

Rise 75

Chapter 75: Leaving After the Matter is Resolved

Zhu Ping'an's explanation did not satisfy the girl. Although she wasn't particularly familiar with this mountain village and found it hard to discern the truth in Zhu Ping'an's words, she was still very dissatisfied with his answer. Even if what he said was true, the difference between saving someone and not saving them at all was not significant; who would doubt a person's intentions based on their choice of words?

So...

"Little brother, you seem to be a bit naughty."

With a swift sound, a gleam of cold light shot out from the dagger that was flipping up and down, pinning Zhu Ping'an's clothes to the ground between his legs.

"Wait, wait, wait, I haven't finished speaking yet."

Damn, he could already feel a chill in his groin.

Cold sweat broke out on Zhu Ping'an's forehead. That was close, so close! This girl was really ruthless. He hurriedly begged for mercy, trying to avoid her sharpness.

"Then you speak; I'll give you another chance. I told you before, if you can't outsmart me, I'll use my knife. Others might be deceived by your silly appearance, but I won't. So if you don't want to lose something, you'd better behave yourself."

The girl bent down, clutching the dagger between her fingers, flipping it up and down, looking at Zhu Ping'an with a smile.

Zhu Ping'an, having been seen through by the girl, simply smiled foolishly and sat on the ground, speaking lightly.

"When you were shouting for help, your voice was very convincing, but your eyes showed no sign of fear. Instead, they looked like a wolf spotting its prey, red and fierce. You must have deliberately applied something to stimulate them, right?"

The girl sat on the chair, her delicate hands gripping the dagger, no longer twirling it, watching Zhu Ping'an with great interest, waiting for him to continue.

"Also, about you being a weak woman running clumsily in embroidered shoes—those five, um, those five burly men just happened to chase you all the way to the mountain temple. What a coincidence."

The interest in the girl's eyes intensified, urging Zhu Ping'an to continue with her gaze.

"And then there's your attire. Your clothes are all disheveled, giving off the impression that you were robbed and almost assaulted. But don't you find that strange? With your clothes so disheveled, you haven't exposed anything at all. Of course, I'm not being lewd; it's just that in a real situation like this, you'd show at least a little skin. Nothing at all is just too unusual. The ones chasing you are five men with lustful intentions, not monks..."

"And then there's the matter of being overly friendly. Which well-bred young lady would drink and toast with a bunch of men? It's rare for them to show their faces at all..."

"Of course, the most certain thing is that when you toasted me, I pretended to stumble and bumped into you so suddenly. But you handled it too well; not a single drop of wine was spilled. Tsk, tsk, your reflexes are too quick for a weak girl, aren't they?"

As Zhu Ping'an spoke, he looked at the girl with a silly grin.

His analysis was thorough and hit the nail on the head, but in reality, it was not so.

"You're so clever; you must have realized I really dislike bookish people. But do you know what I dislike the most?"

After hearing Zhu Ping'an's words, the girl nodded, propping her delicate hand against her fragrant cheek, smiling as she asked him.

Zhu Ping'an was taken aback by the question. Was this girl changing the subject a bit too quickly?

Before he could collect his thoughts, he saw an embroidered shoe magnifying before him, and then he was kicked to the ground by the girl.

"I hate bookish people like you who are clever yet self-righteous!"

Zhu Ping'an thought he had underestimated women of old; it turned out there had always been these unpredictable girls throughout history. Lying on the ground, he watched the girl turn around with her hands behind her back. He felt quite embarrassed but couldn't help grinning.

"Damn, is this guy really knocked silly by the young master? He's almost eating dirt and still grinning."

One of the men responsible for watching Zhu Ping'an saw him awkwardly lying on the ground with his face pressed against the dirt and couldn't help but comment.

Another man joined in with laughter.

"Don't mind him. These scholars always like to be pretentious and create mysteries, making it seem like the whole world is in their hands. Reading has made them foolish; they can't even tell the situation."

The girl didn't seem to care about their remarks.

Soon, three men who had gone to hunt rabbits and pheasants returned, bringing back six skinned and cleaned rabbits, along with some firewood. They started a fire in the makeshift shelter.

The aroma of roasted rabbit was rich and crispy, so delicious that just smelling it made Zhu Ping'an's mouth water.

Zhu Ping'an, feeling hungry again despite having a full stomach, looked at the girl and the others each holding a roasted rabbit.

"Ahem, could I have a piece too?" Zhu Ping'an asked, staring eagerly at the girl.

"Aren't you the ones who say there are beauties and mansions in books? Just recite your lines over there," the girl replied, seemingly filled with disdain for bookish types. Although she was smiling while speaking, the sarcasm in her words was unmistakable.

The girl sat alone on the earthen kang in the shelter, while the other four men sat a bit further away, displaying different social statuses.

"Could I at least have a sip of wine?"

Despite getting knocked down and covered in dirt, Zhu Ping'an wasn't discouraged and turned his interest to the wine at their feet.

The few big men laughed derisively at his request, saying, "Giving you wine would be a waste. You've already had enough outside the mountain temple! This fine wine is for us to enjoy."

Indeed, the reputation of the young women of the Jianghu is well-deserved. The girl is also drinking, bringing her own cup, while the other men are using bowls found in the shanty to pour the fine wine and enjoy it heartily. The girl is not greedy; she sips lightly, only having a small cup. The other men, however, fill their bowls to the brim, leaving not a drop for Zhu Ping'an.

Zhu Ping'an sits on the ground, watching them eat meat and drink wine, his silly smile growing more pronounced. Behind his back, he has a broken shard of tile, slowly rubbing it against the ropes binding him. The ropes have already been worn down by about four-fifths; with a little effort, they would snap easily.

"Calculating the time, it should be about right, shouldn't it?"

The few people eating grilled meat and drinking suddenly heard an inexplicable remark from behind and turned to see the source of the voice.

"Oh, perhaps we still need to wait for another two breaths," Zhu Ping'an said casually, seeing that they could still turn around.

"What do you mean?" The girl looked at Zhu Ping'an suspiciously, sensing something was off.

Then, under her astonished gaze, Zhu Ping'an stood up from the ground and stretched, moving his arms and legs.

How is this possible? Aren't his hands tied?

Then, the girl and the five men turned pale, their bodies suddenly losing all strength, unable to move even their little fingers.

"It's strange how this happened, isn't it?" Zhu Ping'an set his bag aside and slowly walked toward the girl.

"I certainly wasn't randomly bumping into you in the temple out of boredom. The moment I heard your voice and saw you, I could see through it all without needing to take the risk of bumping into you for confirmation. You must not have noticed that the paper package tucked at your waist is gone, the one you opened and

pinched a small bit from when you were crouching, then put back. I saw you pour something into it when you raised your wine jug to toast. When I bumped into you, I took the opportunity to grab it. After finishing a sip of wine outside the Mountain Temple, I also poured a bit into it."

As Zhu Ping'an spoke, he reached for the exquisite dagger beside the girl.

"Little brother, what are you going to do?" At this moment, the girl still wore a smile, seemingly unafraid at all.

Zhu Ping'an stood in front of the girl with the dagger in hand, his silly smile still intact as he spoke politely:

"Sister, could you spare some money for me? Have pity on this penniless scholar who has to hurry to the county town for an examination! Look, my only possession now is this dagger!"

The girl stared at Zhu Ping'an, smiling on the outside but nearly breathing fire on the inside. How shameless! What my mother said was indeed true; these scholars are the most filthy and despicable in the world, utterly detestable! To rob someone while speaking so delicately—spare? Who has a knife to their neck asking for charity? Moreover, that knife is mine; when did it become your only possession?

"If you don't agree, just clap your hands. If you don't clap, then I'll take it as you agree," Zhu Ping'an said with a silly smile, adding, "This sister is generous, giving me two hundred and thirty taels of silver and six hundred and fifty-seven wen in one go. With such a kind sister, you'll surely find a scholar to be your perfect husband."

Zhu Ping'an picked up the money the girl had casually placed down earlier and weighed it in his hand, satisfied.

After taking the money the girl had scraped together in the temple, Zhu Ping'an walked over to the five big men with a dagger in hand, wearing a naive smile.

The smile Zhu Ping'an had at that moment was almost identical to the way the students in the mountain god temple smiled at the girl.

"Don't be nervous; I won't tremble." Zhu Ping'an squatted in front of the man who had slapped him on the head twice, shoved him several times, and even knocked him down when he entered. He smiled foolishly, pressing the knife against the man's face.

"I've eaten more salt than you've eaten rice; why would I be nervous!"

The man still had some backbone. If it weren't for his lack of strength, he would surely have spat at Zhu Ping'an.

"Eating so much salt, are you trying to pickle yourself into salted fish?" Zhu Ping'an chuckled.

"Stop talking nonsense; if I frown, it won't end well... ah..." The man with backbone suddenly let out a scream, his features contorting, unable to even frown anymore.

"Ah, sorry, I really slipped." Zhu Ping'an pulled the dagger out of the man's thigh with an apologetic look.

Seeing the blood pouring from the man's leg, Zhu Ping'an suddenly felt a bit nauseous and didn't dare look too closely. It seemed this way of showing off wasn't suitable for him; whether before or after his crossing, he was still just an ordinary person. He truly couldn't handle such violent matters.

"Forget it; you all look poor enough, so there's no money to squeeze out of you."

Bored, but not wanting to show weakness in front of these people, Zhu Ping'an waved the dagger around in front of them, forcing himself to intimidate them. After leaving a parting remark, he turned to leave.

The girl watched as Zhu Ping'an, holding the bloody dagger, approached her with a silly smile, and this time it felt entirely different from before.

The dagger was dripping with blood now.

No matter how bold one is or how skilled in martial arts, life is still only one.

"What are you going to do again?" The girl felt a bit nervous, her cheerful demeanor gone.

"Your subordinates didn't give me any money, so I had to come to you again," Zhu Ping'an said lightly.

"The money was taken by you just now." The girl was somewhat angry; she had wanted to show off in front of her father but hadn't expected to fall at the hands of this young man.

"I think you still have money to spare for me, sister." Zhu Ping'an said as he looked the girl up and down.

Seeing Zhu Ping'an's gaze was unwholesome, the girl spoke up, "There are five taels of broken silver under the table leg; there's really nothing else."

The girl thought about how to deal with Zhu Ping'an, hoping that once her weakness wore off or her father arrived, she could crush this boy into ashes!

Zhu Ping'an, following the girl's instructions, indeed dug out five taels of broken silver from under the table leg, brushed off the dirt, and tucked it into his pocket. Then, he once again approached the girl with the dagger in hand.

"What do you want now?" The girl glared at Zhu Ping'an, thinking he was too greedy.

"Take off your clothes!" Zhu Ping'an said casually, holding the dagger.

What a beast! These scholars are even more shameless and filthy than what my mother said. Not only did he steal my money, but he also wants... he wants... truly worse than a beast!

"Oh, right, you can't move. Then I'll just have to do it myself." Zhu Ping'an said lightly as he reached for her.

Feeling Zhu Ping'an unfastening her clothing, the girl closed her eyes, tears streaming down her face. She thought to herself that this time she was done for and would be tarnished by this boy. However, once her weakness was gone, she would definitely tear this brat into pieces, throw the meat into the wild to feed the dogs, grind his bones into powder, and scatter them into the river to feed the fish!

"You're honest, no hidden money."

Zhu Ping'an said this and turned to leave. The matter settled, he flicked his sleeve and concealed his achievements and name.

Huh? The girl opened her eyes in confusion, realizing that only her outer garment had been undone, and her inner clothes were still intact.

He did it on purpose! This brat is deliberately playing with me!

Watching Zhu Ping'an's gradually disappearing figure, the girl gritted her teeth, wishing she could rush up and stab him with a knife.