

Noble Ruler 911

Chapter 911: Hold Umbrella for You

After being called, Mu Qinghe was dazed as he looked at the woman not far away.

She sat there relaxingly and lazily, and her dressing was very simple, but she exuded an elegance throughout her body. She still had a young woman's youthful smile on her face, and her eyes dazzled like stars, looking just as she did more than a year ago.

And she directly called out his name in such a relaxed and free tone as if all the vengeance that she had these few years... was completely non-existent.

Mu Qinghe clenched his fists gradually and looked down. "We just have ordinary interactions. Y-Your Majesty, you don't have to worry."

After this one-line answer, Mu Qinghe shut his mouth as if he didn't want to continue explaining.

Jian Fengchi glanced at him hesitantly and knitted his brows slightly, hesitation flashing across his eyes. *At this point, does he still not want to talk about anything...*

Actually, everything that Chu Liuyue asked was also what he wanted to ask. That day, the royal family's ancestral hall burned for a day and a night, and even he was alerted as he rushed to the palace. In the end, Mu Qinghe arrived even later than him.

Even he could tell that the Princess's death was amiss, but Mu Qinghe never expressed any objections from start to end.

If it weren't because of the things that happened later on... Jian Fengchi was almost certain that he had completely betrayed Shangguan Yue. If he said that he sided with Jiang Yucheng because he cared for the big picture, what else can he not say now that Jiang Yucheng and Shangguan Wan are already eliminated?

Jian Fengchi really didn't understand it. He always wanted to help explain a few things, but in actual fact, he couldn't explain much.

Only Mu Qinghe knew his reasons for doing many things. Whatever outsiders said would just make the scenario more complicated.

"What do you think?" Chu Liuyue didn't seem surprised by Mu Qinghe's answer as she shrugged her shoulders and looked at Jian Fengchi.

Jian Fengchi's brows twitched. "Uh... We just fooled around last time. If you think carefully, we didn't actually have a deep conflict..."

Chu Liuyue seemed to laugh, but her gaze seemed like she had seen through everything.

Jian Fengchi's words seemed to be stuck in his throat, and he couldn't say anything. He couldn't help but look at Mu Qinghe.

However, Mu Qinghe looked down as if he were thinking of something. After some time, he then raised his head again and calmly said, "Your Majesty, you once sent out three signals for help that day, right?"

Chu Liuyue gradually sat up straight and stared at him closely.

Mu Qinghe stood with one hand behind his back as he clenched it slowly. His expression was as calm as normal. "I was the one who halted the three signals. It's me; I was the one who stopped your last chance of survival."

...

It was already the middle of June, and it was quite hot and humid.

The streets were bustling.

Rong Xiu walked on the streets alone. As he was wearing a hood and hid his surrounding aura, he didn't attract much attention.

Everyone here was still talking about her.

While Rong Xiu walked forward, he listened to the crowd's discussions. Every time he heard those people gasp in surprise and praise her, his thin lips would curl up slightly. *She could always do everything she wanted.*

It wasn't that he didn't think of coming over to help, but in the end, he felt that it was better if he let her have a run.

It was best if she could get back what she lost. She could take her own revenge and completely wash away all the pain she had once suffered. And he just had to give her the knife when she needed it.

Of course, the knife needed to be quick enough.

Just as he was thinking about this, he suddenly felt his surroundings darken.

He looked up and realized that the previously bright sky was suddenly covered by dark clouds as it darkened.

Very quickly, rain dropped down on his forehead; it was ice-cold.

He was originally heading toward Hundred Herbs Building, but he didn't expect the weather to suddenly change midway.

The rain quickly became heavier, and all the stall vendors quickly packed their stuff and left.

White water droplets gradually appeared on the marble floor. Only a curtain made of rainwater was left between heaven and earth.

Rong Xiu knitted his brows slightly, and his gaze was dark. Then, he turned his body and went in another direction.

The tall and muscular man rapidly disappeared in the water curtain.

...

After Chu Liuyue exited the Mu Residence alone, she walked aimlessly on the streets as Mu Qinghe's words kept replaying in her mind. *He admitted it; he said that he did all of those things. What else did he say? Oh yes, he said that he was originally Jiang Yucheng's man, so his betrayal wasn't really a betrayal. It turns out... This is the truth!*

Countless scenes flashed before her eyes.

Chu Liuyue took a deep breath in.

The winds started brewing, and the skies quickly darkened.

She looked up.

Humid and hot, yet cold at the same time.

She had already forgotten what expression she made or what reply she gave after she heard those words. She didn't even remember how she walked out of the Mu Residence.

Suddenly, a furry sensation was felt.

Tuan Zi squatted on her shoulders and snuggled against her face.

Chu Liuyue shook her head. "Tuan Zi, don't worry. I'm fine."

It should be because I left hope for myself and thought... However, there aren't so many assumptions in the world. Chu Liuyue looked at the sky, and the rain fell.

In the blink of an eye, the rain quickly fell and connected into one long line between heaven and earth.

Chu Liuyue took a step out and was about to go back when she suddenly felt a sinisterly cold aura suddenly rushing toward her from the rain curtain far away.

Alarmed, she suddenly looked up!

A purplish-blue light shot through the sky, and it went straight toward her!

She moved her feet and was about to take action when she suddenly felt someone rapidly approaching her from behind and grabbing her waist.

At the same time, a silver blade flew out and harshly collided with the light!

There seemed to be a transparent barrier that appeared in the surroundings, blocking all of the ripples outside.

An extremely familiar cold fragrance came over, and Chu Liuyue's heart started beating quickly. She turned around and judged from the incoming person's breathtaking appearance and shocking aura that it was Rong Xiu!

“R-Rong Xiu... What are you doing here?” Chu Liuyue widened her eyes slightly.

Rong Xiu held her even more tightly as he held the black umbrella with his other hand. He said with a lazy voice, “It’s raining. I’m here to hold the umbrella for you.”

Chapter 912: With Me Here, Don’t Be Afraid

The originally empty heart suddenly seemed to be filled instantly.

Chu Liuyue instinctively held his skinny waist tighter and stuck her face against his chest. It was as if hearing his powerful heartbeat melted all her frozen blood and let it circulate again.

The rain fell down, and the cold wind blew up, causing the ripples on the ground to intersect.

In the dark sky, the figures of two people closely holding onto each other were reflected.

Chu Liuyue’s eardrums beat, and she then felt that her floating mind was finally being pulled back. Her numb limbs gradually recovered their warmth as the countless hallucinations before her eyes disappeared bit by bit.

Only Rong Xiu was left behind—hugging her and letting her depend on him—in such a genuine manner. With the black umbrella above her head, it was as if all the storms were blocked outside.

The wide and warm embrace that she longed for.

Chu Liuyue was dazed. After a while, she softly said, “Rong Xiu, I miss you so much.”

Rong Xiu knitted his brows slightly. *Her voice doesn't seem right. She has always been smart, independent, and strong. No matter what situation she was in, it seemed like she never panicked. Even when she experienced that kind of betrayal back then, she still relied on her own strength to repay all the pain and sufferings she once felt and take back whatever once belonged to her. It was as if she would always be strong and unbreakable.*

But in this world, anything that has flesh and blood will feel pain and get hurt. However, there are just some people that are better at hiding it.

He leaned in closer, and his jade-like chin gently rested on her forehead. “With me around, you don’t have to be afraid.”

This simple sentence was his most precious promise.

Tears welled up in Chu Liuyue’s eyes. No matter how tumultuous and torturous the journey was, there would always be one person in this world who would accompany her when she needed him the most—to give her courage and love.

This was enough.

She closed her eyes, and the last bit of desolation and regret in her eyes faded away.

Anyway, it isn't like I haven't experienced greater setbacks. These things don't count for much now. At the very least, the situation today was all under my control.

Bang!

The sound of something exploding came from behind.

Chu Liuyue looked up from Rong Xiu's embrace and turned around to take a glance. She saw the purplish-blue light that was rapidly flying toward her previously had collided with Rong Xiu's force and completely disappeared.

At this time, only one thing was left in the water.

Pada!

It caused some rain droplets to ripple.

Chu Liuyue focused on it and vaguely saw that it seemed to be a thumb-sized object as it glistened with a faint light in the water, looking rather fake.

"What's that?" asked Chu Liuyue weirdly. Previously, I clearly felt that this thing was coming for me! The aura I felt at that moment was very unfamiliar.

She thought back on it for a moment, but she couldn't figure out who would do such a thing.

“It’s just a small toy,” said Rong Xiu lightly.

Unsure if it was an illusion, Chu Liuyue unknowingly felt that Rong Xiu seemed to have recognized that item’s background and that his tone was slightly cold.

Chu Liuyue made eye contact with Tuan Zi.

Tuan Zi flew out and picked up that item.

Rong Xiu glanced at Tuan Zi, and his gaze turned slightly cold.

A chill went down Tuan Zi’s spine, and its strong urge for survival made its wings tremble and almost threw that item out. Withstanding the tremendous suppression, it still passed that item to Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue reached out and was about to take it when Rong Xiu held her hand by the side and sent out a wave of force to hit that item.

Bang!

A crisp sound was heard, and that item cracked. Then, a paper flew out from within and unrolled itself.

It seemed to be a piece of white Xuan paper that was casually cut, but it floated in midair and let the surrounding rainwater drop all over it without staining its surface a single bit. It was as if there was a layer of invisible barrier around it.

Only two lines of words were on that paper.

The first was: Congratulations, Shangguan Yue.

The second was: Your father is having a great time with me. Don't miss him. We'll naturally meet in a month.

As soon as Chu Liuyue finished reading it, the paper started burning rapidly by itself and turned into ashes, disappearing without a trace!

Other than the faint burning smell that permeated the air, it was as if nothing had happened.

However, Chu Liuyue widened her eyes and was stunned. This was because she had seen the handwriting on the note before! When she received this letter in Country Yao Chen, the letter used a half-Xuan formation as its seal, and she had to draw out the remaining half of the Xuan formation to open it. That letter was written with: 'Shangguan Yue, long time no see.'

She hadn't told anyone about her identity at that time, so she thought for a very long time after receiving that letter. However, she couldn't guess who had written it to her.

After coming to Xi Ling, she was busy with everything and forgot about this incident until today—when she saw that note again...

The same person must've done it, and the other party clearly knew of my identity from the start! The other party might even know everything about me very clearly! Without question, this 'congratulations'

is definitely talking about my throne ascension! Also, Father was purposely brought away by the other party! Chu Liuyue knitted her brows tightly. Who exactly is this person?

In the beginning, she thought that it was written by someone in the Tianling Dynasty. However, it didn't seem to be the case now.

To be able to use such a formal tone and have such extreme methods... It is very likely that it is someone from outside Tianling!

Rong Xiu squinted his eyes slightly, and cold intent flashed across the corner of his eyes. *He never goes away...*

Chu Liuyue suddenly looked up at Rong Xiu. "Do you... know who this is?"

She had an unknown hunch that Rong Xiu seemed to know much more than she had expected. She was also unsure where this feeling came from, but judging from Rong Xiu's previous reaction, it seemed like her guess was right.

Rong Xiu's thin lips moved, and he was about to speak when a shout came from the corner of the streets behind the duo.

"Your Highness!" That was Thirteen's voice.

Chu Liuyue turned around and indeed saw a slim young man rapidly running toward her.

His movement technique was nimble and agile. He looked like he hadn't moved much, but he was already in front of her.

Thirteen came here in spite of the rain, but there was a barrier around him, so he wasn't worried about getting wet.

As he was young, Chu Liuyue never assigned any missions to Thirteen and just told him to focus on his cultivation. This caused Thirteen to be very free within and outside of the palace, able to come and go as he wished.

Today, he coincidentally met Shangguan You. Once he heard that it was related to his master, he immediately agreed and came out of the palace to look for her.

When he was just a short distance away from Chu Liuyue, Thirteen excitedly yelled, "Your Highness, the Supreme Emperor was worried since you were out for too long alone. Hence, he told me to give you an umbrella and bring you back to the pal—"

Chapter 913: Gave Her Rong Xiu

Suddenly, Thirteen's voice trailed off, and he stopped in his tracks. He watched the scene in front of him in shock. *Someone is already holding the umbrella for Her Highness! The key point is that he's even hugging Her Highness! With their intimate actions, anyone can tell that the pair have an extraordinary relationship!*

"W-who are you?!" Thirteen originally came to take Chu Liuyue back to the palace happily, but his entire person became disoriented when he suddenly saw this scene.

Without waiting for Chu Liuyue to speak, Rong Xiu raised his brows slightly and said lightly, "I'm Yue'er's fiancé."

“Y-you... You’re Her Highness’s fiancé?!” Thirteen widened his eyes in shock and opened his mouth. *Didn’t Her Highness just settle Jiang Yucheng and Shanguan Wan? Where did this fiancé suddenly come from?*

As Thirteen was young, nobody had told him about this matter. Thus, he was especially shocked when he saw them.

However, Chu Liuyue was thinking about what Thirteen had just said. *He seems to have said... Supreme Emperor? With Rong Xiu’s intelligence, he will definitely notice that something is amiss after hearing this sentence and will thus guess my identity!*

As expected, Rong Xiu slowly and directly asked, “Who did you say asked to fetch Yue’er back?”

Chu Liuyue’s eyelids twitched.

Thirteen was about to respond when he saw that Her Highness’s expression was amiss and hurriedly covered his mouth.

“Um... Rong Xiu, I have something to tell you...” Chu Liuyue originally wanted to find an appropriate time to tell him the entire story, but she didn’t expect this to happen the moment they met...

In that case, I definitely have to say it!

Rong Xiu looked down at her and saw her embarrassment, causing his lips to curl up undetectably. *Is she feeling awkward because she didn’t honestly tell me about those things before?*

“Hm?” Rong Xiu’s voice was deep, and this low questioning tone came from his chest as it tightly pressed down on his heart and brushed past one’s ears.

It was pleasant to the ears.

Chu Liuyue’s face blushed slightly, but she gently and determinedly held his hand and intertwined their fingers. “Follow me.”

...

Six Clouds Street, Chu Residence.

As the rain came suddenly, the peaceful and relaxing yard already had a layer of rainwater.

The rain droplets from the roof kept falling into the puddle, causing ripples.

The post-rain air had a tinge of sweetness to the humidity.

Thirteen stood outside and waited frustratedly and uneasily, continuously glancing at the shut door from time to time. *Her Highness has gone in with that man for quite some time and hasn’t come out yet. Hearing what Her Highness said, it seems like she’s explaining something to that man? But Her Highness has been distinguished since birth and is harsh and decisive. Since when did she need to explain so much to others? And... the key is that the man is actually Her Highness’s fiancé!*

Thirteen scratched his ear and cheeks. *Seventh Brother and the rest didn't talk about this before... I've grown up in Xi Ling City, so I'm very sure that the man isn't a local. But judging by his surrounding aura, he isn't one to be underestimated.*

Thirteen looked inside again and scratched his head.

...

"...This was what I wanted to tell you."

Chu Liuyue and Rong Xiu sat opposite each other inside the room.

Chu Liuyue curtly explained all the happenings from her previous life and current life.

"I'm Country Yao Chen's Chu Liuyue and also the Tianling Dynasty's Shangguan Yue," she said seriously as she looked at Rong Xiu. "Previously, I only said that my enemies were in Xi Ling City, but I didn't tell you exactly what happened because... At that time, I wasn't sure if I could successfully complete what I wanted to do."

"But now, everything has been settled. I wanted to find a chance to talk to you about it, but I didn't expect it to coincidentally happen today." Chu Liuyue took a deep breath. "Rong Xiu, this is... the real me."

She then quietened down and silently waited for Rong Xiu's reaction. But to her surprise, the latter didn't look shocked at all and looked doting instead.

He stretched out his hand and held her hand tightly, gently caressing the back of her hand. “Does it hurt?”

Chu Liuyue was dazed. “What?”

“No matter if it were you deciding to burn yourself to commit suicide that day or everything that you experienced later on... My Yue’er, you must’ve suffered a lot, right?” Rong Xiu looked at her, and his gaze was deep.

He had been waiting for her to tell him everything personally, but this was undoubtedly akin to ripping her own wounds open. To him, knowing all the pain and sufferings she had previously been through was also torture.

“Rong Xiu, y-you’re not angry that I lied to you?” Chu Liuyue dazedly stared at him, and tears welled up in her eyes. *Even though I didn’t hide it from him on purpose, I still hid too many things. Does Rong Xiu... not mind at all?*

Upon hearing this, Rong Xiu gently shook his head, smiled slightly, and sighed. “I don’t even have enough time to dote on you. Why would I have additional energy to get angry at you?”

Chu Liuyue didn’t expect him to have such a reaction.

The next moment, Rong Xiu leaned in and kissed the tear at the corner of her eye. “Promise me that no matter what happens in the future, don’t shoulder it all by yourself. I’m always here.”

The previous uneasy apologies disappeared at this point as they all became grievances to be let out.

It suddenly seemed like she had removed her heavy armor, and her entire body became relaxed. All the pain and sufferings she had once experienced weren't worth a mention now.

The heavens gave her pain and obstacles, but they also gave her Rong Xiu.

Chu Liuyue closed her eyes and buried herself in his shoulders, her tone low as she replied. "Okay."

...

After a while, knocks were heard.

Thirteen's rather nervous voice sounded. "Your Highness? The rain has stopped for quite some time. Should we return to the palace now?"

Actually, he also didn't want to rush her at this point. However, there were still people waiting for her in the palace!

Chu Liuyue's emotions then gradually calmed down, and she removed herself from Rong Xiu's embrace. *I almost forgot that Thirteen was still waiting outside.*

"There are some things that I want to tell you, but it seems like I can't do it today." Rong Xiu brushed her messy hair behind her ear and gently caressed her face.

Chu Liuyue looked at him, and a white light suddenly flashed across her mind. *I vaguely feel that Rong Xiu wants to tell me about something important, and... It is most likely related to his 'Your Grace' identity! But Thirteen is already hurrying us, and it is indeed inconvenient for us to stay any longer.*

Chu Liuyue could only nod. "Then, you can stay here first for the night. Tomorrow..."

She paused, looked up, and glanced at Rong Xiu. "Actually, Father had mentioned to me that... he wants to see you."

Rong Xiu understood what she meant and gently kissed her forehead. "I'll visit Father-in-Law tomorrow then."

Chu Liuyue's face turned red, and she suddenly became worried. "Will tomorrow be too fast?"

This kind of matter should be left with more time to prepare, right...?

Rong Xiu squinted his eyes, and smiling intent flashed across them. *My wife doesn't seem to be very confident in her man...*

"Then... three days later."

Chapter 914: Confession

After bidding farewell to Rong Xiu, Chu Liuyue left with Thirteen to head to the palace.

Her originally disappointed and worried emotions suddenly became much better after she saw Rong Xiu. It was as if there was nothing else to worry about with him around.

When she returned to Shaoyue Palace, Shangguan You had already been waiting for her for quite some time.

Seeing Chu Liuyue coming back safely, the former emperor heaved a sigh of relief. Ever since experiencing that incident two years ago, he became much more sensitive.

If Chu Liuyue left for too long, he would be worried. Even though he knew that she had quite a few trump cards with her, it was normal for him to be worried as her father.

Chu Liuyue thought for a while and told Shangguan You about Rong Xiu coming to visit three days later. However, she didn't mention the fact that Chu Ning was kidnapped. Now that she didn't even know who the other party was, telling her father about it would just make him more worried.

On the other hand, Shangguan You became increasingly curious about Rong Xiu. *I wonder what kind of person can make her like him so much.*

Seeing how his daughter's eyes dazzled when she mentioned Rong Xiu made Shangguan You secretly determined. *As long as that chap is decent, I won't object to it. I'll put my daughter's happiness above everything!*

...

After sending Shangguan You off, Chu Liuyue returned to the study and sat down on a chair.

Today, she had experienced too many things that made her confused. Too many scenes kept intersecting in her mind.

After some time, she opened her eyes—they were completely calm.

“Ancestor,” Chu Liuyue respectfully called out.

A half-transparent figure appeared in front of her—it was Shangguan Jing! He stood with one hand behind his back and asked, “Girlie, what are you worried about?”

Chu Liuyue nodded. “That thing you previously mentioned... Black Demon Hole—what kind of existence is it?”

Upon hearing this, her ancestor’s expression turned stern as he became silent for quite some time.

Chu Liuyue waited quietly. She understood the matters of many dynasties within Heaven’s Canopy rather well—there were some stronger and others weaker than the Tianling Dynasty.

But Black Demon Hole... She really hadn’t heard of them before.

“That’s a reclusive clan.”

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows. “Reclusive clan?”

After some time, Shangguan Jing gradually spoke and deeply sighed as if he was recalling something. “A thousand years ago, I was already a peak stage-nine warrior. I was just one step away from entering Apotheosis, but I spent ten years and still didn’t succeed. Later on, I left Tianling and roamed around the mainland. Meeting Black Demon Hole was a pure accident.”

“Black Demon Hole is very strong. Even me in my peak couldn’t be compared to them. I had once seen someone from Black Demon Hole take action, and his moves were indeed heaven-defying!”

Even after thousands of years, the scene from back then was still deeply engraved in his mind, as good as new.

Chu Liuyue was also shocked. *Ancestor is the strongest warrior in the Tianling Dynasty’s thousand-year history. If even he says this, then... How strong must Black Demon Hole’s people be?*

“Even though that person didn’t have a physical body and was left with only a soul that day, the Black Demon Hole aura was extremely strong. Thus, I recognized him at one glance.”

These reclusive clans were always very formidable in terms of cultivation, and most of them had their own obvious characteristics. Once one saw them, they could basically recognize them with one glance.

“But these people are usually very arrogant and rarely come into the world, let alone interfere with the royal family’s power struggles...” Shangguan Jing shook his head in confusion. “I don’t know what happened this time...”

Chu Liuyue pondered for a moment. “That soul had been living in Shangguan Wan’s body for at least a few years. According to what Shangguan Wan said, she doesn’t even know when that person started

living inside her, but the many things she did later on were all instigated by that person, including... killing me.”

Shangguan Jing glanced at her with complicated emotions. “Actually, I already felt that the person seemed to be targeting you that day. Do you know why?”

Chu Liuyue’s heart tingled. *I still remember what that person said that day very clearly. It seems to be because... of the water droplet in my body? Ever since the water droplet formed a pearl of essence-like existence in my body, it had always maintained such a shape. But under that man’s influence that day, it took the appearance of a transparent page and had the faint feeling of being yanked out! If one said that the man came for this, then why did he target me from such an early time? Before I died in my previous life, I didn’t have this item with me. This item just mysteriously appeared after I was reborn. Even now, I still haven’t figured out what it is myself...*

She shook her head.

“That person failed on the first attempt, but he definitely won’t just give up. He’ll come again,” said Shangguan Jing deeply. “It’s fine if he is the only one, but if others get involved...”

This was what he was most worried about. If Black Demon Hole wanted to go against Tianling, even he might not be their opponent!

“Girl, the most important thing now is to elevate your cultivation level. This way, even if someone wants to cause trouble for you next time, you will have the ability to retaliate.” The Tianling Dynasty’s founder knitted his brows. “Besides, you have too many treasures with you, and taking any of them out will definitely attract many people coveting it... You can hide for a moment but not forever.”

The only and best way was to make herself stronger!

Chu Liuyue seriously nodded. "I will remember your teachings in my heart."

...

In the blink of an eye, three days had passed.

That morning, Chu Liuyue stood up and tidied herself before going to Yuan He Palace.

Yuan He Palace was Shangguan You's current sleeping residence.

Setting the venue here and not the main hall that most officials would go to was enough to show that Shangguan You wanted to see Rong Xiu as a father first.

Even though Shangguan Yue was the emperor now, to Shangguan You, the most important thing was to see if this marriage could give her happiness.

Perhaps to the entire world, an emperor's marriage was first a political affair and then a family affair.

But to Shangguan You, it was first a family affair and then a political affair.

Wherever she walked, the palace maids respectfully greeted her.

But the moment she stood outside Yuan He Palace, she saw someone standing there as if they were waiting for a person.

Hearing the commotion, that person turned around.

After examining Chu Liuyue's appearance carefully, that young and handsome man looked emotional and elated. He quickly walked. "Your High—Your Majesty!"

Chu Liuyue looked at him strangely. "Zhao Zicheng? Why are you here?"

This was the Zhao family's second young master, and he could be considered a descendant of a famous aristocratic family in Xi Ling City. However, he left Xi Ling a few years ago, so she didn't expect him to come back today.

When Zhao Zicheng heard her question, his ears turned red. "I heard that Your Majesty came back, so I rushed home overnight to see you."

He seemed very nervous, but his face was filled with hope and sincerity. "Your Majesty, I came here today to confess to you. Because you previously chose Jiang Yucheng, I didn't say much and just left Xi Ling City. But this time... I hope you'll give me a chance!"

Chu Liuyue's eyelids twitched. *Is he... confessing?! On the day I'm bringing my fiancé to see Father no less?!*

Chapter 915: No

Zhao Zicheng didn't seem to notice that Chu Liuyue's expression was amiss as he continued, "I knew that Your Majesty would be busy with work recently, so when I came back, I stayed in my residence all along. I didn't dare to disturb you, but..."

Zhao Zicheng looked up and quickly glanced at the woman in front of him, his eyes filled with unconcealable love and admiration as his nervous heart kept beating. "B-but... I've admired Your Majesty for many years. If I still don't say it this time, I'm afraid I won't have the chance to do so next time."

After finally voicing out his inner thoughts, Zhao Zicheng instantly felt much better, but his handsome face was stained with a tinge of red. He looked at Chu Liuyue with eyes filled with hope and uneasiness as if he were waiting for her reply.

Chu Liuyue sighed in her heart. *Objectively speaking, Zhao Zicheng is great. Even though the Zhao family isn't considered a top aristocratic family in Xi Ling City, they have also been a subordinate of Tianling for hundreds of years and contributed much to the dynasty. And as the second young master in the Zhao family, Zhao Zicheng's status is even more distinguished. The most important thing is that he is an outstanding Xuan Master talent. Other than myself, almost nobody in the entire Xi Ling can be compared to him.*

If one said that Jian Fengchi lost to her by one step in regards to medicine refining, then Zhao Zicheng was someone that could challenge her in terms of her Xuan Master skills.

When she was young, she often followed the royal family elders to cultivate, and Jian Fengchi and Zhao Zicheng were once her study buddies for a period of time.

Different from Jian Fengchi's arrogant and bold personality, Zhao Zicheng was a humble gentleman. He was introverted and gentle.

All these years, everyone in Xi Ling City that mentioned the Zhao family's second young master would be full of praise for him. Even when compared to Jiang Yucheng, his every aspect didn't lose out to the latter.

"Zhao Zicheng, I remember that you're already 27 this year," said Chu Liuyue.

Zhao Zicheng was dazed for a moment as he nodded in confusion. "That's right."

"You should've long married someone and had kids at this age," said Chu Liuyue sincerely and calmly. "Don't waste any more time on me."

Zhao Zicheng's originally flushed face turned white in an instant, and panic flashed across his eyes. "Your Majesty, what do you mean?"

Chu Liuyue shook her head. "Someone as smart as you should understand what I mean. In that case, let's not bring this up anymore. Please go back."

Then, Chu Liuyue planned to leave.

Zhao Zicheng hesitated for a moment before immediately stepping in her way. "Your Majesty, I'm sincerely proposing to you!"

He tried his best to suppress his nervousness and embarrassment. "Because Jiang Yucheng was a step ahead of me back then, you agreed to his marriage agreement. I recollected my thoughts and left Xi Ling alone after that. Even though it was hard on me, everything else didn't matter as long as you were happy. But now, he has betrayed you, and I thoroughly regret it! I missed you once, and we were separated by life and death. I don't wish for the same incident to happen again!"

Zhao Zicheng came here determined.

The previous few years, he left dejectedly and thought that he was giving her his blessings, but he didn't expect everything to turn out into ridicule in the end!

When he heard that she survived the ordeal and came back alive, he immediately rushed back!

No matter what, I must persist to the end this time! Even though I don't really care about materialistic items, I'm confident that I'm definitely one of her most suitable choices today in terms of background, talent, and other aspects!

Chu Liuyue felt her head ache. *Zhao Zicheng is a gentle person, but even cows cannot pull this kind of person back when they are stubborn.*

"Zhao Zicheng, I always understood your intentions." Chu Liuyue thought for a moment and decided to tell the truth. "Even when you didn't say it many years ago, I still knew."

Zhao Zicheng was actually a very sincere person, and he didn't really know how to hide his likings.

She wasn't stupid.

The both of them had spent a few years studying together, and when he later joined the imperial court as an official, they would see each other during court or at a banquet. Hence, how could she not know what he was thinking?

However, one could never force feelings.

Zhao Zicheng was dazed for a moment and took quite some time to understand what she meant.

As he looked at the woman's clear eyes, his heart broke.

Even though her appearance was slightly different from before, her eyes were still how he remembered. *She's still her. This is a clear rejection, but... But... I don't want to give up just like this.*

"Can't you... give me another chance?" Zhao Zicheng spoke with much difficulty, and there seemed to be something so fragile in his eyes that it could break with one touch.

It wasn't that he hadn't thought of letting down this person he longed for for so many years. If he could do it, he wouldn't be here today.

"Just once—"

"No." A clear and cold male voice sounded suddenly from behind. Even though the tone was light, it had a faint tinge of sharp suppression!

Zhao Zicheng turned around and saw a man in white that appeared behind him at some point.

This man looked like he was in his twenties. He was tall and muscular as he was decked in white. When the wind lightly blew the corner of his clothes, he looked like a deity. The more shocking thing was that

his five features seemed to be meticulously crafted by the heavens as every spot was perfect. He was unparalleled, and he had a hint of demonic aura.

Just by standing there, he could easily steal all the colors between heaven and earth.

Even Zhao Zicheng had to admit that this appearance and aura were things that he hardly ever saw.

“Y-you are—”

Rong Xiu’s thin lips curled up into a slight smile. “I’m Yue’er’s fiancé—Rong Xiu.”

Chapter 916: Surely You Have Some Sense of Shame?

The simple sentence was a thunderbolt that sent Zhao Zicheng reeling with shock. His mind became completely blank for a moment. “W-what did you just say?”

H-he’s... her fiancé?! But didn’t she return? When did—

Zhao Zicheng turned his head back, only to see the woman—who had been so cold and distant toward him just now—smiling unconsciously at the sight of the newcomer. Her eyes were even sparkling with joy.

His heart immediately turned cold.

“Rong Xiu.” Chu Liuyue—who hadn’t expected his early arrival—walked over to him. “Why are you here so early?”

Rong Xiu raised his brows slightly and lifted the corners of her lips. “I naturally have to come early since I’m paying my respects to my father-in-law. Besides, I would’ve missed a good show had I come any later.”

Chu Liuyue shot him a glare in return. *Trust him to make fun of me when I’ve clearly rejected Zhao Zicheng.*

Rong Xiu’s smile deepened, and his heart tingled slightly when he saw her annoyed expression. He wanted to wrap her in his embrace, but considering the fact that they were currently at the Tianling Imperial Palace and that many palace staff were watching them, he endured it and held her hand instead.

At the sight of the two’s tightly clasped hands, Zhao Zicheng finally snapped back to his senses, and a frown unconsciously formed on his forehead. Anyone could tell that the two were on intimate terms. *Fiancé... How come I never heard about it before? I even specifically asked my father to test His Majesty a few days ago, but the latter didn’t mention a single word about this. Did she get to know this man during the past two years? If I remember correctly, she came back from an empire called Yao Chen, which is outside Heaven’s Canopy. Then, this man...*

“You don’t seem to be from Xi Ling.” Zhao Zicheng took a deep breath in a desperate bid to make himself appear calm. *There’s no aristocratic household with the surname ‘Rong’ throughout the entire Tianling Dynasty, much less in Xi Ling. Chances are that he’s from Yao Chen.*

Not wanting to explain things to Zhao Zicheng, Chu Liuyue thus said, “My father is probably waiting for us inside, so I’ll leave with Rong Xiu now. You should go back, Second Young Master Zhao.”

Zhao Zicheng, however, looked at Rong Xiu insistently. “Since you’re Her Majesty’s fiancé, then there should be nothing you can’t say about your family background, right?”

This was a clear confrontation.

Rong Xiu gave Chu Liuyue a reassuring look before flashing a bland smile at Zhao Zicheng. “I’m Rong Xiu, the Seventh Prince of Country Yao Chen.”

I knew it—he’s from Country Yao Chen! Zhao Zicheng’s frown deepened. Although he’s a prince, his status is nothing worth mentioning in Xi Ling since Country Yao Chen is a lesser empire. He’s not even worthy of marrying the young miss of an average aristocratic family, much less Her Majesty. Their difference in status is so huge that even the courtiers won’t agree to this marriage!

He couldn’t resist glancing at Chu Liuyue and clenching his fists while feeling conflicted and aggrieved. *She surely understands this, and yet she’s still so insistent about the marriage. This just means that she’s truly in love with him. Jiang Yucheng was one step ahead of me back then, and now, she has this man named Rong Xiu by her side. It seems that I’m always one step too late.*

“I’m Zhao Zicheng, the Assistant Minister of Appointments.” Although Zhao Zicheng wasn’t in Xi Ling the last few years, he hadn’t resigned from his post. He had just gotten promoted to become the Assistant Minister this year, but truthfully speaking, this title was nothing compared to his family background. There were several Assistant Ministers after all, yet there was only one Second Young Master Zhao.

Zhao Zicheng had no intention of using his family background to pressure Rong Xiu. He just wanted to exert pressure on the other with his court title.

While ordinary people would inevitably reveal looks of surprise and admiration when they heard Zhao Zicheng’s position, Rong Xiu only nodded in a calm and indifferent manner. “I’ve heard about you.”

Chu Liuyue and Zhao Zicheng looked at him in surprise.

The former wondered, *Rong Xiu has only been to Xi Ling that one time, but Zhao Zicheng wasn't in the city back then. So how did he hear about Zhao Zicheng's name?*

Zhao Zicheng found it perplexing that Rong Xiu didn't seem to be surprised or in awe of him when the latter seemed to have heard a thing or two about him. *Is he clueless about the way things work in Xi Ling? If that's the case, then his reactions make sense.*

He took a deep breath. "I'd like to have a brief chat with you alone, Young Master Rong. I wonder if it's convenient for you?"

Rong Xiu raised his eyebrows and nodded. "Yes, of course."

"Just talk here." Noticing that the atmosphere was beginning to become strange, Chu Liuyue grabbed Rong Xiu's arm to stop him from leaving. *Since they're most likely going to talk about me, why can't I listen?*

Zhao Zicheng gave her a hesitant look. "Your Majesty—"

"What is it that I can't hear about when Rong Xiu and I have been engaged to one another? If you have something to say, please cut to the chase, Young Master Zhao."

Rong Xiu blinked in amusement. *Oh, it's rare to see her standing up for me... This doesn't feel bad.*

I don't think she has ever stood up for Jiang Yucheng back then... Seeing how protective she is of Rong Xiu, she must be serious about him. There was a moment when Zhao Zicheng's eyes narrowed slightly,

but a ball of fire suddenly ignited within him when he saw how Rong Xiu seemed to be enjoying Chu Liuyue's protection behind her back without the slightest ounce of guilt.

If he's already behaving like this now, what more in the future?! Her Majesty deserves better! Zhao Zicheng's expression became serious. "In that case, I won't beat around the bush anymore. Young Master Rong, if you truly love Her Majesty, then please leave her right away and don't get involved with her ever again."

The temperature around them instantly dropped to freezing point, and the air around them seemed to be freezing bit by bit. Chu Liuyue distinctly detected the biting aura coming from Rong Xiu.

In fact, there was this one moment when Zhao Zicheng felt a murderous aura in the air. His heart thumped, and all the hair on his body stood on their ends. However, that feeling disappeared as quickly as it came as if it was all just his imagination.

A ghost of a smile touched Rong Xiu's lips, and his voice was glacial. "Oh? What if I say 'no?'"

Zhao Zicheng wasn't discouraged by Rong Xiu's answer, for he had already expected this. Instead, he continued saying, "You two might've been a good couple in the past, but as you can see now, she's currently the Tianling Dynasty's Empress. Her future partner needs to be someone who's well-matched with her, but you're not. If you truly like and cherish her, you should leave and forget all about the engagement for her sake. Surely you have some sense of shame?"

Chapter 917: Take Your Pick

Chu Liuyue's face darkened. "Zhao Zicheng—"

Rong Xiu grabbed her hand, gave her a placating look, and let out a laugh. It appeared that Zhao Zicheng's words had no effect on him, for he didn't seem bothered or angry. "If I can prove that I'm

good enough for Yue'er, then you'll have to take back your words and promise not to disturb her ever again. What do you think about this?"

Zhao Zicheng didn't expect this response from Rong Xiu. He frowned and returned the other's question with more of his own. "Prove? How can you prove it?"

"Whatever you can think of." Like a cold and misty landscape painting, Rong Xiu exuded an indescribable aura as he stood there calmly. His voice was light and calm as if he didn't take this matter to heart at all. The confidence he had could only be found in cultivators who were really strong.

The word 'ridiculous' immediately appeared in Zhao Zicheng's mind, and his feelings of annoyance and indignation grew exponentially. *He sure thinks highly of himself for him to be able to say such things! Does he even know the kind of existence the Tianling Dynasty has? A random person here might be able to crush him easily! A conceited man like him doesn't deserve to be with Her Majesty! Even if she doesn't like me, I'll have nothing to say if she chooses another handsome and talented young man to be her husband. However, Rong Xiu... doesn't make the cut!*

Zhao Zicheng squeezed his fists as he said, "Okay. Since you dare to confront me head-on, I won't make things difficult for you. It's pointless to compare family backgrounds since one can't choose their birth origins, so I'll consider it my defeat if you can prove that you're outstanding enough! May I know what cultivation path you practice? Are you a warrior, Xuan Master, or a heavenly doctor?"

Rong Xiu raised his eyebrows slightly. "May I know which you are best at, Second Young Master Zhao?"

"Xuan Master," replied Zhao Zicheng seriously with a straight back after he got over his initial surprise by the question. He was actually also somewhat skilled at the other two cultivation paths, but he was most talented at being a Xuan Master. His Xuan Master cultivation level was the highest among the three cultivation paths.

"Xuan Master it is then," said Rong Xiu.

Their surroundings immediately went quiet.

“Xuan Master? Are you sure?” asked Zhao Zicheng with widened eyes a moment later. *I just said that I’m best at being a Xuan Master, yet he still chose this?*

“Yes, but I’ll naturally follow your wishes if you wish to compete in other areas.”

The calm and patient smile on Rong Xiu’s face irked Zhao Zicheng to no end. “Fine! We’ll have a Xuan Master competition then! If you can win against me, I won’t interfere in this matter ever again!”

“You’ll also have to keep your distance from Yue’er,” reminded Rong Xiu.

Zhao Zicheng was at a loss for words. “Fine!”

Rong Xiu nodded in satisfaction upon hearing this answer.

Chu Liuyue glanced at Rong Xiu. *Is he... doing it on purpose? Why do I get the feeling that he deliberately induced Zhao Zicheng to say all these things?*

Zhao Zicheng became serious. “In that case, let’s set a date—”

“Make it today!” Before Zhao Zicheng could finish speaking, a deep and powerful voice resonated from nearby.

The trio looked back and saw Shangguan You, who had come out of Yuan He Palace at some point in time. Clearly, that voice belonged to him.

Chu Liuyue greeted, "Father."

Rong Xiu cupped his fist and paid his obeisance to Shangguan You. "Greetings, Your Majesty."

Zhao Zicheng—who didn't expect Shangguan You's appearance—nervously paid his bow at the thought that the latter had heard what he said.

Hints of astonishment and appreciation shone in Shangguan You's eyes as he sized Rong Xiu up. He had been waiting for Chu Liuyue and Rong Xiu at Yuan He Palace for some time, but nobody showed up. It was only later when he heard from the servants that there was some sort of argument outside that he came out to take a look.

He saw his precious daughter from afar at first glance. His gaze then shifted and landed on the man in white clothes standing next to her. Based on how close they were standing to each other, he had an idea of who the man might be.

Although all he saw was the man's back, he could faintly detect the air of nobility and elegance from him. It surprised him much, for not even the ordinary scions could carry themselves in this manner. Having been the emperor for a long time, Shangguan You had naturally developed an eye for judgment. *Only someone who's in a high position and status will have such a demeanor. I've seen the Emperor of Country Yao Chen a few times, but the way he carried himself is totally different from this young man. There's no way Country Yao Chen can produce someone like this...*

“So you’re Rong Xiu...” Now that Shangguan You was facing Rong Xiu and looking at him from a close distance, he got a clear look of the latter’s appearance. He couldn’t help raising his eyebrows in surprise. *H-his looks are out of this world.*

Even the former emperor had to admit that he had never seen such an ethereal appearance in his life. Even Jiang Yucheng—who was deemed as the most good-looking man in Xi Ling—paled in comparison to Rong Xiu. It was like comparing a glow-worm with the sun and the moon—there was no competition at all.

Just one look, and he immediately understood why his daughter would like Rong Xiu. In fact, all the young ladies would be infatuated with him. Had he not eavesdropped on the trio’s conversation for a while and thought that this young man was pretty responsible and gutsy, he would pretty much suspect that his precious daughter was solely attracted to his alluring face.

“Father, we were on our way to meet you when we ran into Second Young Master Zhao. You’re not angry by the delay, are you?” asked Chu Liuyue with blinking eyes.

Shangguan You laughed, knowing that his daughter was speaking up for Rong Xiu, but he also couldn’t help feeling somewhat displeased when he saw how protective she was of Rong Xiu. “Do I look like such a petty person?”

S-so they’ve arranged to meet? Doesn’t that mean he... Zhao Zicheng became even apprehensive.

Shangguan You sighed inwardly when he saw Zhao Zicheng standing at the side. *Even though Zhao Zicheng is outstanding in all aspects, there is nothing I can do about it if my daughter doesn’t like him.*

He knew that Zhao Zicheng had left Xi Ling heartbroken when Shangguan Yue was engaged to Jiang Yucheng. Now that Jiang Yucheng had fallen from grace and was imprisoned, there was nothing wrong with Zhao Zicheng coming forward to ask for her hand in marriage since he was still fond of her. Unfortunately, he was one step too late again.

“Since both of you have agreed to compete, then why not just do it today?” It just so happened that Shangguan You wanted to see how capable Rong Xiu was too. He wasn’t fully convinced about the latter’s abilities when his daughter sang his praises. Thus, the only way to confirm it was to see it with his own eyes. “There’s a training ground behind Yuan He Palace, so we can have it there!”

Since Shangguan You had given the word, the rest of them naturally wouldn’t object to it. Thus, everyone started moving toward Yuan He Palace.

Chu Liuyue tugged on Rong Xiu’s sleeve and whispered to him, “When did you become a Xuan Master? Zhao Zicheng is extremely talented at this. Are you... up to it?”

Chapter 918: Step up Your Game

Hearing that, Rong Xiu stopped in his tracks and looked at Chu Liuyue with a raised eyebrow. The dangerous gleam in his dark phoenix eyes made Chu Liuyue feel a chill run down her spine. He didn’t even open his mouth, but she could hear his soft whisper clearly. “Don’t ever say that again.”

Chu Liuyue blinked, having the vague feeling that she had committed a serious faux pas. *Uh... What did I say just now?*

“Stop worrying.” Rong Xiu shot her a warning glare. “Your man is good at everything.”

Chu Liuyue’s cheeks and ears immediately burned up. She quickly averted her gaze and followed the crowd forward. *Tch, I was just worried about him! We’ve known each other for so long, yet I didn’t even know that he’s also a Xuan Master.*

Although she knew that Rong Xiu was pretty formidable, she—since the beginning—thought that he was just a warrior. Thus, she wasn't confident that he could win against Zhao Zicheng in a Xuan Master competition. Moreover, the latter was just slightly lagging behind her in terms of talent in this aspect. After years of diligent practice, it wasn't hard to imagine how far he had progressed in his Xuan Master cultivation journey.

Rong Xiu is being so calm and nonchalant... I guess that means he's fairly confident about his skills... Having received a stern warning from Rong Xiu, Chu Liuyue naturally dared not comment further on the matter. Not to mention that his lazy and unconcerned attitude gradually made her worries ease. I don't think I've ever needed to worry about this man before...

...

Yuan He Palace's training ground.

Rong Xiu and Zhao Zicheng stood facing each other, while Shangguan You and Chu Liuyue sat down at the side. Surrounding them were Black Guards, who were responsible for guarding the place.

It was quiet, and everyone's eyes were on the two people standing in the middle of the training ground. Some were curious, while others were skeptical. By now, everyone here had already found out that the man in white was Chu Liuyue's fiancé, that Zhao Zicheng failed to ask for her hand in marriage, and that the two men had agreed to compete to see who was better suited for her.

As this matter involved Chu Liuyue, everyone was naturally curious. Despite their calm exteriors, they were all really agitated on the inside. Some of the palace staff were even carefully peeking in from outside the palace gate.

"I heard that the man in white is Her Majesty's fiancé. He seems to be the Seventh Prince of Country Yao Chen!"

“Yao Chen? Isn’t that one of the Tianling Dynasty’s subsidiary countries? Even though he’s a prince, he isn’t compatible with Her Majesty in terms of status...”

“Few in the world have such a graceful appearance though! I used to find Second Young Master Zhao good-looking, but for some reason, I now find his appearance slightly lacking compared to the other man...”

“Hey, this is all superficial stuff and isn’t so important! Given Her Majesty’s noble status, the courtiers won’t easily agree to their marriage even if she agrees to marry him...”

“Second Young Master Zhao was already a seventh-grade Xuan Master when he left Xi Ling, and his cultivation must’ve improved considerably over the past few years. I’m afraid that the outcome of the competition is already out...”

...

Zhao Zicheng looked at Rong Xiu and cupped his fist. “Please...”

Rong Xiu gave an indifferent nod in return, which made the former frown.

He can only continue to act arrogant for so long. Once the duel starts, he’ll know what it means by ‘there is always someone better out there!’ A mere Seventh Prince of Country Yao Chen isn’t worthy of Her Majesty! Zhao Zicheng then held his breath and gathered his focus while spreading his feet apart slightly and lifting his arms. A thumb-sized silver force instantly flew out from his palm—it was concentrated and powerful despite it swaying along with the wind.

With a wave of his arms, the force instantly split into hundreds of bits. The thing was that each of them was completely identical to the original strand in terms of thickness and aura. The fact that he could gather such concentrated force together and split it up so quickly was proof that he had perfect control over his force.

Like agile fish swimming in the sea, countless strands of silver force hovered around his hands and intertwined to form a gigantic Xuan formation. As the formation became increasingly complex, the aura Zhao Zicheng released became more powerful as well.

In just the span of a few breaths, the silver Xuan formation became so complicated that it was mind-boggling. It exuded a strong pressure that slowly spread out and spun as black spatial cracks silently formed on the edges of the void, which showed how terrifyingly powerful this Xuan formation was.

Shangguan You sat slightly straighter in his seat as he stared closely at the Xuan formation in surprise. "I didn't know that... Zhao Zicheng is already an eighth-grade Xuan Master!"

There was no doubt about it, given how strong the pressure was. It was apparent the young man hadn't slackened off in his cultivation and had, in fact, been training hard over the past few years all along.

Thinking about it, he's not even 30 this year. Even across the entire Tianling Dynasty, very few people can break through to become an eighth-grade Xuan Master in the middle of a competition. Shangguan You then turned to look at Rong Xiu but ended up being slightly taken aback when he saw the latter calmly standing still with a hand behind his back. He couldn't help but frown. He hasn't... even started? He's not going to do anything even though his opponent is about to complete his advanced Xuan formation? Don't tell me that... he's giving up without a fight? Even if he's not on the same level as Zhao Zicheng, he should give his best shot at least. What is he just standing there for?

Chu Liuyue also found this strange, although her curiosity was even stronger. Even now, she still didn't know where Rong Xiu truly stood in terms of cultivation level, and this was a Xuan Master competition on top of that. Hence, she really wanted to see how capable of a Xuan Master he was.

...

Zhao Zicheng's bad mood worsened when he saw Rong Xiu's reaction—or rather, lack thereof—for it appeared that the latter was disregarding the effort he was putting in. As he pursed his lips, he injected more force into his Xuan formation.

A huge figure appeared above the Xuan formation, and it turned out to be a tiger.

“Fearsome Tiger Formation!”

With a thundering roar, the tiger leaped forward and charged straight toward Rong Xiu.

However, a white lion suddenly appeared in front of the man in white robes the next second. Its ice-blue eyes stared coldly at the tiger illusion as it lifted its paw indifferently.

Whoosh!

The illusion was ripped into pieces in a flash.

Rong Xiu looked up and curled his lips into a small smile. “This isn't good enough. You need to step up your game.”

Chapter 919: Worthy

Everything happened in just an instant.

Before the audience could process what was going on, they saw the white tiger illusion disappear. Even the Xuan formation began to show signs of cracking, which appeared all over it in just the blink of an eye.

Zhao Zicheng's heart sank, and he quickly retreated. Just as he moved away from his spot, the gigantic silver Xuan formation completely shattered into pieces and exploded into countless blinding rays of light that scattered all over the place along with its terrifying impact.

Even though his chest felt stuffy and his shoulders felt heavy as if two mountains sat atop them, he was in no mood to pay attention to his condition. He stared at Rong Xiu in shock. *H-how was that possible? All he did was summon a fiend, and the Xuan formation that I created with painstaking effort was destroyed just like that!*

To make things worse, what Rong Xiu said made him feel even more embarrassed. His face became flushed, and he was boiling mad on the inside. *I thought I could end the competition with just one move, but I ended up being the loser instead...*

Despite his shock and anxiousness, he couldn't resist glancing at the menacing white lion with ice-blue eyes sitting quietly in front of Rong Xiu. A layer of frost had actually formed on the ground where it was sitting.

"I-is this your fiend?!" asked Zhao Zicheng in disbelief. *Based on that attack, this white lion must at least be an eighth-grade fiend and is very likely higher than that!*

Zhao Zicheng had seen his share of high-grade fiends before. After all, Chu Liuyue's Nine-Colored Heavenly Pheasant used to be a ninth-grade fiend. He had also come across a couple of them during the past few years when he traveled.

I don't know if I'm imagining things, but based on this lion's aura... it seems to be even more powerful than any of the ninth-grade fiends I've seen before! The moment this terrifying thought appeared in his mind though, he immediately shot it down. *That's absolutely impossible! There are conditions in place when a fiend agrees to be contracted with a human. Generally speaking, fiends will only willingly agree to submit to humans if the latter is powerful and capable enough. If this white lion really is... Then, Rong Xiu...*

Zhao Zicheng shut his eyes tightly and tried to rid these thoughts from his mind. Still, it didn't stop him from breaking out into a cold sweat. *Rong Xiu... is most likely much stronger than I thought!*

...

Chu Liuyue—who was leisurely watching the competition—slightly raised her eyebrows when she saw Xue Xue appear. *It seems that Xue Xue is almost on the same level as a ninth-grade fiend... From what I remember, Xue Xue was just a seventh-grade fiend when I first met it. How did it become so strong all of a sudden?*

It should be noted that a fiend's grade was decided at birth, and extremely few of them could raise their grades with repeated breakthroughs. These were the fiends that had extremely strong bloodlines.

Even if Xue Xue has the potential, it's somewhat impossible for it to reach this level in such a short time. Chu Liuyue rubbed her chin, her eyes narrowing slightly. *Did it... deliberately hide its true power, or perhaps it hasn't even unleashed all of its power yet?!*

Rong Xiu smiled and nodded right then. "That's right. I guess I should be considered worthy of Yue'er in this aspect."

...

Dead silence ensued as everyone present stared dumbly at Rong Xiu, pondering the meaning of his words. It was well-known throughout the entire Tianling Dynasty that Chu Liuyue had returned to Xi Ling with a legendary fiend—a red-tailed phoenix—and ascended the throne after experiencing a great ordeal. Hence, they wondered if he meant that his fiend was also a legendary fiend.

Unable to hold back his burning curiosity any longer, Shangguan You turned to his daughter and asked, “Yue’er... I-is that white lion also... a legendary fiend? Why didn’t you mention it before?” *This would’ve earned Rong Xiu a lot of brownie points since Yue’er is the only person in the Tianling Dynasty to own a legendary fiend!*

But Chu Liuyue was utterly speechless herself, for she had no idea either.

Shangguan You’s eyes were fixed on Rong Xiu as he stroked his beard, so he didn’t notice his daughter’s expression. “When have the princes of Country Yao Chen become so capable? No wonder he was so confident in himself!”

Chu Liuyue couldn’t answer the question, and she was, in fact, more curious than her father himself. Countless images flooded her mind all of a sudden. *I just thought that Xue Xue was smart and adorable, and it has never crossed my mind that it might be a legendary fiend. Most importantly, I’ve never heard of a white lion being a legendary fiend... Rong Xiu has never mentioned it to me before!*

Her heart thumped hard just then. *If Xue Xue is so strong, then what more of Rong Xiu?!*

...

Never did Zhao Zicheng ever imagine that Rong Xiu could summon a legendary fiend so easily, and it showed on his face, seeing how he was staring at Xue Xue incredulously. *What sort of person can make a legendary fiend become their contracted fiend? Isn't he just an ordinary prince from a lesser empire? Then, how did this legendary fiend come about?!*

Unease started to creep in. However, as there was no way they could stop the competition since they had placed their bets and were still in the middle of it, Zhao Zicheng forced himself to calm down and adjust his breathing before he started constructing another Xuan formation.

I previously thought that I could easily win against Rong Xiu with just a random move, so I didn't give it my best shot. But now, it's time for me to get serious.

...

Just as Zhao Zicheng began constructing his second Xuan formation, a few people suddenly flew in from outside. "Your Majesties!"

Chu Liuyue and Shangguan You turned their heads at the same time, only to see Elder Chen Ke and the rest of the elders heading their way.

Elder Chen Ke—who was the person to land—swiftly walked over to their side and asked nervously, "What's going on, Your Majesties? Why was there such a huge commotion just now?"

Things were still pretty tense after what happened at the palace a few days ago, so the elders thought that something had happened again when they heard the commotion over on this side. However, Elder

Chen Ke and the others soon realized that nothing seemed unusual over here after quickly surveying their surroundings. All they saw was the two people on the training ground.

“It’s no big deal. These two chaps are just dueling.” Shangguan You waved his hand to indicate to them that they didn’t need to worry.

It was only then that Elder Chen Ke and the rest heaved a sigh of relief, although they were all taken aback again when they saw the two young men’s faces. *W-what’s going on? That’s Zhao Zicheng. Based on his aura, it appears that he was the one responsible for that commotion. Who’s the man in white though?*

They wanted to ask about it, but they kept their silence and looked over at the training ground instead when they sensed that the atmosphere wasn’t right.

Zhao Zicheng had just finished constructing his second Xuan formation, and it was clearly much stronger and more powerful than the previous one. He took in a deep breath and then sent out the Xuan formation with all his might. “Sun Formation!”

Chapter 920: Do You Admit Defeat?

Like a brilliant sun slowly rising, light gathered above the Xuan formation and shot out from above. It was so blinding that everyone could hardly open their eyes. The temperature around them suddenly shot up, and the people who stood near Zhao Zicheng could almost feel a burning pain.

Looking solemn, Elder Chen Ke waved his hand in the air and cast a barrier around the training ground. There was a hint of shock in his eyes as he mumbled quietly to himself, “Are these two people bent on destroying this place?”

Although Yuan He Palace and its training ground were carefully built to withstand extremely strong force, one mustn't underestimate Zhao Zicheng's full-force attack as he is an eighth-grade Xuan Master now. Not to mention that he's joined by the man in white and the white lion. I might not know who that man is, but it's obvious that he's extremely powerful too, seeing how he easily dealt with Zhao Zicheng's Xuan formation. If these two fight for real...

Of course, they'd go all out. This matter concerns Yue'er after all. Shangguan You snorted when he heard what Elder Chen Ke said to himself. He was initially worried that Rong Xiu might not be a match for Zhao Zicheng and would embarrass his daughter if he lost the match, but he now realized that his worries were unfounded since the latter probably had some sort of tricks up his sleeves for him to be capable of contracting with a legendary fiend. *But the question is... How did a mere Seventh Prince of Country Yao Chen become so capable?*

...

Black scorch marks could be found on the ground, which was the result of the Xuan formation. It wasn't hard to imagine how terrifying it would be if the force had landed on a single person.

Zhao Zicheng's face turned somewhat pale as force gushed out of his body. The Sun Formation was an eighth-grade Xuan formation, as well as the highest level Xuan formation he could execute at the moment. In order to understand this Xuan formation fully, he spent three whole years studying it.

Even when dueling with others, he rarely executed this Xuan formation because the toll on his body would be extremely huge if he wanted to fully execute it at his current level. Regardless of whether he won or lost, there would be no more fight in him once he executed it. In other words, he had to win with this one move.

With much difficulty, he drew the last stroke of the formation and pushed it forward with all of his might. "Go!"

...

The dazzling Xuan formation speedily flew toward Rong Xiu, burning the ground in its trail. Even the air seemed to be burning up.

The distance between Rong Xiu and Zhao Zicheng wasn't wide in the first place, and the latter had used his full force in this strike. Thus, it took only a blink of an eye for the Xuan formation to reach five steps in front of the former.

Turbulent force intertwined above the Xuan formation and formed a squall. As the hem of Rong Xiu's clothes fluttered in the wind, one could see faint golden lines on his clothes, which were like a clear lake's sparkling reflection of a starry night.

It was at that moment Rong Xiu finally moved; he lifted his right hand and drew a light stroke in the air with his long and bony finger.

A silver light immediately appeared in front of him. Then, his finger moved again to draw another stroke, and the two strands of silver light moved to form a cross that was slightly bigger than a palm. It was nothing compared to the size of Zhao Zicheng's Xuan formation though.

"Isn't it too late for you to start constructing a Xuan formation?" said Zhao Zicheng as he stared closely at Rong Xiu. *He's too arrogant for his own good!*

Rong Xiu looked up with a smile. "I'm done."

"What?" asked Zhao Zicheng in confusion. *He completed his Xuan formation? Just that little cross? What kind of Xuan formation is this?! Even a stage-one Xuan Master won't call these two lines a Xuan formation! Why did he insist on competing in this aspect when he obviously has no knowledge about*

Xuan formations? Is it just for the sake of saving his face? But what's the use if he's going to lose anyway? A man with such poor abilities and character isn't worthy of standing next to Her Majesty!

Annoyance surged within Zhao Zicheng. "There are many ways for you to prove your abilities. Why do you have to—"

Before Zhao Zicheng could finish talking, he saw Rong Xiu push the cross forward.

From afar, the latter's Xuan formation looked like a fluttering butterfly, flying lightly in the air as it reached the front of the gigantic Xuan formation in no time. Then, it flew straight through the other Xuan formation.

Whoosh!

A soft rustling sound was heard, which made Zhao Zicheng stop talking. He looked at the scene in front of him in shock and disbelief. *D-did that cross just fly through my Xuan formation?! The Sun Formation can't be easily destroyed because it has abundant force. Not to mention that little thing—*

Just then, the gigantic, terrifying Xuan formation stopped three steps away from Rong Xiu. Its light quickly dimmed, and a thick layer of frost covered it.

A strong feeling of unease hit Zhao Zicheng. "No—"

Crack!

A clear and crisp cracking sound resounded throughout the training ground, followed by the shattering and disappearing of the Xuan formation.

...

“Cough!” The heavy blow made Zhao Zicheng jolt. He coughed up blood as he staggered backward, almost falling to the ground. The aura around him dissipated quickly, and he looked as if he was physically and mentally drained. The shock and horror in his eyes, however, revealed his current emotions.

“Y-you...” he said with much difficulty, only to taste the metallic blood in his mouth.

Aside from him, everyone present was just as incredulous. *D-did... Rong Xiu just defeat Zhao Zicheng with that cross Xuan formation?!*

The cross Xuan formation made a U-turn and flew back to Rong Xiu, who caught it easily with his fingers. The whole process was so simple that it seemed as if he had just thrown a dart.

It was deathly quiet as Rong Xiu—who was seemingly oblivious to the reactions of the people around them—looked at Zhao Zicheng calmly and asked, “Do you admit defeat?”

Zhao Zicheng’s heart trembled as he looked into those deep and cold phoenix eyes that seemed to conceal countless ripples of emotions. It was at that moment he finally admitted that Rong Xiu was indeed far stronger than him. While others might not know it, he distinctly felt an unbeatable pressure coming from the cross Xuan formation when his own Xuan formation was destroyed.

That was indeed a Xuan formation! If I'm not wrong, those strands of light contained higher levels of Xuan formations within them. It's just that Rong Xiu didn't fully execute them—the cross Xuan formation alone was more than enough to deal with me. Zhao Zicheng closed his eyes. "I... concede!"