

Three-Time 29

Chapter 29

[Tough Luck] Su Liang tried on the shoes that Ning Jing had bought and they fitted perfectly. The mushrooms were excellent, which she planned to use for a chicken stew. As for the hawthorn that Ning Jing wanted, Su Liang originally wanted to make candied hawthorn, but without bamboo sticks, she decided to make Sugar Snowball which doesn't require sticks. Ning Jing rolled up his sleeves, listened to Su Liang's instructions, and began to wash and pit the hawthorns. "What's the name of that guy?" Su Liang who was frying sugar suddenly asked. Ning Jing looked indifferent, "It doesn't matter." Su Liang suspected he didn't know, because he wasn't the real seventh son of the Ning Family. But, indeed, it didn't matter. The sun was setting. When Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi arrived, they saw a middle-aged man standing at the door, so they curiously asked, "Who are you?" "I am here to find my young master. Could you please let him know? If my master does not agree to return home, I'll just wait here." The middle-aged man sighed. "Bro, he's here for Brother Ning." Zhuzi said. Bai Xiaohu pushed the door open, pulled Zhuzi in, and immediately shut the door, whispering, "Ignore him! Don't let him in. He must be someone Brother Ning and Sister Su Liang dislike!" ... Su Liang turned around and saw two young boys standing at the door with sparkling eyes. The newly made Sugar Snowballs were enticing. The white sugar frosting cloaked the hawthorn, fading its original vivid red color to a soft, blurry hue, like a plum bathed in the snow – it was absolutely charming! The sweet aroma wafted in the air and Ning Jing was about to pop a piece into his mouth with his slender fingers. Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi both swallowed simultaneously. Su Liang waved at them, "I just made these, not sure if they're good or not. Come and have a taste!" Bai Xiaohu took out a handful of sour dates from his pocket, "These are from a tree behind my house. Some of it has ripened and it tastes very good!" Round and plump dates, crisp and sour-sweet. Seeing Su Liang liking them, Bai Xiaohu mentioned that there were many of such trees on the mountain behind his house. "I'll take a look someday." Su Liang laughingly said. The two boys ate quickly and the small bowl of Sugar Snowball which she gave them was soon gone. Su Liang refilled a big bowl for Bai Xiaohu, "Don't eat too much at once, especially Zhuzi, don't have any more today. Take it home and get your grandparents to taste it. It can stay fresh for a few days." "Thank you, Sister Su Liang!" Bai Xiaohu took the bowl and sprinted off, with Zhuzi following him, his footsteps were steadier than before. ... She finished making the mushroom stewed chicken, as darkness fell, a tempting aroma wafted around the courtyard. Bai Xiaohu, who came back to return the bowl, took away another bowl of meat and got scolded by the old man Bai when he returned home. "When you are leaving someday, write me a cookbook." Ning Jing suggested, "I can buy it." Su Liang nodded, "No problem. We can't spend our money forever, we need to think of a way." Their life was simple, but not frugal, especially when it came to food. Su Liang was too fragile, she needed good food for nourishing her body. Ning Jing was initially the type of person who only ate to avoid starvation, but Su Liang's food was his exception. Putting down the chopsticks, Su Liang looked out of the window, "Since he is here, it isn't right not to let him in..." ... The front gate creaked open, the middle-aged man huddled in the corner stood up immediately, "Young Master!" Ning Jing didn't say a word, he turned around and went back. Looking at the open door, the middle-aged man came to his senses, hurried in, and closed the door behind him. When he entered the room, he saw Su Liang lazily sitting at the table with a plate of Sugar Snowballs and a plate of plump grapes next to her. The middle-aged man quickly gave a bow, "So this must be the lady of the Seventh Young Master of the Ning Family? Sorry for the inconvenience. My name is

Zhao Ming, I am the fourth housekeeper of Ning Mansion.” Su Liang returned the question, “If I go to the Ning Family in Xunyang, can I really become a respectable lady?” Zhao Ming was stunned, then chuckled, “The master spoils the Seventh Young Master the most, of course, he would recognize you as the Seventh Young Master’s wife.” “He spoils him the most yet still drove him out of his home?” Su Liang couldn’t help but show a bit of sarcasm. Zhao Ming sighed again and again, “That was just a temporary solution out of no choice. Now that the storm has passed, the master has sent me to bring the young master back home.” “You must have inquired about who I am, right?” Su Liang asked. Zhao Ming nodded, “Indeed, the lady grew up in the capital city and is also from a distinguished family.” “Distinguished, not quite. But times have changed. If I go to Ning Family with my current status, I can at best become a concubine, and would have to endure people’s contempt. If so, I might as well not go.” Su Liang said. “Then what about the young master...” Zhao Ming looked towards Ning Jing. “He can go with you. But I’ve supported him for so long with my embroidery work, surely there should be something for me too, right?” Su Liang hinted. “Thank you for... your care for our young master.” As Zhao Ming was speaking, he took out a hundred-silver banknote. Su Liang took it with a smile, “Indeed, a wealthy household. Even a fourth housekeeper carries so much money around.” Zhao Ming chuckled awkwardly, “It’s for emergency needs when we travel.” “Knowing I used to live in the capital city, and you’re giving me this small sum of money. Are you trying to beggar off street kids?” Su Liang’s countenance suddenly changed. “I do not carry that much with me. Once we return home, I will report to the master and he will arrange to reward you.” Zhao Ming said. Su Liang shook her head, “I am the kind of person who only trusts in hard cash. Hand over five thousand taels and you can take him with you.” Zhao Ming’s face froze, “Miss Su, the master is seriously ill and waiting for the young master to return home, we cannot delay. Once we return home...” “Cut the crap, I don’t believe you.” Su Liang cooled her face, “You can leave now. Without five thousand taels, let’s not talk.” Zhao Ming turned to Ning Jing, “Young Master, this...” Without any expression on his face, Ning Jing said, “The thing I dislike most is owing someone. If the Ning Family is reluctant to pay even this small amount, then I don’t need to return.” Not long after, Zhao Ming was kicked out and walked away quickly from the Su Family’s village. There was a carriage waiting at the entrance of the village. Zhao Ming boarded it, his face sank, “To the county town!” ... The next day, when Zhao Ming returned, Xing Yusheng, who had come to seek medical treatment, hadn’t left yet. Noting the emblem on Qi Yan and Qi Jun’s waist swords, representing Bei Jingwang Mansion, Zhao Ming turned pale and kept his distance. Seeing Ning Jing enjoy the Sugar Snowball dessert, Xing Yusheng asked about it. Learning it was made from the red fruit he’d brought the previous day, he tasted it out of curiosity and complimented effusively. Su Liang suggested he take some back for Madame Xing. As Xing Yusheng was leaving, he noticed Zhao Ming, “Who is that man?” Summoned by Qi Yan, Zhao Ming revealed that he had come from Ning Family of Xunyang to take Ning Jing back. Xing Yusheng’s face fell, “Lady Ning, who is my adopted sister, if she doesn’t approve, who dares to meddle? Be careful, or you’ll lose your head.” Shaken, Zhao Ming realized too late of what he was saying, Xing Yusheng had already left in his carriage. ... Qi Jun chuckled, “It seems Miss Su didn’t agree to being the crown prince’s adopted sister.” From within the carriage, came Xing Yusheng’s melancholic voice, “Can’t I support her unilaterally?” Qi Yan sighed, “That lady is odd. Anyone else would’ve clung to the prince, but it seems the prince must pursue.” Qi Jun laughed, “I wonder if they’ll return to the Ning Mansion.” “They won’t.” Xing Yusheng was certain. “What if they do?” Qi Yan asked. Xing Yusheng humphed, “Su Liang agreed to treat me, she hasn’t done so. Why would she go now? Ning Jing, on the other hand, can.” “If only Miss Su remains, we could invite her to the prince’s mansion to be a mansion physician!” Qi Yan

was elated. Qi Jun coughed lightly, "Brother, even the old lady and the prince don't hold such influence, stop dreaming." ... Zhao Ming took out a stack of silver banknotes and respectfully handed them to Su Liang, "This is five thousand taels, a token of my gratitude for Miss Su for caring for our young master." Feigning surprise, Su Liang accepted, "It's only been a night, where did you get this?" "From the Money House in the county town," replied Zhao Ming, "The old man gave me a token, seeing as young Master might need money on the way home." "I see." Su Liang faintly smiled, "There seems to be a misunderstanding here, I asked for five thousand taels of gold. Such a valuable son, wouldn't five thousand taels of silver be too little?" Zhao Ming looked aghast, "Miss Su, Please don't make things difficult for me. The old man's sickness is really severe, that token only permits withdrawal of up to five thousand taels, there isn't any more." "What a pity, I'll trouble you to run some errands again." Su Liang didn't show any sympathy. Zhao Ming turned to Ning Jing, who was engrossed in his book and didn't glance up. After hesitating for a while, Zhao Ming spoke again, "I met the crown prince of Bei Jingwang Mansion just now, outside. He claimed to be Miss Su's adopted brother. I was ignorant, I made reckless remarks yesterday. Miss Su's status is definitely suitable for the seventh prince as his official wife, the old man would surely be overjoyed. Please return with the young master!" "Sure, I could, but I'm not interested, I just want money." Su Liang shook her head. Embarrassed, Zhao Ming said, "Miss Su, since you've acknowledged the prince as an adopted brother, surely you're not short of money?" With a cold laugh, Su Liang asked, "Are you teaching me how to do things?" Zhao Ming hastily apologized, "No, I didn't mean to..." "I want to eat grapes." Su Liang declared. Ning Jing quietly put his book down, washed his hands, and began to peel grapes for Su Liang... "Go back and tell your master, Ning Jing is mine now. If he wants to have him 'move', it won't be that easy." The emphasis Su Liang put on the word 'move' triggered a slight tremor in Zhao Ming's sleeve-covered hand. ... As she watched Zhao Ming sullenly leave, Su Liang mused out loud, "So this is what it feels like to bluff with borrowed power." "There was an assassin before him, likely he was sent to collect my body. Seeing I'm still alive, they plotted to lure me away and attack me on the road." Ning Jing's expression was neutral, "With this development, they will be even more determined to kill me, and you." Su Liang shook her head, "Some people were always determined to eliminate you, it doesn't matter if they are more determined now." Ning Jing nodded, "I guess." "If they do decide to take me out too, it changes nothing. You could foresee any physical danger to me." Su Liang was quite complacent. ... Bei'an County. A man faced away from Zhao Ming, studying a painting on the wall, "No wonder my brother spent so much on hiring Yan Shiba to assassinate him, but the seventh prince still didn't die. Turns out, he found his backup." Bowing his head, Zhao Ming said, "The one related to Bei Jingwang Mansion is the woman with the seventh prince." Being lustful enough to pursue the seventh prince and greedy enough to blackmail us for five thousand taels. The man coldly scoffed. "So now..." Zhao Ming appeared disturbed. "Since we're already here, I wanted to finish the seventh prince myself, but if he and his woman don't know what's good for them, then forget it." The man laughed coldly, "My elder brother paid the highest price, and according to the rules of Yanyun Building, they're accountable for a failed mission. They'll execute Yan Shiba and then take over the unfinished task." ... The next day, meeting Xing Yusheng again, Ning Jing took a closer look at him. "Is there something dirty on my face?" Xing Yusheng felt puzzled. As if sparked by a thought, Su Liang pulled Ning Jing aside and they began to whisper. "He's again..." "Mhmm." "Is it the people who wanted to poison him before, thinking that since they already failed once, they might as well go all out and kill him directly?" "That's what I think as well." ... Turning around, Su Liang gave Xing Yusheng a smile. Suddenly he felt a shudder, "About my claim of being your adopted brother to that servant from Ning family, I was wrong. Please don't mind." Su Liang

produced a silver needle, pointed it at Xing Yusheng's forehead, "I heard there are hot springs in Qiuming Manor, can we stay there for a few days?" Xing Yusheng cleared his throat, "Of course, I thought there was a problem." He felt vaguely scared... "Great." Su Liang nodded her head. For some unknown reason, Xing Yusheng asked again, "What if I don't agree?" He followed his question up with an embarrassed change of topic. After pondering a moment, Su Liang said, "If you don't agree, then you won't be leaving today." Xing Yusheng laughed, "Can I stay here?" Turning a page, Ning Jing commented under his breath, "You're sleeping in the Firewood Room."