Upon seeing Su Liang, he bowed and smiled, "Congratulations, Divine Doctor Su."

Su Liang paused, "He agreed?" Without delay, she rushed into Gu Ling's room.

When Gu Ming looked back, the door was already closed. He quickly left to report to Situ Xie.

The moment she closed the door, the smile disappeared from Su Liang's face. She frowned, walked over, and sat opposite Gu Ling, "What's going on? Why did you agree to the Imperial Matrimonial Decree? How do we handle the aftermath?"

Although Su Liang thought any outcome would be acceptable, she believed that Gu Ling would certainly refuse.

Gu Ling looked at Su Liang, his expression calm, "There's nothing wrong with marriage."

Su Liang nodded, "That's what they say, and we have acted as a couple before. However, not many people knew about it and in name, it was me who was involved with Ning Jing. If we were to marry now, the whole world would know. You used to reject me and suddenly agreed, which needs a convincing explanation. Otherwise, how can we justify it to Duanmu Yi? Is it because you suddenly realized you loved me the moment you received the Imperial Matrimonial Decree? That sounds absurd."

Gu Ling looked away, "I asked Situ Han for something."

Su Liang was stunned, "What? You used the marriage as a bargaining chip to ask Situ Han for benefits? What treasure is it?"

"The thousand-year-old Snow Lotus," Gu Ling said.

"Situ Han has that? What do you want it for? To maintain eternal youth?" Su Liang felt bewildered.

"It was not planned," Gu Ling explained, "He has it, but only agreed to give me two petals of the Snow Lotus."

Su Liang nodded, "Such a precious thing, of course, he wouldn't give you the whole thing. Why do you think Situ Han is insisting on our marriage?"

"To drive a wedge between us and Duanmu Yi." Gu Ling said.

Su Liang contemplated. Although she was just an imperial physician and always thought her status in Qian Country was insignificant, Situ Xie and Situ Han didn't seem to agree.

Su Liang could guess what they were thinking. After all, she had previously served as a general and could be assigned to lead troops at any time if needed. Marquis Zhong Xin Xing Ji was quite close to her, not to mention Duke Qin's Mansion, Lin Mansion, and Crown Prince Duanmu Chen, whom Situ Yao referred to as "Su Liang's good friend".

Besides, Su Liang was not only the head of the Ning Family, one of the four major businesses in Qian Country, but she also had extremely close relationships with the Wan Family and the Yang Family. Therefore, she controlled considerable wealth.

If Su Liang and Gu Ling accepted both Situ Han's tribute and the marriage decree in Liang Country, regardless of how reasonable the reasons might be, it would be an act of humiliation, or even betrayal, as far as Duanmu Yi was concerned.

That was why Su Liang accepted it, assuming that Gu Ling would refuse, and then everything would work out perfectly.

"But why did you agree to it just for the sake of two snow lotus petals? Is someone's life hanging on this?" Su Liang looked puzzled.

"When Gao Jiabao was poisoned, I went to find someone for the antidote." Gu Ling suddenly brought up this matter. Su Liang certainly remembered this, "What was the woman's name?"

Gu Ling's expression was calm, "Ying Ying."

Ying Ying, a master of poison techniques, admired Gu Ling and offered him the urgently needed antidote on the condition that Gu Ling stayed with her. However, Gu Ling refused. The condition was then changed: If Gu Ling got married, Ying Ying would emerge and compete in poison techniques with his wife. If she won, Gu Ling would leave with her.

“Yes, if we are going to get married this time, I might be poisoned to death.” Su Liang touched her forehead, “Without anyone to guide me, in poison techniques, I am bound to lose.”

“She needs the snow lotus.” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang’s eyes brightened, “You mean, when she shows herself, you can give her the snow lotus, and then your bet with her will be abolished?”

Gu Ling nodded.

Su Liang clapped her hands, “So this is what it’s about! Only this way she will come looking for you, and resolve her issue, so there will be no future worry!”

“Do you hope that I will break off the engagement then?” Gu Ling asked Su Liang.

Su Liang thought for a moment, “Let’s see how it goes. I guess Duanmu Yi may send people to stop us once he finds out. But no matter what, we will have an explanation when we return to Qian Country. In this way, not only can we repay Ying Ying’s favor but also avoid future entanglements. Are you sure she will give you up for Snow Lotus?”

Gu Ling nodded, “Her only younger brother is ill and needs the Snow Lotus for prescription.”

“How do you know that Situ Han has the millennium Snow Lotus?” Su Liang asked.

“I’m not certain, it’s just a guess. If it exists in this world, it should be in Liang Country.” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang nodded, “If it’s in Liang Country, it would naturally belong to the Liang royal family.”

The incident today caught Gu Ling off guard, he had to improvise, planning to seize the opportunity to make a deal and resolve the predicament left behind. Under the pressure of the moment, he made a bet with Ying Ying. He couldn’t break his word, but there was room for negotiation and change. Perhaps by the time he and Su Liang were to marry, Su Liang’s poison techniques would surpass Ying Ying’s. Still, Gu Ling didn’t wish for anyone to interrupt or destroy that day.

“Great God, you’re really clever. Yes, let’s do it like that!” Su Liang found the plan workable, “Seems like we can only celebrate New Year in Liang Country. Is the wedding date set?”

“The sixth day of the Lunar New Year.” Gu Ling said.

“About the right time, by then I can cure Situ Han. If he doesn’t want to start a war with Qian Country, he won’t demand our stay in Liang Country. If old Mu shows up to take you as his disciple during this period, that would be even better.” Su Liang thought everything was going well so far.

During the incident with Gao Jiabao, Gu Ling was only helping her out of convenience, but it attracted a troublesome person. The sooner he could repay the debt, the better. Indeed, it was an unexpected gain.

As for getting married or not, it wasn't something Su Liang really cared about.

When Su Liang returned to Han Xiangyuan with a joyful expression, she found Situ Yao hadn't left yet.

"Divine Doctor Su, I heard that cousin agreed to marry you, is this true?" Situ Yao asked Su Liang.

Su Liang answered with a smile, "Yes, it's true, I asked him."

Situ Yao happily said, "I knew it! I knew cousin must like you!"

But Su Liang shook her head, "That's hard to say. I asked him why he was willing to marry me, but he remained silent. I suspect he doesn't really want to marry me, there might be some other purpose."

Situ Yao frowned, "Really? Don't overthink it."

Su Liang gave a slight sigh, "I hope I am overthinking it. No matter what, his willingness to get married to me should make me happy. I fell in love with him at first sight, I hope he will eventually grow to like me."

Situ Yao expressed that it was certain.

Ren Dong was watching from the side. The two women looked like they were best friends, but compared to when Su Liang was with Yang Yu or Lin Xueqing, Ren Dong felt that when Su Liang was with Situ Yao, she seemed to be wearing a mask, it was a bit fake.

The news of Gu Ling's ennoblement as the King Ning of Liang Country and Su Liang becoming Princess Yu Heng, along with their wedding being set for the sixth day of the Lunar New Year, spread rapidly throughout Yao City.

Situ Han also awarded Gu Ling a King Ning Mansion not far from Yue Wang Mansion.

On the surface, Gu Ling's status became equal to Situ Xie's overnight. However, when it came to real power, there was no room for comparison.

Situ Xie approached Gu Ling to ask why he suddenly wanted to marry Su Liang again. Gu Ling did not reveal the deal about the Snow Lotus, merely said that it was his own business and advised Situ Xie not to concern himself.

How could Situ Xie not feel the growing distrust from Situ Han? He wasn't consulted about this issue at all. The betrothal concern was his granddaughter, but it was as if he had no right to question it.

However, on the surface, Situ Xie was very pleased with the upcoming marriage between Gu Ling and Su Liang, pretending to be as if he wasn't the one who tried to stop Situ Han in the palace.

It took Mu Yu two days to repair the broken folding fan and presented it to Su Liang.

In reality, Su Liang felt it was uglier than the original one Gu Ling made, but she did not show it on her face. She lavished it with praise and asked Mu Yu to make another five fans for her to bring back as gifts for her friends.

Soon, this matter also spread in Yao City. The secret folding fan weapon made by the descendant of the Mu family was dismantled by Su Liang. A skilled craftsman in Yue Wang Mansion restored it to its original state and could replicate similar ones.

This was a rumor intentionally released by Situ Xie, hoping to draw in Mu Yu's master, and thus acquire the other half of the mechanical secret scroll. Otherwise, if the old Mu hid, there was no way to find him.

On the third day after Gu Ling's ennoblement as Ning Wang, he and Gu Ming visited Ning Wang Mansion granted by Situ Han.

Upon hearing this, Su Liang also followed with Ren Dong.

"Ren Dong, why don't you ask Gu Ming to have a drink? I'll explore around here with Marquis Ning." Su Liang instructed.

Gu Ming quickly protested that he didn't drink, but Ren Dong pulled him away saying, "We will only get in the way here."

Gu Ming furrowed his brows, but still followed.

The empty Ning Palace is roughly built. Gu Ling said the original owner was Situ Hao, Situ Han's younger brother.

Situ Hao died of illness when he was young, and the mansion was unoccupied ever since. After it was bestowed to Gu Ling, it was hurriedly repaired.

In this season, other than the pines and firs, the rest of the trees are bare.

Gu Ling and Su Liang walked in the garden of Ning Palace. Their surroundings were in clear view, there was no need to worry about others eavesdropping on their conversations.

"Situ Xie spread the news around. I wonder if Old Mu will search for his ill-disciplined disciple." Su Liang was still concerned about Gu Ling's apprenticeship.

"Perhaps he won't." Gu Ling walked into a pavilion, took out a handkerchief to wipe the dust off a stone bench, then went to the opposite side.

Su Liang sat on the bench that Gu Ling had wiped clean. Looking at the ice lake not far away, she sighed softly. "If I were Old Mu, I would not look for Mu Yu. After all, he's the child I raised. I wouldn't bear to kill him, but the issue is with Mu Family's ancestral teachings. That thing might not necessarily be correct. Mu Yu is determined to pursue wealth and power. He won't turn back unless he hits a dead end. It's better to let go and stop caring. Sooner or later, he will pay the price for his choices."

Just as Su Liang finished speaking, a cold hum came from behind her. She turned her head to see Old Mu standing not too far away.

"You girl, don't tell me you have a mind-reading heart, how did you guess what I was thinking?" Old Mu came over, took a seat on the untouched stone bench between Su Liang and Gu Ling. Judging from his reaction, he had overheard Su Liang's words.

In fact, Gu Ling had noticed Old Mu when Su Liang was just starting her speech, but he didn't interrupt her.

Seeing Old Mu made Su Liang very happy. "I thought you wouldn't come to see us again."

Old Mu scoffed, "Stop pretending, you must have known I'd come!"

Su Liang smiled, "Well, yes. Because I hope for it. You're getting on in years, Old Mu. It would be sad to hide away in the mountains all alone for the rest of your life. Why not live happily with us?"

Old Mu countered, "What is a good life?"

Su Liang pondered, "Eating well, sleeping tight, that's a good life."

Old Mu didn't expect Su Liang to answer so simply, but on second thought, it did make sense. A peaceful night of sleep was a luxury that many couldn't afford. Old Mu himself had been suffering from insomnia for many years and even became an alcoholic at one point.

"You're right, girl. Mu Yu is grown now, and I don't feel like I owe him anything. From here on out, we have no ties, good or bad. He chose this path himself." Old Mu let out a deep sigh, "I'm old enough now, it's time for me to live for myself. Young man, aren't you going to call me master?"

With a calm expression, Gu Ling said, "Master." There was no kneeling or bowing, it was completely emotionless.

However, Old Mu, who had abandoned the ancestral teachings that he had

adhered to for a lifetime, didn't mind these details- Upon hearing this, he nodded, thereby accepting Gu Ling as his disciple. Then, he addressed Su Liang, "I like your character and his talent. It's a shame your talent isn't great, and his attitude can kill a person!"

A smile tugged at the corners of Su Liang's mouth, "Then why don't you take me as a disciple as well, Old Mu? He can learn your ancient techniques while I'll become your obedient disciple, how does that sound?"

Old Mu blinked, "Can it be done this way?" Then, he burst into laughter, "Ha ha ha ha! Great! I can't ask for more!"

After Old Mu calmed down from the excitement of accepting two disciples, he looked at Su Liang and said, "I will hand over the complete secret scroll to you in due course. Judging by your character, I trust you guys would handle it properly."

"You can rest assured, Old Mu, we will handle it carefully." Su Liang replied seriously.

"Aren't you going to call me master?" Old Mu glared at Su Liang.

With a slight smile, Su Liang replied, "It's not fun if we all call you master." Old Mu huffed, "I knew you weren't some docile girl!"

"Sigh, the King of Yue is anxiously waiting for your appearance, Old Mu." Su Liang pretended to sigh.

Old Mu scoffed, "Let him wait!" Then he turned to Gu Ling, "I thought you didn't like this girl, how come you suddenly want to get married?" Gu Ling remained passive, "One cannot go against imperial command." "Bullshit!" Old Mu turned to Su Liang, "You tell me! What's the truth?"

Still grinning, Su Liang said, "He's just pretending, he actually likes me a lot." She turned to Gu Ling and asked, "Isn't that right?"

Gu Ling nodded, "Yes."

Su Liang saw her reflection in Gu Ling's calm ink-black eyes. Noticing his serious demeanor, her heart skipped a beat. She quickly looked away and coughed lightly, "No kidding now.. Old Mu, you've lived through many years, do you know any Poison Master?"

Chapter 283: 283. Desired return gift

"A Poison Master? What do you want with that?" Old man Mu furrowed his brows.

Su Liang sighed, "As you know, I'm a doctor, and my medical skills are pretty decent, but I don't know anything about poison. I had an enemy who wanted to harm me and had poisoned food, but I accidentally gave it to a friend..." Old man Mu widened his eyes, "Your friend was poisoned and died?"

Su Liang shook her head, "Almost. I sought help for an antidote, but now I owe a huge favor that's hard to repay. It's better to rely on oneself. I want to learn, but I can't find a master."

Upon hearing this, Old man Mu scratched his withered beard and said uncertainly, "I think I know someone."

"What do you mean you 'think' you know someone?" Su Liang was puzzled.

Old man Mu explained that he was once a heavy drinker, living a dreamy life for several years, waking up every day not knowing where he was. During that time, he made a friend, or more accurately, a drinking buddy. The two first met when they fought over the last jug of alcohol in a small shop, and since then, they became friends and drank together whenever they met, chatting away.

"One time, we talked about each other's abilities. I was not that drunk, so I just said I was a carpenter. He drunkenly said he was the Poison King and that the poison he made was unrivaled in the world. At first, I thought he was boasting, but during our last encounter, he revealed a golden snakehead from his sleeve, which sobered me up immediately. Afterward, I suffered a severe illness and barely pulled through. I decided to quit drinking and never saw him again."

Upon hearing this, Su Liang immediately thought this person must be a master. She hurriedly asked, "What's his name, and where did you meet him?"

Old man Mu shook his head, "I don't know his name. He just called himself Mr. Bai. I called him Old Bai, and he called me Old Jin."

Su Liang facepalmed. Old man Mu's surname was fake, and Old Bai might be fake too.

“It was in Qian Country.” Old man Mu said, “If you really want to learn poison techniques, I’ll go find Old Bai for you! Maybe he’s still drinking somewhere.” Su Liang smiled slightly, “Wouldn’t that be too much trouble for Master?”

Finally hearing Su Liang call him Master, and seeing her obedient face, Old man Mu’s heart softened, but he still glared at her, “I don’t want you to get poisoned and die someday. Without you, I would definitely be annoyed to death by that youngster!”

“When does Master plan to leave?” Su Liang maintained her smile.

Old man Mu said grumpily, “Today! I don’t want to stay in this lousy place either!”

Su Liang could see that old man Mu was feeling conflicted, yet it wasn’t about them, but rather about Mu Yu. Although they had decided not to interfere with the apprentice, they could predict that once Mu Yu joined Situ Xie’s side, and when he couldn’t give Situ Xie what he wanted, his fate would be sealed.

After all, old man Mu did raise him, and he was somewhat reluctant to part with his disciple. However, as Su Liang said, even if old man Mu forcibly took Mu Yu away now, Mu Yu wouldn’t understand him, nor could he watch over Mu Yu for the rest of his life. Their master-disciple bond had come to an end, and it was time to let go.

“We should meet again in Qian Country next time. I’ll cook something delicious for Master then,” Su Liang smiled and asked.

“You? Can cook?” Old man Mu looked doubtful.

“If you don’t believe me, ask him.” Su Liang pointed at Gu Ling.

Gu Ling nodded slightly, “It’s decent.”

Su Liang rolled her eyes at Gu Ling, and old man Mu chuckled, “I’ll just follow you from now on! I’ll find Old Bai and ask him to take you as his disciple. Consider that as your welcome gift!”

“Master is so kind.” Su Liang was in a joyful mood. This was indeed an unexpected gain. She hadn’t asked the specific location for someone to go and search, thinking that if he were truly a master, only old man Mu would be able to find him and have a conversation.

“What about mine?” Gu Ling asked.

Old man Mu stood up and slapped Gu Ling on the back of his head, “What about you? There’s no welcome gift for you! Take good care of your junior sister! Or else I’ll expel you from the sect!” With that, he disappeared.

Su Liang looked at Gu Ling’s deflated expression with glee, “Great God, so you have your bad days too.”

Gu Ling smoothed his hair and said calmly, “Are you very happy?”

Su Liang nodded, "It's fine. I'll cook 'decent' late-night snacks for you every day. It's a pity to bother you like this. From today on, there won't be any more snacks! Besides, we're already engaged. I don't need to please you anymore."

Gu Ling shook his head, "That won't do. When I said that, it was for your sake. Old man Mu is obviously a glutton, and he'll want you to cook three meals a day personally. You'll be tired."

Su Liang smiled slightly, "Thank you, Great God, for your consideration. Then I won't cook starting today."

Gu Ling was silent for a while, then nodded gently, "Alright. Although I have been looking forward to the late-night snacks every day, I won't die of hunger if I don't eat."

Su Liang looked at him speechless, "Great God, are you trying to act pitiful?" "It's because of you that I have become picky about food." Gu Ling said quite justifiably.

Su Liang looked helpless, "Alright, alright. It was agreed from the beginning that you'd protect me with your strength, and I'd cook for you. It seems that the only way to turn the tables is to beat you someday."

Lately, Situ Xie had been in a bad mood, as things didn't seem to be going well for him.

He sent people across Yao City to publicly praise the skills of "Zhao Yu," the craftsman from the King Yue's Mansion, but after several days, Mu Yu's master still hadn't shown up.

He had initially suspected that Su Liang was responsible for the hidden weapon fan, but her various actions did not match this speculation. She didn't seem to care about hidden weapons at all and even appeared quite naive at times.

Situ Xie did not believe that Su Liang was a simple girl, but since she came to

Yao City, aside from demanding that Situ Min be punished for nearly killing Lian Shun, at other times, she really seemed like she was just here to treat Situ Han's illness and chased after men in her spare time.

Situ Xie's thoughts were too chaotic, so he told his most trusted grandson, Situ Jing, about the matter.

"Grandfather, perhaps the fan was not made by Mu Yu's master, nor was it a scheme set by Su Liang. Maybe someone truly wanted to sell the fan and claimed it was made by a descendant of the Mu family to fetch a high price?" Situ Jing thought that Situ Xie was overcomplicating the matter.

"What you said may be possible, but if we think of things too simply, we may fall into other people's traps." Situ Xie said coldly.

Situ Jing's expression darkened slightly, "Or maybe, someone from the royal family of Yin Country found out about the Mu family's descendants in Yao City and they intervened?"

Situ Xie's face changed, "You are right in thinking about this layer. But where did the fan come from? It's still a mystery. As long as we figure this out, many doubts will be resolved."

“Grandfather, I have an idea,” Situ Jing said thoughtfully, “If we want to know if Su Liang has come for the Mu family’s Mechanism Map, why not set a trap and see if she makes a move. All the spies in Yao City might be lured out and caught in one fell swoop!”

After pondering for a long time, Situ Xie nodded slightly.

That day, Situ Yao invited Su Liang to go to the tea house with her to listen to music, and Su Liang happily accepted the invitation.

“In a few days, I will call you sister-in-law.” Situ Yao said with a sweet smile.

However, Su Liang sighed slightly, “I hope your cousin doesn’t suddenly change his mind.”

Situ Yao hurriedly comforted her, “How could he? Although my cousin does not like to socialize, he will not go back on his word once he has promised something. Besides, this is what he promised to the Emperor, and the Imperial Decree for the marriage is not a joke.”

Upon hearing this, Su Liang nodded, “I know, I should trust Gu Ling’s character. But I am still worried. When our Emperor finds out that he and I are getting married in Liang Country, he might send someone over to stop us.”

Situ Yao was stunned, “Why? Does Emperor Qian not want you two to be together?”

Su Liang shook her head, “That’s not it. It’s just that since we are both from Qian Country and on official business in Liang Country, things like the conferring of titles and granting marriages should be reported to our Emperor. However, with such haste, I am afraid that our Emperor will become suspicious of us.”

Situ Yao furrowed her brows, “Will he? When I go back, I’ll ask my grandfather whether we should send someone to Qian County to explain. After all, our Emperor’s intentions are good. Besides, once you two get married, as long as our Emperor’s health is not an issue, you can return to your country at any time.”

Su Liang’s expression was full of gratitude, “That’s great. Hearing you say this, I feel much more at ease.”

Situ Yao laughed, then lowered her head to pour tea.

The window was open, and across from the tea house was the Treasure Pavilion. After an old man with white hair entered, all the guests left, and the Treasure Pavilion closed its doors in broad daylight.

“Go and see what happened?” Situ Yao instructed her maid.

Su Liang also told Ren Dong to go and check on the situation.

Soon, the Treasure Pavilion opened its doors again. The old man with white hair did not come out, but an astonishing piece of news spread quickly.

The head of the Mu Family’s current generation had gone to the Treasure

Pavilion and said that he would like to auction off a valuable item from the Mu Family in the Treasure Pavilion in three days. The highest bidder would get the item.

Soon, news about the Mu family having a Mechanism Map also spread throughout Yao City.

Learning about this, Situ Yao laughed, "Then the hidden weapon fan that

Divine Doctor Su obtained earlier must be a genuine item of the Mu family."

A faint smile appeared on Su Liang's lips, "Auction? I like it. No matter what kind of treasure, I will take it."

Situ Yao nodded, "What Divine Doctor Su doesn't lack is money. When you buy the treasure, you must let me have a look."

"No problem." Su Liang readily agreed.

At night, in Situ Xie's study.

"Grandfather, why not let the person posing as the head of the Mu family stay openly at the inn and see who goes to him?" Situ Jing asked.

Situ Xie shook his head, "If so, I should invite him to stay at our mansion. Anyone could go to him."

Situ Jing paused for a moment, "Grandfather is right. But in that case, what will be sold at the auction in three days? Given Su Liang's financial resources, if she openly bids for the auctioned items, it wouldn't prove anything."

Situ Xie was holding half of the Mechanism Map in his hand, his eyes deep, "We'll sell this."

Situ Jing's expression changed, "We cannot let Qian Country and Yin Country get this! "

Situ Xie shook his head slightly, "By now, I'm afraid both Qian Country and Yin Country already know about the Mu family's descendants in Yao City and are watching me. But I still haven't got the complete Mechanism Map. Only half of it, which is useless. In that case, why not sell it openly?"

Situ Jing's eyes lit up, "Whoever buys it will get a hot potato!" It's useless, and it will bring great trouble.

With the secret scroll in hand, Situ Xie could easily make a copy for himself, sell the real one, and shift the focus. Situ Han's mistrust of him deepened, and if he knew that Situ had concealed the matter of Mu Family descendants, he would doubt him even more. The upcoming auction, if successful, could help Situ Xie sever ties with the Mu Family.

It was already the 25th of December.

On this day, after giving Situ Han an acupuncture treatment, Su Liang left the palace and it began to snow halfway through her journey.

Ren Dong drove the carriage, taking them directly to the Treasure Pavilion, where the auction would take place today.

For the past three days, the Treasure Pavilion had been selling expensive entrance tickets, beyond the reach of ordinary people.

Su Liang had Ren Dong book one of the most expensive private rooms.

Even though it was snowing, there were still many common people gathered outside the Treasure Pavilion, unable to go in but still wanting to watch the excitement.

As Su Liang entered with Ren Dong, she saw that many of the Liang Country's most distinguished nobles were present. She had previously attended banquets with most of them, including several princes.

Everyone from King Yue's mansion was there, except for Situ Min, who was under house arrest.

On the top floor of the Treasure Pavilion, the three best private rooms held Prince Situ Chao and his younger brothers, Situ Xie with his children and grandchildren, and the one purchased by Su Liang.

Upon her arrival, Su Liang noticed Gu Ling was not there yet.

She went to greet Situ Xie and asked about Gu Ling.

Situ Xie replied with a smile, "Ling'er said he would come today, he might still be on his way."

"Ren Dong, you go pick up Marquis Gu." Su Liang instructed.

Ren Dong left upon the order, and Su Liang looked down at the hall, "What if that person doesn't show up today?"

Situ Xie smiled, "Let's wait a little longer. I just don't know what treasures we might see today?"

"I hope it's something even more powerful than that fan from the last time." Su Liang said, returning to her private room.

After a short wait, Ren Dong appeared with Gu Ling, entering the Treasure Pavilion together.

Su Liang looked on as everyone's eyes immediately focused on Gu Ling. The moment he removed his cloak and hood, he seemed like a beautiful Snow Lotus born from a snow-covered mountain, stunningly beautiful.

Gu Ling's dark eyes lifted slightly, meeting Su Liang's gaze.

Su Liang smiled and waved at him, calling out sweetly, "Brother Ling."

Situ Xie almost spit out the tea in his mouth, feeling something strange about it. Was Su Liang really the type to turn sweet and silly when in love?

Gu Ling's steps slowed momentarily before looking away.

Ren Dong: ...To be honest, she was not used to her master's current appearance...

The doors and windows were open, so people outside could see Su Liang attentively helping Gu Ling remove his cloak, pouring tea for him, and offering him dessert while chatting and laughing with him. But Gu Ling spoke very little.

Overall, the impression Su Liang left on people was of someone highly skilled, open, and straightforward, with great courage in love and hate. Gu Ling, on the other hand, appeared somewhat aloof and unapproachable.

After Gu Ling's arrival, no other guests came in. After waiting for another two quarters of an hour, many people grew impatient, thinking they had been deceived. Then, the door of the Treasure

Pavilion opened once again, and a man wearing a bamboo hat entered, bringing in a gust of wind and snow. The manager of the Treasure Pavilion greeted him, taking a cloth wrapped package from the man, who then turned and left.

People quickly began watching the man who had left, following him as he disappeared into the snowstorm.

The manager announced that he was the disciple of the Mu Family's master, and brought the auction item for today – half of the legendary Mu Family's Mechanism Map!

The audience was in an uproar. Of course, everyone present knew what a treasure the Mechanism Map was.

With a determined look on his face, Crown Prince Situ Chao said, "Let's get started now!"

Su Liang smiled, "Brother Ling, I'm afraid I can't compete with the Crown Prince of Liang Country and King Yue. What should I do? I want to buy it for you."

Gu Ling's exquisite eyebrows furrowed slightly, speaking softly, "Just speak properly." The lovely Su Liang today made Gu Ling want to hide her away, not because of the pet name, but he didn't want others to see her smile.

Su Liang looked serious, and hearing the bidding begin outside, she instructed

Ren Dong, "Raise the bid. Double it, no matter the amount."

Although it was an auction with many spectators, once they knew what the item was, and that the first bid came from Crown Prince Situ Chao's room, only Su Liang's subordinate Ren Dong joined in the bidding.

Regardless of how much Situ Chao bid, Su Liang would double it on his side, showing he had deep pockets and wasn't worried about the consequences.

Situ Jing felt that things might deviate from their grandfather-grandson plan, so he whispered to Situ Xie, "What if the crown prince insists on buying the secret scroll no matter the consequences..."

Situ Xie shook his head slightly, indicating that Situ Jing need not worry. "At the right time, tell the crown prince that the half secret scroll is useless."

Situ Jing nodded, listening as the price quickly reached an astonishing number. He thought that they could wait a bit longer, as Su Liang seemed so generous that he wouldn't give up no matter how high the price was. The King Yue

Mansion could take this opportunity to make a big profit – a brilliant plan.

After Ren Dong shouted an astronomical sum, Situ Xie gave Situ Jing a signal.

Situ Jing understood and got up to find Situ Chao next door.

At the same time, Situ Chao's subordinate had already followed his instructions and added another 10,000 taels on top of the price called out by Ren Dong.

Gu Ling put down her teacup, and Su Liang stopped Ren Dong from bidding again before she could. "The tea has gone cold; go get a fresh pot."

Gu Ling had excellent hearing and heard movement in the next room. She sensed that Situ Chao was about to stop and gestured for Su Liang to stop as well.

Ren Dong was puzzled. "Aren't we going to bid anymore?"

Su Liang smiled. "No matter how rich I am, how can I compete with the prince of a country? I can't empty my fortune just for a broken book. Let's stop here."

Ren Dong found it odd since she knew Duanmu Yi's real intention for sending Su Liang. However, seeing Su Liang give up the secret scroll, Ren Dong knew Su Liang must have another plan and left with the teapot.

The Treasure Pavilion suddenly grew quiet.

After Situ Jing whispered a few words into Situ Chao's ear, Situ Chao frowned but nodded, "I understand." He then called back his bidding subordinate and ordered, "Forget it."

The subordinate's face turned ugly. "Your Highness, after I raised the bid, there was no sound from the other side."

Situ Chao and Situ Jing had been whispering and didn't notice, only realizing now that something was wrong.

Situ Xie picked up his teacup, concealing his cold smile.

The manager of the Treasure Pavilion, seeing that Su Liang's side didn't bid again, confirmed it three times before slamming the hammer down. The half secret scroll belonged to Crown Prince Situ Chao, at a terrifying price.

When the so-called secret scroll was handed over to Situ Chao, he found that every page was incomplete. Without the other half, what he had bought was just a pile of waste paper. Furious, he ordered that the seller, a descendant of the Mu Family, be found at any cost to obtain the other half. As for the money he decided not to pay.

"What a pity." While passing Situ Xie's private room, Su Liang said to Gu Ling, "I wanted to buy it and see the amazing mechanism map. Unfortunately, we're in Liang Country, and I can't possibly compete with Crown Prince Situ."

Situ Xie glanced over, his eyes full of coldness. It seemed as if Su Liang knew everything, stopping the bidding at just the right time to trick Situ Chao!

At this grand auction, Situ Xie's goal had fallen short, and soon everyone would know that the mechanism's secret scroll had been obtained by the Royal Family of Liang Country. No one would believe it was useless! They had picked up a stone to smash their own feet!

Outside the Treasure Pavilion, Gu Ling suggested they take a walk, and Su

Liang immediately ordered Ren Dong to return while she accompanied Gu Ling on her stroll.

"Do you think Qian Liang countries alliance would accept sharing the secret scroll for the sake of our alliance?" Su Liang asked with a light laugh.

Gu Ling shook her head, "No."

“No matter,” Su Liang said calmly, “Someone wanted to trick me, but I threw the hot potato into his grandson’s hands. I bet He’s thrilled.”

The two of them walked for a while before stopping to rest at a tea house.

Gu Ling took out a hairpin and handed it to Su Liang.

“Why are you giving me a hairpin again?” Su Liang asked, taking the simple wooden hairpin.

“For your sixteenth birthday,” Gu Ling replied.

Su Liang paused, “Last year, we celebrated my birthday on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, but this year the Great God changed the date.”

Gu Ling shook his head, “I wasn’t ready before.”

“Alright, thank you. I like it.” Su Liang nodded, “But I think you could have made this simple hairpin in half an hour, right? I guess you just forgot my birthday, though it doesn’t really matter.”

How could I forget? I’ve been counting the days.. Gu Ling didn’t voice his thoughts, but instead told Su Liang that the hairpin was a hidden weapon.

Su Liang’s eyes lit up, and after Gu Ling explained how it worked, she couldn’t put it down. “Great God, you truly are a genius!” Not only could it launch hidden weapons, but it could also conceal poison, medicine or rolled-up notes for communication. It was more ingenious and practical than the folding fan.

“Great God, what do you want in return as a gift?” Su Liang asked.

After a moment of silence, Gu Ling spoke, “Didn’t you complain that I never laugh? Try to make me laugh.”

Su Liang blinked, “Although the task is tough, I will not give up! Great God, be prepared!”

Chapter 284: I feel dizzy.

On the day of the auction, the news that Crown Prince Situ Chao had bought half of the secret scroll from the Divine Craftsman of the Mu Family spread rapidly.

Situ Chao wanted to capture the person who provided the secret scroll, but that person did not return to the Treasure Pavilion to collect the money, making people suspect that the intention of the Mu Family was to use the auction to reveal the secret scroll, not for money.

In fact, the entire auction was designed by Situ Xie, so naturally, he wouldn’t let his people be captured by Situ Chao, or it would be impossible to end the matter.

Situ Xie quickly released news that the secret scroll was fake, and all the drawings were incomplete and useless.

However, some people believed it, but most did not.

That night, there were two waves of assassins who infiltrated the Crown Prince Mansion in Yao City. Situ Chao suffered only minor injuries, and one of the captured assassins bit his tongue and committed suicide without revealing anything.

The next day, when Su Liang went to the palace to give Situ Han acupuncture, she mentioned the secret scroll.

“Your Majesty Emperor Liang, Qian Country and Liang Country have become allies. I wonder if Your Majesty could allow me to copy a portion of the secret scroll and bring it back to my emperor? I’m sure my emperor will see Emperor Liang’s sincerity.” Su Liang smiled.

Upon hearing this, Situ Han frowned slightly, “That thing is fake! I’m afraid it was deliberately done by the person who really got the secret scroll to divert attention!”

“Since it’s fake, I suppose your Majesty Emperor Liang wouldn’t mind letting me take a copy back to show my emperor?” Su Liang asked seriously.

However, Situ Han shook his head and sighed, “We’ve seen your loyalty to Emperor Qian. But this matter is not so simple. The fake scroll reached the hands of the crown prince yesterday, and someone tried to assassinate and snatch it. There will be more trouble in the future. If I let you copy it, and the news gets out, you’ll have no peace in your life, too dangerous. The person who sold the fake scroll had everything planned and was vicious! I’m doing this for your own good! ”

Upon hearing this, Su Liang was slightly stunned, “Thank you, your Majesty Emperor Liang, it’s my lack of consideration.”

Situ Han’s eyes relaxed, “You don’t have to worry about Emperor Qian blaming you. You came here to treat me, it’s not your responsibility to handle other matters; there’s no need to shoulder it yourself.”

Su Liang nodded with a smile, “What your Majesty says is absolutely right.”

She knew that the secret scroll given to the Treasure Pavilion by Situ Xie was real, as it could be seen from the paper whether it was an antique or not.

Obviously, Situ Han believed it was real. Even if it was only half and couldn’t be used for the time being, he wouldn’t share it with Qian Country. What if the other half appeared later? Whoever got the complete copy first would have the advantage.

Su Liang never intended to share the risk with Situ Chao and had expected such a result, but she still had to ask, and she had to put on a show so that the people of the Liang imperial family wouldn’t think that she, as a servant of Qian Country, had no interest in the secret scroll.

One day, when Su Liang returned to the Prince Mansion after leaving the palace, she saw Situ Xie preparing to go to Ning’s residence.

Situ Xie sighed heavily, “Ling’er suddenly said she wanted to move to Ning’s mansion to live. Su Divine Doctor, please help me persuade her. It’s almost the

New Year, and it’s so cold and desolate there, why bother?”

Su Liang was stunned for a moment, "He wants to move to Ning's mansion? Then I'll go too!"

Situ Xie's mouth twitched slightly, "Su Divine Doctor, please stay in the Prince Mansion, we have everything you need here. If you're not satisfied with anything, just tell me."

Su Liang laughed, "I have no complaints, everything is fine here. But if Gu Ling wants to go, I'll naturally go with him."

"But you haven't married yet, so it might not be appropriate to live together." Situ Xie said.

Su Liang shook her head, "Don't treat us as a betrothed couple. Both he and I are envoys from Qian Country, we can live in the same inn, stay together in the Prince Mansion, so why can't we stay in Ning's mansion? It's all the same."

As they talked, the two had entered Ning's residence.

Gu Ling had packed his things and was about to leave.

"Marquis Gu, I'll go with you to Ning's mansion to live." Su Liang said.

Gu Ling glanced at her, "Alright."

Situ Xie hurriedly tried to persuade them to stay, but Gu Ling was determined to go and even brought up Situ Han, "It would be very disrespectful if I don't go to the mansion that my royal uncle bestowed."

Situ Xie could only agree to let Gu Ling go but wanted to arrange a group of servants including the brother and sister of the ancient family to serve them.

"There's no need, I can take care of Marquis Gu's daily life. He particularly likes my cooking but doesn't like unfamiliar people around him." Su Liang said with a smile.

Gu Ling wouldn't take anyone from Prince Mansion, and Situ Xie knew that he and Su Liang must have discussed beforehand to get rid of his surveillance, but he couldn't force them into it. After all, they were officially people of Qian Country.

So, not long after, Ren Dong drove the carriage and Gu Ling and Su Liang moved out of King Yue's mansion to the nearby Ning Prince's Mansion. Actually, Gu Ling had already discussed this with Su Liang yesterday. Since they wanted to stay for the New Year, they wanted more freedom and didn't want to continue pretending. To live a normal life with Su Liang, the first thing to do was to get rid of the surveillance.

Other than the weather being too cold, even the evergreen pines and cypresses were dull in color; the Ning Prince's Mansion was practically the same as Su Liang and Gu Ling's home in the capital city of Qian Country, both were empty and deserted.

All the belongings in the main courtyard were complete. Su Liang and Gu Ling were staying in two separate rooms separated by a wall inside the main courtyard, and Ren Dong was arranged to live in another courtyard nearby. Ren Dong secretly pulled Su Liang aside and asked, "Master, why did Gu Ling change his attitude so much? Could he have ulterior motives?" It was hard to believe that the man who didn't want to deal with Su Liang before was now willing to live under the same roof.

Su Liang smiled, "Can't it be that I, your master, have won his heart?"

Ren Dong immediately nodded, "Of course, that is the most likely. I've spoken too much."

"Don't bother us if it's not necessary." Su Liang patted Ren Dong's shoulder.

Ren Dong quickly understood and expressed that she would try her best to reduce her presence and not disturb Su Liang and Gu Ling's romantic relationship.

News of the auction and secret scrolls were being widely discussed in the capital city, so Gu Ling moving to the Ning Prince Mansion and Su Liang following after didn't attract much attention. It was only natural for him, the Ning Prince of Liang Country, to stay in the Ning Prince Mansion, and for Su

Liang to follow him there.

As for the separation of men and women, firstly, the customs in Liang Country were relatively more open as compared to Qian Country, hence less strict. Secondly, Su Liang didn't have her own place to stay in Qian Country, and both of them were envoys of Qian Country, so there was nothing wrong with them living together.

At dusk, Situ Yao brought people and another cartload of things, including newly made clothes for Gu Ling and Su Liang, as well as many food ingredients, tea, alcohol, and desserts.

"Will you be cooking on your own from now on?" Situ Yao frowned, "Why not let me send my best cook to help?"

Smiling and shaking her head, Su Liang replied, "No need. As long as Gu Ling likes it, I'm happy to cook for him. My best friend married Gu Ling's best friend, so even if we're not engaged, we're not outsiders."

Situ Yao let out a sigh, "Alright then. If you need anything, let Ren Dong inform us at King Yue's Mansion." She smiled and said, "Now that you get to be alone with my cousin, you must be happy."

Su Liang expressed that she was very happy indeed.

After seeing Situ Yao off, Su Liang checked the time and decided it was time to prepare dinner.

Su Liang knocked on Gu Ling's door, "Great God, are you having dinner tonight?"

Gu Ling replied, "Of course."

"Then why don't you hurry up and start the fire?" Su Liang complained before heading to the kitchen.

Ren Dong wanted to help, but Su Liang gave her a silver note and told her to go out and enjoy a nice meal while listening to the outside gossip.

Ren Dong went out alone.

It had been some time since Gu Ling had last lit a fire and Su Liang cooked.

As the fire in the stove burned, Gu Ling sat on a small stool with a fire poker in his hand; the firelight reflected on his jade-like face, adding a touch of warmth and redness.

Outside, the cold wind howled. Su Liang, in her apron, cut the preserved meat while reminiscing, "It feels like we're back in Su Family's village."

Last winter, they spent their time this way.

Su Liang would occasionally complain about how tiring cooking was, but in reality, it wasn't. It was only when she didn't want to cook, primarily because she had a lot of books to read or was busy with other things and had no time.

But being busy often meant that she was under pressure to improve herself or was oppressed into doing something for her own safety. When she wasn't that busy, Su Liang actually enjoyed this kind of ordinary life, as it was when she felt the most relaxed, enjoying life in between her hard work.

Su Liang had the hairpin Gu Ling gave her as her sixteenth-birthday gift on her head. Remembering the conversation from yesterday, she told Gu Ling a cold joke.

After she finished telling the joke, she laughed, but Gu Ling seemed as if he hadn't heard.

"Great God, wasn't it funny?" Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling shook his head slightly, "It was cold."

Su Liang snorted, "You find it cold even while roasting by the fire, it must be because you have a cold constitution."

Dinner was ready: a meat dish, a vegetable dish, soup, and a pancake. Although they were home-cooked dishes, they were delicious and fragrant.

The two sat face to face in the small hall, with the dark night outside and snow-covered pine and cypress trees in the courtyard. A half-open window let in the cold wind, and a few budding plum blossoms were inserted in a vase on the windowsill, which Gu Ling had clipped from Ningxiang Residence when she left Yuewang Mansion.

"Su Liang reminisced about their days in the village – no intrigue and full of simple pleasures.

Gu Ling nodded gently, "We'll go back for the New Year next year."

Su Liang shrugged, "Who knows what will happen this time next year? It's easy to leave but hard to want to return."

Gu Ling didn't say anything more.

When they'd almost finished eating, Gu Ling collected the dishes and took them to wash, following their usual division of tasks.

After Su Liang had taken a bath, Ren Dong returned from outside, bringing a pot of alcohol for Su Liang to cook with.

Ren Dong reported various news she had heard at the restaurant, mostly about the secret scroll's mechanisms or gossiping about Su Liang and Gu Ling. The rest were trivial matters that didn't concern them.

When night had deepened, Su Liang closed the book in her hand and suddenly remembered something. She went out to knock on Gu Ling's door.

"Come in," Gu Ling's cool voice came from within.

Su Liang pushed the door open and saw that Gu Ling was drawing with a charcoal pen.

“What are you drawing?” Su Liang walked over.

Gu Ling picked up a blank sheet of paper and covered his drawing, not letting Su Liang see it.

“Stingy,” Su Liang sat down opposite him, “I was thinking, wouldn’t Situ Xie assume that our sudden insistence on leaving Yuewang Mansion at this time is to secretly snatch the secret scroll more conveniently?”

Gu Ling nodded slightly, “He might.”

“Then, if we don’t do anything, it would be abnormal, right?” Su Liang pondered.

Gu Ling nodded again, “I’ll go to the Crown Prince’s Mansion later to steal the secret scroll.”

“That’s a lot of work,” Su Liang agreed. Seeing that Gu Ling didn’t move, she urged him, “You should go now and come back early. I’ll be waiting here for the news.”

“You want to sneak a peek at my drawing,” Gu Ling saw through Su Liang’s intention.

Su Liang replied solemnly, “Why be afraid to show it? Did the Great God draw something indecent?”

“You can ask directly if you want to see it,” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang nodded, “Yes, I want to see it.”

Gu Ling shook his head slightly, “No.” Su Liang: .

“Come with me,” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang immediately nodded and stood up, “Okay, I’ll go change my clothes!”

When Su Liang had left, Gu Ling removed the paper on top, revealing an unfinished drawing of Su Liang. He drew the scene of her sweetly calling him “Brother Ling” as she peeked out from the elegant room of the Treasure

Pavilion yesterday. Gu Ling was collecting the heart-stirring moments that Su Liang had brought him; even if he didn’t draw them, he would never forget, but he enjoyed doing it this way.

Su Liang quickly changed into a dark-colored outfit, put on her mask, blew out the lamp, and went out to meet Gu Ling.

As they left Ningwang Mansion, Su Liang whispered to Gu Ling, “We won’t be caught, right?”

After all, there were assassins in the Crown Prince’s Mansion last night, and tonight there would certainly be heavier security. Plus, she suspected that the secret scroll had been moved to the palace.

“Run a little faster,” Gu Ling said.

Gu Ling had Su Liang walk in front and himself in the back; the two led the master following them on a run around in Yao City.

Su Liang understood that they were supposed to go to the Crown Prince’s Mansion but didn’t actually have to go there. They could simply play around while they couldn’t shake off the tail.

For Su Liang, it was an excellent opportunity to practice her lightness skill.

Thus, Su Liang and Gu Ling led their watchers on a run for an hour. They hadn't had time to see many places in Yao City during the day, but they visited them at night, even if they couldn't see clearly.

But the scenery of the Liang Country's imperial city in the freezing winter nights had a unique aesthetic. The quiet and tranquil atmosphere was like a city frozen in ice. The dark silhouette of the grand palace resonated with a comic Su Liang had seen in her previous life, making the trip worthwhile.

After circling the Imperial Palace three times, the two exchanged a glance and decided to go home to sleep.

Entering Ningwang Mansion's garden, the ice lake looked like an ink-colored mirror under the night sky. Su Liang walked onto the surface and suggested to

Gu Ling, "How about cutting the ice and fishing tomorrow?"

"Okay." Gu Ling's voice was very soft, as if it were blown away by the wind.

"We also have to buy New Year's goods. You can write the couplets," Su Liang said with a smile, "Oh, and you can cut the window decorations."

"Okay," Gu Ling agreed again.

Su Liang suddenly remembered that they were to be married on the sixth day of the New Year, "Actually, there aren't many days left. Situ Han should have everything ready by then, right?"

"You need to prepare one thing yourself," Gu Ling said.

Su Liang inquired what it was.

"When you marry me, you'll be so happy that you won't have time to embroider your wedding dress, but at least you can embroider your own red veil," Gu Ling said.

Su Liang paused and then nodded, "You're right. I'll put on a full play. It's been a long time since I've picked up a needle and thread, but I can do one."

As they reached the center of the ice lake, Su Liang suddenly grabbed Gu Ling's sleeve, "Great God?"

"Hmm?" Gu Ling was puzzled.

As Su Liang let go, she pinched the corners of her eyes and mouth, making a grimace, and tiptoed closer to Gu Ling's face suddenly.

The two were very close, their breaths mingling.

Gu Ling frowned slightly, "Did your brain freeze again?"

Su Liang let go of her face and returned it to its original appearance, humming,

"Isn't this funny?"

In a ghostly tone, Gu Ling said, "Don't try to amuse me the way you would a

three-year-old child.”

“This is clearly meant to amuse a four-year-old,” Su Liang blinked and fell behind a step, then suddenly reached out and launched a sneak attack on Gu Ling’s armpit.

Gu Ling didn’t expect Su Liang to launch a physical tickle attack on him. His body stiffened, and he reflexively turned to avoid her, but Su Liang, who hadn’t given up, tackled him with open arms!

Wrapped in her warmth, Gu Ling’s mind was a mess. He stepped on Su Liang’s skirt, and they both lost their balance, falling onto the ice together.

Gu Ling was on the bottom, with Su Liang lying on top of him, their bodies entangled in an ambiguous position.

“Great God, are you alright? I didn’t mean to!” Su Liang rolled to the side and hurried to help Gu Ling up.

“Something is wrong. I feel dizzy,” Gu Ling said softly.

Su Liang slapped herself on the forehead, “It’s all my fault! You might have a concussion from the fall. We can’t see clearly here; I’ll take you back to check

“How will we go back?” Gu Ling asked.

“I’ll carry you,” Su Liang said, and put her hands under Gu Ling’s shoulders and knees, slowly lifting him from the ice. She took a deep breath, “Please don’t fall again.”

Gu Ling wrapped his long arms around Su Liang’s neck, leaned his head on her shoulder, and sighed softly.

“Does it hurt a lot? We’ll be home soon!” Su Liang said as she stepped forward but didn’t dare to walk too fast because the ice was slippery.

The desolate cold wind with snow granules blew on their faces. Gu Ling sniffed Su Liang’s neck’s fragrance, and the corners of his lips curved into a gentle smile....

Chapter 285: 285. Ren Dong’s Perspective

Su Liang laid Gu Ling flat on the bed. Seeing his slightly furrowed brows, she assumed he had a severe headache and hurriedly checked the back of his head. Indeed, she felt a small bump, which was obviously the result of the fall.

“There’s no bleeding.” Su Liang held Gu Ling’s head, gently laying it on the pillow, before she took his arm to take his pulse. “I can’t tell from your pulse, but if you feel dizzy and have a headache, it might be a mild concussion.”

As she spoke, Su Liang sighed with a regretful expression, “It’s all my fault for being reckless. How are you feeling now, Great God? Are you still very dizzy?”

Gu Ling looked at Su Liang’s concerned gaze and nodded slightly, “Dizzy, and in pain.”

“How many is this?” Su Liang held up two fingers.

Gu Ling’s lips parted slightly, “One... plus one.”

Su Liang put her hand on her forehead, “That’s good. Great God, you’re still clear-headed and can even joke. I don’t think it’s serious. Rest for a while, and I’ll prepare some medicine for you.”

Just as Su Liang was about to turn away, Gu Ling tugged at her clothes, saying he was uncomfortable.

“Oh, right.” Su Liang tried to remove the cloak that was pressing Gu Ling down, tugging at one side, but it wouldn’t move. She leaned in to pull the other side from the inside.

If there was a third person present, they would think the two were doing something unspeakable...

Finally, Su Liang managed to remove the cloak. She took off Gu Ling’s shoes and socks, covered him with a quilt, and said, “You sleep for a while. I’ll call you when the medicine is ready.”

“Okay.” Gu Ling closed his eyes, waited for the sound of footsteps to fade away, then opened them again. He watched Su Liang hurry out the door and disappear from view.

She’s so worried about me... Gu Ling thought of something. Su Liang always called him “Great God” and seemed to admire him, treating him like an “idol.” Perhaps this was why she always felt there was a distance between them, treating him as a protector, a master, a brother, and never considering being together. Maybe he should show his vulnerable side at the right time?

But the word “vulnerable” was too unfamiliar for Gu Ling. He thought about it, and the only thing that could be considered vulnerable was his need for Su Liang to be by his side, not wanting her to leave.

How to show that? Pretending to be ill was not a long-term solution. Su Liang was a doctor and would easily find out. This time was just a coincidence, as Gu Ling had really fallen, but it wasn’t as serious as Su Liang thought.

Su Liang brought in the prepared medicine and saw Gu Ling lying with his eyes closed. She gently called out to him, “Great God?”

“Mmm.” Gu Ling opened his eyes and saw Su Liang smiling. “You didn’t fall asleep? Then hurry up and drink the medicine!”

Su Liang put down the medicine bowl, helped Gu Ling sit up, picked up the medicine, and scooped a spoonful. She gently blew on it to cool it down before bringing it to his lips. “It’s a bit bitter, just bear with it.”

Gu Ling actually wanted to laugh because he had hit his head, not his hand, and he could drink the medicine on his own.

However, Gu Ling didn’t remind Su Liang. He silently accepted the feeding and finished the bowl of medicine. It was indeed bitter, but he found the aftertaste sweet.

When Su Liang put down the bowl, Gu Ling spoke up, “Actually, my hands are fine.”

Su Liang was taken aback, “Oh, right, you just hit your head, not paralyzed.” Gu Ling: ... So Su Liang thought he was paralyzed just now...

“You can go to sleep now. It shouldn’t be serious. You’ll recover quickly with some rest.” Su Liang yawned as she spoke.

Having run around outside late at night, it was long past midnight.

Gu Ling furrowed his brows slightly, “I remember you once said that a concussion could cause amnesia?”

Su Liang nodded, “Yes, but Great God, you have such a strong body. It was just a fall, and your mind is clear right now. I don’t think it’s that serious.” “Why did you suddenly attack me?” Gu Ling asked, reminding Su Liang of how he had fallen.

Su Liang coughed lightly, “Didn’t we say yesterday that I would try to make you laugh? Telling jokes didn’t work, and making faces didn’t help either. So, I thought I’d try tickling you.”

Now Gu Ling was genuinely puzzled, “Tickling? What is that?”

“Great God, you don’t even know this? Then again, you never had a childhood. When you were little, all you thought about was saving people with dark foreheads.” Su Liang explained to Gu Ling that some parts of the human body have more sensitive nerves, commonly known as “ticklish spots.” Most people can’t help but laugh when their armpits are tickled.

When Su Liang was young, she and her classmates often used this to tease each other and play pranks. But it was obvious that Gu Ling could never have such experiences and didn’t know about it.

“I see.” Gu Ling nodded slightly, gaining new knowledge.

‘Great God,’ Su Liang grinned, “Shall I try again?”

“I’m still sick. Do you want me to fall off the bed?” Gu Ling refused. Although he liked it when Su Liang touched him, he didn’t want a touch that would cause uncontrollable physical reactions for now.

“Just kidding. I know you really want to hit me. Just bear with it for now.” Su Liang gently patted Gu Ling’s quilt, “As for making you laugh, I’ve decided to give up. It’s as difficult as beating you.”

“You promised.” Gu Ling disagreed.

Su Liang sighed lightly, “Alright, I did promise. Since you insist, Great God, it means you want to laugh. So why not try to laugh? Come, follow me.”

Su Liang stretched out her index fingers, making a guiding gesture to lift the corners of her mouth. She showed a standard smile, but Gu Ling remained expressionless.

“Never mind, you should rest.” Su Liang decided to end today’s attempt, feeling exhausted.

“Alright.” Gu Ling actually wanted Su Liang to stay, but it was inappropriate for them to sleep in the same bed. Su Liang wouldn’t agree to that, and he was also afraid of having any physical reactions. If he let Su Liang stay to keep watch overnight, she would definitely not refuse, but Gu Ling couldn’t bear to see her tired.

By the time fell asleep, it was already past midnight.

Early the next morning, Ren Dong paced outside Su Liang and Gu Ling’s courtyard, not seeing any movement inside. She found it strange because Su Liang had a regular life, hardly ever oversleeping, and always waking up at the same time every day.

After waiting for a while longer, Ren Dong went in to knock on the door, worried that something had happened and it was time for Su Liang to go to the palace to give Situ Han his acupuncture treatment.

As Su Liang opened the door rubbing her eyes, Ren Dong was surprised, “I thought the Master wasn’t here.”

“What time is it?” Su Liang asked.

Ren Dong reported the time, and Su Liang instantly woke up, “Help me fetch water!”

Then, Su Liang washed and changed her clothes in fifteen minutes, and went to the next room to check on Gu Ling, who was still lying down.

“Great God, sorry, I overslept. When I return from the palace, I’ll cook and make medicine for you.” Su Liang left without even taking a carriage, riding a horse to the palace instead.

Although from a doctor’s perspective, her treating Situ Han an hour later wouldn’t be a big deal, it was different from a patient’s point of view, especially since her patient was the Emperor.

That day, Su Liang still gave Situ Han his acupuncture treatment punctually.

After it was over, Situ Han invited her to play chess, but Su Liang said that Gu Ling was sick and she had to go back to take care of him early.

Situ Han looked concerned as he asked about his Gu Family nephew’s illness, to which Su Liang replied, “He has sleepwalking disorder. For some reason, he ran to the frozen lake in the garden last night. By the time I found him, he had already fainted. ”

Situ Han looked shocked, “Sleepwalking disorder? Can it be cured?”

Su Liang shook her head, “I’m not sure what’s causing it. When I arrived, he had already woken up, but he didn’t remember going to the garden last night. He hurt his head from the fall.”

“You should hurry back and take good care of Gu Ling,” Situ Han said, letting her go.

Su Liang returned to Prince Ning’s mansion as fast as possible and dismounted at the entrance to the main courtyard.

Ren Dong took the reins and told Su Liang that Gu Ling had not come out yet.

“Hmm, he’s not feeling well.” Su Liang said as she walked in, “You can go out and play, wander around, have dinner outside, and don’t worry about saving me money. Oh, it’s time to buy New Year’s goods, you can decide what to buy.”

Watching Su Liang walk straight towards Gu Ling’s room, Ren Dong couldn’t help but laugh and cry. Although they were technically master and servant, Ren Dong often felt that Su Liang not only treated her as a friend but even spoiled her...

And all Ren Dong had to do was obey. She knew Su Liang had secrets but didn’t want to pry. Su Liang also didn’t like her humbling herself, so she hoped Ren Dong would freely express her thoughts, while Ren Dong was still adjusting her mentality.

When Su Liang saw Gu Ling, he had already changed his clothes and was sitting on the bed reading a book.

She took the book from Gu Ling’s hands and put it aside, “You need to rest, sleeping more will help your recovery.”

Gu Ling said faintly, “I’m too hungry to sleep.”

Su Liang coughed lightly, “I’ll go make breakfast now.”

Although it was already late morning, Su Liang still made a light porridge, egg pancakes, and side dishes according to her breakfast routine.

“You start eating, and I’ll go prepare the medicine.” Su Liang put down the food, and Gu Ling had already gotten out of bed and walked over. At the door, Su Liang turned back and asked, “Are you still dizzy?”

“A little.” Gu Ling replied-

sighed and went to the kitchen to prepare the medicine.

After preparing the medicine, the two of them ate breakfast together. When they finished eating, Su Liang mentioned the nonsense she had spouted in front of Situ Han.

Gu Ling nodded slightly, “Sleepwalking disorder, not bad.”

Su Liang’s lips curled up, “I knew the Great God would like it. If you ever get caught doing something bad in the middle of the night, don’t speak or look at anyone, just walk away. The next day, say you don’t remember anything. By then, I’ll ask Situ Han to testify that you’ve had sleepwalking disorder for a while. ”

“Very well. If I hit you tonight, please don’t mind, it’s because I’m sleepwalking,” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang sighed, “I knew it, because of last night’s incident, Great God, you really want to hit me.” As she spoke, Su Liang leaned forward and put her head closer, “You can hit me on the forehead once, and we’ll call it even.” Gu Ling raised his hand, bending his index finger.

Su Liang thought she was going to get flicked on the head, but Gu Ling just gently tapped her head and then withdrew his hand.

Without thinking, Su Liang blurted out, "Great God, are you still hungry?"

Gu Ling beckoned, "Come here."

Su Liang stood up and walked away, "I was just joking, we're even now, I'm going to check on the medicine."

After the medicine was ready and Gu Ling had finished drinking it, it was approaching noon.

The sun was out, and the outside was bright, but it was still very cold.

Gu Ling brought up Su Liang's idea of ice fishing from last night. Su Liang said she wouldn't go, but he insisted on going to the garden for a breath of fresh air.

Thus, Su Liang found some tools and made two small fishing rods.

Gu Ling was draped in a cloak and wore a bonnet, walking gracefully ahead.

Su Liang carried a small wooden bucket in one hand and two small stools in the other, following behind.

Gu Ling stopped to wait for her. Su Liang quickened her pace and came to his side. "I don't know if there are any fish in the lake. Great God, if you feel unwell, go back and rest first."

"I'm all right," Gu Ling shook his head slightly.

Walking onto the ice lake, Su Liang quickly found the place where they had fallen last night. It looked like there had been a fight. There were fine cracks on the ice where Gu Ling had hit his head.

"Let's start here!" Su Liang inserted the ice chisel onto the ice which had been in intimate contact with Gu Ling's head, and the crack instantly enlarged.

She set up the small stools and asked Gu Ling to sit beside her. She started chiseling the ice with a chisel and a hammer and poured some hot water onto the ice to help it melt.

The ice was thick, and Su Liang chiseled a hole, water gushing up. After clearing the ice fragments, she handed Gu Ling a small fishing rod with bait.

Then, Su Liang dug another hole not far away. She sat side by side with Gu Ling, facing the sun with their backs to the wind, and started ice fishing.

After a quarter of an hour, no fish were caught.

"Great God, are you cold?" Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling answered, "I'm fine." "Are you hungry?" "I'm fine." "Are you bored?" "I'm fine." "Let's call it quits, then?"

"No."

looked up at the sky, speechless. She didn't particularly like such almost motionless activities, constantly waiting. She had suggested it last night, thinking Gu Ling would like it. Gu Ling indeed enjoyed it, and she, feeling guilty, had no choice but to accompany him.

Then, Gu Ling reciprocated the questions Su Liang had asked earlier.

"Are you cold?" Su Liang nodded, "Cold." "Are you hungry?" Su Liang nodded, "Hungry." "Are you bored?"

Su Liang nodded again, "Bored."

"All right," Gu Ling said, "You go and get more clothes, some dessert tea and hand warmers."

Su Liang: .

When Su Liang came back with a basket, she saw Gu Ling's small fishing rod pulled up.

She hurriedly ran over to see a foot-long crucian carp being pulled up from the ice hole, its tail flapping.

Gu Ling put the fish on the ice and then picked up Su Liang's small fishing rod.

"I can catch my own fish!" Su Liang immediately put down the basket, wanting to experience the fun of catching fish, but Gu Ling, fearing the fish would escape, didn't let go.

Then, Su Liang put her hands around Gu Ling's hands, and together they pulled up a fat carp.

As soon as the fish landed on the ice, Su Liang let go of Gu Ling's hands, removed the fish, and put it into the small wooden bucket.

Looking at the two fish in the bucket, Su Liang suddenly felt no longer cold, hungry, or bored.

"Braised carp, steamed crucian carp."

"I want to eat fried fish nuggets," Gu Ling said.

"Catch one more large fish then," Su Liang returned to her seat, "Now that we are here, let's catch more, and we can eat them for the New Year."

Underneath the spot where they had fallen last night were likely some fish nests. Shortly after the two fish were hooked, more fish were caught continuously. It wasn't until the small wooden bucket was almost full that Su Liang and Gu Ling unanimously decided to end their ice fishing activity for the day.

Then, Gu Ling carried the basket, Su Liang carried the wooden bucket, and they returned together with their full harvests, carrying the small stools. "Hey, Great God, ice fishing is so much fun, aren't you happy?" Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling nodded, "Happy."

"When you are happy, why don't you feel like laughing?" Su Liang was puzzled.

Gu Ling looked at her and said, "This is what you owe me. I can't let you win easily, or it would be boring."

Su Liang snorted, "Great God, aren't you deliberately making it difficult for me? That's not very fair, is it?"

"You promised," Gu Ling repeated in his usual tone. Then, he abruptly changed his step and stood in front of Su Liang, blocking her way.

"What are you doing, Great God?" Su Liang looked stunned.

Gu Ling raised his hand, lightly patted Su Liang's head, and then turned around to continue walking forward.

Su Liang was baffled, "Great God, has your brain gotten waterlogged and then frozen?"

"I didn't hit you hard enough this morning, and you were unhappy. So, I just made up for it," Gu Ling said.

Su Liang's tone was cold, "No fried fish nuggets today."

Gu Ling glanced at her, "I have a headache."

Gu Ling thought for a moment and said, "I think it will be better tomorrow."

The next day.

Gu Ling, who had eaten fried fish nuggets and drunk crucian carp soup the day before, said he wanted to eat sweet and sour ribs today.

Su Liang refused to order, and Gu Ling complained about his headache again.

Su Liang said irritably, "Great God, you haven't lost your memory, have you?"

How did you say it yesterday?"

Gu Ling looked at Su Liang and said, "I said yesterday that it would be better tomorrow. Today, my head still hurts. What's wrong with that?"

Su Liang realized that she had been tricked by Gu Ling and immediately stood up to check the swelling on the back of Gu Ling's head. If the swelling was gone, the matter would be over.

The window was open, and Ren Dong came to deliver the red paper Su Liang had asked for to cut window decorations. At a glance, she saw Su Liang tiptoeing, seemingly embracing Gu Ling...

Ren Dong immediately turned around and silently left, hugging the red paper, three steps as two.

Gu Ling's head had not yet completely deflated, so Su Liang had to accept his headache for the time being.

When Su Liang saw Ren Dong again, she felt her hesitation.

"If you have something to say, say it." Su Liang was cutting a large sheet of red paper with scissors, planning to let the skillful Gu Ling cut window decorations.

“Master...” Ren Dong unconsciously lowered her voice, “Was Master forcing a kiss on Marquis Chang Xin today?”

Su Liang’s hand trembled, nearly injuring herself, “What?”

“A subordinate inadvertently saw Master and Marquis Chang Xin embracing each other, and their heads were moving...” Ren Dong’s voice grew quieter but couldn’t help exclaiming, “You’re progressing so fast!”

“You saw it wrong, we weren’t...” Su Liang was speechless, “Even if we were really embracing, how could it be me forcing a kiss on him? Am I that kind of person?”

Ren Dong gave Su Liang a look that told her to reflect on herself.

Su Liang coughed lightly. Indeed, she couldn’t blame Ren Dong for her “crazy love.” She quickly explained, “I was checking his head injury.”

Ren Dong was confused, “Why didn’t Master stand behind him to inspect the injury?”

Su Liang realized she couldn’t answer...

Ren Dong gave a slight smile and a “I know you want to take advantage of the situation to hug Marquis Chang Xin” look before turning around and leaving.

Sitting down with the scissors in her hand, Su Liang was pensive: Was she getting a little too intimate with Gu Ling lately, beyond just friends....

Chapter 286:286. Two reflective monsters

Su Liang thought about it seriously.

It was natural for Gu Ling to have changed since they first met, mainly due to her influence as a transmigrator. He had been diligently learning about various aspects of Su Lian@s previous world, including etiquette, language habits, and how people interacted with each other. Most of the changes were reflected in his interactions with Su Liang, while in front of others, there wasn’t much difference from before.

The reason they started shaking hands and hugging was because Su Liang took the initiative to shake hands, saying it was a habit from her previous life when friends met. Gu Ling even asked her how many times they should shake hands.

Thinking about what had happened between them over the past two days, Su Liang began to reflect. She always said that Gu Ling treated her like a brother, and she treated him as an elder brother. It was fine for her to ignore gender in other matters, but she didn’t pay much attention to boundaries when it came to physical contact. Tickling Gu Ling was overly intimate since they were both adults. Even in her previous life, such games between opposite sexes were only played by children.

No matter how she thought about it, Su Liang felt that the problem was with her. Although she listened to Gu Ling in many things, the truth was that she was the one guiding their way of interacting. Gu Ling would accept new habits by default, thinking they were commonplace in her previous life.

A scene of Gu Ling saying with an indifferent face, "I don't see you as a woman," flashed through Su Liang's mind, and she sighed softly. They liked each other as friends or even family, but she couldn't be too "unbridled." Gu Ling didn't see her as a woman, but at times, she had to be careful of her words and actions, so as not to mislead him.

The door was open, and Gu Ling stood at it for a while. Seeing Su Liang lost in her thoughts, frowning and sighing now and then, he was somewhat puzzled. He raised his hand and knocked on the door.

Su Liang came back to her senses when she heard the knock. Seeing Gu Ling, she felt a little uneasy. She picked up the cut red paper from the table and walked over to Gu Ling, handed it to him along with the scissors, "Make any window decorations you like. I'm going to change clothes and go to the Peng Family." As she finished speaking, she closed the door.

Gu Ling frowned slightly, looking at the bright red paper in his hand, feeling that something was off. Su Liang hadn't made eye contact with him at all, as if she was trying to avoid his gaze...

After a while, Su Liang changed her clothes and left the house. She glanced at Gu Ling's closed door, habitually wanting to say hello to him, but considering she had already said she would go to the Peng Family, saying it again would seem redundant. So, she just went out.

Gu Ling sat by the window, watching Su Liang's figure disappear through the half-open window. He had been holding the red paper and scissors in his hand for a while, but they remained untouched, not a single cut made.

Thinking of what had happened over the past two days, Gu Ling quickly realized that he had been too impatient. Su Liang was very smart and skilled in medical practices, so she must have realized that he had been pretending to be sick since he first fell.

The more Gu Ling thought about it, the more he believed he had been too touchy with Su Liang these two days. It must have been only after Su Liang had calmed down that she felt this wasn't appropriate. Was it because she had guessed his thoughts and didn't want their relationship to change, so she decided to avoid him?

That's right, this was how she treated Lian Shun... Gu Ling thought. Su Liang liked Lian Shun as a friend, but once she realized he had feelings for her, she kept her distance, not wanting to give any misunderstandings. After confessing his feelings, she resolutely handed him the "friend card," preventing any further developments...

Upon thinking of this, Gu Ling dispelled his intention to confront Su Liang and clarify things. What if his confession led to the same result as Lian Shun? A confession might push Su Liang away, but staying friends would give him more time and opportunities for her to fall in love with him...

Gu Ling sighed deeply, reflecting that he couldn't keep calm. He needed to carefully and gradually approach her, controlling his hands...

Su Liang went to the Peng Mansion on a whim. When she saw General Peng, he glared at her, "You said you'd come to see me again, but I've been waiting and waiting. It's not appropriate for me to just go to Prince Ning's Mansion."

Su Liang hurriedly apologized with a smile, saying that she had been busy lately.

"Busy taking care of that kid from the Gu Family?" General Peng scoffed.

Su Liang shook her head, "It's more like looking after him rather than taking care of him. After all, we're going to get married." As she spoke, she reminded herself in her heart that it was fake and not to think too much.

"I heard that kid is very strong?" General Peng asked.

Su Liang smiled slightly, "Yes, he is far better than me."

"I knew it. I was wondering why you would be attracted to him, it can't be just because of his face." General Peng believed Su Liang wouldn't be that superficial.

However, Su Liang replied, "It's also his physique."

Old General Peng: ...

Su Liang had a bit of a "professional ailment" – when she saw her former patients, she would want to take their pulse and make sure they were completely healed.

As a result, General Peng and his son Peng Qian both received another follow-up examination from Su Liang. She didn't prescribe any medicine, but gave them a few medicinal diet recipes.

Old General Peng wanted to invite Su Liang to his home for a visit, not for anything else, but simply because he liked this younger generation. It was a rare opportunity for them to meet and chat.

Su Liang asked about the customs during the New Year in Liang Country. General Peng not only explained them to her in great detail but, when Su Liang was leaving, he also gave her some New Year's pastries with Liang Country characteristics, made by the Peng family themselves.

Su Liang stayed at Peng Mansion until the sun was about to set. Only with great difficulty did she decline Old General Peng's invitation to stay for dinner. Thinking that it was late, and not wanting to go back and cook again, Su Liang went to the largest restaurant in Yao City and bought a few dishes she had tried earlier, to take away.

By the time Su Liang returned to Prince Ning's Mansion, it was already dark.

When she saw Ren Dong, she told him that she had already eaten outside, thinking that Su Liang would certainly have arranged dinner for Gu Ling, so she didn't bother with him.

Su Liang entered the main courtyard with the food box and desserts, only to see that the doors and windows of Gu Ling's room were closed, and the light was on inside. Gu Ling's silhouette reflected on the window, as if he was reading a book.

Su Liang knocked on the door, "I'm back."

Gu Ling's voice came from inside, "Come in."

As soon as Su Liang pushed the door, it opened. She went in with the food box, "Old General Peng insisted on having me stay for dinner, I finally managed to decline. It was a bit late, so I bought some food from outside."

Gu Ling put down his book and nodded faintly, "Alright." He thought to himself that Su Liang was indeed avoiding him, coming back so late and not wanting to cook for him.

"Have you finished cutting the window flowers?" Su Liang asked.

"It's done, you can choose." Gu Ling pointed to the paper beside the desk, where a stack of window flowers were placed.

"Let's eat first," Su Liang said.

From the time they met until now, it was rare for the two of them to have such an awkward moment. Su Liang thought about restraining herself, and Gu Ling thought about being more reserved. As a result, both became much more silent than usual, as if the dishes bought from the restaurant outside were delicacies that they ate very diligently.

After dinner, Gu Ling didn't mention wanting a late-night snack.

Su Liang praised the window flowers cut by Gu Ling as very delicate and beautiful. Gu Ling said if she wanted other Datterns. she could tell him.

"I'll take these two," Su Liang picked two window flowers and gave two to Ren Dong as well.

Just as she was about to leave, Su Liang stepped outside the door and suddenly remembered something, "When will you go to the palace and ask Situ Han about the Snow Lotus? We should get it ahead of time, in case Ying Ying comes looking for it and saves us the trouble. I'm not supposed to know about this, so you'll have to go yourself."

Gu Ling nodded, "Alright. I'll go tomorrow."

As soon as the door closed, Gu Ling thought to himself – Su Liang deliberately mentioned the Snow Lotus and Ying Ying. Was she reminding him that their engagement was false and merely a transaction, so he shouldn't think too much about it...

The next day, Su Liang went to the palace on time to treat Situ Han. Gu Ling went only after she had left the palace.

Situ Han really had the Snow Lotus flower, and he didn't go back on his word. When Gu Ling went to ask for it, he had someone fetch it and give it to him.

Because Situ Han's goal had been achieved, Gu Ling and Su Liang had accepted the ennoblement from the Liang Country royal family, becoming half-Liang citizens in name and were soon to be married in Yao City. It was certain that Duanmu Yi would be angry, and suspicion was inevitable.

When Gu Ling returned to Ning Prince Mansion with the snow lotus, he saw Su Liang cooking lunch. She had also personally made breakfast.

In this way, Gu Ling felt that their lifestyle was the same as before, which was great. He just needed to be careful not to have unnecessary physical contact with Su Liang.

During lunch, Su Liang talked about the New Year customs of Liang Country she learned from the old General Peng and asked Gu Ling if he wanted to go to the market together in the afternoon.

Su Liang smiled, "I heard on my way back that there is the last temple fair of the year in South City today, and it must be very lively."

Gu Ling naturally wouldn't refuse.

After the meal, Gu Ling washed the dishes while Su Liang asked Ren Dong to prepare the carriage.

When it was time to leave, Su Liang and Gu Ling tacitly each brought a book along. They both liked to read while sitting in the carriage.

Ren Dong drove the carriage, taking Su Liang and Gu Ling to the liveliest temple fair in Yao City before the New Year.

Today was a cloudy day, but from far away, one could hear the gongs, drums, and noise of the temple fair. The road was jammed by the crowd, so the carriage couldn't pass. Ren Dong stopped the carriage, and Su Liang and Gu Ling got off, one after the other.

"Miss Gu!"

"Divine Doctor Su!"

After a few exclamations, the news of Su Liang and Gu Ling coming to the temple fair spread quickly, attracting many onlookers wherever they went.

However, Su Liang was already used to this. It was not because of her, but because she often appeared with Gu Ling, and no one could ignore his true appearance.

Of course, this was what Su Liang believed. In fact, she was also a notable figure because of her excellent medical skills. She was not only the exclusive Imperial Physician for the Qian Country Royal Family, but also sought after by the Liang Country emperor from thousands of miles away when he fell ill. People who hadn't seen her first heard about her talents and were amazed by her beauty when they met her.

As for Gu Ling, he could be undefeated just with his appearance alone...

In public, they had a tacit understanding. Gu Ling was only responsible for being aloof and beautiful, while Su Liang would make way, protect him from being touched, and take the initiative to talk to him.

The two of them had visited the market in Bei'an County before. The market in the small county town of Qian Country could not compare to the New Year's market in the capital city of Liang Country, as the latter was much larger and bustling with all kinds of goods for sale.

The cold weather didn't dampen the merchants' enthusiasm for making money. Since Su Liang appeared gentle, many people greeted her warmly wherever she went. She would buy anything that interested her, and when she had bought too much, she would ask Ren Dong to send a batch to the carriage.

As they passed a stall selling stones, Su Liang remembered that Gu Ling had given her a beautiful rainflower stone when he went to find Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu. The pattern inside the stone looked like a bunny and was now in her purse.

Su Liang squatted to pick stones, and Gu Ling stood beside her, watching.

Seeing that Su Liang could name several of the stones, the stall owner knew that she was knowledgeable about stones and offered her a basin of unexhibited private collection stones to choose from.

The small stones were soaked in water, and each had a bright color with distinctive patterns, all very beautiful.

“Lord Gu, do you like it?” Su Liang looked up and asked Gu Ling.

Gu Ling saw Su Liang’s eyes shining and smiling, and the inexplicable uneasiness in his heart over the past few days had disappeared. He nodded slightly and said two words, “Not bad.” That’s good enough, he told himself.

“I’ll take all of them,” Su Liang said very generously.

Knowing that Su Liang was an important person and knew about stones, the stall owner didn’t dare to overcharge. However, at the normal price, the basin of rare stones containing dozens of pieces was quite expensive.

But Su Liang didn’t lack money, so she bought them all and asked Ren Dong to take them to the carriage.

Adding to the previous time when Su Liang spent a lot of money on Gu Ling at the Treasure Pavilion in Yao City, there was now a rumor of Su Liang willingly spending money for the sake of Gu Ling’s smile.

After browsing half of the market, Gu Ling suddenly stepped on Su Liang’s skirt.

Su Liang instinctively looked back and heard Gu Ling whisper, “Follow the tiger-head hat.”

Following the direction, Su Liang saw a child wearing a tiger-head hat sitting on a man’s shoulder, shaking a rattle drum in his hand. The two seemed to be father and son, walking through the crowd.

She knew that Gu Ling must have noticed something unusual, nodded slightly and followed them.

Soon, Su Liang smelled a sweet fragrance, and there was someone selling fried sweet chestnuts in front of her.

Watching the chestnuts tumble in the pan, Su Liang continued to focus on the tiger-head hat.

Then the man with the child approached the big pan of fried chestnuts, apparently the child wanted some and they were going to buy.

However, someone accidentally fell and bumped into the man carrying the child from behind!

Su Liang’s eyes grew serious, and amidst the screams, she leaped into action. Her toes touched someone’s head, rushing over, and caught the child before he fell into the boiling hot pan!

The crowd burst into applause after the initial exclamations.

The chestnut vendor dropped his spatula in fright, while the man who had been carrying the child broke out in a cold sweat. He stared at Su Liang catching and landing with the child. After regaining his senses, he rushed forward and knelt heavily in front of Su Liang, kowtowing. The person who fell was also scared pale, realizing that he almost caused a child harm.

The child stared wide-eyed at Su Liang and cutely called out, “Fairy Sister!”

Smiling, Su Liang straightened the crooked tiger-head hat, pinched the child’s face, and told him to go find his father.

As she stood up, she caught sight of Gu Ling still standing in the same spot, quietly watching her.

Su Liang smiled brightly, walking towards Gu Ling.

Gu Ling resisted the urge to pick up Su Liang and softly said once she was by his side, “Not bad.” “You’re the most amazing, Great God,” Su Liang whispered. The incident just now reminded them of the initial reason for their partnership.

Gu Ling also thought of this, and couldn’t help but think of the words he had said before, “You can leave whenever you want”, “I don’t see you as a woman”, “We are brothers.” He wished he could go back in time and keep his mouth shut, if he couldn’t say anything better....

Chapter 287: 287. Late-night visitor

The stall owner who sold fried sweet chestnuts insisted on giving Su Liang a freshly cooked bag of chestnuts, which she accepted with a smile.

The news of Su Liang saving a child in the market quickly spread. Everywhere they went, they could see the kind smiles of the common people and hear their praise.

Moreover, Su Liang asked the chestnut stall owner for an empty paper bag for

Gu Ling to hold. She walked while peeling chestnuts, handing the first one to Gu Ling and eating the second one herself, throwing the shells into the paper bag Gu Ling was holding.

You take one; I take one; the sweet fragrance, everything seemed extraordinarily harmonious.

Ren Dong, who had gone to send the stones back, watched their backs and thought they were a perfect match made in heaven, hoping Lady Gu would be kind to her master.

They bought a lot of items, including New Year’s goods and unique snacks from the Liang Country market. Most of them were shared by Su Liang and Gu Ling on the spot, very down-to-earth.

It seemed as if Su Liang took the initiative to give foods to Gu Ling. There was no sign of desire for the food on his face, and he didn’t even smile after finishing it.

But Su Liang knew best that Gu Ling must have wanted to eat more than she did. It was just that his image had always been there, so it couldn’t be destroyed, and they were both still acting.

By the time they had finished walking around the market and were full, the carriage was stuffed with things Su Liang bought.

“It’s not too late yet. Shall we walk back?” Su Liang asked Gu Ling. There was no room to sit in the carriage.

Ren Dong quickly said, “This subordinate will take the stuff back first and then come to pick up Master and Marquis.”

“Alright.” Gu Ling spoke.

Ren Dong was stunned, not sure if Gu Ling was answering Su Liang’s “walk back” or her saying “come to pick up” and looked at Su Liang.

Su Liang smiled, “You can go back. No need to come again. We will stroll around a bit.”

Ren Dong didn’t hear Gu Ling say anything else, so she nodded, got on the carriage and left alone.

“Fairy sister! Fairy sister!”

A child’s voice came from behind Su Liang. She looked back to see a child in a cap running and jumping towards her.

Su Liang smiled and bent down, hugging the child who threw himself into her arms.

The child held a string of red candied hawthorn in his hand, shining with excitement, offered it to Su Liang like a treasure, “For fairy sister to eat! ”

A man with a child by his side stood nearby, his expression somewhat frightened, “Master Su, the child doesn’t know any better...”

Su Liang smiled accepting the candied hawthorn, “Thank you.”

The child, seeing Su Liang take it, clapped his hands happily and hopped back to his father.

The man heaved a great sigh of relief and thanked Su Liang again.

“Be more careful when taking your child out in the future,” Su Liang left a comment and walked away.

After turning a corner, Su Liang handed the candied hawthorn in her hand to

Gil Ling. “This should belong to you-”

Gu Ling took it but didn’t eat it, just holding it in his hand.

Everyone who saw the scene thought it was a magical picture, the aloof Lady Gu with Candied Hawthorn seemed an odd combination but didn’t affect the aesthetics...

Last time the two went out to the Mansion in the middle of the night, they went through many places, but it was pitch-black all around.

The gloomy weather had cleared up, and the two walked side by side on the streets and alleys of Yao City. Su Liang was telling Gu Ling the story she hadn’t finished before.

The cold wind brushed their faces, but walking continuously didn’t make them feel cold.

Su Liang liked the feeling of walking around in unfamiliar places.

Gu Ling also enjoyed it; being with Su Liang, he wouldn’t find it boring to walk till the end of time. The sights he’d seen before were all gray and ice cold, colorless. But now, everything around him seemed to come alive and become more colorful.

“Today’s story ends here. If I keep talking, my mouth will go dry,” Su Liang requested Gu Ling to take over midway through the walk, “Tell me about the people you’ve saved before.”

Gu Ling wasn’t used to talking that much, but after careful consideration, he began telling the story of the first time he saw someone with a dark imprint on their forehead as a child. He thought that as long as Su Liang was willing to listen, he would tell the experiences of all the people he’d saved and killed in chronological order.

However, Su Liang thought Gu Ling’s experiences would be exciting, and Gu Ling thought so too. But a life-saving event took only a few words to say...

Real-life events naturally don't have as many coincidences and logical cause-and-effect as novels. Most of the time, Gu Ling saw "black fog," followed by someone he targeted. In most cases, the problem was solved within no more than three days, often on the same day, and then he left. Many of those he saved didn't even know what he'd done.

At this moment, Gu Ling also realized that he was willing to talk, but there was nothing to talk about because he didn't even know many of the people he'd saved, just because he happened to meet them.

Just like the little child just now, if he told someone who wasn't there, it would be a three-sentence affair. He didn't know the father and son; he didn't know their background.

As Gu Ling wondered if Su Liang would find him boring, she was already talking about something else and didn't ask him to continue. "I don't know what secrets that person who suddenly sent me a note knew about me."

Gu Ling thought that if there were another transmigrator in this world, they might see Su Liang as an enemy.

"If it's really one of your fellow townsmen, then deny everything when the time comes and say it was all taught by me," Gu Ling said.

Su Liang sighed softly, "That's a way, a roundabout way, but it would put us in a better position."

"You need to teach me more things," Gu Ling said.

Su Liang readily agreed, "Of course, it's possible. Great God, are you interested in any aspect? Although I don't know much about many things."

Gu Ling thought, "I'll learn to cook with you."

Su Liang was stunned for a moment, wondering in her heart if Gu Ling planned to break up the partnership? Once he learned to cook, Su Liang felt that there was no place for her. One of the main reasons Gu Ling asked her to stay initially was that he liked the food she cooked.

However, Gu Ling thought that Su Liang was always cooking for them and that she was too tired. Also, Su Liang once said that in her past life, there was a saying, "If you want to capture a man's heart, you must first capture his stomach." He didn't think there was much difference between men and women in this regard. His stomach had been firmly captured, and his heart was captured too. He wanted to "counter-capture" with a try.

"Not allowed" Gu Ling asked.

Su Liang immediately nodded, "How can it not be allowed? It's very allowed! I mentioned earlier that Great God, you have the potential to become a Kitchen God."

"Alright. Starting from today," Gu Ling said. Now that he and Su Liang had the opportunity to be alone together, nobody was watching when they returned to Prince Mansion. Apart from expressing his love for Su Liang, Gu Ling always did what he wanted to do in any other matters.

Ren Dong drove back to Prince Mansion and delivered all the things Su Liang had bought to the main courtyard, then went to her own courtyard to attach the window flower Su Liang gave her yesterday.

Ren Dong didn't know it was Gu Ling who cut it and thought it was Su Liang. As she put it up, she couldn't help thinking that her master was skillful, and it looked beautiful.

Situ Xie invited Gu Ling and Su Liang to attend a family banquet at King Yue Mansion tonight. Ren Dong said they hadn't returned yet, and she would relay the message when they did. The messenger left.

By the time Su Liang and Gu Ling walked back to Prince Mansion after crossing half of Yao City, it was evening.

"Not going." Gu Ling said.

Su Liang "translated", "Ren Dong, please go to King Yue's mansion and tell him that Marquis Gu and I are tired today, and will visit King Yue another day.

Please ask for their forgiveness. Then you can go to the restaurant for dinner."

Ren Dong accepted the assignment, rode a horse out of the mansion, and went to King Yue's mansion.

Returning to the main courtyard, Su Liang asked Gu Ling, "Great God, what do you want to do today?"

"I don't know." Gu Ling said, "It's up to you."

"Let's make Sweet and Sour Fish." Su Liang replied, "We still have quite a few fish left from the day before yesterday."

Su Liang selected a fat fish. Gu Ling scooped it out according to her instructions, stunned it with a knife, and began to scrape off the scales.

Su Liang stood by, and each time she saw her red apron tied around Gu Ling, she couldn't help but want to laugh, "Great God, since you are interested in things you have never done before, do you want to learn some needlework?

Start by making an apron for yourself."

Gu Ling looked down at the "Little Red Skirt" and said indifferently, "As long as it is usable."

Su Liang nodded, "I like that you look like you are floating in the sky but you always get the job done in a practical manner."

Gu Ling: ... He just wanted to hear the first six words...

In fact, Gu Ling has been Su Liang's assistant and firekeeper all along, knowing many steps but not being so sure about them, and he had hardly made anything by himself except for dumplings.

However, Su Liang had said early on that Gu Ling had a knack for cooking when he was making dumplings.

Indeed, this was the case.

With Su Liang's guidance and instruction, Gu Ling made a perfect Sweet and Sour Fish in the end. The taste was almost the same as Su Liang's, and the presentation was even better.

Su Liang gave a thumbs up, "Great God, you can graduate now."

"I don't know how to do anything else." Gu Ling replied, indicating his graduation was not important. Staying in the kitchen together was the activity he enjoyed the most.

"You'll learn soon." Su Liang smiled softly, "With Great God's talent, you can try to create some new dishes."

Gu Ling had this intention.

The two shared a fish, and after dinner, Su Liang washed the dishes and boiled water. The division of labor was reversed by now. About Gu Ling learning to cook for himself and possibly breaking up the partnership, Su Liang just had a fleeting thought in his mind, and decided to let nature take its course.

King Yue's Mansion.

Situ Xie has not been in a good mood lately.

At first, he was overjoyed when Mu Yu joined him. Unfortunately, the secret scroll on mechanisms he most wanted had only half a copy, and it was all incomplete.

He thought that with Mu Yu, it would be a matter of time before his master appeared. When the fan appeared, Situ Xie thought Mu's old man had come, but the series of events that followed made him completely confused.

The Treasure Pavilion auction was a trap designed by Situ Xie, but unfortunately, in the end, neither Su Liang nor he got what they wanted. Half of the original secret scroll fell into Situ Han's hands.

Situ Xie sent people to spy on Ning Wang Mansion. That night, the spy saw Su Liang and Gu Ling leave their house, but they did not enter the Imperial Palace or the Crown Prince's Mansion. They seemed to have found the spy and deliberately led them on a wild goose chase.

Today, his invitation to Gu Ling and Su Liang to dine at his mansion was also refused.

"Grandfather, I'm afraid we'll have to consider the secret scroll issue more carefully." Situ Jing sighed, "As long as Mu Yu's master knows he's in King Yue's Mansion, he'll come looking."

But Situ Xie's face darkened, "Wrong!"

Situ Jing frowned, "Did my son say something wrong?"

"Big mistake!" Situ Xie clenched his fists, "That auction shouldn't have happened at all!"

Situ Jing was stunned for a moment, "There's not much we can do about it now..."

Situ Xie said coldly, "Have you ever thought that if Mu Heng really comes to Yao city, instead of coming to King Yue's Mansion to find me, he might go to the Imperial Palace?"

Situ Jing pondered for a moment, and his face changed dramatically, “Wouldn’t that let the Emperor know that Mu Family’s descendants have been loyal to grandfather for a long time, and that grandfather has been hiding it and not reporting it?”

Situ Jing didn’t know Situ Xie was Situ Han’s biological father. At that moment, all he felt was that things had gone wrong. They really should not have revealed Mu Yu’s existence, even under a pseudonym. Once Mu Yu’s master heard it, it would be obvious who he was. Besides, they shouldn’t have taken out half of the secret scroll!

“It’s all my fault. I was confused and ruined everything.” Situ Jing’s face turned ugly. At that time, he had given Situ Xie many suggestions.

However, they had originally expected that Su Liang would buy the secret scroll. In this way, they could not only bring trouble to Su Liang but also make a huge profit.

Unfortunately, their plans failed.

“Su Liang...” Situ Xie muttered the name coldly, “Did she know something all along?”

Situ Jing didn’t dare to speak casually, but he thought that Su Liang was really good at disguising herself. She seemed to be doing well on all sides but was actually focusing on irrelevant matters. She never suffered on important matters.

“Can Su Liang really marry Gu Ling in Liang Country? Will someone come to stop it?” Situ Jing asked.

Situ Xie’s eyes narrowed, “I know a big secret about them, and I’m thinking about whether to reveal it to Emperor Qian.”

That night, before going to bed, Su Liang was still thinking about what dish she would teach Gu Ling to make tomorrow.

Gu Ling heard footsteps next door, and then silence, knowing that Su Liang had gone to bed. He wasn’t sleepy yet, so he sat at the table drawing. He was drawing the scene of Su Liang flying to save the child in the bustling market that day.

He was halfway through the drawing when he suddenly heard a noise coming from the back window, as if a stone had hit it.

Gu Ling’s eyes narrowed, and he put away the painting, got up, and went out, following a dark shadow into the garden.

When he saw the dark shadow, he knew who it was. Otherwise, he wouldn’t leave Su Liang alone.

Standing on the ice lake, the two holes Su Liang had drilled for ice fishing the day before were already frozen solid again.

The visitor stopped and turned around, looked at Gu Ling, and said with a smile, “Xiaogu, I heard you’re getting married, so your sister came.”

Gu Ling’s face remained calm, ‘Ying Ying.’”

Ying Ying wore a cloak, revealing only half of her golden mask, and spoke in a low tone, "Last time you asked me for medicine, was it for that Su Girl? She's only sixteen? So you're just neglecting me because I'm older than you? I'm only three years older."

As for the antidote, it was actually easy to investigate. At that time, it was for Su Liang's friend Gao Jiabao.

Gu Ling still didn't say a word, and Ying Ying snorted lightly, "But I'm not an unreasonable person either. You agreed to the terms back then. Coincidentally, I'm in Liang Country right now, and I came as soon as I got the news.. Do you want to invite the girl out now and let me compare with her, or wait until tomorrow to introduce her to me?"

Chapter 288: 288. Xiaogu was speechless

The night was dark, and the ice lake was chillingly cold.

After Yuanying asked a few questions, Gu Ling replied with a counter-question, "Is Yuanye still alive?"

Yuanying, who had been standing casually, straightened up instantly upon hearing the words, narrowing her eyes, "Gu Ling, what do you mean?"

"Concern." Gu Ling said the two words.

Yuanying snorted coldly, "Of course Xiaoye is alive!"

"Why are you, coincidentally, in Liang Country?" Gu Ling asked.

Yuanying stared at Gu Ling, "You never talked so much before. I thought you wouldn't be interested in anything about me, including my younger brother."

Gu Ling opened his mouth again and said four words, "Millennium Snow Lotus."

After a moment of silence, Yuanying sighed, "Yes, you guessed right. Xiaoye is seriously ill, and I came to Liang Country to find the Millennium Snow Lotus to save him. I just learned that you were getting married here during my journey."

"I have it." Gu Ling said. Yuanying asked back, "What?" "Snow Lotus." Gu Ling said.

Gu Ling nodded slightly, "A write-off."

Yuanying looked deeply at Gu Ling, "I don't know how you got the Snow Lotus, and I won't ask. But you really care about that little girl, right? You don't want me to make things difficult for her?"

"I just don't want to marry you." Gu Ling said.

Yuanying snorted lightly, "You make it sound like I can't get married! Give me the Snow Lotus!"

"Wait for it," Gu Ling turned around and left after speaking.

Yuanying looked at his back and sighed softly. She squatted down, placed her hands on the icy surface of the lake, and stood up after a moment, removing her mask and placing her cold hands on her cheeks, muttering to herself, “Stay focused, Xiaoye is the most important thing...”

When Gu Ling returned and saw Yuanying again, she was still wearing her mask, her face hidden. She took the box from Gu Ling and asked, “Why is it so small?” When she opened it, the wooden box had a jade layer inside, with two crystal-clear Snow Lotus petals.

“I thought it was a whole flower.” Yuanying said unhappily after confirming, immediately closing the box.

Gu Ling shook his head, “You said that two petals are enough to save Yuanye.”

“But making the medicine might cause problems!” Yuanying said coldly, “Two petals are not enough!”

“Getting one more petal, and Situ Han wouldn’t budge,” Gu Ling said, “You are skilled in poison but making medicine is also related to it. It’s just that you are worried because it concerns your brother.”

“Nonsense!” Yuanying interrupted Gu Ling, “In short, two petals are not enough, you must have a solution!”

“Ask someone for help.” Gu Ling said.

Yuanying asked, “What do you mean?”

“Su Liang will make the medicine for you.” Gu Ling said.

“Are you sure? If there is a problem, can she bear it?” Yuanying asked coldly. Gu Ling shook his head, “I will take responsibility for any problem.”

After a long silence, Yuanying returned the box to Gu Ling and took out a piece of paper from her bosom, handing it to him. “This is the prescription. I’ll come back tomorrow.” She vanished as soon as the words were spoken.

When Su Liang got up early in the morning to exercise and freshened up, she saw Gu Ling in the kitchen cooking porridge, still wearing her little red apron.

“Great God, good morning.” Su Liang said with a smile.

Gu Ling turned to look at her, “Good morning.” Although the weather outside was gloomy, he felt that everything around him brightened up whenever Su Liang appeared.

“Millet and Red Date Porridge, and the pot stickers are ready?” Su Liang gave him a thumbs up again, “It seems that Great God, you really want to be a Kitchen God.”

The prepared vegetarian stuffing and kneaded dough were placed next to him. However, according to Su Liang and Gu Ling’s eating habits, they usually wouldn’t make dumplings in the morning, but rather fry potstickers.

Su Liang sat down naturally on the small bench, added a piece of firewood to the stove and sighed, "The New Year is almost here. After the New Year, I'll be seventeen."

"Stand up." Gu Ling suddenly said.

Su Liang was stunned for a moment but still obediently stood up.

Gu Ling reached out his hand and gently brushed over the top of Su Liang's head, reaching down to his shoulder, "You've grown taller since last year."

Su Liang sat down and laughed, "Of course. Last year's shoes are too small this year, and the clothes are also a bit short." What she didn't say was that her body was also developing.

It wasn't until they finished breakfast that Gu Ling brought up the matter of guests from last night.

Su Liang was very surprised, "Ying Ying has already arrived? Why didn't you call me, Great God?"

"Do you want to see her? Why?" Gu Ling asked.

Su Liang coughed lightly, "Just curious. Of course, I don't want to compete with her in poison techniques. Has she taken the Snow Lotus and left?"

Gu Ling shook his head, fetched the box containing the Snow Lotus and the prescription.

Su Liang learned about what had happened and was very surprised, "Let me make life-saving medicine for Ying Ying's brother? If I mess it up, the Snow Lotus will be gone."

"You can do it." Gu Ling expressed his faith in Su Liang, "If Ying Ying does it, there'll be a problem."

"That's true. She must be afraid to use up the Snow Lotus without making the medicine in time." Su Liang showed understanding. She looked at the prescription and it was indeed complicated. Apart from the Snow Lotus, there were several rare ingredients, but she had them all in her family's home in

Qian Country. They shouldn't be too difficult to find in Liang Country's capital.

Su Liang handed the prescription to Gu Ling, "You are in charge of finding the ingredients. If you don't have any, go and ask King Yue for help. He must be very happy that you're asking him something, even if it's just false feelings."

Gu Ling did not mention that if Su Liang wasted the two Snow Lotus petals, he would take responsibility and find a way to get more. On the one hand, he truly believed that Su Liang could do it; on the other hand, he didn't want to put pressure on her. But whatever the outcome, he could bear it once he said it out loud.

Gu Ling went to find the medicinal materials, while Su Liang went to the palace to give Situ Han acupuncture. Both of them left the mansion at the same time.

Halfway through the horse ride, Su Liang suddenly felt as if someone was staring at her. She looked around but found nothing. She suspected it was Ying Ying.

After giving the acupuncture that day, Su Liang brought up the thousand-year-old Snow Lotus and asked Situ Han if he had ever seen it.

As a doctor, it was natural for her to be interested in top-grade medicinal materials, and it was Liang Country where the Snow Lotus most likely grew.

Situ Han laughed and said, "I have seen it. There used to be a thousand-year-old Snow Lotus in the palace, but it's already been used up. Otherwise, I could have asked someone to get it for you to see."

Su Liang sighed, "That's really a pity."

She deliberately asked about it, so Situ Han would think that Gu Ling did not trust her and didn't tell her about the Snow Lotus. Naturally, he also didn't really like her and only agreed to get married.

After leaving the palace, Su Liang went to General Peng's Mansion.

Peng Qian had been seriously ill for many years, and Peng Mansion had gathered a lot of good medicinal materials. Su Liang came to look for medicine.

When Peng Wei learned of Su Liang's intention, he readily nodded, "Take whatever you need!" Both he and his son were now completely healed and no longer needed these medicinal materials. It was best if Su Liang could use them.

Thus, Su Liang left with a Peng Mansion carriage following behind her, filled with things Peng Wei had given her. Most of them were medicinal materials, but there were also some food items.

At the same time, Gu Ling was in Prince Yue's mansion, telling Situ Xie that he needed some medicinal materials.

Situ Xie would naturally not be as straightforward as Peng Wei was to Su Liang. Instead, he asked Gu Ling with a concerned face if he was unwell.

Situ Xie pressed further for details about the illness, but Gu Ling maintained his silence.

Situ Xie personally took Gu Ling to the warehouse to look for medicine, and seeing that Gu Ling was familiar with various medicinal materials, he jokingly asked, "Did you learn this from Su Liang?"

"It's in the books," Gu Ling replied.

"I've always wanted to ask you, you two have known each other for so long and lived together for such a long time, are you really serious about marrying her this time?" Situ Xie asked with a smile.

Gu Ling remained silent.

When Gu Ling returned from Prince Yue's Mansion, Su Liang checked and found that the medicinal materials were all available. Gu Ling had also taken a few that she couldn't use this time but had been looking for from the prince's mansion.

"Can you be my assistant, Great God?" Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling nodded, "Sure." He had learned these basic things from Su Liang, and according to her, he did them even better.

Originally, Su Liang had agreed with Ren Dong that they would put up couplets together today. Ren Dong saw the two of them closing the door and not coming out, so she quietly put up the couplets by herself.

Su Liang and Gu Ling were both very serious about their work. They ate some snacks when they were hungry and didn't even stop for lunch.

It wasn't until the sky turned dark that Gu Ling lit a lamp. By the time the sky was completely black, she finally made a light green pill, round and full, emitting a strange fragrance that refreshed the heart and lungs.

"Have we succeeded now?" Su Liang asked Gu Ling.

Gu Ling nodded. "We should have. The prescription notes that the color of this medicine must resemble the early spring seedlings. If the color is not right, the effects of the medicine will be different."

"That's great. After all, this is a matter of life and death!" Su Liang instinctively reached out, wanting to high-five Gu Ling.

However, Gu Ling asked instead, "Shouldn't one hug in joy?"

Su Liang coughed lightly, "A high-five represents celebrating success."

Gu Ling stretched out her hand and high-fived Su Liang, but felt somewhat disappointed in her heart. Was Su Liang really trying to avoid suspicion? The promised hug had been downgraded to a high-five...

"I'm so hungry! Great God, what's for dinner?" Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling responded with a single word, "Noodles."

Gu Ling was very good at doing things that required technical skills, such as kneading dough, pulling noodles, cutting noodles, chopping vegetables, making dumplings, and so on.

So, after a busy day, Su Liang had a bowl of hot and stomach-warming sour soup with pork cartilage noodles. The noodles were chewy, and each one looked identical in thickness. The meat was soaked in the soup, the green vegetables were tender and crisp, and it was perfect.

After eating, Su Liang washed the dishes and then sat in Gu Ling's room reading a book, waiting for Ying Ying to arrive again.

"Tomorrow is New Year's Eve." Su Liang suddenly sighed, "Time flies so fast!"

Gu Ling's expression was indifferent, "Actually, it's not fast." Su Liang had just turned sixteen. If she were eighteen today, they could really get married, on the condition that Su Liang truly liked him.

This year, Xing Ji would be spending the New Year with Qi Jiang and his son Qi Jun in Xuanbei City.

Half a month ago, Marquis Zhong Xin had sent over two large carts filled with things from the capital, including clothes made by Xing Ji's grandmother. Tomorrow would be New Year's Eve, and on this night, Xing Ji and Qi Jiang were drinking and playing chess, with Qi Jun watching by the side.

Xing Ji suddenly brought up Su Liang, "That Su Liang girl is going to marry Gu Ling in Liang Country, and the Emperor may be furious."

Qi Jun frowned, "The Master must have her reasons for doing so, right? The Emperor sent her to Liang Country to get the secret scroll. If she doesn't accept Emperor Liang's arrangement, she won't be able to stay in Yao City to do her job."

Xing Ji sighed, "But the Emperor may become suspicious that she's doing it for her own selfish desires. If she can really get the secret scroll, it might be fine, but if she can't, how will she end this?"

"But the Master really likes the Marquis Chang Xin. I'm a little surprised that the Marquis Chang Xin agreed to marry the Master," Qi Jun said.

Xing Ji scoffed, "Do you think it would be right for that Gu Ling kid to not like Su Liang?"

Qi Jun hurriedly shook his head, "Of course not. It's just that in the capital, Marquis Chang Xin always seemed to keep everyone at arm's length."

As they spoke, a report came from outside the door, "Master, someone has come from the capital." Xing Ji's expression turned solemn, "Come in."

Qi Jiang and Qi Jun both stood up, and when the door opened, a man walked in, bringing a gust of cold air along with him.

Qi Jun was stunned, "General Nian?"

The man took off his hat, exhaled a breath of white air, and with cold and stern eyebrows, it was indeed Nian Jincheng.

"Master!" Nian Jincheng cupped his hands and saluted Xing Ji.

Xing Ji invited him to sit down and asked for some hot water to be served.

"No need, I can't stay here too long, and I need to hurry to Liang Country after meeting the Master," Nian Jincheng said.

Xing Ji's expression became slightly tense, and he had a rough guess of what was going on.

After Duanmu Yi received the news that Su Liang and Gu Ling had accepted Situ Han's decree and would be getting married in Liang Country on the sixth day of the New Year, he ordered Nian Jincheng to go north and rush to Liang Country. Freshly married, Nian Jincheng had to leave Yang Yu and hurry along day and night.

"Is the Emperor asking you to stop their wedding?" Xing Ji frowned and asked.

Nian Jincheng shook his head, "The Emperor didn't explicitly say what I should do, only that he gave me a sealed secret edict to be personally handed to Su Liang."

The secret edict was in Nian Jincheng's possession, but Duanmu Yi had also arranged for two guards to accompany him and watch his every move.

"You're going to Liang Country, and if you're fast, you should be able to arrive around the sixth or seventh day," Xing Ji frowned. Since it wasn't just Nian Jincheng alone, the speed was not up to him to control. Otherwise, he could have delayed a little to avoid disrupting Su Liang and Gu Ling's wedding.

Xing Ji asked Qi Jun to prepare food and hot water to entertain the two guards.

Nian Jincheng also had a meal and drank some alcohol at Xing Ji's.

Xing Ji told him not to waste time and do everything according to the Emperor's instructions. Whatever trouble there was, Su Liang and Gu Ling would solve it. Xing Ji thought that since they had done so, they must have anticipated the consequences of the matter. Nian Jincheng's rash actions might lead to failure.

After staying in Xuanbei City for an hour, Nian Jincheng once again set out for Liang Country with his people....

Yao City.

Su Liang waited until midnight, yawned, and thought that Yingying might not come tonight, so she planned to return to her room to sleep. However, she did not forget to tell Gu Ling, "If she comes here at night, you must call me." agreed, and as Su Liang opened the door and walked out, she saw a

dark shadow floating lightly onto the courtyard.

"Yingying?" Su Liang blurted out.

The golden mask shimmered mysteriously in the cold moonlight, and Yingying chuckled, "Su Liang?"

"Yes, it's me." Su Liang nodded and greeted, "Nice to meet you."

Yingying walked towards Su Liang, and as she got closer, she saw her beautiful and exquisite little face. She said, 'What a tender and beautiful flower, no wonder he doesn't care for me.'

Su Liang: ...it seemed like a compliment, but it sounded somewhat weird...

"Where did you learn your Medical Skills?" Yingying asked Su Liang. Su Liang retorted, "Where did you learn your poison techniques?"

"I heard you're infatuated with Xiaogu?" Yingying asked again. Su Liang retorted, "I heard you're infatuated with him?"

"Is my medicine ready?" Yingying asked.

With a smiling face, Su Liang said, "How much are you willing to pay for it?"

Yingying snorted lightly, "Xiaogu, why is your little wife asking me for money?"

Given our relationship, shouldn't it be given to me?"

Gu Ling's voice came from the room, "Only the Snow Lotus is what I owe you. The other medicinal ingredients and finished medicines are all Su Liang's, so what she says goes."

"Little girl, you name your price. If I can't afford it, then I'll just have to be rude."

Yingying's eyes looked deeply at Su Liang.

Su Liang looked Yingying up and down, "I want all the poison you have on you."

Yingying blinked, "That's it?"

Su Liang nodded, "That's it."

Yingying reached out and put her arm around Su Liang's shoulder, "Why didn't you say so earlier! Your room is here, right? I'll stand here and not move; you can search for them yourself, and whatever you find is yours!"

Gu Ling stared at the small jade medicine bottle in front of him, motionless for a quarter of an hour.

The voices of Yingying and Su Liang kept coming from the next room.

"Yingying, can I take off this dress?"

"You can."

"What about this one?"

"Any of them!"

"Yingying, you have such a great figure!"

"You're still young; you'll grow up."

Gu Ling realized what they were talking about and felt that he shouldn't listen, but his ears were too good; unless he covered them up, he could hear the voices in the next room very clearly.

"Okay, I've taken off my clothes. I'm going to sleep here for a while before I leave; I'm exhausted."

"Yingying, don't you want to check the medicine first?"

"Oh, I forgot. I'll look at it when I leave. I trust you. If there's any problem, feel free to choose one of those poisons and let Xiaogu take it."

"Alright!"

Gu Ling in the next room:

Chapter 289: 289. Nian Jincheng's Resentment

Su Liang wasn't used to sleeping with others, so she gave the bed to Ying Ying and slept on the couch.

Ying Ying accepted without hesitation, and although she was enthusiastic towards Su Liang, she wasn't as pretentious and clingy as Yan Shiba.

Dawn was approaching.

Su Liang felt an itch on her face, opened her eyes, and saw Ying Ying's magnified smiling face.

Ying Ying had a tall and voluptuous figure, and a charming and attractive appearance. When she smiled, she was truly a beauty with a myriad of enchanting expressions.

"Little girl, sister is leaving." Ying Ying saw that Su Liang had woken up, pinched her face, and stood up.

Su Liang quickly got up, "So early? Aren't you going to eat something before leaving?"

"Next time. When Xiaoye is feeling better, I'll take him to meet you, the benefactor." Ying Ying said, putting on her cloak. Then, with a serious look, she asked Su Liang, "What's your relationship with Xiaogu...? Su Liang laughed, "We are good friends."

Ying Ying's beautiful eyes widened in surprise, "Just...friends?"

Su Liang shook her head, "No, we're brothers, family, and master and disciple."

Ying Ying looked puzzled, "What does he teach you?"

Su Liang shook her head again, "We learn from each other. He teaches me martial arts, and I teach him medical skills."

"You two are really interesting," Ying Ying smiled meaningfully. She was sure that Gu Ling's feelings towards Su Liang were not ordinary, but it seemed that the two had not yet broken through that thin layer of paper. As an onlooker, she decided not to interfere, in order not to annoy Gu Ling.

"Oh, the medicine! Wait a moment!" Su Liang put on her clothes and went to knock on Gu Ling's door next door.

After a while, the door cracked open and a hand reached out, handing Su Liang the medicine bottle.

Su Liang took it, "Great God, Ying Ying is leaving. Won't you come out to see her off?"

"No." Gu Ling said, quickly closing the door.

Ying Ying looked at the medicine Su Liang had made and nodded immediately, "Yes, that's it! You're not even that old, but you're quite capable. I underestimated you before. Next time we meet, let's have a good talk about medicine and poison."

Su Liang gave Ying Ying a bundle containing the clothes she was sending her and some desserts.

"This is nice, give it to me!" Ying Ying pointed to the unremarkable wooden hairpin on Su Liang's head.

But Su Liang refused, “No, this was a gift from someone else.”

Ying Ying guessed it was given by Gu Ling and didn’t insist further. She picked up the bundle, hugged Su Liang, and turned to leave, saying that they would definitely meet again.

“Take care, Ying Ying.” Su Liang stood under the eaves, watching Ying Ying disappear from view before turning her head to find that Gu Ling had also come out.

“You just met, and you’re already so reluctant to part?” Gu Ling asked.

Su Liang felt his tone was a bit odd, “Not bad. Ying Ying is much more adorable than that Yan Shiba.”

Gu Ling didn’t comment on this and turned to walk towards the kitchen.

‘Great God, I want wontons for breakfast.” Su Liang said, feeling really good to be able to order food.

Su Liang replied, “I don’t want to make them.”

Su Liang: ...Fine, fine, it’s nice to have something to eat. She didn’t always let Gu Ling order food in the past either.

However, when Su Liang finished exercising and washing up and was eating her steaming hot breakfast, she stirred the sour soup noodles with her chopsticks, and several small, exquisite wontons floated up from below.

A smile instantly appeared in Su Liang’s eyes, “Great God, didn’t you say you didn’t want to make them? Did you also want to eat them after hearing me say

Gu Ling shook his head, “Just practicing.”

Su Liang was very happy with this arrangement, “Great God, feel free to practice any dish you wish to cook. I promise to give it a good try and provide honest feedback. ”

On this freezing New Year’s Eve day, it started snowing during breakfast. After eating a warm bowl of wonton noodles, Su Liang felt refreshed and hummed a tune while washing the dishes.

After giving Situ Han his acupuncture treatment in the palace again today, Su Liang was awarded a gold embossed invitation, inviting her and Gu Ling to the royal family banquet on New Year’s Eve.

Su Liang was extremely pleased and took the invitation back to Ning Mansion. Situ Han also bestowed many gifts, which were sent directly to Ning Mansion.

As Su Liang rode her horse through the snow, her pace was not fast. Halfway through the journey, she heard the sound of horses’ hooves and someone shouting “Divine Doctor Sul’ behind her. She turned around to see two imperial guards on horseback.

She learned that one of Situ Han’s concubines was having a difficult childbirth and was asked to return to the palace to save her. Su Liang turned back immediately.

Gu Ling was preparing the New Year’s Eve dinner at home, with quite a few ingredients needing to be pre-fried. It was agreed between him and Su Liang that they would eat little at the palace banquet and return home to observe the night together.

Su Liang was very busy that day. After giving Situ Han his acupuncture treatment, she helped his favored concubine give birth. Approaching noon, the child was born safely along with the mother. Su Liang thought she could leave, but Empress Dowager Min sent for her, saying she had a terrible headache and asked Su Liang to check it out...

As always, Su Liang was easygoing and agreed readily, then followed the person to Empress Dowager Min's place. Su Liang didn't prescribe any medicine and just gave her a few acupuncture needles; she felt her head was less foggy afterward.

So, when Su Liang left the palace once more, she received another bunch of rewards.

Back at Ning Mansion, Gu Ling brought over a plate of freshly fried dumplings and a bowl of fish soup – Su Liang's missed lunch.

"Thank you for your hard work, Great God." Su Liang smiled, her eyes curved, "Then, let me dig in."

Gu Ling turned back to the kitchen to continue preparing the New Year's Eve dinner ingredients. He thought he was on the right track, as Su Liang seemed to be already conquered by his cooking skills after only two days...

But in fact, Su Liang felt it was just a change in division of labor, which was good. If they ever decided to part ways, both of their lifeskills would be no problem.

When Su Liang went to the kitchen to wash the dishes and help Gu Ling make a fire after her late lunch, she brought up Ying Ying again, "Ying Ying is so beautiful and has such a great figure. How could you not like her?"

Gu Ling raised his knife, and a fish head was chopped in half. Considering his meticulous pursuit of perfection in cooking, his cut was a bit off this time and the two halves were noticeably different in size.

As Gu Ling looked down at the pale fish eyes, wondering how to answer Su Liang's question, he couldn't say that he wasn't interested in women anymore. He heard Su Liang laugh, "But it's true, since you have no interest in women and don't understand romance, Ying Ying needs to find a man who can

appreciate her beauty."

Gu Ling turned around with the knife, which startled Su Liang as she looked up, "Great God, what are you doing?"

Gu Ling's expression was calm, "The fish head is bad, we need to get a new one." Saying this, he picked up another fish from the water basin, raised the knife, and got a new fish head.

Su Liang couldn't understand why he had discarded the previous one, "What's wrong with it? Isn't it fresh?"

"The two halves I cut were not the same size," Gu Ling explained.

Su Liang scoffed, "You are obsessive-compulsive."

Following Su Liang's memory from her previous life and their learning from Master White's wife in Su family village, the two of them made a basket of jujube flower buns. Gu Ling did most of the work, while Su Liang was responsible for putting the washed red dates on top.

Gu Ling lifted the lid of the pot, and a faint warm steam filled the kitchen. Once the steam had dispersed, Su Liang looked at the steamed buns, each with a perfectly symmetrical shape, none of them twisted during the expansion process. She gave Gu Ling a thumbs up, "Perfect!"

Ren Dong saw the finished product and praised Su Liang for making it look so beautiful.

Su Liang accepted the praise, as she couldn't let anyone know that Gu Ling cooked in her apron every day. Such information would be a devastating blow to his cold image he maintained in front of others...

As it started to get dark, Ren Dong drove Gu Ling and Su Liang to the palace for the banquet.

This was a banquet attended only by members of the Liang royal family, most of whom Su Liang had already met.

Situ Han, who had been out of sight for two months because of his facial paralysis, appeared today in high spirits and full of pride. He had a handsome appearance, always treating Su Liang gently, but his presence was somewhat similar to Duanmu Yi's. A clever emperor must have a deep mind and be a smooth operator.

Situ Han's seating arrangement was interesting – Su Liang and Gu Ling sat right opposite the crown prince, with King Yue and Situ Xie seated at their side.

Though Su Liang and Gu Ling were honored guests, this arrangement made the atmosphere a bit subtle. During the banquet, Situ Han would occasionally talk and laugh with Su Liang, asking Gu Ling if the food suited his taste, but he completely ignored Situ Xie, not even lending him a glance.

Lady Min took the initiative to make peace, "During the time when His Majesty was ill, King Yue sent someone to invite Divine Doctor Su to treat His Majesty and helped handle political affairs. Today, there's no outsider present, shouldn't His Majesty toast King Yue?"

Upon hearing this, Situ Han laughed out loud, picked up his wine glass, and looked at Situ Xie.

Situ Xie smiled softly, raising his glass and standing up.

"To Uncle," said Situ Han, draining his glass. Putting down the wine glass, his smile deepened. "My uncle is getting old, so it's hard on him to work so diligently. I feel guilty in my heart. From now on, let my uncle put aside his concerns and enjoy his remaining years! This is my filial piety as a nephew, and my uncle must not refuse!"

Empress Dowager Lady Min's face changed first, followed by Situ Xie's children and grandchildren.

There was no fool present, and everyone knew what Situ Han meant. Letting Situ Xie enjoy his remaining years was equivalent to openly asking him to hand over the power in his hands.

Situ Xie's expression didn't change, and he just said, "Thank you for Your Majesty's concern" without taking a clear stance.

The specifics of the power struggle wouldn't be brought up in the open, but it was apparent that Situ Han had declared war on Situ Xie, and the outcome was uncertain.

Su Liang's only interest in the power struggles within Liang Kingdom's

imperial family was to watch the drama unfold. She and Gu Ling were outsiders, and their purpose for coming here had been achieved, just waiting for the right time to leave.

The banquet didn't end too late. After leaving the palace, Su Liang and Gu Ling got into a carriage and rode some distance before Su Liang asked, "Will Situ Xie rebel? His illegitimate son becoming emperor is different from his legitimate children and grandchildren becoming emperor. Even if Situ Han knows he's his biological father, he can still deny it. Even, given the current momentum, I wouldn't be too surprised if Situ Han wants to eliminate Situ Xie's entire family."

It was not novel for fathers and sons in the royal family to fight each other, let alone this father and son who were born from an illicit affair between their uncle and sister-in-law.

"Let them do as they please." Gu Ling was not interested in this.

Su Liang was thoughtful, "It might be destined to be a life-and-death stalemate. After all, Situ Han has his own children and grandchildren, and Situ Xie has the children and grandchildren he raised, and for the sake of their children and grandchildren's safety and future, they cannot reconcile. After all, there's only one imperial throne."

Seeing that Gu Ling didn't speak, Su Liang changed the topic to something that concerned them and lowered her voice, "Ying Ying came too quickly, took the Snow Lotus, and left. What should we do about our marriage?"

Originally, they planned for Ying Ying to appear on the day of their wedding and "kidnap the bride," then they would use her appearance to void the marriage. But now, this plan was no longer feasible.

"Let it be." Gu Ling said.

Su Liang shrugged, "Fine. We can only do this. After all, we can't offend either side."

At this point, they had already accepted the imperial marriage and couldn't just reject it without reason. Moreover, they couldn't leave easily without obtaining the object Duanmu Yi asked them to get.

Although technically they've got it, the secret scroll would be obtained sooner or later. But whether or not to give it to Duanmu Yi and how to give it was something that could only be discussed when they see Old Man Mu again.

Now, Su Liang was waiting for someone from Duanmu Yi to come, whether it was to warn or scold her, she didn't care. As long as someone came, she would have a reason to leave.

New Year's Eve night.

This was the second New Year Su Liang had spent since traversing the timeline, and Gu Ling was still by her side.

Last year they had spent the New Year in Su Family Village, and Su Liang had prepared the New Year's Eve dinner, which included a luxurious tea-flavored chicken made with Dahongpao tea leaves.

This year in Yao City, there was no Dahongpao, but Gu Ling used the precious tea leaves given to Su Liang as a reward from Situ Han to make tea-flavored chicken, which had its own unique flavor.

Su Liang tried every dish and kept nodding in praise.

Last was the chopped pepper fish head. The two fish heads were placed symmetrically on the plate, even the fish eyes looked like a mirror image.

"Great God, do you feel uncomfortable seeing something asymmetrical?" Su Liang asked Gu Ling.

Gu Ling shook his head, "No."

"What did that ruined fish head do wrong?" Su Liang asked with a smile.

Gu Ling's expression was indifferent, "I'm sick, obsessive-compulsive, can you cure me?"

Su Liang almost choked on the fruit wine she had just taken, coughed lightly, and said, "It's just cooking, it's not that serious, no need to cure it." The window was open, and snow was swirling outside.

As Su Liang enjoyed her food, she reminisced about her experiences after crossing over. Gu Ling listened quietly, realizing that she remembered all those events when he was mostly by her side. This feeling was nice.

After finishing eating, Su Liang put down her chopsticks, walked to the window, and suddenly turned to propose to Gu Ling, "Great God, there's still a long time before daylight. Shall we go for a walk later?"

Gu Ling nodded, "Alright."

Soon after, Su Liang returned to her room to change clothes, donned a large cloak, and brought along a small hand warmer she had bought at the market a few days ago.

Upon stepping out, she saw Gu Ling already prepared and waiting for her under the corridor.

"Great God, you have a cold constitution." Su Liang handed the hand warmer to him.

Gu Ling took a look and shook his head, "Not as cold as you." "You don't even smile," Su Liang teased.

Gu Ling casually replied, "Brown Sugar Ginger Jujube Tea."

Su Liang: ...speechless...

Leaving the Prince Ning Mansion, the two strolled aimlessly in the falling snow, listening to the sound of their footsteps crushing the fresh powder. It felt as if they were the only ones left in the world, with no one else around.

Gu Ling wanted to know how children from Su Liang's past life grew up.

From her earliest memories, Su Liang recounted her experiences from childhood to adulthood, what kind of school she attended, the teachers who had left a deep impression on her, the unforgettable classmates, and the silly things she had done.

“During high school, a boy confessed his love for me,” Su Liang said with a smile.

Gu Ling’s eyes flashed slightly, as Su Liang continued, “Guess how I rejected him back then?”

Gu Ling frowned slightly, “You said you needed to focus on studying?”

“Great God, you actually guessed right!” Su Liang expressed her surprise.

Gu Ling: ...Indeed, Su Liang was currently at the same age as when she was in high school in her past life, and her priority was still studying and improving her abilities. This was also one of the reasons why Gu Ling did not plan to confess his love right now; he respected and admired Su Liang’s mindset and determination.

“How about college?” Gu Ling asked.

Su Liang shook her head, “I was even busier in college. Medical students have a lot to learn and are always swamped.”

Gu Ling: ...Good, if Su Liang falls in love with him, he would be the first and only man she had loved in both lifetimes.

New Year’s Day.

It was still the crack of dawn when Su Liang and Gu Ling returned to the Prince Ning Mansion.

There was a thick layer of snow on the ice lake, and the two built a cute little snowman together.

“This is what winter should be like,” Su Liang said cheerfully. “Great God, happy New Year.”

Gu Ling brushed the snow off Su Liang’s hat, “Xiaoliang, happy New Year.”

Their conversation was the same as last year. Gu Ling rarely called Su Liang by that name, but he did it for the sake of parallelism.

Back in the main courtyard, Su Liang brought up her friends, “At this moment, your brother Xiao Nian must be enjoying a carefree life with his beloved wife.”

Meanwhile, Nian Jincheng, who had to abandon his newlywed wife and couldn’t return home on New Year’s Day, was riding fast through the snowy landscape to Yao City. He sneezed suddenly, his face full of resentment, and silently complained: It’s all Gu Ling’s fault, that bastard. Had he married Su Liang earlier, none of this trouble would have happened....

Chapter 290: 290. Turmoil of the Second Marriage

On the first day of the New Year, Su Liang and Gu Ling both slept until approaching noon, and then made dumplings together.

On the second day, early in the morning, the King Yue Mansion sent people to invite Gu Ling and Su Liang to attend today’s family banquet. According to tradition, the married daughter should

return to her maiden home; since Gu Ling's mother was no longer present, they asked him to join the reunion. But Gu Ling declined.

On the third day, someone from the palace came to bring a celebratory robe for Gu Ling to try on. There was still time to make any necessary adjustments if it didn't fit.

Gu Ling went into the room by himself, and after a while, he came out, saying that he had tried it on, and it fitted very well.

But Su Liang suspected that he hadn't worn it at all.

"Master ...I", Ren Dong glanced at the eunuchs and palace maids waiting outside the courtyard, wanting to ask Su Liang if she was really going to stay in the Liang Country Palace for the next three days.

The fact that Situ Han had sent someone to deliver the ceremonial robe was only one of his purposes. The other was to take Su Liang into the palace. She was to stay there for the three days before the wedding, and on the sixth day, she would go directly from the palace to get married. Her wedding dress was also ready in the palace, waiting for her to try it on.

Su Liang instructed Ren Dong, "You pack up; I have a few words to say to Marquis Gu." After saying this, she went into Gu Ling's room.

After closing the door, Su Liang saw the box for the celebratory robe still intact on the table. It seemed that it had indeed not been opened.

"Great God, how about this, I stay in the palace for three days, and during that time, you elope!" , Su Liang came up with this idea on the spot.

Gu Ling countered, "Elope to where?"

"Of course, back to Qian Country. Afterwards, we could spread the rumor that you agreed to get married only to obtain a thousand-year-old snow lotus from Emperor Liang. I lost face, so I return to Qian Country to get even with you. This way, Situ Han will not do anything to you, and Duanmu Yi will not respond either." Su Liang looked serious.

Gu Ling shook his head, "I would be condemned by people."

Su Liang paused for a moment, "Great God, do you really care about the opinions of outsiders?"

Gu Ling looked at her silently.

Su Liang cleared her throat, "Now that I think about it, some of our friends who know us well might also blame you because of misunderstandings, but there are some secrets we can't tell them. It's my fault for not considering it thoroughly. I kind of wanted to elope too. How crazy would it be to dump the world's most beautiful man right before the wedding, but I like you. If I eloped, it wouldn't be crazy, it would be insane. Never mind."

Upon hearing Su Liang sigh, 'I like you', even though Gu Ling knew she wasn't serious, his heart skipped a beat.

From the time they met to the present, Su Liang and Gu Ling had both been relatively rational. Thus, Su Liang quickly dismissed the idea she thought was feasible but Gu Ling didn't want to implement.

"Someone will come from Qian Country.", Gu Ling said, expression neutral.

Su Liang nodded, "That's for sure."

They both believed that Duanmu Yi would send someone. However, when the person Duanmu Yi arranged would arrive was unknown, unlike the previous arrangement made with Ying Ying and Gu Ling for an elopement on his wedding day.

The speed of message delivery, the speed of human travel, and the influence of weather would all affect the timing. All they could do was estimate a rough period: from the fifth to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month.

If the fastest estimated arrival time they anticipated was accurate and the person arrived on the fifth day, then the wedding could be cancelled on the sixth day. If the person only arrived on the fifteenth day, Su Liang and Gu Ling would become husband and wife in name once again.

"While I'm not around, you should go out to eat." Su Liang suggested, thinking that if only Gu Ling was left in the prince's mansion, and he never went out, it might cause suspicion about how he got his meals.

Gu Ling nodded slightly, "Okay." He liked the dishes cooked by Su Liang, but he decided to learn the cooking skills himself, just to cook for Su Liang.

A quarter of an hour later, Su Liang left the Prince Ning Mansion with Ren Dong and got into the carriage sent by the palace to head toward the Palace of Liang Country.

It wasn't because of any custom that the bride and groom shouldn't see each other three days before the wedding, but that Su Liang was seizing the opportunity to find out where the secret scroll was hidden. Her objective was not to obtain the scroll, but to let Duanmu Yi know that she hadn't forgotten her mission. After all, there was still a spy planted here in Yao City by Duanmu Yi, and she didn't know who it was.

The Yuheng Palace that Situ Han had arranged for Su Liang was the same one that sisters Situ Xiang and Situ Ning had stayed in when they entered the palace. When Situ Xie took Su Liang on a tour of the Imperial Palace of Liang Country, he mentioned that Situ Ning really loved the plum grove in the Imperial Garden. Despite being only a princess before her marriage, Situ Ning's treatment in the palace was no different from that of a princess.

Since Situ Ning got married and Situ Xiang disappeared, no one had lived in the Yuheng Palace.

As Su Liang walked in, she found the decoration inside to be simple and elegant. On the inner window sill, there was a plain white vase with blossoming winter plums outside the window.

A group of beautiful palace maids entered the room in a single file, walking lightly. Each of them was holding a tray containing bridal dresses, a phoenix crown, and many other exquisite and dazzling jewelry.

The leader smiled before speaking, "Should Lady Su try on her bridal dress first?"

Su Liang held her forehead, "I didn't sleep well last night and I'm a bit tired. I'll try them on after a nap. Leave them here."

"Yes." The palace maids left after setting the items down.

Ren Dong made the bed for Su Liang, but saw her examining the jewelry.

"Do you want to sleep, Madam?" Ren Dong asked.

Su Liang shook her head, "I slept well last night. I just didn't want them to help me change clothes."

Ren Dong showed understanding. She didn't have the opportunity to help Su Liang change either.

"I've made a fortune on this trip to Liang Country." , Su Liang chuckled lightly.

Ren Dong knew that Su Liang had received a lot of gifts, most of which were from the royal family. Although Su Liang did not lack money, some of the antiques and treasures inside could not be bought with money.

"As long as we can leave smoothly, it will be fine.", Ren Dong said.

Su Liang set down the gold hairpin she was holding, "That's hard to say." If something unexpected happened in the following process and they didn't leave smoothly, naturally, they wouldn't be able to take anything with them.

No matter how valuable the items were, they were not important. All she hoped for was to escape smoothly.

"I have just told others that I am going to sleep, so I can't go out to stroll immediately." Su Liang looked around, feeling bored. If she were at home, she could teach Gu Ling some medical skills and order some dishes. Speaking of which, they still had two fish left from their New Year's fishing.

Su Liang shook her head, "I don't want to read right now. The next time I see Emperor Liang, I'll ask to visit the palace's Library Pavilion. Ah, I just thought of something!"

Ren Dong indicated her curiosity, and then she listened to Su Liang saying, since Situ Ning and Situ Xiang used to live here and it has been vacant since then, then maybe they could still find the traces left by those sisters back then.

Ren Dong looked puzzled, "What good will finding that do? Is it to tell Marquis Chang Xin what his mother did?" Besides, she couldn't think of any other reason.

Su Liang shook her head, "Just curious. Since there's nothing to do, might as well kill time. From these two pillars, you search on the left, and I'll search on the right, look carefully."

Actually, it was because Su Liang sat in the Yuheng Palace and suddenly thought about the cry for help letter that was never sent out by Situ Xiang while living in King Yue's mansion years ago. That letter was in Su Liang's medicine box.

What made Su Liang curious was, whose child was Situ Xiang carrying before she disappeared.

This matter had nothing to do with Su Liang, but both the places Su Liang was living in at King Yue's mansion and the palace were places Situ Xiang once lived, this coincidence made Su Liang curious.

Although Ren Dong didn't understand what the significance of this was, she still searched earnestly, every corner, the pillars, the roof, the floorboards, inch by inch. As she searched, she felt a bit of the thrill of treasure hunting, hoping to make some discoveries.

If someone were in Yuheng Palace, they would see a peculiar scene: Su Liang and her follower climbing high and low, concentrated on searching for some unknown treasure.

"Master!" Ren Dong suddenly made a discovery and quickly called Su Liang over to see.

Ren Dong crawled out from under the bed holding a dusty jade hairpin, looking delighted, "This bed is very wide, the hairpin must have fallen by the wall and was not found by the cleaners."

As she spoke, Ren Dong wiped off the dust from the jade hairpin with a handkerchief and handed it to Su Liang.

Su Liang took it, feeling its smooth and warm texture, the jade was brilliant and of excellent quality. The hairpin was not the usual straight style, but resembled a cloud with a tail.

One small portion of the pointed end of the hairpin was darker in color.

"Is it stained with something?" Ren Dong asked.

Su Liang smelled it, poured a little water, just enough to cover the bottom of a cup, immersed the end of the hairpin and stirred it gently.

The color of the water changed, and the stain on the hairpin was gone.

"This is..." Ren Dong frowned.

"Blood." Su Liang was certain, the end of the hairpin was stained with blood. However, if it was used to stab someone, the stained part was too shallow.

There were no characters carved on the hairpin, so it was impossible to ascertain who the owner was. But it was likely to be Situ Ning's or Situ Xiang's.

Putting down the jade hairpin, the two of them searched the entire Yuheng Palace but found nothing more.

Su Liang put the cloud-shaped jade hairpin into her medicine box, intending to share her discovery with Gu Ling when she saw him again, and analyze it together.

As for the gorgeous wedding dress, Su Liang had no interest in trying it on. The next time she saw the palace maid, she said that she had tried it, it fit very well, she was very satisfied, and there was no need for any more adjustments.

"Ling'er, Grandfather knows you resent me for not protecting your mother, and not taking good care of you. There is something Grandfather has always wanted to say, letting your mother and you marry into the Qian country is my lifelong regret. But

your mother said she didn't regret it, do you know why?" Situ Xie looked at Gu Ling and said earnestly.

Gu Ling remained silent.

Situ Xie sighed heavily, "It's because of you! Your mother said, she had already been completely disappointed in Gu Yuan, but because of you, she felt everything was worth it."

Gu Ling finally spoke, but it was a counter-question, "You want me to forgive you on my mother's behalf?"

Situ Xie bitter smile, "Ling'er, you misunderstood, Grandfather just wants to take advantage of the opportunity to see you more often, talk to you, give you what you want, nothing else."

Gu Ling nodded slightly, "Alright. I want a thousand-year-old snow lotus." Situ Xie instantly frowned, "Ling'er, what do you need the snow lotus for?" "It's useful." Gu Ling said.

"Didn't the Emperor already give you two pieces?" Situ Xie asked. Gu Ling hadn't mentioned this, and Situ Han deliberately concealed it, but it was still discovered by Situ Xie. This made him think that Su Liang and Gu Ling did not truly intend to get married.

Gu Ling shook his head, "It's not enough."

"But the thousand-year snow lotus, only the Emperor has one, and there probably isn't much left now. Would a hundred-year one suffice?" Situ Xie sighed.

As a result, Gu Ling had a meal with Situ Xie at Yue King's mansion, got a hundred-year snow lotus, and then returned to Prince Ning's mansion.

Situ Jing was puzzled, and somewhat dissatisfied, "Why is Grandfather so indulgent towards Gu Ling? He doesn't pay any attention to us, even harbors hostility towards us, and endlessly asks for things. Grandfather has always been submissive to him, and he doesn't even call him Grandfather, or show a good face. In the future, if something happens, he definitely won't side with us!"

However, Situ Xie obviously had his own plans, "Those trees, medicinal materials, snow lotus flowers, they're nothing. If he wants them, let him have them. He has Situ Family's blood running in his veins, he can never escape that."

Situ Jing sighed, and didn't mention Gu Ling anymore, instead bringing up another matter that bothered him, "For these years, Grandfather has worked hard for the stability of Liang Country, yet the Emperor is now suppressing you in all respects, trying to marginalize the power in your hands, are we just going to do nothing?"

Situ Xie's eyes suddenly became profound as he looked at Situ Jing, "What do you want to do?"

Situ Jing subconsciously glanced around, lowering his voice, "Grandfather, sooner or later the Emperor will make a move against King Yue's mansion. We should be prepared in advance, otherwise, we can only be at the mercy of others. "

However, Situ Xie said something that Situ Jing could not understand, "I don't want to see any fratricidal conflict."

Su Liang was rather comfortable in the palace. She took Ren Dong on a tour of the palace of Liang Country, conducted regular follow-ups for Situ Han and Empress Dowager Min, obtained permission from Situ Han to read books in the library pavilion on the condition that she would not borrow them and an old eunuch would accompany her throughout. She also went to see the little prince born on New Year's Eve and treated the princess who suffered heavy bleeding during childbirth. If any concubines were unwell, they would send people to invite Su Liang, and she would never refuse.

As for the nights, Situ Han suspected that Su Liang might secretly look for the mechanism secret scroll, but she never did.

In a blink of an eye, it was the night of the fifth day of the Lunar New Year.

Ren Dong observed quietly, but never saw joy or nervousness on the face of the bride-to-be Su Liang. Tonight, she seemed lost in thought, which made Ren Dong curious and prompted, "Master, you're getting married to Marquis Chang Xin tomorrow, aren't you happy?"

"Ah?" Su Liang was thinking about an ancient prescription she saw in the library pavilion of Liang Country's palace today. The prescription was missing a corner, and she was guessing what the missing herb might be.

Ren Dong repeated the question.

Su Liang nodded, "Oh, that! Of course, I am very happy, extremely happy!"

Ren Dong: ... didn't seem like it, still lost in her own thoughts...

Then, Su Liang suddenly clapped and laughed, "I got it!"

Ren Dong was at a loss for words, watching as Su Liang started to write something. She glanced at it and saw that it seemed to be the name of a medicinal herb. Ren Dong then went to set the bedding for Su Liang in silence.

What Ren Dong saw was that aside from her expertise in medicine, Su Liang was fascinated by Gu Ling. But for now, it seems like even Gu Ling couldn't compare to her love for medicine? Ren Dong, on the contrary, thought this was a good thing, because she always felt that Gu Ling was too indifferent to Su Liang. She didn't want Su Liang to fall too deeply in love and risk getting hurt.

Su Liang was oblivious to the fact that her loyal subordinate was worrying about her love life. She was only happy to have found a good prescription.

"What a shame, the Snow Lotus is so rare. It doesn't have to be a

thousand-year-old Snow Lotus; a hundred-year-old one would work too. But this treasure is hard to acquire even with money." Su Liang regretted.

Ren Dong commented, "I overheard in the restaurant that the Snow Lotus grows in the most dangerous cliffs of Wolong Snow Mountain. However, everyone who tried to pick it failed to return alive. Should I find someone who has been there to show us the way and try our luck?"

Su Liang patted Ren Dong's shoulder, "I'm getting married tomorrow. Such an important day, and you're thinking about the Snow Lotus? Go to sleep."

Ren Dong: ... who's the one thinking about the Snow Lotus and forgetting about her own wedding tomorrow...

The sixth day of Lunar New Year.

Su Liang was roused early in the morning and was attended to by a group of beautiful palace maidens. She had a bath in fragrant water, experiencing the lavish life of a noble.

Next, Su Liang kindly refused the old nanny who came to do her makeup, claiming that she was afraid of pain.

The old nanny didn't want to upset Su Liang, so she praised her for having excellent skin and looking beautiful even without makeup. Satisfied, the nanny then left.

By the time Su Liang put on layer after layer of wedding gown and felt a few points heavier, she genuinely could not comprehend why one would want to sew gold and silver threads and precious pearls and gems onto their clothes. Silently, she thought, when she gets married for real someday, she will design her own wedding dress which will focus on comfort. In fact, she likes qipao, maybe she can make one just for her husband to see.

Su Liang was attended to, much like a puppet on a string, and found it tiring. However, she couldn't show it too obviously as it was supposed to be a happy day and she should look delighted. The nervousness of a new bride-to-be could be ignored; there was nothing to be nervous about when marrying Gu Ling...

The Mansion of Prince Ning.

Although Situ Xie's suggestion that Gu Ling should get married in the king's mansion was rejected, he still busied himself with Gu Ling's wedding arrangements. He ran to the Mansion of Prince Ning for three consecutive days, arranged for many servants to come over, and even brought all the people from the king's mansion on the sixth day of the Lunar New Year.

As for Gu Ling, he left them to it, knowing that he couldn't handle all the matters on his own.

Only after being repeatedly urged by Situ Xie, did Gu Ling finally put on his wedding robes, which the palace had sent over. He didn't particularly like them, finding them too cumbersome. He thought maybe he could learn some sewing. When he and Su Liang get married, he could personally make her a wedding outfit since she doesn't like this kind of get-up. He had previously promised to let her embroider her own bridal veil, but other matters had taken precedence, and it was set aside.

"Cousin, you look so beautiful, deserving of the reputation of the most beautiful person in the world." Situ Yao was utterly stunned by Gu Ling's appearance in the red wedding attire.

There was still no smile on Gu Ling's face, as arranged by Situ Xie, Gu Ling set off on time to fetch his bride from the imperial palace, accompanied by Situ Jing and Situ Zhang.

The common people who came to watch yet again marveled at Gu Ling's stunning beauty, and they all understood why Su Liang, such a talented and beautiful woman, would choose no one but him.

"Cousin Ling, are you not happy?" Situ Jing asked with a laugh.

Gu Ling answered indifferently, "Very happy."

Situ Jing nodded, “That’s good. Being able to marry a remarkable woman like divine doctor Su is a blessing for you. You must cherish her!”

Upon arriving outside the palace, after waiting for a while, the carriage that Su Liang was riding finally drove out slowly. It was very grand, but she couldn’t be seen...

Gu Ling was not disappointed, as he did not want other men to see Su Liang in her wedding dress, but he knew he would witness it today.

The wedding procession left the imperial palace, boisterously making its way back to the Mansion of Prince Ning.

Situ Jing reminded Gu Ling that, according to tradition, he should carry the bride from the gate to the wedding hall.

Gu Ling lifted the curtain of the carriage to see Su Liang sitting inside, surrounded by layers of piled-up clothes. The phoenix crown on her head looked very heavy, and her face was covered.

Su Liang lowered her head, seeing a hand stretch over. She recognized it as Gu Ling’s, and couldn’t help but grumble, “My neck is about to break.”

Maybe I should also make the phoenix crown when we get married... Gu Ling thought, as he hoisted Su Liang out of the carriage in a horizontal carry.

Amidst the sounds of firecrackers and cheers, Gu Ling firmly carried Su Liang into the wedding hall.

Situ Xie didn’t have the audacity to sit in the high hall position, knowing that Gu Ling would definitely not pay him respects, and that it would only result in a public loss of face.

After stabilizing her feet on the ground, Su Liang sighed a breath of relief, hoping this tiresome ceremony would finish quickly so that her head could be freed.

Gu Ling also hoped it would end soon to avoid further complications. Regardless of its authenticity, he liked the part of the ceremony where the couple bowed to each other. Last time he went through it in his disguise as Ning Jing, that didn’t count, but this time it was different.

“The auspicious time has arrived!”

Under the watchful eyes of the nobility of Liang Country, Su Liang and Gu Ling completed the ceremonial rites of the wedding.

“The rites are over, the newlyweds to the bridal chamber!”

Upon hearing this, Gu Ling once again lifted Su Liang in his arms.

Situ Xie, with the people of the Yue King’s mansion, wore a full smile as he invited the guests to dine.

Just then, a shout came from a distance, “My Prince, the emissary from Emperor Qian has arrived!”

Silence enveloped the room instantly.

“At last.” Su Liang got off Gu Ling as she heard Nian Jincheng’s voice.

“I am here under the Emperor’s order, to deliver an imperial edict. His Majesty ordered that whenever and wherever Su Liang is found, the edict should be given to her immediately.” Nian Jincheng’s face was stern as he spoke.

Su Liang didn’t lift her veil, taking a deep sigh, she said, “General Nian, you have my gratitude.” Turning to Gu Ling by her side, she continued, “Let’s go.”

The crowd watched as Gu Ling, Su Liang and Nian Jincheng left for the bridal chamber together, looking at each other in surprise.

With a glint in his eyes, Situ Xie carried on with the banquet, inviting the guests to dine.

Entering the chamber, Su Liang lifted her veil saying, “I will go and save my head, you two carry on.”

Nian Jincheng, who had been complaining about Gu Ling all the way, looked at him in his wedding attire and said, “I’m sorry. I didn’t want to interrupt your wedding, but I was being watched and couldn’t delay.”

Gu Ling shook his head lightly, “I owe you an apology. You couldn’t be at home with Yang Yu on your wedding anniversary.”

From the inner chamber, Su Liang’s voice echoed, “Will you two stop the brotherly bonding? My God, come help me out!”

At Su Liang’s words, Gu Ling immediately left Nian Jincheng and walked quickly into the inner chamber. The sight of Su Liang made him stop in his tracks.

She had taken off two layers of the wedding garment. Her face, still in makeup, was very appealing. Right now, her expression carried a hint of annoyance, adding charisma to her charm.

Gu Ling swallowed dryly, asking in a low voice, “What can I assist with?”

“My hair...” Su Liang was trying to take off the bridal headdress but it was entangled in her hair. At the moment, half of her hair lay loose and the headdress tilted to one side. She had to tilt her head to reduce the pressure. She felt genuinely ridiculous.

A flicker of amusement crossed Gu Ling’s eyes. She did not look ridiculous at all, she was super cute.

Gu Ling quickly moved forward, gingerly untangling Su Liang’s hair from the headdress. When he took off the headdress and held it in his hand, it felt very heavy. It must be even more so on one’s head, ‘You’ve had a tough day.’

After stretching her neck, Su Liang blurted out, “Can’t agree more. Next time we get married, can you wear the bridal dress and the headdress and I wear the groom’s attire?”

Gu Ling was taken aback for a moment before retorting, “Next time?”

Su Liang stood up, stretching her limbs, “What if we need to pretend to be married again?”

Gu Ling put down the headdress and said, “Let’s do away with the headdress next time.”

Su Liang was about to go find Nian Jincheng when Gu Ling told her to change her clothes first.

“Yes, I really need to. The clothes from the palace are weird.” Su Liang looked down at her chest.

Gu Ling silently turned around and left...

When Su Liang came out again after freshening up, both Gu Ling and Nian Jincheng had already read the secret edict.

When Su Liang took it, it instructed her to cancel her marriage to Gu Ling without offending Situ Han, and to return to the country immediately.

Nian Jincheng frowned, “You two have completed the wedding rites, how can it be cancelled? Not offending the one who bestowed the marriage, Emperor Liang, is literally impossible.”

The next moment, Su Liang abruptly got up, throwing down the secret edict and pointing angrily at Gu Ling, saying, “I treated you with sincerity, with the heavens as my witness. You actually agreed to marry me for the sake of another woman? What do you take me for?”

Nian Jincheng was taken aback, staring in astonishment.

Gu Ling spoke calmly, “She is just my friend, I owe her a favor and need to repay it. It was you who wanted to marry me, and I did not want to deceive you, and thus told you the truth.”

Surprised looks appeared on the faces of the servants in the courtyard as they heard the voices coming from inside the room.

“Gu Ling, I do love you, and I cannot bear to see you trample my sincerities like this!” There was anger behind Su Liang’s words, “At this point, I should thank you for your honesty! Since you have ulterior motives for marrying me, let’s end this. Let’s pretend this never happened! The Emperor is ill and has commanded me to return home as soon as possible. I will embark on my journey today, you are free to come or not!”

After her words, Su Liang went into the inner chamber, took out the headdress that had been causing pain in her neck, and threw it on the ground. Then she left the room returning to the one she previously occupied.

After Nian Jincheng closed the door, he saw Gu Ling calmly taking off the wedding attire and asked him confusingly, “Is this... a rehearsed drama?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “Ad-libbing actually, was it not exciting?”

Nian Jincheng nodded absently before asking confusedly, “The other woman Su Liang said you agreed to marry her for, who is she? You haven’t fallen in love with someone else, have you?”

Gu Ling replied contemplatively, “All the women I know prefer Su Liang even more..”