

## I. Dynasty 381

### Chapter 381: Returning to Chang'an

Feng Deshui was admiring the Prince Qi's residence. He gazed at the two tall water towers in the courtyard and felt a bit envious.

He instantly realized that they were similar to the water towers in front of Wei's Restaurant.

Today was the day Xiao Ming would leave for Chang'an. Feng Deshui had waited at the residence to accompany Xiao Ming on his departure.

After staying at Wei's Restaurant for two days, Feng Deshui was reluctant to leave. But he knew the journey to the capital couldn't be delayed, and Xiao Ming had hurriedly ended the reward ceremony.

He had heard a bit about the ceremony from the next day's newspaper. From that, he gained more insight into Xiao Ming's unconventional methods. He understood the officers and generals, but he was still puzzled by the fact that Xiao Ming also rewarded commoners and merchants with noble titles.

"Ah, Your Highness, another expensive trip to Chang'an," Feng Deshui remarked with a mischievous tone as he saw the long line of carriages outside the gates of the residence.

Since the reward ceremony, Xiao Ming had been preparing for the journey. These past two days had been spent gathering the necessary supplies.

"Feng Minister, you joke too much. These are just small gifts," Xiao Ming replied, even before he approached Feng Deshui. Feng Deshui immediately noticed the strong scent of perfume in the air.

Combined with the delicate nature of Feng Deshui's personality, it gave him an oddly playful appearance, like someone who didn't mind spending small amounts of money.

Feng Deshui chuckled, then looked at the two women following Xiao Ming, Green Luo and Purple Wisteria. He raised his hand and gently patted Xiao Ming on the back. "Your Highness, looks like you've had quite the enjoyable time these past few days."

As he spoke, Feng Deshui's eyes kept glancing at Ziyuan and Lu Luo.

Feeling his gaze, both Ziyuan and Lu Luo became a little uneasy.

Xiao Ming immediately understood what Feng Deshui was implying. He couldn't help but feel a little helpless. This old eunuch had been in the palace for so long that he was sharp enough to pick up on these things with just a glance.

Chuckling wryly, Xiao Ming wasn't bothered. After all, Feng Deshui was a eunuch. He said, "Thank you for your kind words, Minister Feng. Please wait a moment. Once my personal guards arrive, I'll be ready to leave."

As soon as Xiao Ming finished speaking, the sound of horses' hooves echoed in the distance. Luo Xin and Qi Guangyi entered the scene.

"Your Highness, the men are ready. We can depart now," Luo Xin called out.

Xiao Ming nodded. This time, he didn't bring Lu Fei. Aside from Niu Ben, Luo Xin and Lu Fei were his most capable subordinates.

Now that Niu Ben was staying in Qingzhou to oversee military expansion, Luo Xin had to go to Chang'an. Lu Fei would stay behind to guard Shanhai Pass.

Shanhai Pass was of immense strategic importance, and Xiao Ming had more confidence in Lu Fei's ability to defend it compared to Luo Xin.

Aside from Luo Xin, Niu Ben had also sent Qi Guangyi to join the party. Qi Guangyi was an expert in cavalry tactics, so Xiao Ming was bringing 5,000 armored cavalry for the journey to Chang'an.

With these 5,000 cavalry, Xiao Ming wouldn't have to worry, even if they encountered an ambush. The cavalry were fast and suited for long journeys.

Seeing everything was in order, Xiao Ming nodded and told Luo Xin and Qi Guangyi to wait a moment. He was still waiting for the supplies from the military workshop.

Before long, Chen Qi arrived with craftsmen, carrying several large boxes, and he also had a small box in his arms.

"Your Highness, the items have arrived," Chen Qi said with a wink, subtly pointing at the small box in his arms.

He had noticed Feng Deshui, who was looking around curiously.

Xiao Ming understood and nodded, signaling Chen Qi to go back. Then he turned to Feng Deshui and said, "Minister Feng, it's time for us to leave."

With a reluctant look, Feng Deshui glanced one last time at the direction of Wei's Restaurant. He then got into the sedan chair that had been prepared for him.

At the center of the procession was a large sedan chair—twice the size of Feng Deshui's. It could comfortably fit three people.

Xiao Ming, along with Ziyuan and Lu Luo., climbed into the spacious sedan.

Everything was ready. Luo Xin and Qi Guangyi mounted their horses and positioned themselves beside the sedan. At Xiao Ming's command, the entire procession began its journey.

Outside Qingzhou city, Pang Yukun led a group of officials to send Xiao Ming off. He gave a few final instructions, and only then did Xiao Ming set off toward Chang'an.

The large sedan was not prepared for Xiao Ming, but for Fei Yue'er. After their wedding in Chang'an, Fei Yue'er would return to Qingzhou with him.

Inside the lavish sedan, Xiao Ming placed the small box Chen Qi had given him on the table in the center.

Ziyuan asked, "Your Highness, what is this?"

"Firearms," Xiao Ming replied with a smile.

He opened the box, revealing two finely crafted short-barrel pistols. The stocks were made of peach wood, engraved with intricate patterns. The pistols were only about 30 centimeters long but had thick barrels, designed for greater power.

These firearms were small enough for Xiao Ming to carry concealed beneath his clothing.

With these firearms, Xiao Ming would be able to defend himself in case of an unexpected attack. No matter how skilled an assassin was, he could neutralize them with a single shot.

"Is this the weapon used by the Qingzhou army?" Green Luo asked in surprise.

Xiao Ming nodded. "These have great power. They can even kill a tiger."

Lu Luo's face turned pale as she was startled by the thought.

Ziyuan, intrigued, picked up the other pistol and began inspecting it. She aimed it at herself, and Xiao Ming was immediately shocked. He quickly grabbed it from her, scolding, "Are you trying to get yourself killed? This pistol is loaded with bullets!"

Xiao Ming broke into a cold sweat. If the gun had gone off, Ziyuan would have been in serious danger.

After being scolded, Ziyuan pouted, "It's going to be a boring ten-day journey to Chang'an."

Xiao Ming put the pistols away and laughed, "How could it be boring? We have such a large sedan. There's plenty for us to do."

At first, Purple Wisteria didn't quite understand, but as she thought it over, her face turned bright red. As someone new to such matters, she blushed, but she also started enjoying the attention, becoming more playful.

With the playful teasing between Ziyuan and Lu Luo, the journey went by smoothly. Ten days later, the procession reached Chang'an.

Both Xiao Ming and Luo Xin sighed in relief. They had finally arrived safely.

Before their arrival, the news had already reached Chang'an. Xiao Wenxuan had sent officials to wait at the city gates to welcome them.

“Your Highness, the Emperor personally sent officials from the Ministry of Rites to greet you. This shows how much the Emperor values you,” Feng Deshui said with a smile as he got out of the carriage.

The last time they came to Chang’an, they had been treated poorly by the city gate guards. This time, however, Xiao Wenxuan had taken extra care to make sure they were welcomed properly.

Nodding, Xiao Ming said to Feng Deshui, “Minister Feng, please take care of things for me. I hope you can look after me even more in Chang’an.”