

## Finest 386

### Chapter 386 Salvaging Silver

After a bout of playfulness, Luo Ning and Miss Xu gradually calmed down. The Talented Miss Luo clung to Lin Wanrong's arm with a face filled with joy, coquettishly complaining, "Big brother, you're so bad, teasing me and Sister Xu like this. Thankfully, Sister Xu has a good temperament, otherwise, she would certainly have made a fuss with you."

Seeing Luo Ning's transition from surprise to happiness, her face still adorned with tear streaks, causing one to feel both pity and love, Lin Wanrong grinned, grabbed her hand, and gave her something. Luo Ning took a look and found it was a silver ingot and a lump of tin, the bottom of the silver stamped with the government's fire mark – it was the missing treasury silver.

Luo Ning was filled with surprise and joy, clutching the ingot tightly, tears streaming down her face, as she threw herself into Lin Wanrong's arms, sobbing, "Big brother, big brother, Father can be saved, we found it, we finally found it."

Gazing at the silver and tin in Luo Ning's hands, Miss Xu smiled and nodded, everything had indeed turned out as expected. She also felt waves of excitement; an unsolved case with only a seven-day deadline was solved by him. From reasoning to deployment, to finally finding the silver, his analysis of others' thoughts, calculation of moving distance, search for the hiding place for the silver, everything was meticulously done, gripping the heart.

Beside them, Luo Yuan suddenly jumped up, embraced Lin Wanrong's shoulders, and joyously exclaimed, "Wonderful, big brother, I knew you could do it. Brothers, come, come, follow me to salvage the silver."

Speaking, he beckoned to numerous fishermen to propel the fishing boat towards the place where the silver was buried. Xu Zhiqing hurriedly stopped him, saying, "Luo Yuan, what are you doing?"

"What else? Big brother has found the hiding place for the silver, so of course we're going to salvage it," Luo Yuan replied with great enthusiasm.

"Salvage the silver? How will you do it? Have you considered that it's 350,000 taels of silver, with countless pieces of tin bound together, weighing tens of thousands of pounds? How will you salvage it?" Miss Xu asked with a smile.

In his excitement, Luo Yuan hadn't thought of all this. Hearing Miss Xu's words, he was stunned, indeed, hundreds of thousands of taels of silver were probably buried in the mud, how was he to salvage it? He pondered for a long time without a clue, could only let out an awkward chuckle, and bashfully looked at Xu Zhiqing, "Sister Xu, what do you suggest we do to salvage it?"

"This, we need to see the specific situation underwater," Xu Zhiqing replied, smoothing her hair and glancing at Lin Wanrong, the meaning clear: please Lord Lin explain the situation in the water so they could find the right solution.

Lin Wanrong yawned, lazily saying, "Ning'er, I'm a bit tired, can I eat something and take a bath before we discuss this?"

This was clearly a refusal to give Miss Xu face, and Luo Ning's expression showed her difficulty. If she agreed with big brother, she would certainly dampen Sister Xu's enthusiasm; if she agreed with Sister Xu, she would feel sorry for big brother. Caught in this dilemma, Xu Zhiqing looked at Lin Wanrong, gritted her teeth, and huffed, "If you won't say, will I not go and explore myself? Ning'er, guard the cabin door; I'll be back soon."

She rummaged through the bundle she carried, and surprisingly took out a black diving suit, turning towards the cabin as she prepared to go underwater herself.

Who could have guessed that this girl could swim? It was impossible to imagine what her ample and voluptuous figure would look like, hidden inside the tight diving suit. It would certainly be a breathtaking sight, and Lin Wanrong, with a customary sly smile on his lips and wide-open eyes, eagerly awaited the appearance of this mermaid.

"Big brother—" Luo Ning, alarmed, quickly grabbed hold of Miss Xu, turning back to look at Lin Wanrong with a pleading expression on her face.

"Ning'er, don't beg him." Miss Xu disdainfully pouted her lips. "He acts as if he's above everyone else, commanding his soldiers with arrogance. I'll show him that we can do just as well without him."

"I, being the most shameless person in the world, don't need any manners or grace. Miss Xu thinks too highly of me," Lin Wanrong laughed, then his face turned serious. "Since Miss Xu is so interested, let me report on the matter. There are indeed three hundred and fifty thousand taels of silver underwater, but they are mixed with large quantities of tin blocks, all massive in size and heavy in weight. All the silver and tin blocks are stored in over twenty large boxes, tied together

tightly with a large net. To recover the thirty-five thousand taels of silver and tin blocks simultaneously, with our current conditions, I'm afraid it will be difficult to accomplish."

Miss Xu's brow furrowed lightly; if it were really like that, recovering the silver would indeed be a great hassle.

Luo Yuan snorted and said, "If we can't haul it all up at once, we can break it apart and haul it up piece by piece. We'll send hundreds of skilled divers, and with each one carrying up dozens of taels, we'll eventually get it all."

"Such a dull idea from a dull person," Lin Wanrong laughed, patting Luo Yuan's head. "You can't think of something smarter? A few hundred people diving together could easily hide some silver, and if there's a shortage of thousands or tens of thousands of taels, will you pay for it?"

Luo Yuan, seeing the glimmer of amusement in his big brother's eyes and sensing that he had a plan all along, suddenly had a realization. Clapping his hands, he said, "Big brother, you must have a way, right? I knew you could do it."

Luo Ning seemed to see hope as well, hugging Lin Wanrong's arm and cooing, "Big brother, do you have a plan? Tell me quickly."

With Luo Ning's sweet and cloying coquettishness, Lin Wanrong's heart softened. He rubbed his arm against her full, soft chest and chuckled into her ear, "I can tell you, but tonight you can't run away. Leave your Miss Xu aside."

Luo Ning blushed, her body twisting slightly, her soft chest pressed tightly against his arm.

Lin Wanrong gave a lustful smile, sneakily caressing Luo Ning's ample buttocks. His face turned serious as he patted his chest loudly, "Ning'er, Little Luo, don't worry, the matter of recovering the silver is on me. Alas, who made me so clever?"

When big brother agreed, Luo Ning and her brother were naturally overjoyed, and Miss Xu dared not speak. She had completely lost confidence in Lin San. She didn't know whether this person was bluffing or truly capable.

Master Lin looked around the lake impatiently and said, "Where's the boat? Where's the boat I asked for? Why hasn't Brother Hu brought it to me yet?"

"What boat?" Luo Yuan, with his keen hearing, immediately asked.

"Oh, it's nothing. Yesterday, I asked Hu Bugui to borrow two large wooden boats from the Jiangnan Navy for me, and to prepare some things. By my calculations, they should be arriving soon." Lin Wanrong shook his head and said, "How about this, Little Luo, go and hurry them along. Remember, you must find the two largest wooden boats, and they must be filled with sand. The more, the better. Also, prepare some sturdy wood and some thick and strong ropes."

"Sand, wood, ropes? Big brother, what do you need these for?" Not only was Luo Yuan dumbfounded, but even Miss Xu was stunned. What was this guy up to?

"Nonsense, what else could it be for? Of course, it's for salvaging silver." Lin Wanrong said playfully, kicking him on the buttocks, "Go and get it done quickly."

Hearing it was for salvaging silver, Luo Yuan jumped three feet high and quickly took a small boat.

Lin Wanrong found an unoccupied small boat, jumped on it, lay down in the cabin, and sighed comfortably. Luo Ning followed him, sitting beside him and gently asked, "Big brother, are you very tired?"

Lin Wanrong nodded and smiled, "I am a bit tired! I haven't been in the water for a long time, and my muscles are almost atrophying. It seems that there is some truth to the saying that life lies in movement. Ning'er, how about we do some water sports?"

Water sports? Luo Ning looked at him puzzledly, and Lin Wanrong leaned into her ear and chuckled, "You escaped last night, but not today. Ah, it's been a long time since I've tried water sports. The scenery is beautiful, and the weather is fine. It's a great opportunity for daytime indulgence."

Luo Ning was startled, her face blushing, her ears burning, and she murmured, "How can this be? It's broad daylight now, and besides, Sister Xu is resting on the opposite boat. Ah, I'm so embarrassed!"

"She can rest, and we can do our thing. Daytime indulgence is a very meaningful task. We must try hard." Master Lin chuckled lewdly, embracing Luo Ning's delicate body, his hands resting on her slender waist, and he kissed her sweet cherry lips.

The Talented Lady Luo felt her body go soft, and her brother's body was hot as fire, as if it would burn her. Thinking that her dear sister Zhiqing was on the opposite boat, possibly looking this way, she felt waves of embarrassment, yet also an indescribable thrilling pleasure.

Spring was the best season for passion. Seeing Ning'er's hesitant yet inviting expression, Master Lin couldn't resist. He gently rubbed her back and buttocks, and his two large hands moved to Luo's chest, gently kneading her soft, white breasts.

Ning'er's eyebrows furrowed slightly, her teeth lightly biting, her cheeks flushed, her breathing quickened, her body undulating, her waist swaying, and she had long forgotten where she was.

"Ning'er, Ning'er—" Xu Zhiqing's voice came from outside the cabin, and Miss Luo was startled with a scream. She saw her half-bare, mutton-fat white jade-like chest being played with by her big brother. Her beautiful cheeks instantly turned red as fire, and her cherry lips let out a soft moan. Her small fists rained down on Lin Wanrong: "Stinky big brother, naughty big brother, I'm so embarrassed!"

Miss Xu had ruined the good moment again, and the muscles on Master Lin's face twitched a few times. He pinched Ning'er's buttock and said angrily, "What grudge does this Xu girl have against me? She has ruined such a beautiful spring scene."

Ning'er chuckled and shyly said, "It's clearly you who were naughty. Why are you blaming Sister Zhiqing? She doesn't even know we're here, um—" Luo Ning covered her face and ran out, only to see Miss Xu standing on the opposite boat, looking at her with a smile that seemed to see through something.

Miss Luo's heart pounded, and her words were not as fluent: "Sister, Sister Xu, did you call me?"

Miss Xu nodded and smiled, pointing to two large ships drifting in the distance: "Go tell that shameless man that Luo Yuan has brought the big ships back."

Luo Ning looked up and saw two huge wooden ships coming from afar, with Luo Yuan standing on the bow, waving frantically at her. She quickly turned around to leave but heard Miss Xu say, "Ning'er, there's one more thing." Xu Zhiqing mysteriously smiled and pointed at Luo Ning's chest.

Miss Luo looked down and screamed, her face red as fire, and she ran back into the cabin without looking back. In her haste to come out, she had buttoned her shirt wrong, exposing a patch of white and tender chest that caught Miss Xu's eye.

"It's all your fault, all your fault!" Luo Ning hammered her big brother's chest: "Sister Xu must know everything now, and she will laugh at me."

"Laugh? What's there to laugh about?" Lin Wanrong said shamelessly: "I say, she should be envious, envious that you have such a good husband. Ning'er, since we've been found out, let's not be afraid and continue, haha."

Having a licentious day was indeed a great dream, but unfortunately, Master Lin could not fulfill it that day. Luo Yuan had arrived with two large wooden ships from the Jiangnan Navy, and Master Lin regretted that little Luo had to walk so fast, ruining his plans.

The two large ships of the Navy were more than ten feet long, broad and majestic, with a great carrying capacity. Seeing the ships filled with mud and sand, Miss Xu frowned. This guy really had two ships of mud and sand brought over; what was he going to do? She couldn't help but glance at Lin Wanrong.

Standing beside her big brother, Miss Luo was mischievous, and when she saw Sister Xu looking this way, she was immediately embarrassed and lowered her head. Her eyes, filled with a hint of spring, made her as beautiful as the goddess of the Luo River, even stunning Miss Xu.

'Ning'er is so beautiful,' she sighed softly, a trace of melancholy flashing in her eyes that she herself did not notice.

"Big brother, big brother, what do we do next?" Luo Yuan jumped down from the big ship, landing in front of Lin Wanrong, and shouted loudly.

"Don't panic. Did you bring the quality timber and strong, sturdy ropes I told you about earlier?" Master Lin was quite dissatisfied as Luo Yuan had ruined Master Lin's good plans, and he became much stricter and more demanding with his younger brother-in-law.

"These? General Hu prepared them all before going to raid the office in Zhuping County this morning. I just happened to come across these two large ships," Luo Yuan chuckled, looking quite pleased with himself, unaware that he had interrupted the romantic moment between his sister and brother-in-law.

"You're lucky, young man!" Lord Lin snorted and then laughed, saying, "Now we'll start, and I will be in command. First, bind these two large ships together, side by side, leaving about a ten-foot distance between them. Then use the quality timber you've brought to build a sturdy frame spanning the two ships. Remember, it must be strong."

Two ships bound together? And building a frame on them? Has big brother gone mad? Luo Yuan had doubts in his mind, but seeing his big brother's serious demeanor, he faithfully followed his instructions.

Two enormous wooden ships, laden with mud and sand, sunk deep into the water. Luo Yuan led the craftsmen to nail the timber tightly onto the two large ships, constructing an incredibly sturdy frame between them. Everything was completed in less than half an hour. Lin Wanrong meticulously inspected the work, even jumping on the frame to test its solidity.

Xu Zhiqing watched in puzzlement, finally unable to restrain herself from asking, "What are you doing?"

Lin Wanrong did not answer her question, instead smiling and saying, "Miss Xu, I have a serious request to make of you."

"What is it?" Miss Xu asked, perplexed.

Lin Wanrong grinned, "Next time my sweetheart and I are having a tender moment, could you please not interrupt us? Have you ever experienced a passion interrupted? It's truly torturous!"

"Pah!" Miss Xu turned away, her face red as fire, lightly stamping her foot on the ship and daring not to speak again.

Lin Wanrong took hold of the thick rope that Hu Bugui had prepared, pulling it a few times to test its strength. He nodded with a smile. Old Hu's work was reliable; this rope could even pull a train.

"The next step is crucial," Lin Wanrong said, holding the rope, his face serious. Miss Xu pricked up her ears to eavesdrop. "Luo Yuan, send two of our best swimmers underwater to tie one end of this rope to the box containing the silver. Remember, it must be secure, no slack."

Hearing the seriousness in his big brother's voice, Luo Yuan carefully explained the task to two strong men before sending them into the water. After the time it took to brew a cup of tea, they surfaced, signaling that the rope had been tied.

Lin Wanrong stepped onto the wooden frame between the two ships, finding the center, and slowly pulled the rope until several men's strength could no longer move it. He then carefully tied that end of the rope securely to the center of the frame.

Miss Xu watched his actions intently, only now starting to understand, and asked, "Are you going to use these ships to pull up the silver? But that silver is stuck in the mud at the bottom of the water, no matter how many people row the boat, they won't be able to pull it up."

"Is that so?" Master Lin chuckled, "Miss Xu is so confident? Then how about we make another bet?"

Speaking of betting, Xu Zhiqing's cheeks immediately flushed. He had already found the silver, and she had to fulfill her promise. Was she really going to let him take advantage of her? A feeling she couldn't quite describe welled up in her heart; bitter, trembling, and some taste she herself couldn't understand. Thinking of the scene where Ning'er had just run out with her clothes disheveled, she clenched her teeth and snapped, "You rogue, I won't bet with you anymore; if you don't want to tell me, just leave it at that!"

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, "It's not that I don't want to tell you. In fact, if you observe carefully, you will surely understand. Watch closely; the next step is crucial."

With a wave of his hand, Lin Wanrong shouted loudly, "Shovel the sand! Shovel all the mud and sand into the lake, and don't leave a single grain behind."

At his command, the soldiers on the boats began to pour the mud and sand from the two large wooden ships into the lake. As the mud and sand gradually decreased, the ships slowly began to rise. The rope pulling the silver became tauter, and Lin Wanrong stared intently at it, his heart pounding. 'Brother Hu, you better not be playing with me; this rope involves the lives of my father-in-law's family!'

As the mud and sand in the boats decreased, the rope became straighter, and finally, it slackened slightly. Lin Wanrong was overjoyed. It moved! It moved! The silver moved! The two strong men who had gone into the water reported, "Master, the silver box has floated up from the bottom."



"Quick, quick, pour out all the mud and sand!" Master Lin shouted urgently, and the soldiers moved even faster. When the last grain of sand fell, the silver box was already suspended in the water.

"I understand, I understand," Miss Xu exclaimed, her lips trembling with excitement, looking at Lin San with admiration in her eyes. No matter how shameless this man was, his intelligence was indeed unparalleled in the world.

"Miss Xu, what's going on?" Luo Ning murmured, "How did the silver float up? It's like a dream."

"It's not a dream; it's real. Your family's Lin San is an unparalleled genius," Xu Zhiqing nodded, "He cleverly used the buoyancy of water, poured out the mud and sand, and pulled up the silver box, suspending it in the water. This method is truly extraordinary. How did I not think of it?"

"Row the boats!" Master Lin waved his hand, and the soldiers on the two large ships began rowing, moving the wooden ships toward the shore, with the silver box slowly being pulled behind.

The nearby fishermen and common people stared in amazement, witnessing two unprecedented wonders: fish leaping through the dragon gate and silver boxes growing legs, both occurring on the same day. Was this Master Lin sent by the court a celestial being?

When the wooden ships reached the shore, Luo Yuan knew what to do without Lin Wanrong's instructions. Taking advantage of the silver box still floating in the water, everyone pulled the rope together, and the silver box emerged halfway from the water, finally touching the ground.

What came next was much simpler. Following the same method, Luo Yuan switched the rope, filled the two wooden ships with mud and sand again, and pulled back another silver box. This miraculous process left countless people in awe. If there were truly divine beings in the world, Master Lin was undoubtedly one of them.

By the time evening arrived, more than twenty silver boxes were scattered haphazardly on the shallow beach. Luo Yuan was excitedly shouting, touching one box, then another, acting as though he had never seen silver before.

Ning'er giggled charmingly, running vigorously on the sandy beach, and called out loudly to Lin Wanrong: "Big brother, Ning'er loves you! You are the most amazing person in the world!" Her radiant expression even outshone the western setting sun.

'If it weren't for darling Ning'er, I wouldn't have bothered wasting so many brain cells. Darn it, this work really isn't fit for a human being; it's worn me out!' Master Lin wiped the sweat from his forehead, his whole body soaked through, and plopped down on the ground by the shore, panting heavily.

A silken handkerchief imbued with a faint fragrance was slowly passed to him. He took it and wiped himself a few times, about to say thanks when he felt something amiss. Turning his head, he saw Miss Xu's graceful figure hurrying away, disappearing into the dim twilight.

## Chapter 387 Please Respect My Dignity

The silver chests were hauled up, and Lin Wanrong dared not delay. He immediately broke open the chests on the spot, directing the soldiers to separate the silver pieces and tin chunks. Once they were repackaged and accounted for, all three hundred and fifty thousand taels of silver were present, neither a fraction more nor less. Only then did he completely relax, sealing the treasury silver and deploying a heavy guard, with Luo Yuan personally supervising the army. It seemed unlikely anything would go wrong now.

Having completed these tasks, night had fallen. Just as Lin Wanrong was about to take a sip of water, Hu Bugui arrived on horseback. He dismounted with excitement, exclaiming, "General Lin, I heard the silver has been found. Is this true?"

Lin Wanrong laughed and waved his hand, pointing to the sealed silver chests in the field, "Could it be false? Three hundred and fifty thousand taels of silver, not a penny less, all here."

Hu Bugui's face beamed with joy. "General Lin, you are truly a remarkable person of this age. The people of Jining are spreading the word of your generosity and care for the people, saying you released three hundred thousand fish fry into Weishan Lake, nurturing hope and becoming the great benefactor of Jining County. They even say you're a celestial being descended to Earth to solve problems and save the people. As I was traveling back today, all I heard were tales of you. Ah," he shook his head in annoyance, a hint of frustration appearing on his face, "I only regret that official duties took me to confiscate something in Zhuping County's government building today, missing such a grand opportunity to witness this."

Lin Wanrong burst into laughter, "A celestial being descended to Earth? The good folks of Jining are flattering me. Don't you know my character? Eating, drinking, playing - I'm first in all of them. How can you talk about caring for the country and people, saving the masses? By the way, Brother Hu, did you find anything when you searched Zhuping County's government building?"

Hu Bugui shook his head, his face filled with annoyance. "Those wily dogs! By the time I led the soldiers there, they had already evacuated half an hour earlier. I gave a desperate chase and caught a few at the tail end, but the rest escaped."

This was expected, so Lin Wanrong just nodded, patting Hu Bugui's shoulder with a laugh. "Brother Hu, you handled this matter very well. When we get back to the capital, I'll report favorably to the Emperor. You and I will rise together, rich and prosperous, ha ha ha ha."

Hu Bugui laughed, finding Lin Wanrong's words amusing, though he admired the man's decisiveness in significant matters.

With three hundred and fifty thousand taels of treasury silver already having been stolen once, no mistakes could be made this time. With Hu Bugui overseeing things, Lin Wanrong was two hundred percent confident, especially with Luo Yuan's assistance. He finally exhaled a sigh of relief, shouting, "Bring me a horse! I need to send a report to the Emperor in the capital to share the good news!"

A clerk entered from outside the tent with pen and ink, ready to write. Lin Wanrong paced slowly, smiling, "I'm not familiar with writing petitions, so I'll leave it to you. The main point is to emphasize the hardships of this journey, tens of thousands of soldiers working day and night, and General Hu Bugui traveling a thousand miles without sleep for two nights to capture the real culprits. In short, make it long and mention the names of my brothers, so they can also be recognized by the Emperor. Consider it my way of doing right by everyone."

Hu Bugui's brows unfurled in laughter. Following General Lin was always rewarding; last time it was a military drill on the battlefield, and this time retrieving silver from the lake. Each time brought increased prestige before the Emperor. It wouldn't be more than a few years before the Emperor would recognize old Hu's name.

The scribe was a clever man too. General Lin repeatedly emphasized the importance of highlighting the many soldiers. If even the common soldiers were mentioned in the memorial, how could General Lin's name not be prominently featured? Grasping the intent, the scribe's pen moved as if divinely guided. Each paragraph began with phrases like "The General, leading by example and risking his life, personally commanding the army," and so on. He filled two pages with effusive praise for General Lin's great achievements and the people of Weishan Lake's deep admiration and support for the general.

General Lin received the paper and, without changing his expression, said, "Very objectively written! You have potential! From now on, you'll write all the battle reports." At the end of the letter, he signed his name and dispatched a messenger on a fast horse to deliver the news to the capital.

Upon returning to his mansion, he found the entrance decorated and festive, with red lanterns hung and joyful decorations everywhere. Luo Ning was outside, directing people to clean and tidy up.

"What's all this for?" Lin Wanrong asked, walking over with a smile and gently rubbing Luo Ning's waist, "Ning'er, are we celebrating something special? That's great; we'll have a wedding night again tonight!"

Luo Ning's face turned rosy, and she playfully scolded him, "Big brother, can't you be serious? Today we found the silver, and my Luo family can finally hold our heads high again. It's time for a proper celebration. And another piece of good news: Father just woke up, and he wants to see you!"

His father-in-law had woken up? Lin Wanrong thought, somewhat contemptuously, how the old man had chosen the perfect moment to awake. He quickly put on a joyful expression, "Oh, that's wonderful! Today is indeed a double celebration, Ning'er. Let's quickly go and pay our respects to your father!"

Ning'er nodded lightly, took her big brother's hand, and headed to her father's residence. Just as they reached the door, Luo Min's voice came from inside, "Is that Ning'er outside?"

"Father, big brother and I have come to see you," Luo Ning gently pushed the door open and saw Luo Min slowly sitting in a chair, smiling at them, assisted by a maid.

"Ah, Lord Luo, it's been quite some time!" Lin Wanrong greeted with a laugh, "I must admit, I've missed you a bit."

"Missed me for what?" Luo Min laughed, shaking his head, "You probably missed my daughter Ning'er, right?"

Luo Ning blushed and scolded playfully, "Father, you're teasing your daughter too!" Lin Wanrong chuckled, "I miss both of you, neither one can be missed."

Luo Min sighed deeply, "It's been months since we've seen each other, and I didn't expect our reunion to involve you and my niece Zhiqing working day and night on my behalf. I feel deeply guilty."

Seeing that Luo Min seemed to have aged considerably, without any of his previous cunning and sly demeanor, Lin Wanrong quickly reassured him with a smile, "Nonsense, we are family! Back in Jinling, you, Old Taishan, took great care of me. I should be the one to help ease your burdens now."

Upon hearing Master Lin's constant use of the term "Old Taishan" (a respectful nickname for a father-in-law), Luo Min looked at his daughter Luo Ning in surprise. Seeing her blushing cheeks and the boy's triumphant expression, he suddenly understood and chuckled bitterly to himself. 'Well, well, the rice is already cooked. Why should I be polite with this youngster?' He laughed heartily and nodded, saying, "So it is, very good, very good! My dear son-in-law, I've heard that on this journey you've leaped like a fish over the dragon gate and scooped up silver from a wooden boat. The people of Jining City praise you highly. If the Emperor hears of this, it will be no small matter. Your rise to prominence is just around the corner."

'Nonsense,' thought Master Lin, 'The Emperor's own daughter is my dear wife Xian'er. If I don't rise, who will?' Master Lin laughed heartily, looked around, and said mysteriously, "Old Taishan, you don't have to worry. The Emperor spoke to me before I left the capital."

Luo Min was overjoyed and stood up from his chair, asking excitedly, "What did the Emperor say?"

"The Emperor said that in Jining, 350,000 taels of official silver were stolen, leaving tens of thousands of soldiers without food or grain. The soldiers are stuck in the capital while the border is in urgent need, Luo Min, your guilt is truly unforgivable."

Luo Min's face turned pale, and he fell back into his chair. Lin Wanrong shook his head and sighed, "Old father-in-law, don't blame your talkative son-in-law. You've weathered great storms in Jinling. How could you let down your guard in Jining? This place is the birthplace of the White Lotus Sect, and the waters run deep. You are so upright, and many at court would seize the chance to eliminate you. How could you allow 350,000 taels of official silver to pass through your domain and allow them to stay overnight? Others would have avoided them, but you sought trouble."

Luo Min lamented, "I was confused at the time. The commander told me they needed to resupply, or the journey couldn't proceed. I allowed them to stay a night out of concern for the Emperor. How could I have known... Ah! My wise son-in-law, quickly tell me, what else did the Emperor say?"

Hearing her father and big brother discussing political matters, Miss Luo was not interested and excused herself to leave.

Seeing that old Luo was truly loyal to the Emperor, Lin Wanrong felt it inappropriate to frighten him further, "Upon hearing of the missing silver, the Emperor was furious and wanted to execute you immediately. Fortunately, Mr. Xu and I begged on your behalf, kneeling outside the palace for twelve hours until the Emperor's anger subsided. He gave you a seven-day reprieve. He said if we could find the silver within seven days, he would let bygones be bygones, and you would be reinstated. But if we couldn't, well, you know the consequences."

"Did the Emperor really say that?" Luo Min was both startled and pleased, sighing, "So, it seems I have turned misfortune into a blessing? Even if I am reinstated, how can I face the Emperor and my colleagues?"

Lin Wanrong grinned mischievously, his face full of mystery, "That? It depends on whether you still want to be an official."

"Oh, my wise son-in-law, stop playing riddles with me. I've given you my daughter, and we are family now. Help me come up with a plan." Luo Min, cunning as a fox, clearly understood his son-in-law's intentions. He grasped Master Lin's hand warmly, speaking with great affection.

'This old fellow's face was no thicker than mine,' Lin Wanrong chuckled, "As for this, it depends on how you, father-in-law, want to handle it. The silver was indeed lost in Jining territory, and you can't deny it. In my opinion, you might as well draft a confession, and honestly take responsibility for the whole matter."

"A confession?" Luo Min's face was filled with disbelief, "If I draft a confession, wouldn't I be giving Prince Cheng an excuse?"

"If you don't draft a confession, does he not have an excuse already?" Lin Wanrong patted his shoulder, "Old Taishan, don't worry, the confession is just the prelude, the more exciting part is yet to come. The silver did go missing, but didn't we find it again in less than three days? Moreover, you even raided Zhuping County government office and caught a nest of thieves—" Master Lin blinked, a smile surfacing on his face, "This group, they are remnants of the White Lotus Sect, numbering in the thousands. Old Taishan, you personally led the troops, charging to the front, killed thousands of White Lotus remnants, captured dozens of rebels, and eliminated the last influence of the White Lotus in Shandong. The silver wasn't lost, and you even managed to wipe out the White Lotus along the way, tell me, is this a fault or a merit?"

Luo Min was no fool, since his wise son-in-law credited him with the merit, he can't be modest, he immediately nodded, "It's a merit! But who knows what the Emperor thinks? Besides, it's still uncertain whether they are White Lotus rebels!"

"Whether or not they are White Lotus rebels doesn't matter, what matters is, someone else is taking the blame for you. It will silence everyone, and the Emperor can save face!" Master Lin chuckled, "Wait until the silver and rebels are escorted to the capital, and you can submit a memorial overnight, saying that although you have redeemed your sins with merit, you still feel ashamed of the Imperial grace, and ask the Emperor to let you retire. Heh heh, what do you think the consequences will be—"

"The Emperor will never let me—Brilliant!" Luo Min clapped his hands, shouting excitedly, looking Lin Wanrong up and down, "Indeed, a gentleman changes for the better every three days, and one should look at him with new eyes. Son-in-law, you've only been in the capital for a few months, and you're already so familiar with the ways of the court, surpassing this old man a hundredfold."

"That's because Old Taishan taught me well!" Master Lin said without blinking, and the two burst into laughter.

Luo Min was still recovering from a serious illness, so after a short conversation, Lin Wanrong excused himself and left the room. After looking around and not finding Luo Ning, he was about to return to his room when a young maid ran over and reported, "Sir, Sir, Miss Xu invites you!"

"Which Miss Xu?" Lin Wanrong asked curiously.

"The Miss Xu who came with you from the capital!" The young maid blinked and said, "Miss Xu says she's waiting for you in her room!"

‘Xu Zhiqing is looking for me? And in her room?’ Master Lin chuckled a few times, quickening his steps towards the backyard. Luo Ning's room was dark, seemingly unoccupied, but the room next to hers was brightly lit, a graceful shadow cast on the window screen.

Master Lin's eyes swept over the tall, firm breasts, and he swallowed silently. Recognizing a woman by her chest, there was no doubt that this was Miss Xu.

He lightly tapped on the door twice, and the room fell silent for a moment before Xu Zhiqing's voice, slightly trembling, came through, "Who, who is it?"

"Eh, it's not Ning'er?! I'm sorry; I've gone to the wrong door." Lin Wanrong gave a roguish smile and turned, pretending to leave.

The door swung open with a clatter, and Miss Xu stood in the doorway, biting her silver teeth, softly saying, "Lin – you, wait a minute!"

Lin Wanrong turned around, casting her a puzzled glance, "It's so late, Miss Xu; have you not gone to bed yet?"

Seeing his feigned ignorance, Miss Xu's heart seethed with anger. She looked around to ensure they were alone, then reached out and fiercely pulled him inside before slamming the door shut.

"You, what are you doing? Don't you dare get out of line!" Lin Wanrong's eyes widened, his face filled with fear, as he stammered.

"Get out of line?" Miss Xu was both angry and amused, and felt like giving him a hard kick. "In this world, is there anyone more reckless than you?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled lasciviously, "Miss Xu, don't hold on to my strengths. Though I may have vulnerabilities in your hands, you too have some holes that need plugging. We're even."

"Nonsense, who wants to grab your vulnerabilities? And what holes do I have?" Miss Xu sniffed, noticing his gaze wandering across her chest. Her face turned red, and she quickly turned away, her heart pounding. Silence filled the room, the only sound being their breathing.

Lin Wanrong let his eyes wander over her alluring curves, swallowing hard as he gazed at her voluptuous hips. 'Miss Xu is suitable for bearing a son,' he thought, 'there's potential here!'

"So, Miss Xu, you called me here so late at night. Do you have any instructions?" Lin Wanrong asked, pretending to be concerned while his eyes continued to explore.

"You, you must stop looking!" Miss Xu's face flushed, as she protested.

"Look, look at what?" Lin Wanrong feigned confusion. "I'm looking straight ahead; I don't see anything at all!"



Arguing with such a shameless man was pointless. Miss Xu had no way to handle him, so she sighed and thought, 'Well, he has seen it all before. What does one or two more times matter?' She spoke calmly, "Lin San, your performance today was astonishing. I underestimated you before."

"Where, where? Mutual feelings!" Lin Wanrong said, without a trace of seriousness.

"Lin San, what impression do I make in your heart? Can you tell me?" Miss Xu asked softly, sighing.

"Impression? Oh, it's big, very big!" Lin Wanrong said, wiping a bit of drool from the corner of his mouth.

"What's big?" Miss Xu asked, confused, only to understand his meaning when she noticed his lewd gaze on her chest. Her face turned bright red, and she clenched her small fist, fighting an urge to punch him.

"Lin San, I will honor our bet!" Xu Zhiqing almost bit her lip, pushing her chest out proudly, her eyes slightly closed, and long eyelashes quivering. A faint drop of moisture clung to them. Her voice trembled slightly, "Here, take it! Just please be quick!"

"Quick? Quick about what?" Lin Wanrong asked, genuinely puzzled.

"You want to tease me again?" Miss Xu's tears fell like rain, and suddenly her eyes widened as she yelled in anger, "I've agreed to your conditions, and I can fulfill them now. You wanted to touch, right? Well, here you go!"

Seeing Miss Xu's firm chest advancing straight toward him, Lord Lin's eyes widened more than that of an orangutan. Startled, he leaped back two steps, his face losing color as he exclaimed, "Miss Xu, what do you mean by this? When did I ever say I wanted to touch you—touch that? Please respect my dignity!"

## Chapter 388 Ning'er Catches the Adulterers

"Dignity? Do you have any dignity? Didn't you want to touch? Go on then, touch!" Xu Zhiqing exclaimed, her voice filled with both grief and anger. She thrust her full chest toward him, a

scornful sneer on her lips, stepping closer and closer to him. The tension and unease of the day seemed to have found an outlet, bursting forth like a breached dam on the Yangtze River, overwhelming and unstoppable.

"You, what are you doing?" A man called Lin Wanrong, terror in his eyes, retreated hastily. Xu Zhiqing appeared fearless, closing the distance further. Her soft breasts, radiating warmth, seared Lin Wanrong's nerves.

Cornered and with nowhere to retreat, Master Lin's face was confronted by a tear-streaked Xu Zhiqing. Her proud breasts were mere inches from his palm, and she coldly snorted, "Go on, touch! Once you've touched, I won't owe you anything!"

'This little girl sure is feisty, trying to force me into submission,' Lin Wanrong chuckled, no longer backing away. He grinned and said, "Miss Xu, do you really want me to touch? In that case, I won't be polite."

"Polite? When have you ever been polite?" Miss Xu seemed to have given up, her voice filled with grief and anger, "Since I lost to you, I'm prepared for this. Just consider it a mosquito bite."

Lin Wanrong laughed again, "Since Miss Xu is so committed to her promise, please close your eyes, or I might feel embarrassed."

Xu Zhiqing listened, her voice filled with sorrow, "You're the one taking advantage, what do you have to be embarrassed about? Truly the most shameless person under heaven." She tightly closed her eyes, her long eyelashes trembling slightly, her heart pounding, her chest heaving, waiting for that wicked hand to arrive.

After waiting for what seemed like forever without any movement, suddenly, a pair of large hands gently grasped her small hands. Miss Xu was startled and cried out, "You, what are you doing?"

"What am I doing? Of course, touching!" Master Lin's playful laughter rang in her ears, "Remember, keep your eyes closed, or I will really feel embarrassed!"

'Only a fool would believe you,' Miss Xu snorted, only to feel him pull her hand slowly upward, covering a patch of hot skin. She hurriedly opened her eyes and saw her hands touching Lin San's body.

"Ah," Miss Xu screamed, quickly withdrawing her hands, "What, what are you doing?"

"Fulfilling your promise!" Lin Wanrong laughed, "Miss Xu likes to be clever. That day when we made the bet, I didn't even finish my sentence before you cut me off, causing a misunderstanding. You should have thought about it; I'm such an upright person. How could I do something so shameless?"

Miss Xu was momentarily stunned before hesitatingly saying, "But didn't you want to touch—" Her face turned crimson, and she dared not continue.

This young lady, now suddenly acting shy, had been as brash as a mother monkey just a moment ago. Lin Wanrong fake-coughed twice, and said with all seriousness, "Touching must still be done. However, I will not touch you, although I wish to. Oh, oh, please forgive me, I accidentally spoke the truth." Seeing Miss Xu's eyes widen in surprise, Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Last night, I rashly barged into your room; it was a huge misunderstanding. If Miss Xu blames me for taking advantage of her, it's understandable. To express my most sincere apologies, today I'm letting loose. My only request is that Miss Xu also touch me, to take advantage of me, so we can be even and owe nothing to each other—hey, hey, what are you doing? Don't get physical; I sincerely want you to touch me!"

With a crisp crash, a teacup shattered at Lin Wanrong's feet. He quickly jumped away, only to see Miss Xu's beautiful face flushed red, her eyes filled with fury, glaring at him.

Was there really such a shameless person in the world? Was there no justice? Miss Xu was filled with both shame and anger, yet a strange feeling welled up in her heart. It was as if a tightly stretched string had suddenly snapped. It turned out that this rascal wasn't really going to touch her, and she had been letting her imagination run wild. He wanted her to touch him? No way!

Her face flushed with heat, thinking about the day's fright and fear, a surge of grievances welled up, tears brimming in her eyes. She suddenly rushed to Lin San's side, small fists pounding on him, "I'll beat you to death, you shameless, wicked thing."

Feeling her soft little fists, Lin Wanrong helplessly smiled bitterly, 'Women truly are unreasonable creatures. You are the one who misunderstood, and now you blame me?'

Miss Xu vented for a while and felt somewhat better. Then she suddenly felt something strange. Usually, Lin San, who only took advantage and never suffered a loss, how could he be so honest today and let her beat him like this? She looked up hurriedly to find Lin San leaning against the wall, smiling, but with a fatigue in his eyes that wouldn't go away.

"You, what's the matter?" Miss Xu's heart trembled as she quickly stopped her fists, examining her hands. This guy was thick-skinned; her little punches were probably not even enough to tickle him. How could he look like this?

Lin Wanrong sighed slightly, "It's nothing, just a bit tired."

Miss Xu was stunned for a moment, noticing Lin San's cracked lips, the fatigue in his eyes, and her heart suddenly tightened. She could no longer bring her little fist down. From the capital, he had traveled day and night, continuously investigating the scene and making deductions, looking for silver in the vast Weishan Lake. Fish leaping through the dragon's gate, wooden boats bringing up silver; it all sounded simple, but who knew how much effort Lin San had put in? For the past three days, he had been like an iron man, never resting, bearing a tremendous burden. Even the most resilient would wear out. What's more hateful was that he always seemed carefree, and she didn't know how he had endured it all.

Miss Xu remained silent for a long while, then stealthily withdrew her hand, turned her head, and whispered, "You, you should sit down and rest for a while."

"That's not good, is it? This is your boudoir, and we're alone together; it would not look proper!" Lin Wanrong said with a worried frown.

"You," he was born a scoundrel, his spirits rising whenever taking advantage of others was mentioned. Miss Xu was so angry that her chest quivered, pointing at his nose, she said, "A dog bites Lu Dongbin, failing to recognize a kind-hearted person. If you don't want to stay here, then leave quickly so I don't have to dirty my eyes looking at you."

The situation was grave; he couldn't just leave! Lin Wanrong chuckled, plopping himself down at the table, and playfully said, "Well then, I'll stay. It's rare that Miss Xu is so hospitable, so I must show some respect, right? Hey, is there tea? Bring some fragrant brew! And some snacks would be good too; I'm hungry after all this fuss!"

This guy was certainly making himself at home, and Miss Xu didn't know whether to laugh or to get angry. How did she end up with such a troublesome person? She shook her head in bitterness, glared at him, and turned to brew the tea.

Today had been truly exhausting, busy from morning till night, under immense mental pressure. Lin Wanrong sat at the table, dozing off, sneaking glances at Miss Xu's bustling figure. Her ink-black hair was coiled high, a jade hairpin casually inserted in her bun. Simple yet warm. Her proper purple robe and pleated skirt concealed her enticing figure, outlining her graceful curves, alluring to

the extreme. Recalling their earlier tussle, Lin Wanrong couldn't help but shake his head and chuckle. This little girl was not only well-shaped but also had a wonderful temperament. She felt truly unique!

"What are you looking at?" Seeing his sly eyes on her, although she knew exactly what he was looking at and had been appraised by him many times before, Miss Xu couldn't help but feel flustered. She placed the freshly brewed tea and snacks in front of him, and huffed heavily.

"Looking at you!" Lin Wanrong grinned, "Miss Xu, please don't misunderstand. Someone like me has transcended such base interests, purely appreciating beauty with an artistic eye—Miss Xu, could you sit a little closer so I can admire you more closely?"

"You're going to die!! Admire my head!" Miss Xu's face flushed, and she snorted, ignoring his words. 'You've transcended base interests? I think even base interests are more noble than you!'

Master Lin lifted the teacup and took a gentle sip, a faint fragrance greeted him, slightly bitter at first, then sweet, it was excellent Longjing tea. He tasted a few bites, clicking his tongue in praise, "Good tea, good tea. I didn't expect Miss Xu to have such fine Longjing. It seems I'll have to visit you again for tea."

"You wish!" Miss Xu softly said, "This is the finest Hangzhou Longjing that my father wanted me to give to Lord Luo. It's a reward from the Emperor, only seven or eight ounces in total. I fancied it, so I secretly skimmed some."

"You have a taste for it?" Lin Wanrong asked, surprised, "I didn't expect Miss Xu to have this hobby! I have a taste for it too; can you skim some more for me?"

Miss Xu glared at him, her face slightly flushed, and huffed, "Who's going to skim for you? You're dreaming! If you come to drink it again, it will be gone."

Gone after one more drink? What a pity, what a pity! Lin Wanrong held the tea bowl and drank a few more mouthfuls. The fragrant taste filled his mouth, and in a few sips, the tea cup was empty.

'Is this how one tastes tea? Drinking as if determined to finish it all in one go!' Miss Xu realized then that this fellow was like an ox gnawing on a peony, having no understanding of the art of tea. Silently, she refilled his bowl and sat beside him, watching him take a few sips before asking, "How do you feel now? Still tired?"

“With fragrant tea and a beautiful lady accompanying me, I feel much better,” Lin Wanrong yawned and chuckled. Miss Xu lightly scoffed and paid him no more attention; the room fell into a profound silence.

The two of them were accustomed to either fighting or arguing along their journey, so being in the same room and sitting together in silence was a new experience. It was not just Lin Wanrong who felt out of sorts, even Miss Xu found the atmosphere peculiar, causing her heart to race countless times. She stealthily glanced at Lin Wanrong, noticing his robe was torn and disheveled in several places, undoubtedly the result of their earlier roughhousing. Her face slightly flushed, she parted her cherry lips and whispered, “You, take off your clothes!”

Lin Wanrong, with a mouthful of tea, sprayed it out in shock and cautiously said, “No, no, I'm not ready yet?! Why don't you undress first?”

“What did you say?” Miss Xu's face turned beet red as she snapped, “You have such lewd thoughts, always thinking about who knows what. I saw your robe torn and was simply trying to help you, but you, you, you make me so angry!” She turned her head away in a huff, furious with this shameless man, wishing she could kick him a few times to vent her frustration.

‘Why didn’t this girl explain herself clearly? I got my hopes up for nothing,’ thought Lin Wanrong, his face reddening. He hurriedly waved his hands, saying, “No need, no need. I’ll have Ning’er mend it when I get back. While she's at it, she can undress too, and I’ll mend her clothes.”

Miss Xu abruptly stood up, her eyebrows slightly raised, “If I did something, I’ll take responsibility for it. I tore your clothes, so I should be the one to mend them. Otherwise, how will you explain it to Ning’er? I don’t want her to misunderstand me because of you.” As she spoke, she had already moved to Lin Wanrong’s side, her silver teeth gritted, and her small hand reached out to unbutton his robe.

“Really, there’s no need,” said Lin Wanrong, smelling the faint fragrance of a young woman coming from her and seeing her full and upright figure. He couldn’t help but feel a wave of desire, smiling broadly, “I’ll just tell Ning’er I accidentally bumped into a tree—”

Miss Xu angrily punched him, “You would lie to Ning’er? I hate you oily-tongued men who deceive us gentle women. Off with it, take it off now!”

‘Violent, she’s really violent!’ Lin Wanrong stifled a laugh, allowing her to remove his robe.

Seeing Lin San standing before her, wearing only his short undergarment and grinning, Miss Xu clutched his robe, her heart pounding and hurriedly turned away, her voice trembling, "You, why are you wearing so little?"

'Why am I wearing so little? Miss Xu, you're really something, asking such a question! If you hadn't removed my clothes, would I be displaying myself like this to you?' Lin Wanrong bitterly smiled, "I really don't know how to answer that without offending you. Please don't ask anymore, just mend my clothes quickly. Otherwise, I might freeze into an ice pop."

Miss Xu knew she had misspoken, and her cheeks immediately flushed with embarrassment, unable to suppress her shame! Seeing him sitting there, shivering and trembling, she burst into a light laugh, feeling that Lin San had never been so adorable before!

"You, you wait a moment," Miss Xu said, her face flushing. She turned to take a neatly folded silk quilt from the bed and handed it to him, speaking softly, "Put this on first. I'll return your clothes once I've mended them."

The silk quilt still carried her lingering scent, probably because Miss Xu had slept under it the night before. Lin Wanrong reluctantly accepted it, wrapping himself tightly and only revealing his head. "Miss Xu, please hurry. We're alone here, and I'm so scantily clad. If Ning'er sees us, it will be hard to avoid misunderstandings."

"I know, wrap yourself quickly, and don't catch a cold," Miss Xu replied softly, lowering her head. She took a fine embroidery needle, rubbed it against her hairpin, moistened it with her lips, and then, under the lamplight, began to mend the clothes carefully.

The two were silent, with only the sound of the needle pulling the silk thread filling the room, creating a quiet and warm atmosphere. If this shameless man could sit quietly like this every day, it wouldn't be a bad feeling. The thought startled Miss Xu, making her ears burn. She hastily lowered her head and continued her careful mending.

Looking at the beauty under the lamp, she seemed even more enchanting. Compared to women like Luo Ning, Miss Xu had an extra mature charm in both her demeanor and character. Her slender eyebrows, clear eyes, straight nose, transparent skin, tender lips, blushing cheeks, and upturned smile gave her a unique beauty, showing her strong personality, and adding a touch of charm and grace.

"Miss Xu, you are truly beautiful!" Master Lin praised sincerely.

"Ah!" Miss Xu panicked at his compliment, pricking her finger, a bead of blood slowly oozing out. Her face flushed as she softly said, "Why do you flatter me? Save those words for Ning'er."

Master Lin replied seriously, "I, Lin San, am upright and unyielding, never flattering others. Everyone knows this. When I say Miss Xu is beautiful, she is indeed beautiful. I'm not flattering, just stating the truth!"

"Nonsense! Only a fool would believe you," Xu Zhiqing turned her head away, speaking softly, "Don't distract me with your talk; I've nearly sewn these stitches in the wrong place."

Such gentle and refined Xu Zhiqing was rare to see, Lin Wanrong sighed sincerely, "Miss Xu, if you were this pleasant every day, it would be wonderful."

'If you didn't provoke me intentionally, would I make things difficult for you?' Miss Xu lowered her head in silence. Just as she was about to speak again, she saw Lin San yawn, his face showing signs of fatigue, and he soon fell asleep on the table.

'How could this man just fall asleep anywhere? What if Ning'er sees this?' Lin San, asleep, was a hundred times quieter than when awake. His mouth even dribbled a line of saliva, looking quite ridiculous. Xu Zhiqing's face blushed, and she shook her head, smiling softly as she dimmed the lamp.

"Tap" "Tap," two gentle knocks on the door, followed by a woman's voice from outside: "Sister Zhiqing, Sister Zhiqing, is big brother with you?"

"Ah!" Miss Xu was startled and stood up at once. She urgently shook the slumbering Lin Wanrong: "Wake up, wake up quickly, Ning'er is here!"

Master Lin lazily adjusted his sleeping position, mumbling, "If she's here, she's here, it's time for sleep!"

Looking at the silk quilt draped over Lin San, and then at the robe in her hands, still not mended, Miss Xu's heart pounded, her panic unbearable. How could this be good? Although she and Lin San were innocent, it was already deep into the night, and he was in her room, his clothes ragged and his eyes bleary with sleep. If Ning'er saw this, wouldn't she misunderstand completely?



"Sister Zhiqing, Sister Zhiqing, are you there?" Luo Ning's voice grew more urgent, each call like a peal of spring thunder striking at Miss Xu. She pressed her chest where her heart was beating like thunder, her voice trembling, "I'm here, I'm here, Ning'er, please wait a moment!"

Looking at the soundly sleeping Lin San, Miss Xu felt tears welling up in her eyes. Desperately, she pushed his shoulders: "Wake up quickly, Ning'er is here. Wake up, you dead pig!"

"Ning'er?" Master Lin woke up from his dream, jumping up in a start: "What's she here for? Is she going to catch us in the act?"

"Catch your head!" Miss Xu was both embarrassed and angry, and she jabbed a sewing needle into his buttocks. Master Lin leaped up, about to shout, but a warm little hand covered his mouth, Miss Xu's anxious voice saying, "Don't yell, if Ning'er hears, I could jump into the Yellow River and still not wash myself clean."

Seeing Miss Xu's eyes filled with tears, Lin Wanrong sobered up. He nodded and said, "It's alright, Ning'er won't suspect us. Just tell her we were chatting and accidentally tore some clothes, that's all!"

Miss Xu was almost overwhelmed by his words. She twisted his arm hard, tears flowing down: "Aren't you ruining me? It's all because of your damned condition that I'm in such a mess. I, Xu Zhiqing, have always been pure and dignified, how did I run into a troublemaker like you? I hate you, I hate you to death!"

Caught between a rock and a hard place, being a man was indeed difficult. Lin Wanrong asked with a bitter smile, "If you don't want me to explain to Ning'er, what should we do?"

Xu Zhiqing's intelligence and wit were instantly at work. Looking at the brocade quilt draped over him, she softly said, "Could you please endure a little discomfort and hide for a while? I'll talk to Ning'er and send her away, then you can come out."

Seeing her gaze fixed on the quilt draped over him, Lin Wanrong felt a secret delight, wondering if she was thinking of him in a certain way. But for the sake of Miss Xu's reputation, he would endure! With a lascivious grin and a face of righteousness, he declared: "Miss Xu, whatever you want me to do, I will face even fire and water without hesitation!"

"Can I please ask you to temporarily go to..." Miss Xu's face flushed in waves, seeming too embarrassed to speak. Master Lin was itching with impatience inside, urging her to speak. 'Come on, hurry up and say it. Say you want me to go to your embroidered bed to hide for a while. Oh, what's there to be shy about? I, a proud man, don't care at all, so what's there for you, a young lady from a prominent family, to care about?'

"Sister Zhiqing, what's wrong? Are you not feeling well? Why haven't you opened the door yet?" Luo Ning's voice urged once again.

Xu Zhiqing responded and glanced at Lin Wanrong, her rosy lips parting slightly, and she said softly, "Could I please ask you to hide under the bed for a while?"

"Where?" Master Lin could hardly believe his ears. 'Under the bed? How can you say that with a straight face? How can you justify this to Ning'er, to Great Hua, to me?'

"Miss Xu, I think I'd better be honest with Ning'er. I'm a grown man. Hiding under a woman's bed, would that not be inauspicious for me? How will I be able to face others, to lead others?" Master Lin's face was filled with sorrow, his heart aching as he spoke, and he headed towards the door.

"I'll die from your torment!" Miss Xu's eyes brimmed with tears as she lightly sighed and pushed him onto the embroidered bed, quickly covering him with the quilt and drawing the silk curtain. "Stay hidden in there and don't move. Once I've sent Ning'er away, you can come out. Understand?"

"Understand, understand, there's nothing unclear here." Lying on Miss Xu's embroidered bed, smelling the sweet fragrance, Master Lin blissfully self-reprimanded, 'I'm despicable, I'm sordid, to have gotten on Miss Xu's bed like this. It's so wrong.'

Miss Xu tidied up the room and wiped her eyes, thinking that everything was in order before opening the door. Luo Ning's charming face peeped in, her anxious hand grabbing Miss Xu's, "Sister Zhiqing, are you ill? Why did it take so long to open the door?"

Looking at Ning'er's beautiful face, Xu Zhiqing's cheeks burned, and she shook her head, "I'm not ill. I just lay down to sleep, but when I heard you knocking, I had to take some time to dress."

Luo Ning looked her up and down and giggled, "Sister, we're no strangers. You didn't need to dress so formally, with this lotus skirt and sleeve guards. It looks like you haven't slept at all. You could have just thrown on a nightgown. I saw the light in your room and thought you hadn't settled down, so I came to call you."

Xu Zhiqing, usually calm and composed, was made almost to crawl into the ground with embarrassment by Luo Ning's comments. She had thought everything was perfect without a trace, but Ning'er had easily spotted the flaws. Her face turned rosy, and she hurriedly said, "Oh, I had just lain down, thinking about today's silver-fishing event, and my mind was unsettled. I forgot to put out the lights, and I've made you laugh."

"That's just like me!" Luo Ning clapped her hands joyfully, her face full of delight, "I couldn't sleep, thinking about today's silver-fishing event. I wanted to talk to sister. I don't know where big brother has gone. I've looked for him all day and haven't found him. The maid said you called him, so I came over to check. Since big brother isn't here, let's chat."

Luo Ning spoke and then walked into the room. Miss Xu's heart panicked. It wasn't suitable to stop her or let her go, so she allowed her to enter. Luo Ning saw the teacup placed on the table, the lid still tilted to one side, and exclaimed, "Sister Zhiqing, did you have a guest?"

"Oh, no. Lin San came by earlier, and we talked for a bit. He left afterward. Didn't you see him?" Miss Xu Zhiqing calmly said, suppressing her nervousness.

Hearing that her big brother had been there, Luo Ning made herself at home, taking the teacup and taking a sip. She giggled, "The tea is still warm! Big brother must not have left long ago! This big brother, staying out so late at night, is there a romantic friend in Jining? Sister, since you've been in the capital for a long time, do you know if big brother has any romantic acquaintances?"

Miss Xu Zhiqing, her face flushed with embarrassment, nevertheless put on an air of indifference and laughed openly, "In the capital, I heard that Lin San from your family has quite a few romantic acquaintances. There's the Eldest Miss from the Xiao family, and even the Emperor's daughter favors him. Recently, I heard that he's been exchanging glances with a little palace maid from Goryeo named Seo Jang Geum, and they seem quite fond of each other!"

Ashamed, ashamed! Lin San shook his head from behind the curtain, hearing Miss Xu Zhiqing label him as romantic; he had barely even touched Jang Geum's little hand a few times, and he felt he had truly let her down.

"A princess?" Luo Ning was startled, and quickly grabbed Xu Zhiqing's hand, "Sister Xu, please tell me everything, how did big brother get to know the princess? This big brother, even keeping such significant matters from me, how annoying. I'll let him sleep outside tonight."

The moment the words were spoken, both women's faces turned red. Luo Ning was embarrassed for inadvertently revealing her intimate relationship with big brother. Although it had been a poorly kept secret, revealing it still felt somewhat improper. Xu Zhiqing was concerned about the phrase "Let him sleep outside." It was a situation of the speaker being unintentional and the listener having a particular interest.

Seeing that Luo Ning had no intention of leaving soon, Xu Zhiqing inwardly groaned. Her slip of the tongue had led to this unexpected situation. She quickly laughed, "What I know of his relationship with the princess is merely hearsay and not to be taken seriously. You should ask him directly."

Luo Ning nodded, smiling, "That's true. If big brother really could become a prince consort, that would be a wonderful thing."

Xu Zhiqing was taken aback, asking incredulously, "Ning'er, if Lin San became a prince consort, and a princess stole your husband, wouldn't you worry?"

"Worry, of course I would worry," Luo Ning said, blushing with a shy smile. "I won't lie to you, Sister. Seeing big brother becoming more and more outstanding, I worry more than ever that one day he might leave me. But, we women should have confidence in ourselves and learn to capture our husband's heart. Take the princess, for example. Although she is of noble birth, I, Luo Ning, have qualities that surpass her. For example, I treat big brother tenderly and affectionately, daring to do what the princess would not dare to do—"

Her face flushed a deep red, and she leaned close to Xu Zhiqing's ear, whispering something. Miss Xu blushed to her ears, and spat out, "That shameless man, to force you to do such an embarrassing thing, he is truly despicable!"

Luo Ning shook her head and smiled bashfully, "Sister, you are mistaken. It was not big brother who forced me, but I who willingly did it. Big brother was right when he said that intimacy between a couple is more beautiful than a painted brow, an essential part of human relationships. As long as the husband and wife sincerely love and cherish each other, whatever pose or position they take is all about mutual pleasure and happiness. Why shouldn't we enjoy it? Furthermore, being with Big brother, I experience an insurmountable joy. I know how to enchant him, so what's wrong with that? Once you marry and if your husband possesses big brother's capabilities, you'll naturally understand."

‘Brilliant!’ Master Lin, hiding behind the curtain, was grinning from ear to ear. He hadn't expected such wise words from the Talented Lady Luo. How joyful it was to discover her modest exterior and passionate interior! Miss Xu, you should learn from her.

Miss Xu's heart trembled, and she rushed forward to cover Luo Ning's mouth, laughing, "You reckless girl, since you've married, you've become so unrestrained! It's all Lin San's fault for spoiling you."

Luo Ning, blushing, nestled in Xu Zhiqing's embrace, confidently saying, "If being spoiled by big brother is the result, I'm willing! Though he's always lecherous, likes to bully others, and takes advantage of people, I still love his wickedness; it's extraordinary. Sister Xu, you say that I'm not inferior to others in public, and I enjoy more than others in private. With such pleasure, should I fear the princess? I can keep big brother's heart, make him happy when he's with me. Even if I spend his money on good deeds, and people call me a vase, I'm willing. Living happily and doing what one loves is not easy. I have a good husband who supports what I love to do. What's wrong with that? I want to be big brother's vase forever. Hehe, big brother taught me all this, and I think he's absolutely right."

At this point, Miss Xu couldn't even utter the word "shameless." Lin San had transcended the realm of shamelessness, and words failed to describe him.

Luo Ning talked for a while, her face beaming with joy. Being happy in spirit when good things happened, having recovered the silver and marrying the man she loved, how could she not be overjoyed? "Eh, Sister, why are you keeping the curtain closed after getting up?" Luo Ning wandered around the room and, seeing the curtain drawn by the bed, reached out to pull it.

Miss Xu's soul nearly left her body as she hurried forward, grabbing Luo Ning's hand. Her nose was tinged with a hint of sweat, "Ning'er, have the guards for the silver in the treasury been properly arranged? This time, we must be vigilant. There can be no more mishaps."

Luo Ning nodded, sitting down by the bed and smiling slightly, "Big brother has arranged everything. General Hu, leading ten thousand soldiers, will personally guard it, and Little Yuan will assist. Plus, big brother's ingenious plans are in place, so nothing will go wrong. I wonder where that stinking big brother has run off to. Sister, let's share the bed tonight and ignore him."

Miss Xu's heart leaped into her throat as she quickly sat down beside Luo Ning, her silver teeth gently biting together, and she whispered, "Ning'er, didn't you just say you wanted to treat big brother well? How come you're ignoring him now? Aren't you afraid he'll run off with someone else?"

"I am a little worried." Luo Ning nodded with a smile, her face tinged with a faint blush, looking as enchanting as a flowering begonia in spring, "But we women cannot always be at our husband's beck and call. A little coquetry, a little playfulness, can make our husband like us more. Besides, last night my husband said he wanted to try a new position with me, and also wanted me and Qiaoqiao to serve him together. Looking at his greedy expression, I'm sure no one has tried it with him before. He can't bear to leave me—ah, it's so embarrassing."

To think of such a thing, both human and divine beings would be furious! Miss Xu's face turned red, her heart pounding. If it were not for Luo Ning still sitting in front of her, she would have rushed to the bed, dragged down that charlatan, and beaten him half to death.

‘Ah, shame, shame! With so many lovers, besides Ning'er and Qiaoqiao, there really is no third one willing to join. How is sister An doing? However, with her coquettish temperament, if I tried to exclude her, she would surely fight me to the death, haha.’

Listening to Ning'er's "true confession" outside, Lord Lin on the bed was already itching with desire. Seeing the two women sitting side by side in front of the bed, their plump and fragrant buttocks hidden beneath their skirts, looking particularly tempting.

To not take advantage would make one a fool. ‘Would I, Lord Lin, take advantage? The one outside is my wife, the other her intimate friend, perfect for having an affair. If I did not make some mischief for my wife to catch, I would really be failing myself.’

Lord Lin hesitated for a moment, then thought, ‘Oh well, let's be fair about it, left hand or right hand, let's flip a coin! If the left hand won, I would touch Miss Xu once, if the right hand won, I would touch Miss Xu twice! Ning'er is my wife; I could touch her as much as I wanted under the blanket, so there is no hurry.’

He pretended to decide, and the right hand always won. It seemed it was fate's arrangement, he would touch twice. As he listened to the two women talking outside, he slowly reached out and gently touched one of the plump buttocks, silky smooth, incredibly full, and he couldn't help but press it slightly.

"Ah!" The woman exclaimed and looked at the person beside her, her face turning red, "Miss Xu, you're so naughty. How did you learn from big brother?"

Sweating, Ning'er was really sensitive, able to tell it was big brother's hand. 'Good girl, little Ning'er had developed nicely these few days, I am stunned that I couldn't distinguish these two fragrant buttocks, which is her and which is Miss Xu's, both are my successful cultivation. I wonder what Miss Xu will look like after being cultivated; I'm really looking forward to it.'

"Why would I learn from him?" Miss Xu asked in confusion.

"You, you learned to touch me like him! Big brother is always mischievous like that." Luo Ning's little face was flushed, and she playfully hit Xu Zhiqing, giggling.

Miss Xu was about to say something more when she suddenly felt a warmth on her buttocks, a hot hand touching her through her clothes, gently kneading a few times. "You naughty girl," Xu Zhiqing laughed, pinching Luo Ning's cheek, "You're being naughty too."

Luo Ning pressed her small hands with both of hers and laughed, saying, "I'm not your big brother, why would I do anything wrong?"

Xu Zhiqing wanted to continue her teasing, but suddenly felt something was amiss. Ning'er's both hands were outside, where could there be a third hand to touch her? Her face turned pale, her silver teeth clenched, and her body began to tremble slightly.

"Sister, what's wrong with you?" Luo Ning sensed something was off and hurriedly asked.

Xu Zhiqing moved her body forward a little without showing any emotion and shook her head, saying, "Oh, it's nothing. A mosquito bit me. Ning'er, why were you so eager to find Lin San earlier?"

Lin Wanrong had only reached out a few times when he saw Miss Xu move forward a little, so he also stretched his hand out. Just as he was about to touch her, he saw a small hand press down hard on his own, sharp fingernails digging into his flesh, causing him so much pain that he almost jumped out.

You touch, you touch! Miss Xu showed no mercy, her heart filled with satisfaction as if avenging a long-held grudge.

"Sister Xu, you will be returning to the capital the day after tomorrow, but big brother has not mentioned whether he will take me with him. It's so frustrating. I was in a hurry to find him to ask about this," Luo Ning pouted, grumbling.

"You've captivated his heart and soul, haven't you? Are you still afraid he won't take you with him?" Miss Xu, feeling vindicated and more at ease, spoke with a hint of laughter in her words.

"Sister, you're teasing me too," Luo Ning cooed. "I have some confidence. But I'm also worried that there may be fox temptresses more skilled than me. Big brother has told me about that little palace maid from Goryeo. Judging by his tone, she seems quite enchanting."

Xu Zhiqing laughed, patting her little face. "Don't worry, no fox temptress can compare to you, this little fox spirit. Even hearing about it makes me feel sorry for you. If your beloved big brother heard, he would cherish you even more. Wait when you get back; I guarantee he will take you with him." Luo Ning smiled sweetly, her charm seeming to melt rock. Xu Zhiqing sighed to herself, recognizing that married and unmarried women were indeed different.

When Luo Ning left and closed the door, Miss Xu could no longer hide her anger. Without even taking off her embroidered shoes, she leaped onto the bed and kicked viciously at the culprit hiding there.

Lin Wanrong was hiding under the blanket and with a gentle pull, Miss Xu fell down with a cry, landing on Lin Wanrong. They ended up face to face on the pillow, with Miss Xu's fists raining down, while Lin Wanrong just lay there, smiling.

After a while, Miss Xu's strength waned, and seeing his bright eyes staring at her, her face flushed and her heart pounded. She quickly moved away a bit. "What... what are you going to do?"

"What do you think I'm going to do?" Lin Wanrong smiled slightly, moving closer to her.

"You... you stay back!" Miss Xu exclaimed, quickly covering her chest with both hands. Her unrestrainable weakness was revealed in her eyes.

Lin Wanrong laughed, "I won't come closer; I'm leaving now, Ning'er is waiting for me!"



"You—" Seeing him serious for once, Miss Xu was unaccustomed to it. Her mouth opened, and she stared at him blankly, unable to articulate her emotions, which seemed to be a mix of joy and disappointment.

"Thank you, Miss Xu, for the embroidered bed. It's fragrant and very cozy!" Lin Wanrong chuckled as he got up, jumped down from the bed, and stretched lazily.

Miss Xu looked at him bewilderedly. He wasn't bullying her anymore, and that in itself was unfamiliar. Even being bullied had become a habit to her. Her mouth was dry, and she stammered for a while, not knowing what to say.

Lin Wanrong nodded and smiled, "Miss Xu, we are now even, and neither of us owes the other anything. Remember the past, as it is the teacher of the future. Never make such a mistake again, or you'll be the one who suffers. Also, I must reiterate that what happened last night was truly not intentional on my part."

"What about just now?" Seeing him near the door, Miss Xu couldn't hold back anymore and snapped angrily.

"Just now?" Lin Wanrong turned his head and smiled, "That was indeed intentional! One more thing, Miss Xu, you have an excellent figure!"

"Get out!" Miss Xu's cheeks flushed with anger, and in her fury, she hurled her embroidered shoe, hitting the door. The door made a faint noise, but Lin San was already gone without a trace.

Thinking of his shameless behavior, she felt as if thousands of words were stuck in her chest, not knowing where to begin. Her face burned as she bit her lip and muttered softly, "Cowardly and heartless, I despise you the most!"

Lord Lin stepped out of the room and finally exhaled a long breath. The excitement was quite thrilling, and Miss Xu's fragrant hips were truly breathtaking. However, his little Ning'er was also not bad.

Thinking of Luo Ning, his heart felt like it was on fire. Pushing open Ning'er's chamber door, he gently called, "Ning'er, Ning'er, your husband is back."

After calling twice without a response, he was puzzled. Suddenly, he heard a soft click behind him. The door was closed, and a woman with an incomparably slender figure was leaning against the door, shyly looking at him.

She was dressed in a black silk nightgown, highlighting her snow-white, tender skin. The hem only reached just below her belly, revealing two completely exposed, round, and slender jade legs, crystal clear, and alluring. Her wet hair hung to one side, droplets falling onto her snowy skin, shimmering with a colorful luster under the light. Beneath the thin clothing, two full and firm jade breasts were vaguely visible, along with the pert jade buttocks he had touched earlier.

Even more peculiar was the small dressing table beside her, on which stood a large glass mirror, allowing Lin Wanrong to clearly see both their reflections.

"Ning'er—" Lord Lin was overjoyed and ran to hug his dear girl, whispering in her ear, "Don't worry, big brother won't leave you behind. We'll go to the capital together."

Luo Ning had been waiting a long time for these words. Her heart filled with joy and surprise, she tightly hugged big brother's body and softly said, "I knew it, I knew it, big brother would hear it, big brother would take me with him."

Lord Lin was greatly alarmed and held her tender body, saying, "What, what did you say? How did you know I would hear it? Could it be—?"

Luo Ning mysteriously smiled, rubbing against his chest, allowing her wet hair to dampen her big brother's chest. "Of course I knew you were in Sister Xu's room, don't forget, whose home this is."

Sweat! He had jokingly mentioned being caught in the act, but he hadn't expected it to come true. Fortunately, Miss Xu had covered for him in every way, not knowing that everything had fallen into Ning'er's eyes.

"This, Ning'er, Miss Xu and I have nothing going on. She's just overly suspicious, worried that you would misunderstand, and that's why it turned out like this. Look at your big brother, clean and pure with her, nothing happened."

Luo Ning chuckled, lightly tapping his forehead. "Of course I know that nothing happened between you two. With Sister Xu's talent, she wouldn't be interested in you. I found it amusing watching you two act earlier."

Thank goodness, Ning'er didn't know that he had touched Miss Xu again. Lin Wanrong wiped the cold sweat from his forehead, seeing Ning'er's charming smile, feeling a burning sensation in his heart. His large hand lifted her short skirt, gently massaging her beautiful jade leg.

Feeling that compelling heat and hardness, the thin layer of clothing could no longer block his invasion. Ning'er's face was flushed like fire, leaning her body against Lin Wanrong's embrace, letting out a soft moan, and exhaling a fragrant breath. "Big brother, do you see that mirror? Ning'er wants to watch big brother dote on Ning'er! Do you like Ning'er like this? Sister Xu doesn't want you, but Ning'er loves you madly!"

Boom! An explosion in Lin Wanrong's mind. This little darling, if she wasn't a fox spirit, then there were no fox spirits in this world.

"Oh—" Gazing at herself in the mirror, positioned by big brother in a shameful posture, the Talented Lady Luo let out a low moan, her seductive eyes like silk, her blushing cheeks, enchanting and alluring as if she was drunk...

## Chapter 389 Spring Rain on the Official Road

The search for the silver had finally come to an end, providing a rare opportunity to make an official journey, and a return to familiar ground. Master Lin, naturally, would not pass up such an opportunity, and he and Ning'er thoroughly enjoyed themselves in Jining, easing her yearning heart.

The waters of Weishan Lake had long since returned to calm. Three hundred thousand fish fry had been released, to be harvested by autumn. Master Lin had accomplished a tremendous good deed, winning not only the love of the fishermen but also further captivating the infatuated Miss Luo. The several thousand taels of silver had indeed been well spent. Seizing a beautiful day, Master Lin personally rowed out on the lake, spending the day on Weishan Lake with the beguiling and beautiful Miss Luo. Boating on the water, their sensual wishes were fulfilled under the bright sun. Master Lin took out a spring-themed painting, and together they studied and emulated it, composing a song of flowers on the water. Miss Luo's passion was no empty boast, her partially exposed soft chest pressed against her husband, her speech as sweet as flowers, thoroughly captivating Master Lin's heart and soul. Facing her big brother's indecent requests, Ning'er was half-resistant, half-compliant, her face blushing, her soft sighs and sweet laughter filling the boundless Weishan Lake with the most enchanting smiles. Upon returning to shore, Miss Luo clung tightly to her big brother, her pretty face flushed, her eyes and brows overflowing with fiery passion. Her voluptuous body exuded the charm of a mature young woman, causing Master Lin to feel both arouse and love.

To find a wife like Ning'er, dignified in public and sensual in private, a genuine talented woman, how could one not be enthralled? Miss Xu, upon seeing the happiness radiating from Ning'er's eyes and face, could only sigh in emotion.

After a day's rest, and with Hu Bugui having organized the troops and stocked up on provisions, Master Lin personally led tens of thousands of soldiers to escort the recovered 350,000 taels of silver, marching grandly towards the capital city. The journey back was much more relaxed, with so many soldiers for protection, and Ning'er's presence to provide pleasant company, making it a hundred times better than the journey out.

The only dissatisfaction came from the fact that since the night she "caught him in the act," Miss Xu had completely ignored Lin San. It was as if he didn't exist, only engaging with Ning'er in casual conversation within the carriage, rarely showing herself, and thus cutting off Master Lin's desires.

"General," seeing Master Lin riding his prized steed, trailing listlessly behind the carriage, Hu Bugui spurred his horse to catch up, "Yesterday, the Emperor sent another urgent document, instructing us to hasten our journey and transport the silver quickly. General Li Tai's army is gathering, waiting for the silver for urgent use."

"There's nothing we can do to hurry," Master Lin waved his hand, looking helpless, "We must take it one step at a time, escorting these dozens of carts of silver with tens of thousands of soldiers. We are moving quickly as it is. Moreover, this silver was lost once; who knows if there are bandits waiting for us on the road? We must proceed with caution. Here's what we'll do: you send a report, stating that our army is covering over a hundred li per day, and we are rushing towards the capital."

Hu Bugui responded with an acknowledgment and passed on the order. After pondering for a moment, he looked at Lin Wanrong and said, "General, there's something that I find rather strange. Who was behind the robbery of the Shandong military pay silver? During our search for the silver, we made such a big commotion, yet the other side remained unresponsive the entire time. Could there be some sort of conspiracy afoot?"

Lin Wanrong's eyes focused intently on the path ahead, and he nodded with a sigh, "Brother Hu, you're right. We were fishing and casting nets in Jining, and the noise we made was certainly not small, yet they remained so calm. Unless they no longer want the silver, there must surely be a conspiracy hidden within this matter. That's one of the reasons I'm being so careful. Right now, Li Tai's army urgently needs the silver, and every day we delay on the road puts more pressure on him. But if we proceed recklessly, who knows what kind of tricks the enemy might be playing? It puts us in a difficult position indeed."

Hu Bugui complained, "I've led troops in battle all my life, but this is the first time I've been tasked with escorting silver. We can't move fast, but we can't stop either. It truly frustrates me."

Lin Wanrong gave a bitter smile and patted his shoulder, "What can we do? Who made us take on this responsibility? Brother Hu, look at me, I've always claimed that I don't want to get involved in these matters, and I even refused Li Tai's invitation to join the army. But what's the result? I'm still entangled in all of this, and it's even more complicated than being in the military. My fate is harder than yours!"

His words were not untrue, and Hu Bugui nodded sympathetically, a faint joy in his heart. The deeper Lin Wanrong was mired, the better, and it would be best if he led the troops straight to the northern frontier, sweeping away the humiliation of the Great Hua Empire for the past hundred years. That would be truly satisfying.

Distant thunder rumbled, and the sky gradually darkened, as heavy clouds accumulated on the horizon. Lin Wanrong glanced at the sky, frowning and shaking his head with a wry smile, "Just as I feared. Even the heavens seem to be against us, raining at this moment. This spring rain will likely persist for three to five days. The eight hundred miles from Jining to the capital will not be so peaceful, I'm afraid."

Hu Bugui also shook his head, "Damn it, I've fought so many years in the North, and returning to the capital has me out of sorts. General Lin, you wouldn't know, but when it rains in the nomads' lands, it's not like here. It comes crashing down like hailstones, then the sun shines brightly, with temperatures like fire. Not like our Jiangnan, where the rain is like a gentle woman!"

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, "Nomads' lands are quite different from here. There are great temperature differences between day and night, and the weather changes erratically, hence the saying 'Wear a fur coat in the morning, gauze by noon, and eat watermelon around a stove.' Our Jiangnan has a mild climate, which is why it's rich in fish and rice. This is the fortune of our Great Hua."

"Yes, yes, that's exactly it. General Lin, have you been to the nomads' lands? Ah, I know, it must be from your extensive reading. Your love for learning is truly admirable, General. I hold you in high esteem," Hu Bugui praised.

Lin Wanrong laughed and scolded, "Nonsense, when have you ever seen me reading a book? Damn it, besides having an interest in erotic picture albums, other leisurely books just annoy me."

His flattery landed on the wrong spot, Hu Bugui burst into hearty laughter, finding General Lin's words very much to his liking.

As the two were talking, raindrops began to fall, first fine and delicate, then growing dense. By the time it started pouring down, it was like ice knives slashing at their cheeks, causing sharp pain. Spring rain is as precious as oil, nourishing everything in the season of growth. But for Lin Wanrong, it was terrible news; he didn't know how much this continuous spring rain would delay them.

After standing in the rain for a while with Hu Bugui, Lin Wanrong waved his hand and asked, "Brother Hu, where have we reached now?"

"We are about to leave the Shandong region. This official road hasn't been repaired for many years, and it's bumpy and rugged. There's a mountain path ahead that's especially difficult to traverse!" Hu Bugui, a native of Shandong, was well acquainted with the local terrain.

Lin Wanrong nodded and said, "Right now, the enemy is hidden, and we are exposed. We can only take one step at a time. Brother Hu, send out more scouts to investigate the situation within thirty miles of the silver convoy. Instruct our brothers to be extra cautious, especially regarding the treacherous terrain, landslides, or collapses, and check for any signs of sabotage. If anything is found, sound the alarm immediately and report back at once!"

"Understood!" Seeing General Lin's serious expression, Hu Bugui dared not delay and hurriedly went off to carry out the order.

Lin Wanrong sighed deeply and was about to turn away when he suddenly felt the rain above his head stop. A small oil-paper umbrella was held over his head, and a faint, pleasant fragrance wafted from a beautiful face beside him.

"Ning'er, why did you come out? It's cold outside; go back to the carriage and take shelter from the rain," Lin Wanrong said, smiling.

Holding an umbrella in one hand and grasping him with the other, Luo Ning softly said, "Big brother, you should come inside the carriage too, so you don't get soaked."

"That's out of the question!" Lin Wanrong laughed and patted her little hand, "Ning'er, we're on a military march, and over ten thousand brothers are out in the rain. If their commander were to run away, what would they think? Have you heard of the saying 'lead by example'? It's tailor-made for me!"

Luo Ning burst into a gentle laugh at his words, her coquettish charm momentarily dumbfounding General Lin. He thought to himself, 'This young lady is certainly catching up with Sister An!'

"Sister Zhiqing is truly clever; she knew what you'd say," Luo Ning said with a sweet smile, reassuringly. "Don't worry, I'm not making it difficult for you. Miss Xu has something to discuss with you, and you surely can't ask her to come out and join you in the rain, can you?"

Something to discuss? That was odd. They had been traveling for two days, and Xu Zhiqing had acted as if Master Lin were a plague, not speaking a word to him. Why would she want to talk now, in the rain?

Lin Wanrong shook off the raindrops from his body and got into the carriage with Luo Ning. The carriage was filled with a gentle fragrance, and a small stove was burning brightly, casting a rosy glow on Luo Ning's exceptionally beautiful cheeks.

Miss Xu was seated by the carriage window, her delicate hands busy with knitting, as she lifted the curtain to gaze into the distance. Her eyes seemed misty as she softly recited, "Watching spring rain on the official road, each drop teems with emotion."

"Don't get too emotional," General Lin said, accepting the towel handed to him by Luo Ning and wiping his wet hair. He breathed on his hands, then chuckled, "If we're any more sentimental, heaven might just trap us here!"

Miss Xu's face changed, and she snapped angrily, "Why are you eavesdropping? Ning'er, this is a place for women, and it's improper to bring a man here. Send him away at once, lest he taints our carriage!"

'You care about propriety now? When you invited me to your bed, why didn't you mention that?' Lin Wanrong winked at Miss Xu and smiled mysteriously. Xu Zhiqing seemed to remember something, her small fist clenched, glaring at him fiercely, her face tinged with a blush.

Luo Ning quickly intervened, laughing, "Big brother, it's been so long since I heard Sister Xu recite poetry. Today she is in such a refined mood, and I'm delighted. 'Watching spring rain on the official road, each drop teems with emotion.' Sister Xu, you're so talented. Big brother, you should recite a poem too, about spring rain."

"Garments moisten with apricot flower rain, willow breeze on the face is not chilly. Don't admire me too much; I copied this poem!" Master Lin laughed playfully, winking at Miss Xu.

Miss Xu glared at him, "At least you know yourself a little, and you're not completely worthless. Ning'er, your big brother finally has a small virtue."

"Annoying! Big brother loves to fool around." Luo Ning giggled, giving him a flirtatious glance, then turned to Xu Zhiqing, "Sister Xu, didn't you have something to tell big brother?"

Xu Zhiqing nodded, her face growing serious. She slowly began, "Lin San, have you noticed anything unusual on our journey?"

"Unusual? What's unusual?" Master Lin asked, perplexed, "Apart from Miss Xu taking Ning'er away being a bit strange, everything else seems quite normal."

Seeing that he was not taking things seriously, Xu Zhiqing frowned and sighed, "If you don't want to listen, then forget it. Do what you need to do; I don't feel like talking to you anymore."

Miss Xu's stubbornness was rising again, and Luo Ning hurriedly signaled to her big brother. Lin Wanrong spread his hands, laughing, "Alright, I'm all ears. Miss Xu, can you tell me what's unusual?"

"As astute as you are, I don't believe you've sensed nothing at all," Miss Xu said calmly. "The greatest feeling this journey has given me is silence, too much silence, as if nothing had ever happened. We caused such a commotion in Jinling. If those thieves were really after the silver, they wouldn't remain completely unresponsive. They should at least have put up some decent resistance! For over three hundred thousand taels of silver, they could poison five thousand soldiers who had defected to them. I don't believe they'll let us transport the silver to the capital with ease."

Her words struck at the heart of Master Lin's worries. This Miss Xu, who had once resisted the northern nomads at the frontlines as a female strategist, was truly thoughtful and wise. Her insights were profound and showed great intelligence.

Seeing Lin San deep in thought but not showing the slightest surprise, Xu Zhiqing knew that this fellow had already thought of these things. With his cleverness, he must have sensed something was amiss but chose not to speak about it. Miss Xu shook her head and sighed, "It seems I was superfluous; Master Lin, you must have already made arrangements."



Lin Wanrong laughed, "Miss Xu, please don't taunt me. We're in the open, and our enemies are hidden; how would I know their plots? How could I counter them in advance? Even if they planned to rob us on the way, I wouldn't have any way to stop them."

Luo Ning was taken aback and quickly grabbed his arm, "Robbery? Surely not! We're the official army, with ten thousand troops; have those bandits really become so bold?"

Xu Zhiqing's tender jade finger lightly tapped on Luo Ning's nose, smiling lovingly, "Silly girl, it's not about numbers. If it were a head-on confrontation, they wouldn't dare come, even with ten times the courage. But attacking from the shadows is not something we can guard against. These three hundred and fifty thousand taels of silver are the first payment for hundreds of thousands of troops, vital to our plan against the northern nomads. We can't afford any mistakes. Even if they can't steal the silver, merely trapping us for a few days, delaying the deployment of the army to the border, would be a victory for them. At this time, a delay of one day means the loss of lives at the frontier."

Luo Ning hadn't expected the situation to be so serious. She stuck out her little tongue, pulling Xu Zhiqing closer and asked, "Sister, I find it strange that stealing this silver would only benefit the northern nomads. But the northern nomads are still in the north, a thousand miles away from here. Could they have wings to fly here and rob the silver? Even if they did fly over, how would the northern nomads know that we're transporting the pay to the capital?"

Clever! Right to the point! Lin Wanrong nodded at Luo Ning, who looked at him and smiled enchantingly.

This question seemed to stir up endless feelings in Miss Xu. After a long silence, she sighed, "Ning'er, you're right. Even if the northern nomads were more formidable, they could not penetrate into our great land to steal the silver. There must be traitors within our ranks, treacherous individuals who, for personal gain, would disregard the nation and conspire with the northern nomads to harm their brethren. Such treachery is like a festering sore on our body, and if not eradicated, will cause endless harm!"

"Sister, are you talking about Prince Cheng?" Luo Ning looked at Xu Zhiqing and asked tentatively.

Since they were not in the presence of outsiders, Miss Xu did not conceal the truth and helplessly nodded. Suddenly, she remembered something and her face turned pale, "Lin San, you mentioned before that the assassins who targeted the Emperor were from Dongyin. Were those same people involved in the theft of the silver?"

Seeing Lin Wanrong nod, Xu Zhiqing's face changed dramatically, murmuring, "Ambitious wolves, ambitious wolves! With northern nomads in the north and Dongyin invaders in the southeast, and treachery within, our great nation is in peril!"

Xu Zhiqing was indeed quite intelligent, connecting these sporadic clues together to see the critical point in the situation. Lin Wanrong shook his head, saying, "It's not as grave as that. The calamities brought by the Dongyin, the chaos stirred by the northern nomads; these are not new. But our Great Hua has stood for years and has always found a way to cope. Miss Xu, well-versed in history as you are, should know this even better than I. Our land has never lacked heroes and has always found a way to survive against the odds. This is an inevitable pattern, and we needn't worry too much."

Lin San's words seemed to hold some truth. The hardships in the history of the Great Hua were much more severe, but each time the country had persevered. Miss Xu glanced at him and nodded, saying, "Your words may be twisted logic, but they seem to contain some insight!"

Lin Wanrong smiled wryly, for this young lady really had a spirit of never admitting defeat. Seeing her big brother frown, Luo Ning quickly grabbed Xu Zhiqing's arm, pleading, "Sister, can you find a way to help me? This silver was lost on my father's watch, and we're three days behind schedule. We must make up for it, or my Luo family will become the eternal sinners of the dynasty."

Xu Zhiqing saw that she didn't ask Lin San for help but instead came to her, and laughed, shaking her head, "You silly girl, after marrying your husband, you've changed. For such a strenuous matter, you don't ask him but come to me. Do you care for him more than your sister?"

Luo Ning's cheeks flushed, and she quickly embraced her, acting spoiled, "Who says I don't care for Sister? I care for Sister and my husband equally. But this matter is extraordinary, so I want to ask Sister to help my husband!"

Seeing Luo Ning's infatuated appearance, Miss Xu patted her little face, helplessly saying, "I really don't know what to do with you. I don't know what's so good about him that's made our Ning'er so infatuated, unable to leave him for a moment."

"If Sister were married to big brother, Sister would understand," Luo Ning giggled, eliciting a flurry of embarrassed little punches from Xu Zhiqing. The two women wrestled in the carriage, their hairpins askew, and the front of their robes barely concealing their charming figures.

'Look not at what is improper,' thought Master Lin, sitting upright, though his eyes were rolling around, glancing at Ning'er and then Zhiqing, missing neither one.

"Enough, enough, stop messing around." Xu Zhiqing had the stronger self-control, and seeing Lin San's sly eyes, she knew he had taken advantage again. But since it wasn't the first time, she was accustomed to it. What could she do? Her face turned slightly red, and she whispered, "We are about to leave the territory of Shandong. From what I know, this border region has broken roads and complex terrain, including a rugged mountain path. If those thieves have any plans, they will surely act here. Once we cross this border, it's a straight road to the capital with no obstacles. Therefore, we must be especially careful in this hundred miles, heighten our vigilance, send out scouts thirty miles ahead, pay attention to complex areas, and watch for anything unusual."

This idea was precisely in line with Lin Wanrong's thinking, and Master Lin grinned, giving a thumbs-up, "Military Advisor Xu's insight is remarkable; I've already given these orders."

"I knew you would have everything arranged properly," Xu Zhiqing glanced at him, sighing, "With the enemy in darkness and us in the light, this is all we can do. Ning'er, I can only help him this much. How are you going to thank me?"

Luo Ning's eyes twinkled, and a coquettish smile appeared on her face. She gestured with her little finger to her big brother, "It's easy for me to thank Sister Xu! Big brother, come sleep in Sister Xu's bed for a while, and I'll mend your clothes."

"Ah—" Miss Xu's heart fluttered, blushing as she covered her cheeks, stealing a glance at Luo Ning. She saw Luo Ning's coquettish expression, seemingly an innocent remark.

Seeing Lin San's strange smile, Miss Xu's anger was directed at him, pushing him towards the outside of the carriage, "Enough talking, what are you still doing here? Go, go, Ning'er and I are going to rest!"

"Don't you want me to sleep?" Lin San inquired, puzzled.

"Scram!" Miss Xu angrily kicked, but Lin San dodged quickly, tumbling down from the carriage. Just as he was about to burst into laughter, there was a soft splash, and his feet landed in a puddle that had just formed. Rainwater splashed, dousing him head to face.

The surrounding soldiers laughed uproariously, and Lin San wiped the rainwater from his face, shouting, "What are you laughing at? Haven't you ever seen a man kicked out of bed by his wife?"

The laughter grew even louder, drowning out the sound of the falling rain. Miss Xu could only grit her teeth in anger, and she grabbed Luo Ning's hand and said sternly, "Ning'er, how can you not control him? Letting him talk nonsense like this. How can we stand it in the long run?"

Lying on the bed, Ning'er stretched her little waist lazily, replying helplessly, "Sister, you know as well as I do, once I met big brother, he took hold of me. How can I control him? Whoever wants to control him, let them do it!"

## Chapter 390 Holding Too Tightly

The spring rain lingered, continuing until evening without stopping. This chilly weather left even the horses feeling tired, to say nothing of the people. The road was muddy and difficult to travel, particularly as it ran along a section of official road that had been neglected for years and was in terrible disrepair. The carts carrying silver repeatedly became stuck in the mud, and it took the effort of soldiers to push them forward. The pace of advancement in such conditions could be imagined.

"Damn it all," spat Hu Bugui, throwing aside his rain cape and revealing a face full of thick beard. "At this rate, we won't reach the capital even if we walk for another ten days. If we miss the opportunity to resist the northern nomads, we'll be eternal criminals. What are these Shandong officials doing, eating their meals without even repairing the roads? It's so broken down that even a wild donkey wouldn't walk this path, let alone us, the imperial army!"

The soldiers under his command were temporary garrison troops from Shandong. A commander of a hundred men said with a bow, "General Hu, you haven't returned to your hometown for many years and are unaware of the situation here. Shandong's tax revenue amounts to hundreds of thousands of taels each year, but it's all taken away by the imperial court, leaving nothing behind. With the White Lotus Rebellion a few years ago and the people taxed from both ends, they are in dire straits. Even if they wanted to repair this road, the higher-ups couldn't scrape together the money. It's really a tough situation. To speak irreverently, we can only blame the great lords in the imperial court, for they never considered Shandong's local construction issues."

Discussing the court's rights and wrongs left Hu Bugui without a solution, and he could only snort, "Unlucky, truly unlucky. Following General Lin is better; as long as he's around, we brothers won't suffer. If someday he takes charge of the court, with his intelligence, raising funds for local development would be easy."

"What are you grumbling about, Brother Hu?" A clear voice came from behind. Hu Bugui turned around and couldn't help but laugh. He saw Lord Lin holding a small oil-paper umbrella that barely covered his head, pretending to be refined, looking utterly ridiculous among the army.

"We're talking about this road," Hu Bugui grumbled, helplessly saying, "It's rainy, and there's mud everywhere. The carts are stuck, and today we've only managed to cover a dozen or so miles. At this rate, we'll die before we reach the capital. Oh, General Lin, where did you find this little umbrella? Compared to your mighty stature, it's quite out of place!"

"I had no choice; my wife was worried about me, so she insisted on giving me this small umbrella. This damn little thing doesn't even shield the rain, and it's a burden to carry. If it weren't for my wife's good intentions, I would have thrown it away long ago," General Lin said, folding the umbrella that Ning'er had lovingly given him, laughing cheerfully.

"So it was Miss Luo who gave it to you. No wonder you treasure it so. To have such a beautiful companion by your side, General, you are indeed a fortunate man," Hu Bugui said, showing a knowing smile that men understand, and the two of them burst into hearty laughter.

Lin Wanrong stood firm, looking ahead. Before him stood a perilous mountain, towering into the clouds, majestic and erect, exuding an extraordinary aura. The official road wound through the mountain's waist, appearing as though it was suspended on the mountain ridge. Lin Wanrong's brows furrowed; such a vast mountain could easily conceal thousands, making the path ahead untraversable by night.

With the day turning to dusk and the storm intensifying, the advancing silver carts were facing great difficulties. Lin Wanrong pondered for a moment and resolutely said, "Brother Hu, have our men set up camp. We won't continue today. Let's station ourselves at the foot of the mountain for the night."

"So early for camping?" Hu Bugui asked, puzzled. "We've moved so slowly today that if we don't press on a bit further, I'm afraid we'll fall even more behind schedule."

"We have no choice," Lin Wanrong replied gravely. "This strong wind and heavy rain are hindering the carts and horses. And the path ahead is mountainous and treacherous, mired in mud. If we push on in the dark, the danger will be even greater. Safety comes first. Order the men to halt and set up camp, keeping a strict watch. It won't be too late to continue tomorrow morning."

Hu Bugui looked ahead and saw the winding official road extending to the mountain, rugged and hard to navigate, with the army's vanguard already at the mountain's base. Camping on the mountain while transporting three hundred and fifty thousand taels of treasury silver overnight felt unsettling. It was safer to stay at the foot of the mountain. He nodded in agreement, appreciating General Lin's wise decision.

"By the way, Brother Hu, have the scouts been sent out?" Lin Wanrong asked, seeing that Hu Bugui had passed down the order and the army had stopped.

"They're on their way; over ten small teams, more than two hundred brothers, all very sharp. They're expected to return by the latter half of tonight," Hu Bugui answered.

Lin Wanrong felt slightly more at ease. As he was about to turn back, he spotted a figure approaching from the distance, holding an oil umbrella, tiptoeing towards them.

"Miss Xu, why have you come down from the cart?" Seeing Xu Zhiqing's long skirt soaked and her hair wet with rain, Lin Wanrong was taken aback and quickly asked.

Gazing at the distant mountains, Xu Zhiqing's brows slightly furrowed, she softly said, "The mountains ahead are steep and the forests dense. We cannot proceed today; we should set up camp quickly."

Her view coincided with Lin Wanrong's. Hearing that General Lin had already ordered the encampment, Xu Zhiqing nodded, lifted her long skirt, and continued to walk through the rain.

Hu Bugui hurriedly stopped her, "Miss Xu, the camp has already been set up ahead. You should go back and rest!"

"I want to go and look at the mountain ahead," Xu Zhiqing continued walking, speaking calmly, "This is the last barrier to the capital. If the bandits make no move, they will lose their chance. I do not believe they will let go so easily."

With her determined expression and no intention to stop, Hu Bugui looked helplessly at General Lin. Lin Wanrong gave a wry smile, knowing her stubborn personality was easy to entice but hard to block. He nodded to Hu Bugui, saying, "Brother Hu, go and organize the men to station themselves. Strengthen the guard, extend the posts by two miles, and rotate the mobile sentries to patrol. We must never let our guard down at any time. I'll accompany Miss Xu to take a look ahead."

Miss Xu shook her head, snorting through her small nose, "Why would I need you to accompany me? I can go myself!"

‘You bratty girl, are you addicted to backtalk? Even rebelling now, are you?’ Lin Wanrong's face hardened, his expression stern as he said, "I said we're going, so we're going! I'm the one leading this expedition, and whether or not you like it, you must obey my command. If you dare to disobey the military order, no matter who you are, I'll spank you just the same!"

As he mentioned spanking, he couldn't help but feel a thrill, recalling the wonderful sensation from that secretive night. His eyes couldn't resist stealing a glance.

Miss Xu seemed to think of the same incident, her face heating up in anger. She lowered her head, murmuring in irritation, "Shameless!" But seeing his demeanor, so different from his usual jesting, he seemed quite authoritative, and she found herself unable to retort.

The spring rain grew heavier, showing no signs of stopping. As they continued down the slope, the water accumulated, making their progress more difficult. The soldiers ahead had stopped and were setting up camp.

After a few steps, Lin Wanrong looked back, hearing that the footsteps behind him had become more scattered. He saw Miss Xu's dress soaked through, her long hair dancing in the wind and rain. The paper umbrella had torn in several places, barely shielding her from the storm. Xu Zhiqing gritted her teeth, following him silently, her steps uneven in the puddles.

‘What a masochistic girl,’ Lin Wanrong sighed, shaking his head, taking a few steps back and offering her his umbrella. But Miss Xu stubbornly shook her head, "I don't want it! Keep it for yourself!"

Raindrops landed on her face, accentuating her clear, pristine complexion. Lin Wanrong sighed, saying, "Go back first. I'll take a look and report back to you."

"Why can you go, but I can't?" Xu Zhiqing's expression was stern, impeccable, "This is a military campaign. There's no distinction between men and women. We are equal!"

"Equal? Equal, my foot!" Seeing how obstinate the girl was, Lin Wanrong became angry and frustrated. He reached out, saying, "Give me your hand."

"What are you doing?" Seeing his face darker than the sky, Miss Xu was startled and quickly stepped back, her embroidered shoe thoroughly soaked in rainwater.

"Troublesome girl!" Lin Wanrong muttered, grabbing her small hand and leading her forward without another word.

"What are you doing? Men and women shouldn't have such close contact!" Miss Xu was both embarrassed and angry, crying out. Seeing Lin Wanrong ignoring her, pulling her along with soldiers looking at them in surprise, her face flushed with embarrassment, her voice much softer, "Don't let others see. You... you better let go of me."

After hurrying for a while, they reached the mountain path. Lin Wanrong finally released her small hand. Miss Xu was panting, her face covered with a deep blush, angrily saying, "How can you be so rude?"

'Rude? You haven't even seen the worst of it!' Lin Wanrong's face darkened, angrily retorting, "Miss Xu, I've tried to reason with you both politely and impolitely. Don't challenge my patience. Either you shut up and follow me quietly, or you go back!"

Miss Xu hummed but said nothing. Lin Wanrong glanced at her, noticing that her clothes were soaked through and her lips were turning purple from the cold, yet she stubbornly refused to utter a word. Such a woman was indeed rare! He sighed inwardly, his face contorting into a fierce expression as he growled, "Did you hear me clearly?"

Xu Zhiqing clenched her teeth and nodded. When she saw him reach out to her again, a faint blush appeared on her face, and she let him take hold of her hand. She hadn't noticed it when they were walking quickly earlier, but now as he held her rough hand, she felt a warmth spreading through her body, dispersing much of the chill. Her palm trembled slightly, and she unconsciously gripped his hand a little tighter.

The two of them stood on a steep hillside, with no one else in sight except for the faint movement of sentries in the distance. Lin Wanrong looked around at the distant green pines and cypresses, thick clouds, and the winding official road that stretched out of sight. The road was slippery with fallen pine needles and leaves, making it difficult to walk.

"What do you think of this situation?" Miss Xu asked, feeling a strange sensation in her heart as he continued to hold her hand, her face flushing with inexplicable warmth.

"I was cursing the heavens earlier, but now it seems that the gods have done us a great favor. This spring rain has come at just the right time—ah, be careful, Miss Xu. Hold my hand tightly, don't slip," Lin Wanrong said with a chuckle, lightly brushing her palm. The soft sensation made his heart flutter, and he pointed seriously at the dense trees in the distance. "This official road is tens of miles



long and winds around the mountainside. With our tens of thousands of troops stretched out, we lose the advantage of close formation, making us weak everywhere."

"Are you worried that the enemy will charge down from the mountains to fight you?" Miss Xu tried to pull her hand back but found it tightly gripped, unable to move. She could only glare at him angrily, turning her head away. 'It's his fault for holding so tightly, not mine,' she consoled herself, feeling somewhat calmer.

"Fight us? Only a fool would try to rob an official army on the road," Lin Wanrong shook his head, his face suddenly becoming serious. "Good rain knows the season, blossoming in spring! If not for this timely spring rain, the mountains and fields might already be engulfed in flames. Even with a hundred thousand soldiers, we couldn't stop such a fire. If they spread tung oil on both sides and the fire catches the wind, even with three heads and six arms, I would be helpless. Damn it, I must burn incense tonight in thanks!"

Miss Xu shot him a glance, clearly unhappy with his foul language, and snorted, "At least you have some sense, not making such a foolish mistake. We have rules when we march and fight. Not crossing bridges in snow or forests at night prevents the enemy from taking advantage. If we were reckless and overconfident, we would surely pay a heavy price."

Seeing Lin San listening to her chastisement obediently, Miss Xu felt a faint sense of joy in her heart. Although she had led a hundred thousand soldiers against foreign invaders, she had never felt such a sense of accomplishment. Teaching him alone seemed more rewarding than training a million soldiers.

'I had just taught her a lesson, and now this young lady was looking for an opportunity to educate me in return.' Seeing Miss Xu with her clothes soaking wet and her lips turning purple from the cold, Lin Wanrong wanted to spar with her verbally but couldn't find the words. He took her small hand and smiled faintly, "Let's go back quickly."

When had he become so gentle? Gazing into his eyes, filled with a fleeting expression of tender affection, Miss Xu's heart pounded in her chest. She was about to speak when Lin San's face suddenly turned serious.

In the distant sky, a flare shot up and almost immediately withered away in the wind and rain, leaving behind a trail of long green smoke.

"It's bad, something has happened!!!" Miss Xu cried out in alarm, but Lin Wanrong's loud shout to muster the troops had already resonated throughout the entire army: "Hu Bugui, assemble the soldiers!"