

Rise 310

Chapter 310: A Confident Young Man

Watching Li Shu sway and shyly dash past him, the young man outside the door felt extremely frustrated. He couldn't understand why his cousin would ignore him—a young master of second-rank nobility—and instead fawn over some plain-looking, unknown boy!

He was talented in both literature and martial arts, and exceptionally handsome. How could his cousin degrade herself like this?

The young man outside was deeply upset. He stormed into Zhu Ping'an's room, pointed at him, and loudly demanded, "Who are you?! How dare you act so boldly toward the young lady of the marquis household?!"

Zhu Ping'an ignored the confrontational youth and instead turned his gaze to Li Yanzhou, who had followed behind.

He dares ignore me?!

Seeing that Zhu Ping'an was ignoring him, the young man's already wounded pride flared into anger. But before he could explode, the plain-looking youth who had ignored him opened his mouth. "Brother-in-law, who is this young master?"

With this light and casual remark, the young man was instantly silenced. What did he just call Yanzhou? Brother-in-law?! What does that mean? Could it be... As he recalled the interactions between Li Shu and Zhu Ping'an, the young man suddenly realized the truth. He stood there as if struck by lightning.

When his aunt had suggested introducing him to cousin Li Shu, he had hesitated. After all, Li Shu was merely the daughter of the least favored third master of the Marquis of Linhuai's household. But upon seeing Li Shu today, he had been struck speechless -she was a peerless beauty, even more stunning than the top courtesan of the Peach Blossom Courtyard.

Such a beauty should be matched with a talent like himself!

After seeing her just once, the young man had firmly agreed to his aunt's proposal. But damn it-what was that "brother-in-law" supposed to mean?

"Ahem... This is my cousin, Zheng Duo, second son of my uncle, the Provincial Governor of Zhejiang, Lord Zheng. Ahem, Cousin, this is Zhu Ping'an, who was betrothed to Fifth Sister by Third Uncle in the countryside. Third Uncle just informed the family of the engagement, so he hadn't had time to tell you yet."

Fatty Zhou coughed twice and began to explain.

"What? Cousin Shu is engaged? And to someone from the countryside?" Zheng Duo looked as if he couldn't accept this news. He scrutinized Zhu Ping'an with contempt and indignation. "Is Cousin Shu really Third

Uncle's biological daughter? How could Third Uncle treat her like this? No, I can't just stand by and watch her fall into a pit of fire."

After speaking, Zheng Duo looked as if a sense of justice had taken hold of him. Determined to rescue cousin Shu from this disaster, he turned around in righteous indignation and headed out-presumably to speak to the Lady of the Marquis Household or the matriarch.

"Cousin, wait for me!" Fatty Zhou called out and, wobbling his chubby body, ran after him.

Zhu Ping'an smiled slightly as he watched the two leave. A "rival in love" had appeared out of nowhere. It seemed his days at the Marquis Household wouldn't be peaceful anymore. Still, he would just take things as they came. With that thought, he bowed his head and continued eating.

Things developed just as Zhu Ping'an had expected. That afternoon, just after his nap, a servant came to inform him that Young Master Li Yanzhou, Young Master Zheng Duo, and the Marquis Household's Second Miss were holding a poetry and tea gathering in the Bamboo Garden and had invited him to join.

Ugh, how boring!

A chubby guy who's been kissed before, a second-generation rich kid who thinks he's the reincarnation of Pan An and Li Bai, and a bunch of back courtyard ladies scheming against each other. Such a poetry gathering could at best be compared to the Heroine's Poetry Meet in Dream of the Red Chamber.

But even so, Zhu Ping'an had overestimated this poetry gathering...

The venue was arranged to appear quite elegant. Several maids brewed tea over charcoal in the courtyard, and a long pavilion stood in the Bamboo Garden. A table for wine and poetry was placed in the center. Ink paintings hung inside the pavilion—likely pulled from storage to enhance the atmosphere. The floor was covered with thick, gold-embroidered carpets, and intricately carved incense stands stood beside the pillars, filling the air with delicate fragrance. A young girl skilled in zither played music live in the courtyard, and colorful ribbons were tied to the bamboo stalks.

Several ladies from the Marquis Household, including Li Shu, were present. There were also many maids and older women serving, as well as the household's rowdy children.

When Zhu Ping'an was led into the Bamboo Garden by a servant, Zheng Duo was just about to recite a poem. At that moment, Young Master Zheng had changed into a white brocade robe—spotless and stylish. His hair was crowned with flawless jade, making him look every bit the noble gentleman, far more elegant than Zhu Ping'an.

Zheng Duo stood with his hands behind his back, his eyes gleaming with confidence, his dark eyebrows sharp and strong. He radiated a heroic aura, as if he were capable of great feats and about to express lofty ambitions with a single breath.

As Zhu Ping'an stepped onto the pavilion, Young Master Zheng began to move. With bold strokes, he quickly wrote a vigorous poem:

"Ode to the Pavilion of Penglai"

Oh, what a Penglai Pavilion, where immortals sit above.

Warm sunlight shines, and sea glistens below.

By the window, we place wine, singing loudly to the sea.

If it's a contest of drinking, let's drink until we drop!

After completing the poem, Zheng Duo neatly placed his brush on the inkstone with the flair of a gentleman.

Zhu Ping'an saw this "Ode to the Pavilion of Penglai" the moment he reached the pavilion. The flood of "artistic expression" nearly made him choke.

The second and third young ladies of the household twitched their mouths upon seeing their cousin's poem and couldn't utter a word. Li Shu rolled her eyes and didn't even bother looking again.

Only Fatty Zhou clapped and praised the poem, of course. The surrounding maids and older women also joined in, exclaiming "Good poem! Good poem!" amid the excitement. Zheng Duo basked in their applause, clearly pleased with himself.

"Oh, isn't this the talented scholar from the countryside? Come, come-compose a poem about the Pavilion of Penglai too," said Zheng Duo brightly upon spotting Zhu Ping'an.

What a Penglai Pavilion, singing loudly to the sea... This kind of poetry gathering-what a joke! He'd be better off spending that time studying for the imperial exam.

"Ahem... Young Master Zheng, your talent is unmatched. I, Ping'an, am ashamed in comparison... Well, I have pressing matters to attend to, so I'll take my leave."

Zhu Ping'an forced a polite smile, gave a bow to everyone, and turned to leave.

Watching Zhu Ping'an's retreating figure, Zheng Duo was stunned-this outcome was just too easy. He had organized this poetry gathering to showcase his talent in front of Li Shu, and to crush Zhu Ping'an with it, making Li Shu realize that he was the better match. He didn't expect to achieve his goal so effortlessly.

See? The way cousin Shu is looking at me has changed!

Feeling triumphant, Zheng Duo thought he should seize the moment and write another poem to firmly establish his literary reputation. So he returned to the table, picked up the brush, and prepared to write again.

"I still have things to tidy up in my room. You all enjoy yourselves," Li Shu said calmly, then gracefully walked away with her little bun-faced maid.