

Three-Time 401

Chapter 401: 401. Father's love is like a landslide

Upon learning that Su Liang was going to Huguo Temple, Ji Xiaoshu immediately said he wanted to go too, with a good reason, "My master's wife has never taken me out to play!"

Gu Ling shook his head, "There is a serious matter. You need to go to class, practice your calligraphy well, and I'll check it when I come back."

Ji Xiaoshu turned and hugged Zhengzheng, "Big brother, please help me beg them!"

"Grandpa Lin is coming, and we have to take classes; we can't go out to play."

Zhengzheng stressed the importance of studying. As a disciple of their Master and his wife, it would be shameful if he were not skillful enough.

Old Mu stayed at home to look after the children, and Gu Ling disguised himself as Qi Yan to accompany Su Liang. This time they were "fishing"; their opponent was strong, so they needed to be cautious.

Fortunately, Gu Xiaonuan was not so clingy anymore, both of them could leave as long as it didn't take too long, she wouldn't cry and make a fuss.

After feeding Gu Xiaonuan a meal, Su Liang rode out on her horse with Gu Ling following on his horse. He carried a basket in which two books were placed. These were the medical books she had once borrowed from the Scripture Pavilion in Huguo Temple. She had forgotten to return them due to an interruption, and today was the perfect opportunity to return them in an open and honest manner.

The two rode through the lively streets and bumped into Lu Yu, greeting him. Lu Yu said that he and Wan Hui would bring their youngest son to visit Zhengzheng at Su Mansion tomorrow.

Although Zhengzheng used to stay at Su Mansion most of the time, he often went back home. But since Ji Xiaoshu arrived, Zhengzheng stopped going home and only visited his parents and younger brother every other day, leaving quickly.

Last time, Wan Hui joked that Zhengzheng might be treating his home as an inn. Zhengzheng replied that both were his homes, and he wanted them both.

At the foot of Huguo Temple's mountain, Su Liang dismounted, "Qi Yan, how about you wait at the foot of the mountain? I'll see the Abbot Master, return the books, and come back quickly." Su Liang said.

Gu Ling shook his head, "The Marquis ordered me to follow the Master."

"Alright then, let's go." Su Liang said and walked up.

Gu Ling tied up the horses, carried the basket, and followed half a step behind.

"I haven't seen Little Monk Cheng Yun for a long time; I wonder how he is doing." Su Liang chatted with Gu Ling.

Gu Ling replied, "He has returned to his original temple; he should be fine. When the Master goes to the north in the future, she will see him. Maybe Little Master Cheng Yun will come to the capital again; I remember he had a deep connection with Zhengzheng."

"Yes, it was Gu Ling, Cheng Yun, and I who saved Zhengzheng together back then."

Su Liang smiled, "It has been two or three years in the blink of an eye. I am already a mother now; time flies fast. That little rascal Gu Nuannuan only clings to me when she is hungry; when she is not hungry, she clings to her dad."

Gu Ling coughed lightly, "The Little Master is very smart."

In fact, Su Liang was slandering Gu Xiaonuan on purpose so that anyone who might be following them could hear and think that Gu Ling was at home taking care of the child.

Gu Xiaonuan's clinginess was very arbitrary, and it was difficult to tell who she depended on more between her parents.

As the two reached the mid-hill, they found an open stone platform with a wide view. Su Liang walked over and looked down at the capital city. The once towering city walls and grand imperial palace now appeared small like a model when viewed from a high place. Since learning about the existence of another transmigrator who possessed a portable space, many of Su Liang's previous perceptions had also changed. She admitted that before this, although she had been cautious in her actions, she subconsciously believed that the combination of her and Gu Ling was invincible, mainly relying on Gu Ling. Now, she felt a great sense of crisis.

After admiring the scenery for a while, the two continued to walk up.

"Master, do you miss Little Master? Actually, it would be enough for me to return the books at Huguo Temple; there's no need for the Master to make a trip personally." Gu Ling said.

Su Liang shook her head, "I have borrowed these two medical books for a long time and forgot to return them. If I don't apologize personally to the Abbot Master, it would be very impolite. The Master agreed to lend them to me in the first place, all because of Cheng Yun's face."

As Su Liang spoke, she looked up at the sky, "The weather today is not very good."

This was a secret code she had agreed upon with Gu Ling to inquire whether someone was following them.

Gu Ling responded, "Maybe it will rain."

This meant "someone is watching us."

"Then let's hurry." Su Liang quickly scanned the lush pines and cypresses around them without stopping her steps.

However, even after they entered Huguo Temple, the assassin did not reveal themselves.

Su Liang whispered, "Perhaps they are waiting for me to come down the mountain to act."

Gu Ling nodded slightly, and then accompanied Su Liang to meet the Abbot Master of Huguo Temple.

After returning the books, Su Liang said that since she had come to Huguo Temple, she would take the opportunity to visit the back mountain and enjoy the scenery.

The two went to the back mountain, and Su Liang walked to the edge of the cliff, "I'll sit here for a while; Qi Yan, you go to the Vegetarian Hall and get some vegetarian dishes that Gu Ling likes. He will be very busy, and we won't have time to come back."

Gu Ling understood, watching Su Liang sit down on a rock, he turned and left.

The surrounding silence lasted only for a moment before Su Liang sensed someone coming!

She turned around and saw an elderly man wearing an iron mask, with a sword in his hand, rushing towards her with a murderous intent.

Fortunately, no explosives were used... this was Su Liang's first thought at the moment.

Su Liang knew that in terms of Martial Arts, she could not compete with these old monsters, and this person might not be He Wei. According to their knowledge, after the first assassination attempt on Duanmu Chen failed, there were at least two other people in that group.

Only one appeared now, and Su Liang didn't hesitate to pull out the nail gun she carried with her, aiming it at the old man's brow!

Since everyone but He Wei were Death Soldiers, Su Liang intuitively thought that the person who came to kill her was not He Wei, but the one who was saved by He Wei that night. He Wei was their leader, and he wouldn't make a move himself until the last moment, instead choosing to let others take the risk first.

The old man's eyes widened in surprise, and he quickly dodge! Because Su Liang was right, he was the assassin who escaped that night and he knew how powerful the weapon in Su Liang's hand was.

Su Liang's eyes were calm, lowering the muzzle and pulling the trigger, hitting the old man's right thigh.

She didn't hit a critical point because the nails were smeared with a poison that would quickly paralyze a person's body, allowing her to subdue her enemy while also keeping them alive.

Su Liang thought the old man would flee, but instead, he continued charging at her with a murderous look in his eyes, seemingly willing to give up his own life to take hers!

Today, Su Liang wasn't disguised and this old man might recognize her face as resembling Mo Yan's daughter. If that's the case and he still chose to kill Su Liang, it would reveal that Gu Ling's previous guess was correct: these highly skilled old men, loyal to Mo Yan, share the same goal and aren't genuinely devoted to Mo Yan.

Su Liang fired again, and the old man fell to the ground in a nearby position, struggling to lift the sword in his hand but his arm fell weakly. The sword fell, its tip only half an inch away from Su Liang's toes.

Then, Su Liang didn't bother with the fallen old man, carefully watching her surroundings, waiting for their real target to appear.

About a quarter of an hour later, Gu Ling returned, shaking his head at Su Liang, indicating that there was no one else nearby.

Su Liang frowned and asked the old man on the ground, "Do you recognize me?"

The old man's body was paralyzed, but his consciousness was still clear. He didn't react to her words and just lay there silently.

"You have another accomplice, where is he?" Su Liang asked again, knowing that it was unlikely that she would get an answer.

As expected, a corpse soon appeared in front of Su Liang. Today's operation could not be considered a complete success or failure.

He Wei was the key figure, and it didn't matter if there were more or fewer Death Soldiers.

Gu Ling searched the assassin's body and found three signal flares like the ones used by Madam Min, along with his sword, which were collected. Then, he dragged the body to the edge of the cliff and kicked it down.

Su Liang watched quietly, remembering something, "The huge rock that appeared here back then, was it a coincidence or someone's doing?" Judging by the timeline, at that point Mo Yan already knew about Su Liang and suspected her of being a transmigrator. Was that rock Mo Yan's doing, intending to provoke Duanmu Yi to attack Su Liang, thereby forcing Su Liang to retaliate, disrupting the previously harmonious relationship between the monarch and his subjects, and further testing her abilities?

Gu Ling shook his head, saying he couldn't be certain, but it was worth suspecting Mo Yan.

The two quickly left Huguo Temple and went down the mountain, their horses were still grazing at the foot of the mountain, and they didn't encounter any more trouble on the way back.

When they returned home, Lin Shuzhi had already finished teaching the two children and was taking a walk by the lake with Gu Xiaonuan in his arms. The children were sitting face to face by the window, writing seriously.

"Master," Su Liang went over, and Lin Shuzhi handed Gu Xiaonuan to her.

Gu Xiaonuan kissed Su Liang happily, and Lin Shuzhi smiled and asked, "It's rare for you to go out. Is everything all right?"

Indeed, since Su Liang became pregnant and returned home, she significantly reduced her time outdoors, and after giving birth, she even rarely went out.

"Nothing's wrong. I've been meaning to return the two books I borrowed from the Scripture Pavilion of Huguo Temple, but kept forgetting. Today, I finally remembered and personally delivered them, also apologizing to the Abbot Master," Su Liang said with a smile.

Lin Shuzhi chuckled, "Besides you, no one else reads those books. I think the Master won't mind."

Su Liang nodded, "Indeed, the Master said he had already forgotten."

"Mother!" Ji Xiaoshu waved the brush in his hand to greet Su Liang.

Ink splashed from the brush on Zhengzheng's face, he said with a resigned expression, "Xiaoshu! Focus on your work!"

“Eldest brother, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to do it,” Ji Xiaoshu realized he caused trouble and hurried to wipe Zhengzheng’s face.

“It’s fine; I’ll wash it off after we’re done writing,” Zhengzheng said.

Ji Xiaoshu grinned, “Then let’s take a bath together later!”

Zhengzheng agreed.

Then, Ji Xiaoshu was picked up by Gu Ling, and placed back in his original position.

“Master, would you like to take a bath with us later?” Ji Xiaoshu enthusiastically invited, “My dad used to take me with him all the time!”

Gu Ling shook his head, “No, you weren’t focusing. I’m giving you extra homework.”

Ji Xiaoshu let out a mournful cry and collapsed on the table.

After Lin Shuzhi left, Gu Ling changed her clothes and secretly went to Min family again. Min Rui was still in the same condition, half-dead, and no black mist appeared on his brow.

However, Gu Ling believed this didn’t indicate that Min Rui wouldn’t be killed within three days; it just meant there was no need for her to save him.

The Min family accepted Min Rui’s sudden stroke quite naturally. Firstly, Min Rui’s health had always been poor and not yet recovered; secondly, his wife and daughter abandoned him and ran away. If he had a fit of anger, it could lead to a complete collapse and cause such symptoms.

Min’s secretary originally planned to invite Su Liang or Gu Ling to treat Min Rui, but then he learned about the incident in the palace and that Gu Ling had become the Regent King.

Thinking that Gu Ling must be too busy, he dared not ask the Regent King to be the doctor for his criminal son, so he invited Imperial Physician Gao instead.

In the past two or three years, the stroke patients treated by Su Liang and Gu Ling, apart from Old Duke Qin and Situ Han, were familiar to all, including Imperial Physician Gao.

Thus, after examining Min Rui’s condition, Imperial Physician Gao felt that his stroke was different from that of Old Duke Qin. It was more similar to the already dead Wan Family’s master and Duanmu Yi, who was still alive.

As such, Imperial Physician Gao had a clue in his mind: Min Rui’s stroke was probably related to Gu Ling and Su Liang, rather than occurring naturally.

But this didn’t mean to Imperial Physician Gao that Gu Ling and Su Liang were wrong and intentionally harmed people. It only indicated that Min Rui was the one with the problem. It wouldn’t take such a method for Gu Ling and Su Liang to really want to kill Min Rui.

Therefore, Imperial Physician Gao did not say that he could cure Min Rui, nor did he say he couldn’t; he just said he would try his best. After prescribing medicine and administering acupuncture to Min Rui, he said he would come back the next day.

When Min’s secretary sent Imperial Physician Gao away, he quietly asked whether he knew the situation inside the palace.

Imperial Physician Gao showed no particular reaction. He just calmly said that since there was no summons from the palace, he didn't know as he hadn't been to the palace in recent days.

It was getting dark.

Gu Ling did not stay at the Min Mansion. After checking on Min Rui's condition, she went back. A pile of yet-to-be-checked memorials was sent from the palace. Gu Ling dealt with them in the afternoon and had them taken away.

The dinner was prepared by Gu Ling and Su Liang. As the two cooked and continued sorting out the recently obtained information, they used their imagination to guess about Mo Yan's background and motives. If they considered all aspects, they might guess some facts, at least being prepared mentally.

Before dinner, Gu Ling checked the writing of the two disciples that day. Although Ji Xiaoshu was naughty and mischievous, he was quite talented in reading and writing, and he was not worse than Zhengzheng.

"Master, when will we catch tadpoles?" Ji Xiaoshu asked.

Gu Ling handed them a chicken leg each, "Wait till I have time."

"When will Master have time?" Ji Xiaoshu asked again.

Gu Ling replied, "Tomorrow."

Ji Xiaoshu cheered, "Great!"

Su Liang thought, "Tomorrow and tomorrow, Gu Ling is definitely fooling the child..."

At night, Gu Ling left her house again before and after midnight, going to the Min Mansion. Finding no movement there, she went to the palace.

As Duanmu Chen was suffocating in the Library Pavilion, he couldn't light the lantern for fear of attracting enemies. While he was tossing and turning in bed, he suddenly saw a dark shadow beside his bed and was immediately frightened, "Who is it?"

"It's me," Gu Ling spoke.

Duanmu Chen sat up, patting his chest, "Gu, can't you stop scaring people like this?"

"Please come here, Your Majesty," Gu Ling said, turning and walking to the window.

Duanmu Chen was somewhat puzzled but still quickly put on his shoes, got out of bed, and walked to Gu Ling's side to look out, "What's the matter? Don't tell me you foresaw an explosion at other places in the palace."

Instead, Gu Ling looked back at Duanmu Chen's brow under the moonlight, and the black mist had disappeared. Did this mean that He Wei temporarily gave up killing Su Liang and left the capital?

"What are you looking at?" Duanmu Chen was feeling strange, "Are you predicting my fortune?" Nowadays, he was not particular about "Your Majesty" and "I" in front of Gu Ling.

Gu Ling nodded, "Your Majesty can live a long life."

Duanmu Chen rolled his eyes, "You've been really strange lately... Does Su Liang know about this?"

"She likes me this way," Gu Ling replied. The disappearance of the black mist on Duanmu Chen's brow was a good sign.

Duanmu Chen sighed, "Can't I leave the Library Pavilion yet?"

"Just wait a bit more. With so many books, the Emperor can read them slowly." Gu Ling said.

Duanmu Chen snorted lightly, "You might as well be the Emperor."

Gu Ling shook his head, "Too tiring, I wouldn't have time to accompany Su Liang and Nuannuan."

Duanmu Chen:...He couldn't tell for a moment whether he was using Gu Ling or Gu Ling was using him.

Gu Ling guessed what Duanmu Chen was thinking and said indifferently with four words, "Pleasant cooperation."

No one can say who is the tool... Duanmu Chen wants the imperial throne, Gu Ling wants freedom, each taking what they need, and they have already reached a tacit understanding through a long period of running-in.

After seeing Duanmu Chen, Gu Ling left the palace and went home. He saw that the first floor of Yuanming Pavilion was lit, and as he entered, he saw Lin Bojun was there, talking to Su Liang.

"Second Brother Lin has found something." Su Liang said to Gu Ling, "You go out of town with him and take a look. It might be He Wei's hiding place recently."

Since the first assassination, Gu Ling had Lin Bojun arrange people to search openly and secretly investigate the recent newcomers to the capital city and vacant houses, but it had yielded nothing.

Yesterday, Gu Ling asked Lin Bojun to turn the search to the city's outskirts, pay close attention to valleys and caves, and expand the scope, but he must be careful.

Lin Bojun knew he was looking for the hideout of the assassin group and made meticulous arrangements in and out of the capital city.

Not until tonight was a place found that matched Gu Ling's description.

"There are traces of an explosion." Su Liang said. However, since the location was hidden, it had not been discovered before.

"No one is there, but bloodstains." Lin Bojun added.

Su Liang continued, "If He Wei accidentally blew himself up while making explosives, that would be great." After all, He Wei hadn't gone into the imperial palace to find Duanmu Chen, and he didn't find Min Rui, nor did he show up to kill Su Liang, which was somewhat abnormal.

Gu Ling let Su Liang wait at home and followed Lin Bojun out of the city to the newly discovered location.

It wasn't near Wangxiang Mountain, because at the foot of Wangxiang Mountain was the City Guard Army camp, but it was in a mountain range further away from the capital city.

When Gu Ling arrived, the soldiers held torches, and he saw a cave in a rock wall.

The entrance of the cave was blackened, with traces of burning.

Lin Bojun let Gu Ling look at a tree outside the cave. The trunk was stained with dried blood, and there were some traces on the ground. From this, it can be inferred that an injured person had once leaned against the tree and left bloodstains on it.

"They might have gone that way." Lin Bojun pointed at the dark woods, "Some bloodstains were found inside."

Gu Ling examined the cave inside and out and felt that Su Liang might have guessed correctly. Except for He Wei, everyone else who had appeared in the group had died, and those who were dead did not have any injuries when they took action.

He Wei was hiding here, needing to eat and make explosives. He might not light a fire, but he might too. Perhaps after bombing the palace, He Wei hid here and planned to make a grenade-like weapon to kill Su Liang, but he failed and exploded himself? After all, the skill was very complex, definitely taught by Mo Yan, and what He Wei used before might have been made by Mo Yan. He Wei thought he could do it, but he actually wasn't very skilled?

"Aling?" Lin Bojun patted Gu Ling's shoulder, "What's wrong with you?"

Gu Ling shook his head, looked around again, "Nothing. Let them put out all the torches, leave here first, and not enter the cave. I will come back to check during the day." There might still be residual explosives inside, which would be very dangerous. Even if He Wei was really injured, since he could still escape, he would still be a very dangerous existence.

Gu Ling returned home after sending Lin Bojun back to the palace.

"How is it?" Su Liang hadn't slept yet.

Gu Ling hugged her, "You might have guessed right."

Su Liang smiled, "Although I'm not sure, I still think today is a good day."

"Yeah, let's celebrate." Gu Ling hinted.

Su Liang coughed lightly, "Aren't you going to take a bath after coming back from outside?"

"Let's take it together." Gu Ling pulled Su Liang out, leaving sleeping Gu Xiaonuan in the room. It was not appropriate to make noise in the house next door that had a master and disciple, so they occasionally went to another courtyard in the residence to take baths and sleep.

"What if your daughter wakes up?" Su Liang said, not stopping. They've been really tired lately, and with the crisis temporarily resolved, it was worth relaxing a bit to relieve fatigue.

Gu Ling said calmly, "She will cry." Once she cried, someone would come from next door to take care of her.

Su Liang coughed lightly, "Fatherly love is like a mountain...landslide."

Chapter 402: 402. New Plan

Early in the morning, Gu Ling rode his horse into the palace for the morning court. Although there was definitive evidence that He Wei had an accident and ran away, he decided to let Duanmu Chen hide for a few more days to see how things would unfold.

After the morning court, Gu Ling took the submitted papers and left the palace to return home.

Duanmu Chen in the Library Pavilion thought that Gu Ling would come to find him, but when he learned that Gu Ling had already left, he was at a loss for words. However, he could only follow Gu Ling's suggestion, searching for books to pass the time in the Library Pavilion.

As soon as Gu Ling returned home, he saw Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu all ready to go out, looking eagerly at him.

"Master, let's go catch tadpoles!" Ji Xiaoshu hugged Gu Ling's leg.

Gu Ling shook his head, "I can't spare the time today."

Ji Xiaoshu frowned, "Master promised, you can't break your word!"

"I said tomorrow." Gu Ling's expression remained calm.

Ji Xiaoshu was taken aback, "Big brother, is Master reneging on his promise?"

Zhengzheng sighed resignedly and pulled Ji Xiaoshu away, "Let's focus on important matters first, and wait until Master has time to spare."

"Mistress, Master is an untrustworthy man!" Ji Xiaoshu complained to Su Liang, who was approaching from not far away.

Su Liang smiled, "There must be some misunderstanding. Xiaoshu, remember to be clear when making appointments with others in the future."

Ji Xiaoshu huffed, "Mistress, you're taking Master's side!"

Gu Ling was unfazed, "That's only natural."

Ji Xiaoshu asked Zhengzheng, "Big brother, when will we get a wife?"

"At least another ten years or so," Zhengzheng thought for a moment and replied.

"By that time, my wife will also take sides with me!" Ji Xiaoshu declared.

Gu Ling walked by and shook his head slightly when he heard this, "Not necessarily."

After hugging their daughter, Gu Ling and Su Liang went out together to see the cave they had found the night before. Fearing that any open flames would cause an explosion, Gu Ling had not entered the cave the previous night.

Lin Bojun had sent soldiers to guard the area, protecting the scene.

After Gu Ling and Su Liang arrived, they first checked the outside.

The weather was clear today, and the morning mist in the mountains had dissipated. Under the sunlight, the bloodstains on the tree trunks became even more apparent.

“It wasn’t sprayed on, but rubbed on.” Su Liang observed carefully and said, “With this amount of blood, the injury must be severe.” There was blood on the grass nearby, and an area of the ground was soaked through.

Then, they followed the bloodstains deeper into the woods, and about a hundred meters later, the landscape suddenly opened up, and the path ended. In front of them was a steep hillside with overgrown weeds and jagged rocks.

Gu Ling noticed that there seemed to be bloodstains on an upraised rock, so he jumped down from above and followed the bloodstains downward. He found that most of the bloodstains were on the uphill points and nearby areas, which suggested that the injured person had descended the mountain this way.

Su Liang waited above, and it took Gu Ling about half an hour to return along the same path. “He probably escaped using the water route.” There was a river nearby, which made tracking difficult.

“He must have chosen the route in advance.” Su Liang said. After the explosion, it was possible that nearby people would be attracted. Now it seemed that there was no one nearby at the time, but He Wei could not be certain, so he chose a difficult route to be safe.

Gu Ling also observed that He Wei had used his right hand while descending the mountain because several rocks had left bloodstained handprints, only one hand. It was a reasonable inference that He Wei’s other arm was injured or even gone.

The two returned to the entrance of the cave, and Gu Ling went in first to check, making sure there were no traps before calling Su Liang.

The inside of the cave had collapsed and was in disarray, with no bedding, clothes, or hay. They speculated that He Wei and his men had been sleeping on the ground, eating dried food without cooking.

After clearing away some rocks, Su Liang found half of a jade pendant under a pile of rubble, picked it up, but didn’t find the other half, which might have been completely shattered.

Su Liang kept the jade pendant and planned to take it back for Min Rou to confirm if it was He Wei’s belongings.

“I think with He Wei’s caution, he wouldn’t start a fire in the cave.” Su Liang concluded after looking around, “Perhaps he just wanted to make a hand grenade to kill me, but he failed and blew himself up.”

From what they knew so far about this group of people, there shouldn’t be any hidden master who had yet to make a move, so the only one who might have escaped injured was He Wei, and no one else.

Although these people were highly skilled in Martial Arts, they had failed to kill Duanmu Chen, so they must have understood how strong Gu Ling and Su Liang were. Furthermore, Gu Ling and Su Liang had powerful weapons at their disposal.

In this case, using explosives was the most likely method to be successful, even without showing one's face, as long as the target's location was known, it would be difficult to avoid throwing explosives from a distance.

However, He Wei had a limited amount of explosives, which he had first used to try to kill Duanmu Chen. When he made another attempt, he blew himself up.

As there were no other useful clues, Su Liang and Gu Ling left, ordering the soldiers to fill up the cave before leaving.

By the time the two returned to the city and home, they saw Qi Yan with a solemn expression, "Master, the war has started in the north!" The urgent battle report finally arrived in the capital city today, and the messenger who entered the palace also came to the Su Mansion to specifically report to the newly appointed Regent King of Qian Country.

It was now the tenth day of the third month, and the war had started on the night of the fifth day of the month, having been going on for four to five days. More battle reports would be coming in succession in the future.

Gu Ling entered the palace to discuss with Duanmu Chen, while Su Liang called Min Rou.

"Do you recognize this jade pendant?" Su Liang put the half of the jade pendant she had picked up from the cave in front of Min Rou.

Min Rou looked at it and nodded without hesitation, "It's my grandfather's." She then described the complete jade pendant pattern to Su Liang. It was a totem designed by He Wei to represent the He Family.

"I have one too." Min Rou took out her own jade pendant, which she wore with her at all times, and compared it with He Wei's. The patterns on both were very similar.

This showed that He Wei's ambition was indeed great, wanting to lead his family to the pinnacle of power; otherwise, if he were truly retiring, why would he need a totem?

"Is my grandfather...dead?" Min Rou furrowed her eyebrows. The broken jade pendant was not a good sign.

Su Liang shook her head, "He's been injured and fled. But it wasn't our doing; I suspect he was making explosives to blow me up and accidentally blew himself up."

Min Rou was stunned, and her feelings were complicated, but at this moment, she somehow found the situation a little funny...she even began to think that her grandfather deserved it for his misdeeds.

Because Min Rou couldn't even imagine what would happen if He Wei had thrown explosives at the Yuanming Pavilion like he had tried with the Emperor's Sleeping Palace...not just Su Liang lived there, but also the elderly and children, who were all so adorable...

"How is your mother?" Su Liang asked, "Has she calmed down?"

Min Rou gave a bitter smile, “She’s calm now, but she won’t say anything. When she’s awake, she looks at me as if I were her enemy.”

As soon as Lady He Qianqian found out that Min Rou had been captured, her first concern was whether Min Rou had revealed the secrets of Xingluo Island.

At first, Min Rou followed Su Liang’s instructions and lied to her mother, saying that she hadn’t divulged anything and didn’t know why she was captured.

But Min Rou’s acting skills were average, especially in front of her mother, who had watched her grow up since childhood. Her lies were quickly exposed.

Min Rou then admitted that she already knew what kind of people her father Min Rui and mother were, and that they planned to do evil. She told Su Liang everything she knew about Xingluo Island and advised her mother to reveal any secrets she knew and to seek atonement. In return, she would ask Su Liang to spare her mother.

But Lady He truly became sober, “Su Liang won’t let me go. Since that’s the case, why should I betray my family? You traitor, we really loved you in vain!”

Returning to the present, Min Rou’s face was full of self-mockery, “Today I asked my mother a question that has been bothering me these days: why did they pretend to be good people in front of me? Why did they teach me to be kind and obedient? I really don’t understand the meaning of such deception among family members.”

“What did your mother say?” Su Liang asked.

Min Rou sighed, “She actually told the truth – so that I could win Mo Grandfather’s favor. It turns out that making me a good girl was just their means of pleasing the Island Master, not because they really thought I was right and they were wrong. Everything is for their benefit, everything has a purpose, and the so-called blood and affection are so ridiculous and utilitarian.”

As for this point, Su Liang had already guessed it when Min Rou said that Mo Yan was very fond of her and treated her like a granddaughter.

It was known that Mo Yan had a daughter who went missing. He Qianqian and He Wei just catered to Mo Yan’s preferences and cultivated a genuinely obedient child – a girl that Mo Yan would like – in order to further stabilize their He family’s position on Xingluo Island. Pretending to be good was more troublesome than not, but it wasn’t that difficult – with time, it became second nature.

It was also because Min Rou went to Mo Yan and said that she wanted to go out and seek treatment for Min Rui that Mo Yan allowed the Min family of three to leave Xingluo Island.

“At first, I thought you could threaten my mother with my life. But now I think it’s useless. My mother knows very well that she can’t live, and she also knows that you won’t kill me. She values the He family greatly, listens to her father and uncle, and treats her cousins like her own sons. She would never do anything to hurt them.” Min Rou sighed slightly.

Su Liang nodded, “I understand. After all, she’s your mother. No matter what, it’s only natural for you to hope that she would live. I won’t do anything to her for the time being. Since your parents

are not important figures on Xingluo Island and are already under our control, it doesn't matter whether we kill them or not. Keeping them alive might even prove useful later."

"Anyway, thank you," Min Rou said, her eyes suddenly becoming red.

As Su Liang looked at her, a thought suddenly came to his mind, but before he could say anything, he heard Ji Xiaoshu calling for his master from below. Gu Ling must have returned.

"I will find you later," Su Liang stood up.

The result of Gu Ling's discussion with Duanmu Chen was to wait and see. At the moment, they only knew that the war had started, but the situation on the battlefield was still unclear. Last month, Duanmu Chen had secretly ordered reinforcements to be sent from the south to the north, so before the war started, Ren Dong and Bai Yang's siblings had already stationed their troops near Xuanbei City.

Since the old General Peng Wei of Liang Country suffered a serious injury back then, the three generations of the Peng family had not held the position of General again. During the period when the generals of Qian Country were being depleted, Liang Country also faced a similar situation.

Now, with Xing Ji and Qiao Jing in charge of Xuanbei City, Duanmu Chen wasn't too worried about the army of Liang Country. What he was really worried about was the mysterious force that colluded with Liang Country and whether they would resort to any crooked tactics.

"There's no black fog on his brow," Gu Ling said. That was why he had gone to the palace for a short visit to see Duanmu Chen in person. Discussing the war was just incidental, and they didn't talk much about it.

"I don't think Mo Yan's involvement would lead to a normal war," Su Liang's expression was somewhat worried, "I'm thinking that even without the food and supplies given by Yin Country initially, Mo Yan could have let the two countries go to war through other methods, like using explosives. Such overpowering weapons of mass destruction can quickly end a war."

Gu Ling agreed. The two countries were bound to go to war, because Situ Xie wanted to fight, and so did Mo Yan. The food and supplies from Yin Country mainly served to confirm the sincerity of the Yin Royal Family's cooperation. Moreover, it would allow Mo Yan not to expose to Situ Xie the explosives he might have hidden in his space. If he could win the war without using explosives, then naturally it would be the best option – after all, one could not simply obtain as many explosives as one wished.

If Yin Country did not cooperate and refused to provide food and supplies, and Mo Yan did not want to change his plan, the situation would become even more uncontrollable.

Although Su Liang and Gu Ling could not have predicted this beforehand, at least now, they could be sure that the food and supplies provided by Yin Country were not the fuse that ignited the war.

"We can't temporarily leave to go north." Su Liang said, "I just talked to Min Rou, the jade pendant is He Wei's, and He Qianqian refuses to reveal anything."

After briefly mentioning her conversation with Min Rou, Su Liang said she had an idea, “The key to this matter is Mo Yan. Since I might be his granddaughter, and He Wei doesn’t want him to know about it, we should find a way to get this news to Mo Yan’s ears. If he doesn’t know, he will most likely try to kill me. However, if he finds out, things can’t get worse, and there might be a chance for a turnaround.”

Gu Ling frowned. His plan was actually to hide Su Liang and the children, which would be more secure. Once Su Liang was exposed in front of Mo Yan, the plan to disguise Gu Ling as a Transmigrator might not hold much significance.

For Gu Ling, he hoped that no matter what happened, he could protect Su Liang and the children from behind.

But Gu Ling also knew that what Su Liang said had its reasons.

“We can’t find him.” Gu Ling said. Although he made a portrait of Mo Yan based on Min Rou’s description, it was difficult to find a master who hid in the dark.

“Let Min Rou go.” This was Su Liang’s plan, “Min Rou is He Wei’s granddaughter, and she has been favored by Mo Yan since childhood. She should not be in any danger when she contacts Mo Yan, moreover, the information she brings is what He Wei hides.”

If there were no other means, Su Liang wouldn’t want to use Min Rou. But to talk to Mo Yan, it was the only option.

“Let her go to Nanping City and use signal smoke to find Mo Yan?” Gu Ling guessed Su Liang’s plan.

Su Liang nodded, “We can give it a try, let Master escort her there, bring a portrait of me and that purple jade pendant. Make Mo Yan think that you are the Transmigrator, and I may be his granddaughter. Seek an opportunity to have a good talk with him and figure out his purpose. At the very least, we can stop the war for a while and avoid more casualties. If it goes well, we might be able to establish contact with him before the injured He Wei sees Mo Yan again.”

The reason for still disguising Gu Ling as the Transmigrator was twofold, to confuse Mo Yan and for safety reasons. Given the current situation, Mo Yan only cares about the Transmigrator and not about others. If Mo Yan knew that Su Liang was the Transmigrator, he might try to assassinate Gu Ling.

Gu Ling pondered for a while and then nodded, “Alright.” Su Liang looking like Mo Yan’s daughter was an opportunity. If used well, the situation might change to their advantage. But they needed to do it quickly. Otherwise, once Liang Country discovers that Yin Country has not sent troops on time and realizes they were deceived, Mo Yan may resort to any means necessary to achieve his goal.

After Su Liang talked to Min Rou about her plan, Min Rou immediately agreed, “After learning that you might be Mo Yan’s granddaughter, I thought I should tell him about it to avoid the tragedy of two generations fighting against each other.”

Su Liang could tell that Min Rou still had feelings for Mo Yan, probably because she didn’t know the exact bad deeds Mo Yan had done. From the perspective of a kind-hearted girl, she felt that Mo

Yan would only be against Su Liang because he didn't know the truth, and if he knew, he would back off.

Although Su Liang believed things were not that simple, Min Rou's thoughts were not exactly wrong either.

"I can go. I'm more than happy to go." Min Rou was very serious, "If this can resolve the conflict and make things calm down, so no more people get hurt or killed, then that would be great!" Not just Su Liang and Gu Ling, Min Rou also wanted the people on Xingluo Island to stop making mistakes.

In this case, she was indeed the most suitable person for this task, because she genuinely cared about what she was doing, and Mo Yan would see that too.

Su Liang asked Old Mu to escort Min Rou to the north. Old Mu knew that the situation was turbulent now. Although he was happy to stay at home with the children, he also wanted to help. Especially when he heard that Yue Mei was in collusion with Xingluo Island, and that Old Bai and Ying Ying were in her hands, he had no hesitation. He had always been worried about Old Bai, and now there was finally a clue.

Before leaving, Min Rou went to see Madam Min and told her that she was going to find Mo Yan and inform him that Su Liang was his granddaughter.

Madam Min cursed Min Rou for being a white-eyed wolf and called her a fool, but Min Rou ignored her.

"I should thank you." Min Rou said before she left, holding Su Liang's arm, "I am very happy to do something that is truly right and useful, no matter what the result is, I am willing, and I will not regret it. I hope we can see each other again soon."

Su Liang nodded, "And your grandfather, he is waiting for you to return home, you have a family. Take care."

Old Mu hugged Gu Xiaonuan and kissed her, hugged Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu, and then reached out to hug Gu Ling, "Take care of the home, that's the most important thing."

"Hmm. Master, take care." Gu Ling nodded and watched Old Mu and Min Rou leave.

Chapter 403: 403. Nangong Lin's Letter

After Min Rou had left, Su Liang moved Lady Min to the Heavenly Prison, instructing not to torture her for interrogation, and to keep her alive, treating her as an ordinary prisoner. Su Liang had told Min Rou about this because nobody in the Su Mansion had the time to take care of Lady Min.

This was a secret; the people in the Heavenly Prison did not know Lady Min's identity, and the Min family did not know she was in the Heavenly Prison either.

The tension of the past few days had temporarily eased. After Gu Ling confirmed once again that Min Rui and Duanmu Chen had no immediate blood disaster, he told Duanmu Chen that he could leave the Library Pavilion.

“Are you sure it’s safe now?” Duanmu Chen let out a sigh of relief, “Have all the assassins been dealt with?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “There’s still one leader who got away.”

Duanmu Chen frowned, “Safe for now then? Alright. I am mentally prepared for this.” As an emperor, being targeted for assassination by enemies during wartime was all too normal. Duanmu Chen had previously attempted to assassinate Situ Xie, but with no news of any success, he could only assume the plan had failed.

“Carry on as usual. You should step down from the position of Regent King,” Gu Ling said.

Duanmu Chen shook his head, “Why would I step down? This position suits you, and I need your assistance.”

Gu Ling turned and left, “Don’t look for me if it’s not necessary.”

Duanmu Chen’s voice came from behind him, “When can I have your handmade steamed buns again?”

“Next year.” Gu Ling replied casually.

Duanmu Chen: ...

Empress Dowager Xiao was overjoyed to tears seeing Duanmu Chen safe and sound. Duanmu Yi’s face was as black as the bottom of a pot, questioning what Duanmu Chen and Gu Ling were up to.

Duanmu Chen knew very well that there was no longer any father-son bond between him and Duanmu Yi. The reason why Duanmu Yi was still alive was because he felt that their relationship hadn’t deteriorated to a point where he had to kill Duanmu Yi, and he couldn’t bear to do it.

Duanmu Chen calmly answered Duanmu Yi’s questions, “Father, don’t worry so much. It’s not good for your health.”

Duanmu Yi was furious and scolded Duanmu Chen, but Duanmu Chen didn’t care.

Empress Dowager Xiao told Duanmu Chen to go see the Empress and the other concubines, so he went to them.

Xing Yuyan burst into tears upon seeing Duanmu Chen, saying she had been plagued by nightmares, fearing something bad would happen to him.

Though Duanmu Chen didn’t really like the Empress, he understood her, knowing that she was being genuine. Coupled with the fact that Xing Yuyan was carrying his child, he set aside past unpleasant feelings and comforted her for a while.

After that, Duanmu Chen went to visit Situ Yao.

Though pregnant, Situ Yao had become alarmingly thin. Upon seeing her, Duanmu Chen frowned and scolded the servants for not taking proper care of her.

Situ Yao defended the servants, saying she had been too anxious lately and couldn’t eat.

“Are you worried about Liang Country, or me and Qian Country?” Duanmu Chen asked indifferently.

Situ Yao smiled bitterly, “I am concerned about my family, and Your Majesty is a part of my family as well.”

Duanmu Chen snorted, “But this time, the war was initiated by your grandfather, not me.”

“I don’t understand the affairs outside nor can I interfere. I only wish to safely give birth to the child in my womb.” Situ Yao looked out through the window as she spoke, her gaze reaching the towering palace walls in the distance.

Upon leaving Situ Yao’s place, Chang’an immediately followed him to the Imperial Garden.

They were at Duanmu Chen’s favorite pavilion since childhood. Sitting in his usual spot, he looked at the vibrant flowers and lush ancient trees, and sighed, “Since I could remember, I have struggled for the Dragon Throne, always on edge, never daring to take a wrong step. Now that I am truly in this position, I slowly begin to feel a bit...”

Duanmu Chen’s voice trailed off, pausing for a while before uttering two words, “Bored.”

Chang’an was stunned, he really dared not respond to these words. However, from his point of view, the ones who caused Duanmu Chen to have such thoughts must be the couple Gu Ling and Su Liang.

For such a long time, Chang’an was most aware of the subtle changes that took place in Duanmu Chen, even though they didn’t seem obvious.

Duanmu Chen quickly changed the topic, “Chang’an, is it too harsh for me to hope that Concubine Liang will no longer care for her family from now on?”

“This...” Chang’an wasn’t not daring to speak but genuinely did not know what to say.

“You don’t have to answer.” Duanmu Chen shook his head, “These days, I’ve been thinking in the Library Pavilion about what my goal should be in the future. Unifying the world? It seems that the time has come, although the result is still uncertain. But what to do after the world is truly unified?”

Chang’an indicated that he would just be a silent listener.

“My son will be Gu Ling’s disciple. After the child grows up a bit, I can hand over the throne to him. I trust whoever is taught by Gu Ling completely. By then, I want to go out and enjoy the beauty of the world.” Duanmu Chen said with a faint smile.

Chang’an was stunned again, surprised but thinking it was very feasible.

“It’s just a pity that I have many women, but none that makes me want to travel the world with.” Duanmu Chen sighed slightly. If Situ Yao was not the princess of Liang Country, maybe their relationship would have been different. But there are no ifs, and when the world is unified, either the Situ family will be destroyed or the Duanmu

family... the life-and-death situation has doomed that his relationship with Situ Yao will not be better than it is now.

After a while of reflection, Duanmu Chen regained his rationality and left the pavilion, heading to the Imperial Study to deal with state affairs.

That evening, the second war report arrived in the capital city: Liang Country's army fought fiercely, and without any provocation on the first day, they directly attacked Xuanbei City. Xing Ji sat in the city to command, and Qiao Jing led the elite troops out of the city to fight. After a fierce battle, Liang's army temporarily retreated.

In addition to the news about the war situation, Xuanbei City also sent another piece of news. Before the war started, Xing Ji sent people to Ping'an Temple to invite Abbot Master to lead the monks to Xuanbei City in order to avoid harming the tranquil land of Buddhism, but they were refused by Ping'an Temple.

Just as the war report from the north arrived, another "war report" came from the south: The Yin Country's army marched and attacked Jiaye City. On the first day, the general of the Yin Country's army called for a battle, and Nian Jincheng went out of the city to fight, but there was no outcome. Yin Country's army started the siege, but due to heavy rain, they withdrew soon after. There were no casualties on both sides.

Duanmu Chen only smiled faintly. The attack on Xuanbei City by Liang Country was serious, but the attack on Jiaye City by Yin Country was merely a show, otherwise there wouldn't have been no casualties. This was a plot agreed upon by Gu Ling and Ji Yuebai to deceive Liang Country. As for the spies in the border army of Yin Country, they had already been found by Ji Yuebai's people earlier, but they didn't "unmask" them. The unimportant decision-making personnel were just right to pass messages to Situ Xie.

Su Mansion.

Before dinner, the latest war reports from the north and south were also delivered to Su Mansion.

For the time being, it seemed that Mo Yan had not yet appeared, and there were no explosives on the battlefield. There was nothing to worry about in the south, as Ji Yuebai would not let his own army fall out of control and be led by Situ Xie.

"My father ordered an attack on Qian Country?" Ji Xiaoshu was shocked, "Has he really given up on me? I'm still here! Will I be taken hostage by Emperor Uncle and hung up on the city wall? So scary!"

Zhengzheng furrowed his brows, feeling that this matter was a bit troublesome. He originally thought that Yin Country and Qian Country were allies, so why did they turn against each other so quickly?

"Master, I'm so scared!" said Ji Xiaoshu as he threw himself into Gu Ling's arms.

Gu Ling was in the middle of ladling soup and almost spilled it out. He put down the bowl and pulled Ji Xiaoshu away, "Sit properly."

“Master, what’s going on?” Zhengzheng asked earnestly with a serious look on his face.

“What do you guess?” Gu Ling’s expression was indifferent.

Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu exchanged glances.

Ji Xiaoshu sighed, “My father is a liar, right? He sent me here to deceive Master, Mistress, and Emperor Uncle, making you think that Yin Country would work with Qian Country. In reality, it’s not the case. Master and Mistress wouldn’t hurt me, a child.”

“Xiaoshu, you analyzed it very well.” Zhengzheng agreed, “If it’s like this, then it makes sense.”

“Master, is that true?” Ji Xiaoshu asked.

Gu Ling nodded, “Mm.”

Ji Xiaoshu was dumbfounded, “I... was just joking. My father is definitely not a liar! Master, don’t scare me!”

Zhengzheng: ...Ji Xiaoshu is a liar, he was actually being sarcastic earlier, and Zhengzheng really believed him.

Su Liang smiled and hugged Gu Xiaonuan over, sitting between the two children. Originally, there was a fixed seat for Gu Ling beside her, but Gu Ling couldn’t always compete with the two little disciples.

“Apprentice-mother...” Ji Xiaoshu was really a little nervous this time, his little face nervously tightening.

“Your master didn’t say anything wrong, your daddy is indeed a liar.” Su Liang smiled lightly, “The war between Ying Country and Qian Country is a lie, just a show, your father purposely deceived Liang Country’s side.”

Ji Xiaoshu blinked, “Oh~ This liar, well then... the deception is good, the deception is brilliant! Apprentice-mother, did I say it right?”

“Very right.” Su Liang nodded.

Then, the two children began to discuss the situation of the war, looking very serious and cute. But after all, they were still young and did not understand many things, so their opinions were quite naïve. For example, Ji Xiaoshu said, if they let Gu Xiaonuan go to the front line and smile, the enemy would surrender, and Zhengzheng actually agreed...

The next day, Duanmu Chen resumed the morning court, and when the officials saw him looking quite well, they couldn’t find any trace of illness or injury. They thought that the previous situation was just a strategic move since the war had begun. Perhaps he was avoiding the numerous assassins temporarily in order to confuse the enemy.

As for Regent Gu Ling, he only appeared at the morning court once, and then he stopped coming once Duanmu Chen appeared.

Although the situation was tense, Gu Ling didn't have anything that he must do at the moment. That day, he fulfilled his promise and planned to take the two little disciples out for a trip, to catch tadpoles.

"Apprentice-mother isn't going with us? Let's take Xiaonuan with us, and we'll all go together!" Ji Xiaoshu pulled Su Liang's hand non-stop.

"Alright." Su Liang looked at the weather outside and decided to go for a walk.

Cen Man also wanted to go, so Su Liang decided that they would all go, including Nangong Qian and Qiuyue. Otherwise, if they only left her servants at home, it would not be completely safe, in case Nangong Lin came to take Nangong Qian away again, Su Liang would have no way to explain to Qiao Cong.

The whole family went on a trip, riding two carriages, and the destination was Wangxiang Mountain. There were clear streams and springs in the mountain, where they could find tadpoles, and it could also satisfy Su Liang and the children's desire to climb the mountain.

After preparing, the group set off.

They got off the carriages at the foot of Wangxiang Mountain and walked up the mountain. Gu Xiaonuan was held by Gu Ling for the whole journey, while Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu ran forward energetically. Nangong Qian and Qiuyue, who had the worst stamina, were now much healthier than before, as they had been insisting on exercising under Su Liang's guidance. Although they thought Wangxiang Mountain looked very tall and felt they might not be able to climb it, they still wanted to give it a try.

"Master, can we decide who will be the senior apprentice-brother by whoever reaches the mountain top first?" Ji Xiaoshu asked.

Gu Ling shook his head, "No."

Ji Xiaoshu was so disappointed, he laughed and said to Zhengzheng while running forward, "I was actually planning to trick senior apprentice-brother into competing, but I don't really want to be the senior apprentice-brother, haha!"

Zhengzheng: ... Yes, Ji Xiaoshu is too good at acting spoiled and cunning as an apprentice-brother, what's so good about being an apprentice-brother?

However, having said that, Zhengzheng was willing to be the senior apprentice-brother, because he felt that he was, in fact, Gu Ling's first disciple and should take care of the younger apprentice-brothers and sisters.

After walking for a while, Nangong Qian felt tired and slowed down. Cen Man told Su Liang and the others to go ahead while she, Nangong Qian, and Qiuyue walked slowly behind.

"Then we'll meet up at the waterfall halfway up the mountain." Su Liang said.

In the middle of their journey, Ji Xiaoshu wanted Gu Ling to carry him, but Gu Ling said that if he did, he would have to expel Ji Xiaoshu from the apprenticeship because his stamina was too weak and he would embarrass Gu Ling.

Ji Xiaoshu instantly lost his temper and continued to charge forward.

When they reached the waterfall, there was a clear stream. Su Liang took her daughter and let Gu Ling take his two disciples to play in the water. It was rare for them to go out and they should temporarily forget their worries and relax for a while.

“Master, is this a tadpole?” Ji Xiaoshu called for Gu Ling to come and see.

Gu Ling went over and shook his head, “It’s a loach.”

“What is a loach?” The two children asked in unison. One was the crown prince of Yin Country, and the other was a young master from one of the four major business families in Qian Country. They had never seen such a creature before.

“It’s edible.” Gu Ling explained from a cook’s perspective.

“Can tadpoles be eaten?”

“No.”

“Can frogs be eaten?”

“I’ve never tried, but I’ve heard they can, but they’re not easy to handle.”

“Ah! This loach is so slippery, like a snake! It’s so scary, don’t get near me!”

Su Liang held Gu Xiaonuan in his arms as they watched the waterfall, listening to the sounds of Gu Ling and the children playing not far away. For a moment, he felt as if he had returned to Su Village, and thought of Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi brothers. He hadn’t seen them for a long time, and they must have grown taller. If the war could subside and the troubles be resolved, Su Liang would definitely bring the children back to the village with Gu Ling for a while.

When Cen Man arrived with Nangong Qian and Qiuyue, Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu had already caught some tadpoles and placed them in a precious colored glazed vase they had brought, to show them.

Nangong Qian first saw them and found it very magical, “They look like ink droplets. What do they look like when they grow up?”

Then she followed the direction Zhengzheng was pointing to and saw a frog tied up with grass twine by Gu Ling. She was instantly scared and screamed, her face losing color. After that, she couldn’t even look at the tadpoles anymore.

The two children hadn’t had enough fun but wanted to climb to the top of the mountain, so they released the tadpoles and frogs they had caught and said they would come back to find them another day.

When Nangong Rou and Qiuyue finally reached the top of the mountain, they saw the children swinging from tree branches while Gu Ling and the Su family of three rested under the tree.

Nangong Rou wiped the sweat off her forehead, gazing at the distant north, and couldn’t help but sigh, “One can see far by climbing high. This is my first time being at such a high place. I wonder how my grandfather and big brother are faring.”

Cen Man smiled, "They are together, and nothing will happen to them." She had never seen such a view before due to her previous blindness.

Gu Ling brought some fruits and desserts, and they all played on the mountain top for about an hour before descending. In the meantime, Gu Ling wrapped Gu Xiaonuan in his outer clothes and hung her on the tree to sway with the wind. Gu Xiaonuan loved it and kept laughing.

After returning home, Qi Yan brought food from Wan Family Restaurant. After everyone was full, the three children soon fell asleep.

Xuanbei City.

Another day of battle had ended. When Qiao Jing saw Qiao Cong, he was covered in blood.

Seeing Qiao Cong frown, Qiao Jing hurriedly explained that he wasn't injured, and it was someone else's blood. With his skills, it was difficult for him to get hurt on the battlefield.

"Did you have any gains today, Grandfather?" Qiao Jing asked.

Qiao Cong sighed, "No! Xiaoliang said Liang Country has food and fodder, but I've searched all the possible places and saw no traces of them. Liang Country doesn't seem to lack food and fodder at all, it's strange! And I haven't seen the mysterious person. Should I go capture Liang Country's main general tonight?"

Qiao Jing pondered for a moment, then shook his head and said, "Since Su Liang said Situ Xie colluded with the mysterious forces, and there are many masters, Grandfather shouldn't take risks to avoid unnecessary complications. Even if Liang Country's main general is caught, Liang Country might not necessarily save him. Once he dies, unforeseen situations might arise."

"Alright, you have the final say." Qiao Cong shook his head and sighed again, "If it weren't for the fear of Situ Xie sending someone to kill you, I would really like to go to Liang Country and slaughter Situ Xie."

"Grandfather, don't worry. He will definitely die a terrible death." Qiao Jing's gaze was firm.

At that moment, a soldier hurriedly delivered a letter, saying it was from the mysterious person and was for Qiao Jing.

Qiao Jing opened the letter, his face cold upon recognizing the writing, "It's from Nangong Lin."

Qiao Cong took the letter and read it with a deep frown. In the letter, Nangong Lin stated that he had taken Nangong Qian from Su Liang's house and was leaving with his daughter to live in seclusion. He hoped that the past grievances would be wiped clean. If Qiao Cong and Qiao Jing didn't meet him outside the city tonight, they would never see Nangong Qian again in this lifetime.

Chapter 404: Killed her.

When Qiao Jing saw Xing Ji, he was talking to Bai Yang. Qi Jiang, Qi Jun, and Ren Dong were also there.

“Ah Jing, your timing is impeccable,” Xing Ji looked up at Qiao Jing, “You’ve been leading the front for several days now. Even if you’re uninjured, you need some rest. I’m discussing with Bai Yang about letting him lead the troops out of the city for the battle tomorrow. What do you think?”

Qiao Jing nodded. “I have no objection,” he announced. He came to atone for past mistakes, but was not eager for glory. He had sparred with Bai Yang before, and while his martial arts skills were superior, Bai Yang was more than capable of contending Liang Country’s generals. Moreover, Bai Yang had openly confessed his error and expressed a desire to redeem himself by requesting to be deployed when necessary.

“I’ll go with Bai Yang,” said Ren Dong. She was the only one present who knew the full extent of the trouble Bai Yang had gotten into. Still, she did not want him to risk his life in pursuit of atonement, for there would be no future if he were to lose his life.

Qi Jun sighed internally. He yearned to fight alongside Ren Dong, but Xing Ji had affirmed his military strategy and intellect rather than his martial arts skills. With stronger warlords present, he had zero chances of being sent on risky ventures outside the city. His father would have been the first to object, and he didn’t want his possible mishap to cause trouble for everyone.

“Alright, the siblings will lead the troops out of the city tomorrow,” Xing Ji nodded. Then he noticed Qiao Jing taking out a letter from his jacket and handing it to him.

Xing Ji frowned instantly. If Su Liang had sent the letter, it should have come to him first.

Upon receiving and swiftly reading the letter, his expression became serious. He handed the letter to Qi Jun.

Qi Jun and Ren Dong read the letter together, both of their faces becoming grave.

“Nangong Lin is my and Gu Ling’s master, and also my grandfather’s disciple. He taught us all our martial arts,” Qiao Jing’s voice was icy, “And my sister, Nangong Qian, is his daughter. After he got injured on the island he escaped and disappeared. It’s been more than half a year now.”

“You’re sure that it’s Nangong Lin’s handwriting?” Xing Ji asked. He had heard of Nangong Lin from Su Liang but had never met him.

Qiao Jing nodded, “It’s his writing. My grandfather has confirmed it.”

“But...” Xing Ji looked at the letter in Qi Jun’s hands again, “Your sister, Nangong Qian, is in the Su Mansion in the capital city. She’s living with Xiaoliang and Xiaogu. How could something happen to her?”

Ren Dong instantly agreed, “Exactly! With our Master and Gu Ling there, it couldn’t be possible for Nangong Lin to intrude into the mansion and take Miss Nangong away! Moreover, there are two of the Master’s masters. One of the seniors, Cen Man, is living in the same courtyard as Miss Nangong!”

Qi Jun pondered thoughtfully, “I believe... there’s a deception in this letter.”

Qiao Jing nodded, "When my grandfather heard that my sister was taken by Nangong Lin, he was understandably anxious. However, I also think that Nangong Lin is setting a trap to capture or kill me. My sister isn't in his possession."

Su Liang and Gu Ling have always been cautious and meticulous in their actions. Nangong Qian's previous conflicts with them were already history. Not only had Su Liang healed Nangong Qian's body, but she also had been gently guiding her towards becoming a better person. Nangong Qian herself confirmed these changes in letters she sent periodically.

As per Nangong Qian's letters, she would occasionally go out, visiting Huguo Temple or going shopping. Su Liang would arrange for Cen Man to accompany her, and if Cen Man was unavailable, he would entrust her to Elder Mu.

Despite Nangong Lin's martial arts prowess surpassing Cen Man and Elder Mu's, the latter two were Su Liang's teachers. If enemies did show up, they wouldn't rely solely on martial arts.

Before the start of the war, Qiao Jing was aware that Elder Mu and Gu Ling had collaborated to create impressive weapons. They even sent explosives and advised caution against its indiscriminate use.

In such circumstances, it was practically impossible for Nangong Lin to take Nangong Qian away from the capital city or even the Su Mansion unless Su Liang and Gu Ling were dealing with some other troubles. But as far as they were aware, no such problems had arisen.

Even so, Qiao Jing felt Nangong Lin would not dare approach them recklessly. Knowing fully well that Gu Ling had surpassed him in power and Su Liang was a poison master, he was too fond of his life and wasn't the sort of person who'd risk himself for the sake of his daughter.

"Could it be possible," a thought occurred to Qi Jun, "that Nangong Lin is now in cahoots with the royal family of Liang Country and is working for Situ Xie? After all, given General Qiao's unique position, it is highly unlikely that Liang Country would let matters lie, or consider General Qiao as just another individual from Qian Country. It's highly probable that they could have sent someone specifically to target General Qiao. Specifically, with General Qiao recently halting the attack of the Liang Country's army and damaging their morale, their hatred for him, being the commander, would only intensify."

Originally, Qi Jing was a prince of the Situ Imperial Family, but he betrayed it to become a citizen of Qian Country, even leading a large army to attack Liang Country. Every time Qi Jing repelled the large army of Liang Country, it was like rubbing salt in the wound of the Situ Imperial Family, whose reputation was already in shambles, and pouring fuel on the fire in the hearts of the Liang Country's troops.

Under such circumstances, could Situ Xie bear it any longer? If Nangong Lin really colluded with Situ Xie, wouldn't he be the perfect candidate against Qi Jing?

"It's possible." Qi Jing frowned, "I was thinking, since it's a trap, to avoid complications, I would ignore it and kill Nangong Lin when he can't resist showing up."

But if he is here on Situ Xie's order, he might know something important. Marquis, should we lay a counter trap and capture him?"

Xing Ji disagreed, "He knows your grandfather is also here, he didn't come alone. Even if you know it's a trap, there is a chance you might get caught if you both go. What if he uses poison? Yan Mei is still alive, she has been helping Situ Xie. Xiaoliang warned in her last letter that we must avoid contact with those from Liang Country outside the battlefield."

The reason why Su Liang stressed this was because she speculated that the transmigrator who possessed space might be involved in the war between the two countries. It would be more than just helping bring food and fodder. For example, if she did something else to help Situ Xie, it could be very troublesome. This is also why Qiao Cong, despite having the idea, did not capture the main general of Liang Country.

There's a mysterious character on the other side whose background they know nothing about. If the war develops normally, they can control the situation in Xuanbei City. Once an abnormal situation occurs, such as both sides starting to capture hostages, things can get out of control quickly.

Qi Jing sighed, "What Marquis said makes sense. I believe my sister is not in the hands of Nangong Lin. Even if she really gets captured, she's not in danger. He wouldn't harm his own daughter unreasonably. In this case, we should just avoid the trap set by Nangong Lin. If this plan fails, let's see if he has any other strategies."

Qi Jing told Qiao Cong about the results of his discussion with Xing Ji, and Qiao Cong had no objections. With his previous temper, he would not have remained so calm. He really wanted to meet at night and cut down Nangong Lin. However, the overall situation matters. Now, he's not fighting alone. Su Liang has to remind him not to act rashly and must discuss with Qi Jing every time she writes a letter.

That night, outside Xuanbei City.

Nangong Lin waited until the second half of the night, but no one came for the appointment.

"No one is coming." Yue Mei walked out from behind a big tree with her crutch, her voice hoarse. Originally, her right foot and left hand were chopped off by Gu Ling on Wangxiang Mountain. Although iron fists and iron feet were attached, they're not useful. Especially her feet, they'd hurt a lot when she walked, so she always leaned on a crutch.

Nangong Lin's face was cold and he faced the direction of Xuanbei City, saying nothing.

Yue Mei scoffed, "Your master and disciple are not fools. They know your daughter is in Su Liang and Gu Ling's house and you can't kidnap her. You also bluffed to Emperor Liang that you could help him capture Qi Jing. You boasted too much."

Nangong Lin turned around, looking coldly at Yue Mei, "Are you mocking me?"

Yue Mei scoffed, "You're overthinking. We have the same goal. This appearance of mine was caused by Gu Ling. I want much more than you for them to lose everything and suffer a brutal death! Emperor Liang instructed us to go find Mo Zunzhu, no matter what happens. Let's go."

“Who is that person actually?” asked Nangong Lin.

Yue Mei shook her head, “Put away your curiosity, it won’t do you any good. Don’t think being highly proficient in martial arts is a big deal. Mo Zunzhu’s skills are beyond your imagination. Besides, he might not appreciate your martial arts skills. He has many underlings who are more proficient than you.”

Nangong Lin’s face twisted for a moment, but he did not rebut Yue Mei’s words.

Nangong Lin and Yue Mei found an inconspicuous house in Nanping City according to Situ Xie’s instruction before dawn.

On entering, Nangong Lin silently let Yue Mei walk half a step ahead.

“Who is there?” A young man blocked their way.

Yue Mei was very polite, “We were instructed by Emperor Liang to visit Mo Zunzhu. My surname is Yue, and I’m an old acquaintance of Mo Zunzhu. This gentleman’s surname is Nangong, he is the master of Gu Ling and Qi Jing.”

“Wait here.” The young man turned and entered the room. He came out shortly, pointed at Nangong Lin, “The master asked you to come in.”

Yue Mei’s face stiffened, feeling slighted, but she dared not lose her temper. So, she sat on the cold stone bench in the courtyard, leaning her crutch against the stone table.

The moment Nangong Lin entered the door, he felt a touch of unknown trepidation brewing in his heart. He had not feared anyone for many years, but the mysterious person he was about to meet made him apprehensive because of Situ Xie’s attitude and the words Yue Mei had spoken.

In the room, a red candle was lit, it was not until he heard a hoarse voice coming from the window that Nangong Lin noticed Mo Yan. It seemed as if Mo Yan had merged with the shadows in the room, like a cold sculpture, devoid of the spirit of a living person.

“Hmm?” Mo Yan voiced out again.

Nangong Lin quickly regained his composure, his tone unconsciously taking on a note of respect, “I started teaching Gu Ling martial arts when he was eight. But I had met him before that because his mother, Situ Ning, was my good friend.”

“Sit.” Mo Yan gestured towards another seat in the room.

As Nangong Lin sat, the red candle was beside him, illuminating his face. However, from his angle, he could not see Mo Yan’s face at all. He then felt an unbeknownst sense of pressure.

“What kind of person is he?” Mo Yan asked again.

Nangong Lin was taken aback, “Gu Ling? He is a person... a man of great capabilities but indifferent to fame and fortune. He seems cold but is actually kind-hearted and values friendship and loyalty.”

These were Nangong Lin’s innermost feelings, that he unintentionally blurted out, but immediately regretted it because he was obviously praising Gu Ling. Yet, he detested Gu Ling deeply.

“What was he like as a child? Was he different from ordinary children?” Mo Yan questioned.

Nangong Lin began to feel uneasy. Before his arrival, he hadn’t anticipated that Mo Zunzhu would be so interested in Gu Ling, and wondered if him being asked to enter was also because of Gu Ling?

“Can’t remember?” Mo Yan asked.

Gathering his composure, Nangong Lin replied, “Gu Ling has been different from ordinary children since he was young. He was exceptionally cool-headed and logical. There were times when you stared into his eyes, he did not seem like a child at all. Plus, he was exceptionally intelligent, had a good understanding, and learned anything quickly.” Not certain about Mo Yan’s intentions, Nangong Lin chose to speak the truth in order to avoid getting himself into trouble. After all, many things were not only known by him.

“Did he ever suffer from any illness or severe injuries during his childhood?” Mo Yan asked again.

After thinking for a while, Nangong Lin shook his head and said, “Not that I recall. He has been very healthy since birth and is a martial arts prodigy.”

“What about Su Liang then? Considering her significant changes, what’s your opinion?” Mo Yan mentioned Su Liang again.

With a snort, Nangong Lin said, “Her martial arts were definitely taught by Gu Ling!”

“And her medical skills?” Nangong Lin asked.

Mo Yan shook his head, “Her medical skills probably weren’t taught by him. Su Liang’s grandfather was a renowned doctor, it’s normal that she knows medical skills. The Su family could have simply kept this undisclosed before the incident.”

“If I want Gu Ling to abandon everything and leave with me to another place, is that possible?” Mo Yan asked.

Nangong Lin immediately shook his head, “Impossible. He wouldn’t part with Su Liang, unless…”

“Unless what?” Mo Yan probed.

Nangong Lin’s gaze fleeting, “Unless… Su Liang dies. Only then can she be separated from Gu Ling.”

“Do you want to kill Su Liang?” Mo Yan’s voice deepened.

Nangong Lin’s heart skipped a beat. Although he still didn’t understand why Mo Yan wanted Gu Ling to leave with him, he could already confirm that Mo Yan came with Gu Ling in mind. Once he succeeded, things would naturally become a lot easier for Nangong Lin.

“That woman has indeed spoiled many of my plans,” Nangong Lin said, “If she could be eliminated, it would be excellent.”

“It turns out that Yue Mei also wants to kill her. In this case, this task will be left to both of you.” Mo Yan’s tone was commanding. “Do not harm Gu Ling, nor let him know that it has something to do with me. After the matter is accomplished, whatever you ask for can be obtained.”

Nangong Lin came out of the room, Yue Mei stood up immediately, but no one called her in.

“Let’s leave,” Nangong Lin walked toward the exit without waiting for Yue Mei.

Yue Mei frowned, picked up her crutch, and silently followed behind Nangong Lin.

It was already daylight, and the two didn’t stop until they reached a quiet forest.

“What did Mo Zunzhu say?” Yue Mei asked.

“He ordered us to kill Su Liang.” Nangong Lin said pensively. “Do you know if he has any connections with Gu Ling?”

Yue Mei shook her head, “I don’t know. However, killing Su Liang is exactly what I want to do. Gu Ling caused me to become a cripple, I would dismember Su Liang to let him feel the pain of loss. Haha! Now about my Senior Brother, he is interested in Su Liang just like he was once interested in that cheap woman, Shen Qingxue. I’ll make him regret rejecting me! Your plot failed, but I can definitely succeed with a similar plan because Su Liang knows very well that her master and Ming Ying are in my hands!”

Nangong Lin looked in the direction of Xuanbei City, “That’s good. It’s time for me to see my daughter. Let’s go.”

Xuanbei City.

Qiao Jing did not show up for the date, neither did he see Nangong Lin or receive any messages from him, but he was still on guard all the time.

However, what Qiao Jing did not know was that Nangong Lin had secretly passed through Xuanbei City that day and went to the capital city with Yue Mei.

War reports were continuously sent to the capital city. There was no sign of Mo Yan using explosives yet. However, Su Liang was worried that if Liang Country kept failing in the siege, Mo Yan’s patience might run out, he might end up lending a hand.

Therefore, Su Liang was always calculating time, hoping that Min Rou and Old Mu could arrive soon, successfully find Mo Yan, and inform him of the facts. Perhaps then, the whole situation could take a turn.

Chapter 405: 405. Explode the city wall tomorrow

Liang Country, Yao City.

Like Duanmu Chen, Situ Xie was closely following the wars. The difference was that Duanmu Chen was only concerned about the war between Qian Country in the north and Liang Country, while Situ Xie was also focusing on the war between Qian Country in the south and Yin Country.

Whether Yin Country could capture Jiaye City was important to Liang Country. So, when Situ Xie received the news that Yin Country had sent troops according to the time agreed with Ji Yuebai, he was greatly relieved.

In his view, as long as Liang and Yin countries put pressure on Qian Country from both sides, the destruction of Qian Country was only a matter of time, and there was no other possibility.

The cooperation of Mo Yan had made Situ Xie even more confident and emboldened, and he was just waiting for good news from the frontlines.

However, as time went on, the initial high spirits cooled down, and the constant stream of war reports made Situ Xie increasingly anxious: not only was Xuanbei City not falling, but there was no sign of Jiaye City being captured!

During this period, Jiao Jing, who had been the vanguard general of Xuanbei City, had been Situ Xie's own grandson. His former identity as the second prince of Liang Country had made it difficult for people in the court, the common people, and the military to ignore him, resulting in many resentful and dissatisfied voices. Outsiders didn't know the details of Jiao Jing's betrayal of Liang Country and only felt that it was caused by internal problems within the royal family, but this hidden danger had not been resolved in time.

Situ Xie's sons and grandsons kept advising him that Jiao Jing, the traitor, must be removed as soon as possible. They said that he was the scourge of Liang Country's Situ Family and that only his death could stabilize the military and the civilian population.

That's also why Situ Xie decided to let Nangong Lin and Yue Mei serve him and go to deal with Jiao Jing when they came one after another. It wasn't just about "old grudges," but also "new hatreds" and the need for the current war to proceed.

Situ Xie calculated the time and waited for the news of Nangong Lin and Yue Mei's success. The two of them, one being Jiao Jing's master and the other a poison master, should have no problem dealing with Jiao Jing, even with Qiao Cong present.

Right when Situ Xie estimated the time to be up, he happened to receive the news: Jiao Jing, who had been the vanguard general since the beginning of the war, had not shown up and had been replaced by another young general with an unfamiliar face.

The new general was Bai Yang, and the news Situ Xie received was from the day Bai Yang led the troops for the first time. Although Bai Yang was skilled in martial arts and still successfully kept the Liang Country's army outside Xuanbei City, the news that day brought a smile to Situ Xie's face for the first time since the beginning of the war. To those who hated Jiao Jing, they even celebrated with alcohol, saying they were "sending him off."

No matter if it was for personal or public reasons, the disappearance of Jiao Jing was good news for them.

Unfortunately, their happiness was a bit premature... Because the next day, a new battle report came in, and Jiao Jing reappeared as the vanguard general of Qian Country and repelled the Liang Country's army.

As much as they were happy yesterday, today they would reap double the frustration.

However, Situ Xie told Nangong Lin and Yue Mei that if they encountered any obstacles, they should go to Mo Yan. He believed that Jiao Jing could not escape Mo Yan's hands.

But as time passed, in the following war reports, every time Bai Yang replaced Jiao Jing in battle, it led the Situ Family to believe that Jiao Jing had been captured by them, but Jiao Jing always reappeared on time the next day.

After three rounds of such substitutions, although it was only six or seven days, Situ Xie felt that something unexpected must have happened; otherwise, Jiao Jing would not have been unharmed.

Situ Xie did not arrange for any other skilled fighters to go and kill Jiao Jing. If Nangong Lin, Yue Mei, and Mo Yan combined could not do it, sending anyone else would be futile. However, Situ Xie did not think that the three of them together could not do it; he suspected that Mo Yan had not done the job.

So, Situ Xie planned to send a confidant to see Mo Yan and inquire about the situation, as well as ask Mo Yan to think of a way to capture Xuanbei City as soon as possible. Otherwise, relying on the food supplied by the Yin Country, Liang Country would not be able to last too long.

But before the confidant could be sent out, Situ Xie received a message that instantly changed his expression: Qian Country had secretly dispatched troops from Jiaye City northward before the war began!

The reason Situ Xie only found out about this now was that both Yin Country and Qian Country had tried their best to hide their covert actions in order to deceive Liang Country. Especially Yin Country, who had been attacking Jiaye City with their army every day, would never have let the Liang Country's Royal Family suspect that they were merely putting up a show.

This message made Situ Xie furious! This not only showed that Qian Country had known about Liang Country's intention to wage war, but it also indicated that the Qian Country's Royal Family considered defending against Liang Country's attack more important and didn't need to worry about not defending the south!

It should be noted that the Yin Country, which has been watching the fire from the other side all these years, has a unique natural resource and a national strength that is no weaker than that of Qian Country or Liang Country, and its military power is not weak either.

In this situation, there is only one possibility: Ji Yuebai is a fraud! He said he would cooperate with Liang Country but actually colluded with Qian Country secretly!

"Emperor Grandfather, could it be that Qian Country thinks that Liang Country's military strength is stronger so they transferred some troops from the south to the north?" Situ Jing couldn't understand, "There's no reason for Ji Yuebai to collude with Qian Country. If that were the case, why would he send so much food to us?"

That's right, the food... Situ Xie recalled the performance of Ji Yuebai's master when he came to discuss with him and willingly provided food to Liang Country first, which showed great sincerity. This was also the reason why Situ Xie had never suspected that there would be any problems with Yin Country before they sent troops and until today.

However, Situ Xie had been deceived, and the slap in the face was too sudden for him to defend against, leaving him burning with anger, almost spitting blood!

Seeing the terrifying gloom on Situ Xie's face, Situ Jing realized that the worst situation had indeed occurred: not only was Yin Country not Liang Country's ally, but it had also become Qian Country's backing!

"Gu Ling...Su Liang..." Situ Xie gritted his teeth, "It must be their doing! Duanmu Chen doesn't have the ability to persuade Ji Yuebai! Perhaps, when Ji Yuebai became the Crown Prince, it was Gu Ling who secretly helped him! As a matter of fact, Gu Ling's whereabouts were unknown at that time!"

Situ Jing frowned deeply, "So...can we call for a cease-fire?" There is no chance of winning if we continue to fight.

Situ Xie said coldly, "That food is bait! We've already taken the bait; do you think they will stop fighting if we call for a cease-fire?"

A gust of wind blew in through the window, and Situ Jing felt a chill on the back of his neck, as if sensing for the first time that there was a crisis of national extinction in Liang Country.

"That mysterious master! Would he be able to do anything? Let him kill Gu Ling and Su Liang! Our obstacles will be reduced a lot! Also, kill Duanmu Chen and Ji Yuebai!" Situ Jing clenched his fist and said.

"It's not that easy." Situ Xie said coldly. Mo Yan had already said that he would arrange for his men to kill Duanmu Chen, and when Situ Xie received the news a few days ago, he thought that Mo Yan's men had succeeded when he learned that Gu Ling had become the Regent King of Qian Country. However, not long after, Duanmu Chen appeared unscathed once again.

"If we can't deal with Qian Country, then let's kill Ji Yuebai who deceived us first!" Situ Jing said sharply, "Capture his son and hold him hostage! Let's see if he obeys!"

Situ Xie didn't answer Situ Jing's words but wrote another letter and had his confidant bring it to Mo Yan.

After the man left, Situ Jing spoke again: "Father Emperor, is that Mo surnamed person really trustworthy? Could he be in collusion with Gu Ling and Su Liang?"

Situ Xie once evaluated that Su Liang's greatest strength was his ability to sow discord in people's hearts. Now even Ji Yuebai has unreasonably allied with Qian Country, Situ Jing finds the mysterious Mo Yan to be very suspicious.

Situ Xie narrowed his eyes and shook his head after a while, "He is not in the same league as Gu Ling and Su Liang."

"But will he truly help us?" Situ Jing asked again.

As for this question, Situ Xie was not quite sure. But he knew that Mo Yan was an enemy of Gu Ling and Su Liang, and an enemy's enemy is a friend. However, thinking that there was no exchange of interests between the Liang Imperial Family and Mo Yan, Situ Xie felt uneasy because he still didn't know what Mo Yan's purpose was for coming out...

But at this point, there is no turning back. Now that the war has begun in Liang Country, even if Liang Country wants to stop, Qian Country will not let it go easily.

In the letter that Situ Xie sent to Mo Yan, he informed him of the situation where Yin Country secretly colluded with Qian Country to set a trap for Liang Country and asked Mo Yan to help Liang Country turn the tide by any means necessary, or else their cooperation would be doomed to fail.

In addition to sending someone to find Mo Yan that day, Situ Xie later issued an Imperial Decree to the Peng Family, ordering Peng Wei, who had already disarmed, to go to Nanping City and fight on the battlefield with his only grandson.

The Peng family received the Imperial Decree, but dared not express their anger. Peng Wei was old and had retired because of a severe injury. Although his condition had improved under Su Liang's treatment and he had survived, his current physical condition was not suitable for leading troops into battle. Peng Wei had only one grandson for three generations, and he had already sought a decree from the former Emperor Situ Han that his grandson would not be sent to the battlefield.

Although they were not on the front line, the Peng family still understood the current situation – Liang Country wanted to fight Qian Country, but had not yet captured Xuanbei City in nearly half a month of fighting.

The three generations of the Peng family knew very well that Situ Xie's order to have Peng Wei take his grandson to Nanping City was not really to expect the old Peng Wei or his inexperienced grandson to lead soldiers, but because the Peng family had some past connections with Xing Ji, the current commander of Xuanbei City, Su Liang, and Gu Ling!

This was clearly a deliberate attempt to get the Peng family's ancestors and grandchildren to go, to see if Xing Ji would show mercy to them, and even, if necessary, push the Peng family ancestors and grandchildren out as hostages.

But the Imperial Decree had been issued, and they had to accept it and couldn't refuse. The Peng family has been part of the Liang Country for generations and has military roots. If they defy the decree, no one will care about their past achievements and it will lead to a great disaster.

Peng Wei's son, Peng Qian, once suffered from a serious illness and was cured by Su Liang. He couldn't bear to see his elderly father being forced to go to the battlefield again, so he went to the palace to plead to go to war in his father's place.

Situ Xie said a few high-sounding words and finally changed the order, but only to let Peng Qian replace his son. As for Peng Wei, he must go, no matter what. Situ Xie said that the border needed Peng Wei to hold it.

So Peng Wei and his son Peng Qian left Yao City and headed south to Nanping City.

Peng Wei's body could no longer bear the long journey on horseback. Peng Qian suggested that his father ride in a carriage, but the accompanying martial arts officer sent by Situ Xie was very firm, saying that the Emperor had set a time limit to arrive in Yao City and could not delay. He asked Peng Wei to understand their situation.

Peng Qian was full of anger but was stopped by Peng Wei, who said he was fine, could still hold on, and not to cause trouble.

The situation of the world divided into three had been maintained for nearly a hundred years. Although Liang Country and Qian Country occasionally had wars, nothing fundamentally affected the two countries.

However, with the recent upheavals within the royal families of the three countries and the changes in the imperial thrones, last year Yin Country attacked Jiaye City but was repelled. Thus, when Liang Country began to attack Xuanbei City now, even the common people felt that the world was really about to change.

As time went on, the stalemate in the war was not much of a problem for the Qian Country army, as their victory lay in blocking the Liang Country's attack. However, it was clear that the Liang Country army from top to bottom was becoming increasingly restless.

Xing Ji and Qiao Jing analyzed together and thought this was an inevitable result. Liang Country wanted to fight but didn't dare to start a war easily due to a lack of food and supplies. But this did not mean that the Liang Country army had the strength to crush the Qian Country army once they solved the problem of food and supplies.

Xing Ji had participated in the wars between the two countries when he was young, and he has been paying close attention to the changes in the Liang Country army over the years. Apart from Peng Wei, none of the other generals had anything he would be afraid of. However, Peng Wei was already old, and Peng Wei's son-in-law's entire family had been wiped out by Su Liang and Gu Ling.

On the other hand, the strength of the Qian Country army has obviously increased in recent years, thanks to Su Liang's military training plan, as well as her efforts to improve the army's food and medical conditions. Even though Duanmu Yi has been abandoned now, he was a wise emperor during his reign, and he greatly valued Su Liang and seriously implemented many of her suggestions.

At the military commander level, there might be a lack of people, but the current group of young generals, including Qiao Jing, Nian Jincheng, and Lian Shun, are all capable of facing any challenge alone. Even Bai Yang has been growing rapidly. In addition, there is Lin Bojun who guards the capital city. Not to mention that Gu Ling and Su Liang are both well-versed in military strategy and have more than once turned the tide as military geniuses.

Therefore, as long as they confirmed that Yin Country would not interfere, Xing Ji and Qiao Jing did not think they would lose a frontal war. They were only worried that the mysterious group Su Liang repeatedly warned against would make a hard move.

A few days ago, Nangong Lin sent a letter asking to meet with Qiao Cong and Qiao Jing, but the two didn't go. They waited for Nangong Lin to make a move, but the latter remained quiet.

Qiao Cong, who was waiting for Nangong Lin to appear and kill him, cursed angrily, "He couldn't have been struck by lightning, right?!"

Qi Jun nodded solemnly, "That's really possible."

That day Xing Ji received another secret order from the capital city. It was said to be a secret order, but Duanmu Chen would always kindly inform the Xing family and Su mansion so that they could send letters. Putting other matters aside, Xing Ji opened Duanmu Chen's secret order and was somewhat surprised.

Duanmu Chen ordered Xing Ji to take the initiative to propose a truce and peace talks with Liang Country.

When Qiao Jing returned from the city with his soldiers and saw the secret order, he frowned and thought for a moment, "The emperor's order must have been discussed with Gu Ling and Su Liang. I suspect that Su Liang is worried that if the war continues, the mysterious forces will not be able to contain themselves and make a hard move."

"But will Nanping City agree to peace talks?" asked Bai Yang.

"As long as we bring this up, they will have to consult Situ Xie. It is possible to pause the war." Qiao Jing explained to Bai Yang.

Nian Jincheng seemed thoughtful, "Situ Xie can't be kept in the dark for too long about our alliance with Yin Country. He should know about it by now."

The letter from Nangong Qian that arrived simultaneously confirmed that Nangong Lin had indeed lied before.

In Su Liang's letter, she mentioned something that surprised both Nian Jincheng and Qiao Jing: If Mo Yan, the mysterious force's suspected leader, appears and wants to capture or kill any of us or uses explosives to attack the city, tell him that I am his granddaughter and ask him to come to the capital city to see me.

"This..." Qiao Cong was puzzled, "is this true or false? Is this a tactic by Xiaoliang to lure the enemy?"

Thinking of Su Liang's background, Nian Jincheng suspected that what Su Liang said in her letter might be true, even though everyone knows that she is Su Yuanzhou's granddaughter, no one knows who her mother is!

"Did Su Liang just find out about this? Because of those assassins?" Qiao Jing thought that if Su Liang had known earlier, she would not have mentioned it now.

"It must be," Nian Jincheng nodded. "Anyway, from what Xiaoliang suggested, Mo Yan is extremely dangerous, so be extra careful in the future. As she mentioned before, avoid direct contact, and unless they approach us first, don't create unnecessary trouble. When Liang Country's army arrives tomorrow, tell them it's time for a ceasefire and negotiations."

That night, in an inconspicuous house in Nanping City.

Mo Yan saw He Wei, whose one arm had been blown off and half of his face covered in scars.

"What happened?" Mo Yan asked coldly.

Hanging his head, He Wei knelt down, "Master, Gu Ling and Su Liang are too cunning, and they seemed to have known our actions in advance. They set an ambush, and everyone else is gone." He thought that Duanmu Chen would be either dead or seriously injured when he escaped from the capital city with his injuries, but later he heard that Duanmu Chen was completely fine.

“How did you get injured like this?” Mo Yan helped He Wei up.

He Wei sighed deeply, “I was blown up.” He did not say that he was blown up by his own explosives but deliberately blurred the matter, letting Mo Yan assume that he was injured by Gu Ling and Su Liang.

As expected, Mo Yan did not inquire further, “How are Rou’er and the others?”

He Wei shook his head, “Rou’er was granted marriage, but at that time, I thought I was about to kill Duanmu Chen, so there would be no problem. I did not see them during that period to avoid any trouble.” Because his daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter had contact with Su Liang, He Qianqian would recognize Su Liang’s appearance as similar to Mo Yan’s daughter, and He Wei had to deny that he had seen He Qianqian during that time. Moreover, he insisted that he had never seen Su Liang’s face firsthand to cover up the fact that he knew Su Liang was most likely Mo Yan’s granddaughter.

“I see. This time you go again, who do you think is the one I’m looking for between Gu Ling and Su Liang?” Mo Yan asked.

He Wei immediately replied, “It’s Gu Ling. Su Liang didn’t show up and stayed at home with the child. It was almost entirely Gu Ling who ruined our operation. If you want to get rid of Gu Ling, you must kill Su Liang. He is incredibly powerful and hard to deal with, but on my way back, I’ve been thinking that the only thing that can defeat him and let him collapse is Su Liang’s death!”

With He Wei’s declaration, Mo Yan nodded, “I have sent Yue Mei and Nangong Lin to the capital city to kill Su Liang, they should be almost there.”

He Wei felt a surge of joy within him but almost immediately noticed a problem. Yue Mei was very familiar with Shen Qingxue, and knew that Shen Qingxue had given birth to Mo Yan’s daughter. What if she sees Su Liang’s face and starts causing trouble?

However, soon, He Wei realized that Yue Mei, like him, would discover that Su Liang might be Shen Qingxue’s granddaughter and doubtlessly put Su Liang to death before Mo Yan found out! First, Yue Mei’s greatest hatred was towards Shen Qingxue, and second, Su Liang was her target anyway. If Mo Yan knew and Su Liang gained power, Yue Mei would undoubtedly die.

Thus, He Wei was slightly relieved.

“These useless soldiers from Liang Country can’t even capture a single city after such a long time.” He Wei talked about the current battle.

Mo Yan said coldly, “I’m almost ready. I’ll blow up Xuanbei City’s walls tomorrow.”

Chapter 406: I’ll give you three breaths of time.

Qian Country’s capital city, Su Mansion.

After Min Rui suffered a stroke and was paralyzed, he was treated by an elderly Imperial Physician. The physician was not completely helpless, but suspecting that Min Rui had been drugged by Gu Ling and Su Liang due to his own issues, he appeared to be conscientious and diligent on the surface, yet in reality, Min Rui’s condition did not improve at all.

Old Master Min, who did not understand the character and behavior of Min Rui and his wife, was still worried about his son. After much thought, he decided to visit Su Mansion in person and ask Su Liang or Gu Ling to treat Min Rui.

Old Master Min sent a message in advance, saying he would pay a visit. Su Liang guessed his intentions and did not refuse.

On this day, Old Master Min brought valuable gifts to Su Mansion, and Su Liang welcomed him. Gu Ling was teaching two children martial arts, Cen Man was walking around with Gu Xiaonuan in her arms, and Nangong Rou and Qiuyue were sitting in a pavilion by the lake doing needlework.

There was a reason for this. In the past, Gu Ling had made a cloth doll for Zhengzheng. Last time Zhengzheng went home to see his brother, he took the doll with him.

Ji Xiaoshu found out that the cute and silly cloth tiger was actually made by his cool master, and he was shocked. It was as if he could no longer look straight at Gu Ling. Then, he clung to Gu Ling like a little monkey and strongly demanded that Gu Ling make one for him personally, or he would cry.

Of course, Gu Ling threw Ji Xiaoshu out and told him to cry as he pleased.

Nangong Qian, who happened to see what happened, found out the reason. Recently, her embroidery had been improving, so she proposed to make dolls for the children, but she would need Su Liang's help with drawing. Many of the patterns that Nangong Qian had used for embroidery and making clothes in the past were provided by Su Liang, which were simple, beautiful, and elegant.

Seeing that Gu Ling remained unmoved, Ji Xiaoshu swiftly snatched Zhengzheng's cloth tiger, and Zhengzheng generously gave it to him.

Then, they both said they wanted a frog, but Nangong Qian firmly rejected the idea. During their time on Wangxiang Mountain, she had accidentally seen what a real frog looked like and was almost scared to death.

So, after some discussion, the two children decided they wanted one lion and one wolf, and they had to be life-sized.

Gu Ling drew the patterns for them in detail, including the dimensions of each part.

At this moment, Nangong Qian and Qiuyue had already cut out the cloth and prepared the cotton for stuffing. Nangong Qian was sewing a lion doll, and Qiuyue was sewing a wolf doll.

"After these two are done, I'll make a big tiger for my grandfather." Nangong Qian said with a smile.

Qiuyue thought it was very appropriate. In her eyes, Qiao Cong was just like a tiger, exuding an aura of power even when he wasn't angry.

Here, Su Liang poured a cup of hot tea for Old Master Min. After he expressed his thanks, he got straight to the point, "Thanks to the prince and princess for treating my son Min Rui before. He was about to recover when something happened to Rou'er. He may have been under too much pressure and became sick from feeling stifled." Old Master Min sighed deeply as he spoke.

Upon hearing Old Master Min address her as the princess, Su Liang remembered that Gu Ling was now nominally the Regent King of Qian Country. Duanmu Chen refused to revoke this title.

"I saw Elder Gao earlier and heard him say that," Su Liang said, "I'll go with Master Min later to take a look."

Old Master Min's expression brightened, "Thank you, Your Highness."

As Su Liang stepped out, Ji Xiaoshu greeted her enthusiastically, "Mother!" She looked over and saw Ji Xiaoshu being kicked in the butt by Gu Ling, telling him to focus on practicing his horse stance and not to move recklessly.

Smiling, Su Liang waved at the two children and walked over to tell Gu Ling that she was going to Min Mansion for a while.

"You stay here and watch the children. Let Master accompany me," Su Liang knew that Gu Ling would not let her go out alone. Cen Man, who had just come over with Gu Xiaonuan in her arms, handed the baby girl to Gu Ling upon hearing this.

Gu Xiaonuan kicked her little legs in Gu Ling's arms. Su Liang was still wondering what was going on, as her daughter was always very well-behaved when held by Gu Ling.

However, in the next moment, Gu Ling walked over to Ji Xiaoshu with Gu Xiaonuan in his arms and let her kick Ji Xiaoshu's butt as well...

Ji Xiaoshu immediately protested, "Mother, look at my master! Not only is he beating me, but he's also using my little sister as a tool to beat me!"

Looking at the toothy grin on Gu Xiaonuan's face, Su Liang couldn't help but sigh, "This time, it's not your master's fault. It's your sister who wanted to kick you."

Zhengzheng couldn't help but laugh, "It must be because my sister saw how Master beat Xiaoshu and wanted to learn by example!"

Ji Xiaoshu also laughed, "My little sister is so smart!"

Cen Man accompanied Su Liang to Min Mansion.

When they saw Min Rui, a servant was feeding him soup. Min Rui's gaze fell on Su Liang, and his eyes instantly turned gloomy.

Old Master Min didn't notice it, "Rui'er, I've specially invited the Regent Princess to treat you."

Min Rui closed his eyes, clenched his teeth, and showed a face full of resistance, which made Old Master Min feel inexplicable.

Su Liang came forward to check Min Rui's condition and took his pulse. Then, she looked at the prescription left by the elderly Imperial Physician, "Elder Gao's prescription is correct. If his condition has not improved, it may be because of a heart ailment. Heart ailments are difficult to treat. If he cannot let go of his troubles, even the best medicine will be useless."

Upon hearing this, Old Master Min nodded in agreement, "The princess is right. That's exactly the case. Min Rui's wife left with Rou'er without telling anyone, leaving him behind. He is very upset about this."

Su Liang looked at Min Rui with a smile, "Try to let go of your worries. They will be fine."

Old Master Min only felt that Su Liang was gentle and kind, but Min Rui knew very well that Su Liang was mocking and humiliating him! And she must be speaking sarcastically!

Unfortunately, Min Rui couldn't even utter a complete sentence. The medicine he took every day could only maintain his current condition, with no improvement at all.

In the end, it was as if Su Liang had done nothing, and she was respectfully escorted out by Old Master Min.

Since they were already out, Su Liang decided to visit Old Master Qin in the neighboring Duke Mansion. Old Master Qin was very happy to see her and gave her a fat fish that he had just caught.

On the way back, Cen Man asked Su Liang, "Did you just come out for a walk?"

Su Liang nodded, "Old Master Min personally came to invite me, so it would be impolite to refuse. I just went through the motions." If this made Min Rui's condition even worse due to anger, that would be fine too.

As they walked, Cen Man glanced back and had a strange feeling that someone was watching them, but she did not see anyone suspicious.

Upon returning home, Su Liang fed Gu Xiaonuan first and was about to take her out when she saw Gu Ling entering through the door.

"What's wrong?" Su Liang noticed Gu Ling frowning slightly.

"Qiuyue." Gu Ling said while pointing at his own brow.

Su Liang furrowed her brows, "Someone wants to kill Qiuyue?"

Gu Ling shook his head, "Not necessarily targeting her, but she is in danger."

"Nangong Lin?" Su Liang blurted out. Not many people knew Qiuyue, and if Nangong Lin came and wanted to take Nangong Qian away, he might kill Qiuyue in passing, as Qiuyue was inseparable from Nangong Qian.

Nowadays, Nangong Qian would occasionally go out, always accompanied and protected by Cen Man. However, if a master like Nangong Lin were to appear, Cen Man could only protect Nangong Qian enough for her to escape, leaving Qiuyue vulnerable to an attack.

Su Liang imagined various scenarios and, in the end, still felt that Nangong Lin was the most suspicious. However, she didn't rule out the possibility that someone else might come to Su Mansion to kill or kidnap someone, and Qiuyue could just be caught in the crossfire.

Her forehead showed a black fog, which meant that if she didn't do anything in the next three days and carried on with her original plans, she would die.

It would be easy to forbid Qiuyue and Nangong Qian from leaving the house for three days, as they didn't often venture outside. However, after discussing with Gu Ling, Su Liang decided to wait and see, keeping an eye on Nangong Qian and Qiuyue, and only taking action when someone appeared. If they could eliminate Nangong Lin in the process, it would also solve a hidden danger.

In the dense forest outside the capital city.

Nangong Lin frowned as he looked at Yue Mei, who was leaning against a tree with an uncertain expression on her face. "What do you need to do outside the city? We haven't been discovered."

Yue Mei didn't answer and remained lost in her thoughts.

Nangong Lin didn't get angry, either. Instead, he found a stone nearby to sit on and rest, waiting for Yue Mei to return to normal. He knew that Yue Mei was a Poison Master and had a paranoid personality, so he didn't dare to provoke her carelessly.

About a quarter of an hour later, Nangong Lin saw Yue Mei move. She faced the direction of the capital city and muttered something to herself, her words indecipherable.

Nangong Lin got up and walked over. "What's wrong, after all?"

Yue Mei turned around, looked at Nangong Lin, and suddenly revealed a creepy smile. "Nothing. I just suddenly figured out a few things today."

Nangong Lin had a feeling that Yue Mei was hiding something from him. They had just arrived in the capital city today and happened to come across Su Liang, who was out. However, it wasn't convenient to act in broad daylight, so they only followed her for a short while. Even then, they were almost discovered by Cen Man.

Afterwards, Yue Mei didn't say anything and left the city.

Nangong Lin recalled that when he signaled to Yue Mei that the woman on horseback was Su Liang, she looked over and her pupils dilated, as if her eyeballs were about to pop out...

Nangong Lin wondered, had Yue Mei never met Su Liang before? Did Su Liang's appearance remind her of someone? Was it related to Su Liang's background? He had researched before, and Su Liang's birth mother was unknown.

Immediately, Nangong Lin thought about the fact that he had casually chatted with Yue Mei about a lot of things on the way, learning some details about her, including the grievances between her and Su Liang's master, Old Bai, and Shen Qingxue, who was sold by her years ago...

Shen Qingxue, Su Liang's master... Nangong Lin couldn't help but come up with a bold guess. Was Su Liang's identity related to Shen Qingxue? Judging by their age, she might be Shen Qingxue's granddaughter or great-granddaughter, and they looked similar in appearance. Otherwise, why would Shen Qingxue's senior become Su Liang's master? And why would Yue Mei show such shock when she saw her, speaking strangely. "She figured a few things out"? Did she mean why Old Bai was so good to Su Liang? Previously, Yue Mei had said, "I really don't understand, we grew up together, but my senior betrayed me and now cares more for a disciple he barely knows, even risking his life!"

"Send a message to Su Mansion as planned," Yue Mei said. "Tonight, Su Liang will come out to exchange for my senior at midnight, most likely accompanied by Gu Ling, just like last time. As long as he leaves the house, the people in Su Mansion are no match for us. Take the opportunity to bring your daughter back!" This was agreed upon during their journey, and Nangong Lin insisted on taking Nangong Qian away. Yue Mei agreed.

Before leaving the dense forest, Nangong Lin couldn't help but ask, "Is it because of Su Liang's appearance? Do you know her mother?"

Yue Mei looked coldly at Nangong Lin, "Rein in your curiosity!"

Nangong Lin laughed, "We are here to carry out Mo Zunzhu's orders. I need to make sure you won't change the plan because of the sudden realization you had today and not tell me, otherwise, wouldn't that be trapping me?"

"It won't change!" Yue Mei coldly snorted, "Now, I want to kill Su Liang even more."

Hearing this, Nangong Lin truly believed that Su Liang could be Shen Qingxue's granddaughter or great-granddaughter. However, if it were that simple, why couldn't she tell him directly? He had nothing to do with Shen Qingxue. There must be other secrets in this.

Thinking back on Yue Mei's earlier statement that she had contact with Mo Yan's power decades ago, and that Shen Qingxue was "sold" to the young master of that power, Nangong Lin had a thought. Could the young master from decades ago be the current island Master of Xingluo Island, Mo Zunzhu? In that case, was Su Liang the granddaughter or great-granddaughter of that person?

If that was the case, it would make sense that Yue Mei refused to say it outright... Nangong Lin felt that he had probably glimpsed the truth of the matter, as well as the biggest secret at the moment, a secret that even Mo Yan was clearly unaware of.

However, Nangong Lin had always been scheming and did not show it. He did not ask further, just said that everything should proceed according to the original plan.

So, in the evening, an old beggar sent a letter to the Su Mansion.

"Yue Mei?" Su Liang was a bit surprised. Because today, after Gu Ling discovered that Qiuyue's eyebrows had black mist on them, they thought that Nangong Lin would suddenly come to cause trouble. "Last time she captured Zhengzheng, I didn't go, and you, Great God, chopped off one of her hands and feet. How dare she use the same trick again?"

Gu Ling pondered for a moment, "Min Rou said that Yue Mei had taken Ying Ying to the Starfall Island. Now that she might have been sent by Mo Yan to kill you, she shouldn't be alone."

Min Rou should be arriving in Xuanbei City soon, but whether she could find Mo Yan was still uncertain.

"Could it be that Nangong Lin has also joined Starfall Island? Did he come with Yue Mei?" Su Liang guessed. Nangong Lin had had an incident on Qiao Cong's island, and then escaped by sea, so it was possible that he would go to Starfall Island.

After reading the letter again, Su Liang believed that Yue Mei truly captured Old Bai. But in order to control him, it would likely be necessary to put him into a coma. Carrying a hostage all the way here was actually very troublesome.

"In case she was really sent by Mo Yan and brought explosives to ambush me, it is indeed very dangerous," Su Liang analyzed. "I don't think she brought Old Bai here."

Even if she did, she wouldn't kill him if we didn't show up. In that case, we shouldn't go to the appointment, just keep an eye on Qiuyue."

When it was deep into the night and all was quiet.

Gu Ling left the mansion secretly and returned after taking a detour nearby.

Su Liang arranged for Nangong Qian and Qiuyue to stay in another courtyard tonight, while Cen Man guarded the children in Yuanming Pavilion. Su Liang disguised herself as Qiuyue, staying in the room with the bed canopy hanging down, and no one inside. Gu Ling was waiting quietly in the shadow of the courtyard.

A quarter past midnight, Gu Ling saw a familiar figure approaching, it was Nangong Lin without a doubt. And there was no one behind Nangong Lin.

One of the windows was half-open. Nangong Lin, silently at the window, first looked around cautiously, and then peered inside through the crack.

A lamp was lit in the room, and Nangong Lin saw "Qiuyue" sleeping on the couch. He gently pushed the window open and was about to go in when he suddenly felt that his chest had been pierced through by something!

Nangong Lin stiffened, looked back, and saw Gu Ling standing behind him, holding something in his hand and aiming it at him.

The moonlight was bright and clear, and Gu Ling's complexion was indifferent, like a banished fairy and even more like a killer.

How did he know I was coming? Can he predict the future... As this thought flashed through Nangong Lin's mind, he felt a sense of foreboding, and was about to escape when he felt his body quickly becoming paralyzed and involuntarily falling to the ground!

As Gu Ling approached, Su Liang also came out of the room after hearing the commotion. She had guessed almost correctly during the day – that Nangong Lin was coming to find Nangong Qian and would try to kill Qiuyue by taking advantage of the opportunity.

"You...you are Su Liang?" Nangong Lin looked at the eyes of "Qiuyue", his heart filled with horror. His plan was very secretive, why did they seem to know it beforehand?

The reason Nangong Lin had found Nangong Qian's dwelling was because of the scarcity of people in Su Mansion and the fact that there was only one courtyard lit up apart from Yuanming Pavilion. Nangong Lin knew that Nangong Qian had been afraid of the dark since childhood and needed a light on during the night. Moreover, he saw "Qiuyue" there.

Su Liang smiled, "We meet again. Where's Yue Mei? Did you come together? Tell us how to find her, or else, tonight will be the day of your death."

Nangong Lin's face was extremely ugly, "How did you know I would come?"

"Stop talking nonsense." Gu Ling said, aiming the muzzle at Nangong Lin's forehead, "You have three breaths of time."

Chapter 407: 407. Win decisively together

The night wind brushed against his face, it wasn't cold, but Nangong Lin couldn't help but shiver. He knew very well, if Gu Ling said she wanted to kill him, she would really do it!

"I'll talk." History showed that Nangong Lin was a man who understood the times.

Gu Ling put away the gun in her hand, pulled up one of Nangong Lin's arms, and dragged him from the ground into the room.

Su Liang closed the doors and windows, turned the lamp wick a bit, and the room became a bit brighter.

"Start talking, from the very beginning." Su Liang sat down, her gaze coldly fixing on Nangong Lin.

"What...from the beginning?" Nangong Lin was dazed for a moment. He was thinking about how to describe the matter of Yue Mei.

"Start recounting from the day you were injured and escaped last year. Where you went afterward, who you met." Su Liang said.

Nangong Lin's heart tightened. If he started recounting from the very beginning, the time span was long, and the matters and people involved were large. If he had any oversight in any area, he would be discovered. At this point, he had no doubt about how terrifying the intellect of Gu Ling and Su Liang could be.

But, Nangong Lin dared not stay silent, he didn't even have the chance to hesitate over what he would think, "When I escaped that time, I hid in Yin Country to heal after reaching the shore. My Achilles tendon was cut. It wasn't until two months ago that I fully recovered. Before that, I did not go anywhere and did not contact anyone. I was afraid that practicing martial arts would further harm me and my leg would become useless."

Su Liang believed this was plausible. If the Achilles tendon was damaged, it would not be easy to fully heal.

"More than a month ago, I left Yin Country and went to Liang Country to see Situ Xie, hoping to serve him." Nangong Lin did not have time to fabricate a consistent story, so he decided to speak the truth about certain things, "You are certainly going to kill me. I had no other choice but to join Situ Xie..."

"No need to explain so much," Su Liang interrupted Nangong Lin. "Just say what you have done."

Nangong Lin's face stiffened, he took a deep breath, and continued, "I got to know Yue Mei at Situ Xie's place, I only knew she was a Poison Master, and nothing more. By that time, Liang Country and Qian Country had already started fighting, and Liang Country was failing in the siege. Many people were shifting the blame to Situ Jing...Qiao Jing's shoulders, in Liang Country the call to quickly eliminate this traitor Qiao Jing, was very high. Situ Xie then sent me and Yue Mei to Xuanbei City to kill Qiao Jing."

"I lied that Qianqian was with me, and wished to make a final farewell with Qiao Jing and master, in an attempt to lure them out of the city, but they didn't go at all." Nangong Lin's face darkened, "Then we received new orders, to come to the capital city and kill you."

Su Liang: ...there really were quite a few people wanting to kill her during this period!

"I arranged with Yue Mei, tonight she would lure Gu Ling out, and then I would take Qianqian away." Nangong Lin said, "I didn't expect that Gu Ling didn't leave, even if she did, Yue Mei wouldn't have gone. She had fallen into the same trap before."

"Then, how do you plan to kill me?" Su Liang asked.

Nangong Lin paused for a moment before speaking, "It was Yue Mei's idea. She wanted to capture another child from your family, then find a place and have a daytime rendezvous with you, and let you make the exchange yourself."

"Who do you plan to kidnap?" Su Liang's eyes were icy cold.

Nangong Lin shook his head, "We haven't decided yet. We agreed to wait until I took away Qianqian tonight, then decide according to the situation. She is now handicapped, so some things will have to wait for me to handle. But she has said it before, it's not easy to kidnap a child from the Su Mansion, so it may be possible to kidnap one from the Lin Family. Even though tonight's actions would alert everyone, you can't protect that many people."

"Where is your hideout?" Su Liang asked.

Nangong Lin provided a location in the woods outside the city.

"Finished?" Gu Ling asked coldly.

Nangong Lin sighed, and before him flashed a black figure. Gu Ling once again pointed the gun at his forehead, "Since you have nothing useful to offer, you might as well die."

Nangong Lin's eyes widened, and he began to sweat profusely. This was the first time he had felt the proximity of death, and he couldn't keep calm anymore, blurting out, "I haven't finished!"

"Continue," Gu Ling did not withdraw her gun.

Although Nangong Lin's story didn't seem to have anything wrong with it, Gu Ling felt that it couldn't be that simple.

"There's one more thing. During the day, I followed Cen Man into the city and happened to see Su Liang. We trailed her in secret for a while, and then Cen Man suddenly left the city," Nangong Lin recounted, drenched in sweat. "When she left the city, she was mumbling to herself while looking towards the capital city. I don't know why. I asked her, but she wouldn't say. But I guess it has something to do with Su Liang's background. As long as you let me live, I will tell you everything! I swear, it's true!"

Nangong Lin had managed to not panic in this critical situation. He was telling the truth, but he didn't mention Mo Yan at first and deliberately saved the most important part for last. According to his guess, Mo Yan doesn't know that Su Liang is his granddaughter or grandniece, and Su Liang has no idea about it either. Su Liang knew nothing about Xingluo Island and Mo Yan, let alone the fact that Mo Yan now wanted to kill her and was helping Situ Xie to fight against the Qian Country. From the respect Situ Xie and Yue Mei showed towards Mo Yan, it could be seen that Mo Yan was certainly a formidable and dangerous adversary, who might prove to be the greatest threat to Su Liang and Gu Ling.

Just as Nangong Lin thought he could make his escape by leveraging this secret, he noticed that Gu Ling's face remained unchanged. Su Liang sneered suddenly, "Is that all?"

Nangong Lin's heart skipped a beat. "You...don't you want to know about your heritage?"

"Do you think you know more about my heritage than me?" Su Liang questioned back.

Nangong could hardly believe what he was hearing. Could it be that she knew about Xingluo Island? About Shen Qingxue and Mo Yan? Shen Qingxue... His expression suddenly froze as he realized that he had forgotten one thing! Mo Fei, Shen Qingxue's senior brother and Su Liang's master (also known as Old Bai, many of you might have forgotten it) might have told Su Liang that she is Shen Qingxue's granddaughter or grandniece already! Moreover, Mo Fei might know who Shen Qingxue's lover was!

No no no... Nangong thought something was off. If Su Liang already knew about Xingluo Island and Mo Yan, and that she could possibly be Mo Yan's granddaughter or grandniece, she would not just stand by and do nothing. At least, she would have let Mo Yan know about this, and a lot of things might have been different!

But in the next moment, Su Liang spoke, "Xingluo Island? Mo Yan? Shen Qingxue? My birth mother? Anything else?"

Nangong Lin felt the chill of death upon hearing this. He marveled at his so-called secret, which Su Liang had known all along, and even more. Since she mentioned her birth mother, she must indeed be Shen Qingxue and Mo Yan's granddaughter. Nangong Lin had not ruled out the possibility that Su Liang was their grandniece, because he always felt that Su Liang's father couldn't have been Su Yuanzhou's son. The Su family couldn't have produced a such monstrous person...

"Since you have never been to Xingluo Island, the so-called secret you told me today is just a guess based on Yue Mei's abnormal behavior," Su Liang hummed. "But, it's meaningless now."

"I... I can help you catch Yue Mei! She has taken your master captive!" Nangong Lin said urgently.

"No need," Su Liang shook her head and Gu Ling moved the gun away from Nangong Lin's forehead to shoot through both of his wrists.

Before Nangong Lin's scream of agony could escape his lips, he fainted.

At midnight, Gu Ling disguised herself as Nangong Lin and left the city with Su Liang, who was disguised as Nangong Qian.

According to what Nangong Lin had told them, Gu Ling found the approximate location and stopped there without going further. She leaned against a tree and began to cough. It was to ensure Cen Man didn't get suspicious should the exact meeting spot not be correct.

As expected, a short while later, there was a rustle nearby, followed by the voice of Yue Mei, "You're injured?"

Gu Ling coughed again, and Yue Mei emerged from behind a large tree, leaning on a crutch, her iron hand emanating a cold light.

The distance between them was about three meters.

Setting Su Liang down by a tree, Gu Ling began to speak, "The woman who lives with Qianqian is an old lady."

"The one we saw with Su Liang in the day? Regardless, I've already helped you get your daughter out of Su Mansion. Now, it's time to get to real business!" Yue Mei huffed coldly.

Gu Ling nodded, "I'll follow your lead."

"If your injury isn't too severe, act tonight. Go to Lin Mansion and snatch one of Lin Shuzhi's grandsons! Thisbe easy for you, Lin Mansion can't possibly have a master. Then, we can wait for Su Liang and Gu Ling to come begging. Ha ha ha ha!" Yue Mei sneered.

"Alright. Could you watch over Qianqian? Don't wake her up yet," Gu Ling said, adjusting Su Liang's clothes.

"Just go, your precious daughter won't experience any harm!" Yue Mei retorted walking over.

Gu Ling nodded, turned around, and quickly disappeared from Yue Mei's sight.

Yue Mei stood next to Su Liang, looking at her coldly, "Why does he care so much for a useless daughter? He should've gotten a new woman and fathered a son."

Meanwhile, Su Liang played the role of an unconscious girl while awake and began to wonder: Did Yue Mei have her own flesh and blood grandchildren hidden somewhere? Why else would she align herself with Situ Xie?

Su Liang slumped onto the ground. Yue Mei sneered, attempting to lift her with the crutch, but failed.

Cursing, Yue Mei approached again, trying to support Su Liang with her remaining hand.

In the next moment, Su Liang's eyes snapped open, and her knife, cold and unyielding, mercilessly severed Yue Mei's remaining hand!

Yue Mei fell to the ground in pain, just in time to see “Nangong Lin,” who had left not too long ago, appear by her side, holding something dark in his hand, targeting her left shoulder.

“You... Gu Ling?!” Yue Mei’s expression was one of horror. She could not forget Gu Ling’s calm yet terrifying eyes from when she had been pushed off the cliff.

Everything happened quickly. As Yue Mei opened her mouth, Gu Ling had already driven two nails into her shoulders, paralyzing her body from the neck up and down. And because Su Liang had cut off her hand, she couldn’t even use her poison techniques.

To make sure nothing went wrong, Gu Ling and Su Liang performed a show for Yue Mei, all to prevent her from getting a chance to poison them.

“Old hag, finally showing your face,” Su Liang stood up and slammed Yue Mei’s bloody severed hand onto her face.

Yue Mei had been splashed with her own blood. She watched Su Liang go to Gu Ling’s side, a cloth soaked with a medicine in her hand to reveal a face that sent Liam seething...

“Do you recognize me?” Su Liang asked, a smile playing on her lips, “But we’ve never met before. Do I resemble someone you despise?”

Yue Mei closed her eyes, refusing to look at anything. But due to her rage, blood trickled from the corner of her mouth.

“You can think about how to deceive me. For every nonsense you say before you tell me the whereabouts of my master and the Ying siblings, I’ll cut one piece of flesh from you,” Su Liang calmly threatened, “If you don’t answer my questions, I’ll cut your flesh as well. If you really have the guts, you can bite your tongue. I don’t care. I know my sister Ying is on Xingluo Island; your so-called big secret was deduced and told by Nangong Lin. Moreover, I already knew it before he said it. I’m the granddaughter of Mo Yan and Shen Qingxue, right?”

Yue Mei’s body shook noticeably, and she spat out another mouthful of blood.

Continuing, Su Liang said, “Therefore, Mo Yan doesn’t care about you, and even if he does, after he knows, he might want to kill me, but the possibility of him killing you is greater, don’t you think?”

Instead of interrogating Yue Mei in the woods, Gu Ling and Su Liang brought her back to Su Mansion and tossed her into the same dungeon as Nangong Lin. Although Nangong Lin might be useless in the future, they temporarily kept him, thinking he could be of use someday. After all, he was now completely disabled and no longer posed any threat. They could kill him later if necessary.

By the time Gu Ling and Su Liang had dealt with Nangong Lin and Yue Mei, day was about to break, and the two of them went to sleep.

Early the next morning, everyone in the mansion gathered on the first floor of the Yuanming Pavilion.

Ji Xiaoshu and Zhengzheng were playing and chasing each other, while Gu Xiaonuan laughed and clapped her hands in Gu Ling’s arms, seemingly cheering for one of the brothers.

“Did anyone appear last night?” Cen Man enquired.

Nangong Qian tugged at her handkerchief. She and Qiuyue had been moved to a different place to stay, which Qiuyue suggested was probably for protection against Nangong Lin; no one else would come looking for them.

Su Liang nodded, “Nangong Lin came with the intention to kill Qiuyue and kidnap Nangong Qian. Both he and Yue Mei have been captured.”

Qiuyue’s face paled, and Nangong Qian looked down, her hopeful fantasies about Nangong Lin shattered.

In fact, Nangong Lin had been brought down by Gu Ling before even entering the room, but the black fog appearing from Qiuyue’s forehead indicated that she would have been killed by Nangong Lin last night if not for Gu Ling’s interference.

Su Liang mentioned this to ensure that Nangong Qian would no longer hold any hopes for Nangong Lin. He was not worth it.

Cen Man sighed with relief, “That’s good.” However, she also started doubting if Su Ling or Gu Ling had any predictive powers, but refrained from voicing her thoughts. If such special abilities existed, it was safest not to mention them.

After breakfast, Su Ling and Gu Ling went to the dungeon to interrogate Yue Mei.

At the same time, the Liang Country’s army was once again at the gates of Xuanbei City.

Mo Yan and He Wei stood behind the army, looking distantly at Xing Ji on the city building.

In a low voice, He Wei asked, “Master, taking Xuanbei City today is not a problem. However, if Yue Mei and Nangong Lin prove useless in the capital city, should I take a team there again?”

Mo Yan shook his head, “First destroy Xuanbei City, we can deal with the Su Liang problem when we return.”

Chapter 408: 408. Min Rou Arrives

Unlike before, this time the Liang Country’s army didn’t start attacking the city right away, but challenged them under the city walls instead.

Xing Ji stood on the city building, watching the Liang Country’s army make way for an old, white-haired general on horseback from the back. His face darkened: it was actually Peng Wei!

Xuanbei City hadn’t received any news about Peng Wei in Nanping City, and he hadn’t shown himself before either. Xing Ji felt that there was only one possibility: Peng Wei had just arrived, and was forced to enter the battlefield immediately. And they sent a once seriously injured veteran like him to the front? Situ Xie’s sinister intentions were obvious!

Xing Ji’s father had a good relationship with Peng Wei years ago, despite their different national positions. A few years ago when Peng Wei was seriously injured, it was Su Liang and Gu Ling who saved him, and even helped to temporarily restore peace between the two countries.

Xing Ji was very clear that Peng Wei did not come voluntarily. The Peng family had already decided to lay down their arms and live a peaceful life after experiencing many difficulties.

As the bravest veteran in Liang Country, Peng Wei's arrival at the forefront of the army immediately ignited the cheers of the Liang Country's soldiers.

Qiao Jing, who grew up in Xuanbei City and had been in the army for several years, was very familiar with Peng Wei and knew about his good relationship with Qian Country. Naturally, he also guessed what Situ Xie intended to do with Peng Wei.

As such, Qiao Jing, who was supposed to lead the troops out of the city to fight, went up to the city building to discuss with Xing Ji how to deal with the situation.

As soon as Qiao Jing stood beside Xing Ji, he saw Peng Wei draw his sword and point it at him, "I am here by imperial edict to kill the traitor! Qiao Jing, do you dare to fight under the city?"

As soon as these words were spoken, the morale of the Liang Country's army, who had been frustrated in their siege for half a month and deeply resented Qiao Jing, rose once again and shouted loudly.

However, Xing Ji could hear that Peng Wei's voice was exhausted and full of fatigue.

Not to mention that Peng Wei was old, in poor health, and must have rushed here day and night without proper rest. Even at his prime, he was no match for Qiao Jing in terms of martial arts.

Xing Ji and Qiao Jing glanced at each other, and without saying it aloud, they both knew what Situ Xie intended.

If Qiao Jing did not accept the challenge, or showed mercy to Peng Wei, clearly having superior strength but unwilling to kill him, it would make people on Qian Country's side doubt his loyalty.

However, if Qiao Jing treated Peng Wei as an enemy general and killed him in a normal battle, it would further fuel the hatred of Liang Country's army towards him and Qian Country, and they would recklessly attack Xuanbei City in the next stage.

No matter what, Situ Xie had calculated that Peng Wei would be advantageous for Liang Country. As for his family in Yao City, Peng Wei didn't dare to disobey the orders. Whether he would die or not, Situ Xie didn't care at all. He might even hope that Peng Wei would die miserably under Xuanbei City, giving a morale boost to Liang Country's army.

"Marquis, what should I do?" Qiao Jing was really in a dilemma. It was wartime, and sentiment could not be considered, but he didn't want to fight Peng Wei at all.

Since no one from Qian Country responded to Peng Wei's challenge, the Liang Country's army began to shout "traitor" louder and louder.

Xing Ji turned his head and whispered to Bai Yang, who left quickly.

A moment later, an arrow shot through the air, aimed directly at the horse under Peng Wei!

The Liang Country's army's cheers came to an abrupt halt. Peng Wei saw it and tried to dodge, but failed. His horse fell to the ground with an arrow in it, and he himself also fell to the ground, only to be quickly carried away to the rear by his men.

Xing Ji, from his high vantage point, spoke loudly, "What traitor? General Qiao only chose the light over the darkness! If any of you want to become citizens of Qian Country like General Qiao, just lay down your weapons, and Qian Country will protect you. At least in Qian Country, you don't have to worry about filling your stomachs, unlike in Liang Country. Can you have a full meal all year round? You came to fight Qian Country just to have enough to eat, and since you can't win, why not just join Qian Country? Isn't that simpler?"

What just happened, along with Xing Ji's words, instantly extinguished the Liang Country army's morale. On the other hand, laughter erupted from Qian Country's side.

Qiao Jing sighed softly. As for Peng Wei's challenge, this was the only way to deal with it. Fighting or not fighting would both play into Situ Xie's scheme. The best solution was to simply ignore Peng Wei, and not mention him at all.

At this time, in the rear of the Liang Country's army, Mo Yan, who had been watching everything silently, still said nothing. He Wei sneered, "What use is it to let that waste from the Peng family go up there? It's just a waste of time."

Mo Yan shook his head, "It is useful, but the use of it has failed."

He Wei sneered, "Next, it's time to show some colors to Qian Country."

"Explosives are limited and not omnipotent. It's still not easy for Liang Country to win this war," Mo Yan said coldly.

"But with the help of the Master, it would be much easier," He Wei wasn't just flattering Mo Yan. From his demeanor, he truly believed so.

When Xing Ji saw the catapult pushed out from the army of Liang Country, he did not let Qiao Jing lead the troops out of the city to battle. They just needed to defend the city today.

He Wei sneered, "They really think they're ordinary stones."

As his voice fell, several black "stones" flew high from the catapults. At the same time, a group of Liang Country's archers suddenly rushed to the front, each accompanied by a soldier who lit their arrows.

At this moment, Xing Ji had also ordered to shoot the arrows. But when he saw the sudden flames at the front of Liang Country's army, his expression changed drastically. He recalled the warning in Su Liang's previous letter and immediately shouted, "Retreat! Everyone, retreat!"

Qiao Jing raised his bow and arrow, aiming at the archers below, and killed three in a row. Unfortunately, there were too many of them. It was impossible to kill everyone in such a short time and still couldn't stop the flames and "black stones" from flying towards the city wall and gates of Xuanbei City, seemingly about to converge.

Qiao Jing threw away his bow and arrow, and Qi Jun had already grabbed the horn to blow it.

The soldiers on the inner side of the city gate were waiting for orders to go out of the city. Suddenly hearing the horn of retreat, they hesitated for a while and then all turned to run back.

Everything happened so quickly.

As a black “stone” hit the city gate, a ball of flame followed it. A loud explosion made the people inside and outside the city feel a sudden shudder in their hearts.

Then, consecutive explosions resounded.

The solid north city wall of Xuanbei City collapsed amidst the thick smoke and dark light of the fire.

When the city gate exploded, Xing Ji thought of Su Liang’s previous letter. While leaping down the city building, he shouted “Mo Yan,” but he didn’t know if Mo Yan was actually there. At this moment, even if he shouted his lungs out, the sound would be completely drowned out by the huge explosion, unable to reach anyone’s ears.

Not to mention that the army of Qian Country was in chaos; even the army of Liang Country was stunned: when did they have such powerful weapons and why didn’t they use them earlier?

Only a very few people knew about it. Even the soldiers who used the catapult didn’t know they were using special “stones” that were explosives. The soldiers shooting the “rockets” were merely following orders, not knowing that the power of the flames shot out was so great.

But after the shock and astonishment, the army of Qian Country began to fear, while the army of Liang Country quickly got excited because the city gate of Xuanbei City that they hadn’t been able to break through for half a month was finally broken!

Xing Ji ordered to continue retreating. The explosives were aimed at the city walls and gates, and as long as people retreated from that area, they would be safe. There were no large-scale casualties for the time being, but they dared not confront such weapons with their flesh and blood.

As for Qiao Jing, after coming down the city building, he disappeared. At this moment, he and Qiao Cong were rushing towards the city gate in a carriage, going against the direction of the army’s retreat. The carriage contained the secret weapon sent by Su Liang earlier. They were told not to use it if the enemy didn’t use it. Now, since Liang Country disregarded the code of Martial Arts, there was no need to be polite!

He Wei’s eyes flashed with excitement, and he could not wait to rush up and personally blow the city gate of Xuanbei City open with explosives.

And Peng Wei, who had been protected after his fall and retreated to the rear, looked at the collapsing city gate of Xuanbei City in disbelief. He turned his head to see the soldiers on his side, their eyes tainted with bloodthirsty light from the smoke.

Peng Wei had only arrived this morning, exhausted, and was forced to the battlefield. He had no other choice, even if he was killed by the Qian Country’s side, he would accept it. At that time, when the arrow was shot, he could have made his horse dodge it, but he dodged it in a way to ensure his horse was hit, then fell down, ending the fight.

Peng Wei knew nothing about the powerful explosives in the army of Liang Country and couldn’t understand why they were only used now.

There were fireworks and similar explosive substances in this world, but their power was not strong and did not have much use on the battlefield.

Such a heart-palpitating explosion like today had never happened before.

Peng Wei had thought that with the alliance of Qian Country and Yin Country, Liang Country had no chance of victory, but now seeing the smoke in Xuanbei City, he was unsure.

As the sound of the explosion subsided, a gust of wind blew by, and the collapsed city wall and the exposed large gap in the city gate gradually became clear.

And the Liang Country army couldn't hold back anymore, just waiting for an order to enter the city and have a killing spree!

At this moment, He Wei asked Mo Yan another question, "Is this all we use today? Shouldn't we give them some more, and blow up Qian's soldiers?"

Mo Yan shook his head, "We'll see."

He Wei nodded, "Master is right. The explosives are for attacking the city, but for fighting, people still need to step up, otherwise, they will be used up quickly."

At this moment, the signal horn for Liang Country's attack sounded, and the vanguard troops shouted "Kill" as they rode toward the non-existent city gate of Xuanbei City.

But just as they were about to reach the city gate, another thunderous noise exploded the wall in front of them that had not completely collapsed!

Smoke billowed again, and debris flew wildly. Startled horses neighed, and the previously high-spirited Liang Country vanguard troops with their swords drawn had turned pale!

The Liang Country army behind them was also stunned by this sudden change and stopped in their tracks, wondering: was that not Liang Country's secret weapon? What was going on with that last attack?

He Wei's smile froze on his face, and he frowned heavily, "Qian Country has it too?"

Mo Yan narrowed his eyes, "With Gu Ling there, it's not surprising. But how did he know that the Liang Country army would use explosives? This must have been prepared beforehand, waiting for Liang Country to use them first."

He Wei's heart skipped a beat, yes, how did Gu Ling know? In theory, he and Su Liang shouldn't have known about Xingluo Island and Mo Yan, let alone that Mo Yan was helping Situ Xie!

Suddenly remembering what had happened when he went to Qian Country's capital city to assassinate Duanmu Chen earlier, He Wei blurted out, "He... can predict the future?"

Mo Yan's eyes narrowed, "Perhaps."

"What do we do now?" He Wei asked, frowning and looking at the halted Liang Country army.

"We only gave them that much explosives today," Mo Yan shook his head, "Move forward or retreat, it depends on them."

He Wei believed that under such circumstances, the Liang Country army would not dare to enter Xuanbei City again. Who knew how many explosives were waiting for them? They were the attackers, and Qian Country was the defender, so while Liang Country could blast the walls of Qian Country, Qian Country could blast the people of Liang Country.

As the second explosion sounded at the gate of Xuanbei City, a signal horn for retreat soon sounded among the Liang Country army. The main general was not Peng Wei, who was just a tool forced to come, and it was very dangerous to recklessly enter Xuanbei City at this moment. They had to think of a long-term plan.

The Liang Country army retreated like a tide. Their mood today could be described as a rollercoaster, with victory seemingly in sight, only for it to vanish again.

Mo Yan took a deep look at the collapsed wall of Xuanbei City and left with He Wei.

Xuanbei City.

Qiao Jing threw two explosives, both avoiding Liang Country's people. He was also a soldier, but he didn't like to kill, especially in such a destructive manner.

The fact that the city gate was blown open made the Qian Country army feel frustrated and vulnerable, and Xing Ji ordered the civilians of Xuanbei City to evacuate to the rear today to avoid innocent casualties, while also arranging for people to urgently repair the city wall.

Even if the repairs were easily destroyed again, it was still meaningful, as it could at least consume some of the enemy's explosives.

The atmosphere in the Meeting Hall was gloomy for the first time since the start of the war.

"How much do we have left?" Xing Ji asked Qiao Jing.

"We only used a tenth of it today," Qiao Jing said.

Xing Ji sighed deeply, "In the end, we still reached this point. That man with the surname Mo is nowhere to be found. How can we pass Su Liang's words to him?"

Qiao Cong said irritably, "In my opinion, if we can find him, let's just blow him to pieces! Better yet, just kill him! He's always messing things up!"

"That man is very dangerous. Su Liang has warned us not to get in touch with him rashly," Xing Ji shook his head. If it was that simple, Su Liang and Gu Ling wouldn't have been so wary, and they wouldn't have been reminded in every letter they received.

"I don't think their explosives are inexhaustible either." Qi Jun said.

"But we still need to plan carefully for the next battle," Qiao Jing sighed slightly. Neither side knew much about the other's weapons, and there would be many unpredictable variables.

Just then, a very familiar voice came from outside the Meeting Hall door, "Make way! I am the Regent King's master!"

Xing Ji was stunned for a moment, and Qi Jun had already run out, his face full of surprise, "Master Mu, why are you here?"

Qiao Jing appeared behind Qi Jun and saw a young girl with an unfamiliar face following Master Mu. He asked somewhat uncertainly, "Su Liang?"

Min Rou quickly shook her head, “No, I’m not.”

“Oh.” Qiao Jing felt a bit awkward and turned back.

Master Mu brought Min Rou in, introduced her as Minister Min’s granddaughter, and everyone was a little confused.

Then Master Mu explained that he was sending Min Rou to Nanping City to find Mo Yan and stop him from continuing to help Liang Country in the war.

“My grandfather is Mo Yan’s confidant, and he watched me grow up,” Min Rou explained herself.

Xing Ji asked, “Do you know how to find him?”

Min Rou nodded, “I know how to find my grandfather. Let’s give it a try.”

“We are still late.” Master Mu said irritably, “Damn it!” They heard the explosion before they even entered Xuanbei City.

“She... can she really be trusted?” Qiao Jing asked Master Mu in front of Min Rou.

Min Rou frowned, and Master Mu snorted, “Anyway, Su Liang trusts her, you can believe it or not, kid!”

Qiao Jing: ...

“Bring me some food. I’m starving!” Master Mu sat down with Min Rou, “We’ll go find that bastard with the surname Mo after we eat!”

Chapter 409: 409. Task failed

Xing Ji had meals sent over and then, with Qiao Jing, they went out to make arrangements for what to do next. Repairing the city walls and gates was the most urgent task; retreating to the next city would be more troublesome. Since both sides now possessed powerful weapons, even without the city walls, direct combat was not feared by Qian Country.

As Qiao Jing approached the door, he noticed Qiao Cong sitting still and called out to him, “Grandpa, let’s go.”

Qiao Cong waved his hand, “You go ahead! I’ll take this girl to Nanping City later!”

Qiao Jing frowned, and Old Mu shook his head, “That won’t be necessary.”

Qiao Cong snorted, “First, my martial arts skills are better than yours. Second, you’ve traveled day and night to get here and are in no shape to go. Third, I’m very familiar with Nanping City. Before the war started, I had been searching almost every day for the Liang Country’s hidden grain storage. Though I haven’t found it yet, I have a clear understanding of many places.”

Old Mu’s hand holding the chopsticks paused as he glanced at Min Rou. After contemplating for a moment, he handed the chopsticks to Qiao Cong, “If you insist, you can go. But eat first.”

Qiao Cong wasn't hungry initially, but considering he might not return from Nanping City anytime soon, he took the chopsticks from Old Mu and ate with gusto.

Min Rou inquired, "May I know the name of this senior?" The situation had been urgent today, so Xing Ji hadn't introduced Min Rou to the others.

"He is my grandfather." Qiao Jing, still standing at the door, said.

Min Rou looked at him and asked, "And you are?"

Qiao Jing's face stiffened, and he turned and walked away, following Xing Ji.

Qiao Cong suddenly laughed, "That's my grandson, Qiao Jing. You might have heard of him. You can just call me Old Qiao."

"Senior Qiao." Min Rou nodded, "I have indeed heard of General Qiao's reputation."

Min Rou didn't eat much before putting down her chopsticks. Qiao Cong said she was too thin and needed to eat more, but she really had no appetite today.

Qiao Cong hurriedly ate a couple more bites, then slammed his chopsticks on the table, "Let's go! We have important matters to attend to!" Although they had no idea what Mo Yan's capabilities were besides explosives, since Su Liang and Gu Ling were so wary of him, they couldn't afford to take him lightly. Now that Min Rou had arrived, there was no time to delay.

Old Mu handed Qiao Cong his personal handgun, taught him how to use it, and gave him another secret weapon and a hand grenade, "According to Xiaoliang, you just need to send her there. Do not make contact with those people."

Qiao Cong was stunned, "Just send her there? How will she return?"

Min Rou shook her head slightly, "That doesn't matter." She was prepared to be taken away by Mo Yan. Moreover, it was possible that Mo Yan might vent his anger on her due to her betrayal and do something to her. Nevertheless, she did not regret her choice.

Qiao Cong frowned but said nothing. He left Xuanbei City in secret with Min Rou, heading towards Nanping City.

Nanping City.

The latest battle report had just been sent out. Yi Fei, the current commanding general of Nanping City, sat with a gloomy expression as Peng Wei, assisted by two soldiers, approached. Yi Fei had once served under Peng Wei, but times change, and their positions were now different.

Peng Qian rushed in from the doorway, his expression anxious, "Father!" He had been forced to separate from Peng Wei upon arriving at Nanping City and was monitored as he took inventory of the provisions. He had no idea what had happened.

"It's okay." Peng Wei, helped by Peng Qian, sat down and shook his head at him.

Then, he looked at Yi Fei, "General Yi, what are your plans for the future?"

Yi Fei snorted, his tone somewhat sarcastic, "I really admire Old Peng. Even at this point, he can still make Xing Ji show mercy. Such a relationship is truly enviable."

Peng Wei said with a straight face, "Or does General Yi expect me to be beheaded by Qiao Jing today?"

Yi Fei's face stiffened! Even though that was the reality, it was not pleasant to hear.

Nevertheless, even with Yi Fei in charge of Nanping City and the father and son Peng Wei having no real power, Yi Fei did not dare to take them lightly or treat them badly. If Peng Wei were to die on the battlefield, that would be what Situ Xie wished for, and it would have nothing to do with Yi Fei. However, if something were to happen to the Peng family during times of peace, Yi Fei would not be able to explain the situation to Situ Xie. After all, Situ Xie believed that this father and son pair had value.

"You've both had a hard journey. Old Peng, you're injured today, so it's best to rest soon. If there's anything you need advice on, I'll come to consult you." Yi Fei's attitude turned polite.

"What happened with the explosives today?" Peng Wei frowned and asked, "Who made them?" He had come over, injured, just to ask about this matter. Especially after learning that Qian Country also had explosives, Peng Wei felt the situation was worsening. This was no longer the war he had experienced before.

Yi Fei's eyes flickered slightly, "This matter concerns the highest level of secrecy, I'm afraid I cannot disclose any information."

"Father, let me help you back to rest. We have General Yi in charge of everything, you don't have to worry about this too much," Peng Qian said, pulling Peng Wei up.

Yi Fei watched them leave the room, then made a gesture to someone behind him, whispering, "Go ask Mo Zunzhu if there's any plan coming up."

When Peng Wei and Peng Qian left the room, Peng Wei looked up at the sky. The sun was about to set, casting a bloody glow on Nanping City's sky.

Peng Qian sighed, "Father, times have changed. Let's not worry about this too much."

Gazing at the setting sun, Peng Wei sighed deeply, "I hope this ends soon."

Peng Qian wanted to ask Peng Wei what he hoped would end, but held back at the last moment. Back in their house in Yao City, Peng Wei had said some "unconventional" things. The Situ Family didn't care about the common people at all and caused wars, making the already difficult lives of the poor even worse. Countless people starved to death or froze to death every winter. As for the soldiers fighting on the battlefield, they were merely tools to fulfill the Situ Family's expansionist desires. Especially after witnessing life in Qian Country and meeting Su Liang and Gu Ling, and after Duanmu Chen took power in Qian Country, he always thought that the first step for Liang Country's salvation was to eliminate the ambitious Situ Family. It might not be a bad thing for Liang Country to cease to exist. Did the common people really care which country they belonged to? They just wanted to live in peace, be fed, and live a good life.

At the time, Peng Qian thought it was dangerous for Peng Wei to say such things in Yao City, but it was their own home, and the door was closed, so no one could hear. Peng Qian had no reason to refute either.

Peng Qian believed that after today's events, Peng Wei would be more determined in his hope for the Situ Family to fall and Qian Country to unify the world.

However, who could bring an end to the war, how to end it, and when it would end, no one knew, be it in Nanping City or Xuanbei City.

When Qiao Cong and Min Rou arrived in Nanping City, it wasn't completely dark yet. He settled Min Rou at a location to wait, then secretly entered the Liang Country Military Camp again, and gathered information with ease. As with many previous times, nobody mentioned Mo Yan's name, let alone someone who resembled Mo Yan. As for the granary of the Liang Country army, it was a ghostly place in Qiao Cong's eyes.

From the beginning of the war until now, nearly a month had passed, and Qiao Cong had been watching closely. He noticed a pattern: among several granaries, only one was always full, while the others were empty. The strange thing was that when the full granary became empty, another granary would be full overnight, as if by magic!

Qiao Cong was worried about Qiao Jing's safety, so he didn't spend a long time watching the granary – which was what Su Liang had instructed. When he wrote to Su Liang about the strange situation, she replied not to stake out any longer. She knew what was going on and was concerned that Qiao Cong might run into trouble if he encountered Mo Yan.

Returning to the present, the sky had completely darkened when Qiao Cong failed to find anything in the military camp and left.

There were many common people in Nanping City, so searching house by house would be too difficult. Qiao Cong found Min Rou and took her out of Nanping City to a dense forest outside the city.

Min Rou took out the signal flare she had brought. It was what Gu Ling had found on her mother, He Qianqian, and Gu Ling had personally seen He Qianqian using it to send messages to He Wei and had informed Min Rou of the details. There were originally three flares, but Gu Ling had made three more identical ones as backups.

"Senior Qiao, you should go back. In case you encounter my grandfather or Mo Yan and can't get away," Min Rou said to Qiao Cong, "I'll be fine. If I can't find anyone with this, I'll go to Nanping City to find the Liang Country army's commanding general. I think he must be in contact with Mo Yan."

Qiao Cong nodded, "You're very smart. I hadn't thought of that. Alright, I'll go first. Be careful with everything, and follow exactly what Xiaoliang has instructed."

"I will, thank you, Senior Qiao." Min Rou looked serious, watching Qiao Cong disappear into the night. After a while, she took out her flint, and lit the first signal flare.

He Wei was pacing anxiously in Mo Yan's room, "Master, if we delay any longer, the situation will become even more unfavorable for us. We should capture the leader and kill the likes of Xing Ji and Qiao Jing tonight! Even if Qian Country's army has explosives, we have nothing to fear!"

Mo Yan sat by the window, looking at the blue porcelain flower vase on the windowsill, not responding to He Wei's words.

"Master..." He Wei tried to speak again, but Mo Yan got up and walked out without answering.

He Wei followed, frowning, and looked into the distance in the direction of Mo Yan's gaze but saw nothing.

After a quiet wait, a red light appeared in the southern sky. He Wei's expression changed.

"Is it Rourou and the others?" Mo Yan asked.

He Wei stared intently, "Not necessarily. I didn't tell Qianqian to bring Rourou here. They should have gone home after escaping. I'll go check it out."

"Take Ayue with you." Mo Yan said and turned back to his room. Ayue, whom he referred to, was called Sheng Yue. He was Mo Yan's attendant and was very young.

When He Wei saw Sheng Yue appear like a ghost, he set off directly without any communication.

On their way, they saw the signal smoke again. This was the third time.

Before arriving at their destination, He Wei suddenly stopped and turned to look at Sheng Yue, "No matter what happens next, don't interfere."

Sheng Yue's gaze went past He Wei to the dark woods, "Is Master He implying that you might kill your daughter and granddaughter if they do something you think they shouldn't?"

He Wei's expression changed, "What nonsense are you talking about?"

Only then did Sheng Yue's gaze fall on He Wei, his head tilted slightly to the right, "What other matters would prompt you to say those words to me just now? His eyes were as deep and dark as ink, but his movements and tone exuded innocence, like a child born in hell, chilling to the bone.

He Wei snorted coldly, "In any case, if you dare to meddle or speak out of turn, don't blame me for being discourteous!" With that, he turned around and continued on his way.

After sending up three signal smokes, Min Rou waited restlessly. The forest at night was quiet, with the occasional rustling sound of animals making her hairs stand on end.

Finally, she heard the sound of footsteps. Instead of feeling relieved, Min Rou's heart was clenched tightly in fear. Although she had come with a mission, she did not know what awaited her. The best-case scenario was Mo Yan's arrival, and the worst was He Wei's...

The next moment, Min Rou saw He Wei appear not far away, illuminated by the moonlight, the scars on half of his face due to his injury making him look terrifying. As Su Liang and Gu Ling had guessed, he had blown himself up.

"Grandfather!" Min Rou's face lit up with happiness, and her eyes welled up with tears as she ran towards him.

He Wei grabbed her arm, looked around, and asked, "Where's your mother?"

It was then that Min Rou saw Sheng Yue appear behind He Wei, and her heart relaxed slightly. They had grown up together since childhood and were among Mo Yan's two favorite juniors on Xingluo Island.

"My mother is in trouble." Min Rou said somberly, "We agreed to leave together that night, but someone blocked our way. She gave me all her self-defense items and covered my escape. Later, as I waited and waited, she never came to find me. Mother said that Grandfather Mo might be in Nanping City, so I could only come here."

He Wei's face darkened, his grip on Min Rou's arm tightening, "You're lying!"

Min Rou's heart skipped a beat. She had practiced this countless times on her way here and had even eliminated her subconscious tells when lying under the guidance of Old Mu. How was she found out?

He Wei said coldly, "I know you. If something really happened, you wouldn't have left your mother behind and run away!"

Without hesitation, Min Rou turned her head and said to Sheng Yue, "Big Brother Yue, I have an important message for Grandfather Mo!"

As He Wei's brow furrowed, he let go of Min Rou and tried to strike the back of her neck!

However, at that moment, Sheng Yue pulled Min Rou behind him, causing He Wei's attempt to knock her out to be in vain.

"What do you think you're doing? Do you think I can't handle you just because I've lost one hand? Or do you think I don't dare to touch you?" He Wei looked at Sheng Yue, his eyes already showing a murderous intent.

"You can't handle me, and you don't dare to touch me." Sheng Yue's voice was flat and unwavering, one hand grabbing Min Rou, the other hand striking at He Wei with a palm.

They stood close together, and He Wei quickly dodged. The tree behind him that was originally standing intact collapsed with a loud bang.

"What is it that you need to tell the Master?" Sheng Yue asked Min Rou.

Min Rou shook her head, "I have to see Grandfather Mo with my own eyes before I can say."

"Tell me, so I can know if it's worth going against your grandfather, and whether you have betrayed the Master." Sheng Yue's tone was calm.

Min Rou looked at He Wei not far away, his eyes filled with murderous intent, and knew that he already knew what she was going to say, and would spare no effort to stop her, even if it meant killing her own granddaughter. He Wei had served Mo Yan all his life and would spare no expense to obtain what he wanted, especially since his own children and grandchildren were safe on Xingluo Island, a granddaughter was not that important.

Min Rou knew Sheng Yue's personality. If she didn't tell him, he wouldn't care about her life or death.

At this moment, Min Rou could only assume that Sheng Yue was different from He Wei and was truly loyal to Mo Yan.

“Su Liang is Mo Yan’s granddaughter.” Min Rou told Sheng Yue, “It’s a fact, as long as Mo Yan asks about Su Liang’s appearance, he will know!”

Sheng Yue’s eyes finally changed a bit, but soon, they returned to their usual cold state, “Since you said that, I believe it.”

Min Rou breathed a sigh of relief. However, He Wei had already drawn his sword and stabbed at Sheng Yue. Min Rou, seeing the situation, hurriedly warned and said, “Brother Yue, be careful!”

Before her words fell, she felt her neck being choked by an icy hand, and He Wei looked at this scene with disbelief, then slowly withdrew his sword, his face revealing a cold smile, “Ask her how much information she has betrayed about Xingluo Island?”

It was only then that Min Rou realized how naive she was. There were no normal people on that island...

“Grandfather, you don’t even ask me where my mother is?” Min Rou could still speak at this moment. She looked at He Wei with sarcasm. This was the man she had thought cared for her since childhood. It was absurd. In the face of interests and ambitions, what does family affection count for? What does blood relation count for?

“If you confess obediently, I may not kill you and will send you home.” He Wei stepped forward and coldly looked at Min Rou, “It’s precisely because I know you, I know that you’re the type of person to be easily bewitched by Su Liang. I initially thought you and your mother had left beforehand. I didn’t expect you to betray Xingluo Island.”

“Me? What am I? A good person? Incompatible with you all? Then what are you? Humans?” Min Rou had expected some outcome when she came, not only for Su Liang but also to save those innocent people she believed were on Xingluo Island. But reality slapped her in the face again.

Sheng Yue suddenly tightened his grip, “Sister Rou, tell us what you know about Su Liang and Gu Ling, and you can live. Otherwise, you will never go home.”

“Don’t call me your sister, it’s disgusting,” Min Rou said with difficulty, “Indeed, there is a secret about them. In fact, they are gods from the heavens who will eventually destroy you monsters.”

Sheng Yue snorted lightly, and Min Rou knew that he was going to kill her.

At this moment, He Wei suddenly felt something piercing through his body, cold and fast.

Min Rou saw that He Wei’s body shook slightly. She immediately raised her hand, and a silver needle as thin as an ox hair silently entered Sheng Yue’s abdomen.

Min Rou hadn't forgotten about her hidden weapons and had planned to use them in the most critical moments. Since there were two opponents, even using powerful hidden weapons would only deal with one, and she knew a secret about Sheng Yue: he had a poison-immune constitution. Therefore, poison-hidden weapons would be less effective on him.

However, Min Rou knew that it must be Qiao Cong who had helped her. He hadn't left but stayed nearby.

As expected, after Sheng Yue was hit with the hidden weapon, he still didn't let go of Min Rou. Another hidden weapon flew from the dark dense forest towards his heart, forcing him to dodge. Min Rou pulled out a dagger from her sleeve, forcing Sheng Yue to let her go, but unfortunately, she couldn't stab the dagger into his body!

"Go!" He Wei grabbed Sheng Yue firmly. He had been poisoned and would die unless Sheng Yue took him away!

To He Wei's surprise, Sheng Yue really carried him on his back, but then He Wei blocked two more hidden weapons for Sheng Yue before he passed out.

Qiao Cong didn't have time to use his grenade because Sheng Yue was extremely fast, as if he was not injured at all.

"Are you alright?" Qiao Cong appeared and grabbed Min Rou.

Min Rou broke out in a cold sweat, shivered in the night wind, and shook her head, "I'm fine. Thank you, Senior Qiao."

"What kind of people are they around that Mo guy?" Qiao Cong couldn't help but complain. He had hidden and held his breath to observe, originally thinking Sheng Yue was different from He Wei.

Min Rou sighed, "Everyone has their own interests. I couldn't accomplish the task Su Liang entrusted to me. What should I do?"

Qiao Cong pulled Min Rou back, "Let's go back first and discuss it. Those people are lunatics, Xiaoliang is right, we must be careful when dealing with them. If it doesn't work, we'll shout at them when Liang Country's army comes again tomorrow, telling them that Xiaoliang is Mo Yan's granddaughter. He will know."

Min Rou wasn't so optimistic, "Sheng Yue is powerful and immune to all poisons. He is Mo Yan's eyes and ears. If he and my grandfather don't want Mo Yan to know about it, they can really do it. As long as they find an excuse to coax Mo Yan away from Nanping City and let Mo Yan personally order to kill Su Liang with all his strength. However, in this way, the war may end. Maybe that's what Su Liang cares about. She doesn't really want to acknowledge any grandfather."

Qiao Cong cursed, "The people on your island are all sick! Seriously sick! Except for you! You're not bad, quite smart. What do you think of my grandson-in-law?"

Min Rou: ...

Chapter 410: 410. Day of Peace

By the time Qiao Cong and Min Rou hurried back to Xuanbei City, Sheng Yue had already returned to Nanping City with the severely injured and poisoned He Wei. Mo Yan, who hadn't yet slept and was reading under the lamplight, saw them enter. His expression darkened as he stood up and snapped his book shut with a "pop." "What happened?"

Sheng Yue's voice was low, "It was Min Rou. She was bewitched by Su Liang, and came to assassinate us with accomplices. He Wei didn't guard against her and was hit by a hidden weapon; I was also struck."

"What about Min Rou's mother?" Mo Yan asked coldly.

Sheng Yue shook his head, "Didn't see her. She must have fallen into Su Liang's hands." He then laid He Wei down and lit another lamp, revealing four small bloody holes on He Wei's body. One of the nails had pierced through He Wei's body, with half of it protruding out from his back, while the others were still embedded inside him.

Sheng Yue took out a sharp knife, doused it with alcohol, and removed the nails from He Wei's body. During this process, He Wei regained consciousness from the intense pain, bleeding even more and turning paper-white. His teeth chattered as he trembled.

Mo Yan coldly looked at the four blood-stained nails on the table, asking, "What's going on with Min Rou?"

"She's under someone's control and doesn't recognize her family," Sheng Yue replied while skillfully tending to He Wei's wounds. "Master, don't count on Liang Country winning the war. With Gu Ling and Su Liang in Qian Country, Liang Country has no chance of victory. We may be exposed soon, and it's time to leave."

Mo Yan frowned, "Where should we go?"

Sheng Yue glanced at He Wei, "Forgive my boldness. I didn't initially agree with Master's involvement in the world's strife, but it served as a means against Gu Ling and Su Liang. Moreover, Master promised He Wei and others, including myself, that before Master returns home, he will help us conquer the world and ensure endless wealth and glory for our generations. However, in my opinion, Master's homecoming is the most important matter and should be settled before any distractions arise."

Mo Yan sighed deeply, "I know you have always been loyal."

"Master, heed my advice and leave this place soon. Forget about Liang Country. We can reconsider and plan carefully later on," Sheng Yue said.

Mo Yan fell silent and walked to the window. Gazing at the bright moon in the night sky, he sighed, "He Wei won't die, right?"

Sheng Yue shook his head, "I've already treated his wounds and neutralized the poison. He won't die."

"Then," Mo Yan's gaze fixated on the faint ink-colored shadow amid the moon, "let's return to the island first. As for conquering the world, it may be easier to snatch it after it's unified. You were right – I shouldn't have listened to He Wei and intervened

at this time. Despite him being older than you, no one on the island can match your strategies. Pack up and let's go."

Sheng Yue quickly packed their belongings, changed He Wei into clean clothes, and ordered two subordinates to take He Wei away first.

As Mo Yan walked to the door, Sheng Yue, carrying the luggage, blew out the lamp in the room.

Mo Yan suddenly turned around, half of his face illuminated by the moonlight while the other half hidden in the shadows, "Should I send the remaining food supplies to the military camp?" he asked, his tone obviously seeking agreement.

However, Sheng Yue didn't concur, "Doing so still wouldn't ensure Liang Country's victory, and those supplies might just end up being destroyed by Qian Country. It's not worth wasting; bring them back to the island. The island needs food as well."

Mo Yan sighed softly, shook his head, and turned away, "This trip was indeed ill-considered. Let's go back and plan again. Let's go."

Soon, the small courtyard was empty and returned to being utterly quiet.

Only after Mo Yan and Sheng Yue had left Nanping City did Sheng Yue address the hidden weapon inside his body. He found a secluded location and had Mo Yan guard him while he used his Internal Strength to force out the hair-thin silver needle.

It was at this moment that Qiao Cong and Min Rou arrived back at Xuanbei City.

Qiao Jing hadn't slept either and was sitting in the Meeting Hall, waiting for Qiao Cong's return. Unable to concentrate on the Liang Country topographic map spread out before him, he stood up and paced around the room.

Qi Jun brought hot soup over, "General Qiao, have some soup. You might still have to fight tomorrow."

Qiao Jing furrowed his brows, "According to our plan, my grandfather should have been back by now."

Qi Jun nodded, "Indeed, but perhaps something has delayed Old Qiao. He has a high level of martial arts and powerful weapons, so he shouldn't be in trouble."

Qiao Jing felt increasingly uneasy, "What if my grandfather didn't come back as agreed after he sent Min Rou away and instead has been secretly protecting her, and then..."

Qi Jun didn't speak. He also thought of this possibility. Qiao Cong was a sentimental person. Just based on the sentence "Su Liang trusts Min Rou", he would not leave Min Rou and return alone. This could be seen from his words and demeanor before they set off. However, he didn't say it at the time since they were in a hurry and everyone didn't think much of it. Moreover, protecting Min Rou was not a wrong thing to do, but it was somewhat risky.

Even Qiao Jing couldn't say that Qiao Cong should have left Min Rou and come back alone. This was the original plan, but it was not set by them. It was Su Liang who had decided. Su Liang said to "deliver to the location", not to find a place for Min Rou to send a signal and be done with it. Qiao Jing thought that his grandfather might be waiting for Mo Yan to really arrive before leaving, but if Mo Yan doesn't show up, Min Rou could be in danger...

Xing Ji took an hour to rest, first went to the city gate to check the progress of the city wall repairs and then came back, only to learn that Qiao Cong still hadn't returned. He was also very worried about his safety.

Qi Jun comforted Qiao Jing into drinking half a bowl of soup. When the rest of the soup had cooled down, he finally heard Qiao Cong's voice, "Jingjing!"

"Grandfather!" Qiao Jing quickly got up and rushed out, seeing Qiao Cong walking towards them in the morning light, followed by Min Rou.

Since leaving the capital, Min Rou had hardly rested. At this moment, her face was pale and exhausted, her forehead's damp strands of hair wet with dew. She glanced at Qiao Jing, then immediately looked away, her steps unsteady, as if her spirit was somewhat dazed.

"Be careful!" Qiao Jing saw Min Rou nearly falling and quickly stepped forward to support her.

"Ah, this girl has really reached her limit this time. Last night, she encountered danger and almost lost her life. Jingjing, hurry up and carry her inside," Qiao Cong said.

"No, no need..." Min Rou shook her head, wanting to push Qiao Jing away and stand up on her own but already lacking the strength. Last night, her heart was tightly wound, thinking that she was going to die, only to be saved by Qiao Cong. When she finally returned to Xuanbei City, a place that made her feel secure, she let out a sigh of relief. She still had consciousness, but her body had reached its limit. She had been pampered since childhood, and the recent ordeals had taken a toll on her body and emotions – something she hadn't experienced before.

When Qiao Jing heard Qiao Cong say to carry Min Rou inside, he thought she had been seriously injured and immediately bent down, picked her up horizontally, and took two steps to enter the meeting hall. He put her on the long table still covered with maps and said to Qi Jun, "Quick, call the army doctor!"

Min Rou looked at Qiao Jing, never having been so speechless in her life...

"I'm just tired, not injured," Min Rou explained. She propped herself up on her arm and sat up with difficulty, only to feel even more embarrassed, wanting to get down from the table right away.

As a result, she heard Qiao Jing say, "Then your body is just too weak."

Qiao Cong kicked Qiao Jing's butt, causing him to lean forward unexpectedly. Min Rou turned her face just in time, accidentally falling into Qiao Jing's embrace...

"Honestly! Find a place for Rou to rest!" Qiao Cong was speechless towards Qiao Jing. This boy, if he couldn't speak properly, should just keep quiet.

Qiao Jing looked at Qi Jun, "Is Ren Dong up?"

Qi Jun had been enjoying the show, but when he heard the question, his expression turned serious. He was about to speak when he caught Qiao Cong's suggestive gaze.

Although Qi Jun understood that Qiao Cong had good intentions in wanting to match Qiao Jing and Min Rou, he still thought it would be more convenient for Ren Dong to take care of Min Rou. In the very important time, the dawn was about to break, and Qiao Jing still had important things to do.

So, under the pressure from Qiao Cong, Qi Jun still went out and found Ren Dong.

After Ren Dong carried Min Rou to where she was staying, Qiao Jing asked Qiao Cong, "Grandfather, what happened last night?"

Qiao Cong sighed, "He Wei and a man named Sheng Yue were the ones who showed up. They're not good people. Fortunately, I didn't leave, or else that girl would have been killed last night."

"Isn't He Wei her grandfather?" Qiao Jing furrowed his brows.

Qiao Cong snorted, "Do you think all the grandfathers in the world are as good as me?"

Qiao Cong, Qi Jun: ... Didn't dare to speak.

After Qiao Cong quickly finished explaining what had happened, Qi Jun looked thoughtful, "Should we send someone to monitor Nanping City Lord Yi Fei? He might contact Mo Yan."

Qiao Cong's eyes narrowed. He immediately stood up, "I'll go right now! Although that girl said that those people would definitely run, maybe they haven't left yet!"

Qiao Jing caught up and said, "Let me go with Grandpa. By the way, I'll see what Liang Country has planned next. If I see them sending troops again today, I can still rush back in time."

By the time the grandfather and grandson left Xuanbei City, the sun had already risen.

Qiao Cong asked Qiao Jing, "What do you think of the Miss Min?"

Qiao Jing was stunned, "What do you mean?"

"Do you think she looks pretty?" Qiao Cong asked very directly.

Qiao Jing replied very directly, "She's not bad, but far worse than Su Liang."

Qiao Cong glared at Qiao Jing, "You little rascal, you're still thinking of Su Liang, huh?"

Qiao Jing looked innocent, "I don't know any other ladies. Oh, right, there's my sister and Ren Dong. Min Rou is not prettier than them, and she looks weak as well."

Qiao Cong was speechless at Qiao Jing, "Stop playing dumb!"

Qiao Jing coughed lightly, "I know what Grandpa is thinking." He had feelings for Su Liang and now saw Qi Jun and Ren Dong together every day. At this age, how could he not understand?

"So what's your point?" Qiao Cong asked.

Qiao Jing sighed, "Grandpa, it's not the time to think or talk about these things."

"You mean we're going too slowly?" Qiao Cong countered.

Qiao Jing shook his head, "No."

Qiao Cong humphed, "A person's brain can think of two things at the same time, and it won't kill you!"

Qiao Jing: ...

"I think that little girl had a terrible impression of you. She certainly won't like you," Qiao Cong tried to provoke Qiao Jing further.

Qiao Jing pretended not to understand and nodded directly, "I think so too."

Qiao Cong sighed, "Forget it, forget it, the main issue is more important."

However, when the grandfather and grandson arrived in Nanping City, they did not see Liang Country's troops again today. They sneaked into the military camp and saw from a distance that the troops had assembled, but they just stood there without moving.

Qiao Cong gestured, and he and Qiao Jing approached the residence of the main general. With their abilities, it was easy for them not to be discovered.

"What? There's no one there anymore? How is that possible?"

The shocked voice of Yi Fei entered Qiao Cong and Qiao Jing's ears. They knew it was too late, but coming earlier would have been useless as well. Yi Fei wouldn't dare to disturb Mo Yan in the middle of the night, and if Mo Yan had come to bid farewell to Yi Fei, he wouldn't be so shocked now. So even if they had watched last night, they would only confirm at this moment that Mo Yan had really left.

"General, there's really no one in that place, and the luggage is gone."

There was a moment of silence, followed by the sound of a chair moving on the ground, as if Yi Fei, shocked, had stood up and then sat back down, "Grain and fodder... is there any movement in the grain depot?"

"I've checked, and there's none, just like yesterday"

Yi Fei's voice began to fill with anger, "How could this be? That man must be a spy!"

Qiao Jing thought to himself, their grain storage must not be the same as yesterday, and the grain and fodder must be less than yesterday... Very good, it seemed that Mo Yan was not really helping Liang Country. Maybe he was just using Liang Country to deal with Qian Country, trying to gain power in the world. Seeing that the situation was not right, he abandoned Liang Country and left without caring for their life or death.

Qiao Cong grinned in silent laughter. As long as Mo Yan and his people were gone, he wouldn't have to worry about Qiao Jing being in danger every day. The remaining people of Liang Country were not to be feared at all.

Yi Fei said he would write a statement to be sent back to the capital urgently. Someone asked when he would send the troops, and he scolded them angrily, saying there would be no attack today.

The soldiers of Liang Country had mixed feelings. They finally managed to break the city gate of Qian Country's Xuanbei City, which was the best time for a decisive battle. However, Liang Country didn't dare to fight, which was very discouraging. Moreover, after yesterday's events, they began to worry that Qian Country, which had been on the defensive, might counterattack. It would

not be too difficult for Qian Country's army to blow up the city gate of Liang Country's Nanping City with explosives.

However, these were the thoughts of Liang Country's soldiers who were not aware of the true situation regarding their grain and fodder. Because since the beginning of the war, the grain and fodder depots had become forbidden areas, in the name of protection, but in fact, they did not want people to discover any abnormalities.

Half a month into the war, the supply of grain and fodder had been abundant, which had led the soldiers of Liang Country to believe that there was no need to worry about this aspect. The Royal Family must have resolved this issue in advance before sending them to attack Qian Country.

And Liang Country's army was still in the dark about the fact that Yin Country had not cooperated with Liang Country but had allied with Qian Country and thought that the southern border of Qian Country was also under a full-scale attack by Yin Country.

Qiao Cong and Qiao Jing quietly left Nanping City again.

"Let's just attack. Blow up their city gate first, and pay them back with their own methods!" Qiao Cong said coldly.

Qiao Jing shook his head, "Let's discuss it with Marquis first."

Xuanbei City.

After a day and night of repairs, the city wall was almost restored. The newly-built city wall was darker in color, and the old one was lighter, with a discernible boundary between them. The spare city gate was also reinstalled.

Once again sitting in the Meeting Hall, Qiao Jing reported to Xing Ji about the situation they learned in Nanping City. Everyone's brows and eyes relaxed, and it was basically certain that the crisis had been temporarily resolved.

The initiative was now on Qian Country's side: without the help of the mysterious force and the sufficient grain and fodder support for the upcoming battles, Liang Country's troops had no chance of winning, no matter how they fought. They had to choose between counterattacking or continuing to defend.

"I'll send a memo back to the capital to see what the Emperor decides," Xing Ji thought there was little point in continuing the fight and it would only increase casualties. Now that things had come to this point, perhaps they could seek to eliminate Liang Country in a more peaceful way.

Qiao Cong spoke up, "Well, since none of you want to continue fighting, shall I go and capture the main general of Liang Country? Let's see what tricks Situ Xie can still come up with!"

Xing Ji looked at Qiao Jing, who nodded, "I'll go with Grandpa. There's a 90% chance we can capture him." Qiao Cong had made too many trips and was now quite familiar with Liang Country's army. Moreover, with their combined efforts, capturing someone was not difficult. They had previously been wary of Mo Yan.

If it weren't for the involvement of the force from Xingluo Island, the war wouldn't have been waged like this. Liang Country did have grain and fodder; their soldiers needed to eat as well, but to support the war, they required more. Moreover, right before the war, Situ Xie ordered the original grain and fodder to be transferred and used those supplies from Mo Yan first. Mo Yan had given them only one warehouse at a time, holding back, and in the end, left with most of the remaining grain and fodder...

Yesterday was the most intense day of battle since the start of the war, but today was the first peaceful day.

That night, Qiao Cong and Qiao Jing sneaked into Nanping City again, stunned a few soldiers, and captured the main general, Yi Fei.

With this, Liang Country's army was no longer considering attacking and just hoped that Qian Country would not counterattack because their chances of winning were slim...

Qian Country's capital city.

Yue Mei admitted that Elder Bai was on Xingluo Island during her interrogation yesterday, as she dared not lie, or Su Liang would cut her flesh. However, whether what Yue Mei said was true was unverifiable for Su Liang and Gu Ling at the moment. When asked about other things about Xingluo Island, she insisted she did not know.

"Master and Min Rou should have some results by now. Let's wait for a few more days to see how the situation changes," Su Liang sighed faintly, "We may have to go to Xingluo Island sooner or later."