

Three-Time 361

Chapter 361: 361. Dare or not?

When Gu Ling and Su Liang first met, they exchanged their greatest secrets, Gu Ling's special ability and Su Liang's time-traveling adventure.

At that time, they discussed why Gu Ling should help strangers when he sees the black fog. He is inherently kind, but his kindness is not proactive. Most of the time, he wishes to have nothing to do with outsiders.

He regarded the special ability given to him by heaven as a mission to be fulfilled, not wanting it to disappear due to his own passivity. Because perhaps, after saving one hundred strangers, he would have the chance to save those he cares about, which would be worth it.

Gu Ling initially asked Su Liang to stay by his side to help him with the "missions." Indeed, they rescued some people together.

If mistakes were made, Gu Ling had made them in his childhood when his abilities were limited. Since obtaining high-level martial arts, he has successfully intervened in the lives of those with black fog in their brows.

However, the only exception was Situ Jing.

By coincidence, Situ Jing had been poisoned, and at the time, he had disguised himself as one of their people. They didn't know he was a spy, and he had poison as part of a ruse. He had the antidote in his hand and didn't need Su Liang and Gu Ling to save him.

What Gu Ling should have done was to stop Situ Jing from killing the servant who had inadvertently overheard the secret.

"But what about General Yuan?" Gu Ling asked Su Liang after a moment of silence.

During that incident, three people died. One was a servant killed by Situ Jing to silence them, another was General Yuan, and the last was Fan Tong, the killer of General Yuan.

In fact, whether Situ Jing was in Jiaye City or not, and even if he hadn't been there, it would not have affected Situ Xie's plan. Neither of them needed him to take action.

Su Liang sighed, "Situ Xie is the root of all evils. Situ Jing should pay for what he has done, but the price may be in the form of observing penance."

It was because Situ Jing intervened in the Jiaye City incident, and his identity was special, not a simple spy. He changed the timing of the attack for Lian Shun's family, knowing what the consequences would be. This subtle change ultimately led to Situ Xie's major conspiracy falling through, forcing him to marry off his granddaughter to Emperor Qian and save his grandson.

Indeed, it can be said that Situ Jing should have been honest with Lian Shun and Su Liang from the beginning and chosen the right path. However, one cannot ignore the fact that he had been brainwashed and coerced by Situ Xie since childhood and mentally abused by the Che family's parents. His so-called master, Nangong Lin, had also been leading him astray.

When Situ Jing defended himself, he said that no one had experienced what he had gone through, and no one could empathize with him.

That was indeed true.

Su Liang believed that Situ Jing had feelings for the Che parents, especially their mother.

He also had feelings for Lian Shun, even though he made the wrong choice, but this cannot be denied.

People are not extreme, not just black and white. Even now, Situ Jing's human side and his struggle can still be seen.

Qiao Cong has never given up on his grandson Situ Jing, and Su Liang began to review everything she knew about Situ Jing after witnessing the events in the Heavenly Prison today.

Putting aside all emotional matters and looking at it from a practical and long-term perspective, Su Liang also felt that this could not continue.

As it was a mistake, it should be corrected as soon as possible.

Gu Ling sighed softly, "I have a prejudice against him." As Su Liang's lover, Gu Ling is sensitive to other men who admire Su Liang. He knows that Situ Jing is jealous of him mainly because of Su Liang.

So Gu Ling did not want to see Situ Jing and did not consider the matter of Nanshan City.

Gu Ling is a very simple and straightforward person, and he likes people like that, not just Su Liang, but also Lian Shun, as well as Xing Yusheng who seemed to have no special abilities.

However, he admitted that he despised Situ Jing, whose forehead seemed to read, "I'm the most miserable, why can't you understand me?"

Still, Gu Ling acknowledged that Situ Jing's past was indeed miserable. It was more miserable than his own, though he had a bad father. But he was not controlled by anyone, and he lived a simple but free life alone most of the time. He didn't have emotional burdens, while Situ Jing had to carry them as he grew up.

"So, we've reached an agreement?" Su Liang smiled, "I'll talk to him tomorrow and see what he's really thinking."

Gu Ling shook his head, "I'll talk to him."

Su Liang raised an eyebrow, "Request to listen in."

Gu Ling nodded, "Not allowed to show yourself."

"Understood." Su Liang chuckled, "Did our little god grow up today?"

A little bit." Gu Ling gestured with her hand.

It rained in the middle of the night and it hadn't stopped by the early morning.

Chang'an came to the Liang Country Inn and told Situ Jing that his foster parents had died last night and asked how he would like their bodies to be handled.

Situ Jing quietly listened while holding his teacup, and didn't immediately speak, gazing at the rain outside through the window. Last night, he had dreamt about his teenage years again. His foster father was very strict with him, claiming it was for his own good, while his foster mother felt sorry for him being arranged to be a spy at such a young age, always secretly comforting him behind his foster father's back, telling him it would be fine, so long as he followed the orders of his master, everything would be alright.

Ever since he was a child, Situ Jing had always been surrounded by these words "As long as you listen, everything will be fine" ... Everyone who knew he was Situ Jing said this phrase to him – Situ Xie, Nangong Lin, his foster parents, those responsible for conveying Situ Xie's intentions...

Chang'an patiently waited, seeing the grief in Situ Jing's eyes, but it quickly vanished.

"It's for the best." Situ Jing finally spoke, trying to appear relaxed, but the tear at the corner of his eye betrayed him. "They've finally reunited as a family, which is good."

That's how he thought of it, asking Duanmu Chen to give them a quick and painless death to send them on their way. But when the moment truly came to articulate it, it still felt unbearable. He thought he could face this matter with ease, but in fact, he had been avoiding facing his foster parents, fearing their fate.

After all, it was they who had raised him and provided the most companionship. They were the people he had called his mother and father for twenty years. Even though he was very disappointed in them and felt they weren't kind enough, he still found himself understanding their grief of losing their child after feeling disappointed...

This complex and contradicting struggle accompanied him in the past, and now it seemed as if he could finally break free. However, in that instant, the pain was almost too overwhelming for him to catch his breath.

"Prince Situ, please accept my condolences." Chang'an said, "The Emperor asked me to inquire about how you would like to have the bodies of those two people handled?"

After another moment of silence, Situ Jing said, "Please bring them to me."

Chang'an hesitated for a moment, "Bring them to the inn?"

Situ Jing nodded.

"Alright." Chang'an complied and quickly excused himself to leave.

Not long after, the bodies of his foster parents were brought to the Liang Country Inn.

While waiting for the bodies to be delivered, Situ Jing sent his subordinates to buy two coffins in the city and bring them back.

When Situ Jing received the news, the coffins and the bodies had just entered the gate of the inn one after another.

"Second Prince, what is this for?" Situ Jing smelled a strong stench, which was the smell that came from the Heavenly Prison.

Duanmu Chen had instructed Chang'an to follow Situ Jing's orders but that didn't include helping with the cleanup of the bodies.

"These are my foster parents." Situ Jing said, gesturing for the coffins and bodies to be carried into the inn's main hall.

Situ Jing forcefully suppressed his anger, "Second Prince, they are criminals sentenced to death by Qian Country."

If a prince from Liang Country were to publicly hold a funeral for his foster parents, it would be a slap in the face of the Liang royal family! It would let the world know that the Liang royal family sent their prince to Qian Country as a spy!

Although it wasn't a secret, Situ Jing's actions in paying tribute to his foster parents would make the Liang royal family a laughing stock to the people of Qian Country, not to mention that Duanmu Chen's series of actions in collaboration with Situ Jing seemed kind, but in reality, they were all mocking the Liang royal family.

Upon hearing Situ Jing's words, Situ Jing turned around and walked towards him.

Both were holding umbrellas, which collided and were thrown away by Situ Jing, who also knocked the umbrella out of Situ Jing's hand, approached, placed his hand on Situ Jing's shoulder, and looked at him with icy eyes, "What did you say? Say it again?"

Situ Jing's heart sank! This was Situ Jing's true face! He never considered himself a member of the Situ Family! He had already messed up their plans earlier, and now he was flaunting his status and disregarding their feelings! Situ Xie had raised a tiger for trouble!

But on the surface, Situ Jing dared not confront Situ Jing. Although they were both Situ Xie's grandsons, it was a pity that Situ Xie was not the emperor, but Situ Jing's own father was.

"Second Prince, please calm down. I didn't mean anything by it, I'm just worried about why Emperor Qian agreed so easily. Maybe he has some kind of plot." Situ Jing lowered his voice, "If the Emperor finds out that the Second Prince cares so much about his foster parents, he might become unhappy."

"For my sake?" Situ Jing sneered and whispered in Situ Jing's ear, "Actually, you really hate me and wish to tear me apart, don't you? I know. It was my fault that you were caught and that your sister had to marry me. You hate me to death, but you still have to bow down to me. It must be very uncomfortable, right?"

Situ Jing felt the strength of Situ Jing's hand pressing down on his shoulder, and he was almost unable to stand. He lowered his head and said, "Second Prince, you have misunderstood, I didn't think like that."

Situ Jing suddenly released Situ Jing, and the two stood face to face in the rain. Situ Yao rushed over looking worried, "Second Prince, Brother, please come inside quickly. You'll catch a cold standing in the rain."

Situ Jing didn't pay her any heed but just suddenly laughed. His smile made the rainwater flow down his face in a crooked path from the corner of his mouth, like a stream that suddenly changed course when encountering an obstacle.

He looked at Situ Jing and said coldly, "It was our good grandfather who planned everything, and we are both just pawns. Do you think it's all my fault that I didn't follow his wishes? Indeed, it was my fault. I caused you to be captured, and I caused your sister to marry me. Do you want to hit me if you don't accept it?"

Situ Jing calmed down and said, "I understand that Second Prince is upset about the matter of his foster parents, but please don't say such things. We are family, we should stand together."

"Family?" Situ Jing scoffed, "I'll have to ask our good grandfather when I go back. With so many grandchildren, why did he pick me to be a spy? Yet, he said he valued me the most and spent the most effort on raising me. I plan to take the remains of my foster parents back to Liang Country and give our grandfather a chance to pay tribute to their sacrifices for the great cause of Liang Country. They deserve it, don't you think?"

Situ Jing frowned, "Second Prince, please calm down."

"You don't agree?" Situ Jing chuckled coldly and turned around, "That's a good idea, so let's do it."

Looking at the bodies of his foster parents, Situ Jing suddenly felt that he had found the meaning of life again. It was to destroy everything that Situ Xie cared about, making Situ Xie feel as miserable as the people whose lives he had ruined.

Situ Yao wiped the wet hair of Situ Jing, looking uneasy, "Brother, what on earth does Second Prince want to do?"

Situ Jing's face darkened, "He's a madman! When we go back, I must tell our grandfather that if we don't get rid of this madman quickly, he will ruin Liang Country!"

Situ Yao looked at the door and lowered her voice, "Brother, be careful what you say, don't let him hear you. Speaking of which," she sighed, "Little brother told our grandfather about this and our grandfather told me that if Second Prince really goes mad, it might not necessarily be a bad thing. His biggest problem right now is that he still harbors feelings for some people in Qian Country, especially those in his cousin's family. He doesn't know what he wants. Someone like him could open up a whole new world for Liang Country, as long as he can let go of emotions. Brother, you might not be happy to hear this, but grandfather said that the people of the Situ Family have become too complacent and lack the wisdom and courage necessary. He doesn't want to give up on Second Prince because he is the one our grandfather raised to break the stalemate for the Situ Family."

Situ Jing frowned, "So what do we count for?"

Situ Yao looked serious, "Brother, don't think like that. Just because grandfather wants the Second Prince to break the stalemate doesn't mean he favors the Second Prince as the ultimate king."

Situ Jing's eyes flickered slightly, "But will grandfather's plan really succeed? I think when Situ Jing goes mad, he will bring ruin to Liang Country first."

Situ Yao shook her head, “Grandfather will surely find a way. This time, he let him come here to see how happy Gu Ling and Su Liang are living their life. If he wants Su Liang, the only way is to get the world first.”

“Does he really think so highly of Su Liang? Yesterday, I saw him looking at Gu Ling more than Su Liang.” Situ Jing snorted coldly.

Situ Yao sighed softly, “Of course he likes Su Liang, but as a loser, he doesn’t want to show it.”

“What if Su Liang tries to win him over again?” Situ Jing frowned.

Situ Yao shook her head with a smile, “That’s absolutely impossible. Grandfather said that given Su Liang and Gu Ling’s characters, they would never give Situ Jing another chance. And this is our opportunity.”

When Situ Jing changed his clothes and asked his subordinates what Situ Jing was doing, he learned that someone from Su Mansion had just come — Qi Jun, Su Liang’s attendant, had taken Situ Jing away.

Situ Jing’s face changed, “Are you sure it’s Su Liang’s attendant who came?”

The subordinate nodded, “Yes, this servant has seen that man.”

It was not Qiao Cong who came, but instead Su Liang sent someone to find Situ Jing, what in the world were they trying to do...

Su Mansion.

The rain was getting heavier, and Qiao Cong and Zhengzheng’s fishing plans were thwarted. Qiao Cong went out and wandered around the city for a long time before he could buy two fat fish.

When Qiao Cong returned to the entrance of Su Mansion, holding an umbrella in one hand and two struggling fish in the other, he saw Situ Jing and Qi Jun not far away.

Qiao Cong frowned and waited for them to come over, then asked Situ Jing, “Why did you come so early? Did you meet up halfway?”

Qi Jun smiled, “Senior Qiao, our Master has something to discuss with Second Prince Situ.”

Qiao Cong was first stunned, then suddenly overjoyed, “Really? Then go quickly!” Afterward, he frowned again, squinting his eyes and staring at Situ Jing, “You haven’t done anything bad these two days, have you?”

Situ Jing’s expression was indifferent, “Does killing my foster parents count?”

Qiao Cong really wanted to smash the fish in his hand on Situ Jing’s face, thinking that Su Liang was planning to have a good talk with Situ Jing again and give him a chance to reform himself.

However, watching Qi Jun and Situ Jing enter, Qiao Cong realized that would Su Liang care about the lives of the couple from the Che Family? Their ancestors were spies of Liang Country all along and were bound to die. Situ Jing just sent them on their way a little earlier, relieving them.

Thinking of this, Qiao Cong became hopeful again.

When Situ Jing asked Qi Jun what was going on, Qi Jun said he didn’t know.

When they reached the vicinity of Yuanming Pavilion, they did not go in. Instead, Qi Jun led Situ Jing around half the lake to a pavilion and said, "Second Prince Situ, please."

Situ Jing thought it was Su Liang who wanted to see him, but in the pavilion, only Gu Ling was seated, still carving small flowers...

Situ Jing entered the pavilion, closed his umbrella, put it aside, and sat down opposite Gu Ling, his face expressionless, "What do you want me to do? Speak directly." It was Gu Ling who initially proposed that he return to the royal family of Liang Country.

Situ Jing believed that Gu Ling must want to order him to do something so he called him here.

Gu Ling ignored him, continued to carve the small flower in his hand, and then raised his head to ask Situ Jing, "Does it look good?"

Situ Jing frowned, looking at the uncolored woodcarving flower in Gu Ling's hand, "Speak up if you have something to say!"

"Stay in Qian Country instead of going back to Liang Country, serve as a military commander, and atone for your sins through meritorious service. Dare or not?" Gu Ling's expression was indifferent.

Chapter 362: 362. Actually, I want to hit him.

The rain grew heavier, and the wind blew the rain into the pavilion, hitting Situ Jing's face.

The sound of the wind and rain, together with the sound of the lake in the storm, made him temporarily unsure whether the sentence he just heard was true.

"What did you say?" Situ Jing stared intently at Gu Ling and asked.

Gu Ling saw a figure moving behind a large tree not far away, without an umbrella, undoubtedly soaked through. He couldn't see the person clearly, but he saw a fish, head up and tail down, swaying and jumping in mid-air...

"Oh," Gu Ling said indifferently, "Do you dare or not?"

He repeated what he said earlier, but not entirely.

Situ Jing's heart sank and then rose suddenly. His fists clenched subconsciously, "Are you... playing a joke on me?"

Gu Ling withdrew his gaze, frowning slightly, "Do you think I am very idle?"

"Let me stay in Qian Country? As before, be a military commander, lead soldiers to fight for Qian Country?" Situ Jing still dared not believe what Gu Ling had just said and asked again.

Gu Ling didn't say anything unpleasant, in fact, he didn't say anything at all, just nodding his head to confirm.

“Why?” Situ Jing stared fiercely into Gu Ling’s eyes, seemingly trying to glimpse some bizarre conspiracy in this unexpected and shocking incident.

“Because,” Gu Ling pondered, looking at the space between Situ Jing’s eyebrows, “you are too impulsive and emotional. You are not suitable to be a spy.”

The truth. Situ Jing’s problem lies here. He failed as a spy for Liang Country for this reason, and if he became a spy for Qian Country, it would still be the same. Having been manipulated for many years, he struggled and wavered in contradictions, lost and confused between emotions and rationality. A moment’s lapse could completely destroy the “Cai Beibei” with a conscience in his heart.

Situ Xie was waiting for Situ Jing to be reborn after destruction, becoming the chess piece he truly desired.

Meanwhile, Su Liang and Gu Ling decided to pull him out of the quagmire and guide him back to the right path.

The reason they could not let Situ Jing return to Liang Country was not that they could not control him, but that he could not control himself. In the environment in which the Liang Country’s Royal Family schemed and fought each other, it was unclear if he could resist the temptation after constant vicious attacks disguised as blood ties and family affection. In fact, it had already begun.

Situ Jing’s strength was great, and his intelligence was also high, otherwise, Situ Xie would not be reluctant to give him up until now. However, the environment, the people around him, the things he did, and his life goals were all very important to him.

Gu Ling’s assessment made Situ Jing somewhat annoyed, but after slightly calming down, he knew that every word Gu Ling said was correct.

Just as Gu Ling was prejudiced against Situ Jing, Situ Jing didn’t like him either, so his emotions were more easily affected when facing him.

At this moment, Situ Jing was very clear that he was not suitable for returning to Liang Country. The key point was: did Gu Ling and Su Liang really intend to let him stay? Allow him to become a Qian Country citizen? Even trust him to continue as a military commander? Let him lead soldiers in battles? As if he had never been Situ Xie’s grandson, Situ Han’s son; as if his past as a spy was just a dream; as if the ridiculous and pathetic wish he had yesterday in Cai Beibei’s mother’s embrace, hoping that he was really a child of the Che Family, had suddenly come true, even better than that!

“You trust me? I don’t believe it.” Situ Jing couldn’t believe it.

Gu Ling’s expression was somewhat impatient, “I asked if you dare or not?”

“I...” Situ Jing almost blurted out and stopped, feeling that Gu Ling was using reverse psychology on him, but he was indeed “hit” by the words and wanted to save face. He pulled a corner of his mouth and smiled awkwardly, “If you dare, why wouldn’t I?”

“Good.” Gu Ling nodded, got up, and prepared to leave.

Situ Jing stood up immediately as well, “How could Emperor Qian possibly trust me?”

Gu Ling shook his head slightly, "You don't need to worry about that."

Situ Jing saw Gu Ling open his umbrella, about to leave, and couldn't help but ask one more question, "Does Lian Shun know about this?"

Gu Ling stood on the last step of the pavilion, holding an umbrella and turning around. He looked at Situ Jing and said, "Lian Shun doesn't like men. He already has someone he loves; give up."

As Gu Ling floated away into the rain, Situ Jing's face stiffened. By the time he reacted and felt angry enough to curse, Gu Ling was already far away.

"Sick! Sick! Sick!" Situ Jing pounded on the pillar of the pavilion with his clenched fists. When he said it for the third time, he wasn't thinking about Gu Ling's joke that he harbored such feelings for Lian Shun, but about Gu Ling and Su Liang's plan to keep him.

At this moment, Situ Jing still felt as if he was in a dream.

Situ Xie believed that Su Liang and Gu Ling could not accept Situ Jing again, and Situ Jing himself believed so too, although he could not deny that there was still some wishful thinking in his heart.

Overnight, something seemed to have changed, and there must be a reason, but Situ Jing couldn't figure it out...

Qiao Cong rushed over with a fish, suddenly grabbing Situ Jing's arm before he could react.

"Grandpa," Situ Jing instinctively called out, only then noticing that Qiao Cong was soaked through. The old man's eyes, which were usually squinted when looking at people, were now wide open, full of raindrops clinging to his long, curly white eyebrows. The eyes beneath them were frighteningly bright.

Situ Jing quickly realized that Qiao Cong must have been eavesdropping nearby just now, but because of the rain, he probably didn't hear much. No wonder Gu Ling glanced in his direction earlier.

"Jingjing, what did Xiaogu say to you? Was it he who asked you to come? Does he have any important tasks for you?" Qiao Cong seemed happy, even excited, simply because Gu Ling took the initiative to see Situ Jing. Even if Gu Ling asked Situ Jing to join him in the most dangerous situations, Qiao Cong would think it was better than being ignored now.

Situ Jing stared at Qiao Cong as if seeing him for the first time, indeed this was the first time he saw Qiao Cong like this, disheveled from the rain and without any trace of the aloof demeanor of a master. His cold and detached air was gone.

Only at this moment, Situ Jing could finally feel the blood ties between him and the old man.

Back when Situ Jing asked Qiao Cong to capture Su Liang, and Qiao Cong agreed and did so, Situ Jing didn't feel happy or loved unconditionally. Deep down he even thought: Qiao Cong must be the same kind of person as Nangong Lin, unable to distinguish right from wrong. What kind feelings could they possibly have?

Throughout his life, Situ Jing has been struggling with confusion about right and wrong and feelings. His moral shackles were self-imposed, the main reason he has never lost his conscience.

Therefore, when Situ Jing evaluates someone, he subconsciously considers their morality first, then talks about their feelings. This is because the so-called family members, Situ Xie and Che's parents, only offered him false emotions devoid of morality.

Qiao Cong was indeed selfish in the past. Although he was biased towards Situ Jing, this made Situ Jing subconsciously think that Qiao Cong wasn't a good person either.

However, now Situ Jing's thoughts were focused on the Qiao Cong he met again on that island.

At that time, Qiao Cong fell in love with Su Liang and his attitude towards Situ Jing changed dramatically. He always criticized Situ Jing and hoped he could repair his relationship with Su Liang and Gu Ling. He didn't want him to go back to Liang Country, and he wanted him to do the right thing. At the same time, Qiao Cong asked Su Liang to heal Situ Jing and protect him. Before he left for Liang Country, Qiao Cong earnestly tried to persuade him to stay. This time, Qiao Cong also went to the post station and never gave up on persuading him, even if he said he wouldn't get involved the day before. The next day when Situ Jing visited, he could still see the expectation in Qiao Cong's eyes...

Yes, expectation. That's what filled Qiao Cong's eyes at this very moment.

Situ Jing wondered what Qiao Cong was expecting? What was he seeking from him?

But as he thought about it, he was certain that the old man in front of him, his grandfather by blood, had no utilitarian demands, no selfish desires, and no intention of using him.

His grandfather just wanted him to be alive and well from the beginning to the end.

Was this not what he had always wanted? This was a real family member, who hoped for his well-being and nothing else.

Just now, Gu Ling had given him an opportunity he had longed for but thought impossible—a chance to turn back.

Even though it was raining, Situ Jing's cold heart warmed for the first time in a long while.

He didn't answer Qiao Cong's question, raised his hand, and wiped the rainwater from Qiao Cong's face with his sleeve. He called "Grandpa" again, took a deep breath, and said, "I'm sorry."

Qiao Cong looked at Situ Jing, the fish in his hand fell to the ground and started to flop around. He hugged Situ Jing and cried, his old tears streaming down his face.

Gu Ling silently approached, holding an umbrella, walked into the pavilion, picked up the fish on the ground, and silently left.

Just now, Qiuyue came to the Yuanming Pavilion to inform them that Qiao Cong had bought two fish and wanted to send one to Gu Ling to cook for Su Liang. Qiuyue specifically came to ask if they needed help killing the fish. Her cooking skills were now very proficient, and she was very good at killing fish and chickens.

Gu Ling said that the fish had lost its way, so he would go out to find it.

At lunchtime, Qiao Cong, Cen Man, Situ Jing, and Nangong Qian sat together, with the three generations enjoying a rare harmonious atmosphere.

The delight on Qiao Cong's face never left. He already knew the purpose of Gu Ling's visit to Situ Jing today and knew Situ Jing's answer.

"I've never seen Grandpa so happy before." Nangong Qian smiled as she added food to Situ Jing's plate, "Brother, you don't know how Grandpa used to worry about you, always looking sad whenever he mentioned you."

Qiao Cong coughed lightly, "What sadness? Qianqian, don't talk nonsense."

Cen Man spoke seriously, "Qianqian is telling the truth. Ajing, it wasn't easy for Xiaoliang and Xiaogu to take the initiative to find you this time. You must think clearly about your future path."

Situ Jing nodded: Indeed, even thinking about it now, he still found their actions today somewhat incredible.

Qiao Cong snorted, "What's there to think about the future path? Just do whatever Xiaoliang asks you to do. It's not controlling you, it's all for your own good. Don't make any more mistakes!"

Situ Jing didn't say anything, and Qiao Cong grabbed his collar, pulling him closer, "You're still not happy?"

Situ Jing looked helpless, "Grandpa, I didn't say I'm unwilling."

"Then you better say you're willing!" Qiao Cong didn't let go of his grip.

Cen Man knew Qiao Cong had drunk too much and was too happy. He started drinking alcohol even before the dishes were served, one cup after another, and now he was drunk. He was quite adorable and somewhat resembled old Mu.

Situ Jing nodded, "Willing, I'm willing."

"That's more like it." Qiao Cong finally let go of Situ Jing, picked up his wine cup, and drank it in one gulp. "Today is a good day!"

Nangong Qian secretly tugged at Situ Jing's sleeve. Situ Jing lowered his head, and Nangong Qian whispered in his ear, "Grandpa always goes to Huguo Temple and asks the Bodhisattva to bless my brother. He must go there to fulfill his vow tomorrow."

Situ Jing looked a little dazed, and then he heard Qiao Cong laughing, "I must go to Huguo Temple this afternoon."

Cen Man tried to help the unsteady Qiao Cong, but he leaned against her.

Nangong Qian chuckled lightly, "Grandma Cen, just leave Grandpa alone, let's eat. The dishes are getting cold."

Feeling embarrassed in front of the younger generation, Cen Man tried to get Qiao Cong to sit up, but he seemed determined to sleep and refused to get up.

Helpless, Cen Man asked Situ Jing to take Qiao Cong back to his room.

Situ Jing came over, lifted Qiao Cong horizontally, and found that the old man, who looked quite tall, wasn't heavy at all.

Situ Jing carried Qiao Cong back to his room and put him on the bed. He could also hear Qiao Cong mumbling, "Xiaoliang... please pity my old bones... forgive my grandson..."

Situ Jing sighed softly in his heart. He was wrong to think that no one cared about him.

As for why Su Liang and Gu Ling suddenly changed their minds, Situ Jing believed that it had something to do with Qiao Cong's refusal to give up on him.

As for what would happen next... Situ Jing went out, stood under the eaves, and looked at the dense curtain of rain, feeling relaxed. Just let things be. Anyway, whatever decision the couple makes, he could accept it either way, because it would always be for the best.

Liang Country's inn.

Situ Jing and Situ Yao knew that Situ Jing had gone to Su Mansion. It was past noon, and he still hadn't returned.

Situ Jing had not brought the attendant arranged for him by Situ Xie, and Situ Jing felt that something was wrong. He sent someone to Su Mansion to ask when Situ Jing would return, saying that he had something to discuss with him.

The messenger arrived at Su Mansion and explained his purpose. After Qi Jun asked Situ Jing, he told the man that Situ Jing would return later in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, Duanmu Chen was reviewing memorials in the palace when Gu Ling dropped down from the sky again.

Duanmu Chen was already quite used to Gu Ling's unconventional approach. He glanced at him and continued reading the memorial in hand before asking, "What's the matter?"

"Situ Jing wants to stay in Qian Country and become a military commander." Gu Ling got straight to the point.

Duanmu Chen looked at him with a strange expression, "What? Situ Jing? He is now the second prince of Liang Country. Why would he stay in Qian Country? And become a military commander? Have you all gone mad?"

Gu Ling's expression was indifferent, "If there's a problem, I'll take responsibility."

Duanmu Chen's eyes narrowed, "Why? If you still consider him as a friend, why wait until now? What has happened?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "Nothing. I just suddenly find him less annoying."

Duanmu Chen: ...

"Don't push your luck. I've been tolerant enough towards you two," Duanmu Chen firmly refused.

Gu Ling nodded, "Alright. Just don't regret it when he becomes a military commander in Liang Country, Your Majesty."

Duanmu Chen's face stiffened, "Can't you just kill him outright? Wouldn't that be better?"

Gu Ling's expression remained calm, "Having the son who has just been publicly acknowledged by Situ Han betray him and Liang Country to help Qian Country defend its borders is very interesting."

Upon hearing his words, Duanmu Chen had to admit that he was starting to be enticed... If Gu Ling and Su Liang could truly guarantee that Situ Jing would not betray Qian Country, this would be very interesting indeed!

Letting a prince of Liang Country serve as a military commander for Qian Country to fight against Liang Country would certainly make Situ Xie and Situ Han's faces very colorful when they found out...

"If there's a problem, you're responsible." Duanmu Chen stared at Gu Ling with a serious expression, "Remember your words. It's out of trust for you and Su Liang that I'm willing to take this risk."

Gu Ling nodded, "Alright."

Su Mansion.

Situ Jing knew that Gu Ling had gone to the palace and that it was for his sake. Qiao Cong didn't sleep for long. He woke up, drank the hangover soup, and specifically went to ask Su Liang.

So both Qiao Cong and Situ Jing were waiting for Gu Ling to return. If Emperor Qian absolutely refused to employ him again, then Gu Ling's plan would not work.

Qiao Cong comforted Situ Jing, "What's wrong with not being a military commander? It's a good opportunity to have some leisure time and enjoy a peaceful life."

Situ Jing nodded, "I understand." However, he still hoped that he could do something, as Gu Ling said, to atone for his sins. He also wanted to continue his past ideals and settle the score with Situ Xie for his years of suffering and torment.

Being a military commander of Qian Country meant completely abandoning the identity of the prince who had tortured him for years, which was exactly what he had been dreaming of.

Finally, Gu Ling's figure appeared at the entrance.

Qiao Cong immediately stood up and went to greet him, "How did it go?"

Gu Ling walked past Qiao Cong, placed a box of fresh fruits he had taken from Duanmu Chen's dragon case next to Su Liang, sat down, and calmly said, "The Emperor has agreed."

Situ Jing was overjoyed in his heart and breathed a long sigh of relief.

Qiao Cong clapped his hands, "Great! But why did Emperor Qian agree so easily? Did he set any conditions?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "No conditions. I vouched for Situ Jing."

Situ Jing was stunned. He didn't quite understand why Gu Ling would suddenly change his attitude towards him and even be willing to take risks for him. If they were just talking about friendship, it was always he and Su Liang, and his relationship with Gu Ling had never been good...

Qiao Cong patted his chest, “Don’t worry, Xiaogu. I’ll keep an eye on him. If he causes any more trouble, I’ll give you my head as compensation!”

“Going to the southern border or the northern border?” Situ Jing asked Gu Ling.

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “I’ve told you not to think about Lian Ershan. He won’t be interested in you.”

Su Liang almost choked on the water she was drinking. Qiao Cong narrowed his eyes and looked at Situ Jing with suspicion.

Situ Jing snapped angrily, “I want to go to the northern border! I was just asking if the emperor had other arrangements! I don’t want to find Lian Shun!”

“Why are you so agitated?” Gu Ling’s expression was still calm. “You can leave now.”

Situ Jing left the room angrily, and Qiao Cong followed him out. “Jingjing, I thought you liked Xiaoliang? Could it be that the one you really like is the boy from the Lin family?”

Su Liang couldn’t help smiling, “Great God, I didn’t expect you to have such a bad sense of humor.”

Gu Ling used a small knife to peel the fruit. He peeled the skin into thin, long strips, coiling them down without breaking them. “Actually, I want to hit him.”

Su Liang supported her forehead, “Great God, you intentionally said those words to provoke him. You wanted him to make a move so that you could fight back and beat him up?”

Gu Ling cut the peeled fruit into small pieces, placed them on a plate, and handed it to Su Liang. He nodded and said, “That’s right.”

“You could just hit him directly. His grandpa wouldn’t mind.” Su Liang said earnestly.

Gu Ling shook his head, “I don’t want Xiaoshen to think I’m bullying people for no reason.”

Su Liang chuckled, “What if I want to see the Great God bully people?”

Gu Ling put down the fruit knife, stood up, “I’ll bring him over and beat him up right now.”

Chapter 363: 363. When we never came

It had just rained, and the air was fresh and cool.

Qi Jun had set up a big table by the lake, with a pot of warm water, a pot of hot tea, and a pot of fine wine, and some fruits and desserts were laid out. Everyone from the mansion, young and old, sat together to watch Gu Ling and Situ Jing fight.

Zhengzheng sat beside Su Liang, her eyes sparkling with curiosity as she asked, “Aunt, who will win?”

“You guess.” Su Liang smiled.

Zhengzheng grinned, “Then I guess Beautiful Uncle will win!” She called him Ning Uncle and Uncle-in-law, but now she called Gu Ling Beautiful Uncle. She said that it would best showcase her favorite uncle’s most striking characteristic.

Qiao Cong refused to sit and busily greeted everyone, acting as if he had organized the martial arts competition himself. He wasn't concerned that Situ Jing would be beaten, but rather hoped that the fight would be as fierce as possible.

Technically, both Situ Jing and Gu Ling were Qiao Cong's disciples. Once upon a time.

Putting aside Nangong Lin's involvement, Situ Jing and Gu Ling's swordsmanship came from the same origin. Qiao Cong had already taught Gu Ling the most powerful moves, but he hadn't taught Situ Jing yet.

This was a fight that everyone knew the outcome of even before it began.

Situ Jing, the party involved, also knew the outcome. But he was equally eager to fight this battle, wanting to see how big the gap was between him and Gu Ling.

Although Qiao Cong was the inheritor of the Luoying sword technique, he didn't possess the Luoying Sword itself.

The Luoying Sword had originally been in the hands of the Peng Family of the Liang Country, before it was given to the Bei Jingwang Mansion of the Qian Country by General Peng. Now, it had been given to Su Liang by Xing Ji.

However, Gu Ling did not use the Luoying Sword, but instead chose a wooden sword. This had been part of a set of wooden weapons he had made when teaching Su Liang swordsmanship in Su Family Village.

Upon seeing this, Qiao Cong took Situ Jing's waist sword and borrowed Zhengzheng's sword for him to use instead.

Zhengzheng had always spent most of her time at the Su Mansion while in the capital city, sometimes even staying over. Her toys were all there, including a wooden sword given to her by Gu Ling.

Zhengzheng readily agreed to the request and didn't mention anything about not breaking it. If it broke, she would just ask Beautiful Uncle for a new one.

"Alright, let's get started." Qiao Cong cleared his throat and looked at Gu Ling and Situ Jing, his gaze then falling on the calm lake not far away. He added, "Whoever loses, jump into the lake!"

Situ Jing, who had just raised his wooden sword: ...

Zhengzheng cheered, "Yes, yes! Let's get started!"

Old Mu called out, "Whoever loses gets tied up and whipped on a tree!"

Qiao Cong snorted, "Get lost!" He could discipline his grandchildren, but Old Mu had no place to stand.

The competition was very exciting, with both of them using the Luoying Sword Technique. Gu Ling did not use any of his unique moves, but he still easily overpowered Situ Jing.

“Is my apprentice’s swordsmanship really learned from you? It looks the same as your grandson’s, but it’s not quite the same.” Old Mu leaned over to Qiao Cong and analyzed.

Qiao Cong watched with narrowed eyes. When he had taught Gu Ling his unique moves, he had discovered that Gu Ling was a martial arts genius, with extraordinary comprehension skills and an unwillingness to be bound by convention.

What Situ Jing used was the most authentic Luoying Sword Technique, with every move and posture standard and precise, without losing any speed or strength.

However, Gu Ling had made some seemingly subtle changes that made the technique faster and more powerful.

Moreover, when it came to adaptability, Situ Jing was truly a notch below Gu Ling.

Qiao Cong felt that this competition had already achieved its purpose. Winning or losing was not important, but it was crucial for Situ Jing to see the gap between him and Gu Ling and learn from him. Envy is the most useless emotion, and from today onwards, any emotional issues that troubled Situ Jing should be thoroughly wiped away.

Gu Ling’s extraordinary comprehension skills were inseparable from his extraordinary attitude towards life, which was also Su Liang’s strength. Living with them, Qiao Cong saw their determination to do their best at everything they did, always striving to improve themselves.

Right now it was just a match, but Situ Jing, who was bound to lose, could only rely on his martial arts. Gu Ling, on the other hand, was an all-around talent, which made him even less likely to win than the other Situ Jing.

Gu Ling controlled the pace from start to end.

When Situ Jing’s wooden sword broke in half, both of them stepped back.

Zhengzheng exclaimed, “My sword! It was a gift from Beautiful Uncle!”

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “Let him compensate you.”

Zhengzheng blinked his big black eyes and nodded, “Then let Uncle Beibei compensate me!” That way, when he asks Beautiful Uncle for another one, he’ll have two new swords!

Situ Jing felt a bit frustrated, although he knew he would lose before the fight began. He thought that Gu Ling would use his trump card and make him lose very badly.

As a result, Gu Ling had not used his trump card, and Situ Jing lost without suspense.

Situ Jing knew very well that Gu Ling’s swordsmanship was also taught by Nangong Lin, just like his. The current difference was all Gu Ling’s own doing.

Situ Jing bent down to pick up half of the wooden sword from the ground, only to notice the intricate patterns on it. Upon closer inspection, the patterns formed many “Zheng” characters, which were carved by Gu Ling himself for Zhengzheng.

“I lost.” Situ Jing looked at Gu Ling, admitting his defeat wholeheartedly.

He always knew that there was a gap between them and today, he realized how ridiculous his jealousy was.

It had to do with their mothers being sisters, that both of them had Situ blood in their veins, that their master was Nangong Lin, and that he also liked Su Liang... But none of these reasons were that important.

Situ Jing now thinks that the biggest reason for his jealousy towards Gu Ling was that he saw Gu Ling as an imaginary enemy, because he needed such a person to exist, needed a target, otherwise he wouldn't know how to face his real life...

All along, everyone thought Situ Jing loved Su Liang and he wanted to win her over. The former was true, but the latter was not.

In Situ Jing's mind, Su Liang and Lian Shun were in approximately the same position, both being warmth and light that appeared in his once gloomy life, people he longed for.

Instead of saying that Situ Jing wanted to possess Su Liang, it would be more appropriate to say that he wanted to be like Su Liang, free and easy, with a strong heart.

In other words, for the first twenty years of Situ Jing's life, he was indeed trapped by emotions. After meeting Su Liang, the emotional troubles that plagued him included his feelings for Su Liang, but only a small part of it.

After letting go of his "jealousy" towards Gu Ling, Situ Jing also admits that Gu Ling and Su Liang are a perfect match made by heaven.

"Jingjing, you bet and must accept the loss. Jump in!" Qiao Cong pointed at the lake and said to Situ Jing. His aim was not to make Situ Jing embarrass himself, but to encourage him to integrate into this family and relax a little.

Zhengzheng ran over and pulled Situ Jing towards the lakeshore, "I'll jump with Uncle Beibei, I want to swim! Let's catch fish together!"

Situ Jing thought Zhengzheng was trying to comfort him, fearing that he was too embarrassed, and was moved by his understanding.

Situ Jing carried Zhengzheng into the water, and Nangong Qian asked from the shore, "Is the water cold?"

"Not cold!" Zhengzheng answered happily.

Qiao Cong found the hand-held fishing net made by Gu Ling and threw it to Situ Jing.

In the end, they really caught a fat fish, and Zhengzheng told Situ Jing, "The fried fish nuggets made by Beautiful Uncle are the best in the world!"

Situ Jing shook his head, "I can't have any."

Zhengzheng whispered, "Then when it's ready, I'll hide a piece for Uncle Beibei to eat."

Situ Jing smiled, "Alright."

Since Su Liang couldn't eat fish recently, Zhengzheng begged Gu Ling to make fried fish nuggets for him, so Gu Ling made a big plate of them.

“Can I take it to share with Grandpa Qiao and Grandpa Mu?” Zhengzheng asked.

Gu Ling nodded, and Zhengzheng held the plate and ran off.

People came to Liang Country’s inn again to inquire when Situ Jing would return, and he asked Qi Jun to tell them that he would be back.

But Situ Jing never left, just waiting to taste the fried fish that Zhengzheng said he would secretly share with him.

Zhengzheng arrived, followed by Qiao Cong and Old Mu.

The two elders and the youngster, all four of them, soon finished the fried fish made by Gu Ling.

Old Mu felt it was not enough, “My apprentice’s cooking skills have really improved, but it’s too little.”

Qiao Cong said to Situ Jing, “You should learn to cook when you have time, or you won’t be able to marry a wife. Don’t think about that Lin boy, he fancies a Miss with the last name of Yuan.”

Situ Jing:...When did marrying a wife have anything to do with whether one can cook or not? But Gu Ling’s cooking skills were indeed impeccable.

As for Lian Shun and Ying Ying’s matter, Situ Jing only found out today. He also found out that Ying Ying’s grandmother, Madam Yue, originally wanted to marry her granddaughter into King Yue’s mansion. However, Ying Ying betrayed Madam Yue and Situ Xie, or else Xing Ji would have been dead by now.

It wasn’t until evening that Situ Jing finally returned to the inn of Liang Country, wearing clothes borrowed from Qi Jun. Because his clothes were wet from falling into the water.

Entering the inn’s main hall, he saw the two coffins arranged, and Situ Jing called someone to prepare the Memorial Hall here.

Situ Jing arrived upon hearing the news, “Second Prince, Situ Yao will be married from the inn soon, and if the Memorial Hall is set up here, Emperor Qian may think it is inauspicious.” He suppressed his anger and used Duanmu Chen as an excuse to stop Situ Jing.

Situ Jing didn’t lose his temper like he did in the morning, and after a moment of silence, he nodded and said, “You’re right. I’ll find another place to put my foster parents’ remains.”

Situ Jing was surprised that Situ Jing suddenly became so reasonable, but if he could remove the coffins of Shen’s parents, that would be even better.

Situ Jing asked Situ Jing if anything had happened when he was called to the Su Mansion today.

Situ Jing just said that his grandfather invited him to go for a meal.

As for returning to Qian Country, Situ Jing discussed with Gu Ling to keep it quiet for the time being because he wanted to send Shen’s parents’ coffins back to Xuanbei City for burial on the way. After arriving in Xuanbei City, he would give Situ Jing and Liang Country a “surprise”.

After all, it would soon be the day for Situ Yao to enter the palace, and it would be hard for Situ Jing to continue with some things if he suddenly turned against them at this time.

This was also Duanmu Chen’s intention.

When Situ Jing said he would find another place, he simply moved the coffins of his foster parents out of the inn's main hall and into an empty courtyard, still within the inn.

Situ Jing asked Situ Yao if he had any hope of persuading his grandfather, Qiao Cong, to return to Liang Country together.

Situ Yao said yes, he would contact Qiao Cong and Nangong Qian more in the future, and try to persuade them before leaving.

Only then did Situ Yao feel slightly relieved, thinking that he and Situ Yao had worried too much before. It seemed that after Situ Yao's contact with the Su Family, his relationship with Su Liang and Gu Ling had gotten worse.

From then on, Situ Yao would go to the Su Mansion every day, usually leaving after having lunch there.

Meanwhile, Duanmu Chen sent people to the inn several times to give gifts to Situ Yao without making a big fuss, but the gifts were very thoughtful and sincere.

When Su Liang saw Old Madame Xing again, she thought she would ask about Situ Yao's upcoming entrance to the palace as an Imperial Concubine, but Old Madame Xing didn't mention Situ Yao at all. She just talked about Xing Ji, worried that he would be heartbroken and sad because of Miao's death, and she didn't know when he would be able to come back.

Su Liang said that the emperor would soon arrange for a general to go to the north, and if the situation was stable, she would ask the emperor to grant Xing Ji a leave to visit his family.

Old Lady Xing began to look forward to it. She knew that Su Liang's words would never be empty promises.

As for how many women are in the harem, whom Duanmu Chen favors, Old Lady Xing knew clearly that it was not her place to ask, nor was it something Su Liang could control. And after the previous incident, Old Lady Xing was quite disappointed in Xing Yuyan, and now she had no other desires but to hope for her to behave and properly nurture her unborn child.

Soon, it was the day for Situ Yao to marry.

Situ Yao knew very well that Duanmu Chen's enthusiasm for Situ Yao was not genuine, but he never reminded Situ Yao. Because, it didn't concern him anymore. He hated Situ Xie and didn't vent his anger on Situ Yao and Situ Yao; he didn't care about them, but he couldn't help them either.

Situ Yao did what he had to do, watching Situ Yao get married and enter the imperial palace of Qian Country.

Situ Yao acted guiltily, reluctantly, and even a little sad, saying, "It's my fault that my little sister married far away."

Situ Yao knew in his heart that Situ Yao actually blamed him.

But Situ Yao never thought it was his responsibility, because the main culprit was Situ Xie.

Watching Situ Yao's low spirits, Situ Yao wanted to say, "If you really didn't want your little sister to marry over, why didn't you end yourself when you found out that Qian Country wanted her to marry to exchange your return?"

Of course, Situ Jing didn't say it because it wasn't necessary.

In four days, they were to leave the capital city of Qian Country and return to Liang Country.

However, this was only what Situ Jing thought. Situ Jing would go with him, but he would not return to Liang Country.

After entering the palace, Situ Yao became the only Imperial Concubine under the empress, with the title of Liang.

When Su Liang found out, she thought the title was appropriate for Situ Yao's background as a member of the royal family of Liang Country, but it was still a bit ominous. Generally, when a person is "cold," they are no more.

However, a title doesn't mean much; once the princess from Yin Country marries, there will be another Imperial Concubine Yin.

As for how Situ Yao's life in the imperial harem of Qian Country goes, that depends on her. She is different from Situ Jing, she won't be threatened by her grandfather Situ Xie who watched her grow up. If she really wants to help Liang Country do something or whisper sweet nothings to Duanmu Chen, then it's entirely her own decision.

On the second day of Situ Yao's entry into the palace, Su Liang received news that Duanmu Chen had not gone to the early court. It was the first time since he became the emperor.

So, quite a few court officials were worried that this beauty from Liang Country would mesmerize Duanmu Chen.

Su Liang found it amusing upon hearing it. Duanmu Chen might have been really happy as a bridegroom and wanted to relax for once. There was nothing wrong with that; he was an emperor but also a normal man, and Situ Yao was indeed an outstanding beauty. However, to say that Duanmu Chen was mesmerized? That's a bit of an overstatement.

Qiao Cong had decided to go to Xuanbei City with Situ Jing, keeping an eye on him while also protecting him.

That day, Situ Jing came to the Su Mansion again, first met with Qiao Cong, and then they, as grandfather and grandson, went to see Gu Ling and Su Liang together.

As soon as they entered, Qiao Cong said, "There's a serious matter. Jing'er has an idea. He can tell Liang Country that he's pretending to betray them, deceive you, and stay in Qian Country as a spy! What do you think? Isn't it better?"

Su Liang blinked her eyes, smiled, and said nothing.

Gu Ling put back the newly assembled Mechanism Tree and sat next to Su Liang, looking at Situ Jing with a faint expression, asking back, "You deceived us?"

Situ Jing's face stiffened and he turned to leave.

Qiao Cong didn't react in time, "What's the meaning of this? Jing'er, why are you leaving? We haven't finished talking!"

Situ Jing's voice came from outside the door, "Situ Xie won't believe that I have the ability to deceive Gu Ling and Su Liang."

Qiao Cong coughed a few times, "That's true." He waved at Su Liang and Gu Ling, "Pretend we were never here!" And with that, he disappeared.

Chapter 364: Can Xiao Shen wear a skirt?

Three days after Situ Yao entered the palace, Duanmu Chen held a banquet in the palace and invited Situ Jing and Situ Jing, as well as Gu Ling and Su Liang. These were Situ Yao's only relatives in Qian Country.

Duanmu Chen thought that Gu Ling and Su Liang would make excuses not to come as they had before, but they arrived on time for the banquet.

The reason was a conversation.

Su Liang asked, "Will you go?"

Gu Ling said, "Either way."

Su Liang laughed, "Shall we go and watch the emperor's performance?"

Gu Ling nodded, "Alright."

The two of them even brought Zhengzheng along.

The daytime banquet was held in the Imperial Garden.

The sun shone brightly, and the breeze was warm and gentle, with beautiful trees and flowers everywhere.

Situ Jing and Situ Jing arrived first and saw Gu Ling and Su Liang walking through the Moon Gate with Zhengzheng in tow.

Situ Jing smiled and was about to stand up to greet them when Gu Ling suddenly chased after a butterfly and disappeared into the flowers, with Zhengzheng following.

Su Liang's expression remained the same as she continued to walk forward.

Situ Jing once again witnessed Duanmu Chen's favor towards Su Liang and Gu Ling. They seemed to be treating the Imperial Garden as their own, acting so casually.

"There is no need for Situ eldest son to be polite, please sit down," Su Liang smiled, choosing a shaded spot to sit.

Situ Jing took his seat again, laughing, "Is cousin Ling catching butterflies? How childlike."

Su Liang nodded, "Yes, my husband is still a child."

Situ Jing: ...

Situ Jing: ...He couldn't stand this couple anymore, but thankfully, they would leave tomorrow.

Before long, Gu Ling and Zhengzheng emerged from the flowers. Zhengzheng's little hand was cupped like a shell as he ran towards Su Liang, "Aunt, look what we caught!"

Gu Ling walked while weaving a flower crown, already half done. His slender fingers were very agile, and he wore a silver ring on his left ring finger. Su Liang had one too; they were a pair.

This was a pair of rings designed by Su Liang and crafted by Gu Ling himself, both containing hidden weapons.

Zhengzheng ran to Su Liang's side and slowly opened his little hand, releasing a black-winged, gold-edged butterfly.

"Isn't it pretty?" Zhengzheng asked Su Liang with a brilliant smile.

Su Liang nodded, "It's beautiful." She wiped Zhengzheng's hands with a handkerchief.

Zhengzheng climbed onto a chair next to her, only to quickly slide down and choose another position, sitting next to Situ Jing, "Uncle Beibei, where's the sword you owe me?"

Situ Jing's eyes flashed. He knew whose child this was but didn't expect Zhengzheng to have such a good relationship with Situ Jing. What did he mean by owing him a sword?

"I'll give it to you before I leave tomorrow," Situ Jing said. He had wasted a lot of good wood and hadn't made a satisfactory one yet.

"Don't forget!" Zhengzheng's little face was serious.

Situ Jing nodded, "I won't."

When Gu Ling sat down next to Su Liang, the flower crown was finished. Yellow flowers, like stars, adorned the entwined green leaves and branches, arranged in a pleasing and adorable way.

"Cousin, you have skillful hands," Situ Jing praised.

"You wear it," Su Liang shook her head. It's not that she didn't like it, but she thought it was more suitable for Gu Ling.

Then, both Situ Jing and Situ Jing watched in amazement as Gu Ling actually put the flower crown on his own head...

It looked good, incredibly beautiful like a celestial being.

Zhengzheng clapped his little hands, "Beautiful uncle is even prettier now!"

Situ Jing: ...What he admired most about Gu Ling was not his martial arts skills, but his "I'm happy and don't care what others think" attitude.

As far as he knew, Gu Ling had always been like this, able to live the life he wanted without getting involved in the affairs of the Gu Family before they were wiped out.

Situ Jing himself had been sent to another family and had been bound by his so-called background, unable to break free.

Gu Ling said that Situ Jing was emotional, and Situ Jing had been thinking lately that Gu Ling was not unfeeling. However, he could always clearly separate "emotions" and "matters."

Feelings are precious and should not be given to those who are unworthy. When dealing with matters, one should be principled, focused, and not be affected by superficial emotions.

Situ Jing discovered that Situ Jing was lost in thought again, this time not looking at Su Liang, but Gu Ling. He had been absent-minded a lot these days, and Situ Jing wondered what he was thinking about.

“The emperor has arrived!”

The voice from outside the Moon Gate made Situ Jing look up, and he saw Duanmu Chen and Situ Yao coming.

One with a radiant smile, the other alluring and demure – they looked like a truly loving couple.

Seeing Duanmu Chen holding Situ Yao’s hand, Situ Jing couldn’t help but smile even deeper and stood up to pay his respects.

Gu Ling and Su Liang had special privileges and did not need to salute Duanmu Chen or, even less so, Imperial Concubine Yao.

Situ Jing exchanged a glance with Duanmu Chen, stood up, bowed slightly with his hands clasped, “Emperor Qian, Imperial Concubine Liang.” In fact, their relationship had become that of a monarch and subject, but this matter was still a secret for now.

Duanmu Chen chuckled, “Situ Second Prince, Situ eldest son, there is no need for formalities. Please, sit.”

“Emperor Uncle!” Zhengzheng waved his little hand cheerfully at Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen smiled and nodded, “So Zhengzheng is here too.”

Only after sitting down did Duanmu Chen let go of Situ Yao’s hand.

Situ Yao’s face turned slightly pink, “Big brother, Cousin Jing, cousin, sister-in-law.”

Duanmu Chen noticed the flower crown on Gu Ling’s head, and the corner of his mouth twitched, “Quite unique. I didn’t know you liked to dress up.”

“Does Your Majesty want one? Ten thousand taels,” Gu Ling said casually.

Duanmu Chen snorted, “You plucked flowers from the Imperial Garden, and I should charge you ten thousand taels.”

From their brief exchange, it was clear that Duanmu Chen and Gu Ling, the former rebel’s son, had a very good relationship.

As the representative of the in-laws, Situ Jing solemnly reminded Situ Yao to take good care of Emperor Qian and not be willful. He spoke a few pleasantries.

Situ Yao agreed one by one, “Will big brother and Cousin Jing leave tomorrow?”

“If Yao’er is reluctant, let them stay for a few more days,” Duanmu Chen said gently.

Situ Yao shook her head, “Thank you for your consideration, Your Majesty. But big brother has been away for a long time, and our parents and grandfather are all very worried. I hope he can return as soon as possible.”

“That sounds good,” Duanmu Chen agreed easily.

Delicious food was served, and on the surface, the atmosphere seemed incredibly warm and harmonious.

Gu Ling and Su Liang formed their own little world, while Duanmu Chen and Situ Yao were like a newlywed couple, so sweet and affectionate. Situ Jing kept handing Zhengzheng food and talking to him.

The only left out was Situ Jing as he silently watched the “three pairs,” feeling that something was off, yet couldn’t quite put his finger on it. Everything seemed to be going much better than expected, but it was almost too smooth, giving him an inexplicable sense of unreality. Did Duanmu Chen really like Situ Yao that much? Had Situ Jing completely severed ties with Gu Ling and Su Liang? That child Zhengzheng was just a merchant’s child, yet he could eat and laugh at the same table with the Emperor of Qian Country, without having to bow... What kind of person was Duanmu Chen, really?

No one would answer these questions for Situ Jing.

After the banquet, Situ Yao wanted to have a private conversation with Situ Jing, and Duanmu Chen allowed it, letting Situ Jing go to Situ Yao’s palace.

Gu Ling and Su Liang went for a lake tour in the Imperial Garden, while Situ Jing took Zhengzheng home.

Upon reaching the middle of the lake, Gu Ling put down the paddle and let the boat drift gently with the wind.

Su Liang leaned on Gu Ling, enjoying the sun, feeling comfortable and content.

“I think the Emperor truly likes Situ Yao,” Su Liang said as she squinted at the white clouds in the blue sky.

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “He also truly likes you and me.”

Hearing this, Su Liang laughed, “Yes.”

Although it may seem different, it’s actually the same. Because Duanmu Chen is too restrained when it comes to feelings. Compared to others, Duanmu Chen’s “liking” could at most be considered “fondness.”

The difference lies in the fact that Duanmu Chen has trust in Su Liang and Gu Ling, in addition to his fondness for them. But he doesn’t have that trust for Situ Yao, who just married him.

Duanmu Chen can test Situ Yao, and the fact that he didn’t treat this foreign Princess with a routine relationship from the start shows that he has expectations for her.

Therefore, Duanmu Chen’s current liking for Situ Yao is like a rootless tree. If they can establish trust, perhaps they can truly become a good couple beyond politics and power. But if there’s no trust, it won’t take long for the best-case scenario to be reduced to pure lust and saving face, or even worse.

Su Liang, gently touching her belly, asked, “Great God, we should find out soon whether it’s a boy or girl. Do you want to know in advance, or wait until the birth?”

Gu Ling thought about it seriously, “It’s up to you.”

Su Liang smiled softly, "Can I keep it a secret from you after I find out?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "No. Either neither of us knows, or both of us know."

"Great God, you know how to check the pulse, so you can confirm and tell me first," Su Liang said, "I can guess based on your expression."

Gu Ling agreed that it would be better this way. He couldn't wait to find out if they would have a son or a daughter.

Initially, Su Liang had suggested that it would be better to have twins, so they could have two children after going through pregnancy once. But Gu Ling disagreed because carrying twins would be more difficult for Su Liang and pose a higher risk during childbirth.

With Su Liang carrying only one child, both she and Gu Ling had expectations for the child's gender but felt that either would be fine.

When their lake tour finished, the couple went to borrow some books from the Imperial Library Pavilion before leaving the palace and heading home.

By the time Situ Jing returned to the inn after sending Zhengzheng home, Situ Jing had already come back.

The two sat down to discuss the arrangements for leaving the next day.

Situ Jing asked Situ Jing again if he really wanted to take the coffins of his adoptive parents with them.

Situ Jing said yes.

Situ Jing didn't object any further. Now that the marriage alliance had been completed, there was no need for him to upset Situ Jing.

Then Situ Jing brought up Situ Yao, "Does Second Prince think that Emperor Qian really likes Yaoyao that much?"

Situ Jing took a sip of tea with an indifferent expression, "Why do you ask?"

Situ Jing sighed softly, "I don't know why, but I always feel that Emperor Qian is treating Yaoyao too well...for a monarch."

"Do you hope that he will not treat your sister well?" Situ Jing snorted.

Situ Jing shook his head, "Of course, I don't mean that. It's just... I'm really worried about Yaoyao. She's married so far away, and we can't expect Gu Ling to look after her."

"If you want to stay and accompany your sister, I'm sure Emperor Qian would be very happy," Situ Jing said expressionlessly.

Situ Jing had nothing to say.

That evening, when they met again, Situ Jing asked Situ Jing if there was no hope of getting Qiao Cong to join Liang Country.

Situ Jing gave Situ Jing a surprising answer, "Grandfather has already agreed to go to Liang Country with me."

Situ Jing's face was filled with joy, "That's great! Su Liang and Gu Ling won't stop it, will they?"

Situ Jing shook his head, "They can't stop it."

"What about your sister?" Situ Jing asked.

"She's still sick, so she'll stay here for now," Situ Jing said.

Situ Jing felt that something was not quite right. Qiao Cong was leaving his granddaughter behind and going to Liang Country with Situ Jing? Could it be that he had ulterior motives? Situ Jing knew that Situ Han had forced Situ Xiang back then and suddenly began to doubt if Qiao Cong was going to Liang Country to avenge his daughter?

Situ Jing finally decided to wait until they returned to Liang Country to discuss everything. No matter what Situ Xie thought, Situ Jing had to talk to him properly. He couldn't rely on Situ Jing, and it would be best to dispose of him as soon as possible, otherwise, it would only ruin their plans.

That night, Situ Jing barely slept and spent the entire time making a wooden sword for Zhengzheng. It wasn't until the sky was about to brighten that he finally made one that he felt was barely acceptable. He secretly sent it to Zhengzheng's house and placed it in his room.

As soon as day broke, Qiao Cong had packed his bags and came to say goodbye to Gu Ling and Su Liang.

"Little girl, your master is leaving now. I'll have to trouble you to take care of Qianqian's health," Qiao Cong said with heartfelt sincerity. "I'm really sorry, I always said I would help you, but when you needed my help, I was injured. Now that I'm healed, I'm going to follow Jingjing."

Su Liang just smiled, "Third Master, please don't say that. We're not outsiders, there's no need to be polite with me. If you can help my father-in-law take a break from his duty in Xuanbei City and come home, that would be a big help."

Qiao Cong's expression turned serious, "Don't worry about that! I'll definitely help Jingjing protect Xuanbei City! If those bastards from Liang Country dare to cause trouble, they won't have a good time!" Qiao Cong didn't plan to confront Situ Han for the time being because Situ Xiang's two children were more important.

Qiao Cong was worried about Situ Jing, not because he was afraid that he would make another mistake but because he was afraid that he would have an accident. Not only might the Liang Country's royal family try to capture Situ Jing, but Nangong Lin, who had escaped from the island, could reappear at any time. The capital city had many people, and Qiao Cong was absolutely confident in Gu Ling's strength. He could not trust Situ Jing by himself.

Su Liang had no objections to this arrangement. She thought that Situ Jing was going to guard the city, and Qiao Cong was going to protect him. This would allow Xing Ji to go home and rest for a while.

Gu Ling had already consulted Duanmu Chen about this matter. Duanmu Chen felt that they were being a bit reckless since he couldn't fully trust Situ Jing. But in the end, Duanmu Chen adopted their suggestion, wrote a secret order to Xing Ji, and let Xing Ji handle the matter.

That secret order was hidden in Qiao Cong's arms.

Su Liang prepared many poisons, wound medicines, and antidotes for Qiao Cong to take with him in case of emergencies. Although Old White wasn't home, Su Liang never let her guard down and practiced making many medicines during these days. She also researched new medicines with Gu Ling.

After bidding farewell to Su Liang and Gu Ling, Qiao Cong was ready to leave the mansion when he saw Cen Man waiting at the door for him.

"I'll have to trouble you to take care of Qianqian while I'm gone," Qiao Cong said to Cen Man.

Cen Man smiled, "Why be so polite between us? Be careful on your trip to the north, and don't be impulsive. Discuss things with Ajing."

Qiao Cong was unhappy upon hearing this, "Discuss with him? Do you think I'm more confused than he is?"

Cen Man joked, "Both of you are prone to making mistakes, so it's better to discuss things together."

Qiao Cong strode out of the door, "Let's go!"

In the blink of an eye, Su Liang was already four months pregnant.

That night, before going to sleep, Gu Ling checked Su Liang's pregnant belly and took her pulse.

"Great God, what are you looking at? Why is it taking so long?" Su Liang asked with a yawn.

Gu Ling released Su Liang's hand, "I know the gender of the baby now. Can you guess?"

Su Liang instantly woke up, "Then let me ask you a question. You can answer it or not, and I'll judge by your expression."

Gu Ling nodded, "Go ahead."

Su Liang thought for a moment and said, "Can Little God wear a skirt?"

Gu Ling blinked, "Yes."

Chapter 365: When it's time to hit, you go up.

After Gu Ling finished speaking, he lay down with his arm as a pillow, gazing at Su Liang with a shallow and playful smile.

Su Liang felt that Gu Ling's wink was deliberate and not a subconscious reaction to lying, as he had stopped doing that after she discovered his physical response to lying.

Nevertheless, Su Liang suddenly thought, given Gu Ling's personality, even if it were a son, he will think that the child can wear a skirt...

Consequently, "can" doesn't signify anything, and "wink" doesn't imply anything either.

“Forget it, just reveal the answer directly,” Su Liang gave up guessing.

“It’s a daughter,” Gu Ling responded, his smile deepening.

Even though Su Liang was indifferent between a son or a daughter, she still felt a thrill bubbling when the prediction was confirmed because she began imagining how their little girl would look.

As they lay facing each other, Su Liang said, “They say a daughter always resembles her father, and I too hope that our daughter will look like you. Gu Ling, if you were a woman, you would undoubtedly be a great beauty.”

Gu Ling nodded, “I hope your wishes come true.” He didn’t have any specific requirements about how his daughter should look. Anything would suffice. However, since Su Liang had an idea, he hoped it could fulfill her.

Both of them couldn’t sleep and simply got dressed, went outside for a walk, speculating about life after their baby was born.

“Let’s keep this a secret for now,” Su Liang gently laughed. “We’ll surprise our masters later. But, there’s a question I want to re-ask you, Gu Ling.”

Gu Ling nodded, “Which one?”

A mischievous smile hung on Su Liang’s lips, “What if our little girl is naughty? Will you still banish her to a deserted island? Does she still need to surpass you in martial arts?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “No more desert islands. Before her martial arts surpass mine, she will have to obey. If she misbehaves, she will be punished.”

Su Liang expressed surprise, “I thought you would pamper our daughter unconditionally, Gu Ling.”

“I will. But that’s not good,” Gu Ling nodded. “When she needs to be disciplined, you will deal with it I will console her.”

Su Liang, although she was clearly designated for the task, found the arrangement acceptable.

After Lian Shun had safely escorted Yang Yu to Jiaye City, he told Nian Jincheng to just enjoy his time with his wife, leaving the city’s defences to him.

Nian Jincheng didn’t hesitate, and he went to spend lovey-dovey time with Yang Yu.

Lian Shun thought about Ying Ying who went ahead to Yin Country, couldn’t help feeling all the more longing and worry for her. He wondered if she had arrived at her destination and if she succeeded in rescuing her brother.

Two days after he had returned to Jiaye City, Lian Shun suddenly remembered something else. So, he went to find Nian Jincheng, only to discover Nian Jincheng pushing Yang Yu on a swing as soon as he entered the courtyard...

How childish... while Lian Shun ridiculed him internally, he was already starting to fantasize about pushing Ying Ying on the swing. It appeared at odds, as if it would be more fitting if Ying Ying were the one pushing him instead.

Seeing Lian Shun, Nian Jincheng held Yang Yu tight, causing the swing to halt.

“What’s the matter?” Nian Jincheng asked twice.

Lian Shun returned to his senses, “I suddenly remembered something and came to ask you. Any news from Ren Dong?”

Nian Jincheng shook his head, “No. She went to Xiangyue City. If everything went smoothly, she should be back soon.”

Lian Shun sighed, “I’m not sure what will happen. If she returns, she should come to say hello to us.” Turning around, he waved his hand, “If there’s nothing else, continue your game, I’m going to patrol now.”

According to his calculation, at this moment, Situ Jing would have reached the capital city, and the marriage between Situ Yao and her beloved would have happened. The wedding delegation from Yin Country had also passed Jiaye City a few days ago, heading to the capital city.

Lian Shun actually wanted to find Nian Jincheng for a drink and chat about Situ Jing’s situation, but seeing that sweet reunion between the couple, he thought better of it. He decided to deal with the bothersome issues alone.

Several days passed, Ren Dong hadn’t appeared, and there was no news from Ying Ying either. Meanwhile, news from the capital kept arriving: Situ Yao entered the palace, bestowed as Liang Imperial Concubine, the emperor doted on her immensely, and even due to her refusal to participate in morning court, the second prince and King Yue’s eldest grandson of Liang Country had left the capital and embarked on the road back to Liang Country...

As for the issues concerning Duanmu Chen and Situ Yao, Lian Shun didn’t care. If Duanmu Chen was the type of emperor who would be blinded by beauty, Gu Ling and Su Liang wouldn’t have helped him ascend to the throne. Rumors couldn’t be trusted, if they were indeed true, there must be something strange in it.

What caught Lian Shun’s attention was that Situ Jing had left the capital after arriving, which meant Xing Ji, who never gave up on him, didn’t manage to successfully reconcile the relationship between him, Su Liang, and Gu Ling.

Lian Shun knew that Xing Ji wouldn’t leave Situ Jing unattended. He must hope that Situ Jing won’t return to Liang Country, but instead stay in Qian Country with him. But he also lived with Su Liang, so Su Liang needed to agree. From the looks of it, it seemed that there was no hope.

Lian Shun’s mood was somewhat complicated.

The incident that happened four months ago in Jiaye city was unexpected. Now, looking back at it, Su Liang should have known the gender of the baby in her belly.

Lian Shun had long since calmed down. He often recalled the first time he met “Che Yun”. The friendship between the two was initiated by Lian Shun. He took the initiative to find Situ Jing because he was always running around, and Situ Jing was in the army in Xuanbei City, unable to go anywhere.

As such, there never existed such a thing as Situ Jing intentionally approaching Lian Shun, deceiving his sentiments, and using him to achieve unmentionable secret goals.

Only now, Lian Shun finally understood why Situ Jing, when he was quiet, always seemed a bit gloomy, and sometimes it was even hard to hide his sadness and suppression.

Initially, Lian Shun didn't doubt and thought, "Che Yun" couldn't relax or cheer up because he lost his little brother when he was young and his parents' health was not good.

After the truth came out, everything became clear.

Lian Shun also knew that even without Situ Jing, General Yuan would die in Situ Xie's meticulously planned scheme, and even Yuan Pei would get into trouble. Although Lin's family had faced a disaster, in the end, there were no other consequences except for Lian Shan's memory loss, and everyone was still alive.

It's undeniable that the people who destroyed Situ Xie's scheme were not only Su Liang and Gu Ling, but also Situ Jing. Although Lian Shun still thought he was ill, from the results, Situ Jing indeed ruined Situ Xie's plan to protect the Lin Family members. This directly led to the situation where Liang Country had no opportunity to join hands with Yin Country, Situ Jing was captured, and Situ Yao had to marry far away from home.

After his anger had subsided, Lian Shun couldn't help but wonder, if that man could still be saved. Even if he intended to use him, asking him to atone for his actions, would he turn back...

Lian Shun was a little torn, but he respected Su Liang and Gu Ling's decision and let things be. He did what he had to do and waited for Ying Ying to return.

The capital city.

On this day, Gu Ling and Su Liang went to the Lin Mansion to pay a visit and saw Yuan Pei was also there. He was now studying at the Imperial College, a student of Lin Shuzhi, and got along well with the two Lin brothers. He often came over to the Lin's for meals. Of course, he didn't sever ties with Lin's family either. He always stayed at the Lin's when he was not at the academy, regardless of whether his marriage with Lian Shan was still possible. The Lin household was his closest family.

After the meal, Yuan Pei was about to leave to return to the Imperial College when Su Liang halted him, saying that she had something to discuss with him.

They went to the garden together and sat down. Yuan Pei was puzzled, unsure of what it could be.

Su Liang began speaking, mentioning the second prince of Liang Country, Situ Jing, who had left a few days ago. She informed Yuan Pei that he would become a military commander of Qian Country again, leading soldiers to guard the border in Xuanbei City.

As soon as he heard the beginning, Yuan Pei frowned, but he didn't interrupt Su Liang. When she finished, he asked, "Is that man trustworthy?"

Su Liang nodded, "Yes, he is. Moreover, there's a master keeping an eye on him."

"Are you referring to his grandfather?" Yuan Pei asked.

Su Liang nodded again, "Yes, he's also my master."

"It was the same person who took you away from Jiaye City, I know." Yuan Pei sighed, "I was just a bit surprised, please don't take it to heart. Since he is your adopted

master, I naturally trust that there will be no issue with him. You need not tell me about this, I owe you a great deal, and I need to thank you for today's favor once again."

"This matter I and Gu Ling facilitated, once it's settled in Xuanbei City, the news will be relayed. It just so happened we met today, so I thought I should give you a heads-up." Su Liang said.

Yuan Pei nodded, "I understand. It wasn't Situ Jing who killed my grandfather, he was just a pawn. If you feel he can be of use and contribute to Qian Country, it's a good thing. In his lifetime my grandfather wished most for peace in the world. Regardless of spending his lifetime defending Qian Country's southern borders, he always fretted about the north, stating that the Situ Family of Liang Country was a pack of jackals. If they invaded Qian Country's land, they wouldn't treat the common people kindly."

"It's good that you're thinking like this. Sooner or later, we will make sure Situ Xie pays for his blood debt." Su Liang said earnestly.

Hearing the words "blood debt", Yuan Pei was reminded of the scene atop the Nancheng Building in Jiaye City, when Su Liang made him personally behead Fan Tong. He looked at Su Liang with a slight smile, "I believe if you say it, you can do it. I look forward to seeing what Situ Xie will feel when he learns that the grandson he carefully nurtured has chosen to stay in Qian Country and will lead troops against Liang Country in the future."

"Let's wish him many bouts of spitting blood then." Su Liang said.

When Gu Ling and Su Liang were about to leave, they saw Xing Yusheng and Lin Xueqing coming.

As soon as Xing Yusheng saw Su Liang, he said, "The emperor has sent someone to ask for my grandmother to come to the palace. I wonder what has happened again."

"If they didn't ask you to go, it's probably not a big deal." Su Liang said.

Xing Yusheng sighed in exasperation, "It really is never a moment's peace." His sister the empress, always up to some mischief again. Xing Yusheng suspected it might have something to do with the recently adored Imperial Concubine from Liang, Situ Yao, but did not share such thoughts with Su Liang as he deemed it unnecessary.

At this moment, the old matriarch Xing was in the palace of Empress Xing Yuyan, watching as she sobbed and wiped away her tears. As for why Duanmu Chen sent her in, it was because Xing Yuyan refused to eat for two meals, complaining she had lost her appetite. As she was carrying the Dragon Seed, this concerned Duanmu Chen.

"Grandmother, those previous matters, were all mother's idea, I really didn't know it would turn out like this...," Xing Yuyan sobbed out her words.

The old matriarch Xing frowned, "How many times have I told you, do not utter a word about that issue again! No matter how confused your mother was, she was still your mother. She's already gone, why still bring this up?"

Xing Yuyan seemed to choke on her sobs, paused a moment, then cried again, “Ever since the princess from Liang came into the palace, the emperor stopped coming over to my side... Grandmother, what am I to do?”

The old matriarch Xing scolded her, “You’re pregnant, what purpose does the emperor have coming here? The emperor has a myriad of businesses to attend to and you expect him to come and placate you?”

Xing Yuyan shook her head, her voice noticeably lower, “That’s not what I mean... The emperor has been smitten by that woman from Liang, it’s not good. Ask Su Liang to persuade the emperor, even if... even if he doesn’t come to see me, he cannot always be with that woman, what if she is a spy?”

Old matriarch Xing massaged her forehead, “If you can think of this, wouldn’t the emperor have already considered it? Don’t outsmart yourself. Whether the Imperial Concubine from Liang is a spy or not, it’s none of your business. Su Liang isn’t one of our own, you can’t count on her for everything, especially your affairs. If it weren’t for the emperor’s respect for Su Liang, it wouldn’t have been just your mother who died last time.”

Xing Yuyan stiffened, “The emperor was clearly considering that my father was guarding the borders...”

The old matriarch Xing hummed lightly, “Your father may be called back any day now. He’s not a young man anymore, the emperor is more interested in the younger, talented group.”

Xing Yuyan looked alarmed, “How can it be like this? If father isn’t leading the troops anymore, wouldn’t the emperor dislike me even more?”

The old matriarch Xing was really irritated when she heard this, “You only think of yourself, not concerned about how hard or dangerous it is for your father in the north?”

Xing Yuyan wanted to justify herself, but she wasn’t good with words, so what came out only irked the old matriarch Xing more.

As the elder, the old matriarch Xing cooled down and repeatedly admonished Xing Yuyan to not cause trouble and to eat and rest well, stating that care for her child was of utmost importance. When the emperor visited, greeting him with a smiling face was necessary, as was finding pastimes like reading and writing when he didn’t. As long as she didn’t create another scene, no one in the palace could supersede her.

After the old matriarch Xing left the palace, she couldn’t help but tell her long-serving nanny, “Yusheng’s health isn’t good. Those years ago, I could only take care of him and didn’t properly discipline my other grandchildren. Jiyi was overly indulgent with her daughter... Who would have thought that she could become the Empress! I do not know what the future holds.”

The nanny advised the old matriarch Xing to be at peace, and that the children and grandchildren would have their own destinies to fulfill.

But the old matriarch Xing shook her head and replied with a bitter smile, “From what I see, the only fortunate grandchild is Yusheng. He has suffered much in his past but met benefactors later on, he’s the one who reassures me most.”

Xuanbei City.

When the wedding party from Liang Country passed through, Situ Jing had once drunkenly sought out Xing Ji for a few words.

Now, Situ Jing and Situ Jing had returned to Xuanbei City with their entourage. Because they arrived at night, Situ Jing proposed staying overnight and continuing in the morning. However, Situ Jing, being affected by previous events, disagreed and wished to return to the boundaries of Liang Country as soon as possible. His opposition was to no avail.

When Xing Ji saw them, he received them with professionalism and arranged for their stay.

Liang Country's Nanping City had received the news and sent troops to greet the second prince and the eldest son of King Yue's Mansion, fearing they might be detained again.

Xing Ji got news of Liang Country's mobilization of troops, and suggested not to panic, letting them come and wait. The troops of Liang Country would certainly not make any rash moves before Situ Jing and Situ Jing safely left Xuanbei City.

Seeing the sudden appearance of Qiu Cong, Xing Ji was neither worried nor surprised. He knew Qiu Cong had once captured Su Liang and had later become one of her masters, having previously stayed in the Su Mansion in the capital with his granddaughter. This time he traveled north with Situ Jing, leaving his granddaughter in the Su Mansion.

Therefore, when Xing Ji saw Qiu Cong accompanying Situ Jing, he made a guess.

However, when Qiu Cong handed over Duanmu Chen's secret order to Xing Ji, Xing Ji realized he had guessed wrong. He had thought that Su Liang had instructed Qiu Cong to assassinate Situ Xie in Liang Country, but instead they wanted to keep Situ Jing, and Duanmu Chen had agreed.

"What does Marquis Xing think?" Qiu Cong was very polite. "Xiao Liang asked me to say hello to you, hoping that you could take this opportunity to have a break and visit your family in the capital."

Xing Ji read the secret order twice and confirmed its authenticity. Regarding the opportunity to redeem Situ Jing by his meritorious service, Xing Ji had no objections. After all, it was he who first highly praised and promoted Situ Jing in Xuanbei city. He was indeed an outstanding talent.

If Su Liang thought he could be used, Xing Ji wouldn't doubt it.

Pocketing the secret order, Xing Ji poured two glasses of alcohol, handed one to Qiu Cong and said, "Thank you, my senior. I need to go home and check in."

Having heard this, Qiu Cong's eyebrows relaxed, "You can be assured that I will keep a close eye on my grandson. If he dares make the same mistake again, I will be the first one who won't spare him!"

Xing Ji toasted Qiu Cong with a smile and said, "I trust you." being Su Liang's master, he wouldn't do anything to harm her.

After several rounds of drinks, Qiu Cong asked Xing Ji, "Once it's dawn and Liang Country realizes my grandson has ferociously slapped their face, will they retaliate?"

Xing Ji shook his head, "My senior, do not worry. They don't dare to recklessly send troops, let alone Situ Xie's grandson is still in the city."

Upon hearing this, Qiu Cong looked disappointed and said, "I wish they would attack as soon as possible. Then I would be able to put on my armor and teach those Liang country scoundrels a lesson!"

Xing Ji chuckled, "There will be opportunities. You should be careful in the future though, Situ Xie won't easily let it go once he hears the news."

Qiu Cong snorted dismissively, "If he dares, let him come!"

"There's a poisoner on his side." Xing Ji reminded.

Qiu Cong shook his head, "That poison woman is no longer in Liang Country. Xiaoliang has prepared many treasures for me, and I was worried about not having a place to use them. Let Situ Xie quickly send assassins to kill me!"

Xing Ji:... It's said that this man is the true inheritor of the Luoying Swordsmanship, and was once Gu Ling's master. Indeed, with real strength comes confidence.

After talking with Xing Ji, Qiu Cong brought Situ Jing over.

"Marquis." Like in the past, Situ Jing greeted Xing Ji with a salute.

Xing Ji sighed deeply, "Not everyone who takes the wrong path gets the chance to turn back. You should treasure this opportunity."

Chapter 366: Do not admit

It was only the end of July, and the weather in Xuanbei City was already much cooler than in the capital city.

There was a heavy fog in the early morning. When Situ Jing woke up, he received news that the Liang Country's troops from Nanping City had arrived last night to escort him and Situ Jing back to their country, and they had been waiting outside the city for half the night.

This news was conveyed by Xing Ji's men, but they were instructed to wait until Situ Jing woke up before telling him.

Situ Jing was annoyed because he didn't want to stay in Xuanbei City last night. After packing up, he went to find Situ Jing, intending to leave as soon as possible.

There was no response when he knocked on the door, and Situ Jing's attendant said that he hadn't seen his master leave.

After calling out three times and still hearing no movement inside, Situ Jing had a bad feeling, so he ordered someone to break down the door.

As the door was opened, Situ Jing called out again, "Second Prince? Are you alright?"

Unexpectedly, a voice came from the direction of the courtyard entrance, "Looking for me?"

Situ Jing frowned, then saw Situ Jing walking into the courtyard through the morning fog, followed by his grandfather Qiao Cong. They were both wearing different clothes than yesterday.

“When did the Second Prince go out? These servants don’t even know.” Situ Jing smiled, “It’s about time. Let’s get on our way.”

Situ Jing nodded, “Let’s go.”

Situ Jing was stunned, “Isn’t the Second Prince going to pack his things?” Although there were servants to serve him, Situ Jing never let them touch his belongings.

“It’s already prepared.” Situ Jing said.

Qiao Cong looked impatient, “Are you going or not? Stop dawdling!”

Situ Jing lowered his eyes, “Second Prince and senior Qiao, please wait a moment.” He was very anxious, but he thought that Situ Jing would at least have breakfast before leaving.

Soon, the Liang Country’s troops were ready to depart.

Xing Ji didn’t show up, but sent a subordinate general to see them off.

From their residence to the north gate of Xuanbei City, Situ Jing’s heart was in suspense. The last time he came to pick up the bride, he was forcibly “invited” back by Xing Ji just before leaving the city.

Situ Jing couldn’t help but look at Situ Jing, who was riding on a horse with a calm expression. Qiao Cong was looking around, as if he was seeing the scenery of Xuanbei City for the first time. At the end of the procession were two carriages, each carrying a coffin.

The soldiers who carried the coffins onto the carriages today felt that they were lighter than yesterday, but Situ Jing was urging them impatiently, so no one dared to say anything.

“Open the city gate!” At the command, the north gate of Xuanbei City was slowly opened.

As the morning fog cleared, Situ Jing saw the imposing Liang Country army and the high-flying Liang Country flag outside the city gate, and he felt relieved.

The procession slowly left the city gate, and Situ Jing heard the heavy closing of the city gate behind him. They were approaching the Liang Country’s army.

“Greetings to Second Prince!” The leading Liang Country general knelt down and saluted.

Following that, the entire Liang Country army knelt down like a tide, bowing to Situ Jing.

Situ Jing lowered his head, took two steps back, and clenched his fists. As Situ Xie’s grandson, he was even more rightful, but he was being held back by others, and this feeling was not pleasant.

Qiao Cong stood beside Situ Jing, looking at the kneeling Liang Country army, and snorted coldly.

Xing Ji, along with several generals from Xuanbei City, appeared on the city building behind them, looking down at the scene below. Apart from him, the other generals did not know what Situ Jing was planning to do next.

After a while, seeing that Situ Jing did not speak to let everyone stand up, Situ Jing approached with a frown and whispered a reminder, “Second prince, we cannot stay here for long, we need to leave as soon as possible.”

Situ Jing turned his head, glanced at Situ Jing, and his indifferent eyes made Situ Jing feel a little uneasy.

Soon, Situ Jing withdrew his gaze and looked around. He said loudly, “I was sent to Xuanbei City by Situ Xie as a spy since I was young, and he didn’t raise me but killed my foster parents and their family.”

Situ Jing’s face changed dramatically, “What are you talking about, second prince?”

Today, so many people are witnesses. In the past, I was not a native of Liang Country. Now, whoever wants to be the second prince of Liang can be one; I don’t want to be one anymore!” Situ Jing said coldly. This line was designed by Qiao Cong, and he had to say it this way.

All the soldiers of Liang had darkened faces, and the soldiers of Qian Country on the city building of Xuanbei City, except for Xing Ji, were also dumbfounded.

From today on, I will follow my mother’s surname and change my name to Qiao Jing, and I will have nothing to do with the Situ Family!”

Qiao Cong looked pleased. He really hated the Situ Family who had hurt his daughter, but he did not ask his grandson to change his surname. It was Situ Jing who wanted to change his name to Qiao Jing. He could no longer use the name Che Yun. The character Jing, which was chosen by Situ Xiang, was retained.

Second Prince, do you really want to do this?” Situ Jing’s face turned extremely ugly. He didn’t understand why, since Situ Jing was planning to betray Liang Country, he still came here? Why didn’t he simply stay in the capital city of Qian Country?

“What? Do you want to arrest me and bring me back?” Qiao Jing looked at Situ Jing with a half-smile, “You come over, and try it.”

Situ Jing was so angry that he almost spat blood, knowing that Qiao Jing was very strong and he couldn’t beat him. Moreover, the Qian Country army was behind them, and even if Liang Country dared to start a war rashly, they would have no advantage fighting under the walls of Qian Country!

Situ Jing saw Qiao Jing about to leave and turned to look at the two coffins at the back of the team, shouting loudly, “Do you not even want the remains of your foster parents? You want to return to Qian Country, do you think Qian Country will accept you, and Emperor Qian will still trust you?”

From the city building came Xing Ji’s voice, “Qian Country welcomes General Qiao to abandon darkness and join us.”

Hearing the name “General Qiao,” Situ Jing was struck by thunder! Xing Ji would not dare to make a hasty decision, which meant that Qiao Jing had already talked to Duanmu Chen while in the capital city! This meant that Su Liang and Gu Ling had also accepted him! This was completely beyond Situ Xie’s expectations and a change that Situ Jing could never have imagined!

With this, the dignity of the Liang royal family was once again trampled on by the people of Qian Country. What a brilliant move to abandon darkness and join Qian Country! Even the prince of

Liang Country was going to pledge loyalty to Qian Country, and even help Qian Country fight their wars, against Liang Country!

“The coffins contain gifts for your grandfather; please help me take them back.” As soon as Qiao Jing finished speaking, he jumped onto the city building of Xuanbei City with Qiao Cong.

The generals of Qian Country looked at each other. Although they were all shocked, they knew by this point that Qiao Jing had been passed by their Emperor. Since the Emperor trusted him, they naturally had nothing more to say. Moreover, everything that had just happened had been really refreshing! Seeing the suffocating expressions on the faces of the people from Liang Country was absolutely satisfying!

It was said that the Yin royal family was the most treacherous, but the facts proved that the Liang royal family was just as sinister.

What could be more humiliating for Liang Country than the betrayal of Emperor Liang’s own son to join Qian Country? At least not for now.

Qiao Jing stood next to Xing Ji, and Qiao Cong couldn’t help but laugh. Good, very good, this was exactly what he wanted.

In the meantime, Situ Jing had already sent someone to open the two coffins that were pulled out of Xuanbei City.

Instead of Che’s father and mother’s bodies in the coffins, there were two spirit tablets. One of them had Situ Xie’s name on it, and the other had Situ Han’s name.

If Qiao Jing hated Situ Xie the most, Qiao Cong hated Situ Han the most. He hadn’t gone to Liang Country to kill people yet, but it didn’t mean he didn’t want to kill Situ Han.

Seeing the situation, Situ Jing turned green with anger and drew his sword to cut the two spirit tablets and even the coffins.

But the most hateful thing was that even though Qiao Jing had made a very good and “filial” drama in front of the armies of both countries, humiliating the Liang royal family, no one in Liang Country dared to do anything to him, including Situ Jing.

The only thing he could do at that moment was to persuade Situ Jing to turn back, but he knew it was impossible to persuade him, and saying one more word would only humiliate himself.

“Leave!” Situ Jing yelled angrily.

The army of Liang Country slowly began to move.

Situ Jing rode a short distance and looked back, his gaze towards Qiao Jing who was standing on the city wall of Xuanbei City. He had a lot to say, but once the words reached his mouth, he swallowed them back. At this point, no matter what he said, good or bad, it would just become a joke.

As soon as he turned his head, Situ Jing heard Qiao Cong shouting, “Tell Situ Xie and Situ Han to wash their necks and wait, sooner or later this old man will chop them down!”

Situ Jing ordered to speed up. Although he actually had no authority to command the army of Liang Country, no one cared at the moment, they all just wanted to leave as soon as possible.

In fact, Situ Jing didn't want Qiao Jing to return to Liang Country as a prince, because he thought that Qiao Jing was not wholeheartedly loyal to the Liang Royal Family and had caused trouble in the past, being uncontrollable.

The result seemed to be what Situ Jing wanted, but the process was the greatest humiliation he had ever faced in his life, making his hatred for Qiao Jing reach its peak. With a little calmness, he thought that Duanmu Chen's decision to keep Qiao Jing and even let him lead the army showed no intention of reconciling with Liang Country. Situ Yao's marriage alliance was evidently meaningless to Duanmu Chen, other than gifting him a beauty!

After watching the disappearance of the Liang Country's army in the distance, the generals of Qian Country's Xuanbei City returned to the military camp's meeting hall.

Xing Ji conveyed Duanmu Chen's will and then let Qiao Jing say a few words.

Qiao Jing stood up, acknowledging his past mistakes, and hoped that everyone would forgive him and give him a chance to make amends. He then once again expressed his determination to completely separate from the Situ family.

Most of the people in attendance had worked with Qiao Jing before, including his former superiors and comrades who had started as ordinary soldiers and made their way up to generals with him.

As everyone was expressing their welcomes, a discordant voice came from a veteran general, "General Xing, what if he's playing us again, trying to gain our trust while still secretly helping Liang Country? This is the border, and we cannot tolerate any suspicious people here!"

Xing Ji didn't speak, but Qiao Jing sighed, "General Liu's concern is justified. My background and previous actions easily make me suspicious. However, since the Emperor trusts me and is willing to give me another chance, I will not fail his trust. I swear that if I ever help the Situ family again, I shall be childless and cursed, struck by thunder, and die a horrible death!"

People in this world believe in oaths, especially those that curse themselves with poison.

Seeing this, General Liu frowned, "In that case, I hope you don't forget your oath!"

Qiao Cong wanted to say something, but Qiao Jing stopped him. Some things had to be said clearly by himself. After experiencing the previous events, he understood more than ever the importance of sincerity in dealing with people.

Qiao Jing buried Che father and Che mother in the Che family cemetery in Xuanbei City, placing in the coffins the clothes that their two sons had worn as children, which Che mother had treasured for many years. As for the corpses and bones of Che Yun and Che Xiao, they were nowhere to be found by now.

After finishing this, Qiao Jing let go of the guilt and resentment he had harbored in his heart towards the Che family.

In his secret decree, Duanmu Chen said that Xing Ji would decide Qiao Jing's position.

Xing Ji began to hand over his job to Qiao Jing from the start, which made Qiao Jing feel uneasy, "I am grateful that everyone is willing to give me a chance, but appointing me as Marquis would not convince everyone, right?"

Xing Ji shook his head, "I know your abilities, so I made such arrangements. There are too few people who can stand on their own in Xuanbei City now. Since you have decided to start over, don't be afraid of gossip, just do what you need to do and the rest, time will prove."

Qiao Jing's expression became serious, "Thank you, Marquis, for your trust. I will not disappoint."

Qiao Cong laughed, "In that case, Marquis Xing can go home soon."

Xing Ji nodded, "Indeed, that's one of the considerations." Then he sighed, "It's shameful to say, when I was young, I always wanted to make a name for myself, but I failed to manage even my own family's affairs. If it weren't for Xiaoliang's help these past two years, I don't know what my home would have become. Ajing, as someone who's been through it all, let me give you some advice. In matters of relationships, don't hesitate or get bogged down in indecision. Sometimes, making one wrong step can take a lifetime to make up for."

Qiao Jing knew that Xing Ji must have been thinking of his two deceased wives.

"That's right," Qiao Cong agreed, "I've heard about some of your family's problems, and as the head of the household, you should bear the main responsibility. Your mother had to worry so much in her old age."

Hearing this, Xing Ji was even more ashamed.

Qiao Jing sighed, "I was really ignorant, making my grandfather worry so much."

Qiao Cong patted Qiao Jing's shoulder, "It's all in the past. If I hadn't met Xiaoliang, I would still be clueless!"

The news that the second prince of Liang, who was once trained as a spy, had completely betrayed the Liang Country and defected to Qian Country, rising to the rank of guard general of Xuanbei City, was rapidly circulating throughout the world.

Xing Ji only handed over his duties to Qiao Jing for five days before he set off with Qi Jiang, leaving Xuanbei City and rushing back to the capital day and night.

After Miao Family's death, Xing Ji had completely lost his former ambition and was just waiting for an opportunity to return home, take care of his mother, and raise his children.

Qiao Jing was the opportunity that Xing Ji had been waiting for.

Capital City of Qian Country.

On the day the princess of Yin Country arrived, Su Liang and Gu Ling went to a restaurant to watch the excitement. She asked Gu Ling if he knew the princess, and Gu Ling said that he had only met her once and that she looked very timid.

While Su Liang's attention was focused on the princess's extravagant carriage, Gu Ling glanced through the open window and made eye contact with an old man in grey clothes among the bustling crowd below.

As soon as he looked away, the old man disappeared into the crowd.

“Great God, what’s wrong?” Su Liang saw Gu Ling frowning and asked puzzled.

“There was someone below just now.” Gu Ling recalled the old man’s ordinary appearance, which didn’t stand out, but he was sure that he wasn’t an ordinary person, and he was watching Su Liang before being noticed.

Su Liang’s expression was inexplicable, “Could it be that the person who sent me the note last time has reappeared?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “I don’t know. If another transmigrator really comes to you, don’t admit it.”

Su Liang was stunned, “If I really meet a ‘fellow villager’, denial is useless.”

Gu Ling looked at the crowd below, “Just say that I am the transmigrator, and everything you know that doesn’t belong to this world, you learned from me.”

“It depends on the situation.” Su Liang sighed softly, “I hope it’s not as we guessed. Otherwise, the other party is so mysterious, never exposed, but still comes looking for us. It doesn’t seem like something good.”

When they returned home, Gu Ling seriously discussed with Su Liang what kind of past life identity and background a transmigrator like him should have.

Although the existence of a “fellow villager” targeting Su Liang was just a guess made by her and Gu Ling, Gu Ling was very cautious about it, determined to create a perfect story for Su Liang as a cover.

Su Liang found it fascinating, whether it would be useful or not.

“Well, Great God, just think about it. If you were to travel to the modern society, what kind of profession would you like to pursue?” Su Liang asked with a smile.

Gu Ling was thinking seriously when he heard Su Liang say, “Great God, you could also be a woman in your previous life.”

Gu Ling frowned, “You mean, set it up as if I am a man with a woman’s heart now?”

Su Liang coughed lightly, “It’s possible, but it’s a bit weird. Let’s rule this out. How about we make it simple? Great God, you are me. You used to be a military doctor, and your family background is the same as mine, so there won’t be any flaws. You basically know all the medical skills I do.”

Gu Ling nodded, “That’s fine. Next, you’ll teach me some things that are not very useful here, such as music, painting, history, geography, political science, and so on.”

Su Liang smiled, “Great God, with your tone and choice of words, you really seem more like a transmigrator than I do without pretending. But some of the knowledge I’ve learned, I don’t remember as clearly anymore, so I’ll teach you whatever I think of.”

Chapter 367: 367. Imperial Concubine Yan

“The princess of Yin Country for the marriage alliance has arrived, but there’s still no news from Ren Dong. I wonder how she’s doing.” Su Liang sighed lightly.

Much to their surprise, as soon as her words fell, Qi Jun’s voice came from outside, filled with jubilation, “Master, Ren Dong is back!”

Before long, Su Liang saw Ren Dong. She was much thinner than when she’d left, but she seemed uninjured, her complexion was decent, and a tall, sturdy young man followed behind her. He was likely the younger brother, Bai Yang, she’d set off to find on this trip.

“Master, your subordinate is back,” Ren Dong saluted, then pulled the young man behind her forward, “Bai Yang, this is the Master.”

Bai Yang had a handsome countenance, and his behavior still carried traces of an imperial guard. He stepped forward and bowed deeply, although he didn’t address Su Liang as Master per Ren Dong’s lead, “I am grateful to Divine Doctor Su for taking care of my sister.”

Su Liang didn’t find Bai Yang’s behavior disrespectful. She had sent Ren Dong to find Bai Yang not because she wanted another subordinate to order around.

Seeing Ren Dong furrow her brows and tug Bai Yang, as if reminding him not to act rashly, Su Liang thought it was clear that the siblings hadn’t come to an agreement on certain things during their journey back.

“You must be tired from your journey. Please sit down. Qi Jun, bring the tea.” Su Liang had already noticed Qi Jun lurking at the door.

“Yes!” Qi Jun answered.

Ren Dong pulled Bai Yang to sit down, only to hear Su Liang ask, “Did Shaoyao go to Yin Country to give you trouble?” If Shaoyao had found Bai Yang before Ren Dong, or if they’d bumped into each other, things likely wouldn’t have gone this smoothly.

Bai Yang nodded, “She didn’t appear.”

Su Liang looked at Ren Dong. If Shaoyao hadn’t gone looking for Bai Yang, they should have been able to return much sooner.

Ren Dong sighed, “After leaving Xiangyue City with Bai Yang, I wanted to check out the valley Master mentioned on our way back. I didn’t expect there to be an array in the valley. We got lost before we could find Madam Yue’s hideout and were trapped.”

“An array?” Su Liang frowned. Gu Ling knew a bit about this subject, but only from collecting related records from ancient texts. To her, this all seemed a bit absurd.

“It was a place like a maze, with dense trees and multiple paths, and no way to find the exit,” Ren Dong described what they had seen.

Now that didn’t sound so mystical. Su Liang had seen mazes like that on TV in her previous life.

“There were many poisonous creatures inside. Fortunately, we had the medicine Master gave us. We were trapped for seven days but eventually made our way out,”

said Ren Dong. "However, we didn't find Madam Yue's hideout or Miss Ying. We took a detour, so we were delayed in our return."

"As long as you're alright, it doesn't matter." Su Liang told Ren Dong that Ying Ying was okay and that she'd gone to find her younger brother again, but there was still no news.

Qi Jun brought the tea over and covertly evaluated Bai Yang.

After a while, Ren Dong took Bai Yang away to clean up and rest.

"Master, do you think there's a chance that something more...intimate...might develop between those two siblings?" After much hesitation, Qi Jun asked Su Liang.

Su Liang rolled her eyes at him, "Although they aren't blood related, you're overthinking things. They've been siblings since they were young; they're family. If you like Ren Dong, you should confess your feelings soon. Now that her brother is back, she might impulsively agree to be with you."

Qi Jun's eyes lit up, then he coughed lightly, "What do you mean she might impulsively agree to be with me? Do you think we're well-matched?"

Su Liang shook her head, "It doesn't matter what I think, as long as you both feel you're well-matched, that's what counts."

She wasn't surprised that Qi Jun had developed feelings for Ren Dong. The familiarity born of spending a lot of time together often leads to affection. People often limit their romantic pursuits to those within their social circle, because they have little to no interaction with outsiders, making dating impossible.

Even the relationship between Su Liang and Gu Ling was a product of this circumstance. After living together for a long time and finding themselves compatible, they gradually went from friends to lovers.

"Wish me luck." Gathering his courage, Qi Jun ran off.

Su Liang asked Gu Ling what he thought about Bai Yang.

Gu Ling shook his head, "I don't know him well enough."

"Understandable. It seems he doesn't plan on staying at Su Mansion, he likely has other plans." Su Liang surmised.

Having plans was a good thing. It would be strange for a strong, young man with great martial arts skills, who had just escaped being a spy, to resign himself to being a servant. Although Ren Dong thought following Su Liang was a good choice, Bai Yang was not her.

Later, when Ren Dong came to find Su Liang, she let out a sigh as soon as she spoke, "Bai Yang wants to be a palace guard."

Su Liang raised an eyebrow, "Does he particularly like this job, or is there another reason? If he wants to make a name for himself, why not join the army?"

“Maybe he’s just used to that kind of life. He tends to be quiet and not very sociable, so joining the army might not suit him,” Ren Dong said helplessly. “I wanted him to stay and follow you, but he wants to do something on his own and not rely on others. He’s always been headstrong, and I can’t persuade him. But I think it’s better this way. We’re all in the capital. It’s not like we’re far apart. What do you think, Master?”

Su Liang nodded, “There’s nothing wrong with that. If one can get the emperor’s favor as a palace guard, the future won’t be bad.”

Ren Dong cheered up, “If you approve, then there’s no problem.” She hadn’t planned to let Bai Yang benefit from Su Liang’s palace connection, but to make him find Duanmu Chen himself.

Su Liang chuckled, telling her not to worry about many things, to take good care of her health and to regain her weight lost during her trip.

After Ren Dong left, Su Liang discussed Bai Yang’s situation with Gu Ling, “I might be overthinking, but I always feel there is more to his wanting to join the guard than he led on. We need to first exclude the possibility that he was turned by the royal family of Yin Empire and that he returned as a spy for them.”

After all, Bai Yang’s previous disguise as a spy in the Yin Imperial Palace was as a guard.

“The emperor will take all these into consideration and investigate thoroughly.” Gu Ling advised Su Liang not to worry about Bai Yang’s matters as he was fostered by Duanmu Yi and now wanted to serve Duanmu Chen.

“That’s right. Let it be then.” Su Liang nodded, “I wonder when Qi Jun is planning his declaration of love and if he’ll be rejected.”

By evening, as Ren Dong went out, she saw a figure swaying outside the courtyard.

“Do you need anything from me?” Ren Dong wasn’t surprised when she saw Qi Jun. As the only two guards of Su Mansion, the two were used to frequent exchanges.

Startled by the sound of Ren Dong’s voice next to him, Qi Jun looked up to see she’d already come over, “Um...indeed I do have something.”

Ren Dong nodded, “Speak.”

Qi Jun seriously proposed, “Let’s talk about it in the garden.”

“Why?” Ren Dong looked around, “There’s no one here.”

“It has to be in the garden.” After leaving these words, Qi Jun turned around and walked away, “Hurry up.”

Ren Dong silently followed, not questioning further.

The sunset in the west, with dusk painting half the sky red.

Qi Jun walked to a large banyan tree in the garden, turning to face Ren Dong in the fading sunlight, which lit up half his face.

Ren Dong expression remained unchanging, looking like she was patiently waiting to hear him out.

Qi Jun took a deep breath, breaking into a handsome smile, "Miss Ren Dong, I'm fond of you, and I want you to be my wife."

Ren Dong was taken aback for a brief moment, then looked at Qi Jun with furrowed brows.

Qi Jun touched his face, there shouldn't be anything dirty on it. He couldn't quite understand Ren Dong's reaction; was she unhappy? Or considering?

"Why today?" Ren Dong asked.

Qi Jun was a bit confused, "What...why?"

"Why did you wait until today to confess?" Ren Dong asked seriously, "Is today a special day?"

Qi Jun blinked: ...so, Ren Dong had known for a long time that he liked her, and she had been waiting for his confession, is that it?

"Because, you've found your little brother and returned home." Qi Jun told her the truth, "Previously, you were always worried about your brother and I didn't dare to confess my feelings rashly, fearing that you'd say you're not in the frame of mind to consider it."

"Indeed." Ren Dong nodded.

"So..." Qi Jun looked at Ren Dong expectantly, "Have you agreed to be with me then?"

Ren Dong shook her head, "I didn't say anything. Why this place?"

Qi Jun was confused again, "What's wrong...with this place?"

Ren Dong frowned, "I mean, why did you insist on confessing here?"

"Oh!" Qi Jun flashed a huge grin, "When you were not at home, I found this spot, this time, to be particularly lovely with a special charm which, in our master's words, is exceedingly romantic."

Hearing the words, Ren Dong retreated a few steps back.

Looking at the sunset, the evening glow, the large banyan tree, and the man grinning underneath the tree, she nodded, "It really is a beautiful sight."

"Does that mean you've agreed to be with me?" Qi Jun asked again.

Ren Dong was about to speak when Bai Yang's voice came from a short distance, "Sister."

Ren Dong turned her head, "I'm over here."

Disappointment settled in Qi Jun's heart. As a third person joined, the romantic atmosphere was instantly shattered.

Bai Yang came over and greeted Qi Jun as 'big brother Qi'.

Qi Jun responded with a slight nod. Then, he heard Ren Dong ask Bai Yang about his business.

"I haven't been back to the capital for many years, I wanted to go out and look around." Bai Yang explained.

Ren Dong nodded, but Qi Jun jumped in, "I'll accompany you! I'm free!"

Bai Yang hesitated for a moment, "Wouldn't it trouble you, big brother Qi."

"We aren't strangers, why the formality?" Qi Jun shook his head, "I'll treat you to some alcohol."

"Is sister coming along?" Bai Yang asked Ren Dong.

Ren Dong shook her head, "I won't join you. Don't drink too much, be back early."

Bai Yang nodded and started walking ahead.

Qi Jun walked up next to Ren Dong, and with an earnest gaze, lowered his voice to ask, "So, it's possible right?"

Ren Dong nodded, "Yes." She then left in a different direction with a casual stride.

Qi Jun was over the moon, and upon seeing Bai Yang's confused expression, walked over to him, patted his shoulder and said with a smile, "From now on, I'll be your brother-in-law!"

Bai Yang nodded, "Oh, brother-in-law."

Qi Jun raised an eyebrow, "You agree?"

"I trust sister's judgment. She often mentioned you on our way back." Bai Yang replied.

Upon hearing this, Qi Jun could hardly contain his joy. There was no doubt about it, Ren Dong liked him as well. Today was indeed special, a perfect day for a confession!

After Qi Jun and Bai Yang had toured the city and stopped by a restaurant for drinks, he sought out Ren Dong, only to find that she was already asleep, and the lights at the Yuanming Pavilion were all off.

Wanting to share his joy with someone, Qi Jun rushed back to the Marquis Zhong Xin mansion to find his brother.

It was already late, Qi Yan was startled awake, thinking it was an intruder. Upon seeing it was Qi Jun, he kicked him away, "What's the matter?"

Qi Jun was tossed onto the floor but didn't show any irritation. He got up, grinning at Qi Yan, "Brother, I'm engaged!"

Qi Yan was taken aback, "That Miss Ren Dong? You confessed? She didn't hit you?"

Qi Jun coughed, "Why would she hit me? She likes me!"

"Alright, get out!" Qi Yan rolled back under his covers.

Qi Jun pulled the covers off Qi Yan again, "Brother, aren't you happy for me?"

Qi Yan replied with a token effort, his eyes closed, "I'm happy. Now get out!"

Qi Jun: ... He's definitely too envious to know what to say. It has to be that!

The next day, when Su Liang encountered Qi Jun, she saw him with dark circles under his eyes. Clearly, he didn't rest well the previous night.

"Were you rejected?" Su Liang asked, smiling.

Qi Jun shook his head, "Ren Dong agreed. I was thinking about the wedding all night."

"Congratulations." Su Liang gave him a thumbs up, "Your father should be back soon. Shouldn't it be better to wait for him to handle the wedding arrangements?"

Qi Jun nodded vigorously, "You're right, Master! I'll wait for my father to come back!"

Bai Yang requested to see Duanmu Chen, but Duanmu Chen didn't see him immediately. Instead, he sent Chang'an to invite Su Liang and Gu Ling to the palace.

"Is that Bai Yang trustworthy?" Duanmu Chen cut to the chase.

Gu Ling shook his head, "I don't know, I don't understand him."

Su Liang smiled, "Your Majesty can ask the Grand Emperor about the information Bai Yang provided in the past, the things he has accomplished, and judge based on that."

Duanmu Chen nodded, "I've asked. He has been performing his duties faithfully, transmitting quite a lot of news about the royal family of Yin Country, but not much of it has been very useful. After all, he's just a guard. If there's no problem with him, I want to make use of him; after all, he's a master my father personally trained."

Su Liang knew, as long as she vouched for Bai Yang, Duanmu Chen would not suspect anything. But she didn't know Bai Yang enough to make such a guarantee.

"In that case, I will assign him some tasks and judge based on his performance!" Duanmu Chen already knew Su Liang and Gu Ling's attitudes.

When she got home, Su Liang told Ren Dong about the situation.

Ren Dong didn't think it was a big deal. It's normal for the emperor to be suspicious. Su Liang indeed did not understand Bai Yang.

The next day, Bai Yang left the capital on official business.

As Su Liang speculated, Princess Ji Yueyan of Yin Country was entitled Imperial Concubine Yan on the day she entered the palace, the same rank as Situ Yao.

Before entering the palace, Ji Yueyan never showed herself, claiming to be acclimating to the local environment and resting in the post house.

Unexpectedly, Su Liang met this timid princess, whom Gu Ling described, on the night of her wedding to Duanmu Chen.

Because Duanmu Chen was injured by Ji Yueyan with a hairpin on their wedding night...

In the middle of the night, Chang'an came to invite Su Liang, and Gu Ling said he would go, but Chang'an insisted on Su Liang going too.

Thinking the situation was severe, Su Liang and Gu Ling went together.

Duanmu Chen's face didn't look good. The senior imperial physician, who had arrived earlier, had already treated his wound, which was not serious.

Imperial Concubine Yan, Ji Yueyan kneeled with her head down on the side. She was still dressed in a big red wedding dress, her body slightly trembling, but she did not cry.

A blood-stained golden hairpin was discarded on the ground.

The senior imperial physician told Su Liang about Duanmu Chen's wound. Gu Ling looked at the wound and said it was not a problem. It was not a vital spot and not much blood was lost.

Duanmu Chen waved his hand, letting the senior imperial physician leave. He had Chang'an bring Su Liang and Gu Ling not for medical help but to discuss something else.

"She came to marry me, but she won't let me touch her!" Duanmu Chen was not finished in anger, "I asked her why, and she's like a mute! Su Liang, help me ask her what exactly is she trying to do!"

Upon finishing these words, Duanmu Chen let Chang'an support him to leave.

Gu Ling frowned, telling Su Liang not to get close to Ji Yueyan.

Su Liang sat down with Gu Ling. The dragon and phoenix candles were still burning.

"Imperial Concubine Yan, is there anything you want to say?" Su Liang asked calmly.

Ji Yueyan didn't say a word, she just knelt unmovingly.

"Let me rephrase that. Do you have someone else in your heart?" Su Liang frowned. The reason Duanmu Chen didn't do anything to Ji Yueyan, but specifically asked Su Liang, was that he hadn't lost his rationality.

This couldn't possibly be an assassination of Duanmu Chen organized by the royal family of Yin Country, but rather Ji Yueyan's personal action. Given this, Duanmu Chen did not wish to make a big fuss because Qian Country wanted to seek cooperation with Yin Country to deal with Liang Country first.

Upon hearing Su Liang's words, Ji Yueyan's hand moved, but she still didn't lift her head.

"Did you ever think of the consequences of doing so? Since you didn't harm or kill yourself, it means you still want to live with the person you love, am I right?" Su Liang asked.

Finally, Ji Yueyan looked up at Su Liang. Her beauty was not as breathtaking as Situ Yao's, but she was also elegant and charming. Her eyes were red at this moment, with stubbornness and a hint of desperation.

“It seems I’ve hit the nail on the head?” Su Liang’s face remained calm, “What do you want? As the princess sent by Yin Country to marry, you should know that our emperor is not lacking in women. He can avoid touching you, but he cannot let you leave. By doing this, are you hoping to be sent into the cold palace, preserving your chastity?”

Finally, Ji Yueyan spoke, “I know you, Su Liang, the Divine Doctor Su.”

Chapter 368: 368. Little Fei is gone

The atmosphere was silent.

Su Liang watched the flame of the dragon and phoenix wedding candle, as thick as a child’s arm, flickering, waiting for Ji Yueyan to speak again.

Gu Ling picked up the blood-stained golden hairpin from the ground and carefully examined the patterns on it.

Ji Yueyan looked at Su Liang, then at Gu Ling, propped herself up with her arms, and slowly sat in a seat opposite them.

As for the servants, they had all been shooed away by Duanmu Chen at the beginning of the incident.

“What are you looking at?” Ji Yueyan asked Su Liang.

Su Liang withdrew her gaze, her expression indifferent, “Moths flying into the fire.”

Ji Yueyan glanced at the wedding candle subconsciously. There was only the flame and no moths. Even mosquitoes could hardly fly into this deep palace. Moths flying into the fire meant courting self-destruction... Her face changed suddenly, and she stared at Su Liang, “Moths... are you talking about me?”

Su Liang shook her head, “If Imperial Concubine Yin knows what she is doing, there is no need to ask.”

“What should you do if there is someone blocking your way to be together? If you were forced to marry a man you don’t love, what should you do? I was born in the royal family, so should I not have control over my own body and be at the mercy of others? You guessed it all right, I would rather be thrown into the cold palace than be touched by Emperor Qian! You think I’m seeking my own death, but as far as I’m concerned, being a canary in this harem, being possessed by a man I don’t love, having children for him, is worse than death!” Ji Yueyan spoke, her body trembling slightly, and her eyes filled with determination.

Su Liang looked at Ji Yueyan. Gu Ling’s previous impression of her had been one of cowardice, which might not necessarily have been a pretense, but she clearly regarded love as more important than anything else and was willing to sacrifice everything for it, even her life.

“Why didn’t you plan earlier?” Su Liang asked.

In Su Liang’s eyes, Ji Yueyan did not see any sympathy for her, only calm scrutiny. On the side, Gu Ling was still studying the golden hairpin, looking indifferent.

Ji Yueyan’s face was bitter, “I was imprisoned in the high walls, what plans could I make? I also had no chance to learn skills like Divine Doctor Su and work towards a better future. I have resigned myself to the marriage alliance, but now I just want a peaceful and clean life, is that too much to ask?”

“As a princess in a marriage alliance, any imperfection in your body would not be brought here,” Su Liang said calmly, “If you want to escape the fate of the marriage alliance, it’s actually very simple. You don’t need sophisticated medical skills or powerful martial arts. You just need to ‘accidentally’ burn your hand, break your leg, ruin your face, or leave a big or small scar. You’re not afraid of death, are you afraid of those? If you had done those things, you could stay in the familiar Imperial Palace of Yin Country as a noble lady, live peacefully and quietly as you wish, instead of traveling thousands of miles to the unfamiliar Imperial Palace of Qian Country and risking assassination of the Emperor of Qian Country.”

Ji Yueyan’s hands suddenly clutched the wedding dress and tugged. Although she let go quickly, Su Liang did not miss it.

“Divine Doctor Su really has an extraordinary mind. But unfortunately, I am not smart and didn’t think of that at the time,” Ji Yueyan shook her head.

Su Liang looked at Ji Yueyan and fell silent. Because she suddenly thought of another person, someone who had just returned to Qian Country from Yin Country.

Ji Yueyan was not stupid. She weighed her actions enough to count on Duanmu Chen not tearing his face with Yin Country, so she would be fine.

Therefore, Ji Yueyan couldn’t possibly have not thought of the things Su Liang mentioned. The fact that she considered them but did not act so meant that she wanted to come to Qian Country.

At this moment, Su Liang could not help but suspect that Ji Yueyan’s lover had also come to Qian Country. And the only normal men that a princess in a deep palace could have contact with were the guards of the palace besides the royal family members.

Palace guard, this word, these days, Su Liang had indeed heard quite a lot... Bai Yang had been a guard in Yin Country’s Imperial Palace before, and after returning to Qian Country, he was still determined to be a guard in the palace.

Back then, Su Liang did not find Bai Yang’s reason for entering the palace persuasive.

If Ji Yueyan and Bai Yang were lovers, it all made sense.

They had no future in Yin Country. Not to mention their difference in status, Bai Yang was also a spy of Qian Country, controlled by others, and neither of them had freedom. Bai Yang wouldn’t dare to flee on his own for Ren Dong’s safety.

Ren Dong went to look for Bai Yang around the same time when the Yin royal family chose Ji Yueyan for the marriage alliance. After Duanmu Yi was abolished, Bai Yang only needed to follow Ren Dong back to Qian Country to regain his freedom, obtain a legitimate identity with backing, while Ji Yueyan could come to Qian Country and marry. Even if they still couldn't be together, as long as Bai Yang could become a palace guard, they could still see each other and stay in touch.

Even if Ji Yueyan really entered the cold palace and gradually became neglected, Bai Yang could find a chance to elope with her. With his martial arts skills, coupled with his position as an insider in the palace, after gaining Duanmu Chen's trust, it was not impossible.

The reason why they couldn't do anything on the way to the marriage alliance was that destroying the marriage affecting the overall situation would inevitably lead to the pursuit of both the royal families of Qian and Yin Countries. Bai Yang was powerful in martial arts, but an individual's strength couldn't compare with that of the royal family.

However, after the marriage alliance was completed, Ji Yueyan was nominally Duanmu Chen's woman and the Imperial Concubine of Qian Country. If something happened to her, Duanmu Chen would try his best to cover it up for the sake of saving face and not let outsiders know.

Just like tonight, not many people knew about it. The old Imperial Physician, who had served the royal family all his life, would never spread the news. Duanmu Chen had chosen Su Liang, whom he trusted the most, to interrogate Ji Yueyan.

Bai Yang no longer needed to worry about Ren Dong, because she was now under Su Liang's protection. And because of the sibling relationship with Ren Dong, once Ren Dong begged Su Liang to let Bai Yang go, Su Liang could persuade Duanmu Chen...

Su Liang looked at Ji Yueyan, and Ji Yueyan quietly looked back at her.

Su Liang felt that if things were as she guessed, it would not be difficult to explain why Ji Yueyan showed such unusual calmness. When she saw Duanmu Chen calling Su Liang over to handle the situation immediately, Ji Yueyan should have more confidence in her and Bai Yang's plan.

As their eyes met, Ji Yueyan realized that Su Liang had seen through her. Her originally forced composure was replaced with a few more silent pleas... because she knew that as long as Su Liang mentioned Bai Yang's name here, their love and future would come to a dead end tonight.

Ji Yueyan and Bai Yang indeed needed Su Liang's help, but in their plan, before they elope, Su Liang would not find out, and no one else would find out. Even if Su Liang was unwilling to help them afterwards, they would never regret it even if they were hunted down.

Unfortunately, Ji Yueyan underestimated Su Liang's intelligence and calmness. Su Liang had no feelings for Bai Yang, who she had just met, and could not talk about trust, nor would she be moved by the tears of a princess who had grown up in the palace since childhood.

When she saw Ji Yueyan's pleading look, Su Liang knew she was right in her guess.

However, the situation was still somewhat difficult to handle. After all, Ji Yueyan and Bai Yang hadn't done the things Su Liang suspected yet. At present, Bai Yang was found by Ren Dong and served Duanmu Chen loyally, while Ji Yueyan simply didn't want to consummate her marriage with Duanmu Chen.

Su Liang couldn't drive them to a dead end simply because she discovered Ji Yueyan's feelings, and because of their elopement plan that had not yet been implemented.

But helping them, fulfilling their love as a pair of tragic lovers was also not what Su Liang was considering now. She was not a living Bodhisattva that saves people from suffering, and her current position was Duanmu Chen's confidant. She could not disregard Duanmu Chen's feelings and the dignity of the Qian Country's Royal Family.

Gu Ling threw the gold hairpin in her hand, nailing it to the table next to Ji Yueyan, scaring her.

"Let's go." Gu Ling stood up.

Su Liang didn't look at Ji Yueyan again, clasping Gu Ling's outstretched hand, and they walked out together.

The door opened, and they saw Chang'an standing outside, "His Majesty is waiting for you."

Su Liang wasn't surprised that someone was listening outside. She nodded and let Chang'an lead the way.

Ji Yueyan saw Chang'an's gaze sweeping past her through the open door and was instantly frightened in cold sweat! If Su Liang had just mentioned Bai Yang's name, the consequences would be unimaginable!

After calming down a little, Ji Yueyan thought, since Su Liang must have guessed, but didn't mention Bai Yang, did that mean she decided to help them cover up...

When Su Liang saw Duanmu Chen, he was admiring the moon in the Imperial Garden.

Chang'an brought them over and bowed his head to leave.

Duanmu Chen looked at Su Liang and Gu Ling, calling them over to sit.

Gu Ling took off her outer garment, folded it and made a cushion, and then helped Su Liang to sit down.

Duanmu Chen snorted lightly, "Are you here to provoke me?"

Addressing himself as "I" indicated that he wanted to talk to Su Liang and Gu Ling as friends.

"I'm pregnant." Su Liang yawned as she spoke.

Duanmu Chen coughed lightly, "I forgot, you are delicate now. How is it? Did she confess?"

Chang'an had heard Su Liang's conversation with Ji Yueyan but hadn't told Duanmu Chen yet. Duanmu Chen asked Su Liang first.

If Su Liang lied to Duanmu Chen, he would find out by comparing her story with Chang'an's later.

"How is Your Majesty getting along with Concubine Liang?" Su Liang asked about Situ Yao instead.

Duanmu Chen nodded, "She's not bad."

However, these words didn't seem to carry much sincerity. Su Liang knew Duanmu Chen's attitude towards women and was not surprised.

Just as Su Liang was considering how to talk to Duanmu Chen about Ji Yueyan's situation, Gu Ling spoke up first, "Ji Yueyan and Bai Yang are lovers."

Sharp and straightforward.

Su Liang's brow furrowed slightly, then quickly smoothed out. She hadn't discussed her suspicions with Gu Ling, but she wasn't surprised that Gu Ling had discovered them as well.

There must be a reason why Gu Ling spoke so bluntly.

Duanmu Chen frowned deeply, "Bai Yang? No wonder... no wonder he sought me out to become a guard in the palace! What are they trying to do? Carry out some sneaky business under my watch?"

Anger caused him to refer to himself as "I" again.

"Not necessarily," Gu Ling shook his head. "But they will likely find an opportunity to elope."

Duanmu Chen's face turned green with anger. He had met Situ Yao before their marriage and wanted to win her over. But he had no such relationship with Ji Yueyan. Tonight, he was just doing what he was supposed to: consummating the marriage with the Princess.

Duanmu Chen felt that his imperial dignity and masculinity had been seriously challenged, by Ji Yueyan and Bai Yang.

"You guys... aren't you planning to let me fulfill their wishes?" Duanmu Chen snorted coldly.

Gu Ling shook his head, "Those two have nothing to do with us."

Duanmu Chen's eyes narrowed, "If I execute them, you won't intervene?"

Gu Ling shook his head again, "Firstly, under the current situation, the Princess of Yin Country cannot have anything happen to her; secondly, this matter cannot be made public; thirdly, Your Majesty should not force a woman who loves another."

"What do you mean?" Duanmu Chen asked coldly, "I have no interest in that woman. She is also my concubine, and she must die in the palace!"

"My suggestion is," Gu Ling said indifferently, "why not let them be, and wait until the world is united."

Upon hearing the four words "unite the world," Duanmu Chen's face changed, "Didn't you say that they have nothing to do with you? What if it takes ten or twenty years more to realize the unification of the world?"

"It has nothing to do with whether they have anything to do with us or not. I'm just talking about what's right. Unifying the world won't take that long," Gu Ling said.

Su Liang would consider her feelings for Ren Dong, but Gu Ling had no personal interests, only good intentions. A helpless princess and a guard trained to be a spy since childhood would find it hard to come together. Gu Ling just didn't want to be an accomplice in destroying their hopes for the future.

Although he didn't see the black mist appearing between Bai Yang and Ji Yueyan's brows, he felt that he should do something, rather than watch them walk into a dead end just because of their love for each other.

At this moment, Duanmu Chen's anger had subsided, because what he cared about more was Gu Ling's words, "Unifying the world won't take that long."

All along, Duanmu Chen had not told Su Liang and Gu Ling about his ambitions to destroy Liang Country and Yin Country and become the sole emperor. It was not that he didn't want to, but that ambition was something to be kept to himself. Some things were more important to achieve than to speak of.

This was also the first time Gu Ling had indicated to Duanmu Chen that he would assist him in unifying the world. Although Gu Ling didn't express it like that, Duanmu Chen understood it that way, and he didn't think there would be any misunderstanding.

Compared to that, Ji Yueyan and Bai Yang were insignificant. Duanmu Chen didn't really care about the so-called dignity a woman gave to a man, or the kind of person who would feel refreshed only when Ji Yueyan died in the Qian Imperial Palace.

What's right... Duanmu Chen thought about the three words in Gu Ling's speech and found them very convincing. He had been reminding himself to do what was right and not let emotions influence his decisions in the heat of the moment.

At this moment, Duanmu Chen wondered, would killing Ji Yueyan and Bai Yang, or separating and torturing them, have any meaning for him? Would it bring him any benefits or pleasure? The answer was no, he wasn't mentally deranged.

"Su Liang," Duanmu Chen's eyes were deep, "Do you think the same way?"

Su Liang laughed softly, "They will definitely think Your Majesty is a great person."

Duanmu Chen wanted to roll his eyes, "I don't need it." But he laughed after saying that, "To tell the truth, I miss the days when I was a county official in Bei'an County. The gratitude and respect from the victims after upholding justice were more real than the admiration I get from sitting on the high Dragon Throne."

With a long sigh, Duanmu Chen stood up, "In that case, I'll be a good person this time. I probably won't have anyone who truly loves me in this life, but seeing you guys in love is nice. However, Bai Yang shouldn't think about entering the palace. Let him earn some merits first, and I'll send him to work under Nian Jincheng in the south!"

"Your Majesty is benevolent." Su Liang gave a thumbs up.

Duanmu Chen snorted lightly, "Hurry back, don't tire out my godson."

Had he not said that, Su Liang would have almost forgotten that Duanmu Chen was going to be her child's godfather. However, it was a daughter instead of a son, a fact she had yet to reveal to him.

Gu Ling and Su Liang returned home at the latter half of the night, and both soon went to bed.

Upon seeing Ren Dong the next day, Su Liang said he wanted to chat with her.

First, he asked about her relationship with Qi Jun. Ren Dong looked helpless, "I just agreed to be with him, but we haven't reached the point of getting married yet. He's too impatient."

"First get married, then fall in love wouldn't hurt," Su Liang smiled, "Let's wait until his father comes back."

Ren Dong nodded, then told Su Liang that Bai Yang's mission wasn't too far away and he would return in about three to five days if everything went well.

"When you went to Xiangyue City to find him, did you meet him and leave with him right away?" Su Liang asked.

Ren Dong was stunned for a moment before shaking her head, "When I saw Bai Yang, I wanted to take him away immediately, but he insisted that I wait for two days because he had some unfinished business. He didn't want to cause trouble for his friends in the Yin Country's Imperial Palace. Is there any problem? I believe Bai Yang will not betray Qian Country."

"But he's planning to betray the Emperor of Qian Country now." Su Liang told her the events that happened last night while Ren Dong was in shock.

After listening, Ren Dong was stunned, "Why would...he do this? Did...the emperor already know about it? Will he kill him?"

Su Liang shook his head, "He might have, but Gu Ling gave the emperor a suggestion which he adopted."

Reassured by Su Liang's words, Ren Dong said with relief, "Thank you, Master, and Master's husband!"

Upon learning about Gu Ling's suggestion and Duanmu Chen's decision, Ren Dong immediately agreed, "That's great! If it weren't for the Master and his wife, the emperor would never have spared him. If he wants to be with the person he loves, he must work hard for it!"

"You should talk to him when he comes back," said Su Liang.

"I have to let him kowtow to Master and Master's husband," Ren Dong said.

Su Liang shook his head, "No need. He knows what to do. This matter must be kept secret, don't tell Qi Jun yet."

Imperial Concubine Ji Yueyan was not punished to the cold palace. To do so would require a reason, and Duanmu Chen did not want to reveal the real cause.

The night after Duanmu Chen married Ji Yueyan, he actually went to Xing Yuyan's place, which puzzled Situ Yao. However, the message she received was that Ji Yueyan was not feeling well.

Xing Yuyan was overjoyed, but Duanmu Chen had only come to see her, and left after not sitting for long. He was injured and didn't want Situ Yao to find out, although he felt most comfortable with her.

Gu Ling sent people to observe but did not find the grey-clothed old man again.

That day, Old Mu and Zhengzheng were eating in a restaurant, and Zhengzheng was almost done eating when he started playing with paper planes.

After throwing it once more, the paper plane spiraled and floated out the window.

“Grandpa Mu, Little Fei Fei flew away!” Zhengzheng quickly called Old Mu.

Old Mu dropped the chicken leg in his hand and ran to the window, “Grandpa will help you pick it up!” But when he was about to jump out, he looked left and right but couldn’t find the paper plane.

Old Mu picked up Zhengzheng, “My little sweetheart, look, Little Fei is gone, did someone pick it up?”

“Alright,” Zhengzheng nodded, “Then I’ll make another one!” Before Gu Ling used to make it for him, but now he knew how to fold it on his own, so it didn’t matter if he lost it.

“I’ll fold one too, let’s see who can fly it farther! Haha!” Old Mu carried Zhengzheng and turned around, and both young and old went to make new paper planes.

In an alley not far from the restaurant, on a lush big tree, the grey-clothed old man carefully observed the paper plane in his hand, then took out a sheepskin booklet from his bosom, untied the rope tied around its seal, opened it, put the paper plane in, and then took out a charcoal pen. He held the sheepskin booklet in one hand while writing on it with the other hand: “Found an object resembling the plane described by the Master. The owner of this object is closely related to Su Liang and Gu Ling.”

Chapter 369: 369. High probability that the newcomer is not good

The loss of a paper airplane during the day didn’t bother Zhengzheng. However, when he took a bath at night and, as usual, picked up a toy from the shelf beside his bed to play before sleep, he found something missing.

“Father, Mother, there’s a thief in our house!” Zhengzheng ran to the next room with a serious face, “The Little Fly No.3 Uncle MeiRen gave me is gone!”

He was referring to an airplane model. Gu Ling had given Zhengzheng three different airplane models, which were his favorite toys that could be disassembled and reassembled, named Little Fly No.1, Little Fly No.2, and Little Fly No.3. No.3 was the smallest, delicate and cute.

Lu Yu and Wan Hui went to Zhengzheng’s room and indeed found an empty spot on the shelf. The shelf had been custom-made, and the toys on it were almost all from Gu Ling.

Wan Hui frowned, “I didn’t go out today. If a thief really came in, their skills must be incredible.” Although Zhengzheng’s birth father Li San was dead and the Li family was no more, several well-paid martial artists were hired to guard the Wan family’s mansion in the capital city for safety reasons.

“What kind of thief only steals a small toy?” Lu Yu found the situation strange.

Zhengzheng furrowed his little brows, “During the day, I was at the restaurant with Grandpa Mu, and I also lost a paper-folded little Fly! I have to tell Uncle MeiRen!”

Lu Yu nodded, “Yes, you have to tell him. Tomorrow.”

The next day, when Zhengzheng visited Su Mansion, he told Gu Ling that his Little Fly No.3 had been stolen from his home.

“Are you sure it was lost yesterday?” Gu Ling’s eyes narrowed slightly.

Zhengzheng nodded, “Yes, I saw it the night before last.” He also mentioned the incident of losing a paper airplane yesterday.

When a paper airplane falls on the bustling main street, someone might pick it up, or someone might step on it and turn it into waste paper. But there was definitely something wrong with the things in Zhengzheng’s house being lost.

There were many valuable items in the Wan family, but instead, a wooden model was stolen... Gu Ling thought of the gray-clothed old man he saw a few days ago. If it was really related to the transmigrator, they would be interested in items with Su Liang’s previous life symbols, right? Breaking into Su Mansion would be too risky. Although there were guards in the Wan family, it was relatively less difficult for a master.

“Uncle MeiRen, who could have stolen my Little Fly?” Zhengzheng scratched his head, finding it very strange.

Gu Ling replied with a word, “Ghosts.”

Zhengzheng’s eyes widened suddenly, “Auntie said there are no ghosts in the world!”

“As an analogy. Thieves as elusive as ghosts.” Gu Ling rubbed Zhengzheng’s little head, “Let it go if it’s lost.”

“Can I have another one?” Zhengzheng knew that there were many toys in Gu Ling’s study.

“You can go and choose one.” Gu Ling nodded.

Zhengzheng ran into the study, looked around, and pointed to an exquisite steam train model, “Uncle MeiRen, can I have this?” Although he didn’t understand what it was, he thought it was very cute.

Gu Ling said he could, took it down, and gave it to Zhengzheng.

“What’s its name?” Zhengzheng asked.

Gu Ling casually said, “Little Fire.”

“Where’s the fire?” Zhengzheng was puzzled.

Gu Ling looked calm, “Burned, it can be firewood.”

Zhengzheng hugged his new toy and ran, “Uncle MeiRen, you better not have such wasteful thoughts!”

When Zhengzheng left Yuanming Pavilion with his new toy to find Old Mu, Gu Ling told Su Liang, who was reading a book in the pavilion by the lake, about Zhengzheng’s stolen Little Fly.

Su Liang immediately sensed something wrong, "Is it really one of my fellowtownsman secretly investigating and confirming me as a transmigrator?"

Gu Ling shook his head slightly, "If it was based on the Little Fly, I would be the transmigrator."

"Yes, yes, you look more like it." Su Liang said, "I don't know the thief's purpose, but he seems to be still in the city. We need to find him first."

"I planted a bait." Gu Ling was referring to the train model he had just given to Zhengzheng. If someone was watching Zhengzheng and was interested in the airplane, they would probably pay attention to the train as well.

"It might not work," Su Liang said. What if the other party already obtained the information they wanted through the small plane and stopped watching Zhengzheng? But it was worth a try.

Gu Ling asked Lao Mu to take Zhengzheng out for a walk in the street, and the boy kept holding onto the train model. That was precisely what Gu Ling intended, to show it off to the unseen observer.

He didn't regret revealing the strange objects to be seen. Because before Gu Ling regained his strength, someone had already been watching Su Liang, whose beauty and talents had astounded everyone after his weak and powerless departure from the capital city. If the two models caused the hidden people to mistake Gu Ling for a transmigrator, that was precisely what Gu Ling hoped for. No matter what the other party's intentions were, if he could deceive them, he could gain more initiative.

That night, just before bedtime, Zhengzheng put the train model in the same spot where Little Fly No. 3 used to be, and called out, "Handsome uncle?"

Gu Ling appeared behind Zhengzheng, picked him up and put him in bed, then took out a medicine bottle, pulled out the stopper, and carefully sprinkled some powdery medicine on the train model.

Standing in bed, Zhengzheng curiously watched, "Will this catch the thief?"

Gu Ling nodded, "We'll try. Go to sleep."

As Zhengzheng turned over and lay down on the bed with his blankets tucked in, he said, "Are you going to sleep with me, handsome uncle? Let's pull the bed curtains down and hide together!"

Gu Ling shook his head, "I'll be here. You sleep first."

"Thank you, handsome uncle!" Zhengzheng closed his eyes and obediently fell asleep.

About an hour later, the Wan family's mansion was quiet.

A shadow climbed over the garden wall and entered the mansion, silently heading towards the main courtyard. Zhengzheng was young, and although he had his room, Lu Yu and Wan Hui were in the room next door.

Quietly prying open the window to Zhengzheng's room, the shadow sneaked in and took out a luminous pearl. With the help of the soft light, they entered the inner room and stopped beside the shelf near the bed.

As the luminous pearl approached the train model, a hand reached out after a moment, picked up the train model, examined it for a moment, nodded slightly, and tucked it into his clothes. Then, they turned around and left the way they came in.

Crossing the garden once again, the shadow suddenly stumbled and scratched its hand, leaving a few bloody trails.

The shadow hesitated for a moment before speeding up their escape. Gu Ling descended from the sky before them, blocking their path.

The shadow knew they had fallen into a trap, and Gu Ling was counting down from five, waiting for the thief to fall.

Unexpectedly, as the shadow stuffed a pill into his mouth, he pulled something out of his bosom and threw it at Gu Ling!

Gu Ling's expression changed as he caught a whiff of a faint smell of gunpowder in the air, and he immediately dodged to safety.

The explosion startled Zhengzheng, who jumped out of bed barefoot and ran into the adjoining room to find Lu Yu holding an anxious Wan Hui, both having been awakened.

"Was it thunder?" Zhengzheng furrowed his brows and touched Wan Hui's bulging belly, "Don't be scared little brother, it's okay, handsome uncle will protect us."

About fifteen minutes later, Gu Ling's voice came from outside the door, "Zhengzheng?"

"Handsome uncle!" Zhengzheng's eyes lit up, and he immediately ran to open the door.

When Lu Yu and Wan Hui came out after tidying up, they saw Gu Ling's clothes stained with dust and didn't know what had happened.

"Did handsome uncle catch the thief?" Zhengzheng asked.

Gu Ling shook his head, "No." The other party had an antidote, and even if it could not completely neutralize the poison he had administered, it was enough for them to escape. He chased after, only to lose sight of them. What was unexpected was that the other party's weapon turned out to be explosives.

Both Su Liang and Gu Ling had researched the explosive, but never thought about using it. This world itself had fireworks and firecrackers, and naturally, there were some craftsmen who knew how to make crude ones with relatively weaker power compared to the ones from Su Liang's previous life.

However, the explosives used by the thief tonight were quite potent and portable. If Gu Ling hadn't dodged in time, he would have been severely injured or killed.

“It’s alright.” Zhengzheng shook Gu Ling’s hand, “That jerk who stole my treasure won’t have a good ending!”

“What was that loud bang just now?” Lu Yu initially thought it was thunder, but later felt it wasn’t, as if it came from the direction of the garden.

“A thief causing trouble.” Gu Ling said.

Wan Hui’s face tightened, “What on earth is he trying to do?” If even Gu Ling’s carefully planned capture failed, it must have been a very tricky person.

“He stole things I made; he’s after me, not you,” Gu Ling explained.

Wan Hui sighed with relief, and then sighed again, “Then you and Su Liang should be more careful too.”

Gu Ling nodded, “You guys go to sleep. We will figure out a way to deal with it.”

After leaving the Wan family, Gu Ling checked on the situation in the garden. A large pit had been blown out of the ground, and a tree had fallen.

When he returned to the Su Mansion, Gu Ling went to the study to wash and change his clothes before entering the bedroom, careful not to wake Su Liang. But as soon as he got to the bedside, Su Liang woke up.

“I can’t sleep well without you.” Su Liang sat up, “How is it? Did you catch the person?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “He got away.”

Su Liang’s expression darkened, as Gu Ling failed to capture him even after making a move? How high must the Martial Arts skills be?

After listening to Gu Ling’s account, Su Liang felt a bit heavy in his heart, “He carries hand grenades with him?”

Noticing the airplane and train engine models, hand grenades as weapons, there was no doubt that it was a transmigrator.

“What does he want to do by stealing Zhengzheng’s toys? Why doesn’t he come directly to us?” Su Liang felt the matter was strange and couldn’t understand the suspected fellow transmigrator’s intentions.

Gu Ling shook his head, “Maybe he was sent by the transmigrators to investigate us.”

Su Liang pondered, “That’s possible. If he’s investigating, he needs evidence, and the toys you gave Zhengzheng are evidence. Now I suspect that the mysterious force behind Yue Mei might be related to the transmigrators, although there’s no evidence yet. But why didn’t he worry about you getting hurt when he blew you up with a hand grenade last night? If he’s just here to investigate.”

Gu Ling thought for a moment and said, “He’s probably still suspicious whether you or I are the transmigrator. The hand grenade was also a test to see if I recognized it and knew how to avoid it. If I didn’t know what it was, and grabbed it with my hand, it would show that I wasn’t the target he was looking for, and death would be in order.”

Su Liang's face darkened slightly, "Damn it. It was probably the person who suddenly appeared and gave me a note back then. Now that we're married, the person who's watching me is starting to suspect both of us and came to investigate. I don't know what he intends to do after finding out."

"Let's sleep." Gu Ling shook his head, "The person investigating shouldn't want to kill us directly; otherwise, there would be no need to investigate. Since he wants to avoid meeting us, he should not be the decision-maker. Let's discuss it tomorrow."

The next day, Gu Ling took Su Liang to the Wan Family to check the pit that had been blown out last night, and then Lu Yu ordered people to restore the garden to its original state.

On their way home from the Wan Family, they happened to run into Xing Ji and Qi Jiang, who had rushed back from Xuanbei City day and night.

Qi Jun, who was driving the carriage, saw the people riding horses from afar and was overjoyed, "Master, my father is back!"

Qi Jun stopped the carriage by the side of the road. Gu Ling lifted the curtain and saw Xing Ji riding his horse towards them.

"Ajun! Xiaoliang, Xiaogu!" Xing Ji was delighted to see them.

"Uncle, don't dismount. You have to go to the palace to report first, right?" Su Liang smiled, "Come to our house for dinner tomorrow."

Xing Ji nodded repeatedly, "Alright!" Today, he indeed had a lot of things to do. Firstly, he would go to the palace to see Duanmu Chen. He also wanted to visit his daughter, Xing Yuyan, and then hurry back home.

Qi Jun went to talk to his father, and when he turned around, he saw Gu Ling sitting in the coachman's seat, picking up the reins, "Let's go back. You accompany your father to the Marquis Mansion."

Qi Jun knew Gu Ling and Su Liang's personalities, so he didn't bother being polite with them.

After Xing Ji and Qi family had left, Gu Ling drove the carriage, taking Su Liang home.

Somewhere hidden, a pair of eyes watched them until the carriage disappeared from sight.

In an alleyway in the capital city, the old man in grey clothes took out the sheepskin book from his pocket, and his bloodstained hand wrote with a charcoal pen, "Gu Ling had no noble air, personally drove the carriage." The line above read, "Gu Ling recognized the hand grenade and dodged in time." "Gu Ling had been eccentric since childhood, did not like to deal with people, and had an extremely distant relationship with his relatives." "Gu Ling's medical skills were excellent, and he went into the palace to treat Duanmu Yi with acupuncture." And so on.

Xing Ji first met with Duanmu Chen and reported his duties. Then he apologized for the previous mistakes of Mrs. Miao and Xing Yuyan. After all, they were his wife and daughter, and he was to blame for not managing and teaching them well.

Duanmu Chen had no intention of dwelling on that matter and took the initiative to suggest that Xing Ji visit Xing Yuyan later. In contrast, Duanmu Chen was more concerned about Qiao Jing's performance after arriving in Xuanbei City.

Although news of the incident in Xuanbei City had been sent earlier, and Situ Xieding now knew that he had been betrayed by Qiao Jing, Xing Ji, as an eyewitness, knew the details better.

Xing Ji elaborated to Duanmu Chen about what happened outside Xuanbei City that day.

After listening, Duanmu Chen showed satisfaction, “Not bad. I think King Yue of Liang Country will be gratified to know that he has raised a sensible grandson.”

This statement dripped with sarcasm.

After thanking Duanmu Chen, Xing Ji left the Imperial Study and went to see Xing Yuyan.

Upon seeing Xing Ji, Xing Yuyan burst into tears.

It took some time for her to settle her emotions. Then she began to complain about how wronged she was, saying that Duanmu Chen had neglected her, and his heart was now set on Situ Yao. Even the newly arrived Yan Imperial Concubine could not win his favor.

Xing Ji knew his daughter’s nature and, given her pregnancy, did not dare speak harshly. He only advised her to relax, taking care of the fetus and not to think too much. Giving birth to the child safely was the most important thing.

“Father, will you not lead troops anymore?” Xing Yuyan asked.

Xing Ji shook his head, “It depends on the situation and the emperor’s arrangement. It’s hard to say now. But for the time being, I don’t have to go. I’m lucky to be able to come back this time.”

“Can father come to see me often?” Xing Yuyan asked with teary eyes.

Xing Ji said it was inconvenient for him to enter the palace often, but he would ask the emperor for permission to let Old Lady Xing visit her more often.

After returning from the Wan family, Su Liang and Gu Ling made a decision. They needed to get some hand grenades too. Those with unknown intentions and acting secretly were treated as default enemies. Since the other party had such weapons, they must at least have something similar, or else they would be at a disadvantage.

Some things can be left unused but cannot be absent. Their existence as a deterrent would be useful when it is time to use them.

Gu Ling wouldn’t let Su Liang get involved. Su Liang had already taught Gu Ling everything he knew about this aspect, but they hadn’t put it into practice before because it was a bit risky.

That day they had prepared the necessary materials and tools, and Gu Ling planned to start making some to test the next day.

Before going to sleep, Su Liang was still thinking about the “fellow townsman” issue. “Great God, the transmigrator who has been targeting us without revealing themselves, could they be uninterested in the power of this world and want to go back?”

Gu Ling thought for a moment and said, “Or they might be hiding very deeply, and we haven’t discovered them.”

“Anyway, it’s now confirmed that in addition to the Liang and Yin countries, there is an even more mysterious and perhaps more powerful enemy targeting us.” Su Liang

sighed faintly, then continued with renewed interest, "Assuming the other side really finds a way to travel back, I'd be quite interested, provided the other side is a friend and not an enemy."

Seeing Gu Ling's frown, Su Liang hurriedly said, "Of course, this is just a hypothetical possibility. I don't want to go back without the Great God."

"I think, most likely, they're up to no good." Gu Ling pictured the grey-clothed old man throwing a hand grenade at him. Those behind the scenes were hidden but had made such weapons, acting secretly, and vigilance was the best policy.

Su Liang agreed with Gu Ling's judgment, "Then I wish the Great God success in his first explosion tomorrow."

Chapter 370: 370. It's Gu Ling

In order to avoid drawing too much attention in the city, Gu Ling made some explosives and went out of town to test them in a deserted area.

For safety reasons, Su Liang wanted to go too, but he was rejected and did not persist.

Accompanying Gu Ling out of town was old Mu. He knew how fireworks and firecrackers were made and had some understanding of explosives, but the formula Gu Ling used and the peculiar-shaped final products all made him feel very novel, and he didn't know how powerful they were.

Seeing this, Old Mu strongly requested to follow Gu Ling to have a look before Su Liang even had the chance to invite him.

While waiting for news at home, Su Liang talked to Qi Jun about the matters in Xuanbei City brought back by Qi Jiang, mainly about what Qiao Cong and Qiao Jing had done since arriving in Xuanbei City.

After Qi Jun finished speaking, he left to find Ren Dong. In a short while, he reappeared in front of Su Liang, "Master, Bai Yang is back! Ren Dong is talking to him secretly, and they asked me to leave. Are they talking bad about me?" The last sentence was spoken in a joking tone.

It was almost as predicted.

As for what Ren Dong was discussing with Bai Yang, Su Liang knew very well, he smiled and said, "The emperor has other plans for Bai Yang, and Ren Dong is trying to persuade him to accept it."

Qi Jun was stunned, "What kind of arrangement?"

"To let him join the military in the south and be Nian Jincheng's deputy," Su Liang said. "Deputy" doesn't mean that Bai Yang is really suitable for being a normal general. His greatest strength is Martial Arts and disguise, which are also very important in war. Firstly, he can protect the safety of military commanders like Nian Jincheng and Lian Shun, and secondly, he can carry out necessary assassinations or infiltrate the enemy's army to do something. Su Liang had discussed these issues in detail with Ren Dong and asked her to talk to Bai Yang.

Upon hearing this, Qi Jun was surprised and envious, "It seems the emperor values Bai Yang very much."

Su Liang knew that Qi brothers always wanted to join the military, but Qu Jiang wouldn't let them take the risk.

"There is a shortage of young military commanders nowadays," Su Liang said. "But since you're planning to marry Ren Dong, you probably don't want to join the military, right?"

"Well... That's also true, but it's still a bit of a pity that after living for over twenty years, I haven't done anything remarkable. Except following my Master, which doesn't count compared to my Master and Uncle," Qi Jun opened his heart.

Su Liang thought for a moment, "Then why don't you discuss with Ren Dong, both of you and Bai Yang go to the south? Xiao Nian and Lian Ershan are definitely in urgent need of talented people. Their siblings are highly skilled in Martial Arts, and you are intelligent and have read many military books, you will surely have some achievements in the army."

Qi Jun's eyes lit up, but he frowned again, "If we all go, there will be no one to take care of the family."

Su Liang shook his head, "You don't have to worry about that. I've said before, you're not servants. You stayed before because you didn't have other suitable things to do. But you have to discuss with your father and Ren Dong, your father was strict because he wanted to protect both of you."

Qi Jun looked serious, "I understand. I'll go and see if Ren Dong and Bai Yang have finished talking, ask her opinion first, then take her to see my father. My father is very supportive of our marriage, and he is already choosing a date."

"Go ahead," Su Liang nodded.

After Qi Jun left, Su Liang sat in the lakeside pavilion and read a few more pages of his book. When he heard footsteps, he saw Bai Yang coming.

Su Liang closed his book, waiting to chat with him, but Bai Yang walked into the pavilion and knelt down in front of Su Liang, "Thank you, Master, for protecting us in that matter."

Su Liang frowned slightly at Bai Yang's sudden change of address. "There's no need for that. The emperor considered our feelings, but he also thought about the overall situation."

But Bai Yang knew that even if Duanmu Chen wanted to deal with Ji Yueyan temporarily for the sake of the overall situation, he still had plenty of ways to kill him and torture Ji Yueyan.

None of these terrible things happened, all because Su Liang and Gu Ling protected Ji Yueyan at the critical moment and gave Duanmu Chen a suggestion, while also giving Bai Yang and Ji Yueyan a bright and legitimate future they never dared hope for.

Because in their original plan, even if they managed to elope against all odds, they could only hide far away in a place where no one knew them and live in fear for the rest of their lives. Moreover, there was a great possibility of failure, and they could even lose their lives.

With the current situation, even if Bai Yang had to wait ten or eight years, he would be willing. He didn't fully believe in Duanmu Chen as the emperor, but he believed in Su Liang and Gu Ling.

Bai Yang got up and sat across from Su Liang, apologizing to her first. In his original plan, he had intended to use his sister's relationship with Su Liang. Although it was a helpless move.

"Ren Dong has helped us a lot. In addition, your affair with her didn't cause too much trouble and didn't have serious consequences, so there's still a chance to make a good ending." Su Liang sighed slightly, "It seems that you've accepted the emperor's arrangement?"

With a guilty look on Bai Yang's face, he said, "It's a great kindness from the heavens."

"That's good. You should head south today, and let Nian Jincheng arrange your duties. You don't need to enter the palace to see the emperor again. Although the emperor is magnanimous, he doesn't want to see you for now. If you can make great achievements for Qian Country, your wishes will be better guaranteed. However, don't risk your life. Bravery and recklessness are different. Discuss with people around you if you encounter any problems. Nian Jincheng and Lian Shun are my friends, and they both know Ren Dong, so they will take care of you." Su Liang said.

Bai Yang nodded, "I understand, thank you, Master. However..."

Su Liang interrupted, "If you want me to arrange for you to see the Yin Imperial Concubine before you leave, it's impossible." Duanmu Chen has already made great concessions, and they cannot overreach or let anything happen that would jeopardize the reputation of the Royal Family.

Bai Yang quickly shook his head, "Master misunderstood. My brother-in-law said earlier that he and my sister would go with me. Can I wait for their decision before leaving?"

"Of course." Su Liang's expression relaxed, "It should be settled today. However, if you have anything to say to the person in the palace, I can help pass the message when I see her next time I enter the palace. It can only be verbal."

Bai Yang's eyes lit up, "Thank you, Master!"

In the afternoon, Gu Ling and Old Mu returned home.

Old Mu was covered in dirt, but his old eyes were frighteningly bright. He excitedly ran to find Su Liang, "Good apprentice, you have no idea how powerful the treasure that Xiaogu made is! If I weren't afraid of scaring my disciple, I would have let you see it, haha!"

Gu Ling came in afterwards and told Old Mu to go take a bath.

"I'll go eat something to fill my stomach first, and then I'll come to you. Teach me how you did it! Let's go out of the city and have fun again tomorrow!" Old Mu ran off happily after he finished speaking.

Gu Ling's clothes were still relatively clean, but his shoes and trouser legs were dirty. After the successful experiment with Old Mu, he used a previously prepared shovel to fill the blasted hole

back up... Old Mu thought it was unnecessary, but Gu Ling was meticulous in his work and didn't want anyone to discover those strange holes. They went to a deep valley, making sure no one was around and that the noise outside wouldn't be easily heard.

"How was it?" Su Liang handed Gu Ling a cup of water.

Gu Ling took it and drank it all in one gulp, then began to talk about the results of today's experiment. The two grenades and a pack of explosives they brought all successfully detonated. However, the detonation time of the grenades was not very stable, one was too fast and the other too slow. Detonating too fast could hurt oneself, while detonating too slowly could result in the enemy kicking it back.

Just like the previous night at Wan Family's Garden, when Gu Ling realized what was flying towards him, he didn't dare to strike or kick it back because he wasn't sure when it would explode. It could have exploded at any moment. Dodging immediately was the best choice.

However, Gu Ling wanted to fix the detonation time of his own grenades within a suitable range, neither too fast nor too slow.

The explosives were detonated with a fuse that was lit, and the explosion time depended on the length and burning rate of the fuse. This was easy to control. Today, Gu Ling got a more intuitive understanding of the power of explosives.

"It's already impressive that you successfully detonated it on your first try." Although Su Liang said this, she knew that Gu Ling was a perfectionist when it came to his work, and would certainly improve quickly until he was satisfied.

After eating, Gu Ling accompanied Su Liang for a nap.

Anxious to study the "treasure" with Gu Ling, Old Mu wandered outside the Yuanming Pavilion, wanting to call Gu Ling but afraid of disturbing Su Liang's rest.

As soon as he heard movement inside, Old Mu rushed in to grab Gu Ling, and they went to a courtyard specially designated for Gu Ling to "mix medicine". They got busy again.

Cen Man asked Su Liang what treasures Old Mu and Gu Ling were tinkering with, but Su Liang mysteriously said it would be kept secret for now.

Qi Jun took Ren Dong to see Qi Jiang.

If Qi Jun went on his own to ask if he could go to the south to join the army, Qi Jiang would surely refuse. However, in front of his future daughter-in-law and upon learning that she and her brother would also go, Qi Jiang didn't want to separate Qi Jun and Ren Dong, or make his daughter-in-law think he was an unreasonable old stubborn, so he agreed.

Qi Jiang earnestly warned Qi Jun to listen carefully to Ren Dong's words and not to behave recklessly.

Qi Jun was a bit embarrassed, but more excited about fighting side by side with his wife, which seemed absolutely fantastic.

The most speechless person had to be Qi Yan. Not having a wife was bad enough, but when he suggested to Qi Jiang that he also go to the south to join the army, he was refused with the words, "Find a wife first before talking about it!"

The frustrated Qi Yan had a fight with Qi Jun, only to find out that Qi Jun's strength had somehow surpassed his at some point!

Qi Yan felt that his dignity as a big brother was seriously challenged, so he made a big decision: since Qi Jun and Ren Dong were both leaving, he would go to Su Mansion and become the housekeeper! By following Su Liang, not only would he gain experience and improve his skills, but he might also find a wife!

Qi Jun laughed heartily when he heard Qi Yan's reasoning and expressed his absolute support.

Qi Jiang didn't have any objections to this either. It was definitely a good thing for his son to follow Su Liang.

Thus, when Su Liang saw Qi Jun again, he told her that his father had agreed to let him, Ren Dong, and the Bai Yang siblings go to the south together. Also, he strongly recommended his brother Qi Yan to take his place at Su Mansion.

"Why not?" Su Liang cheerfully agreed, "He can come if he wants. Now that my foster father and your father are back, there should be no need for him to do anything at the Marquis Zhong Xin's Mansion."

Qi Jun, Ren Dong, and Bai Yang left the capital for the south that night. Su Liang wrote a letter to Yang Yu and asked Qi Jun to inquire at Lin's Family and also help them deliver a letter to Lian Shun.

After three days of research, Gu Ling finally made a hand grenade that satisfied him.

As Old Mu's excitement faded, he sighed, "You're not going to give this to the emperor, are you? If this is used on the battlefield, it will cause rivers of blood."

Su Liang shook her head, "No." Making this weapon was to be prepared for the unseen "fellow townsmen" and not for his use.

Old Mu nodded, "That's good. No matter how the situation changes in this world, at least we shouldn't become accomplices to executioners. Moreover, once this thing goes out, if Qian Country has it, the Liang Country and Yin Country will try their best to imitate it, along with other ambitious people. By that time, will there be peace anywhere in the world with all the explosions?"

Su Liang agreed, and she also thought so. For now, it seemed that the "townsmen" had not cooperated with any royal families, at least this advanced weapon had not appeared in Liang Country and Yin Country yet.

After making the hand grenade, Gu Ling planned to make a musket because Su Liang's "townsman" might already have that kind of weapon.

Old Mu's interest and curiosity were piqued again as he wondered how Gu Ling came up with all kinds of gadgets. When Gu Ling said he had dreamt about them, Old Mu hit him playfully.

...After Bai Yang left for a few days, Su Liang and Gu Ling together went into the palace, proposing to treat Yin Imperial Concubine. Duanmu Chen guessed what she was going to do, but since everything was settled, he let her go without fussing over such minor matters. When Su Liang saw Ji Yueyan, she was doing embroidery, looking quite well.

Unlike last time, Ji Yueyan was noticeably happy to see Su Liang this time, and after having the servants serve tea and leave, she had many questions for Su Liang. Regarding Duanmu Chen's decision and Bai Yang's whereabouts, Ji Yueyan knew nothing. She had not been cast into the Cold Palace, lived a decent life with nothing lacking, but she had not seen Duanmu Chen again and still felt uneasy, not knowing the outcome.

Seeing Su Liang, Ji Yueyan felt much more at ease.

Su Liang briefly told Ji Yueyan of Duanmu Chen's decision.

Ji Yueyan could hardly believe it, "Is it true? Is Emperor Qian really willing to..."

Su Liang nodded, "I don't know what kind of person your father is, but for now, you can trust and can only trust that what I'm telling you is true."

Ji Yueyan was both shocked and overjoyed, and it took her a while to calm down, looking at Su Liang, she said, "Anyway, I believe you."

"I came here today to tell you that Bai Yang has been ordered to go south and I don't know when he will return. He is with his sister and sister's husband." said Su Liang.

Ji Yueyan felt a moment of sadness but quickly regained her composure, "I know that he can't come to see me in the palace right now, I can wait, even willing to wait for ten or eight years." As she finished speaking, she got up and knelt in front of Su Liang.

From their words and actions, this pair of ill-fated lovers indeed had similar personalities.

Su Liang pulled Ji Yueyan up and conveyed Bai Yang's message.

Ji Yueyan breathed a long sigh of relief, finally lifting the heavy weight in her heart.

"Remember, you are a princess from Yin Country and a noble concubine in the imperial harem. Maintain your dignity and do what you should do until that day arrives," Su Liang reminded Ji Yueyan.

"I understand." Ji Yueyan nodded quickly, then mentioned another matter, "The empress's people wanted to visit me the other day, as did the Imperial Concubine Liang yesterday, but they were all stopped by the emperor's people. The emperor doesn't allow me to go out or let anyone come to see me, so I am actually quite at ease."

Su Liang could easily guess what Xing Yuyan was thinking. But why did Situ Yao come to see Ji Yueyan? Was it out of "sisterly" concern, or did she want to confirm whether or not Ji Yueyan was genuinely sick?

Not wanting to stir up trouble, Su Liang didn't bother to ask these questions, and after leaving Ji Yueyan, she and Gu Ling left the palace together.

The carriage moved slowly through the streets, and as Su Liang hadn't been out for a while, she wanted to get out and walk. Gu Ling told Qi Yan to stop the carriage and helped Su Liang down, telling Qi Yan to go home first.

Gu Ling sensed that there seemed to be someone watching him in the dark, but he couldn't spot the covert observer and guessed the other person must be highly skilled in Martial Arts since they could hide so well, probably the old man who threw the grenade at him previously.

Since he was with Su Liang, Gu Ling didn't want to create trouble and didn't purposely look for the person. The two entered the Yang Family's Embroidery Workshop, and Su Liang bought a piece of cloth with a color that she liked, although it was not of the best quality.

Yang Yu had instructed that good items from the Yang family's shop should be sent to the Su Mansion first, so Su Liang seldom bought things for herself.

After leaving the Embroidery Workshop, Gu Ling, with one arm around Su Liang and the other holding a piece of fabric, headed towards the Wan Family Restaurant.

As they walked, Su Liang told Gu Ling that she planned to use the cloth to decorate the baby carriage that Gu Ling had already made for their daughter, which would be very cute.

After the two entered the restaurant, in a dark alley in the city, the old man with a scarred hand recorded on a sheepskin book with a charcoal pen, "Gu Ling can make baby carriages, Su Liang can sew clothes."

Turning the page, he reached the last page of the sheepskin book, with all the previous pages filled with writings.

The old man pondered for a moment and wrote three slightly larger words on the last page, "It's Gu Ling."