

Ghost 142

Chapter 142: improvement

Morning sunlight spilled over the street like melted gold, warming the stone path that led to Whisper Bowl. By the time Empress Lian An stepped outside with her sleeves rolled up, the entire neighborhood was already awake.

Hammers clanged.

Saws screeched.

Workers shouted measurements from one room to the next.

The renovation of the second shop — the new TWB main branch — was entering its final three days.

Dust clouds drifted every time a wall was knocked down, but the excitement in the air kept everyone energetic.

Today was the first full day after returning from the barbaric camp.

Five days remained before the Empress had to pretend to "recover" and return to the palace.

She had no time to waste.

1. Morning Assembly — Training Begins

Yao Qing clapped loudly.

"Everyone, gather! Sister Lian wants to speak!"

Forty freed slaves, neatly dressed in their uniforms, lined up outside the restaurant. Fifteen stall vendors who had joined earlier stood behind them. Their backs were straight, their hair neatly tied, and their eyes full of determination.

They looked completely different from the weak, lost people they once were.

In only five days of training...

Their writing had improved

Their speech was clear

Their posture was correct

Their confidence had grown

The Empress walked forward, hands behind her back, examining their lines like a commander watching her troops.

The freed slaves straightened instantly.

Her mere presence had that effect.

"Today," she said firmly, "we begin the final stage of training. When TWB opens, you must behave like professionals. No hesitation. No confusion. No mistakes."

Everyone nodded with serious expressions.

"Our restaurant will open branches across the kingdom. The elite branches start here. The responsibility falls on you."

Her words hit their hearts like a drum.

One slave stepped forward.

A middle-aged man who used to look hopeless and hollow. Now his eyes burned with purpose.

"Lady Lian," he said, "thank you for giving us a future. We promise we won't fail you."

The Empress nodded.

"Good. Let's begin."

2. Training Station 1 — Greeting Customers

Twin Lin demonstrated.

He bowed deeply.

"Welcome to The Whisper Bowl! Please take a seat!"

His voice was so loud he scared two birds off the rooftop.

Everyone laughed.

Twin Ran elbowed him.

"You're greeting customers, not chasing tigers."

They practiced:

Voice tone

Bowing angle

Hand position

Walking posture

Some bowed too low.

Some bowed too fast.

One man bowed so hard he hit his head on a table.

Yao Qing smacked her forehead.

"NO! We are not running a comedy club!"

The workers fixed their posture seriously, and soon the line of trainees began to resemble trained staff of a high-class restaurant.

3. Training Station 2 — Reading & Writing

The new man, carrying a stack of bamboo scrolls, stood at the teaching station.

"Read this," he instructed.

He held up a menu.

Workers took turns reading:

"Fried..."

"Veg... ve... vege—"

"Vegetable Spring Roll!" he corrected.

Another read: "Chilli—"

"Chilli Chicken!"

The Empress walked by and corrected strokes on their practice sheets.

Seeing her neat handwriting, several trainees sighed softly.

"She writes like a noble..."

"She must have been taught by scholars..."

"She's too good to be living here..."

Fen Yu, floating invisibly above them, kicked her ghostly feet in the air.

"Of course she writes well! She's our Empress!"

Wei Rong grunted.

"Quiet before someone hears you."

Li Shen hovered silently, supervising from above.

4. Training Station 3 — Food Preparation

Inside the kitchen, steam rose endlessly.

Stir-fry sounds rang like rhythmic drums.

Cooking was their hardest lesson — but also the most fun.

The Empress wore an apron and demonstrated slicing vegetables.

Her hands moved with precision — thin, equal slices, each one identical.

Everyone stared.

The new man whispered to twins,

"She cooks like a miracle."

One older woman, practicing beside her, sliced vegetables shakily.

The Empress stood behind her, guiding her hands.

"Firm grip. Steady wrist. Let the knife do the work."

The woman beamed.

"No one has ever taught me so gently..."

Fen Yu crab-walked across the ceiling, whispering,

"If only Emperor saw her being gentle with others..."

Li Shen deadpanned,

"Stop stirring problems."

Wei Rong perched on a roof beam.

"She is more peaceful here than the palace."

When the slaves cooked their first full dish — simple fried rice — the aroma surprised even themselves.

"It smells real!"

"It looks real!"

"Did... we make this?"

Their laughter filled the kitchen.

Progress.

Real progress.

5. Training Station 4 — Serving & Walking Balance

Twin Ran placed bowls of water on trays.

"Balance them while walking from here to there. Don't spill a drop!"

The first group started walking.

Immediately—

SPLASH.

Three bowls hit the ground.

"No! No! No!" Yao Qing face-palmed.

Twin Lin shouted dramatically,

"THE WATER IS YOUR ENEMY! TAME IT!"

Workers burst into laughter, but they tried again.

And again.

And again.

By afternoon, they could walk steadily, bow, move sideways, and serve without spilling.

6. Renovation Progress

The Empress took a break from training and walked next door.

The renovation team, fifty strong, were working like an army.

Walls were freshly plastered.

The ceiling lights were hung.

Tables were sanded.

"Lady Lian," the head carpenter reported, "we will finish in exactly three days. The new kitchen will be completed by tonight."

"Good," she nodded. "I want the front sign ready too."

"The TWB logo?"

"Yes. The emblem must be carved deeply. No one should be able to copy it."

Her tone was sharp.

Everyone understood.

This was not just a sign—it was the symbol of their rising food empire.

7. Merchant Yu Mian's Inspection Visit

By late afternoon, a familiar carriage stopped at the entrance.

Yu Mian stepped out wearing a fine blue robe embroidered with gold. His eyes brightened when he saw the renovated shop.

"Lady Lian! How impressive! The progress is beyond expectations."

Inside, he examined everything:

Workers learning to greet

Slaves writing beautifully

Kitchen staff preparing sauces

Twins instructing like strict generals

He was stunned.

"You trained them to this level in five days?"

The Empress shrugged.

"Hard work is easy when people have purpose."

He clasped his hands.

"With this level of discipline, TWB will become the strongest restaurant chain in the Kingdom."

Yao Qing crossed her arms proudly.

"Of course! Sister Lian is unstoppable!"

8. Renewing the Contract (New Share Split)

Yu Mian opened his scroll and placed a new contract on the table.

"Let's finalize the updated shares."

The Empress nodded.

She had changed the distribution:

45% — Empress

40% — Merchant Yu Mian

10% — Yao Qing (her friend)

3% — Twins (1.5% each)

2% — New man

The twins stared, speechless.

"We... we get shares? REAL shares?!"

The new man trembled.

"I—I never imagined..."

Yao Qing slapped their backs proudly.

"Appreciate Sister Lian! She values loyalty!"

The Empress signed first.

Yu Mian signed next.

Yao Qing carefully wrote her name.

The twins pressed their thumbprints, crying dramatically.

The new man bowed three times before signing.

"Thank you," he whispered.

"I will devote my life to TWB."

The Empress smiled lightly.

"Then don't disappoint me."

9. Ghosts' Cultivation Corner

While everyone continued practicing, the three ghosts gathered in a quiet corner.

Fen Yu glowed faintly.

"Look, my aura is brighter!"

Li Shen nodded.

"The shaman's ritual advanced our cultivation."

Wei Rong summoned his spiritual sword briefly.

Blue light flickered.

"Soon, we can detect ghost-breeders from miles away."

The Empress overheard and smiled softly.

With stronger ghosts...

With trained workers...

With TWB nearly ready...

Everything was finally moving forward.

10. Ending Scene — The Empress Looking at Her Growing Empire

At sunset, the street glowed orange.

Workers cleaned the floors.

Trainees practiced greetings.

Renovators hammered the last beams.

Ghosts meditated.

The merchant discussed expansion plans.

The Whisper Bowl, once a small idea...

Had become a living empire.

The Empress stood at the doorway, hands behind her back, watching her people.

Her heart warmed.

This was her world.

Her ambition.

Her beginning.

In five days she would have to return to palace life...

But TWB would continue to rise.

She exhaled slowly, satisfied.

"Let's make this the greatest opening in history."

Everyone nodded with fire in their eyes.

The Empress, her three ghosts, and her four humans rise to the next stage

Night swallowed the Whisper Bowl street in quiet darkness. The construction workers had gone home, the trainees were asleep on the top floor, and only the faint glow of lanterns flickered inside the restaurant.

But inside the Empress's private room...

eight beings sat in a circle.

The Empress.

Fen Yu the dramatic ghost.

Wei Rong the ghost general.

Li Shen the scholar ghost.

Yao Qing.

Twin Lin.

Twin Ran.

And the new man.

All cross-legged.

All holding crystals from the shaman.

All nervous.

The room hummed with a low spiritual vibration.

The Empress inhaled slowly.

She could feel something warm pulsing under her skin—

the spiritual pathways the shaman had awakened during the barbaric battle.

Wei Rong's sword glowed faintly beside him.

Li Shen's body flickered with scholarly blue light.

Fen Yu's hair floated around her dramatically as she sighed loudly.

"I hope this cultivation makes me prettier," she said.

"I want to be the top beauty in both ghost world and human world."

Wei Rong snorted. "You need more than cultivation for that."

Fen Yu threw her crystal at him. It passed through his chest, of course, but she still felt better.

Yao Qing whispered to the Empress,

"Your ghosts fight like siblings."

"They are siblings," the Empress muttered.

"In stupidity."

The ghosts glared at her.

And the room fell silent.

It was time.

1. Opening of the Spiritual Array

The parchment from the old shaman glowed faintly inside the Empress's sleeve.

As soon as she sat in the center, the floor beneath them lit up—

a golden-orange circular array spreading like fire.

Twin Ran gasped.

"Who drew this?!"

The Empress sighed.

"That old woman placed it inside the parchment. It activates when we meditate together."

New Man whispered,

"Does it... hurt?"

Fen Yu floated beside him with a smirk.

"It hurts if you are weak."

He nearly fainted.

The array hummed.

Then—

WHOOM—

A burst of spiritual wind spun upward, forming a vortex around them.

Their crystals levitated.

The lights flickered.

Ghostly shapes shimmered in the air.

And all eight felt a tug in their souls—

as if something pulled them into a deeper world.

2. Entering the Shared Conscious Realm

Their eyes opened inside another world.

A vast white space.

Soft, endless, silent.

The Empress gasped.

The space felt warm, like sunlight hugging her skin.

Fen Yu danced in the air.

"I feel lighter! Like my ghost body is glowing!"

Li Shen nodded.

"This is a spiritual consciousness realm. A place where we confront energy... and ourselves."

Wei Rong touched his sword.

"It feels alive."

The four humans looked terrified.

Twin Lin clutched his chest.

"I— I feel something inside me moving!"

Twin Ran frowned.

"Brother... that is your heartbeat."

The new man cried,

"I WANT TO GO HOME—"

Yao Qing slapped the back of his head.

"We are already here."

But then—

The white world trembled.

Cracks formed in the ground.

Dark mist seeped out.

Fen Yu froze.

"Oh no... not again..."

3. Facing the Inner Demon Stage

A deep voice echoed:

"To ascend, confront your weakness."

The mist split into eight shadows—

each representing the worst fear of each person.

Fen Yu's fear— Betrayal

Her shadow appeared as the ghost who deceived her for the ring.

It mocked her.

"You were never loved. Not in life. Not in death."

Fen Yu trembled.

The Empress stepped beside her.

"You are loved here."

Fen Yu began to cry—

but then raised her spiritual sword.

Slash.

The shadow shattered like glass.

Wei Rong's fear— Failure

His shadow was his old battlefield, where he died protecting an emperor who abandoned him.

"You failed," it hissed.

"You died for nothing."

Wei Rong clenched his jaw.

"No. I died with honor."

His sword glowed bright red.

With a shout, he struck his shadow down.

Li Shen's fear— Helplessness

His shadow was a dying scholar unable to save a single villager from illness.

"You know all books but could save no one," it whispered.

Li Shen lowered his head...

but the Empress placed a hand on his shoulder.

"You guide us now. That is saving."

He smiled softly—

and his shadow dissolved.

Yao Qing's fear— Losing Everyone

Her shadow showed her family suffering from false treasury charges, losing everything.

She shook violently.

The Empress hugged her.

"We will fix it. I promise."

Yao Qing clenched her fists and kicked through the shadow, shattering it completely.

Twin Lin's fear— Uselessness

His shadow taunted,

"You are loud but useless! The weaker twin!"

He screamed in agony.

Twin Ran stepped forward.

"My brother is not useless!"

Together they punched through the darkness.

Twin Ran's fear— Abandonment

He saw Twin Lin walking away, leaving him behind forever.

Ran fell to his knees.

Empress patted his head.

"You two are attached like chopsticks. No one is leaving."

Lin hugged him, and the shadow vanished.

New Man's fear— Not Belonging

His shadow showed him being unnoticed, forgotten, discarded.

He cried silently.

Fen Yu floated to him.

"We see you. You matter."

He wiped his eyes and cut down his fear.

The Empress's fear— Loneliness

Her shadow was herself...

alone in the palace, unloved, misunderstood, forgotten.

"You don't belong anywhere," it said.

The Empress exhaled.

"I create my own place."

Her sword flashed.

Her shadow split apart.

When the last shadow shattered—

The white world erupted with golden light.

4. Ascension — Receiving the Spiritual Sword

The ground glowed.

Eight swords appeared in front of them.

The Empress's sword glimmered pink-gold, humming warmly.

Fen Yu's sword glittered silver like moonlight.

Wei Rong's was red as battle flame.

Li Shen's sword shimmered blue like a scholar's ink.

Yao Qing's sword held green aura.

Twin Lin's sword shone electric yellow.

Twin Ran's sword glowed orange.

The new man's sword shimmered pale purple, trembling but alive.

All lifted their swords.

The world shook—

then collapsed into blinding white light.

5. Returning to Reality — The Finished Cultivation

They woke up back in the Whisper Bowl room.

Still in the sigil.

Still holding crystals.

But...

Stronger.

Fen Yu floated in circles.

"I FEEL BEAUTIFUL!"

Wei Rong swung his sword, cracking a tile on the floor.

Li Shen calmly straightened his ghostly robe.

"My cultivation is twice as strong."

Yao Qing stared at her glowing hands.

"I can feel energy flowing!"

Twin Lin screamed,

"I HAVE A SWORD! WE HAVE SWORDS!!!"

Twin Ran spun his sword around—

and sliced the table in half.

The new man fainted.

Then woke up and fainted again.

The Empress wiped sweat from her forehead.

Her energy pulsed through her veins—

smooth, strong, powerful.

"We all grew," she said.