

Rise 280

Chapter 280: Official

The sky was clear, not a cloud in sight. In the Ming Dynasty, free from industrial pollution, the sky was an incredibly beautiful, vivid blue. The afternoon sunlight shone white and warm.

That crisp and soft feminine voice just now had drawn everyone's attention.

Everyone turned their eyes in the direction of the soft voice, and saw a lavishly dressed, rather charming young girl appear before them—a girl with a round, bun-like face. In the sunlight, she stood out exceptionally. Her innocent charm was particularly heart-stirring. Like a little swallow returning to its nest, she lifted her skirt and cheerfully ran toward the boy they had all been despising—the one with poor personal hygiene.

“Master... ah...”

The bun-faced girl ran over joyfully, but couldn't stop in time. She let out a startled cry and, propelled by momentum, plunged directly into the boy's chest.

And so, before the eyes of the crowd, the girl—with her sun-kissed fragrance—fell into the boy's arms.

Hiss...

A collective gasp sounded around them!

Beast!

She just called him Master! That means this guy even laid his hands on the maid of his own wife!

Such a tender and lovely cabbage, just gobbled up by a pig! And not just any pig—a filthy one at that!

The onlookers were first stunned, shocked beyond words. Then came outrage, anguish, and righteous indignation. They launched a more profound moral condemnation of Zhu Ping'an: originally, they just thought this guy had bad hygiene. But now it turns out he's a beast in a slovenly pig's skin, someone who wouldn't even spare his wife's maid! As scholars, how can we even bear to be associated with such a person? Even those who aren't scholars would be ashamed!

But then, someone had a thought. Right—this guy has such poor hygiene and questionable character. What kind of wife could he have gotten anyway? If she isn't blind, she must be lame—or else fat, ugly, or not right in the head! Otherwise, what respectable family would marry their daughter off to him?

Thinking along these lines, people's hearts started to balance out a bit. No wonder this scumbag would go after his wife's maid—it must be that his wife is so... well... unappealing, that even with the lights off, he can't get interested. That's why he's turned to the maid!

Yes, that must be it.

Their gazes toward Zhu Ping'an became less filled with envy, jealousy, and resentment.

"Ah..."

The bun-faced little maid lifted her head from Zhu Ping'an's chest, her round cheeks flushed red. She let out a surprised cry, her chubby little hands pushing Zhu Ping'an as if shocked by an electric current. She took a step back, her entire pretty face red enough to drip blood. She bowed her head like an ostrich, wishing she could find a crack in the ground to disappear into.

This was the Ming Dynasty, after all. Throwing yourself into a man's arms in public was nearly the equivalent of streaking in modern times.

So now, in the sunlight, the bun-faced maid lowered her head, her cheeks flushed red, her delicate earlobes nearly transparent, her little hands nervously twisting the corner of her clothes. She looked extremely embarrassed.

"What are you doing here?"

Zhu Ping'an looked at the bun-faced girl—wasn't she supposed to be in Shanghe Village, keeping that spoiled, cunning young lady company? Why had she come to the capital? Could it be that the willful and manipulative

lady was unhappy about the engagement arranged by her family and had come to the capital to find him and break off the marriage?

That thought sparked a bit of excitement in Zhu Ping'an. He had performed well in the recent imperial exam. If the cunning girl came to break off the engagement now, wouldn't that be double happiness?

But wait—how could this bun-faced little maid dare to call him “Master” so publicly? Was she sent by the spoiled girl to call him that on purpose, just so she could humiliate him even more after breaking off the engagement? Surely she wouldn't go that far?

“Oh, oh, I came with Miss. She's over there.”

The bun-faced maid, hearing Zhu Ping'an's question, seemed to snap out of it. Like a frightened hamster, she lifted her bun-like face, reached out with her chubby hand, and shakily pointed in a direction.

Then Zhu Ping'an saw the cunning girl, Li Shu, gracefully approaching from a distance.

Speaking of that manipulative girl—what kind of game was she playing now? Why was she dressed so stunningly? Zhu Ping'an pursed his lips as he watched Li Shu approach. The ornaments in her hair and the clothes she wore—those must have cost at least several hundred taels of silver.

A new outfit every day, new accessories all the time—such a materialistic girl! He couldn't afford to support her. Of course, the girl knew this too, and had always looked down on him. Ugly, poor, shabby—surely that's why she was so eager to come to the capital and break off the engagement.

At that moment, everyone outside the examination courtyard, waiting, was also completely captivated by the approaching girl. All eyes were on her, and they were shaken to the core.

The beauty had arrived. In an instant, bright eyes, flawless teeth, white mink fur, a red dress—she outshone the very sunlight. She was so beautiful, so breathtaking—one glance from her could steal my soul; one smile could turn my world upside down. In this moment, I would willingly become the ground beneath her feet—if she stepped on me, I would still feel blessed.

If the crowd had been visually drawn to the bun-faced maid earlier, they were now completely entranced by this girl.

She was so beautiful, she didn't seem like a mortal woman. She had to be a fairy from the heavens—no, even among fairies, she'd be the most beautiful one of all.

In that moment, heaven and earth, all things and all people—became mere background.

Everyone stood dumbfounded, watching her approach slowly, gracefully passing them all—until she arrived beside the slovenly boy they had scorned.

“Dear husband...”

Li Shu stepped in front of Zhu Ping’an, bowed gracefully, gave him a playful wink, a mischievous and willful look on her face. Her black eyes sparkled with wit, and her red lips pouted slightly. Like a songbird, her charming, coquettish voice rang out.

Dear husband?

What the hell? Zhu Ping’an looked at Li Shu in disbelief, the corners of his mouth twitching.

The onlookers nearly gouged their eyes out!

Dear husband! She actually called him that!

Heavens—such a devastatingly beautiful woman just called that filthy boy her husband! Is there no justice in this world?! Upon hearing this, the eyes turned toward Zhu Ping’an were blazing with envy, jealousy, and hatred!

Just moments ago, everyone had comforted themselves by imagining that the slovenly boy's wife must be blind, crippled, fat, or stupid. But reality had just mercilessly slapped them in the face. If this woman was "ugly," then there weren't five women worth looking at in the entire Ming Empire! If the maid earlier could enchant a single man, this newly arrived beauty could enchant an entire nation.

What's more, behind this beauty were several more maids, an old housekeeper, and over ten uniformly dressed bodyguards—obviously the entourage of someone from a noble and powerful family. This only deepened the crowd's envy, jealousy, and hatred toward Zhu Ping'an!

Before, they had thought: such a lovely cabbage had been devoured by a pig. And not just any pig—a filthy one!

Now, this very moment, it was like that thought had been upgraded:

Beast! A filthy pig had wandered into a field full of tender, fresh cabbage—and devoured the whole field! And not only that—he was gnawing on ginseng like it was a carrot!