

Finest 221

Chapter 221 Dethroned

Lin Wanrong was momentarily stunned. He hadn't expected that the letter had indeed been written by this young girl.

Tao Wanying, with a delicate cry, sprung into action like a swift swallow, leading the charge. The Xiao family's servants, following behind Brother Lin, charged ahead with a cacophony of drums and gongs.

The Black Dragon Association and Hung Hing were locked in a fierce battle when suddenly, a thunderous wave of gongs and drums echoed in the air. The forge's iron gate was flung open and the Xiao family's servants charged out, brandishing their weapons and chanting a resounding slogan: "Overthrow the Black Dragon Association, Down with the Black Dragon Association"

Wu Zhenghu and his underlings were taken aback. They were already stretched thin dealing with Hung Hing and were on the brink of defeat. The unexpected intervention of the Xiao family's servants, who had astonishingly launched an offensive, left the Black Dragon Association defenseless and on the verge of disintegration.

Lin Wanrong, leading the charge, effortlessly took down several of the Black Dragon Association's minions. Tao Wanying stayed close to him, her martial arts might not have been as proficient as Lin Wanrong's, but they were more than enough to handle the thugs of the Black Dragon Association.

"I am a public servant of the Jinling Prefecture," Tao Wanying declared after knocking down two members of the Black Dragon Association. Her voice was firm and authoritative, her demeanor commanding. Yet she never strayed from Lin Wanrong's side, resolutely protecting him.

Lin Wanrong chuckled, thinking how naive this young girl was. If a few shouts could solve their problems, the underworld was truly disappointing.

Seeing Tao Wanying, Wu Zhenghu hesitated for a moment, but seeing the fierce momentum of the Xiao family and the relentless onslaught of Hung Hing, he knew he had lost this battle. With a grimace, he yelled, "Retreat, quickly retreat"

With that, he turned and fled, his movements quick and agile. The remaining Black Dragon Association members, seeing their leader fleeing, promptly followed his lead and began their hasty escape.

Tonight was an excellent opportunity to obliterate the Black Dragon Association. Dong Qingshan wouldn't miss such a chance and promptly shouted: "Overthrow the Black Dragon Association, take down Wu Zhenghu, Brothers, charge"

The morale of Hung Hing was high, and this rallying cry fueled their fervor. Hundreds chased after Wu Zhenghu. Dong Qingshan and Li Beidou led the way, relentlessly pursuing Wu Zhenghu, refusing to let him escape easily.

The Black Dragon Association had completely lost tonight's battle. Hung Hing wouldn't give them another chance to rise. Cheng De's arm had been permanently disabled. In retrospect, this was a great gift that Cheng De had unwittingly delivered. His mistake was underestimating the strength of the Xiao family and Lin Wanrong's power. The defeat of the Black Dragon Association might just be the first step to Cheng De's downfall.

Seeing Dong Qingshan and Li Beidou cornering Wu Zhenghu, Lin Wanrong realized they had him on the ropes. But Wu Zhenghu was formidable, single-handedly fighting off two opponents without showing any signs of defeat. If they didn't take down Wu Zhenghu soon, it would be difficult to get rid of him once Cheng De arrived to turn the tide.

Lin Wanrong was anxious. He wanted to rush over and assist Qingshan, but saw Tao Wanying stubbornly sticking to his side, not moving an inch.

With a bitter smile, Lin Wanrong said, "Miss Tao, you're a public servant. There should be more important tasks for you to perform. Why are you always following me?"

Tao Wanying responded earnestly, "Right now, the scene is chaotic and dangerous everywhere. If I stay by your side, you can have an extra layer of protection."

Protect me? Lin Wanrong could not help but laugh. "Miss Tao," he said, "you've fought with me before. Let's be frank, even ten of you combined couldn't defeat me. Now you say you want to protect me, isn't that a bit exaggerated? You don't have any ulterior motives, do you? I am a decent man."

Both embarrassed and annoyed, Tao Wanying retorted, "Who would have any designs on you? I'm repaying a favor. If it weren't for you telling me the truth that day, I might not be alive right now. You were so kind to me, and I remember it well. Even though I'm just a woman, I can't just not return a favor. Despite your excellent martial arts, you can't possibly defend against treachery everywhere. With me by your side, we'll have a better chance. Regardless of how you see me, I won't be able to rest easy if I don't repay this favor."

Great, he thought, she's like a piece of bubblegum, I can't get rid of her. Do I need to knock her out again? Lin Wanrong said helplessly, "Miss Tao, I appreciate your kindness, but what you call a favor is just a trivial matter to me. I enjoy helping others and don't expect anything in return, let alone needing your protection. You'd better go and talk to the Eldest Miss."

Tao Wanying was stubborn. She turned her head to the side as if she hadn't heard him and didn't move an inch.

What was he supposed to do now? He'd heard of hard selling, but not hard buying. Did he have to resort to his killer move again? He was afraid that if he did it one more time, she might actually lose her life. Lin Wanrong asked, "Miss Tao, how long do you plan to guard me?"

Tao Wanying was taken aback. After pondering for a long time, she shook her head, "I haven't thought about it yet!"

Frustrated, Lin Wanrong retorted, "Miss Tao, I need to go to the toilet, are you coming?"

Tao Wanying's face turned red. She glanced at him, clenched her teeth, and said, "If you go, I go"

Damn, he thought, I am defeated. Lin Wanrong covered his head and shouted in frustration, "Please, Miss Tao, let me go. I can't stand your torture. I don't need your protection, go protect someone else. Right, don't you like Young Master Hou Yuebai? Go protect him. He's weak and can satisfy your compassionate heart. You're a match made in heaven."

Tao Wanying's face turned redder, and she quickly refuted, "What nonsense are you talking about? Who said I like Young Master Hou?"

"Everyone knows it." Lin Wanrong grinned, "If you don't believe me, ask Miss Luo and the Eldest Miss. See if I'm lying to you."

With a soft sigh, Tao Wanying said, "You confuse me. My sisters say that when you like someone, you can't stop thinking about him. Although I occasionally think about Young Master Hou and have spoken up for him, I wouldn't say that I miss him; it's quite indifferent. How can Sister Yuruo conclude that I like Young Master Hou?"

Lin Wanrong, seeing that time was running out, made a quick decision. Little girl, you forced me to do this. If I have to knock you out this time, I'll just leave you by the side of the road for someone else to pick up.

Tao Wanying gave him a glance and suddenly smiled, "Lin San, sometimes you're quite detestable, but at other times, you don't seem all that bad. If you're so insistent, I won't force my assistance on you. Once today's events are over, I won't mention protection again. Does that sound okay?"

"Stop Wu Zhenghu!" A furious shout from Qingshan cut through the air. Lin Wanrong looked in the direction of the cry, just in time to see Wu Zhenghu, his arms marred by numerous injuries, displaying intense ferocity. His eyes were bloodshot as he struggled desperately to break free from the encircling Hung Hing members and flee. Wu Zhenghu, leading the Black Dragon Society of over a thousand people, indeed had some skills. His bravery, driven by ferocity, injured several Hung Hing brothers and seemed poised to escape the encirclement.

He didn't have time to banter with this girl any longer. Lin Wanrong dashed forward, positioning himself in front of Wu Zhenghu. He sneered, "What's this? You rob the Xiao family and think you can just leave?"

Wu Zhenghu looked at him, his eyes red, and said, "Are you Lin San?"

Lin Wanrong laughed, "Your eyes are sharp indeed, but unfortunately, you've chosen the wrong target."

In the meantime, Dong Qingshan and Li Beidou had encircled him, and Tao Wanying stood by Lin Wanrong's side. Wu Zhenghu bellowed angrily, "Is it honorable to gang up on one person like this?"

"You want to play the hero? Fine by me," Lin Wanrong laughed. "I have the utmost respect for heroes. But don't say I didn't give you a chance. Do you prefer a mob fight or a duel?"

"What's a mob fight?" Wu Zhenghu asked hurriedly.

Lin Wanrong chuckled, "A mob fight is when all of us take on just you."

"You" Wu Zhenghu fumed, "Then what's a duel?"

"A duel? That's you against all of us," Lin Wanrong said casually. The spectators, both the Xiao family servants and the Hung Hing brothers, erupted into laughter. Even Tao Wanying couldn't help but grin.

A glint flashed in Wu Zhenghu's eyes. Seizing the moment when everyone was unprepared, he thrust his sharp knife toward Lin Wanrong.

Lin Wanrong sneered, ready to react, when a sudden scream sounded. Wu Zhenghu was kicked down by someone, and his knife clattered onto the ground.

Tao Wanying's face was icy as she scolded, "Wu Zhenghu, you dare attempt to commit a violent act in my presence?"

Wu Zhenghu was exhausted from the fight, his strength depleted. He had hoped to sneak an attack, but Tao Wanying was on guard. The moment he moved, she landed a heavy kick on his leg. Wu Zhenghu, already severely injured and weakened, was taken down by the force of her blow. He gasped heavily for breath, beads of sweat rolling down his forehead.

"Not bad at all," Lin Wanrong chuckled and cupped his fist in salute. "Thank you, Miss Tao, for saving my life. Now we're even."

Wu Zhenghu was drained of his energy. This was a golden opportunity to beat a dog when it's down, one that was hard to come by. Si De, who had accompanied the others, could no longer restrain himself at the sight of the main culprit. He yelled, "Brothers, this is the man who bullied our Xiao family. Let's get him!"

A mob fight was what everyone excelled at. They swarmed Wu Zhenghu, punching and kicking, their shouts of outrage echoing in the air.

This was the way it should be. What use was a solo fight? Individual heroism could be deadly. Mob fighting was the kingly way. Lin Wanrong chuckled and called out, "Everyone, stop! It's not good to kill. By the way, no one dies from a butt-kicking, but faces and waists are a bit more fragile"

"Hit his face and waist!" Someone in the crowd echoed, and everyone suddenly grasped the meaning behind Brother San's words. Their blows were directed at these two spots. Lin Wanrong shivered; this kid Wu Zhenghu was done for.

The man who had been making a racket gave Lin Wanrong a thumbs-up. Lin Wanrong gave him a disdainful glance. "Qingshan, you beast, you just love causing trouble. But I like it."

Chapter 222 I Hate You To Death

Among the crowd, a few key members of the Hung Hing faction were the most ruthless. They savagely kicked at Wu Zhenghu's legs. Wu Zhenghu's terrible screams resounded in the air, and Lin Wanrong could even hear the sound of his leg bones breaking.

"Sigh, it seems that the Black Dragon Association has truly provoked public outrage," said Lin Wanrong in feigned sympathy. "Miss Tao, you see, I kept reminding everyone not to use violence. But this Wu fellow provoked the crowd's wrath to such an extent that we couldn't stop it." Seeing that Wu Zhenghu was barely breathing, more inhaling than exhaling, he knew that even if Wu Zhenghu didn't die, he was close to it.

Tao Wanying gave him a glance but said nothing. Seeing Wu Zhenghu completely subdued, Dong Qingshan nodded at Lin Wanrong. He waved his hand, and the Hung Hing's men swiftly and silently moved away.

Just as the Hung Hing members disappeared from sight, a loud battle cry was heard in the distance. A team of cavalry was approaching. Leading them was Cheng Ruinian, son of Cheng De.

The rescuers had arrived, but too late. Lin Wanrong chuckled and signaled to a few members of the Xiao family. Their house guards promptly retreated back to their workshop. Only Wu Zhenghu, with his broken limbs and frothing mouth, was left lying on the ground. Even if he were lucky enough to survive, he would be a cripple.

Cheng Ruinian led his cavalry to the scene. The area was already devoid of people. Looking at the scattered black clothes, the bloodstains, and the nearly dead Wu Zhenghu, Cheng Ruinian turned pale. Riding his horse around twice, he scanned the area unwillingly before finally gesturing harshly: "Let's go" Two soldiers stepped forward to pick up Wu Zhenghu, and the group quickly retreated.

Miss Xiao, who was in the workshop, had seen everything clearly. She breathed a sigh of relief when everyone had left. Looking at Lin Wanrong, she asked, "What should we do now? Should we just go back?"

Lin Wanrong shook his head. Cheng Ruinian had just retreated, and the outside situation was still unstable. After a moment of thought, he said, "Let's send someone clever to scout the area. If there are no more soldiers nearby, we can return to our mansion."

This was a prudent plan, and Madam Xiao also nodded, "Lin San's proposal makes sense. We should wait a little longer before leaving. Yuruo, although today's events happened suddenly, our house responded appropriately. Xiao Feng and Si De have rendered meritorious service, and Lin San is the most commendable. After returning to the mansion, we should reward them heavily."

"Madam, you flatter me," Lin Wanrong chuckled. "The Xiao family and I, we're like fish and water, sharing the same breath and destiny. None of us is superior to the other. I was simply doing my duty."

Miss Xiao gave him a smile, "You always know how to say the right things, but don't think I don't know what you're up to."

What am I up to? If it were the Second Miss Xiao accusing me, it might make sense, but you, forget it, I wouldn't bother with your suspicions.

Tao Wanying held Xiao Yuruo's hand and said, "Sister Yuruo, there should be no more trouble here. I should also take my leave. We failed to guard you properly today and caused you some alarm. I hope you won't blame us."

Under such circumstances, Tao Wanying had come to help, alone. Though she could not provide much physical assistance, her intentions were pure. Miss Xiao was moved and held her hand tightly, saying, "Wanying, thank you for today. Whatever happened before, let's put it behind us. From now on, we're close sisters. We should spend more time together and no more misunderstandings should come between us."

Tao Wanying didn't know why, but she felt incredibly aggrieved. At these words, she threw herself into Miss Xiao's arms and sobbed, "Sister Yuruo, I, I, thank you."

She had always thought that she had been defiled and that life held no more joy for her. It was Lin San who had awakened her, finding experienced midwives to check her condition, revealing that

her fears were just her own imagination. The shock and relief made her emotions roller-coaster from the abyss to the sky, a contrast too extreme for ordinary people to comprehend. With no one to share these feelings, and Miss Xiao's words being especially heartwarming, Tao Wanying recalled her experiences during this period and could not help but weep.

How much better has her Xiao family fared than her? Seeing her cry, Eldest Miss Xiao couldn't help but feel sad. Her own tears started to fall, and the two women held each other, crying together.

Damn, why are you crying for no reason when the situation hasn't been resolved? Lin Wanrong was quite annoyed. He couldn't help but cough twice and say, "Miss, let's focus on the matter at hand."

Miss Xiao quickly wiped her tears, gave him an embarrassed look, and said to Wanying, "Dear sister, you should go home for today. Once things calm down, we'll have a proper chat."

Tao Wanying simply hummed in agreement, wiped her tears, and walked towards the door. She mounted her horse, glanced at Lin Wanrong, and said, "Lin San, I'll forever remember your kindness." With a clench of her teeth, she lashed the reins, and the horse took off. In no time, she disappeared from everyone's sight.

This girl seems to have changed quite a bit, Lin Wanrong thought, watching Wanying's retreating figure.

Miss Xiao gave him a look and sighed, "Look at the mess you've made. A perfectly good woman scared into such a state by you."

"Eldest Miss, aren't you too sympathetic? When Miss Tao was doing evil before, you didn't say she was a perfectly good woman," Lin Wanrong smirked. "Now you see her changed and consider her a good woman in your eyes, and I become the villain? That doesn't make sense. Besides, if I hadn't done a good deed, could she have become as obedient as she is now? Curing her illness without charging her was already a bargain."

Eldest Miss Xiao looked at him and smiled, "Alright, I can't win against you. You've done a great service today, how would you like me to reward you?"

"Forget it, I'm used to doing such things every day. If you really want to reward me, you'd never finish," Lin Wanrong shook his head and declined.

From creating perfumes and soaps to stabilizing the situation at the Sunshine and Rain Restaurant in Hangzhou, Lin San's contributions were clear for all to see, and Xiao Yuruo was no exception. It could be said that Lin San had saved the Xiao family single-handedly. As for rewards, she truly didn't know what would be appropriate.

However, Eldest Miss Xiao was very clear about Lin Wanrong's "wild ambitions". She glanced at him and said quietly, "Our family has managed to bounce back, all thanks to your efforts. But I wonder how long you can stay with the Xiao family?"

This was a tough question. With Lin San's capabilities, he couldn't possibly stay with the Xiao family forever. Miss Xiao's tone was somewhat desolate, and Lin Wanrong could only sigh. Despite their frequent disagreements, their long-term collaboration had forged a strong friendship.

"No one can predict the future. But rest assured, Eldest Miss, even if I leave the Xiao family someday, my heart will always be here. You can always count on me if there's trouble. As you know, I'm quite extraordinary. There's hardly anything I can't handle," Lin Wanrong said, grinning cheekily.

"What's this about leaving but keeping your heart here? That sounds unpleasant," Eldest Miss Xiao's mood lightened a bit hearing his playful tone. "You're the type who lies nine times out of ten, I don't trust you. I bet you'll forget all about us the moment you step out of the Xiao family."

Lin Wanrong laughed heartily, refusing to continue this topic, and earnestly said, "Eldest Miss, considering the situation tonight, I fear something significant will happen in Jinling. This workshop is our foundation. To avoid disaster, we need to strengthen our defenses."

"Exactly," Xiao Yuruo agreed, raising her eyebrows. "We should pick some loyal and capable people from our family servants to guard this workshop. We should also hire martial artists to train them. We cannot afford any mishaps here."

Once this plan was mentioned to Madam Xiao, she readily agreed and urged Eldest Miss Xiao to get to it. Lin Wanrong had calculated this all along. The perfume and soap businesses were his industries, and the basis for his future wealth. He could only entrust them to his own people. His key player was Hung Hing, whom he had nurtured personally. He planned to have Qingshan select some loyal and capable brothers to join in. Hung Hing was his man, and the Xiao family was his. He intended to form an alliance of triads and merchants. Let's see who dared to provoke him then.

"Second Miss is here, Second Miss is here" There was a commotion outside, and a carriage screeched to a halt in front of the workshop. Xiao Yushuang hastily jumped off and shouted, "Lin San, Lin San, where are you"

Eldest Miss Xiao rushed forward, alarmed, "Yushuang, why are you here? It's not safe outside, why did you come out?"

Second Miss Xiao threw herself into her sister's arms, urgently saying, "Sister, where's Lin San, where is he?"

Xiao Yuruo gently patted her sister's shoulder, asking with concern, "Why are you looking for him?"

Tears brimmed in Xiao Yushuang's eyes as she said, "Sister, Lin San has taken some people out to fight. By the time I got the news, they had already disappeared. That man, he always bullies me in his free time, he's not one to fight. What if he gets hurt? He's such a scoundrel. Doesn't he know how worried I am? Sister, please save him, sister"

Bully you? Am I that bad? Lin Wanrong wiped his cold sweat. Seeing the young girl cry like a pear tree in the rain, he was deeply moved.

Upon seeing Yushuang's deep affection for Lin San, Eldest Miss Xiao let out a slight sigh, her expression somewhat gloomy. Catching Lin San hiding in the corner and chuckling, she bit her lip in irritation, "Are you very pleased? Lin San, I hate you!"

"Lin San?" Second Miss Xiao exclaimed, quickly lifting her gaze. Lin Wanrong adjusted his small hat nonchalantly, waved, and said casually, "Hi, Second Miss, I'm here"

"Lin San" Second Miss Xiao was both shocked and delighted. She covered her cherry lips with her hand, stared at him for a few moments, and then the tears started falling. "You scoundrel, you're absolutely awful"

Eldest Miss Xiao's eyes blazed with fury. She glared at Lin San, then lightly patted her sister's shoulder, "He is indeed a scoundrel, Yushuang, don't be afraid. From now on, I'll help you deal with him."

"Sister, are you serious?" Xiao Yushuang exclaimed in excitement, "That's wonderful. He is a terrible person. I can't defeat him on my own, but together, we can teach him a lesson. Let's see if he dares to bully me again or harass girls outside. Beware, we might not let you in the door."

The Eldest Miss's face flushed. She gently patted her younger sister's face and scolded, "You impudent girl, watch what you're saying. How can you speak so recklessly?"

Xiao Yushuang playfully scrunched her nose at Lin San, her teary eyes sparkling with mischief. Lin Wanrong burst into laughter. "The two of you against me? That's the funniest joke I've ever heard."

Madam Xiao stepped forward and grabbed the hand of Second Miss Xiao, laughing, "You insolent child, always speaking out of turn. After the New Year, when you go to the capital, let's see how you'll manage."

"Mother" The sight of her mother made the Second Miss Xiao instantly shy. She snuggled into Madam Xiao's arms, behaving like a spoiled child. A genuine smile spread across Madam Xiao's beautiful face. The three of them huddled together, exchanging intimate conversations.

All three were stunning beauties in Jinling, sharing a strong family resemblance. Standing together, they looked like siblings, born of the same mother. The two daughters acted coyly in their mother's arms, Madam Xiao's lips slightly parted, her bosom rising and falling rapidly. The trio resembled fairies frozen in a painting, their beauty natural and unpretentious, a truly captivating sight.

Looking at the three identical beautiful faces, each maturely enchanting, elegantly refined, or innocently pure, Lin Wanrong felt a subtle sense of sentimentality. Beauty was fleeting, and the sight of this mother and daughters laughing carelessly was even more rare and ephemeral. These three exceptionally beautiful women, proud and noble in front of others, hid behind them a vulnerability and bitterness that no one could fathom.

Ah, all this trouble because they lack a man, he sighed to himself. This vacancy...I guess it's up to me to fill it temporarily. After all, who else but I, Lin San, could do the job in the Xiao family?

Seeing the charming allure of the three ladies, Lin Wanrong admired them with a purely appreciative gaze, wiping the corner of his mouth. Just as he was about to continue admiring the beautiful sight before him, Si De approached and spoilt the mood, "Brother San, the wounds on my body are paining badly. With your wisdom, do you have any quick remedies?"

Interrupted at the most enjoyable moment, even by a brother, Lin Wanrong chuckled, "A quick remedy, you say? I have one. Go back, get some child's urine, and rub it all over your body. I assure you, by tomorrow morning, you'll feel fresh and exceptional."

Lin San was regarded as a godlike figure, so Si De had no doubts about him. He hastily excused himself, taking Xiao Feng to find the odd remedy.

After all the commotion, it was late into the night. Seeing no further disturbances outside, Madam Xiao, with her two daughters, climbed into the carriage. Surrounded by their household guards, they departed in a majestic procession, heading back home.

From the outskirts of the city where Luo Min had hidden, to Luo Ning's embroidered chamber, and then to the perfume workshop, Lin Wanrong had had a busy day. He felt somewhat exhausted, lagging at the end of the group, yawning incessantly.

"Heehee" A light giggle suddenly rang in his ear. Opening his eyes, he saw the Second Miss Xiao, Xiao Yushuang, standing nimbly in front of him, her face blooming in a smile.

"Second Miss Xiao, why aren't you in the carriage?" Lin Wanrong asked in surprise.

Xiao Yushuang held his hand, blushing as she replied, "I told my sister that I was tired of sitting in the carriage and wanted to walk. She agreed."

"Oh, I see," Lin Wanrong glanced towards the front of the procession. The curtain of the carriage was slightly lifted, revealing a pair of bright eyes fixed on the two of them. As Lin Wanrong looked back, the curtain was hastily dropped.

"So, you missed me?" Lin Wanrong grinned as the procession turned a corner, out of sight. He pulled Yushuang into his arms and whispered softly.

Startled, Yushuang quickly looked ahead. Seeing her sister and mother's carriage had already rounded the corner, she relaxed. She bashfully scolded him, "You naughty man, always teasing me. This morning, I wanted to have a good talk with you, but you rushed off. By evening, you hadn't returned and I heard you went out and got into a fight. Are you deliberately making me worry? What if you got hurt? That would be the death of me."

Feeling somewhat moved, Lin Wanrong slid his hand under her clothes, gently caressing the delicate flesh of her waist. "Sweetheart, don't worry. I'm skilled in fighting, no one can hurt me."

His words were fiery, his actions even bolder. Yushuang, only sixteen or seventeen, was no match for him. Her breath quickened, her small mouth opening and closing in response to his words. "You boastful man, what skills can you have in fighting? You're best at dealing with my Great General, and bullying me." As she spoke, she remembered their early encounters, her tone growing softer. She pressed her radiant face against his chest, listening to his powerful heartbeat, allowing his hands to explore her waist. A blush crept from her face to her ears.

Sweat broke out on Lin Wanrong's brow. This girl thought I only fought dogs, not people. Seeing her gentle demeanor, Lin Wanrong felt a surge of affection for her. He didn't admonish her, instead tenderly caressing her body.

It was late into the night, quiet and peaceful. They stood in the dark corner, Lin Wanrong's heart aflame. His hands moved upward from Yushuang's waist, softly saying, "Sweetheart, let me examine your body, to help promote your growth."

"What growthoh, not here" She was still puzzled by his new term, but felt the warmth of his hands, lifting her small clothes, touching her tender chest.

The place they stood was secluded, tucked into a corner. Although no one was around, they were still outdoors. Xiao Yushuang's heart pounded like a frightened deer, her delicate body trembling slightly. She buried her face into his chest, too shy to lift her head. All she did was whisper into his ear, "Scoundrel"

Her breasts, fresh and tender, were beginning to take shape, changing constantly under Lin Wanrong's hands. He chuckled and said, "Not bad, in another two years, they will develop even more beautifully."

Second Miss Xiao's face burned, and she buried her head deeper into his chest. In a shy voice, she said, "You scoundrel, always teasing me. Are we like a married couple now?"

"Of course," Lin Wanrong replied with a thick-skinned grin. Luring young girls was his specialty.

"When will I grow as big as my sister?" The young girl looked at him for a long time before finally speaking, asking her question with boundless bashfulness.

"Oh, is your elder sister's very big?" Lin Wanrong broke out in a cold sweat. It was fortunate that Second Miss Xiao had met a lecherous but restrained gentleman like him. Otherwise, her sister would have been questioned inappropriately about her proportions.

"Much bigger than mine," Second Miss Xiao blushed as she said, "But not as big as mother's."

Boom, Lin Wanrong hit a wall! My little darling is too candid. This kind of talk should only be shared with me, and should never be said carelessly to others. It could ruin the reputation of your mother. I am an upright man, and I won't dwell on what I've heard. But then again, did these women often compare sizes? That game sounds quite interesting.

While his mind was in a whirl, his hands gently massaged her, keen on aiding Second Miss Xiao's swift development. A tingling sensation spread through Second Miss Xiao, a soft light glowing in her eyes. Her lips slightly parted, and she asked in a shy voice, "Lin San, are you going to do that thing...the one that makes babies?"

Making babies, by heavens, he had only touched her a little. There was a huge distance between this and making babies. Yet, why did he feel an overwhelming sense of guilt hearing Miss Xiao's words? It wasn't as if he was with an underage girl! The fires of desire in Lin Wanrong plummeted to freezing point. Ignorance could be deadly. He firmly believed that a course on physical health should be provided for girls above twelve to eradicate such misconceptions.

Second Miss Xiao, too embarrassed to lift her head, whispered, "My sister said if a man was being this intimate with me, he was definitely trying to take advantage of me, and I should stab him with a knife."

He had forgotten about that in his lustful haze. Lin Wanrong hastily checked for a knife on Second Miss Xiao, making her giggle and softly say, "You scoundrel, I came to see you willingly, to be teased by you. Why would I need a knife?"

Only then did Lin Wanrong breathe a sigh of relief. The Eldest Miss Xiao had such a bad idea, making him nervous even during tender moments with his sweetheart.

Second Miss Xiao tightly held him and said, "I feel anxious every day I don't see you. Talking to you, being teased by you, that's what makes me happy. My sister said that when you have someone you like, you'll feel this way. The intimacy we shared just now is only acceptable with one's husband. But now I've let you take advantage of me. And you still want to make a baby with me"

"This...this...my little darling, let me explain. The process of making babies isn't as simple as you think." Sweat began to form on Lin Wanrong's forehead. In these times, women only received some vague knowledge from their mothers on the eve of their wedding night. Now, he had to explain the process of making babies to a young girl. It was a truly challenging task.

Well, he thought, I'll just keep it simple and easy to understand. Lin Wanrong chuckled a few times and said, "Well, making a baby is a joint effort between a man and a woman. To put it simply, a man has something called a 'handle', and a woman has something called a 'hole'. Only when the handle fills the hole can a man and a woman combine to produce a baby."

Second Miss Xiao seemed to understand, but also not quite. She bashfully said, "What's this about handles and holes? Your explanation is so obscure and difficult to understand. How am I supposed to get it?"

Fearing she might ask something like "Where is your handle?", Lin Wanrong quickly pulled her into his arms and chuckled, "It's okay if you don't understand. When the time comes for us to have a baby, you'll understand."

Second Miss Xiao softly hummed in acknowledgment, then nestled comfortably into his arms with a radiant smile. After sharing a few words of intimacy, Lin Wanrong behaved himself. Apart from some light touching, he didn't do much else.

When they returned to the Xiao household, the Eldest Miss Xiao was waiting at the door. Seeing Yushuang tightly holding Lin Wanrong's hand, the Eldest Miss Xiao glared at him and said, "If you dare to bully Yushuang in the future, I will die just to spite you."

What strange logic! Lin Wanrong could not understand. He gave a helpless smile. He was extremely tired today, and as soon as he returned to his room and lay down on his bed, he fell asleep.

In his half-asleep, half-awake state, he suddenly felt something was amiss. Forcing his eyes open, he was shocked by the sight before him, and all his hairs stood on end.

Chapter 224 Guidance

Before a dimly lit window stood a thin silhouette, swathed entirely in black, appearing as a reanimated mummy, unmoving as a statue.

Lin Wanrong felt his entire body freeze, his eyes wide with terror. He was on the brink of crying out. Though he prided himself on his courage, he found his breath hitching at the sight before him.

"Whwho's there?" he stuttered, his voice shaking slightly. Cold sweat drenched his body, his skin prickled with chills. He yelled out in an attempt to embolden himself.

At the sound, the mummy-like figure stirred slightly, and a raspy voice questioned, "You're awake?"

So, you can talk, Lin Wanrong thought, his heart somewhat relieved upon hearing the mummy speak. As long as it was a human, he had nothing to fear. He could not discern the figure's face in the darkness, but the voice was vaguely familiar. He hesitated before asking, "Who...who are you?"

The figure chuckled hoarsely, "What, you don't recognize me after just a few days apart?"

He stepped forward. The bright moonlight seeping through the window cast upon his face, the first thing Lin Wanrong noticed was the hollowed-out eye sockets.

"Uncle... Uncle Wei?" Lin Wanrong exclaimed in surprise, hardly daring to believe his eyes.

Old Wei chuckled, "At least you haven't forgotten me entirely."

How did Uncle Wei learn to move so quietly and eerily? Lin Wanrong wiped the sweat from his brow. The last time he had been this startled was when he had encountered Qingxuan, which had been a mixture of fear and admiration. But this time, it was pure fear. People were truly incomparable.

"Uncle Wei, your theatrics are enough to scare the daylights out of someone. If it was someone else, they might have fainted already," Lin Wanrong said with a relieved chuckle. Old Wei was his savior and his first relative here. Naturally, seeing him brought immense warmth.

Old Wei laughed a few times, "Wanrong, surely you aren't that easily frightened? From what I've seen, you're quite the daring one."

"Not at all, not at all, I'm naturally timid. Uncle Wei, where have you been these past days? When did you return to Jinling?" Lin Wanrong got up from the bed and gestured for Old Wei to sit.

Moonlight cast a spectral glow on Old Wei's face. His wrinkled, pale cheeks were frightful, and his hollow gaze stirred fear. But to Lin Wanrong, he appeared infinitely endearing.

"I only arrived in Jinling tonight. Remembering you were working at the Xiao's, I thought I'd come and see you. Light a lamp, or my face might scare you in the dark," Old Wei jested.

At least the old man has a sense of humor, Lin Wanrong chuckled, "Doesn't matter whether we light a lamp or not, I am happy just to sit and chat with you, Uncle."

Having lived in darkness for many years, Old Wei was accustomed to it. Hearing Lin Wanrong's words, he felt touched. Despite being somewhat crafty, the young man was indeed straightforward in his dealings. He sighed, "I'm only passing through Jinling this time, just wanted to see you before leaving."

Lin Wanrong was taken aback, "Uncle, you've only just arrived, why are you leaving so soon? Don't worry, Uncle, I'm earning a decent amount of money now. I can fully support you in your old age without any problems. You don't need to worry about me."

Old Wei laughed heartily, his heart filled with satisfaction. He clasped Lin Wanrong's hand, "Wanrong, I've lived a life without children. Coming to know you in my twilight years must be fate."

Lin Wanrong was already familiar with Old Wei's peculiar character from their time together. Hearing his words, Lin Wanrong sighed, "Uncle Wei, although I might be thick-skinned and occasionally ruthless, I hold a deep respect for kindness and righteousness. You saved my life, treating me like your own kin. If I were not to repay you, would I still be human? Don't worry, Uncle, I have earned quite a bit of money. In the future, I will marry a few more wives, have more children, and pick one to be your grandson, carrying the Wei surname. What do you think?"

In Lin Wanrong's mind, Old Wei saved his life, and repaying him was only natural. With multiple wives, he would have plenty of children, and giving one the Wei surname would be no issue.

Having a unique status and having experienced many hardships, Old Wei had long been accustomed to the myriad ways of the world. He had encountered countless sycophants over the years, but Lin Wanrong was different. Even without knowing his true identity, Lin Wanrong had shown him

genuine kindness, which deeply moved him. His lips moved a few times, and finally he burst into laughter, "Good, good, Wanrong, I was not wrong about you. You have virtue, courage, and cunning. Indeed, you are a fine young sprout."

Lin Wanrong laughed at his peculiar praise, "Uncle Wei, please stop flattering me. These are the traits I dislike most about myself."

Old Wei raised his thumb in approval, "I forgot one thing, you have a thick face." Both the elder and the younger man broke into hearty laughter. Lin Wanrong felt as if he had returned to the time when he first arrived in this world, spending his days freely chatting with Old Wei. Yet the world had changed much since then, and he himself had also changed, gradually adapting to this new world. It was a poignant realization.

Uncle Wei said, "Wanrong, I've heard about your work at the Xiao household. You've thwarted others' schemes, helped revive the Xiao family, and even made friends with Xu Wei. You are far more clever than I ever imagined."

Feeling bashful, Lin Wanrong responded, "Uncle, those are just people exaggerating. I'm not that great, at most only ten times more intelligent than you imagined."

Hearing Lin Wanrong joke with him, Old Wei felt a wave of fondness. He laughed, "Regardless of who's exaggerating, and no matter how many times more intelligent you are, it's widely known that you've done a great job at the Xiao household. Even the master has had his eye on you for a while."

"The master? Which master?" Lin Wanrong inquired, puzzled.

Old Wei gave him a meaningful glance, "The master I've mentioned to you."

Suddenly, Lin Wanrong realized he was referring to the offer to become the son of a wealthy household. But he was already in the Xiao family, which was also very wealthy. He had no need for this mysterious master.

Old Wei seemed to see through his thoughts, heaving a small sigh, "Wanrong, no one can choose their own destiny. You're in the midst of things now, and it's impossible to extricate yourself. Do you know why I brought you to the Xiao family?"

"I don't know," Lin Wanrong responded honestly, shaking his head.

Old Wei smiled at him, "The Xiao household is not an ordinary place, and it holds a significant meaning for that master. Have you met Madam Xiao?"

Of course, I am now a member of the Xiao Family board. How could I have not met Madam Xiao? But it seems your words are reversed. Considering my current position, it should be Madam Xiao coming to see me, heh.

Seeing Lin Wanrong nod, Old Wei continued, "After seeing Madam Xiao's present appearance, you should have an idea of how beautiful and captivating she was when she was young, right?"

Why bring up Madam Xiao? Is there some gossip between her and this master? Madam Xiao seems dignified and elegant. Could she have been a flirtatious character back in the day? Damn, Old Wei, you're a gossip, aren't you? This ruins the lovely image of the lady in my heart.

Old Wei naturally didn't know his thoughts. He sighed, "Back in the capital, Miss Guo was only sixteen but already blooming like a jade flower. She was proficient in all arts and considered a beauty of the capital. She captivated countless talented young men. When that master first saw Miss Guo, he was amazed. Despite being much older, he couldn't help but be infatuated."

As he recalled the past, a nostalgic look flashed across Old Wei's face. Hearing the gossip about Madam Xiao, Lin Wanrong suddenly thought of the Eldest Miss Xiao. This lass, Xiao Yuruo, had inherited around seventy or eighty percent of her mother's charm. Would someone gossip about her in the same way in a few years?

"That master is a man of great deeds. Upon the advice of his counselors, he had to put aside his feelings and concentrate on important matters. The situation in the capital was chaotic at the time, and before he knew it, Old Master Guo had betrothed Miss Guo to the son of Elder Xiao. They were married and left the capital the next day. By the time the master heard the news, Miss Guo had already followed her husband to the far south."

Old Wei's voice was hoarse, "That master truly loved Miss Guo. Seeing her marry someone else naturally caused him great pain, and Miss Guo became his lingering regret. So, as I said, your assistance to the Xiao family could bring you enormous benefits."

Sweating, Lin Wanrong laughed, "So, did Miss Guo shift her affections? This master seems rather lovestruck."

Old Wei shook his head, "It wouldn't be accurate to say she shifted her affections, because at that time, the master and Miss Guo were merely friends through poetry. Their age gap was significant, and Miss Guo had never considered anything beyond that. In fact, it was the master who had unrequited love for Miss Guo. He wanted to wait until his affairs were settled, then propose marriage. Little did he know that he would miss the opportunity."

After all this chatter, it turned out to be unrequited love. Lin Wanrong thought disdainfully, I once had a crush on Lee Jiaxin too, heh.

"Uncle Wei, what exactly do you do? How come you know so much about these internal affairs?" Lin Wanrong asked directly.

"You'll naturally find out if the opportunity arises," Old Wei chuckled. "For now, you just need to keep one thing in mindthe more you help the Xiao family, the more advantageous it will be for you in the future."

I don't need you to tell me that. Yushuang is my wife now. I have to help regardless.

"Wanrong, how well do you get along with Xu Wei?" Old Wei suddenly asked.

"Oh, pretty well, I suppose." More than okay, in fact. I even played a major role in his marriage.

Uncle Wei nodded, "Being on good terms with Xu Wei can be a tremendous asset to you. Once you reach the capital, all these connections will come in handy." Seeing Lin Wanrong nod, he continued, "Have you remembered all that I've told you?"

Lin Wanrong smiled, "Of course, I have, Uncle Wei. I've always been doing as you suggested."

Old Wei replied meaningfully, "Good, very good. Wanrong, you must look at the bigger picture. Remember, your real rivals are not here, but in the capital."

Rivals? The capital? What does he mean? Lin Wanrong was puzzled, but Old Wei had already risen to his feet, laughing, "I came to see you today, and I've said all I needed to. The rest is up to you. I should leave now."

He clapped Lin Wanrong on the shoulder and swiftly walked out, vaulting over the high wall and disappearing into the moonlight in the blink of an eye.

Chapter 225 Miss Luo to Hold a Matchmaking Session?

This old man, he comes and goes as he pleases, just like a blind man, yet so much more nonchalant than I ever was. Lin Wanrong gazed in stupefaction at the fading figure of Uncle Wei. The old man Wei, he was not ordinary by any means. Not only was he able to scale high walls with such an ease, but his familiarity with the people and affairs of the capital was also uncanny. He was definitely no insignificant character.

Recalling Uncle Wei's words, they were rife with implications, yet they were not entirely clear. Assisting the Xiao family and befriending Xu Wei, these were comprehensible. But his remark about adversaries residing in the capital, that was baffling. I do not know a soul in the capital, so who could possibly be my rival? This blind old man, he always had such a faltering way of speaking.

Lin Wanrong pondered for a while but could not make heads or tails of it, so he ceased to ponder. After all, he would be heading to the capital sooner or later. The truth would reveal itself then. Today, with all the running around, the horse riding, and the fighting, he was thoroughly exhausted. He fell asleep as soon as he hit the bed and began dreaming.

He slept till noon the next day, undisturbed. In the past few days, the Eldest Miss would always come to call him to work early, but today was an exception. It seemed she had thoughtfully considered his fatigue.

Sleeping in was indeed a pleasure. Lin Wanrong stretched his arms, got up, and took a leisurely stroll around the garden. The maids and family servants he passed by all hastily greeted him: "Brother San, good morning." A few of the prettier ones even dared to cast flirtatious glances at him. Lin Wanrong joked around with them, feeling invigorated and full of life.

These leisurely days would not last long. The year was coming to an end, and after the New Year, he would head north to the capital. There, he would have to start all over again from scratch. Lin Wanrong sighed a little, then decided to enjoy this rare leisure time, slowly strolling around the garden.

It was already mid-winter. All the flowers had withered, fallen leaves blanketed the ground, and the garden appeared desolate. After taking a few steps, Lin Wanrong suddenly felt the place was rather dull.

"Spring is not for studying, and the scorching summer is for sleep. With the arrival of autumn and then winter, it's best to postpone studying till next year." A loud reading voice drifted into Lin Wanrong's ears. Good heavens, what a talented poem, suggesting one could avoid studying all year round!

Following the sound, he saw Young Master Guo holding a book in his left hand and pacing back and forth, nodding and shaking his head. This brilliant poem had come from his very lips.

"Young Master, good morning. It's not time for lunch yet, why not sleep a little longer?" Lin Wanrong approached and said with a grin.

Upon seeing Lin Wanrong, Young Master Guo instantly brightened up. He grabbed Lin Wanrong's hand and asked, "Lin San, Lin San, what do you think?"

"What do you mean?" Lin Wanrong asked curiously.

"The poem, the poem I just recited. What do you think?" Young Master Guo excitedly asked.

"In one word, it's fantastic!" Lin Wanrong gave a thumbs up. "For your level, Young Master, this poem is nothing less than a timeless masterpiece. I wonder where you copied - oh, I mean, heard it from."

Looking incredibly pleased, Young Master Guo replied, "Heard it from somewhere? You're in for a shock. I composed it myself. Yesterday, I entered this poem in the poetry contest, and it passed on the spot."

A poetry competition? Ah, he'd almost forgotten that little rascal Luo Ning was using his money to hold a poetry competition at the end of the month. He glanced at Young Master Guo and said, "What, do you need to sign up for the poetry competition? I thought anyone who wanted to attend could."

Young Master Guo snorted, "How could that be possible? The poetry competition is a high-level literary event. Talented individuals from several provinces in Jiangzhe (Jiangsu and Zhejiang), as well as from the capital, will have to present a poem on the spot to qualify. How could any random, no-name individuals simply waltz in? The poem I recited is the one I submitted to the competition yesterday. Well, how was it? Does it have a certain grandeur?"

This kind of doggerel poem, I could churn out ten of them while taking a piss, thought Lin Wanrong, chuckling softly. Deciding not to deflate Young Master Guo's enthusiasm, he changed the topic, "By the way, Young Master, there was a big incident in the mansion last night. Do you know about it?"

Guo Wuchang nodded, "I heard about it when I returned to the mansion this morning. That lad, Si De, was beaten up pretty badly. Damn, it's a good thing I wasn't there. If I had been, I'd have made sure those bastards couldn't even find north while looking at the sun."

Lin Wanrong gave him a thumbs-up. He made it sound more impressive than he could: "Oh, I see. Young Master, you weren't in the mansion last night?"

Guo Wuchang gave a sly grin, glancing around before whispering, "Lin San, we're old friends, there's nothing I need to hide from you. Last night my sweetheart at Miaoyu Pavilion brought along her younger sister. They both attended to me, wanting me to taste something different. I stayed the whole night. Tch tch, the experience, it was even better than being an immortal."

God, he was out enjoying a threesome, a perfectly lecherous pair. I despise you, from your head to your toes.

"Lin San, when I signed up at the literature association yesterday evening, I heard some good news." Young Master Guo grinned and said, "It seems that this year's poetry competition is not just about poetry."

"It's not just a poetry competition?" Lin Wanrong asked with a laugh. "What else is there, a song and dance competition?"

"No, that's not it. The poetry competition is held every year, but this year it's going to be more interesting." Young Master Guo looked around mysteriously, then whispered in Lin Wanrong's ear, "Yesterday I spent half a tael of silver to get some exclusive insider news. It's said that this year's poetry competition is more than just a competition. Miss Luo Ning, the number one talented lady in Jinling, is going to use the competition to select a suitor."

"Select a suitor?" Lin Wanrong was shocked. Just yesterday, the girl had confessed her feelings to him, and now she was selecting a suitor?

"Absolutely true," Young Master Guo said confidently. "The news has already been circulating within the Jinling academic community, and everyone is discussing it. Think about it, who is Miss Luo? Not only is she as beautiful as a flower, but she's also the most talented lady in Jinling, and the daughter of Governor Luo. Whoever marries her will be embracing a golden child. All those hopeful young men have already gone into seclusion, striving to come out on top in the poetry competition and win the beauty."

Seeing that Lin Wanrong still did not believe him, Young Master Guo grew somewhat impatient: "What's the matter, don't you believe me? You know Hou Yuebai, right? Young Master Hou whom you had beaten up, have you not seen him around recently?"

Indeed, Lin Wanrong had not seen Hou Yuebai during the recent outing, so he nodded. Young Master Guo triumphantly said, "Exactly, let me tell you, he has been hiding at home, not stepping out at all. He's reading poetry and literature every day, studying with relentless determination, all with the aim of marrying Miss Luo."

Young Master Guo spoke with such conviction, as if he had witnessed these events with his own eyes. If anyone could outdo him at pulling a fast one, it would certainly be Young Master Guo. This kid was wasting his talent by not becoming a journalist for the Sun Newspaper.

Laughing, Lin Wanrong said, "Young Master Guo, if Miss Luo really is choosing her husband based on poetry, then you certainly have a chance."

Young Master Guo replied with a righteous air, "I am loyal to my cousins. How could I possibly engage in such fickle behaviour? I signed up purely for scholarly pursuit, not for the vulgar reasons you mentioned - oh, Lin San, do you think I really stand a chance?"

"If you go, there's a chance. If you don't go, there's no chance at all," Lin Wanrong coaxed.

"That's true," Young Master Guo nodded. "Lin San, you're skilled in creating couplets, but how about poetry? Can you compete with me? Oh, I don't mean the ones you've copied."

Damn it, composing poetry is like making love; both require passion, which I am not so frivolous to possess. Lin Wanrong shook his head, and Young Master Guo lamented, "What a pity, what a pity. Without your company, Lin San, even if I am renowned as a poetry master, I might be very lonely at the poetry competition."

Lin Wanrong broke into a cold sweat. You're more like a poetry monster, he thought. This shameless look of Young Master Guo is quite reminiscent of his past self.

"Brother San, Brother San," Si De's voice echoed from afar. Lin Wanrong and Young Master Guo looked up to see Si De carefully carrying a large bowl.

Seeing the bruises on Si De's face, Young Master Guo said, "Si De, if anyone dares to cross you in the future, you just mention the name of Young Master Guo, and don't forget to mention Lin San. I guarantee you'll be safe."

Si De respectfully replied, "Thank you, Young Master."

Seeing him cradle the bowl as though it was a treasure, Lin Wanrong couldn't help but chuckle, "What are you holding so preciously?"

Si De looked at him with admiration and said, "Brother San is indeed knowledgeable. I tried the method you mentioned last night, and indeed, the pain eased a lot. So, I went out to find some more this morning."

"Find what?" Lin Wanrong yawned.

"Boy's urine," Si De said.

Lin Wanrong and Young Master Guo took several steps back in horror, their faces a picture of astonishment. Boy's urine? Were there even any boys left in this world? Unaware of their reaction, Si De continued, "Brother San, Young Master, when I went out earlier, I heard that this year's poetry competition will start at the end of this month."

Young Master Guo covered his nose and said, "Oh, I've heard about it. I've even been shortlisted."

"Congratulations, Young Master," Si De hurriedly flattered, "I just heard that this year's poetry competition is going to be exceptionally lively. Not only are there talents from several provinces such as Jiangsu and Zhejiang, but even Young Masters from the capital are rushing over. This kind of scene is indeed rare to see."

Rare my ass, the more people that come, the more money I end up wasting. Damn it, do they think I'm a charity? Lin Wanrong found it somewhat amusing to see Si De clutching the boy's urine so tightly. He said, "No matter how many talents come, they're just reciting a few poems. At most, the business of the women by the Qinhuai River might slightly improve. What else could happen?"

"Brother San, you might not know, but after much probing and inquiries, I finally learned about a huge piece of good news," Si De mysteriously said, "I heard that the talented Miss Luo is seeking a husband."