

Little Girl 231

Chapter 231: Who Will the Flower Fall To

As soon as the results of the Written Examination were announced, the names of the Low-grade and Middle candidates filled several large sheets, and the anxiously waiting examinees swarmed forward in droves.

Little Xinzhuo wanted to squeeze forward to have a look but was pulled back by Xin Lin.

"Confidence, what about the confidence we agreed on? Sister has told you many times, with your literary grace, a top three finish is assured."

Xin Lin was supremely confident.

Equally unmoved and standing to one side were Murong Ziyue, Jin Chen, and others.

Jin Chen and his group of dandies were all children of officials and scholars, very confident in their own learning.

Snort—

Chu Miaoyun couldn't help but cover her mouth and giggle upon hearing Xin Lin's words.

"Low-grade people will be low-grade people. I see some are destined for a life of low-grade status, condemned to become foot washing maids."

Chu Miaoyun disliked Xin Lin's face, although young, she was very pretty and flirtatious, which as a woman, made her grit her teeth in annoyance.

"Young Master, your and Miss Miao Yun's names are not on the list."

Jin Chen's guard had finished checking the posted results and squeezed over.

Jin Chen and Chu Miaoyun both wore expressions of triumph.

"However, I also did not see the name of that foot washing maid and her poverty-stricken brother, nor Murong Ziyue's,"

the guard whispered.

"All three are missing?"

Jin Chen's expression changed.

What the hell is going on, do these paupers truly understand the difference between Martial Artists and Spiritual Practitioners?

"Young Master Jin, no need to worry, even if they are Upper-class, they're just hangers-on at best,"

Chu Miaoyun pursed her lips and chuckled, full of disdain.

In the midst of the conversation, Captain Yang began to announce the "Upper-class" names of the Written Examination.

There were over two hundred people with "Upper-class" results in the Written Examination. Although there were no specific rankings, they were announced from the back to the front according to order.

"Chu Miaoyun."

Upon Captain Yang's announcement, the first name was "Chu Miaoyun."

Chu Miaoyun's face instantly changed.

"Pfft, so it seems there is someone else who's the tail ender."

Little Xinzhuo sneered, deliberately speaking out loud.

Making her Sister the tail ender was what she deserved.

"Little brat, one more word and I'll tear your mouth to pieces,"

Chu Miaoyun couldn't hold her face anymore.

The damn examiners are truly blind, to let her be the tail ender.

Chu Miaoyun's face was full of gloom.

"Miss Miao Yun, don't get angry. After I defeat that foot washing maid, I'll buy her brother as well, and after I'm tired of him, you can have them both to order around,"

Jin Chen said with self-satisfaction.

"Heh~ Young Master Jin talks big. Just hope you won't regret your words later,"

Xin Lin sneered.

Captain Yang kept announcing more names one after another.

"General, the top three are..."

General Zuo stood with his hands behind his back in a corner of North Square.

The reactions of the examinees earlier were all under General Zuo's observation, and one of the examiners stood by his ear, whispering.

"Oh?"

After learning the results, General Zuo couldn't help but look over at Xin Lin and her brother a few more times.

"This result seems somewhat unfair. Besides Murong Ziyue for the top three..."

The examiner shook his head and sighed.

"Not necessarily. Let's not talk about the Empress's maneuver; as for Xin Lin, she is quite interesting. Who today still remembers the Emperor's words, 'Upon a narrow path, the brave meets no opposition'? Such bravery."

General Zuo stroked his beard.

The Seventh Prince also turned out to be more outstanding than he had thought, yet it remains to be seen how the Seventh Prince will perform in the Martial Arts Examination.

General Zuo was not very interested in this session of the Zixiao Palace Exam, but after seeing today's events, his interest had been piqued.

Chapter 232: The Foot Washing Maid's Counterattack

In the blink of an eye, the results of the Written Examination were mostly out.

Most of Jin Chen's companions had their results released, except for Chu Miaoyun's lagging behind, the others were mostly ranked around the top hundred in "Upper-class" scores.

It was apparent that for these children of official families, the Written Examination still gave them a considerable advantage.

Soon, only the last few names on a page were left.

Jin Chen's expression had turned from initial ease to unsightliness.

It was already around the top ten, yet the names of the impoverished siblings and Murong Ziyue still hadn't appeared.

Jin Chen had begun to break out in cold sweat, and the Golden Silk Robe he wore felt unbearably heavy.

Until the fourth name.

"Xin..."

Captain Yang moved his lips, releasing a word.

Jin Chen's eyes brightened, and his mouth curled into a smile.

"Haha, Young Master Jin has always said, how could I possibly lose to a foot washing maid."

"Xin Zhuo."

Captain Yang, calm and composed, announced Xin Zhuo's name.

Fourth place?

Little Xinzhuo's face fell.

"Ah Zhuo, it's okay, you've done very well."

Xin Lin patted Little Xinzhuo's head, comforting him.

If it weren't for her insisting that Little Xinzhuo use his left hand to write, his score might have been even better, but only in this way could they avoid Empress Feng's surveillance.

"That's right, at least I'm not dead last, huh."

Little Xinzhuo lifted his head, declaring loudly.

Beside him, Chu Miaoyun's face looked as unpleasant as the bottom of a pot.

Xin Lin couldn't help but laugh, their Ah Zhuo was more and more inheriting her true legacy.

"Don't get cocky, Young Master Jin will deal with you later."

Chu Miaoyun wished she could tear the siblings' mouths apart, but with the Imperial Guards present, she couldn't be too reckless, especially since she still needed to maintain her image as a lady from an upper-class family.

Now that the fourth place had been announced, what remained was the top three of the Written Examination.

All the candidates' eyes were fixed on Murong Ziyue, Xin Lin, and Jin Chen.

Jin Chen puffed out his chest; he believed his answers were quite good, more than sufficient to claim first place.

"Jin Chen."

Yet in the next moment, Jin Chen's body shook.

He almost thought he had misheard.

"How could this be, how could I only be third?"

Jin Chen exclaimed furiously.

"Jin Chen, are you questioning the examiner's judgment?"

Captain Yang glanced at Jin Chen.

Jin Chen choked, unable to utter another word.

"Xin Lin."

"Murong Ziyue."

"That concludes the results of the Written Examination, those who passed please come to the North Square early tomorrow morning for the Martial Arts Examination."

Captain Yang, too indifferent to care further, announced the final results to everyone and was about to return to report.

"Hold on! There's something wrong with this list, why should they rank above me? Someone saw very clearly, she answered only one sentence on the paper 'In a narrow path, the brave triumphs, unrelated to whether they are Spirit or Martial Artists.' Such an answer, and she gets second place? Let everyone say, what qualifications does she have to be second?"

Jin Chen took a step forward like an arrow, snatching the list from Captain Yang's hand.

Murong Ziyue aside, the answer paper from that foot washing maid called Xin Lin couldn't possibly be more brilliant than his.

As Jin Chen spoke out, there was an uproar among the crowd.

What kind of answer was that?

"Outrageous, there's a scandal in the Written Examination, Xin Lin must have some backing, otherwise how could she take second."

"Exactly, despite looking like a poor wretch, she knows how to play dirty tricks."

"It's unfair, the results should be nullified."

The candidates started clamoring.

The scene outside the North Square immediately became noisy, with the candidates filled with righteous indignation.

Captain Yang, for a moment, didn't know what to do.

"Indeed, I do have a great backer."

Just then, a crisp and pleasant voice, like thunder falling from the sky, silenced everyone.

Chapter 233: Unconvinced

The voice was soft, yet it clearly fell into everyone's ears.

The exam candidates turned their heads in unison, looking toward the source of the voice, only to see Xin Lin with an indifferent face, meeting the angry gazes of the crowd.

"She admitted it, truly shameless."

"Quick, report this matter to the examiner, cancel her score."

"I knew it, how could my score be worse than a foot washing maid's?"

Many candidates spoke with a sour tone.

Little Xinzhuo became anxious, hastily explaining.

"Don't talk nonsense, my Sister is not that kind of person."

Little Xinzhuo would stake his life to assure that Sister had no backer; they had just arrived in Purple Cloud City and aside from Ma Jingtian and the Water Wraith Gang, they barely knew anyone.

"Kid, get lost, you got fourth place, your score is also questionable."

"Birds of a feather flock together, they should cancel this little guy's score as well."

"Canceling the score is not enough, this harmful character should have his Imperial Examination eligibility revoked."

The dandy followers behind Jin Chen took the opportunity to make a ruckus, many candidates became excited, even wanting to push forward and jostle Xin Lin and her brother,

"Xin Lin and her brother are not that kind of people."

Murong Ziyue, who had been silent beside them, stepped forward to stand in front of the siblings. She was not someone who spoke much, but with one sweep of her gaze, she possessed an intimidating force, and for a moment, no one came forward.

"Murong Ziyue, you better not meddle in idle matters. She herself admitted it, she has a backer, her score in the Written Examination cannot count. Does she, with that nonsensical answer, also deserve an 'Upper-class' grade?"

Jin Chen scoffed.

He could lose to anyone, but he would not lose to her.

"Ziyue, thank you for standing up for me, but one should bear the consequences of their own actions. Indeed, I only wrote a single sentence, but that sentence has already explained everything. If you don't believe it, you can ask any examiner or even the Empress who set the question to see what they think of my answer."

Xin Lin smiled.

"Nonsense, who do you think you are, a Low-grade person, even thinking of meeting the Empress."

Jin Chen said disdainfully.

"What are you all clamoring about? Captain Yang, since the results have already been issued, why have these candidates not dispersed?"

A white-haired, crane-maned examiner emerged.

He was also one of the chief examiners this time, and he had heard the quarrel outside.

"Grandmaster, these candidates have objections to the results of the Written Examination and are unwilling to disperse."

Captain Yang reported truthfully.

"Grandmaster, Xin Lin answered haphazardly and yet achieved second place in the Written Examination. We do not accept this."

Jin Chen stepped forward, slanting his gaze at Xin Lin.

This Grandmaster was notoriously old-school within the court, and even Grandmaster Jin might not be able to sway him. As soon as he spoke up, Xin Lin's score today would surely be nullified.

"There is no issue with Xin Lin's test paper. Her answer is from the Emperor's own hand. Are you challenging the Emperor's words? You are all young talents of Longteng, instead of scheming against each other here, you would do well to read more. Not even having heard of the Emperor's words, you still claim to be scholars well-versed in holy texts," the Grandmaster said with irritation and a stern look in his old eyes.

This time, it was Jin Chen who was taken aback.

"You wretched girl, shut your mouth! Grandmaster, I still do not accept it. Even if it were words from the Emperor, my answer in the Written Examination also quoted teachings from the current Emperor and the previous Emperor. Why then did I only achieve third place?"

Jin Chen was not yet discouraged; he couldn't understand where his own paper fell short.

Both being Emperors, why were the Emperor's words considered superior?

Chapter 234: Face-Slapping Galore

Jin Chen's question, however, stumped the chief examiner.

The countless examination papers, reviewed repeatedly by a hundred examiners, led to endless disputes in the end.

Especially for this examination, involving a contest between Spirit Warriors, this old dignitary was a thoroughbred civil servant.

He was a veteran minister from the Emperor's era, naturally holding the Emperor in the highest esteem, thus more biased towards Xin Lin.

However, when it really came down to the details, the old dignitary couldn't quite articulate a clear reason.

"Jin Chen, are you not convinced? Fine, I'll let you understand why you only deserve third place. Do you want to know why your answer only merits third?"

Xin Lin did not say much; she turned to Captain Yang and requested a set of brushes, ink, paper, and inkstone.

Then, with the swish of her brush, three sets of examination papers appeared in front of her after a quarter of an hour.

"Ah Zhuo, read the answers aloud for everyone to hear."

Xin Lin said with a cold sneer.

Little Xinzhuo leaned in to take a close look and couldn't help but exclaim softly.

"Sister, how did you know the answers we three wrote?"

What Xin Lin had written down were indeed the examination answers of Murong Ziyue, Little Xinzhuo, and Jin Chen.

The three sets of papers were copied without missing a single word, all transcribed by Xin Lin.

Jin Chen thought someone had peeked at Xin Lin's paper, not knowing that Xin Lin had also memorized the answers of the three before submitting her own.

"My lord, please take a look and verify that these three sets of examination papers belong to them."

Xin Lin bowed to the chief examiner.

The chief examiner stepped forward to inspect and nodded in affirmation.

Only then did Little Xinzhuo begin to recite the answers of the three.

After the reading, the examinees present were once again in an uproar.

Murong Ziyue turned her head to glance at Little Xinzhuo, a look of intense admiration in her eyes.

At such a young age, to have such knowledge and insight, Little Xinzhuo's fourth place indeed seemed undeserved.

Jin Chen grunted unhappily.

"Foot washing maid, what exactly are you getting at? My paper is in no way inferior to Murong Ziyue or Xinzhuo, doesn't this prove even more that the Written Examination was unfair?"

Jin Chen was very confident in his own paper.

In Murong Ziyue's answers, starting from her own perspective, she stated that in a battle between martial artists and Spiritual Practitioners, the martial artists would win, concise and incisive.

In Little Xinzhuo's paper, with extensive references, he demonstrated through data that the Spiritual Practitioners would win, which was also quite dazzling.

Jin Chen's paper also believed that the army of Spiritual Practitioners would be victorious.

Little Xinzhuo, due to handwriting reasons, was nitpicked by Empress Feng, thus only managing to secure fourth place.

Jin Chen, with his illustrious family background and elegant seal script, attained third place.

In Jin Chen's view, his paper was in no way inferior to Murong Ziyue's.

Why should Murong Ziyue be awarded first place?

"Exactly, Young Master Jin's paper is outstanding. I think those with backers have someone else to rely on."

Chu Miaoyun remarked sarcastically from the side.

Chu Miaoyun disliked Xin Lin, and equally disdained Murong Ziyue.

This Murong Ziyue, it's unknown where she emerged from; in this Imperial Examination, she, Chu Miaoyun, should have been the most distinguished. Instead, she found herself eclipsed by the sudden rise of Xin Lin and Murong Ziyue, how could Chu Miaoyun be content with that.

"The tail-end Charlie is still the tail-end Charlie, short-sighted. Let me ask you, in the cultivation of martial artists and Spiritual Practitioners, what is the most important thing?"

Xin Lin mocked with a cold smile.

Were she the examiner, she would definitely score Jin Chen a level lower than Ziyue and Little Xinzhuo.

Chu Miaoyun's face turned pale with anger from Xin Lin's retort.

"Who are you calling tail-end Charlie? In the cultivation of martial artists and Spiritual Practitioners, the most important thing is naturally talent. The stronger the talent, the swifter the cultivation."

Chapter 235: First Encounter with Empress Feng

Such a simple question, every cultivator in Longteng Country would know.

As Chu Miaoyun finished speaking, her face was full of arrogance.

"If cultivation only depended on talent, then why, back in the day, did the Emperor become the Emperor, while the Chu ancestor only became a General?"

Xin Lin gave a half-smile as she looked at Chu Miaoyun.

Chu Miaoyun's face changed color yet again.

The Emperor and Chu ancestor Xin Lin spoke of were indeed the two who founded Longteng, the ancestors of Emperor Longteng and Chu Beiqing, respectively.

In terms of raw talent, the Chu ancestor was in fact more gifted.

Yet in the end, it was the ancestor of Longteng who became the Emperor, reportedly because the Chu ancestor did not crave power and conceded the throne willingly.

There was also a rumor among the common folk that even in the region, the talent of Emperor Longteng paled in comparison to that of Chu Beiqing. It was only a pity that Chu Beiqing turned into an idiot, making all discussions of talent a moot point.

Xin Lin had occasionally come across mentions of Longteng's past in the Mystical Medicine Book, which she took note of while browsing through it. She had not anticipated them being of use today.

"Then do tell, what is more important than talent?"

Chu Miaoyun was asked until her face turned red and her ears became hot.

"Talent is certainly important, but what matters more is willpower, which is the heart of cultivation. Be it a Martial Artist or a Spiritual Practitioner, one should possess an unshakeable will. As a Martial Artist, one should hold the conviction that Martial Artists are the strongest. As a Spiritual Practitioner, one should firmly believe that the path of the Spiritual Practitioner should never waver. This is something Murong Ziyue has accomplished, Little Xinzhuo has accomplished. But how about Young Master Jin?"

Xin Lin shifted the focus of her words and her gaze fell on Jin Chen.

Swish, swish, swish, the examiners' eyes turned toward Jin Chen's examination paper.

As a Xuanwu Practitioner, Jin Chen's exam responses were more akin to that of a Spiritual Practitioner.

For a moment, Jin Chen was dumbfounded and did not know how to retaliate.

"Let me guess why Young Master Jin believes Spiritual Practitioners are superior. It must be because Grandmaster Jin is a Spiritual Practitioner. The phrase 'like father, like son' comes to mind. Young Master Jin, I fear, has always lived in the shadow of Grandmaster Jin, lacking confidence in himself."

Xin Lin looked at Jin Chen with a smile brimming in her eyes.

Jin Chen's face turned even paler.

How could it be? How could this lowly foot washing maid see through his thoughts?

He had always admired his father and aspired to be a Spiritual Practitioner, but became a Martial Artist due to lack of suitable talent.

"Though this is a Written Examination, the Zixiao Palace Exam is assessing the heart of cultivation. How could such an answer sheet even be considered for the top three rankings?"

Xin Lin scoffed coldly.

The surrounding candidates also began to murmur among themselves.

Moments before, they had questioned Xin Lin's score, but after her analysis, their looks towards Jin Chen started to carry disdain.

Even the presiding examiner and Captain Yang, upon hearing her words, felt as if receiving sudden enlightenment.

Jin Chen was extremely anxious, wishing there was a hole for him to crawl into.

His eyes reddened with anger as he glared death at Xin Lin.

"So, are you objecting to the judgment of this Palace?"

Then, a fragrance wafted by, and an alluring figure approached, surrounded by a retinue in court attire, arriving with graceful steps.

The visitor had long hair that cascaded like a waterfall, and wore a loosely pinned white jade hairpin on her updo. Her sweeping court dress was embroidered with clusters of peony patterns in soft pink tones, and her lips were red against her jade-like skin; she was a beauty that made it impossible to look away.

Upon seeing the newcomer, Jin Chen's angry expression immediately vanished.

"Your Majesty the Empress, long live the Empress, long may you reign."

The presence of Empress Feng took all the candidates by surprise.

Xin Lin too felt her heart sink; she had not anticipated that the Empress herself would come to the examination hall, and it seemed her earlier words had reached Empress Feng's ears.

Chapter 236: Empress, You Are Absolutely Right!

Empress Feng's presence graced the scene, her elegance captivating the soul.

Thousands of people stood in North Square, suddenly silent, each and every one bowing in salute.

When in Rome, do as Romans do; Xin Lin had no choice but to slightly lower her body, performing an obeisance.

"There is no need for undue ceremony. I have come uninvited today to see this year's candidates for the Zixiao Palace Exam," said Empress Feng, her voice delightful to the ear, reminiscent of the songs of orioles.

It was as if she had forgotten Xin Lin's earlier offensive remarks, her gaze warm and sweeping around.

Empress Feng's actions made Xin Lin break out in a cold sweat.

She thought that once the Written Examination was over, Little Xinzhuo would have narrowly escaped disaster, not expecting Empress Feng to stoop to visit the examination venue herself.

When Empress Feng's gaze lingered on Little Xinzhuo for a moment, it was sharp, making Little Xinzhuo feel uneasy, fearing his true identity would be recognized.

But recalling his sister's usual teachings, Little Xinzhuo silently encouraged himself.

"I'm a brave little man. I cannot be a coward!"

He straightened his little frame, boldly meeting Empress Feng's gaze.

Xin Zhuo's behavior instead dissipated any doubts Empress Feng might have harbored.

Empress Feng had come personally only because she had been suspecting that the Seventh Prince might also be mingling among the candidates. But with nearly a hundred boys aged six or seven present, it was indeed a challenge to discern which one was the Sixth Prince.

After scanning the crowd, Empress Feng's gaze returned to Xin Lin.

While viewing Xin Lin's examination papers, Empress Feng had become curious about this particular candidate.

She had expected the candidate who had written such an answer to be quite the individual — not expecting to see a nearly-grown girl, with a tender and endearing appearance. Only those eyes...

Xin Lin's eyes were black and large. At a glance, they sparkled brilliantly, truly outstanding.

Among the candidates who saw Empress Feng, there were usually two reactions — one was amazement, and the other was fear.

Yet this little girl, who looked about seven or eight, exhibited not the slightest hint of an unusual expression in her eyes, which was exceedingly peculiar.

"Empress, it's good that you're here. Someone just questioned the validity of my score. I request the Empress to uphold justice for me," stepped forward Jin Chen to lodge his complaint.

"Oh? Who dares question my judgment?" Empress Feng began to inquire, but just then, the eyes of the young girl in front of her changed suddenly.

"The Empress is truly beautiful. Beauty represents justice; who would dare say the Empress is wrong," she puffed out her cheeks, hands on hips, in a manner as if she were about to reprimand someone.

Jin Chen was taken aback.

It was you, Xin Lin, who has been questioning me all this time.

Now that the Empress herself is here, you've turned timid.

Empress Feng raised an eyebrow.

She had thought this sharp-tongued little girl had some spirit, but it turned out, a mere scare was enough to frighten her.

It seems I have been mistaken; how could a half-grown girl harbor such deep schemes?

Empress Feng's gaze softened slightly.

The chief invigilator and Captain Yang also came back to their senses.

"The Empress is right."

"Indeed, who would dare question what the Empress says?"

"Young Master Jin's third place is rightfully earned."

"The Empress is wise."

The surrounding candidates also echoed in quick agreement, switching sides immediately.

"Exactly! That's why Young Master Jin is third in the Written Examination!" exclaimed Xin Lin loudly.

"Correct, third place indeed."

"Third place, that's for sure."

Even Jin Chen himself subconsciously felt that it was normal for him to have achieved third place.

Wait a minute!

Jin Chenmeng snapped back to reality.

He was clearly questioning Murong Ziyue and Xin Lin's scores; how had it suddenly become about him only deserving third place?

He had been tricked!

Chapter 237: Forced to Grow Up

"Xin Lin, who are you saying is third!"

"Isn't it Young Master Jin? Or are you questioning the Empress's words? Jin Chen, you've got quite the nerve!"

Xin Lin scolded.

"I..."

Jin Chen's face looked even uglier than if he were crying.

He glanced at Empress Feng, whose lips twitched slightly.

Such a clever and articulate girl, she had also been drawn into the argument.

With thousands of eyes watching, could Empress Feng still say "no" at this time?

"Thank you, Empress, for upholding justice for this junior."

Jin Chen sulked and unwillingly accepted his third-place ranking.

"If that's the case, then the results of today's Written Examination are..."

The chief examiner also wiped the cold sweat from his forehead.

This year's examinees were too much to handle, almost breaking his old bones.

"Wait, Empress Feng, I, Murong Ziyue, am unclear about something."

Just when everyone thought the matter had been settled, Murong Ziyue, who had been silent at the sidelines, stepped forward.

"So you are Murong Ziyue. This palace remembers, you are the number one in the Written Examination this time. How could it be that you have objections to your own results?"

Empress Feng spoke with a pleasant and friendly tone, very much like the Mother of the Country.

"Ziyue has no objections to her own results. Ziyue merely wishes to ask why Xin Zhuo's results are worse than Jin Chen's. His answer sheet was clearly far better than Jin Chen's."

As Murong Ziyue spoke, a change flickered through Empress Feng's eyes.

The chief examiner and Captain Yang also inwardly felt this was bad news.

"Big sister Ziyue."

Little Xinzhuo was also panic-stricken, never expecting the seemingly cold Murong Ziyue to stand up for him.

A realization flashed through Xin Lin's eyes.

Murong Ziyue, you really didn't let me down.

"Murong Ziyue! How dare you! You have the audacity to disrespect your betters!"

Jin Chen's face turned green with rage. Already begrudging his forced rank of third, was Murong Ziyue implying he didn't even deserve that?

"The question is good. This palace made this judgment for a reason. Xin Zhuo's answer sheet was not vastly different from Jin Chen's, but his sloppy handwriting is an affront to scholarship."

Empress Feng's red lips curved, revealing a captivating smile.

Little Xinzhuo's face turned red with frustration.

"Do you still have objections?"

Empress Feng asked in return.

"I..."

Murong Ziyue wanted to argue further, but behind her, a small hand reached out and took hold of hers.

"Big sister Ziyue, thank you for speaking up for me. Ah Zhuo is willing to accept fourth place."

Little Xinzhuo spoke out loud.

"Thank you, Empress, Xin Zhuo will surely practice his handwriting diligently and will not let down the Empress's teachings."

After saying this, he bowed to Empress Feng.

Just a cowardly boy, that's all.

Both Empress Feng and Jin Chen's eyes flickered with disdain.

Yet they were unaware that in Little Xinzhuo's downcast eyes, there was a hint of color that had never been there before.

"Ah Zhuo, remember, you will suffer some injustices during today's Written Examination. But only in this way can you save your life and your mother's life. A gentleman bides his time for revenge; it is not too late even after ten years. Until you are strong enough to compete with your enemies, you must bide your time and persevere."

After the Written Examination ended, the words of Xin Lin still echoed in Little Xinzhuo's ears.

He didn't understand until Empress Feng showed up, then Little Xinzhuo finally had an epiphany.

Sister, she was telling him to conceal his edge.

Murong Ziyue looked deeply at Little Xinzhuo, silently retreated back.

Behind her, Xin Lin watched Little Xinzhuo's small figure with an increasing sense of satisfaction in his eyes. Ah Zhuo was becoming more and more aware of the ways to survive in court.

Chapter 238: Beating Up a Bully

The words of Empress Feng were decisive—the final results of the Written Examination were announced.

Murong Ziyue came first, Xin Lin second, and Jin Chen third.

Although the results had been made public, due to what Xin Lin said earlier, the looks that the other candidates gave Jin Chen had changed.

After Empress Feng left, the candidates dispersed.

Jin Chen's face was clouded with discontent, and he was about to leave.

"Young Master Jin, hold on a moment."

Xin Lin surged forward, blocking Jin Chen's way.

"Last name Xin, what do you want now?"

Jin Chen's face was full of anger.

Before participating in the Zixiao Palace Exam, he had vowed that he would definitely take first place to enter Qingtian Academy, but ending up third in the written part meant his top rank was in jeopardy. Moreover, once word got out, he would undoubtedly be ridiculed by his peers. All this disgrace was because of that damn foot washing maid!

"Young Master Jin, you truly have a short memory. People may leave, but the Golden Silk Robe must stay."

Xin Lin said with a smile.

"What Golden Silk Robe? I don't understand what you're talking about."

Jin Chen was smug.

"Young Master Jin said such things, but we didn't hear them. You poor ghost, actually eyeing Young Master Jin's Golden Silk Robe, do you have no shame?"

His flunkies behind him echoed in unison.

"Jin Chen, a bet is a bet, and we all heard you say it,"

Little Xinzhuo chimed in from the side.

"Everyone?"

Jin Chen grabbed a passing candidate.

"Did you hear it?"

That candidate dared not utter a word, hurriedly shaking his head.

"And you, did you hear it?"

Jin Chen stopped another candidate.

That candidate shook his head repeatedly and fled in panic.

"See? Who dares to say they heard me make a bet with you?"

Jin Chen said disdainfully.

This is just how the world works, the law of the jungle. His father is Grandmaster Jin, a high-ranking official in the court; no one would dare to contradict him.

"I heard it."

Murong Ziyue walked past and spoke indifferently.

"Murong Ziyue, stop meddling in other people's business! What are you, tired of living?"

Jin Chen's face was livid; this detestable Murong Ziyue had offended him several times within the day, even snatching away his first place.

"Show her some colors!"

Upon seeing this, several flunkies sneered and closed in on her.

Yet before they could get close, Murong Ziyue let out a light shout, and True Qi erupted from within her, turning into a silver whip in her hands.

The silver whip, thick as a thumb, was at once filled with the surge of True Qi, stretching taut. With a flick of the whip, a gust of wind formed, and a sizzling sound was heard.

The whip wrapped around one of the flunkies. His flesh ripped and he was flung out obliquely.

The silver whip tore through the air, lashing and lifting with a swiftness like lightning. With several strikes, each hitting their mark, the flunkies were sent sprawling in all directions.

Crack—

A fierce whip struck right in front of Jin Chen.

On the pavestones, an inch thick, there was now a deep gash.

Jin Chen was shocked and then looked again at Murong Ziyue before him.

True Qi transforming into objects, Murong Ziyue's cultivation was frighteningly formidable, far surpassing his own!

"Murong Ziyue, you dare to assault openly, are you not afraid..."

Before Jin Chen could finish, a scream cut through as Murong Ziyue directly whipped him. Thanks to the protection of his Golden Silk Robe, he was saved from the worst. Still, this caused a tumultuous surge of blood and Qi within Jin Chen.

That whip carried the weight of over a hundred pounds!

"Leave the robe, you, get out."

Murong Ziyue glared coldly at Jin Chen.

Jin Chen dared not say another word. He firmly believed that if he uttered a word of dissent, in the next moment, Murong Ziyue would take his life.

"With the Cloud Whip in hand, you should be wary of this person."

Xin Lin was absorbed in the spectacle when an unwelcome voice came from the Sealing Spirit Talisman in his arms.

Chapter 239: I've Decided to Be Her Friend

Hearing Gui Hu's reminder, Xin Lin was irritated.

What was this guy doing earlier? Now he comes out to make snarky comments.

Be careful with Murong Ziyue, she thought Murong Ziyue, aside from being a bit boring, had no faults.

Not to mention anything else, just for Murong Ziyue's righteous assistance, Xin Lin's favorability towards her skyrocketed.

She decided, this person, she would make friends with.

Being pressured by Murong Ziyue, Jin Chen unwillingly took off the Golden Silk Robe he was wearing and threw it on the ground.

"Fair play to the loser, Murong Ziyue, are you satisfied now?"

Jin Chen's face was ashen.

Under the watchful eyes of the public, he had never been so humiliated.

Xin Lin scurried over and picked up the Golden Silk Robe.

"Wait a minute, Young Master Jin, did Ziyue ask you to strip naked?"

Xin Lin called out as she saw Jin Chen about to leave.

She clearly remembered the grudge of losing third place to Little Xinzhuo.

"Outrageous!"

Jin Chen trembled with anger, but Murong Ziyue's cold glance and the silver whip in her hand immediately smothered his temper.

He had no choice but to remove his underclothes, standing bare-chested.

Seeing that Murong Ziyue still had no intention to leave, Jin Chen clenched his teeth and also took off his trousers, leaving only his underwear.

"You can leave now."

Murong Ziyue finally put away her whip.

"Wow~ Young Master Jin, your skin is so smooth and tender, even whiter than the Oiran of Taoyao Pavilion."

Xin Lin whistled at Jin Chen, followed by a burst of laughter around her.

The exam candidates who had been previously threatened by Jin Chen pointed at him, causing Jin Chen to stumble and glare at Xin Lin with resentment.

"Murong Ziyue, Xin Lin, remember this."

He fled without even bothering to pick up his clothes.

Xin Lin held the Golden Silk Robe, her eyes gleaming brightly, even forgetting to say thanks.

"Ziyue, thank you for your help."

It was Little Xinzhuo who was more sensible, stepping forward to thank Murong Ziyue.

"It was nothing."

A smile appeared on Murong Ziyue's face, as she glanced at Xin Lin and frowned.

Naturally aloof, she was not keen on helping others.

She had intervened not for Little Xinzhuo but for Xin Lin.

She wasn't sure if it was her illusion, but she had felt a trace of Ghost Energy from Xin Lin.

That aura, it was very similar to what her master had asked her to trace.

She acted impulsively in case she missed a clue.

But when she looked at Xin Lin again, the Ghost Energy had disappeared.

"Ziyue, I owe you a big favor this time, if you ever need help, I'll definitely step forward without hesitation."

Xin Lin was in high spirits after obtaining the Golden Silk Robe.

She didn't thank, but was nonchalant about it.

"How shameless she is, does Murong Ziyue really need her help?"

"Exactly, she lacks cultivation, and even got the second place by trickery."

Around them, discussions continued.

There were quite a few who were envious of Xin Lin.

After this confrontation, Murong Ziyue's strength was recognized by everyone.

Her results in the Written Examination were outstanding, and the other candidates acknowledged her as the prospective top candidate for this Zixiao Palace Exam.

Compared to her, Xin Lin's situation was somewhat awkward.

Her second place was, in the eyes of the candidates, undeserved.

But those sarcastic remarks seemed utterly unheard by Xin Lin, who was quite unabashed, striking up a friendship with Murong Ziyue.

Chapter 240: The Vanishing Celebration Banquet

Murong Ziyue gazed at Xin Lin for a moment.

"You recently, have you come into contact with... Never mind."

Xin Lin's small face was full of smiles, whatever Murong Ziyue meant to say stopped at her lips and was swallowed back.

If one is affected by the Ghostly Aura, at best they would be plagued by misfortune, at worst it would cost them their life. Seeing how Xin Lin could still bounce around, it didn't seem likely that she'd be involved with that sort of thing.

"Ziyue, remember what I said, be cautious with your food and drink these next couple days."

Xin Lin said with an air of mystery.

Murong Ziyue did not say much, simply nodded and turned to leave.

Her nature was to be cautious, and she treated her food and drink with care. She didn't take Xin Lin's words too seriously.

"Sister, everyone's gone, we should head back too."

Little Xinzhuo noticed Xin Lin transfixed by the retreating figure of Murong Ziyue and gently tugged on her sleeve.

Today's Written Examination has finally passed, thankfully without incident. Both he and his sister achieved good rankings, and they could return home to share the good news with their mother.

"Ah Zhuo, don't you feel like we have a good rapport with Murong Ziyue?"

Xin Lin suddenly blurted out.

"Yes, Sister Ziyue is a kind person, and her kung fu skills are also formidable."

Little Xinzhuo looked up in admiration.

"That's why we must forge a good relationship with her in the future!"

Xin Lin had made up her mind, she wanted to help Murong Ziyue.

Her superpower was very accurate, although Murong Ziyue verbally agreed, she didn't seem to care all that much about the matter of her food.

She excels in both literary and martial arts, and it's inevitable that she seems a bit aloof.

After the humiliation today, Jin Chen will surely try to avenge himself by any means necessary.

She needed to ponder on how she could aid Murong Ziyue.

"Foolish."

Inside the Sealing Spirit Talisman, Gui Hu witnessed this scene and muttered in annoyance.

This Little Budian, always mistaking kindness for donkey's liver and lungs. Well, let her learn through adversity, since she always takes advantage of others, it's time she faces some losses to learn a lesson.

But, unexpectedly, those people... they caught up so quickly...

Gui Hu pondered darkly.

When Xin Lin and Little Xinzhuo returned to the Water Wraith Gang, it was just around dusk.

As soon as they entered, Shi Guiren greeted them.

"Emperor, Little Lin, congratulations."

Shi Guiren had learned early on from Ma Jingtian that Xin Lin and Little Xinzhuo had achieved second and fourth place, respectively.

"Mother, I was just a little shy of the top three."

Little Xinzhuo looked down, embarrassed.

"Silly child, you've already done so well. If your grandfather were still alive, he would be incredibly proud to see you perform so outstandingly."

She beamed with pride, caressing Little Xinzhuo's head, her eyes tinged with sorrow at the thought of her late father.

"What's this? Today should be a happy day. The Gang Leader has already prepared a table full of delicious food. Come on now, no dawdling."

Ma Jingtian's booming voice rang out as he emerged, seeing Shi Guiren's reddening eyes and quickly intervening to smooth things over.

"That's right, I've been starving. Mother, let me tell you about..."

Little Xinzhuo, ever understanding, started to recount their experiences at the North Square that day to Shi Guiren.

The group, full of joy, just entered the side hall.

Just as they set foot inside, Ma Jingtian was stunned.

"What the... Someone! What happened here? Which bastard stole the food? If I catch him, I'll skin him alive!"

No wonder Ma Jingtian was so furious; the lavish feast he had prepared from the news given by Captain Yang to celebrate for Xin Lin and Little Xinzhuo had vanished. Only a barren plate remained, not even a drop of soup left.