

Nobel Ruler 271

Chapter 271: Fourth-Grade!

Chu Liuyue seemed like she was unable to hear all the discussions. In actual fact, she wouldn't care even if she heard them.

She had refined medicine too many times. Even if she didn't have enough force now, she still had her previous sharpness and experience—this made her more relaxed.

She placed the third ingredient in at a normal speed.

...

After seeing Chu Liuyue's organized manner of handling the ingredients, the surrounding noise gradually quietened down.

The crowd looked at each other in shock.

Chu Liuyue doesn't look like she doesn't know anything... Her movements are even smoother and more natural than the others in the competition!

She moves so smoothly that it seems as if she has done this numerous times before.

The delight in Cheng Han's eyes gradually faded away.

As Chu Liuyue handled the remaining ingredients appropriately, the hopes of him watching a joke were dashed.

He was a stage-five heavenly doctor, and he knew more than others just by watching Chu Liuyue. He could obviously discern the shocking talent that Chu Liuyue had exhibited gradually.

At first, he still thought that Chu Liuyue was lucky and felt that even a broken clock was right twice a day as she coincidentally found a balance when refining the medicine. However, his heart gradually sank.

...

Situ Xingchen didn't have observation skills as great as Zuo Rong and the rest, but she was experienced in medicine refining.

When she saw the sky cashew—which should've long broken apart in Chu Liuyue's cauldron—still floating inside unharmed, she finally realized that things were out of her control.

Situ Xingchen gradually knitted her brows. *Why do all the things that happen to Chu Liuyue become so weird? It was like this for the previous Xuan Master competition and the warrior competition. It's the same, even when she's refining the medicine now!*

Is there a problem with that sky cashew? But those ingredients were prepared in advance, and I've already checked both sets of ingredients. So I know they are the same.

Time ticked past slowly.

Situ Xingchen casually glanced over and realized that Chu Liuyue had handled more than half of the ingredients at the side.

Situ Xingchen's heart skipped a beat. Roughly calculating, Chu Liuyue's medicine refining speed is actually higher than mine! The main point is that Chu Liuyue doesn't look like she's bent on winning. She looks calm and collected instead.

I didn't even see her move much, yet she's already on this step!

Uneasiness overwhelmed Situ Xingchen as she unwittingly clenched her sleeves.

It was rough to the touch—this was the cloud embroidery that she had sewn on herself.

In the past, she would always secretly touch her sleeves when she was nervous or in a bad mood. This was because caressing the cloud embroidery could make her calm down rapidly.

But that person's handsome appearance no longer appeared in front of her, and it was replaced by an intensely burning fire, as well as the burnt embroidery!

As if she was burned by fire, Situ Xingchen hurriedly let go of her sleeves. However, her heart was filled with endless rage and humiliation!

She gradually looked at Chu Liuyue and suddenly remembered that Rong Xiu left with Chu Liuyue first.

Not long after that, Prince Li Mansion had thrown away all the clothes with the cloud embroidery and had even burned them in public!

Did Chu Liuyue say something to Rong Xiu? If not, why would I be humiliated at that precise point in time?

Situ Xingchen felt suffocated as her body slightly trembled, and she suppressed her emotions with much difficulty.

Her hatred for Chu Liuyue increased yet again.

...

Buzz!

A commotion was heard.

At the competition venue, the fire in Leng Chuan's cauldron gradually faded away, leaving behind a round, turning pill.

An intense herbal fragrance permeated through the air, and an invisible wave started spreading in all directions.

Leng Chuan strongly hit the cauldron with both his hands.

Whir!

The pill flew into his hands.

Cheng Lixue emotionally stood up. *He did it!*

Leng Chuan placed the pill into the jade box and looked at the few heavenly doctors. Sweat covered his forehead, and his lips were pale, clearly showing that it wasn't easy for him to produce this pill.

Even though he had used up a lot of energy, he still succeeded in the end!

He took a deep breath in and tried hard to calm himself down, but his lips still curved up unwittingly.

He then walked toward Elder Feng Yi and the other two elders as he respectfully presented the jade box to them.

Displeasure flashed across Mo Cang's eyes.

Elder Feng Yi didn't have any expression as he gently opened the jade box—an emerald pill quietly laid inside.

The four lines engraved on the pill could be clearly seen.

“Fourth-grade pill!” Cheng Lixue glanced at it from the side, and he couldn’t help but gasp in surprise.

The crowd went crazy.

A fourth-grade pill proved that Leng Chuan was already a true stage-four heavenly doctor!

“That’s right; it indeed is a fourth-grade pill.” After closer inspection, Elder Feng Yi pushed the pill to the other two judges and smiled at Leng Chuan. “Congratulations.”

Leng Chuan’s smile widened. “Thank you so much, Elder Feng Yi!”

“It’s just a low-grade, fourth-grade pill. Isn’t it too early to be happy?” Mo Cang coldly spat out a sentence after he saw the product.

Leng Chuan immediately became awkward.

Cheng Lixue couldn’t watch on anymore as he coldly laughed and said, “A low-grade, fourth-grade pill is still a fourth-grade pill! No matter what, it’s the first fourth-grade pill of the day! Besides, there might not even be a second fourth-grade pill!”

Mo Cang was stumped, and he turned away in frustration.

Cheng Lixue returned the jade box to Leng Chuan, and he smiled in satisfaction. “You did great.”

Leng Chuan then relaxed. “Thank you, three elders.”

The judge at the side wrote Leng Chuan’s result down.

Cheng Lixue sat down happily and looked very carefree, appearing as if he was certain that he had won.

“Feng Yi, I think your academy’s Ji Zixing is not bad, but he’s a little slow in refining medicine! There’s only this amount of time left, I wonder—”

Buzz!

A buzzing sound was heard from the competition venue again!

Cheng Lixue looked over, and his voice suddenly faded away.

The noise was actually coming from the cauldron in front of Chu Liuyue!

She’s actually producing a pill too?!

Chapter 272: Acting the Part

The numerous herbs gradually started to merge and form a pill outline in the bright, red fire.

It was indeed the noise that would only be generated when one was producing pills!

Cheng Lixue shockingly stared at Chu Liuyue. As he was too shocked, his voice was even sharper as he said, "When did she prepare all those ingredients?"

Didn't Chu Liuyue just go onto the competition venue? She actually progressed to this step when we weren't paying attention for a little while?

Not only Cheng Lixue, but everyone watching Chu Liuyue refining medicine was in disbelief.

"I was always watching Chu Liuyue refining her medicine, but I felt like she didn't do much. Yet, she has already finished preparing all those ingredients?"

"It's too fast... Won't her speed be considered as one of the top three in today's competition?"

"I think she can even be first! Did you notice that she directly placed the medical formula down after glancing at it once, without ever looking at it again after that? Did she actually memorize that medical formula with one glance?"

"It's nothing much to have a photographic memory, but the point is that she didn't even stop in the middle and kept throwing ingredients into the cauldron! She didn't show any hesitation, and she didn't make any mistakes at all. This is why she's so fast!"

Mo Cang was also stunned when he saw this.

As one of Tai Yan Academy's elders, he didn't have a good impression of Chu Liuyue. Therefore, he coldly smiled and said, "So what if she's fast? There were also people before her who tried to produce pills quickly, yet they still failed in the end."

Elder Feng Yi stared at the pill forming in Chu Liuyue's cauldron and felt very nervous.

Hearing Mo Cang's words, he could not help but retort, "No matter if she can form the pill in the end, she has already proved her talent."

Mo Cang's eyes grew even colder, but he didn't know how to rebut Feng Yi. Mo Cang could only grunt, and his eyes were filled with contempt.

At the start, Elder Feng Yi really didn't harbor much hope for Chu Liuyue, but now...

His gaze turned and landed on Chu Liuyue's face.

Even at this nerve-wracking moment, the pretty young girl still looked as calm as ever.

Chu Liuyue did something that was as difficult as ascending the sky to others, but she didn't seem to care about it.

I think Director really accepted a good disciple...

...

Some would succeed, while others would fail in a competition.

All the successful ones would present the pills they made for evaluation, while the failed ones would leave the competition in a dispirited manner. But out of all of the successful ones, nobody else produced pills. The best was only 'superior third-grade.'

It was obvious that these people didn't pose a threat to Leng Chuan.

Gradually, the competition was only left with Chu Liuyue and Ji Zixing.

Not long after Chu Liuyue, Ji Zixing also finally started trying to produce a pill.

This also meant that, other than Nan Feng Academy's Leng Chuan—who had produced a fourth-grade pill—only the remaining Chu Liuyue and Ji Zixing had the same hope.

Both these two people were even from Tian Lu Academy!

Elder Feng Yi smiled as he leaned against his chair. He then spoke in a seemingly nonchalant manner. "Even though Zixing is slow, he's still stable, unlike Liuyue—who's a little anxious."

Cheng Lixue knew that the only thing he could do now was wait, so he sat in his seat and didn't say a word. Now, he just hoped that both Chu Liuyue and Ji Zixing would fail in producing their pills.

This way, Leng Chuan could thoroughly take first place!

Elder Feng Yi glanced at Mo Cang and lightly knocked his head. “Oh, I almost forgot that Liuyue is representing Situ Xingchen in the competition. No matter if she wins or loses, it’s all for your Tai Yan Academy. Mo Cang, don’t take the criticisms I said earlier to heart!”

Mo Cang took a deep breath in. If it weren’t for so many people watching, he wouldn’t have held himself back. He would’ve taken action directly!

Feng Yi looked very down-to-earth, but he was very cunning.

Everyone could tell that this heavenly doctor competition had nothing to do with Tai Yan Academy.

If Chu Liuyue lost, it meant that Situ Xingchen lost.

If Chu Liuyue won, it still meant that she won, and it would put Tai Yan Academy in a bad light.

At this point, Mo Cang started to regret it. *Why did I agree to Chu Liuyue representing Situ Xingchen in the competition?*

...

Situ Xingchen also realized that something was wrong.

From the moment Chu Liuyue tried to produce the pill, she had been silently hoping that Chu Liuyue would fail. But what disappointed her was that Chu Liuyue continued in an organized manner.

Even though this had exhausted a large portion of Chu Liuyue's energy, making her lips pale, the fire in the cauldron showed no signs of extinguishing or being affected.

As she stared at the pill that gradually became rounder and smoother in the cauldron, Situ Xingchen's heart hung high. *If Chu Liuyue really succeeds...*

...

As she meticulously controlled the fire's changes, Chu Liuyue stared at the cauldron in front of her with much focus.

She was bent on putting her best foot forward this time. It wasn't to compensate for Situ Xingchen, but it was for other considerations.

Previously, Chu Liuyue had always been hiding her talent and capabilities as a heavenly doctor since she didn't want to reveal too much and cause trouble for herself.

However, it was obvious that trouble would come knocking on her door, even if she did not look for it.

From Chu Xianmin to Heng Jingchuo and Yang Jianqing... Everything revealed an eerie aura.

Chu Liuyue had a strange prediction in her heart.

The same person seemed to be controlling everything behind the scenes, and this person was obviously targeting her!

Chu Liuyue thought repeatedly, but she couldn't figure out who would waste so much effort to go against her.

Barely a few people had such means.

So instead of hiding and shunning, why not directly show everything she had and lure the culprit out of their hiding place?

She was in the light, while the other party was in the dark. Hence, she was originally disadvantaged.

But if she stood under the brightest sun, any shadows would show themselves!

Chu Liuyue stared at the pill in the fire.

Perhaps it was her hallucination, but she felt that her force was more nourished after she broke through and became a stage-two warrior. This caused the effects to be even better when she refined medicine.

This was also why she could finish preparing the ingredients and start producing the pill faster than expected.

But... Why is it taking so long to produce the pill?

...

Hong!

A boom was heard from Ji Zixing's cauldron.

A round pill was formed.

At the same time, an intense herbal fragrance started diffusing through the air.

Tian Lu Academy's crowd finally felt secure.

Ji Zixing placed the pill into the jade box and presented it.

Elder Feng Yi opened the jade box, and he couldn't help but look at Chu Liuyue. *Chu Liuyue clearly started earlier than Ji Zixing, but why hasn't she finished yet...*

Mo Cang sneered. "I thought she was very capable, but it turns out... Hmph, she's just putting on an act!"

Chapter 273: Congratulations

“Mo Cang, isn’t it inappropriate for you to say this? Liuyue is representing your school in the competition, yet you said that she’s putting on an act... Do you wish for your academy to lose?” asked Elder Feng Yi calmly.

Mo Cang was stumped. “You!”

But Elder Feng Yi had already retracted his gaze and looked at the pill in the jade box. The four lines on the pill were very visible, but the fourth line was a little faint like Leng Chuan’s.

Elder Feng Yi thought for a moment and said, “low-grade, fourth-grade.”

Ji Zixing looked very calm; he knew what standard his pill had reached.

Cheng Lixue hurriedly took the pill, and upon closer inspection, he knitted his brows and reluctantly said, “low-grade, fourth-grade.”

Mo Cang symbolically looked at the pill and gave the same comment, not saying anything else.

Elder Feng Yi nodded at Ji Zixing. “It’s not bad that you can produce a pill after seeing the medical formula for the first time. It seems like you have once again improved recently.”

Ji Zixing cupped his hands. “Thank you for the compliment, Elder, but I still have many things that I’m not good at.”

Actually, Ji Zixing still felt that he wasn't smart enough. Out of all the people that chose the 'advanced' medical formula, he was the slowest one. He spent a whole hour researching the medical formula, and he was also the last to try and produce the pill.

Even Chu Liuyue—who had appeared halfway—was faster than him.

Even though he produced the pill successfully, he was still clumsier than the rest.

"You have your own merits; you don't need to be too humble." Seeing that Ji Zixing didn't become arrogant because of his success in the competition, Elder Feng Yi was even more pleased.

One's character was also an important aspect of being a heavenly doctor.

"Go and rest first. You just have to wait until Liuyue finishes on her end."

"Okay."

...

Only Chu Liuyue was left in the competition venue.

Everyone's gazes were gathered on her.

Expectant, doubtful, sarcastic...

Chu Liuyue pretended like she didn't notice any of them and was still very patient. But to save on her force, she shrunk the fire in the cauldron and gathered all the remnants in one area.

This way, she could sustain for a longer time.

But as time flowed past, the others gradually became frustrated and doubtful.

"Why hasn't Chu Liuyue ended yet? Didn't someone say that she's fast? Ji Zixing has already completed his pill for a period of time, yet there's not much progress for her pill."

"Is there a problem?"

"I think she's most likely going to fail! Think about it, Leng Chuan and Ji Zixing—who have successfully produced pills—didn't take as long as her!"

"I think so too! I think she's still not capable enough... Even though she's Elder Ye's disciple, I don't think she has cultivated for long, right?"

Tian Lu Academy's crowd felt very conflicted. On the one hand, they were happy that Ji Zixing produced a pill and that he had the chance to compete against Leng Chuan.

On the other hand, they were worried that Chu Liuyue wouldn't succeed.

...

Situ Xingchen stood at the side of the competition venue and felt that every second was spent like a year.

Looking at Chu Liuyue refining medicine in her original spot, Situ Xingchen felt very unhappy. Previously, she was overwhelmed with anger as she felt that Chu Liuyue had blocked her path to victory. Hence, she impulsively agreed to let Chu Liuyue represent her in the competition.

But when she gradually calmed down, she realized that this wasn't beneficial to her at all.

Seeing that Chu Liuyue had not made much of a commotion, Situ Xingchen finally stepped up. "Chu Liuyue, I was thinking for a long time, and I still feel that it's inappropriate for you to represent me in the competition."

Situ Xingchen's voice was gentle and curt, and her tone was very sincere. With slightly knitted brows, she looked even more pitiful. "I believe that you didn't purposely interrupt the production of my pill, so it's unfair for you if I'm so calculative toward you. Don't worry, I won't blame you if you can't produce a pill—"

Hong!

Fire suddenly rose in the cauldron in front of Chu Liuyue. At the same time, a huge wave struck the cauldron strongly.

Hong!

A strong, indescribable herbal fragrance exuded from the cauldron.

Chu Liuyue extended her wrists, and the pill landed in her hands.

Choo!

Chu Liuyue quickly placed the pill into the jade box at the side.

This chain of actions was very smooth, and the crowd only realized what had happened when Chu Liuyue had closed the jade box with a bang.

Chu Liuyue actually succeeded!

Situ Xingchen was in a daze, and all the blood in her body seemed to have frozen.

Chu Liuyue then looked at her. "What did you say just now?"

Situ Xingchen opened her mouth, but she couldn't utter the remaining words at all. She was still under great shock, and she couldn't recover her senses.

"Hm?" Chu Liuyue tilted her head and asked again.

Situ Xingchen's lips moved, wanting to use her usual smile to hide her awkwardness and embarrassment. However, she realized that her face felt like it was wearing a thick mask, and she couldn't move it at all. Even twitching her lips was as heavy as ever.

Chu Liuyue actually did it! How can I smile?

"N-nothing much..." Situ Xingchen was filled with regret. *Why did I say that earlier? I look extremely stupid now.*

Chu Liuyue shrugged her shoulders and smiled carelessly. Without asking further, she walked toward Elder Feng Yi and the rest.

She stood in front of them, presented the jade box in her hands, and politely said, "Sorry for making you wait."

Elder Feng Yi laughed. "Not at all! The heavenly doctor competition doesn't have a fixed duration anyway. Besides, you've successfully produced a pill!"

As he said this, he opened the box nervously and curiously.

The pill appeared in front of him.

The moment he saw the pill, Elder Feng Yi suddenly widened his eyes. "This..."

Elder Feng Yi excitedly picked up the pill and inspected it closely, only able to suppress the excitement in his heart after some time.

“This is... a middle-grade, fourth-grade pill!”

“What?!” Cheng Lixue and Mo Cang were originally upset, so they sat in their own seats and didn’t take a closer look.

Both of them spoke in unison upon hearing Elder Feng Yi’s words.

“Feng Yi, did you purposely rate her higher because she’s your academy’s student?” asked Mo Cang in a rush.

Elder Feng Yi waved his hand. “You’ll find out why if you see the pill for yourself.”

Mo Cang doubtfully took the pill, and his face changed.

Cheng Lixue felt like something was amiss, and he also leaned over. He saw that there indeed were four lines on the pill. However, the most important part was that the fourth line was obviously clearer than Leng Chuan and Ji Zixing’s.

This was indeed a low-grade, fourth-grade pill!

Elder Feng Yi laughed out loud. “You won’t object to this rating now, right?”

The two of them were silent.

Elder Feng Yi raised his voice, and his eyes were clear. Filled with pride, he said, “Congratulations, Liuyue, this pill is a low-grade, fourth-grade one!”

This was the pill that had the highest standard in this year’s competition!

It had undoubtedly taken first place!

Chu Liuyue looked at Situ Xingchen elatedly. “Congratulations, Eldest Princess Situ!”

Chapter 274: Arrived!

Congratulations?! When Situ Xingchen heard that, she felt as if she had been harshly slapped.

Even though Chu Liuyue represented her in the competition and allowed Situ Xingchen to take first place, everyone clearly saw that the low-grade, fourth-grade pill was made by Chu Liuyue!

Everyone had witnessed Chu Liuyue’s outstanding talent and shocking capabilities!

At this moment, Situ Xingchen finally realized one thing: the higher the grade of the pill that Chu Liuyue produced and the better her ranking, the greater the humiliation Situ Xingchen would face.

After the Qing Jiao Competition, everyone would know the reason why Situ Xingchen could take first place in the heavenly doctor competition—it was simply because Chu Liuyue was outstanding enough.

By then, everyone's focus would be on Chu Liuyue. Who else would care about Situ Xingchen?

All the reputation and honor will belong to Chu Liuyue in the end. What about me? I'll just be her pitiful accompaniment. Chu Liuyue gave me this first place, but she also gave me utter humiliation.

Situ Xingchen was very regretful as her face flushed red and white, and she really wanted to disappear from this place immediately.

Elder Feng Yi surveyed his surroundings and said, "I hereby announce the first place in the heavenly doctor competition of this year's Qing Jiao Competition... Situ Xingchen from Tai Yan Academy!"

When the low voice boomed, the large square fell into an eerie silence. This was especially for Tai Yan Academy's crowd, who couldn't describe how they felt.

"Eldest Princess Situ, why do you seem upset?" asked Chu Liuyue as she blinked. "Just now, I vaguely heard you say that you wanted to cancel the agreement with me? Why? Is my compensation not enough?"

Situ Xingchen's lips trembled slightly. *She's asking the obvious! Chu Liuyue is clearly doing this on purpose!*

Situ Xingchen clenched her teeth and forced a smile onto her face, but her eyes had no smiling intent. "N-no..."

Chu Liuyue has already helped me to take first place. How can I say that it's not enough? But... I'd rather not have this first place now!

Elder Feng Yi cupped his fists toward Cheng Han and delightfully said, "Congratulations, Director Cheng Han!"

Cheng Han's blood was stuck in his chest. Before this, he had never expected that they would take first place in the heavenly doctor competition in this manner!

But whenever he heard the word 'congratulations,' he felt that it was better for them not to have a ranking.

No matter what, Chu Liuyue was the one who earned their first-place ranking.

In all these years, he had never once met with such an incident that made him speechless and aggrieved!

Sun Zhongyan looked at Ji Zixing and patted his shoulders to comfort him. "Zixing, you did well this time. Even though you didn't take first place for our academy... the strong will always be respected, and you should admit your defeat, right?"

Ji Zixing answered, "Thank you for your teachings, Elder Sun. I'll remember it in my heart."

Cheng Han clenched his fists tightly. *Sun Zhongyan was clearly scolding me when he talked to Ji Zixing! Every single word of his is filled with sarcasm, but I can't rebut at all!*

Zuo Rong and Xuan Cang looked at each other with complicated gazes.

After some time, Zuo Rong couldn't help but slap his head. He felt that it was aching as he muttered, "I knew it... This girl was indeed hiding her abilities."

She must've purposely acted very clumsy the previous time. To think that we really thought she wasn't good at refining medicine!

Xuan Cang was even more embarrassed. *I was the one who looked down on Chu Liuyue the most, but I didn't expect...*

After keeping quiet for a while, Xuan Cang said, "No wonder Director was willing to accept her as his disciple."

I'm afraid there won't be a second person with such talent in the entire Country Yao Chen, right?

Zuo Rong quickly set his thoughts aside and clapped his hands. "Hehe, why should we think so much? Previously, that girl had purposely hidden her abilities, and many people couldn't tell. It wasn't only us, right? Pft, I heard that Liuyue had tortured the Chu family quite a bit, but it seems like nothing much now. When news regarding the Qing Jiao Competition spreads... Haha!"

Previously, the Chu family's members might feel slight regret, but not heart-wrenching pain when Chu Liuyue enrolled into Tian Lu Academy.

After all, the Chu family still had Chu Xianmin—who was considered one of the stronger ones in the academy.

However, it was different now. Chu Liuyue had taken first place in both the warrior competition and Xuan Master competition.

Strictly speaking, she had also taken first place in the heavenly doctor competition.

This kind of genius had never appeared in Country Yao Chen's history before!

Even if one thought with their feet, they would know what Chu Liuyue's displayed talent meant!

As long as no accidents happened, Chu Liuyue would definitely have a bright future ahead of her as a top fighter!

This was actually the most lethal blow for the Chu family.

...

When the three events in the Qing Jiao Competition finally ended, it was followed by each event's prize presentation ceremony.

Situ Xingchen didn't remember how she accepted the so-called 'first place' because her entire person was numb, and her brain was in a mess.

In comparison, Chu Liuyue wasn't affected at all.

The judges gave her two Cosmic Bags.

Sun Zhongyan laughed and said, "Liuyue, these two Cosmic Bags are your rewards for winning the warrior competition and the Xuan Master competition. You can take a look at the items inside."

Noises of envy could be heard from the crowd.

Just these two Cosmic Bags were already very valuable, let alone the other treasures inside.

Chu Liuyue simply checked the Cosmic Bags and realized that the treasures included a valuable Xuan formation drawing, some decent-standard warrior skills, and an intermediate-grade fiend's pearl of essence.

Her lips curved up into a bright smile. "Thank you, Elder Sun."

Seeing her calm look, Elder Sun nodded in satisfaction.

Many good things were stored in the Cosmic Bags, yet Chu Liuyue could actually be so calm. This proved that she was truly composed, and it made the academy proud.

Of course, the most important things were her talent and capabilities.

“There’s something else other than this. You can choose to enter any one of the three academies and read the books in their library for a month for free. I already asked you about this a few days ago, and you said that you had to think. Do you have your answer now?”

Chu Liuyue nodded. “Elder Sun, I’ve thought about it. I want to go to... Tai Yan Academy!”

Everyone was shocked when Chu Liuyue said this. Even though Tai Yan Academy was also one of the choices, it was obvious that Chu Liuyue had thoroughly offended their entire academy.

If she really went there, she would just be causing trouble for herself.

Even Cheng Han couldn’t help but ask, “Are you sure?”

“I’m sure.” Chu Liuyue’s facial expression didn’t change. She needed to investigate Heng Jingchuo and Yang Jianqing personally, and this was the best chance. “Why? Could it be that Director Cheng Han doesn’t welcome me over?”

Cheng Han sneered and slowly said, “Why wouldn’t we? We welcome you with open arms.”

Chu Liuyue pretended not to hear the threat in his words as she smiled happily. “Thank you.”

Emperor Jiawen finally spoke. “Liuyue, you—”

Before he could finish his sentence, Eunuch Min hurriedly came over and anxiously said, “Your Majesty!”

Emperor Jiawen unhappily asked, “Why are you so anxious?”

Eunuch Min hurriedly knelt down and presented a letter. “Please forgive me, Your Majesty! I have something to report: Tianling Dynasty’s envoy is already within 20 miles of the Imperial City, and he’ll reach here very soon!”

Chu Liuyue’s heart harshly shook as she raised her head to take a look.

Chapter 275: Old Acquaintances Meet

Emperor Jiawen was stunned, and he jumped to his feet. “What? Didn’t they say it would take a while longer? Why did he arrive so suddenly?”

They weren’t prepared yet!

Eunuch Min wiped the sweat from his forehead. “Your Majesty, I don’t know either! Wha-what should we do?”

What to do? What else can we do?!

Emperor Jiawen hurried forward. “Of course, I’ll go forward and receive him personally!”

The Empress followed suit when she heard that, and she looked at Rong Jin and Rong Qi. “Your Majesty! Your Majesty, the Crown Prince and I will join you!”

Emperor Jiawen thought about it and agreed. If more people came, the event would seem grander and more important.

The Empress and Crown Prince’s statuses were a good fit too.

They hurried forward, their usually stoic faces revealing a hint of nervousness.

The others got to their feet when they saw Emperor Jiawen’s reaction.

Other than Rong Jin, the other princes and princesses stood up and followed after the group.

The three academies’ elders were stunned, and they had strange expressions on their faces.

But most of the people present in the square didn’t know what kind of existence the Tianling Dynasty was. They were all confused by the scene before them.

“Tianling Dynasty? What’s that? Why haven’t I heard of it before?”

“Looking at His Majesty’s nervous manner, I wonder what their background is. Are they even more important than His Majesty?”

“...Gosh, I previously heard that there’s an existence countless times stronger than Country Yao Chen, which is tens of thousands of miles away. Could it be..”

“Shh! This is not the kind of thing that we can talk about! You might get in trouble!”

Perhaps influenced by Emperor Jiawen, the atmosphere in the square was strange and tense.

Sun Zhongyan pondered for a moment before saying, “Bai Chen, bring the students back. I’ll follow His Majesty.”

Bai Chen and the others nodded. Since it concerned the Tianling Dynasty, they couldn’t help but get nervous. But at the same time, they were curious.

This was the first time the Tianling Dynasty had sent someone to Country Yao Chen in a century! If they got the chance to meet, they might benefit from it!

Sun Zhongyan looked at Fu Yunshan and Cheng Han. To no surprise, the two were surprised and stunned.

He couldn’t be bothered, and he spoke to them quickly. “Brother Cheng Han, Brother Fu Yunshan, this matter is important, so I think it’s better if you bring your students back first. If anything, I’ll...”

“People from the Tianling Dynasty are coming?!” Cheng Han couldn’t help but walk over to Sun Zhongyan. He could hardly believe what he had heard. *Why did a legendary top class empire send someone to a small place like Country Yao Chen?!*

Sun Zhongyan paused. "They're not coming; they're already here!"

Not many knew of it beforehand, and Emperor Jiawen had instructed everyone to keep quiet about it before the envoy arrived.

Therefore, it was rather normal for Cheng Han and the others not to know about it.

Cheng Han sucked in his breath, and it took him lots of effort to calm down. However, Eunuch Min's earlier words kept replaying in his head.

The Tianling Dynasty's envoy was ten kilometers away!

"I'll come too!" Cheng Han blurted out.

"What?" Sun Zhongyan raised his eyebrows.

Cheng Han straightened his coat and sternly said, "As the director of Tai Yan Academy, don't I have the right to request for an audience?"

Sun Zhongyan was about to rebut when Fu Yunshan spoke up. "Me too!"

"It's fine if we weren't here since they're here to visit Country Yao Chen! However, we happen to be here! What's wrong with asking His Majesty to introduce us?" Cheng Han said sharply.

The matter concerned the Tianling Dynasty. He naturally couldn't let things go just like this!

When he saw that Sun Zhongyan was about to turn him down, Cheng Han turned and headed straight for Emperor Jiawen. "Your Majesty, my Tai Yan Academy..."

"Director Cheng Han and Director Fu Yunshan can come along!" Emperor Jiawen promptly gave an answer. He continuously gave orders to the people around him as he hurried forward.

He had heard Cheng Han and Fu Yunshan's words clearly. No matter how unwilling he was for others to get involved, he couldn't turn them down in public. Thus, he had no choice but to agree to it quickly.

But this was enough for Fu Yunshan and Cheng Han.

They quickly instructed the other elders to bring the students back while they caught up with Emperor Jiawen and the others.

Sun Zhongyan had no choice but to give in.

Bai Chen was doing a headcount when he turned and saw Chu Liuyue standing around dazedly.

"Liuyue?" Bai Chen called out, but Chu Liuyue didn't respond. "Liuyue? It's time to go!"

Chu Liuyue only looked over then. Her expression was the same, but her eyes were terrifyingly deep and cold.

Bai Chen paused, and respect grew from the bottom of his heart. *Chu Liuyue seems... a little different.*

She looked the same, but Bai Chen felt that an oppressive aura was coming from her. To put it accurately, it was the oppressive authority from a high-ranking leader.

Bai Chen closed his eyes. When he looked again, he saw that Chu Liuyue was already heading their way.

The aura had disappeared entirely; it was like it had never existed.

“Teacher Bai Chen.” Chu Liuyue called out to him.

Bai Chen looked at her. Chu Liuyue seemed quite normal, and he thought that he could’ve been imagining things. “Liuyue, the Qing Jiao Competition is over. You can head back and rest...”

Chu Liuyue suddenly asked softly, “It’s the people from there?”

Bai Chen paused then nodded. He didn’t notice the light that flashed at the back of Chu Liuyue’s eyes.

“I heard that... everyone from there is strong?” Chu Liuyue’s voice was soft, making it seem like she was asking out of curiosity.

Bai Chen wouldn’t answer if it were someone else asking, but things were different since it was Chu Liuyue who was asking.

He really admired her before, and her performance at the Qing Jiao Competition really amazed him. He truly admired her, and he was naturally happy to answer all her questions.

“Yes! It’s an unattainable place for us! Now that they’ve sent someone here, it’s a rare chance!”

Chu Liuyue nodded and then spoke in a joking manner. “Didn’t you previously say that the person who placed first in the assessment could pay their respects too?”

Not only had she come in first in the assessment, but she had also taken first place in the Qing Jiao Competition. She should be more than qualified, no?

Chu Liuyue laughed to herself. She had never imagined that it would be so tough for her to meet someone from the Tianling Dynasty one day.

Bai Chen was a little stumped. “That’s true, but the situation now...”

Buzz!

The buzzing of a sword resonated in the air.

Chu Liuyue looked up and saw a slender silhouette heading toward them while standing on his sword!

A familiar aura headed straight for her!

Chu Liuyue's heart beat wildly as if it would fly out of her mouth at any moment!

The air was squeezed out of her chest, leaving gloominess and oppression.

Chu Liuyue clenched her fists, and her knuckles turned white as she stared intently at the person. *That's...*

Chapter 276: Mu Qinghe

The lieutenant of Tianling Dynasty's Black Guard, Mu Qinghe!

His face was rather dashing, but the scar that extended from his eyebrows to his cheekbones added a scary edge to him. Coupled with his cold and uninviting aura, it made him seem extra difficult to get close to.

This aura could only come from someone who had fought for survival on the battlefield!

Even though it had been more than a year, Chu Liuyue recognized Mu Qinghe at first sight.

Mu Qinghe was once one of her most trusted aides!

A tirade of emotions flashed across her heart when she saw that it was him.

Astonishment!

Confusion!

Doubt!

Everyone in Tianling Dynasty knew that Mu Qinghe—the Black Guard’s lieutenant—was the Heavenly Princess’s subordinate.

Mu Qinghe was of lowly birth, and he lived in exile until he followed Shangguan Yue at the age of 13. He later applied to join the Black Guard and headed to the most dangerous Dahuang Swamp, where he earned military honors and was promoted to lieutenant at the fastest possible speed.

The solidification of his position in the Black Guard coincided with the key period of Shangguan Yue gaining power. He held the military in his control, and he became a major pillar of support for Shangguan Yue.

Later... Shangguan Yue was trapped in the royal family’s ancestral hall, and all her requests for support received no reply. This included the ones she sent to Mu Qinghe.

Looking at the familiar face, Chu Liuyue felt a wave of emotions inside her. After she was reborn, she had thought of the previous situation countless times, but nothing seemed right.

Mu Qinghe always carried a communication device—which allowed her to contact him—with him, so he should’ve received the messages.

Even if he truly didn't know, she was trapped in the ancestral hall for three days and three nights!

Given his usual prudence, Mu Qinghe definitely would've noticed that something was amiss! However, she never saw Mu Qinghe appear.

Things were strange, and Chu Liuyue did have her doubts. But in the end, Mu Qinghe was one of the people she trusted the most. He had been loyal to her in all the years that he followed her. She had even been worried that Jiang Yucheng and Shangguan Wan would lay their hands on him after she died.

But he now appeared here as the Tianling Dynasty's representative!

This meant that he hadn't been implicated in the year since she died!

Given Jiang Yucheng and Shangguan Wan's ruthless character, how could they possibly let off anyone that was close to her? Unless...

...

Mu Qinghe's sudden appearance stunned everyone—just the strong aura that emanated from him was a lot to take in!

Emperor Jiawen was the first one to react. "Lieutenant Mu."

The person who came was actually Mu Qinghe!

Emperor Jiawen had seen Mu Qinghe before when he went to the Tianling Dynasty, and Mu Qinghe was still with the Heavenly Princess back then.

Now that the Heavenly Princess was no longer around, he had heard that the person in power was different. He had thought that Mu Qinghe would fall, but it now seemed like he was unaffected.

There was a streak of light beneath Mu Qinghe's feet, and the longsword quickly disappeared.

He walked down from midair slowly and stably.

Chu Liuyue pursed her lips.

Mu Qinghe had been a stage-eight warrior a long time ago. Now that he was outside of Heaven's Canopy, he seemed to have been repressed to stage six.

Even so, he was still the most powerful person here!

The strong aura from a top-tier cultivator made everyone feel a sense of respect and fear!

The broad square instantly seemed a lot more narrow.

Everyone quietened down; they were nervous and excited but also a little afraid.

A lot of people had even looked down, not daring to look at Mu Qinghe directly.

Mu Qinghe walked over to Emperor Jiawen.

The strong aura from him made Emperor Jiawen seem a lot smaller.

“Rong Xiao, it’s been a while,” Mu Qinghe said coldly. His voice was like the deep winter snow, cold to its core.

Emperor Jiawen shuddered uncontrollably, and he bowed slightly as he respectfully said, “Lieutenant Mu has traveled from afar. We’ve failed to welcome you properly, but I seek your understanding and forgiveness.”

The simple conversation between the pair caused waves.

This man called Lieutenant Mu actually called the Emperor by his given name!

But Emperor Jiawen was not upset. Instead, he became even more respectful!

It was clear then that this person’s status was even nobler than they had imagined!

“It’s okay. This trip was rather sudden in the first place,” Mu Qinghe said plainly. Despite his words, he was still expressionless and cold.

Emperor Jiawen was still nervous as he nervously asked, “Lieutenant Mu, would you like to get some rest elsewhere? Oh right, don’t worry! We’ve prepared your residence, and you can move in right away! It’s already rather so late, so shall we hold an official welcoming for you tomorrow?”

Mu Qinghe pondered for a moment before he nodded. “That works.”

Emperor Jiawen was relieved.

This person was trusted when he was the Heavenly Princess’s aide. It was rumored that he was hard to get along with, and he had been worried when he saw that the envoy was Mu Qinghe. However, things didn’t seem as bad now.

“Then, shall I bring you there? Lieutenant Mu, please...” Around Mu Qinghe, Emperor Jiawen didn’t even dare to use the honorific pronoun for emperors.

Mu Qinghe only glanced at everyone that was behind Emperor Jiawen.

Emperor Jiawen didn’t know what he was looking at, so he only waited patiently.

“The Qing Jiao Competition? It seems like not just Country Yao Chen, but the young talents from Country Xing Luo and Country Huai Cang are here too?” Mu Qinghe said suddenly.

Cheng Han—who was standing by the side—was elated, and he immediately stepped forward.

“Greetings, Lieutenant Mu! I’m Cheng Han, the director of Country Xing Luo’s Tai Yan Academy. It’s my honor to be able to meet you!”

All these years, the Tianling Dynasty had always been a legendary existence.

This was the first time Cheng Han had met someone from the Tianling Dynasty, and it seemed like the person was rather high ranking.

If he could take the chance to make some connections... it would only be a matter of time before he could rise through the ranks!

Mu Qinghe looked at Cheng Han calmly.

Cheng Han suddenly felt like a mountain was pressing down on him! He felt intense pain, and his blood rushed through his body as his ears rang!

Cheng Han was stunned, and he tried to speak. However, he discovered that he couldn't even open his mouth!

Most of the people didn't notice this, but Fu Yunshan, Sun Zhongyan, and the others nearby were stunned.

No matter what, Cheng Han was a stage-five heavenly doctor and a stage-four warrior. Even if he wasn't the best, he wasn't exactly easy to deal with.

But this man, with a single strike... No! Mu Qinghe didn't even move a finger, but he was able to suppress Cheng Han to this extent with just one glance!

The strength of his abilities couldn't be estimated!

More importantly, this man seemed rather young. He was 20 years old at most, but he was already at this level!

After a while, Mu Qinghe retracted his gaze. It was only then that Cheng Han felt the oppressive force disappear.

The insides of his mouth were filled with the taste of blood!

Cheng Han stepped back fearfully, not daring to speak again.

Mu Qinghe turned and was about to leave when he felt a gaze on him. His eyes moved, and he turned...

Chapter 277: How are you worthy of that character?

It was a young girl; she looked about fourteen or fifteen. She was slender, but she stood up straight.

This girl had a beautiful face, and she was still young. However, it wasn't hard to imagine how attractive she would be when she grew older.

But this was not what Mu Qinghe cared about. He just felt that the expression in the girl's eyes was a little familiar.

It was like... that person...

Mu Qinghe's heart beat faster, and he froze a little.

Their eyes met, and the young girl seemed shocked as she looked down.

Mu Qinghe's faint anticipation disappeared. *How can such a timid and cowardly girl possibly be similar to her? They are worlds apart; nobody can be compared to her in this world.*

Upon thinking this, Mu Qinghe recollected his emotions, and his expression turned colder.

Emperor Jiawen was standing next to Mu Qinghe. He noticed the latter's reaction and followed his gaze.

He paused when he realized that Mu Qinghe was looking at Chu Liuyue, but he understood why.

Chu Liuyue could be considered a beauty. Her just standing there was enough to attract everyone's gaze. Her face was enough to capture the hearts of countless men.

Could it be that... Mu Qinghe has his eyes on Chu Liuyue? Emperor Jiawen's expression was a little strange. "Lieutenant Mu?"

Mu Qinghe narrowed his eyes. His scar shifted with this movement, and he looked even more intimidating than before. "You, come forward."

This was clearly directed at Chu Liuyue.

Everyone was instantly silenced.

Everyone's gaze landed on Chu Liuyue!

Chu Liuyue clenched her fists under the guise of her sleeves. She then stepped forward.

Chu Liuyue walked extremely slowly, and her head hung low, seeming as if she was nervous.

She stopped when she was three steps away from Mu Qinghe.

With her head hung low, all she could see was a pair of snow deer boots with a black base.

Snow deer were sixth-grade fiends. Even though they weren't advanced fiends, they usually only appeared in places of extreme cold. They also had trouble reproducing, so they were really rare.

Boots made from their fur would adjust their temperature according to the environment, making them extremely comfortable. More importantly, they were good for defense.

For a while, boots made from snow deer were very popular with Tianling Dynasty's elites.

But after Shangguan Yue was rescued by a snow deer during an accident, she prohibited the killing of snow deer.

From that day on, such items disappeared from the Tianling Dynasty.

Shangguan Yue brought the snow deer back with her.

The snow deer was gentle by nature. Mu Qinghe really liked it, so he would take care of it when she was busy.

Chu Liuyue looked closer, and she saw a faint scratch at the edge of the boots.

She suddenly widened her eyes!

That was not a scratch—it was a scar left behind from being stabbed by a sword!

That snow deer had many injuries from saving her, and that scar...

A terrifying thought flashed across Chu Liuyue's mind!

Snow deer were clever and gentle. Their coat of fur was their most prized possession.

No matter what applications, most would request to use a perfect coat of fur.

As the Black Guard's lieutenant, Mu Qinghe didn't have to resort to using flawed fur. Unless...

Chu Liuyue felt like her heart was being squeezed tightly! It was so painful that she could barely stand!

"Look up," Mu Qinghe ordered.

Chu Liuyue had never heard Mu Qinghe speak to herself like this—high and mighty, cold to his core.

Mu Qinghe was quiet and cold. Sometimes, he wouldn't utter a single word the whole day, but he would remove his mask of coldness when dealing with her. His voice would always be clear and gentle.

She still remembered that he had a light dimple on his left cheek when he smiled.

Chu Liuyue looked up gradually. It was only then that she could take a good look at the face that she couldn't be any more familiar with.

A year had passed, and Mu Qinghe didn't look very different from before. However, his aura was colder and more unapproachable than before.

Previously, Mu Qinghe was just cold on the surface. However, Chu Liuyue was almost certain that he was more ruthless and cold than before.

She seemed to be familiar and unfamiliar with this person at the same time.

“Tian Lu Academy’s Chu Liuyue greets Lieutenant Mu.” Chu Liuyue took a glance and quickly retracted her gaze as she bowed.

Mu Qinghe looked at the young girl before him. Up close, Chu Liuyue could be considered a rare beauty, but she didn’t look anything like that person.

Even though her voice was deep and calm, her body was trembling slightly—probably out of fear.

Mu Qinghe frowned. *That instant from earlier must have been an illusion!*

Disdain rose in him. He didn’t say anything as he turned and left.

Emperor Jiawen looked at Chu Liuyue in shock. *What... just happened?*

He had thought that Mu Qinghe had his eyes on Chu Liuyue, but there were no signs of interest in his eyes. Instead... he seemed disgusted?

However, Chu Liuyue did not do anything the whole time. How did she offend him?

Seeing that Mu Qinghe had left, Emperor Jiawen couldn’t be bothered and tried to catch up.

But Mu Qinghe stopped after a few steps, and he turned to look at Chu Liuyue.

As if sensing something, Chu Liuyue looked up.

“Which character is your Yue?” Mu Qinghe asked coldly.

Chu Liuyue’s heart paused, and she tried to keep herself calm. “The heavenly pearl’s Yue.”

Legend had it that there was a pearl that originated from the heavens, and it was also called ‘Yue.’

Mu Qinghe’s heart froze. “What?”

Chu Liuyue smiled. “It also means bright and glorious.”

A scene from many years ago appeared in Mu Qinghe’s mind.

A girl had told him the same thing back then. “Do you know which ‘Yue’ is my ‘Yue?’”

At that time, Mu Qinghe had only been around her for a while. He didn’t know what to do, so he just shook his head. “Princess is of noble birth. How dare Qinghe speak of your name?”

The girl asked him to stretch out his hand. With a smile, she then wrote the character on his palm with her fingers.

The girl was noble and unparalleled, but she didn’t look down on his rough and ugly hands.

“My Yue is the heavenly pearl’s Yue. Father said that it also means bright and glorious.”

Back then, Mu Qinghe thought that the girl was indeed brighter and more eye-catching than the sun.

“...I heard that you haven’t gone to school before. How about I teach you to write from today onwards?”

Therefore, the first character he learned was ‘Yue.’

The image in his mind gradually dissipated.

Mu Qinghe looked at the young girl before him again, and he scoffed. “How are you worthy of this character?”

Chapter 278: Eyes

“How are you worthy of this character?”

This question echoes in Chu Liuyue’s ears, and she almost burst out into laughter. *Me, not worthy? That is my name! How am I not worthy?!*

From Mu Qinghe’s reaction, Chu Liuyue almost thought that he was speaking up for ‘her.’

But... could it be? If Mu Qinghe had been loyal to her—if he had never betrayed her, why would she have died so tragically a year ago?

And if this was indeed the case, how could he not have been implicated after she died?

The lieutenant of the Black Guard was an important position. Given Jiang Yucheng's ambitions, how could he possibly let her remaining allies continue to remain in such a position?

Chu Liuyue was almost certain that Mu Qinghe had allied himself with Jiang Yucheng behind her back! Otherwise, there was no other explanation for everything that happened later.

Seeing his reaction, Chu Liuyue was surprised, but she found it ludicrous at the same time. *Where was he when I was crying out for help? What did he do when I was forced to combust myself? After I died, he even killed the snow deer and turned it into a pair of boots for him to trample on day and night! Is it not contradictory for him to say something like this?*

Chu Liuyue had a lot of questions and a lot of anger. They built up in her, making it hard for her to breathe.

But at last, she took a deep breath and looked down. "Names were given by parents. Even if you think I'm not worthy, you have no right to change it."

"Liuyue! What are you saying!" Emperor Jiawen was stunned, and he began reprimanding her. "Hurry up and ask Lieutenant Mu for forgiveness!"

As he spoke, he looked toward Mu Qinghe nervously. "Lieutenant Mu, this child is still young. She didn't mean to offend you, so please don't take it to heart. If not... Liuyue can change her name to a different character?"

It is just a name! Do we have to kick up such a big fuss?

Even he didn't have the guts to oppose Mu Qinghe, not to mention a mere Chu Liuyue!

Chu Liuyue had always been intelligent, what is up with her today?!

Mu Qinghe looked at Chu Liuyue intently. "No need."

After saying that, he turned around to leave. His steps seemed even, but he moved fast.

Emperor Jiawen looked at Chu Liuyue with warning in his eyes. "You lass, you got lucky today! Don't do this again; do you hear me!?"

Chu Liuyue relaxed a little. Even though she knew that Emperor Jiawen was afraid of being implicated by her, she was still grateful that he spoke up for her.

She smiled, her eyes curving like crescent moons. "Thank you, Your Majesty!"

Emperor Jiawen scoffed; he then turned and caught up with Mu Qinghe.

The entourage quickly disappeared.

The square only regained its liveliness after a while.

Chu Liuyue heard a number of people talking about her.

“I wonder what that Lieutenant Mu’s background is... What did you think about his earlier comments regarding Chu Liuyue?”

“I thought that he had his eye on Chu Liuyue. After all, that face... But it seems like she has offended him!”

“There are so many people here, but he only talked to Chu Liuyue. I think it’s not as simple... That person looks like a killing machine... How could he possibly be drawn to pretty women? I think that Chu Liuyue’s future... is precarious!”

Clearly, not many people saw the earlier exchange in a positive light.

Mu Hongyu ran over and asked nervously, “Liuyue?! What happened earlier?”

Chu Liuyue replied calmly, “What else could it be? He was just asking about my name, and he didn’t seem to be happy about my name.”

“How are you so calm! That is...” Mu Hongyu lowered her voice. “That person is from the Tianling Dynasty!”

"I know." Chu Liuyue nodded nonchalantly. *I used to be from there too. I was even his master!*

"You... sigh!" Mu Hongyu looked at Chu Liuyue's calm and collected manner. She felt like it was futile for her to say anything more. *Does Liuyue not know that her life will be in danger if she upsets that person!? Didn't she see how respectful His Majesty was to him?*

Mu Hongyu was more worried than her friend was!

"Since the competition's over, it's time we head back. Shall we go?" said Chu Liuyue as she walked forward.

Mu Hongyu hurriedly caught up. She tried to say something but decided against it when she saw Chu Liuyue's tired expression.

Chu Liuyue had been competing in the last few days, and she had not gotten proper rest.

Since things are already like this, let's just leave it be! At this thought, Mu Hongyu became more relaxed, and she left with her friend.

"Hey, Liuyue, your earlier competition..."

Gu Mingfeng and Cen Hu caught up with them. They were nonchalant and calm, so the others couldn't say much either.

After they left, the remaining people dispersed as well.

The people from Nan Feng Academy and Tai Yan Academy prepared to leave as well.

“Xingchen? Xingchen?” Mo Cang raised his voice when he saw that Situ Xingchen was still staring in a particular direction.

Situ Xingchen returned to her senses. “We should go!”

Mo Cang walked over to her side and followed her gaze. “You’re looking at that... Lieutenant Mu?”

Situ Xingchen nodded, feeling a little regretful. “I didn’t expect to see such a character like this...”

Country Xing Luo isn’t worse off than Country Yao Chen, so why don’t we have a chance like this?

“It’s not up to us to try and figure out such a strong existence...” Mo Cang muttered, a little fearful when he recalled Cheng Han’s earlier attitude. *That person... is strong beyond belief!*

Situ Xingchen didn’t say anything. Other than Lieutenant Mu’s appearance, what bothered her the most was...

Why did Chu Liuyue catch his eye? Tens of thousands of people were in the square, and Chu Liuyue was far away from him, so why did she catch his eye? In terms of looks, I’m no less attractive than Chu Liuyue. Also... what did he mean with those words?

Others might think that Chu Liuyue was unlucky and might even get punished for it, but...

Situ Xingchen didn't sense the man directing any hostility toward Chu Liuyue.

Something seemed off to her.

...

Mu Qinghe was a little distracted on the journey to his residence.

He hadn't thought of that person for a really long time. But for some reason, he recalled a lot of things from the past when he saw that young lady.

He wanted to shake the images from his head, but the harder he tried, the clearer they became.

Those scenes appeared before his eyes again and again.

Her smiling face, her worried face, her nervous face, her sly face, her serious face... And her look of despair...

All these images overlapped and faded away, leaving nothing but a pair of eyes.

Full of life and reflective like onyxes.

He suddenly froze! *Right! Chu Liuyue has the same eyes as her!*

Chapter 279: Coincidence

Chu Liuyue didn't sleep well that night.

She seemed to have had a long dream...

In the dream, many scenes appeared, but everything disappeared in a ball of flames in the end.

When Rong Xiu arrived, he saw Chu Liuyue lying in her bed. Her brows were knitted, and she was curled up into a ball, muttering to herself.

The moonlight that came in through the window elongated his silhouette. Half of Rong Xiu's face was hidden, and his eyes were deep, but it seemed like a cold fire was burning in them.

He walked over and wrapped her in his arms.

Chu Liuyue was like a desert traveler that had found an oasis. She instinctively inched closer to him.

Rong Xiu bent down and kissed her forehead. “Don’t be afraid; I’m here.”

Chu Liuyue gripped the front of his robe tightly. Her eyes were closed, but a tear slid down her face.

Rong Xiu swallowed that tear, and bitterness spread on his tongue.

He then backed away a little and looked at the person in his arms. His voice was low and hardly audible in the wind as he said, “What’s coming will come.”

...

When Chu Liuyue woke up the next morning, she smelt the familiar cold scent on her—she immediately knew that Rong Xiu had been here.

Even without the scent, she could’ve guessed it.

Earlier in the night, she had been uneasy because of all her nightmares. However, she regained her calmness later on—this was only possible with Rong Xiu around.

Unknowingly, she had gotten used to Rong Xiu’s presence, and she had come to rely on him.

Sweetness emanated from the bottom of her heart.

Chu Liuyue took a deep breath and walked to her window, where she looked toward Yi Feng Courtyard.

Rong Xiu wasn't there at the moment, and all she saw was the peach tree.

The breeze made her more awake.

Since I'm at this step, I can only continue on it!

"Liuyue?!" Someone called her name from downstairs.

Chu Liuyue headed down to open the door after she cleaned herself up.

It was Bai Chen.

"Teacher Bai Chen? What brings you here?"

Bai Chen's expression was complex. He was excited and worried at the same time as he handed her an invitation. "This is an invitation to the palace's banquet today. His Majesty is welcoming that person. You came in first in the assessment, and your performance at the Qing Jiao Competition was outstanding, so... you're invited as well."

This was supposed to be something great since not everyone had the right to meet the envoy from the Tianling Dynasty.

But yesterday, that Lieutenant Mu seemed to treat Chu Liuyue differently, and Bai Chen was worried that Lieutenant Mu would take it to heart.

Chu Liuyue took the invitation from him. "Thank you, Teacher Bai Chen. I'll be there on time."

"Liuyue..." Bai Chen said hesitantly. "Yo-you must stay close to Elder Sun later; be careful about everything..."

"Are you worried that Lieutenant Mu will target me?" Chu Liuyue instantly knew what Bai Chen was worried about.

She curled her lips and said, "Don't worry. Someone of that status won't wait till the palace banquet if they really wanted to do anything to me."

Bai Chen pondered over her statement and thought it made sense. "Your words make sense, but it's always better to be careful..."

Bai Chen left after giving her a few more reminders.

Chu Liuyue looked at the invitation in her hand after she thanked Bai Chen.

She slowly curled her lips into a smile. *I have waited way too long for this day.*

...

Noon.

There was still one hour to the palace banquet, but the sides of Jiaoyang palace were filled with people.

Only the seats on the platform in the center were empty.

Everyone was talking and drinking, and the atmosphere was rather comfortable. However, everyone glanced at the platform from time to time.

They were all here for Tianling Dynasty's Lieutenant Mu!

"Mother, you have to help me this time!" Rong Zhen pleaded as she hovered around the Empress. "That Lieutenant Mu is so formidable! He'll definitely be able to heal me!"

Yesterday, Rong Zhen saw for herself how strong Lieutenant Mu was. He was stronger than anyone that she had seen before!

The Empress also had hope. She patted her daughter's hand and comforted her. "Don't worry. I'll definitely plead for you, but... that Lieutenant Mu looks rather cold. I wonder if he'll help."

"Why not?! He definitely will!" Rong Zhen's eyes lit up, her eyes full of admiration. "Mother, I think that, even though he looks cold, he... he..."

Her cheeks were flushed.

The Empress's heart skipped a beat. *Rong Zhen clearly fancies Mu Qinghe! She is insane!*

"Zhen Zhen, yo-you... who is that person?! We cannot get involved with someone like this! Get that thought out of your mind!"

The smile instantly disappeared from Rong Zhen's face. "Mother, what do you mean? H-he's the most impressive person I've ever seen. Even Brother can't compare! Why can't I..."

The Empress tugged Rong Zhen's arm and glanced around quickly. She only felt a little more relaxed when she saw that nobody was paying attention to them. "What else can it mean? You know exactly what I mean! I'm telling you, we're just asking for help to heal you. Don't think about anything else!"

Mu Qinghe is clearly a dangerous man. He can handle Rong Zhen in the palm of his hands as a toy, not to mention that he might not necessarily be interested in her! Rong Zhen has been raised to be rather wilful. With a man like this, she could lose her life if she isn't careful!

"Anyway, you're not allowed to bring it up! We'll follow Chu Liuyue's instructions if this doesn't work." The Empress's expression became more serious.

Rong Zhen pouted, but she dared not kick up a fuss. "I know! But that Chu Liuyue even has the guts to seduce him in front of everybody..."

The Empress looked at Rong Zhen with warning in her eyes.

Rong Zhen only kept quiet then, but her hatred toward Chu Liuyue grew stronger. *I will teach Chu Liuyue a lesson if I catch her behaving the same way!*

...

Chu Liuyue quietly remained seated in her seat after she arrived with Elder Sun and the others. She could feel the eyes of many people on her, but she wasn't bothered.

She slowly turned the cup of wine in her hands.

Until...

"Tianling Dynasty's Lieutenant Mu is here!"

She turned and looked.

Mu Qinghe walked in from the front door. Emperor Jiawen followed behind and invited Mu Qinghe into his seat.

Instantly, there was pin-drop silence in the hall.

Everyone bowed after a while.

Mu Qinghe's eyes swept across the people.

Almost uncontrollably, his eyes landed on Chu Liuyue again.

Emperor Jiawen thought that Mu Qinghe was still angry about yesterday. Thus, he eagerly said, "Lieutenant Mu, aren't you here to look for some prodigies this time? Chu Liuyue is one of the best! You might not know it, but she's a rare talent that cultivates in all three disciplines!"

Mu Qinghe moved his eyes. "Oh? What a coincidence. Someone I knew was a triple cultivator as well."

Chapter 280: Forget It

"Oh? That's such a coincidence!"

Just as Emperor Jiawen heaved a sigh of relief, he saw that Mu Qinghe's face had no smiling intent. Mu Qinghe even looked at Chu Liuyue with an interrogative gaze.

Emperor Jiawen just realized that this didn't make Mu Qinghe happy.

"You cultivate in all three disciplines? Which one are you better at?" asked Mu Qinghe lightly.

The palace was very quiet as everyone's gazes kept shifting between Mu Qinghe and Chu Liuyue.

Yesterday, Mu Qinghe already acted very differently to Chu Liuyue. Now that he was here, he spoke to her again...

One would be lying through their teeth if they said that he had nothing to do with Chu Liuyue. However, they just didn't know if it was a good thing or a bad thing.

Before Chu Liuyue could speak, Sun Zhongyan had already spoken. "Liuyue took first place in the warrior and Xuan Master competitions during the Qing Jiao Competition. She's also very talented as a heavenly doctor..."

Yesterday, Sun Zhongyan had heard this person mention something to Emperor Jiawen, and it seemed like Mu Qinghe purposely came over to pick a few outstanding individuals.

Even if Mu Qinghe really didn't like Chu Liuyue, he wouldn't do anything unreasonable in consideration of her talent.

Mu Qinghe's gaze remained unchanged. "Oh? So it seems like you're an all-rounder?"

Chu Liuyue could hear the sarcasm in Mu Qinghe's voice. He had been around her for many years, and she was very familiar with his every word and action.

Even though his face looked paralyzed most of the time and didn't have much of an expression, Chu Liuyue could always guess what he was thinking. *It seems like he is looking down on me being a so-called 'all-rounder.'*

"Rong Xiao said that you're 14 this year. What's your warrior standard?"

“Lieutenant Mu, I’m a stage-two warrior.”

“What Xuan Master grade are you?”

“Second grade.”

“What kind of pill can you produce?”

“Fourth-grade ones.”

Mu Qinghe chuckled. “It seems like you’re pretty talented as a heavenly doctor, but you’re just so-so.”

Chu Liuyue bent her knees and bowed. “His Majesty and Elder Sun are too kind toward me. Of course, my small talent isn’t good enough for you, Lieutenant Mu.”

As he stared at Chu Liuyue’s calm and fearless expression, the anger in Mu Qinghe’s heart—which was derived from being offended—had unknowingly dissipated by quite a bit.

“At least you know your limits.”

When that person was 14 back then... Mu Qinghe’s face suddenly became cold as if he had thought of something. Why did I think about that person again? She’s not the only cultivator that cultivates all three disciplines in the world, but how many of them can actually be compared to her?

Mu Qinghe didn't speak any longer as he walked toward his seat with a cold face.

Emperor Jiawen stood beside him and could sharply feel that Mu Qinghe's aura had suddenly become cold.

Emperor Jiawen couldn't help but be curious. *What happened? Weren't they talking just fine? Chu Liuyue's every word was spoken in a very polite manner, and she didn't make any mistakes. So why does Mu Qinghe seem to be unhappy with her?*

Even if Chu Liuyue's talent can't be compared to those in Tianling Dynasty, she is definitely one of the better ones in Country Yao Chen!

Emperor Jiawen was confused, and so were the others.

Chu Liuyue's state is actually just 'so-so' in Mu Qinghe's eyes?! Then, aren't the rest of us even worse?

But upon thinking about it further, this Lieutenant Mu looked like he was in his twenties, but his abilities far surpassed all of them. Hence, his actions seemed understandable.

It seemed like the Tianling Dynasty was really much stronger than what they had imagined.

...

After Mu Qinghe and Emperor Jiawen sat down, the crowd then sat down carefully.

The two of them sat at the front, but Emperor Jiawen was still sitting in the middle. But even though Mu Qinghe just sat there, he had an even stronger aura, and his surroundings seemed to freeze.

The crowd in the palace became even more restrained.

Even though many of them wanted to behave properly in hopes of Lieutenant Mu having a good impression of them, they still honestly sat around when under a strong warrior's suppression.

Mu Qinghe was quite frustrated. After he went back yesterday, he also felt that he had lost control of himself.

What's Chu Liuyue? She's just an ordinary girl in the small Country Yao Chen. I came here to do something important, yet I thought of many ridiculous things after seeing Chu Liuyue, even messing up my mood.

I really care too much about Chu Liuyue, or perhaps, Chu Liuyue reminds me of that person too easily. Clearly, only their eyes are similar and nothing else, but...

Mu Qinghe poured a cup of wine for himself and slowly felt around.

When Chu Liuyue looked up, she saw Mu Qinghe in deep thought. However, she wasn't sure what he was thinking about.

Her gaze landed on his wine cup, and she smiled in a self-deprecating manner. *In the past, Mu Qinghe never drank a sip of alcohol. Only a year has passed, yet so many things have changed.*

As if noticing her gaze, Mu Qinghe looked at Chu Liuyue. “What are you looking at?”

Chu Liuyue stood up and smiled. “It must’ve been really tiring for you to come all the way here. I was too impulsive yesterday, so I wish to give you a toast. I hope that you’ll forgive me.”

She then picked up the wine cup in front of her and drank it in one go.

“Slut!” cursed Rong Zhen angrily. *Ever since Mu Qinghe came in, Chu Liuyue has been using all sorts of methods to attract his attention. She is even openly seducing him now! There are so many people present, and all of them have more rights than her to toast Mu Qinghe!*

Mu Qinghe then looked at the wine cup in his hands.

The strong alcoholic fragrance entered his nose; he knitted his brows in disgust, and he placed the wine cup down.

Bang!

The ceramic wine cup landed on the table with a crisp sound.

The palace was silent.

The crowd exchanged looks among themselves. *Is he... angry again?*

"I never ever drink wine," said Mu Qinghe coldly.

Every single word of his was very cold and stiff.

Confusion flashed across Chu Liuyue's face. *He still doesn't drink wine? Then, why did he pour wine just now... Oh, so he was thinking of something else?*

Whenever Mu Qinghe was in deep thought, he would always pick up something wrong while in a trance. It seems like he is still the same as before.

Emperor Jiawen realized something and hurriedly hollered at the palace maids at the side. "How did you serve him? Who brought this wine up?"

"Your Majesty, please forgive me!" A palace girl hurriedly knelt down and kept begging for forgiveness.

However, she felt very aggrieved. *Who knew that this valuable guest doesn't drink wine? Isn't he a lieutenant in the military? Why wouldn't he drink wine?*

Chu Liuyue hurriedly looked down as if panic flashed across her face. "I was the one who offended you, and everything is my fault. Lieutenant Mu, Your Majesty, I hope you won't implicate anyone else."

"We'll see if she still dares to be so gutsy!" Rong Zhen grunted in delight. *Originally, Mu Qinghe already disliked her. We'll see if she still dares to be arrogant after this. Didn't she just take first place in the Qing*

Jiao Competition? What's there to be proud of? Can't she see that other people don't even care about her?

But Rong Zhen didn't think that Mu Qinghe wouldn't think highly of anyone else in this large palace if he looked down on Chu Liuyue.

Mu Qinghe's face darkened for a while.

Just as the crowd was thinking about how he was going to punish Chu Liuyue, he said, "Forget it."