

Author's Note:

Thank you for being the best readers on Patreon! Here is the link to the [Google Docs](#) for those who prefer it.

Part 44

“Oh my! I am speechless!” The rat girl said.

That was, in fact, a lie.

“This is so beautiful!”

Little Teasing Mouse stared at the hair stick with wide, glittering eyes. She looked like she'd fallen in love. Then she began rambling. I ignored her.

The line into the festival — which was closer to a disorganized crowd — walked behind her. Had she used that to sneak up on us? Then a secret technique that was similar to my Continuous Step, Impossible Leap?

She had to because otherwise... *::How the fuck could we both have missed this rat girl getting so close?!::*

::Well, Sister Lin, sometimes you don't pay attention to your surroundings when you're focusing on something important.::

Just because I was overly happy to receive an expensive gift from my student for the first time?

No. This lack of attention had to be a side effect from the increased dichotomy between my soul and body. Definitely, after all, somebody should have said something to me in my past life if I had this problem. If they hadn't, there was no way I would have stayed alive for so long with such a critical flaw... Then again, I did rely heavily on my defensive tools like the earrings Noxious gave me, and never considered thieves like this idiot.

Hold on... *::If you knew I did this, why didn't you say anything?::*

::Isn't it normal? You can't stay on edge all the time or you'll get even more crazy.::

Fucking Brat.

::Both of us will be training our senses after today! Even if it is normal for other people, we're ancestors from the Indomitable Will Sect. We need to be beyond normal.::

::So we should be... abnormal?::

::...::

::Little Teasing Mouse has a Tracking Mouse beast. They are hard to find because they're fast and have the ability to hide their presence. I think she gained those aspects of her pet through the contract bath.::

::Even if you explain it like that, you're not getting out of this extra training.::

"Brother Verdant Spring!" Little Teasing Mouse said, excitedly. "I heard you bought this hairpin for me! When the clerks told me that I didn't believe them at first, but now I can see that you did!" She cutely pressed it to her chest. "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

I turned to the kid and raised both my eyebrows at him.

His face reddened, then paled. He shook his head. *::I didn't! Trust me, sister Lin!::*

::How dare you,:: I paused, *::think I'd believe this brat over you!::*

He sent me an exasperated look. *::Sister Lin. Please don't tease me like that.::*

I grinned. *::We still need to take that hairpin back. I can't allow the gift from my precious little martial brother to go to some Blackhole-halo-girl.::*

::On it.:: He leaned forward, ready to get up.

::And try to do it in a way that doesn't do more damage to our relationship with the sect.::

He stilled. *::You're asking for a lot.::*

::Always. It's because I know you can handle it.::

We glanced at each other. Then Little Spring stood up and suddenly grabbed both of Little Teasing Mouse's hands. Her cheeks turned red.

"Senior Sister. I apologize for my past behavior!"

"S-so bold."

"But I can't give you this." As he spoke, he casually wiggled the pin from her grasp. "It's a gift for my Junior Martial Sister Linlin, who saved my life." He tossed it behind him, where I caught it.

I swiftly put it in my ring so no one could take it from me again.

"Oh! I knew you weren't that upset with me!" She paused. "Wait! But I really wanted that hairpin!"

Both of us winced at her voice. By fuck, she was loud and shrill, but somehow also cute and distressed.

Two massive poison body cultivators crashed through the crowd, sending several disciples sprawling. They landed right in front of her, forcing Little Spring and me to take a step back.

This bitch was never far from her fans.

Little Teasing Mouse started tearing up.

"Please, Little Brother Verdant Spring. Junior Linlin. Can you give that hairpin to me instead?"

The bigger of the two body cultivators took a step forward and glared at the kid. "What's this? Is this boy bothering you, little sister?"

She sniffled. “N-no. O-of course, not.” Her eyes watered.

The smaller guy frowned. “The way you’re acting makes me think you mean, ‘Of course, yes.’”

She shook her head. “How could I possibly ask Brother Verdant Spring to give me the beautiful hairpin he meant for the sister who saved his life? I’ll just have to be sad that I don’t have anything like it.”

The larger guy clutched his heart. “Of course, you couldn’t. You’re too sweet and kind.”

The two turned toward us. The smaller one cracked his knuckles, and the larger one took a step forward.

“But we can do something about that.”

“Give Little Teasing Mouse the hairpin.”

“She’s such a good kid, you shouldn’t make her upset.”

I glanced at the girl to see her cautiously hopeful and looking back at us.

Did this rat seriously believe that I would give her my precious student’s gift? Sure, I could eventually forge something better, but this represented Little Spring’s concern for my safety. Fuck giving it to anyone else.

The thing was, I could tell from her expectant expression that this had occurred before — where she would cry because she wanted an awesome item and a fan of hers would force the guy holding it to give it up. Every time this happened, the people involved happily gave their gift to her because of her adorableness... And because of her Black Hole Halo.

She was raised to be a spoiled brat.

Well, fuck her expectations.

“Little Teasing Mouse, unless you want to see these two with their faces smashed in, call them off.”

“She doesn’t control us.”

“We’re doing this because we want to.”

The larger one cracked his neck. “What is a weak musical cultivator like you going to do, huh?”

I didn’t have to prove anything to anyone. But the smug-ass look on that asshole’s face as he questioned my strength...

Violence wasn’t the answer... but it was an answer. Muahahaha!

I clenched my hand into a fist, used my spiritual energy to strengthen my legs, back, and arm muscles. Then I punched the body cultivator in the face as hard as I could. His nose caved in before he was sent flying above the crowd and into a stall selling spiritual vegetables. Colorful veggies flew into the air, spreading everywhere and pelting people inside the festival.

The poison body cultivator did not get back up.

[\[Image Link\]](#)

The stall owner pressed his hands to his cheeks in distress. “Nooo! My carrots! My sweet potatoes! My Cabbages!”

Everyone froze.

Ah, shit. Now I’d have to compensate for this guy’s cabbages because this body cultivator was so weak he couldn’t even recover from my punch.

“AAAAAAAH!” Little Teasing Mouse screamed so loudly and high-pitched that my ears practically bled.

A hundred disciples came running over.

While I was an incredible cultivator and genius, even I would have trouble fighting so many dumb fuckers simultaneously.

Little Spring grabbed my sleeve. “Sister Linlin... I think we should go.”

“I know!” I grabbed the kid, and we used Impossible Leap to move past the crowd and back into the festival.

[\[Image Link\]](#)

We wound our way through the crush of people with a hundred angry assholes chasing after us.

A large woman with lion ears managed to get close.

I grabbed a short man eating a tanghulu and threw him at her.

Her eyes grew wide, and she caught him.

I might have been imagining things, but I swear I could see hearts above the guy’s head as he fell in love with her at first catch.

Thankfully, this was the perfect distraction. We used our movement technique to vanish, only to reappear hidden between two food stalls.

Unfortunately, another asshole found us. He sent his spider and a lion puppet to charge at us. We dodged, and I used the tip of my hair to send a slash of sword Qi to cut the invisible spiritual strings tying the puppets to their master.

Really, it was his fault for using puppets against a grandmaster toolsmith who could make these things with her eyes closed.

The puppets, now out of the puppeteer’s control, showed the perfect example of ‘an object in motion like to stay in motion.’ They kept moving forward and rammed into the large crowd of people in front of the melon seed booth.

Once they stood up, they glared at us.

I pointed to the flabbergasted puppeteer. “It was him.”

::Sister Lin, weren’t we trying to not make our reputation worse?::

Fuck.

Little Spring grabbed my hand and pulled me back into the crowd.

We Impossible Leaped in between two booths selling weapons. At this point, we were almost to the martial arts practice area, so we hid our presence and casually followed the crowd to the reserved seating. The Qi Condensation Battle of the Bands was already taking place and the music from the stage sounds like a soft breeze with a few jarring mistakes here and there.

I sent out a pulse of my divine sense and found my students, and we pushed our way over to them.

Shadow Panther and Three Drops Silent Toxin must have been nervously sitting in their reserved seating because they jumped when the two of us appeared next to them.

“Teacher Linlin!” They stood up.

I waved them back down and sat beside the new musicians.

::I think we lost them::

I grimaced. *::I wouldn't be too sure about that. But they won't try anything nasty here. Not with those golden core judges watching everyone::*

Still, I wasn't about to let someone sneak up on me again. I split my mind in two. Half focused on the concert while the other used divine sense to scan the area for potential threats.

This was going to give me a goddamn headache.

Three Drops smiled widely. “We thought you weren't gonna make it.”

I shrugged. “I'd always wanted to watch your performance. You have to beat all these musicians and show them the power of rock!”

“That might be too hard for us,” Shadow Panther said and pointed to the group that had just finished setting up. They had a pipa, a zither, and a

large drum. “These three are the top picks for who will win the Qi Condensation Battle of the Bands. Their name is Three Immortals.”

“And we go up after these pretentious pricks.” Three Drops Silent Toxin looked grim and crossed his arms.

The ensemble began playing a classic song that everyone in the audience had heard before. It was dramatic, lovely, and ridiculously long, taking up the full 25 minutes each band had. There wasn’t any soul-healing energy from it, but that was to be expected at this level.

The crowd seemed suitably impressed. The judges off to the side nodded and debated.

I crossed my arms and leaned closer toward the two. “Play the song we talked about at the end of your set instead.”

They looked at each other, then back at me, and nodded. Then they went to set up.

Pearlescent Rose walked on stage. “I know why you all are here.” She gestured to Shadow Panther and Three Drops. “You want to see if the many fans of Little Teasing Mouse can defeat Fairy Linlin’s students and her rock music?!”

They spoke excitedly.

“Oh! I heard about this.”

“That’s why we’re here, Senior!”

“We have Little Teasing Mouse’s back!”

She waited for the discourse to die down. “Well, now is the moment you have all been waiting for! It’s time to listen to — for the first time — the band of those students: Toxic Puppets!”

Damn, that was actually a good name.

The crowd murmured. Until that rat girl jumped in front of Rose. The brainwashed fools cheered.

Goddamn it. She found us.

Once the noise settled down, she pointed at me and said, “There you are, Sister Linlin!”

Everyone turned to stare.

Motherfucker!

May as well make this shit more dramatic. I wanted the Foundation Establishment battle later tonight to be packed. By doing this, I could make it so that the perfect time — the only time — to do the trade would be during the concert.

With a single fluid motion, I flew onto the stage and gracefully turned to look at everyone in the crowd.

I put my hands on my hips and addressed the spoiled brat. “Are you here to steal my hairpin again?”

The girl rested her palm against her heart as if wounded and took a step back.

“J-junior sister. That was a misunderstanding. I had heard from the second-floor clerk that Brother Verdant Spring was going to gift it to me. When I saw it, it was so pretty, and I merely thought he was just showing you the hair stick to make sure I’d like it.”

Were we really going to rehash the argument in front of half the sect?

“Booooo! Give our Little Teasing Mouse the hairpin!”

“Yeah! How dare you not give her what she wants? It’s just a hairpin!”

It was wild how they immediately took her side. Seriously, how did these people even survive in these types of novels? Oh right. In this one, they ended up dying for this girl.

Pearlescent Rose stepped forward with a frown as if she were about to set things straight, but a Golden Core cultivator helping to organize the Battle of the Bands walked over.

“This is ridiculous. We’re on a time crunch here. How about you two make a bet? If Sister Linlin here wins the Foundation Establishment tournament tonight, she keeps her hairpin. And if she loses, then she gives it to Little Teasing Mouse.”

“Wooooooo!” the crowd agreed.

I grinned. “No,” I projected my voice to reach everyone.

“That’s because you think you’ll lose,” a voice from the crowd yelled.

Ha! “My band will have to win, not just against a single other opponent, but against all those that participate. Yet, you tell me to give up my precious defensive tool without the possibility of winning something in return? Are you all mad or just dumb?”

“ ... ”

Teasing Mouse raised her hands, like a rat begging for cheese. “I’m okay, everyone. I really don’t need the hairpin. Even though it is the prettiest one I’ve ever seen and will be *suuuuper* sad if I can’t get it.”

I brought it out and used my cleaning technique on it since I didn’t know what this bitch touched before she grabbed it previously. Once it was clean, I put it in my hair with a grin. “Well, it’s mine. Unless you all are going to offer me a massive amount of high quality sky rank defensive tools in this bet, I will be leaving.”

As if anyone would do—

“I’ll do it!” Someone in the crowd pulled out a golden peach token. It was a sky rank tool.

“Me too!”

Ten more people spoke up, offering their defensive tools to help Little Teasing Mouse.

Even Brilliant Song Bird from Whispering Brook, the band that Azure’s Ex was in, yelled that they’d be defending her and offered a Golden Core level shielding talisman. She sent me a furious and triumphant look when she sent the tool over to Pearlescent Rose, who’d started collecting them.

Fuck. I might actually have to take this bet.

I looked at Little Spring. He nodded with determination. *“I trust that you’ll win! And when you do, we’ll have enough protection to go through our next tribulation.”*

Goddamn it. The kid was right. I *did* need those, all of them.

“So, if I win, I’ll get all of those tools?”

“Yes! But you’re going to lose!” Brilliant Song Bird said. “Wee’ll defeat you. Just wait and see!”

“Our Little Teasing Mouse deserves that hairpin,” one of the simps in the audience yelled.

I grimaced. “Alright, I accept!”

The crowd cheered.

“But just so you know. Senior Dread Lotus is in my band.”

“ ... ”

“Can I take my tool back?”

“Hush. This is for our junior sister.”

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Author's Note:

Thank you all for reading! You are the best readers a writer could ask for!

This chapter ended up being around 2750 words long. That's much longer than a normal chapter (which I try to keep between 2k and 2.3k). I guess I'm really trying to make up for the two weeks I was out with an injury. It's also why this is out a few hours later than I wanted it to be.

For the image on LS and Lin I ended up photoshopping two AI images together. AI is not very good at doing multiple characters when they're very specific like these two. Thankfully I used to be a professional artist and combining them was just fun.

For the image of the body cultivator stuck in the cabbages, I originally tried to make one of the vegetable sellers but they never came out right. This one ended up being funny enough that I included it instead.