

Three-Time 331

Chapter 331: 331. Go find him

“Seeking death!” Situ Xie’s eyes flashed, and he reached out to hit Old Mu’s head.

Situ Han’s anger was uncontrollable. “Does Uncle still have me in his eyes? Are you going to rebel? Come here! Capture King Yue!”

Just as Situ Xie and Old Mu were getting into a confrontation, a team of fully armed elite soldiers rushed in from outside, following orders to surround Situ Xie.

These people didn’t have the capability to take down Situ Xie, but they were enough to disrupt his attack on Old Mu.

Old Mu seized the opportunity and rushed out of the Imperial Study. “Since King Yue is unwilling, I’ll take my leave first and come back another day!”

Situ Han’s expression changed, and he heard Situ Xie roar, “Get out of the way! Why aren’t you capturing him?”

Situ Han finally reacted and hurriedly ordered everyone to intercept Old Mu.

But when Situ Xie led people out, where was Old Mu’s shadow? Only Situ Xie and Situ Han’s livid faces proved that he had really been here.

Situ Xie returned to the Imperial Study and closed the door heavily, leaving only him and Situ Han inside.

Situ Han looked at Situ Xie’s gloomy face and couldn’t help being shocked. “Uncle, what are you trying to do? Help! ”

Situ Xie roared, “Whoever dares to come in shall be killed without mercy!”

“You... Are you really going to rebel? I didn’t wrong you!” Situ Han drew the long sword from the wall and pointed it at Situ Xie.

Situ Xie took a deep breath and said in a low voice, “Put down the sword, I just want to talk to you. Some things, by now, should be made clear.”

“Are you going to tell me that you didn’t know about the Zhao family member in the mansion who was actually a descendant of the Mu Family? Or that the matter of the Mu Family’s secret scroll being auctioned at the Treasure Pavilion had nothing to do with you?” Situ Han said coldly.

Situ Xie shook his head. “His real name is Mu Yu. I knew from the beginning. The secret scroll in the Treasure Pavilion was handed over by Mu Yu.”

“Well done! You sold it to the Crown Prince, made a big profit, and hid such an important matter from me! You’re really my good uncle!” Situ Han laughed sarcastically.

Situ Xie's face calmed down. "I just wanted to give the complete scroll to the emperor after receiving it."

Situ Han sneered, "Do you think I'm a three-year-old child?"

Situ Xie looked at Situ Han. "After Axiang escaped that year, she gave birth to a son."

Situ Han was struck by lightning, looking at Situ Xie in disbelief. "What did you say? Son?"

"Actually, the man just now was not well-intentioned, but what he said was true. You have a son who has been lost outside, born to Axiang. His name is Situ Jing." Situ Xie chose to reveal Situ Jing's matter at this time to divert the imminent conflict between him and Situ Han.

Situ Han frowned heavily. "You said she died!"

"At first, I thought she was dead, but later I found her and Jingjing." Situ Xie said.

"Where are they? The child? What did you do to them?" Situ Han stared intently at Situ Xie.

"I know you truly loved Axiang, but sadly, she was devoted to another and reluctant to enter the palace as a concubine." Situ Xie sighed deeply. "I wanted to use Jingjing to bring Axiang back with me. She initially agreed, but was then taken away by someone else."

"Who took her away?" Situ Han asked coldly.

"Nangong Lin, the man she loved." Situ Xie said. "They wanted to take the child away with them, but after all, I managed to keep the bloodline of the Situ Family."

Situ Han's expression became agitated. "The child? My son born to Axiang? His name is Jingjing?"

"I have raised him elsewhere." Situ Xie said, "In Qian Country's Xuanbei City, the eldest son of the Che Family, Che Yun, is Jingjing."

"Che Yun? Che... I know this name! He is a Military Commander of Qian Country!" Situ Han exclaimed, "Did you arrange this? You made me unsuspecting of my own son with Axiang becoming a spy since childhood?"

"He is alive, highly skilled in Martial Arts, possessing an extraordinary intellect and well-experienced; all your other sons combined cannot compare to his excellence. If you blame me for this, there's not much I can say. Liang Country lacks not for princes, but rather for talented and resourceful heroes who can achieve great things! Otherwise, generation after generation, we will only be stuck in the bitter cold of the north!" Situ Xie coldly replied.

Situ Han narrowed his eyes, "No... this is not right! I know about Che Yun; he was sent to Jiaye City last year. Is this war against Yin Country related to him?"

“Yes, it is related. He went to Jiaye City, also at my suggestion. The original plan was to incite Yin Country to deploy their troops and work together with him to support Qian Country’s continuous retreat, then we would send troops from the north. He did what he was supposed to do, but it all fell apart when Fan Tong broke the agreement and deployed the troops too soon, causing Jingjing to be unable to return with Xing Ji’s daughter and to be captured.” Situ Xie claimed Situ Jing was not at fault and blamed the failure on the already dead Fan Tong. Because if he told the truth, Situ Han would only think that it was all his fault.

“You have been colluding with Fan Tong for a long time? Do you even have me in your eyes?” Situ Han grew increasingly furious. He had not expected Ye City’s war with Qian Country to be connected to Liang Country, let alone being orchestrated by Situ Xie. It would have been greatly beneficial if they succeeded, but they failed! Moreover, this involved his son, whom he didn’t know anything about!

“I wanted to discuss matters with the emperor upon encountering them, but the emperor always refused to talk. Over time, I always tried to accomplish something first before telling you, so as to alleviate your worries and difficulties.” Situ Xie sighed deeply.

“Is that child still in Qian Country now? Has he been discovered?” Situ Han asked.

Situ Xie shook his head, “His disguise was originally seamless, but who would have thought that Nangong Lin would come and cause trouble, allowing Su Liang and Gu Ling to discover clues.”

Situ Han gritted his teeth, “Nangong Lin! How is he not dead yet? Where is Jingjing now? How is he?”

“He was taken away by Nangong Lin.” Situ Xie bitterly smiled, “Fortunately, he didn’t fall into Qian Country’s hands. I still underestimated Su Liang and Gu Ling’s strength...”

Situ Han interrupted him, “Gu Ling! You still have the nerve to mention Gu Ling? If you hadn’t run to Qian Country back then and pleaded for him publicly, allowing Duanmu Yi to vindicate him and restore his status, would he still be a fugitive hidden from the world now? How could he possibly have turned against us and wholeheartedly help Qian Country?”

Situ Xie frowned, “I didn’t know him well enough at that time. I initially thought, after all, we were related by blood, and helping him would eventually come in handy. Unexpectedly, he didn’t care about our relationship at all.”

“So you want to tell me that this defeat was your doing? My son with Axiang, whom you arranged to be a spy for over twenty years, is now missing?” Situ Han angrily said, “You deceive me at every turn, act on your own, and defy all rules! I will strip you of your title! If you are not plotting a rebellion, go and enjoy your remaining years!”

Situ Xie sighed once more, "Your Majesty, the title does not matter to me, I just want to make Liang Country better and hope to see Situ Family rule the world in my lifetime!"

"Since my uncle is so high-minded, let it be so! From now on, do not meddle in the affairs of Liang Country! Otherwise, do not accuse me of being unfeeling!" Situ Han's expression was gloomy.

But Situ Xie shook his head, "Only by working together with a united heart can we create a bright future for the Situ Family!"

Situ Han sneered, "Are you trying to say that without your assistance, I would face difficulty in achieving great things? I have been too lenient with you all these years that you have forgotten your place as a servant!"

Situ Xie looked at Situ Han, whose once well-maintained hair had turned even frostier due to recent worries and heavy thoughts.

There was silence.

After a long while, Situ Xie spoke again, "Your Majesty is an intelligent man. With our relationship, you should understand that I did not covet that position based on how I raised Jingjing."

Hearing the words "our relationship," Situ Han's expression changed abruptly. How could he not know that he was Situ Xie's own son?

"The more our enemies look forward to seeing our internal strife at this time, the more we should not afford them the opportunity." Situ Xie pleaded earnestly, "Even if that person was truly the head of the Mu Family just now, he must have already colluded with Qian or Yin Country. Otherwise, he wouldn't have said those things to drive a wedge between us."

Situ Han snorted coldly, "If it's true, why can't it be said? If he didn't say it, would my uncle continue to keep it from me?"

"Your Majesty must be very careful these days." Situ Xie regained his composure, "Just remember, I will not take that position, and anything I do will be to help Your Majesty and help Liang Country."

"Just find Jingjing and we'll talk!" Situ Han said coldly.

People outside prepared to burst in at any moment, but they didn't expect Situ Xie to leave calmly. Situ Han only ordered them to withdraw.

As Situ Xie left the palace and returned to his mansion, he was not surprised to learn of Mu Yu's disappearance. He simply dispatched people to secretly investigate where the master and disciple might have ended up in the city.

Soon enough, the news spread from the capital city of Qian Country to Liang Country: Emperor Situ Han was born from the secret affair between the Empress Dowager and King Yue!

Even though the common people didn't dare to gossip about the emperor, there were those who helped spread the rumor, making it widely known.

Along with this, there were also rumors that the Former Emperor was killed by Situ Xie, and the reason Situ Xie didn't fight for the throne was because his son had already taken it... such nonsense.

There are some things that people might already know, but as long as they don't speak about it, they can pretend it doesn't exist.

But once it's said, it's just a matter of humiliating and shame.

And what the royal family cares about the most is their reputation.

Upon learning this, Situ Xie immediately realized that this must be Qian Country playing tricks. But he still had some doubts, even if Liang Country was behind the recent war, was Qian Country really intending to become enemies with both Liang and Yin Countries? Just as Duanmu Yi was smart, it should've been time to settle things down...

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Yao City.

A humpbacked old man slowly walked into a dark alley and disappeared.

"I couldn't find her!" Old Mu pushed open a worn wooden door, straightened up, and entered the room with a stern face.

The room had a strong smell of medicine. Since leaving Su Mansion, Old Bai had become disheveled, sitting among a pile of medicinal herbs, concentrating on his work without even lifting his head.

Old Mu grumbled, "My disciple said he hadn't seen that girl in Yue King Mansion. Situ Xie often mentions her, but what he says doesn't sound like he captured our girl! Could it be that she was captured, but hasn't arrived here yet?"

Old Bai still ignored him.

Old Mu talked to himself, afraid to get too close to Old Bai for fear of being poisoned, "I'll try to investigate again tonight! That father and son are truly despicable, but they didn't turn against each other! Once you finish the medicine, we'll kill Situ Xie first, and then Situ Han! We'll find a fool to be the emperor and hand Liang Country over to Qian Country! No, no, not to Qian Country, our girl can't be suppressed by the emperor of Qian Country all her life, let her be the emperor instead! Hahaha!"

Finally, Old Bai responded, looking coldly at Old Mu, "What's so great about that? You do it!"

Old Mu snorted, "What if the girl likes it? I'm her real master, don't think you understand her better!"

Old Bai didn't argue, just lowered his head again.

Over the next few days, the biggest news in Yao City was that Princess Yaoguang of Yue King Mansion, who was originally set to get married, had gone missing!

Situ Yao was kidnapped by a mysterious person on her way to visit the Empress Dowager in the palace. Soon, the city was sealed off for a search, but her captor seemed to have vanished into thin air.

And as a day went by, neither the imperial palace nor Yue King Mansion received any news from the kidnappers.

Situ Xie was at a loss, suspecting that this was also done by the Qian Country royal family, perhaps even by Su Liang and Gu Ling! But why? Situ Jing was already in the hands of Qian Country!

It wasn't until that day when Situ Jing suddenly appeared in front of Situ Xie...

"Jingjing?" Situ Xie saw Situ Jing as an adult without a beard for the first time. After the shock, he hugged him tight, "It's really Jingjing! You're alright, that's great!"

Situ Jing's expression was indifferent, "Grandfather, aren't you mad at me for messing things up?"

Situ Xie let go of Situ Jing, sighed, "Now that things have come to this point, it's good that you can come back. I've talked to your father about your identity, and he blamed me for not telling him earlier and for letting you go to Qian Country, feeling guilty towards you. Actually, I've regretted it for a long time, and wanted to bring you back several times, but I also hoped that you could achieve something for Liang Country before coming back, establish prestige, and arrange the best for you."

"I've disappointed Grandfather." Situ Jing lowered his eyes.

Situ Xie shook his head, patted his shoulder, "We're family, why say such things? If it weren't for Nangong Lin's trouble, your identity wouldn't have been discovered by Su Liang and Gu Ling, and you would have had a lot of potential."

As he spoke, Situ Xie sat Situ Jing down and mentioned how both Situ Jing and Situ Yao had been captured, with a weary expression, "I'm very happy that you're back, but the current situation is very unfavorable for Liang Country, and I don't know what Qian Country is up to. If Su Liang really captured Yao'er, I wouldn't worry about her being harmed."

Situ Jing's face remained calm, "It's not her."

Situ Xie's eyes narrowed, "How do you know?"

Situ Jing said, "She's in my hands."

Situ Xie's face changed, then he smiled broadly, "Really? That's great! Where is she?"

"Not in Liang Country, very far from here." Situ Jing said.

Situ Xie frowned, "Why?"

Situ Jing explained that he had another sister, and Su Liang was treating her, so she wouldn't lose control.

Situ Xie sighed lightly, "That's fine, then. Qian Country doesn't know about this, and they must think Su Liang would be brought here by you, so they wouldn't send people to capture Yao'er otherwise. It must be Gu Ling's doing. As long as they think Su Liang is in our hands, things will be much easier."

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Nameless island.

Su Liang's period was late, and after checking her pulse for several days in a row, she finally confirmed that she was really pregnant!

Su Liang held a bamboo shoot and went out to the backyard to find Qiao Cong, who was chopping firewood, to share the good news, "Master, I'm pregnant."

Qiao Cong replied, "What did you get?"

Su Liang smiled, "Of course, a baby!"

Qiao Cong nodded, "I knew it already."

Su Liang looked at the sky in speechlessness.

Qiao Cong said, "What do you want, I'll go buy it."

Su Liang sighed, "I want my child's father to accompany me."

Qiao Cong furrowed his brow, "Where is he?"

Su Liang hesitated, "If I tell Master where he is, are you planning to capture him as well?"

"If you insist on having him." Qiao Cong nodded.

Su Liang's eyes sparkled, "Xiangyue City."

"Are you sure?" Qiao Cong narrowed his eyes, "You said before that you didn't know."

"The baby told me in a dream." Su Liang made up a story seriously, "If Master can't find him in Xiangyue City, then never mind."

"It's too far." Qiao Cong frowned.

Just as Su Liang thought Qiao Cong was going to say he wouldn't go, she heard him say, "After I finish chopping the firewood, catch some rabbits and wild chickens, and buy some grain, I'll go find him."

Chapter 332: 332. New Master

After Qiao Cong returned from Jiaye City, it took him three days to build a new kitchen.

Now he decided to go find Gu Ling, so he was busy from morning till night, first buying grain, then filling the backyard shed with firewood, reinforcing the house doors and windows, and fences, and cleaning up inside and out.

Today, he left early in the morning and didn't return until after noon, carrying a bamboo pole with two vines, one with wild chickens tied by their legs and fluttering wings, and the other with wild rabbits hanging from it.

Qiuyue had been very diligent these days, getting more and more proficient in her work. Sensing that Qiao Cong was no longer as annoyed with her, she grew bolder. Seeing Qiao Cong walk into the courtyard looking like this, she couldn't help but burst into a giggle and quickly called out to Su Liang, "Miss Su, come and see, the Master has caught a lot of game!"

Su Liang came out and couldn't help but laugh, thinking the wild chicken and rabbits looked both pitiful and cute, and they must taste good....

Qiao Cong put all the live game into bamboo-woven chicken cages and rabbit cages.

Qiuyue found it fun and went over with Su Liang to have a look when Qiao Cong suddenly called her, "You, come here."

Qiuyue instinctively grabbed Su Liang's sleeve, still a little afraid of Qiao Cong, but didn't dare to disobey, so she braced herself and went over.

Qiao Cong pointed at the chicken cage, "Pick one."

Qiuyue didn't know why but thought perhaps he was asking her to pick one to eat today. After carefully looking it over, she pointed at the fattest one.

"Take it out." Qiao Cong said.

Qiuyue's eyes widened, "Me?"

Qiao Cong squinted his eyes and upon seeing Qiuyue glance at Su Liang again, ordered Su Liang to return to her room.

Su Liang guessed what Qiao Cong was planning to do and chuckled, "Master wants Qiuyue to kill chickens and rabbits? If she's not brave enough to do it, I can."

Only then did Qiuyue realize what was going on and took two steps back in fear. She truly didn't dare to do it, nor had she ever done it before. Recently, Qiao Cong had been the one killing the game, and Qiuyue was initially nervous about handling the freshly slaughtered meat.

"No." Qiao Cong insisted that Su Liang go back and rest, as he wanted to teach Qiuyue how to kill a chicken himself.

Su Liang gave Qiuyue a helpless look before heading back to the front yard.

Entering her room, Su Liang picked up the now thoroughly dried out bamboo shoot, light as a feather, "Little god, I hope I'm not mistaken, that the Great God is truly in Xiangyue City, and the Master can find him."

Su Liang missed Gu Ling very much, especially after discovering her pregnancy, she wished more than ever that Gu Ling could be by her side. At the same time, she was sure that Gu Ling missed her even more, and wished to accompany her during this time, watching their baby grow day by day.

Some things, once missed, cannot be made up for.

Su Liang had written a letter yesterday to be given to Gu Ling by Qiao Cong. Otherwise, if they met, they might start fighting, which wouldn't be good.

As for whether Gu Ling was willing to stay with Su Liang on this island, or if he would try to take Su Liang away after he arrived, that was for later. First, he needed to know where Su Liang was and come to reunite with her. That was the most important thing.

As for the outside situation and whether Qian Country needed Gu Ling to do anything, Su Liang had no way of knowing and didn't want to think about it too much. Good or bad, it was not her

doing, and she had no freedom at the moment, so she did not worry about the world. Besides, she knew that Gu Ling would undoubtedly drop everything else to find her given the opportunity.

Su Liang did not mention asking Qiao Cong to let her go, not because she didn't want to leave, but because Nangong Qian's physical condition dictated that Qiao Cong wouldn't let her go. Besides, Qiao Cong was now showing that he cared about the baby in her belly and had even started making a cradle, so it was hard to say whether he wanted Su Liang to give birth here.

Su Liang didn't think she would or wanted to stay here for too long, but there was no need to talk about things that couldn't be changed or hadn't happened yet.

In a short while, Su Liang heard Qiuyue's scream, but she didn't go out to check. However, she planned to help Qiuyue share some of the housework after Qiao Cong left, or at least wash her own clothes.

As usual, Su Liang and Qiao Cong ate their meals sitting across from each other in the courtyard. Nangong Qian couldn't come out, so Qiuyue always fed her first and then ate in her room.

"Will Master set out tomorrow?" Su Liang asked.

Qiao Cong shook his head, "Today."

"How long will it take to get to Xiangyue City?" Su Liang asked again. She knew how long it took Qiao Cong to get to Jiaye City from here and how far Jiaye City was from Xiangyue City, but it might not be necessary to pass through Jiaye City en route to Xiangyue City from here.

"Eight days," Qiao Cong said.

"So Master should be back in just over two weeks," Su Liang said, telling Qiao Cong where to find Gu Ling in Xiangyue City after he arrived. The place was the mansion she had bought before, and she had a strong feeling that Gu Ling was there.

Qiao Cong nodded and asked Su Liang in return, "What is he doing there?"

"Something big," Su Liang said. To completely solve the problem in Liang Country, they needed to first take down Yin Country in order to have no more concerns about the rear.

Qiao Cong didn't ask any further and called Qiuyue over after finishing his meal. He instructed her to take care of Su Liang when he was gone, not to let her run around or do any work, or Qiuyue alone would be held accountable.

Qiuyue dared not refuse and promised to take good care of Nangong Qian and Su Liang.

When Qiao Cong packed up and left, he saw Su Liang standing outside.

"I'll go to see Master off at the beach," Su Liang said, fearing he'd refuse, she added, "It's broad daylight, I won't fall, and going out for a walk is good for the baby."

Qiuyue had to stay and watch over Nangong Qian, so Qiao Cong, seeing Su Liang's eager expression, nodded his consent.

The midday sun was scorching. Just outside the small courtyard, Qiao Cong took off his straw hat and put it on Su Liang's head.

"Master, aren't you worried that Situ Jing will be in danger when he returns to Liang Country?" Su Liang asked.

It took Qiao Cong a while to answer, "It's the path he chose."

"True. He is not Nangong Qian. He has experienced much since he was young and has pursuits. Forcing him to stay with Master would be meaningless," Su Liang said.

Actually, she wanted to say that the letter Qiao Cong had helped her send to Jiaye City before might have jeopardized the relationship between Nangong Lin and Situ Jing. Although they didn't really control her, they probably believed she was completely under their control, so it was unlikely they would use her as a hostage to negotiate with Qian Country and Gu Ling.

But Su Liang felt that Qiao Cong must have been aware of the consequences of the letter, yet he still sent it for her. Since this was the case, it was pointless to talk more about it.

When the duo reached the seaside, Qiao Cong threw their bundle onto the boat and told Su Liang to hurry back.

"The hat." Su Liang took off the straw hat and placed it on Qiao Cong's head.

"You wear it back." Qiao Cong took it off again.

"I'll walk back through the forest, so I won't be exposed to the sun. Wear it Master, your sea journey is a long one." Su Liang said. The sea offered no shelter and exposed one to the relentless sunshine.

Seeing her insistence, Qiao Cong finally put it on. He dragged the boat to the edge of the sea, jumped aboard, and turned to Su Liang. "Take good care of Qianqian's health. Don't worry about anything else."

Su Liang nodded. As Qiao Cong was about to set sail, she called out, "Master, are we sure that no outsiders will come here?"

She suddenly thought, what if someone else appeared? She was pregnant, Nangong Qian was bedridden, and Qiuyue had only just regained a bit of strength today.

Qiao Cong furrowed his brows. "No." He paused then said, "To be safe, I won't go."

Su Liang was stunned. "Master, can we pretend I didn't ask anything and hurry on your way?"

Qiao Cong appeared to think of something. After a moment of silence, he said, "In a few days, a blind old woman will come. She is our own."

With an astonished expression, Su Liang asked, "Is she a skilled friend you invited, Master?"

Qiao Cong nodded. "Go back now." With that, the boat left the shore and soon drifted away.

Su Liang watched Qiao Cong disappear into the distance, walking along the coastline for some time before retracing her steps.

When Qiuyue saw her return, she patted her chest. “Miss Su, I felt anxious when you were not here.”

Qiuyue didn’t know what Qiao Cong had gone to do, only that he would return in about half a month. Su Liang told her that she could expect Qiao Cong’s blind friend to stay on the island temporarily in a few days. There was no need to be afraid, just remember to be polite when they met.

Seeing Su Liang going to wash her own clothes, Qiuyue quickly grabbed them. “No! Master told me so, and if he comes back and finds out, he will punish me. Besides, bending over and sitting for long periods is not good for a pregnant woman like Miss Su.”

Hearing the last sentence, Su Liang agreed and suggested taking turns cooking with Qiuyue.

Qiuyue disagreed, saying the kitchen was dangerous.

Su Liang smiled, “Don’t worry, I have experience. I won’t burn the kitchen down.”

“Miss Su, I know you are a very, very kind person who doesn’t treat me like a servant. If you weren’t pregnant, I wouldn’t stop you from working, but it really isn’t good for you now,” Qiuyue said stubbornly. She genuinely liked and appreciated Su Liang and felt comfortable being around her as if they were equals.

That night, as Su Liang prayed before sleeping, she hoped that Qiao Cong could successfully find Gu Ling and bring him back.

Liang Country, Yao City.

“Stop crying!” Old Mu yelled impatiently.

Situ Yao, sitting in the corner with red eyes, pleaded, “Senior, please let me go home. I really haven’t done anything wrong.”

Old Mu scoffed, “It’s all because of your worthless grandfather!” With that, he left for the next room.

Old Bai was asleep but was awakened by Old Mu. “Stop sleeping! We’ve captured Situ Xie’s granddaughter, but we still can’t find where our little girl is being held. She couldn’t still be on her way to Yao City, right? Quick, what should we do now? That girl’s crying is annoying me!”

“Give this to Situ Xie and make sure he eats it.” Old Bai tossed a coarse porcelain bottle to Old Mu.

Old Mu caught it, his brow furrowed. “Why don’t you give it to him? Why do you always order me around?”

Old Bai didn’t say anything and closed his eyes again.

Old Mu stored the bottle and left the room.

It was broad daylight, yet King Yue’s mansion was tightly shut.

Situ Jing followed Situ Xie into Han Xiangyuan and noticed the two characters “Ning” and “Xiang” carved on the rockery in the courtyard.

“They grew up together since childhood and were closer than real sisters.” Situ Xie looked wistful, “Now, they are both gone. I originally thought that after you and Gu Ling knew about each other’s identities, you could support each other like brothers, but he is an outsider after all. Now it seems he’s not only unreliable, but has also become our biggest threat.”

Situ Jing asked, “If there is a chance to get rid of Gu Ling, will Grandfather be willing to do it?”

Situ Xie shook his head, “He is Aning’s only child, how can I bear to do that?”

After entering the room, Situ Xie told Situ Jing about Su Liang’s previous visit to Liang Country and asked him when he planned to enter the palace to see Situ Han.

“Your father has loved your mother since they were young and couldn’t see anyone else. We all thought that they would end up together. However, after your mother met Nangong Lin, she became infatuated with him and refused your father. Your father was young and hot-headed at that time, and given his status, he impulsively forced himself on her, which was a grave mistake.” Situ Xie sighed, “These years, he has never forgotten your mother. When he found out that you existed, he was overjoyed and wanted to see you as soon as possible.”

However, Situ Jing shook his head, “If I reveal my identity now, I will become a target. People around Su Liang would spare no effort to kill me.”

“I understand.” Situ Xie nodded, “Let’s not reveal your identity yet. You can pose as a guard and accompany me into the palace, so your father can see you. It’s not convenient for him to leave the palace at this time.”

“Alright.” Situ Jing agreed.

Situ Xie’s face brightened, “I will make arrangements later.”

In the dead of night, a composed maid brought a bowl of soup from the kitchen. Situ Xie valued his health and maintained a regular habit of drinking soup, and there was a fixed set of people to prepare and serve it for him. This information was obtained by the old man Mu from Mu Yu.

Now, Mu Yu had already left Yao City and went to Qian Country according to the old man Mu’s command. After this ordeal, he had come to understand Situ Xie, as well as himself, and abandoned his previous unrealistic fantasies, realizing that the old man Mu was the only person who genuinely cared about his safety.

Halfway to her destination, a gust of wind blew the maid’s purse onto the ground. She carefully set the soup on a nearby stone platform before picking up her purse. Noticing the strap had broken, she tucked the purse into her chest pocket, picked up the soup, and continued toward Situ Xie’s study room.

Situ Jing’s presence in the mansion was a secret, and most of the servants didn’t know about it. For safety reasons, he stayed in Situ Xie’s study room.

The maid didn't make eye contact and simply served the soup in front of Situ Xie, then left, closing the door behind her.

"Jingjing." Situ Xie spoke.

Situ Jing came out from behind the bookshelf, changed into a new set of clothes, and prepared to enter the palace tonight to see Situ Han.

"This is the soup I specifically asked the kitchen to prepare for you. Your mother used to love it the most. You should try it." Situ Xie smiled and scooped a small bowl of soup, placed the spoon, and handed it to Situ Jing.

Situ Jing accepted it and took a sip, while Situ Xie asked if he liked it.

Situ Jing nodded slightly, then slowly finished the whole bowl.

As Situ Xie tried to serve him another bowl, Situ Jing said that he was full.

After putting down the bowl, Situ Jing suddenly felt a bit feverish and assumed it was because he had just drunk hot soup.

However, Situ Xie's face suddenly changed, "Jingjing!"

Situ Jing's ears, eyes, nose, and corners of his mouth began to bleed profusely, looking absolutely terrifying.

"What... What happened to me..." Situ Jing's consciousness quickly blurred, and he collapsed to the ground.

Situ Xie hurriedly took out a pill bottle from his bag, poured a pill, and stuffed it into Situ Jing's mouth, then patted his back to help him swallow it.

If Su Liang were there, he would find the pill that Situ Xie gave Situ Jing now looked exactly the same as the two life-saving pills old White gave Su Liang before. One of Su Liang's pills was also eaten by Situ Jing.

"Come here!" Situ Xie yelled in fury.

A trusted guard appeared and quickly left.

Soon, a woman who had recently moved into the Yuewang Mansion's guesthouse entered Situ Xie's study room. From her silhouette, she had a thin figure, but her face revealed her age.

Quickly check what kind of poison he's been exposed to! I've given him the life-saving pill you provided!" Situ Xie anxiously asked.

The old woman observed Situ Jing's condition, narrowed her eyes, and took his pulse. Suddenly, she sneered, "I didn't expect him to be here too."

Situ Xie frowned, "Who? What are you talking about?"

"No need to worry." The old woman stood up, glanced at the unfinished soup, "That antidote is enough to dispel the poison he ingested. The poison must have come

from my senior brother's hand. The last time we met... it feels like it was in a previous life..."

Ignoring the old woman's sighs, Situ Xie felt relieved when he heard that Situ Jing would be alright. "Who is your senior brother? Has he joined the Qian Country Royal Family?"

The old woman shook her head, "Impossible. If he really took action, it would definitely be for someone's sake, not for Qian Country."

Situ Xie's eyes narrowed, "Su Liang! Could it be that Su Liang is your senior brother's disciple?"

At these words, a strong interest appeared on the old woman's gaunt face, "Who is Su Liang?"

"I'll explain later. When will Jingjing wake up?" Situ Xie asked.

"Half a moment." The old woman said.

Time passed quickly, but Situ Jing woke up later than the old woman had expected.

Seeing him open his eyes, Situ Xie's expression relaxed, and he helped him up.

Situ Jing sat in the chair, the bleeding had stopped after taking the medicine.

"Jingjing, do you feel uncomfortable anywhere?" Situ Xie asked with concern.

Situ Jing's face was covered in blood, he opened his eyes and closed them again, "My eyes hurt..."

The old woman immediately pushed Situ Xie away, stepped forward to examine, and after a while, frowned heavily, "It's ruined!"

Situ Xie's expression changed, "What's ruined? Didn't you say that your medicine is definitely safe?"

As she spoke, the old woman gave Situ Jing another pill but without the confidence she previously had, "Damn it! He changed the recipe of the poison we developed together!"

"What will happen to Jingjing? Tell me clearly!" Situ Xie frowned and asked.

The old woman gritted her teeth, "Even if he's not blind, it will be half-blind."

"Hurry up and detoxify him!" Situ Xie roared angrily.

"I tried my best, but it's already too late. Some injuries cannot be reversed. My senior brother's poison attacks the eyes, and even if the poison could be resolved, it would be too late to save them." The old woman sneered, "If it wasn't for my medicine, he would have met Yama King already."

Situ Xie trembled with anger, "Damn it! Su Liang ... it's all because of Su Liang!"

The old woman asked, "Where is this Su Liang you're talking about? I need to see if she is my senior brother's disciple."

"She's in my hands." Situ Xie said coldly.

The old woman sneered, "I want to see her!"

“You can’t see her; she’s not here!” Situ Xie couldn’t hide his anger, “You claim to be a poison expert, why don’t you quickly find a way to save my grandson!”

“I saved his life. As for his eyes, I said, I can’t do anything.” The old woman didn’t show any politeness either, “But as long as my senior brother is really in Yao City, I will find him!” As her words fell, her figure disappeared.

Situ Jing was awake; he had heard all the words between the old woman and Situ Xie. Tears streamed down his face from the pain in his eyes, washing away the blood stains. Struggling to open his eyes and look at Situ Xie, he realized that his vision had become unclear. He felt his heart filling with anger, unwillingness, and fear of turning blind, “Why ... why is heaven treating me like this ...”

On the other hand, after spending several days reconnitering and waiting a whole day, the old man Mu successfully poisoned Situ Xie. He returned to the place he was staying with Lao Bai and woke him up. “The poison has been applied, just like you said, the silver needle can’t detect it! Now we shall see whether that dog Situ Xie is dead or blind tomorrow! Hahaha! Let’s give him a taste of our revenge first and then go save our girl!”

Anonymous Island.

After Qiao Cong had left for five days, things were fairly calm for Su Liang. Most of the work in the small courtyard was done by Qiuyue. Su Liang was mainly responsible for treating Nangong Qian. When the weather was good, she would ask Qiuyue to carry Nangong Qian and place her on a reclining chair in the courtyard to bask in the sun. At other times, she would read books or take walks around the area.

At first, Qiuyue found it difficult to kill chickens and rabbits, but after a few attempts, she had no problems and could even kill a wild rabbit without changing her expression.

One day, as Qiuyue was sweeping the courtyard, she inadvertently looked up and saw someone standing outside the fence, she was startled and immediately called Su Liang.

Coming out of the house, Su Liang saw a tall, thin old woman standing outside the bamboo fence, her eyes were gray but her hair was meticulously combed, and her clothes were neat. She leaned on an eagle-headed cane.

“Senior, are you my master’s friend?” Su Liang spoke with a smile and went out to greet her, “Master told me you would come before he left.”

The old woman’s face was turned towards Su Liang’s direction, “You are the Su Liang that Old Qiao mentioned? His disciple?”

“Yes.” Su Liang nodded, “Do you need any help, Senior?”

“No need, just walk in front of me.” The old woman shook her head and followed Su Liang into the small courtyard. They sat down by the table, it seemed she had been here before and remembered the way.

“Qiuyue, make some tea.” Su Liang called Qiuyue.

Qiuyue responded and quickly threw down her broom to make tea.

“My surname is Cen,” the old woman said, “Old Qiao said you have his disciple in your belly and asked me to stay here for a while to help him look after the house and teach you some self-defense skills.”

Su Liang smiled, “Thank you so much, Senior Cen.”

“I specialize in hidden weapons.” As she spoke, she flicked her wrist and two silver nails were embedded in Su Liang’s door.

Su Liang was surprised. It must have taken remarkable perception and control to embed those nails precisely into the door when she heard the sound of the door opening.

“Senior Cen is so amazing!” As Su Liang got up and went over, she finally managed to pull out the nails. They were embedded exactly the right distance and depth to fit perfectly.

She had just put down the silver nails and sat back in her seat when she heard the old woman say, “Old Qiao said that being your master was very comfortable. So, if that stubborn old man could like someone so much then why don’t you also become my disciple?”

Chapter 333: 333. Pretending to be someone else

Regarding the sudden addition of a new master, Su Liang felt: It’s a good thing! Having more skills and more masters means an easier path forward.

She thought of her two masters at home, wondering what Old Bai and Old Mu were doing now. She wondered if they knew that she had been caught and were rushing to Liang Country to save her.

With this thought, Su Liang became somewhat worried. She hoped that the letter she had asked Qiao Cong to send to Jiaye City could be delivered to Nian Jincheng in time. As such, if the royal family of Liang Country wanted to use her capture as an excuse to do something, her own people wouldn’t get into trouble.

Because Su Liang thought that Nangong Lin and Situ Jing couldn’t possibly not make an issue of her capture.

After some thought, Su Liang believed that Nian Jincheng and Lian Shun would know what to do after receiving her letter. She was just worried about potential time differences caused by the distance and the possibility of bad consequences.

“Miss Su?” Qiuyue’s knock on the door interrupted Su Liang’s thoughts.

Su Liang came back to her senses, “Come in.”

Qiuyue closed the door, as if afraid that someone might hear, and looked at Su Liang somewhat awkwardly, “Madam Cen says she is a vegetarian and doesn’t eat any meat. But the master said that Miss Su and Miss should eat meat. I’m afraid the dishes I made might not suit Madam Cen’s taste. Miss Su, could you teach me how to make delicious vegetarian dishes?”

Su Liang nodded, "Vegetarian dishes are not difficult; I'll make them."

"But the master said not to..." Qiuyue thought it wasn't right either.

"She is my master. It's only right for me to cook for her and show my respect. You mustn't stop me," Su Liang said with a light laugh.

Su Liang's new master was named Cen Man, and she lived in Qiao Cong's room. Qiuyue had already cleaned and aired the bedding in advance. Su Liang even specifically rearranged the table and chairs in the room to avoid any chance of bumping into Cen Man.

During lunchtime, other than Qiao Cong's seat being replaced by Cen Man's, everything else was the same as before.

Cen Man took a bite of the dish and nodded slightly, "That girl has good cooking skills."

Su Liang smiled, "I made those dishes for Master."

Cen Man took another bite, "Very good."

Then, the two of them quietly ate their meal. Su Liang's meal had a mix of meat and vegetables, while Cen Man's was strictly vegetarian.

Almost at the same time they put down their chopsticks, Cen Man wiped her mouth with a handkerchief, her movements elegant, "Su Liang, tell me about yourself."

"What...about me?" Su Liang asked.

"Everything, except your name and you being Old Qiao's disciple. I don't know anything else," Cen Man said.

Su Liang thought to herself, accepting her as a disciple without knowing anything about her background? On one hand, it showed that Cen Man really was isolated from society and didn't care about the outside world; Su Liang herself was somewhat of a well-known figure. On the other hand, it showed that Cen Man really had a good relationship with Qiao Cong and trusted his judgment in accepting disciples.

Su Liang then recounted the experiences she had shared with Qiao Cong earlier. She talked about the day she got married to Gu Ling, and the sudden news of Yin Country's invasion that arrived after their wedding. She stopped after telling about the hurried journey south.

"You are only 16 years old and got married on February 15th," Cen Man frowned slightly, "You haven't said how you met Old Qiao and became his disciple."

Su Liang honestly recounted how she had met Qiao Cong and why she was on this island.

Upon hearing this, Cen Man's face darkened slightly, "You couldn't have made up the story to deceive me, planning to leave while Old Qiao is away, could you?"

"Oh, of course, I want to leave, but I won't go for now. That's because Master is looking for my husband, and I'm waiting for him here," Su Liang calmly responded to Cen Man's doubt. After all, Cen Man was first Qiao Cong's good friend and only today became her new master.

“Old Qiao is really confused, actually doing such a thing,” Cen Man spoke again, indicating that she believed Su Liang. Otherwise, it would be hard to explain how a young divine doctor like Su Liang ended up being Qiao Cong’s disciple and treating Nangong Qian on this island.

“However,” Cen Man continued, “It seems that there is no real resentment between you and Old Qiao, and the conflict lies between you and his son-in-law and grandson. I’ve known Old Qiao for decades, and I know what kind of person he is. His decision to leave his granddaughter behind and travel far to find someone for you means he wants to make up for his previous mistakes.”

Su Liang nodded, “I understand. Master is not a bad person, he was just blinded by family ties at that time.”

“I really didn’t expect that you and him would have such a relationship,” Cen Man sighed softly.

Half-jokingly, Su Liang asked, “Does Master regret accepting me as a disciple?”

Cen Man shook her head, “No. As the enemy of Old Qiao’s son-in-law and grandson, you were caught and brought here without any freedom. Yet, you managed to make him admire and like you, which is extraordinary. You made an agreement with him that you would no longer be master and disciple after leaving this place, but you and I are different, with no time limit.”

Su Liang grinned, “Then I really got a bargain.”

Afterward, Cen Man began teaching Su Liang how to enhance her perception, which was extremely beneficial for the accuracy of both hidden weapons and normal weapons.

Cen Man took off an exquisite, ancient-looking purple jade ring from her hand and gave it to Su Liang.

At first, Su Liang didn’t want to accept it, thinking that it must be a self-defense item for Cen Man.

But Cen Man said it was a gift for meeting her, and not accepting it would mean not recognizing her as a master.

The ring fit perfectly on Su Liang’s thumb, and there was a hidden weapon mechanism inside that could launch five silver needles.

This reminded her of Old Mu. Old Mu was good at mechanical hidden weapons, and the real inheritor was Gu Ling. Unfortunately, before he could teach any of that, many things happened. Old Bai was the real master Su Liang wanted to worship. Although they had agreed not to have a master-disciple relationship in name, they did have the actual relationship. Unfortunately, she hadn’t had a chance to learn the powerful poison techniques yet...

In Liang Country, Yao City.

As soon as the sky began to light, Situ Xie left his mansion in a carriage to enter the palace.

Old Mu hid in the shadows, not sure who was in the carriage. He also hadn’t seen any signs of a funeral or request for an Imperial Physician at the Prince Masion. He wondered: Could it be

possible that the poison Old Bai spent several days making was thwarted? Or did Situ Xie avoid a catastrophe by not wanting to drink the soup last night?

Old Mu decided to wait for the carriage to return and see if he could confirm if Situ Xie was inside. It has become too risky to sneak into the Imperial Palace.

As for Situ Han, he had been waiting until midnight yesterday, hoping to meet his son for the first time. However, all he saw was a secret guard sent by Situ Xie to deliver a message that the arranged meeting had been canceled without explanation.

Situ Han thought it was Situ Jing who had a change of mind and didn't want to meet him. Although disappointed, he didn't do anything about it.

It wasn't until he met Situ Xie again and heard about Situ Jing being poisoned in Prince Yue's mansion that Situ Han's anger flared up again. "What kind of assurance did you give me earlier? You said you would protect him! Staying temporarily in Prince Yue's mansion without revealing his identity would be the safest! Is this the safety you spoke of? Why did everyone else in Prince Yue's mansion escape unharmed and only my son was poisoned?"

Situ Xie, anticipating this reaction from Situ Han, sighed deeply. "Now all we can do is find another famous doctor and have them treat Jingjing."

"A famous doctor?" Situ Han said coldly, "Isn't the most powerful divine doctor in the world today none other than Su Liang? Jingjing said he had captured Su Liang and kept her in another place. So what is the holdup? Let him reveal where she is, and send someone to bring her here! This would make everything else easier!"

Situ Xie nodded, "I'll talk to Jingjing about Su Liang when I return. I suspect that the kidnapping of Yaoyao was done by Gu Ling, and Jingjing being poisoned this time must be related to him too."

When Situ Xie returned to his mansion, he was still inside the carriage without showing his face. Old Mu crouched in wait, unable to determine who was inside, and returned first.

Back in the study room, Situ Jing sat with his eyes closed, motionless as if asleep.

Situ Xie sighed before speaking, "Jingjing, at this point, we must have Su Liang come here. Your eyes may still have a chance to be saved."

"Does grandfather want to really capture Su Liang, even at the cost of blinding my eyes?" Situ Jing opened his eyes, and everything he saw was blurry halos, making nothing visible.

"Jingjing, do you really think this way?" Situ Xie frowned.

Situ Jing remained silent. His near-blindness made him lose the calmness and confidence he had when he came to Yao City, and he was extremely irritated.

"I will find a girl similar in age and appearance to Su Liang to impersonate her and deceive the people hiding nearby. This way, at most we can save Yaoyao." Situ Xie sighed deeply, "You are still so young, and there is a long life ahead of you. I know

your feelings towards Su Liang, but now is not the time to be confused! If it gets any later, there may be no hope left!"

Situ Jing clenched and then loosened his fists. "Grandfather, please bring Nangong Lin here."

Situ Xie wasn't surprised to know that Nangong Lin was also in Yao City, even though Situ Jing had deliberately not mentioned it before.

"Does he know where Su Liang is? Where is he?" Situ Xie asked.

Situ Jing told him a location and gave him his jade pendant as a token.

Situ Xie immediately sent a secret guard to find Nangong Lin and bring him here.

It took about four hours before Nangong Lin finally arrived.

Seeing Situ Xie, his eyes narrowed slightly, but when he noticed the red spots around Situ Jing's eyes, his face darkened, "What happened?"

Situ Xie sighed and recounted the events of the previous night.

Nangong Lin was furious, "I brought Jingjing back, and this is how you treat him?"

Regardless, the incident happened in the Prince's Mansion, and the poisoned soup was personally served by Situ Xie, so he could not escape the responsibility.

"What's the point of saying these things now?" Situ Xie shook his head, "The top priority is to bring Su Liang over as soon as possible to treat Jingjing."

Nangong Lin looked at Situ Jing again, his breathing becoming heavier, "Damn it! Can't we find the poisoner for the antidote instead? Wouldn't that be faster?"

From Yao City, passing through Liang Country and Qian Country, to the south seaside to find Su Liang, a round trip would take more than a month!

Situ Xie shook his head, "It's very dangerous to rashly look for a poison master. Moreover, the damage has been done. Even if the poison is neutralized, Jingjing's eyes are no longer poisoned, but injured by it. The treatment should be for the injuries, not detoxification!"

Nangong Lin sneered, "Why do you know so much? Where did the antidote come from?"

Situ Xie said coldly, "A friend of mine gave it to me."

"Master," Situ Jing didn't want to hear them talk about random things anymore. He knew that Situ Xie didn't poison him, "Go and bring Su Liang here."

"For you, of course, I can go." Nangong Lin shook his head, "But the fastest way is for me to take you to Su Liang, isn't it?" In this way, Situ Jing could see Su Liang and get the treatment more quickly.

Situ Jing frowned and then relaxed, "Master is right!" He was in a terrible mood, and his mind was a little confused.

But, did Situ Xie really not think of this? Or did he be willing to take the risk of Situ Jing's treatment being completely blinded and insist on bringing Su Liang to Yao City? This way, he could use the real Su Liang to save his grandchildren!

Situ Jing couldn't help thinking this way. He was poisoned and injured, but Situ Xie was not, so he shouldn't be so clever as to not know what was best for Situ Jing.

Situ Xie sighed repeatedly, "I was confused! I was too happy to see Jingjing come back, I just thought about letting him meet his father, and didn't think about letting him leave again. But now, your health is the most important thing. In any case, I'll arrange for someone to escort you to find Su Liang as soon as possible!"

"That's not necessary. I will accompany Jingjing on the trip." Nangong Lin said.

Situ Xie didn't insist and let them go. He had many grandchildren, but Situ Jing's identity was the most special one. After years of training, once crippled, if he couldn't recover, he would have no future.

"Grandfather, after I leave, please ask Father to restore my prince's identity." Situ Jing said to Situ Xie.

Situ Xie nodded, "As long as you are willing, there will be no problem on your father's side. According to the order of birth, you should be the second prince. This way, you can restore your identity first, so people from Qian Country won't be able to find you when they want to do something. You can come back after your eyes are healed."

Before leaving, Situ Jing finally asked where the real Che Yun was.

Situ Xie sighed deeply, "During the journey when I brought him back, there was a snowstorm, and he ran outside at night." It was obvious what would happen to a child running out into the icy, snowy outdoors without anyone looking after him.

"What about Che Xiao?" Situ Jing asked.

Situ Xie counter-questioned, "Do you want to see him?"

Situ Jing shook his head and left quietly with Nangong Lin.

Watching their retreating figures, Situ Xie's face darkened. Che Xiao managed to escape because Su Liang intentionally let him go. He was indeed loyal and went a long way to bring the news.

However, Che Xiao knew too much, and there were some things that Situ Xie and Situ Han had lied about. Besides, the true value of Che Xiao was his identity, but that identity was now irrelevant. When he died unsuspecting in Situ Xie's hands, he didn't even get an explanation.

Old Mu was certain that Situ Xie hadn't encountered any problems, and he was alive, without blind eyes. He went back to Old Bai in a huff to discuss countermeasures.

"I really did poison it, he drank the soup every day! Could there be a poison expert by his side?" Old Mu frowned and said.

Old Bai, however, asked, "Did you find Su Liang?"

Old Mu shook his head, "No! I didn't see her shadow at all!"

“Keep an eye on them.” Lao Bai said.

Lao Mu got up to leave, and as he stepped out of the door, he turned back and cursed Lao Bai, “If it wasn’t for the kid, I wouldn’t listen to you!”

...

Situ Xie walked into the guesthouse and heard unfamiliar voices in the room.

At the entrance, he saw a tall girl standing inside with her back facing him.

“This is my granddaughter Aying.” The old woman introduced her to Situ Xie, and then said to the girl, “Aying, quickly greet King Yue.”

The girl turned around, tall and full-figured with a charming and bewitching appearance. She bowed and said, “King Yue.”

Situ Xie smiled slightly, “No need for formalities. I didn’t expect Mrs. Yue to have such an outstanding granddaughter. In fact, I have a task that I would like to ask Miss Aying for help.”

When Lady Yue asked what the matter was, Situ Xie said he wanted her granddaughter to impersonate someone.

Lady Yue chuckled, “I understand. It’s quite simple, and I had the same idea in mind!”

If Su Liang were here, she would find that Lady Yue’s granddaughter was actually Ying Ying, whom she knew.

Ying Ying didn’t know who her grandmother intended for her to impersonate, so she sat quietly, following her breath.

“Does she resemble her?” Lady Yue asked Situ Xie, looking at Ying Ying.

Situ Xie shook his head, “Not quite, but as long as she doesn’t show her face or speak, it won’t be a problem.”

“Very well. Maybe the person who will be lured out is my long-awaited Senior Brother.” Lady Yue’s laughter was harsh, and her emaciated face seemed to only have a layer of skin covering her bones, making her somewhat creepy.

“Miss Aying must have inherited her grandmother’s mantle, right?” Situ Xie looked at Ying Ying with a gentle smile.

Ying Ying shook her head, “My poison techniques are not even one-tenth or one-fifth of my grandmother’s.”

Situ Xie laughed and said Ying Ying was too modest.

Lady Yue asked Situ Xie, “When can I see the Su Liang you mentioned who is in your hands?”

Upon hearing Su Liang’s name, Ying Ying was taken aback for a moment. Seeing that neither Situ Xie nor her grandmother had noticed, she quickly lowered her head to avoid being discovered.

“My grandson’s eyes are injured and have gone to find her for treatment. Afterward, he will bring her back.” Situ Xie said.

“Can Su Liang cure your grandson’s eyes?” Lady Yue scoffed, “How is that possible?”

“What she is best known for is her medical skills, not poison techniques. She is known as a Divine Doctor. As for her being Lady Yue’s Senior Brother’s disciple, it is just your speculation and may not be true.” Situ Xie explained.

“Divine Doctor?” Lady Yue sneered, “In any case, because your grandson was poisoned, Su Liang must have some connection to my Senior Brother! Aying, have you heard of Su Liang?”

Ying Ying nodded, “I have heard of her. She was once the Martial Arts Champion of Qian Country.”

“Next, follow King Yue’s arrangement and impersonate Su Liang to quickly lure out whoever is causing trouble in this Yao City!” Lady Yue ordered.

Ying Ying nodded again, “Yes, grandmother.”

“There’s no rush. I need to make some arrangements first, and then I will come to ask for Miss Aying’s help.” Situ Xie said as he left.

Lady Yue also left shortly after, not knowing where she went.

Ying Ying closed the door and furrowed her brow: Was Su Liang captured by Situ Xie? Where was Gu Ling? She had to find out what was going on.

As for Situ Xie’s request for Ying Ying to impersonate Su Liang and lure out those who wanted to save her, Ying Ying had only one thought: let Situ Xie go to hell, she would never do anything harmful to Su Liang!

Chapter 334: 334. Are you going or not?

Yao City, midnight.

“Old Bai! Old Bai, wake up! Stop sleeping!” Old Mu rushed into the room, grabbing Old Bai from the bed. The table beside the bed was still piled with various herbs and some semi-finished products.

Old Bai looked at Old Mu coldly, “What is it?”

“I saw a carriage entering the Yue Prince Mansion from the back door!” Old Mu was excited, “It’s so coincidental, I couldn’t sleep tonight, so I went to keep watch near the Yue Prince Mansion! Although I didn’t see any people, our little girl might be inside!”

Old Bai suddenly straightened up, his eyes narrowed, “Whether it is or not, it is time to meet Situ Xie!”

“What do you think we should do? Send a message to Prince Yue Mansion, and meet outside the city tomorrow night to exchange hostages?” Old Mu frowned, “After all,

this place is Situ Xie's territory. We must be careful. Our old bones are worthless, but we must not hurt the little girl!"

Old Mu sighed as he spoke, "I took her on as a disciple, but I never taught her anything."

"Where did that Gu kid go?" Old Bai snorted.

Old Mu shook his head, "How would I know? But you, old man, should stop meddling in the love affairs of young people. Gu Ling is also my disciple, and he must be more anxious than anyone else if the little girl is captured. Maybe he's in Yao City too!"

"Send a message to Situ Xie. Tomorrow night, at midnight, outside the city by the Wolong River in Baihua Forest." Old Bai said.

Now it is summer, the warmest season in Liang Country. Although there is still some un-melted snow on Wolong Snow Mountain, the river outside the city is flowing and suitable for getting away at any time.

"You've been here before? I didn't even know there was a Baihua Forest." Old Mu muttered under his breath. He didn't ask further and began to think about how to pass the message to Prince Yue Mansion.

Initially, when Old Mu brought Old Bai to Su Liang's house, Old Bai was a drunkard who was unconscious, Old Mu was very clearheaded. But now that Old Bai has quit drinking, he has shown a more assertive side. Although Old Mu always mocked him, he actually listened to Old Bai more often than not.

At dawn the next day, Situ Xie's carriage left the Yue Prince Mansion. Suddenly, an old beggar emerged from a corner, holding a letter in his hand, "Your Highness Prince Yue, I have news about the Princess!"

Just as a guard was about to drive away the beggar, Situ Xie's voice came from inside the carriage. He lifted a corner of the curtain, saw the letter in the old beggar's hand, ordered it to be taken and gave him some money.

Soon, the old beggar pocketed a piece of silver and walked a distance looking around before running down an alley like he was flying.

The guard opened the letter and, at Situ Xie's request, shook the paper and wiped it with his sleeve before handing it to him.

With the lesson of Situ Jing being poisoned, Situ Xie carefully used two layers of cloth to avoid direct contact between his skin and the paper.

The handwriting on the letter was unfamiliar and sloppy. It said that they would meet at midnight tonight at Baihua Forest by the Wolong River to exchange Situ Yao for Su Liang. If they didn't go or tried any tricks, they would have to collect Situ Yao's dead body.

Situ Xie threw the letter and the cloth aside with a gloomy expression after reading it. This was within his expectations because last night's carriage was deliberately arranged by him. If someone was watching, seeing the carriage enter the mansion at that time and using the back door would certainly arouse suspicion.

To make the act more convincing, Situ Xie had specifically invited Ying Ying to leave the city secretly and return in that carriage.

At that moment, Situ Xie was thinking about whether Gu Ling was in Yao City and whether this letter was related to him. Or was it just like Poison Immortal Madam Yue said, her Poison Master senior was Su Liang's unknown master, coming to rescue her after learning she was captured?

Situ Xie also thought of Old Mu. These past few days, he had been revisiting the events that happened in Yao City last year with Su Liang and Gu Ling. He strongly suspected that the hidden weapon fan had been connected to them from the beginning, and Mu Yu's master had known them long before.

When he went to the palace to see Situ Han, he was drafting an edict to restore Situ Jing's status.

Seeing Situ Xie, Situ Han's face was not friendly. He had yet to see his son, Situ Jing, but had learned that his son had been blinded by poison at Yue Prince Mansion.

"What brings Royal Uncle here today?" Situ Han said coldly.

Situ Xie took a seat, "I have an important matter to discuss with Your Majesty. It concerns Qian Country and Yin Country."

Hearing this, Situ Han snorted, "Has Royal Uncle arranged any other spies that you plan to tell me now?"

Situ Xie shook his head, "It's a secret about Su Liang and Gu Ling."

Situ Han's eyes narrowed, "What secret?"

"In fact, they already knew each other." Situ Xie said.

Situ Han frowned, "What kind of secret is this?"

"I mean, when Gu Ling was still a rebel, they were already together." Situ Xie said.

Situ Han was stunned, "Really? Does Imperial Uncle have any evidence?"

"There is a man surnamed Liang, who had been favored by Ning Jing, and followed Gu Ling for a while after Gu family's incident. He knows many of Gu Ling's secrets." Situ Xie explained as he mentioned Uncle Liang, the Su family village, Ning Jing, and the Top Scholar...

Halfway through the conversation, Situ Han looked at Situ Xie incredulously, "Imperial Uncle means that Gu Ling is the same Ning Jing who was once with Su Liang? They are deceiving the emperor!"

Situ Xie nodded, "In any country, this is a very serious deception to the emperor. This matter was not leaked out at first because I still had a soft spot for Gu Ling, but he has no sentiment for me. Now, there is no need to keep their secret! As long as Duanmu Yi in Qian Country knows that Su Liang and Gu Ling have been deceiving him, he would probably not act against Liang Country for Su Liang, disregarding the overall situation of Qian Country!"

“Why is Imperial Uncle only talking about this now?” Situ Han’s expression was angry. “If it was revealed earlier, Su Liang and Gu Ling would not have destroyed your original plan and caused the current situation!”

“I don’t have the ability to predict the future.” Situ Xie sighed. His original plan was to let Situ Jing gain a high position in Qian Country and use his relationship with Su Liang to access the core of power. In this way, once it “exploded”, Qian Country would fall into a huge crisis.

Unfortunately, the major plan collapsed due to Situ Jing’s moment of weakness, leading to uncontrollable developments.

The reason why Situ Xie decided to “betray” Gu Ling now was that he was very clear that the so-called “secrets” were outdated, and there was no benefit in revealing them earlier. “Ning Jing” was already dead, and Su Liang and Gu Ling had handled things very meticulously. If Situ Xie stood on the main street of Qian Country’s capital city and shouted that the former Top Scholar Ning Jing was actually disguised by Gu Ling, the people of Qian Country would only think he was crazy...

However, even if it was “outdated”, it might not be useless for a suspicious emperor.

Situ Xie didn’t want the common people to know, he only needed to inform Duanmu Yi.

Situ Han suddenly sneered, “If Duanmu Yi believes it, then those who were once very close to Su Liang, such as Duke Qin’s Mansion in Qian Country, the great scholar Lin Family, Xing Ji, will all be suspected of having known the truth but deliberately concealed and sheltered the son of a former rebel, Gu Ling! And Nian Jincheng, he is Gu Ling’s best friend, how could he know nothing! At that time, I would like to see how Duanmu Yi can pretend nothing happened!”

Situ Xie nodded, “Since Your Majesty agrees, I will arrange for someone to go to Qian Country today.”

“Alright.” Situ Han nodded, then listened to Situ Xie talk about the letter he had just received when he went out.

“I have arranged for a woman to impersonate Su Liang and go to the appointment tonight to see who it is.” Situ Xie said.

“Gu Ling should have arrived.” Situ Han said.

Situ Xie pondered, “With his anxiety for Su Liang, he definitely wouldn’t do nothing, but it’s still uncertain whether he really came to Yao City or not. We’ll know after tonight.”

“Imperial Uncle said there is something about Yin Country?” Situ Han asked.

Situ Xie’s expression became serious, “Your Majesty, I believe that the top priority is to form an alliance with Yin Country!”

Situ Han could not help being angry upon hearing this, “Why haven’t they formed an alliance? So many times, when has Yin Country been reliable?”

“Past failures are not only lessons for us but also for Yin Country, who did not get any benefits. Through this incident, the royal family of Yin Country should see to what extent Qian Country has grown. Only by joining forces can the two sides eliminate Qian Country in one fell swoop. Once it is too late to join forces, there will be no turning back.” Situ Xie’s expression was solemn.

“Does Imperial Uncle think we can persuade Yin Country to form an alliance again this time? Even if they agree, can we trust them?” Situ Han still could not trust the royal family of Yin Country.

“Regardless of success or failure, we must try to win them over, otherwise, if our conflicts with Yin Country intensify, Qian Country will be happier. In the interest of the overall situation, let’s temporarily put aside our past grievances with Yin Country.” Situ Xie said.

Situ Han took a deep breath, “Alright, I will listen to Imperial Uncle’s advice on this matter. As for tonight’s change of person, be very careful if you go personally.”

...

Qi Jun had been in Yao City for two days, staying disguised in an inconspicuous small inn.

He set off for the north on the day he received the second letter from Nian Jincheng, wanting to find Elder Mu and Bai Lao to tell them that Su Liang was not in Liang Country or in the hands of Situ Xie, fearing they might be controlled by Situ Xie if they didn’t know the truth.

However, Qi Jun had searched the city for two days without finding Elder Mu and Bai Lao, and was not daring to do anything that might expose himself or arouse suspicion, so he could only quietly pay attention to the movements of King Yue’s Mansion.

In the deep night, Qi Jun saw a carriage leaving Yue King’s Mansion through the back door from a distance. He did not dare to approach, kept his distance, and followed cautiously.

The carriage stopped at the city gate for a moment, and the city gate was quickly opened before driving out of the city.

As midnight approached, Qi Jun watched the carriage travel along the edge of Wolong River for a while before entering the dense Baihua Forest. Fearing he would be discovered, he deliberately detoured and entered the forest from another side.

As midnight approached, the bright moonlight shone through the forest gaps.

The carriage wheels rolled over the ground, making rustling noises, and then stopped. There were no more sounds of the horses’ hooves and no one spoke.

The sudden sound of a short flute broke the silence, coming from the other side of the river outside Baihua Forest. Old Mu’s voice followed, “Situ Xie, if you want your granddaughter to live, bring Su Liang over here!”

Upon hearing the voice, Qi Jun's expression tensed! He had finally found Old Mu, but it seemed that this night had been arranged for a hostage exchange. However, Su Liang was not on this side, this must be a trap!

Thinking of this, Qi Jun could no longer remain idle. As he rushed out of the Baihua Forest, he shouted, "Senior Jin, it's me! The Master is not in Yao City, retreat!"

Before his words fell, a dozen black shadows burst out from around the carriage in Baihua Forest. Half of them chased after Qi Jun and the other half rushed towards Old Mu.

Old Mu had never expected to suddenly hear Qi Jun's voice, and his words caused his expression to change drastically. He cursed, grabbed Situ Yao in front of him, and quickly left on a small boat!

As some masters chased from the shore, Old Mu saw a black-clothed man with the fastest speed leaping from the shore to board the boat. He simply threw the unconscious Situ Yao into the turbulent river behind him!

As expected, the man chose to jump in and save Situ Yao, which gave Old Mu a chance to escape.

When the others caught up, the black-clothed man had just pulled Situ Yao out of the water, and Old Mu had disappeared without a trace.

After falling into the water, the black-clothed man's mask had fallen off, revealing himself to be Situ Xie himself.

The one who caught up afterwards was Ying Ying. She had come to pretend to be Su Liang because Situ Xie had set up an ambush. However, for safety's sake, he still planned to meet the person first to prevent Situ Yao from getting hurt.

However, Ying Ying never had a chance to "help" Situ Xie. She had thought about warning the other party if something was wrong but didn't expect someone else to speak up first. As a result, she had not yet revealed her secret that she had a close relationship with Su Liang but did not fully recognize her.

Ying Ying helped Situ Xie revive Situ Yao. Apart from feeling a little weak, she was not injured and had not taken any poison.

"Was it Gu Ling who captured you?" Situ Xie asked.

Situ Yao shook her head, "I didn't see cousin... An old, tall, and thin man took me, I didn't see anyone else..."

Situ Xie frowned. The tall and thin old man must be Old Mu he had seen in the palace before.

"Where did they stay?" Situ Xie asked.

Leaning on Situ Xie's body, Situ Yao shook her head weakly, "I don't know where it is..."

At this time, the other group that had chased Qi Jun returned without any gains.

"I could have caught that man, but another person suddenly appeared and saved him," said the leader in a deep voice.

With a cold face, Situ Xie picked up Situ Yao, "Let's go back!"

At least he had rescued Situ Yao tonight. However, Situ Xie was currently thinking about Qi Jun, who had suddenly appeared and shouted. Did the people on Su Liang's side already know that she was not in Liang Country or Yao City? Gu Ling had not shown up tonight, it must be because he knew Su Liang was not here! But according to Situ Jing, Su Liang was under her grandfather's control and couldn't escape! How did her people know that she was not in Yao City? Did they only know that she was not in Yao City or had they already found out her whereabouts? Or had she already escaped?

With this thought, Situ Xie's face looked extremely unhappy as he sat in the carriage with Ying Ying and Situ Yao, returning to Yao City.

Old Bai timely rescued Qi Jun, who had almost been unable to escape, and met up with Old Mu in another part of the forest.

"Why did you come? Isn't the girl not in Yao City? How did you know? What happened?" Old Mu asked anxiously.

Qi Jun hurriedly explained that he had received a letter from the south, saying that although Su Liang could not return temporarily, she was safe and not in the hands of the people of Liang Country.

"It must be that Master has conquered the master who was guarding her and even had that person specially send a letter to Jiaye City to report her safety! I rushed here to inform the two seniors not to be fooled by Situ Xie!"

Hearing Qi Jun's words, Old Mu clapped his hands and laughed, "So that's how it is! Truly worthy of being my disciple! Hahahaha!" He didn't feel any regret for letting go of Situ Yao. He didn't want to hurt her in the first place, and since Su Liang was not in Situ Xie's hands, there was no point in keeping Situ Yao hostage.

Old Bai's brows were still furrowed. "Where is Su Liang?"

Qi Jun shook his head, "I don't know where Master is precisely, but she should not be too far from Jiaye City."

"What about Gu Ling?" Old Mu asked Qi Jun, "Does he know about this news?"

Qi Jun was stunned for a moment. "I don't know where my nephew has gone, nor do I know if he knows this news..."

Seeing that Old Bai's face was not right, Old Mu quickly changed the subject. "Old Jin, should we stay and kill Situ Xie, or go south to find our girl?" He still wanted to protect Gu Ling since he was also his disciple.

"Kill Situ Xie first before we leave!" Old Bai said coldly.

Qi Jun weakly said, "You two seniors must not be impulsive. Master went to great lengths to send a message to report her safety, precisely because she doesn't want anyone to get into trouble for her sake."

But no one listened to Qi Jun. Old Mu had already started discussing with Old Bai how to make Situ Xie's death the most "spectacular".

...

On the island, Su Liang calculated the time. It had been eight days since Qiao Cong left. If everything went smoothly, he should have arrived in Xiangyue City by now.

At this moment, Qiao Cong, wearing a straw hat and carrying a bundle, had just walked into Xiangyue City and found a stall to eat wontons.

He ate two large bowls, not because it was delicious, but he had been traveling and eating on the go, so he was very hungry. In terms of taste, he felt it was far worse than what Su Liang made.

During the meal, Qiao Cong learned of a piece of news that Yin Country had recently changed the crown prince. The original crown prince was the legitimate eldest prince, with a powerful maternal family, but was suddenly replaced by a frail prince born of a concubine, which surprised many people. Yet, there was no chaos in the royal family, and it remained eerily calm.

Qiao Cong had a hunch that the change of the crown prince in Yin Country was related to Gu Ling. He settled the bill and went looking for the address Su Liang had told him.

It was broad daylight, and the mansion's door was closed with a large lock hanging on it.

Qiao Cong sneaked in, found the main courtyard, where no one was inside, but he saw Gu Ling's clothes in the room.

Qiao Cong put down his bundle and went to the next room to catch up on sleep.

By evening, a figure like an ink feather landed in the courtyard.

Seeing the ajar door, Gu Ling's eyes narrowed slightly.

When he pushed open the door and saw the bundle, straw hat, and long knife on the table, Qiao Cong in the next room also opened his eyes but didn't get up.

Gu Ling walked to the table and saw a letter under the straw hat with an edge of it exposed.

He picked up the letter, opened it, and saw the familiar handwriting. His eyes narrowed!

"Don't fight with Old Qiao, I asked him to find you.

Great God, congratulations, you're going to be a dad!!!

Little God is very well behaved, come to be with us soon!"

The signature was, "Missing You" plus two water droplets.

Gu Ling read the letter from beginning to end five times before he finally dared to believe it was true! Su Liang was pregnant! He was going to be a dad! The child was called Little God? How strange, how cute!

Su Liang had considered not mentioning the pregnancy in the letter and give Gu Ling a surprise when he arrived, but she quickly dismissed the idea. She hoped that he would know the news sooner and be happy sooner.

"Are you going or not?" An old voice came from the doorway, Qiao Cong's.

Chapter 335: 335. The beauty who flew over

Their eyes met in the dim light, shadows casting an ominous veil over Qiao Cong's aged face. No light was lit in the room, and the expression on Gu Ling's face was devoid of warmth.

The atmosphere was tense for a moment, and Qiao Cong's hand twitched slightly.

The next moment, Gu Ling's lips parted slightly, "I have something to take care of."

Qiao Cong's eyes narrowed, anger in his voice, "Are you actually not going?"

Before he could finish speaking, Gu Ling had taken the letter and walked out of the room, avoiding Qiao Cong's hand that tried to grab his shoulder, "Wait a moment for me."

Qiao Cong watched as Gu Ling disappeared from his line of sight, snorted coldly, "Just one moment. If you're late, I'll head back and let Su Liang leave you behind!"

...

Nighttime fell, and the small courtyard became quiet and serene.

Qiao Cong sat in the courtyard with his package, long sword, and straw hat by his side, ready to leave at any moment.

Just as Qiao Cong felt that the agreed moment had arrived and he didn't want to wait any longer, Gu Ling returned.

Qiao Cong didn't know where he had been and didn't want to ask, so he just picked up the package on the table to teach Gu Ling a lesson.

Gu Ling offered no explanation, went back to his room, came back out soon after with another package, and closed the door.

Seeing this, Qiao Cong turned and left. Gu Ling followed him from a distance.

Neither of them showed any intention of communicating with each other, but for the sake of Su Liang, they had temporarily achieved a silent tacit understanding.

As they were leaving Xiangyue City, Gu Ling finally asked, "How many days?"

Qiao Cong replied, "Seven or eight."

Then they lapsed back into silence.

As for matters like eating and drinking, Gu Ling was in charge without any communication. Qiao Cong had wondered if his share of food would be left out, and if so, they would each handle things separately. But it turned out he was overthinking.

...

On the nameless island.

At dusk, when the heat subsided and a cool breeze blew, Su Liang, as usual, strolled through the bamboo forest with Cen Man's arm in hers.

They had chosen a path they hadn't taken before, and suddenly the way ahead seemed brighter. Su Liang was puzzled since the seashore was still a long way off.

After walking a little further, Su Liang exclaimed with delight, "Master, there's actually a lake here! I never knew about it before!"

Surrounded by lush bamboo, a lake as clear as a mirror reflected the orderly green bamboo from its edge. In its center, the sunset cast a gentle red hue upon the lake, creating an exquisite harmony of colors, like a scene from a fairyland.

Su Liang described the view to Cen Man, who smiled, "From your words, it feels like I can see it."

"Master, if Old Master Qiao brings my husband over, I want to set aside a piece of land by this lake, and build a small courtyard for the two of us to live!", Su Liang happily said.

As it stood, Su Liang and Gu Ling had always enjoyed their private space and cherished their own little world, where they could relax and protect each other's secrets. To be precise, there were now three of them, including the child in her belly. Especially when it came to Gu Ling, he would probably not get along well with Qiao Cong.

Secondly, once Qiao Cong returned, the original small courtyard would not be big enough for them all unless Cen Man left immediately.

Thirdly, considering what had happened earlier, Nangong Qian had lost her memory and her temperament had softened considerably, but that didn't rule out the possibility of her taking a liking to Gu Ling again upon seeing him. It would be inconvenient to live under the same roof, and maintaining a degree of distance was best.

Su Liang thought that if she brought up this third point, Qiao Cong would likely agree to let Su Liang and Gu Ling live on their own for Nangong Qian's sake.

Cen Man, who knew what had happened before, thought it was a good idea. In this way, she could also stay.

Walking around the lake, Su Liang grew increasingly fond of the place. While she didn't intend to live in seclusion with Gu Ling, it was better to live as happily and comfortably as possible under the circumstances.

That night, before going to bed, Su Liang sketched her imagined bamboo house under the lamp light, planning to refine the drawing the next day and show it to Gu Ling after his arrival. He would surely be able to bring her vision to life.

"Little one, your father might be arriving soon. We'll build a new house when he comes." Su Liang gently stroked her stomach, looking forward to Gu Ling's arrival.

Yao City.

Yesterday, Situ Xie had arranged for two groups of people: one went to Qian Country to tell Duanmu Yi about Gu Ling and Su Liang's deception, and the other headed for Yin Country to discuss an alliance.

After Situ Yao was rescued last night, Situ Xie had spent the whole night sleepless, pondering if Gu Ling had not come to Yao City, and Su Liang's people already knew she was not in Liang Country, might it have been Gu Ling who had saved her?

If this were the case, not only would Situ Jing's eyes be beyond saving, but the upcoming situation would be extremely disadvantageous to Situ Xie and Liang Country! As long as Su Liang and Gu Ling were in Qian Country, under certain circumstances, their husband and wife could defeat thousands of troops! Moreover, Duanmu Yi might not necessarily believe the message that Situ Xie sent over. Even if he believed it, he might not really choose to confront Su Liang and Gu Ling at this time.

Because Situ Xie knew very well what kind of people Su Liang and Gu Ling were. If Duanmu Yi saw their true nature, the smartest move would actually be to make use of them to achieve his goal.

Daylight arrived.

Situ Xie changed clothes, intending to enter the palace and inform Situ Han of last night's situation face-to-face.

Not long after the carriage left King Yue's Mansion, it suddenly shook. Situ Xie's face sank as he gripped the wall of the carriage. He listened to the sound of horses neighing and guards shouting outside, "Assassins! Protect the prince!"

Situ Xie's strength was far greater than that of the guards, but he did not immediately go out. Instead, through the swaying gap of the carriage curtain, he coldly watched as four masked assassins engaged the guards.

The assassins were powerful and swiftly dealt with the guards and coachmen, surrounding the carriage in the process.

Situ Xie watched the assassins' figures, making sure that neither Gu Ling nor the old man, Mu, were among them. He suspected that this might be the work of the Qian royal family.

Just as the four assassins approached the carriage, the secret guards appeared and blocked their path.

"Leave a survivor," Situ Xie ordered, still seated in the carriage without making a move. His trusted secret guards were all highly skilled masters recruited with high rewards over the years. In terms of strength, they were not inferior to the four assassins.

The battle reached a stalemate, with both sides suffering casualties.

Seeing that the assassins had no reinforcements, Situ Xie decided to take matters into his own hands. But before he could exit the carriage, the four assassins heard a whistle in the distance and fled with a feint!

Following Situ Xie's instructions, the secret guards did not give chase to avoid falling for a trap.

"Master, those men appeared to be killers," said one of the secret guards.

Situ Xie realized this too. The moves of the assassins were vicious and aimed at taking lives no matter the cost. The ruthlessness of all four was evenly matched.

But that was what puzzled him. Since they were assassins, even without an obvious disadvantage and with accomplices nearby, they hadn't even seen him yet, so why did they retreat?

“Master, perhaps they are from Yanyun Building,” suggested another secret guard.

Immediately, someone countered, “If someone hired Yanyun Building to kill the master, disregarding the fact that Yanyun Building wouldn’t normally accept this kind of job, the one to make the move should be the owner, Yan Shiba, rather than those people just now.”

Yanyun Building had rules against interfering with royal family disputes and generally didn’t accept assassination jobs targeting main members of the royal family.

Firstly, the risks were too high, and secondly, it would easily attract the scrutiny of the royal family.

If there was an employer capable of making Yanyun Building willing to assassinate Situ Xie, it would either be due to a special relationship or they were offering an astronomical hiring fee.

No matter the case, it would be more logical for Yan Shiba to take the job personally.

Situ Xie was aware of all this, and he also knew that Su Liang and Gu Ling had control over vast financial resources. If those assassins just now were from Yanyun Building and were hired by someone related to Su Liang, there wouldn’t be much to worry about if they were paid for the job.

However, Situ Xie thought of another possibility: Yanyun Building might not be doing this for money, but for Su Liang’s sake... because he had heard some rumors about the internal turbulence at Yanyun Building over the past few years. He couldn’t help but suspect that some mysterious people were helping Yan Shiba behind the scenes. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have escaped danger so many times.

Could it be that the mysterious person secretly helping Yan Shiba was Su Liang?

With the death of the horse, Situ Xie returned to his mansion under the escort of the secret guards. On his way back, he felt that he might be overthinking it. Lately, his thoughts were occupied by matters and people related to Su Liang. Any incident that occurred, he would subconsciously link it to her, without necessarily knowing that there were so many coincidences...

But Situ Xie was right on the mark this time.

Yan Shiba arrived in Yao City early this morning with her subordinates. She did not take action personally because she was still recovering from a severe injury. After learning that Su Liang had been captured, she hurried over here without much rest. Her physical condition was far from her peak.

Another reason was that Gu Ling had told her not to go all out.

The retreat whistle was blown by Yan Shiba. She had learned from Gu Ling that Situ Xie was extremely powerful, so if he took personal action, it would be difficult for the four assassins to escape.

This was not a killing job undertaken by Yanyun Building, but a small act of revenge by Yan Shiba for Su Liang. Today was just a minor probe to gauge the strength of the guards around Situ Xie.

...

Upon returning to the mansion, Situ Xie wrote a letter and secretly sent it to the Imperial Palace to be delivered to Situ Han. He then went to see Situ Yao.

There was no harm to Situ Yao's body, but her spirit had been somewhat shaken after this ordeal. Aside from Elder Mu, she hadn't seen anyone else. She could only describe the room she had been kept in and had no knowledge of the exterior conditions or specific locations, so she couldn't provide any useful information.

Situ Xie specifically introduced Ying Ying to Situ Yao, hoping that they could become good friends.

His goal was to use Ying Ying to protect Situ Yao if they became friends, just like Su Liang, who had drawn many helpers through her emotions...

Ying Ying gladly agreed, and Situ Yao, always obedient, naturally welcomed the idea.

Since Situ Jing's poisoning, Situ Xie had changed the servants and had Madam Yue supervise all food entering the mansion, making the situation even more cautious than before.

"I heard that the Princess was originally going to marry into Qian Country this year." Ying Ying sat by Situ Yao's bedside, curiously asking, "Have you met the Crown Prince of Qian Country?"

Situ Yao nodded, "I have met him."

"May I ask, do you really want to marry him, or is it just following your family's arrangement?" Ying Ying asked with a smile.

Situ Yao's expression was melancholy, and she sighed, "I don't know."

Ying Ying: ...Hypocritical, neither admitting nor denying, so as not to say the wrong thing.

However, Ying Ying didn't dislike Situ Yao, she was just indifferent to her. After all, when they met, Ying Ying was already a friend of Su Liang and Gu Ling, and the recent events made her automatically put herself on the opposite side of the Situ family. And she didn't know what her moody grandmother really wanted to do.

When Ying Ying returned to the guesthouse from Situ Yao's place, she saw Situ Xie talking to her mother-in-law.

Ying Ying was about to avoid them, but her mother-in-law saw her and beckoned her to come over.

"Let Aying handle this matter!" Her mother-in-law decided without consulting Ying Ying, and Ying Ying didn't even know what she was supposed to do.

Situ Xie nodded, "Then, thank you, mother-in-law and Miss Ying."

After he left, her mother-in-law began to explain in a commanding tone, "You go back to Qian Country, go to Xuanbei City, poison Xing Ji, and let him exchange the antidote for King Yue's eldest grandson! No matter how you do it, you must save King Yue's eldest grandson! King Yue will arrange two people to assist you!"

Ying Ying lowered her eyes, "Grandmother, why do we need to get involved in these matters?"

Her mother-in-law's face suddenly turned dark, and she raised her hand to slap Ying Ying hard, "Do I need to explain what I do to you? Do you think your wings have hardened, and you don't want to listen anymore?"

Ying Ying, like so many times before, knelt down with her head down, "I dare not, grandmother, please calm your anger."

Her mother-in-law snorted coldly, "It's me who raised you and your brother, gave you food, and taught you your skills! If it weren't for me, you would have died long ago! If you dare to defy me again, I'll make sure you never see Ying Ye again in your life!"

"I was wrong, please calm down, grandmother." Ying Ying said solemnly.

Her mother-in-law looked at Ying Ying coldly, "Are you hiding something from me about Ying Ye's recovery? Where did the Snow Lotus come from?"

Ying Ying's heart sank, suspecting that her mother-in-law had inquired about the Snow Lotus from Situ Xie, so she braced herself and said, "Gu Ling gave it."

Last year in Yao City, the fact that Gu Ling and Su Liang faked their marriage only to get the Snow Lotus for another woman was no secret.

Her mother-in-law kicked Ying Ying in the chest, "How did you meet Gu Ling? Do you also know that Su Liang? Speak!"

Ying Ying shook her head, "I only know Gu Ling. I met him when I took refuge in his house when it was in trouble. I saw him so handsome and fell in love with him. I deliberately approached him, but was rejected. However, he knew about my poison techniques and my previous whereabouts. Once he found me for an antidote, he owed me a favor, last year he repaid it with the Snow Lotus. There's nothing else, I don't know Su Liang!"

"Why didn't you say it earlier?" her mother-in-law asked sharply.

Ying Ying said solemnly, "I originally wanted to tell grandmother, but after coming here, I heard that the Situ family had a feud with Su Liang and Gu Ling, so I didn't dare to mention it..."

Her mother-in-law's eyes were fierce, "Raise your head!"

Ying Ying raised her head and looked at her mother-in-law, her eyes returning to calm.

Her mother-in-law suddenly changed her expression, bent down to help her up, and sighed, "Don't blame grandmother, I just fear that you'll be deceived outside. The task I'm giving you this time is very important, King Yue promised that if you can save his eldest grandson, you can marry one of his grandsons and enjoy endless wealth and glory in the future! Grandmother is doing all this for your good, do you understand?"

Ying Ying nodded, "Yes, I understand. Thank you, grandmother."

"Well, prepare yourself, and set off today." Her mother-in-law patted Ying Ying's shoulder lightly.

Ying Ying turned and walked out, her face immediately turning cold. After packing her belongings in the next room, she met Situ Xie again, along with the two helpers he had arranged.

Situ Xie said some words of gratitude to Ying Ying, saying that there would be great rewards after the event, and Ying Ying left the King Yue Mansion with the two of them, heading south.

From then on, whenever the Masters of the Yue Wang Mansion went out, they would encounter assassination attempts, and there were clearly two groups of assassins.

In just three short days, Situ Xie and his sons and grandsons had experienced six assassination attempts.

Situ Xie suffered only a slight external injury, but was nearly killed by the poison smeared on the assassin's weapon. Fortunately, his mother-in-law promptly detoxified him. Yet his mother-in-law once again said that the poison was from the hand of her senior brother.

As for Situ Xie's two grandsons, Situ Zhang and Situ Min, they survived their only time out, but both were seriously injured. Situ Min's leg was cut off and could not possibly be restored, so he was destined to be crippled.

Situ Xie's anger was constantly rising, but the assassins were extremely cunning, seemingly omnipresent and not using their full strength or willing to fight to the death. As soon as things went wrong, they immediately dispersed and fled, leaving everyone in the Yue Wang Mansion uneasy and unable to sleep.

Situ Xie finally realized that his original thought was correct, and it must have something to do with Su Liang. These assassins were here to take revenge on him for Su Liang! It was obviously a personal grudge!

From beginning to end, Su Liang wasn't captured by Situ Xie, and he didn't even know where Su Liang was. It was all thanks to his well-cultivated grandson, Situ Jing.

But who could say that Situ Jing's actions were unrelated to Situ Xie? Situ Jing was a person created by Situ Xie himself. At first, when Situ Xie found out that he had captured Su Liang, he was genuinely happy and even made many plans.

However, he was as happy as he was back then, but now he was just as eager to vomit blood.

When he was talking about the bigger picture and thought that offending Qian Country wouldn't have serious consequences, he didn't realize that the real trouble would come from offending Su Liang.

His judgments were all driven by self-interest, which had failed him this time.

What he saw and thought was all about war, national affairs, and the big picture. He regarded Su Liang as a servant who Duanmu Yi didn't fully trust, but he ignored the fact that she was the core of a certain circle. And Situ Xie had no idea where the boundaries of that circle were...

...

While Su Liang's master and friends in Yao City were avenging her, she was living a peaceful life on a distant island, counting the days until Gu Ling arrived.

Cen Man couldn't help but subtly remind Su Liang that if Gu Ling wasn't in Xiangyue City, it might be Qiao Cong who came back alone. She didn't want to dampen Su Liang's spirits but was afraid that the greater her expectations, the greater her disappointment.

Su Liang was calm about this. She had considered that situation, but she still chose to trust her intuition.

Before going to bed that night, Su Liang talked to the unborn child in her belly again, "Little god, if everything goes smoothly, your father will arrive tomorrow. What do you think he will say when he sees you?"

Daybreak came.

Cen Man knew that today was a special day. After breakfast, when she heard Su Liang wanted to go for a walk by the sea, she said she would accompany her.

Nangong Qian sat in the courtyard on a lounge chair, watching Su Liang and Cen Man enviously as they walked out of the courtyard. Qiao Cong had been away for half a month, and her emotions had calmed down. Under Su Liang's treatment, her complexion had noticeably improved.

"Is my grandfather coming back today?" Nangong Qian asked Qiuyue.

Qiuyue shook her head, "I don't know, maybe." She knew that Su Liang had gone to the sea to wait for someone but didn't want to discuss the topic with Nangong Qian, fearing it would remind her of Gu Ling.

"What about my brother? When is he coming back?" Nangong Qian asked.

Qiuyue shook her head again, "I don't know that either, my lady. Just take good care of yourself, and you'll see him eventually."

One being a pregnant woman and the other blind, Su Liang and Cen Man didn't walk fast. When they reached the seaside, the sun had already risen high into the sky.

Su Liang looked into the distance, and the sea was vast and boundless, with no visible boats or people.

Since the sunlight was so intense, the two of them found some shade beside a large rock close to where Qiao Cong usually docked his boat and chatted idly.

By noon, there was still no one in sight, so Su Liang decided to help Cen Man up and prepare to leave.

"Are we coming back this afternoon?" Cen Man asked.

Su Liang nodded, "We will wait until it's cooler in the afternoon."

"That kid is really lucky," Cen Man sighed. Although she had never met Gu Ling, she had heard a lot about him from Su Liang. Although in Su Liang's stories, Gu Ling was like an omnipotent god whom she worshipped, Cen Man still thought marrying Su Liang was Gu Ling's biggest fortune.

Su Liang smiled, "So am I."

Just as she was about to turn around, helping Cen Man up, she glanced at the sea again and froze.

"What's wrong?" Cen Man asked.

Su Liang let go of her and shielded her forehead with her hand, squinting at the distance again. This time, she could see more clearly that there was a small moving black dot on the ocean's surface.

"Have they returned?" Cen Man's face showed a hint of joy.

“It seems so.” The distance was too far for Su Liang to be sure yet.

“If it’s not, hide further away,” Cen Man said. Her purpose in coming here was to protect Su Liang while Qiao Cong was away and prevent outsiders from coming onto the island.

Time didn’t pass much, but Su Liang felt that it had somehow slowed down. The black dot in her field of vision gradually enlarged and became clearer: a boat, two people, and a familiar straw hat...

“It’s Master returning!” Su Liang looked excited.

Cen Man sighed in relief, “And Gu Ling?”

Su Liang watched the figure leaping from the boat into the air and broke into a big smile, “Little god, look quickly! That graceful figure flying over is your father!”

Chapter 336: 336. Little God is lazy

Qiao Cong took off his straw hat, glanced at the two people huddled together on the shore and let out a small sigh. He also got ashore, pulled up the small boat, and picked up his and Gu Ling’s bundles, along with the food ingredients they had purchased halfway.

“Old Qiao?” Cen Man called out in the direction where Qiao Cong was.

“Hmm.” Qiao Cong responded, “Let’s go back first.”

Cen Man then started following the sound of Qiao Cong’s footsteps and left.

After walking some distance, she started talking, “That girl looks forward to seeing Gu Ling every day, and I was genuinely worried that you might not find him.”

Qiao Cong asked, “How is Qianqian doing?”

“I can’t see for myself, but she should be a lot better than when you first left.” said Cen Man.

“Hmm. Thank you.” said Qiao Cong, “You can go if you have something else to do.”

Cen Man paused, “I’m not leaving.”

Qiao Cong frowned, “You want to stay?”

Cen Man nodded, “Su Liang likes the view of the lake and plans to build a house with Gu Ling and live there separately. For the sake of your granddaughter, you should not object, right?”

Qiao Cong shook his head, “It’s their choice.”

“The boat is there, aren’t you afraid that Gu Ling will run away with Su Liang?” Cen Man asked.

Qiao Cong looked back, Su Liang and Gu Ling were still huddled together.

He looked away, “He won’t. Su Liang is my disciple.”

“Forgot to mention, she’s also my disciple now.” Cen Man hinted with a slight smile.

Qiao Cong scoffed, “You’ve been living well alone for so many years, why the sudden change?”

Cen Man sighed softly, “I am alone, just alive but what’s so good about it?”

Qiao Cong frowned, “Whatever you say.”

The two walked into the bamboo forest one after the other, with just Gu Ling and Su Liang remaining on the shore.

...

“What does it feel like?” Gu Ling gently placed his hand on Su Liang’s still flat belly, his handsome eyebrows slightly furrowed.

After thinking, Su Liang said, “Actually, I don’t feel any different physically, but mentally, I feel like I’m not alone anymore.” She suddenly laughed, referring to the “friend”, Little God of Bamboo Shoots, she had found when she was first brought here.

Gu Ling sighed softly, “I’m sorry.”

“Sorry for what?” Su Liang leaned into Gu Ling’s chest, watching the waves slowly coming in, then receding.

“I should have been more careful.” Gu Ling spoke in a low voice.

Su Liang was stunned for a moment, then turned to look at Gu Ling, her fair brows knit, “Are you saying, you hadn’t actually planned on having a child?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “I like children, but for this, we haven’t made a decision yet.”

Su Liang covered her belly, “Little God, you didn’t hear anything.”

Gu Ling looked helpless, “The baby is so small, it can’t hear.”

“Oh, I was just teasing you.” Su Liang chuckled lightly, “Honestly, I was quite taken aback too, I wasn’t prepared to be a mother. But these kinds of things, don’t require much preparation, it’s probably fate.”

“Are you really okay?” Gu Ling placed his hand on Su Liang’s, looking somewhat worried.

“Great God, you’re too nervous.” Su Liang pulls her hand out and places it on Gu Ling’s, “Everyone’s body conditions vary. The age I told you about when women in the past became adults doesn’t need to be so stringent. I’m fine.”

“I just...” Gu Ling finds it hard to describe his current feelings. He’s very excited, very happy, yet he thinks this unexpected child may be a hardship for Su Liang, he worries it will harm her body.

Su Liang turns her head, and gives a light peck at the corner of Gu Ling's lips, "I understand. But I am the doctor, if I say it's ok, then it is. You must not show any doubts or denials about the baby, babies can actually sense it."

Gu Ling sighs softly, "How could I ever deny the child, I'm very happy, really. When I saw the letter, I instantly thought it would be great if there were an airplane."

Su Liang laughs, "Great God, you might just wish you had wings, why are you even thinking about taking a plane?" You seem more like a transmigrator than I do.

"A plane is faster than a bird," Gu Ling explains earnestly.

"That is true," Su Liang admits, "It's showing sense. The master has left, and it's just us two with a boat, are you sure he isn't worried we'll escape?"

Gu Ling answers casually, "He believes you wouldn't leave."

Su Liang raises an eyebrow, "What have you two talked about?"

"Nothing." Gu Ling succinctly summarizes everything that happened from the moment he met Qiao Cong to the present day.

Su Liang lightly coughs, "Okay then, it's good you guys didn't start a fight, there's no need to force yourselves to get along if you don't see eye to eye. Great God, do you think we should leave this place and return to the Qian Country?"

Gu Ling glances at the small boat not far away and shakes his head slightly, "It might be better to stay."

"Why? Is it too dangerous out there? How's the situation?" Su Liang asks.

Gu Ling tells her about how he had hired Yan Shiba to wreak havoc in Yao City in Liang Country and about the succession drama he covertly facilitated in Liang Country.

While Su Liang isn't surprised by the first bit, she is curious about the latter.

Gu Ling tells her that the new crown prince of Yin Country is someone he had rescued once after witnessing the black fog, someone with extraordinary intelligence and talent, who always remained low-key. The man was indifferent to power, but empathetic, he had many plans for the common people's welfare which were hard to achieve.

"It seems the new prince was 'enlightened' by you, Great God. He realized that he needed power first, to do what he wanted to do. If he wishes to prevent the common people in Yin Country and even all over the world from suffering in the war, he should make sure he is qualified to sit at the negotiating table, otherwise, all his efforts would be in vain," Su Liang says.

Gu Ling nods, "He knows it and has a plan, but he has been waiting for the right opportunity."

"So, you helped him, Great God. But with him suddenly leaving Xiangyue City, can he hold on to his position?" Su Liang asks.

“He has his own men and horses,” says Gu Ling. “If he can’t even hold onto a position he acquires, then he isn’t fit for responsibility.”

That makes sense to Su Liang. A person who is praised by Gu Ling must have real skills. To stand out in the royal family and not be overthrown, you can only rely on others for protection for a while, but you can’t last long unless you stand firm yourself.

“As long as Yin Country does not truly ally with Liang Country, Qian Country will not face a real crisis,” Su Liang concludes. The new crown prince of Yin Country is a staunch opponent of war, and the emperor of Yin Country is a typical opportunist; there is very little chance they will truly ally with Liang Country to attack Qian Country.

Next, Su Liang fills Gu Ling in on all that had happened since she arrived on this island.

Speaking of how Qiao Cong had given Nangong Qian a drug to erase her memory, almost killing her, Su Liang sighs, “That old man really isn’t bad; he was just blinded by family affection in the past. Everything he has done was at Nangong Lin’s instigation, except for capturing me, which was Situ Jing’s idea.”

Gu Ling does not want to comment on Qiao Cong, only saying, “It’s me who can’t be without you. You could lead a good life without me.”

Su Liang plays with Gu Ling’s fingers, “Of course not, I’d be very lonely without you.”

“You have the little God,” Gu Ling looks at Su Liang’s belly.

Su Liang blinks her eyes, “Great God, you’re not going to fight with the baby over anything in the future, right?”

Gu Ling shakes his head, “No, I will love the baby. You need to care more about me.”

Su Liang: ...Her aloof and abstinent Great God is really just a dream of the past...

“So... we just stay here for now, without getting involved in what’s happening outside of here?” Su Liang asks.

“Yes,” Gu Ling agrees. If Su Liang was not pregnant, he would not want to hang around in Qiao Cong’s territory. But now, nothing else matters, he just wants Su Liang to be safe. If they leave this place and return to Qian Country, Su Liang will surely become a target of many people’s attention. The royal family of Qian Country would surely need their help again with this and that.

Qiao Cong was relieved to see Nangong Qian’s condition improve.

When Nangong Qian asked if Su Liang’s husband had arrived, Qiao Cong nodded.

“I wonder how remarkable a man her husband must be to deserve her?” Nangong Qian asked curiously.

Qiao Cong frowned, "Why bother about it? You should focus on your recovery and not think too much."

"Mm." Nangong Qian nodded.

When Gu Ling carried Su Liang into the courtyard, Qiuyue cast a glance at Gu Ling and quickly withdrew her gaze, "Master, Miss Su is back."

Gu Ling brought Su Liang back to her room, where his luggage had already been placed by Qiao Cong.

"Great God, you've lost weight. You must be hungry, right? Qiuyue's cooking is decent, I taught her." Su Liang said, "If you don't want to eat with them, just bring your meal here, so we can eat together."

Gu Ling nodded, that was exactly what he thought.

So, Su Liang and Gu Ling had lunch in the room, Nangong Qian and Qiuyue ate in their room, while Qiao Cong and Cen Man sat in the courtyard.

With more people around, it was quieter than before.

In the afternoon, Su Liang felt a little weary. She knew Gu Ling mustn't have had proper rest as he journeyed here, so she asked him to join her in her nap.

At the bedside, Gu Ling noticed the limp bamboo shoot and looked puzzled, "Is this, the little god?"

"Yes, it's my friend." Su Liang laughed and picked up the bamboo shoot, "Greetings from Great God."

Gu Ling waved his hand, "Hello... bamboo shoot."

Su Liang laughed and fell onto the bed. She had told Gu Ling that in her previous life, "bamboo shoot" was used as an adjective because it sounded like "damaging".

As the two of them laid on the bed, Su Liang whispered into the crook of Gu Ling's arm, "Actually, I've discovered a secret."

"What?" Gu Ling stroked Su Liang's belly, thinking about the child growing inside was simply miraculous. Even though Su Liang had explained the entire process of conception to gestation, experiencing it oneself felt utterly different.

"I suspect that Master Cen has feelings for Master Qiao," Su Liang said.

Gu Ling was not particularly interested in this, but still indulged her by asking, "How did you come to that?"

Su Liang, with nothing to do here and unable to practice martial arts due to her pregnancy, spent a lot of time with Cen Man and was now somewhat interested in gossip. She explained why she thought Cen Man was interested in Qiao Cong.

The most obvious piece of evidence was that Cen Man, knowing that Qiao Cong might return in a few days, had changed into a dress much prettier than her usual attire. The hairpin she wore today had changed from wooden to jade.

“Maybe it’s just a coincidence.” said Gu Ling.

“Great God, don’t you understand that a woman changes for the one who cherishes her?” Su Liang insisted on her belief, “Today, I wore my prettiest dress when I went to the seaside to wait for you.”

A smile lit up Gu Ling’s eyes, “You’re the prettiest.”

“You’re the one who’s the prettiest.” Su Liang traced Gu Ling’s face with her fingers, “I dreamed about our baby before. I initially thought it was you in the dream because the baby had your face, but then I realized it was a tiny baby who looks just like you.”

Gu Ling furrowed his brows slightly, “But I dreamed about a baby who looks just like you.”

Su Liang expressed surprise, “Really? You’re not trying to tease me, are you?”

“Really.” Gu Ling said.

“Oh...” Su Liang started to laugh, “That’s because we’re lovesick. I’m constantly thinking of you and you’re constantly thinking of me. Now that we know we’re having a baby, we can only dream of each other.”

Su Liang closed her eyes, “Let’s sleep.”

Gu Ling’s lips met her’s, and their light kisses served as a remedy for their longing for each other. Anything more, now, would be inappropriate.

Cen Man wished to discuss with Qiao Cong about their living arrangements, but after he put down his chopsticks, he headed to the backyard to check on the vegetables they had planted, and then took his axe and sickle and left.

By the time Gu Ling and Su Liang woke up, it was dusk.

“I’m becoming lazier and lazier recently.” Su Liang said while yawning.

Gu Ling shook his head, “It’s the little god who is lazy.”

Su Liang giggled, “Right. I was never lazy. It’s all because of the little god.”

The bamboo shoot beside the bed rolled onto the floor with a gurgle. Gu Ling picked it up, “Let’s send it home.”

The two of them got ready and stepped out. The courtyard was quiet and empty.

Su Liang wanted to show Gu Ling the lake she liked and discuss building a house.

Gu Ling held Su Liang close as they stepped into the bamboo forest. Not much further in, a beautiful lake came into view.

The area Su Liang wished to build a house on was cleared away. The bamboo had been chopped down and laid on the ground.

Qiao Cong rolled up his sleeves and positioned himself to chop a thick bamboo stalk.

Cen Man kicked the bamboo and bent down to drag it towards one side, forming a pile. Although she couldn't see, she was making slow progress.

Su Liang felt a sudden wave of gratitude and called out, "Master."

Both Qiao Cong and Cen Man turned to her.

"Xiaoliang, you're here?" Cen Man was first to react, "Is this the right place? I can't see, so I feared I might choose the wrong spot."

"No, it's correct." Su Liang replied with a hint of laughter, "You've both worked hard, it's getting late. Let's head back."

"You two go back." Said Qiao Cong, who then immediately swung his axe again. The bamboo snapped with a crack and fell to one side.

Gu Ling chose a spot in the bamboo forest to bury the wilted bamboo shoot and then used a small knife to carve two words into the bamboo beside it, "Good Bamboo".

Su Liang:... Her Great God was becoming more and more adorable.

After dinner, Cen Man wanted to ask Qiao Cong about their living arrangements, but he put down his chopsticks and went back to chopping bamboo by the lake.

Su Liang showed Gu Ling her drawings of the house she wished to build. It was supposed to be simple due to the limited resources, but it needed to be comfortable and beautiful.

Gu Ling said it was possible.

After Su Liang fell asleep, Gu Ling quietly left the room and went back to the lake.

He found Qiao Cong still working alone, with a fire for illumination.

Upon hearing footsteps, Qiao Cong turned back and saw Gu Ling emerging from the bamboo forest. He squinted, "Why are you here?"

Gu Ling did not reply, so Qiao Cong huffed but did not inquire further. Like before on the road, the two of them formed a tacit agreement for Su Liang and busied themselves under the cover of night.

The next morning, when Su Liang opened her eyes, Gu Ling was beside her, watching her.

"Great God, why are you awake so early?" Su Liang hugged Gu Ling's arm, "Let's rest a bit more. We need to discuss a name for the little god."

After a moment's thought, Gu Ling said, "Let's find a name with the water radical."

Su Liang laughed, "Stop, we have plenty of water now, no need to be so rigid."

Gu Ling shook his head, "I can't think of any."

"I didn't expect there would be something that could stump the Great God." Su Liang chuckled, "Don't worry, it's still early. We have plenty of time to think."

Chapter 337: 337. Your grandfather's deterrence

On the third day after Gu Ling arrived on the island, the lakeside cottage was built.

Qiao Cong worked day and night, coming over to help whenever he had time. At first, he thought Gu Liang didn't understand, but later found that Gu Ling was even more skilled and efficient than him.

Cen Man also helped as much as she could within her abilities.

As for Su Liang, she only went there when it wasn't too hot during the day, and they wouldn't even let her lift a finger.

The lakeside cottage was surrounded by a waist-high bamboo fence, and Gu Ling personally made the fence himself, with a unique pattern designed by him, which looked much more beautiful than the one at Qiao Cong's courtyard.

The cottage only had one room to live in. In addition, there was a kitchen, toilet, and a firewood shed, fully equipped.

Qiao Cong originally said that they shouldn't build a kitchen on this side, and to let Qiuyue cook and send them the prepared food directly.

Gu Ling insisted.

At this moment, Su Liang was being held by Gu Ling while looking at the new house when Qiao Cong couldn't help but say, "Su Liang is pregnant; she can't cook or do heavy work, as it will tire her."

Su Liang smiled, "Master, don't worry, I won't do it; I'll let him do it."

Qiao Cong was stunned, and Cen Man was also a little puzzled, "You want Gu Ling to cook? Can he cook?"

It was rare for men to know how to cook in this world, especially for men from distinguished noble families.

Su Liang casually said, "My husband, he can do everything!"

Qiao Cong and Cen Man shook their heads and sighed, feeling that their disciple had lost her senses because of Gu Liang...

Qiuyue was asked to bring one portion of each ingredient to the lakeside cottage, and she was immediately puzzled, "Will Miss Su cook by herself?"

Qiao Cong snorted, "She said Gu Ling will do it. I will keep an eye on them."

If Su Liang secretly cooked for Gu Ling behind their backs, Qiao Cong would have a "chat" with Gu Ling.

Not far away, Nangong Qian, who was sunbathing, was surprised, "Grandfather, can my uncle's husband cook?"

Qiao Cong walked over, picked up Nangong Qian, and sent her back to her room, "It doesn't concern us, they've separated!"

However, the "separated" Qiao Cong secretly left the small courtyard and headed towards the lake, intending to see for himself who exactly was cooking.

As soon as Su Liang sat down on the small stool to add a piece of firewood, Gu Ling pulled her up, "This is uncomfortable to sit on." He wanted to send her back to the room.

Su Liang refused, "No, I want to be here. We haven't cooked together in a long time."

Gu Ling looked around and asked Su Liang to wait for a moment. He returned to the room and moved the bamboo chair that Qiao Cong had made for Su Liang, with a soft cotton cushion on it, and placed it by the open kitchen window.

Su Liang sat in the spot Gu Ling arranged for her, a distance away from the stove, so she wouldn't be smoked by the cooking fumes. Looking out the window, she saw the lush green bamboo forest.

Su Liang thought she saw a shadow flickering in the bamboo forest, but when she looked again, it was gone. She thought she must have been seeing things and assumed that if someone came, Gu Ling would definitely notice.

It was Qiao Cong.

He hid in the bamboo forest and saw Su Liang sitting by the kitchen window, but he couldn't see Gu Ling.

After a while, smoke came out of the kitchen, and Su Liang had a teacup in her hand, drinking water.

A little later, Qiao Cong smelled a faint fragrance, but Su Liang remained seated all the time.

Qiao Cong waited patiently until Su Liang finally stood up, and soon saw her walking out of the kitchen with Gu Ling following and holding two plates.

The table in the courtyard was made of a large stone slab that Gu Ling had carried back from the beach, polished smooth and flat, and the stools were made of bamboo.

When Su Liang and Gu Ling were about to eat, Qiao Cong squinted his eyes to make sure the food wasn't cooked by Su Liang.

Su Liang had just tried a piece of spare rib and was about to praise Gu Ling's improved skills when she saw Qiao Cong walking in with a big bamboo shoot in his hand and his gaze fell on the food.

The courtyard was filled with the enticing aroma of food, and Qiao Cong was already a little surprised by the appearance and color of the food. It looked just like what Su Liang would make, even more delicate.

"I don't know if it's safe to eat, but I brought this for you anyway." Qiao Cong put the bamboo shoot on the table.

"Master, would you like to try Gu Ling's cooking?" Su Liang asked with a smile.

Qiao Cong was about to sit down when he heard Gu Ling say, "Not enough to eat."

The atmosphere suddenly became subtle, and Qiao Cong left with a dark face.

Su Liang coughed lightly, "Great God, I originally planned to let him teach you the ultimate technique of Luoying Swordsmanship after he tasted your cooking."

Gu Ling's face was calm, "It's fine if you teach me."

“My swordsmanship isn’t up to par,” said Su Liang. “It would be better if he taught you.”

But Gu Ling didn’t give Qiao Cong any face, which made Su Liang’s plan difficult to carry out.

“Let’s talk about it later.” Gu Ling put another piece of ribs on Su Liang’s plate.

Cen Man heard footsteps, then Qiuyue said that the Master had returned, and it was time for dinner.

After Su Liang moved out, Cen Man moved into her old room.

“I thought you were going to stay there for dinner.” Cen Man started the conversation.

Qiao Cong snorted lightly, looking at the dishes prepared by Qiuyue, he felt that they were far inferior to those at Su Liang’s table.

Cen Man asked again, “Was it cooked by Su Liang, or is Gu Ling really good at cooking?”

“That kid can cook.” Qiao Cong told the truth.

Cen Man was quite surprised, “He really can do everything. He looks so good, no wonder Xiaoliang likes him.”

“You can’t even see him.” Qiao Cong snorted lightly.

Cen Man smiled, “He is indeed recognized as a beauty by everyone. Old Qiao, you were wrong about what happened before, it’s normal for Gu Ling to be unhappy with you. In both sentiment and reason, I think you should apologize to him first.”

Qiao Cong’s face turned dark, “Su Liang didn’t say anything!”

Cen Man shook her head, “Xiaoliang took you as his Master only because she had no other choice. You forced them to separate twice, if Gu Ling doesn’t hold a grudge and acts as if nothing happened, do you think that’s right? Why did Xiaoliang agree to not be your apprentice anymore after leaving the island? You were wrong, but you didn’t apologize and you can’t guarantee that you won’t make the same mistakes for your grandson and granddaughter in the future. On what grounds can you demand their sincere treatment of you?”

Qiao Cong slammed his chopsticks on the table, not eating anything, and got up and left.

Cen Man sighed, “Why all the fuss?”

...

Su Liang and Gu Ling finally returned to their peaceful and quiet lives. Although both knew they wouldn’t stay here for long, living in the present still brought them full happiness.

Gu Ling would go with Su Liang to fetch water from the courtyard when Su Liang went to give Nangong Qian acupuncture, as there was no well at the lakeside house.

At other times, Cen Man would occasionally come to talk to Su Liang, stay for a while, and leave without staying for a meal.

Su Liang was curious about Cen Man's past. She must be a person with a story, she asked about Su Liang's affairs, and always mentioned Qiao Cong, but she wouldn't talk about her own affairs.

However, Su Liang never inquired further. She could feel Cen Man's sincerity and kindness, and other things were not important.

After not seeing Qiao Cong for two days, Su Liang learned that he went shopping again and hadn't returned.

Another day passed, and Qiao Cong came back, letting Qiuyue send things over to Su Liang and Gu Ling, and specifically found Cen Man to tell her about the current situation outside and asked her to inform Su Liang.

"Did you go to Jiaye City?" Cen Man was surprised. There was no need to go to Jiaye City just to buy things.

Qiao Cong nodded, "They have the desserts that Qianqian likes."

Cen Man knew he was lying and didn't admit that he went there for Su Liang, "I don't know anything about the outside world and people. I'm afraid I can't explain it clearly, you should tell Xiaoliang."

Qiao Cong wanted to say something more, but Cen Man entered the room and closed the door.

Qiao Cong frowned and stood for a while. Turning back, he saw Qiuyue returning after sending the items.

"Master, I have sent the items to Miss Su. Mr. Gu made a little rabbit out of bamboo, and it looks really nice!" Qiuyue said with a smile.

Qiao Cong didn't say anything and went back to his room.

Qiuyue was puzzled, feeling that Qiao Cong seemed angry, but who was he angry at? No one offended him!

Qiuyue felt that Gu Ling was a magical person. Even though he was a nobleman from a prestigious family, he could cook delicious dishes, do laundry, and was skillful in all kinds of chores. Moreover, his martial arts skills were amazing, making him incredibly perfect.

Qiuyue thought no wonder her lady had been captivated by him.

However, to Qiuyue, Gu Ling was like the moon in the sky, untouchable. She knew her status was low and never dared to have improper thoughts.

But she believed that Gu Ling and Su Liang were a match made in heaven, the so-called "fairy couple."

Qiuyue dared not mention this to Nangong Qian, but couldn't help confiding in the gentle Cen Man, using all the beautiful words she knew.

Finally, Qiuyue mentioned Qiao Cong, "It seems that Master is in a bad mood lately, and I don't know why."

Cen Man shook her head, "Nobody annoyed him." He was just angry at himself.

At dusk, Su Liang and Gu Ling were having dinner when a figure appeared outside the fence, silently watching them.

As Su Liang was imagining her future life with children, she suddenly saw Qiao Cong and hesitated, "Master, is something wrong?"

Qiao Cong didn't intend to come in, but spoke to Su Liang across the fence, "Is Qian's health still dependent on you?"

Su Liang stood up and walked over, "It's stable for now. The interval between acupuncture treatments has increased, and after this month, it won't be needed anymore. She can rely on medicine."

Qiao Cong nodded, "Alright. After this month, if you want to leave, you can."

Su Liang hadn't expected Qiao Cong to come especially for this, but was still thrilled, "We'll discuss whether to leave or not."

"I'm sorry for everything before." Qiao Cong looked at Su Liang and said.

"I know it wasn't Master's intention." Su Liang replied.

"If he wants to learn Luoying Swordsmanship, I can teach him." Qiao Cong glanced at Gu Ling, who was eating.

Su Liang's eyes brightened, "That's great! I've been thinking about this, but I couldn't find Master these past few days."

Saying this, Su Liang waved for Gu Ling to come over.

Gu Ling put down his chopsticks and walked over, his arm naturally wrapping around Su Liang's waist. He liked this position, being able to embrace her with a hook of his arm.

"Master just said he can teach you the ultimate techniques of Luoying Swordsmanship. You should learn from him tonight." Su Liang thought this was very important. It was rare for Qiao Cong to apologize and show goodwill, and they couldn't miss this opportunity.

As the sky darkened, Qiao Cong squinted at Gu Ling, and Gu Ling looked back at him.

Qiao Cong thought that if Gu Ling refused, it would be fine. He had never tried to please anyone so much in his life, not even Nangong Lin, who always wanted to learn from him.

"Alright." Gu Ling nodded indifferently.

Qiao Cong snorted lightly, "I'm doing this for the sake of my grand-disciple in Su Liang's womb so that you can protect mother and child."

Truth be told.

But Gu Ling said, "So am I."

Qiao Cong was left speechless and hummed coldly before turning to leave, but Su Liang called out, "Wait, Master!"

Qiao Cong turned around to see Su Liang returning to the table and back quickly, handing him a plump white steamed bun with a smile, "This is a meat bun made by Gu Ling. Taste it, Master. It's a thank you gift for teaching him swordsmanship."

Qiao Cong glared at Su Liang, "Is one bun really enough for my ultimate sword techniques?"

Su Liang's smile deepened, "This is a meat bun made by my beautiful and talented husband. Not everyone can have one. If Master doesn't want it, that's fine."

Qiao Cong snatched it quickly, "Why wouldn't I want it?" Then he stormed off with the bun in hand.

As he entered the bamboo forest, Qiao Cong took a bite and squinted his eyes, finishing the bun in just a few bites before cursing, "She only gave me one, so stingy!"

That night, Gu Ling planned to visit Qiao Cong after Su Liang fell asleep.

Qiao Cong waited for a while but saw no one, so he took the initiative to visit the lakeside courtyard.

After sitting in the courtyard for a while, he finally saw Gu Ling come out.

"If you don't want to learn, just say so!" Qiao Cong was really annoyed.

Gu Ling shook his head, "Speak quietly, don't wake her up."

Qiao Cong: ...

Su Liang's Luoying Swordsmanship, which was taught by Gu Ling, has limited foundation and can no longer improve.

However, Gu Ling's swordsmanship, learned from Nangong Lin, is now not inferior to his own.

After exchanging moves with Gu Ling, Qiao Cong had to admit, "You have a high level of comprehension." Gu Ling had integrated his original swordsmanship and created new sword techniques that were close to being true ultimate moves, but they still needed some polishing.

Without wasting any words, Qiao Cong simply demonstrated an ultimate move and asked, "Did you remember?"

As soon as the words fell, Gu Ling reproduced the move without any error and at a not slow pace.

Qiao Cong felt that this was supposed to be his real disciple... However, he knew that Gu Ling did not care for him, he couldn't say this out loud.

"I'll come back tomorrow at this time to exchange moves with you." Qiao Cong left after saying the words.

He stopped at the edge of the bamboo forest, and saw an elegant figure on the lakeside, practicing with the sword flashing.

Qiao Cong muttered, "What a monster."

When Gu Ling finished practicing the sword and returned to his room, Su Liang woke up.

"How was it?" Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling gently touched Su Liang's hair, "Not bad."

"Would Nangong Lin be angry to death if he knew that his father-in-law taught you the ultimate technique of the Luoying Swordsmanship for a meat bun?" Su Liang laughed softly.

Gu Ling shook his head, "It's not just for the meat bun."

Su Liang rubbed her belly, "Our baby is just a little meat bun. We still don't know if it's a boy or a girl."

"Either is good, I will love both." Gu Ling gently patted Su Liang, "Go to sleep."

The next day, Cen Man learned that Qiao Cong had apologized to Su Liang and Gu Ling and had taught Gu Ling the ultimate sword technique. She breathed a sigh of relief. She really didn't want to break the harmony that is happening now, and luckily Qiao Cong wasn't so confused.

As for the news Qiao Cong investigated in Jiaye City earlier, there was nothing special. There were no conflicts on the surface between the three countries, nor any signs of war.

In the following days, Qiao Cong would exchange sword moves with Gu Ling by the lake every night. Although Qiao Cong was stronger, under his suppression, Gu Ling's swordsmanship became more advanced and improved rapidly.

This was also a very fulfilling thing for Qiao Cong.

On the other hand, because Situ Jing, who was almost blind due to poison, has rushed to Liuxian River with Nangong Lin's company, day and night. Not far away was Jiaye City, where a major turning point in his life took place.

He already knew that Che Yun and Che Xiao had been sent back to the capital of Qian Country, but he decided to let go of the non-existent relationship that he had been longing for unilaterally. The real Che Yun and Che Xiao were dead, and some relationships no longer had any room for reconciliation or recovery.

The two could directly leave Liuxian River and go to sea without going to Jiaye City. But Nangong Lin insisted on going to check the situation.

Coincidentally, as they sneaked into the city and approached Lin's Family, they met Lian Shun, who was about to return home.

"What are you going to do?" Situ Jing's eyes were wrapped in a black cloth to avoid further injury.

Nangong Lin sneered, "I am going to invite your best friend to accompany you on a trip. So that Su Liang's girl doesn't play tricks!"

Situ Jing subconsciously grabbed Nangong Lin's arm.

Nangong Lin snorted softly, "Jingjing, at this point, you can't think that Lian Shun will still treat you as a friend, right? Wake up! Healing your eyes is the most important thing, otherwise, everything is in vain!"

Situ Jing's expression froze, and he let go of his hand.

It was not difficult for Nangong Lin, with his strength, to capture Lian Shun.

Situ Jing waited for about a quarter of an hour, and Nangong Lin returned.

“How is it?” Situ Jing frowned and asked.

Nangong Lin snorted, “Easy. Your friend’s martial arts skills are far behind those of you and Gu Ling.”

“Is he... alright?” Situ Jing didn’t hear Lian Shun’s voice.

“He was knocked out, otherwise, he would have screamed.” Nangong Lin said, “Let’s take him with us, as a gift for Su Liang. With your grandfather’s deterrence, wouldn’t she obediently heal you? Let’s go!”

Chapter 338: 338. Save you

Yao City, Liang Country.

Under the incessant “harassment” of Yanyun Building’s assassins and Old Bai and Old Mu, the doors of Prince Yue’s mansion remained tightly closed for several consecutive days, with nobody going in or out.

Situ Xie couldn’t enter the palace to discuss the overall political situation with Situ Han, so he had secretly sent three masters to deliver messages to the Imperial Palace. However, none of them returned.

“This can’t go on like this.” Madam Yue’s face was grim, “How about setting a trap?”

Situ Xie coldly said, “It’s time for a counterattack. I came here to discuss this with Madam Yue and ask for her assistance.”

“Sure. I’m here to help Prince Yue.” Madam Yue sneered, “Why not tonight, then?”

Situ Xie snorted, “Exactly what I was thinking.”

That night, close to midnight, Situ Xie’s carriage slowly left the Prince Yue Mansion’s back door, heading in the direction of the Imperial Palace.

Soon, the news of the carriage was reported to Yan Shiba, who was hiding not far from Prince Yue’s Mansion, by Yanyun Building’s assassins who had been observing from the dark.

Yan Shiba didn’t want to continue dealing with Situ Xie either. Although Gu Ling didn’t explicitly tell her to kill Situ Xie, she also didn’t say not to kill him.

“Tonight, all of you, kill Situ Xie!” Yan Shiba coldly ordered.

On the other hand, Old Mu had long noticed that there had been another group of genuine assassins attacking the entire Prince Yue’s mansion recently. However, since he didn’t know the relationship between Su Liang and Yan Shiba, he wasn’t sure whose people those assassins were.

But, the enemy of an enemy could be a temporary friend. Old Mu understood this principle.

So, when he saw the carriage leaving Prince Yue's Mansion, he thought that those persistent assassins would surely take action again.

Old Mu kept his distance and called Old Bai when he passed by the place where the two of them were staying.

Old Bai was sleeping soundly at the time, and when he was woken up, he was in a bad mood. When Old Mu told him that a carriage had left Prince Yue's Mansion and Situ Xie might be inside, or it might be a trap, Old Bai sobered up.

Qi Jun was about to follow them, but both Old Bai and Old Mu pushed him back, telling him to stay put.

Qi Jun fully understood: with his weak strength, he shouldn't go out and cause more trouble...

It was the dead of night.

The carriage wheels rolled over the ground, making a rumbling noise.

Halfway through the journey, the carriage crossed a stone bridge, and the sound of horse hooves became clearer.

Upon reaching the middle of the bridge, more than a dozen shadows suddenly flew from the bridgehead and attacked the carriage!

As the assassins approached, eight figures jumped out from inside and beneath the carriage!

The two sides quickly engaged in battle, with the sounds of swords and knives clashing echoing from one side to the other.

Old Mu and Old Bai quietly approached and saw a chaotic battle.

Both sides were strong and had similar numbers. Old Mu had guessed correctly that the carriage was indeed a trap, and Situ Xie wasn't inside; it was all just to lure the assassins out.

Looking around, Old Mu thought that there must be more than just those eight on Situ Xie's side. However, he didn't intend to make a move yet and planned to observe the situation further.

Old Bai had been quiet and not talking much. Old Mu suspected that he had gotten lost if he didn't look at him.

As Old Mu was staring at a bush and thinking that there might be people hiding behind it, Old Bai suddenly pulled him back a few steps.

"What's up?" Old Mu asked in a low voice.

"Poison." Old Bai said in a low voice, took a medicine bottle from his waist pouch, poured out two pills and handed one to Old Mu.

Old Mu's expression changed, and he quickly swallowed the pill. Although he hadn't felt anything unusual, if Old Bai said there was poison, there must be poison.

"That despicable Situ Xie, so sinister!" Old Mu cursed in a low voice. This trap tonight was even more ruthless than he had anticipated. The chance of survival for those assassins wasn't looking good.

“Old Bai, do we save them or not?” Old Mu asked with a frown, “What if those people are our girl’s friends and they’re here for her?”

As soon as he finished speaking, without waiting for Old Bai’s answer, Old Mu shouted at the top of his lungs, “It’s poisoned, run!”

The assassins of Yanyun Building, upon hearing this, had yet to react when they heard the sound of a whistle. It was the signal from Yan Shiba to retreat.

But at that moment, more than a dozen assassins suddenly felt dizzy and unsteady on their feet, as the poison began to take effect. There were also master fighters nearby who had taken the antidote in advance, blocking their way. They wanted to leave, but were now unable to escape.

Seeing this, Old Mu cursed and rushed out from his hiding spot! If these men were really Su Liang’s friends, then he couldn’t just not help them!

Old Bai hesitated for a moment, but also went over.

Just as Old Bai was about to save one of the Yanyun Building’s assassins, he heard a gloomy female voice behind him, “Senior Brother, is that you?”

Old Bai’s eyes widened and his face stiffened, not looking back. He pushed back an attacking master with a palm strike, and the next moment he felt something sharp and thin silently penetrate his body.

“Senior Brother, after such a long time apart, why won’t you look back at me?”

Madam Yue’s laugh was chilling.

Old Bai tore open his pouch and threw it up, the sweet-smelling powder rapidly spreading through the air!

Madam Yue’s complexion changed, and as she retreated, she shouted loudly, “Retreat!”

The fierce battle suddenly ended, leaving only an empty carriage on the bridge, with no trace of any people.

After Madam Yue and her men fled, Old Mu took Old Bai’s antidote, distributed it among the fallen assassins, and then left together. They didn’t stop until they entered a dense forest.

All ten assassins were injured to varying degrees, with their exposed skin showing signs of festering, but it wasn’t serious, and it was already under control. This was caused by the poison that Old Bai released later, but he and Old Mu had taken the antidote beforehand, so they were fine.

Madam Yue ran so quickly because she knew the severity of the poison. The antidote she had given to Situ Xie’s men in advance could not counter this unexpected poison.

“Who are you? From Yanyun Building? Why did you want to kill Situ Xie?” Old Mu asked coldly.

A young woman’s voice came from not far away, “And who are you?”

Old Mu turned his head to look at Yan Shiba, who had appeared before them, his eyes narrowed. “You are... the owner of Yanyun Building?”

The young female assassin leader could be none other than her.

“What if I am? Who are you two?” Yan Shiba’s gaze was guarded. She had not returned to Qian Country for a long time before she met Su Liang in Yin Country. She didn’t know that Su Liang had two new masters. But she guessed that these two strong and poison-savvy old men were here for Su Liang.

“You first, why do you want to kill Situ Xie? Who hired you?” Old Mu scoffed.

Yan Shiba sneered, “You first, announce your names!”

Looking impatient, Old Bai spoke, “Enough! Let’s go!”

Old Mu sensed that Old Bai was agitated, likely due to his encounter with that witch earlier, and didn’t want to entangle with Yan Shiba any longer, deciding to leave.

However, Yan Shiba ordered her men to block Old Mu and Old Bai’s way.

“Do you know a girl named Su Liang?” Yan Shiba stared intently at Old Mu.

Old Mu replied irritably, “Do you plan to repay kindness with enmity? Get away!”

“I mean to say that, since our goals are the same, why not work together?” Yan Shiba didn’t step aside.

Old Mu was tempted, but Old Bai flew up and broke through the encirclement.

“Hey! Wait for me!” Old Mu followed and ran after him.

Yan Shiba did not let her men really obstruct them. Watching their figures disappear into the night, she snorted softly, “It must have something to do with Liang Sister!”

All of Yanyun Building’s assassins in Yao City were deployed tonight, and they were all injured and poisoned. Although the poison was under control, they knew that Situ Xie had a witch who was proficient in poison by his side. If it weren’t for the timely rescue of Old Bai and Old Mu, they would have been wiped out.

Thinking it over, Yan Shiba thought the risk was too great to continue, and Gu Ling, who asked her to come here, had told her not to risk her life.

Given this, Yan Shiba decided to temporarily stop and withdraw from Yao City to recuperate.

Meanwhile, when Old Mu found Old Bai, he had already packed up and prepared to leave.

Qi Jun didn’t understand why and dared not speak.

“Didn’t we agree to kill Situ Xie first before searching for our young lady? What’s the meaning of this?” Old Mu frowned, “Is it because of that old witch? She’s the madwoman you mentioned? Are you that afraid of her?”

Old Bai looked sullen, “Get out of my way!”

Old Mu spread his arms out, “No! You can’t just leave without explaining yourself! How am I supposed to face the young lady if you leave? You haven’t even properly taught her poison techniques yet! Are you planning to go back to a life of drunken stupor?!”

“You don’t understand,” Old Bai said coldly.

Old Mu snatched his bundle away and tossed it to Qi Jun. Qi Jun hesitated for a moment before hiding the bundle behind his back...

Old Bai looked conflicted, “You don’t know how insane that madwoman truly is! Especially when it involves people or matters related to myself! If she finds out that I am connected to Su Liang, there will be endless trouble!”

Hearing this, Old Mu became furious, “Have you lost your mind? At this point, the madwoman must know you’re connected to the young lady! She might have even guessed that you’re her master! If you run, what will happen to the young lady if the madwoman comes looking for her?”

Qi Jun finally understood what was going on and quickly nodded in agreement, “Yes, indeed! Our young lady hasn’t had a chance to properly learn poison techniques from Senior Bai, how will she be able to deal with it? Senior Bai must not just simply abandon us!”

Old Bai’s expression turned gloomy, “It’s all my fault... I shouldn’t have involved Su Liang...”

“What on earth did you do to offend that madwoman?” Old Mu couldn’t help but ask, “Is your poison technique inferior to hers? Why does she keep bothering you?”

Old Bai hesitated, only to heave a deep sigh in the end.

Qi Jun looked serious, “Senior Bai, I believe that since this person is such a big problem, it’s better to just get rid of her outright. Of course, this is only under the premise that both seniors are not in danger, as the young lady definitely wouldn’t want anything bad to happen to you both.”

“That makes sense,” Old Mu agreed.

Old Bai swayed slightly, blood leaking from the corner of his mouth, his complexion extremely unsightly, “It’s not as simple as you think.”

...

Nameless island.

As night fell and the wind and waves picked up, Situ Jing reached out and felt Lian Shun lying beside him. He then asked, “Master, haven’t we arrived yet?”

“We have.” As soon as Nangong Lin finished speaking, the boat reached the shore.

After the three of them landed, Nangong Lin pulled the boat ashore and secured it to prevent it from being swept away by the waves.

As Situ Jing had not yet adapted to being blind, Nangong Lin led him by a ribbon and stepped on the sandy beach as they walked forward. Nangong Lin was carrying the still unconscious Lian Shun on his back. Lian Shun had almost woke up in the middle, but was given another sedative to keep him asleep.

They hadn’t gone far before Nangong Lin suddenly stopped, almost causing Situ Jing to bump into him.

“Master, why have we stopped?” Situ Jing asked, frowning.

Nangong Lin gazed at the dark bamboo forest in front of him, lost in thought, "You two hide here, while I go find your grandfather."

"Master, are you worried that something might have happened on the island while we were away?" Situ Jing asked.

Nangong Lin nodded and shook his head at the same time, "With your grandfather here, nothing should have gone wrong. But just to be on the safe side, let's be cautious. I won't alert Su Liang yet; I'll talk to your grandfather about how to make Su Liang willingly treat your condition."

"That works," Situ Jing nodded.

Soon after, Nangong Lin found a place for Situ Jing to sit down and securely tied up Lian Shun's hands and feet, making it impossible for him to escape even if he woke up.

"Don't make a sound. Wait here for me to come back." Nangong Lin patted Situ Jing on the shoulder.

Situ Jing could clearly hear the sound of waves and the rustling of the wind blowing through the bamboo leaves, guessing that they were at the edge of the bamboo forest.

Nangong Lin made sure Situ Jing was settled before heading alone into the bamboo forest, heading towards Qiao Cong's residence.

At this time, Qiuyue had already served Nangong Qian her meal, administered her medicine, and put her to bed, and the lamp in the room had been extinguished.

However, the rooms on the left where Su Liang stayed and on the right where Qiao Cong stayed still had their lights on.

Nangong Lin appeared outside the courtyard and immediately saw a slender shadow reflected on the window of Su Liang's room. Everything appeared the same as when he left last time, just as he had expected.

Nangong Lin circled around to the fence nearest to Qiao Cong's room, leaped in, and silently made his way over to avoid alerting Su Liang. He knocked on the back wall in a rhythmic pattern.

Qiao Cong was tidying up his clothes inside his room, planning to go train with Gu Ling later. Hearing the sound from the back wall, his eyes narrowed slightly. He put down his clothes, opened the door, and went out.

Cen Man was weaving a small basket with thin bamboo strips. Since she couldn't see, it took her a long time to do it. During the day, she specifically asked Qiao Cong to teach her this task to pass the time.

When she heard the door open, Cen Man thought it was Qiao Cong going to find Gu Ling again, so she didn't notice anything unusual.

Qiao Cong left the courtyard and entered the bamboo forest. Soon, Nangong Lin appeared, "Father."

"Why did you come back? How is Jingjing?" Qiao Cong asked with a frown.

Nangong Lin countered, "How is Qianqian's health? Is Su Liang still here?"

“You don’t need to worry about Qianqian’s health. Su Liang is still here. What are you here for? Is Jingjing alone in Liang Country?” Qiao Cong asked.

Nangong Lin sighed deeply, “Father, Jingjing had an accident.”

Qiao Cong frowned more, “What do you mean? What happened to him?”

Nangong Lin hurriedly said, “He is still alive and came back with me, but he was poisoned and injured his eyes. Now, he can’t see.”

Qiao Cong grabbed Nangong Lin’s collar, his voice filled with anger, “How did you promise me?”

Nangong Lin said that the poison was suspected to be from Su Liang’s master. Situ Jing encountered it in Situ Xie’s mansion. At that time, he was asked to stay outside by Situ Jing and did not follow him in.

“Father, I brought Jingjing back to find Su Liang quickly, to treat him. Maybe his eyes can still be saved.” Nangong Lin’s face turned grim, “Perhaps, Su Liang knows how to solve the poison. Jingjing being poisoned has something to do with her too. Now, we must make Su Liang obediently cooperate and put all her efforts into treating Jingjing. For this, I specifically went to Jiaye City to capture Lian Shun.”

“Where is Jingjing?” Qiao Cong’s voice was low.

“Over there.” Nangong Lin pointed in a direction, “To be on the safe side, I came to discuss with Father how to deal with it. Su Liang is full of tricks. If we are not careful, she will take advantage of us! If she pretends to treat Jingjing but does not try her best, we won’t know. We must use strong means, if she can’t cure Jingjing, we’ll dismember Lian Shun!”

Qiao Cong turned around, “Take me to see Jingjing.”

Nangong Lin nodded, “Alright, this way.”

On the way, Nangong Lin talked about the events that occurred after he and Situ Jing left last time. He appeared to have taken good care of Situ Jing and treated him well, almost fulfilling his every wish.

“Situ Xie is strong, and the Liang royal family is full of dangers. Once Jingjing’s eyes are cured, you should teach him the complete Luoying swordsmanship as soon as possible,” Nangong Lin said.

“Hmm,” Qiao Cong nodded, “I’ll teach you first another day.”

Nangong Lin’s eyes lit up with happiness, “Thank you, Father. I realized on this trip that there are always stronger people out there. If I can learn the complete Luoying swordsmanship, I will be able to better protect Qianqian and Jingjing from being bullied.”

As they were talking, the two reached the edge of the bamboo forest.

Nangong Lin led the way and found Situ Jing and Lian Shun, who were still in the same spot.

“Jingjing, I brought your grandfather here,” Nangong Lin walked over, pulled Situ Jing up, and bent down to pat the dirt on his clothes, being extra careful and considerate.

Lian Shun was still unconscious nearby.

Qiao Cong’s gaze fell on the black cloth covering Situ Jing’s eyes, and his face darkened.

“Grandfather, it’s because I am incompetent,” Situ Jing said in a low voice.

“Don’t talk like that. Su Liang is here, she will definitely cure you,” Nangong Lin said reassuringly.

Qiao Cong approached Situ Jing and Nangong Lin without turning his head and said, “Father, Jingjing’s eyes cannot be delayed any longer, we...”.

Before he could finish, Qiao Cong raised his hand behind Nangong Lin’s back and slapped his neck with a palm strike!

Nangong Lin’s eyes widened in shock. He turned around and looked at Qiao Cong in disbelief, “You...”

Qiao Cong slapped Nangong Lin’s face hard, knocking him to the ground, then stepped on his chest and kicked him fiercely!

Everything happened so fast. Nangong Lin spat out a mouthful of blood and passed out.

Situ Jing couldn’t see, but he heard the sound of Qiao Cong hitting Nangong Lin. His expression changed drastically, “What is Grandfather doing?”

Qiao Cong coldly said, “Saving you!”

Chapter 339: Do you have that medicine?

As Lian Shun’s consciousness gradually returned, he heard the increasingly clear sound of waves and people talking nearby.

“Grandfather, it seems you really have fallen for Su Liang,”

This voice was all too familiar to Lian Shun – Che Yun, who was now better known as Situ Jing.

Qiao Cong spoke up coldly, “She once sincerely regarded you as a friend. Why were you insistent on following Situ Xie’s orders? Even for the sake of the Che Family, there should be other ways!”

This was the question Lian Shun wanted to ask Situ Jing as well. Why...

After a moment of silence, Situ Jing spoke up again, “What if I say that I just want power, to return to Liang Country as a prince, to become the crown prince and seize the Dragon Throne? Would grandfather be against me like you were against Nangong Lin?”

Qiao Cong spoke up again with anger, “What is so good about that throne anyway?”

Situ Jing coldly said, “I have been under others’ control since I was little, walking on thin ice every step of the way. Situ Xie treated me like a pawn, so did Nangong Lin. Where was grandfather during those times? To him, because I had Situ Han’s blood, I was an existence that was both

unwilling to be abandoned and utterly detestable! I have never obtained what I once longed for and have long been disappointed, so I don't need it anymore!"

Qiao Cong's face darkened, "I didn't detest you. It's just that during those past years, I was trapped by some matters, unable to extricate myself and care for you and Qianqian properly."

Situ Jing's face was full of self-mockery, "Yes, you all have your own matters and lives. What about my life? The so-called Liang Country prince, the Che family's young master, the military commander – they are all just jokes! Even now, if I were to sabotage Situ Xie's plans for Lian Shun's sister, causing him to lose everything, Lian Shun would still not give me another chance! Neither would Su Liang! They are both morally noble and spotless people, but I am not. My heart is dark, and I have killed people to survive long ago. I am not worthy to be their friend! To be your grandson! I truly like Su Liang, envy Lian Shun, and am jealous of Gu Ling! But I want power even more, and I don't want to be anyone's puppet or accessory any longer! The Situ surname has brought me nothing but pain and oppression for the past twenty years, so why should I not try to seize that throne?"

Qiao Cong sighed deeply, "I know your life has been difficult, but even if you truly sit on the Dragon Throne, will you be happy then?"

Situ Jing scoffed, "You want me to be like Lian Shun and Su Liang, optimistic and cheerful, always staying kind and good-hearted no matter what difficulties they face. But I am not Lian Shun, nor am I Su Liang. They have not experienced my life. It is tough to be a good person, and I am already tired."

"Jingjing," Qiao Cong said earnestly, "It was grandfather's fault for not taking care of you in the past, causing you to suffer so much. I will ask Su Liang to treat you, but whether or not your eyes can be healed, as long as I am alive, you can never return to the Liang Country royal family."

"What about the things grandfather did to Su Liang and Gu Ling for me and my sister?" Situ Jing asked coldly.

Qiao Cong shook his head, "Foolish, short-sighted, impulsive, big mistakes. As Su Liang said, I was blinded by affection at the time and did things against my conscience. Now, I regret it deeply."

"What if Su Liang refuses to treat me?" Situ Jing asked.

Qiao Cong bent down to help Situ Jing up, "I will have a good talk with her about this."

Just then, Nangong Lin, who had fainted on the ground, suddenly opened his eyes. A cold glint flashed across them as he ruthlessly severed Qiao Cong's right Achilles tendon with a hidden dagger!

Under the dark night sky, with no stars or moon, and amidst the sound of waves and rustling bamboo leaves, Qiao Cong was focused on speaking with Situ Jing and did not notice that Nangong Lin had regained consciousness.

As Qiao Cong was about to help Situ Jing up, he was caught off guard by Nangong Lin's successful sneak attack. Gasping in pain, he fell back to the ground with Situ Jing!

“Grandfather? What’s wrong?” Situ Jing sensed that something was amiss but couldn’t see what had happened.

As soon as Lian Shun, who had already regained consciousness, opened his eyes, he saw Nangong Lin getting up from the ground, clutching his chest and staggering towards the sea.

Lian Shun’s hands and feet were tied up tightly, making it impossible for him to break free. If he were to speak up at this moment and try to stop Nangong Lin from escaping, he would surely be taken hostage by Nangong Lin, potentially losing his life in the process.

Considering this, Lian Shun closed his eyes again, pretending to be unconscious. After all, none of the three people around him were on his side, so he must not act rashly.

With his Achilles tendon severed and blood gushing out, Qiao Cong struggled to stand up, knowing that his chances of catching and defeating Nangong Lin were slim. For Situ Jing’s safety, he decided to forget about Nangong Lin for now.

“He injured me and escaped,” Qiao Cong ripped a piece of cloth to wrap around his ankle, but it didn’t help much.

By the time he looked back at the sea, Nangong Lin had already disappeared.

Su Liang had already gone to bed, as Gu Ling was waiting for Qiao Cong to come and practice martial arts with him, as they had been doing for the past few days.

When the usual time for Qiao Cong’s arrival had passed, Gu Ling thought he wasn’t coming and didn’t go looking for him, deciding to go to bed early that night.

However, not long after, the voice of Cen Man came from outside, “Xiaoliang!”

Gu Ling sat up. At this time, Cen Man must have called for Su Liang because something had happened.

Cen Man called again, and Su Liang finally woke up, drowsy and held by Gu Ling as she sat up, “Is Master calling me...?”

“Yes. I’ll go out first and see.” Gu Ling spoke as she got out of bed.

As he opened the door, he saw Cen Man supporting Qiao Cong, who entered the courtyard with one leg suspended in the air, clearly in pain.

“Qiao Cong’s ankle has been severed by Nangong Lin. Please let Xiaoliang take a look at it quickly!” Cen Man’s expression was anxious. A normal person would become disabled if their ankle was severed, and the impact on a martial artist would be even more severe.

Su Liang got dressed and went to the door. Upon hearing Cen Man’s words, her face changed, “Bring Master in quickly!”

She lit two lamps in the room, looked at Qiao Cong’s injured ankle, and furrowed her brows.

Gu Ling had silently brought the medicine box and placed it beside Su Liang’s hand.

“Can it be saved?” Cen Man asked, frowning.

Su Liang focused her gaze, "I'll try."

Qiao Cong's face was as calm as water, and he didn't explain the cause of the injury at all.

Su Liang asked Gu Ling to assist her in treating Qiao Cong's injury, not having the time to investigate what had happened.

After a quarter of an hour, Su Liang let out a sigh, "It's a severe injury. Whether it can recover depends on the healing process. Do not engage in martial arts again."

"Hmm." Qiao Cong spoke up and sighed, "I should have just killed Nangong Lin!"

"What exactly happened? Did Nangong Lin return? Where is Situ Jing?" Su Liang sat down with Gu Ling and asked about the cause.

Qiao Cong told the truth. Nangong Lin and Situ Jing had captured Lian Shun from Jiaye City and brought him to the island, intending to force Su Liang to treat Situ Jing's eyes.

Upon hearing the beginning, Su Liang was filled with anger.

"Nangong Lin said that your master poisoned Jingjing's eyes in Yao City." Qiao Cong said.

Su Liang scoffed, "Without evidence, are they blaming everything on me?" However, she suspected it was the handiwork of Old Bai and Old Mu. Strictly speaking, Old Bai was not her master.

Qiao Cong shook his head, "It's just his one-sided claim." He then talked about how he followed Nangong Lin, met Situ Jing and Lian Shun, knocked Nangong Lin unconscious, tried to persuade Situ Jing, but didn't expect Nangong Lin to wake up so quickly and escape after ambushing him.

"It was because Nangong Lin was the man her daughter loved most, so Master couldn't be cruel to him." Su Liang said indifferently. They had been master and disciple for many years and later became in-laws. Nangong Lin naturally tried his best to disguise himself and even intentionally brainwashed Qiao Cong in front of him. No matter what he did, he always claimed it was for the sake of Qiao Cong's grandchildren, and even used Nangong Qian and Situ Jing to drag Qiao Cong into it.

The only miscalculation Nangong Lin made was that Qiao Cong genuinely liked Su Liang and sobered up because of her.

But Qiao Cong attacked Nangong Lin because he didn't want him to harm his grandchildren anymore. After all, they shared a long-standing relationship, and Qiao Cong subconsciously never thought about killing Nangong Lin, so he didn't hit him hard enough.

Qiao Cong sighed deeply, "It was my momentary confusion!"

"Is Lian Shun alright?" Su Liang asked.

Qiao Cong shook his head, "He's fine. I asked Qiuyue to make some food for them. If you want to see him now, I can call him over."

"As long as he's fine." Su Liang yawned, "Master, go back and rest first. Don't touch the wound. Let's talk about other things tomorrow."

“Alright.” Qiao Cong nodded.

Gu Ling had no intention of escorting Qiao Cong back. He didn’t want to leave Su Liang for a moment, in case Nangong Lin snuck back onto the island.

Cen Man offered to carry Qiao Cong on her back, but he refused.

“I think it’s fine.” Su Liang spoke up, agreeing with Cen Man’s suggestion to carry Qiao Cong back.

“Xiaoliang has already said it, don’t push yourself. No one’s laughing at you.” Cen Man insisted.

Qiao Cong finally agreed to listen to Su Liang, reluctantly letting Cen Man carry him on her back.

A specially built road made of stone slabs connected the small courtyard by the lake to Qiao Cong’s courtyard, making it easier for Cen Man to walk.

Cen Man carried Qiao Cong on her back, walking slowly on the stone slab road, surrounded by tranquility.

“Old Qiao, you can’t continue making blunders. Nangong Lin is nothing but trouble.” Cen Man sighed, “Regardless of whether Xiaoliang is willing to treat your grandson or not, you can’t force her. She doesn’t owe you anything.”

“I know,” Qiao Cong said solemnly. “No matter what decision she makes, I’ll accept it.”

On the other side, Su Liang and Gu Ling were lying in bed, sleepless.

“Great God, should I treat Situ Jing?” Su Liang asked, and then added, “Of course, on the condition that I can treat him.”

Gu Ling gently stroked Su Liang’s hair, “It’s up to you.”

Situ Jing had once been Su Liang’s friend, but he had never been Gu Ling’s friend. Gu Ling wouldn’t consider Situ Jing his brother just because of the sisterly bond between Situ Ning and Situ Xiang.

However, he respected and supported Su Liang’s choices. Many things weren’t simply black or white. Some people couldn’t be judged solely based on good and evil.

“Let’s see how things go tomorrow then!” Su Liang sighed slightly. Qiao Cong certainly wanted to save Situ Jing, as he was his grandson.

Qiao Cong slept on the ground in the kitchen, leaving his room for Lian Shun and Situ Jing.

Cen Man was worried about the two of them fighting, but Qiao Cong assured her there would be no problem.

Lian Shun wasn’t injured and still didn’t know that Gu Ling was on the island. When he asked to see Su Liang, he was told that she had gone to bed and would see him tomorrow...

From the conversation between Qiao Cong and Situ Jing earlier, Lian Shun knew that Qiao Cong had been “conquered” by Su Liang. The letter of reassurance was most likely personally sent to Jiaye City by Qiao Cong.

As such, Lian Shun wasn’t too worried about his situation and decided to wait until he saw Su Liang.

The only discomfort came from sharing a room with Situ Jing.

They used to be very close friends, sharing a room or even squeezing together on a bed when there was limited space.

But now, things could never be the same.

Lying on the ground, Lian Shun closed his eyes, and immediately heard Situ Jing’s voice from the bed, “I admit, I like Su Liang. But the friend I least want to lose is you.”

Lian Shun was instantly amused and angered, “What do you want? Should I thank you, too?”

“It’s me who wants to thank you.” Situ Jing spoke in a low voice, “I’ve thought about being completely honest with you, but I didn’t have the courage. Later, as certain events happened, there was no turning back.”

“Do you think that by saying these things, I’ll forgive you and act as if nothing happened? And let Su Liang treat you?” Lian Shun coldly said.

Situ Jing sighed, “I know you won’t. But I still want to say that, from start to finish, the person I least want to hurt is you. You may not believe me, but in my heart, Su Liang holds less importance than you.”

“How ridiculous! If I’m so important, then why did you arrest my entire family, cause my sister to be injured and lose her memory, and cause the death of Grandpa Yuan!” Lian Shun coldly said.

Situ Jing was silent for a moment before speaking again, “I don’t want to make excuses that those weren’t my ideas, but at the time, I wasn’t in complete control. If I hadn’t participated in the incident at Jiaye City, Yuan Ye wouldn’t have been the only one dead.”

Upon hearing this, Lian Shun’s anger grew, “If you had revealed the truth earlier, Grandpa Yuan wouldn’t have died at all!”

Situ Jing sighed, “If you think that way, you’re underestimating Situ Xie and being too naive. I’m just his pawn. If I don’t obey, he’ll have other pawns. Your grandfather was a war hero, and you wholeheartedly served Duanmu Che, yet in his eyes, there was still no family affection, only manipulation from a higher position because he was born into the royal family. Su Liang is strong, but she’s merely a pawn in Duanmu Yi’s eyes; he’ll definitely get rid of her and Gu Ling when they’re no longer useful! What difference would it have made if I had told you all the truth back then? Unless I hid and ran away, I would never be able to escape the fate of being manipulated by others. I just saw the reality of this world and wanted to gain power and control, no longer being controlled by anyone!”

Hearing this, Lian Shun replied calmly, “Do you really think I, or Su Liang, don’t understand what you’re saying? But while living in this world, there are things we should do and things we shouldn’t. If you had revealed the truth earlier, perhaps it wouldn’t have changed the animosity between Liang Country and Qian Country, and I might still not have been able to save Grandpa Yuan. But Su Liang and I would have considered you our friend and done our best to help you. No matter what the future holds, good or bad, we would have faced it together.”

Hearing Lian Shun’s last words, Situ Jing fell into complete silence...

The next day, at the break of dawn.

Lian Shun followed Qiuyue to the lakeside and couldn’t help but exclaim, “This place is so beautiful!” As he spoke, he saw a familiar figure appear inside a small courtyard surrounded by a bamboo fence.

Lian Shun rubbed his eyes, thinking he was seeing things, “Gu Xiaoling?”

Upon realizing it was really Gu Ling, Lian Shun’s face lit up with joy, “Gu Xiaoling, I can’t believe you’re here too! No one told me last night!”

However, just as he moved to hug Gu Ling enthusiastically, he was coldly pushed away.

Not minding, Lian Shun looked behind Gu Ling and ran excitedly over, “Su Xiaoliang! It’s so great that you’re okay!”

As Lian Shun tried to hug Su Liang, Gu Ling grabbed his collar and pulled him away.

“How’s your arm?” Su Liang asked.

Lian Shun grinned, “It’s almost completely healed! Everything’s good at home; Xiaonian is doing well, aside from missing his wife every day! You don’t have to worry!”

Qiuyue spoke up, “Master said to please go to the other side with Miss Su.”

Lian Shun snorted, “Situ Jing is blind; the old man wants you to treat him.”

Su Liang’s expression remained calm, “Let’s go there and see.”

Seeing Gu Ling reaching out to hold Su Liang, Lian Shun sighed, “You two are really inseparable. If I didn’t know any better, I’d think you two were just here for vacation.”

“I have news.” Su Liang said with a light laugh.

Lian Shun was taken aback, “What news?” After realizing what she meant, he exclaimed in excitement, “Really? Su Xiaoliang, you’re pregnant?! Gu Xiaoling, you’re amazing! Su Xiaoliang, you’re the best! I want to be the baby’s godfather!”

Gu Ling gave Lian Shun a cold look, leaving him to dwell on it.

When they met with Situ Jing, he was quietly sitting next to Qiao Cong, his eyes still covered with a black cloth.

Hearing Lian Shun saying “Gu Xiaoling,” Situ Jing furrowed his brows, “Grandpa, is Gu Ling here too?”

Just like Lian Shun the night before, nobody had informed Situ Jing.

Qiao Cong shook his head, "Whether he's here or not, it has nothing to do with you."

Su Liang knew that Qiao Cong was probably about to mention treating Situ Jing.

But unexpectedly, Qiao Cong spoke up, "Persuasion doesn't work, but since there's only one pill, I gave it to Qianqian. Do you have any?"

Su Liang was stunned for a moment before realizing Qiao Cong's intention. Did he want to erase Situ Jing's past memories as well?

Wasn't this a 'Restart Button' for raising children... freely disposing of them? Although crude, it was indeed effective.

Qiao Cong was determined to get Situ Jing and Nangong Qian back on the right track. And this was what was truly good for them. Unconditional obedience and yielding would only harm them.

"As for that type of medicine, I don't have any, nor do I know how to make it." Su Liang shook her head. Old Bai certainly knew, but he wasn't there.

Situ Jing's expression changed, "What are you talking about?"

Qiao Cong's expression became serious, "You must forget your past, start over, and I will ask Su Liang to heal you. If you're unwilling, you may leave! I'll just pretend that I don't have this grandson!"

Chapter 340: 340. Groundless Talk

Weighing whether or not to heal Situ Jing, the premise is that Su Liang must be able to do so.

Peeling off the blindfold, Su Liang leaned in to check the condition of Situ Jing's eyes.

Lian Shun glanced at Gu Ling subconsciously, only to find his expression usual, and showing no intention to intervene.

As Su Liang straightened up thoughtfully and distanced herself from Situ Jing, Qiao Cong quickly asked, "How is it? Is it possible to heal?"

Su Liang shook her head, causing Qiao Cong's face to sink. But then she said, "There's less than a sixty percent chance."

"More than fifty percent is considered good odds. As your master, I believe in your medical skills!" Qiao Cong sighed with relief. "Don't feel pressure. He's already in this state; even if he can't be cured, it won't be your fault."

Situ Jing:...

Su Liang smiled slightly as Gu Ling was pulling her to sit down, "Master, I haven't even said that I wanted to heal him yet. I was just taking a look."

Qiao Cong frowned, "If you have any conditions, just voice them. It's just that there was no medicine around. Otherwise, I would have wiped his memory clean last night."

“That does seem like a solution,” Su Liang agreed. “But there’s really no such medicine now. I can’t trust that he won’t stand against us in the future.”

Qiao Cong narrowed his eyes, “I will keep an eye on him and prevent him from making the same mistake!”

“But given your age, Master...” Su Liang shrugged, “No offense, but whether you’re protecting or watching him, there will come a day when you cannot. It’s not a long-term solution.”

“Then what do you suggest? As long as you can heal him, preventing him from becoming blind at such a young age, I will agree to any condition,” Qiao Cong still wanted to save Situ Jing in the end.

“I really didn’t think of anything,” Su Liang turned to Gu Ling, “What do you say, my dear?”

Lian Shun thought to himself that Gu Ling would certainly be unhappy for Su Liang to heal Situ Jing. Asking him this kind of question wouldn’t yield any answer.

Who knew, without even a second thought, Gu Ling opened his mouth, “Alright.”

The sudden agreement took Qiao Cong, Cen Man, and Lian Shun by surprise, and they were all curious as to what Gu Ling’s condition might be.

“This is an opportunity for Su Liang to practise,” Gu Ling began, making clear his reason for not opposing Su Liang’s offer to heal Situ Jing. It had nothing to do with Qiao Cong’s influence, nor turning a blind eye to old grudges, nor considering Situ Jing a brother out of respect for his mother. It was purely for Su Liang’s sake. She is a hardworking doctor. If she encountered a challenging case that intrigued her, she loved to take a crack at it. If the treatment worked, then great, if not, no harm done.

Qiao Cong’s beard trembled slightly at this.

Lian Shun felt like laughing out loud. Gu Xiaoling lived up to his reputation! His provocation was always blunt and straightforward. He liked it!

“If he can be cured, he must repay his debt.” Gu Ling continued.

Situ Jing’s face darkened, but Qiao Cong nodded, “That’s only fair. What do you want in return?”

“Let him do what he’s good at,” replied Gu Ling.

Lian Shun raised an eyebrow. What was Situ Jing good at? Serving as a spy?

Hearing this, Situ Jing guessed what Gu Ling was driving at, and snorted coldly, “Do you want to manipulate me as your tool too?”

“You can choose to remain blind,” Gu Ling replied indifferently.

“If that’s the case, how are you any different from Situ Xie?” Situ Jing’s face twisted with anger.

“He forced you to become a spy,” said Gu Ling. “You will have to beg us for a chance to serve us. Take it or leave it.”

Situ Jing’s face turned from pale to green, lips tightened, and fists clenched.

Qiao Cong and Lian Shun both knew that the last thing Situ Jing wanted was to be under someone’s thumb again. That’s why he pursued power directly and primarily.

Gu Ling’s condition had struck at Situ Jing’s weakest point.

Qiao Cong sighed deeply and bargained with Gu Ling, “Can we come up with another condition? I don’t want him involved in those things again; it’s too risky.”

But Gu Ling didn’t give in, “No.” Qiao Cong didn’t even have a temporary master-disciple relationship with him, and the fact that he was willing to teach Qiao Cong swordsmanship was just an apologetic gesture from Qiao Cong. He accepted it but didn’t feel indebted as a result. Fair is fair.

And adults must bear the consequences of their choices.

Situ Jing’s eyes are poisoned and blinded; it was his own fault. The poison was intended for Situ Xie. If Situ Jing hadn’t chosen to side with Situ Xie initially, nothing would have happened to him. Not to mention, he didn’t have a choice then, but after he reunited with Qiao Cong, he had a complete opportunity to break free from the control of Situ Xie and Nangong Lin.

Now, if Situ Jing wants to regain his sight, he must beg Su Liang and Gu Ling and agree to and fulfill the conditions they propose, even if that’s something he’d least like to do.

Alternatively, if Su Liang had let Gu Ling set conditions, offering Situ Jing a chance to be healed, it was out of respect for Qiao Cong.

Unable to help himself, Lian Shun cut in, “Situ Jing, isn’t being a prince in Liang Country what you want? Now, you’re relying on your grandfather and unwilling to pay the price. Do you expect Su Xiaoliang to treat you for free? Stop dreaming! You made all the choices, and the right to choose is still in your hands.”

Cen Man said softly, “Old Qiao, I don’t think it’s a bad thing.” She thought no matter what Gu Ling asked Situ Jing to do, it was a chance for him to atone for his mistakes.

With his eyes slightly narrowed, Qiao Cong said, “Jing Jing, in that case, you should agree. No matter what Su Liang and Gu Ling ask you to do afterwards, you must do it with all your might.”

“Alright, I agree to your conditions,” said Situ Jing in a heavy voice.

Lian Shun scoffed, “Don’t be so reluctant. If it wasn’t for your grandfather, you wouldn’t even have the chance to choose. If Su Xiaoliang cures you and you betray her, Gu Xiaoling will definitely gouge out your eyes! Don’t think I’m joking!”

Cen Man brought up a point, “Su Liang, do we need to send someone out to buy the medicinal materials? Is Master Lin staying on the island?”

Su Liang shook her head, "He needs to go home as soon as possible; otherwise, his family will worry." Then she moved closer to Cen Man and took another look at her eyes.

Sensing something, Cen Man asked Su Liang what was going on.

"Nothing." Su Liang smiled, "I'll go back and write out a prescription."

Just looking at Situ Jing's eyes had given Su Liang a new idea for treating Cen Man. She decided to give it a try. Even if it failed, it couldn't be any worse. On the off chance it succeeded, Cen Man would be able to see again in her lifetime, and her life would significantly improve.

Lowering his head, Qiao Cong glanced at his injured foot. "Can I go out now?"

Su Liang shook her head, "Master, you need to recuperate. We need to move."

Qiao Cong's brow furrowed, "Are you leaving?"

"No." Su Liang shook her head. "We can't stay here anymore, it's not safe. If Master hadn't been injured, it would be fine, but right now, only Gu Ling can go out. If the rest run into Nangong Lin coming back for revenge, it will be quite troublesome."

Nangong Lin had waited for many years, expecting Qiao Cong to teach him the complete swordsmanship, but all his efforts had been in vain. Now that they've cut ties, given his crafty and sadistic nature, he certainly won't let it go. Moreover, his only daughter, Nangong Qian, is still here.

Su Liang believed that it was highly possible that Nangong Lin would recover from his injuries and return. Because he didn't know that Gu Ling and Cen Man were also on the island, he would surely think that he could easily take on an injured Qiao Cong and that Su Liang would pose no threat to him.

The only one suitable for going out and buying supplies was Gu Ling. If Nangong Lin were to arrive while Gu Ling was present, they could handle him and even seize the opportunity to eliminate him. But if he infiltrated the island when Gu Ling was away, that would be a significant problem.

"Xiaoliang has thought everything through." Cen Man nodded, "Why not, let's all go to my place. It's not far from here, Nangong Lin doesn't know about it, and there are houses to live in."

Su Liang shook his head, "Living on an island, it's very quiet during uneventful times, but it is incapable of self-sufficiency, and life is inevitably inconvenient. Especially now with the injuries and the illness, we need not only food but also medicine. I think, we better return to a normal place to live."

Lian Shun agreed emphatically, "Right! Let's go back to Jiaye City! If you don't want anyone to know, I can arrange a safe place for you all!"

Shame filled Qiao Cong's face, "It's all my fault. You had just settled into your finished house for a few days, and now you must leave." He knew back then that Gu Ling had agreed to stay with Su Liang just to enjoy some tranquillity and avoid the tumult of the outside world.

Su Liang dismissed it with a smile, "Plans always fall behind changes, we couldn't have stayed here too long anyway."

Cen Man stated that she will follow Su Liang no matter where they go.

Situ Jing didn't have the luxury to speak up, but he knew Su Liang's decision was a very wise one. He isn't Nangong Lin's son, and the so-called master-disciple affection was only so genuine, one look at how Nangong Lin treated Gu Ling made it clear. There won't be any good outcome when they meet again. He will need to avoid risks until his eyes are fully healed.

Having settled on this, they would set off from this island and return to Jiaye City today. Lian Shun has already thought about where to settle them, but Su Liang felt they could decide when they get there; buying another residence might indeed be safer than living in a cottage in Lin's house.

For the time being, both Su Liang and Gu Ling did not wish to appear openly in Jiaye City. They were not hiding from Duanmu Yi but the Liang Country's Royal Family, led by Situ Xie. Based on previous events, given the opportunity, Situ Xie would spare no effort to capture or eliminate Gu Ling and Su Liang, as they were the biggest obstacles on his path to great achievement.

Upon finding out they were leaving the island to return to the city, Qiuyue was overjoyed. Even though she had tried her best to adapt, she still didn't want to live on the island long-term. As long as she could leave this place, she would be one step closer to home.

Nangong Qian didn't understand much, and Qiao Cong didn't wish for her to know too much. He only stated that due to his injuries, it wasn't convenient to reside here.

Gu Ling, with Su Liang in his arms, went back to their little courtyard by the lake to pack. Lian Shun followed behind. Being the kidnapped party, he had absolutely nothing to pack. He didn't even have a change of clothes. So, he requested to borrow an outfit from Gu Ling.

"Such a beautiful place, such a pity we have to leave soon." Lian Shun sighed, "But once the baby is born, you guys can choose to come back and live here whenever you want. Just remember to bring me along, I can help look after the child!"

"Stay away from my child." Gu Ling said.

Lian Shun was instantly offended, "Why?"

"Stupidity, it's contagious." Gu Ling commented darkly.

Stepping up, Lian Shun took Gu Ling's arm on the other side and rested his head on him, "Calling me stupid? I'll start with you!"

Suppressing her amusement, Su Liang chimed, "You two carry on, should I go?"

Gu Ling kicked Lian Shun away with one foot, "Stop talking nonsense. No wild guesses." Aware of Su Liang's knowledge of multiple sexual orientations from her past life, he knew she was teasing him.

Ricocheting off a bamboo stalk, Lian Shun bounced back onto the cobblestone path. He recalled the times he was kicked by Gu Ling in Jiaye City and found he was getting accustomed to it...

Gu Ling didn't have much luggage. Su Liang had many items, most of which were bought for her by Qiao Cong after they moved here, among which was a thick stack of medical books.

As for bedding and such, Su Liang thought she would leave them here so they could be used when they return.

But Gu Ling insisted on bringing them along, mentioning that the boat ride would be bumpy and given they set out today, they wouldn't reach Jiaye City until tomorrow.

Packing was simple, but they still needed to prepare a day's worth of provisions for everyone in the group.

When Lin Shun witnessed Gu Ling's elegant and skilled cooking, as smooth as flowing water, he couldn't help but marvel, "Gu Xiaoling, are you a demon? Aren't you? How is it that you can do everything so well? How are ordinary men like me supposed to live? I need to apologize to Su Xiaoliang, for ever confessing my affection to her. When compared to you, I feel like my presumption of being worthy of Su Xiaolian is utterly ludicrous!"

Gu Ling finished stuffing a meat pie and placed it on the cutting board, saying nonchalantly, "None for you."

Lin Shun: ... He absolutely couldn't say that he would sever their friendship, because Gu Ling would surely agree immediately. Once the pie was cooked, he just had to snatch it!

Watching Gu Ling cook the first pie, Lin Shun was ready to reach out and take it. But Gu Ling scooped it up with a spatula, cut it into consume easier pieces, stuck a fork that he'd handmade himself into it, and turned to hand it over to him.

Lin Shun was moved in an instant, "Gu Xiaoling, you're so good to me!"

There was a cold glint in Gu Ling's eyes, "Take it to Su Liang. Don't you dare sneak a bite."

Lin Shun held his forehead, "Yes yes yes, who would dare to snatch it from her? She is carrying my godson, or maybe my goddaughter, hehe!" And with that, he went off to look for Su Liang with the meat pie.

Su Liang wasn't hungry, so after tasting a piece, she gave the rest to Lin Shun since he was salivating.

Lin Shun took a bite, "This is.... Gu Xiaoling's cooking skills are absolutely superb! It's you who gave it to me. If he tries to beat me up, you'll have to stop him."

Su Liang smiled, "I like watching my husband beat people up, it's particularly attractive."

As Lin Shun ate the delicious meat pie, he quipped about the caustic couple, they were indeed a perfect match!

Under the scorching afternoon sun, Gu Ling placed a hat on Su Liang's head, and with arm around her, walked through the bamboo forest to join others waiting on the beach. Lin Shun had made several trips to help them move their luggage.

There were two boats on the island, one owned by Qiao Cong, and the other was used by Cen Man earlier. The boat Nangong Lin and Situ Jing rode on the previous night had been taken away by Nangong Lin again.

Qiao Cong, Situ Jing, Nangong Qian and Qiuyue were in one boat, and Lin Shun was arranged to take care of them.

In the other boat were Su Liang, Gu Ling, and Cen Man. Blankets were laid out in the boat. Su Liang lay down comfortably, the sound of the boat moving through the water near her ear, as Cen Man, with a fan in hand, fanned her to cool her down.

Su Liang mentioned that it wasn't necessary, but Cen Man insisted on doing so for the sake of her unborn grandchild...

Capital city of Qian Country.

Duanmu Chen was once again summoned to the palace early in the morning, unsure of what had happened again.

When he met Duanmu Yi, the latter appeared calm, but Duanmu Chen inexplicably felt a stifling atmosphere.

After bowing, Duanmu Yi remained silent and threw a letter at Duanmu Chen.

Unsure of the context, Duanmu Chen opened the letter. After reading the beginning, his eyes contracted sharply, and his heart sank: The Ning Jing who had earlier become the Top Scholar, was Gu Ling disguised, and the real Ning Jing was long dead. Gu Ling and Su Liang had colluded since their time in Su Family's village, and had been deceiving the king from start to end.

The letter further stated that Su Liang became the Top Scholar out of revenge and that all the princes of the Qian Country who had either died or disappeared were a result of her and Gu Ling's actions.

After reading, Duanmu Chen's face returned to calm, he closed his eyes and respectfully replied, "Your Majesty, regardless of who wrote this letter, it's all baseless nonsense! It's just impossible! The whole world knows exactly how capable Su Liang and Gu Ling are. If that were so, both Liang Country and Yin Country would've done everything possible to eliminate them! Precisely for this reason, we can't readily believe this letter that lacks substantiate evidence, because doing so would play right into the enemy's hands!"