

Nobel Ruler 101

Chapter 101: Director

This voice sounds a little familiar... When Chu Liuyue was thinking, she saw that the figure had already rushed up to Sun Zhongyan.

His figure was a little stooped, and he was wearing a torn cotton robe. Who else could it be if it was not Elder Ye? However, why was he here?

Sun Zhongyan was even more shocked than Chu Liuyue.

“Uncle-Master? Why are you here?”

Uncle-Master? Chu Liuyue was shocked. She had already guessed that Elder Ye’s identity was not simple, but she did not expect him to be Sun Zhongyan’s Uncle-Master. *Isn’t his status too high?*

Elder Ye panted and glared at Sun Zhongyan.

Sun Zhongyan felt very guilty from his stares. “... Uncle-Master, what’s the matter?”

“What’s the matter? How dare you ask me?” said Elder Ye as he directly slapped Sun Zhongyan across his face. “You’re a brat. How dare you fight for her with your Uncle-Master? You’re too gutsy!”

Sun Zhongyan did not dare to retaliate and could only cover his head and hide. “Uncle-Master! Uncle-Master! Why are you hitting me? Even if I ate bear heart and leopard gall, I wouldn’t dare to fight for a person with you.”

Chu Liuyue immediately felt amused when looking at the highly respected Sun Zhongyan being chased around and beaten up. She coughed and turned around.

“Uncle-Master, even if you want to beat me up, could you make it clear when did I steal your person?” yelled Sun Zhongyan with grievances. *Uncle-Master usually doesn’t show up, so why did he hit me once he did?*

Elder Ye finally stopped and pointed at Chu Liuyue while huffing and puffing. “Her!”

The building instantly fell into deep silence.

Chu Liuyue could sharply feel that the previously hidden aura had some ripples. It was obvious that everyone was shocked by Elder Ye’s words.

Sun Zhongyan was stunned for quite some time. “T-this... Uncle-Master, you want to accept Chu Liuyue as your disciple? But... you’re a heavenly doctor!” *Chu Liuyue’s strong talent as a warrior and Xuan Master has no need to be mentioned, but her heavenly doctor talent... seems to be a little lacking.*

Sun Zhongyan looked at Chu Liuyue and could not help but advise him. “Uncle-Master, did you hear that this girl entered the academy by passing all three examinations, so you wanted to accept her as your disciple? You might not know it very clearly, but this girl is talented as a Xuan Master and warrior. She’s much stronger in those two areas than in the heavenly doctor aspect. Besides, didn’t you always feel that accepting a disciple is troublesome?”

His Uncle-Master had not accepted a single disciple all these years.

“If you really want to accept a disciple, there are quite a few talented ones in this batch of students.”

“What do you know?” Elder Ye interrupted him frustratedly. “Why would I not know about my own disciple?”

After Elder Ye finished his sentence, Sun Zhongyan was suddenly speechless as if he had been strangled.

At that moment, the surroundings were so quiet that one’s breathing could be heard.

Chu Liuyue quietly sighed in her heart. Initially, she wanted to choose a teacher quietly and then begin cultivating in the academy, but it seemed like this was not possible... *I didn’t expect Elder Ye to have such a connection with Tian Lu Academy. He even popped up at this time.*

“This girl has been my disciple for a long time. Dream on if you want to snatch her away from me.” Elder Ye was still brooding over the earlier matter as he glared at Sun Zhongyan as if he was looking at a thief.

He walked to Chu Liuyue. “Girl, all these old fellows are very bad! Don’t be tricked by them!”

Chu Liuyue was speechless. *Must you be so direct?*

While showing an indignant expression, Elder Ye said, “This girl! Why didn’t you tell me that you were coming to the academy? Are you really thinking of finding someone else to be your mentor?”

Chu Liuyue smiled helplessly. "Mentor, you're mistaken. I..."

"I only went into seclusion for a few days. I went to look for you at the Chu family estate once I was out, but I couldn't find you after looking for you everywhere. I asked around for a long time until I found out this major thing had happened! If I were any later, won't you be this brat's disciple?"

The scolded Sun Zhongyan did not care about feeling wronged or explaining himself. There was too much information within Elder Ye and Chu Liuyue's conversation, which caused him to be unable to react.

Chu Liuyue froze and did not say anything. If she knew Elder Ye was from Tian Lu Academy, she wouldn't have wasted so much effort. However, she was pretty touched when she heard that Elder Ye had frantically searched for her.

Elder Ye looked at the young girl in front of him and did not even have enough time to dote on her. Why would he have the heart to scold her seriously? His voice became warmer as he slapped Chu Liuyue's arm. "Luckily, I came here early enough. You can't do this anymore!"

Chu Liuyue replied to him with a delightful smile. "Okay, Mentor!"

The mentor-disciple duo was over the moon, but Sun Zhongyan and the building full of teachers were dazed.

Upon seeing that Elder Ye was going to take Chu Liuyue away, Sun Zhongyan could not help but step forward and ask, "Elder Ye, a-are... you really accepting this girl as your disciple?"

Elder Ye glanced at him. "The girl called me 'mentor'. Did you not hear her?"

Sun Zhongyan was stumped. "B-but her talent... Her talent, I..."

Elder Ye spoke halfway when Chu Liuyue gently pulled on his sleeves. Elder Ye's heart skipped a beat, and he glanced at Chu Liuyue. He could guess what she was thinking. *It seems like this girl doesn't want to expose herself... That's true. It will attract too much attention if I expose everything.*

Elder Ye coughed. "Anyway, she passed the heavenly doctor examination. I also have some fate with her. Since I've already accepted her as my disciple, there's no use in whatever you say." He looked very determined.

Sun Zhongyan really felt that it was a pity. *Chu Liuyue has no potential as a heavenly doctor. Even if she has a mentor, her future is bleak.*

"Master, I'm actually pretty interested in Xuan formations. I came to the academy to learn a thing or two about it."

Chu Liuyue's words worried Elder Ye. "Y-You really want to accept this brat as your disciple?"

Chu Liuyue contained her laughter and shook her head. "Since I already have a mentor, it's not nice of me to accept another teacher. I want to cultivate as a Xuan Master on my own. May I know if you'll agree to it?"

"On your own?" Sun Zhongyan immediately felt that it would not work. "Girl, you must think this through. If you have no teacher to guide you along, your Xuan Master path will be a difficult one."

Chu Liuyue nodded her head in determination. “Thank you, Elder Sun, but I’ve already made up my mind. Mentor, do you have any objections?”

Elder Ye was hesitant with his words. Actually, he had already vaguely guessed that Chu Liuyue really did not need a Xuan Master mentor. Similar to her heavenly doctor cultivation, her potential was untested, and she was more than worthy of being his teacher.

“Why would I stop you in whatever you want to do? This matter is settled.” Elder Ye waved his hand. “Bring the name registry over!”

Someone very quickly walked out of the building and brought a thick booklet.

On the cover was a few words written in gold: ‘Tian Lu Academy’.

Elder Ye placed his hand on the booklet and released energy. The pages actually flipped open on its own.

Chu Liuyue stood at the side and could clearly see that the pages were filled with names.

Students’ names were in black, while teachers’ names were in red.

The pages finally stopped flipping when it arrived at a new page.

Elder Ye looked focused as he extended his fingers and wrote his name, letter by letter.

“Ye Zhiting.” The sparkling golden words looked like they had a life of their own. His name was actually in gold!

Very quickly, Chu Liuyue saw a line of words appearing below his name.

“Tian Lu Academy’s 65th Director!”

Chapter 102: Classes

Elder Ye is the director of Tian Lu Academy!? Chu Liuyue stared at him in shock.

This old and unkempt man wore tattered cotton clothes all year round. She wouldn’t believe his true identity if she didn’t see this with her own eyes!

Chu Liuyue couldn’t help but recall their previous few meetings. Elder Ye had clung to her, pestered her, and begged her to let him watch her brew the medicine. Her emotions became more complicated. *The most powerful person in Tian Lu Academy was right in front of me this whole time!*

Elder Ye looked serious, which was unlike his usual demeanor. His finger continued to move along the page, and another name appeared on the page—Chu Liuyue!

Chu Liuyue realized that her name was in red, the same color as the academy’s teachers.

After that, a small line of words appeared below her name.

Cultivation discipline—heavenly doctor, Xuan Master, warrior!

Most students chose to focus on only one discipline due to the limitations of their talent, but Chu Liuyue was different. Elder Ye knew very well that her talent might be stronger than he thought, so he simply wrote down all three disciplines for her.

This would also make things easier in the future.

After he wrote the last word, a golden ray of light shot out from Elder Ye's name and merged with the nameplate on Chu Liuyue's left chest.

“Each student's nameplate contains their teacher's power, which can be used to identify themselves. In times of distress, this power can also be used as a trump card!” explained Elder Ye as he let go.

The pages turned slowly and closed automatically. Then, he returned it to the teacher, who had given him the book earlier. “Alright! We have registered your name. From now on, you will truly be known as my disciple, and I as your master!” Elder Ye felt emotional as he glanced at Chu Liuyue. He was unable to contain his excitement.

Although Chu Liuyue had already offered him tea, the formality had taken place between the two of them only. Nobody else had knowledge of their relationship.

With both of our names now written on the academy's roster, everything will be different! In the future, everyone will know that Chu Liuyue is my disciple! Elder Ye's heart filled with joy at this thought.

He has lived most of his life. Many had advised him to take on a disciple, but he found it troublesome. Thus, he refused.

He finally found one that caught his eye. On top of that, she was a once-in-a-century rare genius that put the rest of the teachers' disciples to shame! How could he not be happy?

"Come, come! I haven't seen you for so long. There is much I have to say to you!" Once the official business had been concluded, Elder Ye immediately left with Chu Liuyue, leaving behind Sun Zhongyan and the others to stare at each other.

There was a long silence in Peach Garden before a helpless laugh erupted.

"To think that we have been vying for so long. In the end, it turns out that she has been the director's disciple all along!"

...

Elder Ye originally wanted to bring her back to his quarters. However, he suddenly remembered it probably hadn't been cleaned because he had been away from the academy for a long time. Finally, he followed Chu Liuyue back to her lodgings.

Fortunately, most of the students in the academy had already started their classes or cultivation at this time. Thus, they didn't run into anyone on their way back.

As soon as they entered the house, Elder Ye promptly opened his mouth and asked, "Girl, if you wanted to come to the academy, why didn't you tell me sooner? I could have saved you the trouble of taking three different examinations! I also heard that you participated in the mid-term assessments a few days ago. Did anyone give you a hard time? You can tell me. I'll definitely help you out!"

He talked profusely without pausing for a breath.

On the other hand, Chu Liuyue took her time to pour him a cup of tea. "Please, slow down; there's no rush."

Elder Ye finally took a break and stopped to drink his tea.

Chu Liuyue then briefly told him about the events that had occurred during his period of absence.

Elder Ye had already sporadically heard some rumors before, but he only completely understood what had happened after hearing Chu Liuyue's account.

"... So much has happened during this period of time! Girl, didn't you say that you'll come to me if you get into trouble? As your master, I didn't even help a bit..." Elder Ye was filled with guilt. In his opinion, Chu Liuyue was still a child. He wondered how many hurdles she had to overcome when she went against the Chu family and the Crown Prince.

Chu Liuyue didn't seem to mind at all. She laughed and jokingly said, "I didn't know your true identity at that time. I would have looked for you if I did."

Her words only embarrassed Elder Ye even more. "It was negligence on my part as your master..." He was a free-spirited man, and he never liked to deal with the academy's matters. He usually left the mundane stuff to Sun Zhongyan and the others.

Although he was the designated director, he had been running around all these years, so not many people had actually met him. He, too, would forget his identity very often.

"However, you need not worry. Everything is fine now, isn't it?" said Chu Liuyue.

Elder Ye's expression became serious as he shook his head. "Girl, you have no idea. The Crown Prince can be excessively mean and narrow-minded. Your achievements to date have caused him to lose face. He definitely won't let this go..."

Buzz!

Before Elder Ye could finish, they heard a buzzing sound coming from outside.

The two of them looked out in unison but saw nothing.

Nevertheless, Elder Ye didn't seem to relax. Instead, his frown deepened. He stood up immediately. "Girl, there's something I need to attend to. I'm leaving. I'll see you next time!" With that, he shifted his feet and quickly disappeared.

Chu Liuyue looked in the direction he left in and shifted her gaze slightly.

Not far away, the magnificent and majestic Jiuyou Tower stood in silence.

That strange noise earlier... seems to be coming from there! However, it is a very faint fluctuation. An ordinary person won't notice it.

She was able to detect it because she was very sensitive to the Heaven and Earth Force's transformations. Although she hadn't fully recovered her strength from her last life, her strong perception still remained. *If I remember correctly, Jiuyou Tower is the Tian Lu Academy's...*

Knock, knock...

A knock on the door interrupted Chu Liuyue's thoughts.

"Who is it?" she asked as she went to open the door.

A familiar face stood outside the doorway.

Chu Liuyue was puzzled. "Si Ting? What are you doing here?"

Si Ting was stunned. He didn't expect her to come so fast. Nevertheless, he quickly came to his senses. "You've already chosen your teacher?"

Chu Liuyue nodded.

Si Ting paused but didn't ask which teacher she had chosen. "There is a meditation class this morning. Mr. Dongfang wants me to see how you are doing."

"Meditation class?" Chu Liuyue was confused.

Si Ting explained, "While most of a Xuan Master's training is done independently, we do have to attend a shared class, which is taught by Mr. Dongfang."

It finally dawned on Chu Liuyue that Si Ting was here to bring her to class. She scrutinized him and couldn't help herself from messing with him. "The teacher actually sent you here for such a trivial matter?"

Si Ting shifted his gaze away. The expression on his handsome and smart face remained neutral. "It's just that I was the only one available because I had cracked the first level. If you're done unpacking, please come with me."

Chu Liuyue followed him to their class without asking further questions.

Chapter 103: The Bully

The meditation class was taking place in Autumn Frost Court.

Chu Liuyue followed Si Ting and soon arrived at the class.

When they stood outside the door, Si Ting whispered, "Meditation classes are usually a way for us to cultivate our control over the Heaven and Earth Force."

Chu Liuyue nodded. A Xuan Master's cultivation was nothing more than these few aspects.

The front door automatically opened as soon as they arrived at the doorway.

A rich voice, belonging to a middle-aged man, called out, "Come in."

Chu Liuyue entered after Si Ting.

It was a very spacious room. A square-faced man stood at the front of the room.

"Good day to you, Mr. Dongfang," Si Ting greeted.

Chu Liuyue immediately understood that the man was Dongfang Qing, the meditation class's teacher.

"You came quickly." Dongfang Qing nodded with approval. His gaze soon fell on Chu Liuyue with some curiosity. "Are you Chu Liuyue?"

Chu Liuyue bowed. "Good day to you, Mr. Dongfang."

Dongfang Qing's eyes rested on her nameplate for a moment. He was going to ask who she had chosen as her teacher. However, he found it inappropriate to do so with so many students present.

He lifted a finger and pointed. "You can sit next to Si Ting!"

Chu Liuyue looked in the direction he was pointing in.

Ten stone platforms had been placed in the room, and a student occupied each of the tables.

A chessboard was placed on each table in front of them.

Almost all the students were staring intently at their own board, thinking hard. Even when they heard the two of them enter, they merely glanced up quickly and directed their attention back to deciphering the Xuan formation on the board.

At the front, two empty stone platforms were in the middle. One obviously belonged to Si Ting, whereas the other was hers.

As she got closer, she saw a distinct character 'two' engraved on the stone platform. She glanced at Si Ting's platform beside hers. It had the character 'one.'

It seemed that this seating arrangement was based on their mid-term assessment results.

The moment Chu Liuyue stepped onto her platform, a chessboard suddenly appeared on the empty tabletop! The chessboard displayed a Xuan formation!

“Today’s lesson is simple. You will pass as long as you can find these two Xuan formations’ formation eyes.” Dongfang Qing looked at Chu Liuyue with hidden expectations. “The top three students who take the least time will be rewarded separately.”

He wasn’t there during the mid-term assessment, so he wasn’t sure what happened or how Chu Liuyue had come in second place for the Xuan Master assessment. Elder Sun and the others had hyped it up so much, even saying that Chu Liuyue’s talent was not the slightest bit inferior to that of Si Ting.

He wanted to see if that was really the case!

Chu Liuyue looked at the Xuan formation before her. A formation of this level was not difficult for her. She immediately found a way to crack it when she first laid eyes on it. However, she couldn’t pass the level so fast.

Chu Liuyue certainly knew that Dongfang Qing was testing her when she sensed him watching her. She looked at Si Ting and whispered, “Si Ting, how long did you take for the first level?”

Dongfang Qing’s eyes lit up even more. *Is Chu Liuyue issuing a challenge to Si Ting?*

Si Ting looked at the girl in front of him. From her calm demeanor, he could guess what was on her mind. “One hour.”

Chu Liuyue nodded thoughtfully. *According to Si Ting’s current age, he really is doing exceptionally well by reaching such a level.*

“Please try to crack the second level as fast as you can. Perhaps, I may even come from behind and surpass you.” Chu Liuyue blinked her eyes at him. She would be able to spend less time here if Si Ting was faster. Otherwise, it would be torture for her if she had to spend a few hours here.

Si Ting caught the crafty look that had flashed across her eyes. He nodded after a moment’s silence. “Okay.”

From behind them, a girl suddenly asked haughtily, “What? Chu Liuyue, are you challenging Si Ting?”

Chu Liuyue turned around and faced the girl, who was about 15 or 16 years old.

The girl had pretty features. As she stared at Chu Liuyue with her almond-shaped eyes, she didn’t bother to conceal her arrogance and hostility towards the latter.

Hostility? A frown appeared on Chu Liuyue’s forehead. I don’t even know the girl. What have I done to deserve this attitude?

Si Yang—who was sitting behind Chu Liuyue—impatiently retorted, “Gu Mingzhu, why are you so nosy? It’s normal for Liuyue to challenge my brother. After all, she’s the second best! This is no place for a third runner-up like you.”

Chu Liuyue suddenly knew who this girl was upon hearing her name.

Second Gu Missy, Gu Mingzhu. Since she was the eldest son’s daughter and a Xuan Master in training, Second Gu Missy was widely adored within the Gu family.

Gu Mingzhu's expression became more hostile after she was chided by Si Yang. "I merely asked a question. Why are you coming to her defense?"

Si Yang snorted. "You know exactly what you were thinking! If you want to challenge my brother, wait till you get second!"

Gu Mingzhu was so angry that she turned white. Finally, she replied through gritted teeth. "How capable can she be? She came in second without a solid foundation or training. Who knows how she got second."

A Xuan Master's cultivation was especially delicate. Even if one had talent, one still might not succeed if they didn't have patience and a teacher's proper guidance.

All these years, Chu Liuyue's life in the Chu family had been worse than a servant. She is now in her teenage years. She discovered her talent as a Xuan Master too late! Her achievement at the last assessment must be a coincidence!

Si Yang was beginning to feel offended. "What? Are you suspecting that Elder Sun and the others were wrong in their judgment?"

He came in third!

Gu Mingzhu's suspicion of Chu Liuyue coming in second was as good as implying that he wasn't strong enough!

When Gu Mingzhu heard this, she kept her mouth shut. Si Yang always had a way with his words. She couldn't be bothered with him.

Aggrieved, Gu Mingzhu turned and looked at Si Ting. However, the handsome youth didn't even glance her way. It was as though he didn't care about what had just happened.

Gu Mingzhu felt worse with every passing minute as she bit her lip.

Si Ting was a quiet and introverted person with an aloof temperament. However, it didn't deter Gu Mingfeng. She still held on to a ray of hope after being rejected time and time again. Right now, she felt threatened by Chu Liuyue's appearance!

A guy like Si Ting had never been interested in anyone before. Nevertheless, when Mr. Dongfang assigned someone to bring Chu Liuyue to class, Si Ting had volunteered! Although he said he had some time because he had cracked the first level, Gu Mingzhu knew better.

When Chu Liuyue spoke to Si Ting earlier, she clearly felt that Si Ting's attitude towards Chu Liuyue was completely different! This was a woman's intuition! This also caused Gu Mingzhu to dislike Chu Liuyue even more.

She placed one hand on her chessboard. Her knuckles began to turn white from the strain she was putting on the board. "Chu Liuyue, I dare you to compete with me. If you lose, I'll take second place; if I lose, I'll give you the Long Xian Formation! What's your decision?"

Everyone surrounding them looked up, clearly startled.

It was rumored that the Long Xian Formation was a fifth-level Xuan formation! Being the Gu family's Second Missy, Gu Mingzhu was indeed generous!

Nobody would refuse this jackpot! However, unexpectedly, there wasn't a trace of excitement on Chu Liuyue's face. Instead, she shook her head with a smile and said, "I don't think so. After all, bullying is something I really don't like to do."

Chapter 104: Does She Deserve It too?

How could Gu Mingzhu not understand the meaning behind Chu Liuyue's words? The latter was obviously not taking her seriously!

She laughed with exasperation. "Chu Liuyue, are you afraid to do it?"

Chu Liuyue shrugged her shoulders. "Think what you want."

Gu Mingzhu was suddenly at a loss for words. She didn't expect Chu Liuyue to be immune against her provocations! She raised her voice in defiance. "I'll add another, the Qing Mu Xuan formation! Are you in or not?"

The room was in an uproar.

Qing Mu Xuan formation was a formation just as good as the Long Xian Formation!

In order to get Chu Liuyue to compete with her, Gu Mingzhu was willing to place two fifth-level Xuan formations as a reward! She was putting a lot at stake!

Chu Liuyue finally turned back and glanced at her lazily. "Really?"

"Of course! I am the Second Gu Missy!" Gu Mingzhu lifted her chin haughtily.

Chu Liuyue nodded. "Okay!" She wasn't a fool. The other party had taken the initiative to do her a favor, so why shouldn't she accept the bet?

Gu Mingzhu was delighted when Chu Liuyue finally agreed. However, she sneered with despise. "You didn't agree earlier because the reward wasn't appealing enough!" Her words implied that Chu Liuyue was money-minded.

Chu Liuyue actually admitted it with a bright smile. "I'm glad you know. If you want to ask for advice, you have to show your sincerity." *Otherwise, I would really be reluctant to waste my time on a person like this.*

"You!" Anger began to well up inside Gu Mingzhu. Just as she was about to direct her anger at Chu Liuyue, she felt someone looking at her. It was Si Ting!

Gu Mingzhu restrained herself with much difficulty and regained her usual arrogant demeanor. "We'll use the two formations laid out by Mr. Dongfang. Whoever cracks them first is the winner!"

“Gu Mingzhu, you have the gall to say this? You have been trying for the past two hours. Chu Liuyue just arrived. You’re obviously bullying her!” Si Yang spoke up, feeling indignant.

Smirking, Gu Mingzhu looked at Chu Liuyue. “It can easily take one a few hours to unravel a Xuan formation. Sometimes, it’s even impossible to crack it in a day. Chu Liuyue came late because of her own reasons. Can I be blamed for that? Besides, she came in second during the assessment. Surely she wouldn’t be so calculative with the time. Isn’t that so, Chu Liuyue?”

Chu Liuyue waved her hand without a care. “Have it your way.”

Gu Mingzhu was annoyed again by her casual behavior. “Begin!” With that, she lowered her head and focused on the Xuan formation that she had been working on. *This time, I have to win!*

Chu Liuyue withdrew her gaze and looked steadily at Si Ting.

It made Si Ting feel nervous for some reason.

The corners of Chu Liuyue’s lips curled up. *Si Ting is obviously the cause of this trouble. Nevertheless, Si Ting has helped me before. It won’t be very nice of me to hold a grudge against him now.*

Si Ting was the first to break eye contact.

Chu Liuyue raised a brow but soon directed her attention to her Xuan formation.

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At the Royal Palace's Imperial Study.

Emperor Jiawen leaned back in his chair and emotionlessly stared at Rong Jin, who stood facing him with his hands clenched by his side.

"I won't repeat myself. Let this matter go. No one is to pursue it." His low and powerful voice resonated in the spacious study with authority and nobility befitting an emperor.

Rong Jin clenched his fists tighter. In reality, he already had an answer in his mind before he even came. However, it still puzzled him! "Father, something is really fishy about the way Zhen Zhen injured herself. When I was tending to the hunting ground, situations like this never happened! How did this happen as soon as Zhen Bao Pavilion took over the hunting ground? If we don't launch a thorough investigation, how can we appease Zhen Zhen?"

Emperor Jiawen looked at him solemnly. "Crown Prince, are you blaming me?"

Rong Jin suddenly panicked, promptly lifted his robe, and knelt down. "I wouldn't dare!"

"Zhen Zhen insisted on hunting the high-level fiend even after Zhen Bao Pavilion discouraged her several times. She has only herself to blame for this! I've spoiled her rotten. All these years, I have indulged her in her wilful ways instead of punishing her! I, too, am to blame for playing a part in what had happened!" Emperor Jiawen closed his eyes and let out a long sigh.

"How does my heart not ache for her when her pearl of essence has been shattered? I have ordered Chu Ning to lead the imperial guards to pursue the fiend that has injured Zhen Zhen. Those who followed Zhen Zhen but failed to protect her that day have also been punished. You... what else do you want to investigate?"

His last sentence made Rong Jin's heart skip a beat inexplicably.

Although Emperor Jiawen wasn't looking at him, Rong Jin still felt that the emperor could read his thoughts.

"I merely think..."

"I already told you the last time not to have any ideas about Zhen Bao Pavilion, but it seems like you didn't listen at all." Emperor Jiawen looked exhausted when he opened his eyes. He said slowly, "Are you honestly asking for an investigation for Zhen Zhen's sake or... for your own?"

"Father!" Rong Jin was stupefied. Emperor Jiawen's eyes suddenly resembled ghostly fire, and Rong Jin was scared witless. "Father, please! I have no selfish motives!"

Emperor Jiawen remained unmoved. He knew everything about Rong Jin, including what he had in mind and his plans.

Father and son—one seated and the other on his knees—engaged in a confrontation.

The atmosphere in the study became cold and tense.

After a long time, Rong Jin finally hung his head low, dejected. "Father, I just want an answer! What's the big deal about Zhen Bao Pavilion that even you, the emperor, are so protective of them? I spent a lot of effort on that hunting ground, but they snatched it out of my hands in the blink of an eye! I simply can't reconcile with this fact!"

“You, the Crown Prince, are behaving like this because of a silly hunting ground? I think you’re more concerned about your ego and reputation as the Crown Prince, aren’t you?”

Emperor Jiawen’s words hit the nail on the head, and the prince’s face went pale.

“I-if they hadn’t helped Chu Liuyue, I wouldn’t...”

Emperor Jiawen shook his head. “You initiated the dissolution of your marriage agreement.”

He knew that Rong Jin was narrow-minded, but what had recently happened really disappointed him. If Chu Liuyue had shown that she had an amazing talent in the first place, the current situation would be different.

“You’re dismissed.” Emperor Jiawen waved his hand.

Rong Jin wanted to say more, but he swallowed his words when he saw Emperor Jiawen’s expression. “Yes.”

Rong Jin stood up and left.

Just when he reached the door, he heard Emperor Jiawen’s voice from behind him. “I heard that the Chu girl, Chu Xianmin, hurt her face a few days ago. Go and visit her when you have the time.”

Rong Jin had a bad premonition as he turned back.

“The rumors in the Imperial City are spreading like wildfire. With the current situation, it’s better that you marry her as soon as possible.”

“Father, there’s nothing between Chu Xianmin and me...”

“As the Crown Prince, you have to decide what the best solution is for yourself.”

“Yes.”

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On his way back to Crown Prince Mansion, Rong Jin didn’t utter a single word, but his terrifying expression explained everything.

Song Yuan, who had been waiting outside for him, felt something was amiss. His heart skipped a beat in panic as he lowered his gaze.

Rong Jin stood in front of Song Yuan. “Send word to the Chu family and ask them to make preparations. I will marry Chu Xianmin in a few days.”

Song Yuan was taken aback. “Your Highness, are we... adapting the formalities for a Secondary Consort?”

Rong Jin sneered. "Secondary Consort? Does she deserve it?"

Chapter 105: It was Hard Waiting for You

"The Crown Prince Mansion will receive her as my concubine in three days!"

Song Yuan hesitantly asked, "Your Highness, Third Missy is a trueborn lady of the Chu family after all. Isn't being a concubine... a bit inappropriate for her?"

"I am already bestowing her an honor!" Rong Jin looked cold. There was no love in his eyes when he spoke of Chu Xianmin.

The series of events had disgraced him! He was doing her a huge favor by giving her a place in Crown Prince Mansion!

Song Yuan watched Rong Jin and realized that the prince had made up his mind. Since the matter had been settled, he didn't say anything more. "Yes."

Rong Jin let out a breath of foul air and intended to walk into the mansion. However, Song Yuan stood rooted to the spot. There was something about his expression... He couldn't help but frown. "What are you still standing here for?"

Song Yuan bowed and whispered, "Your Highness, the men we sent to investigate Zhen Bao Pavilion... are gone!"

Rong Jin's frown deepened; he was startled by the news. "How is that possible? Those guys are stage four warriors!" He had no reservations when he made his move, knowing that Zhen Bao Pavilion wasn't a place to be trifled with. However, who would have thought...

"Your Highness, those people had just started to poke around Zhen Bao Pavilion when they were assassinated one after another. The other party was so highly-skilled that they barely left any traces! We can't even find any evidence to prove that they did it!"

Rong Jin clenched his fists tightly and said through gritted teeth in a tense voice, "You mean to say that I have no choice but to suffer in silence this time?"

"Your Highness, I didn't mean it like this!" Song Yuan hastily fell to his knees.

Rong Jin shut his eyes, deep in his thoughts. After a long time, he sneered and said, "If we can't investigate without them knowing, let's come out in the open!"

Song Yuan seemed worried. "Your Highness, didn't His Majesty ask us to stop pursuing this matter? If you investigate them openly, I'm afraid it won't be easy to explain to His Majesty!"

"Naturally, I won't get it mixed up with this. However, Zhen Bao Pavilion has been operating in the Imperial City for so many years. Who knows if there are any issues with their accounts? It's just as well that those officials at the Ministry have been having a leisurely time lately. It's a good idea for them to check all those accounts now!"

...

The Chu family residence.

Chu Yan and Lu Yao were dumbfounded as they stared at Song Yuan, who stood before them. They almost thought they had misheard him.

“Lord Song, you just said... His Highness is going to marry Minmin and make her his concubine?”

Song Yuan wore a smile on his face. “That’s right! His Highness has always been interested in Third Missy. As you both know, he has long intended to marry her. Although we’re in a bit of a rush, His Highness has said that he wishes to keep things simple for the sake of Third Missy’s health since she is still recovering from her injuries. Nevertheless, you can be assured that His Highness will never mistreat Third Missy, even though the formalities have been simplified.”

Chu Yan and Lu Yao shook with anger.

“Lord Song, no matter what, our Minmin is still a trueborn lady of the Chu family. Even if she can’t be the Princess to His Highness, he should make her his secondary consort at the very least! A mere concubine? He’s asking for too much!” Chu Yan couldn’t suppress the anger inside him, and the way he spoke sounded pushy.

Song Yuan’s smile never wavered, but there was a hint of coldness. “Hehe. Lord Chu Yan, you should know very well why His Highness wants things to be done this way. The injuries on Third Missy’s face may never heal. As the Princess or the Secondary Consort, she will have to go to the Royal Ancestral Hall to meet all the ancestors. Is it... appropriate for Third Missy to do so with the way she looks?”

“Besides, not only did Third Missy hurt her face, but she has also hurt His Highness’s reputation. His Highness is already being very kind to her to marry her as his concubine. Both of you should have a proper discussion. Don’t forgo His Highness’s good intentions.”

Everyone could hear the threat in his words.

Chu Yan and Lu Yao exchanged a look with each other. Both of them felt extremely sullen!

Chu Xianmin was their only child. Initially, they had been counting on her to forge a relationship with the Crown Prince and become his princess. However, that now seemed impossible with their current situation!

How could they possibly prepare everything in three days?

It was a disgrace to marry like this! They would become laughingstocks in the whole Imperial City!

“I will marry!” Just when they were in a stalemate, a woman’s voice could be heard from outside. It was Chu Xianmin. She was wearing a veil that covered most of her hair and face, revealing only a pair of eyes.

Her eyes were no longer proud and vain like they used to be. Instead, they looked gloomy and cold, which unsettled people.

In his mind, Song Yuan thought that this Third Missy wasn’t quite the same as before.

“Minmin! What are you doing out here?” Lu Yao went to her side quickly and scrutinized her with worry. “D-Did you hear our conversation?”

Chu Xianmin nodded. “Yes, I heard everything. I am willing to marry.”

Song Yuan smiled. “Then I ask that Third Missy make your preparations for your marriage to His Highness in three days’ time!” With that said, Song Yuan didn’t bother staying any longer. He turned and left.

Chu Yan only came back to his senses when Song Yuan had left. He felt puzzled as he looked at Chu Xianmin. “Minmin, you should think about this. You will be a concubine once you marry him.”

Chu Xianmin laughed with self-mockery. “What can I do now when I look like this?”

Everyone fell silent.

“There’s no Crown Princess or Secondary Consort in the Crown Prince Mansion, only a few mistresses. Anyway, I won’t be bullied when I’m there. Besides, I have no intention to be a noble concubine my whole life.”

Lu Yao’s eyes lit up. “Minmin, you mean...”

“My looks may be ruined, but I still have my talent and capability. I can make use of the Crown Prince’s status once I marry him! I haven’t forgotten who made me land in such a state!”

Chu Liuyue. Let’s settle our score bit by bit!

...

Meditation class.

It was very quiet in the room. Everyone focused on the chessboard in front of them.

Ka!

A crisp sound was heard!

Gu Mingzhu had unraveled the first Xuan formation!

Dongfang Qing looked at her with surprise. He never thought she would be the one to crack the first level after Si Ting.

Si Yang heard the sound and couldn't help himself from turning around to take a look. He felt even more frustrated.

Gu Mingzhu lifted her chin arrogantly and glanced at Chu Liuyue, who was sitting in front of her. "This simple Xuan formation is a piece of cake!"

Chu Liuyue heard her and looked back at her. "Huh? You've unraveled the first formation?"

“Why? Are you surprised? Are you confused by this simple Xuan formation?” Gu Mingzhu had mockery in her eyes. “Actually, as long as one has gone through systematic learning and received guidance from a famous master, one would know a Xuan formation’s characteristics. With that knowledge, one is naturally fast when it comes to unraveling the formation. However, I think you must not have seen any decent Xuan formations. As such, it’s only normal that you have no idea where to start.”

Chu Liuyue nodded seriously. “It’s true. I have not seen many Xuan formations like this.”

She hadn’t played with one since she was six, so of course, she hadn’t seen much.

Gu Mingzhu rolled her eyes. “Why don’t I wait until you’ve cracked the first level as well? We can then start on the second one together. I don’t want any disputes or anyone saying I won dishonorably.”

Chu Liuyue turned down her proposal with a smile. “That’s not necessary.” After saying that, she turned back to her table. She held a chess piece and placed it on the board.

Ka!

It was the sound of an unraveled Xuan formation!

“I’ve had a hard time waiting for you. Please don’t bother to wait for me.”

Chapter 106: Cheating

Everyone was dumbfounded.

Has Chu Liuyue... unraveled the first Xuan formation? It looks a little too easy for her.

If they remembered correctly, only one hour had passed since she came in, yet she had actually cracked the first formation right after Gu Mingzhu!

No, she had obviously cracked it already, but she was waiting for Gu Mingzhu!

Gu Mingzhu's smug smile froze on her face. Her eyes widened slowly, and she glared at the chessboard in front of Chu Liuyue.

"Y-You have unraveled the first level too?"

Chu Liuyue was nonchalant. "Isn't it obvious?"

Gu Mingzhu felt her mind going blank. She became confused as she looked at the indifference on Chu Liuyue's face.

How is this possible? This is a complicated Xuan formation. One won't be able to unravel it so easily if one isn't capable!

When Gu Mingzhu said that it was a simple formation, it was a deliberate exaggeration on her part to mock Chu Liuyue. If it really were that easy, the dozen students in the room wouldn't have to rack their brains for so long and think so hard about it!

However, this Xuan formation didn't seem to be a problem to Chu Liuyue at all...

"Chu Liuyue is too good, isn't she? She had already unlocked the formation! Didn't she come in not too long ago?"

"Although Gu Mingzhu was one step before her, upon careful calculation, Chu Liuyue clearly solved it in a much shorter time!"

"Hey, can't you guys see that Chu Liuyue had already thought of an answer to the Xuan formation and was apparently waiting for Gu Mingzhu? I think Gu Mingzhu is going to be slower in cracking the second formation."

"Tsk tsk. Rumor has it that she used to be a loser. How did she turn out to be this good in the blink of an eye? Compared to Si Ting, her talent may even be on par with his!"

The whispers from the surrounding students reached Gu Mingzhu's ears. Her face paled.

"Carry on!" She was used to being proud as the Second Gu Missy. How could she admit defeat now?

Chu Liuyue remained unconcerned as she directed her focus back to the chessboard.

Once the first Xuan formation had been unraveled, the chess pieces automatically shifted into the second formation.

Gu Mingzhu withdrew her gaze in exasperation, but a trace of unease was beginning to surface from within. *Chu Liuyue... how is she so strong? She has only just embarked on the path of a Xuan Master. She apparently also didn't have the means to hire a master to guide her. So how is she so much better than me?*

Gu Mingzhu originally thought her results at the mid-term assessment was a coincidence. However, it now seems like she had been careless!

Gu Mingzhu took a deep breath in and tried to focus all her attention on the second Xuan formation in order to crack it as soon as possible and win against Chu Liuyue. However, her mind was so distracted that her head felt like a jumbled pile of mess. She simply couldn't calm down.

The more she tried to calm down, the more agitated she became. The more she stared at the Xuan formation on her chessboard, the more complicated she found it.

Before she knew it, little beads of sweat covered her forehead, and her eyes turned red.

Dongfang Qing, who stood at the front of the class, knew her expression well. He couldn't help but shake his head.

Indeed, Gu Mingzhu has considerably good talent. She certainly can afford to feel proud. However, being overly proud is arrogance.

She hasn't thought about the fact that Elder Sun and the others personally constructed the mid-term assessment's Xuan formation in the forest. How can it be possible for Chu Liuyue to pass by coincidence?

It will be tough for Gu Mingzhu to win against Chu Liuyue.

...

Time always passed by quickly when one was deep in their thoughts.

The light outside the window gradually went from bright to warm, then to dark.

Chu Liuyue looked up from her chessboard and realized that it was already evening. *I've wasted three hours of my time by staying here.*

At this thought, she shifted her gaze, and it landed on Si Ting—who was sitting beside her.

His back was straight, and his appearance was cool while he concentrated on the Xuan formation before him.

The light reflected on his face drew a clear and sharp outline of his face. This young man resembled a sharp blade, ready to be unsheathed at any moment. He always had an air of aloofness about him.

Although he seemed to be noble, restrained, and polite, Chu Liuyue could feel that this person was, by no means, as simple as he appeared to be.

When Si Ting sensed Chu Liuyue's gaze on him, his entire body tensed. Even his hand that was holding a chess piece froze for a moment.

What is she so anxious about? Si Ting couldn't help himself from thinking this. Then, a strange emotion arose inside him. Her talent is indeed stronger than I thought!

If I'm right, then she unraveled the second Xuan formation a long time ago. Despite that, she never took that last step for some unknown reason. She seems to be waiting for me.

Si Ting pursed his lips and stared at the formation eye. Then, he turned his wrist gently. The chess piece changed direction and landed in a position that he hadn't planned to place it in earlier.

Ka!

The second formation had been unraveled!

The pieces on the chessboard in front of him suddenly flew up, divided into black and white ones, and automatically landed in the box beside him.

Dongfang Qing looked at Si Ting with surprise. "I thought you would need four hours to crack this, but I didn't expect... Si Ting, you seem to be progressing very fast lately!"

Si Ting nodded gently. "I happened to see a similar Xuan formation a few days ago. That helped me to unravel today's formation faster."

Dongfang Qing stroked his beard, impressed. “Haha. I heard you’ve been borrowing a lot of books on Xuan formation diagrams from the library lately. It does seem to be quite useful to you today! Since you’ve passed the two levels today, you can be dismissed from class early!”

As soon as he said that, countless students looked at Si Ting enviously.

Things really are different when one comes in first. Not only is he able to go out in the middle of the class, but he is also dismissed early!

They didn’t know how long they would have to stay to unravel the formations!

Si Yang couldn’t help but hold his head, mourning. “Brother, why do I feel that you are even better than before? How do you expect any of us to live with it?”

Si Ting stood up and gave him a look. “Be more diligent. You can do it as well.”

Si Yang murmured to himself, “You seriously think that everyone is like you and are able to unravel the formation just by looking at something similar? If that was true, we would all be geniuses.”

Those accepted into Tian Lu Academy naturally had the talent. However, there was always someone better. When many geniuses gathered in the same place, there would definitely be some with an advantage and others with a disadvantage.

Si Ting, without a doubt, was one of the best!

“Where in the world are all these perverts—”

Ka!

Before Si Yang could finish, another crisp sound could be heard reverberating throughout the room!

This made everyone perk up. *Someone has unraveled the second formation again!*

They turned in unison and looked in the direction where the sound had come from. Once again, they were all taken aback because that sound actually came from the chessboard in front of Chu Liuyue!

This actually happened right after Si Ting finished. Chu Liuyue was the second person to unravel the second Xuan formation.

Even Dongfang Qing was shocked. His arms, which had been folded at his chest, lowered unconsciously as he quickly strode toward Chu Liuyue.

Almost at the same time, the chess pieces on Chu Liuyue's chessboard flew up, split themselves into their respective colors, and landed in her box!

Everyone had no more doubts about her after witnessing this scene.

Chu Liuyue had indeed unraveled two Xuan formations in succession!

Chu Liuyue dusted her hands and stood up while she moved her sore shoulders. "It's finally over..."

Si Ting could see the relief on her face. The look in his eyes softened. However, it disappeared in a flash like lightning before anyone noticed it.

Si Yang stared at her, dumbfounded. Finally, he couldn't hold back any longer and cursed softly, "Damn pervert!"

Chu Liuyue gave him a look that made him shudder and cower. For some reason, he always felt an indescribable aura from Chu Liuyue that made others think twice about provoking her.

In reality, Chu Liuyue didn't care. She turned around, looked at Gu Mingzhu, and said with a smile, "Second Gu Missy, those two Xuan formations that you promised earlier are now mine, right?"

Gu Mingzhu's face went pale.

Those two formations were also rare treasures to the Gu family. She dared to use them as a wager because she was impulsive and certain that she would win against Chu Liuyue.

What should I do now that I've lost the wager? Must I really give them to Chu Liuyue? Gu Mingzhu's expression changed. Suddenly, she thought of something and glared at Chu Liuyue. "You unraveled the formation immediately after Si Ting. Is it possible for such a coincidence to occur in the world? Chu Liuyue, you must have cheated!"

Chapter 107: Murdering My Husband

Chu Liuyue raised her brows. "Cheating? Are you saying that I peeked at Si Ting's method, and that's why I can solve the Xuan formation? Gu Mingzhu, both Si Ting and I are right under Mr. Dongfang's nose. We can be clearly seen if we attempted to do anything. Are you suspecting that Mr. Dongfang is protecting me?"

Dongfang Qing knitted his brows and looked at Gu Mingzhu. "Gu Mingzhu, this isn't a place for you to play around."

"I'm not playing!" Once Gu Mingzhu said that, she regretted it in her heart. Saying such things in front of Mr. Dongfang meant stirring up trouble for herself. However, she had already said it. What else could she do?

She clenched her teeth decisively and hardened her heart. "Mr. Dongfang, don't you find it weird? Why did Chu Liuyue solve it so soon after Si Ting? Isn't this too weird?"

The spectators looked at each other and cast their doubts on the matter.

Dongfang Qing was so angry that he laughed. "Gu Mingzhu, this isn't the first time you've had lessons here. Don't you clearly know whether one can cheat and look at how the people around solve the Xuan formation?"

The room fell into silence.

This was true. Even though everybody sat beside each other, there was some distance between the seats, and one could not see the other party's situation that easily.

The most important thing was that this chessboard was used to train one's abilities to solve Xuan formations. So, usually, only the person sitting right in front of the board could see it clearly. One would just see a blurred figure when viewing it from anywhere else.

Although Chu Liuyue and Si Ting sat right beside each other, logically speaking, Chu Liuyue should not have seen anything from her seat.

Si Yang broke into a smile and mocked, "Gu Mingzhu, you're pretty near my brother's seat as well. You can also look up and see how he solved the formation. Why didn't you solve the second one? Hm?"

Gu Mingzhu's face flushed red, and she could not say a word.

"Even though I don't want to admit it, this pervert is actually pretty talented. Did you think that Elder Sun and the rest could be so easily tricked?" Si Yang very clearly remembered how Elder Sun's attitude towards Chu Liuyue that day was filled with admiration. Initially, he could not believe it as well. However, he realized Chu Liuyue really wasn't an average person after that.

He could not win against her, but he was willing to admit her excellence, unlike Gu Mingzhu. "Gu Mingzhu, could it be that you can't afford to lose?"

Gu Mingzhu glared at Si Yang harshly. "Shut up!"

Chu Liuyue smiled harmoniously. "Second Gu Missy, you're so distinguished, so you're definitely not someone who will go back on their words. Previously, you talked about how the two scrolls of Xuan formations are clearly in front of everyone else. If you go back on your words, then it would be very shameless—"

“Who are you calling shameless?” Gu Mingzhu could tell that Chu Liuyue was scolding her and instantly became anxious.

Chu Liuyue blinked in shock. “Second Gu Missy, what do you mean by that? Do you really not plan to carry out your end of the deal?”

Gu Mingzhu was very indignant. *Chu Liuyue has said everything. What else can I say?*

She could not help but look at Dongfang Qing and noticed his annoyed expression. She knew that if she continued making a ruckus, it would do no good for herself.

“It’s just two scrolls of Xuan formations. I’ll just give them to you.” She pressed her hands against the chessboard and forcefully curbed the anger in her heart as she thought of how she would explain to her family later on. If it were anything else, it would be easier to talk about it. However, if her family head knew that she lost them because of a bet...

“Second Gu Missy, you’re truly generous. Thank you so much.” Even though Chu Liuyue did not care for those Xuan formation drawings, she had no reason to reject them when the other party had offered them herself.

After Chu Liuyue finished her sentence, she looked at Dongfang Qing. “Mr. Dongfang, can I end my lesson now?”

Dongfang Qing originally wanted to keep her behind and talk to her, but he didn’t force her to stay after seeing that she looked like she wanted to leave a long time ago. He laughed. “Of course.”

“Thank you, Mr. Dongfang,” said Chu Liuyue as she briefly packed her items and walked out.

Almost at the same time, Si Ting bade Dongfang Qing farewell and followed Chu Liuyue out.

While looking at the duo’s disappearing back views, Gu Mingzhu bit her lower lip and slammed the chessboard in frustration.

*B*tch!*

...

“If you walk out with me, you’ll just get me into more trouble.” After walking out of the room, Chu Liuyue turned around to look at Si Ting, who was behind her.

Si Ting knitted his brows slightly. “Sorry for causing you trouble, but there’s nothing between Gu Mingzhu and me.”

He knew that Gu Mingzhu was interested in him, but they did not talk privately on normal days, so he did not know that Gu Mingzhu would purposely cause trouble for Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue was obviously intelligent as she had already guessed the reason.

For some reason, he was nervous because he was afraid that Chu Liuyue would misunderstand, but he seemingly had a strange expectation.

“That has nothing to do with me.” Chu Liuyue shook her head. It was normal for a young and handsome man like him to attract all sorts of love. Initially, she did not really care about it. It would not be good if it affected her. “However, I hope nothing of this sort will happen in the future. So, let’s not meet if there’s nothing important.”

Si Ting felt as if a whole bucket of cold water was poured over him when he heard the young girl’s distant and polite tone. His lips moved as if he wanted to explain, but a thought flashed across his mind. *What right did I have to explain?*

Chu Liuyue walked forward and gently said, “But thanks for today.”

Si Ting hesitated for a while and hurriedly went forward to block her path. “I promise that this won’t happen again, but I have a question that I hope you can answer.”

Chu Liuyue nodded, indicating for him to ask his question.

Si Ting paused for a while and stared at Chu Liuyue’s dark and clear eyes. He enunciated every word carefully as he asked, “You solved the second formation long before, right?”

Chu Liuyue looked at him with much interest and retorted, “Didn’t you as well?”

Si Ting was suddenly stumped. He had always hidden it very well. Even Dongfang Qing did not discover it, but... Chu Liuyue noticed it instantly.

Chu Liuyue had long noticed that something was amiss with Si Ting. She finally noticed the problem when they came to class together today—he was also hiding his talent and abilities.

Even though Chu Liuyue did not know the reason, she had no interest in probing.

“Then... how long did you take?” Si Ting did not deny it and looked at Chu Liuyue with a more investigative gaze.

Chu Liuyue’s lips curved up, and she walked past him. “I’ve answered your question. I have nothing else to say about the rest.”

Si Ting turned around but only saw the young girl’s slim figure gradually disappear.

...

When she returned to her lodgings, the sky had already turned dark.

The moment she walked in, she alertly stopped in her tracks and quickly brandished a dagger towards her behind. “Who are you?”

Her wrist was held by a lukewarm, strong hand. With a forceful pull, she easily fell into the person’s arms.

Chu Liuyue was shocked and turned her wrist as a silver light flashed across her eyes.

At this time, a familiar cold fragrance attacked her nose, which made her stop in her tracks.

“Yue’er, are you trying to kill your husband?” The lazy voice sounded beside her ear.

Chu Liuyue looked up and saw a handsome face that one could not get mad at. “Rong Xiu?”

Chapter 108: Wait For You

Chu Liuyue asked in shock, “Why are you here?”

Rong Xiu’s long arm held her thin and soft waist, bringing the two of them even closer.

Chu Liuyue raised her brows and was about to take action.

“Wu...” Rong Xiu seemed not to notice that danger was lurking as his entire person leaned against Chu Liuyue and his chin gently rested on her forehead. He sighed softly. “I’m so tired...”

Chu Liuyue was speechless.

The duo’s close to hugging posture allowed Chu Liuyue to feel the warmth of Rong Xiu’s body through the shirt. She could even hear his clear and powerful heartbeats.

The warmth from the duo's contact started to spread, making her feel a little hot.

She clenched her teeth. "Rong Xiu, if you don't let go of me, I won't be nice to you!"

Rong Xiu's hand that was restricting her moved slowly, and he knocked Chu Liuyue's fingers lightly, causing the sharp knife to land in his hands.

Chu Liuyue originally wanted to retaliate, but Rong Xiu was too strong, and she was not his match. She could only watch on as the other party took her things away.

Rong Xiu looked down and saw the blade shining brightly; it was as sharp as ever. *If this knife slashed me... Pfft.*

"Yue'er, why do you always hide weapons on you? If you accidentally hurt me, won't your heart hurt to death?"

Chu Liuyue turned speechless after listening to his shameless words. "I just use it for self-defence, so I'll naturally kill whoever has ill intentions. I'll only act faster towards shameless people."

Rong Xiu laughed deeply, and Chu Liuyue could clearly feel his chest vibrating.

Just when Chu Liuyue really could not take it any longer, Rong Xiu finally let go of her. At the same time, his fingers bent, and the flying blade immediately contorted, turning into useless metal.

Chu Liuyue glared at him.

However, her gaze was bright and very comfortable to Rong Xiu. He chuckled lightly and walked into the house while holding Chu Liuyue's hand.

"This is of poor quality. I'll give you a good one tomorrow."

Chu Liuyue really did not know how to reply to him. She looked down and saw Rong Xiu holding her hand tightly, without any intention of letting her go. There was no use for her to struggle, so she decisively gave up on that idea.

Logic was useless in front of this type of person, and she was no match for him in terms of violence, so it was useless for her to struggle.

"Your Highness, did you come to the wrong place? This is Tian Lu Academy. Isn't it inappropriate if you come in just like this?" Chu Liuyue suddenly had a question in her heart when she thought of this. "That's not right. The academy has tight security, and trespassers aren't allowed to enter at all. How did you come in?"

Rong Xiu pulled her into the house and walked straight to the bed as he smiled lightly. "I have my own ways of coming in."

Chu Liuyue seriously looked at him. *There are barriers outside Tian Lu Academy, and countless strong talents are holding the fort inside. Logically speaking, they should definitely detect an outsider trespassing into the area. However, they clearly did not detect him. How exactly did Rong Xiu do it?*

Just when Chu Liuyue was thinking about this, Rong Xiu had already reached the bed.

Chu Liuyue secretly gathered her strength and suddenly pushed him.

Somehow, Rong Xiu seemed to have predicted this, so he turned around.

Chu Liuyue's strength struck the air, and her entire person fell forward uncontrollably.

Rong Xiu moved backward and conveniently fell onto the bed.

The sound of impact between the body and the bed made one's teeth ache.

Chu Liuyue landed straight on Rong Xiu's chest.

Rong Xiu grunted but still held her tight, using his body to block the impact.

Everything happened in just a moment. When Chu Liuyue recovered her senses, she noticed that she was in Rong Xiu's embrace.

And he—

“Yue'er, I can be pushed easily. You don't have to use so much strength,” teased Rong Xiu.

That bit of guilt in Chu Liuyue's heart instantly vanished into thin air. She looked up at him. “Who wanted to push you...”

Before Chu Liuyue could finish her sentence, she saw Rong Xiu's slightly pale face and the faint dark green beneath his eyes from the moonlight that shone in through the window. She paused, and her brows knitted slightly. "Your Highness, since when did you become so weak?"

Rong Xiu's lips curved up. "Yue'er, you really care about me."

Chu Liuyue glared at him angrily but felt that something was indeed wrong, judging by his appearance.

"I haven't slept in the past two days, so I am pretty tired."

"Yet, you didn't forget to come over even when you're tired. Prince Li, you really have a lot of energy," muttered Chu Liuyue, but she eliminated the idea of kicking Rong Xiu down from the bed.

Rong Xiu looked at her, and his eyes sparkled. He laughed deeply. "I can only sleep well in your place. What else can I do?" His voice was low, similar to the strumming of an instrument. He looked especially genuine under the brilliant moonlight.

Chu Liuyue tightly pressed her lips against each other. She naturally did not believe his words, but she could not help hesitating when she saw Rong Xiu's appearance. After some time, she then said, "Your Highness, you come and go as you please, and others can't say anything about it. Go ahead."

She was about to stand up.

"Really?" Rong Xiu raised his brows and exerted some strength with his hands, trapping Chu Liuyue in his embrace.

The both of them were very close to each other. When Rong Xiu talked, Chu Liuyue could even feel his warm breath by her ears.

Rong Xiu shifted his gaze, and it traveled around her face, finally landing on her petal-like lips. His eyes were dark, and he slowly inched in closer.

Chu Liuyue suddenly felt uncomfortable, and her entire person froze.

Unexpectedly, Rong Xiu stopped and smiled. “What are you... waiting for?”

Chu Liuyue was shocked and only recovered her senses afterward. She immediately stood up. “Whose waiting for you?”

Rong Xiu liked Chu Liuyue even more as he stared at the young girl with a pair of bright and fiery eyes in front of him.

Her current appearance—which was different from her usual calm and composed demeanor—was the most attractive one.

He started to relax, and the feelings of lethargy kicked in. He laughed deeply and looked at Chu Liuyue before closing his eyes to rest.

Chu Liuyue heaved a sigh of relief for some reason when she saw him close his eyes and hide his mesmerizing gaze. That earlier look made her heart beat a lot faster.

“Rong Xiu—” Chu Liuyue was about to say something else, but Rong Xiu breathed deeply as if he had already fallen asleep.

Chu Liuyue swallowed her remaining words and looked at Rong Xiu for a while. *This is weird. How can someone with such complicated thinking fall asleep in someone else’s place so quickly? Is he really not worried that I’ll do something bad to him?*

Rong Xiu is definitely someone that doesn’t trust the people around him easily, but he never guards himself against me for some reason. Why exactly is that so...

Chu Liuyue looked at him for a while and turned around to leave.

After walking out, she heard a faint mutter.

“... Yue’er...”

Chu Liuyue turned around and saw that Rong Xiu’s eyes were tightly shut, and he had not woken up.

He dreamt of me? What did he dream of? However, his tone is very warm and loving.

Chu Liuyue inched in closer, but Rong Xiu did not say anything else. She waited for a while and finally stood up to leave. *Perhaps... I heard it wrongly.*

When Chu Liuyue left, the room fell into dead silence once again.

Rong Xiu seemed to have a nightmare since he knitted his brows. After a long time, his lips moved slightly, and he let out a light mutter. "... Don't go back..."

Chapter 109: Yuan Meridian Advancement

Even though the house that the academy arranged for Chu Liuyue was not big, there were extra empty rooms.

Chu Liuyue no longer got angry when Rong Xiu stole her bed once again; she had even faintly adjusted to it. She went to the neighboring room and closed the door. After listening intently, she was reassured when she did not notice any commotion in the other room.

Since Rong Xiu could quietly enter Tian Lu Academy, he definitely would not be discovered so easily. She was not worried about this.

Even though it was already late at night, Chu Liuyue did not go to sleep directly and meditated instead. She focused on her breathing and absorbed the Heaven and Earth Force.

Invisible streaks of energy gradually entered her body and circulated throughout her limbs and bones before silently flowing towards the water droplet in her dantian.

Ever since she created this special pearl of essence and formally stepped back onto the path of cultivation, Chu Liuyue had never relaxed for a day. She would insist on cultivating no matter how tired she was, not wasting any time.

Even if nobody forced her, there would always be a voice in her heart that kept reminding her that she had many things to do. Being born again was an enormous work of destiny, so she had to strengthen herself.

After some time, Chu Liuyue finally opened her eyes slowly and breathed out foul air.

She could feel the aura in her body gradually strengthening day by day. After all, this body had a Dijing Yuan meridian, so she cultivated much quicker than an average person. However, this was not enough.

In her previous life, she had a Tianjing Yuan meridian, and her talents were outstanding—which were not something that a Dijing Yuan meridian could compare to. However, Chu Liuyue knew that she could not rush this. Her enemy's status was also much higher than her current self, so she could only work hard on strengthening herself.

Si Yang previously said that the top scholars in the mid-term assessments have the chance to meet Tianling Dynasty's envoys. Calculating the time, it should be soon...

Chu Liuyue finally completed a Xuan formation drawing in her mind and stopped cultivating.

...

The next day, Chu Liuyue woke up early in the morning.

After arranging her items, she remembered the sleeping Rong Xiu in the neighboring room and went over to knock on the door.

Nobody answered her.

She pushed open the door and saw that the person had indeed disappeared. Chu Liuyue touched her forehead and was caught between laughter and tears.

The high and mighty Prince Li really seems to treat my place as an inn. However, it would be a little troublesome if he was still here at this time.

Chu Liuyue did not care about it and turned around to leave.

...

“Hey, did you hear? Gu Mingzhu failed in her challenge with Chu Liuyue during the meditation class yesterday and lost two scrolls of fifth-level Xuan formation drawings!”

“Are you for real? Isn’t Gu Mingzhu quite strong too? How did she lose to Chu Liuyue?”

“Of course, it’s true! This incident has spread all over the academy. Gu Mingzhu is talented, but don’t you know that Chu Liuyue came in second in the mid-term assessments on her first day? However, she is pretty gutsy since she was so merciless, even with Gu Mingzhu’s status...”

“She doesn’t even care about the Crown Prince, let alone the rest.”

“It seems like this Chu Liuyue isn’t someone to be trifled with...”

Chu Liuyue heard all this chatter when she came to Jiuyou Tower.

Upon seeing her appear, these voices quickly disappeared, and everyone looked at her with uncomfortable gazes.

Perhaps many people in the Xuan Master’s side had not seen Chu Liuyue before, but she was pretty famous on the warrior’s side.

All the warriors were there when she battled against Chu Xianmin.

Chu Liuyue did not care about all of these as she headed straight for Jiuyou Tower.

“Hold on!”

A teasing voice sounded, and Chu Liuyue looked over.

The person who blocked her was none other than Lu Feiyan.

“What’s the matter?” asked Chu Liuyue lightly.

Lu Feiyan's brows knitted tightly, and her shrill voice became even louder and harsher to the ears. "Of course, I have something to tell you! Chu Liuyue, what are you doing here?"

Chu Liuyue righteously said, "Of course, I came here to cultivate."

"This is warrior territory. Why has a Xuan Master like you come here?" Lu Feiyan had had enough of Chu Liuyue from the previous day and did not have a good night's sleep. The more she thought about it, the more indignant she felt.

Just as she was thinking about how to handle her, Chu Liuyue offered herself up. Many warriors would back her up here, so she was not afraid of Chu Liuyue.

When Chu Liuyue heard this, a ripple appeared in her calm eyes. She raised her brows and asked, "Why can't I—someone who took first place in the warrior assessment—come to warrior territory?"

Lu Feiyan was dazed. She only then remembered that Chu Liuyue did indeed take first place in the warrior assessment, even though Chu Liuyue went to cultivate as a Xuan Master. She clearly had more rights than anyone else here.

Lu Feiyan froze.

"My time is precious. If you continue to block my way, I won't guarantee that I won't do anything to you." Chu Liuyue was calm, and her tone was cold as if she was talking about something unimportant.

However, this particular look of hers made Lu Feiyan even more fearful for some reason.

She almost instinctively moved a step backward, but she became increasingly indignant with so many people watching her. When Chu Liuyue walked past her, she could not help but curse. "What's there to be proud of? You're just a dog without a home." *What can Chu Liuyue, someone without a family to depend on, do?*

Upon hearing this, Chu Liuyue did not stop in her tracks but smiled slightly. It was not the first time she heard such a thing, but she did not care at all.

To the public, the Chu family had a lot of businesses and was a stable support. However, they were just a dirty cage to Chu Ning and her.

The earlier they left the family, the earlier she would be happy.

As for people who did not know how to talk, such as Lu Feiyan... She would handle them another day.

Lu Feiyan even thought that Chu Liuyue was scared of her as she ignored Lu Feiyan, so Lu Feiyan became even more confident and turned to the people behind her. Lu Feiyan said, "Did you see? Chu Liuyue is just glorious on the outside. She's going to have a tough life ahead after offending the Chu family and the Crown Prince."

However, her sentence did not garner the agreement she expected. The few girls looked at each other awkwardly and hesitated for a while before saying, "Yan'er, I heard that the Chu family's situation isn't very good. They say that the Crown Prince will become in-laws with the Chu family soon, but Minmin is only a concubine..."

In the past, everyone thought that Chu Xianmin would definitely be the Crown Princess, so they thought highly of the Chu family. However, everything was different now. Chu Xianmin did marry the Crown

Prince, but her status was akin to slapping the Chu family. It was just adding salt to the Chu family's wounds.

However, Chu Liuyue had a smooth road ahead of her after leaving the Chu family.

Lu Feiyan's gaze suddenly changed as she purposely sighed, looking sorrowful "Minmin is already disfigured. Of course, the position of Crown Princess will be left for someone else... When will the ceremony be held? Let's go and show her some support."

She would not miss any rare chances of seeing the Crown Prince.

...

On the other hand, Chu Liuyue had already arrived at the bottom of Jiuyou Tower.

An elder wearing a white robe sat in front of the door and was pretending to be asleep.

Every student had to pause in front of the elder before they went in.

Chu Liuyue saw that the students took off their nameplates from their left chest and placed it on the square piece of black jade in front of the elder before picking it up again.

When she walked in closer, she could see that a few lines of words would appear on the jade after a nameplate was placed on it.

It was her turn soon.

When she placed her nameplate on the piece of jade, the elder suddenly opened his eyes.

“Are you Chu Liuyue—the girl who came in first during the mid-term assessment? He pouted. “Why haven’t you registered your Yuan meridian level?”

Chapter 110: Awakening

Chu Liuyue paused in her movements. “I didn’t know about this.”

The elder laughed and waved his hands. “It’s normal that you haven’t registered. When new students come in every year, they’ll go for a mass test and be registered in the booklet. It’s normal that you don’t have it because your situation is special. Just find some time to take the test later on.”

Chu Liuyue then remembered that, when the people in front of her placed their nameplates on the black jade, it would show their names and their Yuan meridian and cultivation levels.

However, the stone only showed her name after she placed her nameplate on it. No, there was still a number after it—19.

Chu Liuyue curiously looked at the number behind her name. “This is...”

“This is the amount of time you can spend cultivating in Jiuyou Tower. According to the mid-term assessment results, every student will be allocated different cultivation durations. Since you took second place in the Xuan Master assessment and first place in the warrior assessment, your total cultivation duration is 38 hours.” The elder was very patient and explained everything to Chu Liuyue.

When he finished his explanation, Chu Liuyue could clearly feel quite a few people turn to look at her. Their gazes were filled with envy, unlike the previous curiosity and fear.

Envy? Is it because of these 38 hours? Chu Liuyue knew that one had to meet conditions to cultivate in Jiuyou Tower, but it seemed like it was much harder than what she imagined. With her results, she only had 38 hours. It was easy for her to guess how many hours other people had.

“Teacher, can I freely allocate these 38 hours?”

The elder smiled a little cunningly. “It’s not that simple. Even though you have many allocated hours, there’s a limit to how long you can spend cultivating inside every day.”

Xuan Masters and heavenly doctors did not really care about cultivating in this area, so they rarely came to Jiuyou Tower to absorb the Heaven and Earth Force. Warriors were the ones who came the most.

After all, Jiuyou Tower’s Heaven and Earth Force was much denser than outside. One’s cultivation speed would greatly increase if they could enter the tower and cultivate.

This was an enormous attraction to any warrior.

“The cultivation duration is naturally allocated according to the warrior’s stage. Stage-one warriors can train for up to two hours in Jiuyou Tower a day. Stage-two warriors can train for four hours, and so on and so forth.”

The elder’s eyes shone with excitement and curiosity as he stared at Chu Liuyue. “I heard you beat Chu Xianmin previously, so you should be a stage-three warrior at least, right?”

When Chu Liuyue heard him talk about the warrior stages, she knew that something bad was about to happen. She was not weak, but who would have guessed that she had just become a stage-one warrior?

No matter how hard she worked, an extra line would not be added to her pearl of essence.

Chu Liuyue could not do anything about it. She could only helplessly and shamelessly say, “I’m... a stage-one warrior.”

...

The Chu family estate.

“First Elder, do you mean that you’re not giving Minmin a dowry?”

Even though Chu Yan and Lu Yao were not satisfied with their daughter marrying the Crown Prince as a concubine, they did not have any other choice now and could only agree.

Three days were too much of a rush, so they could only prepare a bigger dowry to make them look good. It would also allow Chu Xianmin to live an easier life after she married Rong Jin. However, they did not expect to be stopped by First Elder.

First Elder was expressionless. "The family doesn't have much income these few years, and the two of you know this the best. Now that the ceremony date has been settled so abruptly, we don't even have time to prepare such a big dowry."

Chu Yan suppressed his anger. "Minmin is going to marry the Crown Prince, and she represents our Chu family. If Minmin gets belittled, our Chu family's reputation will also be tarnished."

"Hmph, it's not bad that she's marrying the Crown Prince, but she's only going to be a concubine." First Elder forcefully placed the teacup in his hand down and looked at the duo with a darkened face. "If her dowry is too extravagant now, what will she do when the Crown Prince marries a Secondary Consort and a Royal Consort? Rather than showing our affluence temporarily, we should just be low-key and avoid getting into more trouble."

His words stumped Chu Yan and his wife, but the anger in their hearts rose even more. Even though the Chu family could not be compared to the past, they still had enough money to afford this.

Besides, Chu Xianmin was the first wife's daughter, and the Chu family had long been preparing gifts secretly ever since she got close to the Crown Prince.

First Elder only said he did not have the gifts because Chu Xianmin had lost the Crown Princess position. Thus, he purposely became mean to her and wanted to save his money.

How could Chu Yan and his wife agree to this?

“First Elder, even though Minmin is not marrying the Crown Prince as his legitimate wife, it’s hard to tell the future. If you insist—”

“Who can accurately predict the future?” When First Elder heard Chu Yan’s words, he interrupted Chu Yan. However, he was slightly convinced, so he said, “But seeing that you two only have one daughter, the Chu family will fork out 32 gifts to be her dowry.”

Lu Yao sneered in her heart. *He is just brushing us off with this slight amount of money! It’s too shameless if the strong Chu family only forks out 32 gifts to be Minmin’s dowry!*

First Elder seemed to have read her mind as he calmly added, “Lu Yao, you’ve been in charge of the household for many years. I bet you’ve already prepared some gifts for Minmin. It’s already very nice for the family to give so much. What do you think?”

First Elder is essentially threatening me about me pocketing the money. Lu Yao clenched her teeth. However, she really did not dare to cause much trouble as her reputation would be ruined if word got out. She was also very indignant. *Yes, I did take money, but clothes and food both need money.*

The three of them were too used to living luxurious lives and only loved the best of everything. Thus, they did not have much savings.

The most important thing was that Chu Xianmin had spent more than 100,000 silver taels in Zhen Bao Pavilion the previous month. Lu Yao was planning to ask her marital home for money after Chu Xianmin claimed first place in the academy’s assessment and earned the Crown Prince’s liking.

Who would have expected Chu Liuyue to appear out of nowhere and disrupt her plans?

The Lu family was now mocking her openly and secretly. Why would they give her another cent?

Zhen Bao Pavilion had also chased her very tightly. She definitely did not dare to offend them, so she could only use her own money.

She no longer had money to prepare a dowry for Chu Xianmin. However, judging by First Elder's look, it was clear that he would not change his mind. Saying anything else would only humiliate her.

Lu Yao stood up and glanced at Chu Yan—who wanted to say something else—before the two of them left with many grievances.

...

Tian Lu Academy, Jiuyou Tower.

Chu Liuyue ignored all the gazes around her and pinned the nameplate on her left chest again. She calmed herself down and looked up.

Jiuyou Tower was a majestic tower with nine levels and was made of black cast iron. When viewed from the bottom to the top, the tower looked like a sharp knife going straight for the clouds, as if it would tear the sky into pieces at any moment.

Every level had eight corners that curled up. A bell hung from each corner. When the wind blew, one could hear crisp bell rings nearby.

The person in front of Chu Liuyue had already entered the tower through the dark-green copper door.

The door was rectangular and had a weird drawing etched on it. It seemed to be an eagle. The eagle looked down slightly, and its eyes were tightly shut. Its pair of enormous wings were folded in front of it, making it look especially stern while enveloped by a fiery and crazy aura.

For some reason, Chu Liuyue took one look at it and felt its ferocious aura.

She suppressed her strange feelings and stretched her hands out to push the door.

At this moment, the eagle suddenly opened its tightly shut eyes.

Bloody! Violent! Terrifying!

Harsh, cold intent went straight for Chu Liuyue.