

Three-Time 391

Chapter 391: 391.Breakthrough

“Make sure it’s clean.” Min Rui’s voice reached Gu Ling’s ears.

Lady Min snorted coldly, “Don’t worry.”

There was silence afterwards, but Gu Ling did not leave, still waiting quietly in his original spot. He heard Lady Min moving around in the room, the sound of a chair being moved, and a teacup being picked up and put down.

About a quarter of an hour passed, and Min Rui spoke again, “I wonder if your father’s matter has been settled.”

Lady Min immediately silenced him, “Shut up. This has nothing to do with you. If you dare to talk more, don’t expect me to help you.”

The conversation was quite informative. Gu Ling thought about the information he was ordered to investigate about Min Rui before his arrival in Chang’an: both of Lady Min’s parents had died, and there were no other relatives in the house. Apparently, this was different from what Min Rui and his wife were discussing. As for the “helping Min Rui” Lady Min mentioned, Gu Ling had already guessed what it was.

Old Master Qin had already passed the title of Duke to his son Qin Kang. Now, he was merely a respected nobleman in Qian Country’s capital city and held no real power, nor would he have any grudges with anyone. Lady Min intended to create an accident to kill Old Master Qin stealthily. There could only be one reason: Min Rui wanted it.

As for the conflict between Min Rui and Old Master Qin, there was only one thing that could be considered an issue: years ago, Old Master Qin had rejected the Min Family’s marriage proposal and did not marry his daughter, Qin Yuan, to Min Rui.

From the tone of the couple’s conversation, they were definitely not loving or affectionate. In fact, it seemed that they not only lacked any affection but even disliked each other. It was possible that Min Rui still could not forget Qin Yuan after so many years and was still dwelling on that unrequited love.

Probably because Xing Ji was too far away and difficult to deal with, Min Rui aimed his grudge at Old Master Qin instead.

However, what Gu Ling was more interested in at the moment was Lady Min’s father. Judging from Min Rui’s words, his father-in-law was also in the capital city, and some secret matters were being dealt with. Coincidentally, last night Duanmu Chen had experienced an assassination attempt. When connected, it became clear: Lady Min’s father should be one of the four assassins and the fifth person who provided support last night.

Gu Ling and Su Liang suspected that the mastermind behind last night’s assassination was the mysterious force colluding with Situ Xie, which had been investigating them, the transmigrators.

Therefore, Gu Ling currently speculated that Min Rui and Lady Min were both people related to that mysterious force, and they must know some secrets.

Su Mansion.

Seeing that it was noon and Gu Ling hadn't returned yet, Su Liang found it strange. It shouldn't take much time to administer the acupuncture treatment. Gu Ling had immediately come back after finishing his task in the past two days.

"Shall I go to the Min Mansion to check?" Qi Yan asked.

Su Liang nodded and then quickly shook her head, "You go to Old Doctor Gao's house first to see if he has returned yet." She had an intuition that Gu Ling had not come back because something had happened beyond his expectations and he couldn't get away. But in broad daylight, it was not very likely that Gu Ling was trapped by any trouble.

Su Liang thought of Min Rui and his wife, wondering if Gu Ling had discovered anything suspicious about them. After all, Gu Ling had gone to the Min Family, and if there was any trouble, it would most likely involve the Min Family. Qi Yan openly going to ask could possibly ruin things.

Qi Yan immediately took his orders and went to the Gao Family.

At lunchtime, Ji Xiaoshu and Zhengzheng both asked why Gu Ling hadn't returned yet, and Su Liang said he was dealing with something else.

"Then how will Master eat?" Ji Xiaoshu asked with a grin.

Zhengzheng replied, "Master went to treat someone. Of course, someone will take care of him."

"I know; he'll use needles to poke people." Ji Xiaoshu nodded and asked Su Liang, "Does it really not hurt?"

Su Liang smiled, "Do you want to try it?"

Ji Xiaoshu immediately shook his head, "I'm not sick, so I won't try. Teach me how to do the acupuncture, Mom!"

"It's not as simple as poking with needles; you have to learn a lot of medical principles. If you're interested, I'll teach you little by little." Su Liang said.

The two children nodded enthusiastically, indicating that they were very interested.

After lunch, Su Liang sent them upstairs for a nap, and Gu Xiaonuan was also coaxed to sleep.

After a while, Qi Yan returned, "Imperial Physician Gao is at home, and he said that after Marquis finished giving the treatment, the two of them left the Min Family together. Marquis said he was going to visit Old Master Qin at Duke Mansion, so they parted ways."

Su Liang's expression was strange, a sudden decision to visit Old Master Qin? This wasn't something Gu Ling would do. There must be some special reason, and it had nothing to do with Old Master Qin himself.

Qi Yan continued, "This subordinate went to the Duke Mansion and saw Old Master Qin, who was at home. He said that Marquis did come, but he left without seeing anyone after entering the

mansion. It's unknown where he went. Old Master Qin also said that he would come over to fish tomorrow and asked Marquis to make him some fried fish."

Su Liang nodded, "I see."

Qi Yan frowned, "Where should we look for Marquis next?"

"You don't need to worry about it. Go call my fourth master, and then go eat your meal," Su Liang waved her hand.

Based on the current information, Su Liang was certain that Gu Ling's visit to Old Master Qin was just an excuse, and going to the Duke Mansion was just a convenient way to "disappear". As for Gu Ling's whereabouts, Su Liang guessed that he must be at Minister Min's mansion. He must have discovered something or someone suspicious at the Min Family and needed to conduct a secret investigation. Hence, he used the freely accessible Duke Mansion as a cover to make a detour back.

Cen Man quickly arrived at Yuanming Pavilion when she found out Su Liang was looking for her.

She first looked at Gu Xiaonuan, who was sleeping soundly in the cradle, before sitting down next to Su Liang and softly asking what was going on.

"It's fine, she won't be disturbed by this noise," Su Liang said, "I want to ask fourth master to go to the Ministry of Industry Minister Min's Mansion, which is right next to Duke Mansion."

Cen Man asked what was to be done there but then remembered that Gu Ling had been at Min's Mansion all day and hadn't returned yet, so she frowned, "Is there a problem with Xiaogu?"

Su Liang shook her head, "No. I guess he's hiding somewhere in Min's Mansion, observing someone, most likely their recently returned patient, Min Rui."

Cen Man understood, "Should I go there secretly, see if he's there, and if he is, should I stay and let him come back?"

"Yes," Su Liang nodded, "Whether he comes back or not doesn't matter, just see if there's anything he needs on his side."

"Alright," Cen Man stood up, "I'll change into some lighter clothes and go over."

Min Mansion.

Gu Ling listened as Min Rui and Madam Min had their lunch and took their medicine, but they had not engaged in any "effective" conversations afterward. Neither the matter Madam Min was supposed to deal with nor the matter concerning her father was mentioned again.

During that time, Min Rou had come by. The couple's relationship seemed much better when Min Rou was there, but as soon as she left, they returned to their previous frosty state.

Following Su Liang's instructions, Cen Man found Gu Ling under the window behind Min Rui's room.

Gu Ling's body was pressed against the wall, his face expressionless, and he didn't move at all.

Cen Man knew that he must be eavesdropping on the conversation inside the room, and it must be very important. Otherwise, he wouldn't have stayed away from home without discussing it with Su Liang beforehand.

Gu Ling also saw Cen Man, and he understood that Su Liang must have sent her. He and Su Liang had an unspoken understanding, which they didn't need to express.

Instead of approaching, Cen Man used gestures to ask Gu Ling if she should "switch shifts" and take over for him.

Gu Ling nodded slightly, and then Cen Man quietly moved closer. She still didn't know why they needed to eavesdrop here, but it wasn't convenient to ask at this moment.

Gu Ling raised one hand, facing Cen Man, and wrote the character "woman" on his palm, then pointed to the wall.

Cen Man understood that the person being watched was the woman in the room. In this case, if Madam Min were to leave the room, Cen Man would have to follow her. As for Min Rui, a seriously ill person, he couldn't go anywhere nor do anything by himself.

Afterward, Gu Ling left quietly without a sound.

However, he didn't return home immediately but went to Duke Qin's Mansion again.

Old Duke Qin was taking a short nap in the afternoon when he suddenly saw Gu Ling appear in his room, giving him a big fright. Slapping his chest and glaring at Gu Ling, he said, "You youngster, why are you lurking around today? What's the matter?"

"Let's go fishing at my place." Gu Ling said.

Old Master Qin's mouth twitched, "You came twice just to invite me to go fishing? Why? No, Qi Yan came at noon to look for you, and I told him to tell Su Liang that I would go fishing at your house tomorrow. What's going on with you?"

"Go today." Gu Ling said, "Don't let anyone know that I invited you. I'll wait for you at my house."

In the blink of an eye, Gu Ling disappeared again, leaving Old Master Qin stunned. After a moment, he came to his senses and couldn't help but complain, "How does Little Liang put up with this kid..." He had forgotten how he used to praise Gu Ling and talk about him when educating his own grandson.

Of course, it was just a few complaints. Soon, Old Master Qin changed his clothes and asked his servant to prepare a carriage, announcing that he was going to the Su Mansion to fish.

Qin Kang happened to come over, "Father, didn't you say you were going tomorrow?"

Old Master Qin calmly said, "I had a nap and dreamed about Nuannuan. I miss her and there's nothing to do today anyway, so I don't need to notify Little Liang in advance."

Qin Kang smiled, "Alright. I originally wanted to have a couple of games of chess with Father."

“If you want to play chess, go find Xueqing’s father, I don’t have time.” As soon as Old Master Qin finished speaking, he ordered his entourage to bring his fishing supplies and left.

Just outside the courtyard, he turned his head and said to Qin Kang, “Your orchid is blooming, give me a pot.”

Qin Kang raised many rare orchids, one of which had just bloomed this morning. Upon hearing this, he coughed lightly, “Father, what do you want the orchid for when you go fishing?”

“It’s not proper to go empty-handed, right? I’ll take it to Nuannuan to play with.” Old Master Qin said cheerfully.

Qin Kang: ...It’s true that you shouldn’t go empty-handed. Now the center of the Su Mansion seems to be Miss Gu Nuannuan, but she’s too young. What’s the fun in orchids?

Nevertheless, Qin Kang let Old Master Qin take his beloved orchid away. After all, he also likes Nuannuan, and a pot of orchids is nothing.

By the time Old Master Qin left the mansion to head to the Su Mansion, Gu Ling had secretly returned home.

As soon as Su Liang saw him, she asked, “Is there a problem with Min Rui and his wife?”

Gu Ling nodded, “Madam Min has a dark complexion.”

Su Liang’s eyes narrowed, “It’s not her who is sick, could she be... planning to kill?”

Gu Ling nodded again and shared the useful information he had overheard.

Su Liang was incredulous, “Madam Min wants to kill Grandfather Qin? Just because he didn’t marry his daughter to Min Rui back then? Min Rui is insane! It’s been so many years, he’s married and has a daughter, why does he still think about Qin Yuan?”

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “Revenge is his nature.”

Knowing his grandmother’s doting, the youngest son of Min Laoshu was spoiled from an early age. Old Master Qin once mentioned that Min Rui was accustomed to everything going his way, unable to accept any setbacks or failures.

“Min Rui’s father-in-law...” Su Liang pondered, “Maybe one of the assassins last night was him, and the two who escaped are even more likely. Since the three of them returned to the capital city, it means that Madam Min’s father is not a small character.”

With this in mind, Su Liang understood why Gu Ling had been so vigilant in monitoring Madam Min after discovering the problem. This could be their biggest lead so far, and every word spoken by the couple might provide crucial information.

Sending Cen Man instead of Old Mu was due to her many years of blindness which had sharpened her ears beyond those of ordinary people, making her suitable for monitoring and eavesdropping missions.

“What about Grandfather Qin, then...” Su Liang thought if Madam Min would act today, Cen Man would definitely step in to save Old Master Qin. But what would the couple do if their hidden agenda was exposed?

Gu Ling reached out and rubbed Su Liang’s forehead tenderly, “I invited him to fish, and he should be here soon.”

Su Liang’s eyes brightened, “Right! Delaying their plan and not giving the woman a chance to act will force Min Rui and his wife to provide us with more information.”

Considering that the top master last night was a Death Soldier, Su Liang felt that once the matter was revealed, it would be difficult to pry open the mouths of Min Rui and his wife. Even if they confessed, it would be hard to verify the truth and might even be misled by them.

Therefore, the matter of Lady Min wanting to kill Old Master Qin must be dragged on without leaving any traces, letting the couple think they’re operating in secret while plotting something else. Perhaps, they could even wait until Lady Min’s father goes to find them, which would be even better.

After Gu Ling bathed and changed clothes, Su Liang made him a bowl of Hot Soup Noodles.

Just as he started eating, Old Master Qin arrived, and Gu Xiaonuan woke up.

As soon as Old Master Qin entered, he rushed to Gu Xiaonuan with a pot of blooming orchids, “Nuannuan, look what Grandpa brought you!”

Then, Gu Xiaonuan grabbed the orchid with her little hand and plucked it off...

Old Master Qin laughed loudly, “Nuannuan is so strong! She’ll definitely be a master in the future!”

Su Liang:... Everyone treats Gu Xiaonuan as a treasure, so she must shoulder the responsibility of being a strict mother, educating her daughter properly, not spoiling her too much, but only when she’s older and understands more.

Old Master Qin played with Gu Xiaonuan for a while before he thought to ask Gu Ling about what happened today.

Su Liang explained, “The emperor was assassinated last night, and two assassins escaped. We were worried that Grandpa Qin might be in danger.”

Old Master Qin had a strange expression, “Why is it that I’m the only one in danger when the assassins escaped?”

Su Liang spoke directly, “Actually, Gu Ling accidentally overheard Min Rui and his wife plotting to harm Grandpa Qin.”

Old Master Qin looked at Su Liang in disbelief, “Who? Min Rui? He wants to harm me? Why?...” Before he could finish speaking, Old Master Qin realized why: other than the rejected marriage proposal years ago, there was no other possibility.

“He’s simply... crazy! Unreasonable! Reckless! Back then, I could see that he was stubborn and self-righteous, with no ability but arrogant! Why should he marry my daughter?” Old Master Qin scolded angrily.

Gu Xiaonuan babbled a few times, and Old Master Qin quickly calmed down, “Don’t be afraid, Nuannuan. Grandpa is scolding a beast.”

Gu Xiaonuan wasn’t scared; she just wanted to go outside and play.

Gu Ling finished his noodles, put down his chopsticks, and carried Gu Xiaonuan outside. Old Master Qin took a deep breath and said coldly, “So Xiaogu went to see if anything happened to me at home? What do you plan to do?”

“We hope Grandpa Qin won’t make any moves for now, pretending not to know anything, just being careful. Our people are watching that couple, and if they make a move, they’ll be stopped. But before that, we still need to investigate them secretly and not alert them.” Su Liang said.

Old Master Qin’s expression turned solemn, “You mean, besides wanting to harm me, they have other suspicious things?”

Su Liang nodded, “The origin of Min Rui’s wife is very suspicious.”

Old Master Qin knew that when Su Liang said so, it must be true. He took a deep breath, “Will the other people in the Min Family be in danger?”

“They want to do ‘big things’, so they won’t act recklessly.” Su Liang said. Trying to harm Old Master Qin was already a reckless action on top of their other plans, which was related to the poor relationship between Min Rui and his wife. Because of this, the couple’s interests did not align, leading to conflicts and troubles.

“I understand.” Old Master Qin nodded, “So I’ll listen to you. I’ll go out every day and never be alone.”

If it weren’t for Gu Ling calling Old Master Qin over, he would have gone fishing in his garden in the afternoon today. His habit of fishing was not to have servants by his side, fearing that any noise would scare away the fish. It was fine normally, but there was danger if someone had ill intentions towards him.

That was also the reason why Gu Ling could see the dark fog in Lady Min’s brows. If he didn’t intervene, she would have a high chance of succeeding.

Su Liang smiled, “Don’t worry, Grandpa Qin, nothing will happen.”

“Of course, I trust you. However... sigh!” Old Master Qin sighed deeply, “It’s all a tangled mess!” He thought of his daughter again. Although his son-in-law Xing Ji also dissatisfied Old Master Qin, at least his character wasn’t a problem.

Old Master Qin went fishing, and Su Liang looked out at the bright day, taking a long sigh of relief. The mysterious power, the mysterious Transmigrator, had already revealed the tip of the iceberg, but it was far from enough...

Chapter 392: 392. Fishing

Old Master Qin caught two fish, which Gu Ling fried until they were golden and fragrant. He, Old Mu, and the two little ones sat by the lake, eating fried fish and drinking flower and fruit tea, feeling quite contented.

It wasn't until nightfall that Old Master Qin left the Su Family after having dinner. He was accompanied by guards from the Duke Mansion, and he made plans with Old Mu and Zhengzheng to visit Huguo Temple together the next day.

As for whether the real or fake Zhengzheng would go, it would be determined after the two little brothers played a game that night. This was not the first time such an incident had occurred, and they all enjoyed it.

At the same time as Old Master Qin returned home, Gu Ling secretly returned to Minister Min's mansion, and "changed shifts" with Cen Man, allowing her to go home for dinner and rest.

As for whether Cen Man had heard any useful information in the meantime, the two did not immediately communicate. As expected, Mrs. Min was a master as well, so they had to be cautious and avoid startling any snakes in the grass.

When Cen Man left, Gu Ling heard Min Rou's voice from inside the room, "Father's condition has improved a lot. He should be able to get out of bed and go out in a few days. It was right to come back. There are no divine doctors like Marquis and Lady Chang Xin on the island."

The island... Gu Ling immediately caught the keyword. The food and mythical Immortal Island of Yin Country further corroborated his and Su Liang's previous speculation.

Mrs. Min's voice was displeased, "Rou'er, how many times have I told you, be cautious with your words."

"Alright." Min Rou sounded helpless, "I just don't understand why... never mind, Mother, don't glare at me, I know I'm wrong, and I'll be careful in the future."

Min Rui's voice, "It's not early, Rou'er, go to bed soon."

"Then Father and Mother should rest early too. I'm going back." Min Rou finished speaking, footsteps were heard, followed by the sound of a door opening and closing.

The room quieted down, and after a short while, Mrs. Min's deliberately lowered voice entered Gu Ling's ears, "Damn it. That Qin guy went to the Su Mansion today. I don't know if he's back yet."

"Let's see tomorrow." Min Rui said, "Taking action at night, it's impossible to make it look like an accident, and people might suspect me."

Mrs. Min snorted coldly, "As long as you know. I have to wait for the right opportunity to make a move, and I cannot act recklessly."

About a quarter of an hour later, after a long silence, Mrs. Min spoke again, asking Min Rui, "Don't you want to kill Xing Ji and his son?"

It took Min Rui a little while to answer, "If I have the chance."

Mrs. Min sneered, "No matter how many people you kill, you'll never have Qin Yuan in this life."

Min Rui immediately retorted, "Your lover died earlier than Qin Yuan. No matter how much you hate me, you can only be with me, this substitute."

Gu Ling gained a little more understanding of how this couple ended up together.

"That's enough. From now on, I won't mention Qin Yuan, and you're not allowed to mention that person either." Mrs. Min surprisingly calmed down.

The lights in the room went out, and the surroundings returned to tranquility, but Gu Ling did not leave. He still stood quietly in the night, waiting for Min Rui's father-in-law, who might not appear.

In the Imperial Palace, Duanmu Chen hadn't slept, and he didn't plan to sleep tonight.

Chang'an looked at the food and drinks Duanmu Chen had prepared, as well as the specially taken out Double Jade Chess, and couldn't help but remind him gently, "Your Majesty, Marquis Gu said he won't come tonight."

"He came the night before without making a sound." Duanmu Chen asked Chang'an to go out and take a look, "The tree from last night, is he hiding in it again?"

Chang'an really went out to look and even climbed the tree to confirm that there was no one there.

After waiting for a while and not seeing Gu Ling, Duanmu Chen felt strange, "How does he seem to know when an assassin will appear? If I didn't trust him, I would have suspected that he arranged the assassin to gain merit."

Chang'an thought to himself, does Gu Ling need to invite merit? This didn't make sense.

Then he heard Duanmu Chen sigh, "But he doesn't need to invite merit either. Could it be that he can foresee the future?"

Seeing Duanmu Chen look over, Chang'an quickly shook his head, "Your subordinate thinks that this is unlikely."

"If he really can predict the future, that would be great." Duanmu Chen said, "Anyway, I absolutely believe that they are my good friends, and they'll definitely help me."

Chang'an immediately nodded, "Yes."

"You eat these," Duanmu Chen got up, "put away that chess set, and send it to Su Mansion tomorrow. Say it's my gift to thank Gu Ling for staying up all night."

Chang'an complied, and Duanmu Chen went into the inner chamber, "I need to sleep now. Since Gu Ling said it's okay, it should be fine."

Su Mansion.

Cen Man had just reported to Su Liang the information she had secretly gathered during the afternoon. She was not sure what their purpose was, so she remembered everything she heard and recited it to Su Liang from beginning to end.

The conversation between Min Rui and his wife was mostly pointless, but it revealed that their relationship was terrible.

However, in the afternoon, Min Rui's wife had secretly left the Ministry Mansion once, and Cen Man had followed her undetected. Min Rui's wife went to the Duke Mansion, hid in a spot in the garden with a view of the lake for a long time, then went to the courtyard near Old Master Qin's residence, but did nothing before returning to the Ministry Mansion.

Cen Man wasn't sure what was going on, but Su Liang understood completely. Min Rui's wife had previously visited the Duke Mansion to investigate. According to the plan, Old Master Qin would be fishing by the Garden Lake in the afternoon, and there would be no one around him at the time, making it a perfect opportunity to take action.

Unfortunately, Min Rui's wife's plan fell through because Old Master Qin "changed his mind" and went to fish at Su Liang's house instead.

After dinner, Cen Man asked Su Liang if she needed to switch places with Gu Ling.

Su Liang said it was unnecessary and asked Cen Man to go to bed early, as she might need her help during the day.

When Su Liang went upstairs, holding the drowsy Gu Xiaonuan, she heard laughter coming from the study room.

The door was half-open, and Su Liang saw Old Mu, along with the two children, competing to see who could stand on their head the longest. Ji Xiaoshu had already lost and was lying on the carpet, making faces at Zhengzheng and teasing Old Mu.

"Master!" Ji Xiaoshu saw Su Liang and excitedly climbed up from the ground, "accidentally" bumping into Zhengzheng, who in turn kicked Old Mu's face when he fell. The three of them ended up in a tangled heap.

Old Mu sat up, holding a child in each arm, and they all laughed toward the doorway, "Is that kid not coming back tonight? Do you want me to substitute for him?"

"I can do it too!" Ji Xiaoshu raised his little hand.

Zhengzheng went around Old Mu's back and pressed Ji Xiaoshu's hand back down, "You can't. Don't make trouble."

Ji Xiaoshu chuckled, "Then I can sleep with Master!"

Su Liang smiled, "None of you need to. Stop fooling around and go to bed. Aren't you going to Huguo Temple tomorrow?"

"Master, guess who is going out and who is staying at home tomorrow?" Ji Xiaoshu asked excitedly. "If you guess correctly, we'll go to sleep immediately!"

"I guess..." Su Liang feigned hesitation, "Xiaoshu is going out to play tomorrow?"

"Master is amazing, you guessed it!" Ji Xiaoshu had already climbed onto Old Mu's back, "Tomorrow Master will take me to play, and Big Brother will stay at home to practice writing."

Su Liang smiled at Zhengzheng, knowing that it was his intention to let Ji Xiaoshu win. Zhengzheng had already become proficient in the games they played, but he knew that Ji Xiaoshu rarely had the opportunity to go out, so he always let him win whenever they competed.

Zhengzheng silently puffed out his little chest. As the eldest brother, it was his duty to take care of his younger siblings, as Master always told him he was the most well-behaved child.

Returning to her room, Su Liang put Gu Xiaonuan down and, feeling restless, sat at her desk. She pondered for a moment, and then began to write all the fragmented information related to the mysterious power and the Transmigrator known so far. She connected each piece, one by one.

Finally, Su Liang took out a new sheet of paper and wrote down three questions: “Who is the enemy? What do they want to do? Why are they doing this?”

The answer to the first question was incomplete and inaccurate, but it was “Transmigrator.”

The answer to the second question, as far as they knew and what directly involved them, was “to capture Gu Ling alive.”

The answer to the third question was the most critical and still remained shrouded in mystery. Why would one Transmigrator look for another Transmigrator, secretly investigate and confirm their identity, and not kill them? What were they planning to do?

“How can the exchange be made, discussing how to go back...” Su Liang’s muttered words made her pause, as she wrote the words “go back” under the word “transmigration” on the paper. She drew a circle around it and once again fell into thought.

Is it possible... Su Liang wondered. Although she and Gu Ling often brought up this topic since they met, it was mostly based on fantasies and assumptions. Whether it was choosing to face reality like her or Gu Ling’s desire to see another world, they both knew deep down that this was impossible. If a person’s soul could travel through different space and time, would that not make them immortal? A one-way transmigration is already a dream-like encounter, and it usually happens at the brink of death. Who would put their life on the line, betting on an uncertain future?

At this thought, Su Liang’s expression grew serious! Near death ... betting one’s life... Could it be that another transmigrator really wants to go back, not wanting to gamble on their own life, but looking for a fellow transmigrator to experiment with?

However, Su Liang quickly realized that this hypothesis does not hold. The so-called near-death experience is remembered from the perspective of a successful transmigration while recalling the last moments in the previous world. But people living in the same space-time would only see death, unable to verify if the deceased had actually transmigrated to another place.

The deduction hit a bottleneck again, and Su Liang tidied up her desk, planning to discuss her immature new idea with Gu Ling when he returned.

Looking out the window, there was no moon in the night sky, and it was already the first day of the third month. Northern battle affairs were likely to start at any time, as expected.

Su Liang wasn’t sure whether the other party would use special weapons, like explosives, in addition to their mysterious supplies. To be on the safe side, she had already sent a cart of secret

weapons and a letter to Qiao Cong, explaining that these items should not be used lightly unless the enemy has used something similar. Using their powerful weapons first might end the battle quickly, but it could also lead to retaliation and make the situation uncontrollable.

What Su Liang hoped for the most was that Qiao Cong could destroy the Liang Country's supplies before the battle began, or at the very start of the battle. Without enough supplies to sustain them and realizing they were deceived by the Yin Country, Liang Country would be unable to put up much resistance.

But if the opponent really had someone carrying a large storage space for the Liang Country's army, things became more complicated.

That night, Gu Ling did not encounter Min Rui's father-in-law and Min Rui and his wife did not say anything or leave the room either.

As dawn approached, Cen Man came to relieve Gu Ling of his duty and sent him home.

As Gu Ling approached Yuanming Pavilion, he saw Elder Mu leading Ji Xiaoshu and Zhengzheng in a jog around the lake in the early morning light.

Ji Xiaoshu waved at Gu Ling from a distance, "Master!"

Gu Ling stopped in his tracks and waited for them to approach; he caught the little ones as they rushed over.

"Master, Mistress and little sister are still asleep," Ji Xiaoshu pointed to the building above and then tried to climb Gu Ling like a tree.

Zhengzheng solemnly pulled Ji Xiaoshu down, "Stop making a fuss. Master didn't sleep all night and most likely is tired. We still need to train."

The next moment, Ji Xiaoshu was caught by Gu Ling, and his small body somersaulted 360 degrees in mid-air. By the time he reacted, he had passed over Gu Ling's head and landed steadily on the ground.

Looking puzzled, Ji Xiaoshu scratched his head as Gu Ling entered Yuanming Pavilion; his face seemed to say, "Who am I? Where am I? What just happened?"

Zhengzheng pulled Ji Xiaoshu forward and started running, "Master's just playing with you, are you scared?"

Ji Xiaoshu immediately shook his head, "How could I be? That was so much fun! Let's have a somersault competition later!"

Gu Ling washed up and changed clothes before entering the room and saw Gu Xiaonuan nestled next to Su Liang; the mother and daughter duo were fast asleep.

Gu Ling did not wake them. Instead, he turned to see a stack of papers on the table. As he picked them up, his eyes fell on the three questions and answers Su Liang had written, finally resting on the circled word "return." He furrowed his brow.

"Great God, you're back." Su Liang sat up and cradled the little girl in her arms, "How was it? Any new developments last night?"

Gu Ling nodded and shook his head, “A little bit.” It was the two words “on the island” that he heard Min Rou mention when he arrived last night.

“It really is an island.” Su Liang said, “So, all the oddities we encountered were caused by the same group of people? The supplies sent by Ji Yuebai from the Yin Country also disappeared at sea.”

Gu Ling sat down by the bed, taking Gu Xiaonuan from Su Liang to give her a kiss, “Do you think that person wants to go back?”

Su Liang shrugged her shoulders slightly, “I just had this idea last night – a bold guess, but not a fully formed thought.”

“You’ve mentioned something like a time machine before. Maybe the way that person transmigrated is different from yours, and there really is a possibility of going back.” After accepting new knowledge and ideas, Gu Ling’s thinking sometimes became more open and bold than Su Liang’s.

Su Liang was stunned, “What I said was purely fictional, like from novels or sci-fi movies. When I came here, technology hadn’t advanced enough to realize such fantasies.”

Gu Ling thought for a moment and said, “Perhaps, that person is not from the same world as you, but maybe from the future or a parallel space in your world who has traveled here?”

After contemplating for a while, Su Liang said, “If what you say is true, Great God, this would be unimaginable. If that person came from a more advanced time and space than mine and brought along treasures like the Storage Space, they would be really the Chosen Son, while I would just be a transmigrator who tags along.”

Gu Ling shook his head, “Perhaps we are overthinking it, and it’s not that complicated.”

Su Liang sighed lightly, “Maybe we are overthinking things. If that person wants to go back but doesn’t come directly to us, instead secretly causing trouble, it is inexplicable.”

After waiting for a while, Imperial Physician Gao didn’t come, so Gu Ling went to the Ministry Mansion on his own.

When Gu Ling left, Lao Mu, disguised as “Zhengzheng” by Ji Xiaoshu, met up with Old Master Qin and headed to Huguo Temple together.

Within the Min Mansion.

When Gu Ling saw Madam Min again, the black fog between her eyebrows was still there, indicating that her murderous intent towards Old Master Qin had not subsided, and she might succeed. But for now, Gu Ling was intervening.

As usual, he administered the acupuncture. After finishing, while he was packing up, Min Rou appeared again, “Marquis, have a cup of tea before you leave.”

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “Thank you, but there’s no need.”

Min Rou smiled, “Is the Marquis afraid that I might have poisoned the tea?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “You’re overthinking.”

Madam Min frowned and pulled Min Rou, motioning her to say less.

Nevertheless, Gu Ling took the initiative to say, “My guidance in medical skills and that of the Madam were learned from one another.” This was the answer to Min Rou’s question from yesterday.

Min Rou was surprised that Gu Ling still remembered and would even answer her question. By the time she recovered, Gu Ling had already left.

Madam Min pulled Min Rou again, “Hurry up and clean up, we still have to go to Huguo Temple.”

The mother and daughter were both going to Huguo Temple to offer incense and pray for blessings for Min Rui. Madam Min had decided this in the morning, and Gu Ling heard about it as he left.

After leaving the Min Mansion, Gu Ling went straight home. However, as soon as he entered the mansion, he secretly left and went to the Imperial Palace.

Seeing Gu Ling appear, Duanmu Chen’s face revealed a smile, “Are you here to make sure that I am safe and sound?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “Your Majesty should go to Huguo Temple today.”

Duanmu Chen was stunned, then frowned, “Why?”

“Min Rui’s daughter, Min Rou, is in Huguo Temple. Your Majesty should meet her and then issue a decree to bring her into the palace as a concubine,” Gu Ling said.

Duanmu Chen was speechless, “You’re meddling too much. Give me a reasonable explanation!”

Gu Ling’s expression was calm, “I suspect that the family of three – Min Rui, his wife, and his daughter – is related to that mysterious force, but we cannot reveal our hand now. Bestowing the marriage is not the goal, but just a means of probing. It is ‘fishing’ to see what reactions these people will have.”

Duanmu Chen’s expression changed slightly, “Are you saying that they might be colluding with Liang Country?”

Gu Ling nodded, “It can’t be excluded.”

“Fine!” Duanmu Chen’s eyes narrowed, “I understand what you mean now. Min Rou isn’t the main point; it’s the person behind her.. I know what to do now. I’ll accompany the Empress Dowager to Huguo Temple later to offer incense and pretend to be infatuated with her. In this way...”

Gu Ling added, “In this way, the person who tried to assassinate Your Majesty the night before may come again.”

Duanmu Chen held his forehead, “My role as Emperor becomes more and more interesting.”

Chapter 393: 393. Prepare to fry fish

On the first day of the third month, a large number of pilgrims flocked to Huguo Temple early in the morning, forming an unending stream.

This was Ji Xiaoshu's first visit. As they climbed the mountain, he would often disappear as he wandered around, enjoying himself immensely, only to be caught and brought back by Old Mu from the nearby forest.

Old Master Qin, who was walking with them, wasn't fast but seemed to enjoy the lively and adorable child. However, he noticed something peculiar: The "Zhengzheng" he saw today spoke and behaved differently from before, and seemed taller, more like the boy called Xiaoshu.

But Old Master Qin didn't know that Xiaoshu's surname was Ji. He just wondered why the two close friends couldn't play together and seemed to share one identity in front of others.

Seeing Ji Xiaoshu being caught again in the forest by Old Mu, Old Master Qin laughed and said, "You can come and climb trees at my place tomorrow."

"Sure!" Ji Xiaoshu nodded immediately.

Old Mu knew that Old Master Qin had discovered this boy wasn't Zhengzheng but Tree-loving Xiaoshu, and it didn't matter. Old Master Qin was a wise man and understood that Xiaoshu was pretending, so he wouldn't reveal it or tell others.

When they arrived at Huguo Temple, Old Mu first took Ji Xiaoshu to visit the front hall.

In the towering hall, there were several giant Buddha statues for Ji Xiaoshu, whose heads could only be seen by tilting his head high. The statues were splendid and solemn.

Devout pilgrims lined up to kowtow and pray for blessings in front of the Buddhas. Seeing people kneeling and kowtowing on the cushions, Ji Xiaoshu pulled Old Mu's sleeve and asked, "Old Mu, can the Buddha really grant all our wishes?"

Some nearby pilgrims frowned, seeming to feel that Ji Xiaoshu's words were disrespectful in the Buddha Hall.

However, Old Mu didn't mind, and answered Ji Xiaoshu's question, "It depends on human effort."

Old Master Qin chuckled, "Let's go outside and offer incense." He had once knelt there to kowtow and pray for his daughter and grandson's safety. He might do similar things in the future, but not today. He was very satisfied with his current life and had no other requests, and the Buddha was very busy with so many people.

The incense burner, like a large cauldron, was placed outside the hall. Pilgrims could take incense from the nearby table, and monks would help light it before inserting it into the burner.

Ji Xiaoshu was interested in this but choked on the smoky smell as soon as he approached it.

So Old Mu took Ji Xiaoshu farther away, watching Old Master Qin offer three sticks of incense before they went somewhere else.

"Old Master Qin, are there immortals in this world?" Ji Xiaoshu asked.

Old Master Qin smiled, "Maybe there are, but we can't see them."

Ji Xiaoshu's face was serious, "I think Master and Mistress are like immortals descended from heaven, and little sister Nuannuan is also."

Old Mu laughed, "Maybe they are, just forgetting they were once immortals."

“Are there ghosts in the world?” Ji Xiaoshu asked again.

Old Master Qin shook his head, “No.”

Old Mu added, “Ghosts are in people’s hearts.”

Ji Xiaoshu nodded, “I know, only bad people have ghosts in their hearts, right?”

“You’re very smart.” Old Master Qin praised, rubbing Ji Xiaoshu’s head with a smile.

Old Master Qin and Ji Xiaoshu went to the back mountain to enjoy the scenery. Ji Xiaoshu happily climbed up and down the trees in the back mountain forest, and when he saw a bigger tree, Old Mu would join him.

Old Master Qin sat on a rock, appreciating the sea of clouds, listening to Old Mu and Zhengzheng’s laughter, thinking that when his great-grandson grows up, he can also take him out to play.

Sunlight pierced through the layers of clouds, gentle breezes blew, the sea of clouds gradually thinned, and finally disappeared. The sky brightened, and the view became more open and clear.

Old Master Qin thought of the couple Min Rui, who wanted to harm him, and couldn’t help but sigh. At his age, he had seen too many scoundrels; but when the “ghost” lurking in the hearts of the people he knew emerged, he couldn’t help but lament. After all, he was the one who had watched Min Rui grow up. When Min Rui safely returned this time, Old Master Qin was happy for him and the Min Family and even helped in inviting Su Liang to treat him.

However, you can know someone’s face but not their heart. Old Master Qin didn’t know what would happen to Min Rui and his wife after their scheme was exposed, but he presumed they wouldn’t survive. This is because their biggest problem was not wanting to kill Old Master Qin, but rather that they were suspected of colluding with the “enemy,” in other words, they could be spies.

Old Master Qin could only hope that the other members of the Min Family would not be implicated, especially Old Master Min, who had worried and cared for that son for so many years, and finally waiting for his return. Upon learning the truth, he didn’t know if he could bear it...

“Old Master Qin!” Ji Xiaoshu stealthily ran up behind Old Master Qin and suddenly hugged him from behind.

Old Master Qin was startled and put his hand on his chest to calm his breath, while Ji Xiaoshu was already standing in front of him. “Were you thinking, Old Master Qin? I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you.”

Old Master Qin smiled and hugged Ji Xiaoshu, “It’s nothing.”

After playing in the back mountain for a while, they were in no hurry to return and planned to eat Huguo Temple’s Vegetarian Dishes later before leaving. Ji Xiaoshu hadn’t tried them yet and wanted him to have a taste.

Other visitors kept arriving at the back mountain and then leaving.

Ji Xiaoshu and Old Master Qin were playing tug-of-war with tree leaves when they saw Elder Mu bring over a few newly-selected leaves. “I heard someone say that the emperor and Empress Dowager have arrived.”

“The emperor?” Ji Xiaoshu raised his head when he heard this, but quickly lowered it again. In his mind, the emperor’s father is also the emperor. As for the uncle who was the emperor of Qian Country, he had already seen him before.

Ji Xiaoshu’s tree leaf broke first, and Old Master Qin chuckled, “Let’s do it again.”

The front hall of Huguo Temple was cleared because the Empress Dowager and the emperor wanted to burn incense. The Forbidden Army was guarding outside, keeping outsiders away.

Duanmu Chen helped the Empress Dowager walk and scanned the layers of visitors outside. He noticed a problem: he had followed Gu Ling’s lead in targeting Min Rou, but he didn’t know which one was Min Rou...

The Empress Dowager offered incense, praying to the Buddha for the prosperity of Qian Country and for Xing Yuyan and Situ Yao to safely give birth to sons for Duanmu Chen.

At this time, Lady Min and Min Rou had just entered the gate of Huguo Temple. They set off after Gu Ling had given Min Rui acupuncture, and after Min Rou’s elder aunt decided to accompany them, they waited a little longer.

Standing on the periphery of the crowd and tiptoeing, Min Rou could only see one part of the Buddha statues in the main hall and not the Empress Dowager and Duanmu Chen.

Min Rou asked the elder lady of the Min family, “Aunt, do we have to kneel and bow when the Empress Dowager and the emperor come out later?”

The elder lady of the Min family shook her head, “No need.”

“That’s good,” said Min Rou.

Lady Min quietly tugged Min Rou’s sleeve, reminding her not to speak carelessly.

After offering incense, the Empress Dowager planned to join Duanmu Chen in tasting Huguo Temple’s Vegetarian Dishes.

As they stepped out of the front hall, Duanmu Chen saw the elder lady of the Min Family standing at the edge of the crowd. His gaze then shifted to the young girl in white, holding Lady Min’s arm.

Of all the notable young ladies in the capital, Duanmu Chen had seen them all. This unfamiliar face must be Min Rou, the granddaughter of Old Master Min who had recently returned home.

She looked quite good, and her eyes were very lively... This was Duanmu Chen’s first impression of Min Rou.

Min Rou noticed Duanmu Chen looking at her, and as she was curious about the emperor, she didn’t avoid his gaze and looked back boldly.

At this time, most people kept their heads down and didn’t dare to stare, including the elder lady and Lady Min of the Min family, so they didn’t notice the eye contact between Duanmu Chen and Min Rou.

The Empress Dowager noticed but didn’t mind, and she quickly walked with Duanmu Chen towards the Vegetarian Hall.

When the Forbidden Army withdrew, the order in the front hall was restored. The three from the Min Family went in, and Lady Min knelt in front of the Buddha, bowing and offering incense, praying for Min Rui to recover quickly.

At this point, it was approaching noon. Lady Min, with a hint of regret, said, "The vegetarian dishes at Huguo Temple are quite good. I originally planned to take you all to taste them, but Empress Dowager and the Emperor are here today, so we can't go to the Vegetarian Hall. We'll come another day."

"Can't we go after Empress Dowager and the Emperor finish eating?" Min Rou asked with a coquettish tone. "Aunt, we're not in a hurry to leave, are we?"

Lady Min smiled, "If you and Rourou are not hungry, there's no harm in waiting. Why not take a walk around the temple? The scenery at the back mountain is quite beautiful."

The three of them, accompanied by several maids and nannies, walked towards the back mountain while enjoying the view. Halfway, they ran into Old Master Qin and Ji Xiaoshu.

Old Master Qin greeted them with his usual demeanor, and his gaze on Lady Min showed no signs of anything unusual.

Lady Min played her part flawlessly as well.

Lady Min asked Old Master Qin if he was going back, and he replied with a smile that he was heading to the Vegetarian Hall.

"The Emperor and Empress Dowager are there," Min Rou said.

Ji Xiaoshu, with a playful smile, exclaimed, "Then I'll go eat with Uncle Emperor!"

Min Rou had met "Zhengzheng" at the Lin Family, but that day she had only seen Ji Xiaoshu pretending to be Zhengzheng, so she detected nothing amiss. She knew that Gu Ling and Su Liang held extraordinary positions in Qian Country, and as Gu Ling's disciple, "Zhengzheng" had a special relationship with Duanmu Chen that granted him special privileges.

At this moment, a nanny from the Empress Dowager's side appeared nearby with two palace maids.

Everyone thought that Duanmu Chen had sent someone to invite "Zhengzheng" when he found out he was there, but the nanny walked straight up to the Min Family and said, "The Empress Dowager invites Lady Min and Miss Min to the Vegetarian Hall for a discussion."

Lady Min was startled, although her twin daughters were married to good families and many noble ladies in the capital envied her for that. However, she had little contact with distinguished people from the palace and immediately felt like something was wrong.

Lady Min also felt something strange, while Min Rou was somewhat puzzled but didn't think too much about it.

So, they all headed to the Vegetarian Hall.

"Uncle Emperor!" Ji Xiaoshu yelled at Duanmu Chen at the entrance.

Duanmu Chen came out with a smile, rubbing Ji Xiaoshu's head and holding his little hand. His eyes, however, fell on Min Rou, not hiding his manly interest in her.

Lady Min hesitated for a moment before realizing what was going on.

Old Master Qin and the others had already gone in, and Lady Min led Lady Min and Min Rou to the Empress Dowager. They hadn't even knelt down before they were told not to show such formalities.

Then, the Empress Dowager called Min Rou over, asked her a few questions about her daily activities, what books she read, and whether she was used to the capital. After praising her for having a spirit different from the capital's noble ladies, the Empress Dowager awarded her a gold bracelet.

When the cool gold bracelet was placed on her wrist, Min Rou finally realized what was happening. However, after receiving a hint from Lady Min's gaze, she dared not show anything.

The vegetarian dishes were still delicious, but the only ones who enjoyed the meal were Ji Xiaoshu and the nanny.

Old Master Qin was baffled, wondering whether the Emperor was genuinely interested in Min Rui's daughter or had other intentions. After pondering the matter, Old Master Qin tended towards the latter; Gu Ling and Su Liang had already mentioned that there were issues with Min Rui and his wife, so they must have informed the Emperor as well.

"Does Rourou not like vegetarian dishes?" Empress Dowager asked with a warm smile.

Min Rou hurriedly replied, "They're very delicious, but I'm just not hungry today."

Duanmu Chen interacted with Ji Xiaoshu a lot, and it seemed very natural. As the Crown Prince of Yin Country, Ji Xiaoshu had no fear of Duanmu Chen and treated him like any uncle who accompanied his father.

Finally, Duanmu Chen put down his chopsticks, and the meal was over.

The Empress Dowager and Duanmu Chen left first, and before he left, Duanmu Chen asked Ji Xiaoshu if he wanted to go to the palace to play. Ji Xiaoshu calmly replied, "I'll go tomorrow. I still have to go home and write today, or my master will punish me!"

Only Old Master Qin's group and the three people from the Min Family were left in the Vegetarian Hall when something happened that almost made Old Master Qin lose his composure...

Suddenly, Lady Min frowned and said to Old Master Qin, "Did the emperor set his sights on my daughter Rourou... Old Master Qin has a great reputation, can you please help and speak for us? My daughter Rourou doesn't understand the rules, and if she enters the palace, I'm afraid she'll cause trouble and displease the emperor."

As soon as these words were spoken, Old Master Qin was stunned, Lady Min's expression changed, and even Min Rou quickly tried to stop Lady Min from talking any further. This had nothing to do with whether or not Min Rou wanted to enter the palace. This kind of talk just shouldn't be spoken here, especially not directed at Old Master Qin.

Old Master Qin had never encountered such a speechless situation in his life. He thought that Lady Min truly loved her daughter, but asking for his help? Where's her dignity? She was planning to conspire with Min Rui to kill him! Anyway, he's not dead yet, and he can still be useful, right?

Before Old Master Qin could say anything, Lady Min was pulled away by the elder Lady Min, “Sister, it’s getting late, we should go back.”

Lady Min also realized that she shouldn’t have spoken like that just now and let the elder Lady Min lead her away. Min Rou said goodbye to both Old Master Qin and Ji Xiaoshu, and she seemed to be the calmest of them all.

Ji Xiaoshu sighed, “Do emperors have to marry so many women?”

Old Mu pinched his face, “No need to learn from others; this kind of thing depends on oneself.”

Ji Xiaoshu whispered, “I don’t want to be the emperor at all; I want to be an immortal like Master!”

Old Mu laughed heartily, and Old Master Qin also laughed. As they were laughing, a thought occurred to him. Why did Ji Xiaoshu say he didn’t want to be the emperor? What was his real identity?

As they left Huguo Temple and got on a carriage, Elder Lady Min’s face turned uncharacteristically serious, “Sister, there are many aristocrats and rules in the capital city. You can’t talk recklessly like you did just now. And even if the imperial decree hasn’t been issued yet, if it is issued, it should be considered as a grace. As long as we’re not talking to outsiders, we can be a bit more casual behind closed doors. Fortunately, Old Master Qin is not an outsider.”

Lady Min didn’t refute and just sat silently, lost in thought.

Min Rou, who had been more depressed than before, said, “I used to think the capital city was quite nice, but now I think the sea... where we used to live is much better.”

Elder Lady Min held Min Rou’s hand and sighed deeply, “We don’t know yet, don’t think too much.”

However, when they returned to the Ministry Mansion, no sooner had they stepped inside than someone from the palace arrived with the Imperial Matrimonial Decree; Min Rou was to enter the palace in three days. Her title was set as Concubine Rou, and many gold, silver, and precious jewels were awarded.

At this time, Gu Ling had secretly gone to the Huguo Temple and returned to Min Residence, replacing Cen Man and continuing to eavesdrop on Min Rui and his wife.

Lady Min couldn’t conceal her anger, “What kind of emperor is this? Who does he think he is? Casually wanting to marry my daughter, no way!”

Min Rui said coldly, “It’s not about marrying; Rou is just one of many concubines in the palace. I really don’t understand what you went to the Huguo Temple for. If you hadn’t taken Rou with you, how could this have happened?”

Lady Min’s anger intensified, “Isn’t it all because of you? I learned early on that the old geezer from next door was going to the Huguo Temple, so I went there specifically to find an opportunity.”

“You went, so why did you bring Rou with you?” Min Rui was also angry.

“I said it was to pray for blessings for you, so what’s wrong with me taking Rou with me? She’s been to the capital city before and it’s not like she hasn’t been out!” As Lady Min finished speaking, the sound of porcelain shattering was heard, “Everything

started because of you! If it weren't for you threatening me and forcing me to help you kill that Qin guy, none of this would have happened! I have only one daughter, and I just hoped she could marry the man she likes and have a lifelong partner. You ruined everything!"

"Are you blaming me? Isn't Rou my only daughter? Don't I hope she marries the person she loves?" Min Rui was agitated for a moment and started coughing from anger.

Gu Ling: ... It's understandable; both husband and wife in this lifetime have never been able to be with the people they love and are both obsessed with their feelings. That's why they put their failed love on their only child and don't want her to walk their old path. While they do genuinely love Min Rou, their expectations for Min Rou's future are also compensating for and satisfying their own regrets.

After a moment of silence, Gu Ling heard Lady Min speak again sarcastically, "Your dear father, as much as he dotes on Rourou, has no ability to change the imperial decree for her. We shouldn't have come here in the first place!"

Min Rui immediately retorted, "We've already come, if you want to leave, then just go! My father has no ability? Yeah, right! Who has the ability like your father? He's in the capital, isn't he? Go find him and see what he can do!"

Lady Min snorted coldly, "My father loves Rourou the most and will definitely find a solution. As for the Qin guy, I don't care anymore. The most urgent thing right now is Rourou's matter, and there must be no further complications. I will go to see my father tonight."

Gu Ling: ...Great, the "fishing" plan is a success. He'll go home to prepare some grenades and go "fishing with dynamite" tonight.

Chapter 394: 394. Harvest

Back in the palace, Empress Dowager Xiao dismissed the servants and said she wanted to have a private conversation with Duanmu Chen.

"What was the matter with Miss Min today?" Empress Dowager Xiao thought it was impossible for Duanmu Chen to fall in love at first sight with Min Rou. She knew her son best; even if he had taken a fancy to a woman, he wouldn't reveal it so blatantly, on the contrary, he would intentionally hide it to avoid having others discover his feelings.

Besides, Min Rou was indeed a beauty, but when it came to talent, appearance, and overall demeanor, she was lacking compared to the two princesses in the Imperial Harem. Situ Yao, in particular, was the one Duanmu Chen truly liked, but due to their positions, their feelings for each other had never been pure.

Duanmu Chen frankly admitted, "Indeed, I have other intentions."

Empress Dowager Xiao frowned, “Did you go there specifically because you knew Min Rou was going to Huguo Temple?”

Duanmu Chen nodded, “Mother, don’t blame me. The situation is tense now, and the Min family is somewhat suspicious. It’s just an attempt to test them.”

Empress Dowager Xiao sighed softly, “Why would Ai Jia blame you? As long as you know what you’re doing, Ai Jia won’t ask any more questions. Do be very careful with your safety.”

“Mother, rest assured, I will be extra careful.” Duanmu Chen smiled.

“When you have time, go see the Empress and Concubine Liang. They are both pregnant and must want to see you.” Empress Dowager Xiao, being a woman herself, didn’t want her daughters-in-law to experience the bitterness and grievances she had endured. A restless Imperial Harem wouldn’t be beneficial to Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen expressed that he had been too busy recently but would find time to visit them.

As for what was going on with Imperial Concubine Ji Yue Xuan of the Yin Country, Empress Dowager Xiao inquired, and Duanmu Chen only said that Ji Yue Xuan would not become his woman, as this was something he had discussed with someone. Empress Dowager Xiao thought this “someone” was Emperor Ji Yuebai of the Yin Country, and since Duanmu Chen was aware of the situation, there was no problem, so she didn’t press the matter further.

The Imperial Matrimonial Decree on the first day of March quickly spread throughout the capital city. Before, there had been instances of Duanmu Chen not attending court because of Situ Yao, so the common people felt this was nothing more than the emperor taking a fancy to another beauty. It wasn’t anything special.

Su Liang learned of the events at the Huguo Temple from Old Mu and Ji Xiaoshu and immediately concluded that the encounter and attraction between Duanmu Chen and Min Rou must have been Gu Ling’s strategy.

However, this was a last-minute decision by Gu Ling after seeing Min Rou today. He went directly to Duanmu Chen, and although he had returned home, he didn’t see Su Liang, so she wasn’t aware of it beforehand.

Ji Xiaoshu complained about Duanmu Chen, “Master is so much better. I want to be like Master, a loyal and devoted man.”

Su Liang couldn’t help but smile, “That’s good.” However, it’s not necessarily true that all emperors are romantic and passionate. Many times, an emperor needs more women for the purpose of expanding the family, ensuring that the royal family has male heirs, and avoiding the loss of imperial power due to premature death, illness, or other reasons.

Duanmu Chen and Ji Yuebai were not romantic or passionate, they were normal, and could even be considered emperors who were very restrained toward women.

However, Ji Xiaoshu had said long ago that he didn’t want to be an emperor, thinking it wasn’t a good thing.

In the afternoon, Cen Man went to Min Mansion again, and Gu Ling returned.

Su Liang made some food for Gu Ling and watched him eat as she talked about Min Rou's situation. "If Min Rou's maternal grandfather is really in the capital and truly loves her, and if he doesn't want her to marry into the palace, the simplest way would be to kill Duanmu Chen within three days."

According to their previous guess, Min Rou's maternal grandfather should have been one of the assassins who attempted to kill Duanmu Chen a few days ago. He was not dead and not captured after the failed assassination attempt. After the failed assassination, the black mist on Duanmu Chen's forehead disappeared, indicating that the assassins had chosen to give up, or at least temporarily.

Gu Ling nodded, "I'll go back to the palace later and check again." To see if the black mist had reappeared on Duanmu Chen's forehead.

Su Liang sighed slightly, "Do you think Min Rou is the same kind of person as her parents?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "It doesn't seem like it." Min Rui and his wife did their shady dealings behind Min Rou's back. Although this didn't necessarily prove that Min Rou was a good person, at least for now, there was no evidence to suggest she was a bad one.

Seeing Gu Ling appear again, Duanmu Chen snorted lightly, "What should we do next?"

Gu Ling's gaze fell on Duanmu Chen's forehead, and he calmly said, "In order to prevent Min Rou from entering the palace, that group of people will come to kill you again."

Duanmu Chen's face tightened, "Are you sure? Are you saying Min Rui and his wife are in league with the previous assassins?"

Gu Ling nodded, "It should be."

It wasn't entirely certain before, but after the Imperial Matrimonial Decree, the black mist appeared on Duanmu Chen's forehead once more, which couldn't be a coincidence.

Duanmu Chen knew that Gu Ling had been watching Min Rui and his wife these past few days, so he didn't ask him how he knew about the upcoming assassination attempt, assuming that Gu Ling had eavesdropped on the couple's conspiracy.

"Then will you guard me again tonight?" Duanmu Chen suddenly smiled, "I prepared wine and food for you last time, but you didn't come." Having experienced the previous assassination attempt, Duanmu Chen was very confident in Gu Ling's abilities and was not worried about any mishaps happening because they had set this trap.

Gu Ling took out something wrapped in cloth from his arms and handed it to Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen didn't understand, took it, and opened it to find a strangely shaped iron lump. It didn't look like a weapon and he couldn't figure out what it was.

"Is it a hidden weapon? It's too big and heavy." Duanmu Chen asked.

It was a nail gun for Duanmu Chen to defend himself with. Gu Ling took it back to demonstrate how to use it.

“Nails? The two assassins last time were taken down by this thing?” Duanmu Chen felt it was quite magical. After listening carefully to Gu Ling’s explanation, he held the nail gun in his hand, aimed at a pillar, and pulled the trigger.

The next moment, a sharp nail completely penetrated the pillar, and even passed through the thick pillar, coming out halfway on the other side.

The pillar was made of strong wood, which showed its great power. If the target were human flesh and blood, as long as the aim was accurate, it could instantly kill the enemy.

When Duanmu Chen looked at the nail through the pillar and the iron lump in his hand, his eyes were completely different, “This is much better than a bow and arrow.” It almost required no effort and was much faster.

Seeing the eager look in Duanmu Chen’s eyes, Gu Ling knew what he was thinking and shook his head slightly, “It’s very difficult to make, and there’s no way it can be used on the battlefield.”

Duanmu Chen felt a little regretful, “It’s a pity such a powerful weapon. Thank you, it’s very useful, I’ll gladly accept it.” Although he had many people protecting him, he was afraid that if an enemy got close, he would need a weapon to defend himself. Duanmu Chen had practiced archery and his aim was not bad.

“It’s just a loan to Your Majesty.” Gu Ling said.

Duanmu Chen’s face stiffened, “I’m going to tell Nuannuan that you’re stingy.”

Gu Ling: ... He was just joking.

But whether it was a joke or not, Duanmu Chen could never give the nail gun back to Gu Ling. After putting it away, he asked, “You’re giving me this, are you not coming to protect me tonight?”

Gu Ling nodded, “I need to keep an eye on Min Rui couple.”

Duanmu Chen immediately felt uneasy, “What if the couple remain inactive tonight, but I can’t hold on on this side?”

“I’ve asked Master to come over.” Gu Ling said.

“Your master’s strength might not be stronger than yours.” Duanmu Chen shook his head, “But since you’ve decided, I trust you.”

At night, Cen Man returned to the Su Mansion, and Gu Ling went to the Min Mansion again. The assassination might not be tonight, but even if it was tonight, Min Rui’s wife’s father might not take action personally. Gu Ling chose to continue monitoring Min Rui’s wife, who had said during the day that she would go to Min Rou’s grandfather at night.

As for the Imperial Palace, Gu Ling asked Old Mu to watch over it. Old Mu was very willing. Since accepting Gu Ling as his disciple, he had made several new weapons and hidden weapons, but they had never been used. He was looking forward to testing their power on enemies.

Cen Man stayed in Yuanming Pavilion to protect Su Liang and the three children.

Min Mansion.

The dinner was a meal for Min Rui, his wife, and Min Rou together, with a very depressing atmosphere.

Though Old Master Min had never thought his granddaughter would enter the palace as a concubine and really loved Min Rou, when the Imperial Matrimonial Decree was issued, he accepted it. He had more than one son and more than one grandchild and had to take into account the overall situation.

Old Master Min had talked to Min Rou, hoping she wouldn't see entering the palace as a bad thing because Emperor Duanmu Chen was not only an enlightened monarch but also treated his queen and concubines well. There had never been any disputes in the Imperial Harem.

Min Rou did not refute Old Master Min's words, just listened quietly and said she understood.

At this moment, only Min Rui, his wife, and Min Rou were in the room.

Min Rou stirred the soup in her bowl with a spoon, stirring it endlessly. Even after the soup had lost its heat, she was still stirring. The regular sound of the spoon and bowl colliding echoed, one after another, making the expressions of Min Rui and his wife increasingly anxious.

Min Rui's wife frowned, "Rou'er, if you're not going to drink the soup, put down the spoon."

Min Rou obediently let go of the spoon, looked at Min Rui's wife, and sighed, "Mother, if I ran away, would it involve my grandfather? Our family is related by marriage to the Duke Mansion and the Lin Family, and if I ran away, the emperor wouldn't do anything to the other members of the Min Family, would he?"

Min Rui's wife was stunned for a moment, and Min Rui frowned. It was apparent that the couple hadn't considered this possibility because they had been angry at each other all the time.

After a while, Min Rui spoke, "That's a good idea. You go find your grandfather and stay with him. It's safe. The emperor won't do anything to the Min Family because of this. As you said, your cousin is married to a good family, and if the Min Family really has a problem, the Qin and Lin families won't sit idly by."

Min Rou bitterly smiled, "The emperor is truly terrifying. With just a few casual words, he can control someone's life. I want to go back to the island. Even though life there isn't as bustling and prosperous as it is in the capital city, it's at least simple and free. My only worry is that it might cause trouble for the Min family."

Lady Min sneered, "Rou'er, you're just too kind-hearted. I haven't seen anyone in the Min family who genuinely cares about you. Why did your cousin get a good marriage? That's because your grandfather picked a good husband for them before they participated in the selection!"

Min Rou frowned, "Mother, don't say that. No one could have predicted today's events. We have only been home for a short time, and it's not like Grandfather could be in a hurry to marry me off. What has happened, has happened. Imperial edicts cannot be disobeyed. As the head of the family, Grandfather can't do anything about it either."

"What can't be done? Look at the Qin and Lin families. Why didn't Qin Yujin and Lin Xueqing enter the palace to become imperial concubines? Do you think Duanmu Chen didn't want them? Someone stopped it, and succeeded." Lady Min said coldly.

Min Rou was puzzled, “Mother, what do you mean? What was stopped?”

“Initially, Duanmu Chen wanted to marry Lin Xueqing as his Imperial Concubine, but Su Liang intervened and made Duanmu Chen give up. She and Gu Ling have a huge influence. As long as they’re willing to speak up for you, even the issued Imperial Decree could be repealed. But your grandfather simply doesn’t want to ask for their help for your sake!” Lady Min snorted coldly.

Min Rou furrowed her brows, “How did you know about this, Mother?”

“I accidentally overheard your eldest uncle and his wife talking about it behind closed doors. They mentioned it only to lament that the Lin family had connections, while the Min family did not.” Lady Min’s tone was resentful, “After all, it’s not their daughter, so why would they care if you’re doing well or not?”

Min Rou sighed deeply, “Mother, you can’t say that. Uncle Lin and Madam Gu are master and disciple, and they have known each other for a long time. The relationship between the Qin family and Madam Gu is also unusual. The Marquis and Madam Gu treated Father’s illness, and it is us who owe them, not the other way around. How could we recklessly ask for their help for such a significant matter?”

Lady Min’s face darkened, “Don’t mention those things anymore. If you want to leave, I’ll go and find your grandfather tonight. He can either take you away, or figure out another solution.”

“My paternal grandfather... he’s in the capital city?” Min Rou was very surprised, “When did he arrive?”

“Don’t ask so many questions. Your grandfather has his own business to attend to.” Lady Min shook her head, and continued after a pause, “But he will definitely not ignore your situation.”

The room quieted down. After a while, Min Rou left.

Min Rui asked Lady Min, “Do you know where your father is?”

Lady Min coldly replied, “You don’t need to worry about it. Even if I don’t find him, he will surely come.”

Gu Ling listened to everything, continuing to patiently wait.

As it approached midnight, the palace was calm and there were no assassins.

Lady Min, having not seen her father come, decided to go out and look for him. She changed into night clothes, put on a mask, didn’t light a lantern, and walked out of the room. As she left, Min Rui said, “Be careful, if you can’t find him, come back as soon as possible.”

Lady Min only responded with a soft snort. As she left the room, Gu Ling silently followed her.

What Gu Ling did not know was that a person appeared in Min Rui’s room a quarter of an hour after he followed Lady Min out of the Min residence.

“Who’s there?” Min Rui gripped the knife under his pillow.

“Where’s Qianqian?” An aged voice asked. It was He Wei, Lady Min’s father. Lady Min’s name was He Qianqian.

Min Rui breathed a sigh of relief, “Father, you must have just missed Qianqian. She’s gone out to find you because she’s worried about Rou’er’s situation.”

He Wei turned to leave, but Min Rui quickly stopped him, “Father, you know about Rou’er being awarded a marriage, right?”

“You’re all incompetent, not even able to protect Rou’er.” He Wei coldly said, “You should never have come here in the first place.”

Min Rui sighed, “I regret coming back too. But talking about it now is of no use. What do you plan to do, Father? Will you take Rou’er away first?”

“I’ll go find Qianqian.” With this, He Wei left, not going to look for Min Rou.

Meanwhile, Gu Ling followed Lady Min to a grove of trees outside the city. Lady Min lit a signal, and a wisp of red smoke rose into the night sky, quickly dissipating in the wind.

After waiting for two quarters of an hour with no one appearing, Lady Min lit the second signal.

After waiting another two quarters of an hour, finally, someone arrived.

Gu Ling held his breath and watched carefully as a shadow approached, its figure resembling the gray-clothed elder he had seen before.

When Lady Min saw the person, she breathed a sigh of relief, “Father!”

He Wei began, “I just went to the Min Family.”

“We must have missed each other. I was afraid that Father had left or didn’t see the signal I sent.” Lady Min grabbed He Wei, “Does Father know about Rou’s situation? Please think of a solution quickly.”

He Wei nodded, “Take Rou and leave. Leave tonight, don’t stay here.”

Lady Min was stunned, “I’ll take Rou away... but what about Father? And Min Rui?”

“I still have unfinished business; I will join you once it’s done. If you don’t leave, there may be more trouble coming.” He Wei said, “Why bother with Min Rui?”

Lady Min explained, “Although Rou doesn’t know many things, she might not be able to accept it if we don’t care about the life and death of Min Rui. After all, he’s her biological father.”

“Then tell Rou that Min Rui’s illness hasn’t improved and he needs to stay behind for treatment. He’ll be fine with the protection of the Min Family.” He Wei said.

Lady Min hesitated for a moment, and then told He Wei about how Min Rui threatened her to kill Old Master Qin, leading to the current situation.

Filled with anger, He Wei scolded, “Idiot! What a time to make more trouble! Min Rui can’t stay. You guys go first, I will deal with him!”

Lady Min sighed deeply, “Now that things have come to this point...”

He Wei interrupted impatiently, "Stop talking nonsense! While you haven't been discovered by Gu Ling and Su Liang, take Rou and leave quickly!"

"And what about Father, what is he going to do next? Kill Su Liang?" Lady Min asked.

As Gu Ling, who was hiding in the shadows, heard this question, his eyes suddenly filled with an icy chilly!

Yet he listened as He Wei replied, "Don't worry about that."

As father and daughter were about to part, Gu Ling hesitated about whether to continue following Lady Min or He Wei. He Wei was a more critical figure, but also more difficult to deal with; whether he wanted to catch him, kill him or pry open his mouth, it would be a challenging task.

However, after a brief consideration, Gu Ling continued to tail Lady Min. As the situation unfolded, he developed a new plan.

Gu Ling quickly returned to the Min Mansion before Lady Min and headed for Rourou's courtyard. After taking the antidote, he lit a potent sleeping incense in her room. Asleep, Rourou's slumber deepened."

Lady Min met with Min Rui again, and told him her father had something to do tonight, instructing her to send Rourou outside the city, where someone would meet them.

Min Rui didn't think too much about it, and just watched as Lady Min left once more.

When Lady Min secretly entered Rourou's room, she felt the air was a bit stuffy, but there was no unusual smell. She quickly went to the bedside, lifted the bed curtains, and patted Rourou's quilt, "Rou, wake up!"

Rourou didn't respond, while Lady Min started to feel a bit dizzy.

As Lady Min tried to pull Rourou up, she collapsed on the bed, feeling weak all over. She realized something was wrong, but it was already too late to escape.

Before she lost consciousness, Lady Min faintly saw Gu Ling appear not far away...

Late at night, Su Liang hadn't slept yet. Her daughter was sleeping soundly in a nearby crib, while she read a book under the lamplight, waiting for news from Gu Ling. There might be assassinations in the palace tonight, as well as fights in the Min Mansion. The carefully laid "bait" in recent days should yield some results.

Old Mu hadn't returned, but Gu Ling returned first.

"Why did you bring them back?" Su Liang was surprised. It was agreed that gathering information was most important, to avoid startling the enemy.

Gu Ling explained that Lady Min had agreed with her father that she would take Rou and leave the capital secretly tonight.

Su Liang's eyes lit up, "So, this mother-daughter duo was supposed to disappear tonight, and those people shouldn't suspect us for the time being?"

Gu Ling nodded, “Min Rui will only think that his father-in-law took his wife and Rou away.” The reason Lady Min went to see Min Rui without taking her luggage was that she wanted him to think she was also deceived by her father and had no choice but to leave.

Moreover, after several surveillance sessions, it could be confirmed that Lady Min knew many secrets of that power. Rourou didn’t know much, but at least she knew where their original home was — the island. This information was very important for Su Liang and Gu Ling.

Su Liang grabbed Gu Ling’s collar and pulled him down to give him a kiss, “Great God, your adaptability is unmatched in the world. To interrogate them, I’ll take care of it!”

Chapter 395: 395. Really a swindler

Old Mu returned home at dawn, informing Gu Ling and Su Liang that no assassin had appeared in the palace last night.

Su Liang asked Old Mu to get some rest. Cen Man went back to keep an eye on Min Rui at the Min Mansion, even though Min Rui seemed incapable of doing anything, but his father-in-law might try to find him again.

Gu Ling was home, and he made breakfast together with Su Liang.

After breakfast, Ji Xiaoshu said that he had promised Old Master Qin that he would go climbing trees at Duke Qin’s mansion today, but also promised Uncle Emperor that he would go play in the palace today. What should he do?

“You choose one, and I’ll go to the other one,” Zhengzheng said calmly.

Ji Xiaoshu immediately shook his head, “That won’t work, it will give me away. Can I go to Old Master Qin’s in the morning, and then go play in the palace in the afternoon?”

“No, you can’t.” Gu Ling shook his head, handed Gu Xiaonuan to Su Liang, stood up and picked up Ji Xiaoshu, who was right next to him, to go out.

Ji Xiaoshu swung in Gu Ling’s hand, “Mom, help! Master is going to throw me away!”

Zhengzheng: ... he is calling for help while his face is all smiles, truly, there is none like him.

Su Liang chuckled, “Your master is taking you to play in the palace, don’t run around, this is a secret mission.”

Ji Xiaoshu’s eyes lit up, and then he was tossed onto Gu Ling’s back by Gu Ling. His little hand accordingly hugged Gu Ling’s neck and laughed, “Master, let’s go quickly! What’s the secret mission? Are we going to assassinate Uncle Emperor? Is he a big villain disguised as a gentleman? Is it appropriate to assassinate him in broad daylight?”

Gu Ling patted Ji Xiaoshu’s buttock, “Quiet.”

Ji Xiaoshu shouted, “Mom, master is hitting me! Sister, your dad is hitting me!”

His voice quickly faded, and the surroundings quieted down. Su Liang looked down to see Gu Xiaonuan smiling at her, her eyes squinting with joy.

Zhengzheng came over, “Does sister want to go out and play? Let me take her.”

Su Liang put Gu Xiaonuan in the baby buggy, and Zhengzheng pushed her out. Now, Zhengzheng is not as enthusiastic about going out to play as before. He has been to all the places that could be played in the capital, including Duke Qin's mansion and the Imperial Palace. Most of Ji Xiaoshu's play projects are leftovers from Zhengzheng's, so of course, he would not compete with him.

When Su Liang was cleaning up the dishes alone, she was considering how to interrogate Mrs. Min and her daughter Min Rou. They were brought back last night and locked up in the secret room of the underground labyrinth of the Yuanming Pavilion. They should still be asleep by now.

Gu Ling went to the palace again to see if the black fog on Duanmu Chen's brow was still there. The enemy was strong, and it was impossible to fully predict their plans of action, so they had to remain cautious.

The Min Mansion.

Early in the morning, Master Min got a report from a servant saying that Min Rou was missing. There were no signs of a struggle in her room, the bedding was neat, but several of her clothes and the books that Master Min had given her were all gone.

Master Min's heart thumped in his chest, hurrying to Min Rui's.

Min Rui looked bad, because he had not slept much last night, waiting for Mrs. Min to return. According to the original plan, only Min Rou should have left, but Mrs. Min went missing until dawn, and Min Rui guessed that he had been duped. It's possible that Mrs. Min didn't plan to leave, but He Wei insisted that both mother and daughter must leave. Also, it's possible that after seeing He Wei, Mrs. Min decided to take Min Rou away, but deliberately lied to Min Rui that she would come back.

One moment Min Rui thought it was the former, the next he was convinced it was the latter. His emotions were complex.

Master Min walked in, saw that only Min Rui was in the room, and immediately looked grave, "Where is Rou and her mother?"

Min Rui shook his head bitterly, "I don't know."

Master Min frowned heavily, "How could you not know?"

"I went to bed early last night, I don't know when Mrs. Min disappeared." Min Rui sighed deeply, "I guess that because of yesterday's imperial marriage decree, Mrs. Min decided to run away with Rou. Her greatest wish in life has been for Rou to live carefree and to marry someone she loves in the future. You should also know very well what it would be like to enter the palace. I didn't mention it before, but Qianqian knows martial arts, and Rou has learned some."

Master Min had calmed down "She didn't discuss it with you?"

Min Rui shook his head, "No. She probably feared that I would stop her. After all, if they run away, the emperor would blame the Min family. If she had asked me beforehand, I definitely would not have agreed. But now that they're gone, I feel relieved. I only have one daughter. I hope you understand my feelings. If the emperor blames us, I will take all the responsibility."

Master Min shook his head, “What’s the use of talking about this now? I will go to the palace and apologize.”

Min Rui suddenly brought up Old Master Qin, “Father, why don’t you discuss it with Uncle Qin and see if he can help? After all, his only daughter was also given away in marriage and died in a foreign land. He should understand Mrs. Min’s actions.”

Upon hearing Min Rui mentioning the past, Master Min frowned again, thought for a moment, and shook his head again, “Not appropriate. This is the Min family’s issue. If we rashly bring our relatives into this, it could further anger the emperor. Now that it has happened, only a sincere apology might lead the emperor to deal leniently with us. Any more deception will only make things worse.”

At these words, Min Rui wanted to get out of bed, “If anyone is to apologize, it should be me. My health is a bit better now, I can go out.”

Minister Min sighed again, “Alright, you can come with me.”

While father and son from the Min Family were on their way to the palace, Gu Ling, escorted by Ji Xiaoshu, had already entered the Imperial Study.

They came secretly. Ji Xiaoshu didn’t disguise herself today. When she saw Duanmu Chen, she waved cheerfully from Gu Ling’s back, “Uncle Emperor, here I am!”

Duanmu Chen chuckled, then yawned in the middle of his laughter. He hadn’t slept much; he thought there would be an assassination attempt last night.

Seeing Duanmu Chen yawning with a light smile on his lips, Ji Xiaoshu suddenly found this uncle a lot cuter and less pretentious.

Ji Xiaoshu jumped down and ran to the Dragon Throne. With some effort, she climbed and sat on it. She picked up a book from the desk, didn’t even open it, just touched the embossed patterns on the cover and laughed, “This is different from my father’s. The flowers on our books at home are smaller.”

Duanmu Chen, holding Ji Xiaoshu, chuckled, “Which one looks better?”

Ji Xiaoshu lifted the book in her hand, “Uncle Emperor’s is prettier.”

Even though it was just an insignificant compliment from a child, Duanmu Chen felt extremely happy. Even though Ji Xiaoshu sat on his Dragon Throne, he found her just adorable and nothing else.

“Your master has already gone back, yet you specifically came to check on me. Are you okay?” Duanmu Chen taunted. It felt really good to be cared for, especially by someone like Gu Ling who seemed to care about no one outside his family.

Gu Ling didn’t answer Duanmu Chen’s question. He fixed his gaze between Duanmu Chen’s brows where the black fog still lingered.

In theory, they should keep watch tonight waiting for the assassin as usual. But thinking of what happened last night when Lady Min met with her father outside the city, the old man didn’t

accompany Lady Min home nor did he send his granddaughter away. Clearly, he had other important things to do last night.

Gu Ling had not followed that old man, so he didn't know what he had done later that night. However, if the old man's mission was to kill Duanmu Chen, and he did something last night instead of making an attempt on Duanmu's life in the palace, could it be that he intended to switch tactics?

Switch tactics... Gu Ling thought that was highly probable. After the failed assassination attempt a few days ago, their group had lost over half its men, the possibility of them using the same method to assassinate Duanmu would be very small. Then what could be their next possible method?

While Gu Ling was deep in thought, Duanmu Chen said to Ji Xiaoshu, "Look at your master. He's so still, just like a statue."

Ji Xiaoshu asked earnestly, "If I push him, will he fall over?"

Duanmu Chen patted Ji Xiaoshu's shoulder, "Why don't you go and give it a try?"

"Uncle Emperor, why don't you go? If I go, my master will hit me. That would be scary." Ji Xiaoshu expressed that she won't fall for it.

Duanmu Chen half coughed, "If I go, I might also get hit."

"Wow! My master even dares to hit Uncle Emperor? He's really bold! Then he definitely would dare to hit my dad too! I am looking forward to seeing that!" Ji Xiaoshu had quickly mastered the art of causing problems for her father.

Duanmu Chen broke into laughter, indicating that he was also looking forward to it.

"Gu Ling, what are you thinking about?" Duanmu Chen asked.

Just then, Chang'an's voice could be heard from outside the room, "Your Majesty, the Minister of the Ministry of Industry and his son are seeking an audience outside of the palace."

Duanmu Chen was stunned for a moment, "What are they here for?"

Gu Ling spoke, "Min Rui's wife and daughter went missing last night."

Duanmu Chen frowned, he never actually liked Min Rou. Official matters took precedence, and he would not lose face just because Min Rou had run away. However, considering that Gu Ling had always been watching the Min couple closely, he asked, "You did nothing and just let them run away?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "Not far. They're at my place."

Duanmu Chen's lips twitched, "Alright then. Interrogate them quickly to see if we can learn anything."

"Min Rui thinks they have left the capital," Gu Ling added.

Duanmu Chen nodded, "So they were genuinely trying to flee but were intercepted by you halfway? Then I know what to do now. As for the others of the Min Family, keep things as they are, throw Min Rui into the Heavenly Prison and decide on an execution date later, how does that sound?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "Let's not deal with Min Rui for now. Let him go home." He Wei said last night that he wanted to deal with Min Rui, but he hadn't acted yet which meant he was too busy doing something else. If Min Rui were thrown into the Heavenly Prison, He Wei would have to break into the prison to kill him, which would inevitably harm the innocent.

"You have the final say," the words tumbled out of Duanmu Chen's mouth. He thought to himself that such words shouldn't be said by an emperor to a servant. But then again, why should he constrain himself with the experiences of other former emperors, most of whom ended badly? Putting on an emperor's grandeur in front of Gu Ling would be pointless and even ridiculous. Gu Ling didn't treat him like an emperor, and he didn't treat himself like a de facto emperor either. They were talking as friends.

Duanmu Chen shouted to the outside, "Chang'an, let them come in an hour."

Chang'an took his order and left.

"You ..." Gu Ling glanced again at Duanmu Chen's brow.

"What about me?" Ji Xiaoshu asked.

Gu Ling didn't answer, he got up and walked to the window, opened it, and saw the sky was full of dark clouds, there might be a thunderstorm today. The dark clouds on the sky interweaved with the black fog in Duanmu Chen's brow, made Gu Ling feel a very bad premonition.

"Don't stay in the Sleeping Palace tonight." Gu Ling closed the window and turned to Duanmu Chen and said. He was worried that those people might use the explosive weapons he initially thought of, which would make things simpler. But for Duanmu Chen, it was much more dangerous.

Duanmu Chen immediately turned pale, "Will I be in danger tonight? Is it more dangerous than last time?" He thought that hiding in a secret room with a nail gun for self-defense and many secret guards to protect him would make it difficult for the enemy to succeed. But when Gu Ling thought so long and asked him to change places tonight, there must be dangers that he could not foresee.

Gu Ling explained a word, "I suspect that one of those people had fought against me before, and he has a terrifying weapon."

It was the first time that Duanmu Chen heard Gu Ling say the word "terrifying", he was shocked.

"In short, don't stay in the Sleeping Palace tonight, and try to avoid staying in the Imperial Study during the day. It's best to go to a place that no one knows about as soon as possible." Gu Ling said.

"You mean I should hide from now on?" Duanmu Chen felt very uneasy.

Gu Ling nodded, "Choose a place with a secret passage and don't come out once you go in."

Duanmu Chen understood, "Okay, I'll go back to the Sleeping Palace later, and then go to the Library Pavilion through the secret passage."

Gu Ling also found out for the first time that there was a secret passage from the emperor's Sleeping Palace to the Library Pavilion. He didn't know who dug it, but it was useful enough.

Ji Xiaoshu looked surprised, "What about us?"

"You can stay with Uncle." Duanmu Chen took the initiative to invite Ji Xiaoshu.

Ji Xiaoshu immediately slid down from the Dragon Throne and ran to Gu Ling, "Master, let's run quickly, it's very dangerous in the palace!"

Duanmu Chen: ...I trusted you in vain...

But Gu Ling was going to leave. If the opponent uses explosives, staying by Duanmu Chen's side would not only be ineffective, but would also put himself in danger.

After Gu Ling left secretly with Ji Xiaoshu, Duanmu Chen reviewed two more memorials. Feeling too restless, he asked Chang'an to bring the Min family's father and son to him.

When Ministry of Industry Shangshu Min and Min Rui saw Duanmu Chen, they felt the atmosphere was very tense. They didn't know that Duanmu Chen was not angry because Min Rou had run away, but was worried about the imminent danger.

The well-prepared vouchers from Ministry of Industry Shangshu Min were only spoke two sentences and Duanmu Chen interrupted him, "I have a headache today and don't want to hear these things, you guys go back."

Ministry of Industry Shangshu Min's face was stunned, go back... is there or is there not trouble?

"I already know about your granddaughter's matter," Duanmu Chen said with a cold face, "Min Rui, if your wife and daughter never set foot in Qian Country again, then let it be. But based on your news, I will never let them go! Dismiss yourself!"

Min Rui was dumbfounded. Although he thought that Duanmu Chen would not really do anything to the Min family, he didn't expect him to let them go so easy? Especially him. He had always thought that Duanmu Chen would suspect that he was complicit in the disappearance of Mrs. Min and Min Rou, and had thought about how to defend himself, but in the end, it wasn't necessary at all.

Ministry of Industry Shangshu Min tugged at the startled Min Rui, thanked the emperor for his grace and then bowed their heads and exited.

After they left, Duanmu Chen called Chang'an in, "I have a headache, I will go back to the Sleeping Palace. Take these memorials with you."

Chang'an agreed, packed up the memorials, and followed Duanmu Chen out of the Imperial Study and returned to the Sleeping Palace.

Duanmu Chen has been staying in his Sleeping Palace recently instead of staying with his concubines. After entering, he ordered not to be disturbed, and then took Chang'an to the Library Pavilion through the secret passage. That place is usually a forbidden area, and very few people can enter. Su Liang often went to the Library Pavilion to borrow books before, which were special privileges given by Duanmu Yi.

The reason why Duanmu Chen didn't take the Empress Dowager, the Empress, and Song's concubines was because the assassin obviously only targeted him alone. If Gu Ling didn't say that others were in danger, it means that he didn't need to consider too much.

As soon as Gu Ling took Ji Xiaoshu back home, he heard the thunder. It was about to rain.

Ji Xiaoshu lay on Gu Ling's back, looked up at the sky, and said, "Master, will Uncle Emperor be alright?"

"I don't know." Gu Ling put down Ji Xiaoshu and entered the Yuanming Pavilion.

Ji Xiaoshu quickly ran after him, "Mother, I brought Master home!"

But Su Liang was not found on the first floor, nor on the second floor.

"The rain is about to fall, where have my master and sister gone?" Ji Xiaoshu looked back to ask Gu Ling, but found nobody behind him. He rubbed his eyes, for Gu Ling was just there a moment ago.

"Could my master really be a fairy, capable of becoming invisible?" Ji Xiaoshu muttered to himself, then ran downstairs.

Zhengzheng was just pushing Gu Xiaonuan through the door, "Xiaoshu, you're back! It's going to rain outside, but sister isn't afraid of thunder at all, she's even braver than me. I used to be scared of thunder."

"Older brother, where's master?" Ji Xiaoshu asked.

"Master has important matters to attend to, she's downstairs." Zhengzheng pointed at the floor.

Ji Xiaoshu understood immediately, "Master must have gone there too, let's go too!"

"No, we need to take care of our sister." Zhengzheng said seriously.

Ji Xiaoshu leaned over to the stroller and asked Gu Xiaonuan, "Sister, are you a fairy?"

Gu Xiaonuan stretched out her little hand, cheerily waving it, "Ya!"

Ji Xiaoshu looked surprised, "Older brother, did you hear that? Sister said she is a fairy!"

Zhengzheng: ...

In the secret chamber below, Su Liang sat across from Min Rou, calmly looking at her.

Min Rou had been awake for a while now. Su Liang asked her a question, "Where is your home?"

But Min Rou remained silent, staring coldly at Su Liang.

With a serene expression, Su Liang said, "Earlier, Gu Ling went to give your father an injection. She then went to visit Old Master Qin at the Duke Mansion and inadvertently discovered that your mother sneaked into the Duke Mansion with a suspicious demeanor. She then monitored her every action and discovered some things. The first thing, your parents plotted to kill Old Master Qin."

Upon hearing this, Min Rou frowned, "Impossible! You're falsely accusing us! You're talking nonsense without evidence. We have no grudges or enmity. I don't know what you're hoping to achieve by capturing me, but I don't believe a word you've said!"

Su Liang nodded, "Just as I expected." With that, she rose to her feet. "If you don't believe me, I'll let your mother tell you in person."

Upon hearing Su Liang's words, Min Rou's face dramatically changed, "What do you mean?"

Su Liang didn't answer. After exiting the chamber and closing the door, Min Rou heard her mother's voice from the adjacent room after a while, "Su Liang? What are you trying to do? Why have you captured me? Where's Rou?"

A feeling of unease crept into Min Rou's heart, but it was not for her own safety...

In the neighboring room, Su Liang looked at Lady Min, who was tied up, and calmly said, "Gu Ling accidentally discovered that you've been secretly coming and going from the Duke's Mansion, so she started keeping an eye on you and heard things. This is why you were captured."

Lady Min looked at Su Liang in disbelief, "You... I didn't do anything wrong! I just didn't want my daughter to become one of the Emperor's many women! What's wrong with that?"

"Indeed. As for the other matters, you had only planned them and haven't had a chance to carry them out yet." Su Liang said, "You planned to kill Old Master Qin, and just for that, I could kill you."

Lady Min's face darkened, not uttering a word; she wondered how much Su Liang and Gu Ling had overheard.

"You're not defending yourself, so you're admitting it?" Su Liang scoffed.

Inside the adjacent chamber, Min Rou's face suddenly turned pale.

The next moment, they heard Lady Min's angry voice, "Since you've been monitoring me, you should know that the person who wants to kill the Qin family is not me, but Min Rui. I was forced by him. I haven't done anything yet! If someone has to be held responsible for this, you should kill him, not trouble me!"

Min Rou felt as if she had been hit with a sledgehammer. From sitting upright, her shoulders suddenly slumped down in resignation...

Meanwhile, Gu Ling, who was about to enter the secret chamber beneath the Yuanming Pavilion, heard a thunderous roar, followed by an explosion from the direction of the Imperial Palace.

Gu Ling closed the entrance to the secret chamber, went up to the roof of the Yuanming Pavilion, and saw smoke billowing in the direction of the Imperial Palace. His hunch turned out to be true; the villains had directly used explosives to attack Duanmu Chen. They could easily infiltrate the Imperial Palace in broad daylight without being noticed, just like him.

Therefore, Gu Ling speculated that the villains didn't use explosives during their first assassination attempt because they were confident in their abilities, and probably didn't have explosives on them. The explosives they used this time must have been secretly prepared in the past few days following the failed attempt. This explanation made sense.

The Imperial Palace was vast; given the sound and smoke, only one location had been blown up. It should have been Duanmu Chen's sleeping quarters. Gu Ling thought that Duanmu Chen—who was always cautious—would have avoided it after hearing his warning, but he still decided to go to the Imperial Palace to confirm it.

Meanwhile, within the Imperial Palace, Duanmu Chen stood at the top of the Library Tower, speechlessly staring at the billowing smoke in the direction of his sleeping quarters. With his hand on the table, his face turned pale. After a long while, he softly sighed, "Gu Ling, truly a soothsayer, isn't he."

Chapter 396: Don't go overboard.

Upon seeing Gu Ling again, Duanmu Chen spread his arms in welcome, "Are you sent by the heavens to protect me?"

Gu Ling circumvented Duanmu Chen's embrace, walking towards the window expressionless. He looked outside at the charred remains of the Sleeping Palace, extinguished by the downpour. Anyone caught in the explosion inside the palace would certainly have been dismembered.

"Was anyone inside?" Gu Ling asked.

Assuming a serious demeanor, Duanmu Chen stood beside Gu Ling, shaking his head as he looked out, "No one. You mentioned danger, so I ordered everyone out." The guards had originally been stationed around the perimeter and hidden spots.

At this moment, it was evident that most of the outer wall of the Sleeping Palace remained intact, thus anyone outside the wall would be unharmed.

"What happens next?" Duanmu Chen sighed, "If the culprits find out I'm not dead, won't they come after me with more explosives? I can avoid them this time, but what about next time? Their power is too formidable to be deterred by ordinary guards."

"Explosives are not as common as pebbles on the sidewalk," Gu Ling, with a cursory look at the ashen haze above Duanmu Chen's brow, remarked. The dark fog had vanished – perhaps temporarily, but at least the crisis had been temporarily averted.

However, as Duanmu Chen pointed out, the current problem was whether to pretend he was dead temporarily to dodge the threat. If the enemies intended to kill him and disrupt public morale and military spirit while launching an attack on Liang Country, even a fake death would grant them their wish.

But this reasoning doesn't hold water. Even if Duanmu Chen dies, the Duanmu Family has no other contender for the throne at present. Neither Gu Ling nor Su Liang would let Qian Country fall into chaos. Hence, no matter if Duanmu Chen is dead or alive, the enemy's goal will not be achieved.

Soon after, Gu Ling realized that the group's real target seemed to be him all along. Yet this time, they were after Duanmu Chen. He wondered whether this had something to do with him. If they were hell-bent on killing Duanmu Chen, they could be intending to force him onto the throne?

While the reasoning was a little confusing, Gu Ling found this latter prediction more plausible.

“Are you divining the future in your mind?” Duanmu Chen questioned, noticing a shift in Gu Ling’s gaze.

Gu Ling glanced at Duanmu Chen, understanding his thoughts. But in such circumstances, it was better not to explain. As long as he doesn’t say anything, Duanmu Chen’s suspicions will remain unconfirmed. If he speaks up, there’s a chance more people will find out.

It wouldn’t be wrong to say that Gu Ling possesses the ability to foresee the future. However, his prescient powers are limited – perhaps equal to the claims of a street fortune teller’s declaration, “Your forehead is darkened, you’ll encounter a bloody disaster within the next three days.” The difference lies in the fact that most street fortune tellers spout nonsense and cheat people of their money, while Gu Ling... is a real fortune teller...

“The emperor should announce he suffered an injury and urgently summon me to the palace,” said Gu Ling.

Duanmu Chen nodded, “Why not Su Liang? She is the Divine Doctor.”

Gu Ling shook his head, “No, I am the Divine Doctor.” He had just recalled the threat to kill Su Liang that Mrs. Min and her daughter had spoken of. If Su Liang came to treat Duanmu Chen, and the two targets were together, he wasn’t sure what moves the enemy might make.

Duanmu Chen coughed lightly, “If you say so. Will you head home and wait for me to send someone to call you back?”

“Let the Empress Dowager make arrangements. Censor the news, don’t let the explosion’s news leak,” Gu Ling suggested, “You must stay here and remain unseen.”

Duanmu Chen answered solemnly, “Alright.”

Intending to leave, Gu Ling looked outside at the gloomy skies and the pouring rain; Duanmu Chen frowned, “Could it be that the battle in Xuanbei City has begun?”

“Perhaps,” Gu Ling muttered, and left. If a battle were to ensue, dispatching reports would certainly take some time.

However, Xing Ji and Qiao Jing, despite receiving supposed news of Duanmu Chen’s death, wouldn’t easily believe it. Even if they did, it wouldn’t affect their original plan. Because they know that with Gu Ling and Su Liang in the capital city, chaos is far from inevitable.

Upon receiving the news, the Empress Dowager was drowned in sorrow, crying till she almost fainted.

It’s worth mentioning that when Duanmu Yi, who was still alive, got wind of the explosion in Duanmu Chen’s Sleeping Palace, he immediately called for Su Liang, “Summon Su Liang now, have her heal me!”

The Empress Dowager, upon hearing this, stared at Duanmu Yi with a stupefied gaze. She saw nothing but excitement on his face, paired with the thrill of potentially reclaiming the throne, completely agnostic to his son’s misfortune...

This left the Empress Dowager heartbroken; she sobbed, telling Duanmu Yi, “Even if Su Liang comes, she won’t be able to heal you.”

Duanmu Yi’s face stiffened as he regained his composure, realizing that if Duanmu Chen were truly dead, the throne would surely fall into the hands of Gu Ling and Su Liang!

Panicking, Duanmu Yi started shouting, “Someone help! Quick, help me!” He was anxious to take control of the situation.

However, the Empress Dowager moved towards the door, addressing the approaching guards, reassuring them that everything was under control and that they could leave.

Duanmu Yi’s verbal tirade echoed through the room as the Empress Dowager wept. She had no idea what was going on, nor if her son was alive. But she felt that it was best not to act on impulse at present. As she was unable to discern the situation and lacked the capability to handle such a crisis, she could only wait for Gu Ling and Su Liang, trusting that they would come to the palace if they heard about the incident. Duanmu Chen had mentioned that he absolutely trusts those two.

“Empress Dowager.”

A familiar voice echoed through the room. The Empress Dowager, tear-blinded, incredulously raised her head towards the approaching figure, “Chang’an?”

Duanmu Yi was also taken aback. Chang’an was typically inseparable from Duanmu Chen, so if he was safe, wouldn’t that mean Duanmu Chen was safe as well?

Making a silence gesture, Chang’an whispered, “The Emperor is safe.”

Duanmu Yi blurted out, “You haven’t turned into Gu Ling and Su Liang’s lapdog, helping them deceive us, have you?”

Chang’an: ... If Gu Ling and Su Liang wanted the throne, they wouldn’t need such intricate schemes, nor would they need him.

The Empress Dowager ignored Duanmu Yi’s words, only asking Chang’an about Duanmu Chen’s whereabouts.

Chang’an didn’t answer directly but mentioned that he was still in the palace and imparted Duanmu Chen’s instructions for the Empress Dowager to announce to the public that Duanmu Chen was accidentally injured and Gu Ling has been summoned.

“Why Gu Ling? Shouldn’t it be Su Liang we should summon?” The Empress Dowager mused.

Chang’an explained, “Marquis Chang Xin Gu Ling claimed to be a Divine Doctor.”

The Empress Dowager nodded, “Okay.” Indeed, Gu Ling did possess medical skills, and this was not about finding someone to save Duanmu Chen.

Having arrived unnoticed, Chang’an then left just as stealthily, without raising any suspicion.

Likewise, the Empress Dowager led a group of people under the pouring rain to inspect Duanmu Chen’s Sleeping Palace. She ordered a strict lockdown of the Sleeping Palace and its information, announcing death as the penalty for anyone who disseminated information about the incident. She then immediately sent someone to Su Mansion to summon Marquis Chang Xin Gu Ling.

Su Mansion.

Locked in the underground clandestine room, Su Liang remained oblivious to the loud claps of thunder and the explosion from the palace. Unperturbed, she continued interrogating Mrs. Min.

“I know, your name is He Qianqian. Someone overheard you telling Min Rui that I must be killed. However, the cause and effect are unclear to me. I really don’t understand. What possible grudge exists between you, your husband, and me?” Su Liang asked coldly, looking at Madame Min.

The color drained from Madame Min’s face. She couldn’t remember when she had told Min Rui that they should kill Su Liang, but she had indeed said it. Her memory was in disarray, and what was more disorienting was the fact that she didn’t know how much Gu Ling and Su Liang had eavesdropped on and how much they knew. She was unsure how to respond.

In the secret chamber next door, upon hearing Su Liang say “I must be killed,” Min Rou’s face paled further. Her heart raced, and she firmly clenched her own sleeves, an instinctive reaction whenever she was nervous.

Min Rou was waiting. She was waiting for Madame Min to refute Su Liang’s accusation. She felt as if time had slowed down. Each breath she took made her feel suffocated.

“I never said I wanted to kill you. Your informant must have misheard. We have no grievances. Why would I want to kill you?” Madame Min finally responded.

Min Rou’s heart relaxed slightly, but then she clenched her fist even tighter. She desperately wanted to believe her mother, but a voice at the back of her mind said: don’t be naive. Your parents are not what they appear to be. You don’t truly understand them, nor do you know what they have done behind your back...

Madame Min paused, and then continued, “I admit that Min Rui indeed intended to kill Old Master Qin. The reason should be quite clear to you. The Qin family rejected our marriage proposal back in the day. Min Rui has always harbored unrequited feelings for Qin Yuan, and he bears a grudge against Old Master Qin for looking down on him. I was coerced into it by Min Rui who blackmailed me with some compromising information. But all this is in the past and has nothing to do with you. I don’t want to explain too much. If you are planning to take revenge for Old Master Qin and pin it on me, you are seriously mistaken. It was not my idea and I had no intention of harming Old Master Qin, did I?”

Su Liang took a discreet glance at the wall behind Madame Min. Separated by just a wall, Min Rou was sitting there, must have heard every word her mother said.

Then Su Liang hummed lightly, “I’m well aware of this. Did you also ask Min Rui why he didn’t kill Xing Ji and his only son with Qin Yuan, Xing Yusheng?”

“When I asked that, I was merely being sarcastic. There was no other intention. Our marriage has been loveless for a while. I found out that he has only ever loved Qin Yuan—he only treated me as his substitute. And so...”

“Let me interrupt you for a moment.” Su Liang spoke with a neutral expression, “According to what my informant heard, it’s not that Min Rui doesn’t love you; only you don’t love him. You see him as a replacement for a past lover. He only stays with you because he has no other choice. You have always been the one in charge, as he was just a son-in-law who lived in your house. Am I correct?”

Mrs. Min’s face stiffened, “No matter what, our marital relationship is poor, we are incompatible. But for the sake of Rou, we haven’t separated. If you want to avenge Old Master Qin, go find Min Rui. Why are you holding me hostage?”

“Are you saying that even if I kill Min Rui, you wouldn’t care?” Su Liang sneered.

After a moment of silence, Madame Min replied, “Yes, I’ve long wanted to cut ties with him completely. So whatever he does, you really can’t blame it on me.”

Tears were welled up in Min Rou’s eyes, but they didn’t spill over. Filled with sorrow at first, as she listened, she found the whole situation increasingly absurd... It was highly ridiculous: her parents, whom she previously perceived as loving and devoted, were merely putting on a facade. They detested each other but hid it so well, all for her sake? Did they conspire and prejudiced against one another for the sake of their daughter? Did they scheme to kill Old Master Qin for her? Marriage proposals are decisions made by parents. If some are accepted, of course, some are turned down. Why did the Qin family have to agree to the Min’s proposal? Was it wrong and deserving of death for rejecting it?

Min Rou felt that her life, her knowledge of the past, everything had turned upside down in this moment. Her father, once gentle and refined, was a petty, psychologically twisted, paranoid man. Her mother, once gentle and virtuous, was a person who was self-interested and could not distinguish right from wrong.

Ridiculous, tragic, pitiful, and shameful...

“Old Master Qin escaped unscathed because we noticed and safeguarded him in time. However, I will still settle the score with Min Rui, just not now.” Su Liang looked at Madame Min, speaking coldly. “Back to the previous question, why do you want to kill me? My informant confirmed hearing it and the listener was my husband Gu Ling. This is why you were captured. If you cannot provide me with a reasonable explanation, you will die here in this place where no one knows. Don’t think I’m trying to scare you.”

Madame Min pressed her lips together, “If I said no, then it’s no. Keep asking, I have nothing to say.”

To Min Rou’s ears in the next room, Madame Min’s words were clear—it was as if she had done it but refused to admit.

And Min Rou could not understand why Min Rui and Madame Min said they wanted to kill Su Liang? Granting that Old Master Qin and Min Rui had a grudge, it could somehow be justified. But Su Liang was so young, and before this incident, she didn’t even know them.

Su Liang did not continue to interrogate Madame Min or resort to torture. Instead, she brought a glass of water over and forced it down Madame Min's throat.

"It's only a sedative, you won't die. There's no need to be nervous." Su Liang looked disinterested as she watched Madame Min fell unconscious again after drinking.

Min Rou heard the door in the adjacent room open and close. The hand that had been clenching her sleeve loosened slightly, then tightened again. Soon, Su Liang appeared in front of her again.

"You heard it all." Su Liang looked at Min Rou calmly, "Some things I didn't say to your mother just now, because if I did, she wouldn't confess even more. These few days, it has been Gu Ling who has been monitoring your parents. What she heard and saw is not just what happened earlier. You know about your grandfather's affairs in the capital, but do you know what he came to do?"

Min Rou pressed her lips together in silence. Indeed, she had heard that her grandfather was also there, but she genuinely did not know what he came to do and why he had not shown himself.

"He came to assassinate the emperor, he had already made one attempt, but failed, and is still planning the next action." Su Liang said.

Min Rou frowned, and then heard Su Liang say, "Because the owner of your island is in collusion with the royal family of Liang Country, preparing to help them unify the world. We had found this out earlier, we just didn't expect it to be related to your parents. I suspect they wanted to kill me at the behest of Liang Country's emperor, Situ Xie, but I cannot confirm this, because the person who is thought to be your grandfather has not come to bother my husband and I for the first time. The last time he came was at the end of last year when he was discovered tracking Gu Ling from the shadows and almost killed her."

Min Rou's grip tightened, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I believe, that of all the things that happened in the shadows, you really don't know any about them." Su Liang said, "I'm just explaining why you and your mother were brought here. You are a smart person, you should know, your parents are actually spies. Regardless of whether they have done anything or not, based on their identity and what your grandfather has done, according to the laws of Qian Country, the Min Family should be executed to the ninth degree, including you, as well as other innocent people of the Min Family."

Min Rou stared at Su Liang, "Then why don't you turn us over to the emperor? What are you trying to do?"

"What I am doing is at the behest of the emperor, not something my husband and I decided on our own." Su Liang said flatly, "We need to know more information in order to deal with your grandfather and the people behind him. If you cooperate, naturally you will be safe, and those who don't know in the Min Family will also be

safe. But if you don't say anything, it will be taken as you choosing to side with your parents and grandfather."

Min Rou shook her head, "You won't harm my grandfather's family, you're not that kind of person."

Su Liang suddenly laughed, "You know me that well? Indeed. No matter what happens, even if your grandfather succeeds in killing the emperor, and the event falls into the hands of my husband and I, we would not harm your grandfather's family. After all, they have not done anything wrong."

Min Rou frowned at Su Liang, then heard her continue to say, "I don't want to make things difficult for you, but I hope you can understand, choose to do the right thing."

"I don't understand the tensions of the world, but why does my grandfather helping Liang Country have to be wrong? Could Qian Country, or you, be the only ones to unify the world? Would that be right?" Min Rou retorted.

"I'm not talking about the grand policy of the world. Your grandfather is a subject of Qian Country. Your grandfather is helping the royal family of Liang Country to assassinate the emperor of Qian Country, showing that he doesn't care about the lives or deaths of your grandfather's family. Of course, your grandfather does care about you. Last night, he planned to have your mother take you away. As for your father, your grandfather said he would take care of him. He doesn't care about the lives or deaths of the others in the Min Family. Don't you care either? Or do you wager that I won't harm the Min Family, that I might even protect them? But why? Because I'm reasonable, is the reason that you all can do as you please? Are your grandfather and your paternal grandfather only different in their positions? In terms of your own standards, who is good and who is evil, can you truly not judge?" Su Liang said coldly.

After long silence, Min Rou looked at Su Liang and slowly shook her head, "My parents were wrong, you have already caught my mother. Catching my father is easy, I have nothing to say. I am not clear about what my grandfather is doing, and I can't stop it. But other people on that island are also my relatives, I won't betray them, I won't let you destroy our home."

Su Liang snorted lightly, "That's your home, but it might not be the home of others. You are well protected, you only see the good things. Those evil deeds that can't be seen in the light, just because you haven't seen them, doesn't mean they don't exist. With the behavior of your grandfather and your parents, you really think that the home you speak of is some kind of paradise?"

Min Rou's face stiffened, but she still remained silent.

Su Liang heard Gu Ling calling her from not far away and responded, "I'm here."

Gu Ling came over quickly, glanced at Min Rou with an indifferent look, then said to Su Liang, "The emperor's sleeping quarters have been destroyed by explosives."

Min Rou's eyes widened in disbelief, and she blurted out, "Is the emperor dead?"

“Is he okay?” Su Liang asked with a frown. She hadn’t expected those guys to act in broad daylight.

Gu Ling shook her head, “He’s alright, he wasn’t in there.”

Su Liang sighed, looked at Min Rou and said, “I suspect that the next person your grandfather wants to blow up is me. You should be aware of what explosives are, right? This is not a weapon ordinary people would use. Since you are unwilling to confess, I cannot find out why your grandfather wants to kill me, and thus can’t resolve the conflict. Therefore, you should stay by my side for the time being. When your grandfather comes to kill me, I’ll have you serve as my shield. Do you think that’s unreasonable?”

With a bitter and confused look on her face, Min Rou slowly shook her head and said softly, “It’s not unreasonable.”

Chapter 397: I said

The heavy rain poured outside, and a thick carpet was laid in the hall on the first floor of Yuanming Pavilion. Elder Mu took Gu Xiaonuan out of the stroller and placed her on top, he sat down with Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu, all of them sitting barefoot, playing games around Gu Xiaonuan.

Min Rou followed Su Liang out of the underground secret room and saw this scene: Gu Xiaonuan was babbling and chatting about something, Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu each held one of Gu Xiaonuan’s small hands, gently rocking in rhythm as if they were dancing with their precious little sister.

The three of them were playing a game of Jenga. A round, thick wooden board was placed on the carpet with a cylindrical tower built from small wooden blocks on top. They each took turns pulling out a block, and whoever caused the tower to fall would lose.

As Zhengzheng carefully tried to pull out a block he had chosen, Gu Xiaonuan suddenly tugged at him.

Although the pull was weak, Zhengzheng subconsciously leaned in the direction of Gu Xiaonuan’s pull for fear of hurting her, and the jenga tower collapsed all at once.

Ji Xiaoshu was immediately excited, “Haha! Big brother, you lost!”

Gu Xiaonuan also started to giggle.

Zhengzheng helplessly took the small wooden block that had fallen on Gu Xiaonuan’s leg, his hand still holding Gu Xiaonuan as he gently rocked her, “Sister, as long as you’re happy.”

“Fair is fair!” Ji Xiaoshu separated Zhengzheng and Gu Xiaonuan, holding Gu Xiaonuan in his arms, waving her hands, “Big brother, you need to do the frog jump!”

Standing not far away, Su Liang watched with a smile. Min Rou was a bit confused, wondering what the frog jump was about.

Zhengzheng then squatted down, his hands behind his head, and started hopping around the edge of the carpet like a frog. This was a punishment for the game proposed by Su Liang.

“Sister, doesn’t big brother look like a big frog?” Ji Xiaoshu asked with a big grin.

Gu Xiaonuan, sitting in Ji Xiaoshu’s arms, was laughing heartily, waving at Zhengzheng the entire time.

“Wait a minute, I’ve never seen a real frog!” Ji Xiaoshu turned his head, saw Su Liang, and sweetly called, “Mother, where can I find frogs? I want to catch some tadpoles!”

Su Liang had once told Zhengzheng the story of a tadpole looking for its mom, which he then relayed to Ji Xiaoshu. But the two children had never seen a frog or a tadpole with their own eyes.

Su Liang smiled, “Ask your master to take you to catch some tadpoles another day.”

Just then, a voice came from outside the Yuanming Pavilion, “The Empress Dowager has summoned the Marquis Changxin to the palace immediately!”

Gu Ling also came out of the underground secret room at this time, passing by Su Liang and giving her a quick kiss on the cheek.

Min Rou stood there in shock. She knew they were husband and wife, but was it really okay for them to be acting so intimately in public?

Looking towards Elder Mu, she saw that everyone seemed accustomed to it, showing no particular reaction.

But if anything, Ji Xiaoshu had a reaction. Holding Gu Xiaonuan, he stood up, his little face uplifted, his eyes shining brightly, “Master, I want a kiss too!”

Gu Ling bent over, gave his beloved daughter a kiss, then pinched Ji Xiaoshu’s ear, and was at the door in the blink of an eye.

“Mother, father hit me again!” Ji Xiaoshu “complained” about Gu Ling.

Gu Xiaonuan raised her small hand and slapped Ji Xiaoshu on the face.

But Ji Xiaoshu just laughed, “Wow, sister is so strong!”

Min Rou found the atmosphere here to be quite unique, a feeling she couldn’t quite put into words. Outside the window, the wind howled and rain fell harshly, but Min Rou felt that, apart from her, everyone in the Yuanming Pavilion seemed warm and happy. Her own family, which she had thought was warm and harmonious, was nothing more than a joke...

“You can think about it, if your grandfather wanted to kill me, would he throw explosives directly at us? What would the consequences be?” Su Liang said quietly to Min Rou.

Min Rou was watching Gu Xiaonuan when Su Liang spoke. The words made her heart jump, and she clenched the sleeves of her robe tighter. She wanted to say that her grandfather wouldn’t be so inhumane, but she couldn’t bring herself to speak. Because she didn’t even understand the true nature of her own parents, let alone her grandfather, a highly skilled martial artist who would occasionally be out for long periods handling business... she had no idea what her grandfather had done when he was away, perhaps even including the time he nearly killed Gu Ling.

Su Liang's earlier question to Min Rou came to mind—were her grandfather and great-grandfather just on different sides?

No... Min Rou knew the answer.

Apart from his identity as a servant of Qian country, her grandfather was just an ordinary person, the head of the Min family, who loved his grandchildren and also considered the bigger picture. Therefore, Min Rou did not blame Minister Min for not helping her reject the imperial matrimonial decree. She had no desire to enter the palace, but entering the palace did not necessarily spell tragedy and suffering, nor did it mean life-threatening danger. Min Rou believed that if her cousin had been chosen for the imperial marriage, Minister Min would have treated her the same. Moreover, it has now become clear that the Emperor of Qian country didn't really fancy her; it was just a trap set for her parents.

But her maternal grandfather had strong power and huge ambitions, if what Su Liang said about their cooperation with the Liang Country's Royal Family is true.

They really had different standpoints, but the good and evil of human nature can't be covered by the word standpoint.

"Who is this aunt?" Zhengzheng noticed Min Rou.

Min Rou thought she knew Zhengzheng, but the two who she had seen before were actually disguised as Ji Xiaoshu. She recalled now, the "Zhengzheng" voice she heard and her face, were both from those two children.

Min Rou had been disguised by Su Liang into another visage, so Ji Xiaoshu didn't recognize her. Only old Mu knew who she was.

Su Liang introduced her, "She is Chun Hua. She will be taking care of you here."

Min Rou frowned, she didn't quite like the alias Chun Hua, but she was in no position to say anything.

However, later that night, when Min Rou saw Qiuyue, she understood why Su Liang casually named her Chun Hua...

Su Liang carried Gu Xiaonuan upstairs to breastfeed, and Min Rou just sat quietly and watched old Mu and the two children playing games on the ground.

After another round ended, Zhengzheng voluntarily invited Min Rou, "Aunt Chun Hua, come and play too! It's very simple!"

Min Rou quickly waved her hands, but Ji Xiaoshu directly ran over to pull her, "Come and play! It's more fun with more people!"

After Su Liang lulled Gu Xiaonuan to sleep, and carried her down to put in the cradle, she heard Ji Xiaoshu saying that he was hungry.

"What would you like to eat?" Su Liang asked.

Ji Xiaoshu, Zhengzheng, and old Mu each named a dish in turn. When Su Liang allowed them to choose, they each had one opportunity. However, most of the time she didn't allow them to choose.

The three dishes were all ones that Min Rou had never heard of. Looking at Su Liang, she got up to make room, “You come to play, I...” she couldn’t cook...

“Play one more round and then come and help me light the fire.” Su Liang went to the kitchen as soon as she finished speaking.

Min Rou did not feel like playing games and lost in the end.

Wei felt that it would be inappropriate to make a beautiful aunt like her jump like a frog, so he suggested that Min Rou make a grimace.

“A very ghostly one.” Ji Xiaoshu demonstrated.

Min Rou consoled herself; it was better than jumping like a frog. It didn’t matter because she could not see herself making it. So, she wiped her hands and mimicked Ji Xiaoshu’s way of making a ghost face.

Then Wei pointed towards the kitchen, “Aunt Chun Hua, go over there, please.”

When Min Rou entered the kitchen, Su Liang was cutting vegetables. Her movements were smooth and skilled.

“Don’t you have any servants here?” Min Rou asked.

Su Liang countered, “On the island, are you a lady who has servants to attend to you?”

Min Rou suddenly felt a bit embarrassed. Although Su Liang’s tone carried no mockery, she thought about it. From a young age, she had grown accustomed to being waited on by others, even on her journey to the capital, she had a maid specifically serving her.

“There are maids in my house, but they’re not my maids.” Su Liang said. Qiuyue was serving Nangong Qian. But now Nangong Qian was like a different person, she very much enjoyed sewing clothes and cooking, and was getting better and better at it.

Sitting on a small stool tending the fire, Min Rou watched the flames burning in the stove and thought about the day’s events. She couldn’t help but tear up again. Her mother had become a prisoner, her father’s condition was unknown, her grandfather was plotting to kill the Emperor of the Qian Country, and she had become Chun Hua, a maid at the Su Mansion, with an uncertain future.

Seeing Min Rou’s distraught state, Su Liang did not comfort her. They could have been unrelated. Su Liang and Gu Ling had not caused the situation to reach this stage. The couple was just trying to protect themselves after realizing the danger.

Min Rou quickly adjusted her mood and began to watch Su Liang cook. After a while, she couldn’t help but ask, “Do you usually cook?”

Su Liang shook her head, “Gu Ling does it more often.”

Min Rou was stunned, “Marquis Gu? He knows how to cook too?”

With an indifferent expression, Su Liang responded, “He cooks better than me.” That was the truth. Although Gu Ling learned cooking from her, he had now surpassed her and had even created some very good dishes.

This overturned Min Rou's understanding. Up until today, she assumed that Su Liang was the Martial Arts Champion, a Divine Doctor, and a heroine among women. She thought Gu Ling came from a noble family, was Marquis Chang Xin, highly skilled in Martial Arts and Medical Skills, aloof as an immortal banished to earth.

But at this very moment, Min Rou sees and hears the true abilities of this couple, which might even be greater than she knew. At the same time, they have a quotidian touch, living a truly happy and fulfilled family life.

And her grandfather wants to destroy the home of Su Liang and Gu Ling.

Min Rou thought, if Su Liang directed her anger at her because of this, it would be justified.

But this was not the case. Despite being captured, she did not suffer any abuse. Su Liang was polite when speaking to her, and was constantly laying out the facts and reasoning.

"I just hope you can tell us about your original home, where that island is." While serving a dish, without looking at Min Rou, Su Liang said, "If your family does not do evil acts or harm me, I won't touch them. Will you believe me?"

Min Rou fell silent. She wanted to say that she believed, but at the same time felt torn. On one side, was her family who raised her, and on the other, Su Liang whom she really got to know today. Even though her parents' deeds have hit her hard, it's hard for her to suddenly side with Su Liang.

"Take this over to them." Su Liang didn't pressure Min Rou for an answer, but instead handed her the plate in her hands.

Min Rou stood up, took the dish, and carried it into Yuanming Pavilion.

An old man and two children immediately crowded around. Without chopsticks, Old Mu took out a traditional bamboo fruit fork from a bamboo tube and carefully forked a piece of meat, blew on it to cool it down, and offered it to Ji Xiaoshu.

Just as Ji Xiaoshu was about to receive it, the meat flew away, fed instead to Zhengzheng by Old Mu.

"Old Mu!" Ji Xiaoshu was irritated.

Old Mu laughed heartily and fed the second piece to Ji Xiaoshu, then ate the third piece himself.

Just when Min Rou was wondering why the two youngsters didn't use the fork to eat by themselves, the three finished their piece of meat and went back to playing.

Zhengzheng seemed to have noticed Min Rou's confusion and said with a smile, "There are more dishes to come, it wouldn't be worth it to get full all at once!"

Min Rou couldn't help but chuckle, "That makes sense."

After Gu Ling entered the palace, he went to the Empress Dowager Xiao.

Duanmu Yi asked Gu Ling what was going on with a gloomy face, but Gu Ling did not respond, he only spoke a few words to Empress Dowager Xiao. There may be spies from Liang Country in the palace, thus to prevent the enemy from taking further action, he did not go to the Library Pavilion to look for Duanmu Chen.

Lin Bojun surrounded the Empress Dowager's Ci'an Palace with troops. When he saw Gu Ling, he only asked, "Is the Emperor well?"

Gu Ling's response was, "He is alive, but cannot show himself."

After leaving the palace, Gu Ling did not immediately return home, but went to Minister Min's Mansion. As per their agreement, he still needed to administer acupuncture to Min Rui today.

Due to the sound of thunder, very few people outside have come to know about the explosion in the palace.

Minister Min was still uneasy about the escape of Min Rou and her mother. Seeing that Gu Ling was late but still arrived, he inexplicably felt less anxious.

After the acupuncture, Gu Ling asked Minister Min to leave for a moment, saying he had to discuss something with Min Rui.

Minister Min thought it was the Emperor asking Gu Ling to inquire about something, so he left.

"I swear, I really don't know where my wife and daughter went. They did not discuss it with me." Min Rui took the initiative to speak.

Gu Ling's expression was indifferent, he bluntly said, "Your father-in-law wants to kill you, it could even be tonight."

Min Rui's expression froze, only after a while did he respond, "I don't know what you're talking about... my father-in-law is long dead."

"Just a friendly reminder, no need to thank me." With that, Gu Ling's gaze swept over Min Rui's forehead before turning to leave. Min Rui's bloody disaster was imminent, but no black fog appeared on his forehead, which meant he was not worth saving. He deserved to die.

However, Min Rui's heart pounded like a drum. Watching Gu Ling nearing the door, he couldn't help but ask, "Why would you say such things?"

Gu Ling paid no attention and walked out the door.

Gu Ling left the Min Family as before, entered Duke Qin's Mansion, and then disappeared.

Soon, Gu Ling secretly returned to Minister Min's Mansion and sent Cen Man, who had been monitoring Min Rui, home. Then, he entered Min Rui's room.

Min Rui was frightened by Gu Ling's words. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that He Wei would definitely kill him to silence him. He didn't hear the door opening, and when he saw Gu Ling appear in front of him, his expression changed drastically, "You...what are you doing back here?"

Gu Ling didn't say a word, he knocked Min Rui out with a palm and then took out the disguise medicine. After disguising himself as Min Rui, he kicked him under the bed and sat on Min Rui's bed.

Su Mansion.

On seeing Cen Man return, Su Liang knew that Gu Ling had gone to keep an eye on Min Rui again.

Thinking that Gu Ling hadn't eaten lunch, Su Liang decided to intensify her psychological attack on Min Rou.

So, Min Rou saw an unconscious old man, and her expression showed that she knew him.

"He is one of the masters who attempted to assassinate the Emperor a few days ago. There were five in total, two died in the palace, one was caught, and two escaped. I suspect one of the two who escaped was your grandfather," said Su Liang.

"What are you going to do with him?" Min Rou asked with furrowed eyebrows.

"He's a death soldier. We keep him unconscious because if he wakes up, he'll kill himself to prevent secrets from leaking. One of his comrades did just that," Su Liang said, "Do you know what secrets he's guarding till death?"

Min Rou's face was ugly, "I don't understand... why they did that..."

"That's exactly what I want to know." Speaking, Su Liang took out an airplane model Gu Ling made and showed it to Min Rou, "Do you recognize this?"

Min Rou's shocked expression clearly indicated that she had seen something similar before.

"Where did you get it?" Min Rou clenched her sleeves, her eyes uneasy.

"Gu Ling made it." Su Liang said, "Where did you see it? Who made it?"

Min Rou began to rub her aching forehead. Her mind was in a mess, completely not understanding what was going on. She wanted to say something, but felt that she shouldn't, she absolutely couldn't say it.

"Have you seen her?" Su Liang put down the model and took out a portrait to show Min Rou.

The woman in the portrait was Yue Mei, Ying Ying's grandmother. Su Liang suspected that she had colluded with the power from which Min Rou originated.

Min Rou nodded, "I've seen her." She didn't like this woman, but her mother said she was an honored guest on the island.

"Was there a young girl with her?" Su Liang opened the second portrait, which was of Ying Ying.

Min Rou looked uneasy, "I really don't know who they are."

Su Liang held a portrait in one hand, "Let me simplify. This girl is my sister. She was taken away by this witch and seems to have something to do with your family. I must find her and bring her back. Can you tell me where I can find her?"

Min Rou bit her lip, "Do you want to know where my home is just to save her?"

Su Liang nodded, "Yes, you're a Min. I hope you can look at the problem from the perspective of the Min family, detach yourself, and then look at your former home."

Min Rou heard Gu Xiaonuan laughing downstairs and could imagine her cute look. She very much wanted to persuade herself that Su Liang and she were not the same kind of people, not to be trusted. But she found no reason to doubt Su Liang, while her former home had sprung up countless suspicious aspects in a single day.

“Promise me you won’t harm any innocent people in my home,” Min Rou took a deep breath and looked at Su Liang steadily.

Su Liang raised her hand, “I swear, I won’t harm any innocent people.”

Min Rou loosened her clenched sleeve, her voice was very soft, “Alright, I’ll tell you...”

Chapter 398: 398. Significant progress

The rain outside the window was gradually weakening, and the cool breeze seeped through the open window slits. Min Rou’s face was as dull and gloomy as the sky.

“My maternal grandfather’s surname is He, with a single character for his name: Wei. I have two uncles, and four cousins, all of them were on the island... Maybe they aren’t there anymore, I don’t know.” The tone of Min Rou’s words was slow, and for her, it was difficult to say these things. However, not because she worried that Su Liang would go to the island and harm people, but rather, her intuition told her that those uncles and cousins she did not particularly like might not be good people either.

“Where is the island?” Su Liang asked this crucial question again.

Min Rou frowned in thought, “It is at sea... That is obvious. We disembarked at Nanshan City in Qian Country, but I don’t know how to describe the route from the island to Nanshan City.”

Su Liang could understand. Sailing in the sea without some professional knowledge and high attentiveness, it was difficult even to know the direction.

“But I saw the nautical chart in the hands of the old man who sent us ashore.” Min Rou sighed as soon as she finished speaking. This was one of the most secret things about that island and was not to be revealed to outsiders.

In fact, even if Gu Ling forced Min Rui to confess, even if Min Rui was willing to confess, he would not be able to tell the location of the island at all. This was because he was taken there and had left for the first time in more than twenty years. Moreover, during the journey, he lay down sick in the cabin listening to the sound of the waves, seldom looking outside.

As for Madam Min, He Qianqian was able to move freely aboard the ship, but still could not provide a useful route.

Among the three of them, only Min Rou, who had a good relationship with the old man who sent them away from the island, often went to chat with him. She unintentionally saw the nautical chart when he was away for a short time. She was curious at the time, wanting to know the direction of their destination, so she looked at it for a few more seconds. Afraid that the old man would be

unhappy, she managed to return everything to its original state, pretending not to have noticed the sheepskin scroll at all.

At this moment, Min Rou had not realized that one of the reasons their family of three was allowed to leave the island and return to the Min Family was that without someone to guide them, they would not be able to return, nor could they accurately reveal the island's location to outsiders.

Su Liang was overjoyed. Although she had asked several times and Min Rou refused to say anything, she still felt Min Rou might not be able to tell the exact location of the island. But unexpectedly, Min Rou did know after all.

Su Liang immediately took out the writing supplies and gestured for Min Rou to draw the route she knew as a chart.

Min Rou took a seat, and Su Liang quietly left as she could see Min Rou still frowning in deep thought.

Once downstairs, Su Liang saw that the three children were asleep on the carpet, covered with a thin quilt by Old Mu. Gu Xiaonuan was in the middle, with Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu on either side, both facing Gu Xiaonuan. Ji Xiaoshu's face still bore a smile, as if he had dreamt of something fun.

Old Mu was sitting cross-legged next to them, closed-eyed and nurturing his spirit. Upon hearing some movements, he opened his eyes and looked at Su Liang, asking softly, "How is it?"

Su Liang nodded as she walked over, "There are gains. She is willing to talk now."

Old Mu let out a light hum, "That's more like it. Otherwise, we would have had to use force."

After looking at the children, Su Liang went to brew a pot of tea and brought it upstairs into the study room. Just then, Min Rou put down her brush.

"Have some tea." Su Liang placed the teapot on the table but didn't pour tea for Min Rou. Instead, she took away the map Min Rou had just drawn and sat on the side, examining it carefully.

Min Rou stood up, poured two cups of hot tea, placing one in front of Su Liang and holding the other in her hands.

The teacup was a little hot, but at this moment, she felt cold both inside and out, and desperately needed the warmth.

Su Liang finished examining the map and asked Min Rou, "How many days did you travel?"

Min Rou answered, "We set off early in the morning, after nine nights, we arrived outside Nanshan City in the morning." She counted days just because she found the journey on the ship boring.

"Tell me about the features and shapes of these islands you passed along the way."

Su Liang placed the map between the two of them. The map was still somewhat vague, and more details were needed to ensure the route wasn't mistaken.

Min Rou recalled and described the islands she saw along the way to Su Liang.

Su Liang grabbed a writing brush and made annotations on the map.

“Your handwriting is beautiful,” Min Rou said.

Su Liang coughed lightly, “That’s not the point. Don’t get distracted. Think again, is there anything else you’ve missed?”

For some reason, Min Rou felt a little embarrassed, but after seriously thinking about it, she couldn’t remember anything else about the sea journey.

“Alright.” Su Liang placed the detailed route map to one side, then took another blank sheet of paper. On it, she wrote He Wei’s name, annotated his two sons and four grandsons, and also added the names of Min Rou and her parents.

On the other end of the paper, she wrote the names of Yue Mei and Ying Ying.

“There is also an old man who is my master when I was with this sister of mine.” Su Liang described the appearance and figure of Old Bai to Min Rou.

Min Rou shook her head, “I really haven’t met this senior. As for the other two, I only ran into them once. My grandfather He took them to the island and didn’t allow me to ask too many questions.”

Su Liang’s heart sank. Old Bai was not with Ying Ying? Then where was he? Or was he already harmed by Yue Mei?

No, that couldn’t be it... Su Liang knew that Old Bai had a special relationship with Yue Mei and wouldn’t easily kill him. Perhaps he was just not taken to the island but instead, trapped elsewhere.

“Was there a young man with them?” Su Liang asked.

Min Rou thought for a moment, then nodded and said, “Yes, there was a young man, tall and thin, but he held her hand all the time.”

As Min Rou spoke, she pointed at Ying Ying’s name on the paper.

Su Liang thought that it must be Ying Ying’s younger brother, Ying Ye, without a doubt. It seems that Yue Mei took Ying Ying and her brother to the island.

“How was my sister’s expression?” Su Liang asked.

Min Rou answered, “The old lady had a calm expression and held her head high, but your sister looked very cold and haggard. She was always half a step behind her, holding the young man’s hand, who was muttering words with his head lowered. I don’t know what he was saying. I’m sorry, I didn’t know anything at the time, so I didn’t think much about it.”

Looking back, the three of them were clearly out of place. But if Su Liang hadn’t mentioned that Ying Ying was kidnapped, Min Rou wouldn’t have thought of such a possibility without reason.

Su Liang shook her head, “No need to apologize, this has nothing to do with you.” She then briefly recounted her relationship with Ying Ying and Ying Ye, and the relationship between Yue Mei and Old Bai.

Only then did Min Rou understand why Ying Ying was Su Liang’s sister in her words. The story between them was tortuous, bizarre, and intriguing. Although Su Liang spoke in a calm tone, Min Rou found it fascinating as she listened. It was a true story that couldn’t be made up out of thin air.

“Who is the Island Master?” Su Liang asked the core question. The master of the island should be her “fellow townsman” and the root of everything.

Upon hearing this, Min Rou’s gaze fell back on the airplane model Su Liang had brought out earlier, and this basically confirmed Su Liang’s guess.

“The Island Master... He is a very powerful person.” Min Rou seemed unsure of where to start her explanation and paused for a moment before continuing, “His name is Mo Yan, about the same age as my grandfather. I call him Grandpa Mo. I’ve seen something like this in his courtyard, but much larger than yours.”

Finally, Su Liang and Gu Ling’s guesses had been confirmed all along, and the previously inexplicable things all suddenly connected.

There really was a transmigrator who had been living in seclusion on an island in the sea for many years, and now he was out to make trouble.

“What can he do?” Su Liang asked.

Min Rou answered, “I think Grandpa Mo can do anything and everything.”

Su Liang countered, “Can he perform medical skills?”

Min Rou hesitated for a moment, shaking her head, “He probably can’t, or else he would have treated my father. So I take back the statement that Grandpa Mo can do everything.”

Su Liang nodded, thinking that the truly omnipotent one was her own Great God.

“My grandfather said that Grandpa Mo’s martial arts are very high, none can match... but it may not be, maybe Marquis Chang Xin is even stronger in martial arts than Grandpa Mo, I don’t know about that.” Min Rou quickly learned to objectively view her former home and everyone in it.

After writing Mo Yan’s name in the center of the paper and drawing a circle around it, Su Liang wrote two smaller words “Martial Arts” next to it and also circled them.

Min Rou continued, “Grandpa Mo can make many strange things.” Looking at the model on the table, she shook her head, “Maybe it’s because I grew up on the island and haven’t seen much, I thought those things were unique to him, unknown to others. That’s what my grandfather said. But now it seems you can do it too.”

Su Liang drew an empty circle where she would have written “Transmigrator” but couldn’t write it out.

“Other than this, what else has he done?” Su Liang asked.

Min Rou thought for a while and said, “There are many other odd little gadgets, I don’t even know what they’re called. Right, Grandpa Mo wrote a very beautiful collection of poems, which I’ve read before, and he can also play very beautiful music.”

Su Liang was not surprised, as she could do those things as well, but when it came to music, it had to be Gu Ling. She wanted to gather information to determine Mo Yan's profession before crossing over, but she couldn't be sure.

Then Su Liang asked another important question, "Your Grandpa Mo, does he have any special features that make you think he's not an ordinary person?"

Min Rou nodded, "He really isn't an ordinary person, but which aspect do you want to know about?"

"Not related to martial arts or poetry or playing the qin, there are many people who can do that. Is there something only he can do? And a bit mysterious, like something you can't understand?" Su Liang wanted to confirm whether Mo Yan truly had a portable space.

Min Rou was stunned, "How did you know?"

That meant there really was one, but Min Rou thought it was an absolute secret and Su Liang would have no way of finding out from such a distance.

Su Liang shook her head, "I can't explain this to you for now. First, tell me if there is something like that, and if so, what is it?"

"There is something that I have never been able to understand." Min Rou unconsciously lowered her voice, "Grandpa Mo can make things disappear. Like, just vanish. I accidentally saw it from a distance, he was holding a piece of wood in his hand, it was quite big, definitely couldn't be hidden on his body, and then suddenly it was gone! You might think I saw it wrong or made it up, but at the time I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me, and later I doubted that it had never happened and that I had dreamt it, until after a long time I saw the same thing happen again. Grandpa Mo didn't realize I was spying on him, but my grandfather discovered and strictly warned me not to mention to anyone what I saw."

Now Min Rou's logic was that her grandfather was not a good person, so his words were not necessarily true...

Moreover, today's events had made Min Rou begin to doubt Mo Yan's nature as well. Her grandfather was Mo Yan's number one confidant, without children of his own, and enjoyed a high status on the island, second only to Mo Yan himself. This also meant that Min Rou enjoyed a high position on the island, and Mo Yan liked her very much, treating her like a granddaughter, which was the main reason she had access to some secrets.

At this moment, Min Rou was thinking that the deeds of her grandfather and the other high-ranking death soldiers must have been orchestrated by Mo Yan.

Most unacceptable to Min Rou were the death soldiers, as she had once thought the powerful grandfathers were all good friends and brothers with her grandfather and island master Mo Yan, but now the facts proved that she was too naive.

The secret that she accidentally discovered made her believe that Mo Yan was not a god but rather a demigod or an extraordinary person detached from worldly affairs. However, she never expected him to be involved in worldly conflicts now, and his methods were not at all open and aboveboard.

In other words, the Mo Yan she once admired and respected had “collapsed.”

In contrast, it was the couple Gu Ling and Su Liang who showed Min Rou what true open and aboveboard power was, even though they just met today.

“What was the size of the item that disappeared for the second time?” Su Liang asked.

Min Rou was a little surprised at Su Liang’s focus, “It was a lot of big boxes. I don’t know what was inside them. Together, they must be as large as this room.”

After looking around, Su Liang sighed. As soon as she confirmed that Mo Yan had the space, she knew her previous guess was right. Those supplies from Yin Country were transported by Mo Yan to Liang Country using his portable space. His space must be very large to fit all of this.

Seeing Su Liang writing “portable space” on the paper again, Min Rou asked, “Do you also have such abilities? If Grandpa Mo is an immortal, then you and Marquis Gu must be from the same place as him, right?” The evidence was the similar airplane model and Su Liang’s accurate guesses and understanding of Mo Yan before she even knew about him.

Su Liang shook her head very seriously, “We don’t have such abilities.”

Su Liang was a transmigrator but had no special abilities or space, while Gu Ling, a native, was born with special abilities.

It was also because they recognized that they were both “different” when they first met, which led to their later “collaboration.”

Their enemy Mo Yan, whose motives were unknown, made Su Liang very wary just because of his portable space. What if Mo Yan put a lot of explosives in his space, it would not be impossible for him to flatten Qian Country...

“Does Mo Yan have any children or grandchildren?” Su Liang asked.

Min Rou shook her head, “None. In my memory, he has always been alone. I remember when I was young, I saw a portrait in his study. It was a woman in the painting, dressed somewhat strangely, exposing her arms and legs, and wearing a large hat that only revealed her lower jaw. I asked who the person in the painting was, and he said it was his lover. I asked where she was, and he said she was far away.”

Undoubtedly a transmigrator, had a lover before transmigration, and was unable to forget, so he never married or had children in this world. This was Su Liang’s current hypothesis.

She had thought of Shen Qingxue, who was possibly related to her own life story, and was likely sold to the island by Yue Mei years ago. However, she still couldn’t confirm who Shen Qingxue followed, if it was a coincidence that Su Liang looked like her.

“Tell me more about the people and events on the island. Just say whatever comes to mind,” Su Liang said.

Min Rou told Su Liang everything she knew about the island, including the number of people on the island, who they were, and the terrain and houses on the island.

Soon, Su Liang's paper was filled with the collected information. She switched to another paper and wrote more than half of it. Min Rou said it was probably like that, and she couldn't think of anything else for now. If she thought of anything else, she would tell Su Liang.

"Great, thank you," Su Liang looked at the two papers and the line chart of the ship's route, feeling that the current problem had made significant progress. She wanted to share it with Gu Ling immediately and discuss it further, but unfortunately, Gu Ling was not home.

After talking a lot, Min Rou was a bit thirsty. After drinking the cold tea, she looked at Su Liang and asked, "I've told you everything I know. Can you tell me about your story with Marquis Gu?"

Su Liang raised her eyebrows, "Are you asking out of curiosity or for another reason?"

"It's out of curiosity, and there is another reason," Min Rou said with a bitter smile. "I don't think I know enough about you, and I think if I knew more, maybe it would be easier for me to believe that what I'm doing is right. Actually, I should have asked you earlier, but for some reason, today was supposed to be the turning point when I decided not to trust anyone easily, yet I was still convinced by you involuntarily."

Su Liang smiled slightly, "That makes sense. I can tell you whatever you want to know."

Chapter 399: 399. Granddaughter

Su Liang told Min Rou about her past experiences, which were more or less the same as what her family members knew, except for Gu Ling. Time travel and special abilities were not to be mentioned.

Although Min Rou informed her of the biggest secret on that island, including the events about the transmigrator Mo Yan, she lacked a concept of "transmigrators." Besides, she was talking about other people's experiences, not her own secrets.

Thus, Su Liang's "exchange" also had its limits, only avoiding certain things and almost only telling the truth.

After listening, Min Rou couldn't help but sigh, "You two are truly a match made in heaven."

The love she had once imagined was like that of her parents. Now thinking about it, she only felt ironic and ridiculous.

After coming to the capital city, she was envious of her two elder female cousins' marriages, thinking that they had found their perfect husbands and were living comfortably.

But after hearing Su Liang and Gu Ling's story, Min Rou felt that the love between them was truly wonderful and interesting, without parental arrangements, matchmaker's words, or love at first sight. The love stories in the traditional script were plain and boring in comparison.

Apart from love, Su Liang's diligence and hard work along the way, even if she didn't mention it, made Min Rou admire her deeply.

"Compared with you, my previous life was simply as bland as water," said Min Rou, mocking herself.

However, Su Liang shook her head, "Your blandness is a peaceful and worry-free life, which is better than most people in this world. It's because I had no one to rely on that I had to rely on myself and keep moving forward, never stopping, never being careless, or else I would be torn apart and devoured by the 'tigers' and 'wolves' that suddenly appeared."

Min Rou was originally very innocent, and being carefree was the capital of innocence.

Understanding Su Liang's meaning, Min Rou felt even more ashamed, "You're right." She listened to Su Liang talk about her past experiences, and the interesting points she heard were from a shallow understanding as an onlooker. In fact, those experiences were filled with danger and opportunities, and without enough strength and wisdom, one would fall into a hopeless situation.

"From now on, I have no home..." Min Rou's face was bitter. Throughout today, she had been avoiding thinking about the fate her parents would face, but in any case, that once warm and harmonious home, which was created by the people around her, no longer existed for her.

Su Liang gently patted Min Rou's shoulder, "Aren't you envious of me? Your chance to grow independently has arrived."

Min Rou: ...She had no confidence in herself and was full of confusion at the moment.

Zhengzheng carried Gu Xiaonuan upstairs, saying her little sister was hungry.

Su Liang fed her daughter and Gu Xiaonuan stretched her little hand towards the window, making noises.

"The rain has stopped, and Grandpa Lin hasn't arrived yet. Shall we take little sister out to play?" Zhengzheng asked.

Su Liang put the little hat Ji Yue Xuan had given Gu Xiaonuan on her head, "It's cold outside, both you and Xiaoshu should put on extra clothes before going out."

Su Liang intended to arrange Min Rou to stay in a courtyard closest to Yuanming Pavilion, but Min Rou voluntarily proposed to sleep in the underground secret room at night, "I won't ask how you will eventually deal with my mother. But for now, she is still alive and needs someone to take care of her. I will stay below and won't make rash moves."

"I trust you. But I need to remind you, once you go back down, suppress your curiosity and don't wander around or touch anything down there. Otherwise, there will be danger," Su Liang warned. That was the maze created by Old Mu and Gu Ling's master and disciple. Although Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu occasionally went down to play, they all remembered where they couldn't go and what they couldn't touch.

Min Rou said she understood.

Because of the rain, Lin Shuzhi arrived later than usual and saw Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu pushing Gu Xiaonuan to play by the lake, with Old Mu watching them in the pavilion. He greeted them with a smile and told them there would be no class today.

Ji Xiaoshu cheered and jumped, "Will there be class tomorrow?"

Zhengzheng frowned, "Xiaoshu, with that attitude, Master will scold you."

"Master is not at home though," Ji Xiaoshu looked behind and saw no one, feeling a bit disappointed. "I was just thinking, maybe Master has returned and is hiding somewhere nearby, waiting to pick me up and scold me!"

Zhengzheng: ...So, Ji Xiaoshu purposely said he hoped there would be no class tomorrow to test if Gu Ling had returned? In other words, he was looking forward to being scolded? Speechless...

Lin Shuzhi laughed and entered Yuanming Pavilion, where he saw Su Liang coming down from upstairs.

"Is Master looking for me or Gu Ling?" Su Liang asked.

"He's still not here?" Lin Shuzhi asked. He hadn't seen Gu Ling at home these past few days.

Su Liang nodded, "He's gone out."

"Is everything okay in the palace?" Lin Shuzhi hinted.

Su Liang nodded again, "The emperor is well."

Lin Shuzhi sighed in relief, "That's good, that's good." Although he knew that even if Duanmu Chen died, Qian Country wouldn't be in chaos, he still hoped that Duanmu Chen would be fine. First, Duanmu Chen was indeed suitable for sitting on the Dragon Throne. Second, Gu Ling and Su Liang didn't want to be pushed into that position.

"There is still no news from the north. I don't know whether they've already started fighting," Lin Shuzhi sighed deeply.

Su Liang felt that even if they hadn't started fighting yet, it would be soon. The driving force was Mo Yan and his portable space. Once the turmoil in the capital was resolved, she and Gu Ling had to quickly consider how to handle the war in the north and eradicate the hidden danger in Liang Country.

Su Liang didn't take the initiative to say more about the current situation, and Lin Shuzhi didn't ask further. After chatting about the children for a while, he got up and left.

Min Ministry Mansion.

At dusk, Old Minister Min came to Min Rui's courtyard again.

Min Rui woke up once, moved a little, and before he could make any noise, Gu Ling dragged him out from under the bed, knocked him out again, stuffed him with sedatives, and kicked him back.

At this time, Gu Ling, disguised as Min Rui, sat across from Old Minister Min.

“Rui’er, have your wife and Rourou returned to where you used to live?” Old Minister Min asked.

Gu Ling nodded slightly, imitating Min Rui’s voice, “Maybe they will go back, or maybe they will find another place to avoid the limelight.”

Old Minister Min sighed deeply, “I don’t know if I will see Rourou again in my lifetime.”

“You will,” Gu Ling said.

Old Minister Min was taken aback by his confident tone. He hesitated, then glanced at the door, lowered his voice and asked, “Rui’er, is everything you said about the past twenty years true? Are you hiding anything?”

Gu Ling remained silent.

Old Minister Min’s face grew increasingly uneasy, “Don’t make any mistakes! If someone is forcing you to do something, speak up immediately. Don’t hide anything. Although our Min Family can’t compare to the Qin Family’s glory, we are loyal to Qian Country, and the emperor is very lenient. You can’t do anything to harm the country!”

“What if I do?” Gu Ling asked.

Old Minister Min’s face turned white instantly, “If you dare do such treacherous things, I can only expel you from the family! I can’t let the entire Min family be buried with you!”

Gu Ling nodded, “I understand. Don’t worry; nothing like what you’re worried about is happening.”

Old Minister Min was somewhat annoyed. He raised his hand as if to hit Gu Ling, but stopped halfway and glared at him, “Watch your words! Remember that!”

Gu Ling nodded again, indicating that he remembered.

After Old Minister Min left, Gu Ling had dinner alone. The dinner served for Min Rui was light in taste and not delicious. Gu Ling ate just to fill his stomach, thinking of Su Liang enjoying a lively meal with the children in Yuanming Pavilion. He wished to return there immediately, but he couldn’t. He had to stay here, waiting for He Wei, who might appear.

Cen Man secretly approached, intending to replace Gu Ling, but she didn’t find him. Thinking that something had changed, she returned home to discuss with Su Liang.

“He’s not there?” Su Liang frowned. She had been waiting for Gu Ling to come back and tell him the information she had learned from Min Rou today.

Cen Man looked worried, “I didn’t see anyone. Could something have happened?”

Su Liang believed that the group’s objective today was to blow up Duanmu Chen. He Wei was cautious, and it was unlikely that he would kill Min Rui in broad daylight, but he might go to the Min Family mansion tonight.

With that in mind... Su Liang suspected that Gu Ling might have disguised himself as Min Rui, waiting in the room for He Wei to show up and then capture him.

“It should be fine,” Su Liang said to Cen Man, “Could you please go over there again, Master, and stay there to see if there will be any movement tonight? Be careful.” In case of any problems, Cen Man and Gu Ling could join forces, which would increase their chances of success.

Upon hearing this, Cen Man went to the Min Family mansion again.

That night, many people were sleepless.

Duanmu Chen was still in the Library Pavilion. To avoid drawing attention, he didn’t light any lamps. He couldn’t sleep or read, so he lay in bed tossing and turning, thinking about the terrible smoke that rose from the explosion in the Sleeping Palace during the day. If it weren’t for Gu Ling protecting him recently, he would have already died more than once... As Duanmu Chen thought about this, he clenched the nail gun in his hand. The cold iron bump warmed by his body temperature could not calm his restless heart.

Min Rou was sitting in the Underground Secret Room, watching her mother, Mrs. Min, lying beside her. Her mind was filled with memories from her childhood and the present, which made her thoughts chaotic and complicated.

Old Mu didn’t sleep either. Seeing that Gu Ling wasn’t home, he knew that things were becoming more and more unsteady, and he needed to stay awake to protect Su Liang and the children.

Su Liang was reading, waiting for Gu Ling to come back.

Gu Ling lay on Min Rui’s bed, waiting quietly all night. Cen Man, who was just a wall away, was also waiting. But the Min mansion was quiet all night, and no one came.

It was almost dawn.

Gu Ling sat up on the bed, frowning in thought. He had to leave; he couldn’t stay here forever. Min Rui was not that important, but he might know some useful information. Gu Ling couldn’t let him see He Wei when he was awake; it would startle the snake in the grass.

At this moment, it was very quiet outside. Gu Ling went out the window and saw Cen Man.

Cen Man hesitated for a moment and then asked in a low voice, “Xiaogu?”

Gu Ling nodded. “Master, you go back first and tell Su Liang that I’m fine here. I’ll be home later.”

Without asking any further questions, Cen Man left.

Gu Ling returned to the room and dragged Min Rui out from under the bed. He then pricked an acupuncture point on Min Rui with a needle.

Min Rui quickly woke up and heard a cold voice near his ear, “Do not scream. Even if you get people’s attention, your father won’t protect you and go against me.”

Min Rui’s face stiffened. It was Gu Ling, and he knew that Gu Ling was telling the truth. Regardless of Min Rui’s fatal problems, even if he were innocent and blameless, Old Minister Min wouldn’t dare offend Gu Ling for his son’s sake. Even if Gu Ling demanded Min Rui’s life.

“Whatever I ask you next, answer honestly, and I may consider sparing your life for your father’s sake. Otherwise, your attempt to kill Old Master Qin is enough reason for me to kill you,” Gu Ling said coldly.

Min Rui looked panicked, “What... what do you want to know?”

“About that island. Who is the Island Master?” Gu Ling asked.

Min Rui suddenly recalled Gu Ling saying “your father-in-law wants to kill you” before passing out the previous day, and thought of Mrs. Min who had deceived him and left. With a sullen heart, he looked at Gu Ling and said, “If I tell you everything I know, will you really let me go? I was captured back then, and I had no control over what happened afterward.”

Gu Ling nodded, “That depends on whether you can provide useful information.”

“I trust your character and that you won’t go back on your word,” Min Rui said to Gu Ling, trying to reassure himself. At this point, he had no other choice. By compromising with Gu Ling, he still had a chance to save his life. As for his wife and daughter, he had no time to care for them or rely on them.

“The place is called Xingluo Island, and the Island Master is called Mo Yan, about the same age as my father,” Min Rui opened up and started to talk about what he knew.

But as a son-in-law who was not well-liked by his father-in-law, Min Rui’s status on the island was lower than that of his daughter, Min Rou, and had little contact with Mo Yan.

The most crucial point was that Min Rui did not know the location of the island and was entirely unfamiliar with Mo Yan’s portable space. “Mo Yan has a powerful treasure. I don’t know what it is, but my father-in-law, He Wei, knows and wants it. However, he doesn’t plan to kill Mo Yan, perhaps because he can’t kill him.”

Gu Ling thought this might be the portable space that Su Liang mentioned, and it might not be an object that could change ownership. If Mo Yan died, it might disappear.

“Why did you say you want to kill Su Liang?” Gu Ling asked.

Min Rui hesitated for a moment before revealing a crucial piece of information. “It’s because of her appearance. After He Qianqian saw Su Liang for the first time, she told her father that Su Liang must be killed because Su Liang looks very similar to Mo Yan’s daughter. If Mo Yan sees her, they may not get what they want.”

Gu Ling narrowed her eyes. Was there such a thing? Did Shen Qingxue follow Mo Yan back then?

“I have never seen Mo Yan’s daughter. By the time I arrived on the island, she was already gone, and it seemed to be a taboo to mention her. All the people on the island were not allowed to mention her, which led me to believe that Mo Yan was not married and had no children,” Min Rui continued.

Finally, Min Rui began to lament how he was captured years ago and how he was looked down upon by the He family over the years. He said that he wanted to kill Old Master Qin only because he was impulsive and was bewitched by Lady Min, and he now regrets it.

Gu Ling took out a medicine bottle from her bosom, poured out two pills, pinched Min Rui's chin, and stuffed them into his mouth under his horrified gaze.

Soon, Min Rui's whole body stiffened, showing symptoms similar to a stroke. He can open his mouth but can no longer speak clearly.

After that, Gu Ling dragged Min Rui from the ground, put him on the bed, covered him with a quilt, and left.

Not killing Min Rui for now was only to prevent He Wei from noticing anything unusual, not to let him off the hook.

Gu Ling returned home, and her two disciples were practicing in the morning.

Ignoring Ji Xiaoshu's enthusiastic call across the lake, Gu Ling went straight back to Yuanming Pavilion.

"Senior Brother, Master seems to be in a bad mood. She didn't even come to beat me up!" Ji Xiaoshu shared his discovery.

With a speechless expression, Zhengzheng wondered if Gu Ling hitting him meant she was in a good mood? Although the fact was more or less like that, he thought it was strange...

When Gu Ling went upstairs and saw Su Liang, she had just finished feeding Gu Xiaonuan.

The couple looked at each other and found that their eyes were both bloodshot.

"Wash up, eat breakfast, and then take a nap," Su Liang said, putting Gu Xiaonuan back into the crib.

Gu Xiaonuan saw Gu Ling and stretched out her little hands high, babbling and asking for a hug.

But Gu Ling opened her arms and embraced Su Liang instead.

"Great God, you've been working hard lately," Su Liang gently patted Gu Ling's back.

"It's alright," Gu Ling sighed softly. "I just miss you a lot."

Su Liang chuckled, "We've only been apart for less than a day. Great God, behave, wash your hands, and let's eat. Min Rou revealed many important things yesterday, and I'll tell you about them later."

Gu Ling let go of Su Liang. "Tell me now. Min Rui also confessed, but he doesn't know much."

Then Su Liang took out the drawings she got yesterday and showed them to Gu Ling, and the two exchanged the information they had obtained.

Su Liang initially thought that the information she had obtained from Min Rou completely covered what Min Rui knew, until Gu Ling mentioned the reason He Wei and his daughter wanted to kill her.

Su Liang was stunned. "Could I possibly be... Mo Yan and Shen Qingxue's... granddaughter?"

Chapter 400: 400. I want it too

After getting to know Old Bai, Su Liang began to suspect the original owner's identity was unusual. Learning the truth about Xingluo Island from Min Rou and that Yue Mei indeed colluded with them, Su Liang suspected that the original owner's mother might be from Xingluo Island and could even be Shen Qingxue's daughter.

But Su Liang never expected that Mrs. Min would say she looked like Mo Yan's daughter. That means Mo Yan's daughter and Shen Qingxue's daughter point to the same person. Did Shen Qingxue follow Mo Yan after being harmed by Yue Mei?

However, Min Rou mentioned that Mo Yan had a portrait of his lover from a distant land, dressed not like this world but like Su Liang's previous life. This caused Su Liang to subconsciously think that Mo Yan never married or had children after transmigrating and was always missing a lover from another world.

"Could it be that Shen Qingxue resembles Mo Yan's lover from his previous life?" Su Liang posed a guess.

Gu Ling nodded, "It's possible."

Su Liang took a box out of the cabinet, opened it, and inside was a shiny purple jade pendant.

It was left by the original owner. Su Liang wore it around her neck for a long time, but later Gu Ling gave her a new jade pendant which she replaced with this one.

When they moved Su Yuanzhou's family's graves back to their hometown, Su Liang initially wanted to set up a tombstone for the original owner. But first, her cousin, Su Bai, objected, thinking it was ill-fated. Second, before that, Su Liang received a note, which turns out probably to have been sent to her by He Wei.

That note made Su Liang suspect that there were other transmigrators in this world targeting her. To avoid unnecessary trouble, Su Liang dropped the idea of setting up a tombstone for the original owner but buried the relics left behind by the original owner in Su Yuanzhou's coffin, including her clothes and many embroideries she made by hand.

This purple jade pendant wasn't put into the coffin because Su Liang felt it might be useful, in case the original owner's maternal family showed up. There had to be a token of trust when necessary. Whether or not it was used, she couldn't dig Su Yuanzhou's grave again when she wanted to use it.

At this moment, Su Liang placed the purple jade pendant on the table, directly above her written summary of Xingluo Island.

There were no words on the jade pendant, but Su Liang intuitively felt this item belonged to the original owner's mother and might be related to Xingluo Island.

"Mo Yan's portable space might not be an object and can't change ownership, but exists in his mind and consciousness. Although I think it's too mysterious, I am a mysterious existence myself." Su Liang continued to analyze, "Since He Wei is Mo Yan's number one confidant and knows him very well, even knowing his transmigration and space situation, what is his purpose in remaining loyal to Mo Yan?"

Gu Ling looked deep into her eyes, “They think Mo Yan is an immortal, capable of getting the world if he wants to.”

Su Liang snorted, “So, He Wei and these top martial arts death soldiers believe that following Mo Yan would lead them to soaring heights? He Wei’s position on Xingluo Island is exalted, and the old men who die for the cause most likely do so for their descendants’ futures.”

Gu Ling nodded in agreement. Those who have achieved top martial arts either truly lived in seclusion or had huge ambitions once they emerged into society.

These masters would have a hard time gaining the trust of the royal family directly. If there was an opportunity to become a founding hero of a new dynasty, it could secure generations of glory.

Mo Yan was regarded as a king because he genuinely had abilities beyond ordinary people, which could only conquer these people.

“I used to think Mo Yan’s idea of getting back to the past was impossible. But now I think he may really want to go back. Because he doesn’t have any children or grandchildren here. Even if the original owner is his granddaughter, he doesn’t know of her existence.” Su Liang said, “Plus, he still misses his lover from his previous life. Shen Qingxue might just be a substitute.”

Gu Ling looked at the purple jade pendant thoughtfully, “Maybe Mo Yan promised that once he got the world, he would give it to He Wei, and he would leave. If he was greedy for power, he wouldn’t have waited so long to leave the island.”

With Mo Yan’s capabilities, he could have stirred up the world by now. Just like this time, if it weren’t for his space, Liang Country wouldn’t have enough food and supplies to fight Qian Country.

“What does the Great God think Mo Yan has been hiding for so many years?” Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent, “Maybe he’s been building a time machine.”

Su Liang held her forehead, “With the level of technology here, that really isn’t possible.”

“I meant that he’s been looking for a way back. It doesn’t necessarily require technology; it may be some mysterious thing.” Gu Ling said.

Su Liang looked puzzled, “Great God, you mentioned earlier that he might have traveled from my past life’s future. Perhaps his past life’s era really had a time machine, or some special device that could complete time travel, even going back?”

“Maybe his time machine launcher is out of battery or broken, and he has been trying to fix it,” Gu Ling said.

This was derived from a TV series called “Seeking Qin” that Su Liang had told Gu Ling about. The male lead traveled back to the Qin Dynasty through a time machine to complete a mission, carrying a signal transmitter. Once he pressed the transmitter, someone could re-open the time machine and return the same way...

“Stop, stop.” Su Liang shook her head, “If we continue thinking in this direction, the possibilities will only grow. In short, Mo Yan’s goal might be to go back, no matter what method he uses. Then, why is he looking for me? Does he need help?”

After pondering for a moment, Gu Ling said, “Maybe he wants to use you as a test subject.”

If he needed help, he could come over openly and greet them, communicate with them, and have a proper talk. However, under the current situation, Mo Yan already knew that one of the husbands and wives, Gu Ling and Su Liang, must be a transmigrator, and he had basically confirmed that it was Gu Ling. Then, Mo Yan began to help Situ Xie to fight against Qian Country. Gu Ling and Su Liang were the core power of Qian Country’s royal family.

That is to say, Mo Yan is actually an enemy to Gu Ling and Su Liang, not intending to cooperate with them at all.

Gu Ling believed that Mo Yan’s plan was to defeat him, make him lose everything, control him, and ask him to do something that only a transmigrator could do. It certainly wouldn’t be a good thing, otherwise, he would never agree to it through negotiation.

“I think your speculation makes sense, Great God. He Wei thought I might be Mo Yan’s granddaughter and wanted to kill me to prevent Mo Yan from meeting me. Could it be because if I really am, Mo Yan might not leave? Or would he stop being our enemy and give up all his plans?” said Su Liang.

“Not necessarily,” Gu Ling shook his head, “But there is such a possibility. You are a threat and obstacle to He Wei.”

Su Liang rubbed her forehead, “At least things are clearer now.” Since receiving that note, the fog that had been shrouding their eyes had dispersed a lot with Min Rou’s confession, but there were still some unresolved mysteries, including whether Mo Yan really wanted to go back and whether it was really possible, as well as what he wanted from the other transmigrators.

“Let’s eat first,” Su Liang held Gu Ling’s hand and pulled him up, “After you finish, you have to go to the palace again to see if the black mist on Duanmu Chen’s brow has disappeared.”

Ji Xiaoshu never expected Gu Ling to test his homework during the meal, and immediately said, “Grandfather Lin came yesterday, but he didn’t teach us anything!”

“What about the characters you wrote yesterday?” Gu Ling asked.

Ji Xiaoshu was dumbfounded, and Zhengzheng lowered his head in silence. Because there was no class, the two of them had played too much and even forgot to write the two pages of characters that Gu Ling asked them to write every day.

“Can we make it up today?” Ji Xiaoshu asked weakly.

“Master, I didn’t write either,” Zhengzheng admitted voluntarily.

“Double it,” said Gu Ling indifferently.

Zhengzheng immediately nodded in agreement, while Ji Xiaoshu gave Su Liang a look for help with a mournful face.

Su Liang smiled, "After you finish writing, if your master has time, let him take you to find tadpoles and frogs. Weren't you two interested in seeing them?"

The eyes of both children lit up instantly, and they stared at Gu Ling in unison.

"Master, if you don't agree, let the mistress beat you!" Ji Xiaoshu fearlessly added fuel to the fire.

Gu Ling agreed, but also twisted Ji Xiaoshu's ear.

Ji Xiaoshu laughed, "Master, you must be hungry! It didn't hurt at all this time!"

Zhengzheng: ...

After breakfast, to be allowed to go with Gu Ling to catch tadpoles, the two children obediently went to practice their writing.

Gu Ling secretly entered the palace to see Duanmu Chen.

Duanmu Chen was still hiding in the Library Pavilion and had not gone out. Today's morning court was canceled, and the officials were informed that Duanmu Chen had been injured in an assassination attempt, making everyone uneasy.

Fortunately, there was still no news of a battle breaking out in the north. If there were such reports at this time, it would only make people more uneasy.

When Gu Ling saw Duanmu Chen, the black fog in his brow was still there. This meant that He Wei and his party were still in the capital city, perhaps waiting to confirm Duanmu Chen's death before leaving or maybe He Wei was planning to kill Su Liang before leaving. Once they found out that Duanmu Chen had escaped the explosion, they would surely strike again.

"Your Majesty, please hide for a few more days." Gu Ling said.

Duanmu Chen sighed, "For the sake of stability in the court, why not issue a decree to make you the Regent King, in charge of the government for now?"

Duanmu Chen was sincere, having thought about it all night. However, he felt that Gu Ling would definitely refuse, but Gu Ling directly agreed, "I was just thinking the same."

Duanmu Chen looked at him strangely, "If it weren't for knowing that you're not interested in the throne, it'd be hard not to doubt your motives for going around in such a big circle!"

Gu Ling's expression was indifferent, "As long as Your Majesty doesn't suspect me of being attracted to you, the rest doesn't matter."

Duanmu Chen: ... What kind of words are these? Absurd! He was a perfectly normal man!

However, if Chang'an were here, he would surely nod in agreement with Gu Ling. Ever since Duanmu Chen found out about Gu Ling staying up all night for him, his attitude toward Gu Ling had been so enthusiastic that it was outrageous. He constantly called Gu Ling his best friend, completely forgetting that he once said he and Gu Ling would be enemies if it was not for Su

Liang's presence. For several days, Chang'an hadn't heard Duanmu Chen mention Su Liang's name, while Gu Ling's name was mentioned quite frequently...

However, Duanmu Chen wanted outsiders to think he was severely injured, and that was Gu Ling's idea. In order to prevent He Wei from bombing the palace again, Chang'an secretly went to see Empress Dowager Xiao, who ordered Gu Ling to become the Regent King.

While this may make the officials and common people suspect that Duanmu Chen is no longer capable, it doesn't have a significant impact on the situation. Gu Ling handling the government affairs wouldn't lead to any chaos.

As Gu Ling was about to leave, Duanmu Chen called him back.

Gu Ling thought something important had come up, but Duanmu Chen said, "Next time you come, can you bring me some steamed buns? The meat buns you make."

Gu Ling gave Duanmu Chen a cold look and left him to ponder.

Gu Ling left the palace and returned home shortly after. An imperial edict from the palace soon arrived, as Duanmu Chen was injured and needed to recuperate. Empress Dowager Xiao conferred Marquis Chang Xin, Gu Ling, as the Regent King of Qian Country and temporarily managed the government.

The news quickly spread throughout the capital city and beyond.

Some people suspected that Duanmu Chen had already died, and he had no sons. His only surviving brother, Duanmu Che, was rumored to be insane and hidden away somewhere for treatment. Grand Emperor Duanmu Yi was still alive, but had suffered a stroke and could not take care of himself.

Of course, there were also conspiracy theorists who suddenly remembered that half of Gu Ling's blood came from Liang Country's Situ Family and had once been conferred as a king by Liang Country's royal family. They thought Gu Ling must have harmed Duanmu Chen to conspire with Liang Country's royal family to seize control of the Qian Country.

However, no matter how the rumors spread, after the changes in the Qian Country's royal family and court over the past two or three years, no one could shake the "power" headed by Gu Ling and Su Liang. As for the most important military commanders during troubled times, the Northern commanders were Su Liang's adoptive father Xing Ji and Gu Ling's cousin Qiao Cong, while in the South were Gu Ling's childhood "only friend" Nian Jincheng and later, his friend Lian Shun. The commander of the City Guard Army was Su Liang's senior brother Lin Bojun; his father-in-law was Duke Qin, and his brother-in-law was Su Liang's sworn brother.

After receiving the decree, Gu Ling went back to the palace again, this time openly, to meet Empress Dowager Xiao, only saying that Duanmu Chen was currently hiding for safety reasons.

When Gu Ling returned home again, it was already time for lunch.

Su Liang cooked, specifically making a few dishes that he loved. Min Rou helped Su Liang and asked her to teach her when she was free in the future.

After eating, Min Rou went to clean up the dishes. She started to feel that doing household chores she was capable of was also nice, as no one was born to be enslaved by others.

Su Liang pulled Gu Ling to bed, thinking he had been too tired lately and planning to discuss the next steps after waking up.

"I suspect He Wei is hiding somewhere, waiting for an opportunity to harm you," Gu Ling sighed, holding Su Liang.

Su Liang pointed at her brow, "Is it black?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "No." For many years, he had saved many people with his special abilities, so that he could detect and avoid danger to those he cared about ahead of time.

Although Su Liang's brow wasn't black, Gu Ling couldn't feel at ease as He Wei was still alive.

"I forgot about one person." Su Liang suddenly sat up, "That assassin may recognize my face."

The two got out of bed and went to the secret chamber.

Gu Ling gave the assassin the antidote and waited for him to wake up. If the assassin could really recognize Su Liang's face and think of her as Mo Yan's granddaughter, he might change his allegiance and help find He Wei's hiding place. Anyway, there was no other use for this person, so it was worth a try.

The assassin woke up slowly, and Su Liang asked, "Have you seen me or someone with a similar face before?"

The assassin stared at Su Liang, and then, like his companion, bit off his tongue...

Although biting his tongue wouldn't kill him immediately, Su Liang felt there was no need to continue the interrogation and led Gu Ling out, "Back to sleep."

Su Liang slept deeply this time, waking up to hear Gu Xiaonuan laughing. Gu Ling had already gotten up and was at the window playing with their daughter.

Su Liang got out of bed and walked over. When Gu Xiaonuan saw her, she began to play hide-and-seek, hiding back and forth in Gu Ling's arms.

Su Liang played along for a while, then ignored Gu Xiaonuan. She hugged Gu Ling from behind and leaned on him, "I was thinking, for now, we cannot let He Wei know that his daughter and granddaughter are in our hands, or else he could easily capture many hostages in the capital city to threaten us. So we can't use He Qianqian's signal to lure He Wei, in case he realizes something is wrong and goes after our people. I don't know what he's planning, but I'm worried that it could hurt the children in the end. So, maybe I should go out and go to Huguo Temple? See if I can lure He Wei out. Maybe he's hiding somewhere waiting for me to leave."

Gu Ling frowned slightly, thought for a moment, and then nodded, "Alright." If they waited too long and let He Wei produce another batch of explosives, it would be even more troublesome.

Gu Xiaonuan stretched out her little hand to grab Su Liang's hair and babbled for Su Liang to continue playing hide-and-seek with her.

Su Liang freed her hair, "Great God, your daughter is bullying me."

Gu Ling held Gu Xiaonuan up in front of Su Liang, "Do as you please."

As a result, Gu Xiaonuan leaned in and kissed Su Liang happily.

Laughter spread in Gu Ling's eyes, "I want one too."