

Rise 97

Chapter 97: Nonsense about the Red Sleeves Adding Fragrance

A fox had suddenly appeared in the room, causing many inconveniences.

After a busy morning, Zhu Ping'an finally found some time to study and write a strategy paper at his desk by the window. Meanwhile, the enchanting woman, having taken her medicine, sat beside him, resting her delicate chin on her jade-like hands, watching him write. Out of boredom, she stirred the ink in the inkstone haphazardly with her slender fingers.

Suddenly, the enchanting woman burst into laughter.

Zhu Ping'an's train of thought was abruptly interrupted by her laughter, and he felt an impulse to sell this woman to a laughter venue so she could laugh to her heart's content.

"We have our own matters; you tend to your injuries while I write my words," Zhu Ping'an glanced at the enchanting woman indifferently. With no life-threatening worries, he felt less inclined to be cautious.

"You really don't know how to appreciate kindness. I'm just trying to help you correct the errors in your writing, yet you are so ungrateful," the enchanting woman rolled her eyes and pouted playfully.

"Big sister, please let me off; I'm still young."

Not knowing how to appreciate kindness, ungrateful... Zhu Ping'an's lips twitched slightly. How could those words sound so awkward? In ancient times, weren't women supposed to value the boundaries between men and women? Why did she make it sound so ambiguous, as if I had some kind of relationship with her? Besides, how could she spot the errors in my writing? I've polished this paper for quite a while.

Hearing this, the enchanting woman's face darkened. She seemed quite displeased with the term "big sister," which appeared to be a common woman's taboo. Women often dislike being referred to as "big," even if she looked only about seventeen or eighteen.

"You really don't know how to appreciate kindness; that sentence you just said is quite amusing," the enchanting woman pointed at a phrase in Zhu Ping'an's strategy paper and chuckled.

The sentence she pointed to was from the introduction of Zhu Ping'an's strategy paper: "When clams and gulls fight, the fisherman benefits; this is precisely a case of mutual benefit when united and mutual harm when at odds."

Seeing that the enchanting woman seemed quite serious about her point, Zhu Ping'an re-read the sentence but found nothing wrong with it. The way he presented his ideas was coherent, and his introduction was in accordance with traditional formats and standards.

So, Zhu Ping'an ignored the enchanting woman's teasing and continued writing his strategy paper.

"You're so boring! Look at this phrase about clams and gulls fighting; it's hilarious!" The enchanting woman, noticing Zhu Ping'an was ignoring her, forcefully snatched the brush from his hand.

Green-clad maidens urging topics and red-sleeved attendants enhancing the reading experience.

Damn, it's all nonsense.

Zhu Ping'an had no similar thoughts; instead, he found this beautiful enchanting woman quite annoying and wished to kick her out.

"Give me back my brush!" Zhu Ping'an said calmly.

"I won't give it back unless you admit that the phrase about clams and gulls fighting is funny." The enchanting woman smiled at Zhu Ping'an, lightly shaking the brush she held.

"What's funny about clams and gulls fighting?" Zhu Ping'an had lost count of how many times he wanted to sell this laughing enchanting woman to a laughter venue.

"Then tell me the story of the clams and gulls fighting," the enchanting woman, with a smile, unaware of Zhu Ping'an's thoughts, urged him to share the tale of clams and gulls fighting.

After the clam clamped the gull's beak shut, it said, "I won't let go today, and I won't let go tomorrow. The sun will bake you to death!"

When Zhu Ping'an reached this part, he saw the enchanting woman clutching her belly, laughing heartily.

What's so funny about that?

"The clam speaks with its mouth, right? If it doesn't use its mouth, how can it talk? Then when it's talking, doesn't that mean it has let go? Hahaha, this is hilarious... And you still dare to use such phrases; aren't you afraid the examiner will laugh so hard they burst?"

The enchanting woman continued to laugh, clearly delighted that she could tease Zhu Ping'an. These scholars really seemed to have turned their brains to mush—how amusing.

"Is playing with words really that interesting?" Zhu Ping'an said casually, feeling a bit disdainful of the enchanting woman's sophistry.

The girl nodded, trying to stifle her laughter.

Zhu Ping'an turned his head to look out the window. The sun was gradually setting in the west, and he realized that the day had already passed for the most part. The county exam was much easier compared to

the provincial exam; those who took the provincial exam were generally much more capable than those taking the county exam, but the pass rate was significantly lower. Compared to these old scholars who were immersed in traditional styles all day, he felt relatively inexperienced. He knew he had to make full use of his time. Therefore, this annoying enchanting woman needed to be dealt with.

"Since you enjoy playing with words so much, how about I come up with a word game for you to play? If you can't answer it, you'll give me back my brush and go somewhere cool to stay without bothering me," Zhu Ping'an said, a provocative smile on his lips as he looked at the enchanting woman.

"My benefactor, what if I get it right?" the enchanting woman asked with a smile. She had just been teasing Zhu Ping'an and didn't think he could come up with a challenging word game.

"Then it's up to you," Zhu Ping'an said, not at all worried.

"Then don't regret it," the girl said with a smile, looking at Zhu Ping'an. "You scholars always think you're so clever."

"There are 6 steamed buns in a basin and 6 children. Each child gets one bun, but there's still one bun left in the basin. Why is that?"

Zhu Ping'an presented a popular riddle of the modern era. Riddles originated from ancient India, and ancient China, at least during the Ming Dynasty, had not been exposed to this kind of thinking, making it very difficult for people of that era to come up with an answer. He believed the enchanting woman was no exception.

After Zhu Ping'an posed the question, the enchanting woman furrowed her brows in deep thought. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't understand why there were still one bun left in the basin after each of the six children took one.

The enchanting woman continued to furrow her brows, looking troubled.

"Give me back my brush, and go somewhere cool to stay. Don't bother me again!" Zhu Ping'an extended his hand and spoke calmly.

"No way! This is simply impossible; you're trying to deceive me!" The girl held onto the brush tightly, expressing her dissatisfaction with Zhu Ping'an's riddle.

"Just because you can't figure it out doesn't mean it's impossible," Zhu Ping'an sneered.

"Unless you can tell me the answer, you're just trying to trick me!" The girl was convinced that Zhu Ping'an couldn't possibly know the answer. In her eyes, this question was nonsense and couldn't have an answer, as it involved something entirely implausible.

"What if I tell you?" Zhu Ping'an asked calmly.

"If you tell me, then I'll give you back the brush," the girl said, blinking her eyes.

Zhu Ping'an glanced at the girl and calmly said, "Because the last child took the basin away with him."

With the last child taking the basin away, it was obvious there would still be one bun left in it.

The enchanting woman stared at Zhu Ping'an for a while, her face showing reluctance as she finally returned the brush to him. However, she didn't leave; instead, she propped her chin up with her hand.

In her words, she only promised to give back the brush, not to go away.

"Then I'll pose another question. You can stay over there," Zhu Ping'an said as he took the brush, dipped it in ink, and began to write his essay without looking at the enchanting girl.

Since the girl was feeling unsatisfied, she naturally wouldn't refuse.

"Who does Xiao Ming look the most like at home?" Zhu Ping'an asked, then lowered his head to continue his writing.

"It must be his dad," the enchanting woman replied immediately from the bed.

Zhu Ping'an didn't even lift his head and said it was wrong.

"His mom?"

Zhu Ping'an shook his head again.

"Uh, you're really quite crude. Could it be that Xiao Ming looks like someone else?"

The enchanting woman, sitting on the bed, expressed her disdain.

Zhu Ping'an still shook his head.

The enchanting woman felt that Zhu Ping'an was truly trying to trick her this time. She couldn't believe that her answers about his parents weren't correct, so she urged Zhu Ping'an to reveal the answer.

"The Xiao Ming in the mirror," Zhu Ping'an replied while writing his essay. He added nonchalantly, "Alright, children of the rivers and lakes keep their promises, so don't disturb me anymore!"

The girl leaned against the bed and forcefully tugged at Zhu Ping'an's long robe hanging by the bed, venting her dissatisfaction.