

Rise 227

Chapter 227: Only Women and Villains Are Difficult to Deal With

The old hen made its final contribution. Mother stewed the chicken soup until it was rich and fragrant—full of motherly love. Zhu Ping'an drank two bowls of soup in one go and only finished after eating three pancakes.

After the meal, people began to visit the house one after another, either to offer congratulations and gifts or to make connections. Chen refused all the gifts, and as for those trying to establish connections, Zhu Ping'an dealt with them on a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstances. This situation lasted for two days before things gradually returned to normal.

Cattle and sheep roamed leisurely on the sunny hillside, munching on fallen leaves and dry grass. A shepherd boy, wrapped in a cotton-padded jacket, leaned against a tree trunk and slept soundly—it looked like a paradise isolated from the world.

Zhu Ping'an passed by the foot of the hill, carrying his schoolbag slung over one shoulder, heading toward Shanghe Village.

The Li family of Shanghe Village had already gotten used to Zhu Ping'an. From entering the door to walking into the study, it all felt as natural as coming home. Of course, that is, if it weren't for a certain black-bellied and willful young girl—

"Hey, Zhu Ping'an, how can you just walk in without knocking?!"

Inside the study, Li Shu held a chess piece in her hand, looking stunningly beautiful. Her big, black, sparkling eyes glanced sideways at Zhu Ping'an who had just entered, her face filled with a half-smile, half-mischievous air of arrogance.

An exquisite face paired with a spoiled temper.

It felt like a budding poppy flower silently spreading its fragrance throughout the room—its beauty was suffocating, like an angel and a devil in one.

"It's a study, not a boudoir," Zhu Ping'an replied calmly, bringing a gust of cold air into the room with him.

"Scoundrel!"

The black-bellied girl, Li Shu, glared hard at Zhu Ping'an and pouted, her cheeks flushed, as if accusing him of teasing her.

"Here, this is the content for the last few sessions."

As he spoke, Zhu Ping'an took out a stitched booklet from his bag and placed it on the desk. Then he pulled out the book he had borrowed last time and shook it at the black-bellied girl, indicating that not a single one was missing, and walked toward the bookshelf.

The black-bellied girl was playing chess with the little bun-faced maid. Seeing Zhu Ping'an's indifferent attitude toward her, she was rather annoyed and glared at his back a few times. Then she took out her dissatisfaction on the chessboard—strategizing, attacking, pressuring... With a flurry of moves, she quickly took out more than half of the already disadvantaged maid's pieces.

"Miss~" The bun-faced maid's eyes were red from losing, looking pitifully at her mistress.

"Who told you to be so dumb? I already gave you a head start of three pieces, and you're still losing so badly. What a buzzkill!" Li Shu said angrily as she swiped the chess pieces away, leaving the board in a mess.

The bun-faced maid puffed up her cheeks in grievance and suddenly noticed Zhu Ping'an browsing the bookshelf behind her. Her watery eyes lit up, and she said to her mistress, "Miss, I'm not good at chess, but there's someone who definitely is."

The black-bellied girl's eyes flashed, as if she had instantly guessed who it was, but she put on an indifferent look and asked casually, "Who?"

"Zhu Ping'an. He's a licentiate—he must be great at chess."

"Him?" The black-bellied girl snorted lightly. "Who knows if he's actually good."

The bun-faced maid, Hua'er, rolled her eyes and stood up, walking toward Zhu Ping'an who was still flipping through books behind the bookshelf. She said a couple of sentences to him once she reached him.

Li Shu saw Zhu Ping'an glance in her direction, then shake his head.

It was obvious that Hua'er had gone to ask Zhu Ping'an to come play chess with her, but he actually refused! That made Li Shu very displeased—her lips pouted high.

You don't want to keep me company, huh?!

"Hey, Zhu Ping'an, come play chess with me," Li Shu said, pouting and bossily ordering.

Hearing this, Zhu Ping'an glanced at the black-bellied girl, then curled his lips in disdain.

"You..." Li Shu stomped her foot angrily.

At this point, Hua'er was just about to persuade Zhu Ping'an, but her mistress's sudden outburst rendered all her efforts meaningless.

"You... If you beat me in one game, you can pick any book you want. It'll be yours from now on. How about it, dare to accept the challenge?"

The scheming girl provocatively stared at Zhu Ping'an, her slender jade-like hand casually playing with a chess piece.

"Why not?"

Upon hearing this, Zhu Ping'an became interested. He had his eye on a thick book, one that would take several days to copy by hand. If he played chess with the scheming girl Li Shu and won, this book would be his. A business with no loss, why not take the chance?

To be honest, he had played chess quite a bit in his past life. He had also specifically studied many chess games. Although he wasn't good at Go, chess was his strong suit. He especially liked to sacrifice pieces to set traps, leading the opponent unknowingly into a deadly situation.

The bun-faced maid eagerly helped Zhu Ping'an and the scheming girl Li Shu set up the chessboard, while the older maid and other little maids each performed their duties, serving tea and water.

First game: Li Shu opened with the cannon, and Zhu Ping'an moved his horse... From the start of this game, Li Shu frequently advanced on Zhu Ping'an's side, capturing several of his pieces. But just when Li Shu was feeling smug, Zhu Ping'an made a single move to checkmate, winning without even capturing a single one of Li Shu's pieces.

Second game: Li Shu played much more cautiously, but she was still trapped in Zhu Ping'an's scheme, losing the second round unknowingly.

"You only know how to cheat behind people's backs!"

Li Shu, the scheming girl, who had lost two games in a row, was clearly not happy.

Then, in the third game, Zhu Ping'an seemed to respond directly to Li Shu's complaint, launching a fierce offensive right from the beginning. He quickly played "Two-headed snake," "Boldly through the heart," "Cannon tramples Dan Sha,"... With these moves, he captured Li Shu's chariot, horse, and cannon one after another, leaving only her king, with no other pieces left.

Li Shu's expression at the time almost looked like she wanted to swallow Zhu Ping'an whole...

"Army, soldiers, all are arranged before you."

Just as Zhu Ping'an was about to deliver the final checkmate, he suddenly heard Li Shu on the other side muttering something like a chant.

Then, to Zhu Ping'an's surprise, Li Shu swiftly placed all the pieces she had lost back in their original positions.

"What's with that look? This is a resurrection spell. If I say it once, I can bring them back to life."

Li Shu looked at Zhu Ping'an with a smile, speaking confidently, her big watery eyes full of pride.

What the heck, now there's a spell for resurrecting pieces?

However, the difference in skill was clear. Zhu Ping'an still managed to use his remaining pieces to capture Li Shu's pieces, leaving her with only two elephants and three pawns.

Then, Zhu Ping'an witnessed Li Shu's tricks. She claimed her elephants could cross the river and that the pawns were elite martial artists she had hired with a heavy price, even stronger than chariots!

Despite that, Zhu Ping'an still managed to checkmate Li Shu's flying elephants and martial artist pawns.

In the end, Li Shu was left with just a lone king again.

Then came a scene that completely overturned Zhu Ping'an's chess understanding: Li Shu used Zhu Ping'an's own advisor to capture his king. What in the world was that?

"With great rewards comes great courage. I spent a lot of money to buy your advisor and turn him to my side! I had a spy hide beside your king for so long, just for this moment. When the people around you suddenly turn, you won't be able to defend against it."

Li Shu rested her chin in her hand, looking at the bewildered Zhu Ping'an, her eyes gleaming with excitement.

"Only women and villains are hard to deal with."

Zhu Ping'an looked at the triumphant Li Shu and slightly shook his head, saying lightly, "This girl has both traits."

"Cut it out, you're talking like you're about to become a monk!" Li Shu scoffed, rolling her eyes. Then she fixed her gaze on Zhu Ping'an with burning intensity. "You look down on women? Does that mean you won't marry one in the future?"

"I only look down on you!" Zhu Ping'an glanced at Li Shu, replying indifferently.

"Really petty. Hey, what kind of wife do you want in the future?" Li Shu sneered, then teasingly asked, her eyes still burning with interest.