

## Rise 193

### Chapter 193: Gambling

"Food is fine, but no alcohol."

Zhu Ping'an was quite interested in Fatty's invitation to a meal. He had no choice—he hadn't eaten enough at noon. It wasn't that he was picky, but the test hall's biscuits were just too awful. If not for washing them down with tea, he would have barely managed to finish one.

Of course, this was understandable. The provincial exam wasn't as important as the national imperial exam, so the allocated funds were minimal. The fact that they even had biscuits was already fortunate.

"Top-quality Zhuangyuan Red. Don't regret refusing it," Fatty said with a wide grin.

But it was useless. Zhu Ping'an had no interest whatsoever.

Since he had turned in his paper early, it was only around three in the afternoon. The restaurant wasn't too crowded. Led by a waiter, Zhu Ping'an and Fatty took a seat by the window. Fatty generously ordered the restaurant's signature dishes, and Zhu Ping'an was happy to accept—after all, Fatty's family wasn't short on money.

As they feasted, more and more scholars in blue robes arrived, gradually filling the restaurant. These scholars had just finished their exams. Since many had submitted their papers together, the exam official, Zhao Wenhua, hadn't had time to review them on the spot and had only collected them. These scholars didn't know how well they had performed. Some were anxious, others excited, and they eagerly debated the exam questions while drinking, making the restaurant lively.

Hearing their discussions, Fatty rolled his small white eyes and scoffed in disdain. But since his voice was too soft to attract any attention, he was somewhat displeased—after all, he was a top-tier candidate!

Come on, where does a backdoor entry candidate like you get this sense of pride? Zhu Ping'an couldn't help but look down on Fatty's attitude.

"This time's exam was simple. I think I should pass."

"Yeah, yeah, I feel like I have a good chance this time too."

Just as the scholars at the nearby table were encouraging each other, a loud, melodious fart suddenly rang out.

"Nooo..."

Clear, long, and perfectly enunciated.

For a moment, the entire restaurant fell silent. The words of encouragement vanished. The scholars turned toward the source of the sound, only to see a certain Fatty at the next table looking back at them innocently.

"Disgraceful!"

"Truly an insult to scholars!"

"If one cannot even control a fart, how can they control the world?"

The scholars at the next table harshly criticized Fatty. They had just been talking about how they would pass for sure, and then this guy let out a fart that sounded like "no"—was this some kind of curse? Of course, as educated men, they wouldn't express their anger crudely, but their indignant expressions were clear.

Under their accusations, Fatty remained unfazed. Without a trace of shame, he replied, "That wasn't a fart. That was my butt breathing."

Breathing, my ass!

Just moments ago, his face had been red. They had thought he was concentrating on something important, but no—he had just been forcing out a fart...

Honestly, even Zhu Ping'an was tempted to hit him at this point.

Though scholars were supposed to be refined, Fatty's words had pushed the limits. Many of the scholars at the next table were barely holding back, looking ready to roll up their sleeves and teach him a lesson.

"What, you want to control the sky, the earth, and even when people take a dump and fart?"

"Hey, hey... what are you doing?"

"Don't be rash! We're all respectable scholars; we shouldn't act like brutes."

Fatty stood up, waving his chubby hands to calm the situation. Then, with a provocative smirk, he added, "How about this? Since we've all just taken the exam, let's make a bet. There are four of you at your table and only two of us here. Let's see which table has more people passing when the results come out. If you win, I, Xue Chiren, will apologize to you all by treating you at the best restaurant in Yingtian City. But if we win—haha—then you'll just have to treat us to a meal right here. What's the matter? Are you afraid?"

Damn, so this guy had this kind of plan all along!

Both I and Fatty are pretty much guaranteed to pass the provincial exam. No matter how skilled that table of people is, less than half of them will probably make it through. That means we've basically got a sure win. Winning the meal is secondary—what matters is that Fatty gets to show off. Even if we lose, Fatty will still get to be the center of attention.

Zhu Ping'an was speechless at Fatty's shameless behavior. He had no interest in showing off. Of course, this wasn't anything outrageous, so he just let Fatty do as he pleased. If Fatty wanted to come, he could, but Zhu Ping'an had no intention of joining in.

"You said it yourself, so don't regret it later."

At the next table, several scholars couldn't wait to shout out as soon as Fatty finished speaking. In their eyes, Fatty was someone who couldn't even control his own farts, yet he thought he could pass the provincial exam? As for the young man sitting across from Fatty, he was clearly just a kid who hadn't even grown all his hair yet—obviously a student admitted through a family donation, probably even worse than Fatty.

So to them, Fatty was just asking for a beating, and they were more than happy to oblige.

With that, they found a few intermediaries in the restaurant, brought out their examination admission slips to verify their identities, and wrote down the names and hometowns of both tables. This would serve as proof for their bet when the results were released.

After that, the atmosphere in the restaurant returned to harmony.

At some point, a father and daughter duo arrived in the restaurant's main hall to perform. They were dressed simply—the father played a stringed instrument, while the daughter sang. The girl looked about seventeen or eighteen, not particularly beautiful, but she had a pleasant voice.

After singing two songs, the father put down his instrument and walked around the hall with an iron tray, collecting tips.

Zhu Ping'an also took out a dozen or so copper coins and placed them in the old man's tray.

"Thank you, young master."

Whenever someone tipped, the girl would place her hands on her waist, bend her legs, and perform a graceful bow.

Everything was going well until suddenly, the girl let out a startled cry, begging for mercy, breaking the harmony of the scene.

At some point, a slick-haired, powdered-faced young master had appeared in the hall. He was lecherously pulling at the girl, saying the usual sleazy lines about "come enjoy life with big brother" and "big brother will make you happy." Behind him stood a group of henchmen.

The hall was filled with scholars eager to uphold justice. Immediately, many of them stood up, ready to play the role of heroic rescuers.

"I dare you to move! My third uncle is none other than the esteemed provincial examiner, Lord Zhao!" The slick-haired young master shouted arrogantly, pointing at the scholars in the hall with a smug expression, full of confidence.

These scholars had just finished their exams, and whether they could qualify for the next stage depended entirely on this Zhao Wenhua, Lord Zhao. In an instant, none of them dared to act recklessly. Even Fatty, who had started to rise, hesitated and sat back down.

The girl's father wanted to save his daughter, but he was blocked by the young master's henchmen.

"Hahaha! You'd better just behave and become my eighth concubine. Give me a fat, white son, hahahaha!"

The scoundrel was overjoyed and continued his harassment.