

Fat Wife 181

Chapter 181: Good Culinary Skills

Xia Zhe felt his whole body go weak when he heard the way she called him big brother. He hurriedly covered Qiao Mei's mouth and heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that no one around had heard what Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe flicked Qiao Mei's head dotingly and said, "You, you dare to say anything!"

"Hahahaha, Commander Xia is blushing!" Qiao Mei giggled as she looked at Xia Zhe.

"Ahem, I'm not! Don't talk nonsense!" Xia Zhe made a show of straightening his clothes in order to hide his thoughts.

"Alright, you can go and take a rest in my tent. I have a meeting to attend," Xia Zhe said seriously.

"Alright, then I'll wait for big brother to come back!" Qiao Mei whispered sweetly.

Xia Zhe looked at the little girl in front of him and felt both helpless and being bathed in sweetness. He reached out to caress Qiao Mei's head and said, "I'm off, little girl."

Qiao Mei smiled as she watched Xia Zhe's departing figure gradually disappear into the distance. She did not want to rest yet and wanted to find something to do.

When Qiao Mei saw that the cookhouse staff had already started to set up the stove to cook, she knew what she wanted to do.

I want to prepare a nice meal for the soldiers!

"Let me help you!" Qiao Mei said.

"Sister-in-law is here!"

“Hello, sister-in-law!”

The soldiers from the cookhouse greeted her with big smiles. They all welcomed Qiao Mei’s arrival and they liked her very much. After all, she was beautiful and had a nice personality. Anyone would like such a person.

“Let me be your assistant,” Qiao Mei said as she proactively took over the ingredients.

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“Sister-in-law, you should take a rest. Don’t tire yourself out. Let us handle these things,” the cook said.

“That’s right, sister-in-law!”

“Sister-in-law, you should rest!”

The rest of the soldiers chimed in one after another.

“It’s fine, it’s fine. I’m not tired. I’ll let you guys have a taste of sister-in-law’s cooking!” Qiao Mei said laughingly as she held the spatula.

The soldiers around her all felt very happy, but they also lamented how Commander Xia was so lucky to have such a beautiful wife. They just wondered about her culinary skills.

“What do you have?” Qiao Mei asked.

“This time, we brought rice, flour, potatoes, eggs, and sweet potatoes. We didn’t bring anything else, and we’ve finished off some of the other stuff,” the cooks said one by one.

Qiao Mei thought for a moment and said, “Well... then let’s make potato and egg soup! And roasted sweet potatoes!”

“Alright, sister-in-law! We’ll listen to you!” the soldiers echoed in unison.

A female soldier quietly watched all of this from the side. She could not help but clench the table top beside her and look at Qiao Mei with enmity.

“Zheng Yuan, what are you doing here?” a soldier asked.

“Ah! I... I’m not doing anything. What’s wrong?” Zheng Yuan was stunned for a moment.

“Nothing much, I just wanted to tell you that Commander Xia asked you to join him in a meeting,” the soldier replied.

“Yes, I understand.” Zheng Yuan nodded.

After watching the soldier leave, Zheng Yuan took another long hard look at Qiao Mei and turned to leave.

Qiao Mei was completely unaware of all this. She was completely immersed in cooking for the soldiers and showing off her culinary skills and was totally indifferent to everything that was happening around her.

In less than half an hour, the potato and egg soup was ready. The fragrance filled the entire camp and everyone stared at the delicious food in Qiao Mei’s pot.

All of them did not stop what they were doing, but their hearts and minds had long been seduced by the smell of Qiao Mei’s delicious food. They all only wanted to finish work early and go back to eat.

After searching for another half an hour to make sure that no one was around, the troop was dismissed.

Qiao Mei was relieved to see that there were no casualties being carried back. That area had long been evacuated and basically no one would stay around there for too long.

After Xia Zhe's meeting, he let everyone go and have their meal. Everybody's first reaction was to rush to the cookhouse to queue up for food, afraid that if they queued too late, the food would all be eaten up by others.

"Hey! No need to rush! Everyone has a share!" Qiao Mei shouted.

Qiao Mei quietly kept a portion for Xia Zhe and her. She had worked hard for more than an hour to cook, so she thought she should be allowed this bit of remuneration.

Xia Zhe came over and semi-hugged Qiao Mei back to the tent in the camp. His gentle actions were witnessed by Zheng Yuan, who was standing in the corner.

Chapter 182: Eavesdropping

It was only after they entered the tent that Qiao Mei dared to lean on Xia Zhe and flirt with him. She pointed at her arm and said to Xia Zhe, "Please give me a massage. After cooking for so many people, my arm is so sore."

Xia Zhe held on to Qiao Mei as she took a seat on the side and reached out to massage her arm and make her feel better.

"You, I don't even know what to say about you. You're pregnant and you should not exert yourself. Yet you even went to help at the cookhouse. Don't you find it tiring!" Although Xia Zhe nagged at Qiao Mei, his hands continued to massage her.

Qiao Mei knew that Xia Zhe had a sharp tongue but a soft heart. It was his way of caring about her!

"Oh well, I just want to show them how good Commander Xia's wife is at cooking and make you proud," Qiao Mei said sweetly to Xia Zhe.

Xia Zhe shook his head resignedly, but there was a faint smile on his lips. Qiao Mei was right. Everyone outside was full of praise for Qiao Mei, which greatly satisfied his vanity, but her health was still the most important thing.

“You’re already good enough. Don’t do things that would hurt yourself, do you understand?” Xia Zhe said sternly.

Qiao Mei nodded and brought the mess tin over. “Yes, Battalion Commander! I promise to complete the mission! Hurry up and eat the food I made, or it’ll get cold in a while!”

Xia Zhe smiled when he heard what Qiao Mei said. He was indeed hungry by now. He had been so focused on Qiao Mei that he forgot he had not eaten since coming out of the ruins and his stomach was already growling.

Xia Zhe took the mess tin and tasted the food seriously. The fragrance of the food made him feel very satisfied. Looking at his loved one beside him and holding the hot meal made by his loved one in his hand, he thought that this was probably what happiness felt like.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei affectionately and said, “Thank you.”

“Huh? Why are you thanking me?” Qiao Mei looked up from her mess tin and asked in confusion.

“You came all the way here to look for me and even care so much about me. I just think that it’s quite nice to have a feeling of being home.” Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei with fondness.

Qiao Mei did not immediately respond after hearing this. Instead, she thought for a long time before speaking.

“Actually, I should be the one thanking you. You could have left me behind at that time, but you gave me a dignified wedding and even gave me a child. I feel very happy now.” Qiao Mei smiled very sweetly.

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Qiao Mei did not tell him that there was going to be more than one child, that there were two babies in her belly. She was afraid that she would give Xia Zhe a scare.

Xia Zhe reached out and touched Qiao Mei's belly.

"I will be a good husband and a good father. Trust me," Xia Zhe said firmly as he looked at Qiao Mei.

"Yes, yes! I believe you!" Qiao Mei said with a smile.

Outside the tent, Zheng Yuan secretly eavesdropped on the conversation inside. She gritted her teeth so hard that cracking sounds could be heard. She had clearly been the one taking care of Xia Zhe all this while, so how could a woman suddenly appear and take everything away from her.

Zheng Yuan looked at the tent door indignantly. The loving relationship inside should have belonged to her, but Qiao Mei had snatched it away.

Zheng Yuan changed directions and made a detour to the center of the camp, pretending that she had never gotten close to Xia Zhe's tent. However, all she could hear were praises for Qiao Mei and envy for Xia Zhe.

"Commander Xia really married a good wife!"

"That's right. Not only is sister-in-law beautiful, but she's also a good cook!"

"Sigh, if only that wife of mine was like sister-in-law..."

"Come on! Your wife's culinary skills are not bad either! Previously, you were still showing her off to us, but now you're even complaining about your wife!"

"Hahahahaha, that's right!"

The people around her were chatting and laughing away. Zheng Yuan stood in the middle of the crowd and felt like a clown. It was clearly Qiao Mei who had snatched Xia Zhe away from her, so she could not understand why everyone was praising Qiao Mei.

“Hey! Deputy Commander Zheng, you came at the right time. Please be the judge. Who do you think is better, Commander Xia’s wife or his wife?” a soldier next to her said.

Zheng Yuan’s expression was dark as she looked at the soldier without saying anything. She looked as though she wanted to skin him alive.

“About that... we should all get back to work... let’s all disperse...” Another soldier saw that Zheng Yuan’s expression did not look right and quickly interrupted.

Chapter 183: The Plan

Zheng Yuan looked at the crowd dispersing around her and became even more angry.

“As if I’m the god of plague. Everyone is avoiding me!” Zheng Yuan muttered softly.

She quickly walked back to her tent and looked at the food in the mess tin. The more she thought about it, the angrier she got. She decided to just throw the food away and not eat it. She would rather starve to death than eat what that woman made.

“It’s all that woman’s fault. If not for her, why would Xia Zhe have a change of heart!” Zheng Yuan clenched her fists and looked outside with hatred.

All this while, as Xia Zhe was the battalion commander and she was the deputy battalion commander, they often interacted with each other at work. Everyone used to joked in private that they were a match made in heaven and that they might as well report that they were going to get married.

Zheng Yuan’s father was also Xia Zhe’s mentor, so he was especially attentive to Xia Zhe. Also, Xia Zhe’s mentor was very willing to let Xia Zhe take care of his daughter, so Zheng Yuan always thought that she would marry Xia Zhe one day and become Mrs. Xia.

Unfortunately, things did not go as planned. Xia Zhe only went back to visit his relatives once and actually got married behind everyone's backs. Furthermore, the other party was a village girl with no background at all, which made Zheng Yuan even angrier.

"If it wasn't for her, Xia Zhe would definitely be mine. She must have seduced Xia Zhe. Otherwise, Xia Zhe wouldn't have changed his mind," Zheng Yuan said firmly.

After pondering for a while, she suddenly thought of something. Qiao Mei was pregnant? Then, as long as the child was gone, Xia Zhe would then be with her! A marriage could always end in divorce!

Zheng Yuan's eyes lit up. She had thought of a brilliant plan that would definitely make Xia Zhe fall in love with her again.

However, all of this was just Zheng Yuan's illusion.

After the meal, many soldiers packed their things and prepared to take a short rest in the afternoon before they took over the work from the backup rescue troops tomorrow. They were all exhausted from carrying out the search and rescue missions day and night for the past few days.

Qiao Mei sat in the tent and let Xia Zhe lie on her lap. She patiently massaged his head to help relieve his fatigue.

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"What does Grandpa do every day now?" Xia Zhe asked Qiao Mei as he looked at her.

Originally, Xia Zhe's feelings towards Qiao Qiang were quite complicated. At first, he was very grateful to Qiao Qiang for saving his grandfather's life back in those days. However, after what happened between him and Qiao Mei, he had found it impossible not to blame it on Qiao Qiang.

But now, he was just filled with gratitude. If he had missed out on such a nice girl like Qiao Mei, he would never be able to find another person like her. He was grateful to Qiao Qiang for being willing to leave his granddaughter in his care.

How could he not love this woman who would do anything to save him?

“Speaking of grandfather, he goes to the village square to chat with different people every day. Otherwise, he helps to take care of the children that my mother had with her current husband,” Qiao Mei said as she massaged his head.

“Huh? Doesn’t Grandpa think that it’s hard work? It’s not an easy task to take care of children,” Xia Zhe asked.

At the mention of her family, Qiao Mei showed a rare tender smile.

“The children are quite obedient and they all help out at home. They should be going to school in a few days’ time.” Then Qiao Mei continued, “It’s not lively at home with only grandfather and me, so having the children around helps to relieve grandfather’s boredom.”

“That’s good. It’s alright as long as Grandpa doesn’t get too tired. What about Qiao Zhuang? Is he still bullying you?” Xia Zhe held Qiao Mei’s hand and asked.

“Huh? Qiao Zhuang? How do you know about this family?” Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe in confusion.

Xia Zhe told Qiao Mei everything that he had heard when he made his way back the last time and happened to eavesdrop on Qiao Mei and Qiao Qiang.

At the mention of the pendant, Qiao Mei immediately covered her chest nervously.

“I can’t give you the pendant! It’s already mine! Don’t even think about taking it back!” Qiao Mei widened her eyes and stared at Xia Zhe nervously.

This pendant had such an impressive superpower and Qiao Mei would never want to lose this energy. No matter what, she would not let Xia Zhe take it away.

Even if Xia Zhe thought that she was a greedy person, she would not let him take it away!

Xia Zhe did not think too much about it, nor did he think that Qiao Mei was a greedy person. He thought that Qiao Mei saw it as a token of love from him, so she could not bear to return it to him. Moreover, this pendant would have been meant for her.

“This is the pendant that my grandma left behind for me. Now it belongs to you.” Xia Zhe smiled at Qiao Mei.

Chapter 184: Agreeing

“Grandma?” Qiao Mei asked as she looked at Xia Zhe.

“Yes, this is what Grandma left for her future granddaughter-in-law. It’s yours to begin with so why should I take it back,” Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei tenderly and said.

Seeing Xia Zhe, who was cold and unsympathetic to others, being so affectionate to her, Qiao Mei could not help but want to get closer to him.

“Since it’s for her granddaughter-in-law, you can’t take it back. You can’t go back on your word in the future either!” Qiao Mei only felt at ease after confirming that Xia Zhe would not take the pendant away.

She could not bear to give such a good treasure to anyone.

Qiao Mei smiled sweetly at Xia Zhe as he held her hand and said, “Alright, I’m going back to the troops to take a look at the soldiers. I have to make some arrangements for work. Don’t walk around randomly.”

“Yes, I understand. Go ahead!” Qiao Mei nodded and said docilely.

Xia Zhe stood up and gave Qiao Mei a pat on the head before leaving.

There were three people sitting by the tree stump not far from the door, sighing and lamenting about life.

"Hey, why do you think big brother is so lucky!" Zhao Wu said.

"That's right. Sister-in-law is such a nice person, big brother really has it good. I also want a wife!" Zhang Yong said.

Zhuang Hua remained silent. Seeing this, Zhao Wu stepped on Zhuang Hua's foot and said, "Why are you so quiet, say something."

"Me? What can I say? I thought that the beautiful girl was mine and that I could let my parents meet their daughter-in-law. Now, their daughter-in-law has turned into my sister-in-law," Zhuang Hua said irritably.

"Sigh..." The three of them sighed at the same time and sat on the tree stump dejectedly.

"What are the three of you doing here and looking so listless? Are your troops ready?" Xia Zhe walked over and asked.

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Zhao Wu looked up at Xia Zhe and turned his head away in annoyance.

"Huh? What's wrong with him?" Xia Zhe pointed at Zhao Wu and looked at Zhang Yong and Zhuang Hua in confusion.

"Oh him. He also wants to have a girlfriend, or a wife," Zhang Yong teased.

Zhao Wu angrily picked up the cap beside him and threw it over while saying, "You're talking nonsense! Big brother, don't listen to what he says. It's nothing."

Xia Zhe looked at this person and then that person, suppressing the smile on his lips and coughing lightly.

“Ahem, how about I introduce you to a few nice girls later,” Xia Zhe said.

Zhao Wu’s eyes lit up when he heard this.

“Big brother, is that true? Are they similar to sister-in-law and as nice as her?” Zhao Wu stood up and looked at Xia Zhe.

Hearing this, Xia Zhe gave him a kick.

“You deserve to be taught a lesson. That’s my wife. What do you mean by asking if they are similar to her?” Xia Zhe frowned and said.

“Hehe, big brother, I just meant it superficially.” Zhao Wu also felt that what he said earlier was a little abrupt and held his own head in embarrassment.

“Alright, alright, alright. I’ll find you all better ones, is that alright!” Xia Zhe said with a laugh.

Zhuang Hua stood up and put his arm around Xia Zhe’s shoulder. “Big brother, you said it yourself! You can’t go back on your word!”

“That’s right, that’s right!” Zhang Yong echoed in agreement.

Xia Zhe nodded solemnly and said teasingly, “Yes, yes, yes, that’s what I said. Do I need to write a contract for you?”

“Hahahahaha, it’s not impossible!” Zhao Wu said.

“Hahahahaha!” The few of them put their arms around one another and laughed.

Zheng Yuan watched Xia Zhe walk out of the tent alone before she slowly approached the group of men.

“What are you guys laughing at so happily?” Zheng Yuan smiled as she walked over.

When the men saw that it was Zheng Yuan, they awkwardly let go of one another and stood there in silence.

“Oh... we were just... just talking...” Zhao Wu stammered, not knowing what to say as he kept winking at Zhuang Hua to signal him to reply.

“Yes, we’re doing a summary on how successful this rescue mission is! There are basically no serious injuries or deaths, and the mission is completed in a timely manner!” Zhuang Hua said agitatedly.

“Yes, yes, yes, that’s what we were talking about,” Zhang Yong echoed in agreement.

Chapter 185:

False Obedience

Xia Zhe stood at the side and lowered his head, not looking at Zheng Yuan and not paying attention to what she was saying.

Zheng Yuan walked to Xia Zhe’s side smilingly. She closed the distance between them such that she was almost leaning against Xia Zhe, and he took a step back silently.

“Oh, so I see,” Zheng Yuan said.

Zhuang Hua hurriedly grabbed Xia Zhe and said to him, “Oh... about that... I still have something to discuss with you. Come, let’s go over there.”

Xia Zhe was pulled away by Zhuang Hua in a chaotic manner, leaving Zheng Yuan on her own in a state of confusion.

“Well... Zhang Yong and I have to go and settle some matters in our teams. See you later, Deputy Commander Zheng.” Zhao Wu and Zhang Yong saluted and ran back to their respective teams.

Zheng Yuan clenched her fists and looked with enmity in the directions where Xia Zhe and the others had left. She then turned back to look at Xia Zhe’s tent.

“Qiao Mei... I will take revenge for all of this!” Zheng Yuan said softly.

Qiao Mei sneezed inside the tent.

“Achoo! Achoo!” Qiao Mei rubbed her nose.

“I wonder who’s scolding me behind my back...” Qiao Mei tidied up her things in the tent and then picked up Xia Zhe’s dirty clothes with the intent to wash them.

Using the plants in the surroundings, Qiao Mei detected a small stream about five kilometers away. It was not a very big place, but it would be useful enough for her to wash her clothes and other stuff.

The clothes that she brought were all intended to be worn in the capital. Now that she was among the troops, it was quite inappropriate for her to wear these clothes. She also had to change her current set of clothes as she was covered in dust and dirt and she really could not stand it anymore.

Qiao Mei put everything in a cloth bag and wanted to check if there were any bicycles nearby that she could borrow. Otherwise, she could only go on foot.

When Zheng Yuan saw Qiao Mei walking out of the tent, she quickly stopped Qiao Mei.

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“Hey! Where are you going?” Zheng Yuan asked rudely.

“Comrade, I want to go and wash my clothes.” Qiao Mei looked at Zheng Yuan and assumed that she was part of the troops. Her uniform was different from the other ordinary soldiers. which meant that she should be of a similar rank to Zhang Yong and the others.

“The water supply in the camp is so scarce now, yet you still want to wash clothes?” Zheng Yuan looked at Qiao Mei in disdain.

Qiao Mei did not know how she had offended this woman in front of her and why this woman had such a bad attitude towards her. On her end, Zheng Yuan thought badly of Qiao Mei for wanting to waste the camp’s water source.

“I’m just going nearby to look around and try my luck.” Qiao Mei had to speak in a nice tone out of concern for Xia Zhe’s reputation.

“Nearby? We’ve searched everywhere but there’s no water source. Where are you going to find it? If you lose your way, it’ll only cause trouble for Xia Zhe,” Zheng Yuan said to Qiao Mei as she rolled her eyes.

Xia Zhe? The other soldiers all referred to Xia Zhe as big brother or Commander Xia. Even Zhang Yong, Zhao Wu and Zhuang Hua rarely called Xia Zhe by his full name. What right did this woman have to call him that?

Qiao Mei only knew that her grandfather had been in the army when she was young, but her grandfather had not taught her anything about army ranks and positions, so Qiao Mei could not make out Zheng Yuan’s rank from the epaulets on her shoulders.

“I know the way and can find my way back,” Qiao Mei said as she prepared to walk out.

Zheng Yuan reached out to stop Qiao Mei and said, “No, you can’t go!”

Qiao Mei looked at the woman in front of her. She was quite pretty and tall, and could be considered to be good-looking. Could it be that this woman liked Xia Zhe?

“Sure,” Qiao Mei agreed readily.

If she was not allowed to go and find the water source, then she would go out another day. This was the army and she did not want to cause trouble for Xia Zhe. As for the relationship between this woman and Xia Zhe, although she believed that Xia Zhe would not do anything to betray her, it did not stop her from feeling very angry at the moment.

Zheng Yuan did not expect Qiao Mei to be so compliant and to go directly back to the tent. She watched in a daze as Qiao Mei left.

Initially, she thought that this village woman would be shrewish and domineering. She did not expect her to be so timid and weak. However, it was a good thing if this village woman was so obedient since it would only make things easier for her.

Zheng Yuan stared at the tent door and gave a purposeful smile.

“Just you wait. I’m going to give it to you,” Zheng Yuan muttered softly.

Chapter 186: Sneaking Away

Qiao Mei did not return to the tent because she was compliant to Zheng Yuan’s instructions. She was not the kind of weak person who would just listen to whatever others said.

“This woman is quite interesting,” Qiao Mei muttered to herself.

Qiao Mei was so angry that she threw the clothes on the ground and sulked on the tent cot.

“I wonder what’s the relationship between that woman and Xia Zhe. This woman must fancy Xia Zhe,” Qiao Mei mumbled.

She shook her head to get rid of all the thoughts in her mind. If she continued to think about these useless things, her mind would be completely overwhelmed by them and then, it would affect her mood as well as the babies.

Qiao Mei touched her belly and said, "Babies, look at your father's romantic debt. When your father comes back tonight, I must definitely ask him in detail."

Qiao Mei sat in the tent for a while and waited for Zheng Yuan to leave before quietly going out from the back. For Qiao Mei, who had to go up and down the mountain every day in the village and walk long distances on the mountain road to do her farmwork, five kilometers was a piece of cake.

During this trip, she had found that the energy of the pendant was more powerful than before and the energy had also become purer. She had not properly absorbed the energy for so long, so it was time for her to come out to take a look around and find some remaining plants.

It did not matter if there were only a few. One or two would be enough for her and the trip would not be wasted.

It did not take long for Qiao Mei to reach the small stream. It seemed that what the plants had told her was true. She happily opened the cloth bag, humming a tune as she washed the clothes. The surrounding plants swayed happily.

"Huh? Are you moving?" Qiao Mei reached out to touch a small blade of grass beside her.

The little blade of grass pretended to be motionless, afraid to reveal its fondness for Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei smiled and continued singing.

The surrounding plants all felt that this song seemed to be charged with power, improving their vitality and making them grow better.

Zheng Yuan did not feel at ease and kept thinking that Qiao Mei was lying to her about following her instructions. She went to the infirmary to look for the medic and said, "Xia Zhe's... Commander Xia's spouse is not here?"

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Zheng Yuan was still unable to articulate that Xia Zhe's spouse was someone else. She could only feel better by thinking of him as just Commander Xia.

"No, what's wrong with sister-in-law? Isn't she all well already?" The medic looked at Zheng Yuan in confusion.

"I'm not sure. It's just that she told me that her waist hurt badly and I don't know if it's an injury from the incident. So I'm just here to see if she came by," Zheng Yuan said.

"Injury? That's not something minor. Anyway there aren't any patients now so I'll go and take a look at her." The medic took the medical kit and went towards Xia Zhe's tent.

Zheng Yuan was secretly happy to have achieved her goal and followed the medic.

"Sister-in-law! I'm medic Xiao Sun! Is it convenient for me to go in?" medic Xiao Sun shouted from the door.

After shouting for a long time without any response from inside. Xiao Sun got a little anxious and asked Zheng Yuan nervously, "Could sister-in-law have gotten into an accident! There isn't any response!"

Zheng Yuan also pretended to be anxious and said, "Then let's go in and take a look. I hope she didn't faint!"

When Xiao Sun heard this, he gently pushed open the tent door and said, "Sister-in-law, I'm coming in!"

After opening the door and seeing an empty tent. Zheng Yuan frowned. It was just as she had expected.

Xiao Sun looked at Zheng Yuan uncertainly and asked, "Deputy Commander Zheng, didn't you say that sister-in-law is here?"

Zheng Yuan suddenly slapped her own thigh and said, "Oh, she told me that she felt that she was too dirty and wanted to go wash up. Let's talk about it when she comes back."

Xiao Sun could only nod helplessly. Just as he was about to walk out of the tent, he turned around and said to Zheng Yuan, "Deputy Commander Zheng, remember to let me know when you see her. It's most effective to do treatment early and not to delay it!"

Zheng Yuan simply nodded and Xiao Sun left in relief.

Zheng Yuan looked around and guessed that Qiao Mei must have left through the gap at the back of the tent. She had been too careless to let Qiao Mei run out like that.

"It's not a good thing to leave the camp on your own. When you come back, I'll definitely give you a big gift," Zheng Yuan said as she looked at the water storage tank in the distance.

Chapter 187: Framed

After Qiao Mei finished washing her clothes, she did a simple exchange of energy with the surrounding plants. As the plants were very happy today, the energy she extracted was much purer than usual, but it still could not be compared to that of wild ginseng.

Qiao Mei walked back happily to the camp. She slipped back the way she came out and thought that no one had discovered what she did.

After Qiao Mei returned to the tent, she simply tied a rope and hung out the clothes to dry before lying on the bed and falling asleep.

While Qiao Mei was not around, Zheng Yuan went to the water storage tank and filled a basin with water. Then, she poured basin after basin of water into the ruins so that the water gradually flowed to the ground through the gaps.

“Hmph, let’s see how you explain yourself when it’s found out that half the amount of water is gone,” Zheng Yuan said as she looked at the ruins.

At night, after Xia Zhe finished his work, he returned to the camp with Zhang Yong, Zhao Wu and Zhuang Hua. As they walked, they chatted and laughed happily.

“The reinforcement forces arrived just in time. I thought we would have to search for another week!” Zhao Wu said.

“You’re right! I didn’t expect it to end so quickly either,” Zhang Yong said.

“It’s a good thing there were very few casualties. Otherwise, we would have been very busy.” Zhuang Hua then looked at Xia Zhe and asked, “Eh? Big brother, why are you so quiet along the way?”

“You! You’re really stupid! Big brother is missing sister-in-law! He wants to go back and accompany her as soon as possible!” Zhao Wu pointed at Zhuang Hua and said laughingly.

That was exactly what Xia Zhe was thinking. His ears turned red as he laughed embarrassedly and scolded, “Zhao Wu, are you itching for a beating!”

“Yo, yo, yo! Commander Xia is so embarrassed!” Zhao Wu laughed loudly and said.

Xia Zhe angrily pulled off Zhuang Hua’s cap and threw it at Zhao Wu.

“Sigh! Big brother, my cap!” Zhuang Hua watched helplessly as he got caught in between their petty fight.

Zhao Wu grabbed the cap that Xia Zhe threw over and ran away quickly.

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"Let's go! If we don't leave now, Xia Zhe will kill me!" He then disappeared in a flash.

Only then did Zhuang Hua react. He hurriedly chased after Zhao Wu and shouted, "Zhao Wu! Damn you! My cap!"

"Hahahaha," Xia Zhe and Zhang Yong laughed as they watched the two of them leave.

"Big brother, I'm going back to rest too. You still have to organize everyone's work tomorrow. Rest early alright!" Zhang Yong looked at Xia Zhe with a wicked smile.

Xia Zhe smacked Zhang Yong angrily and said, "Nonsense! Hurry up and go back!"

"Aye, alright! Big brother, you have to take care of your body! Take care of your body!" Zhang Yong shouted at Xia Zhe as he ran off.

"Get lost!" Xia Zhe shouted at Zhang Yong's back.

Actually, it was not as if he did not have those kinds of thoughts. Originally, since he could not see Qiao Mei or hear her speak, he did not think about those things and just needed to put more time into training.

However, it was different now. The person was right in front of him, and that delicate voice kept reminding him of that night when he could not stop himself and she kept calling out to him repeatedly...

Don't think about it anymore. Xia Zhe's ears turned red as he stood outside the tent for a long time and did not make his way in. He looked as if he was reflecting on his mistakes behind closed doors.

Zheng Yuan happened to see Xia Zhe on her way back from the water storage tank. She hurriedly ran to him and said anxiously, "Xia Zhe, I have bad news!"

"What's wrong?" Xia Zhe took a small step back and asked.

Zheng Yuan saw what Xia Zhe did, but she decided to ignore it given that the matter with Qiao Mei was more important at the moment.

"After you left this afternoon, Qiao Mei went out by herself. I wonder where she went!" Zheng Yuan pretended to be anxious as she said that.

Xia Zhe's mind buzzed when he heard that, but his years of training had taught him to be calm at moments like this.

"Noted. You can go back now." Xia Zhe looked at Zheng Yuan with a straight face.

Zheng Yuan felt extremely happy. She had thought that Xia Zhe loved Qiao Mei very much. It turned out that Qiao Mei was not that important to Xia Zhe after all.

"Alright, come look for me if you need anything." Zheng Yuan smiled and turned to leave.

Xia Zhe watched Zheng Yuan leave before rushing into the tent. When he saw the person he had been thinking about sleeping soundly on the tent cot, the weight on his heart immediately lifted.

Chapter 188: Being Injured

Xia Zhe quietly made his way to the bed and looked at Qiao Mei, reaching out to touch her face gently.

The touch made Qiao Mei feel that there was an itch on her face and she groggily lifted her hand to scratch it before turning around to change her posture, and promptly falling asleep again. Xia Zhe watched Qiao Mei's movements with a smile.

"You naughty girl, where did you sneak off to again?" Xia Zhe squatted down and asked Qiao Mei softly.

Xia Zhe reached out and gently tapped the tip of Qiao Mei's nose. In her sleep, she waved her hand at her nose, moved her mouth a little and then turned around to the other side to continue sleeping.

This was the first time Xia Zhe had seen her looking so charmingly cute. In the past, he always thought of Qiao Mei as a wilful but kind girl. Later on, he felt that she was gentle and virtuous. Now, he actually thought that this little girl was becoming more and more adorable.

Then he remembered that she was only 18 years old. As he thought of that, Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei and felt his heart ache.

After staring at Qiao Mei for a long time, he still could not bear to disturb her nap so he carefully made his way out of the tent. It was time for dinner and he should get some food for her. Otherwise, he would not have a solution later if the little girl woke up and said that she was hungry.

Although the food here was nothing delicious, it was still much better than hardtack.

He ran into Xiao Sun when he got to the cookhouse.

"Oh! Commander Xia!" Xiao Sun hurriedly ran to Xia Zhe.

"What happened?" Xia Zhe asked.

"I heard from Deputy Commander Zheng in the afternoon that sister-in-law said her waist hurt badly, but I didn't find sister-in-law when I went over to look for her in the afternoon. Deputy Commander Zheng said that sister-in-law went to wash her clothes. I wonder how she's doing now?" Xiao Sun asked softly.

In the camp, even if one was not a member of the troops, one also had to abide by the military rules. Sneaking out of the camp was no small matter.

Xia Zhe frowned slightly and asked, "Did she feel unwell?"

"Yes, that's right. Deputy Commander Zheng came to tell me about it. I'm not too sure what's going on, but if sister-in-law isn't feeling well, you have to bring her to me so that I can take a look," Xiao Sun said.

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“Yes, alright. I’ll go back and take a look later.” Xia Zhe nodded.

Xiao Sun walked to the back of the line in relief. Xia Zhe stared straight at the back of the head of the person in front of him, thinking about Qiao Mei’s waist pain.

Why did she never mention such a thing to him?

How long has it been hurting?

How serious is it?

Does it have anything to do with the baby?

Xia Zhe’s mind was filled with many questions. He was not a doctor and he had even gone off on a mission in the afternoon. He felt that he did not manage to be around for Qiao Mei and had not fulfilled his promise to take good care of her.

Xia Zhe frowned and stood motionless.

The soldier behind looked at Xia Zhe, who was in a daze, tapped him carefully and said, “Commander Xia, it’s your turn.”

“Ah! I’m sorry!” Xia Zhe said as he came back to his senses.

He packed the food quickly and rushed back to see if Qiao Mei had woken up.

Qiao Mei was still asleep when Xia Zhe entered. He sat down in a chair with a heavy heart and sighed.

Qiao Mei could smell the fragrance of food in her sleep and she woke up groggily to find Xia Zhe sitting there with a frown and deep in thought. She wondered what he was thinking about.

Qiao Mei called out softly, "Big brother, you're back."

Xia Zhe snapped back to attention, hurriedly went up to her and asked, "What's wrong with your waist? Are you injured? Show me where else you feel discomfort, don't hide anything from me."

Without hesitation, Xia Zhe reached out to lift Qiao Mei's clothes to check her for injuries. It did not cross his mind that this was only the second time the two of them were spending the night together.

Qiao Mei blushed as she watched what Xia Zhe was doing. It also struck Xia Zhe that his actions were a little sudden, but he felt that the matter was urgent and he was so worried that he could not think straight.

"Big brother... why are you so anxious to do this after just coming back?" Qiao Mei said shyly.

"I... I'm not... I... Sigh, I just want to check if you are injured..." Xia Zhe turned his head away bashfully, not daring to look at Qiao Mei.

"Injured? But I'm not injured?" Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe in confusion when she heard what he said.

"Huh? The medic told me that you suffered a serious waist injury." Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei seriously.

Qiao Mei still did not quite understand what Xia Zhe was talking about. She was clearly fine and dandy, so why did the medic say that she was seriously injured? Was there any misunderstanding?

Chapter 189: Being Taught a Lesson

Qiao Mei did a few simple movements and did not feel discomfort anywhere.

"My waist is fine too. I don't feel any discomfort. I don't even have any wounds," Qiao Mei said to Xia Zhe.

No injuries? That was strange. The medic, Xiao Sun, would not say that Qiao Mei was injured for no reason. Then why did Xiao Sun feel that Qiao Mei was injured?

Xia Zhe then remembered that Xiao Sun had said it was Zheng Yuan who told him that Qiao Mei was injured. Also, when he returned to the camp earlier in the night, Zheng Yuan had even informed him that Qiao Mei was not in the tent this afternoon.

"I'm glad that you're fine." Xia Zhe sat on the bed, thinking about the whole night's events.

"What's wrong with you? What's going on?" Qiao Mei asked Xia Zhe, who seemed preoccupied.

Xia Zhe stared unwaveringly at Qiao Mei and asked, "Are you sure you're not injured? Shall we let the medics check again!"

Qiao Mei did not understand what was happening with Xia Zhe, but she suddenly thought of a fun idea and decided to tease him.

"Ow!" Qiao Mei suddenly held her belly and cried out.

It made Xia Zhe nervous enough for him to stand up quickly and said, "What's wrong!"

"Mm... I'm hungry, hehe!" Qiao Mei looked up at Xia Zhe with her big bright eyes and said laughingly.

Xia Zhe had already been tricked by her countless times but he still fell for it every time, and each time she would outsmart him.

Xia Zhe pulled a long face and turned around while saying to Qiao Mei, "I'll go get you some food."

Seeing this, Qiao Mei grabbed Xia Zhe's sleeve and asked, "Haven't you already brought the food? Where else do you want to go?"

Xia Zhe had wanted to pretend to be angry to teach Qiao Mei a lesson for the prank, but he did not expect her to see through his intention so that he could not continue with the pretense. Xia Zhe wanted to go and take the mess tin, but Qiao Mei held on to him tightly.

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“Oh! I won’t cause any issues anymore! Where are you going!” Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe nervously and said to him.

Xia Zhe turned around and slapped Qiao Mei’s hand away. With a cold expression, he went to get the mess tins and placed them in front of Qiao Mei one by one in silence.

Qiao Mei had only wanted to play a joke on him, but she did not expect to get such a serious reaction.

When Xia Zhe saw that Qiao Mei was about to cry, he could not bear to continue punishing this little girl.

“Don’t joke about your health next time, alright? I worry about you a lot,” Xia Zhe said to Qiao Mei as he looked at her.

Qiao Mei nodded obediently. She blinked at Xia Zhe with her big eyes and said sweetly, “Yes, big brother. I’ll definitely take note of that in the future. Can you not be angry anymore?”

Seeing Qiao Mei like this, Xia Zhe was no longer in the mood to blame her. He handed the chopsticks to Qiao Mei and said, “Eat, eat. I’m not angry anymore.”

Qiao Mei looked into Xia Zhe’s eyes and after confirming that he was really not angry anymore, her sad face immediately lit up. As she smiled, her eyes looked like little crescent moons and her sweet look really made him feel like giving her a pinch.

“I’m good as long as you’re not angry. Aren’t you eating?” Qiao Mei asked.

"No, I'm not. I ate with the rest just now. I packed food for you since you haven't woken up." Xia Zhe told Qiao Mei everything.

As she ate, she remembered what Xia Zhe had said about her being seriously injured when he first returned.

"Who on earth told you that I was unwell?" Qiao Mei asked.

"That medic, Xiao Sun, specifically came over today to ask me if you were injured. He said that's what you told Deputy Commander Zheng," Xia Zhe said.

Who was Deputy Commander Zheng? Another battalion commander? Could it be that woman from this afternoon?

"I don't even know any Deputy Commander Zheng, but a woman did come and look for me this afternoon," Qiao Mei said as she put down her bowl and chopsticks.

"Then do you remember what she looks like?" Xia Zhe asked patiently.

Qiao Mei thought back for a moment and looked at Xia Zhe's epaulets. She took Xia Zhe's hand and slowly traced a picture in his palm.

"The pattern on her shoulder looks something like this. I don't know what rank it is. My grandfather didn't teach me about this," Qiao Mei said.

After years of training outdoors, Xia Zhe had a tanned complexion for a long time. Qiao Mei's fair and delicate little hand looked petite and cute in Xia Zhe's hand.

Xia Zhe's mind was completely not on what shape Qiao Mei was tracing. His entire mind was only filled with Qiao Mei.

Chapter 190: Not Being Serious

Qiao Mei did not get any response from Xia Zhe even after tracing on his hand for a long time. She frowned and looked up at him and said, "Did you even hear what I said!"

Xia Zhe quickly snapped back to attention and held Qiao Mei's hand as he said, "Yes... Yes, I was listening."

"Really? I think you're fibbing! You clearly didn't hear what I said just now!" Qiao Mei pulled back her hand angrily and glared at Xia Zhe.

"It's my fault. I promise there won't be a next time. Don't be angry," Xia Zhe said in a kindly manner.

"Really? There won't be a next time?" Qiao Mei stared into Xia Zhe's eyes to see if he was sincerely admitting his mistake.

"Really! I will strictly follow comrade Qiao Mei's orders! I will definitely fulfill comrade Qiao Mei's wishes!" Xia Zhe nodded firmly.

Qiao Mei decided to let Xia Zhe off on account of his good attitude.

"Then how much do you remember?" Qiao Mei asked.

"I... I... I..." Xia Zhe stammered, not knowing what to say.

Qiao Mei sighed and pulled Xia Zhe's hand towards her again as she said, "Look carefully! This is the last time I'll draw for you!"

Xia Zhe nodded and looked seriously at what Qiao Mei was tracing on his palm.

Qiao Mei slowly tried her best to draw whatever she saw. After a while, she felt that she had roughly drawn it all so she looked at Xia Zhe and said, "That's all I remember."

Xia Zhe slowly sorted out the image and felt that it seemed more like Zheng Yuan's military rank. Moreover, there were not many women in the camp. Other than her, no one else had reached this military rank.

"It's Zheng Yuan, Deputy Commander Zheng," Xia Zhe said.

"Talking about her, she did come to look for me in the afternoon and said something about not letting me go out," Qiao Mei said as she looked at Xia Zhe.

Qiao Mei recalled how Zheng Yuan looked in the afternoon. She thought that this woman must fancy Xia Zhe but she did not know how Xia Zhe felt about it, so she decided to pretend to be angry and test him out.

"Does she like you? She looked so fierce in the afternoon as if she wanted to eat me up." Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe teasingly.

"I don't. You're the only one I like. Besides, I'm already married to you and I avoid all other women. Didn't you already test me?" Xia Zhe said expressionlessly.

Indeed, before her identity was exposed, Qiao Mei had already tested Xia Zhe to see if he would cheat on her. Even though Qiao Mei was so beautiful, he was able to resist the temptation and remain faithful. Although Zheng Yuan could also be said to be slender and graceful, her looks were still far inferior to Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei held back her satisfied smile. She made a finger gun and placed her hand against Xia Zhe's head.

"If you dare to and I find out anything, I'll kill you!" Qiao Mei said threateningly with a fierce expression.

Xia Zhe laughed and nodded. He said affectionately, "Yes, leader. I will definitely go along with the leader's arrangements!"

"Hahahahaha, that's more like it!" Satisfied, Qiao Mei picked up her bowl and started eating.

Qiao Mei had a habit of eating too fast and often got rice grains stuck on her face. Xia Zhe went to his table to sort out the reports for the troops' work during this period of time. In a while, he needed to report the latest search and rescue situation to his superiors. There was a pile of work that was waiting for him to deal with.

After Qiao Mei finished eating, she collected the bowls, walked to Xia Zhe's side and said, "I'm going to wash the dishes. Wait for me to come back."

Xia Zhe looked up and saw that Qiao Mei's mouth was still oily from the food and she still had rice grains at the corner of her mouth. Without thinking, he picked them up and put them into his mouth.

"Don't eat so fast next time. It's not good for your stomach. Go ahead and do what you need," Xia Zhe said absentmindedly.

Qiao Mei was stunned on the spot. This was the first time she had experienced such an intimate action. Although they had done even more intimate things before, a small gesture like that still made her feel warm inside.

"Alright, I'm going off." Qiao Mei carried the utensils and went out happily.

Along the way, everyone greeted Qiao Mei warmly. When she passed by the cookhouse, she saw that the team leader was frowning and many people were gathered there for a meeting.

"What's wrong with you guys? Why are you all looking so worried?" Qiao Mei asked curiously.