

Nobel Ruler 491

Chapter 491: I Can Help You

That youngster had an undisciplined wildness and looked like a young, ferocious beast.

Chu Liuyue's gaze gently swept across the marble board and landed on him.

The two of them stared straight into each other's eyes.

"Qiang Wanzhou?" said Chu Liuyue first with a smile.

That youngster nodded.

Chu Liuyue was a little surprised. *This youngster seems like he's from the wilderness or the side regions, so I didn't expect him to have such an elegant name. His name and his aura are miles apart.*

"I am Chu Liuyue."

That youngster glanced at her. "I know."

He had heard it clearly when so many people were calling her previously.

Chu Liuyue was dazed for a while and couldn't help but laugh. *This youngster doesn't seem as distant as he is on the surface. On the other hand, it seems like he has some... child-like innocence?*

"I need your help," said Qiang Wanzhou directly.

"Oh? What help?" Chu Liuyue leaned against the chair with much interest. *A normal person wouldn't easily ask a stranger to help, so it's rare to see him ask in such a righteous manner.*

"I need your fire seed."

Chu Liuyue smiled deeply. "What did you say?"

Qiang Wanzhou looked at her gaze and slightly knitted his brows. "I won't ask for your help for free. In return, I can be your servant for ten days."

Chu Liuyue opened her mouth. "Do you know what you're saying?"

"Twenty days."

"It's not a matter of duration, but—"

"Thirty days. That is the maximum."

“...” Chu Liuyue rubbed her brows painfully. *This child previously looked like he could fight, but why is his brain not really working?*

“Qiang Wanzhou, right? Come over and sit down first.” Qiang Wanzhou was about to shake his head when Chu Liuyue intercepted and said, “If you don’t sit down and talk, I won’t agree.”

Qiang Wanzhou glanced at her before sitting down on the seat beside her.

Chu Liuyue glanced at him in a seemingly casual manner and realized that his sitting posture was very accurate. His back was straight, and his aura was cold. It was as if he had specifically learned this before.

If one didn’t look at his torn clothes, his every action and movement looked like a young master that could only be developed in an aristocratic family.

After sitting down, he looked straight at Chu Liuyue, obviously waiting for her answer.

Chu Liuyue sighed in her heart and raised her fingers. “One, that’s not how you ask someone for help. Two, I’m not interested even if you agree to be my servant for a year. Three... Do you know what a fire seed is?”

Qiang Wanzhou’s cold and aloof gaze swept across her fingers.

“One, I’m asking you for help. So naturally, I’ll use my way of doing so. Two, I already said the maximum is a month. One year is impossible. Three, I know what a fire seed is. Aren’t you a heavenly doctor? Then, you’ll naturally have a fire seed.”

Chu Liuyue widened her eyes. "Who told you that all heavenly doctors have a fire seed?"

Qiang Wanzhou looked defensive. "Of course, someone told me."

Chu Liuyue held her forehead in exasperation. "That's a liar who lied to you! Only the top heavenly doctors can produce a fire seed. With my bit of standard, I can't do it no matter what. I'm sorry; I can't help you with this."

Qiang Wanzhou suddenly stood up, and his face was filled with anger. "Who are you calling a liar?"

Chu Liuyue was shocked as she didn't expect Qiang Wanzhou to react so strongly. *It seems like the person who told him about this is very important to him.*

"Ahem, I don't mean it in that way. I'm saying that... you don't seem to understand heavenly doctors very well. I really can't do this, but Xi Ling has quite a few outstanding heavenly doctors. You can look for them."

Seeing Chu Liuyue's genuine expression, she didn't seem like she was lying. Thus, Qiang Wanzhou did not continue to be angry.

"I don't need other heavenly doctors. Only you can help me," said Qiang Wanzhou stubbornly.

Chu Liuyue didn't immediately answer him. *The fire I produced is indeed different from the rest. Could... Qiang Wanzhou be coming for this?!*

The so-called fire seed was made by converting a heavenly doctor's force into fire. When a heavenly doctor placed a fire seed into another cultivator's body, the latter could use their own force to let the fire seed grow continuously, allowing them to produce fire during battles.

As a cultivator's level increased, the fire seed in their bodies would also grow. In the end, some of them could even completely merge the fire seed's strength and become heavenly doctors.

This was also a method that some people would use to become a heavenly doctor, but how could it be so easy to form a fire seed?

This item would waste a large part of a heavenly doctor's force and energy, but the success rate was very low.

To heavenly doctors, producing a fire seed was simply a thankless task. Nobody would help others produce a fire seed for free.

But to Qiang Wanzhou, it seemed like this task was very easy.

Chu Liuyue felt her head ache upon seeing his stubborn manner. *It seems difficult to convince him...*

"You don't want to help me?" asked Qiang Wanzhou slowly.

Chu Liuyue opened her arms helplessly. "Sorry. It's not that I don't want to, but I really can't."

However, Qiang Wanzhou said determinedly, "You don't want to help me."

This time, it was a declarative sentence.

Chu Liuyue's eyes sparkled slightly.

But Qiang Wanzhou didn't say anything more as he turned around to look at the competition. His expression looked calm and nonchalant as normal. It was as though he didn't care too much about this.

But Chu Liuyue was suddenly curious as she leaned in and softly asked, "Why do you need a fire seed? You're quite talented as a warrior. You don't have to be a heavenly doctor."

Qiang Wanzhou glanced at her. "I don't want to be a heavenly doctor."

"Then, why do you need a fire seed?" Chu Liuyue was even more confused.

Qiang Wanzhou paused. "I need the fire seed to live."

As he spoke, loneliness quickly flashed across the youngster's arrogant face. "I want to find someone, but I haven't found her yet. I'm afraid that I will be dead before I can find her."

His tone was very light, but Chu Liuyue discovered that he didn't seem too emotional when he talked about himself dying soon. However, he revealed unconcealable sadness when he talked about being unable to find that person.

It seemed like... that it was more important than his life.

Chu Liuyue's heart tingled. "Is that person very important to you?"

Qiang Wanzhou's expression had already returned to normal. After hearing this, his lips curved up slightly, and his chin became tense as he said determinedly, "She's the most important person to me."

Chu Liuyue's heart seemed to be touched by something soft. She didn't say anything more as she leaned against the chair and looked at the competition.

The two of them fell silent as if this incident had already passed.

Time passed bit by bit.

The names on the black marble board decreased, and increasingly more people were being carried down the arenas.

When half of the preliminary competition was over, Chu Liuyue finally spoke up. "I can help you."

Chapter 492: I Recognize Your Name

Chu Liuyue herself was also quite surprised when she said that.

She wasn't a sympathetic type of person; she was harsh, swift, and decisive most of the time. But for some reason, she also felt upset when she saw Qiang Wanzhou's lonely expression when he said that sentence.

This feeling was very rare.

She never willingly interacted with people unrelated to her in case she attracted trouble, but Qiang Wanzhou seemed to be different.

"Really?" Qiang Wanzhou turned around when he heard her reply.

The brown eyes covered by the soft, golden hair were so bright that it seemed like fireworks exploded in them.

Chu Liuyue suddenly didn't feel conflicted anymore as her lips curved up, and she smiled. "I always make good on my word. But according to the agreement, you need to be my servant for a month."

Qiang Wanzhou immediately nodded. "Sure!"

He then stretched out his hand and bent his pinkie. "Pinkie promise."

Chu Liuyue's eyelids twitched. "...What are you doing?"

Qiang Wanzhou said matter-of-factly, "This is the highest standard of a promise between humans. Since we have an agreement, you can't go back on it."

Chu Liuyue was speechless.

Seeing Qiang Wanzhou's convinced appearance, Chu Liuyue suddenly thought of something. "That person taught you this too?"

As expected, the youngster nodded. "Before this, I had made a promise with only her. You're the second one."

Why does this sound like he looks up to me, and that's why he's willing to hook pinkies with me? Chu Liuyue's eyes turned as she calmly stretched out her pinkie and hooked it with his.

The youngster's hand was actually as cold as ice.

Chu Liuyue looked at him silently. It's no wonder he said he needed the fire seed to live. This youngster looks the same as others, but his internal organs have already been infiltrated by the harsh and sinister aura.

Most of his bodily force has already been frozen. Even in this situation, he still has such strong combat power. I really don't know how shocking his true standards will be...

"Come over." After hooking pinkies, Chu Liuyue curled her finger toward him.

Qiang Wanzhou leaned toward her in confusion.

When he got closer, Chu Liuyue finally saw his appearance clearly, and she was dazed.

This was actually a very intricate and beautiful youngster. His skin was very white, the kind that reflected light. The pair of brown eyes under his golden hair was cold and arrogant but pure and clean like the snow piled up on a mountain.

He had a high nose, and his lips were as pretty as a rose petal, which curled up naturally. His sharp chin also made him look more like a pure youngster.

If it weren't for his skeleton and body structure that looked unquestionably like a young man, Chu Liuyue would almost suspect that this was a charming young woman.

Chu Liuyue raised her hand and messed up his golden hair.

Qiang Wanzhou was first dazed before he knitted his brows. "What are you doing?"

Looking at his messy appearance, Chu Liuyue smiled and wagged her pinkie. "Since we already made a promise, then it's effective, right? Today is the first day that you're my servant."

In other words, a servant must have a servant's instincts. So what was the big deal of ruffling his hair?

Qiang Wanzhou stared at her for a while, and a tinge of anger seemed to flash across his pretty eyes. But in the end, he didn't say anything as he turned around and sat up straight.

After a while, he coldly said, "Yes, I understand."

Chu Liuyue almost burst out laughing. *This Qiang Wanzhou seems like he's nonchalant and distant, but in actual fact, it's very easy to coax him.*

She now started to understand why that person would purposely use small lies to trick him.

Thinking of this, Chu Liuyue's last bit of conflict completely disappeared. *Coincidentally, I'm alone and have no help in Xi Ling, so it's good that I have another helper. Not to mention others, but Qiang Wanzhou's talent is pretty strong. His current cultivation level should be a peak stage-five warrior. According to his age, he can be considered an outstanding genius.*

"Where are you from?" asked Chu Liuyue.

"Nan Jiang."

"Nan Jiang?! Tianling Dynasty's Nan Jiang?!" Chu Liuyue widened her eyes.

Seeing Qiang Wanzhou nod, Chu Liuyue was even more shocked in her heart.

The Tianling Dynasty had a total of four regions, and they were all deserted islands. Amongst them, Nan Jiang had the fewest people.

That place was filled with marshes, and poisonous items permeated throughout the air. Normally, a cultivator who went there would just die.

He actually came from there?!

“Who... brought you here?”

This person went all the way to Nan Jiang to bring a cultivator with a Dijing Yuan meridian back. This is too...

“Nobody brought me here,” said Qiang Wanzhou. “I lived in Nan Jiang since I was young, but I came here because the lake started drying up.”

Chu Liuyue’s eyes widened, and her mouth was agape.

Seeing that she didn’t speak, Qiang Wanzhou added, “Until today, it has been five whole months.”

Chu Liuyue took a long while to recover her senses. “This means that you came to Xi Ling alone from Nan Jiang’s Qian Wei Lake?”

Qiang Wanzhou nodded.

Chu Liuyue was even more stunned. *What kind of person is this? A person in their teens can actually walk out of Nan Jiang on their own and journey thousands of miles to come to Xi Ling?!*

An idea suddenly popped up in her head. “Y-you came to Xi Ling to find that person?”

As expected, Qiang Wanzhou gave an affirmative answer. "Yes."

This reply was much more determined and serious than before.

Chu Liuyue asked hesitantly, "But every competitor requires someone to bring them over. Who... Who brought you to sign up at Xin Li Garden?"

Given Qiang Wanzhou's behavior, how could he have gone there on his own?

Qiang Wanzhou knitted his brows. "I think that person is called Yu Minhan. I don't know him, but he told me that if I join the Wan Zheng Competition and take first place, I'll become famous and be able to find the person I want to find."

Chu Liuyue instantly understood. That person called Yu Minhan must've discovered Qiang Wanzhou's talent, so he purposely pulled him in and lied to him to join the Wan Zheng Competition. Qiang Wanzhou came from Nan Jiang and isn't very experienced with the world, so he naturally agreed when he heard that he could find the person he was looking for.

"Do you know what clan that Yu Minhan is from?"

Qiang Wanzhou's gaze focused, and he shook his head. "I didn't ask."

Chu Liuyue was speechless. *This child is so honest. He didn't even find out about the other person's identity, yet he crossed the Rubicon.*

“When you signed up, he should’ve written his name and clan. Did you not notice?”

Qiang Wanzhou suddenly fell silent. The strands of golden hair fell down and covered his eyes.

However, Chu Liuyue saw embarrassment for some reason.

His fingers slightly curled, and after some time, he said, “I’m illiterate.”

Chu Liuyue reacted and thought that she was silly. *Qiang Wanzhou has grown up in a place like Nan Jiang, and it’s very difficult for him to live until now. Of course, he had no chance to learn how to read and write.*

But when she was thinking of how to comfort him, Qiang Wanzhou suddenly raised his head and pointed at the black marble board. “But I recognize your name—Yue.”

Chapter 493: Come With Me

The corners of Chu Liuyue’s lips curved up slightly. “It looks like we have quite the affinity. Does that person have the same name as me?”

Qiang Wanzhou shook his head. “I don’t know her name, but she told me to call her ‘Yue.’ That’s how I recognize this word.”

That person happens to have the same name as me... Chu Liuyue propped her chin up with her hand as she fell into deep thought. She then tentatively asked, "Is she from Xi Ling?"

Qiang Wanzhou nodded.

Chu Liuyue raised her brows slightly. Is that person a fraud...? I was given the name 'Yue' by my father in my last life, and ever since I was crowned a princess, nobody in the whole of Xi Ling dared to use this name again. Those who were born after I was crowned avoided using the name, while those who originally had 'Yue' in their names had to change their names.

The person he's looking for claimed to be from Xi Ling, yet their name is 'Yue.' It's either their original name or... it was fabricated. If it's the former, Qiang Wanzhou will recognize the person if they ever meet again. But if it's the latter... his search will be futile. He won't be able to find that person.

"Was that person... really good to you?" she asked, only to receive a strange look from Qiang Wanzhou.

"Of course. She was the one who gave me my name."

Chu Liuyue swallowed the words at the tip of her tongue when she saw his look of conviction. Knowing that he would surely not believe her words and might even flare up at her should she explain this to him now, she decided to find out more about this matter first before she slowly broke the news to him. At this point, she put her thoughts away and told him with a smile, "You do have a nice name."

The poker-faced Qiang Wanzhou turned his head away and answered a moment later, "Of course."

She shot him a glance, only to notice that his ears had turned pinkish. As she held back her laughter, she shifted her gaze back to the arena.

Most of the matches had already ended, leaving behind a small number of people still battling it out. The atmosphere in the square, however, remained just as lively as before.

After watching the remaining matches for a while, she turned to face Qiang Wanzhou upon remembering something. “Oh yeah, don’t go around biting people again during the competition.”

The aura he exuded immediately became chilly. “Are you saying that I’m barbaric?”

He had been hearing people saying such things to him lately.

Chu Liuyue gave him a light flick on the forehead in response. “What are you saying? I’m just afraid that you’d get dirtied by their blood! Your current condition can’t be cured with just a fire seed. Listen to me if you want to live longer!”

Never expecting to hear such an answer, Qiang Wanzhou—who initially looked furious—became somewhat embarrassed.

“Given your capabilities, you can easily win against most of those people here. Why even bother doing that?” said Chu Liuyue as a trace of disgust appeared on her face. “Moreover, the person you fought with had no aptitude at all. Don’t you hate it as well?”

Qiang Wanzhou hung his head low as he replied dejectedly, “B-but I need their blood...”

It looks like this kid knows nothing about his own condition. After letting out a sigh, she told him softly, “Although the cold, evil qi in your body can be temporarily suppressed by the blood and qi of other cultivators, it’ll do you more harm than good in the long run. Therefore, don’t do it again. Understand?”

Qiang Wanzhou unconsciously bobbed his head when he saw her serious expression.

It was only then that Chu Liuyue sighed in relief. *I somehow have the feeling that I'm raising a child...*

Dong!

The ringing of a bell was heard, and it reverberated throughout the square.

Chu Liuyue looked over, only to see the Black Guards hitting the big bronze bell that was placed in the square.

Her keen senses led her to look in the direction of the black marble board. As expected, she noticed that only half of the names remained on it.

Elder Qiuxi rose up in the air. "The Wan Zheng Competition's preliminary round has come to an end! Congratulations to the 196 winners!"

Loud cheers erupted from the crowd, with almost nobody caring about the handful of depressed people. After all, it was the long-standing rule of Xi Ling City that the winners were crowned kings while the losers were nothing.

Elder Qiuxi swept a glance across Chu Liuyue and the others, his voice full of vigor. "You'll gather here at the same time tomorrow morning for the official start of the competition."

Everyone heard him loud and clear, and the excitement of the competitors who had survived the preliminary round couldn't be concealed.

"I hope you all go back and have a good rest today in preparation for tomorrow's competition. Generous prizes and the chance to enter Xi Ling's top sects are awaiting you!"

His words were indubitably a great motivation booster, which made the crowd even more excited.

"Yes!"

Rising to her feet, Chu Liuyue smiled at Qiang Wanzhou and said, "Come with me."

Qiang Wanzhou nodded and quickly followed her.

Around them, a lot of people had already hopped off the spectator seats to celebrate the victory with the winning participants. The entire square was brimming with people.

Chu Liuyue and Qiang Wanzhou squeezed past the bustling crowd, intending to make their exit in a low profile.

When Jiang Yucheng stood up, his gaze once again fell onto Chu Liuyue. He couldn't help but frown when he saw the blond boy behind her. Earlier, he had noticed the two of them speaking to each other for quite some time, yet they were now seen leaving together. He thus asked, "Do they know each other?"

The man next to him followed his line of sight and answered, "That young chap is from Nan Jiang and was inadvertently roped into joining the competition. I don't think they knew each other before this."

Jiang Yucheng gave the blond chap a scrutinizing look. "His Yuan meridian... Go run a check on him."

"Understood!"

Just when Jiang Yucheng was about to turn around and leave, he happened to see a smiling Chu Liuyue look back and ruffle the young man's hair. Though there was a sullen look on his face, the young man only shot her a glare and said nothing about her action.

Chu Liuyue then tugged on his arm and led him through the crowd to leave.

A hint of displeasure sprouted in Jiang Yucheng's heart right there and then. He had no idea what brought about this emotion, but he was indeed furious at the sight, for that smile wasn't supposed to appear again, no matter how similar it was.

"Eldest Young Master, do you want me to go do something about it?" asked the man next to him softly.

"No need," he replied coldly before turning around to leave.

...

It was only when a faint blush crept up on Qiang Wanzhou's fair and translucent face that Chu Liuyue stopped teasing him. While it was fun teasing the kiddo, overdoing it would only piss him off.

"The place I'm staying at is a little special; you'll know what I mean when we get there. First, we'll go buy some herbs that will help with your condition." As she spoke, she made a mental list of the herbs that she needed. *Tsk, this lackey doesn't come cheap...*

Being the taciturn person he was, Qiang Wanzhou mostly bobbed his head in response to her rambling.

"Hold it right there!" A man suddenly stopped right in front of Chu Liuyue.

She looked up, only to see an unfamiliar face before her. "You are...?"

However, this man wasn't looking at her. His eyes were fixed on Qiang Wanzhou as he chided him with a frown. "Who permitted you to run around on your own?"

Chapter 494: I Apologize for the Commotion

Given the way he scolded Qiang Wanzhou, others would surely think the two of them were related in some way if they didn't know better. Chu Liuyue, however, had an idea of this person's identity. "Are you Yu Minhan?"

"Yes, I am!" The man shot her an irritated look before sneering at Qiang Wanzhou. "You told her about me? What else did you say, huh?"

He made a move to grab Qiang Wanzhou but was blocked by Chu Liuyue, whose eyes turned cold as she stepped in front of Qiang Wanzhou. With a polite smile, she told the man, “I’m sorry, but Qiang Wanzhou isn’t going back with you.”

Yu Minhan’s expression soured as he gave her the once-over. “What do you mean by that? He belongs to the Azure Dragon Sect! It’s clearly stated on the marble board!”

Chu Liuyue instantly understood the situation at hand. *I see. So he’s from another third-rate sect.*

She had heard about the Azure Dragon Sect. Like the Eight Direction Clan, the Azure Dragon Sect was one of the many sects in Xi Ling City and had always been ranked at the bottom. They usually kept to themselves though. The reason this man was behaving so arrogantly was likely due to the fact that she came from outside Heaven’s Canopy.

“Qiang Wanzhou has told me all about it. He’s just here in Xi Ling to look for someone, yet you used this as an excuse to trick him into joining the Wan Zheng Competition. If I’m not wrong, the better the results he gets, the better the rewards you—his referee—will receive. Isn’t that right?”

Although Chu Liuyue knew nothing much about the Wan Zheng Competition previously, she had pretty much gained a rough idea over the past two days.

As expected, Yu Minhan’s expression changed at once. “Enough of your nonsense!”

Chu Liuyue laughed, for his denial only further affirmed her suspicion. *The rewards must be pretty good, although everyone is being quite evasive about it...*

“You know it better than I do whether it’s nonsense or not. Then again, there’s no need to blow this matter up. I’m taking Qiang Wanzhou with me today no matter what. From now onward, he’ll have nothing to do with you and the rest of the Azure Dragon Sect.”

“I dare you to!” Yu Minhan became anxious. “How dare you try to steal our people?!”

With that, he made a move to slap Chu Liuyue in the face.

Before Chu Liuyue could do anything about it, a cool breeze grazed her ear as a punch landed right in the middle of Yu Minhan’s chest, which sent him flying backward and crashing heavily onto the ground.

This attack caught Yu Minhan totally unprepared.

A murderous aura enveloped Qiang Wanzhou as he moved forward once more.

Chu Liuyue hurriedly pulled him back. “Alright, that’s enough.”

It was obvious that Qiang Wanzhou wanted to kill Yu Minhan. Chu Liuyue wanted to avoid unnecessary trouble and not waste any time and energy on such matters, so she merely gave him a verbal warning.

Standing still, Qiang Wanzhou looked down at the hands that were grabbing his wrist. Although he looked as if he wanted to break free of her hold, he obediently stood to the side in the end.

Chu Liuyue’s heart softened, and her lips curled up at the sight. *Given that he quietly did as told despite his reluctance, it seems that in his mind, being a servant means that one has to be obedient all the time.*

She released his hand and said with a laugh, "Thank you."

Surprised to hear that, Qiang Wanzhou looked up, only to turn his head away in embarrassment when he saw the sincerity twinkling in her eyes. "It's what I ought to do."

Chu Liuyue said nothing more after that. *It looks like there are a lot of things he needs to learn.*

"You! What do you think you're doing?! This is Xi Ling! Are you guys going to kill me?!" Yu Minhan shouted in anger when he realized that he had sustained some serious internal injuries from Qiang Wanzhou's punch after climbing to his feet with much difficulty.

"Killing you isn't a difficult task, but I don't want his hands to be dirtied with your blood now that he's my subordinate." Chu Liuyue took a step forward.

Despite the smile on her visage, the cold and unnerving aura she radiated frightened Yu Minhan so much that he unconsciously retreated a step.

She said lightly, "I'll let this matter pass just like that if you choose to cooperate with me. Otherwise... I'm rather curious to see what sort of reaction the members of your sect will have if they find out that you sought a random person to take part in the competition."

Yu Minhan's face turned ashen in an instant. With seemingly great determination, he then sternly retorted, "I don't care what you have to say! You've clearly overestimated yourself if you think someone like you can raise a complaint to the Azure Dragon Sect. In any case, Qiang Wanzhou isn't going anywhere with you today!"

After that, he took out a whistle and blew hard on it.

Several figures suddenly appeared behind him a moment later and had Chu Liuyue and Qiang Wanzhou surrounded. It was obvious that these people were Azure Dragon Sect members.

Smirking, Chu Liuyue swept a glance at the people around them before she turned to Qiang Wanzhou and joked, "I couldn't tell at all. They've really put in quite a bit of effort for your sake."

Qiang Wanzhou frowned. "I'll deal with them."

His reply only made her put a hand on her forehead. "A kiddo like you shouldn't be fighting and killing others all day long."

His frown deepened at her words. "I'm not a child."

Chu Liuyue shot him a reassuring look in response.

Yu Minhan was fed up with the way the two of them talked as if no one else was around, for it was clear that they had no respect for the Azure Dragon Sect at all. The Azure Dragon Sect didn't have a high status in Xi Ling, so Qiang Wanzhou's appearance was a chance for them to experience a meteoric rise.

Previously, he was tasked to find a cultivator with a Dijing Yuan meridian, but he got delayed by certain matters and thus planned to accept his due punishment when he returned. He didn't expect to meet Qiang Wanzhou right at that timely moment though.

Being at the end of his wits, he could only trick Qiang Wanzhou into joining the competition in order to make up for the numbers and avoid punishment. However, Qiang Wanzhou's capabilities far exceeded his expectations. From the preliminary round earlier, it seemed like Qiang Wanzhou had a chance to come in the first few places of the competition.

It was only then that Yu Minhan realized that he had found himself a treasure. Hence, how could he possibly let him leave at this critical juncture?

"Attack!" He waved his hand, motioning the others to attack the duo.

But right at that moment, he heard someone sternly shouting from the side. "Xuan Ji Square is not a place for you to cause trouble!"

The Azure Dragon Sect members broke out into a cold sweat when they turned and saw a Black Guard—who was seemingly at the officer rank—approaching them.

"You're mistaken, sir! We're not causing trouble; there's just a slight misunderstanding here. Chu Liuyue wants to take one of our members away! You mustn't let her get away with this!"

When that Black Guard walked toward Chu Liuyue, Yu Minhan and the others were secretly rejoicing because they were sure that Chu Liuyue would surely end up suffering from having offended a Black Guard.

Alas, they saw the guard cup his fist and bow respectfully to Chu Liuyue the next moment. "Ms. Chu, I apologize for the delay and commotion."

The Azure Dragon Sect members wore similar shocked expressions on their faces.

Chapter 495: Hundred Herbs Building

Why is this Black Guard so respectful toward Chu Liuyue?

“S-Sir...” stammered Yu Minhan with unease. “Are you mistaken about something...?”

Didn't Chu Liuyue come from outside? Don't tell me she has someone powerful backing her up?!

With a faint smile, Chu Liuyue said, “No need to blame yourself, Officer Duan. This matter arose because of me after all.”

Duan Ziyu shook his head. “I'm responsible for your safety, so naturally, everything has to be done right!”

He had been waiting at the audience stand at first, but he didn't expect to see Yu Minhan and the other members of his sect go and find trouble with Chu Liuyue. *They must be tired of living!*

Chu Liuyue swept her eyes across the stricken Yu Minhan to the others. “It's no big deal, but your arrival is timely. I have some other matters to attend to, so I'll be leaving first.”

Duan Ziyu made way for her. “Understood. Please go ahead.”

Yu Minhan and the others instantly exhaled in relief. *The fact that Chu Liuyue can employ a Black Guard officer as her bodyguard is enough proof that she is no simple character.*

Yu Minhan couldn't help but secretly regret his earlier actions. *I should've checked her background first!*

Chu Liuyue stepped forward to leave with Qiang Wanzhou in tow. But when passing by Yu Minhan, her footsteps halted. "You're welcome to snatch Qiang Wanzhou back at any time."

A chill ran down Yu Minhan's spine. "No, I wouldn't dare to do so! P-please go ahead, Ms. Chu!"

Chu Liuyue—who was used to seeing such behavior—left without a care.

It was only after the two of them walked past him that Yu Minhan cast a reluctant look at Qiang Wanzhou. *Such a good seedling... actually got stolen by Chu Liuyue just like that!*

"Azure Dragon Sect?" questioned Duan Ziyu as he made his way over.

Only then did Yu Minhan recall that a big shot—who he couldn't afford to offend—was standing right next to him. He hurriedly said, "I know I was wrong! I know I was wrong!"

People from the top sects might not even be on par with the Black Guard, much less small fry like them—who dared not offend them in the slightest. He didn't want to implicate the entire Azure Dragon Sect just because of his own affairs.

“I was blind to entertain angels unawares, sir. I... I didn’t know that you were Ms. Chu’s backer. Please don’t take the offense to heart!” Yu Minhan offered his deepest apologies and even almost went down on his knees.

However, a grin spread across Duan Ziyu’s face when he heard the apology. “You got it wrong. I’m not qualified to be her backer.”

“W-what?!” The reply shocked Yu Minhan into momentary silence, and his heart became heavier when he saw the smile on the Black Guard’s face.

Duan Ziyu then bumped Yu Minhan’s shoulder with the hilt of his sword. “Next time, go make inquiries first to see if that person is someone you can afford to offend.”

After saying his piece, he swiftly left to catch up with Chu Liuyue, leaving Yu Minhan and the other Azure Dragon Sect members to exchange uneasy looks.

Someone then came forward to ask, “Fourth Brother, w-will we be in trouble for this?”

With a darkened expression, Yu Minhan gave that person a tight slap across the face. “Can’t you tell at all?! That person is a Black Guard officer for goodness’ sake!”

They hardly met anyone of that rank, yet they had now offended the person whom the military officer was supposed to protect. Most importantly, it was obvious that he was tasked by someone more powerful and influential than him to do this. The person who wanted to protect Chu Liuyue was of a much higher rank, which could only mean that that person was one of the top-ranking people in Xi Ling!

“T-then... are we letting them take Qiang Wanzhou away just like that? He has a Dijing Yuan meridian—” asked someone thoughtlessly, only to receive a kick from Yu Minhan.

Who cares about that at this point?! The entire Azure Dragon Sect has gotten into trouble now!

“Go back and find the sect leader this instant!”

...

Duan Ziyu caught up with Chu Liuyue in no time as she led Qiang Wanzhou out of Xuan Ji Square.

After walking for a while, the crowd around them visibly lessened. It was then that Duan Ziyu finally asked, “Ms. Chu, are you taking Young Master Qiang back with you?”

Chu Liuyue gave him a thoughtful look. “I do have this intention, but I don’t know if Lieutenant will be agreeable to this.”

Duan Ziyu was really curious as to why she was doing this, but he knew that he was in no position to ask such questions. As such, he only said, “We have strict rules in place that prohibit outsiders from even getting near the residence. However, those rules naturally won’t apply to you if that’s your request.”

Chu Liuyue smiled. *To be honest, it doesn’t make a difference whether I have Mu Qinghe’s permission or not since I can always just find an inn for Qiang Wanzhou to stay in.*

“By the way, I’d like to go buy some medicinal herbs. May I trouble you to take me there, Officer Duan?”

Chu Liuyue's request surprised Duan Ziyu at first, but upon recalling that he had seen the former converting her force into fire during the competition earlier, he surmised that she had to be a decent heavenly doctor. Hence, there was nothing weird about her wanting to buy herbs.

"Please follow me."

...

After walking through several streets, Duan Ziyu led Chu Liuyue and Qiang Wanzhou into a rather large herb shop.

When Chu Liuyue looked up, she saw the words 'Hundred Herbs Building' painted in gold glitter on a massive signboard.

"Ms. Chu, this is the largest medicinal herb shop in Xi Ling City. You can find any herbs you want here," said Duan Ziyu.

Chu Liuyue stroked her nose. I'm not worried about this shop not having the herbs I want. Instead... I'm more worried about whether I can afford to buy the herbs at all. Being the top herb store in Xi Ling, Hundred Herbs Building naturally has all sorts of herbs. Not only are they of top quality, but their prices are equally high as well. While my ten white crystals might seem a lot to average folks, they are considered... a stretch here.

Although she had heard a lot about Hundred Herbs Building, she had never actually been here before. The Tianling Dynasty's royal family had a lot of precious medicinal herbs stored away, and she tended to Xin Li Garden on her own. There was never a time where she had ever experienced a shortage of herbs, so she naturally didn't need to visit such a place.

Chu Liuyue—who initially wanted Duan Ziyu to bring her to a random herb shop—hadn't expected him to pick the most expensive store out there.

Since they were already right in front of the shop, she felt bad about turning around to leave. As such, she took in a deep breath and took the lead to walk inside.

As soon as she stepped into the store, a pageboy immediately welcomed her with much enthusiasm. "Are you looking for something, Miss?"

Chu Liuyue scanned her surroundings, which was a unique, spacious, and rectangular exhibition hall. All sorts of herbs—along with signs displaying their names, properties, and prices—could be found inside the neat rows of transparent crystal cabinets.

Her eyelids twitched when she took a cursory glance at the stated prices. *A 100-year-old blood lingzhi actually costs three white crystals? Isn't that as good as daylight robbery?!*

"I... will take a look around first," she told the pageboy while looking as calm and dignified as before.

The pageboy respectfully answered, "I'll come back to serve you once you're done looking around."

With that, he tactfully retreated to the side.

There were about 100 people selecting herbs in the exhibition hall at this moment. Likewise, there were also many other pageboys scattered everywhere. Like the one serving her before, they all gave excellent service.

Chu Liuyue started walking along a row of crystal cabinets, but she stopped after a few steps.

Chapter 496: Running Into More Acquaintances

A palm-sized coral quietly lay in the crystal cabinet. It had an orange-red hue all over, while its tips were white and translucent like jade. This was a superior-quality Jizo coral, be it in terms of size, shape, or texture.

Even someone as picky as Chu Liuyue took a fancy to it with just one glance. *This thing is very effective in expelling the cold, evil qi in Qiang Wanzhou's body, so I have to buy it.*

Her eyes then shifted to its price tag, which stated: ten white crystals.

This Jizo coral will cost me my entire fortune, huh. I won't have any leftover money to buy the other herbs then. Her head started hurting at this thought.

Before she was reborn, she had almost never bought anything out of her own pockets. While she could still afford the living standards in Country Yao Chen after her rebirth, she couldn't do so here because it wasn't easy to earn white crystals.

A stage-five warrior like Wu Zhao only had those few crystals on him despite having stayed at Ping Liang Square for so long, much less her.

With an arm across her chest and a hand stroking her chin, Chu Liuyue fell into deep thought. *It looks like I have to quickly think of a way to earn money...*

"I'll take this," she told the pageboy who was waiting at the side.

The pageboy immediately came up to her with a smile. "You have a good eye, Miss. This is the most beautiful piece in our latest batch of Jizo coral. We've just put it up for display, yet you've taken a liking to it already."

She nodded in agreement despite being immune to such flattery. "It's not bad indeed."

Looking somewhat proud, the pageboy told her, "You can rest assured that the items in Hundred Herb Building are all of top quality. Is there anything else you want?"

She waved her hand in response. "Just this for now while I'll continue to look around."

The smart pageboy said nothing more after that. He then put on his gloves, intending to take the coral out of the cabinet when he heard a delicate female voice saying, "Wait! I want that piece of Jizo coral!"

Chu Liuyue looked past her shoulder and saw a young lady—who looked around twenty years old—in a yellow top. She had a lithe figure and a pretty face, but the corners of her eyes were hooked up, and she reeked of haughtiness that made people uncomfortable when looking at her. The young lady's eyes were fixed on that piece of Jizo coral as if she didn't even notice Chu Liuyue and her entourage.

Standing next to her, on the other hand, was a handsome young man in his mid-twenties. Wearing a light-blue shirt, the man stared at the young lady with adoration.

Chu Liuyue's lips curled up at the sight. *What a coincidence. Those two are old acquaintances of mine.*

This young lady was Jiang Yucheng's younger sister, Jiang Yuzhi, whereas the young man was the Xiahou family's second son, Xiahou Tingan. Both of them had some relations with her at one point in time.

Needless to say, Jiang Yuzhi was once Chu Liuyue's future sister-in-law. When she got engaged to Jiang Yucheng back then, she had tried to become closer with Jiang Yuzhi, but the two of them somehow just couldn't get along with each other well.

This was especially so after a particular incident, where she told Jiang Yuzhi off for a mistake she made. After that, the latter became even more upset with her and would deliberately go against her time and again. Thereafter, Chu Liuyue no longer paid any more attention to Jiang Yuzhi.

Shangguan Wan, however, had always maintained an excellent relationship with the young missy. Both were considered close friends who always kept in touch with one another.

On the other hand, Xiahou Tingan grew up as a study companion, so he was rather familiar with all the princes and princesses in the palace. The crucial thing was that he used to be fond of her and had even had the intention of marrying her.

She rejected him from the start and had never taken this matter to heart. But upon seeing this pair together now, she couldn't help but find it strange.

"I'm sorry, Fourth Missy Jiang, but this piece of Jizo coral has already been picked by this lady here." The pageboy had clearly recognized the two newcomers' identities, so he was being very careful with his apologies.

Hearing that, Jiang Yuzhi frowned. It was only then that she deigned Chu Liuyue a look.

She was surprised to see a stunning face staring right back at her though. *Since when did such a person appear in Xi Ling?*

As the saying went: ‘opposites attract, and likes repel.’ Jiang Yuzhi—who never liked to be outshone by others—instantly disliked the other woman as she sized her up.

Seeing that the female in red was not adorned with any accessories or luxurious fabrics draped over her, Jiang Yuzhi surmised that she had to be a low-born and must’ve come from outside Heaven’s Canopy.

The contempt and disdain in her eyes grew even more apparent at the thought of that. “Has she paid for it?”

The pageboy paused. “No, but—”

“In that case, it doesn’t belong to her. There’s no problem with me buying it, right?” As she spoke, she lifted her hand, motioning a servant to come forward.

When the servant placed ten white crystals on the crystal cabinet at her beckoning, Jiang Yuzhi flashed Xiahou Tingan a smug smile. “Tingan, earrings made from this piece of Jizo coral will surely be beautiful. Don’t you think so?”

There were only a few families in Xi Ling who could afford to splurge ten white crystals so extravagantly on a superior Jizo coral just to make a pair of earrings.

Xiahou Tingan pinched her nose indulgently. “Of course. You look good in everything after all!”

Like a little woman in love, Jiang Yuzhi's smile deepened, not bothering about the other people around them.

Caught in a difficult position, the pageboy turned to Chu Liuyue with an apologetic look. "I'm really sorry about this, Miss, but Fourth Missy Jiang is a VIP of our store. Hence, I'm afraid I can't give this piece of Jizo coral to you. Don't worry though; we'll definitely find a satisfactory piece for you and give you a 20% discount as compensation. Will that be okay with you?"

Everyone knew the rule 'first come, first serve.' But when it came to the rich and famous, their words were the rules. Thus, the pageboy didn't dare to not give what Jiang Yuzhi wanted.

The question made Chu Liuyue laugh. *They want me to compromise when they're only giving me a discount of two white crystals? Since when have I become a pushover? I might've been merciful enough to give up the Jizo coral had it been someone else speaking nicely to me since I only require it to refine medicine and can make do with others with similar effectiveness. But because the other party is Jiang Yuzhi, I will never back off, no matter what.*

"No," answered Chu Liuyue bluntly. "The deal is sealed the moment I told you to wrap it up, so this piece of Jizo coral is naturally mine now. Whoever came after that has to wait in line and is in no position to fight for it with me. Isn't that right?"

The smile on the pageboy's face was slipping off fast. *This lady wants to go against Jiang Yuzhi openly? That's the Fourth Missy Jiang, who is also the younger sister of the current prince consort! It's well known that Jiang Yucheng holds great power in his hands, so why would she choose to offend the Jiangs when everyone else is trying to butter them up?!*

Naturally, Jiang Yuzhi was shocked to hear that answer. "What did you say?"

Chu Liuyue rapped her knuckles against the crystal cabinet, her dark eyes calm. “I said that I’m not giving up the coral to you.”

Used to being spoiled all the time, Jiang Yuzhi naturally lost her temper when she couldn’t get her way and saw how a small fry actually dared to go against her. “I dare you to repeat that!”

Chapter 497: Getting It at All Costs!

Chu Liuyue smiled. “Coming from a prestigious family, I’m sure that Fourth Missy Jiang surely knows the principle of ‘first come, first served.’ Someone with a lofty status like you wouldn’t rob others of their things, right?”

“You!” Her words caused Jiang Yuzhi to choke hard. *This woman sure has a sharp tongue!*

Just when the enraged missy was about to go forward and teach Chu Liuyue a lesson, Xiahou Tingan gently said to her, “Yuzhi, this lady has a point.”

“Why are you even speaking up for her?!” She shot him an angry look. *Is he bewitched by her looks?!*

Xiahou Tingan knew that Jiang Yuzhi must’ve misunderstood him when he saw her furious look. He patted her hand while flashing her a reassuring smile. “What are you thinking? As the Jiang family’s Fourth Missy, it’s indeed not right for you to do this. Your father will surely tell you off if he hears about it later.”

At the mention of her father—Jiang Lizuo—Jiang Yuzhi restrained herself a little. She was very afraid of her father because he—as the grand tutor—was very strict with himself and the family.

Stomping her foot in indignation, she cried, "But I want that piece of Jizo coral!"

"Don't worry. I'll get you whatever you want," Xiahou Tingan reassured her before stepping forward with a gracious smile on his face. "We don't want to rob others of what they like either. However, it's rare for Yuzhi to come across something she likes, so I'm willing to pay twice the price to buy this item. The highest bidder wins, so there's no issue now, is there?"

As soon as he said that, the servant behind them stepped forward once more and produced another ten white crystals.

The pageboy hesitantly looked at Chu Liuyue. "Miss..."

Chu Liuyue raised her brows. *Money sure makes the world go round. I'm not losing out since they're forking out twice as much for the coral, so I'll be at a disadvantage if I insist on what I said earlier.*

While she hesitated, Duan Ziyu said to her, "Ms. Chu, Master ordered us to fulfill your needs as much as possible. If you really want that piece of Jizo coral, just give me the order."

Chu Liuyue looked at him in surprise. "Did he really say that?"

Duan Ziyu nodded. "He specifically instructed me about this when he came back the other day."

Of course, those weren't Mu Qinghe's exact words. What he actually said was: 'Since I'm the one who brought Chu Liuyue over, everything she does in Xi Ling will affect my reputation. Therefore, you're to keep a good watch over her.'

If word were to spread that Chu Liuyue lost to someone else just because of a measly ten white crystals, others would surely think that the lieutenant was poor and stingy.

Chu Liuyue could roughly guess what Mu Qinghe meant as well. Although the latter wasn't the type to care about appearances, there was a need for him—the lieutenant of Tianling Dynasty's Black Guard—to stand firm and show his power.

This... doesn't seem to feel bad? The corners of her lips slowly hooked up. "Thank you, Officer Duan."

Duan Ziyu politely responded, "You're welcome, Ms. Chu."

After that, he walked forward and tossed a money bag to the pageboy. "There are 40 white crystals in there. We're getting the coral."

Everyone in the hall was dumbfounded. *Oh my goodness! He's spending 40 white crystals to buy that piece of Jizo coral? Even if there's another piece with better color, it may not even fetch that price! Is this person out of his mind?!*

Duan Ziyu looked at the pageboy. "The highest bidder wins, no?"

The pageboy hurriedly said, "I'll help you—"

Jiang Yuzhi anxiously tugged on the sleeve of Xiahou Tingan, who nodded and raised his voice once more. "I'll pay 50 white crystals."

I'm ultimately the Xiahou family's Second Young Master. Since when have I ever lost because of money? Jiang Yuzhi is here, so all the more reason I can't lose to them!

Without even turning his head, Duan Ziyu doubled the offer. "One hundred white crystals."

The entire exhibition hall fell into silence as everyone else looked over at them. There was nothing worth more than 100 white crystals on the first floor of the exhibition hall, yet the officer was offering that amount for just a piece of Jizo coral.

The other people couldn't help but think that he must either be out of his mind or simply beyond rich.

Mu Qinghe was indeed wealthy though.

Chu Liuyue stroked her chin. Most people think that Mu Qinghe is just a martial arts warrior who built his fortune from scratch and became a nouveau riche in Xi Ling City because of his abilities. Despite his high position, they think that all of his assets can't be compared to that of old money.

But the truth is that it's easiest to get rich with wars. With Mu Qinghe's iron hand and leadership, the army ended the decades-long rebellion at Dahuang Swamp in one fell swoop. His wealth is immeasurable.

Even though Jiang Yuzhi and Xiahou Tingan came from big and noble backgrounds, they didn't have as much financial freedom as Mu Qinghe. Thus, it was only natural that Xiahou Tingan's countenance changed when he heard the other person double his offer.

It wasn't that he couldn't afford the amount, but it also wasn't exactly a small amount to him. His family would surely chew him out should they find out that he had spent so much money just to buy a piece of Jizo coral.

His throat grew dry as he glanced at Jiang Yuzhi somewhat awkwardly. "Yuzhi, that coral might be nice and all, but it's not worth that much money. Why don't we go take a look at other things, and I'll buy you something else instead?"

Jiang Yuzhi instantly pulled a long face at him. "Tingan, are you unwilling to spend the money on me? If that's the case, I'll pay for it out of my own pockets!"

She then moved to take out her own money.

Seeing that she had gotten angry, Xiahou Tingan immediately pacified her by saying, "Hey, I was just joking with you! Did you take it for real? Of course, I'll buy the coral for you!"

Jiang Yuzhi remained doubtful, however. "Really?"

Xiahou Tingan could only bob his head in response. "Of course."

Gritting his teeth in determination, he looked at the pageboy and said, "I'll add five more white crystals!"

Pfft. Someone chuckled.

Although the sound quickly disappeared, everyone could hear the mocking tone in it, for the five white crystals sounded really pathetic when compared to Duan Ziyu's generous offer.

Xiahou Tingan's face instantly flushed red. Although he felt rather embarrassed himself, he had reached his limit.

Duan Ziyu's expression, however, remained unchanged as he said, "150."

Color drained from Xiahou Tingan's face once more as he felt the stares of others on him. He turned to look at Jiang Yuzhi, only to hear her eagerly and anxiously saying, "Tingan, continue upping the offer. Otherwise, we'll lose the coral to them!"

It was easier said than done though.

Knowing exactly what Jiang Yuzhi was up to, Xiahou Tingan felt a ball of anger surging from within him.

Being the proud missy she was, she disliked losing to others. However, she was also afraid of getting scolded by her father for her excessive spending. This was why she was urging him to pay the bill instead.

He had been trying all methods to please the missy for the past year, and now that the two families already had a marriage agreement between them, his efforts would all go to waste should he make her upset at this point.

But just when he was about to open his mouth to make a counter-offer, Duan Ziyu said, "No matter how much Second Young Master Xiahou is offering, we'll add 50 white crystals to the amount. We're getting the coral at all costs!"

Chapter 498: Receive with Guilt

The crowd gasped. *How bold must she be to have the guts to say this? Is it worth it for a Jizo coral?*

The answer was affirmative because the two parties weren't simply fighting over a Jizo coral. They were fighting over... reputation!

The matter had been blown up, so whoever backed away at this point would be admitting defeat.

Jiang Yuzhi and Xiahou Tingan represented their family clans behind them. No matter if it were the Jiang family or the Xiahou family, they were all reputable aristocratic families here. It would be too humiliating if they lost to this unknown nobody at Hundred Herbs Building.

Xiahou Tingan couldn't control his expression anymore as he looked at Duan Ziyu and sneered. "Are you purposely going against my Xiahou family?"

Chu Liuyue lightly chuckled and said, "Why do you say this, Second Young Master Xiahou? After all, I liked this Jizo coral first, yet you increased the price and bid for it. Why did it suddenly become us purposely going against you because we increased the bid amount?"

Xiahou Tingan could not retort and was embarrassed. *Even if I can continue to increase the price, I will definitely be lectured when I go home. Besides, with the other party like this, they are obviously going to fight to the end. If I let this snowball, the incident will just become bigger!*

"Tingan, why aren't you talking?" Jiang Yuzhi knitted her intricately drawn brows. "You must help me buy it! Are you just going to watch on as I'm bullied by them?"

Xiahou Tingan became increasingly frustrated. *Who is the one being bullied now? She just stood there and casually said a few sentences without doing anything, but I'm the one being humiliated! Even if we really buy it, she'll only be scolded for being willful when she goes back, but what about me? I'm not the only young master in the Xiahou family! They will most likely make a mountain out of a molehill for this!*

"Tingan, Tingan?" yelled Jiang Yuzhi in frustration.

Xiahou Tingan took a deep breath in before suppressing his anger. He tidied his shirt, coughed, and looked at Duan Ziyu. "You're from the Black Guard? It looks like you're a military officer. From what I know, the salary of Black Guard's military officers isn't high enough for you to be tossing money on the streets. I'm afraid your money is illegal, right?"

There were unclean people everywhere, even amongst the Black Guard.

This military officer is so arrogant, and he throws money even more freely than young masters. It'll be a wonder if there's nothing wrong with him!

Duan Ziyu straightened his back and stood like a standard gun. "I'm the Black Guard's third military officer, Duan Ziyu. I have been in the military for 11 years and killed 1,589 enemies. I can use my life to guarantee you that I've never done anything against my conscience or taken illegal money!"

His voice was cold and hard, and every single word was as if lightning zapped the ground.

"What you said previously, Second Young Master Xiahou, isn't just an insult to me, but an insult to the millions of Black Guards that protect the royal family. Please take back your words!"

The crowd was taken aback before they were solemn and respectful. *With this kind of military accolades, it's more than enough for him to be promoted to another rank.*

As guards that protected the Tianling Dynasty's borders, they poured their hearts and souls into their duty, and they battled without caring about their lives. Yet, they received an aristocratic child's insult in the end.

This was humiliating!

Xiahou Tingan was also taken aback by Duan Ziyu's aura. After all, he had been living a delicate life in Xi Ling City and was totally different from Duan Ziyu, who frequented the thin line between life and death.

The moment Duan Ziyu spoke up, he immediately felt guilty.

Even though the surrounding people didn't say much, they scolded him with their eyes.

"I-I just casually asked you about it. If your money is legitimate, why don't you dare to say it?" retorted Xiahou Tingan with thick skin.

Duan Ziyu sneered, "Second Young Master Xiahou, do we need to report to you how the Mu Residence gets our money?"

Mu Residence? Which Mu Residence? Xiahou Tingan was dazed for a while before reacting. There is only one Mu Residence in the entire Xi Ling City—Black Guard Lieutenant, Mu Qinghe's residence!

“Y-you work for Mu Qing—Lieutenant Mu?” Xiahou Tingan’s voice was shaky.

The room became especially quiet.

Duan Ziyu said carefully, “If you don’t believe me, Second Young Master Xiahou, you can follow me back to take a look.”

Xiahou Tingan immediately said, “No need!”

At Mu Qinghe’s residence, it was indeed all Black Guards.

I was still wondering why he looked so familiar! Mu Qinghe did bring him around before!

But Duan Ziyu was still an accompaniment after all, so Xiahou Tingan didn’t even notice him. This was why he didn’t recognize him after so long.

Looking at Chu Liuyue and Qiang Wanzhou standing beside him, he asked uneasily, “Then—”

“Ms. Chu is Mu Residence’s VIP,” said Duan Ziyu first.

Xiahou Tingan was stumped and couldn’t say anything for a long time. *I-I offended Mu Qinghe!*

Jiang Yuzhi was also frightened when she heard 'Mu Residence,' and she panicked in her heart. *Mu Qinghe is not one to be trifled with... This woman is actually related to Mu Qinghe? If I knew this earlier, I wouldn't have fought with them!*

"Second Young Master Xiahou, may I know if you want to continue bidding?" asked Duan Ziyu.

Xiahou Tingan's chest felt suffocated. *Not to mention that I have no money now, it's impossible for me to go against Mu Qinghe even if I did. Wouldn't that be digging my own grave?*

"N-no need. Since Ms. Chu is Mu Residence's VIP, then I'll let Ms. Chu have this Jizo coral as a gift for Lieutenant Mu—"

"Second Young Master Xiahou, you don't have to be so polite." Chu Liuyue suddenly spoke and looked at Xiahou Tingan and Jiang Yuzhi with a smiling face. "Since you want it, we'll fight for it fairly. I'm just a woman with an ordinary background. Lieutenant Mu is very generous, but I'll be receiving it with much guilt. I'm already embarrassed to have to trouble Lieutenant Mu for my room and board, so it won't be good if I use his authority and need you two to let me have it. So, you really don't have to give in to me!"

This sentence made Xiahou Tingan so embarrassed that he wanted to dig a hole and jump into it himself. *I just wanted to find an out for myself, but why is this woman so persistent?*

He kept silent for a while before clenching his teeth and said, "No need! At the end of the day, this Jizo coral is just a small toy! Ms. Chu, if you want it, just take it! How can we fight for what you like?"

Jiang Yuzhi anxiously said, "Tingan—"

“We still have something on, so we’ll leave first.” Xiahou Tingan spoke really quickly, and he turned around to leave once he was done.

Jiang Yuzhi looked at Xiahou Tingan—who rapidly left—with a whole stomach filled with anger. *It’s fine that he didn’t buy my items, yet he still left me alone and left?!*

She turned around to look at Chu Liuyue and angrily said, “It’s all your fault!”

Chu Liuyue wasn’t angry nor furious as she laughed and spoke with a sincere expression. “Fourth Missy Jiang, you should thank me!”

Jiang Yuzhi was dazed. “Thank you for what?”

Chu Liuyue sighed and said pitifully, “Even though my background isn’t as good as yours, I know the logic. Men who refuse to spend on women aren’t reliable! Second Young Master Xiahou’s family is so outstanding, so why did he refuse to spend such a small amount of money on you? Actually, I would’ve given myself an out and let you have the item if he continued increasing the price. It’s a pity...”

Jiang Yuzhi was enraged. Her expression changed, and she left in a hurry.

Chu Liuyue retracted her gaze, and she lightly knocked on the crystal cupboard. “I want this cupboard, that cupboard, and that wall over there. I want everything inside.”

There was dead silence in the room.

Qiang Wanzhou couldn't help but ask, "Didn't you say that you're receiving that person's money with guilt?"

Chu Liuyue chuckled and patted her own chest. "Yes, but since I'm already filled with guilt, let's make it more intense!"

Chapter 499: Buy to Look at It

Duan Ziyu's mouth harshly twitched. For some reason, he felt a strong sense of uneasiness.

As expected, Chu Liuyue then looked at the pageboy. "Oh, right. Do you have three stories in your building in total?"

That pageboy hurriedly said respectfully, "Yes. The herbs on the second floor are more expensive, and the ones on the third floor are only for important guests. If you wish to go up, we'll immediately send people to introduce to you."

Chu Liuyue wanted the expensive ones! "There's no need to find other people; you can just follow me up."

That pageboy was shocked and surprised.

One had to know that every level of Hundred Herbs Building had specific people to serve the customers. Without permission, the pageboys on the lower floors weren't allowed to enter the higher floors.

Seeing Chu Liuyue's behavior, she was clearly going to buy a lot of things. Just based on the ones she just picked, they were already much more than what he sold in a normal month.

If he served Chu Liuyue in a satisfying manner, his promotion would happen in minutes.

“Ms. Chu, different floors will pack and settle the bill individually.” The pageboy hurriedly produced a card and gave it to her with both hands. “Your previous spending has already exceeded 1,000 white crystals, so we’ll give you a free Hundred Herbs Building gold card. With it, you can enjoy a 10% discount.”

Chu Liuyue took the card, and her eyes brightened up, but she looked at Duan Ziyu hesitantly afterward. “Officer Duan, will this be too overboard?”

Even if Duan Ziyu really felt that her actions were inappropriate, he would not say it. He coughed and said, “Don’t worry, Ms. Chu. The Mu Residence can still produce this money.”

The items on the second floor are slightly more expensive, but it shouldn’t be much to let Chu Liuyue casually pick a few items.

Chu Liuyue then relaxed and smiled. “That’s good. I’ll thank Lieutenant Mu personally when I return later.”

She then let the pageboy lead her to the second floor.

...

There were clearly fewer people on the second floor than on the first floor.

Chu Liuyue generally scanned the surroundings and realized that the actual number of customers here were only three, including her.

She even recognized one of them; it was Chong Xu Cabinet's Master, Weichi Song.

He was also a heavenly doctor and had given her quite a few pieces of advice in the past, so he could be considered half her teacher.

She didn't expect to bump into him here. But compared to the past, Weichi Song's hair was much whiter than before, and he looked much older.

"Ms. Chu, please head here." The pageboy walking in front made way and let Chu Liuyue enter.

Chu Liuyue hurriedly retracted her gaze and followed the pageboy to walk forward.

The same crystal cabinets were used for exhibition, but each crystal cabinet had an extra defensive Xuan formation.

Just based on this structure alone, it was much more expensive than the ones downstairs.

Chu Liuyue looked at the herbs placed inside.

They were indeed all valuable and rare items, but what was different from the first floor was that the labels here only had the herbs' names. They didn't show their uses or prices.

These were obviously provided for the people who knew how to use them and had money.

Chu Liuyue walked a few steps and pointed at a green fist-sized fruit. "Take it out, and let me see."

Duan Ziyu glanced at the side. *Green Spiritual Snake Fruit; it doesn't look like anything special.*

But the pageboy's face changed. As if in shock and also as if in surprise and excitement, he hurriedly wore gloves and took it out.

He took it out, but the Green Spiritual Snake Fruit had another crystal barrier Xuan formation layer around it.

The defense was very tight.

Chu Liuyue looked at it carefully. "This should be around 500 years old, right?"

"You really have good eyesight! This Green Spiritual Snake Fruit is found from a thousand-year-old Green Spiritual Snake Tree! The entire tree only had a total of three Green Spiritual Snake Fruits, so they are very valuable."

The pageboy's impression of Chu Liuyue changed greatly. *This Ms. Chu can actually determine this Green Spiritual Snake Fruit's age. It seems like she's not from an ordinary family. Commoners don't have this kind of eyesight!*

Chu Liuyue nodded in satisfaction. "I want this then."

The pageboy suppressed his inner excitement and said, "This Green Spiritual Snake Fruit costs 5,000 white crystals. Are you sure you want it?"

Duan Ziyu suddenly raised his head. *This green fruit actually costs 5,000 white crystals?!*

As if detecting his abnormality, Chu Liuyue turned around and asked concernedly, "Officer Duan, what's wrong?"

Duan Ziyu forced a smile and said, "N-nothing much..."

As if she suddenly understood something, Chu Liuyue softly asked, "Ah, was the item I picked too expensive?"

Duan Ziyu was speechless. *Is there a need to say such obvious things? Although Master said to take good care of Ms. Chu, if this carries on... Master will definitely spend a lot of money! But how can I go back on the words I said?*

Duan Ziyu forced a smile and said, "No, please don't overthink. I'm just a boor, and I don't really recognize these herbs, so I didn't think it would be so expensive and was shocked temporarily."

Chu Liuyue heaved a sigh of relief. "That's good. I was still worried that I was doing something wrong."

Duan Ziyu had difficulties but couldn't voice them out. He looked calm, but in actual fact, his mind was already crazily thinking of all sorts of reasons to explain this matter to Master.

Chu Liuyue continued walking forward.

This hall was very big, and there were many herbs.

Chu Liuyue fancied many things.

She walked past many things and had only walked through one-third of the place, but she had picked quite a few items.

The pageboy followed her from behind and secretly thought that this person really had good eyesight as she picked all the most expensive ones. "Ms. Chu, according to what you've previously fancied, you've already exceeded 10,000 white crystals. Your gold card has automatically upgraded to become a platinum card. Other than those on the third floor, you get to enjoy a 15% discount for everything else in Hundred Herbs Building."

Chu Liuyue heard this and suddenly stood still in front of an eight-colored ice crystal. "Add this too."

The pageboy was already used to Chu Liuyue's generosity as he directly smiled and said, "This eight-colored ice crystal is taken from the deep seas, and it's very cold, so it's worth 7,000 white crystals."

Duan Ziyu's steps became shaky.

Qiang Wanzhou stood beside Chu Liuyue, slightly knitted his brows, and softly asked, "The harsh, sinister air inside my body... shouldn't need this, right?"

"Who said that this is for you?" Chu Liuyue glanced at him. "I just saw that it looked nice, so I want to buy and look at it."

Chapter 500: The Wealthy Speaks Loudly

Since Mu Qinghe has already spoken, I naturally can't let his goodwill down. In her previous life, she had helped Mu Qinghe a lot. Hence, she deserved to get some of it back in her current life.

After Qiang Wanzhou heard this, he nodded in understanding. He had no concept of money and very rarely interacted with others. *What Duan Ziyu previously said should mean that Chu Liuyue can buy whatever she wants. Thus, there naturally won't be a problem if she buys these.*

"Oh, right. Go over there and take a look. You can just buy whatever you like," said Chu Liuyue to Qiang Wanzhou as she smiled happily.

Qiang Wanzhou had no interest in these, but since he was already Chu Liuyue's servant, he had to listen to her orders.

He acknowledged her words, and his gaze scanned across the crystal cabinets. However, he was still within three steps of Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue raised her chin. "You can go over there and see for yourself."

But Qiang Wanzhou shook his head.

Chu Liuyue thought of how stubborn this kid was, and her lips curved up. "I'll help you pick some then."

Qiang Wanzhou silently nodded again. When he listened to her, he always looked especially cute and obedient.

Chu Liuyue restrained the urge to ruffle his hair as she continued walking forward.

Duan Ziyu dragged his body and followed her.

"Can you really not increase it? This is the best quality red heart jade. I spent a lot of effort on digging it out back then..." Weichi Song's voice suddenly sounded.

Chu Liuyue looked up and saw Weichi Song talking to a pageboy. He was holding a small, black jade box in his hands, and his expression looked anxious and poverty-stricken.

It turned out that he wasn't here to buy herbs but to sell herbs.

The pageboy looked to be in a difficult position. "Master Weichi, I'm really sorry, but this is the best price we can give."

Weichi Song looked disappointed. He hesitated for a while before sighing deeply and pushing the jade box forward. "Forget it. Just this then."

The cover to the jade box was open, and Chu Liuyue coincidentally saw the item inside.

It was a very intricate jade seal. From outside to inside, it gradually turned from transparent to red. The outside was crystal clear, and the middle was intense and rich without any impurities.

Chu Liuyue widened her eyes. *This seal was Weichi Song's favorite in the past! When I wanted to play with it last time, I had to coax him for a long time, which showed how much he valued this seal. However, he actually wants to sell it now?!*

The pageboy carefully closed the jade box.

Weichi Song looked very reluctant. He opened his mouth but did not say anything.

The pageboy gave him a card. "There are 10,000 white crystals here. Please keep it well."

Weichi Song took that card and unwittingly hesitated before harshly retracting his gaze and turning around to walk away.

Chu Liuyue could clearly see the loneliness on his face.

When Weichi Song brushed past Chu Liuyue, she could even feel the deep loneliness exuding from his body.

She wanted to speak up, but she thought of her own identity and swallowed the words in her throat.

When Weichi Song left, she asked in a seemingly unintentional manner, “So Hundred Herbs Building receives herbs as well?”

The pageboy serving her at the side smiled and said, “Of course. We give the best prices in Xi Ling.”

It was indeed right for that red heart jade seal to be sold for 10,000 white crystals, but Chu Liuyue was curious as to why Weichi Song had to do this.

Seeing his face, he looked very reluctant.

Chong Xu Cabinet had quite a high status in Xi Ling. As its Master and a heavenly doctor, Weichi Song never lacked money. Why did he end up in this state?

She smiled and looked curious. “That elder juts now... If he could take out such a valuable item, his status mustn’t be ordinary, right?”

The pageboy didn’t suspect others and thought that Chu Liuyue was just casually asking, so he softly said, “That person is Chong Xu Cabinet’s Master Weichi.”

Chu Liuyue blinked. “Since he’s a master, why would he personally come...”

She didn’t say the remaining words, but her meaning was clear.

The pageboy sighed. “Sigh, you don’t know, but Chong Xu Cabinet used to be one of the top clans here in Xi Ling City. But now...”

He shook his head and had a sympathetic face.

Chu Liuyue asked, "What happened now?"

The pageboy lowered his voice. "This is all Chong Xu Cabinet's matters, so I've only heard about some things and don't know much. I only know that Chong Xu Cabinet had been robbed empty a year ago and that many of their members were injured or killed. Even Master Weichi was injured, and he hasn't fully recovered yet. Additionally, Master Weichi's only son met with an accident outside and passed on half a year ago, which dealt him a severe blow. So..."

Chu Liuyue was shocked. *What kind of person can attack Chong Xu Cabinet like this? Besides, even Brother Weichi Lang is... dead?! It's no wonder Weichi Song looked so frail.*

"To this day... Chong Xu Cabinet has become a second-grade clan. It's also hard for Master Weichi to bitterly support it..."

Chong Xu Cabinet always had a decent reputation in Xi Ling. Its disciples were all heavenly doctors as well, so they had a good relationship with Hundred Herbs Building.

Seeing them like this, Hundred Herbs Building's people were also very emotional.

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows slightly. *Chong Xu Cabinet is very strong. Even if they met with a catastrophe, it's impossible for their status to drop so quickly in a mere year. There must be another reason! Most likely, people had purposely attacked them!*

After all, I was on very good terms with Weichi Song back then. If Jiang Yucheng and Shangguan Wan intentionally wanted to take revenge, it's not impossible... Perhaps I really implicated Chong Xu Cabinet... Chu Liuyue felt complicated emotions and didn't speak for some time.

"Ms. Chu? Ms. Chu, are you okay?" Upon seeing her like this, the pageboy called her twice.

Chu Liuyue recovered her senses. Her expression had already returned to normal, and she slightly smiled. "Oh, nothing. I was just thinking that the seal looks decent."

Duan Ziyu—who kept quiet the whole time—had his eyelids twitch.

As expected, Chu Liuyue then walked to the pageboy who had just received the seal and stood in front of the crystal cabinet.

The black jade box hadn't even been put away yet.

Chu Liuyue spoke up. "Let me look at it."

The two serving pageboys were elated as they hurriedly presented it to her respectfully.

Chu Liuyue looked at it for a while. "I want this."

"Since Ms. Chu is so decisive, then we'll sell this treasure to you at its original price."

All the people who could be pageboys here were all smart and sensible.

This Ms. Chu was Mu Residence's important guest, and she was very generous with her money. Thus, being on good terms with her was better than anything else.

Everyone knew that the Mu Residence was filled with men, but a woman suddenly appeared today, and she was even a beautiful young woman. Perhaps she might've shaken Lieutenant Mu's heart of steel.

With this progress, she might even become the Mu Residence's female owner.

Chu Liuyue naturally didn't know what these people were thinking, and it was great that she could buy it at the original price.

She picked up that seal, examined it for a moment, and felt something stirring in her heart. "What else did that Master sell here previously?"