

## Golden 18

### Chapter Eighteen: The Gathering (Part 1)

"Mom, that medicine is very precious. Uncle De only gave me a little, and I've applied it all to you. I'll ask Uncle De for some more for Godmother after I get back to Zhonghai.

Zhuang Rui didn't know if his mother had become suspicious. He had never heard of such an effective medicine, so he could only make up a few things on the spot.

He stood up, went to the bathroom to wash his face, and when Zhuang Rui returned to the living room, his mother had already come out of the room. It seemed that his waist injury was completely healed, and she was now smiling as she held her granddaughter and talked to Lei Lei and Qin Xuanbing.

To Zhuang Rui's surprise, Qin Xuanbing, who had been cold and indifferent to him just moments before, was now behaving very politely, with a faint smile on her face. He couldn't help but sigh inwardly, thinking how unpredictable women truly were.

"Xiao Rui, go call Da Chuan. Don't bother looking for a doctor. It's so cold, and the New Year is almost here. Where are we going to find a doctor? Go call him and tell him to come home for dinner." Zhuang's mother said immediately upon seeing Zhuang Rui, but before she could finish speaking, a knocking sound rang out on the door.

As soon as Zhuang Rui opened the door, Liu Chuan rushed in. He was stunned when he saw Zhuang's mother chatting and laughing with his girlfriend. He couldn't understand why Zhuang's mother, who had been in so much pain that she couldn't speak just now, was acting like nothing was wrong. Zhuang Rui noticed that there was someone behind him and quickly ushered the person into the house.

Liu Chuan also came to his senses. He first offered a seat to the person he had brought, and asked with a puzzled look on his face, "Godmother, didn't you twist your back? How come it's all better now? Ugh...ugh, look at my jinx. It's only natural that it's better now. By the way, Godmother, this is Brother Wang, my dad's colleague. Let Brother Wang take another look at your back injury."

"It's nothing, Da Chuan. I just twisted my ankle. Xiao Rui brought some special medicine from Shanghai. It'll be fine after applying it. Why are you bothering Xiao Wang during the New Year? Xiao Wang, I'm sorry, you haven't eaten yet, have you? Have a simple meal here."

Mrs. Zhuang put down her granddaughter and called Zhuang Min to serve the dishes. However, Liu Chuan's father's colleague refused to stay, saying he had things to do at home, and didn't let Liu Chuan drive him. Zhuang Rui quickly gave Wang Ge two packs of cigarettes he had just bought from the supermarket and saw him downstairs.

"Hey kid, is Brother Wang a forensic doctor? The kind who spends all day looking at corpses?"

As soon as they got upstairs, Zhuang Rui pulled Liu Chuan, who was clinging to Lei Lei, into his room and asked her in an annoyed tone.

"So what if he's a forensic doctor? Brother Wang graduated from medical school too. His skills are no worse than those of doctors in big hospitals. I'm going to go and thank him another day, and you're not even grateful. By the way, what kind of medicine do you have? It's so effective! My mom keeps complaining about back pain. Could you get me some when you get home so I can use it on her?"

It turns out that Liu Chuan also had his eye on the special medicine that Zhuang's mother had mentioned. Although he was impulsive, he was very filial. When Zhuang Rui was away, if Zhuang's mother needed anything and his brother-in-law couldn't get away, it was always Liu Chuan who would help.

"I've used up all the medicine. It was made by an old Chinese medicine doctor, and the process was very complicated. Uncle De gave me some when I came here, and I just used it all up. But it's okay. I'll go back to Zhonghai in a couple of months and ask for some more. I'll bring it to my godmother then."

Zhuang Rui said helplessly that he still had to keep making up lies. Firstly, what happened to him was too bizarre, and secondly, Liu Chuan was too outspoken. If he told Liu Chuan about this, the whole world would probably know in a few days.

As for helping Liu's mother treat her back pain, Zhuang Rui had already planned it out. Once the spiritual energy in his eyes was replenished, he would go and "deliver the medicine" to Liu's mother.

However, rare and precious ancient books imbued with spiritual energy are extremely rare and hard to come by. Zhuang Rui was lucky to obtain this couplet and manuscript, and he didn't know if he would have such a good opportunity again. That's why Zhuang Rui said he would wait until he returned to

Zhonghai to seek the medicine. He thought that by getting to know some collectors and enthusiasts through Uncle De, he might have a chance to absorb spiritual energy from their collections.

"Zhuang Rui, Da Chuan, come out for dinner. What are you two rascals whispering about inside? Hurry up."

Zhuang Min pushed open the door to Zhuang Rui's room and called her two younger brothers to come out for dinner. In the past, when these two boys hid in their rooms, they could always come up with some naughty ideas that made people both laugh and cry. Zhuang Min naturally knew the true nature of her seemingly honest younger brother very well.

Usually, it's just Zhuang Rui and his mother at home, so it's rather quiet. But now that so many people have come, it's got a bit of a New Year's atmosphere. However, Zhuang Rui and Liu Chuan are a little puzzled by Zhuang's mother's behavior today. The usually kind and gentle Zhuang's mother is showing a side of herself that they've never seen before at the dinner table. Although she's dressed the same as usual, she exudes an air of nobility in her every move. Lei Lei and Qin Xuanbing are also acting with a touch of reserve, like socialites from a wealthy family. This makes Liu Chuan and Zhuang Rui feel quite awkward during the meal.

Zhuang Rui's head injury hadn't fully healed, and he'd only had some red wine. Liu Chuan liked baijiu, but since he had to drive, he didn't dare let him drink. Under Zhuang Rui's deliberate questioning, the whereabouts of the girl with glasses over the years were finally clarified, and there were some things that even Liu Chuan had never heard of before.

It turns out that Lei Lei's maternal grandfather smuggled himself to Hong Kong during that turbulent era. After more than 20 years of hard work, he built a considerable business in Hong Kong and remarried. However, deep in his heart, Lei Lei's maternal grandfather always missed his wife and daughter who were left behind on the mainland. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, his wife in Hong Kong passed away, which gave him the idea of returning to the mainland to find his relatives.

Lei Lei's mother later married a policeman who happened to be Liu Chuan's father's colleague. Of course, they didn't know about these relationships when they were in junior high school. Later, Lei Lei's maternal grandfather found Lei Lei's mother and learned that his wife in mainland China had also passed away. He wanted to bring his daughter and granddaughter to Hong Kong. Lei Lei's mother refused, but in order to give her daughter a better education, she sent Lei Lei to Hong Kong. This is also the reason why the girl with glasses went missing after transferring schools.

Lei Lei has returned to Pengcheng once a year for the past few years, but her visits are always brief. She usually just visits her parents and then returns to Hong Kong. After graduating from the University of Hong Kong last year, Lei Lei interned at her maternal grandfather's jewelry company for a period of time. This time, however, she returned to Pengcheng to investigate the jewelry industry in the mainland market and will stay there for a longer period of time. That's why she made a special trip back to Pengcheng to spend the Lunar New Year with her parents.

Qin Xuanbing was the first friend Lei Lei made at school after arriving in Hong Kong, and also Lei Lei's best confidante. This time, she came to the mainland at Lei Lei's invitation to experience the New Year atmosphere. It seems that she has some business cooperation with Lei Lei, but neither of them said much. Naturally, neither of them would mention to outsiders that Qin Xuanbing came to the mainland with Lei Lei to avoid trouble.

Lei Lei's mother, who was very concerned about her daughter's marriage, took every opportunity to arrange several blind dates for Lei Lei, even though she had only been back for a few days. However, Lei Lei did not feel anything for any of them.

Just as Lei Lei was getting impatient, her father introduced her to a colleague's son. As soon as they met, Lei Lei recognized Liu Chuan. She still had a deep impression of this mischievous classmate from junior high school, so she agreed to meet him. Unexpectedly, after spending a few days together, they felt quite compatible. In particular, the occasional gentleness and thoughtfulness that Liu Chuan, a grown man, revealed actually won over Miss Lei. Even Liu Chuan himself couldn't quite believe that he had so easily captured the heart of this beautiful woman.

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"Lei Lei, what projects are you planning to investigate since you're back? Let Da Chuan accompany you to check them out. Pengcheng has developed quite well in recent years. You could consider starting any business here. Now that you're a Hong Kong businessman, you should also contribute to the economic development of the mainland." Zhuang Rui poured Lei Lei and Qin Xuanbing a cup of tea and said jokingly.

After lunch, Zhuang's mother and Zhuang Min went to coax their daughter to take a nap. The young people sat on the sofa chatting. The New Year was coming soon, and this was the busiest time of the year for everyone, but also the most leisurely.

“My maternal grandfather runs a gold and silver jewelry business. He owns several small shops in Hong Kong, but business hasn’t been very good in recent years. So he wanted to expand into jade and other jewelry products. However, in Hong Kong, these products are basically monopolized by a few large jewelry stores. Meanwhile, the mainland economy has developed rapidly in recent years. So my grandfather wanted to adjust the company’s strategy and gradually shift the business focus back to the mainland. I’m just a small fry here to explore the possibilities.”

Lei Lei paused here, brushed a strand of hair from her forehead behind her ear, glanced at Liu Chuan, and continued, "By the way, Zhuang Rui, I heard you're working in Zhonghai now, right? That's the focus of our investigation. When we go to Zhonghai, you'll have to treat us."

Lei Lei's maternal grandfather's company is indeed not doing well right now. In recent years, international gold prices have risen, Hong Kong's economy has suffered setbacks, and citizens' purchasing power has declined sharply. Therefore, developing the mainland market has become a top priority, and Lei Lei has a heavy burden on her shoulders this time.

Zhuang Rui wasn't interested in jewelry or anything like that, so he joked, "So Miss Lei is a Hong Kong capitalist. You must look me up when you go to Zhonghai. But if the man accompanying you isn't Da Chuan, I won't entertain you."

"No need to trouble Mr. Zhuang, we have a branch in China Overseas."

Sitting next to Lei Lei, Qin Xuanbing, who had been listening more and saying less, suddenly said something that made Zhuang Rui a little embarrassed: "Why are you looking for someone like me when you have a branch in Zhonghai?" Little did he know that the "we" Qin Xuanbing was referring to had nothing to do with Lei Lei.

Liu Chuan also noticed that Qin Xuanbing seemed to be targeting Zhuang Rui, so he quickly changed the subject and said, "Lei Lei, it's rare for you to come back, how about we organize a junior high school reunion tomorrow?"

"A junior high school reunion???" Lei Lei and Zhuang Rui were both stunned. They didn't expect Liu Chuan to make this suggestion.