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Chapter 96 A Seduction? (Part 1)

From afar, he couldn't discern clearly. 'Could it be Xiao Yushuang, that girl?' he wondered. 'No, she must be angry with me today. Why would she willingly come to see me? If it's Xiao Qingxuan, that girl, it's even less likely. She has never had the habit of coming out to greet me.'

As he approached and could see more clearly, he was still somewhat taken aback. The woman turned out to be the Eldest Miss of the Xiao family.

The Eldest Miss Xiao was holding a small booklet, flipping through the pages. The expression on her face was quite odd, shifting between smiles, shyness, envy, and longing.

Lin Wanrong looked carefully and was surprised. The small booklet was actually the original manuscript of the page three tabloid he had compiled, which Xiao Yushuang had searched for.

'Good heavens, don't tell me this Eldest Miss has discovered it and come to settle accounts with me,' Lin Wanrong thought. However, on second thought, this seemed unlikely. Second Miss Xiao was currently resenting him; she would absolutely not mention him in front of the Eldest Miss. And the Eldest Miss Xiao had such a poor impression of him, she would never take the initiative to care about his affairs. This was rather odd.

'What's there to fear? She's just a young lady. If push comes to shove, I'll just knock her down,' he thought after a while. Then, no longer worried, he slowly entered the garden.

Upon seeing him return, Xiao Yuruo hurriedly hid the booklet in her bosom, straightened her face, and said in a soft voice, "Lin San, you're back?"

Seeing her do this, Lin Wanrong relaxed. This young lady must have been bored and was killing time by reading the booklet. However, it seemed that the Eldest Miss quite enjoyed reading her own gossip news, which was indeed quite amusing.

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, "What wind has blown the peerless Eldest Miss Xiao to my humble courtyard today? This is indeed unusual."

Seeing the cunning smile on his face, Xiao Yuruo felt an inward resentment. But she had to ask him for a favor and couldn't retort. She had to say, "Lin San, I found your words today very reasonable. Do you have a way to resolve this crisis?"

"No," Lin Wanrong decisively said. 'Are you joking? With this attitude, you're not sincere at all. Do you think I'm a pushover?' He didn't bother with the Eldest Miss and went straight into the house.

Xiao Yuruo bit her lower lip lightly. Seeing him enter, she gathered her courage and followed him in without a word. The moment she stepped through the door, she seemed to hear her own heartbeat.

'This girl has some courage,' Lin Wanrong thought to himself, laughing inwardly. He turned to look at the Eldest Miss and asked incredulously, "Miss, what is your intention in entering a strange man's boudoir so late at night? Are you harboring ill intentions?"

"You" Xiao Yuruo hadn't expected the man before her to be so shameless as to speak such words. As a pure and innocent woman, how could she withstand such teasing? Enraged, she pointed at him with her slender jade-like finger, her face flushing in waves, tears welled up in her eyes. Overwhelmed with both embarrassment and anger, she quickly turned and ran out.

Lin Wanrong shook his head helplessly, thinking, 'This girl, her ability to withstand attacks is too weak. She needs to be toughened up.'

He was somewhat tired that day and didn't bother with the Eldest Miss. Just as he was preparing to sleep, he heard someone outside the door saying, "Lin San, could you have a proper talk with me?" The voice was unmistakably Xiao Yuruo's.

'So she hasn't left yet,' Lin Wanrong thought, his heart filled with secret mirth. He loudly responded, "I have already retired for the night. Come back tomorrow."

Xiao Yuruo lingered outside the door for a long time. When she heard no movement inside, recalling the humiliation she had endured, her stubborn temper flared again. She stamped her foot in annoyance, turned around and ran off.

Listening to the sound of her delicate footsteps, Lin Wanrong shook his head helplessly. 'This Eldest Miss is somewhat clever, but her temper is too fiery. She can't bear any grievances. I'll have to teach her a lesson and show her what real toughness is.'

He chuckled to himself, feeling a bit arrogant for rejecting the Eldest Miss's goodwill. 'This servant role suits me well, with a taste of power. I'm growing fonder of this occupation.'

After spacing out for a bit, he suddenly remembered that it was getting late. 'Why haven't I seen Xiao Qingxuan?' At this time in the past, she would usually be waiting in the room. 'Where could she be?'

He looked around curiously and spotted a neatly folded white handkerchief on his bedside. Walking over, he picked it up and unfolded it. Embroidered on it was a pair of intertwined flowers, underneath which were a few words: "Waiting for your return, but had to leave."

There was no signature. The ink had already dried, and the handkerchief emanated a faint scent. Without a doubt, it was a message from Xiao Qingxuan.

Lin Wanrong frowned as he read, 'This Qingxuan, what a waste. Couldn't she just write on paper? Why use this handkerchief? A piece of fine Yunjin silk is casually discarded. She doesn't know how to economize, such a spendthrift woman.'

The next morning, while Lin Wanrong was still deep in sleep, he heard a woman's voice from outside, "Lin San, are you up yet?" The voice sounded familiar. 'Isn't it Miss Xiao?'

Lin Wanrong got up to see Xiao Yuruo standing at the doorway, clad in a purple satin dress, looking haggard. Clearly, she had not slept well the previous night.

Lin Wanrong felt a pang of sympathy. 'Am I being too petty? After all, she is Xiao Yushuang's older sister and technically my mistress. It seems a bit much to torment her like this.'

However, seeing the touch of grievance and annoyance in Miss Xiao's expression irritated him again. 'So the Eldest Miss hasn't realized the severity of her mistake yet.' He waved his hand dismissively and said, "Miss, are you here to rush me to work? I'll head to the garden to cultivate the soil."

Eldest Miss Xiao hurriedly said, "Lin San, that's not what I meant. I want to hear your advice on how our Xiao family can extricate ourselves from"

Lin Wanrong interrupted her with a yawn, "Miss, I've just woken up and haven't had breakfast yet. Maybe we could"

The Eldest Miss Xiao tightly clenched her fists, suppressing her anger as she said, "If that's the case, I will have someone prepare it for you." Grinding her teeth, she left the room, her face flushed with frustration. It wasn't long before she personally brought in his breakfast.

Having eaten and drank his fill, Lin Wanrong dawdled around. Seeing the Eldest Miss forcing herself to tolerate the situation, her expression was one of impatience. He knew she was unhappy about serving a servant, this deeply ingrained sense of superiority and inferiority annoyed him greatly. His expression changed, and he said coldly, "Miss, thank you for the breakfast. I'm off to work now."

Eldest Miss Xiao hurriedly said, "Lin San, do you have a way to help my Xiao family?"

Lin Wanrong interrupted her, "Miss, my job is to maintain the garden and ensure it flourishes. As for other matters, we can discuss them when I'm off duty."

Having been repeatedly made difficult by this obstinate and harsh servant, Xiao Yuruo naturally felt aggrieved. She really wanted to harden her heart and expel this troublesome servant from the Xiao family, but considering their current situation, who else could help her? Although she didn't hold much hope for Lin San, at the very least, he had demonstrated some capability. Regardless of whether he had a solution or not, she had to try. She looked at Lin Wanrong helplessly and despairingly, then turned and left.

Watching her leave, Lin Wanrong let out a long sigh, thinking, 'If this goes on, not only will this girl be unable to stand it, but I won't be able to bear it either.'

He took out the perfume samples and sniffed each one. The scent testing was indeed effective; he noticed a change in the scent of two bottles. After checking the records and adjusting some ratios, his work was finally complete.

Yesterday, he had Dong Qingshan find some wineries and got some fermented yeast filtered of impurities, stored in a large jar. When he pulled out the stopper, a pungent smell of alcohol hit his nostrils.

Lin Wanrong poured some alcohol, added some fragrance, and then poured in the pure water that had been settling for several days, adjusting it according to a certain ratio. If the scent was too weak or strong, he would continuously add more fragrance, alcohol, or pure water until the scent satisfied him, then he finally stopped.

The world's first true bottle of perfume was finally born. It had a faint red color and a pure, lasting scent that was both subtle and deep. The fragrance was so intoxicating that even Lin Wanrong, a man, was somewhat captivated by this woman's perfume.

This was a bottle of rose perfume. Although the process was still slightly crude, it was, after all, the first completed product of perfume, and the excitement in Lin Wanrong's heart was needless to mention.

He carefully filled a few bottles with the perfume, thinking to himself, 'This is rose perfume, I should first give it to my darling Qiaoqiao.' He then proceeded to make jasmine and orchid perfumes, conducting various trials for the mixtures. Only when all was completed did he stretch lazily, the joy in his heart unparalleled.

Looking up, he realized that it was already afternoon. He had been so engrossed in his work that he had forgotten lunch. Just as he was about to step out, he saw Eldest Miss Xiao standing before him again.

With a sigh of resignation, Lin Wanrong invited her into the room, "Miss, what do you need this time?"

As Xiao Yuruo entered, before she could even speak, she was greeted by a faint and refreshing scent. It resembled the fragrance of roses, but was not as intense, carrying a hint of subtlety within its elegance. It was a scent that, once smelled, could never be forgotten.

"Lin San, what is this?" Xiao Yuruo pointed at the small bottle on the table, curiously asking, "Is the fragrance coming from inside? What is this exactly?"

Seeing the Eldest Miss's intrusion, Lin Wanrong found himself torn between laughter and tears. "Miss, this has nothing to do with you. Why have you come looking for me?"

With great effort, Xiao Yuruo shifted her gaze from the perfume to Lin Wanrong, "You know why I'm here. Lin San, do you have a way to counter this alliance? As long as you can save the Xiao family, I can agree to any terms."

Any terms? Lin Wanrong felt a chill run down his spine, wondering if this Eldest Miss was attempting to seduce him.

"Really, any terms? Then I only want one thing," Lin Wanrong said with a lascivious grin.

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Xiao Yuruo was taken aback. She had not intended to convey that meaning, but to her surprise, this man had such a lewd interpretation. Shocked, she exclaimed, "Lin San, you, you mustn't misunderstand!"

"Really?" Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Did I misunderstand? Then, Miss, what do you think I want?"

"You, you..." Eldest Miss Xiao retorted angrily, "Even if I die, I won't be yours."

"Hahahaha" Lin Wanrong laughed uproariously, "Miss Xiao, your self-perception might be a bit too positive. Even if you genuinely wanted to be mine, I would still have to think it over."

"You, you" In her embarrassment and anger, Eldest Miss Xiao removed the embroidered shoe from her foot and threw it at him.

Catching her shoe, Lin Wanrong laughed frivolously, "Thirty thousand feet of red thread, half a foot of jade. Miss Xiao, your way of conveying your feelings is quite unique."

Xiao Yuruo bellowed, "You shameless rogue, I won't let you go"

Lin Wanrong's expression shifted, his laughter fading into a cold snort, "Miss Xiao, don't assume that everyone in the world is as vulgar as you think. You may be beautiful, but in my eyes, there are countless women more beautiful than you. You're not necessarily at an advantage. I won't make things difficult for you. I changed clothes yesterday if you wash them for me, we can sit down and have a proper conversation."

"Lin San, is everything you said true?" Xiao Yuruo asked incredulously.

With a nonchalant hum, Lin Wanrong replied, "In terms of trust, your younger sister outperforms you by a thousand times."

Xiao Yuruo thought to herself, My sister is only obedient because you deceived her. She nodded, reasoning that washing his clothes couldn't be that bad.

However, Eldest Miss Xiao, who managed the Xiao family, had never done such chores before. She was clueless about how to start washing clothes. Fetching water with a wooden bucket was already exhausting; she could only fill it halfway before gasping for breath. Watching her, Lin Wanrong sighed, wondering how these young ladies, who barely ate half a bun at a meal, found the strength for such tasks.

He took the bucket from her, shaking his head in disappointment, "You ladies, living in idleness, knowing nothing of the hardships of the world..."

Upon hearing his mockery, Xiao Yuruo felt wronged and retorted, "If I were to take up chores like laundry and cooking, who would manage the affairs of the Xiao family?"

He had to concede the point. There was no high or low in work, just different roles, all essential. Seeing her teary eyes and her reddening face, Lin Wanrong, who couldn't bear to see a woman cry, quickly added, "Alright, I misspoke. Let me apologize to you."

Had he kept quiet, things might have been fine. But with his apology, Xiao Yuruo suddenly felt the tears roll down her face. She was a woman of strong character and remained silent, clutching Lin Wanrong's robe, furiously scrubbing as if the robe embodied the man who had angered her.

"Miss, in this world, there is something called soapnuts. You won't be able to clean this collar with bare hands, I fear you might wear it out before it gets clean," Lin Wanrong said with a wry smile as he tossed some soapnuts into the water.

"You mind your business," Xiao Yuruo huffed, her face turning a shade of red.

Lin Wanrong held back a laugh, causing Xiao Yuruo to feel even more embarrassed. Suddenly, she slapped the water with both hands, sending droplets splashing onto Lin Wanrong's face.

"You rascal, I hate you," Xiao Yuruo murmured, tears welling up and falling freely.

Men universally struggled to witness a woman's tears. Lin Wanrong was no exception. Looking at her delicate face, teary like a pear blossom in the rain, he thought, Enough is enough, I am, after all,

a man who pities and cherishes the fair sex. He sighed and said, "Alright, don't cry anymore. You don't have to wash these clothes, let's just talk."

Xiao Yuruo, feeling wronged, had been waiting for these words. She looked up joyfully and asked, "Really?"

Lin Wanrong laughed, "Given your persistence, it's only right that I give some face to the Second Miss."

Biting her lip, Xiao Yuruo rose to her feet. Glancing at the robe still soaking in the water, she felt her face heat up and said, "I will fulfill my promise. I'll take this robe, wash it, and return it to you."

Laughing, Lin Wanrong replied, "You're clearly going to have your maids wash it, yet you speak so confidently."

Xiao Yuruo humphed, about to retort, but seeing his playful and unconcerned expression, she sighed, "You villain, I don't know what kind of charm you possess. I always lose my composure around you."

You've only lost your composure, not your virtue. What are you worried about? Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Alright, let's talk about what we need to discuss."

Upon hearing the shift towards serious matters, Xiao Yuruo collected her thoughts and looked at him earnestly, "Lin San, do you have a plan to deal with this so-called alliance?"

Lin Wanrong shook his head, "Miss Xiao, most of what I mentioned before were merely guesses. I can't confirm if Young Master Tao has such intentions. However, from a business perspective, if the Xiao family continues in this way, there will be no development, and it will hit a bottleneck. Even without Young Master Tao, other competitors could pose a serious threat. To put it bluntly, the business of the Xiao family has no added value, no unique features; anyone can do it. Any firm that grows big enough could pose a threat to the Xiao family."

Xiao Yuruo had been contemplating this issue for a long time. Although Lin Wanrong's words were harsh, they were undeniably true and hit the nail on the head. She sighed, "Lin San, since you have this insight, I won't hide it from you. Since I took over the Xiao family's affairs, I have been considering this issue and have wanted to make some reforms. Unfortunately, I have not found a good path nor had any good ideas. There are hundreds of people in the Xiao family. If we were to fail, the consequences would be unimaginable."

Lin Wanrong dismissed her concerns, "Miss Xiao, reform comes at a cost. If we're not willing to make tough decisions, we won't achieve anything. The Xiao family's situation is dire; even without the Tao family's involvement, I fear it may not last more than three or five years."

"That's not necessarily true," Eldest Miss Xiao retorted, slightly annoyed by his underestimation. "If I were to form an alliance with the Tao family, we could easily endure for three to five years."

Lin Wanrong knew she was being sarcastic. If she truly intended to ally with the Tao family, why would she come to him, endure his scolding and plead for his help? It was just that the young lady was too proud to admit it.

He laughed, "If you form an alliance, the Xiao family may be able to live comfortably for three years. But after those three years, there will be no Xiao family left. By then, you, Miss Xiao, would have no choice but to enter the Tao family as a wife. Without the Xiao family backing you, whether you'd be treated as a primary or secondary wife would be a question."

Xiao Yuruo gave him a flushed look, humphed, but didn't respond. Lin Wanrong sighed, "Miss Xiao, I don't blame you for looking down on us servants. After all, you were brought up to do so. But since the second miss has been so kind to me, I feel obliged to help, even if I didn't want to."

"You, you," Miss Xiao stammered, "You're not allowed to lay a finger on Yushuang!"

Lin Wanrong shook his head in exasperation, dismissing her concerns. He asked out loud, "Miss Xiao, given the dire straits the Xiao family is in, have you considered a business transformation? Oh, I mean, using the Xiao family resources for a different business?"

Miss Xiao sighed, "Easier said than done. The Xiao family has been in the cloth business for years, and all our foundation is here. If we don't do this, what else can we do?"

Lin Wanrong smiled, "Selling cloth does bring some profit, but the competition is fierce, and the margins are getting thinner. If you don't want to leave the silk business, you could consider the silk industry's byproducts, oh, like manufacturing and processing ready-made clothes."

Miss Xiao shook her head, "I've considered making ready-made clothes, but tailoring shops are a dime a dozen. We don't have much of an advantage in that area."

Lin Wanrong suggested, "If you're producing ordinary clothes, the Xiao family indeed won't have much advantage. But what if you make special clothes, clothes people have never seen before? What would happen then?"

"Special clothes? Clothes people have never seen before?" Miss Xiao exclaimed in surprise, "What kind of clothes are these?"

Lin Wanrong already had some ideas but hadn't systematically sorted them out yet. He smiled slightly and said, "Let me think about it. I'll discuss it in detail with you tomorrow."

Miss Xiao gently acknowledged his words, thinking to herself that if they could manufacture unique clothes, it would indeed be a good idea for the Xiao family. They wouldn't have to leave the silk industry, and they could continue to use their advantages. But what kind of unique clothes would have such great appeal?

"Lin San, tomorrow young master Tao has invited me to a gathering to discuss the alliance. How should we plan for it?" Xiao Yuruo asked. This was the real reason she had been so urgently seeking Lin Wanrong today.

No wonder this young lady had humbled herself to curry favor with him today. As it turned out, Tao Dongcheng was about to make his move. If he guessed right, Tao Dongcheng would begin pressuring the Xiao family to comply as early as tomorrow.

Lin Wanrong nodded, "Miss Xiao, make your own decisions about these matters. Whether to trust me or Tao Dongcheng, you should have a plan in mind. My advice ends here."

Xiao Yuruo, of course, doubted Tao Dongcheng's intentions. After talking with Lin San, although she had some leads, Lin San had only pointed out a bit but hadn't explained in detail. What if he had no solution and ended up angering Tao Dongcheng, wouldn't that get the Xiao family into even more trouble?

Seeing her furrowed brows, Lin Wanrong knew she was troubled. He didn't push her, but instead said, "Miss Xiao, it's right to think it over. If you make a wrong step, what you stand to lose is the entire Xiao family. Think it through carefully."

By the time he saw off Eldest Miss Xiao, it was already dinner time. After wolfing down his meal, Lin Wanrong took out a pencil he had gotten from Qiaoqiao, found a piece of blank paper, and began writing and drawing incessantly. He constantly made revisions, his brows knitted in

concentration one moment and beaming with joy the next. His face bore a smile that was as lascivious as it was radiant.

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After an arduous effort of completing the drawing, he chuckled heartily while gazing at the patterns on the paper, thinking to himself, 'I truly am a genius at making money.' He wondered what Eldest Miss Xiao would think when she saw these drawings. Undoubtedly, she would blush in embarrassment. 'Ah, it's simply too explosive!' he thought. However, if the Xiao family actually went into this business, they would definitely make a fortune.

Before sleep, he carelessly tossed aside the Yunjin silk handkerchief left by Xiao Qingxuan. His thoughts drifted to the endearing, silly little girl, Qiaoqiao, and he couldn't help but smile. This girl truly held a special place in his heart. He made a mental note to find some time to spoil her. Suddenly, he remembered he hadn't visited Qin Xian'er today. He wondered what tricks the flirtatious vixen would employ to seduce him. His heart fluttered at the thought of both Qiaoqiao and Qin Xian'er, his body reacting to his wandering mind. He tossed and turned for a while before finally falling into a deep sleep.

Early the next morning, Eldest Miss Xiao came looking for him. "Lin San," she said to Lin Wanrong, "Today Young Master Tao is discussing the alliance with me. You should come with us."

Lin Wanrong was momentarily taken aback. 'Why would she need me, a mere servant, in their discussions?' he wondered. But a glance at Eldest Miss Xiao's gaze made him realize that she was having trouble deciding and had purposely brought him along for assistance.

The pair left the house. Eldest Miss Xiao climbed into the carriage, and just as Lin Wanrong was about to follow, a young maid by the side said, "Brother Lin, you can't go in."

'Oh,' thought Lin Wanrong, 'I forgot. I'm a servant. How could I climb into the young lady's carriage?'

As the carriage trundled off, Lin Wanrong followed alongside with a troubled expression, thinking, 'She expects me to match pace with a horse. What a ridiculous idea, Miss Xiao.'

He had assumed that Tao Dongcheng would have arranged their meeting at a restaurant or teahouse, but to his surprise, the carriage headed straight out of town.

After walking more than ten miles, Lin Wanrong felt blisters forming on his feet. He cursed Tao Dongcheng and his entire family. Finally, when the carriage came to a stop, he looked up to see a lush green mountain surrounded by trees. A clear stream ran down the mountain, birds sang, and flowers bloomed. The scenery was delightful.

The carriage had stopped at a small pavilion halfway up the mountain. Its flying eaves and walking galleries were impressively grand. A sign hanging above read "Resting Immortal Pavilion."

Tao Dongcheng was already waiting there. Seeing Eldest Miss Xiao's carriage approach, he hurried forward with a respectful smile, "Ah, my dear sister, you've finally arrived. I've been waiting for you. After such a tiring journey, please rest in the pavilion."

'Damn it,' thought Lin Wanrong, 'I walked more than ten miles, got blisters on my feet, just to hear your sweet nothings? How pathetic am I?'

Eldest Miss Xiao nodded slightly and smiled, "Thank you, Brother Tao. Lin San, come with me."

Tao Dongcheng was taken aback to see Lin San following Xiao Yuruo. He had a deep impression of Lin San, and now that he had something to discuss with Xiao Yuruo, what was he doing there?

While his mind raced with these thoughts, Tao Dongcheng managed to keep his face impassive, giving Lin Wanrong a cold glance before the trio moved towards the pavilion.

The space within the pavilion was quite expansive, and the table in the center was already set with food and wine. Once Xiao Yuruo had taken her seat, Tao Dongcheng let out a hearty laugh, saying, "I invited you here today to discuss business, but the taverns and tea houses in the city are rather superficial. A heavenly person like you, Xiao Yuruo, would be insulted by those places. Therefore, I took the liberty of being a gentleman today, inviting you to this pavilion on Purple Gold Mountain to appreciate the beautiful scenery together. I hope you don't mind my impertinence."

Lin Wanrong shook his head, thinking that this Tao guy was underestimating Eldest Miss Xiao if he thought wooing her would be that simple.

Eldest Miss Xiao replied with a light laugh, "You are being too courteous, Brother Tao. I am just a mundane woman. I am flattered that you value me so much and wish to make friends. I can only feel gratitude, not take offense."

Tao Dongcheng smiled, "Don't underestimate yourself. I've traveled far and wide, seen many famous mountains and rivers, and met countless women, yet I have never encountered someone as heavenly as you. I must confess, ever since I first saw you, I've been unable to eat or sleep. I made a vow to protect and cherish you for the rest of my life."

Lin Wanrong was flabbergasted. He thought he was the most shameless, but it seemed this Tao guy was not so simple. Originally, the meeting was about the alliance, but Tao Dongcheng didn't even mention it, choosing instead to express his feelings to Xiao Yuruo. If he could win over Xiao Yuruo's heart, he could skip the business partnership and go straight to marriage, eliminating many complications.

This brazen confession took place right under Lin Wanrong's nose. Tao Dongcheng spoke as naturally as if he were drinking water, without a hint of pretense. With his handsome and charming appearance, combined with his heartfelt confession, he was indeed captivating.

Eldest Miss Xiao's face flushed. She hadn't expected Tao Dongcheng to be so forward, and she quickly said, "Brother Tao, I'm flattered by your affection, but I am in charge of the Xiao family affairs and have never had time to consider romantic feelings. I ask for your understanding."

"Yuruo," Tao Dongcheng persisted, his gaze locked onto Xiao Yuruo's eyes. "Don't you understand my feelings by now? I truly love you. From the moment I saw you, I fell for you. Yuruo, I am sincere..."

As Tao Dongcheng spoke, a fiery glint in his eyes, he reached out to grasp Xiao Yuruo's hand.

"Miss" Seeing Xiao Yuruo cornered and her face showing a trace of fear, Lin Wanrong could no longer sit idle. He quickly stepped forward to stop Tao Dongcheng, turning to Xiao Yuruo, "On our way here, your mother mentioned that the son of the Governor, Young Master Luo, is visiting today. She asked that you return home as soon as possible if there's nothing urgent here."

Tao Dongcheng's hand hung in mid-air, his gaze filled with annoyance as he looked at the servant who had just ruined his plans. He snapped, "I was talking to your mistress. When is it your place to interrupt?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, retorting, "I was talking to my young mistress. When is it the place of an animal like you to interrupt?"

A flicker of rage passed through Tao Dongcheng's eyes. If it hadn't been for this servant, he might have resorted to some force to compel Xiao Yuruo today.

Seeing the look of fear and determination on Xiao Yuruo's face, Tao Dongcheng shot a glance at Lin Wanrong. A murderous glint appeared in his eyes before he quickly regained his composure. He said, "My dear sister, my words are sincere, and my heart is pure. Please consider them carefully."

Xiao Yuruo's expression calmed somewhat, and she nodded, "Brother Tao, I am well aware of your feelings towards me. However, at present, the affairs of the Xiao family are numerous. I can't consider such matters for now."

The atmosphere grew tense. Tao Dongcheng nodded and said solemnly, "In that case, I'll be waiting for your good news."

Xiao Yuruo didn't know what to do. Seeing Lin Wanrong making faces at her, seemingly mocking her, she felt a hint of irritation. She thought, 'You rascal, enjoying my embarrassment.' While she was usually composed in front of others, she seemed to lose her cool in front of this Lin Wanrong, which she found strange.

"In that case, Brother Tao, I have some matters at home and shouldn't linger here. We shall part for today and discuss other matters on another day." Seeing that there was nothing left to do, Xiao Yuruo hurriedly suggested leaving. She had no interest in discussing the alliance today, especially after learning from Lin Wanrong's analysis that Tao Dongcheng had ulterior motives. If it wasn't for Tao Dongcheng's insistence, she wouldn't have come at all.

Strangely, although Tao Dongcheng had invited Xiao Yuruo to discuss the alliance, he had not brought up the matter at all, as if he was not in a hurry. Seeing Xiao Yuruo wanting to leave, he didn't try to stop her, but simply nodded and said, "If that's the case, we'll discuss the alliance another day. Let me accompany you home."

Xiao Yuruo quickly declined, "There's no need. You're busy, Brother Tao, and I wouldn't want to inconvenience you. Having this servant escort me home is enough."

Tao Dongcheng nodded and smiled, watching as Eldest Miss Xiao and Lin Wanrong left, a ruthless glint flashing in his eyes.

As they descended the mountain, Lin Wanrong could no longer hold back his laughter. Xiao Yuruo's face flushed with anger as she spat, "What are you laughing at, you rascal?" Today's meeting about

the alliance had ended without a conclusion, and Xiao Yuruo felt somewhat uneasy. Tao Dongcheng came from an extraordinary family, and she couldn't afford to offend him lightly.

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, "Miss, this Young Master Tao is so smitten with you. Why won't you accept him?"

Xiao Yuruo glared at him, "What do you take me for? The affairs of the Xiao family are unsettled, how can I consider personal feelings?"

Lin Wanrong gave her a thumbs up, "You are indeed a strong woman. I really didn't see that coming."

Xiao Yuruo found herself getting used to the sharp tongue of this fierce servant. She sighed, "Today's quarrel with Young Master Tao was unpleasant. He will surely press harder for the partnership. If he uses his father's power to force me to submit, what am I to do?"

Seeing her wistful expression, Lin Wanrong thought to himself, 'Do you think it's easy being a strong woman? The hardest part is yet to come.' He nodded, "Miss, you need not worry too much. I already have a few ideas in mind, I'll share them with you later."

Xiao Yuruo sighed, "I'm not sure if your ideas will work, if not, I'll have no way out." Her tone was uncertain, clearly lacking confidence in Lin Wanrong. Even if he spoke persuasively, without a viable plan, it would all be in vain.

As Miss Xiao was about to climb into the carriage, she heard Lin Wanrong behind her, "Miss, I have a matter to discuss with you."

She turned around, furrowing her brows, "What is it?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "We still have over ten miles to return to the city. I'm quite tired, and your carriage is spacious. Could I perhaps join you inside for a rest?"

Xiao Yuruo was so angry she almost fainted. This servant, ignoring his own status, had the audacity to make such a request. Leaving aside the fact that he was a servant, he was a man. How could a man share a carriage with a woman? It was completely improper.

Seeing her face pale and her eyes blazing with anger, as if she wanted to kill him, Lin Wanrong knew what she was thinking. 'This Miss is too conservative,' he thought, 'If her mindset isn't adjusted, who knows what might happen.'

He put on a serious face, pretending to be earnest, "Miss, as the old saying goes, 'the upright need not fear the crooked shadow, the barefoot need not fear the shoed.' Oops, that's not the right one. I'm just a bit tired and would like to rest. You know I stayed up all night thinking about the affairs of the Xiao family, only sleeping in the morning. Then you called me here, and I walked over ten miles. I'm really tired. That's why I made this request, hoping you could understand."

Hearing him say he stayed up all night for the affairs of the Xiao family, Xiao Yuruo felt even more resentful. 'You're using this to coerce me. How are you different from Tao Dongcheng? Why must I suffer such fate, always being controlled by others?' She gritted her teeth, angrily said, "In that case, you ride in the carriage, and I'll walk."

Lin Wanrong looked at her curiously, nodded and said, "That works too. You rarely leave the house and lack exercise. Walking a few more steps could be considered an exercise. Since you insist, I won't be polite."

He was never polite to begin with. He turned and climbed into the carriage. Xiao Yuruo had spent many days traveling, often in this carriage, which was akin to her second boudoir.

As Lin Wanrong entered the carriage, he smelled a faint fragrance, not that of powder, but a natural body scent. The carriage was spacious with only a sleeping mat and a small table, leaving plenty of room.

Naturally, Lin Wanrong wouldn't be so bored as to lie on someone else's bed. He settled himself in a corner and closed his eyes to rest. He was genuinely tired and had not lied to the Miss. While he hadn't stayed up all night, he had indeed slept only a few hours. Leaning against the carriage, he unwittingly drifted off to sleep.

Xiao Yuruo didn't make it far before she felt a sour ache in her legs. As a pampered young mistress, she had never experienced such hardship. She resented Lin Wanrong to the point of gritting her teeth. If this rascal didn't produce a satisfactory answer, she might have to resort to using her sister's General Zhenyuan.

After a few more steps, she couldn't go on. She thought to herself, 'Am I actually afraid of this scoundrel? It's broad daylight. What can he possibly do?' With that thought, she gritted her teeth,

lifted the curtain, only to see Lin Wanrong resting his head against the carriage, sound asleep, a trail of drool extending three feet.

Xiao Yuruo, suppressing her shyness, sat down on her own seat, her heart somewhat uneasy. But Lin Wanrong showed no signs of awareness of her entrance, sleeping soundly.

She didn't dare to let down her guard, gripping her protective scissors tightly in her hand, her gaze fixed on the servant. His body was twisted, his breathing rapid, and his drool had puddled on the ground. She wanted to laugh but restrained herself, thinking, 'This scoundrel isn't so annoying when he's not causing trouble.'

The carriage jolted on, leaving a lone man and woman in close quarters. The implications of this situation were understood only by Eldest Miss Xiao. Lin Wanrong, oblivious and unbothered, was sound asleep.

Chapter 99 An Exotic Idea

By the time they had returned to the mansion, it was already afternoon. After a hasty lunch, Eldest Miss Xiao reported to Madam Xiao, and the two of them waited for Lin San in the guest room. Given the imminent peril faced by the Xiao family, they dared not waste a moment.

"Lin San, what do these unique clothes you mentioned look like?" Xiao Yuruo asked urgently.

Lin Wanrong gave a cryptic smile and said, "Miss, Madam, I should warn you in advance that no matter what you see, don't be too surprised. What we're discussing here is merely business. If you both agree to this, then I can disclose it."

Xiao Yuruo glanced at her mother and said, "We understand that. As it's about business, no matter what it is, I can accept it."

"Very well," Lin Wanrong replied with a slight smile. "Miss, you've been in business for a while now. In the garment industry, whose money is easiest to earn?"

After contemplating a moment, Xiao Yuruo said, "If we're talking about price, men's clothing is the most expensive. But women change their clothes more frequently, yielding higher profits than men's clothing."

Lin Wanrong nodded, thinking to himself that Eldest Miss indeed had done her research. "Miss, you're absolutely right. In fact, the easiest money to make in this world comes from women and children. It's obvious for children. As for women, they are naturally fond of beauty. Cosmetics and fancy clothes are essential to them. Hence, we might as well start with women. Moreover, our Xiao family has an advantage over others: from Madam to Eldest Miss, all are women running the cloth business. Doing business with women is more convenient for us than for others."

Madam Xiao looked at Lin Wanrong with a smile, thinking to herself that this servant was not only eloquent but also made some good points. Yushuang had indeed chosen a talented person.

Xiao Yuruo nodded, "What you said makes sense, but how can we produce clothes that no one has seen before?"

Lin Wanrong gave a mysterious smile, pulling out a piece of paper from his bosom. He handed it to Xiao Yuruo, saying, "Miss and Madam, please take a look, but be sure not to be too surprised."

As Xiao Yuruo took the paper and looked at it, she saw a long dress drawn on it for women, diagonally buttoned at the front, and hanging all the way down to the ankles. What was peculiar was the long slit on the left leg side, going all the way to the edge. Both women were experts in this field and were instantly captivated by the concept. The dress was simple and elegant, and more importantly, it excellently accentuated a woman's figure and posture. It was truly something they had never seen before.

Seeing the astonished expressions on both women's faces, Lin Wanrong smiled and said, "This dress is called a cheongsam. Its greatest advantage is that it fits the body shape of our Great Hua women perfectly, accentuating their soft and charming figures. In my hometown, the cheongsam is referred to as the king of women's attire. Both Madam and Eldest Miss are experts, so what do you think of this design?"

The women here typically wore loose and baggy clothing. The idea of a form-fitting dress like the cheongsam was unheard of, unseen, and truly astonishing. Every woman is fond of beauty, and this cheongsam could highlight a woman's figure and temperament. The Eldest Miss only had to take one look to see that it was a unique and bold design.

With a flushed face, Xiao Yuruo bit her lip and said, "Lin San, this dress is quite form-fitting. Isn't it a bit too bold? If we make this, who would dare to wear it?"

Lin Wanrong shook his head and said, "Miss, Madam, what do you think of this dress?"

Madam Xiao nodded and said, "It indeed has a strong appeal, but as Yuruo said, it's a bit too bold. It would be very eye-catching on the street, and I worry others might have difficulty accepting it."

Lin Wanrong replied earnestly, "If both the Miss and Madam think it's good, then it truly is. As for whether it can be accepted, that's just a process. Beautiful things are never rejected by anyone. Besides, the cheongsam isn't meant for everyday wear. Its initial target should be women with certain economic means. It could be worn at banquets or at home. Once a portion of people accept it, and others see its beauty, they will gradually accept it too."

A trace of excitement flashed across Xiao Yuruo's face. Clearly, Lin Wanrong's words had struck a chord with her. Madam Xiao, however, was more cautious. She took another look at the cheongsam drawing and said, "But, the slit on this dress... isn't it a bit too high?"

The drawing Lin Wanrong presented was a simplified version of the cheongsam he remembered. He knew that expecting women in this world to wear a high-slit cheongsam, revealing so much of their legs, was nothing short of daydreaming. He said, "Madam, Miss, you are the experts here. How do you think we should modify it to make it more acceptable? This is just a preliminary template, you can change it according to your preference. But one thing must be kept in mind, the material of the cheongsam should be soft and comfortable, it should feel high-end and reflect status."

Xiao Yuruo, being intelligent, nodded and said, "Of course. The cheongsam is not something that common people can afford initially, so the material must be good. Once everyone accepts it, we can change to different fabrics, and make different grades to meet the needs of different women."

Lin Wanrong nodded. The Eldest Miss, being a businesswoman, was good at deducing things.

Madam Xiao and the Eldest Miss glanced at each other, their eyes filled with excitement. Just as Lin Wanrong had said, this idea was novel, bold, and challenging. Once successful, it would not only create a new type of clothing but also enhance the reputation of the Xiao family. With the insight of the young lady and Madam Xiao, they certainly knew how to improve the cheongsam. However, thinking of one issue, Xiao Yuruo began to frown, "Lin San, the cheongsam is indeed good, but once it's accepted by the public, it's highly likely to be copied. How do we solve this problem?"

The young lady indeed had a good point. Lin Wanrong nodded approvingly. Such a mindset of preventing piracy was rare in these times. He looked at the Eldest Miss approvingly and asked, "I've thought carefully about this issue. May I ask, how many shops does the Xiao family own?"

Xiao Yuruo proudly replied, "Our Xiao family has been in business for many years. We have countless shops, from the south to the north, covering a dozen provinces across the country, each with Xiao family shops. This is something the Tao and He families can't match."

"That makes things easier," Lin Wanrong smiled. "After making the cheongsam, we will promote it among the ladies and misses in each city. Meanwhile, we will embroider a unified mark of the Xiao family on all cheongsams, explaining that this cheongsam is a unique creation of the Xiao family. A unique code will be embroidered on each garment and registered. If it can be checked against the certificate, then any others are counterfeits. This way, the reputation of the Xiao family's cheongsam will be established. Even if there are imitators, as long as the code is incorrect, it's a counterfeit and should be reported."

Lin Wanrong knew that this method would not completely prevent piracy. However, with such a big market, the Xiao family was the creator. Once they started, they dominated the vast majority of the market, their reputation preceding them. Even if there were imitators, they wouldn't dare to claim they were imitating the Xiao family, not even Tao Dongcheng would dare to commit such an outrageous act. At most, they could quietly make some small profits, seizing a minor share, and would still have to consider the Xiao family's feelings.

After discussing it for a while, Xiao Yuruo and Madam Xiao felt that this was feasible. They could not only break away from the limitations of selling cloth but also produce and sell their own finished products, no longer needing to act according to others' moods. As Lin Wanrong put it, they were transformed from the party B into the party A. From a cloth supplier, they became a cloth purchaser, finally becoming their own boss.

However, just this cheongsam business was far from enough for the large stall that was the Xiao family. They needed to think of more ideas. Lin Wanrong took out another piece of paper from his bosom and handed it to Xiao Yuruo, saying, "Miss, please have a look."

Xiao Yuruo took a look and immediately threw the paper away, her small face turning bright red as she angrily said, "Lin San, what are you doing?"

Madam Xiao took the paper and saw two items drawn on it. The top one was a triangular pair of small pants with some hollow patterns in the middle. The bottom one was a rather strange item, a long strap with two round pieces of cloth attached, seemingly meant for women's chests.

Madam Xiao's fair face also flushed, but she was a woman of the world. Although she felt embarrassed, judging from Lin San's previous performance, he must have had another purpose.

Lin Wanrong took back the paper and said seriously, "Let's talk business. Eldest Miss, don't underestimate the items on this paper. The top one is called panty, and the bottom one is called a bra. They are both items used by women."

The Eldest Miss' face turned red as she muttered, "You rascal, where did you learn about these things? They're so embarrassing." In this era, women wore conservative underclothes. They had never seen anything so revealing or straightforward.

Lin Wanrong shook his head and said, "Miss, we're conducting business and discussing products, not being disrespectful. From the perspectives of ready-to-wear and comfort, do you think these two items are feasible?"

Madam Xiao's face turned red, but her experiences far surpassed those of Xiao Yuruo. Moreover, they were discussing business, so after a moment of shyness, she calmed down and asked Lin Wanrong, "Lin San, are you suggesting that we make clothes according to these designs?"

"Correct." Lin Wanrong replied earnestly, "Based on my experiences in my hometown, these two items are more comfortable and fitting for women. Besides, they are worn inside, similar to underclothes, so where's the embarrassment? Moreover, this has a significant advantage for our Xiao family. These are personal items for women. Even if the Tao and He families wanted to imitate them, the misses and ladies wouldn't accept their products. But in our Xiao family, both Madam and Eldest Miss are females, so it's naturally easier for us to discuss intimate matters. Only our Xiao family could manufacture these items, and once we succeed, the profits will be substantial."

Xiao Yuruo blushed for a while, gradually understanding. She held back her embarrassment and asked, "But, are these items really more comfortable than, than those?" As an unmarried young girl, she couldn't bring herself to utter the word "underclothes".

Lin Wanrong nodded, "Based on my experiences in my hometown, these two items are absolutely more comfortable than so-called underclothes. Though the materials required for these panties and bras are minimal, the comfort and softness of the fabric are crucial. The reasons for this are clear."

Xiao Yuruo bit her lip and said, "But would people be willing to wear these?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Whether people would be willing to wear them or not, Miss, you could try them and see."

"You, you rascal!" Xiao Yuruo's face turned red with anger.

"Miss," Lin Wanrong said seriously, "I am discussing serious matters with you, not taking advantage of you. If you hadn't begged me, I wouldn't bother with these matters."

Madam Xiao sighed, "Lin San, you can't blame Yuruo. These things are indeed too shocking."

Lin Wanrong declared, "Good things always shock the world when they first appear. These two items only feel this way because Miss and Madam are encountering them for the first time. In fact, not only you two but any other women would feel a bit frightened when first introduced to these items. However, just like underclothes, these are worn inside. After a few encounters and realizing the comfort they bring, everyone will gradually accept them."

Xiao Yuruo calmed down and began to ponder. These panties and bras, though they seemed indecent, were essential items for women. As Lin San had said, they were incredibly suitable for the Xiao family's business, and other families wouldn't be able to replicate them. If they were as comfortable as he claimed, there would undoubtedly be a market for them when promoted. After a while, she asked, more seriously than ever before, "Lin San, are you certain about this?"

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "My words alone won't be enough. You and Madam can thoroughly study these three items, including the cheongsam. It's best to hurry and produce some samples, and personally experience them. Then you will understand that my words are not empty promises."

Both Madam Xiao and the Eldest Miss felt a flush creeping onto their faces. They thought to themselves, This servant speaks confidently about women's items, where does he get all these strange ideas from?

Seeing the expressions on their faces, Lin Wanrong knew what they were thinking. He grinned and added, "Of course, Miss, you must carefully develop these two items. During the promotion period, use the best materials, and the price must be high, because initially, we will be targeting wealthy misses and ladies. They have money but may have doubts about these new items. If the price is too low, it may not pique their curiosity. As long as the product is good, they will willingly spend their money. Once everyone gradually accepts them, we can produce cheaper ones, create different grades, and distribute them to different people."

Xiao Yuruo was somewhat persuaded. Though discussing these women's items was a bit indecent, they were perfectly suitable for the Xiao family's business. After all, the status of those in commerce wasn't high, and they were women's families.

Seeing them deep in thought, Lin Wanrong thought to himself that since he had already said so much, he might as well give them a complete surprise. He flipped the paper over and said to Madam Xiao, "Madam, take a look at this."

Madam Xiao glanced at it and saw that it was somewhat similar to the panties she had seen earlier, but it was even simpler. There was just a simple string with a narrow piece of cloth in the middle, looking like a tiny "T". She asked curiously, "What is this?"

Chapter 100 Perfume

Lin Wanrong said earnestly, "This is called a sanitary belt, used by women during their monthly periods." At the end of the 1980s, when sanitary pads had not yet become widespread, sanitary belts were the most commonly used feminine products in China.

As soon as he finished speaking, both Madam Xiao and her daughter blushed simultaneously. How could this Lin Wanrong dare to utter such words? Even women were embarrassed to bring up such filthy items, yet he spoke about them as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Seeing their flushed faces, Lin Wanrong felt a certain helplessness. This was basic menstrual hygiene knowledge. He, a man, had to explain these things to them. It wasn't that he wanted to, but that he was trying to help them.

Seeing the expressions on the faces of the mother and daughter, knowing they would take some time to come to terms with it, Lin Wanrong shook his head, cleared his mind and said, "Madam, Miss, I am discussing business with you, much like a doctor treating a patient. Many matters need not be taboo."

Madam Xiao's face was as if on fire. Despite being a mature woman, hearing about menstruation still made her feel uncomfortable. She glared at Lin Wanrong but dared not say a word. Xiao Yuruo was even more mortified, her head almost touching the ground.

Seeing the beautiful mother and daughter too embarrassed to lift their heads, Lin Wanrong couldn't help but cough lightly, "Madam, Miss, if you don't want to hear about it, then I'll stop."

Xiao Yuruo blushed for a moment before finally lifting her head and saying, "You may continue."

Now that's more like it. Lin Wanrong smiled at Xiao Yuruo, nodded and said, "I don't need to explain this too explicitly. As long as Miss follows this model. As for what materials would be best and most comfortable, I think Miss would know better than I do."

Xiao Yuruo hummed in response, her face flushed but still glaring at Lin Wanrong, saying, "You're a truly incorrigible man."

Lin Wanrong sighed, "Miss, we are discussing business here, where does all this hesitation come from? I am just making suggestions based on the Xiao family's specific situation. There's no intention of disrespect. Consider that it takes some courage for a man like me to talk about these women's issues."

Damn it. Was it amusing to be looked down upon? He was genuinely trying to help them. He was a distinguished sales manager, yet here he was, designing and selling women's underwear and sanitary pads, and being guarded against by this mother-daughter duo as if he was a pervert. His grievances were beyond words.

After finishing his speech, Lin Wanrong felt a sudden wave of exhaustion. Truth be told, when he recommended these products to the women of the Xiao family, he did so purely from a business perspective, without a hint of lewd intentions. He was fully considering the matter from the Xiao family's point of view. Unfortunately, he overestimated the tolerance of women in this era, and that included strong women like Madam Xiao and her daughter.

In the face of the mother and daughter's wary gazes, he, though made of iron, was incomparably weary. Why was he enduring this? He let out a bitter laugh, heavily sank into a chair, and fell silent, giving the madam and her daughter ample time to ponder.

The impact house servant Lin Wanrong had on Madam Xiao and her daughter today was indeed enormous, not only visually but also psychologically.

Xiao Yuruo glanced at Lin Wanrong, thinking to herself how this wicked man had learned about these embarrassing items. He must have been up to no good in the past. He was truly incorrigible.

Of course, it couldn't be denied that the proposals Lin Wanrong made were quite tempting. Leaving aside the cheongsam and underwear, the final item, the sanitary belt, was a very practical item. It was suitable for the Xiao family business and could bring significant profits if done well.

She pondered for a while before saying, "Lin Wanrong, we can't rush into this matter. My mother and I need to discuss it further."

Lin Wanrong understood that asking them to accept these new items all at once was indeed a bit harsh, so he nodded and said, "Alright, Madam and Miss, you should consider this first. However, there is another even more profitable business venture. I wonder if Miss would be interested?"

"What business?" Xiao Yuruo was somewhat afraid of this house servant now. Who knew what kind of crazy ideas he could come up with?

"Miss, do you remember the fragrance you smelled in my room yesterday?"

"Of course, I remember. Lin Wanrong, you haven't told me where that fragrance came from."

Lin Wanrong took out a small glass bottle from his bosom. The bottle contained an unknown liquid that was faintly red. He uncorked the bottle, and a delicate fragrance began to permeate the air.

Xiao Yuruo and Lady Xiao took a deep breath. Unlike the overpowering, pungent smell of makeup, it had a cooling aroma. It was extremely delicate and pleasant, intoxicating.

Xiao Yuruo looked at the small bottle in surprise, "Lin Wanrong, what is this?"

Lin Wanrong smiled faintly, "Miss, this is a special kind of makeup water I made myself. It has a pleasant name: perfume. What you see now is rose perfume. There are also jasmine perfume, orchid perfume, and so on. The business I wish to discuss with you is about this perfume."

"Perfume?" Excitement flashed across the faces of Xiao Yuruo and Lady Xiao simultaneously. What was this perfume? If it truly had the magical power of the bottle in Lin Wanrong's hand, then the Xiao family's business was bound to flourish.

"Yes, perfume. I am the only one in the world who possesses the formula for this perfume. I believe Madam and Miss have already experienced its charm," Lin Wanrong said proudly.

"Then, Lin Wanrong, state your terms," Xiao Yuruo said, gritting her teeth.

Lin Wanrong didn't answer her question directly. Instead, he said, "Miss, as I mentioned earlier, once the cheongsam and underwear ideas are produced on a large scale, the profit is not to be underestimated. It just needs promotion. The same goes for this perfume. It requires a large amount of floral braids as raw materials. I hope that Madam and Miss can support me in setting up a perfume workshop. In return, I will grant the Xiao family the exclusive right to distribute this perfume. Thus, the integration of cheongsam, underwear, and perfume will give the Xiao family's business a powerful boost. I believe it would be hard for the Xiao family's business not to flourish."

Lin Wanrong had given this much thought. Though he had the technical knowledge, he lacked financial backing and a sales network, whereas the Xiao family had an extensive sales network, which would be very helpful for promoting the perfume. The combination of the two would be the right way forward.

Xiao Yuruo pondered for a while. The cheongsam and underwear business had already begun to entice people. With the addition of this perfume, the Xiao family indeed had a new opportunity.

She glanced at her mother. Madam Xiao nodded slightly, and Miss Xiao decisively said, "Alright, Lin Wanrong, I'll agree to your terms. The Xiao family will fund the perfume workshop and provide the raw materials. However, the exclusive rights must be solely operated by our Xiao family. We'll split the profits seventy-thirty, seventy for me, thirty for you."

'Damn, this young lady is even more cunning than me,' Lin Wanrong waved his hand and said, "Miss Xiao is indeed a shrewd businesswoman. Isn't your profit-sharing scheme a bit low? In my opinion, how about a sixty-forty split?"

"Sixty-forty? Lin Wanrong, your demands are excessive. Considering you've done a great favor for my Xiao family today, fine, I'll give in. Forty for you, sixty for me!" Miss Xiao said through gritted teeth, thinking to herself, 'This man is a complete swindler.'

"Not quite," Lin Wanrong, who had felt uneasy about the underwear deal, insisted on a larger share of the perfume profits: "Miss, you've misunderstood. I meant, sixty for me, forty for you."

"What? You" Miss Xiao pointed at him in anger. She hadn't expected that this house servant would make such an outrageous demand, wanting more than half of the shares. She had never encountered such an audacious person in the business world.

"Is Miss unwilling to agree? Then we have no deal. I think there will be many people interested in this perfume." Lin Wanrong smiled faintly. He wasn't worried; the perfume was a lucrative

opportunity. Xiao Yuruo was a shrewd woman; she wouldn't let this opportunity slip away. I have the formula; what could you do to me?

"Lin Wanrong, don't push your luck," Eldest Miss Xiao huffed. 'A mere servant, I have already shown you great respect by dealing with you, where do you get off making demands?'

"Miss, you've been in business for years. In business, profit is the priority. I strive for the greatest profit for myself, and you strive for the greatest profit for the Xiao family. There's nothing wrong with that, where is the excess?" Lin Wanrong retorted.

"In that case, Lin Wanrong, I'll make one more concession. Fifty-fifty profit sharing, half for each of us. That's my final offer. Otherwise, I'd rather not venture into the perfume business," she declared.

A glint flashed in Eldest Miss Xiao's eyes. She knew that although Lin Wanrong had the formula, it would take time for him to find a suitable partner, and he must certainly want to collaborate with the Xiao family. However, the idea of this servant getting half of the net profit merely by providing a perfume formula left her feeling dissatisfied, and she found herself despising him even more.

The perfume was a guaranteed success, one of a kind. Given Lin Wanrong's cunning business nature, even getting sixty percent of the profits would seem somewhat insufficient. Seeing Eldest Miss Xiao making some concessions, he thought to himself, 'Oh well, it's like doing a favor for that little girl Xiao Yushuang. Besides, the sales network belongs to the Xiao family, I shouldn't offend them too much.' So he agreed, "In that case, let's settle on this."

Xiao Yuruo glared at the smug servant. Remembering how he had brazenly climbed into her carriage earlier that day, she was infuriated. If not for his significant contribution to the Xiao family today, she would have had him thrown out long ago.

"We will take care of modifying the cheongsam and underwear, and you, Lin Wanrong, will handle the perfume," Xiao Yuruo said, grinding her teeth. Such an arrogant servant was indeed rare.

"No problem!" Lin Wanrong chuckled, "As for the rest of the manpower, I'll choose them from the Xiao household. I hope Miss will oblige." At this point, all Xiao Yuruo could do was nod in agreement.

Watching the audacious servant leave, Xiao Yuruo snorted in annoyance. After a long silence, Lady Xiao suddenly asked, "Yuruo, what's wrong with you today? You seem to be at odds with Lin Wanrong at every turn."

Lady Xiao was not overly bothered by Lin Wanrong's audacity. Talented people often behaved this way. Lin Wanrong was intelligent, well-connected, and full of talent. The fact that he was willing to serve as a servant in the Xiao family was already a favor. The idea of underwear and sanitary pads, although somewhat ahead of its time, was a great opportunity. As for the profit-sharing in the perfume business, it was a fair deal. Neither Lin Wanrong nor Yuruo had done anything wrong.

Such talent as Lin Wanrong's should be nurtured. Yushuang had also done a great service for the Xiao family. Thinking of Xiao Yushuang's affection for Lin Wanrong, Lady Xiao sighed internally. If Lin Wanrong were not a servant, he would indeed be a good match for Yushuang.

Xiao Yuruo didn't want her mother to know about the bad things Lin Wanrong had done to her. He was thoroughly wicked. However, a comment from Madam Xiao struck Xiao Yuruo, making her startle and wonder why she always lost her composure around him. It was indeed strange.

"Mother, what do you think of Lin Wanrong's ideas?" Xiao Yuruo, avoiding her mother's question, changed the subject.

"You're the head of the household now, you are the one to make decisions," Madam Xiao smiled.

"The cheongsam and underwear may be bold ideas, but as he said, we are all women, and this business is worth exploring. After all, we are a mother and daughter alone in the Xiao family. We're not short of one more point of ridicule. If promoted properly, the profits are not to be underestimated. This Lin Wanrong does have some audacity in this matter." Without Lin Wanrong's misdeeds in front of her, Miss Xiao was truly astute.

"And not to mention the perfume. Given Lin Wanrong's cunning nature, if he had resources of his own, he certainly wouldn't cooperate with us. This conniving merchant!" Miss Xiao added, making Madam Xiao chuckle. Yuruo always seemed a little off-balance in front of Lin Wanrong, and who knew what commotion would ensue in the future.

"Indeed, Lin Wanrong is talented, Yuruo. You must not neglect him in the future," Lady Xiao advised.

"I understand, mother." For some reason, the annoying face of the servant floated before Eldest Miss Xiao's eyes again. She quickly shook her head, "This Lin Wanrong, he keeps claiming that these things are commonly used in his hometown. I wonder where his hometown actually is?"

"I once asked him, but he seemed unwilling to talk about it. As long as he is talented, it's enough. We don't need to worry about where he came from," Madam Xiao replied.

"He loves being mysterious," Eldest Miss Xiao snorted.

"By the way, mother, how should we modify the cheongsam and underwear?" Seeing two pieces of paper on the table nearby, Xiao Yuruo was reminded of the task at hand.

She picked up the papers, studying them carefully. The sketches were simple and rustic, outlined with a few strokes. The style, the ink, everything was unfamiliar to her.

Looking at the simple lines, a thought struck her. They looked familiar, as if she had seen them somewhere before. She slowly sank into contemplation.