

Mythical 81

Chapter 81: Fazheng's Aspiration

Guo Jia was by far the most formidable strategist that Taishan had recruited. When Chen Xi called Liu Bei over, he specifically told Liu Bei to make as grand a reception as possible. He also hinted that the young Fazheng was crucial and should be well received.

Liu Bei fully understood Chen Xi's intentions. He personally led all the remaining civil and military officials to welcome Guo Jia. To Chen Xi's amazement, Liu Bei even brought over a chariot with a canopy, a top-tier welcome.

Liu Bei personally helped Guo Jia onto the chariot, then climbed up himself, pulling Chen Xi along. This left Fazheng, who was watching with envy, standing there. Liu Bei extended his hand again.

"Xiaozhi, come up too. Though you are young, you are not inferior to your peers. Today, I will bring you into the city. Remember this day and never be embarrassed among your peers in the future," Liu Bei said with a smile, extending his hand to the envious Fazheng.

Fazheng was stunned. He hadn't expected there to be a place for him. He had felt Chen Zichuan's capabilities since entering Taishan, and Guo Fengxiao's intelligence was enough to command respect. Fazheng had no complaints about their place in the chariot, despite his envy.

Seeing Liu Bei's encouraging expression, Fazheng dumbly extended his hand, allowing Liu Bei to pull him up.

Sitting in the chariot, Fazheng swore that Liu Bei was the leader he had been waiting for his entire life. Although he might not yet be worthy of this position, he vowed to earn it as quickly as possible.

"I, Fazheng, will never be inferior to anyone," Fazheng resolved inwardly, staring at Guo Jia with burning eyes. "The first person I must surpass is this guy. Only by surpassing him can I feel worthy of this honor!"

Guo Jia glanced at the determined Fazheng, understanding instantly that this kid was fired up and would likely aim to topple him. How naive.

Seeing Fazheng's eyes, Guo Jia thought of the man who had once tormented him. Hearing that man had now gone to Cao Cao, Guo Jia felt a surge of anger. He, too, wanted to humble his former tormentor, who had bullied him mercilessly.

"Calm down, calm down. Why does thinking of that guy always make me so angry..." Guo Jia began reminiscing about his own miserable youth before turning back to Fazheng with a fierce look, planning to continue his "training."

After a bath and change, Guo Jia emerged in a moon-white robe made of Shu brocade, with a gold crown, a jade pendant, and a sandalwood folding fan prepared by Chen Xi. He now exuded the air of an aristocratic nobleman, starkly contrasting with his previous drunken state. His presence even made the serving girls blush slightly.

Under the guidance of a servant, Guo Jia arrived outside the main hall, where he was greeted by Fazheng, now dressed in a pure white brocade robe, looking exceptionally spirited. Compared to his earlier ragged appearance, he now truly exemplified the saying, "Clothes make the man."

Entering the main hall, Liu Bei and the others were already seated, with a bronze cauldron cooking lamb in the center.

Chen Xi had no words for this. He had improved the recipe countless times to make the lamb taste good, but it was cooked in a bronze cauldron, which he had repeatedly advised Liu Bei against using for food preparation. Yet, whenever distinguished guests arrived, Liu Bei would bring out the bronze cauldron for lamb stew.

Eating too much copper might cause some strange illness, Chen Xi mused as he ate the lamb, half-listening to the conversation around him. Unlike Fazheng's gratitude and Guo Jia's astonishment, Chen Xi thought it odd but accepted that using a bronze cauldron for such meals seemed to be a refined and solemn way to entertain guests during this period.

After the meal of lamb boiled with salt, Liu Bei led Guo Jia and Fazheng to see their accommodations, clearly aiming to impress both.

"Zichuan, where is the Lord taking us?" Guo Jia whispered to Chen Xi as they followed Liu Bei.

"Didn't you say you admired King Zhaowang's Jade Table Banquet? We don't have a jade table, but we prepared something else," Chen Xi replied with a smile, and Fazheng perked up his ears to listen.

"The feast was more than sufficient. Anything more would be excessive," Guo Jia joked. "But if it's another banquet, I wouldn't mind."

Fazheng licked his lips. He had never enjoyed such treatment at home. The food and wine were one thing, but the high honor of it all profoundly impacted his young mind. A thought crossed his mind: A true man should either feast with five cauldrons in life or be cooked in five cauldrons in death!

Noblemen ate differently from others, and to reach the position of the Three Dukes, one could enjoy such privileges. Fazheng decided to pursue this ambition. Being a great scholar seemed trivial compared to this. The bronze cauldron's lamb tasted better than anything cooked in a clay pot.

Years later, when Fazheng finally became a marquis and had the privilege of using a bronze cauldron for lamb stew at home, he melted a pile of coins to make a cauldron. After cooking the lamb and tasting it, he found it equally bland. Apparently, the delicious lamb at Liu Bei's wasn't due to the bronze cauldron after all...

Neither Guo Jia nor Chen Xi noticed Fazheng's ambition to cook lamb with a bronze cauldron at home. Even if they had, they wouldn't have minded; it was a noble aspiration, achievable only at the level of a marquis, a title many never attained, like the original Flying General Li Guang. As for the second Flying General Lu Bu, he was already the Marquis of Wen.

Passing through several moon gates, Guo Jia felt the security tighten until they reached a pavilion. Liu Bei finally stopped.

"Zichuan, open the door and let Fengxiao and Xiaozhi choose a book," Liu Bei said solemnly. Though Liu Bei also had the key, playing the good guy meant not carrying it.

"Well..." Chen Xi hesitated, glancing at Fazheng before looking back at Liu Bei. Everyone present understood what that meant.

"Xiaozhi will not disappoint us today," Liu Bei said confidently, looking at Fazheng.

"Alright, if the Lord guarantees it," Chen Xi sighed, taking out the key to unlock the pavilion. Pushing open the door, a wave of fresh ink filled the air.

"Here are about ten thousand volumes of essays. More will be added in the future. Fengxiao's gift is the right to choose a book here and the privilege of borrowing any book you need in the future." Chen Xi sighed. "The same goes for Xiaozhi."

Seeing the room full of bookshelves, Guo Jia realized that the paper here differed significantly from Cai Hou's paper. As Chen Xi said, this gift was indeed perfect for scholars, far more suitable than the Jade Table Banquet.

Fazheng couldn't hear Chen Xi anymore. He was stunned by the room full of books, already pulling one off the shelf. Ten thousand essays? No exaggeration!

"With these, the king's path is much smoother!" Guo Jia realized the significance of these books. The identical handwriting suggested a specific method of production. From the volume alone, he deduced the cost wasn't exorbitant. These books could eliminate many obstacles.