

Rise 264

Chapter 264: The Dispute Over the Money Bag

“Shen Jingli, be cautious with your words. Be careful, there may be ears on the other side of the wall.”

Listening to Shen Jingli’s reckless scorn for the current Prime Minister, the black and blue-clad Jinyiwei were unusually nervous, their faces turning pale. They feared that the words might be overheard, and if word of this reached Yan Song, it would surely spell trouble.

“Cautious with my words? Haha, I was not afraid of the court that day, and today, in such a small tavern, what is there to fear?” Shen Jingli, dressed in a flying fish suit, took a sip of wine and sneered, “Now, our Grand Scholar Yan Song, his greed has reached its peak, and his foolish and shallow heart is as hard as iron. A few words, how could they move him!”

Upon hearing Shen Jingli’s words, the black and blue-clad Jinyiwei remembered the great achievements of their colleague from two years ago. Back then, in front of the civil and military officials, with a single remark, “The master does not speak, so the small official speaks,” they had boldly criticized the Minister of Personnel, Summer. Good heavens, this was the Minister of Personnel, the one in charge of promotions! If they had to curry favor, they would never have dared to criticize him.

Moreover, this colleague of theirs was upright, always hostile to evil, and would express any grievances openly. Especially after drinking, their mouth was even more uncontrollable. Discussing the country and writing with enthusiasm—these were common traits of scholars. After all these years, if they could have changed, they would have done so, but if they hadn’t, they wouldn’t have lost the lucrative post of county magistrate.

Forget it. They were just a small Jinyiwei flag-bearer. Best to let it go.

But their colleague was indeed lucky. Through misfortune, they had gained favor with the Jinyiwei and caught the eye of their superiors. Their future was bright. Unlike themselves, who had been stuck as a small flag-bearer for over ten years.

In the future, they would have to rely on this colleague for promotion.

After thinking a lot, the black and blue-clad Jinyiwei flag-bearer gave up on persuading their colleague to be cautious, occasionally pouring wine and serving tea.

Then, Zhu Ping'an overheard the black and blue-clad Jinyiwei in the neighboring table creatively criticizing Yan Song, revealing quite a few sordid affairs of the court. For instance, Yan Song had been selling official positions, and the scholar Pan Hongye had used 2,200 taels of silver to become the governor of Linqing. A certain general had spent thousands of taels of silver to take over the supervision of grain transportation. And there were many other things about Yan Song.

After a few more cups of watered-down wine, the black and blue-clad Jinyiwei suddenly grew interested, lightly tapping the table and reciting a poem:

“When young, don't toil at your studies, money can establish one's name.

Look at Chancellor Yan, he surely values those with wealth.”

This was a modification of four lines from “The Divine Child,” emphasizing wealth and linking it to Yan Song, exposing his involvement in selling official titles.

After finishing the poem, the Jinyiwei in the flying fish suit was not yet satisfied. They picked up the wine jar with one hand, poured a bowl for the blue-black-clad Jinyiwei, then poured one for themselves, drinking deeply. After refilling the bowls, they drank again and slapped the table, reciting another poem:

“The emperor values power and wealth,

Scholars teach you this too.

All things are inferior,

Only serving Yan Gao is worth something.”

This mocked the idea that no matter how good your scholarship, it was nothing compared to flattering Yan Song. Only by currying favor with the Prime Minister could one be promoted and become wealthy.

Zhu Ping’an sat at the table, poking at the thin porridge and side dishes, listening to the Jinyiwei in the flying fish suit scolding Yan Song.

An upright person!

Hostile toward evil!

Zhu Ping'an admired this flying fish suit Jinyiwei.

However, from their haughty drinking and scolding, Zhu Ping'an could also detect another tone. They were too upright but lacked flexibility; they were hostile toward evil but also somewhat arrogant.

After all, what was the use of scolding Yan Song in this small tavern? It could easily alert the enemy and bring misfortune. If they really caught the attention of Yan Song's allies, it would be a shame. After all, they were up against a powerful opponent.

So, while admiring them, Zhu Ping'an couldn't help but feel a little nervous for this flying fish suit Jinyiwei.

Just as the flying fish suit Jinyiwei seemed ready to stand up and loudly curse Yan Song, a commotion was heard from outside the tavern. It seemed that two people were arguing about something.

The flying fish suit Jinyiwei, true to their character, immediately stopped scolding Yan Song. Business was business. They grabbed the folding fan on the table and stood up, walking toward the door. The other blue-black-clad Jinyiwei followed, grabbing the rusty spring knife on the table and heading out with them.

Seeing the Jinyiwei leave, those who had been afraid to venture outside, intimidated by these two Jinyiwei, also followed them toward the door.

Zhu Ping'an placed ten coins on the table and joined the crowd heading outside. The prices in the capital were more than three times higher than those in the village.

Once outside, they saw two people pulling and arguing. One was dressed splendidly, though his clothes were a little wrinkled, with long, almond-shaped eyes, but his eye sockets were deep and dark, as if he hadn't slept well last night.

This person was holding a very shabby young man by the arm. The young man's clothes were truly poor, ill-fitting, and short, exposing his wrists and ankles. He was holding two bundles of herbs.

"I clearly had six taels of silver in my pouch, but now there are only three!"

The well-dressed man raised a green-colored purse and fiercely questioned the shabby young man, gripping his arm tightly.

“I only found three taels of silver,” the shabby young man explained, aggrieved and angry.

“No, you’ve taken the three taels!” The well-dressed man insisted. “If you don’t give it to me, I’ll take you to see the officials. You stole my silver. Taking something without asking is theft. We have plenty of honest judges here in the capital who’ll have you whipped and make you return my silver.”

As the well-dressed man was speaking, he looked up and saw the flying fish suit Jinyiwei and the blue-black Jinyiwei walking out of the tavern.

The well-dressed man, gripping the shabby young man, dragged him toward the flying fish suit Jinyiwei and knelt down with a thud. Pointing at the young man, he started to accuse him.

“I have grievances, please, great lord, give judgment.”

The flying fish suit Jinyiwei squinted their eyes, glanced at the two, and asked, “What grievance do you have?”

“Last night, I took six taels of silver from my home to take care of business, but halfway I lost my purse. This boy found it, and after I chased him, he returned the purse, but there were only three taels of silver inside. This boy has kept the other three taels! That silver is my hard-earned money. Please, great lord, do justice for me.”

The well-dressed man kneeled on the ground, tearfully making his case.

The shabby young man, listening to the accusations, trembled all over, his voice filled with indignation.

“You’re slandering me! I found the purse here and have been waiting for more than half a day. When I saw you looking for something, I called out and asked what you were looking for. You said you lost your purse, so I returned it to you. The purse only had three taels of silver in it. Who took your three taels?”