

## Golden 78

### Chapter Seventy-Eight Herdsmen

"Brother Zhou, what does 'multiple' mean?"

Liu Chuan followed behind Zhou Rui and asked him, "Ama La must be 'mother,' the universal term for mother, but with these two extra words, no one understood."

"In Tibetan, 'Duoqi' is the Tibetan Mastiff's name, meaning a large dog that is tied up at home. However, this Mastiff King cannot be tied up."

As Zhou Rui casually explained, the little girl's voice also called out to the adults inside the tent. A strong Tibetan man wearing a lambskin hat came to greet them.

Upon seeing the Tibetan man, the golden Tibetan mastiff immediately pounced on him and affectionately licked his face. Seeing the bandages wrapped around the mastiff's front paws, the man immediately understood that these guests had treated his injuries. His smile grew even brighter. For Tibetans, a purebred Tibetan mastiff holds a position in their home no less important than a family member. These guests helping the mastiff was the greatest respect they could show them.

The Tibetan man stopped five or six meters away from the group, took off his hat with his right hand, bent forward so that the hat almost touched the ground, and said after bowing, "Welcome, guests from afar. Rinchen Tsomu of the grasslands extends her sincerest welcome to you."

Everyone was surprised to hear that the Tibetan man was speaking Mandarin. Although he spoke somewhat haltingly, they all understood what he meant. However, Zhuang Rui, Liu Chuan, and the others did not know how to reciprocate the courtesy he displayed.

Zhou Rui knew that the man's gesture was a greeting that Tibetans would only give to their most honored guests or elders. He dared not be negligent, so he stepped forward, bowed in return, and said, "I apologize for disturbing the warriors of the grasslands."

At this moment, people from several tents nearby came out. From the tent where Rinchen Tsomu came out, a woman in her thirties, holding several snow-white hadas (ceremonial scarves), came out. She seemed to be Rinchen Tsomu's wife.

In some Tibetan areas where Sinicization is quite prevalent, almost every guest is presented with a hada (ceremonial scarf). However, for these grassland herders, presenting a hada signifies that the guest is the most respected person. After the couple presented hadas to each person, they then led the group into the tent.

From the outside, the tent didn't seem very big, but once everyone went inside, they discovered that the interior was quite spacious, even divided into two small rooms. A stove in the middle of the tent kept it warm, and the area for entertaining guests was large enough that a dozen people could sit comfortably without feeling crowded.

Since Rinchen Tsomu speaks Chinese, communication is not difficult. His wife is named Pema, which means lotus, while the eight or nine-year-old girl is named Dawa, which means moon. It is a family of three.

Little Dawa had several small braids in his hair, and his rosy cheeks showed obvious signs of high altitude. He tilted his head and looked at the puppy in Zhuang Rui's arms with a look of exasperation in his eyes.

Renqing Cuomu also learned about Zhuang Rui and others' experience of rescuing the golden Tibetan mastiff. After hearing Liu Chuan recount how Zhou Rui single-handedly subdued the mastiff and treated its injuries, she immediately stood up and said to a young man beside her, "Danba, tell the people in the den that I am going to hold a grand banquet today to entertain my most honored guests. Have Maqin Cidan prepare cattle and sheep so that our guests can feel the warmth of the grasslands."

The man who followed them in from another tent responded, nodded and smiled at Zhuang Rui and the others, then turned and walked out of the tent. Soon after, his shouts could be heard, and the entire tent area immediately became lively. Inside the tent, the hostess, Baima, had also prepared butter tea. She took out several small wooden bowls with silver rims and placed them in front of everyone. After the water on the stove boiled, she immediately poured tea for everyone.

Along the way, everyone heard Zhou Rui talk about the customs of the Tibetan people and knew that this tea was a must-drink, and that they had to drink more than three bowls. Apart from Zhou Rui, no one was used to this butter tea and they only managed to drink three small bowls. Liu Chuan, on the

other hand, drank five bowls by himself, praising the tea as he drank. Rinchen Tsomu looked at him with the most admiration.

Only Zhuang Rui knew that Liu Chuan had definitely set his sights on finding Tibetan mastiffs in this Tibetan area.

After Qin Xuanbing and the other girls finished their tea, they chatted with Baima. They were very interested in the decorations in the tent and kept praising the beautiful silver ornaments on Baima's head, which made Baima giggle. The tent was filled with a cheerful atmosphere.

Zhuang Rui then put the puppy in his arms on the ground. However, the little guy seemed to be too attached to Zhuang Rui, circling around him and ignoring the jerky in Xiao Dawa's hand, which amazed everyone.

"These are probably offspring from multiple births of our family members, or from crossbreeding with other families."

After examining the puppy, Renqing Cuomu said uncertainly, "Tibetan mastiffs only have one estrus cycle in winter. His family's dogs are the kings of the area, with many mates, producing many puppies every year. In this litter, only the best puppies are kept; the rest are abandoned."

Zhuang Rui wasn't disappointed when he heard this. He was growing to like this intelligent little guy more and more. Besides, large dogs weren't allowed in the city, so he wouldn't be lonely with this little guy around after returning to Zhonghai.

"Brother Renqing Cuomu, everything is ready. Please come over, guests."

The thick curtain of the tent was lifted, and the Tibetan man from before walked in.

After everyone went out, they arrived at the center of the den and found a large tent, more than a hundred square meters in size, set up in the open space there. Many people were busy going in and out, and the shouts of slaughtering cattle and sheep could be heard nearby. A group of Tibetan dogs surrounded the area, picking up the livers of cattle and sheep that had been thrown out.

Inside the tent, a long row of tables and chairs had already been set up. Zhuang Rui and the others were seated and accompanied by Baima, while Renqing Cuomu stood at the tent entrance to greet the guests. Soon, everyone in the tent gathered around.

Some of the herders who understood Mandarin gathered around Zhuang Rui and his group, listening to Liu Chuan's boastful talk that left these simple men bewildered. At one point, he even changed the story of Wu Song fighting the tiger to Zhuang Rui killing a wolf, which led to some young Tibetans running up to Zhuang Rui, giving him a thumbs up, and patting him on the shoulder.

After a while, all the guests invited by Renqing Cuomu arrived. He stood up and gave a toast, then toasted Zhuang Rui and the others. Even the ladies, including Qin Xuanbing, were not spared, although their glasses were smaller. They all followed Zhou Rui's actions, taking the glasses with both hands, then holding the glass in one hand and dipping the middle finger of the other hand into the glass, then flicking it upwards with their thumb and middle finger, signifying an offering to the gods. They then did a second and a third flick, respectively, to the earth and to the Buddha.

There are also specific rules for drinking alcohol. You should first take a small sip, and then Rinchen Tsomu will immediately pour more wine to fill the cup. Then you should take a second sip, and then the cup will be filled again. After that, you have to drink the entire cup of wine in one gulp.

Seeing these visitors showing such respect for their customs, the Tibetan men began to sing, while some young Tibetan women went to the center of the area to dance. For a time, the place was filled with singing and dancing, creating a lively and festive atmosphere.

The subsequent whole roasted lamb, prepared in its original flavor, was a delight for everyone. The banquet lasted for two or three hours before it finally ended. Slightly tipsy, Liu Chuan presented the wolf pelts to the host, Renqing Cuomu, with both hands. This drew envious glances from all the guests, as such a gift was rare on the grasslands and demonstrated the guests' respect for their host.

As the host, Rinchen Tsomu had also drunk quite a bit. When she stood up, she was already a little unsteady, but she looked very happy. After saying something to Pema, she accepted the gift from Liu Chuan with both hands. For Tibetans, a guest's gift is a token of friendship and cannot be refused.

At this moment, the golden Tibetan mastiff suddenly ran in, first rubbing its head against Zhuang Rui before lying down at Renqing Cuomu's feet. This scene amazed everyone in the tent. Everyone knew that Duoqi from Renqing Cuomu's family was the most noble, and he ignored everyone except Renqing

Cuomu's family. Moreover, these guests were all brought by Duoqi. Now, it was actually showing goodwill to Zhuang Rui, which made everyone's attitude towards Zhuang Rui even more respectful.

"Brother Liu Chuan, Duoqi are our friends. We hope you will treat them well in the future. The Snow Mountain Goddess will bless you."

Little Dawa followed the golden Tibetan mastiff into the tent, carrying two small, black puppies in her arms. Liu Chuan's eyes lit up. Sure enough, after Renqing Cuomu took the puppies, she gave them back to Liu Chuan as a gift. This immediately sobered Liu Chuan up, and he couldn't wait to put the two Tibetan mastiffs, who hadn't even opened their eyes yet, back into the incubator he had prepared in the Hummer.

These two Tibetan Mastiff puppies are descendants of that Golden Mastiff King. Even though the female mastiff they mated with wasn't of pure breed, these two puppies are still priceless, which is why Liu Chuan acted that way.

"Brother Renqing Cuomu, could you please let us witness the horsemanship of the grassland warriors?"

After Liu Chuan and Renqing Cuomu finished exchanging gifts, Zhuang Rui spoke to his master.

"No problem!" Renqing Cuomu readily agreed and immediately had someone make the arrangements.

The Tibetan people's winter homes are also built in a place surrounded by mountains on three sides, which can not only shelter them from the wind, but also effectively prevent wolf attacks. However, after leaving the mountain pass, there is a vast grassland with no trees, but herds of cattle and sheep. Flocks of sheep and horses are like rolling clouds dotting the distant mountains and nearby waters. The white clouds in the blue sky reflect each other, making it almost indistinguishable, as if in a dream.

When Liu Chuan reached the village entrance, he put the two Tibetan mastiffs into the Hummer. Zhuang Rui, on the other hand, held the little dog the whole time. He had an arm injury and couldn't ride a horse. His words earlier were actually for Qin Xuanbing. Over the past few days, he had learned that Qin Xuanbing loved riding horses.

At this moment, Little Dawa, sitting on a horse followed by several tall horses, came to the side of the group.

"Brother Liu Chuan, how about we go for a horse race?"

After Renqing Cuomu mounted a horse, she spoke to Liu Chuan.

Liu Chuan had only ever taken photos riding on those toothless old horses in the park, so he didn't dare to accept the challenge. However, Qin Xuanbing said from the side, "I'll compete."

"Okay, you're the Bam of women, but you can try to compete with Dawa."

In Tibetan, "Bamu" means "heroine," but although Rinchen Tsomu said this, she refused to compete with Qin Xuanbing and instead put her own daughter forward, which is also a source of pride for Tibetan men.

Qin Xuanbing hesitated. Comparing herself to an eight or nine-year-old child would be embarrassing, even if she won. Little did she know that children from Tibetan herder families grew up on horseback from a young age, and their skills were comparable to those of professional horse racers.

Dawa's mother, Baima, came over carrying several saddles. After saddled a pure white horse, she led it to Qin Xuanbing. Looking at the tall and handsome white horse and the boundless grassland, Qin Xuanbing forgot that she was competing with little Dawa and jumped on the horse.

Little Dawa rode a chestnut horse, and once he picked up speed, he was like a red lightning bolt darting across the green grass. Qin Xuanbing's skills were really good; she managed to keep up closely behind Dawa without being left behind. The two figures, one red and one white, chased each other across the grassland.

At this moment, apart from Zhuang Rui, the others were also on horseback. Renqing Cuomu whistled and charged ahead first, followed closely by Zhou Rui, and then Bai Meng'an. His horsemanship was surprisingly good, and his movements were standard and he never fell behind. Only Liu Chuan and Lei Lei were a bit disheveled, their bodies swaying from side to side on their horses, which made Zhuang Rui laugh heartily from below.

Upon hearing Renqing Cuomu's whistle, the golden Tibetan mastiff also rushed out, and for a moment, the neighing of horses, the barking of dogs, and the hearty laughter of the crowd echoed across the grassland.

After leaving the winter camp that filled everyone with wonderful memories, it was already past three o'clock in the afternoon. However, it was only a little over four hours away from Nagqu, so they could easily make it there to spend the night. Moreover, Liu Chuan had achieved his goal of going to Tibet. The Hummer was filled with laughter and joy.

The ladies were delighted that before they left, Pema gave each of them a beautiful piece of silver jewelry. Although it might not be very expensive, it was something that could never be bought elsewhere, which made them feel that their trip was worthwhile.

Bai Meng'an also got into the Hummer, but he wasn't in a very good mood. Compared to Liu Chuan, who was being a foster father to two puppies, and Zhuang Rui, who was playing with the little guy, Bai Meng'an's trip to Tibet didn't seem to be so pleasant.