

## Rise 93

### Chapter 93: Someone Jumped into the Lake Early in the Morning

In the early morning, thick fog envelops the area, bringing a slight chill, swirling and twisting.

Five days have passed since the Jingxian Poetry Conference, during which other poetry gatherings have also taken place. The scholars participating in the provincial examination are all gearing up to perform well at the poetry meetings, hoping to leave a modest name for themselves and gain some leverage for their imperial examination.

Some have invited Zhu Ping'an to participate, whether sincerely or insincerely, but he has declined all invitations. His previous attendance at the Jingxian Poetry Conference was merely coincidental; he was dragged along by his uncle and others to meet friends, and he only wrote poetry for self-preservation.

At this early hour, compounded by the heavy fog, there are few pedestrians on the road, and the usually bustling Anqing Prefecture is surprisingly quiet.

Zhu Ping'an, dressed in a blue cloth robe, carries a shoulder bag and holds a black wooden board in his hand. He slowly appears in the morning mist, cheerfully humming a strange tune.

"Cold, oh cold..."

Hmm, it hurts, oh it hurts...

Hmm, ah hum...

Give me back what I took, and spit out what I ate..."

With no one around, Zhu Ping'an doesn't have to be too cautious. He happily hums interesting tunes from the past, swaying and gesturing, which serves to warm up his limbs against the chilly morning fog.

Ancient cities generally have this advantage: they are built near mountains and rivers, and Anqing Prefecture, in particular, is rich in water sources, with numerous lakes and rivers within the city. The inn where Zhu Ping'an stays is located by the shores of Tai Lake, and he doesn't need to walk far to reach the lake's edge. He squeezes the black wooden board under his arm and heads toward the large rock he used to sit on.

With unwavering perseverance, Zhu Ping'an's skills in calligraphy have been steadily improving.

He puts down the wooden board, takes out the brush his father made from his bag, retrieves a bamboo tube, bends down to scoop water from the lake, and prepares to write.

Due to the thick fog, he hadn't noticed earlier, but as he leans down to scoop water, he nearly drops the bamboo tube in fright.

Not far from the lake, a patch of dark water plants spreads across the surface...

This immediately reminds Zhu Ping'an of a story he once heard: a boy went for a walk by the river with his girlfriend. Suddenly, his girlfriend fell into the water, and the boy jumped in to look for her. He couldn't find her, and almost got tangled in the water plants himself; in the end, he left, heartbroken. Years later, he returned to the same spot and saw an old man fishing. When the boy noticed that the fish the old man caught had no water plants on them, he asked why. The old man replied, "This river has never had water plants." Upon hearing this, the boy suddenly jumped into the water and committed suicide.

So, when Zhu Ping'an first saw the large clump of water plants spread out before him, he instinctively shivered, and the bamboo tube in his hand nearly fell into the water.

Taking a deep breath, he steadies his mind.

After all, stories are just stories; reality rarely follows the plot of a tale.

With his mind now steadied, Zhu Ping'an bends down again, reaching to scoop water, though his gaze involuntarily fixates on the black water plants.

In the next moment, his hand trembled again. Nearby the black water plants, he could vaguely see clothing. What's going on? Is someone really jumping into the lake this early in the morning...

At this point, Zhu Ping'an forgot his fears. Life is at stake! He threw aside what he was holding, not caring whether his shoes or robe would get wet...

With a splash, he saw a figure swimming in a dog-paddle style, causing a ruckus in the water as the previously calm lake surface began to churn.

He vowed never to act recklessly again. Now soaked, Zhu Ping'an exerted all his strength, choking on several mouthfuls of water along the way, almost giving up his life to the lake god. However, he managed to pull the owner of the black water plants to shore through sheer willpower.

Once on land, Zhu Ping'an didn't take a moment to catch his breath. He turned the owner of the black water plants over, preparing to administer first aid.

He couldn't see the person's features in the water, but once flipped over, he realized the owner was a woman. She had fair skin, delicate features... a beauty indeed, and a rare one at that. Just judging by her looks, she appeared soft and fragile...

However, upon seeing her face, Zhu Ping'an's expression turned complicated. Why is this enchanting woman here? How could such a fierce, almost alien-like beauty want to end her life in the river? This is someone who can precisely hit a small spider with a flying knife!

Despite the confusion, life takes precedence.

In urgent circumstances, one must adapt. After all, children of the rivers and lakes would surely understand. Zhu Ping'an thought this and began to administer modern CPR.

He pressed on her chest lightly and rhythmically, but there seemed to be no response. It looked like he would have to perform mouth-to-mouth. This felt increasingly like a plot from a novel, where the male lead encounters a drowning woman by the lake, performs a rescue, starts artificial respiration, and after a few kisses, the female lead wakes up, screams, and slaps him, cursing him as a scoundrel. Yet somehow, they end up falling for each other after a series of twists and amusing encounters, eventually sharing some intimate yet playful moments. The story would conclude perfectly with a scene of the three of them watching the sunrise or sunset together.

Forget that! After giving her mouth-to-mouth, if this enchanting woman doesn't stab herself with a few holes, that would be a good outcome.

Zhu Ping'an chuckled self-deprecatingly, preparing to lower his head to give this enchantress mouth-to-mouth. Life is at stake; there's no room for hesitation.

However, reality is reality; it has nothing to do with stories.

Just as Zhu Ping'an lowered his head, ready to act, he saw the enchantress under him suddenly open her dark eyes.

Then, Zhu Ping'an felt as if he had been struck in the stomach by a bull charging at two thousand five hundred miles per hour...

His entire body seemed to spring forward, arms and legs outstretched, as he splashed back into the water. In the air, he involuntarily spat out a mouthful of water, but that was fine; falling into the water made him swallow three or five more mouthfuls, making up for what he had just expelled. On the shore of Tai Lake, the enchantress, with her dark eyes wide open, kept her leg raised, ready to kick...