

Keyboard Immortal

Chapter 7: Breakthrough

Translator: Pika

Zu An turned around, grabbed a chair, and sat down. "Let's begin. I only have one request – don't hit my face. I rely on my good looks to keep myself fed."

Chu Huanzhao ground her teeth in fury, but she didn't want her parents or her sister to find out about any of this, so she assented. "Fine. I won't hit your face." With a snap of her wrist, she sent the whip howling through the air. It struck him in the chest with a terrifying crack, ripping a gaping hole in his shirt and splattering blood everywhere.

Chu Huanzhao flashed a victorious smile... but it quickly froze, then curdled. The anticipated howl of agony never came, and there was not even a pained whimper. Zu An simply sat there, still and quiet. He did, however, have a peculiar look on his face.

As the whip struck, Zu An had felt no pain - instead, a wave of pleasure overcame him. He struggled to still his facial features and maintain his composure, but only partially succeeded. He felt like a man lost in a desert taking a bite out of a juicy, frozen watermelon, or a scholar who had placed first in the imperial exams. He felt such rapture that he almost moaned in pleasure.

However, he willed himself to silence, knowing that there could be others about. He didn't want word to spread that he was some sort of masochist.

"Huh?!" Chu Huanzhao stared at him with wide-eyed shock. She had not predicted this. He must be forcing himself to remain silent and pretending indifference. Yeah. That's gotta be it! The last time I hit him, he bawled like a baby. He's probably clamping his jaws shut for the sake of this wager!

Clenching her teeth, Chu Huanzhao struck a second time. She knew better than anyone else just how terrifying the Wailing Whip was. Someone with incredible willpower could probably endure one strike, but not a second.

The whip drew a second gash across Zu An's chest, marking him with a huge and bloody 'X'. Chu Huanzhao stared at him eagerly. Let's see if you scream this time.

"Hmm? Mmm..." Zu An struggled to hold in his moaning, but he had reached his limit. He almost blushed at the amount of pleasure he felt. A whole new world of sensations had opened up for him.

Chu Huanzhao felt her hairs stand on end. Everything that had happened today was the complete opposite of what she had expected. She took some time to consider, then decided to strike a different part of him. Maybe his chest is already completely numb from his injuries.

Taking a deep breath, she slashed her whip against his leg. Alas, she was let down once again. Although his face was twisted by what must have been sheer agony, not even a whimper escaped his lips.

"I... win, right?" Zu An noticed that the first rune formation glowed golden, and the second one was almost half-full. Seems like this little brat really went all out in whacking me.

"This isn't possible!" Chu Huanzhao's eyes widened further. She stared at the whip in her hand, bewildered. Is my whip broken?

She contemplated for a while, then walked over to Zu An and handed the whip to him. "Hit me with it and see what happens."

Zu An was instantly wary. "Are you serious?"

"Stop jabbering and hit me! Just remember, don't hit me in the face." Chu Huanzhao gave him a disparaging look, her nose stuck haughtily in the air. She closed her eyes, her lashes quivering.

Zu An sighed as he studied her perfectly smooth, pale, oval-shaped face. The women of the Chu clan are all weirdos, but I have to admit, they have good genes.

There was no way he was going to hit her face. It wasn't because he was a feminist; rather, he was worried about what the Chu clan would do to him once they found out.

He chuckled softly. "I swear, all my life I've never heard of someone making a request like this. I promise to satisfy you." This little wench hit me hard as hell. Time to give her a taste of her own medicine.

He lashed out viciously with the whip. Unfortunately, his body was terribly weak. Despite his pain being converted into pleasure, the real damage to his body had not been diminished. It was a minor miracle that he was still alive. As such, there was no real power behind his strike.

His blow was soft and weak, but as soon as it connected, Chu Huanzhao shrieked, clutching the tiny wound it had made, her face contorted in pain. "That hurts!!"

Zu An watched as tears streamed down her face. For the first time, he rejoiced in having drawn the Ball of Delights as his prize.

"You bastard! Why'd you hit so hard?!" Chu Huanzhao nursed the wound with one hand and scrubbed her face furiously with the other.

Zu An was struck dumb. "You clearly hit me way harder just now."

"Then why didn't you scream?" Chu Huanzhao stared at him curiously. She was very aware that his blow only held a fraction of the force that she had used.

Zu An coughed lightly, then said with a straight face, "A real man will never scream in pain." Sometimes, you gotta fake it until you make it.

Chu Huanzhao blinked, then nodded uncertainly. "I-it looks like I underestimated you. Fine. You win. I won't blame you for killing Bootlicker."

She turned to take her leave. She had to find her maidservant quickly to poultice her wound. I hope it doesn't leave a scar.

However, Zu An stopped her with an expectant look on his face.

"Don't leave yet," he implored. "Whip me a few more times."

It was Chu Huanzhao's turn to be struck speechless. She could not believe what she had just heard.

"Ahem-hem-hem!" Zu An realised how masochistic that statement made him seem, and hurried to correct himself. "That's not what I meant! I meant to say, let's make another wager."

His second rune formation was nearly full. How could he pass on such a wonderful opportunity? Besides, his Ball of Delights would still be active for a while longer, and it would be a shame to let it go to waste.

"What's the wager?" Chu Huanzhao replied without thinking.

Zu An said, "Same as before. If I win, you are no longer allowed to take me to task for climbing into your bed last night. If you win, um... right. I'll... I'll lick your shoes."

Although there was much about this world that was foreign to him, he was fairly certain that a groom climbing into his sister-in-law's bed on his wedding night was probably an unforgivable offense. If his sister-in-law was willing to drop the matter, his life in the Chu clan would improve immeasurably.

Unexpectedly, Chu Huanzhao's flushed a bright scarlet. "Why are you so fixated on licking my shoes?! You pervert! I'm gonna go tell my sister!"

Zu An was in disbelief. You were the one who came up with this perverted bet in the first place!

“Fine! I accept your wager!” Chu Huanzhao rubbed her hands together in anticipation. She was just like any other gambler; she didn’t understand how or why she had just lost, but she was determined to win the next round.

“Then please whip me!” Zu An intoned heroically.

Three lashes ensued. Chu Huanzhao stood open-mouthed. The man had collapsed to the ground, unmoving, but he hadn’t let out a single peep. “Doesn’t that hurt?”

“Of course it hurts! But a real man never cries out in pain!” Zu An sensed that his third rune formation was half-full. He would have danced with joy, but he did not want to set off her suspicions.

Chu Huanzhao fell silent. This is the most courageous man I’ve ever seen in my life. He’s clearly pathetically weak, but he has such amazing willpower! She had encountered many mighty figures whose strength far outstripped Zu An’s, but none of them had been able to endure more than two strikes from her whip.

“Would you like to make a third wager?” Zu An probed.

Chu Huanzhao narrowed her eyes. “Do you... have some sort of special fetish?”

“Of course not!” Zu An protested innocently. Oh hell no. I refuse to end up saddled with that type of reputation. “I just want to make you lick my shoes.”

“In your dreams! No deal!” The old Chu Huanzhao would have agreed in a heartbeat, but having lost twice in a row - to someone she had thought would have no chance of winning at that! - she was feeling a bit antsy.

Zu An had expected her to turn down this third wager, and so, he proposed new terms. “Then if I win, you have to respectfully address me as ‘brother-in-law’ every time you see me. Deal?”

Chu Huanzhao took her time to consider the odds. The man was her brother-in-law to begin with, so it would be no big deal even if she lost. She nodded. “Deal!”

A new contest began! After the first lash, Zu An could not contain himself any further, and quivered as he let out a low moan. It wasn’t a moan of pain, but one of sensual arousal.

“I knew you were a pervert! I’m done here!” Chu Huanzhao’s face was beet-red. She stamped her feet angrily before picking up Bootlicker’s corpse and fleeing the scene.

“Hey, what about the two remaining hits!” Zu An called out desperately, but Chu Huanzhao disappeared into the night like a terrified little rabbit.

Jeez. She’s no fun. Zu An grumbled to himself. Thankfully, the third rune formation was close to full. He struck out with a fist to test out his newfound strength.

“You actually reached the third step of the second rank? And you’re almost at the pinnacle of the third step, at that!” A voice called out, and a figure walked into the room. This was none but Old Mi.

Was he hiding nearby and watching this entire time?! Zu An felt a surge of anger, but he didn’t let it show. Instead he asked, “What do you mean, ‘third step of the second rank’?”

Old Mi explained, “Previously, I explained the nine ranks to you. At the second rank, you temper your skin. From the second rank onwards, there are nine small steps between successive ranks. Kid, in just two short hours you actually managed to reach the third step of the second rank! That’s intriguing. It takes an ordinary person months - or even years! - to draw in enough to reach the first rank, let alone the second rank. You, a lower Ding class talent, actually managed to reach the third step of the second rank in mere hours. The secret manual I gave you might be formidable, but it shouldn’t have allowed you to gain strength that quickly.”

Zu An quickly deduced what had happened. After he had absorbed the secret manual, the F2 button had carved all nine formations onto his skin. This allowed him to skip the most difficult part of the process, which was drawing enough ki into the body, and start from the second rank. He had already filled up two formations and was almost done with the third, which placed him on the third step of the second rank.

He racked his brains for a plausible explanation to offer Old Mi. Cowardice was the only true way of survival, after all! He was still very weak at the moment. If he demonstrated a ridiculous amount of talent, others might grow jealous and attempt to take his life.

Old Mi’s muttering interrupted his musings. “It seems the Wailing Whip truly is a formidable weapon. Not only that, your resistance against the pain must have somehow amplified its effectiveness. The unique technique of this secret manual was undoubtedly the catalyst, causing you to experience these incredible results.” Should I try this in the future too?

Hearing Old Mi’s piece together the truth on his own accord, Zu An no longer saw the need to concoct an excuse anymore. He was just about to ask what powers his new level unlocked when a wave of pain crashed into him. He howled.