

Rise 176

Chapter 176: But Fatty Has Already Seen Through It

The fat guy was like a shadow, following Zhu Ping'an everywhere, and he even had the audacity to justify it by saying, "My father told me to learn from you."

Learn from your sister! Zhu Ping'an looked at the fat guy's chubby face and felt the urge to kick him twice: I stay up at night copying books, while you sleep sprawled on the table; I wake up early to read and practice calligraphy, while you nap against a tree; I spend my day practicing eight-legged essays, and you're drooling on the desk... What the hell are you even learning?!

Still, even though all he did was sleep, this guy was a dedicated shadow. He even insisted on tagging along when Zhu Ping'an went to return a book to the wealthy landlord, Li.

As soon as they reached the entrance of the landlord's house, Fatty Xue Chi saw the two stone lions at the doorway and immediately started making a big fuss. He pointed at the lions, his plump face twitching with excitement:

"Ahem, ahem! Don't scare me like that! The texture is fine, smooth, and lustrous—so naturally translucent! This is top-grade green jade! Just imagine how much money it took to carve such massive stone lions... And they just leave them at the entrance like this? Aren't they afraid someone will steal them?"

Then, Fatty Xue Chi waddled up to the stone lions, examined them from every angle, and beat his chest in regret, looking like he wished he had the strength of a Hercules so he could haul them away himself.

Green jade?

Who in the village would recognize something like that? If it weren't for Fatty pointing it out, Zhu Ping'an wouldn't have even considered that the stone lions casually placed at the landlord's entrance could be valuable enough to shock a rich kid like Fatty.

"Can you have some dignity for once?" Zhu Ping'an shot him a look of utter disdain before stepping forward and climbing the stairs.

Reaching the door, Zhu Ping'an raised his hand and knocked.

No response.

It seemed like the landlord was away again. If he were home, the gatekeeper, Uncle Li, wouldn't be so negligent in his duties.

After knocking a second time, the door finally opened.

"I figured Young Master Zhu would be coming by soon. And sure enough, here you are! Please come in. The master left just yesterday, but before he went, he specifically told me to make sure to treat Young Master Zhu well," the gatekeeper, Uncle Li, said, rambling on like a chatterbox.

Yeah, right. As if the landlord would actually leave such instructions—Zhu Ping'an didn't believe it for a second.

When Uncle Li noticed Fatty, he was momentarily stunned.

"This is my friend, Xue Chi from Fengyang Prefecture," Zhu Ping'an introduced. "He's heard that your family has an extensive book collection and wanted to see it for himself."

"Well, if he's a friend of Young Master Zhu, then it's fine." Uncle Li hesitated for a moment before allowing Fatty Xue Chi inside as well.

Once inside the courtyard, Fatty Xue Chi acted like Grandma Liu stepping into the Grand View Garden for the first time, gawking and exclaiming at everything he saw. He pointed at the redwood corridors, the huanghuali wood window lattices, and even some ornamental fish in the pond, shouting about how they were rare treasures...

"Who's making all that noise? Don't you know the young miss is reading?!"

The study door suddenly swung open, and a young maid, Hua'er, stormed out, pouting angrily and waving a handkerchief as she scolded them.

When she saw Zhu Ping'an, she paused for a moment. She had assumed it was some unruly servant making all the commotion. But then she frowned—Zhu Ping'an was always polite and well-mannered. He'd never behaved like this before.

"Wow! So beautiful! Way prettier than the maids at my house!"

At that moment, Fatty suddenly hollered in his loud, grating voice.

The maid, Hua'er, suddenly noticed a chubby man clinging to a pillar in a corner of the corridor. Startled, she quickly hid behind Zhu Ping'an, feeling both embarrassed and angry.

"Who are you? Who let you in? Don't you know that outsiders aren't allowed here?" Hua'er peeked out from behind Zhu Ping'an, covering half of her delicate face with a handkerchief, pouting angrily.

"Outsider?"

The chubby man murmured upon hearing this, then suddenly looked as if he had been struck by lightning. His fat hand trembled as he pointed at Zhu Ping'an. "Brother Zhu, you're really something, huh? Hiding all this time. I was wondering why you weren't out enjoying the beauty of the Qinhuai River in Yingtian. Turns out, you already have a beautiful wife and concubines at home! And such stunning ones at that! I'm truly envious."

"What nonsense are you talking about!" Zhu Ping'an was speechless.

Hua'er's face turned red with embarrassment as she snapped, "What rubbish are you spouting? Who's his wife or concubine?!"

The chubby man looked at Zhu Ping'an and Hua'er with a knowing expression, as if to say, "You can try to deny it, but this wise and perceptive Lord Fatty has already seen through everything."

"You still won't admit it? Just now, you said outsiders weren't allowed in, and you tried to keep me out, but you didn't say anything about Brother Zhu. Doesn't that mean Brother Zhu is an insider? Insider... doesn't that mean you're family?" The chubby man, Xue Chi, analyzed the situation like a detective, making a seemingly airtight argument.

"You're talking nonsense!" Hua'er was both embarrassed and furious.

"Hua'er, you little troublemaker, are you itching for a beating? You can't even handle such a small task properly!"

At that moment, a voice as sweet as a nightingale's rang out from the study. It was incredibly pleasant to the ears.

Xue Chi's round face immediately turned toward the study door. In his lecherous little eyes, he saw an unbelievably beautiful young girl step out. The maid from earlier was already stunning, but compared to this girl, she was merely a tiny star beside the moon.

Even a fairy would feel ashamed in her presence.

Beyond her beauty, the girl carried an aura as intoxicating as poison, making it impossible not to be drawn into her.

She was unlike any girl Xue Chi had ever encountered. The girls he had met before were all gentle and demure, but this one—this one could only be described as enchanting. After seeing her, Xue Chi felt that all the other women he had known were lifeless. Only this girl was truly alive.

"Who is this fat pig? Doesn't he know that outsiders aren't allowed here? Hurry up and get someone to throw him out!"

The black-bellied young girl, Li Shu, had just stepped out, but after taking one glance at Xue Chi, she immediately looked at Baozi, Hua'er with disgust and ordered her around arrogantly.

Outsider?

Hearing this word again, Xue Chi's heart shattered. He looked at Zhu Ping'an with a face full of envy and jealousy, then suddenly wailed, "This one too? She's also your woman? Wuwuwu... Brother Zhu, you're really making people jealous... Wuwuwu, I must not look, I must not look."

Xue Chi wailed as he turned his head away, no longer daring to look at the black-bellied young girl and Hua'er. These were all Brother Zhu's women—he couldn't betray Brother Zhu by staring.

This guy was honestly too ridiculous! Zhu Ping'an looked at Xue Chi and couldn't help but laugh.

"You fat pig, what nonsense are you spouting?! Who's that toad's woman?!"

The black-bellied young girl blushed, pointing at Xue Chi as she scolded him furiously. Then, catching sight of Zhu Ping'an smirking with amusement, she became even angrier. Her small tiger teeth flashed as she stomped over and pinched Zhu Ping'an, scolding, "Zhu Ping'an! What are you grinning about, you toad?! Stop dreaming!"

"In broad daylight, openly flirting like this... and you still say there's nothing going on? Who would believe that?"

At this moment, a weak voice sounded. The chubby man, now covering his eyes with both hands, sighed dramatically, striking a pose as if to say, "No matter how much you deny it, this wise and perceptive Lord Fatty has already seen through everything."

