

Nobel Ruler 241

Chapter 241: Getting Cold Feet

Chu Liuyue was speechless. She increasingly had the feeling that Rong Xiu had prepared everything and was just waiting for her to agree to it.

“What if I didn’t come this time?” she asked.

Rong Xiu glanced at her. “If not this time, then next time and the time after. You’re bound to show up eventually.”

Chu Liuyue could not help but laugh. “Prince Li is so confident. What if I never agree? Won’t all those preparations be in vain then? Oh right, Prince Li can always just get someone else and...”

Rong Xiu’s tone was calm. “It’s just for you. If you never agree, I’ll just burn everything.”

Since everything was prepared for her, there was no point in keeping them if she did not want them. Of course, Rong Xiu had never thought about doing this because he had his eyes set on her.

Chu Liuyue paused. *His tone is even as if he is stating a fact. It’s like he doesn’t realize how startling this is to me.*

She paused, then asked. “Wh-when did you begin preparing those things?”

Did Rong Xiu fall for me when we met for the first time? The bloodied and muddy me?

Rong Xiu narrowed his eyes. "A long time ago."

A long time ago? How long? Chu Liuyue wanted to continue asking, but Rong Xiu had carried her into the transportation formation.

Countless streaks of light formed a barrier around the pair. Everything turned black, and the pair entered the transportation formation's void!

...

The pair quickly returned to the middle of the woods.

The barrier around the two only disappeared after they exited the lake.

Chu Liuyue turned and glanced around. It was noon, and the mist above the lake had dissipated a little. The transportation formation beneath the lake had also turned invisible.

From the outside, everything seemed normal.

"There's a barrier outside the lake. Regular people can't get near it, so it naturally won't be discovered," explained Rong Xiu as if he could read her mind.

Chu Liuyue nodded but thought of another matter. “In that case, you purposely let me in back then?”

Rong Xiu glanced at Xue Xue with a half-smile.

Xue Xue looked up proudly. *What about it! I did it on purpose! If I did not take the initiative, who knows when Master can get married!?*

Hmph! Tuan Zi looked at Xue Xue with contempt. *With such a shameless master, the fiend is definitely the same.*

Xue Xue bared its teeth at Tuan Zi.

Tuan Zi shook its tail and stuck its butt out at Xue Xue.

Chu Liuyue laughed. For some reason, Tuan Zi was not afraid of Xue Xue. It would even challenge Xue Xue from time to time.

In theory, Tuan Zi wouldn't have dared to do this since Xue Xue was an advanced fiend, and Tuan Zi was of a lower stage. But when she thought about how Tuan Zi wasn't even afraid of the black flying python, she did not think much of it.

She would study Tuan Zi in detail when she got the chance.

“Right! There's the Qing Jiao Competition today!”

As Chu Liuyue looked at the bright rays of light reflecting off the trees, she suddenly recalled that there was another competition today.

“At this time... the competition must’ve begun.”

Rong Xiu smiled. “You really seem to care about this Qing Jiao Competition.”

Chu Liuyue nodded frankly. “The competition isn’t important. What’s important is the reward!”

Even though she had become the top warrior in this year’s Qing Jiao Competition, it was good to get more benefits from it since she had signed up for the Xuan Master competition.

As he stared at Chu Liuyue’s bright-eyed behavior, Rong Xiu began to reflect. *Perhaps I did not gift her enough things last time?*

“You still want to take part in the Qing Jiao Competition?”

Chu Liuyue shrugged. “I don’t think I will make it in time even if I go now.”

Rong Xiu smiled. “If you want to take part, then it’s not too late.”

...

Yan Ge anxiously waited for news of Chu Liuyue in Zhen Bao Pavilion. Since he was afraid of setting off alarm bells, he did not go out to search for her personally. However, he did send out a number of people discreetly.

Time passed, and noon was almost over, but there was still no news.

His heart was in his throat when he pondered whether he would have to resort to extreme measures if there was still no news by evening.

Then, he suddenly felt something. He quickly took out the palm-sized geomantic compass from his chest. *Master uses the geomantic compass to send messages, but he has not used the compass more than thrice in the past three years. I did not expect it to move now!*

The needle—carved out of purple jade—pointed in a specific direction after spinning for a while.

Without hesitation, Yan Ge dashed out!

...

Jia Nan Square.

The entire square was silent, and the arena was filled with Xuan Masters.

Since the Xuan Master competition required high concentration, everyone remained silent. However, the atmosphere was tense because it was a competition.

Bang!

A soft sound could be heard.

In the arena, three stars had lit up on the stone stage in front of a Xuan Master. This meant that the student had solved three Xuan formations!

“That’s Sheng Yiming from Nan Feng Academy. He’s only 18, but he’s a stage-four Xuan Master. He can be considered one of the best amongst these students.”

“There are less than ten students who are above stage-four Xuan Masters, correct? The top Xuan Master should be amongst them...”

“Look, Xi Wanwan has also solved three formations!”

“Nan Feng Academy’s Xuan Masters seem rather strong! But then again, Tian Lu Academy’s Elder Sun is a Xuan Master himself, so he should produce rather outstanding students. However, none of Tian Lu Academy’s Xuan Masters have solved the third formation yet.”

“That Si Ting seems to be his student, right? I heard he’s rather strong, but I wonder how the others are...”

“Hey, isn’t Chu Liuyue a Xuan Master too? She could even activate a fourth-level black Xuan formation crystal! Why don’t I see her?”

In the arena, Si Ting held a chess piece in his hand, but he did not set it down. He turned and glanced at the empty seat next to him and frowned. *Chu Liuyue still isn't here yet. Knowing her, there is no reason for her not to show up after signing up... Master seemed a little anxious earlier, and I wonder if it has anything to do with Chu Liuyue.*

He pondered for a moment before he suppressed his uneasiness and set the chess piece down.

Bang!

The third formation was solved!

“Look, Si Ting has solved it as well!”

“He seems to be a stage-four Xuan Master too?!”

“But he still ranks quite far behind. It seems like first place will belong to Nan Feng Academy...”

The crowd debated softly.

Situ Xingchen was seated in her seat. She seemed to be watching the happenings in the arena, but she would occasionally glance at Tian Lu Academy. *Chu Liuyue actually did not show up today...*

Cheng Han noticed her gaze and naturally figured out what she was thinking. He scoffed. “Xingchen, there’s no need to look! That Liuyue must have fled because she got cold feet!”

Chapter 242: The Last Person

Situ Xingchen hesitantly said, “It can’t be... She even activated a fourth-level black Xuan formation crystal... She shouldn’t be too bad if she showed up for the competition.”

Cheng Han thought otherwise. “All your attention is on cultivating as a heavenly doctor, so you naturally don’t know the tricks of Xuan Masters. Even though her black Xuan formation crystal contains a fourth-level Xuan formation, one does not have to be a stage-four Xuan Master to activate it.”

“You need to understand that those things are made to be easily activated during battles. It isn’t that hard to activate them! That Chu Liuyue is just a stage-two Xuan Master; she only managed to become the top warrior because she used unorthodox means!”

Cheng Han was referring to Chu Liuyue’s blood ferret when he said ‘unorthodox means.’

After an entire day of pondering, Cheng Han still could not figure out why that blood ferret could consume Heng Jingchuo’s force whole.

Something was off! To him, Chu Liuyue did not come in first because of her own ability! Therefore, he still despised Chu Liuyue.

“There were too many variables in the one-on-one competition yesterday. But the Xuan Master competition is different. One’s ability is clear for all to see!”

Situ Xingchen nodded. From her point of view, she agreed with Cheng Han's opinion.

But Tian Lu Academy's reaction doesn't seem right. Did something really happen to Chu Liuyue? Situ Xingchen curiously stared for a while, but it was difficult for her to ask about it in public.

Then again...

Something else bothered her. After the competition ended yesterday, she sent someone to get information on Prince Li Mansion. However, the mansion was heavily guarded, so she did not manage to get any information.

She felt a little disappointed, but she knew it was normal given that person's personality. Besides, this was the Imperial City, so she had to be extra careful.

Thankfully, there was news about Prince Li Mansion going around in the Imperial City. Hence, she managed to get some information. But she was even more surprised after she heard the rumors.

That person had barely left his mansion since he returned to the Imperial City a month ago. The only time he left his mansion was when he took part in the Crown Prince—Rong Jin's birthday banquet.

The most important thing was that he seemed to have helped Chu Liuyue out at the banquet...

Rumors were usually exaggerated. People outside the palace usually didn't know what was going on inside, so nobody actually knew what truly happened.

From the bottom of her heart, Situ Xingchen did not want to believe it. She treated it as idle gossip made up by people.

Based on that person's personality, there is no way he would help her out of the blue. Even if he did help her, there has to be another reason behind his actions. After all, Chu Liuyue was still Rong Jin's fiancée then. He would never take another look at such a woman.

This was the only way Situ Xingchen could comfort herself.

But another matter had caught her attention.

He actually went to Tian Lu Academy. On the surface, he said that it was to pay respect to his mother, but he hasn't done that in all these years. There is probably another reason behind his sudden decision.

She wondered what had caught his attention in Tian Lu Academy. Situ Xingchen had many questions in her heart, and she wanted to ask him those questions in person. However, he seemed to be away from the Imperial City these two days.

She wondered if she would be able to meet him before the Qing Jiao Competition ended...

...

Time passed quickly, and it was already the afternoon.

The competition was down to the last four hours.

In the arena, the Xuan Masters who had not solved the first and second Xuan formations became increasingly nervous.

At this point, the competing Xuan Masters would only have hope of solving the final two Xuan formations in the final four hours if they had solved the first three. Those who had not done so could be confirmed as eliminated.

Bam!

Someone fainted in the arena.

Sun Zhongyan took a glance and instructed the refereeing teacher to bring the person down as he shook his head.

Forcibly solving the Xuan formations will only hurt yourself. In reality, this happens in the arena every year. But no matter what we say, there will be people who won't listen. However, Xuan Masters aren't like warriors. This discipline relies more on one's talent and ability. Without either, one will not make any progress, even if they study Xuan formations day and night.

The truth was cruel, but there was nothing that could be done.

Finally, someone stood up in the dead silent arena.

"Nan Feng Academy's Su Bai quits." His face was pale, and he could barely stand. He clearly could not hold on any longer.

The stone platform in front of him only had one star lit up.

The refereeing teacher took Su Bai's wooden card back and comforted him before sending him down.

The teenager's face was gloomy. He stared at the card for a long while before he turned and left.

The crowd did not look down on him either. At most, they sighed.

"Only one in a thousand can become Xuan Masters. It's a pity that only a handful can become top-class Xuan Masters."

"There are always stronger people out there."

"Xuan Masters truly rely on talent heavily..."

The first person to quit seemed to have set a precedent. Soon, others followed.

By the time there were only three hours left on the clock, half the contestants had left the arena.

The people still in the arena were either truly talented or clinging on for their dear life.

Bang!

The stone platform before Sheng Yiming was the first to have four stars lit! He was the first to solve four Xuan formations and enter the last stage!

Everyone in Nan Feng Academy was excited. Even Fu Yunshan tugged at his beard and revealed a content smile. *Sheng Yiming is the academy's hope of coming in first, and he clearly did not disappoint. As long as he keeps things up, he will definitely take first place!*

Without a doubt, Sheng Yiming's activation of the last stage added pressure onto the others.

A few more quit. Very soon, only a handful of people were left.

Following Sheng Yiming, Tai Yan Academy's Su Bai caught up.

Everyone's attention was focused on the two. If everything proceeded as expected, one of the two would be the final winner!

The atmosphere over at Tian Lu Academy's side was a little stiff. This was because nobody had broken through to the last stage!

Suddenly, someone fainted in the arena again.

Sun Zhongyan frowned.

It was a rather outstanding Xuan Master student from their academy. Perhaps they were too anxious, which resulted in forces clashing within their body. It then led to the person fainting.

Their only hope left in the arena was Si Ting!

Chapter 243: Here to compete!

Tian Lu Academy sank into silence. The others noticed it, and they began to chatter.

“I didn’t expect Tian Lu Academy to be left with only one new student! I think they won’t end up with anything!”

“We don’t know for sure! I heard that Si Ting is the Si family’s Eldest Young Master and has always been a talented Xuan Master. Maybe he’ll make a comeback.”

“I think it’s tough! Can’t you see that he still hasn’t solved the fourth Xuan formation yet? Sheng Yiming and Su Bai are almost done!”

...

At this moment, Si Ting calmly put a chess piece down!

Bang!

A fourth star lit up on the stone platform before him!

The crowd was silenced as if they did not expect Si Ting to solve the fourth Xuan formation at this moment!

Alongside Sheng Yiming and Su Bai, he was now in the top three!

Sun Zhongyan sighed. As Si Ting's mentor, he knew how much potential his student had.

Si Ting had intentionally concealed his ability earlier, but it now seemed like he was going for the number one position!

...

Having entered the last stage, Si Ting was calm. However, the others around him were a little surprised.

Sheng Yiming and Su Bai could not help but look back a little stiffly. *It seems like we underestimated Si Ting...*

Xi Wanwan—who was at the side—furrowed her brows, and her expression turned cold. She had been confident of herself, but she did not expect a new student to beat her to it!

She could not help but speak up. "I couldn't tell before, but you're quite strong."

Si Ting glanced at her expressionlessly and nodded. "Thank you."

He then retracted his gaze and looked towards the chessboard.

The last Xuan formation was much tougher than the others, so it would be difficult to solve if he did not concentrate.

After seeing his reaction, Xi Wanwan was upset. She felt that Si Ting was looking down on her. *He's just ahead by a little! What's he so arrogant for?!*

Xi Wanwan was upset, but she did not show it. What was more important was solving the fourth Xuan formation...

But the more nervous she was, the more difficult it was for her to find the solution.

Sheng Yiming and Su Bai were fine since they were famous, but it would be embarrassing for her to lose to a new student.

I was ahead of Si Ting earlier! Xi Wanwan felt frustrated, but she saw that Si Ting was already laying pieces down as if he were attempting to solve the final Xuan formation.

Xi Wanwan glanced at Sheng Yiming, only to discover that he was staring at the chessboard hesitantly. She then bit her lip. *It's fine if I lose, but... Sheng Yiming has been waiting too long for this day.*

Sheng Yiming and Su Bai seemed to have noticed Si Ting's actions, and they looked at him again.

Their expressions changed when they saw Si Ting calmly put the chess pieces in place. They were all Xuan Masters, so they could tell if the other person was faking it.

Si Ting is actually this strong?!

Su Bai laughed as he tried to place some pieces down. He then muttered, "How interesting..."

Sheng Yiming and Xi Wanwan glanced at each other and saw the worry in each other's eyes.

Xi Wanwan pursed her lips. *Sheng Yiming cannot lose...*

She looked down and stared at the chessboard, but she found everything before her eyes a jumbled mess. She held her breath and rubbed her glabella. She knew she had reached her limit.

In this condition, she would only pass out if she tried to solve the Xuan formation forcibly.

She would be forced to drop out. She could not continue on in this state...

At this thought, Xi Wanwan gritted her teeth and stood up! "I drop out!"

Her voice was especially clear in the square.

Everyone looked over in surprise. *Wasn't Xi Wanwan a hopeful before? Why did she drop out at such a crucial moment?*

The referee teacher asked, "Xi Wanwan, are you sure? It's as good as voluntarily dropping out once you say this. Hence, you can take back your decision."

She nodded firmly. "I'm sure."

With that, she headed for the arena's exit. When she walked past Si Ting, her hand moved ever so slightly.

Her movement was very discreet, and her hands were hidden in her sleeves. Hence, nobody noticed it.

Si Ting—who was focused on solving the formation—sensed that something was amiss and raised his hand, but it was too late!

A transparent thread landed on the chessboard.

The instant it landed on the board, it disappeared completely!

The lines on the chessboard suddenly changed!

In the next instant, Si Ting saw all the pieces on the board fly up and scatter everywhere.

Pilihuala!

The originally tidy chessboard was a mess!

The crowd was stunned!

The chessboard fell apart itself? This usually only happens when a severe mistake is made!

Si Ting was doing fine just now, so why did things become like this in an instant?

Si Ting stood up and turned towards Xi Wanwan, his voice cold and angry. "Xi Wanwan!"

Xi Wanwan was already at the edge of the arena. Her heart skipped a beat, but she remained expressionless as she turned to look at him. "What's the matter?"

Si Ting clenched his fists. "You purposely destroyed my Xuan formation!"

Xi Wanwan looked at him blankly. "What are you saying? Why don't I understand anything? Si Ting, you can't say whatever you want. How can you blame me for your inability to solve it? Do you have proof?"

Si Ting's face turned colder. *That thing will never leave a trace!*

All his attention was on the Xuan formation earlier, which gave Xi Wanwan the chance to do such a thing. Most importantly, he did not expect her to strike in public!

Fu Yunshan frowned unhappily. "Exactly. You need to back up your accusations with evidence. You can't go around wronging people like this."

Si Ting clenched his fists gradually.

Sheng Yiming looked up and glanced at Si Ting, a gleeful expression flashing across his eyes.

Su Bai narrowed his eyes and deeply stared at Xi Wanwan, but he did not say anything.

Xi Wanwan tucked her hair behind her ears and smiled. "I know you're Tian Lu Academy's last hope, and you really want to win. But you can't wrongfully accuse me because of this, right? Didn't I voluntarily drop out too?"

She handed her tag to the refereeing teacher casually, but her voice was mocking. "There's no one left in your academy..."

"Who says there's no one left in Tian Lu Academy?" A bright voice reverberated through Jia Nan Square.

Sun Zhongyan and the others were stunned. They then turned around in surprise!

A slender figure stood at the entrance to Jia Nan Square!

“Tian Lu Academy’s Chu Liuyue is here to compete!”

Chapter 244: The first stage!

The person who spoke was Chu Liuyue!

Everyone’s gaze gathered on her; they all had mixed reactions.

Mu Hongyu and her friends cried out in surprise. “Liuyue! You’re finally here!”

Chu Liuyue headed in the direction of Tian Lu Academy’s students.

Mu Hongyu could not help herself and ran over to grab Chu Liuyue’s arm. “Y-you...”

She really wanted to ask Chu Liuyue what happened during the day and night she was missing and if she was hurt. However, she decided against it after recalling that they were in public and just stared at her friend excitedly.

Chu Liuyue’s heart felt warm. “I made you all worry.”

Mu Hongyu shook her head immediately. “What’s important is that you’re fine!”

Sun Zhongyan could not help but eye Chu Liuyue from head to toe. He was relieved when he determined Chu Liuyue to be fine.

Chu Liuyue smiled. "I got held back by something yesterday. Can I still take part in the competition?"

Sun Zhongyan immediately spoke up. "Yes! Of course!"

Even though there were only two hours left, and Chu Liuyue hardly had a chance of winning, her calm demeanor still drew objections.

"I don't think so!" Cheng Han spoke up with a frown. "The competition is almost over. It doesn't make sense for her to take part. Since she's late, she has lost the right to compete!"

Sun Zhongyan retorted, "Brother Cheng Han, the Qing Jiao Competition doesn't seem to have such a rule. Even though Liuyue is late, the competition is not yet over. Besides, she did sign up for the competition. Why can't she compete?"

Cheng Han despised Chu Liuyue, so his objection was an instinctive move. He coldly laughed when he saw how defensive Sun Zhongyan was. "Rules make the world go round! If we let her compete, what do we do if others follow suit in the future? There will be chaos!"

Sun Zhongyan laughed. "Not necessarily! I don't think many will take part in the competition with only two hours left. From my point of view, this is a show of her determination!"

Cheng Han was at a loss for words.

Sun Zhongyan had always been good at talking!

Fu Yunshan was disapproving as well. "Brother Zhongyan, no matter what, it's not very appropriate to let her compete with so little time left."

Sun Zhongyan placed his hands behind his back with a wry smile. "Brother Yunshan, could it be that you're afraid Liuyue will overtake your students in the final two hours?"

Fu Yunshan's expression stiffened. *This is reverse psychology, but it has worked! If I don't agree, it is as good as me admitting that my students are inferior to Chu Liuyue.*

He scoffed coldly. "Since you've gone this far, there's naturally no reason for me to object to this! But this is the only time!"

Sun Zhongyan glanced at Cheng Han again. "Brother Cheng Han, what do you think?"

Even Fu Yunshan had agreed, so objecting now would only make him seem petty.

Hence, Cheng Han waved his sleeves. "Since all of you insist, sure!"

He refused to believe that a stage-two Xuan Master could create any ripples.

Situ Xingchen glanced at Chu Liuyue. For some reason, she felt a little uneasy. "Master, are we really going to let her compete? This... seems a little inappropriate?"

“So what if it’s inappropriate? Can’t you see that Sun Zhongyan is hell-bent on helping Chu Liuyue? She doesn’t seem to be his disciple, but he pays a lot of attention to her for some reason...”

Cheng Han smirked as he spoke. “I think he’s just trying to make up for the fact that there’s nobody left from their academy. However, it’s crazy that he’s relying on Chu Liuyue to win! We can just watch from here! It’ll be the biggest joke if Chu Liuyue can’t even solve a single Xuan Formation at the end of it all!”

...

Sun Zhongyan felt a little more assured after seeing the other two give in.

Chu Liuyue said gratefully, “Thank you, Elder Sun.”

Sun Zhongyan waved. “There’s nothing to thank me for. Just head on up! There are only two hours left, so just try your best. Don’t think too much.”

He did not have much hope either.

Chu Liuyue nodded. “I’ll definitely try my best.”

With that, she headed over to the refereeing teacher and picked up the wooden card belonging to her.

Xi Wanwan looked at her with a frown. Since she ranked behind Chu Liuyue in the warrior competition yesterday, she was both jealous and afraid of her.

She was a little afraid when she saw the small ball of fur on Chu Liuyue's shoulder. Naturally, she did not act as arrogant as she had toward Si Ting. She barely managed to keep her composure as she said, "I thought that you wouldn't show after you took first place in the warrior competition."

Chu Liuyue glanced at her with a smirk. "Why wouldn't I? I would have missed a good show."

As she spoke, her hand traced the shape of Xi Wanwan's hand.

Xi Wanwan's heart skipped a beat! Could it be that Chu Liuyue knows... How can that be? I acted quietly and secretly. Even the refereeing teacher at the side did not notice. Chu Liuyue just came back, so how could she have possibly seen it? She must be testing me!

Xi Wanwan shot Chu Liuyue a stiff smile. "I didn't know that you were close to Si Ting. Do you think that I caused him to fail too?"

Chu Liuyue's smile deepened. "This has nothing to do with friendship, but my eyesight."

She pointed towards her eyes. "My eyes just can't stand looking at dirty things."

Xi Wanwan shuddered. The temperature was fine, and Chu Liuyue was smiling, but she felt cold.

It was like everything had been laid out in plain sight!

Xi Wanwan looked away nervously. She turned and left without saying anything else.

Chu Liuyue stared at her back for a while, finding it funny. She really did not know if Xi Wanwan was dumb or stupid. *Did she really think that nobody would notice her lowly tactics? But now isn't the time to pursue the matter.*

Chu Liuyue quickly retracted her gaze and headed towards the arena.

She ran into Si Ting.

Their eyes met, and his eyes contained complicated emotions.

“Be careful, and just try your best.”

Chu Liuyue nodded with a smile. *It's a pity for Si Ting. Based on his actual ability, he definitely could've come in first. However, his hopes were dashed by the despicable Xi Wanwan.*

The two walked past each other.

According to the number of the wooden card, Chu Liuyue found her position.

The chessboard was empty. Nothing was activated.

She contracted and moved her wrist. The lines of the chessboard changed!

The first Xuan formation was presented before her eyes.

Chapter 245: Sorry for the Wait

“I really don’t know what Chu Liuyue is thinking by participating in the competition at this time. There are only two hours left. What can she do?”

“Yeah! The remaining competitors—Sheng Yiming and Su Bai, who are genuine talents—have spent nearly a day to solve the fourth Xuan formation and enter the final stage. Isn’t she just going to be a joke by coming here now?”

“Aish... You should think about Tian Lu Academy! They only have Chu Liuyue now!”

“Only Chu Liuyue? You make it sound like she’s really going to win. Haha!”

Almost everyone thought badly of Chu Liuyue. Even Tian Lu Academy’s students were worried. Although they never said anything, the atmosphere was stiff.

It was even more so when they saw Si Ting come back.

Even the talkative Si Yang did not dare to say anything randomly. He could only quietly stay at the side and try hard to minimize his existence.

With Big Brother's current mood, I can't offend him at all... Si Yang clasped his hands together and prayed in his heart genuinely. Sick pervert, you must get first! You must get first!

Suddenly, a commotion was heard from the competition venue.

Si Yang turned around in shock and saw people staring at Chu Liuyue with strange expressions. He followed their gazes and immediately saw a star light up on the stone table in front of Chu Liuyue.

What the heck! Si Yang rubbed his eyes with much force and closely stared at the stone table again. That's right! Chu Liuyue has truly solved the first Xuan formation, and she's on the second stage! Isn't this too fast? I called her a sick pervert, but she's actually this abnormal?!

Not only Si Yang, but everyone in the square was stunned by Chu Liuyue's extraordinary speed.

"Wait a minute! Am I seeing things? Chu Liuyue actually already solved the first Xuan formation!"

"T-that's right! That's what I see too! I think it's true!"

"That can't be it! Didn't she just head into the arena? Even though the Xuan formations' difficulty gradually increases, the first stage isn't so easy to solve, right? Didn't it stump quite a few people previously?"

"How exactly did she solve it...?"

The commotion also attracted Sheng Yiming's and Su Bai's attention. Both of them turned around to look at Chu Liuyue.

A star had indeed lit up on the stone table in front of her.

Moreover, Chu Liuyue looked very calm and composed, as if she did not notice how shocking her actions were.

If she can be so calm, it is either because she is too focused, or... she is very confident! Su Bai found her interesting, but he looked more serious.

Sheng Yiming slightly furrowed his brows, feeling more frustrated. He had always been the first to solve the Xuan formations from the first stage to the fourth, but even he had used a full hour to solve the first Xuan Formation.

However, Chu Liuyue seemed to have only taken one look at it and solved it.

Chu Liuyue was just a stage-two Xuan Master. Logically speaking, she would not be this fast.

Could it be that the first stage's Xuan formation is one she has seen before? It seems like this is the only reason why she can solve the first Xuan formation so rapidly. Sheng Yiming suppressed his irritation and smiled in a self-deprecating manner. *Perhaps I'm really too nervous.*

Even if Chu Liuyue managed to solve the first Xuan formation, she still has to solve the second, third, and fourth Xuan formations next! She definitely won't be able to catch up with me in the last two hours.

Sheng Yiming felt slightly more at ease when he thought of this.

...

But after a while, a familiar sound rang again.

Bang!

It was the sound of a Xuan formation being solved!

Sheng Yiming's heart tingled, and he almost turned around instinctively. As expected, he saw a second star light up on the stone table in front of Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue had actually successfully passed the second stage!

The crowd broke into more heated discussions.

The first stage was simple, so they could understand her solving speed. But how did she also solve the second stage so quickly?

This speed had won against all the people who had competed today!

Cheng Han already felt that something was amiss, and he could not help but look at Sun Zhongyan. Cheng Han's face was filled with doubts. "How can a mere stage-two Xuan Master solve the Xuan formations so quickly? Could it be that she coincidentally saw similar Xuan formations?"

Sun Zhongyan naturally could tell his implied meaning, so he looked very stern. "Why? Brother Cheng Han, are you suspecting that I leaked the questions?"

"Of course not. Brother Zhongyan, you've always been honest, so why would you do such a despicable thing? I was just curious as to why Chu Liuyue is so successful."

Sun Zhongyan was so angry that he laughed and said loudly, "Even though Tian Lu Academy provided the chessboards for the Xuan Master competition, the five Xuan formations used in the competition were decided by all three academies. There might be a possibility if you say that I leaked the questions, but... Brother Cheng Han and Brother Yunshan, I don't think either of you can absolve yourselves from the responsibility, right?"

Fu Yunshan immediately said, "Brother Zhongyan, don't misunderstand me! I don't mean it in that way! However... I'm also curious as to why Chu Liuyue can solve the Xuan formations so quickly."

Sun Zhongyan coldly laughed. "What else can it be? It's obviously because she's talented!"

This answer was too righteous and straightforward, which made Fu Yunshan and Cheng Han not know what to say for a short while.

Seeing that the two of them wanted to argue even more, Sun Zhongyan shook his clothes. "Your students can't do it, but does that mean other people can't?"

His single sentence thoroughly shut the duo's mouths.

...

One hour passed very quickly.

Bang!

A familiar sound rang again!

The crowd looked over and saw a third star light up on the stone table in front of Chu Liuyue.

The originally noisy crowd gradually quietened down. At this point, they finally realized that Chu Liuyue did not rely on luck to solve the first two Xuan formations so quickly.

Sun Zhongyan's words are true. Her talent is truly very rare!

Chu Liuyue calmly looked at the moving pieces on the chessboard in front of her.

Very quickly, the fourth Xuan formation appeared.

At this point, all those people who doubted her were absolutely quiet. *If Chu Liuyue isn't counted as talented, perhaps nobody will be considered a talent!*

They were all concerned about one thing now—could Chu Liuyue solve the fourth and fifth Xuan formations in the final hour and take first place?

Su Bai's smile disappeared from his face at some point.

Sheng Yiming's hand—which held the chess pieces—also started to tremble slightly.

Even though they did not turn around, they could already guess what had happened. Now, they both hoped that Chu Liuyue would not catch up—

Da!

Chu Liuyue placed a chess piece down.

Both of them were stunned. *She's starting to solve the fourth Xuan formation so quickly?*

Following which, the sounds of pieces landing on the chessboard were repeatedly heard.

Chu Liuyue's actions were very smooth, and every single sound was like a call of death. It continuously rang in Sheng Yiming's and Su Bai's ears.

If one took a close look at them, they would see the duo's foreheads covered with tiny droplets of sweat.

No... No... I must quickly solve the last few steps!

But the more they thought of this, the harder it was for them to succeed.

On the other hand, Chu Liuyue paused in her actions and quietened down.

Sheng Yiming and Su Bai looked at each other before turning around in unison.

Chu Liuyue held a piece in her hand and looked at the duo with a smile. "Sorry for the wait."

Then—

Pak!

The piece was set down on the chessboard.

Bang!

Following the sound, the fourth star lit up.

Chapter 246: Loss of Hope!

Everyone closely stared at Chu Liuyue and the four stars in front of her.

She actually continuously solved the four Xuan formations and arrived at the last stage in such a short amount of time! As long as she can successfully solve the last Xuan formation, she will be the top Xuan Master!

Previously, everyone thought it was just a joke for Chu Liuyue to catch up with her competition in the remaining two hours. However, all of them now finally understood that Chu Liuyue had come prepared.

She clearly has the ability to fight for first place!

At this point, someone could not sit still anymore. "Brother Zhongyan, you should give an explanation now, right?"

Cheng Han's face was cold, and he looked like he was about to cause trouble. "Ignoring the first three stages, the fourth stage is a fourth-level Xuan formation. Chu Liuyue is just a stage-two Xuan Master, so how can she solve it so quickly? I demand to check on Chu Liuyue immediately!"

Fu Yunshan glanced at him. Even though Fu Yunshan did not say anything, he still felt that the matter was suspicious.

How could Sun Zhongyan not know what Cheng Han was thinking? Hence, Sun Zhongyan immediately rejected Cheng Han. "The competition hasn't ended yet. How can we just stop it now? If Brother Cheng Han must check on Liuyue, then the other two must be checked too!"

Cheng Han sneered. "Not only me, but even the other people in the square have doubts about Chu Liuyue. How can a mere stage-two Xuan Master have such abilities? Even if she's talented, she definitely can't do this much."

"How do you know that she can't do this much?" Not only was Sun Zhongyan not angry, but he had even surveyed his surroundings and revealed a meaningful smile. "Everyone might know that Liuyue only entered our Tian Lu Academy two months ago. However, there might be something you're not clear about. Liuyue only formally started cultivating as a Xuan Master after entering the academy!"

Seeing the crowd's stunned expressions, he grunted. "This also means that Liuyue has advanced from a normal person to a stage-two Xuan Master in two months' time!"

The crowd dropped into deadly silence, and all of them were beyond shocked.

Sun Zhongyan's words had too much impact, and they were too shocking.

"Impossible!" Cheng Han was the first to react and immediately refuted Sun Zhongyan.

"Why is it possible? Everyone in the Imperial City knows about this. Our academy's elders, teachers, and even students can attest to this." Sun Zhongyan smiled like an old fox. "Could it be that so many people will lie in unison to help Chu Liuyue?"

Cheng Han was stumped for a while, and his mind was blank. In actual fact, he knew that it had to be true if Sun Zhongyan dared to say so in public.

At the very least, Sun Zhongyan could prove his words to be true.

Cheng Han could not help but look at Chu Liuyue. *She caused such a big commotion in her surroundings, but the culprit acted as if it had nothing to do with her. She is just calmly solving the Xuan formation in front of her.*

He felt increasingly uneasy. *If what Sun Zhongyan said is true, then Chu Liuyue's talent...*

“If you’re still doubtful, we can conduct a check after the competition,” said Sun Zhongyan slowly. *You want to use such a method to stop Chu Liuyue? Dream on!*

Cheng Han did not speak for a long while.

Fu Yunshan—who was sitting opposite Cheng Han—was also shocked for some time. After thinking for a while, Fu Yunshan just hoped that Sheng Yiming could solve the last Xuan formation before Chu Liuyue.

...

Hopes were beautiful, but things usually happened against one’s wishes.

Fu Yunshan quickly discovered that Sheng Yiming did not seem to be in a good state.

Sheng Yiming sat there staring at the chessboard, not making a move for quite some time.

Even Su Bai had started to solve the final Xuan formation, but Sheng Yiming looked like he had no idea where to start.

Fu Yunshan understood the outstanding Sheng Yiming quite well. Seeing his appearance, Fu Yunshan knew that something was wrong.

Everything was good about Sheng Yiming normally, except for one thing—his arrogance.

Sheng Yiming wanted to do his best in everything. If he occasionally lost to someone, he would lock himself in the library to study Xuan formations and wouldn't come out for one day and one night.

For this Qing Jiao Competition, he had prepared for a very long time. He was set on taking first place. However, it seemed like Chu Liuyue's appearance had clearly caused him a great amount of stress.

At this point, Xi Wanwan had already returned to her seat, but her heart rose when she saw the competition's situation.

I really shouldn't have left so early just now! If I knew there would be another Chu Liuyue, I would've definitely dragged her down before leaving the arena! But it is too late to say anything now! I wonder if Sheng Yiming can last on his end...

...

Da!

Chu Liuyue placed a chess piece down again, and the chessboard in front of her moved slightly.

Both Sheng Yiming and Su Bai clearly knew what this movement meant—Chu Liuyue had already found the correct way to solve the Xuan formation!

If she was given more time, she would probably finish before them and take first place!

Su Bai also placed his piece down. Immediately, the same movement appeared on his chessboard.

Sheng Yiming looked at Su Bai and could not conceal his shock. However, Su Bai just smiled and ignored him.

This smile instantly made Sheng Yiming realize that Su Bai had also been hiding his abilities previously!

Su Bai was always behind him every time, and Sheng Yiming thought that it was due to the difference in their abilities. But...

No matter if it is Si Ting, Su Bai, or Chu Liuyue—who just appeared—all of them seem to be stronger than me! However, I still thought that I was the most outstanding one and that my future was bright! In actual fact, I'm just a laughingstock to them!

If I lose this time... Sheng Yiming held the piece in his hand tightly, and his entire body tensed up.

He tried hard to focus on the pattern on the chessboard, but his anxious heart did not allow him to see it clearly, let alone think about solving it.

If this goes on...

Da!

Su Bai was ahead!

Chu Liuyue quickly followed after him, almost putting a chess piece down at the same time.

Upon hearing the duo's movements, Sheng Yiming's hand trembled, and he crushed a chess piece!

This mild commotion attracted many people's attention, and the crowd broke into discussions immediately.

Sheng Yiming felt very uncomfortable; it was as if he was sitting on needles.

Chu Liuyue looked up, nonchalantly glanced at him, and her lips curved up. *For someone like Sheng Yiming, even if he is talented, he will not go far as a Xuan Master.*

As expected, Sheng Yiming took a deep breath in, but his hands violently trembled when he wanted to pick up another piece. He spent much effort picking that piece up.

He looked at the chessboard in frustration and anxiety. As he was too rushed, he casually placed the piece in a position.

The chessboard shook violently!

Sheng Yiming was shocked! *I made the wrong crucial step, and this game is ruined!*

When he noticed the chaotic energy on the board, an extremely dangerous thought flashed across Sheng Yiming's mind. Then, his hands lightly swiped across the chessboard as if they could not be controlled.

The chessboard was in a mess!

The Xuan formation's energy immediately exploded out and spread in all directions!

Chu Liuyue's gaze was sharp, and she picked up her chessboard swiftly.

Chapter 247: Continue!

Su Bai—who was at the side—immediately noticed something was wrong and hurriedly got up, but he was still too late.

Clang!

The chessboard in front of him was affected by the energy in Sheng Yiming's chessboard, and it immediately flipped over.

The Xuan formation—which Su Bai had solved a portion of—became a mess in the blink of an eye.

Su Bai's face immediately turned white and green. *Sheng Yiming did it on purpose! He knew that he was not our match, so he took the chance to destroy our Xuan formations and forcefully stop the competition!*

He glared at Sheng Yiming.

As Sheng Yiming was closest to the chessboard, the energy affected him the most. He collapsed on the floor and spat out blood. However, he suddenly felt happier when he saw the fallen chess pieces on the floor from the corner of his eyes. *This way, everyone can't continue!*

The sudden situation in the arena immediately attracted the crowd's attention.

Fu Yunshan looked at Sheng Yiming, and his face immediately changed. "What happened?"

Remorse filled Sheng Yiming's face. "D-director, sorry... I made a mistake... and this happened..."

"You're saying it so casually! Now that Su Bai's chessboard is ruined, what should we do? How can you compensate for this?" Cheng Han was originally in a bad mood, and he could not hold himself back. He directly exploded when he saw this scene.

Cheng Han clearly saw Su Bai successfully solving the Xuan formation, but he was interrupted by Sheng Yiming.

“As a Xuan Master, don’t you know how much energy will be used up when you’re solving the Xuan formation? You’ve ruined everything now!”

Their academy’s last bit of hope was on Su Bai. It didn’t matter if Sheng Yiming wasn’t good enough, but he actually dragged Su Bai down as well.

Sun Zhongyan furrowed his brows and said, “I’m afraid the competition has to stop since this happened.”

However, Cheng Han refused to let it happen. “The competition was going on smoothly, so how can we just stop it so suddenly? The three of them were at different stages of progress. If they restart, it’ll be too unfair!”

He originally thought that Chu Liuyue was terrible enough, but he did not expect Sheng Yiming to be a real piece of work.

Sun Zhongyan was also in a bad mood. Everyone could tell that Sheng Yiming was starting to lag behind and that Liuyue had the chance to fight with Su Bai.

If they were to restart, Liuyue would be disadvantaged too.

This girl has been competing for the past few days, and she even disappeared off to somewhere last night. Then, she directly came to join the Xuan Master competition... Who knows how long that small body of hers can last? If it weren’t because we’re the ones who organized the Qing Jiao Competition, I would also cause a scene.

Fu Yunshan was the most guilty one. However, since things had come to this stage, retreating would only show that he was in the wrong.

He coughed and said, "This matter is indeed Yiming's fault, but I'm afraid we can't continue any longer since things have already ended in this state... Why don't we let the kids rest first, and we'll give them another Xuan formation test later?"

Sun Zhongyan and Cheng Han were silent.

Since things had ended in this way, this was the most suitable solution.

Sun Zhongyan hesitated for a while and said, "Then... Let's act according to Brother Yunshan's suggestion."

Actually, Sun Zhongyan was also a little selfish. He was worried that Chu Liuyue could not take the impact, so it would be good if she could take the time to rest first.

Sheng Yiming lowered his head and slowly wiped the blood away from his mouth. He felt extremely delighted and lucky. *If we restart, I definitely won't lose to the two of them.*

"Hold on," said Chu Liuyue—who initially stood at the side and did not speak a word. She looked at Sun Zhongyan calmly and properly enunciated every word as she said, "Elder Sun, I hope that the competition can continue."

Everyone looked at her with weird gazes. *How can they continue with the competition in this state?*

Even Sun Zhongyan was in a difficult position as he advised, “Liuyue, I understand how you feel. However, the chessboards are all ruined, so the competition can’t carry on...”

“My chessboard isn’t ruined.” Chu Liuyue’s casual sentence immediately stirred up a storm in the crowd’s hearts.

“What? Are you speaking the truth?” gasped Sun Zhongyan in shock.

Sheng Yiming suddenly raised his head and looked at Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue showed the chessboard in her hands.

None of the chess pieces had moved a single bit! Even the energy wave—which was created due to half of the Xuan formation being solved—was no different from before.

Her chessboard was indeed well and unaffected.

Sun Zhongyan was shocked and surprised. He did not expect Chu Liuyue to be capable of protecting her chessboard in such a scenario. “Great! Since your chessboard isn’t ruined, there’s no reason to stop the competition. However, as for the others...”

Ignoring Sheng Yiming, Su Bai was truly pretty innocent. He was implicated in the situation for no reason. It did not seem right if they just allowed Chu Liuyue to continue with the competition alone.

Chu Liuyue smiled lightly and asked, “Elder Sun, you can restore the chessboard’s state, right?”

Sun Zhongyan was dazed. "Of course. Do you mean..."

"I hope you can help restore Su Bai's chessboard. When it's restored, I can continue competing with him."

Sun Zhongyan's eyes lit up. *Why didn't I think of that?*

"Su Bai, do you remember which step you stopped at?"

Su Bai nodded.

"That's great! It'll only need about half an hour for the chessboard to be recovered."

This way, it will not delay the competition, and it is also fair for everyone. As Sun Zhongyan spoke, he raised his hand, and Su Bai's chessboard flew toward him.

The light on his fingertips shone brightly, and the messy pattern on the chessboard immediately became clear again.

Su Bai watched on at the side as he explained, in detail, which step he had progressed to.

Sun Zhongyan was very fast, and the chessboard started returning to its original state at an observable speed.

After a few checks, he returned the chessboard to Su Bai. "Take a look and see if it's correct."

Su Bai took the chessboard with both hands and carefully checked it. He then seriously bowed toward Sun Zhongyan. "Thank you, Elder Sun."

He then looked at Chu Liuyue and nodded. "Thank you."

"No need for thanks. It's just for a fair competition. I don't want people to say that my victory is not glorious." Chu Liuyue smiled lightly and sat back down on her seat.

Su Bai did not say anything more. However, his impression of Chu Liuyue had changed greatly.

Sheng Yiming was stunned. After being in a daze for quite some time, he suddenly jumped up in panic when he saw that the duo was about to continue. "Wait a minute! My chessboard isn't restored yet!"

Even if they want to continue with the competition, they should wait for me to be ready, right? How can they continue so suddenly?

Chu Liuyue held her chin up with one hand and gazed at him lazily. She said in a seemingly smiling manner, "If I didn't remember wrongly, your Xuan formation broke because you made the wrong move, right? According to the rules, it seems like you're... eliminated."

Even though she did not continue speaking, everyone could understand what she implied—how can a person who has been eliminated have the cheek to continue standing there?

Sheng Yiming was stumped, and his face was a sight to see.

Chapter 248: He's Here

Sheng Yiming wanted to refute Chu Liuyue's words, but he realized that she was right. *Everyone saw what happened very clearly. I was indeed eliminated due to my own mistakes. I can no longer stand in the arena now that Chu Liuyue has directly pointed it out, no matter how thick-skinned I am.*

Sheng Yiming's head felt heavy. *All these years, I was an outstanding talent that everyone envied. Since when was I so easily defeated and even needed to leave the competition in shame?*

His intense desolation almost made him unable to stand properly.

Xi Wanwan—who had nervously been watching on from below—sensed that something was wrong and hurried over. “Yiming, you're injured. Why don't you rest for a while?”

Fu Yunshan knew that the situation could not be salvaged, so he could only shake his head and sigh.

With Xi Wanwan helping Sheng Yiming ease out of the situation, he finally recovered his senses and forcefully walked down.

When he walked past Chu Liuyue, he could not help but turn around to take a look.

That young girl looked very relaxed as she stared at her chessboard calmly. She was very different from his previous nervous and embarrassing appearance.

Sheng Yiming felt increasingly uncomfortable. He hurriedly retracted his gaze and left with his head hung low.

Chu Liuyue gently placed a piece down, not even giving him an extra look.

Sheng Yiming wanted to fish in troubled waters silently, but Chu Liuyue did not want to waste any time on him.

As for that Xi Wanwan... She's just a jackal of the same tribe.

...

When Sheng Yiming came down, the crowd softly discussed for a while before turning their attention back to the duo in the competition.

The competition was going to end soon, but nobody knew who was going to solve the Xuan formation first.

Suddenly, there was an uproar in the crowd.

At first, Chu Liuyue did not take the commotion to heart, but the sounds gradually grew louder and louder as if something was not right.

She finally retracted her gaze from the Xuan formation and looked up.

She saw a familiar figure far away.

The man was decked in white, and he donned a black cloak. Just by standing there, he automatically attracted everyone's gaze. He looked as sturdy as a tree, and he looked like a very humble gentleman.

These words used on him could only show off a portion of his characteristics.

Many girls in the square blushed as they looked at him, feeling both excited and nervous.

On the other hand, the men felt very guilty as they didn't even have the desire to compete with the man due to them being vastly different.

Such a fairy-like person was definitely not someone an average person could compare with. This commotion was also caused by this man's arrival.

Even though she was in the arena, Chu Liuyue could still clearly hear many people's excited whispers.

"Who is that? Who is that? Since when did Country Yao Chen have such a handsome young man?"

"There are tons of men out there... but I didn't expect there to be such a man here..."

“I think he’s Country Yao Chen’s Seventh Prince, who is also the sickly Prince Li. I heard that he has always been resting at Mingyue Tianshan and that he only returned to the Imperial City just recently.”

“So it’s him! I thought he’d look sickly and frail, but I didn’t expect...”

“Even though rumors have it that he has always been sick, his appearance is enough to make countless women go crazy over him, right?”

Chu Liuyue raised her eyebrows a notch. *A demon is indeed a demon. He can easily cause such a commotion no matter where he goes. However, we bid farewell in the woods outside the Imperial City. Why did he suddenly come here? Why isn’t he doing his own things?*

Yan Qing—who was behind Rong Xiu—started sweating when he heard the commotion. *Master is so... He clearly knew that he would cause a commotion, yet he still came here so openly—forget it. Our trip is actually considered low profile already. Prince Li only came with one guard. No matter what, it can’t be considered as being high profile. The most high profile thing is Master’s face!*

When Master returned to the residence with messy bloodstains all over, he frightened Yu Mo and me. However, Master has never been in a better mood before. Not only was he lazy to act sick in the mansion, but he even went outside.

Originally, Yan Qing was still confused. However, he immediately understood why when he saw Chu Liuyue in the competition.

Master clearly came here for someone! But Yan Qing felt even more confused. According to Yan Ge, Master came back with Ms. Chu in the afternoon. Why did he suddenly come to see her again after such a short while?

Yan Qing naturally did not understand anything.

Other than something called 'missing her' in this world, there was also 'possessiveness.' Rong Xiu finally captured her back, so how could he just quietly stick around?

Rong Xiu looked at the young girl in the arena and walked forward. His body seemed to have an invisible aura, which made people instinctively move backward and make way for him when he walked past them.

...

Situ Xingchen froze when she saw Rong Xiu appear. The man that she had been thinking about day and night appeared in front of her suddenly and unexpectedly.

As she was too shocked and surprised, even Xing Luo's eldest princess did not know what to do.

In actual fact, they had not met in a long time.

Rong Xiu's face looked more mature than before, and he felt even more prestigious and cold.

Her heart started racing, and her cheeks turned red. Situ Xingchen nervously checked herself and secretly regretted it in her heart. *If I knew he was coming today, I definitely would've dolled myself up before I left the house.*

However, all these were minor things that were quickly washed away by the happiness of meeting him again.

Situ Xingchen took a deep breath in. When Rong Xiu finally walked nearer toward her, she softly called out, "Senior Brother Rong Xiu!"

Rong Xiu stopped in his tracks and looked over.

Chapter 249: Do a Small Favor

Rong Xiu stopped in his tracks and looked over. When he saw Situ Xingchen, a faint doubt appeared in his clear eyes. "You are?"

Situ Xingchen felt as if someone had poured cold water over her, and her originally excited heart felt cold. However, she still forcefully maintained the smile on her face. "Senior Brother Rong Xiu, I'm Xingchen!"

Rong Xiu squinted his eyes as if he was trying to recall who the girl in front of him was.

Yan Qing—who was behind him—softly reminded, "Your Highness, she's Elder Zong Ye's niece."

Rong Xiu looked like he suddenly recalled something upon hearing Yan Qing's words. "Oh, so you're Eldest Princess Situ."

After seeing Rong Xiu's reaction, Situ Xingchen knew that he really didn't remember her. This caused her heart to feel empty.

Rong Xiu's distant tone hurt her even more.

Ever since she knew that the Qing Jiao Competition would be held in Country Yao Chen, she had always been imagining the scene of the two of them reuniting. She had thought about this scene countless times, but she did not expect it to end up like this.

He actually did not even recognize me. She took a deep breath in and suppressed her disappointment with much difficulty. *Actually, both of us have not seen each other for more than two years, and I don't look the same as before. Hence, it is normal for Rong Xiu not to recognize me very quickly.*

After comforting herself in her heart, Situ Xingchen's eyes gradually looked more natural. "We haven't seen each other for a long time, but you look even better than before, Senior Brother Rong Xiu."

Rong Xiu coughed and smiled warmly, but the smile did not reach his cold eyes. "Eldest Princess Situ, you're too kind. My body is weak, and I'm just a bottle of medicine. I'm not worthy of your praises."

Situ Xingchen was stumped because she knew that Rong Xiu definitely was not as weak as he seemed on the surface. In the past, she had personally witnessed how outstanding he was. However, it was clearly not the time to talk about this.

Something flashed across her eyes as she softly said, "Senior Brother Rong Xiu, you're being too polite by addressing me like that. Since we came from the same clan, you can just call me—"

“Eldest Princess Situ, I don’t think so,” interrupted Rong Xiu calmly. Even though he was smiling, his attitude was even more distant and colder than before. “You’re Elder Zong Ye’s niece, but I’m under Elder Zhu Ying. There are 80 elders in Mingyue Tianshan in total, and each of them has their own different clans. Besides, the two elders have been diligently cultivating in isolation and don’t interact much. I think we’re not considered as part of the same clan. Eldest Princess Situ, you shouldn’t call me Senior Brother.”

When they heard this, the originally dazed crowd finally understood what happened. It turned out that both of them were from Mingyue Tianshan, but they did not follow the same person. In this way, they really could not be considered as senior brother and junior sister.

Besides, everyone could tell that Rong Xiu’s attitude was adamant even though he was polite. This clearly showed that he did not want anything to do with Situ Xingchen.

Situ Xingchen really bumped into a wall of dust. “Senior...”

Situ Xingchen did not expect Rong Xiu to clarify their relationship so easily, and she did not know what to say for a short period of time. She had a distinguished status, and she was very outstanding both in terms of looks and talent.

Her father, her mother, her brother, and many other people had doted on her. When young men faced her, they were clueless about what to do, or they were very hardworking and put her in the spotlight.

She was used to being doted on, so she did not know what to do when Rong Xiu ignored her. She was just about to say something, but she met with Rong Xiu’s quiet and slightly oppressive gaze. She instinctively kept quiet, and her pretty face turned red and white.

However, Rong Xiu seemed not to notice her embarrassment as he walked straight toward Tian Lu Academy’s seating area.

Yan Qing glanced at Situ Xingchen and silently prayed for this eldest princess. *It isn't wrong to like Master. However, how can Master be nice to her when she has offended his loved one? During the short time when Master returned to the Imperial City, Master has already found out everything related to that person in the past few days. Naturally, he has also heard about how Eldest Princess Situ repeatedly put that person in a difficult spot.*

Master has an incredible memory, and he can remember every book he read or person he saw very clearly. Whatever he did just now was just to embarrass her.

As one stared at Rong Xiu's leaving figure, his back was tall, but it looked cold and distant as well.

Situ Xingchen walked back two steps in disappointment and could not recover her senses for a long time.

...

"Rong Xiu, why are you here?"

Sun Zhongyan and the rest were also very surprised when they saw Rong Xiu. A few days ago, Rong Xiu said that he had something to handle, so he left the academy. They did not expect him to come here directly after returning.

Sun Zhongyan asked worriedly, "How's your body?"

Rong Xiu smiled lightly and shook his head. “Don’t worry, Elder Sun. I’m feeling fine. I just need Ms. Liuyue to help me out with something, so I specifically came over here.”

Once he said this, not only Elder Sun, but even the surrounding crowd—who was eavesdropping—was surprised.

Ms. Liuyue? Is he referring to Chu Liuyue?

What help does the grand Prince Li need from Chu Liuyue?

Elder Sun was also curious, but he did not ask further and nodded. “That girl is currently competing, so I’m afraid you need to wait for a while before it ends.”

Rong Xiu smiled. “It’s okay. I’ll just wait here.” He then found a place to sit to watch the match quietly.

Yan Qing followed behind Rong Xiu, and his lack of a smile made him look like an ice mountain.

This made many girls—who had their eyes on Prince Li—much more fearful and calm.

Prince Li looks like he has a good temper, but this cold guard... doesn’t look like someone to be messed with.

Rong Xiu ignored the surrounding gazes as he quietly watched the competition. It truly looked as if he was patiently waiting for the competition to end.

This scenario made quite a few people discuss quietly.

“Why does Prince Li know Chu Liuyue? What help does he need from her?”

“Who knows? Prince Li is a higher-up, so how can we find out anything about him?”

“Could it be that Prince Li and the Crown Prince—I heard that Prince Li once helped Chu Liuyue previously during the Crown Prince’s birthday banquet.”

“How can that be? It must be because Prince Li is kind! How can Chu Liuyue attract Prince Li’s attention? She isn’t part of an aristocratic family anymore...”

“But her father—Chu Ning—is the imperial guards’ Commander in Chief! Besides, she’s so talented! Chu Liuyue will definitely become popular in the market after the Qing Jiao Competition.”

“I don’t think they’re possible...”

Situ Xingchen naturally also heard these discussions. Her heart—which had calmed down with much difficulty—started to feel ripples again. She tightly clutched her sleeves, spending a lot of effort to restrain herself from going forward and questioning them.

Others don’t know, but I know it clearly! The crystal barrier that Chu Liuyue previously used belongs to Rong Xiu!

Chapter 250: Tie?

That crystal barrier is Rong Xiu's personal item. Even though I've only seen him use it twice when I was at Mingyue Tianshan for so long, I have a very deep impression of it. This is because I remember the pattern etched on it very clearly.

Situ Xingchen had once asked around in secret and found out that Rong Xiu valued that crystal barrier a lot; he would not easily show it to others. However, such a valuable item actually appeared in Chu Liuyue's hands.

Previously, Situ Xingchen still had other doubts. But now that Rong Xiu had personally appeared, she finally could not continue lying to herself. She could only admit that Rong Xiu took the initiative to give it to Chu Liuyue.

In other words, Rong Xiu had willingly given the crystal barrier to Chu Liuyue.

Rong Xiu looked very gentle and calm like jade, but he was actually cold and proud. He had never thought highly of anyone before, let alone giving people such a precious gift. Even to a girl!

Situ Xingchen did not dare to think about what this meant. Once she thought about it, her heart felt like it was tightly clenched, and she would feel terrible.

Cheng Han—who was beside Situ Xingchen—had already realized that she seemed a little unusual ever since Rong Xiu appeared. “Xingchen, you've been so distracted these days. Is it because—”

Situ Xingchen was shocked and immediately shook her head. “It's not because of him! Mentor, please don't misunderstand!”

"I haven't even said the reason why." Cheng Han was very experienced, and he could easily guess his disciple's thoughts.

Situ Xingchen was stumped, and she knew that there was no point in denying it further. She tightly pressed her lips against each other and did not speak another word.

However, Cheng Han knitted his brows. "Xingchen, you've always been the best in all aspects. Why would you—"

What's so good about Rong Xiu? Even though he's Country Yao Chen's Prince Li, he looks like he'll be blown away by the wind at any time, let alone cultivate. This kind of person is an idle prince at best. How can he be worthy of Xingchen?

So many young talents like her, but she ignored all of them. Instead, she actually likes such a person! Just look at Rong Xiu's previous attitude! Since when did he care about Xingchen?

Situ Xingchen shook her head, lowered her voice, and sounded like she was begging him as she said, "Master, please don't say anymore."

Looking at her wronged and upset appearance, Cheng Han felt his heart ache. "Okay, okay. I won't say anything else. You should know what to do about this."

They came here to take first place in the Qing Jiao Competition, not anything else.

Situ Xingchen forcefully nodded and wanted to put away her thoughts. However, Rong Xiu was still the person she had missed for so long. How could she truly completely ignore him after seeing him today with much difficulty?

Almost instinctively, her gaze turned and landed on Rong Xiu again.

Rong Xiu sat there quietly, and there was an unseen, strange aura around him—which separated him from the rest. This was the dignity in his bones.

Rong Xiu clearly looked gentle and harmless on the surface, but he made people fearful for some reason.

Relaxed, calm, and composed.

Sometimes, even she—who had a distinguished status—would feel insufficient in front of him. Some people naturally seemed able to control everything if they wished.

Many surrounding people also scrutinized Rong Xiu secretly. However, he seemed not to notice it—or perhaps he did not even care—as his pair of clear eyes were fixed on the competition venue.

Situ Xingchen followed his gaze, and her heart felt sour. *He's indeed looking at Chu Liuyue! Furthermore, his eyes look especially gentle when he stares at her.*

Even though it was only a flash across his eyes, Situ Xingchen had seen it! She silently clenched her teeth, but the ripple in her heart could not be appeased for a long time.

...

Seeing that Rong Xiu had appeared here, Chu Liuyue initially found it weird. But she roughly guessed why he had come after hearing his conversation with Elder Sun.

Her brows slightly lifted as she decisively retracted her gaze and turned her attention to the chessboard.

I should solve the final Xuan formation first, thought Chu Liuyue as she placed her pieces down.

Su Bai—who was beside her—could not help but look at her as a complicated gaze flashed across his eyes. He had already guessed that Chu Liuyue was very talented as a Xuan Master, but he did not expect her to be this good.

Su Bai had already predicted the final outcome after seeing Chu Liuyue's smooth actions in solving the final Xuan formation and when he saw his quiet chessboard. In actual fact, he already knew that he probably wasn't Chu Liuyue's match when she protected her chessboard.

He pinched his glabella, and then he bitterly laughed. He did not place a chess piece down for a long time.

...

Time seemed to pass very slowly, but it also seemed to pass very quickly.

Su Bai felt like he had only been dazed for a while, but he shockingly discovered that only a short period of time was left when he looked up again.

Upon seeing that Su Bai could not make it, Cheng Han said, “If none of them can solve the last Xuan formation at the end of the competition, both of them will be tied at second place. Brother Zhongyan, am I right?”

Sun Zhongyan hesitated for a while. He clearly saw that Chu Liuyue was ahead of Su Bai, but she was still a few steps away from solving the final Xuan formation.

According to the rules, if the competitors could not solve all the Xuan formations within the stipulated time, they would only be second—not first—no matter how great their results were.

If both of them tie for second place, it will be slightly disadvantageous for Chu Liuyue... After thinking for a while, Sun Zhongyan still nodded in agreement. “Brother Cheng Han, you’re right.”

It is a pity that Chu Liuyue came late. If she came two hours or even one hour earlier, she could definitely solve the last Xuan formation.

“It’s pretty good if both of them are tied for second place!”

At least they didn’t lose! It’s already surprising that Chu Liuyue can get this ranking.

...

Su Bai looked up and realized that there was not much time left. He only solved a small portion of the chessboard in front of him.

He helplessly smiled and actually placed his piece down directly.

When Chu Liuyue detected his movement, she turned around to look at him with furrowed brows. *Su Bai actually chose to give up at this time...*

"It seems like both of us are going to share the same ranking." Su Bai smiled in a self-deprecating manner. Originally, I thought I'd definitely take first place... It's a pity that a sick freshman like Chu Liuyue appeared.

Chu Liuyue's lips curved up slightly. "Sorry, I don't like to be second."

Su Bai was dazed. He then saw Chu Liuyue put a piece down with one hand. Her other hand also set another piece down almost simultaneously.

Chu Liuyue was solving the chessboard with both hands! One had to know that this was not actually chess-playing but solving a Xuan formation.

Every chess piece had different energy incorporated within. If one mistake was made, the entire Xuan formation would be affected and collapse.

Chu Liuyue was actually daring enough to use both hands at the same time as she felt that using one hand was not fast enough.

Was she not worried that all her efforts would be wasted if she made any small mistakes?

Chu Liuyue did not care about what was happening around her as her hands quickly overlapped.

A chain of chess pieces landing sounds was made.

Finally, the judge announced, “Time’s u—”

Bang!

The last Xuan formation broke with the sound.

Five stars lit up on the stone table in front of Chu Liuyue, dazzling and shining brightly.