

## **Finest Servant**

### **#Chapter 31 - Read Finest Servant Chapter 31**

Chapter 31 The Household Servant Selection Contest (Part 2)

"What business do you have with me?" Assistant Steward Pang found Lin Wanrong's behavior satisfactory, but he wasn't a fool. He knew that this sudden bootlicker must have an ulterior motive.

Lin Wanrong gave Assistant Steward Pang a thumbs up, "Speaking with an intelligent person like you is such a relief." He glanced around and whispered, "To be honest with you, Assistant Steward Pang, I was supposed to attend the interview today, but unfortunately, I was held up by some urgent matters at home. Now, I'm late. I was hoping you could make an exception and let me in."

Assistant Steward Pang took on an official tone, "How could you be so careless with your time? Time is gold, and gold can't buy time. Do you know how many people want to work as servants in our household? Do you know how many people want this opportunity to be in the initial selection?"

Assistant Steward Pang repeatedly asked, "Do you know?" Lin Wanrong was furious but had to act subservient for now. He nodded vehemently, "You're absolutely right, Steward. I hope to have more chances to learn from you and listen to your teachings, so I can grow stronger and healthier."

After saying this, he felt nauseous, cursing Assistant Steward Pang and his ancestors in his mind.

Assistant Steward Pang saw that Lin Wanrong could be taught and was excellent at flattery, so he considered him a promising candidate. For the assistant steward, this request was an easy favor to grant. However, officials tend to exaggerate minor matters and make them sound significant. Assistant Steward Pang was no exception. He frowned deliberately and said, "Well, I can try to give you some guidance, but it depends on your luck. Although I am part of the management, this recruitment is handled by the subordinates. There are too many people involved, and it's not easy for me to interfere—"

Before he could finish, Lin Wanrong flashed another tael of silver before him. Assistant Steward Pang's eyes lit up, and his smile grew wider.

Suppressing the urge to punch this scoundrel, Lin Wanrong said with a fake smile, "I hope you can help me, Assistant Steward Pang."

"Well, alright. I'll give it a try. Maybe they'll still do me this small favor. Wait here for a moment." Assistant Steward Pang cleverly grabbed the silver and tucked it into his sleeve, then disappeared into the examination room.

Lin Wanrong spat on the ground as he watched Assistant Steward Pang's retreating figure. What the hell was going on? To become a servant at the Xiao family, he had to beg them to take him in. The low-ranking servants in the Xiao family earned less than two taels of silver a month, and he had already spent two taels on bribes. Wasn't he just asking for trouble by losing money and serving others?

Feeling pathetic, Lin Wanrong couldn't help but despise himself. After getting in, he vowed to make back his investment tenfold or even a hundredfold. He was also deeply resentful of old man Wei, who had set him up in this situation.

With silver paving the way, everything went smoothly. Assistant Steward Pang emerged after a short while, smiling, "Alright, they've agreed to let you in, thanks to my little influence. However, whether you succeed or not is entirely up to you. Given the current situation, this is all I can do."

The current situation? Lin Wanrong, being the intelligent person that he was, understood the meaning behind Assistant Steward Pang's words. A mere two taels of silver could only buy him an interview opportunity. If he had spent two hundred taels, perhaps Assistant Steward Pang would have directly handed him the interview questions.

Annoyed by Assistant Steward Pang's greed, Lin Wanrong managed to hide his anger and responded respectfully, "I'm grateful for your support and care, Assistant Steward."

Assistant Steward Pang nodded officiously, "You're clever, and I have high hopes for you. Don't disappoint me."

"Of course, of course," Lin Wanrong said with a forced smile.

"Oh, by the way, what's your name?" Assistant Steward Pang asked.

"I'm Lin San," Lin Wanrong replied.

"Lin San?" Assistant Steward Pang's face changed instantly, "You're Lin San?"

"Yes," Lin Wanrong stared in surprise. Was he famous? This guy seemed to recognize him.

Assistant Steward Pang's expression changed immediately. He quickly pulled out the two taels of silver he had hidden in his sleeve earlier and handed them back to Lin Wanrong, saying awkwardly, "Heh, um, Young Master Lin, I'm sorry. I didn't know it was you who honored us with your presence. Please forgive my ignorance. Please, go in."

Lin Wanrong was now the one puzzled. What was going on with this guy? Why had he suddenly become so polite? It seemed like he recognized Lin Wanrong. Could it be—

A lightbulb went off in Lin Wanrong's head. That must be it - Old Wei must have given instructions before leaving. Rumor had it that Old Wei was a high-ranking servant in the Xiao family, equivalent to a white-collar worker. The fact that he lived by Xuanwu Lake instead of the Xiao residence showed that he had significant influence in the family. It would be a piece of cake for him to handle such a matter.

Lin Wanrong, smugly attributing the credit to the now-absent Old Wei, was annoyed at himself for having wasted his breath flattering the assistant steward. Seeing Pang's obsequious expression, which resembled his own demeanor earlier, Lin realized that their situations had completely reversed.

Not wanting to offend someone who was now friendly to him, and feeling a bit embarrassed himself, Lin Wanrong didn't exchange more words with Assistant Steward Pang. He took the silver and went in.

Upon entering, he first came to a registration desk where a servant sat, asking irritably, "Name—"

"Lin San," Lin Wanrong replied.

"You're Lin San?" The servant glanced at him, stood up, and his expression softened. He respectfully said, "Young Master Lin, please have a seat."

It seemed that Old Wei had done his job well, as everyone had been informed. Lin Wanrong's opinion of Old Wei improved slightly, and he sat down confidently.

Seeing Lin's attitude, the servant in charge of registration became even more respectful. He stood there, carefully recording Lin's name on a slip of paper, and handed it to him with both hands, "Young Master Lin, please proceed inside."

Lin Wanrong nodded, thinking that Old Wei, as a high-ranking employee of the Xiao family, had arranged everything meticulously.

Inside the next room, several applicants for servant positions were holding brushes, staring at the blank papers in front of them, looking frustrated and perplexed. Lin Wanrong glanced at the crooked and awkward characters on their papers, which looked like squirming worms.

"Recite the Three Character Classic, ok? Write a few lines from memory." One of them handed Lin Wanrong a brush, glanced at his nameplate without the respect shown by others earlier, and impatiently told Lin to write.

"Write the Three Character Classic from memory?" Lin Wanrong inhaled sharply, finally understanding why the others looked so distressed. These people had come to apply for servant positions and were likely from impoverished backgrounds, with few able to read and write. They might be skilled in chopping wood in the mountains, but asking them to write with a brush was like trying to make a sow climb a ladder.

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## Chapter 32 Passing Three Trials (Part 1)

Lin Wanrong's forehead was slightly sweaty. He was a brilliant student from Peking University, but his expertise lay in the sciences. He was a genuine prodigy in the field of science, and solving complex calculus problems came easily to him. Reading, writing, and even reciting a few ancient poems were no issue for him. However, asking him to write the Three Character Classic from memory was truly a challenge.

In this world, aside from knowing a few poems, Lin Wanrong essentially belonged to the "illiterate" category. At this moment, he was deeply grateful for his father, a primary school Chinese teacher, who forced him to memorize a few Tang and Song poems since childhood. Otherwise, he might have been genuinely illiterate in this world.

It's not that I don't understand, it's that the world is changing too quickly. Lin Wanrong sighed inwardly as he picked up the calligraphy brush. The last time he practiced writing with a brush was during a tutoring class when he was ten years old. He could only remember the first twelve widely known characters of the Three Character Classic.

Cursing Old Wei in his heart, Lin Wanrong had no choice but to bite the bullet. Fortunately, he had thick skin and never backed down in difficult situations. He picked up the brush and quickly wrote the twelve characters on the rice paper: "At the beginning of life, human nature is inherently good, natures are similar, but habits make them diverge." Then, with a gentle flick of his right hand, the brush fell into the inkstone.

Under his agitation, the strokes of the characters were crude and crooked. Individually, they were barely recognizable. Yet, when viewed together, they exuded an unrestrained and unruly flavor.

"I can't remember the rest," Lin Wanrong said to the man without a hint of embarrassment.

Throughout the day, there had been eighty or ninety applicants for the servant position. Yet, none had the "bold" temperament of Lin Wanrong.

The servant found Lin Wanrong's arrogant attitude displeasing and scolded, "When writing, one should handle the brush gently. Hasn't anyone taught you? This is a fine Anhui inkstone; if you break it, you won't be able to afford it."

Lin Wanrong didn't care about the inkstone, but seeing the servant's hostile tone, he snorted and said, "Assistant Manager Pang only told me to come in for an interview, he didn't mention anything about the Anhui inkstone. It seems I've learned something new from you, brother."

Upon hearing the mention of Assistant Manager Pang, the servant's expression changed immediately, and he forced a smile, "Brother, were you introduced by Assistant Manager Pang?"

It's because of the silver I paid that I'm here, Lin Wanrong thought with a smirk, as long as Mr. Pang has taken my silver, I'll make sure to squeeze every last bit of value from him.

"Indeed, I do have some acquaintance with Assistant Manager Pang. However, when I came in, he specifically instructed that you should adhere to the principles of openness, fairness, and impartiality, and not engage in any favoritism." Lin Wanrong seized the opportunity and simply sold the favor of Assistant Manager Pang, who wouldn't dare to say anything anyway.

"Naturally, naturally." The servant in charge of recruitment grinned and handed the nameplate back to Lin Wanrong, "Young Master Lin, congratulations, you've passed the first round." He then pointed to the two flabbergasted fellows beside him and said, "You two, have been eliminated."

He had only written twelve characters, and that was enough to pass? Lin Wanrong couldn't help but laugh and cry, knowing that the servant was doing this to save face for Assistant Manager Pang. Without thanking him, Lin Wanrong took his nameplate and entered the second room.

The two eliminated men cried out, "It's not fair! It's not fair! Why can he pass, but we can't?"

The recruiting servant sneered, "Do you know who he is and who you are? Can't you tell the difference? Can you write these characters?"

He threw the paper with Lin Wanrong's writing on it in front of the two men. Although there were only twelve characters, crooked and twisted, it was already outstanding compared to the servants from poor backgrounds. The two eliminated men had written fewer than eight characters between them.

Lin Wanrong didn't care whether they objected or not. Victory goes to the winner, defeat to the loser, and passing the trials was the ultimate goal. After walking a few steps, he

arrived at the second room, where several fellow applicants were also deep in thought, their furrowed brows seeming as if they could wring out water.

An examiner took Lin Wanrong's nameplate and handed him a wooden box with an opening, emotionlessly saying, "Draw a question from the box."

"What kind of question is it?" Lin Wanrong didn't want to proceed blindly like other candidates. He wanted to understand the situation first.

"Just draw one, why so much nonsense?" This servant seemed to have had a poor-quality intimate life the night before, and was quite irritable.

"It's a question-and-answer test. You need to answer it correctly to pass to the next round." A fellow servant candidate who was anxiously about to pull his hair out overheard Lin Wanrong's question and subconsciously replied.

So, that's how it is, Lin Wanrong understood. This was an on-the-spot Q&A test, examining the intelligence of the servants.

He pulled out a folded piece of paper from the wooden box and unfolded it, only to see two lines written on it: "A man crosses a single-log bridge, with a wolf in front of him and a tiger behind him. The man quickly makes it across. How does he do it?"

My god, do people in this world also enjoy playing riddles? Lin Wanrong laughed inwardly but deliberately pretended to be deep in thought for a while before answering, "Could it be— he fainted?"

"Correct!" The servant examiner glanced at him and thought that this young man must have seen the question somewhere before; otherwise, he wouldn't have answered so quickly. He's quite lucky.

"I object! I object!" Just as the servant examiner was about to announce Lin Wanrong's advancement to the next round, he heard another candidate servant raise his voice. There were three candidates in the room, including Lin Wanrong; one had just answered his own question, and the other was the fellow who was now shouting in objection.

"What are you objecting to?" the servant examiner snapped, "Is there anything for you to object to here?"

Seeing that he was about to be eliminated for not being able to answer the question, the candidate wanted to make a final struggle and said hastily, "What I object to is, why did he get such an easy question while I got such a difficult one? As long as he can answer my question, I will accept my elimination willingly."

The servant examiner roared, "These questions were randomly drawn by you. Are you clearly suspecting that the examiner has tampered with the process?"

"No harm, no harm." Lin Wanrong laughed and said, "But I wonder, dear fellow, what question do you have in your hand? Let me have a guess."

The man picked up the paper in his hand and read aloud, "When a medium-rare steak meets a medium-well steak, why don't they greet each other?"

"Because they're not familiar with each other, dear fellow." Lin Wanrong laughed helplessly. Was there any need to think about such a small question?

Oh, the dissatisfied candidate couldn't say anything else. Was he really that stupid? He was greatly discouraged and couldn't bear to stay any longer, so he left with a gloomy face. The remaining candidate servant was full of admiration for Lin Wanrong.

Having breezed through two rounds with ease, Lin Wanrong chuckled inwardly, thinking that the selection process of the Xiao family's servants really liked to show off. It involved identifying and interpreting characters, as well as brain teasers. Were they trying to turn servants into scholars as well?

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## Chapter 33 Passing Three Trials (Part 2)

Upon entering the third chamber, Lin Wanrong found himself unexpectedly facing three men in their fifties, all dressed in plain green robes and small hats, leaving no doubt that they were household servants. The trio was engaged in a lively discussion, but as soon as Lin Wanrong appeared, they halted their conversation and turned their collective gaze upon him.

A long silence followed, with the three old men continuing to stare at Lin Wanrong, their eyes flashing with amusement. Puzzled by their behavior, Lin Wanrong examined himself. Apart from his slightly dirty clothes from the earlier scuffle with Dong Qingshan and the others, there seemed to be nothing particularly noteworthy about him.

Could it be because of my good looks? Lin Wanrong pondered. He was quite pleased with his appearance, but his aim was to attract young women, not these wrinkled old men.

Growing increasingly agitated by their intense, unyielding stares, Lin Wanrong defiantly locked eyes with the three men. Their eyes met in an intense, unblinking standoff, neither side willing to back down. Eventually, Lin Wanrong boldly pulled up a small stool and sat down right in front of the trio, his fierce gaze surpassing even theirs.

"This kid, shameless—" After what felt like an eternity, one of the old men finally spoke, a hint of admiration in his eyes.

"This kid, extremely shameless—" The second old man echoed, similarly impressed.

The third old man nodded approvingly at Lin Wanrong and said, "Your shamelessness reminds me of myself in my younger days."

Feeling rather insignificant in the presence of such brazen elders, Lin Wanrong realized his own sense of shame was far too thin.

"Shamelessness is a fundamental quality for a senior household servant," the first old man unabashedly declared. "Young man, you have the mettle. I see in you a reflection of my younger self—a rising star in the world of household servants. Trust me, you're destined to become an exceptional servant."

Lin Wanrong silently scoffed at the eccentric trio. The second old man continued, "Congratulations, you have successfully passed all the tests. If you are willing, you can become an honorable household servant in the Xiao family mansion at any time."

"Wait, wait," Lin Wanrong hastily interjected. "Could one of you kindly explain what's going on here?"

The third old man chuckled, "Of course. You want to know what these three tests are about, right? Hehe, let me explain. The first test is to select literate servants. We don't want illiterate ones. The second test is to find quick-witted and nimble servants. We don't want slow-witted ones. As for the third test, it is overseen by the three of us, the most outstanding household servants of the Xiao family. This is the most important test. First, we evaluate the candidate's appearance. As you know, the Xiao family is prestigious, and anyone unsightly should consider plastic surgery before returning. Second, we assess their character. For those with exceptionally honest and reliable character, we need them to guard the storeroom. We can trust that they won't steal from it. As for someone like you, hehe, you're a rare and highly sought-after talent, suitable for any role except the storeroom."

Annoyed by the insinuation that his character was flawed, Lin Wanrong's face showed a hint of indignation. The old man quickly added, "Don't worry, we're not doubting your character. For someone like you, we won't judge you based on character."

"You mean to say I have no character?" Lin Wanrong snapped.

"Hehe, I didn't say that," the old man replied. "In fact, we haven't seen a person with such thick skin as yours in many years. The moment we saw you, we were struck by a sense of awe, as if we were looking at ourselves in our younger days. We believe that with meticulous guidance and time, you will surely become the brightest star in the world of household servants. Your future is boundless and full of possibilities."



After finishing his speech, the old man laughed heartily, his expression suggesting that he considered himself a talent scout and Lin Wanrong a rare gem.

Sighing resignedly, Lin Wanrong realized that he would have to continue cultivating his thick-skinned skill. Judging by the demeanor of these three men, as long as he was part of the Xiao family mansion, they would likely have him under their control.

The three old men each introduced themselves. It turned out they weren't exaggerating; they had been with the Xiao family for three to four decades, since the time of the family's patriarch. The first old man was a ten-time champion of the Xiao family cooking competition, the second was a skilled craftsman well-versed in woodworking and masonry, a multiple recipient of the prestigious "Lu Ban Golden Award." The third old man, known as a flower enthusiast, excelled in planting flowers and trees and was a recipient of the Xiao family's Labor Medal.

The three old men were all quite interested in Lin Wanrong, each clamoring for him to follow in their footsteps so that their unique skills could be passed on.

Lin Wanrong, however, had no interest in these pursuits. He only wanted to spend a quiet year here to repay Old Wei's kindness and then move on. Seeing the old men arguing over him, Lin Wanrong grew impatient and asked, "What's all the fuss about? Who's in charge here?"

The third old man, Uncle Fu, who had the thickest skin of the three, chuckled. "Your shamelessness resembles my youthful demeanor," he had said earlier, which had irritated Lin Wanrong the most. Through the previous introductions, Lin Wanrong had learned his name was Uncle Fu.

Uncle Fu explained, "As long as you pass the first two tests and are approved by the three of us, there's no problem. We'll simply report to the young mistress, and you can sign the indenture agreement directly with us."

The young mistress they mentioned was Madam Xiao. These three men had been with the Xiao family patriarch for a long time and had grown accustomed to addressing her as such since they had seen her marry into the family.

"Indenture agreement?" Lin Wanrong's heart skipped a beat upon hearing those words. "So, does that mean I'll be a servant to the Xiao family for the rest of my life?"

"Of course," Uncle Fu confidently replied. "Once you sign the indenture agreement, you'll become an honorable member of the Xiao household, holding a lifelong golden rice bowl. Your entire life will belong to the Xiao family. Living, you are their servant; dying, you are their ghost. It's an honor many people can only dream of. Madam will even grant you the Xiao surname, so you'll no longer be Lin San but Xiao San instead."

"Xiao San?" Lin Wanrong exclaimed. "For the rest of my life?"

Despite all his calculations, Lin Wanrong had forgotten that becoming a household servant in someone else's home required signing an indenture agreement, essentially belonging to them for life, with no one-year term.

He couldn't accept the idea of changing his surname to Xiao, as his sense of male pride was strong. "Can I be a contract employee instead?" Lin Wanrong asked, his eyes gleaming with a sudden idea.

"Contract employee?" The three old men cried out in unison, baffled. "What in the world is a contract employee?"

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### Chapter 34 Contract-based Employee (Part 1)

"Contract-based employment is no joke, ahem, ahem," Lin Wanrong realized his slip of the tongue and hastily feigned a cough to cover it up. "As the name suggests, contract-based employment means that I sign an employment contract with the Xiao family for a term of one year. During this time, I serve the Xiao family, working eight hours a day, or four shichen. I am still a free individual, not belonging to the Xiao family. Of course, I am still a servant of the Xiao family, and my labor belongs to them. The advantage of this arrangement is that if the Xiao family is dissatisfied with me, they can dismiss me at any time."

"Oh, oh," Lin Wanrong noticed the three old men staring intently at him, implying that even if he signed a lifelong indenture contract, as long as the Xiao family was dissatisfied with him, they could make him leave at any time. He quickly added, "Under such pressure, I will be more ambitious, striving harder, contributing to the development of the Xiao family and making a modest contribution to the establishment of a more powerful Great Hua dynasty. After a year, if both parties are satisfied, we can renew the contract and have friendly negotiations regarding salary."

The old men found these later remarks quite interesting. Lin Wanrong's willingness to push himself to improve and his courage to explore and forge ahead were commendable. Such young people were rare nowadays. The three old men praised him.

Fubo spoke up, "Lin San, it's not that we don't agree with you. In fact, your proposal is quite constructive. We've been studying the topic of abolishing lifelong tenure for leaders, and with you taking the lead, we will bring up this issue for discussion at the next servants' conference. Once approved, we'll inform the young ladies and officially implement it. However, you know that such reform will encounter great resistance, and we can only proceed gradually. This time, we can only report your proposal to the young

ladies, and whether it will be successful or not is uncertain. But think carefully; if it is not accepted, you may be eliminated. Are you prepared?"

Fubo's words were full of bureaucratic language, such as abolishing lifelong tenure for leaders, servants' conference, and the resistance to reform. Lin Wanrong felt dizzy but hastily nodded when he heard the last sentence, "Of course I have thought it through, Fubo. Please report it to the higher-ups quickly."

Lin Wanrong was willing to repay Old Man Wei's kindness, but he would never tolerate changing his name and living in disgrace. If it came to that, he would rather give his life back to Old Man Wei.

The three old men discussed for a while, and then entrusted Fubo to report the proposal to the higher-ups.

As Fubo stepped outside, he saw a young woman standing by the door, covering her mouth and giggling.

The woman was not old, but her beauty was striking. In time, she would certainly become a great beauty.

"Young Lady Xiao, so you're here," Fubo happily rushed over. Seeing her laughing, he couldn't help but chuckle as well, "Did you also hear this young man's crazy idea just now?"

Xiao Family's second young lady snorted, "It's quite outrageous. I knew from the start that this boy wasn't a good one."

Fubo noticed a piece of paper in her hand, with a few characters written crookedly, yet somehow exuding a rebellious charm. He curiously asked, "Young Lady Xiao, what is this that you're holding?"

Xiao Family's second young lady pursed her lips, her shoulders trembling slightly, and eventually couldn't help but burst into laughter. "Uncle Fubo, take a look. This is the Three Character Classic that Lin San wrote from memory. Heehee—"

It turned out that she was holding Lin Wanrong's answer sheet from the first challenge. Fubo couldn't help but laugh and cry at the sight of the characters.

Judging by his contract-based employment proposal, Lin San didn't seem like an illiterate person. How could his handwriting be so terrible?

Xiao Family's second young lady took a small booklet from her bosom and pointed to the woman in the painting. "Uncle Fubo, look."

Fubo's eyes lit up as he looked at the painting. "This is Elder Young Lady Xiao! Whose work is this?"

She shook her head, "I don't know who painted it. I bought it from Lin San, and many people have bought this booklet from him. Hmph, that boy is actually making money off my sister's portrait. He's really incorrigible."

Fubo had no doubt that Lin Wanrong could do business. With his thick skin, it would be a shame not to.

Fubo asked, "Did you ever ask him who painted it? I may not know much about art, but this painting is very different from the ones we've seen before. It's simple yet extraordinary, with a fluid and concise style, and vivid expressions. I wonder who this master artist is."

Xiao Family's second young lady replied, "I did ask him, but he refused to tell me. Hmph, he can't even write a few characters correctly, so it definitely isn't that scoundrel. Moreover, my sister seldom shows her face, so hardly anyone knows what she looks like. Yet this master artist managed to capture her likeness so accurately. This person must be exceptionally talented."

Fubo nodded, "So, what should we do with this Lin San?"

From the second young lady's tone, it seemed she harbored quite a bit of resentment towards Lin San. It appeared that he had no destiny with the Xiao family.

Xiao Family's second young lady bit her lip, a hint of a smile on her face. "This fellow has quite a few tricks up his sleeve, and he's done so many bad things. Hmph, how could I let him off easily?"

Fubo didn't understand her meaning. "So, young lady, should we sign Lin San or not?"

She smiled and said, "Sign, of course. Fubo, you should follow his suggestion and draft a contract for him as a contract-based employee. Hmph, once he enters the doors of the Xiao family, I will—"

A devilish grin spread across her face: "—Close the doors—Release the dogs—"

Fubo ran off like the wind, sweat dripping from his body. He knew all too well the power behind the second young lady's words, "—Close the doors—Release the dogs—"

At this moment, the "master" mentioned by the second young lady was engaged in a lively conversation with the two remaining old men in the room. They were all experts in their fields, so their boasting filled the air, with saliva nearly flooding the room.

From the two old men, Lin Wanrong learned about the Xiao family's situation.

The Xiao family's old master, the father-in-law of Lady Xiao, had held a high position in the imperial court and was once the Minister of Rites. After retiring, he returned to Jinling City to live out his days. Upon his death, the current emperor personally wrote a mourning couplet and granted him the honorable title of "Benevolent and Virtuous Scholar."

However, after the old master's passing, the young master of the Xiao family fell ill and died within two years. The Xiao family lost their support and their fortunes declined. Fortunately, the old master's many students provided assistance, and with Lady Xiao's hard work, as well as the second young lady's talent and intelligence, the mother and daughter managed to maintain the vast family business.

But as the years passed and the old master's influence waned, competition increased, and the Xiao family's business became more difficult. To maintain the family business, the young lady traveled extensively throughout the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui and rarely stayed at home, so few people in Jinling City had seen her.

Lin Wanrong also learned an important piece of information from the two old men: this year's recruitment of household servants. Although it appeared to be large in scale, with a similar number of applicants as in previous years, the Xiao family kept the number of new servants they hired extremely limited and confidential.

Lin Wanrong could understand this; when he conducted business, he always liked to inflate the company's turnover, while only a few people knew the actual details.

"What about these scholars? What's their story?" Lin Wanrong asked the two old men directly, recalling a question that had been on his mind for some time.

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