

## Rise 131

### Chapter 131: The Examination Date Has Been Announced

Time is precious. A day has 24 hours, and no extra minute or second can be gained.

Even though Zhu Ping'an cherishes time, his fingers are too wide, and time is too thin, so time still slips away quietly through the gaps in his fingers. The sky can be repaired, the sea can be filled, and the South Mountain can be moved. The days and months that have passed cannot be pursued again.

Amidst Zhu Ping'an's diligent and hardworking review for his exams, the moment of the imperial examination was drawing near.

"Brother Zhu, Brother Zhu! Hurry up, hurry up!" The chubby Xue Chi knocked urgently on Zhu Ping'an's door.

Zhu Ping'an, who was reviewing, opened the door and saw the chubby Xue Chi, with his forehead covered in bruises, standing excitedly in front of the door, as if he had just found a huge advantage.

"What's the rush? If you break the door, you'll pay for it," Zhu Ping'an said, just starting to break into the first problem, ready to complete the eight-legged essay in one go, but was completely disturbed by Xue Chi's loud knocking, losing his train of thought. Therefore, when he looked at Xue Chi, his expression was unkind.

"What's going on? The examination schedule for all the prefectures has just been posted by the imperial examination commissioner in front of the Gongyuan, and everyone has gone to check it out. Come on, hurry up, there won't be good spots left if we're late!" Xue Chi said, his excited face trembling.

According to the usual practice, the imperial examination for South Zhili is held at the Yangtze River Gongyuan in Ying Tian, as South Zhili includes 14 prefectures such as Ying Tian, Suzhou, and Fengyang. With the number of students this year plus those from previous years, the number is quite large. Therefore, even though everyone takes the imperial exam at the same Gongyuan, it is done in batches. The South Zhili imperial exam is usually divided into two batches. The first batch includes the prefectures around Ying Tian, and after that, the second batch is for other prefectures. There's no need to worry about leakage of the exam questions, as the questions for each batch are different. There's also no need to worry about different difficulty levels creating unfairness, as the questions are the same for all candidates in each prefecture, and the exam results are posted separately for each prefecture. Each prefecture has a fixed number of candidates who can pass, divided into three categories based on the local literary style, population, and resources—large, medium, and small. Larger prefectures have more slots, while smaller ones have fewer. For example, the large prefectures like Ying Tian, Fengyang, and Suzhou have 40 slots, the medium prefectures have 30, and the smaller ones have 20 slots.

While this is the usual practice, no one can guarantee that there won't be changes this year. As the saying goes, plans cannot keep up with changes, and the order of exams is always based on the schedule announced by the imperial examination commissioner.

"What are you standing there for? Hurry up!" Xue Chi urged, his round face impatient.

Under Xue Chi's repeated urging, Zhu Ping'an closed the door and went downstairs with him toward the Yangtze River Gongyuan.

Before they even reached the Gongyuan, they could already hear the noise of people discussing, seemingly because there had been changes to the exam schedule this year.

When they were almost at the Gongyuan, they couldn't move forward anymore due to the overwhelming crowd. Students from all the prefectures had come to check the posted schedule, and even though the gate of the Gongyuan was wide, it couldn't hold them all.

"Copies of the examination schedule, word-for-word, each copy 20 wen." At this point, some savvy street vendors had rushed to copy hundreds of copies of the schedule and were selling them on the spot, making quite a profit.

"Give me two copies." The chubby Xue Chi pulled out some money from his pocket and waved it at the vendor.

After the vendor took the money, he handed two copies of the written schedule to the chubby Xue Chi. After receiving them, Xue Chi casually gave one to Zhu Ping'an. Zhu Ping'an didn't refuse and began to read it.

Sure enough, the imperial examination commissioner had made significant adjustments to the examination schedule this time. Although it was still divided into two batches, it was very different from previous years.

The imperial examination commissioner had divided the fourteen prefectures into two batches. The first batch included seven prefectures: Yingtian, Fengyang, Huai'an, Yangzhou, Suzhou, Anqing, and Chizhou, with the exam scheduled for tomorrow. The second batch included the remaining prefectures: Songjiang, Changzhou, Zhenjiang, Luzhou, Taiping, Ningguo, and Huizhou, with their exams scheduled for three days later. Candidates were required to assemble at the gate of the Yangtze River Gongyuan at the hour of the Yin (around 5 to 6 in the morning) on their exam day to register and enter.

"Hahaha, Brother Zhu, we can take the exam in the same batch!" Xue Chi looked at the schedule, laughing so hard his eyes were almost hidden.

"Mm." Zhu Ping'an replied indifferently.

"To celebrate that we'll take the exam together, I'll treat you. We won't go back until we're drunk!" Xue Chi said, already reaching for Zhu Ping'an to head to a restaurant.

Hearing this, Zhu Ping'an could hardly stop himself from kicking the chubby Xue Chi's face, making it two sizes larger. Damn, the exam is tomorrow, and you're talking about not returning until drunk!

"I just had breakfast, so no thanks." Zhu Ping'an replied coldly.

"That's fine. Come on, let's go! Here's to wishing us success in the exam! We won't return until we're drunk..." Xue Chi was still enthusiastic, his gold chain swinging around his neck.

Damn it, not returning until drunk? What exam tomorrow!

To this, Zhu Ping'an calmly replied, "I bought a bag last year!"

"A bag? A purse? You bought it last year, so what's the point of mentioning it now? Let's go, go, go..." Xue Chi was still as eager as ever, not at all concerned about tomorrow's exam.

Well, ancient people wouldn't understand the subtlety in this.

"Forget it, I need to go back and cram for the exam," Zhu Ping'an said firmly, unwilling to go along with Xue Chi.

"Sigh, you're always so diligent, but you're still studying so hard. The exam is tomorrow, it won't make a difference if you don't study today," Xue Chi grumbled, looking a bit helpless.

"I advise you to go back and study too. The exam is tomorrow, and we have to be at the Gongyuan gate early to register. You won't go back until you're drunk? What's the point of that! You can drink after the exam, it's not too late," Zhu Ping'an patted Xue Chi on the shoulder and walked toward the inn.

"Oh, oh, Brother Zhu, wait for me..."

Xue Chi hurriedly chased after Zhu Ping'an, shouting, "We've got a deal, after the exam, we won't return until we're drunk! Hehehe, I'll take you to see something new across the river..."

In the end, after Zhu Ping'an's persuasion, Xue Chi returned to the upstairs to study. As for how effective it was, that's unknown.

Back at the inn, Zhu Ping'an sat at the desk, recalling all the knowledge he had accumulated about the eight-legged essay. Thanks to his rebirth, his memory this time was surprisingly good.

The other students in the inn were also immersed in their books, preparing for the exam. The business at the Jinfen Yulou across the Qinhuai River also dwindled by half. Those still consuming there were either confident or arrogant; otherwise, how could they stay in a place full of gentle temptations?

Take one step forward, and the sea is vast and the sky wide; take one step back, and you'll be covered in dirt.

As night fell and the inn became quiet, the students sat by the windows, reviewing for the exam. This night, many students likely lost sleep.