

Finest 416

Chapter 416 Dealing with Him

Silence lingered for a moment, and when Lin Wanrong looked up again, he saw Qingxuan still by his side, but Xu Miss was nowhere to be seen. In astonishment, Lin Wanrong stammered, "Where is Miss Xu?"

Du Xiuyuan, who had just approached him, hurriedly whispered in his ear, "General, Miss Xu has gone down the mountain."

'Gone down the mountain? No way. Eating stealthily and then running away—where in the world can you find such an easy deal?' Lord Lin slapped the dust off his hands and snorted, "Unacceptable, utterly unacceptable! She was whispering so much that she even spat on me. Tomorrow, I must find her and have a serious talk with her."

Du Xiuyuan seemed to have more to say, but Miss Xiao glanced at Lin Wanrong, her expression a mix of smiling and not smiling. "Were you really whispering? My Dear, what is your relationship with Sister Xu?"

"I swear, nothing has happened between us yet!" Lin Wanrong quickly raised his hand to pledge his loyalty. Du Xiuyuan urgently tugged at his sleeve, whispering, "General, General, this humble officer has something to report—"

Lin Wanrong glared at him, "If you have something to say, say it directly. She is my wife; there's no need to talk behind her back. Listen, Qingxuan, what happened just now was a misunderstanding. Miss Xu and I have a purely working relationship, don't get any wrong ideas."

Xiao Qingxuan's expression was indifferent, and she didn't speak, leaving her thoughts inscrutable. Du Xiuyuan hesitated for a while before saying, "General, someone has asked me to tell you that they would like you to visit their residence tomorrow morning."

"Visit their residence?" Lin Wanrong wondered aloud. "Who invited me, and which residence? Ah, Brother Du, why are you stumbling over your words? You're not usually like this."

Xiao Qingxuan grabbed Lin Wanrong and looked at him calmly, "Is it to visit the Xu residence?"

"This, this—" Du Xiuyuan stammered, not daring to speak. Lin Wanrong was shocked, thinking, 'Damn you, old Du, are you trying to sabotage me? Are you even a man, reporting this in front of my wife? How could you do this to me?'

Du Xiuyuan looked embarrassed as well, thinking, 'This was what you asked me to report in front of your wife, General; it's not my fault.'

The mischievous young girl, Li Xiangjun, also huffed, "Sister, who was that woman earlier? Big Brother Lin is your husband, what does she mean by kissing? And visiting the residence—could it be a marriage proposal?"

Lin Wanrong gritted his teeth and glared, 'You little girl, no one would mistake you for mute if you stayed quiet.' "Ah, haha, little sister, it's not what it seems. Miss Xu and I are just work partners, and she likes to play pranks sometimes. She was just biting my ear; everyone misunderstood. Du Xiuyuan, hurry and find a palanquin, my wife can't walk." Lin Wanrong's face was thick enough to hastily defend himself. With one order from him, Du Xiuyuan disappeared in a flash, leaving Lin Wanrong grinding his teeth, muttering, 'Damn you, old Du, don't let me catch you keeping a mistress.'

Seeing Xiao Qingxuan neither angry nor smiling, Lin Wanrong couldn't discern what she was thinking. He let out a couple of awkward laughs, probing, "Qingxuan, let's settle the matter of running the school then. You mentioned raising money, but where will we get it from? I have tens of thousands of taels at hand; why don't you take it for now?"

Xiao Qingxuan said expressionlessly, "You don't have to please me. If I say I can raise the silver, it means I have a way. When you go to the mansion tomorrow, explain it clearly to Sister Xu, and tell her that after we have set up this forum and school, we will invite her to be an instructor. On account of your face, I think she won't refuse."

Upon hearing the words "go to the mansion," Lin Wanrong's head became as big as a cow's, thinking that this girl Xu Zhiqing must be crazy. Clearly seeing his wife beside him, she played this act, wasn't this intentionally asking for his life?

"What mansion are you talking about? I don't know. Qingxuan, we've been through hardships to be together, and I won't go anywhere tomorrow; I'll stay at home with you and our son," Lin Wanrong said, blushing.

Xiao Qingxuan's eyes softened for a moment, but she quickly suppressed her tenderness and said indifferently, "I've told you my piece, your legs are on your own body, whether you go or not, can I drag you?"

Miss Xiao spoke neither warmly nor coldly, and Lin Wanrong could not discern her attitude. Secretly complaining, he thought of how adept he was in dealing with various women, but his talents seemed of no use facing Qingxuan. The current situation was the most difficult kind; though they had been apart for many days and had just reunited at a time when they should be affectionate, this Xu girl had created such a big fuss. It was unbearable even for him, let alone for Qingxuan, who had suffered so much for him. Lord Lin, though eloquent, felt somewhat helpless and for a moment hated Miss Xu. If it weren't for her fine figure, he would have already tormented her in his heart.

"Big Brother Lin, will you go to the mansion tomorrow?" Li Xiangjun asked mischievously, grinning.

"No, I won't go, absolutely not," Lord Lin firmly said, fully aware that he could not give in at this moment.

Li Xiangjun playfully stuck her tongue out at her senior sister, and Miss Xiao covered her lips and chuckled lightly. Seeing that Lord Lin was eyeing her slyly, she quickly composed herself and returned to her indifferent demeanor.

After burying the body of Recluse Jing'an on the green hills and reflecting on past events and present grievances, Miss Xiao's emotions overwhelmed her, and tears fell uncontrollably. She had lived for over twenty years, and all her tears seemed to flow that day. Lin Wanrong, worried about her health, stayed close by her side, attending to her every need.

It was only at nightfall that everything on the mountain was settled, and the people in the Hall gradually calmed down. However, it was inevitable that no one would sleep that night due to the sudden upheaval. There was no way to avoid the acute pain; only time could heal it.

"General, the sedan is here!" Du Xiuyuan came up from the foot of the mountain with a small sedan, reporting nervously.

"Is it?" General Lin's gaze pierced him like two sharp swords, and Du Xiuyuan laughed awkwardly before quickly withdrawing his head.

"My Dear, is our house big?" Xiao Qingxuan suddenly asked, thinking of something.

"Big, very big," Lin Wanrong laughed, "We can even keep sheep in the house." Fortunately, during his recent trip to Shandong, the house had been renovated; otherwise, with Qingxuan found, would they still live in the Xiao residence? Even though Eldest Miss was willing, what about Qingxuan? Even if Qingxuan didn't mind, where would his own dignity lie? In the end, the matter with the Xiao family hadn't been settled. If the two families had become one, everywhere would be his home, and there would be no such worries.

"My Dear, My Dear—" Xiao Qingxuan's calls interrupted Lin Wanrong's deep thoughts, and he hurriedly asked, "Ah, what's the matter?"

Miss Xiao glanced at him and said softly, "What are you thinking about? I just said that we should let Junior Sister live with us at our home. What do you think? I've had her with me since she was little, and I wouldn't feel comfortable leaving her alone on the mountain."

"Good, good," Lin Wanrong eagerly clapped his hands and laughed, "Welcome to our home, Junior Sister."

Li Xiangjun looked him up and down, disdainfully saying, "Your eyes are insincere, and your smile is frivolous. Your welcome lacks sincerity; it's quite hypocritical."

This little sister has a sharp eye, Lin Wanrong laughed, "How could that be? You are Qingxuan's Junior Sister, so you're my Junior Sister too. Without your guidance today, there would have been no reunion for my wife and me. I sincerely welcome you."

"Save it," Li Xiangjun said with a cold laugh, "Better save your sincerity for my sister. She has suffered so much for you."

Lin Wanrong looked at Xiao Qingxuan and saw a faint smile on Miss Xiao's face, her eyes radiating tenderness that warmed his heart like fire. Ah, universal love is indeed a noble goal, but it seems somewhat unfair to Qingxuan. Lord Lin rarely took a moment to reflect on his actions.

"If you dare to flirt with other women behind my Senior Sister's back, I will—" Li Xiangjun brandished her sword, making a throat-slitting gesture. Lin Wanrong promptly silenced himself.

"The palanquin is here, Qingxuan. Get in quickly," Lin Wanrong held the curtain and took Xiao Qingxuan's hand.

Miss Xiao looked back at the green mountains and rivers that had been her companions for over twenty years. They were about to become distant now. Her eyes moistened, and after a long silence, she bent down to enter the small palanquin.

Lin Wanrong let down the curtain, ready to order the departure, but Miss Xiao's head popped out from inside, her voice sweetly calling, "Come in quickly too!"

"Me?" Lord Lin was overjoyed, pointing to his nose, hardly believing his ears. Was Qingxuan not angry with him anymore? Was his wife worried about him?

Just as he was about to step in, smiling, someone pulled him from behind. The little girl's voice laughed from behind, "Big Brother Lin, move aside. My Senior Sister is calling me in."

As the small palanquin started downhill, filled with the cheerful laughter of the two women, Lord Lin sighed, his head hanging, looking around for Du Xiuyuan, only to see him walking at the head of the procession, majestic and triumphant.

Seeing his downcast, utterly dejected appearance, Miss Xiao pursed her lips in a smile, lowered the curtain, and murmured, "This man of mine is always attentive to others. If I don't rein him in, he'll turn our home upside down."

"Hmph, men of this world, all are ungrateful wretches. Not a single one is good," the little girl suddenly spoke up, saying bitterly.

Miss Xiao was startled; how could a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old girl speak such words? It couldn't be that her Husband Lin's actions had upset her.

"Senior Sister, are you worried about your Husband Lin?" Li Xiangjun laughed teasingly, "Your husband is quite explosive when angry, wherever he points, cannons fire in that direction, but in front of you, he's quite well-behaved."

Miss Xiao's eyes softened, and she said gently, "He bears all this because he has me in his heart. Otherwise, with his character that never suffers a loss, he wouldn't be so easygoing. But he

provokes young ladies everywhere, and I don't know how many sins he's incurred. If I don't cure him of this habit, I'm afraid our home won't even have a place to stand."

"Cure?" The little girl scoffed, "Senior Sister, who in this world has ever cured a man's wandering eye? Your Husband Lin is the worst of the lot when it comes to philandering, and I think it's a bit hopeless!"

"However hopeless, he must be cured!" Miss Xiao said with a smile, "Starting with this Xu Zhiqing!"

Chapter 417 The Empress?

When Lin Wanrong, led Du Xiuyuan and others down the mountain, even though it was already late in the evening, countless onlookers had gathered. Soldiers held aloft torches, lighting up the night as if it were day. Before tonight was over, news of Lord Lin's bombardment of "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" would spread throughout the Great Hua, and no one knew what kind of reaction it would provoke. Du Xiuyuan and the others secretly wiped their sweat for General Lin, but he alone seemed carefree, smiling and joking with everyone.

"General," Du Xiuyuan, who had been scouting ahead, hurried back with an unusually grave face, "Several people have blocked our army's path ahead. It is—" He paused, lowering his voice, "it's Minister Ye from the Ministry of Personnel, Minister Liang from the Ministry of Rites, and various officials and scholars from the Three Pavilions and Six Ministries, as well as Prince Cheng—"

Lin Wanrong was surprised but laughed twice, "No harm, no harm. Perhaps these honorable gentlemen are here to present a plaque to praise me. Brother Du, let's go forward and take a look."

Seeing Lin Wanrong's lack of surprise, as if he didn't take these influential figures seriously, Du Xiuyuan admired him secretly. A man who dared to speak, act, and take responsibility, truly an extraordinary person!

As Lin Wanrong was about to move forward, Miss Xiao poked her head out of her sedan, asking, "My Dear, what's happening up ahead?"

Lin Wanrong smiled, "Some people have come to visit me. Qingxuan, you and your junior sister stay here and rest for a while. I'll be back soon."

Xiao Qingxuan smiled softly, taking out a golden waist token from her bosom. After gazing at it with a faint mist in her eyes, full of reminiscence and longing, she beckoned him and whispered, "My Dear, come here, I have something to tell you."

When Lin Wanrong approached, Xiao Qingxuan handed the token to him and said softly, "Take this. If anyone dares to trouble you, show them this, and no one will dare touch a single hair on my husband."

The gold token was heavy in his hand, carved with a lifelike phoenix. Lin Wanrong laughed, "This token is quite similar to the gold token bestowed by the Emperor in my hand. It's like a union of the dragon and the phoenix; we have nothing to fear in all the world."

Xiao Qingxuan smiled sweetly, "Don't waste time talking, hurry up and settle this so we can return home soon."

Ahead, the soldiers had already stopped, and noisy shouts were heard, with faint cries of "Lin San, come out!" "Lin San, come out and answer!"

Lin Wanrong, accompanied by Du Xiuyuan, looked around and saw many familiar faces from the morning court. More than half of them had come, and standing in front, coldly sneering, was Prince Cheng, followed by two senior officials from the Ministries of Personnel and Rites, along with dozens of scholars and officials. Everyone was in high spirits, shouting loudly.

"I, Little Brother Lin San, pay my respects to His Highness, and to all the honorable gentlemen," Lin Wanrong laughed, feigning surprise on his face, "It's so late, and all of you have collectively come to inspect the people's conditions? Such dedication to the nation, I am truly in awe."

The Minister of the Ministry of Personnel, Lord Ye, barked, "Lin San, cease your absurd ravings! We are here to question you about your crimes."

"Crimes? What crimes?" Lin Wanrong asked in confusion. "I have always obeyed the law, paid my taxes as required; where are these crimes you speak of?"

Lord Ye angrily retorted, "Do you dare to deny your own actions? What were you doing on this mountain? Do you think the whole world is filled with fools?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "I was simply enjoying the mountain scenery and, in a moment of inspiration, fired a couple of shots. Lord Ye, this matter doesn't seem to be under your jurisdiction."

Lord Ye's beard quivered with rage, and he pointed at Lin Wanrong, his voice filled with fury, "Fired a couple of shots? You make it sound so trivial! Do you know what place this is? The 'Jade Virtue Fairy Hall' is a sacred place that scholars all over the world yearn for. Many great scholars have emerged from there, making enormous contributions to our great nation. Even the Founding Emperor granted a plaque to this place, and everyone in the court takes pride in coming from the sacred place. Your reckless behavior here shows utter lawlessness and arrogance. The Prince, I, and my colleagues are here to bring you to justice. You'd better surrender and await your fate."

Lin Wanrong smiled nonchalantly, "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall? A nice name, but unfortunately, I've never heard of it. I received information that someone was feeding armed forces on this mountain, holding illegal gatherings, privately creating laws, restricting personal freedom, misinterpreting the Founding Emperor's edicts, confusing young people, and even claiming to be equal to Heaven, attempting to break away from our great nation. Their numerous crimes have angered both gods and men. Only by resolutely banning such illegal terrorist organizations can we preserve our country's eternal prosperity. Lord Ye, is there anything wrong with this?"

Lin San's eloquent words left Lord Ye dazed. Lin San was the only one in the world who could categorize the "Jade Virtue Fairy Hall" as a terrorist organization.

"You, you, you're talking nonsense!" Lord Ye's beard shook in anger as he pointed at Lin Wanrong's nose, "The name of the Fairy Hall is revered all over the world, and countless eminent scholars have come from there. They are the backbone of our great nation. How can you label it as some terrorist organization?"

"Whether it's a terrorist organization or not, Lord Ye, neither your word nor mine will decide. Here, I have some confessions and statements, all written by the deceived scholars on the mountain," Lin Wanrong extended his hand, and Du Xiuyuan brought the confessions. Lin Wanrong said with a beaming smile, "Whether it's a terrorist organization or not, Lord Ye, please read, and you'll know at a glance."

Lord Ye hadn't expected Lin San to be so cunning. In just a few hours, he had destroyed the Fairy Hall and even prepared the confessions. It seemed impossible to find fault with him.

"Lin San," Prince Cheng, who had been silently watching, suddenly spoke, "You led the soldiers to the mountain, brandished swords at people, so obtaining however many confessions you wanted was not difficult. These confessions, coerced through intimidation, cannot be counted as evidence. Even before the Emperor, you cannot escape the suspicion of forced confessions."

"Right, right, the Prince has keen eyes. This is coercion, all these confessions, they cannot be taken as truth." Hearing Prince Cheng's words, Lord Ye revived in spirit, shouting loudly. The scholars behind them also joined in, yelling, "Coercion, this is coercion!"

Du Xiuyuan's heart was a bit tense, and he hastily glanced at Lin Wanrong, who appeared as usual, chuckling: "Capturing criminals and taking confessions is a universal method of case-solving. If we were to follow Prince's reasoning, wouldn't all the yamen officials be suspect of forced confessions? Wouldn't such a statement coming from Prince chill the hearts of all officials?"

Prince Cheng laughed, his eyes flashing, and nodded: "Well said. Whether the testimony is true or false, 'Jade Virtue Fairy Hall' is a sacred place inscribed by the Founding Emperor himself, and it enjoys the reputation of being 'Equal to Heaven.' How dare you be so reckless in this sacred place, disregarding the Founding Emperor?"

"Equal to Heaven?" Lin Wanrong grinned and waved his hand. Two soldiers brought out the Founding Emperor's inscription: "Prince, are you referring to this?"

Prince Cheng took a quick look and immediately knelt to the ground, expressing sincere fear: "Unfilial descendant Zhao Mingcheng, beholding the true handwriting of the Founding Emperor." The officials including Minister Ye also hurriedly knelt, crying out: "Beholding the true handwriting of the Founding Emperor." Lin Wanrong stood in place, receiving everyone's homage before hypocritically helping Prince Cheng: "Prince, please rise!"

Prince Cheng and the others performed three prostrations and nine kowtows before respectfully rising. He looked at Lin Wanrong and said: "Lin San, you are quite bold, knowing full well that 'Equal to Heaven' was inscribed by the Founding Emperor, yet you dared to fire the cannon. Do you intend to rebel?"

"Prince, you can mess around with food, but words should not be spoken carelessly," Lin Wanrong solemnly said. "This inscription of the Founding Emperor is the clear proof of Jade Virtue Fairy Hall's false edict. I am planning to present it to the Emperor myself."

"How dare you! I, being a descendant of the Founding Emperor, have long admired the handwriting of 'Equal to Heaven.' It's undoubtedly inscribed by the Founding Emperor, so how can you speak of false edicts?" Prince Cheng angrily said. "You dare be so insolent before the Founding Emperor's handwriting, do you think I cannot deal with you? I already have evidence of your involvement with the Holy Mother of the White Lotus Sect. Tomorrow I will report this to the Emperor, and you will be punished."

Damn, Prince Cheng was ready to completely fall out with him, even dragging his Sister An's issue into it, thinking he had a handle on him. Lin Wanrong laughed: "Prince, what White Lotus Holy Mother, what conspiracies? Even though you are a royal relative, I can sue you for defamation. I am upright and clean, indifferent to beauty, and respected by all in the capital. If I've done anything wrong, please feel free to report me to the Emperor."

Prince Cheng sneered: "I won't waste words with you. The handwriting of the Founding Emperor is before us, and the sacred place's reputation is justified. What else can you say?"

Lin Wanrong said disdainfully: "What justified reputation? The Founding Emperor was benevolent and wise, foreseeing the affairs of later generations a hundred years ago. Being a descendant of the Founding Emperor, how do you not recognize his treasures? Bring the Founding Emperor's treasure to Prince and the officials, and let's see what these three characters are."

"Yes!" Two soldiers stepped forward holding the inscription. Prince Cheng, being closest, took a careful look at the scroll and his face changed dramatically. Minister Ye stared for a moment and murmured: "Equal to Man? How... how could this be?"

"Master Ye has good eyesight," Lin Wanrong chuckled. "Founding Emperor's grand vision and foresight were apparent a hundred years ago. His inscription, these three characters 'Equal to Man', was meant to instruct the people of Jade Virtue Fairy Hall to learn from the masses, to go among the people, and to love the people. Little did he know that this Hall harbored wicked intentions, exploiting a slight difference in two characters to claim equality with Heaven, confusing right and wrong, misleading the populace, and going so far as to enact private laws, restricting others, and absurdly trying to turn this mountain into a country within the country."

Prince Cheng's face changed, and he shouted angrily, "Founding Emperor's inscription has been passed down for a thousand years and is well-known. How could it be wrong? Lin San, it must be your doing."

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, his voice resounding through the sky, "Your Highness is correct. Founding Emperor's inscription has been passed down for a thousand years, known to all. But may I ask, who has heard the Founding Emperor himself pronounce the words 'Equal to Heaven'? Or has it ever been recorded that the Founding Emperor personally bestowed this title? All of you are learned scholars; who among you has heard or seen this?"

Everyone fell silent. Though the words "Equal to Heaven" were circulated with great detail, no Emperor would ever say such words. "Heaven" represented the supreme authority; no Emperor would be foolish enough to equate someone else with himself.

Seeing that these once-ardent officials dared not speak, Lin Wanrong was filled with pride and said to the two soldiers, "Quickly take care of Founding Emperor's true relic and present it to His Majesty tomorrow."

The ministers, all looking to Prince Cheng, lowered their heads in silence when they saw he did not speak. Prince Cheng gave Master Ye a glance and sneered at the sedan behind Lin Wanrong. Master Ye instantly became energized and shouted, "How eloquently you speak, Lin San! But do you think the real truth is unknown to me? I've received a petition stating that the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Personnel, Lin San, set his eyes on a female disciple of the sacred place and tried to seize her by force. When she resisted, you angrily sent soldiers to snatch her. The petition is here; dare you deny it?"

He pulled out a paper filled with writing from his sleeve and proudly displayed it. The officials were indignant, cursing Lin San as a disgrace to the officialdom.

Damn, this works too? It seems my skin is not thick enough! Lin Wanrong grinned, "Master Ye, your eyes are indeed sharp, uncovering even this matter. I admire you."

Seeing signs of Lin San's submission, Master Ye was overjoyed and said with pride, "I am upright and impartial, kind to the people. Even if you, Lin San, have all the power, I will handle this fairly and justly, ensuring justice. Bailiffs, where are you—"

The bailiffs behind him quickly responded, "Please instruct us, Master."

Master Ye pointed at the sedan where Miss Xiao was sitting, his face full of righteousness, "The common girl who was forcibly taken by Lin San is in that sedan. You must take her quickly and protect her properly. There must be no mistakes."

The bailiffs looked at one another. Lin San was surrounded by soldiers, and to snatch someone from these ferocious troops would be courting death. Lin Wanrong smiled mysteriously and whispered to Master Ye, "Minister Ye, may I speak with you privately? I have something to show you."

"Don't try to bribe me," Lord Ye sternly refused, about to add another feather to his cap, when he noticed Lin San holding up a shiny golden waist badge with a half-smile. "Lord Ye, take a good look. The young lady in the sedan chair wanted me to show you this waist badge."

"What waist badge?" Lord Ye glanced at it disdainfully, only to have his mouth drop open as if he'd seen a ghost, and found himself unable to speak.

"Lord Ye, Lord Ye—" Prince Cheng tried to get his attention but became impatient as Lord Ye remained still. He kicked Lord Ye's leg, demanding, "What's the matter with you?"

Lord Ye turned around, his face pale and stammering, "Prince, it's the Empr, Empr, Empr—"

"Emperor what?" Prince Cheng pushed him aside, catching sight of the waist badge. His face turned pale, and after stuttering for a moment, he knelt down, "Your humble servant, Zhao Mingcheng, pays homage to Her Majesty the Empress. Long live the Empress, long live, long live a thousand times!"

The officials were all taken aback. Today truly was a bizarre day. They had come to apprehend Lin San, but now even the Empress had appeared? Seeing Prince Cheng kneel, they all hurried to kneel as well, chanting the Empress's longevity.

The Empress? Lin Wanrong's head was spinning. Qingxuan was the Empress? Was he going to fight with the Emperor over a woman?

The declaration of "Her Majesty the Empress" had a more profound effect on Lin Wanrong than on the other officials, who were simply stunned. Lin Wanrong stood there, feeling empty, unsure of what to say.

Prince Cheng and the others knelt on the ground, waiting in silence for someone to speak. Lin San looked thoughtful and didn't say a word. "Her Majesty the Empress" remained silent, and nobody dared to make a sound.

Lord Ye, who had accused Lin San earlier, was trembling like a leaf. Lin San's "forcibly seized" common girl turned out to be "Her Majesty the Empress"? This was utterly absurd, not just to others, but even to himself! He feared the Empress's wrath could lead to the extermination of his entire clan.

"You may all rise," came a youthful female voice from the sedan chair. It was the junior sister, Li Xiangjun: "You have twisted facts and deceived others, making me angry. If you want leniency, write a detailed report about today's incident and present it to the Emperor. Her Majesty the Empress will deal with it."

Hearing this young girl's voice and realizing it wasn't the Empress who mothered the nation, Prince Cheng was puzzled. But the waist badge was genuine, so he had no choice but to comply. Lord Ye's face turned pale; he knew his position as Minister of Personnel would be lost.

"You may leave," Li Xiangjun's voice, although youthful, carried an air of authority. No one dared linger, and they all hurried away. Prince Cheng glanced back at the sedan chair, his eyes filled with doubt.

"My Dear, My Dear—" Miss Xiao's delicate call rang in Lin Wanrong's ears, and the little girl Li Xiangjun chuckled, "Senior Sister, your Husband Lin was scared silly by you."

Lin Wanrong came to his senses and quickly grabbed Xiao Qingxuan's little hand, "Qingxuan, what's going on? How can you be Her Majesty the Empress? Oh my, I've never contended with the Emperor over a woman before, and now it seems I'll have to attack the Imperial Palace."

Li Xiangjun burst into laughter, "Big Brother Lin, you're quite bold to speak such treasonous words. When you attack the Imperial Palace, be sure to call on me as well."

Seeing Lord Lin's somewhat foolish expression, Xiao Qingxuan covered her lips with a smile, her eyes filled with affection, "Pay no attention to Xiangjun's nonsense. My Dear, my identity is not important. I, Xiao Qingxuan, am your wife. In life, I am a member of the Lin family; in death, I am a ghost of the Lin family. I will be with you forever and ever!"

Chapter 418 I'll Make Sure You Can't Sleep Tonight

Indeed, Lin Wanrong suddenly came to his senses. Qingxuan was barely twenty years old and had grown up in the mountains. How could she be the Empress? He had been so confused! With this realization, his mind suddenly became clear, and he laughed, saying, "I don't care whether you're the Empress or not; you are my wife, and the important task of bearing children and expanding the Lin family falls on you."

Miss Xiao snorted softly, her cheeks blushing in embarrassment, but she unconsciously touched her belly, her face aglow with tenderness. He handed back the waist token, and as she slowly caressed the glittering golden token, tears shimmered in her eyes. She softly said, "My Dear, I will tell you about Qingxuan's identity in the future. Just rest assured, my family background is honorable and will not disgrace the Lin family."

"What family honor does my family have?" Lin Wanrong said, laughing as he grabbed her hand. "In this world, I have no father or mother. As long as I have enough to eat, my whole family won't starve. I'm like a monkey that jumped out of a crack in a rock. Disgracing anyone won't disgrace me."

"You have a sharp tongue. If you are that monkey, wouldn't our child be a little monkey?" Miss Xiao covered her mouth and laughed, her face turning red. Recalling something, she quickly repressed her thoughts and calmly took Li Xiangjun's hand to get into the sedan chair. "I'm a bit tired, let's go home. I heard our house is next to the Xu mansion, is that true?"

Lin Wanrong was in a cheerful mood, but seeing Miss Xiao's expression change and hearing her words, he suddenly choked. 'Ah, Qingxuan is still angry! It was all that Xu girl's doing, and now even being neighbors has become a crime. I'm truly wronged.'

"It's a coincidence—absolutely a coincidence!" Lin Wanrong hastily said with a serious face, "Qingxuan, you know that I am a man who always deals with matters calmly and avoids disputes. The house was a gift from the Emperor, and I don't know how old Xu's family heard the news and sneaked next door to us. This has absolutely nothing to do with me."

"Deal calmly, avoid disputes?" Li Xiangjun scoffed, "Big Brother Lin, you are quite modest. There aren't many people in this world who are as content with 'calmness' as you."

'You're just a little girl; what do you know? I won't argue with you.' Seeing the sedan curtain fall, and not knowing what Qingxuan was thinking, Lord Lin found himself in a difficult position, not knowing what to do.

With the "Empress" backing him, who would dare to block their path? Everyone had dispersed, and the road was clear. The soldiers set off, heading straight into the city. Du Xiuyuan walked beside Lin Wanrong, cautiously asking, "General, who exactly is the Empress? I would like to meet her too. We mustn't be negligent."

Indeed, who was the Empress? Lin Wanrong was also taken aback. Qingxuan had brushed the matter aside in a few words, and even now, he was still in the dark.

"The Empress, my wife knows her well!" Lin Wanrong glanced around, speaking mysteriously, "Brother Du, you just do your job, and someday I'll have my wife talk to the Empress. Maybe she'll promote you to a commanding general or something. It's not impossible."

He casually wrote a blank check without concern, but Du Xiuyuan was overjoyed. What kind of person was General Lin? He was powerful and influential, and his words never fell to the ground. Suppressing the surprise in his heart, he replied spiritedly, "Thank you, General, for nurturing me. I will be loyal and dutiful, repaying your kindness."

Today's events had seen Du Xiuyuan putting forth much effort and taking on significant risks, and Lin Wanrong was well aware of it. Rather than wasting any silver, Lord Lin merely expressed his gratitude and approval to Du Xiuyuan, saying, "Brother Du, I will keep your intentions in my heart. You go back and tell Brother Hu, Brother Li, and Xu Zhen that what Lin San says is this: You all do well in the army, and never let our Grain and Provisions Army lose face. If my brothers have any problems, I'll cover you. This time on the front lines, as long as you fight bravely, I assure you small merits will earn great rewards, and great merits will earn tremendous rewards. I, Lin San, can manage that much righteousness."

"Thank you, General!" Du Xiuyuan gratefully exclaimed, then whispered, "It would be even better if the General could personally lead the brothers to the front lines."

"Brother Du, did someone teach you to say that?" Lin Wanrong looked at Du Xiuyuan with a smirk.

"General truly has discerning eyes." Du Xiuyuan awkwardly smiled. "It was Miss Xu who instructed me. She also said that with the General's wisdom and unmatched bravery, if you were on the front lines, our army's casualties would be reduced by at least fifty percent."

'Haven't I suffered enough because of you today?' Lord Lin thought, infuriated and annoyed. He waved his hand and said, "Right now, I have to accompany my wife, prepare baby blankets, milk powder, baby underwear, diapers; I'm too busy for anything else. As for fighting, we can talk about it in a few days."

Du Xiuyuan gave a forced laugh, glanced at the sedan chair where the young lady was seated, and carefully said, "General, Miss Xu has asked you to visit her mansion tomorrow to talk. I have delivered the message, but I don't know—"

"I won't go. Your persuasion is useless. Hey, Brother Du, don't pull me. I will never do anything to betray my wife!" Lord Lin's voice suddenly rose eight decibels, sternly refusing. Du Xiuyuan was utterly frustrated; they were having a decent conversation, when did he ever pull him? It was the General who clung to him shamelessly.

"General, will you go or not?" Du Xiuyuan asked helplessly.

"Ah, perhaps it's better not to go," Lin Wanrong lowered his voice, sighing in despair. "Brother Du, as you can see, my wife is back, and our good days as men are over. Besides, I don't even know where Miss Xu's boudoir is. If I stumble into the wrong place, that could be troublesome—surely her family would have a maid to guide the way, right?"

"I wouldn't know. Miss Xu never mentioned it. Why doesn't the General ask her in person tomorrow?" Du Xiuyuan chuckled, wanting to have his cake and eat it too without getting his hands dirty. Such good fortune simply didn't exist.

"Hmm, it would be disastrous if I stumbled into the wrong place." Lin Wanrong said with stern righteousness, his expression serious. "Tomorrow, I'll go to ask Miss Xu for directions and firmly reject her kindness—Whoa, Brother Du, why are you looking at me like that? You must know that I cannot be swayed by poverty or seduced by wealth. It is clear to all, young and old, that I am genuinely going to ask her for directions. You must believe me!"

Li Xiangjun peered out from the sedan chair, looked around, and then closed the curtain. Turning to her senior sister, she said, "Senior Sister, it seems your husband has changed his ways; he seems to be treating you properly now."

"Is that so?" Miss Xiao said with a light laugh: "When it comes to talking nonsense, there's no one in the world who can beat him. Only when he really breaks off contact with all the young ladies will he have truly changed. Anything else he says, hear it, but don't believe it!"

By the time they entered the city, it was already evening, and the lights of the city shone brightly. Taverns, tea houses, and pleasure quarters were bustling everywhere. Lin Wanrong had not expected that the very place he and Ning'er and Qiaoqiao had sneaked off to eat just the day before, would today be the place where he would formally welcome Qingxuan to stay, with a 'buy one, get one free' deal. He was secretly delighted, and hurriedly sent Du Xiuyuan to notify Qiaoqiao and Luo Ning in advance.

As they reached East Straight Gate Street, Miss Xiao lifted the curtain and glanced around. The area was filled with grand mansions, golden bricks, jade trees, silver walls; it was filled with elegance and splendor everywhere. Her beautiful eyes filled with faint tears as she sighed softly, murmuring, "New trees planted in front of the hall, flowers blooming for ten years. By this golden jade bridge, the scenery hasn't changed much."

When they arrived at a large mansion, the palanquin was set down, and the vermillion gate swung open, with two huge lanterns hanging in the gateway, each embroidered with a golden "Lin"

character. The courtyard was clean and tidy, with servants and maids bustling about. Qiaoqiao and Luo Ning were already waiting at the door, and as the palanquin was set down, they rushed forward.

"Qiaoqiao, Ning'er, why have you come out?" Lin Wanrong greeted them with a smile, reaching out to take their hands. But Qiaoqiao and Luo Ning seemed not to see him, going straight to the palanquin and bowing respectfully, saying, "Younger sisters Qiaoqiao (Luo Ning), greet elder sister."

Lin Wanrong was taken aback. What's going on? These two girls didn't come to greet their husband first but instead bowed to Qingxuan. What sort of rule was this? He was the master of the house!

"Two younger sisters, please rise quickly!" Xiao Qingxuan came out of the palanquin, hastily helping Luo Ning and Qiaoqiao to their feet. Qiaoqiao and Miss Luo were both seeing Xiao Qingxuan for the first time. With her eyebrows like distant mountains, eyes like autumn water, skin whiter than snow, cheeks tinted like maple, lips touched with cinnabar, and dressed in a gorgeous yellow gown, she looked like a fairy from a painting. Though the two were exceptionally beautiful themselves, they seemed to lose some of their luster in front of Xiao Qingxuan.

"Sister, you are so beautiful." Qiaoqiao stared, murmuring.

Xiao Qingxuan took her hand and smiled sweetly, "Sister Qiaoqiao, you are also a delicate and beautiful person, not worse than me."

Qiaoqiao exclaimed with joy, "Sister Xiao, how do you know my name?"

"I not only know you but also know Sister Luo Ning." Xiao Qingxuan took the slightly reserved Luo Ning's hand and smiled faintly, "Miss Luo is renowned for her talent and wit, and Qiaoqiao is clever and exceptional. We all are familiar faces from Jinling, and you met My Dear before me, so today I should be the one visiting you."

Luo Ning quickly said, "Sister Xiao, please don't be a stranger. From Jinling to the capital, the person my big brother has been most concerned about is you. He has been so anxious about this matter, and thank heavens, sister, you have finally returned safely, fulfilling my big brother's, mine, and Qiaoqiao's dream."

"Yes, yes," Qiaoqiao chirped, "When we were in Jinling, big brother was already in a hurry to come to the capital to find you. Today, we finally get to see sister."

"In the past, when I was in Jinling, mundane affairs occupied my life, and I never got the chance to meet with my two younger sisters. Fortunately, today we have met again in the capital, sparing me the regret of missing them," Xiao Qingxuan said, her eyes brimming with tears. She earnestly added, "For various reasons, My Dear and I were separated from each other. Thankfully, my two sisters took great care of My Dear in my absence, enabling this joyous reunion today. I cannot repay this kindness. Please accept a bow from me, my dear sisters."

With that, Xiao Qingxuan gracefully bowed. Qiaoqiao and Luo Ning were taken aback and quickly pulled her up, exclaiming, "You mustn't, sister; you're flattering us too much."

Xiao Qingxuan's grace and poise were unmatched, yet she was also humble and approachable. With just a few words, she had endeared herself to Luo Ning and Qiaoqiao, who naturally regarded her as their elder, harboring no resentment. Meanwhile, Lin Wanrong watched the three women chatting and getting along, a mix of joy and sadness in his eyes. 'You sisters seem to be enjoying yourselves. I'm the head of the household, but you've left me out. What happened to the usual gentle and charming Qiaoqiao and Ning'er?'

These three women were all stunningly beautiful, each with her own charm - nobility, tenderness, or allure. Du Xiuyuan looked on with envy, saying, "General, you are truly fortunate. Three wives, all of heavenly beauty and deeply devoted to you. It's enough to make others envious."

"Envious of what?" Lin Wanrong sighed woefully, "One monk fetches water to eat, two monks carry water to eat, but three monks have no water to eat. Brother Du, I have unspeakable sorrow; who could be more pitiful than me?"

"Oh, I suddenly remembered. I have some military affairs that General Li has ordered me to attend to. I must take my leave," Du Xiuyuan said, quickly making his escape, seeing the general's gloomy expression.

"Sister, let's go inside quickly and see if you like the attic that Sister Ning and I prepared for you." After talking for a while, Xiao Qingxuan introduced Li Xiangjun to everyone. Seeing this sister Xiao's natural and kind words, Qiaoqiao was very happy, grabbed the hands of Miss Xiao and Li Xiangjun, and eagerly led the way.

"Be careful, sister's body..." Luo Ning hesitated, then said softly.

Qiaoqiao paused, glancing at Xiao Qingxuan's abdomen, and suddenly exclaimed with embarrassment, "I was too rash, almost forgetting that you're pregnant, sister."

Xiao Qingxuan's face flushed, and she hurriedly looked down, whispering, "Sister, who told you that I'm pregnant?"

Luo Ning giggled, "It was Xu Zhiqing. She informed us about your return and told us all about you and big brother. She was so enthusiastic, bustling around until just before your return—Huh, why are you staring at me like that, big brother?" Luo Ning suddenly asked Lin Wanrong.

"Oh, nothing. I'm just counting stars. How many stars are there in the sky? I still haven't counted them all. Ning'er, come count with me." Lin Wanrong looked up, his eyes distant and unfocused. The young girl, Li Xiangjun, chuckled, "Big brother Lin, don't forget to count the stars when you visit the mansion tomorrow. Tell me the number once you've counted them."

Lin Wanrong grumbled, "The stars in the sky are numerous, only one less than the strands of hair on my head. If you want to know exactly how many, simply count the hairs on my head."

"Heart filled with mischief!" Li Xiangjun made a face, giggling and hiding behind her senior sister.

Miss Xiao's expression was gentle as she nodded and smiled, "This Sister Xu is indeed warm-hearted. My Dear and I received a lot of help from her on the mountain today. We shall have My Dear thank her in person tomorrow."

"Not going, not going, absolutely not going!" Lin Wanrong quickly waved his hands, his face filled with anxiety. Luo Ning and Qiaoqiao looked at him strangely. "You know Sister Xu, why won't you go?"

Xiao Qingxuan ignored him, smiling and saying, "Qiaoqiao, let's go inside quickly and leave him to his antics outside."

Qiaoqiao giggled and nodded, "Eldest Sister, let's walk slowly and you can tell me and Sister Ning what it feels like to carry a baby. Big Brother was saying yesterday that he wants Sister Ning to have a baby as well-- Ah--"

Luo Ning's face turned bright red, and she pinched Qiaoqiao, "You silly girl, what nonsense are you talking about in front of Eldest Sister!"

Qiaoqiao stuck out her tongue, her face flushed, seemingly recalling something that had happened the night before in the embroidery room. Xiao Qingxuan's face also turned shy, and she hurriedly pulled Qiaoqiao's hand to move forward.

"Big Brother," Luo Ning fell behind, secretly pulling Lin Wanrong's hand, her face displaying a hint of charming blush, and whispered, "What's wrong with you? Why does your face look bad every time Sister Xu is mentioned? Do you have any prejudice against her?"

Prejudice? How could he not? She openly challenged Qingxuan, wanting to snatch him away. Luckily, he was able to resist her temptation; otherwise, Luo Ning wouldn't be smiling now.

"What prejudice?" Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Sister Xu and I traveled together to Shandong. We had such a good relationship that it's like riding two horses and wearing two pants. How could there be any prejudice?"

"What's this about riding two horses and wearing two pants? Is this what a good relationship looks like?" Luo Ning was torn between crying and laughing, glaring at him.

"Or should it be riding one horse and wearing one pant? Is that what a good relationship is?" Lin Wanrong laughed.

Luo Ning spat softly, her face filled with shy annoyance, and punched him, scolding, "Don't think I don't know what you're thinking. What did you do with Sister Xu in Shandong? You were so intimate with her, touching and caressing. You thought I didn't know, hmm, hmm--"

"Lower your voice!" Lin Wanrong quickly covered her mouth, cold sweat forming on his forehead. He anxiously glanced forward, seeing Qiaoqiao and Qingxuan chatting and laughing ahead, paying no attention to them. His heart settled a bit, and he urgently defended, "It was all a misunderstanding, not intentional at all. I had explained it to Sister Xu."

Ning'er giggled, "So Big Brother is afraid Eldest Sister will know. Finally, someone can control you." She glanced around, suddenly leaning into Lin Wanrong's ear, her breath tickling as she whispered, "Big Brother, Sister Xu's figure is really good. Ning'er has felt it with her own hands, and you know it too, right?"

"Ning'er, don't be so vulgar. Be upright like me," Lin Wanrong reprimanded with a solemn face, though his heart was pounding. Sister Xu's figure was indeed unparalleled – oh, he couldn't think like that, he couldn't betray Qingxuan.

"Disgusting, you're the vulgar one." Luo Ning's eyes were seductive, and she panted softly, "Big Brother, don't touch me."

Lin Wanrong reluctantly withdrew his large hand, laughing, "Please don't misunderstand, I was just checking your vigilance, Ning'er. I didn't expect your sensitive area to be so extensive; one touch, and I've already tested it."

Luo Ning gave him an amused look, then reached into her bosom to retrieve a letter and handed it to him, "Here, this is for you!"

"What's this? Ning'er, if you want to write a love letter to me, you don't have to be so formal about it. Just call out to me from the bed; I'll hear you," Lin Wanrong said.

"Vulgar!" Ning'er giggled, "You can read it at your leisure. Sister Xu said it will keep you awake tonight--"

Chapter 419 I Want to Sleep with Your Senior Sister

'You say I won't be able to sleep? Is that an exaggeration? Even if you were standing naked in front of me, I would still be able to sleep.' Lin Wanrong laughed twice, opened the envelope, and was greeted by a faint, ethereal fragrance, with several snow-white letters coming into view. He unfolded the letters, revealing several small paintings.

The first depicted a ruined temple, with a blushing Eldest Miss holding a crossbow, timidly and nervously peeking from behind a broken wall, while a figure resembling a man hid behind the door, looking inside with shifty, rat-like eyes. The second was a scene of a charming boudoir, with translucent screens and dim, cozy lighting. A Young Lady was half-naked, her lingerie faintly visible, and her eyes full of horror. Another male-like figure had his hands on her chest, gently kneading and fondling, appearing to enjoy himself immensely. The third painting showed the vast surface of a lake, a man joyfully jumping about, harshly kissing the smiling face of a nearby Young Lady. The face of the woman in these paintings was somewhat indistinct, and unless one looked carefully, it would be hard to recognize her. On the other hand, the man's face, with his shifty eyes and lecherous smile, was drawn so vividly that even a blind man could tell who it was.

Luo Ning stood beside Lin Wanrong, stealing glances at the paintings. Lin Wanrong quickly covered them, laughing, "Who drew these comics? They're not suitable for children."

Luo Ning glared at him and covered her mouth, giggling, "Big Brother, who are the people in these paintings? How could they be so shameless, taking advantage of this woman?"

"Taking advantage?" Lin Wanrong answered seriously, "The young master in the painting looks as handsome as I do, so it seems more like the young lady wants to take advantage of him. Ning'er, don't you think?"

Miss Luo held back a laugh, "Ning'er is an outsider, so I don't know who wants to take advantage of whom. But there's an old saying, 'It takes two to tango.' Maybe they were both taking advantage of each other. Big Brother, don't you think?"

"Profound insight!" Lin Wanrong gave her a thumbs up, admiringly. He glanced around and saw that Qingxuan and Qiaoqiao had already turned the corner. He chuckled, "But really, just by these few slightly indecent comics, will I be unable to sleep tonight? Ning'er, your sister Xu must underestimate me."

Ning'er shook her head gently, "I don't know why Sister Xu said so. Today, when Sister Xu came, she gave Qiaoqiao and me each a letter. Mine is to be passed on to you, and I don't know about Qiaoqiao's, it seems to be for Sister Qingxuan. The two letters are of the same thickness, so I don't know if they contain the same thing?"

"What?" Lin Wanrong's mind exploded, and he rushed forward as if smoke was billowing from his behind. As he turned the corner, he saw Miss Xiao holding several letters, looking closely at them. Her face grew redder as she read, tears welling in her eyes, about to fall.

Cold sweat suddenly dripped down Lin Wanrong's forehead. Damn, Xu Zhiqing's move was ruthless, completely disregarding everything. This was it; even jumping into the Yellow River would not wash away his guilt now.

"Sister, what's wrong? What did Sister Xu say in the letter?" Qiaoqiao, unaware of the situation, hurriedly whispered.

Miss Xiao put away the letter and sighed softly, shaking her head, "It's nothing, just some trivial matters. Qiaoqiao, where were we in our conversation?"

"Oh, we were talking about taking Eldest Sister upstairs to see the boudoir that Ning'er and I have prepared for you." Qiaoqiao grabbed Xiao Qingxuan's hand, happily saying, "Eldest Sister, let's go quickly."

"I'm going too, I'm going too!" Lin Wanrong hurriedly joined, smiling obsequiously, "Qingxuan, don't believe Miss Xu's words. She has been acting a bit strangely lately due to some family matters. Don't take it to heart. I'll accompany you upstairs; I'm familiar with it."

Xiao Qingxuan shook her head and sighed, "I don't think that everything Miss Xu says is necessarily false. Concerning a woman's reputation, and given that Miss Xu is a famously extraordinary woman, how could she joke with her own reputation?"

It was all about reputation and honor, Lin Wanrong was annoyed inside, thinking that Qingxuan's view of the letter must be the same as his. If Qingxuan weren't present, he would have certainly rushed to Xu's residence next door to find out the truth.

Li Xiangjun giggled and glanced at Lin Wanrong, "Big Brother Lin, how long have you been involved with this Miss Xu, and you still want to hide it from my Senior Sister? There's not a single good man in this world." As she spoke, her voice became angry, evidently aggrieved for her Junior Sister.

'Seeing that you haven't fully matured yet, I'll endure!' Lin Wanrong gave a dry laugh, pretending not to hear her words. He couldn't go to question Xu Zhiqing now, or he would fall into her trap. Miss Xiao went upstairs with Li Xiangjun and Qiaoqiao, and the sound of the three women's laughter filled the floor above, leaving Lin Wanrong standing dumbfounded downstairs, not knowing what to do.

"Big Brother, Big Brother," Luo Ning's light laugh broke his contemplation, "Eldest Sister and Qiaoqiao have gone upstairs; let's go see them."

Lin Wanrong grabbed her hand, helplessly saying, "Ning'er, tell me, what exactly does Miss Xu want to do? I haven't provoked her recently, have I?"

Luo Ning chuckled, giving him a sideways glance, "After you've treated Sister Xu like that, how did it become that you're the wronged one? I know Sister Xu's character well; she's determined and unyielding. If there's something she wants to do, she will definitely persist until the end, not stopping until she achieves her goal!"

"That's, not so good, right? If she takes over me, what will you all do?" Lin Wanrong was restless inside. Although he knew that this thing couldn't be done, and doing it would be unfair to Qingxuan, men are naturally cheap. They say one thing and think another.

"What takeover?!" Luo Ning laughed and gave him a punch, "Sister Xu is not that kind of person. When I was studying in the capital as a child, she always took care of me. She's beautiful and knowledgeable, with high standards. Back then, I wondered what kind of person would be worthy of Sister Xu?!"

She sighed faintly, her eyes filled with sorrow, helplessly saying, "Who would have thought that, in the end, the person she likes is my husband. Big Brother, if you were me, what would you do?"

"Like me? How is that possible? She never confessed to me. You should know, I'm always the passive type; taking the initiative is not my strength." Lin Wanrong's eyes narrowed, and he grinned wickedly, his face as vile as could be.

Luo Ning glared at him and scolded, "Don't pretend to be innocent after taking advantage. Nobody knows the matter between Miss Xu and you better than me. When in Jinling, that match at the 'Food for Immortals' Pavilion was against Miss Xu herself. You even composed a couplet that outshone Miss Xu by some degree. I sent your couplet to the capital in a letter. Mr. Xu spoke so highly of you; though Miss Xu may not have said it, she probably has you in her heart."

"No way, I don't feel anything at all," Lin Wanrong said with a beaming smile.

"I think you've lost your sense due to embracing too many women who throw themselves at you," Luo Ning said sourly. "Haven't you thought, Miss Xu, being a single woman, traveled with you all the way to Shandong? If it were anyone else, would she have trusted you? You took liberties with her in my room, and held and kissed her at Weishan Lake. If she didn't have feelings for you, how would she have let you go?"

"It's all a misunderstanding," Lin Wanrong hurriedly said. "Besides that, I really haven't done anything else."

Luo Ning, both amused and annoyed, glared at him again. "You've done everything you could, what more do you want? Although Miss Xu is nominally a widow, she's pure and untouched, never even holding hands with anyone. Apart from not sleeping with her, not sleeping with her..." Luo Ning's face turned red, and she gave him a look. "You've done everything else, what more do you want?"

"You can't say that, Ning'er," Lin Wanrong said with a lewd laugh. "While Miss Xu may be pure, so am I. I held her, and she held me; I kissed her, and she kissed me too, just like our joyous time last night – heh heh, you enjoyed it, and I was happy. It's a mutual act; you can't blame everything on me."

Luo Ning blushed, pinching his arm hard, and scolded, "What nonsense are you talking about, 'you enjoyed, I was happy'? You and your twisted logic."

She huffed a few times, a trace of melancholy appearing on her face, and she whispered, "We don't need to talk about Miss Xiao, you were destined with her, and she's like a fairy; I should respect her. Miss Xu is my respected teacher and friend; I care for her, and if she can be with us forever, I would be happy. Qiaoqiao is my dear friend, gentle and pleasing, she's basically my sister; I'm willing to serve you with her. But if someone else tries to take you, I won't be so accommodating. Let her try to snatch my husband –" Luo Ning raised her eyebrows and pouted, "I, Luo Ning, am not a pushover!"

Lin Wanrong was sweating profusely; it seemed Ning'er was hinting at something. Her words seemed to be directed at Eldest Miss. Since Jinling, the two had not gotten along, and even in the capital, they couldn't live together. No wonder she didn't want to stay in the Xiao Mansion. At present, neither the matter with Qingxuan nor Xu Zhiqing had been settled, and here Ning'er was clashing with Eldest Miss. Being a man was so difficult.

When he followed Luo Ning upstairs, he saw Qingxuan holding Qiaoqiao, the two engaged in intimate conversation. This bamboo building was already decorated in a simple and elegant manner, but with Qiaoqiao and Luo Ning's touch, it became even more charming and warm. The rosy curtains, jade canopy, silk quilts, and ivory bed, and on the table, a pair of bright red candles flickered in the gentle breeze. The duvet embroidered with mandarin ducks playing in the water added to the scenery everywhere.

"Big Brother," seeing Lin Wanrong come up, Qiaoqiao joyfully grabbed his hand, her sweet voice laughing, "From now on, this will be Eldest Sister's boudoir. Our Lin family's first little treasure will be born here. Sister, do you like it?"

Xiao Qingxuan's face flushed, she glanced around and softly said, "It's warm and elegant; I like it very much. Qiaoqiao, Ning'er, thank you for your efforts."

Luo Ning hurriedly took her hand, "Sister, what are you talking about? We are family; there's no need for formalities! Now that you are with child, this is the Lin family's firstborn; we must not be negligent. If you need anything, just tell Qiaoqiao and me. You mustn't exert yourself."

"Yes, yes," Lin Wanrong quickly nodded, "Qingxuan, just order me around if you need anything. Apart from things I can't do, I'll do everything else."

Miss Xiao glanced at him and laughed, "It's not as serious as you make it sound. I've practiced martial arts since I was young; small matters are nothing to me. You mustn't spoil me."

The group gathered together, chatting about family matters, all revolving around the Lin family's future heir in Xiao Qingxuan's belly. The atmosphere was lively and warm, truly feeling like one family. Qingxuan was noble, Qiaoqiao pure, Ning'er foxy. Looking at the three beautiful faces before him, Lin Wanrong lazily sighed. With these wives, what more could he ask for in this lifetime?

After talking for a while, Luo Ning stood up and said with concern, "Sister, there's been a lot today, and you must be tired. You should rest early. Big Brother, you've been apart from Sister for many days; spend some time talking with her."

Xiao Qingxuan's face turned red, and she shyly looked at Lin Wanrong before lowering her head and softly agreeing. Lin Wanrong went downstairs, and Ning'er suddenly hugged his arm, humming, "Big Brother, now that you have Qingxuan, you mustn't neglect Ning'er."

"How could I?" Lin Wanrong embraced both of them, kissed Qiaoqiao's face, then kissed Ning'er's cheek, playfully patting their soft behinds, laughing, "Don't you know my abilities? A new wife in the room, old ones waiting in bed; my little darlings, so obedient and sensible, I will surely treat you well, making you the happiest women in the world."

Qiaoqiao nodded, her face blushing, her voice as soft as a mosquito, "Big Brother, I, I also want—"

"You also want? How about this, you wash up, and after Qingxuan falls asleep, I'll come to you, let you have enough—" Lin Wanrong laughed lewdly.

Qiaoqiao's face turned red, and she scolded, "Big Brother, you're so bad, that's not what I meant—"

"Oh, you want to try new things." Lin Wanrong nodded, "No problem, my thirty-six scattered hands technique is perfected, guaranteed to vary in style, making you feel like dying or becoming immortal."

"Annoying, that's not what I want!" Hearing his obscene words, Qiaoqiao was too embarrassed to speak, hitting his chest twice before burying her face in his chest. Luo Ning giggled, "My good Big Brother, this little girl wants to be a mother. Just do a good deed and grant her a few drops of rain and dew."

"Sister—" Qiaoqiao was shy and embarrassed, whimpering, and burying her head in her big brother's arms. Lin Wanrong laughed and said, "So that's how it is, Rain and Dew, huh? Your husband has plenty of it, even ten spring rains wouldn't be too much. Let's pick a good day soon, and we'll grandly create the Lin family's offspring."

Qiaoqiao dared not raise her head, hearing Luo Ning's clear laughter, Lin Wanrong pinched her buttocks and asked, "Ning'er, don't you want to be a mother? Why don't you ask your husband?"

Luo Ning's body was heating up, leaning weakly against him, her little hand caressing him, and whispering in his ear like an orchid, "My lord, you bestowed Rain and Dew last night, it's in Ning'er's body!"

"I did bestow it," Lin Wanrong was puzzled, "but I seem to remember bestowing it in the wrong place!"

"Ah," Luo Ning's cheeks were fiery red, her red lips parted, extremely enticing. Her little hand covered Lin Wanrong's lips, and she said shyly, "Don't say it, you bad man."

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Good Ning'er, don't be afraid, have you forgotten the scattered hand technique your husband has practiced? That's a profound skill, and there are many more novelties. Our slogan is, let go a little, then let go a little more, and create a new era of entertainment."

Qiaoqiao laughed in Lin Wanrong's arms, "Big brother's slogan is tailor-made for sister Ning'er. In a few days, even sister Qingxuan will know how considerate Ning'er is to her husband."

"You naughty girl!" Luo Ning's face was red, and she lightly slapped her, and Qiaoqiao giggled and threw herself into her big brother's arms. Luo Ning's ears were burning, and she leaned to his other side, her slender fingers drawing circles on his chest, and softly said, "Big brother, Eldest Sister has become a mother and Qiaoqiao will become one too. If Ning'er is the same as them, there will be no one to accompany you, hmm—"

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, pinched her buttocks, and happily went upstairs. Entering the room, he saw Xiao Qingxuan and Li Xiangjun, two people tidying up their clothes. Seeing him return, Miss Xiao's face turned red, and she quickly lowered her head.

"Ah, little junior sister, you've been busy all day, it's getting late, you should go rest too." Lin Wanrong chuckled, "concernedly" said.

"This is what I should say to you, right?" Li Xiangjun smiled cunningly, "I've lived with my senior sister since I was a child, if anyone should leave, it's you."

‘Little girl, I want to sleep with your senior sister, don't ruin my good time.’ Seeing the little girl's nonchalant look, Lord Lin was anxious and wished to shout at her.

"This, little sister, things were different before. You were not grown up, but now you are, and your senior sister has married a husband. You can't live together anymore, otherwise—"

"Otherwise what?" Li Xiangjun giggled.

"Otherwise, otherwise," Lord Lin, usually eloquent, was at a loss for words facing this thirteen or fourteen-year-old girl, and could only say angrily, "Otherwise, you'll get a corn."

Xiao Qingxuan couldn't help but laugh, took his hand, and said, "You're about to be a father, why are you still so shameless?" Her face was blushing, she glanced at the little girl, and softly said, "Junior sister, it's getting late, you should go rest too."

Li Xiangjun's eyes reddened, and tears were about to fall. "Sister, you, you don't want me anymore?!"

Seeing her pitiful appearance, Lin Wanrong's whole body shuddered. Could it be that this little girl had that condition? It would be difficult to treat; he must hurry. But then again, his wife was as beautiful as a celestial being; it was no wonder that both men and women loved her.

Miss Xiao hurriedly shook her head. "Little sister, don't misunderstand. I'm just worried that you are tired and want you to rest early."

"Sister, I want to live with you in the same room. Since childhood, I have always slept with you. You cannot abandon me." Li Xiangjun's eyes widened, her tear beads spinning in their sockets, about to fall at any moment.

"This..." Xiao Qingxuan's face turned red, not knowing how to explain. Should she tell her little sister that since she had married her husband, she must share the bed with him and could no longer accompany her? How could she say that? She quickly grabbed Lin Wanrong's hand, looking at him with a plea for help.

This was the first time Lin Wanrong had encountered such a situation, and he had no experience in handling it. Seeing Qingxuan's compassionate expression, he let out a dry chuckle. "Little sister, you are still young and might not fully understand some things. When you grow up, you'll know better. In this world, there are many things that cannot be done. For example, ants cannot marry elephants, turtles shouldn't race with rabbits, a brother-in-law cannot sleep with his sister-in-law—"

Xiao Qingxuan couldn't help but smile at these illogical explanations, which sounded like something one would say to placate a child. Li Xiangjun glanced at him disdainfully and said, "Stupid man, do you think I don't know what you are thinking? If you have the guts, just say it."

Miss Xiao lowered her head in embarrassment, not daring to speak. Seeing her sister's expression, Li Xiangjun became even more annoyed, and snorted, "You dare not say? A man without guts!"

These days, even children were so bold. Damn it, this was too much; he was Lin San, and he feared no one. Lin Wanrong, extremely annoyed, burst into laughter, "I want to sleep with your senior sister—that's not something I'm afraid to say; I'm just afraid you wouldn't accept it!"

"What, what did you say?" Li Xiangjun's eyes brimmed with tears, and she clenched her fists.

"I want to sleep with your senior sister, my wife!" Lin Wanrong declared righteously. "It's as natural as the order of the universe, and even thunder would not dare strike me! Do you have any questions?!"

"You rascal." Miss Xiao hurriedly grabbed him, her face flushing hot. Strangely, hearing him say this, she didn't feel any repulsion. Instead, a warm and tender feeling spread through her heart.

Li Xiangjun was dumbfounded and began to cry loudly, her tears flowing like a floodgate had been opened. Xiao Qingxuan was alarmed and quickly embraced the little girl. "Sister, what's wrong?"

"Sister, you don't want me anymore?" Li Xiangjun's tears fell like rain, and she hid in Xiao Qingxuan's arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

Xiao Qingxuan didn't know what to do, so she could only embrace her and softly comfort her. Lin Wanrong blinked in disbelief, cursing inwardly, 'Grandmother's, I've only just found my wife, and before I even had a chance to hug her, this little girl has stolen her away. Is there no justice in this world?'

The little girl continued crying, her sobs gradually slowing down until she fell asleep in Xiao Qingxuan's arms.

"My Dear, come here!" Xiao Qingxuan gently laid Li Xiangjun on the bed and suddenly beckoned Lin Wanrong, motioning him to come over.

Lin Wanrong quickly walked over. Xiao Qingxuan's face was full of apology as she slowly leaned into his embrace, softly saying, "My Dear, I'm sorry you had to go through this."

Lin Wanrong sighed, "It can't be helped. She's your junior sister, our benefactor. Well, I'll consider her my adopted daughter, although she's a bit old for that."

Xiao Qingxuan chuckled, lightly tapping his forehead. "You, you never make any sense when you speak." Her eyes were filled with sweetness, her voice gentle, "But that's exactly what I love about you. Oh, what are you going to do?"

Lin Wanrong lifted her body and cradled her in his arms, chuckling, "That little girl has taken our bed; shouldn't we take hers in return? It's just a simple exchange; I'm not afraid of her."

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Xiao Qingxuan languidly rested in his embrace, letting him hold her tightly. Her cheeks were flushed, her body weak and weary. Although they were married and their union had been consummated on Mount Dangtu, due to the whims of fate, they had only been physically intimate once and had no other encounters since then.

Miss Xiao's face turned a shy pink, and she softly said, "You're such a scoundrel." She struggled to free herself from Lin Wanrong's arms, carefully covering Li Xiangjun with a quilt before straightening up. With a charming smile, she grabbed Lin Wanrong's hand.

Considering Li Xiangjun's dependence on Xiao Qingxuan, the young girl's embroidered room was not far from Miss Xiao's chamber. As they entered, they found the room simple yet cozy. A precious glass mirror stood on a dressing table opposite the window, and the room was adorned with pink curtains and wind chimes that tinkled in the breeze.

Xiao Qingxuan looked around and smiled, "Is this Miss Luo's idea? She is truly thoughtful; my junior sister will surely love this place."

"It must be Ning'er's idea, judging from the mirror," Lin Wanrong chuckled. "I guess it's her; this girl has many clever tricks and knows how to please."

Xiao Qingxuan sighed softly, "Both Qiaoqiao and Ning'er are gentle and charming; I can't help but adore them. It's lucky they are with you, or who knows what kind of mess you would be."

"It's not as bad as you make it sound," Lin Wanrong laughed. "I was doing just fine when I was alone in Jinling!"

"Doing just fine?" Miss Xiao giggled, looking at him tenderly. "When I first met you in Jinling, you were not as splendid as you are now."

Lin Wanrong's face turned red, and he laughed awkwardly. He hadn't achieved success back then, so a little misery was understandable. But everything had changed since he met Qingxuan; could his beloved wife be his destined benefactor?

Miss Xiao gracefully touched the wind chimes above her head, producing a pleasing sound. Her face flushed, she gracefully sat down before the dressing mirror and looked at her reflection: eyebrows like crescent moons, lips like painted vermilion, her face like powdered jade, a picture of loveliness.

"My dear husband," Xiao Qingxuan said softly, her eyes brimming with gentle affection, "Please help me pin up my hair." In those times, a woman would pin up her hair after marriage, signifying her status as a wife. Lin Wanrong knew this, and he hurried over. As Miss Xiao's hairpin was lightly removed, her silky hair floated around her, like a fairy in the clouds.

Xiao Qingxuan was naturally beautiful, her hair smooth and shiny. However, pinning up her hair was a delicate task, and Lin Wanrong was completely clueless. After fumbling around for a while, he managed to pin her hair, but he couldn't quite capture Xiao Qingxuan's ethereal charm. Miss Xiao smiled softly, "Haven't you ever pinned up Qiaoqiao's and Ning'er's hair? You seem like it's your first time."

"Isn't it my first time?" Lin Wanrong chuckled twice, and Xiao Qingxuan laughed, "How can you be so neglectful of your wives? Don't they scold you?"

"They have no choice; my most beloved wife wasn't back yet," Lin Wanrong said playfully.

Xiao Qingxuan's face turned redder, her eyes showing a hint of joy. She playfully scolded, "You smooth talker, always saying sweet words. I don't believe you at all."

The candlelight danced, lightly throwing out a few sparks, and Lin Wanrong shyly said, "Madam, it's getting late. Let's rest early."

Xiao Qingxuan's heart thumped wildly, and she softly hummed in agreement, her face as red as fire: "You, you go close the door." Her voice was so faint that even she could hardly hear it.

Lin Wanrong sprang up and closed the door. Xiao Qingxuan, infinitely shy, whimpered and covered her cheeks, peeking at him through her fingers. The two had been through bitter hardships to reunite, so joy and excitement were natural. Even someone with thick skin like Lin Wanrong couldn't help but feel his emotions surge.

Lin Wanrong embraced Xiao Qingxuan's soft waist and gently said, "Qingxuan, we must undress to sleep, don't you know?"

Miss Xiao, her face flushed, giggled and pinched his arm, complaining, "You thick-skinned man, why do you have to say it so plainly? Do you think I'm a child like Xiangjun?"

Her eyes tender, she stood up, took his hand, and shyly said, "My Dear, I will undress you."

"Let's help each other, help each other." Lin Wanrong grinned broadly, his hands reaching behind her, pulling at her clothes. Where his hands touched, the skin was slick and delicate, soft as boneless, like the smoothest silk. Lin Wanrong exhaled deeply. What woman in the world could compare to my Qingxuan?

Xiao Qingxuan, suppressing her embarrassment, began to unbutton his clothes and saw that his bosom was filled with things clinking together: erotic pictures, silver notes, a gun, and some knockout drugs. These were all essentials for a wanderer in Jianghu.

"Why are you still carrying these things?" Among them were the knockout drugs and the gun she had given him in Jinling. Seeing that he had carefully preserved them, Miss Xiao was surprised and touched.

"These are tokens of our love; I can't lose them," Lin Wanrong said seriously with a smile. "I've relied on them to save my life countless times." He briefly recounted his experiences after parting, including using the gun and drugs to fight off enemies and nearly losing his life to her own master. Xiao Qingxuan could not help but weep, holding his hand and saying, "You're so stubborn. I asked you to learn some martial arts, and you found every excuse to refuse. The world is dangerous, what would I do if something happened to you?"

Lin Wanrong quickly reassured her with a smile, "Look, I'm fine, aren't I? We each have our own destinies, and forcing them doesn't work. I'm quite content with my life now, having a wife and making money."

"You're always talking nonsense," Miss Xiao accused him, shaking her head helplessly. She slowly nestled in his arms, softly saying, "People in this world are malicious, and now that you have a family to take care of, you must not be careless."

With her robe removed, wearing only tight undergarments, her long jade legs were smooth and shiny, her ample chest stood tall, and her rounded hips were full. Her figure was curvaceous, and as she nestled in his arms, their skin touched, causing Lin Wanrong's heart to flutter as he held her tightly.

Xiao Qingxuan was nervous, and noticing his strong embrace, she hurriedly said, "My Dear, be careful of our child."

Lin Wanrong was also taken aback, quickly loosening his grip on her, his large hand gently stroking her abdomen, anxiously saying, "Qingxuan, is the baby alright?"

Miss Xiao's face was flushed, her heart filled with happiness. She softly said, "The child is fine; you must not frighten him."

Lin Wanrong lay on her small abdomen, listening intently to the movements inside. After a while, he suddenly looked up, joyfully saying, "Qingxuan, I heard our son kick."

Xiao Qingxuan slowly stroked his hair. Seeing his jubilant expression, she somehow started crying, tears cascading down. She embraced him tightly and whispered, sobbing, "My Dear, thank you, thank you for our child. Qingxuan is so happy."

This sentence condensed too many emotions. Lin Wanrong's heart ached as he heard it, and he quickly hugged her, forcing a smile, "What are you talking about? We are husband and wife!"

The joys and sorrows Xiao Qingxuan experienced in one day were beyond what others could feel in ten lifetimes. Even if she were a fairy in heaven, she couldn't bear such torment. In the deep silence of the night, facing the husband she had longed for, her worries and misery erupted at once. She hid in his embrace, and her tears flowed like a river.

Lin Wanrong stammered a few times, not knowing what to say. After parting for many days and passing Qingxuan several times, had he not been determined, he might never have seen Qingxuan again. The husband and wife had endured hardships to reunite; these tears of joy could flow freely.

Xiao Qingxuan was pregnant, and even her supreme martial arts skills couldn't contain her emotional exhaustion. Lying in his arms, she found a tranquil harbor, weeping for a while before she fell deeply asleep in his embrace.

Her cheeks were smooth as jade, tear stains still wet, gleaming under the dim light, like pearls broken from their string, invoking love and pity. Lin Wanrong's heart warmed. He placed his large hand on her small abdomen, feeling the pulse of his own bloodline, a sense of peace he had never felt before. He gently kissed the cheek of Qingxuan, who was sleeping like a fairy in his arms, and spent the most innocent night of his adulthood, embracing Qingxuan's delicate body.

The next morning, while still in a drowsy state, he suddenly heard a thumping of footsteps, and Qiaoqiao's voice came from outside the door, "Big brother, sister, are you up yet?"

Xiao Qingxuan was usually an early riser, but after going through so much and reuniting with her husband, she had overslept in her joy. Hearing Qiaoqiao's call, she quickly looked to her side, only to see Lin Wanrong turn over in his sleep, his hand unconsciously fondling her chest, then falling back into deep slumber.

Xiao Qingxuan's whole body tingled, overcome with shyness. Seeing him sleep so sweetly, she didn't want to wake him. As she was about to get out of bed, she felt a strong arm around her waist, and her husband Lin's voice sounded in her ear, "Good wife, it's not time to get up yet. Let's sleep a little longer."

She felt his palm gently caressing her waist and hips, a soft feeling that made both their hearts tremble. Miss Xiao's voice trembled, "My Dear, stop fooling around; Qiaoqiao is waiting outside."

Miss Xiao was five months pregnant, and it was indeed a time when her emotions ran high. She hadn't noticed it last night, being too tired, but now, a few gentle squeezes ignited a fire of passion. She felt her clothes being opened by him in an instant, his two large hands exploring her body freely within her clothes.

"My Dear—" Miss Xiao practiced the method of calming the spirit and steadying the breath, usually composed and serene. Yet the moment she encountered him, all the techniques became futile. Wave after wave of heat surged through her, and Miss Xiao let out a gentle pant, her body aflame. She hastily clung tightly to his body, shyly raising her head, and met his passionate and resolute eyes, like the brilliant rays of the sun, dispelling all the shadows in her heart.

"Qingxuan!" Lin Wanrong called softly, slowly caressing her delicate skin, playing with a pair of ample jade-like breasts. Xiao Qingxuan's mind was stirred, her body trembling, and suddenly, she let out a soft cry, feeling a hot force invade her body; he had entered her.

"You naughty man!" Early in the morning, while Qiaoqiao was still outside, Miss Xiao's body was weak and soft, her cheeks pressed against his chest, listening to their heartbeats that came one after another, a tidal wave of joy surging through her heart...

"Big Brother, why are you alone? Where's Sister?" Qiaoqiao was impatiently waiting outside the room, only to see Lin Wanrong with a smiling face, pulling back the curtain to come out.

Lin Wanrong laughed, "Qingxuan is nourishing herself for pregnancy. I just exercised with her to aid in a smooth delivery. Ah, childbirth is not easy."

Qiaoqiao, unsuspecting, nodded and said, "Naturally, carrying for ten months and giving birth in one day, Sister must be suffering. Big Brother, you must take good care of her."

This little girl was becoming more and more adorable. Lin Wanrong pecked her cheek and joked, "Little darling, did you knock so early just to ask about childbirth?"

"Ah," Qiaoqiao exclaimed, "Disaster, Big Brother, I forgot the important matter. Quickly, come with me!"

Qiaoqiao grabbed him, hurrying outside, and Lin Wanrong laughed, "What matter could be more important than our childbirth?"

"Big Brother, hurry! The Emperor has sent someone with the imperial edict. It's already been quite some time." Qiaoqiao cried out urgently.

‘An imperial edict? No way! Making love with my wife and then receiving an imperial edict—my goodness, how awesome I am! But my Emperor father-in-law is really something, issuing edicts so early in the morning. Doesn't he let people sleep?’

Lin Wanrong yawned, walking forward at a leisurely pace, then suddenly stopped, remembering something. ‘I just attacked that hall yesterday, and the Emperor sends an edict this morning. It's not something wrong, is it? You're my father-in-law, the destruction of the hall was your idea, so don't blame me for it.’

When he arrived at the main hall, he saw Gao Ping with a smile, chatting with Luo Ning. The teacups had been changed several times. Seeing the smile on the eunuch's face, Lin Wanrong relaxed. Have you ever seen a house-confiscating eunuch this easy-going?

He laughed, stepping in, and saluted, "So it's Eunuch Gao who has arrived. I apologize for not receiving you sooner; I hope you will forgive me."

Gao Ping hurriedly stood up, bowing respectfully, "Not at all, not at all. Disturbing the Master's rest is entirely this old servant's fault."

Luo Ning and Qiaoqiao exchanged puzzled glances. What was their big brother up to, that he could make this edict-announcing eunuch bow so humbly? Waiting impatiently for half an hour was one thing, but it seemed as if announcing the edict was a grave sin.

Lin Wanrong was also puzzled. When did the palace stewards change their minds and establish a sense of service to the people?

Luo Ning had already arranged the incense burner and offerings table. Gao Ping glanced around the room and then asked cautiously, "My Lord, have all your family members arrived?"

"Oh, there is one more wife. She felt a little unwell during her activities this morning and is still resting inside the house," Lin Wanrong said with a smile.

Gao Ping responded with a sound of acknowledgment, unfolded the imperial edict, and said with a grin, "The Emperor has said that for this imperial edict, neither Lord Lin nor his family need to kneel. My Lord, the Emperor really can't praise you enough."

‘Nonsense. Kneeling all day, every day, was that not troublesome?’ Lin Wanrong laughed heartily twice without saying anything.

"By Heaven's decree, the Emperor proclaims: Vice Minister of the Ministry of Personnel and Commander-in-Chief of the Loyal and Brave Army, Lin San, is loyal, brave, upright, considerate of the people's livelihood, diligent in government and loving towards the people. A paragon of virtue, he stands as a model for all. He is specially rewarded with one hundred strings of pearls, a thousand taels of gold, ten thousand bolts of silk, as commendation—"

‘So, it's an award of silver.’ Lin Wanrong was delighted inside, thinking, ‘The old man really understands me. I just shut down the hall yesterday, and today the imperial edict has arrived.’

"Furthermore, hearing that Lin San is devoted to state affairs and works day and night, We are much relieved. Specially granted is a pair of golden longevity locks—"

‘What?’ Lin Wanrong was greatly surprised. ‘I'm not a newborn child, what do I need these longevity locks for?’

"—also, five jin of high-quality blood swallow, ten thousand-year-old ginsengs, ten imperial physicians from the palace, twenty wet nurses of suitable age, eighty midwives from the capital, and a hundred servant women! Everyone must remember to take good care of Lord Lin!"

‘Grandmother's! What is the Emperor up to?’ Lin Wanrong blinked, ‘with wet nurses and midwives – is this to take care of me? More like taking care of someone in confinement.’

"Eunuch Gao, is this edict for me?" Lin Wanrong took the imperial edict from Gao Ping's hands, puzzled.

"Lord Lin is joking. If it were not for you, what would this humble servant be doing in your home?" Gao Ping fawned.

'Indeed, but this edict doesn't sound like it's for me,' Lin Wanrong thought, troubled. Just then, a soft laugh came from outside the hall: "My Dear, why haven't you thanked the Emperor yet?"

Xiao Qingxuan, dressed in white, her figure graceful and her hair neatly coiled, slowly walked in from outside the hall. Her face was stunningly beautiful, her breasts full, her hips shapely, and her demeanor elegant and dignified. The men and women in the hall were all dumbstruck. If yesterday she could still be called Miss Xiao, then today she should be addressed as Madam Lin, a qualitative change, as if overnight she had transformed from a tranquil lily into a blooming peony!

Qingxuan was so beautiful that Lin Wanrong's eyes almost popped out. He stared at her without blinking, his gaze seeming to pierce through her clothes, as if he had returned to the joyful moments they had just shared.

"Fool!" Recalling their lovemaking earlier that day in broad daylight, and that it happened in front of Qiaoqiao, all in contrast to her lifelong practice of purifying her heart, Xiao Qingxuan's face turned red. Her heart was tingling, her body softened, and with a mix of shame and joy, she glanced at him. Her eyes, turning softly, were as tender as if they could wring water from them.

Gao Ping's lips moved a few times, and suddenly he bowed to the ground, saying respectfully, "Old servant Gao Ping pays his respects to Princess Chuyun!"