

Mythical 80

Chapter 80: Finding Joy in it All

"May I ask where you hail from, sir?" Chen Xi asked the drunkard with a smile, realizing he had to show respect to a talented individual, even if they appeared inebriated.

"Chen Zichuan?" The drunkard turned his head slightly, thinking for a moment before speaking. "I come from the north."

Chen Xi was taken aback. He hadn't revealed his identity yet. How did this man figure it out? Then he glanced over and saw a large, ten-foot-wide man holding a knife, watching them from a short distance away. Understanding dawned on him.

"Guo Fengxiao?" Chen Xi asked.

"How did you know?" The drunkard was curious but not particularly surprised.

"Although Fa Xiaozhi is young, he is no ordinary person to be easily refuted. Coming from the north, with your stature and age, and given your bohemian, free-spirited demeanor, you could only be Guo Fengxiao." Chen Xi laughed. "I never expected today that Lord Xuande's recruitment would attract such a great talent."

"Taishan's new administration hasn't missed a beat, even with intelligence. Chen Zichuan indeed lives up to his reputation as a contemporary genius. But if I recall correctly, Yan Zhaowang had a banquet on the Jade Table. What treatment can I expect?" Guo Jia said with a playful smile.

Guo Jia had been in Taishan for half a month, traveling and observing. He was very satisfied with Liu Bei, who dared to delegate power, valued talent, and did not judge people by their social status. Compared to Liu Bei, Yuan Shao seemed like a shallow fame-seeker.

On this day, while lying in a nearby tavern and observing the recruitment below, Guo Jia had spotted Fazheng. This boy reminded Guo Jia of himself—equally intelligent and equally arrogant.

But Guo Jia remembered that when he was that age, this boy was slightly lacking. Perhaps he hadn't seen much of the world yet, specifically people more intelligent than himself, who could crush him intellectually.

Guo Jia enjoyed a perverse pleasure in verbally sparring with and defeating intelligent youths. When he was young, he had been repeatedly humbled in such battles, and the one who bested him had told him that high-IQ youths could only grow through constant intellectual beatings.

Guo Jia quickly descended from the tavern, seeing that Chen Zichuan, whom he presumed was the observer, also seemed eager to engage. Seeing an arrogant youth, Guo Jia couldn't resist giving him a lesson.

Sure enough, the arrogant youth didn't need much provocation to start a fight. The boy launched into classics and philosophy, nearly overwhelming Guo Jia, who broke out in a cold sweat. However, when the conversation shifted to strategy and statecraft, Guo Jia found his footing. He expertly dismantled Fazheng's arguments, leaving him bewildered and stunned.

Guo Jia patted Fazheng on the shoulder and shook his head, feeling a sense of achievement. He now understood why his own tormentor had taken such pleasure in these battles. High-quality youths were rare, and watching them repeatedly return for more verbal sparring was a unique joy.

Guo Jia looked at Fazheng, estimating he could continue humbling the boy for several years. The poor kid, to even hold his own against Guo Jia in strategy, would take another five or six years. Surpassing him? That would depend on luck.

"Hmph, Yan Zhaowang's Golden Platform and the Jade Table Banquet are nothing!" Chen Xi haughtily declared, feeling no need to be overly polite with the likes of Guo Jia.

"So what? The Jade Table is quite valuable," Guo Jia said, patting his empty money pouch.

Chen Xi felt his forehead veins throbbing. "Where's your scholarly dignity? Aren't scholars supposed to disdain talking about money?"

"Confucius didn't think it was shameful. Do you, Zichuan?" Guo Jia retorted, looking every bit the righteous scholar.

"Oh, I'm saying it's shameful coming from you, not talking about money in general. As for what you'll see, just wait. Lord Xuande will be here soon." After Fazheng's defeat, Chen Xi had sent Zang Ba to inform Liu Bei. He should arrive shortly.

Chen Xi's views differed from many in his time. He believed a ruler shouldn't handle daily affairs but should instead balance his subordinates, place them in appropriate roles, and unify their efforts while being a spiritual symbol for his people.

Chen Xi had carefully instilled these ideas in Liu Bei, who executed them well. Liu Bei focused on what he did best: sitting at the center, distributing responsibilities, and serving as a spiritual symbol for his subjects. Liu Bei had perfected each of these tasks.

This made Liu Bei the ideal king in Chen Xi's eyes. As their governance expanded, they would face no obstacles when ascending to the throne, as their support would come not from officials but from the common people.

As such, Liu Bei didn't handle many daily affairs. He mostly trained new troops with Yu Jin and personally greeted every scholar and warrior who came to Taishan.

Chen Xi had specifically asked Liu Bei to personally greet and arrange positions for all scholars and warriors. Particularly distinguished individuals would receive a special banquet from Liu Bei. Chen Xi also instructed Liu Bei to hold a joint banquet for groups of recruits and personally see them off, making everyone feel Liu Bei's sincerity.

Liu Bei excelled at this, winning over the recruits with his hospitality. Many came to Taishan admiring Liu Bei's boldness, and after the banquets, they were deeply moved by his kindness and sincerity, swearing loyalty.

Liu Bei noticed that these banquets had a side effect of attracting more recruits. Each time he saw off a group, others would come, moved by their reports. Thus, Liu Bei found great joy in these events.