

Finest 71

Chapter 71 Who's Helping Whom to Redeem? (Part 2)

Qin Xian'er's face held a hint of thin anger as she glared at him, "Men are all the same. I just wanted to have a chat with you, yet you're behaving so frivolously."

"Miss Xian'er," Lin Wanrong responded bluntly, "There's no need for roundabout conversations in front of a clear-minded person. Your pretense may work on others, but not on me. Why don't you just say what you want from me?" Arguing with this young girl wasn't much fun; it was better to get straight to the point.

A flicker of surprise flashed in Qin Xian'er's eyes. She smiled and said, "Since Young Master Lin has said so, Xian'er won't beat around the bush anymore. In fact, I have some queries related to music that I'd like to consult with you."

Lin Wanrong waved his hand dismissively, "You're asking the blind about the path. I can't understand musical scores or differentiate the five tones, let alone discuss musical theory. I'm utterly ignorant about it."

Qin Xian'er looked intrigued, "Given what you've just said, it's rather curious how you were able to pinpoint the flaws in my music?"

"It's quite simple," Lin San replied, "Listen more, observe more, think more."

Seeing Qin Xian'er's puzzled gaze, Lin San explained, "I won't elaborate on the first two points. As for the third, it's the most important. Miss Xian'er, your musical skills are indeed remarkable, but you've only been imitating others. There's no innovation in your technique or creativity in your scores, you're merely continuing the work of others. Even if a piece is famous, if it's heard too often, it loses its freshness. With your talent, why not try composing your own music? Your own compositions will allow you to better capture its spirit and flavor."

Qin Xian'er blushed slightly, "Composing my own music? I've thought about it, but with so many great composers before me, how dare I presume to compete?"

"That's not the right way to think about it. What's the purpose of composing your own music? Is it to please others and earn their praise? If that's your goal, forgive me for being blunt, Miss Qin, but you'll only ever be able to imitate others. Music is the voice of the heart, to put it plainly, it's about pleasing oneself. The primary goal is to make oneself happy. If you're inspired, write it down. If you feel like singing, sing. Why care about what others think?" Lin Wanrong's idealistic words rang true.

"Sing if you feel like singing. Yes, indeed, you've woken me up, Young Master Lin. I almost fell into the same old rut." Qin Xian'er said excitedly.

"Exactly, write when you're inspired. Even if no one else appreciates it, at least you will. For example, right now, you and I are alone in this room. Perhaps this situation will inspire you to write a piece about missing your lover, I guarantee it will be well-received." After a few exchanges with Qin Xian'er, Lin Wanrong couldn't help but tease her again.

A blush appeared on Qin Xian'er's face, "Young Master, you're making fun of Xian'er again. To be honest, for someone who understands music as well as you do, claiming to know nothing about it, I feel you're belittling me."

Lin Wanrong gave a wry smile, "The songs from my hometown are completely different from those here. Their scores are simple and lyrics straightforward. You might not understand even if I explained. Take this one song for instance, the lyrics go like this: 'I love you, love you, just like a mouse loves rice. No matter where you go, I'm willing to accompany you, love you this way' What do you think? Can you stomach these words?"

Qin Xian'er blushed and murmured, "Where are these lyrics from? They are rather bold, how could anyone sing them out loud?"

If she was too shy to even speak about this, Lin San wondered how she would react if she saw a G-string lingerie. Seeing Qin Xian'er's flushed face, an evil thought crossed his mind: what would it be like if she wore a G-string and flirted in front of him? The mere thought made his nose bleed.

Seeing his dazed expression, Qin Xian'er quickly asked, "Young Master Lin, what's the matter?"

"G-string...ah, carrots, I feel like eating carrots." Lin Wanrong blushed, spouting nonsense to cover up his thoughts.

"Pfft." Qin Xian'er covered her mouth, trying to suppress her laughter, "You're such a strange person, sometimes smart, sometimes confused. I can't tell when you're being honest and when you're fooling around."

"And aren't you the same, Miss Qin?" Lin Wanrong laughed.

The room fell silent. Qin Xian'er was scrutinizing Lin Wanrong, a hint of amusement in her eyes.

Damn, I hope she's not falling for me. I don't have the money to redeem you. But if you're willing to pay, I might consider it, Lin Wanrong thought to himself.

After a while, Qin Xian'er finally broke the silence, "Are you really a servant of the Xiao family?"

Lin Wanrong shook his long blue sleeves, "As real as it gets."

Qin Xian'er sighed, "Such a talented person as you, why did you choose to be a servant? Young Master Lin, if you don't mind, I can help you redeem your freedom."

Damn it! Lin Wanrong's mind went blank. He had been thinking about helping her redeem her freedom, but in the blink of an eye, it was she who wanted to help him? Is she planning to support me? Although I'm quite handsome, she can't treat me like a gigolo.

Seeing the myriad of expressions on Lin San's face, Qin Xian'er, being the clever girl she was, quickly guessed his thoughts. She said crossly, "Young Master Lin, where is your mind wandering? I meant for you to come and assist me."

Assist her? Lin Wanrong understood what she meant. She wanted to pay his contract break fee so he could switch to her service. But the only suitable job for a man in a brothel was a pimp. Was she asking him to downgrade from a servant to a pimp? No man could accept that.

Before Lin San could speak, Qin Xian'er continued, "I want you to become my teacher, Young Master Lin. What do you think?"

Become Qin Xian'er's teacher? Although he knew 'teacher' was the intended meaning of the word in this context, he was still stunned by the potential double entendre.

[The word teacher here has a double meaning of husband]

"Well, do you not want to?" Qin Xian'er, seeing Lin San still silent, asked anxiously.

Lin San swallowed nervously, unconsciously licking his lips as he said, "Miss Qin, I dare not become your teacher. I am a servant in the Xiao family, and both the young master and young miss treat me well. I have my freedom and live quite comfortably. Besides, I don't think I have anything to teach you."

Qin Xian'er sighed, "Your knowledge and insights are beyond ordinary people's reach. If that's the case, it seems my fortune is thin."

A faint disappointment appeared on Qin Xian'er's face. She gracefully moved to the window, gazing at the distant green mountains and said softly, "As you said, there are countless acquaintances in the world, but not one true friend. Who could understand the feeling? Here, although everything seems grand, many things aren't as simple as they appear."

Despite Qin Xian'er's unpredictable nature, at the end of the day, she was still a young woman in her prime, carrying many burdens in her heart. Looking at her graceful figure from behind, there was a hint of melancholy, which stirred an urge in people to hold her in their arms and comfort her.

Lin Wanrong walked over to her side, gazing out the window, and sighed, "Life is full of disappointments. If everything went as we wished, then life would lose its intrigue."

Qin Xian'er chuckled, "Young Master Lin, your words are always unique. Don't worry, I intentionally put on that act earlier, hoping to gain your sympathy. I didn't expect to provoke such a profound reflection."

This Qin Xian'er was indeed eloquent, one moment she was vague and melancholic, the next she was laughing cheerfully. Truly a chameleon.

"Let the strong be strong, the bright moon shines over the great river," Lin Wanrong fully embodied the spirit of Ah Q, laughing off the situation.

[Q (Q) is a character from the famous Chinese novella "The True Story of Ah Q" (Q) written by Lu Xun, one of the most prominent and influential Chinese writers of the 20th century. The story was first published in 1921 in the Chinese magazine "New Youth."

Ah Q serves as a symbol of the Chinese people's sufferings and humiliations during the early 20th century. The character is known for his "spiritual victories," a coping mechanism where he convinces himself that he is superior to others even when facing defeat or humiliation. Ah Q represents the flaws and weaknesses of the Chinese national character at the time, including ignorance, arrogance, and a tendency to blame external forces for personal failures.

In modern Chinese culture, the term "Ah Q" has become an archetype and a derogatory term for people who exhibit similar characteristics, such as self-deception and a refusal to face reality.]

A clear whistle came from a distance, and several fireworks rose to the sky, exploding into a beautiful white lotus.

"Huh, which kid is setting off fireworks?" Lin Wanrong wondered.

Seeing the white lotus, Qin Xian'er's expression changed. Hearing Lin San's words, she couldn't help but chuckle, giving him a glance.

"Young Master Lin, since you won't be my teacher, could you at least visit me often? Chatting with you is quite relaxing," Qin Xian'er proposed.

"No." Lin Wanrong flatly refused.

Qin Xian'er was stunned; no man had ever rejected her so directly before. She couldn't help but feel resentful, "Am I so unbearable in your eyes, Young Master?"

Lin San chuckled, "Do you know what kind of place this is? How could a small servant like me afford to come here every day? Even if I had the desire, I don't have the money."

Qin Xian'er pouted, "You seem to enjoy teasing me, Young Master. Humph, if you won't come, I'll send someone with my name card to the Xiao's mansion to invite you. Humph."

As they became acquainted, Qin Xian'er seemed to have changed, acting more like a petulant child. Ironically, Lin San found himself somewhat delighted by this. Beautiful women were always welcomed, he mused with a sigh.

Qin Xian'er seemed somewhat distracted. Lin San knew it was time to take his leave, so he bowed and said, "It's getting late, and I've troubled you enough for today. Please forgive me, miss."

Qin Xian'er laughed playfully, "Why have you suddenly become so formal, Young Master? I'm not used to it."

Lin Wanrong let out a hearty laugh, "We should always maintain decorum to avoid any accusations of impropriety."

Qin Xian'er chuckled at his frankness and escorted him out.

"You don't need to accompany me all the way, miss. Just to the entrance of Miaoyu Pavilion will be enough," Lin San said nonchalantly.

Qin Xian'er paused. She had spent more time being surprised tonight by this thick-skinned Lin San than all previous occasions combined. Strangely, despite his blunt manner, she didn't feel a desire to reject him. In fact, she found him quite different from the other young gentlemen.

"You wish! I'll only accompany you this far. Take care, Young Master Lin," Qin Xian'er huffed.

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily as he reached the entrance, then suddenly turned back, "Miss Qin, may I ask you something?"

Qin Xian'er nodded, "Please ask."

"Miss Qin, can you actually sing 'Eighteen Touches'?" Lin San asked with a roguish grin.

Qin Xian'er: ""

Chapter 72 The Eldest Miss (Part One)

Having exited the gates of the Miaoyu Pavilion, Lin Wanrong felt as elated as if he had eaten a urine-boiled meatball, recalling Qin Xian'er's shy and irritated expression when he asked her questions. You little girl, no matter how much of a shape-shifting witch you are, you can't outplay me, he thought.

Thinking of the young master, Lin Wanrong suddenly slapped his forehead. "Damn it, Young Master Guo is still inside!" In his haste to leave, he had forgotten to ask Qin Xian'er where she had taken Guo Wuchang. What a miscalculation.

Just as he was regretting, he saw a figure staggering out of the Miaoyu Pavilion. From the silhouette, it seemed to be Young Master Guo.

Lin Wanrong hurried over and called out, "Young Master"

The man raised his head, his face full of fresh red lipstick marks. It was Guo Wuchang.

"Young Master, what happened to you" Lin Wanrong quickly asked.

"That little lady, she's quite the handful," Guo Wuchang said, reeking of alcohol and grinning from ear to ear.

Without further explanation, Lin Wanrong knew what had happened. Qin Xian'er must have arranged a courtesan to appease Young Master Guo.

While he was having a spiritual connection with Qin Xian'er, Young Master Guo had found a woman to physically connect with. Lin Wanrong shook his head, "Men, they really can't resist beautiful women."

Young Master Guo was covered in the scent of makeup, his face kissed by numerous women, leaving fresh red lipstick marks everywhere. Add to that his drunken state, he was staggering so much it was unbearable to watch. With no other choice, Lin Wanrong had to support him, heading towards the Xiao Mansion.

When they were not far from the mansion, the clip-clop of horse hooves accompanied by the sound of a carriage wheel reached their ears. Lin Wanrong looked back to see a carriage slowly passing by them, a man on a white horse and several servants were escorting the carriage.

"Squeak" With a few light sounds, the carriage slowly came to a halt. A clear voice came from inside the carriage, "Is that Cousin Guo walking outside?"

"It's not Cousin Guo, it's your Brother Lin." Guo Wuchang was heavy, and Lin Wanrong was struggling to support him. He was annoyed and without thinking who was asking, he answered dismissively.

"How dare you!" A man's angry shout. The man on the white horse turned his horse's head around and came over in a few strides, pointing at Lin Wanrong with his riding whip, "You servant, you've got some nerve, speaking so disrespectfully."

The man was in his twenties, about as tall as Lin Wanrong, dignified, with thick eyebrows and big eyes, handsome like Zhu Shimao. He was riding a white horse, exuding a powerful aura in his anger.

[Zhu Shimao is a famous Chinese actor during the 1980s and 1990s]

A Prince Charming on a white horse? Lin Wanrong suddenly thought of this phrase. Undeniably, this man was very good-looking and exuded a strong masculine charm, not comparable to those frail scholars, very appealing to girls.

Damn, just because he's on a white horse, does it make him a prince? He might be just another Monk Tang, acting all pompous. Lin Wanrong grumbled inwardly.

[Monk Tang is the Monk from Journey to the West]

Seeing the man staring at him with disdain, Lin Wanrong was angry but didn't look at him. Instead, he shouted at the white horse, "You beast that looks more like a donkey than a horse, what's the meaning of blocking my way?"

However, the man was not to be trifled with. Hearing Lin Wanrong's insult, he shouted in anger, "You insolent servant! I will teach you a lesson on behalf of Miss Xiao." With that, he raised his whip and lashed it mercilessly towards Lin Wanrong.

Lin Wanrong was startled. Damn it, who said you could just hit me? He was supporting someone, making it hard for him to move. If he dodged, the whip would hit Guo Wuchang.

At the crucial moment, Lin Wanrong leaned to the side with Guo Wuchang, and the two rolled on the ground, avoiding the whip. When he got up, he was covered in mud and looked extremely disheveled.

The man was surprised that the servant dared to dodge. He was about to strike again when he heard the lady in the carriage say, "Young Master Tao, please stop."

Young Master Tao glared at Lin Wanrong, then turned to the carriage and said, "Miss Xiao, this servant is so disrespectful. Let me punish him on your behalf."

The lady in the carriage was silent for a while before saying, "This is a matter for the Xiao family, Brother Tao. Please allow me to handle it."

Hearing Miss Xiao call him Brother Tao, a smile appeared on Young Master Tao's face. "Since you've said so, Sister, I'll let you handle it."

In just a little while, they had started calling each other 'brother' and 'sister'. Lin Wanrong was furious. Suddenly, he remembered that this Young Master Tao had called the person in the carriage Miss Xiao, and both the carriage and Young Master Tao were covered in dust. Recalling that Xiao Yushuang had said her sister would be returning tonight, could it be that the person in the carriage was the Eldest Miss Xiao?

Lin Wanrong felt bitter inside. If it really was the Eldest Miss Xiao, even though he had unintentionally taken advantage of her earlier, the fact remained. If she had heard it, there would be trouble in the future.

As they were talking, the curtain of the carriage was lifted, and a slender young lady stepped out.

The young lady was in her twenties, with eyebrows like distant mountains, eyes like autumn water, and lips like crimson spots. She had an oval face, almond-shaped eyes, a pointed nose, and was incredibly beautiful. Looking at her features, she resembled Lady Xiao by sixty to seventy percent. No wonder the painting could fool even Xiao Yushuang.

Even without thinking, Lin Wanrong knew this lady must be Eldest Miss Xiao. He sighed inwardly. Tonight really is a terrible night.

Eldest Miss Xiao looked like she had been traveling for a long time, her face was covered in dust, and she had a resolute look. There was a hint of worry between her eyebrows. Compared to Qin Xian'er, she was less flirtatious but had a stronger sense of determination.

A maidservant jumped down from the carriage to help Eldest Miss Xiao down. Young Master Tao quickly went forward, holding the reins with one hand and extending the other to assist Eldest Miss Xiao.

Eldest Miss Xiao gratefully smiled and said, "Thank you, Brother Tao." However, she didn't allow him to help her down, instead, she held the hand of the little maidservant and landed on her feet.

On the ground, Guo Wuchang rolled around, the alcohol effect lessening a bit. Hearing his cousin's voice, he was terrified and quickly grabbed Lin Wanrong's hand, "Lin San, my cousin is back, we should hide."

Having been caught red-handed sneaking out for a drink, Lin Wanrong also thought of the same. The two of them moved in unison, turning to sneak away.

"Cousin Guo, where are you going?" Eldest Miss Xiao's voice came from behind. She had recognized Guo Wuchang earlier, and seeing him trying to hide, she asked.

Lin Wanrong felt a bit relieved, thankfully, it didn't seem like Eldest Miss Xiao wanted to hold him accountable.

With nowhere to hide, Guo Wuchang had to stop and said, "Ah, ah, it's you, cousin Yuruo, you're finally back. Your mother and cousin Yushuang are waiting for you." As he spoke, he surreptitiously wiped away the various marks on his face.

Xiao Yuruo walked up to the two of them, glanced at Lin Wanrong, and said something that made him tremble, "You insolent servant, for your disrespectful words, you'll be slapped twenty times."

Lin Wanrong stared dumbfoundedly at Eldest Miss Xiao. This girl was too ruthless. She was quite good-looking, but her opening move was so severe, it was too heartless.

Seeing the servant rudely staring at her, Xiao Yuruo angrily said, "Do you dare to defy?"

Young Master Tao walked over and said, "Sister, let me discipline this servant."

Lin Wanrong thought it was somewhat acceptable for Xiao Yuruo to speak, but when did it become this Tao guy's turn? Riding a white horse, did he really think he was a prince?

Lin Wanrong glared at Young Master Tao and said, "This is a matter of the Xiao family, it's not your place, a groom, to intervene."

Young Master Tao had just led Eldest Miss Xiao's horse by the reins, so in everyone's eyes, Lin Wanrong's sarcastic remark of him being a groom was quite fitting.

Young Master Guo was hanging his head, but hearing Lin Wanrong's words, he couldn't help but feel delighted. This Tao guy, it was obvious that he was trying to curry favor with his cousin. Of course, he wasn't pleased, and Lin San just vented his frustration for him.

Young Master Tao was extremely annoyed, but since Xiao Yuruo didn't say anything, and Lin Wanrong wasn't wrong in calling him an outsider, he just gave a cold laugh and remained silent.

This Young Master Tao was really cunning. Lin Wanrong saw how quickly he quieted down and was taken aback, realizing that this man was not to be underestimated.

Seeing this servant's audaciousness, ferocious look, and subtle show of aggression, Xiao Yuruo was also startled. She wondered when this servant had appeared in the mansion, why hadn't she seen him before?

Lin Wanrong said to Xiao Yuruo, "Miss, my name is Lin San, I'm a new servant in the mansion."

"You are that contract worker Lin San?" Xiao Yuruo was somewhat surprised. Before she left, she had heard of a contract worker, but due to her hurried departure, she didn't have time to inquire further. She didn't expect that this tall and rather appealing servant in front of her was that contract worker Lin San.

"No matter who you are, as long as you're a servant of the Xiao family, such disrespectful speech deserves punishment," Xiao Yuruo said coldly. Having experienced the business world for a long time, she was savvy in dealing with situations and had a strong-willed aura.

"Disrespectful? Miss, what do you mean by that?" Lin Wanrong pretended to be alarmed, "Just now I heard someone call 'Cousin Guo', I thought I heard it wrong, so I made a joke. Does Miss think I would disrespect you?"

Even though she knew Lin San was making excuses, his last sentence left Xiao Yuruo unable to respond. Although she was experienced, she didn't have the same thick skin as Lin Wanrong. If she were to punish him, it would seem as though she was admitting to his claim of disrespect towards her.

Seeing the servant's slick talk and smooth words, Xiao Yuruo was annoyed, but as an extraordinary woman, she just sneered, "You're only good at verbal battles, that won't make you successful."

Chapter 73 The Eldest Miss (Part 2)

"Eldest Miss, I'm merely a servant in charge, and I dare not dream of achieving anything significant." Lin Wanrong said with a bitter expression.

Xiao Yuruo did not speak, but that Young Master Tao sneered a few times, saying, "At least you have some self-awareness."

As for this Young Master Tao, Lin Wanrong was not at all worried. Seeing him mocking and sneering at himself, he did not hold back either, and said, "Young Master Tao, it seems a little too early for you to interfere in the matters of the Xiao family, doesn't it?"

His words were quite venomous. He had noticed that Young Master Tao was pursuing Xiao Yuruo, and the two of them had already returned together, indicating some level of interaction. Therefore, he deliberately said this.

As expected, Young Master Tao's face changed, "What nonsense are you, a servant, talking about?"

"Young Master Tao, I am a servant of the Xiao family, not your servant. In front of my Eldest Miss, it's not your place to command." Lin Wanrong retorted sarcastically. He noticed that Xiao Yuruo's

relationship with this Young Master Tao didn't seem to have reached that point, so he was utterly ruthless.

Young Master Tao was also a popular figure in Jinling City, and he had never been treated so rudely, especially by a mere servant. Even with his good temperament, he was so angry that his face turned pale. But his deep composure kept him from reacting on the spot, which made Lin Wanrong even more wary of him. A barking dog doesn't bite, a biting dog doesn't bark this was a lesson from his past life that Lin Wanrong kept in mind.

Seeing the servant talking nonsense, Xiao Yuruo felt even more contempt for him. She ignored him and turned to Guo Wuchang, "Cousin Guo, it's late. Where are you heading?"

When Guo Wuchang realized he couldn't avoid the question, he had to answer, "Cousin Yuruo, I heard you were coming back, so I specifically brought Lin San here to wait for you."

Hearing this, Lin Wanrong couldn't help laughing inwardly. The young master was waiting for you in the brothel with me.

The rouge and lipstick on Young Master Guo's face hadn't been fully wiped off. Xiao Yuruo frowned upon seeing this and rebuked, "Cousin, how many times have I told you to focus on your studies and stay away from such places of pleasure? Only then can you live up to Uncle and Mother's hopes. Why don't you listen?"

Young Master Guo mumbled in agreement, not daring to speak up. This cousin, although younger than him, was born to do great things. She managed the large Xiao family with precision, and everyone in the Xiao family had a certain reverence for her, especially him.

Seeing her cousin in such a sorry state, Xiao Yuruo sighed. But when she turned around, she saw that roguish servant covering his mouth and snickering. Remembering his impudence and presuming he must have accompanied her cousin to those unseemly places, she was even more furious. She shouted, "You wicked servant! You dared to take your young master to such wicked places! Come, drag this servant away and give him a hundred severe lashes!"

Damn it! Lin Wanrong jumped up immediately. This girl has gone crazy! If I take a hundred lashes, will I survive? A few tall and sturdy servants following Xiao Yuruo came over upon hearing her order, ready to drag Lin Wanrong away.

"Wait!" Lin Wanrong shouted.

Xiao Yuruo looked at him coldly, "What? Do you have something to say? Have you been wronged?"

Seeing the Eldest Miss's displeasure, Lin Wanrong decided not to care about her feelings and shouted, "Not just wronged, I've been greatly wronged. May I ask, Miss, which eye of yours saw me leading the Young Master?"

Xiao Yuruo paused before saying, "You appeared with Cousin Guo, so naturally, both of you went together. I know my cousin well; without someone instigating him, he would absolutely not dare to go to such a place."

Her deduction was indeed accurate. The whole thing today was indeed Lin Wanrong's idea. However, saying Young Master Guo was an innocent man was far from the truth. His actions in the brothel were quite proficient, implying he had been there many times, only hiding it from the Eldest Miss.

For the sake of his own backside, Lin Wanrong would never admit it. "Miss, so all this is based on your conjecture? Can conjecture be taken as fact?" He looked at the Eldest Miss and snorted.

However, Lin Wanrong underestimated her. Xiao Yuruo, who managed such a large family, was not easy to deal with. She ignored Lin Wanrong and turned to Guo Wuchang, "Cousin Guo, did this Lin San lead you to that place? Don't be afraid. I will handle this wicked servant who bullies his master."

Xiao Yuruo saw things clearly. Guo Wuchang revered the Eldest Miss and would naturally not dare to lie. The most effective way was to break through him. Once Guo Wuchang identified Lin San, his crime would be confirmed, and the beating would be inevitable.

Seeing Young Master Guo's legs trembling, Lin Wanrong felt things were going south. This Young Master was not a tough nut. Damn it, he might die in this girl's hands today. Damn, he would never have imagined that one day he would be spanked by a girl.

At this critical moment, Lin Wanrong's steady mentality played a crucial role. He looked at Xiao Yuruo and sneered, "Miss, it seems like you are determined to pin this on me."

Xiao Yuruo retorted, "If not you, could it be that Cousin Guo wanted to go himself?"

This was a tough move, Lin Wanrong thought to himself. Even if Guo Wuchang were beaten to death, he would never admit it was his idea. Xiao Yuruo was indeed smart and capable, cornering both Lin Wanrong and the Young Master in just a few words.

"How could such a sincere and diligent person like the Young Master even think of going to such a place? It surely wasn't the Young Master who requested to go." Lin Wanrong secretly praised the Young Master.

Young Master Guo quickly nodded, "Yes, yes, Cousin, it wasn't my idea."

Xiao Yuruo scoffed, "So it wasn't Cousin's idea, and it wasn't you who led him there. Was he invited by someone else then?"

"Exactly, exactly, Miss is indeed incredibly clever. It was indeed someone who invited us." Lin Wanrong silently prayed in his heart, hoping this punishment could be avoided.

"Do you think I would believe that? My cousin's friends have been warned by my mother a long time ago. I doubt they would dare to take him to such a place." The Eldest Miss scoffed. Given Young Master Guo's scholarship and ability, he couldn't have made any profound friends. They were all unsavory characters from families without real power. Madam Xiao had sent them packing with just a few words, all to let her nephew focus on his studies.

Seeing the Eldest Miss's aggressive attitude, Lin Wanrong was very annoyed. Damn it, it was just a trip to a brothel, wasn't it? A man not visiting a brothel is like wasting his manhood. Who does she think she is, a police officer, interrogating like this?

"Since Miss wants to ask, I will tell the truth. Nothing is unspeakable, and in fact, this is a good thing to share. The Young Master was invited by Miss Qin Xian'er, the top courtesan of Miaoyu Pavilion, for some scholarly exchange," Lin Wanrong said without any embarrassment. Miss Qin, you have helped me this time. Next time, I won't let you sing 'Eighteen Touches.' I'll reduce one touch, letting you sing 'Seventeen Touches.'

"Yes, yes," Young Master Guo's eyes lit up. This Lin San was so talented, coming up with such an excuse, and making it sound so legitimate, "It was Miss Qin Xian'er who invited me over. She even sang a little tune called 'Qu Yu Guan,' and I pointed out some inadequacies in her performance. It was a purely academic exchange, cousin, you mustn't misunderstand."

If this Young Master Guo wasn't naturally spineless, he could have been a good salesperson. He could lie without batting an eye, even taking credit for Lin Wanrong's contributions without any blush.

"Oh?" Eldest Miss Xiao was surprised. She hadn't personally met Qin Xian'er, the famous courtesan from Qinhuai River, but she had heard of her. Not only was she incomparably beautiful, but she also had exceptional guqin playing skills. Her fame had spread throughout Jinling City. Everyone of importance in the city knew her name. However, she had heard that Qin Xian'er was aloof and only associated with the upper-class young masters and talented scholars. She knew exactly how much her cousin weighed. Even if Qin Xian'er were blind, she wouldn't exchange a single word with her cousin. But the servant and her cousin seemed sincere, not like they were lying. And if she sent someone to investigate, she would know the truth. They shouldn't dare to deceive her. What was going on? Could it be that Qin Xian'er really took a liking to her cousin? If that were true, it would be good news. Having a talented woman like Qin Xian'er as a relative would indeed be a beautiful story.

Miss Xiao was deep in her own thoughts, but the long-silent Young Master Tao nearby seemed rather disdainful. He had already investigated thoroughly what kind of person Guo Wuchang was. As for Qin Xian'er, he had seen her with his own eyes. The idea that she would invite Guo Wuchang to discuss scholarship was impossible.

Seeing that the Eldest Miss was lost in thought, Lin Wanrong knew that today's matter would likely be glossed over. However, this Eldest Miss was so stern and impartial that he would have to be careful in the future, so as not to give her any excuse to catch him again. Thinking about this, he felt somewhat disgruntled. Before this young girl came along, he was living a carefree, almost divine life in the Xiao family. Why did everything become awkward once this girl arrived? It was really damned strange.

"Are you telling the truth?" After some contemplation, Miss Xiao finally looked up and asked. From her tone, it seemed she had already partly believed them.

Just as Lin Wanrong was about to speak, he saw Eldest Miss Xiao glare at him and say, "You're a man full of lies and can't be trusted. Cousin Guo, is what he's saying really true?"

Chapter 74 The Arrival of the Phoenix (Part 1)

It seemed that in Eldest Miss Xiao's eyes, Lin Wanrong had become synonymous with lies. Was that really necessary? He had only made a casual joke when he thought she wasn't around. With such a grudge over a minor issue, she was quite comparable to that little girl named Xiao Qingxuan.

Young Master Guo nodded frantically, like a chicken pecking at rice, and said, "This is absolutely true. Many people saw us today in the Miaoyu Pavilion. Miss Qin even invited Lin San and me in for tea, and we had a lengthy conversation before returning."

You "exchange," I talk, collectively known as conversation. Lin Wanrong glanced at Young Master Guo, both of them letting out a sigh of relief.

Miss Xiao nodded, finally not pursuing the matter any further. There was a hint of fatigue on her face, and she waved her hand, saying, "In that case, hurry up and accompany me into the mansion."

The place where they stood was not far from the Xiao family's courtyard. After a while of conversation, the people in the Xiao mansion were already alerted. After taking a few steps, they saw a delicate figure rushing up, saying, "Sister, you're back."

Lin Wanrong looked closely, it was the Second Miss Xiao, Xiao Yushuang. She was acting coquettishly in her sister's arms, just like a little girl who hasn't grown up yet.

Xiao Yuruo, however, loved her little sister dearly. She gently patted her shoulder, saying with a smile, "You little girl, I've only been away for a few days, and you've become like this. Have you been good these days, not bullying anyone?"

Only a sister knew her sister best. Eldest Miss Xiao must be aware of her little sister's character to ask such a question, Lin Wanrong thought to himself.

"Absolutely not," Xiao Yushuang said with a shy twist, "I didn't bully anyone these days, but almost got bullied by a scoundrel."

Lin Wanrong took a deep breath. He naturally knew who Xiao Yushuang was talking about. Thinking of Eldest Miss Xiao's stern attitude earlier, if she knew he had beaten up her sister, he'd be crawling home today. Don't talk nonsense, little girl, or my life would be buried here.

"You, it's good enough that you didn't bully others. Who would dare to bully you?" Eldest Miss Xiao stroked her sister's hair, speaking affectionately. She thought her sister was just being cute in front of her, not knowing that the person who bullied her little sister was standing right in front of her.

"Eh, Lin San, why are you here? Cousin Guo, what happened to you? Did you go to the opera? Why did you wear so much rouge?" Second Miss Xiao spoke without any restraint.

Guo Wuchang laughed awkwardly and didn't dare to speak. Lin Wanrong said, "Second Miss Xiao, the young master and I had some matters to attend to. We happened to bump into Eldest Miss Xiao returning home, so we joined her."

Xiao Yushuang gave Lin Wanrong a mysterious smile and asked, "Lin San, where were you guys tonight?"

Lin Wanrong was taken aback for a moment and then said, "Oh, the young master took me out to handle some business. Eh, how did you know I wasn't at home?"

Xiao Yushuang didn't speak. She took out a small booklet from her bosom, flashed it quickly before Lin Wanrong's eyes, and then tucked it back. Lin Wanrong, with his sharp eyes, immediately recognized it as the original manuscript of the page three tabloid. With this manuscript, all the nonsense about some "master painter" had been debunked. Second Miss Xiao must have already known that the tabloid was his idea. But what was strange was that Lin Wanrong clearly remembered that this manuscript was kept in his room. He wondered where Second Miss Xiao had found it from.

"Strange, isn't it?" Xiao Yushuang said in a smug, low voice.

"Where did you find it?" Lin Wanrong asked.

Seeing his stern face, Xiao Yushuang pouted, snorted, and turned her head away.

"Did you go to my room?" Lin Wanrong thought for a moment and understood. This Second Miss Xiao was lawless. Entering his room was nothing to her.

Seeing his angry expression, Second Miss Xiao felt a bit scared. Her eyes reddened and she said, "Why are you so fierce? I wanted to find you to tell me a story when my sister was not around. Who knew you weren't in your room? That's when I saw this."

For some reason, when Second Miss Xiao saw him angry, she felt a faint fear and seemed a bit wronged.

As a modern man, Lin Wanrong highly valued privacy. How could he allow someone to casually enter his room? Fortunately, he carried the erotic picture album with him. Otherwise, if it fell into this little girl's hands, who knew what could happen?

"Give it back to me," Lin Wanrong extended his hand.

"Hmph, no," Xiao Yushuang said. "This booklet was clearly your idea. You lied to me. You're a terrible person."

Having been found out, there was nothing to hide. Lin Wanrong admitted, "I didn't mean to deceive you."

Second Miss Xiao bit her lip and whispered, "So you drew these pictures too."

"I did," Lin Wanrong confessed since there was no point in denying it now.

"Really?" Joy spread across Second Miss Xiao's face. "I knew it. Lin San, you are really talented." Lin Wanrong was introduced to the Xiao mansion by Second Miss Xiao by accident. Now seeing his talent, she naturally felt proud.

"Second Miss Xiao, let's consider this a little secret between us. I hope you can keep it for me," Lin Wanrong said. He wasn't afraid of others, but this Eldest Miss Xiao was smart and capable, and she had a prejudice against him. If she knew he was profiting from her, who knew how much trouble she might cause?

"Let's consider it our little secret," Xiao Yushuang's face flushed slightly as she looked at him. "But you have to agree to two conditions."

"Go ahead. What conditions?" Lin Wanrong wasn't particularly afraid of Second Miss Xiao. He was confident that he could handle her.

"First, you have to tell me a story every day, no slacking off," Second Miss Xiao said, blinking.

"Can we be a bit more flexible, like one story per month?" Lin Wanrong pleaded with a grimace.

"No," Xiao Yushuang flatly rejected.

"Every two weeks?"

"Every seven days?"

"No more. At most, one story every two days, any faster and I won't be able to keep up," Lin Wanrong said through gritted teeth.

"Alright, one story every two days. You said it, and I'll remember," Xiao Yushuang said with a triumphant posture.

Lin Wanrong nodded helplessly. "Go ahead, what's your second condition?"

"Second, you must draw a picture like this for me in the future," Xiao Yushuang said wistfully.

"No problem," Lin Wanrong sighed with relief inwardly. This request was too easy to fulfill. Seeing the sweet smile on Xiao Yushuang's face, he suddenly remembered Dong Qiaoqiao's longing expression when she saw the drawing. He vaguely remembered that he had made the same promise to her. He wondered what the girl was doing at this moment, was she tossing and turning in her small bed thinking about him?

"Hey" Second Miss Xiao called him a few times before Lin Wanrong snapped back to reality. He hurriedly said, "Second Miss Xiao, what did you say?"

Xiao Yushuang pouted. "What were you thinking about? I called you several times and you didn't respond."

Lin Wanrong made an acknowledging sound. "What did you say just now?"

Second Miss Xiao huffed, "I said in the future, you're only allowed to draw pictures for me, not for other women."

"How can that work?" Lin Wanrong exclaimed. This little girl was too domineering. He had already promised Qiaoqiao. "Absolutely not. Second Miss Xiao, I've already agreed to your two conditions. Don't push me anymore, or else..." Lin Wanrong glanced at her little buttocks.

Xiao Yushuang jumped, thinking that he was going to get violent again. When she saw he was only bluffing, she calmed down, snorted at him, and stopped insisting on that condition.

At the end of their conversation, their voices had risen slightly. Eldest Miss Xiao turned around to see that detestable servant talking with her younger sister. They were having a lively conversation.

Eldest Miss Xiao had no fondness for this servant. Seeing her little sister with him, she felt displeased and said, "Yushuang, come here, stand by my side."

Xiao Yushuang nodded, saying to Lin Wanrong, "Lin San, don't forget the conditions you promised."

Only after seeing Lin Wanrong nod did Xiao Yushuang go to her sister's side. She affectionately grabbed her sister's arm, saying, "Sister, I'm here."

"Second Miss Xiao, I am Tao Dongcheng. Nice to meet you," Young Master Tao greeted Second Miss Xiao with a bow.

"So it's Young Master Tao, huh. How come you came with my sister?" Second Miss Xiao returned the greeting, expressing her curiosity.

"Oh, I was conducting some business in Anhui and happened to run into Miss Xiao, so we returned together," Tao Dongcheng replied.

"Indeed, I should thank Brother Tao for his protection along the way," Eldest Miss Xiao said with a generous smile.

Lin Wanrong's eyes darted about, and with just a glance at Tao Dongcheng, he understood the situation.

Judging from their conversation, this wasn't the first time Xiao Yushuang had met Tao Dongcheng. It seemed that Tao Dongcheng had been pursuing Miss Xiao for some time. How far had their

relationship progressed? But considering Eldest Miss Xiao's tone and demeanor, they didn't seem to be very close yet. Lin Wanrong thought this gossip was interesting.

"Yuruo, you've finally returned." As everyone arrived at the Xiao residence, Lady Xiao had already come to the entrance, holding Eldest Miss Xiao's hand with a smile. The mother and daughter looked quite similar, and Lady Xiao was so young that they appeared to be more like sisters.

"Mother, has everything been well at home in the past few days?" Despite being in charge of the Xiao family, Eldest Miss Xiao still seemed to regress to her childhood when in her mother's presence, showing some dependence.

Lady Xiao lovingly stroked her daughter's hair, saying, "What could possibly happen at home? You are the one who's always out and about. You should take better care of yourself."

"I am Tao Dongcheng, honored to meet you, Lady Xiao," Tao Dongcheng greeted Lady Xiao respectfully.

"So you're the young master of the Tao family." Lady Xiao smiled, "I heard from Yuruo that you personally went to Anhui. Thanks to your support, the business went very smoothly this time."

"Madam, there's no need for such formality. The Xiao and Tao families are practically becoming one, there's no need to differentiate between us," Tao Dongcheng said with a smile.

Becoming one? Lin Wanrong was taken aback. Had Eldest Miss Xiao and this Tao Dongcheng engaged? Damn, this Tao Dongcheng was quite lucky to have such a beauty.

Chapter 75 The Arrival of the Phoenix (Part 2)

Xiao Yuruo gave a light smile, saying, "Brother Tao, I need more time to ponder over this matter. It's not too late to discuss it later."

Tao Dongcheng responded with a deep, knowing smile, "Such a significant matter indeed requires careful consideration. I shall await the good news from you, dear sister."

With Eldest Miss Xiao having reached home, Tao Dongcheng found no excuse to linger. He bade farewell to Lady Xiao and her two daughters, mounted his horse with a fist salute, then galloped away, his departure as gallant as could be.

Eldest Miss Xiao stood at the entrance for a long time, seemingly troubled by a difficult decision. After a while, she sighed, "Mother, let's go in."

At first, Lin Wanrong thought that the Xiao and Tao families were planning a marriage alliance. However, as time passed, he realized that wasn't the case. It was clear that Tao Dongcheng was pursuing Miss Xiao, but talk of marriage seemed far off, especially since Eldest Miss Xiao's attitude was quite ambiguous. So, what did Tao Dongcheng mean when he spoke of "becoming one"? Seeing the troubled expressions of the three Xiao women, it appeared that the decision was a difficult one. Could it really affect the survival of the Xiao family?

Lin Wanrong pondered for a while, then suddenly spoke, "Why am I thinking about these things? I'm here to pass the time. After a year, I'll leave. Why should I worry about this? Even if I help solve the Xiao family's problems, would they be willing to make me their master? I can only daydream about it, nothing more."

Returning to his small room, he suddenly felt utterly exhausted. So many things had happened that night. Not only had he encountered the capricious courtesan, Qin Xian'er, but he had also met Eldest Miss Xiao who had just returned home and almost received a beating from her. After some thought, he drifted off into a deep sleep.

After an unknown period, Lin Wanrong suddenly felt something was amiss. He jerked awake to find a figure standing in front of him, staring at him coldly.

"A ghost!" Lin Wanrong yelled, his body breaking out in cold sweat.

The figure stood still, not reacting to Lin Wanrong's shouting.

After shouting for a while, with no one coming, and the figure remaining motionless as if lifeless, Lin Wanrong calmed down a little. Just as he was about to reach out to touch the figure, a voice said, "Why did you stop shouting?"

It sounded like a woman, and somewhat familiar. But in the middle of the night, an eerie shadow suddenly appearing in his room what could one make of that? That Lin Wanrong didn't wet his pants out of fear was already a testament to his courage.

"Are you... Sadako?" Lin Wanrong recalled a horror film he had watched. His hair stood on end as he tentatively asked.

"Who's Sadako?" This time the voice of the "female ghost" was louder, and it sounded incredibly pleasant. Lin Wanrong's courage grew a little stronger. He reassured himself, Whether she's a human or a ghost, as long as she's female, there's nothing I can't handle.

"Who are you, really?" Lin Wanrong got up from his bed and asked.

"Oh? Don't you recognize me? 'The warm wind intoxicates the traveler, making Hangzhou feel like Bianzhou.' You were so imposing that day." The shadow replied with a cold laugh.

Remembering the poem and the somewhat familiar voice, a lightbulb went off in Lin Wanrong's head. He exclaimed, "Are you Xiao Qingxuan?"

The faint moonlight shone into the room, illuminating the stunning face of the young woman. She looked at Lin Wanrong and said, "I didn't expect you to remember me."

"Are you here to kill me?" Upon confirming that the shadow was human, and a woman at that, Lin Wanrong's fear subsided a bit. If it's a woman, then he had ways to handle her. However, he had experienced Xiao Qingxuan's fierce methods and dared not act recklessly.

"What do you think?" Xiao Qingxuan's words seemed devoid of any emotion, cold as ice.

"Miss Xiao," Lin Wanrong said with an awkward smile, "What happened that day was entirely a misunderstanding. Besides, you injured me, I almost lost my life. We should be even now, right? Or, should I apologize to you?" Thinking back to the incident, Lin Wanrong was still harboring resentment. But with his life in this woman's hands, he dared not show it, so he kept it to himself for the moment.

Xiao Qingxuan coldly retorted, "If apologies were useful, what would be the need for law enforcement?"

Damn, this girl is tough, Lin Wanrong cursed silently. Seeing that she was not easily appeased, he considered getting tough himself, but remembering her capabilities, he gave up. He couldn't muster the strength. Damn, he felt like such a wimp.

Thinking that, Lin Wanrong hardened his heart and remained silent. Kill or rape, he thought, do as you please. The two of them fell into a standoff, and in the darkness, Lin Wanrong could only hear his own breathing.

She didn't even seem to breathe. No wonder she's so cold-blooded, Lin Wanrong thought to himself.

Lin Wanrong had never experienced a situation like this. In the dark of night, a beautiful woman stood by his bed watching him sleep. If the beauty was naked, it would be a delightful situation, but now not only was she clothed, but she also likely had a very sharp sword on her. That made things less fun.

Lin Wanrong felt his breath growing cold, the atmosphere somewhat terrifying. In this tense situation, he found himself growing tired, wanting to sleep.

"What time is it?" Lin Wanrong, thoroughly exhausted, couldn't help but ask.

"It's the third watch of the night," Xiao Qingxuan replied.

"Oh, if you're not busy, then I'll go back to sleep," Lin Wanrong yawned. The back-and-forth between them almost resembled a couple sharing a bed.

Seeing him genuinely about to drift off, Xiao Qingxuan's expression finally flickered. She seemed to huff, "Are you really going to sleep? That's fine, I suppose. Killing you in your sleep would spare you any pain."

"Miss, if you're going to kill me, just do it. Can you stop trying to scare me? Is it fun for you? Scaring me a thousand times isn't as effective as just killing me," Lin Wanrong pleaded with a bitter face.

"You can feel fear too? Why didn't I see that when you were bullying me that day?" Xiao Qingxuan retorted venomously.

"Was I the one bullying you that day? It was you bullying me. I just called you a girl, which is a fact. Was there a need for you to go overboard? It really is like the old saying goes, 'the scorpion's sting is in the tail, but a woman's poison is in her heart'." Lin Wanrong felt truly wronged. Just for saying something wrong, he had to face death. Damn, was there no justice left in this world?

Xiao Qingxuan paused, seeming to see some reason in his words. While he was somewhat rude, his offense wasn't worthy of death. She admitted to herself that in the heat of the moment, she might have gone a bit too far. But his indecency underwater was something she would never forget. "How are you going to make up for what you did to me underwater?"

"That was an overreaction on my part. I was fighting for my life, how could I know what I was doing?" Lin Wanrong replied.

"Overreaction? Then if I kill you today, could it also be considered my overreaction?" Xiao Qingxuan's voice carried a hint of excitement.

"Miss, please don't resort to violence and killing so easily. You're a girl, you'll have to get married someday. If you draw your sword so readily, who would dare marry you?"

Lin Wanrong's fear was slowly ebbing away. If she truly wanted to kill him, she could have done so while he was asleep. It would've been clean and quick. But now she was talking so much, it was clear she wasn't going to kill him.

Before he could finish his thoughts, he heard a swishing sound. A sharp sword, glinting coldly, was suddenly at his throat. The icy blade sent chills through him.

Damn, is this girl serious? This is my throat we're talking about. If she's not careful, that's the end for me. Lin Wanrong's heart pounded in his chest, he was too scared to speak, barely daring to breathe. He feared that one breath might cause the blade to cut his throat, ending his life.

"Why aren't you talking now? Weren't you quite capable before?" Xiao Qingxuan's voice echoed in Lin Wanrong's ears. "Did you think I wouldn't dare to kill you?" Her sword moved a fraction closer to his throat, making it difficult for Lin Wanrong to even breathe.

Today's incident seemed irreconcilable; this girl seemed intent on killing him. Damn, if there's no hope, then let it be. If I, Lin San, am afraid of you, girl, then I deserve to crawl through your legs as punishment.

With that thought, Lin Wanrong steeled himself, chose not to look at her, and closed his eyes in silence.

Seeing his stillness, Xiao Qingxuan looked more closely, only to find him with his eyes tightly shut, motionless, as if he had fallen asleep.

Despite his usual jocular demeanor, he did have some backbone. Xiao Qingxuan secretly praised him in her heart. Her slender hand moved, the sword's cold light moving like a gust of wind past Lin Wanrong's throat.

The flash of the sword was extremely fast. Before Lin Wanrong could blink, the sword had disappeared, leaving only Xiao Qingxuan standing quietly there, the sword's location unknown.

The sword had grazed Lin Wanrong's throat, and he had felt a profound chill. A moment's distraction from Xiao Qingxuan would have led to his total disappearance from this world.

His back was completely drenched, but he felt like he had already come to terms with death. He wasn't particularly afraid of Xiao Qingxuan anymore, and he coldly snorted, "What, not killing me anymore?"

Xiao Qingxuan huffed, "I won't kill you today, but I will certainly take your life in the future."

Having heard these words, Lin Wanrong had gradually figured out Xiao Qingxuan's temper. He pretended not to hear her and asked, "How did you know where I live? How did you find me?"

"Is it hard to find you? You're just a minor servant in the Xiao mansion. Even if there were ten of you, I could easily find you," Xiao Qingxuan's tone carried a hint of arrogance.

Lin Wanrong nodded, "I wish there were ten of me, so you could kill me ten times, and I could live a few more days."