

Great Ming 101

Chapter 101: The Second Village Enters View

Liang Shixian began distributing congee to save the people!

First, starting right under his watchful eye, it began at the county seat.

At the entrance of the Chengcheng County office, a Charity Platform was set up. Using the flour provided by Li Daoxuan, thick noodle soup was cooked and filled into several large buckets.

Liang Shixian personally oversaw the operation, sitting beside the Charity Platform, glaring at the bailiffs responsible for distributing the food.

His Clerk from Shaoxing busied himself back and forth, constantly running between the kitchen and the Charity Platform.

At this time, Chengcheng County had become a sea of suffering. The drought alone made survival difficult, but after the bandit army rose up, people unwilling to join the remaining bandits found life even harder. Large numbers of common folk abandoned their homes and fields, fleeing to the county seat to beg for survival.

This led to beggars filling the streets of the county seat, turning it into a scene of ruin.

The news about the officials distributing congee was shouted out by bailiffs patrolling the city. Hearing the announcement, all the refugees ran towards the Charity Platform.

Before long, the refugees had formed a crowd several layers deep.

Had this been an ordinary wealthy family distributing food, the refugees might well have swarmed forward in a chaotic rush, toppling the Charity Platform.

But with the County Lord personally in charge and a large number of bailiffs and attendants maintaining order, the refugees dared not act recklessly. They obediently lined up, holding broken bowls to receive the noodle paste.

One man, after receiving a bowl of noodle paste, quickly walked to a street corner. He lifted a family member who was terrifyingly emaciated and on the verge of dying, slowly pouring the noodle paste into their mouth. He murmured: "Brother, you're finally saved... drink this, and you won't starve... you will survive..."

"Little brother... you... drink too..."

"I will!"

The two brothers took turns sipping the bowl of noodle paste, one sip after another. After finishing, they lay flat on the ground, rubbing their bellies. Just as they were starting to worry about what to do tomorrow, they heard the bailiffs roar in unison: "Don't take more than you need! Drink until you're full! There's no need to save any for tomorrow! Tomorrow, His Excellency the County Lord will be back here distributing congee! Understood? It will be here every day!"

"Brother... it's here every single day... our Chengcheng County finally has a good official..."

"Little brother, we've finally survived... wuwu..."

The two brothers hugged each other and wept bitterly. Two lightly glowing points of light flew up from their bodies. With a swish, they traversed the heavens, flew over thirty li, reached Gaojia Village, and entered the box.

...

Li Daoxuan saw that the "Rescue Index" was climbing rapidly. During the short time of the morning meal, it had already increased by over ten points. Judging by this rate, at least several hundred people who should have starved to death had been saved by this one meal.

The war fog covering the box must have cleared significantly again.

Li Daoxuan reached his hand towards the box's buttons labeled "north, south, east, and west" and pressed them randomly in rapid succession.

Sure enough, his field of view instantly expanded considerably. To the south, he could see beyond the bamboo groves to another distant barren slope. To the north, he could now see over a small mountain covered with withered trees, revealing a stretch of dead forest and a rocky wasteland behind the mountain...

Huh?

Li Daoxuan suddenly noticed that at the very edge of his vision, to the northeast, appeared a small desolate village. Hey! He could see a second village now!

This was incredibly exciting! Unfortunately, the village consisted only of dilapidated thatched huts; it seemed utterly devoid of life. Everyone from this village must have migrated long ago.

Thinking of this, Li Daoxuan made a sound of surprise ["Huh?"] and quickly tapped the "center" button, switching his view back to the village. He found Gao Yiye: "Yiye, northeast of Gaojia Village, about five or six li away, there's a small village. What village is that?"

Gao Yiye: "Ah? Isn't that Zhengjia Village? Zheng Daniu's village."

The moment Li Daoxuan heard "Zhengjia Village," the box abruptly emitted a large amount of golden light ["swish"].

This golden light was invisible to Gao Yiye; she didn't even blink. But Li Daoxuan was dazzled and had to blink. When he opened his eyes after blinking, he saw something new on the side of the box, near the buttons labeled "north, south, east, west, and center": two lines of semi-transparent text had appeared.

1. Gaojia Village

2. Zhengjia Village

He thought to himself: Could these two lines be the function he imagined?

He reached out and tapped on Zhengjia Village, and the view in the box suddenly jumped to the sky above Zhengjia Village. Then he tapped Gaojia Village, and the view suddenly jumped back directly over Gaojia Village.

“Hey, it indeed is the function I thought!”

A fast switching button.

Damn, this was ridiculously convenient!

Li Daoxuan said: “Yiye, go gather all the people from Zhengjia Village to assemble.”

After a short while, the people of Zhengjia Village had assembled. There weren't many, only about twenty.

They were all honest and simple villagers. When Zheng Yanfu rebelled with Wang Er, he mobilized the villagers of Zhengjia Village, and most followed Zheng Yanfu away.

But these over twenty villagers didn't want to join the rebel army and stayed in their village. Later, they were tricked by Thirty-Two using flour to come to Gaojia Village, then settled here, and had been living there for over a month.

Among them, Li Daoxuan knew Zheng Daniu best.

This guy was the most conspicuous one in Zhengjia Village, always turning up everywhere.

Zheng Daniu had now become the spokesperson for the whole village. He looked up and said: “Deity, what do you command? Daniu guarantees to complete it for you, then, heh heh, use the reward to swap chocolate with Village Chief.”

“Shut up, you fool,” the Village Chief cursed from the crowd. “Speaking so rudely, without any sense of boundaries.”

Li Daoxuan said: “You all just saw the people of Gaojia Village plowing the fields and preparing to sow autumn wheat. Did you have some thoughts about that?”

The crowd was silent.

After a few seconds of quiet, Zheng Daniu was heard murmuring softly: “So envious we were almost crying, but here there’s no land for us...”

True, the land around Gaojia Village was limited and all claimed by others.

It couldn’t just be occupied randomly.

So these honest villagers could only envy beyond envy.

“Your land, is it all in Zhengjia Village?”

“Yes,” Zheng Daniu responded loudly. “My family has two mu of land.”

Li Daoxuan said: “Hmm, have you considered returning to Zhengjia Village?”

For a moment, all the people of Zhengjia Village went silent, too afraid to answer, in case they said something wrong and were disliked by the Deity.

Zheng Daniu, being the boldest, looked up and said: “I don’t want to go back. Helping the Deity here makes me very happy. But my father wants to return for farming; besides that, he has no other skills and can’t help the Deity.”

Li Daoxuan said: “Farming is what makes him happy, right?”

Zheng Daniu shouted loudly: “Yes, My father is happiest when farming, happier than when I drink happy fat water.”

“Alright,” Li Daoxuan said. “Daniu, call Gao Chuwu now, immediately drive Solar Vehicle No. 2, and transport the villagers back to Zhengjia Village to take a look.”

Zheng Daniu said: “???”

He was utterly confused, not knowing what the Deity meant.

Li Daoxuan said: “You’ll understand when you go and see.”

Chapter 102: A Fine Drizzle

Solar Vehicle No. 2 was Li Daoxuan’s improved creation, refined after incorporating lessons learned from Solar Vehicle No. 1. He redesigned both its power and loading systems.

The vehicle measured five centimeters long. In the late Ming setting, it expanded to ten meters—roughly the size of a modern bus. It featured a bus-like carriage body, with solar panels mounted on the roof.

Sunshades were installed to shield the solar panels, operated by two long sliding rods. Inside the carriage, Zheng Daniu could use these rods to open or close the sunshades at any time, thereby controlling the vehicle’s power.

Being significantly larger than its predecessor, Solar Vehicle No. 2 was also easier to modify. It now included a brake function—a simple plastic clip. Gao Chuwu needed only to step with his foot to jam a tire.

Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu spent several days relearning before they could skillfully operate this larger vehicle.

Over twenty villagers from Zhengjia Village boarded Solar Vehicle No. 2, including Zheng Daniu's parents. None knew why the Deity wanted them to see Zhengjia Village, but the Deity's command was absolute. They obeyed without question—going was enough.

Gao Chuwu: "Daniu, I'm ready. You can open the sunshades now."

Zheng Daniu: "We killed someone last time driving. Let's go slower this trip."

The two fools had effectively received a harsh lesson in traffic safety after their fatal accident. Their driving style became far more cautious. No longer daring to race along the public roads, they now cautiously set Solar Vehicle No. 2 in motion, heading toward Zhengjia Village.

Watching the "bus" depart, Li Daoxuan tapped the "Zhengjia Village" tag outside the diorama box. The view inside instantly shifted to the sky above Zhengjia Village.

He took out a medical nebulizer, aimed it above the village, and switched it on.

The straight-line distance between Gaojia Village and Zhengjia Village was just over nine "li" (approximately five kilometers). Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu maintained a steady speed of around 40 km/h, safely transporting the villagers towards their homeland...

Long before arriving, a villager pressed against the window called out: "Ah! Everyone, look! Look at our village!"

The villagers rushed to crowd by the windows to look outside.

Their familiar home! Little more than a month ago, they'd left this small village that had nurtured and raised them. Now, seeing it from afar felt both deeply familiar and strangely alien.

The view was distant, hazy — like seeing it through a fine drizzle!

Wait — it wasn't hazy. There really was a fine drizzle.

Zhengjia Village was completely enveloped in a curtain of white misty rain.

Tears instantly filled the villagers' eyes.

"Look at the sky!" someone shouted.

Everyone looked up. Above Zhengjia Village hung a familiar patch of low cloud — the very cloud that always appeared when the Deity manifested. A dragon head emerged from its center, spraying rain and mist downward onto the village below.

So this was how the "fine drizzle" had come.

"The Deity invited the Dragon King to Zhengjia Village!"

"The Deity is merciful!"

"Our family's fields... we can plant them!"

The villagers were ecstatic. "Stop! Stop the vehicle now!"

Zheng Daniu drew the sunshades closed, and the bus halted. A group of villagers leapt out and sprinted through the rainy mist towards their village, laughing wildly as they ran.

Gao Chuwu: "Hah! They always call us fools, but they're the fools. Why run when they could have stayed on the bus?"

Thwack! Zheng Daniu flicked Gao Chuwu sharply on the forehead, making him yelp, clutch his head, and crouch down defensively in pain.

After a long moment, Gao Chuwu finally straightened up. "Daniu, why hit me? Aren't we best friends?"

Zheng Daniu: “You just called my parents fools. Even best friends deserve a flick for that.”

Gao Chuwu: “...”

Fine. He could take the hit. That had been wrong. Calling Daniu a fool was fine between friends, but insulting his parents? Yeah, that deserved a flick.

They shook hands and reconciled. Still best friends.

They watched as the Zhengjia villagers sprinted at least one “li” (over 500 meters), reached their own fields, threw themselves to the ground with a thump, clutched handfuls of the now slightly moistened soil, lifted their heads, and laughed toward the sky.

Although they’d been happy living in Gaojia Village, this moment was undeniably a far greater joy.

Points of light scattered and rose from their bodies, melting into the diorama box.

When their lives had been saved back then, each person provided only a tiny fraction — maybe a hundredth — toward the Rescue Index. But this time, just over twenty people added eight full points to the box all at once.

Li Daoxuan stared at the Rescue Index approaching 400 points on the box, deep in thought. There was still much mystery surrounding this Index, but he was gradually understanding its significance.

After their joyous outburst, the twenty-plus villagers returned to Solar Vehicle No. 2: “Chuwu, Daniu, take us back to Gaojia Village! We need to plead with the Deity to let us return to Zhengjia Village to live!”

“No. I forbid it.”

When they returned to Gaojia Village and crowded around Gao Yiye, eagerly expressing their desire to move back, Li Daoxuan rejected them outright.

“I permit you to work your fields there by day. But once the work is done, you must return to Gaojia Village to rest. Staying in Zhengjia Village long-term is far too dangerous.”

Li Daoxuan’s words puzzled the villagers. “Reporting to the Deity, Wang Er’s rebellion ended long ago. All other rebels dispersed. The new county magistrate is distributing congee to aid the people! Chengcheng County is surely safe now!”

“No. It’s far from safe.”

Li Daoxuan sighed deeply. He had no desire to elaborate further.

The villagers exchanged confused glances. Gao Yiye lowered her voice conspiratorially. “What I’m about to say next is just from me, okay? Not the Deity’s message. You can’t see the Deity, but I can. Just now, while he spoke... I saw profound sorrow in his expression. It was as if he mourned for all the suffering people under heaven...”

The villagers: “...”

Gao Yiye whispered, “He must know something. But it’s Celestial Doctrine, forbidden knowledge for mortals like us. Disclosing it might be a burden too heavy for our mortal existence.”

Her words shocked the villagers. Thinking carefully, the Saint Lady made perfect sense. The Deity was divine! He knew five hundred years into the past, five hundred years into the future, and every detail in between. If he said Zhengjia Village was dangerous, then danger certainly lurked. They should simply heed his command.

Instantly chastened, everyone declared solemnly: “We obey the Deity! We won’t move back! We’ll go by day to work, and return to Gaojia Village immediately afterwards!”

Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu grinned broadly. "We'll drive you back and forth every morning after sunrise."

The villagers considered this. That actually worked well. They could get up early, have the two young men drive them to Zhengjia Village, farm together helping each other, then all ride back together after work. There really was no need to move permanently after all.

Chapter 103: Online Road Construction

In the following days, the villagers of Zhengjia Village began to busy themselves. They gathered at the entrance of Gaojia Fortress early in the morning, at sunrise, waiting for the sun to rise. Then they would board Solar Vehicle No. 2 and head to Zhengjia Village.

Of course, this was only what Li Daoxuan had observed.

Li Daoxuan could not read their inner thoughts: "Every morning, Miao Ri Star Official woke the sun. We rode the magical car borrowed by the Deity from Miao Ri Star Official, returning home to farm. Ah, each day unfolded so spectacularly. Even the emperor wouldn't have such a magical car to travel in on the way to farm."

In reality, the newly appointed Emperor Chongzhen was a young man, not old at all, but that was beyond their concern.

After observing for a day, Li Daoxuan noticed one issue: only a quarter of Zhengjia Village's farmland was being utilized.

Originally, Zhengjia Village had a far larger population than Gaojia Village, with twice the amount of farmland.

When Zheng Yanfu followed Wang Er to revolt, he swept away most of Zhengjia Village's population. These people either perished in battles or were now labor offenders at Gaojia Village.

The farmland belonging to those "lost" villagers lay entirely abandoned, with no one to sow seeds. The remaining twenty or so villagers obediently refrained from occupying others' fields, tending only their own. Hence, farmland utilization became severely inefficient.

Such waste was unacceptable.

Li Daoxuan summoned Gao Yiye and Thirty-Two, instructing them to resolve the idle farmland problem.

Thirty-Two, experienced in such matters as a magistrate's aide, tackled it skillfully. He first inventoried Zhengjia Village's remaining residents and their land deeds. Then he checked the labor offenders to identify who hailed from Zhengjia Village and which land deeds they possessed.

This revealed the deceased, whose land became "unclaimed territory." Normally, such plots would be discovered through the imperial court's periodic "land surveys" before being resold or reallocated.

But with Gaojia Village now powerful, they wouldn't wait for the court. Thirty-Two sent Clerk Tan Liwen to survey Zhengjia Village's land. He lent this "unclaimed territory rent-free" to the twenty or so remaining residents—labor offenders excluded.

Thus, the Zhengjia villagers doubled their farmland for free, causing wild excitement. They worked with frenzied energy, as if electrified.

The labor offenders watched with envy. Those resigned to lifelong exile vowed secretly: "I must behave well, end my sentence early, regain freedom. Next time rent-free land is distributed, my chance will come."

Meanwhile, Li Daoxuan pondered another problem: Solar Vehicle No. 2 bounced violently on the official highway, hampering efficiency. If his Tiny Kingdom expanded to uncover more villages, these decrepit roads would hinder development severely.

Apparently, an old saying merited implementation: "To prosper, build roads."

Li Daoxuan went downstairs, crossed two streets, and approached a small construction site. Workers were digging up a sidewalk to rebuild it. He had no clue why this path was perpetually under renovation—patched, torn apart, repatched, and torn apart again for years.

Boldly, he handed a drink to an elderly worker and smiled, "Uncle, my home wall needs cement repair. Buying a whole sack at the market is excessive. Could I take just a tiny bit from your site? Barely a pinch."

The worker chuckled, “Sure, take it quickly—before the foreman notices.”

Li Daoxuan thanked him. Using two small plastic bags, he scooped a minute bundle of cement and another of sand, then scurried off, pleased with his petty heist.

Upon returning, he intended to place the cement inside his box for the tinies to manage—but reconsidered. Road construction was a massive undertaking. Gaojia Village’s population was too small. Building just three miles of road would take ages.

Forget it. He’d build the first road himself—an experiment he’d long found intriguing.

Retrieving an unused plastic box, he looked up cement formula online. He mixed cement, sand, and water at proportion, stirring vigorously. Soon, a small box of concrete was ready.

He reached into the box and tapped the “East” and “North” buttons, shifting the view to an area distant from the village. Using a small metal scraper, he shaved the ground twice, sweeping dead trees, weeds, and stones aside. Parallel to the official highway, he scraped space for a fresh path.

Online “rural cement road guides” were overwhelmingly complex. Ignoring most steps, he sprayed water to dampen the soil, then formed “expansion joints.” He dumped concrete and smoothed it flat with plastic film.

Li Daoxuan personally constructed a road measuring approximately three miles long and fifteen meters wide inside the box. In reality, this translated to a thin cement strip only fifteen meters long and 7.5 centimeters wide—an effortless endeavor achieved in minutes.

Had the tinies handled this labor, the duration would’ve been unknowable.

Acting as the nanny Deity while troweling cement proved surprisingly fun.

“Ah! Look—the Deity is working divine magic again!”

As Li Daoxuan labored, villagers gathered to marvel. From afar, they watched a colossal “metal plate” scrape the earth with a thunderous “crunch,” splitting rocks with godlike might, forcibly carving a parallel road alongside the official highway.

Then gray slurry poured from the sky, flooding the path for miles. The bizarre “metal plate” scraped repeatedly over this thick, odd sludge, polishing it smooth as water.

Dumbstruck, the villagers mumbled, “This... this divine act befuddles us. What is this meant to achieve?”

Debating endlessly, they only hushed upon Gao Yiye’s approach. “The Deity has bestowed a road linking Gaojia Village and Zhengjia Village. For seven days, no one may approach it—only after that may it be used. Understood? Should anyone defy the Deity’s decree...”

She pouted her petite lip and snorted—barely menacing, rather cute. But the unspoken punishment behind her pause amplified dread, twisting her loveliness into menace.

The villagers protested hurriedly, “Dare not! Who would dare disobey the Deity?”

Gao Yiye pointed at the labor offenders. “Send a group of you. Smooth the road with planks. Then patrol along both sides. For seven days—not humans! Not even mice or rabbits step on it. Catch and beat any trespassers to death.”

The villagers sweated, “Saint Lady, after years of drought, mice and rabbits are practically extinct! Rest assured.”

Chapter 106: The Bandit Army Returns

Bai Yuan was an old friend of Gaojia Village. His request naturally couldn’t be refused. Thirty-Two promptly invited Bai Yuan’s wife, son, and several servants and maids into the fortress, instructing Clerk Tan Liwen to arrange rooms and daily necessities for them.

Bai Yuan cupped his hands in salute. “Thank you, Deity. Thank you, Manager Thirty-Two. With my wife and child safely settled here, I have no worries left. I shall return to Bai Family Fortress now to organize the militia and prepare to resist the bandit army at any moment.”

Thirty-Two frowned thoughtfully. “Thousands of bandits... even if Bai Family Fortress tried every trick possible, it couldn’t withstand them, could it? Ultimately, we must still rely on the authorities.”

Bai Yuan: “The authorities... ah... as you know, Chengcheng County has only Patrol Officer Cheng Xu himself, leading just over a hundred soldiers. Normally, dealing with small-time thieves is manageable, but faced with thousands of bandit troops, he could only go see his ancestors.”

Thirty-Two: “...”

Bai Yuan said: “In any case, I shall head back first. If Bai Family Fortress proves unable to resist, I will flee to Gaojia Village. I hope Gaojia Village will save me once more then.”

Thirty-Two returned the salute. “Take care. If the situation looks dire, come immediately.”

Bai Yuan swung himself onto the carriage, drove the empty vehicle back the way he came, and the servants who had accompanied him spurred their horses to follow. The group came quickly and left just as fast, disappearing into the setting sun in the blink of an eye.

Li Daoxuan watched Bai Yuan leave, feeling a twinge of concern.

Bai Yuan was an amusing fellow. Having watched him from above for so long, Li Daoxuan had developed a certain affection for him, much like watching Song Xiaobao perform sketches repeatedly; inevitably, one day, upon hearing Song Xiaobao intended to single-handedly duel a hundred armed thugs, one would worry for him.

It seemed it was time to deploy—Solar Vehicle No. 3.

“Yiye, go summon Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu.”

Gao Yiye immediately sprang into action, ready to relay the message.

Li Daoxuan slowly lowered the pre-modified Solar Vehicle No. 3 in front of Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu.

The massive solar vehicle, a full 14 centimeters long (translating to 28 meters, or over nine zhang in the late Ming period), loomed before the figures barely a centimeter tall—the visual impact was simply explosive.

Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu craned their necks, gazing up at the behemoth like modern men standing before a giant semi-truck, their jaws hanging open. “So big?”

Li Daoxuan: “If it weren’t this big, it couldn’t transport the catapults.”

The two idiots: “Huh? Transport catapults? For what?”

Thirty-Two delivered a thud thud—a knock on each of their heads: “Still don’t get it? The Deity wants the two of you to use this enormous vehicle to transport catapults to Bai Family Fortress and help Master Bai defend against the enemy.”

Only then did understanding dawn on them.

“After sunrise tomorrow, you two practice getting familiar with this vehicle first. The driving method is the same as with the previous sun chariots. It’s just that this one is larger, has greater inertia, and turns much less nimbly. You need to adapt well to it. Keep the speed very slow.”

Early the next morning, just as the sun rose, the two fools began practicing driving Solar Vehicle No. 3. Though they were slow-witted, they were agile and quick to react—quite suited for driving. They managed to master driving the large vehicle proficiently in just a single day.

Early on the third morning, Li Daoxuan took out the small catapults used previously against Supreme Bright King and placed them on the vehicle. These little catapults were only 3 centimeters long. Placed on the vehicle, they posed no problem at all. Several could even be stacked. Though once at Bai Family Fortress, it would likely require significant effort for Bai Yuan and his men to unload them.

But Li Daoxuan had confidence in the ingenuity of ancient laboring folk; they would surely find a way to utilize these catapults.

Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu set off, transporting a vehicle fully loaded with catapults, advancing towards Bai Family Fortress over forty li away...

The vehicle was too large, making the official road seem somewhat narrow. Its tires often strayed onto the grass beyond the path.

Fortunately, the tires were sufficiently large. The two drivers only needed to proceed slowly, avoid major potholes and large stones, and maintain a steady forward course; it was manageable.

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Simultaneously, Ninth-rank Patrol Officer Cheng Xu was leading his 100-odd soldiers towards Huanglong Mountain.

“Stone and mud!” Cheng Xu cursed incessantly. “I, your father, exerted considerable effort to finally wipe out the damn bandit troops in Chengcheng County, only to find bandits from other counties showing up in the blink of an eye! Damn, damn, I damn their mothers! Magistrates of Luochuan and Yichuan Counties, I damn your ancestors for eighteen generations!”

The deputy inspector whispered, “Boss, shouldn’t we be cursing the patrol officers of Luochuan and Yichuan? They failed to suppress the bandits properly, allowing them to cross borders. Why curse the magistrates?”

Cheng Xu: “Those two patrol officers are military officers like me. I understand their predicament perfectly! The bandit force is huge. Like me, they have only about a hundred subordinates. How could they resist? They can’t be blamed for this. The fault lies entirely with the civil officials demanding harsh exactions, driving good people to banditry. We military officers bear no responsibility.”

His men: “...”

Something felt off, but upon reflection, it seemed right enough.

The deputy inspector whispered, "Boss, once we reach Huanglong Mountain, do we attack immediately?"

Cheng Xu: "Attack my ass! Haven't you heard? Twenty to thirty hundred bandits came from Luochuan, and the same from Yichuan. Together, at least five thousand! Should we, just over a hundred men, fight five thousand? Are you fucking itching to die? When we get to Huanglong Mountain, I won't go a single step up that hill. I'll just go sip some tea at Bai Family Fortress and sponge off their prosperity. If the bandits retreat back to Luochuan and Yichuan, we return and claim credit, saying we routed a bandit army of five thousand with a mere hundred men, driving them away. If the bandits attack... hmph..."

Deputy inspector: "...we run? Then report to the court that the bandit force was too strong, thus not a failure in battle?"

Cheng Xu patted the deputy inspector's helmet. "You've finally shown some sense, lad."

As they spoke, Bai Family Fortress came into view ahead.

Cheng Xu gazed towards the fortress in the distance. "Eh? Bai Family Fortress... they've thickened and heightened the fortress walls. Seems they've spent a lot of money lately."

The fortress gates opened ahead, and Bai Yuan came out to greet them, saluting Cheng Xu with clasped fists. "General Cheng's esteemed presence brings honor to our humble Bai Family Fortress."

Cheng Xu laughed heartily. "Master Bai, you surely know why I've come."

Bai Yuan: "Naturally, it is concerning Huanglong Mountain."

As they said this, both men instinctively turned their gaze towards Huanglong Mountain. The imposing Huanglong Mountain soared north of Bai Family Fortress, its peaks towering hundreds of zhang high, winding and coiled, its scenery majestically formidable.

From where they stood, they could see only a corner of Huanglong Mountain; its full scale remained impossible to grasp.

Cheng Xu: “Master Bai, thousands of bandits are right there on the mountain beside you. Yet, you remain calm and stay here to guard it. Such courage is indeed rare.”

Bai Yuan gave a bitter smile. “The common people of these dozens of li all depend on me to protect them. How could it be proper, once bandits arrive, for me to flee first? This contravenes propriety. And propriety is one of the Six Arts of Gentlemen; I am quite particular about such things.”

Chapter 107: Delivery of the Catapults

Cheng Xu secretly laughed in his heart: What era was this, still clinging to the Six Arts of Gentlemen? It was the Ming Dynasty now; even dogs didn’t learn the Six Arts of Gentlemen.

Cheng Xu said, “Mr. Bai, I won’t waste words. If the bandit army on Huanglong Mountain goes to another county, it’s none of my business. But if they enter Chengcheng County, I must deal with it. So in the next few days, I’m afraid I’ll trouble you at Bai Family Fortress.”

Bai Yuan knew that what this guy meant by “trouble” was actually lingering there to eat and drink. It was an old custom: officials on campaign fed off wealthy families wherever they went. If no wealthy families were around, they might let the soldiers loot civilians.

After all, if such looting got reported by a local civil official, a military officer could lose his head. Similarly, if the wealthy one had strong backing, the officer might get reported anyway and still lose his head.

Everyone was walking a tightrope!

Bai Yuan didn’t mind having the garrison feed off them. For Bai Family Fortress, having a group of regular officials stationed was actually a good thing, even if they were ninety percent likely to flee in battle. Just their presence could scare the bandits.

If it scared the bandits off and stopped them from attacking, that was the best outcome.

Bai Yuan smiled, "General Cheng Xu wishing to station at my fortress is Bai Yuan's fortune, and the fortune of all common people within ten li around Bai Family Fortress. Please come in."

Cheng Xu led his troops into the fortress. He saw the fortress wall was being repaired: widened, thickened, and heightened. Unfortunately, with Bai Family Fortress's limited manpower, progress was slow. It was still only half-done, just at the level of a squire's courtyard, far from ready to resist a large bandit army attack.

Dozens of family servants and over a hundred militiamen stood guard around the fortress with bows. Sentinels on the four turrets kept close watch on all sides.

Cheng Xu thought to himself: This Bai Family Fortress was somewhat robust. But even so, it wasn't enough at all. Plus, with his own hundred men, facing five or six thousand bandits, he'd still end up reporting to his grandmother.

He addressed her mentally: Grandmother, your great-grandson is still young, not ready to join you. If the bandits come, I'll run first—I swear. Please don't blame me for dishonoring the Cheng family name.

As his mind wandered, a sentinel on a turret suddenly leaned down and shouted, "Master! Master!"

The yell nearly scared Cheng Xu out of his wits. He shrieked, "What? Did the bandit army arrive?"

Bai Yuan looked up, "Speak!"

The sentinel called out joyfully, "Gao Chuwu is here."

"Gao Chuwu?" Bai Yuan asked puzzled, "Who?"

The sentinel sweated, "That big foolish guy from Gaojia Village—he's been here a few times."

Bai Yuan suddenly realized, "Oh, I remember now. It's that guy, clear as day."

The family servants stared blankly.

The sentinel announced loudly, “Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu drove a giant vehicle here. On it stands a celestial catapult.”

Hearing this, Bai Yuan was thrilled. “A celestial catapult? The kind we used against the Supreme Bright King?”

The sentinel had followed Bai Yuan into that battle and knew it well. He responded loudly, “Yes, exactly that.”

Bai Yuan laughed, “Quick, open the fortress gate! Welcome them in!”

The sentinel replied, “That vehicle’s too huge. Looks like it won’t fit inside; it’ll have to stop outside the gate.”

Standing nearby, Cheng Xu heard Bai Yuan and the sentinel’s strange talk but barely understood it. What kind of vehicle could transport a catapult? Since ancient times, catapults were either made on-site by an attacking force with logs, or like the trebuchets Mongulians used—four-wheeled and pulled by troops.

He’d never heard of a catapult being carted around; how massive must the vehicle be?

Cheng Xu hurried up onto the fortress wall, climbed the turret, and looked out. Before him was a super giant train, nearly nine zhang long, rumbling down the official road. Its enormous wheels crushed dried grass along the path, stirring thick clouds of dust. The noise was deafening.

His jaw almost dropped to the ground. “Hell? What devil-vehicle is this?”

A deputy inspector leaned close and whispered, “Boss, I remember now. Back when we ambushed Little Overlord’s rebels, a weird vehicle suddenly appeared, ran him over, then sped off. Could it be...”

Cheng Xu shook his head, “That strange vehicle was much smaller then.”

The deputy inspector insisted, "But the weird plates on it and these strange black wheels are similar."

He was talking about rubber tires and solar panels. Cheng Xu looked closely and agreed. He muttered under his breath, "Watch more, speak less. Let's see what kind of troublemaker Bai Family Fortress and this odd vehicle are brewing."

Solar Vehicle No. 3 stopped at the entrance to Bai Family Fortress. Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu hopped off and cheerfully greeted the Bai family servants.

Bai Yuan came out to meet them. He immediately organized a team to unload the huge catapult from the vehicle.

The catapult, two zhang tall and wide, was insanely heavy. But it didn't stump the laborers. Bai Family Fortress's men first tied the catapult with ropes and pulled together with dozens of people. Then several others climbed onto the big vehicle and pried the other side with long poles. Using force from both ends, the massive catapult slowly slid out of the carriage.

Cheng Xu watched their working from a turret on the fortress wall. His lips curled slightly. "What fools! If such a large catapult drops from that high carriage, it'll shatter on impact. It's rather delicate gear."

His words had barely faded when the catapult landed on the ground with a thud.

But Cheng Xu's imagined scene of it breaking apart didn't happen. How could plastic crack so easily? The catapult not only survived but bounced several times, all springy and elastic.

Cheng Xu muttered, "Holy hell, what kind of devil catapult is this?"

The huge catapults were pulled off the vehicle one by one, placed on rolling logs as wheels, and pushed into Bai Family Fortress. In no time, ten of them stood lined up.

Bai Yuan was thrilled. He grabbed Gao Chuwu and said, "Go back and thank the Deity for me."

Gao Chuwu scratched his head and grinned dumbly, "Alright, the catapults are all yours. We'll head back now."

Bai Yuan waved goodbye. Turning around, he perked up energetically, "Call the strongest farmer from the fortress here. I'll teach him how to use this kind of catapult."

Cheng Xu spectated from the fortress wall, thinking: These gaudy, irregular catapults lack a single sinew cord. How could they fling out a rock? This thing must be unusable.

But he was instantly proven wrong!

Bai Yuan directed the farmer over. They lifted a rock into the large scoop of the catapult. Then he instructed the farmer to hit the mechanism hard with a heavy hammer. The catapult's plastic arm swung up silently and flung. A giant rock sailed right over the fortress wall, landing in the open ground outside with a thunderous crash.

Chapter 108: Never Go to Gaojia Village After Dark

Cheng Xu exclaimed, "Holy crap! This weird-looking catapult actually works? How did you manage that?"

The deputy inspector, equally stunned, remarked, "Just like that, Bai Family Fortress now has ten catapults. The more bandits swarm us, the easier it is for these catapults to hit them."

Cheng Xu snapped, "Idiot! How many men could catapults kill? Their real value is breaking the enemy's spirit! Those bandit thugs are already a disorganized mob. In battle, they refuse to charge headlong. Just hurl a few large stones into their ranks with catapults, and the rear units will falter. Meanwhile, the reckless fools in front keep surging forward, splitting their formation clean in half. We'd crush them both easily."

After a pause, he shrugged dismissively and scoffed, "Even splitting them though, trapping the head and tail from aiding each other—our current forces plus Bai Family Fortress's militia still couldn't stop that army."

Compared to the catapults, that bizarre giant train intrigued Cheng Xu more. It was colossal and intimidating. Even a two-zhang catapult could be transported on it. Using it to move troops or supplies? That'd be...

He recalled the last time he'd seen it—when the giant train had barreled through Little Overlord's rebel ranks, scattering bandits like rag dolls. Cheng Xu secretly marveled: Now that's the real game-changer.

Unfortunately, it was too clumsy. Rough terrain rendered it useless. Earlier, when leaving after delivering the catapult, just turning around took ages—agonizingly sluggish and awkward. If I were commanding against it, I'd seize that moment when it pivoted. Order soldiers to storm aboard and butcher whoever's driving it.

Enough. Bai Family Fortress can't hold anyway.

His mind stayed fixated on fleeing. While half-heartedly discussing defenses with Bai Yuan, he ignored every word said. Over two hours later, mealtime arrived. The Bai Steward started distributing rations to soldiers, and Cheng Xu readied himself to mooch a meal.

Suddenly, that rumbling sound echoed once more.

Grabbing two steamed buns from the Steward, Cheng Xu gnawed at one while climbing to the watchtower. Scanning the noise's source, he saw the peculiar giant train returning...

Bai Yuan hurried outside once again to greet it.

Gao Chuwu and Zheng Daniu parked by the gate, beaming. "Lord Bai! The Deity sent us bringing a second haul of treasures."

Curious, Bai Yuan looked: This time, it carried a bunch of colorful giant crossbow vehicles. These were the exact 1:200 models Ningyang Toy Company had specially customized for the "Daily Life in the Tiny Kingdom" theme—part of their collaboration with Li Daoxuan on the TikTok Little Yellow Bike project. Li Daoxuan had delivered ten more to Bai Yuan.

Made mostly of plastic yet mirroring ancient giant crossbows, Bai Yuan and Cheng Xu grasped their design instantly—no explanation necessary.

Bai Yuan cheered, "Thanks to the Deity! More fortress-defying marvels!"

Cheng Xu also thought, Giant crossbow vehicles beat catapults for defense. Catapults rely on luck, but crossbows? Pinpoint accuracy. Still... what sorcery are these bolts?

Turns out each bolt was plastic-blunted, childish playthings. Cheng Xu shook his head wearily.

Bai Yuan gestured calmly, "Fear not—the Deity blesses with mercy. Though blunt, we sharpen them. Slice bamboo tubes to cap the tips."

Instantly, villagers chopped thick wood bamboo, capped the dull arrows, then sharpened the other ends—turning frivolous toys into lethal spikes.

Since giant crossbow vehicles couldn't arc shots like catapults, they couldn't lurk behind walls; they needed mounting atop. But they were significantly smaller and lighter. Coordinated villagers hoisted them onto the fortress wall with heave-ho shouts, installing them along the parapet.

Cheng Xu scanned left and right. Unknowingly, Bai Family Fortress now boasted ten catapults and ten giant crossbow vehicles. Eyes widening, he slapped his forehead awake. "Huh?! How can this cramped Bai Family Fortress hold more siege equipment than a border army general?"

Beside him, the deputy inspector also gaped, whispering shakily, "General... doesn't Bai Family amassing all this... constitute treason?"

Cheng Xu tilted his head, considering solemnly. Privately forging armor? Undeniably treasonous. Hoarding firearms? Also treason. But siege weapons? Never heard of such an accusation—utterly beyond his knowledge.

After scratching his head forever, he murmured, "Who knows. Why stress? Stronger fortress only helps us. If it blocks the bandits from Chengcheng County, that's ultimately my credit. I could just claim I organized villagers to build these siege weapons." He smirked coldly. "Pocket the glory? Why brand Bai Family a traitor? Pointless malice. Not my style. Unlike those spineless, report-snitching scholars—sons-of-unmentionables types."

The deputy inspector nodded dutifully. "What the general says is wise."

Awkwardly chatting, both stared as that giant train outside painstakingly turned once more and rumbled away.

Cheng Xu's curiosity surged. Approaching Bai Yuan, he probed, "Mr. Bai, where did that enormous train come from? Where did these siege devices arrive from?"

Bai Yuan answered plainly, "Transported from Gaojia Village."

"Gaojia Village?! Again?" Cheng Xu's mind flashed with both visits—dawn and later—his skin suddenly prickling. Voice tense, he asked, "Mr. Bai, which Gaojia Village? The daylight one or... the night one?"

Bai Yuan, baffled: "Gaojia Village has different day and night forms?"

Cheng Xu explained, "First time, nearing dusk—I saw a colorful wall. Inside, villagers stared back frenzied and strange. Another time, daytime... saw a sturdy fortress. That's where I claimed Zheng Yanfu and Zhuang Guangdao's heads..."

Bai Yuan chuckled lightly. "Oh! General Cheng witnessed the same Gaojia Village both times. It just... shifts. Rapidly. Constantly moving, shape-shifting itself. As for Zhuang Guangdao and Zheng Yanfu? Overreaching fools who tried raiding Gaojia Village at night. Heh—did they think high Jia Village allows nighttime strikes?"

Bai Yuan wasn't lying; every word was true.

But to Cheng Xu, those words sounded wholly unnatural. Shivers ripped up his spine.

Nearby, the deputy inspector also paled, sweating cold.

The two retreated aside. The deputy rasped, "General... Mr. Bai implies—it's safe by day. But at night? Gaojia Village becomes a village of ferocious ghosts... All those slaughtered bandits...? Ghosts did it."

Cheng Xu wiped rivulets of sweat. "After sundown, steer clear of that haunted ground. Whatever you do!" He shuddered involuntarily. "Never want to meet my... grandmother there."

Chapter 109: Huanglong Mountain

While the Bai Family Fortress was bustling with preparations to defend against the invasion of the bandit army from Huanglong Mountain.

Deep within Huanglong Mountain, in an unnamed valley.

More than six thousand bandits were packed together in the valley, creating a great hubbub.

These six thousand people weren't all battle-ready soldiers. Half were elderly and weak, women and children, with no fighting capability at all. Of the other half, the three thousand, most were ordinary young adults of low combat strength, not much different from the youths of Gaojia Village.

Only the leading thousand were hardened fierce bandits.

These thousand men actually came under several well-known, renowned martial figures and outlaw leaders.

One outlaw leader was called Bu Zhan Ni (historical figure) from Luochuan County. Under him were five hundred fierce bandits, a thousand young adults, and fifteen hundred elderly and weak, women and children.

Another was called Zuo Guazi (historical figure) from Yichuan County. He similarly commanded five hundred fierce bandits, a thousand young adults, and fifteen hundred elderly and weak, women and children.

The two were evenly matched, each accounting for half the bandit army.

Bu Zhan Ni was happily gnawing on a rabbit leg. His men had caught a rabbit in the mountains that day and, treating it like treasure, presented it to him. After roasting it, he invited Zuo Guazi to share the meal. The two outlaw leaders ate joyfully, taking bites in turn.

Bu Zhan Ni tore off a piece of rabbit meat with his teeth. Chewing, he mumbled, “Guazi, there’s no going back to my Luochuan County. The patrol officer of Luochuan has blocked the Huanglong Mountain pass with troops. That fellow has led border armies before—tough guy. If I go down the mountain to return to Luochuan, I’d run right into him.”

Zuo Guazi, his mouth slick with rabbit grease, mumbled back, “Hey, I can’t go back to my Yichuan County either. For fuck’s sake, there’s this official in charge of grain transport in Yichuan named Hong Chengchou. Damned tough! My several thousand men actually couldn’t beat a bunch of his servants. He led his household guards, hacking his way after me all the way into Huanglong Mountain. That bastard is still blocking the mountain pass even now. I don’t dare go back.”

Bu Zhan Ni’s jaw dropped. “Household servants that fierce? Just who is this Hong Chengchou?”

Zuo Guazi said, “How the hell should I know?”

Almost in unison, the two said, “Seems we can only go to Chengcheng County now.”

Huanglong Mountain lay at the junction of three counties: west to Luochuan, north to Yichuan. And south? That would be Chengcheng County. Since they couldn’t go to Luochuan or Yichuan, naturally only the road to Chengcheng County remained.

Bu Zhan Ni said, “I heard Chengcheng’s patrol officer Cheng Xu is a useless bastard. When Bai Shui Wang Er rose in rebellion, that good-for-nothing chased Wang Er for months but failed to even lay a hand on him.”

Zuo Guazi laughed. “I heard that too. That coward is terribly afraid of death. The slightest stir will send him scurrying away with his troops.”

Bu Zhan Ni chuckled. “Hehehe, then it’s settled. We’ll send some men first to case the area around Chengcheng County, find out what’s going on downhill. Then we’ll dig up some food from within the county.”

Zuo Guazi laughed too. “Before I fled into the mountains, I heard the new Chengcheng County Magistrate Liang Shixian was distributing congee to help the citizens. Means he still has food supplies!

We'll charge into Chengcheng County, chop that damned newly appointed dog official limb from limb, and snatch all his grain for ourselves!"

Bu Zhan Ni said, "Good! Let's do it!"

...

Chengcheng County suddenly felt the winds of tension once more.

News of a large bandit army amassing in Huanglong Mountain swiftly reached the county town. Panicked, the townspeople remembered the last time Bai Shui Wang Er caused chaos. The wealthy families suffered terribly then—many wives and daughters dishonored, spouses slain, families decapitated. Though some managed to flee, their homes were plundered clean.

Even some poor folk lost their tumbledown wooden shacks when the bandits set fires that spread wildly, forcing them into destitution on the streets.

Everyone in all of Chengcheng trembled like startled birds.

The newly arrived county magistrate, Liang Shixian, certainly couldn't simply sit and watch, nor did he want to die mysteriously like Zhang Yaocai. He promptly mobilized the thirty-plus constables. Each constable recruited three to five helpers, forming a force of over a hundred "soldiers." He then urged farmers near the county town to take up arms, form militia groups, and assist the government in resisting the bandits.

Organizing such a large force so suddenly demanded vast amounts of weapons. Liang Shixian sent for the artisan master of the official workshops: "Quickly assemble all permanent workers and rotating workers. Exert all efforts to forge weapons to meet the militia's needs."

The artisan master wore an awkward expression. "Reporting to County Lord, the artisan households in the official workshops are insufficient... I fear... we cannot manage..."

"What?!" Liang Shixian was astonished. "Why are the artisan households insufficient?"

The artisan master answered, “For some reason, many artisans have recently run away one after another lately, especially the rotating workers. Each suddenly had the courage to pay their artisan registration fee then walk away clean. The massive official workshop is now deserted and quiet. Only a few permanent workers remain.”

Liang Shixian: “!”

The artisan master added, “Just yesterday, I submitted the artisan registration fees collected from dozens of rotating workers to the Clerk. County Lord can verify it by asking him.”

The Clerk hurriedly handed him a register. Liang Shixian looked down: listed were a row of names, all rotating workers, each having paid between six to thirty years worth of artisan registration fees.

Clearly, there was no hope of them returning to work anytime soon.

Liang Shixian, knowledgeable in many matters, instantly activated his reasoning within his mind. The information he’d just reviewed whirled through his thoughts: possibilities spun dizzily like a revolving lantern, before finally “ding” – all the deductions merged into one conclusion.

Someone helped them!

Liang Shixian snorted. “There’s someone who needs artisans working for him, so he produced a large quantity of silver to pay the registration fees for them. This person commands significant resources and must be a prominent family, village head, or powerful elite near Chengcheng County. Finding him shouldn’t be hard. Since these rotating workers were willing to come pay the fees, it means they don’t want exile; they fear becoming rootless refugees. Surely one among them revealed his destination. Investigate immediately!”

The Clerk rushed to investigate, returning shortly to report quietly, “They went to Gaojia Village.”

“Gaojia Village?”

Liang Shixian certainly remembered Gaojia Village. The grain he'd used earlier to distribute congee for relief came from Gaojia Village's Li family.

"I understand," Liang Shixian said. "So it's the Li family. No wonder they have such resources. The Li family is a kind-hearted family. We must extend courtesy. Clerk, go personally to the Li family. Ask them to lend us some weapons. Once we drive back these bandits, every weapon will be returned in full—no pilfering!"

Clerk: "I fear the Li family might be unwilling..."

Liang Shixian: "Use reason, appeal to conscience. I act for Chengcheng's citizens, not personal gain. The Li family is a kind-hearted family. They absolutely cannot refuse to assist."

Clerk: "I understand, master. I'll go pay a visit to Gaojia Village."

Chapter 110: Gao Yiye and the Bow

Early in the morning, Li Daoxuan was lying in bed, chatting on WeChat with the manager of Ningyang Toy Company, A Barrel of Pudding: "Bro, can you really not make 1:200 scale hand crossbow toys?"

"Cannot." A Barrel of Pudding said: "At this scale, the hand crossbow is too small; we cannot make the mechanism to this size; not even the simplest mechanism."

Li Daoxuan: "Alright, that is to say, only bows are left?"

A Barrel of Pudding replied: "Yes, bows are fine. Ancient long bows' arms are generally 1.5 meters long; 1:200 scale toys are 7.5 millimeters. Plastic toy bows of this size we can easily make. In fact, we have already made them. We hope you can put them in the Little Yellow Bike to sell in your next video. The sample has been sent out; as we speak, it might be almost arrived."

"Wow? Such efficiency?"

Li Daoxuan heard the doorbell ringing, ran out to open the door. The courier handed him a box. Opening it, it was indeed a box of toy bows.

The bow arms were 7.5 millimeters long, small and cute. They used super thin elastic bands as bowstrings, simply adorable to the max.

A single bow was too small; the small box in Li Daoxuan's hand held at least thousands of them, densely packed. At a glance, it could trigger trypophobia, almost dying on the spot.

This belonged to a special toy; the target user group was small. Only those who loved watching "Daily Life in the Tiny Kingdom" would buy such scale small toys. Used together with plastic miniature figures, they could set up a huge ancient battlefield at home. Recently, toys of this theme sold quite well, and Li Daoxuan received good commissions.

Li Daoxuan happened to be this special group; he himself was willing to buy several boxes first. Casually taking out a toy bow from inside, he handed it into the box: "Yiye, find any villager to have him try whether this bow can be used."

Find any villager? I am a villager myself! Gao Yiye first tried it herself, using her delicate arm to pull the bowstring...

Originally thinking she couldn't draw such a large bow fully, unexpectedly, she could pull it open.

"Wow, Deity, I can even use this bow."

Li Daoxuan was delighted; the girl drawing the bow seemed quite easy. Thought about it carefully and understood: traditional long bows used fine wood for arms and tight cowhide tendons for strings; to pull it open, great strength was naturally required, and the arrows shot out were very powerful.

But this toy bow of his used plastic bow arms and loose elastic band, so of course it was easy to pull open. So easily pulled, the arrows shot out wouldn't be powerful.

"Tighten the bowstring a bit; pull it tighter. Find the right tension for you, and you can shoot powerful arrows."

"Alright!"

Gao Yiye untied the bowstring, pulled it tight, and reattached it to the bow arm.

This time it was too tight; the girl used all her strength, yet couldn't draw the bow fully open, exhausting her, puffing her cheeks and panting.

Li Daoxuan was amused; the girl gritting her teeth and puffing her cheeks... wanted to kiss her...

Just then, Li Daoxuan glimpsed from the corner of his eye that Gaojia Village had another guest. His face was unfamiliar, but his attire seemed a bit familiar; thought for a while and remembered: the Clerk of the County Lord.

Thirty-Two had already been notified by the sentinel and was greeting him at the Gaojia Fortress gates. Both being clerks, once they started talking, witty banter flew all over; after talking for a while, they were still jesting without getting to the point. Li Daoxuan couldn't be bothered to listen, turning his attention back to Gao Yiye, watching her play with the bow.

She loosened the bowstring a little bit; this time pulling the bow, she could finally draw it open without being too strenuous.

Li Daoxuan had no arrows to give her; this box of bows didn't come with arrows. Gao Yiye found a round-headed bamboo stick herself, set it on the bowstring, then drew the bow fully and released...

The bamboo flew through the air, passed over several rows of encircling houses, and disappeared.

"Ouch!"

A distant cry of pain; Gao Yiye was startled: "Oh no, I shot someone."

Li Daoxuan's gaze followed; he laughed: "It's fine; you hit the Clerk of the County Lord, not one of ours. Plus, the round-headed hollow bamboo won't injure; shot in the chest, he was just startled."

Gao Yiye: "Pfft!"

She had long felt... the Deity was extremely biased; their own tiny people were all treasured, while outsiders were completely disregarded.

Mr. Wang told about "Journey to the West", where those immortals indulged their pets causing mischief in the lower realm. When Sun Wukong came demanding accountability, they didn't punish their pets but just took them home. Seems gods are all like that.

Gao Yiye whispered: "The Deity is so good."

Li Daoxuan didn't catch it: "Huh?"

Gao Yiye said loudly: "I'll go see Thirty-Two; maybe I need to help the Deity deliver divine orders."

Li Daoxuan: "Oh! Go ahead."

The girl swung the bow over her back and pattered towards that side.

Li Daoxuan directly turned his attention over...

Thirty-Two accompanied the Clerk, strolling casually in Gaojia Fortress, talking as they walked.

The Clerk: "That just scared me to death; luckily it was a round-headed bamboo arrow."

Thirty-Two: "Don't know which child was being mischievous; I'll definitely scold him properly later."

The Clerk: "Forget it; it's a small matter; don't frighten the child. This time I came to visit the Li Family, ordered by the County Lord, specifically to request to borrow a batch of weapons..."

Thirty-Two's eyebrow twitched: "Borrow weapons?"

The Clerk rubbed his hands: "I know this request is a bit... ahem... but Thirty-Two must have heard that bandits from Luochuan County and Yichuan County have gathered at Huanglong Mountain, with massive bandit strength of at least five to six thousand. If such a large group of bandits invade Chengcheng County, I fear the county town will not be safe... sigh... by then, your Li Family may also find it hard to avoid trouble."

Thirty-Two had already received news from Bai Yuan and wasn't surprised, but upon hearing "the county town will not be safe," still got a fright. Although Gaojia Village was safe, his own wife was still in the City God Temple in the county town "saving the common people." If the bandit army stormed the county town, my beautiful, fair, plump wife... ah, the consequences are unimaginable.

Thirty-Two: "Bai Family Fortress is rooted at the foot of Huanglong Mountain; if the bandits do not break through Bai Family Fortress, how could they reach the county town?"

The Clerk: "Thirty-Two, you imagine the bandits as proper armies. Only proper armies would attack city by city. Bandit army pays no heed to that; if Bai Family Fortress is hard to take, they change routes out of the mountain, bypass Bai Family Fortress, and directly scatter to the rear. If they break through Fengyuan Town, they will head straight for the county town. Thus, the County Lord wants to organize another local gentry army, forming a second line of defense.

Thirty-Two: !

This made perfect sense; if Bai Family Fortress holds, the bandits would scatter, which is also highly unfavorable.

Li Daoxuan heard their conversation, thought for a moment, and said: "Yiye, tell the Clerk that we can lend him five hundred long bows."