

Rise 180

Chapter 180: The Wildness of Youth

At dusk, the setting sun was glowing red, slowly sinking behind the western mountains. It looked as if someone had splashed a bucket of red watercolor onto it, dyeing not only the sun but also half the sky. The sunset was infinitely beautiful, mesmerizing to behold.

Under the sunset, a young girl stood idly by the pond, tossing fish food into the water. She watched as the fish competed for the food, flicking their tails and breaking through the water's surface, creating ripples. The rippling water, illuminated by the sunset's glow, shimmered red, looking breathtakingly beautiful.

Yet, the stunning scenery seemed to do little to spark the girl's interest. Her delicate face bore an expression of boredom as she absentmindedly scattered the fish food—some near, some far. The fish in the pond eagerly chased after the food wherever she threw it, except for one koi fish, which leisurely swam in the middle of the pond, indifferent to the commotion.

"This stupid fish! I've been feeding you for so long, and you still won't come!"

Annoyed, the girl suddenly threw a whole handful of fish food toward the center of the pond, startling the unbothered koi. With a loud splash, the fish disappeared beneath the water.

Just then, in the distance, a little maid with a bun hairstyle lifted her skirt and ran over, shouting breathlessly, "Miss, Miss, that scoundrel came to borrow books again!"

The girl, who had been feeding the fish, suddenly brightened at the news. However, her face remained indifferent, and she pouted slightly. "So what if he came? Who cares?"

"He said he's going to take the imperial examination," the little maid added.

"Oh? Are you reluctant to see him go?" The girl smirked and cast a sideways glance at the little maid.

"Who... Who said that?! Miss, you just love teasing me!" The little maid's face turned bright red, and she twisted shyly.

"Oh? Then why are you blushing?" The girl playfully lifted the little maid's chin and smiled mischievously.

"Miss..." The little maid dragged out the word in protest, objecting to her mistress's teasing. "That scoundrel also brought several pages of the Heavenly Sword and Slaying Python Chronicles he wrote."

"Really?" The girl's voice carried a hint of excitement.

"Yes, many pages. It looks really thick," the little maid confirmed.

Hearing this, the girl immediately dumped all the remaining fish food into the pond and gracefully lifted her skirt, heading straight for the study.

"Miss, wait for me..." The little maid, who had just run over, watched as her mistress left. She quickly lifted her skirt and chased after her, panting with flushed cheeks.

Inside the study, Zhu Ping'an was browsing the books he intended to borrow when suddenly, with a loud bang

, the door was pushed open. The cunning young lady strode in, lifting the hem of her dress.

This gold-digger changed into another new outfit again! Ever since childhood, she had never worn the same clothes for more than two days! Peeking out from behind the bookshelf, Zhu Ping'an glanced at the domineering young lady and smirked.

"Why are you here again?"

The young lady marched up to the bookshelf and cast her bright, watery eyes at Zhu Ping'an. She dragged her words with an air of disdain, looking at him with obvious distaste.

Zhu Ping'an remained focused on his book, not even sparing her a glance. He responded calmly, "Borrowing books."

The young lady frowned at his unruffled demeanor. With a delicate yet assertive gesture, she reached out and covered the pages of his book, blocking his view.

"Where's my Heavenly Sword and Slaying Python Chronicles?" She pouted and stretched out her delicate hand, demanding imperiously.

Such a spoiled young lady! Zhu Ping'an wondered which unfortunate guy would have to marry this stubborn girl one day.

He looked up at her with a smirk and suddenly asked, "When I was taking the exams in Huaining and Anqing Prefecture, was it you who sent someone to deliver silver to me?"

At his words, the young lady's mind seemed to short-circuit. She stood frozen like a wooden doll, her large eyes staring at him in shock. Her delicate face instantly turned bright red...

Two seconds later, she snapped out of it. Still blushing, she spat at him and huffed, "What nonsense are you talking about? Who sent you silver?!"

"The gentleman who gave me the silver—I saw him on the day Master Li returned," Zhu Ping'an said calmly.

The scheming girl's proud, upturned face turned even redder.

Then, she quickly regained her usual arrogant demeanor. Tilting her delicate face upward at a forty-five-degree angle, she blushed but remained unfazed. "Hmph, so what if it was me! Don't overthink it. At the time, you were robbed and had no money for the exam. If you didn't take the exam, how could you fail? And if you didn't fail, how would I make fun of you and look down on you? Hmph! Who would have thought that you, this bad person, would get lucky and pass? I ended up losing out instead, so of course, I was too embarrassed to admit it."

Damn it, so she did it just to see me fail and mock me? Rich people really do play differently!

Zhu Ping'an finally unraveled the mystery. This scheming girl had gone to such lengths just to mock him. Well, to her, that bit of money probably wasn't worth much anyway.

"Miss, wait for me..."

The little maid with a bun finally caught up, panting heavily. It wasn't entirely her fault for being slow—on one hand, the scheming girl had walked too fast, and on the other, the little maid had already run ahead once to inform her that Zhu Ping'an had arrived. She was completely exhausted and had to rest for a bit before running over again.

"Stop interrupting! Where's my Heavenly Sword and Venomous Serpent Chronicles?"

The scheming girl suddenly turned bossy again, extending her delicate hand with an air of command, her breath as light as orchids.

Women really do change moods in an instant!

Zhu Ping'an watched the girl's sudden shift in attitude and shook his head slightly before pointing toward the table in the main hall.

The scheming girl snorted coldly and turned toward the hall.

When the little maid entered, she immediately heard her lady's domineering tone. She didn't doubt it at all and eagerly ran to the table, like a loyal lackey, and presented the handwritten Heavenly Sword and Venomous Serpent Chronicles to her lady.

This was a thin booklet that Zhu Ping'an had copied by hand, imitating his own writing style, just for the scheming girl.

The scheming girl held the booklet in her hands, looking satisfied, but she still spoke in a sarcastic tone. "Hmph, you deliberately made the pages so small. There's no way this will be enough. So half-hearted!"

Zhu Ping'an, standing behind the bookshelf, was speechless. What does small pages have to do with whether it's enough or not? More pages just mean a longer book!

"Hey, Zhu Ping'an, you don't need to write anymore before your exam. But once you return from the exam, I want you to copy the entire book for me."

The scheming girl flipped through a few pages and suddenly spoke.

Did she suddenly grow a conscience and worry that she'd interfere with my studies? Zhu Ping'an found it hard to believe and looked at her with some doubt.

"Hmph, don't overthink it. I'm just worried that if you rush it for the exam, you'll do a sloppy job, and the story won't be as good..." The scheming girl rolled her eyes and said indifferently.

As expected. I knew she wasn't that kindhearted.

Zhu Ping'an felt relieved.

The little maid glanced between Zhu Ping'an and her lady. "Young Master Zhu, you're about to take the imperial exam. Do you feel confident?"

Before Zhu Ping'an could answer, the scheming girl immediately poured cold water on the idea.

"Him? Hmph, a toad like him was already lucky enough to pass the county-level exam. And now he thinks he can pass the imperial exam? Ha, what a joke..."

She covered her delicate mouth with her hand and sneered.

"You really have long hair but short knowledge," Zhu Ping'an glanced at the scheming girl who was laughing exaggeratedly and spoke calmly.

"Ah! Zhu Ping'an, what do you mean by that?!" The scheming girl instantly flared up.

Zhu Ping'an merely smiled without replying.

"What, you really think you, this little toad, have a chance of passing the exam?" The scheming girl was full of mockery.

Zhu Ping'an curved his lips into a faint smile and stepped out from behind the bookshelf, walking straight toward her. He had already chosen his book.

"You... What are you doing?" The scheming girl's expression changed slightly, and she took two steps back.

But the next second, she stomped her foot in frustration—because Zhu Ping'an wasn't walking toward her at all. Instead, he went to the table in the main hall, picked up a brush, ink, and paper, and with a few swift strokes, left behind a sheet filled with bold calligraphy. Slinging his book bag over his shoulder, he strode out of the study without looking back.

The scheming girl walked over to the table and looked down at the paper. On it, written in a free-flowing script, was a poem titled River City Song:

In youth, one dares to be wild,

Scorning Kunlun, laughing at Luliang.

Sharpening my sword for years, today I reveal its edge.

Tempered by fire for two hundred days,

It becomes Mo Ye, a blade that cuts through steel.

The fledgling eagle spreads its wings,

Braving the thunder, proud in the blazing sun.

Singing against the fierce wind, unafraid of ice and frost.

Longing to soar to the heavens, to grasp the sun and moon,

To overturn the Eastern Sea and cleanse the vast sky with my brush.

After reading the poem, the scheming girl couldn't help but look up at the silhouette walking forward under the colorful evening clouds...

"Tch, acting all high and mighty," she muttered, pouting.