

Minxin Only Wants to Be Number One

Lu Minxin's parents are humble employees, doing humble administrative jobs for the government, and earning humble wages. Their daughter, however, only wants to be number one, so the parents are happy.

She won a lot of mathematical competitions. She scored high in the "Cup of Spring". She even won the tournament "Beauty of Mathematics," which was known for its difficulty.

The Southern Garden Elementary School was a boarding school, but for Minxin's parents, in order to let their daughter get ahead, they picked her up every afternoon and sent her to intensive afterschool programs. Minxin, therefore, never lived in the school dorm. From Monday to Wednesday, she went to private tutors. On Thursdays, she practiced the flute with her instructor. Every Friday after school, she rehearsed and recited poetry. On weekends, she went to New Oriental to learn English.

Every week.

Every year.

Minxin was a good student. She was supposed to be number one. However, the forever genius, Ran Qiu, was already sitting on the throne, never letting it go for six years; she was the citadel Minxin would never be able to conquer.

Qiu's competition records were better than Minxin's, too. Who could attend the national program since the tender age of four like Qiu? Who else could go to Hong Kong for education experiments, attend Princeton elite summer camps, or travel around the world for math tournaments with other geniuses, slaughtering every gold cup team from different countries? Who else could decline every invitation from every elite program in China because she just felt bored? Who else could start receiving invitations from all the top universities around the world since the age of eleven?

No one could compete with Qiu.

In order to gain teachers' attention, Minxin helped her teachers organize the whole class. She ratted out her classmates, raising her hand and shouting out the student's name when she found someone not following the lecture during class time.

But everything was futile.

Minxin hated Qiu. She hated Qiu for making her live in the shadow of a genius. She hated that Qiu took all the glory. She hated herself for being so stupid or for not working hard enough. She hated the fact that she could not become Ran Qiu.

"Honey, don't push yourself so hard," her parents said. "You have already worked very

hard. You are such a good student that you will definitely attend a good middle school, a good high school, and then a fantastic college.”

Things should have been this way.

Minxin was elected as Student of the Year in the school district for the first three years of grade school. Then she became Student of the Year of the entire Beijing for final three years. Glory to Minxin. She was ready to score, ready to get into the best middle school.

About four years ago, the genius Qiu declined an early college program because it conflicted with the plans of her national mathematics program. The Southern Garden Elementary School then offered her the only guaranteed admission to the Experimental Middle School. Qiu declined the offer again, but this time, it was just because she didn’t like that school. Who else deserved the offer? The elementary school just gave this offer to Minxin.

Until another unknown student got in her way.

When it was already December of the sixth grade, the school suddenly informed Minxin that they could no longer guarantee her admission to the Experimental Middle School. Her parents demanded an explanation, but what they received was ambiguous. They asked a few friends in the education system to help them check it out, and then they realized:

One student bribed the school.

“How dare you say our daughter does not fulfill the requirements?” the parents raged. “You received a bribe! Minxin has always been a good student! We always tell our daughter to respect the rules and earn her due rewards in the right way! The middle schools’ secret weekend programs are the best way to get in but they are banned by law, so we didn’t go. We never used our social connections, but now, as you constantly take away what our daughter deserves, WE will play this game with you and WE are going to win!”

The Experimental Middle School was a great school, but two schools were *better*—the Middle School Affiliated to Renmin University and the Number Four Middle School. “MSAR is closer to home. Let’s send Minxin there,” said Minxin’s mom to her dad. Then they called their friends, and the next day, when teachers from Renmin University went to the Southern Garden, the principal was aghast.

“Good afternoon. We are from Renmin University and we are here to pick up Lu Minxin’s documents for our affiliated middle school,” said they.

The principal did not know what to say. When he recovered from the shock, he finally remembered to call some staff to bring Minxin’s papers and tried to talk to these teachers, stupidly, “There are a couple of other students who are very good... Is it possible that...?”

The teachers from Renmin University laughed, and they left.

Not until the affiliated middle school got Minxin's documentations, did her parents tell Minxin that they used some connections.

"How can you..." Minxin was so angry. If there was anything that irritated her more than some other student stealing her offer, it was her parents using connections to get her in a middle school. It was an insult to her ability and personality. "I don't know if you paid Renmin University, but even if you gave them a million RMB, I'd rather not attend any school that is allowing you to use connections!" said Minxin.

"But the elementary school did that to you first! You had the ability to attend the Experimental Middle School, and now we are in this kind of situation. If we didn't use any connections, could you still attend a top middle school?" said her parents.

"I don't care! Either you call them and say I am not going, or I will not attend any school at all."

The two sides fought for three days, and finally the parents made the compromise.

"Then let's check Jinxi Middle School and see if we have a chance. It's not as good as the Experimental Middle School, but it's still a nice place," said the parents.

Jinxi Middle School was across the street, right in front of the Southern Garden Elementary School. Southern Garden graduates could often receive admission after some interviews. However, interviews only granted admissions to the school, but not to the experimental program.

Minxin went anyway.

"If I work hard, no matter if I am in the good or bad program, I will definitely get into the best high school through the high school entrance exam," said Minxin to herself.

It turned out Jinxi gave Minxin all the opportunities they had since she had fantastic mathematical competition records, she could recite well, and she was one of the "Students of the Year" for six years. Minxin was admitted by Class One from the experimental program after the program admission exam. However, what she didn't expect was Ran Qiu attended Jinxi Middle School and they were classmates again.

The citadel she could never conquer.

Minxin started working extremely hard, harder than she had ever been, but she was still always the number two of the whole grade. Qiu's record reached its peak when she received the only full-mark gold medal in thirty years of an American mathematical tournament. Minxin could never surpass her.

The middle school was thrilled to have such a genius' attendance. They could finally brand and publicize Jinxi with her. They could let her join more competitions and tell applicants that

the school had great academic competition records since those people didn't know who Qiu was or what kind of national program Qiu was in. At the same time, the school feared too many people knew Ran Qiu's name. She could be poached by the Number Four Middle School, by the Middle School Affiliated to Renmin University or by the Experimental Middle School. They feared Qiu would not attend their Jinxi High School. Therefore, they offered everything to Qiu and made sure she signed the contract with the school and therefore stayed at Jinxi. They offered her every opportunity.

Therefore, no matter how hard Minxin worked, she had nothing.

No one would remember the number two.