

## Finest 411

### Chapter 411 Peach Blossom Rain

"You, you are Lin San?" Liu Shiyuan's face turned pale, and he retreated a few steps, looking closely at Lin Wanrong, fixing his eyes on him, and urgently cried, "Defeating the King of Couplet of the Seven Northern Provinces, the champion of the Jinling Poetry Contest, the bandit-suppressing hero of Shandong, the one who suppressed the Turkic national tutor Lu Dongzan in the capital, and the Lin San who made the fish leap over the dragon gate on Weishan Lake—is that you?" He was clearly familiar with Lin Wanrong's deeds, obviously having heard of his name.

"It is indeed I," Lin Wanrong said, squinting with a smile, "Merely a notorious figure, Brother Bullshit, you flatter me."

Liu Shiyuan glanced at Xiao Qingxuan and suddenly nodded, "Excellent, just excellent. Brother Lin, your name is well-known, and I have admired you for a long time. Today, seeing you in person, your reputation is indeed well-deserved. Even Junior Sister Xiao treats you with great respect. Taking advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I wish to learn a thing or two from you."

"Learn?" Lin Wanrong laughed, "Brother Bullshit, what do you wish to learn from me? If it's about poetry and prose, forget it; I haven't been involved in that for many years. If you're interested, go buy a collection of Lin San's works on the street. They are beautifully printed and don't cost much. Couplet, poetry, jokes, none are missing, and it's worth every penny. Buy ten, and you can get one free."

Liu Shiyuan proudly replied, "There are many fame-seekers in this world, and those poems can be fabricated by others as well. Brother Lin, with your great talent, why not teach me something? Could it be that Sister Xiao's chosen husband is a coward? That would be a laughingstock."

Xiao Qingxuan's face changed, her sleeves fluttering slightly as she coldly said, "Senior Brother Liu, my husband's reputation is bestowed by the world, reflecting his courage and wisdom. His experiences are well-known, and not something your baseless slanders can obtain. I'm grateful for your affection towards me, but if you insult My Dear, I won't let you off."

Within the sacred place, Xiao Qingxuan's beauty was breathtaking, her demeanor elegant, a fairy-like figure. Seeing the fairy angry, Liu Shiyuan felt as though he was pierced by ten thousand needles. Just as he was about to speak, Xu Zhiqing snorted, "Young Master Liu, it wasn't my place to interrupt your conversation with Miss Xiao. But your contempt for Lin San is your own disgrace.

Lin San's reputation is widespread, acknowledged by all, and well-documented. It's the result of his own hard work, not something your words can deny. If you think you can fabricate it, try it if you can! Not to mention others, my father and I both respect him wholeheartedly. To be frank, with his reputation and honor, challenging him is beyond your qualifications."

Xu Zhiqing's face was icy, her heart's grief having no outlet, and when she saw this Liu fellow daring to challenge Lin San, her anger erupted uncontrollably. Her words were eloquent and left Liu Shiyuan's face both red and white, unable to make a sound. As Miss Xu had said, with Lin San's reputation, Liu Shiyuan was far from being his match.

"Sister, I'm infinitely grateful for your support of My Dear," Xiao Qingxuan took Miss Xu's hand, smiled faintly, and said gratefully.

Xu Zhiqing's face turned red, and she hurriedly lowered her head, speaking softly, "I only spoke out because I couldn't stand others being so overbearing, not specifically to defend Lin San. Miss Xiao, please don't misunderstand."

Xiao Qingxuan glanced at her, shaking her head with a light smile, and took Lin Wanrong's hand, playfully saying, "You fool, being friends with Sister Xu must be the result of many lifetimes of good fortune."

"I've always been straightforward with Miss Xu," Lin Wanrong nodded and laughed, looking very honest. Xu Zhiqing sighed inwardly; he was only playing the fool in front of Miss Xiao, while in front of others, he was like a ferocious wolf.

On the other side, Liu Shiyuan, seeing the two women and one man talking, all appearing quite intimate, felt increasingly bitter as he was left out. He shouted, "Junior Sister, even if you're married, I must finish what I have to say today. Since I first met you more than ten years ago, I have been deeply in love, constantly thinking about you. I've studied hard, even becoming the best in literary writing, all to earn a word of praise from you. I've lingered outside this garden every day just to catch a glimpse of you, and even the servants know of my feelings. Yet, Junior Sister, you were entirely devoted to your studies and treated everyone with indifference. I've kept these feelings hidden, afraid to upset you. I planned to express my years of longing before the big day tomorrow, but I didn't know you'd already secretly chosen a husband—"

Tears rolled down Liu Shiyuan's cheeks, his expression impassioned as he loudly continued, "I have no reason to live. Even if I become a wandering soul, I'll still surround you, Junior Sister, I'm going now—"

With that, his eyes filled with determination, he threw himself like a fierce tiger at a nearby tree, intending to end his life.

Lin Wanrong had grown impatient listening and, seeing Liu's intent, kicked him in the rear. Liu Shiyuan's body twisted, missing the tree trunk, and he fell to the ground.

Xiao Qingxuan had not expected Liu Shiyuan to be so impulsive. She frowned, smiled bitterly, and said, "My Dear, you saved his life this way, but he may not appreciate your kindness."

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "I don't have time to save his life; I actually intended to assist him just now. Who would have thought my kick would be off, and instead of helping him, I saved him? It's incredibly annoying; it seems I need to practice my martial arts more."

"You better not learn martial arts," Xu Zhiqing interjected with a huff. "You're already bullying others enough as it is; if you learn martial arts, won't you become a tyrant?"

Xiao Qingxuan laughed, "Sister, don't worry. As long as I'm here, he won't dare to do anything to you."

Xu Zhiqing's heart jumped, and she hurriedly said, "Miss Xiao, what should we do with this Senior Brother of yours? Such a man, although handsome, is narrow-minded and extreme, truly difficult to reform."

Xiao Qingxuan glanced at Lin Wanrong, who smiled and said, "Forget it, forget it. Let me be the villain." He took the sword beside Xiao Qingxuan and slowly walked towards Liu Shiyuan.

Xu Zhiqing was startled, asking, "What is he going to do?"

Xiao Qingxuan gave a relaxed smile, softly saying, "Whatever he wants to do, let him do it. If he's constantly restrained, he wouldn't be My Dear."

With just one sentence, Xu Zhiqing was filled with shame and embarrassment. The one who knew Lin San best and understood him most was none other than Miss Xiao, who was like a fairy.

Lin Wanrong walked slowly and gracefully to the side of Liu Shiyuan, crouched down, and grinned, "Talented brother, what's happened to you?"

Liu Shiyuan roared angrily, "Mind your own business, let me die!"

"Die? That's quite easy," Lin Wanrong laughed. "Talented brother, look, what's this?"

Liu Shiyuan looked up to see Lin San's ferocious face, holding a long sword. With a swish, the sharp blade was drawn, the cold sword tip flashing like lightning towards his forehead.

"Ah—" Liu Shiyuan let out a miserable scream, instinctively dodging, rolling several times on the ground, covered in mud and grass. He glared at him and shouted angrily, "You, you—"

"Me? What about me?" Lin Wanrong raised an eyebrow, his long sword swishing as it stabbed into the tree trunk. He shouted loudly, "Don't you like to die? Then come on, bash your head against a tree, let the blood spatter, how heroic and inspiring! Many noble and virtuous people in ancient times chose this way to die, Talented brother, you're no exception, right?"

Seeing Lin San's sneering face, Liu Shiyuan unconsciously stepped back, biting his teeth, about to charge into the tree again. But he saw Lin San draw the precious sword with a swish, laughing twice, and then reinsert it into the tree trunk. The bright blade was so dazzling that it was difficult to keep one's eyes open. His heart pounded, a sense of cowardice spontaneously arising.

"Charge," Lin Wanrong said, smiling as he approached Liu Shiyuan. His face was kind and gentle. When he came closer, he suddenly lifted Liu Shiyuan's body, his voice rising sharply, "Charge, damn you, just do it!"

Liu Shiyuan was frightened, retreating several steps with a pale face, "You, you—"

Lin Wanrong did not deign to look at him and laughed out loud, "Brother Liu, Miss Xu was right. You and I are not of the same level. How did I marry Qingxuan, such a beautiful and gentle fairy? Was it because of those rumors you heard? Think with your brain. I stand here not because of my abundant knowledge or broad-mindedness, but my perseverance. In this world, I am like a stone squeezed out of a crack. I have nothing, and I fear nothing. Mount Tai could fall and not crush me, I could not be hacked on Mount Dangtu, not be blown apart by thousands of cannons. What I have been through, you can't imagine in ten lifetimes. I can be defeated, utterly crushed, but I won't die. I am like a lump of clay; anyone can knead or step on me. I will become the earth when I lie down, and a standing spear when I stand up, standing tall and never giving up—I am a cockroach, who am I afraid of? If you want to compare with me, go back and learn for another two hundred years."

Xu Zhiqing was stunned. During her time with Lin San, she had only seen him jesting and laughing, even when dealing with significant matters like investigating the loss of official silver in Shandong. He never seemed serious, but today's words were passionate and stirring, almost like a summary of his twenty-odd years of life. Somehow, Miss Xu's heart was filled with sadness, and she murmured, "Is everything he said true?"

Xiao Qingxuan wiped a tear from the corner of her eye and sighed softly, "My Dear has sorrows in his heart; he just never speaks of them."

Xu Zhiqing snorted, annoyed, and said, "Miss Xiao, even if everything else is true, saying that he popped out from the cracks of a rock, isn't that infuriating?"

Xiao Qingxuan smiled faintly, responding, "I know his nature; he speaks falsely on trivial matters, but is honest on important ones. He is my husband; if he says it, I believe it!"

Xu Zhiqing was stunned. It had seemed that Miss Xiao had kept Lin San in check, but now, it sounded like Lin San was the one dominating Miss Xiao.

Seeing her confusion, Xiao Qingxuan took her hand, speaking with slight apology, "Sister, My Dear and I have been apart for some time, with no one beside him. Thank you for taking care of him. I know my husband well; he might not do great evils, but he never ceases with his petty mischief. Sister, you must have suffered a lot from him. Don't worry, if we both survive this time, I'll be sure to restrain him and not let him trouble you again."

'You do indeed know your husband,' Xu Zhiqing thought bitterly, smiling, but not knowing how to reply, and fell silent.

Observing Lin San's ferocious expression, yet with eyes that seemed both sad and joyful, Miss Xiao stared blankly at Lin San. Her eyes were filled with deep love. Liu Shiyuan's heart turned to ashes, and he suddenly fell to the ground, crying out in grief.

"All done, let's wrap it up," Lin Wanrong placed the long sword on the table, smiling at Qingxuan and Miss Xu. "Now, Talented Brother won't seek death anymore. Ah, to save a life is better than building a seven-tiered pagoda. Save two more, and I can become a Bodhisattva."

"Is this saving him? It seems more merciful to kill him," Miss Xu chuckled. "There's no greater sorrow than a dead heart. You've beaten him down so; even if Young Master Liu survives by

chance, he will be but a walking corpse. Miss Xiao, your husband's invisible killing is truly terrifying."

Xiao Qingxuan shook her head, smiling bitterly without replying. Xu Zhiqing glanced at Lin San, her eyes misting over, and sighed softly, "The most pitiable in the world are those full of passion, and this Brother Liu is indeed pitiable."

"Sister, don't sigh," Xiao Qingxuan said calmly. "I've always been this way since childhood; even an outstanding man wouldn't catch my eye. Perhaps Brother Liu has strong feelings for me, but that doesn't mean I have to respond in kind. It's not that I'm heartless; I simply feel no obligation to do so. To allow him to continue misunderstanding would be ungracious."

"Exactly, exactly, that's the way. Cut the Gordian knot, and then we can rest easy," Lin Wanrong embraced Qingxuan's waist, strongly agreeing.

"Don't be too pleased," Xiao Qingxuan gave him a glance, "If we talk about cutting the Gordian knot, you're the very example of a dull knife. Ambiguously entangled, who knows how many women you've attracted? How can there be such a blunt knife as you in the world?"

Knowing he couldn't hide these matters from Qingxuan, Lin Wanrong helplessly spread his hands and grinned, "I'm too charming; there's nothing I can do about it. Actually, I've been quite honest, never actively pursuing other young ladies. Miss Xu can testify to that."

Xiao Qingxuan laughed, "Don't make Miss Xu perjure herself; it will put her in a difficult position. If I can leave the mountain, I'll cut these entangled ropes for you, to ease your mind."

'Since the First Wife has returned, Jang Geum Dongsaeng, our game is over. Miss Xu, you should give up your foolish dreams.' Lin Wanrong's heart was bleeding, but the smile he managed to squeeze out on his face was radiant as he said, "Of course, of course."

Liu Shiyuan had been crying for half a day. When he came to his senses, he was dazed and confused, his eyes lifeless, looking like a ghost who had lost its soul. He glanced blankly at the three of them, then turned and left. Lin Wanrong exclaimed, "Such a high mountain. I don't know if this talented brother might stumble and fall. Let me clarify, I have nothing to do with this. Miss Xu, you must testify for me."

Xiao Qingxuan shook her head and smiled, her expression slightly somber, "Stop fooling around. Once Brother Liu leaves, I'm afraid the entire Fairy Hall will know about us. My Dear, you grabbed my hand, oh, I told you to hold my hand, not to hug me—"

Chided tenderly by his wife, Lin Wanrong felt his bones go soft. He released her slender waist, his face bashful, and smiled, "I just didn't hear clearly, and misunderstood for a moment."

Such an excuse could only be thought of by Master Lin. Qingxuan frolicked with him, her heart warm. She held his hand tightly and said softly, "I broke my promise and married you. I must face others whether in life or death, I no longer care, only wishing to be forever by your side. Since we have done it, we must be brave enough to bear it. This peach garden, beautiful as it is, is not where we can stay long. Although Qingxuan is wrong, she is not weak. Let us walk out openly and proudly!"

Lin Wanrong took her hand, naturally placing her behind him, and laughed, "Naturally. I'm taking my wife home. Why would we need to sneak around?"

As Xiao Qingxuan walked, her belly slightly bulged. Xu Zhiqing, who knew medicine, exclaimed in surprise, "Miss Xiao, you are pregnant—"

Xiao Qingxuan nodded with a smile, caressing her belly, a gentle and sacred maternal glow on her face, "This is my child, he is with us."

No wonder Lin San was so pleased; it was indeed a double celebration. Xu Zhiqing's lips trembled a few times, and she silently said, "Miss Xiao, congratulations."

Lin Wanrong laughed, "Congratulations to us all, Miss Xu, remember to come for the sweet soup and red eggs."

Xiao Qingxuan's face flushed as she playfully hit him and then held his hand tighter, coquettishly smiling, "My Dear, do you find me beautiful?"

Xiao Qingxuan's eyebrows were like spring water, her face as if powdered, her beauty unmatched in the world. Her pale yellow palace dress made her appear even more graceful and distinguished. Lin Wanrong stared, dumbfounded and foolish, murmuring, "So beautiful it's bubbling."

Qingxuan blushed and smiled shyly, swinging her long sword with force. The peach blossoms in the garden were suddenly stirred into a dance, like a shower of peach blossoms, spreading and sprinkling, flying towards them.

"Wow, it's raining, peach blossom rain!" Lin Wanrong grabbed her hand and laughed out loud.

Xiao Qingxuan held his hand, swinging her long sword rapidly. The colorful flower petals fluttering in the air slowly descended, forming a pathway leading straight to the door. As the dance progressed, Xiao Qingxuan let out a gentle rebuke, and her long sword flew from her hand, shooting straight into the treetops. The hilt of the sword buried itself, causing the branches to tremble slightly.

Xu Zhiqing was dumbfounded. This Miss Xiao was indeed like a celestial being.

"The sword was bestowed by Fairy Hall and must not be taken away, nor used against my brothers and sisters," Xiao Qingxuan said with a gentle smile, turning to Xu Zhiqing, "Sister Xu, come here."

Xu Zhiqing came to her side, and Xiao Qingxuan took hold of her small hand, the other hand tightly grasping Lin Wanrong. A sweet smile spread across her face as she resolutely said, "My Dear, you lead us away!"

Chapter 412 Equal to Heaven? Equal to Man?

Xu Zhiqing's heart trembled, and she involuntarily raised her head, only to see Xiao Qingxuan's face composed, her eyes shooting an incomparably determined look, gazing at Lin Wanrong with a tender smile. This Miss Xiao, whose background was unknown, possessed such grace that she outshone all the women in the world without even saying a word. Xu Zhiqing sighed softly and grasped her hand.

Lin Wanrong was not shy, quickly taking Qingxuan's little hand and rushing outside. In those few short steps, peach blossoms fell, brilliant and colorful, landing on the heads and bodies of the two women, as if they had become the flower goddesses of the peach garden, incredibly beautiful.

"Don't look back," seeing him continuously looking behind, Qingxuan shyly smiled and softly said, "Keep an eye on the path ahead so Miss Xu doesn't trip."



"Miss Xiao is joking," Xu Zhiqing's face reddened slightly. Seeing Xiao Qingxuan's clear eyes, she somehow felt uneasy and quickly lowered her head.

Once they were out of the garden, a scattering of fine rain fell on the three people's hair, giving a cool sensation. Situated atop an isolated peak, the cold air was biting. Looking into the distance, the mountains and waters were hazy, illusory, further enhancing the fairyland-like environment, a paradise on earth.

Gazing at the distant scenery, Xu Zhiqing was spellbound and only after a while did she sigh, "I've spent so much time in the capital, but I never knew that such a wonderful fairyland existed here. If it were me, living a lifetime in this peach blossom paradise would not be a problem."

"Fairy mountains are indeed fairy mountains," Lin Wanrong laughed, "but they lack a lot of human warmth. In my opinion, living in the city is better with taverns and teahouses, graceful dances and melodies, gossip and diverse cultures, everything to make you cry or laugh. That is the earthly paradise for us mortals."

That was crass to the extreme. Miss Xu shot him a glance, his words ruining her good mood. Xiao Qingxuan softly sighed, "Retreating from the world or embracing it is a great wisdom in itself. Some prefer the mundane, some prefer the fairy mountains; the paths may be different, but they all eventually converge."

"My wife is the clever one, cutting through the complexities of life with a single sentence," Lin Wanrong chuckled, glancing down the mountain to see the scattered white tents at the foot. Needless to say, they must have been the troops brought by Du Xiuyuan. With a strong army backing him, Lin Wanrong was even more energized. He held onto Miss Xiao and said, "Down the mountain, down the mountain, quickly, Qingxuan, let me carry you!"

Xiao Qingxuan's face was like powdered makeup, and she punched him lightly, whispering, "Don't be foolish, or Miss Xu will laugh at us."

"How is this foolish!" Lin Wanrong said earnestly, "You are pregnant now, and the mountain is steep and slippery. If you twist your waist carelessly, that would be a disaster. No, no, I must carry you."

Xiao Qingxuan, with her strong martial arts, didn't need his help at all. His righteous words made her both amused and touched. Xu Zhiqing, who knew medical principles, gave him a stern look and said, "Miss Xiao is five months pregnant, a stable period. Walking a few more steps is beneficial for the fetus. If you carelessly drop her while carrying, that would be the real disaster. Just admit you want to take advantage, don't make up so many excuses."

Miss Xiao's face turned a shade redder, and she tightly clutched Lin Wanrong's hand, her eyes filled with tenderness. Lin Wanrong's face was thick enough to not mind being exposed by Miss Xu, and he chuckled, "Is that so? Miss Xu seems to know a lot about this. Perhaps you can become a doctor specializing in childbirth in the future."

The three of them quickened their pace, with Lin Wanrong leading the way, and in a blink of an eye, they arrived at the fork in the road where Li Xiangjun had led the two of them up the mountain. Seeing that there was no one to stop them, Lin Wanrong felt more at ease. He was about to turn the corner with Xiao Qingxuan when Miss Xiao suddenly halted, listening intently for a moment. Her expression darkened as she said softly, "What was destined to come has finally arrived."

"What has come?" Lin Wanrong asked, puzzled.

Xiao Qingxuan gave a slight smile and took Lin Wanrong's hand, leading him around the corner. Xu Zhiqing followed the two, glancing ahead, and was suddenly stunned. In the clearing at the fork in the road, hundreds of people had already gathered. At the forefront sat several scholars over fifty, all appearing as learned men of great substance. Behind the scholars were young students and young ladies, their eyes filled with envy, jealousy, and indifference as they gazed at the three. Judging by the formation, they had been waiting here for quite some time.

"Miss Xiao, what is this?" Xu Zhiqing hesitated to ask.

Xiao Qingxuan shook her head with a bitter smile, sighing, "These are the elite of my Fairy Hall. Those sitting at the front are the teachers of the Fairy Hall, great scholars of the Literature School, renowned throughout the world, not inferior to your esteemed father. Grand Academician of the Wuying Hall, Yanzhai Recluse Yan Ne, Shengan Recluse Yang Shen, Shen Shitian from Yunnan, Taoist Xuanzhen Song Jinglian, Mr. Cangming Li Panlong, Zhongxi Recluse Li Yuanyang—"

Xu Zhiqing was horrified upon hearing these names. It was not only that she had heard of them; any scholar of the time would know them. These men were renowned scholars, not inferior to Xu Wei by much, and some were even Xu Wei's seniors. That these men were teachers of the "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" explained the school's immense reputation. They were all gathered here; could Lin San handle them?

"What's wrong? Are these people very famous?" Lin Wanrong laughed, "What 'Sheep Kidney Yuanyang' or something, I don't recognize any of them."

Even these people were unknown to him? Was his knowledge simply dropped from the sky? Xu Zhiqing gave him a helpless look and whispered, "These are scholars on par with my father. Any one of them is hard to meet, and I didn't expect to encounter so many today. You must not take them lightly."

'Me, take them lightly? My cannons are stationed at the foot of the mountain; whoever blocks me, I'll blast.' He snorted, patted Qingxuan's little hand, chuckled, and shouted, "Wow, so many people! Are you all holding a convention here?"

A man in front with white hair and beard, dressed in a grey robe, stroking his long beard, looked at him sternly and shouted, "Who are you? Why have you trespassed the gate of our Fairy Hall?"

"Who are you? Why do you question me so rudely?" Lin Wanrong raised an eyebrow and laughed aloud.

Such a response was a first for the old man, who paused, then proudly said, "I am Shen Shitian from Yunnan, former Scholar of Hall of Literary Brilliance in the previous Emperor. Who are you?"

Xu Zhiqing saw that Lin San truly did not recognize this person, and hurriedly tugged at his sleeve, urgently saying, "This Mr. Shen is an old minister from the time of the late Emperor, a generation senior to my father."

An old minister from the previous Emperor? Wasn't that a retired position? Lin Wanrong laughed and said, "I am Lin San, the number one servant of the Xiao family mansion in Jinling Prefecture, also known as the Exciting Master of Seduction."

Shen Shitian shook his head, the man before him who was calling himself the Exciting Master of Seduction was frivolous and impetuous, truly disgraceful. He snorted, "You slick-tongued little thing, daring to play tricks with your words in front of me. If you explain yourself well today, then that's fine; if not, I will report to the head of the court and punish you for trespassing the Fairy Hall."

Lin Wanrong burst into hearty laughter, "Trespassing the Fairy Hall? What a serious crime! You rely on this so-called Fairy Hall to privately enforce punishment, accusing me of a crime, under the broad sky and bright sun. Have I somehow wandered into a foreign land?"

Shen Shitian proudly said, "It is not that we privately enforce punishment, but the Founding Emperor once granted our Fairy Hall the title of 'Equal to Heaven.' You trespassing the Fairy Hall is disrupting the order of Heaven. Why can't I accuse you of this crime?"

Xu Zhiqing listened and sadly shook her head. Indeed, the older the ginger, the spicier it gets. By invoking the Founding Emperor's decree and charging with the crime of "disturbing Heaven," even the current Emperor would not dare object. Worried, she was about to speak, when Xiao Qingxuan gently shook her head, softly saying, "Sister Xu, trust my husband. There is nothing in this world that can stump him."

"What a great claim to be 'Equal to Heaven,'" Lin Wanrong said with a cold smile, "Esteemed Mr. Shen, may I ask, who is the Heaven of our Great Hua?"

Shen Shitian bowed and replied, "The Heaven of Great Hua, of course, is the reigning Emperor, the exalted one known as the Son of Heaven."

"Excellent, excellent!" Lin Wanrong clapped and laughed, "You are charging me with disturbing Heaven, thus treating the Fairy Hall as Heaven itself, aren't you?"

"That is naturally so." Shen Shitian said, "Our Fairy Hall is 'Equal to Heaven,' and your trespassing the Fairy Hall is naturally a disturbance to Heaven."

Lin Wanrong's face suddenly changed, shouting loudly, "You, Shen Shitian, dare to plot treason? Seize him!"

Shen Shitian's face turned pale, pointing at Lin Wanrong and stammering, "You, you are fabricating things! My loyalty to the Emperor is clear for all to see!"

"What a claim of 'clear for all to see.' I wonder which Heaven you are referring to?" Lin Wanrong said, his lips curling into a smile.

"This—" Shen Shitian hesitated, unsure how to respond, finally forcing out after much thought, "Both apply; both are considered Heaven."

Lin Wanrong burst into uproarious laughter, a sound that could shatter stones. Suddenly, he stopped, pointed a finger, and yelled, "You, Shen Shitian, despite being well-read in the classics, dare to proclaim the Fairy Hall as Heaven. As the saying goes, 'A country has one ruler, and the people

have one Heaven.' By treating the Fairy Hall as Heaven, where do you place our Great Hua Emperor and our Great Hua citizens? Your treacherous heart is truly exposed!"

Shen Shitian's face turned ashen. He never dreamed that this seemingly unimpressive young man could speak so eloquently, securely pinning a traitorous label on him. He regretted his momentary lapse, which allowed his opponent to seize the advantage.

"Look, what is this—" Lin Wanrong suddenly pulled out the imperial golden medallion from his bosom, sneering slightly. Shen Shitian, being a former court official, naturally recognized the object, and a shudder ran through his heart. He staggered back two steps, pointing at Lin Wanrong and stammering, "Is, is this sent by the Emperor?"

Seeing Shen Shitian not kneel upon seeing the imperial golden medallion, Lin Wanrong was annoyed, and coldly snorted, "Could it be that you invited me here instead? The Emperor said that there are some people on this mountain who, sheltered under the grace of the Founding Emperor, know not right from wrong, are arrogant, and regard the common people as nothing. He specially instructed me to come here and punish them. Mr. Shen, since you are so loyal and devoted to your 'Fairy Hall Heaven,' it seems I may have to start with you."

A taboo for the royal family, Shen Shitian, a seasoned court official, was certainly aware of it. However, generations of Emperors of Great Hua had tolerated the situation, allowing the Fairy Hall to flourish, and Shen Shitian had not taken it to heart. He never expected to capsize in the gutter today. Regardless of whether this envoy was genuine, just the fact that he dared to say such words meant he was no ordinary character. Perhaps he was indeed sent by the Emperor.

The more Shen Shitian thought about it, the more frightened he became, his face pale, slumping into a chair, gasping for breath. A man next to him shook his head and snorted, standing up and loudly declaring, "Even if you are the Emperor's envoy, what of it? Our Fairy Hall has the sacred Founding Emperor's personally inscribed 'Equal to Heaven,' which everyone must admire and bow to, even the current Emperor must bow his head."

"What's your honorable name, sir?" Lin Wanrong asked with a playful smile. The man who had stood was a few years younger than Shen Shitian, but still over fifty.

The man snorted, "Ignorant youth, I am known as Cang Ming!"

Xu Zhiqing hurriedly said, "This is Mr. Li Panlong, also known as Cang Ming. His calligraphy and painting are second to none, even the Emperor would pay a thousand gold pieces for one of his works. He is highly respected among the people."

"Oh," Lin Wanrong sighed, bowing his fist, "So it's Brother Li. Why, instead of selling your calligraphy and paintings, are you hiding in this Fairy Hall to teach?"

Li Panlong angrily retorted, "Who is your brother? The three words 'Equal to Heaven' were personally inscribed by the sacred Founding Emperor. Even the reigning Emperor must pay his respects, and no one can deny it. Brother Shen's respect for Heaven means respecting both the current Emperor and the sacred Founding Emperor. To say that you are disturbing heaven is accurate; where is the mistake?"

Damn, this guy indeed has a background in art, concocting a concept of two heavens. Lin Wanrong, who had only dealt with conflicting elements, had no interest in learning about these two heavens. He pulled Xu Zhiqing aside and whispered, "They say that the Founding Emperor inscribed those three characters; have you ever seen them?"

Xu Zhiqing was taken aback and shook her head, "Great Hua has been established for hundreds of years. Where would I see the handwriting of the Founding Emperor? Not even my father has seen it."

"Qingxuan, have you seen it?" Lin Wanrong whispered.

Xiao Qingxuan shook her head, "I've only heard of the Founding Emperor's handwriting; I've never seen it."

"So it means that none of us have seen those three characters?" Lin Wanrong smiled triumphantly, "Could it be fake? Nowadays, there are more fake things than real ones!"

Xu Zhiqing gave him a sidelong glance, "If it were fake, wouldn't the Emperor investigate it rigorously? It's just that the writing of the Founding Emperor has been lost for many years, and everyone doesn't know where it is stored."

"Who cares if it's real or fake? If they can't produce it, then it's fake." Lin Wanrong's eyebrows danced with joy as he stood up, pointing at Li Panlong and saying, "Brother Li, you say that the Founding Emperor personally inscribed the words 'Equal to Heaven' (与天齐,) is this true?"

Li Panlong laughed heartily, "Such a fine saying has been passed down for a hundred years, known to all, even women and children. You alone are ignorant of this matter, yet you dare to disturb our Fairy Hall gate? Ridiculous, absurd."

"Ha ha ha ha--" Lin Wanrong laughed uproariously, overwhelming Li Panlong with his presence before abruptly stopping. Calmly, he said, "It's not that I've never heard of it, but that I've never seen it. There are stories of the Horse King having three eyes; do you believe it? Ah, it's just a street tale. Believing it makes it real; disbelieving makes it vanish. I have always been diligent and inquisitive in my studies, and I won't easily believe in something I haven't seen with my own eyes. Since you claim there's the Founding Emperor's inscription, why not produce it for us younger generations to admire, to satisfy our yearning?"

"This—" Li Panlong was momentarily stunned, then his face changed, snorting, "The Founding Emperor's gift is not something you youngsters can see at whim. If I say it's there, it's there!"

Seeing Li's blustering appearance, Lin Wanrong was certain in his heart, laughing, "I'm strict in my studies. Since you can't produce it, I'll consider it nonexistent. Since the Founding Emperor didn't bestow the 'Equal to Heaven' inscription, you all must be deceiving the Emperor—"

"Silence—" Li Panlong yelled angrily, "If I produce this inscription, I'll have you charged with disrespect for the law!"

Disrespect for the law? Lin Wanrong smiled slightly, with the Emperor's gold medal in hand, not even the Emperor's golden seal could touch him. He opened his hands, giggling, "Disrespect for the law? Such a grave charge; I'm so scared."

A victorious smile spread across Li Panlong's face, "Lin San, is this all you've got? Where's the talent you showed in the Jinling poetry competition? Today, I'll show you something."

Lin Wanrong was startled, "You know me?"

Li Panlong gave a cold smile, "Mei Yanqiu, whom you humiliated in Jinling, is my grand-disciple. I heard of your sharp words long ago, and today I set this trap to lure you in. The Founding Emperor's inscription hangs in the private chamber of the Head of Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, and I've sent people to fetch it. The Emperor's handwriting will be revealed, and we'll see whether you'll win, or I'll win!"

"No—really?" Lin Wanrong jumped a step back, his face showing great astonishment, "You really have this inscription? Wow, it's been hundreds of years, has it not turned to ashes? Brother Li, Brother Li, let's step aside and talk. Earlier, it was just a misunderstanding. I came to buy paintings from you. I'll pay ten wen for a painting, and you can give me an inscription as a gift—"

Li Panlong's sleeves flicked, his voice filled with anger, "Today's matter cannot end well; I will avenge Yanqiu's past disgrace."

Xiao Qingxuan pulled Lin Wanrong aside, whispering, "My Dear, are you confident?"

"I'm not entirely confident, but if you'll kiss me, then I'll be absolutely certain." Lin Wanrong said with a mischievous grin.

Miss Xiao's face turned pink, and she scolded, "Be serious, don't set a bad example for our child."

From a distance, two young boys came running at full speed, holding a scroll of painting in their hands. Judging by the wooden roller and paper's color, the scroll seemed quite ancient.

Li Panlong's face lit up with pride, and he bowed respectfully to the scroll before carefully unrolling it.

This was the Founding Emperor's personal inscription, a treasure preserved for several hundred years. Everyone held their breath, their eyes fixed on the scroll. As it slowly unfurled, the three majestic characters "Equal to Heaven" appeared, causing the people of "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" to erupt in unified cheers.

"Hold on, hold on—" Lin Wanrong walked over to Li Panlong, smiling, "I was too far away earlier, and couldn't see clearly. Brother Li, let me have a good look."

Li Panlong nodded haughtily, and Lin Wanrong took hold of the scroll, turning it over carefully to admire it. Li Panlong grew impatient, calling out loudly, "Have you admired it enough? Do you have anything else to say?"

Lin Wanrong giggled, "I've finished admiring it. The Founding Emperor's authentic handwriting is indeed extraordinary. Brother Li, your learning is vast; can you read these three characters for me?"



Li Panlong gritted his teeth, huffed, and shouted, "Equal—to—Heaven—"

"No way?" Lin Wanrong stepped back a few paces, shouting, "Brother Li, you're quite old, and you don't even recognize these characters? Allow me to teach you. These three characters read Equal—to—Man!"

## Chapter 413 The Three-Beat Drum

"What?" Li Panlong laughed heartily, stroking his beard with contempt, "You can't even recognize a few characters, Lin San, you might as well go back and find some tutors to teach you how to read. Don't come out and make a fool of yourself. With your knowledge, to discuss poetry and debate, and even win the title in Jinling, truly the world's greatest joke."

All the scholars in the Fairy Hall and the gathered students and intellectuals around burst into laughter, looking at Lin Wanrong with eyes full of disdain.

"What is he up to?" Xu Zhiqing glanced at Lin Wanrong, not daring to be distracted, and whispered to Miss Xiao, her voice tinged with a hint of concern.

"No matter!" Xiao Qingxuan shook her head and smiled, "Has Miss not seen his abilities? From Jinling to the capital, he has refuted others in all matters under heaven, rarely being bested by anyone. Turning death into life, black into white, this is my husband's unique skill that no one can learn."

Xu Zhiqing chuckled, recalling Lin San's eloquent debates during the flower-viewing event and the unique experience of seeking silver in Shandong. With his ability, there was really no task in the world that could stump him. She felt much more relaxed and couldn't help but stamp her foot, complaining, "This dead man, always fooling others with tricks, never realizing how much worry he causes others."

"Really? Miss Xu is worried about him too? My husband has found a true friend in you," Xiao Qingxuan said with a faint smile, as beautiful as a fairy.

Xu Zhiqing's face turned slightly red, and seeing that Miss Xiao said nothing, her expression calm, she did not know what she had understood and felt uneasy, not daring to speak.

Seeing everyone laughing, Lin Wanrong didn't mind and chuckled, "No matter, if I really made a mistake, I can hire a tutor to teach me. But, if Brother Li, you made a mistake, what then?"

This was an outright insult to Li Panlong's intelligence, and the people in the Fairy Hall became impatient. Several young scholars shouted, "Master Li is renowned for his calligraphy and painting. He painted continuously for seven days and nights on West Lake, creating vast waves, a story passed down for ages. Even the Emperor takes pride in possessing his works. How could he recognize a character wrong? Lin San, you better release Miss Xiao, and we will spare your life." Li Panlong approvingly looked at the scholars, stroking his beard and smiling, looking very pleased with himself.

'Paint for seven days and nights? If it were making love, I might consider it, but painting, let's forget it.' Lin Wanrong laughed twice and said, "So Brother Li is so stalwart, I admire, I admire. However, as the saying goes, 'To err is human,' and if he accidentally recognizes a word wrong, that is not out of the question."

"Nonsense." Li Panlong waved his sleeve angrily, "Such simple characters, even a three-year-old child recognizes them. How could I mistake them? Lin San, I will make a bet with you."

"A bet? I'm not very good at that." Lin Wanrong shyly smiled, "Do you want to roll dice, play Pai Gow, or compare sizes?"

Li Panlong disdainfully said, "Those are the trivial pursuits of the petty, the height of vulgarity, and I, Li Panlong, could never engage in such things. I will bet with you on recognizing characters, specifically these three characters inscribed by the Founding Emperor. If you are wrong, you will bow respectfully to me in the Fairy Hall and accept our punishment."

"What if you are wrong?" Lin Wanrong was unfazed, grinning mischievously.

"Hahaha—" Li Panlong laughed uproariously, proclaiming with arrogance, "I, Li Panlong, have been inscribing and painting all my life and have never read a character wrong or misrecognized one. If I am wrong, I will bow three times and kowtow nine times to you, and call you Lin San my master."

The surrounding scholars were startled, crying out in unison, "Master, do not."

Li Panlong waved his hand, snorting angrily, "You need not worry for me. I recognized characters at three years old and have never been mistaken. Today, I want to see what Lin San is really capable of."

Seeing that everyone's eyes were on him, Lin Wanrong shook his head, saying, "This isn't very appropriate. I'm still young, haven't even had a son yet. How can I take on a disciple? Why don't you bow to me as a big brother and I'll take you as a younger brother? Alas, in these times, humble people like me are truly rare."

"Enough of your nonsense. With your abilities, you are not a match for our master." Seeing Lin San's shameless self-praising, Li Panlong's disciples couldn't stand it and interrupted Lin Wanrong's words, cheering for their master.

Li Panlong's face turned deep red, shouting, "Enough talk! The Founding Emperor's inscription is here, one glance is all it takes to know. Everyone present is well-educated; no one can falsify. Lin San, do you have any objections?"

Everyone in the field held their breath, waiting for Lin San's reply. Lin Wanrong laughed, "Reading and recognizing characters is a good thing; what objections could I have? The characters inscribed by the Founding Emperor are clear as day. Anyone can come up and look."

"So you agree?" Li Panlong sneered, "Good. As today's competition is within my Fairy Hall, to prevent you from making excuses after losing, I'll let you choose someone to recognize these three characters, so that you may be utterly convinced."

"Choose anyone?" Lin Wanrong glanced around and pointed at a fourteen or fifteen-year-old scholar, smiling, "Young man, can you read? What, your master is Li Panlong? Then it's you, I choose you."

The young scholar looked uncertainly at Li Panlong, who snorted, "Lin San, you indeed have nerve, daring to choose my disciple."

"Who to look at is not about nerve," Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Brother Li, you said yourself, these characters are extremely simple; even a three-year-old child recognizes them. Naturally, your disciple won't mistake them. Young man, come take a good look. Just don't get it wrong, for I have tens of thousands of troops and ten cannons waiting down the mountain. If I'm delayed, and they fire up the mountain because they've waited too long, it won't be my fault."

Hearing about the army and cannons below, everyone became a little uneasy. The young scholar looked at his master with fear. Li Panlong snorted, "Yu Yonglian, don't be afraid, recognize the characters boldly, your master will take responsibility."

Yu Yonglian, the young scholar, bowed and made his way forward slowly. Everyone held their breath, their eyes fixed on Lin San and Li Panlong. The field was quiet, so quiet that the sound of a pin dropping could be heard.

The two boys who brought the scroll held it upright before everyone. Though they stood at a distance, the three flamboyant characters were clearly visible. It read "Yu Tian Qi," meaning "Equal to Heaven."

Xu Zhiqing was taken aback, and even Xiao Qingxuan exclaimed in surprise, her face full of confusion. The people at "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" had already begun to clap and cheer, while Li Panlong stroked his beard and smiled complacently. "Lin San, the victory has been decided. Do you have anything to say?"

"The victory has been decided?" Lin Wanrong asked incredulously. "Brother Li, where did you get that idea? The young fellow hasn't even approached yet, nor has he spoken a word. Where does the victory come from?"

Li Panlong, thinking that he had already won, paid no mind and snorted. "Yonglian, hurry up and recognize it, don't keep your uncles and brothers waiting."

Yu Yonglian quickly acknowledged, and as he was about to approach, Lin Wanrong grabbed him, smiling. "Little brother, how old are you this year? How many years have you been reading?"

Yu Yonglian replied, "I am fifteen this year. I have been following my mentor since I was eight, so it has been over seven years."

Lin Wanrong nodded. "Fifteen years old, that's not too young. You must look carefully at these three characters, not missing a single stroke, and definitely not reading them wrong. Otherwise, if this spreads, your whole life will be ruined."

Yu Yonglian, hearing this, kept nodding his head as he approached the handwriting of the Founding Emperor. He observed it carefully, not missing a single detail. At first, his expression was normal, but when he looked at the character for "heaven," his face gradually changed, large beads of sweat rolled down his forehead, and his legs began to tremble.

Li Panlong, growing impatient, shouted, "Yonglian, have you seen it clearly? If you have recognized it all, then tell your uncles and brothers loudly."

"Master, disciple, disciple has seen it clearly—" Yu Yonglian's face turned pale, his voice trembling as he dared not speak.

Li Panlong frowned, snorting, "Since you have seen it clearly, then speak quickly."

Lin Wanrong coldly smiled, interjecting, "Little brother, this is a sacred relic of Founding Emperor, visible to everyone. You cannot fabricate it, or you'll lose your head. Speak the truth."

Yu Yonglian's sweat poured like rain, trembling as he said, "With—with—with—"

Li Panlong urged him on, "With what? Read it out quickly!"

Yu Yonglian's knees gave way, and he fell to the ground, continuously kowtowing. "Master, disciple dares not read, disciple dares not read!"

The scholars of "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" were all shocked, and the disciples couldn't help but make a commotion. Li Panlong's face changed drastically, and he yelled, "What did you say? How do you dare not read? Have you wasted over ten years of my teaching?"

Lin Wanrong laughed, "Brother Li, this young brother is doing you a favor. If he had read these three characters straight, you would have been completely defeated today."

"Nonsense, how could I be completely defeated?" Li Panlong shouted angrily.

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, pointing to two little boys, "You, hold the scroll closer, let the present scholars and talents see it clearly." The two boys held up the scroll, displaying it before everyone. All eyes fell on the character for "heaven" (天) in the middle. Without looking, one wouldn't know; with one look, one would be shocked. On the original character for "heaven," there was a faint ink mark at the top, just a tiny speck, not clear from a distance, but it was unmistakably the character for "man." (夫)

The scholars' faces turned pale, and the disciples of the Fairy Hall were dumbfounded, almost unable to believe what was happening before their eyes. The handwritten characters of the

Founding Emperor, passed down for a thousand years, had changed in an instant. Li Panlong was like a man struck by lightning, his eyes wide, mumbling, "Impossible, this is impossible—" He suddenly pointed at Lin San and accused, "It was you, you tampered with it——"

"Me, tampered with it?" Lin Wanrong laughed out loud and said, "Brother Li, with your unparalleled mastery of both painting and calligraphy, can you really not see that when the Founding Emperor wrote the character 'Heaven,' there was already an extra dot? You are all well-known scholars of this era, please take a good look."

Everyone looked and saw that, as Lin San had said, the character Heaven (天) had a slight extra protrusion when the Founding Emperor had written it (夫). Although the mark was faint, they had disregarded it, assuming it to be an unintentional slip by the Emperor. Who would dare question such a thing? But now, with the spring rain dampening the paper, the protrusion became more pronounced.

"This, this—" The crowd looked at each other in disbelief, no one daring to say a word.

Lin Wanrong said coldly with a smirk, "What a 'Jade Virtue Fairy Hall.' The words of the Founding Emperor were clearly 'Equal to Man,' urging you to set aside your arrogance and learn from the common people. But you dare to twist the Emperor's words, considering the people of the world as insignificant, claiming 'Equal to Heaven.' Such deceptive behavior towards the Emperor and disdain for the subjects is despicable, and the crime is punishable."

The slogan "Equal to Heaven" had been the proud pillar of the "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" for hundreds of years. But now, Lin San's words had turned their world upside down, transforming equality with heaven into equality with the common folk—a massive difference. Although the academy was filled with learned scholars, faced with this shocking change, they could think of no response.

Was it really necessary to bow to this young man? Li Panlong, who had previously been so confident, now looked ashen-faced, his lips quivering, his expression filled with despair.

Lin Wanrong chuckled sinisterly and was about to speak when Xiao Qingxuan gently tugged at his clothes and softly said, "If we can spare them, let's do so. I've been educated by the Hall since I was young, and I still have respect for them. Let's not make it difficult for these gentlemen here; we can just leave the mountain."

Lin Wanrong spread his hands, looking innocent, and said, "You saw it too; it was clearly them who made things difficult for me, not the other way around. But since my wife has spoken, I'll let them off. I was going to attack the Fairy Hall, but alas, who knows when I'll fulfill my wish?"

Xiao Qingxuan gave a soft laugh and glanced at him. Xu Zhiqing, puzzled, asked, "Lin San, is the Founding Emperor's inscription really 'Equal to Man'?"

Caught in a small trap, even the clever and wise Miss Xu couldn't discern the truth. Lin Wanrong grinned, looked around, and mysteriously said, "The Founding Emperor was clever. That character for Heaven '天' that doesn't look like Heaven '天,' and the Man '夫' that doesn't look like Man '夫,' who knows what it's meant to be? Probably something left for later generations to guess. I just took advantage of the rain and fulfilled the old Founding Emperor's wish from many years ago."

Miss Xu gave a long "oh" and huffed, "So you really did tamper with it. The masters of the Hall opposing you truly have terrible luck."

Lin Wanrong chuckled a few times, holding onto Qingxuan as they were about to descend the mountain when suddenly a soft sound came from a distance. It was like the striking of a wooden fish, the sound becoming more and more urgent, like the beat of a drum pounding in one's heart.

"Who is that, playing with a wooden fish in broad daylight?" Lin Wanrong said, laughing.

Xiao Qingxuan's delicate body quivered slightly, and she shook her head with a bitter smile. "The abbess is summoning me, My Dear. Hold me tight."

"Abbess?" Lin Wanrong was taken aback for a moment, noticing Qingxuan's continuous trembling. He quickly hugged her tightly and exclaimed, "Qingxuan, Qingxuan, what's wrong with you?"

Xiao Qingxuan leaned weakly against him, her face as pale as paper, tears rolling down her cheeks. She murmured, "My Dear, I've followed you this far today, and even if I die, I will die content. But leaving behind our child is my failure to you. Hold me, hold me tight!"

The wooden fish's knocking grew more frantic, Xiao Qingxuan's whole body trembling lightly, seeming to lose all strength, tears falling like rain, her face pale as paper. She clung tightly to Lin Wanrong's waist, desperately wanting to melt into his embrace.

Lin Wanrong was horrified and held her body tightly, anxiously saying, "Qingxuan, Qingxuan, what's wrong? Don't scare me—"

A fleeting brilliance bloomed on Xiao Qingxuan's beautiful face as she murmured, "Three-Beat Drum, I'm not afraid! I'll live and die with My Dear. My Dear, My Dear, take me away quickly!"

"Three-Beat Drum?" Xu Zhiqing murmured to herself, her face flashing a hint of surprise.

Lin Wanrong let out a loud cry, embracing Xiao Qingxuan's soft, boneless body, and charged down the mountain. The sound of the wooden fish seemed to follow his movements, becoming more urgent. But the breath of Xiao Qingxuan, nestled in Lin Wanrong's arms, grew weaker and weaker, a faint gloom appearing in her beautiful eyes, her body gradually softening.

Feeling the chill emanating from Qingxuan's body, as if life was slowly ebbing away from her, Lin Wanrong's eyes cracked, his blood boiling as if aflame. "Ah!" he suddenly stopped, howling at the sky, drawing a musket from his bosom. "Bang!" A gunshot rang out, the smoke rising, Lin Wanrong brimming with murderous intent. "Du Xiuyuan, fire the cannons, fire the cannons!"

Down the mountain, Du Xiuyuan heard the gunshot from above, the unique signal General Lin had instructed before leaving. He hesitated for a moment, then clenched his teeth, waved a small flag and shouted, "Fire the cannons—"

Eight giant cannons belched hot flames, and several cannonballs sped through the air, striking the cliff in front of the Fairyu Hall, stirring up a fierce cloud of dust. The previously composed scholars were instantly pale and confused, their disciples thrown into chaos.

As the cannon sound rang out, the grating noise of the wooden fish stopped. Lin Wanrong gently stroked Xiao Qingxuan's cheek, softly saying, "Qingxuan, don't be afraid, as long as I'm here, no one dares to harm a hair on your head. Listen, that's the sound of cannons. I'll blow this Fairy Hall to smithereens. Anyone who dares to hurt you, I will make them pay a hundredfold."

Xiao Qingxuan's body slowly warmed up, two large tears slid down her cheeks, her long eyelashes trembling slightly. She slowly opened her eyes, lightly calling "My Dear," and her tears fell like raindrops.

Xu Zhiqing sighed, softly saying, "If you want to save Miss Xiao's life, you'd better not take her down the mountain just yet."



"What does that mean?" Lin Wanrong exclaimed in shock.

Xu Zhiqing didn't answer him but glanced at Xiao Qingxuan and asked softly, "Miss Xiao, is the 'Three-Beat Drum' that you just mentioned the method used by Tibetan Living Buddhas to find the reincarnated soul child?"

Xiao Qingxuan nodded and sighed gently, "Sister Xu is indeed knowledgeable and has a strong memory, even knowing about the Three-Beat Drum."

Lin Wanrong was utterly confused, and he quickly grabbed Xu Zhiqing's hand, saying, "Miss Xu, what's this about the Three-Beat Drum, Four-Beat Drum? What does it all mean?"

Xiao Qingxuan gently grabbed him and said, "My Dear, let me explain it to you. My childhood was filled with hardship, and I entered this Fairy Hall and was chosen by the abbess as the successor. Every generation of the Fairy Hall's abbess must cultivate virtue and live ascetically without earthly desires. If you hadn't come today, I would have become the next abbess tomorrow."

Lin Wanrong was greatly shocked and tightly held her hand, saying, "Qingxuan, how can this be? Didn't you promise to meet me at the Jade Buddha Temple on the seventh day of the seventh month? How could you suddenly change your mind?"

Tears rolled down Xiao Qingxuan's face as she shook her head, "It's not that I changed my mind. It's because I carry your bloodline, and that's why the world has suddenly changed. I originally intended to meet you on the seventh day of the seventh month, but the abbess saw that I was pregnant and forced me to abort the child. I fought her tooth and nail, so she suggested a compromise: I would inherit the abbess position tomorrow and give birth to our child in seclusion, never to see you again. On the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, I waited for you but you never came. Today, on the golden hall, was supposed to be our last meeting—"

Tears streamed down Xiao Qingxuan's face, and she choked, unable to continue. Lin Wanrong was covered in cold sweat, unable to believe the twists and turns that had occurred. If he hadn't come today, Qingxuan would have become a nun.

He quickly grabbed Qingxuan's hand and comforted her, "Wife, don't be afraid, now that I'm here, no one will bully you. I'll destroy this Fairy Hall today, and let's see who dares to force you. Quickly tell me what this Three-Beat Drum is about?"

Xiao Qingxuan sighed, "The Three-Beat Drum comes from Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, used specifically for enlightenment and as the Fairy Hall's abbess's secret, used to choose a successor. When I was a child, the abbess recited it to me every day. It was like a spell, trapping my mind. If recited three times in a day, my mind would be exhausted, I'd enter deep meditation, and never wake up. That's why it's called the Three-Beat Drum."

Lin Wanrong broke into a cold sweat. This so-called Three-Beat Drum was actually a kind of sinister hypnotism. It had already been recited once. If it were recited twice more, he and Qingxuan would be separated by life and death.

Xiao Qingxuan smiled tenderly and said, "Since I'm married to My Dear, we'll be husband and wife through life and death. The Fairy Hall is no longer my dwelling. I broke our old promise, and it's my fault. What's wrong with enduring this Three-Beat Drum? My Dear, you'll support me, won't you?"

How could he support this? Lin Wanrong's heart was bitter. He grabbed Xiao Qingxuan's hand and said gently, "Three-Beat Drum, Four-Beat Drum, we're not afraid of them. I'll blow up this Fairy Hall today, and let's see how they can play their drum."

"Bomb my Fairy Hall?" A woman's voice rang in their ears, filled with cold authority, "With just you?"

"Pay respect to the abbess!" From afar, the disciples of the Fairy Hall ran forward, and on hearing this voice, they seemed to find their backbone, respectfully bowing their heads. Even some other people respectfully saluted.

Xiao Qingxuan tightly held Lin Wanrong's hand, her face blooming into an exceptionally beautiful smile, "My Dear, this is our last hurdle. In this life and the next, we'll be husband and wife, never to be parted!!!"

## Chapter 414 Bombarding the Archway

From a distance, several people approached, all dressed in grey robes. Walking on both sides were two young girls, with their hair coiled up and daoist pins inserted into their hair, their expressions solemn. In the middle of them was an old daoist nun, around fifty or sixty years old, her hair white and her demeanor majestic. Wherever the three passed, people were sincerely terrified and respectful, bowing and saluting.

Behind them stood a tall archway. When they had been hurrying up the mountain earlier, they hadn't taken a good look at it. Now, upon closer inspection, the archway was grand and imposing, with four shimmering golden characters written on it—"Jade Virtue Fairy Archway."

Xiao Qingxuan saw Lin Wanrong deep in thought, not speaking, and whispered, "That place is the sacred inheritance site of the archway, the core area of the Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, where ordinary people cannot enter."

The core of the Jade Virtue Fairy Hall? Lin Wanrong sneered a few times, having made up his mind.

"Disciple Xiao Qingxuan, paying respects to the abbess." Seeing the old daoist nun slowly approaching, Xiao Qingxuan remained calm, about to bow down, but Lin Wanrong quickly stopped her, saying with concern, "You are pregnant; it's best to do less of this needless action. From now on, you are not allowed to bow to anyone except Heaven and Earth and your parents."

Xiao Qingxuan sweetly smiled, nodding her head. The abbess, having arrived in front of them and hearing this, raised her eyebrows in anger, "Qingxuan, is this the evil man who has led you astray? For his sake, you even forgot the rites?"

"Rites? What rites?" Lin Wanrong spread his hands and laughed, "In the world, only justice and righteousness are the greatest rites. I have treated Qingxuan sincerely, yet suffered malicious obstruction. I ask you, old lady, do you understand the rites?"

While they were talking, the scholars and disciples of the Fairy Hall had already gathered around the abbess, emboldened. The abbess signaled them, then coldly said, "What a brazen child, daring to spout such madness, undermining my Fairy Hall's hundred-year foundation. Today, I must properly deal with you."

"Fairy hall?" Lin Wanrong laughed loudly, "Abbess, don't take yourself too seriously. You call yourself 'Fairy,' but where is the Fairy?"

Upon hearing him repeatedly call her "old lady," the people of the Jade Virtue Fairy Hall were already seething with rage. The abbess raised her eyebrows, her robes fluttering, proudly saying, "Our Fairy Hall has produced countless scholars and great learned men through the generations. They have devoted their lives to caring for the people, leading the masses, rescuing them from disasters. The name of the virtuous and fairy is respected all over the world."

"What a caring for the people, leading the masses, rescuing them from disasters." Lin Wanrong laughed loudly, clapping, "This is indeed the biggest joke I have ever heard. Your Fairy Hall is truly extraordinary in its sanctity."

The abbess shouted, "Audacious rogue, why do you laugh?"

Lin Wanrong stopped laughing, disdainfully asked, "Abbess, what is your daoist name?"

As soon as his voice fell, there was an uproar on the other side, "How dare you! Our abbess's daoist name is not something an ignorant person like you can inquire about."

Lin Wanrong glanced at the speaker, who turned out to be Li Panlong, who had lost a bet earlier. Seeing Lin Wanrong looking at him with a smiling face, Li Panlong somehow felt a chill in his heart, quickly shutting up and not daring to speak again. The abbess waved her hand to stop her disciples from talking, calmly saying, "Telling you my daoist name does no harm. I am the seventeenth abbess of the Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, Recluse Jing'an."

"Recluse Jing'an?" Lin Wanrong nodded and said, "The name does indeed resemble that. It's just a pity that such a good name has been wasted."

"How dare you—" Li Panlong yelled, but Lin Wanrong angrily pointed at his nose, "You're the one being daring! I, the master, am speaking here; it's not your turn, you little monkey, to interrupt." Everyone had witnessed Lin San's magical duel, so Li Panlong couldn't deny it. Having his nose pointed at and scolded by Lin San in front of everyone, his face turned both red and white, and he was unable to make a sound.

Recluse Jing'an angrily said, "You have quite the nerve to insult me!"

Lin Wanrong laughed, "Where's the insult? You, a recluse, are not calm, and not peaceful; where do the words 'quiet' and 'peace' come from? Saying that this good name has been defiled is not at all an injustice. The word 'Fairy Hall' is indeed the greatest absurdity under the heavens."

"You—" Recluse Jing'an angrily said, "Stop spouting such nonsense, insulting my Fairy Hall!"

"Do you not agree?" Lin Wanrong shouted, "Caring for the people, leading the masses, rescuing all from fire and water – this is really the biggest joke. You lords and masters of the hall, detached from the masses and lofty, regard all living beings as mere weeds. How dare you talk about leading the masses? The common people of remote mountains and countryside work from sunrise to sunset,

supporting themselves with their own hands. Why do they need your leadership, your rescue? Do you truly think that reading a few shabby books allows you to comment on the country and write passionate words? Without the millions of peasants tilling fields and paying taxes to support you, you would be nothing but a lump of dung in the latrine. Who are you leading? Who are you saving? Except for yourselves, you cannot save anyone. Your so-called 'Fairy Hall' is nothing but a harlot in a brothel, flaunting herself daily to attract attention. Do you think yourselves noble? Claiming the name of Fairy, respected by all, I spit on it—respect my foot!"

Lin Wanrong's cursing was heartfelt and unrestrained. With a "snap," he kicked a small stone, which flew up and landed in front of the abess, startling everyone.

"You, you—" Recluse Jing'an's face turned pale, her body swayed, and she was unable to speak a word. The "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" had stood for a hundred years without falling, unparalleled in reputation; when had it ever suffered such an insult? Across the vast world, no one dared to bombard the Jade Virtue Fairy Hall like this, except for Lin San.

Xu Zhiqing saw Lin San's body filled with a furious aura, seemingly carrying a storm of anger, and felt secretly startled. Being highly wise, she felt an affinity for the populist thoughts embodied in Lin San's words. The world belonged to the common people, who possessed infinite courage and wisdom. They were the true rulers of the world. How could this aloof and out-of-touch Jade Virtue Fairy Hall qualify to lead or save them?

Seeing his impassioned appearance, Xiao Qingxuan's eyes brimmed with tears, and she was faintly reminded of their first meeting by the side of Xuanwu Lake in Jinling Prefecture last golden autumn. He had looked just like this, capturing her attention. This moment, this scene, made her feel as though she had returned to the time when they first met. Her heart filled with tender emotions, she took his hand and smiled charmingly, like a hundred flowers blossoming, overshadowing the brilliance of heaven and earth.

Lin San's words were like heavy artillery shells, landing on the people of Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, leaving them wide-eyed and speechless. Faced with Lin San's domineering and stern appearance, the room fell into an extreme silence, with no one daring to speak.

Recluse Jing'an swayed a few times, barely steadying himself, and shouted angrily, "What a sharp tongue you have! Our sacred hall's century-old foundation is not as disgraceful as you describe. As for this matter concerning the masses, I will not argue with you today. Xiao Qingxuan is our disciple, the chosen heir of our residence many years ago. No one can take her away; this is a universally accepted principle, and you cannot deny it."

Seeing Recluse Jing'an no longer daring to call herself "Fairy Hall," Xu Zhiqing inwardly chuckled, casting an admiring glance at Lin Wanrong. No matter how wild and unyielding the sacred hall was, they had to bend their waists in front of the stone-like, unyielding Lin San.

Lin Wanrong's fierce scolding had subdued everyone's momentum. Hearing Recluse Jing'an backpedal, he sneered, "I say, old madam, Qingxuan is just a disciple under your care, not sold to you. She has the right to marry and have children. How can you obstruct this and claim righteousness?"

Recluse Jing'an snorted, "If this were happening to another disciple, I would certainly not stop it. But Qingxuan is an exception. She was directly chosen by the previous head as the heir, a matter concerning our Hall's eternal cause. I absolutely cannot let her go. Besides, she vowed in the past to cast away worldly desires, practice asceticism, lead our disciples, and carry forward the spirit of Jade Virtue Fairy Hall. How can we forget such a vow?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "What a ridiculous rule, utterly inhumane. Even if Qingxuan is to become the head, must she renounce her desires and become a nun? Why don't you reorganize the sacred hall? Make the Literary School a Department of Culture, the Martial School a Fighting Club, and the Sacred Hall a corporation, with Qingxuan as the chairman and me as the chairman's husband. This way, everyone would be satisfied, and it would be perfect."

Recluse Jing'an flicked her long sleeve and scolded, "Nonsense! The heads of our Hall have always been talented individuals with high cultivation, willingly sacrificing worldly desires for the pursuit of heavenly truth, single-mindedly maintaining Jade Virtue Fairy Hall. Only this path can gain the disciples' support."

"Pursue heavenly truth?" Lin Wanrong scoffed, "Worldly emotions are the natural rights of common people. Who are you to take them away? You ask people not to enjoy their humanity but to pursue an elusive heavenly truth. Is this how your Jade Virtue Fairy Hall cultivates? Seeking the heavenly way while destroying the human way, who would agree? You're forcing Qingxuan to do what she doesn't want to do for your so-called selfish desires of the Hall, yet you speak as if it's so selfless, so noble. It's laughable, just laughable!"

Xu Zhiqing listened and applauded, for Lin San's words hit the nail on the head, tearing off the veil of supposed nobility and sanctity covering "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall." Xiao Qingxuan's face flushed, holding Lin Wanrong's hand tightly, and softly said, "My Dear, Qingxuan does not seek the heavenly way, only wishing to follow the path of human relationships with you, life after life!"

"Exactly, exactly." Lin Wanrong nodded hurriedly, playfully whispering in her ear, "The way of human relations, the pinnacle of intimate emotions between husband and wife, is truly sacred. I have always been tireless and assiduous on this academic path. My good wife, after we take care of things here, let's explore it further."

Miss Xiao lightly spat and blushed, hitting him once. The two were affectionate and loving, envied by all around.

Upon hearing Lin Wanrong's words, the younger generation of disciples in the Fairy Hall were all moved. "Seeking the Heavenly Way, Destroying Human Way" – these seven characters were deafening and enlightening, giving a feeling of sudden clarity. Everyone looked at each other, whispering amongst themselves.

Recluse Jing'an saw that the situation was somewhat out of control and hastily shouted, "A person without trust is unstable. No matter what you say, Xiao Qingxuan's vow from the past is true. Qingxuan, do you admit it?"

With her proud character, Xiao Qingxuan's integrity was akin to that of a man, so how could she deny it? She calmly nodded and said, "What the head of the sect says is not false. I indeed made that vow in the past. Today's matter is my violation of the promise I made. I am willing to accept any punishment." Lin Wanrong knew Miss Xiao's temperament and didn't stop her, allowing her to act freely. After all, whatever his wife did, he'd take care of it.

Upon hearing Xiao Qingxuan's straightforward admission, Xu Zhiqing became anxious and quickly tugged at Lin Wanrong, giving him a stern look. She whispered, "With your intelligence, why don't you think of a way to have Miss Xiao phrase it more tactfully? That way, there may still be room to remedy the situation."

Miss Xiao shook her head gently and gratefully said, "I appreciate your concern, sister. This is how My Dear understands me; what's white is white, and what's black is black. What I have done in life, even if wrong, cannot be erased. I will never deny what I have done."

Lin Wanrong chuckled and said unconcernedly, "Exactly, exactly. What are we afraid of? Let's just say it as it is. After all, I'm the world's most notorious villain; I'll handle the wicked deeds."

These two, one foolish and the other naive, one good and the other evil, were indeed a perfect match. Miss Xu was moved and at a loss for words. She could only grasp Lin San's hand, showing support.

The Fairy Hall's head, Recluse Jing'an, was waiting for these words from Miss Xiao. Upon hearing Xiao Qingxuan's candid admission, she immediately gave a chant and nodded, "Since Qingxuan admits it, there are no further concerns. As the saying goes, 'a person without trust is unstable,' and to violate a vow is something despised by the world. It's not too late to turn back now."

"Turn back? Turn back to what?" Lin Wanrong sneered, loudly saying, "Recluse Jing'an, my dear, do you remember when Qingxuan made this vow?"

The head of the hall snorted and said angrily, "Of course I remember this matter. It was the eighth year after Qingxuan came to the mountain, probably when she was around eight or nine years old."

Lin Wanrong turned and softly said, "Qingxuan, she's not wrong, is she?"

Miss Xiao nodded lightly, "The head of the hall remembers correctly; I was not even nine years old at that time."

Lin Wanrong let out a long "Oh," leaped to a scholar, and smiled, "May I ask this gentleman, what were you doing when you were nine years old?"

The young scholar was momentarily stunned, then said, "When I was nine years old, I was learning to write and memorize poetry with my father."

"Oh, did you have any dishonest behavior at that time?" Lin Wanrong teased, "Like asking your honorable father to buy you candied hawthorn, he gave you ten wen, and you secretly pocketed six?"

The scholar's face turned red, and he nodded hesitantly, "One winter, he forced me to get up early to write. Under his authority, I had to agree. But when he went out, I sneaked away to play with others, betraying his teachings."

"Oh, that's breaking a promise then," Lin Wanrong said, spreading his hands in resignation. "Scholar brother, it seems you're no gentleman."



The scholar was horrified and quickly said, "It's not like that. I was young and mischievous, momentarily tempted to play, but that was merely childish mischief. I believe everyone has had such experiences. It can't be taken seriously. I haven't broken my word in later years."

Lin Wanrong shook his head, his face full of sympathy. "Scholar brother, I believe you. But if someone thinks you're no gentleman, I can't help it."

The scholar hastily asked, "Who?"

Lin Wanrong pointed at the abbess, smiling, "Why, this old lady here. According to her reasoning, since my dear Qingxuan made a vow at nine and didn't keep it now, that's dishonesty. And scholar brother, you knew how to deceive at that age, so you're naturally no gentleman either. Alas, what a pity."

The scholar became frantic and quickly defended himself, "What happened at nine is a child's doing; one could even be misled and not know it. How can that be taken seriously?"

Lin Wanrong let out a long, enlightened "oh," and said, "Ah, I see, childish ignorance, misled. Well said, scholar brother, I support you. You are a gentleman, a great gentleman. I have a relative who has an aunt, I'll set you up with her sometime."

Miss Xu sensed the way out and suddenly relaxed, clapping her hands in laughter, "I don't know where this rascal gets his bizarre ideas from, Miss Xiao, I'm truly impressed by this scoundrel. Your husband is indeed unparalleled in the world."

Xiao Qingxuan heaved a sigh, saying helplessly, "Unparalleled, yes, but I only worry that his allure to us women is also unparalleled. If any awkward situations arise later, it would be quite unsightly."

Miss Xu, who had her own secrets, let out a soft sigh, hurriedly lowering her head, not daring to speak.

Upon hearing Lin San's words, some clever individuals began to understand, and whispers spread among the crowd. Lin Wanrong walked over to the scholars, smiling as he greeted them, "My respected sir, may I know your name? Ah, Brother Song, I've heard much about you. Did you do anything dishonest when you were ten? Like stealing candy from a child—no way, you could do such a heinous act? That's outrageous. We must have you severely punished!

"Oh, Brother Yan Ne, what bad things did you do before you were ten? Touching little girls' hair, stealing copper coins, tying up horses, gambling—

"Brother Li Yuanyang? May I ask what misdeeds you committed as a child? Throwing stones into the horse stable, luring other people's hens, peeping at widows bathing—"

He questioned them all the way, and everyone had some youthful indiscretions. Seeing him was like seeing a plague, and they scattered in panic.

Recluse Jing'an angrily said, "Lin San, what is the meaning of this nonsense?"

"Oh, I almost forgot about you, Lady Abess. Tell me, before you were ten, did you ever steal silk threads from other children, or snatch their paper cranes—"

"No!" Recluse Jing'an proudly said, "I was raised with good family values and never engaged in such filthy acts."

Lin Wanrong's eyes twinkled, and he chuckled, "Then, when you took the vow of celibacy, did you discuss it with your parents?"

Recluse Jing'an hesitated and stammered, "That—"

"Oh!" Lin Wanrong pursued relentlessly, "You must have deceived your parents, telling them you were well-fed and cared for here, so they could rest easy. My God, you could do such a heinous act. You deceived your parents, leading to no descendants, a great act of filial impiety. You took vows, causing a man to remain unmarried, unable to have children, leading to an imbalance of Yin and Yang for generations. You disrupted the birth policy, harming our great nation for generations, a great act of disloyalty. You, a disloyal and unfilial person, dare to speak of righteousness and morality, it's utterly absurd!"

Recluse Jing'an was trembling with rage, her fingers quivering, her lips pale, unable to utter a word.

Xu Zhiqing smiled slightly, "He has won again. His talk of disloyalty and unfilial piety seems absurd, but it's not without reason."

Eldest Miss nodded solemnly, "Though he makes everything sound ridiculous, there's hidden wisdom for those who understand."

"We, we are talking about Qingxuan's matter, why, why are you going off-topic?" Recluse Jing'an said, her voice trembling.

"Qingxuan's matter has already been judged by the public," Lin Wanrong slowly walked a few steps, smiling, "A nine-year-old girl, still a child, how could she make independent judgments? Think about what you all did at the age of nine, and how much you remember now. Forcing a child to make a vow, then demanding she keep it, sacrificing her happiness, is something a gentleman would despise. If it happened to you, what would you think?"

Everyone nodded silently, and Lin Wanrong loudly said, "So, the truth is, Qingxuan was naive and ignorant, and was lured or even coerced by Abess to make such a malicious vow. Alas, thinking back to those times, Qingxuan's suffering is unknown to all! Abess, how could you be so heartless!"

"You—" Recluse Jing'an's blood rushed to her head, and she swayed, about to collapse.

"What 'you'? Don't point your middle finger at me. You're so malicious, and I haven't even accused you of abducting and deceiving children, or mistreating child laborers. You should go home and offer up incense in gratitude." Lin San's words flowed smoothly, and he looked at the recluse, smiling disdainfully, "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall should be put to rest."

The recluse's eyes went dark, and she slumped to the ground, her two female disciples hurriedly catching her, crying out, "Abbess, Abbess—"

"General Lin, General Lin—" From down the mountain, a group of soldiers came rushing, led by Du Xiuyuan. Behind him were several fine horses, pulling two cannons, heading up the mountain.

'Finally, they have come. I've talked myself dry,' Lin Wanrong thought, and plopped down on the ground, panting heavily. Du Xiuyuan quickly helped him up, "I apologize for my tardiness, General. Please forgive me."

Lin Wanrong pointed to the distant archway with the words "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" inscribed on it, and yelled angrily, "Brother Du, blast that archway for me."

"At once!" Du Xiuyuan hastily set up the cannons, and the gunners loaded the ammunition. With several thunderous "Boom! Boom!" noises, amid the curling smoke, the noble archway crashed down and collapsed...

## Chapter 415 Vanishing like Smoke

Upon witnessing the towering, century-old sacred archway collapse thunderously, everyone present, be it the learned scholars or the young prodigies, was struck dumb, unable to utter a word. These four characters, "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall," had undoubtedly been the spiritual pillar in their hearts for many years. To see it collapse right before their eyes was an indescribable feeling of loss and helplessness. However, the formidable Lord Lin had circled the Fairy Hall with swords and cannons. These scholars, who had been studying hard for years, were full of worry and frustration but were helpless.

Though Xiao Qingxuan had decided to sever ties with the Fairy Hall for her husband's sake, she could not help but feel an unpleasant sensation as the moment arrived. Gazing at the broken remnants and ruins of the archway, she could only sigh deeply.

Recluse Jing'an trembled violently, spitting out a mouthful of blood, and suddenly screamed madly, "Where are the disciples of the Martial School who protect the Hall?"

"Here we are!" came a unified delicate shout, as over a dozen women stepped out from the crowd. Graceful and heroic, with treasured swords at their waists, among them was the young girl Li Xiangjun who had guided Lin Wanrong into the mountain gate. She was secretly making eye contact with Xiao Qingxuan.

With all her strength, Recluse Jing'an shouted, "Lin San has insulted our Fairy Hall, severed our lineage, and destroyed our thousand-year foundation in a single day. I command you to put forth all your strength to kill Lin San. Don't stop until he is dead!"

The women looked at each other, uncertain how to respond. They glanced timidly at Xiao Qingxuan and whispered, "Senior Sister—"

Xiao Qingxuan helplessly sighed, "My dear sisters, we have studied and grown up together like siblings. I never wanted to see things come to this. Our master is away, and I dare not issue orders on my own. But you must have heard what my husband said earlier. The Fairy Hall has stood for a hundred years; while it has merits, there are also many unsatisfactory aspects. I hope you will think it over before deciding."

It turned out that they were all disciples of Fairy Ning. Observing them, each with a treasured sword on their back, looking as beautiful as flowers, Lin Wanrong shook his head. The heavy responsibility of protecting Jade Virtue Fairy Hall had fallen on a few young girls, while the scholars, learned in poetry and literature, were powerless in the face of real disaster. It was truly pitiful and lamentable. The old saying, "scholars ruin the country," seemed to have some truth in it.

Li Xiangjun, the youngest girl standing in the last row with tears in her eyes, suddenly turned to Recluse Jing'an and loudly asked, "May I ask, Master, do you have evidence that Lin San destroyed our Fairy Hall's foundation? Did he speak or act wrongly? He and my Senior Sister love each other sincerely, where is the fault in that? Why can't our Fairy Hall's thousand-year tradition of benevolence and morality apply to my Senior Sister? Is it true, as Big Brother Lin said, that the Fairy Hall is 'Pursuing the Heavenly Way while destroying the Human Way'? I am confused, Master, please enlighten me."

"Disciples are confused, and seek guidance from the Master!" Fairy Ning's ten or so disciples all knelt down together, imploring Recluse Jing'an for direction. These young women were all under twenty, in the most brilliant season of their lives. Their hearts were filled with infinite beautiful dreams about love between men and women, yet they had been painfully suppressed by the rules of the Fairy Hall. Today, they saw Miss Xiao, whom the entire Fairy Hall worshipped and adored, opposing the entire establishment for the sake of a predestined love. Her spirit and bearing were awe-inspiring, setting an example for the young maidens. Lin San's astonishing words were like a splash of cold water, waking up the young people of the Fairy Hall, making them reflect on whether they needed the Way of Heaven or the Way of (Hu) Man as mere mortals.

Seeing Li Xiangjun taking the lead in pleading, and remembering her kindness in leading the way, Lin Wanrong secretly nodded at the bravery and boldness of such a young girl. Miss Xiao's eyes were moist, and she spoke softly, "Sisters, you are so genuine and affectionate towards me. My Dear, if conflict arises, you must not harm my sisters."

"Of course not. These sisters are all as beautiful as flowers. If they were to be injured somewhere, it would be quite unsightly if they couldn't marry in the future," Lin Wanrong chuckled. Xiao Qingxuan gave him a playful glare, somewhere between a smile and a frown.

"Oh no, what a mess!" Lin Wanrong suddenly seemed to remember something and smacked his head. Miss Xiao quickly asked, "What's the matter?"

Lin Wanrong pointed at Li Xiangjun and asked, "Is this young sister called Li Xiangjun?"

Xiao Qingxuan nodded and laughed, "She led you up the mountain, and you don't even know her name?"

Lin Wanrong helplessly replied, "She mentioned it once, but I didn't pay attention. You know I tend to be indifferent and don't pay much attention to girls." Xiao Qingxuan's expression remained unchanged, and she automatically skipped his last sentence.

"Li Xiangjun, Li Xiangjun, I knew the name sounded familiar." Lin Wanrong whispered to Miss Xiao, "Is this young sister Xiangjun engaged to someone now?"

Xiao Qingxuan blushed and scolded, "Stop talking nonsense, she's only thirteen or fourteen. Where would she have a lover? Do you think everyone is as shameless as you?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "That's good, that's good. Qingxuan, you must watch over your young sister. If she meets any man surnamed Hou, it's best to kill that Hou kid with a single blow, so as not to ruin her entire life. Remember, remember."

Miss Xiao didn't understand his words, but seeing his serious expression, she realized he wasn't joking and simply nodded. She didn't know where all these seemingly serious instructions came from.

Recluse Jing'an's face turned pale when she saw her martial school disciples collectively opposing her will. She pointed at Li Xiangjun and others, trembling, "Very well, do you also want to betray my Jade Virtue Fairy Hall? I say it again, kill Lin San quickly, without error!"

"How dare you! Plotting against a court official, are you planning to rebel?" Du Xiuyuan shouted, his thousands of soldiers raising their weapons, surrounding the martial school disciples. Numerous archers aimed at the crowd, waiting for Lin Wanrong's command to wash the Fairy Hall in blood.

The scholars in the field were pale, experts at poetry and literature, but completely helpless in the face of weapons.

Lin Wanrong laughed loudly, took two steps forward, and his face suddenly changed, "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, you claim to be supreme, trying to be independent of Great Hua, secretly training armed forces, endangering others' safety, and undermining Great Hua's stability. Just these two points alone can convict your Jade Virtue Fairy Hall of treason."

"If you want to accuse someone of a crime, you can always find an excuse," Recluse Jing'an exclaimed loudly. "The disciples of my Jade Virtue Fairy Hall are spread all over the world, and they won't let you act so recklessly. Even if I were to stand before the Emperor, I would not be afraid—"

The Emperor? Lin Wanrong chuckled. "You old nun, you still haven't understood even at the brink of death, what the existence of this shoddy hall threatens, and who it really threatens." He waved his hand, and two cannons from Du Xiuyuan's command fired in unison. The distant plaque of the Fairy Hall was blasted into fragments, silencing the roar of Recluse Jing'an, and everyone's faces turned pale.

Lin Wanrong sneered, "The Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, involved in mass brawls and secret gatherings, is an illegal organization. I will report it to the Emperor, and it will be resolutely banned and punished. All of you scholars and talented young men have been temporarily deceived, falling into the trap. In the spirit of curing the illness to save the patient, punishing the past and penalizing the future, as long as you recognize your mistakes and write a letter of repentance, I will plead for you before the Emperor and strive for leniency. Please make your choice."

He waved his hand, and the soldiers under Du Xiuyuan's command rattled their swords and spears, causing the scholars to tremble with fear and their faces to turn pale. A few of them glanced at Recluse Jing'an and the ferocious soldiers, finally raising their hands, trembling, and whispering, "We repent!"

Lin Wanrong waved his hand, and the soldiers brought ink and paper. Those few wrote quickly, detailing their involvement in the "illegal organization" of the Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, listing the heinous crimes, such as forging edicts, inciting ignorant youth, forming private alliances, arming themselves secretly, engaging in corruption, oppressing young disciples, defying imperial discipline, plotting against government officials, and many others too numerous to mention.

Lord Lin looked it over again and again, delighted with the powerful writing that listed the crimes of the Fairy Hall in full detail. He handed the documents to Miss Xu, sighing, "It turns out that the Fairy Hall is so wicked, Miss Xu. Look, their crimes are so appalling that I broke out in a cold sweat just reading them once. Alas, fortunately, I arrived in time to rescue the people from this disaster."

Xu Zhiqing was left speechless by this forced confession, disgusted by his self-praise. Seeing more and more scholars coming forward to repent, with the Fairy Hall completely divided, and looking at the growing stack of repentance documents, Miss Xu shook her head, sighed softly, and thought that without Lin San's coercion, who could have imagined these seemingly honorable scholars were so

weak? From this point of view, Lin San had done a great thing; these lofty and impractical scholars, although appearing as the pillars of the nation, were hollow at the core.

Miss Xu gave a bitter smile and shook her head, sighing, "Scholars are useless, as our ancestors have taught us, and only now do I understand. Think about the talents nurtured by such a Fairy Hall. If they were to enter the court, manipulate the government, and assist in governance, what would our great land look like? Can we expect them to fight against the nomads? Devoted to dead readings, cowardly in nature, no wonder the nomads bully us, even the small nation of Dongyin dares to pull our great nation's whiskers."

Xiao Qingxuan listened, her expression turning gloomy, and she silently bowed her head without speaking. Lin Wanrong shook his head, feeling that he had said too much, so he simply grew tired of speaking.

With the fall of the walls, people pushed forward. Faced with the strong presence of Lin Wanrong, Jade Virtue Fairy Hall no longer possessed its former dignity, and the disciples were divided into two extremes. Recluse Jing'an never expected that the once thriving Jade Virtue Fairy Hall would collapse and dissolve so quickly in the face of military disaster; it was simply unimaginable. She became furious, her white hair suddenly turning gray and dull, her eyes losing all their shine, and blood gushing from the corners of her mouth. She stared blankly at the scene before her, as if turned to stone.

"Lin San!" Recluse Jing'an suddenly called out.

"Recluse, are you calling me?" Lin Wanrong paused.

Recluse Jing'an's face was ashen, and she nodded, saying, "Can you tell me why my prosperous Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, upon encountering military disaster, would vanish into thin air, leaving no trace?"

This question was indeed hard to answer. Even though Lin Wanrong considered himself knowledgeable and eloquent, he couldn't respond, only managing a bitter smile and a shake of his head. "This, I don't understand."

Recluse Jing'an sighed sadly, then suddenly whispered, "Qingxuan, come here."



"Abess—" Miss Xiao's eyes filled with tears as she hurried over. Lin Wanrong became anxious and was about to grab her, but Xu Zhiqing stopped him, sighing, "When a person is about to die, their words are kind. Don't worry, the Recluse will not harm Miss Xiao."

"Here, take this," Recluse Jing'an said, slowly handing the wooden fish she was holding to Xiao Qingxuan. Lin Wanrong exclaimed, "Oh my, this old lady's treacherous heart still lives! She wants to make Qingxuan the headmistress."

Miss Xu gave him a stern look, twisting his arm hard, and said, "Don't assume everyone is as crafty as you. In my view, the Recluse is saving Miss Xiao."

Lin Wanrong was confused, but over there Miss Xiao exclaimed, "Abess, what are you doing?"

Recluse Jing'an's face was calm as she nodded, "This wooden fish represents your fate. Smash it, and you will no longer suffer the torment of that three-beat drum. Be a free woman, marry and have children, no longer troubled by the heavenly path, and reclaim your human destiny."

Miss Xu was indeed right. The old nun seemed to have had a change of heart. Lin Wanrong's eyes sparkled as he stared intently at the wooden fish in Qingxuan's hand, itching to rush over and smash it to pieces.

Miss Xiao's tears fell like rain, and she tightly grasped Recluse Jing'an's withered hand, crying out in a heartbreaking voice, "Abess—"

Recluse Jing'an coughed violently, her face flushing as she seemed to talk to herself, "Qingxuan, you have grown up under my watch since you were a baby. From your infancy, I have chanted scriptures and prayed for you daily. Back then, your master was just a little girl and didn't understand many things, so I kept you by my side and took care of you. Though I pursue the heavenly path, I am still human. Who can be without feelings? Watching you grow up day by day, graceful and tranquil, no one could be happier than me. Among the countless disciples in Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, I have only ever treated you this way. Cough, cough—"

Miss Xiao silently shed tears, unable to speak a word. Recluse Jing'an's face grew redder, and her eyes seemed to brighten as she bitterly smiled, saying, "You, of noble birth, found yourself in our Jade Virtue Fairy Hall. The previous head of the institution saw something in you, and it was fate that you would face this tribulation. The only mistake I made was urging you to make that vow of suffering. But for me, to continue the thousand-year tradition of the Fairy Hall, there was no other way. Anyone in my position would have done the same. If you want to blame me, I have no complaints."

Xu Zhiqing listened and shook her head, sighing silently, "The Recluse is right. In her position, if she hadn't pressured Miss Xiao, another girl would have suffered. It's not her fault, Lin San, you were too cruel."

'Women's logic is truly confusing,' Lin Wanrong thought. 'One moment they sympathize with Qingxuan, the next they turn to care for Granny Hermit. In any case, the bad person is always me.' He chuckled dryly, not saying a word.

Xiao Qingxuan sobbed, "Abess, I don't blame you. It's my fate to face this difficulty, just like meeting My Dear. These are my hardships, and I must bear them."

Recluse Jing'an sighed, "I tried my best to carry on the Fairy Hall's tradition, only to end up like this. Betrayed by everyone, the Fairy Hall vanished under my watch. I have failed our ancestors. Even if I go to the Western Paradise, I will be too ashamed to face them. Gathering and dispersing is the great morality of humanity, contrary to the Way of Heaven. Yet, I am so concerned. It seems that the Way of Heaven is truly beyond us ordinary people."

Xiao Qingxuan suddenly turned around, "My Dear, come here."

Lin Wanrong hurried to her side. Miss Xiao took his hand and softly said to the head of the hall, "Abess, look, this is the man I have chosen. He taught me that we are human, subject to birth, aging, sickness, death, emotions, and desires, riches, and hardships. These are rights bestowed upon us by Heaven, something we mortals must bear. Departing from humanity to pursue the Way of Heaven is to act against nature. I don't want to be a detached person; I only want to be an ordinary woman, to love my husband, teach my children, bear sons and daughters, and follow the great path of human relationships. Please grant us your blessing."

Recluse Jing'an scrutinized Lin Wanrong carefully and nodded, "Qingxuan, you are strong-willed and decisive, far stronger than I was at your age. This man you've chosen, unrestrained in appearance, is a leader among men and a perfect match for you. Very well, very well!"

Lin Wanrong grinned, "Old Lady Recluse, I'm not as good as you say."

The Recluse looked at him and shook her head, "But your eyes are lascivious; you seem like a frivolous and base man. You must watch him closely in the future; don't let him ruin the pitiable women of this world."

Lord Lin's face darkened. 'This old woman, slandering me in front of my wife, is truly stubborn.' Annoyed, he snorted twice but said nothing, while Miss Xiao expressed her gratitude, "Thank you, Abess, for your kind words. I know my husband, and I will surely keep him in line in the future."

Recluse Jing'an nodded, her breath coming in hurried gasps. She looked around, worry in her voice: "The Jade Virtue Fairy Hall has dispersed, and I am the one at fault. Yet, under my care, there are many young disciples who are now without clothes and food. How can I rest easy? Qingxuan, their livelihood is a great matter, and I have no one else to entrust this to; only you can take care of them."

Xiao Qingxuan hurriedly nodded, saying, "Master, rest assured, My Dear is full of wisdom and strategy; he will definitely find a way to properly settle these young disciples."

The Recluse silently nodded, looked at Lin Wanrong and softly said, "Lin San, I have been such an obstacle between you and Qingxuan. Do you resent me?"

"I wouldn't say resent, but in this world, one can't always control their own fate," Lin Wanrong laughed, thinking to himself that he couldn't really fault her since she had handed over the wooden fish.

Recluse Jing'an suddenly coughed violently, weakly gasping, "Qingxuan is fortunate to have you to assist her. But as for me, back in my time, who ever helped me? In the end, my suffering was the same as Qingxuan's!"

Lin Wanrong was silent for a moment, thinking that Miss Xu was right: this Recluse was also an innocent victim. But who was the evil mastermind behind all this?

"Lin San, believe me," the Recluse choked suddenly, spitting out a mouthful of blood. Her eyes lost their spark, and two tears rolled down her cheeks as she tightly grasped their hands, "I... I am not a villain—" With her last breath, her body hung in mid-air, lifeless, passing away.

'I'm not a villain!' Lin Wanrong muttered to himself, smiling bitterly.

"Abess—" Xiao Qingxuan cried out in grief, embracing the body, tears falling. Lin Wanrong was startled and quickly supported her delicate frame, gently saying, "Qingxuan, you are pregnant, extreme joy or sorrow isn't good for our baby."

Xiao Qingxuan's tears fell like rain, "My Dear, the Abess has raised me; I must pay my respects to her!"

Unable to refuse this request, Lin Wanrong supported her as she knelt on the ground, respectfully bowing to the Recluse. Lin Wanrong followed her down, saying helplessly, "Recluse, as I said before, I am honoring an elder, not your Fairy Hall. May you not misunderstand in the heavenly realms."

Xu Zhiqing gently nudged him, angrily saying, "You, how can you be so tactless?"

The few scholars who had remained faithful looked on in horror as the Recluse passed away, losing their last support, their faces aging as tears fell. The disciples of the Fairy Hall, seeing their master gone, all knelt and wailed in pain, including the young maiden Li Xiangjun, who had previously opposed the Recluse.

Xu Zhiqing, having witnessed the rise and fall of Jade Virtue Fairy Hall in a mere instant, was full of emotions. She clung to Lin Wanrong, whispering, "Lin San, did we go too far?"

Lin Wanrong replied helplessly, "Miss Xu, if you want to sympathize with the opponent, think first what would have happened if I had lost."

His words were true; mercy to enemies was cruelty to oneself. Lin Wanrong glanced at the scattered archway in the distance and sighed, "To be honest, although we won today and found Qingxuan, my heart feels empty."

"Why?" Xu Zhiqing asked curiously.

Xiao Qingxuan took Lin Wanrong's hand, speaking softly, "My Dear means that although we won this battle, it is a victory without a real opponent. Isn't that right, My Dear?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Forget it, such profound content is not my style; let's talk about something more relaxed."

Miss Xu frowned, glanced around, and said with a bitter smile, "Relaxed? How can we be relaxed? With such a mess, I'm afraid you won't find it easy."

The Jade Virtue Fairy Hall had undergone a sudden and devastating change. With the death of the Hall Master and the fall of the Fairy Hall, the emblematic building was also destroyed by Lin Wanrong's cannon. This was akin to shattering the pillar of everyone's heart. The mountains were filled with cries, scholars sighed, and the young disciples, who had never experienced such harsh realities, were weeping uncontrollably.

Xiao Qingxuan's expression turned somber. The chaos at the Fairy Hall had all started because of her, so her grief was understood without saying, "My Dear, do you have any good ideas to stabilize the situation on the mountain and calm the hearts of the disciples for now?"

Destruction is easy, but rebuilding is hard. The collapse of the Jade Virtue Fairy Hall might not have been entirely a good thing, especially since there were now hundreds or even thousands of scholars and talented individuals left unemployed. They all needed food to eat. Miss Xu realized the difficulty of the situation and glanced at Lin Wanrong, softly saying, "If these people are not properly settled, I'm afraid they will all become unstable factors."

Lin Wanrong nodded, smiling brightly, "Wife, give me some motivation. A kiss on my cheek will help me think."

Xiao Qingxuan's face flushed as she shook her head, "You always take advantage of situations like this. I won't fall for it." Xu Zhiqing grabbed Xiao Qingxuan's hand, smiling, "Miss Xiao, you know him best. You can't be too kind to this kind of person."

Xiao Qingxuan gave a faint smile, casually saying, "Miss Xu knows him quite well too!" Xu Zhiqing quickly turned her head, her face flushed, not daring to speak. Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, and Miss Xiao glared at him, snorting, "Stop laughing and tell me what's going on. If it gets dragged out later, I won't bother helping you."

"I'm thinking of a solution, right now." Lin Wanrong broke into a sweat. His wife's words were profound, like a silent thunder that made his heart pound.

Seeing Miss Xiao's method, Xu Zhiqing felt inferior, believing that there was finally someone who could keep him in check. Otherwise, he would continue to run wild, harming countless innocent women, and eventually becoming an unrestrained stallion. Miss Xu's face turned red, and she quickly looked around to divert her attention.

"Sister—" the little girl Li Xiangjun approached Xiao Qingxuan, her teary eyes glistening, looking utterly pitiful and delicate, "The Hall Master is gone, the Fairy Hall is no more, and the Master is not here. What shall we do?"

The little girl's ability to support Qingxuan during such a difficult time, an act akin to sending charcoal in snowy weather, was deeply touching. Lin Wanrong quickly reassured, "Little sister, don't be afraid, we will protect you."

Li Xiangjun snorted, "I don't need your protection. Just take my senior sister and leave. Why did you have to fire the cannon? Our Fairy Hall is in this state today, all thanks to you."

‘Children speak without thinking,’ Lin Wanrong thought, and he laughed off the comment, pretending not to hear her words. Xiao Qingxuan took Li Xiangjun's hand and spoke softly, "Little junior sister, My Dear is trying to find a solution. Don't worry. We've been together as senior and junior sisters for many years, and you've all treated me with deep affection and loyalty. I will never abandon you."

"I've got it!" Lin Wanrong suddenly clapped his hands and laughed.

"What do you have?" Little Li Xiangjun asked, "Didn't senior sister already have a baby?"

Xiao Qingxuan let out a soft cry, her face flushing with embarrassment as she covered her cheeks with her hands. Xu Zhiqing took Li Xiangjun's hand and giggled, "Little sister, you're still young. There are some things you may know, but you must not speak them out loud. Remember that next time."

Even though Miss Xiao was usually elegant and composed, she found herself without a place to hide, her cheeks flushed as the two women teased her. She took Lin Wanrong's arm and pinched it hard.

‘I'll endure!’ Lin Wanrong laughed, "I've thought of a way to handle the arrangements for this hall. I'm not sure if it'll work."

"Don't keep us in suspense. Tell us now," urged Xiao Qingxuan, managing to set aside her embarrassment to focus on the serious matter.

With all the women's eyes on him, Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Wasn't this hall originally a gathering place for discussion, and forming cliques for personal gain?"

Xiao Qingxuan and Li Xiangjun spat in unison. Miss Xiao scolded, "What do you mean by forming cliques for personal gain? Your words sound so unpleasant! It should be teaching and imparting knowledge."

"Yes, yes, that's what I meant, just expressed differently," Lin Wanrong smiled, "Since this hall was originally a forum, why don't we expand it? The original hall was exclusively for composing poetry and imparting Confucianism and Daoism, a rather one-dimensional function that can foster arrogance in talented individuals and lead them to become lazy and disconnected from reality. Let's expand it into a top-level forum."

"A top-level forum?" Several people were taken aback at once. Even Miss Xiao and Xu Zhiqing, both with extraordinary insights, were somewhat puzzled by this new term.

"Yes, a top-level forum," Lin Wanrong smiled, "Instead of just focusing on literature, let's expand it into five major disciplines: literature, engineering, agriculture, science, and medicine. We'll teach the most common knowledge in these areas, allocate substantial funds to reward outstanding talents, and promote innovative knowledge. Regular academic conferences will be held to stimulate scholarly activities, enriching the culture and technological enterprise of the nation. By intertwining these five disciplines, everyone can learn from each other, allowing those high-minded scholars to understand the profundities within engineering, agriculture, science, and medicine. It will promote open discussions, eliminate their tendency to work in isolation, and avoid the emergence of a second Jade Virtue Fairy Hall in a hundred years."

Miss Xiao nodded as she listened, "Prosperity fosters culture, chaos fosters martial arts. The cultural flourish of Great Hua was in full swing, unobstructed during prosperous times, but not a good omen in the face of this crisis." Lin Wanrong's train of thought, which she had heard back when they first met in Jinling, was surprisingly put into such a grand proposal, and this plan ingeniously utilized the strengths of Jade Virtue Fairy Hall, achieving two goals in one stroke.

Miss Xu applauded, exclaiming in a delicate voice, "This idea is good! Our Great Hua emphasizes culture heavily, yet the principles of all things and machinery remain unexplored. If we could truly establish such a forum, accompanied by great rewards, it would indeed be a magnificent deed, rallying countless skilled craftsmen to strive for higher levels of knowledge. A hundred years later, the craftsmanship of our Great Hua will certainly have risen to the next level. Lin San, where did you come up with this idea?"

"Alas, I've always been such a great person, just not good at expressing it," Lin Wanrong sighed, but the expression in his eyes and brows couldn't hide his pride.

Xiao Qingxuan chuckled, "Don't be too pleased with yourself. Although the idea is good, it involves fostering schools, organizing forums, and offering hefty rewards. Where will all the money come from?"

Xu Zhiqing shook her head with a playful smile, saying in a sweet voice, "Miss Xiao, this is where you are uninformed. Your husband here deals in industry and sells perfume, and soon the Xiao family of Jinling will be his. He now has wealth in the millions, leaping towards tens of millions. Where would he notice these few taels of silver?"

‘You stand there speaking without any pain, but that silver is my hard-earned money, which can't be spent so casually.’ Lin Wanrong inwardly sighed. Miss Xiao's expression became serious, and she grabbed his hand, saying, "My Dear, even with money, don't squander it recklessly. You must be frugal—"

Lin Wanrong nodded to himself, thinking, ‘This is my wife, who knows how to care for me.’ But before he could finish his self-satisfaction, he heard Miss Xiao continue, "—this time for the forum, you only need to take out one hundred thousand taels, no more, not even a penny more."

Lin Wanrong wanted to cry without tears. Was one hundred thousand taels not enough? That could buy thousands of young and beautiful maids, one for each day, enough for ten years.

Seeing his worried and bitter face, Miss Xiao covered her mouth with a gentle laugh, and tapped her finger on his forehead, saying, "I'm reminding you not to waste money. It's not easy to earn silver, but it's spent like running water. Now that you have a family, you can't be so extravagant. Let's settle this matter of education this way. I'll think of ways to handle the money, and from now on, the rewards will be given in the name of my Lin family, called Lin's Scholarships. My Dear, what do you think?"

"Good, good!" Lin Wanrong naturally nodded. His wife truly had a sense of grandeur, settling the matter with just a few words. He felt grateful in his heart, raising a finger and saying, "Alright, I will donate this amount first!"

Miss Xu's eyes brightened, and she exclaimed urgently, "Ten thousand taels?!"

Lin Wanrong gave her a look, saying irritably, "One thousand taels, to be donated over five years, two hundred taels a year."

"Stingy!" Miss Xu snorted, expressing her resignation.



Xiao Qingxuan's face was full of shy blushes, and she suddenly kissed him on the cheek, softly saying, "My Dear, this is Qingxuan thanking you for taking care of my senior and junior brothers and sisters."

"That's only right, only right. Qingxuan, I also thank you for looking after my son—" Lord Lin was smiling between his eyebrows, about to "thank" Miss Xiao, when Miss Xu, her face flushed red, bit her silver teeth, grabbed him, and kissed him on the cheek like a dragonfly skimming the water. Her voice was as fine as a mosquito's, saying, "Lin San, thank... thank you for proposing such a great idea."

Oh, what was this about? The faint fragrance lingered on his face, and Lin Wanrong was stunned.

Miss Xiao kicked him in the leg, and Lord Lin lost his balance, thudding down to sit on the ground with a bump.