

My System 34

Chapter 34: Princely Heir, Do You Want the Oiran or Not?

"Miss, is there a time limit for composing poetry?" someone asked loudly from downstairs.

The red-robed maid replied with a smile, "There's no time limit. As long as you can write a poem and submit it to me, I will present it to Miss Bai for review. If it aligns with her preferences, then it will be considered a pass."

"Only those who pass the test may enter the room and have a face-to-face conversation with Miss Bai."

"Should someone appeal to Miss Bai's heart, they will become her honored guest behind the screen."

Hearing the red-robed maiden's words, everyone present revealed thoughtful expressions.

It seems not just anyone could meet Bai Shuxuan. Only those who passed the test would qualify to interact closely with Miss Bai.

Upon understanding this, many in the crowd showed looks of disappointment.

They had all come for Bai Shuxuan, and now you're telling me that if I don't pass the test, I won't even have the chance to catch a glimpse of her?

Moreover, whether you pass the test is entirely up to Bai Shuxuan's whims—how utterly unfair.

Many people thought this way.

Yet, they had no grounds for objection.

After all, Bai Shuxuan was choosing her own honored guest behind the screen. This wasn't some official imperial examination.

If you met Bai Shuxuan's preferences, you could spend a spring night with a beauty whose fame rippled through the capital city. With such a prospect, who needs anything else?

With their thoughts swirling, the crowd ceased their discussions. Those with poetic talent immediately leaned over the tables, picking up their brushes to start composing.

Those lacking the skill to compose poems looked around, hoping to buy a poem from some impoverished scholar for a bit of money.

As the noise in the pavilion began to settle and quiet reigned, the red-robed maid added with a smile,

“Although the test has no time restriction, Miss Bai’s intention is to select someone who meets her preferences to become her honored guest behind the screen. If she has already taken a liking to someone, she won’t continue to review subsequent poems.”

Upon these words, everyone was taken aback, and then the sounds of pens scratching on paper intensified amid the tension-filled air.

Cheng Guang couldn’t help but want to make a snide remark.

I bet during the imperial examinations, none of you were this worked up, right?

To visit a brothel and gaze upon beauties, you’re making such a drama out of it??

In his past life, Cheng Guang, although not a historian or a poetry expert, had at least gone through twelve years of mandatory education as an outstanding graduate and could recall a number of famed Tang and Song dynasty poems with ease.

Poems themed around the moon were something he could produce without a second thought.

Although the poetry task was simple for him, he didn’t want to reveal his hand just yet.

He decided to observe first and see if Bai Shuxuan would make a special case for him.

Cheng Guang leaned on the railing, casually gazing downwards.

He noticed Wen Qinghe and a few other students from the Great Zhou Academy hunched over their papers, deeply engrossed in writing. They seemed genuinely here for Bai Shuxuan and, unlike last time, had no intent of causing trouble for Cheng Guang.

It was natural, considering they didn't know Cheng Guang would be leaving his residence unexpectedly.

Their encounter in Wanhuatower's Jade Pavilion today was purely coincidental.

After surveying the room, Cheng Guang's gaze landed on the red-robed maid at the center for a few moments, before passing over her to the screen behind.

Through the screen, he could faintly make out the figure of a poised and elegant woman sitting behind it.

His view wasn't clear.

But surely, that figure was Bai Shuxuan.

Cheng Guang only glanced at her for a moment before withdrawing his gaze to fall on Qiao Songshan, who was seated beside him.

Qiao Songshan held his brush with a face full of worry, his posture as awkward as a child using a spoon to eat, splattering ink across the paper until it was entirely blackened.

“Boss, how do you write this poem? It’s too hard; the question is too difficult, I don’t know how to do it,” he lamented.

“It looks like we’ve got no chance with Bai Shuxuan. If I’d known she would set this task, with poetry-making involved, we could’ve prepared a few moon-themed poems in advance from some scholars.”

At this thought, Qiao Songshan’s eyebrows danced, as he felt a sudden spark of cleverness.

“Speaking of which, we could still look around now. I wonder if there’s anyone here willing to sell us a poem.”

Saying so, Qiao Songshan hurriedly stood up and bellowed down the stairs, “I, Qiao Songshan, am willing to pay top dollar for poems! Is there anyone willing to sell?”

His voice was so loud it silenced the previously bustling Jade Pavilion.

Cheng Guang held his forehead in his hand, almost wanting to pretend not to know this man.

Many people stared at Qiao Songshan upstairs, their faces showing a strange expression.

“What’s that big idiot doing? To cheat, you wouldn’t just shout in the examination hall, ‘Who will give me the answers?’”

“Really not taking Miss Bai into account?”

“Everyone tends to be extremely cautious about such matters, and here you are, flipping the table directly??”

“I’m not even sure if Miss Bai would care about this, or else the poem I just obtained would be totally useless.”

“Even if she does care, it’s not like she verified whether our poems were written by ourselves or bought from someone else.”

“That’s true, that’s true, acting discreetly.”

The crowd buzzed with discussion.

Meanwhile, Wen Qinghe, who was downstairs, also heard Qiao Songshan's voice, his expression turned slightly stunned as he looked up vacantly, immediately spotting Qiao Songshan inside the top-floor private booth.

Upon a closer look, he noticed that beside Qiao Songshan, there was another figure exuding an air of distinguished nobility.

"The Princely Heir is here as well?"

Wen Qinghe murmured to himself.

Several scholars beside Wen Qinghe, upon hearing his words, were initially stunned and then turned their gazes upward following Wen Qinghe's.

"It should be the Princely Heir. Everyone knows Qiao Songshan loves to follow behind the Princely Heir."

"When I entered the Jade Pavilion, I heard some people saying that the Princely Heir had come to the Jade Pavilion too. I didn't believe it at first, but it turns out to be true."

"Hiss, the last time, we were almost beaten to death over an Oiran by those two, I hope nothing unexpected happens this time..."

After seeing the figures of Cheng Guang and Qiao Songshan, the group gave each other looks of understanding.

Most of them had been beaten up by the Princely Heir and Qiao Songshan once before. They were okay with facing Qiao Songshan, but they didn't dare raise a finger against the Princely Heir.

If a conflict like the last time were to happen again, they would probably get thrashed once more.

And they wouldn't be able to reason their way out of it.

"Don't worry, last time there was a reason; after all, we were the ones who provoked the Princely Heir. Getting beaten was expected."

"This time it's different, as long as we don't provoke the Princely Heir, we should be fine." Wen Qinghe's face, which had been somewhat stiff, quickly returned to normal, and he let out a light laugh.

"Besides, Miss Bai is selecting her guests based on their literary grace and talent. Although the Princely Heir is noble, it would not be easy for him to buy a top-quality poem on such short notice."

"He has no hope, he can't compete with us."

After Wen Qinghe finished speaking, the other scholars felt reassured and, without further discussion, continued to write their poems.

Wen Qinghe felt calm inside; he was very confident about winning Bai Shuxuan.

Although there were many distinguished people present, including nobles like himself, and even with the Princely Heir joining the fray, he didn't believe anyone could outcompete him.

He was very confident in his poetic talent.

His poetry skills were among the top in the Great Zhou Academy, even earning praise from several Great Confucian Scholars.

Wen Qinghe had already felt that the position as Bai Shuxuan's guest was rightfully his.

Back to the private booth.

After Qiao Songshan had shouted, the Jade Pavilion fell into momentary silence, but ultimately no commotion arose, and everyone quickly went back to their own business.

This left Qiao Songshan feeling disheartened, as he began to slump.

First, he didn't know who had good poetry skills, and second, he didn't know whom to buy a poem from.

Qiao Songshan felt that his plan to help his boss win the Oiran, Bai Shuxuan, had failed.

It indeed confirmed what was said at the beginning—he really just came to join in the hubbub.

Qiao Songshan sighed, seeming too embarrassed to face Cheng Guang. He sat in a corner by the table, drawing circles on the paper as if in self-imposed isolation.

This scene made Cheng Guang can't help but laugh. He didn't mind and was about to speak to comfort Qiao Songshan, when a hoarse voice suddenly sounded beside him.

"Princely Heir."

Cheng Guang turned his head to see a sneaky-looking Turtle Slave approaching, who quietly pulled out a scroll from within his clothes, and whispered, "Princely Heir, do you want the Oiran?"

"I have a poem here, themed around the moon, that will surely pass Miss Bai's test and win her favor."