

Chapter 23

Who Is To Blame?

After Yu Fanghe and Lin Shoujuan were gone for some time, Tian Chixing laughed: "It is very hot and stuffy under there. Come out now."

Except for those men who carried the bed, there was no one here. Yu Peiyu didn't know who he was talking to. Tian Chixing pointed at their location, now Yu Peiyu was scared out of his wits. He knew that they were discovered by him.

Zhu Lei'Er mumbled softly: "It is said that fat people are quite useless. This one must be an exception."

She crawled out the furnace, Yu Peiyu couldn't stop her. She was a very bold young girl.

Tian Chixing was surprised to see a beautiful young girl coming out.

Zhu Lei'Er walked in front of him and smiled: "Wow! So many delicious dishes. Can I have some I am quite hungry."

Without waiting for his answer she took an apple from the plate and started eating.

Tian Chixing looked at her and asked: "Aren't you afraid of me?"

Zhu Lei'Er smiled: "Why should I be afraid of a funny and friendly man like you."

Tian Chixing said: "Didn't you see me kill those men?"

Zhu Lei'Er smiled: "A great hero like you, wouldn't kill a young girl like me. I'm very assured."

Tian Chixing laughed: "Very amusing! Such a sweet tongue and at your age. Old crone Hu can learn a few things from you. You're so adorable, you can even be my daughter."

Zhu Lei'Er laughed: "Being your daughter is quite nice, I think. I can eat everything I want and nobody will bully me."

Tian Chixing laughed: "Enough flattering already. Tell the other person to come out too. Who is it anyway?"

Zhu Lei'Er giggled: "Do you think he is afraid of you? You're wrong. Do you know who he is?"

Tian Chixing laughed: "Having a lover at your young age."

Zhu Lei'Er said: "Don't spout nonsense. My fourth uncle is a very gentle man, but when he's angry even my third uncle is a bit afraid of him."

Tian Chixing asked: "Who is your third uncle?"

Zhu Lei'Er said casually: "You've heard of him too, you even mentioned his name."

Tian Chixing was startled and shocked and said: "F... Feng San is your uncle?"

Zhu Lei'Er smiled: "You must know about my third uncle's abilities."

Tian Chixing clapped his fat hands and laughed: "Hilarious! The brother of Feng San is hiding in the furnace."

Yu Peiyu was still in there and didn't come out. Zhu Lei'Er was surprised because she knew that Yu Peiyu wasn't a coward. There must be a reason why he was still there.

Zhu Lei'Er said: "How dare you to be rude against my third uncle and fourth uncle!"

Tian Chixing laughed: "That is some joke, me afraid? Afraid of Feng San? Some joke."

Zhu Lei'Er was a bit surprised, this was the first time she saw someone not being afraid of her third uncle.

Before she could speak again a voice from the furnace said: "That is some joke, me afraid? Afraid of Feng San? Some joke."

His voice and laughter sounded exactly the same like Tian Chixing.

Zhu Lei'Er was shocked, that wasn't the voice of Yu Peiyu. But if it wasn't Yu Peiyu who was there now.

Tian Chixing was also taken by that voice, he managed to put a smile and said: "Why are you imitating me? Come out!"

The voice laughed too: "Why are you imitating me? Come out!"

Tian Chixing shrieked with fear: "Who... who are you?"

The voice shrieked too in the same way: “Who... are you?”

Tian Chixing was stunned and after a moment he composed himself and shouted: “I am a bastard! I am an idiot! I only know how to mimic the voices of others.”

The voice from the furnace said: “I am a bastard! I am an idiot! I only know how to mimic the voices of others.”

Tian Chixing said: “The most despicable and vile man on this world is the Parrot of Echo Valley.”

The voice said: “The most despicable and vile man on this world is the Parrot of Echo Valley.”

Whatever Tian Chixing cursed this Parrot would repeat. Zhu Lei’Er was quite amused but when she thought about it was quite eerie. Someone repeating every word you say.

Tian Chixing was sweating like a pig now, he screamed: “If... if you keep repeating my words. I will kill you!”

The Parrot repeated: “If... if you keep repeating my words. I will kill you!”

Tian Chixing yelled: “You... you...”

The Parrot repeated: “You... you...”

Tian Chixing stormed back into his carriage, his carriers followed and the carriage rode away from this place like they were being pursued by some monster.

Zhu Lei’Er was too surprised and the Parrot stopped repeating anything now. She walked back to the furnace and called: “Fourth uncle!”

But no one answered, it seems that Yu Peiyu wasn’t there anymore. But when she took a look, she saw Yu Peiyu still in there.

She smiled: “So it was you, fourth uncle. That was most impressive, you gave that fat man quite a scare.”

Yu Peiyu didn’t answer; he just looked at Zhu Lei’Er.

Zhu Lei’Er was shocked and asked: “What’s wrong?”

She pushed him but he had no reaction, his acupoints were sealed.

She also noticed there was a hole in the furnace at the other side.

Luckily Zhu Lei’Er learnt the skills to seal and unseal acupoints from Feng San. Feng San knew all the different types of sealing acupoints techniques in the world.

She unsealed Yu's acupoints and asked: "Fourth uncle, what happened? Who came by?"

Yu Peiyu sighed deeply and said: "Someone did come by. But I didn't see who it was."

When he wanted to follow Zhu Lei'Er out, someone sealed his acupoints.

Zhu Lei'Er said: "That person must have punched a hole through the furnace."

Yu Peiyu nodded.

Zhu Lei'Er said: "Didn't you hear something? There is a hole in the wall behind you."

Yu Peiyu shook his head and said: "I did not hear a thing. The bricks around the furnace are very hard, but this person punched a hole through like it was tofu."

Zhu Lei'Er was very scared to know that this person had such powerful palm energy. She asked: "What happened?"

Yu Peiyu said: "Someone crawled in the furnace and stayed behind me."

Zhu Lei'Er said with surprise: "That hole is very small. He can't fit through there."

Yu Peiyu said: "This man must have reached the highest level of the Skeleton Shrinking Skill."

This skill wasn't a very amazing technique, usually some ordinary thieves would have learnt something of this skill. But the level of this mysterious person was unbelievable.

Zhu Lei'Er was silent for awhile and asked: "That's when he started to repeat the words of Tian Chixing."

Yu Peiyu nodded: "Exactly."

Zhu Lei'Er asked: "Did you see how he looked like?"

Yu Peiyu shook his head and sighed: "No, unfortunately not. I couldn't turn around to see his face."

Zhu Lei'Er smiled: "That person must be very agile."

Yu Peiyu sighed: "This man is truly awesome."

Zhu Lei'Er frowned: "Tian Chixing said this person came from the EchoValley. But I've never heard of the valley before, third uncle never mentioned it to me. Tian Chixing is not even afraid of my third uncle and he ran as fast he could when he

heard of the Echo valley. That sign Yu Fanghe made to Tian Chixing could that refer to them.”

Yu Peiyu looked very troubled and repeated: “EchoValley? EchoValley? What place is that?”

Zhu Lei’Er smiled: “Even if I knew where that place was, I will never go there. My heaven! Someone repeating my every word I will go mad.”

The mere thought of it was quite frightening, she didn’t want to think of it anymore.

Yu Peiyu and Zhu Lei’Er now heard some soft moaning sounds. Zhu Lei’Er held on to Yu Peiyu’s hand, they carefully walked closer to look and they saw a man covered in blood standing up.

His face and clothes were covered in blood, if it wasn’t for his long beard no one would know who he was.

Zhu Lei’Er was relieved to see it was only Long Beard Xiang.

She whispered: “He is still alive, Long Beard Xiang.”

Yu Peiyu wanted to tend to his wounds, but when he noticed that Xiang was behaving suspiciously he stopped.

Xiang began to laugh wickedly, his mad laughter made him look even more ghastly.

A man without a nose and ears is a terrible sight, but a man with no ears and a nose laughing like a lunatic is even more terrible.

Zhu Lei’Er held on to Yu Peiyu’s hand even more tightly.

Xiang said happily: “Yu Fanghe... Yu Fanghe, I’ve won from you. I have found it, you did not.”

He jumped back into the hole they dug.

Zhu Lei’Er whispered happily: “He must have found the object. He is going to hide the thing back there again.”

Yu Peiyu was a bit happy too, Zhu Lei’Er and he swiftly moved over to the hole.

They saw old Xiang sitting in the hole like an old child, his hand were tightly around a small metalic box.

He was laughing: “It is mine. All mine! I will become invincible, everyone will bow before me. My time for recognition has finally come.”

Zhu Lei'Er sneered: "Don't count your chicks before they hatch."

Old Xiang jumped up and stared evilly at Yu Peiyu and Zhu Lei'Er and asked frantically: "What... what do you want?"

Zhu Lei'Er responded: "We just want that little box."

He put his hands behind his back and said: "What box? What are you talking about?"

Zhu Lei'Er was amused by this childish act of his, but she was also feeling a bit sorry for the old man. She shook his head and sighed: "There is no point in hiding it."

Xiang jumped up and down and yelled: "It's mine! I sacrificed my own ears and nose for this small box. You can only have it after you kill me."

Zhu Lei'Er smiled: "After killing you. That wouldn't be too much trouble."

Xiang shouted: "You..."

Suddenly he fell down with spasms and after awhile he was motionless.

Zhu Lei'Er leapt down and took his pulse and sighed: "He is dead. I never believed that anger could kill."

Yu Peiyu sighed: "The shock of losing his treasure was too much for him."

Zhu Lei'Er pouted: "You can't blame me for that. But I can't let him keep that box, can I?"

Yu Peiyu smiled wryly: "I'm not blaming you. It is his own fault for being greedy."

Zhu Lei'Er wanted to take the box from him, but Xiang clutched tightly to the box. She had to use a shovel to jack open his hands.

She said softly: "I wonder what is in here. He wouldn't let go of it even when he is dead."

There was only a notebook in the small box, and there were no characters in the notebook either. It was available in all the bookshops in the land. And a bamboo tablet with no markings on it.

Zhu Lei'Er was very disappointed and sighed with indignation: "These are treasures. For these little things Yu Fanghe burnt down this entire village? For this all these people died? What? Why?"

She threw the items on the ground and wanted to stamp on it.

Yu Peiyu picked them up and said: "Anyway we went through a lot to get these things. Let's keep them around, as a sort of souvenir."

Zhu Lei'Er pouted: "Souvenir of what? Of this old man Xiang? I might as well let him keep it."

Yu Peiyu said: "I think there is something to these two objects. Your mother wouldn't secretly bury these two objects if they were useless."

Zhu Lei'Er asked: "Is there something special to this useless treasure?"

Yu Peiyu smiled and shook his head, Zhu Lei'Er smiled: "Fourth uncle, you can have it if you want it. I don't want to keep these useless objects around. I don't people to think I'm some sort of silly dumb girl."

Yu Peiyu laughed: "No matter what, nobody will think you're a silly dumb girl."

Yu Peiyu put the notebook and the bamboo table away in his robe and started to bury the corpses of those men.

Zhu Lei'Er sighed and said: "Fourth uncle, you're really a nice man. Your future wife must be one very lucky girl."

Yu Peiyu sighed too and thought of Lin Daiyu and Jin Yanzi, he remained silent for a moment and said sadly: "I'm an unfortunate man, everyone will be cast in my misfortune too."

Zhu Lei'Er blinked her eyes and said: "Does that mean you won't take me along?" She paused for a minute and lowered her head: "I know that I am an poor orphan and can't go anywhere. But I don't want to become your burden, fourth uncle. I will leave."

Yu Peiyu patted her gently on her back and smiled: "Little girls shouldn't think too much. Even if I didn't want to take you along, after hearing you, I will have to change my mind."

She happily raised her head and smiled: "Where are we going?"

Yu Peiyu didn't know how to answer her question, because he had no idea too.

He thought for awhile and said softly: "I wonder whether the Tang Clan has discovered that Tang Wushuang is missing. I wonder if Jin Yanzi is still there."

Zhu Lei'Er asked: "Fourth uncle, are we going to the Tang Manor?"

Yu Peiyu said: "Why not? Let us have a look."

Zhu Lei'Er clapped her hands in happiness and smiled: "I have heard that the Tang Manor is a very fun and exciting place."

Suddenly they heard a group of people crying and cursing coming their way. They must be the villagers.

Zhu Lei'Er took Yu Peiyu by his hand and walked the other way.

Outside Family Li Village it was already day, the awful burnt smell and the cries of the villagers couldn't be smelled or heard.

Zhu Lei'Er asked: "Do you think that Yu Fanghe will really pay up?"

Yu Peiyu said: "I think he will. He wants to win support over from all kinds of people."

Zhu Lei'Er said: "But they can't compensate for the emotional losses. The pain to see your home destroyed is really very overwhelming."

Yu Peiyu consoled her by saying: "Time will heal everything. And the fond memories of the past will always stay with you."

Zhu Lei'Er smiled sweetly: "You're right. If you keep thinking about the unhappy events in your life, there is no point in living anymore."

It was a very bright and sunny day and the day was filled with hope.

Zhu Lei'Er sighed deeply first but afterwards she smiled: "Anyway I'm still young and alive. The world is a big place and there are so many places I want to see and visit."

She opened up her arms and dashed forward into the wind, Yu Peiyu was very happy to see her smiling and happy again. He too felt cheerful again. However suddenly they heard a soft moaning coming from the tall grass.

A voice sighed: "Young people shouldn't be depressed, only old woman like me..."

She started to cough violently, Yu Peiyu and Zhu Lei'Er were startled to hear this voice.

Zhu Lei'Er ran back to Yu Peiyu and held on to his hand again and said: "Granny Hu? Is that you?"

Granny Hu coughed and panted: "Yes, it is me. Please give me some water, I beg you. Please be benevolent good sir and Miss."

Zhu Lei'Er looked at her and said: "You, cunning old witch! What are you up to again?"

Granny Hu panted: “Miss, no tricks this time. I am very thirsty... I just want some water. That damn sun...”

Zhu Lei’Er pulled Yu Peiyu’s hand and said: “Let’s leave! I don’t want to see this awfull old woman again.”

Seeing granny Hu’s face bloody and mutilated, Yu Peiyu felt sorry for her. She tried to get up but fell down again.

She begged: “Young master Yu, I know you’re a kind man. Please some water.”

Yu Peiyu gently pushed aside Zhu Lei’Er’s hand and walked over to granny Hu.

Zhu Lei’Er sighed: “Old crone, listen carefully. My fourth uncle is a good man. Don’t try to trick him, if you do I will cut off your tongue personally.”

She too walked over to the tall grass and to a look at granny Hu.

Her mouth was very dry and her clothes were covered with mud and blood.

When she saw Zhu Lei’Er wanted to smile, but when she tried she almost fainted of the pain.

She panted: “Miss, I am too weak now to do anything. How can I harm anyone now?”

Zhu Lei’Er was a bit surprised to see in her in this state but retorted: “That is your own fault for doing all those evil deeds.”

Granny Hu said sadly: “I know it is too late to repent now. But if I weren’t that old I wouldn’t be that weak of a mere wound.”

Zhu Lei’Er knew that her weak state wasn’t caused by the lost of her nose. In fact the real reason was that she lost the lion’s share of her internal power to Feng San and Yu Peiyu. That took a heavy toll on her old body, plus the fact that she lost a lot of blood when she cut off her own nose.

Zhu Lei’Er also felt a bit sad for her now, and wondered why it took Yu Peiyu that long to get some water. She asked granny Hu: “Of all the people why ask us for water?”

Granny Hu answered: “Maybe because I’m afraid of other people. I only trust a good young man like young master Yu now.”

Zhu Lei’Er asked: “Why all the confidence in my fourth uncle?”

Granny Hu said: “Only men like him can make women feel secure and safe. He is to be trusted, although I’m old but I am still a woman.”

Zhu Lei’Er smiled sweetly: “It seems you have good taste.”

Granny Hu asked: "Why do you call him fourth uncle? He isn't that much older than you."

Zhu Lei'Er ignored her and was playing with some long grass straws.

Granny Hu secretly looked at her and said: "If I were your age and I saw a man like young master Yu, I wouldn't let him go. I will try to do everything possible just to be around him and to marry him. I wouldn't call him fourth uncle."

Zhu Lei'Er smiled: "Do you think I'm old enough to get married?"

Granny Hu said: "Why not? Some girls at your age are mothers already."

Zhu Lei'Er suddenly stood still and was daydreaming, the sun shone on her beautiful face, she was blushing. But she didn't look like a child anymore. Children who grew up under tough circumstances will mature quicker.

Also Zhu Lei'Er didn't hate this old woman that much anymore.

However granny Hu knew exactly what words to say, to make this young girl happy. But why go through all that trouble? Whenever she spoke she would be in pain, what is she up to?

Yu Peiyu came back with a gourd of water, and he was sweating. He went through some work to get this water.

Granny Hu happily said: "Thank you, young master Yu. Thank you! I knew you are a good man."

Yu Peiyu didn't say anything, he put the gourd in front of her. Granny Hu tried to get up and take the gourd but she fell down again. She couldn't lift a pebble in her present state.

Zhu Lei'Er said: "Be careful, if you spill it we won't get you anymore."

Granny Hu panted: "I know... I know..."

She took the gourd with difficulty but she was really too weak and couldn't hold on to it. Fortunately Zhu Lei'Er quickly caught the gourd.

Zhu Lei'Er said in an irritated tone: "I told you to be careful."

Granny Hu panted: "I know, but... I didn't know I was that weak. I fear my end is nearing..."

She started to sob now, Zhu Lei'Er sighed and put the gourd to granny Hu's mouth. She immediately drank heartily.

Zhu Lei'Er was amused by her actions and turned around to Yu Peiyu and laughed: "Fourth uncle, look at her. She is just..."

All of a sudden her laughter was gone, she quickly leapt aside and the remaining splattered on granny Hu. Yu Peiyu went over to Zhu Lei'Er and asked: "What is wrong?"

Zhu Lei'Er angrily cursed: "The ungrateful crone..."

Yu Peiyu didn't trust that old woman for a bit, but he did not notice anything strange about her. But now he was furious and yelled: "What do you want!"

Granny Hu panted: "My nails were too long, I am sorry to have scratched you, Miss."

Yu Peiyu immediately took Zhu Lei'Er's hand and saw a scratch.

He asked: "Is there poison on her nails?"

Zhu Lei'Er nodded and said: "Hmmm."

Yu Peiyu asked softly: "Are you immune to it?"

Zhu Lei'Er said: "If I took it in, it won't harm me. But now this poison directly entered my bloodstream. I fear..."

Yu Peiyu sighed deeply and turned around to face granny Hu. He said very slowly: "What do you want from us?"

Granny Hu panted: "I am very sorry, I didn't mean to. But... young master Yu, kill me."

Yu Peiyu said coldly: "You know I won't kill you."

Granny Hu laughed loudly: "I know that. I am very old and if a young girl like her can accompany me in the netherworld..."

Yu Peiyu asked: "What are your conditions for the antidote?"

Granny Hu said calmly: "This is one of my best tricks, I won't keep the antidote on me. If she does not take the antidote within the next three days, she will surely die a horrible death."

Yu Peiyu wiped away his sweat and asked: "Where is the antidote?"

Granny Hu laughed: "Listen to my commands and I will give it to you."

Zhu Lei'Er said loudly: "Don't listen to her. Don't let her threaten you!"

She pulled out a short sword out of her sleeve and wanted to chop off her arm.

Yu Peiyu quickly grabbed the sword and said: "What are you doing!"

Zhu Lei'Er explained: "The poison has only travelled through my arm, if I would..."

Yu Peiyu sighed: “Silly child! She will give us the antidote, don’t worry. Why... why...”

He was impressed and touched by her courage to chop off her own arm.

Zhu Lei’Er wept: “I cannot let fourth uncle to do her every command.”

Yu Peiyu was very touched and smiled: “You’re willing to sacrifice your arm for me. I will find a way to get the antidote. Don’t worry about me.”

Granny Hu clapped and laughed: “What a sweet pair of lovebirds! Even the famous Zhu Yingtai and Liang Shanbo²⁴ are nothing compared to you.”

Zhu Lei’Er blushed and stamped her feet: “Don’t talk rubbish in front of my fourth uncle.”

Granny Hu giggled: “You’re resent me for saying that, but I know in your heart you’re very happy. I just said that you and your fourth uncle are a made for each other. You forgot to pay attention to me when I just told you that young master Yu is made for you.”

Zhu Lei’Er ran into Yu Peiyu’s arms out of embarrassment and said softly: “Don’t believe a word she says.”

Yu Peiyu coughed and said seriously: “Where is the antidote?”

Granny Hu said: “I have a home too and there is the antidote. If you can bring me back within the next three days, you will receive your reward.”

Granny Hu said: “Go and rent a carriage, I will give you the directions.”

Granny Hu sat in the carriage and she looked like she was about to die any minute. Her eyes were closed and saliva dripping out of her mouth. It was a disgusting sight, Zhu Lei’Er was very annoyed by her and said angrily: “You sly old witch! You were waiting for us there, weren’t you?”

Granny Hu giggled: “Not really, but I hate to pass out on a great opportunity.”

Zhu Lei’Er looked at her for some time and smiled: “Thank you! I will repay you somehow for your generosity.”

²⁴ Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai were a famous tragic love couple in ancient China. I believe in the Sui dynasty 581 - 618 A.D. Zhu Yingtai dressed up like a man to attend school. Liang fell in love with her, but he thought she was a man. And she fell for him too. Alas, Zhu Yingtai was already engaged to someone else. When Liang finally found out Zhu was really a girl, he was grief-stricken, and Zhu was about to marry into another family. Liang died of sadness, Zhu Yingtai was heartbroken too and she went to his grave and saw that Liang’s grave was open and a butterfly flew out of the coffin. She, too turned into a butterfly and flew off with him.

If Zhu Lei'Er said that in a mean way, granny Hu wouldn't be bothered by it. She has heard those lines perhaps thousands of times in her life. But seeing that Zhu Lei'Er was saying those words in this manner she really got goosebumps.

She smiled difficultly: "You shouldn't be angry with me, in fact you should even thank me."

Zhu Lei'Er said with indignation: "Thank you?"

Granny Hu laughed: "If I didn't arrange this little test, you wouldn't know that your fourth uncle cared that much for you."

Yu Peiyu felt a bit embarrassed and coughed dryly, he quickly changed topics and asked: "What unsolved matters do you have with that Yu ... person?"

Granny Hu didn't answer and looked at Yu Peiyu and asked: "Your family name is Yu too. Is he a relative of yours? And judging by your accent you're both from the same province."

Yu Peiyu's heart ached and said: "No, I don't even know him."

Granny Hu laughed: "Well, I suppose I can tell you. Either this Yu Fanghe has gone senile or I am sure this is not the real Yu Fanghe. The Yu Fanghe, we see now is an imposter. I am sure of that."

Yu Peiyu was extremely excited in his heart, finally someone understood believed him. Even it this person was the awful witch granny Hu.

He made a fist and tried not to reveal his emotions and asked casually: "Imposter? I don't think anyone who believe your assumptions."

Granny Hu sighed: "I know that too, nobody will believe me."

Yu Peiyu just said: "HMMMM?"

Granny Hu continued: "Twenty years ago I met Yu Fanghe. We did not have any unresolved animosities, in fact he saved my life."

Yu Peiyu was surprised and asked: "Saved your life?"

Granny Hu said: "When he saved my life, he didn't know who I was. But afterwards when we exchanged names, he knows. He wasn't sorry for saving me. He even advised not to do so much evil anymore. Good men like him are becoming a rarity. If he mentioned this incident I wouldn't have given him any trouble. However the Yu Fanghe I saw yesterday didn't even know of that incident, he even thought I was an enemy of the real Yu Fanghe. So what do you think? It is most strange."

Zhu Lei'Er said: "It is quite funny."

She casually looked at Yu Peiyu and saw he was emotionless.

It was a nice day, and they were travelling very fast. Zhu Lei'Er saw that the rider used his whip to speeden the horses.

She was enjoying the scenery, but suddenly she thought of something and her face changed.

How could Yu Peiyu find a carriage that fast and by the looks of the carriage and horses, those were impossible to find in a small town like the Family Li Village.

Zhu Lei'Er asked softly: "Fourth uncle, where did you rent this carriage?"

But Yu Peiyu was sound asleep, in the beginning she thought he was just pretending. But she shook him a bit, he was still asleep.

Zhu Lei'Er pushed him a bit harder and said in his ear: "Wake up! There is something wrong with this carriage."

Yu Peiyu opened his eyes for a moment and mumbled: "What is wrong with the carriage..."

But he fell asleep again, granny Hu was snoring.

Zhu Lei'Er panicked and called out: "Sir, could you stop the carriage please? I feel a bit sick."

The rider laughed: "If you're sick just sleep a bit. You will feel a bit better."

The rider was an extremely ugly fellow, he looked even uglier when he laughed. Zhu Lei'Er tried to open the doors, but she was too weak now.

Zhu Lei'Er yelled: "Who sent you? What do you want from us?"

She now understood that Yu Peiyu and granny Hu were knocked out by intoxicating incense. Because she was rather immune to all kinds of poisons, she remained awake. But the incense was having an effect on her too.

She thought: It must be Yu Fanghe.

She noticed that there was a white smoke emitting from the roof, she held her breath and took out a silver blade and wanted to disperse the smoke with her palms. But she was too weak now and when she stood up she fell down again.

At this moment a piece of the roof fell down, because they riding on a bumpy mountain path. There was a secret compartment in the carriage. These people must have hidden the intoxicating incense in there.

Zhu Lei'Er saw that the incense was almost burnt up, it was ingenious of these people to hide the incense there. They could even knock out an expert like granny Hu and a cautious man like Yu Peiyu.

With difficulty she went over to the secret compartment.

She blew out the incense and hid it in her sleeve, she also saw a sack there. When she touched it, it was soft and she opened to see what was in it. It was a young woman, Silver Blossom. She was put in the sack here.

Zhu Lei'Er was sure that Yu Fanghe was behind this, Silver Blossom was also unconscious. Zhu Lei'Er pretended to pass out too.

The carriage rode very fast and it seemed that they were riding over a bumpier road now.

Slowly the carriage slowed down, and Zhu Lei'Er heard a man saying: "Eldest martial arts brother, sorry to have troubled you."

This man helped the rider down, the rider was this so-called [eldest martial arts brother]. Was he the head disciple of Yu Fanghe, but to Zhu Lei'Er's knowledge Yu Fanghe hasn't accepted any disciples yet.

The eldest brother grunted. The other man smiled: "Have you found the second Miss?"

The eldest brother slapped him and scolded: "That is none of your business."

The man smiled apologetically: "Yes, forgive me. I will keep my tongue in the future."

The eldest brother grunted: "I have also brought back three other persons for the hierarch. They will serve as sacrifices and tie them to the altar. Tie second Miss to the altar too."

The man obeyed his commands.

Zhu Lei'Er thought: Why is this [eldest martial arts brother] so fierce to his other martial arts brothers? Judging by his words he seem to know Silver Blossom, do they belong to the same sect? Are there any connections with them and Yu Fanghe?

Zhu Lei'Er did not know that Silver Blossom belonged to the Heavenly Silkworm Sect and they did not have any links with Yu Fanghe.

A few men opened the door of the carriage, Zhu Lei'Er secretly looked at these men. They were all hideous, even Zhu Lei'Er was shocked to see them. They said: "Why is the second Miss injured?"

"Are these people responsible for that? Who are they?"

"Look the old crone, she doesn't have a nose. And look at that girl."

"She is pretty, unfortunately a bit too young for my taste."

One of those ruffians pinched her cheek lightly.

She was disgusted that this ugly man touched her, she almost threw up.

One said: "Hurry up! Otherwise eldest martial arts brother will be angry again."

When they heard he said [eldest martial arts brother] they shut up and carried them away.

A man asked: "Second martial arts brother, do we tie second Miss to the altar too?"

The second martial arts brother said: "Those were the orders of the eldest brother."

The man sighed: "Second Miss has always been favoured by the hierarch. Will she receive the ultimate punishment too?"

Zhu Lei'Er secretly saw that this cave was lightened and decorated with all kinds of strange statues.

There were fires everywhere and small boxes next to the fires. You could hear hissing sounds from those boxes. It was obvious that in those boxes were snakes and such.

Yu Peiyu, Zhu Lei'Er, Silver Blossom and granny Hu were tied to the altar.

Zhu Lei'Er saw that the eldest brother coming out, he was wearing an expensive robe and had a fan in his hand.

He looked very distinguished, but if you saw his face you would be horrified.

His face was mutilated beyond words; he was missing half a nose, there were countless bite marks in his face.

Also he only had four fingers in total, right hand three. And on his left hand only one.

The other men respectfully called: "Eldest martial arts brother, we await your orders."

He just grunted and looked viciously at Yu Peiyu and others. He laughed evilly: "They should be awake now."

He opened his fan and waved to them, Zhu Lei'Er could smell a foul air. Zhu Lei'Er wasn't feeling woozy anymore and Yu Peiyu and others instantly woke up.

The eldest martial arts brother laughed at granny Hu: "The famous granny Hu has been outsmarted by me, Sang Erlang."

Yu Peiyu and granny Hu stayed calm when they heard him, Zhu Lei'Er deliberately said loudly: "Who are you? What do you want from us?"

Sang Erlang used his fan to point at Zhu Lei'Er and said: "You're the daughter of the Keeper of the Palace of Enchantment?"

Zhu Lei'Er said: "Aha! Since you already know who I am, I suggest you will let me go now."

Sang Erlang scoffed: "You really have a sharp tongue little girl. But if you would open your mouth one more time, I will slap you very, very hard."

Zhu Lei'Er immediately remained quiet. She knew that experts like master Nu and Madame Hai Tang would try to uphold their statuses and not slap a young girl. But she knew that men like San Erlang would do almost anything.

Sang Erlang asked: "Are you Yu Peiyu?"

Yu Peiyu said: "Yes, I am."

Sang Erlang smiled: "Very handsome! Not surprising that our Three Magnificent Flower Ladies would fall for you. I used to be very handsome too and after awhile I will make sure that you look as ugly as I do now."

Yu Peiyu calmly retorted: "I think you hope that everyone in the world has the same ugly face like you."

Sang Erlang looked very angry and slapped him and said: "You think you're very handsome... I... I... used to..."

He became very frantic and upset.

Granny Hu sighed: "Poor child, you must have suffered the *Silkworm's feast*. That's why you look like this."

Zhu Lei'Er could resist to ask: "What is this *Silkworm's feast*?"

Sang Erlang scoffed: "No need to ask, you will soon find out personally."

Granny Hu retorted: "I have no ties with this Yu Peiyu and Zhu Lei'Er. Furthermore I have no grudges with the Heavenly Silkworm Sect. Why tie me up?"

Sang Erlang ignored her and granny Hu deeply sighed: "Yu Peiyu, young master Yu. How could you rent this carriage with your intelligence?"

Yu Peiyu sighed too, at that moment he was too worried about Zhu Lei'Er and her condition. He was too negligent and didn't think clearly.

When Zhu Lei'Er saw Yu Peiyu's reaction, her eyes were watery and bit her lip. She said: "I know fourth uncle was too concerned about me. If he wasn't that worried about me, he wouldn't have fallen for their tricks. It is all my fault."

Yu Peiyu consoled her: "It's not your fault, I should have guessed that the Heavenly Silkworm Sect wouldn't let Silver Blossom go that easily..."

Silver Blossom screamed: "Sang Erlang! What is the idea of tying me up here! Release me now!"

Because she lost her internal strength, she was the weakest of the four. And she was also the last one to wake up.

Sang Erlang looked at her and smiled: "Second Miss, you're in no position anymore to order me around."

Silver Blossom said: "Sang Erlang, don't forget who saved you."

Sang Erlang nodded and said: "Yes, you saved me. But let us not forget that you told the hierarch that I tried to rape you. That is why I had to endure the Silkworm's feast."

He looked very sinister now and said coldly: "You have betrayed the hierarch now, and nobody will plead for you. Soon you will suffer the same fate as I did all those years ago. But I will beg the hierarch to spare your life too. You too will learn how it feels to live your life as an ugly person!"

Silver Blossom looked petrified and stammered with difficulty: "Do... don't forget. The hierarch is my father. He... he won't punish me that severely."

Sang Erlang scoffed: "He won't, will he?"

Silver Blossom yelled: "Of course he won't. Now release me."

Sang Erlang said earnestly: "You stole the treasure of the Palace of Enchantment, mislead the hierarch. However the hierarch was secretly spying on you. And if you would have begged for forgiveness and mercy at the graveyard of the Family Li Village. He wouldn't punish you this severely. But... you aligned yourself with outsiders and forget about the sect. Your desire to betray us is evident."

Silver Blossom yelled: "You were at the cemetery too! So it wasn't my father."

Sang Erlang said: "Yes, it was me. If it was the hierarch you were dead now."

Silver Blossom angrily said: "You animal! I knew you weren't a real man, but now I'm sure of that."

Sang Erlang laughed sinisterly: "You haven't fallen into the hands of an animal. I waited outside the Family Li Village for you, and when you were captured by Yu Fanghe's henchmen I rescued you. With the purpose of letting you sample the Silkworm's feast."

He laughed even louder now: “But it was an extra surprise when Yu Peiyu came to us too. The little fool was so happy to see the carriage, he thought I was his saviour. But in fact I am your nemesis!”

Zhu Lei’Er sighed: “Now I know what is going here. You were just lucky.”