

Three-Time 351

Chapter 351: 351. Could it be Ying Xiaoying?

Su Liang returned home and called Ren Dong, telling her that Bai Yang was in Xiangyue City, Yin Country.

“He was initially in direct contact with Shaoyao, reporting directly to the Grand Emperor. Now that Shaoyao is missing, the Emperor doesn’t even know Bai Yang’s existence,” Su Liang said to Ren Dong. “The Grand Emperor said that the last time Bai Yang’s news came was at the beginning of the year, nearly half a year ago. We don’t know his current situation. You go and have a look; if you find him, bring him back.”

Ren Dong’s expression became serious, “Alright, this subordinate will set off today.”

“I’ll make preparations first. I’ll ask Yang Yu if he has any letters for Nian Jincheng, and you can deliver them along the way. We’ll discuss who will accompany you on your journey,” Su Liang said.

Ren Dong was stunned, “Master, I don’t need anyone to accompany me. I can do it on my own.”

“I know your strength is not weak, but it is still very dangerous to encounter Shaoyao. Besides, I also want to ask you to find my older sister, Ying, and check on her situation.” Su Liang’s expression was serious.

Ren Dong nodded upon hearing this, “I will follow the Master’s arrangement.” She then went to find Yang Yu.

It was quite difficult for Su Liang and Gu Liang to determine who should accompany Ren Dong on the trip south.

Gu Ling would never leave Su Liang easily. Old Bai was teaching Su Liang his poison techniques, Old Mu’s martial arts were insufficient to deal with Shaoyao, and Cen Man’s eyes had a chance of recovery, but it would take some time.

In fact, the most appropriate choice was Qiao Cong, but his foot injury had not yet fully healed.

Su Liang thought of Yan Shiba, wondering if she was still in Liang Country, if not, she could hire her to go.

Earlier, Su Liang had ordered Qi Jun to find Cheng Yun at Huguo Temple. However, Cheng Yun had already left the capital and went back to Ping’an Temple, which was between Xuanbei City and Nanping City.

“Great God, what should we do? If we only need to find Bai Yang, Ren Dong can go alone. There’s a possibility that she won’t encounter Shaoyao after such a long time. But I am worried about my elder sister. If Yue Mei knows that she betrayed them, we don’t know what she might do,” Su Liang sighed.

Gu Ling spoke up, "I'm not going."

Su Liang rubbed her forehead, "That's not what I meant. How about asking Old Bai to go? After all, we have to go to Yue Mei's lair, and he is the most suitable person."

Gu Ling furrowed his brow, "Maybe, Yue Mei will come here to find you."

Su Liang's expression was indescribable, "That's not impossible."

"If Yue Mei leaves Yao City and returns to Yin Country, she will pass by here. If her granddaughter fails in her mission, she won't leave without doing anything," Gu Ling analyzed. "As long as she doesn't go back, Ying will not be in much trouble."

Su Liang thought it made sense. Considering the timeline, there was a high probability that Yue Mei was still in Liang Country at this time.

"Then, let's not look for Ying first and have Ren Dong only find my younger brother?" Su Liang sighed. "Pregnancy is indeed very inconvenient; otherwise, we could all go."

Gu Ling frowned, "It's all my fault."

Su Liang giggled and reached out to touch and rub Gu Ling's face, "Great God, what are you talking about? I swear I'm not complaining about having our baby, I'm just expressing my feelings."

Gu Ling gently stroked Su Liang's belly, "It would be nice if I could be the one pregnant."

Su Liang coughed lightly, "Shall we swap souls? Use my body?"

Gu Ling nodded, "That would be best."

"Enough with the nonsense. I know you want to experience it, but it's probably not possible in this lifetime," Su Liang laughed. "Let's just settle on this. Maybe Ying has already taken my younger brother and is safely on their way here."

For Yue Mei's lair, besides Old Bai, Su Liang didn't trust anyone else to go, and it would be too dangerous for Gu Ling to go as well.

After Ren Dong got Yang Yu's letter for Nian Jincheng, she quickly went to find Su Liang, and knowing the plan, she set off right away.

Su Liang told her to be discreet once she arrived in Xiangyue City and to be cautious to avoid bumping into Shaoyao. Ren Dong said she would.

There was something that Su Liang didn't know. Before Ren Dong left, Qi Jun found her privately, wanting to go with her. But Ren Dong refused on the spot, implying that Qi Jun's strength was too weak and would hinder her work...

Liang Country and Yin Country were both going to form marriage alliances with Qian Country, with the wedding dates set for the end of July. Situ Yao would marry into Qian Country first, followed by the princess of Yin Country.

Ever since learning about Bai Yang's whereabouts, Gu Ling had not returned to the palace to treat Duanmu Yi.

The Empress Dowager Xiao expressed her concerns to Duanmu Chen, suggesting that Duanmu Yi's health be allowed to recover somewhat and not be tormented so cruelly. She found it somewhat unbearable.

Duanmu Chen said it was impossible. It was either not done at all or done with absolute assurance of success.

At this point, Xiao naturally listened to Duanmu Chen and did not raise the issue again.

In the blink of an eye, it was the last day of May.

Having learned poison techniques from Old Bai for half a day, Su Liang realized that Gu Ling was not in Yuanming Pavilion or preparing lunch, as if she had gone out.

Su Liang found it a bit strange. Lately, Gu Ling rarely let her out of sight, always sneaking glances at her even when cooking. How could she go out without notice?

Seeing Qi Jun carrying a piece of wood nearby, Su Liang stopped him and asked if he knew where Gu Ling was.

Qi Jun shook his head, saying he had been working with Old Mu on modifying the secret chamber all morning and hadn't seen Gu Ling.

Just as the words fell, Qi Jun inadvertently saw a figure flash by on the second floor of Yuanming Pavilion, "Master, is Marquis upstairs? There seems to be someone."

"You go and do your work." Su Liang went back in after she spoke.

Upon going upstairs and finding the door closed, Su Liang called out, "Great God?" Nobody responded.

Walking to the door, she pushed it open, only to see the room full of fresh flowers. A lovely child emerged from the flower bushes, who else could it be but Zhengzheng?

Zhengzheng's smile was radiant, "Aunt! Aunt!"

The person Su Liang was looking for was standing nearby with a smile on his lips, this was a surprise for her.

After returning to the capital, they hadn't seen Zhengzheng because the Wan Hui couple had left the capital with their child to return to their hometown.

Su Liang had even made a special request for Qi Jun to inquire about when the Wan family in the capital would return, as she missed Zhengzheng very much. However, the steward didn't know.

Su Liang didn't send a letter to the Wan family either. The Wan family wasn't originally in the capital. It was only after Zhengzheng met Su Liang and Gu Ling that the Wan Hui couple began living in the capital with him. Now that they were reunited, she didn't want to disturb them.

But unexpectedly, Zhengzheng had suddenly come from the sky!

Su Liang was delighted. Zhengzheng ran over with the most beautiful bouquet of flowers, "To Aunt!"

Su Liang caught it and bent down to hug Zhengzheng, giving him a peck on the side of his face, "Zhengzheng has grown taller."

Zhengzheng nodded with a beaming smile, "I've grown up! Aunt is even more beautiful now!"

"What about him?" Su Liang smiled as she pointed to Gu Ling.

Zhengzheng's little face turned serious, "Uncle Gu is the most beautiful of all!" After a pause, he whispered mysteriously to Su Liang's ear, "I know, uncle Gu is actually Uncle Ning."

Su Liang raised an eyebrow, imitating Zhengzheng's manner, she whispered into his ear, "How did you know that?"

Zhengzheng replied softly, "Intuition."

Su Liang couldn't help but smile, "Zhengzheng's intuition is very strong, huh!"

Gu Ling, with his excellent hearing, watched Su Liang and Zhengzheng whispering "behind his back", even though he could hear every word clearly, he didn't expose them.

His previous disguise as Ning Jing was no longer a secret. It was not surprising that Zhengzheng could sense it – children were very accurate at reading people.

Su Liang asked where all the flowers in the room came from?

Gu Ling pointed at Zhengzheng, "It was his idea."

Zhengzheng grinned, showing his teeth but not his eyes, "I missed you so much, but I didn't know what gift to give."

Zhengzheng had returned to the capital today and couldn't wait to see Su Liang. He insisted on coming secretly, wanting to surprise her.

Wan Hui had Lu Yu send Zhengzheng "quietly" over. Su Liang didn't notice, as she was busy studying when he arrived.

Gu Ling let Zhengzheng stay and asked Lu Yu to leave. Determined to give Su Liang a gift, Gu Ling carried Zhengzheng on his back as they went around the capital picking flowers and decorating the room, waiting for Su Liang to discover them.

Now, with Zhengzheng sitting happily between Gu Ling and Su Liang, he gently touched Su Liang's belly with his little hand. His face was full of curiosity, "Is the baby brother in there? Why isn't he moving?"

Su Liang laughed lightly, "We don't know if it's a little brother or a little sister yet."

Zhengzheng's eyes lit up, "Can I have a little sister, then?"

Su Liang coughed lightly, "Dear, we won't know until the baby is born. It's already decided, so we can't choose."

"Really?" Zhengzheng seemed to understand, "My mom's baby is going to be a brother. What if I want a sister?"

Su Liang looked at Gu Ling in surprise.

Gu Ling nodded, "It's been three months." Wan Hui was pregnant with a second child, which they didn't know before. That's why Zhengzheng subconsciously called Su Liang's baby a brother, but he actually wanted a sister.

Su Liang was happy for Wan Hui and Lu Yu. She had helped Wan Hui with her health before, and Zhengzheng had always wanted a sibling.

As for the gender of the child, Su Liang had no preference. She thought both sons and daughters were great and Gu Ling felt the same way.

They chatted for a while, mostly about what had happened at Zhengzheng's home recently.

As they talked, Zhengzheng's stomach began to growl, "Auntie, I'm hungry."

Gu Ling stood up, "I'll be right back."

After Gu Ling left, Zhengzheng hugged Su Liang's arm, resting his head on it, "I'm so happy that Auntie and Uncle Ning got married! It would be great if the baby arrived soon! I'd play with them! I'd be a big brother!"

Su Liang smiled and rubbed Zhengzheng's head, "There's no way to speed it up. We'll have to wait a bit longer."

Soon, Gu Ling came back with food. When Zhengzheng had arrived, Gu Ling had been cooking a soup, which was now ready to eat.

After finishing their meal together, Su Liang felt sleepy, and Zhengzheng began to yawn too.

Gu Ling prepared the bed for them to rest, then tidied up the dishes and went downstairs.

When Gu Ling returned to the room, he saw Su Liang and Zhengzheng fast asleep facing each other, their small fingers intertwined. They looked adorable.

Gu Ling took off his shoes and socks and lay down on the outer side of the bed. Looking at Zhengzheng, he couldn't help but imagine raising a child with Su Liang in the future.

When Su Liang and Zhengzheng woke up and were washing their faces, Gu Ling brought over a plate of freshly cut fruit.

Su Liang saw that Gu Ling had cut the fruit into delicate little stars, crescents, and flowers and couldn't help but laugh, "Great God, you have the potential to be an outstanding dad."

Zhengzheng, the flatterer, laughed, "Auntie is right!"

After eating the fruit, Su Liang went to find Old Bai.

Gu Ling prepared the gear and took Zhengzheng fishing.

Due to their injuries, the bored Qiao Cong and the still-recovering Cen Man also joined in, saying they wanted to fish for Su Liang to eat.

With his sweet mouth and cuteness, Zhengzheng quickly conquered the old fellows who were looking forward to having a disciple, making them even more eager for one.

At dusk, Gu Ling drove the carriage with Su Liang and Zhengzheng inside, heading towards the Wan Family.

Seeing Wan Hui, she looked much better and even a bit plumper than before. She was pleasantly surprised when she found out that Su Liang was also pregnant.

Wan Hui mentioned that her father had recently decided to move the entire family to the capital city. She and Lu Yu came first to make arrangements while the others were on their way.

“When we heard that even you were captured, we were very worried. My father has been sighing all day, thinking that peaceful days might not last long.” Wan Hui sighed softly, “Once the war starts again, if it goes on for a long time, who knows what the situation will be like. My father thinks it’s safer to be at the feet of the emperor and wants to hand over most of our family business to the court. Making too much money might not be a good thing.”

The Wan Family’s grain business would be difficult to operate in times of war and chaos. It would be easy to make a mistake if they weren’t careful.

Old Wan’s age was showing, and he no longer had the drive to compete like in his youth. He only hoped for his family’s safety and stability.

Deciding to move to the capital was also related to Su Liang. After all, having a connection within the court made his plan more achievable and he wouldn’t dare to deal with the officials recklessly otherwise.

Listening to this, Su Liang expressed her support. Tea was a luxury for common people, while grains were the foundation of a nation, so they were different in nature.

Old Wan’s decision to back down was a wise move, and Duanmu Chen would undoubtedly be happy to see the Wan Family voluntarily contribute to the national treasury.

Su Liang planned to get a plaque or something similar for the Wan Family, as it might be useful at certain times.

After having dinner at the Wan Family’s residence, Gu Ling took Su Liang and left, while Zhengzheng said he would come back to fish the next day.

Life was peaceful and fulfilling for Su Liang in the following days. Zhengzheng was almost always around, so there was no need for Gu Ling and Su Liang to accompany him all the time, as he could play well with the elderly folks in the mansion.

Old Mu had already taken Zhengzheng to play in the secret chamber several times, the one he had initially forbidden Su Liang from seeing. He had also made some interesting little gadgets for Zhengzheng.

Rushing through their journey day and night, Ren Dong arrived at Jiaye City and went to find Nian Jincheng to deliver the letter.

Lian Shun was also present. His family was already on their way to the capital, and Ren Dong had met up with the Lin Family’s convoy midway.

As Nian Jincheng read the letter, Lian Shun asked about the situation in the capital, to which Ren Dong answered truthfully.

“Is there any news about Ying Xiaoying?” Lian Shun asked, thinking of Ying Ying.

Ren Dong paused for a moment before realizing that Lian Shun was referring to Su Liang’s friend. He shook his head, “There is no news from Miss Ying. The Master initially wanted me to look for

Ying Ying while I was on my way to Yin Country but decided against it due to the potential danger.”

Lian Shun frowned, “Is that so? Is that old witch still in Liang Country?”

Ren Dong shook his head, “I’m not sure. But the Master thinks that if Madam Yue is to return to Yin Country, she may try to make trouble for the Master first.”

Lian Shun blinked, “That makes sense. I hope Ying Xiaoying is safe! If she escapes with her brother, will she come looking for us first?”

Ren Dong thought it was possible, as it was well-known that Nian Jincheng was Gu Ling’s best friend.

Ren Dong had a bite to eat and was about to continue on his trip when he heard a thump outside the door. A dark shadow collapsed not far away.

Ren Dong’s expression tightened, as Nian Jincheng and Lian Shun also came out when they heard the sound

The three of them cautiously approached, Lian Shun bent down and turned the person who was lying on the ground over.

The moonlight was bright, revealing a beautiful, pale face with closed eyes. Checking her breath, she was still alive but seemed to have sustained severe injuries.

“Could she be the legendary Ying Xiaoying?” Lian Shun’s eyes brightened, “She looks just like someone who would be good friends with Gu Xiaoling and Su Xiaoliang!”

Chapter 352: 352. Don’t like me

Nian Jincheng was a bit speechless, “What do you mean by she looks like a good friend of Gu Ling and Su Liang? What if she is a spy using a distressed-bait strategy or honey trap? You’ve already fallen for it.”

Lian Shun shook his head, “I meant to compliment her extraordinary beauty. Except you, young Nian.”

Nian Jincheng: ...

“It should be Miss Yuan.” Ren Dong carefully observed Ying Ying’s facial features and figure, which perfectly fitted the description given by Su Liang before she left, as she believed Ren Dong might encounter Ying Ying along the way.

Lian Shun nodded repeatedly, “Knowing what Ying Xiaoying looks like is great, it must be her! Quickly bring her inside!”

Ren Dong bent down and picked up Ying Ying, swiftly carrying her into the room.

The lamp was lit, illuminating the room slightly. Upon seeing the bloodstains on Ying Ying’s clothes, some of which were still fresh and dark, Lian Shun frowned and showed worry, “Young Nian, go find a doctor quickly!”

Nian Jincheng nodded and strode out.

Ren Dong began to unbuckle Ying Ying's belt and seeing Lian Shun approaching, she asked him to step back, "I need to see how badly Miss Yuan is injured. Master Lin, could you bring some clean water?"

"Oh, right!" Only then did Lian Shun realize what Ren Dong was intending to do. He swiftly left the room and firmly closed the door from the outside.

This was the courtyard where Gu Ling and Su Liang used to stay during their stay at the Lin's home. After they left, it was unused, and Nian Jincheng and Lian Shun usually came here to drink and chat.

Ren Dong removed Ying Ying's clothes and saw her injuries, causing her heart to sink. The blood that had seeped into the clothes was not all there was. It seemed Ying Ying had been hit by many hidden weapons, with four wounds on her chest, and injuries on her back and arms. She had hastily treated them, but without proper rest, they had not yet healed.

Knowing that Ying Ying had gone to rescue her brother from Yue Mei's lair, Ren Dong deduced that the rescue had failed, and Ying Ying had fled severely injured, likely pursued by enemies!

Ren Dong subconsciously glanced outside, there was no commotion. She assumed that Ying Ying had probably managed to shake off her pursuers before coming here, pushed herself to the limit, and collapsed upon arrival.

Saving people was urgent. For now, Ren Dong took out all the medicine that Su Liang had asked her to carry. Ying Ying's wounds were discolored, indicating residual poison.

Lian Shun brought the water but did not enter. He stood outside and waited until Ren Dong took the water, then shut the door again. From outside, he asked, "How is she?"

"Miss Yuan is badly injured. I need to first administer an antidote and medicine to her," Ren Dong explained.

Lian Shun frowned. Detoxify? Ying Ying was a Poison Master herself, but it seemed she had encountered someone even more formidable? Or was it that she had been defeated because she had given all her antidotes to Su Liang's adoptive father, Xing Ji, leaving her in a passive situation?

By the time Nian Jincheng arrived with an old army doctor, Ren Dong had already treated Ying Ying's wounds and medicated her. These skills were specifically taught to her and Qi Jun by Su Liang.

Su Liang had given Ren Dong two antidote pills for personal protection. The pills were made by old man Bai and were naturally extraordinarily effective. Ren Dong gave Ying Ying one, waited a moment, and saw her complexion improve before letting out a sigh of relief.

The old army doctor took Ying Ying's pulse and said that her injuries were severe and she had lost too much blood. But luckily, her vital organs were not damaged. Her life was not in danger, but she needed to recuperate quietly.

After prescribing a decoction for Ying Ying, the old army doctor was sent off by Nian Jincheng.

Lian Shun brought another basin of warm water and mentioned there were clean clothes that belonged to Su Liang in the wardrobe.

Ren Dong bathed Ying Ying and changed her carefully into a new set of clothes.

Ying Ying's figure was originally tall and full, but she had lost a great deal of weight this time. She barely fits into Su Liang's clothes.

By the time Ren Dong called Lian Shun back in again, she had already changed Ying Ying's clothes. The clothes that were taken off were put aside and not discarded in case Ying Ying had hidden something in them.

Lian Shun stood by the bed, looking at Ying Ying's weak face, and sighed deeply, "Ying Xiaoying, you need to recover quickly."

When Ren Dong came in, Lian Shun told her, "I've had someone prepare plain porridge. Let's give her some when she wakes up. If you are in a hurry, you can go ahead, young Nian and I will take good care of her and will notify Su Xiaoliang as soon as possible."

After thinking for a moment, Ren Dong said, "My Master is very worried about Miss Yuan. She initially wanted me to look for Miss Yuan on my way. Since I've run into her, I'll wait until Miss Yuan wakes up before leaving. After all, it's not convenient for you two gentlemen to look after her."

"That's a good plan," Lian Shun nodded.

After confirming Ying Ying's condition, Nian Jincheng called Lian Shun to leave.

Lian Shun shook his head, "Go get some rest. I'll stay here. What if someone who's after her comes?"

Nian Jincheng thought there was some logic to that, "Alright, I'll come to relieve you in the latter half of the night."

"No need, get a good night's sleep, there's important stuff to do tomorrow. I am not tired." Lian Shun waved his hand.

Nian Jincheng took another look at Ying Ying, his eyes gleaming slightly, "Then you take good care of Miss Yuan."

Lian Shun instructed Ren Dong to go next door and take a short rest, telling her that she would alert her when Ying Ying woke up.

Having traveled day and night to reach her, Ren Dong was indeed feeling tired. After seeing that Ying Ying's breathing was steady, sheeding Lian Shun's advice, planning to rest for a bit to recharge. In case someone attempted to kill Ying Ying, she needed to be ready to protect her.

In terms of capabilities, Ren Dong was stronger than both of them, Nian Jincheng and Lian Shun. After all, she had been trained to be a secret guard by Duanmu Yi since childhood.

Lian Shun still remembered the first time he heard about Ying Ying from a letter by Xing Ji, he couldn't imagine what kind of girl Ying Ying would be.

Now that he'd seen her, Lian Shun only felt: Yes, this is just right!

Even though this was their first meeting, he felt like he had known her for a long time since the name ‘Ying Xiaoying’ had been on his lips so often.

Looking at Ying Ying’s frail figure, Lian Shun couldn’t help but sigh. She went to save her brother, probably failed. And Ren Dong was also heading to Yin Country to search for her brother.

Lian Shun suddenly realized how fortunate he was to have a warm and harmonious family, loved ones who cared about him, and a few good friends.

He needed to cherish the present. Lian Shun told himself.

As he let his mind wander in various directions, Lian Shun started to yawn. He pinched himself to stay awake. He needed to be alert in case Ying Ying woke up and felt unwell, hungry or thirsty.

As dawn was breaking, Lian Shun sat by the bed, drowsiness gradually washing over him.

Ying Ying’s eyelashes quivered before her eyes finally opened slowly. As she surveyed the unfamiliar surroundings and person, her mind slowly cleared.

Then, Lian Shun, unable to resist his exhaustion any longer, slumped onto Ying Ying, his head landing on her chest.

Ying Ying let out a stifled groan, feeling as though a wound had been reopened.

Lian Shun, still half-asleep, subconsciously reached out to touch...

Ying Ying’s expression darkened. Lian Shun suddenly woke up, sat up straight, withdrew his hand. Seeing Ying Ying awake and recalling what he just did, his face flushed with embarrassment. Standing up, he awkwardly introduced himself, “Uh... nice to meet you, I’m Lian Ershan.”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Lian Shun wanted to slap himself. He had planned how to greet Ying Ying, but ended up forgetting it all due to nervousness.

“Lian...” Ying Ying was familiar with the Lin family of Jiaye City, “Where’s Nian Jincheng?”

Lian Shun, taken aback, said, “You’re looking for Nian? He’s asleep.”

In a weak voice, Ying Ying replied, “I’m not looking for him... I just couldn’t hold on anymore and remembered that Xiaoliang’s friend lived here...”

Lian Shun hurriedly reassured her, “That would be me! I’m Su Xiaoliang’s best friend, you made the right choice coming to my house when you were in trouble!”

The next moment, blood seeped through Ying Ying’s clothes once again, he himself was to blame...

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have touched your wound while being half-asleep.” Lian Shun was quite certain he had left a terrible impression on Ying Ying. Not only had he aggravated her injury but also touched her...

Seeing Lian Shun’s flustered reaction, Ying Ying asked, “Were you the one who changed my clothes?”

In a panic, Lian Shun immediately waved his hands, “No, it was Ren Dong! Right, I’ll fetch Ren Dong to treat your wound!” With that, he rushed out.

The morning fog hit his face, making the heat on Lian Shun's face more pronounced. He knocked on Ren Dong's door and she came out immediately.

"Did Miss Ying wake up?" Ren Dong asked.

Lian Shun nodded, "Yes, she's awake. Her wound has reopened, you need to treat her quickly."

Ren Dong frowned, she quickly entered the room where Ying Ying was staying.

Lian Shun followed her inside but quickly left, shutting the door behind him.

He could already imagine Ying Ying complaining to Su Liang about a lecherous man named Lin who was not a good person!

In his defense, he really didn't mean to...

Ying Ying was unaware of Lian Shun's inner turmoil. Seeing Su Liang's maid, Ren Dong this side, she let out a sigh of relief.

Ren Dong didn't understand why the wound on Ying Ying's chest was bleeding again, but she didn't ask more

Upon hearing Ying Ying ask about Su Liang's situation, Ren Dong truthfully informed her that Su Liang and Gu Ling had safely returned home, and that Su Liang was pregnant.

Ying Ying's eyes shone brightly, a pallid smile tugged at her lips, "I want to be the baby's godmother."

The eavesdropping Lian Shun silently declared to himself, that's a coincidence, as he wanted to be the godfather to Gu Ling and Su Liang's baby.

Ren Dong asked how Ying Ying had gotten injured.

Ying Ying mentioned that in Yue Mei's hideout, there was an unknown master whom she didn't recognize. She was severely injured before she even saw her brother, barely managed to escape, and it was only when she was close to Jiaye City that she shook off her pursuers.

It was almost the same as what Ren Dong and Lian Shun had speculated.

Ren Dong sighed, treated the wounds, and helped Ying Ying dress. "Miss Ying should go to the capital to find my Master once her injury has recovered a bit."

Ying Ying looked a bit dejected, "I don't want to cause trouble for Xiaoliang."

Ren Dong said that Su Liang was really worried about Ying Ying, and if anything happened to her, Su Liang would never sit idle. That being the case, it would be better to make arrangements from the beginning and solve the problem together.

"That sounds a lot like something Xiaoliang would say." Ying Ying smiled, "But, how come you're in Jiaye City?"

Ren Dong truthfully informed her that she was also going to Yin Country to look for her brother. Her experience was somewhat similar to that of Ying Ying.

"I see." Ying Ying sighed lightly, "I have unfortunately delayed you, you should go. I am fine and won't die."

Ren Dong nodded, "When it's daylight, I'll continue on the road. General Nian and Master Lin will take care of Miss Ying here, you can ask them if you need anything."

Lian Shun, outside the door, silently nodded in agreement.

The very next moment, Ying Ying asked Ren Dong, "That Lin...Ershan, is his name Lin Shun? I've heard of him."

Lian Shun's eyes brightened, so Ying Xiaoying had heard of him a long time ago!

Then he heard Ying Ying continue, "He claimed to be Xiaoliang's best friend, he's bragging, right?"

Lian Shun:...

Ren Dong couldn't help laughing, "It's not bragging, Master Lin is just very outgoing and enthusiastic. But if one were to say who my master's best friend is, it would definitely be your niece."

Lian Shun:... Gu Xiaoling is Su Liang's man now and he still has to compete with them for the position of best friend? That's not appropriate.

"Oh, I thought I was Xiaoliang's best friend." Ying Ying said.

Lian Shun couldn't resist and laughed out loud, he found Ying Ying to be very adorable.

Hearing Ren Dong ask Ying Ying if she was hungry, Lian Shun outside the door immediately replied, "I'll get some clear congee!"

Soon, Lian Shun brought two bowls of steaming clear congee where the rice was boiled till it had melted, giving one bowl to Ren Dong, "Have some too, you still have a journey ahead."

Ren Dong accepted it, "I'll feed Miss Ying first."

"I'll do it!" blurted out Lian Shun.

Ren Dong paused, then heard Ying Ying say, "Let him."

Lian Shun and Ren Dong looked at Ying Ying at the same time, unsure whether she said, "Let him do it" or "Let her do it".

Ying Ying's gaze fell on Lian Shun's face, "You."

Lian Shun couldn't help but laugh, "I'll do it! Ren Dong, you just eat yours!"

Ren Dong finally noticed something was off and quietly sat in the outer room with her bowl of congee.

Lian Shun carefully fed Ying Ying a bowl of congee, poured a cup of warm water for her to drink, and then apologized to her again, saying it definitely wasn't intentional before.

Ying Ying gently shook her head, "It's okay."

After finishing her congee, Ren Dong picked up her belongings and bid them farewell.

Nian Jincheng came over to check on Ying Ying again, discussing with Lian Shun to arrange for a maid to take care of her.

Upon hearing this, Ying Ying said it was unnecessary as she was planning to leave in two days to find Su Liang in the capital city and discuss how to deal with Yue Mei. Ren Dong had already informed Ying Ying that Su Liang was truly the disciple of Yue Mei's master and that Yue Mei would definitely cause trouble for her.

"Your injury..." Lian Shun furrowed his brows.

"It's nothing." Ying Ying shook her head, "I've survived worse injuries than this."

Lian Shun suddenly felt a pang of sympathy, thinking that Ying Ying must have suffered a lot in the past to face her illness and injury so lightly.

"You..." Nian Jincheng looked at the somewhat distracted Lian Shun, "Why don't you escort Miss Ying to the capital city? Yin Country has decided to form a marriage alliance, so there should be no fighting here for the time being. This would also give you the chance to check if your family has settled in well. Xiaoyu wrote in her letter that everything is relatively peaceful now. She wants to come to find me, and Su Liang agrees, there just weren't any suitable escorts for her. If you are to come back then, you can escort Xiaoyu to Jiaye City. If you decide to stay in the capital city, let Su Liang make other arrangements."

Upon hearing this, Lian Shun realized that Nian Jincheng had his plan all laid out.

However, the recent situation has indeed changed and it was not as tense as before.

Lian Shun hesitated. The reason he did not accompany his family to the capital city was not because he feared being punished for deserting his post. He had never been officially appointed to a role in Jiaye City and had been nursing his wounds since he returned last year.

Lian Shun just wanted to stay with Nian Jincheng.

"That's settled then," Nian Jincheng said, "You aren't of much use here anyway."

And so, it was decided that Lian Shun would accompany Ying Ying to the capital city in three days.

Ying Ying suggested two days, but Lian Shun insisted on waiting to see how her health was first. In the end, she begrudgingly agreed to add another day.

Later that day, when Lian Shun saw Ying Ying, she was already out of bed and was sunbathing in the courtyard.

Unable to resist, Lian Shun asked Ying Ying, "I heard you had feelings for Gu Xiaoling?"

Ying Ying looked at Lian Shun and asked back, "I heard you had feelings for Su Xiaoliang?"

Lian Shun blinked his eyes, "Who told you that?"

Ying Ying tilted her head to gaze at the bright blue sky, her lips curling into an amused smile, "Oh, it was just a wild guess."

Lian Shun sighed... He had indeed confessed without even being asked.

"After getting to know Xiaoliang, I liked her even more." Ying Ying said.

Lian Shun chuckled, "How coincidental. After getting to know Gu Xiaoling, I began to like him even more!"

Is love important? Of course. But it's not the entire meaning of life. There are some sentiments that are more cherished than love, and they can also bring about happiness.

Ying Ying looked at Lian Shun, her face teasing, "Really? Didn't you say last night that you were Xiaoliang's best friend?"

Lian Shun replied in all seriousness, "Firstly, I was just boasting. Su Xiaoliang's best friend is Gu Xiaoling. Secondly, I never said she was my best friend. My best friend is also Gu Xiaoling."

Nian Jincheng, who just happened to pass by the courtyard: ...Why does this sound like kids playing house? In his eyes, Gu Ling and Su Liang are one and the same. Why separate them so clearly?

According to the plan, Ying Ying stayed with the Lin family for only three days before setting out to find Su Liang to discuss how to deal with Yue Mei. She was eager to save Ying Ye, but without dealing with Yue Mei, it was hard for Ying Ye to escape.

Lian Shun set off with Ying Ying. He had prepared a carriage, but Ying Ying insisted on riding a horse.

They took a boat to cross the Liuxian River.

The sun shone brightly, and Ying Ying's face had regained some of its color. Her naturally charming and splendid looks, combined with her worries for her brother had cast a certain cold glamour around her.

Lian Shun looked at Ying Ying's profile and couldn't help but become lost in thought.

"Don't fall in love with me." Ying Ying suddenly said.

Lian Shun was taken aback and asked, "Why?"

Ying Ying snorted, "My crazy grandmother would capture you and feed you poisonous snakes and bugs every day, are you afraid?"

Lian Shun shook his head, "No! I believe Su Xiaoliang's poison techniques would surpass your grandmother's, and then she could feed her the poisonous snakes."

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Ying Ying remained silent.

Lian Shun's heart stirred, "In that case, can I like you?"

He had heard of her name before seeing her, which had made Lian Shun fantasize and expect a lot from Ying Ying. The feeling after actually seeing her was rather peculiar. Curiosity, wanting to explore everything about her, worrying about her when she was in pain – all made her very interesting to him.

This was definitely not because Ying Ying was Su Liang's friend.

Ying Ying shook her head, "I'm not in the mood to consider that now."

Lian Shun comforted her instead, "It's okay, I understand. Let's talk about it after your brother is safe. Let's start off as friends first!"

Ying Ying looked deeply at Lian Shun, "Alright."

After crossing the Liuxian River, the two continued their horseback journey.

It was always Lian Shun who insisted on stopping for a break, and only then would Ying Ying stop. Lian Shun was only worried that her body might not be able to take it, as her wounds had not yet healed.

Capital city.

Under Su Liang's meticulous treatment, Nangong Qian could now get out of bed and walk around. Although she still looked quite weak, she was able to move freely, which was a key development considering her long-term bedridden condition.

Qiao Cong was delighted. His foot injury was also healing. He was anxious, mainly because he felt that he owed Su Liang too much and wanted to recover sooner to help her.

Cen Man's eyes were recovering more slowly than expected, but there were notable changes. Not only could she perceive light, but she could also see objects vaguely. Although not clear, she could distinguish obstacles and even identify every person in the mansion by their blurry outlines. She could also recognize bright colors, no longer needed a walking stick, and could move around the house.

"A gift for Grandma Cen!" Zhengzheng carried a large bunch of brightly colored flowers and ran over.

Seeing the figure of a child running in her line of sight, Cen Man's face revealed a loving smile. Bright yellow, fiery red, and rich green blended together in her eyes, forming a lively and beautiful picture.

Cen Man bent down and held the flowers Zhengzheng had given her.

There was also a light purple flower in Zhengzheng's hand. He tiptoed and tucked it behind Cen Man's ear, grinning, "You are more charming than the flowers."

Cen Man's face blossomed into a smile. From a distance, Qiao Cong watched quietly, a small smile appearing on his face as well.

Today, Gu Ling cooked fried fish nuggets, which both he and Zhengzheng particularly loved so they ate them in the kitchen. Su Liang had recently started to experience morning sickness, which was fine with other dishes, but fish and shrimp dishes would make her nauseous.

"It's a pity the baby doesn't like fish." Zhengzheng's little mouth was greasy as he sat in his chair, swinging his legs, and lamented with a regretful expression on his little face.

Gu Ling shook his head, "Not necessarily."

Zhengzheng was confused, "Auntie likes to eat it. But Auntie can't eat it while she's with the baby. Doesn't that mean the baby doesn't like it?"

Although Gu Ling thought Zhengzheng was very smart for his age and analyzed the situation reasonably, he knew from what he had learned from Su Liang about childbirth science that it was due to hormonal changes during pregnancy, not the still-unformed little deity revealing food preferences.

However, Gu Ling did not explain so much to Zhengzheng, only saying they would know once the baby was born.

Gu Ling was very worried about Su Liang's morning sickness. He was always afraid she wouldn't eat well, so he started to create some new dishes to whet her appetite.

Gu Ling, who had a talent for cooking, had never dabbled in dark cuisine due to his seriousness and understanding of ingredients. No matter what he cooked, everything turned out great once he got the hang of it.

Thus, Su Liang was able to taste some dishes she had never eaten before. There were no disgusting ones, as Gu Ling would always taste test first, only serving it to her if it was good.

Originally, Su Liang had always tried to assure Gu Ling that morning sickness was normal and that there was no need to worry as long as she wasn't hungry. But seeing his enthusiasm and attentiveness in taking care of her and remembering his words about "this being his way as a father, feeding the child together with Su Liang," she let him be.

When Su Liang, who rarely entered the palace, saw Duanmu Chen again, she was asked about the Mu Family's secret scroll of mechanisms.

Although Situ Xie had confirmed earlier that the old man from the Mu Family was indeed working together with Su Liang and that she must have a complete secret scroll of mechanisms in her possession, he didn't mention this in the letter accusing her to Duanmu Yi. Situ Xie thought that Su Liang must have already handed over the secret scroll to the royal family of Qian Country, and if she had not, he did not want her to hand it over to them. Therefore, the matter of the secret scroll was not mentioned in that letter.

Duanmu Chen still didn't know that the heir of the Mu Family was in Su Liang's house. There were too many things going on before, so he didn't pay attention to the secret scroll. And now he remembered it again.

Su Liang and Gu Ling had carefully studied every blueprint recorded in the secret scroll. The flat drawings made it difficult for Su Liang to imagine what the weapon would look like, so Gu Ling patiently explained it to her.

After examining it from beginning to end and gaining a detailed understanding, both came to the same conclusion: This secret scroll of the Mu Family was far less destructive than rumored.

The ancestors of the Mu Family were experts in mechanical arts, and this secret scroll was passed down from generations ago. Because of their legacy, later generations did not innovate or improve in this area. This included Old Master Mu, who loved mechanical arts but never thought of using them to create large-scale weapons.

As a result, this historically significant secret scroll was more focused on the mechanics rather than the weapons themselves. There was even a considerable portion of the scroll where different

mechanical devices were ingeniously combined together, showcasing great wisdom and described as magical but had little practical use.

The most practical weapon was a large crossbow, but Gu Ling believed it needed modification. According to the original blueprint, it would be too cumbersome to load the arrow and achieve high accuracy.

Therefore, when facing Duanmu Chen's inquiry, Su Liang didn't hide anything and directly admitted that she indeed had the complete secret scroll of the Mu Family.

Duanmu Chen's expression changed instantly, "Where did you two get it?" Su Liang had it, but it didn't mean she was the one who obtained it — it could be Gu Ling as well.

Su Liang simply said that she had met the real heir of the Mu Family by chance and received it from them.

"You..." Duanmu Chen was more puzzled than angry at the moment. If Su Liang didn't plan to hand it over, why wouldn't she just keep hiding it? If she did plan to hand it over, why didn't she mention it earlier?

Su Liang explained that she didn't mention it earlier because she couldn't trust the Grand Emperor at first, and later there were too many things going on, so she forgot.

Duanmu Chen was somewhat speechless, "So, now that you admit to having it, do you plan to give it to me?"

Su Liang nodded, "Yes, but Your Majesty probably won't understand it."

Duanmu Chen wondered if he had been indulging Su Liang too much lately. It seemed like it, as every time there was a new treasure in the palace, he would think of sending it to his unborn godson first. He rarely called Su Liang to the palace and had someone deliver half of the tribute fruits to the Su Mansion immediately...

However, Su Liang wasn't arrogant due to favoritism. She was just telling the truth, although it might not sound pleasant.

Afterward, Su Liang explained the content of the secret scroll to Duanmu Chen in detail.

After listening, Duanmu Chen's first reaction was, "You know so much about mechanical arts? Is there anything you don't know?"

"I really don't know." Su Liang shook her head. "It's Gu Ling who understands. When we were in Su Village, he apprenticed himself to an old carpenter in the village, who happened to be my relative. He learned some carpentry skills and had a basic foundation."

Duanmu Chen's mouth twitched slightly, finding it difficult to decide whether it was more absurd for Gu Ling to apprentice himself to a remote village's old carpenter or Su Liang to think that the carpentry skills taught by the village's old carpenter could serve as a foundation for mechanical arts...

“Of course, I say this because my husband is very smart and talented in this area. I wouldn’t understand those blueprints if I looked at them.” Su Liang said earnestly.

Duanmu Chen snorted, “Yes, yes, your Gu Ling is the smartest, the number one genius in the world.”

Su Liang expressed that it wasn’t an exaggeration at all. Gu Ling was not only smart but also very serious and dedicated to everything he did, which naturally contributed to his success.

“In that case, do I not need the secret scroll? How about asking Gu Ling to make some practical weapons for me?” Duanmu Chen asked with furrowed brows.

Su Liang nodded, “Let him try. He’s currently modifying one of the weapons. If it’s successful, I’ll then show it to Your Majesty.”

“If I hadn’t asked, when would you have mentioned it?” Duanmu Chen huffed.

Su Liang smiled, “I was planning to give Your Majesty a surprise when the weapon was ready.”

Duanmu Chen replied coldly, “Thank you very much!”

“Your Majesty is too polite.” Su Liang said with a respectful expression.

“When can I taste the dishes personally cooked by Gu Ling?” Duanmu Chen suddenly changed the subject.

Su Liang hesitated for a moment, “Did he promise to cook for Your Majesty? I wasn’t informed.”

Duanmu Chen snorted, “Stop pretending to be clueless. I can’t forget the steamed bun from your house that cost 500 taels.”

Su Liang nodded, “No problem, next time I make steamed buns, I’ll send a plate to His Majesty.”

After Su Liang left, Changan saw Duanmu Chen’s expression was strange, sometimes frowning, sometimes sighing, not knowing what he was thinking.

Changan asked Duanmu Chen if he wanted to go to the Empress Dowager’s palace, Duanmu Chen shook his head, “There are still memorials left unapproved.” Then he asked Changan, “Does Su Liang know some kind of enchanting tricks?”

Changan was surprised, “This... not possible, right?”

“When I was the crown prince, I thought that I couldn’t treat Su Liang as a friend, only as a partner. When I become the emperor, I must establish my authority and make her stick to her place as a servant. I also think that it was right for my father to show kindness and strictness to Su Liang, and it was normal to suspect her.” Duanmu Chen frowned, “But after I really became the emperor, I wanted to be friends with her, and I couldn’t be strict in front of her. Did she drug me?”

Listening until the end, Changan coughed lightly, “If Mrs. Gu really had a drug that could conquer people’s hearts, perhaps she would have already used it on the Empress Dowager...” As he spoke, he realized his disrespect and didn’t dare to finish.

But Duanmu Chen had already understood Changan's meaning. Thinking about it, if Su Liang had such a heaven-defying ability, there would be no enemies for her in this world, and everyone would like her just by casually drugging them.

"Indeed, it's impossible." Duanmu Chen nodded, "Then it's my problem."

Changan said weakly, "Actually, I think the current situation is not bad. From another perspective, Your Majesty has also gained Mrs. Gu's trust."

"That makes sense." Duanmu Chen's brows relaxed, "To be honest, I feel pretty good. There are very few people who can make me feel that I'm neither above them nor under pressure, but talking to them on an equal footing without having to think thrice before speaking."

From childhood to adulthood, Duanmu Chen had developed the skill of pleasing everyone in every situation, always careful and calculating with his words and actions. Even in front of his mother, Empress Dowager Xiao, he had always followed the rules.

But when facing Su Liang, he was more relaxed, revealing more of his personal emotions.

Su Liang didn't know that Duanmu Chen had thought so much. When she returned home, she told Gu Ling that Duanmu Chen wanted to eat his steamed buns, and Gu Ling said no.

"Great God, are you afraid that he'll never be satisfied?" Su Liang asked with a smile. Gu Ling's steamed buns were incredibly delicious, no matter how they were made. Su Liang thought they were better than hers.

Gu Ling nodded, "He definitely will be." This time he wanted steamed buns; next time he would order dishes.

"Just refuse him next time. I had no choice but to agree to it this time. After all, it's not good to completely snub him, who is the ruler of a country." Su Liang shook Gu Ling's arm, "You don't have to make them especially for him, just send him a few when you make them."

"Alright." Gu Ling agreed. As for the matter of weapons, he had already been working on it.

Su Liang calculated the time, "Ren Dong should have arrived at Jiaye City by now. Situ Jing should also be almost at Yao City. It remains to be seen whether Yue Mei will come to cause me trouble."

...

Liang Country's Yao City.

Yue Mei had left for several days, and Situ Xie remained in seclusion.

On the day Situ Jing arrived at Yao City, he didn't go to the King Yue's mansion to find Situ Xie, but directly sneaked into the Imperial Palace to see Situ Han. With his martial arts skills, it was very easy.

Father and son hadn't met before, and when Situ Han first saw Situ Jing descending from the sky, he was cautious. But after recognizing his face, he became excited, "Jingjing? Are you Jingjing?"

Situ Jing nodded indifferently, "It's me."

"Your eyes are alright?" Situ Han approached, looking at Situ Jing's face, very happy, "That's great, as long as you're fine, it's good you came back. Have you seen your uncle the emperor yet?"

Situ Jing shook his head, "No."

Upon hearing this, Situ Han showed a satisfied expression. This was his son, hidden and concealed from him by Situ Xie for so many years. He didn't want Situ Jing to be completely devoted to Situ Xie and be distant from himself.

Situ Han pulled Situ Jing to sit down and asked about the details of the matter.

Situ Jing said that his maternal grandfather had been won over by Su Liang, and he pretended to repent and gained her trust. Su Liang treated him and after he was healed, he secretly left and came to Liang Country.

"Your grandfather didn't listen to you but chose to side with Su Liang instead?" Situ Han snorted coldly, "That girl is indeed best at enchanting people's hearts!"

"Father Emperor." Situ Jing called out.

Situ Han looked relieved and temporarily did not think about the possibility that Situ Jing was sent by Su Liang. He brought up Situ Xiang.

After reminiscing about the past, Situ Han said he would officially restore Situ Jing's status and let him return to the Liang Country's Royal Family; this was what Situ Jing wanted, so he naturally would not refuse.

After that, Situ Jing left the palace to see Situ Xie.

Situ Xie was very happy to see Situ Jing return with his eyes healed but began to harbor doubts in his heart.

After listening to Situ Jing's words, Situ Xie sighed, "Don't blame your grandfather. In fact, if you can regain Su Liang's trust and stay by her side, it would be better and more conducive to what we are going to do next."

Situ Jing's face was calm, "I know. My maternal grandfather tried his best to repair my relationship with Su Liang, and I pretended to repent and asked for her forgiveness, but she resolutely refused to give me another chance. That's why I had no choice but to leave."

Situ Xie sighed deeply, "It's good to be back. Your father emperor must be very happy to know; he is very worried about your safety."

"I have just seen my father emperor." Situ Jing's expression was faint, "My father said he will hold a banquet for the officials tomorrow and let me make my official appearance."

Situ Xie's eyes flickered slightly, "That's very good. You have suffered a lot of grievances over the years, and your grandfather will make it up to you."

"I want the position of the crown prince, and I hope my grandfather will help me."
Situ Jing said bluntly.

"I will discuss this matter with your father emperor." Situ Xie did not agree or disagree.

When Situ Jing left the mansion, he came face to face with the twin brothers from King Yue's Mansion, Situ Zhang and Situ Min. Situ Min had almost killed Lian Shun last year, and as a result, became Su Liang's enemy. At that time, he was punished with fifty lashes, his skin torn apart, but he had recovered by now.

Seeing Situ Jing, Situ Min's eyes were hostile, "You are the bastard who ruined our grandfather's big plans, causing my elder brother to be captured? You have the nerve to come back?"

Situ Zhang frowned and pulled Situ Min to calm down, but he didn't pull hard, and Situ Min still rushed in front of Situ Jing.

Situ Zhang just watched from the side. It was true that Situ Jing's involvement led to Situ Jing falling into the hands of Qian Country.

"Situ Jing? It sounds like a name my grandfather randomly chose to imitate my elder brother." Situ Min sneered, "You were blind, but how did you recover so quickly? Was it originally a pretense? Did that slut Su Liang heal you? I heard you two were good friends before? What kind of friends? You wouldn't also be her lover, would you? Why did you come back? To be a spy for her? To continue to harm Liang Country and the Situ Family?"

Situ Jing's eyes turned cold, "Get out of my way."

Situ Min sneered, "This is my home, and you're telling me to get out of the way? Who do you think you are? My elder brother is still suffering in Qian Country, my younger sister is being forced to marry, and you're living a carefree life. Why? You have two choices: First, go to Qian Country and rescue my elder brother safely, then I can barely accept you as a cousin. Second, kneel down and kowtow to me; I can, for the sake of my grandfather, temporarily not hold a grudge against you. Otherwise, I will——"

As soon as Situ Min's hand was raised, Situ Zhang heard the crisp sound of bones cracking, followed by Situ Min's pig-like screams.

After breaking Situ Min's arm, Situ Jing raised his hand and slapped him, then continued on the other side.

Situ Zhang's expression changed, and he stepped forward to stop Situ Jing but was slapped away!

By the time Situ Xie rushed over after receiving the report, his two grandsons were beaten beyond recognition. Situ Jing was ruthless and showed no mercy to Situ Zhang, deliberately targeting his weak points. Situ Jing's strength was enough to easily crush the two of them.

“Stop!” Situ Xie shouted angrily, “Jingjing, what are you doing?”

“He called me a bastard.” Situ Jing said casually, throwing down Situ Min, who he was beating, and took out a handkerchief to wipe the blood from his hands. He knew very well that Lian Shun’s broken arm last year in Liang Country was Situ Min’s doing, and Situ Min scolded Su Liang because Su Liang had hurt him for Lian Shun’s sake.

Situ Xie’s face darkened, “Minmin, what nonsense are you talking about? Hurry up and apologize to Jingjing!”

But Situ Min’s face was too swollen to speak.

Situ Xie sighed, “Jingjing, they are also worried about their elder brother being caught and are venting their anger on you. You are all brothers, but your hand was too heavy.”

Hearing the word “brothers,” Situ Jing immediately thought of Lian Shun’s bright and smiling face. He looked down at Situ Zhang and Situ Min on the ground, and said coldly, “Prince Uncle, do they dare to be so disrespectful and use abusive language in front of the Crown Prince?”

Situ Xie frowned, and saw Situ Jing turned around, throwing down a sentence, “I kindly helped Prince Uncle discipline his grandsons; there’s no need to thank me. Please let them remember that I am the second prince, and let them go and say that I am a bastard in front of father emperor.”

Looking at Situ Jing’s retreating figure, Situ Xie’s face darkened, and he increasingly felt that this grandson, who he had once placed high hopes on, had long ago gone out of control and as if he had come back to suppress his (own) power...

Chapter 354: 354. Uncle is a Great God

After the Imperial Physician examined Situ Min’s arm injury, he said it was too severe to fully recover, which further infuriated Situ Xie.

Perceptive as he was, Situ Xie naturally realized that Situ Jing must have done this on purpose. And the reason was most likely the injury Situ Min had inflicted on Lian Shun’s arm last year, even in the exact same spot!

However, Lian Shun’s injury wasn’t as serious, and with Su Liang’s careful treatment, he had long since recovered. Situ Min, on the other hand, might lose the use of his arm because of this!

“Grandfather, Situ Jing has always been ambitious and has never truly been on our side. We can’t let him go on like this!” exclaimed Situ Zhang, frustrated.

Over the years, witnessing Situ Min cause troubles, Situ Zhang, his twin brother, had always pretended to be a mediator but was actually watching the drama. The reason was simple: they could never surpass their eldest grandson, Situ Jing, in status. Situ Xie truly dedicated himself to teaching and had high hopes for his grandson Situ Jing alone, demanding obedience and compliance from his other grandsons since childhood, deliberately guiding them to avoid competing with Situ Jing for anything.

Considering himself smarter than Situ Jing, Situ Zhang naturally felt resentful. As a result, on the one hand, he pretended to flatter Situ Jing, and on the other hand, he intentionally enticed Situ Min

into indulging in wine, women, and gambling. By doing this, he not only eliminated his rival but also used Situ Min to highlight himself, achieving a double victory.

Therefore, Situ Zhang didn't want Situ Jing to return safely. But he had been hiding his true feelings so well that even Situ Xie hadn't noticed.

Unexpectedly, Situ Jing, another grandson of Situ Xie, appeared out of nowhere. Situ Jing was the son of Situ Han, just that alone made him superior to the prince from the King Yue's Mansion.

This forced Situ Zhang, who originally had been eagerly waiting for Situ Xie to take control of the Imperial Throne and then find a way to seize the throne himself, to watch helplessly as his dream of the Imperial Throne seemed increasingly distant.

Situ Jing's martial arts were far beyond Situ Zhang's reach.

Anger, resentment, and bitterness intertwined, causing the anger in Situ Zhang's heart to rise, feeling that he couldn't continue like this anymore, he must do something...

However, Situ Xie's expression turned calm again, "Remember, he is a prince."

"Grandfather, if the Imperial Throne is given to Situ Jing one day, will any of us in the King Yue's Mansion have a chance to survive?" Situ Zhang couldn't accept Situ Xie's behavior of only focusing on his illegitimate son and grandson while refusing to give power to his legitimate grandchildren.

Situ Xie's gaze narrowed slightly, "Don't talk nonsense. The priority now is to save your older brother, then we can discuss other matters."

"Is Grandfather really going to marry my younger sister to Duanmu Chen? Isn't there any other way?" Situ Zhang asked.

Situ Xie shook his head, "Yaoyao is willing. In the long run, this is a good thing."

Situ Zhang thought that Situ Xie might be thinking about Situ Yao's future son with Duanmu Chen inheriting the throne of Qian Country.

From a broader perspective, this was indeed a good thing for the Situ Family.

But power that didn't fall into his own hands and benefits that he couldn't obtain were meaningless to Situ Zhang.

After Situ Xie left without mentioning how to deal with Situ Jing...

The next day, Situ Han hosted a banquet in the Liang Country's Imperial Palace to officially introduce Situ Jing, the Second Prince, and restore his identity in front of the royal family and ministers.

Empress Dowager Min found her long-lost grandson untrustworthy and reminded Situ Han to be cautious. Situ Han said he believed in the people trained by Situ Xie, leaving the Empress Dowager speechless.

Thus, Situ Jing formally returned to the Liang Country's Royal Family. His Prince Mansion was none other than the one Situ Han had bestowed upon Gu Ling last year, where Gu Ling and Su Liang had lived for a while.

Now, Gu Ling's prince title had been abolished in Liang Country.

When Situ Jing returned to the palace and met Situ Han again, Situ Xie was also there.

His grandchildren being defeated had happened only four days ago, but Situ Xie acted as if nothing had happened. Facing Situ Jing, he showed that sincere and kind smile again.

It's so fake... Situ Jing thought, even faker than his former adoptive father and mother.

After taking their seats, Situ Jing quickly learned the reason he was summoned to the palace: Situ Xie proposed to have Situ Jing lead the delegation to Qian Country for the marriage and then bring Situ Jing back.

"Jingjing, you've just returned, and it's hard to ask you to travel again. However, among the younger generation of the Situ Family, you have the highest martial arts skills. I'm worried that Qian Country might try something, and I can't trust anyone else to go," Situ Xie explained why he insisted on sending Situ Jing.

Situ Han was evidently convinced, "Jingjing, although the previous incident was kept a secret, many people in the court still know about it and have spoken ill of you, even suspecting you of siding with Qian Country. This marriage mission is an opportunity; if you can complete it successfully, those voices of doubt will disappear."

Situ Jing knew very well that the so-called "someone has grievances against him" and "someone suspects his loyalty to Qian Country" were none other than Situ Xie and Situ Han.

On the surface, Situ Han seemed to be very affectionate towards Situ Jing, but as long as Situ Xie instigated a few words, he would doubt Situ Jing's intentions in returning this time.

Situ Jing's expression was faint, "If I were to go to Qian Country, I might not be able to come back."

Situ Han frowned, "If Qian Country does not want to go to war, they won't hold the prince of Liang Country hostage."

Situ Jing shook his head slightly, "I mean, my grandfather is now with Su Liang, and if he sees me, he might insist on keeping me by his side."

Situ Xie spoke up, "It's not impossible. But it's also an opportunity to win over your grandfather. After all, you are his bloodline, and I believe you must have a way. It would be great if you could get your grandfather to leave Su Liang and come to help us in Liang Country."

Situ Han agreed, "What my uncle said is reasonable. Jingjing, he is your grandfather, and he will not harm you, nor will he let Su Liang harm you. You can go without worry."

Situ Jing closed his eyes, "Since Father and Uncle believe I'm the most suitable person for the job, then I'll take care of the marriage escort."

After Situ Jing left, Situ Xie said to Situ Han, "I will have Yaoyao keep an eye on his every move for any suspicious behavior."

Situ Han sighed, "I hope he won't disappoint me. I heard that your two grandsons were injured by Jingjing, are they all right?"

Situ Xie shook his head, "They were the ones who made the mistake first. Jingjing was a bit heavy-handed, but their lives are not in danger."

"That's good." Situ Han nodded.

The day of Situ Yao's wedding soon arrived.

Her eldest brother was still in Qian Country, and her other two brothers were injured and did not show up to see her off.

Situ Xie personally sent his granddaughter ten miles out of the city, and repeatedly urged Situ Jing to take good care of Situ Yao.

Situ Jing agreed to do so.

On the first day of the rest, Situ Yao took the initiative to find Situ Jing with the desserts she made herself.

"Is there really no hope for the relationship between Royal Brother and sister-in-law to be repaired?" Situ Yao brought up Su Liang.

Situ Jing's expression was faint, "Why do you care about this?"

Situ Yao sighed, "Actually, I've always admired my sister-in-law, but because of our different positions, I don't even have the chance to be friends."

"You'll have the opportunity once you marry into the imperial harem of Qian Country." Situ Jing said.

Situ Yao sighed softly, "I wonder if Sister-in-law would be willing to acknowledge me. After all, many things have changed since last year. Would Sister-in-law vent her anger on me because of what my grandfather did?"

Situ Jing felt that Situ Yao was pretending to be innocent while testing him, so he just said faintly, "I'm curious about that too."

Then Situ Yao apologized to Situ Jing on behalf of Situ Min, saying that he was just worried about Situ Jing and acted impulsively at the time.

Situ Jing said that he had solved the problem at that time and there was no need to mention it again. Capital city of Qian Country.

Zhengzheng had played at Su Mansion for another day, and when it was evening, Lu Yu came to pick up his son. When Zhengzheng left, he even brought a box of delicious cookies baked by Gu Ling.

However, not long after Zhengzheng left, when Gu Ling and Su Liang were sitting in the pavilion by the lake having dinner, they saw Lu Yu return in a panic, saying that Zhengzheng had been kidnapped on their way home!"From the sound, it's a woman. She's not young and her martial arts are very powerful." Lu Yu's face turned pale, obviously having been poisoned, "The woman said that Su Liang has to meet her on the top of Wangxiang Mountain at midnight tonight. If he's even a bit late..." Collect Zhengzheng's body...

"Yue Mei!" Su Liang's heart sank, "She really came after all!"

Soon, everyone in the mansion got the news.

Old Bai was furious, "She even targeted the child!"

"Grand Master, please calm down. She's after me," Su Liang said with a solemn gaze, "We need to be cautious in dealing with this. It would be best if we could eliminate her, but the most important thing is to rescue Zhengzheng safely."

"You can't go. If there's any accident..." Cen Man frowned and said to Su Liang.

Qiao Cong also spoke up, "Yes, you absolutely can't go! My leg has almost recovered; I can deal with that poison woman!"

Su Liang shook his head, "Let's not rush to decide who's going first. Grand Master, what do you think her purpose is in wanting to meet me? To kill me? To capture me for torture? Doesn't she know that Master is right here?"

Old Bai frowned, "She's a madwoman, who knows what she wants to do!"

"Her actions may be crazy, but her mind is not insane. She must have a purpose," Su Liang said, "Since she's in league with Situ Xie, maybe she plans to capture me alive and give me to Situ Xie as a hostage? At the same time, to control Master and take revenge on Master?"

Old Bai clenched his fists and gritted his teeth, "It's all my fault. I should have settled this with her back in Liang Country!"

Although Old Mu scolded Old Bai for this matter for a long time, he explained for Old Bai at this moment, "You were also poisoned by that poison woman. You both haven't been together for decades and don't know much about each other's poison techniques. Even if you didn't leave back then, you might not be able to kill her. Maybe she would kill you instead."

"We must save Zhengzheng, but Xiaoliang must not go," Old Bai said.

"But Ren Dong is not at home, and there's no one to act as a substitute for Master," Qi Jun sighed.

As a result, Qiao Cong said, "My granddaughter!"

Everyone looked at him together. Old Bai and Old Mu were both stunned.

Qiao Cong squinted his eyes, "What are you looking at? I'm not going to send my granddaughter to die, am I? It's just to ensure that nothing goes wrong. After all, Xiaoliang has our disciple in her belly; she can't be frightened."

Su Liang coughed lightly, "No. Nangong Qian is too weak and doesn't know how to imitate voices. To avoid holding us back, I won't go and won't find a substitute, lest she finds out and gets more provoked. And I feel that as long as she sees my face, she will be enraged. But before she sees my face, her main target is Master. In this case, Master can just confront her directly, talk more about the past, distract Yue Mei's attention, and Gu Ling goes to save Zhengzheng."

Everyone agreed one after another.

So it was quickly decided that Old Bai and Gu Ling, the two with the strongest current combat power, would go to Wangxiang Mountain tonight, while the others would stay behind.

Qiao Cong, Cen Man, and Old Mu would guard Su Liang until Gu Ling returned.

“You go back first and tell Sister Wan not to worry too much. The woman is after me and won’t harm Zhengzheng,” Su Liang said to Lu Yu.

Lu Yu nodded, “Let us know as soon as there is news.” As soon as he finished speaking, he left. He had already taken the antidote given by Su Liang and his body was unharmed.

The meal had already gotten cold, and Su Liang and Gu Ling, worried about Zhengzheng, had no appetite.

Su Liang rubbed his forehead, “It’s really hard to live a peaceful life; I have a troublesome constitution.”

Yue Mei’s martial arts are powerful and her poison techniques are top-notch. She’s also hiding in the dark, waiting to strike, making her hard to resist. Even if Gu Ling personally escorts Zhengzheng home, he might be ambushed.

However, Zhengzheng has nothing to do with Yue Mei; she is just a tool for her to deal with Su Liang. He has to be alive for her plan to work.

As midnight approached, the night breeze was cool.

Old Bai climbed to the top of Wangxiang Mountain and chose a location suitable for both offense and defense before stopping. After waiting for a while, he finally heard some movement.

Looking at the figure, Old White knew it was indeed Yue Mei, and she had bound Zhengzheng with a rope in front of her, her back facing the cliff. If anyone attacked her, Zhengzheng would be used as a shield.

“Ah Mei.” Old White spoke, his voice low and deep.

Yue Mei sneered coldly, “How come my senior brother came? I’m not looking for you.”

Old White sighed, “Su Liang is my disciple, and you’re looking for trouble with her because of me. Isn’t it better for me to come? Let’s settle any issues tonight and stop this endless fighting.”

“Are you blaming me?” Yue Mei snorted coldly, “But even though you are Su Liang’s master, you cannot replace her. Let her come, or else I will twist this child’s head off and throw it down!”

“Ah Mei! Why do you have to be like this? Is it because of Situ Xie? What benefits did he give you?” Old White asked sternly, “We grew up together, and you know that I have always treated you like a sister. Even now, I asked Su Liang to promise that no matter what, she will not kill you. Everything that happened back then was my fault, and I owe you. If I had the chance to start over, that night, I would have gone with you!”

Yue Mei's expression changed at last, "Senior brother, are you trying to deceive me? You like Shen Qingxue, how can you go with me? You're lying to me!"

Old White shook his head, "I'm not lying to you. As long as you told me that night about Shen Zhong's humiliation of you, I would have taken you with me. I swear, this is the truth."

"I believe you." Yue Mei's voice softened a lot, "I have never forgotten my senior brother's kindness toward me."

"The past is not important anymore. As long as you are willing to change your ways, we will still be brother and sister in the future." Old White said earnestly.

However, Yue Mei suddenly sneered, "Even at such an age, Senior Brother is still so naive. I like it. However, who gets to decide what is evil and what is righteous? Why can't it be Senior Brother who comes with me instead? In consideration of Senior Brother, I'll give you one more chance: call Su Liang here, and you two follow me as master and disciple. I'll let this child go without hurting him at all. Otherwise..."

Before Yue Mei could finish, a dark figure leaped up from below the cliff, and a cold blade silently pierced Yue Mei's clothes, her skin...

As Yue Mei felt the pain and looked down, her right ankle separated from her body and tumbled down the cliff!

Yue Mei let out a muffled grunt and her face paled in horror as Old White rushed over. She instinctively turned only to be slashed across her left arm!

All of this happened in the blink of an eye, and the blade was so sharp that it seemed to cut iron effortlessly, causing Yue Mei's hand to fly out along with the splattered blood...

With a scream, Yue Mei, with her only remaining hand, released the rope on her body, allowing Zhengzheng to be pulled away. Taking advantage of the situation, she hurriedly fell down the cliff! If she didn't let go of Zhengzheng now, she would be completely unable to escape!

Meanwhile, Old White swung the prepared rope and it was caught by Gu Ling, who was about to plummet. With a hand she leaped onto the cliff, securely holding Zhengzheng in the other.

Old White looked down the cliff, which was quickly calm again.

It was Ying Ying who told them about Yue Mei's habit of acting alone. If she had accomplices tonight, the situation would have been different.

Gu Ling calculated every step carefully when she attacked, any misstep would lead to failure.

Old White, who was responsible for diverting Yue Mei's attention, was indeed successful. Although he didn't persuade Yue Mei to change her wicked ways, that was never his purpose. After all, back then, Yue Mei liked Old White and had been trying to win his affections, holding a grudge ever since. Hence, Old White was one of the few people who could truly influence her.

"Is Zhengzheng alright?" Old White asked with a somewhat nervous expression.

Gu Ling had already checked Zhengzheng's breathing and pulse, "He's fine."

“You go back first, I’ll check the bottom of the cliff!” With that, Old White disappeared from sight.

Gu Ling carried Zhengzheng down the mountain, halfway through, Zhengzheng woke up, with his big eyes wide open, looked at Gu Ling in amazement, “Uncle Ning!”

Gu Ling didn’t mind that Zhengzheng was still occasionally calling him Uncle Ning, he tousled the boy’s hair, “It’s okay now.”

Zhengzheng hugged Gu Ling’s neck, “I’m not afraid, I knew Auntie and Uncle Ning would bring me home! Do you know why, Uncle Ning?”

Gu Ling played along, “Why?”

With a grin, Zhengzheng answered, “The answer is what Auntie often says. Because Uncle Ning is a great god! An all-powerful great god!”

Chapter 355: 355. He is lovesick

“Auntie!”

The child’s voice was filled with laughter.

A huge weight lifted from Su Liang’s heart, and she breathed a deep sigh of relief. Although she had faith in Gu Ling’s abilities, when it came to Zhengzheng’s safety, she couldn’t help but worry more.

Those waiting with Su Liang relaxed and set their minds at ease.

Gu Ling walked in, with Zhengzheng lying on his back, waving his little hands happily at everyone. “I’m fine!”

Su Liang stood up and greeted him, “We need to inform Sister Wan quickly.”

Qi Jun immediately responded, “I’ll go right away!”

“I’ve already been home.” Zhengzheng hurriedly said, “I told my parents and little brother to go to bed early, because I want to sleep with Auntie tonight!”

Su Liang chuckled, “Alright.” She knew that her family’s great god was always the most reliable. He had already gone to the Wan family to report their safety on his way back.

Su Liang checked Zhengzheng’s pulse to make sure he was alright and not poisoned. As she had expected, Zhengzheng was just a tool for Yue Mei, who had no need to make things more complicated than they needed to be.

Zhengzheng was being held by old man Mu, who asked him if he was afraid.

Zhengzheng shook his head, “No, I knew my aunt and uncle and all the powerful grandpas and grandmas would save me!”

Everyone laughed.

Su Liang pulled Gu Ling aside to ask about the situation, “Where is grand master?”

Old Mu frowned at the mention, “Oh right, how could I forget about Old Bai? Where is he?”

Gu Ling briefly explained the events, saying that he had taken Zhengzheng back first, while Old Bai had gone down the cliff to hunt down Yue Mei.

Upon hearing that Gu Ling had cut off Yue Mei's right leg and left forearm, Qiao Cong nodded vigorously, "Good! This way, whether she dies or not, she's crippled!" And it was the kind of disability that made it very difficult for her to move freely.

After learning the Luoying Sword technique from Qiao Cong, Gu Ling's abilities had become even more profound. In terms of martial arts, Yue Mei was no match for him. Moreover, he had attacked her from behind, relying on speed, ferocity, and accuracy. It was simple and brutal, never giving Yue Mei a chance to counterattack.

Old Mu put Zhengzheng down and walked out, "I'll go back up Old Bai! That mad woman is crippled but can still use poison. Old Bai is emotional and can't afford to be soft-hearted towards her now and fall for her tricks!"

Qi Jun quickly followed, "I'll go with senior!"

Su Liang didn't stop them. Although she didn't think that Old Bai would still show any mercy towards Yue Mei at this point, considering everything she had done, as long as Yue Mei was alive, there was still a chance for her to strike.

Gu Ling stayed behind. He needed to protect his family, and with enemies like Yue Mei around, he tried as much as possible to prevent Su Liang from leaving his line of sight.

Su Liang discussed with Gu Ling, "Shall we go to the Imperial Palace early tomorrow morning, report to the Emperor, and issue a nationwide emergency arrest warrant? If we don't capture Yue Mei tonight, she may deceive and harm people on her escape route. At least we should inform the common people that she's a dangerous person, not to pity her because of her disability. If anyone sees her, keep a distance and report it immediately. There will be a generous reward."

Gu Ling agreed.

Cen Man also expressed her agreement, "Xiaoliang has thought this through very well. In the case of Yue Mei being injured and disabled, she would definitely want to return to her hideout as soon as possible. If she is unsure of her safety everywhere, she won't dare to harm people rashly, in order to avoid being discovered."

After a night of turmoil, dawn was almost breaking.

Zhengzheng leaned against Qiao Cong and began to yawn, his eyes becoming bleary.

Gu Ling walked over, picked up Zhengzheng and took him upstairs to sleep.

"Master, why don't you go and get some rest as well? We'll wait until they come back," Su Liang said to Qiao Cong and Cen Man.

"I'm not sleepy, and since it's almost dawn, I'll just wait here without sleeping." Qiao Cong shook his head.

Cen Man smiled, "Xiaoliang, you should go up and sleep. We'll call you if anything happens."

Su Liang nodded, then went upstairs.

Zhengzheng, who had taken off her outer clothes and shoes, rolled around on the bed, muttering drowsily, “Bastard...pay me back my little biscuits...”

Gu Ling’s lips curved as he and Su Liang shared a smile.

Last night, Zhengzheng was kidnapped on the way home with the little biscuits Gu Ling had made by himself. Yue Mei threw the biscuits she had been holding away. Now she remembered them.

Gu Ling filled a basin with warm water, wiped Su Liang and Zhengzheng’s hands and face, and tucked them in, “I’ll be here, go to sleep.”

Su Liang lightly touched her lips with her fingers, signaling Gu Ling to kiss her.

Gu Ling’s eyes sparkled with a smile, and he leaned down to gently kiss Su Liang, stopping after a brief taste, only wanting her to rest as soon as possible.

When Su Liang and Zhengzheng were both asleep, Gu Ling went downstairs.

...

In the Imperial Palace, Duanmu Chen had just put on his dragon robe and was about to go to court when Gu Ling appeared unexpectedly.

Duanmu Chen frowned, “Can’t you stop startling people like this? If it were anyone else, they would definitely think it’s an assassination plot. What’s happened now?”

Gu Ling revealed that a poison master beside Situ Xie had kidnapped Zhengzheng the night before, intended to kidnap Su Liang too, but failed. However, the poisoner had escaped.

When Gu Ling set out, White hadn’t returned yet. If he hadn’t returned by then, it meant the pursuit of Yue Mei had most likely failed.

Duanmu Chen’s face darkened, “Is the child alright?” He was already familiar with Zhengzheng.

Gu Ling shook his head, “She’s fine. But we need Your Majesty’s help to issue an urgent warrant for arrest.”

After Gu Ling explained why he wanted to do this, Duanmu Chen nodded, “Your plan is very thorough, I’ll make arrangements for it.”

This wasn’t just about Su Liang. Yue Mei had Situ Xie and Liang Country behind her, so it would be disastrous if they managed to capture Su Liang.

Gu Ling brought a portrait of Yue Mei and handed it to Duanmu Chen, detailing her features. Shortly after he left the palace, an urgent warrant for her arrest left the Imperial Palace, quickly dispatched to various territories.

When Gu Ling returned home, Su Liang and Zhengzheng were still asleep, while Qiao Cong and Cen Man were still waiting downstairs in the Yuanming Pavilion, looking at the lake outside the window and talking.

Gu Ling went upstairs for a glance, then went to cook breakfast.

Cen Man couldn’t help but sigh again, “Xiaogu is such a good kid.”

Qiao Cong nodded, “He’s only about a hundred times better than my grandson.”

Cen Man knew Qiao Cong was mocking himself, and she shouldn't have laughed, but she couldn't help it, thinking that the stubborn old man had become funnier since he had met Su Liang.

When Gu Ling finished making breakfast and left it warming on the stove, he checked again to see if Su Liang and Zhengzheng were awake yet, and White, Old Mu, and Qi Jun finally returned.

White looked terrible, his clothes torn and covered in dirt, but none of them were injured.

Qi Jun reported, "We never expected that crazy woman to have an accomplice. A senior white-haired man followed the trail of blood down the cliff for a while, but the blood trail stopped, and another person's footprints appeared. It was a man who took the crazy woman away."

Old Mu said angrily, "The place was well hidden, with many footprints around and a pile of leftover chicken bones. It seems that the crazy woman had planned to take Xiaoliang down that path, and someone was waiting to help her there! Damn it!"

From the traces, Yue Mei was indeed still alive after falling off the cliff. She found her accomplice shortly after, dragging her injured body. As for why the accomplice hadn't gone to the top of the mountain to help her, perhaps Yue Mei was too confident, or perhaps for some other reason, it was hard to say.

However, the chances of someone eating a roasted chicken late at night in that exact spot, and Yue Mei coincidentally running into him during a critical moment, and him being willing to take her away were almost non-existent. Too many coincidences were not coincidences at all.

Su Liang sighed softly, "It's good that she's okay. She's already crippled, so it won't be easy for her to make trouble in the future. Grand Master and Second Master, please go and rest for a while. Ajun, you too."

Old Bai was in a terrible mood because he believed Yue Mei was attracted by him, "I said I wanted to keep chasing, but they insisted on dragging me back!"

Old Mu patted Old Bai's back, "There's no trace of her now, and no clues. We don't know where they ran to, so what's the point in chasing?"

"Ying Ying mentioned where Yue Mei's hideout is, so I'll go find it!" Old Bai clenched his fists tightly. After last night, he became even more determined to eliminate this threat.

Old Mu disagreed, "Your most important task now is to teach your apprentice. Don't think about those irrelevant things! What if you get into trouble while running around, and your apprentice needs to find a way to save you?"

Su Liang sighed lightly, "Grand Master, please wait a bit longer. Let's see if there's any news from Sister Ying Ying."

Zhengzheng woke up and ran down the stairs, throwing herself into Old Bai's arms, "Grandpa Bai!"

Old Bai's face brightened slightly, knowing that Su Liang had already checked, but he still confirmed once more that Zhengzheng was not poisoned before putting his mind at ease.

As soon as Lu Yu and Wan Hui came over to take Zhengzheng away, Lian Shun's parents arrived.

They had arrived in the capital city early this morning. The mansion was provided by Yang Yu, fully equipped. After settling in briefly, they came to pay their respects to Su Liang.

While Su Liang was entertaining Father Lin and Mother Lin with tea in the mansion, he thought Lian Shun would also come with them to the capital city.

Mother Lin smiled and said, "Everything was peaceful on the way; no incidents happened. Xiaonian is alone in Jiaye City, so Sunsun stayed behind to accompany him."

Su Liang nodded, "That's good. Yang Yu plans to go there. I'll make arrangements for these few days." Yang Yu had been busy dealing with business in the capital city and planned to meet up with Nian Jincheng in the south next.

While there are still risks, the couple cannot live separately forever. General Yuan had passed away, and Qian Country was in dire need of a capable general. It would probably take Nian Jincheng a year and a half to return.

Father Lin and Mother Lin came to inform Su Liang and declined his invitation for a meal before leaving. They said they would invite Su Liang and Gu Ling to visit once they had settled in their home.

Su Liang had already sent many gifts to Lian Mansion in the capital city before their arrival, and Father Lin and Mother Lin had come especially to express their thanks.

Two days later, just as Yang Yu was about to set off for the south, Lian Shun arrived in the capital city and visited the Su Mansion first. The person accompanying him was a pleasant surprise for Su Liang.

"Sister Ying Ying!" Su Liang excitedly ran over to hug Ying Ying.

Gu Ling recalled the scene when Su Liang and Ying Ying first met in Liang Country. The two of them really hit it off.

Ying Ying forced a pale smile, "Congratulations to both of you. You're carrying a baby now, be careful not to run. Are you that happy to see me?"

Su Liang nodded, pulling Ying Ying into Yuanming Pavilion, "Of course I'm happy! I've been thinking about Sister Ying Ying all the time! It's such a relief knowing you're okay, but your face looks pale. Were you injured?"

As she said this, Su Liang checked Ying Ying's pulse and frowned, "Your energy and blood are very weak."

"I'm fine," Ying Ying smiled faintly, "I was injured before, but it's getting better."

"Not that fast," Su Liang shook her head, "Sister Ying Ying, you've lost so much weight."

Ying Ying told Su Liang about what had happened. Gu Ling went to check on the soup simmering on the stove.

Lian Shun looked around, up and down, as if no one noticed or cared about him. He didn't want Ying Ying to think he was childish and noisy, so he just turned around and went back to his house to find his parents.

After Ying Ying chatted with Su Liang for a while and saw that Gu Ling came to bring the soup, she remembered Lian Shun, "Why didn't he come in?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "I don't know, and it doesn't matter."

There were two bowls of soup. Ying Ying, who was very hungry, took a bite, "Not bad. Gu Ling, did you make this?"

"He made it," Su Liang replied.

Ying Ying commented, "My brother-in-law is really good at homemaking."

Su Liang smiled, and Gu Ling silently drifted away.

After finishing the soup, Su Liang brought up the events from a few days ago.

Upon learning that Yue Mei indeed caused trouble for Su Liang, Ying Ying's face darkened.

"It's a pity, I didn't manage to get rid of her. But she's disabled now. I just don't know who her accomplice was that night. If it wasn't for that person, she'd be dead," Su Liang said.

Ying Ying frowned upon hearing this, "I left with my brother to hide from her three years ago, but she still found us. This time when I returned to Yin Country, I noticed that there were a few new masters in Wangyou Valley, and I didn't know where they came from."

This was also the direct reason for Ying Ying's failed rescue of Ying Ye. Including Yue Mei's accomplice, Ying Ying had never seen them before when she was in Liang Country.

Hearing this, Su Liang thought of the mysterious forces that Master Lao Bai had mentioned. Those forces had someone cooperating with Yue Mei.

Could it be that Yue Mei's accomplice and the masters in her lair are from the mysterious forces? What do they want to do?

Now that she thought about it, if Yue Mei had ambition and sought power, why did she only reveal herself this year and choose to serve Situ Xie? What was she doing before? Was her change also controlled by the mysterious forces behind the scenes?

"Ying Ying, are your parents still alive?" Su Liang asked.

Ying Ying furrowed her eyebrows, "I don't know."

Su Liang was puzzled, and then Ying Ying explained, "Since I could remember, I've always been with my grandmother and have never seen my parents. I don't know who they are, where they are, or whether they're still alive. My grandmother forbade me to investigate my origins. I once suspected that I was a child she stole or snatched. After all, someone like her probably wouldn't pick up a child and raise it. Ying Ye was also brought back by her all of a sudden one day."

As she continued, Ying Ying added, "There's another thing I doubt about not being related by blood. She constantly forced us to practice holding our breath underwater. There were several times when I felt like I was going to drown in Wangyou Valley's deep pool. Ying Ye almost drowned once when she held his head down and didn't allow him to come up for air. He narrowly survived and had a severe illness, after which his mind became much slower, and he remained like a child."

Upon hearing this, Su Liang realized that Ying Ye must have suffered brain damage due to the drowning, which damaged his nerves and affected his cognitive abilities.

“Maybe she knows that there’s something valuable hidden in the water and wants you to help her retrieve it after improving your skills?” Su Liang speculated, “In this case, she might not be your real grandmother. You both might have been stolen or snatched by her.”

“Maybe.” Ying Ying sighed, “Now, I just want to save Ying Ye from her clutches.”

Su Liang nodded, “I understand. Ying Ying, go rest first. I’ll discuss with Gu Ling, as Yue Mei is also a problem we need to solve quickly. I’ll check on your injury later.”

“Alright,” Ying Ying nodded. After she left, she saw Qi Jun, who arranged for her to go to the guesthouse.

Su Liang shared the new information with Gu Ling, “Great God, should we go to Yue Mei’s lair for a look? I think the masters who are with her are suspicious.”

Gu Ling pondered, “That’s fine. Let Old Bai go if he wants. You should rest for a while.”

“Ying Ying will definitely want to go as well, but she’s not in good condition. However, we cannot delay any longer. If we can arrive before Yue Mei, our chances of saving Ying Ye will be higher,” Su Liang said, “Let her rest for two days, and take her medicine. By the way, where is Lian Ershan?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “I don’t know. He probably went home.”

“Didn’t he say he wanted to stay in Jiaye City with Xiaonian? Why did he suddenly come to the capital city?” Su Liang asked, puzzled, “His strength is not enough to protect Ying Ying, either.”

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “He’s love-sick.”

Chapter 356: What to do if the little god is mischievous?

Su Liang was surprised, “Lin Shun and Sister Ying? This...” Thinking about it, Ying Ying was indeed the type Lin Shun would like. Moreover, after Lin Shun appeared today, he was unusually quiet, which must have had a reason. If it was because he didn’t want to appear too childish in front of Ying Ying, it all made sense.

However, Su Liang didn’t plan to ask Ying Ying about this, nor did she plan to help Lin Shun. At the moment, all Ying Ying wanted to do was hurry and rescue her brother. As for matters of love, she must not be considering them. Lin Shun should also know this, otherwise, with his original character, he would definitely run to Su Liang and ask her to be his matchmaker.

Su Liang went to find Old Bai and told him about Ying Ying and her brother’s situation.

Old Bai’s face changed as he listened to Su Liang’s guess that there were people from that mysterious power beside Yue Mei now, “It’s not impossible. But I know nothing about that power.”

“We are in the light, and they are in the dark. We need to investigate as soon as possible in order to deal with them.” Su Liang sighed slightly.

Old Bai frowned, “I’ll go to Yin Country! See if I can save Ying Ye, and capture Yue Mei to find out the truth!”

Su Liang nodded, “This is what I wanted to discuss with grand master. Although I don’t want grand master to leave, things have changed, and no one else has the strength to deal with Yue Mei and her group.” Poison techniques are very important.

“I’ll go!” Old Bai initially wanted to pursue and kill Yue Mei, but was stopped and pulled back by Old Mu, “You have a great talent in poison techniques, and you learn fast. You have already achieved five or six percent of my success. I will teach you more when I come back. You rest well during this period of time!”

“Okay.” Su Liang nodded slightly, “Sister Ying is familiar with Yue Mei’s lair, and since she is worried about her brother, let her go with grand master so they can watch each other’s backs. However, she is still injured, and I want her to rest at home for two days before setting off.”

Old Bai frowned, “We should go as soon as possible!”

Su Liang thought about it, and it made sense. In case Yue Mei and her group abandoned the place and disappeared with Ying Ye, it would be hard to find them.

“Grand master, please pack up first. I’ll go and talk to Sister Ying, tell someone to prepare dried food, and you can set off as soon as possible.” Su Liang said.

When Su Liang saw Ying Ying, she was not asleep, but had just taken a bath, changed her clothes, and was sitting by the window holding a cup of tea and staring blankly.

“Xiaoliang, you’re here. How did your discussion go?” Ying Ying asked as soon as she saw Su Liang.

Su Liang looked at Ying Ying’s pale face and handed her a small bottle, “This is for replenishing Qi and blood. Eat one a day.”

The tonic was not taught by Old Bai, but was made by Su Liang herself based on her past life experience. It was originally used for situations where a person had lost too much blood due to injury and needed to recover quickly. She had just found it.

Ying Ying took it, opened the stopper, poured one out, and swallowed it, “It’s delicious and sweet.”

Su Liang chuckled, sat down beside her, “I’ve talked to Gu Ling, and decided that grand master, who is Yue Mei’s senior, will go.”

Ying Ying’s expression changed, “That’s great! I’ll go with him!”

“Although I think Sister Ying should rest, time is pressing and I’m afraid of any complications if we wait too long. You should set off as soon as possible.” Su Liang

said, "Sister Ying, just call him master like I do, and don't talk about it from Yue Mei's side."

Ying Ying nodded again and again, "I'll listen to you." After speaking, she clenched Su Liang's hand, "Xiaoliang, thank you so much this time. Otherwise, I would have no strength to confront Yue Mei alone, let alone save Xiaoye."

Su Liang shook her head, "Sister Ying, please don't say that. Even if it wasn't for you and Ying Ye's situation, I and Yue Mei were already on bad terms. We are cooperating to deal with a common enemy."

Ying Ying breathed a sigh of relief, "Seeing you, I feel like I'm back home, and my heart is a little quieter. If I were a man, I would definitely compete with Gu Ling for you."

Su Liang laughed, "I'll have to tell Gu Ling about this."

When Ying Ying went to Jiaye City, she had no belongings and had only brought a few clothes with her from Su Liang's home.

Su Liang asked Qi Jun to buy a few sets of clothes and shoes for Ying Ying, prepared some dried food, and gave Old Bai and Ying Ying one of the recent hidden weapons made by Gu Ling.

Old Bai had previously made a lot of poison while Su Liang was not at home and stored it. He picked some for the two of them to take. In addition, Su Liang gave them all kinds of possible wound medicines and the special hemostatic gauze she had commissioned.

Last month, during her free time, Su Liang described the style and functions of outdoor backpacks to Gu Ling based on her memories from her past life, Gu Ling drew detailed design plans, Yang Yu provided the best and strongest fabric, and the Yang Family's embroidery ladies made two sample packs.

Although they couldn't make zippers and had to use laces instead, which was somewhat inferior to her previous industrialized backpacks, it was much more convenient and practical than a cloth wrap used here for luggage.

Su Liang gave two backpacks to Old Bai and Ying Ying for their luggage. The capacity was large, and different items were placed in different positions; straps around both shoulders and waist relieved the burden on both hands. It was much more convenient than the bamboo or wooden bookcase-type backpacks.

The water bottle was placed in a side pocket with an opening, so it was easy to grab and didn't need to be hung around the waist and swayed around. Except for being a bit peculiar, there was no problem at all.

Qi Jun saw that Ying Ying had packed a lot of things into it, he tried it for himself and found it much more comfortable than carrying a baggage, "This is really useful!"

"Make more later, so that everyone has one." Su Liang said.

Old Bai appeared at the door with his backpack, "Let's go."

Qi Jun hurriedly put down Ying Ying's backpack and handed it to her, but Ying Ying turned around and hugged Su Liang, "Xiaoliang, you be well at home, don't worry about me. We will come back as soon as we are done." She seemed to have already regarded this place as home.

"Alright, Sister Ying, take good care of yourself." Su Liang smiled.

Old Bai and Ying Ying set off in secret.

When Lian Shun returned to Su Mansion after having dinner with his family, he was informed that Ying Ying had already left.

Lian Shun immediately frowned, "Her health is not very good."

"I am a doctor. But saving people is more important." Su Liang said with a slight sigh.

Lian Shun understood, but suddenly felt empty in his heart, "Should I catch up with them and go together?"

Su Liang shook his head, "They are traveling fast, you won't be able to catch up now, and you might miss them."

Lian Shun sighed deeply, "Su Xiaoliang, do you think I would just make things worse even if I went?"

"Of course not." Su Liang said, "Although your martial arts are not very high, and you don't know poison techniques, you are very smart and can definitely help. But what they need to do is not something that will be easier with more people."

Lian Shun understood, he just felt that Ying Ying was working hard and wanted to help her.

"Did you see it? I like your sister Ying." Lian Shun confessed.

Su Liang nodded slightly, "It was Gu Ling who noticed it first."

Lian Shun laughed, "No wonder Gu Xiaoling is my best friend."

He didn't ask Su Liang to help set them up, as now was not the right time. They would talk about it after the trouble was resolved.

"Moving to a new environment is good for my parents. My father and Uncle Lin get along very well, and my mother received an invitation from Duke Mansion today. Lady Qin invites her and my sister to attend a flower-appreciating banquet tomorrow." Lian Shun said, "Actually, it's all because of your connections. I should thank you."

Although the Lin Family used to have a great reputation in Qian Country, after the death of Old General Lin and the loss of Concubine Lin, and with Duanmu Che's consecutive failures and still under house arrest, it was not easy for Lian Shun, who was a military commander but had no real achievements, to integrate into the circle of nobles in the capital city.

Yuan Pei was recommended by Su Liang to Lin Shuzhi, and Lian's father also had contacts with the Lin Family. As for the flower-appreciating banquet held by Duke Mansion specially inviting Lian

Shun's mother and sister, indeed, it was because of Su Liang's face. Lian Shun didn't have any significant intersection with the Qin Family before.

"No need to thank me. Your wounds are healed, your family settled. When are you going to do some real work?" Su Liang asked.

Lian Shun coughed lightly, "I'll meet the emperor in the palace tomorrow, and then escort Xiao Nian's family back to Jiaye City, and guard the border together with Xiao Nian. If you trust me, I can go back to the southern border to defend the city myself, and let Xiao Nian return to the capital."

"Better do it together, you can discuss and support each other in case of problems." Su Liang said, "You don't have to worry about things in the capital, I'll help out if your family needs anything."

"That's something I'm not worried about." Lian Shun chuckled, "Then it's settled."

In the past, Lian Shun had spent several years neglecting his duties to find a cure for Duanmu Che. After being disappointed with Duanmu Che, he decided to join the army to inherit his grandfather's will, but he had a streak of bad luck and had encountered several accidents.

Now that Qian Country had a new emperor and the Lin Family had moved to the capital, Lian Shun wanted to support this home more, make great achievements, and restore the family's glory. Only then would his family members not be looked down upon by others.

It was not that Su Liang asked him to do some real work, and he decided to return to Jiaye City on a whim. He had planned it before. He had come to see Ying Ying off and had already done so. Another task was to escort Nian Jincheng's wife back to Jiaye City.

Yang Yu said that leaving tomorrow was no problem, and she had been prepared to go and reunite with Nian Jincheng.

Early the next morning, Lian Shun entered the palace to see Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen was very pleased that Lian Shun would soon return to Jiaye City to take up his post. Qian Country was short of officers, and if Lian Shun intended to live a comfortable life in the capital, Duanmu Chen would have to have a serious talk with him.

"I heard that the marriage engagement between your sister and the grandson of Old General Yuan has been canceled?" Duanmu Chen suddenly asked about Lian Shan's marriage.

Instantly, Lian Shun's heart was on guard. He knew that now was the time for choosing beautiful women for the emperor, and it was not possible that his sister Lian Shan had been chosen, right?

However, Lian Shun also understood that since Duanmu Chen asked, he probably already knew the truth and wanted to see Lian Shun's attitude...

Lian Shun could only say that the marriage engagement had been canceled but not yet restored. He did not give a definite answer because there was indeed room for negotiation in this matter.

“So that’s how it is.” Duanmu Chen nodded, “Your sister’s name was on the list of beautiful women submitted by the Ministry of Rites, and I wanted to ask you about it.”

Previously, Lian Shun had served as a military commander in Xuanbei City, on the same level as “Che Yun,” and since he had not been removed from his post, it was normal for his unmarried and eligible sister to be on the list of beautiful women. Because beautiful women were not only selected from the capital but also from the daughters of official families all over the country.

“Do you have anything you want to say?” Duanmu Chen’s eyes were deep.

Lian Shun braced himself and said, “My sister’s marriage to Yuan Pei was agreed upon by our grandfather and Yuan’s grandfather when they were alive. My parents and I still hope they could be together. It’s just that my sister was injured earlier, and her mind was not clear, and Yuan Pei was mourning his grandfather at the time, so the engagement was temporarily not settled.”

“Hehe,” Duanmu Chen said with a gentle smile, “In that case, I’ll ask the Ministry of Rites to remove your sister’s name from the list of beautiful women.”

Lian Shun heaved a huge sigh of relief in his heart, “Thank you, Your Majesty!”

“Now is the time to make use of talents. You have the heart to serve the country, and I am very pleased, I hold high expectations for you. I hope you can live up to your grandfather’s wishes and restore the glory of Lin Family.” Duanmu Chen said with a solemn expression.

Lian Shun expressed his loyalty.

After leaving the palace, Lian Shun realized that it was probably true that Lian Shan had made the list of imperial beauties, but Duanmu Chen had mentioned it to him and then easily chose to give up. It was just an opportunity to show favor.

Lian Shun would not be resentful of any possible calculations made by Duanmu Chen. They were originally a monarch and his officials, and Duanmu Chen’s intention to show favor was also a way of showing goodwill, hoping that he could be loyal and devoted.

Lian Shun was grateful, and this did not conflict with what he originally wanted to do.

Ying Ying went to the capital city the same day and followed Old Bai. The next day, Lian Shun escorted Yang Yu out of the capital and headed for Jiaye City.

That day, Su Liang and Gu Ling were invited as guests to the Marquis Zhong Xin’s mansion, along with Zheng’Er. The invitation was for them to pick grapes by Old Lady Xing.

Upon entering the Marquis Zhong Xin’s mansion, Su Liang noticed that the servants walked more lightly and had better manners.

When meeting Old Lady Xing, she was talking to an elderly nanny dressed in plain clothes.

Seeing Su Liang, Old Lady Xing smiled and said, “You’ve arrived.” She waved her hand to let the others leave and pulled Su Liang to sit beside her.

Gu Ling took Zheng'er and the basket they brought along straight to the grapevineyard. This place used to be the Gu Family's mansion, so he was very familiar with it.

"You have a good complexion." Old Lady Xing gently touched Su Liang's belly and smiled broadly, "When this little one is born, I wonder how good-looking they will be!"

Su Liang smiled softly, "I hope they look like their father."

They chatted about Xing Yuyan, who had become the empress, and Old Lady Xing said that she had just visited her with the Miao Family yesterday. "The emperor treats Yuyan extremely well. Even if new people enter the palace in the future, they won't surpass her. I just want her to stop having wild thoughts and focus on taking care of the emperor."

Old Lady Xing had always kept a close eye on the Miao Family and her grandchildren, fearing that they would cause trouble. Now that her granddaughter had become the empress, Old Lady Xing worked on purifying the mansion again. She hired two retired nannies from the palace to teach manners, which even the Miao Family had to learn.

Whenever Xing Yuyan wanted to invite the Miao Family to visit the palace, Old Lady Xing would accompany her, fearing that the Miao Family would say something wrong and prevent them from teaching Xing Yuyan bad things.

Although the Miao Family had always wanted their relatives to live in the capital city, Old Lady Xing never let her guard down. Recently, when the Miao Family brought up the matter again, claiming guilt about not being able to look after their family while enjoying a luxurious life in the capital, Old Lady Xing sent many valuable gifts to the Miao Family's relatives, hinting that they should behave and not cause trouble.

"Now I have no other thoughts, just hoping that the world will be peaceful and my son can return safely." Old Lady Xing sighed.

"He will." Su Liang nodded.

"It's up to you." Old Lady Xing said, holding Su Liang's hand.

Two baskets of grapes came back from the Marquis Zhong Xin's mansion. One basket was washed with well water and shared with everyone. The other basket, Gu Ling wanted to make desserts, and Zheng'er was now a little expert in cooking.

While Gu Ling and Zheng'er were busy in the kitchen, and Su Liang was sorting out the notes she had taken when learning about poisons, Qi Jun came in, "Master, just now when I went out to buy vegetables, I accidentally saw the second son of Marquis Zhong Xin."

Su Liang put down what she was holding and looked up, "Xing Yuyang? What happened to him?"

"I saw him alone without any guards, so I felt something was wrong and followed him secretly for a while. I saw him enter a mansion," Qi Jun said, "I didn't dare to enter rashly, so I waited outside for a while, but didn't see him come out, so I returned first."

Su Liang frowned. She had just seen Old Lady Xing today, who was very cautious but couldn't prevent her grandchildren from going out. That Xing Yuyang was unaccompanied meant there was an issue.

Su Liang didn't ask Qi Jun to inform Old Lady Xing yet, deciding to first confirm the situation with the mansion Xing Yuyang had visited.

Su Liang asked Old Mu to go over without alarming the people inside.

An hour later, Old Mu returned and told Su Liang that there was a young pregnant woman in the mansion, with an old nanny attending to her. When he arrived there, Xing Yuyang had already left.

Xing Yuyang's marriage had been arranged, and he was engaged to the legitimate second daughter of the Ministry of Rites' family. They were to be married in the autumn.

If the woman in that mansion was indeed someone Xing Yuyang was keeping and the child in her belly was his, it would greatly damage the reputation of the Marquis Zhong Xin's mansion. While many young masters of noble families had fun with women outside, it was another matter entirely to bring a woman of unknown origin back home. Moving her elsewhere was a way to keep her hidden.

Su Liang even suspected that the woman might be a spy, deliberately approaching Xing Ji's son with some sort of plot.

But after a secret investigation by Qi Jun, it turned out that the woman was the niece of the Miao Family!

Su Liang was speechless. The Miao Family brought their nieces to the capital city behind Old Lady Xing's back and paired them with her son. They hid the fact that they were pregnant until Xing Yuyang was to marry a noble daughter. At that time, they would let the niece enter the house with the child, forcing Old Lady Xing to accept the Miao's daughter as a daughter-in-law. They planned to use the niece to control the daughter-in-law, both inside and out. They had calculated everything well, but only for their own interests and their family's future, without considering how the news would affect the reputation of the Xing Family.

Su Liang asked Qi Jun to send a box of homemade grape pastries to Old Lady Xing, while inviting her to visit the next day.

The next day, Old Lady Xing happily visited. However, when Su Liang told her about the actions of the Miao Family and Xing Yuyang, Old Lady Xing was so angered that she nearly fainted.

Su Liang had been worried about this, which is why she didn't let Qi Jun mention it directly yesterday. In this way, she could ensure that Old Lady Xing's health wouldn't be affected by her anger...

"At this point, getting angry at ourselves isn't worth it. We should focus on how to solve the problem." Su Liang gently patted the back of Old Lady Xing.

Old Lady Xing's face turned ugly, "After so many years, she always said that our Xing Family did not take good care of her natal family. But before returning to the capital city, the Xing Family was also walking on thin ice, just having an empty reputation! After returning to the capital city, if it wasn't for your support, where would we have peaceful days? The emperor's promotion of Yanyan

as the empress is not only because of my son, but also related to you. Now is the time of trouble, the more prominent one is, the more cautious one should be. Her natal family has no talented people, even my eldest grandson doesn't have an official position today, just an idler. What else does she want? I've talked to Miao's family about this, but she's only focused on seeking benefits for herself and her natal family, without considering the consequences it would bring to the Xing Family!"

That matter could be considered significant or trivial. But Old Lady Xing cared the most about her reputation, and Xing Yuyang's marriage was also her decision. Wasn't this a slap in her face? Forcing her future family to suffer in silence!

However, it wasn't easy to deal with the situation. After all, that was Xing Ji's wife and son. If it escalated, it would be difficult to end.

Seeing Old Lady Xing remaining silent with a sullen face, Su Liang expressed her thoughts. Miao's family always mentioned Xing Ji and cared about him a lot. Since there was no war at the moment, why not send her to Xuanbei City to cook for Xing Ji and take care of him? Without her children around, she would have nothing to plan.

Upon hearing this, Old Lady Xing's eyebrows relaxed, "You're right! That's the best solution! The only thing I admire about her is the attentiveness with which she takes care of Ji'er. As for Yuyang's situation, I'll ask him when I go back. If he really likes his cousin, since things have come to this, she can enter the mansion. If the Ministry of Rites wants to break off the engagement because of this, I'll make the decision to let Miao's lady marry Yuyang, and then they can leave our family. This is the choice he made for himself!"

Su Liang felt this was a pretty good solution. Everyone has to pay the price for their choices. Old Lady Xing is benevolent and plans on letting Xing Yuyang be responsible to Miao's lady, leaving the final decision to the future family. If the Ministry of Rites breaks off the engagement, Xing Yuyang will marry his beloved cousin, and if the Ministry of Rites still wishes to go through the marriage, the Xing Family hasn't concealed anything, and Miao's lady will become a concubine.

Su Liang thought this matter would end there. The possibility of the Ministry of Rites breaking off the engagement was not too high, after all, Xing Yuyang was the empress's own brother.

However, unexpectedly, that night, Chang'an arrived suddenly and said that Duanmu Chen was ill, asking Su Liang to enter the palace immediately.

When Gu Ling took Su Liang into the palace, they saw Duanmu Chen still conscious, his face covered with many small red spots, and his hands as well. It seemed like an allergic reaction. Severe allergies could be life-threatening.

Su Liang asked Duanmu Chen what he had eaten that day. Duanmu Chen said he had eaten dinner at Empress Dowager Xiao's place and drank a bowl of nourishing soup stewed by Xing Yuyan before going to bed.

Su Liang turned her head and saw Xing Yuyan evading her gaze in panic.

"What did you add to the soup?" Su Liang frowned. She knew Xing Yuyan would not and dared not plot against Duanmu Chen. However, the problem was that this person was not very smart, and it would be troublesome if she was used as a pawn by someone.

Duanmu Chen's cold eyes shot at Xing Yuyan, who knelt down with her knees bent and tears streaming down her face, "Your Majesty, I swear I didn't poison it!"

"What kind of medicine did you add? Tell me quickly, otherwise, I won't know how to treat His Majesty. If we delay time..." Su Liang tried to make her voice sound as gentle as possible.

Upon hearing this, Xing Yuyan got up quickly, and soon brought a medicine bag to Su Liang, "This one, my mother said it was a secret recipe for having a child, my cousin used it and got pregnant very soon!"

Su Liang:

Duanmu Chen was already furious. He began to rethink why he initially believed Xing Yuyan could be Empress without any problems...

Su Liang suspected that the cousin Xing Yuyan mentioned was the one hidden by Xing Yuyang, "Why did you give the secret recipe for having a child to His Majesty?" She opened the medicine bag and carefully checked what was inside.

With red eyes, Xing Yuyan said, "My mother said it would be best if both people consumed it. I took it first, and I'm fine." Su Liang really wanted to roll her eyes. Could medicine be taken so carelessly? The same medicine might be fine for one person but not for another. Obviously, Duanmu Chen was allergic to this secret medicine, and Xing Yuyan, as the Empress, was in a hurry to get pregnant for fear that Duanmu Chen's other women would give birth to sons before her.

However, Su Liang confirmed there was no toxicity. Seeing that Duanmu Chen's symptoms were not worsening, she told Gu Ling how to apply the needles and asked him to treat Duanmu Chen.

After the acupuncture treatment, the red spots on Duanmu Chen's face gradually faded, leaving only a faint trace.

"It will take some time to fully recover," Su Liang said, "Does Your Majesty have any other discomforts?"

Duanmu Chen coldly glanced at Xing Yuyan, "No more."

"Your Majesty..." Xing Yuyan cried like a pear blossom in the rain.

However, Duanmu Chen had already withdrawn his gaze and stood up, "I'm going to the Imperial Study, let's go together."

On the way, Duanmu Chen said to Su Liang, "For this matter, I will handle it myself, and you should not interfere."

Su Liang knew that the situation, whether it was intentional or unintentional, could be viewed as an attempt on the emperor's life. No matter how he dealt with it, it would be considered normal from the standpoint of an emperor.

Su Liang indeed didn't want to plead for Xing Yuyan. After all, with Duanmu Chen's temperament, he wouldn't vent his anger on unrelated people. As for those who were involved, it would be best to deal with them impartially and according to the law.

Upon leaving the palace, Su Liang thought about what had happened during the day and sighed softly, “It seems Old Lady Xing’s plan won’t work out. Actually, from another perspective, it’s not a bad thing either. The emperor takes action, and those who make mistakes pay the price, there’s not much to say. Both Old Lady Xing and my righteous father are kind-hearted and always find it hard to be tough. However, some people’s foolishness may lead to bad results; fortunately, nothing serious happened this time. If it happens again, it might cause a major disaster.”

Some people could lead thousands of troops, but they might not be able to manage a family. This referred exactly to Xing Ji. No one is perfect, especially in household affairs, where feelings and blood ties were hard to disentangle.

“Great God, what would you do if Xiaoshen becomes wilful in the future?” Su Liang asked Gu Ling.

Gu Ling thought for a moment and said, “Throw him on a deserted island for three months, and he’ll surely behave.”

Su Liang looked speechless, “I take back my words about you being an unparalleled great father.”

Gu Ling shook his head, “I was joking. In our family, you have the highest authority. Xiaoshen and I will listen to whoever has the higher martial arts skills. If he wants to be wilful, let him try to defeat me first.”

Chapter 357: 357. Will you put righteousness before family?

Su Liang did not go to inform Old Lady Xing about tonight’s events. Although it would give her psychological preparation, or she could deal with some people in her family first, to avoid the emperor’s punishment.

But the problem lies here. Su Liang is not sure what Duanmu Chen intends to do, and once Old Lady Xing personally deals with Madam Miao, Xing Yuyang, and Miss Miao, it would become a burden in her heart and would affect her relationship with the other children of the Miao family. In short, this is a very difficult situation to deal with.

Therefore, Su Liang did not want to pass this huge trouble to Old Lady Xing, and after the events took place, she only needed to say that Duanmu Chen did not allow her to interfere.

If Old Lady Xing doesn’t know Duanmu Chen’s intentions beforehand, can’t stop him during the events, she will be able to let go more easily afterward.

It was even more unnecessary to tell Xing Yusheng beforehand. He had always been respectful and kept away from Madam Miao and her children.

After returning home, Su Liang and Gu Ling quickly went to bed.

Early the next morning, the Marquis Zhong Xin’s entire family, including the Crown Prince Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing, were summoned into the palace.

At the same time, Miss Miao, who Xing Yuyang thought was well-hidden, as well as her two elder brothers hidden in another place in the capital city, were subsequently searched and arrested by Xing’s subordinates, along with their servants, and taken into the Heavenly Prison.

Upon entering the palace, the Xing family did not directly see Duanmu Chen nor Xing Yuyan, but instead waited in an empty palace.

Old Lady Xing felt uneasy in her heart, feeling that something bad had happened, and momentarily suspected that something might have happened to Xing Ji who was far away in Xuanbei City.

Xing Yusheng did not think his father was in trouble. If so, Duanmu Chen should have consulted Su Liang first, and she would inform the Xing family in the first instance.

Being in the Imperial Palace, Xing Yusheng couldn't help but suspect that today's events were related to Xing Yuyan. However, not knowing the details yet, he said nothing, only comforting Lin Xueqing not to worry. Even if Xing Ji wanted to rebel, Lin Xueqing would be safe at least.

After Duanmu Chen finished the morning court and reviewed the memorials, he finally came to see the Xing family members with Jing.

Old Lady Xing led the entire family to kneel and salute Duanmu Chen. With an indifferent expression, Duanmu Chen said, "Old Lady and Crown Prince's wife, please rise, you have seats."

Xing Yusheng, who was still kneeling on the ground, felt a sinking feeling in his heart. Only his grandmother and the pregnant Lin Xueqing were allowed to sit, while the others had to continue kneeling? It was undoubtedly bad news!

Xing Yusheng gave Lin Xueqing a reassuring look before palace maids came and helped Old Lady Xing and Lin Xueqing to sit down.

Madam Miao's head was hanging low, and Duanmu Chen's gaze swept over her before settling on Xing Yuyang.

Old Lady Xing tried to stay calm, "Your Majesty, may I ask what has happened?" She also suspected that Xing Yuyan had made a big mistake.

"Bring in the Empress." Duanmu Chen's expression was indifferent.

Xing Yuyan entered the room soon after, followed by two serious-looking palace maids, who were unfamiliar faces to Old Lady Xing.

Although Xing Yuyan's clothes were neat and her hair ornaments were all in place, her eyes were red and swollen, clearly having cried. As soon as she entered and saw the Xing family members, she broke into tears again, "Grandmother, save me..."

Old Lady Xing's heart lurched, but she heard Duanmu Chen's cold voice, "Does the Empress not even understand the rules?"

Xing Yuyan's body trembled, and she knelt down to pay respects to Duanmu Chen but was not called to stand up.

"Tell your family what you have done, Empress," Duanmu Chen said coldly.

Xing Yuyan glanced subconsciously at Madam Miao and Xing Yuyang, "Your Majesty, my second brother has also taken that medicine, and it really doesn't cause any harm..."

As soon as Old Lady Xing heard the word "medicine," she felt as if she had been struck by lightning, her face turning pale! No matter what kind of medicine it was, it was extremely sensitive in the palace!

Xing Yusheng was already filled with murderous intent. He knew that when trouble arose, he would not be considered an outsider since their surnames were both Xing.

“Jing, tell Old Lady what the Empress has done.” Duanmu Chen didn’t look at Xing Yuyan again.

Chang’an’s expression turned serious, “Yes.” He then recounted the incident of Miao’s mother secretly bringing untraceable medicine into the palace and giving it to Xing Yuyan, who had secretly put it in a chicken soup for Duanmu Chen to drink. He also declared that last night, it was confirmed that the medicine was brought into the capital city by the maternal relatives of Miao’s mother, and the related parties had already been arrested and thrown into the Heavenly Prison.

In the end, Chang’an said, “Last night, His Majesty broke out in red rashes all over his body, and the situation was extremely dangerous. Fortunately, Imperial Physician Su and Marquis Chang Xin entered the palace in time to treat His Majesty, otherwise, the consequences would have been unimaginable.”

Lady Xing was sweating profusely, and she couldn’t sit still as she listened. She got up and knelt down again. Lin Xueqing silently knelt by Lady Xing’s side, supporting her with one hand, afraid that she would faint.

After Chang’an finished speaking, all that could be heard were the sobs of Xing Yuyan, who kept saying that she really didn’t mean it, she didn’t know it would turn out like that, she only wanted to bear the emperor’s Dragon Seed as soon as possible.

Duanmu Chen looked at Lady Xing, “I know that Su Liang is the adopted daughter of Marquis Zhong Xin. She has a good relationship with the old lady and the crown prince, so I specifically instructed her last night not to intervene in this matter.”

These words explained why Su Liang had not informed the Xing family at the earliest opportunity.

Lady Xing said solemnly, “This incident has nothing to do with Su Liang. It is because of the unfortunate circumstances of my Xing family. I beg Your Majesty to consider the loyalty of my son and treat us leniently.”

It was impossible for Duanmu Chen to not punish them. In the past, Duanmu Chen had given the Xing family important information and saved them because of Su Liang’s face, but he was a crown prince back then, and now he is the emperor.

If Miao’s mother and Xing Yuyan weren’t the empress and Duanmu Chen still needed to use Xing Ji, their whole family could be executed, and even his nine clans could be exterminated.

Upon learning from Su Liang about the things Miao’s mother and Xing Yuyang did behind their backs, Lady Xing still wanted to value harmony and even thought of how Miao’s daughter had already become Xing Yuyang’s woman and was carrying his child, and thus needed to take responsibility.

Back when Lady Xing allowed Miao’s mother to enter the family, she had the same mindset. Since Xing Ji’s wife, Qin Yuan insisted on doing that, Lady Xing admitted even if she knew that Xing Ji was calculated by Miao’s mother.

However, at this moment, Lady Xing had completely turned cold towards everyone related to Miao's mother. She regretted more and more that she should have been firm back then and never allowed Miao's mother to enter the Xing family's door! If they married a virtuous wife and severed ties when they had to, the Xing family wouldn't have been destroyed by the Miao surname!

You should know that the day before yesterday, Lady Xing told Su Liang that the emperor was extremely good to Xing Yuyan. This was a fact. Duanmu Chen, on one hand for Xing Ji's strength and on the other hand for Su Liang's face, was kind and just towards the Xing family. Xing Yuyan was living in happiness without knowing it, and it was so stupid that it was infuriating!

Duanmu Chen, as a crown prince, already had several concubines serving him, but none of them had ever given him a son. Didn't Miao's mother and Xing Yuyan know why? It was Duanmu Chen's intention because he wanted his main wife to give birth to his legitimate heir first, to avoid the situation where his eldest son was born illegitimately!

So Xing Yuyan only needed to be more patient, and if her body wasn't ill, the firstborn prince of Qian Country would definitely be her son.

Lady Xing had reminded Miao's mother and Xing Yuyan of this, but because they were in the palace, they didn't dare to speak too explicitly. She didn't know whether they were too stupid to understand or whether they understood but just couldn't settle down!

"In consideration of Marquis Zhong Xin's loyal service at the border, I will not depose the empress." Duanmu Chen's words ended, and Xing Yuyan's expression brightened.

Miao's mother breathed a sigh of relief but heard Duanmu Chen continue, "However, those who instigated the empress to poison me must be punished severely."

Miao's mother's face stiffened, "Your Majesty... I did it out of good intentions!"

Xing Yuyan also pleaded for her mother, "Please spare my mother, Your Majesty, she really meant well!"

Duanmu Chen's face turned cold, "Silence! Whoever thinks my punishment is too severe and dares to plead for mercy again will be punished the same way!"

Xing Yuyan's face stiffened, and she didn't dare to speak anymore.

Miao's mother, pale-faced, crawled over to Lady Xing, "Mother... Mother, save me! I did it all for Yuyan and the Xing family!"

"Summon." Duanmu Chen ordered.

An old eunuch came forward holding a tray with a pot and a cup. Anyone not a fool would know what was inside.

As Miao's mother cried and wailed, Duanmu Chen got up and walked out, "There's no hurry. Wait until Lady Xing is ready, then send her on her way."

His words left the palace, and the door was closed from the outside. Inside, only the Xing family members and the old eunuch who brought the poison wine were left.

Xing Yusheng helped Lady Xing and Lin Xueqing up and let them sit down. Then he turned around and fiercely kicked Xing Yuyang, "Look what you've done!"

It seemed Duanmu Chen didn't show any mercy and directly ordered the execution of Xing Ji's wife. However, in reality, he was still merciful. Those with the surname Miao didn't expect to survive, but those with the surname Xing were all right.

Knowing this, Lady Xing dared not say another word. She knew that Xing Yuyang and Xing Yuyan, who were directly involved, would deserve death if they were punished.

Xing Yuyang grabbed Xing Yusheng's leg, his expression panicked, "Brother! Go find Su Liang! As long as she pleads with the emperor, he will definitely spare my mother's life!"

Xing Yusheng kicked Xing Yuyang away and said coldly, "It's no use asking anyone, even if Father were here, it would be useless! Didn't you hear what the emperor said, Su Liang is not allowed to intervene! The emperor didn't kill you and Xing Yuyan together, that's already a great grace!"

Lin Xueqing held Lady Xing's cold hand, not knowing what to say. She had a simple background and didn't have much contact with the Miao family after her marriage, so she couldn't understand why they would do such things instead of living a good life. They say that being with the emperor is like being with a tiger, so you have to be cautious. But Miao and Xing Yuyan have gone too far!

Xing Yusheng ignored them and sat down next to Lady Xing, "Grandmother, things have come to this point, the emperor has already been extremely merciful."

"I know..." Lady Xing sighed deeply, "I'm just worried about your father. If he knows, he will definitely feel heartbroken."

After all, that's Xing Ji's wife, even if she's in the wrong, Xing Ji will still blame himself for not managing his family properly.

"Father will understand." Xing Yusheng wasn't too worried about this. Xing Ji was the smartest person in the Xing family. But in another sense, he was also the most foolish. He could always handle external affairs well, but he couldn't handle family matters properly. If they had just kept the doors closed and only dealt with family matters, that would have been fine. But this time, some people had overreached themselves.

Xing Yusheng looked at Miao, who was about to be executed, and felt nothing. She was his stepmother, and the person he had hated from childhood, with no emotional attachment.

Unworthy people in high positions will inevitably bring disaster. Xing Yusheng suddenly thought of his father-in-law, Lin Shuzhi's previous warning about Xing Yuyan. Lin Shuzhi's point was that the Xing family must control Xing Yuyan, not seeking her help for their family, but just hoping that she would behave and stay out of trouble.

Lady Xing did just that, but who would have expected that some people were so fearless and absolutely insane...

Su Mansion.

Qi Jun was reporting the news of the Xing family to Su Liang, "It's said that the Empress is sick, and the emperor has allowed the family members to visit her in the palace. Lady Xing went in a hurry."

Su Liang was slightly stunned, “She’s dead?”

Qi Jun nodded, “Yes. The Xing family members have left the palace and returned home, and they are preparing for the funeral.”

“What about the others?” Su Liang asked.

Qi Jun shook his head, “The others should be fine. By the way, on my way back, I went to the place where Xing Yuyang’s concubine was hidden, and it was empty.”

“I see. You go and say that I asked you to check on Lady Xing’s health, and bring this box of calming incense to her.” Su Liang ordered, “Ask if she needs me to come over.”

Qi Jun understood and went to the Xing family.

Su Liang sighed and looked at Gu Ling, who was making medicine nearby, “I didn’t expect the emperor to have Xing Yuyan’s mother executed. But after all, it involves poisoning the emperor, and killing someone is not excessive.”

As for the missing Miss Miao, Su Liang felt that her chances of survival were slim.

Xing Yuyan’s life must not be as good as before, even if the position of Empress is still hers.

Duanmu Chen seemed gentle, but his gentleness was only for useful people. Even if Xing Ji returned to the capital, he would have to thank Duanmu Chen for his grace, for not killing his children.

Qi Jun soon came back and said that Lady Xing’s face was not very good, but she was fine and told Su Liang not to come.

In addition, Lady Xing asked Qi Jun to tell Su Liang that she was preparing to cancel Xing Yuyang’s marriage, using the reason that he would be in mourning for three years, and letting the Ministry Mansion’s lady choose another good husband.

Su Liang thought this was a good option, as Xing Yuyang was a person who made mistakes and also had the habit of calculating his fiancée, which was different from the situation when they first got engaged. Lady Xing’s move, on one hand, did not want to delay the Ministry Mansion’s lady, and on the other hand, was to punish Xing Yuyang.

Xuanbei City.

Xing Ji had no idea that something had happened to his family in the capital city. He was currently entertaining the marriage envoy from Liang Country. The leader of the group was a familiar face – the person who had once pretended to be Che Yun, now the second prince of Liang Country, Situ Jing.

The envoy was to stay in Xuanbei City for one night before setting off again the next day.

Xing Ji maintained a strictly professional attitude and did not show any special emotions towards Situ Jing.

As night fell, Xing Ji was having a leisurely chat with Qi Jiang under the moon. The two had been friends for more than half their lives, with Qi Jiang’s companionship lasting even longer than that of Xing Ji’s wife and children.

“Marquis, the second prince of Liang Country is here,” someone reported.

Xing Ji looked up to see Situ Jing standing at the entrance of the courtyard, holding a jar of alcohol in his hand. He had once sported a long beard when pretending to be Che Yun, but now, without the beard, he looked much younger and more refreshing. He was indeed a handsome man.

However, Xing Ji could not bring himself to like him, no matter how he looked at him.

Situ Jing entered and said, “I came here to have a few drinks with the Marquis.”

Qi Jiang stood up, gave Situ Jing a cold glance, and remained by the side without leaving.

Situ Jing took a seat and poured wine for Xing Ji, “This is the imperial wine from Liang Country. Please have a taste, Marquis.”

“I am afraid I may not be fortunate enough to enjoy such a precious gift,” Xing Ji replied coldly.

Situ Jing smiled and raised his cup, drinking it himself, “It feels like returning home when I come back here.”

Upon hearing this, Xing Ji really wanted to hit him.

“Actually, there is nothing special,” Situ Jing said to Xing Ji. “I just thought that the Marquis must miss his home very much. If there are any letters or items, I can help deliver them to the capital city along the way.”

Xing Ji shook his head, “No need.”

“There is one more thing,” Situ Jing raised his cup again, “I would like to thank the Marquis for his care and support in the past.”

Xing Ji grabbed the wine glass full in front of him and splashed it on Situ Jing’s face, “No need to thank me!”

Wiping the wine off his face with his hand, Situ Jing’s smile grew deeper, “I deserve it. Even if the Marquis cuts me with a knife, I would still owe it to him.”

Qi Jiang drew his knife and handed it to Xing Ji.

Xing Ji took it without hesitation, pointing the blade at Situ Jing, “You choose the spot.”

Situ Jing stretched out a finger, pointing to his own forehead, “Here.”

Xing Ji snorted coldly, swung the knife, and cut off a strand of hair from Situ Jing’s forehead. “Second Prince Situ, please leave.” He could see Situ Jing had drunk quite a lot of alcohol before coming and was somewhat tipsy.

Situ Jing picked up the hair that had fallen on the table, slowly winding it around his finger, and laughed at himself, “If the Marquis really cut me with a knife, I would be very happy. But just like Su Liang, you are not willing to give me even the slightest chance.”

“There is no need to say such nonsense, as if becoming the second prince of Liang Country was forced upon you by Su Liang,” Xing Ji said coldly.

Situ Jing nodded with a sarcastic smile, "Indeed, it was her and Gu Ling who forced me to go there. If they were willing to accept me, I would never have gone to Liang Country." With that, he turned around and walked away slowly.

At the entrance of the courtyard, Situ Jing looked back, "I wish I were your son. This is something I have wanted to say for a long time, and today I finally said it. I want to ask the Marquis one thing: if your family members do something grievously wrong, would you protect them or let them pay the price, even with their lives?"

Xing Ji frowned, "No matter who it is, everyone must take responsibility for their actions."

Situ Jing chuckled, "Very well. May the Marquis and your family never make any mistakes. And Su Liang and Gu Ling too. What I want to know most is whether Su Liang would abandon Gu Ling if he makes a mistake."

Chapter 358: 358. The cost of doing

Qi Jiang watched Situ Jing's figure disappear at the entrance of the courtyard, snorted coldly, and said, "Could we not just treat him as a spy and dispose of him? I don't think Liang Country would miss one prince."

Xing Ji shook his head, "That's not for us to consider. Since Xiaoliang and Xiaogu didn't do anything to him, just let him be." He inexplicably felt that Situ Jing's claim that "Su Liang and Gu Ling forced him to return to Liang Country to become a prince" has some truth to it.

Earlier, when Situ Jing's eyes were blind, Su Liang treated him. If they really wanted to stop him from returning to Liang Country, it would have been entirely possible.

However, Xing Ji was more inclined to believe that Su Liang and Gu Ling let Situ Jing go to his doom because they didn't want to team up with him anymore, and the enmity didn't reach the point of having to kill him outright. After all, Situ Jing's grandfather is now Su Liang's master.

Xing Ji sighed deeply, "I suddenly feel a bit worried about the family. I don't know how Yanzi is doing in the palace."

Qi Jiang shook his head, "Don't be influenced by Situ Jing's nonsense. The old lady wrote about the emperor treating the empress very well, which must be true."

Xing Ji nodded slightly, "I know, it's just..." He didn't approve of Xing Yuyan becoming the Empress in the first place, thinking she was not suited for such high positions and it wouldn't be appropriate for her to become the wife of a noble family. However, Duanmu Chen didn't consult him at all before deciding. Xing Ji was really afraid that Xing Yuyan would do something she shouldn't.

Qi Jiang comforted Xing Ji to relax, not to think too much, and also mentioned Lin Xueqing's pregnancy and that he could become a grandfather this year.

Xing Ji was very relieved about Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing, especially Lin Xueqing. Being able to marry this daughter-in-law was really a blessing for the Xing Family. Now, Lin Boyan has replaced Duanmu Chen's grandfather, Xiaolao Chengxiang, becoming the youngest prime minister

in the history of Qian Country. Lin Bojun is also the most trusted among the military commanders and has been promoted successively, allowing him to take control of the City Guard Army.

It's not the growing prominence of the Lin Family that Xing Ji cares about; he envies the simplicity and harmony of the Lin family even more. The saying "A harmonious family prospers in everything" makes sense.

After so many years, Xing Ji no longer expects Xing Yusheng to get close to Miao's family and her children, thinking it's good to keep a distance. But what really worries him has never been Xing Yusheng, but the always reluctant Miao's family...

The next day, Xing Ji sent a team of elite soldiers to "escort" the marriage delegation from Liang Country to the capital city.

As the marrying princess, Situ Yao, according to the rules, didn't show up directly and just greeted Xing Ji from the carriage.

Situ Jing had resumed his reticent demeanor as if the drunken incident of seeking out Xing Ji last night had never happened. Capital city.

According to Su Liang's calculations, Ren Dong should have already arrived at Xiangyue City in Yin Country, but she was alone, and he didn't know the situation there.

Su Liang told Ren Dong that if necessary, she could ask for the help of the assassins of Yanyun Building in Xiangyue City and gave her a token. Although previously Yan Shiba took quite a few assassins to Liang Country, there must still be Yan Shiba's people in Xiangyue City, the capital of Yin Country.

As for whether Yan Shiba himself is still in Liang Country or not, Su Liang wasn't sure.

Time flew by, and it was July.

Gu Ling measured Su Liang's belly with his homemade cloth ruler every night, not missing any small changes. Sometimes when Su Liang thought there was no change, Gu Ling would take out his "Little God's Growth Record" and show her the data from the previous day, indicating that their little god had grown a little bit more...

Su Liang found Gu Ling's scientific approach to her pregnancy very amusing. Once she gave birth, Gu Ling would certainly become a childbirth expert, understanding everything except his inability to give birth himself.

When she received the news that Liang Country sent the second prince Situ Jing as the envoy, Su Liang shared the information with Qiao Cong.

At that time, Qiao Cong asked Su Liang, "Do you want me to catch him and lock him up?"

Su Liang knew Qiao Cong really wanted to do it, but that wouldn't solve the problem.

At this point, Xing Ji should have received the news of the incident in Xing's family, but Duanmu Chen didn't allow him to return to the capital to see Miao's family for the last time. Su Liang believed that Xing Ji would definitely understand, but he must be blaming himself and feeling guilty.

Chang'an came to Su Mansion again and invited Su Liang and Gu Ling to the palace.

“Has someone fallen ill in the palace?” Su Liang asked. Gu Ling was packing his medicine box.

Chang’an nodded, “Yes, there is a guest who is sick.”

Su Liang quickly realized that the royal guest must be referring to Situ Jing. Although she knew he was somewhere in the capital city, neither Su Liang nor Gu Ling had met him, nor were they particularly interested in meeting him. He was just here as a hostage and had no particular value to evaluate.

Now that the marriage alliance is continuing, as Situ Xie’s eldest grandson and Situ Yao’s brother, Situ Jing cannot have an accident.

After Su Liang and Gu Ling entered the palace, they met Situ Jing in a palace. He had lost a lot of weight, his eyes were dim, but he still maintained his usual dignity and smoothness. When he saw Su Liang and Gu Ling, he stood up and greeted them with a smile, “Cousin, cousin sister, we meet again.”

“Where do you feel discomfort?” Su Liang asked directly.

Situ Jing sighed deeply, “Recently, I have been unable to sleep at night, always having nightmares and sudden stabbing pains in my body, as if...”

Su Liang frowned, “You believe someone is using witchcraft to curse you?”

Situ Jing nodded, “Indeed, I do. If so, is there a way to break the curse?”

Su Liang first took Situ Jing’s pulse, and there was indeed nothing wrong with his body. He had been held hostage for a long time, but he was not mistreated.

Su Liang didn’t believe in witchcraft. Mu Ya had used the same method to deal with her in the past, but it had no effect on her.

She was inclined to believe that it was all in Situ Jing’s head. Being held captive for months without freedom, he inevitably worried about not being able to return and was anxious about someone at home not wanting him to return.

“If, as you suspect, someone has cast a spell on you, that person would definitely be in Yao City, Liang Country.” Su Liang’s expression was indifferent, “I can only give you some calming and sleep-inducing drugs.”

Situ Jing nodded, “Thank you, cousin sister.”

After leaving the calming medicine, Su Liang and Gu Ling were about to leave. At the door, she turned back and asked, “You must already know who brought your sister for the marriage alliance. What do you think of Situ Jing returning to Liang Country’s royal family as a prince?”

Situ Jing smiled, “He has been in exile for many years, and I am happy for him that he can finally return home. I also hope to return home and reunite with my family as soon as possible.”

Su Liang nodded, turned around and left, then said to Gu Ling, “Situ Xie has only this grandson who has his style. Unfortunately, there is only one imperial throne, and he has too many grandsons.”

When she met Duanmu Chen, Su Liang mentioned Situ Jing's situation, and Duanmu Chen laughed, "It must be one of his brothers, I guess."

It could be no one else but someone who has a rivalry with Situ Jing.

Su Liang thought the same. If someone truly wanted to curse Situ Jing and didn't want him to return alive.

However, there was another possibility. No one was cursing Situ Jing or even if there was someone, it didn't affect him. His insomnia, nightmares, and physical pain were all pretenses. After seeking treatment from Su Liang, he could use this as an excuse to deal with one of his brothers when he returned to Liang Country, playing a game of framing and entrapment.

No matter what, Su Liang had no interest in investigating further. Her only attitude towards the Situ family was – fight harder, make it more intense.

"I have been pondering a question lately, and since you are here, I would like to ask your opinion." Duanmu Chen smiled.

At this time, Empress Dowager Xiao sent a palace maid to serve a bowl of soup, which Duanmu Chen often drank.

"I won't let you have this." Duanmu Chen said to Su Liang, "I think this soup is good since I have had it since childhood. I will give you the recipe later, and Gu Ling can make it for you to taste."

After the previous incidents, Duanmu Chen became more cautious about what he consumed and knew that Su Liang and Gu Ling were also careful.

After Duanmu Chen had drunk half a bowl of soup, he continued the previous topic, "You know very well how I got to this position. It can be said that without your intentional or unintentional help, I might not have made it this far. Looking back at the current situation of my father and brothers, I feel a bit sad. It's not that I sympathize with certain people, but I can't help but wonder, does the royal family have to be like this? If I have a son in the future, will he also take the same path of fighting and killing amongst relatives?"

Su Liang raised her eyebrows. Duanmu Chen hadn't been emperor for very long, and she was somewhat surprised that he was already considering this issue.

However, she was very clear that Duanmu Chen definitely did not regret dealing with Duanmu Yi and the other princes. If he had the chance to do it again, he would have been even more ruthless.

What Duanmu Chen was worried about at this moment was that his future sons would also follow his old path.

"Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you" is not applicable in the fight for the emperor's throne.

Simply put, while Duanmu Chen could eliminate his brothers and father for power, he did not want his own sons to do the same.

This is a double standard, but it is also understandable.

“No one can predict the future,” Su Liang said.

Duanmu Chen snorted, “Nonsense.”

Su Liang could only respond with nonsense because there is not much to say about such a matter. It's not like she could advise Duanmu Chen to have only one son.

In this world, having many sons is considered a blessing, especially for the royal family. Having many sons is necessary. In the case of low medical standards, if one son dies, falls ill, or is killed, and there is no other son to inherit the throne, the emperor's power cannot be passed on to his offspring as desired.

Therefore, having just one or two princes is not enough, even ten or eight princes are not considered too many.

Su Liang believes that Duanmu Chen will have many sons in the future. Those princes will be born and grow up in the whirlpool of power, and some struggles are inevitably historical cycles that cannot be avoided.

“I will teach my children well,” Duanmu Chen sighed.

Su Liang believes this, but whether it will be useful can only be determined in the future. However, if Duanmu Chen has this awareness from the beginning, it's a good thing to better control the internal affairs of the royal family. Everything depends on people's efforts.

“How many children do you plan to have?” Duanmu Chen changed the subject.

Su Liang smiled, “We'll let fate decide.”

“You are both so outstanding; you can have more children,” Duanmu Chen said.

Su Liang remained silent and only smiled. She didn't see anything wrong with what he said, but she didn't necessarily agree with it. This was a matter between her and Gu Ling, and it had nothing to do with others, nor would they listen to others' opinions.

The Xing Family's ancestral tomb was not in the capital city. Xing Yuyang wanted to send Miao Family's coffin back to Bei Jingwang Mansion's territory for burial, and then stay there to observe the funeral rites.

Xing Laotai's old age could not withstand the bumps, and she didn't want to be left in the care of Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing.

Initially, Xing Laotai wanted Xing Yuyang to stay in his hometown for three years of mourning, but fearing that distance might prevent her from managing him and causing more trouble, she decided on one year.

On the day of departure, only after Xing Yuyan pleaded bitterly did Emperor Duanmu Chen allow her to leave the palace to send off Miao Family's coffin, under the condition that she acted low-key and didn't make a big deal out of it.

Xing Yuyan returned to the Marquis Zhong Xin Mansion and knelt by Miao Family's coffin, crying to the point of nearly fainting from exhaustion.

Finally, the nanny who was taking care of her pulled her up and told her that she should return to the palace. However, Xing Yuyan had fainted.

Xing Laotai hurriedly called the mansion doctor to come, thinking that Xing Yuyan had fainted from excessive grief, without sending a message to Su Liang.

The doctor saw her pulse and suspected that she was pregnant, but he was not sure. After all, it involved the emperor's offspring and was a matter of great importance.

Upon hearing this, Xing Laotai sent someone to invite the Imperial Physician to the mansion.

After the Imperial Physician examined her and confirmed that she was pregnant, it was only due to the short time that her pulse seemed unstable from her recent emotional turmoil. She needed to rest in bed and recuperate.

Xing Laotai pulled the Imperial Physician aside and asked him if he could determine when she became pregnant.

The Imperial Physician mentioned a rough timeline, which was before the last time Xing Laotai and Miao Family visited the palace. The secret prescription that had killed Miao Family was given to Xing Yuyan at that time.

In other words, when Xing Yuyan had drugged Emperor Duanmu Chen, she was actually already pregnant.

After sending the Imperial Physician away, Xing Laotai felt a terrible headache and lay there dazed and speechless. Seeing this, Xing Yusheng asked Qi Yan to quickly invite Su Liang over.

When Su Liang and Gu Ling arrived at the Xing Family, Xing Yuyan had already been taken back to the palace by Emperor Duanmu Chen's men who had received the news.

Sitting by Xing Laotai's bedside, Su Liang checked her pulse and sighed, "Since the matter has come to this, try not to overthink it. Your son-in-law is at the border, and the household still needs Laotai to take care of it."

Before entering the room, Xing Yusheng had informed Su Liang of the whole story.

Su Liang felt a sense of sorrow in her heart. It was no wonder that Xing Laotai couldn't bear it. Anyone who encountered such a distressing situation multiplied by sudden additional distress would not easily let go of it.

If only the medicine had reached Miao Family a few days later, there would be no problems.

Su Liang gave Xing Laotai a few acupuncture treatments, and her consciousness gradually became clearer. Looking at Su Liang, she shed tears, "I didn't help Yi'er manage this household well..."

Su Liang comforted her a few times, knowing that Xing Laotai was feeling upset at the moment and couldn't listen. She made a bowl of calming soup for her and watched her fall asleep before leaving.

Xing Yusheng sent Su Liang to the door, and he looked much thinner lately. He sighed and said, "My family's troubles always involve you. After today, there should be no more problems."

"You take good care of your grandmother, and don't worry about anything else." Su Liang replied and left in the carriage.

Before she got home, Chang'an came to find her to make another trip to the palace.

This time it was for Xing Yuyan. Although Emperor Duanmu Chen didn't want to see her recently, she was carrying his child in her belly.

"Please take a look at her again. The medicine she took earlier, will it harm the child?" Emperor Duanmu Chen was worried that Xing Yuyan's private consumption of unidentified medicine would harm the child.

Su Liang couldn't tell from her pulse and had previously verified that the medicine was non-toxic.

When Emperor Duanmu Chen learned about Xing Yuyan's pregnancy, he was happy but speechless. She had turned a perfectly fine situation into a mess.

Su Liang checked the prescription for stabilizing the fetus given by the Imperial Physician and found no problems. As for Xing Yuyan's recent grieving mood, she couldn't do anything about it.

After leaving the palace, Su Liang thought about Xing Yuyan's situation and sighed once again, "To cherish one's fortune and not make mistakes is so important."

Chapter 359: 359. Pretending

When the bridal entourage of Liang Country arrived at the capital, it was a rainy day.

In the early hours of the morning, the weather was gloomy, and drizzle began to fall. When Qiao Cong and Cen Man came to look for Su Liang, she was visiting the underground secret chamber built by Old Mu.

More accurately, it should be called a maze.

Qiao Cong walked down the steps step by step without using crutches. His foot injury had healed.

Cen Man's eyes also returned to normal, and she was much more cheerful than before. As she regained her sight after years of blindness, her eyes sparkled with curiosity and she wanted to understand everything around her. Since she had recovered from her long-standing blindness, her eyes that opened revealed a youthfulness that erased the years of aging.

"Third Master, Fourth Master, I'm inside. Try to find me. Be careful not to touch the protrusions on the wall." Su Liang's voice came from inside the chamber, accompanied by two echoes.

"Xiaoliang, I have something to discuss with you." Qiao Cong looked at the three entrances in front of him.

Cen Man chose the entrance on the right and walked in directly, "Why are you in a hurry? If your grandson has a heart, he will come to see you."

Qiao Cong frowned, watching Cen Man's figure disappear into the distance. He stepped into the left entrance. Indeed, he wanted to discuss with Su Liang how to deal with Situ Jing, as he still cared and couldn't let go.

Not long after, Cen Man found Su Liang. She was looking at a tree with Gu Ling.

Not a real tree, but a lifelike mechanical tree made by Old Mu and Gu Ling, which was very beautiful and interesting.

Cen Man walked over with a smile, "You're really clever."

Su Liang turned around and held Cen Man's hand, "Master, you are so beautiful."

A true statement. The graceful elegance that radiated from the rejuvenated Cen Man would make it clear that in her youth, she must have been an incredible beauty.

Cen Man couldn't help but laugh. She looked back but didn't see Qiao Cong's figure and called out, "Old Qiao."

From the right came the sound of Qiao Cong tapping on the wall, "There's no way through."

"Hahahaha!" Old Mu's proud voice sounded, "Little girl, what do you think?"

Su Liang chuckled, "Second Master truly is a Divine Craftsman."

Old Mu was overjoyed. As a descendant of the Mu Family, he had no wild ambitions. He found that this was what he truly loved and what made him feel fulfilled.

"Old three, do you admit defeat?" Old Mu asked, shouting in the direction where Qiao Cong was.

Qiao Cong was annoyed, "Let me out!"

Old Mu chuckled, "Call me big brother first!"

Qiao Cong raised his hand to hit the wall, but Old Mu immediately stopped him, "Stop!"

Gu Ling disappeared from Su Liang's side, and soon managed to save Qiao Cong, who had been trapped in the Heavenly Iron Cage, and brought him over.

Qiao Cong's face was dark, and he squinted his eyes at Old Mu, "Do you dare to try it again?"

Old Mu counterquestioned, "Do you dare try it downstairs?"

Su Liang didn't bother to mediate their quarrels, she had grown used to their daily bickering. She touched a mechanism on the trunk, the tree bloomed, and Cen Man marveled, "It can bloom!"

Yellow flowers bloomed all over the tree, arranged in a delicate and unique manner.

Qiao Cong's attention was also attracted, and he ignored Old Mu, approaching the tree and asking, "Is it just for looks?"

Su Liang explained that the flowers on the tree were hidden weapons, which could be launched in three waves to defend against enemies.

Cen Man praised sincerely, "It's truly ingenious."

Qiao Cong, however, said, "Placing it here seems to have little use."

Old Mu was instantly displeased, "What do you know? Challenge me if you don't believe in its use!"

Su Liang made an objective evaluation, "This is just in case."

It was hard to say when this maze-like secret chamber could come in handy, or if it was just a place for the children to play hide and seek. Zhengzheng already loved playing in it.

But even if it was just for play, it was definitely the most high-end and interesting place.

Su Liang loved it.

Qiao Cong didn't think it was useless, but just thought that the mechanical tree should be moved to Su Liang's room. It could serve as a decoration during normal times, and be used as a secret weapon in case of intrusion.

Old Mu rolled his eyes at the suggestion, "You're the only smart one! My apprentice is already making a better and more powerful one to place there!" He was referring to Gu Ling as his apprentice.

Gu Ling had provided the main idea for the mechanism tree, and he had personally carved those small flowers.

Qiao Cong was speechless.

Cen Man silently patted Qiao Cong's arm as a sign of comfort.

Qiao Cong didn't show any signs of discomfort. He just changed his position to be further from Old Mu but closer to Cen Man.

Su Liang saw this and kept silent with a smile. If they could develop a late-life romance, she would absolutely approve of it.

After visiting Old Mu's maze, Su Liang gave high praise, which made Old Mu very happy. He said his next plan was to turn the entire Su Mansion into a large maze to ensure that trespassers could never leave.

Cen Man smiled and said, "If you need any help, we'll be more than happy to assist."

Old Mu had always treated Cen Man well, and chuckled while nodding, "Alright, I'll come to you when the time comes. Old Three isn't needed. He has to worry about his worrying grandchild, haha!"

Qiao Cong: ...

When they all returned to Yuanming Pavilion, Old Mu disappeared again, saying he was going to Zhengzheng's house for dinner. He had become a frequent guest at the Wan Family.

Qiao Cong brought up the important matter: Situ Jing should have already arrived at Liang Country's temporary residence.

"I want to see how he's doing." Qiao Cong didn't beat around the bush. The reason he had to ask Su Liang's opinion first was that he regarded her as the owner of the house and was afraid she would be unhappy about it.

Su Liang nodded agreeably, "If Third Master wants to go, then go."

"Do you have any medicine that can cause memory loss?" Qiao Cong asked.

Su Liang hesitated, "Does Third Master still insist on erasing his memories?" This had been discussed before.

Qiao Cong shook his head, "I won't force him. If he's willing to do it, I'll give it to him."

Hearing this, Su Liang handed Qiao Cong a medicine bottle, "Then give it a try." But she thought that the probability of Situ Jing willingly taking the medicine was almost negligible.

Qiao Cong put away the medicine bottle and walked to the door. Cen Man handed him an umbrella, "Do you want me to accompany you?"

Qiao Cong took the umbrella and shook his head, "No need."

Liang Country's temporary residence.

When Qiao Cong appeared, Situ Jing was talking to Situ Yao.

Seeing an elder appear, Situ Yao's expression changed, but she heard Situ Jing say, "He's my grandfather."

Situ Yao's face relaxed, she stood up to pay respects, "Greeting to the senior."

Qiao Cong put down the umbrella, glanced at Situ Yao, and shifted his focus to Situ Jing, "I want to talk to you alone."

Situ Yao excused herself and left.

With only Qiao Cong and Situ Jing, the grandfather and grandson, in the room, Qiao Cong looked Situ Jing up and down again, seeing that he looked well and scoffed, "It seems that you're enjoying being a prince."

Situ Jing looked indifferent, shook his head, and said, "If I really enjoyed it, I wouldn't have come to Qian Country."

Qiao Cong's eyes narrowed slightly, "You were being ostracized?"

"I am the intruder." Situ Jing nodded, "But grandfather, don't worry, I will return after the matter is done."

Qiao Cong's face darkened upon hearing this, "Is it that good to be a prince?"

Situ Jing shook his head, "No, I want to be an emperor."

Anger appeared on Qiao Cong's face, "You really are blinded by power."

Situ Jing shook his head again, "I haven't experienced true power yet, so how can I be blinded? I just feel that, to give an explanation for my past experiences, I should strive to sit on that position. Let everyone know that I am not a pawn."

Qiao Cong took out the medicine bottle Su Liang had given him and placed it on the table, "Eat the medicine inside, and you can forget all your worries."

Situ Jing looked at the medicine bottle steadily, "Grandfather, is this Su Liang's intention?"

Qiao Cong shook his head, "It has nothing to do with her, it's my idea."

Situ Jing looked away, "I chose this path myself and will bear the consequences. Grandfather need not worry."

Although he had expected this, Qiao Cong was still filled with disappointment. He stood up with the medicine bottle, "In that case, I have nothing more to say. Take care of yourself." With that, he walked away with big strides.

Situ Jing watched Qiao Cong walk to the doorway, then called out to him, asking, "Is my sister well?"

Qiao Cong snorted coldly, "Take care of yourself!"

As soon as Qiao Cong returned to Su Mansion, he first saw Cen Man.

Cen Man looked at Qiao Cong's face and knew that things had not gone well. She sighed softly, "Just let him go. No matter how much you worry, it won't be of any use."

"You're right! I'm just asking for trouble, being self-righteous and overly concerned!"

Qiao Cong said angrily, "He is seeking his own doom!"

Cen Man frowned, wanting to persuade him again, but Qiao Cong had already walked past her quickly, disappearing around the corner.

Nangong Qian now lived in an enclosed environment arranged by Qiao Cong. Besides her maid Qiuyue, the most people she saw were Qiao Cong and Cen Man. Her days were spent eating, sleeping, and strolling around the garden, living a comfortable and carefree life.

Qi Jun returned from outside and brought a piece of news: Duanmu Chen personally left the palace and went to the relay station to visit Situ Yao.

When Su Liang learned of this, she was quite surprised because it did not resemble Duanmu Chen's usual style. However, Qi Jun had witnessed the imperial carriage going to the relay station.

"The news has spread outside." Qi Jun frowned, "It seems that the emperor is really fond of Princess Yaoguang."

Su Liang's expression was inscrutable, "Perhaps."

In the relay station, Situ Yao was also very surprised by Duanmu Chen's sudden arrival. It had been originally planned that a banquet would be held in the palace tonight to welcome them.

And along with Duanmu Chen was Situ Jing, Situ Yao's elder brother, who had come to visit Qian Country's "guest" the Crown Prince of Yue.

As soon as Situ Yao saw her brother, tears filled her eyes, "Big brother!"

Situ Jing's face was calm, "Little sister, shouldn't you greet Emperor Qian first? He came especially to see you."

Upon hearing this, Situ Yao hurriedly paid her respects to Duanmu Chen, thanking him for his concern and for his care of Situ Jing.

Duanmu Chen smiled warmly, "Princess Yaoguang has traveled far and must be weary. You should get some good rest. I am sorry for the interruption."

Situ Jing arrived upon hearing the news and saw this scene, his eyes slightly narrowed.

Duanmu Chen also saw Situ Jing appear at the door, and their eyes met, making the atmosphere taut in an instant.

Their relationship had originally been that of ruler and subject. At the time when he had promoted “Che Yun”, Duanmu Chen had also made a lot of effort.

“Your Majesty.” Situ Jing bowed.

Duanmu Chen’s expression was indifferent, “Having grown accustomed to seeing the bearded appearance of the second prince of Situ, this is the first time I have seen you like this. Congratulations on returning home.”

This remark sounded mocking, with a hint of provocation. The so-called “returning home” seemed to congratulate Situ Jing on returning to Liang Country’s Royal Family, but at this moment, he was in Qian Country...

Situ Jing politely saluted Situ Jing, “Second Prince.”

“No need to be overly courteous, Jing Cousin.” Situ Jing’s expression remained calm, “I’m relieved to see you safe and sound.”

The three men exchanged words in a hidden battle of wits while Situ Yao maintained a perfect smile on the side.

Duanmu Chen’s gaze occasionally fell on Situ Yao, adding a touch of warmth.

He didn’t stay long at the post house before returning to the palace.

After Duanmu Chen left, Situ Jing also got up and left, leaving the siblings Situ Jing and Situ Yao alone to talk.

“Big brother...” Situ Yao spoke again, tears welling up in her eyes, “I’ve been worried for you all this time.”

Situ Jing let out a deep sigh, “Little sister, I’m sorry. You shouldn’t have had to marry into Qian Country because of me.”

Situ Yao shook her head repeatedly, “Brother, please don’t say that. Even if it wasn’t for you, I was already engaged to Qian Country.”

Situ Jing smiled bitterly.

The truth was, according to the engagement set last year between the two countries and the secret plan laid out by Situ Xie, if things had gone smoothly, Situ Yao wouldn’t have had to marry into Qian Country. The plan was to act after Situ Jing’s return to Liang Country. If Liang Country had successfully formed an alliance with Yin Country to encircle Qian Country, there would have been no need for the marriage alliance at all.

Now, on the surface, the original marriage alliance continued with Duanmu Chen and Situ Yao reuniting their previous relationship, but in fact, this alliance was not the original intention of the Situ Family. Situ Yao’s marriage to Qian Country was indeed for the sake of Situ Jing.

The person Situ Jing hated the most at this moment was undoubtedly Situ Jing. He knew very well how Situ Xie’s plan had failed.

After inquiring about the family's recent situation, Situ Jing brought up Duanmu Chen again, discussing what he had heard while staying in the Qian Country Imperial Palace.

"The Empress' mother was bestowed death by Emperor Qian?" Situ Yao's expression was astonished. On her journey here, she had learned about the death of Lady Marquis Zhong Xin from illness but found it strange, as she had never heard of the Miao Family's health problems. Sudden deaths related to the Royal Family usually had hidden reasons.

Situ Jing nodded, "Poisoned alcohol."

"I thought that Emperor Qian and the Empress were in a harmonious relationship." Situ Yao frowned, "Marquis Zhong Xin is still stationed in Xuanbei City, so why was his wife bestowed death?"

Situ Jing shook his head with a profound gaze, "I'm not sure of the exact cause, but the Empress is definitely involved."

"I didn't expect Emperor Qian to be so ruthless. He seemed like a gentle person." Situ Yao sighed.

Situ Jing scoffed, "Do you think it's possible for the gentlest prince of Qian Country to become emperor at such a young age?"

"Grandfather said that his becoming emperor had a lot to do with Cousin Gu and Sister-in-law. If it weren't for them, the outcome wouldn't be like this today." Situ Yao's expression was serious.

"Indeed." Situ Jing nodded, "But never underestimate him."

"I don't underestimate him." Situ Yao shook her head, "I just don't know how to deal with him. If I upset him, will he do the same to me...?"

"Don't think too much, little sister. Not to mention that you are a Liang Country princess, as I see it, Duanmu Chen truly cares for you. Otherwise, he wouldn't have insisted on you marrying him and coming to see you today. His Empress, Xing Shi, only had the opportunity to enter the palace because of her family background, and she doesn't have his affection." Situ Jing said, "With your talents and looks, neither Empress Xing nor any other consorts in the Imperial Harem can compare."

"Don't say that, brother. Emperor Qian has seen stunning beauties like Sister-in-law, so what kind of beauty hasn't he encountered?" Situ Yao spoke in a soft voice.

Situ Jing instructed Situ Yao to seize the opportunity, while there were not many women in the Qian Country Imperial Harem and the Empress was pregnant, to firmly grasp Duanmu Chen's heart.

That night, Su Liang and Gu Ling did not attend the palace banquet.

All those who participated could clearly sense that Duanmu Chen held Situ Yao in an extraordinary regard.

The next day, Su Liang asked Gu Ling, “Great God, do you think Duanmu Chen has fallen for Situ Yao?”

Gu Ling, busy assembling a new Mechanism Tree, picked up a meticulously carved small flower and precisely clasped it to the “branch” before shaking his head slightly. “Pretending.”

Upon hearing this, Su Liang laughed, “I also think he’s pretending. If he were to truly fall in love, he would hide it and not expose it. He probably likes Situ Yao, but what he’s showing now is all tactics.”

As for the reason, Su Liang speculated that it was because Situ Yao was a foreign princess and Situ Xie’s granddaughter, so Duanmu Chen must have suspected that she had come with some “mission”, displaying extra care for her to see if she would reveal any flaws.

In other words, this was Duanmu Chen’s “sugar-coated shell”, and if Situ Yao were to truly believe that he had fallen for her, focused on her alone, and planned to do something for Liang Country and her grandfather, it would be very dangerous...

Chapter 360: 360. Past Mistakes

The day after the bridal procession from Liang Country arrived at the capital city of Qian Country, Situ Yao paid a visit to her cousin Gu Ling and sister-in-law Su Liang. It was as if all the previous disputes and fights had never occurred.

Situ Jing and Situ Jing were also present. Based on blood relations, both were Gu Ling’s cousins.

When Qiao Cong, who was playing in the underground labyrinth at the Su Mansion with Zhengzheng, heard the news, Situ Jing was already sitting upstairs having tea.

Qiao Cong immediately wanted to go upstairs, but he was held back by Old Mu, “What do you want to do? Didn’t you just say yesterday that you don’t care about him? You really are contradictory! He’s here as the prince of Liang Country, and you’re worried that he’ll be bullied?”

Qiao Cong pushed Old Mu away and frowned, “If Xiaoliang and Xiaogu do bully him, that would be just fine.”

“Why is that?” Zhengzheng popped his head out from a corridor and asked with a chuckle, “Why is it good to be bullied? My aunt is the best person in the world, she never bullies anyone!”

Old Mu laughed heartily, opened his arms to lunge at Zhengzheng as if to catch him, and Zhengzheng ran off again.

Old Mu didn’t chase him, but returned to Qiao Cong, patting his shoulder, “Third, I understand what you mean, but they know what is going on among themselves, you worrying for them is useless!”

Old Mu understood. From Qiao Cong's perspective, he actually hoped that Su Liang and Gu Ling could have a "resolution" with Situ Jing, such as beating him up, paying off old grudges, and accepting him again.

But now, Su Liang and Gu Ling's attitude towards Situ Jing was one of indifference, even oblivious.

Ironically, it was Gu Ling who suggested Situ Jing return to the Liang Country to become a prince, but nobody kept an eye on him, nobody controlled him, and if he didn't want to go back, he could go anywhere he pleased; nobody had any say in it.

Old Mu fully understood Qiao Cong's feelings. After all, that was the bloodline left behind by his daughter, and as an elder, even if their children and grandchildren made mistakes, they ultimately hope for them to have a chance to reform.

Old Mu had a similar attitude towards his disciple, Mu Yu. He wanted to let go but couldn't bear to do so, hoping against hope that he would be alright.

Hearing Zhengzheng shouting for them, Old Mu left Qiao Cong and rushed in with a laugh, "Coming!"

Situ Yao came with a gift that Situ Xie had specifically prepared for Gu Ling and Su Liang, a priceless jade and stone screen. The intricately carved pattern on it was of Wolong Snow Mountain in Yao City.

"This is an ancient object. Grandfather said that your mother-in-law liked this screen very much. The carving of Wolong Mountain on it was your mother-in-law's idea. However, by the time grandfather found a craftsman to complete the carving, your mother-in-law had already passed away." Situ Yao sighed lightly.

"When Crown Prince Situ returns, please relay our thanks to King Yue for his gift," Su Liang said with a smile.

Gu Ling, who was carefully carving little flowers by her side, did not even raise his head. He seemingly ignored his guests, acting as though they were not related to him at all.

Situ Jing nodded, "Alright, I'll pass the message to Grandfather. Once Yaoyao gets married, I and the Second Prince will start our journey back home. In the future, Yaoyao only has two relatives in Qian County, Cousin Gu and his wife, so I'd like to ask the two of you to take good care of her."

Situ Yao looked fervently at Su Liang, only to see her nodding with a smile, "Crown Prince Situ need not worry. Also, please tell King Yue to rest assured. Our Emperor is merciful, and has a deep karmic connection with Princess Yaoguang, so she will live well in Qian Country."

The words were polite, dignified, friendly, and devoid of any emotional attachment.

Not to mention that the person who truly has blood relations with these three "honored guests" is Gu Ling, not Su Liang. Even if Gu Ling were to speak, he wouldn't even bother to be polite.

You could argue that their previous disagreements were due to different stances, but you can't just talk about stances when you want to start a fight, and switch to relationships and feelings at other times. Switching faces as needed is two-faced.

From start to end, Su Liang always had the same attitude towards the people of Gu Ling's so-called maternal family: keep pretending, if you wish.

No matter whether anybody else believes in Situ Xie's care for Gu Ling or not, one thing was certain – Su Liang and Gu Ling never believed it, not even the slightest bit.

Hearing Su Liang's words, Situ Yao lowered her gaze, as Situ Jing sighed but said nothing further. Even if there hadn't been any previous incident, Su Liang and Gu Ling would still have maintained this attitude, let alone now?

However, it should be noted that the incident of Su Liang's capture wasn't part of Situ Xie's plan and was caused by Situ Jing.

Situ Jing looked at Situ Jing, "Second Prince, aren't you going to visit your grandfather and younger sister?"

Situ Xie had instructed Situ Jing to try his best to bring Qiao Cong to Liang Country.

Situ Jing put down his teacup and looked at Su Liang, "I presume grandfather wouldn't want to see me. May I ask if I can see my sister?"

"You should ask your grandfather about this matter first." Su Liang remained calm. Who could meet Nangong Qian would be decided by her guardian, Qiao Cong.

"Is grandfather in?" Situ Jing asked.

"Wait a moment, he'll be here." Su Liang said.

Before long, Qiao Cong came out from the underground secret room carrying Zhengzheng, Old Mu was beside him. Old Mu was also holding one of Zhengzheng's little hands, swinging it as if they were a warm and harmonious family of three...

Among Su Liang's four masters, Cen Man had the best temperament. Among the three old men, Old Mu had the best temperament and the highest emotional quotient. It seemed like he was always arguing with Qiao Cong, but in fact, they were on good terms. Ever since Mu Yu learned from his mistakes and stopped being troublesome, Old Mu had not had to worry, he had become much calmer.

The smile on Qiao Cong's face disappeared when he saw Situ Jing.

Chaozheng, who was lying on Qiao Cong's back, curiously looked at the three guests, one of them seemed familiar so he asked, "Uncle, have we met before?"

The one being questioned was Situ Jing.

Back when he was known as Che Yun, he had come to the capital to handle official business with Lian Shun. At that time, he had a good relationship with Su Liang and had even held Zhengzheng.

However, Zhengzheng found him somewhat familiar but wasn't quite sure, because Situ Jing's appearance and demeanor both changed after he shaved his beard.

Situ Jing nodded, "We've met. I've even held you before."

Zhengzheng wondered, "Who are you, uncle? Are you in disguise?" He had seen Gu Ling's guise-changing abilities before.

Situ Jing did not shy away from his previous identity as Che Yun, he covered the lower half of his face with both hands, “Big beard. Remember now?”

Zhengzheng exclaimed in realization, “Uncle Cai Beibei!”

Situ Jing dropped his hands, revealing a soft smile, “It’s me.” The nickname, Cai Beibei, was coined by Lian Shun.

Qiao Cong squinted his eyes, watching the interaction between Situ Jing and Zhengzheng. He brought Zhengzheng in front of him, put him down, and Zhengzheng ran towards Situ Jing, “Uncle Beibei, you look much better without a beard!”

As Situ Jing hugged Zhengzheng, he subconsciously glanced towards Su Liang and Gu Ling.

Just then, Gu Ling looked up, gave him a cold look, and lowered his head again, continuing to carve.

Su Liang didn’t think much of it, as children don’t understand the twists and turns among the adults, so it’s fine as long as Zhengzheng is happy.

Situ Jing lifted up Zhengzheng and sat him on his lap. Zhengzheng said giggling, “Grandpa Qiu said he hopes his grandson gets bullied, who is his grandson?”

Qiao Cong: ...

Old Mu laughs heartily and exits the room.

A voice came from behind Zhengzheng, “It’s me.”

Zhengzheng turned around in surprise, “Uncle Beibei, it’s you! Why does grandpa Qiu hope you get bullied? How strange.”

Qiao Cong exited the room without uttering a word.

Su Liang quietly smiled. She knew what Zhengzheng was saying, and so did Situ Jing.

Situ Yao felt the atmosphere was somewhat weird, so she greeted Zhengzheng and gave him a beautiful jade bell.

Zhengzheng thanked Situ Yao, then Situ Jing picked him up and headed out, “I’m going to chat with grandpa, you all carry on.”

“Put Zhengzheng down.” Gu Ling finally spoke up.

Situ Jing pretended not to hear and with a quick stride, he disappeared from the doorway.

Zhengzheng’s laughter came from outside, “Uncle Beibei, run fast! My handsome uncle wants to beat you!”

Seeing the attitudes of Gu Ling and Su Liang, the siblings Situ Jing and Situ Yao had nothing to say, so they soon got up to leave, without waiting for Situ Jing.

Su Liang got Qi Jun to send them off, without saying anything in return.

When only two were left, Gu Ling finally put down the piece of wood he was working on. The beautifully carved wooden box on the nearby table was nearly full of exquisite wooden flowers.

“Great God, do you think Situ Yao is smart?” Su Liang asked.

They've interacted more than once. Situ Yao hadn't done anything to upset Su Liang and appeared perfectly noble and elegant.

But there was another possibility that she was perfectly pretentious.

Gu Ling shook his head, "It doesn't concern us." If his mother were alive, perhaps she would be concerned about these maternal relatives. But his mother was long gone, Gu Ling wouldn't treat the Situ family as relatives because of Situ Ning. That would be foolish and dangerous for him.

If Situ Xie truly loved and cared for Situ Yao, he should not have allowed her to come for this marriage. Just like when Situ Ning married, although she had chosen her own husband, the far-off marriage was agreed to by Situ Xie. He was well aware of the great risks.

Discussing blood ties with a group of people who spoke pleasantly but did not place much importance on blood relations, it was meaningless.

"I hope she knows what's best for her." Su Liang sighed lightly.

Meanwhile, Situ Jing found Qiao Cong and proposed to visit Nangong Qian.

Qiao Cong naturally didn't stop him, allowing him to leave.

Zhengzheng asked Qiao Cong, "Does Grandpa Qiu have a bad relationship with Uncle Beibei?"

Qiao Cong nodded, "Very bad."

"Why?" asked Zhengzheng.

Qiao Cong was quiet for a moment before he replied, "He's naughty."

Zhengzheng murmured, "Such a big man, Grandpa Qiu still treats him like a kid? I'm not a kid anymore."

Qiao Cong squinted his eyes, "Zhengzheng is very right."

Situ Jing visited Nangong Qian, her complexion was better than when he last left, showing no signs of illness and she seemed to have gained some weight, she didn't look skin and bones as before.

Nangong Qian was pleasantly surprised to see Situ Jing. She grabbed his arm and showed him the flowers she planted herself.

"Very beautiful." Situ Jing looked at the red Peonies before him, nodding subtly.

Nangong Qian said with a smile, "Grandpa said he'll teach me kung fu in a few more days! I'm afraid I can't learn it. Grandpa watches over me every day, making me walk three large laps in the mansion daily. It was exhausting at first but it's much better now."

Situ Jing nodded, "That's a good thing. Are you allowed to go out?"

"Yes, I am!" Nangong Qian nodded, "Grandpa takes me to the Huguo Temple to pray and to the lake for a boat ride, we even go to dine at Zhengzheng's restaurant. I often go out."

Qiuyue Cong looked at Nangong Qian strictly but had not confined her. She was free to venture out with Qiuyue Cong always by her side for her protection.

“Grandma Cen’s eyes were cured by Master Su, have you seen her? She looks much younger than before. Master Su’s medical skills are truly remarkable!” Nangong Qian mentioned Su Liang in awe.

Situ Jing looked at Nangong Qian calmly, unable to see any traces of the woman who once desired Gu Ling on her.

Honestly, Situ Jing had no particular fondness for Nangong Qian. They were half-siblings born to the same mother, but they did not grow up together. In fact, they only met this year. At first, Situ Jing did not like her personality.

“What are you looking at, Brother?” Nangong Qian was puzzled.

“The medicine seems to be working very well.” Situ Jing averted his gaze.

Nangong Qian assumed Situ Jing was talking about the medicine Su Liang prescribed for her and agreed, “Yes, the medicine I take nowadays is less in quantity and isn’t bitter anymore. Then, Master Su made me some dietary prescriptions. Some of the medicinal dishes taste very good. Qiuyue’s culinary skills are also getting much better. Brother, will you stay for dinner? Or will you be leaving?”

Situ Jing nodded, “I will leave in a few days.”

Nangong Qian appeared visibly disappointed, “Why must you leave? Can’t you stay? I want to live with grandpa and brother.”

Situ Jing’s expression was indifferent, “I am not welcome here.”

Nangong Qian frowned, “We can move out. Buy a new mansion, it doesn’t need to be big, the three of us with Qiuyue can live together. It would be even better if Grandma Cen lived with us.”

Situ Jing was taken aback, “Did grandpa teach you to say that?”

Nangong Qian bowed her head, “No, I thought of it myself. I want to live with brother, a family should live together...”

Upon hearing the phrase “a family,” an image of his childhood with his adoptive parents at the Che family mansion in Xuanbei City flashed through Situ Jing’s mind...

Seeing Situ Jing change his expression, Nangong Qian looked slightly uneasy, “Did I make you angry, Brother? Grandpa truly didn’t teach me to say that.”

“No,” Situ Jing shook his head, “I just remembered something that I need to do. Can I come for dinner tomorrow instead?”

Nangong Qian nodded hurriedly, “Sure! I’ll have Qiuyue prepare more delicious food. You must come tomorrow, Brother.”

“Okay.” Situ Jing raised his hand, hesitated for a moment, then gently ruffled Nangong Qian’s hair. He had seen Gu Ling do this to Su Liang before and thought it was a pretty good gesture.

Watching Situ Jing leave, Nangong Qian turned around to find Qiuyue Cong holding Zhengzheng, seemingly dropping in from nowhere.

“Did you tell him what we discussed?” Qiuyue Cong asked.

Nangong Qian nodded with a small sigh, “Brother seemed a little upset and didn’t agree to stay. He said he had something to do and left, but promised to come for dinner tomorrow.”

Qiuyue Cong snorted, “We’ll see about that tomorrow, he may not come.”

However, afterward, Qiuyue Cong made plans with Zhengzheng to go fishing tomorrow, saying he felt like eating fish. Qiuyue’s fish-cooking skills, learned from Su Liang, were quite good indeed.

When Zhengzheng asked why they weren’t going fishing today so they could eat the fish today, Qiuyue Cong simply stated that he wanted to eat fish tomorrow.

Duanmu Chen received a report of Situ Jing seeking an audience with some surprise, unclear as to his purpose.

Upon meeting, Situ Jing got straight to the point, “I heard that my adoptive parents are still in the Heavenly Prison, I want to see them.”

Duanmu Chen gave a dry laugh, “I thought you might have forgotten about those two. If you hadn’t brought it up, they would have been executed in a few days.”

The reason the couple was still alive was intentionally to deal with Situ Jing – if he cared for them that is.

Duanmu Chen readily agreed and had Chang’an accompany Situ Jing to the Heavenly Prison. However, it was only for a prison visit. Situ Jing made no other requests.

The weather was fine the next day after a rainfall. The sun was delightful and bright.

However, the Heavenly Prison seemed to be cut off from the outside world by towering walls, remaining an eerily gloomy and dark place.

Situ Jing saw his adoptive parents, Che Father and Che Mother, who were now emaciated and huddled in a corner with dull eyes. The foul smell of excrement lingered in the air.

“Does Prince Situ wish to enter?” Chang’an asked.

Situ Jing nodded and Chang’an had the guards unlock the large rusty iron lock on the prison door.

Chang’an didn’t leave and merely stood outside. Situ Jing didn’t care and walked straight in, stopping in front of Che Mother, crouching down, and putting his hand on her sunken shoulder.

Che Mother’s body shivered slightly. She looked straight at Situ Jing, and her dull eyes suddenly lit up, “Yun, is that you? Yun, have you come back?” She threw herself into Situ Jing’s arms, clutching tightly onto his shirt collar and crying loudly, “You don’t know how much your mother has missed you... I’ve missed you so much!”

Chang’an quietly watched this scene, his gaze shifting towards Che Father. He slowly lifted his head, his eyes cold as ice, like a knife aimed at Situ Jing’s back.

Chang’an withdrew his gaze, looking towards the straw mat in the cell opposite. There were dried blood stains on it, he remembered the spy sent by Mu Ya to harm Su Liang was once locked there.

Hearing the incessant noises of Che's mother laughing and crying and speaking incoherently behind him, Chang'an suspected she had gone mad, unable to distinguish reality from fantasy. She mistook Situ Jing for her eldest son taken away by Situ Xie and didn't grow up under their care, she thought he was the real Che Yun and even mentioned her little son, Che Xiao, claiming he was still at home waiting for them.

However, the real Che Yun and Che Xiao had already died.

Situ Jing let Che's mother hold onto him, and didn't correct her "mistake".

He heard the sound of chains gradually approaching. He knew Che's father was behind him.

But Situ Jing did not react, only knelt on the ground, holding the crying Che's mother, gently patting her back.

When Chang'an heard the distinct sound of the chains clashing and turned around again, his expression changed. He saw Che's father using the chain that bound his hands to strangle Situ Jing's neck!

Che's father's messy hair didn't cover the protruding veins; thus, it could be seen that he was using all his strength.

Chang'an knew that Situ Jing was very strong and that he wouldn't let anything happen, so he didn't intend to go in.

However, Situ Jing didn't resist at all, allowing the chain to strangle his neck and leaned back onto the ground.

Che's mother just stared dazedly, murmuring "Yun'er" and watching Che's father strangle Situ Jing to death, she did nothing. Suddenly, she began to laugh and clapped her hands, "Quick! Quick! Our Yun'er is waiting!"

Her previously confused speech suddenly became clear.

Chang'an burst into the slightly ajar prison door and targeted Che's father with a knife-hand strike to the back of his neck with substantial force, but he wasn't able to knock him out in one go. It took three hits to knock Che's father down.

Chang'an pulled the chain from Che's father's hands off Situ Jing's neck, seeing a deep red mark with blood seeping out.

"Second Prince Situ! Second Prince Situ!" Chang'an felt a sinking feeling and checked Situ Jing's breath.

Situ Jing coughed and opened his eyes, slowly sat up, and looked at Che's mother.

Che's mother was also looking at him. She wasn't laughing anymore. There was only hatred in her eyes, the kind of hatred that would make her want to strangle Situ Jing herself if she could.

At this moment, Situ Jing realized that the couple must know that their two sons were dead. Perhaps they dreamt it, or guessed it, or perhaps they knew there were no other possibilities.

Therefore, they were waiting for Situ Jing here. He might not come, but if he comes, his foster parents had planned a performance to take revenge on him by killing him.

The funny thing is, Che's mother had truly deceived him. At the time, he even wished: If he were their biological son, how nice it would be...

"Second Prince Situ, are you alright?" Chang'an's voice interrupted Situ Jing's thoughts.

"I'm fine." Situ Jing stood up, looked back at Che's mother, opened his mouth but didn't say anything, and walked out with a downcast gaze.

Behind him, the cry of Che's mother echoed, but Situ Jing never looked back.

Duanmu Chen saw Situ Jing enter the palace again and thought he was coming to plead for mercy, trying to save his foster parents.

However, when Situ Jing started speaking, he said, "Can Emperor Qian grant them a swift end and let them depart sooner?"

Duanmu Chen was surprised, "Wait for the execution."

Situ Jing shook his head, "Living in such pain, they can reunite with their sons when they die."

Duanmu Chen said indifferently, "They don't want to die, or they would have committed suicide long ago."

Situ Jing suddenly laughed, a laugh that didn't reach his eyes, "They have lived till today just to kill me, no other thoughts. If Emperor Qian feels troubled, just forget it."

Duanmu Chen sighed lightly, "It's not a trouble. If Second Prince Situ insists, I will arrange it."

"Thank you." Situ Jing stood up and bid farewell, walked to the door, suddenly turned around and asked Duanmu Chen, "Do you really like Situ Yao that much?"

Duanmu Chen smiled warmly, "Yes."

Situ Jing didn't say anything else and left.

After asking about Situ Jing's visit to the Heavenly Prison, Duanmu Chen asked Chang'an to find Su Liang and tell her everything about this matter.

That night before going to bed, Su Liang brought up Situ Jing again, "Great God, there's something we seem to have been overlooking."

While Gu Ling was listening to the movement of the little god on Su Liang's body, he lifted his head upon hearing this, "What is it?"

"Do you remember when we were in Nanshan City? You saw black fog on Situ Jing's brow. At that time, we both thought he was poisoned to death. I saved him, thinking it completed the mission." Su Liang frowned, "But later on, it was proven that it was actually him trying to kill someone he wasn't supposed to."

Gu Ling's face turned slightly serious as Su Liang continued, "The problem is, if we can see it, it means we were supposed to stop it. Failure to prevent it, doesn't it negate heaven's will? If we had stopped him from killing that person at that time, we could have found out about his secret earlier. Many things that happened after that would have been different."

Gu Ling frowned, "Is it my fault for his present situation?"

"Ours." Su Liang corrected him, "In theory, what he did were his own choices, so he should bear the consequences. But considering your special ability, that time was indeed our mistake. I worry this mistake will bring worse consequences. I'm just thinking, maybe, our attitude towards Situ Jing should be clearer and more proactive. If he can't be killed, he should be prevented from straying further and further on the wrong path, becoming a madman who poses a threat to us in the future."