

Rise 256

Chapter 256: Couplets

"That's for those who can come up with matching couplets, not for you. You should go check out other inns," the shop assistant said impatiently.

The powerful prey on the weak, and slaves dominate their masters.

The shop assistant's sarcastic tone, combined with the disdainful glance of the scholars deep in thought inside the inn, was a double blow that could easily deal 10,000 points of damage... Usually, when faced with such an awkward situation, most people would probably feel too ashamed to look up and walk away.

However, to everyone's surprise, the poor country bumpkin standing at the entrance of the inn didn't seem to catch the sarcasm in the shop assistant's words or understand the disdain in the looks of the others. Instead of being embarrassed and covering his face, he wore a simple, honest smile and, clearly delighted, said one sentence:

"Really? So that means there's a room then."

What a pure-hearted young man!

The scholars in the inn, who had been deeply focused on coming up with couplets, couldn't help but burst out laughing when they heard Zhu Ping'an's words and saw the silly grin on his face at the entrance. I imagine that the most polite word they could use to describe this country bumpkin would be "simple-minded." Of course, judging by the expression on their faces, after a long period of struggling to come up with a couplet and failing to do so, the way they described the poor young man at the door was likely more vulgar: "Idiot! Dumbass!"

The shop assistant, hearing this, looked at the young man's silly grin at the entrance and nearly spat out a mouthful of blood. What nonsense is this? He can't even understand simple words. The room that was kept open isn't for you!

"The remaining rooms are reserved for those who can come up with matching couplets. They are not for rent to the public. Sir, please leave. I won't see you out," the shop assistant said, growing increasingly impatient, making a sweeping motion with his hand toward the door. Despite his smile, his words dripped with sarcasm.

"Really? Then I'll give it a try and come up with a couplet too." Zhu Ping'an said, still holding the black horse by the door, squinting his eyes and speaking with a silly, cheerful expression, as if he had no idea what rejection was.

The shop assistant scanned Zhu Ping'an from head to toe, rolling his eyes. A breath of disdain left his nostrils.

"You too?"

Don't just casually use 'too,' alright? You'll lower the level of the people here who are also trying to come up with couplets! Look at you, obviously a country bumpkin who digs for food in the mud. There's not a shred of scholarly air about you. It's a miracle if you can even recognize your own name, and you're talking about coming up with a couplet? You should know that these couplets were specially collected by our owner from all over the country, taking a lot of time. Even the average scholar wouldn't dare claim to match even one of

them. You, a country bumpkin, dare to say you can match a couplet? That's quite a bold claim. I don't even want to expose you!

"Why, can't I come up with a couplet now?" the young man at the door glanced toward the hall and softly asked, flashing a row of white teeth.

"Even if you can, so what? Even if you can't, so what? Anyway, you won't be able to do it. Since it's still early, you might as well go find another inn," the shop assistant said impatiently. The hall was filled with scholarly elites, and if a country bumpkin like you came to join the fun, wouldn't that be an insult to these esteemed guests? Think about it. Many of the scholars in the hall haven't even come up with a couplet yet. If a country bumpkin like you walked in and couldn't come up with one either, it would be as if these esteemed scholars and you were no different. That can't happen. It absolutely cannot.

"Then that means I can," the young man at the door said cheerfully, his slightly dark face glowing with a rosy hue, like a pure stalk of red sorghum in the fields.

You've got to be kidding me!

The shop assistant almost spat out another mouthful of blood. What are you so happy about? Can't you understand simple words? Can you focus on the point? I told you to leave. Why are you worrying about whether you can come up with a couplet or not? Fine, this poor boy at the door really won't stop until he runs into a wall! Alright, let's see you hit that wall! You want to come up with a couplet? I'll let you, but not with the six couplets hanging in the inn's lobby.

"You want to match couplets, huh? If you can match my couplet, then you can go to the main hall and match the couplets there. If you can't match it, heh, then don't even think about the couplets in the main hall. You won't be able to come up with them no matter how hard you try."

The shop assistant glanced at Zhu Ping'an, gave a slight hum, and said.

The shop assistant had also studied for a few years, otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to get a job at this inn. The salary at this inn is two or three times higher than at other inns, and the requirement is to be literate and understand punctuation. It was precisely because he had studied for a few years that he was able to get a job at this inn. In just half a year, the shop assistant had earned enough to support others for two or three years, which made him feel a sense of pride and self-satisfaction.

"Alright." Zhu Ping'an responded with a cheerful smile, his expression still the same.

"The thatched door is now opened for you." The shop assistant exhaled and recited a couplet based on ancient poetry.

Actually, this couplet was not difficult at all. It comes from Du Fu's Guest Arrival. This is the second line of the couplet, and the shop assistant wanted Zhu Ping'an to provide the first line. However, he deliberately didn't specify which line was the first or second, looking down on Zhu Ping'an. If Zhu Ping'an had read poetry, he would have recognized it immediately as the second half of the line from Guest Arrival: "The flower path has not been swept for guests, but the thatched door is now opened for you." All he had to do was recite the first line to complete the couplet.

After reciting the couplet, the shop assistant glanced at Zhu Ping'an with a condescending look, while the people in the main hall, who were struggling to come up with couplets, glanced toward the door, treating it as a form of entertainment.

"The thatched door is now opened for you."

Zhu Ping'an, holding his Shamat black horse, softly recited the couplet given by the shop assistant. Just as the shop assistant was about to say that repeating the line didn't count as matching the couplets, Zhu Ping'an continued and delivered the second line:

"Wake up, damn it, and get up and enjoy!"

"The thatched door is now opened for you, wake up, damn it, and get up and enjoy!"

As soon as Zhu Ping'an said this couplet, everyone in the hall seemed to have been struck with a spell, stunned for a second, and then they burst into laughter, the entire hall echoing with their amusement. Although the people of the ancient Ming Dynasty didn't understand the meaning of "high" as it's used today, the word "high" in ancient times also had an onomatopoeic or exclamatory meaning, so they could roughly grasp the intended meaning.

The courtyard path, covered with flowers and plants, hadn't been swept for guests; the thatched door, made of rushes, had only been opened today because of your arrival. What a poetic scene! But the seven words "wake up, damn it, and get up and enjoy!" were like a pig, instantly smashing the elegant imagery, turning it into something like a dog eating shit.

The impact was utterly insane.

Of course, the shop assistant, who was at the front line of the impact, experienced a prelude to a ten-thousand-point damage, feeling like a pile of shit was shoved into his mouth. Just as he was about to spit out Zhu Ping'an's "dog shit" on his face, he heard Zhu Ping'an speak again.

"The flower path has not been swept for guests, but the thatched door is now opened for you." Zhu Ping'an showed eight teeth, flashing a standard smile, then continued, "Hehehe, I thought the atmosphere was too serious, so I made a joke."

With those words, the hot "shit" that the shop assistant was about to spit out was once again shoved back into his mouth.