

## I. Dynasty 207

### Chapter 207: Autumn Drying Festival

On Suzaku Avenue, Xiao Ming and Lu Fei walked slowly, one in front and one behind.

Now living in Chang'an, even though Xiao Ming missed the affairs of Qingzhou, since things were not yet settled, he couldn't go back.

With nothing to do, he felt very relaxed. But life in Chang'an was indeed boring, or else Lu Fei wouldn't be so idle as to want to visit the brothel to relieve boredom.

Facing Lu Fei's slightly resentful expression, Xiao Ming smiled and explained, "Father has granted me a marriage soon. At this time, going to such a place is really inappropriate. You'd better go with Luo Xin instead."

"To tell the truth, Your Highness, it was that kid who just talked a lot about such things and got me all fired up. Who knew that kid would be dragged back by General Luo."

Xiao Ming gritted his teeth with frustration. So this was why Lu Fei suddenly brought it up—it turned out to be the fault of Luo Xin, that spoiled rich kid.

As the two were talking, suddenly Luo Xin's voice came from far away. Before long, he arrived in front of them.

At this moment, Xiao Ming asked curiously, “Didn’t Lu Fei say that General Luo took you back? Why are you back again?”

“Your Highness, I just went to ask about something. Since Your Highness came to Chang’an, my main job is still to serve you,” Luo Xin grinned.

Xiao Ming looked at Lu Fei, who was staring at Luo Xin with a murderous look, and said, “You’d better serve Lu Fei, or he might beat you up.”

“Hahaha...” Luo Xin laughed at Lu Fei’s expression and said, “Your Highness, I know you’re going to visit the Fei residence soon, so of course we can’t go to the brothel. Otherwise, my father would beat me to death. But, Your Highness, did you forget what day it is today?”

“What day?” Xiao Ming asked, confused.

“It’s the Autumn Drying Festival on the ninth of September,” Luo Xin suddenly said.

Xiao Ming immediately understood. The ninth of September is actually the modern Chongyang Festival, but in the Great Yu Kingdom it is called the Autumn Drying Festival. Every year at this time, the scholars and poets of Chang’an gather at Qujiang Lake to drink and enjoy chrysanthemums.

Because the Autumn Drying Festival also has another meaning—it’s about walking and enjoying the autumn.

“I’m not interested,” Xiao Ming said lazily. In the past when he was in Chang’an, his former self used to enjoy going to Qujiang Lake every year around this time. But usually he would end up being humiliated by other princes and then leave in anger.

After all, drinking and admiring chrysanthemums naturally includes writing poetry, which, in modern terms, is basically a day for scholars to show off.

Because at the same time, there would be two poetry gatherings at Qujiang Lake. The poetry gatherings are divided into two sides, separated by a curtain—one side for men, the other for women.

“Your Highness, if you don’t go this time, you’ll definitely regret it. This year’s poetry gathering is hosted by Princess Pingyang herself. It’s said that many noble ladies from Chang’an will be there, especially talented women from famous families. It’s even said that Lady Fei Yue’er, your future bride, will be among them.”

Saying this, Luo Xin calmly smiled.

“What poetry gathering? Nonsense! His Highness won’t go. I want to go to the brothel. What’s so great about poems?” Lu Fei shouted loudly, almost ready to roll up his sleeves.

Luo Xin said unhappily, “Which is more important—what’s under your pants or His Highness’s matters? Looks like you haven’t spent enough time in the little black room.”

At the mention of this, Lu Fei suddenly got angry, “Say ‘little black room’ again, I dare you!”

Seeing Lu Fei was really angry, Luo Xin immediately softened and said seriously, "Anyway, going to the brothel now is useless. On this day, all the best courtesans are already at Qujiang Lake. When the time comes, I'll take you to find a decorated boat instead."

Hearing this, Lu Fei immediately stopped being angry and smiled, "See, you should've said that earlier."

Then he looked at Xiao Ming and said, "Your Highness, let's go. No one knows if this Fei girl is tall or short, fat or thin, ugly or pretty. If she turns out to look like a monster, even if she's from the Fei family, for Your Highness's sake you can't marry her. Just imagine, if you lift her veil and get so scared that something happens to you, what would we do?"

"Go, go, go!" Luo Xin waved his hand like shooing away a fly. "Back then, I actually saw a painting of Fei Yue'er. Your Highness, she definitely doesn't look like what Lu Fei said."

Lu Fei laughed even louder, "A painting? That's nothing! Maybe Minister Fei was worried his daughter wouldn't get married, so he made a fake painting to trick you all into dreaming about her and treating her like a treasure."

Xiao Ming didn't doubt it before, but now that Lu Fei said it, he started to feel a bit worried.

After all, very few people in Chang'an had actually seen Fei Yue'er. If what Lu Fei said turned out to be true, it would be too late to cry later.

Concubine Zhen arranged for him to marry a girl from the Fei family for his future safety, but to Xiao Ming, all he needed to do was please Emperor Xiao Wenxuan for a few more years.

By then, even without the Fei family, who could stop him?

Besides, this wasn't love marriage. There was no way to understand someone's personality in advance. In modern times, even blind dates look at appearances. Not to mention, before the wedding night, he might not even get to see her face.

Thinking of this, he said, "Go?"

"Of course we go!" Luo Xin said with a smile. This was a rare lively event. For noble sons like him, there was no reason not to go.

"Since you both insist, let's go then," Xiao Ming said.

Luo Xin and Lu Fei were delighted and said, "Your Highness, after you!"

After that, Xiao Ming returned to his residence in Chang'an and changed into casual clothes. Lu Fei and Luo Xin also went to change clothes. The three of them agreed to meet at Qujiang Lake.

"Your Highness is going to Qujiang Lake, right?" Ziyuan seemed to already know everything.

“How did you know?” Xiao Ming asked in surprise.

“Today is the ninth of September. Every year at this time, Your Highness always goes. Now that the court session is over and Your Highness is free, where else would you go if not Qujiang Pool?” Ziyuan said softly.

Lu Luo’s face turned red with excitement, “Your Highness, take us with you. That time of year, there are the most people selling malt sugar by Qujiang Lake.”

Ziyuan also said, “Your Highness, please take us. It’s too boring staying in the yard.”

After thinking for a moment, Xiao Ming figured since the poetry event is divided in two halves, if he couldn’t see Fei Yue’er, maybe Ziyuan and Lu Luo could go to the women’s side and help look for her.

So he said, “Alright. But when we get there, you two mustn’t run around. The poetry gathering has all kinds of people. Many sons of nobles aren’t good people.”

“Yes, Your Highness,” Ziyuan and Lu Luo replied joyfully.

After changing clothes, the three of them, along with guards also dressed in plain clothes, set off for Qujiang Lake. Generally speaking, the poetry event would last from noon until evening.

This was the time when people were heading to Qujiang Lake. On the road, Xiao Ming saw many fancy carriages heading in that direction.

Xiao Ming was in no hurry. He enjoyed the scenery of Chang'an while thinking about how to expand business into the Chang'an market. After all, according to the business guild's statistics, nearly a quarter of Qingzhou's products had been sold in Chang'an in the past year, showing just how terrifying the spending power of Chang'an was.