

Three-Time 81

Chapter 81: 081. Su Liang l s Task

Seeing Lin Xueqing looking like she was going to have a good talk with Ning

Jing and tell him that “missing out on Su Liang will be a lifelong regret,” Su Liang earnestly said, “Xueqing, I know you mean well, but we are fine as we are now. I admire him, but being together doesn’t necessarily mean we have to be husband and wife to be the best, right?”

Lin Xueqing was momentarily stunned, “That makes sense, but I really think you two are a perfect match!”

Su Liang smiled, “Actually, I was just joking earlier. Between us, no matter who is to whom, there is no romantic attraction. To be precise, we are good brothers.”

Lin Xueqing was speechless, shaking her head and sighing, “Alright, alright, I admit that you are handsome! Whatever, you guys decide for yourselves!”

Just now, Su Liang almost said, “maybe Ning Jing has someone else in his heart,” but in the end, she didn’t say it.

Lin Xueqing is a good girl. Letting her know that her “Brother Jing” died in silence is better than letting her think that Ning Jing is living well, and just never knows that someone once liked her. The latter is better for her.

It’s deception, but it’s also Zhen Ningjing’s real wish.

Lin Xueqing took Su Liang to see the three pine trees planted side by side on the back mountain, “This is my eldest brother, this is my second brother, and this is Brother Ning! They are never at home, so I planted three trees together. When I come to the back mountain to play, it’s like they’re all with me!”

Listening to her, it was obvious that Lin Xueqing regarded the real Ningjing as her own brother, her family.

Su Liang wondered if, three years ago, if the real Ning Jing hadn’t left and had the opportunity to accompany Lin Xueqing as she grew up, their relationship might have changed.

It was possible.

But now, it’s no longer possible.

Lin Xueqing picked off some grass from a pine tree and saw Su Liang looking a little dejected, so she asked her what she was thinking.

Su Liang smiled, “I’m envious of the sibling bond you guys have.”

“Your relationship with Brother Ning is even more interesting!” said Lin Xueqing, laughing.

Lin Shuzhi and Ning Jing appeared not far away, and Lin Xueqing waved to them, “Brother Ning, come see, your tree has grown taller than you!”

The two came over, and Lin Shuzhi asked Su Liang with a gentle smile, “Did Xueqing ask you to stay at the academy?”

Lin Xueqing’s eyes lit up, and she immediately hugged Su Liang’s arm, “Sister Su, you can’t leave now that you’re here! The academy is full of men, and no one is there to accompany me. You must stay!”

“I’ll listen to him.” Su Liang looked at Ning Jing.

She thought Ning Jing would definitely refuse, but he said indifferently, “You stay here.”

“Are you not staying, Brother Ning?” Lin Xueqing also found it strange.

Ning Jing shook his head slightly, “I have something else to do, but I will come back.”

Su Liang was confused, but she thought Ning Jing must have a reason for letting her stay on her own and didn’t ask in front of Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing.

Su Liang didn’t object, and Lin Xueqing was very happy, leading her away, “I’ll take Sister Su to see the room!”

Lin Shuzhi saw that Ning Jing’s expression remained indifferent and sighed, “I won’t ask what you’re going to do, just be careful and never act impulsively.”

“This disciple will always bear in mind Master’s teachings.” Ning Jing nodded.

Su Liang was brought to Lin Xueqing’s room, which had a simple and elegant yet lively style, very much like Lin Xueqing herself.

Lin Xueqing wanted to share a room with Su Liang, but Su Liang was not used to it, so she was arranged to stay in the room next door.

When they finished tidying up the room and met Ning Jing again, he was leaving.

“You come with me.” Ning Jing looked at Su Liang.

Su Liang followed Ning Jing and told Lin Xueqing she would be back soon.

Watching Su Liang follow Ning Jing, Lin Xueqing sighed, “Why is Brother Ning like this? Sister Su is so beautiful and has such a lovely personality, why doesn’t he like her?”

Lin Shuzhi cleared his throat, “Xueqing, what do you think is the real relationship between them?”

Lin Xueqing pondered, “At first, I thought Brother Ning must like Sister Su, then I heard Sister Su say she likes Brother Ning, and I thought it must be true. But she said later that it was just a joke, and they are good brothers.”

Hearing the last three words, Lin Shuzhi’s mouth twitched slightly, and Lin Xueqing said, “After looking back and forth, they seem to really just be good brothers, nothing more, it’s such a pity.”

Lin Shuzhi laughed, apparently sharing the same sentiment, “What’s wrong with that? What’s there to regret?”

“Sigh, when I think about Sister Su getting married to someone else, and

Brother Ning being alone again, I can't help but feel anxious for him." said Lin Xueqing, "But what good is my anxiety? This time we met, Brother Ning looks like he doesn't care about anyone. It's so frustrating!"

"Do you think Ning Jing can't find a girl he likes?" Lin Shuzhi asked with a smile.

Lin Xueqing snorted, "If Brother Ning doesn't even like Sister Su, then what kind of girl does he want? Anyway, no matter who he chooses, as long as it's not Sister Su, I think it's no good."

"Childish. Don't worry about other people's business." Lin Shuzhi chided his daughter, "Spend some time with Su Liang these few days, and when she leaves, go to the capital city to find your older brother."

"Why can't I go to find my second brother instead?" Lin Xueqing habitually argued with her father.

Lin Shuzhi snorted, "Because second brother also lives at older brother's house!"

"Actually, I really want to hang out with Sister Su and Senior Brother Ning, but I know father won't agree." Lin Xueqing said with some regret.

"Just don't bother them." Lin Shuzhi said.

"I got it. When I see older brother and second brother, I'll tell them father sent me to bother them." Lin Xueqing finished speaking and quickly ran away, dodging her father's hand as he raised it to slap her.

On the other side, Su Liang followed Ning Jing to the entrance of Qianshan Academy.

"What do you mean by asking me to stay?" Su Liang asked.

"Master has a blackened forehead." Ning Jing said. Su Liang paused, "Is that why you brought me here?"

Ning Jing nodded.

"Why don't you stay?" Su Liang expressed confusion. Before the exam, Ning Jing was taking care of the children and had nothing important to do.

"The more you talk, the more mistakes you make." Ning Jing said.

Su Liang understood in her heart. Lin Shuzhi was a top scholar in his youth and cultivated many talented people over the years. He was extremely intelligent and cautious. He hadn't noticed anything wrong with Ning Jing for now, but that didn't mean he wouldn't in the future.

Ning Jing had imitated the real Ning Jing's handwriting, which could pass as genuine, but there were some things he didn't know or couldn't imitate, such as eating habits and chess moves.

And these things would be unavoidable if he stayed at Qianshan Academy.

The real trouble wasn't letting them know that the real Ning Jing was dead, but letting them know that the current Ning Jing's true identity was Gu Ling.

The latter might bring disaster to them.

Su Liang sighed softly, "Alright. Since I promised to do things for you, it's only right for me to stay and watch over your master for three days. What about you?"

"What?" Ning Jing asked back.

"How will you eat by yourself when you go back?" Su Liang asked. Ning Jing said indifferently, "I didn't starve to death before I met you." Su Liang: ... She shouldn't have asked!

"You can borrow books from Master to read." Ning Jing said again.

Su Liang nodded, "Right. He must have some good books there. I'll go later. As compensation for our deception, I'll cook something delicious for them."

They arrived at the entrance of the academy, and Su Liang thought of Zhengzheng, "I wonder if Zhengzheng will have grown up by the time we see them again after they leave Pingbei City."

"I told him we would visit him." Ning Jing said.

Su Liang nodded, "Okay, we definitely will. I hope they have a safe journey."

Watching Ning Jing leave alone, Su Liang turned back and entered Lin Xueqing's courtyard.

There was a new pot of orchids in her room, which Lin Xueqing said she had grown herself.

The sun was about to set, and Lin Xueqing asked Su Liang what she liked to eat.

There was a large kitchen in the academy, responsible for the meals of the teachers and students. Normally, Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing ate whatever was prepared in the kitchen.

"My mother was a great cook, but unfortunately, she passed away too early and didn't have time to teach me." Lin Xueqing sighed lightly, "If you don't like the food in the academy, you don't have to force it. We can go down the mountain to eat at a restaurant."

Su Liang smiled, "I can cook a few dishes myself if you don't mind..."

Lin Xueqing looked delighted, "You can cook? That's great, let's cook together! I'll be your assistant!"

There was a small kitchen in Lin Xueqing's courtyard. She had cooked there before, but never very well. Lin Shuzhi never gave her any face, and her older brothers, who did, were not at home, so she rarely cooked.

After hearing from Su Liang what ingredients they needed, Lin Xueqing's maid fetched them from the large kitchen.

As soon as Su Liang started cutting vegetables, Lin Xueqing exclaimed, "Sister Su, your knife skills are amazing!"

Su Liang found that this girl was really a bit talkative, but unlike the annoying Yan Shiba, Lin Xueqing was much more adorable.

In the end, Su Liang cooked four dishes and a soup by herself. Lin Xueqing tasted each dish and kept praising, "Brother Ning is really lucky!"

At this moment, Ning Jing was having dinner at the largest restaurant in Pingbei City. He took a bite of each dish and put down his chopsticks to call the waiter to settle the bill.

"Is the guest done eating?" The waiter thought this guest was strange, as he clearly hadn't eaten much.

Ning Jing shook his head, "I'm not hungry."

Waiter: ... Why come to a restaurant if you're not hungry? Rich people are really inexplicable.

Ning Jing walked leisurely on the streets as night fell, soon realizing that someone was following him. He maintained his composure and turned into a dark alley.

Before long, he left through the other end, and the alley became even quieter.

"Dad, don't peek!" Lin Xueqing covered Lin Shuzhi's eyes and spoke mysteriously.

Su Liang set the four dishes and a soup on the table, placing bowls and chopsticks.

Lin Xueqing let go of her hands, and Lin Shuzhi had already smelled the tempting aroma. Looking at the dishes on the table, he was surprised, looking at Su Liang, "Did you make all of these?"

"Of course. Isn't my cooking something that Dad knows best?" Lin Xueqing pulled Su Liang to sit down, smiling brightly, "Dad, taste Sister Su's cooking quickly!"

Lin Shuzhi chuckled, "Alright."

After tasting the dishes, Lin Shuzhi nodded repeatedly, "It's been many years since I've eaten such delicious and comfortable food. Su Liang is very skilled."

"We don't have to worry about Brother Ning, he gets delicious food every day, I should envy him instead," Lin Xueqing laughed.

Lin Shuzhi nodded, "That's true."

"But Brother Ning is on his own now, without Sister Su, how does he eat?" Lin Xueqing suddenly thought.

Su Liang replied with Ning Jing's original words, "He didn't starve to death before he met me."

Lin Shuzhi almost choked on his soup while drinking it. With these words, he felt even more that there was no romantic relationship between Su Liang and Ning Jing, but rather a brotherly bond...

Lin Xueqing and her father appreciated Su Liang's cooking and finished all the dishes.

After dinner, Su Liang said, "Actually, I am a doctor, I..."

"My grandfather was a famous doctor in the capital city named Su Yuanzhou," Su Liang said.

Lin Shuzhi paused for a moment, "You're Su Yuanzhou's granddaughter?" Su Liang nodded, "Yes."

“Then your family, all...” Lin Shuzhi knew Su Yuanzhou and had heard about the Su Family’s situation.

Again, Su Liang nodded, “I’m the only one left. My hometown is Bei’an County, and I was sent back there after many things happened. I was injured and lost my memory. Ning Jing happened to be living in Bei’an County, and that’s how we met.”

“So that’s how it is,” Lin Shuzhi sighed, “No wonder you’re with Jing’er, both of you lost your families. It’s good to have each other’s support.”

Lin Xueqing didn’t know Su Yuanzhou, so she didn’t chime in, but she could tell Su Liang must have had an unfortunate past. She held Su Liang’s hand tightly.

“I’m doing fine. Actually, I want to ask if Master has any good books that I could borrow?” Su Liang asked with a smile.

Lin Shuzhi nodded, “I got a few medical books in my earlier years, which are useless to me now, so I’ll give them to you.”

“Thank you, Master,” Su Liang said.

“You called me ‘Master’ and even ate the food you cooked yourself. I didn’t prepare any gifts to greet you, so I am the one who is impolite. You can come to my study anytime you want and take any book you like,” Lin Shuzhi said with a warm smile.

Even Lin Xueqing was surprised, “Sister Su, my father treasures those books very much. Even my brother can only copy them and can’t take them away.”

Lin Shuzhi coughed lightly, “That’s because your brother likes to practice writing.”

Lin Xueqing had a “I don’t believe you” expression on her face.

Su Liang bowed and said, “Thank you, Master.”

Lin Xueqing’s courtyard was next to Lin Shuzhi’s, and Su Liang went back with her. After taking a bath and changing into the clothes Lin Xueqing gave her, Su Liang said that she wanted to go to Lin Shuzhi’s study to read when Lin Xueqing wanted to chat with her while holding a pillow.

“I didn’t realize Sister Su, you’re actually a bookworm, just like my brother,” Lin Xueqing yawned and left with her pillow, “Well, you go ahead. I won’t accompany you. There’s a lantern outside, so come back to sleep early.”

Actually, Su Liang didn’t have to go read at this time, but she had a mission on her hands here. She needed to watch Lin Shuzhi and prevent him from getting into any trouble.

Lin Shuzhi was about to go to bed when he heard the noise and went out to see Su Liang coming with a lantern.

“Master, rest early. I’m going to the study room to read for a while and then go back,” Su Liang said.

Lin Shuzhi softened his gaze as he thought of his own son. “Go ahead, but don’t stay up too late.”

Su Liang entered the study room, lit the lamp, closed the door, and looked at the books filling the room. She planned to stay up all night here.

Assassinations often happened at night, so she couldn't be careless.

She briefly skimmed over the books before choosing one she was interested in and began reading under the lamp by the window.

The window was half open, and Lin Shuzhi's room was right next door.

Unconscious of the time, it was already late at night. Su Liang rubbed her eyes and took a sip of cold tea. She looked at the swaying shadows of the trees outside and was about to stand up and stretch when she heard a noise from behind the bookshelf. Her expression turned serious, and she was about to draw her dagger when she heard a familiar voice, "It's me."

She turned around and saw Ning Jing coming from behind the bookshelf. She didn't know when he arrived or how he entered through the rear window.

"I thought I told you to leave it to me. What are you doing here?" Su Liang asked.

"I was afraid that you might fall asleep and miss something," Ning Jing whispered. "Go rest. I will keep watch."

Su Liang closed the book and went to the corner of the study room to lie down on the couch. "Call me if you get tired."

Ning Jing sat where Su Liang had been and started to read the book she had been looking at.

The room was quiet, and Ning Jing turned to see that Su Liang had fallen asleep with her arms crossed.

The cold wind blew through the window, and though there was charcoal burning in the room, it was not warm.

Ning Jing closed the window and took the thick coat he had been wearing when he arrived to cover Su Liang with.

When Su Liang woke up, it was almost dawn.

She sat up and realized that Ning Jing had left. She thought the room would be cold at night, but it wasn't.

Nothing happened to Lin Shuzhi last night. Su Liang went back to Lin

Xueqing's courtyard, and she happened to come out, looking surprised. "Sister Su, you didn't come back last night?"

Su Liang nodded. "Yes. I was tired from reading, so I slept in the study room all night. "

"Don't do that again. It's bad for your eyes," Lin Xueqing disagreed. "There aren't any blankets in the study room either. You might catch a cold."

After breakfast, Lin Xueqing suggested that Su Liang take her and Lin Shuzhi to visit the place where Ning Jing was staying.

“It’s rare for the academy to have holidays, and my father has some free time. We must go out and have a walk,” Lin Xueqing said.

Su Liang nodded. “Alright. I also want to see the city.”

The sunshine was warm.

Lin Xueqing walked arm in arm with Su Liang, and Lin Shuzhi followed behind as the three of them walked down the mountain.

Lin Xueqing was telling Su Liang some amusing stories about the past between her siblings and the real Ning Jing.

Only then did Su Liang learn that the real Ning Jing was accepted as Lin Shuzhi’s disciple because his mother and Lin Xueqing’s mother were old friends. With this connection, the real Ning Jing had known the Lin siblings since they were young.

There were not many people on the mountain path, and birds flew overhead from time to time.

Su Liang was in a good mood, thinking that after two more nights, the trouble would be resolved, and she could return to martial arts practice. Befriending Lin Xueqing was an unexpected joy, and Lin Shuzhi was also a great person.

However, Su Liang didn’t expect that the danger for Lin Shuzhi would appear in broad daylight.

Watching the four men in black suddenly burst out from the dense forest, Lin Xueqing exclaimed in surprise. Lin Shuzhi rushed forward, shielding his daughter and Su Liang behind him, and asked coldly, “Who are you?”

“Mr. Lin, our apologies. If you want to blame someone, blame your son for meddling and spoiling our master’s plans. Your son is in the capital city, and it’s not a good idea to touch him, so we have to settle this debt on your heads!” One of the men seemed to believe that the weak-looking Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing would soon be dead under their knives and generously revealed their background.

Although they didn’t know who their master was at the moment, as long as Lin Shuzhi survived, he could send a message to his sons, and the identity of the person who had wronged his sons in the capital city would be known.

As for Su Liang, they treated her as Lin Xueqing’s little maid and did not take her seriously.

“Attack!” The four men did not give Lin Shuzhi a chance to speak and charged at once!

Lin Shuzhi’s expression tightened. “You two run!”

The next moment, Lin Xueqing stared in amazement as Su Liang drew two sharp blades from her legs and charged out with cold eyes!

Chapter 82: 082. Didn’t Expect You to be Like This, Su Meimei

Before long, Su Liang took down two black-clothed men and entangled with two others.

Aside from being startled, Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing, father and daughter, who were unharmed, each leaned on the other as they moved aside to watch Su Liang's agile figure and fierce moves, their faces full of astonishment.

"Dad, how is Sister Su so amazing? She knows medical skills, martial arts, and her cooking is delicious. Isn't it unreasonable for Brother Ning not to like her?" Lin Xueqing asked blankly.

Lin Shuzhi nodded, "Indeed."

"With such an amazing Sister Su cooking delicious food for Brother Ning every day, and him not being moved, I think he either has a problem with his brain or his taste." Lin Xueqing's eyes were full of admiration as she watched Su Liang.

Soon, Su Liang took down the third black-clothed man, and the fourth one, realizing the situation was turning against him, wanted to escape but had no chance.

These four men's martial arts were not bad, but they were not even as good as the third-rate assassins at Yanyun Building.

In fact, if they joined forces, they would be more than enough to take down Lin Shuzhi's father and daughter.

Unfortunately, they met Su Liang today.

An opponent who had been professionally trained as a real assassin by Ning Jing.

At first, the four men thought they had taken on an easy task, arriving at their destination during the day, and deciding to take action when they saw Lin Shuzhi near the Qianshan Academy, thinking there was no need to wait until night.

As a result, the "weak little maid" in their eyes transformed into a cold-blooded female devil, more like an assassin than they were!

After the four men were all seriously injured and fell to the ground, Su Liang sheathed her sword and looked at Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing, "Are you two alright?"

Lin Xueqing looked at Su Liang's blood-stained clothes and her twin-blade wielding figure, unconsciously shrinking back a little, feeling terrified, awe-inspiring, and really, really cool!

Lin Shuzhi took a deep breath, "We're fine. Are you hurt?"

Su Liang shook her head too, "No. How does Master want to deal with these people?"

Lin Shuzhi let go of Lin Xueqing, walked up to look at the first man who had shouted and asked coldly, "Who is your master?"

"Someone you commoners can't afford to offend!" The masked man gritted his Su Liang thought to herself, it's probably the royal family then.

Lin Shuzhi, thinking of something, sighed, "Since things have come to this point, let's send them on their way!"

If they were released, Su Liang would be exposed to certain people. She had no special background, but her family feud involved the royal family.

Lin Xueqing was shocked at her usually upright and gentle father's other side, but didn't say anything. Hearing Lin Shuzhi calling her, she quickly ran over and let him lead her forward.

"What about Sister Su?" Lin Xueqing looked back subconsciously.

Lin Shuzhi said, "We'll go first; she'll catch up." It wasn't because he wanted to avoid suspicion but to prevent scaring Lin Xueqing.

He had originally thought that Ning Jing was protecting Su Liang because Su Liang seemed to listen to Ning Jing, cooked for him, and stayed or left when Ning Jing asked her to.

But today's incident completely changed Lin Shuzhi's view.

He finally realized the meaning of the phrase "Ning Jing and Su Liang are good brothers."

They were equal, with no one dependent on the other; perhaps there was some kind of transaction between them, but this didn't prevent them from becoming real friends.

If it were just a transaction, given their personalities, they would be polite and distant, not so naturally in-sync.

This was the reason why Su Liang was willing to stay in the villa, talking and laughing with Lin Xueqing, and personally cooking for Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing.

Ning Jing must have asked her to do that.

It's because Ning Jing wanted to avoid having to deal with Lin Xueqing, but was still worried about them.

And for the sake of Ning Jing, her friend, Su Liang's treatment of Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing was sincere as well.

For a moment, Lin Shuzhi thought of many things.

Although he didn't guess everything correctly, he got the essence of it.

The incident happened suddenly, and Su Liang acted in time, protecting Lin Shuzhi's father and daughter well; at first, Lin Xueqing even had the heart to think about the matter "Why doesn't Ning Jing like Su Liang, who is so good?", and only now did she finally feel the fear afterwards, "If Sister Su hadn't been here today, we..."

Lin Shuzhi sighed, "We would be dead."

When he left the officialdom back then, it was because he really didn't like those intrigues and didn't want to be absorbed in the struggle for fame and fortune. He would rather teach and have a simple and peaceful life.

However, he always respected his two sons and never hindered them from doing what they wanted, even though he knew that the path might be fraught with thorns.

Today's event was the first of its kind.

Lin Shuzhi didn't know which son had caused the trouble, but he believed that his sons would not act recklessly and sending an assassin to kill the family of an enemy already proved that the person behind it was not a good one.

Compared to worrying about his own safety, Lin Shuzhi was more concerned about the situation of his two sons in the capital city at this moment.

Lin Xueqing looked back three times with each step, thinking about what Su Liang was doing, she didn't find it scary but just sighed, "Su sister is even younger than me. She was originally the granddaughter of a famous doctor. I don't know how much hardship she has suffered to be forced to become so powerful. When I met her yesterday, I thought she was the young lady from a family who sneaked out to play."

Lin Shuzhi thought that Su Liang, like Ning Jing, didn't choose to find a place to hide and live a peaceful life after experiencing a great change in their lives. She would probably return to the capital city sooner or later to seek justice for her dead relatives, which would be even more difficult and dangerous than what Ning Jing had to do.

He really underestimated the bravery and perseverance of this young lady.

Finally, after Lin Xueqing looked back countless times, Su Liang appeared in their sight.

She immediately let go of Lin Shuzhi and ran back, "Su sister!"

Only when they were close did she realize that Su Liang had changed her clothes.

"My dress? Su sister, did you go back and change your clothes?" Lin Xueqing exclaimed.

She thought that it would take a long time for Su Liang to kill the four men, dispose of the bodies, and catch up with them.

But it didn't take too long, Su Liang even went back to change her clean clothes before coming down the mountain.

"I really like this dress, so I took it as a gift." Su Liang said with a light laugh.

She was a short-distance running champion in her previous life, and since transmigrating she had been training her endurance, running every day. So when it came time to use it, her speed was naturally guaranteed.

Since her clothes were stained with blood, she had to change them or she would be noticed once she came down the mountain.

Hearing this, Lin Xueqing hurriedly said, "What's mine is yours, just take it! Su sister, you saved my life and my father's!"

"What savior? Am I an outsider?" Su Liang joked.

Lin Xueqing shook her head repeatedly, held Su Liang's hand and smiled, "You and Ning senior brother are both part of our family!"

As they spoke, the two of them walked to Lin Shuzhi, who had heard Lin Xueqing's words and held back his words of gratitude. He looked at Su Liang with warm eyes and said, "No matter what happens in the future, you can talk to us about it, don't always carry everything on your own."

Su Liang nodded, "I won't be polite with master."

But Lin Shuzhi felt that neither Ning Jing nor Su Liang had any intention of involving the Lin family in what they were going to do.

Lin Shuzhi knew that besides being a listener and giving advice, he couldn't help Su Liang and Ning Jing with anything and didn't ask further since they didn't want to say anything.

After going down the mountain, Su Liang took Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing to the house where she and Ning Jing lived in Pingbei City.

It was locked during the daytime, but Su Liang had a key. Ning Jing usually used the back door when entering and leaving.

"The house here is very expensive. Ning senior brother should have taken Su sister to live in the academy." Lin Xueqing said.

Su Liang smiled, "Ning's house is a mess now, and he doesn't want to involve master in it. We made some money in Bei'an County before, and it's enough."

"Making money? Is it Su sister's medical practice? I don't think Ning senior brother has any skills to make money." In Lin Xueqing's heart, Su Liang's status instantly surpassed Ning Jing.

Su Liang nodded, "I've been practicing medicine, but I can't make much money from it, sometimes losing money. It was the fourth prince who was investigating the case there, and I helped him, so he gave me a generous reward."

Lin Xueqing looked shocked, "The fourth prince?"

Lin Shuzhi was also surprised. Lin Boyan mentioned in his last letter that the fourth prince went to investigate the smuggling of iron mines.

When Su Liang mentioned this matter, she wanted Lin Shuzhi to know that she and Ning Jing were capable of handling their own affairs and that he should not worry too much about them.

"The specific situation cannot be disclosed for the time being, as it must remain confidential," Su Liang said.

At this point, Lin Xueqing's eyes sparkled, "Su sister, are you human?"

Su Liang shook her head, "I'm not annoying."

Lin Shuzhi couldn't help but laugh.

Ning Jing heard Lin Xueqing's voice from afar and came out of the room, only to see the three of them entering the gate.

At a glance, Lin Shuzhi saw the small swing in the courtyard, recalling the child who was carried by Ning Jing to the academy that day, he was still a little speechless, but he absolutely believed Ning Jing's words.

"Ning senior brother, you've lost weight." Lin Xueqing said as soon as she saw Ning Jing.

Ning Jing felt inexplicable. He had missed two meals, but he shouldn't have lost weight so quickly.

"How will you manage without Su Liang?" Lin Xueqing sighed.

Hearing this, Su Liang knew that the girl wanted to bring her together with Ning Jing again and hurriedly interrupted, "My master wants to pay a visit. We encountered an assassin on the way, but it was resolved."

Ning Jing furrowed his brow, "Who sent them?"

Su Liang shook her head, "They said that the two elder brothers of the Lin Family offended someone in the capital city. We don't know who yet."

"Jingjing, I need to write a letter and send it to the capital city." Lin Shuzhi said.

Ning Jing nodded, "Alright." With that, he invited Lin Shuzhi to his room.

Lin Xueqing went to see Su Liang's room and saw a box full of medical books and ancient texts. She was once again amazed, "Where did you get these books, Su Liang?"

"Crown Prince Bei Jingwang sent them," Su Liang said.

Lin Xueqing felt a bit dizzy, "Everyone says that Ning Jing used the Crown Prince Bei Jingwang's name to take the imperial examination in a remote place, which caused a lot of rumors. I wanted to ask Ning Jing how he knows Crown Prince Bei Jingwang. It turns out that it's because of you, Su Liang?"

"You could say that," Su Liang nodded.

Lin Xueqing sighed, "It seems that Ning Jing clearly relies on Su Liang for care and protection since he doesn't know Martial Arts."

In fact, saving Xing Yusheng and helping Duanmu Chen was done by both Ning Jing and Su Liang. However, Ning Jing's deeds couldn't be mentioned.

Su Liang brought up Xing Yusheng in order to tell Lin Shuzhi that his disciple had not clung to power and wealth for official career goals.

In the next room, Lin Shuzhi finished writing a letter and wanted it to be sent out immediately. Ning Jing offered to accompany him.

In the end, Ning Jing drove the carriage, put on a straw hat, and let Lin Shuzhi sit in it, taking him to the Lin Family's mansion in the city.

As he usually lived in the academy with his daughter, only servants were looking after their home in the city.

After delivering the letter, Ning Jing took Lin Shuzhi back.

Lin Shuzhi asked him, "Is Su Liang protecting you?"

Ning Jing replied, "Yes."

"Having a capable friend like this by your side is a blessing. You must cherish it," Lin Shuzhi spoke earnestly, "If possible, it would be even better to marry her; otherwise, she will leave eventually."

Originally, Lin Shuzhi had a respectful attitude towards the younger generation's affairs and did not want to interfere with the relationship between Su Liang and Ning Jing.

Now, saying these words, he truly felt that it was an excellent fortune for Ning Jing to have a friend like Su Liang. If the two could develop their relationship further, it would be even better.

In a way, it was a parent's mindset.

Seeing an impeccable and exceptional person of the opposite sex beside their child, they naturally thought of making them part of the family.

Lin Shuzhi: ...He didn't even bother to humor him? Just like his sons, whenever the subject of marriage comes up, they immediately adopt an uncooperative attitude. A simple question makes them think he wants to hold a grandson. As a father who cares about his son, it's difficult for him too!

Originally, Lin Shuzhi had suggested eating at a restaurant for lunch, offering to treat everyone, so as not to burden Su Liang.

However, Su Liang insisted on cooking at home. After Lin Shuzhi's troubles were resolved, she didn't plan to return to Qianshan Academy, so there wouldn't be many chances to invite them to eat again.

Seeing Su Liang and Lin Xueqing going into the kitchen, Lin Shuzhi suggested playing a game with Ning Jing. However, Ning Jing said he was going to build a fire.

Lin Shuzhi was very supportive of this and urged him to hurry up.

At the dinner table, Lin Xueqing began praising Su Liang, thinking that everything she cooked tasted delicious.

It was only after the meal that Su Liang said she wouldn't return to the mountain.

Instead of showing disappointment, Lin Xueqing looked forward in anticipation, "Great! Can I stay here with Su Liang then?"

Su Liang: ...She hadn't expected this.

Nevertheless, she didn't decline. She didn't want to go back to the mountain as living here was more convenient for practicing martial arts and reading. At the academy, she was always a guest and not quite as free.

Lin Xueqing staying wouldn't inconvenience Su Liang, and she could even find time to teach her some self-defense techniques.

Seeing Su Liang agreeing, Lin Shuzhi chuckled, “Well, then I’ll go back to the mountain by myself.”

This sentence had an obvious implication.

“Su sister, can my dad stay too? It’s so lonely for him to go back alone! But I’m definitely not going back with him!” Lin Xueqing shook Su Liang’s arm.

Not even bothering to ask for Ning Jing’s opinion.

Su Liang looked at Ning Jing.

Ning Jing nodded, “Alright.” He could change his taste in things, but he’d find a way to avoid playing chess with Lin Shuzhi.

“That’s great!” Lin Xueqing was very happy.

Su Liang arranged for them to stay in another courtyard. Lin Xueqing still had the idea of bringing Su Liang and Ning Jing together, so she didn’t want to live with Su Liang.

Everything they needed was taken from the Lin family, so there was no need to buy anything else.

Lin Shuzhi also asked Ning Jing to go to the academy and fetch the medical books he wanted to give to Su Liang.

And so, their two became a “family” of four.

When Lin Shuzhi asked to play chess with Ning Jing again, Ning Jing glanced at Su Liang.

Su Liang understood, stood up, and said, “What’s the point of playing chess, Master? I’ve decided to teach you and Xueqing some basic self-defense techniques for the next few days. It might be useful if we encounter trouble in the future. ”

Lin Xueqing looked forward to it.

Lin Shuzhi was confused. Learn martial arts at his age?

“As long as you’re willing to learn and practice, you’ll succeed.” Su Liang thought that since she was going to teach him, she might as well teach Lin Shuzhi Tai Chi, which would be suitable for him and could help build up his body.

Decidedly, Su Liang led Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing to the backyard. Ning Jing also went to watch.

“I’ll do a demonstration first.” Su Liang said and gestured for Ning Jing to come over.

Ning Jing didn’t know what she was going to do, but he went anyway.

The next moment, neither Lin Shuzhi nor Lin Xueqing could clearly see what happened, and Ning Jing was thrown to the ground with an over-the-shoulder flip by Su Liang...

Nobody cared if Ning Jing was in pain. Lin Xueqing clapped excitedly with shining eyes, “Su sister, you’re so amazing!” Lin Shuzhi said, “It was too fast, I didn’t see it clearly.”

So, Su Liang demonstrated another three times.

As Ning Jing tried to suggest that he and Su Liang swap for the demo, Lin family’s father-daughter duo immediately objected.

“Ning senior brother, how could you not know how to cherish and love your girl?” Lin Xueqing indicated that someone like him would never get a wife!

Ning Jing glanced at Su Liang indifferently, “Her? Suitable for the words ‘cherish and love?’”

Su Liang snorted and twisted her wrist, “Did you guys see the last one clearly, Master and Xueqing?”

Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing shook their heads in unison, saying they didn’t see it at all and needed her to do it a few more times.

Su Liang held out her hand towards Ning Jing and smiled, “Come on.”

Since Ning Jing didn’t dare to play chess with Lin Shuzhi, he had no choice but to play along and be a prop.

In the end, after being thrown multiple times by Su Liang, Ning Jing was also used as a training prop for Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing.

It wasn’t too painful.

No longer did he resemble a divine creature who cared for everything, but Ning Jing didn’t get angry or leave. Afterwards, he continued to silently act as a prop, with a practiced demeanor that made people sympathize.

Even Lin Xueqing couldn’t stand it, “Su sister, are you always treating my senior brother like this?” It was brutal...

“He enjoys it.” Su Liang said and looked at Ning Jing, “Right?”

Ning Jing silently nodded.

Lin Xueqing gave Su Liang a thumbs up, “I never thought you’d be like this, Su sister.. I’ll leave my senior brother to you! You can hit him, but you have to take responsibility afterwards!”

Chapter 83: 083. Ning Jing Passes the Exam

Su Liang felt that the simplest over-the-shoulder throw was still quite difficult for Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing.

They had learned the technical essentials, but their own strength was really too limited.

Lin Shuzhi practiced with Ning Jing many times, barely succeeding. When Lin Xueqing tried to throw Su Liang, she always failed.

“I’m too stupid.” Lin Xueqing cupped her face and sighed.

“As long as you know how to do it, practice makes perfect.” Su Liang planned to teach Lin Xueqing some easier self-defense techniques for women.

Lin Shuzhi and Ning Jing sat under the tree to rest, watching Su Liang teach Lin Xueqing.

“For self-defense, one must be ruthless, put in full effort, and be accurate. If you can defeat the enemy with one move, you’ve succeeded.” Su Liang said seriously.

Lin Xueqing had no confidence in this at all, “Ruthless? How do I become ruthless...” ‘

Su Liang turned her head, “Ning Jing.”

Lin Shuzhi smiled, “Jingjing, go ahead.”

Ning Jing had just patted the dirt off herself, got up and walked over. Su Liang pointed out a position for him to stand still.

Lin Xueqing watched seriously and suddenly saw Su Liang’s index and middle fingers come together, quickly jabbing towards Ning Jing’s eyes!

Lin Xueqing was horrified, Lin Shuzhi’s expression tightened.

And Ning Jing’s eyes shrank sharply, standing still without moving a muscle.

Su Liang’s fingers stopped just before touching Ning Jing’s eyes, and she didn’t pull them back. She turned her head to Lin Xueqing and explained, “If you encounter extremely wicked people, never have any compassion. You must be ruthless. As soon as you get a chance, no matter how many fingers you use, stab hard into his eye sockets from the side of the eyes, and scoop the eyeball out if possible!”

Lin Xueqing’s little face turned pale, “I... I can’t do it...”

Listening to Su Liang’s voice, even Lin Shuzhi had goosebumps. But after calming down a bit, he realized that what Su Liang said was not wrong, and it was not excessive. To deal with someone who wants to kill you, you have to fight back to survive.

For a moment, Lin Shuzhi felt that Su Liang was teaching Lin Xueqing something too poisonous, but thinking of the assassins they encountered today, he thought Su Liang’s teachings were good. Lin Xueqing had always been under their protection, innocent and kind, unaware of the dangers of the outside world.

Lin Shuzhi hoped that his precious daughter would never need to use these skills, but she should learn them to avoid being defenseless when in danger.

“Are people trying to kill you?” Su Liang asked.

Lin Xueqing frowned and said, “I’m scared...”

“What if someone wants to kill your father and brother? Would you fight them to the death?” Su Liang asked again.

Lin Xueqing’s face still showed fear, but she clenched her fists, “Can I really do

Su Liang nodded, “Of course, I believe in you.”

As soon as the words fell, Su Liang suddenly withdrew her hand and aimed her knee towards a certain spot on Ning Jing’s body...

Lin Xueqing’s eyes widened, and Lin Shuzhi was astonished.

Ning Jing’s face turned a bit dark, but he still stood still, not moving a muscle.

Of course, Su Liang was just demonstrating to Lin Xueqing and would not actually hurt Ning Jing. However, the scene was very awkward because it almost touched...

Su Liang's expression was calm as she maintained the knee-up posture and explained to Lin Xueqing that in case of encountering a pervert, attacking their weak points was important. The knee attack was just one method. One could also use a knife, a stick, or a stone, but the target must be clear and the attack should be fast and accurate.

This time, Lin Xueqing didn't find it scary; it was just so embarrassing that she turned her head away and dared not look at the strange posture of Su Liang and Ning Jing. She hurriedly said, "Sister Su, this is simple, I'll remember it."

Su Liang retracted her leg and demonstrated to Lin Xueqing other self-defense moves, such as using her elbow to strike the opponent's armpit, and using her forehead to forcibly hit the opponent's nose, etc.

Lin Xueqing listened with confusion, feeling that her mind could understand but her body couldn't grasp the techniques.

When it came to the demonstration of how to escape a bear hug, Su Liang asked Ning Jing to hug her from behind.

Lin Xueqing blinked, and Lin Shuzhi's expression eased.

Ning Jing frowned and asked, "What are you going to do to me?"

"Just pose. I'll show Xueqing, don't touch me, and I won't touch you." Su Liang said.

"It doesn't matter if we touch! You guys are good brothers, I won't think anything of it!" Lin Xueqing giggled.

Ning Jing ignored her and followed Su Liang's instructions, only circling her with his arms without touching her.

Seeing Lin Xueqing's disappointed expression, Su Liang coughed lightly,

"Xueqing, pay attention and study hard, I'll test you later!"

Lin Xueqing's expression changed, "Oh!"

Finally, the theoretical part was finished. Ning Jing, the "tool man" responsible for cooperating with Su Liang in the demonstrations, silently floated back to Lin Shuzhi's side, sat down, and watched how Su Liang instructed Lin Xueqing in practical exercises.

"Pretend I'm the pervert who wants to assault you." Su Liang said, and suddenly hugged Lin Xueqing from behind, saying, "Beauty, I'll take good care of you!"

Lin Shuzhi held his forehead, and Lin Xueqing burst into laughter.

Su Liang solemnly said, "No laughing! Think carefully about what I taught you!"

Lin Xueqing recalled seriously, mimicking Su Liang's previous actions, which were not wrong, but too slow. Su Liang had her practice repeated.

When Su Liang was sure Lin Xueqing had remembered all her teachings, Lin Xueqing was sweating and exhausted.

“Your body is too weak. I’ll take you to work out tomorrow. You must practice self-defense well, as now you are far from good enough.” Su Liang let Lin Xueqing rest nearby, asked Lin Shuzhi to come over, and said she would teach him a set of boxing techniques.

In her previous life, Su Liang came from a family of traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, and her grandmother practiced Tai Chi for many years. Su Liang also practiced with her since childhood, memorizing every move.

The wind picked up, Su Liang stood on an open space, her green dress fluttering in the wind.

Seeing her practice Tai Chi, at first, Ning Jing and the Lin family thought the movements were deliberately slowed down for Lin Shuzhi to remember.

But soon, Ning Jing discovered that the boxing techniques were very ingenious, appearing very soft, even weak at first glance, yet indeed containing firmness within softness, showing an imposing manner of conquering the strong with the soft.

Lin Shuzhi felt it as well. He initially thought Su Liang would teach offensive boxing techniques, doubting if he could learn them. However, when he saw the actual Tai Chi moves, Lin Shuzhi developed great interest and actively raised his hands to learn along with Su Liang’s movements.

Lin Xueqing exclaimed, “It’s so beautiful! I feel it has the ‘Immortal Wind and Daoist bones’ described in books, as if Sister Su is about to ride the wind away.”

Once the Tai Chi routine was completed, Su Liang heard Ning Jing say, “I want to learn too.”

Lin Shuzhi also insisted, asking Su Liang to teach him.

So, Su Liang taught one move at a time, and the three of them followed. Ning Jing performed the most accurately, learning everything in one go.

By the time the sun was almost setting, Su Liang’s martial arts coaching for the Lin family was temporarily concluded.

On his way back to the front yard, Lin Shuzhi recalled the Tai Chi movements, mimicking them with his hands.

“I’ll write to Big Brother and Second Brother to tell them Dad is starting to practice martial arts at such an old age.” Lin Xueqing laughed.

“This set of boxing techniques is only suitable for reinforcing the body for health purposes. In dangerous situations, you should still use the self-defense techniques I taught you – be ruthless,” Su Liang said.

“It’s so difficult,” Lin Xueqing lamented, leaning her head on Su Liang’s arm. “Su Mei, how can you be so talented? After getting to know you, I feel so worthless.”

Lin Shuzhi shook his head slightly, “No, Xueqing, you have one strength.”

“What is it?” Lin Xueqing asked.

Lin Shuzhi replied seriously, “Great self-awareness.”

Lin Xueqing: ... She really is her biological father!

Lin Xueqing begged Su Liang to teach her a few simple but delicious dishes because she was afraid she wouldn't do well with complicated ones.

Su Liang asked what the Lin family liked to eat and customized a menu for Lin Xueqing with four dishes. It would be difficult for her to cook poorly if she followed the recipes.

Although Lin Xueqing's cooking skills were not great, she was not so terrible as to be an assassin in the kitchen. She took her studies seriously, but her mother died early and there was no one to teach her well.

Under Su Liang's guidance that evening, Lin Xueqing cooked, and to her surprise, it was a success. After tasting the meal, Lin Shuzhi highly praised it, feeling proud, believing that his daughter was “no longer too foolish as she grew up”.

Lin Xueqing's confidence soared, vowing to continue learning from Su Liang and cook more dishes. She would give her elder brothers a big surprise when they got to the capital city!

Before, there were only Su Liang and Ning Jing in the house, one taciturn and the other too busy to chat. The house was quite empty.

It was a bit more lively when Zhengzheng was there, but now, with the presence of the Lin family father and daughter, a gentle elder, and a talkative Miss, the house had a warmth of family.

After dinner, Lin Shuzhi again proposed to play chess with Ning Jing.

Not that Lin Shuzhi really loved chess, but there wasn't much else for the two men to do for entertainment and socializing. They couldn't imitate Su Liang and Lin Xueqing, strolling under the moonlit sky hand-in-hand or whispering intimately to one another.

Lin Shuzhi believed Ning Jing would accept the challenge, but instead, Ning Jing took out a piece of wood and a knife, “I'm busy. Master, you should rest early too. ”

Since Ning Jing said so, Lin Shuzhi went to bed.

The next day, Lin Shuzhi received a pen holder, handcrafted by Ning Jing as a gift, which surprised him. “You made this for your master last night? I never

Imew you were so talented. It's really well done.”

“I learned it from a woodworker master in Bei'an County,” Ning Jing said.

Lin Shuzhi was delighted, taking the pen holder Ning Jing gave him everywhere he went. He even showed it off to his two sons, but that's a story for another time.

Lin Xueqing also wanted one, but Ning Jing replied, “I don't have time.”

Lin Xueqing pretended to be heartbroken and collapsed into Su Liang's arms with a deep sigh. “He's given one to Su Mei and Dad, but not me. Isn't this favoritism? But he won't admit it. Who can I turn to for justice?”

Lin Shuzhi twitched his mouth, noticing that his daughter had become more playful and lively since she'd met Su Liang, making her even more lovable.

Su Liang suddenly hugged Lin Xueqing tightly, "My beauty, now that you've fallen into my hands, you won't escape!" Then she turned serious, "Xueqing, if you can't break free, you're not allowed to eat."

Lin Xueqing: ... she wanted to act spoiled with Su Liang because Ning Jing wouldn't even give her a penholder, but why did that lead to a sudden test of her self-defense techniques? Life is really too difficult!

Su Liang let go of her grip, and Lin Xueqing successfully escaped. Before she could celebrate, Su Liang dragged her to the backyard to teach her daily exercise routines.

Lin Shuzhi laughed and asked, "Jingjing, shall we practice Tai Chi together?"

Ning Jing shook his head, "I've learned it already."

Lin Shuzhi left with a dark expression, "How come you're getting better at annoying people? You're not nearly as cute as Liang girl!" In the end, Ning Jing was alone in the courtyard.

The sunlight was warm, and the cold wind burst intermittently.

With calm eyes, Ning Jing practiced Tai Chi alone in the courtyard, his white clothes fluttering in the wind, as if he were an immortal.

Soon it was time for the results of the Provincial Exams to be announced.

Lin Shuzhi asked about it last night, and Ning Jing and Su Liang told him they would head back to Bei'an County the day after they learned the results of the exam.

Ning Jing went out early in the morning for some reason, and as it was approaching the time when the exam results would be released, Lin Xueqing urged Lin Shuzhi and Su Liang to go see them.

The three of them left and headed for the bustling main street of Pingbei City.

"What a crowd!" Lin Xueqing looked at the throngs of people ahead, finding it difficult to squeeze in.

Su Liang planned to wait at the tea house until fewer people were present before checking the results. After all, she knew the results were out and believed that Ning Jing's name would certainly be on the list, so she wasn't in a hurry.

As Su Liang prepared to talk to Lin Shuzhi about going to the tea house, two familiar faces emerged from the crowd – scholars from Bei'an County.

"Miss Su!" One of them recognized Su Liang's kind face from their last meeting and greeted her with a smile. "Congratulations! Your brother, Ning Gongzi, has become a top-scoring candidate! Since he's not a local, there's another top-scoring candidate as well!"

Seeing the joy on both men's faces, Su Liang smiled and said, "I have to congratulate both of you, too. You must have passed the exam!"

They were indeed the most outstanding talents in Bei'an County, and only the top three in the Court Examination had the chance to study at Qianshan Academy.

Both nodded, then noticed Lin Shuzhi standing behind Su Liang and quickly paid their respects.

Lin Shuzhi smiled warmly, "Don't be complacent. If you have any questions, you can come to me."

Both were overjoyed. Although they didn't know how Lin Shuzhi and Su Liang came to be together, they felt fortunate to have caught the dean's attention due to Su Liang.

"And the other one..." Su Liang inquired about the other top-scoring candidate from Bei'an County's Court Examination.

One of them sighed, "He failed. We saw him just a while ago but don't know where he went."

They didn't chat much more, and the two scholars went back to the academy.

Lin Shuzhi met with his fellow teachers from the academy, and they went to a tea house to discuss the results of the Provincial Exam.

Su Liang and Lin Xueqing went shopping.

By the time they returned home, it was approaching noon.

Ning Jing was there, and as soon as Lin Xueqing saw him, she asked him to guess which place he had ranked in the exam.

Still carving wood and not looking up, Ning Jing said indifferently, "Do our best, and leave the rest to fate."

Su Liang's reply was to hug Lin Xueqing again, "My beauty, I only want you. If you don't want me, run away!" After saying that, she turned serious, "Xueqing, if you can't get away, you're not allowed to eat!" Lin Xueqing looked up helplessly at the sky....

Chapter 84: 084. Pray for their marriage

"Su sister, why are you insistent on returning to Bei'an County?" "My self-defense techniques aren't up to par, I need your guidance!" "My cooking is also terrible. Once you leave, I'm sure it will worsen."

"Su sister, please don't leave. Stay with Elder Brother Ning, wait until after the New Year, and then we'll all go to the capital together!"

Lin Xueqing pleaded persistently, hoping they would stay and live with them in Pingbei City.

At such times, Ning Jing would always remain silent. After getting to know Su Liang, Lin Xueqing hardly paid him any attention.

When Lin Shuzhi returned in the afternoon, he also sought Ning Jing and Su Liang to discuss the possibilities of them staying in Pingbei City.

After all, in the eyes of Lin Shuzhi and his daughter, if Su Liang and Ning Jing returned to Bei'an County, they would have no relatives or friends there. It would be just the two of them leading a quiet life.

It would clearly be better to stay. The four of them could live together. Lin Shuzhi could advise Ning Jing in his studies, and Lin Xueqing would have companionship. She admired Su Liang very much and wanted to learn many things from her.

However, Lin Shuzhi also knew that Ning Jing was different from before. He had come far on his path towards the Imperial examination, and moving forward, he won't need to worry much. Lin Shuzhi's help would be limited.

And although Lin Xueqing is a year older than Su Liang, and constantly referred to Su Liang as her younger sister, between them, it was Su Liang who acted more like the elder sister. It would undoubtedly be great if Su Liang stayed for Lin Xueqing. However, contrary to that, aside from Lin Xueqing's companionship, she wouldn't be of any help to the things that Su Liang wanted to accomplish.

Therefore, Lin Shuzhi merely hoped that Ning Jing and Su Liang would consider it. If they really didn't wish to stay, he wouldn't force them.

"Master, Xueqing, Ning Jing and I understand your intentions, and we have enjoyed living with you very much," Su Liang said seriously.

Upon hearing these words, Lin Shuzhi knew the situation didn't look promising.

To the contrary, Lin Xueqing naively believed there was still hope, her eyes shining.

However, Su Liang continued, "But we must return. Before we left, a friend got injured, who is recuperating at home. We asked a neighbor to help take care of him. We cannot neglect our responsibility. Additionally, we previously helped the fourth prince, and we have some unfinished matters. We had promised the prince that we would return after the examination."

Lin Shuzhi sighed, "In that case, you truly do have to return."

They had someone at home and had promised the fourth prince. They obviously couldn't go back on their word.

Lin Xueqing looked upset, "So that's why. I thought Su sister, you were leaving because you were annoyed with me."

Su Liang hugged Lin Xueqing and chuckled softly, "How could that be? I can't get enough of you."

"Really?" Lin Xueqing's spirits lifted all at once, she turned towards Lin Shuzhi and said, "Father, I'll marry Su sister! Since Elder Brother Ning and Su sister are just close friends!"

Lin Shuzhi was rendered speechless.

"Such a pity. If I were to leave, Father being all alone would be too pitiful. It's all my elder brothers' fault, always staying in the capital and not coming back. Otherwise, I

could go home with Su sister.” Lin Xueqing looked regretful. Lin Shuzhi coughed lightly, “I’m being dismissed by my own daughter!”

Lin Xueqing looked helpless, “Actually, my elder brothers both wanted Father to go to the capital, handing over the academy’s responsibilities to someone else. But Father always refused.”

Lin Shuzhi shook his head, “I am not yet so old that I must rely on my sons for sustenance, and there are still things that I want to accomplish.”

The father and daughter appeared to contradict each other, but they were merely distinguished by jokes and serious words.

Su Liang greatly admired Lin Shuzhi. His two sons were very accomplished, and he himself was quite renowned in Qian Country. He had numerous disciples, and he could certainly live leisurely in the capital, but he abandoned a promising future and remained steadfast in his purpose: teaching and cultivating individuals, leading a quiet and simple life.

“Alright,” Lin Xueqing understood and supported her father’s decision fully. If she didn’t, she could have moved to the capital to live with her two brothers instead of staying behind to accompany Lin Shuzhi.

“When are you planning on going to the capital?” Lin Shuzhi asked.

Su Liang remained silent, allowing Ning Jing to decide.

“After the New Year,” Ning Jing said.

Lin Shuzhi gave a slight nod, “Alright, then we will meet in the capital.”

Lin Xueqing’s face brightened, “So Father is finally willing to go to the capital!”

Lin Shuzhi shook his head and chuckled, “You make it sound like I was afraid of the capital. I’ve just been busy all these years and haven’t traveled far. Every year, your eldest brother sends a letter asking us to spend the New Year in the capital, but we have never gone. The time when your two brothers can take a break during the New Year is short, and they can’t return. Let’s go this year.”

“That’s great!” Lin Xueqing’s face was full of anticipation, “My two elder brothers will be really happy when they know Father is willing to go to the capital!”

“After the New Year, scholars are all heading to the capital to take the examination. At that time, Master, you can stay in the capital for a year and a half. If your eldest son gets married and has children, don’t you have to go and take care of and educate your grandchildren?” Su Liang said with a smile.

Lin Shuzhi chuckled, “Indeed, Liang girl is the cleverest. I’m looking forward to having a grandchild, at which point, I will find a reliable person to take over the academy and return home to take care of the baby.”

“Father, why didn’t you say it earlier? If my elder brother knew, perhaps he would have been married by now!” Lin Xueqing said.

Lin Shuzhi gave a light cough, "How dare I say that? Every time I bring up their life-long matters, your brothers deflect the topic. Old friends write letters, thinking I ignore my sons and only take care of the academy. They believe I don't give them enough concern about important matters. Having said that, if your elder brother knew, he would only urge your second brother to get married and have children soon."

Su Liang couldn't help but laugh.

She genuinely admired and envied the harmonious and close relationship within the Lin family.

Lin Shuzhi, a widower, brought up his children all by himself and did a great job.

He didn't have the outdated ideas some scholars had. His thoughts were very open, and he interacted with his children as if they were friends.

The acknowledgment and respect he accorded his children were something that most parents in this world couldn't do, as they only saw their children as possessions.

Actually, this was also the reason Ning Jing and Su Liang could truly interact with the Lin family's father and daughter like family.

Whether it's Ning Jing or Su Liang, they couldn't be bothered to appease people they disapproved of. Although their initial acquaintance was due to the real Ning Jing, their current emotions are not counterfeit.

And Ning Jing didn't want to go to the academy, primarily for fear that Lin Shuzhi would spot his shortcomings after long interaction, and secondly, he couldn't appear too close to Lin Shuzhi publicly.

The royal family of Qian country has long been rumored to cut down the power of its nobility, with Bei Jingwang, who has the greatest merits from his ancestors, being the first in the line.

And Crown Prince Bei Jingwang, Xing Yusheng, was "invited" to the capital city by the emperor under the pretense of becoming the son-in-law for his most beloved Sixth Princess. The intention became increasingly explicit.

Ning Jing would participate in the Imperial examination using Xing Yusheng's identity merely because, coincidentally at that time, they were both in Bei'an County and Su Liang saved Xing Yusheng. In fact, Xing Yusheng was in serious disagreement with his father, Bei Jingwang.

But outsiders weren't aware of this, and wouldn't care, they would simply believe that Ning Jing had a close relationship with the Bei Jingwang Mansion.

Only Su Liang knew that Ning Jing took the examination because he was borrowing the identity of the real Ning Jing, in order to fulfill his unfulfilled wish. He was not seeking wealth or status. After qualifying, he also didn't need anyone else's identity. Even if Bei Jingwang runs into trouble the next day, Ning Jing wouldn't care.

But Lin Shuzhi was different.

He has many students and high reputation, as well as two sons in the official circle and one unmarried daughter. Once they are associated with the Bei

Jingwang Mansion because of Ning Jing, the consequences would be severe.

Now that two sons of the Lin Family have offended the nobility in the capital city, implicating Lin Shuzhi and Lin Xueqing, if there is any doubt about their stance, it will definitely be taken advantage of.

There is no harm in the brief interaction between Ning Jing, Su Liang, and Lin

Shuzhi at the academy in the past few days as seen by the public, because Ning Jing obtained the qualifications to study at Qianshan Academy based on his own abilities. The fact that the four resided together was unknown to the public.

Being aware of this, even if Ning Jing stays behind, Lin Shuzhi will only treat him as a student of Qianshan Academy and will still need to avoid any suspicions publicly, considering the welfare of his children.

They are departing early tomorrow, so Su Liang pulled Lin Xueqing aside to provide a final critique on her self-defense techniques and instruct her on daily means of physical exercise.

“Although I hope you never run into troubles, if they do arise, first calm down, don’t panic, but you can pretend to be weak.” Su Liang advised seriously. Lin Xueqing weakly responded, “I’m already very weak ...”

Su Liang said solemnly, “That’s why you need to practice well. I mean, you can pretend to be very afraid, but you shouldn’t panic inside. Stay calm and take advantage of opportunities to counterattack. You can’t be impulsive and sometimes, you’ll need patience to deal with the enemy, find their weakness before making your move.”

This is indeed very difficult for Lin Xueqing, but she took to heart Su Liang’s advice, clenching her fists, her eyes resolute, “I must be braver!”

“You can be much braver.” Su Liang laughed lightly.

Lin Shuzhi then asked Ning Jing to review his progress in practicing Tai Chi.

Within just a few days, not only had Lin Shuzhi learned it, but he also performed it quite well.

Ning Jing corrected several of his movements that weren’t performed properly.

Later that night, Su Liang and Lin Xueqing cooked a grand dinner. Lin Shuzhi bought some alcohol from outside and drank a few cups with Ning Jing.

After the meal, Ning Jing drove the Lin family’s father and daughter back to their house in Pingbei City.

Su Liang went with them and took out a cookbook she had written specially the previous night, as a gift to Lin Xueqing.

Lin Shuzhi saw the handwriting inside and was surprised, “Your writing...”

Su Liang smiled, “I wasn’t good at writing originally. After knowing Ning Jing, I started to imitate his handwriting, and I think I’ve gotten quite good at it, right?”

Lin Shuzhi nodded, “It really is. At first glance, I thought it was written by Jingjing.”

“I will learn to cook well. Su Liang, next time we meet, test me.” Lin Xueqing said.

Su Liang then took out a small booklet with the title “Women’s Self-defense Techniques” on it.

Lin Xueqing took it, her expression was surprised, “Su Liang, you draw really well!”

Worried that Lin Xueqing would forget, Su Liang drew all the self-defense moves and wrote detailed technical points next to them.

“Su Liang put so much effort into this, I will definitely practice well!” Lin Xueqing was moved. Each stroke was proof of Su Liang’s care for her.

Su Liang also gave Lin Shuzhi a book titled “Tai Chi” that she had drawn herself.

Lin Shuzhi cherished it and said, “This can be kept as a family heirloom.”

The carriage stopped. Lin Xueqing sighed, “How come we’re home so soon?” Su Liang embraced Lin Xueqing, “We’ll meet again.”

“Yes.” Lin Xueqing nodded seriously, “Su Liang, let’s meet in the capital city after New Year’s, you must come. Even if you abandon my brother Ning Jing in the meantime, you should still come to the capital city to find me!”

Ning Jing outside the carriage: ...

As Father and daughter Lin alighted from the carriage, they watched it leave.

Lin Xueqing’s nose twitched, “Dad, I really hate to leave Su Liang, it would be so nice if she becomes part of our family!”

Lin Shuzhi sighed, “Wait until that blockhead Jing realizes, and brings Su Liang home as his wife.”

“Will that day come?” Lin Xueqing asked.

Lin Shuzhi thought about it and replied, “Tomorrow, let’s go to the Hongluo Temple and pray for them.”

Lin Xueqing’s eyes widened, “Dad, I thought you never believed in this stuff?”

Lin Shuzhi said seriously, “We can believe..”

Chapter 85: 085. Restless Night

After sending Lin’s father and daughter off, Ning Jing rushed the carriage, taking Su Liang back with her.

After entering the door, Su Liang asked, “Has there been any movement from the Xiao Family recently?”

Ning Jing answered, “There were some people following before, but they have all been dealt with.”

Su Liang pondered, “Do the Xiao and Li families know that Zhengzheng’s parents came to Pingbei City? If they know that Zhengzheng has already been taken back by the Wan Family, Li San shouldn’t go to Xunyang City to find Ning Yao. After all, everyone knows that you and Ning Yao are like water and fire; how could you take the child back to Xunyang City? Even more, Li San might join forces with Ning Yao to get rid of you.”

“Cheng Yun told Zhengzheng’s mother about the situation, and she knows the agreement in Xunyang City. Coming to Pingbei City is a secret. If they are discovered by the Xiao Family, they can’t leave.” Ning Jing said.

Su Liang nodded, “That’s right. The Wan Family is not to be trifled with. We can’t do anything about the later matters. We just hope that Zhengzheng returns home safely.”

“Do you miss him?” Ning Jing asked.

“Of course. Don’t you?” Su Liang retorted.

“Let’s go see Zhengzheng first and then return to Bei’an County.” Ning Jing finally answered.

Su Liang chuckled lightly, “Alright!” It is important to keep promises made to children, and she also wants to make sure that Zhengzheng has returned safely.

Each person returned to their respective rooms. Su Liang had just read two pages of a book when she heard a knocking sound, one after another.

Next door, Ning Jing went out.

Su Liang didn’t go out.

After a while, Ning Jing came back, pushing open Su Liang’s room door with a frown, “We need to go to the academy. There’s been an accident!”

Su Liang’s expression condensed, and she immediately closed her book, stood up and walked outside. Ning Jing came in and took her medicine box.

“Is someone sick?” Su Liang asked.

“Many people are vomiting and having diarrhea. The situation is not good.” Ning Jing said, “Master received the message and hurried back first, asking someone to come and ask for your help.”

In this world, diarrhea can be fatal.

If many people have symptoms at the same time, it is very likely to be food poisoning.

As the best academy in the northern part of Qian Country and even the whole country, the students in Qianshan Academy have at least the title of scholar.

In recent years, the government has been increasingly interfering in the management of the academy. The rule that the top three in the court examination in each county in the north can study in Qianshan Academy for free is not Lin Shuzhi’s intention, but it was set up by the provincial government for better talent cultivation and political achievements in the imperial examination.

The government bears the daily expenses of the academy, which greatly reduces the burden on students.

To a certain extent, Qianshan Academy has already become the official school of the large province in the northern part of Qian Country.

Therefore, although Lin Shuzhi has not become an official, if someone dies, he, as the dean, cannot avoid responsibility.

Su Liang and Ning Jing rode out together, heading towards Qianshan Academy at the fastest speed.

The cold wind blew against their faces. There was no one on the mountain road at night, only the sound of galloping horses' hooves could be heard.

Suddenly, a group of masked people appeared in the dark forest, blocking Ning Jing and Su Liang's way.

Ning Jing handed the medicine box to Su Liang and said in a low voice, "You go first."

Su Liang took the medicine box and put it on her back, took out the twin blades from her leg, and rode forward with Ning Jing, meeting the assassins who were attacking.

Ning Jing's speed was extremely fast. After clearing the obstacles for Su Liang, she urged the horse to rush out, and the rest of the people were intercepted by Ning Jing.

He leaped into the air, his long sword flashing a gloomy light, and the killing intent suddenly became dense!

Su Liang did not encounter any more obstacles on her way. The front door of the academy was wide open and she directly charged into the courtyard on horseback.

"Su sister!" Lin Xueqing stood inside the door, holding a lantern. She exclaimed in surprise, narrowly avoiding the incoming person and horse.

Su Liang got off the horse, grabbed Lin Xueqing, and walked quickly inside,

"What happened?"

"My father and I were planning to return to the academy early tomorrow morning, but suddenly we received a message that many people had been poisoned. Not only did my father look for you, but he also asked people to invite doctors from all over the city and immediately reported it to the government!" Lin Xueqing looked uneasy, "You're the first to arrive!" It was late at night, and the students were all in the dormitory area.

Lin Shuzhi stood at the door anxiously, looking around. When he saw Lin Xueqing with Su Liang appearing, he immediately went up to them. He didn't have time to greet them and just reported the situation, "Dinner was served an hour ago, and symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea appeared in the students one after another within half an hour. There are more and more cases. As long as they live in the academy and had dinner tonight, no one is spared. There are a few people who ate dinner in the city and came back to stay overnight, and they are temporarily fine."

The academy was on holiday for five days from the end of the provincial examination to the announcement day, and the local students all went home. Only those from other places stayed in the academy.

However, today is special. The academy is scheduled to resume normal classes tomorrow, and the students are basically back.

Teachers, cooks, and other miscellaneous helpers, doorkeepers, totaling more than a hundred people, all encountered problems together. Lin Shuzhi asked someone to invite doctors from throughout the city, but he had no clue what to do.

“Where’s the cook?” Su Liang asked.

Lin Shuzhi had just returned to the academy not long ago. He understood the situation and had a few unaffected students move all the people over to this side. Hearing Su Liang’s question, he immediately took her to the cook.

The cooks had eaten their fill during the cooking process, and now one of the older cooks was in the most serious condition, vomiting for a long time with a dark face and signs of difficulty breathing. His son, also a cook, was temporarily conscious.

While taking the old cook’s pulse, Su Liang asked the middle-aged cook about the food prepared for the academy’s dinner, any abnormal ingredients, or any suspicious people entering the kitchen.

“The academy’s meals are made according to a fixed list, rotating every five days, and each meal is set. The suppliers of vegetables and meats have been the same for many years. There’s nothing wrong, and no one has entered the kitchen...” The middle-aged cook held his father, looking pale.

Lin Shuzhi’s face darkened, “Just one!”

Ning Jing’s voice came from the doorway, “I’ll go check the well.”

Su Liang carefully took the pulse of the old cook, observed his symptoms, administered acupuncture to relieve them, and asked the middle-aged cook about his discomfort. She then told Lin Shuzhi, “Someone has poisoned them.”

Thanks to Xing Yusheng, who had asked his maternal grandfather, Old Master Qin, for a book on poisons to give to Su Liang, and combined with her experience from a previous life, Su Liang already knew what was going on.

At first glance, it seemed like they had eaten something unclean, but if it was not taken seriously, it could indeed be fatal. “Can you find a solution?” Lin Shuzhi asked anxiously.

Su Liang nodded, “I’ll try.”

The government soldiers arrived, surrounding Qianshan Academy.

Doctors from the city also came one after another.

Su Liang finished writing the prescription, and Ning Jing brought back a bucket of water.

When the other doctors found out that the well water might have been poisoned, they all came to have a look.

They put in a silver needle, and it turned black indeed.

“Go get the medicine.” Su Liang handed the prescription to Ning Jing, and there wasn’t enough time to discuss it with the other doctors due to the urgency. Ning Jing took the prescription and left immediately, riding his horse down the mountain.

“Master, is there any other source of water nearby?” Su Liang asked.

Lin Xueqing’s face turned pale, “The only water... is from the waterfall on the back mountain. It’s the water that comes down from the mountain.”

“Let someone fetch water.” Su Liang said.

Lin Shuzhi immediately arranged for someone to get water from the back mountain, as the well water had been poisoned and could not be used.

While the other doctors were still debating how to detoxify, someone shouted that one of the students was in critical condition.

Before the doctors could react, Su Liang had already rushed over with her medicine box.

There was no medicine available temporarily, so she could only use acupuncture to alleviate their symptoms.

There were very few doctors in this world who knew acupuncture, and seeing Su Liang’s skill, the other doctors began asking about her background.

Lin Shuzhi was too lazy to pay attention to them. He could see that some of the doctors might have had ideas, but they were unwilling to take the risk and responsibility in such a life-and-death matter.

Before Ning Jing returned, Su Liang had been administering acupuncture continuously, one patient after another, without any time to catch her breath.

At one point, an old gatekeeper and a new scholar from the list of successful

Imperial examination candidates were both waiting for Su Liang’s help. Su Liang arrived at the old man’s side first and saw that his condition was critical, so she performed acupuncture on him, ignoring the calls to go to the other person.

As a result, several students who witnessed the situation angrily condemned Su Liang for not being able to distinguish priorities, saying that if anything happened to them, Su Liang would be involved!

Lin Shuzhi was utterly disappointed with the self-righteous students who believed their lives were more important and that Su Liang, as a doctor, should be responsible for their safety.

He didn’t want to cause any trouble temporarily, but he memorized who those people were and planned to kick them out of the academy once this issue was settled.

Su Liang was racing against time to save lives and needed a high level of concentration. She had no time to listen to those messy voices and didn’t stop helping those self-proclaimed noble students due to it.

The primary duty of a doctor was secondary to her. She didn’t want Lin Shuzhi to get into trouble over someone’s death.

Finally, Ning Jing returned with the medicine, and Su Liang checked that the ingredients were correct.

Back when they were in Su Village, Ning Jing used to purchase medicinal materials for Su Liang, and he had read through most of Su Liang's medical books, so he was not unfamiliar with the process.

The water from the waterfall was not poisoned and had already been boiled in a big pot. Su Liang asked Ning Jing to take the medicine ingredients to cook with the water.

When the decoction was ready, Su Liang tasted and confirmed there were no issues, and had a bowl served to every poisoned person.

The few doctors who were still discussing how to detoxify came to Lin Shuzhi and said that Su Liang had taken matters into her own hands without consulting them, and they had no chance to intervene. If there were any problems with the antidote, it would be Su Liang's sole responsibility, and they would have nothing to do with it.

Lin Shuzhi said with a dark face, "If there are any problems, I will take responsibility! Please leave!"

A renowned doctor from Pingbei City sarcastically said, "We didn't expect Dean Lin to be so bold as to put so many people's lives in the hands of an unknown girl!"

Lin Shuzhi was furious! He had invited these doctors over in the first place, and there was no one stopping them from practicing medicine. With so many patients in front of them, did they not know what to do?

Su Liang was too busy saving lives at such a critical time, how could she have the leisure to talk about irrelevant things with them?

Lin Shuzhi knew very clearly that these doctors were afraid of getting into trouble if someone died, and when they saw Su Liang was willing to take on the responsibility, they just stood by and watched. But as doctors, being so selfish, how could they compare with the young Su Liang? Didn't Su Liang know that if she failed to save a life after trying to treat the patient, she would be in trouble?

Those doctors who did nothing didn't leave either, just watching from the sidelines to see what would come from Su Liang's treatment, knowing that the outcome, good or bad, had nothing to do with them.

After struggling for most of the night, no one's condition worsened, and the patients' symptoms were alleviated.

Lin Shuzhi, with cold sweat all over his head and a soaked back, breathed a sigh of relief, "If it weren't for Liang'er tonight, I really don't know what to do."

Su Liang checked the pulse of the chief cook, who had the most severe symptoms at the beginning, and made sure he was out of danger. She stood up, feeling lightheaded, and almost collapsed, but was steadied by a hand. Turning her head, she saw Ning Jing, and Su Liang smiled wearily, "At least it's over now."

"I'll take her to rest." Ning Jing helped Su Liang as they walked away.

"Go quickly." Lin Shuzhi had seen Su Liang busying herself all by herself, taking on everything with admiration and emotion.

Once outside, Su Liang shivered as the cold wind blew.

Ning Jing took off his coat and draped it over her, then walked in front of her, bent over with his back to her, “Get on.”

Su Liang didn’t refuse, as this wasn’t the first time Ning Jing had carried her.

The two went to Lin Xueqing’s courtyard, where Su Liang had stayed before.

“There is a jade pendant with the Ning character carved on it by the well.” Ning Jing mentioned his discovery by the well.

Su Liang was stunned, “Ning Yao sent someone to do it and frame you?”

Ning Jing shook his head, “I have no reason to harm the people of Qianshan Academy.”

Clever people who saw that jade pendant would think that someone from Xunyang Ning family might be trying to frame Ning Jing.

“If a scholar from the academy dies, it would be a significant event. If Ning Yao is behind this, isn’t he just asking for trouble? A few days ago, he sent someone to provoke you in public.” Su Liang contemplated.

“He can use this to defend himself.” Ning Jing said coldly.

Su Liang’s eyes narrowed, “Leaving such a jade pendant behind, if he is suspected, he can say that if it were really him, he would never leave the jade pendant to implicate himself, and even allege that you did it to frame him while removing competitors in the academy and paving a smoother path for yourself in the Imperial examination! After all, everyone knows you were in Pingbei City, and he wasn’t here.”

Ning Jing coldly said, “As long as that jade pendant is found, whether or not I did it, everyone will think that this incident is caused by me, and the victims would be implicated by me.”

“And then there’s the assassin tonight.” Su Liang frowned, “Let’s not return to

Bei’an County for now, and go straight to Xunyang City to eliminate Ning Yao.. Otherwise, he won’t stop!”

Chapter 86: 086. Investigating the Real Culprit

Because of the jade pendant engraved with the character “Ning,” both Su Liang and Ning Jing believed that Ning Yao was the most suspicious.

But this was just speculation.

Ning Jing had other enemies, and in Pingbei City, there was one: Third Master Li, who wanted to snatch away Zhengzheng’s sister, Miss Li, who had married into the Xiao family and become Lady Xiao.

As for Su Liang's intention to go to Xunyang City to kill Ning Yao first, Ning Jing said they would discuss it later.

Whether it was Ning Yao or Lady Xiao who was involved, their target was Ning Jing.

But when Su Liang calmed down, she realized something was off, "Ning Yao and Li are both not good people. With their previous tactics, once they take action, they wouldn't have left you any room to survive. In this case, if someone dies in the academy, you will be thoroughly implicated."

Even if it was proven later that it was not Ning Jing's doing but his enemy's, he would still be held responsible by the victims, and the world would think that he had brought disaster to the academy.

Ning Jing pondered, "Are you suggesting that the poison in the well tonight was not poisonous enough?"

Su Liang nodded, "Indeed, it was not enough. If someone really intended to poison people to frame you, there are 'better' choices that would not have given me a chance to save anyone. Even if I weren't there, I believe the doctors in Pingbei City would have ways to detoxify the poison, though it may result in some critically ill patients losing their lives due to untimely medical attention."

Ning Jing had been thinking about himself because of the jade pendant, and after all, he didn't understand medical poison.

After hearing Su Liang's words, he also felt that there was something else going on.

Su Liang suddenly thought of something, "Is there anyone from the Xiao family in the academy?"

They had previously believed that someone had infiltrated the academy to poison the well, but the poison was not fatal enough.

Just in case it was someone inside the academy who had done it, in order not to be suspected, they also got poisoned. As long as they were young and healthy and had a small dinner, they could ensure they would become perfect victims without any danger to their lives...

Even if Su Liang had not intervened, among the group with the lightest poisoning, there were more than a dozen people who would not have died even if they were not specifically detoxified.

Among them, could there be a poisoner?

As Ning Jing was about to go find Lin Shuzhi to ask, Lin Xueqing arrived.

She had been helping to take care of those who were poisoned. Her clothes were dirty, her hair messy, and she looked exhausted.

"Sister Su, my father asked me to tell you that everything is okay!" Lin Xueqing looked at Su Liang with gratitude, her eyes red with emotion, "I was so scared, what would have happened if someone had actually died! Sister Su, you are amazing!"

Su Liang did not care about that, and directly asked Lin Xueqing, "Is there a young master from the Xiao family in the academy?"

Lin Xueqing was taken aback, "The Xiao family? The one dealing in ceramics in Pingbei City? There is a young master Xiao, the younger brother of the head of the Xiao family, named Xiao Shirong. He failed the scholar examination and is just a waster, forced in. The Government Office pressured the academy a few times, and since the Xiao family helped fund the new academy

dormitories, my father had to agree to accept Xiao Shirong. In fact, my father is not in control of many things in the academy now. The Xiao family once tried to arrange a

marriage between Xiao Shirong and me, but my father rejected them without even asking for my opinion. If they had asked me, I would have scolded them!”

After saying all this in one breath, Lin Xueqing finally thought of asking Su Liang, “What’s wrong with the Xiao family? Why are you asking about them, sister Su?”

“Is Xiao Shirong poisoned?” Su Liang asked again.

Lin Xueqing thought for a moment and nodded, “He wasn’t here tonight. He usually can’t stand living in the academy dormitory. The Xiao family even suggested building a separate courtyard for him to live in, but my father firmly refused. He should be returning tomorrow.”

This didn’t match Su Liang’s speculation, but her suspicion of the Xiao family deepened.

She asked Lin Xueqing to bring paper and pen and wrote an “investigation questionnaire,” “Give this to your master. Everyone in the academy is a suspect since the well was poisoned, including those who were poisoned. Everyone must be investigated.”

Lin Xueqing looked at it and saw that there were many questions written on it, including where everyone was and what they were doing during the five days of vacation, whether anyone could testify for them, and a detailed account of their daily situations, covering 24 hours without omissions.

“Post it and let them write according to it. Once done, they should hand it in,” Su Liang said: “The Government Office will also investigate this serious matter later.” However, the Xiao family obviously had a good relationship with the Government Office, so they must act first and get the evidence.

Su Liang believed that if it was the work of the Xiao family, there was also a possibility that the young master Xiao did not do it himself but had someone else do it for him.

Just as Lin Xueqing was about to leave, Su Liang asked another question, “Who does Xiu Shirong usually get along with at the academy? He’s rich and powerful, so he must have some followers.”

“Yes, there are a few people who always follow him around. But I really hate that guy, so I never paid attention to who was close to him,” Lin Xueqing replied, “Oh, right, there’s one I know! It’s Ma Yaozu who tied with Elder Brother Ning in the Court Examination during the Bei’an County Provincial

Exam! He’s also very annoying. He has spread many rumors about Elder Brother Ning in the academy, that’s why I noticed him. He’s very much ingratiated with the Xiao family and doesn’t get along too well with the other two scholars from Bei’an County.”

That’s how Lin Xueqing got to know those two scholars who were always together and also learned about the top scorer, Ma Yaozu.

With a thoughtful look, Su Liang asked, “Ma Yaozu? Was he poisoned too?”

Lin Xueqing nodded, "Yes, but it's not too serious. He said he had lunch in town and wasn't hungry at night, so he didn't eat much."

She didn't go around asking those people how much they ate but just happened to pass by when she heard Ma Yaozu telling someone else.

"I understand. You go find the master first." Su Liang became suspicious of Ma Yaozu but couldn't jump to conclusions at the moment. First, she would investigate everyone else and see who had issues. Once the questionnaires were collected, the answer might reveal itself.

After all the commotion, the sky was already getting bright.

Ning Jing fetched water, and after Su Liang washed up, she lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

Ning Jing left the room, looking at the hazy dawn light, his face cold and expressionless, like a statue devoid of warmth.

When Lin Shuzhi saw the questionnaire that Lin Xueqing brought, he asked her to find a large piece of paper and rewrite it to prevent anyone from recognizing that it was written by Su Liang and Ning Jing.

After Lin Xueqing copied it, Lin Shuzhi had someone paste the paper on the wall, informing everyone to answer the questions according to what was on the paper once their condition improved. Each person's statement was to be submitted before noon today.

In the meantime, no one was allowed to enter or leave the academy.

The doctors that Lin Shuzhi asked to leave but didn't were also kept behind. When they argued with Lin Shuzhi, he said it was done to prevent unnecessary panic caused by the spread of information and asked them to understand and cooperate.

The poisoning incident seemed to have subsided, but that was only on the surface.

Su Liang slept heavily through the incident, waking up just as noon approached.

Government soldiers brought plain porridge and steamed buns from the foot of the mountain and distributed them to the people in the academy.

Two bowls of cold porridge and two big steamed buns were on the table in Su Liang's room. They were brought by Lin Xueqing for her and Ning Jing, but she didn't see Ning Jing and didn't wake Su Liang up as she was sleeping.

Su Liang got up, stretched her arms, took a deep breath, walked over to the bun and took a bite. She was really hungry.

When Su Liang finished a bowl of cold porridge and half a bun, Lin Xueqing came in.

"Sister Su, you're awake? Let me heat up the porridge for you," Lin Xueqing said.

Su Liang shook her head, "I already had some. Don't bother reheating it."

Lin Xueqing had not slept a wink since the night before, and after Su Liang asked about the current situation, she told Lin Xueqing to take a nap. "No, I want to be with father." Lin Xueqing yawned as she spoke.

Su Liang hugged her and led her into the room, "I'll go."

"Sister Su, you're really too good. You're much more useful than me," Lin Xueqing hugged Su Liang and sighed, "When things are figured out, please help me persuade father to let go of the academy and head to the capital. The academy is not the pure school he wanted it to be anymore. If this continues, I don't know what else might happen next."

Su Liang nodded, "I have the same intention."

"That's great. If you talk to him, he'll definitely listen." Lin Xueqing breathed a sigh of relief and went to sleep peacefully.

Su Liang didn't know where Ning Jing was. When she found Lin Shuzhi, he was seriously reviewing the submitted questionnaires.

Seeing Su Liang, Lin Shuzhi asked her if she was hungry.

Su Liang said she had already eaten, and she sat down and joined Lin Shuzhi in reviewing the papers.

"The government office sent people to ask me questions, mentioning the disturbance caused by the Ning Family from Xunyang in the academy some days ago. They said it might be the work of Ning Yao, who tried to harm Ning Jing, and that innocent people got caught up in it." Lin Shuzhi looked serious,

"There's no proof, they're just trying to throw dirt on Ning Jing!"

Su Liang sighed softly, "Master, what if it really was Ning Yao?"

Lin Shuzhi frowned, "There's a definite debtor and creditor for grievances. Even if it was Ning Yao who did it, Ning Jing is a victim, not a wrongdoer."

"That's true, but if someone died, it wouldn't be enough to just say that Ning Jing is innocent." Su Liang shook her head, "You may protect your students, but outsiders wouldn't care so much about that."

Lin Shuzhi's expression darkened, "Do you really think it was Ning Yao?"

Su Liang shook her head, "I thought so initially. But now I think it was done by someone else who wanted to frame Ning Yao."

Even Ning Jing and Su Liang had instinctively suspected Ning Yao, let alone others?

Moreover, after the ruckus caused by the Ning Family days ago, everyone in Pingbei City, especially those at Qianshan Academy, knew about the animosity between Ning Yao and Ning Jing.

It might not be impossible for someone to exploit this fact and pull off a clever move.

After all, Su Liang thought that if Ning Yao were to make a move, he would prefer to poison Ning Jing directly instead of going to such great lengths to involve himself in a major case.

"Who would do such a ruthless and vicious thing?" Lin Shuzhi didn't understand.

Su Liang told the truth. Ning Jing had found a jade pendant with the character “Ning” engraved on it near the well last night.

Lin Shuzhi’s face changed drastically, “Tell him not to show it, or many people will assume he did it without caring what the truth is.”

Lin Shuzhi was not trying to hide the truth. Knowing it wasn’t Ning Jing who did it, he did this to protect Ning Jing and to better investigate the truth, not letting the real mastermind behind the scenes succeed.

Su Liang nodded, “Don’t worry, Master, he knows.” She then mentioned the child named Zhengzheng, whom Lin Shuzhi had known about before.

After listening to the child’s background and story, Lin Shuzhi finally realized that Su Liang was genuinely suspicious of the Li and Xiao families, who had a grudge against them because of Zhengzheng.

The Xiao family is actually subordinate to the Li family, and the main decision-maker is the Fourth Miss who married into the Li family.

However, the young master Xiao wasn’t in the academy yesterday.

Su Liang flipped to Ma Yaozu’s questionnaire and took it out separately for review.

The issues in the previous days weren’t significant, as he stayed in the academy most of the time without going out.

Yesterday was the day of the results, and Ma Yaozu wrote that after learning that he failed, he was depressed and went to drink. He stayed at the largest Huixiang Restaurant in Pingbei City for four hours before returning to the academy.

But Su Liang knew that Ma Yaozu was from a poor family. Studying at Qianshan Academy was free, but they had to pay for meals outside

Two hours at the restaurant was quite a long time. If he didn’t spend much money, the restaurant would probably kick him out.

Su Liang and Lin Shuzhi read through all the questionnaires and picked out a few suspicious ones. Aside from Ma Yaozu, who was Su Liang’s first suspect, several others had written vague answers.

Lin Shuzhi called the students in and questioned them one by one, with Ma Yaozu somewhere in the middle.

During the questioning, one student admitted he had visited a brothel the day before yesterday and didn’t dare to let others know.

Two others admitted to visiting a Gambling House together.

When it came to Ma Yaozu, he appeared very calm.

“You spent two hours in the restaurant, yet you claim there were no witnesses?” Lin Shuzhi asked sternly.

Ma Yaozu replied, "I thought that the waiters wouldn't remember when they served whom since there were so many customers coming and going in the restaurant daily, so I wrote that there were no witnesses."

"Ordinary people wouldn't stay in a restaurant for that long. It happened only yesterday, so the waiter would surely remember you." Lin Shuzhi said, "I'll ask the government soldiers to bring someone from the restaurant."

Ma Yaozu's eyes showed clear panic, "Dean, do any of my classmates have witnesses for everything they've done?"

Lin Shuzhi spoke coldly, "Not all of them do, but those without them all need to be thoroughly investigated. Attempting to harm nearly a hundred people with titles is a grave crime, and we can't afford to miss any clues."

"Dean, why do you think someone from the academy did it? Perhaps someone sneaked in and poisoned the well." Ma Yaozu said.

"It's possible. But first, we have to clear the people in the academy, don't you think?" Lin Shuzhi retorted.

"Yes." Ma Yaozu conceded, "Actually, I have an idea. I'm not sure if I should say it."

"Go ahead." Lin Shuzhi nodded.

"I come from Bei'an County, and during the Court Examination, someone from the Ning Family of Xunyang tried to frame Ning Jing. Before the Provincial Exam, the Ning Family came to force him to give up the Imperial Examination and return home, but failed. Yesterday, when the results were announced and it was revealed that Ning Jing had become the top performer, the person who wanted to harm him in the Ning Family would certainly be restless. If they thought Ning Jing was staying in the academy and poisoned the well, it's highly possible." Ma Yaozu spoke righteously, "Last night, Ning Jing went to check on the well. If he found any evidence, he might deliberately hide it to clear himself. He is the one who should be investigated!"

Lin Shuzhi's eyes narrowed slightly, "You're quite keen."

Ma Yaozu hurriedly added, "I'm just stating my guess, which might be wrong. I hope the Dean will report to the government office and investigate thoroughly so that the truth can be revealed."

"Very well." Lin Shuzhi nodded, "You wait outside for the people from the restaurant."

Ma Yaozu's face stiffened, not expecting Lin Shuzhi to continue investigating him. He wanted to say something but ultimately remained silent, hanging his head and leaving the room.

The government soldiers brought the restaurant manager and waiter to the academy.

They both said they saw Ma Yaozu go to the restaurant yesterday and that the timing was correct.

“Master Ma went there with Master Xiao and ordered the most expensive private room and the best food and drinks,” one of the waiters said.

Ma Yaozu was prepared, “Dean, Master Xiao found out that I failed, so he invited me for a drink to comfort me. But since Master Xiao didn’t return to the academy, I didn’t think it had anything to do with him, so I didn’t write the details. ”

Su Liang walked out from behind the bookshelf, her expression indifferent, “In that case, Dean Lin might as well call Master Xiao over for questioning. Master Ma, you can tell us now what you and Master Xiao talked about during your two-hour meal at the restaurant yesterday. Both of you are about to take the Imperial Examination, so your memory must be excellent. It only happened yesterday, you can’t have forgotten, right? Then we’ll ask Master Xiao separately. As long as the stories match, Master Ma will be cleared of any involvement.”

Ma Yaozu’s face turned pale, “What right do you have to order me?”

“Because she saved the entire academy last night.” Lin Shuzhi looked at the government soldiers coldly, “I beseech you to bring Xiao Shirong here immediately.” He also found someone else from the government office to oversee the investigation, asking him to record Ma Yaozu’s testimony on the side.

“I... I had a few drinks with Master Xiao last night, and I don’t remember what we talked about,” Ma Yaozu said, hanging his head.

However, the waiter reported that both Ma Yaozu and Xiao Shirong had not been drunk and were sober when they left the restaurant yesterday.

Su Liang looked coldly at Ma Yaozu, “You’d better think it through, or else you’ll be used as a pawn, and you won’t even know how you die!”

Chapter 87: 087. The Truth Reveals

After a short moment of panic, Ma Yaozu regained his composure, insisting that he had been drunk at the restaurant the previous day and couldn’t remember what he had said to Xiu Shirong.

In response to the waiter’s claim that they hadn’t been drunk, Ma Yaozu argued that it was quite normal for a waiter to make a mistake when dealing with so many customers every day.

Su Liang took out two questionnaires, “One student saw you heading towards the well yesterday evening, another saw you coming back from the well. What do you have to say about that?”

Ma Yaozu, who had been standing, trembled a bit at Su Liang’s words, then lowered his head, “It was dim in the evening, they must have seen it wrong. I never went there, Miss Su, don’t make false accusations!”

“So, no tears till you see the coffin, huh?” Su Liang put away the two pieces of paper, “then let’s wait and see what Mr. Xiu has to say when he gets here.” No sooner than Su Liang finished speaking, footsteps were heard outside.

The two government soldiers who had been sent to the Xiao Family by Lin Shuzhi to find Xiu Shirong were back, carrying someone with them.

Su Liang had never seen him, but she guessed this must be Xiu Shirong. He looked ordinary but was dressed splendidly.

Ma Yaozu's face changed, "What is the meaning of this?"

Su Liang walked over, handcuffed Ma Yaozu's hands behind his back, tied him up with a rope she had prepared beforehand, and then shoved a piece of cloth into his mouth.

Ma Yaozu struggled, and Su Liang used another rope to tie his feet.

Lin Shuzhi was stunned as he watched.

Su Liang then dragged Ma Yaozu behind the bookshelf, "You listen carefully to what Mr. Xiu has to say about yesterday."

Then she came out from behind the bookcase and pinched Xiu Shirong's philtrum to wake him up.

The dazed Xiu Shirong woke up, looked around puzzlingly, then his eyes

brightened a bit when he saw Su Liang's face.

Realizing that he was sitting on the ground, Xiu Shirong got up, his face darkening, "I was fine at home. Who brought me here? In bright daylight, I'm going to sue you all!"

Lin Shuzhi guessed who did it, but of course, he wasn't going to reveal it, "Xiu

Shirong, do you know what happened at the academy last night?"

Xiu Shirong found a place to sit down and shook his head, "What happened? I got up late, I didn't know."

Lin Shuzhi said solemnly, "Somebody poisoned the academy's well, almost causing casualties."

Xiu Shirong leaned forward, a shocked look on his face, "How could this happen? Is everyone alright?"

Lin Shuzhi shook his head, "A close shave. We are currently investigating the culprit and need everyone's whereabouts for the past five days. Ma Yaozu said he was with you at the restaurant yesterday. We need a testimony from you. We were about to invite you, but you came."

Xiu Shirong frowned, "I don't know anything; I was abducted here. Never mind.

What did the dean say just now? Ma Yaozu? Oh! The poor scholar from Bei'an

County... My classmate? I remember. What happened to him?"

Lin Shuzhi repeated the question, and Xiu Shirong admitted without hesitation. "That's right, I went to the restaurant with him yesterday. He failed the exam and was dejected, so I invited him for drinks at Huixiang Building when I ran into him."

"How much did you drink at Huixiang Building? Did you get drunk?" Lin Shuzhi asked.

Xiu Shirong shook his head, "Just a jug, we didn't get drunk. You can easily lose face if you get drunk during the day. My brother-in-law and sister-in-law are all about face. I wouldn't want to be scolded by them."

Behind the bookshelf, Ma Yaozu's eyes widened in disbelief.

He then heard Xiu Shirong continue, "As for what we talked about... that concerns Ma Yaozu's privacy. I had promised not to tell anyone."

Lin Shuzhi looked serious. "You should know what matters most, as you are aware of what happened last night."

Xiu Shirong muttered quietly, "Poisoning... I thought he was joking..."

Lin Shuzhi's face darkened, and the government officials standing nearby bristled. "Mr. Xiao, clarify that!"

Xiu Shirong sighed deeply, "Ning Jing, the top student in the Provincial Exam, used Crown Prince Bei Jingwang's license to enter the Court Examination in Bei'an County. This didn't affect him, but Ma Yaozu always felt that his glory had been stolen by Ning."

Xiu Shirong sighed again, "After Ma Yaozu came to the academy, he always tried to curry favor with me. I knew he was after my wealth and seeking benefits from me. But I never really approved of him. He did better in academics than me but was small-minded. Half of the rumors about Ning came from him. I don't know why he was so jealous."

"During the Provincial Exam this time, I wasn't eligible to participate, but I went to see the results when they announced them. Ning became the top student, and I didn't see Ma Yaozu's name at the end of the list. I thought he must be feeling down as a classmate, so I invited him for drinks. However, he kept cursing Ning, saying that Ning stole the luck that should have belonged to him by using his privileges! He also used some foul language about Ning and Crown Prince Bei Jingwang's relationship, which I can't even utter!"

"I tried to soothe him and told him it had nothing to do with him. Ning earned his position with his own merit. Ma Yaozu is not old; he can study hard and try again three years later. I even offered to provide financial assistance from my family so he could continue his studies."

"However, perhaps he was provoked by Ning becoming the top performer, and his failure, he kept saying that he wanted Ning to pay the price. He claimed that he would only achieve success if Ning was ruined. And he also said that he planned to do something major, which would completely tarnish Ning's reputation if it succeeded!"

"Even though he said that yesterday, he couldn't really have done something as crazy as poisoning, could he?"

Xiu Shirong finished speaking in one breath, yet at the end, he still defended Ma Yaozu innocently, "I have told you everything I know. Are you going to check where I've been and what I've done in the past five days? Should I tell the dean now, or should I write it all down?"

"Write it down." Lin Shuzhi said.

“Alright.” Xiu Shirong got up, “I will go and check on my friends first. If you need my assistance in anything, just let me know.”

Seeing Xiu Shirong about to leave, Su Liang said, “Mr. Xiao, please wait.”

Xiu Shirong turned and gave a smile, “May I know who this beautiful girl is?”

“I’m Ning Jing’s sister.” Su Liang replied, her face calm, “Mr. Xiao, please get a pen and paper and write it down in the courtyard. You can leave after you’ve finished.”

“Miss Ning?” Xiu Shirong laughed, “Even though I don’t know why I have to listen to you, I have never refused a request from a beauty.” After saying that, he took a pen and paper and sat by a stone table in the courtyard.

While watching Xiu Shirong, Su Liang knew that this man was cunning, and the facts were definitely not as he had described. While Ma Yaozu was jealous of Ning Jing, he wasn’t deranged to this extent.

She dragged Ma Yaozu out and removed his gag.

His face turned extraordinarily grim, “He’s talking nonsense! He’s framing me deliberately! I never said those things! And I didn’t poison anyone!”

Su Liang coldly said, “Ma Yaozu, with Xiu Shirong’s testimony, do you think you’ll be able to survive when you reach the Government Office? You said he’s framing you, but you guys are often together and even drink together. Why would he frame you for no reason?”

Between his gritted teeth, Ma Yaozu blurted out, “Because he wants to...”

His voice suddenly stopped short, Ma Yaozu’s face changing color instantaneously, “I don’t know why the Xiao Family wants to harm Ning Jing, but those things he just said, are actually what he wants to do but he’s dumping the dirt on me! The poisoning must have been done by someone secretly from the Xiao Family, they have the total capability to do it!”

Su Liang watched as Ma Yaozu struggled desperately, but at this point, he was already ensnared. It was too late to escape.

“If it were indeed done by the Xiao Family, they wouldn’t even have had the time to cover it up, let alone telling you about it.” Su Liang asked, her voice icy.

Ma Yaozu wanted to say something, yet he couldn’t articulate it at all.

Lin Shuzhi slammed the table forcefully, “Why not confess honestly now?!”

As if drained of life, Ma Yaozu slumped, “I was instructed by Xiu Shirong... The poison was given to me by him... I was bewitched for a moment...”

Xiu Shirong in the courtyard heard what Ma Yaozu said, merely lowered his head and sneered, showing neither anger nor fear.

With a mournful expression, Ma Yaozu claimed that he encountered Xiu Shirong yesterday while feeling down, and Xiu invited him to the Huixiang Building for drinks.

During the dinner, Xiu mentioned Ning Jing, expressing extreme jealousy towards him, suspecting that Ning Jing's smooth path in the Imperial examination was arranged by some influential figure behind him.

Ma Yaozu confessed that he too had jealousy for Ning Jing due to his own poverty and insecurity. Many people in Bei'an County often compared him to Ning Jing, stating that he wouldn't outperform Ning Jing, a young master of a major family who was effectively born with a 'golden spoon'.

After both of them slandered Ning Jing, Xiu Shirong said that he couldn't stand Ning Jing and had a plan to ruin him.

Ma Yaozu thought Xiu was making a joke, but Xiu took out a packet of poison, asked Ma Yaozu to put it into the well after returning to the academy, and also gave him a jade pendant with 'Ning' carved on it, which was to be thrown next to

After the incident, everyone would assume it's related to Ning Jing, either resulting in Ning Jing's death, or making it appear as though it was something orchestrated by Ning Yao to harm Ning Jing, leaving Ning Jing in a desperate situation nonetheless.

"He said then, as long as I was poisoned too, no one will suspect me. I didn't want to endure another three years, and I couldn't afford to, and I was even more afraid of being mocked when I return to my hometown. Xiu Shirong promised that the Xiao family could sponsor my stay in Pingbei City and would give me a large sum of money after the event. If I didn't agree, he would make it impossible for me to stay in Pingbei City. I didn't want unprincipled gains, I was threatened into obeying him at the time!" Ma Yaozu asserted resentfully, "The poison was given by him, he was the mastermind, and I had no choice!

But I didn't expect him to let me bear all the blame and use me as a scapegoat!"

Ma Yaozu's final admission was more or less what Su Liang had suspected. Being a poor scholar, his jealousy and insecurity were true, but even if he had the courage, he wouldn't dare perform such a vicious and ruthless act. However, the truth was that he was really threatened, as well as enticed although that may just be an attempt to whitewash his crime.

The truth was, the real mastermind behind all this was the Xiao Family. Being influential powerhouses in Pingbei City, they had already found their scapegoat in advance.

If Ma Yaozu hadn't been discovered, Xiu Shirong could've avoided any involvement at all, and everything would've been considered Ning Jing or Ning Family's matter.

When Xiu Shirong was brought to the academy, he already knew he was suspected, and he instantly sold out Ma Yaozu without any hesitation.

"The depositions of the two of them, did the officials record everything?" Lin Shuzhi looked at the man from the Government Office.

The man nodded, "It's been recorded. Ma Yaozu admitted to personally committing the poisoning. Ma Yaozu claimed that it was instigated by Xiu Shirong, but that's just his side of the story, it's too far-fetched, not credible.

After all, Xiu Shirong doesn't have any real grudge with the young master Ning."

This statement directly indicated the attitude of the Government Office.

Until now, Ma Yaozu could only protest, speaking useless nonsense, as even he didn't know why Xiu Shirong would want to frame Ning Jing.

Ma Yaozu, bewildered by jealousy and blinded by benefits, had self-destroyed his prospects and ended up in his current state. Su Liang didn't sympathize with him, yet she hoped even more for the wicked deeds of the Xiao family to be publicly known.

Xiu Shirong appeared at the entrance with a paper in his hand. Seeing Ma Yaozu, he sighed deeply, "You really have messed up!"

After his statement, Xiu Shirong disregarded the murderous gaze from Ma Yaozu, walked in arrogantly, and then ceremoniously handed the paper to Lin Shuzhi, "Dean, please read it. If there's nothing else, I'll take my leave."

Lin Shuzhi took the paper cold-faced, "Even though there's no evidence to prove Ma Yaozu's accusations against you, since there's suspicion, please take the two of them for a thorough interrogation."

Xiu Shirong's face darkened briefly, but quickly returned to normal, "Sure! Those who are clean have nothing to fear, I am willing to cooperate with the investigation! "

Ma Yaozu was cursing furiously, while Xiu Shirong looked at him, smiling grimly.

The former was led away forcibly, while the latter strutted away, his head held high.

Only Su Liang and Lin Shuzhi were left in the room.

Lin Shuzhi let out a long sigh, "It seems that it was indeed the doing of the Xiao family."

"But Xiu Shirong will be off the hook very soon," said Su Liang, "We don't have any evidence."

Xiu Shirong truly was the spitting image of the spoiled rich second-generation figures Su Liang had often seen in news in her past life: lawless and fearless.

The only problem was that sometimes it was hard to pin something on them.

A silhouette appeared at the door. Su Liang turned her head and saw it was Ning Jing. She asked him, "Did you bring Xiu Shirong here?"

Ning Jing nodded and walked in, "I heard from the Xiao Family that their plan to frame me was not because of Zhengzheng. Even before I came to Pingbei City, the Xiao Family had reached a cooperation agreement with Ning Yao. One of Ning Yao's conditions was for the Xiao Family to eliminate me in Pingbei City."

The previous attempts of Ning Yao's people to openly contact Ning Jing at the academy was merely a ruse to lower his guard.

After failing several times in Bei'an County, Ning Yao knew that the current Ning Jing was not an easy target, and didn't expect that moral blackmail would work on him.

His real hidden card was the Xiao Family.

Su Liang's eyes narrowed, "If the jade pendant had been discovered last night, you would've already been arrested. As long as the Xiao Family handled the situation well, you might end up having to escape from jail to save your life, not to mention your career."

Lin Shuzhi's face turned whiter, "Disgusting! These people are outrageous!"

Su Liang fell into thought, "We need to figure out a way to make Xiu Shirong confess and rat out Ning Yao. If the Government Office is going to be corrupt and unjust, then we'll just have to arrange a meeting with the Yama King for some people.."

Chapter 88: 088. Ning Jing Leaves

The final conclusion of the storm that had developed till now was either that

Ma Yaozu, jealous of Ning Jing, chose to poison the well water of Qianshan Academy to frame him.

Or that Ning Yao had bought the Xiao Family, and to frame Ning Jing, they coerced and enticed Ma Yaozu, making him a scapegoat.

It seemed both roots were due to "jealousy" and centered on Ning Jing, but there was a difference.

In the former case, Ma Yaozu displayed a one-sided vile and malicious character and Ning Jing was an innocent victim. He was just too outstanding, and that wasn't wrong.

In the latter case, it was caused by Ning Jing's family affairs, and once outsiders got involved, he would inevitably be blamed.

Ning Jing could not control Ma Yaozu's jealousy, but he "should" have handled his family affairs well.

Although Ning Jing had been expelled from his family, he still carried the Ning surname. In the eyes of outsiders, he was inseparable from Ning Yao.

When two brothers fought, outsiders would enjoy watching the excitement.

But if outsiders were affected, then it would be a different story.

Especially since Ning Yao was in Xunyang City and had been behind the scenes from beginning to end. The victims in Qianshan Academy, as well as the angered spectators, could only see Ning Jing, and their anger would naturally be vented on him.

"If we spread the truth, you may not receive sympathy and support, but more likely hostility and resentment." Su Liang looked at Ning Jing and sighed.

The shrewd merchant Xiao Family surely calculated this, and they firmly believed that Ning Jing didn't want to escalate the matter because it would do him no good on the Dath of the ImDerial examination.

However, if they were to blame everything on Ma Yaozu and keep Ning Yao and the Xiao Family out of it, Su Liang would be unable to swallow her anger.

It seemed that Ning Yao and the Xiao Family's real goal had not been achieved, but it still hit Su Liang hard.

Thinking of Xiao Shirong's hypocritical and triumphant face earlier, Su Liang wanted to kick him away with one foot.

Ma Yaozu poisoned his peers for his own interests and deserved to die, garnering no sympathy.

As long as Ning Jing suffered a loss in silence, everything would quiet down. However, the more Su Liang thought, the angrier she became.

Lin Shuzhi sighed deeply, "The Xiao Family has significant influence in Pingbei City, and they have left no handle on their actions. Based on Ma Yaozu's accusation alone, it's impossible to hurt Xiao Shirong even a little bit. People would only think that Ma Yaozu has gone mad and is attacking randomly. The real mastermind is Ning Yao, but there is no way to prove that Ning Yao and the Xiao Family are working together, as they have no apparent connection with you."

"What does Master think we should do?" Su Liang asked.

Lin Shuzhi shook his head, "There are only two of you, but you have offended two, even three major families. In my selfish view, I hope you can avoid them until Jing'er takes the exam next year, and then settle accounts with them. But I also know that whether the matter can be silenced depends entirely on them. Judging by the actions of the Li, Xiao, and Ning families, if they don't succeed this time, there will be a next time. They won't give up until they drive Jing'er to a dead end. Avoidance is not a long-term solution; it will only embolden them.'

"So Master supports our counterattack?" Su Liang asked.

Lin Shuzhi nodded, a hint of coldness in his eyes, "The Xiao Family and Ning

Yao committed heinous acts, and if not for Liang'er's efforts to turn the tide, Qianshan Academy would have been gone last night. If you are confident, do whatever you want to do!"

Lin Shuzhi was a scholar, but it didn't mean he lacked courage.

From his resignation as a young official till now, he had always adhered to his principles. After experiencing the life-and-death moment last night, he would never say that Ning Jing should give in and endure any further.

"Ning Yao should know the relationship between Master and me. He may very likely make a big fuss about it and drag Master into it." Ning Jing's face was calm, "I had originally intended to let him die after I ranked as the Top Scholar, but now, I can't wait anymore."

Ning Jing participated in the Imperial examination to fulfill the wishes of the real Ning Jing.

In the real Ning Jing's suicide note, he said, "I always dreamed of becoming the Top Scholar and seeing the faces of my brothers and sisters. Sadly, I won't have the chance." This was also one of the reasons why Ning Jing hadn't sought revenge for the real Ning Jing until now.

He initially planned to wait a few months before taking action to destroy the Ning Family after the Imperial examination was over.

If it were only Ning Yao targeting Ning Jing, regardless of assassination or framing, Ning Jing wouldn't take the initiative to find him.

However, this time, Ning Yao had completely crossed Ning Jing's bottom line.

Moreover, after getting to know Lin Shuzhi, Ning Jing didn't want Ning Yao to publicize their close relationship with the Lin Family, which would affect not only Lin Shuzhi but also the two Lin Family members who were officials in the capital city, and it might even affect Lin Xueqing's future marriage.

After all, Ning Jing now has the label of Bei Jingwang Mansion.

"In fact, we can hire assassins from Yanyun Building, money isn't an issue. But since Yan Sui was killed, Yanyun Building is probably in chaos now and can't be relied on." Su Liang said.

Lin Shuzhi frowned, it sounded like Su Liang and Ning Jing had dealt with Yanyun Building before?

Su Liang was stunned, and Lin Shuzhi asked uncertainly, "Jing'er, your martial arts..."

That day, when two male corpses were found near Qianshan Academy, Ning

Jing admitted it was his doing, so Lin Shuzhi knew he was no longer the same.

Su Liang answered, "His martial arts should be more than enough to slaughter the entire Ning Family."

Lin Shuzhi looked at Ning Jing and sighed deeply, "I won't ask where your martial arts skills came from. Are you planning to take revenge on Ning Yao right away?"

Ning Jing nodded, "Su Liang stays at the academy to protect Master and junior sister. I will go to Xunyang City and come back here after the issue is resolved."

Su Liang originally wanted to go with Ning Jing, but when he heard him say this, he nodded too, "I have no problem. Someone is in Su Family village, and she can't leave anyway, Aunt Bai will take good care of her. As for the Fourth Prince, I'll send a letter to inform him."

In fact, there was no agreement between Su Liang and Duanmu Chen, just the possibility of future cooperation. The actual person to inform was Nian Jincheng, so he wouldn't think something happened to his good brother for not returning for so long.

But directly contacting Nian Jincheng was absolutely forbidden, it would be enough to tell Duanmu Chen.

"It's going to take at least half a month for this round trip. Will you be able to return to Bei'an County before the end of the year?" Lin Shuzhi asked.

“He shouldn’t need that long.” Su Liang said, “Whether we return to Bei’an County or not, let’s wait for him to come back.”

Lin Shuzhi nodded, “Since you’ve decided, I have no objections as your master. Just one thing, Jing’er, you must take care of yourself, those people are not worth risking your life for.”

“Okay.” Ning Jing nodded, then looked at Su Liang, “You can come see me off.”

The two of them walked through the academy towards the main gate.

“How long will it take you to come back?” Su Liang asked.

Ning Jing said, “Ten days.”

“Alright.” Su Liang nodded, “There have been some troubles lately, I’ll stay here to watch over Master and Xueqing, and try to convince Master to agree to leave Qianshan Academy with Xueqing to head to the capital city before you come back.”

The Lin Family father and daughter also had troubles recently, otherwise Su Liang could have gone back to Su Family village first.

As they approached the main gate, Su Liang suddenly remembered something, “Hold on!” He ran back.

Ning Jing stood waiting, and Su Liang soon returned, handing him the wound medicine and antidote he had made earlier, “I made these according to the recipe, I don’t know their effectiveness, you can give them a try.”

Ning Jing frowned at Su Liang, “Are you sure your antidote won’t poison me to death?”

Su Liang snorted, “Forget it then!”

Ning Jing put away the medicine bottles, “Let Ning Yao try.”

Su Liang’s lips curled slightly, “Alright!”

“Be careful.” Ning Jing said.

“So should you.” Su Liang, like a brother, clenched his fist and bumped Ning Jing’s shoulder, “Make sure Ning Yao dies in a ‘good-looking’ way.”

“Okay.” After Ning Jing finished speaking, he turned around and strode away..

Chapter 89: 089. Can You Die From Saying It

Xiu Shirong emerged from the Yamen, neatly dressed and standing tall.

“Master Xiu, take care,” the Yamen runner bowed respectfully.

Xiu Shirong looked pleased, took out a folded silver banknote and handed it over. “After all, I had studied with Ma Yaozu, please ‘take care’ of him for me.”

The Yamen runner quickly pocketed the silver banknote and assured Xiu Shirong.

Not far away was a luxurious carriage. As soon as the Yamen runner left, a young servant ran over and diligently wiped the dirt from Xiu Shirong's clothes. "Master, the third master suddenly disappeared, master and madam are both worried to death! Is the third master alright?"

Xiu Shirong snorted lightly, "In Pingbei City, who could harm me?"

When the carriage curtain was lifted, Xiu Shirong saw a woman with heavy makeup sitting inside. She looked to be in her twenties, but her facial features were obscured by the extravagant makeup.

Xiu Shirong immediately put on a different facial expression, and after getting in the carriage, smiled and called her "sister-in-law."

The woman was the fourth young lady from the Li family, one of the four major merchants in Qian Country, and now the mistress of the Xiu family. She squinted her eyes, sizing up Xiu Shirong, "What happened?"

Xiu Shirong sat upright, "Someone knocked me out at home and sent me to Qianshan Academy! "

Xiu Lishi's expression changed, she twisted the handkerchief in her hand, "who?"

Xiu Shirong shrugged, "I don't know. Maybe Ning Jing?"

Xiu Lishi snorted coldly, "Ning Yao said that Ning Jing had a weak body and didn't know Martial Arts, but she has climbed up the ranks with Crown Prince Bei Jingwang, and it seems there are master protectors around her."

"Originally, the Xiu family had no grudge with Ning Jing, and even Ma Yaozu wouldn't admit it. But recently, because of my sister-in-law's family and her nephew, Ning Jing has become suspicious of us." Xiu Shirong looked regretful,

"Such a perfect plan, yet it ended up in vain."

"You didn't confess, did you?" Xiu Lishi asked.

Xiu Shirong's smile seemed both genuine and fake. "If I were that foolish, sister-in-law wouldn't entrust me with such important matters."

Xiu Lishi snorted lightly, "Your mind is clever, but you never use it for good."

After all these years of studying, you didn't even become a scholar."

The Xiu family's heart was set on cultivating scholars and achieving success, but Xiu Shirong was not up to par. The Li family had spent a fortune hiring a highly-ranked old scholar to teach the children of the family, and last year, Xiu Lishi sent her only son to her maiden home to study.

Xiu Shirong's eyes darkened slightly, and he said nonchalantly, "If all my ambitions were to be used for good, I would've turned against my big brother and sister-in-law long ago."

Xiu Lishi sneered, "You don't have the guts! Without the Xiu family, what could you accomplish?"

Xiu Shirong didn't get upset and only laughed, "I'm just counting on my sister-in-law to give me more rewards!"

“Stop flapping your gums! Tell me, what happened in the end?” Xiu Lishi asked. Xiu Shirong then went on to recount his experiences after waking up in the academy.

“I didn’t see Ning Jing, but I did meet a Miss Ning who claims to be Ning Jing’s younger sister. She really was an extraordinary beauty.” Xiu Shirong’s mind conjured an image of Su Lianz’s small face, and he licked his lips.

Xiu Lishi scoffed lightly, “Look how greedy you are! Once we take care of Ning Jing, you can play with her however you want!”

“Thank you in advance, sister-in-law.” Xiu Shirong’s smile deepened.

Upon hearing his recount, Xiu Lishi also sighed regretfully, “We wasted an opportunity. Unbelievable that Ning Jing actually has a sister by her side with such formidable medical skills. Otherwise, if just a few more scholars had died, the matter would’ve been a big deal and Ning Jing would’ve been implicated! Now we have to make sure Ma Yaozu dies quickly and keeps quiet, so as not to implicate us!”

“Sister-in-law spends so much silver every year on the government, what’s there to be afraid of?” Xiu Shirong was unconcerned.

“My father taught us from a young age that in business, there’s no need to worry about right and wrong, black and white, but you have to be clean and not leave any flaws. Otherwise, you never know when a careless mistake could cause you to lose everything!” Xiu Lishi said in a stern tone.

Xiu Shirong still had a playful smile on his face, “Thank you for your guidance, sister-in-law.”

The poisoning incident spread quickly throughout Pingbei City on the day it happened.

But in the story versions, there was Ning Jing, Ma Yaozu, but not a trace of connection to the Xiao Family or Xiu Shirong.

Xiu Lishi knew that this attempt had failed and did not cause any further trouble, deciding to make new plans. Other than removing the Xiao Family from the story, she did not try to pin any other dirty water on Ning Jing.

Thus, it soon became common knowledge in Pingbei City that a scholar from Bei’an County, who had failed the provincial exam, was consumed with jealousy over Ning Jing, the head of the Ning family, and committed the heinous crime of poisoning the well at the academy and framing Ning Jing.

Thankfully, the medical treatment was timely, and everyone at the academy was shocked but unharmed, otherwise the consequences would have been unimaginable!

Once the news spread, public outrage was immediately aroused, and people began to condemn the malicious Ma Yaozu who had been studying like a dog.

Though there were also some who had no idea that Ning Jing was also at fault in this matter, they fabricated a story that Ning Jing had once boasted in front of Ma Yaozu, angering him, leading to the subsequent incidents.

But such groundless rumors were believed by only a minority of people.

Most people thought that Ma Yaozu was crazy and that Ning Jing had nothing to do with it.

It is worth noting that Su Liang's name did not spread.

Nobody from the academy had come down the mountain. In the afternoon, after Ma Yaozu and Xiu Shirong were taken away, the only people who came down from the mountain were the doctors who had been invited the night before, and they didn't know anything about Su Liang's background and name.

Those who were unaware thought it was the doctors who had saved nearly a hundred people at the academy.

Among them were those who cared about face and didn't want to admit they hadn't done anything on their trip to the academy and that a young girl with an unknown background had saved everyone. They neither admitted nor denied the praise, essentially acquiescing to it.

And there were even some thick-skinned people who blatantly took credit for Su Liang's accomplishments, fabricating stories about how difficult it was for them to save people.

After all, reputation is very important for medical professionals. With a good reputation, there is business and money to be made.

The Xiao Family was located in the eastern part of Pingbei City, occupying a large area.

At dusk, Xiu Shirong came out of his elder brother's place, Dlaninz to change into another set of clothes and go to the brothel to listen to some music.

Returning to his room, Xiu Shirong closed the door, opened the wardrobe, picked out a brocade robe, and just as he put it on, a shadow silently approached from behind. Then, a brick smacked him on the back of his head.

Blood streamed down Xiu Shirong's ears, soaking into the collar of his new clothes. He didn't even have the chance to scream before passing out on the floor.

On the other side, the current head of the Xiao Family, Xiu Shihao, was massaging Xiu Lishi's shoulders. The couple exchanged a few words and quickly decided to arrange for Ma Yaozu to "commit suicide out of fear of punishment" tonight in jail. It would be easy with money.

"I should have known not to get involved in Ning Yao's mess. That Ning Jing is quite a handful." Xiu Shihao scoffed.

Xiu Lishi closed her eyes, leaned her head back against Xiu Shihao's chest, and lazily said, "Don't you want to not be under the thumb of my family for the rest of your life? You need allies against outsiders, otherwise our business will always be controlled by the Li family."

"My wife really cares for me." Xiu Shihao said, visibly touched.

The atmosphere grew intimate, and just as the couple was about to get affectionate, a dark shadow floated by and raised their blood-stained brick to smack Xiu Shihao on his head.

Xiu Lishi, who had her eyes closed, heard a strange sound and felt a viscous liquid on her face. She opened her eyes, but before she could see anything clearly, she too was knocked unconscious with the same brick.

Meanwhile, the unmarried second master of the Xiao Family was away on a business trip and would not return until the end of the year.

As the last trace of sunset was swallowed up by the western sky, Ning Jing glanced at the blood-soaked dark patch on the brick and tossed it into the lake in the back garden of the Xiao Family estate before leaving silently.

As Ning Jing left, screams and cries resounded in the Xiao family.

He returned to the mansion he and Su Liang had purchased, picked up the prepared bundle, put on a bamboo hat, and left Pingbei City on horseback.

At this point, Su Liang, who was preparing dinner at the academy, was unaware that Ning Jing had left only after teaching the three leaders of the Xiao family a lesson with bricks. She thought he had left the city early.

Lin Xueqing woke up to find the sky already dark and went out to the smell of food coming from the kitchen. She walked over quickly and saw a familiar figure, her face surprised and delighted, "Su, you're still here?"

Originally, Su Liang and Ning Jing planned to leave Pingbei City early in the morning and return to Bei'an County. Lin Xueqing woke up thinking they might have already left, but to her surprise, Su Liang was not only still here but also at the academy.

"There is hot water, wash your face." Su Liang smiled and explained to Lin Xueqing the truth behind the poisoning case from last night and why they hadn't left.

As Lin Xueqing listened, she became indignant and shocked.

After she finished listening and had washed up, she came to stoke the fire and sighed, "Elder brother Ning is so miserable, he has such a family to deal with. No, they are not even human! He was ready to hand over the family business to Ning Yao, but Ning Yao insists on persecuting him! Shameless! The people of the Xiao family are heartless for profit! Ma Yaozu deserves to die!" "The more Ning Jing tolerates Ning Yao, the further he goes. ")

Su Liang said.

Lin Xueqing realized something was off, "Elder brother Ning... is he skilled in martial arts?"

Su Liang nodded, "Actually, he taught me my martial arts." Not entirely true. Lin Xueqing was shocked, "Is he that good? We haven't seen each other for only three years!"

Su Lianz smiled, "Actually, I've only known him for just over three months and don't know what he went through in those three years."

Lin Xueqing sighed, "My second brother has practiced martial arts since he was a child, and it has been difficult. If Ning Jing is so strong after only three years of practice, he must have put in more effort and worked harder than others."

“In life, when you want to do something or get something, you have to pay the price.” Su Liang said, “He knows what he’s doing, so you don’t need to think too much.”

Lin Xueqing nodded heavily, ‘You’re right, Su. In fact, I’m happy that although Ning Jing doesn’t talk much or smile now, he is neither depressed nor resentful.”

After preparing dinner, the two went to find Lin Shuzhi.

In the afternoon, government soldiers came to deal with the well, drawing up many buckets of water one after another, and finally, Su Liang confirmed that the water they had sent to her was safe.

Lin Shuzhi had gone to check on the students and had just returned and changed clothes. Seeing Lin Xueqing and Su Liang, his eyes softened, “Liang, you should take a break. You’ve been the most exhausted.”

“I’ll go to bed early tonight.” Su Liang nodded.

After dinner, Lin Shuzhi looked worried, “With Ning Jing gone, will the people of the Xiao family target you and cause you harm in Pingbei City?”

Su Liang was very calm, “Master, don’t worry. If they dare to cause trouble for me, I will show them some colors!”

She couldn’t stand the sight of Xiu Shirong and wished she could sneak into the Xiao family house tonight and smack him with a brick!

However, with Ning Jing gone, Su Liang didn’t want to start trouble actively. She was fine on her own, but she was afraid of causing trouble for the Lin family father and daughter.

Seeing Lin Shuzhi sigh again, Su Liang said seriously, “I think all the officials in Pingbei City have been bought by the Xiao family. Ma Yaozu has been found guilty and may die in prison tonight, so it’s even more impossible to expose Xiu Shirong’s crimes to the public.”

Lin Shuzhi looked disappointed, “It wasn’t like this a few years ago; things have been getting worse.”

“Father thought about reporting it to the court, but we know they are unclean, yet we have no evidence.” Lin Xueqing said.

“Master, in that case, it’s better to leave sooner rather than later. This place is no longer the simple and quiet place you wanted.” Su Liang said.

Lin Shuzhi hesitated for a moment, “I planned to hand over the academy before the New Year and take Xueqing to the capital city. It’s not good for a family to be scattered.”

“It’s just over a month anyway. Master, why not send a letter to Brother Lin earlier and have them send someone to pick us up? So as not to have more troubles in the long run.” Su Liang said, “By now, the students who have become scholars, how far they can go in the future mainly depends on themselves. Besides, there are other teachers in the academy, Master should also think more about his own children.”

“Yes, yes indeed!” Lin Xueqing nodded repeatedly, “Su’s sister’s words make a lot of sense! We still don’t know who sent the assassin before, once we get to the capital city, it will be safer than here. After all, my father is not a nobody.”

“Well...” Lin Shuzhi was somewhat hesitant. Deciding to go to the capital city for the New Year was because of the assassination, but he didn’t expect to leave so soon.

After all, this academy was his many years of hard work, but he also knew that Su Liang was right. If it weren’t for the academy, Lin Shuzhi would have reunited with his daughter and two sons long ago. He had already made a lot of sacrifices for the three children he owed.

“After this incident, Master has fallen ill and has no energy to manage the academy anymore. It’s reasonable and logical for him to resign and leave for the capital city.” Su Liang had already thought about how Lin Shuzhi could get out of the situation smoothly.

“I think it’s a good idea!” Lin Xueqing approved with both hands, “Look at what my father looks like now? If it wasn’t for Suls care, he might really be terribly ill. I will write to my brothers tonight, and when Ning Senior returns from

Xunyang City to take Su away, we will go to the capital city!”

Seeing the eager anticipation in Lin Xueqing’s eyes, Lin Shuzhi sighed and finally nodded, “Alright! Let’s settle it this way!”

He also planned to write a secret letter to report the corruption of the officials in Pingbei City after arriving at the capital city.

There was no conversation that night.

The next morning, someone from the government office came to find Lin Shuzhi, and Su Liang was also present, and learned of an unexpected piece of news.

“The official has already verified it, and everything Ma Yaozu said is true. The poison was indeed given to Ma Yaozu by Xiao Shirong, the third son of the Xiao family. Xiao Shirong lured Ma Yaozu to commit the crime, and the Xiao family was the mastermind behind the poisoning case!”

Su Liang felt it was very strange. The one who came was the master who defended Xiao Shirong yesterday. He was from the Yamen.

Yesterday, Xiao Shirong was taken to the Yamen and returned home unharmed in no time. Su Liang knew about this.

Why did the wind change its direction overnight?

Lin Shuzhi was also surprised, “Just based on Ma Yaozu’s testimony...”

The master shook his head, “Last night, Xiao’s family head and his wife, along with Xiao Shirong, committed suicide in fear of punishment at home! After the servants of the Xiao family reported the case, the officials searched and found the poison in Xiao Shirong’s room. There were also servants

who confessed that the head of the Xiao family conspired with Ning Yao of the Ning family in Xunyang to frame Ning Jing! Their methods were despicable and appalling!”

Su Liang was completely dumbfounded. Was she mistaken when she said that the officials in Pingbei City were corrupt? But it’s not right! There was no way that those three evil people in the Xiao family could commit suicide in fear of punishment!

The master said solemnly, “The truth of the case has come to light, and all of the Xiao family’s property has been confiscated and forfeited to the state! The official says that every person in the academy who suffered wrongful harm will be given ten silver taels of compensation. It will be sent later today. Please give it to them, Dean Lin!”

Lin Shuzhi, full of doubts, said a few polite words and sent the master away.

But when Su Liang heard the master say the Xiao family’s property was confiscated, she immediately realized what had happened.

It’s impossible for the master of the Xiao family to commit suicide. They had already fixed up the people in the government office and were unafraid of anything.

The final result was either greedy officials who wanted to swallow the Xiao family’s property took advantage of the situation and killed them, or the three people in the Xiao family suddenly encountered an accident and were killed by someone else. Officials “ingeniously” took advantage of this case and used Ma Yaozu’s testimony to convict the Xiao family, faked a suicide in fear of punishment, and conveniently seized their property.

After thinking it over, Su Liang felt the latter possibility was greater. The government office and the Xiao family were originally interest-sharing partners. If they wanted to take down the Xiao family, they could have believed Ma Yaozu’s testimony and convicted the Xiao family from the beginning, instead of playing this game of changing faces overnight.

And the person who did justice on behalf of Heaven could only be Ning Jing besides her.

After Ning Jing left, Lin Shuzhi worried, Su Liang was also worried that the Xiao family would harm her, but she didn’t expect that someone would casually do what Su Liang wanted to do most, solving the hidden troubles for the future.

The result was of course excellent, but Su Liang was a bit annoyed that Ning Jing didn’t mention a single word when he left.

She looked out of the window and whispered to herself, “Would saying something kill you? Seriously....”

Chapter 90: 090. Didn’t you send someone to ask me to come home?

After Lin Shuzhi sent away the master from the government office, he closed the door and asked Su Liang what she thought of the matter about the “three members of the Xiao Family committing suicide for fear of being punished for their crimes. ”

“Someone probably took matters into their own hands and the government played along, benefitting from the outcome.” Su Liang said.

Upon hearing Su Liang's words, Lin Shuzhi understood who was behind it. He sighed but didn't say anything more.

Having decided to leave the academy for the capital city yesterday and witnessing the darkness of the official circles in Pingbei City again today, Lin Shuzhi lost his last hesitation. He wrote another letter to his two sons, asking them to send someone to pick them up.

In the letter, he didn't mention much about the poisoning case at the academy, fearing that they would worry and that the letter might be lost and seen by others. He only wrote that he was getting old, increasingly tired, and running out of energy, so it was time to let go of the matters of the academy and reunite with his family.

In both letters sent to the capital city, one after the assassination attempt and one this time, Lin Shuzhi never mentioned Ning Jing and Su Liang.

The first time he only mentioned being saved by a skilled master.

Su Liang also wrote a letter, asking someone to send it back to Bei'an County. The recipient was Hu Er.

There were two letters hidden inside the letter to Hu Er, one for County Magistrate Mu Fei, and one for "Su Jiujiu."

She only informed them that she was delayed and would return half a month later than expected.

A day later, Lin Shuzhi intended to go to the government office to announce his intention to resign as the dean of Qianshan Academy and that he had chosen a reliable successor within the academy.

Su Liang was worried that he might encounter trouble along the way, but she couldn't leave Lin Xueqing alone at the academy. So, the three of them went down the mountain together, and found a tea house for Su Liang and Lin Xueqing to wait for Lin Shuzhi's return.

Sitting in the elegant room on the second floor overlooking the street, as Lin Shuzhi walked alone towards the Government Office, Lin Xueqing clasped her hands together and prayed earnestly, "I hope everything goes smoothly, and there won't be any more problems."

"Master is not a government official and doesn't even receive a salary. It's just that the government has relied on Qianshan Academy to achieve their political merits in recent years, so they've been getting more and more involved." Su Liang said, "Although Master's talents are irreplaceable, I think his resignation will go smoothly."

Given the fame of Qianshan Academy, there were probably many people who wanted to take the dean's position.

However, the successor chosen by Lin Shuzhi might not necessarily have the opportunity to take over the position.

From where they were sitting, they could hear the voices of the people on the street below and the conversations of other guests in the tea house.

Everyone was talking about the same thing – the poisoning case at the academy.

At first, when Ma Yaozu was sentenced, everyone thought the truth had been revealed.

Unexpectedly, after a night, the case took a shocking twist.

It wasn't quite a reversal since the fact that Ma Yaozu had poisoned the academy himself was not overturned; still, he was not the real mastermind, but someone who had been threatened and lured into doing it.

The mastermind was the Xiao Family of Pingbei City, while the Ning Family of Xunyang City was the instigator.

Ning Jing, who had already been expelled from the Ning Family, still couldn't break free from their persecution and entanglement.

His elder brother from the same father but different mother, Ning Yao, had secretly provided benefits to the Xiao Family, asking them to help ensure Ning Jing's death in Pingbei City.

After many twists and turns, and with no lives lost in the academy, the "truth" became clear at this point, and people were condemning Ning Yao's shamelessness and cruelty, condemning the Xiao Family for their unscrupulousness, and condemning Ma Yaozu.

There were also those who condemned Ning Jing as a bad luck star without knowing right from wrong.

However, since the three main members of the Xiao Family had already met Yama King and could no longer slander Ning Jing, those voices would soon disappear.

The government officials showed no intention of asking Ning Jing to cooperate in the investigation. Because their self-directed and self-acted "truth" had already come to an end.

As for the second master of the Xiao Family who was still away on business and had not returned, the Pingbei City government office issued a warrant for his arrest. As long as he returned, he could not escape death. Only when he died could those who got the Xiao Family's property finally sleep peacefully.

Lin Xueqing listened to the mixed opinions around her and looked at the clear sky outside, sighing softly, "The sky in Pingbei City is getting darker."

She knew that Lin Shuzhi was planning to go to the capital city for another purpose – to expose the corruption and bribery in Pingbei City to the court.

This would be a risky move, and it could only be done after leaving this place.

Yonglong Embroidery Workshop was right across the street, and the manager looked up in surprise when he saw Su Liang. He had thought that Su Liang and Ning Jing would leave after the exams were over.

When he shifted his gaze away, the manager ordered his clerk to remove the newly-arrived Yanluo silk from the shelf and take it to the back, not for sale.

However, as soon as the clerk took the valuable fabric from the most conspicuous spot, someone said, "That fabric, I want to buy it!"

Seeing that it was the daughter of Master Mao from the government office, the manager didn't dare to offend her and motioned for the clerk to bring the Yanluo silk to Miss Mao.

Miss Mao liked it very much and immediately said she wanted to buy it.

The manager quoted the price with a smile, explaining that this was a new fabric launched by the Yang Family this year for the new tribute items, with only a few items released to test the market response.

Hearing this, Miss Mao became more determined to buy it, but she cut the price by more than half, asking that it be sold at a lower price.

Miss Mao's face darkened, "You dare not recognize my father's authority while doing business in Pingbei City? Do you know who my father is?"

Soon a crowd gathered to watch the commotion.

Yonglong Embroidery Workshop was doing legitimate business, backed by one of Qian Country's four major businesses, the Yang Family. They had never skimped on giving the government its share of benefits.

The manager knew that if he gave in to Miss Mao today, she would only become more demanding, fearing that in the future, all the good things in the Embroidery Workshop would be taken by those ladies and madams from the officials' families.

The manager tried to appease Miss Mao to no avail. She insisted on buying the Yanluo silk at the price she had named.

With so much commotion, it was hard for Su Liang not to notice.

Lin Xueqing looked outside for a while, not knowing what had happened, and had no intention of joining the excitement. However, she saw Su Liang stand up.

"Where are you going, Sister Su? Is my father back?" Lin Xueqing looked down, but she didn't see Lin Shuzhi.

Su Liang shook her head, "My master won't be back so soon. I'm going to the embroidery workshop across the street to buy some things."

"Wait a little longer, and I'll go with you." Lin Xueqing tried to hold Su Liang back.

Su Liang smiled, "It's okay. You stay here and wait. I'm going by myself, and I'll be back soon."

Before Lin Xueqing could say anything more, Su Liang had already hurried downstairs.

A crowd had gathered in front of the Embroidery Workshop, Little Miss Mao's maid accused the manager of outrageous pricing.

There was a lot of debate among the crowd, some saying that Little Miss Mao bullied others, while others said that the workshop manager was being unreasonable. Offending Master Mao over a piece of cloth would lead to no good consequences.

Su Liang pushed through the crowd and walked in, "How much is it? I'll buy it." The manager looked astonished, not expecting Su Liang to show up.

Little Miss Mao was infuriated, "Who are you? I've already bought the cloth!"

Su Liang looked innocent, "If the payment has already been made, why argue? Since you don't have enough money, maybe look at something else? To force others to sell at a loss, how is this any

different from daylight robbery?” “You dare to insult me?” Little Miss Mao’s face turned green with anger.

Su Liang smiled, “I didn’t use any foul language; everyone here heard. I heard that this miss is Master Mao’s daughter? I’ve met Master Mao before, he’s a frugal and honest person. Does he know that his daughter is bullying people in broad daylight?”

Little Miss Mao’s face stiffened!

Su Liang asked the manager again, “How much is it?”

The manager quoted the original price, and Su Liang handed over a silver note,
“I’ll buy. Keep the change.”

Someone with sharp eyes saw it and exclaimed, “One thousand taels! ”

The cloth was already 500 taels, which was considered a sky-high price in the fabric market. Yet Su Liang paid 1000 taels for it.

“Who are you?” Little Miss Mao asked coldly.

“Do I need to verify my identity to buy a piece of cloth?” Su Liang snorted lightly.

Little Miss Mao stared at her but didn’t dare to be arrogant anymore, afraid of being scolded by Master Mao when she returned home.

The manager insisted on only taking 500 taels, and Su Liang left the
Embroidery Workshop while holding the cloth.

Feeling humiliated, Little Miss Mao quickly left as well but ordered her maid to follow Su Liang to see where she went, clearly not intending to swallow this humiliation.

The manager knew Su Liang wasn’t just buying the cloth but was helping the Embroidery Workshop; he felt gratitude but also worried that Su Liang might run into trouble.

However, after leaving the Embroidery Workshop, Su Liang turned into an alley and quickly disappeared from sight.

Lin Xueqing was confused, not knowing what was going on.

When Su Liang returned, she had changed into men’s clothing, and the cloth was nowhere to be seen.

“I went back home for a while,” Su Liang sat down opposite Lin Xueqing, “That cloth is really nice. When you go to the capital city, take it with you. See what the popular styles are there and make two new dresses.”

Lin Xueqing was still puzzled, “Sister Su, you didn’t go there just to buy cloth, right?”

Su Liang chuckled softly, “I couldn’t stand the injustice.”

Seeing Lin Xueqing’s disbelief, Su Liang closed the window and began to tell her about the Yang Family.

She began with how Yang Yu was betrayed and sold by her cousin who lived with her, Lin Xueqing looked anxious, "Was she alright in the end?"

"It was a close call." Su Liang talked about her first encounter with Yang Yu.

She skipped the part when Ning Jing accidentally discovered a black mist in the center of Yang Yu's eyebrows, which led to their interaction.

As Lin Xueqing listened to the thrilling stories of Yang Yu's rescue and Yang

Feng barely escaping an assassination by his father's illegitimate child, Yang Wu, only to become Ning Jing's scapegoat shortly afterward, she couldn't help but feel shocked and excited.

"Miss Yang is amazing, carrying the weight of such a big family at such a young age." Lin Xueqing finally sighed.

"You have a good relationship with your siblings. Cherish that. But for relatives and friends, be more cautious, especially with people like me." Su Liang advised Lin Xueqing.

Lin Xueqing shook her head, "Sister Su is so nice, there's no way you would harm me."

"But when you arrive in the capital city, not all the 'friends' you meet might have good intentions. Better be cautious." Su Liang said.

Lin Xueqing nodded, "I will."

Su Liang also mentioned Liu Xiaoyue, whom she sent to Yang Yu's side.

Upon hearing Liu Xiaoyue's tragic experience, Lin Xueqing was shocked, "Such a thing happened to her, yet she still managed to live on, she's so brave! I really want to meet Yang Yu and Xiaoyue!"

"You'll have a chance to meet them in the future." Su Liang said.

She wasn't trying to tell stories or brag about the people she saved, but rather to let Lin Xueqing know that as a woman in this world, survival was already difficult. Caution was necessary, and in times of hardship, one must be brave and strive to live on.

Lin Xueqing would soon leave Qianshan Academy in Pingbei City and live in the capital city, where the environment would change drastically. She couldn't avoid going out, so protecting herself was essential.

There was a knock on the door, Lin Xueqing rushed over excitedly, "Father is back!"

Lin Shuzhi entered, his face heavy.

"Did they refuse to let Father leave?" Lin Xueqing frowned.

Lin Shuzhi shook his head, "I can leave, but for the new academy dean, they don't accept the person I nominated and said they have other arrangements." Su Liang had guessed right.

With Su Liang's remark, the overwhelmed Lin Shuzhi became enlightened. He clapped his hands and stared intently, "That's right! I have to go to the capital city as soon as possible!"

The Ning Family residence in Xunyang City.

It was late at night, and Ning Yao was still checking account books under the lamplight, completely focused.

A gust of wind blew, and suddenly the lamp went out. Ning Yao frowned and stood up, only to see a dark figure in the distance behind him, not knowing when it had appeared.

Ning Yao looked horrified, “Who is it?”

“Didn’t you send someone to ask me to come home soon?” Ning Jing’s icy voice sounded..