

I. Dynasty 216

Chapter 216: Delivering Gifts

“Thank you for your help at the poetry gathering, Your Highness.”

After the boat trip, Zhu Yushu and the other two escorted Xiao Ming all the way back to his residence before sincerely expressing their gratitude.

“Don’t be so formal. Back in the day, we went through fire and water together,” Xiao Ming said with a smile.

Qin Rui and the others exchanged glances and laughed. Qin Rui said, “Since Your Highness is rarely in Chang’an, let’s meet again soon. And don’t forget about us three after you return to Qingzhou.”

“Ah, back in Qingzhou, I was bullied by the powerful families and couldn’t do anything. But now, I’ll definitely keep in touch through letters,” Xiao Ming replied.

Du Boyuan added, “That’s great. After all, we promised to share both hardships and blessings.”

With that, the three cupped their hands in farewell and took their leave.

After seeing them off, Xiao Ming turned to Lu Fei, who had returned with him that evening, and asked, “Can you still stand?”

“Your Highness, what kind of question is that? Even after ten days and nights of fierce battle on the walls of Cangzhou, I, Lu Fei, am still full of energy! Ah—Luo Xin, give me a hand!” Before he could finish, Lu Fei immediately leaned on Luo Xin’s shoulder.

Luo Xin was in no better shape. The two had spent the day indulging in pleasures, and he cursed, “Go back and rest, you nuisance!”

Lu Fei grinned, looking thoroughly satisfied, and clasped his hands toward Xiao Ming before turning away, muttering, “The Jiaofangsi is truly extraordinary...”

Xiao Ming frowned slightly as he watched them leave. The two had earned their rewards through their contributions in battle, so he let them be. After all, a life constantly facing death needed some release—otherwise, it would drive a man mad.

Returning to his quarters, Zi Wan informed him, “Your Highness, someone came earlier to say the goods will arrive tomorrow.”

“Really? That’s excellent. Once the gifts arrive, I’ll visit the Fei family tomorrow. In a few days, we’ll return to Qingzhou,” Xiao Ming said.

In just one day, he had already accomplished half of his tasks. The rest was simply delivering the gifts.

The next day, the merchant ships from Qingzhou arrived punctually at noon. Two large shipments of goods were unloaded, and Ziyuan hired over thirty horse-drawn carts to transport everything in multiple trips.

Selecting thirty items, Xiao Ming ordered the servants, “Take these and follow me.”

He was heading to Fei Ji’s residence.

The servants obeyed, loading the chosen gifts onto the carriage before following Xiao Ming to the Fei estate.

Yesterday, catching a glimpse of Fei Yue’er had briefly stunned him, but his emotions quickly settled. Having grown up in the modern era, surrounded by beautiful celebrities and animated heroines, he had some immunity to mere appearances.

Though he enjoyed playful banter, he was no lecher. He knew his priorities—compared to the unfamiliar Fei Yue’er, he valued the Fei family’s influence in the Great Yu Empire far more.

After all, Fei Yue’er was still a stranger to him, and strangers evoked only distant feelings.

Thus, this visit to the Fei residence was merely a formality. Once the marriage was finalized, the framework of his Chang’an interest group would be firmly established.

Coincidentally, today was a rest day. When he arrived at the Fei residence, Fei Ji himself came out to greet him after being notified.

“Fei Ji pays his respects to Your Highness,” Fei Ji said with a bow at the gate.

“Grand Secretary Fei, no need for formalities.”

Xiao Ming dismounted and helped Fei Ji up.

Fei Ji stood and gestured for Xiao Ming to enter. “Your Highness’s arrival brings great honor to my humble home. Please, this way.”

“You’re too kind,” Xiao Ming replied with a cupped-hand salute before following Fei Ji inside.

In the main hall, the two took their seats. Xiao Ming said, “Grand Secretary Fei, I apologize for disturbing you in the afternoon. I’ve brought some small gifts—I hope you’ll accept them.”

With that, he instructed the servants to unload the gifts from the carriage.

“Your Highness, there was no need for this. Your presence alone is an honor. Such extravagance is unnecessary.”

Despite his words, Fei Ji was secretly delighted.

Noble families placed great importance on face. Xiao Ming's personal visit, bearing lavish gifts, would surely enhance Fei Ji's reputation.

Moreover, Qingzhou goods were highly sought after in Chang'an. Whatever Xiao Ming brought would undoubtedly be premium items—this wasn't just about money, but prestige.

The servants carried in the boxes one by one, opening them before Fei Ji.

The first dozen or so contained "Drunken Qingzhou" liquor in glass bottles, the transparent liquid clearly visible through the crystal-clear glass.

When the boxes were opened, Fei Ji's eyes lit up.

"Your Highness, could this be the legendary glass?" Fei Ji examined it closely.

"Indeed," Xiao Ming replied, taking out a bottle of Drunken Qingzhou and placing it on the table.

The afternoon sunlight streamed in from the west, casting a golden glow on the bottle and its contents. This batch was custom-made—glass-bottled Drunken Qingzhou was not available on the market.

Picking up the bottle, Fei Ji ran his fingers over the smooth surface, fascinated. “If Your Highness hadn’t said it was glass, I would have mistaken it for rare jade. To produce such exquisite craftsmanship through human skill—Your Highness is truly extraordinary.”

Xiao Ming once watched a documentary about an isolated African tribe that worshipped glass bottles washed ashore as divine gifts.

This demonstrated how novel objects could deeply impact those in closed environments.

Similarly, Xiao Ming’s inventions had a profound effect on the people of the Great Yu Empire, much like how the first mobile phones became instant status symbols among the wealthy in modern times.

Now, Qingzhou’s goods were gradually becoming fashionable among the nobility, with high-end items satisfying their vanity.

Even someone like Fei Ji was not immune.

Twenty boxes contained Drunken Qingzhou—over a hundred bottles in total. The remaining ten boxes held other treasures.

Five of them were filled with handmade soaps infused with medicinal herbs, which Xiao Ming introduced one by one.

This was part of his next business strategy: soap would soon be categorized into high, middle, and low grades. The handmade soaps were the premium line, while ordinary soap would become accessible to commoners.

Fei Ji had never seen such soap before. Learning it was a new product, he smiled approvingly.

The last five boxes contained pure glass handicrafts.

Having mastered their craft, the workers at the glass workshop could now easily produce intricate artworks.