

Nobel Ruler 111

Chapter 111: Ferocious Beast!

The next moment, the palm that she placed on the door seemed to attract all sorts of fire as it burned crazily.

Almost immediately, the fire seemed to extend from her palm to the rest of her body. The fiery, boiling heat surrounded her.

It was as though every inch of her body was scorching because of the burning fire. It was as if something had wrapped around her organs tightly, hurting the depths of her heart.

Chu Liuyue was shocked and angry. *This fire is killing me.*

She wanted to move backward, but she discovered that she could not move at all. Her entire person was controlled by something else.

The fire rapidly burned her limbs and bones, heading straight for her dantian.

The harsh and petrifying murderous intent made Chu Liuyue's hair stand on end.

The dantian was the most important thing to a cultivator. Once it was spoiled, one would never be able to cultivate again.

This fire was actually going straight for her dantian.

When the strong force was about to strike her dantian, the water droplet—which had always been quietly floating in Chu Liuyue’s dantian—suddenly started spinning rapidly.

Hong!

An invisible pressure burst out of Chu Liuyue’s body and went straight out.

Chu Liuyue could even clearly feel the two forces intensely clashing as the terrifying strength spread around her body. At this moment, Chu Liuyue felt as if her entire body had been invaded by molten lava. Every single inch of her body hurt.

The lucky thing was that the energy exuded by the water droplet was very powerful. It had almost overwhelmed and killed off the energy that wanted to kill Chu Liuyue.

The horrifying pain then gradually dissipated.

However, Chu Liuyue did not dare to relax as she stared at the etching on the door.

The eagle’s eyes were actually closed as if everything that happened just now was just an illusion.

Chu Liuyue clenched her fists tightly. *No. That definitely wasn't an illusion! Without the water droplet's power, I would've died.*

She had never expected her to walk on the edge of life, even before she entered Jiuyou Tower.

“What’s the matter? Is there a problem?” asked the elder curiously when he saw Chu Liuyue stand in front of the door and did not move.

Chu Liuyue turned back.

The elder and the surrounding people seemed not to have noticed what just happened the moment before.

A thought flashed across her mind, and she shook her head. “Nothing.” Then, she no longer stopped in her tracks and walked in.

...

Jiuyou Tower had nine levels in total and many different rooms. It was very spacious inside.

The people who walked in had already familiarly walked towards the rooms they liked to start cultivating.

A spiral staircase was situated in the middle of the building, and it was clearly connected to the higher floors. Some people did not stop at the first floor and went straight up.

The higher the floor, the denser the Heaven and Earth Force in Jiuyou Tower. However, every floor was separated by a boundary. Anyone who wanted to enter the higher floors to cultivate had to make it past the boundary.

This would then be based on one's capabilities.

Normally, students with lower cultivations could only practice on the first floor.

Chu Liuyue did not eagerly choose which room to cultivate in, but she stood still and lowered her head to look at her palm. The scorching burn mark could still be clearly seen.

She had previously placed this hand on that door. That petrifying fire had also entered her body through her palm. That burn mark was the best evidence for whatever had just happened.

But why did it happen...? All the other students clearly had no issues entering Jiuyou Tower, so why did such a situation happen to me? Why did the eagle suddenly open its eyes and direct such murderous intent towards me? Perhaps... the murderous intent wasn't directed at me, but the water droplet in my dantian.

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows tightly, but she had no answers.

"Chu Liuyue, have you not picked a room?" A voice suddenly sounded from behind.

Chu Liuyue turned around and saw an unfamiliar young girl's face.

The girl was quite pretty, and her pair of almond-like eyes were very cute. She raised her hand and pointed at the side. "Actually, the rooms on the first floor are the same. You can just choose any one of them and go in to cultivate. However, those with names on the door means that there's someone inside. Therefore, you can just choose the ones without anyone inside."

Chu Liuyue nodded. "Thank you."

That young girl smiled and revealed her teeth. "What's there to thank? I'm Mu Hongyu. You can just call me Hongyu."

It turns out that this girl is an extrovert and makes friends easily. Chu Liuyue could not help but laugh. Chu Liuyue liked her personality, but she did not know the girl, so why did the girl seem so enthusiastic?

"Okay. You can call me Liuyue then."

Mu Hongyu curiously sized Chu Liuyue up. "You're really different from the rumors."

Without needing to ask Mu Hongyu what the 'rumors' said about her, Chu Liuyue could already guess. She also did not have any interest in asking. "Everyone is avoiding me, so why did you take the initiative to help me?"

Mu Hongyu grunted. "You taught Chu Xianmin a lesson, so I'll naturally stand at your side. An enemy's enemy is a friend."

Chu Liuyue felt amused. *It seems like this lady purposely helped me because she had grudges against Chu Xianmin. However, I do agree with whatever Mu Hongyu said.*

“I can’t talk to you anymore. I need to go up and cultivate.” After Mu Hongyu finished her sentence, she decisively turned around and went upstairs.

Chu Liuyue originally wanted to head upstairs as well. However, upon thinking about what had happened earlier, she hesitated and chose to cultivate on the first floor instead.

Chu Liuyue generally surveyed her surroundings and discovered that the layout of every room was the same. Eventually, she chose a room in an isolated corner.

After closing the door and hiding away from everyone’s gazes, Chu Liuyue sat cross-legged on the stone in the room. She was not in a rush to cultivate. Instead, she looked at the burn mark on her palm.

Just looking at it made her feel pain.

Chu Liuyue entered deep thought. *Jiuyou Tower is the most important place in Tian Lu Academy. It is also the academy’s foundation. If there were any movements in it, the academy teachers definitely wouldn’t sit around and do nothing. However, that elder was so near to me, but it seemed like he did not detect anything.*

Chu Liuyue did not dare guarantee that nobody else knew about this. However, the most important thing now was to find out why Jiuyou Tower would target her, or perhaps, target the water droplet in her body.

“Where did you come from? Why did you attract so much trouble?” asked Chu Liuyue in her heart.

However, the water droplet remained motionless.

“Today is my first time coming here. Luckily, I was only shocked and not hurt. However, this won’t happen again if I come here in the future, right?” Chu Liuyue’s eyelids twitched. “If this happens every day, I can’t come to Jiuyou Tower anymore.”

It’s so troublesome!

This time, the water droplet vibrated lightly and finally made a line of words appear. “What’s there to be afraid of a mere evil beast?”

Evil beast? Chu Liuyue was stunned as a cold feeling rose from the bottom of her foot. “You mean that Jiuyou Tower has fiends? How can that be possible?”

Chapter 112: A Big Gift

The Pit of Heavenly Origins was located beneath Jiuyou Tower. This was precisely why the Heaven and Earth Force within the tower was exceptionally abundant.

For a cultivator, Jiuyou Tower was the most desirable place because it quickened one’s cultivation speed. However, it was the exact opposite for a fiend.

The Pit of Heavenly Origins was a natural vault for force. It contained an extremely dense amount of Heaven and Earth Force, but it was also mixed with many impurities. Inhaling an excess amount would harm the cultivator's body, damaging their Yuan meridian in mild cases. For the more severe cases, it could be life-threatening.

A cultivator could discharge these impurities in their bodies through various means, but fiends couldn't. Besides, most fiends were cruel and fierce by nature. The Pit of Heavenly Origins had a great impact on them. If they stayed too long, they might lose their minds and eventually go berserk or even self-implode and die.

Jiuyou Tower is built above the Pit of Heavenly Origins. How is it possible to keep a fiend here?

The words on the water droplet quickly dissipated without further explanation.

Chu Liuyue frowned. It was a ridiculous statement, but she believed it for some reason. *Earlier, when that eagle opened its eyes, it had the scent of a fiend! I am absolutely sure of it. Why... would the academy do this?*

It is a great lurking danger for both the fiend and the students training in the tower! As the director of the academy, does Master know about this?

...

Prince Li Mansion...

The prince had disappeared for the night. Upon seeing his master return, Yu Mo greeted him in a hurry. "Master, you're back."

Rong Xiu nodded, looking well-rested.

Yu Mo was surprised when he saw the hidden smile on his master's lips. *As long as he stays with that person for a while, Master's mood will always be good. I'm immensely impressed!*

"Master, it looks like you've had a good night's rest."

Rong Xiu raised his saber-like eyebrows. "Was the house still lively yesterday?"

Yu Mo bowed. "Yes. They sent another group of men. However, we caught them when they were about to break into your bedroom."

"Are they also doomed warriors?"

"Yes, my lord. Just like the ones who came two days ago, these men were willing to sacrifice themselves. When their break-in attempt failed, they consumed poison and killed themselves. All but one died. We have locked him up. Yan Qing interrogated him all night and used many different methods. Finally, he gave up and talked."

Rong Xiu stopped walking. "Oh?"

Yu Mo whispered, "The Crown Prince sent them."

Rong Xiu smiled. "It's still the same old trick after all these years. He may not be tired, but I'm sick of it."

Yu Mo asked hesitantly, "Master, do you think this man..."

"Is Third Brother still in the Imperial City?" Rong Xiu asked abruptly.

"Yes. His Majesty said it's been tough on His Highness, the Third Prince, who has been fighting at the border for many years. Now that there is no war and the Third Prince is of marriageable age, His Majesty... wants him to remain in the Imperial City."

Rong Xiu chuckled.

Rong Jiu's reputation was on the crest of a wave from his outstanding achievements in the Northwest Army. Would his father feel at ease to let him go back?

The safest option was to keep him in the Imperial City.

"I have been back for some time now, but I have yet to pay a visit to Third Brother. Tell Yan Qing to bring a few men with him. I'm sending my brother a big gift."

"Yes!"

...

Rong Jiu joined the army when he was young and was away for many years. In the past, he always stayed in the palace for a few days before leaving. However, this time, Emperor Jiawen said he was too old to stay in the palace anymore. As such, he specially arranged a residence for the prince outside the palace.

The size of his residence was similar to Rong Xiu's Prince Li Mansion. Even so, the emperor's decree to bestow him a title never came. Initially, Rong Jiu had held out some hope. He waited day after day. However, Emperor Jiawen refused to let him leave each time. Deep down, Rong Jiu understood his intentions.

A title bestowment was a small matter. However, keeping him trapped in the Imperial City was not! The Northwest Army had been asking him to return, but Rong Jiu knew in his heart that it would be difficult this time.

Once he figured this out, he calmed down and continued to stay in the Imperial City as though he hadn't noticed the emperor's fears at all.

Rong Jiu and Rong Feng were sparring in the backyard. The glint from their blades resembled lightning during their friendly exchange!

Rong Feng was quite gifted, and he had been cultivating diligently with his master in the palace. Although he was only 15 years old, he was already a stage three warrior. Nevertheless, he was still a bit young when compared to the experienced Rong Jiu.

After ten rounds, Rong Jiu found the right moment. He thrust his spear and disarmed Rong Feng easily, causing the latter's sword to fly out of his hand.

Rong Feng watched his sword fall and smiled bitterly. "Third Brother, can't you give in to me? It's so boring every time!"

Rong Jiu waved his spear around with ease. "Who would give in to you on the battlefield?"

Speechless, Rong Feng shrugged his shoulders and gave him a smug smile. "I know you mean well! Those people in the palace are always worried about hurting me. It's no fun at all!"

The corners of Rong Jiu's mouth twitched. "Why don't you go to Tian Lu Academy? The teachers there don't do that."

"I'm not going when the Crown Prince is there!" Rong Feng rolled his eyes. "I've been compared to him since I was a kid. I'm sick of it."

Rong Jiu simply stared at him. "That's why you've been hiding your strength from everyone, pretending that you're inferior to him?"

"Who dares to be better than the Crown Prince? Wouldn't that be asking for trouble? It's not like I have nothing better to do!" Rong Feng threw himself onto the wooden rattan chair at the side. "Look at Seventh Brother. He hasn't been back to the Imperial City for ten years, and he got himself into trouble just because Father bestowed a title on him. Third Brother, I think you being here is a thorn in his eye!"

Rong Jiu was about to say more, but he saw his trusted aide approaching quickly.

"Your Highness, someone from Prince Li Mansion is here. He said His Highness, Prince Li, has a gift for you. It's been placed outside the door."

"Gift? Bring it in."

Rong Feng was right behind him, looking all curious. "Ah? Third Brother, what gift did Seventh Brother send you? Isn't your birthday still early yet?"

Rong Jiu didn't speak, but he was thinking to himself.

Soon, a wooden box was carried in.

Rong Jiu narrowed his eyes. He stretched his arm out, turned his wrist, and thrust the spear at the box. It opened!

His face was hit by a strong scent of blood!

A man covered in bruises and blood was lying in the box!

His body was twisted into a bizarre position and stuffed into the box. The sight sent chills down one's spine just by looking at him!

Rong Feng exclaimed. Almost immediately, he turned pale and started to retch. He had never seen anything like this before.

Rong Jiu looked at the box with furrowing brows.

“T-Third Brother! Is this a d-dead man?” Rong Feng struggled to speak. “Why did Seventh Brother send you this?”

Someone beside them reminded, “Your Highness, this man is still alive. He just lost a lot of blood and passed out.”

Rong Jiu stepped forward.

“Brother, don’t go!”

Rong Jiu thrust his spear, and an object flew out from the box. It was a small seal.

Rong Jiu picked it up and studied it. His expression then changed. After a moment’s thought, he said, “Lock this man up and keep him alive. He must not die!”

With that, he turned and walked away.

Rong Feng hurried and followed him. “Brother, where are you going?”

Rong Jiu didn’t look back. Since Rong Xiu had sent him such a big gift, he obviously had to accept it.

Chapter 113: Urgent Summon

Three days flew by. In the blink of an eye, it was Chu Xianmin's wedding day.

With the exception of her own residence, the rest of the Chu family did not have any decorations to commemorate the festive occasion.

In the past, whenever there was a wedding ceremony in the house, the servants were always eager to rush to work. On the one hand, they wanted to leave a good impression on the master. On the other hand, they wanted to earn more money.

However, Chu Xianmin's courtyard was deserted. Only those who usually worked here were busy. If it wasn't inevitable, they wouldn't want to be here either.

The news had spread throughout the whole household—this time, Chu Xianmin was getting married to the Crown Prince as a concubine. It was really humiliating!

For this reason, First Elder didn't even prepare a dowry for her. This was proof that this marriage wasn't a joyous occasion.

A few servants whispered as they were packing Chu Xianmin's belongings. "I thought Third Missy would become the Crown Princess when she married the Crown Prince. Who would have expected her to be his concubine! How will this look on the Chu family?"

"Exactly! Life in the Chu family hasn't been easy for the past few years, and now the trueborn lady is marrying to be someone's concubine. What a joke! Third Missy used to be so glamorous, but now she's the whole city's laughingstock!"

“Who can she blame? She’s disfigured, and she can’t go anywhere without wearing a veil. Besides, her reputation was ruined long ago. Even if she wanted to, nobody would want to marry her! She has nowhere to go other than Crown Prince Mansion.”

“Shush! She’s coming out!”

The door opened, and Chu Xianmin came out—helped by one of the ladies. All the servants in the courtyard shut up immediately, but their eyes constantly scrutinized Chu Xianmin.

She wore a red wedding dress with a veil covering her face. However, she didn’t wear a phoenix coronet on her head. Instead, there was only a jade hairpin with gold trimmings in her hair.

It wasn’t because she didn’t want to dress up for the occasion. It was due to a rule.

The phoenix coronet and the scarf over the bride’s ceremonial robe were reserved for first wives. She was marrying the prince as his concubine. As such, everything about her wedding must be kept simple.

The courtyard was deserted when Chu Xianmin walked out of her room. Except for her usual servants, no one came to congratulate her!

Well, it’s better this way. They would just come and mock me anyway. Chu Xianmin gritted her teeth, and her nails dug deep into her palms. Only then did she manage to suppress the anger and grievances inside her.

“It’s so quiet. I don’t hear any gongs or drums. The Crown Prince isn’t here yet?” Chu Xianmin asked, holding back her anger.

Those people at Crown Prince Mansion are too much! In the past, they would suck up to me. However, they are neglecting me on my wedding day just because I’m in dire straits!

The crowd exchanged looks among themselves.

Lu Yao, who stood beside her, looked stiff. She had forgotten to tell Minmin that the Crown Prince need not be here to receive her in person.

Someone approached them quickly at this moment.

“Aren’t you packed already? Why aren’t we leaving? The palanquin is waiting outside. Third Missy, please hurry!”

Chu Xianmin thought the man looked familiar. He was only an ordinary guard who used to bow and nod to her. However, he dared to speak to her in such a disrespectful manner now!

This wasn’t it. The most important thing...

“W-what do you mean? His Highness isn’t coming?” Chu Xianmin stared at him.

Lu Yao pulled her aside and whispered, “Minmin, according to the rules, this is correct...”

Chu Xianmin finally came to her senses. *The Crown Prince isn't even here to receive me on my so-called 'wedding day.'* Instead, he simply sent a random person over!

That guard broke into a sarcastic smile. "Third Missy, His Highness is a very busy man. He doesn't have the time for such trivial matters."

Trivial matter? This is the most important thing in a woman's life. He actually said this is a trivial matter! Chu Xianmin had imagined marrying into Crown Prince Mansion countless times. It should have been a grand event with a flurry of flowers, not as crude and disgusting as it was!

It was at this moment that she came to her senses and realized she was a concubine!

Chu Xianmin didn't know how she had endured the waves of emotions inside her or how she had gotten into the palanquin outside the gate.

She only came to her senses when she finally arrived at Crown Prince Mansion.

She lifted the side curtain to look out. The gates to Crown Prince Mansion were shut. It didn't look like a wedding was going on at all.

Yes.

She could only enter via the side entrance.

A strong sense of humiliation welled up inside her!

Chu Xianmin had been the most beautiful girl since the day she was born. She had been the envy of everyone for so many years, but she had never been so lowly! Her hatred for Chu Liuyue increased.

A servant led her to a courtyard at the back of Crown Prince Mansion. "Ting Feng Court will be your residence from now on. His Highness is occupied with other matters for the day and won't be able to come. You can wait for him here." With that, the man, who showed her around, left.

Chu Xianmin glanced at her surroundings. A few girls and a pageboy were outside, presumably sent to wait on her. She felt suffocated and couldn't care less about them.

There was only one way left for her. No matter what, she had to win the Crown Prince's favor!

...

Chu Xianmin waited for the whole day. It wasn't until nightfall that the courtyard suddenly became lively.

"His Highness, The Crown Prince!"

Chu Xianmin got up in a hurry upon hearing this.

Rong Jin had already opened the door and entered.

"Your Highness, you're finally here."

After the previous incident, Rong Jin had been displeased with Chu Xianmin. If his father hadn't pressured him into marrying her, he didn't even want to see her at all. As such, he had kept himself occupied during the day and delayed coming here until nightfall.

The second he walked through the door, he saw a familiar silhouette.

Chu Xianmin looked pretty in her red wedding dress as she stood waiting.

The warm and dim candlelight in the room cast a hazy glow around her, giving her a rare charm. Although she wasn't dressed to the nines, the cutting of her wedding dress enhanced the curves of her slender and exquisite figure, making her waist look wholesome.

Rong Jin examined her with narrowed eyes.

Other things aside, Chu Xianmin was indeed beautiful. The red veil hid her face, only revealing a pair of timid eyes that was particularly attractive.

Rong Jin approached her. His voice sounded gentler. "There's too much going on today, so I haven't been able to get away. That's why I'm late. Minmin, you won't blame me, will you?"

"How could I? Your Highness remembers me even though you have more important things to deal with. I am already very happy," Chu Xianmin said with a smile. However, tears filled her eyes, making her look extremely pitiful.

It pained Rong Jin to see her like this. He reached out and caressed her shoulder. Then, he suddenly moved and pulled her veil away. “Minmin...”

Chu Xianmin never expected him to be so direct. She had a bad feeling, and she tried to stop him immediately. Alas, it was already too late.

Rong Jin had already seen the horrible, red scar along her cheek!

“Y-You... Your face...” He backed away quickly as though he had seen something terrifying. The moment of intimacy from earlier had vanished!

Chu Xianmin felt like he had slapped her across her cheek. She pulled her veil back in place in a panic. When she was about to defend herself, she heard Song Yuan’s urgent voice coming from outside.

“Your Highness! There’s been an urgent summon from His Majesty!”

Chapter 114: Fiend Tidal

Rong Jin was instantly relieved when he heard this. “Y-You can go to bed first! I’ll come back and see you another time!” Instead of waiting for Chu Xianmin to respond, he turned and strode out of the room.

“Your Highness...” In her panic, Chu Xianmin tried to catch up with him to explain.

However, Rong Jin turned back abruptly and said with a frown, “By the way, it’s better if you stay at home as much as possible instead of going out unnecessarily. You can still go to the academy, but your face... It would be good if you wear your veil!”

After saying that, he left in a hurry as if some beasts were chasing him. He felt his stomach churn whenever he thought of that horrifying face! *It’s disgusting! It is a wonder I even thought she was beautiful just a few minutes ago!*

Rong Jin vanished like the wind, leaving Chu Xianmin alone in the room. She stood there in a daze for a long time before erupting into a laugh filled with hostility and resentment!

...

Rong Jin strode out of Ting Feng Court as he asked Song Yuan, “What happened to make Father summon me so urgently at this hour?”

“I’m not sure either, Your Highness. Eunuch Min came personally. It looks serious.”

True enough, Rong Jin looked up and saw Eunuch Min. He became more confused. *What could have happened that Eunuch Min personally had to come this late at night?*

Eunuch Min was pacing anxiously while he waited. He promptly stepped forward when he saw Rong Jin from afar. “Oh gosh, Your Highness. You’ve come out! We have to hurry. His Majesty is expecting you!”

Rong Jin frowned. “What’s the hurry, Eunuch Min? What’s going on?”

“I have no idea either, Your Highness! This afternoon, the Third Prince came into the palace to see His Majesty. They talked for a long time in the Imperial Study. After he left, His Majesty ordered you to come and see him as soon as possible!”

Eunuch Min put his hand against his chest and hesitated. “Erm... Your Highness, there’s something you should know. His Majesty is fuming at the moment. You should be careful when you arrive...”

Angry? Rong Jin frowned even more. *Did Rong Jiu have anything to do with this? I have had no dealings with Rong Jiu all this time, so why would he be involved?*

“Thank you, Eunuch Min.” Rong Jin asked no more and went with the eunuch.

...

It was an extremely hot summer night.

Rong Jin was covered in sweat by the time he rushed to the Imperial Study. When he entered, he felt despair once he saw his father’s icy glare. “Father...”

Emperor Jiawen suddenly picked up the inkstone from the table and hurled it at Rong Jin!

Rong Jin dared not dodge. He took the blow and suffered a wound on his forehead. Blood began to flow like a river! He knew the situation was against him and immediately fell on his knees. “Father, if you want to teach me a lesson, I’ll gladly accept it. However, can you tell me why...”

“You know very well what you’ve done!” Emperor Jiawen was livid as he interrupted the Crown Prince.

This was the first time Rong Jin had seen his father like this. His heart continued to sink. *What... the hell is going on?*

“Rong Jin, you are already the Crown Prince! Is there a need for you to make a move against your own brother? Is his presence that intolerable for you?” Emperor Jiawen rebuked angrily.

Rong Jin came to his senses. He was terrified. *Does Father know that I sent someone to spy on Rong Xiu?*

“I know that Rong Jiu has made a lot of military achievements and that he can fight with you in court to a certain extent, so you dislike him. However, he’s your younger brother after all. You’re also the Crown Prince already, so how can you be so petty?”

Rong Jin was dazed. *Rong Jiu? That’s not right! I clearly sent people to...*

“Father, kindly investigate. I didn’t—”

“How dare you deny it? Your man has already been detained by Rong Jiu!”

Rong Jin’s remaining words got stuck in his throat, and he could not say anything else.

“If it weren’t for him being in the military for so many years and was alert enough, he might have already died!” Emperor Jiawen took in a deep breath. “You’ve greatly disappointed me!”

As if struck by lightning, Rong Jin's heart felt like the stormy sea. *That's not right! My man went to investigate Rong Xiu, and I did not do anything to Rong Jiu. There must be a problem here! I am indeed fearful of Rong Jiu, but I did not do anything to him.*

He very clearly knew that Rong Jiu had a lot of achievements and that his father had already noticed this; it was the very reason why his father made Rong Jiu stay in the Imperial City for so long. Emperor Jiawen wanted to strip Rong Jiu of his control over the Northwest Army.

He could just sit this one out and reap the spoils later, so why would he cause trouble for nothing?

Could it be... Rong Xiu and Rong Jiu have joined hands? When Rong Jin thought of this, his face darkened even more.

In Emperor Jiawen's eyes, Rong Jin's changing face naturally made it look like he had admitted to his wrongdoings.

"Harming your own brother... You've really grown up!"

Rong Jin could not argue back and did not say a single word. *Since Rong Jiu dared to lodge a complaint with Father, he must have solid evidence. If I denied it and the investigation continued, I would just cause trouble for myself. Besides, I can't say that I was going for Rong Xiu. The consequences would be even worse!*

After much thinking, Rong Jin could only clench his teeth and admit it. "I... know I'm wrong! I just wanted to test Rong Jiu's abilities. I didn't intend to kill him. Father, kindly rethink your decision! I was just too impulsive and made a huge mistake. Father, please punish me!"

Emperor Jiawen stared at him with a deadly gaze.

...

Cultivation time always passed very quickly.

In the blink of an eye, Chu Liuyue had already stayed in the academy for five days. In these few days, she had gradually familiarized herself with all the classes in the academy and had begun adjusting to life at the academy.

Actually, the students could choose the majority of their classes; their teachers would not force them.

As Chu Liuyue had chosen only a few lessons, she had more freedom with her time.

Other than going to Jiuyou Tower to cultivate for two hours a day and occasionally attending lessons, Chu Liuyue spent most of her time cultivating in her own residence.

After the first day, the weird scenario did not occur in Jiuyou Tower again, but Chu Liuyue still felt that a pair of eyes seemed to be staring at her in the dark.

After some serious consideration, she did not ask Elder Ye about this. She felt that this was related to the mysterious water droplet in her body.

Rong Xiu did not come back again.

Chu Liuyue finally returned to her own bed, but she could still smell the faint, cold peach blossom fragrance, which caused her to think about that person from time to time. Chu Liuyue wanted to move into the neighboring room, but she decided against it in the end after she thought of the faint fragrance in that room and how she always slept especially well.

...

Today, Chu Liuyue went to Jiuyou Tower to cultivate as usual and left after two hours.

When she came out, she coincidentally met Mu Hongyu. Chu Liuyue nodded to greet her, but she did not expect Mu Hongyu to follow her.

“I heard that you come here to cultivate every day.”

Chu Liuyue slightly smiled. “You’ve heard quite a bit.”

“Really? How can you be so willing to use your cultivation time quota?” Mu Hongyu gasped, and her eyes were filled with unconcealable envy. “That’s right... You have 38 hours. Even if you come every day, you can cultivate here for half a month at least. Unlike me... I spent all that effort and only earned four hours of cultivation time at Jiuyou Tower. Thus, I have to use the time frugally.”

Chu Liuyue’s interest was piqued. “How do you earn the hours?”

“You don’t know? That seems right. You’ve just arrived at the academy, so you shouldn’t know much about it. There are many ways to earn cultivation time. I’ll slowly tell you about them in the future. However, let me ask you this first: Who will you group with in the upcoming Fiend Tidal?”

Chapter 115: Form a Team

“Fiend Tidal?” Chu Liuyue was confused.

“You don’t know this too? Wan Ling Mountain will experience a Fiend Tidal every August, and countless fiends will fight to go there, even the powerful ones. If you’re lucky, you might even meet an advanced fiend. This is the best time to hunt for fiends, and the academy sends elders to bring us there every year. Students can form teams on their own, and we’ll take action in teams after we reach Wan Ling Mountain. The kind of fiends we get to hunt will then be based on our own abilities,” explained Mu Hongyu.

Chu Liuyue suddenly realized what happened.

The original owner seemed to have a blurred impression of this because the Crown Prince, Rong Jin, hunted his fourth-grade fire-eyed leopard during the Fiend Tidal a year ago.

When the news spread, Rong Jin was put in the spotlight for quite a while. Everyone knew that the Crown Prince was strong and could even personally hunt such a fiend.

One needed to know that a first-grade to third-grade fiend could only be considered as a low-grade one, while fourth-grade to sixth-grade fiends belonged to the middle-grade. Seventh-grade to ninth-grade fiends were fiends that only existed in rumors.

Even though a fourth-grade fiend was only one grade higher than a third-grade one, both were actually worlds apart. However, Chu Liuyue had been busy cultivating recently and did not care much about that.

Mu Hongyu is telling me this...

“You want to team with me?” asked Chu Liuyue.

“Yeah!” Mu Hongyu nodded magnanimously and did not hide her intentions. “You’re the top scholar in the warrior assessment and also a Xuan Master. Thus, you can be considered as one of the most capable people in our cohort. Who else should I team with? Don’t worry. I won’t drag you down. In another half a month, I can likely break through and become a stage-four warrior.”

Chu Liuyue was not worried about this.

Mu Hongyu did lose to Gu Mingfeng in the previous assessment and came in third. This ability could be considered as one that was stronger than average.

“Okay, let’s work together then.” She had no reason to reject Mu Hongyu’s passionate invitation.

Mu Hongyu was surprised at Chu Liuyue readily agreeing to her request. “Y-You really agreed?”

“Yeah, is there anything wrong?”

“Not really. It’s just... Xuan Masters always look down on us warriors, and we don’t really like them too. Thus, we rarely team together. Won’t they say anything if you’re teaming with me, now that you’re a Xuan Master?” asked Mu Hongyu hesitantly.

Chu Liuyue laughed. *This fight is really childish. Why would anyone care about this in a world where abilities are prioritized?*

“There’s no need for that.”

Upon seeing Chu Liuyue’s nonchalance, Mu Hongyu smiled, and her almond-like eyes sparkled. “Okay, this is a deal then! You can pull anyone over if you have any other people in mind. We need five people to form a team, so we still need three more.”

Chu Liuyue thought for a while before saying, “You can just make the decisions.” She was not familiar with these people, so she would just let Mu Hongyu do the work.

When Mu Hongyu heard that, she instantly felt that Chu Liuyue completely trusted her, giving her an even better impression of Chu Liuyue. “Okay!”

...

When Chu Liuyue went for the meditation class in the afternoon, she saw Gu Mingzhu standing at the door.

The moment Gu Mingzhu saw her walking over, her face darkened.

Chu Liuyue walked over at normal speed. “Second Gu Missy, did you bring the two Xuan formation drawings today?”

Gu Mingzhu looked even worse as she took out two rolls of Xuan formation drawings from her sleeves and threw them at Chu Liuyue. “Aren’t they just two Xuan formation drawings? What’s there to rush me about? Here they are!”

Chu Liuyue gently took the items and opened them to take a look. After she confirmed that they were fifth-grade Xuan formation drawings, her lips curled up, and she delightedly said, "Second Gu Missy has said before that my status has degraded after leaving the Chu family. Therefore, fifth-grade Xuan formation drawings are very valuable to me. I'm not like Second Gu Missy, who can easily wager these items in a bet."

Gu Mingzhu was so angry that her face turned white. She did not even dare to tell her family head about this. Even though she was doted on in the Gu family, the family head would never have let her off if he found out about this. However, Chu Liuyue rushed Gu Mingzhu every time she saw her, saying that she would go straight to the Gu family and demand for the drawings if Gu Mingzhu didn't give her them.

How would Gu Mingzhu dare to let Chu Liuyue suffer so much? She could only beg her mother in private and bring the items over. She was even badly scolded for this.

After seeing how happy Chu Liuyue was, the resentment in Gu Mingzhu's heart was about to burst out. "Chu Liuyue, I'll remember you for this. You better pray hard that I won't find fault with you. If not, you'll get it from me!"

Chu Liuyue waved the Xuan formation drawings in her hands. "Thank you, Second Gu Missy, for remembering me. If there are more good presents, I'll be more than grateful."

Gu Mingzhu was furious, but she could only swallow her anger because class was about to start and more people were coming in. She harshly glared at Chu Liuyue before turning to enter the room.

Chu Liuyue ignored her and walked in as well.

The people in the room had gathered into groups as if they were all discussing something.

Once Chu Liuyue sat down on her seat, she saw Si Yang waving at her. “Hey, sick perv—Chu Liuyue! Why don’t you group with us for the Fiend Tidal?”

It turns out that everyone was talking about this. Chu Liuyue shook her head. “I’ve already agreed to group with someone else. Thanks for asking.”

“What? Someone already asked you? Who?” Si Yang gave up once he heard her words.

“Mu Hongyu.”

Si Yang was stunned and painfully said, “Mu Hongyu? That princess? Is there something wrong with you? You, me, and my brother—the three top Xuan Masters—combined will be unbeatable. Why did you group with her? Besides... she’s a warrior!”

“I’m also a warrior.” Chu Liuyue glanced at him. “Is there a rule which states that warriors and Xuan Masters can’t group together?”

Si Yang was stumped. “No, but...” *I planned it so well at first, but why did Mu Hongyu act so fast?*

“We already have four people now, and we’re just missing you. If you don’t join us, what will we do?”

When Chu Liuyue heard that, she shook her head silently. If it was only Si Ting and Si Yang, she could still discuss with Mu Hongyu, but four people meant trouble. Besides, she originally did not want to interact with Si Ting much, so this was better.

"I already made a deal with Mu Hongyu, so I can't go back on my words. Sorry." After she finished her sentence, she took out her chess pieces and had no intentions of continuing the conversation.

Si Yang defeatedly looked at Si Ting.

Si Ting looked nonchalant. "Since it's so, let's find someone else."

Si Yang sighed in his heart. He could tell that his brother had feelings for Chu Liuyue and wanted to create an opportunity for him during the Fiend Tidal, but...

"Si Ting, can I join you? I haven't formed a team yet." Gu Mingzhu had been eavesdropping on their conversation and immediately spoke when she saw the opportunity. She looked at Si Ting, filled with hope.

Chapter 116: Stuck

Si Yang glanced at her from the corner of his eye. "No!" *It will definitely spell trouble if a spoiled missy like Gu Mingzhu joins our team. Besides, can't she tell that Big Brother has no interest in her?*

Gu Mingzhu felt her face burn up when Si Yang outright rejected her in public. She looked at Si Ting in grievance but saw that he did not look at her at all. He even seemed nonchalant, as if he did not care about her.

Gu Mingzhu felt increasingly uncomfortable, and a fire burned in her stomach, causing her turmoil. She tightly bit her lips and controlled her impulsiveness. However, she became even more jealous and hated Chu Liuyue even more.

How can Chu Liuyue be invited by them, yet I was rejected when I asked? Chu Liuyue can easily get what I badly want but can't have. I do not believe that Chu Liuyue can continue to be so proud all the way.

Dongfang Qing quickly walked over.

The discussions in the room immediately died down.

Dongfang Qing happily smiled at the crowd. "It seems like all of you are looking forward to the Fiend Tidal. There's still half a month left, yet you're all so excited."

"Mr. Dongfang, is it true that high-level fiends will appear during the Fiend Tidal?" asked a student curiously.

Dongfang Qing stroked his beard. "Hundreds of fiends will gather at Wan Ling Mountain during the Fiend Tidal. If you're lucky enough, you might meet a high-level one."

Once he finished his sentence, the students' eyes lit up and filled with unconcealable excitement.

"If a cultivator can successfully make a pact with a fiend, it will undoubtedly increase their attacking power. The higher the fiend's level is, the more it can help you. This is especially so for Xuan Masters. Our bodies are relatively weaker, but we don't have to worry about it if we have fiends with us."

Xuan Masters had a higher status than warriors, but their weakness was that they were not good at fighting. They needed time and effort, especially when they were setting up Xuan formations. If fiends helped them at that time, it would be akin to adding wings to tigers. Thus, Xuan Masters were more interested in fiends than warriors.

“Some of you already have your own fiends, but most of you don’t. You can take this chance to find a suitable one for yourself. Give it a shot!”

“Mr. Dongfang, can’t a cultivator only have one fiend?”

“Yeah. Fiends are naturally temperamental and arrogant, so they won’t serve a master who already has made a pact with one. If you want to hunt for a new fiend, you need to release or kill your original one. Once fiends have a master, they’ll have a human scent on them. So they will be ostracized, even if they return to their packs. In most scenarios, they will only die if they’re abandoned by their Masters.”

The crowd nodded in understanding.

“Even though fiends are ferocious, it seems like they’re pretty prideful...”

Dongfang Qing emotionally sighed, “Yes. Once a fiend recognizes a master, they will forever be loyal to them, living and dying with their masters. Hence, you must be very careful and choose properly when hunting for fiends.”

The students were thrilled. “Yes!”

Chu Liuyue looked at the chessboard in front of her and suddenly stopped in her actions. *Live and die with their masters... So, after I died...*

“Okay, you should use the remaining time to work hard in your cultivation. When your abilities are elevated, you can then hunt for higher-grade fiends. Today, we’ll be testing you on water formations...” Dongfang Qing waved his hand, and the chess pieces flew out to form a new formation on the board.

Chu Liuyue looked down and collected her thoughts.

...

Chu Liuyue was pretty distracted during the lesson. Even though her eyes were glued to the chessboard, many different scenes appeared in her mind.

As the Tianling Dynasty’s heavenly princess in her previous life, she naturally had her own fiend. However, it had coincidentally been breaking through to the next level and fell into a deep sleep when she was in trouble. When she was betrayed and left in a perilous situation, she could only choose to commit suicide. However, she did arrange for its lodging before she took action.

I don't know what happened to it after that...

Country Yao Chen was very far away from the Tianling Dynasty. Based on her current status and ability, it was as hard as going to the moon for her to hear news from them, let alone going back there.

Perhaps she could only find out what happened when the so-called envoy came...

“Hm? Chu Liuyue, haven’t you solved the formation?”

After more than two hours, Si Yang solved the formation and noticed that Chu Liuyue was actually motionless and still staring at the chessboard when he turned around to look at her.

She had solved the formations not long after Si Ting the first few times. At first, everyone was still shocked, but they were all used to it happening now.

He did not expect to come in second this time, in front of Chu Liuyue!

Chu Liuyue recovered her senses.

Gu Mingzhu also solved the Xuan formation at this point, and the pieces loudly fell into place. She glanced at Chu Liuyue and sneered. "Pfft! One can only see a horse's power by traveling long distances. Everyone will know if one truly has the ability after some time."

Chu Liuyue was too lazy to care about her weird behavior. She lowered her head and started to place her pieces instead. Her actions were very fast, like a moving cloud and falling water. It was as if she completely did not need to think about it.

After making a few moves in such a manner, the Xuan formation sounded and unlocked. Afterward, she did not even look at the surrounding weird stares and directly stood up. "Mr. Dongfang, can I leave now?"

"Sure, of course! Tomorrow is a holiday, so you can go home earlier." Dongfang Qing readily agreed since he also noticed Chu Liuyue looking somewhat off today.

Chu Liuyue thanked him and left.

Gu Mingzhu coldly shouted, "What's there to be happy about?"

Si Ting looked up but could only see the corner of her clothes floating away. *What's... wrong with her?*

In his mind, Chu Liuyue had always been calm and collected as if nothing could move her. She could decisively sever her ties with the Chu family and live independently. Chu Liuyue was definitely much stronger than what she looked like. This was the first time he saw her so distracted.

Si Ting turned around, and his gaze landed on the fixed chessboard as his brows knitted tightly.

If I did not remember wrongly... Chu Liuyue seemed to have taken only one look at the chessboard before directly placing her pieces.

...

The academy had a break every five days, so Chu Liuyue just lightly packed her items and went home.

Chu Ning had not returned yet, so Chu Liuyue ate dinner on her own and went back to her room to rest. Once she lay down on the wooden chair, a weird noise sounded from outside the window.

Chu Liuyue looked over and saw a huge white head stuck at the window. A pair of icy-blue eyes stared straight at her.

It was actually Xue Xue.

Chu Liuyue looked at it and broke into laughter. The window was not that big, so almost half its head was gone with its head sticking through it.

“Xue Xue, why are you here?” asked Chu Liuyue as she walked over.

Xue Xue placed its paw on her hand and looked at her pitifully. Only God knew how busy it had been outside the past few days. It missed her like crazy.

“Quick, come in.” Chu Liuyue patted its head and moved backward.

Xue Xue wanted to barge in eagerly, but the sound of wood splitting was heard. It immediately stopped in its actions and had a stiff expression.

Chu Liuyue’s eyes turned, and she noticed that the edges of the window were broken. Her eyelids twitched. “Y-You’re stuck?”

Chapter 117: Danger

Xue Xue looked at Chu Liuyue with its eyes wide open and did not know what to do. Its gigantic head was stuck at the window, and it looked very comical.

“It’s broken anyway. Just come in.” Chu Liuyue touched her forehead and waved towards it in an angry yet laughable manner.

It was originally difficult for someone of Xue Xue’s size to barge in through the window. Also, it could easily destroy the entire ledge with its strength.

Xue Xue only relaxed when it realized that Chu Liuyue was not angry, and it jumped straight into her arms.

Chu Liuyue caught it and stabilized herself with much difficulty.

The big fluff ball in her arms made Chu Liuyue’s originally depressed mood a lot better.

She hugged Xue Xue and stood on the tip of her toes, feeling a little shocked. “Hm? Xue Xue, you seem to have slimmed down.”

It seemed to be slimmer from the first time they met.

Xue Xue passionately rubbed its cheeks against her face, tickling Chu Liuyue until she kept moving backward.

“Okay, okay. Xue Xue, stop messing around. It’s ticklish...”

Xue Xue only stopped after harassing her for a while. Xue Xue then obediently rested by her feet. Its tail kept wagging continuously, and it looked very cute.

Chu Liuyue could not help but smile. *If anyone else saw this scene, they would think that Xue Xue is my fiend.*

When Chu Liuyue thought of this, she felt even more amused. Now that she thought about it, Rong Xiu was Xue Xue's Master, but it seemed much closer to her.

From the first time they met till now, Chu Liuyue always felt strangely close to Xue Xue. She also genuinely felt that it would not hurt her.

Fiends were ferocious, and high-level fiends were especially arrogant. Logically speaking, they would not care about anyone else other than their masters. However, Xue Xue...

"I haven't seen you lately. Where have you been?" asked Chu Liuyue casually as she brushed its fur.

Xue Xue closed its eyes in comfort. When did it have such enjoyment when its Master was here? This was worth the hard work these few days.

Chu Liuyue did not mind when she saw the face of enjoyment Xue Xue, who acted as if it did not hear her words—had. At this moment, she did not feel as lonely with Xue Xue's company.

"Speaking of that, you and your Master are both very similar in one point."

Xue Xue moved and opened one eye to glance at her.

Chu Liuyue's thin, white fingers tapped its wet and rough nose. "You both love to barge into other people's houses in the middle of the night."

Xue Xue closed its eyes guiltily and rubbed against Chu Liuyue's palm as it purred.

Chu Liuyue sighed in her heart. *Its shameless appearance is even more like...*

"Yue'er, are you home?" Chu Ning's voice suddenly sounded from outside the door.

Chu Liuyue stood up to open the door happily, but Xue Xue was even faster than her as it jumped out of the window.

The originally damaged window now had an even bigger hole.

Chu Liuyue looked at it speechlessly. *I didn't even say anything, so why was Xue Xue so anxious?*

She opened the door and saw Chu Ning, whom she had not seen for days. He was wearing the black imperial guard armor and looked weary. However, his tired eyes brightened up once he saw Chu Liuyue.

"Yue'er, you're really home."

Chu Liuyue blinked and whined—a rare action from her. "It's a school holiday tomorrow, so I came right home after lessons today. I miss you a lot after not seeing you for a few days."

When Chu Ning heard his daughter said that, the tiredness he felt in the past few days had completely disappeared, and he instantly felt much comfort. "I also missed Yue'er very much! I was very busy recently, so I didn't even have time to visit you at the academy."

Chu Liuyue helplessly smiled. "Father, our house is pretty near the academy. You don't have to send me there. Also, you've just been appointed as the imperial guards' Commander in Chief, so you definitely have a lot of things to handle. It seems like you haven't rested these few days," said Chu Liuyue as she invited Chu Ning in and poured a cup of tea for him.

"That's right. Other than handling the imperial guards' affairs, I still need to investigate the Fourth Princess's incident. Previously, the Fourth Princess met with an accident at the hunting ground, and her pearl of essence was destroyed. The Emperor is heartbroken and keeps asking us to investigate properly. We've already punished tens of people in these few days."

Chu Liuyue gently replied with an "oh." She then asked, "Pearl of essence destroyed... Does that mean she can't cultivate anymore?"

"Yeah. This matter has affected the Fourth Princess greatly, and the palace is in chaos now. She even told us to find the fiend no matter what. However, she was the one who chased after the fiend and fell to the bottom of the cliff. Nobody else was around, so nobody knows what the fiend looks like. How do we even find it?"

"Fourth Princess should have seen it, right? If she described its appearance, it should be easy to find it."

"Fourth Princess herself didn't look at it properly. Also, she can't even talk about it properly as she's too shocked. Finding it will be as hard as finding a needle in a haystack." Chu Ning sighed and did not have much hope for this.

Chu Liuyue did not care about it.

Rong Zhen had been spoiled. Thus, she thought she could do everything she wanted, just because she was the Empress's first daughter. The past love she had would disappear very quickly after she became a good-for-nothing. Only a bleak future awaited her.

The people in the royal family were the cruelest and most heartless. People without any use would be abandoned immediately. It was a pity that Rong Zhen had not noticed this.

Chu Liuyue propped her chin up and casually asked, "I heard Chu Xianmin married the Crown Prince two days ago. That was really fast. The Crown Prince and Chu Xianmin finally got what they wanted."

Oh, maybe not Chu Xianmin. When she racked her brains to get the Crown Prince's attention, she probably did not think that she would marry him as a concubine. I've only entered the academy to cultivate for a few days, but many things have already happened in the Imperial City.

Chu Ning looked stern. "Yue'er, don't talk about the Crown Prince's situation so rashly. It was hard for us to have a clean cut with him, so it's better if we have nothing to do with him in the future."

Chu Ning's reaction made Chu Liuyue feel weird. Upon seeing Chu Ning's guarded appearance, a thought flashed across Chu Liuyue's mind. "... Did something happen to the Crown Prince?"

Chu Ning did not expect Chu Liuyue to be so smart and guessed the main point in no time. After thinking for a while, he knitted his brows and sighed. "This incident has too big of an implication. Yue'er, it's best if you don't ask about it. Just be careful about what you say."

He literally broke into a cold sweat after Emperor Jiawen called him over, and he found out about the incident.

Luckily, they had already severed ties with the Chu family and dissolved the marriage agreement with the Crown Prince previously. If not, the father-daughter duo would definitely be implicated.

In the past, Chu Ning hated Rong Jin. However, he was just thankful to avoid all of this now.

“Father, don’t worry. I know what to do,” said Chu Liuyue, but she wondered what exactly the Crown Prince did to give Chu Ning this reaction.

When she came out of the academy today, she did not hear any news. It seemed like the palace was keeping this confidential. However, the Crown Prince’s situation was probably very dangerous...

As the imperial guards’ Commander in Chief, Chu Ning was Emperor Jiawen’s knife.

It seemed like this knife was hovering above the Crown Prince’s head this time.

Chapter 118: Chase Debt

Rong Jin really did not have it easy these few days. Princes hurting each other to fight for power and authority was one of the things that the Emperor hated the most.

Emperor Jiawen had earned his throne in a similar manner back then, so he was extremely sensitive and suspicious about this.

Of course, he knew that this was an unavoidable fight in the royal family. However, he did not believe that Rong Jin was the first to strike.

Back then, the Emperor's father did not appoint the Crown Prince until way later, causing his other brothers and him to fight brutally. Thus, when it was his turn to choose, he appointed the Empress's eldest son—Rong Jin—as the Crown Prince early on as he was afraid that history would repeat itself.

However, reality was different from his wishes, and Rong Jin really disappointed him thoroughly.

Emperor Jiawen did not understand. Rong Jin was the Crown Prince, had a distinguished status, and was more talented than the rest. As long as the others did not revolt, the throne would be his. So why couldn't he hold himself back?

Emperor Jiawen did not announce this incident, commanded that everything should be kept confidential and that nobody should spread a word about this.

He then told Rong Jin to reflect on himself in his residence and confiscated his authority to supervise the six divisions.

All the booklets that had been sent to Crown Prince Mansion were sent back to the Imperial Study overnight by Rong Jin.

Rong Jin knew that the Emperor no longer trusted him. This was his biggest loss, compared to the rest. If the Emperor still could not trust him in the future, then...

Rong Jin did not dare to overthink as he knew that he was in the wrong. He did his best to admit his mistakes and clearly showed his stance in hopes of reducing his father's anger.

This was the biggest secret loss he had incurred since he became the Crown Prince. However, he could not take revenge on the instigator.

Rong Jin was very indignant, but he did not even dare to throw a tantrum as his father was definitely watching him in secret. What else could he do?

After much thinking, he could only shut himself in the study and not go out for two days.

On the third day, Chu Xianmin brought soup over as usual and was halted outside the door without surprise. Chu Xianmin could not hold herself back much longer.

On the first day she married the Crown Prince, he was called into the palace overnight and went straight to the study when he returned. She could not even catch a glimpse of him.

These three days, all the servants in the mansion talked bad about her. Many of them were also very rude to her as they saw that the Crown Prince didn't love her.

I must do something for myself today. However, Chu Xianmin knew that forcefully barging in was not advantageous to her. Therefore, she could only swallow her indignance and face the tightly shut door before saying, "Your Highness, I'll put the fritillary bulb and pear soup here. Do drink it when you have the time and don't tire yourself out. Also, I have a request. My body has recovered quite a fair bit after resting for a while, so I would like to go back to the academy tomorrow. What do you think?"

If she were the Crown Princess, she would, of course, be too lazy to head back. However, she was disfigured and was only left with this path.

If she still had capabilities, the Crown Prince would not be overboard with her. She had to go back, even if her most hated enemy, Chu Liuyue, was inside the academy.

After Chu Xianmin finished her sentence, she waited outside the door anxiously. She only heard Rong Jin's reply after a long time.

"You can go back to the academy if you want, but you're not allowed to stay there. Come back to the mansion every day. Also, you should always take care of yourself. Don't embarrass me."

Chu Xianmin acted as if she was granted something extravagant. "Thank you very much, Your Highness."

...

Early in the morning the next day, Chu Ning left in a rush.

Chu Liuyue guessed that the Crown Prince was in even more trouble than expected. This thought put her in a good mood, so she did not rest at home and walked out of the house and headed to Zhen Bao Pavilion.

Once her figure appeared in Zhen Bao Pavilion, a sharp-eyed pageboy went to the back and told Yan Ge.

Yan Ge, who was busy checking the stocks, did not continue with his work and reached the front desk in no time. His face was filled with enthusiasm, but he did not lose his manners. "Ms. Liuyue, what brings you here?"

“I have a break today, so I came here to take a look.”

“Hehe, that sounds great! Look around and see what you like!” Yan Ge rubbed his hands, and his gaze was filled with hope as if he would immediately give Chu Liuyue the item she liked.

Chu Liuyue hurriedly waved her hands. “No, no. Second Master Yan, you’re too kind. I still have many of the things you gave me, and I haven’t used them. I came here today to get a few people from you.”

Yan Ge was dazed. “You want some people from me? What are you planning to do?”

Chu Liuyue’s lips curved up slightly. “Chase a debt.”

...

In the Chu family’s main living room.

First Elder sat at the head of the table, and a stack of account books was on the table. The few people, who looked like they were managing things, stood in front of him with their heads hung low with faces filled with nervousness.

The room was very quiet, and one could only hear the sound of First Elder flipping the books.

With every page First Elder flipped through, the darker his face looked. At the very end, his gaze completely darkened, and he slammed the books on the table. “What’s the matter? Not only did the

stores under the Chu family's name not make any profit, but we have even suffered losses! What are you all doing?"

The few managers were frightened until they shivered.

One of them wiped the sweat off their foreheads and had a bitter look as he muttered, "First Elder, we have no choice. This year is a bad year, and we can't collect the rental fee for the fields. Our business is also doing badly, and there's nothing we can improve on. Besides, the residence has a large expenditure... so more money went out than in, resulting in huge losses."

"Weren't a few stores earning money? Where are their accounts?" First Elder flipped the books in frustration.

The few of them exchanged looks and spoke even softer.

"... First Elder, did you forget that those stores were given to Chu Ning by the head of the family? They're all written under his name... When he severed ties with the Chu family he sent people over to claim those stores."

First Elder was shocked and only remembered the incident then.

Chu Ning was originally very loved in the Chu family, publicly thought to be the next family head, so he had quite a few assets under his name. After he lost favor, his name was still written on the title deeds even though his situation was bad and the stores were taken away.

When Chu Ning was appointed as the imperial guards' Commander in Chief, it was not a problem for him to claim those stores back. The Chu family also did not have the guts to go against Chu Ning upfront.

First Elder's blood boiled, and he almost ripped the book apart. *If this goes on, the Chu family's lives will be even worse!*

"First Elder, C-Chu Liuyue is here!" At this moment, a pageboy suddenly ran into the house with a face filled with panic.

Everyone thought that they had heard him wrongly. *Didn't Chu Liuyue sever ties with the Chu family? Why would she dare to come here?*

First Elder squinted his eyes. "Is it really her?"

"Y-Yes it is." The pageboy was on the brink of tears. "She even brought a few people with her, and they're outside the door."

"She really ate bear hearts and leopard galls!" First Elder slammed the table and stood up. "How dare she come to the Chu family? I want to see what she's up to this time."

Even if she knelt down and begged him, he would not go easy on her.

The pageboy huffed and puffed before speaking with much difficulty. "First Elder, Chu Liuyue s-said..."

"Said what?"

“She said she came to chase a debt.”

Chapter 119

: Bloodshed

“Chase a debt?” First Elder was so angry that he laughed. “What does she want to chase?”

The pageboy staggered backward in fear. “S-She says that you haven’t given her things you promised to give in the agreement you signed when splitting the family assets previously... She also wants to claim the dowry her mother brought when she married into the family...”

The pageboy’s words shocked First Elder because he had almost forgotten about it. That day, he was driven to his grave by Chu Liuyue and did not even look at the details before signing the agreement.

After thinking about it now, the items he agreed to give to her were worth a huge sum of money. Just the dowry that Chu Liuyue’s mother gave to them alone was worth an extravagant amount. If he really returned all of the items to Chu Liuyue, the Chu family would lose a lot of money.

First Elder staggered backward in frustration as he glanced at the scattered account books on the table in the corner of his eyes. This put him in an even worse mood. The Chu family was currently losing money, and taking out this sum of money was akin to adding oil to the fire.

Why is Chu Liuyue so thick-skinned, daring to come to our residence and demand the items directly?

“First Elder, you should hurry up and go take a look. Chu Liuyue says that if she doesn’t get the money today, she’s not leaving... They have already blocked the entire gate...”

“Useless!” First Elder howled and walked outside with big steps.

Can a mere Chu Liuyue really take down the entire Chu family?

...

First Elder walked to the main entrance and almost fainted in anger upon seeing the scene in front of him. Chu Liuyue stood at the main entrance, and a group of curious onlookers surrounded her.

She was currently talking to the people around her in a sad tone. “...Yeah, when I was young, my mother left the world first, leaving my father and me to depend on each other. I think all of you know that my father got injured while serving the Emperor, so he couldn’t cultivate any longer. The Chu family said that my father and I had no ability to take care of my mother’s dowry, so they passed all of it to Lu Yao...”

“It has been so many years, and my father and I have finally made it big in life. I feel that everything else doesn’t matter. However, that dowry belongs to my mother, and it’s the last thing my mother left for me. If I don’t get it back, I’ll feel extremely uneasy...”

The crowd nodded in agreement.

Chu Liuyue and Chu Ning were considered ‘famous’ in the Imperial City, so the public always talked about them in private. They knew that Chu Liuyue was speaking the truth. Actually, everyone clearly knew that the Chu family had done this to take over the dowry of Chu Liuyue’s mother.

The Chu family looked like they ran a big business on the surface, but they were very greedy on the inside.

“Yes, yes! The dowry is yours! Other people shouldn’t take it. You must get it back!”

“Exactly! The Chu family is one of the four biggest families. It’s too much if they refuse to return you the dowry.”

“That’s true... If the Chu family really does that, they’re shameless.”

The crowd broke into discussions, and First Elder’s face turned green. He hollered, “Chu Liuyue, what are you doing?”

Chu Liuyue looked over and lazily glanced at him. “Oh, Chu First Elder, don’t you know what I’m doing here? Previously, you agreed to split the family assets and claimed that you’d send the things that belonged to my father and me to us. However, nobody showed up after such a long wait. I didn’t even see the items’ shadows. I thought that you were probably too busy and didn’t have time to arrange trivial matters like this, so I specifically brought some people over.”

Chu Liuyue raised her hand and pointed at the few people behind her. “These two are Zhen Bao Pavilion’s managers, and they’re very proficient at reading through account books. They’ll help us check on the assets later and will definitely not miss anything out. These four people are Zhen Bao Pavilion’s pageboys, and they’re very strong. Therefore, they can help carry the items away, and we won’t bother the Chu family members. Chu First Elder, what do you think of this arrangement?”

First Elder was so angry that he could not say a word. *This Chu Liuyue has it all planned out. She brought people along with her to block the gate and is determined to bring those items away. If I do not accede to her request, she will directly snatch the items away from me.*

“How dare you! This is the Chu family residence, not somewhere that you can mess around in.”

Chu Liuyue retorted, “Why wouldn’t I dare to do this? I just came back to take back the things that belong to my father and me. Why can’t I do that? Chu First Elder, are you planning on going back on your words? Hah, many people have witnessed what happened this time and the previous time, so it won’t look too good on you if you act in this manner.”

Her smile faded slightly. “Of course, I know this is the Chu family residence. If it weren’t because you didn’t carry out your end of the agreement, I wouldn’t have come. I’m afraid that coming here too many times would dirty my eyes.”

“Chu Liuyue, what are you talking about?” scolded Lu Yao, who had rushed over once she heard the news. Hatred flashed across her eyes.

Whenever she saw Chu Liuyue’s face, Lu Yao would remember her daughter’s disfigured appearance and miserable wedding.

“Even though you don’t have anything to do with the Chu family any longer, everyone here were your elders previously. Did you lose your manners after leaving the Chu family?” With Lu Yao’s last strand of rationality, she did not scold her loudly in public as she knew that it was better not to do things the hard way with so many people watching.

However, Chu Liuyue did not buy her tactic and was too lazy to even be superficial. “Lu Yao, you came here at the right time! My mother’s entire dowry is with you. Even if you needed to check the stocks, the time given is more than enough. Since I have already come here personally, return the entire dowry to me. Or... are you unwilling to give it up?”

Lu Yao could not refute Chu Liuyue's words in front of so many people, so she could only forcefully frown. "How can that be? Not mentioning the big businesses the Chu family runs, I—Lu Yao—am from the Lu family, so why would I covet your things?"

"That's great." Chu Liuyue interrupted her and took out a list from her sleeves. Chu Liuyue passed the list to the two people behind as she said, "This is the dowry list my mother brought with her when she married into the Chu family. Later, I'll pass it to Manager Wu and Manager Zhang to check through them. Those are all things that my mother left behind, so I won't take it lying down if even half an item is missing."

Lu Yao was dazed. *That list is something from more than ten years ago. How does Chu Liuyue have it?*

Something seemed to be stuck in Lu Yao's throat as cold sweat drenched her back.

She did touch those items after all these years... At first, she thought that Chu Liuyue and Chu Ning could never make a comeback for the rest of their lives, so she righteously claimed the items as her own. Who knew they would make a comeback?

Now, Chu Liuyue even wanted to check on the items meticulously.

What should she do?

While looking at Lu Yao's expression, Chu Liuyue clearly knew her thoughts and could not help but sneer in her heart. *If I don't skin the entire Chu family alive today, they won't know that I, Chu Liuyue, am not someone to be messed with.*

“Xiao Wen, bring a chair over,” commanded Chu Liuyue, and a muscular young man behind her immediately obeyed her order. He hurriedly walked to the horse carriage, took out a purple chair, and put it behind Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue ostentatiously sat on the chair, feeling very relaxed. “Chu First Elder, Lu Yao, please hurry up. There are a lot of items, and I only have a one-day leave. You must check the items faster.”

Chapter 120: Exposed

If so many people weren't watching them, First Elder would have rushed up and personally taught Chu Liuyue a lesson. Her arrogant attitude made his blood boil and almost explode. “Lu Yao, you've always been in charge of the family's items. Go and check the list against theirs. Give them everything they should have, nothing more.”

Lu Yao was frightened by First Elder's holler and subconsciously agreed when she saw his face filled with anger. “... Yes.”

First Elder did not think this was enough as he shouted at the other managers. “The few of you, follow them and keep a close eye on them! Don't miscalculate the accounts!”

The few of them hurriedly agreed.

Lu Yao's entire body tensed up, and her footsteps were heavy. However, she knew that she had to obey First Elder, no matter how reluctant she was in her heart.

On the other side, the Zhen Bao Pavilion Manager duo had already started the battle and was checking the items based on the list given to them.

“One pair of eight-colored glass cups, two sets of jade December accessories, a pair of gilt horse pots, two colored Chinese harps—”

Lu Yao could not do anything but clench her teeth. “Did you not hear them? Go to the storeroom and bring the items over.”

The subordinates replied to her, and hurriedly rushed to get the stated items.

When they brought the items out one by one, the few people Chu Liuyue brought over would hurriedly go forward and receive the items. After some serious inspection, they would put them back properly and place them in the horse carriage.

Chu Liuyue smiled brightly. “These few people are the most helpful ones in Zhen Bao Pavilion. Even though they don’t have a high status, they have the best eyes for recognizing treasures. They will know if the item is real or fake with one look. Now that they’re carefully inspecting the items, it would be more convenient for all of us in the future, right?”

This sentence dashed Lu Yao’s last bit of hope. She resigned herself to her fate and closed her eyes.

Chu Liuyue was thoroughly going against them today.

...

In the restaurant not far away from the Chu family residence, someone was clearly observing the scene.

“Her character is really the same as last time...” Low laughter bellowed from behind the curtains. “Did you send all those people over?”

Upon hearing this, Yan Ge bowed and courteously said, “Yes, Master. Madam came to Zhen Bao Pavilion early in the morning and said she wanted to borrow some people. I didn’t expect...”

At that point in time, he was still very confused and did not know what Chu Liuyue wanted to do with a manager. Who knew she wanted to cause trouble for the Chu family? Yan Ge was pretty experienced and had seen quite a few scenes, but it was his first time observing such a debacle.

Chu Liuyue was obviously chasing a debt. The point was that her debt was logical, and the Chu family could not deny it.

The Chu family had power in numbers. Therefore, Chu Liuyue would definitely die a horrible death if she went alone. Hence, she found a few people and explained the incident in public, causing a big scene. This would then force the Chu family to follow her words since they cared about their reputation. After all, the Chu family still wanted to live in the Imperial City.

“You did well for this.”

Yan Ge was shocked upon hearing his master’s praises. He had followed his master for many years, and such compliments were very rare. He greatly benefited since his master was extremely happy with him because he had sent a few people to help Chu Liuyue. “Thank you for the compliment, Master, but I really didn’t do much. It was all Madam’s plan.”

The person behind the curtain seemingly shook his head and smiled. "Of course, only she could think of such an idea. She's also the only one who can do it so cleanly." *If it were someone else, they would not dare to go against the Chu family alone.*

Yan Ge thought for a while and could not help but say, "Master, Madam seems to be unsure of your identity. She also doesn't know about the things you've done for her. Do you want..."

"She will know when the time is right. Just focus on your own tasks."

Yan Ge lowered his head. "Yes."

...

The Zhen Bao Pavilion manager duo was still checking the list in front of the Chu family.

"This pair of crescent moon wine cups is fake. This pair of bamboo jade bangles are fake too."

The few people Chu Liuyue brought over were very clean with their work. They moved the items and did not forget to check for their authenticity at the same time as they threw the fake items aside.

Every fake item identified was akin to a slap across Lu Yao's face.

The Chu family members were also humiliated, so some of them could not help but glare at Lu Yao angrily.

Who would have expected Lu Yao to pocket the items unreasonably? If it were not for today's stock checking, they would not have known how much of the Chu family's assets were used by Lu Yao.

All of these items were just part of the dowry Chu Liuyue's mother had left behind. There were so many other assets in the residence. Thus, who knew just how much money she had pocketed?

Upon sensing all the stares, Lu Yao's face became as white as a sheet, and her entire figure trembled as if she was a leaf on a tree that could be easily blown away in the middle of a thunderstorm. If she could, she really wanted to dig a hole and hide in it. Every single second and minute here was torture.

Chu Liuyue held her chin with one hand as her gaze swept across the fake goods taken out in a seemingly smiling manner. "It seems like your family had a great life for the past few years. No wonder Chu Xianmin is so willing to buy an accessory worth more than 200,000 silver taels casually. Not everyone can buy something made from red jade."

Lu Yao wanted to rush up and rip Chu Liuyue's mouth apart. *How dare she talk about that? That was clearly a trap she set for Minmin. She has even distorted the truth now.*

However, before Lu Yao could say anything, she felt the increasingly furious gazes from the surrounding Chu family members.

Her heart sank as she knew that they believed Chu Liuyue's words. How would they still believe her after all those fake items were taken out?

Even if Chu Liuyue did not say anything, they probably already wanted to kill Lu Yao.

Time trickled past, and Chu Liuyue remained sitting on the chair in a relaxed manner.

Manager Wu had even specifically brought her tea and exquisite snacks in between in case she got hungry.

Chu Liuyue readily accepted them. Instead of saying that she came to get money, you could say that she came here to get someone's life.

Finally, the dowry list was completely checked after an entire afternoon passed.

Chu Liuyue then requested them to split the assets according to the contract made that day, forcefully snatching away quite a bit of money from the Chu family.

When the money was brought up to the horse carriage, even the strong First Elder's eyes could not help but twitch as his heart ached.

The few managers just watched on quietly, feeling their muscles ache when they thought of the messy accounts.

The surrounding people were all dazed from seeing so many treasures.

"I didn't expect Chu Liuyue's mother to bring so many valuable treasures when she married into the Chu family back then."

“I heard that Chu Liuyue and Chu Ning led a tough life these few years, and their daily necessities couldn’t even be compared to the ones the servants used. It should be enough for them to survive if they sell some of these treasures, right?”

“Chu Ning loved his wife dearly, so he was probably reluctant to sell them... Besides, these things were in someone else’s control. He probably didn’t even see the items, so how could he sell them?”

“That’s true. The Chu family has really suffered a huge loss this time.”

The horse carriages made several rounds and finally brought all the items away.

All those fake goods that were thrown out seemed extremely awkward outside the door.

Chu Liuyue then stood up and lazily rolled back her shoulders. She was tired after sitting here all day long. “That’s enough. We’ll end it here today.”

First Elder’s eyelids jumped. *What does she mean? Is she still going to come in the future?*

As if Chu Liuyue could read his mind, she casually waved her hands. “Don’t worry. I won’t be coming here anymore. However, Manager Wu has already recorded the accounts for these fake items, so kindly and gradually compensate for them in the future. You can send it over to my house, or I can send someone over to collect them.”

While having much difficulty hiding his anger, First Elder looked at Lu Yao. “This is the good thing you did from being in charge. You fill this hole yourself!”

Lu Yao staggered backward.

Chu Liuyue smiled with deep meaning. “Chu First Elder, why are you angry? It’s just a few items. Even if the Chu family refuses to give them up, the Lu family’s wealth is comparable to that of the country. This is just a simple matter for them, right, Lu Yao?”