

Finest Servant

Chapter 26 Cunningly Seizing Wealth and Power (Part 1)

Although the incident just now had caused Lin Wanrong to blush, the time it took for his face to return to normal was only a matter of microseconds. In a moment, he had regained his composure.

The new shoes that Qiaoqiao had made for him fit perfectly. After walking a few steps back and forth, he felt extremely comfortable. Qiaoqiao was truly skilled with her hands.

Beside him was also a new set of clothes, obviously made for him as well. Thinking about how busy Qiaoqiao had been during the day, it was clear that she had stayed up late to make these clothes and shoes for him. Lin Wanrong was moved by this and felt a slight sense of remorse for his earlier indecent behavior.

Wearing his new clothes and walking back and forth, Lin Wanrong felt as if the clothes were made specifically for his body. He wondered if it was due to Qiaoqiao's skill or if he was just naturally suited for clothing. He shamelessly thought to himself.

Suddenly, there was a light sound, and Dong Qiaoqiao walked out, trying to suppress her shyness. The blush on her face was still clearly visible.

"Qiaoqiao," Lin Wanrong smiled at her apologetically.

Dong Qiaoqiao didn't say anything. She walked over to him and gently adjusted his clothes. She carefully looked over him from front to back, left to right, before nodding in satisfaction.

As he looked at her shy face, her crystal-clear complexion, and the fragrant scent that emanated from her, Lin Wanrong felt a surge of desire, wishing he could embrace her and kiss her deeply.

Taking a deep breath, tightening his abdominal muscles, lifting his breath, and squeezing his buttocks, Lin Wanrong silently recited the breathing technique, suppressing his arrogance and desires.

"Big brother, you'll be going to the Xiao family tomorrow, take care of yourself. I'll make two new sets of clothes for you, come and get them when you have time," Dong Qiaoqiao said softly.

Lin Wanrong, who was in a fierce struggle with the dragon head, felt a warm feeling spread throughout his body when he heard her words, and the stubborn dragon head immediately crouched down.

This Qiaoqiao girl was so gentle and kind, it was really not right to treat her like this. Lin Wanrong's conscience was pricked, and he felt a little guilty. He was also dissatisfied with the performance of the dragon head under him. "It's all your fault, causing trouble for me."

That night, Lin Wanrong slept soundly and dreamt of countless beautiful women. When he woke up the next morning, the dragon head was still standing tall.

He was quite pleased with his morning erection. "It's quite prominent," he thought to himself with a sense of promiscuity.

Feeling dampness in his underwear, he reached down and realized that he had actually had a wet dream. This phenomenon had rarely occurred since he had started dating at eighteen years old, but he didn't expect it to happen in this world. Lin Wanrong was a bit helpless and couldn't help but cry and laugh, it was evident that yesterday's stimulation had been quite significant.

"Washing my underwear at six in the morning, this is not a good omen," Lin Wanrong sighed in his heart.

He arrived early at the Xiao family's entrance and saw that there were already countless diligent people gathered around two red lists, making a lot of noise.

Lin Wanrong squeezed forward and took a look, only to find that it was a list of names for those participating in the Xiao family's servant preliminary test. The big red list was filled with countless names, dense and crowded.

Thanks to Lin Wanrong's good eyesight, he finally found his name in an inconspicuous corner - Lin San.

These two characters looked so awkward, Lin Wanrong remembered Old Man Wei's trickery, and became angry. However, looking at the names beside him, there were all sorts of names: Zhang Gousheng, Xia Shiren, Liu Yuejing, compared to these names, being called Lin San was considered fortunate (These names literally means: Gousheng = Leftover Dog; Shiren = Historical Benevolence; Yuejing = Refined Cross; Lin San = Lin the Third). Lin Wanrong secretly broke out in a cold sweat. It seemed that Old Man Wei was still a decent person after all.

"I never thought that I wouldn't even have a chance to take the initial exam and be eliminated like this. Heaven is against me," a household servant-looking fellow next to him sobbed.

"Why are you so sad, my friend?" another fellow asked.

The sobbing fellow replied, "I didn't realize that yesterday's registration was the initial selection. Unfortunately, I was distracted by the maidservants and missed my chance."

"My friend, you must choose the right time to pursue a lady. Once you get in, there will be plenty of opportunities. Oh, I truly feel sorry for you," the other fellow lamented.

"Hey, looking at your dress, haven't you already made it in the household servant world? Why did you come to participate in the selection again?" another older fellow asked curiously.

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The sobbing fellow snorted, "What's so strange about that? Nowadays, people aim for higher positions, and water flows to lower places. Can't I come and try my luck? Let me tell you, not only did I participate in the selection for the Xiao family's household servants, but I also participated in the 'Man of the Prefecture' held by the prefecture's master and the 'Rough Level Female Students' held by the Jinling Women's Society. I have passed the preliminaries and am now advancing toward the top 100."

"Excuse me, excuse me, my friend is truly formidable."

"Where, where. I heard that the capital is currently holding the 'Young Singing God Competition,' and I'm preparing to register for it. I'm planning to sing with the original ecological style. What do you think of me, my friend—"

Lin Wanrong couldn't help but burst into laughter upon hearing this. Nowadays, anyone who has anything to do with talent shows is sure to become a hit. However, he was also a little puzzled. These guys were saying that there was still a pre-preliminary selection for selecting the Xiao family's house servants, but how did he unknowingly pass it?

Lin Wanrong was doubtful, could it be because of Old Man Wei? Old Man Wei was a senior servant of the Xiao family and clearly at the gold-collar level. He was recommended by him, so the Xiao family naturally had to give him face and directly let him advance to the preliminary round.

Looking at the red list next to it, there were only the names of talented scholars who had made it to the list. Although there were as many as two to three hundred of them, compared to the scale of the registration, two-thirds had already been eliminated.

The Xiao family obviously attached great importance and respect to these talented scholars. Each of their names was followed by the title "Gentleman", and their handwriting was neat and tidy, in stark contrast to the messy list of house servant candidates.

Lin Wanrong's preliminary round was scheduled for later in the afternoon, but he was not in a hurry. After waiting for a while, he saw Dong Rende walking quickly toward him.

They had agreed to meet the owner of Meiwei Restaurant this morning. After the embarrassing incident with Dong Qiaoqiao yesterday, Lin Wanrong didn't feel comfortable going to his house and so they agreed to meet here.

"Uncle Dong, did you bring the silver notes?" Lin Wanrong asked.

Dong Rende looked around cautiously and leaned in close to Lin Wanrong. "I brought them all, young master, a full five thousand taels."

Seeing Dong Rende's nervous look as he looked around, Lin Wanrong found it quite amusing. He patted him on the shoulder and said, "Uncle Dong, when we meet the boss later, follow my lead."

Dong Rende nodded. Lin Wanrong's status in the Dong family was extremely high, so whatever he said was naturally taken as truth.

Dong Rende led Lin Wanrong towards Meiwei Restaurant, passing through the bustling areas of Jinling City. As they walked along the street, they saw crowds of people and heard vendors shouting out their wares. Lin Wanrong felt as though he had returned to Nanjing Road Pedestrian Street.

Near the entrance of Xuanwu Lake, which was also the most prosperous area of Jinling City, stood a five-story pavilion with flying eaves and majestic buildings. Its imposing presence was evident at first glance.

Lin Wanrong took a quick look and was satisfied with both the location and the size. The only remaining question was the price.

Dong Rende led Lin Wanrong to the third floor, where they met the owner, an old man in his sixties or seventies who had met Dong Rende a few times before.

Dong Rende explained their purpose and then pointed to Lin Wanrong behind him, saying, "Mr. Wang, this is Young Master Lin from the capital. His father will soon be serving in Jiangsu, and Young Master Lin is planning to invest in Jinling. He heard that you are selling your restaurant, so he came to take a look."

"I see, a distinguished guest from the capital. Please forgive my impoliteness. I wonder if Young Master Lin's family is..." Mr. Wang, upon hearing that Lin Wanrong was from the capital, naturally did not dare to be rude. However, having run a restaurant for many years, he had met many people and was not overly nervous.

Lin Wanrong took a few steps forward, waved his right hand, and opened a folding fan with the four simple characters "Nan de hu tu" (难得糊涂) written on it.

(The phrase 难得糊涂 (nán dé hú tú) roughly translates to "hard to be smart" or "better to remain ignorant". It suggests that sometimes it's better not to overthink things and just go with the flow, as being too smart or too knowledgeable can lead to unnecessary worry or complications.)

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Chapter 27 Cunningly Seizing Wealth and Power (Part 2)

As soon as he saw the white fan, boss Wang immediately had a bad feeling in his heart.

Lin Wanrong smiled slightly and said, "Boss Wang, my father is not a remarkable person, he is just someone who runs errands for the emperor, but he is not important enough to be seen on the surface."

When it comes to understanding human psychology, Lin Wanrong's years of experience as a sales manager were not in vain. Although what he said was basically meaningless, it had a significant effect.

Dong Rende had long heard that boss Wang's son had served as a county magistrate and had made a lot of money, earning the nickname "the sky is three feet high". This old man was planning to retire and enjoy his son's riches, so he wanted to sell the restaurant. Although Meiwei Restaurant had a beautiful name, boss Wang was a stingy person who was afraid of the strong and bullied the weak, so business had always been poor.

Those who boasted about their fathers being high-ranking officials such as ministers or prime ministers did not scare the old veterans, but they were afraid of young masters like Lin Wanrong, who wore a smile on their face but had sinister intentions in their heart. Wang was an old veteran, and he naturally understood this principle.

"To be honest, this restaurant has an excellent location and many regular customers. If it weren't for my retirement, I would never sell it. But since you, Master Lin, seem like a person who can achieve great things, I won't ask for a high price. How about 6,800 taels of silver, to make it a lucky number? What do you think?" Boss Wang said happily.

"6,800 taels of silver? That's not unreasonable." Lin Wanrong shook his fan and smiled. "But, you see, Boss Wang, I have a habit of not liking to deal with odd numbers in business. How about we round it up to an even number? Either 6,000 taels or 7,000 taels. What do you say?"

With a thud, Dong Rende was so scared that he bit his own tongue. Who bargains like this? Has Lin Wanrong gone crazy from making too much money yesterday?

Lin Wanrong's smile was enigmatic, leaving Dong Rende feeling thoroughly confused. Wasn't Lin just inflating the price himself? If boss Wang insisted on 7,000 taels, wouldn't he be shooting himself in the foot?

But Lin Wanrong wasn't worried about that at all. Ultimately, this was a question of who was more shameless. In terms of audacity, Lin was willing to admit he was second only to one, but nobody dared claim first.

While boss Wang may have seen his fair share of battles, he paled in comparison to Lin Wanrong in terms of audacity. Upon hearing Lin's words, he couldn't help but feel overwhelmed. Was this young master really trying to force a confession out of him? Could he really have the audacity to ask for 7,000 taels?

Boss Wang nervously chuckled, "Young Master Lin, is it possible that--"

"Boss Wang, 800 taels of silver isn't a lot to me, and it isn't a lot to you either. This is simply a matter of business ethics. I'll be honest with you, we scholars aren't interested in the business aspect of things. I'm only buying this restaurant for fun. When my grandfather arrives in Jiangnan, I can explain it to him. If you think the price is reasonable, then we have a deal. If not, well... I never said anything." Lin Wanrong grinned.

Boss Wang wiped his sweat. Who knew what kind of background this young master had? He didn't want to unwittingly cause any trouble for his son.

He thought for a moment before gritting his teeth, "Fine, 6,000 taels it is. I only ask that Young Master Lin be more lenient with us in the future."

"Excellent! I like it!" Lin Wanrong snapped his fan shut with a crack and chuckled. "In that case, let's not delay any further. Let's sign the contract right away."

"No problem, I like doing business with straightforward people," Boss Wang replied.

Lin Wanrong nodded and turned to Dong Rende. "Old Dong, quickly bring out the 3,000 taels in silver notes."

Dong Rende was taken aback, but the two had already discussed that Lin Wanrong would take the lead, so he quickly counted out three thousand taels of silver notes.

Boss Wang did not understand what he meant and asked in confusion, "Lin Master, this three thousand taels--"

Lin Wanrong chuckled and interrupted him, "Boss Wang, this is the first installment. I will pay you the other three thousand taels within six months."

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Boss Wang was surprised and asked, "How is that possible? In business, we always pay for goods upon delivery."

Lin Wanrong replied with a smirk, "Boss Wang, it's not that I don't trust you, but people are unpredictable. Although you have transferred this restaurant to me, who knows if you have any external debts or if you have mortgaged this restaurant?"

Boss Wang was taken aback and his expression changed, "Lin Master, is this not putting me in a difficult position?"

Lin Wanrong replied nonchalantly, "Difficult position? Not at all. Boss Wang, I am doing this to ensure the interests of both parties. As long as there are no creditors coming to your door within six months, I will not only pay you the three thousand taels of silver, but also calculate interest on a monthly basis. This way, you will not suffer any losses, and I can make my purchase with peace of mind."

Dong Rende finally understood that Lin Wanrong was actually asking boss Wang for a loan. Only someone as shameless as Lin Wanrong could come up with such a despicable excuse.

Seeing boss Wang's hesitation, Lin Wanrong raised his eyebrows and his expression changed, "What? Don't tell me that boss Wang does not trust my character? Hmph, although I do not frequent the official circles of Jinling, I can still manage to gain some face. As for those little devils running around below, they wouldn't dare to disrespect me. Boss Wang, you can rest assured that as long as I make a call, no one will dare to cause trouble for you. But if I were not here, I cannot guarantee that they would not cause any trouble—"

—

"Threat, this is a naked threat!" Boss Wang, the restaurant owner, saw the cold smile on Lin Wanrong's face and shivered. Who was this young master with such thick skin and blatant use of threats? He didn't expect him to be even more black-hearted than his appearance suggested. If he didn't have a strong background, this brat wouldn't dare be so arrogant.

Dong Rende knew Lin Wanrong's background, and seeing him spouting nonsense with such arrogance made him sweat nervously. If they were found out, they would be beaten and kicked like dogs.

Boss Wang shuddered as Lin Wanrong opened his paper fan and pretended to wave it a few times before saying, "Boss Wang, you can rest assured that I never like to bully people. We can sign a contract. If I don't pay back your money and interest in six months, you can take back this restaurant."

Under Lin's soft and hard tactics, boss Wang had lost his judgment and had to agree.

Fortunately, if Lin Wanrong kept his word, boss Wang wouldn't lose anything. After six months, if Lin still couldn't pay, the restaurant would be his again.

The two signed a contract agreeing to these terms.

As they left the restaurant, it was already noon, and Lin Wanrong felt his back was soaked through. Even as a sales manager, he had never felt so excited by such a daring and outrageous act.

Dong Rende was impressed by Lin Wanrong's shamelessness and fearlessness, not only for buying the restaurant but also for taking out a three thousand liang silver loan for six months.

Lin Wanrong wiped the sweat from his body and said to Dong Rende, "Uncle Dong, today is an important day. Go and call Qiaoqiao and Qingshan. Let's celebrate."

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Chapter 28 Organized Crime (Part 1)

Lin Wanrong went straight to a restaurant and sat down. After a while, Old Dong returned with Dong Qiaoqiao, but Dong Qingshan did not accompany them. Old Dong grumbled, "I don't know where that boy Qingshan has run off to; let's not bother about him."

During the meal, Dong Rende exaggeratedly recounted how Lin Wanrong had swindled the restaurant from the previous owner. Dong Qiaoqiao covered her mouth, giggling incessantly. Ever since the embarrassing incident the previous night, Lin Wanrong's immunity toward Dong Qiaoqiao had significantly decreased. Seeing her covering her mouth with a delicate laugh, he couldn't help but find her enchanting and charming. He sighed deeply, thinking she was lethally bewitching.

Of the five thousand taels of silver, only two thousand remained, which was to be used for renovations and hiring additional staff and equipment. It was quite tight. But the father and daughter of the Dong family, who had full trust in Lin Wanrong's abilities, were not worried at all. Listening to Dong Rende list out his plans, Lin Wanrong slapped his forehead and said, "Big brother, do you think I'm a bank?"

Dong Qiaoqiao giggled charmingly, her red lips reminding Lin Wanrong of the intoxicating touch from last night, causing a certain reaction in his lower body.

After the meal, the father and daughter of the Dong family went their separate ways according to their predetermined tasks. Having enjoyed a few too many drinks with Dong Rende at noon, Lin Wanrong stumbled down the street, feeling somewhat dizzy. Remembering that he had to "start work" in the afternoon, he staggered forward.

Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted a familiar figure disappearing into a small alley. Wasn't that Qingshan? Sneaking around, what was he up to? Lin Wanrong stealthily followed.

Inside a dilapidated courtyard, more than a dozen young people had gathered. The oldest were in their twenties, while the youngest were only thirteen or fourteen. They sat or stood, their faces revealing a mix of worry and excitement.

Dong Qingshan, wearing a short coat and bare-armed, distributed iron rods and wooden sticks to everyone, saying, "Brothers, wait for my command. When I shout 'attack,' we all charge and beat the hell out of those bastards."

The young men chattered nervously, fearful yet expectant. Dong Qingshan silenced their discussions, saying, "Don't be afraid. Think about it; once we win this fight, Li Ergou's territory will be ours. With Li Ergou's territory, we can consolidate our strength, recruit more followers, and expand our influence to dominate the southern part of the city. In the future, we will continue to grow, not only controlling the south but also the north and the center of the city. Jinling City will be under our control. We will collect protection fees along Xuanwu Lake, Confucius Temple, and even the flower boats on the Qinhuai River. We can have our way with the women on the flower boats, and grope the courtesans of Lichun Brothel as we please. We'll rob their silver, their women, and leave them with nothing."

The young men laughed heartily, their eyes filled with greedy desire, resembling unevolved beasts.

Eavesdropping outside the door, Lin Wanrong was also dumbfounded. Dong Qingshan was incredibly crude. But, he thought, I like it! These twenty or so children, dressed in rags, were obviously from poor families, and some of them were even beggars. They seemed fearless and if they were truly brought together, they would undoubtedly form a force to be reckoned with.

Their numbers were still too small, but they had purpose, energy, determination, and ruthlessness. They were the typical four-pronged new breed, and their potential should not be underestimated. The underworld was already taking shape, and as long as they seized opportunities, their growth was imminent.

Dong Qingshan was feeling proud of his speech when someone suddenly patted him on the back.

"Get lost, I'm busy," Dong Qingshan said without looking back.

"Qingshan—" a familiar voice sounded from behind.

Dong Qingshan turned around and, to his delight, exclaimed, "Big brother, what brings you here?"

Lin Wanrong smiled and nodded, "I was wandering around the neighborhood and saw you. Are these your followers?"

Dong Qingshan bashfully nodded, turned to his subordinates, and said, "What are you waiting for? Hurry up and greet the boss."

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"Boss—" the twenty-some youngsters shouted in unison.

Lin Wanrong broke out in cold sweat, wondering when he had become the leader of these young hoodlums.

Unperturbed, Dong Qingshan was thrilled to see Lin Wanrong and grabbed his arm, "Boss, you're just in time to witness our battle against Li Ergou."

"Li Ergou?" Lin Wanrong was unfamiliar with the name. A chubby young man with a round, white face and a beaming smile standing next to Dong Qingshan immediately explained, "He's the notorious Li Ergou who rules over the southern district of the city. He has twenty or thirty followers and is known for his wickedness. We've arranged a fight with him outside the city today. Whoever wins will take control of the southern territory."

Oh, so the battle was happening so soon? Lin Wanrong's forehead broke out in sweat. He had just incited Dong Qingshan to engage in organized crime the previous day, and now a gang had already been formed.

The chubby young man continued, "Boss, I've heard Qingshan praise you for your wisdom, valor, and extraordinary courage. We believe that under your leadership, we will soon achieve dominance and rule the underworld for generations."

Lin Wanrong didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the fact that he had inadvertently become the boss of these young hoodlums. However, it was his own doing that had led Dong Qingshan to this point, so he had no one to blame but himself.

After some conversation, Lin Wanrong learned that the chubby young man's name was Li Beidou, and he was the best fighter aside from Dong Qingshan. Lin Wanrong had heard his name mentioned a few times before.

Although Lin Wanrong, as a smart man, would never have engaged in a fight with another gang so soon after forming his own, Dong Qingshan was different. Young, passionate, and fueled by the latest theoretical guidance, he was a fiery force ready to ignite wherever he went.

Lin Wanrong sighed, acknowledging that the hasty battle was unavoidable. It was the gang's first fight, and they couldn't afford to lose. He carefully observed Dong

Qingshan's followers; despite their ragged, malnourished appearances, their eyes were sharp, clearly indicating they were experienced fighters who wouldn't be easily defeated. Lin Wanrong felt somewhat reassured.

The agreed-upon time between Dong Qingshan and Li Er Gou was approaching. Although Lin Wanrong had instigated Dong Qingshan, when he thought of Dong Qiaoqiao's worries, he also had some concerns that Dong Qingshan might be too reckless. So he followed him out of the city.

To the south of the city was a large open area with lush crops and dense forests. It was a great place for gangs to fight and for people to be killed and silenced.

Dong Qingshan had already observed the nearby terrain and led his older and younger brothers to move into a patch of plant forest, moving with cat-like grace.

This forest was very large in area, with about twenty people hidden inside and not feeling crowded at all.

These plants were like trees but not quite, with a height of about half a person. The leaves had already begun to wither, and a faint familiar fragrance could be detected on the leaf veins, which invigorated Lin Wanrong's spirit.

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Chapter 29 Organized Crime (Part 2)

Upon sensing the familiar fragrance, Lin Wanrong's mind struggled to recall the origin of the scent. His fingers delicately traced the rough surface of the leaves, which carried a faintly pungent aroma.

"What is this?" Lin Wanrong furrowed his brow, though he was certain he had encountered this plant before.

"Big brother, are you afraid?" Dong Qingshan inquired, standing beside Lin Wanrong. Although he had been involved in many skirmishes, his youth and inexperience left him feeling somewhat apprehensive amidst the large-scale conflict.

Lin Wanrong nodded, "It is natural to be fearful the first time, but you will grow accustomed. By the way, Qingshan, do you know what kind of leaf this is?" He picked up a leaf and posed the question to Dong Qingshan.

Scratching his head and grinning sheepishly, Dong Qingshan replied, "I am not certain, but these plants grow abundantly in the wild. Sometimes we dry the leaves and use them as kindling, although the smoke can be rather choking."

As Lin Wanrong was about to respond, he detected the sound of approaching footsteps. His hearing had been sharpened by Master Wei's training.

"Someone is coming," Lin Wanrong whispered.

Dong Qingshan tensed and motioned for silence, causing the rustling in the undergrowth to cease.

A burly man appeared in the distance, followed by a group of twenty or thirty individuals. Each one bore a distinctive facial feature, and their swaggering gait revealed their penchant for lawlessness.

"The man up front is Li Ergou," Dong Qingshan informed Lin Wanrong in a hushed tone.

Lin Wanrong nodded and asked, "Qingshan, what do you plan to do?"

"Confront them, explain our intentions, and then engage in battle," Dong Qingshan declared with a sense of righteousness.

Lin Wanrong inwardly chuckled and lightly slapped Dong Qingshan's head, "When I give the signal, you and the others charge forward. Remain silent, attack on sight, and strike with all your might. We will not cease until they cry out for mercy."

"Big brother, you mean we won't be explaining ourselves?" Dong Qingshan's initial romanticism was shattered by Lin Wanrong's ruthless pragmatism. Nevertheless, he was no fool, and he quickly adapted to the new approach.

"Do you think this is a martial contest, my young friend? We are in the underworld, where survival depends on speed and ruthlessness," Lin Wanrong explained.

Dong Qingshan understood and a fierce glint appeared in his eyes, "Right, big brother. We are claiming territory; there is no need for honor. To the victor go the spoils, and the defeated shall submit."

Lin Wanrong nodded approvingly and instructed Li Beidou, who was nearby, to relay the message.

After a short wait, Li Ergou's voice could be heard as they approached, taunting Dong Qingshan and demanding his presence. As a dominant force in the southern city, they did not take Dong Qingshan seriously and had not bothered to scout the area.

Gripping his iron staff, Lin Wanrong slowly moved into position. His earlier inebriation and the thrill of being among these young rogues made him feel youthful and invigorated. He glared at Li Ergou and his companions, eyes bloodshot with anticipation.

As Li Ergou entered striking range, Lin Wanrong sprang into action, brandishing his iron staff and charging forward with adrenaline-fueled excitement. His wheat-colored skin flushed a deep red.

Damn, I didn't expect the boss to be even more ferocious than me! Dong Qingshan stood behind Lin Wanrong, watching him rush out with an incredible speed, even faster than himself.

Dong Qingshan let out a low growl and, gripping his iron rod, darted forward like a leopard.

The blood of the gangsters had long since boiled over. They followed Dong Qingshan and Li Beidou, brandishing cleavers, iron rods, and wooden sticks, charging out without a word, striking down anyone they saw.

Li Ergou was closest to Lin Wanrong. He stared dumbfoundedly as a healthy, wheat-skinned man rushed at him with an iron rod. His mind raced, wondering where this man had come from and, with such a bitter and resentful expression, if the girl from last night was his sister.

Seizing the moment of Li Ergou's distraction, Lin Wanrong lunged forward, smashing his iron rod heavily onto Li Ergou's head.

Although Wei Lao's empowerment was not entirely successful, the power it granted Lin Wanrong was significant. Not only was he quicker, but his strength had increased considerably as well.

Li Ergou, caught off guard and faced with Lin Wanrong's fierce combat prowess, failed to dodge the blow. Lin Wanrong's iron rod crashed heavily onto his head, knocking him out on the spot.

As the bright red blood flowed, Lin Wanrong felt an indescribable thrill. He even lightly licked his lips and swung the rod down again with force.

Li Ergou grunted and slowly fell, disbelief filling his eyes.

One of Li Ergou's underlings saw his boss fall and, wielding his wooden stick, struck heavily at Lin Wanrong's back.

Lin Wanrong let out a muffled groan, a large swelling forming on his back, but he didn't fall. He retaliated with a swift strike to the underling's face, the burning pain in his back giving him a perverse pleasure.

Dong Qingshan rushed over and struck the fallen Li Ergou with his rod.

Lin Wanrong glanced at Li Ergou, knowing that, even if the lad survived, he would be bedridden for the rest of his life.

The battle, needless to say, ended in a resounding victory for Dong Qingshan's side. Lin Wanrong had fought his fair share of fights before university, but such opportunities had been few and far between since then. Now, in this world, he was unrestrained. The chance to fight freely today made him feel invigorated, and his discontent in this world seemed to dissipate.

Dong Qingshan's gang members had all seen Lin Wanrong's ruthless and swift attack, and they admired him greatly.

"Ouch!" Lin Wanrong sat down, only to feel a burning pain on his back, like a fire. The underling had struck him quite heavily. He looked at Li Ergou, whom he had beaten senseless, and felt a pang of resentment.

"Don't worry. Tonight, my sister can help you apply some ointment. She always helps me after I get injured in fights," Dong Qingshan said nonchalantly, laughing. He himself had sustained few injuries; although they were twenty against thirty, Lin Wanrong had quickly taken down the enemy's boss, making the fight relatively easy.

"Boss, you're really a great fighter!" Li Beidou's buttocks had been hit, tearing his pants and causing a large swelling. Nonetheless, he approached Lin Wanrong and said so.

Lin Wanrong gritted his teeth and said, "Qingshan, Beidou, remember this: once you go down this path, there's no turning back. Only by being darker, more stable, and more ruthless than others can you make a name for yourself."

"Big Brother, I understand," the two nodded together. "Oh, by the way, Big Brother, are you still going to Xiao's house?"

They had avoided mentioning Xiao's house, but as soon as it was brought up, Lin Wanrong suddenly yelled, "This is not good--"

Ignoring the pain, he got up and ran, and Dong Qingshan heard his voice in the distance, "Get the team organized, we'll have a dinner party tonight--"

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Chapter 30 The Household Servant Selection Contest (Part 1)

Immersed in the thrill of the recent brawl, Lin Wanrong had momentarily forgotten the main matter at hand. It was only when Dong Qingshan mentioned the Xiao family that he recalled he had a "job interview" to attend. This job held extraordinary significance for him, as it was a way to repay the kindness of Old Man Wei; he couldn't afford to mess it up.

Rushing to the Xiao residence, Lin Wanrong arrived only to find that he was a step too late. He asked a few people nearby and learned that his name, Lin San, had already been called.

"Are you saying this Lin San fellow is an idiot?" The man whom Lin Wanrong had questioned about the situation chuckled maliciously, "For the Xiao family's recruitment, we all arrived here early, wishing we could present ourselves even earlier. As soon as we join the Xiao family, our fortunes will be made. But that Lin San wasted such a golden opportunity. No need to say more, he must have crawled into some young lady's bed last night, and perhaps he hasn't even gotten up yet."

The man wore a lewd smirk on his face, evidently delighted with Lin San's misfortune. The competition for the Xiao family's household servant selection was fierce, and with Lin San forfeiting, there was one less competitor. Naturally, the man was overjoyed.

"Idiot, your mother's egg!" Lin Wanrong cursed inwardly, "With your pimply, adolescent face, it would be a miracle if the Xiao family chose you."

Looking around, Lin Wanrong found no other latecomers, making him an anomaly in this servant selection contest. Observing the tense expressions on the faces of the other applicants, Lin Wanrong didn't know whether he should laugh or cry. On the one hand, he had arrived late, and if he gave up now, he wouldn't have to perform menial tasks at the Xiao family's residence, although explaining this to Old Man Wei would be difficult. On the other hand, once he entered the Xiao family, he would probably become just like these other aspiring servants, wearing a bitter, downtrodden expression.

After pondering for a while, he told himself, "Forget it, it's only a year. Stand tall, and it will pass. I can't let Uncle Wei, the blind man, look down on me."

Having made up his mind, Lin Wanrong started to worry again. Now, even if he wanted to serve someone, they might not necessarily want him. "What kind of situation is this?" Lin Wanrong sighed bitterly, knowing that he needed to come up with a plan.

Glancing around, Lin Wanrong noticed that the servants and scholars were being selected separately. The scholar selection was moving at a slow pace, while the household servant selection was quite rapid. Some candidates went in and came out with downcast expressions in under a minute.

"Brother, what do they test you on inside?" Lin Wanrong stopped one of the defeated servant candidates and asked.

The defeated servant candidate replied with a bitter expression, "I have no idea what they're testing us on. I couldn't recognize a single character on the test. Oh, my dream of becoming a household servant for the Xiao family, my dream lovers Miss Xiao, Miss Xiao the Second, and Madam Xiao, we shall part forever..."

Astonished, Lin Wanrong watched the defeated servant dash away. This fellow's appetite was quite large, as all three women of the Xiao family had become his dream lovers.

Lin Wanrong wandered around and saw a man resembling a steward standing at the entrance to the servant recruitment room. He was supervising the servant applicants as they entered one by one, his demeanor arrogant and smug.

The steward appeared to be around forty years old, with a pointed chin and sunken cheeks. His eyes flickered with silver light, and according to Lin Wanrong's skill in reading people, this man was a natural opportunist.

"Perfect!" Lin Wanrong smirked, taking out a silver coin and holding it in his hand. He hurried over to the steward and whispered, "Esteemed Steward, may I have a word with you?"

Although he was called a steward, he was actually an assistant steward. His immediate superior, the chief steward of the Xiao family household, was overseeing the scholar recruitment. With the assistant steward's experience, he knew that having the title of the chief steward of the Xiao family made him a hot commodity among the scholars.

The scholars were generous, and to win the favor of the young ladies, they eagerly tried to curry favor with the chief steward. All things considered, the chief steward could easily earn eighty to a hundred silver coins in a day.

The assistant steward resented his title, as it relegated him to the task of supervising the servant recruitment, which offered little in the way of perks. By the end of the day, he had only accumulated a meager five silver coins, all in small change. He despised these poor servant applicants but had no choice, as those applying for servant positions were unlikely to be wealthy.

"What do you want—?" The assistant steward stopped mid-sentence as he saw the silver glint in Lin Wanrong's hand.

"Um—" The assistant steward's eyes lit up, and he walked a few steps closer, "Speak quickly, I'm busy with work."

Lin Wanrong's initial offering of a silver coin, while much less than what the scholars provided, was still considered generous among the servant applicants.

This young man has potential, the assistant steward thought, feeling an immediate "fondness" for the healthy-looking youth on account of the silver.

"What is it?" The assistant steward asked with an official tone, subtly pocketing the silver coin when no one was looking.

Once the money was taken, Lin Wanrong felt more at ease and quickly asked, "May I know the esteemed steward's name?"

"My surname is Pang, and thanks to the appreciation of the masters and mistresses, I am the deputy steward of the Xiao residence," said Deputy Steward Pang with an arrogant expression. However, when he mentioned the "deputy" part, a hint of resentment flashed in his eyes, clearly dissatisfied with the title.

"So you are Steward Pang," Lin Wanrong looked at him in awe, seemingly ignoring the "deputy" part of the title, "My, your reputation truly precedes you. Meeting you in person is even more impressive than hearing about you."

Deputy Steward Pang looked at him curiously and asked, "Do you know me?"

Lin Wanrong wore a charming smile on his face, "Of course. Although I haven't met you before, who in Jinling City doesn't know the famous Steward Pang? Loyal and righteous, devoted to your master, patriotic, your good name is known throughout the land."

Words didn't cost anything, so Lin Wanrong shamelessly praised Deputy Steward Pang.

But Deputy Steward Pang was even more shameless, his eyebrows raised and eyes smiling as he nodded, accepting the compliments.

Looking at the man's thick skin, Lin Wanrong thought, My goodness, his skin is even thicker than mine. This guy is beyond saving.

Lin Wanrong glanced around and then whispered into Deputy Steward Pang's ear, "Moreover, I heard from friends in the servant circle that the position of steward in the Xiao residence should have been yours. But last time, that fellow used despicable means, deceived the mistresses, and took your position. He is truly despicable and vile. I would give him a beating every time I see him."

In Lin Wanrong's previous world, there was a natural conflict between the chief and deputy positions, and he had seen such situations countless times. Furthermore, Deputy Steward Pang had a naturally harsh appearance, and nobody would believe that he didn't covet the steward's position.

"Don't talk nonsense—" Deputy Steward Pang put on a righteous face and said, "Unity is crucial. Steward Wang and I work as a team, and we have a harmonious relationship. Under the leadership of our core team, the Xiao family's servants are powerful. Steward Wang and I cooperate and complement each other well, and the organization trusts us greatly." However, the fleeting excitement in his eyes revealed his true thoughts.

"Indeed, indeed—" Lin Wanrong agreed obsequiously, "You two work together in the same team, leading hundreds of Xiao family servants. Naturally, your relationship must be quite deep."

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