

Rise 309

Chapter 309: A Frustrated Young Man

"To seek principles outside the mind-this is why knowledge and action are considered two separate things. To seek principles within the mind-this is the teaching of unity between knowledge and action in the Sage's school."

Zhu Ping'an had spent the whole morning reading the Instructions for Practical Living, gaining a deeper understanding of Wang Yangming's philosophy of the mind. Beyond the concept of the unity of knowledge and action, Wang Yangming's lively expressions, his skill in using metaphors, and his sharp-witted language also left a strong impression on Zhu Ping'an.

Just before noon, Li Shu arrived at Zhu Ping'an's guest room with the little bun-faced maid, who was carrying a food box, her cheeks rosy red.

"Son-in-law~~ it's time to eat~~"

The little bun-faced maid drew out her tone sweetly, as if presenting a treasure, and placed the food box on Zhu Ping'an's table. She reached out with her chubby little hands to open the box and took out each dish one by one.

As soon as the box was opened, Zhu Ping'an smelled an intoxicating aroma. Although the food at the Marquis Residence was usually good, the meal brought today by the bun-faced maid, Hua'er, was clearly far superior to what he had eaten in the past two days.

All the dishes in the box were his personal favorites, even the soup was his preferred rice porridge.

"Thank you very much," Zhu Ping'an said with a slight smile, cupping his hands to express thanks to Li Shu and the bun-faced maid.

"Don't get any funny ideas-it was made by someone random," Li Shu shot Zhu Ping'an a glance and pouted.

Zhu Ping'an was already immune to Li Shu's tsundere attitude.

Coincidentally, he was also hungry, so he didn't hold back. He sat down at the table, picked up a piece of sweet and sour pork rib with his chopsticks, and put it into his mouth. It was dry yet moist, sweet and sour with a rich flavor-so familiar and absolutely delicious. Zhu Ping'an couldn't help but eat two more pieces before putting down his chopsticks, still savoring the taste.

"Did you bring your home cook with you?" Zhu Ping'an's eyes lit up.

"Huh?" The bun-faced maid looked puzzled.

"What, you don't like it?" Li Shu raised an eyebrow.

"No, it's too good," Zhu Ping'an shook his head. "The flavor is exactly like your family's. I thought your cook had come along too."

Li Shu glanced at Zhu Ping'an, her moist eyes flickering slightly. She still pouted and said, "So ignorant. The Marquis Residence has cooks, you know."

Zhu Ping'an smiled faintly and didn't pursue the question. Whether it was her family's cook or the Marquis Residence's, it made no difference to him. As long as the food was good, he'd eat more.

What surprised Zhu Ping'an a little, though, was that Li Shu and the bun-faced maid showed no intention of leaving. Li Shu walked over to Zhu Ping'an's desk, sat down, and began reading his calligraphy and essay drafts. The bun-faced maid followed her like a shadow-wherever Li Shu went, she went.

"Aren't you two going to eat?" Zhu Ping'an paused his meal and asked.

"We already ate in the courtyard," the bun-faced maid puffed her cheeks and said, "There's an annoying guy in the front courtyard-he's so clueless."

"Oh?" Zhu Ping'an was curious.

"He's the eldest madam's nephew-so annoying. Always hanging around us," the bun-faced maid pouted.

"Don't bring up that idiot!" Li Shu quickly cut in, as if worried Zhu Ping'an would get the wrong idea. "That guy is eighteen already, but he's no good at studying or martial arts. Does nothing at home and only got into the Imperial College because of his family's influence. Dumb as a dog but thinks he's the reincarnation of Pan An. Walks around with a fan pretending to be some talented scholar, spouting nonsensical poetry. I can't stand him."

Li Shu's face was full of disgust when she mentioned him.

From what Li Shu and the bun-faced maid said, Zhu Ping'an got the gist: to celebrate the old madam's birthday, the nephew from the wife's maiden family arrived early at the Marquis Residence. Seeing Li Shu, he was clearly smitten and began strutting around like a gorilla to impress her, which annoyed her enough to seek refuge in Zhu Ping'an's room.

Heh, probably the entire Marquis Residence was hoping for that nephew to succeed, judging by their attitude toward Zhu Ping'an.

In any case, once the birthday banquet ended and Li Shu returned home, she was supposed to break off the engagement anyway. So none of this really mattered to Zhu Ping'an.

From Li Shu's attitude, though, it was clear that the Marquis Residence's scheme had failed.

Zhu Ping'an smiled faintly and lowered his head to continue eating. Today's food really was excellent-he felt he could eat much more than usual.

"Hey, Zhu Ping'an, don't forget-you're my betrothed fiancé right now." Li Shu casually flipped through one of Zhu Ping'an's draft pages and said, watching him eat so heartily.

Zhu Ping'an naturally understood what she meant. It was what they had agreed upon before coming to the Marquis Residence.

"Of course." Zhu Ping'an nodded and popped a piece of crispy sweet pork into his mouth. He knew exactly what to do while at the residence.

Li Shu's lips curled into a satisfied smile.

Zhu Ping'an continued to enjoy his lunch, determined to fill his stomach. The delicious food was intoxicating. But before he could eat much more, a fragrant breeze swept by, and Li Shu smilingly sat across from him. Her skin was fairer than snow, and her eyes were so charming they seemed to drip water.

What's with this girl? Did she take the wrong medicine? Zhu Ping'an was so surprised he nearly dropped his chopsticks.

"Brother Zhu, don't just eat meat-try this braised bamboo shoot. It's crisp and refreshing, perfect with rice."

Even more shockingly, Li Shu delicately picked up a piece of braised bamboo shoot with her slender hand and brought it to Zhu Ping'an's lips. Her bright eyes locked onto his with a charm so soft it could melt bones.

But Zhu Ping'an quickly understood what she was doing.

Because with her gesture came a heart-wrenching shout-as if Brother Zhang next door had discovered Old Wang hiding in his closet. It was a mix of shock, fury, and heartbreak.

"You-you two! What are you doing, Cousin Shu?! Who he?! How could you-?!"

Zhu Ping'an looked up to see a young man in a tragic lover's pose, clutching his chest like a cuckolded husband catching someone in bed. One hand held a folded fan, the other trembled as he pointed at Zhu Ping'an and Li Shu, as though utterly devastated.

This must be the nephew that Li Shu and the maid were talking about. Not particularly good-looking, yet he strutted like he was king of the world. Reeking of perfume-a typical playboy.

Fatty Zhou was also there beside him.

Since Li Shu had gone this far, Zhu Ping'an naturally had to play along.

He looked up, smiled faintly at the dramatic young man, then opened his mouth and accepted the bamboo shoot Li Shu offered, chewing with satisfaction and nodding.

That made the young man's face turn green.

"Oh my, you're here? How embarrassing!"

Li Shu suddenly acted like she'd just seen the visitors. Blushing furiously, she dropped her chopsticks and covered her face with her sleeve, like a noble lady caught in a secret rendezvous. Her pretty face flushed red, she stood up in a hurry, stomped her little foot, and with the bun-faced maid in tow, fled the room, vanishing from sight.

This girl, what a waste if she doesn't go into acting. Zhu Ping'an smiled faintly as he watched her leave.