

## Finest 181

### Chapter 181 Madam's Conspiracy

It's happening, it's happening, Lin Wanrong thought to himself, Isn't this obviously a temptation? Asking me about my opinion of the Second Miss, is she planning to matchmake me with her? But for the mother-in-law to personally play matchmaker, that's not according to the custom, it sounds inappropriate.

Feigning sincerity, Lin Wanrong chuckled and said, "The Second Miss? Everyone has always found her to be delightful, lively and innocent, beautiful and kind, everybody adores her."

He stated it as though it were a fact. If the maids and servants of the Xiao family had heard his words, they would have been furious. Everyone knew well what the Second Miss was like before Brother San arrived at the Xiao mansion. How could he speak as though they had always been close?

The Madam smiled and glanced at him, "I was asking what you think of her?"

"Ah, well, madam, my relationship with the Second Miss has always been quite cordial." Lin Wanrong responded vaguely, a thin layer of perspiration forming on his forehead. The Madam's question was a bit too direct, he wasn't prepared for it yet. Though he had a thick skin, he found it difficult to broach this topic.

Seeing his unnatural expression, the Madam couldn't help but laugh, "Lin San, this is the first time I've seen you so shy. Could it be that I've been ignorant in the past?"

How dare you flirt with me just because you're the mother-in-law, that's really unfair, Lin Wanrong thought indignantly. He was no pushover either and chuckled, "Madam, in truth, people have misunderstood me. They only see my wild and unrestrained exterior, but they don't know that my true self is very fragile and in need of comfort."

Even though Madam Xiao was typically serious, she couldn't help but laugh at his audacious reply. After a while, she said, "Lin San, I have often heard Yuruo say that you have a silver tongue. I didn't quite believe it until now."

Seeing her laugh so charmingly, Lin Wanrong thought to himself, Of course, this is the first time you've seen me talk like this. This is the unique Lin Wanrong style, unparalleled in the world. Where else would you hear it, if not from me?

"Lin San, where are you from? Who is in your family?" Madam Xiao asked again.

If he remembered correctly, this was the second time Madam had asked this question. The first time was when he first entered the mansion. Lin Wanrong smiled and said, "I am from Jingchu. I have no land or house, no wife or food, only myself left."

Madam softly said, "You are quite pitiful." After a sigh, she continued, "Although you're pitiful, my Xiao family isn't much better off than you."

Lin Wanrong didn't respond, simply listening to her continue, "My Xiao family, a widowed mother and fatherless daughters, have been striving for many years. Though we have achieved some success, every step is still fraught with difficulty. We have no one in the court and no men in the house. No matter how diligent Yuruo and I are, we are still a laughingstock to others."

A shadow of despair flickered across the Madam's face. In this era, business people were already of low social status. And after the death of the patriarch, the Xiao family had no more male members. They were in dire straits, relying solely on the women of the family to hold everything together. No matter how strong the Madam and her daughter were, how could they not be ridiculed in this tide?

Lin Wanrong nodded, thinking to himself, All this talk is pointless. You should be hurrying to find a husband, or perhaps let the Eldest Miss attract a prospective son-in-law. As for plans regarding the Second Miss - I, a Lin, will never stoop to marrying into her family. It's right and proper for Yushuang to marry into the Lin family.

The Madam sighed deeply, then lifted her head and laughed, "Why am I discussing these things with you, spoiling the mood? Let's talk about Yushuang instead. Lin San, you're a clever man. I know that Yushuang harbors some feelings for you."

The Madam paused at this point, glancing at Lin Wanrong as if to gauge his reaction.

But Lin Wanrong was a seasoned man who couldn't be easily swayed by her words, so he acted as if he hadn't heard her, waiting for her to continue.

Seeing his lack of response, the Madam sighed, "I wasn't very supportive of this initially. Yushuang is still young, it's not time for her to be involved in these matters. Moreover, the difference in your social statuses is too great. If word gets out, I'm afraid it will be an even greater cause for ridicule."

What rubbish about status, thought Lin Wanrong. Your fancy words are just an excuse those so-called noble families use. In my eyes, status is nonsense. What's wrong with me having feelings for the Second Miss? It's fashionable for a servant to romance the Eldest Miss. I enjoy it. Worst comes to worst, I'll just quit this job, elope with the Second Miss, and then we'll see what you have to say about status.

Noticing his contemptuous look, Madam Xiao seemed to understand his thoughts and laughed, "Don't be impatient. Those were my previous thoughts. As a mother, I naturally consider my daughter's best interests. I hope you can understand that. But recently, I've noticed your speech and conduct. Although they're not exactly by the book, you do have some talent-"

She paused, then continued, "During your time in our Xiao family, you've truly put in effort and provided many ideas. Not to mention the soaps and perfumes, your rescue of Yuruo alone was deeply touching. Your recent triumph over the Tao family in Hangzhou has restored our family's honor. Your achievements are commendable. If I were to unreasonably hinder you, it would not only be overly oppressive, but also unjustifiable."

Lin Wanrong felt a surge of happiness inside, although he didn't show it on his face. Madam Xiao's words were much more pleasant to his ears, unlike the unreasonable and harsh Eldest Miss who even taught Yushuang some self-defense techniques against 'wolves', clearly indicating her suspicion of him, causing him to be on tenterhooks.

Madam Xiao then said solemnly, "However, Lin San, don't think that I've given in to you. Yushuang is still young and can't discern many things clearly. I hope to see her develop freely, making her own choices, and you mustn't resort to force."

Good, I'd be worried if you didn't allow her freedom, thought Lin Wanrong. In fact, he had already considered all that Madam Xiao had said. When courting a woman, he detested using force. First, steal the heart, then steal the person - this was his personal maxim.

The Second Miss was only sixteen, the age when feelings of love first stir, and also an age that was easy to deceive. Lin Wanrong was confident that as long as he treated the Second Miss kindly and spoke a few sweet words, he could make her follow him devotedly. He had absolute faith in his skill of charming women.

Lin Wanrong took a deep breath, smiling and saying, "Madam is too kind to me. I'm truly grateful. If you weren't so young, I would have placed you on an altar and worshipped you regularly."

Madam Xiao smiled charmingly and said, "Lin San, don't try to fool me with the same tricks you use on others. I'm not falling for them."

Seeing her smiling like a blooming flower, cheeks faintly flushed, it was clear that his flattery had hit the mark. He chuckled to himself, thinking, You're not falling for it? If I believed that, I'd be the fool.

"Then I thank you, Madam," Lin Wanrong replied modestly.

Madam Xiao shook her head, saying, "Don't rush to thank me yet. I must clarify my earlier statements. I believe you understood my meaning. As for the matter between you and Yushuang, I neither support nor oppose it."

Seeing Lin Wanrong nod, Madam Xiao continued, "Yushuang is young, and she has her older sister, Yuruo, above her. The sisters have a deep bond and Yushuang respects Yuruo greatly. If you hope for a good outcome between you and Yushuang, you must find a way to win over Yuruo. I will not interfere either way. Whatever attitude Yuruo adopts toward your relationship, I am powerless to influence."

Lin Wanrong let out a long, "Oh." Damn, a plot, a grand scheme. Madam Xiao had circled around so much, and it turned out to be a game of Tai Chi. She had seemingly handed the initiative to the Eldest Miss, requiring Lin Wanrong to utilize all his strategies to win over Xiao Yuruo. But in essence, she wanted Lin Wanrong to work tirelessly for the Xiao family.

Snaring Lin San with the Second Miss and controlling her through the elder sister was indeed a masterstroke. The intention at the heart of it all was to tie Lin San, a talented individual, to their household. It could be said now that success or failure hinged on the Eldest Miss. Her role had never been this pronounced.

Madam Xiao had said so much, but in reality, it amounted to saying nothing. Yet, she managed to make it seem like she had done Lin Wanrong a great favor. Truly, her years of managing the Xiao family were evident in her shrewdness.

Lin Wanrong, an experienced hand, saw through the situation in a glance. Using Yushuang as bait for me? Heh, it's not yet certain who's baiting whom. Dealing with the elder sister was a greater

challenge and offered more intrigue, and he liked that. No matter what schemes she had, as long as it involved a lady, he was never one to back down.

Seeing the faint smile on Lin San's face, Madam Xiao knew she couldn't fool this astute man. She managed a bitter smile, thinking to herself, If only our Xiao family had even half a man like Lin San, I wouldn't need to resort to these tricks.

Madam Xiao sighed, "Lin San, I heard that you met Master Wenchang in Hangzhou. I also heard that he thinks highly of you. I hope he is doing well?"

Lin Wanrong nodded, "Mr. Xu is doing well. He even asked me to convey his regards to you, Madam."

Madam Xiao looked out the window, sighing gently, "It's rare that Master Wenchang still shows such concern. Since we parted in the capital, twenty years have passed, yet there's no date set for our reunion. Time can be so heartless."

Seeing the Madam so sentimental, Lin Wanrong wondered if she had an old flame left in the capital. Observing her expression, though tinged with melancholy, her gaze was clear and bright. It didn't seem like she was reminiscing about a particular person, but more of a general reminiscence. Madam Xiao truly was a woman of stories, Lin Wanrong thought to himself.

When he stepped out of the room, the Eldest Miss was pacing outside. Seeing him emerge, she quickly asked, "Lin San, what did my mother talk to you about?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Nothing much, just some talk about marriage."

The Eldest Miss paused, "What marriage?"

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, "Madam suggested marrying the Second Miss to me."

Xiao Yuruo's face changed, scoffing, "In your dreams!"

Just as he expected, her reaction was predictably negative. Lin Wanrong laughed helplessly. But before he could speak, he saw Si De running in from outside, panic-stricken and yelling, "Brother San, Eldest Miss, disaster has struck!"

## Chapter 182 Taking Over (Part 1)

"Si De, don't panic. You must remain calm. Even if the sky were to fall, it is the Madam and the Eldest Miss who would bear it first. Only then it would be our turn." Lin Wanrong laughed heartily. The Eldest Miss glared at him bitterly.

Si De was panting heavily, struggling to catch his breath. In a state of urgency and panic, he stammered, "Brother San, Miss, it's terrible. Young Master Guo... Young Master Guo has been beaten..."

"What? Beaten?" Lin Wanrong exclaimed in surprise.

Although Young Master Guo was a bit of a rascal, he wasn't one to provoke trouble. Moreover, with the material wealth of the Xiao family, even in Jinling, they weren't a family to be trifled with. How did someone dare to beat Young Master Guo? After all, one must consider the owner before hitting a dog. Didn't they know that Young Master Guo was under Brother San's protection?

"Who, who hit Cousin Biao?" The Eldest Miss asked hastily.

Lin Wanrong suddenly remembered that Young Master Guo had gone to Tao Family's shop with Si De and others, acting pompously. Could it be the people of the Tao family who had beaten him?

Si De anxiously said, "We went with Young Master Guo to take over Tao Family's shop. We ran into Master Tao there. They didn't say a word before they started beating us, and they captured Young Master Guo. I managed to escape at the risk of my life, just to inform the Madam and Eldest Miss. Now, I must return to save Young Master."

To save him? You simply ran away, yet you try to sound noble. But you didn't do entirely wrong. If you can't win, then run. That's being quick-witted. Or should you wait to be beaten?

After hearing his words, the Eldest Miss anxiously said, "We were still discussing how to deal with this matter. How could Cousin Biao act so rashly? He couldn't wait for a while?"

"Master Tao? Is it Tao Yu, the silk manufacturer from Suzhou?" Lin Wanrong asked the Eldest Miss. As it turned out, what Fourth Uncle had said earlier was correct. This Tao Yu had indeed

hurriedly come to Jinling, but he wondered what had happened to Tao Dongcheng and that Tao family girl.

The Eldest Miss, flushed with anger, said, "Exactly that person. Cousin Biao may be a bit rash, but that Tao family shop already belongs to our Xiao family. It's only right for Cousin Biao to take over. How could Tao Yu beat and capture people at will? I'll go argue with him."

Lin Wanrong hurriedly pulled her back and said, "Eldest Miss, have you lost your mind? You're going to reason with an official? There are two mouths in the character for 'official'. How could you reason with him?"

Lin Wanrong was no fool. He knew that at this time, talking was useless. If you wanted to fight with an official, you had to prove your strength.

"Lin San, what should we do?" After a moment's hesitation, the Eldest Miss agreed that Lin was right. She might have all sorts of strategies for doing business, but when it came to dealing with wicked people, it was Lin San who had to step in.

Young Master Guo might be a little showy, but he was still kind to Lin Wanrong. Besides, he was Yu Shuang's cousin. Under no circumstances could they let the Tao family bully him. Damn it, the Tao family was clearly a combination of official and merchant, playing both the referee and the athlete, and fooling the people.

"Si De, go immediately to Governor Luo's mansion and find Brother Gao, who came back with us. Tell him what has happened here. Then ask Brother Gao to pass the message to Governor Luo. Ask him to go to Tao Family's shop and see how his subordinate official oppress the good and exploits the common people," Lin Wanrong instructed.

Upon hearing him speak this way, the Eldest Miss hurriedly said, "Lin San, how can you be so sure that Governor Luo will come?"

Lin Wanrong gave a mysterious chuckle, "Both Old Luo and Little Luo are like brothers to me, and I am their benefactor. It would be strange if Governor Luo didn't come."

Ignoring the Eldest Miss's words, he turned to Si De and said, "Go quickly. You must find Brother Gao. If this matter is resolved, I will request the Eldest Miss to increase your salary."

"Thank you, Brother San, thank you, Eldest Miss." Si De excitedly went on his way.@@novelbin@@

Seeing his mysterious demeanor, the Eldest Miss couldn't help but say, "Where do you get the audacity to promise benefits to others? You are becoming more and more presumptuous."

Seeing that Lin San had made appropriate arrangements, she felt a lot calmer. Being stubborn and soft-hearted, she didn't want to lose face, and thus, she huffed and no longer spoke.

When Lin Wanrong and the Eldest Miss arrived at the Tao family's shop, they saw a crowd of people gathered at the entrance, watching the commotion. Young Master Guo was bound by a few of the Tao family's servants and was cursing loudly.

Lin Wanrong's gaze swept the crowd, but he didn't see Tao Dongcheng and his sister Tao Wanying. Instead, he saw a plump man in official robes standing in the center, bearing some resemblance to Tao Dongcheng, with a fair amount of official prestige. This man was likely Tao Yu, the silk manufacturer from Suzhou. The Tao family's servants were continually moving bolts of fabric from the shop to a carriage outside.

"Shameless," the Eldest Miss whispered angrily. The Xiao family hadn't yet had time to transfer ownership with the Tao family. For every bolt of fabric the Tao family moved, the Xiao family suffered a loss.

"They're moving this fabric to leave us with an empty shell. It's absolutely despicable," the Eldest Miss said resentfully.

Lin Wanrong nodded, "Their methods might be despicable, but we can't stop them. The fabric is certainly a source of income, but it isn't the most important thing. The more valuable assets are the shop and real estate. These are fixed assets, their sales channels. Without these, no matter how much fabric they have, it'll just rot at home."

The Eldest Miss knew he was right. She nodded, and upon seeing her Cousin Biao's miserable state, sighed, "Cousin Biao's actions were indeed reckless. He suffered this time, but I hope he learns to be smarter next time."

"I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing. It might even be a good thing. Small conflicts are inevitable when we take over the Tao family's shop. After this commotion caused by Young Master



Guo, it became well known, which can work in favor of the Xiao family. Sometimes, bad things can turn into good ones," Lin Wanrong analyzed calmly.

The Eldest Miss thought for a moment, seeing some reason in his words, and remained silent.

Just as Lin Wanrong was growing impatient, he felt a pat on his back. A hearty voice said, "Young Master Lin, I have arrived." He turned around to see the Gao brothers standing behind him with a smile.

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Thank you for your effort, Brother Gao. Are you clear about the current situation?"

Gao Qiu nodded, "Young Master Lin, please rest assured. Before leaving, Minister Xu had already explained that Tao Dongcheng has written proof and Minister Xu himself as a witness. The Tao family cannot deny this."

"So, aren't our actions extremely just? Extremely legitimate?" Lin Wanrong asked with a laugh, a trace of mischief twinkling in his eyes. The Gao brothers burst into laughter at his words.

Lin Wanrong followed the Eldest Miss out, and upon seeing them, Young Master Guo immediately shouted, "Cousin, cousin, come and save me. Lin San, come and save me"

The Eldest Miss approached, giving Tao Yu a respectful bow, "The commoner Xiao Yuruo pays respects to Master Tao."

Tao Yu sneered, "Miss Xiao, what a grand air you display, sending people to seize my Tao family's shop. Have you stopped considering me, an official, in your sight? I cannot accept such a bow."

You, a corrupt official, using your power for personal gain, and still expecting respect? I've seen shameless people, but never one as shameless as you. Lin Wanrong looked at the fat Tao Yu and thought with a cold laugh.

Miss Xiao said seriously, "Master Tao, why would you say such a thing? Having been in business for many years, I have always acted within the law. Every word and action have been in accordance with our Great Hua's laws. I don't understand the meaning of your words."

Tao Yu said coldly, "Miss Xiao, you sent people today, claiming that you want to take over my Tao family's ancestral property. Do you not understand the logic? As the Silk Manufacturer of Suzhou, overseeing the textile industry of a whole province, my duties are incredibly busy. How can I tolerate such insolence?"

Xiao Yuruo huffed, "Master Tao, the matter of the Xiao family taking over the Tao family's fabric shop is known to everyone in the Jinling Chamber of Commerce. Could it be that you truly don't know? At the annual meeting in Hangzhou, your son wagered the Tao family's fabric shop in a bet with my Xiao family. Unfortunately, your son lost twice, and according to the agreement, he lost the Tao family shop to us. We have his written documents as evidence, witnessed by hundreds of merchants from both Jinling and Hangzhou, and even witnessed by the Chief Senior Scholar of the Hall of Literary Brilliance, Minister of the Ministry of Revenue, Master Xu Wei. No falsehood is possible in this matter. From the moment your son put down his written statement, the Tao family's shop already belonged to my Xiao family. We are here to collect the property according to the agreement, which is lawful and reasonable. What's wrong with that? Although you are the head of the Silk Manufacturer of Suzhou, you have no right to arbitrarily arrest people. My cousin Biao is innocent, why have you beaten and arrested him without reason?"

Although Xiao Yuruo spoke gently, her words were passionate and forceful, resonating with the crowd. The spectators, hearing that this was the legendary Miss Xiao, admired her fearlessness and elegance. Since ancient times, commoners did not fight with officials, but today Miss Xiao publicly argued her case with reason and vigor, which pleased the common people. When she finished speaking, several voices burst out from the crowd with a resounding "That's right!"

Tao Yu's eyes darted around, and he changed his expression, "Miss Xiao, the bet in Hangzhou was a setup to frame my son, Dongcheng. This matter requires thorough investigation. I've already reported to the Commander-in-Chief of Jiangsu, Master Cheng De, who will soon personally send people to inquire about this matter and clear my Tao family's name. Your bet can't be counted."

Damn, true to the reputation of an official, his skin was thick to such a degree. Cheng De was from the military faction and he was from the political faction. Even if a thorough investigation was to be reported to the higher authorities, it should be reported to the Governor of Jiangsu, Luo Min. What did this have to do with that old turtle Cheng De? Moreover, this incident was witnessed by so many people. Could it just be overturned by his say-so? Damn, a dog official was a dog official, speaking such lofty words while steeped in corruption.

Hearing Tao Yu's blatant distortion of truth, Miss Xiao's pretty face turned red with anger. "Master Tao, what is the meaning of your words? Are you doubting the sight and wisdom of hundreds of merchants from Jiangsu and Zhejiang? Or are you questioning the fairness of Xu Wei, the Minister of the Ministry of Revenue? Then, I would like Master Tao to bring out your son. I, Xiao Yuruo, am willing to debate him in front of all the elders of Jinling present here"

## Chapter 183 Taking Over (Part 2)

In haste, Lin Wanrong grabbed the Eldest Miss' arm, "Have you lost your wits, Miss? We have the written promise given by Tao Dongcheng himself. All we need to do is take over the Tao family's estate. Why are we arguing about this? Even if the Xiao family is fraudulent, the Tao family has no choice but to accept it. Tao Dongcheng has done plenty of wrongs. If I swindle him just once, does he dare to bite me?"

Tao Yu responded, "My son, Dongcheng, was unfortunately ill yesterday. He is currently resting at home. Once he recovers, it will not be too late for us to confront each other."

Resting? Probably frolicking in some damsel's belly, Lin Wanrong thought amusingly, recalling his own masterpiece.

The Eldest Miss huffed, "Master Tao, I'm just a common woman, while you're an official appointed by the imperial court. Naturally, you are more familiar with the laws and regulations than I am."

She took out a contract from her bosom. It was the document Tao Dongcheng had signed at the Sunshine and Rain Restaurant, "This contract was made by Young Master Tao at the Sunshine and Rain Restaurant. It bears Young Master Tao's signature and seal, and it also has the autograph of the top scholar, Master Xu Wei, as his personal notarization. This contract serves as clear evidence, with all the facts presented. Master Tao, would you also deny this?"

"How dare you, Xiao Yuruo! Are you trying to deceive me? Master Xu is a virtuous minister of the court, his status highly prestigious. How could a woman like you know Master Xu? I suspect that this seal is a forgery." Tao Yu snapped.

"How audacious!" Gao Qiu stepped forward, pointing at Tao Yu and shouting, "You insignificant official, dare to doubt the authenticity of Minister Xu's seal? Are you so lofty to overlook the truth?"

"Who are you?" Seeing that the man was tall and robust, with sharp eyes, Tao Yu asked in alarm.

Gao Qiu drew a golden token from his waist, waving it in front of Tao Yu, "I am a royal bodyguard, armed with a sword, serving under the imperial order to protect Master Xu Wei. The seal on this document was personally made by Master Xu Wei. He feared someone might play tricks, so he

specially instructed me to come to Jinling to clarify this matter. You, as an official, pretend not to recognize his seal. Are you planning to rebel?"

Being a royal guard, Gao Qiu was accustomed to dealing with princes and high-ranking officials. To his eyes, the local official Tao Yu was no more than a minor character. Even without an official title, anyone close to the emperor deserved extra respect. Tao Yu naturally fell silent under Gao Qiu's scolding.

The Eldest Miss didn't waste her breath on Tao Yu either. She handed the contract to Lin Wanrong. He took it, paraded around in front of the onlookers, and rustled the contract, "Ladies and gentlemen, take a good look. This is Tao Dongcheng's personal signature and seal, indicating his intent to transfer the Tao family's cloth estate to our Xiao family. Our Eldest Miss, kind and benevolent, didn't wish to trouble the Tao family unnecessarily, thus gave them a day to relocate. Who would've thought that the Tao Family would be so audacious today, not only assaulting our appointed representatives but also trying to deny the contract's existence? Even the contract Tao Dongcheng personally signed, he's denying now? Master Tao is an official, but I want to ask all of you here, can officials freely bully us commoners? Today, they bullied the Xiao family; tomorrow, would they bully the Zhang family or the Li family? Is there no place for justice in this world anymore?"

The words of Lin Wanrong were a mix of truth and fabrication, and Young Master Guo was transformed under his tongue into the righteous messenger of the Xiao family, a brave incarnation. Guo Wuchang listened, heart swollen with satisfaction, and he puffed up his chest, shouting, "Let go of me, let go quickly."

Lin Wanrong's last few words were provocatively designed to stir up unrest between the officials and citizens. Almost immediately, the crowd erupted with cries of "Release him, release him." The shouts stirred a resonance in the crowd and they swelled even louder.

The Eldest Miss spotted a few familiar faces in the crowd, those who seemed to be servants of the Xiao household. She even recognized Xiao Feng and Si De, who were among the most enthusiastic in the crowd. Lin Wanrong gave her a knowing look and a subtle smile. Yes, they were plants.

Seeing the rising public sentiment, Tao Yu's face changed and he stepped back, shouting, "Close the gates"

"Governor Luo has arrived" A loud call broke the uproar, a sedan chair slowly approaching from a distance.

Lin Wanrong secretly let out a sigh of relief. That old fox Luo Min always made his entrance at the critical moment, likely trying to give me a scare. Without a doubt, the old rascal must have been lurking in some dark corner watching the drama unfold. He only revealed himself once he saw the young mistress had left Tao Yu without a word to say, swooping in to pick the ripe fruit.

Upon hearing the Governor had arrived, the crowd quieted down. Lin Wanrong signaled Si De, who quickly withdrew with the others.

Luo Min, sporting a big belly, alighted from the sedan chair, feigning a stern survey of the surroundings, his face stern, "I was leaving the city on official business, passing by here, but seeing this crowd, what exactly has happened here that it is so noisy?"

"Subordinate Tao Yu greet the Governor." Tao Yu, seeing it was the Governor himself, hurried forward to greet him. He secretly conspired with Cheng De, but he also understood that Luo Min was not someone he, a mere Suzhou silk manufacturer, could afford to offend.

"Oh, so Tao Yu is also here? When did you return from Suzhou? Why did my office not receive news of it?" Luo Min spoke with official airs. If an official abandoned their post without permission from a superior, the punishment would not be light. If Luo Min reported this, it would be enough to make Tao Yu suffer.

Tao Yu hurriedly said with respect, "I had to return to Jinling due to an urgent matter at home, as the situation was urgent, I didn't have time to take leave. I was just about to report this to the Governor's mansion, but I didn't expect to meet you here."

Luo Min let out a long "Oh", saying, "So it was like that. Tao Yu had urgent family matters, that's understandable, my office will not pursue it. But what is the reason for this crowd gathering in front of your residence today?"

"That's just some minor issue among the common people, I have already dealt with it, I wouldn't dare trouble you to worry about it," Tao Yu said respectfully.

"A minor issue? Master Tao, you make it sound so trivial." The Eldest Miss sneered, stepping forward slowly, and respectfully saluted Luo Min, "Common woman Xiao Yuruo greets Governor Luo, I plead for you to stand up for my Xiao family, and give us justice."

Luo Min glanced at Tao Yu, asking, "Why would Miss Xiao say such a thing? You are a descendant of Elder Xiao, who would dare to bully you? Could there be some misunderstanding?"

Xiao Yuruo held up the written contract with both hands and respectfully said, "This seal on the contract was penned by Mr. Xu Wei himself. The bet was presided over by Mr. Xu in person. Mr. Xu even specially sent Gao Qiu, a first-class guard from the palace, to Jinling to verify this matter. Please check it carefully, sir."

Gao Qiu saluted, reporting, "Informing Governor Luo, this matter of the bet was witnessed by Mr. Xu himself, who wrote the contract. I was specifically dispatched here for this reason."@@novelbin@@

Luo Min nodded, glancing at the seal, surprised, "Indeed, it was penned by Mr. Wenchang himself."

After reading the contents of the contract, Luo Min's brow furrowed. He pulled Tao Yu aside and softly asked, "Mr. Tao, is this really your son's seal?"

Tao Yu nodded gritting his teeth, "Yes, it is."

Luo Min sighed, "Mr. Tao, not to criticize you, but your son has indeed acted recklessly this time. How could the Tao family's shops be used so casually for a bet? Signing a contract and adding a seal, creating irrefutable evidence?"

Tao Yu sighed heavily. Tao Dongcheng had always been mature and competent from a young age, always making him feel reassured. But why had he met with a setback with the Xiao family this time? He couldn't figure it out.

Luo Min continued in a placating tone, "Mr. Tao, you and I both serve in the same province, and we have the camaraderie of our subordinates. Normally, I would definitely help you to suppress this matter. But the problem is, your son has offended Mr. Xu Wei. Even if I tear up this contract now, Mr. Xu is already aware of the situation. Who is Mr. Xu? We both know very well. To be blunt, our combined power is not enough to match even a fraction of Mr. Xu's influence. How can I help you?"

With his eyes squinted, Luo Min put on an air of deep concern, appearing to be genuinely worried for the Tao family. Tao Yu remained silent, his spirit deflated. Both men seemed troubled, and aside from Lin Wanrong, who could tell that they were putting on a show, each for their own purposes?

Luo Min whispered a few more words to Tao Yu, who turned even paler. He glanced at the Eldest Miss, grunted harshly, pondered for a long time, and finally, gritted his teeth and nodded.

Luo Min walked over, smiling at Xiao Yuruo, "Miss Xiao, there seems to have been some misunderstanding. I have explained things to Mr. Tao. Since Mr. Xu Wei himself is guaranteeing, there surely won't be any discrepancies. Mr. Tao has agreed to transfer the Tao family's cloth shop to the Xiao family. I hope you will manage it well in accordance with Mr. Tao's teachings and not let him down."

"In that case, Yuruo thanks Mr. Tao for his magnanimity and also thanks Governor Luo for his just decision," the Eldest Miss said with a gentle smile. Tao Yu grunted in anger and stormed off.

Lin Wanrong secretly gave Luo Min, the cunning old fox, a thumbs-up. Luo Min chuckled and returned to his mansion; this matter was exactly why he had come.

The rest of the matters were much easier to deal with. With Tao Yu gone, the servants of the Tao family naturally wouldn't stay either. The Tao family's cloth shop property, along with the cloth, all became the property of the Xiao family. According to Lin Wanrong, they had indeed struck it rich this time. "Damn, I could marry a hundred wives, make a hundred clothes for each, and still not run out of this cloth."

Inventory check, goods verification, and reception, the Eldest Miss was busy with all these tasks in a diligent and efficient manner. As for Lin Wanrong, he had no interest in such trivial matters, considering himself naturally suited for a chairman's role, he watched the Eldest Miss' figure and chuckled.

He felt relatively at ease when he was busy. But as soon as he was idle, he felt uncomfortable. The weather was getting colder and colder, and in a month, it would be the New Year. After the New Year, he would head north to the capital to find Qingxuan. The Second Miss could accompany him to study in the capital, but what about Qiaoqiao? Was he supposed to leave that girl alone in Jinling? That would be asking for trouble.

As he was lost in thought, he found himself downstairs at the Food for Immortals. Qiaoqiao's surprised voice came from upstairs, "Big brother, you're back?"

Chapter 184 The Astute Qiaoqiao

Lin Wanrong looked up to see Qiaoqiao dash down the stairs like a small bird and sprinted toward him. "Big brother, you're back?" she exclaimed joyfully.

A hint of tears of longing shone in Qiaoqiao's eyes. Despite not having seen each other for days, she still looked as charmingly bright as ever, though her cheeks had noticeably thinned, and her eyes twinkled with excitement.

Grasping her small hand, Lin Wanrong nodded and said with a grin, "I returned late last night. Had to deal with some matters this morning and only now found some free time. Little darling, have you missed me these past days?" He teased her by gently tickling the palm of her hand.

The restaurant was bustling with diners. Lin Wanrong shamelessly held Qiaoqiao's hand and flirted with her, causing her to blush crimson and lower her head, unable to meet anyone's gaze. Still, the sweetness in her heart overflowed onto her face.

Qiaoqiao led Lin Wanrong straight to the fourth floor. Upon entering, he saw old Dong and Qingshan were present, and the renowned beauty from Jinling, Luo Ning, was also there, smiling at him.

"What a gathering! Are you all here to welcome me? You're all too kind," Lin Wanrong laughed. Seeing Luo Ning's amused smile, he added, "Miss Luo, it's been a few days since we last met. How have you been?"

Luo Ning thought to herself, 'From the moment you had that confrontation with Young Master Hou to your return from Hangzhou, it's been merely five or six days. Do you really need such a contrived greeting?' Smiling, she replied, "Brother Lin, I've been well these past few days, though surely not as exciting as you. Word of your deeds in Hangzhou has already spread throughout Jinling: your discernment of diamond, your bravery in washing your hands in boiling oil, these unheard-of exploits are almost magical. I wouldn't be surprised if they've been turned into storybooks. I'm sure you can hear about them in restaurants and tea houses." Covering her mouth, she giggled, "Later, Brother Lin, you must give us a good telling." Qiaoqiao looked on, her eyes filled with admiration.

Feeling embarrassed, Lin Wanrong laughed and said, "Good deeds are seldom heard, while bad news travels fast. That's the saying, isn't it? Miss Luo, your dedication to public welfare, your aid to the orphaned and disabled, these are the deeds that should be praised." Luo Ning blushed, feeling too shy to say more.@@novelbin@@



Turning to Qiaoqiao, Lin Wanrong asked, "Everyone seems to be here today, Qiaoqiao. Are you all discussing something?"

Qiaoqiao smiled sweetly, guiding him to a chair and said, "Big brother, your return is timely. Indeed, we were discussing something. Since Sister Ning had something to discuss as well, we asked her to join us."

Lin Wanrong noticed the way Qiaoqiao spoke was still charming and coquettish, but there was a newfound maturity and competence in her. Although she was not as experienced as Xiao Yuruo, he was pleased to see her progress. Managing a restaurant was indeed a great test of one's mettle. Qiaoqiao, from being a simple young girl, was slowly transforming into a successful business manager.

"Oh, what matter would call for our boss Qiaoqiao to summon such a meeting?" Lin Wanrong teased, his hand stealthily reaching under the table to hold Qiaoqiao's hand.

Qiaoqiao's face was flushed with embarrassment as she tightly held his hand. "Big brother, you are making fun of me. It is you who is the boss," she said, her voice soft.

Luo Ning watched their playful exchange and couldn't help but interject, "There is no need for you two to deny it. One of you is the boss, and the other is the boss's wife, hehe."

Lin Wanrong adjusted his hat, smiled coquettishly, and declared, "That's how it should be. Miss Luo has voiced exactly what's in my heart."

Both delighted and embarrassed, Qiaoqiao glanced at Luo Ning and cooed, "Sister Ning, you're teasing me too." Despite her words, everyone could see the happy blush that colored her face. Everyone burst into laughter. Qiaoqiao bowed her head, her hand still tightly holding onto her big brother's hand.

Seeing her shyness, Lin Wanrong deflected, "Qiaoqiao, let's first talk about what you wanted to discuss this time, shall we?"

Seeing the encouraging look on Lin Wanrong's face, Qiaoqiao nodded, tidied the hair by her ear, and said seriously, "This time, we are discussing expanding the restaurant."

Remembering the last time this topic was discussed, Lin Wanrong was delighted. "Qiaoqiao, have you found a place?"

Seeing Qiaoqiao nod, Lin Wanrong was overjoyed, laughing, "So, our second restaurant is about to open? Qiaoqiao, you're really capable."

Luo Ning, watching him laugh, said, "Brother Lin, Boss Lin, you are mistaken, it's not the second restaurant"

Lin Wanrong was puzzled. "What do you mean by that, Miss Luo?"

Luo Ning giggled, covering her lips. "Brother Lin, how can you be clever all your life, but confused for a moment? These days, Qiaoqiao has been selecting suitable locations with me, and she has chosen two places. What is about to open is not the second, but the second and third restaurant, both at once."

"Opening two at once, what a good omen," Lin Wanrong looked at Qiaoqiao in surprise and delight, "Is this true, Qiaoqiao?"

Feeling somewhat embarrassed, Qiaoqiao said, "Big brother, I found two places and we've negotiated the prices. We're just waiting for you to decide."

With a sweep of his hand, Lin Wanrong said, "Why wait for me? You manage the restaurant, I don't interfere. Everything is up to my little darling."

Qiaoqiao's face flushed with surprise and joy. She quickly stole a glance at Old Dong, seeing that he seemed to have heard nothing, she relaxed. Her big brother was so bad, how could he say such affectionate words out in the open? Couldn't he have said them in private? The more she thought about it, the hotter her face felt.

Luo Ning was used to Lin Wanrong's outrageous remarks. Seeing his trust in Qiaoqiao, she couldn't help but sigh inwardly, Lin Wanrong was a good scholar, had good insight, and good skills. Qiaoqiao was lucky to have such a husband.

Unfazed, Lin Wanrong laughed, "Qiaoqiao, tell us where these two places are that you've chosen? When will we start the renovation? I can offer some suggestions."

Qingshan piped up, "Big brother, sister is amazing. The two places she chose, one is on the Qinhuai River and the other is in the Confucius Temple, both are renowned locations. Together, they cost twelve thousand silver taels."

Twelve thousand taels of silver? This was quite a hefty sum. He hadn't expected his delicate Qiaoqiao to be so capable. He had truly underestimated his little treasure. But where had she obtained such a sum? Lin Wanrong knew about the restaurant's financial status. Although it was making money hand over fist, since its opening, it had probably earned about eight or nine thousand taels of silver. However, to buy two restaurants at once, it would surely be stretched thin.

Qiaoqiao understood his doubt and smiled, "Big brother, do you remember the method you used to buy this restaurant?" Lin Wanrong nodded, how could he forget, it was a mixture of cunning and coercion, coupled with taking out a loan.

Qiaoqiao whispered, "I used the reputation of our restaurant as collateral, negotiated with the owners of the two locations, paying half of the sum upfront, with the agreement to repay the remaining half within half a year, with monthly interest."

So that's how it was. This girl had immediately put into practice what she learned. It was truly endearing, Lin Wanrong mused. The last time, he had taken this place by cunning and coercion. This time, Qiaoqiao took advantage of his experience. She didn't need to employ the same drastic measures, instead, she leveraged the greatly appreciated asset of the restaurant for financing. This maneuver was one that Lin Wanrong often used, having seen it plenty of times. Real estate developers played even dirtier games, taking something out of nothing was not a myth. But in this era, to have such courage and insight, especially for a young woman, it was really remarkable. It was such a pity that Qiaoqiao wasn't in real estate.

Lin Wanrong was inwardly very pleased, my eye for talent is truly not to be underestimated, this move of Qiaoqiao's was brilliantly executed. In the blink of an eye, I've become the owner of a chain of three restaurants.

Luo Ning gave Lin Wanrong a meaningful look, laughed and said, "I was there with Qiaoqiao when we negotiated with the two owners. When Qiaoqiao proposed this idea, the two owners didn't dare to agree initially. Luckily, our restaurant has a very good reputation, coupled with Qiaoqiao's willingness to use the restaurant as collateral and offer a high interest rate, they reluctantly agreed. I was extremely worried at the time. This way, we not only borrowed a large amount of debt, but the monthly interest alone was several hundred taels of silver, the pressure was immense. If things went wrong, we might even lose the restaurant. Later when Qiaoqiao said someone had successfully employed this method before, I wondered, who came up with this mad idea."

That madman was me, wasn't it? Lin Wanrong coughed awkwardly and asked, "Qiaoqiao, now that we've done this, how much silver do we have left for liquidity?"

Qiaoqiao replied, "Since you have no objections, Big brother, I will immediately sign the contracts with these two owners, paying out six thousand taels of silver first. The remaining cash, deducting the one thousand taels you promised for the poetry competition sponsorship, we'll have about three thousand taels left."

Speaking of the poetry competition, Lin Wanrong slapped his forehead. Ah, that was why Luo Ning had come to see him; the sponsorship money hadn't been paid yet. Now with the opening of two new restaurants and sponsoring the poetry competition, these good deeds converging presented a golden opportunity for advertising. He had to part with that thousand taels of silver. Damn it, being a big boss and still so poor. Luckily, there was the commission from the Xiao family's perfume and soap, otherwise, he would have been a very pitiful boss indeed.

Lin Wanrong did a quick calculation. The poetry competition was scheduled for the end of the month, still more than twenty days away. If the renovation of these two restaurants was hastened, they should be able to open before the competition. Damn, those so-called scholars and poets would cost him a thousand taels of silver, but he intended to advertise, to advertise like there was no tomorrow. The money he spent would have to be earned back from them, tenfold, even a hundredfold.

Lin Wanrong shared this idea with Qiaoqiao, who smiled sweetly and said, "Big brother, I had the same thought. The materials and artisans have already been prepared in advance, all awaiting your command."

Having Qiaoqiao around certainly made his life as a boss easier, Lin Wanrong nodded and said, "Then let's proceed with this plan. Also, Miss Luo, rest assured, I will not be a penny short of the thousand taels I promised you. I'll have Qiaoqiao collect it from the accounts room for you later. But don't forget my request, hehe, from the large paintbrushes and paper, down to every piece of toilet paper in the restroom, the emblem of my restaurant must be everywhere."

Luo Ning blushed slightly and retorted, "Brother Lin, I have never doubted your credibility. I didn't come today for this matter, but for another reason, which also concerns you."

Lin Wanrong responded, "Concerns me? That's quite strange, my name is usually only associated with silver."

Luo Ning covered her mouth and giggled, "Brother Lin, I have some good news for you." She pointed gracefully to the couplet hanging in the restaurant and said with a radiant smile, "Someone has managed to match your couplet."

## Chapter 185 The Absolute of Brother Lin

"Has someone matched it?" Lin Wanrong looked at Luo Ning with a puzzled expression. "Miss Luo, could it be you who found the match? But I wonder which verse you've matched? Don't tell me you've matched all four. I'd go mad if that were the case."

Upon hearing his humorous remark, Luo Ning stifled a laugh. "Brother Lin, are you joking with me? If I could have matched them, would I have waited until now? Someone has indeed matched one of the verses."

So only one out of four verses was matched. That was a relief. Lin Wanrong was momentarily startled. If all four had been matched, his life would have been in shambles. He knew well that while these four verses were uniquely superior, the more superior they were, the likelier they'd be matched. The world was so vast with so many extraordinary individuals, it was only a matter of time before someone matched them.

After all, he was not the author of the verses. If someone had indeed matched them, he could just invite this person for a grand display of their wealth and talent. This was a tremendous opportunity for publicity. All he had to do was invite this talented individual to the restaurant, hold a symposium with a group of talented men and women, and not only would it create a buzz, but also the Food for Immortals chain restaurant would become known worldwide, becoming the dream destination for countless talented individuals.

He had to hype it up; the hotter, the better. Thinking of this, Lin Wanrong immediately chuckled, "Someone has matched it? That's wonderful! Ever since Food for Immortals was established, we've never invited talented individuals. As long as the match is indeed correct, we'll announce to the world, not only hanging the paired verses, but also inviting the talented men and women of Jinling to the restaurant, celebrating this poetic event together."

Luo Ning nodded. "The lower verse has been matched. But I can't make any judgments about its quality. Since you, Brother Lin, came up with the upper verse, you should be the one to evaluate the lower one."

She pulled out a letter from her sleeve, extracted a clean sheet of white rice paper, and handed it to Lin Wanrong. "Brother Lin, please have a look."

Lin Wanrong took the white rice paper; a subtle musky fragrance wafted over. On the paper were two lines of elegant small characters: "Smoke Trails Along The Vibrant Eaves, Mirrored In The Eyes Of Swallow. Fog Veils The Darkened House, Wherein The Objects Fade."

These two verses were well-matched, with clear and definite tones. Lin Wanrong studied them for a while, then nodded in approval. "Excellent, very excellent."

Qiaoqiao, a little poet herself, raised her eyes and looked at the two verses. She also nodded, "Perfectly matched, the meanings align. Sister Ning, who is the talented individual that matched these?"

Lin Wanrong, who had been eager to use this opportunity for publicity, hurriedly added, "Indeed, Miss Luo. These verses are superb. I wonder who this talented individual is and where they come from. As we at Food for Immortals promised, we definitely want to invite this talented individual to be our guest."

Luo Ning replied, "Brother Lin, it's not that I'm being stingy. The one who matched the verse is from the capital. She was my mentor and friend when I studied there years ago. She's not in Jinling, so I can't invite her over."

Lin Wanrong felt a bit disappointed. Money... this would be a loss of money. If this talented person was in the capital, how would they have known about these four verses? Lin Wanrong felt disappointed for a while, then grew a bit puzzled.

Luo Ning, as if she had seen through his thoughts, smiled and said, "Brother Lin, you needn't doubt it. Your four couplets have already gained fame far and wide, and not only are the scholars of Jiangsu and Zhejiang talking about them, but even those in the capital have also heard of them. They've been enthusiastically trying to match them for fun, but no satisfactory matches had been found until now."

He hadn't expected his fame to have spread all the way to the capital. Lin Wanrong let out a long "Oh" and asked, "Then, Miss Luo, can you tell me the name of this talented person? I want to frame their name along with the couplet and announce it to the world."

Luo Ning shook her head, "Brother Lin, it's not that I don't want to tell you. It's just that this friend and mentor of mine is inherently indifferent to fame and keeps a low profile. She doesn't want to ride this wave. She had specifically instructed me so when she sent the matched couplet."

"Indifferent to fame?" Lin Wanrong chuckled, "This talented individual sent a letter thousands of miles, just for this?" It was laughable that someone who had matched the famously difficult couplet was trying to pretend they were indifferent to fame.

Luo Ning shook her head, "No, my mentor didn't match this couplet to show off. In her own words, she did it to vindicate the scholars of the world."

"To vindicate the scholars of the world?" Lin Wanrong was puzzled, "What does that mean?"

"My mentor said that while your challenge to the world with these four couplets is a good story, it also seems a bit pretentious and artificial, as if you had ulterior motives and wanted to gain fame from this."

As Luo Ning spoke, she glanced at Lin Wanrong's face to gauge his reaction. Seeing his expression unchanged, she quickly added, "Brother Lin, my mentor is a person of high moral standing and straightforward nature. She's like this to everyone and everything. Her words can sound harsh sometimes, so please don't take offense."

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, "Why would I take offense? Your friend is right. I indeed had ulterior motives with this pretentious act. To put it bluntly, it was a way to attract customers. Your friend has seen through this quite accurately. So, what else did your friend say?"

Luo Ning continued, "She said she matched this couplet with no ulterior motive and not to get invited to your restaurant. She did it to puncture your arrogance and make you stop underestimating the scholars of the world."

Lin Wanrong broke into a cold sweat. He had put out the couplet primarily to attract attention and make money, a marketing strategy of sorts. But he hadn't expected it to provoke such indignation from this talented person, even earning him the reputation of belittling scholars. Goodness, this individual had quite the audacity to claim to represent all scholars!

"Oh, Miss Luo, may I ask what your friend does in the capital?" Lin Wanrong humbly asked. This person, who was bent on educating him because she didn't like him, reminded him of a political science teacher.

"She's a teacher at the Capital's Jinghua Academy and the youngest ceremonial officer at the Imperial Academy, quite famous in the capital. When I was young and studying in the capital, we were both friends and mentors. We lived together, and this elder sister helped me a lot," Luo Ning said, her face full of admiration as she spoke of her mentor.

No wonder, it turned out she was a university professor, a mainstream educationalist. Seeing my audacity, of course, she'd be upset. Lin Wanrong sighed, shaking his head helplessly. Suddenly, recalling Luo Ning's words from before, he asked with surprise, "Miss Luo, did you say you live with her?"

"Yes, I do. What's so strange about that?" Luo Ning replied. Noticing Lin Wanrong's puzzled gaze, she realized he had misconstrued her words. A mix of embarrassment and annoyance flickered in her eyes as she clarified, "Brother Lin, where are your thoughts wandering? My mentor is a woman." (Note: She/Her and He/Him in Chinese sounded the same)

"Ah, a woman. My apologies for misunderstanding," Lin Wanrong laughed awkwardly, wiping the sweat off his forehead. What a haughty woman, he thought, she despised me without any reason or provocation. If Xu Wenchang had been the one to match the couplet, it wouldn't have been surprising. But the one who matched it now was a woman, a professor, which was truly interesting.

Dong Qiaoqiao, who had been listening to their conversation all this time, was surprised to learn that the person who had matched the couplet was a woman. "Sister Ning, is it really this sister who matched the couplet? That's amazing," she exclaimed.

Luo Ning nodded, "Absolutely. My mentor's knowledge and talent are unparalleled in the capital. Everyone knows her. Brother Lin, if you visit the capital in the future, you should drop by Jinghua Academy to see her."

Visit her? What would I talk with her about? Discuss her contempt for me, and my respect for her in return? No thanks. I'm not interested in female ceremonial officers or professors. I'm a predator, not a scholar. Making money is my priority.

Luo Ning smiled gently, "Brother Lin, my sister also mentioned that if you're willing, she has a couplet for you to match. And she promises that it will be as challenging as the one you proposed, absolutely fair. If you do match it, she will hang it high on the tower of Jinghua Academy, where it can reflect the brilliance of your couplet from the north, creating an interesting contrast."@@novelbin@@



This proposition was a bit tempting. Having it hung on the university tower, that would be a legacy. Lin Wanrong was intrigued and wanted to give it a try. However, knowing that the woman was highly talented and that her couplet would not be easy, he hesitated.

"Brother" Qiaoqiao gently took his hand and said, "Let's not match this couplet. I'm satisfied with 'Food for Immortals', I don't seek any north-south brilliance."

Lin Wanrong knew that Qiaoqiao was subtly looking out for him. He squeezed Qiaoqiao's hand and laughed, "Miss Luo, what's the couplet? Let's hear it."

Luo Ning pulled out a scroll from her sleeve, nodding slightly, "My sister instructed me to unroll this couplet only after you agreed. So, I have no idea what it is either."

What is it? Why so secretive? This professor knows how to create a mystery, Lin Wanrong thought.

Luo Ning unrolled the scroll. As she read the seven characters written on the snowy white paper, she froze.

Qiaoqiao quickly peeked at the paper. To her surprise, it carried the same seven characters "Smoke Trails Along The Vibrant Eaves, Mirrored In The Eyes Of Swallow."

Lin Wanrong was also stunned. The couplet was his own, yet it was also presented by that woman. No wonder the female professor repeatedly insisted it was absolutely fair. There was no exaggeration in her claim.

The couplet was an absolute masterpiece across the ages. For the woman to match one was already extremely rare. Now, Lin Wanrong was being forced to think of another one. This was difficult, extremely difficult.

Lin Wanrong paced back and forth for the time it took to steep a pot of tea. Qiaoqiao and Luo Ning watched him anxiously, not daring to utter a word.

Suddenly, Lin Wanrong chuckled, picked up a pencil, and swiftly wrote seven large characters following the initial couplet. Luo Ning and Qiaoqiao glanced at each other, then exclaimed in unison, "Incredible."