

Rise 165

Chapter 165: Sorry, I made you laugh

The study was filled with laughter and disdainful glances.

In response, Zhu Ping'an merely cupped his hands, showing a simple smile toward the area where the laughter was most concentrated, and said faintly:

"Sorry, I made you laugh."

The accountants at the three tables thought Zhu Ping'an had been exposed, and was softening up. So, some of the accountants adopted a condescending attitude, saying things like "It's great if one can admit their mistakes and correct them," "It's not too late to change after a misstep," and "Don't pretend to know something you don't" among other things. Some accountants shook their heads and chuckled bitterly; others continued to criticize, saying things like "You're playing the fool"...

In any case, the accountants all carried a sense of superiority.

Only the cunning young girl noticed a clue in Zhu Ping'an's silly smile. Upon hearing the tone of his words, which seemed to emphasize the apology, her dark eyes flickered, and she recognized the strong tone of sarcasm in his earlier remark.

"Sorry" was a mockery. "Made you laugh" was mocking laughter.

The backstabbing was well hidden...

This tactic was exactly what this seemingly foolish troublemaker would do! Anyone who wasn't familiar with him would definitely end up selling him out and then helping him count the money!

For some reason, the cunning young girl, Li Shu, actually started to believe that Zhu Ping'an's earlier remark about the account book being falsified might have been serious.

The round-faced maid beside Li Shu, hearing Zhu Ping'an's words, looked even more worried, thinking: "Uh-oh, this bad person is really going too far. What if he makes Master angry? What if he doesn't let us borrow books anymore...?"

While the accountants, filled with a sense of superiority, lectured him, they suddenly heard the person who had been targeted speak again.

"Sorry, I made you laugh," Zhu Ping'an said with a silly smile. As the accountants' lecturing voices continued, he shook the account book in his hand. Slowly, he continued, "But, this account book is indeed falsified. At least, the one in my hand is."

The room went silent for several seconds.

Ah, this guy is really trying to keep up the act!!!

After the brief silence, the accountants once again began to criticize Zhu Ping'an. The boy is still putting on an act! Doesn't he know he's just playing a big sword in front of Guan Gong? Doesn't he know that we've been working in accounting for decades? This is something that can't be tolerated anymore!

"Can you even understand this account book?" one of the accountants mocked.

As soon as the question was asked, Zhu Ping'an replied calmly with one word: "Yes."

The accountant who had spoken was immediately outraged. This boy really has a sharp tongue! At this point, he's still pretending. He loves to act, doesn't he? Well, today I'll expose his lies and show him that an account book is not as simple as he thinks, so that he doesn't tarnish the name of us learned men!

With that, the accountant picked up the account book in his hand and stood up, preparing to expose Zhu Ping'an's lies.

"Since you say you can understand the account book, then tell me what's written on this page?" The accountant casually flipped open the account book, pointing to a page, and began his first strike in exposing the falsehood.

Zhu Ping'an took the book and glanced at it. Then, he spoke calmly, "This is a daily clearing book, a record of cash flow. Specifically, this is a page from the transaction ledger, and it records, hmm, Zhang San's debt payment of two hundred and fifty-eight taels..."

After Zhu Ping'an finished reading, the accountant standing opposite him looked as if struck by lightning. His face was full of disbelief, and he immediately snatched the account book from Zhu Ping'an's hand, staring at the page for a long time, unable to regain his composure.

He... he can actually read it? The accountant was dumbfounded, unable to speak for a long time.

A flash of light passed through the dark eyes of the cunning young girl.

"Miss, that bad person... he really can read the account book," the round-faced maid, Hua'er, said, her little face turning red. She tugged at her mistress's sleeve, whispering in disbelief.

"Is it really that just being able to read means you can understand it?" Hua'er blinked, still somewhat unconvinced.

"You go get a book and take a look," said the sly girl Li Shu, giving a small nod to the maid Hua'er.

So, the maid Hua'er quickly walked over to Zhu Ping'an's side and took the ledger from his hands.

If this villain can understand it, then my lady and I should be able to understand it too, right?

After taking the ledger from Zhu Ping'an, the maid Hua'er excitedly handed it over to her lady and then leaned in to look at it together with her.

But after just one glance, the maid Hua'er's face darkened.

What kind of strange symbols are these in the ledger? I can recognize the Chinese characters, but these symbols used for the numbers like 丨 || ||| × 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎... what are they? I can't understand them at all!

The little maid's face, which usually looked as round as a steamed bun, was now as sour as a bitter melon.

The three tables of accountants, who had confirmed that Zhu Ping'an could understand the ledger, stayed quiet for a while, and then began to murmur loudly. "So what if you can understand the ledger? Many people can understand it, but how many could actually work as accountants? Let alone being as famous as us in the entire county. We've carefully checked the accounts for three days and couldn't find any issues, but you've just looked at it for less than a cup of tea and already claim it's fake. How could that be possible? The person who made these accounts is an expert, without a flaw. How could you spot fake accounts so quickly?"

"Zhu Ping'an, come here," the maid Hua'er waved at him after receiving a signal from her lady.

"What is it?" Zhu Ping'an frowned.

"Come here," the maid Hua'er pouted.

When Zhu Ping'an walked over, the maid Hua'er held the ledger and pointed at the places where the symbols like 丨 𠄎 𠄎𠄎 𠄎𠄎𠄎 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 appeared, asking, "What are these strange symbols?"

Strange symbols?

Well, for most people, these would probably be considered strange symbols. But for merchants and accountants in the southern regions, especially around Nanjing, this is very familiar. These symbols are part of the "commercial numbers" used in Chinese folk traditions, which you can still find in special characters on computers today. These "commercial numbers" were widely used in ancient trade, particularly for accounting in vertical ledgers. Zhu Ping'an had learned about them when studying ancient Chinese characters. They may look like strange symbols, but these commercial numbers are very visual and easy to learn. Even illiterate people could write them with ease, which is probably why they became the standard commercial numbers for ancient businesses.

"This is the commercial number system. 1 is written as a single vertical line 丨 ; 2 is two vertical lines 𠄎 ; 3 is three vertical lines 𠄎𠄎 ; 4 is a cross 𠄎𠄎 ; we usually use an abacus, and you see this ancient symbol 𠄎𠄎𠄎 , the top part looks like the bead on an abacus moving down, representing five, so 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 is six, 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 is seven, very easy to understand. 𠄎𠄎𠄎𠄎 is the cursive form of 'jiu' (久), written quickly..." Zhu Ping'an explained in simple terms, pointing to these commercial numbers on the ledger the maid was holding.

The maid Hua'er's face turned slightly red, unsure if it was because she was embarrassed by being stumped by such simple numbers or something else.

As Zhu Ping'an was explaining, the sly girl leaned in to listen seriously. After hearing it, she gave a disdainful "humph."

What? Thinking it was impressive, but it's actually so simple...