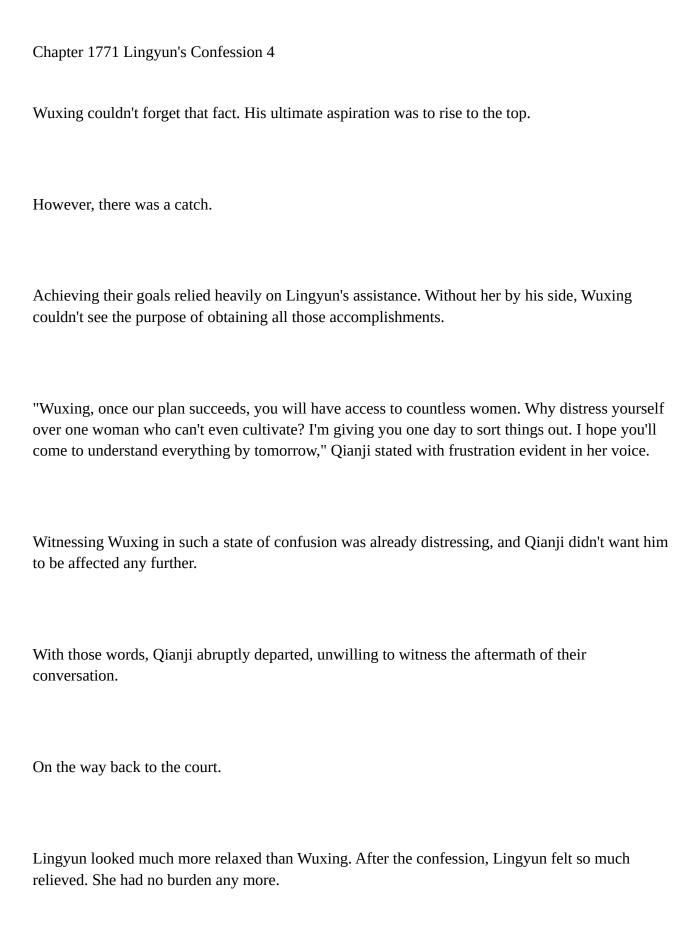
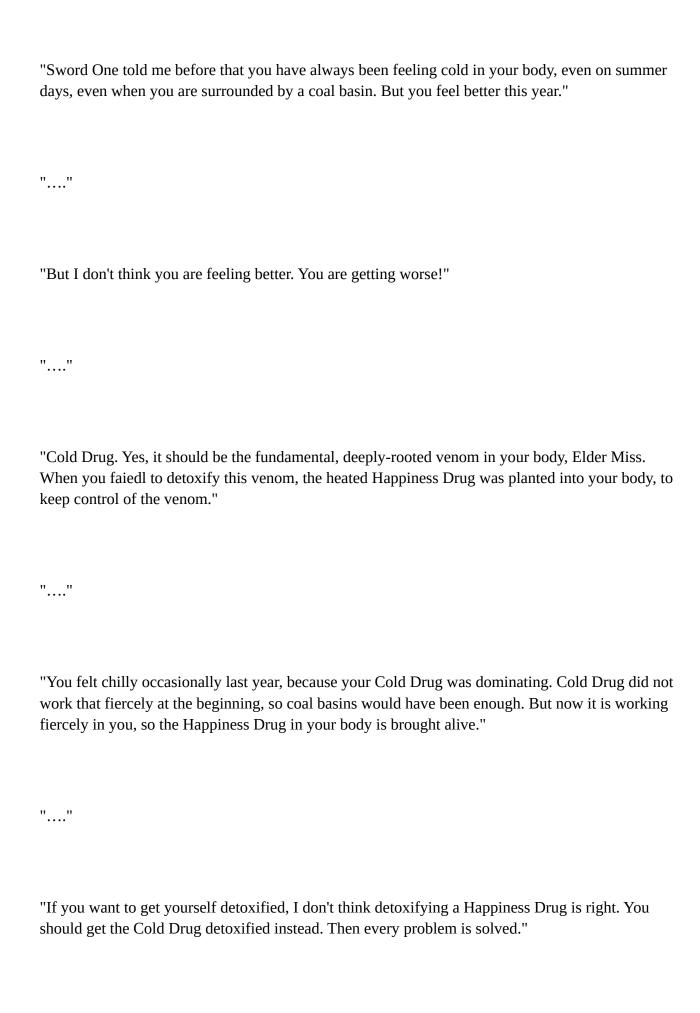
Divine 1771



And she felt that her horizon had been broadened.
She felt the road ahead was very wide, as she had nothing on her mind.
Then she thought of what was bothering her Elder Miss.
Suddenly, Lingyun thought of something.
She thought it through in her head and suddenly got really excited. "Sword Two, let's go back to the court. I just think of something about Elder Miss' situation!"
Having said that, she hurried back to the court.
Sword Two followed up as wel without delays.
Back in the court, Lingyun headed directly to Fengxian Palace.
Lingyun almost forgot to greet Elder Miss, when she walked in. She said anxiously, "Elder Miss, I have figured it out!"
""

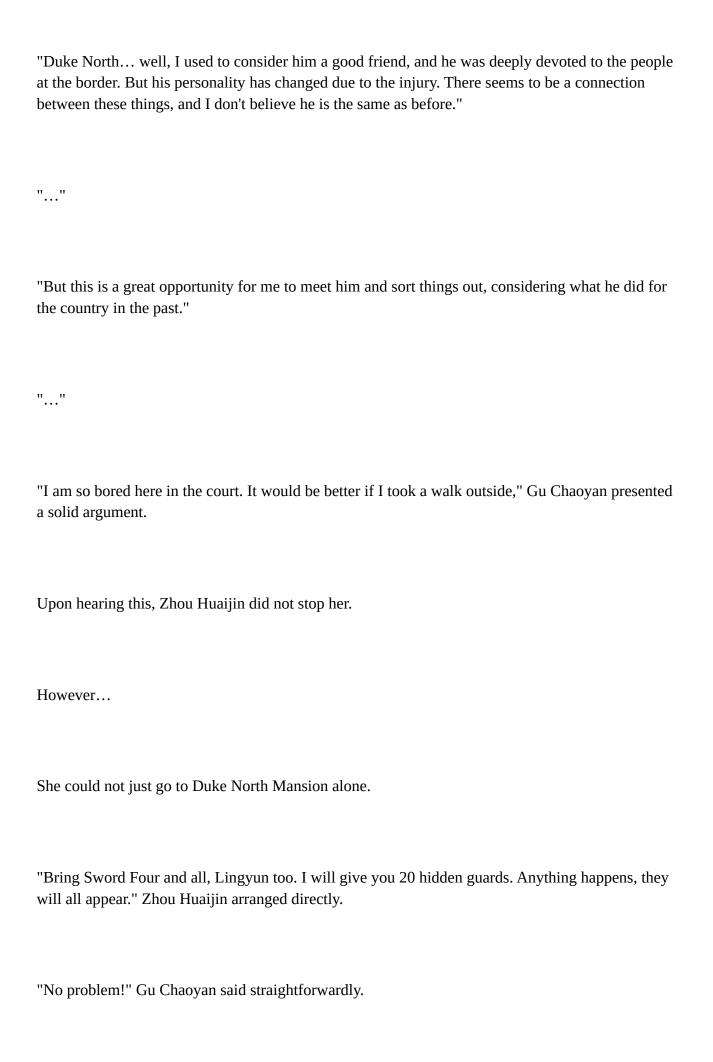




These were all mere speculations, and Gu Chaoyan knew that a thorough investigation was necessary to uncover the truth.
There were still people alive who were connected to her past—Chen Fu and the Lin Family. They might hold valuable information that could provide her with clues.
Lost in her thoughts, Gu Chaoyan realized that she needed answers and a solid plan to unveil the mysteries surrounding her mother's past.
Sword One asked with a small voice, "Lingyun, are you able to detoxify Elder Miss, when you understand what is going on here?"
Lingyun shook her head directly.
"If it is really Cold Drug, then that is totally out of my ability." Lingyun said straightforwardly. Then she started to get a little distressed herself.
That was Cold Drug!
Not an ordinary sort of venom!
And Elder Miss received a Happiness Drug to press down the Cold Drug, which made the detoxifying process even more difficult.

Lingyun also showed some slight disappointment.
That made Sword One feel even more distressed.
Gu Chaoyan stopped thinking and looked up at Lingyun and Sword One. "Then don't tell anyone about this yet, especially when Lingyun has no idea what to do."
"What about Mr. Head?" Sword One asked.
"Him in particular." Gu Chaoyan said straightforwardly.
Sword One disagreed. But she still nodded.
Sword One had just spoken of it when Mr. Head arrived.
Zhou Huaijin came in at the right moment.
He smiled when he saw that Gu Chaoyan looked better.
Hidden guards from the Shadow Door were out looking for Mr. Zhao. The others were seeking other famous doctors. And a majority of them were seeking well-practiced people beyond the territory of the four countries.

Everything was moving forward. But Zhou Huaijin did not mention this to Gu Chaoyan, because he did not want to stress her.
He sat down and started to talk about what was happening recently.
Shiling Palace was under construction, and the officers were all bowing to him. Everything was well settled.
But there was just one small thing that made him hesitant.
Zhou Huaijin said quietly, "Duke North has some military authorities, but he has not been to the morning sessions for a while. He still has the rank from his father, so we can't do anything about him. But the military authorities can't be in his hands forever. So that is quite bothering."
He had this bothering thought, because he thought of the past Duke North.
"I will talk to him." Gu Chaoyan said. Chapter 1773 Duke North 1
"No," Zhou Huaijin disagreed directly.
Chaoyan was not feeling well, and she might get sick anytime. If she went to deal with this for him, it would only make him worried.





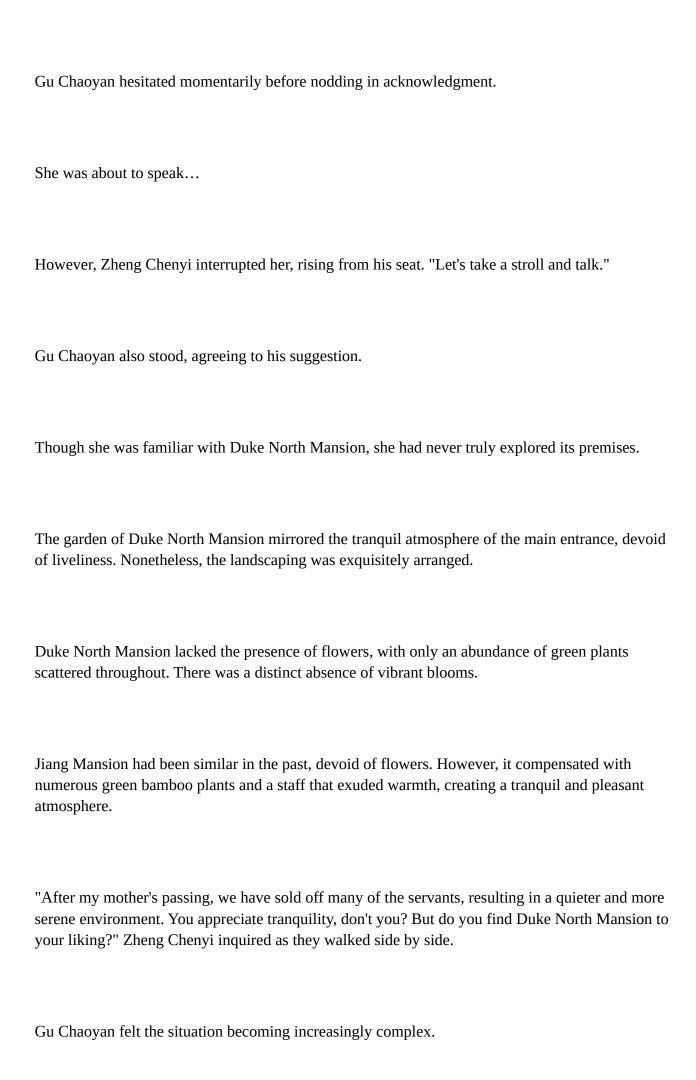


But
When she walked into Duke North Mansion on this visit, she felt that something was wrong.
The air was different. It was no longer lively.
"Where is Mr.Duke?"
Chapter 1774 Duke North 2
"Duke North Mansion is a noble's residence. How can there be so few servants? There are many matters to attend to. Have we neglected taking care of you?" Gu Chaoyan inquired as she walked through the mansion.
The former Lady Duke North had passed away, and Duke North had since remarried. There should have been someone in charge of the household. How could the mansion appear so deserted? It was unheard of in a place like this.
The servant remained composed, as Duke North had already provided them with prepared answers.
"Well, Phoenix Girl" the servant hesitated.
""

"For one, Duke North has been preferring solitude since his last injury. And secondly, the current Lady Duke North is unwell and has been resting in her room, and we are uncertain when" The servant trailed off, not providing further details. However, they added, "Rest assured, Phoenix Girl, Duke North Mansion is well-equipped. There is no need to worry."
Gu Chaoyan cast a sharp gaze at the servant.
She had arrived at this place incognito, with her true identity concealed from the public, not specifically to visit Duke North Mansion. The people here should be aware of her true title.
Why, then, did the servants persistently address her as Phoenix Girl?
Even her own staff, like Lingyun, who was not considered a formal maid and didn't adhere to court etiquette, would occasionally address her as "Elder Miss."
So, why did the servants from Duke North Mansion, who should have been properly trained, behave so casually?
Gu Chaoyan comprehended the situation after hearing the servant's explanation, but she didn't appreciate being addressed incorrectly.
"Don't call me Phoenix Girl; call me the Queen," Gu Chaoyan corrected firmly before continuing her walk towards the lobby.
As she proceeded, she observed that the plants were meticulously trimmed, indicating attention to detail. However, she noticed a conspicuous absence of servants.

Then, her gaze landed upon Duke North, who was seated in the lobby.
He maintained a posture with a straight back.
At first glance, Gu Chaoyan could discern a frighteningly pale complexion on Duke North, devoid of any color. He had visibly lost weight, with prominent cheekbones. The once sunny demeanor had been replaced by a somber and dark countenance.
Something was amiss. He did not appear to be in good health.
Could the poison still be lingering within his wounds?
But her messenger had assured her that he had been detoxified. So, what had transpired?
Gu Chaoyan approached him directly and stated, "Show me your hand. I will feel your pulse."
"You are still willing to walk into Duke North Mansion, aren't you?" Duke North looked at her, a glimmer of happiness in his eyes.
He was alluding to how she had rejected him when he had been poisoned before. He had intentionally poisoned himself as a means to manipulate her. Gu Chaoyan disliked being coerced, and she would never act under duress, even if she held genuine concern for others.

However, it seemed that he remained unconvinced by her previous actions.
Gu Chaoyan had no intention of engaging in such discussions. She held steadfast to her principles.
"Show me your hand. I will feel your pulse," Gu Chaoyan repeated, her tone conveying a sense of urgency. Chapter 1775 Duke North 3
"Have some tea. It's a fine blend. During these peaceful times, I find solace in seeking out the best tea. I believe you will enjoy it. And there are pastries in the hall as well. We seldom have guests, so it tends to be rather cold. You are among the few who have graced us with your presence. I dare not treat you poorly, for fear that you may no longer wish to be here," Zheng Chenyi spoke calmly, keeping his hand concealed.
Gu Chaoyan cast a glance towards the hall, where a variety of pastries lay.
Indeed, there was an array of choices.
She then shifted her gaze to Zheng Chenyi, noting the subtle changes in him.
Finding an empty spot, Gu Chaoyan took a seat. She began sipping the tea and picked up a pastry to nibble on, albeit without the same relaxed demeanor she exhibited at Xinlin Mansion and Fengxian Palace. After finishing the pastry, she remarked, "You don't appear to be well."
"I am aware of that. Don't worry," Zheng Chenyi responded calmly. "Why have you come here?"



Why was he asking such questions?
"As long as both you and your wife are content with it, that would suffice," Gu Chaoyan responded calmly. She continued, "The Saint Divine Land has been stabilized now. Duke North, you possess an authority token for the military. However, considering your infrequent attendance at the morning sessions, the token holds little practical power. It remains uncertain how we should handle the authority token."
""
"The King is pondering whether you wish to return to the court. If you do, you can retain the token, as it rightfully belongs to Duke North. However, if you prefer to distance yourself from political affairs, the token could be passed on to someone else," she explained.
""
"What are your thoughts on this matter?" Gu Chaoyan inquired earnestly.
Zheng Chenyi suddenly felt a pang in his heart. It appeared that she was solely interested in discussing anything related to Zhou Huaijin. She seemed indifferent to his question.
"What do you expect me to do then?" Zheng Chenyi asked, his gaze fixed on her.

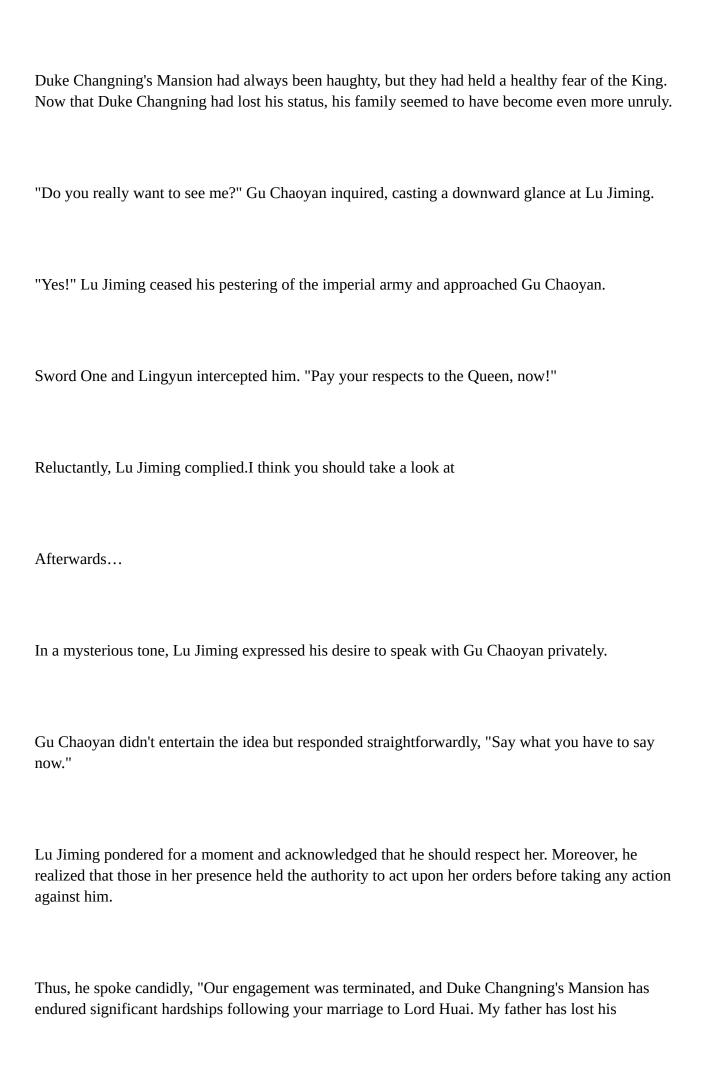
Gu Chaoyan unconsciously furrowed her brows. "You don't need to provide me with an immediate answer. Take the time to discuss it with your wife or your strategist. You can give us your response by tomorrow morning."
"You no longer wish to assist me?" Zheng Chenyi questioned, his displeasure evident.
She had previously given him countless instructions and guidance, both to his mother and during his trip to the border.
Chapter 1776 Duke North 4
"Consider the token and provide the King with your answer by the morning session. If you're unsure of how to decide, discuss it with your wife. I came here specifically to discuss this matter with you. If you have nothing else to say, I, as the Queen, will take my leave. Save your efforts," Gu Chaoyan spoke softly.
Zheng Chenyi smiled once again.
The Queen?
She emphasized her role as the Queen. She made that point quite clear.
Zheng Chenyi's displeasure grew, his emotions boiling. He took a few steps forward, intending to reach out to her, but his shoulders were restrained by the guards standing beside him. Finally, he managed to rein himself in and stabilize his posture.
Well

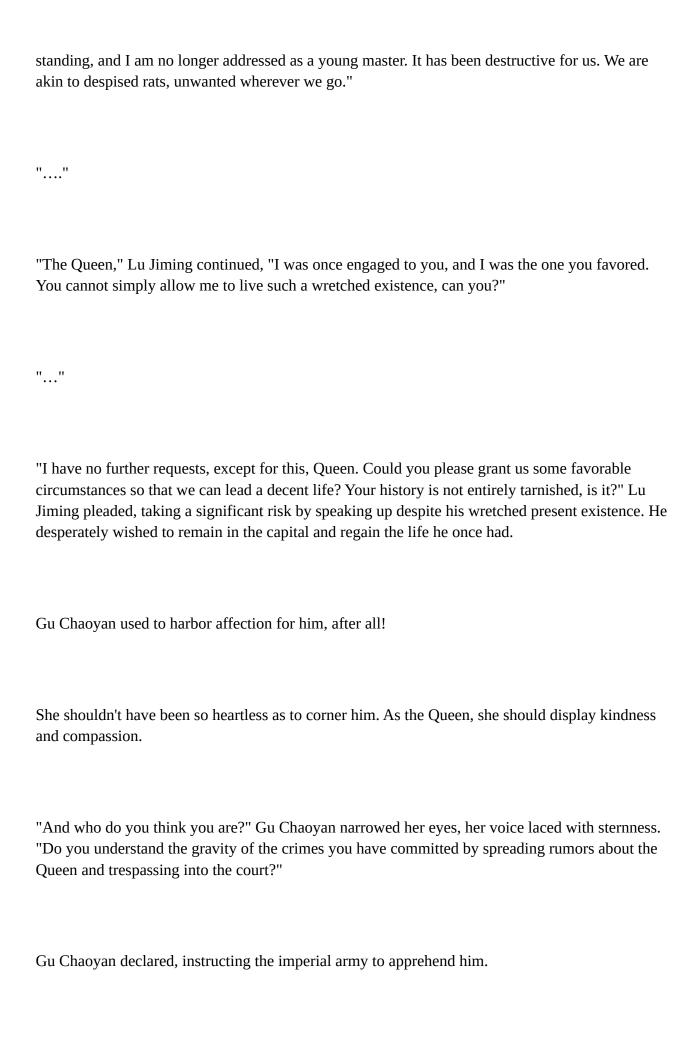
He truly desired to keep her, for he disliked how she emphasized her title. However, upon reflection, he realized that it was not yet the opportune moment.
It wasn't the right time after all.
Even if he were to force her to stay, he would only long for her presence and invite unnecessary trouble upon himself, thus thwarting all his plans.
If he wanted to succeed, he needed to maintain a low profile.
Only through this approach could he achieve his goals.
Zheng Chenyi gritted his teeth and exhaled deeply.
Gu Chaoyan and her guards were already far gone.
Gu Ruxue emerged from a nearby room, gazing in the direction of Gu Chaoyan's departure, and then at Zheng Chenyi. She shook her head, remarking, "I don't understand what's so exceptional about her. So many men are willing to sacrifice so much to win her over!"
She did not come from a prestigious family.

Gu Ruxue believed that she herself was more beautiful because, despite Gu Chaoyan's improved appearance, she still had the frightening red birthmark on her face.
Zheng Chenyi glared at Gu Ruxue fiercely, his expression indicating that he was on the verge of retaliating if she uttered another derogatory comment about Gu Chaoyan.I think you should take a look at
Gu Ruxue shrank back in fear.
Although Zheng Chenyi had approached her willingly, she understood his capabilities and knew that she needed his assistance. Therefore, she couldn't afford to offend him with reckless behavior.
She was not allowed to speak ill of Gu Chaoyan.
That was something she was capable of restraining herself from doing.
Since her arrival at Duke North Mansion, she had been forbidden from criticizing Gu Chaoyan.
Gu Ruxue pursed her lips and left the scene.
Zheng Chenyi's anger subsided, and his gaze shifted.
Gu Chaoyan was currently en route back to the court in her carriage.

That was the extent of what she could do to aid him.
"Elder Miss, do you think Duke North would want to keep the military authority?" Sword One asked, feeling unsure.
Elder Miss did not seem to have witnessed what Duke North really wanted, though she paid a visit to him personally.
Gu Chaoyan also shook her head.
Zheng Chenyi had always been an open and transparent person, incapable of concealing his thoughts. However, he now seemed much more enigmatic, and she couldn't fully understand him.
At this point, Zhou Huaijin should prioritize his concerns about Duke North and his well-being over the matter of military authority.
Gu Chaoyan was lost in thought when she suddenly heard commotion outside the carriage. Chapter 1777 Lu Jiming's Punishment
There was a gate positioned in front of him, and just beyond it stood the court.
In the vicinity of the gate, people would always maintain an air of tranquility, regardless of how they behaved in the capital. Those who dared to cause a commotion would quickly face the consequences, as the imperial army was swift to respond.

However, the man standing before the gate seemed to be defying this norm by making a significant amount of noise.
Curiosity piqued, Gu Chaoyan turned her gaze toward Sword One and motioned for her to investigate discreetly without revealing her true identity.
Sword One descended from the wagon and carefully surveyed the area.
Before long, the clamor subsided, and Sword One returned, relaying the information, "Elder Miss, a Young Master from Duke Changning's Mansion is causing a disturbance here. He insists on seeing you."
A Young Master from Duke Changning's Mansion? Lu Jiming?
It had been quite some time since Gu Chaoyan last encountered this man. What brought him here, disrupting the peace once again?
What could he possibly want from her?
Determined to find out, Gu Chaoyan stepped down from the wagon.
Immediately, her eyes fell upon Lu Jiming, engaged in a heated argument with the imperial army. If not for her presence in the wagon, the soldiers would have likely apprehended him by now. Clearly, he had no grasp of his own position.





"Inflict severe punishment upon him! Duke Changning has failed to instill proper values in his son, and he can no longer retain his title. I shall report this to the King immediately."

Chapter 1778 The Lin Family's Visit 1

Upon hearing Gu Chaoyan's words, Lu Jiming was overcome with fear. The consequences of his father losing his rank would be dire for their entire family. Without the rank, they would lose the benefits bestowed by the court, including their servants, and the chance of remaining in the capital would vanish.

No, this couldn't happen. Lu Jiming was consumed by terror. This was not how things were supposed to unfold.

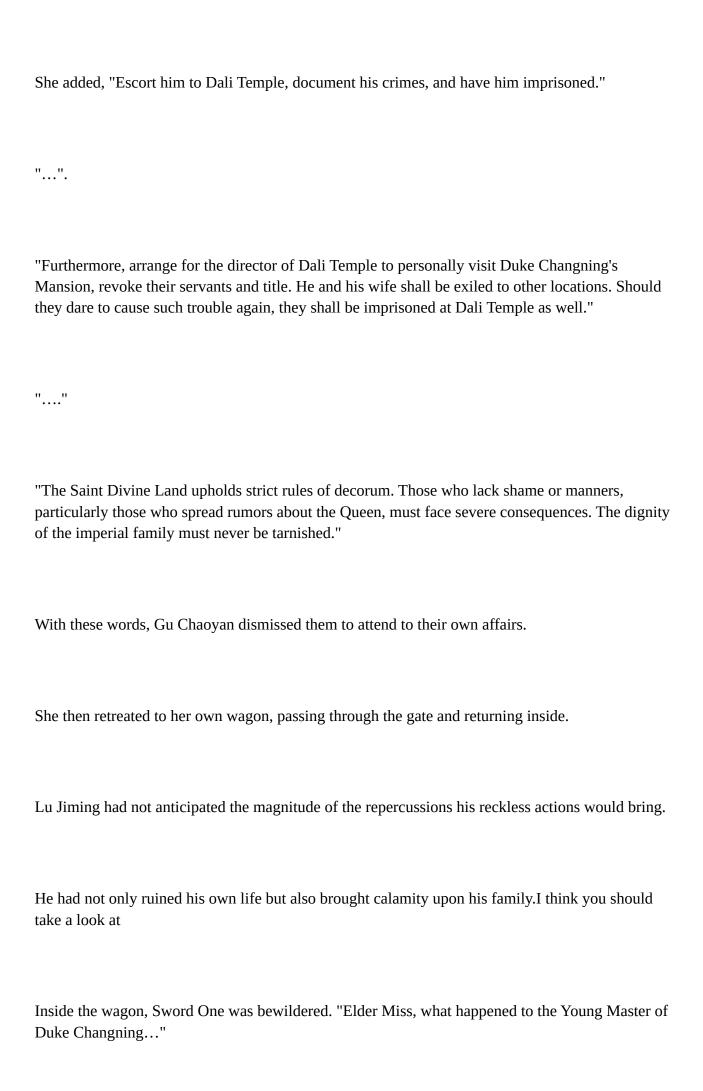
Struggling and shouting in desperation, he pleaded, "Queen, you cannot treat us like this! Yes, we turned our backs on you in the past, but please consider our history together. We were once engaged! Release us. Allow us to live peacefully once more, I implore you."

"...."

"We don't ask for much, just a life in the capital as it was before!" Lu Jiming's voice rang out, resonating through the gate. However, the imperial army swiftly silenced him, preventing any further utterance.

The imperial army had not anticipated such unruly behavior from him, nor the alarming words he spoke.

Gu Chaoyan gestured for the imperial army to remain in place.



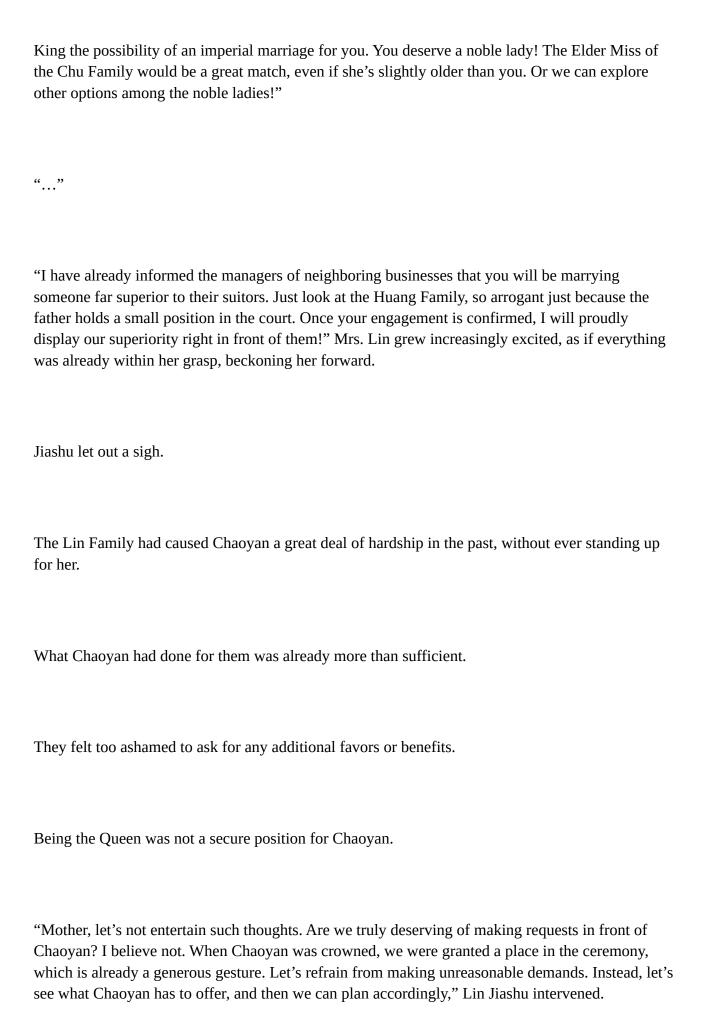
Before Sword One could finish her question, Gu Chaoyan responded directly. "The plight of Duke Changning's Mansion is not a result of my actions. Lu Jiming ended his engagement with Gu Ruxue, who married Zhou Huailing. It was Zhou Huailing who pushed them into obscurity."
""
"However, he keeps bringing up our past engagement. While I may not personally care about such rumors, Huaijin is the King, and any spreading of false information from Duke Changning's Mansion could tarnish his reputation."
""
"I don't want him to be burdened by the actions of the past."
""
"And the punishment is befitting for those from Duke Changning's Mansion," Gu Chaoyan explained bluntly.
She had indeed imposed a harsh punishment this time.
It was a direct consequence of Duke Changning's Mansion's excessive behavior. Regardless of any potential unfairness stemming from her social status, Gu Chaoyan had no regrets about her actions.

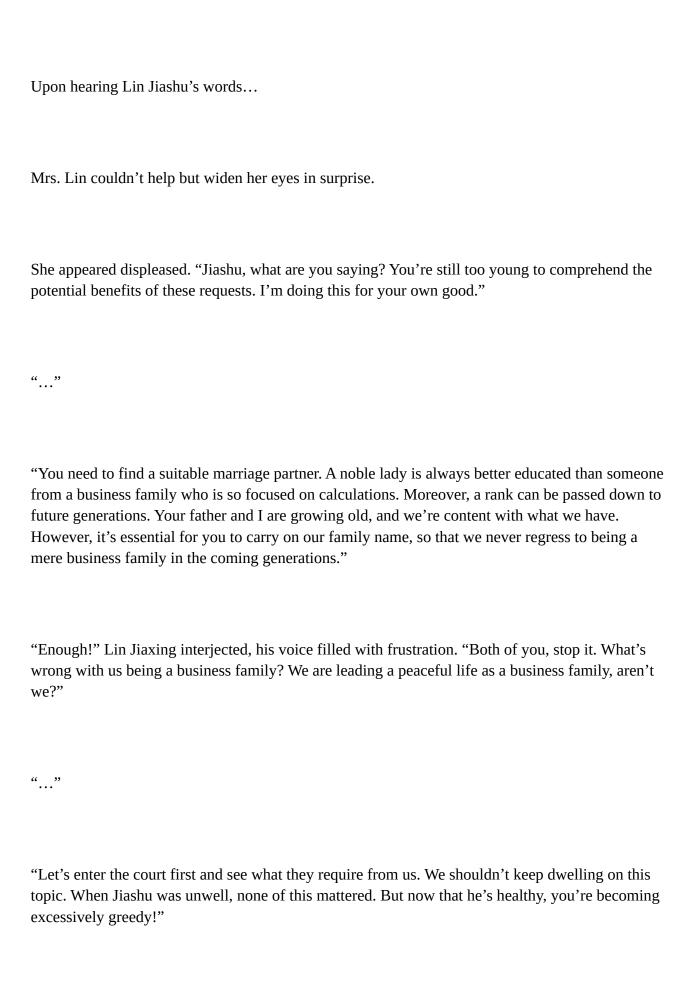
Sword One finally grasped the situation.
Although she didn't necessarily agree with her Elder Miss, she understood her perspective.
Deep down, Elder Miss was a kind-hearted girl.
"Summon the Lin Family to the court later," Gu Chaoyan instructed. Chapter 1779 The Lin Family's Visit 2
"Understood," Sword One promptly replied.
The Lin Family, Gu Chaoyan's own household, may not have been particularly pleasant, but the Old Master of the Lin Family still sided with her.
As the Queen, it was Gu Chaoyan's duty to meet with the Lin Family and make appropriate arrangements.
Meanwhile, back at Fengxian Palace, Sword One conveyed the message about summoning the Lin Family to the court. Gu Chaoyan took a moment to rest in the court, feeling quite fatigued after her visit to Duke North Mansion. Although the tea from the mansion was fragrant and of excellent quality, Gu Chaoyan hadn't been able to fully savor it. However, she felt revitalized after taking a sip of tea in Fengxian Palace.

At the Lin Mansion.
The court officials were efficient, especially when it came to tasks related to Fengxian Palace. They worked with even greater diligence.
Two hours later, the imperial decree and the carriage arrived at the Lin Mansion simultaneously.
The eunuch who delivered the imperial decree awaited the Lin Family's arrival after completing his task.
The three members of the Lin Family, particularly Mrs. Lin, were filled with surprise and joy. "We're going to the court! We're going to the court! She will make arrangements for us! Ah, I never imagined that we would become relatives of the imperial family! And soon, we will also become a noble family!"
""
"When the coronation ceremony took place, we were escorted to attend, but we were not mentioned. I thought she had forgotten everything we did to her, using us only when convenient and abandoning us when she was finished. But she's not like that, is she?"
""
"I have never set foot in the court before in my entire life, and now we're going as relatives of the imperial family! It's truly astounding!" Mrs. Lin cheered, feeling as if a life of luxury awaited her in the near future. Despite the hardships they had endured, it all seemed worthwhile now. Marrying

into the Lin Family was the right choice after all! Now they were reaping the rewards.I think you should take a look at
Lin Jiashu and Lin Jiaxing were relatively more reserved. They didn't share the same level of excitement as Mrs. Lin.
Chaoyan was not only the Queen but also the Phoenix Girl.
In truth, if she hadn't planned to bestow a significant reward upon the Lin Family, they wouldn't be safe.
While Mrs. Lin may not have noticed, Lin Jiashu and Lin Jiaxing did. The Lin Mansion had been provided with numerous guards and hidden protectors.
They must have been arranged by Chaoyan, ensuring their safety.
Chaoyan's actions were likely driven by her desire to honor her mother's memory. However, she had already done enough. She had considered the Lin Family's well-being thoroughly.
If she were to overlook the smaller favors and instead bestow significant rewards, the Lin Family would undoubtedly face a challenging future.
The Lin Family had been a business-oriented family for generations, lacking the firm foundation and influence of the originally noble families.

It was unexpected for them to thrive so remarkably.
But this was sufficient. Just like the Jiang Family, who withdrew from the political sphere, they would benefit from maintaining a low profile.
Mrs. Lin grew frustrated, observing the two men's lack of enthusiasm or plans for the Lin Family. "What are you two staring at?"
""
"This is a rare opportunity, and we should consider how to leverage it for the benefit of our family!"
Chapter 1780 - The Lin Family's Visit 3
"We have been a business family for generations, with a low social status. So this time, we request a rank during our visit. With that, we can live a better life, and Chaoyan would take pride in being part of the Lin Family. The Gu Family is no more, and our family should be considered as part of her own, shouldn't it?" Mrs. Lin emphasized.
Acquiring a rank would suffice for now. They could consider other matters later.
However
There was one more thing besides the rank.
"Jiashu, you are the most important consideration. Given your own circumstances, it may be difficult for you to find a well-suited partner. Mention this to Chaoyan, so she can discuss with the





"What are you insinuating? I'm not doing this for my own benefit!" Mrs. Lin retorted, her voice laced with anger. "I'm doing this for the sake of our family, the Lin Family! For Jiashu and his future children! As a woman, my name won't be passed down to future generations. I'm striving for the betterment of our son's future!"

"…"

"So now I'm the villain, and both of you are the righteous ones?"