

Finest 296

Chapter 296 News from Qingxuan

Today, Xu Wei was in exceptionally high spirits. He spent time chatting with the Eldest Miss and Lin Wanrong, savoring fine wine. Later, he played the elegant guqin and sang amorous verses with the white-haired beauty, Su Qinglian, reviving his youthful vigor, akin to the top scholar he once was.

However, Xu Zhiqing was different from them. She retreated into the room early on to study the Arabic numerals she had just learned. She even dragged Lin Wanrong into her inquiry, asking increasingly complex and profound questions.

In addition to his astonishment, Lin Wanrong also felt a growing respect. With such a diligent and eager-to-learn woman leading the way, he believed this mathematical foundation should quickly spread across Great Hua.

Xu Zhiqing was an incredibly generous woman. When interacting with him, she was natural and exhibited no coquetry. Lin Wanrong, a little itching for banter, attempted to broach some off-topic subjects, but she always managed to politely steer the conversation away, showing interest in nothing but her studies.

The three Xu family members stayed until the evening before reluctantly leaving. As their sedan chairs dwindled into the distance, Lin Wanrong let out a long sigh, "Finally, the old man has left."

The Eldest Miss glanced at him with a faint smile, "Look at the way you talk. A distinguished individual like Mr. Xu is someone others can hardly invite, yet you behave as though you've just seen a plague."

Lin Wanrong laughed, "I don't mind Mr. Xu, it's his daughter who annoys me. She's not very enthusiastic when talking to me."

The Eldest Miss chuckled, "Look at the absurd things you're asking Miss Xu about: which came first, the chicken or the egg, how an egg is fertilized, how to make a pig grow faster. Goodness, what a mess—"

Lin Wanrong, unembarrassed, said, "All these are scientific questions. If you don't know, just ask me. Why not?"

The Eldest Miss laughed, "Why should I ask you? I say, asking you is like falling into your trap, don't regard others as fools. Moreover, that's just how Miss Xu is. With her knowledge, it's really hard to find someone she would look at straight in the eye."

'Damn it, I don't believe that after today, she'd still dare to give me the cold shoulder. She's taking Brother San too lightly!'

After chatting for a while, the Eldest Miss suddenly grabbed his arm, "Lin San, I want to ask you something, and you must answer honestly—when you were in Jinling, Mr. Xu asked for your assistance, was it to help him suppress the White Lotus Sect?"

Lin Wanrong was taken aback, he queried, "Why are you bringing up that again? I genuinely had work to do that day, I didn't slack off."

The Eldest Miss's eyes turned a bit red, and she punched him, "Annoying, I'm not joking, I want the truth."

The incident had already passed, and there was no need to hide it from her. Lin Wanrong nodded and laughed, "Yeah, that old Xu dragged me into a battle, almost lost my life. If it weren't for Xian'er's rescue, I'm afraid you wouldn't see me now. However, those bastards from the White Lotus Sect who once bullied us were thoroughly defeated—Hey, Eldest Miss, why are you crying?"

Xiao Yuruo hastily wiped her tears, asking, "That day I was waiting for you outside the city, was that after you had been injured?"

Lin Wanrong nodded, "Yes, I had not fully recovered from my injury that day. But I had promised Miss Luo to be back for the poetry competition, so I had to rush back overnight."

"You were so badly hurt, yet you still thought of her?" The Eldest Miss spoke with a mixture of pain and anger, "Did you not care about your life for her?"

Seeing the tears welling up in the Eldest Miss's eyes, Lin Wanrong hurriedly responded, "What's going on? Why are we talking about that day all of a sudden? I'm all right now, stronger than ever. If you don't believe me, try holding me."

The Eldest Miss bit her lip hard, her eyes filled with tears as she looked at him, her voice soft, "Do you hate me? For how I treated you that day?" Suddenly, tears flew like rain, "I know, you must hate me. When you were so severely injured, I shut you out. But I really didn't know. During those days, I hoped to see you, so I waited for you outside the city every evening. When I finally saw you coming back, I was overjoyed. But then I saw you with two women. I... I was so upset that I lost all reason. It's your fault! You're the one who is fickle-hearted!"

Sweat, so that's why. Jealous women can be a bit irrational, but it's meaningless if they're not jealous. He laughed, "How can I blame you? You don't know how good Xian'er was to me when you shut me out. I had ginseng and bird's nest every day, and even someone to accompany me to sleep. I was as happy and free as an immortal."

The Eldest Miss's face flushed, and she snorted lightly, "Ginseng and bird's nest? We have plenty at home. How much do you want? If you're talking about someone to sleep with, shame on you! You're always looking for excuses to take advantage of me. Do you think I'm that kind of woman?"

Lin Wanrong understood Xiao Yuruo's character very well. She was a typical case of being tough on the outside but soft on the inside. He grinned and changed the subject, "Let's not talk about this anymore. When Miss Su and Miss Xu left today, it seemed like you gave them something. What was it, why were you hiding it from me and Old Xu?"

The Eldest Miss's face turned red, "Why are you asking this, I won't tell you."

Lin Wanrong laughed, "It's just a few pieces of underwear, why so secretive?"

The Eldest Miss was taken aback, "How did you know? Did you hide somewhere and spy on us? You..."

Her fists rained down on him. Lin Wanrong caught her hand, laughing, "That was easy to guess, seeing you all sneaky. Miss Xu has a nice figure, on par with yours. But I wonder what Miss Su will look like in this underwear, what a lucky man Old Xu is, he's in for a treat tonight."

Hearing his cheeky words, the Eldest Miss had blushed furiously, aiming small punches at him in rebuke. Lin Wanrong laughed gleefully as the two of them playfully tussled. Overwhelmed with joy, the Eldest Miss suddenly threw herself into his arms, crying softly, her emotions a complex whirlwind. She couldn't articulate if it was bitterness or sweetness she felt.

"Brother San, Brother San —" Their intimate moment was interrupted by a call from outside. Huan'er, panting heavily, ran into the inner courtyard. Seeing the two entwined, she let out a yelp of surprise before quickly turning her head away, murmuring, "I didn't see anything, I didn't see anything."

Lin Wanrong feigned a fierce expression on his face. "You really didn't see anything? You know, I excel at silencing witnesses. So, do you prefer to be ravished then murdered, murdered then ravished, or a combination of both?"

Huan'er's small face flushed crimson, but she burst into laughter. "Brother San would never! Brother San is a good person, I'm not scared—"

'Damn, I'm really bad at playing the villain, huh?' The Eldest Miss pinched him at his waist, reprimanding, "You're always talking nonsense. Huan'er, what happened?"

Huan'er, having eased her initial panic, said, "Miss, someone has sent a message for Brother San."

"A message for me?" Lin Wanrong expressed surprise. "I hardly know anyone here in the capital."

Xiao Yuruo huffed, "Who knows? You certainly have a lot of covert operations."

As she spoke, she was the first to take the letter from Huan'er's hand. The letter was thin and carried a faint, alluring scent, suggesting it was written by a lady. The Eldest Miss looked at him with a teasing smile. Lin Wanrong gave a dry laugh, but he was puzzled. He only knew a few people in the capital, who could this be from? Xian'er? Sister An?

Xiao Yuruo handed him the letter without opening it, saying, "Better look at it quickly, don't let it delay your important business."

As Lin Wanrong opened the envelope and skimmed its contents, his face changed dramatically, he exclaimed, "Qingxuan —"

Xiao Qingxuan was not just their shared lifesaver but also Lin Wanrong's lawfully wedded wife. The Eldest Miss hastily peered at the letter, seeing only a few lines of script: "For news of Qingxuan, the birch forest north of the city knows. Come quickly!"

Lin Wanrong was incredibly agitated, gripping Huan'er's hand tightly. "Huan'er, where is the person who delivered this letter?"

Huan'er's small hand was hurting from his grip, her face turned red, and she glanced at the Eldest Miss as if pleading for help. Xiao Yuruo quickly held his hand, saying, "Don't panic, let Huan'er speak slowly, let go of her hand quickly."

Looking anxious, Lin Wanrong released Huan'er's hand. "Where is the person who delivered the letter?"

Huan'er shook her head. "I don't know. After Mr. Xu left, I was helping in the shop. Suddenly, I felt dizzy. After a short while, I recovered, only to find this letter on the table. The letter was addressed to Brother San, so I rushed to deliver it."

Lin Wanrong's brows furrowed deeply. So, Huan'er hadn't even seen who had delivered the letter? Damn, who was so lacking in manners, delivering a letter without showing their face, didn't they know he was anxious?

The Eldest Miss understood his anxiety, comforting him, "Don't panic, first look at this letter. Is this Miss Xiao Qingxuan's handwriting?"

During their stay in Jinling, Lin Wanrong and Xiao Qingxuan had spent every night in mirthful conversations. He had long since grown familiar with her silent treasures. He shook his head, "This isn't Qingxuan's handwriting. However, these strokes are smooth and round. It's a woman's writing."

The Eldest Miss nodded, "From what the letter implies, if you wish to know about Miss Xiao, you must visit the birch forest in the north of the city. Huan'er, is there such a forest in the north?"

Huan'er nodded, "Yes, it's about several dozen miles from here. A vast birch forest."

Upon hearing this, Lin Wanrong quickly stuffed the letter into his clothing and started rushing out. The Eldest Miss quickly grabbed him, "Where are you going?"

"Where else? Of course, to the north of the city," Lin Wanrong responded impatiently.

The Eldest Miss sighed, "This letter is anonymous, with no salutation or signature. If someone was impersonating Qingxuan and wanted to harm you, what then? Why does all your intelligence disappear when Qingxuan's name comes up? Does Miss Xiao truly hold such great power over you?"

Lin Wanrong shook his head determinedly, "I have no choice. Qingxuan is my wife. Even if it means going through hell, I must."

"You..." The Eldest Miss saw his stubbornness, feeling both urgency and anger. She huffed, "I'm not saying you can't go, only that you should plan carefully. Ensure there are no mistakes."

Lin Wanrong gave a bitter smile, "I fear there's no time for that. The letter demands immediate action. If I'm late and miss the chance, I would regret it for life. Wait for me at home."

With that, he dashed out, disappearing quickly into the night.

"Go then, and don't you dare come back!" The Eldest Miss stomped her foot, crying out, "You heartless troublemaker!"

Huan'er saw the Eldest Miss arguing with Brother San and wisely remained still at a distance.

After a while of weeping, the Eldest Miss abruptly turned and went inside, tightening her cloak before heading for the door. Huan'er gasped, blocking her, "Miss, what are you doing?"

Xiao Yuruo sighed faintly, "That fool is so stubborn. I won't be at ease unless I go check on him."

"But miss, it's pitch black out there. The road to the north is not safe, and there have been bandits recently. How can you go?" Huan'er was anxious.

"I must go even if it's dangerous. If I die, tell that scoundrel that I will hate him forever." With that, the Eldest Miss stormed out.

Huan'er was left in a daze. What was happening with Brother San and the Eldest Miss? They could go from being sweet as honey to bickering like foes in no time. It was truly baffling.

The birch forest in the north was roughly a dozen miles from the Xiao family's shop. The path was rough and treacherous, but Lin Wanrong was in such a rush that he managed to reach it in less than an hour.

This stretch of birch forest was vast, probably spanning dozens of acres. Each birch tree was robust, with thick roots and strong branches. The old leaves had fallen, and the new ones had yet to sprout, making the bare branches reach out into the air like fine claws. The cold wind of early spring brought with it a mournful whine, causing the branches to creak and rendering the forest even more desolate.

Upon reaching the edge of the forest, Lin Wanrong saw nothing but emptiness all around, without a single human figure in sight. Puzzled, he couldn't help but call out, "Qingxuan, Qingxuan, where are you—"

He called out several times, but the forest remained silent with no one answering. There was no sign of the person who had arranged to meet him there. The dense forest was ominously dark, but he didn't care. He patrolled the area, but found nothing.

"Whoever has summoned me, Lin Wanrong, please show yourself," he called out, his heart growing increasingly anxious. There was still no movement. Just as his patience was wearing thin and he was about to call out again, a soft feminine voice came from behind, "Are you Lin Wanrong?"

The voice was sweet and gentle, like music from the heavens, slowly drifting over from behind him. Lin Wanrong turned around to see an enchanting figure standing atop the trees. She was dressed in white, her long skirt lightly swaying, her hair hanging low, and a pristine white veil covering her face.

Chapter 297 Overthrowing the Fairy

"Fairy Sister?" Lin Wanrong exclaimed in surprise. The figure perched atop the tree was familiar, he had already seen her at the Jade Buddha Temple. He had pursued her for some distance. Now, though her face was concealed by a light veil, her enchantingly beautiful silhouette was firmly etched into his heart.

"Fairy Sister, are you looking for me?" Upon recognizing the beautiful and mysterious woman, Lin Wanrong's worries and fears significantly subsided. If he had known that he was to meet with Fairy Sister, he would have hired a carriage, preserving his energy for more important matters.

"What Fairy Sister? Do you know me?" The woman gently nodded her head. Even though Lin Wanrong could not clearly see her expression, he sensed that she was smiling. And why wouldn't she be? Meeting Lin San, Brother San, and not smiling would be the real joke.

"What, Sister, don't you remember me?" Lin Wanrong, unabashed in pretending to be familiar, took a few steps forward and grinned, "We had a rendezvous by the Jade Buddha Temple at dusk. You were flying in the sky while I was chasing you on the ground. As I chased, I tripped, and you fled."

The woman's eyebrows furrowed slightly, as she thought back on his words, but eventually shook her head, "Did we? I cannot recall. Even if we did meet, with your appearance, I am afraid I would not remember."

That ticked him off. He was so handsome, even he himself couldn't forget. How could she do this to him, to the world, to his parents? It seemed true that beautiful women had less reliable memories. Upon seeing the ethereal figure of the beautiful woman in the tree, his heart filled with resentment. He wished he could take a slingshot and knock her down. But seeing her elegant figure and posture, he felt a slight thrill and chuckling said, "It doesn't matter if you don't remember. After today, I fear you won't be able to forget even if you want to. May I ask, Sister, what is your name? Where do you live? How old are you? Did you specifically come to find me?"

The woman nodded, "If you are Lin Wanrong, then I did come to find you."

Lin Wanrong slowly took two steps closer and said with a smile, "I am indeed Lin Wanrong. May I ask, Sister, where is my wife?"

"Your wife?" The Fairy Sister frowned, "Who is your wife?"

From his bosom, Lin Wanrong pulled out a slip of paper, gently waving it in the wind, "Did you not write this note - 'If you wish to hear of Qingxuan, you will find out in the birch forest north of the city. Hurry!'"

"That note was indeed written by me." The Fairy Sister confirmed with a nod.

"Excellent, excellent!" Lin Wanrong clapped his hands and laughed, "Then Qingxuan is my wife. We have been separated for so long. This trip to the capital was specifically to find her. Sister, you truly are a heavenly figure who aids those in distress, helping me reunite with my wife. I am forever grateful. In the future, I will be sure to buy lots of celebratory sweets to thank you."

The Fairy Sister lightly furrowed her eyebrows and shook her head, "When did Qingxuan become your wife? You mustn't talk nonsense. There is no marriage certificate between you two, nor a marital mandate. She has nothing to do with you, how could she possibly be your wife?"

Lin Wanrong slowly paced a few steps, an honest smile spreading across his face. "From your words, Sister, it seems you've never been in love," he said. "Don't glare at me. Even if you're married, this one sentence shows that you have no experience in love. There's a saying that rings true: if two hearts have been in love for a long time, it hardly matters if it was early or late. Qingxuan and I cherish each other, we had the green pines as our matchmaker, and heaven and earth as our witnesses. We're true lovers and already in matrimonial harmony, how can there be no entanglement? So how is it wrong for me to call her my wife?"

The woman sighed slightly, "Although you have a way with words, they are all meaningless. Your relationship with her is one of misplaced affections. It can't be taken as truth. I came today, precisely for this matter, to settle these affairs of children's feelings."

'Damn, misplaced affections,' Lin Wanrong thought. He had initially given her face and thought of her as fairy. Overcome with anger, he replied with a laugh, "May I ask, Sister, who are you to Qingxuan?"

"I am her closest person," the fairy-like sister replied with a smile. "She would never disobey my words."

"Hahaha," Lin Wanrong let out a long laugh. "Then, let me ask you again, sister, are these words yours or Qingxuan's?"

The woman lightly stepped forward, leaping across several trees, standing atop a tall one before Lin Wanrong. "My intentions are Qingxuan's intentions."

'Damn, if she thinks I'm going to look up at her, she's dreaming.' So, Lin Wanrong simply laid back on the grass, plucking a withered blade and placing it in his mouth, looking at the fairy-like sister. The woman blinked, understanding his meaning, and chuckled appreciatively at his childlike behavior.

"Fairy, whatever you say, I won't believe," he said. "I trust my wife. If you're trying to sow discord between us, you might as well spare yourself the effort. If there's an issue, have Qingxuan tell me directly."

The fairy lightly laughed, "Watch closely," she commanded. Her slender fingers swiftly moved, a gust of wind slashing past Lin Wanrong, hitting the tree behind him. With a soft crash, the towering birch split into two. The woman smiled, "Aren't you afraid of dying?"

Before she finished speaking, a rumbling sound was heard, the tree under her feet shook violently and looked like it was about to fall. The fairy's face changed color, she quickly stepped onto the tips of her feet, and like a dazzling flying swan, leaped across two treetops before stabilizing.

"What hidden weapon did you use?" The fairy's heart pounded, her eyebrows slightly furrowed as she curiously looked at him. This hidden weapon was powerful and she had been caught off guard by Lin Wanrong, not expecting him to possess such a formidable tool. She had nearly fallen into his trap.

Listening to this, Lin Wanrong's heart soared with joy. 'Qingxuan really is my good wife, she secretly gave me this gun, and even this fairy doesn't know about it.' Realizing this, he felt happy and proudly said, "Sister, I am very afraid of dying, but I don't believe that you're not."

Seeing his cheerful demeanor, the fairy found it amusing and nodded slightly. "I seem to have underestimated you. However, even though your hidden weapon is powerful, it can only ambush. Now that I'm alert, it would be quite difficult for you to hurt me."

Cold sweat filled the palm of Lin Wanrong, yet an icy smile adorned his face. He spoke boldly, "If sister is so confident, why not give it a try—"

The fairy woman said nothing, but in her hand, a silver needle appeared. It was longer than her slender fingers and shone with a sinister silver light under the night sky. Lin Wanrong felt a chill inside, thinking, 'Damn, really? It's even longer than the needle the fox spirit An played with. I hate needles the most.'

"Ha ha ha—honest to say, sister, you're Qingxuan's kin, and I'm her husband. Us fighting and killing, if Qingxuan found out, she would be heartbroken. Moreover, you are a recognized expert, and I'm a scholar with no combat prowess, isn't it a bit bullying for you to pick on me? It would be a laughing stock if word gets out. Let's call it a day, leave a contact address, and we can have a proper

conversation in front of Qingxuan another day, isn't that better for all?" Seeing the ominous silver needle, Lin Wanrong's forehead started to sweat. The memory of Sister An's acupuncture was vaguely playing before his eyes. This fairy sister also plays with needles, could she be the same person Sister An referred to as her senior sister?

The woman let out a sigh, "Lin Wanrong, we are strangers. Today I treat you this way out of necessity. Your connection with Qingxuan is like the moon in the water or a flower in a mirror - an impossibility. This needle won't harm your life, but it will make you forget about Qingxuan. Don't blame me."

Lin Wanrong was horrified, "What the hell is this? A love forgetfulness potion? To forget Qingxuan, you might as well kill me."

Seeing the fairy woman move lightly and suddenly move toward him, Lin Wanrong abruptly extended his hand and shouted, "Hold on—"

The fairy woman didn't halt, her eyes deep as she softly said, "Speak your mind."

Lin Wanrong gritted his teeth, "If you want me to forget about Qingxuan, can I at least know more before I do so? My wife Qingxuan, who exactly is she? Is she the rumored second princess of Great Hua?"

The woman glanced at him but did not confirm nor deny. She spoke enigmatically, "Once you enter the marquis's house, it's like entering a deep ocean. The flute player becomes a stranger. Your connection with her is over. You will no longer recognize each other, freeing you from worries. What benefit is there in knowing these things?"

As soon as her words fell, she moved swiftly, jumping down like a fairy descending from heaven. The silver needle in her hand was quickly aimed, a faint fragrance came, and it was swung toward his neck.

‘Damn, she’s just attacking without a word, what happened to the etiquette of a master? Does she think I’m an easy target?’ Angered, he bellowed, "Look at the gun, left one, right one, top one, bottom one—"

With a loud bang, the gun in Lin Wanrong's hand exploded. The scattered bullets flew out like scattered dust. The fairy sister had been watching out for his hidden weapon, and upon hearing the sound, she sneered in her heart and moved to the side without thinking. No sooner had her figure

shifted, she saw a dense swarm of black needles heading straight for her. The tips of the needles were gloomy, emitting a chilling light, coming down like a swarm of gadflies.

This move was even more unpredictable than his firearm. In terms of martial arts, the fairy sister was far superior to Lin Wanrong. However, she had not anticipated such craftiness. He had intentionally revealed his firearm, while his real killer move turned out to be these flying concealed weapons. In her desperation, her slender hand swung rapidly. Her white robe turned into a solid wall that shielded her.

There were thousands of bee needles. Although the fairy sister had formidable skills, a single needle still slipped through the net, striking her delicate jade finger. The woman gave a soft grunt. With a flash of her figure, she quickly retreated several steps. Her voluptuous body trembled lightly, her high, firm chest rising and falling slightly.

Lin Wanrong was completely drenched, devoid of any strength in his body, yet his heart was filled with indescribable excitement. He had knocked down the fairy sister. Gazing at the trembling fairy sister, he wished he could burst out laughing.

‘Damn, let's see if you dare to inject me again! Now it's my turn to give you a shot.’ Lin Wanrong felt a sense of relief inside. He held his gun, grinning wickedly as he approached the fallen fairy sister...

Chapter 298 Pricked by the Needle

At this moment, they were standing several yards apart, with Lin Wanrong observing every change in the fairy sister's demeanor. The fairy sister's delicate body was slightly trembling. Even though he couldn't see her face clearly, he could imagine just how pale her cheeks must be.

Observing the trembling bosom of the fairy sister, a sense of delight he couldn't express surged in Lin Wanrong's heart. His smile grew increasingly lascivious, and he strolled leisurely towards her, laughing, "Sister, how does that needle feel? You wanted to give me a shot, but it seems I beat you to it?"

"Despicable!" After a long silence, the fairy sister shook her head slightly, a trace of contempt flashing in her eyes, "The methods you resort to are truly devious. Separating you from Qingxuan was indeed the right thing to do."

Regret swelled within her. If she had just used the flying needle on his carotid artery earlier, even though it might have threatened his life, it would have been much better than falling into his hands. The needle technique she used could erase a person's memories, but it had to accurately hit certain points at the back of the head. If it hit elsewhere, it wouldn't work at all, and this was why she had been so cautious.

‘Damn it, just because you're a fairy doesn't mean I'm scared of you, I, Brother San, specialize in dealing with fairies.’ Lin Wanrong burst into laughter, clapping his hands slowly as he walked a few steps, his face lit with a taunting smile, "Despicable? So, sister knows this word too? I thought it was exclusively used to describe me. It seems we do have some common language after all."

The woman shook her head, "I honestly tried to persuade you, even wanted you to forget Qingxuan, but I never meant to harm you. However, you deliberately used that firearm to trick me, and used a poisonous needle to hurt me, neither of which can be considered honorable."

"What a nice phrase, 'honorable'!" Lin Wanrong laughed uproariously, "It's just great. fairy sister, you invited me here under the guise of honor, threatened me with martial arts under the guise of honor, pricked me with a needle under the guise of honor, and even tried to separate a husband and wife under the guise of honor. Every single thing you did is supposedly related to honor and nobility - truly damn noble. But me? I've only had a few days of martial arts training, I'm like an ant in front of you. You stab me with a needle, and I have to endure it; you try to kill me with a sword, and I have to watch. Any resistance from me, be it firearms or hidden weapons, is deemed despicable in your eyes. 'Despicable', what a great word, I freaking love it—"

With a twinkle in his eye, he sauntered towards her, his face bearing an inscrutable smirk. The woman, upon hearing his sarcastic speech, sighed slightly, "If it were any ordinary woman, I wouldn't intervene. But since it involves Qingxuan, I have no other choice. Your grudges against me are futile. It's just the heavens playing tricks on you. Compared to the lives of all under heaven, sacrificing you means nothing."

Damn, she made it sound better than it was, claiming it was for the sake of all under heaven. But in reality, it was just for the sake of their face, to earn the admiration and reverence of the masses. Even at the expense of someone else's happiness, they insist on maintaining their cool facade. He waved his hand dismissively, "Fairy sister, I have a word for you: don't pretend to be superior (a b****), or you'll be struck by lightning!"

Although the fairy didn't fully comprehend the term, the expression on her face revealed a partial understanding. Fortunately, she possessed extraordinary self-control, remaining silent, her silver teeth clenched tight. Slowly, she focused her energy, but a severe pain, unlike any she'd experienced before, radiated from her fingers, making her feel as if she had lost all her strength. With a subtle shake of her head, her light veil slightly lifted from her face. In a quiet voice, she asked, "Today, I have indeed underestimated you. What poison have you used on this needle? It's incredibly potent."

Lin Wanrong stared at her without shifting his gaze. Although he couldn't see her face behind the light veil, he had absolute faith in her, knowing she had been poisoned severely. With a sinister chuckle, a lascivious smirk crossed his face, "No, no, it's not that toxic. Just something I normally use to kill flies and rodents at home. What's its scientific name again? Ah, right, it's called 'Strange Love Scatter'. I still don't understand the meaning of this name. Fairy, you're so knowledgeable and well-learned, can you enlighten me? The name sounds rather imaginative."

The woman looked at her fingertip which was rapidly swelling and turning black. As her slender hand slowly transformed to the same dark color, she bit down on her silver teeth and retorted, "Strange Love Scatter, don't try to fool me. This is clearly a concoction of potent toxins, possibly a blend of several poisons. You could not have created this, someone must have given you this secret weapon."

This fairy was indeed perceptive. However, what could she do even if she knew the truth? Could she detoxify herself? When Xian'er had given him the bee needle, she had mentioned that the poison was concocted by her, deadly upon contact. If he did not offer an antidote, she would die from the toxin within a few hours. Damn, she was a relative of Qingxuan. If he killed her, how could he explain it to Qingxuan? But if he let her go, it would sit even worse with him.

Torn inside, he did not let his dilemma show on his face. He quickly loaded his musket, aimed at her and laughed, "Sister, since you've figured it out, I won't hide it anymore. This poison is potent and instantly lethal. Some time ago, I used it to kill quite a few rats-- don't glare at me, your behavior isn't much better than a rat's. Alas, such a beauty like a fairy is about to die from this potent poison, it truly saddens me."

He slowly paced, carefully observing the woman's movements. Seeing a dark line slowly ascending her translucent jade-like arm, he knew the poison had taken effect. Yet he felt a surging uncertainty inside - should he save her? 'Qingxuan, my dear wife, you've really presented me with a difficult decision.'

The fairy-like woman seemed calm on the surface, but her slightly trembling body betrayed her. Lin Wanrong approached cautiously, chuckling, "Sister, why are you silent? Weren't you quite imposing just now?" Suddenly, he reached out, swiftly pulling away the veil from her face. The woman turned as white as a sheet, unable to move. Her age was indistinguishable, with almond-shaped eyes and a high nose bridge, her skin fairer than snow. Her bright red lips parted slightly, her long lashes trembled continuously, her brows were as graceful as a snowy distant mountain, and her posture as delicate as a willow bending in the wind. Despite her anger, her full chest and rounded hips trembled slightly. She was extraordinarily beautiful, incredibly enchanting.

Was this the fairy sister he had encountered that day? Indeed, she was an unparalleled beauty! As he gazed upon her enchanting face and voluptuous body, Lin Wanrong was also struck dumb. Damn it, she was incredibly beautiful, she could even rival his Qingxuan.

"What...what are you going to do?" The fairy sister blushed with embarrassment and anger, her silver needle quivering in her hand as she sharply questioned him. Her beauty was exceptional, her manner ethereal; even in her admonishment, she held a unique air of nobility.

"Sister, you're incredibly beautiful," Lin Wanrong chuckled. "I'm just going to touch you a little. You don't mind, do you? Even if you do, I'll pretend I didn't notice."

Opportunities to touch celestial beauties were rare, and true to his words, while still holding her veil in one hand, he reached out with the other to touch her soft and smooth cheek. A sensation of silky smoothness, like touching milk, sent tingles through his fingertips. Even a light touch was incredibly gratifying, as if he had fallen into a pile of milk. If he could kiss her, that would be even more delightful.

For many years, the fairy sister had commanded respect wherever she went. No one dared to look at her disrespectfully, let alone touch her. But today, not only had he torn off her veil, but he had also touched her cheek. Overcome with grief and anger, she spat out a mouthful of blood and rebuked, "You lascivious brute, dare to violate me! I'll curse you to never die in peace!"

'Darn, even bleeding doesn't scare her. She's tough!' Lin Wanrong saw her condition, with the fairy sister able to speak but not move, he knew that the powerful poison had indeed worked. This eased his mind considerably. He laughed, "Don't curse. Don't curse, sister. You've misunderstood me, I'm not a lecher. Those were top-notch massage techniques, something I don't use lightly. Just from your reaction, it's clear they worked - so well that you even thought I was a lecher."

Seeing Lin Wanrong's calm demeanor and no more molesting, the fairy sister was about to speak when he interrupted her with a stern face, "Madam, the joke has gone far enough. Don't take my next words lightly."

When he looked at her again, there was no hint of lasciviousness in his eyes, his voice resonating, "Qingxuan and I are a couple committed to each other in life and death. No matter what means you employ, you cannot separate us. Although you are Qingxuan's relative, if you hinder our reunion, you become my enemy. And I, Lin Wanrong, have only one method with my enemies, even if you're a fairy sister, I won't spare a glance."

He took a few steps back, aiming his firearm at her, a mysterious smile playing on his face, "Fairy sister, don't think I won't kill. I'll count to three, and you will tell me where Qingxuan is. Of course, you can choose to end your life, which is a badass move, but I also have a badass countermove. Imagine the spectacle of such a beautiful woman hanging at the city gates, it would surely cause a stir. I really look forward to it."

The fairy sister gritted her teeth but remained silent.

"Three—"

No response.

"Two—"

There was still no response. 'Damn it, do you really think I wouldn't pull the trigger?' He scoffed coldly, a trace of cruelty flashed across his face as his finger curled around the trigger.

"Lin San, Lin San, where are you?" A sharp cry sliced through the night, ringing in Lin Wanrong's ears. A woman was racing towards him from a distance.

"Miss!" Lin Wanrong was startled. Why had she come? Then it hit him: he had fired two shots here. If she had truly been following him, the loud bangs would definitely have drawn her here.

"Lin San—" Xiao Yuruo had already seen him. Her eyes blurred with tears as she raced towards him. The forest was full of sloping terrain, high and low. The Eldest Miss was running so fast that she stumbled and fell.

"Miss—" Lin Wanrong cried out in shock. His eyes darted back to the woman, seeing her icy expression, as though she had seen nothing.

He felt somewhat relieved. The Eldest Miss had already stubbornly picked herself up. She jogged a few steps, intending to rush to his side, when suddenly she saw the situation behind him. "Watch out —" she cried in terror.

Bearing humiliation and hardship, the woman mustered the last of her strength. Seizing the moment when Lin Wanrong was distracted, she flicked her wrist, and a silver needle flew towards him like an arrow from a bow.

Tears welled up in Xiao Yuruo's eyes, soft as water, as she fiercely threw herself in front of him, shielding him with her body. A misty veil of tears rose in her eyes, and she whispered, "Lin San, remember to think of me. Otherwise, I will hate you for the rest of my life."

As the Eldest Miss was crying out, Lin Wanrong realized something was wrong. What should have been a sure win had been ruined by the unexpected interruption of the Eldest Miss. 'Damn it,' he thought, 'I am really unlucky.' Seeing Yuruo risking her life to protect him, he was suddenly reminded of the moment in the Xiao Mansion in Jinling when Yushuang had thrown herself in front of him to block Lu Zhongping's sword. He felt a sudden pang in his heart. He swiftly turned around, pulling the Eldest Miss into his arms. Both of them leaped up simultaneously. Without looking back or turning his head, he fired his gun behind him with a loud bang.

With a thunderous crash, the large tree behind the fairy-like woman collapsed, and the Eldest Miss fell to the ground with Lin Wanrong on top of her. The pair crashed onto the ground together.

Lin Wanrong grimaced, sweat rolling down his forehead, a sharp pain surged in his buttock, the silver needle had pierced halfway in.

Qingxuan's image continuously flashed before his eyes. 'It's over, it's over, he thought, I've been needled, and it hit my buttock. Qingxuan, am I really going to forget you? Damn it, who knew a needle could cause amnesia? God is truly unfair.'

"Lin San, Lin San, how are you?" Seeing Lin Wanrong's pitiful state, the Eldest Miss turned deathly pale. Ignoring her own pain, she cradled him in her arms and anxiously asked.

Lin Wanrong's face was pale, his mind dazed. Recalling the ordeal of forgetfulness, he was not sure whether it was the pain or the fear, but a sudden chill enveloped him. He gave Xiao Yuruo a desolate look and said, "Miss, hold me a bit tighter. I fear I might forget you."

Tears streamed down the Eldest Miss's face as she said, "What are you talking about? I know you will never forget me."

Lin Wanrong sighed, "It's too late. I was pricked by that woman's needle. Not only you, but also Qingxuan, Yushuang, Ning'er, Qiaoqiao, Xian'er, Sister An, and Madam Xiao. I'm afraid I won't be able to recall these names anymore."

The more he spoke, the more he felt something was amiss, a look of horror crossed his face. 'Damn it,' he thought, 'theoretically, after getting pricked by that needle, I should forget these people. But why can I remember their names so clearly, I even remembered Madam Xiao. This is not forgetting, this is remembering even more clearly.'

With that thought, the pain in his buttock seemed to dissipate. He clumsily got up from the Eldest Miss's arms and looked towards the place where the fairy-like woman had been standing. All he saw was the broken tree and scattered branches. There was nothing else there, not even a ghostly figure to be found.

Chapter 299 The Helpless Reining In At The Cliff's Edge

'Damn, even a fairy could run away?' Cold sweat drenched his entire body. He wanted to burst into laughter, but he felt completely drained. Just as he was about to sit down, he leapt up abruptly as if spring-loaded, letting out an 'ouch' sound.

The Eldest Miss hurriedly steadied him, her voice filled with concern, "Don't be reckless, you're injured."

Lin Wanrong's forehead was damp with perspiration, he gritted his teeth, "This woman, a single needle's pain, she will pay a hundredfold someday."

Tears fell from the Eldest Miss's eyes as she scolded, "Look at your condition, and you still think of retaliation? I told you to wait for Huan'er to make arrangements, yet you insisted on playing the hero. Do you plan to worry me to death?"

Remembering how the Eldest Miss had risked her life to save him earlier, he was touched and didn't mind her harsh words. He smirked and said, "It's just a needle, it's not lethal." In the midst of his words, he reached down and felt the cold silver needle protruding from his buttock. Half of it was still exposed, suggesting that the fairy's strength had already been spent when she exerted her power. Although she had hit him, the needle was not too deeply embedded.

"Eldest Miss, Qingxuan, Qiaoqiao... Madam..."

He once again recited the names of the women he knew, but he still remembered them clearly. Where was the symptom of memory loss? Damn it, was there a delay in the effect of this needle, making him forget them once he got home? After some thought, he dismissed the idea. If there was such a delay, he could write their stories down as a brief introduction for himself. Losing his memory wouldn't matter then. The fairy wouldn't make such a basic mistake.

The only explanation was that memory loss required precise placement of the needle. That was why the fairy sister had to get close to him to ensure accuracy. Otherwise, with her skills, he'd have been done for without even needing to dodge a long-distance needle throw.

The more he thought, the more it made sense. The fear of amnesia dissipated significantly, and he didn't feel the pain in his buttocks anymore. Seeing the Eldest Miss crying like rain, he couldn't help but laugh, "Didn't I tell you to wait at home? How did you end up here?"

The Eldest Miss scolded, "Look who's talking. You came here alone into uncertain danger, isn't that asking for me to worry? I wanted to follow you to see what was happening. But just as I got here, I heard two loud noises and then saw that woman trying to kill you—"

Lin Wanrong sighed inwardly. It really was fate. If the Eldest Miss hadn't barged in rashly, he wouldn't have been stuck with this needle. She was worried, which made her act recklessly. How could he blame her, when she, a weak woman, had journeyed so far alone in the pitch black night just to check on his safety? On the other hand, had she not appeared, he might have ended up killing this fairy sister today. It would have been satisfying for a moment, but how would he explain it to Qingxuan later? The Eldest Miss's unexpected intervention might have played a major role.

Thinking this, he chuckled and said, "It's fine. As you can see, I'm quite alright. Apart from a needle stuck in my buttock, everything else is intact."

The Eldest Miss glanced at him, her voice soft, "Are you really okay? That needle is in... in you, does it hurt?"

Sweat trickled down his face; was it possible not to feel pain? He sighed, saying seriously, "It does hurt a bit, but I can't see the wound to remove the needle. It's an unsightly place to be injured and it's improper to trouble you, Miss. Ah, I'll just endure it a bit longer until we return to the shop. Don't worry about me, the worst-case scenario is the pain would kill me. I'll be fine."

Xiao Yuruo's face blushed a bright red, she bit her silver teeth and softly said, "I, I will help you—"

She had long been fond of Lin San, their teasing and playful days had led to a deep affection, but Eldest Miss Xiao, being a lady who strictly adhered to etiquette, refused any crossing of boundaries during their daily interactions. For her to remove a needle from Lin San's buttocks required immense courage.

"This might not be appropriate, Miss. It's beneath you to do this sort of thing for me. I insist on going back." Lin Wanrong said, grinning from ear to ear.

Eldest Miss glanced at him, her face blushing as she snorted lightly, "Pretending to be so formal, do you think I don't know what you're thinking?"

Her face was rosy and radiant, her heart filled with shyness. Seeing Lin San's expression of "pain," she gritted her teeth, her small hand trembling slightly as it moved towards his hip.

The moment her warm, soft hand touched his buttocks, Lin Wanrong let out a comfortable groan. Eldest Miss's small hand was so soft and enchanting. If she could grab the back and then the front, my goodness, he didn't know how glorious it would be.

"Little to the left, further down, oh—" He was full of flirtatious thoughts, suddenly grabbing Eldest Miss's hand.

Eldest Miss was both embarrassed and angry. She forcefully hit the back of his hand, snorting, "What are you yelling for? The needle is clearly on the right side, why are you having me feel around on the left?"

Lin Wanrong frowned, "Eldest Miss, I can't see, I have to feel around. You're the one in charge of pulling out the needle, ah, you took advantage of me and you're still giving me a hard time—"

"How annoying—" Her face flushed like blood, she shyly glanced at him. Her small hand touched the silver needle, hesitated for a moment, but didn't dare to pull it out.

Though Lin Wanrong was teasing her, a needle stuck in his buttocks was uncomfortable after all. Unable to resist, he said, "Eldest Miss, don't hesitate—how about you touch it first, then pull it out?"

"In your dreams!" Eldest Miss was in the midst of her hesitation, seeing his slick and insincere words, she steeled her heart, her slender hand pulling the silver needle out swiftly. Sweat glistened on her face, she took a deep breath, asking concerned, "How are you feeling, does it still hurt?"

Lin Wanrong turned around, holding the silver needle in his hand. The needle was crystal clear, without a trace of blood. It felt cold to the touch, he had no idea what it was made of. The needle was almost identical to the one used by An Biru. Recalling what Sister An had said, was she suggesting that he needed to defeat this fairy? That would be interesting; he'd already won a round tonight.

Seeing him deep in thought, Xiao Yuruo knew he was alright and her heart eased. She asked, "Lin San, who is this woman? Why did you fight with her? Where is Miss Qingxuan?"

Lin Wanrong gave a bitter smile and said, "You may not believe it, but this woman is a relative of Qingxuan. She is here to stop me from being with Qingxuan. As for where Qingxuan is, I have no idea."

Xiao Yuruo looked startled and asked, "Stop you from being with Qingxuan? What can we do? If she is swayed by her opinion, we are in trouble."

Lin Wanrong gave a smirk, glanced at Xiao Yuruo, and took her hand, "Why? Aren't you jealous?"

Xiao Yuruo snorted and gave him a sidelong glance, "You've drawn the attention of countless women. If I was jealous of each one, I'd have drowned in my own tears by now." Although she spoke these words, the sour tone in her voice revealed her heartache. Lin Wanrong sighed, "I can't help it. That's the cost of being attractive."

Xiao Yuruo, having already experienced his thick-skinned nature, chose not to engage in his nonsense and asked seriously, "So, what's your plan?"

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily and said, "It's simple: eat well, drink well, enjoy life, and persist in finding Qingxuan."

"But there are people standing in your way, and they're related to her, this--"

Lin Wanrong waved his hand and interrupted, "The more they try to stop me, the more it proves that Qingxuan is thinking about me. Why else would they be so anxious? Ha, my wife, no one can snatch her away."

'You're good at comforting yourself,' Xiao Yuruo thought to herself. Yet, her feelings for Lin had grown deeper each day, and she felt indebted to Xiao Qingxuan. Consequently, her words did not harbor as strong a sense of caution as they did for Qin Xian'er.

Lin Wanrong thought about the poisoned fairy who escaped. If she didn't have the antidote from him, he didn't know if she could survive. But since he couldn't find her now, he simply chose not to think about her. If she was dead, so be it. For Qingxuan, he was willing to do anything.

The forest had quieted down after the battle, the scent of gunpowder had faded, and leaves were scattered across the ground. With an injury on his buttocks, Lin Wanrong wasn't in a hurry to return. He laid down slowly, letting out a long sigh of relief.

Seeing him silent, Xiao Yuruo quietly sat next to him, her hands clenched in her lap, silently looking up at the starry sky.

Gazing at her beautiful silhouette and soft, beautiful figure, Lin Wanrong gently caressed her waist with his hand, and whispered, "Yuruo..."

"Hmm?" Xiao Yuruo responded with a quiet hum from her nose, her face flushed. She turned her head to look at him, seeing his deep gaze on her. A flood of soft feelings rose in her heart, making her feel as if she were entangled in a web of spiders, unable to extricate herself. She softly asked, "What do you want to say?"

Lin Wanrong let out a sigh, "In the future, don't blindly rush into situations like this. Trust me, I can handle it."

Xiao Yuruo, used to being independent, was about to retort, but seeing his serious expression, she held back. She simply hummed in agreement and said, "Then you must also promise me that you will not take risks so lightly in the future."

"Who can predict what will happen in life?" He chuckled, "I promise you, I will not take unnecessary risks in the future. If I do, you can punish me by giving me an injection in the buttocks."

Xiao Yuruo, blushing, punched him lightly, "Nonsense."

Lin Wanrong stretched his arm out and pulled her tightly into his embrace. In the dark, isolated spot, their intimate posture made Xiao Yuruo's heart race. She trembled and asked, "Rascal, what are you going to do? You're still injured."

"The wound is on my butt, it's no big deal," he chuckled, pressing Yuruo beneath him. The softness emanating from her curvaceous body sent a wave of pleasure through him. He couldn't resist, gently kissing her beautiful lips. "The night is so beautiful," he whispered, "if we don't do something, wouldn't we be squandering Heaven's goodwill?"

Yuruo trembled at his words, breath coming out in fragrant wisps. "Don't... don't bully me," she stammered. "I'll tell my mother... ohh." A hot hand slipped under her robe, covering her ample, erect bosom. His touch elicited admiration from him. The Eldest Miss indeed possessed a figure rivaling that of Sister An's.

With a soft gasp, Yuruo blushed from her cheeks to her neck. His large hand kneaded her tender flesh gently, her body felt as if enchanted. As cool touch ventured under her blouse, grazing those two red beans, a soft whimper escaped her. "Lin San... don't!" she moaned, panting.

"Hush, don't be scared," Lin Wanrong reassured, swallowing. "I'm just giving you a physical examination." His hands continued their exploration, clasping her bosom, his fingers tracing her smooth skin. The subtle scent of her body amplified his desire. One hand encircled her slender waist, while the other ventured downward, seeking the curvaceous swell of her hips.

The Eldest Miss's figure was enchanting, her hips firm and elastic, smoother than the finest satin. He drew her closer, both hands caressing her rounded buttocks. Her lips parted as the sweet scent of her breath filled the air. She stared back at him, resignation in her eyes. She thought: whatever bond she had with him, she both loved and despised him. She'd willingly die for him. If he wanted to do something, she'd let him. Even if it led to her mother killing her, she'd have no regrets.

Feeling his hot hand slowly venture between her tense legs, her heart raced. Her chest heaved, her eyes closing. Long lashes trembled as two clear teardrops welled up, spilling out uncontrollably. Inwardly sighing, she awaited the inevitable moment with a mixture of bitterness and embarrassment. Yet, just then, Lin San chuckled, halting his movements and merely gazed at her.

Covering her eyes in embarrassment, she asked, "What are you doing, you... you scoundrel?"

Lin San sighed softly, pulling her into his embrace. "I almost forgot my principle, alas, I am not a man of casual relationships."

"You... you jerk!" She was a mix of embarrassment, anger, and a little bit of disappointment. She landed a punch on his shoulder, resentfully. "You've had your fun, and now you're speaking lightly of it. You... you..." She trailed off, emotions welling up. She leaned into his chest, whimpering softly.

Had it not been for the injection he received today, would he have reined in at the edge of the cliff so obediently? 'Damn it, fairy sister, if I can't give you a shot, it's hard to quell the hatred in my heart.' Seeing the Eldest Miss crying, Lin Wanrong chuckled and said righteously, "Ah, my relationship with the Eldest Miss is based on understanding. If you are unwilling to discuss these matters, then let's not mention them. I have Qingxuan, Qiaoqiao, and Xian'er, so some needs are easily met."

"You're courting death!" The Eldest Miss, hearing his nonsense, blushed and pinched his waist hard. She stole a glance at him and couldn't help but say, "Who said I was unwilling? It's just, just..."

"Just what?" Lin Wanrong asked curiously.

"If this matter isn't clearly explained to my mother, how can I be with you, be with you like that... You dead man, I hate you!" The Eldest Miss covered her cheeks with both hands, the heat on her face even making her small hands turn red. Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, feeling extremely pleased. The Eldest Miss was naturally independent and strong-willed. Although they often quarreled, it only added to the pleasure of conquest. If she were too submissive, it would lose the flavor of the past. It was better to let her maintain her nature.

Once the Madam was informed, and the Eldest Miss's temperament had been tempered enough, everything would fall into place. He would marry the Eldest Miss and the Second Miss, throw them on the bed, one on top, one below, one on the left, one on the right. Damn, he couldn't stand the thought. His eyes gleamed lasciviously as he looked at the Eldest Miss, daydreaming to the point of drooling...

The fairy sister's injection, although it didn't cause significant consequences, and his little brother was still as upright as ever, the pain in his buttocks made him lie in bed for two days. Thinking

about the half-pushing, half-yielding Eldest Miss, with her chest half-exposed and her jade body lying in front of him, he had actually played the gentleman. He wanted to beat his chest and cry out, "God, you're playing with me!"

During these two days, it was the Eldest Miss's maid, Huan'er, who took care of him. The wound was on his buttocks, a rather indecent location. According to the Eldest Miss's wishes, a male servant was supposed to apply medicine to him every day. Lin Wanrong was furious when he heard this. No one but a woman could touch his buttocks. The Eldest Miss was both amused and annoyed, so she had to send her own personal maid to take care of him.

Huan'er, a young girl who had just come of age, had never seen such a spectacle. She blushed and agreed, but she didn't even dare to enter the room, applying the ointment with her eyes closed. Several times, she almost applied it to his face instead of his buttocks. Lin Wanrong didn't mind. It was just applying ointment to his buttocks. What was the big deal? Tomorrow, he would help her apply it too, one patch per person.

As he had suspected, the injection had indeed been administered in the wrong place. Not only did it not cause him to lose his memory, but it also made him recite the names of several beauties a hundred times a day. Even Huan'er, hearing him call out for Madam Xiao, couldn't help but feel compassionate and said, "Brother San, did you lose your mother when you were young? Why else would you miss the Madam so much?" This made him both laugh and cry.

The flower-viewing festival at the Grand Prime Minister Temple was about to begin, and the Eldest Miss had been kept on her toes for several days. Whenever she found time to visit him, she could barely sit still for a moment before someone would summon her away. This left Lin San feeling quite helpless. Since that night, the Eldest Miss would blush at his sight, as though the memory of his fingers lightly tracing her exposed bosom resurfaced. In public, she tried to maintain a perfect front, fearing that the likes of Sister Song might spot any hint of the affair. But the tenderness and charm that surfaced between her brows and eyes were undeniable, much to Lin Wanrong's amusement. He thought to himself, 'This is exactly how flirting should be - shy to speak, a show of half-hidden intentions. Now, this is fun.'

During the two days of recuperation, he pondered over the fairy sister's origins. If she really was An Biru's senior sister, the situation could become complicated. Leaving aside her martial arts skills and abilities, the immense influence she held over Qingxuan was a thorny issue. If the fairy sister had succumbed to the poison, Qingxuan might hold a grudge against him for the rest of her life. If she survived, she would undoubtedly try to drive a wedge between the two of them. The situation was difficult from both ends, leaving him in a quandary. At this moment, the only person he could

negotiate with was the vixen An Biru. However, since the Eldest Miss stumbled upon their flirtation that night, An Biru vanished like a wisp of smoke, leaving no trace of her whereabouts. He sighed to himself, never had he missed that wily vixen as much as he did now.

Within the Capital, the Grand Prime Minister Temple was the most prosperous, renowned far and wide for its incense-filled air. Its grand and splendid architecture was touted as "golden radiance outshining the misty clouds". The temple was a gathering place for high-ranking monks and famous scholars, and it also served as a bustling hub for trading and entertainment. Literati flocked in and out, as epitomized in a poem: "The Grand Prime Minister Temple is a world's marvel, its ladder to heaven lost in the clouds. Three thousand lamps light up in song, five hundred silken threads lost in the misty fog." Known as the finest temple in the land, the Grand Prime Minister Temple's reputation was indeed well-deserved.

This year, the first month arrived late. The tail end of winter was upon them, and with the warm spring breeze, the willows began to sprout new buds. It was a wonderful season, when all things revived. The annual flower viewing festival was to be held at the Grand Prime Minister Temple. During this time each year, scholars and maidens who had been dormant all winter began to emerge, ostensibly to admire the flowers, but in reality, to admire each other. This first grand event of early spring was affectionately given an interesting name: The Appreciation of Spring Festival.

"The Appreciation of Spring Festival? What a good name!" Lin San plucked a newly bloomed bayberry from the roadside and handed it to the budding young girl Huan'er with a smile. Lin Wanrong didn't know the history of the festival, but from Huan'er's explanation, he could see from the foot of the mountain that the area in front of the Grand Prime Minister Temple was bustling with people, and the maids were as beautiful as a painting. True to its name, the festival indeed celebrated the arrival of spring.

"Thank you, Brother San!" Huan'er blushed, a shy smile playing on her lips as she reached for the bayberry branch. However, Lin Wanrong, with a mischievous grin, plucked the single budding sprout from the branch and teased, "But, little Huan'er, your spring has not yet arrived. Don't be in a rush to welcome it."

"Brother San, you're so annoying!" Huan'er protested playfully. "The Eldest Miss instructed you to get to the temple early, and yet here you are, slacking off. If you miss the important affairs because of this flower-viewing festival, she won't let you off easily."

"It won't be delayed." Lin Wanrong reassured her, pointing ahead and saying, "Look, isn't that Sister Song and the others?"

Huan'er glanced in the direction he was pointing and saw Sister Song and her team distributing slips of paper to passing young ladies. Numerous women had already gathered nearby, examining the slips in their hands and whispering among themselves.

"Brother San, what are they holding?" Huan'er asked curiously.

"Oh, those are called flyers, a promotion strategy. Any lady who receives one can visit the temporary shop of the Xiao family in front of the Grand Prime Minister Temple and try out the perfume for free," Lin Wanrong explained with a smile. This rather clichéd promotional method from his time was quite innovative in this era. The concept of perfume was still novel to many, and seeing such a unique promotion sparked their interest. In no time, the area in front of the temporary tent set up by the Xiao family was packed with people.

"Huan'er, isn't this called a flower-viewing festival? Where are the flowers?" Lin Wanrong looked around curiously, only to see a sea of people, but no flowers in sight.

Huan'er giggled, "The Grand Prime Minister Temple, the flower-viewing festival - the flowers are naturally in the temple. Brother San, this festival is quite lively. You'll understand once you go in—"

"Make way, make way—" Several loud shouts interrupted Huan'er's explanation. A troop of guards slowly ascended the hill, escorting a group of palanquins that rushed forward.

The palanquins moved in line, not more than several feet apart. As Lin Wanrong's gaze swept over the middle two, his face suddenly drained of color.

Chapter 300 The Sales Pitch

The first three palanquins of the procession were quite eye-catching, and Lin Wanrong's gaze, which was malevolent, quickly fell upon the woman seated in the second soft palanquin.

The woman had red lips and a snowy complexion, an attractive figure, and her gaze flitted about. Her radiant eyes sparked with each glance, seemingly shy yet brimming with unspeakable audacity and extreme charm. She glanced around, a soft, enchanting smile blossoming on her face. The woman was none other than Sister An, whom he hadn't seen in days. Sister An seemed to have

changed, her hair was piled up high and pierced with a glittering golden hairpin featuring dragons and phoenixes. She wore two green agates inlaid in gold in her ears, her bosom ample and hips curvaceous, a figure full of allure, which was dazzling to behold.

Behind her, in another soft palanquin, sat a young nobleman. He was dashing, carefree, and extraordinary, lightly smiling at the crowd. Lin Wanrong recognized him too—it was none other than Zhao Kangning, Prince Cheng's son, with whom he had crossed swords several times in Jinling.

With Zhao Kangning present, wouldn't the person seated in the frontmost palanquin be his father, Prince Cheng?

Lin Wanrong quickly cast his eyes over to see a middle-aged man with a square face and thick eyebrows seated in the palanquin, dressed in brocade robes and a yellow cape, radiating an extraordinary aura. This, of course, was the renowned Prince Cheng, known as the Virtuous Prince. As expected of a favored son of heaven and a noble of the Empire, his form was robust, his gaze sharp. Despite the smile playing at his lips, no one dared meet his gaze, for he radiated an aura of imposing authority.

Bloody hell, this vixen finally showed up, Lin Wanrong thought with a surge of excitement, which was quickly followed by confusion. He knew that An Biru intended to use Prince Cheng to deal with her senior sister. But ever since the White Lotus Sect had been wiped out, she had lost her base of power, and even if she wanted to help Prince Cheng, she didn't have the capacity. Furthermore, without her power, she and the Prince were no longer on the same level, and she would lose all her influence over him, and may even end up under his control. Lin Wanrong had spent some time with An Biru and knew that Sister An was not one to suffer losses. She had never mentioned Prince Cheng in his presence, and just a few days ago, she had asked him to deal with her senior sister. But now, after only a few days apart, she was back with the Prince. Could they have been in a relationship all along?

He pondered over it but couldn't make heads or tails of it. He merely looked at An Biru's enchanting smile, feeling somewhat uneasy.

Zhao Kangning and his father led a procession of hundreds. Soldiers led the way, followed by various officers guarding them, their mighty march towards the mountain was quite a spectacle, attracting the attention and cheers of many.

"Look, it's Young Prince Ning," Huan'er exclaimed upon seeing Zhao Kangning, her little hands clapping excitedly and her face turning red with excitement.

Zhao Kangning waved and greeted the crowd from his palanquin, his charming, distinguished demeanor and the status of being a royal firstborn, with an illustrious family background, naturally attracted countless women. As the Young Prince waved and greeted, a series of sharp cheers erupted from the crowd, mostly from the women who had come out for the Spring Festival, dreaming of transforming from sparrows into phoenixes. Seeing their idol, how could they not go wild?

Observing Huan'er's smitten expression, Lin Wanrong shook his head in private and laughed, asking, "Huan'er, do you really think this Young Prince is that good?"

Huan'er shook her head and said, "I don't know if he's good or not, but the young prince is quite handsome and distinguished, like a fine jade in the wind. He's the prince's son, who could compare? There are rumors that our current Emperor has no sons, and wants to adopt the young prince to inherit the throne. Such a charming and powerful figure, of course everyone speaks well of him."

Inherit the throne? Lin Wanrong hummed in his heart. The young prince may have a charming exterior, but he was sly in secret. If he became the emperor, it wouldn't be a blessing for the people. However, judging from Xu Wei's attitude towards Zhao Kangning, it didn't seem like the Emperor intended to adopt him. Otherwise, why would Zhao Kangning conspire with the White Lotus rebels, and why would Xu Wei be trying so hard to diminish their influence? The adoption matter was probably the work of those who wished to muddy the waters. But court affairs were deep and complex, beyond the comprehension of ordinary folk.

Watching as Prince Cheng and his party ascended the mountain, Sister An's figure gradually receded into the distance. Lin Wanrong chuckled and asked, "Huan'er, if I stood next to the young prince, whom would you prefer?"

Huan's face reddened as she replied, "Brother San, you're naughty, asking such a question." She thought for a moment and continued, "The young prince is handsome, but he seems distant to us. Even if he looks good now, knowing someone's face doesn't mean knowing their heart. I have no idea what kind of person he truly is. How could he compare to you, Brother San? Even if you're not as handsome and elegant as the young prince, you are kind and gentle. Even when you're a bit naughty, I like you very much—"

Her voice trailed off as she spoke, appearing like a young girl in love. Lin Wanrong was disgruntled. 'Damn it, was this blasted young prince more handsome than me? What were they looking at? He's just a bit fairer than me. But my complexion represents health, something countless people are envious of and strive for.'

Lin Wanrong wanted to chat with Sister An, but seeing how close she was with Prince Cheng, he was uncertain of their relationship. If they were lovers, wouldn't it be futile and possibly embarrassing to approach her? He might even expose his intentions, causing unnecessary trouble, so he decided to wait and see.'

The Grand Prime Minister Temple was enveloped in incense smoke, with a crowd of visitors coming and going. Young men were calling out to their friends, young ladies were shy and charming; it was a bustling scene.

The flower-viewing event hadn't started yet, but the Xiaos' fragrance tasting was already in full swing. Women are naturally fond of beauty, and ladies, just done with winter, had heard of a new, special "perfume" available. They all wanted to give it a try. The Xiao family's temporary shop was conveniently located in front of the temple, and soon a long queue formed. The line was filled with young and beautiful ladies, immediately attracting numerous glances. Young men gathered around, more interested in the spectacle than the shop itself.

Furthermore, rumors were circulating that Miss Xiao from Jinling who was hosting the event outshone all the other beauties. The combination of a beautiful woman and fragrant perfume was irresistible, driving the crowd into a frenzy.

The perfume fair was remarkably straightforward in operation, each type of perfume paired with corresponding flowers. The direct comparison of the fragrance of the petals with that of the perfume was both captivating and undeniable.

The Eldest Miss held a bottle of orchid perfume, smiling as she introduced to everyone present, "This perfume is the creation of a genius within our Xiao family. It extracts the essence of hundreds of flowers, refined through an intricate process of eighty-one steps, resulting in a long-lasting, rich fragrance. It can be considered the king of flowers, the pinnacle of all fragrances. Depending on the types of flowers used, there are different varieties. For instance, this orchid perfume I'm holding gives off a delicate, invigorating scent, suitable for ladies of modest and elegant taste. Then there's the rose perfume, passionate and intense, full of floral fragrance, ideal for lively and enthusiastic ladies. And let's not forget the jasmine perfume—"

As she spoke, she uncapped the bottle of perfume. A subtle, elegant scent wafted out, like a gentle spring breeze permeating the air. It was truly regal and elegant, the king of fragrances.

"Depending on individual preferences, we have perfumes with strong, mild, and subtle scents. Ladies can choose different floral types, different scent types, according to their tastes. The application is simple, a small dab will retain its scent for two days." With a casual wave of her hand, maids came forward, hands full of various flower petals.

"Miss Xiao, what do you mean by this?" a lady asked curiously.

Xiao Yuruo gave a faint smile, "Words are empty, seeing is believing. I will apply the corresponding perfume onto these flower petals, and distribute them among you. Please compare them to the petals that have not been perfumed. The effect will be clear at a glance."

The ladies nodded in agreement. This method was excellent, simple, and direct, leaving no room for manipulation.

Maids handed out the petals to the ladies present, each selecting the ones they preferred. Bringing the petals to their noses for a light sniff, an intoxicating fragrance unique to each flower wafted up. Although made from flowers, the scent was more profound than that of the flowers themselves, making it difficult to let go after just one whiff.

"Miss Xiao, how much does a bottle of this perfume cost?" A lady, holding a bottle of rose perfume, caressed it lovingly. Her eyes sparkled with the light of deep affection as she asked anxiously.

Miss Xiao replied with a slight smile, "Only our Xiao family can manufacture this perfume. It is challenging to gather the flowers and even harder to produce the perfume. We have a limited monthly production and only offer limited sales in Jinling and Hangzhou. Currently, there is little stock in the capital, and the price has not yet been set. Therefore, at this flower-viewing event, we are not selling the perfume. We're just offering a simple introduction to everyone."

Upon hearing this, a flicker of disappointment flashed across the faces of the ladies. Some even carefully held the petals that had been perfumed, fearing they would drop.

The Eldest Miss suppressed a laugh, thinking to herself how the mastermind behind all this had such a thorough understanding of these ladies' psychology. By deliberately stating that they weren't selling today, they whetted everyone's appetite and made them appreciate the rarity of the perfume.

"However, today coincides with a flourishing era in the capital, and this grand flower appreciation event. We wish to add to the excitement, and for today, we've prepared a thousand gifts for everyone. These are various styles of perfumes, everyone please look—"

As the Eldest Miss's words fell, two maids emerged carrying colorful platters. On the platters sat tiny glass bottles, each about the size of an infant's fist. Each bottle contained a small portion of perfume. Though it wasn't much, it was enough to leave everyone in awe.

The women gasped in surprise. A thousand gifts, such an enormous gesture! Not to mention the perfume, even the intricately made little glass bottles were worth a tael of silver each.

The crowd gasped in admiration. The Xiao family was indeed generous. Just today's promotional event, which involved giving away items without making a profit, would cost them two thousand taels of silver. It was quite astonishing.

People in this era were simple-minded. They had never seen such a marketing strategy before, and the venue became a sea of excited chatter. Everyone was eager to get their hands on the free gifts. The Eldest Miss quickly announced, "Ladies, please register first, and then you can collect your gift. Thank you all for your support of the Xiao family."

Lin Wanrong, who was halfway up the hill, could see the bustling scene clearly. He couldn't help but feel satisfied. Who in the world wouldn't like a little bargain, especially women, who are the best of the bunch. A single tael of silver could make them the best promoters, and the most loyal kind at that. This business was extremely profitable.

The two thousand taels of silver for promotion, by first withholding then generously giving, intentionally not selling, but generously giving away, truly earned good fortune. It would be hard not to be praised. The reputation of the Xiao family skyrocketed, and the two thousand taels would be easily made back. His calculations were steady, there would be no mistake — when it came to understanding people, when it came to doing business, who in the world could surpass him?

Following the perfume was the promotion of soap. With the precedent of perfume, they didn't need to waste words this time. It was something people could see with their own eyes. With such grand preparations, people easily accepted this great invention. For a while, the line to receive gifts extended from the top of the hill, making for an impressive sight. Luckily, the location where the Xiao family set up the canopy was some distance from the main gate of Grand Prime Minister Temple. Otherwise, the entrance to the flower appreciation event would have been completely blocked.

While all this was happening, a woman's cry was heard: "It's Miss Xu! Miss Xu from Jinghua Academy has arrived."

Xiao Yuruo quickly raised her head and saw Miss Xu approaching with a radiant smile. She was followed by several teachers from Jinghua Academy, including Tian Wenjing, whom they had met at "Fairyland Comes with the Clouds."

"Miss Xu, how come you're here?" The Eldest Miss hurriedly welcomed her, asking softly.

Xu Zhiqing laughed, "I've thoroughly enjoyed using the perfume. Aunt Su also loves it and specially instructed me to come and thank you. I've benefited from you, how could I not lend a hand? I have some influence in the capital. Standing here might attract some more sisters for you."

Her words exuded confidence, but it wasn't bragging. The spectators seeing Xu Zhiqing arrive, started exclaiming in surprise. Miss Xu was adept at music, chess, calligraphy, painting, astronomy, geography, history, mathematics, and had unmatched beauty, she was praised as the number one extraordinary woman of Great Hua, and her influence was indeed extraordinary. Wherever she stood, she was a living signboard.

The Eldest Miss expressed her gratitude from the bottom of her heart, grabbing Xu Zhiqing's hand and saying with a smile, "If that's the case, I can't thank you enough for your kindness, sister, and also for Miss Su's generous love."

Xu Zhiqing nodded with a smile, watching the surging crowd gathering their gifts, and sighed, "The perfume is truly magnificent. Aunt Su used some, and even my father couldn't stop praising it. Miss Xiao, is the perfume really Lin San's invention? Hmm, where is Lin San? Why don't I see him?"

The Eldest Miss looked around, wondering why this man was absent at this crucial time. Could he have found another lady to get himself into trouble with on the way? Truly frustrating!

She had been considerate of Lin Wanrong's recent recovery from his severe injuries and had told him to come later in the morning. It was meant to be a polite comment, but she had actually hoped he would be by her side early. However, it seemed this man remembered only her casual words and took the chance to slack off. The sun was already high in the sky, yet there was no sign of him.

"He..." the Eldest Miss sighed helplessly, "There's no one in our family who can keep him in check. Given the time and his absence, I fear some lady is suffering his mischief again."

Xu Zhiqing couldn't help but giggle at her words, "Little sister, from the way you talk, Lin San sounds like a tyrant in your household. I can't believe that a clever girl like you can't manage him."

Young Master Ye, who was following behind Xu Zhiqing, curiously asked, "Miss Xu, who is this Lin San you're talking about? Is he the creator of this perfume?"

"It's not just the perfume," the Eldest Miss sighed softly, leaning over to Xu Zhiqing's ear, "Even the strange undergarments I sent to you and Miss Su were invented by Lin San."

"Is that true?" Xu Zhiqing asked, her face turning bright red.

The Eldest Miss nodded. Xu Zhiqing was dumbfounded for a while before she said, "No wonder my father said he is the most unfathomable man. He stole the Arabic numerals, but where did he copy this perfume and undergarments from?"

While the two ladies didn't answer Young Master Ye's question, he didn't seem awkward at all. He smiled gracefully, "Is this Miss Xiao? I am Ye Yuchuan. I've heard about Miss Xiao from Brother Tian Wenjing several times. After seeing you today, I can confirm that your reputation is not unwarranted."

Tian Wenjing was standing behind Miss Xu and Young Master Ye. He had noticed the Eldest Miss for a while and, seeing that she was free, he approached with a smile, "It's nice to see you again, Miss Xiao. It has been a few days since the lantern festival. I hope you are well?"

The Eldest Miss responded with a polite bow, "Thank you for your concern, Young Master Tian. I'm doing fine."

Tian Wenjing glanced around, noting that the Xiao family had sufficient staff and the distribution of the gifts was proceeding orderly. He offered, "Miss Xiao, do you have some spare time now? Today is the annual flower viewing festival at Grand Prime Minister Temple. There are many distinguished guests from the capital here to appreciate the flowers. It would be a shame to miss this opportunity. I would be glad to accompany you to enjoy the flowers."

Both Xu Zhiqing and Young Master Ye detected Tian Wenjing's intentions. The Eldest Miss did not answer him directly but turned to Xu Zhiqing with a smile, "Sister Xu, did you come today specifically for the flower viewing?"

Xu Zhiqing smiled, "Sort of..."

Ye Yuchuan interjected, "It's not that simple. Miss Xu personally cultivated a few flowers to display at the flower viewing festival."

The Eldest Miss's eyes widened in delight. "Really, sister?" she inquired.

Xu Zhiqing offered a soft smile. "I grow flowers merely as a hobby," she confessed. "The display is nothing noteworthy, merely an opportunity to meet like-minded people and exchange some experiences. My dear sister, if you find yourself with some spare time, why not accompany us inside to see? I anticipate that this year's flower viewing will be bustling."

The Eldest Miss heaved a sigh. "Sister, I do wish to join you, but that Lin San of ours is off gallivanting somewhere again. I've been waiting for him for a long while now, and he hasn't shown up. It's truly infuriating!" Her words, skillfully crafted, subtly rejected Tian Wenjing's kind invitation without arousing suspicion.

Tian Wenjing was left thoroughly confused. What did the invitation to view the flowers have to do with whether or not Lin San showed up? Yet, with his level of courage, he would never have dreamt that this man, Lin San, who dared to steal the Second Miss of the Xiao family, also had the Eldest Miss in his grasp.

Ye Yuchuan found the name 'Lin San' vaguely familiar but couldn't remember where he had heard it. Unable to contain his curiosity, he asked, "Miss Xiao, who exactly is this Lin San you speak of?"

Annoyed, Tian Wenjing replied, "Brother Ye, Lin San is the man who guessed Miss Xu's lantern riddle that day. According to Miss Xiao, he's also the one behind the creation of this perfume and soap."

Ye Yuchuan snapped his fingers in realization. "I remember now! Miss Xu, the man who was being disrespectful to you at the academy gate that day, was it this Lin San? He used a fake name, San Lin. He's quite a cunning fellow indeed!"

Xu Zhiqing merely shook her head and chuckled, remaining silent. The Eldest Miss snorted, "Our Lin San, although he tends to be playful and carefree, is an upright and open-hearted man. If he used a fake name, there must have been a reason, perhaps he was forced to because someone bullied him."

Both Ye Yuchuan and Tian Wenjing found it strange that the Eldest Miss was defending Lin San so fiercely. However, they assumed it was simply her protecting one of her own and decided not to dwell on it.

Curious, Xu Zhiqing glanced at the Eldest Miss and smiled. "In that case, we shall go ahead. Miss Xiao, once Lin San arrives, do make sure to come and take a look."

Looking at the long line of people queued up to collect gifts, Lin Wanrong chuckled to himself, thinking of it as his future source of income. As he started to walk up the mountain, he noticed Zhao Kangning and a few others had already dismounted their sedan and were heading towards the Grand Prime Minister Temple.

Sister An walked alongside Prince Cheng. The Prince must have made some jest, for An Biru shot him a flirtatious glance, her body trembling with her girlish laughter. Her peachy cheeks and curvy figure added to her allure, making her look exceedingly enticing.

"What a flirtatious vixen," Lin Wanrong muttered under his breath, his displeasure evident. "When she was trying to seduce me, I never saw her put so much effort into it."

"Brother San, what did you say? Something about a flirty vixen? Putting effort into what?" Huan'er, walking beside him, asked with a sweet voice.

A flush rose to Lin Wanrong's cheeks, and he chuckled awkwardly, "Oh, it's nothing. I was just saying, Huan'er, you have the potential to become a little vixen, so I was giving you some encouragement."

"Hmph!" Huan'er huffed, her cheeks tinged pink with embarrassment, and she hastened her pace, darting a few steps ahead.

As Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, preparing to chase after her, he saw Sister An glance back at him from the temple gate. Her gaze was direct, and her smile grew more enchanting than ever...