

Finest 396

Chapter 396 The Proposal

When Lin Wanrong returned to the Xiao family, he found neither Qiaoqiao nor the Eldest Miss, and even Madam Xiao had gone out. This puzzled him greatly. After being absent for a few days, why were all the women in the house so busy?

The little maidservant Huan'er laughed and said, "Brother San, Miss Seo Jang Geum from Goryeo has taken Qiaoqiao and Eldest Miss away, as if they are going to play with some rare toy. Even the Madam went with them."

Seo Jang Geum? Hadn't she returned to Goryeo? How had Qiaoqiao become involved with Seo Jang Geum? Lin couldn't help but feel perplexed.

Luo Ning, having heard of Seo Jang Geum's reputation, and more about her flirty relationship with his big brother, glanced at Lin Wanrong and smiled, "This Miss Jang Geum is quite skillful. She managed to win over both Eldest Miss Xiao and Qiaoqiao. Big brother, don't you think there will be more people speaking for her in the future?"

Lin Wanrong gave an awkward smile and asked Huan'er, "How did Seo Jang Geum become so familiar with Qiaoqiao? What did she invite the Eldest Miss and Qiaoqiao to do?"

"Brother San, on the second day after you went to Shandong, Miss Seo Jang Geum came looking for you. As it happened, you were not here, and Miss Qiaoqiao spoke a few words with her. I don't know what they talked about, but Miss Qiaoqiao became very excited. Even Eldest Miss talked with her for a long time. They became familiar with each other, and whenever they had free time over these past few days, the two young ladies would go visit Miss Seo Jang Geum. They have become quite friendly," Huan'er explained the matter in brief.

Seo Jang Geum's delay in Great Hua was probably due to what she sought, Master Lin thought. Since he hadn't yet reported to the Emperor, they hadn't received a definite response, so they naturally wouldn't leave easily. This girl was quite cunning, realizing she could influence his wife. With her vast knowledge and firm character, she easily won the favor of Qiaoqiao and Eldest Miss, so their friendship was no surprise.

Lin Wanrong settled down, chatted with Luo Ning for a while, and then gave her a tour. When Luo Ning saw the mandarin duck pillows in big brother's room, she thought of Qiaoqiao's daily romantic

time with big brother. Her face turned red, and she quickly grabbed his hand, firmly deciding to move out.

“Big brother, is big brother back?” Qiaoqiao's cheerful voice came from outside the door. Her delicate face was flushed with excitement from her haste. Seeing big brother smiling in front of her, she couldn't help but let out a soft cry and rushed into his arms.

Lin Wanrong laughed and hugged her, giving her a quick kiss on the face. Qiaoqiao exclaimed in surprise, her face turning beet red as she looked behind him at Luo Ning and joyfully said, “Sister Ning, how come you are here too?”

Luo Ning smiled, taking her hand and tapping her nose, “I've been here for a while, but you were too busy being affectionate with big brother to notice. Now that you have married your husband, things are indeed different.” Luo Ning's face warmed, and her last words seemed to be speaking of herself.

Qiaoqiao shyly lowered her head and whispered in Miss Luo's ear, “Sister, aren't you the same? Now that big brother has gone to Shandong, Sister must have had her long-cherished wish fulfilled! Hee hee, congratulations, Sister!”

“Naughty girl!” Luo Ning cried sweetly, pouncing on her, and the two collapsed onto the small bed, tumbling into a playful mess. Master Lin watched with unblinking eyes, thinking, ‘Good, this is just the warm-up, the real drama will be performed tonight.’

Behind Qiaoqiao, Eldest Miss who was following glanced at the two women in the midst of playful teasing, sighed slightly, and was about to leave. Lin Wanrong's eyes were quick, and he grabbed her hand in surprise, saying, "Eh, Eldest Miss, not seeing you for a few days, how have you lost so much weight?"

"Where have I lost weight?" Eldest Miss withdrew her hand, snorting coldly, "It's just that your sights have broadened, and others can't catch your eye."

Seeing her gaze fall on Luo Ning, her face full of bitter resentment, Lin Wanrong suddenly understood. Eldest Miss had already been somewhat envious of Luo Ning back in Jinling; now, seeing that he had brought her, she was naturally irritated.

He quickly grabbed her little hand, leading her out of the room, his face full of worry, "Eldest Miss, you know, I have my difficulties."

"What difficulties do you have?" Eldest Miss looked at him, angrily saying, "With such beautiful and close companions, all of whom have fallen for you, this is the good fortune that all men dream of in the world. What are you worried about? Is it that you think you haven't attracted enough young ladies?"

She stood tall, her eyebrows raised in anger, her figure slender and elegant, her beautiful and smooth cheeks flushed with a hint of annoyed pink, her cheeks like dewdrops, her nose like powdered rouge, her eyes misting up, and her full bosom heaving, utterly adorable. Lin Wanrong was stunned, mumbling, "Eldest Miss, you look really beautiful."

"What's the use of your sweet talk? You think this will make me not angry at you?" Xiao Yuruo turned her head, humming softly, her voice much softer.

"Ah, Eldest Miss, you have every right to be angry, and actually, I'm very distressed too." Lin Wanrong frowned, putting on a pitiful look, "You probably know some of my situation. Whether it's Ning'er or Qiaoqiao, I never actively pursued them. These feelings just happened naturally, and it was too late to avoid them. Moreover, they shared hardships with me, and it's hard to abandon them. If you were me, what would you do? Could you cast aside one of them?"

Stealing a glance at Eldest Miss's face, seeing her quietly listening without speaking, Lin Wanrong sighed in relief, smirking, "Actually, from another perspective, isn't my popularity proof of Eldest Miss's good taste? You surely can't love someone whom nobody else likes, can you?"

"Who likes you? Shameless!" Eldest Miss turned around, her neck flushed red.

Lin Wanrong grabbed her little hand, gently stroking it a few times, smiling, "Even if you don't like me, I like you, that's good enough. Eldest Miss, actually, these days when I went to Shandong, I've been thinking about you every day. Even last night, I dreamt of going back to Jinling with you."

"I don't believe your nonsense. You had Luo Ning's company every day; how could you think of me?" Eldest Miss's face was flushed, and after shaking her little hand a few times without breaking free from his grip, she gave up the useless effort and let him hold her.

"Really, I swear to the heavens," Lin Wanrong raised his right hand, his expression utterly sincere, "If I didn't think of Eldest Miss every day, I'd become her ox or horse and let her ride me for a lifetime."

Xiao Yuruo chuckled, then immediately realized that she shouldn't, quickly straightening her face, "Who wants to ride you for a lifetime? You wish. With all your flowery words, you must have used them on many other women. They come easily to you. It would be strange to believe you."

Though she spoke thus, her small hand clenched his palm tightly. Her skin, clear and lustrous as jade, flushed a faint rose color, and her autumn water-like eyes sparkled, alluring and captivating.

Lin Wanrong's heart itched as he looked at her, and he playfully tickled her palm for a moment, then slowly let his hand drift toward her waist.

"What are you doing?" Xiao Yuruo's voice trembled slightly, whispering, "Qiaoqiao and the others are still in the room!"

Lin Wanrong wrapped his arm around her slender waist, pressing her against the wall. He breathed softly in her ear and chuckled, "They are talking among themselves, and we are having our conversation; one does not disturb the other."

Feeling his body leaning towards her like a blazing fire, Eldest Miss's heart rate accelerated manyfold. Her small hands, as if unsure where to place them, gently pinched his back a few times, "Don't come closer, you rogue, hmm—"

Lin Wanrong lowered his head and kissed her lush and alluring red lips, swallowing her soft protestations. Eldest Miss felt weak all over, and the longing of the past few days surged out like a volcanic eruption. Knowing full well that the time and place were both inappropriate, she was unable to resist his fiery passion, and she melted into his ardent embrace.

Lin Wanrong's arms were incredibly strong, and the two were tightly embraced as if they had merged into one. Eldest Miss felt dizzy and breathless, her waist soft and delicate, her full and elastic chest pressed against Lin Wanrong's chest like two dollops of cream. His large hand slid slowly down her slender waist, about to touch her hip, when a soft cough was heard. Eldest Miss's body trembled, and she hastily pushed him away. Seeing the person who had arrived, her face turned bright red, "Mother, Mother—"

Lin Wanrong hurriedly turned around to find Madam Xiao standing in the courtyard, her face stern, staring coldly at him. Eldest Miss quickly gave him a gentle push. Lin Wanrong was flustered, his mind momentarily short-circuited, and he blurted out, "Mother, Mother—"

"Ah! You're killing me!" Eldest Miss covered her blushing cheeks, stamped her foot, and ran off.

Lin Wanrong wiped away a cold sweat, cursing himself, 'Damn, what a slip-up. Why did I say those words?'

Madam Xiao's face was calm as she slowly said, "Lin San, are you here to propose marriage?"

Madam Xiao was indeed clever. Lin Wanrong quickly nodded and laughed, "Exactly, exactly. I was just about to mention it, but it seems Madam Xiao beat me to it."

Madam Xiao snorted and said, "You'd better think it through and not change your mind later. Although the Xiao family consists of a lone widow and daughters, we are not to be trifled with. If you are sincere, well and good, but if you're trying to take advantage quietly, even if you were the Emperor himself, I would hold you to account."

Caught in the act of stealing a kiss from her daughter, Lin Wanrong felt ashamed and laughed awkwardly, "What are you talking about, Madam? Taking advantage quietly? Could I, Lin San, stoop so low? I'm here today to propose, and I beg you to betroth your daughter to me. Here is the betrothal gift!"

He rummaged in his pocket for a while, producing banknotes, bee stings, a firearm, a bottle of sleeping potion—everything that a wanderer of the jianghu would have—and laid it all before Madam Xiao.

Madam Xiao's face slightly changed, and she picked up a colorful little booklet from the pile in front of her and started to flip through it nonchalantly. She snorted, "With these random and messy objects, you want to marry my daughter? That's far too simple. Oh, dear, what is this?!"

With a "slap," the colorful booklet was fiercely thrown to the ground. Madam Xiao turned around, visibly angry, her face tinged with a bright rosy hue, looking strikingly beautiful.

Lin Wanrong picked up the booklet, and his eyes widened at the sight of the vivid images of dragons and tigers and two lifelike little figures in various positions. It was the erotic picture album he had been carrying with him for a long time. In his haste, he had pulled it out without thinking, only to be caught red-handed by his future mother-in-law. How shameful and disgraceful!

"You shameless man, to hide such obscene material! How can I trust you with my daughter?" Madam Xiao's face was still flushed as she looked at him, both shy and angry.

"This is a misunderstanding, Madam." Master Lin picked up the booklet, looking extremely serious, "Having been in the Xiao family for so long, don't you know what kind of person I am? To be frank, my colleagues in the residence have even given me a nickname behind my back."

"What nickname?" Madam Xiao asked coldly.

Lin Wanrong, without blinking an eye, answered righteously, "My nickname is 'Charming to All, Upright and Unequaled'! Think about it, how could someone as upright as Lin San ever engage in such vulgar acts? I don't believe it, and neither do you, Madam. Isn't that right?"

Madam Xiao glared at him fiercely and huffed, "The evidence is right in front of us, and you still want to argue?"

"What is evidence? What you see may not be the truth." Master Lin smiled mischievously, glancing around cautiously and lowering his voice, "Today, I will tell Madam a huge secret. Please watch—"

He picked up a bee needle from the ground, activated its mechanism, and with a whooshing sound, the needles were shot out, hitting a potted plant in the yard. The plant immediately withered and collapsed, surrounded by black smoke.

"What is this?" Madam Xiao stepped back in shock.

"This is a hidden weapon called a bee needle that I carry with me when I wander the martial world. And this is called a firearm." Master Lin played with the firearm, the firing pin clashing with a rattling noise.

"Wandering the martial world? Bee needle? Firearm?" Madam Xiao looked at him, perplexed, "Lin San, what do you mean by this?"

Lin Wanrong became unusually serious, "Madam, think back to our time in Jinling. Why did Mr. Xu value me so highly when we were strangers? How did the Eldest Miss and I escape unharmed from the White Lotus Sect? Why were the northern nomads afraid of me during the princess's martial contest, and why does the Emperor trust me? Have you ever thought about this?"

Indeed, when Lin San's various encounters and relationships were considered, everything seemed extraordinary. Was there a hidden secret to it all? Madam Xiao looked at him, her brow furrowed in confusion, and said nothing.

"Madam, to tell you the truth, on the surface, I may appear to be a mere servant in the Xiao mansion, but in reality, I am a top-notch martial artist, known in the jianghu as 'Quick Pleasure Cannon King.' Only you and a few others, like Qiaoqiao, know this secret. I don't tell it to ordinary people, so please be sure to keep it confidential. The reason I have been able to help the Xiao family complete so many impossible tasks is that I have the aid of divine martial arts, which makes the northern nomads fear me and the Emperor trust me."

"Divine martial arts assistance?!" Hearing his increasingly mystical words, Madam Xiao was half skeptical and half believing. But apart from this explanation, there really was no way to explain his miraculous experiences.

"Madam, what you saw in this little book might seem like erotic art at first glance, but appearances are meant to deceive the ordinary man. Vulgar people only look at its surface, but profound people can see its extraordinariness. This erotic art, in reality, represents a special martial art technique called 'Dongxuanzi's Thirty-Six Scatter Hands.' You see, this pose is called 'Flying Dragon in the Sky,' this one is 'Fierce Tiger Leaping Out,' and this move is even more amazing, called 'Golden Cicada Attaching Tail.' It can be used as a hidden attack, and it is one of the secrets of my school. Madam, please take a look but never reveal it."

Madam Xiao spat lightly and waved her hand, slapping the album away, so it fell on the ground. She turned her head, saying, "Speak properly, what do you show me this for?"

Lin Wanrong said sincerely, "I am telling you this earth-shaking secret today to gain your trust, so you won't misunderstand me anymore."

"I don't care about your 'Quick Pleasure Cannon King,'" Madam Xiao said, not easily deceived, and hummed coldly, "Since you have a contract with my Xiao family, you must naturally execute it as agreed. There's no escaping it."

"I haven't thought about running away," Master Lin said, smiling broadly, "Madam, what about my affair with the young lady? Have you agreed to it?"

"Lin San, don't play dumb with me," the Madam said with a slight smile, "You keep asking me to agree to your marriage with the young lady, but my Xiao family has two young ladies. Which one are you proposing to?"

"This..." Lin Wanrong hesitated, and just as he was about to shamelessly say he wanted both, Madam Xiao's face changed, "My daughters, Yuruo and Yushuang, are each a phoenix among people. If you want to marry both, I advise you to give up on that idea early. Yuruo, Yushuang, you can only marry one of them!"

"No way!!!" Lin Wanrong was horrified, 'How can you say such a thing, Madam? You know full well the passionate relationship I have with both young ladies, so why obstruct it? If I can really only marry one, should I choose the eldest or the younger sister?'

"What do you mean, 'no way'?" Madam Xiao said, dissatisfied, "You have many beloved women around you. Asking you to marry one of my daughters is already a compromise on their part. What more do you want?"

Seeing that the Madam's stance was quite resolute and she seemed intent on separating the lovers, Master Lin hurriedly called out, "Madam, let's negotiate further. How about this, today I'll be the brother-in-law to the Second Miss, and tomorrow I'll be the brother-in-law to the Eldest Miss. I'll take on both roles. Ah, it will be hard, but the capable should work harder!"

"Becoming the brother-in-law to the Second Miss today and the Eldest Miss tomorrow?" Lin San's words were full of twists and turns. The Madam pondered for a long while before she regained her senses, her anger suddenly flaring up. "You shameless man, you want both of them? Dream on! My Xiao family's two young ladies will never serve the same man. Whether you want Yushuang or Yuruo, Lin San, you must think it through. Once you've decided, prepare the betrothal gifts, ask Master Xu to be the matchmaker, and come to propose in an upright and open manner. My Xiao family's daughters will never engage in sneaky affairs."

With a "slap" sound, the lady raised her small foot and kicked the abandoned "Dongxuanzi's Thirty-Six Scatter Hands" far away. Angry, she turned around and walked away with long strides!

Chapter 397 Seo Jang Geum's Invention?

"Big brother, what were you talking to Madam about?" Qiaoqiao and Luo Ning walked out, laughing and joking. They noticed that the face of Madam Xiao was flushed with a hint of displeasure as she flicked her sleeve and left. They had no idea what had happened, so they asked Lin Wanrong.

"Oh, it was nothing," Lord Lin said, his face full of righteousness, and he spoke seriously, "I was discussing an academic issue with my wife concerning the 'Dongxuanzi's Thirty-Six Scatter Hands.' It's very profound; I'll teach you when I have time."

Luo Ning snorted in disbelief, covering her lips, "Big brother, you're so good at talking nonsense, I don't believe you at all. Madam Xiao left in such a hurry; surely you've done something inappropriate that upset her. If you ask me, it might have something to do with the two young ladies from the Xiao family."

She was not entirely right, but not far from the truth. Who would have thought that the passionate and charming Miss Luo would be so astute? Lin Wanrong laughed and played dumb, grabbing Qiaoqiao with one hand and wrapping his other arm around Luo Ning, caressing her waist, and he said, "You sisters have been reunited, hiding in the room and whispering. Let me hear what you were talking about."

Qiaoqiao giggled and interjected, "I was listening to Sister Ning tell of your heroic deeds, big brother. How did you conquer her? Tell us about it. Seeing Sister Ning's radiant face, I think she must have tasted great sweetness already."

"You naughty girl," Luo Ning's cheeks turned peachy red, and she rushed to cover Qiaoqiao's little mouth. The laughter of the two women echoed throughout the courtyard. Watching the graceful figures of the two women frolic, Lin Wanrong felt a faint sense of peace in his heart. Life was short; how many times could one enjoy such warm moments? Contentment was the key.

The two women played for a while, finally stopping, panting and embracing. Luo Ning glanced around, sticking out her bright red tongue, making a face, and carelessly said, "I almost forgot, this is the Xiao residence. Qiaoqiao, have we been too presumptuous?"

The master of the Xiao family, Eldest Miss, had shyly retreated into her room, and the Madam had left in anger, leaving only the three of them in the courtyard. It felt odd, as though they were neither guests nor hosts. At this, Qiaoqiao fell silent, and the two of them waited for their big brother to speak.

Lin Wanrong waved his hand generously, smiling, "No worries, no worries, we're all family, soon to be related by marriage. Everyone, relax, that's how we'll feel close."

The girls didn't understand what he meant by "related by marriage." Luo Ning gave him a charming glance and softly said, "Big brother, I've asked Qiaoqiao earlier, the mansion the Emperor has rewarded is all ready. We can move in anytime. I think we should move sooner, to give Madam Xiao and Eldest Miss some peace, so as not to disturb them for too long."

It seemed that Ning'er didn't want to stay in the Xiao family any longer. But regarding Eldest Miss, he had just taken advantage of her; it wouldn't be right to just leave. Moreover, contractually, he was still part of the Xiao family, unable to leave.

"Qiaoqiao, my little darling, what do you think? Should we move or not?" Seeing Qiaoqiao's somewhat reluctant look, Lin Wanrong held her little hand, caressing it as he asked.

Qiaoqiao hesitated for a moment, whispering, "I heard it from big brother and Sister Ning. But since I came to the capital, Madam and Eldest Miss have treated me like a child or sister, with unparalleled warmth. I can't bear to leave like this. If there's a way for us all to never be apart, that would be best."

This wasn't really a problem. As long as Master Lin succeeded in his marriage proposal this time, becoming both a brother-in-law and a brother-in-law to the sisters, everything would be perfect, especially since the mansion bestowed by the Emperor was spacious.

Lin Wanrong gave a frivolous smile, and while Ning'er wasn't looking, he rubbed Miss Luo's tender little face. Luo Ning blushed all over, quickly dodging, her face flushed as she glanced at Qiaoqiao, shyly saying, "Big brother, don't tease people, Qiaoqiao is still here."

Master Lin smacked his lips and kissed Qiaoqiao's bright red little face, triumphantly saying, "Now it's even, neither of my two wives can be left out."

The two women blushed with joy, bowing their heads together. Lin Wanrong slapped Luo Ning's raised hips, leering with a smile, "Ning'er, where's your bold declaration? Have you discussed with Qiaoqiao about tonight—"

"Big brother—" Luo Ning cried out in alarm, her face burning hot, her eyes soft and tender, almost as if they could squeeze out water. She tightly held Qiaoqiao's little hand, her voice as fine as a mosquito, "As long as big brother likes it, and Qiaoqiao is willing, Ning'er can do anything, willing to do anything."

Qiaoqiao looked at Luo Ning in confusion, "Sister Ning, what are you talking about? What does big brother want you to do?"

Luo Ning lowered her head and whispered a few words in Qiaoqiao's ear. Qiaoqiao let out a cry of surprise, her face blushing to her ears, her little fists pattering on Lin Wanrong's chest, "Big brother, you're so bad. Sister Ning, how can you not control big brother, even aiding and abetting him like this?"

Luo Ning, seemingly gentle on the outside but passionate inside, took Qiaoqiao's little hand and comforted her, "Big brother is just such a wicked person, Sister, you know that. We three spouses are one, eating from the same pot, sleeping on the same bed, what can't we talk about, what can't we do? Besides, Qiaoqiao, what did big brother do to you that day in Jinling in my boudoir? Don't I know? Hee hee, there's even a sensual painting as evidence, you little girl, you're much more open than me."

Qiaoqiao let out a whimper, quickly covering her mouth, the two women's bodies heating up, unable to resist stealing a glance at Lin Wanrong, quickly turning their heads away.

The Talented Lady Luo, knew the big picture, recognized the essence, and Master Lin secretly sighed in his heart, 'My Ning'er, not only is her figure and appearance top-notch, but even in procuring women for her husband, she is so dedicated and loyal, truly virtuous and lovable.' He laughed and said, "Let's not rush to move, but occasionally spicing things up is necessary. Tonight, I will ask the Eldest Miss for a vacation. Let's live in a new house. There can't be too many people, just the three of us."

These words were spoken by The Talented Lady Luo, and she didn't expect them to come true so quickly. Seeing big brother winking at her with a lewd smile, Luo Ning's heart raced, her face burning, her body softening, unable to resist secretly holding his big hand, her soft little fingers scratching a few times, further arousing Master Lin's urgency. If it weren't for the wrong time and place, he would have publicly executed his grand plan of seduction.

Qiaoqiao saw Big Brother and Sister Ning begin to exchange affectionate glances right in front of her. She never expected that the usually timid Sister Ning would have such a charming side. Qiaoqiao's heart was startled for a moment, and suddenly she heard Ning'er whisper in her ear, "Qiaoqiao, naughty big brother said we will stay out tonight. Will you go?"

"Ah," Qiaoqiao panicked inside. Saying "yes" was not right, and "no" was even worse. Her face turned red as fire, and after pondering for a long time, she finally whimpered and buried her head in Ning'er's arms, not daring to lift it again.

Luo Ning, shy and coquettish, glanced at him with a myriad of emotions and gently patted Qiaoqiao's shoulder, "Sister, he is so wicked. Tonight, let's deal with him together. What do you say?"

Qiaoqiao softly hummed in agreement, not daring to speak. Lin Wanrong laughed heartily. This little girl was tricked and didn't even know it. Ning'er, this girl, had always been trying to emulate Sister An, truly possessing the potential of a fox spirit.

"Big brother, how will you thank me?" Seeing that the courtyard was quiet and no one was around, the charming fox spirit bit her red lips, her eyes flowing with emotion, and her face filled with spring feelings that could no longer be concealed. She whispered in his ear.

Is it bearable, or is it unbearable? Lord Lin gently caressed Ning'er's plump buttocks, from the tip of her buttocks to her slender leg crease. The soft feeling was heart-stirring, and he lewdly smiled, "Little darling, tonight we will practice a magical technique called 'Dongxuanzi's Thirty-Six Scatter Hands,' and there are illustrations too!"

Luo Ning's body was numb, and she collapsed softly into his arms with Qiaoqiao, her small mouth exhaling fragrances like orchids and musk, tempting the heart. Qiaoqiao, huddled with her in big brother's arms, felt her heart was about to jump out.

With two beauties in his arms, was there anything more joyful in the world? Lord Lin slowly enjoyed the moment. These two women, one charming and the other shy, had different tastes. Touching and grabbing were inevitable, but with the example of Eldest Miss, he dared not go too far for the time being.

With Luo Ning's cooperation, a "happy" life was imminent. Although Lord Lin was itching inside, he knew that haste makes waste. He forcibly gathered his mind, kissed Qiaoqiao's face, and smiled, "By the way, Qiaoqiao, I heard that during the days I was away, Seo Jang Geum got along well with you. Is that true?"

In front of Sister Ning'er, being frivolously teased by big brother, Qiaoqiao was panting and quickly covered her half-unbuttoned little cotton jacket. She nodded and shyly said, "The day after you left, Sister Jang Geum came to visit the mansion. We chatted for a while, and she taught me many Goryeo dishes, such as cold noodles, kimchi, and soju. I made some and was waiting for you to taste them."

Soju? Lord Lin scoffed at the mention of soju. Was it even wine? As bland as water, drinking ten bottles wouldn't even intoxicate a cat. It was far from the taste of Great Hua. However, the cold noodles and kimchi could be used as a gimmick to enhance the fame of the restaurant.

"Did she teach you how to make medicinal meals?" Speaking of serious matters, Qiaoqiao's shyness lessened. Lin Wanrong smiled, "That's her specialty, very famous in the Goryeo royal family. I heard that the Goryeo king can't sleep without eating medicinal meals."

Qiaoqiao looked at him with a surprised delight, "Big brother, did Sister Jang Geum even tell you about this? She said the medicinal dishes come from Great Hua's nourishing diet and possess various effects such as nourishing the Yin and moisturizing the lungs, enriching the blood and invigorating the spleen, and fortifying Yang and nourishing the kidneys. Their effects are incredibly magical, and now she is perfecting the method of medicinal dishes, intending to teach me in a few days."

'What kind of medicinal dishes could be so magical, even being able to fortify Yang and nourish the kidneys? It can't be tiger, deer, or bear tendons, can it?' Lin Wanrong chuckled, pleased to see Qiaoqiao showing interest in this area. He thought it best to let her interact with Seo Jang Geum on this. If she could bring the eight major cuisines of our great Hua to Goryeo, the merit of this cultural invasion would fall on Qiaoqiao.

"What about Eldest Miss? Is Eldest Miss also going to learn about medicinal dishes? How is she getting along so well with Seo Jang Geum?" Lin Wanrong inquired further.

"What do you mean 'getting along so well'? If Eldest Miss hears that, she'll never forgive you." Qiaoqiao giggled louder, "Eldest Miss is working on something serious. Sister Jang Geum said that she could help the Xiao family open a cloth store in Goryeo, as Goryeo girls are more beauty-conscious. If the Xiao family can open a store there, it will surely find a huge market."

No wonder, given Eldest Miss's temperament, the challenge of opening a shop abroad was indeed an extremely exciting challenge and absolutely irresistible. Seo Jang Geum must have understood Eldest Miss's mindset and intentionally catered to her tastes. Moreover, once the Xiao family established a shop in Goryeo, Lin Wanrong would never stand idly by if Dongyin wanted to take any action against Goryeo. Truly, it was a brilliant idea.

"Not only that, Sister Jang Geum also gave us several nice things. Not only I and Eldest Miss, but even Madam was extremely pleased. Before you came back today, we went to Sister Jang Geum's place to try them." Qiaoqiao took out a small bag from her bosom, fetched two small boxes, and joyfully handed them to Lin Wanrong, "Big brother, take a look, do you recognize this?"

What could have made Qiaoqiao and Eldest Miss so delighted and even attracted the mature and wise Madam? Lin Wanrong was deeply curious as he slowly opened the first small box, inside of which was a tiny amount of transparent liquid with a faint fragrance. Lord Lin looked up and down, left and right, but couldn't figure out what it was.

"You can't recognize it even with your broad knowledge, big brother?" Qiaoqiao teased, grabbing Luo Ning, "Sister Ning'er, please help, let me demonstrate for big brother."

Luo Ning also didn't recognize what it was, but seeing Qiaoqiao acting mysteriously, she leaned over with a smile, "Qiaoqiao, what are you going to do?"

Qiaoqiao cooed, "Never mind, I assure you it will be a pleasant surprise, and you'll soon fall in love with this thing. Close your eyes first!"

Luo Ning obediently closed her eyes, and Qiaoqiao took a soft brush from the small box's lid, dipped it into the transparent liquid, and applied it a few times to Luo Ning's long eyelashes. Strangely enough, the liquid caused her long eyelashes to curl upwards slightly, forming a beautiful arc, and along with her charming expression, she looked even more enchanting.

"Done!" Qiaoqiao clapped her hands with a smile, carefully putting the soft brush back into the box. Luo Ning slowly opened her eyes, her long, curved eyelashes trembling slightly, adding a seductive charm to her look.

"Mascara?!" Lin Wanrong could no longer conceal the astonishment in his heart and cried out loud.

"So, big brother knew about it." Qiaoqiao looked at him joyfully, "That's right, this is mascara. Sister Jang Geum said it could make our eyes look brighter and more charming. Seeing Sister Ning'er today, it's indeed true."

Luo Ning suddenly grabbed Qiaoqiao's little hand, "Dear sister, is this really something Miss Seo Jang Geum gave you? It's amazing! I also want to buy some from Miss Seo. Oh, what's the other thing?"

Qiaoqiao opened the second small box, revealing some faint grey powder that shimmered slightly. She took a soft brush, absorbed some of it, and gently spread it on Luo Ning's eyelids. A soft and charming glow appeared, making Luo Ning even more attractive.

"Eyeshadow, this is eyeshadow." Lin Wanrong was utterly astonished, finding it hard to believe. Mascara and eyeshadow, common makeup items used by women in his previous life, how could they appear in Seo Jang Geum's hands? Were these inventions of hers? It was extraordinary, on par with his own perfume! No wonder even Madam Xiao was fascinated by them; there wasn't a woman in the world who wouldn't like them.

"So big brother recognizes both of them, that's great!" Qiaoqiao clapped her hands and laughed, "Sister Jang Geum said that these two items are private belongings of us women, and only two people in the world know their names. I said that big brother would surely recognize them, and I guessed right."

Lin Wanrong looked astonished, "Qiaoqiao, are these given to you by Seo Jang Geum? Did she make this mascara and eyeshadow?"

Qiaoqiao shook her head, "Sister Jang Geum didn't mention that, and we liked them so much that we forgot to ask at the moment. But they must be from Goryeo. Big brother, if you want to know, I'll ask her next time."

That girl Seo Jang Geum, astonishingly, had this up her sleeve. If these two items were promoted, the profit would surely be no less than that of perfume. But why hadn't he heard of them before? Were they operated by the royal family of Goryeo? He thought about it and shook his head again. If they were managed by the Goryeo royal family, they would have been known in the Central Plains long ago. Beauty-loving women like Madam Xiao and Eldest Miss would not have been unaware of them. It seemed that the secret still lay with Seo Jang Geum.

Indeed, just as Qiaoqiao had described, Luo Ning became enamored with these two items in the blink of an eye. Her interest in visiting Goryeo grew even more intense, and even the mischievous little Qiaoqiao was filled with curiosity about Goryeo, showing a strong inclination to go along. Seo Jang Geum's charm was not to be underestimated.

After chatting casually with the two young ladies, Lin Wanrong's mind was preoccupied with the matter of proposing marriage to Madam Xiao. He could only marry one between Eldest Miss and Second Miss, a decision that was greatly perplexing.

Thinking it over and over without reaching a conclusion, he decided to leave the matter aside for now. Mounting his prized horse, he quickly galloped toward the outskirts of the city. After a short while, he arrived at the camp of General Li Tai's army, where Du Xiuyuan had already received the news and came out to welcome him.

"Brother Du, how have you handled the matter I entrusted to you before going to Shandong?" Lin Wanrong dismounted, handing the reins to Xu Zhen, who was curiously stroking the horse's blood-red mane, and laughed, "Go on, take it for a stroll."

Xu Zhen was ecstatic, so thrilled that he didn't even have time to express his thanks. He mounted the horse, spurred the reins, and the horse let out a long neigh before galloping away.

"General Lin, I was just about to report to you," Du Xiuyuan smiled, "Those northern nomads, there has been some movement."

Chapter 398 The Search

"I came here precisely for this matter." Lin Wanrong nodded, patting Du Xiuyuan's shoulder with a smile, "Is it about those nomads wanting to play with the cannon?"

Du Xiuyuan looked at him in surprise, folding his hands in salute, "General, your strategic thinking is beyond compare; I'm nowhere close."

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, "What strategic thinking? Brother Du, don't flatter me. These northern nomads want to borrow this 'F*ck Cannon'; do you think they intend to use it for mountain hunting? They're obviously planning to use our Great Hua's cannons, it's clear as day."

Du Xiuyuan nodded, "Upon receiving your instructions, General, I dispatched personnel to watch over these northern nomads around the clock. When the F*ck Cannon was first delivered to their camp, the northern nomads were amazed. They had probably never seen such an exquisite piece of ironwork before, and immediately treated it like a treasure, allocating a large tent specifically for it. Although these northern nomads are skilled horse archers, they have suffered from our cannons during our battles. Naturally, they are extremely interested in it. It's quite funny. They consider themselves the majestic eagles of the vast plains, yet they don't know how to operate even this simple cannon, unaware of how to load ammunition or adjust its position, let alone fire it."

"Oh, really?" Lin Wanrong thought for a moment, puzzled, "Other people may not know, but the Turkic National Tutor Lu Dongzan is no ordinary man; he's knowledgeable and well-versed in physics. To say he doesn't know how to operate even this simple cannon is a bit exaggerated."

"I'm not sure about that," Du Xiuyuan replied, "Our spies have been watching them closely, including Lu Dongzan and the Turkic special envoy Ashile. They're completely baffled by the cannon. In the end, they had to find a few skilled blacksmiths from the city and reward them handsomely to learn how to operate it. This incident has become a joke known to everyone in the capital."

Lu Dongzan can't really be that stupid, can he? To make such a fuss in the city by hiring craftsmen? Isn't that playing dumb? Lin Wanrong frowned, "What happened later? Did they fire the cannon after learning how to use it?"

Du Xiuyuan laughed loudly, "General, this is a cannon that our Great Hua has long abandoned. How could it be fired? Besides, even if the northern nomads had the courage, they wouldn't dare fire it within the crucial areas of our capital. As for the gunpowder, our control is extremely strict; they wouldn't be able to get their hands on it."

Strict control? Lin Wanrong chuckled. On his way back from Shandong, he had almost been blown sky-high by thousands of pounds of gunpowder, even endangering his fairy sister's life and his own. And this young man dared to talk to him about strict control? If the northern nomads really had collusion with Prince Cheng, obtaining gunpowder would be effortless. Why would they need to buy it openly?

The northern nomads couldn't operate the cannon, and they couldn't buy gunpowder. The people of Great Hua had laughed their fill at their expense. Lu Dongzan's performance was so poor that it greatly surprised Lin Wanrong. A vague sense of discomfort arose in his heart, and he asked, "The northern nomads never tried to fire the cannon?"

"It won't fire, so any attempt is in vain. The northern nomads studied it for a few days, then gradually lost interest. They covered the cannon with cloth and ignored it. These days, they are packing their bags, preparing to return to their land."

Covering the cannon with cloth? Could it be that the northern nomads were so concerned about hygiene that they feared the dust would dirty the large cannon? After all, on the grasslands, these very people used horse dung as pillows to sleep on.

"Brother Du, did your men actually see the northern nomads cover the cannon with their own eyes?" Lin Wanrong furrowed his brows and asked.

"I didn't see it myself, and to avoid alarming the enemy, our spies kept their distance. But judging by the shape of the cover, it must be the cannon," Du Xiuyuan replied.

This was strange indeed. The northern nomads had been lingering in the capital for so long and finally obtained a cannon, so how could they possibly abandon it like this? Lin Wanrong thought for a moment and chuckled, "Brother Du, you said earlier that the northern nomads are leaving the capital. How much luggage did they pack? Were there several large carts to carry everything away?"

Du Xiuyuan exclaimed in surprise, "How did the general know? These northern nomads must be scared of poverty, coming to our great Huá, purchasing many things such as tea leaves and fabric, and filling a whole seven large carts."

"They must indeed be scared of poverty." Lin Wanrong grinned slyly. "Brother Du, when are these northern nomads leaving the capital?"

Du Xiuyuan looked at the sky and replied, "At dusk today, probably just starting now. These northern nomads are strange, preferring to travel at night rather than in the morning. Truly, the ways of foreigners are incorrigible."

"Not incorrigible, but rather, they have become exceedingly cunning." Lin Wanrong chuckled, swung himself onto a horse left behind by Xu Zhen, and said, "Brother Du, gather our men, let's go catch some thieves."

"Catch thieves? General Lin means to—" Du Xiuyuan suddenly realized, regretting, "Ah, how did I not think of that? Brothers, gather quickly!"

Du Xiuyuan's soldiers were all seasoned veterans brought by Lin Wanrong from Shandong, well-trained and quickly assembled. In no time, thousands of warhorses neighed, and hoofbeats thundered, heading north from the city.

As dusk approached, and the roads were empty, it was a perfect time to gallop. After a while, they hadn't spotted the northern nomads. Du Xiuyuan was anxious as fire; if not for General Lin's timely reminder, he almost fell for the northern nomads' trick. If they couldn't retrieve that object, he wouldn't know where to put his face.

Lin Wanrong, riding alongside him and noticing his anxiety, laughed, "Don't worry, the northern nomads are carrying something heavy, even if they had the best horses, they couldn't get far. Hey, look ahead—"

Du Xiuyuan looked in the direction General Lin was pointing, and not far away, dust was rolling. Dozens of fast horses were pulling four or five large carts, and the riders atop the horses were tall and robust, clearly the Turks.

"Charge—!" Du Xiuyuan shouted excitedly, and like an arrow released from its string, his horse bolted forward, followed by thousands of cavalymen, raising a thick cloud of dust on the highway.

From a distance, Du Xiuyuan could see clearly those high-nosed, deep-set eyes; they were indeed the Turks. These northern nomads seemed unaware of the pursuit behind them, the five large carts maintaining a tight formation, neither fast nor slow, blocking Lin Wanrong and the others' path.

Lin Wanrong's brow furrowed as he grabbed Xu Zhen, who was following him. "Little Xu, take five hundred brothers, cut through the shortcut, and search another fifty miles. When you find the northern nomads, seize them without hesitation."

"Halt! Halt quickly!" Du Xiuyuan spurred his horse forward, leading dozens of soldiers to the front of the horse team. The riders reined in their stallions, pulling hard on the reins. The tall and spirited warhorses tossed their heads, uttering a long neigh. Their front hooves leaped, their heads turned, and their manes fluttered in the wind, facing the northern nomads' horse team directly. The move was clean and beautifully executed, so smooth that even Lin Wanrong couldn't help but inwardly praise it.

The northern nomads' horse team slowly stopped, and from the midst of the ranks, a fast horse leaped out. Other Turkic people led their horses back, and Lin Wanrong saw that the leader was Lu Dongzan, the National Tutor of the Turkic Khanate.

Lu Dongzan placed his right hand on his chest in greeting, speaking in awkward Great Hua language, "Respected Sir, I am Lu Dongzan, the National Tutor of the Turkic Khanate, here on the orders of Bilge Khagan to visit Great Hua and build a long-lasting friendship between our two nations. Having successfully completed my mission with the Emperor's permission, I was about to return to the Turkic lands. But you have suddenly blocked our way with your soldiers. May I know your intention?"

The northern nomads were treacherous, and Du Xiuyuan had nearly been deceived. Anger bubbling within him, he snorted coldly, "You want to return to the Turkic lands? Leave what belongs to Great Hua and then go!"

"You jest, Sir," Lu Dongzan smiled, glancing at Du Xiuyuan and pointing to the carts behind him. "These goods indeed belonged to Great Hua, but we have traded horses and curved blades for them.

Now, they are ours. If you wish to retrieve what belongs to Great Hua, I'm afraid you will be disappointed."

The cavalry had already surrounded the horse team. Du Xiuyuan, not wanting to waste words, waved his hand, "Search!" Hundreds of soldiers dismounted, ready to approach the carts.

With a swish, the Turkic people's curved blades were suddenly drawn. The horses neighed in unison, and the riders stood with blades in hand, an intimidating and murderous presence.

Du Xiuyuan's men were unhesitant, thrusting forward with long spears and sabers, meeting the Turkic people's challenge. Du Xiuyuan grunted, "What's this? Do you intend to go to war with Great Hua?"

A trace of pride crossed Lu Dongzan's face: "The matter of war is not something you can speak of lightly. You have blocked our Turkic envoy for no reason. Are you challenging the Turkic Khanate? If you do not withdraw, I will protest to your Emperor. Can you bear the consequences of damaging relations between our countries?"

In terms of eloquence, how could Du Xiuyuan match Lu Dongzan, a talent in governance? Although a life-and-death battle between Great Hua and the Turkic was inevitable, he couldn't act rashly against these visiting envoys. Du Xiuyuan hesitated, unsure how to proceed.

"Brother Lu, after just a few days, your Great Hua language has become so fluent. I'm truly impressed," Lord Lin, riding a white horse, came smiling from among the soldiers, looking quite carefree.

Upon seeing Lin Wanrong arrive, Lu Dongzan's face changed momentarily but quickly returned to normal. He clasped his hands across his chest and greeted, "I'm at a loss to welcome the esteemed Lord Lin. My apologies for not having received you further on the way."

"Haha, Brother Lu, your command of the Great Hua language is even more authentic than mine. It seems this trip to Great Hua was not in vain!" General Lin said with a playful smile. His eyes fell on Du Xiuyuan, and he paused before shouting, "Du Xiuyuan, I told you to look for the Persian cat, what are you still doing here?"

"Persian cat?" Lu Dongzan glanced curiously at him and said seriously, "Lord Lin, you've come at the right time. This general suddenly and inexplicably blocked our Turkic delegation's way and wants to search my carriages. My Lord, is this how Great Hua treats its guests?"

“Oh, is that so?” Lin Wanrong feigned surprise and smiled, “Brother Lu, this is actually a misunderstanding. Here’s what happened: A few days ago, His Majesty bestowed me a Persian cat, a tribute from Persia. Coincidentally, my seventh wife is very fond of the little creature, unable to sleep without seeing it a few times a day. Yesterday, she took it out for a stroll, but the creature mysteriously disappeared near here. Ah, I won’t hide it from you, Brother Lu, I am most fond of this wife. For this Persian cat, I’ve deployed troops, searching this area for two days and nights without even drinking water. Having to serve the Emperor and my wife is not easy for me. You, on the other hand, enjoy the company of those norther nomads beauties, drinking and enjoying yourself every night. Brother Lu, please let it go, for we are fellow men.”

“This…” General Lin’s “appeal to emotion” left Lu Dongzan somewhat at a loss, who then said hesitantly, “Your lady lost the Persian cat yesterday, but we only arrived today. How could the cat be hiding in our carriages?”

“You never know, that little creature has legs, and it runs faster than a donkey. I couldn’t catch it, and it escaped.” Lin Wanrong chuckled, “Never mind something with legs; even something without legs can run on its own. Brother Lu, do you believe it?”

Lu Dongzan pretended not to hear his words and shook his head, “Lord Lin, if these were my belongings, I would not only allow you to search but would even give them to you for free if you wanted. But these gifts are prepared for Bilge Khagan. If they were searched, I’m afraid it would be highly disrespectful.”

“Is it really that serious? It’s just a search for a Persian cat; it won’t ruin anything. If your Bilge Khagan blames us, tell him to come to me directly. I am a very hospitable person, as you know, Brother Lu. How about this: I’ll give you time to think it over, and I’ll count to five. If you don’t object, I’ll take it as consent.”

Lu Dongzan hesitated for a moment, and just as he was waiting for Lord Lin to count one, two, three, four, he heard Lord Lin directly shout, “Five! — Oh, Brother Lu, I knew you would agree. You’re so straightforward. Du Xiuyuan, what are you standing there for?”

People said Great Hua was a land of etiquette, but how did it produce a maverick like Lin San? Other than admiration, Lu Dongzan felt nothing but admiration.

Seeing Du Xiuyuan leading men and horses to search the large carriages, Lu Dongzan’s face remained composed, showing not the slightest sign of nervousness. Lin Wanrong seemed

unconcerned as well, smiling and saying, "Brother Lu, do you still have any of that pungent herb? Could you spare a few ounces for me? I'm quite craving it."

"I don't have any left either," Lu Dongzan shook his head. "This thing is extremely precious. Even Bilge Khagan doesn't use a few pounds in a year. What we had was given to you some days ago."

"Is that so?" Lord Lin smiled mysteriously. "A few days ago, a certain personage also invited me to taste this pungent herb. Brother Lu, do you know who he was?"

Lu Dongzan's face changed, and he stammered a few times before forcing himself to say, "Is that so? I didn't know. Oh, My Lord, how is the search going? We must hurry on our way."

Hundreds of soldiers turned the numerous large carriages upside down, but their search yielded nothing. Du Xiuyuan came over with a dejected look, "General, we didn't find your wife's Persian cat."

Chapter 399 The Small Cannon

Lu Dongzan smiled and glanced at Du Xiuyuan, without a word, the color of contempt was plain to see.

"Didn't find it?" Lord Lin snorted. "This little beast runs fast. If I catch it, I'll definitely deal with it properly. Ah, Brother Lu, where were we?"

Lord Lin rambled on, but Lu Dongzan had no time to waste on him. Crossing his arms and bowing, he spoke solemnly, "Lord Lin, the vehicles have been searched, and the Persian cat was not taken with us. Can you rest assured now? Bilge Khagan is eagerly awaiting our return with news of friendship with the Great Hua. With the Khagan's orders upon me, I dare not delay. Could you please let us embark quickly?"

"Embark?" Lin Wanrong laughed. "Brother Lu, you are a guest from afar, and I haven't had a good match with you yet. How can you leave so soon? The Turks and my Great Hua are thousands of miles apart. It will take at least ten days to half a month to travel. It wouldn't hurt to wait another half hour, as I have something more to say to you."

Lu Dongzan was momentarily stunned, appearing to glance inadvertently into the distance, his face as calm as ever. "What else would Lord Lin have me do? Please speak your mind."

Lin Wanrong waved his hand, and Du Xiuyuan handed him an object. Lin Wanrong played with it for a moment, smiling, "Brother Lu, do you recognize this?"

"A cannon?!" Lu Dongzan's face showed surprise. In Lin Wanrong's hand was a small wooden model of a cannon, palm-sized, exquisitely crafted.

"This little toy is made by the skilled craftsmen of Great Hua. The children love it, and you can buy it everywhere," Lin Wanrong laughed. "Just like how you Turkic people ride horses all year long, under pressure, your cannons are all this small size."

"My Lord, is this for me?" A smile crept onto Lu Dongzan's face. This Lord Lin seemed quite warm-hearted, even remembering to give him a gift as he leave.

"Oh, this is too big for you to use; I'll leave it to my pet dog Wangcai. Here's what I'm giving you." Lord Lin waved his hand again, and Du Xiuyuan, holding back laughter, pulled out another small object. Lu Dongzan looked at it and was instantly dumbfounded. This time it was another cannon model, but only one-third the size of the previous one, thumb-length, with a thin, frail barrel, obviously a substandard product.

"Hmm, this one is about right." Lord Lin examined the tiny cannon with satisfaction, his face glowing. "Brother Lu, this is specially made by my Great Hua. A concise version of the small cannon designed for foreigners, limited edition, not available in the market, and highly collectible. Just as the saying goes, 'A treasured sword for the hero, a small cannon for the Turk.' Now I present it to you. You must treasure it."

'A useless trinket that even a child wouldn't want, and you have the gall to gift it to me? What I gave you, the nose-piercing Grass, the sweat-blood treasure horse, which isn't worth a fortune?' Lu Dongzan was torn between laughter and tears, but seeing Lord Lin's seriousness, he had to pretend to accept it with enthusiasm, "gratefully" saying, "Thank you, Lord Lin, for this generous gift. May we now proceed?"

"Leave? Oh, you can, of course you can. Eh, why don't I see your country's special envoy, Ashile? I have prepared a small cannon for him too." Lord Lin spoke with exuberant enthusiasm.

Lu Dongzan hastily shook his head, "Oh, Ashile had other matters to attend to and left last night. I thanked you on his behalf for your kind intentions."

In the distance, clouds of dust were rising, and the urgent sound of hooves broke the silence. Lin Wanrong chuckled as he put away the small cannon, "Is that so? He must have run faster than my Persian cat. Eh, isn't that Xu Zhen? Du Xiuyuan, go and see what's going on. Don't block the way for Master Lu Dongzan; he's in a hurry to hit the road."

Ahead, the dust was billowing as hundreds of cavalymen escorted three large carts and dozens of Turkic people towards them. Leading the way, spirited and proud, was Xu Zhen himself. Lu Dongzan's face changed abruptly at the sight of the carts, and he quickly signaled to his guard knights. The Turks raised their sabers high, and in the light of the newly lit fires, they glinted with a cold brilliance.

"Boom!" "Boom!" Two loud blasts rang out, followed by a distant flicker of firelight. The startled horses of the Turkic cavalry reared and neighed, the riders scrambling to tighten the reins and grip the horses' bellies. The horses jumped frantically, almost throwing off their riders. It took a while for them to calm down, their formation in complete disarray.

Du Xiuyuan excitedly said, "General Lin, our Divine Machine Unit soldiers are operating the cannons ahead. These two shots are accurate!"

"Really?" Lin Wanrong said, smiling and shaking his head, "Tell them to fire a few more shots to send off Master Lu Dongzan. They've come such a long way, after all."

Xu Zhen galloped over, dismounted, his face covered in dust and not caring to wipe it away, cheerfully said, "General, when I patrolled ahead twenty miles, I found something unusual with the Turks—"

"I protest! I protest—" Xu Zhen's words were interrupted by a harsh voice in the Great Hua language coming from the front, from one of the three surrounded carts, a person yelling at the top of his lungs.

"What are you screaming about?" Two of Xu Zhen's lieutenants spurred their horses forward and whipped the back of the foreigner's horse. The frightened horse leaped forward but was blocked by the crowd. It let out a long neigh and reared, nearly vertical to the ground. The Turkic man lost his grip and fell heavily to the ground, provoking laughter from the Great Hua soldiers. Lu Dongzan's face turned ashen, and his surrounding Turkic cavalry could hardly contain themselves, raising their sabers to charge but were stopped by Lu Dongzan's glare.

"Lord Lin, what is the meaning of this?" Lu Dongzan shouted, unable to contain his anger any longer.

"Master Lu, what do you mean by this?" Lord Lin widened his eyes, feigning confusion, "I don't seem to have offended you."

Lu Dongzan snorted, a hint of malice in his eyes, "Ashile is my Turkic envoy, sent by Bilge Khagan to pay respects to the Emperor of Great Hua. An old saying in Great Hua goes, 'Do not kill the envoy in times of war between two countries.' Why do you insult Ashile in this manner?"

"Ashile?" Lord Lin's eyes widened even more than Lu Dongzan's. "You say the one being stopped up ahead is Envoy Ashile? Ah, how we have delayed such an honored guest. A few days ago, Shandong was plagued with banditry, and the areas near the capital were affected. The Emperor ordered increased patrols, and all suspicious persons were to be arrested. Little did we know, we mistakenly captured Lord Ashile. But, Brother Lu, I must say you've confused me. You mentioned earlier that Brother Ashile left the capital last night. How has he appeared around here now?"

"This..." Lu Dongzan hesitated for a moment, unsure of how to explain. Xu Zhen beside him saluted, "Reporting to General Lin, I was ordered to patrol within fifty li of the capital. Twenty li ahead, I discovered a group of riders and three big carts, hurrying forward in a suspicious manner. Despite my repeated warnings, they refused to comply. With no other option, I took them into custody and brought them back, seeking the General's judgment."

"Lord Lin, I protest, I protest." Ashile had already gotten up from the ground, his body covered in dust, looking quite disheveled. "I am the Turkic envoy and have been treated so barbarically by your men. I must report this to the Great Khagan and will urge an attack—"

"What did you say?" Lord Lin's slightly squinted eyes suddenly snapped open, exuding a profound brilliance, stern to the extreme. It startled Ashile so much that he didn't dare continue speaking.

"Lord Lin, I must seek justice for today's incident from your Emperor," Lu Dongzan said, maintaining more composure than Ashile as the Turkic National Tutor. "Your blatant deployment of troops to besiege and arrest the Turkic envoy is utterly outrageous. We will report the truth to the Bilge Khagan when we return home."

"Outrageous? Brother Lu, it seems like I should be the one saying that." Lin Wanrong said with a cold smile. "You Turkic people come to Great Hua, and our Emperor and people treat you with courtesy and sincerity. Yet, how have you treated Great Hua in return?"

"Lord Lin, though our two nations have disputes, even we Turks would not resort to detaining envoys. Your rash actions escalate the conflict, plunging the people into misery and suffering. Aren't you afraid of being branded a sinner for all eternity in Great Hua?" Having laid bare their differences, Lu Dongzan responded without hesitation or concession.

"Detaining envoys? Plunging people into suffering? What grand accusations!" Lin Wanrong laughed heartily. "Brother Lu, I never expected that the Turkic people would be so adept at throwing big hats. But look at my face—is it the face of someone who's frightened? To put it bluntly, I've seen many foreigners with white, green, and black hair. The moment you raise your behind, I know exactly what you're about to excrete."

Lord Lin sneered contemptuously, his brash and shameless tone giving Lu Dongzan a headache. Though the Turkic National Tutor, he found himself at a loss facing such an unconventional character from Great Hua. He could only snort coldly, "So this is how Great Hua treats its guests. The Turks have indeed learned a lesson."

Lord Lin laughed loudly, "The hospitality of Great Hua is renowned, and it's not for thieves like you to comment."

Before Lu Dongzan could respond, Ashile started shouting, "We Turkic warriors are the eagles of the valley and plains. How could we be thieves? How dare you insult the brave and invincible Turkic eagles? Lin San, I challenge you to a duel."

"Duel?" Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Excellent, I enjoy dueling the most. But before that, I need to prove something, to show the people of Great Hua, whether you ferocious and overbearing Turks are really noble eagles or mere thieves? Xu Zhen, Du Xiuyuan, search—"

The people of Great Hua had grown accustomed to being bullied by foreigners, always bearing the brunt of aggression. Yet, today, Lord Lin swept away Great Hua's past timidity, adopting an unyieldingly firm stance, to the delight of his men. To be able to turn the tables on the foreigners, under Lord Lin's leadership, was something they could boast about for the rest of their lives. Without waiting for Du Xiuyuan's order, hundreds of Great Hua soldiers, hungry like wolves and ferocious like tigers, rushed forward, overturning the three large carts where Ashile was located.

Countless pieces of silk, satin, cloth, and tea leaves were uncovered, and with a clang, the tip of a soldier's spear seemed to strike something hard. Du Xiuyuan's face brightened, and several soldiers turned the cart over, revealing a dark, shiny iron cannon barrel lying on the ground, its luster faint but visible.

Ashile and Lu Dongzan's faces changed drastically. Ashile gripped his saber tightly, shooting glances at Lu Dongzan. Lu Dongzan looked around at the glaring Great Hua soldiers and shook his head slightly.

"General, we've found a Great Hua-made cannon barrel, a base, and several fuses," Du Xiuyuan reported proudly, chest puffed out.

"Finely crafted" indeed, Lin Wanrong thought, smiling inwardly as he stepped forward and gently touched the specially made "F*ck Cannon." A sensation of coldness spread into his palm. Even a pile of scrap iron could not be allowed to be taken away by foreigners.

Lin Wanrong sneered, "Ah, Brother, is this how you noble eagles of the grasslands treat your hospitable hosts? What are you planning to do with this cannon? Research it thoroughly for imitation? Your Khagan, what's his name, Bishuang he seems quite clever, recognizes quality."

"It's Bilge Khagan, not Bishuang," Ashile muttered, but Lord Lin glared at him, and he dared not speak again.

Lu Dongzan sighed secretly. Great Hua's cannons were the greatest threat to the Turks, and with war looming between the two nations, he had carefully planned to acquire Great Hua's latest cannon technology to take back to the Turks. He hadn't expected to fall entirely into Lin San's hands. This Lin San's way of doing things bore none of the virtuous traditions of the Great Hua people. He was the worst of the worst.

"General, look!" Xu Zhen's face was serious as he ordered the soldiers to overturn the other two carts. With a crashing sound, the lids of the hidden boxes scattered, and black powder poured out.

Dipping his finger into the powder to inspect it closely, Lin Wanrong said with a cold smile, "Brother Lu, what is this?"

"Why ask when you already know, Lord Lin?" Lu Dongzan responded calmly. As a wise national tutor, he knew that preserving strength was the best course of action. He had unhesitatingly rejected Ashile's proposal just now, as Lin San's cunning would lead to a slaughter should they resist. Lu Dongzan had no doubt about this.

Lin Wanrong laughed, "Brother Lu, you truly go to great lengths. I don't know where you managed to get these several hundred pounds of gunpowder, but you're willing to carry them all the way back

to the Turks. What tenacity, what skill. By the way, Brother Lu, where did you purchase this gunpowder? I'd like to get some myself, to set off firecrackers for the New Year!"

Lü Dongzan spoke calmly, "Gunpowder? I bought it at the market. Just as Master Lin said, we are merely taking it back to set off some fireworks."

Lin Wanrong threw his head back and laughed, "Fireworks, very well then! A few days ago on the road, I too nearly had fireworks set off at me. It seems, Brother Lu, that you share the same hobby as they do."

General Lin's sharp and meticulous mind could dissect the slightest detail, and his casual remark struck at the heart of the matter. A shock went through Lu Dongzan, and he hurriedly shut his mouth.

"Even if you didn't say anything, I would know," Lin Wanrong said with a faint smile. "These several hundred pounds of explosives are no small matter, and it couldn't have been done without immense influence. Am I right, Brother Lu?"

Knowing that some things were inevitably transparent to Lord Lin, Lu Dongzan, a straightforward person, laughed heartily, "Brother Lin, although we stand on opposing sides, in my eyes, you are the only person in Great Hua that I respect. If the others possessed even half of your spirit and wisdom, Great Hua would not be what it is today. Unfortunately, the people of Great Hua crave comfort and lack ambition. Some even sell out their ancestors for personal gain, which is truly shameful."

Being looked down upon by a foreigner should have angered Master Lin, but Lu Dongzan's words hit the mark. Great Hua's tribulations and humiliations were painful enough, but what was even more infuriating was that throughout its history, Great Hua had always suffered from traitors. Why had this come to pass?

"General Lin, General Lin—" Hu Bugui's gentle question interrupted Lin Wanrong's thoughts: "What should we do with these northern nomads?"

Capturing them had been easy, but dealing with them was not so simple. They could neither be killed nor released, which made the situation problematic. No wonder Lu Dongzan seemed so composed as a prisoner; he clearly understood the situation. Unlike the rash impulsiveness of ordinary northern nomads, he could bend and adapt—a true talent.

"Take them to the military camp and inform Master Xu Wei and General Li Tai. Let them report to the Emperor for disposition," Lin Wanrong waved his hand, passing the hot potato to the old Xu and the Emperor to worry about.

"Let me go, let me go! I can walk myself!" A few soldiers were pushing Lu Dongzan forward, and he struggled, his clothes in disarray. The small cannon in his hand even fell to the ground.

"Let him go!" Lin Wanrong waved his hand.

Lu Dongzan looked back at him and smiled, "Master Lin, today in this contest, Lu Dongzan admits defeat first. However, in the future on the battlefield, when our two nations clash, Lu Dongzan will never lose to you again."

Lin Wanrong waved his hand, signaling his generals to take away the few northern nomads. Du Xiuyuan stood beside him, puzzled, "General, how did you know of Ashile's whereabouts?"

Lin Wanrong smiled faintly, "It's quite simple, really. Lu Dongzan is an extraordinary man with a great interest in our Great Hua's cannon technology. He went to great lengths to borrow a cannon and then played a trick to deceive our eyes. Knowing that we would send people to watch him secretly, he deliberately acted foolish and caused an uproar in the capital, making everyone let down their guard against a few fools. But in secret, he had already planned, disassembling the cannon and taking it back to the Turks after playing the ruse. When we pursued them here, we only saw Lu Dongzan, not Ashile, and his caravan was so orderly and unhurried, as if intentionally blocking the way. The most important point, as you, Brother Du, have mentioned, is that they had packed at least seven large carts, yet Lu Dongzan only had four or five. Where had the other three gone? There was only one possibility: they had divided their forces into two paths. This official road is the necessary route to the north, so I ordered Xu Zhen to lead light-armed cavalry to take shortcuts across the fields and wilderness to chase them, and indeed, I found them."

Listening to General Lin's analysis, Du Xiuyuan was suddenly enlightened, his admiration beyond words. Lin Wanrong crouched down and picked up something that had fallen in the mud and sand.

It was the small cannon that had been given to Lu Dongzan earlier; it had fallen apart. Seeing Master Lin carefully blowing the dirt off the barrel, Du Xiuyuan asked, puzzled, "General Lin, what are you going to do with such a small cannon?"

Master Lin chuckled, "Though the cannon is small, it is better than an earthworm. The people of the Turks may need it, but the people of Dongyin desire it even more. Pack it up, pack it up, we'll take it as a gift to Dongyin next time!"

Chapter 400 "Wanrong Oppa"

After Du Xiuyuan led the troops to escort Ashile and Lu Dongzan back, the remaining thorny issues were left for Xu Wei and his associates to puzzle over. The rupture between the two nations was an imminent event, just a matter of time. Ashile was insignificant, but Lu Dongzan was a formidable figure. In Lin Wanrong's view, the best course of action would be to ostentatiously release him and then secretly dispose of him on his way back to the Turks, effectively severing one of the Turks' strong arms. Although this approach was somewhat disgraceful, its practicality was undeniable. Sadly, this method might not be accepted by Xu Wei and the Emperor, who, in their haughty pride, would surely disdain to resort to such roguish and unscrupulous tactics as those of Lin San.

"General, this Blood-Sweat Treasure Horse—" The young Xu Zhen, looking at Lin Wanrong's steed, a Blood-Sweat Treasure Horse, had a face filled with longing. A cavalryman loves his horse, and he, personally trained by Hu Bugui, was no less skilled than a nomad. His desire for this Blood-Sweat Treasure Horse naturally exceeded that of ordinary people.

Upon hearing this, Lin Wanrong remembered that he had earlier promised Hu Bugui that he would leave this Blood-Sweat Treasure Horse with the army for their training, perhaps giving birth to a new breed, a significant contribution to the cavalry of Great Hua.

"This Treasure Horse, I entrust to you," Lin Wanrong said, dismounting and patting the shining yellow mane of the Blood-Sweat Treasure Horse with a smile. "If you can cultivate a new breed, consider it a contribution from the Turks to our great Great Hua."

Xu Zhen was overjoyed, "Thank you, General. I will do my utmost." He took the reins, beaming as he led the Blood-Sweat Treasure Horse a few steps. The treasured steed of the Turks, with its clear hoofbeats and mighty build, was naturally a cavalryman's favorite. Xu Zhen touched the sweat-like bloodstains on the horse's back, reluctant to let go.

'This is all money, and I've truly given my all for Great Hua,' Lin Wanrong thought with a pang, riding away on another Blood-Sweat Horse with resignation.

Entering the city gates, he had not gone far when he saw a figure suddenly appear, blocking the path. Lin Wanrong was taken aback and hastily reined in. The horse beneath him neighed and reared up, spinning on the spot. It took a moment to regain stability.

It was dark, and Lin Wanrong couldn't see the person's face clearly. Angered at being blocked, he snapped, "Hey, friend, could you watch where you're going? Don't think you can walk sideways just because there's no traffic light."

The person in front giggled and replied softly, "Shouldn't I be saying that to you, Mr. Lin?"

"Seo Jang Geum?" The voice was gentle and crisp, familiar to Lin Wanrong. Looking closely, he saw that the person standing in front of the horse was none other than Seo Jang Geum, a young palace maid from Goryeo, dressed in a long skirt, her skin translucent, smiling radiantly.

How did this girl get here? Lin Wanrong wondered, a broad smile on his face. "Oh, isn't this Miss Seo Jang Geum? How come you haven't returned to Goryeo yet?"

"Sir, may I have a word with you?" Seo Jang Geum asked, her face serious.

"You may have not just one word, but ten if you need," Lin Wanrong said, dismounting and standing before her. Looking at Seo Jang Geum's jade-like flawless skin, he felt a teasing itch in his heart, quite wanting to reach out and touch her.

Upon seeing Lord Lin so close, laughing and frolicking, Seo Jang Geum hastily stepped back and bowed her head, saying, "I'm sorry to trouble you, my Lord. Please come with me."

'Goryeo women are indeed courteous. Even if one day they were to undress and get into bed, a Goryeo lady would certainly say, "My Lord, please enjoy!"' Gazing at Seo Jang Geum's slender and graceful figure, Lord Lin felt a sly thrill in his heart.

Seo Jang Geum led him to a nearby tavern, ascending to the top floor. She pulled back a curtain and said softly and respectfully, "My Lord, please enter!"

Jang Geum really had no need to be polite. As Lin Wanrong entered the room, he was momentarily stunned. The room was small, but there was a raised platform with a low table on it, just like a typical Goryeo dwelling.

Seo Jang Geum bent down, picked up a pair of cloth slippers from the side, and said with a slightly reddened face, "My Lord, allow Jang Geum to help you change your shoes."

"This, well, might not be appropriate," Lord Lin responded with a smile, plopping down onto a chair beside him, and said carefreely, "I've never been one for being waited on."

Having grown accustomed to Lord Lin's say-one-thing-and-do-another character, Seo Jang Geum didn't hesitate. Once he was seated, she knelt down and carefully removed his boots, her face a faint pink.

The feeling of being attended to by a beautiful woman was indeed wonderful. Lord Lin sighed in contentment, laughing, "Miss Seo, your Goryeo customs are quite special, even having the habit of taking off shoes for guests."

Seo Jang Geum's face turned rosy as she quickly lowered her head and softly said, "No, Goryeo women only do this for, oh, esteemed guests like you, my Lord. It is right for Jang Geum to take off your shoes."

"Is that so?" Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Miss Seo, I have been to Goryeo, surfed the waves in Jeju Island, picked flowers on Mount Kumgang. I know a bit about your customs. In Goryeo, only the most intimate may enter one's bedroom, and taking off a man's shoes is even more special. Heh, you must know more than I do, Miss Seo."

"It's not as you think, my Lord," Seo Jang Geum replied, her face flushed like a sunrise, then gradually returning to normal, she continued calmly, "In Goryeo, women only take off shoes for their husbands or elders. That's our custom. But please do not misunderstand, my Lord; you are our esteemed guest, and Jang Geum respects you. This act has nothing to do with anything else."

"I see," said Lin Wanrong, rising with a smile as Seo Jang Geum put the slippers on him, "Miss Seo, you should have explained this earlier to avoid any misunderstanding. My wife just ordered me today not to flirt with other women, or I'll be sleeping on the floor when I get home."

Seo Jang Geum covered her mouth, laughing softly, "So the women of Great Hua can actually control their husbands like this; Jang Geum is truly envious. My Lord, which lady gave you this command? Was it Lady Qiao, Eldest Miss, or Miss Luo?"

The sweat broke on Lord Lin's forehead. The Goryeos' way of addressing people was indeed special, giving him a headache. Lin Wanrong laughed, then suddenly, as if recalling something, exclaimed, "Miss Luo's? You know Ning'er?"

Seo Jang Geum nodded with a smile, "I only just met her earlier. I learned about your return to the capital after lunch, my Lord, and hurried to the Xiao family. I even chatted with Miss Luo for a while. How else would I know of your whereabouts? Miss Luo is beautiful, dignified, and talented; I admire her greatly. Lord Lin, you are indeed fortunate."

Ning'er was indeed very "dignified." Lin Wanrong laughed heartily. Seo Jang Geum's visit had precisely suited Ning'er's temperament. Chatting with her and acquiring some cosmetics, the two quickly became familiar with each other.

"Sir, please come inside," Seo Jang Geum invited, bowing gracefully. Lin Wanrong stepped onto the tatami, soft and warm to the touch, walking on it was quite comfortable. Seo Jang Geum removed her shoes and wore pristine white socks, exposing her exquisite little feet. She gave him a slight smile, and the two sat down across a low table.

Seo Jang Geum clapped her hands, and two elegantly dressed Goryeo women came in, holding bowls and dishes. They carefully placed the food on the table and bowed before retreating.

"So Miss Seo has invited me for a meal," Lord Lin said with a smile. "Goryeo cuisine, it's been a long time since I last had it. I never expected that in the capital of our great Great Hua, there would be such an authentic Goryeo restaurant. It's quite astonishing."

"This is not a Goryeo restaurant," Seo Jang Geum shook her head. "All the food here is Great Hua cuisine. Only this top floor is reserved for the Goryeo royal family. To be frank with you, sir, this restaurant is owned by the Goryeo royal family. Whenever we come to Great Hua, we always stop here."

With those words, Seo Jang Geum essentially revealed that this restaurant was a Goryeo intelligence-gathering site. Her candid admission showed that Goryeo's situation was indeed urgent.

Lin Wanrong laughed and said, "In that case, the Goryeo food in this restaurant must have something special about it. Today, I must try it thoroughly."

Seo Jang Geum smiled faintly, "Sir, you are joking. Great Hua's eight major cuisines are varied and full of flavor, something our Goryeo food cannot match. Our Goryeo food's strength lies in its simplicity and unique taste, unforgettable once tasted. Please, sir, have a taste."

Seo Jang Geum used a small spoon to serve him some side dishes, respectfully handing it to him. Lin Wanrong tasted it and nodded with a smile, "Good, good. It's much more authentic than the Goryeo food I've had before."

"This is our specially brewed Goryeo wine. Please try it, sir," Seo Jang Geum filled a small cup in front of him and handed it to him. Lin Wanrong said with a laugh, "Since Miss Seo invited me to dinner, I can't be the only one drinking."

Seo Jang Geum's beautiful face tinged with a blush, she filled her cup and raised it with both hands, softly saying, "In that case, Jang Geum toasts you, sir. Here's to a thousand years of friendship between Great Hua and Goryeo, evergreen like the pine!"

"I wish Miss Jang Geum grows more and more beautiful," Lin Wanrong laughed loudly, downing the wine in one gulp. Seo Jang Geum took a small sip, furrowing her brow slightly, her face flushing, seemingly unable to handle the alcohol.

'Really? It's just water. If it were stronger, you would be in trouble,' Lin Wanrong thought, chuckling to himself.

"Sir, please try this. This is a medicinal dish personally prepared by Jang Geum. Its functions—"

"Are to nourish the blood, strengthen the spleen, moisten the lungs, nourish the kidneys, and increase vitality, right?" Lin Wanrong teased.

"Sir, how did you know?" Seo Jang Geum was taken aback but then realized, "It must have been Qiaoqiao who told you."

Lin Wanrong smiled slightly, "Miss Seo, since the medicinal dish has so many functions, what is the purpose of the one you've invited me to eat? Is it to nourish the blood, moisten the yin, or enhance vitality?"

Seo Jang Geum's face turned red, but she forced herself to remain calm. "My Lord is in the prime of youth, so you do not need the effects of these medicinal dishes. This particular dish is meant to clear heat and eliminate internal fire."

"I never thought that Qiaoqiao would even tell Miss Seo about this. How shameful, how shameful, indeed. Recently, I've been overzealous, overindulging in bedroom activities," Lin Wanrong said,

his face serious. "I don't know if Miss Seo's medicinal dish will work, alas, I'll try it tonight, and if it works, I'll definitely report back to Miss Seo."

Seo Jang Geum, overcome with embarrassment, lowered her head and whispered, "My Lord, please don't joke around. You have such beautiful wives at home. If you don't cherish and love them, wouldn't that be a waste?"

'Brilliant,' Lin Wanrong thought. Seo Jang Geum indeed had insight. He burst into hearty laughter, raising his cup, while Seo Jang Geum took another sip of clear wine, her face growing even redder.

"By the way, Miss Seo, I heard from Qiaoqiao that you gave them some mascara and eyeshadow. Forgive my bluntness, but are these two things inventions of yours?" Lin Wanrong asked, remembering the things Qiaoqiao had shown him, and he wanted to clarify while face to face with Seo Jang Geum.

"Lord Lin, how do you know these two things are called mascara and eyeshadow?" Seo Jang Geum replied, ignoring his question and asking one of her own.

This was not an easy question to answer. Lin Wanrong answered evasively, "Oh, I've heard of these before, but I never thought you'd have them as well. Miss Seo, did you really make these yourself?"

Seo Jang Geum smiled slightly, "These were passed down by one of my masters. I heard they were brought over from the West. The ingredients are hard to find, so I only have a few. I gave them all to your wives."

"Your master?" Lin Wanrong frowned, "Has she been to the West?"

"I never heard her mention it," Seo Jang Geum replied indifferently, "Perhaps she has been. Lord Lin, my master is a private person, and she doesn't wish to be known. If your wives hadn't become close to me, I would never have gifted these things that my master gave me. So, please, keep it a secret. I beg you."

Seo Jang Geum bowed deeply, her words earnest. Lin Wanrong chuckled. He knew her intentions well; she was merely trying to appear generous because she wanted something from him. However, Seo Jang Geum's master knowing about mascara and eyeshadow meant she was no ordinary person and likely had been to the West. Fortunately, from Seo Jang Geum's explanation, mass production seemed unlikely, so the Goryeo royal family couldn't challenge Great Hua with these products. Lin Wanrong felt a bit relieved, sipped his clear wine, and changed the subject with a smile. "Miss Seo,

I heard that young women in Goryeo have a habit of calling close male friends by certain names, like 'Seong-jun Oppa', 'Ji-hwan Oppa', 'Wei Oppa'. Is that so?"

"My Lord is so knowledgeable to even know this," Seo Jang Geum said, nodding slightly. "We Goryeo women indeed call our close male friends in this manner."

Lin Wanrong grinned and said, "Well, my full name is Lin Wanrong. If we were in Goryeo, how would you address me?"

"This, um," Seo Jang Geum stammered, her face growing hot. After hesitating for a while, she finally whispered, her voice as soft as a mosquito's buzz, "Wanrong Oppa—"

"Ah, Jang Geum Dongsaeng—" Master Lin's eyes sparkled with joy, responding with extreme enthusiasm, "Today, I have become Wanrong Oppa for once, specifically Jang Geum's Wanrong Oppa, truly an honor."

Seo Jang Geum remained silent for a long time. The atmosphere in the room became ambiguously intense for a moment, and Master Lin teased, "Jang Geum Dongsaeng, hearing you call me Wanrong Oppa so naturally, did you have many 'Oppas' when you were in Goryeo?"

"How could you think that way, sir?" Seo Jang Geum bit her lip lightly, her eyes flashing with a hint of anger, "Jang Geum has grown up in the Goryeo palace, merely a little palace maid. I had no close male friends, let alone many Oppas. Do you belittle me so, thinking that I am a vulgar woman?"

This girl has spirit, Lin Wanrong laughed, "Jang Geum Dongsaeng, don't be angry, Wanrong Oppa is just joking. I know that you and I are not frivolous people."

Seo Jang Geum huffed, lowering her head and falling silent. The previous ambiguous atmosphere was shattered by Master Lin's comment. After waiting a long time without a response, she looked up to see "Wanrong Oppa" enjoying the cooling medicinal dish as if nothing had happened.

"Jang Geum Dongsaeng, you should try it too, it's cooling," Lin Wanrong said, passing the dish with a smile.

Dealing with this unkillable man, even her own face had to become much thicker. Seo Jang Geum shook her head with a wry smile, sighing, "Sir, do you know how Jang Geum feels about you?"

"I hope there's no feeling. Honestly, I'm not ready for international romance, fearing that someone might fall madly in love with me," Master Lin said carelessly.

"Sir, what are you talking about?" Seo Jang Geum said, shyly rebuking, "How could Jang Geum have such thoughts? I must confess, when I first met you, I thought you were truly shameless, disregarding all diplomatic etiquette and capable of anything, utterly detestable. But later—"

"Later, what?" Lin Wanrong asked with great interest.

Seo Jang Geum smiled softly, speaking tenderly, "Later, as I had more contact with you, I realized you were not as greedy and shameless as you appeared. You were merely expressing your feelings in a particularly covert way. This method is inconsistent with the Confucian teachings revered in Great Hua for a thousand years, making you stand out as unique and special. Even regarding your acceptance of bribes from the Turks and Goryeo, I once misunderstood you. It was only after one incident that I realized I was wrong."

"Oh? What incident? Alas, I've done too many good deeds; I can't remember them all at once," Lin Wanrong said, proudly.

Seo Jang Geum chuckled, shaking her head. Then, a touch of melancholy appeared on her face, her eyes reddening slightly, "Sir, do you remember the day when the Prince sought your help and offered you a condition?"

A condition? Lin Wanrong was taken aback for a moment, then he remembered and smiled, "Are you talking about those luminous pearls? I took them, and you even reported me to the Emperor."

"You are always so modest, sir," Seo Jang Geum's face flushed slightly, "Jang Geum is talking about something else. That day, the Prince promised that if you spoke on behalf of Goryeo, he would give me to your household. Surprisingly, you refused without hesitation."

'So it was about this matter,' Lin Wanrong smiled and said, "A gentleman loves beauty, but he must have principles. I adhere to mine very strictly."

Seo Jang Geum lowered her head and spoke slowly, "Judging from the beautiful wives and concubines in your residence, Sir, it is clear that you are naturally flirtatious and fond of feminine charms. There's no doubt about it. Although Jang Geum's appearance is humble, I do not offend the

eyes. Your outright refusal was indeed remarkable. What's even more commendable is that no matter how much Jang Geum tried to challenge you afterward, you never mentioned this matter in front of me, nor did you use it as leverage. You remained an unsung hero, leaving me with much dignity. Your noble character is clear to see, and I am infinitely grateful. I thank you for your kindness."

'Flirtatious by nature, fond of feminine charms? Is this your assessment of me? Superficial, utterly superficial.' Although Lady Jang Geum was praising him, Lin Wanrong was somewhat irritated. 'Don't judge by appearance, yet what you see now as my fondness for beauty, my willingness to be an unsung hero—aren't these surface-level observations? I don't even care to correct you.'

Seo Jang Geum stood up and knelt before him, bowing deeply. Lin Wanrong hurriedly helped her up, saying, "Hey, hey, Jang Geum Dongsaeng, why this grand gesture? You should know that your 'Wanrong Oppa' always stands firm on his principles."

"Sir, your adherence to principles shows me what sets you apart. Beneath your dissolute appearance, there indeed lies a fervent heart that cares for the country and the people. It's as if amidst the frivolous melodies, a noble tune plays, something I greatly admire," Seo Jang Geum softly said.

"In truth, I'm not as good as you say." Listening to Seo Jang Geum praising him, Lin Wanrong's eyes sparkled with joy, and he modestly said, "Apart from being slightly handsome, a bit skilled in martial arts, a little more learned, a touch more capable, and slightly more compassionate, I really have no virtues. Jang Geum Dongsaeng, you're over-praising me."

Seo Jang Geum sighed softly and lowered her head, tears welling in her eyes. She choked up, saying, "Sir, you are so noble and upright; I have a request to make of you. You must agree to it."

After all the flattery, now came the real matter. Seeing "Jang Geum Dongsaeng" in such a pitiful state, "Wanrong Oppa" felt distressed and nodded, "Tell me, as long as it doesn't harm the interests of our great nation, or the interests of the Xiao family, and as long as I don't have to run errands, spend money, or expend mental energy, I'll agree to anything. Ah, I truly have a heart of compassion. I can't stand to see a girl cry. Jang Geum Dongsaeng, don't cry anymore; Wanrong Oppa cares for you."

Jang Geum was irritated by his response. With all those conditions, what could he possibly agree to? She fell to her knees with a thump, tears falling as she said, "Sir, we received intelligence yesterday that the Dongyin armies are set to embark tomorrow. Thousands of ships are heading directly for our Goryeo. Goryeo is in imminent danger. I beg you to persuade the Emperor to send

troops to aid Goryeo. The people of Goryeo will remember the kindness of our great nation for generations to come."

"The Dongyin are mobilizing their troops, so quickly?" Master Lin exclaimed with a sigh, "Miss Seo, the matter of waging war is not so simple. We must not act rashly; careful consideration is required."

"But tens of thousands of our Goryeo people are in imminent danger. If they fall into the hands of those Dongyin beasts, their lives will be worse than death." Seo Jang Geum looked up at him, her beautiful eyes filled with sparkling tears.

"It's difficult, very difficult!" Master Lin sighed, his face filled with concern.

"Sir—" A voice, filled with allure and tinged with a quiver, rang in his ears.

"Huh?" Lin Wanrong looked up and was instantly dumbfounded.

Seo Jang Geum's pretty face was wet with tears, her cheeks tinged with two beautiful shades of red. She gave him a gentle glance, bit her silver teeth, and her delicate little hands quickly undid her sash. With a soft rustling sound, her long robe fell to the ground, revealing a wondrously delicate and beautiful body.