

Mythical 90

Chapter 90: Overwhelmed with Favor

With those words, Gan Ning's mood completely changed. He felt deeply grateful that he was so highly regarded and that this had all been a misunderstanding.

"Zhongkang, untie Xingba," Chen Xi said, turning to Xu Chu. As long as Xu Chu was by his side, there was no need to worry even if Gan Ning tried something.

"My apologies earlier," Xu Chu said, clasping his fist in a salute before untying Gan Ning and releasing the seal on his internal energy.

"We'll have a match on the water someday!" Gan Ning accepted Xu Chu's apology but was still upset about his defeat. He believed he could beat Xu Chu on the water.

"I hope what I said earlier won't make Lord Xuande hold a grudge against me," Gan Ning said, looking at Chen Xi with some trepidation. He had lost the bravado he displayed earlier, as honor was more important than life in this era.

"Anyone who dares to issue a recruitment order has to have a broad mind and great ambition. They wouldn't be so petty. The recruitment order is something only issued by lords with great aspirations in remote places where talents are scarce. It attracts proud and talented people who may not fit into conventional roles," Chen Xi said with a smile. "Do you think King Zhao of Yan or Duke Xiao of Qin were petty men?"

"Now that you mention it, it makes sense. But what about the other scholars who have come to Taishan?" Gan Ning nodded, agreeing with the idea that the recruitment order attracted those who were too talented and unconventional to be recruited by ordinary means.

"For the central figures, it doesn't matter where they work; it's all the same. However, a place with a recruitment order must have vacant positions. It's that simple," Chen Xi explained with a smile. "Xingba, you know which category you fall into."

"Since leaving Sichuan, I thought I was invincible. But then I encountered a white-haired man on the banks of the Yangtze River who defeated me in ten moves. Later, I fought Zhou Tai on the river, barely winning after a hundred rounds. And now, I..." Gan Ning trailed off, looking at Xu Chu with eyes burning with battle spirit. He wanted to fight Xu Chu on the water.

"White-haired man?" Chen Xi tilted his head in thought and quickly figured out who Gan Ning had met. It was most likely Huang Zhong, the white-haired demon. Considering his peak condition, it wasn't surprising that he could defeat Gan Ning in ten moves, especially when Gan Ning was overconfident after leaving Sichuan. If it had been a serious fight, Gan Ning might have ended up like Hua Xiong when he met Guan Yu...

"Xingba, don't be anxious. It's already October. In ten days, Zilong, Yun Chang, Yide, Ziyi, and others will return from Qingzhou. You can spar with them then. For now, focus on recovering. Lord Xuande is very interested in his naval commander, so don't lose your composure," Chen Xi said with a smile, secretly amused at the thought of what awaited Gan Ning.

Gan Ning looked at Xu Chu and shouted, "Alright, I'll wait ten days, and then we'll settle this!"

Xu Chu turned his head away, not taking the bait. Even Lu Bu might struggle against their continuous assaults, especially Zhao Zilong, who was perfectly suited to counter Gan Ning...

Gan Ning had no idea what kind of grueling days awaited him. Instead, he eagerly anticipated the return of Zhao Yun and the others for a sparring session.

"Now that it's settled, Xingba, come with me to see Lord Xuande and Lu Juncai. Please keep the salt trade incident to yourself. It's Lord Xuande's means to accumulate wealth for governing Qingzhou," Chen Xi said, bowing slightly to Gan Ning.

"No problem. All my men are loyal brothers from Sichuan. They won't ruin Lord Xuande's plans. Please, lead me to see Lord Xuande and Lu Juncai. I'm willing to accept any punishment," Gan Ning replied with a respectful bow, showing that despite his arrogance, he wasn't unreasonable.

"Alright. Lord Xuande has already taken responsibility while you were unconscious. There's no need for you to worry. Lu Juncai isn't someone who would bear a grudge," Chen Xi said with a smile.

With that, Chen Xi led Gan Ning to Liu Bei's main hall. As expected, Liu Bei had prepared the usual bronze cauldron of boiled lamb, a simple and uninspired dish, but Lu Jun seemed quite satisfied. It was clear that he valued the high regard shown to him more than the quality of the food.

Chen Xi mused that only Han loyalists like Liu Bei could afford such displays. Other lords lacked the status to use bronze cauldrons for cooking. Thinking back, even Yuan Shao had overstepped when he used a bronze cauldron to cook beef at the alliance meeting, although considering the circumstances, it made sense. The power dynamics had shifted so much that such actions were no longer seen as overstepping.

Lu Jun was deeply satisfied with Liu Bei's reception, feeling honored by the high standards of hospitality. This made him even more willing to invest in Taishan, seeing the earnestness of Liu Bei's apology and hospitality.

"Juncai, Xingba didn't know the situation, which is why he acted as he did. I apologize on his behalf and offer you this cup," Liu Bei said, raising his cup and downing it in one go.

In this era, mutual respect was crucial among notable figures. Chen Xi had advised Liu Bei that for well-known but moderately capable individuals, the best approach was to humble oneself and make them feel highly valued. If that wasn't possible due to one's status, at least make them feel warmly welcomed. Liu Bei's actions now made Lu Jun feel honored and respected, without needing any flowery praise.

Chen Xi led Gan Ning into the hall just as Liu Bei and Lu Jun were having a heartfelt conversation. Lu Jun was even discussing major investments in Taishan and offering to help procure grain from Jiangdong, where food was abundant.

"Gan Zhuangshi, drink this cup with me. You didn't mistreat us on the journey, and you acted out of loyalty to your cause. I, as Lu Juncai, could not speak plainly due to our family's century-long reputation, leading to misunderstandings. Drink this cup, and let us be friends!" Lu Jun said solemnly, holding a cup of wine as he approached Gan Ning.