

## Rise 258

Chapter 258: Oh, How About This Then

This couplet may seem simple at first glance, and it would be easy to come up with a matching one. However, if you look carefully, you will discover the hidden intricacies. This is a palindrome couplet. A palindrome couplet is one of the more difficult and interesting types of couplets, where the couplet is written in a mirrored form that can be read forwards and backwards. Not only does its meaning remain the same, but it is also quite fascinating.

The couplet hanging in the main hall of the guest station, when read from beginning to end or from end to beginning, carries the same meaning. However, it flows smoothly and creates a unique atmosphere. Moreover, this couplet is not a simple palindrome couplet; it belongs to one of the more difficult ones. It not only requires that it can be read both forwards and backwards but also that both readings are consistent and possess a certain poetic quality.

Zhu Ping'an looked up at the couplet and slightly curled the corner of his lips. Having once enjoyed the convenience of the internet, he immediately recalled four or five alternative endings. In the modern online world, what kind of difficult couplets hasn't been seen before? Even the so-called hardest couplet in history wouldn't stand a chance against the collective effort of internet users. Of course, he could also come up with a few couplets of his own, without needing any cheat codes. His level wasn't bad either.

"Hey, start with the first one. If you can't come up with a match, quickly take your horse and leave," said the shop assistant who had just completed the registration at the counter. He immediately walked over to Zhu Ping'an's side, pointing at the first couplet, which was the one from Jingquan Mountain, and impatiently urged him.

The shop assistant didn't believe that Zhu Ping'an could come up with a matching couplet.

Zhu Ping'an looked up at the couplet and softly read it aloud.

"Eh, didn't expect this country bumpkin to know characters," many people in the hall were a little surprised. Earlier, Zhu Ping'an had been able to come up with a couplet from the shop assistant at the door, and some people in the hall thought that he might just have overheard it. But now that they saw him softly reading the couplet aloud, they were indeed a little shocked.

"Repeating it doesn't count as matching a couplet," the shop assistant quickly said, adding, "What others have said also doesn't count as your match."

"You really think too much. I don't even know what others have said," Zhu Ping'an glanced at the shop assistant and said lightly.

"Maybe you overheard it at the door," the shop assistant gave him a strange look, sniffing and sneering.

"So what do you suggest?" Zhu Ping'an asked lightly.

"I have some matched couplets here. I'll say them out, and you can't repeat them," the clerk said, taking out a delicate booklet and flipping to the first page. There were only two or three matched couplets in it.

This time, the clerk learned from his previous lesson and gave Zhu Ping'an no chance for luck.

"Clear water in the pond, the water is clear.' This one is already matched, so you can't use it. There are also two others: 'Red scarf in the tent, the scarf is red,' and 'Red soft wine in the wine jar, the wine is soft and red.' You can't use any of them. Now, you can start," the shop assistant finished reading and urged Zhu Ping'an to begin.

"Clear water in the lake, the water is clear," Zhu Ping'an smiled slightly and spoke.

"Doesn't count. This doesn't count. You just changed one character!"

The shop assistant's face darkened. He couldn't believe it. Zhu Ping'an had changed "pond" to "lake" and thought it was a new couplet! Was he treating him like a fool? If this could be counted as a valid couplet, then people in the hall wouldn't be so troubled. If simply changing "pond" to "lake," "bay," "river," etc., worked, anyone could come up with this couplet. Then what would be so difficult about it?

"Oh, changing one character doesn't count, huh," Zhu Ping'an nodded as if he suddenly understood, then continued, "How about this: 'Sound water in the lake, the water is loud.'"

"Changing two characters still doesn't count!"

The shop assistant's face grew even darker, and he nearly spat on Zhu Ping'an's face in his agitation! Just now, he said changing one character wasn't allowed, and now Zhu Ping'an had changed two characters—he

had swapped "clear" for "loud"! Was this how one matched couplets? He was clearly just making up nonsense! The shop assistant almost screamed at him to leave to avoid embarrassment!

"Oh, changing two characters doesn't count either," Zhu Ping'an again seemed to suddenly realize and nodded. Then, he said calmly, "How about this: 'Sounding stone mountain, the stones sound.'"

Just now I said repeating doesn't count, and you changed one character!

I said changing one character doesn't count, and you changed two characters!

I said changing two characters doesn't count, and now you changed three characters!

"You just said 'sound water lake,' now you're saying 'sounding stone mountain.' What kind of nonsense are you spouting? There's no such lake or mountain with those names!" The shop assistant was almost livid. His face had turned red, and he was nearly bursting from anger.

"The Jingnan area, near the Huairou Mutianyu Great Wall, about 50 miles from the county, has a large canyon, spanning several dozen miles. Inside the canyon is a waterfall and spring pond, where the spring gushes like a fountain, and the sound of water is as loud as thunder. It can be heard a thousand meters away, so it's called 'Sound Water Lake.'"

"In Jiangnan, in Zhejiang's Taizhou County Xianju Township, there is a mountain with sheer cliffs, a hanging stone bridge, and numerous ravines and streams. The mountain has stones resembling hollow sand grains that sound like bells when shaken, hence the name 'Sounding Stone Mountain.'"

Zhu Ping'an looked at the shop assistant's dark face and smiled faintly. He calmly and clearly recited the geographical details and origins of both Sound Water Lake and Sounding Stone Mountain.

"Hey, Wen Sheng, do you think what he said is true?" The well-dressed young man next to him nudged his friend, Wen Sheng, and casually asked.

"I'm not sure about Sounding Stone Mountain, but I've heard of Sound Water Lake. My family has a farm not far from there. I've brewed tea with the lake water, and it tasted quite good," Wen Sheng replied softly, looking at Zhu Ping'an with growing interest. This countryside bumpkin was quite knowledgeable—he was certainly no ordinary person.

"Uh, even if those places exist, you're just taking advantage of others' knowledge. That doesn't count!" The shop assistant was flustered, his words coming out in a jumble.

"Oh, is that so?" Zhu Ping'an responded in the same manner as before, then continued indifferently, "How about this one then."

There's more!

The shop assistant swallowed nervously, glancing at Zhu Ping'an with increasing anxiety.

Ignoring the shop assistant's nervousness, Zhu Ping'an smiled faintly, the corner of his lips curling up. He then casually said, "'Withered vine by the rock, the vine withered.' Does this match?"

As soon as he finished, Zhu Ping'an mumbled to himself, "Maybe the poetic quality is a bit lacking, and the couplets don't really resonate with each other. How about this: 'Bright moon by the shore, the shore's moon bright.' What do you think?"

After speaking, Zhu Ping'an innocently looked at the shop assistant, asking whether his couplets were correct.

As for the shop assistant, he was so shocked that he was at a loss for words. His mouth twitched, and he wanted to say something but couldn't. All he could do was swallow nervously, completely stunned by Zhu Ping'an's casual ability to create couplets.

A couplet could be matched like this!