

ROU BAO BU CHI ROU



REMNANTS
of FIFTH 1

YUWU

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陪你弱冠及礼

肉包不吃肉

“I’ll keep you company—through youth and
into adulthood.”

—ROU BAO BU CHI ROU
 (“MEATBUN DOESN’T EAT MEAT”)

Prologue

CHONGHUA ONCE PRODUCED two young and promising generals as distinct as the Jing and the Wei,¹ as different as water from flame.

The one like water was named Mo Xi. A lifelong bachelor, he had an icy temperament and an ascetic air. The army had a betting pool regarding when General Mo would sacrifice his chastity, and it had long since grown into a fortune that could make any beggar rich overnight. Mo Xi remained a cornerstone of Chonghua's strength.

The one like fire was named Gu Mang. A perfect gentleman, he had a warm personality and smiled often. If he had owed a sack of army wages for every girl he'd kissed, he doubtless would have lost everything he owned ages ago, down to the clothes on his back. Later on, Gu Mang turned his back on Chonghua and became a commander for an enemy nation.

Before Gu Mang turned traitor, there was a day when he was suddenly possessed by a strange whim. Grabbing a little booklet filled with his own writing, he ran to ask Mo Xi to add a few words.

General Mo's hands were full with military paperwork at the time, so he only asked General Gu, "What's in this?"

“All sorts of things,” Gu Mang said cheerfully. “Good food, interesting experiences, travel notes, weapon catalogs, and the trifles of life.”

Mo Xi accepted the booklet, took up his brush, and dipped it in ink to make his comments.

“I also wrote about you,” Gu Mang added with a smile.

Mo Xi’s hand stilled as he looked up at Gu Mang. “...What about me?”

“I wrote a little about our past,” Gu Mang earnestly replied.

Mo Xi didn’t say another word. After staring at Gu Mang for a bit, he lowered those long lashes and expressionlessly inscribed two sharp and icy lines of formal script on the first page.

This book is forbidden. Transgressors will be punished.

Chapter 1: Stain

AT DUSK, a light flurry of snow began to fall on Chonghua's border, until it gradually blanketed the ground in a layer of pristine white. The wheels of lumbering carriages and the feet of passersby left uneven trails across the expanse.

The meat pie seller Wang Er-mazi shouted with all his might as his breath puffed out in dense clouds. "Meat pies, meat pies! Fresh out the oven!" He clanged the gong next to his oven as he peddled his goods. "There's nothing thicker than the pies I bake—other than Gu Mang's face! C'mere and get yours quick!"

Everyone who heard snickered to themselves.

This pie stall had been in business for more than a decade, and a few years ago, Wang Er-mazi had sung a different tune indeed. Back then he had crowed, "Look here, look here! General Gu's favorite pies! My dear customers, if you eat them, you'll be just as successful and invincible as General Gu—guaranteed!"

A strikingly outfitted cavalry troop slowly made their way toward him through the swirling snow, headed by a youth who looked to be about seventeen. Luxuriously dressed in brocades and

furs, he was the picture of indolence with his handsome and mischievous little face bundled beneath his thick fur collar.

This young man was named Yue Chenqing, and he was the deputy general of the garrison troops. He was possessed of two profoundly formidable talents. The first was being very agreeable—as the ditty went, “What’s the point of getting all mad? If I got sick that would be real bad. No one’s happy when I’m mad; it’s such a pain and makes me sad.” Yue Chenqing understood this concept to a tee, and he hardly ever lost his temper. He was the most good-natured young master of them all.

The second talent was making himself comfortable—as comfortable as possible. He never stood if he could sit, nor sat up if he could lie flat. Yue Chenqing’s favorite thing to say was, “I’ll drink all the wine I’ve got tonight and mooch off my bros tomorrow.” He never deprived himself when it came to enjoying nice things: he downed all his liquor the day he received it and took women to bed without wasting time on talk.

As for patrolling...he’d have his fun, and *then* he’d patrol.

The frontier fortress at the northern pass had many markets like this, most of which sold things like animal hides, herbal medicines, spirit stones, and slaves. These places weren’t terribly interesting, but compared to the bitter tedium of army life, they made for a decent way to pass the time.

“I’ll take that seven-tailed spirit cat.”

“Go buy that guhuo niao tail feather for me too.”

“The tumbleweed at that stall looks good. It’ll definitely make effective medicine. Get me ten baskets.”

As Yue Chenqing walked, he directed the retinue following him to purchase all sorts of goods. Although the members of the retinue felt uneasy seeing him shirk his responsibilities, they couldn’t say much to a deputy general.

Over the course of his walk, Yue Chenqing began to feel a little hungry and looked around for something to eat. He suddenly heard Wang Er-mazi shouting in the distance, his raucous voice ringing through the snow.

“Meat pies for sale! Meat pies as thick as Gu Mang’s face! C’mere and take a look!”

Upon hearing this sales pitch, a corner of Yue Chenqing’s mouth twitched. *Aiya, this guy has the guts to use Gu Mang for his own ends? Doesn’t he know that Gu Mang is a taboo subject with our commander, MoXi? If MoXi heard, we’d all be doomed.*

Yue Chenqing quickly led his horse forward and was about to scold the man when the strong, savory aroma of the meat pies hit him in the face. Just as Yue Chenqing’s reprimand reached the tip of

his tongue, he swallowed it—along with the drool about to drip down his chin.

The stallkeeper Wang Er-mazi looked up. “Officer, a pastry for you?”

“...I’ll have one, I guess.”

“All righty!” Wang Er-mazi nimbly grabbed a golden-brown pie from the oven with his tongs and stuffed it into an oilpaper bag, which he passed to the customer before him. “Here you go. Careful not to burn yourself. You gotta eat these pies while they’re hot!”

Yue Chenqing accepted the piping hot pie and took a crackling bite. Scalding juice flowed out from the crispy golden-brown pastry as the flavors of wheat dough, ground meat, and crushed peppercorn blossomed on his tongue. Their smoky scents filled the air in an instant, and he swallowed hungrily.

“Tastes as good as it smells,” Yue Chenqing couldn’t help but exclaim in admiration.

“Doesn’t it? Everyone knows my pastries are the best,” Wang Er-mazi bragged in delight. “No matter how famous Gu Mang got way back when, he always came to my stall and ate a batch as soon as he returned to the city after a battle!”