

I. Dynasty 400

Chapter 400: Grand Gifts

When life becomes peaceful, time seems to pass quickly.

After the court ceremony and rewards, the Ministry of Rites came to Xiao Ming's mansion to help prepare for his wedding.

During this time, Xiao Ming visited relatives and friends to strengthen his connections with court officials — especially Luo Quan, Du Boyuan, Qin Rui, Zhu Yushu, and others.

These were his trusted people in Chang'an who had protected him many times.

Notably, when they searched the Eastern Palace, Du Heng had deliberately suggested the search because he knew Xiao Ming would feel uncomfortable asking for it himself. Xiao Ming only found out later while out with Du Boyuan and others.

Besides old friends, one difference was that Xiao Ming's mansion was now always bustling with carriages and visitors.

Merchants wanting to do business in Qingzhou came to meet Xiao Ming, hoping to join the Chamber of Commerce.

More often, it was nobles and officials from Chang'an.

From princes to ordinary officials, everyone brought rich gifts to get on Xiao Ming's good side.

In the past, only other princes enjoyed such treatment. Now Xiao Ming experienced it too — proof of his rising status.

Days passed by, and amidst welcoming many guests, Xiao Ming busied himself with wedding preparations.

The wedding with Feiyue'er was set for the sixteenth of the month — a very auspicious day.

According to Great Yu customs, before the wedding, the Emperor must give gifts to the bride's family and hold an engagement banquet there.

The Ministry of Rites prepared fifty banquet tables with music and celebration.

All nobles not on duty, ministers, guards, officials of rank two and above, and noblewomen gathered at the bride's home.

The day after the engagement banquet was the wedding day — the formal marriage ceremony in Great Yu.

Early that morning, Fei Ji sent the bridal dowry to Xiao Ming's mansion.

Xiao Ming dressed in his princely robe and went to the palace.

Emperor Xiao Wenxuan, Empress Zhao, and Consort Zhen waited for him in the Jade Water Pavilion.

"Xiao Ming, greetings to Father, Empress, and Mother Consort."

After speaking, Xiao Ming knelt and performed the "three kneels and nine kowtows" ritual — a deep sign of respect, like worshipping one's ancestors.

Empress Zhao was very happy these days, having worked hard on Xiao Ming's wedding.

At the engagement ceremony, she gave Feiyue'er many gold, silver, pearls, and fine silk gifts.

Xiao Ming noticed this and understood Empress Zhao's intentions.

Now that all princes had sworn the blood oath and the Crown Prince's position was secure, making peace with Xiao Ming ensured that when the Crown Prince became Emperor, Xiao Ming could guard the borders for him.

"Prince Qi, no need for ceremony today. This is your wedding day! The whole palace is joyful — it hasn't been this lively for years. I feel blessed by your happiness," Empress Zhao smiled.

Xiao Wenxuan was also happy. In all his years, he'd never been so relaxed.

Since Xiao Ming had defeated the tribes and guarded Shanhai Pass, the court ministers were more obedient. Though factional struggles continued, no one talked about tributes or marriages with tribes. People also feared Xiao Ming more.

He knew that with the northern tribes no longer a threat, Xiao Ming could focus on dealing with his enemies and their backers.

More than that, Xiao Ming had become the empire's stabilizing pillar. No one wanted to provoke him.

Ministers like Fei Ji and Luo Quan spoke louder in court.

"The Empress is right. Today is your happy day. I also feel your joy. Stand up now. You have a busy day ahead."

Xiao Ming answered and slowly stood.

He usually disliked complicated things, but ancient weddings were the most complicated.

Xiao Wenxuan and Empress Zhao were joyous, but Consort Zhen often wiped tears.

Seeing this, Xiao Ming said, "Mother Consort, today is my happiest day. Why do you keep crying?"

"I'm happy. From today, you're truly a family man. In the future, take good care of the family. Come visit Chang'an when you can," Consort Zhen said.

Xiao Ming nodded. Among all, Consort Zhen cared for him most. Seeing her cry made him uneasy.

After the rituals, palace eunuchs went to fetch Feiyue'er.

The Imperial Guards prepared eight red sedan chairs for the bride.

At the auspicious time, the guards carried the sedan chairs from the palace to the Fei family.

Xiao Ming returned to his mansion to wait.

"Your Highness, congratulations!"

On his wedding day, nobles and officials from all over Chang'an came to Xiao Ming's mansion bearing gifts.

"Thank you," Xiao Ming said to Luo Quan, then greeted officials like Luo Hong, Du Heng, Yu Ming, Chao Jun, and others.

"Dear nephew, today Uncle Yong prepared a grand gift worth two hundred thousand taels of gold, silver, pearls, and jewels," said Prince Yong, arriving with Prince Wei, their gifts brought in carts.

Prince Wei added, "Congratulations on your wedding. I prepared gifts worth three hundred thousand taels."

Xiao Ming laughed widely. He now understood what "wedding money" really meant. If he had more weddings, he'd never worry about money.

"Thank you, Uncle. Please come in."

Prince Wei and Prince Yong bowed and entered.

More carts arrived. Servants called out:

"Prince Runan congratulates Prince Qi on his wedding, bringing a pair of jade ruyi scepters, pearl hairpins, and ten thousand taels of gold."

"Prince Chu congratulates Prince Qi..."

"Prince Huainan congratulates Prince Qi..."

One after another, gifts and congratulations flowed in. Xiao Ming grew happier — this Chang'an trip was worthwhile.

Inside the Fei family's main hall, eunuchs placed the sedan chairs.

Feiyue'er, dressed in red ceremonial clothes, came out of the fragrant chamber.

With maids supporting her, she slowly entered the sedan and lowered the curtain.

Fei Ji stood outside, greeting officials with a bright smile.

More officials came than at his eldest daughter's wedding to the Crown Prince — a great honor.

At the auspicious time, the sedan chairs lifted and headed toward Xiao Ming's mansion.

Inside the sedan, Feiyue'er wept bitterly.

This was the last time she'd see her family for who knows how long. Married far away in Qingzhou, with no relatives nearby, she felt sad and lonely.

Though Prince Qi had a great reputation, she didn't really know him — naturally, she felt nervous and scared.