

Really, as much as Qiulan'd hate to admit it to themselves, Primrose's scolding of them the hour prior— as well as the task designated along with it— made *sense*. They'd been the one to upset Dove the week before, and when a new shipment of tea had been readied for delivery to them and Jackal, it'd only felt right to send them along with it; to make amends, despite the crawling anxiety within Qiulan's stomach.

With a frown, they shake their head, hefting the box, something inside that they could only assume to be the tea leaves Primrose had told them about, into a more comfortable position in their arms as they walk. Apologizing was *one* thing— Qiulan supposes they could feel sorry about something they'd said, as long as they still thought they'd been right.

Getting them to admit they were wrong? That, unfortunately, remains to be seen.

*This... is supposed to be it, right?*

Rolling their eyes, they shift the weight of the crate onto their shoulders, leaning towards the edge of an alleyway wall as Qiulan raises a hand to wipe at the beads of sweat on their forehead. They'd prided themselves on their tenacity, but when Primrose had insisted on diligence, they'd assumed that they would at least be able to *drive* their delivery partway.

*—Perhaps those cherubuns aren't used to vehicles, then; if it isn't that Primrose hasn't already gotten sick of my attitude.*

With a short exhale, they step away, a box of tea still carefully held within their hands as they take a couple steps down towards the street, glancing both ways to check for the address they'd been given. It's Jackal's place; they'd never been, but they figured that they'd get their answer more reliably once they'd knocked on the door.

The place they arrive at doesn't seem to stick out like a sore thumb, but it's worth a guess.

"Anyone home?", they call out, checking the address number once more with narrowed eyes, as if attempting to retrace their steps. For a couple moments, it's silence— and then, a couple more— until a face pops up into view behind the door screen, and it carefully creaks open.

Not the Cherubun they'd been hoping to see, but a reassuring face nonetheless, as Jackal lifts an eyebrow. "...What, you're here for...", she pauses, before glancing down at the contents of the box Qiulan's been holding, before opening the door a little wider for them to step through. "One of those deliveries, huh? Didn't think they had succubuns doing this thing, too," she huffs, ushering them inside with a gentle scoff.

"I... good on you, or whatever. Dove's in the kitchen, if you're here for them," she continues, pointing a finger down the hallway with shrugged shoulders. "I'll lock the door for you

on your way out, kid.”

With slightly widened eyes, Qiulan nods, before tip-toeing past her with a heaving breath. It’s demanding work— more demanding, at least, than it’d been planting seeds the week prior. Perhaps they shouldn’t have taken their time with Dove for granted, if this is what they’re tasked with when the cherubun *isn’t* around.

“...Dove?”, Qiulan mumbles, peeking their head into the next room over, before finally locking eyes with them— it’s just for a few seconds before they glance away, opting to instead drop the crate of leaves off onto a nearby table with a sharp exhale. It’s still awkward, to meet their gaze— more awkward than they would’ve liked, clasping their hands behind their back as they allow the door to close behind them.

It’s not just them, either; Dove, eyes widened, has already frozen up in surprise, fingers tightly clasped around a freshly-brewed cup of coffee. “Primrose... Primrose sent you to do this, right?”, they ask, lips pursed, as they gently set their cup down to the side, almost as if they’re afraid of dropping it. There’s a sense of fondness to which they regard the tea leaves, as if glancing at an old friend, that they don’t afford to Qiulan.

“He usually takes charge of the deliveries himself, but he’s made a habit of busying himself lately,” they mumble to themselves, a small smile crossing their face as they close their eyes shut. “It’s nice to know that he still cares enough to send someone over.”

Qiulan’s fingers further lace together, accompanied by a slightly anxious expression, as they nod. They don’t dare take a seat, instead opting to stand in front of Dove— apologizing, it seems, is a lot harder in practice than it looks. “He said that they’re your favorite,” Qiulan murmurs, biting their tongue as their head hangs ever-so-slightly.

“...And,” they mumble, quieter than the previous words, as if they’re already beginning to trip over their own sentences. “He heard that you’d been upset recently, and sent me to apologize.”

At that, Dove’s eyes open once more, although still downcast, as they gingerly nod their head. Even now, although perhaps it’d have been to Primrose’s dismay, they’re still considering Qiulan’s feelings just as much as they consider their own, with their response. “...Ah,” they hum, taking a couple steps forward to place a hand on Qiulan’s shoulder.

It’s reassuring, but Qiulan can’t help but jump a little, a small shock running down their spine at the unexpected contact. If anything, they feel like *they* should’ve been the one comforting Dove, rather than the other way around.

“...I’ve been doing alright,” Dove continues, laughing to themselves with a gentle lilt as they shift backwards, removing their hand to clasp it over their own chest. “Primrose is a bit of a worrywart, that’s all. It’s in his nature, to make sure everything’s working in perfect harmony. He

was the same back in the Heavenly Meadow, too,” they hum, sighing with a continuation of that same, fond expression.

“...You shouldn’t have worried about me. I’m glad you came, though— it’s nice to know that the both of you care about how I’m doing,” Dove says, their expression slightly cheerier than it’d been when they’d surprised them only a couple minutes earlier. “You met Jackal, right? If I was really upset, well...”

“...I think she’d have found a way to help take care of it. She’s very kind, like that.”

Qiulan can’t help but swallow back their words, nodding furiously.

—*So I **do** have to look out for Jackal, then.*