

## Three-Time 51

### Chapter 51: 051. Am I not?

[Am I not?]

Ning Jing, not waiting for Mu Fei to explain, rejected the request on Su Liang's behalf, "She can't help you."

Mu Fei's expression was unimpressed, "I was discussing the matter with Su Liang, not asking for your opinion."

Su Liang's expression was indifferent, "With Lord Mu's status, don't you have skilled people under your command? I truly cannot help, nor do I have the time."

But Mu Fei continued to speak on his own, "I am investigating iron mine smuggling and recently have acquired reliable clues. As long as I can find a certain account book, I will be able to find out who is involved. The account book is most likely in the hands of General Wu Yun, the elderly officer who guards the mine. He has been awarded numerous battle merits and requested to guard the mine due to his old age and illness. He has a reputation for being honest and upright."

"Wu Yun's other sons are all in the capital, only his youngest son Gai Huai'an stays with him. Years ago, Gai Huai'an was injured and crippled on the battlefield, and Wu Yun sought the help of famous physicians in vain."

"I want to send someone undercover to Gai Huai'an's residence, but I can't find a suitable candidate for now. If we startle the enemy and the account book is destroyed, all our efforts will be wasted."

Mu Fei stopped here.

Su Liang frowned, "You want me to approach the father and son with a doctor's identity and help you find the account book?"

Mu Fei nodded, "You are the most suitable candidate. All these years, only doctors have been able to enter that mansion and meet Gai Huai'an."

"But just entering is not enough, I also need to win their trust and ideally stay there. Is that what you mean?" Su Liang asked.

Mu Fei smiled, "I knew you were smart and would understand immediately."

"I understand, but I can't do it. You should find someone else who is more capable." Su Liang still refused.

Mu Fei's brow furrowed, "This matter is critical. If we can't catch them all at once, Qian Country will face a severe threat."

"This is a problem that Lord Mu needs to solve. I cannot bear such a heavy responsibility." Su Liang knew her limitations.

Mu Fei made it sound simple, but in reality, it was extremely difficult and risky.

If the seemingly loyal military commanders and their sons were involved, they must be extremely vigilant and have masters at their side.

Finding such an important account book easily would be a miracle.

“Su Liang, as long as you help me with this, no matter what you want, we can discuss it.” Mu Fei showed his sincerity.

“I’m powerless to help, Lord Mu, please leave.” Su Liang’s attitude was firm.

Without her help, Mu Fei would think of other ways on his own.

This was entirely different from when she and Ning Jing actively went to the county town to help catch thieves.

Even in the thief-catching case, Su Liang was criticized by Ning Jing for being reckless and taking chances, let alone this time, which was far more dangerous and significant.

When with Ning Jing, Su Liang’s self-perception was that she was an average martial artist. She was working hard to improve, but the road ahead was long.

“If you change your mind, I am always available.” Mu Fei left after leaving those words.

By the time he left Su Village, it was already late.

“Master, must I come back tomorrow to deliver the five thousand taels of silver notes?” Chang’an asked.

Mu Fei coldly snorted, “What five thousand taels?”

Chang’an hesitated, “Master, you didn’t pay for tonight’s meal.”

“When she comes to me, I will talk about it. If she doesn’t, I won’t give it.” Mu Fei, in his high position, hadn’t been treated so coldly before. His easygoing temperament was purpose-driven. Now that his plan had failed, he was very unhappy.

Ning Jing came out after cleaning up the kitchen and saw Su Liang opening the window, sorting out the books that Qi Yan had sent. She had a smiling expression with brows raised, loving the sight.

“Are these all medical books?” Ning Jing asked, standing outside the window. Su Liang nodded, “These are exactly what I need now.”

Ning Jing came in to help her sort them out and flipped through a few. They were ancient books from the previous dynasty, all unique.

These books were considered antiques like relics, and usually treasured by noble families as heirlooms. Ordinary people could never see them, and they were hard to find even if you had the money.

If Su Liang hadn’t cured the precious grandson of Old Lady Xing, she wouldn’t have been so generous.

This unique medical book was also a sign of friendship with Su Liang. Having witnessed her medical skills, there might be future use for her help.

“I need a bookshelf.” Su Liang stated.

Ning Jing agreed to make it and also ordered the dishes he wanted to eat the next day.

After taking out all the books, there was still an antique carved wooden box at the bottom of the crate.

Su Liang opened it, and inside was a set of gold needles for acupuncture, placed in a beautifully embroidered cloth pouch. It was obvious that it was a valuable antique at a glance.

Although Su Liang knew that the generous gifts from Old Lady Xing were not only out of gratitude but basically more comfortable than Mu Fei’s condescending attitude when asking how much it would take for Su Liang to be his cook.

Even if Mu Fei pretended to be easy to talk to, the arrogance of a superior was always present.

Such people could cooperate and make deals but not become friends.

Never get emotionally involved with members of the royal family—this was Su Liang’s understanding.

The next day, Su Liang continued to practice how to deal with a master using a whip.

Unlike swordsmanship training, Ning Jing didn’t teach her any predefined routines but let her explore and understand during battles, giving pointers occasionally.

Each time Su Liang felt she could handle it, Ning Jing would create new challenges for her.

Such training required extreme focus and was also a challenge to her physical strength.

However, gaining experience and progress through combat had high thresholds and high efficiency.

Approaching noon, Su Liang was about to cook when she heard a knock on the door.

She opened the door, and outside stood a kind-looking, white-haired old man. Not far away was a carriage.

“Excuse me, is this the home of Doctor Su Liang?” The old man asked.

Su Liang nodded, “I am.”

“My master would like to invite Doctor Su to come to the mansion and treat the young master’s leg illness.” The old man was very polite.

Su Liang suddenly remembered what Mu Fei mentioned last night about the Wu Family father and son. She didn’t ask further, only said she would not visit patients.

“My young master is ill and can’t come here. I ask for Dr. Su to make an exception, and the consultation fee is negotiable,” said the old man with an apologetic smile.

“Sorry, I’m just a weak woman who doesn’t go to strangers’ houses. Please find someone else,” Su Liang said and began to close the door.

The old man quickly stepped forward, "My master is the old General Gai Yun. Dr. Su might have heard of him. There is absolutely no need to worry about safety."

"My medical skills are limited, only enough to treat headaches and fever for the villagers. I can't cure the son of General Gai Yun," Su Liang closed the door right after.

The old man had no choice, said a few more words, realized that no one answered, then left.

"Do you think it's the Wu Family father and son who heard about me in the Su village and sent someone to ask for help, or is there an ulterior motive? Mu Fei mentioned them just last night, and someone from the Wu Family came today. Is it just a coincidence?" Su Liang asked contemplatively.

Ning Jing simply said, "Don't get involved."

When the food was ready, Qi Yan arrived. He had traveled day and night to get here and had not rested much, so he woke up late.

"How is your master?" Su Liang asked.

Qi Yan sighed, "The prince sent someone to bring Old Madam back to the Prince Mansion. Only the crown prince went to the capital under the imperial decree and stayed at Qin Mansion. Old Qin really loves his grandson. The sons and daughters of the Qin family are also nice, but after all, he is living under someone else's roof, and we don't know what the emperor plans."

"Didn't they say that they were selecting a husband for the Sixth Princess?" Su Liang asked.

Qi Yan shook his head, "The Sixth Princess is quite favored, and it's unlikely that she would marry my master. I heard that she admires General Nian, who is the second son of the Nian Mansion, called Nian Jincheng."

Su Liang had actually met him before.

On the night when she crossed over, Nian Jincheng chased after the rebels and came here, said some inexplicable words, and gave her a jade hairpin.

Thinking of Nian Jincheng's appearance, Su Liang felt it was normal for him to be favored by the princess.

"Is he in good health?" Su Liang asked.

Qi Yan stared blankly, "Nian Jincheng is a military commander, of course, he is in good health!"

Su Liang shook her head with a smile, "I'm talking about Xing's crown prince."

"Oh! My master has always followed the prescription given by Miss Su. His health has improved a lot, but he didn't let others know," Qi Yan said.

"That's good," Su Liang nodded.

After dinner, Qi Yan told Su Liang about her past that he had investigated in the capital. This was the main purpose of Qi Yan's trip since Su Liang said she had lost her memory.

“Your great-grandfather Su Yuanzhou has three sons. You are the only daughter of the youngest son. Your father, Su Hongzhao, was originally a scholar and had passed the provincial exam but didn’t become an official for some reason. He partnered with someone to do business in medicinal materials, traveling around.”

“It was said that your mother was a lonely girl your father met outside, whose family and name were unknown. The two got married and gave birth to you. On the way for your father to bring your mother and you back to the capital, he unfortunately encountered bandits. Both your parents died. You were hidden under your mother’s body and luckily survived. You were rescued by the government and brought back by your great-grandfather to the capital city to be raised.”

“Since you were weak and sickly, you rarely went out, and many people didn’t even know that the Su family had a young lady like you. After the Su family had an accident, how you left the capital city and came to Bei’an County is still a mystery.”

Su Liang thought of the handkerchief with the character “Yun” and asked Qi Yan, “Among the people related to the Su family, is there a man with the surname ‘Yun’ or a name containing the ‘Yun’ character?” Qi Yan frowned, “Miss Su, I can’t think of such a person right now.” Su Liang smiled, “It doesn’t matter.”

So far, this was all they could find about the original master.

Although she was called a young lady, in fact, she was just a common girl in the capital who did not go out. Outsiders knew almost nothing about her, and her family who knew her were no longer alive.

“My master said that when the Su family had an accident, it must have been a set-up. If Miss Su needs help, my master can help investigate clues in the capital, collect evidence, and help Miss Su clear the grievances of her family,” Qi Yan said.

Su Liang shook her head, “Thank you for Xing’s crown prince’s kindness, but I don’t want to bother him with this.”

She knew Xing Yusheng was sincere in helping, but his situation was not good, and Su Liang didn’t want to cause him trouble.

For this matter, she intended to cooperate with the Fourth Prince, Duanmu Chen. At that time, she would find out the truth and take revenge for the original master’s family.

“I haven’t congratulated Ning on being the top scorer. There should be no problem with the upcoming provincial exam. Ning will go to the capital city for the exam next year. Will Miss Su go, too?” Qi Yan asked.

Su Liang nodded, “I will.”

“That’s great! My master is bored in the capital city. If both of you go, he will be delighted,” Qi Yan said and asked how Su Liang and Ning Jing became siblings.

Su Liang told him the truth that it was just a fake marriage.

Qi Yan was very happy, "I will tell my master when I return to the capital!" With bright eyes, he said, "Why not Miss Su go back to the capital with me? Anyway, Ning's exam has nothing to do with Miss Su! When we arrive in the capital, my master will take care of everything and no one will bully you!"

Ning Jing put down the teacup in his hand and indifferently said, "You should leave."

Su Liang smiled softly, "I'm not going to the capital for now. You have some tea, and I'll write a letter to your master. Can you help me deliver it?"

Hearing the first part, Qi Yan looked disappointed, but after hearing the latter part, he quickly nodded, "Okay! Don't hurry, Miss Su, take your time to write!" After saying this, he gave Ning Jing a provocative glance.

Su Liang went back to her room to write the letter. Her handwriting was similar to Ning Jing's, as she had been practicing the second font style by copying the Buddhist scriptures Ning Jing had been copying recently.

In the letter, she thanked Old Lady Xing for the gifts and Xing Yusheng for the messages that Qi Yan brought. She wrote that she and Ning Jing might go to the capital after the New Year, and she would investigate the Su family's affairs herself without troubling Xing Yusheng.

Su Liang handed the letter to Qi Yan and also gave him some steamed buns and dessert as dried food for his journey.

"Are you sure Miss Su doesn't want to go back to the capital with me?" Qi Yan asked again.

"You should go now, take care on your way," Su Liang waved her hand.

Watching Qi Yan leave, Su Liang closed the door and went back to her room, planning to flip through the medical books and decide on the reading order. Ning Jing from the next room asked, "What did you write in the letter to Xing

Yusheng?"

"Nothing much," Su Liang answered casually.

"Don't let him misunderstand that you can be pursued," Ning Jing said. Su Liang was speechless, "Am I not?"

"Do you want to be pursued by Xing Yusheng?" Ning Jing asked back.

Su Liang shook her head, "I don't want that. I wrote the letter to him because I was afraid that Qi Yan would talk nonsense and let him misunderstand something."

"That's good," Ning Jing said..

Chapter 52: 052. Su Liang Disappears

[Su Liang is Missing]

In the afternoon, Lady Bai came to visit.

“Just finished these new shoes, why don’t you try them?” When Lady Bai saw Su Liang wearing the shoes she had made, she beamed with joy.

The shoes were specifically made by Lady Bai for Su Liang. Su Liang did not know how, and did not have the time to make them. The ornamental shoes she’d bought were just not suitable for martial arts training.

Su Liang tried on the new shoes and they were the perfect fit.

Ning Jing took the pair made for him and tried them on in his room and agreed that they were a perfect fit.

“It’s getting colder, do you want to have a few more pairs of cotton shoes? You’ll be travelling to the provincial city soon, right? It’s even colder there!” Lady Bai asked.

Smiling, Su Liang nodded, “If you could find the time to make them, that would be wonderful. I have some materials that friends have given to me, perhaps they could be used.”

Saying this, Su Liang took out the fabric that Xing Yusheng had gifted to her. Seeing the material, Lady Bai said it must’ve been expensive.

They settled on ordering two pairs of cotton shoes each for Su Liang and Ning Jing. Lady Bai said she would go to the market the next day and check out the most fashionable styles in town to imitate for their shoes.

Regarding the price, Su Liang was always generous but within limits, she and Lady Bai had an understanding about this.

After settling the shoe order, Lady Bai brought up the family of Niupo.

After the incident, Su Xingzhe’s second brother took his “body” from the government office and buried him hastily.

The villagers thought that Niupo must’ve gone insane due to the shock of the event, there were signs before. But surprisingly, these past few days she acted normal, even more kindly than before. It was strange.

“Don’t mention her,” Lady Bai sighed, “My second son is still fixated on Liu Huilan, my eldest son also persuaded me. We’ve discussed a few marriage possibilities for the second son, but they’ve all been unfavorable. Though, the idea of him marrying a widow, and that too, the daughter-in-law driven out by Niupo, just doesn’t sit right with me.”

Su Liang simply laughed and said, “I don’t understand such matters, it must be about fate, I think.’

“Right, you’re still young, you will only come of age at the end of the year, right? By then, you probably won’t be in the village anymore. Young Master Ning is a great person, you two...” Lady Bai checked herself, lightly hitting her mouth, “Look at me, I talk too much.

"I'm glad you think so, Lady Bai." Su Liang smiled sweetly.

Lady Bai looked at her pale, delicate face with its exquisite eyes, nose, and lips. She couldn't help but compliment, "It hasn't been more than a month and you've grown so much, becoming even more beautiful."

Su Liang pinched her own face, "Maybe it's because I used to be so skinny, I've recently gained some weight?"

"Gained weight? You're still very slim." Lady Bai laughed.

After Lady Bai had left with some materials, Ning Jing mentioned he needed to visit Erniu's house. He had a question for Erniu's grandfather, Su Dakuan, his woodworking master.

Also, Ning Jing had earlier purchased an extra set of woodworking tools from the town to gift to Su Dakuan as a token of his appreciation.

"I'll come as well, to check on Grandpa Dakuan's health," Su Liang said as she changed into a coat before exiting.

Just as they crossed the bridge, they ran into Niupo and her daughter-in-law, both carrying bundles of firewood back home.

Spotting Su Liang, Niupo stopped, contorted her mouth into a smile that was uglier than a cry, and croaked, "Miss Liang."

Su Liang nodded, and Niupo's daughter-in-law pulled her away.

Watching their retreating figures, Su Liang looked uneasy. "Something feels wrong," she muttered.

Then, she heard Ning Jing recite a familiar saying. "She has a darkening forehead," he announced.

Su Liang frowned. "Is she plotting a murder?"

Though many held a grudge against Niupo, none would go as far as to plan her death. She wouldn't kill herself either. Otherwise, she would have done it long ago.

On the way to Erniu's house, Su Liang kept pondering. If Niupo were planning to kill someone, who would it be? It could very well be her and Ning Jing. Niupo blamed Ning Jing for Su Xingzhe's accident.

"Here we go again." Su Liang sighed.

"Sister Su Liang! Big Brother Ning!" Seeing them, Erniu dropped his axe and rushed to get small stools for them.

Su Dakuan emerged from his hut. A laugh spread across his aged face. "Miss Liang is here."

"Grandpa Dakuan, you look much better. Are you still unwell anywhere?" Su Liang asked.

Leaning against the hut wall, Su Dakuan sat and shook his head, "I'm all good now, there's no discomfort. I'll be able to get back to work in a few more days."



Su Liang checked Su Dakuan's pulse and advised him to rest for another half month and to avoid overworking himself.

"What's this?" Erniu seemed interested in the items Ning Jing had.

"That's a gift for Grandpa Dakuan from Ning Jing. He can use it when working with wood," Su Liang explained with a smile, "Please don't refuse. Ning Jing learnt his skills from Dakuan; these are his token of gratitude. Moreover, the debts owed to you will be written off with this."

Su Dakuan immediately dismissed the offer. "How can that be? A debt must be repaid! I didn't teach Young Master Ning much, it's all thanks to his own intelligence."

"Even though he was smart, he was still a beginner. Grandpa Dakuan taught him the fundamentals." Su Liang insisted. "Does anyone learn a skill without paying for it?"

"I know, you are doing this because..." Su Dakuan's eyes were moist.

During the days he was sick, Su Liang had treated his illness and bought his medicine, and Ning Jing had delivered the food and vegetables for his home. There were quite a few left now, enough for him and his grandchild to last through the winter.

"Don't think too much, once you are well, life will get better." Su Liang said.

After Ning Jing learnt a method of mortise and tenon jointing from Su Dakuan, they bid farewell.

After dinner, Su Liang asked Ning Jing what should be done about Old Woman Niu, who was suspected of attempted murder. If it wasn't investigated thoroughly, there would be deaths.

"I'll take a look." Ning Jing said.

"That's good. I guess she may not be able to sleep at night, she might even talk to herself." Su Liang said.

Su Liang planned to go back to her room to read the medical book that Madam Xing had given her. Time was precious, and she had a lot of things to learn, otherwise, she would have gone out with Ning Jing.

Ning Jing cleared the bowls and dishes, heated up some water, changed into dark-colored clothes, and quietly left the house.

Su Liang had arranged the medical books in order, picked out the first one, and began to read attentively at the table.

Immersed in the book, she didn't notice how long it had been when she heard a slight movement in the backyard, assuming it was Ning Jing returning, she didn't pay attention.

After a while, the movement stopped, and Su Liang sensed something was wrong. As she was about to stand up, she felt dizzy and realized something was not right!

Just as she pulled out the dagger hidden in her sleeve, Su Liang's legs gave way, and she fell to the ground. Before she passed out, she saw a figure walking towards her...

When Ning Jing returned home, he saw that Su Liang's room was exactly as when he had left it, with the light on and the door closed.

"Old Woman Niu bought some rat poison, planned to kill Liu Huilan and her family. She blames Liu Huilan for both of her sons' death, she must get rid of this bringer of bad luck."

Ning Jing finished explaining outside the door, but Su Liang did not respond, he furrowed his brow slightly, "Su Liang?"

Still, no one answered. Ning Jing's eyes narrowed, he forcefully pushed open Su Liang's room's door!

On the table, there was an opened medical book, there was no sign of struggle in the room.

The martial arts schedule that Ning Jing made for Su Liang was posted on the wall. The vase on the windowsill was a gift from Xing Yusheng, containing golden yellow wild chrysanthemums that Zhuzi brought to Su Liang yesterday.

The medicine chest was also in Su Liang's room.

The fragrance of wild chrysanthemums and various medicinal herbs intertwined.

Ning Jing did not smell any aphrodisiac incense, but he opened all the doors and windows. Su Liang could not have left without a reason, it would not be easy to take her away unless poison was used. The original smell in the room and Su Liang's focus on reading would have made her unprepared for a calculated drugging.

Ning Jing checked the backyard and found a footprint, clearly a man's.

Under the cold moonlight, Ning Jing held the medical book Su Liang had just read, closed his eyes and stood under the eaves, pondering who would harm Su Liang.

He did not see the black fog appearing on Su Liang's forehead, indicating that she was not in danger of life for at least three days.

Mai Fei? He is a clever man, he wants to cooperate with Su Liang, he wouldn't adopt this method.

Could it be a prank from Yan Shiba? Ning Jing believed that solving the trouble of Yanyun Building was not that easy for her.

Ning Jing recalled that during the day, Gai Yun had sent someone to invite Su Liang to treat Gai Huai'an, but Su Liang refused on the grounds that she was not making home visits...

Ning Jing returned to his room, came out quickly, and was about to leave from the backyard when he heard a knock on the door.

"Miss Su? Master Ning? This is Chang'an."

It was the middle of the night and Chang'an was sent by Mai Fei, he felt that he might be beaten.

Ning Jing opened the door faster than Chang'an expected, his face was backlit, and Chang'an couldn't see clearly, but felt an unexplainable chill running down his spine.

“Master Ning, the thing is, my master has something important and asked me to find Miss Su. Is she asleep?” Chang’an hurriedly explained.

“She’s asleep, tell me.” Ning Jing’s voice was cold.

Although Mai Fei had instructed him to speak to Su Liang in person, Chang’an felt that if he didn’t tell Ning Jing, he wouldn’t be allowed in at all, so he stated his purpose, “It’s about the matter master brought up yesterday. Today, while investigating, the master discovered a series of unsolved cases relating to the disappearance of several young women in Bei’an County over the past three years. The incidences were quite regular, one every half a year, but no clues were ever found. This strange phenomenon started after Gai Yun and his son

Gai Huai’an arrived in Bei’an County.”

Ning Jing remained silent, so Chang’an continued, “There was a precedent. After Gai Huai’an was injured on the battlefield, there was widespread speculation in the capital that it was not just his two legs that were injured. Shortly after his fiancée called off their marriage, she suddenly disappeared, and then he followed Gai Yun to Bei’an County to oversee the mine. The master suspects that the disappearances of the young girls are related to the father and son.”

“However, without any evidence, we can’t act rashly. The master hopes that Miss Su will reconsider the proposal made before. This not only concerns the iron mine smuggling case, it may also be related to the disappearance of young women in Bei’an County in recent years.” Chang’an’s expression was serious.

“Hmm.” Ning Jing replied, then closed the door.

Chang’an looked at the closed door with confusion, “Master Ning, please be sure to tell Miss Su! This is a significant matter, you can’t make the decision for her!”

There was no response from inside, Chang’an sighed repeatedly, and could only leave.

Ning Jing went to Su Liang’s room, found the iron hammer and awl that Yan Shiba had given her, and held them in his hand, muttering under his breath,

“Gai Huai’an....”

Chapter 53: 053. Ugly Disability

[Ugly Cripple]

When Su Liang regained consciousness, she found herself in a strange room. Instead of immediately observing her surroundings, she lowered her eyes and pondered who had attacked her.

First, she ruled out Mai Fei. It wasn’t his style, and their true collaboration wasn’t in Bei’an County.

Yan Shiba’s prank? Su Liang thought the eccentric assassin was capable of such a thing, but not at this time.

It wouldn’t be the assassin hired by the Ning Family of Xunyang, otherwise she would be dead.

“You’re awake?”

A gentle male voice came from not far away, and Su Liang, lying on an imperial concubine couch, slowly raised her head to look over.

It was a man in his twenties sitting in a wheelchair, with long unkempt hair, thin and pale complexion, his eyes revealing helplessness and guilt.

This reminded Su Liang of Xing Yusheng, who was also suffering from a serious illness and confined to a wheelchair when they first met.

At that time, Yusheng still had an air of nobility despite his vulnerability.

In contrast, the man before Su Liang projected an aura of despondency and dejection in addition to his frailty.

She had guessed his identity.

“My name is Gai Huai’an. You may have heard of me. My father told me that you grew up in the capital city.” Gai Huai’an sighed deeply, “I apologize for bringing you here in such a rude manner. It was not my intention.”

Su Liang observed the room secretly.

It was a study room filled with books on the shelves and scrolls hanging on the walls, exuding an aroma of ink.

Gai Huai’an, dressed in white, had a few ink stains on his chest, his demeanor gentle.

Seeing Su Liang’s alert gaze, Gai Huai’an showed a wistful expression, “In those years, I was full of passion, following my father into the battlefield, but I was seriously injured. My father blamed himself for not protecting me properly and has never given up seeking medical treatment for me. When he learned that you were in Su Village, he sent someone to fetch you. If I had known beforehand that he would do this, I would have tried to stop him no matter what.”

It was only then that Su Liang spoke, her face solemn, “So can I leave now?”

Gai Huai’an shook his head with a bitter smile, “I really want to let you go, but all things can be discussed except for treating my illness. My father has become obsessed with it.”

“If I am unable to cure you, I will not be allowed to leave?” Su Liang’s face was tinged with anger, “I didn’t expect the famously upright veteran General Gai to be such an unreasonable bully!”

“Miss Su, you have every right to be angry. But my father has done all this for me, and I don’t want to argue with him any further. At this point, I hope you can calm down.” Gai Huai’an said and looked in the direction of the door, lowering his voice, “For now, just pretend to agree to treat me. I will find the right time to help you escape.”

“Really? Don’t lie to me.” Su Liang’s eyes were suspicious.

Gai Huai’an showed a pale smile, “Don’t worry, I won’t let you come to any harm.”

Su Liang saw that it was bright outside and asked Gai Huai'an; she was caught the night before and arrived here at dawn. "Is this place close to the mine?" Su Liang asked.

Gai Huai'an nodded, "Not far."

He called the servant to bring water and food, as well as a set of new clothes.

Su Liang freshened up, ate a little, and was led by the servant into a garden.

Surrounded by undulating artificial mountains, precious chrysanthemums blossomed in clusters, dazzling under the bleak autumn wind.

Gai Huai'an played the ancient strings in the pavilion, and when the melody ended, he looked at Su Liang.

"I don't understand music, but Master Gaits playing is very pleasant." Su Liang praised.

"I only learned to play after coming here, just to pass the time. It's the first time someone has praised my playing." Gai Huai'an said, pouring a cup of warm tea for Su Liang.

Su Liang suggested checking Gai Huai'an's pulse to see what was wrong with his legs.

However, refused, "Over the years, all the famous doctors that my father could find have seen me, including Ghost Doctor. All were powerless. It's not that I don't trust Miss Su's medical skills, but I've already accepted my fate. It's just my father who can't face reality."

Su Liang sighed lightly, "In fact, you don't need to believe in my medical skills. I said I wanted to see, just out of curiosity. As for actually treating you, I really can't."

Gai Huai'an chuckled, "Miss Su, you're too modest. Your medical skills are quite remarkable for someone so young. Although I shouldn't have asked you to come here, I'm truly delighted to have met you today. I can no longer remember the friends I had before the injury."

"I only have one friend, Ning Jing. Although I call her a friend, it's just my unilateral wishful thinking." Su Liang said self-deprecatingly.

"Oh?" Gai Huai'an looked surprised. "I have heard some of Miss Su's experiences, and it hasn't been easy for you. You and Master Ning..."

Su Liang's expression was sad, "He saved me from my wolfish relatives, and since he was so good-looking, I naturally fell in love with him and wanted our relationship to become real, as husband and wife. Unfortunately, he doesn't care for me and insists on clarifying our relationship, treating me as a sister."

"So that's how it is." Gai Huai'an frowned, "A coerced melon is not sweet. Since Master Ning has no intention of pursuing a relationship, Miss Su doesn't have to be so persistent. You are beautiful, skilled in medicine, and kind-hearted. If Ning Jing doesn't appreciate your goodness, someone else will."

“Mr. Wu, you don’t have to comfort me. Now I am nothing more than a lowly village girl, with my shallow medical skills, I may not even be able to support myself without Ning Jing. Ning Jing wants to take the imperial examination, and after achieving success in the examination, he will return to his family to claim everything that belongs to him. Then he will be able to marry a high-born lady. I can’t help him, and I am a burden. If he hadn’t needed to hide in Su Village for a while, he would have left already.” Su Liang’s eyes were full of bitter laughter, “If I were gone, he would probably feel relieved!”

“In that case, Miss Su, you don’t need to linger on him. I heard that he has made friends with Crown Prince Bei Jingwang and the newly-arrived County Magistrate Mai Fei. He must be a man of great ambitions.” Gai Huai’an said earnestly, “If Miss Su needs a place to stay, I am more than willing to help you if you don’t mind.”

Su Liang looked at Gai Huai’an in surprise, “You mean...”

Gai Huai’an smiled gently, “Perhaps Miss Su might find it presumptuous, but I’m speaking from the heart. I don’t know why, but I feel like I’ve known you for a long time, even though we just met today. I have no friends, and you’re alone too. If you’re willing to stay, you’re more than welcome.” Su Liang lowered her eyes again, “Your father probably won’t agree.”

“I’ll persuade my father to agree, and he’d be happy to see me have some company.” Gai Huai’an said, “Will you really stay here?”

“Even if I go back, after a few days, Ning Jing will leave for the provincial city to take the exam, and he will leave me behind. He has already made it clear to me that no matter how much I beg him, he will not change his mind to take me with him.” Su Liang’s face was bitter, “I am a helpless girl, who knows a few self-defense tricks. It is inevitable that I will be humiliated alone. If I can have

Mr. Wu protect me, it couldn’t be better. But if I stay, what would that be?”

Gai Huai’an’s face lit up, but before he could say anything, Gai Yun arrived.

Su Liang squinted her eyes, and Gai Yun, who was striding over, turned into a dark shadow in her field of vision, much like the one she had seen before passing out...

Gai Huai’an is Gai Yun’s youngest son. Gai Yun is nearly sixty years old, with gray hair and kind eyes.

“Miss Su, do you have any way to treat my son’s leg?” Gai Yun looked at Su Liang, without any apology in his words. Although it was a question, his tone was quite firm.

Gai Huai’an held his forehead, “Father, I haven’t asked Miss Su to see me yet. I feel a little dizzy and want to go back to my room to rest.”

Gai Yun stepped forward and pushed Gai Huai’an’s wheelchair out of the pavilion, “It’s getting cold, you shouldn’t be out here in the cold wind. Let me take you back.”

Gai Huai'an secretly waved back to Su Liang in the pavilion as if to say goodbye.

Su Liang looked at the ancient strings in front of her, her eyes fixed on the thin strings, and then looked outside the pavilion, making sure there was no one around.

She casually pushed the teacup that Gai Huai'an had used with her elbow, squatted down to pick up the broken porcelain pieces, and secretly hid a piece of shattered porcelain in her sleeve.

As the wind blew, Su Liang cut a string from the Ancient Strings and hid it in her palm while picking up the dark red silk cover next to her and covering the musical instrument.

Two consecutive sounds from the strings seemed like she had accidentally touched them.

A young maid with an oval-shaped face appeared not far away, smiling, "The young master said that Miss Su can walk around the garden at will. After talking with the master, he will invite Miss Su over."

Su Liang nodded and left the pavilion to look at the chrysanthemums next to the artificial hill. The maid bent over in a curtsy and turned to leave.

"How is it?" Gai Yun poured a cup of hot tea for Gai Huai'an and sat down beside him.

Gai Huai'an snorted lightly, "As we expected, Ning Jing is the one who made friends with Xing Yu Sheng and Duanmu Chen. Su Liang, like those women before, started fantasizing as soon as I beckoned. They all thought I was smitten with them."

Gai Yun pondered, "Will Ning Jing and Duanmu Chen guess that she's here?"

"What if they do? Duanmu Chen won't do anything for such an insignificant woman."

Gai Huai'an sneered, "As for Ning Jing, he's intent on climbing the ladder. How can he possibly care about a little village girl? If they really care and come looking for her, wouldn't it be even more interesting? Anyway, she's in our hands, and she won't be able to escape even if she had wings."

"Duanmu Chen is already suspicious of me, be careful not to be caught by him," Gai Yun said.

Gai Huai'an nodded, "Father, don't worry too much. He won't act rashly without evidence."

"What about that Su Liang..." Gai Yun asked.

A wicked smile appeared on Gai Huai'an's face, "Judging by her words and actions, she's simply brainless. She just wants to find a backer to live a stable and luxurious life, and even wants me to promise her my name? How ridiculous. Father brought her here not because of her medical skills, but to find me a good-looking new plaything, even after having someone test her to see if she's Duanmu Chen's person. I've grown tired of the last woman, and Su Liang looks pretty good. I'll take her to the secret chamber tonight." Gai Yun stood up, "Don't go too far and take care of your health."

"Father, rest assured, I know my limits." Gai Huai'an licked the corner of his lips, his face full of anticipation."

After Gai Yun left, Gai Huai'an asked the servant to bring Su Liang over.

As soon as Su Liang entered, Gai Huai'an asked her what she liked to eat and asked someone to prepare it."

"Mr. Wu, what did your father say?" Su Liang asked anxiously.

Gai Huai'an waved for the servants to leave, and he reached out to her with a tender smile, "Come."

Su Liang lowered her head and walked slowly towards him. From Gai Huai'an's perspective, she looked timid and graceful. His throat moved, and his eyes darkened a little.

When Su Liang approached him, Gai Huai'an attempted to grab her hand with a smile, "My father is very happy that I have met a girl I like. I think this must be our fate..."

Just as        was about to touch Su Liang, she suddenly dodged and went behind him.

"I didn't expect Liang sister to be so..." Gai Huai'an's eyes were filled with interest, but the next moment, he felt a cold, thin thread hook around his neck and tighten abruptly!

The ends of the string were wrapped around Su Liang's fingers, which were turning white from the pressure. Her eyes were icy, and her voice even colder, "Mr.. Wu, who gave you the confidence to think that I would be interested in an ugly cripple like you?"

Chapter 54: 054. Pretending to be a pig to eat a tiger

[The Pretender]

Comparing with Ning Jing, Wu Huai'an is ugly.

Objectively speaking, he is not ugly, but his deliberately disguised gentleness and sophistication come off as pretentious to Su Liang, who had lived two lifetimes.

Actually, Wu Huai'an performs well, but from beginning to end, his identity and actions seem inconsistent in Su Liang's eyes.

Mu Fei had already grasped the exact clues about Wu Yun's involvement in the iron mine smuggling case, casting a heavy suspicion of treacherous profiteering on the loyal veteran.

After Su Liang was kidnapped by Wu Yun, she believed more in Mu Fei's judgment. Wu Yun is far from righteous. It is shameless to hurt others just because he's worried about his son.

Moreover, Su Liang could tell from Wu Huai'an's words that even he knew Ning

Jing had contact with Mu Fei. It is obvious that while Mu Fei was investigating Wu's father and son, they were also keeping an eye on him, so they must know that Mu Fei knew Su Liang.

After waking up, Su Liang, who was taken secretly as a hostage, had the clearest understanding of her situation: Wu Yun, who captured her, couldn't possibly let her leave alive and contact outsiders, especially Mu Fei.



“The old general Wu kidnaps a young girl in the middle of the night.” If this gets out, it would greatly hinder Wu Yun’s good reputation in Qian Country, and Mu Fei could even seize the opportunity to blackmail him.

After all, if Ning Jing could recognize the fourth prince, how could Wu Yun not know Mu Fei’s true identity?

The more hypocritical a person appears, the more they care about their reputation. Once they have done something despicable, they try hard to conceal it.

In short, Su Liang was a “hostage” who saw the true face of the “kidnapper,” and the chance of being “torn apart” was very high.

Su Liang never thought that she was invited because of her medical skills. Wu Huai’an’s claim that Wu Yun “invited” Su Liang to treat him didn’t make sense.

Considering Wu Huai’an’s identity and his experience of being injured on the battlefield, imperial physicians could be invited at any time. Why would he go for a young doctor like Su Liang? While she treated people in the village for minor illnesses, she didn’t have a remarkable reputation.

It would be fine if they had properly invited her. But kidnapping her after being rejected was unreasonable. They behaved as if only Su Liang could heal Wu Huai’an, when there was no logic in that.

From the moment she opened her eyes, Su Liang had been acting foolishly, going along with Wu Huai’an’s pretense and crafting an image of a vain country girl for herself.

Su Liang was deceiving Wu Huai’an while Wu Huai’an was trying to seduce the beautiful village girl he had captured.

Su Liang was pretending because she knew Wu Huai’an was pretending too.

A rumor spread that a noble son from a military family who went into battle and killed at a young age but was disabled by an injury and spent his days with his elderly father could be lonely, kind and gentle. But it was hard to believe that he fell in love at first sight with a shallow, vain country girl!

Wu Huai’an tried to create an image of an injured, literary young man who liked music and was always gentle and calm. However, if he were truly so cultured, he wouldn’t be interested in Su Liang. He wouldn’t be making ambiguous comments like “I feel like I’ve known you for a long time,” trying to lure Su Liang to stay with him, calling her “Sister Liang,” and wanting to hold her hand.

This was not the behaviour of a refined, polite young nobleman; this was the behaviour of a lecher, and one trying to play the part of a romantic at that.

Su Liang didn’t believe that Wu Huai’an could be ignorant of all of Wu Yun’s actions. If Wu Yun was evil, Wu Huai’an was like a white lotus flower.

Su Liang knew where Wu Huai’an’s confidence came from: his identity, his disguised image, the lowly background of his target, shallow insights, and the desire for wealth and honor.

Therefore, if the person captured today were not Su Liang, but a simple-minded girl with no experience outside of the small place she grew up, the chances of being deceived by Wu Huai'an would be high.

This was why Su Liang's deception didn't evoke any suspicion from Wu Huai'an. Her performance was reasonable.

At this moment, Su Liang even began to suspect that she had been captured simply because Wu Huai'an wanted to play with a woman...

After a brief panic, Wu Huai'an calmed down, looking hurt. "Sister Liang, what are you doing? I know my father was wrong to kidnap you, but I have no ill intentions toward you. I thought you understood me."

Su Liang sneered, "I know. But you're too ugly, and after meeting you, I can't let go of the handsome man at home. Now, you should send me away."

"Sister Liang, you..." Wu Huai'an's eyes became dark and his voice deep, as if he had suffered a severe blow.

"Enough talk! Let's go!" Su Liang said as she controlled the string around Wu Huai'an's neck and yanked him from his wheelchair!

It was rumored that both of Wu Huai'an's legs were crippled, but only one was truly disabled. He instinctively stood on one leg, so Su Liang didn't need to exert too much force.

Wu Huai'an, whose neck might be cut at any moment, was controlled by Su Liang as they left the room. The little maid who came to deliver tea screamed and shouted, "Help!"

"You won't get out like this." Wu Huai'an said in a low voice.

Su Liang retorted, "Didn't you say your father meant no harm? Righteous General Wu, how could he hurt me?"

Wu Huai'an's face stiffened, "Su Liang, I advise you not to take risks. It won't do you any good."

"Why not tell me what you were planning to do with me?" Su Liang asked again. Wu Huai'an remained silent, suddenly feeling Su Liang twist his wrist and snap

He screamed in pain, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead. In an instant, his other hand had also been twisted and broken by Su Liang.

Meanwhile, Wu Huai'an had intended to grab the hidden weapon he had concealed on his body. Now with both hands twisted and hanging limp, he could do nothing.

By this point, Wu Huai'an finally realized that he had underestimated Su Liang, and it was a huge mistake.

He thought this was his turf, and his game to control, but he never expected that this time he caught not a plaything, but a fierce character pretending to be weak.

Su Liang, holding                      hostage, did not walk fast.

Gai Yun appeared in front of them, his face gloomy, “Release my son, and I’ll spare your life!”

Su Liang remained indifferent, “My life and death are none of your concern. Be careful, my hand is not steady, but my grip is strong. If any of you dare to make a reckless move and startle me, I can’t guarantee that Gai Huai’an’s neck won’t be slashed with a big hole!”

Gai Yun glanced at Gai Huai’an’s hand and gritted his teeth, “If anything happens to my son, I’ll tear you to pieces! Everyone, step aside and let her go!”

Su Liang pushed Gai Huai’an forward, and Gai Yun slowly retreated, his aged eyes fixed on her as if trying to bore a bloody hole in her body.

Su Liang had fought on the streets before, so she did not pretend to be fragile and vulnerable. She even actively told Gai Huai’an that she knew some basic martial arts.

She admitted to knowing martial arts but did not confess her full extent.

Su Liang did everything she could to lower Gai Huai’an’s guard, which gave her the opportunity to turn the situation around.

Even at this moment, Gai Yun and his son still had no idea of Su Liang’s real strength. She wasn’t afraid of a real fight.

She believed that Gai father and son would not let her leave alive, but she was sure that her life wasn’t in danger for at least three days, otherwise Ning Jing would have figured it out.

But being temporarily safe does not mean being completely out of danger.

When she suspected Gai Huai’an was a lecher, she knew she had to leave as soon as possible. Having little knowledge of the poison techniques in this world, she had been captured after being drugged with sedatives. If she stayed any longer, who knew if she might be given sedatives or even aphrodisiacs again?

Therefore, even after entering the Wu Family, Su Liang never considered staying to help Mai Fei find the account books – that would have been a foolish and overconfident move.

“Su Liang, there’s no need for this. I just like you; wouldn’t it be good for you to stay with me?” Gai Huai’an was still trying to persuade Su Liang, but he would never admit his true intentions.

Su Liang ignored him. She was surrounded by hostile gazes and couldn’t afford any distractions – there was no time for useless talk.

“Release my son, and you can go,” Gai Yun said coldly, standing inside the gate.

“Open the gate,” Su Liang said tersely.

Gai Yun ordered his subordinates to open the gate, and sunlight, blocked by the high walls, suddenly seeped in, illuminating the dark places inside the gate.

Su Liang continued to walk out, “Rest assured, General Gai, with so many of you watching, how can I easily escape after leaving?”

Gai Yun frowned, stepped outside the gate, and watched Su Liang walk out with Gai Huai’an in tow.

This place was not far from the mine, the terrain was flat, and the surrounding area was open. There were no houses nearby.

It wasn't a bad thing for Su Liang since it would be harder for her to be sneakily attacked from behind. They hadn't moved before probably because they were worried about hurting Gai Huai'an.

"Let go of my son! I won't bother you anymore!" Gai Yun said sternly.

Su Liang nodded, "Swear a poison oath first."

Gai Yun snorted, "Don't push your luck!"

Su Liang tightened her grip on the strings, and a shallow cut appeared on Gai Huai'an's neck. Her expression became even calmer, "Or, should I cut him an inch deep first and see if your son can survive?"

Gai Yun's face turned ashen with anger, "Fine! I swear, as long as you release my son, I won't bother you!"

"I meant a poison oath. The kind that involves family extinction if you break it," Su Liang insisted without backing down.

Unable to maintain his composure, Gai Huai'an let his true face show,

"Shameless! You're just seeking your own death!"

Su Liang pulled the strings in her hand, as if she were using a sharp knife to slowly grind meat on a cutting board, assessing where to cut. The continuous pain was not deep but terrifying nonetheless, leaving Gai Huai'an's only stable leg trembling involuntarily, no longer daring to speak.

"General Gai, have you made up your mind?" Su Liang asked coldly.

Gai Yun raised his hand, "If I bother you again after this, I'll face family extinction!"

"Well, I don't believe it," Su Liang said indifferently.

Gai Yun was burning with rage, his face saying he wanted to tear Su Liang apart, but he heard her speak again, "I don't know the way home, and someone needs to pick me up. General Gai, send someone to get the County Magistrate Mai Fei. Once he's here, I will release your son."

This caused both Gai Yun and Gai Huai'an to furrow their brows in anger! It was difficult to determine whether Su Liang was asking for Mai Fei's help only to ensure a safe escape, or if she had made some other agreement with him beforehand!

"Why not ask Ning Jing to pick you up?" Gai Huai'an asked.

Su Liang snorted, "He can't be involved in such dangerous matters,"

"I've already sworn a poison oath to send you back safely. You have nothing to lose, and making a fuss doesn't benefit you! Tell me what compensation you want, and I'll consider it!" Gai Yun said coldly, "Even if Mai Fei arrives, he should understand a father's concern for his son!"

"Makes sense," Su Liang nodded, "But there's no room for discussion on this. I will release him when Mai Fei arrives. If he doesn't come, you can try to see how long it will take for your son's blood to run dry.."

Chapter 55: 055.1 am at

[I'm here]

Today, there's a market in Feiyan Town.

Yesterday, when Granny Bai went to deliver shoes to Su Liang, she asked and found out that they would not be going to the market, so she didn't call them.

The town was bustling, two soldiers shouted "make way" and galloped past, causing a brief panic, which soon returned to normal.

In the county government, there were a stack of case files in front of Mai Fei related to several cases of missing girls that had occurred in Bei'an County in recent years.

Last night after sending Chang'an to find Su Liang, he went through the case files again. He was originally looking for something he could use against the Wu father and son, and the more he looked, the more he felt that these cases were related to Gai Yun and Gai Huai'an.

"At that time, Ning Jing said that Miss Su had gone to bed, and I dared not barge in. It's a big deal, so he wouldn't keep it from Miss Su, would he?" Chang'an frowned.

Mai Fei thought for a moment, "During the day, Gai Yun sent someone to ask Su Liang to treat his son, and then Su Liang disappeared. Ning Jing reported the case, and I went to the Wu Family with my men to search..."

Chang'an was startled, "Miss Su disappeared? When did this happen?"

Mai Fei shook his head, "She's fine. This is my new plan. She just needs to hide for now and not show up. With all these real cases of missing girls, I think she won't refuse."

Chang'an understood, "Master means to make Miss Su disappear, and have Ning Jing report the case saying that Wu father and son have major suspicions, so we can go search for her at the Wu Family?"

"That's right." Mai Fei nodded.

"But wouldn't this alert the snake in the grass?" Chang'an asked.

Mai Fei snorted softly, "Hiding something like the account book is too easy. I originally planned to have Su Liang sneak into the Wu Family while treating

Gai Huai'an, but that method would be risky and almost impossible to succeed. She was right to refuse. There must be something more than just iron mine smuggling hidden in the Wu Family, and it will be extremely difficult to find evidence before acting. It's better to arrest them first. The account book is used by them to control the conspirators, and they wouldn't easily destroy it."

After saying that, Mai Fei wrote a letter and gave it to Chang'an to deliver to Su Liang's hands. "Don't show your face, find someone else."

Chang'an had just gone out with the letter when a guard came to report that the veteran General Wu had sent someone.

Mai Fei had a feeling something was wrong, otherwise Gai Yun wouldn't take the initiative to contact him.

"This is an urgent matter, please Master Mai to go to the Wu Family immediately! "

Mai Fei's eyes flashed slightly, "Since General Wu invites me, I dare not neglect my duty. But due to my busy schedule, I cannot leave just yet. If I don't know what the matter is, it's not good to rush there."

The two men who came looked at each other before one of them said,

"Someone has kidnapped our young master."

Mai Fei looked surprised, "In broad daylight, such a thing has happened? Who did it? Too audacious!"

"Master Mai will know when you get there."

Mai Fei heard the ambiguity of the visitor and was even less in a hurry, "Is it a man or a woman? Maybe it's the suspect in an old case I'm investigating."

"A woman."

A thought crossed Mai Fei's mind, but he pretended to be indignant, "How dare she even kidnap General Wu's son? What is her intention? I'll take my men and go with you right away!"

The sun had climbed to its zenith.

In late autumn and early winter, the cool breeze blew, and the sunlight had little warmth.

Gai Yun and Su Liang had been in a standoff for nearly four hours.

The wound on Gai Huai'an's neck was not deep, but the thin blood kept seeping out. His body was not in good shape, and he was now as pale as paper, barely able to stand.

Gai Yun had someone bring Gai Huai'an's wheelchair, prepare medicine to stop the bleeding, and provide water and food.

Su Liang refused everything, not allowing anyone to approach her.

Poison techniques were Su Liang's weakness, but she wasn't afraid when it came to endurance and willpower.

Gai Yun kept his eyes on Su Liang, waiting for her to become tired and lose her focus so he could seize the opportunity to counterattack and save Gai Huai'an.

However, as time went by, Gai Yun was increasingly shocked because he found Su Liang's eyes becoming clearer.

As a veteran, he knew how difficult this was.

This woman was not an ordinary person!

If time could go back, they would not have provoked Su Liang yesterday. Unfortunately, there was no such thing as a regret medicine in this world.

“Master Mai is here!”

Hearing the shout, Su Liang didn’t immediately turn to look. She knew that slipping for just a moment could get her killed by one of Gai Yun’s hidden masters.

Mai Fei rode up and saw from a distance a slender figure that was not unfamiliar to him.

Although the person sent by Gai Yun had been vague and didn’t mention the identity of the person who kidnapped Gau Huai’an, Mai Fei had already guessed.

At this moment, as he saw her, his guess was confirmed.

Even more coincidentally, the situation that had arisen was exactly what Mu Fei hoped for.

Chang’an couldn’t hide the astonishment on his face. Ning Jing had said last night that Su Liang was asleep, so how could she have come to the Wu Family on her own and captured Gai Huai’an? Mu Fei had said that the Wu Family was like an iron fortress with strict defenses, so how did Su Liang manage it? And why would she do such a thing?

“Miss Su Liang?” Mu Fei, after seeing Su Liang’s face, called out in surprise, “How could it be you?”

Su Liang coldly said, “It’s about time General Mu has arrived. Last night, I was doing well at home, but suddenly I lost consciousness, and when I opened my eyes, I was in the Wu Family.”

Mu Fei frowned and looked at Gai Yun, “General Wu, what’s going on?”

On the surface, the relationship between the old general and the small county magistrate was uneven, but Gai Yun knew that Mu Fei was the fourth prince, Duanmu Chen, and Mu Fei also knew that Gai Yun was aware of his identity.

Mu Fei’s identity couldn’t be revealed in public, but there was no need to pretend either.

As such, there was not an ounce of humility before Gai Yun from Mu Fei’s lower status, only some superficial politeness.

And, naturally, Gai Yun didn’t dare be arrogant in the face of Mu Fei, even being very cautious to avoid the situation spiraling out of control.

Gai Yun deeply sighed, “General Mu, this is all a misunderstanding. When I learned that there was a talented doctor in the Su Family Village, I wanted her to treat my son, Huai’an’s leg ailment, but when our people asked, she refused to come. For the sake of my son, I impulsively decided to bring her here first and apologize to her afterwards, believing her kind heart would understand my love for my son. However, I never expected her to take it so badly that she would not listen to any explanations... ‘

Chang’an was simply dumbfounded. The events Mu Fei had planned for had happened ahead of schedule.

Mu Fei looked serious, “General Wu, are you saying that without Su Liang’s consent, you drugged her and abducted her from her home?”

Gai Yun sighed repeatedly, “I had no ill intentions and did not hurt her in any way. I just wanted her to treat my son. General Mu, please persuade her to let my son go.”

Hearing this, Su Liang sneered, “General Wu speaks so self-righteously, making it sound as if I am ungrateful and overreacting. You sent someone to ask for my medical services, and I never refused, but I simply said I didn’t make house calls. If you respected my medical skills and had love for your child, why couldn’t you bring him to Su Family Village to find me?” Gai Yun’s face turned ugly, “Huai’an’s condition makes it difficult for him to travel.”

“From the way you speak, it sounds like your son is bedridden and can’t move, practically on the verge of death. But hasn’t he left home now? And he doesn’t even need the wheelchair; he can stand as well.” Su Liang scoffed.

Gai Yun’s face darkened, “Miss Su, I’ve already explained the situation to you and apologized. You wanted General Mu to take you back, and now he’s here. Whatever compensation you want, just ask. At this point, are you still unwilling to release my son? What are your intentions?”

“General Wu has evaded my questions, so how can General Mu believe your words?” Su Liang showed no signs of letting Gai Huai’an go, “Now, it’s my turn to speak.”

“Miss Su, if you have anything to say, please do, and I will make sure to support you. But be careful not to hurt Young Master Wu by mistake!” Mu Fei said solemnly.

“I witnessed General Wu abducting me with my own eyes. When I woke up, I volunteered to treat his son, but he refused. He said that world-renowned doctors couldn’t help, so what could I, being so young, do? The reason I was captured was because of his father’s love, not wanting his son to be lonely and sad. He specifically chose beautiful women for his son to amuse himself within Bei’an County. I was selected not because of my medical skills but because of my appearance. If I didn’t want to die, I would have to obey him willingly, allowing him to dispose of me as he wished.” Su Liang’s clear and cold voice rang in the ears of everyone present.

Gai Yun was furious but couldn’t interrupt Su Liang. He wanted to rush over but was stopped by Chang’an.

As for Gai Huai’an, his consciousness was already fading, and he was about to pass out. He had heard Su Liang’s words, and his lips moved, but he was too weak to refute them.

Mu Fei looked shocked, “Miss Su, are you accusing General Wu and his son of kidnapping a girl?”

Su Liang replied coldly, “Didn’t General Wu admit it when he first spoke? I am the most direct evidence here! If General Wu claims to have invited me to treat his son and says that I refuse to listen, can you please tell Lord Mu how you could be at ease to let Gai Huai’an be alone with me in a room? Otherwise, how could I have the opportunity to take him hostage and come out of there?”

Mu Fei’s expression turned solemn as he looked at the furious Gai Yun, “General Wu, is what she said true?”



“Nonsense! It’s my fault for bringing her here! But what she said is not true! She is slandering both me and Huai’an! She’s talking nonsense!” Gai Yun yelled angrily.

“Why would Gai Huai’an fall into her hands?” Mu Fei asked coldly.

“That’s because she pretended to agree to treat Huai’an. I trusted her and let her stay alone with Huai’an, as per her request! I never expected that as a doctor, she would be so petty and cruel!” Gai Yun’s words were clearly rehearsed.

Mu Fei looked at Su Liang, “Both of you have different stories, and I don’t know who to believe. How about this: you release Gai Huai’an first, and I guarantee that I will thoroughly investigate and uphold justice.”

Chang’an was slightly stunned, but immediately understood that Mu Fei was doing this on purpose. In order to handle the situation, he had to side with Gai Yun and Gai Huai’an on the surface.

Su Liang snorted, “General Wu said that I am making a big fuss over a small issue, which isn’t entirely untrue. The reason I asked Lord Mu to come here is because I want to ask him if he knows about the mysterious disappearances of several young girls in Bei’an County over the past few years?” Gai Huai’an, who had not yet passed out, visibly shuddered.

And Gai Yun’s face darkened even more!

Mu Fei’s heart leaped with joy, as everything was developing in the direction he wanted. He now believed that Su Liang was kidnapped by Gai Yun after she had visited Chang’an last night and learned about the missing girls case.

However, the truth was that Su Liang learned about the missing girls case not just last night.

This matter was not a secret in Bei’an County.

Last year, a fifteen-year-old girl from Liu Family Village, which was next to Su Family Village, went missing. That girl was related to Bai Xiaohu’s grandmother.

After Su Liang and Ning Jing changed their relationship from a married couple to siblings, Bai Peng’s wife, Mrs. Liu, specifically told her about the incident and warned her not to go out alone and to be careful of strangers.

Lei Zheng also mentioned it to Su Liang, saying that the missing girls were the most beautiful ones in the village, and she could easily be targeted.

However, Mrs. Liu, Su Bai, and others who knew about the missing girls case thought that there was a gang trafficking girls in Bei’an County. When Su Liang first learned about it, she thought so too.

Not until she was brought to the Wu Family and met Gai Huai’an did she suspect otherwise.

Gai Huai’an’s behavior made Su Liang suspect that she was captured because he wanted to have fun with a woman.

With that thought, she thought of those mysteriously missing girls.

Human traffickers wouldn’t be so skilled as to leave no trace, nor would they be so patient as to wait half a year before kidnapping another girl.

But Wu Yun and Gai Huai'an father and son had everything.

This reminded Su Liang of a news story she had seen in her previous life, where a high-ranking foreign military officer, to satisfy his twisted desires, committed heinous crimes against women in the surrounding areas of his station and was never suspected for a long time.

Who would suspect Wu Yun and Gai Huai'an? An old veteran with outstanding military achievements and a young disabled general, both highly respected and admired.

But such people, if they have ill intentions and want to commit evil, can only be more secretive and appalling than those who are openly evil.

Su Liang could escape without Mai Fei's help, but she had no intention of leaving that easily.

Not only for her own safety in the future but also for those young girls who may have already encountered misfortune.

If she doesn't bring down this father and son duo, then she won't be a Su!

Mai Fei's expression changed, "I am currently investigating the missing women's case."

"I have reason to suspect that Wu Yun and Gai Huai'an are behind those incidents. I am one of the victims they failed to take advantage of," Su Liang said, "Since Mai Fei is here, please search the Wu Mansion!"

Mai Fei looked at Wu Yun, "I, of course, don't believe that General Wu would do such a thing. However, Su Liang is the victim here, and if I don't search the mansion, she'll tarnish the General's reputation."

Wu Yun's expression changed again, "I have always acted honorably and done what's right. If I didn't do it, I didn't do it! If Mai Fei wants to search, go ahead!" Mai Fei nodded, "Alright." He glanced at Chang'an.

Chang'an shouted, and within a moment, a fully armed group of soldiers rode over, overshadowing Wu family's presence.

Wu Yun's hand trembled. He thought that Mai Fei would only bring two followers...

Mai Fei explained, "General Wu, please don't be offended. These soldiers were brought over to rescue Young Master Wu after I learned that he was being held hostage. They can also help with the search, so the sooner it's done, the sooner Young Master Wu will be safe."

Wu Yun's forehead was covered with conspicuous sweat beads, and his face turned a shade paler.

It was Wu Yun who had abducted Su Liang, something that neither she nor Mai Fei could have foreseen.

However, the subsequent events seemed like a conspiracy between Su Liang and Mai Fei, even though they had no chance to discuss it!

Before Mai Fei's arrival, Su Liang didn't mention the missing women's case, and now Wu Yun was caught off guard! He thought that once Mai Fei came and he explained the situation, everything would be settled, and he would never let Mai Fei enter the mansion. But now, things were beyond his control.

Mai Fei continued, "Could you please gather everyone in the mansion to avoid any conflicts."

Wu Yun nodded subconsciously, originally intending to do it himself but realizing that would be strange, so he ordered the housekeeper instead.

"Chang'an. you bring people to help." Mai Fei instructed

The housekeeper of the Wu Mansion entered, followed by Chang'an and a group of soldiers.

Soon after, a succession of servants came out of the mansion.

While waiting, Mai Fei proposed that Su Liang release Gai Huai'an, but she still refused.

Mai Fei helplessly reassured Wu Yun, "Don't worry, General Wu. Once we've searched the premises, she won't have anything more to say."

Su Liang reminded Mai Fei, "Mai Fei, you must search thoroughly. Young Master Wu personally told me that he would take me to a special place tonight.

I suspect that there is a secret chamber or hidden passage in the Wu Mansion."

Mai Fei nodded solemnly, "Rest assured, I will investigate thoroughly and not let you slander Qian Country's meritorious officials."

"Master, all of the Wu family servants have come out, " said Chang'an.

"Good. Let's start the search. Don't miss any place. Check for hidden chambers or mechanisms. Otherwise, Miss Su won't let it go," Mai Fei sighed, "But be careful not to damage the Wu family's possessions. I will have to compensate them if you do."

"Yes!" Chang'an took the order and charged into the Wu residence with the elite soldiers.

These were not ordinary soldiers but ones Mai Fei had brought from the capital city. Chang'an knew precisely what the search target was.

Mai Fei didn't go in, but a guard was standing behind him.

With Gai Huai'an's wheelchair nearby, Mai Fei said to Wu Yun, "I'm a bit tired from not riding a horse for a long time. Can I sit down?"

Wu Yun nodded with a dark face.

Mai Fei then sat in the wheelchair and chatted with Su Liang, "Your disappearance must have left Ning Jing worried sick. Do you want me to send someone to let him know you're here?"

Su Liang shook her head, "No need."

She also found it strange. Ning Jing should have guessed that her misfortune was related to the Wu family, and she expected him to appear, but there was no sign of him.

However, Su Liang wasn't relying on Ning Jing for rescue. This time, she needed to make up for the weakness in her defenses caused by the sedatives she had taken. For everything else, she could handle it herself.

“Do you know the consequences of slandering the court- appointed officials?” Mai Fei asked.

Su Liang’s expression was calm, “I am the victim, and there are indeed reasonable doubts about Wu Yun and his son. Otherwise, Mai Fei would not have searched the mansion. How could it be slander?”

Mai Fei sighed, “I didn’t think you’d be so audacious.”

“There are many things Mai Fei didn’t anticipate, such as Wu Yun and his son being vicious beasts in human clothing,” Su Liang snorted coldly.

Mai Fei shook his head and sighed, no longer saying a word.

It always sounded like Su Liang was aggressively confronting Mai Fei, while Mai Fei wanted to mediate, appearing as if he was forced into action by Su Liang.

“Why is General Wu sweating? It’s not hot today!” Su Liang said seriously.

Wu Yun remained silent with a sullen face.

Mai Fei, who was carrying Wu Yun, gave Su Liang an appreciative glance, thinking she was really smart.

By not letting go of Gai Huai’an, Su Liang was ensuring her own safety, preventing Wu Yun from going berserk and silencing her.

For a veteran, killing a civilian wouldn’t have serious consequences; he would just need an excuse such as Su Liang wanting to kill his son. But if Mai Fei were to discover his shady dealings, that would be the end for him.

Controlling Gai Huai’an’s life was also ensuring Mai Fei’s safety. In case Wu Yun became desperate, he might even try to harm Mai Fei.

“Aren’t you tired? Let Master Wu go,” Mai Fei asked for the nth time to rescue Gai Huai’an.

Still with a cold face, Su Liang replied, “No!”

She knew that Mai Fei was just putting on a show for Wu Yun to have a smooth conclusion for the situation.

Now, the key was whether they could find the other kidnapped girls, their corpses, or the ledger of smuggling iron ores from the Wu Family.

Any of them would suffice to take down the Wu father and son.

But if they found nothing, the Wu father and son could easily escape punishment based solely on Su Liang’s accusation.

Su Liang believed that the Wu Family must be hiding something illegal. But seeing Wu Yun seemingly calm again, it might be hard to find the secret chamber in the Wu Family...

As she was thinking about it, Chang’an hurried out.

Mai Fei immediately stood up and walked over, his expression changed after hearing a few whispers from Chang'an, "Guards! Arrest Wu Yun!"

Su Liang's heart relaxed, it seemed that they had indeed found something.

The one who took action was Mai Fei's secret guard, his most powerful master, to prevent Wu Yun from escaping.

Of course, Wu Yun wouldn't surrender without a fight. However, he didn't have many soldiers at home, since he had brought them to guard the mine.

After a fight, Wu Yun was captured and knelt in front of Mai Fei, his face defiant, "No matter what you found, it's nothing but a set-up and a trap!"

Mai Fei's face turned cold, "I have solved the three-year-long case of six missing girls in Bei'an County. The evidence is irrefutable. I'll report it to the

Emperor today! "

"Your Highness, the Fourth Prince! Someone is framing my son and me! Today's incident is all a conspiracy!" Wu Yun said gravely, at this point, he had no choice but to reveal Mai Fei's identity.

Mai Fei sneered, "General Wu, last night you drugged and kidnapped Miss Su Liang, Ning Jing's sworn sister, and took her back home. You admitted to it and invited me here. In the secret chamber of your house, we found unidentified girls, corpses buried in the garden, and lewd paintings by Gai Huai'an. You can try to argue; let's see if Father Emperor believes you!" After hearing this, Wu Yun slumped to the ground, his face ashen.

Su Liang was surprised, given Wu Yun and Gai Huai'an's shameful deeds, they should have hidden everything well, or Wu Yun would have fled long ago.

It didn't take Mai Fei's subordinates too long to find the scattered witnesses and evidence, as if someone inside the Wu Family had revealed them.

Su Liang didn't ask, she released the strings that Gai Huai'an was tied up in. Upon Mai Fei's glance, Gai Huai'an fell to the ground.

"Can I go now?" Su Liang asked.

Mai Fei nodded, "I'll send someone to take you home."

"Thank you, Lord Mai," Su Liang said. She believed that there would be no way out for Wu Yun and Gai Huai'an after Mai Fei took action, and it had nothing to do with her from now on.

"You escort Miss Su." Mai Fei quietly ordered Chang'an, "See if Ning Jing is home or not."

Chang'an nodded, he fetched a carriage and asked Su Liang to get in.

Mai Fei watched them leave, then turned to look at the plaque of the Wu Family, his eyes freezing cold, “Wu Yun, if there’s anything else, confess now, perhaps you can avoid the fate of having your family line severed!”

After a nap, Su Liang arrived home once the carriage stopped.

Chang’an went to knock on the door, and after a short while, Ning Jing appeared at the door, still as cold and indifferent as always.

“Miss Su, you should go back quickly, I’m leaving,” Chang’an glanced at Ning Jing, without asking anything, he drove away.

Su Liang closed the front door from inside, looking at Ning Jing’s retreating back, she furrowed her brows, “I went missing, and you just stayed at home, like nothing happened?”

She didn’t think Ning Jing had to save her, but couldn’t he be less indifferent? At least, he could ask a question as a friend, right?

Ning Jing turned back, looked at Su Liang, and said two words, “I was there.”

Su Liang was stunned, “Where were you?”

“When you cut the strings at the Wu Family, I was hiding in the fake mountain nearby. After you took Gai Huai’an away, I searched the Wu Family for the secret chamber and evidence,” Ning Jing said indifferently, “I returned in secret, faster than your carriage, so, Chang’an saw me at home.”

Su Liang suddenly realized, “No wonder they found the ironclad evidence so quickly, you found it first and deliberately exposed it for them to discover!” “I said before, I would watch over you before you leave,” Ning Jing looked at Su Liang’s injured fingers due to the strings and frowned slightly.

Su Liang’s lips curled up, she bowed respectfully, “Great God, please accept my respects.. “

Chapter 56: 056. No Backing Out (Part 1)

“What would you like to eat?”

“Your hand.”

Both of them spoke at the same time.

Su Liang held up his hands and looked at the cuts on his fingers made by the strings, chuckling lightly. “It’s just a scratch. I visited the Wu Family’s house and felt like a cloud of bad luck has covered me.”

“I’ve heated up some water,” Ning Jing said.

Su Liang looked at the kitchen. Flames flickered in the stove, and the warm air drifted out.

Su Liang deeply admired Ning Jing for guessing that she was taken by Gai Yun, rushing to the Wu Family’s house, hiding in the dark to make sure she was safe, secretly searching for evidence of the father and son’s crimes, and then hurrying back to heat water for washing... all in one breath.

Ning Jing went to add firewood. Su Liang leaned against the kitchen door and chatted with him, waiting for the water to boil so he could take a bath.

“There’s a girl still alive in Gai Huai’an’s secret chamber?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing nodded slightly. “Yes.”

Su Liang sighed, “Having experienced such things, I don’t know what she will face after being rescued.”

The girl was an innocent and tragic victim. Her experiences would cast a shadow on her life, and she would not be tolerated by society. “How did you find the buried bones in the backyard?” Su Liang was very curious.

“Six willow trees were planted side by side, all of different sizes and in sequence,” Ning Jing said.

Su Liang’s eyes narrowed slightly.

In this world, willow trees had the meaning of warding off evil spirits and were rarely planted at home.

Three years, six missing girls. Gai Yun brought a girl to Gai Huai’an every half a year. When Gai Huai’an got tired of them, he captured a new one, killed the previous girl, and buried her under the willow trees in the backyard. Su Lianz suspected that not destroying the bodies was part of Gai Huai’an’s twisted behavior. Perhaps he often watered the willow trees, looking at them and “reminiscing” about his prey.

One girl died, one willow tree was planted.

The size and thickness of the willow trees diminished with time, from the earliest tree to the most recent one.

This detail would be extremely difficult for an outsider to notice.

“No,” Su Liang frowned. “Including the girl who didn’t die in the secret chamber, that makes seven. But Mu Fei said there were six disappearances.”

It wasn’t that only six girls had disappeared in Bei’an County during these three years. But these six cases were grouped together because of their similarities, forming a major unsolved case.

The common characteristics were: the missing girls were all “village beauties,” fifteen or sixteen years old, unmarried virgins, and disappeared at night without a trace, without signs of struggle or any clues, and one every six months.

Su Liang was thinking, perhaps a family had lost a girl but didn’t report it, or the County government hadn’t noticed it.

Ning Jing said, “There are seven. The first one is not from Bei’an County. She was Gai Huai’an’s former fiancée from the capital. After he was injured, the two families broke off the engagement. The young lady mysteriously disappeared.” Su Liang couldn’t help but curse, “Fucking pervert!”

Ning Jing continued, “It was Gai Huai’an who really wanted to break off the engagement, but because he was injured, his fiancée agreed to dissolve the engagement without insisting on

marrying him. Later, it was rumored that she despised Gai Huai'an for being crippled and abandoned him."

Gai Huai'an's former fiancée didn't act as he wished, marrying him and living like a widow without complaint, according to worldly standards. Instead, she was denounced by him and the gossiping onlookers as heartless, rejected him, and was secretly imprisoned in Bei'an County. No one knew how much suffering she had endured before dying with hatred.

Just thinking about it made one's hair stand on end.

If it weren't for the exposure of this scandal, countless more women would have been victimized. Meanwhile, the father and son enjoyed their life in Bevan County, far from the capital, acting with impunity.

Su Liang breathed a sigh of relief to calm down, "Did you find the account book?"

Ning Jing shook his head, "No."

"That thing might not be hidden in the Wu Family's house," Su Liang said.

As the water was ready, Ning Jing brought the hot water to Su Liang's room.

It had never been like this before, but today it was because Su Liang's hand was injured.

As Su Liang was taking a bath, someone knocked on the door.

Soon after, the voices of Mother Bai and Bai Xiaohu were heard.

"Is Liang girl at home? We went to the fair and heard about a big event! The new county magistrate, Lord Mu, cracked an unsolved case involving several missing girls. Can you guess who did it?" Mother Bai's eyes widened, her face still showing a bit of the shock she felt when she first heard the news.

Ning Jing replied calmly, "I don't know."

Su Liang, in the room, listened carefully, and could almost imagine Mother Bai slapping her thigh then raising her voice to exclaim, 'You'll never believe it! It's actually...'

In the courtyard, Mother Bai looked exactly as Su Liang had imagined, even saying the exact same words, "You'll never believe it! It's actually General Wu and his son! They're worse than pigs and dogs!"

"Brother Ning, do you know those two villains?" Bai Xiaohu asked Ning Jing.

Ning Jing shook his head again, "I don't know them."

Bai Xiaohu clenched his little fists and said, "They must be very, very ugly! All bad guys!"

"I heard that Lord Mu will escort the criminals back to the County government office. Many people who went to the fair didn't go home and are waiting to see in the town!" Mother Bai said, 'We wanted to take a look, too, but we didn't know how long we'd have to wait, so we came back first.'



Bai Xiaohu clenched his little fist, "I heard someone say that they are going to go home and get rotten eggs, and smash those two big bad guys to death!"

Su Liang heard this and suspected that the news was deliberately spread by Mai Fei, otherwise, it wouldn't have spread so quickly. After all, the incident had just happened, and very few people knew about it.

Once, Gai Yun and Gai Huai'an had many laudatory titles, but now they would all be doubled back onto them, causing even more hatred and resentment.

After sharing the news, Granny Bai took her grandson away. She originally wanted to talk to Su Liang about something else, but Ning Jing said that she was sleepy after reading and was taking a nap at the moment.

Su Liang took a bath, changed into clean clothes, applied some medicine to her fingers, and felt refreshed. When she went out again, the sun was about to set.

At this time, Feiyan Town was crowded with people, all looking in one direction as two prison carriage slowly drove by.

Among the crowd were the relatives of the victimized girls, and more were the indignant common people. They threw rotten vegetables and rotten eggs at the prison carriage, venting their anger.

Gai Yun, disheveled, cried out his grievances, "With a crime to add to, there is no shortage of pretexts! Your Majesty! I am being framed! "

Gai Huai'an's eyes were tightly closed.

A rotten egg smashed onto his head, the liquid from the broken egg flowing down his face. He abruptly opened his eyes, with bloodshot eyes and retching.

Technically speaking, the County Magistrate of Bei'an County had no jurisdiction over Gai Yun's status.

In principle, the mine was under the jurisdiction of the Government Office, but the local Government Office only provided basic security and manpower for mining. The actual management was directly overseen by the soldiers sent by the court.

Furthermore, Gai Yun hadn't even been tried yet and was already shackled and put onto a prison carriage.

But the common people didn't care about these details and only felt relieved.

The more thoughtful people believed the rumor even more, thinking that Mai Fei was an emissary sent by the court, and not just a mere County Magistrate.

Mai Fei sat in the last carriage of the convoy, driven by his trusted aide, Chang'an.

"If it's not Ning Jing, who else could it be?" It was not the first time Mai Fei had raised this question.

Chang'an frowned, "What about the time when the death row inmate escaped and harmed people? There was also a mysterious person helping the Master secretly. Could it be the same person who assisted us secretly this time?" Mai Fei nodded, "It should be, otherwise, it wouldn't be such a coincidence."

“On the day of that incident, Miss Su and Young Master Ning happened to go to the county town. This time, Miss Su was directly involved, but she was on the surface, while the person who secretly helped us find the evidence, I also think it is most likely Young Master Ning,” Chang’an said, “But when I sent Miss Su home, Young Master Ning was clearly at home, and he seemed never to have gone out.”

What do you think about the relationship between Ning Jing and Su Liang?” Mai Fei asked.

Chang’an thought for a moment and said, “Their relationship seems to be very weak, not close, but extremely tacit-tuned.”

“If Su Liang were to go missing, would Ning Jing remain indifferent?” Mai Fei asked again.

Without hesitation, Chang’an shook his head, “Of course not!”

Mai Fei leaned against the carriage wall, his eyes slightly narrowed, “That’s it.

Both times were so coincidental, perhaps they were not coincidences at all. That mysterious person in the dark is Ning Jing.”

“But Young Master Ning doesn’t look like the type who can’t fight, even though he appears to be a scholar who can’t use martial arts,” Chang’an said. “Miss Su once fought with someone on the street, but Young Master Ning never made a move.”

“He might not have made a move because he doesn’t know martial arts, but it could also be because he’s hiding his strength,” Mai Fei said.

“If it’s really Young Master Ning, why would he hide his identity from the Master? Wouldn’t it be better to cooperate with the Master? It would benefit him too.”

Chang’an was puzzled.

Mai Fei snorted lightly, “It’s because, whether it’s him or Su Liang, they are just trying to act out of a sense of justice, and their purpose has never been to help me in the first place. I’d like to cooperate, but they don’t care for it.”

Chang’an felt that his young master had started to act mysteriously again and chose not to speak any longer.

After a long while, Mai Fei suddenly spoke again, “It’s best if we can take down

Bei Jingwang Mansion this time so that Ning Jing can no longer use Xing

Yusheng’s name. Then they’ll come to me.”

Chang’an: ...Their young master had always been very proud, and this was the first time he had tried to win someone over, but the other party didn’t seem to appreciate it.

Chang’an suggested once again that they should test Ning Jing.

Mai Fei still refused, “There’s no need to test him. It’s him, and no one else. But

I don’t understand if he’s so capable, how could he have been driven out of

Ning's family? It's very strange."

After returning to the County government, Mai Fei temporarily put aside his inquiries about Su Liang and Ning Jing and focused on the case of Gai Yun and Gai Huai'an.

He could take down the Gai father and son by virtue of his identity, but he still had to ask for the Emperor's permission to deal with them.

Moreover, he planned to make a big fuss about this matter, making it known to everyone and drawing out the people behind Gai Yun.

He hadn't forgotten the purpose of his trip. Solving the case of the missing girls was an unexpected gain, which was somewhat helpful to his reputation, but solving the case of the iron mine smuggling was a task he had to complete.

Mai Fei wrote a memorial and sent a man with a fast horse to rush it back to the capital city.

On the surface, Gai Yun and Gai Huai'an were locked up in the County government prison, but that was just "bait."

The criminals in the cell were two masters disguised as criminals, and he believed that someone would come to rescue them or silence them.

Only Mai Fei and Chang'an knew where the real Gai Yun was.

For dinner, Su Liang made two dishes that Ning Jing loved to eat to thank him for his care.

While they were eating, Su Liang's hand paused suddenly. "Oh no! Yesterday I was caught because you went to watch the old lady with the ox! Why did we forget about her!"

Gai Yun would never have thought that the real reason he was able to abduct Su Liang, this "troublemaker," was because of the old lady with the ox.

It was Ning Jing who encountered the old lady the day before and noticed the dark fog on her forehead, suspecting that she was going to harm someone. He went out that night to investigate, leaving Su Liang alone at home.

As it happened, Su Liang was taken away by Gai Yun during Ning Jing's absence, which led to the subsequent events.

So much had happened in that day and night that Su Liang had completely forgotten about the old cow woman; and now it finally came back to her. It would be terrible if the old cow woman killed someone today and they failed to stop her.

Ning Jing's face was calm. "She bought rat poison, planning to poison the well at Liu Huilan's house while her family went to the market."

The widow Liu Huilan probably wouldn't go to the market. No one would be home, so it wouldn't be hard for the old cow woman to sneak in, given their previous relationship. If she succeeded, the whole Liu family could die. The mad old cow woman could do anything.

Seeing Ning Jing's expression, Su Liang sighed in relief. "It seems you didn't forget. What did you do?"

"Beat her once." Ning Jing replied.

Su Liang coughed lightly, "That's all?"

"She should be, stupefied." Ning Jing replied.

Originally, Ning Jing had intended to deal with the old cow woman differently.

However, Su Liang was suddenly abducted, and Ning Jing didn't want to waste any more time. On his way out to find Su Liang, he passed by the old cow woman's house, hit her on the head with a stick, and took away the rat poison.

"That's good," Su Liang nodded. "We wasted another day, so we have to practice martial arts well tomorrow."

The next day, before dawn, Su Liang got up, went jogging, and practiced kung fu.

Ning Jing had the water heated, and they both washed and rinsed. Then Su Liang made breakfast. After they finished eating, Ning Jing cleaned the kitchen. Su Liang digested her meal while doing laundry and hung the clothes in the backyard just as the sun began to rise.

Today's schedule was for practicing with a whip.

Before they began, someone knocked on the door.

Su Liang opened the door to find Chang'an standing outside. She asked impatiently, "What's the matter?"

Chang'an was very polite, "Master would like Miss Su to come to the County government to record the testimony for Gai Yun and Gai Huai'an's case."

"Does the county government have special paper for recording testimony?" Su Liang asked an odd question.

Chang'an was puzzled for a moment, then shook his head, "No, they don't."

"Fine, wait a moment." Su Liang turned around and returned without inviting Chang'an in.

Chang'an felt a bit strange and waited outside.

About a quarter of an hour later, Su Liang came out with two sheets of paper and handed them to Chang'an, "My testimony."

Chang'an took it, the handwriting was familiar, and he blurted out, "Did Young Master Ning write this?"

Su Liang shook her head, "I wrote it."

Chang'an was surprised that Su Liang and Ning Jing's handwriting looked the same. He looked over the two pages filled with neat and clear writing, and at the end, Su Liang signed her name and pressed her fingerprint.

With this, Chang'an couldn't insist that Su Liang go to the County government. Mai Fei had instructed him not to offend her.

Chang'an tucked Su Liang's testimony away and asked with some embarrassment, "Does Miss Su have any food at home?"

"There are steamed buns," Su Liang replied.

Chang'an's eyes lit up, "Then..."

Su Liang hummed, "If I remember correctly, your master did not pay the 5,000 taels for his last meal. Did you forget?"

Chang'an's face turned awkward, "We got too busy the last few days and forgot."

Su Liang wrapped the two remaining buns from breakfast and handed them to

Chang'an, "One bun is worth one hundred taels. We'll settle it next time."

Chang'an, clutching the two fist-sized buns that had already cooled, was left speechless.

Mai Fei wanted to cooperate with Su Liang and Ning Jing, but Su Liang just wanted to blackmail him, which was indeed frustrating...

Meanwhile, what Chang'an didn't know was that as soon as Su Liang closed the door, she smiled and said to Ning Jing, 'We're out of steamed buns, so let's have dumplings for lunch.'

Ning Jing was confused, "What are dumplings?"

"You'll see when the time comes," Su Liang teased.

When Mai Fei saw Chang'an return alone, his brow furrowed, "Where is she?"

Chang'an took out two buns from his pocket and handed them to Mai Fei, "Miss Su gave them to me."

Mai Fei sniffed the buns and a subtle smile appeared on his lips, "It seems that our cooperation went smoothly yesterday. It's rare for her to voluntarily give me something to eat. In retrospect, our cooperation was really in sync."

Chang'an weakly said, "Miss Su said, one bun is one hundred taels, together with the last 5,000 taels for the meal."

Mai Fei's face darkened, he gritted his teeth, "Damn it! What does she need so much money for?"

Chang'an blurted out, "To support Young Master Ning!"

Mai Fei: .

Handing the buns to a maid to reheat, Mai Fei asked about the testimony.

Chang'an quickly handed Su Liang's testimony to him, and he was startled when he saw the handwriting, "Is her writing imitated from Ning Jing's?" "Perhaps their handwriting was originally very similar." Chang'an said.

Mai Fei shook his head, "They only met this year, how could their handwriting be so similar? She must have deliberately imitated Ning Jing's writing."

Chang'an sighed, "Miss Su really likes Young Master Ning, even wanting to learn his writing, and the fact that she learned it so well shows that she put in a lot of effort."

“What is she doing at home? Why not come?” Mai Fei asked.

“I don’t know. Miss Su didn’t seem welcoming, so I didn’t go in. Perhaps she just wants to spend time alone with Young Master Ning and doesn’t want to be disturbed,” Chang’an shared his speculations.

Mai Fei put down the testimony, “She wrote it very clearly, and that’s enough, it doesn’t matter if she doesn’t come. I sent another memorial to my father, asking him to appoint someone to replace Gai Yun’s position and take charge of the mine. I recommended someone.”

Chang’an curiously asked, “Which veteran general is it?”

Qian Country’s two mines, one in the north and one in the south, have always been guarded by veterans. These positions are significant, but there is not much room for future achievements, so they are not suitable for young generals.

A cold smile appeared on Mai Fei’s face, “Nian Jincheng.”

Chang’an was taken aback, “His Majesty highly regards General Nian, and he has a promising future. He wouldn’t be assigned to guard the mine, would he?”

“I told my father that the situation here is complicated, and I need a talented person with both literary and martial arts prowess to assist me in cleansing Bei’an County,” Mai Fei said.

“If General Nian does come, he probably won’t stay for long, and he might even take away Master’s credit,” Chang’an said.

Mai Fei shook his head, “He is only ostensibly here to replace Gai Yun’s position. Although he was last year’s Martial Arts Champion, he has no experience in fighting battles. By blocking such a good opportunity for growth, the Crown Prince would appear shortsighted.”

Chang’an understood. Perhaps Mai Fei deliberately recommended Nian

Jincheng, hoping the Crown Prince would stop him and upset the emperor.

“If General Nian comes, he may not truly help Master and might even cause trouble,” Chang’an worried.

Mai Fei smirked, “You just don’t know Nian Jincheng well enough.”

The Nian family was aligned with the Crown Prince. After the Gu family’s incident, they planned to have Nian Ruxue serve as an imperial concubine in the Crown Prince’s residence, but the plan eventually fell through.

Both the Crown Prince and second prince were born to the empress, while Duanmu Chen’s biological mother is the emperor’s favored imperial concubine. He has been competing openly and secretly with his two elder brothers ever since. Volunteering to investigate the Iron Mine smuggling case in Bei’an County is Duanmu Chen seeking opportunities for himself.

Su Liang finished wrapping a dumpling and showed it to Ning Jing, “We eat these during holidays and celebrations.”

Ning Jing learned to wrap the dumpling like Su Liang, but put too much filling, broke it, and tried again. He quickly learned and later wrapped the dumplings faster and better looking than Su Liang.

“Can it only be made this way?” Ning Jing asked Su Liang.

Su Liang shook her head, “There are different ways to pack, but I haven’t tried them.”

Ning Jing always enjoyed trying new things. After Su Liang simply described the other methods, he attempted to wrap the dumplings in different shapes, looking serious and focused as if creating an art piece.

In the end, Su Liang could only wrap the ingot-shaped dumplings, while Ning Jing “taught himself” to wrap all the dumpling shapes Su Liang knew of...

The dumplings were put in the pot, and they floated up, plump and round.

Su Liang mixed the dipping sauce, and the dumplings were ready.

At noon, the sunshine was warm, and the two sat facing each other at the stone table in the courtyard.

Two plates of dumplings and one cold dish. Ning Jing brought a small jar of alcohol from the room.

Su Liang took a sip and found it sweet and refreshing.

“Is this the same wine that you gave Nian Jincheng on the night of the wedding?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing nodded, “It was brewed by Uncle Liang himself.” It was his first time tasting it, too.

The dumplings were delicious. By the end, Su Liang poured the wine, raised the cup, and looked at Ning Jing solemnly, “Ask me that question again.”

Ning Jing poured himself a drink, his voice soft, “Su Liang, are you willing to stay and work for me?”

Su Liang clinked glasses with Ning Jing, “Alright, I accept.”

After recent events, Su Liang soberly recognized her own shortcomings while admiring Ning Jing more and more.

She had thought about it carefully last night before sleep. She had nowhere to go, and had to hide her true self when interacting with others. However, she didn’t need to do so with Ning Jing.

Su Liang decided to follow Ning Jing from now on.

Although she hadn’t intended to leave before, she hadn’t agreed to stay and work for Ning Jing, so she could leave at any time.

Now that she has made a formal commitment, things were different. After putting down the wine glass, Su Liang smiled and said, “I hope you won’t cheat me.”

Ning Jing shook his head, “I can’t guarantee that.”

Su Liang coughed lightly, “Can I change my mind?”

Ning Jing shook his head again, “I trust your character. Once you’ve made a commitment, there’s no going back.”

Looking at Ning Jing, Su Liang suddenly felt as if she impulsively sold herself....

Chapter 57: 057. Bring Back 500 Taels (Second Update)

Mai Fei had ordered for the six skeletons unearthed from the Wu Family to be collected and placed into coffins.

Based the order of burial determined by the willow tree and then combined with the girls’ disappearance timelines recorded by the county government, the coffins were sent back to their respective families, along with a sum of burial reimbursement and solatium.

It’s worth mentioning, the one who was rescued from the secret chamber wasn’t the last girl Gai Huai’an caught before Su Liang was captured— it was Liu Xiaoyue from Liu Family Village who went missing last year.

She had also survived the longest under Gai Huai’an’s hand; the two girls caught after her had both died.

And the earliest skeleton was of Ms. Mei, Gai Huai-an’s former fiancée. She was temporarily placed in the county government office, as the Mei Family in the capital city had already been notified to send someone to retrieve her.

When it comes to maintaining appearances, Mai Fei was always very considerate and meticulous.

The rescued Liu Xiaoyue was taken home by her family that very day.

On that day, Mai Fei was preparing to interrogate Gai Yun and Gai Huai’an again, he heard from Chang’an that Liu Xiaoyue’s elder brother had come to the county government, questioning why their family was the only one without any solatium while others had received theirs?

Chang’an was somewhat indignant, “He even claimed that his sister was sick and might not live long, demanding that Liu Xiaoyue’s solatium and burial funding be the same as the others! I think no matter whether the money is given or not, that girl might not survive!”

Mai Fei originally wanted Chang’an to placate the man with some cash and send him away. After all, Liu Xiaoyue’s life was essentially ruined by this incident. Although he sympathized with her, he wouldn’t interfere more than necessary.

However, as he was about to speak, Mai Fei suddenly changed his mind, “Go to Su Family Village and ask Su Liang to treat Liu Xiaoyue. Let her know that this is the government’s responsibility, but as there is no female doctor available, we have no choice but to trouble her. The consultation and medication fees will be covered by the government office.”

“Yes, sir.” Chang’an responded, “What about the 5200 silver taels...”

Mai Fei was taken aback for a moment, “What?”



“The money owed to Miss Su. If we go to her again without payment, she will certainly ignore me. Last time, she wouldn’t even let me in the door, so I suspect the door won’t even open this time.” Chang’an said, somewhat weakly.

Mai Fei slammed the table, “Pay her! I must’ve owed her a mountain of gold in my past life! Coming to Bei’an County once, she almost cleaned me out!”

With the money in hand, Chang’an sent Liu Xiaoyue’s elder brother away, promising him that the county government would soon send someone to his house.

Believing someone would come to deliver the money, he left cheerfully.

Su Liang was engrossed in reading medical books and didn’t pay attention to the knock on the door.

Ning Jing answered the door, and Chang’an handed over the silver banknote before stating his purpose.

Upon learning they wanted her to treat Liu Xiaoyue, the sole survivor, Su Liang put down her book, changed her clothes, and set off with her medicine box. Seeing this, Chang’an bowed with a smile,

Ning Jing took Su Liang’s medicine box, obviously accompanying her.

As they left the Su Family Village, Su Liang asked Chang’an whether Gai Yun and Gai Huai’an had confessed to anything yet.

Chang’an became angry at the mention, “They’ve committed such atrocities against so many young girls, and despite the undeniable evidence, they won’t admit to it. They insist someone had framed them, claiming complete ignorance about the bodies in the secret chamber and under the willow tree. It’s utterly shameless! As for Mei’s misfortune in the capital city, apart from Gai Huai’an, who else could have done this? Not only does Miss Su stand as a witness, but Liu Xiaoyue, too, is still alive, yet they continue to deny it! And not to mention the smuggling of the iron mine!”

“Does the Wu Family still have members in the capital city?” Su Liang asked. If Gai Yun and Gai Huai’an refuse to plead guilty, there’s still hope to “turn black into white.”

Chang’an nodded, “Yes! Gai Yun has two sons, both in the capital city!”

“Unless evidence of the iron mine smuggling is found, he will not confess. Once convicted, it would result in the execution of his entire clan.” Su Liang said.

“Does Miss Su and Master Ning have any good strategies to pry open their mouths? The master is worrying about this!” Chang’an said.

“We have no idea about this.” Su Liang said.

Chang’an thought to himself. Ning Jing was taking the imperial examination, naturally he was seeking success. This time, with such great credit, if reported to the court by Mai Fei, Ning Jing would have a chance to become an official without taking the examination. But he insisted on denying it, which was hard to understand.

The carriage entered Liu Family Village, and Su Liang lifted the carriage curtain to look out.

A group of children were running along with the carriage. A short and sturdy man was holding a little boy, carrying a load, and was welcomed into a house. She spotted a frail figure inside the door, somewhat resembling Liu Huilan.

The carriage stopped, and before Su Liang could step out, she heard a sharp and high-pitched shout, "Oh my doomed daughter! What will happen to you in the rest of your life?"

Su Liang thought of the old woman, Madam Niu. The carriage was moving slowly. If this woman had been crying out like this earlier, it would have been impossible not to hear it. Clearly, she started to play the victim when she saw the people coming.

Su Liang and Ning Jing got out of the carriage, and a crowd surrounded them, more than a dozen people, old and young. Some were smiling, some were crying loudly, and some were indifferent as if it were none of their business.

Chang'an said loudly, "Upon hearing that Miss Liu is sick, the noble Mai Fei has specially invited a female doctor from Su Village to come and treat her. Where is Miss Liu?"

In an instant, the eagerness on the faces of the family members was like a charcoal fire that had been doused with cold water, leaving behind only faint disappointment that vanished like white smoke.

"We can't even lift the lid of the pot. How can we have money to treat her?" A young woman with sharp features said resentfully, "My younger sister disappeared back then, causing us to return all the betrothal gifts that were given to us. The whole family can't even afford to eat now!"

Su Liang looked coldly at them. There were three or four young men in the family, yet they relied on Liu Xiaoyue's bride price for a living. They blamed Liu Xiaoyue's disappearance for the return of the betrothal gifts, as if it were Liu Xiaoyue who owed them.

It reminded Su Liang of Su Daqiang's family.

"What do you know? Lord Mai is kind-hearted. He is treating my sister first. I'm sure he will give us money!" Liu Dawei, who went to the county government office to request money, said with a grin on his face, observing Chang'an's expression as he spoke.

Although Chang'an felt disgusted at heart, his face remained impassive. He asked again, "Where is Miss Liu?"

They went into the Liu's home, which was all tattered and shabby. Liu Dawei led them towards the backyard, "Our family is big and there is not enough room, so we made my sister stay in the backyard for a few days."

Looking at the state of Liu Xiaoyue, Su Liang felt her blood pressure rise.

The place where the original master stayed in Su Daqiang's backyard was a shed made of wooden boards. Although it was drafty in winter, it was a complete place. Also, Su Daqiang's family, who had no trouble with food and clothing for a long time and were lazy, didn't raise any livestock, so it was quite clean.

But the Liu Family's backyard was filled with pigs and chickens, disgustingly dirty all over, making it impossible to put your feet down. And Liu Xiaoyue was placed in the narrow corner under the firewood shed, curled up into a ball. It was hard to spot if you didn't look closely.

Seeing Chang'an's face turn dark, Liu Dawei sighed, "People outside say that my sister will bring bad luck back. But I think she is my dear sister, I can't just ignore her life and death. Would that be human?"

He sounded as if he were the best brother.

Yet, judging by Liu Xiaoyue's predicament, it was clear that no one cared about her life and death. The so-called family who brought her back home were only using her misfortune as an excuse to extort money from the government office.

Although Su Liang knew that Liu Xiaoyue's situation would certainly lead to gossip, making her circumstances difficult, she still felt incensed on seeing how Liu Xiaoyue's nearest kin put her in a woodpile to fend for herself, whilst simultaneously seeking to profit from her misfortune.

The poor girl must have been hoping during those dark days that her parents and brothers would rescue her from the hell she was in, only to face an even more terrifying despair after she was rescued.

Su Liang approached, and Liu Xiaoyue, trembling all over, buried her head as solidly as she could. One could even hear the clattering sound of her teeth.

The surrounding environment was horribly bad that Liu Xiaoyue couldn't calm down for a while. Su Liang turned her head to look at Chang'an. Chang'an hurried over, "What can I do for you, Miss su?" Su Liang said in a low voice, "I want to take her away."

Chang'an was astonished, "Miss Su, do you mean to buy her?"

Su Liang didn't exactly mean this, but she didn't have the time to explain her intentions more precisely, "You could say that."

"Miss Su's heart is truly benevolent. It would be a hundred times better for her to serve as your maid than to stay here." Chang'an spoke seriously, "I'll take care of this."

He turned around and called Liu Dawei to speak with him privately.

"What? You want me to sell my sister to you?"

"She is my biological sister! She is the most beautiful girl in our village! When

Master Huang wanted to take her as his concubine, he paid fifty silver taels!"

Chang'an, suppressing his anger, asked, "How much do you want?"

Liu Dawei said he would need to discuss it with his family and then ran off.

Su Liang squatted beside Liu Xiaoyue, speaking softly to her, "My name is Su Liang, from the Su Family Village. There is a woman named Liu Cuizhi in my neighbor's home, I believe you know her? I don't know what you've been through, but it's not your fault. If you're willing, I'll take you away from here first. Once you regain your health, you can start fresh somewhere else." Liu Xiaoyue did not lift her head but began to whimper and sob.

Su Liang felt an ache in her heart. She thought of how the original master was always confined at home and had never left, probably Gai Yun and Gai Huai'an didn't know that there was such a girl in the Su Family Village, which was why she escaped their clutches. Otherwise, she might have fallen victim to them too.

The Liu Family, after discussing it together, decided that since they couldn't marry off Liu Xiaoyue or get any money out of her, they had only one chance to profit from her situation. They boldly asked Chang'an for 500 silver taels.

"But she's my biological sister! I only have this one sister and everyone in the family dotes on her the most! We've always given her the best we had and never made her do any work!"

"If you think it's too much, then forget it! We'll not sell her! Even if she dies, she is still part of our family!"

Chang'an gritted his teeth and agreed, not wishing to haggle with these scoundrels any longer, "Fine, 500 taels it is!"

Upon seeing Chang'an agreeing without further negotiations, Liu Dawei looked somewhat regretful, thinking he should have asked for more.

Chang'an didn't carry that much money on him and turned to Ning Jing. He had seen Ning Jing put the silver notes worth more than five thousand taels inside Su Liang's medical box.

Ning Jing didn't say anything and took out a silver note of 500 taels to give to him.

"Thank you, Master Ning. I'll report this to my lord later and repay you." Chang'an said.

Upon hearing the conversation, Liu Dawei's eyes widened, and he stretched out his neck to ask, "Is it Lord Mu who wants to buy my sister? That's really her fortune if she caught Lord Mu's eye, she could live well in the future!"

Chang'an's forehead twitched, "Shut up! Spouting nonsense! Miss Su is buying your sister to be her maid! This has nothing to do with my Master!"

Liu Dawei shrank back in his neck, "You said that, but the money was given by Lord Mu..."

"What does it matter to you who gave the money? If you don't want it then give it back!" Chang'an, suppressing the urge to hit him, shouted in anger.

With several trips to Su Family Village, Chang'an previously felt that the phrase "Bad people come from bad lands" was not credible, but after meeting these people, he found himself too naive before.

Su Liang spoke with Liu Xiaoyue for a while longer and gently held her hand. Liu Xiaoyue shivered and started to struggle.

Su Liang asked Ning Jing to bring her medicine box over. She took out a golden needle and inserted it into several points on Liu Xiaoyue, who soon fell into a deep sleep.

“What have you done to my sister?” Liu Dawei cried.

Su Liang put the golden needle away and looked at Chang'an, frowning, “Where’s the deed of sale?”

Chang'an slapped his forehead, feeling utterly confused. If there was no deed of sale, these people would certainly deny the sale in the future.

After borrowing paper and a pen from Su Liang, Chang'an wrote up the deed of sale, asking Liu Xiaoyue and her parents and elder brothers to press their fingerprints onto the document, and then gave it to Su Liang.

Su Liang, holding Liu Xiaoyue, walked out of the Liu Family residence, and many villagers gathered to watch.

Liu Dawei moved closer, “So, from now on, my sister will live in Su Family

Village? It’s so close, we can visit her every few days!”

Chang'an, unable to bear any more, kicked Liu Dawei to the ground and said coldly, “This is a maid bought by the County Magistrate to give to Doctor Su.

You’ve received 500 taels. If you dare to harass her again, you’ll all be arrested!”

The crowd around them gasped in surprise. They didn’t expect the Liu Family to sell Liu Xiaoyue so quickly! They also didn’t expect that anyone would buy Liu Xiaoyue considering her condition! What surprised them most was that she was sold for 500 taels!

As Chang'an rode away, the Liu Family, with their huge sum of money, couldn’t hide their joy. They claimed that it was for Liu Xiaoyue’s own good to send her to live a better life. Among the spectators, some envied them and were jealous. On the way back, Ning Jing did not get into the carriage but sat beside Chang'an.

Su Liang checked Liu Xiaoyue’s pulse. There were no major health problems, the main issue was that she was psychologically traumatized. But when Su

Liang opened Liu Xiaoyue’s clothing and saw the several large and small scars on her body, she could guess what Gai Huai'an had done to her. She couldn’t help cursing, “That fucking pervert!”

Chang'an immediately asked, “What did Miss Su say?”

Ning Jing had a faint expression, “She was praising your master.”

Chang'an asked with a smile, “What was she praising? I didn’t hear it clearly just now. I have to tell my master when I get back.”

“She was praising him for his generosity.” Ning Jing said.

Chang'an looked up at the sky in silence. Wasn’t he generous? He was being extorted every day.

After returning to Su Family Village, Chang'an said that once Liu Xiaoyue could speak, he would inform the County Government Office, and they would need to take her testimony then.

After Chang'an left, Su Liang asked Ning Jing to go to the Bai Family and call Mrs. Liu.

Mrs. Liu was Liu Xiaoyue's cousin. Upon seeing Xiao Yue in this state, she broke into tears immediately. When Su Liang asked her to help take care of her, she quickly agreed.

Su Liang was indeed too busy to take care of everything. And since Liu Xiaoyue was traumatized, it would be better for her to have someone she trusted by her side.

Su Liang had previously heard from Mrs. Liu that before she got married, Liu Xiaoyue was often beaten and forced to do heavy labor without being given enough food in her family. Mrs. Liu's family was in better condition, at least they had enough food to eat, so she used to secretly save her own food and share it with Liu Xiaoyue.

Madame Bai also came over. After hearing Su Liang explain the situation, she cursed the Liu Family for being heartless and reminded Su Liang to be cautious of them causing any troubles in the future.

Su Liang, however, was not worried. She just wanted to save Liu Xiaoyue; otherwise, she wouldn't have had much time left.

As for where Liu Xiaoyue would go and what she would do afterward, Su Liang planned to let her decide on her own once she recovered. Even if Liu Xiaoyue chose to end her life, it would be a kind of release. But it seemed that the young woman was very strong and didn't have thoughts of suicide; otherwise, she would be dead already.

Although Su Liang was very busy, she didn't need a maid to serve her. Moreover, both she and Ning Jing had secrets, so it wouldn't be suitable for them to become close with others.

Furthermore, Su Liang was curious about why Liu Xiaoyue was able to survive to the last. There must have been a reason.

As the sun set, while Su Liang was cooking, Ning Jing said he was going out.

"Where are you going?" Su Liang asked casually.

Ning Jing was heading out when he said, "To retrieve the 500 taels."

A faint smile appeared on the corner of Su Liang's mouth, "Good. If you didn't go, I was planning to pay a visit tonight myself.."

Chapter 58: 058. Yang Yu Writes a Letter, Xiaoyue Leaves (First Update)

Liu Family's mother carried a wooden basin out of Su Liang's room and turned into the kitchen, her eyes red and sighing constantly, "What a sin!"

Su Liang paused in cutting vegetables, "Did she start talking?"

Wiping her tears, Liu Family's mother nodded, "Xiaoyue only said one sentence, and then I had more trouble... That silly girl, she has been strong since she was a child, never crying when she got hit or scolded. If it were someone else, they wouldn't have made it through this!"

Su Liang sighed, "Indeed."

Liu Family's mother washed the wooden basin and the handkerchief inside, and said to Su Liang, "She drank some chicken soup, couldn't eat anything else, and fell asleep. It's her fortune to follow

you in the future. If it weren't for you taking her away from that family, she would have been ground to death by their black hearts!"

"Let's talk about the future after she gets better," Su Liang said.

Liu Family's mother nodded, "My younger brother is not married, and I'm afraid people will gossip if I take her in to take care of her. You're busy, and now you have to take care of her too. Sigh!"

Speaking of Bai He, Liu Family's mother mentioned another matter.

"I have no objection to my younger brother liking Huilan. She's my sister's child, and I know her roots. It's nice for her to be my sister-in-law, but my mother-in-law is absolutely against it. After all, Huilan's past is with that horrible family of the cow-wife. I wouldn't be happy if it were my child, so I've never tried to persuade her."

"But my brother-in-law isn't giving up. Little Tiger's father has tried to persuade his in-laws several times, and my mother-in-law stopped saying anything. My father-in-law asked me to inquire about what Huilan's family means by this."

"I figured this matter must be more or less settled; as long as my brother-in-law proposes to Huilan, her family will agree without a second thought."

"On the day of the fair, I happened to meet Huilan's mother in town. I didn't mention my brother-in-law, just asked how they plan to handle Huilan's situation."

"And guess what? Huilan wasn't willing to marry the butcher who beat his wife to death, and that didn't work out. The very next day, someone came to Huilan's house to propose marriage! It was a carpenter from the village. I know him; he's honest and capable. His wife died in childbirth, leaving only an old father and a four-year-old son, and he took a liking to Huilan!"

Hearing this, Su Liang recalled that earlier today, she and saw a man leading a child carrying things, heading to Liu Huilan's house on their way to Liu Family Village.

Liu Family's mother sighed, "When I heard this, I couldn't say anything further. To us, my brother-in-law seems better than the carpenter because he has never been married, but what use is there in us thinking that? Maybe Huilan doesn't want to marry into Su Family Village at all?"

"I told them at home, and they will decide. My brother-in-law insists on getting a matchmaker to propose marriage. My father-in-law asked me to go back to my maiden home and visit Huilan while I was there, to ask her opinion in private, without anyone knowing."

"I did go. Huilan was very surprised to find out that my brother-in-law had taken a liking to her, but she said she was not worthy and that marrying the local carpenter as a stepmother would be good for her. There are fewer people in that family, it's

simple, and she's not afraid of being a stepmother or suffering hardships; she just doesn't want to be bullied anymore."

Liu Family's mother shook her head and chuckled, "We all thought that we would be the ones to choose, and our family was considering this matter behind closed doors, but in the end, Huilan found another good match!"

Su Liang was a little surprised by this outcome, but thinking about it, even if Bai Family had proposed marriage earlier, Liu Huilan probably wouldn't have wanted to marry Bai He.

It's not that Bai He isn't suitable himself, but compared to the carpenter, the latter is more fitting for Liu Huilan. If she were to marry into Bai Family, she would have to bear a lot of pressure.

Liu Family's mother lamented, "Huilan said that she couldn't live through the bullying from that cow-wife's family back then, and she tried to hang herself one night. Somehow, the rope broke, and it was as if she heard someone talking to her, telling her to live. The next day she was kicked out, and she was so happy at the time! Now her suffering has turned into sweetness; Heaven is not blind after all!"

Su Liang smiled without speaking. It was she and Ning Jing who had saved Liu Huilan. Now, the cow-wife had been knocked silly by Ning Jing, Su Xingzhe who had almost raped Liu Huilan was dead, and Liu Huilan had found the home she wanted. Everything was going well.

As for Bai He, when the right time comes, he will find a girl who is suitable and whom he likes.

After finishing her story, Liu Family's mother saw it was getting dark outside and hurriedly got up, "I need to go back."

They didn't finish cooking the dumplings at noon, and there were still many leftovers. Su Liang let Liu Family's mother take half of them back and told her how to cook them.

As soon as Liu Family's mother left, Ning Jing returned.

The 500 taels of silver bills, brought back in their original form.

Ning Jing was washing up, and Su Liang started making pan-fried dumplings. It's not as delicious if you make it ahead of time, so she waited specifically until he came back to make them.

Ning Jing listened to Su Liang recount Bai He and Liu Huilan's affairs, and said indifferently, "They were never meant to be married, just like you and Xing Yusheng; you were not suitable."

Su Liang wanted to grab a golden, hot pan-fried dumpling and throw it at Ning Jing's face, saying irritably, "What kind of lousy analogy is that? I didn't even want to marry Xing Yusheng!"

Ning Jing saw that the dumplings were almost fried, and served the chicken soup, getting ready to start the meal.

Mai Fei put down his chopsticks and frowned, saying, "Nothing tastes good."

Chang'an suggested, "Why not let Miss Su write down all her dishes in a cookbook and let Master buy it?"

Mai Fei snorted lightly, "A little steamed bun costs me a hundred taels. Guess how much would she ask if I want to buy her cookbook?"



Chang'an coughed lightly, "This subordinate was too impulsive. Master probably can't afford Miss Su's cookbook. As for buying Ms. Liu for 500 taels today, next time you meet Miss Su, you'll have to pay her back."

Mai Fei looked at Chang'an with a cold gaze, "Why should I pay for Su Liang's purchase of Liu Xiaoyue as her maid?"

Chang'an's neck shrank, "Didn't Master say that the government office will bear all the expenses for inviting her to treat Ms. Liu?"

"I said treatment, but I didn't say anything about buying a maid." Mai Fei said, his eyes flickering slightly, "However, 500 taels, which is just the money for five steamed buns, is not worth much. You can give it to her later."

Chang'an did not understand why Mai Fei suddenly changed his mind and heard Mai Fei say, "With Liu Xiaoyue as her maid, she will definitely learn all of Su Liang's cooking skills. In a few days, we can take Liu Xiaoyue back as our cook. After all, I paid the money, and the person should be mine. What do you think?"

Chang'an gave a thumbs up, "Master is too smart!"

"Go tomorrow and tell Su Liang and Ning Jing that I'm asking for their help going to the Wu Family to find account books. As long as they can find them, I will report to Father Emperor and give Ning Jing a great credit," Mai Fei said.

The Wu Family was sealed off. The people Mai Fei sent never found the account books. He thought Su Liang and Ning Jing could try, as their thoughts were different from that of ordinary people, and there might be discoveries.

After dinner, Ning Jing moved everything in the firewood room to the backyard, cleaned it up, and it became a clean room.

Xing Yusheng sent them a lot of new furniture, and the unused ones were all placed in the empty room.

Su Liang was reading when she heard Ning Jing knocking on the door.

"Let her live in the firewood room," said Ning Jing.

Su Liang went over to take a look, and though it was simple, everything was there. She just needed to bring over the bedding, and it would be suitable for living.

"Alright," Su Liang nodded, "I'll bring her over." Otherwise, she'd have to sleep on the floor tonight.

Liu Xiaoyue had taken calming medicine and was sleeping soundly. Su Liang carried her over, laid out the bedding, and closed the doors and windows.

The next morning, the Liu Family came again.

Seeing that Liu Xiaoyue was placed in the original firewood room, she was taken aback and quickly said, "This is very good! She's a maid, how can she live in your room?"

Su Liang smiled, "We'll talk about it when she gets better."

After a while, Liu's mother helped Liu Xiaoyue out of the room.

Liu Xiaoyue had been locked in a secret chamber without sunlight for a long time. Her face was so white that it was almost translucent, and she was terribly thin. But she still had beautiful features. Otherwise, Huang wouldn't have wanted to take her as his concubine, and she wouldn't have been captured by the Wu Family.

"Xiaoyue, this is Su Liang, your lifesaver," Liu's mother said to Liu Xiaoyue.

Su Liang walked over, and Liu Xiaoyue gently pushed her mother away, almost losing her balance, and slowly knelt down. Her voice was weak but firm, "Thank you, Miss Su, for saving my life. Without your help, I would still be in that horrible place."

Her words revealed that Liu Xiaoyue knew the Wu family's scandal was exposed because of Su Liang. Otherwise, she would have no chance of seeing daylight again.

Liu's mother teared up again but didn't help Liu Xiaoyue up.

Su Liang looked at Liu Xiaoyue and asked the doubt in her heart, "Why didn't Wu Huaian kill you alone?"

Upon hearing that name again, Liu Xiaoyue's body trembled slightly, but her back straightened even more, "After being captured, he said he liked me, that he was just too lonely and wanted me to accompany him. He said he would give me a status in the future, but I didn't believe him. I didn't know how long I had been in that secret chamber, and I wanted to die but couldn't. One day, he asked me to say that I belonged to him and was willing to die for him. As long as I said it, he would let me go home. But I knew he was lying, and no matter what I said, I couldn't leave. All his nice words were fake, not a single word could be trusted! I couldn't say I was willing to die for him; I just wanted him to meet a bad end!"

Liu's mother looked horrified.

Su Liang's eyes turned cold. She was familiar with Wu Huaian's tactics, having experienced them herself. He was not only physically disabled, but also a psychologically twisted man, enjoying playing with women's bodies and emotions. He seduced, tormented, humiliated, and deceived them to the extreme.

Liu Xiaoyue didn't know how long she had been in the secret chamber, but Su Liang guessed it had been around half a year.

The other girls who died at the hands of Wu Huaian were seduced and tormented by him. They said what he wanted to hear, thinking it would set them free, but they didn't realize that it was his way of showing that he was tired of them and wanted them to complete a ritual before they died according to his fantasies.

Liu Xiaoyue survived because she never believed in Wu Huaian's false promises and never compromised. This challenged his high and mighty image of manipulating others and fueled his desire to crush her psychologically, making her the last one to survive.

“Not only did my benefactor save me, but also brought justice for my dead sisters. No matter what my benefactor asks me to do in the future, I won’t hesitate.” Liu Xiaoyue declared.

Su Liang’s expression was indifferent, “If I ask you to do something morally wrong, will you still do it?”

Liu Xiaoyue shook her head, “That won’t happen, you are a good person.”

“Actually, I didn’t plan on having you as a maid. I don’t need one. You can stay here until you recover and decide where to go and what to do in the future.” Su Liang said.

Liu’s mother was startled, “Where...where can she go?”

Liu Xiaoyue looked at Su Liang with tearful eyes, “I can cook and do laundry, and I can learn whatever I don’t know. If my benefactor doesn’t want me, I can only become a nun!”

“Becoming a nun is also a peaceful place.” Su Liang said.

“But how can I repay my benefactor if I become a nun?” Liu Xiaoyue shook her head.

Su Liang was about to say that she didn’t need repayment, but changed her mind.

Liu Xiaoyue was strong, principled, morally clear, and had a clear mind, which was very rare.

Su Liang didn’t need a maid, but hearing Liu Xiaoyue call her a benefactor made her think of Yang Yu. Even if he regained his family property, he would still have a hard life and need trustworthy helpers. Liu Xiaoyue had potential, and if she stayed with Yang Yu, she could learn skills and become independent. “Get up.” Su Liang helped Liu Xiaoyue up, “In a few days, I’ll arrange a place for you.”

Liu Xiaoyue persuaded Liu’s mother to go home, saying she was fine and didn’t need care. When she returned home after being rescued, her family’s coldness hurt and discouraged her. Now that she had a new home and things to do, she could do more.

After Liu’s mother left, Liu Xiaoyue wanted to wash Su Liang’s clothes, but Su Liang ordered her to rest for three more days before she would have plenty of work to do.

Chang’an returned, offering the 500 taels for buying Liu Xiaoyue, but Su Liang refused to accept them.

“At Liu’s house, I didn’t want to deal with them and just wanted to leave quickly, so I didn’t explain. I wanted her, and I should pay for her. I didn’t ask you to pay.” Su Liang said.

Chang’an was dumbfounded, “How can that be? My master invited Miss Su to go there. It’s not right for you to pay.”

“He invited me to treat Liu Xiaoyue. If it’s for medical expenses, I can accept it and use it to buy her more supplements. If it’s for selling herself, then forget it.” Su Liang said seriously.

Now Chang'an was in a dilemma – he couldn't give the money, nor could he take it back. His hand hung in mid-air.

Yesterday, when he said he would return the 500 taels to Ning Jing, he was impulsive. After returning, he was scolded by Mai Fei, who said that he had grown too accustomed to being swindled by Su Liang.

But now that Mai Fei had changed his mind and wanted to give the money and had plans for Liu Xiaoyue, Su Liang refused to accept it.

"You take the money back. She is healthy and is now mine, and I will cover the medical expenses. Please leave." With that, Su Liang closed the door and bolted it from the inside.

Chang'an left with the 500 taels, feeling like crying but having no tears. He had accomplished nothing on this trip. It was a complete failure.

Ning Jing was building a new carpentry workshop in the backyard. Su Liang walked over and sneered, "Mai Fei is so stingy. He's always reluctant to give money, but this time he voluntarily gave 500 taels. There must be some trickery."

If Chang'an were here and heard Su Liang complaining about Mai Fei being stingy, he would definitely spit blood. In just half a month, Su Liang had been taking advantage of Mai Fei time and time again, and he had given her everything she wanted!

"He gives the money, we give him the girl," Ning Jing said.

Su Liang stepped forward to help, "We can't give her to him. Didn't you say it yourself? Stay away from people in the Royal Family. Maybe he's taken a liking to Xiaoyue's character and plans to use her for something."

On this point, Su Liang was actually right.

Although Mai Fei told Chang'an that he would take Liu Xiaoyue away to be a cook after some time, what he truly wanted was to use her since she survived in Gai Huai'an's hands and managed to impress Su Liang enough to be taken home.

"What are you planning to do?" Ning Jing asked.

Su Liang shook her head, "Let her follow Yang Yu."

Ning Jing looked up at Su Liang and nodded slightly, "Not bad."

Liu Xiaoyue heard Su Liang's words in her room. She didn't know who Yang Yu was, but she knew clear that Su Liang didn't plan to keep her as a maid.

When Chang'an returned to the county town and took out the 500 taels, Mai Fei's face turned black, "Damn it! I volunteered to give it to her, and she doesn't want the girl now?"

Chang'an nodded, "It seems Miss Su really wants to keep Miss Liu. She didn't even agree to helping us find the account book. She said that if we can't find it, maybe it's not in the Wu Family."

Mai Fei stared, "Search for three more days. Tear down everything above ground, and dig every place!"

Three days later, Su Liang saw the person sent by Yang Yu to deliver a letter and check in on them.

The person, named Zhou Yuan, was a middle-aged man with a burly physique, a bear-like waist, and a beard. Just by appearance, he looked ferocious, but his demeanor and conversation were quite cultured, suggesting he was a trusted person of Yang Yu.

In the letter, Yang Yu wrote that she knew there was no chance of reconciliation with Yang Wu and that if she returned home, she would definitely be killed. So along the way, she found a way to hire an assassin from Yanyun Building to eliminate Yang Wu before she arrived home.

Su Liang sighed a little. Yang Yu's brother, Yang Feng, was killed by Yan Shiba, and she didn't expect Yang Yu to actively seek out Yanyun Building. The innocent and kind girl she first met had been forced by reality to become ruthless.

But it was a very rational choice.

Although Yang Wu was Yang Yu's half-brother from the same father, their relationship was ultimately a life-and-death struggle. The one who truly killed Yang Feng was Yang Wu. It was Su Liang's intervention that allowed Yang Feng to live a few more days. If Yang Yu had been kind and soft-hearted, she would have died.

As for the cousin who sold Yang Yu, she was given a taste of her own medicine.

Yang Yu wrote that many people in her family did not accept her, not for any other reason, but simply because she was a woman. Her parents were no longer around, and a group of outsiders insisted on adopting a cousin's son as their own to continue the family line and inherit the family business.

"My father started from scratch and accumulated such a large family business. The so-called relatives just took advantage of him to enjoy a good life, without any ability or effort. If I were to give the Yang Family to them, they would soon squander everything. Why should I give up what is rightfully mine?"

"Don't worry, I won't let them bully me. Once I finish handling my family's matters, I'll visit you."

Su Liang put away the letter. Zhou Yuan handed her a jade token engraved with the character "Yang". With this token, she could go to any of the Yang Family's Money Houses to withdraw money.

After Su Liang accepted it, she invited Zhou Yuan for tea and food. While they ate, she wrote a reply, updating Yang Yu on her and Ning Jing's recent situation and introducing Liu Xiaoyue's situation, asking her to find something for the

Girl to do

Liu Xiaoyue had long known that Su Liang was going to send her away but didn't expect it to happen so quickly. She didn't even have the chance to cook a meal or wash clothes for Su Liang.

The only thing Su Liang asked Liu Xiaoyue to do in these three days was to recount what she knew about Gai Huai'an's actions. Su Liang recorded it, and Liu Xiaoyue pressed her fingerprint. This would be sent to Mai Fei as testimony.

Su Liang briefly explained Yang Yu's situation to Liu Xiaoyue, and upon hearing that it was a woman, Liu Xiaoyue immediately breathed a sigh of relief and accepted Su Liang's arrangement.

"Go on. You've survived until now, so there's nothing to be afraid of," Su Liang gently patted Liu Xiaoyue's shoulder. "I hope that the next time I see you, you'll be smiling."

Liu Xiaoyue held back her tears and nodded heavily, "Stay safe, my benefactor! I won't let you down!"

Chapter 59: 059. Nian Jincheng Leaves the Capital (Second Shift)

Zhou Yuan hadn't expected to bring someone back, but Yang Yu had instructed him to do whatever Su Liang suggested, so he agreed immediately, promising to safely escort the person.

After watching Zhou Yuan take Liu Xiaoyue away, Su Liang returned home to find that Ning Jing had already set up his woodworking studio, which looked very professional.

When Mrs. Liu came again and found out that Su Liang had arranged for Liu Xiaoyue to go to her friend's place, she was surprised, but agreed that it was better for Xiaoyue to start anew in a place where no one knew her.

In the afternoon, there was a knock at the door. Su Liang opened it to find a distressed old woman, carrying a basket, who looked vaguely familiar.

The moment she saw Su Liang, she tried to kneel down and pleaded, "I am Xiaoyue's mother, I came to see my daughter, please let me see her!" Su Liang then remembered.

This old woman had been amongst the crowd when Su Liang visited Liu Family. She seemed indifferent, as if none of it concerned her.

With an expressionless face, Su Liang closed the door without saying a single word. She thought that perhaps Liu Xiaoyue's mother had no say at home, but she had sold her own daughter—and more than once. Now she was here again, and Su Liang found it hard not to suspect that she was doing it for the benefit of her sons, not willing to sever ties with Liu Xiaoyue, hoping to gain some advantage in the future.

Bai Xiaohu saw the old woman crying outside Su Liang's house. It reminded him of Mrs. Niu who had been causing him trouble before, so he immediately ran home to tell his grandmother.

Upon hearing the news, Mrs. Liu came out to see and was outraged! Su Liang might not know, but she knew very well what kind of person Liu Xiaoyue's mother was. Her son was a treasure, and her daughter was worthless — Liu

Xiaoyue was always treated poorly, and her mother just ignored it. Once, when Liu Xiaoyue was beaten by her brother and she fought back, Liu Xiaoyue's mother nearly beat her to death.

Mrs. Liu walked over with a stern face and pulled up Liu Xiaoyue's mother,

"Auntie, go home now, Xiaoyue isn't here anymore!"

The sobbing old woman stopped abruptly, "What? Dawei told me it was this hnl\_lsel"

Looking back, Mrs. Liu noticed Liu Dawei lurking not too far away.

Initially, Mrs. Liu wanted to say that Su Liang had sold Liu Xiaoyue to another place, but she thought that such words would ruin Su Liang's reputation, so instead she said coldly, "Xiaoyue insisted on joining a nunnery, Miss Su couldn't stop her, so she let her go."

The old woman started cursing, "What's the use of giving birth to that dead girl! Even after she landed in a wealthy home, she still chose to leave. She never thought of supporting her brothers!"

"Didn't you get 500 taels?" Mrs. Liu frowned.

The old woman sobbed harder, "God knows who stole the money, not a single cent left! Dawei went to report to the local government, but no one took any notice!"

Mrs. Liu was surprised that they had been robbed of such a large sum of money, but on second thoughts, she suspected they might have hidden the money on purpose in order to demand more.

"Get out of here. Master Ning has an exceptional status, and you can't afford to offend him. Xiaoyue is genuinely no longer here, and I don't know where she is either! Don't come here again!" Mrs. Liu pushed the old woman away, scolded Liu Dawei a few times, and the mother and son left, cursing under their breaths.

Su Liang and Ning Jing resumed their busy and fulfilling life.

After Liu Xiaoyue left, Ning Jing made some changes to that room and designated it solely for Su Liang's medical practice. Previously, it was inconvenient for patients to come and go from her room.

They put in a medicine cabinet, added tables and chairs, and purchased the same types of tools found in the town's Medical Hall.

Word began to spread about Su Liang, and the people of Feiyan Town got to know that there was a female doctor in Su Village who was the sworn sister of the Examination Chief, Ning Jing. Many patients came from elsewhere attracted by her reputation, including ladies and wives from the county town.

Some illnesses were inconvenient for women to discuss with male doctors, and female doctors were extremely rare.

One day, after seeing three female patients from the county town in succession, Su Liang remarked, "It would have been nice to keep Xiaoyue here as my apprentice."

Ning Jing, who was seriously grinding medicine, looked up, "Is there anything about me as your apprentice that dissatisfies you?"

Su Liang coughed lightly, "No, you learn quickly, and you do a good job."

Since Su Liang had started practicing medicine in the village, Ning Jing had been assisting her and learning medical skills. However, due to Su Liang's busy schedule, she didn't have time to give Ning Jing formal lessons. Any medical books that she had read, Ning Jing would take them to read as well.

"How many days will it take us to travel from here to the provincial city?" Su Liang asked.

"If we hurry, three to five days. If we take it slow, seven to eight days." Ning Jing replied.

"So we should set off by the end of the month, right?" Su Liang asked.

It was already the tenth day of the ninth month, while the Provincial Exam was in October.

"Yes," Ning Jing nodded, "we should leave five days in advance."

"Do we go straight to the capital city after the exam, or do we come back here first then go to the capital after the New Year?" Su Liang asked.

"We'll come back." Ning Jing replied.

Having decided on that plan for now, Su Liang didn't pay any more attention to the progress of the iron ore smuggling case related to Mai Fei. She thought it wouldn't be easy to unravel.

After receiving Yang Yu's letter, Su Liang felt that her most significant challenge had been overcome. Then she thought about Yan Shiba again. Although Yan Shiba chose to fight against Yan Sui, it was not unrelated to Su

Liang and Ning Jing.

Ning Yao hired Yanyun Building to assassinate Ning Jing, but Yan Shiba mistakenly killed Yang Feng during his first attempt and failed the task. This gave Yan Sui an excuse to confront Yan Shiba, leading to their feud.

If Yan Shiba were defeated by Yan Sui, not only would her chances of survival be slim, but Yan Sui would also continue the unfinished task of killing Ning Jing.

Therefore, Su Liang hoped that Yan Shiba could eliminate Yan Sui and take control of Yanyun Building.

One deep night, Su Liang, who was asleep, heard fighting in the courtyard and guessed that Yan Sui might have come.

If it was really Yan Sui, it meant that Yan Shiba might be dead.

Su Liang didn't light a lamp, stood inside the window with a dagger, pricked a hole through the window paper, and watched the outside situation. If Ning Jing wasn't strong enough to handle it, her sudden appearance would only complicate things.

The moonlight was bright, illuminating the land with a silver hue.

Two shadows intertwined and separated, moving at high speed. Su Liang recognized one of them as Ning Jing, while the other was clearly a man.

The fight lasted an hour. Su Liang watched with such focus that her eyes began to ache, and both fighters seemed to slow down.

But she still couldn't tell who had the upper hand, the result was still uncertain.

As Su Liang rubbed her eyes and looked again, Ning Jing's long sword had already penetrated the body of his opponent!



“Luoying Sword... You are... Gu...” The old voice was filled with astonishment. Before it could finish, it died.

Su Liang thought to herself, it was Gu Ling... She had guessed it long ago. But they hadn't discussed the matter between them, and it wasn't important for now.

Ning Jing looked over, and Su Liang ran out of the door, “Is it Yan Sui?”

“Yes.” Ning Jing uncovered the mask on the corpse's face, revealing an old and ordinary face that didn't look menacing.

Ning Jing took off the MO Yu finger ring from Yan Sui's hand and gave it to Su Liang; it was the symbol of the owner of Yanyun Building.

“If I keep this, will the people from Yanyun Building come for it?” Su Liang asked.

“Yes.” Ning Jing nodded, “If it were me, I would take it and claim that Yan Sui passed the ownership of Yanyun Building to me before his death.”

“Why are you giving it to me then?” Su Liang felt the finger ring in her hand was scorching hot.

“Yan Sui's last task before he went missing was to kill me. Regardless of who has the ring, they will still come for me.” Ning Jing explained.

Looking at the corpse on the ground, Su Liang rubbed her forehead and said,

“You mean we won't have any peace from now on?”

“We'll live as usual during the day, and they'll come at night. Great way for you to practice.” Ning Jing suggested.

Su Liang coughed, “You have so much confidence in me?”

“As long as I am here, you won't die.” Ning Jing said, dragging Yan Sui's corpse towards the backyard.

Su Liang wore the MO Yu ring on her thumb, sighing faintly, “Life is becoming increasingly interesting.”

On a deep night three days later, Su Liang was visited by the first wave of assassins hunting for the ring.

Knowing that Yan Sui had been killed and there was a master here, the enemy would definitely not attack alone, so four of them came at once.

Su Liang heard Ning Jing's warning, got ready for the battle, but when she came out and saw four fierce-looking assassins in the courtyard, she froze. This was not part of the plan; she had trouble dealing with one...

Just as Su Liang thought she'd have to team up with Ning Jing to fight, Ning Jing grabbed her wrist, led her swiftly to the backyard, jumped over the courtyard wall, and sprinted towards the back mountain.

Su Liang stole a glance at the chasing assassins and, despite being surprised that Ning Jing had chosen to run, she obeyed him under such circumstances.

Last time she came up the mountain, Su Liang was hunting wild boars with Ning Jing and the Bai brothers.

Walking along, Ning Jing suddenly let go of Su Liang, gesturing at the tree beside them.

Understanding his intention, Su Liang quickly climbed up, concealed herself, and held her breath.

Ning Jing also hid in the vicinity.

Four assassins paused beneath a tree, a fork in the road ahead of them, unable to determine which way Su Liang and Ning Jing had gone.

They quickly decided to split into two groups, heading in different directions to track them down, with the plan to notify each other as soon as they found their targets.

Once the assassins left, Su Liang looked towards where Ning Jing was hiding. A dark figure flashed past, then disappeared.

Su Liang stayed put.

About half an hour later, she heard a disturbance. Her expression tensed!

She recognized Ning Jing running towards her, with one person chasing him from behind. Only one.

Su Liang tightened her grip on her sword. Once Ning Jing ran beneath the tree, she leaped down, blocking the assassin's path.

The assassin caught sight of the MO Yu ring Su Liang had deliberately worn on her finger. His eyes narrowed, but he didn't kneel and call her "master." Instead, he swung his blade at her!

Su Liang had been specifically trained by Ning Jing on how to fight against blade-wielding enemies, so she didn't fear him.

However, be it martial arts or experience, she still fell short compared to the assassin.

Knowing that Ning Jing was watching, Su Liang was unafraid and fought with increasing courage.

"Yan Shiba?" Su Liang suddenly called out, looking over the assassin's shoulder.

Caught off guard, the assassin faltered. Su Liang took the opportunity to stab him in the arm!

The situation turned. Although it was tough, Su Liang was merely scratched and was able to kill the enemy.

Exhausted from the fight, she leaned against a tree for support. Ning Jing stepped out from the shadows, "There are two more."

Su Liang was taken aback, "Didn't you kill three and leave one for me?"

"I only killed one." Ning Jing said, raising his sword, "They're coming. You have half a moment to rest."

As he finished speaking, he met the two assassins who had rushed back after receiving the message.

Su Liang quickly hid, using this short rest period to observe the two assassins' moves.

Half a moment later, Su Liang jumped out and joined Ning Jing, turning the fight into a 2v2.

When the two assassins saw that Ning Jing was actually using this opportunity to guide Su Liang's martial arts, they were infuriated and attacked even more fiercely.

Unfortunately, even Yan Sui couldn't kill Ning Jing, let alone these men. Once they lost their chance to attack as a foursome, their defeat was inevitable.

They didn't die instantly because Ning Jing was using them to give Su Liang real-life combat experience.

Lastly, leaning on her sword and barely standing, Su Liang took a deep breath,

"Did you train in martial arts since you were a kid? How are you not tired?"

"It's not that I don't get tired, but the enemy must be tired first, otherwise you will die," Ning Jing said.

"Understood." Su Liang nodded, "My base is too weak, I will continue to work hard. "

The east was starting to brighten, and they were not far from the top of the mountain.

After a sleepless night, even though Su Liang was tired and slightly injured, she was highly alert. Cooled by the mountain mist, she asked Ning Jing if he wanted to watch the sunrise on the mountain top.

"You go first." Ning Jing needed to dispose of the bodies.

Using her sword as a walking stick, Su Liang slowly climbed to the top of the mountain, gradually regaining her strength.

When she reached the top, she saw the red sun bursting forth.

By the time Ning Jing arrived, the sun had risen and Su Liang had fallen asleep against a large stone on the mountain top.

Ning Jing tapped Su Liang's head with the hilt of his sword. Su Liang woke up immediately and stood up!

"It's time to descend the mountain." Ning Jing started the descent, holding the weapons of the four assassins in his hand.

"Ah!" Su Liang instinctively followed. She had bloodstains on her clothes and hoped that they wouldn't run into anyone on the way down.

When they were almost at the foot of the mountain, Ning Jing stopped. He hid the weapons in the grass and gave his coat to Su Liang.

From this spot, they can see their house, and a carriage was parked outside the main gate.

Su Liang put on Ning Jing's coat. It was too big and hung loose on her.

When they trotted down the mountain, they missed the chance to enter the backyard directly because Chang'an spotted them.

“Miss Su, Mr. Ning, what is this about?” Chang’an was rather surprised, with Mai Fei standing next to him.

Mai Fei’s gaze focused on Su Liang’s clothes, half amused and half curious, “Did you two go mountain climbing this early in the morning? How intriguing.”

Su Liang walked forward calmly, “Not exactly. I sleepwalked last night and ended up on the mountain. I ran around too far, fell a few times, lost my way. Luckily, Ning Jing managed to locate me.”

Mai Fei smirked slightly, “Sleepwalking?” He had a hunch that Su Liang was making things up again.

“What brings Mr. Mai here?” asked Su Liang.

“Liu Xiaoyue’s family said that the 500 taels of silver were missing. Did you hear about this?” asked Mai Fei.

Chang’an thought to himself, It was probably Su Liang and Ning Jing who stole it back. I considered doing the same, but they beat me to it.

Su Liang nodded, ‘Yes, I did. Xiaoyue’s mother came over a few days ago and mentioned it. ’

“Miss Su, you must not engage with those people!” blurted out Chang’an.

“If you went sleepwalking, Liu Xiaoyue was home, right? Why didn’t she open the door?” Mai Fei asked.

“I sold her somewhere else.” Su Liang retreated a few steps and started running. She leaped over the wall, entered from there, and opened the front door from inside.

The sequence of actions stunned even Mai Fei.

Ning Jing entered the gate and headed straight back to his room, ignoring Mai Fei and Chang’an entirely.

“Please come in. Do you want to have breakfast here?” Su Liang was quite courteous.

Mai Fei answered curtly, “I can’t afford it! ”

“Then get straight to the point, and then, please feel free to leave.” Su Liang said.

Mai Fei didn’t believe that Su Liang had sold Liu Xiaoyue, but since she said so, Liu Xiaoyue must not be here any longer. As for her whereabouts, Su Liang was probably unwilling to disclose.

“Gai Huai’an said he’s willing to confess, but he wants to see you first.” Mai Fei said.

Su Liang huffed, “If I go, he will claim that once he kills me, he’ll hand over what you’re after. Do you believe it or not?”

Mai Fei sighed and stepped into the yard, “I know it’s useless for you to go, but with no progress, I’ve been at my wit’s end. So, I chose to take a stroll and ended up here.”

Nian Jincheng came out of the palace and rode his horse back to his mansion.

Nian Ruxue was wearing a dashing outfit, sitting in the pavilion next to the ornamental rockery in his yard, drinking tea.

“Second Brother, you’re finally back! No matter what emergency arises today, you have to make time for it. You promised to train me in martial arts, but you never had the time!” Nian Ruxue emerged from the pavilion and grabbed Nian Jincheng’s arm.

Nian Jincheng pushed Nian Ruxue’s hand away, “Ask Big Brother to teach you. I have to leave the capital today.”

Nian Ruxue frowned, “Leaving the capital? Why?”

“Gai Yun and his son, who were stationed in the mines of Bei’an County, have been exposed by the Fourth Prince for secretly torturing several civilians in the past three years. The Fourth Prince has captured them and suggested in a memorandum that I should take over Gai Yun’s position.” Nian Jincheng explained.

Nian Ruxue’s face turned somber, “The Fourth Prince is clearly trying to ruin your future! You’re too young to be overseeing a mine!”

“Why can’t I? It’s a critical assignment,” Nian Jincheng countered, “The Emperor asked for my opinion. I agreed and due to the urgency of the matter, I must set out today!”

“Have you gone mad, Second Brother? Since the Emperor didn’t issue a direct decree and asked about your thoughts, why didn’t you come up with an excuse to decline? Hurry and have father go see the Crown Prince. He definitely does not want you overseeing the mine either. That’s practically exile!” Nian Ruxue furrowed her brow.

“You don’t understand, so stop meddling. If it could be declined, the Emperor would have never summoned me to the palace.” Nian Jincheng became serious, “You should head home. I will say my farewell to my grandmother and father shortly and then set off to Bei’an County..”

Chapter 60: 060. Siblings, Cousins (An Update)

The maid closed the curtain, “Old Madam, Second Young Master has arrived.”

Nian Jincheng entered the room, only to see that his grandmother Qiao’s face was full of smiles while playing with a colorful parrot next to his older brother, Nian Jinxing, the eldest son of the Nian Family.

Grandmother’s love and grandson’s filial piety painted a harmonious picture.

Nian Jincheng respectfully greeted his grandmother and older brother, but it seemed that no one heard him.

As sunshine poured in through the carved window frames, premium silver-thread coal burned brightly and warmly in the room. Only Nian Jincheng stood half in the shadows as if he were unnecessary.

After the nanny whispered a few words into Qiao's ear, she spared a mere three-tenths of her attention from her beloved eldest grandson and parrot for Nian Jincheng.

With just a three-tenths share of her attention, her gaze towards Nian Jincheng was slanted, looking completely unconcerned. She opened her mouth lazily, "Aren't you usually busy? How did you find spare time to visit this old woman?"

The nanny pursed her lips. Among the grandchildren, Nian Jincheng was the busiest, but no matter how busy he was, as long as he was in the capital city, he would visit daily. However, eight out of ten times, Qiao wouldn't let him in.

In the eyes of outsiders, Nian Jincheng was a man close to the emperor, the pride of the Nian Family, with a promising future. But since childhood, he had never been liked by his elders, no matter how hard he worked or how outstanding he was. Even the servants at home could see this.

"Grandmother, the emperor has given me an order, and I will leave for Bei'an County today to guard the mine." Nian Jincheng repeated what he had said earlier.

Qiao laughed at the news, "Good! Off you go, and don't worry about the matters at home."

"Take care, grandmother, I am leaving." As soon as Nian Jincheng turned to leave, he looked back before the curtain fell, only to see his big brother, who had never liked him, and Qiao whispering warmly to each other.

As Nian Jincheng reached the entrance of his father Nian Jitang's courtyard, a guard stopped him.

"Second Young Master, the master is busy. He ordered not to see anyone." The guard said sternly.

But Nian Jincheng already saw Nian Jitang.

With the window open, Nian Jitang had his clothes half open, a seductive concubine with mischievous eyes in his arms. They shared a moment of carefree laughter.

Nian Jitang looked up, seemingly glancing at Nian Jincheng, but then dismissed him, whispering something to the concubine, who laughed, her body trembling with glee.

Nian Jincheng retracted his gaze and expressionlessly said, "After father finishes his business, please tell him that I have received an imperial order to leave the city to guard the mine in Bei'an County. I may not be back for some time."

The guard hesitated for a moment, "Such a significant matter, shouldn't your subordinate report it to the master right now? Perhaps the master..." Nian Jincheng turned away, "There's no need. It's nothing important." His affairs had never been of much importance to his father.

Last year, Nian Jincheng became the Martial Arts Champion. While outsiders praised him, he heard his father say to a colleague that he wished his eldest son, Nian Jinxing, had become the champion instead. And he would have offered incense at the ancestral hall to celebrate.

Qiao and Nian Jitang had even suggested that Nian Jincheng resign from his military position so Nian Jinxing could replace him.

They called it respecting seniority and observing proper family hierarchy.

Simply because he was born under an ominous sign during a thunderstorm. Perhaps there were other reasons, but no one had ever told Nian Jincheng.

He returned to his residence, opened and then closed his packed luggage, poured himself a glass of wine from the old jug, and with the rockery in the courtyard as a view, drank it all, one sip at a time.

His attendant, Nian Ye, ran in, “Young Master, Crown Prince Bei Jingwang and Miss Qin have arrived!”

Nian Jincheng was surprised to see Qin Yujun pushing Xing Yusheng’s wheelchair through the door. Early in the morning, a shocking piece of news spread throughout the capital city.

Three years ago, General Gai Yun, who had voluntarily gone to Bei’an County to guard the iron mine, and his young, handicapped son, Gai Huai’an, were accused of secretly kidnapping and killing several young girls in Bei’an County!

At the emperor’s command, Fourth Prince Duanmu Chen had gone to Bei’an County to investigate the case. With conclusive evidence, he exposed the truth and arrested the monstrous father and son!

Moreover, three years ago, Mei, the fifth daughter of the Vice Minister of Rites, who had a marriage contract with Gai Huai’an, had mysteriously disappeared after their engagement was broken off. Her bones were discovered in the garden of Gai Yun and Gai Huai’an’s residence in Bei’an County!

Mei, the Vice Minister of Rites, had gone to the palace early in the morning, and left with red eyes. Meanwhile, the entire Gai Family in the capital city was imprisoned.

When the shocking and disgusting acts of father and son Gai Yun and Gai Huai’an were exposed, the common people were both appalled and disgusted.

The once victorious and glorious general turned out to be so sinister and shameless behind the scenes, causing countless harm and sending chills down people’s spines.

Meanwhile, the news that Emperor had appointed Nian Jincheng to replace Gai Yun’s position did not receive much attention.

Nevertheless, some people still noticed it, such as Xing Yusheng.

This was Xing Yusheng’s first visit to another family in the capital city, but it wasn’t his first time meeting Nian Jincheng.

Last month, at the Qin Mansion poetry gathering, Nian Jincheng had sought out Xing Yusheng. The two played a game of chess and exchanged some words that outsiders didn’t know, and it wasn’t a pleasant conversation.

Qin Yujin, dressed beautifully, came out to meet Nian Jincheng, explaining with a smile, “I apologize for the abrupt visit. My cousin learned that General Nian is going to Bei’an County and would like to ask for a favor.”

“What can Nian do for His Highness, the Crown Prince of Xing?” Nian Jincheng’s expression was indifferent.

Xing Yusheng looked pale, with a cloth bag on his knees and his hands on top of it, "There is a Qiuming Manor in Bei'an County, which belongs to my family. Before coming to the capital city, I stayed there with my grandmother for a while. I made a friend in Bei'an County, and knowing that General Nian is going there, I would like to ask you to help me deliver some books to her."

Qin Yujin chuckled lightly, "My cousin has never mentioned such a friend before. I'm curious about who this person is, that you think so much of and even asked my grandfather for his treasured books as a gift."

"Alright," Nian Jincheng took the books handed over by Xing Yusheng, "Where does Crown Prince Xing's friend live and what's her name?"

"She lives in Su Family Village of Feiyan Town, Bei'an County," Xing Yusheng said.

The fingers of Nian Jincheng's hand that held the books suddenly tightened. But the name Xing Yusheng said next was different from what Nian Jincheng had expected...

"Su Liang?" Qin Yujin asked curiously, "My cousin's friend has a unique name." "It's a woman. General Nian, don't get it wrong," Xing Yusheng said.

Qin Yujin was surprised, "A woman? Is this your close female confidante, cousin?"

Xing Yusheng turned his head slightly and frowned, "Just a friend, don't talk nonsense, cousin."

"Oh," Qin Yujin was very good-tempered with Xing Yusheng, and she smiled upon hearing his words, "I misunderstood."

"General Nian?" Xing Yusheng noticed that Nian Jincheng seemed lost in thought, "I heard that you have been to Su Family Village?"

Nian Jincheng nodded, "I passed by there when I was on an errand."

Xing Yusheng knew that Nian Jincheng's visit to Su Family Village was part of his mission to investigate Gu Ling's whereabouts.

But it had nothing to do with the current matter.

Qi Yan, who had gone to deliver the medical books to Su Liang, had not yet returned to the capital. When Xing Yusheng heard that Nian Jincheng was going there, he got some medical and poison books from Old Master Qin to send to Su Liang, and asked Nian Jincheng to take them along the way.

"Is there any message to convey to Miss Su Liang?" When Nian Jincheng mentioned this name, he remembered a girl wearing a wedding dress, thin, timid, and heavily made-up.

Indeed, Nian Jincheng had been to Su Family Village and had met Su Liang, even talked to her.

At this moment, Nian Jincheng couldn't understand how that girl could be Xing Yusheng's friend. Even though he knew Su Liang grew up in the capital city, the impression left from that encounter was not a good one.



However, since Nian Jincheng and Xing Yusheng were not friends, it wasn't appropriate for him to ask further questions despite his doubts.

Xing Yusheng shook his head, "It would be great if General Nian could help me deliver the books. There's nothing else."

Qin Yujin took off an exquisite embroidered sachet from her waist, "Cousin, I really want to get to know Miss Su Liang. Can I give her this? I made it myself."

Xing Yusheng glanced at it, "Up to you."

Qin Yujin wrapped the sachet in a handkerchief and handed it to Nian Jincheng.

Nian Jincheng took it and put it in the cloth bag given by Xing Yusheng, "I will definitely deliver it."

"Thank you, General Nian," Qin Yujin's face flushed slightly.

"I'll take my leave." As Xing Yusheng finished speaking, Qin Yujin pushed him out and left.

Nian Jincheng returned to his room, opened the cloth bag, and flipped through the three ancient books inside—two medical dictionaries and one book on poisons.

With a mysterious look, Nian Jincheng placed the cloth bag in his luggage and set off with his entourage.

He was going to guard the mine in Bei'an County, and the troops were already there. He and his servant traveled lightly, with no extra baggage.

He didn't know when he would be able to return. Nian Jincheng mounted his horse and rode out, looking back and seeing that no one from the Nian Family had come to see him off.

"Young Master, let's go. We still have a long journey ahead, and the Fourth Prince might get impatient if we're late." Nian Ye sighed.

Just as Nian Jincheng raised his whip, he heard Nian Ruxue's voice. "Wait, Second Brother!"

Nian Jincheng turned his horse around and saw Nian Ruxue running out, holding up her skirt.

"Take care on the road, Second Brother." "Hmm." "Be careful of the Fourth Prince's plots."

"I will."

"Return to the capital as soon as possible."

"I shall follow the emperor's decree."

"I made these desserts for you to eat on the road."

"Thank you. Little sister, practice your martial arts diligently. I'll test you when I return. "

“I will!”

Nian Jincheng took the desserts Nian Ruxue had given him, mounted his horse again, waved to her, and said, “Go back! Don’t worry about me!”

Nian Ruxue smiled sweetly, “Take care, Second Brother!”

At the Qiao Family residence, Nian Jinxing was still there.

“Did little brother leave?” Nian Jinxing asked languidly.

“He left.” Nian Ruxue sat beside Qiao’s wife, massaging her leg quite naturally.

“Finally, I don’t have to see that annoying face every day!” Nian Jinxing snorted.

Nian Ruxue frowned, “Big brother, we should at least keep up appearances. If you treat him well, he’ll return your kindness tenfold.”

Nian Jinxing sneered, “Is that why you’re always trying to get close to him?”

Nian Ruxue didn’t argue, “It would be beneficial for both of us if Second Brother becomes accomplished.”

“It would be beneficial for you. As the eldest son of the Nian Family, I have been outshined by a concubine-born half-brother, and I’ve lost all face!” Nian Jinxing’s expression darkened.

“Big brother, sharing in each other’s glory and losses...” Nian Ruxue sighed.

Nian Jinxing toyed with the agate beads in his hand and said sarcastically, “All he won was a martial arts championship. He’s never even been to battle. Since when did the Nian Family’s glory depend on him? We don’t even know if he’s really part of the Nian Family!”

Qiao’s wife frowned, “Jinxing, don’t talk nonsense!”

Nian Jinxing realized his earlier words were mocking his father, and he pretended to slap his own face, “I’m sorry, grandmother, don’t get angry. It would be my fault if your health worsened. Ruxue, move aside, I’ll massage grandmother’s legs.”

Qiao’s wife poked Nian Jinxing’s forehead and laughed, “You’re quite the jester for someone your age. Your aunt sent word from the palace, asking you to be careful about your behavior outside so she can speak highly of you to the emperor and find you a suitable position in the army.”

Nian Jinxing immediately stood up and bowed respectfully, “Understood!”

His behavior made Qiao’s wife laugh so much that she leaned on Nian Ruxue for support.

After leaving the Nian Family, Xing Yusheng and Qin Yujin took a carriage back to Qin Mansion.

Qin Yujin laughed, “I wonder if Miss Su likes the sachet I sent.”

Xing Yusheng said indifferently, “My cousin’s interest lies elsewhere. She’s not trying to make friends with me, but wants Nian Jincheng to keep your gift close to him.”

Qin Yujin’s face turned red, “Cousin, don’t talk nonsense!”

“So you went to the Nian Family with me today because you didn’t think Ajun was reliable?”

“You and Miss Su seem to have quite a special relationship, don’t you? “You’re overthinking it. She’s already married.”

“You would send a book to a married woman? What’s your real intention, cousin?”

“Books are meant to be read, and they’re perfect gifts for friends. It’s not like sachets that need to be carried around.” “I’ve already said it’s a gift for Miss Su!”

“Oh, so it’s for Miss Su.”

“What a coincidence.”

“Such a coincidence indeed.”

Hearing the laughter from inside the carriage, Qi Jun, who was outside, sighed and gazed at the sky.

Although they rarely met before, Xing Yusheng and Qin Yujin had a good relationship. Their first “quarrel” today seemed quite strange.

“How did you get to know Miss Su?” Qin Yujin curiously asked.

Xing Yusheng thought for a moment and said. “Her family has a pear tree and the pears are delicious.”

Qin Yujin paused, “And then?”

Xing Yusheng abruptly changed the subject, “Do you think Nian Jincheng will stay in Bei’an County for long?”

After giving it some thought, Qin Yujin said, “Probably not.”

“That’s not certain.” Xing Yusheng said.

Realizing she’d been diverted, Qin Yujin asked, “Cousin, you still haven’t told me how you and Miss Su met! ”

Xing Yusheng sighed, “She’s a doctor. When I was seriously ill, she saved my life. So she’s not only my friend but also my lifesaver.”

Qin Yujin’s expression turned serious, “So that’s the reason. No wonder my cousin sent her medical books. You should have told me earlier, so I could have prepared more appropriate gifts for her.”

Qi Jun said from outside, “Miss Suls cooking is delicious. I’ve had steamed buns she made herself.”

Xing Yusheng snorted, “Ajun, your wages for this month are gone.”

Qi Jun, rubbing his forehead, said, “Master, Miss Su gave me those steamed buns.”

“Next month’s wages are gone too,” Xing Yusheng declared.

Qin Yujin, trying to hold back her laughter, said, “Ajun is so pitiful. Even he has tasted Miss Su’s steamed buns, but my cousin and I haven’t. What a pity. What’s more important: steamed buns or wages? What do you think, Ajun?”

Qui Jun replied weakly, “Miss Qin, please don’t tease me anymore. Wages are essential. I haven’t married yet!”

“My cousin hasn’t found a wife yet either, so what’s the rush for you?” Qin Yujin teased Xing Yusheng with a grin.

Xing Yusheng snorted, “Exactly, who would want to marry a sickly person like me? However, considering General Nian Jincheng’s talents, he’ll have no difficulty finding a wife with so many admirers.”

Thinking about the verbal sparring between Xing Yusheng and Qin Yujin, Qui Jun couldn’t help but summarize their conversation: “Come on, let’s hurt each other”...

However, Qi Jun thought Qin Yujin was great for making Xing Yusheng more cheerful..