

## Golden 70

### Chapter Seventy: A Horrifying Experience on the Grasslands (Part Two)

The Nagqu Grassland is the main grazing area for Tibetan herders, and it was late winter, just before spring. The grass was growing very fast, and the path hadn't been used for a long time. The deeper they went into the grassland, the harder it became to distinguish the road. Through the last rays of sunlight on the horizon, Zhou Rui looked at the boundless grassland all around and parked the car on a small earthen slope about five or six meters high.

"What's wrong, Brother Zhou? Are you lost? Oh my god, it's so cold."

Liu Chuan parked the Hummer four or five meters away from the Desert Prince, jumped out of the car, but as soon as he stepped out, he shivered from the cold and quickly shrank back inside. After a while, he finally got out of the car wearing a thick military overcoat, carrying two more overcoats in his hands, which were for Zhou Rui and Zhuang Rui.

"Why is there such a big temperature difference between day and night? A light sweater was enough at noon, but it's probably below zero now. Brother Zhou, my car's GPS isn't working. How's yours?"

Liu Chuan turned up the brown fur collar of his military overcoat, tightly tucking his ears inside. As he spoke, he handed the overcoat through the car window. In early 2003, the so-called global GPS positioning only worked in big cities. On the grasslands, it was like a cell phone—unable to receive a signal.

"Well, it's unusable now. It's dark and we can't see the road. Let's spend the night here. Don't turn off your car. There's no wind today, so we don't have to worry about it starting a fire. Let's light a campfire here and barbecue something to eat. Take your coat back for them to wear. I have two coats in my car."

Zhou Rui did not take the coat Liu Chuan offered. He had prepared before coming, but only three coats. He had not expected so many people to come. Seeing that Liu Chuan was also prepared, he breathed a sigh of relief. You know, if you catch a cold or fever in the high-altitude area, it can be fatal.

Hearing that there was barbecue, the people in the Hummer got excited. Their cold resistance suddenly increased, and everyone put on a coat and got out of the car. Although they often had barbecues

outdoors, lighting a bonfire in the vast grassland, where it was as dark as ink and the surroundings were as silent as if time had stopped, would surely be a different kind of experience.

"Liu Chuan, you and Zhuang Rui help clear the grass around here. The grass on the grassland is quite dry in winter. If a fire breaks out, we'll all be cooked alive here."

Zhou Rui took out a half-meter-long entrenching tool from the trunk of the Desert Prince vehicle and started digging a hole about four or five meters away from the Hummer. He moved quickly, and with one shovel, a large clump of soil, including grass, was lifted up.

Liu Chuan agreed, ran back to the car, and when he came out, he had the two sharp machetes in his hands. After handing one to Zhuang Rui, the two began clearing the withered grass on the slope. Bai Meng'an, along with several women, gathered the cleared grass together. After about half an hour, the preparations were complete.

The grass within a dozen square meters around the car was cleared away. Zhou Rui dug a shallow pit only about thirty centimeters deep in the open space between the two cars, and then took a handful of things from the off-road vehicle.

Zhuang Rui and the others went over to take a look, and wow, there was a meter-long iron fork and more than a dozen dry branches as thick as a forearm. Liu Chuan wandered around to the back of the off-road vehicle. He just wanted to see what Zhou Rui had put in the car. He was even more prepared than him.

Liu Chuan took a bucket of spare diesel fuel from the Hummer and was about to pour it on the withered grass and branches when Zhou Rui stopped him.

"Don't touch this diesel fuel. The Hummer can't be turned off all night; this fuel is life-saving."

Although both cars had filled up with gas in Basu County, about half of the gas had been used up by the time they got here. And it would still be about four or five hours to get to Nagqu City. If they didn't conserve gas, both cars would probably break down on the way.

Using diesel fuel to start a fire was somewhat wasteful. Zhou Rui skillfully built a triangular frame with dry branches, filled it with dry grass, and lit it. First, a thick smoke rose, and soon a raging fire was burning. After the branches were lit, the campfire was already formed.

Two forked branches were placed on either side of the campfire. Zhou Rui used an iron bar to skewer the lamb he had bought from the county town and placed it on the fire. Before long, the lamb, which had been frozen solid, began to soften. Zhou Rui, who was waiting on the side, immediately brushed some cooking oil onto the lamb. Some oil dripped into the fire and made a sizzling sound. The flames flared up and shot up more than a meter high, engulfing the entire lamb.

Accompanied by sizzling smoke, a rich aroma of roasted meat wafted from the center of the campfire. This aroma was unlike anything one could find in a restaurant. Everyone sniffed, greedily inhaling the meaty fragrance. Zhou Rui was the busiest person at this moment. One hand was rapidly turning the lamb on the rack to prevent it from burning, while the other hand was constantly brushing oil and applying cumin and other spices to the lamb.

The lamb, seasoned with spices, gradually turned golden brown as Zhou Rui tossed it around, its aroma growing increasingly intense. What better way to enjoy meat than with wine? Zhuang Rui turned to get some from the car, only to find Qin Xuanbing behind him looking on expectantly, her tongue slightly dangling as she unconsciously licked her lips. Her fair, jade-like face, illuminated by the campfire, glowed with a captivating blush, leaving Zhuang Rui speechless.

"Hey, why are you glaring at Miss Qin?"

Zhuang Rui heard Liu Chuan's jarring voice, and Qin Xuanbing also saw Zhuang Rui's eager gaze, but she didn't get angry; her expression simply returned to normal, which made Zhuang Rui feel a great sense of regret.

"I'll go get the wine."

Zhuang Rui replied to Liu Chuan, then walked past Qin Xuanbing somewhat embarrassedly, carrying the case of Luzhou Laojiao that Liu Chuan had bought out of the car. Without even looking for cups, he handed one bottle each to Zhou Rui, Liu Chuan, and Bai Meng'an.

"Fifty-two degrees, the alcohol content is a bit low. I drank Luzhou Laojiao with seventy-three degrees a few years ago, but it is no longer produced now."

After Zhou Rui took the bottle, he unscrewed the cap, took a sip directly from the bottle neck, smacked his lips, and said something.

"Cough...cough, the prescription is still low, cough, cough..."

Bai Meng'an, his face flushed, held the bottle of liquor. He had just uttered a sentence when he choked back his words. He had just taken a big gulp of this Luzhou Laojiao, thinking it was XO, and had seriously underestimated this pure grain liquor.

"We want to drink too, pour me just a little bit."

Bai Meng'an's appearance didn't frighten the ladies. Bai Mengyao, Lei Lei, and Qin Xuanbing each grabbed a disposable cup and were pestering Zhuang Rui for drinks.

"Have a little, it's okay. Drinking a little in this weather can improve blood circulation and strengthen your muscles and bones. Just don't get drunk."

At this moment, Zhou Rui put down the wine bottle in his hand, grabbed one end of the iron bar with his right hand, lifted the whole roasted lamb horizontally, walked to the large canvas that Liu Chuan had spread on the ground, and with a flick of his left wrist, an inconspicuous knife, only about 20 centimeters long, with a dark surface and no luster, appeared at the tip of Zhou Rui's left finger.

Zhou Rui's left hand moved swiftly across the golden-brown roasted lamb, like a skilled butcher carving up an ox, neatly placing thin slices of lamb into several plates on the canvas, drawing loud cheers from the crowd.

The aroma of cumin powder effectively eliminated the gamey smell of the lamb. The slices of lamb were crispy on the outside and tender on the inside, and chewing them filled the mouth with fragrance. Sipping fine wine and gazing at the twinkling stars in the clear night sky, everyone's heart and mind became open and expansive when they were in this beautiful and vast grassland.

"Wood, sing a song."

Liu Chuan's bottle of Luzhou Laojiao was almost empty. He was chewing on some tender roasted mutton and mumbled something to Zhuang Rui.

"Sing?" Zhuang Rui hesitated for a moment.

"Hmm, Zhuang Rui, sing a song about the grasslands. I heard from Lei Lei that you sing well."

Qin Xuanbing unexpectedly spoke up. Along the way, she seemed to be behaving more and more like a normal person. She would often take the initiative to chat with Zhuang Rui and Liu Chuan, and occasionally make jokes. The sense of distance that kept people at arm's length had also become very faint.

"Brother Zhou, how about you sing a song from the military?"

Zhuang Rui wasn't trying to shirk responsibility; he just hadn't decided what to sing yet.

"Me? I can't do that. If I sing, I'll definitely attract a pack of wolves."

Zhou Rui, who was grilling the second lamb, made a rare joke.

"Yes, Brother Zhuang, why don't you sing a song? It would be best if it were a folk song from the grasslands."

Ever since Zhuang Rui gave up his seat in the Hummer to Bai Meng'an, Bai Meng'an has been calling Zhuang Rui his younger brother. However, he can't hold his liquor very well. After just a few sips, he was already a little tipsy. If Bai Mengyao hadn't been there to support him, he probably wouldn't have been able to sit up.

"Then I'll sing a Mongolian song."

Alcohol emboldens people, and besides, Zhuang Rui has a very deep voice and has always sung well, so he didn't refuse anymore, stood up and sang loudly.

"Beautiful grassland, my home"

The wind blows, green grass and flowers bloom everywhere

Butterflies flutter and birds sing

The horse is like a colorful cloud.

Cattle and sheep are like scattered pearls

Ah, the shepherdess sings aloud

Joyful songs fill the sky

...

Herdsmen depict a happy scene

Springtime scenery is as beautiful as a painting

Ah, the shepherdess sings aloud

Joyful songs fill the sky

The shepherdess sang loudly

Fueled by alcohol, Zhuang Rui delivered a brilliant rendition of this famous grassland folk song. His deep, resonant voice echoed across the vast grassland, captivating everyone who listened. They stopped what they were doing and watched the radiant Zhuang Rui.

"Aww... Aww... Woohoo!"

Just as Zhuang Rui's song was about to end, several wolf howls came from afar, adding a touch of mystery to the vast grassland.

Only Zhou Rui frowned, looked around, and said to Liu Chuan beside him, "Something's not right. Take Bai Meng'an to the Hummer and get the gun down."

"Hey, Wood, you're something else! You actually attracted the wolves. Grab your weapons and get them."

By this time, Bai Meng'an was completely drunk, and the howling of wolves around them rose and fell, gradually increasing in number and becoming clearer, as if they were right next to their ears. Qin Xuanbing and the others also heard it, and their faces showed surprise. Only Liu Chuan was a little excited and shouted loudly for Zhuang Rui to get his weapon.

"You guys get in the Hummer quickly, or you'll be trapped here and die if you're surrounded by wolves."

Seeing Liu Chuan supporting Bai Meng'an and slowly walking towards the Hummer, Zhou Rui stepped forward, lowered his shoulder, hoisted Bai Meng'an up by the waist, opened the car door, and threw him inside.

"Sizzle... sizzle... sizzle... sizzle"

"Brother Zhou, this SUV won't start."

Zhuang Rui reacted quickly as well. Just as Zhou Rui jumped up, he grabbed the machete beside him, not even bothering to throw away the wine bottle in his hand, and climbed into the Desert Prince. However,

no matter how he turned the key, the car only made a "hissing" sound and just wouldn't start. Zhuang Rui knew that the engine oil might have frozen after being off for a while.

"Forget about that car, hurry up and get in this one! Miss Qin, why are you getting in that car?"

Zhou Rui had already gotten into the Hummer, but when he looked around, he realized Qin Xuanbing was missing. After searching further, he found Qin Xuanbing in the SUV where Zhuang Rui was, and he couldn't help but call out anxiously.

Qin Xuanbing didn't know why she got into the car. When Zhou Rui told them to get in, she instinctively followed Zhuang Rui. Only after getting in did she realize she had gotten into the wrong car. Qin Xuanbing pushed open the car door and was about to get out when Zhuang Rui pulled her back and closed the door tightly.

"What are you doing? Let me go!"

Qin Xuanbing was caught off guard when she felt herself snuggled into Zhuang Rui's arms. Immediately, a strong smell of sweat mixed with alcohol hit her nose. Although it wasn't unpleasant, Qin Xuanbing was still a little embarrassed and annoyed. She hadn't expected Zhuang Rui to be so bold at this moment.

"Don't talk, look outside."

Zhuang Rui's voice rang in Qin Xuanbing's ear, a breath of hot air brushed past her ear, making it itch and giving her an indescribable feeling.

Following Zhuang Rui's voice, Qin Xuanbing looked outside and heard a rustling sound coming from the grass a dozen meters away, which was obviously very unusual on a windless night.

A dozen or so eerie green lights shone from the grass. Suddenly, the Hummer on the other side of the campfire lit up its six headlights, illuminating the grass in front of them as if it were daytime. At this moment, Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing could see clearly that they were wolves. A dozen or so broad-boned but emaciated prairie wolves were lying in the grass, poised to pounce.

Qin Xuanbing broke out in a cold sweat. For wolves, a distance of a dozen meters is just a leap away. If she had rashly gotten out of the car, she would probably have been attacked by these grassland wolves.

"Zhuang Rui, there are more behind him..."

The sudden burst of bright light startled the wolves, who then slowly retreated. However, Qin Xuanbing immediately noticed that many eerie green lights were also flashing in the grass behind the SUV.

"No, we must get back to the Hummer as soon as possible. If we stay any longer, we'll definitely get sick."

The SUV wasn't running, so there was no heating, and the temperature dropped rapidly. In just a few minutes, Zhuang Rui already felt his legs getting stiff.

The Hummer started moving at that moment, first driving forward a few meters, then suddenly swung, aiming its rear at the SUV's door.

"Hurry up and get on!"

Zhou Rui opened the back door of the Hummer and shouted to Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing.

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to open the door and get out of the car, several dark figures darted out of the bushes with lightning speed.