

Rise 266

Chapter 266: A Woman Comes from the South

The dispute in front of the eatery had come to an end, and the people offered various praises to the two embroidered uniform guards for their fair judgment. The shabby boy also kneeled and kowtowed repeatedly in gratitude. When everyone recalled the honest and straightforward boy who had spoken up just now, they found that the boy's figure had already disappeared.

"Such a pity, I was hoping to make a friend."

The embroidered guard in the flying fish uniform searched around but did not see the honest boy who had spoken earlier, and sighed.

At this moment, the honest boy they were thinking of was already slinging a bag over his shoulder, clutching a black wooden board as he crossed another street.

When Zhu Ping'an returned to the inn by the same route, three large ships were sailing downstream on the Yangtze River. These three large ships were like a combination of official vessels and pleasure boats — heavy and sturdy, yet with pavilions and towers. They were safe, beautiful, and comfortable in ways ordinary passenger ships could not compare.

On one of the large ships' pavilion towers, there were brocade quilts and carpets sewn from animal fur. Around the railings, brocade quilts were also draped to provide cover.

A languid, almost enchanting young girl sat comfortably on the carpet, leaning sideways against the railing. In her snow-white jade-like hand, she held a scroll of a book, on the title page was a line of poetry:

“On the mountain, there are trees, and the trees have branches;

My heart delights in you, but you do not know.”

The girl’s long hair was as black as a spring, tied into a princess bun. In the bun was a red jade coral hairpin, from which tassels hung. A gentle breeze stirred the tassels, making them sway and highlighting the girl’s elegant and refined beauty. Her skin was whiter than snow, tender and jade-like, with red lips and white teeth. Her glance was full of charm. Sitting there, she resembled a fox spirit or a seductive enchantress, comfortably flipping through the book scroll.

On the carpet, a round-faced plump little maid knelt, extending her delicate small hands to gently massage the long legs of the languid, enchanting girl. She was working hard at the massage, her rosy little face blushing.

Below the pavilion, several burly old maids sat on stools watching the Yangtze River, shelling melon seeds.

Further down were dozens of guards dressed in uniform. They had curved knives hanging at their waists, scattered around the ship’s sides, vigilantly watching passing large and small boats. At the bow of the ship stood a man with a longbow on his back, his gaze sharp.

During the Ming Dynasty, ordinary knives and such were not regulated, but bows, crossbows, and armor were still controlled weapons.

In the Ming Dynasty, carrying a longbow or a heavy crossbow was not much different than carrying a rocket launcher in modern times. Yet the man at the bow of this large ship dared to ostentatiously carry a longbow in plain view...

All passing ships, upon seeing these three large ships, would steer well clear. No checkpoint along the way dared to stop these three large ships; they were allowed to pass immediately, and even provided with fresh water and vegetables as supplies. Thus, the three large ships sailed downstream smoothly, at more than twice the speed of ordinary boats.

“Miss, look! There’s a huge fish swimming over there!”

The plump little maid, working hard at the massage, suddenly spotted a white, spindle-shaped large fish over two meters long swimming rapidly not far from the ship. Suddenly, it leapt out of the water like a fine steed. The plump little maid opened her mouth wide, excitedly chattering and gasping.

Hearing this, the languid, enchanting girl lifted her eyes from the book and looked toward the river. She glanced at the large fish nearby, then gently tapped the plump little maid’s forehead with the book scroll in her hand, smiling slightly:

“Silly girl. What big fish? You’re just easily amazed by things you rarely see. That’s a ji, its body like a sturgeon, tail like a fish. In the Jin period, Guo Pu described it in the Erya Annotation. The dirty fishermen here call it a river horse. Just like you, ignorant!”

“Miss, you’re so amazing!”

The plump little maid covered her forehead, admiring her mistress so much that stars almost sparkled in her eyes.

“I told you to read more books earlier.”

The languid, enchanting girl tapped the plump little maid’s forehead lightly again with the book scroll in her hand.

“It hurts, Miss! I want to read, but I fall asleep whenever I try. It’s so strange,” the plump little maid pouted, covering her forehead, looking aggrievedly at her mistress.

Hearing this, the languid, enchanting girl couldn’t help but roll her eyes with amusement.

This silly girl even has the nerve to say that? Every time she is told to read, the girl sees her little head nodding lower and lower, like a little praying mantis.

“Ah, we’ll arrive at Yingtian by evening, it’s less than two days, so fast,” said the plump little maid.

“Going downstream naturally is faster, but once we turn onto the Grand Canal from Yingtian, it won’t be this quick,” the lazy, enchanting girl said faintly, shifting her gaze from the Yangtze River to the north.

“Is that so? But what if we can’t make it to the old madam’s sixtieth birthday? They originally...”

Suddenly, the plump little maid thought of some bad things about her master’s family and hurriedly covered her mouth to keep the words from coming out, making muffled sounds.

The lazy, enchanting girl didn’t care at all, curling the corners of her lips with amusement. Her snow-white fingertips slid through her jet-black, spring-like long hair, and her dark eyes rolled disdainfully.

“Haven’t seen that old hag in a long time, giggle, didn’t expect that old hag to become more lively and mischievous. Your good granddaughter is going to send a nice big gift... oh, by the way, I wonder how my elder and second cousins are doing, giggle giggle giggle...”

The lazy, enchanting girl smiled slyly, her dark eyes glancing around as she giggled.

The plump little maid massaging beside her shuddered slightly upon hearing her young mistress's laughter.

Laughter and chatter filled the attic.

Below the attic, the old housemaid cracking sunflower seeds shrank her neck, suddenly feeling a chill as if cold wind was blowing.

"Report to Jiang Maxian, the storm is rising, the weather is about to change. Please, Miss, return to your room quickly and take care of your health."

The man standing under the pavilion at the bow of the boat, carrying a longbow on his back, respectfully cupped his fists and loudly reported to the attic.

The guide on the boat was an old fisherman from the Yangtze River, extremely familiar with it. Since the guide warned of a storm risk, it was almost certain a storm was coming. Remembering the master's instructions before leaving, the man with the longbow dared not make any mistakes. After hearing the guide's words, he immediately came to report.

"Understood. You all take care as well. Once we reach the capital, I will ask my father to reward you on my behalf," came a lark-like voice from the pavilion.

“Thank you, Miss.”

The man with the longbow cupped his fists to thank her, then turned to arrange matters on the boat. With the storm approaching, there was much to prepare.

“Would the husband be shocked to see us, giggle...” the plump little maid suddenly said while packing, blinking her big eyes at her young mistress.

“Who has time to see him,” the lazy, enchanting girl closed her book scroll and replied lightly.

“But we’re going to the capital, we will definitely meet him,” the plump little maid said.

“He’s just a toad, who cares to see him,”

The lazy, enchanting girl stood up, pursed her lips, and then left the pavilion.