

Three-Time 511

Chapter 511: 511. Let's set off

After attending Qiao Jing and Min Rou's wedding, Su Liang and Gu Ling found that a few days later, Nangong Qian also got married and formed a marriage with Qi Yan.

Feng Ming and Peng Wu's wedding were set three months later, Cheng Yun and Wen Ran's at the end of the year. Qiao Cong and Cen Man, on the other hand, were set to get married in half a month, mainly because they were worried that if it were later, Gu Ling and Su Liang would have left. As witnesses and promoters of the major turning points in their lives, others could skip their wedding wine, but Gu Ling and Su Liang had to be there.

Originally, Su Liang and Gu Ling planned to leave the capital city after Nangong Qian and Qi Yan formed their marriage. But now, they have to wait another half a month to watch Qiao Cong and Cen Man get married with their own eyes. After all, it was the elder's happy event, and Su Liang was the matchmaker.

That day, when Su Liang saw Yan Shiba again, she casually asked her, "When are you and Sheng Yue planning on getting married?" The two had already slept together but never mentioned the matter of marriage.

Yan Shiba was stunned for a moment, "Ah? Marriage? That's... not so important, right?"

Su Liang nodded, "Indeed, it's fine as long as you both are happy. I was just asking. If you don't plan on getting married, that's even better, we'll save a gift."

The moment Yan Shiba heard that, she was not happy at all, "That won't work! I want everything others have! Marriage! We'll get married tomorrow!"

Su Liang was speechless, "There's not enough time to prepare!"

"Oh, no need to make it so complicated, just a table of wine and dishes at home will do! But you and Gu have to cook it personally. After all, it's my big day, and I won't eat anything made by others! We don't have any elders... No, his dead monk father seems to be alive, but let's just treat him as dead!" Yan Shiba shook her head, "That's it! We'll get married tomorrow!"

"Won't you choose an auspicious day based on your birth chart?" Su Liang asked.

Yan Shiba shook her head indifferently, "I never believed in that stuff! It doesn't matter if he believes it or not! If he dares to disagree, we'll break up!"

As it happened, Sheng Yue came to see Su Liang about something, and when he reached the door, he heard Yan Shiba's words. His face unchanged, he came in directly.

"You came at just the right time." Yan Shiba looked at Sheng Yue, "Originally, I thought getting married was not important, and I would wait until I got pregnant first. In case I couldn't get pregnant, then it would be your fault, and I'd find a capable man..."

Sheng Yue nodded, "That's fine."

Yan Shiba choked for a moment and stared at Sheng Yue, “Don’t interrupt! I haven’t finished! Liang Meimei wants to see us get married, so instead of choosing a date, let’s bump into one – tomorrow! Are you up for it? If not, get lost!”

Upon hearing this, Sheng Yue shook his head, “Tomorrow is not possible.”

Yan Shiba snorted lightly, “Break up! It’s not like anyone’s dying to marry you!”

Su Liang asked Sheng Yue, “You came to see me, is there something?”

Sheng Yue nodded, “My mother’s death anniversary is coming up, and I want to take Cheng Yun with me to pay our respects.”

Yan Shiba frowned, “Have you asked Cheng Yun? Could he agree?”

“I asked him, he said he wanted to go, but not with me. He will go with Wen Ran.” Sheng Yue said. It had just happened, so Cheng Yun and Wen Ran hadn’t come to find Su Liang yet.

Yan Shiba asked, “Where is your mother buried?”

“In Feng City.” Sheng Yue said. It was a city in the central part of Qian Country. Their family had once lived there, and after his mother died, the household scattered. But he had gone back to visit her grave every year on her death anniversary. That was also the fixed day for him to meet with Pu Cheng every year, but Pu Cheng had never taken Cheng Yun there.

“Since Cheng Yun already said he wants to go, I won’t have to persuade him.” Su Liang said, “Leave today?”

Sheng Yue nodded, “I want to leave today.” He looked at Yan Shiba, “Why don’t you come with me, and we can get married when we get back.”

Yan Shiba’s eyes flickered, “Why should I go with you?”

“There’s nothing for you at home anyway. Gu Ling and Su Liang are leaving in half a month, and they won’t take you with them.” Sheng Yue said.

Yan Shiba kicked Sheng Yue, “Just because I have nothing to do, I should go with you? Do you think you’re charming?”

Sheng Yue nodded, “I am charming.”

Yan Shiba:...

Su Liang waved his hand, “You guys go back and fight.”

However, neither of them had any intention of leaving. Yan Shiba snorted, “I can go, I’m just idle anyway. But I want to go with Little Ranran!”

Sheng Yue shook his head, “Cheng Yun doesn’t want to go with me, you shouldn’t bother them either.”

Yan Shiba grabbed Sheng Yue's ear, stood up with a tug, and said, "Have I been too gentle with you recently?"

"Su Liang, mediate." Sheng Yue said.

Su Liang looked amused, "You guys are too noisy. If you want to fight, hurry up and do it. I like to watch, so stop saying all these nonsense."

Hearing this, Yan Shiba directly jumped onto Sheng Yue, who subconsciously held her up.

Yan Shiba leaned in and kissed Sheng Yue, "You little devil, you like to watch, huh? We'll fight for you to see!"

"Great God, throw them out. The farther, the better." Su Liang said in a faint tone.

Yan Shiba immediately got off Sheng Yue and looked at the door, thinking Gu Ling had arrived. If Su Liang spoke, Gu Ling would really throw them out.

Seeing no one at the door, Yan Shiba came over and knocked on Su Liang's forehead. Then she turned around, pulled Sheng Yue, and ran, "Let's go, go, go! Back to fight! If you win, I'll go with you to sweep the tombs!"

Cheng Yun and Wen Ran went upstairs and saw Yan Shiba dragging Sheng Yue down. They quickly stepped aside.

"Little Ranran, I want to go to South Wind City too. Come with me!" Yan Shiba said with a grin.

Cheng Yun immediately shook his head, "No."

Wen Ran smiled, "I don't mind going together."

"I do." Cheng Yun said, and then they went upstairs. They were also going to tell Su Liang the same thing.

"Look at your character. Even your own brother doesn't want to deal with you." Yan Shiba teased.

Sheng Yue remained calm, "He's just pretending."

Yan Shiba burst into laughter, "I think so too! That kid may have returned to secular life, but he's still a bit pretentious! I don't like playing with him either! It's only Little Ranran who likes him! It must be because of his good looks!"

As soon as Su Liang saw Cheng Yun and Wen Ran upstairs, she told them that they could go out without seeking her approval.

"Are you leaving in half a month?" Wen Ran asked.

Su Liang nodded, "That's the plan."

"I guess you don't want to bring anyone else other than the kids, right?" Wen Ran smiled and asked.

Su Liang smiled slightly, "I didn't say that."

“Cheng Yun and I have to get married this year, and we should pay our respects to her mother’s grave.” Wen Ran said. Although Cheng Yun had no memory of his mother, she was the one who gave birth to him after ten months of pregnancy. With Sheng Yue still holding his mother in such high regard, it shows that she was a good mother in his heart. Even though she was a transmigrator who once wanted to return to her original world, it doesn’t mean she didn’t love her child.

Sheng Yue told them that their mother nearly died of severe bleeding when she gave birth to Cheng Yun. After Cheng Yun’s birth, she became more and more uneasy, believing that the world was too backward, and she and her child were not safe. She wanted to go back. Sheng Yue could understand her and never blamed her because he believed that his mother would take them with her once she found the way back. It was just an accident that changed their lives.

“Go ahead.” Su Liang nodded, “There’s nothing going on at home. You can go out and have fun, don’t rush back.”

“I was thinking that Grandfather could go with you to the north, but you probably don’t want to bring so many people.” Wen Ran said with a smile, “But I’m not worried about Grandfather. He and Mu Grandfather are doing well together, and he’s made quite a few friends in the capital.”

Wen Ming, Old Duke Qin, and the Senior Imperial Physician had become fishing buddies and often went fishing together. Moreover, Wen Ming planned to open a medical hall in the capital and officially practice medicine this year. He used to be a skilled doctor who hid his identity because he was afraid of causing trouble, and many things proved that his worries were justified. Now, under the Emperor’s nose, with a prominent disciple, there was no need for concern and no shortage of money. In the end, he still loved his medical skills most and hoped to help others with his expertise.

After notifying Su Liang, Wen Ran and Cheng Yun left the same day. Wen Ming was not worried about his granddaughter as he knew Cheng Yun’s strength.

Sheng Yue and Yan Shiba were still there during dinner, but they were gone the next morning. Zhu Zan said they left in the middle of the night and were still fighting when they left.

With Yan Shiba not at home, the whole mansion had become quite a bit quieter. However, everyone’s fun had also diminished without her and Sheng Yue fussing around daily.

Soon enough, it was time for Qiao Cong and Cen Man’s wedding.

Cen Man wanted a simple ceremony, just to make bows in front of their families as witnesses, but Qiao Cong insisted on making it grander.

Early in the morning, after Cen Man bathed, she put on the wedding dress designed by Su Liang and made by the best master of Yang Yu’s Embroidery Workshop.

“Master, we’re here!” Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu’s voices rang outside.

Cen Man stood up to see Su Liang with three children. Zhengzheng was carrying Su Liang’s makeup box, personally made by Gu Ling, including some of the makeup brushes inside.

Su Liang didn't wear makeup often, so she didn't have much need for it. But whenever there was a wedding among her friends, they would ask Su Liang to help with the bride's makeup, just like they would have a Chinese knot made by Gu Ling hanging in the couple's room.

The three children sat in a row, watching Su Liang apply bridal makeup to Cen Man.

Finally, Su Liang drew a fiery red pattern in the shape of a flame in the center of Cen Man's eyebrows, then stepped back and asked the children, "How is it?"

Zhengzheng exclaimed, "Master, you're truly beautiful! Like a fairy descending to the mortal world!"

Ji Xiaoshu gave a thumbs up, "Uncle Qiao will definitely be over the moon when he sees you!"

Gu Xiaonuan waved her little hand, conjuring a beautiful bouquet of flowers, and handed it to Cen Man. "For Master, you are more beautiful than the flowers!"

Cen Man was so happy that she couldn't close her mouth, but also felt a little embarrassed to have such young children compliment her. However, once she saw her reflection in the bronze mirror, Cen Man was stunned for a moment, "Is... Is that me?"

You don't look old at all, Master. We have a long life ahead, so it's important to be happy and enjoy the good fortune," Su Liang said with a smile.

Cen Man, holding the flowers given by Gu Xiaonuan, was visibly moved. "Yes, I will."

Qiao Cong, dressed in a bright red wedding robe, rode a tall horse. Accompanied by the younger generation, he came to Su Mansion early to pick up his bride. The lively procession became a unique sight in the capital city, as it was rare to see such an old couple getting married. However, knowing that they were Su Liang's two masters, the common people were not too surprised. In their eyes, Su Liang, Gu Ling, and those around them were extraordinary people who shouldn't be judged by ordinary standards.

Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu took Gu Ling to block the door while Feng Ming brought Ale and Axin to play as well. The children thought of many riddles, but before they could start, Gu Ling's long arm reached out, and he pulled open the door bolt.

"Master, you betrayer!" Ji Xiaoshu jumped on Gu Ling's back and, the next moment, greeted the beaming Qiao Cong entering the room, immediately making a salute, "Uncle Qiao, you look so handsome today! Gu Ling wanted to block the door just now, but we stopped him!"

"Haha! Little Tree is such a good boy!" Qiao Cong laughed heartily and rubbed Ji Xiaoshu's head. Qiao Jing, who was following behind, took out the prepared red envelopes and gave one to each of the four children.

Gu Ling also reached out, and Qiao Jing's mouth twitched a little. He reluctantly took out another red envelope and gave it to Gu Ling.

As soon as Cen Man put on the red wedding veil, she heard footsteps outside.

Gu Xiaonuan stood at the door, her smile brilliant as she saluted, "Congratulations, Uncle Qiao!"

Qiao Cong laughed so hard his grin almost touched his ears, and he picked up Gu Xiaonuan and kissed her cheek. "Little Nuan is such a good girl!"

Su Liang took Gu Xiaonuan back, and Qiao Cong looked at the bride approaching slowly, his eyes bright, "Ah Man, I've come to get you!"

As soon as Cen Man approached, Qiao Cong bent down and picked her up horizontally, walking out briskly amidst everyone's laughter.

Su Liang and Gu Ling took the children and followed the wedding procession to Qiao Mansion.

The master of ceremonies was, as expected, Old Duke Qin. He had the best relationship with everyone, and Qiao Cong specifically asked for him to come.

There were many guests, almost all of them being friends and acquaintances of Su Liang and Gu Ling.

After the lively ceremony, it was time for the feast.

Gu Ling, holding Nian Jincheng and Yang Yu's son, looked at him for a while and said to Su Liang, "Luckily, this kid doesn't look like his uncle, or it would be so worrisome."

Su Liang had almost completely forgotten about Yang Yu's mischievous older brother, Yang Feng. It is said that nephews often resemble their uncles, but it is not always true. The child of Nian Jincheng looked very much like his father. Of course, this child was also one of Gu Ling's disciples. He was very open to accepting apprentices.

Su Liang asked Gu Ling what he would do if he ended up having too many disciples to teach.

Gu Ling calmly replied that the disciples were all about the same age, so he could just hold classes or have Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu, his two closest disciples, serve as teaching assistants. As for why he accepted all the children of his friends and family as disciples, he had a reason: these children would grow up to be Gu Xiaonuan's friends. He wanted them to grow strong and upright to avoid Gu Xiaonuan getting constantly involved in solving her friends' problems like Su Liang, which would be too exhausting.

Su Liang agreed with this reasoning. However, she knew that Gu Ling also liked children very much and wouldn't refuse to accept his friends' children as his disciples since they had agreed not to have more children of their own.

After the feast, Gu Ling and Su Liang decided to go home, while Axin and Ale asked Ji Xiaoshu and Zhengzheng to come to their house for a little fun.

Gu Ling leaned down and whispered something to Zhengzheng. After hesitating for a moment, Zhengzheng told Axin and Ale that he wanted to go back to his own house to see his younger brother and would visit Peng Mansion another day.

Gu Ling, Su Liang, and Gu Xiaonuan returned to their home, while Zhengzheng took Ji Xiaoshu to visit the Wan Family.

"Big Brother, what did Master whisper to you?" Ji Xiaoshu asked.

Upon seeing Zhu Zan, the escort who was smiling, Zhengzheng replied, "I know."

Zhengzheng then said, "Little Shu, Master told us to set off today!"

It was previously decided that they would leave in three days. Everyone who was staying at Su Mansion would return to Su Family Village together.

Ji Xiaoshu grinned mischievously, "I originally thought Master and Mistress would sneak off with their daughter and leave us behind! If that happened, I would have cried! But do you think Master will be mad when he finds out?"

Actually, grandmaster himself knew... at least old Muru knew about it. But he didn't mind. Weng Ming had plans to open a Medical Hall, and old Bai would definitely miss his children the most, but by then old Muru would find something for him to do.

Zhengzheng went home to say goodbye to his parents. Although he had been living at Su Mansion, he often returned home. Now that he was going on a long journey, it would be at least several months before he could come back.

Wan Hui and Lu Yu were reluctant to part with their son but supported him in going out to see the world with Su Liang and Gu Ling. They would also return to their old hometown to handle some business, so they wouldn't be too far apart.

As for Ji Xiaoshu, his father Ji Yuebai was even more fond of traveling than he was. Ji Yuebai was not in the capital city, but it was possible that they would run into each other in the north. Ji Xiaoshu planned to visit his father's farmland when he got there.

When the two children returned to Su Mansion, the carriage had already been prepared. This carriage had been designed by Gu Ling and Su Liang, with Gu Ling and old Muru making it by hand. It was very spacious, with everything needed for travel inside.

Gu Ling, Su Liang, and Gu Xiaonuan's luggage had already been prepared, and Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu quickly emerged with their bags.

With just Gu Ling, Su Liang, and the three children, Gu Ling drove the carriage, while Su Liang and the children sat inside.

Master, here I come! Ji Xiaoshu exclaimed excitedly, sitting next to Gu Ling and taking the horse whip, "Let's go!"

Gu Ling carefully taught Ji Xiaoshu how to drive the carriage. Ji Xiaoshu asked, "Master, you are not going to let a kid like me drive the carriage, right?"

Gu Ling nodded, "I believe you can do it."

Ji Xiaoshu grinned, "As long as you don't worry about me driving the carriage into a ditch."

As the carriage left the capital city, the scenery instantly became more wide-open.

The sun was shining brightly, the breeze was gentle, Zhengzheng and Gu Xiaonuan were singing a children's rhyme taught by Su Liang, and Ji Xiaoshu was gently swaying the horse whip in time with the rhythm outside. He looked at the fluffy white clouds in the distance against the blue sky, then suddenly slumped on Gu Ling, saying, "Master, I'm tired!"

With an indifferent expression, Gu Ling responded, "If you're so weak, go home and rest."

Ji Xiaoshu immediately sat up straight, "I'll go back to the car and rest. Mistress, how long will it take for us to arrive at Su Family Village?"

A laughing voice came from inside the carriage, "About half a month, I guess. No hurry, let's take our time, enjoy the scenery."

Chapter 512: 512. Not only beautiful but also thick

At dusk, Old Bai, Old Mu, and Weng Ming gathered in the Yuanming Pavilion, ready to have dinner.

Feng Ming walked in with a large food box, taking out the steaming hot food from inside.

Old Bai frowned, "Why haven't Xiaoliang and the others returned from their outing? It's getting dark."

Old Mu cheerfully picked up his chopsticks, picked a piece of meat for Old Bai, "Don't wait, they have already left."

Old Bai frowned, "Gone? Where to? Are they... going back to Su Family village today?" Seeing Weng Ming's not at all surprised expression, he couldn't help but feel annoyed, "You all knew, why keep me in the dark?!"

Old Mu coughed lightly, "Don't overthink, you're not that special, who would keep secrets from you on purpose?"

Old Bai's face looked a bit dark, Feng Ming spoke from the side, "The Master and the prince left a message, asking the seniors not to be upset. In a few days, you all can go to the Su Family village whenever you like."

Old Mu kicked Old Bai under the table, "Why are you upset? You didn't help Xiaoliang in any way, wasn't she good enough to you?"

Old Bai shook his head promptly, "That's not what I mean!"

"Xiaoliang and Xiaogu have had a hard time these past few years, helping everyone with this and that. They finally have some peace and quiet. If not for Nuannuan being too young, they wouldn't even take her, let alone us old bones!" Old Mu laughed, "They barely had a few peaceful days after their marriage, so they just wanted to have some fun by themselves, not because they dislike us. Look around, which of the young couples at home don't have their own mansion and want to live on their own?"

Weng Ming smiled and nodded, "Yeah. Xiaoliang and Xiaogu rarely have leisure time, we shouldn't tag along. They would worry about taking care of us. They will surely be back before the end of the year."

Old Bai snorted, "Making it seem like I'm the only clueless one! If you told me earlier, I wouldn't have any problem accepting it. Isn't it just that I miss the kid too much?"

"Want to take care of a kid? Isn't it easy?" Old Mu said, "You can just go to the Lin Family, they have plenty of kids."

"It's not the same." Of course, Old Bai's favorite is Gu Xiaonuan. Although Gu Xiaonuan doesn't look like Su Liang, nor the little apprentice sister he's been missing all his life, she is still the most special in his heart.

“You should find something to do instead of always looking miserable, who would like that?” Old Mu said, “If you really have nothing to do, you can go help Old Weng open a medical hall. He is in need of help. You’ve been playing with poison all your life, it’s time to turn over a new leaf when you’ve grown old. Learning some medical skills would be great, wouldn’t it?”

Weng Ming laughed, “If you’re free to help, that would be great.”

Old Bai nodded, “Surely I can help...” He then turned to ask Feng Ming, “Did Xiaoliang mention when they will return?”

Feng Ming shook his head, “The Master didn’t say, it should probably depend on their mood. There’s nothing urgent in the capital city.”

Old Bai sighed, “That’s good, let them go have some fun.” He knew that Old Mu was right, and also knew that his character wasn’t as likable as Old Mu’s. Just as well, he could use this time to find something to do, and adjust himself properly.

After dinner, Old Mu said to Feng Ming and Zhu Zan, “You young people can go ahead with your things, rest if you want to rest. From tomorrow on, we will handle our own meals and clothes, and don’t need you to worry.”

Qiuyue married along with Nangong Qian, and she promised to leave this year and return to her hometown to marry the cousin she has been engaged to. The other relatives who have gotten married often came back and sometimes stayed at the mansion, but since Su Liang and Gu Ling weren’t at home and neither were the kids, they wouldn’t come as often. Besides the three old men, only Feng Ming and Zhu Zan were left in the mansion.

Zhu Zan looked at Feng Ming, and Feng Ming lightly nodded, “Sure. If the seniors have any request, please feel free to tell us. And if we can help with Senior Weng’s medical hall, please let us know for sure, the Master specially instructed us.”

Weng Ming cheerfully nodded, “Great!”

The Su Mansion in the capital suddenly became much quieter, and the lights in the Yuanming Pavilion were extinguished early in the night. Although everyone who stayed had accepted such an arrangement, it took time for them to get used to it, including the most sensible Old Mu.

Before going to sleep, Old Mu sat on his bed, sighing, “I don’t know when I’ll see Nuannuan again... When Old Bai can’t help but run to the north, I’ll go with him.” He planned to visit his disciple Mu Yu. Mu Yu was now married, and in his most recent letter, he said his wife was about to give birth. Old Mu had already prepared gifts for his disciple’s little grandchild and was waiting for their reunion.

When Feng Ming got up in the night and saw Zhu Zan sitting in the courtyard, he asked him if something was troubling him.

Zhu Zan shook his head, “No. You should go to bed. You have to go to the Peng mansion early tomorrow.” The Peng family was planning a trip outside the city and Feng Ming, the prospective son-in-law, was also invited.

However, Feng Ming sat down, “We’ve been brothers for so many years, don’t you think I know you? You definitely have something on your mind. What can’t you tell me?”

At this, Zhu Zan gave a wry smile, “Yes, you are now the closest person to me in the world. There is something, but I feel ashamed to admit it.”

Feng Ming was confused, “What’s wrong? Don’t tell me you’ve fallen for a married woman.” Zhu Zan often expressed his admiration for families and his desire to start one. Feng Ming couldn’t think of any other possibilities, but he also believed that Zhu Zan wasn’t that kind of person.

“No.” Zhu Zan shook his head, “But it’s almost the same.”

Feng Ming looked serious, “Who? Are you in love with her or not, what do you mean by almost? Speak clearly!”

After hesitating for a moment, Zhu Zan began, “You know her, Qiu...Qiuyue.”

Feng Ming was stunned, “Miss Qiuyue? She’s not married, but...”

“She is engaged, and she is going back next month to get married.” Zhu Zan sighed, “It’s my fault, I didn’t understand the situation thoroughly at the beginning.”

Although Qiuyue was just a maid serving Nangong Qian, their relationship had become more sisterly since Nangong Qian’s life changed significantly. Earlier, Nangong Qian had returned the contract of sale to Qiuyue, wanting her to go back and get married soon, as her cousin had been waiting for a long time. But Qiuyue insisted on leaving only after Nangong Qian got married.

Zhu Zan was a good martial artist, but he didn’t have grand ambitions. He just wanted to live when he was on Xingluo Island, but now his life had improved, and he wanted to settle down with a compatible woman, live a calm, peaceful life surrounded by wife and children.

He wasn’t envious of his friends marrying noblemen’s daughters because of their high status, but because they had found suitable partners. He had fallen for Qiuyue, the maid in the Su Mansion, feeling that she was perfect in every way, she was good-looking, had a nice figure, a good character, could cook, do needlework, and was sensible. He knew his own capabilities, that he was just a lackwit martial artist, and it was only through the guidance of Feng Ming, his good friend, that he was having such good days. He had never thought of marrying any noble lady by depending on Su Liang. He didn’t possess Feng Ming’s ability to handle such situations.

But just when Zhu Zan was about to confess his feelings to Qiuyue, and then tell everyone after he succeeded, he suddenly found out that Qiuyue was actually engaged. The bravery he had gathered up instantly fell apart.

The household was busy lately, so Zhu Zan didn’t show anything, but when it suddenly calmed down today, he didn’t know what he should do next and couldn’t sleep.

Feng Ming learned of the situation and couldn’t help feeling some sympathy for Zhu Zan, after all, everyone else’s romantic relationships were going quite smoothly. If Qiuyue wasn’t engaged, they probably would have been successful. Unfortunately, this could not be solved.

Feng Ming patted Zhu Zan’s shoulder, “Cheer up, it means that this is not your true destiny.”

Zhu Zan nodded, “I know, but I need some time. I have to find something to do.”

“Isn’t it simple? Didn’t you say that once you left Xingluo Island and had money, you would open your family pub? I remember you could brew wine, and it’s a family craft.” Feng Ming said, “After returning tomorrow, shall I accompany you to find a shop?”

Zhu Zan was surprised, “The pub? I haven’t been thinking about it recently.”

“Our master doesn’t need us.” Feng Ming said with a smile, “Your future days are yours! It is good to do something you like and have the conditions to do it.” Su Liang had said before that if they were interested in starting a business, she could provide the startup capital as long as they had ideas and were willing to work hard. She would support them.

“Then, should I give it a try?” Zhu Zan smiled, “You really are my benefactor in life, always guiding me out of confusion.”

The next day, Qiao Cong and Cen Man learned that Gu Ling and Su Liang had drunk the wedding wine and run off with the child. They returned to the Su mansion for a visit, then quickly went back to their own home.

Three days after Gu Ling and Su Liang left.

Weng Ming along with Old Bai and Old Mu were busy preparing the medical hall. Feng Ming and Zhu Zan lent a lot of help as well. Hearing that Zhu Zan planned to open a pub, Old Mu was very supportive. He had already surveyed the nearby shops when he was picking the location for the medical hall before. So, he immediately recommended Zhu Zan a place he thought was suitable for opening a pub. Zhu Zan and Feng Ming were satisfied with the location in all aspects, so they confirmed it the same day.

When Feng Ming and Zhu Zan returned to the Su mansion that day, they found Qi Yan and Nangong Qian had returned, but Maid Qiuyue was absent.

Seeing Nangong Qian seeming upset, Feng Ming thought it could perhaps be due to Qiuyue’s imminent departure.

After the dinner was prepared, they sat down to eat and only then learned the reason: Qiuyue’s aunt’s family had arrived in the capital city, including her cousin she was engaged to.

“That family, no good,” Qi Yan shook his head, “Qiuyue said she wanted to go back home to get married, but they insisted on staying here. They said they sold their house back home and came here to rely on Qiuyue. They even said since Qiuyue has climbed up a high branch, their family can rise to great heights in the future .”

Although Qiuyue was just a maid, she was the only maid in the Su mansion, and the identities of Su Liang and Gu Ling were known to all. It wasn’t surprising that her relatives would think that way.

But Qiuyue’s parents weren’t here, even though they knew where Qiuyue was. However, her future in-laws appeared out of nowhere, speaking nonsense.

“Qiuyue’s cousin was lecherous, with a greasy face, clearly not a good man. He tried to grope Qiuyue in front of us.” Nangong Qian said indignantly, “I say, cancel the engagement and drive them away!”

“How is Qiuyue now?” Zhu Zan blurted out.

Nangong Qian shook her head, “How could she be? She only knows how to cry and doesn’t say anything. We really want to drive that family away, but we fear they would stir up trouble and tarnish the reputation of Su Liang and the prince.”

After thinking for a while, Feng Ming glanced at Zhu Zan, then said to Nangong Qian and Qi Yan, “If Miss Qiuyue is really determined to break off the engagement, why not let us handle this matter?”

Qi Yan asked Feng Ming if he had any good methods, that wouldn’t harm anyone, but could quickly resolve the problem. After seeing the true colors of that family today, Nangong Qian was determined to prevent Qiuyue from jumping into a pit of fire. But Qiuyue was worried that after canceling the engagement, her parents would have a hard time back home.

Feng Ming shook his head, “I haven’t thought of anything yet, but it shouldn’t be too difficult. Let’s discuss it.”

Qi Yan and Nangong Qian left after dinner, saying that Qiuyue’s aunt’s family was staying at an inn with Qiuyue paying for their stay. They went straight to the biggest and best inn as soon as they arrived, eating and drinking to their heart’s content, and pretending to be poor whenever they saw Qiuyue.

At night, Zhu Zan paced back and forth in the courtyard, unable to sit still even when Feng Ming asked him to.

Just a while ago, the two had secretly gone to see that family and overheard some of their conversations. For instance, “Qiuyue is really a fool, she’s letting go of her good life in the capital city and actually wants to go back to her old home with us, how stupid”, “We should have come earlier once we knew Qiuyue was leading a prosperous life, it’s all due to Qiuyue’s parents’ secrecy”, “We need to cook the raw rice quickly to prevent any leaks. If Qiuyue finds out that her cousin has been messing around with a widow back home, even fathering a child, while keeping Qiuyue’s family in the dark... Though that widow has been driven away now, but they still want to keep the child, planning to bring him over after her cousin marries Qiuyue, she wouldn’t be able to do anything by then”...

Zhu Zan’s blood pressure skyrocketed after hearing this; he almost couldn’t help storming in to beat them up, if not for Feng Ming pulling him back.

“Actually, it’s very simple.” Feng Ming said, “As long as Qiuyue is willing to be with you, just bring her family to the capital city. Your pub could use the help anyway. From what we can tell, her parents are good people. As for that family, just scare them off. Tell them, if they dare to make trouble again, we’ll castrate Qiuyue’s cousin.”

“Agreed!” Zhu Zan nodded immediately, “We’ll do as you suggest!”

The following events went smoothly; Feng Ming and Zhu Zan weren't pushovers. After three days, the family that was pestering Qiuyue left the capital city in humiliation, and Qiuyue decided to get married to Zhu Zan. They left the capital together, returning to her old home to bring back her family.

Zhu Zan was thrilled when he left, telling Feng Ming that when he returns, they'll drink the wine he brewed himself.

After Zhu Zan left, Feng Ming wrote a letter to send to Su Village. He thought the letter would probably arrive before Su Liang and Gu Ling. The letter detailed the situation of their family after they left and he also shared the joyous news of Zhu Zan and Qiuyue's union.

At this time, Gu Ling and Su Liang had just arrived in Pingbei City.

They have a mansion here, which Su Liang bought when Gu Ling came here for the imperial examination years ago. They hadn't spent much time living in it.

"Big Brother, isn't it amazing how Master and Mistress have their own mansions wherever they go?" Ji Xiaoshu sighed.

Zhengzheng said with a brilliant smile, "Actually, my family also has a mansion in this city." He still remembered this City— it was where Su Liang and Gu Ling brought him when they first came here. His parents also took him home from here.

"I'm the poorest." Ji Xiaoshu held his forehead, "Who let my dad give up being an emperor just to farm!"

Gu Ling tapped Ji Xiaoshu's forehead, "Next time you see your father, remember to ask him for your living expenses."

Ji Xiaoshu chuckled, "That would be great! If my dad has no money, just let him give Master and Mistress a field of sweet potatoes! This way, we will have lots of roasted sweet potatoes to eat in winter!"

Gu Ling nodded, "That's also an idea."

After putting down their luggage, Gu Ling and Su Liang took the kids to the Qianshan Academy in Pingbei City to have fun. Lin Shuzhi used to be the headmaster of this academy. This academy was already very famous, but now it has become the number one academy in the world. Today's Regent King Gu Ling, Prime Minister Lin Boyan, and Great General Lin Bojun all graduated from this academy.

"Master, carry me! You used to carry Big Brother to school, it's my turn now!" Ji Xiaoshu climbed on Gu Ling's back like a little monkey and refused to walk by himself.

Zhengzheng laughed by the side, "Back then, I was really small."

"I don't care!" Ji Xiaoshu insisted. As they were out for fun, of course, he wanted to be happy. The more unwilling Gu Ling appeared to be, the more enthusiastic he became.

Gu Ling made a complaint, "You should be called Ji Xiaohou(monkey)." Yet, he didn't let Ji Xiaoshu down from his back.

Ji Xiaoshu chuckled, "My dad said he was originally going to call me Little Monkey, but then thought it didn't sound nice so he changed it to Xiaoshu! Hey, I've never seen a monkey. Are there any on the mountain we're going to? Do monkeys bite?"

"Yes." Su Liang softly laughed, "But, we might not be able to see them."

Zhengzheng walked in front holding the bouncing Gu Xiaonuan, Gu Ling and Su Liang walked side by side. He carried Ji Xiaoshu on his back while Su Liang carried a basket on hers, which contained water bottles and some snacks for the kids in case they got hungry.

As they walked along, Su Liang told them about her and Gu Ling's experiences at Qianshan Academy back in the day. There was a poisoning incident at the academy at that time, and they narrowly managed to save everyone.

"Mistress is so powerful!" Ji Xiaoshu looked up at Su Liang with a face full of admiration, "It seems like in the past Master was responsible for looking pretty, while Mistress was earning the money for the family and also protecting him! Master, am I right?"

Trying to hide her laughter, Su Liang, on the other hand, Gu Ling hooked his lips slightly, "Well, are you jealous?"

Ji Xiaoshu nodded, "Master's skin is not only beautiful but also thick!"

Chapter 513: 513. Return to the starting point

Clear skies and gentle breezes.

Halfway through, Ji Xiaoshu voluntarily got off Gu Ling's back and let Gu Ling carry a tired Gu Xiaonuan.

"Squirrel!" Ji Xiaoshu saw a fluffy ball in the woods and ran over with bright eyes.

However, the squirrel quickly climbed up a tree, shaking its long tail and disappeared.

Qianshan Academy happened to be on holiday today, and there were not many people on the mountain path.

At the gate of the academy, the gatekeeper recognized Su Liang at a glance—he didn't recognize Gu Ling because when Gu Ling came to the academy, he was still using Ning Jing's identity and appearance. Su Liang saved many people from the academy, leaving a deep impression on everyone.

"No need for formalities." Su Liang stopped the gatekeeper from kneeling on the ground, "We're just passing by to take a look."

The old man nodded repeatedly. After Gu Ling and Su Liang entered with the children, he went to inform the academy head.

They walked through the academy to the back mountain, where Su Liang laid out a picnic blanket for the children to sit on and took out water, snacks, and fruits for them to eat.

Su Liang saw the three trees planted on the back mountain by Lin Boyan, Lin Bojun, and the real Ning Jing. They had grown quite a bit since the last time she saw them. Lin Shuzhi often said that

he wanted to go back to his hometown, but now he had grandchildren and both his sons had become important figures with busy official duties, it was not easy to return.

After playing on the back mountain for a while, they decided to leave, and the head of the academy came over.

Su Liang exchanged a few words with him, asked about the current situation of the academy, and then said farewell to leave.

On the way down the mountain, Gu Xiaonuan was tired and fell asleep in Gu Ling's arms. Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu were full of energy, running around and playing. Halfway down the mountain, they really encountered monkeys.

Seeing Ji Xiaoshu about to rush over, Su Liang quickly stopped him. She was afraid the monkeys in the wild might be aggressive and hurt him.

Ji Xiaoshu threw the remaining fruits to the monkey from a distance. The little monkey jumped agilely off the tree, picked up the fruit, and quickly returned to its perch, sitting down to nibble on the fruit.

Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu both looked on in amazement.

"Mother, the little monkey has some human-like expressions," Zhengzheng said.

Su Liang smiled and continued downhill, telling the children about human origins as they walked.

When they returned to their home in the city, Gu Xiaonuan woke up and went to play in the garden with his two older brothers.

Gu Ling and Su Liang bought groceries on the way home and began preparing dinner. They planned to stay for one day before continuing their journey.

Leaving Pingbei City and heading north, they passed through various places. Su Liang told the children about the times she and Gu Ling had visited each place and what they had done there.

As they neared Bei'an County after more than ten days since leaving the capital, the happiest ones were the children, who enjoyed a different lifestyle while traveling than staying at home in the capital. Gu Ling and Su Liang were also revisiting the roads they had once walked. They had originally traveled from Bei'an County to the capital to achieve certain goals, and despite having returned some time, this time felt different.

"Mother, the temple!" Zhengzheng pulled back the carriage curtain, excitedly pointing out the dilapidated temple not far ahead for Su Liang to see.

Ji Xiaoshu leaned in, "What temple? Is it the one where Master and Mother saved Eldest Brother with Uncle Cheng Yun's help?"

"Yes!" Zhengzheng nodded seriously, "It's right here! It was raining hard that day! I was kidnapped by bad people, and Master, Mother, and Uncle Cheng Yun happened to pass by and saved me!"

The carriage stopped, and Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu ran into the broken temple one after the other.

Su Liang and Gu Ling led Gu Xiaonuan, lifting her to cross the threshold and go in. It had been several years, and this place was still here and unrenovated, even more dilapidated than before, with spider webs all over the roof eaves.

Zhengzheng was telling Ji Xiaoshu about the first time he met Gu Ling and Su Liang, "At that time, Master was still Uncle Ning!"

Ji Xiaoshu looked at Gu Ling, "Master, when will you change back to Uncle Ning for me to see? I haven't seen it before!"

Gu Ling shook his head, "Then you have no chance." He had used Ning Jing's human skin mask back then, which was later buried in the Ning family's cemetery.

After walking around the broken temple, before leaving, Zhengzheng told Su Liang and Gu Ling that he wanted to hire someone to renovate the place so that people could take shelter from the rain and wind.

Su Liang smiled, "Okay. We'll go home first, and once we've made a plan, we can find a craftsman."

Before sunset, the carriage slowly drove into Bei'an County town.

Su Liang got out of the carriage, looking at the familiar small house, where the pomegranate trees were blooming beautifully, with oily green leaves and bright red pomegranate flowers hanging from the branches, making for another bountiful year.

Su Liang took the children inside first, while Gu Ling drove the carriage to buy osmanthus cakes from a tea house in Bei'an County town, which they hadn't eaten for a long time.

On the way, Gu Ling saw Hu Er from a distance, carrying a child on his shoulder and walking into a restaurant with a beaming smile, probably his grandson.

They would probably see him again later, so Gu Ling didn't greet him. He no longer needed to disguise himself, and his beauty attracted attention wherever he went. However, most people had only heard of his reputation and had not seen him in person. He acted low-key, and after buying the freshly baked osmanthus cakes, he left.

At night, Gu Ling and Su Liang sat under the pomegranate tree with the children and watched the moon.

Ji Xiaoshu asked about Duanmu Chen, "I heard that Emperor Uncle used to be a county magistrate here? Did Master and Mistress meet him then? Tell us, how did they meet?"

Su Liang lightly chuckled, "That's a long story."

"I'm not sleepy, I love to listen to long stories!" Ji Xiaoshu said with a grin.

The night breeze was cool, and Su Liang told the children about her encounter with Duanmu Chen in Bei'an County. At first, it was not pleasant, but Duanmu Chen was very shrewd and always knew what choice was more advantageous for him, which led to their pleasant cooperation later on and continued until he became the only emperor in the world.

"Emperor Uncle is really lucky!" Ji Xiaoshu exclaimed after listening.

Zhengzheng nodded, "I asked Emperor Uncle what his secret to success was, and he said that keeping a clear head is important, but mainly he relied on good luck."

Since leaving the capital, they had been telling stories to the children every day. Today's story was over, and it was already late. Gu Ling took the two disciples, and Su Liang took Gu Xiaonuan to wash up and then go to bed.

The next day, when Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu woke up, the sun was already high in the sky. They got dressed and went outside, and saw Gu Ling holding a broom, sweeping up the fallen leaves in the courtyard. There had been a lot of weeds in the yard when they returned yesterday, but it was already late, so they hadn't tidied them up. Now, the weeds had also been cleaned up.

Su Liang stood under the pomegranate tree, supporting Gu Xiaonuan, who was picking flowers from the tree.

"You're awake. Let's have breakfast." Su Liang said, taking Gu Xiaonuan down from the tree. She held a bright red pomegranate flower in her hand and inserted it into Su Liang's hair, "Mom looks so beautiful!"

"Who looks better, your dad or me?" Su Liang asked with a smile.

"Big Brother, Second Brother, what do you think?" Gu Xiaonuan cleverly passed the question on to Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu.

Zhengzheng immediately ran to help Gu Ling sweep the fallen leaves. "Master, let me help you!"

Ji Xiaoshu calmly said, "Of course it's Master's wife! Is there even any need to ask?"

After breakfast, they left their home in the county town and returned to Feiyan Town.

Nowadays, Feiyan Town is much busier than before, with more shops on the streets. It used to be a remote place not far from the border, but now that the world is unified, there are more merchants from the north and south coming to do business. The richest merchant in Bei'an County today is Su Liang's old acquaintance, Hu Er, who has made a lot of money from his past experiences and has been generous with his wealth to do good deeds locally, becoming the well-known great philanthropist Hu Er.

As they passed by the Luoyan Restaurant, Su Liang just lifted the carriage curtain to take a peek. They were going straight back to the village and wouldn't stay in town. The restaurant's business was excellent, and the area had doubled in size. Su Liang also saw the same manager as before.

Leaving the town and heading to the village, Su Liang looked at the scenery passing by outside and felt very familiar, stirring memories of the past. She and Gu Ling used to go to the market together, selling pears and vegetable seeds in town, and buying medicinal materials...

At the entrance of the village, there were always a few elders chatting under the old tree, and some playing chess. Seeing a carriage enter the village, which wasn't too surprising anymore, but when they saw Su Liang, everyone got excited. However, due to Su Liang's status, they didn't dare to crowd around.

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that Su Liang was the lucky star for the Su Family Village. In the past few years, the village had built roads, several bridges, and now the children in the village had a

school to attend. Some children who had studied well were already attending school in the county. The existence of the school had its rules, forming a restraint on the villagers. To avoid affecting children's chances of attending school, the village's atmosphere was very upright, which benefited from the good management of Lei Zheng and Su Bai.

Su Liang smiled and greeted everyone, still recognizing who they were.

The carriage continued forward, passing by Su Daqiang's old house. Su Liang thought of the old pear tree and couldn't help but feel some regret.

After crossing the bridge, Su Liang heard a familiar voice, "Is it Little Liang returning home?"

Madam Bai excitedly approached, carrying a basket.

Gu Ling stopped the carriage, and Su Liang got out with the children. Madam Bai hurried up, looked at her, and said, "You haven't changed at all! No, you're even prettier than before!"

Su Liang smiled brightly, "Madam Bai, you look much younger and more energetic than the last time I saw you."

It was true. The Bai Family's life had improved, and Madam Bai had less worry about her children and grandchildren. Her spirit was much better than when Su Liang first met her, and she was slightly plumper and had sure-footed strides.

Hearing this, Madam Bai laughed with her mouth wide open, "You flatter me!" She then saw Gu Xiaonuan and exclaimed, "Wow, who is this beautiful child?"

"This is my daughter with Gu Ling." Su Liang brought Gu Xiaonuan closer to her.

Madam Bai was extremely delighted, "She's even prettier than the little immortals in the New Year's paintings!"

Ji Xiaoshu cupped his face and asked, "Do we not look good?"

Madam Bai hurriedly complimented the children, and Ji Xiaoshu, being easygoing, asked about Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi even though it was his first time visiting the Su Family Village.

"They've gone to school." Madam Bai said happily, "Come on in, let's rest and eat first! I'll bring you something to eat!"

Before Su Liang could say anything, Madam Bai quickly walked away with her basket.

The house surroundings were clean, with no weeds, probably because the Bai Family had been helping to tidy up.

As they opened the door, Ji Xiaoshu curiously ran inside, "Is this Master and his wife's first home?"

The courtyard was spacious, and the pine trees planted in the winter that year had grown taller.

Gu Ling drove the carriage to the backyard. The backyard was also free of weeds, and the vegetable plot was full of crops. The long pumpkin vines climbed to the roof, the purple eggplants looked ripe, the green beans were at their perfect juicy stage, and several gourd plants had different sized green fruits hanging from the eaves, looking pretty.

Before leaving last time, Su Liang gave Madam Bai a key to their home, so they must have been looking after the place.

Su Liang took the children into the room, which was also spotlessly clean, with the bedding neatly stored in the cupboard.

“Did Master’s wife live in this room? And Master lived next door?” Ji Xiaoshu asked.

Su Liang nodded, “Yes, that’s how it was at the beginning.”

“Then let Master live next door, and we’ll stay with Master’s wife!” Ji Xiaoshu said with a grin.

The next moment, Gu Ling entered the room, picked up Ji Xiaoshu, and threw him outside, “I’m thirsty, go boil some water.”

Zhengzheng came out and pulled Ji Xiaoshu towards the kitchen, “Let’s go boil the water. I’m thirsty too.”

So, when Madam Bai brought a plate of steamed buns, she saw Gu Ling and Su Liang making beds in the room, and the two children were making a fire in the kitchen.

“Wash your hands and eat some buns.” Madam Bai lovingly called Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu.

The buns were made this morning and had just been reheated — they looked plump and delicious. The children were hungry, so Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu washed their hands, each took a bun and politely thanked Madam Bai.

“This is so delicious!” Ji Xiaoshu praised.

Madam Bai laughed with delight, “If you like it, eat more.”

“I’ve always wanted to eat Madam Bai’s steamed buns.” Su Liang said, and then tore a piece for Gu Xiaonuan.

Madam Bai asked what they wanted to eat, and she would cook it for them. They needed to rest properly after their journey.

“Then let’s come over for dinner tonight.” Su Liang smiled.

Madam Bai nodded repeatedly, “Alright, alright! In that case, I’ll go prepare. When Xiaohu and Zhuzi finish school, I’ll have them come over to play. They’ve been missing you and couldn’t wait to see you!”

After Madam Bai left, the children slept in the room. Su Liang and Gu Ling went to the backyard to check on their vegetable plot, which was growing very well.

“Let’s have pumpkin egg-filled dumplings tomorrow.” Su Liang said, selecting a tender pumpkin.

“And I’ll make crisp eggplants and steamed vegetables. I really miss the days when we lived in this little courtyard together.” Gu Ling said.

“Yes, let’s go up the mountain to watch the sunrise tomorrow if the weather is good.” Su Liang said.

“Let’s take the children to hunt wild boars and pick mushrooms.” Gu Ling suggested.

“We should plant another pear tree at home,” Su Liang said with a faint smile, “I suddenly remembered the time when you sneaked into Su Daqiang’s place to steal pears. The pears on that tree were really delicious.”

“Alright, I’ll go find one.” Gu Ling said, holding Su Liang’s hand, the two of them exchanged a smile.

Chapter 514: 514. The Tranquility of Time

The setting sun cast a brilliant glow on the western sky.

Su Liang and Gu Ling were watering the vegetables in the backyard with the children when they heard someone calling, “Sister Su Liang! Sister Su Liang!”

Su Liang put down the water ladle and went to the front yard to find a tall and a short teenager running towards her. It was Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi, who had just returned from school.

The once rough and mischievous little boys had grown into refined and elegant young men. Bai Xiaohu had grown much taller and slimmer in the past two years, and his eyes sparkled brightly, retaining their innate simplicity and innocence when he smiled. Zhuzi, who used to be sickly, was now rosy-cheeked, and still grinned sheepishly with squinted eyes.

As soon as the two entered the house and heard from their mother that Su Liang had returned, they rushed over without even putting down their school bags.

However, they became shy once they reached Su Liang and stopped in their tracks. Bai Xiaohu saluted her solemnly, “Sister Su Liang, you’re finally back.”

Zhuzi mimicked him, which amused Su Liang to no end. She patted Bai Xiaohu on the shoulder, “You’ve grown quite a bit taller.”

Zhuzi silently straightened his chest, and when Su Liang praised him as well, “Zhuzi has grown taller too,” he immediately beamed with joy, his eyes squinting.

Looking at the two brothers, Su Liang seemed to see a reflection of her own time after crossing over. She hadn’t paid much attention to her own physical changes, although Gu Ling had mentioned that she had grown taller since she first arrived—but through the children, she could clearly sense the passing of time.

Gu Ling appeared behind Su Liang, and Bai Xiaohu quickly saluted him, calling out, “Brother Gu.”

“Mm,” Gu Ling nodded as he appraised them, “You’ve both grown up.”

Ji Xiaoshu and Zhengzheng brought Gu Xiaonuan over, and Su Liang introduced them to each other.

Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi glanced at Gu Xiaonuan, then at Gu Ling, and couldn’t help but marvel at her beauty, which surpassed even the fairy children depicted in New Year paintings!

Su Liang laughed, “Your grandmother said the same thing. Let’s go inside and sit down.”

Once they were in the room, Su Liang presented the gifts she had prepared for the two children. Over the years, while they were in the capital city, they had kept in touch with Su Village through letters. Every year, Mr. and Mrs. Bai would send local specialty products from their home to the city, and Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi would write to Su Liang and Gu Ling after school. Su Liang would always send them letters and gifts in return.

Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi took their gifts and thanked Su Liang, telling her that Mrs. Bai had asked them to invite Su Liang and Gu Ling over for dinner.

“Alright, you go back first, and we’ll be there shortly,” Su Liang said, ruffling Zhuzi’s hair like she used to.

Zhuzi nodded vigorously, “Sister Su Liang, do come quickly!”

After Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi left, Ji Xiaoshu asked Su Liang, “Mother, they call you ‘brother’ and ‘sister’, doesn’t that make them higher in status than the three of us? Isn’t that inappropriate?”

Su Liang laughed, “Don’t worry about that; we can treat each other separately.”

As they were about to leave, Su Bai arrived, looking travel-weary. The County Magistrate had called him to the county government for a meeting, and as soon as he returned to the village and heard that Su Liang and Gu Ling were back, he came straight to see them without even going home.

“I heard you’ve been quite busy lately,” Su Liang said with a smile.

Su Bai shook his head, “It’s all thanks to your good fortune!” Everyone knew he was Su Liang’s uncle and the two families had always been in touch.

Seeing the exhaustion on Su Bai’s face, Su Liang suggested he go home and rest first, and they would catch up properly tomorrow.

Su Bai could tell they were headed to the Bai family home for dinner and nodded repeatedly. He took a moment to admire the three children, asked Su Liang if she would be at home tomorrow, and agreed to come over again in the afternoon.

When Su Liang, Gu Ling, and the children arrived at the Bai family home, it felt very familiar despite the newly repaired gate, the stones laid in the courtyard, and the refurbished house—brighter and more spacious than before.

Mr. Bai, who was tending the fire, tapped the dry pipe on his leg—just like when Su Liang first met him.

After exchanging pleasantries, everyone sat down in the main room and the steaming hot dishes were served. Mr. Bai had slaughtered two plump chickens in the afternoon, bought a freshly hunted hare from a village hunter, and asked his son to fetch meat and ribs from the town. The preparation resulted in a lavish spread, even more extravagant than their New Year’s Eve feast.

Although Su Liang’s family didn’t care for meat, it was clear that it was the highest standard of hosting among the village folk. In the past, the Bai family could only enjoy meat during holidays and significant events, which showed that their lives had genuinely improved.

Su Liang noticed that Old Man Bai wanted to hold Gu Xiaonuan but didn’t dare to reach out, so she handed her over.

Gu Xiaonuan had grown very fond of the older people in the capital city's home, snuggling happily onto Old Man Bai, who grinned, his wrinkles blooming like autumn chrysanthemums, as he eagerly served her food, his voice much gentler.

Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi took turns telling Su Liang and Gu Ling about the books they were studying. Their young uncle also decided to go back to school after a school was set up in the village, preparing to take the first new imperial examination after the unification. As for the imperial examination system, Duanmu Chen had previously consulted Su Liang and Gu Ling.

Madam Bai clearly thought that Gu Ling looked even better than before, still initially aloof but with much gentler eyes and expression.

Gu Ling asked Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi some questions, which they both answered correctly.

Su Liang laughed and said, "In your previous letters, you mentioned wanting to take the imperial examination and go to the capital city. Keep up the good work!"

Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi nodded their heads with determination, saying that they would work hard.

The Bai Family elders were both happy and relieved. Nowadays, their family was one of the better off ones in the village, able to let their children study without worrying about making a living, all thanks to Su Liang and Gu Ling's help.

Dinner was lively. Ji Xiaoshu was a natural at socializing and a good hand at enlivening the atmosphere. The Bai family was initially a bit reserved, as their former neighbor had returned with a vastly different status. However, Ji Xiaoshu's witty and sweet words soon had them all laughing, and the atmosphere lightened.

Gu Xiaonuan was passed from Old Man Bai to Madam Bai, then taken in turns by the Bai Family members. In the end, Zhuzi held her, his younger sister standing timidly nearby. Gu Xiaonuan was very enthusiastic, and the two little girls soon played together.

After dinner and cleaning the table, Madam Bai brought out a basin of freshly picked wild fruits from the mountains.

Everyone agreed it was delicious, and Su Liang even asked where they picked them so that they could go there too.

"I still remember Sister Su Liang and Uncle Ning...Uncle Gu, taking me to hunt wild boars!" reminisced Bai Xiaohu.

Ji Xiaoshu immediately chimed in, "Master and Madam, let's go hunt wild boars too!"

Su Liang nodded with a smile, "We have that planned. When Xiaohu and Zhuzi have a day off, let's all go hunting in the mountains together, and call Erniu too."

Erniu was Su Dakuan, Gu Ling's carpenter master's only grandson. They planned to visit Su Dakuan the next day.

The children all cheered enthusiastically.

As it grew late, Gu Ling and Su Liang said their goodbyes with the children and were escorted out by the Bai family members.

With a choked voice, Madam Bai held Su Liang's hand, her eyes welling with tears. "You two are truly our whole family's benefactors and lucky stars. Without you, we can't even imagine what our life would be like now!"

Su Liang smiled, "Madam, don't say that. It's fate that brought us together as neighbors."

"Yes, fate!" Madam Bai nodded repeatedly. "It's the fortune our family built up in our previous lives that gives us such a connection with you!"

Su Liang understood the Bai family's gratitude. The Bai family was kind-hearted, and although they struggled in the beginning, they never took advantage of others. The family loved and supported each other and raised their children well. Su Liang truly enjoyed interacting with them.

Watching Gu Ling and Su Liang walk away with the three children, Old Man Bai sighed, "They're not only our family's lucky stars but also the lucky stars of the whole world!" Even though their village was initially far from the war, they still worried about the possible conscription of able men. Such things had happened many times in history. Fortunately, they no longer had to worry about that now.

After returning home, they first gave the children baths. Gu Ling arranged for Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu to sleep with their younger sister while he slept with Su Liang.

"If you're not planning on having a baby brother for us, Master, why do you insist on sleeping with Madam?" Ji Xiaoshu asked a soulful question.

Su Liang couldn't help but laugh, watching how Gu Ling would answer.

Gu Ling replied simply and bluntly, "She's my wife, and I like it."

Ji Xiaoshu held his forehead, "No need to ask, Madam also likes it. Forget it, my elder martial brother and I, along with our sister, are just in the way. Sooner or later, you two will elope and leave us behind!"

Gu Ling's expression was nonchalant, "If you say that now, there won't be any surprises when it happens."

Ji Xiaoshu: ...He just knows!

But actually, the children have long been used to it. Ji Xiaoshu is just more used to arguing with Gu Ling. This is the fun that Su Liang sees every day. Zhengzheng is also like Su Liang every time, watching Ji Xiaoshu and Gu Ling argue, smiling but not speaking on the side.

After a round of laughter and commotion in the neighboring children's room calmed down, Su Liang and Gu Ling leaned on the bed, looking at the extremely familiar room, not speaking for a while, and not feeling sleepy.

"Great God, what are you thinking about?" Su Liang broke the silence.

Gu Ling hugged her and sighed softly, "If we had consummated our marriage in this room the first time, what would it have been like?"

Su Liang coughed lightly, "This hypothesis is interesting, but you wouldn't have done that at that time, and I couldn't have let you do that either."

Gu Ling raised his eyebrows slightly, “Who was the one who said that when they first saw my face on the night of our wedding, they were amazed by my beauty?”

“That’s true, but to be honest, when I saw you at that moment, I thought I was in the Netherworld.” Su Liang laughed softly.

Thinking about tomorrow’s events, they still had a lot to do: watch the sunrise early in the morning, visit Su Bai in the noon, and visit Su Dakuan in the afternoon. Maybe Hu Er would come to visit after hearing the news.

“Let’s go to bed early.” Su Liang said.

Gu Ling nodded, blew out the candle by the bed, and hugged Su Liang, “The first night back home, we should celebrate.”

The sky hadn’t brightened yet, the children were woken up already.

Ji Xiaoshu looked at Gu Ling groggily, “Master, what’s the matter...?”

“Watch the sunrise.” Gu Ling said.

By the time they left the house, Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu had both woken up and were full of energy, while Gu Xiaonuan was still sound asleep in Gu Ling’s arms.

“Be careful, watch the road.” Su Liang reminded the children not to run too fast and trip themselves.

“Master’s wife, what were you thinking when you and Master went up the mountain to watch the sunrise before?” Ji Xiaoshu “interviewed”. He was very interested in everything about Gu Ling and Su Liang’s past and had endless questions.

Su Liang thought for a moment, and smiled, “I was thinking at that time, the Great God is so handsome, which fairy sister will he end up with?”

Gu Ling’s eyebrows and eyes were full of smiles, and Ji Xiaoshu laughed, “In the end, Master’s wife found out that the fairy sister turned out to be you! So what was Master thinking at that time?”

Gu Ling told the truth, “I didn’t pay much attention to appearance, I just thought this girl was so interesting and knowledgeable that she wouldn’t be interested in the men here.”

Ji Xiaoshu snorted lightly, “Master, just flatter yourself, I know you’re very pleased!”

Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu have never slackened in their martial arts practice, their physical fitness is excellent, and they have often climbed mountains in the capital before, so climbing the back mountain of their home is a breeze.

By the time they reached the top of the hill, it was the darkest time before dawn.

The large rock Gu Ling and Su Liang used to sit on to watch the sunrise was still in its original place. They sat down with the children, and Gu Ling looked down and saw that Gu Xiaonuan was still sleeping soundly, so he didn’t wake her up.

While waiting for the sunrise, Ji Xiaoshu suddenly said, “Actually, if that spatial magical treasure belonged to Master, it would be nice. Then Master’s wife could bring us to live inside!”

Gu Ling decisively gave Ji Xiaoshu a head knock, “You wish.”

“My sister is too young, when she grows up, she can take us to play outside!” Ji Xiaoshu said.

The first ray of light in the morning broke through the clouds, and the sun quickly leaped above the horizon, making everything bright between heaven and earth.

“It’s so beautiful!” Zhengzheng exclaimed, “Nature is so wonderful!” Having learned a lot of new knowledge from Su Liang, the two children were beginning to sound more and more like her.

After watching the sunrise, the sky brightened, and Gu Xiaonuan woke up.

When they went up the mountain, Su Liang carried a bamboo basket from home, and on the way down, they picked fresh wild vegetables with the children, playing and walking back home.

A bamboo basket was placed at the entrance, filled with a pocket of eggs and plenty of fresh vegetables, definitely sent by the Bai family.

After they went in and washed up, Zhengzheng and Ji Xiaoshu went to practice martial arts, and Gu Xiaonuan watched them on the side, seriously imitating them, looking very cute.

Gu Ling took the lead in cooking, with Su Liang helping with the fire. They beat eggs and mixed them with the freshly picked wild vegetables to make the filling, then cooked golden and fragrant vegetable pancakes. The pancakes were cooked, and the porridge was ripe. It was made of millet and red dates, sweet and tempting.

The sun rose warmly. Breakfast was set in the courtyard. Children washed their hands and ran over to sit down. Their little faces glowed under the sunlight.

“It’s delicious!” Zhengzheng praised Gu Ling’s pancakes.

“It’s because of the wild vegetables we picked!” Ji Xiaoshu seized every chance to poke fun.

“Then stop eating.” Gu Ling blocked Ji Xiaoshu’s hand with chopsticks as he reached for more.

Ji Xiaoshu chuckled, “Isn’t it because Master’s cooking skills have already reached the peak? There’s nothing left to praise!”

Gu Ling nodded, “You guys should focus on learning next.”

Although this world wasn’t very industrialized, Su Liang felt that the air in Su Village was fresher than in the capital city. After coming back, even if they didn’t do anything and just stayed, they felt happy. Gu Ling felt the same way.

After breakfast, Su Bai arrived. He earnestly reported to Su Liang and Gu Ling about the development of the village in the past two years, not only about the school and children. The appearance of the village was very different from it was before.

“Uncle Bai, thank you for your hard work,” Su Liang smiled.

Su Bai hurriedly shook his head, "It's all thanks to your blessings. Otherwise, how could we have such good days now? Are you planning to stay longer this time?"

Gu Ling shook his head gently, "It depends on the situation."

"Alright, you two are busy people. Whenever you decide to leave, please let me know in advance. I will see you off," Su Bai said with a smile.

Knowing the character of Su Liang and Gu Ling, Su Bai didn't invite them to his home for dinner. After discussing the matters, he left, as he was really busy.

Su Bai had just left when Hu Er arrived. He had been particularly caring for Su Village and had some "informants" in the village. When he heard that Gu Ling and Su Liang were back, he rushed over immediately.

Like Su Bai, Hu Er also sincerely reported to Su Liang and Gu Ling about his business over the past few years and expressed his heartfelt gratitude. After recovering from his illness, he had become a well-known and kind person, and his temperament had changed dramatically from when they first met.

Hu Er brought many gifts, mostly precious and lonely books he had collected one after another. He knew what Gu Ling and Su Liang would like, and he also specially brought interesting little toys as gifts for the children. They were not expensive, but very thoughtful.

At noon, Su Liang invited Hu Er to stay for lunch, but he quickly declined, saying he had other things to do. He wasn't rejecting the invitation because he didn't want to eat there, but he felt he shouldn't. Even though Gu Ling and Su Liang were polite, he couldn't forget his status. They were his benefactors, not his friends, and he should be respectful to them.

For lunch, Gu Ling, according to what Su Liang said yesterday, picked the tender squash from the backyard to make dumplings.

The children sat in a row, and Gu Ling taught them how to wrap the dumplings. Zhengzheng had learned it a long time ago and wrapped them quickly and well, while Ji Xiaoshu insisted on taking the innovative route, determined to make dumplings with a different style than Gu Ling's. Gu Xiaonuan played happily with the dough, treating it like a rubber mud.

The dumplings were wrapped and then boiled in a pot. Soon, they floated up, plump and white.

Gu Ling prepared dipping sauce, and the dumplings were ready to serve.

Bai's mother sent over some dishes that she made at home, which she remembered Gu Ling and Su Liang loved. She couldn't refuse Su Liang's insistence and took a big plate of dumplings back with her.

The sunlight was bright, and the children's laughter shone brighter than the sun.

As Gu Ling and Su Liang tasted the familiar flavors and listened to the children's laughter, they felt that these were the best moments of their lives.

Chapter 515: 515. The Grand Finale (Mass Update)

Thirteen years later, Xuanbei City.

Once a border city plagued by incessant warfare, it had now become a bustling trade metropolis. Tea houses and pubs could be found every few steps down the street. At dusk, the streets were brightly lit, the singing in the tea houses, the sound of guessing games in pubs, and the clatter of peddlers waving rattle drums as they shouldered their goods intermingled, all evoking the prosperous atmosphere of a time of peace.

Ever since the empire became unified, Emperor Duanmu Chen vigorously implemented new policies, reducing taxes, promoting the cultivation of new food crops in the barren north, and developing sericulture in the south. The days when the common people couldn't afford food had truly come to an end.

However, while peace was real, so were wicked individuals.

A tall girl dressed in coarse clothes, carrying a small bundle, had her hair wrapped in a cloth, showing only her unadorned and fair-skinned face, with large eyes, a high nose, and cherry lips. She entered Xuanbei City alone through the North City gate just before the sky darkened. Shortly after walking down the street, she caught the eye of a man.

The man appeared quite ordinary, with an honest-looking face. Initially, he was just hurrying along, but upon noticing the girl alone at night, his eyes lit up. Pretending to look at a round fan, he kept an eye on the girl who was walking not too far away.

Seeing the girl enter an inn, the man frowned, and the peddler impatiently asked, "Are you buying or not?"

The man threw down the fan, "Not buying!"

Once the man left, the peddler grumbled and picked up his load before continuing on his way.

The man went to the entrance of the inn and saw the girl emerge, looking crestfallen. Inside the inn, a voice could be heard, "You can't stay at an inn without money. Hurry and go to the West City. There's a charity hall there, where people do good deeds!"

The man nearly bumped into the girl, and hastily moved aside, apologizing, then reminding her to watch her surroundings while walking. Seeing the girl's downcast expression, he asked with concern, "Miss, it's so late. Why are you alone outside? Where are your family members?"

The girl glanced at the man, murmuring, "My family has all passed away. I am going to the capital city to seek refuge with a distant uncle. I lost my money along the way. I haven't eaten for three days..."

The man heaved a deep sigh, "How pitiful. My home is in this city, not far from here. My wife is waiting for me with a home-cooked meal. If you don't mind, you can stay with us tonight. I have a daughter about your age."

The girl hesitated, "Thank you, sir, but I'll just go to the charity hall the person mentioned."

The man glanced around and lowered his voice, "You're from out of town and don't know that that charity hall isn't a good place. They won't give you food if you don't work, and they beat and scold you at the slightest provocation. Once you go in, there's no leaving. Can a girl like you bear that?"

The girl hesitated for a moment, and after the man spoke ill of the charity hall, she finally nodded and followed him in a certain direction.

After a while, a waiter from the inn rushed out, looking around, “Hey? Where’s the girl just now? I fetched her two buns! I was afraid she would faint from hunger before reaching the charity hall. Where is she?”

Having seen no one, the waiter shook his head and returned with the buns.

By this time, the man had led the girl into a desolate alley, claiming his home was inside.

“Sir, you truly have a heart of a Bodhisattva (compassionate one).” The girl appeared to let her guard down, “I’ve met a good person!”

Amidst the darkness, the man’s smile exuded an ominous air, “It’s nothing. As long as I can help you. Seeing you reminds me of my daughter, although you are more beautiful.”

“Really?” The girl’s face lit up with innocence.

They had reached the middle of the alley, and a little further, it would be apparent that it was a dead-end. Suddenly, the man stretched out his hand to grab the girl’s shoulder, “Indeed. However, your parents never taught you not to trust strangers. Moreover, such a beautiful girl like you shouldn’t be out alone!”

The girl evaded him in horror, “What... What do you want?”

The man sneered, “Of course, I’ll send you to a good place where you can enjoy good food and drink. With your looks, you can surely fetch a high price!”

Before he had finished speaking, the man pivoted, revealing himself to be a martial arts practitioner. He reached for the girl’s delicate neck.

In the shadows, the girl’s face was half-lit. She narrowed her eyes, and a faint smile graced her lips, making her look like a bewitching fairy, “My family is not short of money. My parents would be really mad if they heard you speak like this.”

The next moment, when the man realized something was amiss, he heard a crack. His outstretched hand had been broken, and he couldn’t even see how the girl had done it. She appeared so frail, yet how could she possess such strength?!

The girl scoffed, “People die for money. No matter how strict the law, there will always be those who have no regard for life.” Within moments, her swift moves left the man screaming in pain. Her expression remained unchanged, her indifferent smile never leaving her face. Despite her youth, she exuded a chilling and imposing aura as she dealt her blows decisively, showcasing an air of dominance.

Soon, the man was lying on the ground, coughing up blood incessantly, his screams growing weaker.

The young girl waved her hand, and two tall and upright young men appeared behind her, one dressed in a flamboyant wide red robe, and the other in a blue outfit.

With synchronized steps, they came forward and stood on either side of the girl, looking at the half-dead man on the ground.

“Little sister, why did you act alone again?” The young man in blue said with a helpless smile, “Now it seems we’ve accomplished nothing on this trip.”

The young man in red fiercely kicked the man on the ground in the chest, “You dared to have ill intentions towards my sister! You must have the guts of a bear and a leopard!” He then grinned at the young man in blue, “Elder brother, it’s you who achieved nothing, not me. I just took action, oh, with my foot! But little sister, you always fight alone and keep us hidden like treasured beauties, not even letting us do the work. What if you lose a hair? Our master will hang us up and beat us when we get home!”

The young man in blue couldn’t help but laugh, “Stop talking nonsense, Little Tree. Master has never beaten me like that.”

The girl smiled playfully, her eyes spirited, completely different from her demeanor when facing the trafficker. She plucked a strand of her hair, “I have lost a hair, so when we get home, I’ll have dad hang my second brother up and beat him!”

The young man in red sighed, hugged the young man in blue, and leaned his head on his shoulder, “Elder brother, little sister, you both bully me! I don’t want to live!”

The man on the ground tried to turn his face to look at them, and the young man in blue flicked a silver needle as thin as a cow’s hair between his fingers, which pierced the man’s neck, and his head drooped, motionless.

The trafficker was indeed courting death since he knew nothing about the people he encountered today.

The girl was Gu Nuan, the only daughter of the Regent Gu Ling and his wife Su Liang, the divine doctor, and also the adopted daughter of the current emperor Duanmu Chen, who had already bestowed her the title of princess.

As for the two young men, they were naturally Gu Ling and Su Liang’s closed-door disciples. The once little steamed bun had grown up.

The young man in blue was formerly known as Zhengzheng, now named Wan Zhengyang, with a square face, handsome eyes, and a steady and gentle temperament.

The young man in red, who occasionally joked about being the crown prince of a fallen country, called himself Ji Xiaoshu. His real name was Ji Tianyang, with delicate eyebrows and eyes, and an unrestrained and proud demeanor.

Ji Tianyang was one month younger than Wan Zhengyang, but when he was a child, he was half a head taller than him. Now he is still half a head taller and even thinner. But while Wan Zhengyang stands as straight as a pine, Ji Tianyang is casual and lazy, making them appear the same height.

The three siblings set out on this trip to visit the Ji family who had settled in the north. Although they had only planned for a short stay, Ji Yuebai’s warm hospitality had kept them there for an additional half-month, and now they had to hurry back to the capital city.

As for such incidents tonight, they had occurred more than once or twice – the three siblings had been traveling together since three years ago without adults accompanying them. Most of the time, Wan Zhengyang and Ji Tianyang were reading, practicing martial arts, sleeping, or playing chess in Gu Xiaonuan’s space, while she was responsible for “fishing.”

A beautiful young girl alone is very easy to attract villains, but that's precisely the goal of the three siblings. When they go out to play, they naturally want to remove some scum along the way. Otherwise, what's the use of learning such high martial arts skills in a peaceful world?

Using the same strategy, they had encountered countless traffickers in various places who wanted to abduct Gu Xiaonuan or sell her off.

And every time, they agreed to do it together. But Gu Xiaonuan would always put the bad guys down first and then summon her two brothers.

"Alright, it's time for big brother and second brother to work. I'll leave this guy to you!" Gu Xiaonuan said with a smile, "And, I'm hungry."

Wan Zhengyang smiled, "It's all ready. Do you want to eat here?"

Gu Xiaonuan nodded, then waved her hand again. A table appeared in front of her, with four dishes and a soup arranged on it.

Another basin of water appeared on the table. Gu Xiaonuan washed her hands, and the basin disappeared. A chair appeared, and she sat down and began eating with her chopsticks.

After tasting a piece of spare rib, she nodded, "Big brother, your cooking skills are getting better and better, almost catching up to my dad."

Ji Tianyang pointed at a brightly-colored dish, "Little sister, try this one! I came up with it today, Strawberry Fried Eggplant! Isn't it beautiful?"

Gu Xiaonuan paused her hand and rejected it with a straight face, "Please, second brother, stop being creative. Strawberries are so delicious, and mom went through so much trouble to find seeds to plant them. Why not just eat them directly?"

Ji Tianyang sighed, "Ah, why does my sister never like the dishes I prepare for her with all my heart? She's not even willing to try a bite. I'm so heartbroken."

Gu Xiaonuan was speechless. Here they go again!

Wan Zhengyang's smile was gentle, "I've tried it, and it's not poisonous. Little sister, why not give it a try? The taste is quite unique."

Ji Tianyang blinked at Gu Xiaonuan, urging her to taste it, "Try it, try it! Maybe it'll suit your taste!"

Gu Xiaonuan, out of curiosity, tried a bite of the eggplant but didn't dare to taste the fried strawberries.

"How is it?" Ji Tianyang asked.

Gu Xiaonuan shook her head, "Second Brother, I've told you many times, I don't like sweet and salty food, it's weird, if you like it, have more yourself."

Ji Tianyang held his forehead, "Alright, alright, then I can only go home and cook it for Master, he'll definitely like it."

Gu Xiaonuan burst into laughter upon hearing this, “Last time you were hung up and beaten by Dad, it was because you pulled off his long-tended flowers and boiled them into a soup, those flowers were supposed to be a surprise for Mom!”

Ji Tianyang coughed lightly, “The ignorant are innocent, I thought those little flowers were wild from the garden, who let them smell so fragrant, but the taste was bitter when I drank it, I was purely deceived!”

“Alright, we should get to work.” Wan Zhengyang called Ji Tianyang to carry the trafficker lying on the ground up together, leaped into the air, and disappeared in a few jumps.

Gu Xiaonuan sat alone in the dark alley, finishing her dinner, and just as she was putting away the table and chairs, her two brothers came back.

“How did it go?” Gu Xiaonuan asked.

Wan Zhengyang nodded, “Interrogated, both the person and the confession have been sent to the county government.”

The reason they didn’t kill him directly was that many of these traffickers were repeat offenders, and they needed to investigate their past misdeeds to rescue the victims.

In the past two years, every county government had been receiving half-dead criminals late at night, along with confessions marked with seals, saving interrogation efforts. People all over the world knew that someone was performing chivalry and getting rid of evil, especially targeting traffickers, but no one had ever seen what the chivalrous person looked like. Because the only one who appeared was a seemingly lonely and helpless young girl, no one would connect her to the chivalrous.

“Let’s go.” As Gu Xiaonuan finished speaking, the three of them once again used their lightness skills, headed south, and left Xuanbei City.

After they left the city, the three of them switched to riding horses. The horses were usually kept in the hidden space. They did this all the way, “fishing” when they were in the populous city, and riding horses to travel in other places. During the day, Wan Zhengyang and Ji Tianyang were usually in the hidden space, and at night they accompanied Gu Xiaonuan outside. There was no way because Gu Xiaonuan’s own space couldn’t be entered by herself.

“First Brother and Second Brother, you don’t actually have to accompany me, I can do it myself. If there’s any real danger, just come out and help me anytime.” Gu Xiaonuan said.

Ji Tianyang shook his head, “How could that be? We said we’d come out together to have fun, and it’s better for me and First Brother to idle in the garden than horse riding and running around outside!”

Gu Xiaonuan chuckled, “Oh, Second Brother thinks my garden is too small.”

“Not small, but the world outside is bigger.” Ji Tianyang laughed, and once again challenged Wan Zhengyang, “First Brother, let’s have a horse race!” With that, he whipped and rushed ahead.

Gu Xiaonuan wasn’t happy, “You’re leaving me out again, see if I don’t teach you a lesson!”

So when Wan Zhengyang hadn’t rushed out yet, Gu Xiaonuan sidestepped and patted his shoulder, causing him and his horse to instantly disappear.

Unaware of what happened, Ji Tianyang thought Wan Zhengyang caught up to him, but in the next moment, he too disappeared from sight.

After a while, Gu Xiaonuan let her two brothers and their horses out again.

Wan Zhengyang remained calm as if nothing had happened, while Ji Tianyang was already wilting, “Next time let’s race together! Little sister, I admit my fault, please take away your divine power, my heart can’t take it, it’s too exciting.”

Gu Xiaonuan calmly shook her head in denial, “Second Brother, you don’t need to act weak, it’s too exaggerated for me to handle.”

Wan Zhengyang smiled without a word.

Capital city.

The children said they would return right when they left, but waiting for them was to no avail.

Gu Ling and Su Liang were not worried, the three of them were playful, never coming back on time once they left home.

However, the elderly at home could not sit still, and they would repeatedly nag Gu Ling and Su Liang three or four times a day, telling them to go pick up their children, in case they encountered bad people on their way back.

Just then, Old Bai came again, “Xiaoliang, let me go and prepare for their return.”

As Su Liang sat by the window reading, Gu Ling was nearby carving a piece of jade. She looked up and said with a smile, “Master, they will be fine. If they don’t meet any bad guys, they’ll probably provoke them on purpose.”

Old Bai chuckled, “True, our Nuannuan is quite the formidable heroine!”

“Master, don’t worry. They might be back in a couple of days. Going to meet them might lead to missing them, as they often change clothes and appearances in the outside world. It’s not easy to find them if they’re disguised.”

Old Bai sighed and turned to leave, muttering, “Alright... She’s still so young, and always running out...”

“Great God, aren’t you the least bit worried about your precious daughter?” Su Liang asked Gu Ling. Her appearance hadn’t changed much in the last ten years, but she looked even more radiant and mature now.

To Su Liang, Gu Ling now looked even more attractive than before, still making her heart flutter with his charisma, admiring the creator's favoritism.

Gu Ling asked back, "Are you worried?"

Su Liang shook her head, "Not really."

Gu Ling smiled slightly, "I am worried Nuannuan might hurt her hand beating up the bad guys."

A clear and crisp voice came from outside the door, "Master, Mistress, may I come in?"

Su Liang raised an eyebrow and whispered, "Your third disciple is here again to check if Gu Xiaonuan has returned. How many times has this been?"

Gu Ling put down the jade stone and went to open the door with his carving knife, "It's the seventh day."

The door could actually be pushed open easily, but Gu Ling insisted on opening the door for Lin Jingyun, as he recently found this boy displeasing.

Speaking of Gu Ling's disciples, there were already too many to count. Due to their ages, when Gu Ling taught Wan Zhengyang and Ji Tianyang, it was time for Nuannuan to practice martial arts with Lin Shuzhi's great-grandson Lin Jingyun. They had to study and read together in both martial arts and at the Lin Family.

Although Nuannuan had many childhood friends, the most compatible one was Lin Jingyun. For two years, Su Liang and Gu Ling stayed in Su Family Village, and Lin Jingyun was brought over by his uncle, the general, who was traveling on official business. The Lin Family all agreed that he should come, and he stayed with them in the Su Family Village for more than a year.

Nuannuan would come of age at the end of the year. Duanmu Chen had early proposed that Nuannuan would become the crown princess for his son, but Gu Ling had directly refused. Duanmu Chen knew that although his son was an outstanding talent in both civil and military fields, he was no match for those several older brothers. Guessing that Gu Ling and Su Liang had already found a suitable son-in-law, he didn't bring it up again.

When the door opened, Lin Jingyun, dressed in white, stood tall and greeted his master, seemingly ignoring the gleaming knife in Gu Ling's hand.

"I know my two senior brothers and junior sister haven't returned. I just came to say hello to my master and mistress." Lin Jingyun smiled, resembling his handsome young father Lin Boyan, an elegant poet. Due to practicing martial arts from a young age, he had become quite tall, only half a head shorter than Gu Ling.

"Jingyun, come in," Su Liang's voice came from inside, and Gu Ling finally stepped aside to let him in.

Lin Jingyun greeted Su Liang with a smile and asked her about the book she was reading.

"You don't need to come every day. When they return, they'll find you." Su Liang poured a cup of tea for Lin Jingyun.

“It just feels like there’s not much to do when my senior brother and junior sister are not at home,” Lin Jingyun said with a smile.

It wasn’t that he was lazy, but he had already passed the civil and military examinations and became a world-famous top scholar last year. As the eldest grandson of the Lin Family, it would have been strange if he hadn’t become a top scholar. His academic and martial prowess had overtaken his father, uncles, Gu Ling, and Su Liang at a young age.

In the previous imperial examination, the Top Scholar in Literature was Ji Tianyang, and the Martial Arts Champion was Wan Zhengyang. The results were settled by drawing lots between the two brothers before the examinations, and Ji Tianyang, who drew the Civil Examinations, was quite unhappy.

Today, they are Duanmu Chen’s most promising talents in the country’s future. However, they are still too young and unwilling to become officials. Duanmu Chen, who had seen them grow up, said generously that he would give them some more time to enjoy themselves and gain more experience.

It’s worth mentioning that Bai Xiaohu’s uncle from the Su Family Village and Bai Family resumed his studies, became a scholar, and soon after, Bai Xiaohu and Zhuzi also passed the imperial examination and became officials in the capital city, where they have moved their families. Su Liang now keeps in touch with them frequently.

“Let me check if your martial arts skills have improved,” Gu Ling stood up.

Lin Jingyun immediately put down his tea cup and stood up, “Alright.”

Then, master and disciple went outside and began their martial arts practice by the lake.

Su Liang found it amusing. Gu Ling practically had “you stinky kid want to be my son-in-law even though I took you in as a disciple” written on his forehead.

However, Su Liang knew that Gu Ling was, of course, not unwilling to let Gu Xiaonuan get married. In fact, one of the reasons he took in so many disciples was to ensure that Gu Xiaonuan would not be in contact with bad brothers because it was very likely that one of them would become his future son-in-law.

Including Duanmu Chen, everyone believed that it was either Wan Zhengyang or Ji Tianyang. The Lin Family also thought so, except for Lin Jingyun.

As for Su Liang, she watched Zhengzheng and Xiaoshu grow up together with Gu Xiaonuan, and it seemed that they regarded her as their sister and had no thoughts in that direction. Otherwise, Gu Ling would have had a headache two years ago. Su Liang was really worried, what if Zhengzheng and Xiaoshu both liked Nuannuan? Later, it turned out that her worry was unnecessary. Those two boys were now eighteen years old, and if they had such thoughts, they would not have been able to hide them.

The outcome of the duel was predictable: Gu Ling won.

Lin Jingyun bowed his hands, “Thank you, Master, for your guidance.”

“You can leave now,” Gu Ling said and entered Yuanming Pavilion.

Lin Jingyun raised his head, saw Su Liang at the window, smiled and waved, “Mistress, I’ll go home first today.”

“Go ahead, come back another day,” Su Liang replied.

Gu Ling went upstairs and entered the room, while Su Liang wrapped her arms around his arm, smiling, “Great God, your emotions are so obvious. You used to like Jingyun a lot, saying that he was the most like you many times. Now suddenly you’re like this, aren’t you afraid of him overthinking?”

“He’s not a fool, of course, he knows what I mean,” Gu Ling snorted lightly.

Su Liang nodded, “Indeed, It’s the seventh day, and you should know his intentions too.”

Gu Ling frowned at Su Liang, “Don’t you dare to say you support him being with Nuannuan, I’ll get angry.”

Su Liang smiled, “Of course, whoever Gu Xiaonuan likes, I’ll support them. She quite likes Jingyun, don’t you think?”

“I think it’s not the right time!” Gu Ling was slightly angry, and the jade stone he was about to carve was crushed in his hand.

Su Liang touched her forehead, “Great God, please calm down.”

“We should wait until Nuannuan is at least eighteen to consider this kind of thing!”

Gu Ling ground the shattered jade stone into powder as he spoke.

“Oh?” Su Liang couldn’t help but smile, “Back then, someone didn’t wait for me to turn eighteen, did they?”

Gu Ling shook his head, “It’s not the same.”

Su Liang nodded, “Yes, it’s not. Just to make it clear, I am not supporting Nuannuan to get married early. I think, Great God, you might as well just tell Jingyun your thoughts directly.”

Gu Ling shook his head, “What if Nuannuan doesn’t like him at all, then it would be like we’ve already decided on him as our son-in-law.”

Hearing this, Su Liang knew that Gu Ling also approved of Lin Jingyun, but couldn’t accept his daughter being watched by someone so young – even though he had done the same thing himself when chasing his wife. But chasing one’s own wife and having one’s own daughter taken away are not the same thing.

“Then let it take its course,” Su Liang said.

“No, what if Nuannuan says she wants to marry Jingyun on the day of her hairpin ceremony?”, Gu Ling became anxious again.

The troubles of having a daughter are as such. At this point, there was nothing else that could make Gu Ling anxious.

“Back when we got together, how old was I then? And how old is Jingyun now? He’s still just a child, thinking about all sorts of things all day long. It seems that I have not given him enough homework,” Gu Ling said, “When he comes again tomorrow, I’ll teach him a new set of martial arts and ask him to catch a hundred criminals before he comes home. Regarding the newly built water conservancy project in the south, I’ll advise the emperor to let him oversee it. He doesn’t do serious work after being the top scholar, talking about tactics on paper is even worse.”

Su Liang was very happy with his words, “Great God, you know, Jingyun should be able to handle it. He knows you’re testing him, otherwise he wouldn’t have tried so hard to get the double top scholar degree early on, so you wouldn’t say he’s not as good as the other two senior brothers.”

The next day, before Lin Jingyun came to visit, Gu Xiaonuan came home.

Before meeting her parents, she met all her masters first who asked about her well-being and asked to go with her next time she went out. If there were any bad guys, they could all fight together.

Gu Xiaonuan readily agreed, “No problem, I’ll take my masters with me next time to have fun!”

“Nuannuan’s gotten thinner,” Elder Mu said. “Let’s go inside.”

Gu Xiaonuan touched her own face. “Did I? That’s great, I specifically wanted to lose some weight.”

As soon as these words left her mouth, a chorus of disapproval came from her masters.

“Dad!” Gu Xiaonuan entered the house, calling out to Gu Ling and hugged Su Liang. “Mom, hurry up and say you missed me, or I’ll run away from home!”

Su Liang smiled and tapped Gu Xiaonuan on the forehead. “I missed your two senior brothers too. Why don’t you let them out?”

“Ah, I forgot!” Gu Xiaonuan waved her hand, and two more people appeared in the room.

Ji Tianyang enthusiastically hugged Gu Ling. “Master, I’ve missed you to death!”

Gu Ling pushed him away. “How old are you now, and you can’t even act properly.”

“Master, you clearly love it.” Ji Tianyang hugged Su Liang again. “Mistress, I missed you even more!”

“I know.” Su Liang laughed. “What do you want to eat? I’ll cook for you.”

Gu Xiaonuan immediately said, “I’m not hungry, but if Dad is, let Second Brother cook Strawberry Fried Eggplant for you. He said you must love it!”

Upon hearing this, Gu Ling picked up the duster next to him. “Ji Xiaoshu, you dare to ruin my strawberries! Come here!”

Before Gu Ling finished speaking, Ji Tianyang darted towards the window and jumped out. “Master, today is not the day to punish your disciple. If you want to, I will go and call Third Brother!”

“I’ll go find Brother Jingyun too!” Gu Xiaonuan said as she tried to run out as well.

Su Liang saw Gu Ling’s face turning black, and Wan Zhengyang hurriedly pulled Gu Xiaonuan back. “Little sister, we just got back. Let’s go find Jingyun later.”

The next moment, they heard Ji Tianyang’s laughter from outside. “Third Brother, perfect timing! Master wants to beat you up!”

“Second Senior Brother looks even more handsome.” Lin Jingyun laughed. “Next time you go out to play, you must take me.”

“Hahaha, no problem!” Ji Tianyang laughed and hugged Lin Jingyun as they both entered the Yuanming Pavilion. This time, Lin Jingyun didn’t go because his grandfather was having a birthday, and Ji Tianyang couldn’t wait for him because he was also rushing to the north for his father’s birthday.

As Lin Jingyun appeared at the doorway, Gu Xiaonuan got up to greet him and affectionately hugged his arm in front of Su Liang and Gu Ling. “Brother Jingyun!”

Gu Ling:...Back then, Su Liang wasn’t this proactive with him!

However, they had grown up together since childhood, and Su Liang felt this was normal. If the children really liked each other, it would be a good thing to settle down early, so as not to give others a chance to come between them and create unnecessary misunderstandings.

Ji Tianyang squeezed into the middle of Lin Jingyun and Gu Xiaonuan, hugging them both. “Third Brother, today our Master and Mistress are cooking, so we can order dishes! Opportunities don’t come often, so hurry up and say, what do you want to eat?”

“I want steamed vegetables,” Lin Jingyun laughed.

“No ordering dishes allowed.” Gu Ling stood up and walked outside. “Jingyun, come and help with the fire.”

“Okay.” Lin Jingyun smiled at Gu Xiaonuan, then followed Gu Ling.

“What’s wrong with Dad?” Gu Xiaonuan felt Gu Ling was acting strange and sat down next to Su Liang to ask.

“Oh, his mood isn’t very beautiful today,” Su Liang laughed.

“Is there anything that can make my Dad unhappy now? Is Mom annoyed with him?” Gu Xiaonuan asked in surprise.

Su Liang coughed lightly, “Of course not. It’s because...his strawberries were used by your second brother for a dark culinary experiment.”

Ji Tianyang, who had just taken a sip of tea, choked. “Ah? Master is really angry at me? That can’t be, right?”

“Why don’t you bring out the strawberries to cheer him up?” Su Liang laughed, “He loves strawberries the most, and they weren’t ripe when you left.”

The next moment, Su Liang saw Gu Xiaonuan pulling her two brothers into the space, and they came out quickly, each holding a plate of freshly picked and washed strawberries, red and beautiful.

“This is for sister-in-law.” Wan Zhengyang placed the strawberries in his hand next to Su Liang, and then the three of them took the other plate to the kitchen to find Gu Ling.

Gu Ling was cooking, Gu Xiaonuan was feeding him strawberries, Wan Zhengyang was washing vegetables, Lin Jingyun was stoking the fire, and Ji Tianyang was leaning against the door, lazily looking at the sky, listening to Gu Xiaonuan telling Gu Ling about the bad guys they encountered on the way. When Gu Ling wasn’t looking, Gu Xiaonuan swiftly handed the plate to Lin Jingyun so he could secretly eat strawberries.

The meal was ready, and although Gu Ling said not to order dishes, he still made each child’s favorite dish, including the steamed dish that Lin Jingyun wanted to eat – in this regard, his taste was quite similar to Gu Ling’s.

After eating, the children were all gone. They had just returned and wanted to visit their master who was not living in Su Mansion, as well as many uncles and aunts who were thinking about them.

In the afternoon, Su Liang and Gu Ling took a nap and then went for a walk in the garden.

“Great God, can you imagine, in a few years, we might be holding our grandchildren?” Su Liang laughed, “Time is flying so fast, I still feel young.”

“I can’t imagine,” Gu Ling shook his head, “Let’s wait a few more years, I’m not old enough to want to hold grandchildren yet.”

“Don’t be so nervous, the kids are smart and can handle their own affairs.” Su Liang shook Gu Ling’s hand.

Gu Ling couldn’t help but laugh, “I know, Jingyun is great... Maybe... I’m a little unbalanced in my heart? After all, it was so difficult to chase you back then.”

Su Liang disagreed, “I accepted your proposal the day after you confessed.”

“Thank you for agreeing.” Gu Ling leaned his head and kissed Su Liang’s smooth forehead, “In the blink of an eye, the children are almost the same age as we were back then.”

“Does Great God think that life is boring?” Su Liang asked with a smile.

“Of course not,” Gu Ling shook his head, “We haven’t been able to shake off the kids for all these years. Now that they have grown up, let’s elope tonight! Go south, out to sea, find an island and experience wilderness survival?”

"You can bear to leave your beloved daughter who just came home? I don't believe it," Su Liang shook her head.

"She's only thinking about her brother now, let her be happy." Gu Ling's tone was a bit resentful.

The next day, when Gu Xiaonuan got up and opened the window, she saw her two brothers practicing swordplay by the lake downstairs, as usual for the past several years.

When Gu Xiaonuan finished getting ready and went out, she found that Gu Ling and Su Liang's room was still closed, and she felt a little strange. She went over and knocked on the door, but no one answered.

"Big brother, second brother, hurry up!" Gu Xiaonuan called out, and Wan Zhengyang and Ji Tianyang immediately rushed in.

The three of them opened the door, and the room was in perfect order, but empty.

Ji Tianyang found the letter on the table, opened it, and saw a thin sheet of paper inside, with Gu Ling's increasingly flowing handwriting, "Gone, don't worry."

"Wow! So ruthless!" Ji Tianyang complained, "Even if Master wants to shake us off and go out to play, he could write a few more words! It's like we were picked up off the street!"

"I'm the biological one." Gu Xiaonuan took the letter and looked at it, "Hey, is it possible that bad people came last night and kidnapped my parents, and then imitated my dad's handwriting to leave a note?"

Wan Zhengyang laughed and shook his head, "That's impossible, don't worry about it, little sister."

"Alright then." Gu Xiaonuan smiled, "Let them have fun! If it weren't for me, my dad would have taken my mom into seclusion long ago."

Ji Tianyang took the paper back, "I'm going to have this framed and hung on the wall for everyone to see Master's heart full of love for his daughter."

"Oh, I forgot to tell my dad that I sneaked out and lost one of my hairs. Second brother, you dodged a beating, but you're already pursuing the next one." Gu Xiaonuan smiled, "I have an appointment with Jingyun brother today to go mountain climbing. Are you coming?"

Wan Zhengyang shook his head, "I have things to do at home, I'll go back in a while, I won't go today. Xiaoshu, you go with them."

Ji Tianyang chuckled, "Then I must go! I have to keep an eye on Xiaomei; otherwise, when master and mistress return and find Xiaomei abducted, it won't just be a matter of getting beaten. Big Brother and I will be expelled from the sect."

Gu Xiaonuan blinked, "My parents...probably don't know about my relationship with Jingyun, right?"

Wan Zhengyang laughed lightly, “They most likely didn’t, but according to master, Jingyun came looking for you for eight consecutive days before we returned. It would be impossible for master and mistress not to know by now.”

Ji Tianyang laughed, “I suspect Third Brother did it deliberately. He didn’t dare say it openly, but he wanted to hint at it to master and mistress so they’d be prepared! As expected, I’ve always said he’s a sly fox since he was little!”

At this moment, Gu Ling and Su Liang had already ridden their horses far away from the capital city.

By evening, they had reached a vast stretch of wasteland.

During the golden autumn season, the setting sun’s golden glow and the wild grass on the wasteland complemented each other beautifully, gorgeous to the eyes.

Leading their horses, they slowly walked forward, with Su Liang listening to Gu Ling discuss the idea of a science fiction novel he’d come up with. His current knowledge and thought patterns were more like those of modern people compared to the people of this era. Over the past few years, Gu Ling had written several books of various genres, and Su Liang was his loyal reader.

It wasn’t until the sky gradually darkened that they rested before getting back on their horses to continue onward.

“Hey, Great God, do you have a plan for when we’ll return?” Su Liang asked.

Gu Ling’s smile was illuminated by the dimming sky, making it look particularly gentle, “Let’s wait for three years. Without us around, Jingyun and Nuannuan won’t be able to get engaged.”

Su Liang snorted with laughter, “You, as a father, are really something else. But I support a three-year wait; they’re indeed too young right now. However, we’ll miss Nuannuan’s hairpin ceremony.”

“That’s not important. How about five years?” Gu Ling asked. In this world, the hairpin ceremony symbolized that a woman was eligible to get married, but Gu Ling felt that his daughter was too young and not yet ready for marriage.

Su Liang laughed as he rode ahead, his voice echoing in the wind, “Do you think the kids will find us before a year has passed?”

“As long as we don’t want to be found, they won’t.” Gu Ling spurred his horse to catch up.

They went on, stopping and continuing without any plan, guided only by their mood. A few days later, they reached Jiaye City and even stole a basket of oranges from Lin Family’s Orchard. After that, they boarded a ship to sail out to sea. Their next destination was to revisit the old site of Xingluo Island.

At night, Gu Ling and Su Liang let their boat drift on the open sea. They lay side by side on the boat, gazing at the dazzling stars in the night sky. Closing their eyes, they felt as if they were resting in a cradle, completely relaxed.

“Great God, if you could go back in time, which moment of your life would you like to return to?” Su Liang asked Gu Ling.

Gu Ling thought seriously for quite a while before answering the question, "I want to go back to the day I confessed my feelings to you. My performance was terrible at that time."

Su Liang looked at Gu Ling sideways, her eyes sparkling, "Alright, close your eyes and open them again. Now we're back at that day, Gu Beauty, you can confess your love to me now."

Gu Ling's eyes burned brightly, but without saying a word, he kissed Su Liang's lips. This was what he had always wanted to do back then...

"Su Liang."

"Hm?"

"Actually, several years ago, I had a dream one night where I had time-traveled."

"Huh? Why haven't you mentioned this before? What happened after you time-traveled? Tell me about it!"

"The dream was short. I found myself standing on a bustling street, with you nowhere to be found. I was terrified, and that fear woke me up."

"Haha, Great God, you're so adorable. Did I ever tell you that I really, really like you?"

"I like you even more."

The End