

PROTEGE 191

Chapter 191: THEY CHALLENGED SOMEONE BEYOND THEIR REACH

The Samurai Men did not hesitate.

In one synchronized motion, they cupped their hands and bowed deeply, their voices ringing with reverence. "Congratulations, Madam, on your breakthrough."

As if on cue, Mushu's team, Pharsa's warriors, and the rest followed suit, bowing respectfully.

Ling Li's lips curved into a small smile as she lifted a hand, signaling them to rise.

"Thank you," she said, her voice carrying a quiet strength, a force that resonated deeply. "Please rise."

Ling Li then turned to the Samurai leader, her expression softening ever so slightly. "Please extend my deep gratitude to your Master."

The Samurai leader bowed once more. Without another word, the seven warriors vanished into thin air, their departure swift as the wind.

Shi Min finally exhaled, feeling the tension drain from his shoulders.

Ling Li turned toward the mansion, cradling Chin Chin in her arms, the little one still sniffing from earlier tears. "Let's go in," she said, her gaze lingering on Four Eyes.

Four Eyes' expression was unreadable.

Something simmered in his eyes, an emotion Ling Li couldn't quite decipher.

Guilt crept into her heart.

She tilted her head slightly, her voice softening. "I'm sorry I made you worry."

Four Eyes exhaled slowly, looking at her with an intense gaze before scoffing lightly. The relief in Four Eyes' features was unmistakable, but he wasn't ready to let go of his frustration just yet.

"You!..." he muttered before cutting himself off, shaking his head.

Ling Li chuckled, gently rubbing Chin Chin's back as they made their way inside.

Meanwhile, across the Hidden Valley, silence settled like a suffocating blanket.

The martial factions, who had waited with bated breath to seize the alchemy's treasures, now felt only dread.

For a cultivator to withstand twenty-five lightning strikes and survive - no, thrive — meant one thing.

They had challenged someone beyond their reach.

Someone beyond mortality.

Someone the heavens themselves had attempted to punish and failed.

The realization sent chills down their spines.

Not one of them would dare approach the mansion again.

As Ling Li stepped through the grand back entrance of the mansion, followed by her family, the lingering traces of divine energy still clung to her, like whispers of the heavens reluctant to part from her presence. The servants and guards stationed inside, led by Butler Peng, instinctively bowed their heads lower than usual, a subconscious response to the overwhelming aura Ling Li exuded. Though she had

masked her true cultivation in the past, her breakthrough left traces of undeniable power, one that could not simply be hidden.

The family gathered quickly in the main hall, the atmosphere thick with a mixture of awe and anticipation. Shi Min stood at the forefront, his sharp eyes observing his mother with newfound reverence. Mushu and Pharsa stood nearby, along with Four Eyes, Lily, Ren, and the rest of the core members who had witnessed the celestial storm that had descended upon the alchemy.

Ling Li turned to face them fully, her silver hair cascading down her back, catching the chandelier above as if the strands were woven with pure moonlight. "I owe you all an explanation. Everyone sit with me," she began, her voice calm yet resolute.

When everyone was settled down, Ling Li lifted her palm, and with a mere thought, several pill bottles and elixir vials appeared in the air before her, floating effortlessly in the refined flow of her qi. The sight alone sent waves of astonishment through the group.

"These," Ling Li gestured toward the artifacts suspended in the air, "are no ordinary pills, elixirs, or essences. Each of them was crafted from materials long believed to be unattainable, each carrying properties that defy the very laws of nature."

Ling Li's eyes swept across the room as she continued.

"Azure Bone — renowned for its ability to fortify both flesh and soul, reinforcing one's foundation to an unimaginable extent.

Ice Lotus — the peak of elemental refinement, capable of purging impurities and granting extreme resistance to ice-based attacks.

Ruby Coral — a rare treasure from the depths, enhancing blood vitality and martial energy recovery at a rate ten times faster than any known medicine.

Snow Ginseng — a miraculous herb with near-infinite regenerative properties, capable of reviving near-dead meridians. And lastly..."

Ling Li extended her fingers slightly, and the faint shimmer of a pitch-black gem emerged, a presence so potent that the very air seemed to grow heavier.

“The Ten Thousand Year Old Black Jade. A celestial material that surpasses even sacred relics. It possesses the ability to refine qi to the purest state imaginable and extend one’s lifespan beyond what was thought possible.”

Gasps filled the room, the sheer weight of the revelation nearly suffocating.

“These...” Ling Li continued, lowering the objects onto the table carefully, “are what I have crafted. They are heavenly-defying creations, and their mere existence will shake the very foundation of the martial world.”

A solemn silence followed her words as every individual in the room processed the gravity of what had been laid before them.

Then, Ling Li’s expression hardened slightly. “That is precisely why my breakthrough and immortality must remain a secret.”

Shi Min straightened slightly. “You mean because of the inevitable jealousy, right?”

Ling Li nodded. “If word spreads that I’ve become immortal, cultivators from all corners - sects, rogue warriors, and hidden masters alike, will come for us. Not to honor us but to claim these creations for themselves and to challenge me. If they know I have defied heaven and succeeded, they will not allow our family to exist in peace. It will be an endless war.”

Pharsa clenched her fists, her eyes darkening. “Even those who have supported us before would turn. Greed changes people.”

Everyone understood.

Ling Li’s gaze swept over them all. “That is why this remains a secret. Not just mine, but all of ours.”

A weight settled over them, the magnitude of their responsibility dawning upon them.

After a beat, Shi Min exhaled, composing himself. "That's not the only matter we need to discuss."

Ling Li lifted a brow, waiting for Shi Min to continue.

Shi Min exchanged glances with Mushu and then began. "Over the past four days, the attacks haven't stopped. Multiple factions have tried to take the mansion, believing that something powerful was being forged inside. Each time, we pushed them back with the help of the Samurai team."

Chapter 192: FINISH HIM NOW

Mushu leaned forward slightly, his eyes narrowing as if the weight of his words pressed heavily on his chest. "But that's not all. We interrogated a captive, and through a series of events, we uncovered something disturbing."

Shi Min's voice cut through the room like a blade, steadier now but carrying an underlying edge of anger that seemed to ripple through the air. "The Old Monk revealed everything about Solaris. His cultivation, his sacrifices, and his hidden abilities."

"Solaris?" Ling Li's gaze sharpened, her posture rigid as she leaned forward slightly. "Sacrifices?" she asked, her voice deceptively calm, though her fingers tightened imperceptibly on the armrest.

Shi Min's lips curled slightly in distaste, his expression darkening as he spoke. "Yes, Solaris. Young virgin females. He's been abducting them for years, using their lifeblood and purity to refine his power."

A subtle shift occurred within Ling Li. Her face remained expressionless, a mask of composure, but for a fleeting second, her eyes darkened, a flicker of pure disgust and contempt surfacing before she immediately masked it again. The room seemed to hold its breath.

None caught it.

Except for Four Eyes. He knew his wife very well, and that fleeting moment of vulnerability did not escape his notice. His gaze lingered on her, a silent acknowledgment of the storm brewing beneath her calm exterior.

Shi Min pressed on, unaware of the tension building around him. "Solaris is confirmed to be an evil cultivator. And what's worse ... he possesses a face-changing ability."

Ling Li's fingers tapped lightly against the armrest of her chair, the rhythmic motion betraying the intensity of her thoughts. "So he can alter his appearance at will," she murmured, her tone laced with a quiet determination.

Mushu nodded, his expression grim. "Which makes tracking him far more difficult."

Ling Li inhaled slowly, her breath measured and deliberate, as if composing herself for the battle ahead. When she spoke, her voice was colder than before, carrying an edge that sent a shiver down Mushu's spine. "It doesn't matter. Solaris will not be allowed to recover."

Her gaze met Shi Min's and Mushu's, her eyes burning with an unyielding resolve. "Finish him now."

Mushu's eyes flickered slightly, a subtle reaction that betrayed the chill he felt at her command. He had expected the order, yet hearing it aloud carried a weight that was hard to ignore.

Shi Min nodded firmly, his jaw tightening as he absorbed his mother's words. "Understood."

Ling Li leaned back slightly, her aura settling once more, though the tension in the room remained palpable. "Otako's men do not use simple poisons. Solaris can't recover in a short time. You will not get a better opportunity than this."

Mushu and Shi Min bowed their heads respectfully, their movements precise and deliberate, before Ling Li exhaled, the weight of the past days finally catching up to her. Her shoulders sagged slightly, a rare moment of vulnerability that she quickly masked.

Shi Min, deep in thought, rubbed his brows, frustration evident in the tension tightening his features. It wasn't just Solaris weighing on him ... there was something else, something he had nearly forgotten.

Ren, standing beside him, offered a gentle reminder, her voice steady but urging. "Shi Min, have you totally forgotten about Kim Kim? You have to tell Mom."

The mere mention of Kim Kim's name sent a ripple of anxiety through Ling Li. She straightened abruptly, her gaze sharpening as it landed on Four Eyes with intensity. "Why? What happened to Kim Kim?" she demanded, her voice carrying the unmistakable authority of a mother on edge. Her fierce gaze locked onto her husband, a silent but forceful command. "You! Tell me!" Her words were firm, demanding no hesitation.

But Four Eyes, ever the composed one, simply returned her piercing glare with silent nonchalance. His lack of reaction instantly set off Ling Li's impatience.

Shi Min exhaled, dragging a hand down his face, cursing himself inwardly for forgetting such an important matter. His mother was nothing if not relentless when it came to their family's well-being.

"Mom, nothing happened to Kim Kim. She is perfectly fine." Shi Min reassured her, his voice calm, yet the tension in the room remained thick.

Ling Li's apprehension dissipated slightly, though she was not yet satisfied. "Then what happened?" she pressed.

Shi Min met her gaze, allowing a brief pause before revealing what had been uncovered. "Mom, Kim Kim seems to have a special ability to identify and locate evil cultivators," he finally said.

Ling Li stilled, her expression momentarily frozen in shock before she schooled it into composure. Her eyes flickered with something unreadable ... concern, astonishment, perhaps even awe, as she waited for Shi Min to continue.

Shi Min chuckled lightly, observing the tense expression on his mother's face, knowing full well how rare it was to catch her off guard. "It was Kim Kim who told us that evil was at the temple. She was also the first to confirm that Solaris is an evil cultivator."

Shi Min then recounted everything — the two temples, the sinister altars hidden beneath them, the undeniable proof of malevolent forces lurking in their midst. Ling Li absorbed his words, her expression unreadable. She didn't know whether to be proud, amused, or utterly overwhelmed by the realization that her daughter possessed such a rare and powerful gift at such a young age.

She sighed, shaking her head as if blaming her own exemplary genes.

Four Eyes, seated beside her, caught the flicker of emotion in her gaze as if he could clearly hear Ling Li's thoughts snorted knowingly.

Ling Li shot him a sharp glance, but the amusement in his expression was enough to make her lips twitch slightly in reluctant acceptance. Her gaze gradually softened, shifting toward the others, assessing them one by one, the fatigue in their eyes, the weight of their burdens pressing upon their shoulders.

"Everyone, get some rest," Ling Li said finally, her voice carrying a note of quiet command. "We've all endured enough."

Slowly, the group dispersed, murmuring their acknowledgments as they stepped away to find solace in well-earned rest.

As Ling Li turned, her gaze met Four Eyes', and for the first time that night, she saw the tension lingering in his posture. His jaw was tight, his emotions simmering just beneath the surface, restrained yet undeniable.

Chapter 193: YOU ARE PLAYING WITH FIRE

WARNING R18 *****MATURE CONTENT*****

Ling Li sighed inwardly. Without hesitation, she reached out to Four Eyes, linking her arm with his, pulling him gently but firmly toward their bedroom.

The door closed behind them with a soft click.

Ling Li turned fully to face her husband, her fingers reaching up to smooth the crease between his brows. “Honey,” she murmured, her tone softer now.

Four Eyes remained silent, his gaze sharp yet unreadable.

Ling Li’s lips curled into a small, teasing smile. “Are you going to stay angry with me forever?” she asked, tilting her head slightly, her puppy eyes and pouty lips playing their part—acting cute in a way she knew her husband could never resist.

Four Eyes scoffed lightly, his eyes narrowing in reluctant amusement.

Ling Li chuckled softly, pressing a hand against his chest. “I didn’t mean to worry you.”

Four Eyes exhaled slowly, his voice dropping to a husky whisper. “You...” He paused, shaking his head slightly. “You make it impossible not to.” He resisted the urge to pull her into his arms.

Ling Li’s smile deepened, warmer now, knowing her husband was close to surrendering his frustration. “Then let me make it up to you.”

Four Eyes eyed her with suspicion, but a hint of anticipation flickered in his gaze.

Ling Li smirked before pulling him down onto the seat beside her, leaning into him, resting against his solid frame. The warmth of Four Eyes’ presence melted away the lingering tension in the air.

For the first time in days, Four Eyes let out a breath... and finally, finally, allowed himself to relax.

Ling Li’s teasing gaze sparkled mischievously as her fingers worked their way to the buttons of Four Eyes’ shirt, her touch light and deliberate. She leaned in, tracing the edge of his jaw with soft butterfly kisses, her breath warm against his skin.

Four Eyes inhaled sharply, his grip tightening over her wrist as he caught her mischievous little hand.

“You’re playing with fire,” he whispered, his voice rough and husky, filled with unspoken promises.

Ling Li smirked.

She knew.

And Ling Li had no intention of stopping.

Ling Li felt her sight turn three-sixty as Four Eyes scooped her up bridal style and laid her onto their bed with a burning gaze, “Honey, you’re so beautiful,” he whispered before capturing her lips with his. Ling Li returned his kiss with affection, circling her arms around his neck. Both were hungry for passion.

As Four Eyes skillfully undresses both of them, he once again gazes at his wife lovingly with burning desire; it vehemently sets his body on fire. He lowered himself and played with Ling Li’s nipples with his tongue, giving it a bite once in a while before sucking them one after the other and gradually kissing her neck before capturing her lips again.

Four Eyes’ hard long cock played and teases Ling Li’s wet entrance, its pre cum adding to its creaminess. She arched herself, eager for her hungry p*ssy to suck his cock dry. But Four Eyes knew her intention and didn’t give her a chance; Ling Li whimpered, biting his shoulder.

Four Eyes groaned and chuckled, recognizing her wife’s eagerness. He continued to poke her with his hardcore cock, playing with her wet entrance, teasing and filling each fold with his pre cum, until his hard cock could no longer endure, its veins popping out in anger, eager to explode. He wrapped Ling Li into his arm, the other hand firmly holding her buttocks.

“Dear, may I?” He asked, his voice so low that Ling Li found it so sexy. She was mesmerized.

Ling Li’s eyes blinked multiple times, and her lashes flapped like butterflies; she pouted, “It took you so long!”

Four Eyes chuckled as he once again pounced on her pouty lips with his as he plunged his cock deep all the way down into Ling Li with one powerful push; feeling the warm wet creamy p*ssy enveloping his hard-core cock, it was almost begging to explode.

Both felt the burning passion between them, and they simultaneously moaned and grunted as they became one.

“Aaahhhhhhh... Hhhmmmmmm...”

“Ugghhhhhhh.... Ugghhhhhhh...”

Four Eyes, overwhelmed with lust, pushes his hard long cock strong and deep and pulls it almost all the way out before plunging it back into Ling Li’s hungry p*ssy.

Ling Li holding his buttocks with both her hands, yearning for more... “Harder...yes! Honey! Faster...! Aaahhhhhhh...” Her legs locked together as if afraid that Four Eyes would let go.

Four Eyes made his rhythm faster and harder, pleasing Ling Li. As if not sensing enough, Four Eyes held one of Ling Li’s legs up and placed it on his shoulder. He kneeled in front of her and once again plunged his hard-core cock into Ling Li and made him grunt in pleasure.

“Ugghhhhhhh... Ugghhhhhhh...” Four Eyes grunted as he held Ling Li’s hips firmly and strongly as he pushed and pulled himself rhythmically deep into Ling Li.

Without Four Eyes’ body to clutch on, Ling Li can only grab on to the sheets that it almost tore apart.

“Honey... Aaahhhhhhh... Hhhmmmmmm.... I’m coooooomiiiiing...” Ling Li’s cry was like a sweet melody to Four Eyes’ ears.

“Yes... come for me, Dear...” Four Eyes said as he made his rhythm faster and stronger, just as Ling Li hungered.

The red tint that appeared on Ling Li's face and the scent of her cum made Four Eyes wilder. It intensified his already scorching desire fiercer.

It was only after Ling Li came three times that Four Eyes released himself, "Dear, I'm coming...."

Four Eyes said as he rode Ling Li worse than a hungry hyena as he cum; the sweat of Ling Li and the scent of her cum lingered on his nostrils, making his eyes bloodshot with the thirst of passion burning deep within him, grunting and groaning in satisfaction "Ahh... Ahh... Ugghhhhhh... Ugghhhhhh..." Making sure every single drop of his seed is released onto Ling Li's.

"Dear... you're so beautiful. I can't get enough of you..." Four Eyes whispered in her ears as he started to intensely stride onto Ling Li once again while groping both her bosom with his hands, pinching its nipples once in a while, which made Ling Li arch her back.

The scent of passion, lust, and burning desire filled the air through the night.

Chapter 194: HE KNEW

Four Eyes carried the sleeping Ling Li into the bathroom, his arms firm yet gentle, cradling her delicate frame. The warmth of her body seeped through his skin, a sensation both comforting and mesmerizing. As he carefully laid her in the bathtub, he paused, his gaze lingering on her cascading long silver hair that fanned out like waves over the porcelain. He sighed.

"This long hair is so soft and beautiful, but it's troublesome!" Four Eyes' face scrunched, eyebrows furrowed in contemplation. The thought of washing it made him hesitate. 'Would I ever finish?' With Ling Li sound asleep, it wasn't something he dared attempt; 'besides, drying it alone might take the whole night and day. A futile battle.'

Instead, Four Eyes focused on cleansing Ling Li's weary body with meticulous care, ensuring each touch was reverent, each movement intentional. As he ran warm water over her skin, his fingers paused, momentarily tracing the faint imprint of exhaustion beneath her eyes. Ling Li had pushed herself beyond limits, crafting elixirs without rest, flowing her qi ceaselessly. Four Eyes' heart twisted with guilt.

Once Ling Li was clean and dried, Four Eyes lifted her again, pressing her closer this time, her soft breaths fanning against his collarbone. As he carried her back to bed, he brushed a stray strand away from her face and studied her peaceful expression, serene, untouched by the chaos of the past days.

“She looks like a character in a fairytale who jumped straight out of a book.”

The thought made Four Eyes chuckle softly.

Despite his admiration for his wife, Four Eyes held himself back from his usual antics, telling himself not to disturb her sleep, but restraint was never his strong suit. His fingers twitched before he caved, lightly pinching his wife’s delicate nose and placing a swift, playful smack on her lips.

"You’re an omnipotent immortal, and yet you end up sleeping before I finish, tsk!" he whispered with amusement.

Unknown to Four Eyes, Ling Li’s immortal senses were keen enough to hear and perceive everything, even in deep sleep. His teasing didn’t go unnoticed.

Ling Li snorted inwardly, irritation flickering across her subconscious. ‘Who asked you to be so lustful?!’ She huffed silently. ‘I haven’t slept for four days and four nights, and I continuously flowed my qi throughout the crafting of the elixirs... And most importantly, I’m pregnant with three beanies! I’m truly tired! Hmph!’

Her silent reprimand amused Four Eyes even more.

He knew.

Four Eyes could tell just by looking at her, the faint twitch in her brows, the barely noticeable exhale, that his wife was scolding him in her thoughts.

With a satisfied smirk, Four Eyes slipped under the sheets, pulling her close until she nestled perfectly against his chest. The familiar warmth of his wife’s presence lulled him into a deep slumber, exhaustion from missing her ebbing away.

Morning arrived with a soft glow filtering through the curtains, casting delicate patterns across the room. Four Eyes stirred, his movements deliberate and careful, not wanting to disturb Ling Li’s peaceful

slumber. He gazed at her for a moment, her serene expression tugging at his heart. 'How could someone so powerful look so fragile?'

Four Eyes slipped out of bed, his steps light as he made his way to the bathroom. The sound of running water echoed softly, a rhythmic backdrop to his thoughts. Today was the day! The day he had planned to propose to Ling Li. Anxiety bubbled within him because of the chaos for the past four days; he felt a mix of excitement and apprehension. 'Would everything go as planned?'

As he stepped out, freshly showered and dressed, Four Eyes couldn't help but glance back at Ling Li one last time before leaving the room. Her presence was magnetic, even in sleep. He closed the door gently behind him, his mind racing with the details of the day ahead.

The dining hall buzzed with energy, a stark contrast to the quiet of the bedroom. The sight of everyone took Four Eyes aback gathered so early. Chatty, ever the lively one, caught sight of him and grinned broadly.

"Here is the protagonist for today!" Chatty announced, his voice carrying a playful edge.

Four Eyes felt a wave of gratitude wash over them. These people, his family, and his friends had gone above and beyond to make this day special. Shi Min approached him, his expression calm yet reassuring.

"Paps, you don't have to worry about tonight. Despite the chaos of the past days, Ren and Lily, along with Shun, Quan Ye, and Murphy, have been working tirelessly to prepare everything. You only need to bring yourself and look handsome tonight," Shi Min said, a hint of humor in his tone.

Four Eyes' throat tightened with emotion, and managed a quiet "Thank you," his voice barely above a whisper, but the sincerity in his words was unmistakable.

Shi Min clapped him on the shoulder, a gesture of solidarity. "Come on, everyone! Let's hurry up and finish breakfast. We need to leave before Mom wakes up," he reminded the group, his voice carrying a sense of urgency.

It was a good thing that Mushu never procrastinated, a trait that made him indispensable in orchestrating such monumental tasks. While the others were entangled in preparations, Mushu had

already completed his part the day after their discussion, fine-tuning every detail with his signature perfectionism.

Sitting before an array of flickering screens in his high-tech command center, Mushu's fingers danced over the keyboard, his sharp eyes locked onto the stream of CCTV footage he had retrieved through meticulous hacking.

Frame by frame, Mushu sifted through years of moments, the first glance Ling Li and Four Eyes shared, the countless stolen smiles, the battles fought side by side, and the silent promises woven into their actions long before words were spoken.

It was a living record of the couple's journey — a tale of love, resilience, and fate.

With focused precision, Mushu stitched together their story, refining each segment, cutting away any noise, and aligning every moment into a holographic cinematic masterpiece. The sequences unfolded like a poetic tapestry, Ling Li's sharp wit meeting Four Eyes' unwavering devotion, their undeniable chemistry radiating from the pixels themselves.

Chapter 195: UNFOLDING OF GRAND MYSTERY

And on the upper right, three tiny aquamarine gems, shimmering like celestial droplets of water, a quiet tribute to the life still growing, the triplets nestled in their mother's womb. Each stone carried a whisper of their future... a symbol of protection, love, and the anticipation of new beginnings.

The platinum band embraced these precious stones, uniting them in harmony, just as the family's love intertwined across time, destiny, and fate.

Shi Min's lips curled into a satisfied smile.

"It's perfect," he murmured before securing the box inside his coat's inner pocket.

The grand event was almost upon them.

Meanwhile, back at the mansion, Ling Li stirred awake. The first thing she noticed was the quiet—a stark contrast to the usual hustle and bustle. She stretched, rolling onto her side, only to freeze as realization struck.

She was still naked.

Her cheeks flushed a deep crimson, irritation bubbling beneath her otherwise poised exterior. That shameless man! He couldn't even think to dress me properly before leaving? She gritted her teeth.

Ling Li concealed herself from her ethereal Immortal look before she got up and dressed quickly, her mind already racing with questions. As she descended the stairs, she was met by Wushing and Butler Peng, both standing at attention.

"Where is everyone?" Ling Li asked, her tone curious but tinged with suspicion. The unusual quietness of the mansion didn't sit well with her.

Butler Peng stepped forward, his demeanor composed yet slightly nervous. "Madam, Young Master Shi Min took everyone to Camp Blaze for training early this morning. He mentioned wanting to find suitable sparring partners for the trainees. The twins are shopping with their grandparents, escorted by Mushu. Young Master Shi Min also instructed me to remind you to rest today, as Pharsa and Chatty will be hosting a party tonight."

Butler Peng hesitated, his usually polished words feeling rehearsed, scripted. Wushing remained just a little too close as if anticipating her next move.

Ling Li raised an eyebrow, her mind piecing together the information. Ling Li exhaled sharply, forcing a subtle smile. "I see," she said, recalling Pharsa's mention of an important announcement.

Butler Peng relaxed slightly before asking, "Madam, would you like to have your breakfast, or would you prefer an early lunch?"

Ling Li glanced at the clock. It was well past ten.

"Just make me seafood porridge. I'll be in the study. Please send it in." Her tone was firm, but her mind was restless.

"Yes, Madam." Butler Peng bowed, retreating with careful precision. The moment he was out of sight, he exhaled a breath he hadn't realized he was holding. He turned to Wushing, whispering urgently.

"How was it? Did I act well?" Butler Peng asked Wushing, his voice tinged with nervousness.

Wushing chuckled, amused by the elderly butler's antics. "You did very well," he assured him.

Butler Peng nodded, his confidence bolstered. "Good... good," he muttered to himself before heading to the kitchen to prepare Ling Li's seafood porridge.

Ling Li enjoyed her seafood porridge in the study, but her mind was restless. The silence was too perfect. It was unnatural.

Her sharp immortal senses picked up subtle inconsistencies: the way Butler Peng spoke as if reading from a script, the way Wushing stayed unusually close, the way everyone else had mysteriously vanished.

Something was being hidden from her.

Her eyes narrowed slightly, and she tapped her fingers against the desk. "What are they up to?"

She recalled Pharsa and Chatty mentioning an announcement for tonight, 'but was that really the whole truth?' There was a lingering feeling in her chest, a sense that something far greater was unfolding.

Ling Li sighed, leaning back in her chair, letting a wry smile curl on her lips.

"Fine. I'll play along for now," she whispered to herself and decided to busy herself with her days of work backlogs. There was still a batch of designs from RS Bijou for her to inspect and approve. Diving into work, she let the hours slip away in a steady stream of reviews, approvals, and unread emails—her

mind only partially present. But the lingering unease never fully left her, a whisper at the back of her thoughts.

The clock ticked past five when a knock echoed through the study.

"Come in."

Butler Peng entered, his posture impeccable. "Madam, it is now a little past five. It's time for you to prepare for tonight's party. Oh, Pharsa sent this invitation for you this afternoon." He reached into his coat, extracting a gleaming silver envelope inlaid with thin gold.

Ling Li accepted it, running her fingers over the delicate script.

You're Invited

Join us for a special evening as we share an important announcement that means the world to us.

****Date:**** April 30th

****Time:**** Six o'clock in the evening

****Venue:**** Camp Blaze

Formal attire is requested for this memorable occasion.

Kindly RSVP by April 25th to +63-54-8888-8888.

We look forward to celebrating this moment with you.

With warmest regards,

Murphy & Pharsa

A small handwritten note fell from the envelope. Pharsa's unmistakable handwriting was scrawled across it.

"Don't you dare not come! I'll beat you up!"

Ling Li chuckled softly. 'Perhaps Pharsa and Murphy did have something important to announce. Maybe I had been overthinking.'

"Thank you, Butler Peng. I'll be preparing in a while." She glanced up. "Oh, Pharsa didn't invite you?"

Butler Peng bowed slightly. "I was invited, but I cannot leave my post. Wushing will escort you to the venue."

Ling Li scoffed, shaking her head. "Come on! Today is Pharsa's special day! We can't miss it! Give all the instructions to the team leaders tonight, and you come with me."

Butler Peng's expression cracked, emotion flooding his features. His voice trembled. "Thank you, Madam." He bowed so low that Ling Li sighed in exasperation.

"Alright, I'll be ready before six, and then we'll leave together," Ling Li said, beginning to tidy up her desk.

"Yes," Butler Peng replied before promptly leaving the room to report the update to Shi Min. With practiced precision, he adjusted a non-existent crease on his coat, then strode off to issue his final instructions to the servants.

Dressed in elegance — a white pearl tube, a sleek pencil-cut skirt with a slit teasingly revealing one fair leg. She applied a simple make-up. 'I can't outdo Pharsa, or that sister of mine will beat me up!' She thought while giggling. Ling Li took one last glance in the mirror. Her golden stilettos clicked against the floor as she grabbed a small clutch.