

Little Girl 381

Chapter 381: Timely Rain, Ghost Soldiers

Emperor Longteng finished speaking and personally helped Little Xinzhuo to his feet.

"Little Qi, you and your mother have been back for a while now. I have been busy with court affairs recently and have not had a chance to see you and your mother."

Emperor Longteng took Little Xinzhuo by the hand, his tone filled with concern, which significantly eased the tension between father and son.

Beside them, Long Qingchen lowered his head, his teeth itching with anger.

He had hoped to use this opportunity to put Little Qi in his place.

"Elder Brother, just now Little Qi he..."

Long Rui, who had been lifted up, wanted to say something.

But his hand was suddenly twisted and broken by someone, which was exceedingly peculiar.

Long Qingchen glanced at Long Rui, completely uninterested in his gibberish.

"Brother, you promised me, if I followed your orders this time and disciplined Little Qi, you would recommend me for the Martial Arts Academy at Qingtian Academy."

Long Rui was not willing to give up.

He risked the wrath of his father for the chance to prove himself.

If he stayed in the Imperial Palace, he would always be under thumb of Empress Feng and her son. But if he went to Qingtian Academy, he would have the chance to make a name for himself.

"With your incompetence, even if you went to Qingtian Academy, you'd only disgrace our Royal family. Get lost, or I'll deal with you and your mother together."

Long Qingchen expressed his annoyance.

Fuming, he returned to Fuluan Palace.

Inside the Palace, Empress Feng just received a cup of fragrant tea from a palace maid and sipped lightly.

"My Prince, who has upset you again?"

Empress Feng's face bore a pleased smile.

"It's all because of that useless Long Rui. I tasked him to discipline Long Xinzhuo, but instead he got schooled by Long Xinzhuo and even caused me to be scolded by His Majesty."

Long Qingchen complained bitterly.

"You're always too impatient. Your father just took Noble Lady Shi and her son back, feeling guilty towards them, and inevitably shows favoritism. Once their novelty wears off, we'll slowly deal with them. Moreover, while you should firmly check them, don't kill them; Noble Lady Shi is still of some use to me."

Empress Feng twirled her teacup, her eyes gleaming coldly.

"Mother, I don't understand. Why keep them around? Aren't you afraid of Father?"

Long Qingchen voiced his confusion.

"Afraid that your father's old feelings might rekindle, granting favor to Noble Lady Shi again? My son, you still don't fully understand your father."

Empress Feng merely smiled without speaking.

As long as she couldn't find the item left by General Shi, she couldn't be at peace.

Noble Lady Shi and her son were her last leads.

Empress Feng paused.

"Besides, I've already placed people in Noble Lady Shi's Xiangyun Palace. If she and her son make any moves, they won't escape my sight."

After Emperor Longteng comforted Noble Lady Shi and her son at Xiangyun Palace, Noble Lady Shi, greatly flattered, escorted Emperor Longteng out with Little Xinzhuo.

Little Xinzhuo looked around and noticed that within a day, the chilly palace had added more than ten palace maids and eunuchs.

"Mother, who are these people?"

Little Xinzhuo asked in a lowered voice.

"These are people sent by the Empress to look after us. We should be thankful for the Empress's consideration."

Noble Lady Shi spoke softly, pulling Little Xinzhuo inside.

"The Empress has people watching us."

Little Xinzhuo said discontentedly.

Noble Lady Shi quickly shook her head, cautioning Little Xinzhuo not to speak recklessly.

"Mother, don't worry, I've already contacted Sister, and she has sent two people to protect us in secret. Just now at the training ground, I nearly got ambushed by the Sixth Prince."

Little Xinzhuo looked around, and although unseen, he could sense the presence of the two ghost guards.

Apart from Ghost, Sister had also sent Gui Er to protect them.

Ghost usually protects Little Xinzhuo, while Gui Er protects Noble Lady Shi.

The people Sister sent were truly timely.

Chapter 382: Looks Are Justice

Just before noon, Xin Lin had already received good news from Ma Jingtian.

The ghost soldiers had all been successfully placed, and this morning, Emperor Longteng even visited Xin Zhuo and his mother.

With the secret protection of Ghost and Gui Er, as well as the overt protection from Captain Yang, Xin Zhuo and his mother would have a much easier time in the palace.

As for Empress Feng, apart from targeting Noble Lady Shi and her son, there wasn't any excessively unfair treatment.

It seemed Empress Feng, as she speculated, was still plotting to acquire the relics of General Shi.

Xin Lin thought to herself.

"Little Boss, everything in the palace has been arranged properly, and the account books you requested are all organized. Would you like to review the accounts of the Spiritual Food Restaurant or the Medical Hall first?"

Ma Jingtian asked attentively from the side.

With the haunted incident in Chu Mansion resolved and considering the need for Heaven-defying Value, Xin Lin had to explore new business opportunities.

As for the hundred acres of farmland obtained by Chu Mansion, Xin Lin heard that they had all been uniformly rented out to farmers, and there was no need to worry in the short term. Once autumn arrived, they could simply collect the rent.

Xin Lin first took over the account book of the Spiritual Food Restaurant and glanced at it.

"Every month there's a loss of thirteen thousand four hundred taels!"

Xin Lin saw the shocking red figure and frowned.

"Didn't they say this Spiritual Food Restaurant had little business, how could there be such a loss?"

Xin Lin expressed her dissatisfaction.

Although she also knew that the properties divided among them by the Chu Mansion Brothers were definitely not good ones.

"Little Boss, three thousand taels of that is due to material losses. The business isn't good, but the materials are still prepared every month. The remaining more than ten thousand taels are the wages for the staff and star-level Spiritual Delicacy Masters alone. Just the Delicacy Master's salary costs ten thousand taels."

Ma Jingtian explained.

"A ten thousand taels Spiritual Delicacy Master who can't sell a single dish, what is this situation? Let's go, we're heading to the Spiritual Food Restaurant."

Xin Lin put away the account book and moved to leave.

As they reached the doorway, Silly Chu happily followed.

"Daughter... go out... play..."

Xin Lin thought for a bit, and decided to bring her silly father along.

Ma Jingtian led the way while Xin Lin and her father walked leisurely behind. Xin Lin was relatively new to Purple Cloud City, and having been busy preparing for the Zixiao Palace Exam earlier, she was not familiar with the city environment.

As they passed through the busy market, many Madams and young ladies looked their way from time to time.

Xin Lin was somewhat surprised, wasn't her warrant already revoked?

As she pondered, she saw her silly father dart to a nearby stall, casually grabbed a shiny big pear, wiped it, and handed it to his precious daughter.

"Daughter... eat, eat..."

Xin Lin sternly faced down.

"How many times have I told you, we can't just take things from others, put it down."

Silly Chu was startled, his lips pouting.

"It's fine, take it to eat. No need to pay, take a few more."

The pear seller's face was all smiles, grabbed a handful of pears, and forcibly stuffed them into Silly Chu's hands, and at the end, she even patted Silly Chu's hand.

"!!!"

Xin Lin was shocked and quickly pulled her silly father back.

"No need to pay? Then I will take some too."

Hearing this, Ma Jingtian reached out to grab a pear.

Little did he know, the old lady snatched the pear back.

"Where's the silver? It's fifty copper coins per pear."

"But you said no need to pay!"

Ma Jingtian was furious.

"He's handsome, so it's free. You, looking like a monkey! Fifty copper coins is already a bargain for you."

The old lady's face was filled with anger as she shooed Ma Jingtian away.

Chapter 383: Chu's Restaurant

All the way here, Xin Lin and Silly Chu's hands were filled with a bunch of items—and all for no! cost! whatsoever!

Silly Chu was all smiles throughout the journey. The aunties and young girls selling goods would swoon over him as if he were honey, their faces turning red as they handed over freebies.

On the other hand, Ma Jingtian, the "Monkey," had a face growing longer by the minute, wearing a Judge Bao expression the entire time.

"It's maddening. Why should someone get free meals just because they're good-looking?"

Ma Jingtian grumbled incessantly.

He eagerly wanted to sneakily grab a pear to eat when Silly Chu was not paying attention, but Silly Chu, with his sharp eyes and quick hands, slapped away Ma Jingtian's hand.

With a smile still on his face, Silly Chu then handed over a big yellow and juicy pear to Xin Lin.

"Silly, you're doing this on purpose, right? You must not really be silly!"

Ma Jingtian stomped his feet in frustration.

Silly Chu was naturally handsome, and back when he was still Grand Doctor Chu, with his high charm and yet unbearable aloofness, ordinary young ladies and married women wouldn't dare to approach him, let alone take a distant look, for fear of being frozen by his cold demeanor.

But it's different now that he's become Silly Chu.

He spends his days heartlessly, cheerfully laughing at everyone he meets, making all the women in the streets and alleyways go crazy for him.

Judging by his appearance, one could guess that back when he was bullied and starved at the Chu Mansion, he must have roamed the streets to fill his stomach.

Thinking of this, Xin Lin felt a touch of sorrow.

Thankfully, with her around, nobody would ever think of bullying her dear Silly dad again!

"Don't just blabber nonsense, where exactly is the Spiritual Food Restaurant?"

Xin Lin had already found the address of the Spiritual Food Restaurant, but where exactly was it?

"It's just ahead, next to that coffin shop."

Ma Jingtian pointed with one finger.

Xin Lin and Silly Chu looked over, and indeed, next to a few willow wood coffins, they saw a small shop with a sign at the front saying "Chu's Restaurant."

A Spiritual Food Restaurant opened next to a coffin shop, no wonder nobody was dining there.

Xin Lin rolled her eyes.

Upon entering the restaurant, Xin Lin saw several waiters listless and lacking energy, and the rosewood tables were covered in grease.

Her brows furrowing, she glanced at the menu on the wall, with prices ranging from five hundred to three thousand.

After looking a few times, Xin Lin ordered three dishes.

As soon as the food was served,

Xin Lin picked up a bite with her chopsticks, and then put it down.

"Call your chef over."

Xin Lin raised an eyebrow.

After a moment, out came a Spiritual Delicacy Master with a plump belly.

He was fat and big, tall and bulky, his eyes brimming with arrogance. Despite his dignified attire and the hat on his head adorned with two stars at its lower left corner.

Xin Lin had also heard from Ma Jingtian that Spiritual Delicacy Masters have their own rankings.

Two stars represent a Two-star Spiritual Delicacy Master, who can cook Spirit Food of the Second Level and below.

The chef at Chu's Restaurant is surnamed Yang, with the nickname Yang Ri Wan (Yang-the-Ten-Thousandth).

"So, you're Chef Yang. These dishes you've made, the ingredients aren't fresh, the cooking is inadequate, and the prices are high."

Xin Lin had eaten Wind Breath Braised Pork, which was also a One-star Spiritual Delicacy, and there was too much difference in taste.

Who knew that upon hearing this, Chef Yang stiffened his neck and slammed the table violently.

"Where did this pauper come from, what do you know about Spirit Food? How dare you say the Spiritual Delicacies I make aren't tasty!"

Chef Yang saw that these few people were dressed plainly, the girl was just a brat, and among the two men, one looked like a skinny monkey, and the other was too handsome, looking like a pretty boy.

"Hey! Fatty, watch who you're calling someone who hasn't eaten good food. Do you even know who we are?"

Ma Jingtian couldn't stand it once he heard this.

"No matter who you are, if you don't like it, get lost, and don't forget to settle the bill. A bunch of paupers!"

Chef Yang said and, with contempt, spat towards the group.

Chapter 384: You're Fired

He spat, which was truly like poking a hornet's nest.

Ma Jingtian was a local ruffian, unused to being bullied.

He flipped the table with a clang, turning it completely upside down.

"Looking to make a scene, huh? Seeking death!"

Chef Yang's neck flushed red, but he was heard stomping back to the kitchen and shortly after, he dashed out wielding two Bone Cutting Knives.

With a jolt of his arms, True Qi was channeled into them, causing the blades to radiate a cold light as they swooped towards Ma Jingtian's head.

Chef Yang's culinary skills were mediocre, but his knife skills were truly remarkable.

The blades, whirling like crescents, created a slicing wind so dense and abrupt it resembled a howling northern gale; he was practicing the Tiger Roar Saber, an Eighth Rank Skill.

Chef Yang, around forty, never quite made the cut in martial arts and failed to advance to the Xuan Transformation Realm; halfway through, he relied on his impressive knife skills to become a Spiritual Delicacy Master.

He was a Two-star Spiritual Delicacy Master and also an Xuanwu Seventh Layer Xuanwu Practitioner.

"This guy's knife skills are surprisingly fast!"

Ma Jingtian didn't expect his opponent to be so adept with blades. As the knife winds howled, his face stung painfully.

As the blade struck at Ma Jingtian's neck, Chef Yang's face showed delight, thinking to himself.

"Dare to criticize my Spirit Food, I'll let you bleed."

No blood splattered; instead, as the blade fell onto Ma Jingtian's neck, his neck strangely softened, and the knife felt like it was chopping into water, only causing ripples.

Ma Jingtian yelled, swinging his right fist and hitting Chef Yang's blade, making Chef Yang feel as if his knives were sucked into a strong force, sinking like stones into the sea.

A clang sound was heard as the two Bone Cutting Knives fell to the ground.

Under Gui Hu's guidance, Ma Jingtian's Water Element Skill leaped forward dramatically; not only was his True Qi more effortless, but it also allowed his skin and bones to become as pliable as water at will.

Chef Yang was all about forceful methods, and Ma Jingtian's Water Element Skill was just the right counter for him.

"Rebellion, rebellion! Beneath the Emperor's feet, these guys want to dine and dash. Let's take this to the officials."

Seeing Ma Jingtian force his knives from his grip, Chef Yang knew he had met a formidable opponent today.

He changed his tone, intending to take the issue to the government.

Chu's Restaurant was a property of the Chu Mansion, deeply favored by Emperor Longteng, and thus virtually unobstructed in Purple Cloud City.

When you beat a dog, you must look at its owner. To bully someone right up to the doorstep of Chu Mansion.

These people, they must be tired of living.

"Hold on, it's hard for an honest official to settle a domestic dispute. Today's issue, even if you called the County Magistrate, or even the current Emperor, the result would be the same. Chef Yang, you're fired."

Xin Lin waved his hand, signaling Chef Yang to get lost.

Such a character, and still earning ten thousand a day, Chu's Restaurant could operate till today only because the Chu family's ancestors were showing their blessing, their spirits must have become active.

Chef Yang was still dumbfounded.

Not until Xin Lin brought out Chu's Restaurant's deed and slammed it on the table.

"Starting today, I'm taking over Chu's Restaurant. You are fired."

The black and white lettering was clear.

Chef Yang's arrogant demeanor vanished instantly as he looked at Xin Lin and then at Bei Qing.

"Are you the new young miss just returned to Chu Mansion? You... you can't fire me, without me, Chu's Restaurant simply can't operate."

Chef Yang had also vaguely heard about the affairs of Chu Mansion, but he didn't expect that the first thing the newly recognized young miss would do after splitting the family was to fire him!

Chapter 385: The Difficulties of a Spiritual Delicacy Master

Hey, I've seen obstinate people, but never someone as obstinate as this.

In this day and age, workers are considered equal.

Is there ever a person that a boss can't fire?

Xin Lin sneered coldly.

"Today, I must fire you. It's like a bad apple spoils the whole bunch, I haven't even started to calculate the money Chu's Restaurant has lost over the years because of you, get out immediately."

"Just wait and see, in a few days, you'll be begging me to come back."

Chef Yang snorted twice.

With a wave of his hand, all the workers in Chu's Restaurant followed Chef Yang and left.

After a short while, aside from Xin Lin and two others, there was no one left in Chu's Restaurant.

"Little Boss, have you driven everyone away? How can we continue to run this Spiritual Food Restaurant?"

Ma Jingtian got carried away in anger, and when he came back to his senses, he realized that Little Boss had fired everyone.

"You yourself said his spiritual delicacies tasted bad, why keep him?"

Xin Lin looked at the burnt spiritual delicacies scattered on the ground.

"Little Boss, although what you said is right, you can't drive away a spirit cuisine master. If you drive him away, Chu's Restaurant will have to close down, and this shop might as well be finished."

Ma Jingtian shook his head and sighed.

Even though Chu's Restaurant was mostly running at a loss, occasionally a few fools would come to dine, providing some income.

It was still several months before the autumn grain harvest. The Water Wraith Gang was also burnt down, and Xin Lin, her father, and the group from the Water Wraith Gang, all were waiting for their next meal.

If Chu's Restaurant was gone, it's not like this group of local ruffians could go help at the Chu Family's Medical Hall to offer medical services and aid society.

From what Ma Jingtian said, Xin Lin realized that she might have indeed caused significant trouble this time.

Chef Yang's culinary skills were lacking, how could Chu Tianyi and his brother not know?

But the reason they kept him in Chu's Restaurant was because he was a spiritual delicacy master.

A Two-star Spirit Food Master, which is pretty good within Longteng Country, even the spirit food chefs in the Imperial Palace are only four-star spiritual cuisine masters.

In Longteng Country, since the time of the Emperor, it had been firmly established by royal decree that a Spiritual Food Restaurant must have a spirit cuisine master personally overseeing, only then could it operate.

If there is no spirit cuisine master, no matter how skilled your chefs are, it would still be considered illegal operation.

"No wonder Chef Yang, before leaving, boasted so loudly, saying I would definitely beg him to come back."

Listening to this, Xin Lin realized she had underestimated the intricacies of running a spiritual delicacies restaurant.

Ma Jingtian was just trying to teach that guy a lesson and make him learn, but instead, he inadvertently made things worse.

"Purple Cloud City is so large, there must be spirit cuisine masters, we should start searching, if we can't find a two-star spirit cuisine master, we'll find a one-star."

Xin Lin thought to herself, anyway, with the Dan Wood Furnace at hand, she could occasionally help make a few dishes of Wind Breath Braised Pork Belly; once Chu's Restaurant had a signature dish, it could gradually become popular.

Xin Lin thought it over; finding a spirit cuisine master required the help of someone well-connected.

Among the people she knew, Jiang Qing undoubtedly had the most extensive connections.

Since Jiang Qing had also said before, if there's anything, she could ask for his help.

Without delay, Xin Lin went straight to the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall to find Jiang Qing and ask for his assistance in finding a spirit cuisine master.

After Xin Lin explained the whole situation to Jiang Qing, his handsome face showed a hint of difficulty.

"Xin, it's not that I, Jiang Qing, don't want to help, but this matter might indeed be a bit challenging to deal with."

Chapter 386: News of Sikong Ran

Jiang Qing couldn't help either?

After hearing this, Xin Lin's big, round eyes dimmed, and her small face fell.

"It looks like my dad, myself, and the brothers from the Water Wraith Gang will all be surviving on the cold wind from now on."

Jiang Qing was speechless.

Seeing Xin Lin's worried and distressed expression, Jiang Qing felt a sudden heaviness in his chest.

Due to his background, he had never been particularly tender-hearted, nor could he be considered good-natured, but he always found himself inexplicably soft-hearted towards this young girl, Xin Lin.

Looking again at Xin Lin's youthful appearance, Jiang Qing couldn't help but wonder if he might have a fondness for young girls.

He shook his head secretly.

"Xin, there are actually quite a few Spirit Cuisine Masters in Purple Cloud City, but the majority of the one and two-star Masters serve in the households of official families. The three to four-star Masters, on the other hand, are concentrated in the Imperial Palace. If you really want to hire one, there's a two-star Spirit Cuisine Master at Peace Hall—who has been my servant since childhood. If you want to extract him from there, you would need to offer a salary of at least fifty thousand taels a month."

Afraid that Xin Lin wouldn't believe him, Jiang Qing continued.

"Of course, there are also some Spirit Cuisine Masters in the major Spiritual Food Restaurants. Apart from the largest, De Yue Building, all others have signed contracts, ranging from three to five years. That's the situation in the market, so it's really not easy to rehire."

Jiang Qing was not only familiar with the Elixir Pills market but also knowledgeable about Spirit Cuisine Masters, as both alchemy and spirit cuisine share similar transformative effects.

"Brother Jiang, what if I try to obtain the qualification of a Spirit Cuisine Master?"

Xin Lin asked.

After all, she possessed the Dan Wood Furnace and "Spiritual Delicacies" book; all she lacked was the formal qualification of a Spirit Cuisine Master.

"The Spirit Cuisine Master examination is held once a year, usually at the beginning of spring, and there's still half a year to go."

Half a year? Could Chu's Restaurant really survive on its savings?

Xin Lin did have tens of thousands of taels in silver.

However, those taels were meant for emergencies.

Silly Chu still needed one ingredient, the Golden Crow Egg Shell.

That item was only available in the Imperial Palace.

She currently had no means to reach Longteng Palace, so her only option to obtain the Golden Crow Egg Shell would be to purchase it.

Xin Lin's petite face tightened with worry.

"Xin, if you truly want to become a Spiritual Cuisine Master, consider finding a Spiritual Food Restaurant to apprentice and learn. If you're lucky, you might encounter a three-star or higher Spiritual Cuisine Master who could teach you many skills. In this way, your examination next year will be much easier."

Jiang Qing advised, his voice tinged with sympathy.

Three-star or higher Spiritual Cuisine Master?

A bold idea crossed Xin Lin's mind.

"Brother Jiang, could you help by listing the Spiritual Food Restaurants that have a Spiritual Cuisine Master?"

Thinking Xin Lin was taking his advice, Jiang Qing wrote down a few names.

Being a businessman who socialized often, Jiang Qing was intimately familiar with the Spiritual Cuisine Masters of Purple Cloud City.

With the list in hand, Xin Lin thanked Jiang Qing and left the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall.

"Hall Master, the new Eagle Chick List for March is out."

From the shadows, a voice emerged.

"Has any genius level person emerged this year from the Main Country, major sects, realms, or prominent families?"

Jiang Qing inquired casually, showing that the Eagle Chick List, which astonished many, barely mattered in his eyes.

"It's mostly the same old faces from the Xuan Transformation Realm, but there are a few new, noticeable individuals – Sikong Ran from Xuantian Sect, Qin Wuchang from Qin Yu..."

Chapter 387: Male Beauty

Xin Lin left the Alchemy Hall, glanced at the Spiritual Food Restaurant list in her hand.

There is a Three-star Spirit Chef in residence; it must be a major restaurant in Purple Cloud City.

For instance, De Yue Building, a place where Ma Jingtian once had a meal that he still reminisces about to this day, boasts some rather formidable Spirit Chefs, second only to those within Longteng Palace.

Xin Lin made it her first choice to head straight for De Yue Building.

De Yue, which is named for its connotations of 'spiritual food resembling mountain ranges.'

Its storefront is large, about a dozen times bigger than Chu's Restaurant, with glazed tiles and vermilion walls, splendidly adorned with golden decorations, and a line of red lanterns that hung with great grandeur.

It was said that the gold-lettered signboard of De Yue Building was personally written by Emperor Longteng in his youth.

Of course, the prices of the spirit cuisine at De Yue Building are the highest. The same dish that costs five hundred at Chu's Restaurant would cost at least ten thousand here, yet despite the astonishing prices, a steady stream of customers continues to come to De Yue Building for a feast.

Xin Lin had just arrived at the entrance of De Yue Building when she saw a notice for hiring posted outside.

"Only hiring male general workers, fourteen years of age and above, Xuanwu Practitioner Triple and above Martial Artists, with a clean background, native to Purple Cloud City, and in good health, may apply."

A Xuanwu Triple could only serve as a general worker, and they were only recruiting men — De Yue Building certainly did play hard to get.

Xin Lin frowned.

She could only look at the other Spiritual Food Restaurants on the list, searching from one to the next.

But soon, Xin Lin came back empty-handed.

Setting aside Xin Lin's appearance, which resembled that of a seven or eight-year-old, even if she assured everyone that she was over fourteen and agile with her hands and feet, she was still turned away by those Spiritual Food Restaurants, saying that they do not hire child labor.

"This approach won't do. I've already searched through every Spiritual Food Restaurant on the list."

As the sky grew darker, Xin Lin's heart sank deeper and deeper.

In desperation, her gaze fell upon the last entry in Jiang Qing's list.

"Taoyao Pavilion."

The three characters came into view.

Xin Lin's eyelid twitched.

Hey, there's a familiar one.

Taoyao Pavilion is a brothel, but it is also a Spiritual Food Restaurant.

After all, amid the allure of beauty, the appeal of fine food is naturally indispensable.

The madam of Taoyao Pavilion is said to be a Two-star Spirit Cuisine Master.

Jiang Qing hesitated when compiling the list, considering that Taoyao Pavilion wasn't exactly a respectable place, and he did not want Xin Lin to go there.

So he placed Taoyao Pavilion at the very end of the list.

Who would have thought that Xin Lin would end up at Taoyao Pavilion in the end.

"Pride Corpse, come out."

Since she was going to Taoyao Pavilion, Xin Lin obviously couldn't go there by herself, otherwise she wouldn't even be allowed through the door.

Having witnessed the epitome of 'appearance equates to justice' with her own Silly Chu earlier in the day, Xin Lin considered herself now well accustomed.

A quarter of an hour later, Gui Hu stood inside Taoyao Pavilion, with a little tail named "Xin Lin" following beside him.

"Lord Hu! Are you sure, your sister wants to come here to learn the art?"

The Oiran of Taoyao Pavilion looked at Gui Hu with affection, then glanced at Xin Lin beside him, who no matter how you looked at it, appeared to be "child labor."

Gui Hu did not open his mouth; he truly couldn't be bothered to acknowledge that the little hen was his sister.

How could he possibly have such a foolish sister!

"Pretty sister, I am genuinely eager to learn. I can do any sort of work, as long as you let me into the kitchen of Taoyao Pavilion to work as a general worker."

Xin Lin had a look full of hope.

Looking at Xin Lin's little face and then at Gui Hu's cool expression, the Oiran blushed and nodded her head.

Chapter 388: Spiritual Cuisine Master

The moon rises above the willow tips, casting slanting shadows of light.

When night falls, the liveliest spot in all of Purple Cloud City is none other than Taoyao Pavilion.

The reason Taoyao Pavilion stands strong amid the bustling activity of Purple Cloud City, aside from its beautiful girls, lies in another secret lure.

As long as you are willing to pay the price, you can savor the exquisite Spiritual Food.

Here, the Spiritual Cuisine Master, Master Ji, is a Three-star Spirit Cuisine Master.

A Three-star Spirit Cuisine Master able to whip up Three to Four Stars dishes, those tasty meals, paired with appealing company, have been discovered to reinvigorate patrons. They spend night after night indulging only to wake in the embrace of Taoyao Pavilion, not spent but rather invigorated, without a hint of adverse effects to speak of.

The secret behind this, it's presumed, is related to Master Ji.

Consequently, the customers are generous with their money, and Taoyao Pavilion's business flourishes more and more each day.

However, these past few days have seen the madam of Taoyao Pavilion troubled by a bothersome issue. Thanks to the boon of the Zixiao Palace Exam, the foot traffic in Purple Cloud City has massively increased, and with it, those flocking to Taoyao Pavilion for both tender companionship and delightful tastes are never-ending.

Yet it's precisely now that problems have cropped up in the kitchen.

In a huff, Master Ji dismissed three or four general workers, blaming their sticky fingers and lazy habits.

The owner had no choice but to recruit new general workers.

But the newly hired workers often couldn't last five days before getting kicked to the curb.

Master Ji's requirements for hiring general workers were particularly high, almost on par with those at De Yue Building. Ordinary Martial Artists who could meet these standards had either gone off to serve as Protectors in affluent households or ended up at De Yue Building; who would come to a brothel like Taoyao Pavilion?

Given Taoyao Pavilion's dubious reputation, and Master Ji's infamy in the entire Purple Cloud Spiritual Food Realm for his bad temper, it's no surprise that not a single general worker came seeking employment for two consecutive days.

Without general workers, Taoyao Pavilion's kitchen was short-staffed; piles of unwashed bowls and chopsticks mounted, complaints abounded.

Master Ji even issued an ultimatum, declaring that if a new general worker wasn't recruited today to help wash dishes and prepare vegetables, he'd walk out.

So, when the Oiran said she would recommend a new "little brother" as a general worker, Boss Liu of Taoyao Pavilion couldn't have been happier.

"Boss, is this the new general worker you talked about?"

Inside the kitchen, a bald, white-robed old gentleman with a goatee buzzed at Xin Lin, his glare intense.

Standing before Master Ji, Xin Lin had already changed clothes.

Her glossy black hair was tied up and hidden under a hat; she wore short tunics and shorts that revealed her lotus-root-like limbs.

Taoyao Pavilion is a brothel, and with her current identity shifted, she naturally couldn't enter as a maiden. Following the Oiran's advice, Xin Lin had disguised herself as a young boy.

Given her current physique, in the words of Pride Corpse, there's not much difference between her front and back anyway.

This so-called general worker, with his tiny arms and legs along with skin so tender it seems water could be wrung from it, clearly looks like an infant.

The general workers that he had dismissed were all sturdy youths around sixteen or seventeen years of age, the type who could gobble up ten pounds of meat in a single meal.

This infant before him probably can't even hold a vegetable knife steady!

General worker in name, but there are rules in the kitchen.

Starting from dish-washing and serving to vegetable-cutting and food-prepping, moving onto stir-frying and finally being able to qualify as a Spiritual Cuisine Master.

Master Ji searches for a general worker whom he can trust: someone deft, scrupulous, and willing to learn as an additional hand in the future.

To find such an infant is utterly ridiculous!

Master Ji indicates, he is very, very upset!

Chapter 389: Little General Worker

Isn't this just toying with people?

Boss Liu also wore a worried expression.

For one thing, no one was coming to apply for the general worker position, and for another, this little lass had entered the pavilion through the Oiran's tearful pleading.

The Oiran is Taoyao Pavilion's gold-lettered signboard, and so is Master Ji; he could not afford to offend either of them.

After much hesitation, Boss Liu still brought the person over.

The others in the kitchen all seemed to watch as if they were watching a joke, looking at Xin Lin with her short arms and legs.

"Master Ji, why don't you try using her first? If she's not suitable, we can look for someone else."

Under Master Ji's intense gaze, Boss Liu looked reluctant.

Boss Liu then lowered his voice further.

"I'll give you an extra fifty percent."

Spiritual Delicacy Masters of Master Ji's caliber, within Taoyao Pavilion, naturally didn't have a fixed income.

His monthly salary was based on Taoyao Pavilion's earnings, and an extra fifty percent was not a small amount.

Motivated by the money, Master Ji reluctantly agreed to keep Xin Lin.

"You, stay in the outer kitchen and don't touch anything carelessly, or I'll break your legs."

Once Boss Liu left, the dining area became bustling with activity.

It was already evening, and in a quarter of an hour, the guests would enter, marking the start of nightlife.

Xin Lin had just arrived, and no one was paying attention to her.

It was also her first time entering a real Spiritual Food kitchen, and at one glance, she realized just how large Taoyao Pavilion's kitchen was.

It was at least ten times larger than the kitchen of the Water Wraith Gang.

It was divided into an inner and outer sections. The inner kitchen could only be entered by the boss, Master Ji, and his few assistant chefs, as well as first and second-star Spirit Cuisine Masters.

A general worker like Xin Lin could only stay in the outer section.

At a glance, she saw various spirit grass and fruits, as well as some Xuan Beasts and Spirit Beasts.

For making Spiritual Food, these were the main ingredients.

Moreover, some of the complex Spiritual Foods even required the use of seven or eight spiritual materials. The likes of Xin Lin, with a dish like Feng Xi Braised Pork Belly, only used a type of Wind Breath Grass and a few pieces of pork for spiritual food, which was indeed rare.

This was only in the outer kitchen, the place for storing ingredients and washing dishes and pots.

After waiting for two hours, Spiritual Dishes were successively served.

"Golden Roasted Cloud Leg, Two-star Spirit Food, can prolong life and rapidly restore True Qi."

"Jade Bone Earth Asparagus Soup, Two-star Spirit Food, can enhance cultivation and increase the chances of opening up the gates of Xuan Sect."

As Xin Lin watched dish after dish of Spiritual Food being sent out, smelling the fragrance that filled the air, she thought to herself that although Master Ji had a bit of a temper, he truly had skill. She didn't know how much more superior he was compared to Master Yang.

"Hey, newcomer, don't just stand there in a daze, go and wash those piles of dishes."

A general worker named Wang Lei came over and barked, telling Xin Lin to go wash dishes.

Dozens of bowls and dishes were all stacked to one side.

Taoyao Pavilion had many customers and banquets, and the nightly cleaning was enough to exhaust anyone to death.

Washing and scrubbing pots also required carrying water, which was all to be assisted by the general workers.

The previous general workers of Wang Lei, some were too lazy and slow and got fired, while others ran away because they found the work too exhausting.

Wang Lei, who was born into a farming family and had practiced martial arts for a few years, was strong and enduring, so he gritted his teeth and carried on.

These past few days, they were short on general hands, and he was doing the work of three or four people alone, already exhausted to the point of collapsing.

He had hoped that after recruiting a new general worker, the boss would appreciate his hard work and let him help in the inner kitchen. To his dismay, they brought in a little lass.

With such a little kid, it would be good enough if she didn't make a mess of things.

Wang Lei thought about it and decided to give Xin Lin a hard time, to make her leave quickly so they could recruit a new general worker and he could get a promotion sooner.

Chapter 390: Veterans Bullying the Newcomer

"Clean everything within two hours, or you're out."

Wang Lei posed as a seasoned general worker.

Xin Lin didn't argue and walked outside where the meals were prepared, finding a small mountain of dishes to wash next to the well.

The bucket for fetching water was an iron one, weighing over twenty pounds just by itself.

Not to mention washing dishes, even fetching water seemed time-consuming.

Beside her, Gui Hu's chilling voice drifted over.

"Hey, it's rare to see you here. Scared by Miss Oiran?"

Xin Lin sneered and glanced at Gui Hu.

She didn't know what Miss Oiran saw in Gui Hu; seeing him, she couldn't even move her feet.

In the eyes of others, Miss Oiran was a person to hold close like warm, fragrant, and soft jade, but in Gui Hu's eyes, she was as terrifying as a flood and fierce beasts.

He sat uncomfortably, as if on pins and needles and handed Miss Oiran over to Ma Jingtian, then circled back to the dining area.

"That guy wants to die."

Gui Hu glanced at Wang Lei's direction, where Wang Lei had dragged over a small stool and was soundly asleep.

"Don't always call for hitting and killing. You're idle anyway, help me fetch water. I can still wash dishes; it's just that I haven't done it for many years and I'm a bit rusty."

After saying that, Xin Lin efficiently rolled up her sleeves, posed ready, and began washing.

When she was in her teens, having just escaped from the Dark Organization, she didn't have any skills and had worked as a dishwasher in a small restaurant in Chinatown for a while. There, she hoarded strength for three years and based on the materials she had stolen from the Dark Organization, she self-taught and eventually became the top-ranked mercenary queen.

Every new official appoints three orders, and Xin Lin saw that nobody in the dining area really respected her.

Being a general worker, she couldn't let others look down on her.

Xin Lin buried her head and started washing fiercely.

Gui Hu stood by the well next to her watching Xin Lin's small figure. After a moment of silence, he picked up the bucket and filled the nearby water tank.

An hour passed.

The tank was filled and emptied, emptied and filled.

Xin Lin only felt her back and waist aching; being a general worker really was tough, comparable to executing the Ghost God Fist Second Form twice.

Xin Lin looked at the remaining pile of dishes, thought for a while, and took out a small bottle of Jade Pure Spring from her pocket.

The Jade Pure Spring in the Jade Purification Tank could restore physical energy and increase Spiritual Energy.

Unfortunately, it required over twelve hours and a full tank of water, which could eventually be bottled into at most three bottles like the one Xin Lin held.

Xin Lin had never drunk it before; her physical energy had excessively depleted today, and for her to complete the task, she definitely needed to exert more effort.

She drank the whole bottle of Jade Pure Spring in one gulp.

The moment the spring water touched her tastebuds, Xin Lin felt them joyously dancing.

The water tasted sweet, like honey.

Her body slowly warmed, and her tired limbs once again became nimble.

What made Xin Lin the most delighted was that the Fu Xi's Energy inside her was restored, although the recovery of the Fu Xi's Energy was not as quick as her physical strength.

Xin Lin looked at the huge pile of dishes behind her, infused Fu Xi's Energy into her hands, and her dishwashing speed soared.

After cultivating the Ghost God Fist First Form, her punching technique was already much faster than ordinary people.

After reaching the Second Form, she found that not only with punches, as long as she activated the Fu Xi's Energy, any activity she did was a bit faster than normal people.

The sound of water splashing was heard, and the pile of dishes under Xin Lin rapidly diminished...

Another hour passed.

"Wang Lei, you dare to slack off here!"

The scolding voice of Master Ji, like a thunderclap, awoke Wang Lei from his sleep.