

## Fat Wife 171

### Chapter 171: Disguise

In the distance, Xia Zhe was discussing the subsequent arrangements on the deployment of the disaster victims with Zhang Yong, Zhao Wu and Zhuang Hua. As he spoke, he realized that the three men were not paying attention to him at all, and that his surroundings had also become very quiet.

“What are you guys doing? Why are you in a daze during the meeting?” Xia Zhe frowned and said to the three men.

“Hey, big brother, look at that person. How is she so beautiful.” Zhao Wu looked at Qiao Mei in the distance in a daze.

Xia Zhe turned around and saw Qiao Mei who was still wearing the same clothes, but with her face revealed after washing away the ash from herself. She had fair skin, small and exquisite facial features, and a pair of big sparkling eyes that made people feel protective about her.

Xia Zhe was stunned for a moment, but he continued to instruct the three men on the follow-up arrangements. However, none of the three men were focused on the mission anymore. Xia Zhe was so angry that he closed his notebook and gave each of them a kick.

“Don’t you need to do any work anymore and just look and look and look! Don’t you all know what’s the real and important matter at hand?” Xia Zhe lectured the three of them.

Qiao Mei saw all of this and thought to herself, “Yes, as expected of my man. He’s so handsome even when he’s angry. He’s simply too charming.”

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe with a big smile, so Xia Zhe had no choice but to settle the issue with Qiao Mei before he could carry out the mission. Otherwise, the soldiers under him would all be distracted.

“Comrade, what’s the matter?” Xia Zhe frowned at Qiao Mei.

“Nothing’s the matter. I just want to help in whatever way I can.” Qiao Mei smiled at Xia Zhe.

Xia Zhe sighed and handed his notebook to Zhang Yong before he turned around to leave. As he walked out, he said, "You guys arrange it for her. I'm going to carry out the mission."

Xia Zhe had already disappeared without a trace, but Qiao Mei still stood there staring in the direction where Xia Zhe had left.

"Hey, stop looking. My big brother has got a wife," Zhuang Hua said as he stood behind Qiao Mei and also looked in the direction Xia Zhe had left.

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"Huh? Big brother?" Qiao Mei looked at Zhuang Hua in confusion. Could this be Xia Zhe's younger brother? She had only heard from her grandfather that Xia Zhe had an older brother, but she had never heard of a younger brother.

Zhuang Hua was puzzled. Wouldn't most people focus on the fact that his big brother was already married? It was really strange that this person was more concerned about his relationship with Xia Zhe.

"Yes, we all call Xia Zhe big brother. Everyone calls him that because he's the most capable among us," Zhang Yong explained.

"By the way, what's your name?" Zhao Wu asked.

"Me... my name is... my name is Zhang Miao!" Qiao Mei said, thinking on her feet.

Qiao Mei thought to herself, "I'm sorry, Miao Miao. I'll borrow your name first. I really have no choice as I can't let your brother-in-law find out that I'm actually his wife. If he finds out that I'm Qiao Mei, he'll probably force me to go to a safe place."

Zhao Wu muttered to himself, "Zhang Miao... Zhang Miao... What a nice name! Zhang Miao! Miao Miao!"

Zhuang Hua hurriedly gave Zhao Wu a kick. He had just met the girl and he was already calling her Miao Miao. How shameless of him. Even if he did not mind, the girl would mind him doing that.

Zhao Wu was about to turn around and settle the score with Zhuang Hua when he heard a shout from the cookhouse, "Mealtime!"

Zhao Wu put aside the fact that he had not taken revenge for the kick just now and brought Qiao Mei to the dining area.

"Look at this kid, he has gone crazy thinking about women. He even wants to woo her, and he hasn't even asked her if she has a partner," Zhang Yong said to Zhuang Hua as he looked at Zhao Wu's back view.

"She looks like she's only 17 or 18 years old. How old is this Zhao Wu, how can he still have the cheek to want to partner her." Zhuang Hua looked at Zhao Wu's departing figure and shook his head.

"Sigh, let's go. Nothing will happen anyway. If he delays the mission, just wait for big brother to give him a beating," Zhang Yong said.

"Hahahahaha. Come, let's go eat." With that, Zhuang Hua and Zhang Yong caught up with Zhao Wu and Qiao Mei.

At the moment, there was only rice and no vegetables. The vegetables had all been given to the soldiers at the front line, so everyone consciously took very little of the side dishes. However, just the rice alone felt completely different from usual. It tasted especially fragrant today and even had a little sweetness to it.

Chapter 172: Satisfaction

Zhao Wu had wanted to turn around to say something to Qiao Mei, but Zhang Yong hurriedly pushed Zhao Wu and said, "Hurry up and eat, just eat!"

Zhao Wu did not get the chance to say anything, so he took his bowl and filled it up with rice before handing it to Qiao Mei and said, "I guess you must not have eaten for a few days. Quickly eat more. Don't stand on ceremony!"

Zhang Yong and Zhuang Hua were dumbfounded. It turned out that Zhao Wu was not stupid at all. His method of wooing girls was much better than theirs. The pressure from the competition was on.

Qiao Mei smiled and took out a large tea jar from her backpack. However, the large tea jar did not look like one as it had long been flattened. Qiao Mei took it in her hands, fiddled with it for a while and returned it to its original shape. The few men were dumbstruck by what she did.

They did not think too much about it though and it did not cross their minds that Qiao Mei was exceptionally strong. They only felt that Qiao Mei was quite pitiful and that her family should be very poor. Big tea jars were usually very sturdy so for a little girl to be able to reshape it easily, it must be a really cheap item.

“Aren’t you going to eat?” Qiao Mei asked curiously when she saw that the three people behind her were still staring at her after she took her food.

“Ah! Yes, yes, yes! Let’s eat, let’s eat!” Zhuang Hua came back to his senses and quickly went to get his food.

Qiao Mei looked around for Xia Zhe. It was mealtime, so why was he not here to get food? Not long after, she found Xia Zhe in the crowd. He also looked over, but he was not looking at Qiao Mei. Instead, he looked at the three people who were getting their food behind Qiao Mei.

Xia Zhe had just taken his bowl and was walking over when Qiao Mei stopped him.

“Are you going to eat? Can I eat with you?” Qiao Mei blinked her big eyes and asked.

Xia Zhe did not even look at Qiao Mei. He dodged to one side and walked forward, saying, “It’s not convenient.”

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe’s indifferent departing figure and was overjoyed, though Zhao Wu found it strange that she was still so happy after being rejected. Zhao Wu walked up to Qiao Mei and said, “Comrade Zhang Miao, don’t go after my big brother. My big brother is already married and he’s also about to become a father.”

“That’s right. Our big brother really has a wife. We’re not lying to you,” Zhang Yong echoed.

Qiao Mei smiled and said, “So what if he has a wife? It doesn’t matter even if he does!”

After saying that, she skipped over to Xia Zhe’s side and sat down. Zhang Yong and the other two men also followed her and sat around in a circle. Qiao Mei opened her backpack and took out the pickled radishes that she had made at home.

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“Here, try this,” Qiao Mei held out the jar and appeared to offer it to everyone, but in fact, she had positioned the jar right in front of Xia Zhe.

Zhao Wu, Zhang Yong, and Zhuang Hua did not care about that. They each took one and started eating.

“Huh? This taste? Why does it taste so similar to the one that sister-in-law sent to big brother?” Zhuang Hua looked at Zhao Wu to see if he agreed.

“Eh? That’s true. The taste is really quite similar!” Zhao Wu said as he picked up the pickled radish with his chopsticks.

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe and asked, “Aren’t you going to have one? It’s very delicious.”

Xia Zhe turned away and hurriedly finished the remaining rice in his bowl. He stood up and said, “I don’t like it. Anyway, I’m finished with my meal.”

Qiao Mei was grinning from ear to ear as she held the jar of pickled radishes. She wondered who was the one who had written in the letter that he loved pickled radishes the most. Qiao Mei closed the jar and put it back into her bag.

Zhang Yong and the rest were still hankling for more, but since she had already put the jar away, they were too embarrassed to ask her to take it out so that they could have more.

Qiao Mei looked at the departing Xia Zhe and thought to herself, "It's really like what my grandfather said. He's a gentleman and it seems that he can still resist the temptation when presented with an attractive woman. I must reward him well when we get back."

Zhao Wu stood up and blocked Qiao Mei's view as he said, "Don't look at my big brother anymore. My big brother really has a wife and her cooking is much better than yours. Don't think about my big brother anymore."

Qiao Mei laughed and said, "Better than me? Hmph, I don't believe it. I'm so young and good-looking, so why not me. Just wait and see."

The other three people there held their foreheads and sighed. There were three men of different characters in front of her, and their looks were not considered ugly, so they could not understand why she did not take a fancy to any of them but only had her eye on their big brother instead.

### Chapter 173: Aftershocks

After finishing their meals, Zhang Yong, Zhao Wu and Zhuang Hua did not chat with Qiao Mei anymore. They still had to go on patrol in the afternoon to ensure that there were no remaining victims nearby who had not been rescued. They had to make sure that nothing and no one was left out.

Qiao Mei followed closely behind Xia Zhe silently. In another hour, there would be a second earthquake. At this point in time, Qiao Mei could not leave his side at all.

Qiao Mei followed Xia Zhe wherever he went. By now, many people in the troop could tell that this young lady had taken a fancy to him and he got very annoyed with her.

He had always had many admirers who stared at him every day. In those days, he did not care that they looked at him, given that he was not married yet. However, it was different now. He now had Qiao Mei and she was even bearing him a cute child. If anyone gossiped or complained behind his back about him having loose morals, his career path would be ruined and his wish to have Qiao Mei join him as a military spouse would be dashed.

Xia Zhe was so irritated that he grabbed Zhao Wu, who was next to him, and said, "Find a reason for her not to follow me. She can follow anyone, but just don't bother me."

Zhao Wu nodded and said, "Okay, boss. Leave it to me."

"Comrade Zhang Miao, go back to the camp with me. The rest of us have to go on a mission later and it's not convenient for us to bring you along," Zhao Wu said in a serious manner.

It was rare for Zhao Wu to take a serious tone when speaking to Qiao Mei and she glanced sideways at Xia Zhe, who was commanding the troop in the distance.

"He wants to chase me away huh," Qiao Mei said.

"No, I'm the one who's worried about you." Zhao Wu did not say that it was Xia Zhe's order, but for his own selfish reasons, he made it sound like he was the one who was concerned about her well-being. In any case, he knew that his boss would not blame him.

Qiao Mei frowned and lowered her head in deep thought. If she was sent back to the camp now and it got too dangerous when the earthquake happened later, who could guarantee Xia Zhe's safety? She could only feel at ease if she followed Xia Zhe herself, but she could not use the excuse that she wished to follow Zhao Wu. If her identity was exposed, it would only cause more trouble.

"What if I just follow behind the team, since I'm able to help you guys and I'm afraid to go back by myself. Besides, you need all the manpower you can get for the rescue mission. If you arrange for someone to send me back, you would lose a person who could be here helping." Qiao Mei looked at Zhao Wu with bright sparkling eyes.

Zhao Wu gulped and thought about it. He decided that it was better to check with Xia Zhe as it was not in his place to agree to a civilian's request in private. No matter how winsome she looked, he had to abide by the military rules.

"Wait for a while, let me ask about it." Zhao Wu returned to Xia Zhe's side and told him about his conversation with Qiao Mei.

Xia Zhe pondered for a long time and also felt that it was inappropriate to let her go back alone. He thought that what she said did make sense.

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“Then let her follow us, so long as she doesn’t follow me,” Xia Zhe said as he looked at Zhao Wu. He then waved his hand and went in front of the troop.

Qiao Mei looked at the watch in her pocket. There were still 15 minutes before the earthquake and Qiao Mei constantly looked out for the best way to position herself to be able to save Xia Zhe quickly.

Xia Zhe could feel Qiao Mei pacing around behind him, and she was always in a spot where it was the shortest linear distance to reach his side.

Xia Zhe thought to himself, “She has such great observation skills, could it be that I’m her target? Is she seeking revenge? But I haven’t offended anyone and I’ve never met this young lady before. What could be the reason?”

It was obvious that Xia Zhe’s thoughts were on the wrong track and extremely far from the truth. The good thing was that he kept it all in his head, otherwise Qiao Mei would laugh at him if she knew.

Qiao Mei looked at her watch and noted the time. It was already down to the final minute.

“59, 58, 57, 56...” Qiao Mei counted silently in her heart. Before she could count to 30, she heard a loud bang and the ground began to shake violently. Xia Zhe stood on the spot and shouted loudly to evacuate the crowd, but he did not notice that there were still the remains of half a tall building behind him.

Qiao Mei did not have time to think and just ran straight to Xia Zhe’s side. She grabbed on to him and threw the two of them to one side, falling into a pit in front of them. The vine seeds which Qiao Mei had thrown out quickly grew and enveloped the two of them tightly in a cocoon-like protective shell.



The wreckage of the half a building collapsed on top of the two of them and the tremors lasted for more than 10 seconds before stopping.

#### Chapter 174: Safe and Sound

When the tremors completely stopped, Qiao Mei secretly used the vines to push out a gap so that the two of them could breathe while they were among the ruins.

“Are you alright?” Qiao Mei asked.

“I... I’m fine. What about you?” Xia Zhe hesitated and said.

Qiao Mei looked at his hesitant expression and felt that Xia Zhe was hiding something from her. She reached out to touch his body, but Xia Zhe frowned and held down her roving hands to stop her.

“Don’t move!” Xia Zhe growled.

Qiao Mei just used one hand to secure Xia Zhe’s hand behind his back and used her other hand to carefully run over his body to see if he was injured.

Xia Zhe struggled but could not break free. He had a strong feeling of *déjà vu*. Who was this person who was so strong and even treated him in this manner?

“Who are you?” Xia Zhe stared at Qiao Mei’s face to see if she was lying when she answered.

Qiao Mei finally heaved a sigh of relief after checking on him. She looked at Xia Zhe smilingly and said, “Big brother, who do you think I am?”

This was the sweet voice that he would never be able to forget for the rest of his life. The scene from that night seemed to appear before his eyes again. That voice had rung in his ears for an entire night and he immediately recognized it.

“Mei Mei?” Xia Zhe looked at the person in front of him in shock, unable to believe that this was the Qiao Mei he had met back then.

“Oh my goodness, did you not read the letter I wrote to you? Didn’t I write in the letter that my looks have changed?” Qiao Mei said as she leaned her head gently on Xia Zhe’s shoulder and gently hammered Xia Zhe’s chest with her small hand.

Xia Zhe hugged Qiao Mei gently. He could now hold her with one arm. He wondered how she lost so much weight in just the few months since he left.

In Qiao Mei’s letter, she did say that she had lost weight, but he thought that she had at most lost 20 pounds. He did not expect Qiao Mei to have become the person in front of him.

“I remember. But why did you lose so much weight, what exactly did you do at home?” Xia Zhe’s heart ached as he looked at Qiao Mei.

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Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe with a smile and said, “Let’s see, I do farm work at home and I do a lot of housework everyday including cooking for my grandfather. Now that I’m pregnant, my appetite isn’t as good as before, so I guess that’s how I lost weight.”

Xia Zhe immediately became nervous when he heard the word ‘pregnant’, and he reached out to touch Qiao Mei’s belly.

“Do you feel anything wrong with your body? Do you feel unwell anywhere? Move slightly and see if you’re injured anywhere.” Xia Zhe tried his best to do a check on Qiao Mei’s body in the small space.

Qiao Mei shook her head and was about to say that she was fine when she realized that Xia Zhe had already started to examine her and was carefully checking every inch of her joints and bones for injury.

When he was checking her ribcage, he examined her rib bones one by one, afraid that the bones had been injured by the impact. However, by doing that, he also touched parts of her body that he need not

check. The spots where his fingers touched felt as hot as if they had been burned, and from time to time, he would happen to touch Qiao Mei's ticklish spots.

"Hey, don't touch me anymore. You're tickling me!" Qiao Mei said as she pouted.

Xia Zhe's face instantly turned red, but he still insisted on giving her a thorough check before he retracted his hand in relief.

Qiao Mei's pregnancy was starting to show. Her slightly protruding belly was not obvious with the type of clothes she wore, but she could still feel the curvature when she reached out to touch it.

"Come, feel it." Qiao Mei pulled Xia Zhe's hand and placed it on her belly.

Xia Zhe gently stroked Qiao Mei's belly. Given the slight curvature, if he did not know any better, he would have thought that Qiao Mei was just not completely thin and still had some belly fat. However, seeing Qiao Mei lose so much weight, he felt both heartache and excitement.

Her heart ached for Qiao Mei who did not have an easy time for the past few months, being pregnant without him by her side. He wondered if grandfather Qiao Qiang's health had improved and if Qiao Mei had eaten anything nutritious and if the baby gave Qiao Mei a hard time.

At the same time, he was also very excited that he was going to be a father. He tried his best to live up to his own expectation of a good father and he wanted to be a great father for this unborn child.

"You've suffered, Mei Mei." Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei caringly.

Qiao Mei smiled and touched Xia Zhe's face. "It's not hard on me. I feel very happy now. I have you and I have our kid, I'm very blessed."

## Chapter 175: Saying Hello

Xia Zhe nodded and recalled the letter his aunt had sent him previously. She had written that most women would get morning sickness by this stage of the pregnancy and would basically throw up whatever they ate.

“Do you... do you get any morning sickness, I mean usually.” Xia Zhe found it embarrassing to raise the topic.

Qiao Mei thought about it and realized that she really had not experienced any morning sickness at all. On a usual day, she did not even feel like she was pregnant with two children. She felt no different from when she was not pregnant.

If there were any differences, it was that she ate better, slept better and walked as if she was on wings. She wondered if these counted as feeling differently.

“I don’t feel particularly uncomfortable,” Qiao Mei said as she shook her head.

“Then what about any loss of appetite or any discomfort, such as back pain, joint pain or anything like that,” Xia Zhe asked carefully.

Qiao Mei shook her head, indicating that she did not have any of these symptoms. Xia Zhe frowned and felt that Qiao Mei must be hiding something from him.

“I really don’t have any of that. I’m in very good health,” Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe decided to believe what Qiao Mei said for the time being. He resolved that after they got out, he would put up an application to go back to the capital and get his aunt to give Qiao Mei a full-body checkup to ensure that Qiao Mei’s health was fine.

Qiao Mei stroked Xia Zhe’s tightly furrowed brows and said, “Don’t worry, I’m really fine.”

Suddenly, Qiao Mei felt a few movements in her belly. At first, she did not pay much attention to it, but the movements had become very obvious.

“Ah!” Qiao Mei exclaimed.

Xia Zhe quickly looked at Qiao Mei, who seemed to be at a loss.

“What’s wrong, do you feel unwell?” Xia Zhe asked.

“I... I think I can feel the baby,” Qiao Mei said with tears in her eyes.

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Under normal circumstances, a pregnant woman could usually sense the fetal movement of the baby at around the 20-week mark. Qiao Mei was about 16 weeks pregnant at the moment. Perhaps due to the fact that she had been exchanging energy with precious plants like wild ginseng, the baby had developed well enough to have such fetal movements.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei in confusion, not understanding what she meant.

Qiao Mei held Xia Zhe’s hand to stroke her belly as she said, “Baby, this is your father.”

As soon as she finished speaking, the baby obediently moved twice. Xia Zhe instantly widened his eyes and looked into Qiao Mei’s eyes in disbelief.

“This is? Is this a fetal movement?” Xia Zhe asked.

“That’s right. I guess the baby wants to greet daddy,” Qiao Mei sweet-talked Xia Zhe.

Xia Zhe was full of mixed feelings and did not know what to say to Qiao Mei. He only felt that he had not done enough and that he owed Qiao Mei too much.

Although he had been forced into the situation back then, he could be considered to have taken the initiative later on. He also had a responsibility towards Qiao Mei. It seemed that he had to work harder and let Qiao Mei become a military spouse earlier so that he could take better care of her.

“Yes, thank you,” Xia Zhe said in a choked voice.

Qiao Mei looked up and stared at Xia Zhe seriously before saying, “I should be the one thanking you, why are you thanking me instead. Besides, we’re already married, so there’s no need to say thank you.”

“Yes,” Xia Zhe nodded and said.

“Oh right, I read your letter regarding those names that you suggested for our child. Just those words you suggested, there are more than ten people in the entire village with the same names. Hurry up and change them, none of those names are good enough,” Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe pondered for a long time before saying, “I have an elder brother, his name is Xia Wen. He’s a teacher at the university. Shall we get his opinion on the child’s name?”

Qiao Mei nodded and said, “Yes, since elder brother is a cultured person, the name he comes up with would be meaningful. But you have to think about it as well. you can’t leave everything to elder brother!”

“Yes, yes yes, I promise you.” Xia Zhe smiled and hugged Qiao Mei.

After the two of them calmed down, Qiao Mei carefully sized up Xia Zhe. This was the person she had been thinking about day and night. She was finally able to see him and both of them were safe and alive.

Fortunately, she arrived in time and there was no delay on the way. Otherwise, she really did not dare to imagine what Xia Zhe would have experienced. As she recalled the earlier scene when Xia Zhe was in danger, she still felt a sense of lingering fear.

Qiao Mei could not help but tear up. It was so good to be alive.

Chapter 176: Mischievous

Translator:

Atlas Studios Editor: Atlas Studios

Xia Zhe thought that Qiao Mei was worried that they would not be able to get out. He quickly wiped away her tears and said, "Don't cry, don't worry. Our police dogs are very outstanding. They all recognize the smell on me. Rest assured that they will find us soon."

Xia Zhe c otingly.

"You little girl, how are you so bold to come here alone," Xia Zhe pretended to say angrily.

Qiao Mei thought for a moment and hugged Xia Zhe tightly as she said sweetly, "Big brother, don't be angry. I was wrong, I just miss you too much. I promise there won't be a next time!"

Xia Zhe's face turned red from Qiao Mei's words as he recalled that night again. She kept calling out to him that night, calling him big brother with her seductively sweet voice. That voice was unforgettable and he had wanted to hear it again.

"Then why didn't you identify yourself to me, if not it won't get dragged out until now," Xia Zhe asked.

"Hahahaha, I just wanted to test you. Who would have thought that you would really remain faithful throughout and for this, comrade Xia deserves to be praised!" Qiao Mei teased.

Xia Zhe pushed Qiao Mei's head with his hand and said, "You mischievous girl."

"And what's that I heard, if I had known that you don't like pickled radishes, then I need not make it for you in the future." Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe smugly.

"Don't you dare! If you dare to do that, I'll..." Xia Zhe said.

"You will? What will you do? Let me tell you, I think those three brothers of yours treat me very well. You'd better feel a little threatened," Qiao Mei said proudly.

It did not cross his mind before she mentioned it. Now that she raised the issue, Xia Zhe was a little alarmed. Could it be that Qiao Mei really liked his brothers more than him?

## Chapter 177: Rescued

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Xia Zhe lowered his head and thought for a moment before saying in a muffled voice, "If you... if you like them... no! You can't like them! You can't go anywhere!"

Xia Zhe originally thought that if Qiao Mei really fancied any of his brothers-in-arms, he would give them his blessings. After all, Qiao Mei was somewhat forced to marry him back then, but now, Xia Zhe did not want anyone else to touch Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei could only be his and she must be his. Any thoughts that Qiao Mei might have of leaving him must be nipped in the bud.

"Hahahahaha, what are you thinking about, I'm already yours. Our child is about to be born, so who else should I be looking for when I only want the child's father." Qiao Mei giggled as she looked at the jealous Xia Zhe.

Only then did Xia Zhe realize that he had been tricked by Qiao Mei again. It seemed that he was going to be played by this little girl for the rest of his life.

Even after the two of them bantered for such a long time, there was still no sign of the search and rescue team. Xia Zhe touched the wall next to him to get a sense of the structure between the stone slabs. He gave the wall a hard push and realized that they were trapped. They would not be able to get out of danger by themselves.

Generally speaking, all the houses here were quite old and the frames of the houses were mostly not sturdy. However, there were also buildings that had been rebuilt during a later period and it seemed that they had unexpectedly encountered one of these buildings.

He did not know whether to be happy or unhappy.

"Sigh." Xia Zhe sighed softly.



“What’s wrong?” Qiao Mei asked.

Earlier, Qiao Mei had already used plants to do some scouting. Although they were trapped under the stone slabs, as long as there was movement outside, they would still be heard if they called for help. It was not as bad as they had imagined.

“It’s nothing. They’ll be here to rescue us in a while,” Xia Zhe said and took out a pack of hardtack from his pocket.

“Here, this is military ration and it’s very hard. We don’t have water now, eat it slowly so you don’t get choked,” Xia Zhe said to Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei put the hardtack back into Xia Zhe’s pocket. This is a life-saving ration and she could not eat it just like that. After all, they did not know how long they would have to stay here.

“Put it away first. We can eat it when we’re hungry. I’m not hungry now, so don’t waste it,” Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe nodded and put away the hardtack. Fortunately, the two of them were able to move around slightly within this space and there was nothing directly pressing on them.

Qiao Mei gently shifted her position and used the vines to burrow into the ground to sense the location of the search and rescue team. Then, she gently made a soft sound to attract the rescue dogs.

For humans, such sounds were too soft to be heard, but animals had sharper senses and could distinguish small changes in their environments.

When the rescue dogs heard the sound, they barked loudly and broke free from the ropes to search for Qiao Mei’s location.

After sniffing the areas one after another, a rescue dog stood on top of the ruins above Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe and kept barking.

“Woof! Woof!”

“Mei Mei! It’s a rescue dog!” Xia Zhe said in surprise.

“Help!” Qiao Mei shouted loudly.

“Help! We’re here! Zhuang Hua! Zhang Yong! Zhao Wu! We’re here!” Xia Zhe kept calling out.

When Zhang Yong and the other two men heard the voices, they immediately rushed over.

“Boss! We’re coming!” Zhang Yong said.

“Big brother! Are you okay!” Zhao Wu asked.

“We are holding up!” Xia Zhe replied.

“Be gentle! Don’t let too many people go up and cause a second collapse! Carry out the rescue carefully! There can’t be any accidents!” Zhuang Hua said to the search and rescue soldiers beside him.

“Yes!”

The soldiers carried out the search and rescue operation nervously. They cleared the stone slabs bit by bit and tried to find out more about the structure. Through the gaps, they observed the position and situation of Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei. No one dared to make a wrong move, afraid that they would encounter a second collapse.

Xia Zhe hugged Qiao Mei tightly and tried his best to shield her with his body to protect her from harm.

Qiao Mei hugged Xia Zhe quietly. She watched Xia Zhe’s every move and remembered all of them well. She came to understand that Xia Zhe really cared about her.

After 50 minutes, the last stone slab was lifted and Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei were rescued.

Everyone did not think too much about it when they saw Xia Zhe hugging Qiao Mei tightly. After all, their role was to protect the public from harm and ensure that nothing went wrong.

#### Chapter 178: Returning to Base

Then, everyone kept staring as Xia Zhe continued to hug Qiao Mei without letting go. Given that so much time had passed, he should be able to let go now.

“Um... Big brother, can you come out now?” Zhuang Hua touched his nose and reminded Xia Zhe embarrassedly.

Xia Zhe immediately came back to his senses and helped Qiao Mei up. The medics went forward to check them for any obvious injuries and carefully examined the joints of their limbs to make sure that there were no problems before leaving.

Xia Zhe got out of the pit first and then reached out to Qiao Mei.

When Zhao Wu saw what Xia Zhe did, he hurriedly jumped into the pit to give Qiao Mei a push. Seeing that, Xia Zhe frowned slightly and pulled Qiao Mei into his arms.

Qiao Mei looked at the jealous Xia Zhe and could not stop smiling.

“How are you acting like a child,” Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe took Qiao Mei’s hand and gave it a gentle squeeze to express his displeasure.

As they made their way down the debris, Xia Zhe kept asking about Qiao Mei’s well-being. He held on to Qiao Mei all the way down and kept asking her if it hurt, if she was tired, and even wanted to carry her.

Zhao Wu, who was next to him, was unhappy when he saw this.?

Earlier, Xia Zhe had clearly despised the girl for getting too close to him. He could not understand why Xia Zhe seemed like a different person after coming out from under the wreckage.

Xia Zhe was a married man! It was not proper for him to have his hands over a girl like this!

Moreover, Xia Zhe's wife was always very concerned about Xia Zhe and often wrote him letters and cooked a lot of delicious food for him. Everyone in the camp envied Xia Zhe for having such a virtuous wife.

"Apart from us, how are the rest of the people?" Xia Zhe asked Zhao Wu as he held on to Qiao Mei's hand.

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"We... We don't have any serious injuries or fatalities among us. There are five soldiers who have some minor injuries and the rest are fine," Zhao Wu said.

Although Zhao Wu was very displeased with Xia Zhe's actions, he was a soldier after all, so he still earnestly answered Xia Zhe's question.

"It's good to know that there are no major casualties. The replacement team must continue to search this area and we must not leave anyone behind," Xia Zhe said with a serious look on his face.

Qiao Mei could not help but stare at the serious-looking Xia Zhe. He looked so handsome like that.

"Yes!" Zhao Wu replied.

Zhao Wu accepted the order but did not take any action. Xia Zhe had just taken two steps when he realized that Zhao Wu had been staring at Qiao Mei and her hand that he was holding.

Xia Zhe frowned slightly and pulled Qiao Mei behind him before asking, "Is there anything else?"

Zhao Wu came back to his senses and leaned close to Xia Zhe and said, "Big brother, isn't it not good for you to behave like that?"

"Not good? What's not good?" Xia Zhe asked in confusion.

"It's... it's just that it's not good for you to hold on to a young lady like this. Why not you go and carry out the search and rescue mission while I send her back to the base," Zhao Wu said seriously after thinking.

Xia Zhe immediately pulled a long face. He kicked Zhao Yong's leg and said, "Hurry up and start the search and rescue mission! What nonsense are you spouting!"

After Xia Zhe finished speaking, he grabbed onto Qiao Mei and walked towards the base. Along the way, he took care of her in every way. The soldiers around him were all dumbfounded, but given that it was the battalion commander's own matter, no one dared to ask about it.

Later on, Xia Zhe even carried her in his arms. She refused but it was useless. He insisted on carrying her all the way.

What was going on?

Could it be that Xia Zhe took a hard knock to the head in the wreckage?

Zhao Wu looked at the departing figures of Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei in confusion. At the same time, he felt that Xia Zhe was being unreasonable. He was the one who had taken a fancy to the young girl first so how could Xia Zhe turn the situation to his advantage now.

Zhao Wu was so angry that he did not care anymore and went straight to carry out the search and rescue mission. He turned the anger in his heart into motivation and focused on the rescue efforts.

Xia Zhe carried Qiao Mei back to the base under everyone's gaze. Qiao Mei lay against Xia Zhe's arms, her soft bosom pressed against Xia Zhe's chest as her sweet voice rang in his ears.

“Put me down quickly, your comrades are all watching!” Qiao Mei said as she pouted.

Xia Zhe could feel his passion rising as he recalled that night when Qiao Mei had moaned softly under him. That coquettish voice...

Xia Zhe’s ears were red, but his expression remained unchanged. He only put Qiao Mei down when they reached the base’s rest area.

Even after he put her down, he still held on to her hands. He also hugged her in an unobvious manner.

#### Chapter 179: Identity Exposed

Xia Zhe had just put Qiao Mei down and was about to let her rest for a while when he saw Zhang Yong returning with his team in the distance. By right, the search and rescue efforts should not be completed so quickly so why was he back so early?

“Why are you back?” Xia Zhe asked.

Zhang Yong had already seen Xia Zhe from afar and also saw him carrying someone. At that time, he thought that it was just an injured person and did not think too much about it.

Zhang Yong wanted to go forward and ask Xia Zhe if he was injured and who the injured soldier was. However, when Zhang Yong saw that it was Qiao Mei standing behind Xia Zhe, he did not bother to answer Xia Zhe.

“What happened? Are you injured?” Zhang Yong stared straight at Qiao Mei and asked.

Just as Qiao Mei was about to answer that she was fine, she realized that the man standing beside her had pursed his lips so tightly that it had become a straight line.

Qiao Mei could not help but cover her mouth and laugh. Her chest vibrated against Xia Zhe’s back and he pinched her waist in annoyance.

“You have the cheek to laugh!” Xia Zhe said sternly to Qiao Mei before looking at Zhang Yong and saying, “She’s fine, you don’t have to mind her. You still haven’t told me, why are you back?”

“Is she really fine? Have the medics checked her?” Zhang Yong was only concerned about whether Qiao Mei was really safe and sound. He had already ignored Xia Zhe’s question twice.

“She’s really fine,” Xia Zhe said, suppressing his anger.

Qiao Mei, who was behind him, gently held Xia Zhe’s hand and drew circles in his palm. Xia Zhe frowned slightly and held Qiao Mei’s hand tightly to stop her from misbehaving.

Zhang Yong was a little taken aback by the way they behaved towards each other and asked hesitantly, “You two...”

Xia Zhe pulled Qiao Mei out from behind him and introduced her formally. “This is my wife, your sister-in-law, Qiao Mei.”

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“Sister-in-law?” Zhang Yong looked at Xia Zhe in shock.

“Yes, yes, she is indeed my wife.” Xia Zhe looked pleased as he nodded.

When the surrounding soldiers heard this news, they felt relieved. So she was Commander Xia’s wife. Then what he did was not surprising.

“You! You! You two!” For a moment, Zhang Yong was unable to accept the fact. He pointed at Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei as he backed away.

Zhang Yong still could not accept what Xia Zhe said. He widened his eyes and pointed at Qiao Mei as he said, “Then why didn’t you recognize her as your wife at first glance?”

This question also attracted everyone's attention. That was indeed the case. Why was Commander Xia unable to recognize his wife at first sight? And also avoiding her like she was the god of plague?

Xia Zhe touched the tip of his nose, not knowing how to answer this question.

Qiao Mei came forward to explain.

"It's like this. What we had was an arranged marriage between children, so we haven't even seen each other much. The first time we met was on the day of our wedding. Even on that day, I kept avoiding your Commander Xia as I was embarrassed to let him see my face."

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe tenderly and continued, "Moreover, I was a big fatty at that time and weighed more than 170 pounds. I've lost weight over the past few months, so it's normal that your Commander Xia can't recognize me."

Qiao Mei was really too embarrassed to say that she weighed more than 250 pounds back then. If she told the people in the troop the truth, they would definitely think that she was lying, because it was very unlikely for anyone to lose more than 150 pounds in just a few months.

Zhang Yong nodded but he was still doubtful. He still could not quite believe that the person standing in front of him was Xia Zhe's wife.

"Then why did you lie to me and say that your name is Zhang Miao?" Zhang Yong looked at Qiao Mei plaintively.

Seeing this, Xia Zhe glared at Zhang Yong. Why are you feeling aggrieved? Do you need Qiao Mei to coax you?

"I... I just wanted to see if your Commander Xia is really able to remain faithful and be good to me wholeheartedly!" Qiao Mei took Xia Zhe's hand and swung it gently.

"So are you satisfied with what you see?" Xia Zhe asked.



“Satisfied! Very satisfied!” Qiao Mei smiled at Xia Zhe.

“Let’s see if you dare to fool around again!” Xia Zhe lovingly tapped Qiao Mei’s head with his fingers.

Zhang Yong looked at the two of them flirting away and he suddenly felt that he did not want to hang around any longer.

Chapter 180: One After Another

Zhuang Hua encountered the follow-up rescue team on his way and so he came back early to rest and make further preparations. As soon as he returned, he saw a smug Xia Zhe talking to a dejected Zhang Yong, with the beautiful young girl standing beside him.

“What are you up to?” Zhuang Hua shouted from afar as he jogged over.

The first thing that came out of his mouth was also not a report of the situation to Xia Zhe. He stared at Qiao Mei and sized her up to see if she was injured.

“Comrade Miao Miao, are you injured?” Zhuang Hua asked nervously.

Xia Zhe’s face instantly hardened. Although he knew that Qiao Mei told them her name was Zhang Miao, he still felt uncomfortable hearing them address her like that.

Xia Zhe clenched his fists. If Zhuang Hua said another word, Xia Zhe would probably not be able to hold back.

“Oh, I’m fine.” Qiao Mei said as she hurriedly held on to Xia Zhe’s fist.

Zhang Yong turned to Zhuang Hua and said, “That’s sister-in-law. Not comrade Miao Miao.”

“Sister-in-law? What sister-in-law? Isn’t sister-in-law in the village? Big brother, you... it’s not good to mess around...” Zhuang Hua still did not know that Qiao Mei was Xia Zhe’s wife and even understood it as Xia Zhe was fooling around outside.

“What are you saying...” Xia Zhe lowered his head helplessly, not wanting to explain this matter anymore.

“Oh, I’m not Zhang Miao. My name is Qiao Mei, I’m Xia Zhe’s wife. I’m sorry for lying to you when I first came to the military camp. I just wanted to test your Commander Xia,” Qiao Mei explained to Zhuang Hua with a smile.

Once she said that, Zhuang Hua immediately understood the situation. He only lamented that such a nice girl was already married to his big brother. Big brother was really lucky.

“Alright, let’s get down to business. Why are you all back?” Xia Zhe asked.

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“Yes, yes, yes. We ran into a backup rescue team on the way and they took over the search and rescue mission. The higher-ups said that we can evacuate now. Our mission is completed and we can just assist them on the side,” Zhuang Hua said solemnly.

“What about Zhao Wu?” Xia Zhe asked.

“He’s still doing search and rescue, finishing up the last bit,” Zhuang Hua said.

Xia Zhe nodded to indicate that he understood.

Their troop was not really a rescue team to begin with, but because they were the closest to this place, they were temporarily dispatched here to carry out rescue missions and help the victims.

While they were still discussing their next steps, Zhao Wu returned from afar.

Zhuang Hua and Zhang Yong looked at Zhao Wu with glee and Zhao Wu looked back at the two of them in confusion.

“Hmm... Why are you looking at me like that?” Zhao Wu asked.

“Hahahaha, it’s nothing. We’ll gather the team and do a debrief first.” With that, Zhuang Hua left with Zhang Yong, leaving Zhao Wu behind.

Zhao Wu looked at Qiao Mei with a silly smile and said, “Miao Miao, are you injured?”

Miao Miao??The veins on Xia Zhe’s arm bulged again. He could not help but want to punch Zhao Wu.

“Um! Comrade Zhao Wu! I’m not Zhang Miao! I’m your Commander Xia’s wife! I’m your sister-in-law! My name is Qiao Mei!” Qiao Mei hurriedly shouted at Zhao Wu.

She was afraid that if she reacted any slower, Xia Zhe would really rush out and vent all his anger on Zhao Wu.

Zhao Wu stared blankly at Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei, his eyes darting between the two of them.

After confirming that this matter was true, he touched the back of his head in embarrassment. As he backed away, he smiled awkwardly and said, “Um... Big brother... It’s all a misunderstanding! I... I’m also going to the team meeting! Big brother, I’m going off!”

With that, he turned around and ran away, not giving Xia Zhe any chance to react.

Xia Zhe stared at Qiao Mei sinisterly. Qiao Mei looked up at Xia Zhe in embarrassment and said carefully with a bright smile, “Don’t be angry, big brother. I just... wanted to see if you really love me!”

Xia Zhe raised his head and deliberately looked away from Qiao Mei. No matter what she said, he remained unmoved. Today, his brothers-in-arms had really brought out all the jealousy in him.

Seeing that her whining and wheedling did not work, Qiao Mei blushed and stood on tiptoe so that her lips were next to Xia Zhe's ear. She said sweetly, "Then... then how about I let big brother deal with me however you want tonight."