

Nobel Ruler 551

Chapter 551: Returned To Its Owner

Her question made Jiang Yucheng uncomfortable, but he put up with it as he bent over and spoke gently. "Of course, it's true. When have I lied to you? I don't like her either, but she took first place in the Wan Zheng Competition. Even if it's for her Yuan meridian, you have to put up with it for now."

But Shangguan Wan wasn't that easy to please. The incident regarding the Tianling God Realm was a huge trigger, which resulted in her being a little unhinged now.

She jumped up and asked, "Oh? Do you dare to say that you didn't think of anything when you saw her face? If you weren't feeling guilty, why didn't you tell me beforehand?"

God knows how terrified I was when I saw Chu Liuyue's smile. If Jiang Yucheng had warned me beforehand, I wouldn't have lost my cool!

"What's there to be guilty about? Wan'er, you're overthinking things. I simply didn't tell you beforehand because I didn't feel it was worth mentioning. You've been too tired lately, so you're a little on edge. None of this will be a problem once your Yuan meridian has been restored." Jiang Yucheng knew where Shangguan Wan's weakness was, so he could always calm her down.

As expected, Shangguan Wan calmed down slightly.

Jiang Yucheng cajoled her for a little longer before she let the matter slide.

In the end, Jiang Yucheng finally left the palace after he sent Shangguan Wan back to the palace and watched her lie down to rest.

After Jiang Yucheng left, Chan Yi walked in. "Third Princess, Young Master Jiang has left."

Shangguan Wan opened her eyes; they were completely clear. She clearly hadn't been sleeping.

She sat up and pondered for a moment before she gave out orders. "Chan Yi, go look into Chu Liuyue's background. Report back if anything seems off. Also, get someone to watch the Jiang family. See if anything has been unusual recently."

Chan Yi nodded respectfully before she left.

There was only Shangguan Wan left in the palace hall. She lit the incense, preparing to take a nap, but Chu Liuyue's face appeared every time she closed her eyes.

That face brought up a lot more memories that she didn't want to remember.

After a number of tries, she became frustrated and smashed everything in the room.

She only stopped when there was nothing left.

"Anyone there?!" she called out.

The servants walked in from outside.

“Clean all of this up!” Shangguan Wan ordered.

The servants hung their heads low, but they weren't stunned. This was clearly not the first time this had happened.

After cleaning everything up, the mess was replaced by an identical set of items. This made it seem like nothing had ever happened.

Shangguan Wan only stopped then.

...

On the other side, Chu Liuyue and the others left Xin Li Garden.

Weichi Song wanted to bring the two of them back to Chong Xu Cabinet directly, but Chu Liuyue turned him down.

Hearing that Chu Liuyue intended to buy a home in Xi Ling, Weichi Song was a little surprised. *The first time I saw Chu Liuyue, the people from the Mu Residence were her escorts. They treated her like she was an esteemed guest, so why would she suddenly want to move out of the Mu Residence?*

Seeing his expression, Chu Liuyue knew that he had misunderstood. "Cabinet Master, I was chosen by Lieutenant Mu but was brought here by Jian Fengchi. Other than that, I have nothing else to do with them."

It was only then that Weichi Song knew that he had misunderstood. He coughed awkwardly. "I see."

The rumors going around Xi Ling are so detailed that I almost bought into them.

"It's not appropriate for me to continue staying at the Mu Residence. Little Zhou and I have moved out." Even though she said they had moved out, there wasn't very much to move.

Weichi Song suddenly asked, "Do you have your eye on anywhere?"

Chu Liuyue shook her head. *The Wan Zheng Competition has just ended, so we didn't have the time to deal with that just yet. Thus, I had intended to find a place of residence with Little Zhou before heading to Chong Xu Cabinet.*

Weichi Song paused. "If you don't mind, I have a vacant mansion that you can have."

...

They walked a few blocks before they arrived at the mansion's door.

Chu Liuyue paused when she saw the familiar door. *Isn't this... one of Weichi Song's residences in Xi Ling City? He used to love staying here whenever he had time. I've been here a number of times.*

“Even though it’s a little secluded, it’s really quiet. If you don’t mind, you can stay here!” Weichi Song spoke as he opened the door.

It was empty inside, and many things had been packed up.

Chu Liuyue frowned when she recalled Weichi Song selling the seal at Hundred Herbs Building before. *Did he intend to sell this place too?*

Seeing Chu Liuyue’s reaction, Weichi Song thought that she wasn’t fond of it. “Actually, this mansion has been vacant for a long time. If you don’t like it...”

“No, no. It’s great. Little Zhou and I like peace and quiet, so it’s perfect,” said Chu Liuyue as she smiled at Weichi Song. “Without your help, who knows when Little Zhou and I would find a place we like!”

Weichi Song was happy too. “I’m glad you like it! I’m glad you like it!”

Chu Liuyue said, “Cabinet Master, Little Zhou and I can’t live in your mansion for free. I...”

Weichi Song shook his head. “Liuyue, you and Wanzhou are disciples of Chong Xu Cabinet. There’s no need to stand on ceremony. Besides... the two of you choosing Chong Xu Cabinet... I’m... really happy. A mansion is nothing compared to all of this.”

Weichi Song was sincere. Without Chu Liuyue and Qiang Wanzhou, Chong Xu Cabinet wouldn’t have recruited anyone today and would’ve ended up at the butt of everyone’s jokes. They helped him and Chong Xu Cabinet maintain their last shred of dignity.

Chu Liuyue wanted to say something, but she didn't know what.

Weichi Song is clearly short on money now. Otherwise, he would never prepare to sell all of these things. However, he will never take my money. Chu Liuyue pondered for a moment. "Cabinet Master, there's something I would like to discuss with you. Is now a good time?"

Weichi Song was a little surprised, but he nodded. "Of course."

Qiang Wanzhou and Ye Ranran knew that the two of them had matters to discuss, so they remained where they were as Chu Liuyue and Weichi Song went to another courtyard.

"Liuyue, what do you want to talk about?" Weichi Song looked at Chu Liuyue gently.

Chu Liuyue took a deep breath. She then took out a wooden box from her Cosmic Ring and handed it over.

"This is..." Weichi Song paused. *This is the item that I sold off at Hundred Herbs Building the other day! Why is it with Chu Liuyue?*

Chu Liuyue replied softly, "Cabinet Master, I bought this after you left. Now, I'm returning it to its owner."

Chapter 552: Getting Her Share of Winnings

Weichi Song didn't expect that the matter Chu Liuyue wanted to talk to him about was this. His gaze turned complicated as he looked at the wooden box and shook his head. "Since you've bought it, it's yours. You don't have to return it to me."

Chu Liuyue stubbornly pushed it toward him. "Like you said, it's mine now. Thus, I can do whatever I want with it, isn't that right?"

Weichi Song was surprised to hear this reply.

"Cabinet Master, take this as a small token of appreciation for the help Little Zhou and I have received from you! If you don't accept it, we won't be able to stay here with peace of mind and will have to find another place instead."

She sighed and then added, "This mansion definitely costs much more than this seal. Strictly speaking, Little Zhou and I have profited from it! Besides... I saw how reluctant you were to part with this thing. It must be very important and meaningful to you, right? In that case, please just accept it!"

Weichi Song hesitated for a long time before he finally took the wooden box from her. *She's right. This seal might not be the most valuable thing I own, but it's something that I treasure dearly. To think it came back to me in the end...*

"Thank you, Liuyue," he said solemnly to her.

Her eyes moved slightly as she flashed him a smile. "I'm a member of Chong Xu Cabinet now, so there's no need to say 'thank you' to me. I still have to rely on you in the future!"

Knowing that she was deliberately teasing him, Weichi Song couldn't resist laughing as he put the wooden box away. "Anyway, now that this matter has been resolved, when are you guys coming over to Chong Xu Cabinet?"

Chu Liuyue blinked. "Not so soon, I'm afraid. I still have something that I have to do."

"What is it?" he asked curiously.

At that, she revealed a meaningful smile. "It's a money matter, of course."

...

In a private room on Chun Feng Restaurant's second floor.

Jian Fengchi was reclining on a couch as usual—with one leg bent and an arm under his head—while gently fanning himself with the fan in his other hand from time to time. With his eyes lazily closed, he enjoyed this peaceful moment as he listened to the melodious music Shui Liu'er played on her pipa behind the screen.

Being in a particularly good mood today, Shui Liu'er finished playing an entire piece—which was rare for her—leaving the last note of the beautiful music lingering in the air for a long time.

She then stood up, emerged from behind the screen with her pipa, and curtsied at him. "The song has come to an end, Young Master Jian."

Opening an eye, Jian Fengchi chuckled as he tossed a Cosmic Ring at her. "I'm a man of my words. Take it!"

Upon catching it, she checked the ring with her force before letting out a satisfied smile eventually. "You must've made quite a windfall this time for you to be so generous."

Jian Fengchi laughed. "100,000 white crystals in exchange for one song of yours. You're the only one who will enjoy such treatment in Xi Ling, Little Liu'er!"

Shui Liu'er cocked an eyebrow. "That's because I'm worth the rate."

He didn't bother arguing with her and merely chuckled at her response.

She sat down next to him. "Let's talk about serious business. We previously got interrupted as soon as we started talking about it. Now that we have time today, it's time for you to tell me all about it."

The man stretched his body. "I knew you were going to ask this! I'm tired after counting all my winnings. Can't you let me have a good rest?"

Shui Liu'er beamed at him. "Haven't you been resting since yesterday? Isn't that enough?"

He immediately sat up straight. "Cough, cough. That was just a casual remark. Don't take it to heart, Little Liu'er!"

She didn't answer him, but a very gentle smile remained on her alluring face.

Jian Fengchi let out another cough. "I've found out some things about the matter you got me to investigate..."

Shui Liu'er's expression turned serious.

"You were right. That person enters the palace every once in a while under the guise of a heavenly doctor who's supposed to treat His Majesty, but his whereabouts are very secretive. His identity is even more so. After much investigation, I found out that his identity... is fake as we suspected."

"I was right..." mumbled Shui Liu'er. "I knew there was something amiss about that person! Have you discovered his true identity?"

Jian Fengchi laughed bitterly at that. "My dear Little Liu'er, you've overestimated my capabilities. Do you think it's easy to investigate an imperial heavenly doctor? It wasn't easy for me to find out this much, especially since I can't enter the palace every day. Besides, I've been helping Mu Qinghe out lately, so I don't have much free time."

She pouted her red lips. "It's a well-known fact in Xi Ling City that you two are arch-enemies. Nobody will ever think that you'd actually help him do things on the sly. You used to be on equal footing with him, yet you're now running errands for him. You sure are something!"

His face darkened for a moment. "You know that—"

"I know nothing." Shui Liu'er's expression eased a bit. "I believe you have your reasons, so I won't stop you from interacting with him. But... just make sure that you can distinguish between what's right and wrong."

“Little Liu’er, actually—”

“I’m not listening!”

Jian Fengchi zipped his mouth right there and then. He knew that despite Shui Liu’er’s gentleness on the surface, she was actually really fierce and stubborn. He would just be wasting his saliva if he tried explaining things to her, so he decided to change the topic altogether. “Actually, my trip wasn’t exactly fruitless. Guess who I met?”

Shui Liu’er cast him a lazy look that said, ‘it’s up to you whether you want to say it or not.’

Jian Fengchi straightened up and leaned in closer to her while making the number ‘13’ with his hands.

There was no reaction from Shui Liu’er at first, but after a moment, she covered her mouth in shock upon realizing something.

The room went silent for a moment.

After a while, she asked quietly, her voice trembling a little, “...For real?”

Jian Fengchi narrowed his eyes. “I didn’t see them myself, but that aura is really similar... It can’t be wrong. Based on my guess, it should be...”

He made another number with his hands—seven, this time.

He had always been particularly astute in this aspect.

Shui Liu'er fell silent for a while. "It looks like the rumors are real... They've all gone outside?"

"Of course. How else do you think they managed to stay hidden for so long?"

Jiang Yucheng has spent a lot of money just to capture those 13 people. If he didn't do that, there's no way he'd be able to track their locations. Shui Liu'er stood up. Her expression was grave as she hugged the pipa tightly in her arms and paced back and forth.

Jian Fengchi knew that this reaction would only appear when she was nervous. *It seems like she's still very much concerned about this matter even after so long.*

"They can't go on like this forever—" Shui Liu'er suddenly stopped and whipped her head to the back. She could hear light and quick footsteps from outside the locked room.

A clear female's voice—which bore hints of amusement—floated over. "Are you in there, Young Master Jian?"

Jian Fengchi was shocked to hear this voice. *That's Chu Liuyue!*

Chapter 553: How Much Did You Win?

How did she find her way here? It didn't take Jian Fengchi long to figure out the purpose of Chu Liuyue's visit. *She's here to get her money!*

At the thought of this, his face darkened a little.

Meanwhile, Shui Liu'er had swiftly retreated back to her seat behind the screen, pretending that she had just finished playing her piece.

Knock, knock...

Jian Fengchi's countenance turned even darker. *Why even bother to knock on the door when she already knows which room I'm in?*

Seeing that he wasn't going to move to answer the door, Shui Liu'er got up instead. As soon as she opened the door, a beautiful face entered her line of sight.

Despite having met many beautiful ladies while playing music at Chun Feng Restaurant, her eyes lit up when she saw the visitor's appearance. Shui Liu'er gave her a small smile. "May I know who..."

A hint of surprise flashed across Chu Liuyue's eyes when she saw the lady before her. *What's Shui Liu'er doing in Chun Feng Restaurant? Isn't she from Jin Chuan?*

There was a saying that was once widely circulated around, and it was: Liu'er's song can move Jin Chuan. It was a praise for her outstanding pipa skills.

Jin Chuan is a thousand miles away from Xi Ling. Why is she here? The ladies working at Chun Feng Restaurant only sell their skills, not their bodies. Consumption costs are really high in this restaurant, and the average folks can't even afford a mouthful of tea here, much less hear the ladies sing and play music. It looks like Shui Liu'er has become Chun Feng Restaurant's headliner. Chu Liuyue suppressed the surprise in her heart as she smiled at the other. "I'm Chu Liuyue."

Shui Liu'er was taken aback by the name. Although she had heard this name going around in Xi Ling lately, she didn't expect this name's owner to look so beautiful. "Shui Liu'er pays her respects to Ms. Chu."

As Chu Liuyue peered into the room, she asked, "May I know if Young Master Jian is inside?"

Shui Liu'er nodded.

"Little Liu'er, I won't meet anyone today!" yelled Jian Fengchi lazily.

Although Shui Liu'er was inwardly cursing Jian Fengchi for using her as a shield again, she put on a difficult expression on her face as she looked at Chu Liuyue. "Ms. Chu, why don't you—"

"Ms. Liu'er, your hairpin is crooked."

"Huh?" Startled, Shui Liu'er hurriedly turned around and walked to the bronze mirror, where she carefully checked the hairpin on her head.

Chu Liuyue couldn't resist chuckling inwardly at the sight. *Apart from pipas, hair accessories have always been the next most important thing to her. It looks like she hasn't changed after all.*

While Shui Liu'er was still looking at the mirror, Chu Liuyue seized the chance to enter the room and walk past the screen.

Never expecting her to barge straight into the room, Jian Fengchi was shocked to see her here.

"It looks like you're enjoying life, Young Master Jian!" Chu Liuyue sighed from the bottom of her heart. While making her way up, she had already heard about Jian Fengchi booking the entire venue for a certain lady, but she didn't expect it to be for Shui Liu'er, who commanded the highest rates. *He wouldn't have been able to splurge so extravagantly if he didn't make a killing from betting on me.*

It was only then that Jian Fengchi snapped to his senses. "How did you get in here? Little Liu'er? Little Liu'er!"

Shui Liu'er was done adjusting her hairpin when she heard Jian Fengchi calling her. She turned her head back, only to see that Chu Liuyue had already entered the room. Her heart skipped a beat as she thought, *Oh dear, I forgot about her!*

Chu Liuyue flashed her a reassuring smile. "Don't worry, Ms. Liu'er. This matter has nothing to do with you."

Shui Liu'er froze as a sudden thought flashed across her mind. *No wonder I found her somewhat familiar. She looks like...*

Chu Liuyue shifted her gaze to Jian Fengchi. "Young Master Jian, I'm actually here to ask you something: Don't you think you've forgotten a certain matter?"

Knowing he couldn't hide from her any longer, he put a hand on his hurting head. "I didn't, alright! I'll give you what I promised to give you, and not a penny less! It's just that I've placed bets at so many betting stations that I need a few more days to collect all my winnings. I can only split the winnings with you once I calculate them."

Chu Liuyue obviously didn't buy into his lie. Her smile grew increasingly warm and gentle as she said, "I heard that you're notorious for your frivolity and compulsive gambling habits in Xi Ling City. Even if the gambling dens haven't paid you your winnings, I'm sure you remember how much money you bet, don't you?"

His brain works very well, and he can remember things clearly, especially when it comes to life's pleasures. He's obviously determined to make a fortune from gambling this time, so how can he possibly have forgotten how much money he has bet?

"I'm not greedy, so I'm only taking ten percent of your winnings. I'm sure you can afford to take this bit of money out, right?" Chu Liuyue then let out a weary sigh. "To tell you the truth, I had no choice but to come and look for you here. I'm currently short of money."

The corners of Jian Fengchi's lips twitched. *Where did this lass even hear those rumors from? What else can I say when she's already said her piece?!*

"Are you kidding me? You? Short of money?" Jian Fengchi eyed her skeptically. "You eat and live in the Mu Residence. Did Mu Qinghe not give you any money? Is he that stingy?!"

Mu Qinghe is far from being stingy. You—on the other hand—are a real miser. "You may not know this yet, but I've already moved out of the Mu Residence."

"Oh? Why did you suddenly move out?" Jian Fengchi was surprised to hear that. *Living there is an excellent choice for her, given her current situation. She has just won the Wan Zheng Competition, yet she wants to disassociate herself from Mu Qinghe?*

Chu Liuyue couldn't be bothered to explain so much to him. Thus, she only told him that she was now a Chong Xu Cabinet member and had thus found herself a permanent residence since she would be staying in Xi Ling for a long time.

"Xi Ling is a good place, but its living costs are simply too high. Everything needs money. Can you really bear to see me living on the streets, Young Master Jian?" she implored.

Living on the streets? Her? Jian Fengchi felt the corners of his mouth twitching. It'll be good enough if she doesn't make others live on the streets!

"Erm... I placed most of my money down as bets. Since I still haven't collected most of it back, I can't take out so much for the time being... Why don't I give you a portion of your share first?" Jian Fengchi tried negotiating with Chu Liuyue, but he received a look of disdain from Shui Liu'er as soon as he said that.

Tsk, he didn't even blink when he took out 100,000 white crystals earlier, yet he's pretending to be poor now. He's obviously agreed to share his winnings with Chu Liuyue, but when it comes down to it now, he's trying to renege on his word. Bah, he sure is something! The rumors about him liking Chu Liuyue are nothing but pure nonsense! Shui Liu'er thus approached them and gently advised, "Young Master Jian, you've always been generous and a man of your words. So you'll surely help Ms. Chu out since she's facing some trouble now, right?"

Jian Fengchi felt immensely stressed as he spoke through clenched teeth. "I'll find a way to raise the money."

He then began taking out one Cosmic Ring after another and showed no signs of stopping even after taking out the fifth ring.

Shui Liu'er's expression gradually stiffened as she watched this and wondered, *Just how much has he exactly won?!*

Chapter 554: Reveal

Jian Fengchi took out eight Cosmic Rings in total. Even though he tried his best to keep his eyes off those rings, he still felt heartache as he said, "T-these should be enough, right?"

That's more like it. After checking each of those rings, Chu Liuyue smiled slightly in satisfaction. She carefully put the Cosmic Rings away before she turned to look at Jian Fengchi and said sincerely, "My life in Xi Ling would've become really tough without this money. I really don't know how I should thank you, Young Master Jian!"

"J-just leave... No need to thank me..." As if he had been drained of energy, Jian Fengchi weakly waved his hand. *It's because of the words 'thank you' that I had so much money extorted from me! I no longer want to hear these words coming out of her mouth! The very mention of them scares me! This woman is a real terror!*

Shui Liu'er was dumbfounded as she watched this scene from the side. *Based on the different grades, the Cosmic Rings' dimensions differ as well. The Cosmic Rings Jian Fengchi took out earlier were all top grade and can contain a lot of things. It's obvious what those rings contain, yet he took out eight of them in one go and... gave them all to Chu Liuyue! Most importantly, that's just one-tenth of his winnings! Did he empty the casinos in Xi Ling?*

When she saw Chu Liuyue putting away the eight Cosmic Rings, she suddenly understood why Jian Fengchi had been delaying to give Chu Liuyue what she deserved and even tried to renege on his words. *I surely wouldn't bear to part with so much money in one go either!*

Jian Fengchi shot her a begrudging look. *If it weren't for her, I could've dragged it out for at least another day! Even though I have no plans of going back on my word, this feeling... It really sucks!*

Chu Liuyue didn't want to stay any longer now that she had successfully gotten her share of the winnings. Thus, she bid farewell to them. "In that case, I won't disturb you from enjoying Ms. Liu'er's music, Young Master Jian."

Jian Fengchi weakly waved his hand once more. He felt that another piece of his flesh would be cut off if he had to look at Chu Liuyue any longer.

After giving him a bow, Chu Liuyue turned to leave. But as she did so, she caught sight of a square jade token lying atop Jian Fengchi's couch in her peripheral vision. It seemed to have fallen off him.

The jade token was white and translucent. It looked very ordinary, save for the intricate cloud pattern carved on the side of it. In the middle of the cloud pattern was a word in fine print—doctor.

Astonishment sprouted within her. *Such jade tokens are only given to imperial heavenly doctors. How did Jian Fengchi come to possess one?!*

When Jian Fengchi noticed that Chu Liuyue hadn't left, he asked in puzzlement, "Hm? Weren't you about to leave?"

Chu Liuyue snapped to her senses right then. As she swept a surreptitious glance at his sleeve, she smiled and turned around to leave the room.

It was only after Chu Liuyue left that Shui Liu'er came walking over.

"Don't you think that Chu Liuyue looks like—What's that thing doing out here?!" she shrieked as she pointed at the jade token on the couch.

Jian Fengchi looked back, only to realize that the jade token had fallen out of his sleeve without his knowledge. He immediately put it away, and the lackadaisical expression instantly vanished from his face.

With a frown, Shui Liu'er asked, "Do you think Chu Liuyue saw it just now?"

He pondered for a moment before answering in a deep voice, "It's likely that she saw it, although she probably didn't get a clear look at it."

"How could you be so careless? Why didn't you take good care of such an important item? If she finds out that—"

"Don't worry. Very few people have ever seen this token. It's unlikely that she knows what it is." Jian Fengchi shook his head.

Shui Liu'er figured that his words made some sense since Chu Liuyue came from outside Heaven's Canopy, so she probably wouldn't think much of it even if she got a clear look at the token. Shui Liu'er rubbed her glabella as she said, "Be careful in the future."

Knowing that he was at fault, Jian Fengchi offered no explanations and merely nodded his head solemnly. "I'll send someone to keep an eye on Chu Liuyue. If there's anything unusual about her... We'll talk about it if that happens!"

To be honest, he didn't want to drag Chu Liuyue into this matter, nor did he want to take action against her—not until the very last moment at least.

Shui Liu'er nodded, but it earned her a curious look from Jian Fengchi. "Given your personality, you definitely wouldn't have let this matter slide just like that... What's wrong with you this time?"

She shot him a glare. "Why are you so nosy? You always have something to say about my decisions. I'm just too lazy to be bothered about her. Got a problem with that?"

Jian Fengchi raised his hands in surrender.

Feeling incredibly annoyed, she took her pipa and plucked its strings, playing a song that was supposed to sound melodious with murderous energy instead.

...

Meanwhile, Chu Liuyue had already left Chun Feng Restaurant and was preparing to head back to her mansion.

The people on the streets would recognize her from time to time and look at her with varying expressions. Although she ignored them all and behaved as she normally did, her emotions were in turmoil because the scene she saw earlier kept replaying in her mind.

Each of the imperial heavenly doctor tokens is specially made, so it's impossible that the token I saw earlier was a fake! There are several heavenly doctors working for the royal family though. Who does it belong to?

There's no way that Jian Fengchi didn't recognize that token. Him not returning it means that he obviously has the intention of keeping it, which is weird since he never wanted to work in the palace. Although he's an extremely gifted heavenly doctor, he dislikes being restrained.

More importantly, his sleeves... were clearly stained with something. I only got a glimpse, so I can't be certain... But if my guess is correct... What exactly does he want to do with that thing?

Chapter 555: Begging for Mercy

Nothing came to Chu Liuyue's mind even after thinking for a long time, so she decided to put this matter aside for the time being. She then turned and headed for Hundred Herbs Building instead.

On the one hand, she wanted to redeem all the items that Weichi Song had pawned to them. On the other hand, she needed to buy more herbs to refine more pills for Qiang Wanzhou since he had already eaten all three pills during the competition.

The cold, evil qi had been there in his body for years, so it couldn't be rid of overnight. It was a good thing that she had money; otherwise, she might not have been able to support both herself and Qiang Wanzhou at the same time.

...

"Please let us off this one time! We already know our mistake! We won't do it again!"

"Yeah! My family told me that I'm not allowed to go back home until the ban is lifted! Please help me out!"

"It wasn't intentional! Do you really want to drive us into a corner? I-it's fine even if you don't allow us to enter! Just don't get our family involved..."

Chu Liuyue spotted the crowd gathered at Hundred Herbs Building's entrance even from afar. It was only when she walked closer that she saw several young ladies begging and pleading at the doorstep.

Standing atop the doorstep was a pageboy who had a polite smile on his face. However, the way he spoke was very cruel and indifferent. "I'm sorry, ladies, but this is a direct order from my supervisor. A lowly pageboy like me doesn't have the guts to disobey his wishes. You should leave! We aren't the only herb store in Xi Ling City anyway!"

A woman with a haggard appearance laughed bitterly at that. "But there are some herbs that can only be found at Hundred Herbs Building!"

Hundred Herbs Building had a very high status in Xi Ling City, as well as a market monopoly on many kinds of herbs. Thus, it was true that certain herbs could only be bought from this store.

The pageboy's smile widened. "That's none of our business though. You should go find alternative ways instead!"

A few burly guards immediately stepped forward at his beckoning. "Ladies, please—"

Even though the ladies knew that making a commotion right at their doorstep would affect their business, they refused to leave no matter what. They had nowhere they could go anyway.

One of them then went down on her knees with tears streaming down her face. "I hope General Manager Yue will let us off this one time!"

Seeing this, the other two ladies kneeled down as well.

How dare these brainless women stir up trouble at our entrance?! The pageboy's expression turned slightly cold. "Hurry up and get these ladies to leave!"

Upon receiving that order, the guards lifted the ladies up, intending to drag them away by force.

Even though these ladies were cultivators, they were no match for the guards. Hence, they could only struggle frantically in an attempt to break free from their hold as their sharp and ear-piercing screams filled the air.

*What exactly is Hundred Herbs Building up to? Why are they chasing away their customers? Chu Liuyue knitted her brows slightly. **Doing business is all about peace and prosperity. The main reason Hundred Herbs Building can develop to its current scale is due to their excellent customer service. They have been doing very well in this aspect all along, and I've never heard of them doing such a thing in the past.***

Just then, the pageboy spotted Chu Liuyue among the crowd. He broke into a wide smile as he hurriedly strode over to welcome her. "What brings you here, Ms. Chu? Come this way, please!"

Chu Liuyue didn't expect the pageboy to have such good eyesight that he could recognize her at a glance, so she could only walk right up to him now. But unbeknownst to her, she had become the most desired customer among the pageboys working at Hundred Herbs Building ever since her last visit.

She wasn't the only VIP with a black gold card in Hundred Herbs Building. Most of the other VIPs were rich and powerful, but they always carried an air of authority with them and were particularly hard to serve.

This wasn't the case for her though! Not only was she decisive and generous with her spending, but she also didn't blink at the prices! On top of that, she was easy-going and didn't put on any airs before the

pageboys! She was polite and amiable, and she even had a good eye. She could pick out the good stuff just by looking around on her own, so there was no better customer than her in the pageboys' eyes.

As Chu Liuyue moved toward the entrance, she glanced at the women from the corners of her eyes and asked, "What's going on here?"

The pageboy bowed at her smilingly. "It's nothing. Those women previously said the wrong things in our store, so our supervisor ordered us not to serve them and their families as customers anymore. Are they disturbing you?"

"No." Chu Liuyue shook her head as she wondered what those women had said for them to receive such a severe punishment. *No wonder they're crying and causing a commotion here without any regard for their faces. They probably have been forced by their families to do this. Either way, this matter has nothing to do with me. I have no intention of meddling in Hundred Herbs Building's affairs, so it's pointless of me to ask more.*

But just as she was about to cross the building's threshold, a woman suddenly broke free from the guards' grip and rushed up toward her before getting down on her knees and crying hysterically. "I beg you to let us off, Ms. Chu!"

Chu Liuyue looked back and was baffled when she saw the unfamiliar face. *Why is she begging me when it's Hundred Herbs Building that refused to do their business?*

The pageboy's face turned cold as he immediately stepped in front of Chu Liuyue and shouted at the guards, "Did you guys not eat at all? Can you bear the responsibility if Ms. Chu gets startled?!"

The guards hurriedly came over to bring the woman away. However, the woman kept begging Chu Liuyue for help as if she were clutching onto her last straw of hope. "We know our mistake, Ms. Chu! We shouldn't have talked about you behind your back, but I swear that we meant no ill-wishes! We've already been punished, so could you please ask General Manager Yue to let us off?"

While tearfully shouting out, the woman tried to kneel down again when she got pulled up by the guards. She looked rather pitiful in this state.

Chu Liuyue, however, was confused. *T-this matter has something to do with me?*

She then told the guards, "Please let her finish her piece first."

When the guards looked at each other—not knowing what to do—the pageboy hurriedly said, "Didn't you hear what Ms. Chu said? Get them all here!"

He then looked at the woman in front of them and ordered frigidly, "You better give honest answers to all of Ms. Chu's questions!"

The woman nodded her head fervently before briefly recounting what happened that day. Of course, she didn't go into detail about what they had said about Chu Liuyue and tried to gloss it over. She then ended it with more pleas and begging. "...Ms. Chu, we truly didn't mean it! We won't dare to do so again! Just let us off this time, please..."

Hearing this, Chu Liuyue fell silent for a long time. *I can imagine the nasty things these women had said about me, so I don't pity them in the slightest. However, there are so many people talking about me behind my back. I would die of exhaustion if I were to go pursue accountability from each and every one of them.*

Since when... did Hundred Herbs Building have such a rule though? I didn't know that the VIPs with black gold cards have such high statuses.

“Actually—”

“What’s going on here?” A clear and calm voice floated over all of a sudden.

The pageboy and the others immediately bowed respectfully. “Greetings, General Manager Yue!”

Chapter 556: It’ll Be Too Obvious

Chu Liuyue looked up and saw a man in an ivory tunic—who appeared to be in his thirties—walking over. His personable and elegant disposition made him look more like a scholar than a shrewd businessman.

It turned out that he was Hundred Herbs Building’s person-in-charge—Yue Ling.

Yue Ling went up to her with a smile. “What a rare visitor! Why aren’t you entering the shop, Ms. Chu?”

She asked in surprise, “You know who I am?”

He nodded. “Your performance at the Wan Zheng Competition was brilliant.”

Oh, so he was there too. Chu Liuyue smiled. “Thanks for the compliment, General Manager Yue. I’m surprised that a busy man like you would actually have the time to watch the competition.”

His cultivation is definitely above that of a stage-seven warrior, so it's only reasonable to assume that he wouldn't care about such competitions. Besides, he's not a clan leader. It's strange that Hundred Herbs Building's manager would spend time watching the competition.

Yue Ling lifted his brows slightly. *I can't possibly say that I went for a cramming session, can I? This lady comes and goes so quickly without warning that I didn't get a chance to see her when she was here in our shop previously, and it had been a regret of mine.*

He had wanted to find an opportunity to meet and get acquainted with her, lest he failed to recognize her should they ever meet. Alas, she was staying at the Mu Residence, which made meeting her even harder since security was extremely tight there.

Thus, he could only go to Xuan Ji Square instead. It was only after a few days of waiting that he finally saw her, and she had even emerged as the competition's victor. It was then that he became truly impressed with her.

His praise for her was thus sincere.

Chu Liuyue then lifted her chin. "I bumped into this scene just as I was about to enter the shop."

Yue Ling had actually long recognized those ladies, and he wanted to kill them when he saw them making a commotion in front of Chu Liuyue. He felt a chill run down his neck as he thought about what his superior would say regarding his management skills should they find out. *If Chu Liuyue ends up getting angry...*

"I'm sorry for causing you trouble, Ms. Chu. It's all due to our carelessness that this matter happened. Why don't I accompany you inside to select the herbs you want?" As he spoke, he shot a warning look in the direction of the guards and the pageboy, who immediately moved to drag those women away.

One of the women wanted to say something, but the moment she tried to do so, she felt an overwhelming pressure descending on her. Her chest became tight, and she couldn't spit out a single word at all.

The same thing happened to the other two women.

One look, and Chu Liuyue could tell that the general manager had taken things into his own hands. She paused and then said, "I heard that this matter concerns me..."

"You're mistaken, Ms. Chu. This matter arose because these ladies openly insulted the black gold card holders right in our territory. This isn't only an insult to our VIPs but also contempt toward us. They only got what they deserved because they spoke carelessly, and they would end up in the same situation even if they were speaking about another VIP," stated Yue Ling calmly in an irrefutable tone.

He then looked in those women's direction. "You may continue making a scene here if you're not afraid of being unable to buy any herbs in Xi Ling City in the future."

The women instantaneously stopped struggling, while the crowd of onlookers fell silent upon hearing the blatant threat. None of them had any doubts about Hundred Herbs Building's ability to do so.

Yue Ling naturally would do what he said since he dared to say it in public. Although Hundred Herbs Building had never taken the initiative to cause trouble, they wouldn't be lenient when facing troublemakers.

Chu Liuyue understood then that the general manager was a resolute man despite his gentlemanly appearance. *It's no wonder that he's Hundred Herbs Building's manager.*

Knowing that it was hopeless to continue making a scene here since things would only become worse for them, the panic-stricken women could only beat a hasty retreat.

When the pressure on them lifted after they walked some distance away, one of them couldn't help but murmur, "Just what exactly did we do wrong? All we did was make some passing comments, so how did things reach this state...? How did things turn out this way?"

It's all because you offended someone you couldn't afford to offend. Yue Ling coldly retracted his gaze. He then turned around to smile at Chu Liuyue, the frigid expression instantly vanishing from his face. "Ms. Chu, please—"

...

Yue Ling thus entered the shop with Chu Liuyue. "Ms. Chu, what would you like to get this time?"

Many people on the exhibition hall's first floor looked over with envy at the sight of them because this was the first time Yue Ling had ever attended a customer in person, and a VIP with a black gold card at that.

"Five times the amount of herbs I bought previously," said Chu Liuyue after a pause.

Yue Ling raised his brows. *She's already considered a big spender with her splurging 90,000 white crystals here previously, yet she wants to spend so much this time?! Five times the amount of herbs she bought previously? That's about half a million white crystals! Few in Xi Ling City can afford to take out that much money in one shot, yet she doesn't seem to feel the pinch at all.*

A hush descended over the people on the first floor. Apparently, they were all shocked into silence by her extravagant spending. It was at that moment that they suddenly understood why Yue Ling refused to do those women's business when all they did was offend Chu Liuyue.

Even if they were to spend their entire family's fortune, they wouldn't be able to take out so much money like her. On top of that, this was just the amount of money she spent during a single visit.

Yue Ling turned to the pageboy—who was frozen to the spot—next to him. “Hurry up and go prepare the herbs Ms. Chu wants. Make sure to pick the best ones.”

“...Y-yes!” The pageboy snapped back to his senses and hurriedly went to pack her order.

The other pageboys couldn't help but lament at this scene. *Out of all days, why is the general manager here today?! If he didn't come, one of us could've struck it rich with Chu Liuyue's order. It's a pity that we won't get that chance since the general manager looks like he wants to attend to her throughout her entire time here.*

“Ms. Chu, we've brought in some new items for the second floor. Do you want to go and take a look?” asked Yue Ling.

She nodded. “Sure.”

“Please, follow me.” He then brought her up to the second floor.

It was only some time after they left that the people on the first floor exhaled. “Oh my gosh... How much did she spend just now...?”

“I don’t know, nor do I want to know... Comparison will just make us angry! While we have to carefully pick out items on the first floor, she just went straight up to the second floor like it’s nothing... She sure has deep pockets!”

“That’s strange. Ms. Chu was accompanied by the people from the Mu Residence previously. Why aren’t they with her this time?”

...

Chu Liuyue paid no attention to the gossip going on downstairs. *Although I had a fun time spending Mu Qinghe’s money, I have to say that it feels better to spend my own money. Besides, now that I have so much money, it’ll be hard to spend it all..*

The second floor was usually empty, and it was all the more so today. It was as if Chu Liuyue had booked the entire floor.

Yue Ling took a look at her before he said tentatively, “Feel free to choose whatever you want. As compensation for what you’ve gone through at the entrance earlier, we’ll offer you a 30% discount on your entire purchase bill today.”

He didn’t want to charge her at first, but it seemed that his superior didn’t want her to find out anything yet. Things would become too obvious if he overdid it.

Chapter 557: Kill order

“Thirty percent? I thought the black gold card gave a 15% discount?” Chu Liuyue asked confusedly. *The discount didn't increase even after I had spent close to 100,000 white crystals. All I got was a spot on the third floor.*

Yue Ling coughed. “That... It's because you bought more things this time around. Besides... Don't you intend on buying more? It's only right to give you a bigger discount. There aren't many customers as generous as you in Xi Ling City!”

The last part was true, and Yue Ling said it very sincerely.

Chu Liuyue didn't think much of it, and she nodded with a smile. “Yeah! Chong Xu Cabinet's Cabinet Master sold a number of things off here before, didn't he? I'll take whatever is left.”

Yue Ling was surprised. “Really? You want all of it?”

“En.”

Seeing that Chu Liuyue's expression was serious, Yue Ling became more serious as well. “If that's the case, please hold on; I'll get someone to bring them out. Because Old Song made a number of trips, it's going to take a bit of time.”

“I can wait.” Chu Liuyue indicated her willingness to wait as she walked along the crystal cabinets.

They really did bring a number of rare herbs. Hundred Herbs Building was really good at this, so they were right to be confident.

When Yue Ling returned, Chu Liuyue seemingly asked him nonchalantly as she looked at the herbs on the display shelves. "Right... General Manager Yue, you mentioned that Old Song made multiple trips... When did he start?"

Yue Ling pondered for a moment. "About half a year ago."

He had been rather shocked at the beginning, so he had memories of it.

Half a year ago... How badly did Chong Xu Cabinet have to be hit for Weichi Song to be struggling this hard? It's no wonder Jiu Xing Alliance has been wanting to take over. It would seem that Chong Xu Cabinet is struggling in Xi Ling now.

"It seems like Ms. Chu is really interested in Old Song's items?" Yue Ling asked.

Chu Liuyue wasn't afraid of him asking, so she told him frankly, "You might not know, General Manager Yue, but I've joined Chong Xu Cabinet."

What happened in Xin Li Garden hadn't spread yet, so it was normal for Yue Ling not to know about this.

As expected, Yue Ling paused. "You're saying that after the Wan Zheng Competition... You chose Chong Xu Cabinet?"

Didn't they say that one could choose any of the major sects? Besides, Chu Liuyue took first place. Shouldn't it be easy for her to join any of them? Why did she choose Chong Xu Cabinet?!

Chu Liuyue nodded.

Should I congratulate her? Joining the current Chong Xu Cabinet isn't exactly something worth congratulating. Yue Ling had always been eloquent, but he was dumbfounded now. *Do I express my pity? Chu Liuyue has clearly made her choice.*

Chu Liuyue had expected him to react this way, so she didn't take it to heart. She chose a few more herbs.

Yue Ling followed along and wanted to provide more information on the herbs, but he soon found that there was no use for him here.

Chu Liuyue was a quick shopper. She bought everything that caught her eye, only asking questions about the age of the herbs occasionally. However, she usually made really good guesses.

Gradually, Yue Ling became certain that the earlier reports weren't exaggerating.

Chu Liuyue can be considered an expert in all of this, but... What is she going to do with all of these herbs? Based on her current age, it should be rather tough to refine these herbs... However, Yue Ling didn't ask.

Chu Liuyue picked a few more herbs, and the pageboy brought out the organized collection of Weichi Song's items.

At a glance, there were a couple dozen things.

Chu Liuyue opened a few boxes to look. To no surprise, they were items that she was familiar with.

I wonder what Weichi Song felt when he sold these items. Chu Liuyue sighed to herself as she placed all the items into her Cosmic Ring.

All the items were put together on the bull.

Yue Ling made the list himself. He smiled after checking through it. "After the discount, the total is 1.05 million white crystals."

Even though the pageboys at the side already had a feeling, they all sucked in a cold breath when they heard the figure.

Chu Liuyue handed him a Cosmic Ring that she had just gotten from Jian Fengchi. "Thank you, General Manager Yue."

Yue Ling looked at the ring after he took it from her and raised his brows. *This is a Cosmic Ring unique to Dragon Teeth Mountain. I've only seen it on Jian Fengchi's hand. This money... is Jian Fengchi's?*

But he quickly put his doubts away and took out the corresponding number of white crystals.

He made sure to look at Chu Liuyue when he was making the withdrawal.

She looked relaxed as if she didn't care about the movement of one million white crystals.

Tsk. Just her composure alone is much more impressive than many of the noble families' sons. No wonder...

“Ms. Chu, you’ve spent more than one million white crystals at Hundred Herbs Building. There will be a permanent room open for you on the third floor. Would you like to take a look now?”

A look of surprise flashed across Chu Liuyue’s face. “So fast?”

Yue Ling hesitated. *I naturally can't say that I had started preparing for this since I received orders from my higher-ups.*

“Hundred Herbs Building has always been efficient.”

Chu Liuyue thought about it but turned him down. “Not today. I’ll come back another day.”

She had been outside for long enough today. It was time for her to go back.

Yue Ling sent her out of Hundred Herbs Building personally. He then sighed after he watched her disappear.

He was a little troubled by what he saw earlier. *That Cosmic Ring...*

...

Tens of thousands of kilometers away.

At the tip of a floating island stood a majestic palace. Armed and armored guards stood on both sides, giving it an impressive aura.

A tall and slender silhouette was heading for the main chamber's door—it was Rong Xiu.

He was dressed in a black robe with a gold collar. The sleeves had cloud patterns on them, and he was also wearing a black cloak.

If Chu Liuyue were here, she would find that Rong Xiu looked like an entirely different person. His usually gentle demeanor was replaced by absolute authority and coldness—ruling over everything!

The previous Rong Xiu was like an unsheathed sword. He hid himself, remaining humble and gentle.

The current him gave off a murderous aura. It was like he could rip heaven and earth apart with a single wave.

He stood straight in front of the soldiers.

Everyone kneeled on one knee and greeted him respectfully! "Greetings, Your Grace!"

Rong Xiu's eyes swept across everyone like they were knives. "The Peerless Palace sent people to assassinate me. Evidence of their intention to rebel is solid, and they are to be executed. I'll lead the troops today to punish them. They are all to die!"

"Yes, Your Grace!"

"Kill! Kill! Kill!" Shouts shook the ground!

Yu Mo and Yan Qing looked at one other from behind Rong Xiu. *Many have been eyeing this position, and they have covertly caused quite a bit of chaos. However, this is the first time that Master is issuing a kill order!*

They wondered what the people from the Peerless Palace had done for His Highness to want to get rid of all of them!

Chapter 558: The Subordinate's Self-Awareness

Tianling Imperial Palace, Huayang Palace.

"Elder Duanmu, how did the investigation go?" asked Shangguan Wan nervously.

Duanmu Chun shook his head. "Don't worry, Your Highness. Everything is fine; the Long Yuan Sword is still there."

It was only then that she could set her mind at ease. "That's good... That's good..."

The elder gave her a strange look. "Your Highness, why did this matter suddenly cross your mind? Without the Long Yuan Sword, the Tianling God Realm is unlikely to continue existing."

Shangguan Wan forced a smile. "I know. I've just been a little distraught ever since I opened the Tianling God Realm to the public for the competition. Somehow, I feel that my ancestors would blame me for doing this. Thus, I requested for you to go check things out and make sure that nothing is affected there."

Her brows furrowed slightly as she patted her chest. "I'd be a sinner if something were to happen in the Tianling God Realm because of my decision..."

Duanmu Chun couldn't help but sigh inwardly at this sight. *The Third Princess is rather outstanding in all aspects, but she just doesn't have enough resolution. It was her idea to open the Tianling God Realm to the public, yet she's worrying and even regretting her decision now. This never would've happened with Princess Shangguan Yue if she was still around...*

Unfortunately, the Third Princess is currently in power and has absolute say. Even though there are other princes and princesses in the royal family, nobody is more suitable than her for this position. If His Majesty remains in a coma forever, then it's highly likely that she'll directly ascend the throne.

"You worry too much, Your Highness. You did it for the Tianling Dynasty's sake after all. The Tianling God Realm..." He paused, hesitating to speak further. *To be honest, I sensed something amiss with the place as soon as I entered it. Although the Long Yuan Sword was still there, the entire realm was in chaos, and the sword didn't look like it had been sleeping for thousands of years. However, I have never entered the Tianling God Realm before, so I can't be certain about what's going on there.*

"What's wrong, Elder Duanmu?" asked Shangguan Wan.

Duanmu Chun pushed his suspicion away. "It's nothing. I just think that you might feel more assured if you were to go there and take a look for yourself."

Shangguan Wan froze for a second. "I'm preparing for a breakthrough, so I've been focusing on my cultivation lately. I don't have the time to go there now; let's talk about this another day!"

Not doubting her words in the slightest, Duanmu Chun bent his waist. "Understood. Once you make a successful breakthrough, you can attempt to wake the Long Yuan Sword. If you succeed..."

His voice trailed off as he swallowed the rest of his words.

A hint of resentment flashed across Shangguan Wan's eyes as her lips formed a small smile. "I understand."

With a bow, Duanmu Chun took his leave.

As soon as he disappeared, the smile on Shangguan Wan's face slipped off. She knew exactly what the elder meant. *With Father in a coma and me being the eldest of my siblings, it's only right for me to take over Father's duties. Even though I currently have the power to handle all of the Tianling Dynasty's affairs, the power isn't truly mine since I'm ultimately just a Third Princess in title.*

The Tianling Dynasty's throne wasn't passed on to princes only. Princesses stood a chance to compete for it as long as they were outstanding enough. It was just like how the emperor had wanted to pass his throne to Shangguan Yue when she got married.

Hence, Shangguan Wan only had two ways if she wanted to become the ruler. With the first method, she could naturally succeed the throne once her father passed on. However, this method wasn't viable

because she couldn't let him quietly pass away just like that and had to make him regain his consciousness instead.

On the other hand, the second method was that she prove her own capabilities and take the throne for herself. Alas, the problem with this method was that she wasn't Shangguan Yue, who had a Tianjing Yuan meridian. The people below her would thus be reluctant to submit to her.

If I can invoke the Long Yuan Sword, I'll be able to prove that I'm qualified to take the throne and squash out all the rumors about me at the same time! But stepping into Tianling God Realm is already a tall order for me, let alone invoking the sword! Annoyance surged within her. "Chan Yi, go summon Yang Qin'er over!"

...

When Yang Qin'er arrived at Huayang Palace and saw the expressionless woman sitting at the seat of honor, a sense of foreboding flooded her. She walked over and went down on her knees right away.

Shangguan Wan looked at her, sneering. "Do you know why you were summoned over?"

Yang Qin'er answered in trepidation, "B-because of the Long Yuan Sword..."

Shangguan Wan slowly said, "That's right. According to our investigation, the Long Yuan Sword is still inside the Tianling God Realm."

Just as I expected! How can that be though? Yang Qin'er was flustered. "That's impossible... It can't be... I saw it clearly back then..."

“Are you doubting my words?” Shangguan Wan asked in return.

Yang Qin’er nearly bit her tongue off right there and then. “N-no...”

Shangguan Wan rose to her feet and slowly walked up to her. “Raise your head.”

Yang Qin’er stiffly did as told.

Smack!

Following the loud slap resounding across the room, Yang Qin’er fell over to the ground. The cheek on one side of her face turned red and swollen instantaneously.

“How dare you make a fool of me?! You must be tired of living!”

Yang Qin’er’s voice trembled as she held her stinging face. “B-but Your Highness, Ning Jiaojiao was also there back then—”

Smack!

She was met with another slap across the face.

“Who are you compared to Ning Jiaojiao?” Shangguan Wan found it ridiculous that Yang Qin’er even mentioned Ning Jiaojiao. *Ning Jiaojiao is ultimately the sole daughter of Xuanfeng Hall’s clan leader, so I can’t possibly do anything to her. However, that isn’t the same for a nobody like Yang Qin’er.*

As she stared Yang Qin’er, she suddenly asked, “I remember that you have a superior Dijing Yuan meridian, is that right?”

...

Chu Liuyue was surprised to find a freshly written plaque—it read: Chu Residence—hanging above her mansion’s front door when she returned home in the evening. Based on the handwriting, she could tell that it was written by Weichi Song.

She pushed the door open, only to realize that the mansion looked entirely brand new. Gone was the gloomy atmosphere. Just two steps into the mansion, and she saw Qiang Wanzhou emerging from a corner. *Is that a cloth in his hand?*

Ye Ranran was right behind him. Her sleeves were rolled up as she held onto a broom.

Chu Liuyue’s eyelids twitched at the sight. “W-what are you guys doing?”

A shy smile—as well as two little dimples—appeared on Ye Ranran’s round face. “You’re back, Liuyue? We’re tidying up the place. How do you think it looks now?”

Of course, I can see that. It’s just that... “How did you persuade Little Zhou to help you with the chores?” He doesn’t seem like he’d do such chores. Based on his character, he doesn’t look like he’d agree to do them either...

With a bright smile, Ye Ranran said, "I was actually going to do it on my own, but Wanzhou offered to help. Hence, I let him do it!"

As Chu Liuyue turned to look at Qiang Wanzhou in shock, he turned his face away in embarrassment and hid the cloth behind him. "I cleaned your room."

Chapter 559: How Do You Know?

Chu Liuyue burst out chuckling as she walked over. "You don't have to do these chores. I can tidy up my own room."

Qiang Wanzhou looked at her in puzzlement. "But I'm your subordinate now."

"What about it?"

"So, this is part of my duties," answered Qiang Wanzhou seriously. *Although I haven't done these chores in a long while, that doesn't mean I don't know how to do them.*

"You can go take a look at your room. If there's anything that you're not satisfied with, I'll change it."

Blinking her eyes, Chu Liuyue realized something all of a sudden. "Little Zhou, do you have this mentality that being my subordinate means that you have to do such chores?"

"Yeah," answered Qiang Wanzhou definitely. *Otherwise, what's the use of having a subordinate?*

Chu Liuyue felt her head throb when she saw how certain he looked. *I wonder what was on that person's mind when she taught him to do such things. I have this feeling that she treated him like a servant, but his gaze always becomes much gentler whenever he mentions her. Although he never says anything, I can sense that he misses her a lot. Otherwise, he wouldn't have endured the arduous journey to come all the way from Nan Jiang to Xi Ling. She must've treated him really well for him to miss her so much.*

At the thought of this, she smiled. "You might be my subordinate now, but I won't make any demands of you. You can do these chores if you want to, but it's not required of you. Understand?" *Otherwise, it'll feel like I'm bullying a little kid.*

Qiang Wanzhou thought about it for a while. "Do you not like this? Is it because I'm doing a bad job?"

It looks like it'll take some time for this kiddo to understand what I truly mean. Chu Liuyue smiled helplessly at him as she ruffled his hair. "That's not it; you did a great job."

A skeptical look crossed his face. "But you haven't seen your room yet."

At that, Ye Ranran excitedly said, "Yeah! Go take a look at your room, Liuyue! It's spanking clean! He did a better job than me!"

Is this something to be proud of—that two geniuses with Dijing Yuan meridians have to compete to see who does a better job at cleaning? Helpless, Chu Liuyue could only raise her hands in surrender. "I'll go check it out now."

"Hurry up!" While Ye Ranran ran ahead of them excitedly, Qiang Wanzhou walked behind Chu Liuyue as usual.

After walking some distance, the trio arrived at Chu Liuyue's room. Even though it was her room, she hadn't had a chance to view it yet.

Under their watchful eyes, she pushed open the door and entered the room, only to be astonished by the room's cleanliness.

Wow, it's spic and span here. Not only does the room look brand new, but even my shadow is clearly reflected on the floor! Chu Liuyue didn't take this matter to heart previously, but upon seeing it for herself, she finally understood why Ye Ranran was so excited. Qiang Wanzhou... seems to be extraordinarily outstanding in this aspect...

She couldn't resist turning her head to look at him as she asked, "Tell me the truth, Little Zhou. Did you do such chores every day that you became—" *So skilled?*

For a moment, she couldn't think of any suitable words to describe what she wanted to say.

When Qiang Wanzhou's countenance darkened, she let out a cough before walking further inside.

On the small couch by the window was a mini wooden table. On it was a chessboard, along with two jars of chess pieces.

The corners of her lips slightly rose when she saw this. *I wonder where he found those things from. They are quite well-placed.*

All of a sudden, her eyes were drawn to the cup of ginger tea that was placed next to the chessboard, which was to her great surprise. “Little Zhou, how did you know that I like to place a cup of ginger tea next to the chessboard when I’m playing chess?”

Chapter 560: She Won’t Forget Me

Qiang Wanzhou froze. “I’ve always placed it like this.”

Always? Chu Liuyue understood what he meant right away. “That person does this too? S-she likes doing this too?”

“What a coincidence.” She raised her brows upon hearing his affirmative reply. *While there are many people who like playing chess and drinking tea, very few people like to put a cup of ginger tea beside the chessboard. At the very least, I’ve never met anyone who has the same habit as me. Not only do we have ‘Yue’ in our names, but that person also likes having a cup of ginger tea next to their chessboard. There really is some affinity between Qiang Wanzhou and me.*

The ginger tea was still relatively hot, with wisps of white smoke coming out from the cup. Its faintly bitter and spicy fragrance felt especially refreshing. As she slowly rubbed the teacup with her fingers, she suddenly found herself being somewhat curious about that person Qiang Wanzhou missed so much. *If she’s still alive... It’d be interesting to meet up with her.*

Qiang Wanzhou was a little distracted as he fell into deep thought. It took a while before he snapped back to his senses when Chu Liuyue called him. “Pardon?”

Chu Liuyue repeated herself. “I said that we should go and rest up for the day before we head to Chong Xu Cabinet tomorrow.”

Weichi Song had left a long time ago, leaving Ye Ranran behind to help them with anything they needed. This was why Ye Ranran also stayed there for the night.

Even though the Chu Residence wasn't as large as the Mu Residence, it was still spacious enough to accommodate a few people.

While Ye Ranran left Chu Liuyue's room not long after, Qiang Wanzhou stayed behind as he seemed to have something to say to her.

Chu Liuyue walked over to him with a smile. "Feel free to ask me any questions you have."

With his back facing the door, the sunlight from outside spilled into the room and onto his soft and luscious blond hair. His ears appeared transparent, and his face's contours were outlined in the dazzling sunlight. Although his features appeared unclear in the shadows, his eyes sparkled with a mysterious light. He was silent for a long time before he quietly asked, "Have you ever been to Nan Jiang?"

Chu Liuyue shook her head. "No."

Like a candle flame that was extinguished, the light in his eyes went out immediately. For some reason, the sight of this made Chu Liuyue's mood sink as if there was something weighing down on her heart.

"I got it." With that, Qiang Wanzhou turned to leave. Just as he took a step forward, he paused and whispered so softly that his voice was almost gone with the wind. "Say, could she have forgotten about me?"

There was none of his usual aloofness or stubbornness in his tone. At that moment, Qiang Wanzhou was akin to a helpless child who had lost his direction and didn't know where to go. Deep loneliness enveloped him as his thin body—which was hidden in the rough and oversized clothes—swayed.

“How is that possible?” said Chu Liuyue gently as she looked at his figure. “There’s no way she’ll forget such an obedient and outstanding boy like you. If she knows that you’re looking for her, she’ll definitely come to find you too.”

Qiang Wanzhou fell silent for a long while before saying, “You’re right; she won’t forget me. Without me, who’s going to help her brew tea and smoothen the chess pieces?”

His voice became much firmer as if he was trying to convince someone.

“She won’t forget me.” With that, he left without so much as a head turn. His hasty departure made it seem like he was worried about getting chased.

Chu Liuyue’s lips moved, but she ended up swallowing the words at the tip of her tongue. *This is his own business after all. Once we settle down, I can perhaps help him look for her.*

She stood there in place for a while before she entered her room and began refining pills.

...

Now that she had broken through to become a stage-four warrior, she was now officially a fourth-grade heavenly doctor. This made refining pills a lot easier for her than before.

After refining three pills, she began meditating. She only stopped to lie down and rest after circulating her force for three Heavenly Cycles.

She had a peaceful sleep that night.

...

Early the next morning, Chu Liuyue, Qiang Wanzhou, and Ye Ranran set off for Chong Xu Cabinet, which was located at Qing Yuan Mountain.

Xi Ling City was huge, with mountainous ranges located inside and outside the city. Since the major sects were all based at different and distant locations, things were usually peaceful.

Located in Xi Ling City's northeast corner, Qing Yuan Mountain was rather special due to it being an isolated mountain peak. It was a good place for cultivation as the mountain was filled with dense force.

When the trio arrived at the mountain's foot, Chu Liuyue noticed that something was amiss. There used to be a powerful barrier enveloping Qing Yuan Mountain, but though the barrier still existed, it had noticeably become a lot weaker than before. Thus, she couldn't resist saying, "Something seems... strange about the barrier."

"Huh? Oh, you're talking about the barrier! It wasn't like this in the past; it got destroyed a year ago when someone forcibly broke into Chong Xu Cabinet. It wasn't easy for the Cabinet Master and the elders to repair it, but maintenance requires a lot of manpower and resources. Chong Xu Cabinet is in a difficult situation now, so... That was all we could do." Upon seeing the complicated look on Chu Liuyue's face, Ye Ranran hurriedly added, "Don't worry though. It might not be as powerful as before, but there won't be any danger with the Cabinet Master and the elders guarding Qing Yuan Mountain."

Only Ye Ranran would be so frank about this. Chu Liuyue smiled wryly at that. *Thinking about it, if it weren't due to dire circumstances, there's no way that a sect wouldn't properly maintain its most basic defense barrier. It looks like Chong Xu Cabinet's situation is worse than I thought.*

"It's fine; I'm just a little curious since this is my first visit. Let's keep going! The Cabinet Master and the others must be waiting for us."

Ye Ranran didn't question her. She simply continued leading the way.

There was only a stone path up the mountain, which extended from the mountain foot all the way to the top. Chu Liuyue and Qiang Wanzhou followed her on this path.

After walking for a short distance, Chu Liuyue suddenly stopped in her tracks. The step below her feet had a smidge of dried, dark-red blood and looked like it had been there for some time. Her pupils shrank slightly as she shifted her gaze to the side of it.

In its surroundings were huge patches of bloodstains, which had become darker over time. With things like dust and stones covering them, one wouldn't be able to spot them if they weren't looking closely enough. Nevertheless, these bloodstains showed how fierce the battle was when it took place here.

We're only at the mountain foot though... Her heart thumped slightly. *I wonder what sort of scene will be awaiting me at the peak. Whoever managed to deal such a huge blow to Chong Xu Cabinet—which once stood at the peak—must be really terrifying!*

With a deep inhale, she retracted her gaze and continued making her way up.