

MEDICAL PRINCESS

Chapter 1261 - 1261 Meeting Zhao Xiran Again



Chapter 1261 Meeting Zhao Xiran Again

His words made Consort Dowager Qing silent. After a long time, she said slowly, "Qing'er, you are the weakest compared with others. Now you have offended Commandery Prince Cheng. The more help you can get, the better..."

"Mother, set your heart at rest. I know what you are thinking and have kept a low profile according to your suggestion. We didn't attack Commandery Prince Cheng on our initiative. I don't know what Commandery Prince Cheng was thinking. How could he brazenly ask me to be his shield? It is reasonable for us to fight back. Otherwise, he will mistakenly think he can bully us at will."

Chu Qing analyzed in a low voice.

Speaking of this matter, he also had a headache. Somehow, he had provoked Commandery Prince Cheng, who tried to blame him for Shao Jing's mistake. After that, Chu Qing dropped a hint and fanned the fire to fight back. Unexpectedly, it involved Commandery Prince Cheng, who was then grounded.

The two families became enemies.

Initially, he only wanted to look on at their trouble with indifference and reap the benefits from their life-and-death struggles.

It was not his original intention to get involved and confront Commandery Prince Cheng at this time. He was confused even until now. It seemed strange that Commandery Prince Cheng found him. Commandery Prince Cheng

targeted him. Was he out of his mind? Besides, “ghosts” appeared in his mansion.

It was evident that Commandery Prince Cheng was venting his anger on him.

“It’s best if you can think in this way. We’d better not stand up to Commandery Prince Cheng. No matter what, he can’t have a huge impact on the overall situation. Instead, you must be cautious when dealing with Prince Yue, Prince Zhou, and Prince Chen.” Consort Dowager Qing warned.

“Mother, trust me. I know what to do.” Chu Qing said. “Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou are well-matched in strength. They have been fighting secretly for a long time. Some of our subordinates have sneaked in. They will provoke fights at the right time so that our side can benefit from it. As for Chu Liuchen...”

Consort Dowager Qing sneered and said, “Just like you, he is also the deceased emperor’s son. Does he think he stands a better chance of success?”

Consort Dowager Qing said sarcastically, “When you ascend the throne in the future, you don’t have to keep him alive. An invalid like him might as well die early. What’s the point of sparing his life? His presence will not build up your reputation.”

Recalling the exceedingly beautiful woman, Consort Dowager Qing felt a surge of anger. Her attractive appearance was also one in a million. She had thought that after entering the Palace, she would be eminent above all other women in the imperial harem. Unexpectedly, the previous empress was even more striking than her. As such, she could only get a little love from the deceased emperor.

Fortunately, the deceased emperor began to dislike the previous empress. That was why she got her chance.

“He is much better now and might be a strong opponent.” Chu Qing said. Consort Dowager Qing could only learn about Chu Liuchen through rumors and hearsay about him. Unlike her, Chu Qing had direct contact with Chu Liuchen, whose manner made Chu Qing very uncomfortable. Whenever Chu Qing faced Chu Liuchen, he felt he had been seen through.

“He won’t recover. It’s not easy to remove the poison from him. Particularly, the poison has stayed in his body for so many years. Even if he is still alive, it must have severely damaged him.” Consort Dowager Qing said in smug satisfaction.

Chu Qing’s heart skipped a beat. “Mother, who poisoned him?”

“It was the Empress, or, more precisely, we did it through her hand. Our people presented the poison on purpose. No one could track us down, even if a survey was carried out. There was more than one person behind it!” Consort Dowager Qing said smugly.

Back then, she had controlled many people. The previous emperor trusted Consort Dowager Qing very much for some time later. Consort Dowager Qing believed she would take the previous empress’s place if the deceased emperor could hold on for a little longer. Then, her son would become the heir apparent. Thinking of this, she felt a little depressed. After all, time waits for no person.

If it hadn’t been for the early death of the deceased emperor, her plan would have been achieved a long time ago, and there wouldn’t be fierce competition among the few princes.

“Weren’t the Empress afraid of being discovered?” This was the first time Chu Qing had known the cause of Chu Liuchen’s illness. It was not that Chu Liuchen was born with poison but that the Empress had poisoned the previous empress.

Back then, the Empress was merely a consort, yet she dared to poison the previous empress!

“Well, these things happened long ago and are not very relevant to you. You just need to be careful. Don’t take reckless actions in the Yuhui Nunnery. That’s all for the time being.” Consort Dowager Qing shook her hand and didn’t want to mention this topic again. She had already made an indiscreet remark.

“I know! Then should Qiuyi bring Shao Jie’er back tomorrow?” Chu Qing asked.

“Let Mo Qiuyi do it. Since she intends to help you put your inner court in order, she has made the right choice. After Shao Jie’er comes back, don’t treat her well. She is just a concubine who must be kept in the mansion.” Consort Dowager Qing thought for a while and said.

In the past, Shao Jie’er had the support of the Marquis Xing’s Mansion. Even if she was merely a concubine’s daughter, it was improper for them to treat her harshly for the sake of Shao Jing. But now, they didn’t have to worry about this. Consort Dowager Qing had decided that Shao Jie’er should be brought back. Even if she died, she should die in the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion so as not to cause any trouble in the future.

In Consort Dowager Qing’s eyes, Shao Jie’er was already dead, but she wouldn’t take her life so soon. Instead, Consort Dowager Qing would keep Shao Jie’er in the mansion for a period before murdering her.

“Okay, I’ll do as you say!” Chu Qing said meekly.

Consort Dowager Qing was very satisfied with his response, and her eyes softened. “Shao Jie’er is an unchaste woman. When you become the Emperor, you can have any beauty you want. Don’t bother about such a woman.”

“Mother, you’re right!” Chu Qing lowered his head to hide the displeasure in his eyes.

As a Prince and the son of the deceased emperor, he would ascend the throne. If he needed to complete each step with his mother’s support, how could he occupy a dominant position to rule over the vast territory?

But he knew Consort Dowager Qing was doing this for his good. Although he felt slightly discouraged, he understood his mother’s good intentions. Thus, he accepted her kind suggestions.

After chatting with Consort Dowager Qing for a while, he returned to rest...

Shao Wanru informed Chu Liuchen early the following day and went out with a few people. This time, she was going to meet Zhao Xiran.

After Zhao Xiran and Shao Hua’an came out of the Marquis Xing’s Mansion, they didn’t move to the Minister Zhao’s Mansion. Instead, they went straight to a courtyard that belonged to the Minister Zhao’s Mansion and lived there with Shao Jie’er.

The courtyard was very remote, and the carriage finally arrived after several turns.

It was a tiny courtyard with its door tightly closed. Yujie went forward to knock on the door. After a long time, someone finally came to open the door — it was Qiu Yue, Zhao Xiran’s servant girl. Seeing her, Yujie was slightly stunned.

“Is First Young Madam inside?” Yujie asked.

“Yes, First Young Madam is here... Please stay here for a while, Your highness. I’ll ask her to come right away!” Qiu Yue came to her senses and said excitedly.

She turned around and ran inside. After a while, she led Zhao Xiran here.

Zhao Xiran was plainly dressed and looked much thinner. She bowed deeply to Shao Wanru and said, "Greetings, Your highness."

"You're welcome, Sister Zhao." Shao Wanru said softly, "Is it okay for you to live here?"

She raised her head and looked around. This place was surrounded by courtyards of the same size. These small courtyards of dense population were tightly packed. There were people of all sorts, and the environment was not very good.

"Thank you for your concern, Your highness. I'm fine!" Zhao Xiran said with a wry smile.

No one had expected the change. Zhao Xiran used to be the First Young Madam of the Marquis Xing's Mansion, but now she was just a Young Madam of an ordinary family. There had been infinite possibilities for her, but she had lost them all. Even her father had given up on her. What else could she complain about?

Now when she saw Shao Wanru again, her expression looked very complicated.

Qiu Yue invited Shao Wanru to sit in the room and served tea.

"Why do you call upon me, Your highness?" Zhao Xiran asked.

"I'm here to see you and my Eldest Brother," Shao Wanru said. Then, she asked Yujie and Qing'er to bring over the gifts. Looking at the few bolts of bright cloth on the table, Zhao Xiran showed an increasingly bitter smile.

In the past, though she had not become the most powerful Madam of the Marquis Xing's Mansion, everything in the mansion was under her control. She had seen all kinds of good things, but now she possessed nothing after being driven out of the mansion.

In fact, some of her dowries were still in the mansion, but she was too ashamed to ask for them.

Shao Jing had committed such a dreadful crime. If they were not from the same mansion, their property must have been confiscated, and even the whole family would have been exterminated. Now only Shao Jing would pay with his life for his murderous actions. It should be the idea of Shao Wanru and Shao Yuanhao. From this point of view, Zhao Xiran had no hatred for Shao Wanru and even felt a little guilty.

She had suspected Shao Jing for a long time. That day, her father asked her to marry into the Marquis Xing's Mansion because he suspected that Shao Jing had a few pieces of script and paintings. Astonishingly, Shao Jing murdered his brother and imprisoned his sister-in-law. She was caught up in it and had only herself to blame.

In the past few days, Zhao Xiran had been thinking a lot. Gradually, she was consciously aware of how wrong she had been before. Everything, including her head-on blow at Shao Wanru, was a mistake.

Her biggest mistake was that she had never figured out its consequences. She had thought the biggest problem was that Shao Jing secretly got some information from the former heir of a duke and found a few scripts and paintings.

After a series of mistakes, she ended up like this.

Her father disappointed her the most. He had been obedient to her in every matter. When the Marquis Xing's Mansion got a crushing blow, she chose to go home. But to her great surprise, her father drove her out again, giving her only a small courtyard to live in.

Girls obey their fathers before marriage, then their husbands after marriage. Sure enough, even her father was taking advantage of her. In the past, she

felt that her father thought highly of her, a brilliant woman no inferior to men. But what about the truth? Her father cheated her into believing she was relieving his worries and helping him! And this cost her all the happiness of her life.

But what could be more important than his daughter's happiness? After all, she was just a girl spending most of her time in the inner court and had a superficial knowledge of the real world. But what about her father? Was her father, a minister, really as ignorant as her?

Her father had praised her for being equally capable of those successful men. Thinking back on this, she felt it was almost a joke. Falling into such an inferior position, Zhao Xiran figured out many things, like she was just her father's pawn. Although she was worthless to him, he might have a chance to take advantage of her, right?

That was her father's idea. He had coaxed her into doing many things for him. Now that things had come to this point, her father was no longer willing to protect her. He pushed her back to her miserable life. After all, a married daughter is just like water that has been poured.

"Is someone at home?" Suddenly, there was a heavy knock on the door outside the courtyard. The knock was so loud that even people in the room could hear it. It sounded like this visitor had evil intent.

Chapter 1262 Fifth Sister, Save Me!

The noise was so loud that even Shao Wanru couldn't help looking over.

"Qiu Yue, go and see who it is!" Zhao Xiran ordered.

Qiu Yue answered and left. After a while, she came back with a few people. Seeing the leading person, Shao Wanru raised the corners of her mouth slightly. It was indeed an acquaintance: Mo Qiuyi.

Nowadays, Mo Qiuyi looked very different from how she looked in the Yuhui Nunnery. At that time, Mo Qiuyi was dressed in very ordinary clothes. As a woman living an ascetic life, she never put on make-up. Most of the time, she

was simply dressed in garments worn by nuns in the Yuhui Nunnery. It was said that Mo Qiuyi had cultivated in the mountain longer than Shao Wanru. Except for that, she had no distinctive features worth mentioning.

Now, Mo Qiuyi seemed to have changed into another person. She wore luxurious clothes made of silk and brocade, always surrounded by many servant girls and old maids. At first glance, Shao Wanru could tell that this woman was living an excellent life. Besides, her face was covered with cosmetics. If Shao Wanru were not familiar with her, she wouldn't recognize her.

She would soon marry into the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, but she was still wandering outside like Infanta Yuan'an.

"Princess Chen?" Seeing Shao Wanru, Mo Qiuyi was startled. She had just seen a carriage parked aside but thought it must belong to another courtyard. There was no unique sign on the carriage. It was a little larger than regular ones but didn't look conspicuous. She didn't expect it to be Shao Wanru's carriage.

She would not have come in if she had known that Shao Wanru was here.

Since she had already entered, it was not convenient for her to leave.

"Miss Mo!" Shao Wanru said with a gentle smile.

Qiu Yue stepped aside angrily. "What's wrong with these people? As soon as the door was opened, they rushed in aggressively without any courtesy. A few strong old maids are with them. They are up to no good."

They were no longer in the Marquis Xing's Mansion. Followed by Zhao Xiran, Qiu Yue had tasted the bitterness of the world and knew they couldn't do anything to them. Fortunately, Princess Chen came here today.

"Greetings, Princess Chen." Mo Qiuyi stepped forward and bowed sideways in a well-behaved manner. Behind her, these servant girls and old maids also respectfully saluted Princess Chen.

Mo Qiuyi didn't dare to take Shao Wanru lightly.

Once in the Yuhui Nunnery, she had clashed with Shao Wanru. Anyway, she dare not underestimate Shao Wanru.

Others thought Princess Chen was delicate. Since she looked young and beautiful, a lady looking like a tender flower must have been carefully protected and cherished. Such a woman was usually useless. Yet, Mo Qiuyi didn't think so. Others didn't know about the Yuhui Nunnery's harsh

environment, but she did. A woman who could survive in such a place couldn't be simple.

Just like her, without other purposes, she wouldn't have lived in such a place.

"Miss Mo?" Zhao Xiran didn't know Mo Qiuyi. She looked her up and down and asked, "Which family is she from?"

It was no wonder that she didn't know Mo Qiuyi. None of the high-status and noble ladies in the capital city knew her. Mo Qiuyi was not from an aristocratic family. For so many years, she lived in the mountain and only went out to socialize occasionally. Since she hadn't yet married into the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, she was still in the current circle of Young Madams from ordinary families and couldn't reach Zhao Xiran's social level.

"This is Commandery Prince Qing's future legal wife." Shao Wanru calmly introduced her to Zhao Xiran.

Zhao Xiran was smart enough to understand it at once. She looked at Mo Qiuyi narrowly. Though she would be Commandery Prince Qing's wife in the future, she hadn't yet married him. Thus, it was not impolite for Zhao Xiran to do so.

If it were in the past, Zhao Xiran would get up to receive her tactfully even if Mo Qiuyi had a lower status. However, Zhao Xiran was in no mood now. After all, she hadn't yet managed to handle her family's messy affairs. How could she think of buttering up Mo Qiuyi when she was so upset with the mess?

Moreover, at a glance, she knew this lady must be here to make trouble. How could Zhao Xiran be generous and kind to welcome someone looking for trouble here?

Mo Qiuyi looked a little sullen. All the Misses and Madams in her circle fawned over her when she attended different banquets during this period. Once she married Commandery Prince Qing, she could be considered one member of those aristocratic families. She would become far inferior to Misses and Madams from these ordinary families. These people would undoubtedly curry favor with her when having a chance to associate with her.

"First Young Madam Zhao, may I see Shao Jie'er?" Displeased, Mo Qiuyi raised her head and went straight to the point. "She is a Commandery Prince Qing's concubine. Since your family has suffered great misfortune, Shao Jie'er must return to the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, no matter what! Please forgive me for being so blunt, First Young Madam Zhao."

“Go and ask Second Miss to come here!” Zhao Xiran was in no mood to care about Shao Jie’er, so she raised her hand and ordered.

Qiu Yue withdrew and soon came back with Shao Jie’er.

Shao Jie’er looked too thin and frail to stand a gust of wind. Never had she imagined that such a change would happen. She thought she could take the Marquis Xing’s Mansion as a shelter and be protected by her father. Unlucky for her, the Marquis Xing’s Mansion fell into turmoil a few days after her arrival. She was driven out with her brother and sister-in-law.

She had a hard time escaping from the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion and never intended to return. Because of this, she even dared to offend Commandery Prince Qing. But she had no idea what to do after so many things happened.

When Shao Wanru came in, she saw her through the window. However, she didn’t dare to see Shao Wanru and hid. Unexpectedly, not only Shao Wanru but also Mo Qiuyi came. Thus, she felt even more reluctant to come out.

But she had to meet them, for Mo Qiuyi came especially for her.

She came out timidly with a pale face. After giving a salute to Shao Wanru, she bowed to Mo Qiuyi.

Mo Qiuyi looked at Shao Jie’er and criticized her with a frown. “Shao Jie’er, His highness asked you to go back. As his concubine, how could you live outside? If anything happens to you in the future, others will make unpleasant remarks about him.”

They hadn’t seen each other for a few days, and Shao Jie’er didn’t look as charming as before. Was there any chance for her to outshine Princess Yuyan?

Shao Jie’er looked at Shao Wanru and Zhao Xiran, who remained silent beside them. Gritting her teeth resolutely, she said, “Miss Mo... I... I won’t go back!”

“You are His highness’s concubine. How dare you refuse to go back?” Mo Qiuyi flew into a rage and snapped, “Are you going to be an escaped concubine?”

When an ordinary family caught their escaped concubine, they would tattoo words on her face.

“Miss Mo, but I am not just a concubine. I... His highness has promised me the position as a consort.” Shao Jie’er screwed up her courage and said. Even

at this time, she knew she could not let Mo Qiuyi make her an escaped concubine.

Her identity in the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion was indeed embarrassing. But Chu Qing had said that it was just a passing phase.

"Shao Jie'er, don't you know your status? Can't you remember your identity when entering the mansion? If you can become a consort, you are no longer an ordinary concubine now!" Mo Qiuyi sneered and said, "Come on, take Shao Jie'er back!"

Two rough-looking old maids came up to her, standing on each side.

"Sister Zhao, save me, please! I don't want to return to the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. I will be killed there. They couldn't tolerate me back then, and now they hate me even more!" Shao Jie'er, dragged by two old maids, cried loudly and pleaded with Zhao Xiran not to let go of her. She didn't dare to ask Shao Wanru for help.

Zhao Xiran's eyebrows twitched slightly. No matter what Shao Jie'er had done, she was still her sister-in-law, the younger sister of Shao Hua'an. At this time, she couldn't turn a blind eye to her.

"Miss Mo, please wait!" Zhao Xiran said.

"First Young Madam Zhao, what do you mean? Are you going to keep His highness's concubine?" Mo Qiuyi looked up at Zhao Xiran and asked. She was afraid of Shao Wanru but not Zhao Xiran.

Zhao Xiran, the minister's down-and-out daughter, was nothing.

"But you haven't married into the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, have you?" Zhao Xiran said and looked at Mo Qiuyi calmly. Only an aristocratic family could cultivate a woman in such an imposing manner. She looked no less intimidating than Mo Qiuyi.

Mo Qiuyi was stunned, and her expression changed slightly. "What do you mean by saying that?"

"Nothing. I want to ask about your wedding date. After all, you haven't yet married Commandery Prince Qing and are still Miss Mo. If Commandery Prince Qing wants my second sister to go back, let him pick her up himself!" Zhao Xiran said, appearing calm and stable, but Mo Qiuyi's face was overcast.

Indeed, she wasn't Commandery Prince Qing's legal wife, though she might be. From this point of view, Mo Qiuyi was not qualified to interfere in the affairs of Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion.

"Do you know what you're talking about?" Mo Qiuyi's face turned pale with humiliation, then vivid with anger. Though Shao Wanru nearby didn't say anything or even look at her, she still felt under tremendous pressure. It made her feel even more ashamed and annoyed. It was okay that she couldn't compare with Shao Wanru, but she was no inferior to Zhao Xiran!

"Miss Mo, I know very well what I'm doing, but you should also be responsible for your actions. The Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion has many people to handle their affairs. But Miss Mo, I don't think you have the right to do this now!" Zhao Xiran said coldly.

She had a low opinion of Mo Qiuyi, who started throwing her weight around early before marrying the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. Mo Qiuyi was not easy to deal with, and she could tell it with a glance.

She didn't want to meddle in this matter at first, but now she had to do so because Mo Qiuyi provoked her.

Mo Qiuyi's act was not perfectly justifiable.

"I... I..." It was true that Mo Qiuyi had no right to do that. Suddenly, she was ashamed into angry but managed to remain rational. Since Shao Wanru was here, she couldn't resort to violence, no matter how furious she was. Mo Qiuyi had brought many helpers with her, for she had planned to take action if anyone disobeyed.

But now, she couldn't do anything.

In the end, she suddenly stood up and sneered, "First Young Madam Zhao, take care of yourself. I'll come back to take Second Miss Shao later."

After some time, she would be Commandery Prince Qing's legal wife. At that time, Zhao Xiran would have no reason to turn her down.

"Do as you please, Miss Mo!" Zhao Xiran said carelessly.

Seeing her like this, Mo Qiuyi became increasingly angry with pent-up hatred. She bowed to Shao Wanru and took her leave. Halfway, she looked back at Zhao Xiran with a threatening expression and left with a bunch of servants.

Of course, she would not give in.

After the large group of people left, the courtyard quieted down. Shao Wanru had been watching them quietly, neither intervening nor saying anything.

"Please save me, Fifth Sister." With no outsiders around, Shao Jie'er bit her lip, suddenly pounced on Shao Wanru, and begged her as if she had made up her mind! Eldest Brother said that this would be her last chance!

Chapter 1263 Leaving, Unrestrained

Shao Wanru looked down at Shao Jie'er silently and said when she almost couldn't hold on any longer. "No one can change the fact that you are a member of Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion unless Commandery Prince Qing is willing to let you go."

"Fifth Sister, you can do it. Could you save me? Please! Please do me the last favor. If you save me, I will go far away and never return. There are only a few people left in our mansion now. Fifth Sister, please save me." Shao Jie'er cried and was about to kneel to Shao Wanru.

Before Shao Jie'er did that, Yujie hurried forward to help her up.

"Do you really want to leave?" Shao Wanru asked, looking at her calmly with watery eyes and asked.

"I... I'm leaving. I have to leave the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. They never treat me as one of them... Mo Qiuyi is offensive, and Princess Yuyan will marry into the mansion. I... I'll die if I stay there." Yujie choked with sobs. Mo Qiuyi was pretty bitchy, and Princess Yuyan would join in later. It would be a piece of cake for them to take her life.

Shao Jie'er had taken great pains to leave the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. Of course, she didn't want to be found and sent back again. To stay in the Marquis Xing's Mansion, she even plotted against Old Madam then. But she didn't expect that things would change so fast that she couldn't react in time.

"Why didn't you leave earlier?" Shao Wanru looked at Shao Jie'er and asked.

"I... Now?" Shao Jie'er didn't understand. She blinked her eyes, and her lips trembled.

"Why didn't you leave in the past? Wasn't it good to go free when you were out of the mansion?" Shao Wanru said.

"I... I thought my father... could be saved at that time..." Shao Jie'er stammered.

"Did you want Old Madam to take you back? Wasn't it more peaceful to live in the mansion than outside? Or did you still have some precious things to pack up?" Shao Wanru mercilessly exposed the lie of Shao Jie'er.

It was an accident. Shao Jie'er was indeed struck dumb at that time. She was driven out of the Marquis Xing's Mansion in a daze. She only took a few pieces of jewelry and some clothes she usually wore. It was because there was not enough time to take other things. She was undoubtedly unwilling to leave like this. Although she didn't have many good things, Old Madam had them.

She had to get some valuable items from Old Madam before leaving.

She was waiting, waiting for Shao Wanru to give her another chance to enter the mansion. Old Madam was in poor health and needed someone to take care of her. Who else could be more suitable than her to do this job?

She could compromise and take care of Old Madam.

Unexpectedly, Mo Qiuyi, instead of Shao Wanru, came. At this time, she was terrified because she saw the wicked and ruthless look in Mo Qiuyi's eyes. She didn't dare to stay and was anxious to leave.

"I'm leaving now, Fifth Sister. Please... please give me a hundred taels of silver. When... when I have money in the future, I will return it to you." Shao Jie'er gritted her teeth determinedly and said.

She didn't have much money to spend on the way. She might be caught and brought back before going very far. Even if she was sent back, she could not live on her own.

"Yujie, give Second Miss a hundred taels of silver." Shao Wanru looked at Shao Jie'er and gave an order after a long while.

Yujie took a note from the pocket before her chest and handed it over. It happened to be worth one hundred taels of silver.

Without much effort, Shao Jie'er got what she wanted. She took the note from Yujie in disbelief and said, "Fifth Sister... Are... are you really willing to let me go?"

"What's the benefit of keeping you here?" Shao Wanru raised her watery eyes and asked, her long eyelashes fluttering twice.

This was something quite contrary to her expectations. Shao Jie'er shook her head blankly. "Shouldn't she harshly scold me and stride away without looking back?"

"If you want to leave, leave right now. Do you want me to help you pack up?" Shao Wanru asked.

"No... no... I'll leave now, right away!" Shao Jie'er seemed to come to her senses at this time. She vigorously shook her head, turned around, and walked out. When she reached the door, she suddenly turned around. Kneeling before Shao Wanru, she kowtowed hard a few times and said, "Thank you, Fifth Sister."

After that, she covered her tearful face and ran out.

Outside the door, Aunt Lu was pacing around anxiously. Seeing Shao Jie'er coming out, she instantly pulled her over and asked in a hurry, "What's the matter? Is there something wrong?"

"We can leave now. Fifth Sister lent me a hundred taels of silver. Let's go. We're leaving right now!" Shao Jie'er spoke feelingly. She didn't expect things to be so simple.

"Okay... okay, let's go!" Aunt Lu wiped away her tears of excitement and said to Shao Jie'er, "Did... did you thank Princess Chen?"

Shao Jie'er had told Aunt Lu about her days in the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. Aunt Lu told her she could take Shao Jie'er to her hometown. That place was so remote that Commandery Prince Qing would not go there to get her.

"I... I thanked her. Let's leave this place quickly!" Shao Jie'er said anxiously. She had been greedy and wanted to take Old Madam's valuable things away. But now, she no longer dared to think about it. Mo Qiuyi had come to her, and judging from her look, Shao Jie'er knew she had complete confidence. Thus, she couldn't delay any longer.

There were not many things to pack up. Aunt Lu and Shao Jie'er had prepared a few items. Since they wouldn't bring any servant girl, the two of them changed into ordinary clothes and were about to leave. When they walked back to the courtyard door, Shao Jie'er suddenly returned to the main room and kowtowed three times again to Shao Wanru in the room. Then, she stood up with Qing'er's help and left in tears.

Once she left, there wouldn't be a chance for her to return.

When Shao Jie'er left with Aunt Lu, no one noticed that a wing room's window was slightly open. Shao Hua'an stood by the window and watched this with a bleak look.

Zhao Xiran was also watching quietly. When Shao Jie'er and Aunt Lu leave, she felt very sad. Shao Jie'er deserved what she had suffered. But even so, Aunt Lu was willing to accompany her and never abandoned her. In contrast,

her father abandoned her. Although her mother felt distressed for her, she just gave her some money secretly and watched her father kick her away.

Frankly, she was pathetic.

“Fifth Sister, you helped Second Sister escape. Will you get into trouble? After all, she belongs to the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion,” Zhao Xiran said.

“I’ll ask Prince Chen to tell this to Commandery Prince Qing.” Shao Wanru shook her head and said, “Sister Zhao, if you have any difficulties in the future, you can tell me.”

“Thank you... Fifth Sister.” Zhao Xiran choked out. Quickly, she turned her face aside to wipe the tears from the corners of her eyes with a handkerchief. Since such a thing happened, everyone avoided her when they saw her. No one had ever come forward to offer help.

“Don’t mention it, Sister Zhao. Shao Jing did such a nasty thing. It has nothing to do with you,” Shao Wanru said. Although Zhao Xiran had targeted her, she had never done such a vicious thing to her parents with Shao Jing.

She was well aware of this.

It was getting late, so Shao Wanru got up to leave. Zhao Xiran sent her to the door and didn’t return to the room until she got in the carriage and left. After sitting in the room for a while, she went to the wing room on the left.

There was a couch in the wing room. Shao Hua’an was leaning against it and reading a book calmly. Hearing the sound at the door, he raised his head and said gently, “Has Fifth Sister gone back?”

“Yes...” Zhao Xiran sat down on a chair nearby. After watching his expression closely, she said, “Second Sister has left. Just now, some people from the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion came to take her away. Second Sister borrowed one hundred taels of silver from Fifth Sister and left.”

“It’s good for her to leave at this time!” Shao Hua’an sighed and put down the book in his hand. Leaning back, he said with a bitter smile, “My father has done such a thing, and we have been punished as his children.”

“Don’t say that!” Seeing his decadent look, Zhao Xiran felt like crying.

“I’m fine. Don’t be sad. When I recover, I’ll take you out of here and find a beautiful place to start over.” Shao Hua’an comforted her and reached out to take her hand. “I’m sorry to make you suffer. You used to be the minister’s daughter but married me, a useless man.”

"Honey, please... Don't say that. It has nothing to do with you. In the future, let's leave this place and go to the south, where there are bright mountains and limpid waters." Zhao Xiran was heartbroken. She didn't expect that they would end up like this.

"Okay, it's all up to you." Shao Hua'an nodded.

"You... Are you serious?" Zhao Xiran asked, feeling uncertain.

"Of course, I'll listen to you. I have nothing now except you!" Shao Hua'an smiled even more bitterly. He looked up, closed his eyes, and said slowly, "Xiran, don't worry. I will do business in the future and let you live a good life."

"I... I know." Zhao Xiran burst into tears. She could no longer restrain herself from crying out in distress. Tears poured down her cheeks.

"Alright, it's okay. Everything will be fine." Shao Hua'an reached out to hold Zhao Xiran in his arms and comforted her softly.

"Will we be fine? You... Promise to me, okay?" Zhao Xiran said unconfidently.

"It'll be fine. I promise you!" Shao Hua'an said, soft eyes on Zhao Xiran.

"My Lady, you assisted Second Miss to leave. Is it really okay for you to do that?" In the carriage, Yujie said worriedly. When Shao Jie'er first came to the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, she was supposed to be a consort. But after many things happened later, no one in the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion mentioned it. As a result, this matter was ignored. But if the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion insisted that Shao Jie'er was a consort, this matter would become a big problem.

It didn't matter if a concubine left, but it would be a big deal if she were a consort.

"As a consort, the royal family would grant and record her identity. In the past, her identity as a consort was never recognized. Then, it's even more impossible for her to become a consort now. How could His Majesty be in the mood to deal with such a trivial matter?" Qing'er said indifferently.

"Maybe she has become a consort long ago!" Shao Wanru said meaningfully.

"How... how is that possible?" The two servant girls were startled. It was not right to gossip about this because such an issue might become terribly wrong.

Chapter 1264 Brothers Gambling Among Each Other

Shao Jie'er moved to the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion as a consort. In this case, the Emperor must have recognized her identity. But why didn't

people in the mansion admit her status later? It was because no one in the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion had gone to inform Grand Prince, the director of the Imperial Clan, about this matter.

The Emperor had agreed. As long as anyone notified the director of the Imperial Clan, Shao Jie'er could be regarded as a half-consort even if she didn't officially go to worship the Imperial Clan.

That was what the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion needed!

"My Lady... Then... Then why did you let Second Miss go?" Yujie asked in confusion. If her master did not allow Second Miss to leave, she could not make it.

"Even if I didn't allow her to leave, she would escape after I left there. Anyway, I would be blamed for this matter. Even worse, Shao Jie'er might even lose her life, and the dead cannot bear witness." Shao Wanru said lightly.

There was no testimony of witness after she passed away, and Shao Wanru would still have to bear the consequences.

"But then, others might ask that who let Second Miss leave? And did she leave when you were away?" After thinking for a moment, Qing'er asked. She was much more thoughtful than ordinary servant girls.

"Honestly, only a few people could let Shao Jie'er leave and control the direction she chose and the place she went. In the end, she would have an accident." Shao Wanru said coldly.

She had already thought of the whole thing the moment she saw Mo Qiuyi.

Her rosy lips curled slightly, showing an air of coldness. In this case, she decided to take the easy option and give them what they wanted. Shao Jie'er, mean and ungrateful, just suffered the consequences of her deeds. Those people wanted to plot against her by using Shao Jie'er — they overestimated themselves.

Everything was ready, and these people were waiting for Shao Wanru to cast herself into the net. Even if she didn't go there this time, there must be a reason for her to come! Coincidentally, she met Mo Qiuyi there...

Chu Qing followed a eunuch into the Palace. He was going home after the regular meeting of the imperial court. But surprisingly, he was summoned by someone in the Palace.

In a quiet palace, Chu Liuchen looked at Chu Qing, who was approaching step by step with malicious and insidious eyes.

It was Chu Liuchen inside. When Chu Qing saw that, he was shocked and stopped in a hurry. The Emperor was not feeling well these days, and Chu Liuchen had not gone to court in the past few days. Unexpectedly, it was Chu Liuchen who summoned him in.

After a short pause, he walked forward slowly, feeling uneasy.

“Greetings, Your highness.”

“Please sit down!” Prince Chen waved his hand, and soon two eunuchs brought a chair over. Then they submissively put their hands down and stepped aside.

Chu Qing didn’t know why Chu Liuchen wanted to see him. Stepping aside, he sat and asked, looking a little bit nervous. “You wanted me to be here. Er... Why?”

“Can’t I meet you if there is nothing important?” Chu Liuchen asked with a faint smile.

Even though his smile looked gentle, it still sent a chill to Chu Qing’s heart. He felt scared and stressed for no reason. He forced a smile and said, “You must be joking. We are originally... How could we not be close?”

“I heard you would make an unknown woman your legal wife?” Chu Liuchen didn’t beat around the bush and went straight to the point.

Chu Qing didn’t understand at first. After thinking for a while, he asked, “Are you... talking about Qiuyi?”

“I don’t know if this woman is the one you have chosen to be your legal wife. This matter has nothing to do with me, but your princess-to-be is scheming against my wife. Then, I have to handle this matter!”

“What did Qiuyi do?” Chu Qing asked in surprise because he had no idea about it.

“Your princess-to-be seems to be very capable. She accomplished something big without you noticing it!” Chu Liuchen’s delicate lips curled. He slightly raised his beautiful eyes, looking careless.

“How could Mo Qiuyi not be capable?” There was no doubt about her outstanding capabilities. Chu Qing knew it very well. This was an important reason why he wanted her to be his legal wife. Compared with Princess Yuyan, Mo Qiuyi was the woman who could rule over his inner court. With her, he could focus on great things.

In Chu Qing's mind, Princess Yuyan might cause trouble, but Mo Qiuyi would never do that.

"I don't know what you mean!" Chu Qing straightened his back, unwilling to appear too weak before Chu Liuchen. They were brothers who had lost their father. Why could Chu Liuchen vigorously suppress him?

"Well, I know something you don't know. Shao Jing's second daughter is your consort?" Chu Liuchen casually asked as if he didn't notice that Chu Qing's expression had changed drastically.

"No, not a consort. She is just a concubine with no status," Chu Qing answered indifferently. He did not like Chu Liuchen interfering in the affairs of his inner court.

"I'm afraid you have gotten it wrong. At the very beginning, Uncle the Emperor has agreed to let Shao Jie'er marry into your mansion as a consort, hasn't he?" Chu Liuchen asked with great interest. Under his searching gaze, Chu Qing felt more depressed.

"Shao Jie'er didn't behave properly, so she is not suitable to be my consort! Later on, she returned without permission when something happened to the mansion. How could she be my consort?"

Chu Qing said.

"No?" Chu Liuchen asked again.

"No!" Chu Qing said with certainty.

Chu Liuchen asked again as if he didn't see the anger in Chu Qing's eyes, "Are you sure? Or has your mother asked someone to change her status proof? Your mother might have agreed to the thing granted by Uncle the Emperor."

"What do you mean? My mother would not do such a thing. How could she make Shao Jie'er my consort?" Chu Qing became increasingly impatient.

Her mother hated Shao Jie'er so much, so how could she take the initiative to make Shao Jie'er a consort?

"I know your purpose. Shao Jie'er has a bad character, and her behaviors are unacceptable. How could such a woman be my consort? Even my ordinary concubines are better than her." Chu Qing gritted his teeth with determination and said. Chu Liuchen dominated their conversation. Chu Qing felt breathless under such intense pressure.

He shook his sleeves and covered the blue veins on his arms. He was afraid he would lose control and fight with Chu Liuchen.

He exhaled deeply. This was Chu Liuchen's territory, so he wouldn't and couldn't fight here. But this depressed feeling made him uncomfortable.

"Well, then, Grand Prince, please come out!" Chu Liuchen smiled languidly and stretched out his slender hand to pat him.

Chu Qing turned his head in a daze and saw Grand Prince coming out from behind the curtain. He was so fat that he could barely walk.

A eunuch brought over a large chair. Grand Prince sat down and rubbed his belly. It was tough for him to stagger here. So, when he had nothing to do, he was unwilling to go out and would rather lie at home.

In particular, when he was asked to go to the Imperial Palace, he knew there couldn't be a good thing.

"Commandery Prince Qing, someone from your mansion came to me with your visiting card. Then I was told to record Shao Jie'er as your consort." The aged Grand Prince did not explain much and went straight to the point. "But according to what you said just now, you don't know about this matter. In this case, who used your visiting card to deceive me?"

His visiting card was not something that anyone could get.

"Really?" Chu Qing was stunned. Subconsciously, he was on the alert.

"Yes, indeed. It happened the day before yesterday. Commandery Prince Qing, what's wrong with your mansion? Is it safe? Sometimes, someone was going to assassinate you. Sometimes, your mansion was haunted. Now, even your visiting card was stolen. Such a mistake about the visiting card might cause big trouble. Nothing serious happened because it was sent to me. But if it was sent to other mansions, others might doubt and criticize you!"

Grand Prince said with a grin and moved his legs to relax. He was so fat that he would feel miserable if he stayed put for a long time. The chair was not small, but he didn't think there was enough space for him because he could barely squeeze himself into it.

What would happen if it was sent to other mansions? If such a visiting card were lost, it would cause big trouble, especially during this sensitive period. All the mansions were very cautious for fear of causing serious trouble. Even the Emperor's sons had shut their doors and declined to see visitors, meticulous about everything. Therefore, shouldn't an unfavored nephew like him behave more appropriately?

Chu Qing's expression changed drastically. He stood up, bowed deeply to Grand Prince and Chu Liuchen, and said, "Grand Prince and Prince Chen, I'll find out the truth when I get back. I'll give you an explanation."

After that, he turned around and was about to leave.

"Wait a minute," Chu Liuchen drawled lazily, tapping gently on the table with his slender fingers. Then, he said with an extremely casual attitude, "Since Shao Jie'er is not your consort, please do me a favor. Whatever mistakes Shao Jie'er made, she is my wife's cousin. It would be great to let her live somewhere far away from the capital! What do you think about it?"

It sounded like a question, but Chu Qing gave him the suggestion in a very matter-of-fact way. His words sounded more like a notice to Chu Qing. Anyway, Shao Jie'er was merely a concubine with no status. It was indeed not a big deal for him. But Chu Qing felt very aggrieved as if he had been severely beaten. What was worse, with his head pressed down, he had to cheer for this brutal beating.

He felt depressed and tried to compose himself, his eyes gloomy and cold. After a while, he nodded to Chu Liuchen and said, "Okay, she is just a concubine. Nothing serious."

After that, he said goodbye to the two of them. This time, neither of them stopped him and watched him leave in a hurry.

With a handkerchief, the aged Grand Prince wiped the sweat off his forehead and smiled at Chu Liuchen. "Your highness, this matter is settled, right?"

"Thanks for the trouble, Grand Prince," Chu Liuchen said politely.

"Don't mention it. It's what I should do." Grand Prince felt uneasy and moved again. He did feel terrible even though he was on the chair. "If there's nothing else..."

"Grand Prince, there is no need for me to tell you how important the offspring of the royal family is. Am I right?" Chu Liuchen said. When his face suddenly darkened, traces of gloominess appeared on his gentle face. Under his piercing gaze, Grand Prince seemed targeted by a powerful savage prey. His hands trembled, and he hurriedly explained. "It's not my fault. People from the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion said so."

In his heart, Grand Prince cursed Chu Qing at full blast. He got involved in this matter for no reason. He didn't know why such a thing happened.

Commandery Prince Qing didn't manage his inner court well, but somehow, the trouble was brought upon Grand Prince's head.

“Do you think it has nothing to do with you? Then I’ll tell Uncle the Emperor the details when I meet him,” Chu Liuchen said coldly.

“Well... I... I was negligent to my work.” Grand Prince had to admit defeat to a junior. At this time, he hated Chu Qing even more.

Grand Prince had just wanted to live out the rest of his life as the director of the Imperial Clan. What was wrong with being an idle Prince with few desires? Without reason, he was involved in this matter.

“Grand Prince, you neglected more than once. Do you remember the matter about the former empress more than a decade ago?”

Grand Prince’s face changed dramatically.

Chapter 1265 Selected Secrets in the Palace

“I heard you have been the director of the Imperial Clan for many years, right? You have been in this position since the deceased emperor was still alive. You must have encountered a lot of things over the years. May I ask you something about the former Empress?” Chu Liuchen said with a gloomy and dark look, and his beautiful eyes seemed bottomless.

Grand Prince’s fat face turned deathly pale. His lips trembled, but he managed not to cry out in alarm.

After a long while, he finally found his voice. “What... What do you mean?”

“The deceased empress was poisoned when she was pregnant. I want to know about it. Could you please tell me the details, Grand Prince?” Chu Liuchen finally cracked a smile. His sullen face brightened up. However, this weird scene made Grand Prince even more terrified. Even the rolls of fat under his clothes began to tremble. He was quite scared when hearing anything about the former empress.

“I’ve checked it. Originally, the deceased emperor selected you to be the director of the Imperial Clan. But after Uncle the Emperor took the throne, many people opposed you taking the position. Then, the Empress repeatedly pleaded with my Uncle the Emperor and invited many Madams of the Imperial Clan to come over. Only then she kept your position as the director of the Imperial Clan. Am I right?”

Chu Liuchen continued, ignoring Grand Prince’s ashen face.

“Grand Prince, the Empress is indeed your understanding and appreciative patron! Also, I found out you were not merely the director of the Imperial Clan but also in charge of the Imperial Household Department long ago. You

handled all the daily affairs. But after Uncle the Emperor ascended the throne, you no longer managed the Imperial Household Department. My Imperial Grandmother's younger brother took it over."

Chu Liuchen said at a slack pace.

Grand Prince felt stifled as if someone had grabbed his neck. He tried to stretch his neck up again and again. But still, he could hardly breathe. Then, he eagerly seized the chair's armrest, intending to sit up straight. However, he slid down instead.

"Grand Prince, when did you become so close to the Empress? The Empress took such good care of you and even let you be the director of the Imperial Clan for so many years. Then, what have you done for her?" Chu Liuchen was all smiles. "After the former empress gave birth to me, they said I suffered from an inherent shortage and was born with the toxin inherited from my mother. But in fact..."

Speaking of this, Chu Liuchen paused again and looked at Grand Prince meaningfully.

"It's not me... not me. It has nothing to do with me." Grand Prince finally managed to say something. He braced his hands against the chair's armrests for support and panted heavily.

"Not you? Then was it the Empress?" Chu Liuchen asked in a gentle voice with a bit of coldness and indifference. Yet, Grand Prince could hear him clearly.

Grand Prince was so scared that he slipped off his chair and fell heavily to the ground.

He was very fat, so it didn't hurt much when he fell to the ground. He was now scared and flustered. Though he fell onto the ground, he didn't care if it hurt. He just shook his head subconsciously and said, "I... really don't know. I don't know anything."

"Do you want Uncle the Emperor to ask in person?" Chu Liuchen raised his eyebrows and asked meaningfully.

Grand Prince trembled all over and looked at Chu Liuchen in horror. Chu Liuchen didn't say these words casually.

"I don't know, Prince Chen. Back then... the Empress treated me well, but that was all. I didn't do anything," Grand Prince explained anxiously.

“But haven’t you ever suspected anything?” Chu Liuchen raised the corner of his mouth and said, “I found something interesting recently and wanted to tell you. But since you don’t want to hear it, I’ll share it with Uncle the Emperor.”

“Wh-what’s the matter?” Grand Prince gasped hard, like a fish thrown ashore.

“Something happened many years ago. Haven’t you ever suspected it? If I go to see Uncle the Emperor now, how long do you think you can remain in your current position?” Chu Liuchen said lazily. His words didn’t sound like a threat but more like a joke.

However, Grand Prince didn’t dare to take it as a joke. With difficulty, he pulled the chair, slowly got up, and sat back in it. Then, he picked up the teacup on the table and downed the tea. Looking straight at Chu Liuchen, he suppressed the fear in his heart and said, “Prince Chen, I didn’t know anything then. The Empress just asked me to accept a few people.”

The Imperial Household Department needed a lot of people. At that time, the Empress was still a Prince’s legal wife. It was not a big deal for her to send a few people over. The deceased emperor was in poor health and had no children. Many people speculated that his brother should ascend the throne after his death. Thus, his brother’s wife would be the future Empress.

Many people had the same idea. That was why Grand Prince readily agreed to accept the people she sent over.

When the former empress gave birth to the eldest legitimate son, the whole country celebrated it. However, it was said that the prince almost died when he was born. After that, people in the Palace frantically searched for those who plotted against the former empress. Only then did Grand Prince notice something seriously wrong, but those people had already left the Imperial Household Department.

Later, the current Empress sent someone to drop a hint to him — he was asked to cover up these people’s crimes. Grand Prince was in a great panic. He planned to reveal the Empress’s unusual movements if he was found out. Unexpectedly, not long after this investigation started, the deceased emperor fell seriously ill and had no time to deal with it. Then, he passed away, and the current Emperor ascended the throne. Finally, Grand Prince breathed a sigh of relief.

After that, the matter was left unsettled. Both the deceased emperor and the former Empress had died. Their son, Chu Liuchen, was sick and on the verge of death. Who would care about him? At that time, he was just the Emperor’s nephew, and his death would even benefit the Emperor.

As a result, this matter became Grand Prince's deep-hidden secret. For so many years, he never dared to talk much about this topic. He just wanted to be an idle Prince who cared about nothing but his position and title.

"Grand Prince, how about we talk about what happened that year?" Chu Liuchen was smiling, but Grand Prince couldn't. He held the armrests tightly to prevent himself from falling again.

"Chu Liuchen, will he be the one to win the final victory?"

Chu Qing stomped angrily back to his mansion and went straight to the Consort Dowager Qing's Buddha hall. The Buddha hall was not big but very quiet. Consort Dowager Qing sat cross-legged on a rush cushion and quietly knocked on the wooden fish with a peaceful look. It was hard to believe that the woman in such a scene harbored wild ambitions.

Hearing Chu Qing coming in, she slowly opened her eyes and looked at him with a frown. "What's wrong? Whatever happens, you should always stay calm and peaceful. Don't you remember?"

"Mother, is Shao Jie'er my consort?" Chu Qing sat down on a chair aside and growled.

"No!" Consort Dowager Qing shook her head. "Why would you think so? You know my attitude!"

She loathed Shao Jie'er. In the past, she could bear her for the sake of the Marquis Xing's Mansion, but now it was not necessary to endure her.

"Then why would someone go to record Shao Jie'er as my consort in the Grand Prince's Mansion with my visiting card?" Chu Qing questioned.

"What?" Consort Dowager Qing did not understand for a moment.

"Mother, did you do it? Tell me the truth honestly," Chu Qing asked impatiently.

Consort Dowager Qing slammed the wooden fish down, and her face instantly fell. She snapped, "How dare you talk to me like that? Are you here to vent your anger on me?"

"Mother, I didn't mean that!" Chu Qing was annoyed, but he had to explain.

"Then what do you mean? You questioned me right after you came in. Do you think I did it?" Consort Dowager Qing was annoyed.

"Mother, it's not like that. How could someone take my visiting card away? Isn't it with you? Why would Shao Jie'er be recorded as a consort? We agreed

we would keep her in our mansion at most,” Chu Qing said impatiently. He didn’t understand why this was happening.

Her mother didn’t say that. Then why would such a thing happen? Just now, he was stumped by the words from Grand Prince and Chu Liuchen and remained tongue-tied for a good while. The more he thought about it, the angrier he became.

“What do you mean? Say it clearly.” Consort Dowager Qing asked coldly.

Chu Qing took a deep breath and told her what had happened in the Palace. When he finished, he saw the anger on Consort Dowager Qing’s face.

“Mo Qiuyi had used your visiting card!”

“Wh-what?” Chu Qing was stunned.

“Yes, your fiancée, Mo Qiuyi.” Consort Dowager Qing sneered, “She performs her duties as the hostess even before marrying into our mansion. She directly made Shao Jie’er a consort. What was her purpose?”

“Mother... Did... did you make a mistake?” Chu Qing calmed down at this time and asked hesitantly.

“In your mind, I could do this. Then, why is it impossible for her to do this?” Consort Dowager Qing was so furious that she laughed. “I used to think that she was smart and sensible. Now, it turns out that she is overly thoughtful!”

Consort Dowager Qing didn’t stay in the Palace for a long time. But she successfully became the deceased emperor’s favorite consort in a short time. Later, she even gave birth to a son in the Yuhui Nunnery. She protected and raised him. How could an ordinary woman achieve all of this?

“Mother, is it really her?” Chu Qing asked uncertainly. He firmly believed Mo Qiuyi and sometimes trusted her more than his mother.

Of course, he never shared such a mystic and inexplicable feeling with anyone.

“Who else could it be? Great. She becomes overweeningly ambitious before she marries into our mansion,” Consort Dowager Qing reproached harshly with a stern look. Mo Qiuyi challenged her authority, which made her very annoyed. “You can go back now. I’ll deal with it.”

Consort Dowager Qing stood up.

“Mother, there may be something else we haven’t noticed. Qiuyi is not that kind of person,” Chu Qing said worriedly.

"I know what to do," Consort Dowager Qing replied coldly. Then she turned around and walked out of the door. Chu Qing followed her uneasily and finally stopped outside the Buddha hall.

"Why would Mo Qiuyi do that?" The matter about Shao Jie'er sounded not simple. Just now, he was so well pissed off that he had never reflected on this matter. Now he became uneasy. He took a deep breath and quickly followed behind. He was really worried about letting his mother take over the whole thing!

When Mo Qiuyi was called over, she saw Consort Dowager Qing sitting in the main seat with a gloomy face. Her heart skipped a beat, and she hurried forward to salute, "Greetings, Your Grace!"

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Chapter 1266 Going Back on His Word, Chu Qing Was Beaten up

"Tell me, why did you make Shao Jie'er as consort?" Consort Dowager Qing asked, and her face suddenly clouded over.

"Do you mean... the matter that she was recorded as a consort?" Mo Qiuyi asked and looked at Chu Qing uneasily. He was sitting aside with a gloomy face, but he looked concerned. Then she was relieved.

"Why would you make this decision you were not in a position to make?" Consort Dowager Qing said coldly.

"It was my fault, but I didn't mean to let Shao Jie'er become the consort." Mo Qiuyi had guessed it when she came over. With Chu Qing around, she was less nervous.

"What do you mean?" Chu Qing was also surprised to hear that.

"Don't worry. She hasn't officially completed the act of worship, so she can't be considered a real consort." Mo Qiuyi replied. "Although she hasn't officially become a consort, her status proof has been recorded. Besides, the Emperor has agreed to it. That means no one can let her escape without permission."

"Escape?" Consort Dowager Qing repeated the word because she didn't understand its meaning.

"Yes, she escaped. After returning to the mansion, Shao Jie'er and her Eldest Brother were driven out together. Princess Chen will go to see her. If Shao Jie'er disappears, Princess Chen must have helped her escape." Mo Qiuyi said softly with a smile.

"What's the use of it?" Chu Qing was still quite at a loss.

"Of course, it is useful. I heard Prince Chen treated Princess Chen very well. Because of her, your consort is missing. Then, she has to give you an explanation. Princess Chen may not offer any help, but Prince Chen will know they are in the wrong. When you confront him, Prince Chen will have to bow down to you," Mo Qiuyi said unhurriedly.

"Make Chu Liuchen give in to me?" Chu Qing thought it was a good idea and looked better. He pointed to the chair aside and motioned for Mo Qiuyi to sit down.

"Tell me more details." Consort Dowager Qing did not intend to let Mo Qiuyi go so easily.

"Your Grace, I only have myself to blame. I didn't tell you in advance. I planned to come over in the next two days and tell you about Shao Jie'er. Then you and His highness can send someone to investigate it. After finding out the truth, you can go to the Prince Chen's Mansion. They lose a consort of our mansion. It will be sensational news. If Prince Chen intends to protect Princess Chen, he must agree to your requests."

Mo Qiuyi said with a smile.

In fact, she had taken action long ago, but she suddenly bumped into Shao Wanru. After that, Shao Jie'er was missing, and Mo Qiuyi couldn't find her. Then she took action according to her plan. She had to find Shao Jie'er, kill her, and make a big deal out of it. Shao Wanru would find it hard to vindicate herself. Then it would be easier for her to frame Shao Wanru.

But she didn't expect that Shao Jie'er could not be found. What was worse, Consort Dowager Qing called her over here.

After the matter was done, Mo Qiuyi was not afraid of being questioned by Consort Dowager Qing. However, she felt a little guilty when Consort Dowager Qing summoned her to come here. Fortunately, she was eloquent. This plan had been put off until now, but she glossed over her error by mentioning the whole thing vaguely.

"What will Prince Chen promise Qing'er?" Consort Dowager Qing's face softened a little. Thinking for a while, she asked.

"His Majesty is ill, but His highness has never had the chance to visit him. However, Prince Chen can go in from time to time. Your highness, you don't have to ask for anything else. Just let Prince Chen take you in to meet the Emperor. This way, others would think you and Prince Chen are getting along well. And..."

Mo Qiuyi paused and looked around.

Although the people around them were their trusted subordinates, the fewer people knew about some things, the better.

Consort Dowager Qing understood and ordered the people on both sides, "You can leave now!"

These servant girls, old maids, and Chu Qing's servants waiting on them nearby retreated to the door together. There were only the three of them left in the room.

"Say it. What on earth do you want to do?" Consort Dowager Qing said coolly, deep eyes on Mo Qiuyi. This daughter-in-law was domineering, and it displeased her.

But now they had to ask Mo Qiuyi's family for help.

"Your Grace, the Emperor is seriously ill. Isn't it a good time for us to do something? If we stir up trouble, the Emperor may die of anger. It will be good for us. Your Highness has endured hardships for many years, and it's time for you to amaze the world with your first achievements. You can use Prince Chen to approach the Emperor and seize the chance to attack him. Then, try to shift the blame onto Prince Chen or other princes..."

Speaking of this, Mo Qiuyi became complacent.

"It is not easy to get close to the Emperor." Consort Dowager Qing pondered this plot for a while and shook her head. "And it will be too risky for Qing'er."

"Your Grace, no one can find out what His highness will do. He only needs to follow Prince Chen to visit His Majesty a few times." Mo Qiuyi took out a sachet from the pocket before her chest. "There are some medicinal materials mutually reinforcing and neutralizing each other. Your highness can wear it and stay near the Emperor as long as possible. Then, it will take effect."

Consort Dowager Qing was greatly startled and turned her head away for fear of being contaminated by evil things. "Since it's so dangerous, take it away right now."

"Your Grace, rest assured. It's not dangerous, and the things inside are not poisonous. There is more than one kind of thing that could react. Another kind is needed, which has been sent to the Emperor. When His highness wears this sachet to meet him, his condition will inevitably worsen," Mo Qiuyi said proudly.

Consort Dowager Qing turned around and frowned deeply. She looked at Mo Qiuyi and pursed her lips. After a long time, she asked, "Are you sure?"

"Of course. So, I want His highness to go with Prince Chen. Your Grace, please think about it. Prince Chen asks His highness to go there. If something happens to the Emperor, His highness will stay safe, no matter how thoroughly others investigate this matter. Prince Chen or any other Prince will take the blame for us. Anyway, no one can track us down."

Mo Qiuyi said implicitly.

"You have even planted some people in the Palace? Is there anyone serving the Emperor? Who is it?" Consort Dowager Qing lowered her voice and asked.

"Your Grace, please forgive me for not being able to tell you about this now. When His highness achieves what he wishes, you will know everything." Mo Qiuyi did not reveal the ins and outs of the matter.

Consort Dowager Qing stared at Mo Qiuyi coldly with an unpleasant look.

Chu Qing coughed in a low voice and said, "Mother, I think it's feasible."

Seeing her son believe Mo Qiuyi's words without hesitation, Consort Dowager Qing was pissed off. She raised her head and rebuked her son coldly, "Feasible? Are you serious? Prince Chen has come to you. How can you explain it? But now Chu Liuchen has brought trouble on you before you start scheming against him."

Thinking of this, Chu Qing felt very helpless. Chu Liuchen didn't seem to be willing to let it go.

"Qiuyi, what should we do now? Chu Liuchen has taken the initiative to provoke me and even came along with Grand Prince. Worse still, I have no idea about this. Shao Jie'er is not and will never be my consort." Chu Qing felt that this matter was difficult to deal with. Chu Liuchen was different from others — his ever-changing behaviors could never be predicted by common sense.

"There is no need to be afraid. You can even say you don't know anything about it. Her Grace is always there to support you, right? Just say Her Grace wanted to do it. Could Prince Chen object to it?" Mo Qiuyi kept her head and answered.

"So, are you going to let me take the blame?" Consort Dowager Qing snorted and became even more unhappy.

“Mother, now... It seems only you can help me out!” Chu Qing thought it over and felt this was a good idea. However, he feared Consort Dowager Qing would be angry. So, he said cautiously with a smile.

“I will take the blame. Then you will investigate the case of Shao Jie’er. If this issue gets out of hand, it will be my fault. Mo Qiuyi, let’s forget it!” Consort Dowager Qing was irritated by their decision. She had always been the one who took advantage of others. Much to her surprise, she would be used by a little girl one day, and she couldn’t refuse it.

“Your Grace, if you add fuel to the flame, His highness will profit from it.” Mo Qiuyi sheepishly reminded Consort Dowager Qing.

With her face darkening, Consort Dowager Qing stopped talking. It was indeed a workable plan very likely to succeed. Chu Qing showed up before the Emperor, who would soon face his doom. Because Consort Dowager Qing knew what would happen long ago, she could be resourceful enough to rise to the occasion in time. It would be easy for them to seize the throne.

“Mother, what do you think...” Knowing Consort Dowager Qing was angry, Chu Qing asked tentatively again, adding, “Mother, if you feel uncomfortable about this idea, then forget it. We’ve waited for so many years and can wait longer.”

“So many years of waiting?” Consort Dowager Qing felt suffocated in her heart. How could she wait any longer? She had been locked up in the Yuhui Nunnery for many days and nights, so she experienced hopelessness and despair. But the people with her repeatedly promised that she and her son would be fine. Besides, her son would be helped to ascend to the throne. Gradually, she accepted the reality.

Consort Dowager Qing had left the Yuhui Nunnery, but she could no longer bear such hard days.

“Okay, I’ll do as you say, but are you sure Prince Chen will suppress this matter?” Consort Dowager Qing gritted her teeth with determination. She had to do this even only for her son.

“If Prince Chen wants to protect Princess Chen, he must do this,” Mo Qiuyi said complacently with a trace of sarcasm across her eyes. So many years had slipped away, but Consort Dowager Qing never did anything really worthwhile. She was really timid and lacked courage. If it were her, she would not land herself in a passive position for so many years. Though she had a son of the deceased emperor, Consort Dowager Qing lived a miserable life. She was indeed useless.

That was what Mo Qiuyi thought, and she persuaded Consort Dowager Qing and Chu Qing. They all felt it was not a big deal. After a brief discussion, Mo Qiuyi stayed in the mansion. Chu Qing got himself ready and went to “confess” before Chu Liuchen in Prince Chen’s Mansion. He knew Chu Liuchen must have returned to his mansion at this time.

When he arrived at the gate of Prince Chen’s Mansion, the gatekeeper went in to report and soon invited him in with a smile.

Chu Qing followed a servant inside.

Chu Liuchen received Chu Qing on the second floor of his study.

Seeing Chu Qing come in, Xiao Xuanzi bowed to him with a smile and stepped back behind Chu Liuchen. On the large chair made of luxurious nanmu, Chu Liuchen looked at Chu Qing coldly and said, “You came back so fast? You and your people must have set up a trap. For my wife or me?”

He tapped his fingers gently on the table. Sunlight came in through the window and fell on his pretty face, leaving bizarre, mottled shadows.

Chu Qing’s heart wildly thumped twice. Never had he thought Chu Liuchen would be so blunt. He came straight to the point, tearing away the veil of false affection between them.

“I just learned about this matter too. It was my mother’s idea...” Chu Qing composed himself and answered primly as they had discussed.

“Commandery Prince Qing!” Chu Liuchen suddenly crooked his finger at Commandery Prince Qing.

Subconsciously, Chu Qing popped his head and looked over — Chu Liuchen was going to tell him some secrets. But the next moment, he was slapped hard in the face, and Chu Qing was immediately stunned...

Chapter 1266 Going Back on His Word, Chu Qing Was Beaten up

“Tell me, why did you make Shao Jie’er as consort?” Consort Dowager Qing asked, and her face suddenly clouded over.

“Do you mean... the matter that she was recorded as a consort?” Mo Qiuyi asked and looked at Chu Qing uneasily. He was sitting aside with a gloomy face, but he looked concerned. Then she was relieved.

“Why would you make this decision you were not in a position to make?” Consort Dowager Qing said coldly.

"It was my fault, but I didn't mean to let Shao Jie'er become the consort." Mo Qiuyi had guessed it when she came over. With Chu Qing around, she was less nervous.

"What do you mean?" Chu Qing was also surprised to hear that.

"Don't worry. She hasn't officially completed the act of worship, so she can't be considered a real consort." Mo Qiuyi replied. "Although she hasn't officially become a consort, her status proof has been recorded. Besides, the Emperor has agreed to it. That means no one can let her escape without permission."

"Escape?" Consort Dowager Qing repeated the word because she didn't understand its meaning.

"Yes, she escaped. After returning to the mansion, Shao Jie'er and her Eldest Brother were driven out together. Princess Chen will go to see her. If Shao Jie'er disappears, Princess Chen must have helped her escape." Mo Qiuyi said softly with a smile.

"What's the use of it?" Chu Qing was still quite at a loss.

"Of course, it is useful. I heard Prince Chen treated Princess Chen very well. Because of her, your consort is missing. Then, she has to give you an explanation. Princess Chen may not offer any help, but Prince Chen will know they are in the wrong. When you confront him, Prince Chen will have to bow down to you," Mo Qiuyi said unhurriedly.

"Make Chu Liuchen give in to me?" Chu Qing thought it was a good idea and looked better. He pointed to the chair aside and motioned for Mo Qiuyi to sit down.

"Tell me more details." Consort Dowager Qing did not intend to let Mo Qiuyi go so easily.

"Your Grace, I only have myself to blame. I didn't tell you in advance. I planned to come over in the next two days and tell you about Shao Jie'er. Then you and His highness can send someone to investigate it. After finding out the truth, you can go to the Prince Chen's Mansion. They lose a consort of our mansion. It will be sensational news. If Prince Chen intends to protect Princess Chen, he must agree to your requests."

Mo Qiuyi said with a smile.

In fact, she had taken action long ago, but she suddenly bumped into Shao Wanru. After that, Shao Jie'er was missing, and Mo Qiuyi couldn't find her. Then she took action according to her plan. She had to find Shao Jie'er, kill

her, and make a big deal out of it. Shao Wanru would find it hard to vindicate herself. Then it would be easier for her to frame Shao Wanru.

But she didn't expect that Shao Jie'er could not be found. What was worse, Consort Dowager Qing called her over here.

After the matter was done, Mo Qiuyi was not afraid of being questioned by Consort Dowager Qing. However, she felt a little guilty when Consort Dowager Qing summoned her to come here. Fortunately, she was eloquent. This plan had been put off until now, but she glossed over her error by mentioning the whole thing vaguely.

"What will Prince Chen promise Qing'er?" Consort Dowager Qing's face softened a little. Thinking for a while, she asked.

"His Majesty is ill, but His highness has never had the chance to visit him. However, Prince Chen can go in from time to time. Your highness, you don't have to ask for anything else. Just let Prince Chen take you in to meet the Emperor. This way, others would think you and Prince Chen are getting along well. And..."

Mo Qiuyi paused and looked around.

Although the people around them were their trusted subordinates, the fewer people knew about some things, the better.

Consort Dowager Qing understood and ordered the people on both sides, "You can leave now!"

These servant girls, old maids, and Chu Qing's servants waiting on them nearby retreated to the door together. There were only the three of them left in the room.

"Say it. What on earth do you want to do?" Consort Dowager Qing said coolly, deep eyes on Mo Qiuyi. This daughter-in-law was domineering, and it displeased her.

But now they had to ask Mo Qiuyi's family for help.

"Your Grace, the Emperor is seriously ill. Isn't it a good time for us to do something? If we stir up trouble, the Emperor may die of anger. It will be good for us. Your Highness has endured hardships for many years, and it's time for you to amaze the world with your first achievements. You can use Prince Chen to approach the Emperor and seize the chance to attack him. Then, try to shift the blame onto Prince Chen or other princes..."

Speaking of this, Mo Qiuyi became complacent.

"It is not easy to get close to the Emperor." Consort Dowager Qing pondered this plot for a while and shook her head. "And it will be too risky for Qing'er."

"Your Grace, no one can find out what His highness will do. He only needs to follow Prince Chen to visit His Majesty a few times." Mo Qiuyi took out a sachet from the pocket before her chest. "There are some medicinal materials mutually reinforcing and neutralizing each other. Your highness can wear it and stay near the Emperor as long as possible. Then, it will take effect."

Consort Dowager Qing was greatly startled and turned her head away for fear of being contaminated by evil things. "Since it's so dangerous, take it away right now."

"Your Grace, rest assured. It's not dangerous, and the things inside are not poisonous. There is more than one kind of thing that could react. Another kind is needed, which has been sent to the Emperor. When His highness wears this sachet to meet him, his condition will inevitably worsen," Mo Qiuyi said proudly.

Consort Dowager Qing turned around and frowned deeply. She looked at Mo Qiuyi and pursed her lips. After a long time, she asked, "Are you sure?"

"Of course. So, I want His highness to go with Prince Chen. Your Grace, please think about it. Prince Chen asks His highness to go there. If something happens to the Emperor, His highness will stay safe, no matter how thoroughly others investigate this matter. Prince Chen or any other Prince will take the blame for us. Anyway, no one can track us down."

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Chapter 1267 Whose Son Are You?

“Chu Qing, don’t you think you overestimate yourself? How dare you plot against my wife?” Chu Liuchen withdrew his hand and slowly took the handkerchief from Xiao Xuanzi, his penetrating eyes deep and cold.

“Chu Liuchen, what do you mean?” Chu Qing gritted his teeth, and the blue veins on his forehead stood out. Suddenly, he stood up and clenched his fists in a growl.

He feared that he would ultimately become out of control and give Chu Liuchen two punches. He would be in serious trouble if he injured the invalid’s frail body.

“Chu Qing, what do you think will happen if I kill you?” Chu Liuchen narrowed his eyes and curled his mouth corners with sarcasm.

“How dare you!” Chu Qing snarled.

“Why don’t I dare to do that? Are you Uncle the Emperor’s son? Or do you think Imperial Grandmother values you?” Chu Liuchen mercilessly destroyed Chu Qing’s confidence. “You believe you can get everything you want as the deceased emperor’s son. How could you be so foolish to believe that? It may be inconvenient for my Uncle the Emperor to deal with you, but I don’t care. I am also the deceased emperor’s son. Moreover, I am his eldest legitimate son, but you... are a consort’s son of unknown origin.”

“Nonsense. We are both the deceased emperor’s sons. What right do you have to humiliate me?” Chu Qing was unable to restrain his anger.

“The sons of the deceased emperor?” Chu Liuchen slightly narrowed his eyes. This made his eyes appear even more chilling with intense killing intent.

Two guards suddenly appeared at the door. They were dressed in black armored suits, eying Chu Qing as if he were dead.

“What... what do you want to do?” Chu Qing was so scared that he took two steps back, and his face immediately turned pale. He had thought that Chu Liuchen was trying to frighten him. But now, he didn’t dare to go against him. The murderous look in Chu Liuchen’s eyes was apparent. “Don’t mess

around, Chu Liuchen. I am your younger brother, your biological younger brother. We both are the deceased emperor's descendants. If... if I'm put to death, even the Emperor will find it hard to explain my death to the world."

"It can't be hard for Uncle the Emperor to face the world. Instead, he will be happy to see us fight fiercely against each other. After your death, I will have to take the blame. He won't be in a difficult situation at all. I'm in poor health anyway. Uncle the Emperor and Imperial Grandmother have been very good to me. I can repay their kindness to me with it. Besides, they would take good care of my wife after I die."

Chu Liuchen flashed him a smile. In Chu Qing's eyes, only a crazy man would smile in such a situation.

Chu Qing was scared, absolutely terrified. He trembled and stepped back, hiding behind the chair. He took a deep breath and suppressed the shock in his heart. "Eldest Brother, let's... talk without heat. We are blood-related brothers. How can we cause death to each other? Our father... he will criticize us and turn in his grave... This... this is an unbearable unfilial act."

"Father? How long has the deceased emperor been dead? I have lived long enough and have no intention of living. You happen to provoke me today and even dare to plot against my wife. Then, don't blame me for being rude." Chu Liuchen stood up with a smile and took a step forward.

Chu Qing took a step backward and almost fell into a panic. "Eldest Brother, don't be like this. We are brothers. How could I plot against you? There must be a mistake."

Chu Qing was about to cry. He didn't expect Chu Liuchen to have gone entirely mad. He was indeed crazy. He had just started taking advantage of Princess Chen, and Chu Liuchen was out of his mind. If he had known that Chu Liuchen cared so much about Princess Chen, Chu Qing would have provoked Chu Liuchen foolishly.

"It doesn't matter. I kill you, but maybe Uncle the Emperor and Imperial Grandmother will leave the case unsettled. After all, they have experienced many difficulties raising me for so many years," Chu Liuchen said with an increasingly gentle smile.

Chu Qing was scared. He had never been so angry with Mo Qiuyi. What kind of idea did she offer? It even drove Chu Liuchen crazy! At this moment, he didn't want to think about anything. He only wanted to leave as soon as possible and never come to Prince Chen's Mansion again.

While maintaining vigilance against Chu Liuchen, Chu Qing stepped back to the door, not daring to stimulate Chu Liuchen significantly. “Eldest Brother, I’m wrong. It’s my fault. I’ll go back and slap that bitch twice. How audacious was she to frame up Princess Chen? I was not very strict with her. Eldest Brother, we are connected by blood. Are you really going to hurt me?”

“Connected by blood? Are you sure?” Chu Liuchen suddenly stopped and squinted at Chu Qing.

It looked like the gaze of death. Chu Qing’s heart trembled again, and he said subconsciously, “Eldest Brother, Prince Chen, I am your brother for real...”

“No, you are not!” Chu Liuchen smiled, but this time his smile was gloomy. “Ask your mother: whose son you are...”

“Okay... okay. I’ll ask her right now.” No matter what Chu Liuchen said, Chu Qing did not dare to disobey him now. Everything he said was right. He retreated to the door while answering, but the two guards just looked at him coldly. They would not take action without Chu Liuchen’s instructions. Chu Qing was instantly relieved at this thought.

As soon as he retreated to the door, he lifted his long robe, turned around, and strode downstairs. When he ran downstairs and saw his servant standing there, he held the pillar and gasped for breath as if he had escaped from death.

“Your highness, you... what’s wrong with you?” The servant ran over to help him up in a hurry and asked anxiously. His master had been very calm when he went upstairs. But now, he looked so scared that his face looked ghastly pale. His clothes were in a mess after such a short time.

He didn’t seem to see Prince Chen. Instead, he was in a mess as if being robbed.

Chu Qing gasped aloud and looked up, only to meet a pair of icy eyes. The handsome eyes seemed fathomless because of the ruthless and dark look. They looked like two bottomless pools. Seeing that Chu Qing was looking at him, Chu Liuchen smiled. Such a smile looked a little gentle and graceful in the sun.

However, Chu Qing’s legs almost went limp because of such a smile. He pushed the servant away and staggered out. He didn’t dare to stay here any longer for fear that Chu Liuchen would kill him regardless of the consequences.

If Chu Liuchen took his life away, Chu Qing didn't know if the Emperor would punish him. But the Emperor and the Empress Dowager doted on Chu Liuchen. Knowing this, Chu Qing felt they would not punish Chu Liuchen even if he killed him.

Chu Liuchen leaned lazily against the building railings and watched Chu Qing fleeing in a panic, revealing a noble and complacent smile. The man with crazy killing intent before Chu Qing had long disappeared.

With a wave of his hand, the two guards left.

Xiao Xuanzi came over with a broad smile and said, "Your highness, Commandery Prince Qing is half dead with fright."

From a distance, they could see Chu Qing running out desperately. One after another, servants in the mansion stepped aside to avoid him. Watching Chu Qing run away wildly, they were stunned. "What's wrong with Commandery Prince Qing? Why does he look so scared?"

"Where is Princess Chen?" Chu Liuchen asked idly.

"Her Highness is making clothes, saying she wants to make a set for you," said Xiao Xuanzi.

Chu Liuchen pulled his sleeves and extended his hands to let Xiao Xuanzi have a look. "Sleeves of my many clothes are short. I seem to have grown much taller."

After saying that, he got up lazily and walked into the study.

Xiao Xuanzi blinked his eyes and finally understood after thinking for a while. Immediately, he said, "Master, I'll report this to Her Highness and set her heart at rest. Princess Chen will make a lot of clothes for you."

His master had not grown taller at all. He had just heard that Princess Chen was making clothes and wanted her to make a few more sets for him. However, his master was unwilling to say it. As his personal eunuch, it was his duty to see Princess Chen and let her know.

"Go ahead!" Chu Liuchen's indifferent voice came from the study.

Xiao Xuanzi was secretly happy. "My master is like this. Well, he has put on several countenances in such a short time." He ran away swiftly to the inner court.

Shao Wanru was indeed making clothes for Chu Liuchen. A set of royal blue clothes had not yet finished. After hearing Xiao Xuanzi's report, she couldn't help smiling lightly. Mo Qiuyi got some dirty tricks up her sleeve: she wanted

to hype up the issue about Shao Jie'er. But unlucky for her, Shao Wanru was never vulnerable, though she was reluctant to confront Mo Qiuyi.

But since she couldn't avoid coming into conflict with Mo Qiuyi, she might as well confront her.

Mo Qiuyi was not easy to deal with, nor was Princess Yuyan.

"Xiao Xuanzi, I heard Princess Yuyan went to the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion?"

"Yes, she did. She had a good talk with Consort Dowager Qing. The Miss of Mo's Mansion also went there, but they didn't meet each other." Xiao Xuanzi knew what Shao Wanru meant. These things were confidential. But his master had asked him to say anything Princess Chen wanted to learn about.

"Can you find a way to let Princess Yuyan go there again?" Shao Wanru raised her eyebrows and said. Mo Qiuyi thought it was easy to become the legal wife of Commandery Prince Qing. Then, she decided to find something for her to do.

Mo Qiuyi seemed to be the key to many things, and so did Princess Yuyan. Shao Wanru was curious: which one of them would win at last? They were answers to many things. Who would have thought that? The key to some issues was not the few Princes but the two seemingly inconspicuous women.

"I know." Xiao Xuanzi nodded with a smile and secretly mourned for the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. How could anyone offend Princess Chen and Prince Chen without paying a heavy price...

Chu Qing fled to his home in a panic. Returning to the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, he rushed to the inner court in a rage. At this moment, Consort Dowager Qing and Mo Qiuyi were still waiting for his good news. Seeing him coming in, Mo Qiuyi came forward and greeted him before the others. She asked in a sweet voice, "Your highness, you're back. What happened? Did Prince Chen say anything?"

In Mo Qiuyi's mind, it was not a big deal.

"Now look what you've done!!" Chu Qing was angry and ashamed, burning with rage. When he saw Mo Qiuyi, he was even angrier. When he ran out of Prince Chen's Mansion, the servants there looked at him as if he were a fool. Thinking that Chu Liuchen almost killed him, he could no longer be as good-tempered as before. As such, he violently pushed her back!

Mo Qiuyi was violently pushed onto the door frame. She covered the back of her head in great pain and almost couldn't speak. Her face became ashen, and she looked like she was about to faint.

"What's the matter? Can't you talk nicely?" Consort Dowager Qing said, and her face fell. Her innermost hatred toward Mo Qiuyi was one thing, and Chu Qing pushing Mo Qiuyi before her was quite another. Consort Dowager Qing was keen to get the force behind Mo Qiuyi. Thus, how could she let him do that?

No matter how much she disliked Mo Qiuyi, she had to keep the feeling in her heart.

"Mother, it's all her fault. I almost couldn't come back!" Chu Qing came to his senses at this time. Instead of going forward to push Mo Qiuyi, he pointed at her and snarled, "Mother, do you know what happened to me? It's all because of her!"

Chapter 1268 Weddings, Each Livelier Than Another

"What's wrong? Talk things over calmly." Consort Dowager Qing looked rather displeased.

Chu Qing was scared. Along the way, many people had seen him in such a mess, and he was quite beside himself with anger. However, her mother's reproachful glare sobered him up a little. After a deep breath, he coldly told Mo Qiuyi, "If you don't think your plan through, don't make any reckless moves. You almost got me killed."

After that, he wildly swung his sleeves and strode away. He had got into this unholy mess. How could he be in the mood to talk about the matter in detail?

Mo Qiuyi was scolded for no reason right before Consort Dowager Qing. She felt ashamed and wronged for a moment, and her tears fell immediately.

Chu Qing had always been obedient to her. Never had he treated her rudely like this!

"Well, I know you feel aggrieved. When Qing'er returns, I'll ask him to apologize to you," Consort Dowager Qing gently comforted her. Although she didn't know why Chu Qing lost his temper, she was not angry with him for losing his temper at Mo Qiuyi. If her son was always good-tempered and under the control of a woman, she would hold him in contempt.

"Consort Dowager Qing... I was wrong. I'm afraid my plan was not good enough. Because of it... His highness suffered." Mo Qiuyi said, wiping her tears.

Chu Qing had just returned from Prince Chen's Mansion. Since he came back in such a sorry plight, it was apparent that things did not go well. In this case, she would never let Chu Qing apologize.

"It's best if you can think in this way. You will soon marry into the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. You two should live together with one heart. If a couple unites as one, their strength is powerful enough to cut metal. When I am old, I'm glad you can accompany Qing'er." Consort Dowager Qing said with great relief and a kind look.

At this time, no matter how aggrieved Mo Qiuyi was, she gradually managed to reveal a smile. She must please Consort Dowager Qing. In the past, she did not think it was necessary. After all, her strength was not negligible. Her family had contributed a lot to helping Consort Dowager Qing bring up Chu Qing in the Yuhui Nunnery. Because of this, Consort Dowager Qing and Chu Qing owed her gratitude and respect.

Unfortunately, since Princess Yuyan showed up, Mo Qiuyi had to adopt a lower profile. With Princess Yuyan in mind, Mo Qiuyi flared up into a fury. What right did such a woman have to pick her fruits?

Unexpectedly, they then had a peaceful time. Prince Yue, Prince Zhou, and Commandery Prince Qing married, respectively.

The three Princes got married almost at the same time. Though all their weddings were grand, Prince Yue's wedding looked relatively normal. Prince Zhou and Commandery Prince Qing each had a sensational wedding with distinctive features.

Prince Zhou married his legal wife and consort at the same time. Several bridal sedan chairs entered his mansion simultaneously. Because so many brides married into his mansion together, Prince Zhou did not go to welcome Infanta Yuan'an in person. He just waited for the bridal sedan chairs of his brides at his mansion. One after another, his women got out of their bridal sedan chairs. Crowded by these graceful women with slender figures, Prince Zhou completed the formal wedding ceremony.

All the onlookers enjoyed the bustling scene, but Infanta Yuan'an was so angry that her face under the red veil was always livid. She couldn't help crumpling her handkerchief into a ball.

If the other women didn't marry Prince Zhou with his legal wife, how could they qualify for a grand wedding ceremony with him? Besides, Prince Zhou might not come to her place today. Since Prince Zhou had been cold to her during this period, Infanta Yuan'an didn't have much confidence in herself.

Angry and hateful, she was on the verge of violently slapping the other women beside her.

But she had to swallow the insult, no matter how reluctant she felt. Before getting on the bridal sedan chair, Ruiping Great Elder Princess repeatedly told her that today's wedding was her last obstacle. Surmounting it, she would become Princess Zhou. No matter how many women Prince Zhou had in Prince Zhou's Mansion, she had the highest status.

If Prince Zhou became the Emperor, she would be the Empress. In the future or now, she had to accept the reality — she could never be the only woman with Prince Zhou.

Anyway, she could bear it...

When she sat on the edge of the bridal bed, she could hear teasing remarks. Of course, even Ruiping Great Elder Princess had some enemies. People with sharp tongues in the clan deliberately pierced her heart at this time.

Everyone could see that Infanta Yuan'an almost couldn't bear it anymore. At that time, Shao Wanru was also in the bridal chamber. She just sat aside silently and watched Infanta Yuan'an's embarrassed look indifferently.

She ranked as many people's junior in the clan but had a distinguished status. It was widely known that Prince Chen was the darling of the Emperor and the Empress Dowager. At present, the Emperor was seriously ill, but he still doted on Prince Chen. There were even rumors that Prince Chen would be the crown prince.

Of course, rumors couldn't be taken seriously. Prince Yue, Prince Zhou, and even Commandery Prince Qing were said to stand a chance. But no matter what, every one of them might get the position before the final result was announced. In this case, people wouldn't offend any of these candidates.

Commandery Prince Qing's wedding also caused a stir. It was mainly because the Xu State princess married into the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion together with the Miss from the Mo family. Miss Mo was just an orphan, but the other bride was a Princess of the Xu State. As a result, the latter enjoyed much greater treatment and more splendor parade on the way to the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. When the princess and Miss Mo were placed alongside, Princess Yuyan threw her into the shade. During the wedding, she seemed to be the legal wife instead of Miss Mo.

In the end, when they came in through the door, Princess Yuyan was said to have domineeringly pulled Commandery Prince Qing forward and left Miss Mo

behind. Did this mean Princess Yuyan would become Commandery Prince Qing's legal wife?

This view made sense. After all, it was right and proper for Princess Yuyan, a princess of a country, to be the legal wife. Upon arrival, many guests first praised Princess Yuyan's striking appearance. They uttered sighs of admiration unceasingly when Princess Yuyan married into the mansion, saying she and Chu Qing were a perfect match of remarkable talent and good looks. No one took notice of Miss Mo next to them!

Miss Mo had no parents. Besides, her only uncle was Wei Dahai, merely a moderate-ranking official. Few guests of the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion paid attention to him. Even if some people talked to him, they did it for the sake of Commandery Prince Qing.

Therefore, like Infanta Yuan'an, Mo Qiuyi was also sent to the bridal chamber with a livid face.

After Chu Qing reprimanded her that day, she had never seen him for a long time. Even when she visited him, Chu Qing refused to see her, saying she shouldn't meet him often before their upcoming wedding.

However, Mo Qiuyi felt even more aggrieved when hearing that Consort Dowager Qing and Chu Qing personally received Princess Yuyan when she came to the mansion. They often invited her to dinner. Both Princess Yuyan and Mo Qiuyi were going to marry into the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, but there was a world of difference in their treatment.

Mo Qiuyi was also very annoyed and told Wei Dahai's Madam to ask for an explanation from them. However, they said Mo Qiuyi's idea that day almost killed Commandery Prince Qing. How could Commandery Prince Qing not be mad at her? It was perfectly understandable that he didn't want to see her in these few days.

Nevertheless, Consort Dowager Qing also made a reassuring promise to Wei Dahai's Madam. Mo Qiuyi and Chu Qing had been childhood sweethearts. Even if such an unpleasant thing happened, Chu Qing would soon cool down. Consort Dowager Qing let Mo Qiuyi prepare for her wedding in peace. When she married into the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, she could take her time to explain to him, and everything would be fine.

Mo Qiuyi had no choice but to wait. To her dismay, she was publicly humiliated on her wedding day.

Then, an unexpected change enraged her even more. The bridal chamber Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion had prepared for her was given to

Princess Yuyan. The one she was going to enter was supposed to be Princess Yuyan's, which was perfunctorily set up by the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion.

When Mo Qiuyi was sent to her bridal chamber, her servant girl told the situation to her. A vicious look emerged on Mo Qiuyi's face under the red bridal veil. By gasping for air, she finally managed to calm herself down.

Before she was sent here, Wei Dahai's Madam, Madam Ouyang, repeatedly told her not to lose the greater for the less. Lack of forbearance in small matters upsets great plans. More importantly, she reassured her they would never let her suffer losses.

When they were performing the formal wedding ceremony outside, Chu Qing and Consort Dowager Qing did not say Princess Yuyan would be the legal wife. Otherwise, Mo Qiuyi felt that she could not bear it.

However, Chu Qing did not say she would be the legal wife either. Thinking of this, Mo Qiuyi felt quite resentful. She could hardly smother her annoyance. They had agreed that she would marry Chu Qing as his legal wife and Princess Yuyan as the secondary legal wife. But why didn't they say anything about it even until now?

Shao Wanru also finished watching Commandery Prince Qing's wedding quietly and peacefully. Then she returned home leisurely with Chu Liuchen. She was not close to none of these mansions and attended their weddings merely as a mere formality.

After the three princes married one after another, it came Shao Wanru's coming-of-age ceremony.

Chu Liuchen had specially prepared it for her. Women were considered to have come of age at 15. It was considered the best part of their lives. Many people came to watch the ceremony. The well-dressed girl wearing a gradient light green dress decorated with plum blossoms appeared. As she slowly stepped into the hall, everyone there was amazed.

They knew long ago that Princess Chen was exceedingly beautiful and pretty as a picture. But when seeing her, they were still startled by her unimaginable beauty. She was endowed with very delicate and glamorous facial features. Under her long and curling eyelashes, her eyes were as limpid as water. Then, there was her well-shaped nose and tender lips. As she slightly turned her eyes, Princess Chen naturally exuded authentic charm. Her lips were bright red without any makeup. Against the red plum blossoms at her dress

corners, she looked like a gorgeous plum blossom proudly blooming on the branch.

The plum blossoms were regarded as the promise of the arrival of spring.

Even though the hall was packed with women, most were stunned by her peerless beauty.

Zhang Qilan calmly pulled her dress, seemingly in peace. However, she lowered her head to hide the gloomy look in her eyes after a glance at Shao Wanru.

She was wearing a bright red dress today. It hadn't been long since her wedding, so it was not strange for her to wear such clothes and dress like a bride. Unlike before, she wore a lot of jewelry this time. She looked bright-colored and beautiful. These pieces of jewelry made her eye-catching. In the past, she was simple and unadorned. But now she looked as gorgeous as a full-blown peony renowned as the queen of flowers.

Since she had newly married Prince Yue, it was normal for her to dress up so gorgeously.

It was just that her face was not dazzling. She looked delicate, but this layer of glittering clothes and accessories outshone her. As such, she even appeared less attractive than usual. People at a distance only noticed her splendid clothes and jewels instead of her face.

It was improper for her to dress like this when attending someone else's coming-of-age ceremony. After all, Shao Wanru was supposed to be the focus of attention today. The other guests were tastefully dressed in a simple style to highlight Shao Wanru, the central figure today. They knew they shouldn't steal her limelight.

However, although Shao Wanru was not dressed as gorgeously as Zhang Qilan, she was much more outstanding than her. Therefore, Shao Wanru grabbed everyone's attention as soon as she arrived. Things went contrary to Zhang Qilan's wishes. Slowly, she lowered her head. No one could see her face, but how could she look well?

"Such a long dress doesn't look good!" Someone beside Zhang Qilan said and pulled her sleeve.

Zhang Qilan turned her head and looked at Princess Yuyan with deep eyes.

"What? Don't you think it's ugly?" Princess Yuyan said with a grin, still pulling her sleeve rudely. It made Zhang Qilan very uncomfortable. She gently shook her sleeve but failed to shake Princess Yuyan's hand off. Seeing Princess

Yuyan approach her again, she had to swing her arm violently. “Ah!” Princess Yuyan let out a scream and almost fell off the chair.

It was quite a stir, and they attracted everyone’s attention...

Chapter 1269 Irrational Jealousy

“Princess Yue, what are you doing?” Princess Yuyan immediately looked sullen and looked at Zhang Qilan unkindly.

Zhang Qilan was stunned. Soon, she stood up and bowed sideways to Princess Yuyan. “I accidentally touched you. I’m really sorry.”

“Why are you so touchy?” Princess Yuyan stopped arguing and muttered to herself. Her words were not harsh, but everyone was looking at them. Their behavior was indeed suspicious.

Especially when hearing her last sentence, people couldn’t help but think of many things.

“Princess Yue made such a scene because she disliked Princess Chen, right?”

“But I heard Princess Yue had a good relationship with Princess Chen before she married?” Many clan relatives present looked at Zhang Qilan and Princess Yuyan thoughtfully.

Zhang Qilan blushed, though she had tried to look calm. Deep down, she felt resentful and regretful. Obviously, Princess Yuyan caused this trouble to take revenge on her.

“Princess Yue, please sit down and watch the ceremony first!” Princess Yuyan suddenly became well-behaved after muttering these words. Smiling, she reached out and pulled Zhang Qilan to sit with her. Meanwhile, she comforted Zhang Qilan softly, “I have never seen such a beautiful ceremony. You never witnessed such an impressive coming-of-age ceremony either, right? Does it make you think of yours?”

Zhang Qilan sat down and smiled. “It’s indeed appealing!”

Surprisingly, she suddenly became calm, as if nothing had happened. She even watched Shao Wanru enter the hall with a smile.

When they quieted down, everyone’s attention fell back on Shao Wanru again — she was the center of her coming-of-age ceremony today.

Princess Yuyan squinted at Zhang Qilan and curled her lips secretly. “She is burning with jealousy but pretends she doesn’t care. No one would believe it!”

Today, Rui'an Great Elder Princess hosted the coming-of-age ceremony for Shao Wanru. She gave a courteous and peaceful speech to the female guests present. When Rui'an Great Elder Princess finished speaking, her eyes turned red.

The host today should be Shao Wanru's Mother. It was a pity that her Mother couldn't make it. The only elder that Shao Wanru could rely on was Rui'an Great Elder Princess. Thinking of her daughter's broken family, Rui'an Great Elder Princess felt sadness welling up in her heart.

The principal guest was a Princess of the royal family, while Qin Yiyan served as the master of ceremonies.

A girl will tie her hair in a bun with a hair clasp at the age of 15 to show that she has come of age. As a part of this ceremony, Qin Yiyan adjusted Shao Wanru's hairpin to a perfect position. Then, Shao Wanru retreated to change her clothes. She took off her previous dress in different shades of light green and wore a long piece of lilac gauze. Inside there was an eight-sided silk skirt in pinkish-white like a lotus. Every step she took seemed to have made a lotus flower grow. The scene amazed all the women.

Shao Wanru was good-looking, and so were her clothes.

Some people had already inquired about her clothes. They all had the same idea when they heard they were from Princess Chen's Butterfly Clothing Shop. Who didn't want to buy a few sets of such exquisite clothes?

After the final salute, the ceremony was completed, and all the female guests came up to congratulate Princess Chen. Everyone knew it: though Princess Chen had married Prince Chen early, she was the youngest legal wife among the wives of the few Princes.

Infanta Yuan'an and Princess Yuyan got together again. They looked very intimate, talking and laughing as if nothing unusual had happened.

But Zhang Qilan was in a state of preoccupation. She stood aside with her eyes on Shao Wanru. Just like her, Shao Wanru had also married a Prince. However, Shao Wanru still looked dainty and feminine as a young girl. In contrast, she had matured a lot though she had only been married for a few days. Sadly, she did not want to become mature.

No one wanted to become mature overnight, but she had no other choices. She was Prince Yue's legal wife but not the only woman of her husband in the mansion. But Shao Wanru was the only one in Prince Chen's Mansion.

"Princess Yue," Mo Qiuyi smiled and walked up to Zhang Qilan.

“Princess Mo!” Zhang Qilan said with a faint smile.

The competition between Mo Qiuyi and Princess Yuyan for the position of the legal wife hadn’t yet ended. Therefore, Mo Qiuyi was temporarily addressed as Princess Mo. As for Princess Yuyan, others still called her the same way.

Zhang Qilan didn’t feel like starting a conversation with Mo Qiuyi. In the past, she looked down upon those women like Mo Qiuyi. Now, Mo Qiuyi had married Chu Qing and became the most inconspicuous one. Nevertheless, Zhang Qilan, fatigued both mentally and physically, didn’t have much effort to chat with her.

After the brief greeting, Zhang Qilan turned around to leave.

“Princess Yue, do you know why Princess Yuyan is hostile to you?” Mo Qiuyi succeeded in stopping Zhang Qilan from walking away.

Not far away, Princess Yuyan was talking with Infanta Yuan’an. Looking at her, Zhang Qilan asked lightly, “What do you mean by that?”

“Nothing serious. I just don’t like Princess Yuyan.” Mo Qiuyi took a step forward and got closer to Zhang Qilan. Then, she lowered her voice and said without reservation.

She and Princess Yuyan married Chu Qing with ambiguous status. Princess Yuyan always had the edge over Mo Qiuyi, whether in or outside the mansion. Thus, it was inevitable that the two of them couldn’t get along well.

“But Princess Mo, don’t you think it has nothing to do with me?” Zhang Qilan asked.

“Of course not. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Am I right?” Mo Qiuyi said with a grin.

Zhang Qilan looked steadily at her in disapproval and smiled faintly with irony. “Princess Yuyan is your enemy, but it seemingly has little to do with me!”

Mo Qiuyi smiled again. “You’re wrong. The truth is that Princess Yuyan’s biggest enemy is not me but you.”

“Why?” Zhang Qilan frowned.

“Because of a man, of course.” Mo Qiuyi’s voice had sunk to a conspiratorial whisper. In others’ eyes, they looked very close to each other.

Zhang Qilan smiled sarcastically and decided to stop the meaningless talk with Mo Qiuyi. She turned around and was about to leave.

Behind her, Mo Qiuyi's said in a gloomy voice, "Princess Yuyan likes Prince Yue the most. Don't you know that? You married Prince Yue. In her eyes, you took away her favorite man."

So, that was why Princess Yuyan would frame her regardless of the occasion. Like the last incident, she was even involved in it. Zhang Qilan didn't think it strange when she never thought about it, but on second thought, she found it was true.

Zhang Qilan slowly stopped.

Seeing that, Mo Qiuyi knew her words worked. Thus, she added in time, "Believe me. Maybe it is not just Princess Yuyan's unrequited love. I think Prince Yue must have had the same feeling for her. You will know it when you go back and sound him out. I also heard that because of Prince Yue, Princess Yuyan is gorgeously dressed like a peony, the queen of flowers."

"If you talk nonsense again, I'll report it to the Empress Dowager." Zhang Qilan said coldly, and her eyes turned sharp.

Mo Qiuyi took a step back. Smiling awkwardly, she squinted at Prince Yue out of the corner of her eye and said, "Just drop the matter if you don't believe me."

Then, she turned around and left even before Zhang Qilan walked away.

They didn't talk long and separated after exchanging a few words. Therefore, they were not as eye-catching and intimate as Princess Yuyan and Infanta Yuan'an.

Unlike in the past, Mo Qiuyi's status was high enough now. Undoubtedly, some royal family members would come to butter her up. At the very least, her husband, Commandery Prince Qing, was the deceased emperor's son and the Emperor's nephew. Compared with those very distant relatives of the royal family, he had an authentic noble status.

There were also lots of people trying to make a connection with Zhang Qilan. Prince Yue was the most likely to inherit the throne in many people's hearts. In this case, Zhang Qilan would become the future Empress and sit up high in a leading position in this country. They had better take this chance to flatter her. After all, they might not even meet her when she achieved her greatest ambition.

Many people had this idea. Unsurprisingly that some people stopped Zhang Qilan and tried to spend more time with her. However, she looked a little pale, and her servant girl had to reach out to support her.

Seeing how fragile she appeared, these people who came up to have “a little talk” with her dared to surround her any longer. Zhang Qilan excused herself and went to a place with fewer people. At this time, no one came to disturb her.

Prince Yue stood a chance of winning the throne. Then, it was the same with Prince Zhou. Infanta Yuan'an was one of them, so it was more convenient for them to get in touch with her.

As a result, more and more people gathered around Infanta Yuan'an to talk.

Mo Qiuyi seemed to look up inadvertently while chatting with others. Seeing Zhang Qilan's receding figure, she silently raised the corners of her mouth and lowered her head to talk to a young Madam flattering her.

It seemed that no one paid attention to Zhang Qilan except her.

Zhang Qilan picked a quiet path for a casual walk. Prince Chen's Mansion was no smaller than Prince Yue's Mansion, which was not surprising. The so-called “Southern Palace” and “Eastern Palace” were almost of the same size. No other mansions could compare with them.

Sitting down by a rockery, Zhang Qilan reached out to pull the gorgeous clothes on her with a glazed look in her eye. Chu Liuyue had chosen these clothes for her. She had thought Chu Liuyue did it only because he loved and cared about her, but now her face was overcast with sadness.

Chu Liuyue liked gorgeous women dressed in bright-colored and beautiful clothes. They usually looked as outstanding and attractive as peonies. It was a pity that she was not such a beauty. Worse still, she wore this set of clothes that didn't suit her at all. As a result, she made a fool of herself before Shao Wanru. Just now, several Madams and Misses seemed to have looked at her with sarcasm in their eyes! However, she didn't need such dashing clothes. As Prime Minister Zhang's daughter, she had many simple and elegant clothes that suited her well. But she accepted the unsuitable clothes that made her look much less charming to satisfy his taste.

She had known that Chu Liuyue liked Shao Wanru. After the incident in Princess Yuyan's courtyard, Chu Liuyue had specially come to her door and implicitly explained that he cared about her.

She was full of joy when waiting to get married. She even regretted that she had misunderstood Chu Liuyue and Shao Wanru. Now the pain brought by this regretful feeling was gnawing at her heart.

To let her better understand her situation, her Mother had told her that Prince Yue might be coaxing her.

But in her mind, Prince Yue was gentle and affectionate to her. How could she believe he loved someone else? However, after she married Prince Yue, she noticed several new concubines in Prince Yue's Mansion more or less looked like Shao Wanru. At that time, she finally understood everything.

Sure enough, Chu Liuyue liked Shao Wanru. Zhang Qilan had regarded Shao Wanru as her best friend, but she and her husband... At the thought of this, Zhang Qilan felt uncomfortable and jealous. She couldn't stay with others. After all, she feared that she might not swallow the insult and lose her temper in public when seeing Shao Wanru again.

A voice suddenly came from the other side of the rockery. Zhang Qilan shrank back because she didn't want to see anyone now...

Chapter 1270 Eavesdropping Behind the Rockery

"Miss, please sit and rest here!" The voice of a servant girl sounded cautious.

"I don't want to sit!" The muffled voice of a girl was very soft. It left a good impression on people. Then, the footsteps stopped on one side of the rockery. Separated by the rockery, people on both sides couldn't see each other.

Zhang Qilan hesitated for a moment and wanted to leave. But it would be shameful if others found Princess Yue from Prince Yue's Mansion eavesdropping. But the next moment, she stopped.

"Don't be sad, Miss." The servant girl comforted her master. "You still have Consort Lan!"

"But Consort Lan won't do anything about this matter, not to mention that it was related to Prince Chen's Mansion." The Young Madam sighed and sounded highly aggrieved.

"Go and tell the Prince," the servant girl said.

Her master was silent for a moment and said slowly, "Cousin doesn't care about this matter and won't give me a chance to see him. Since I entered Prince Chen's Mansion, I have only seen him a few times."

As she spoke, she became sadder and seemed to sob. "I... I have no relatives here. At present, I can only rely on Consort Lan and my cousin. Consort Lan is in the Palace, so it's not convenient for me to visit her frequently. My cousin doesn't take her seriously and never listens to Consort Lan. Besides, he has Princess Chen now..."

Speaking of this, she stopped and sobbed even more loudly.

It must be Qin Yiyao who lived in Prince Chen's Mansion. Zhang Qilan saw her at the coming-of-age ceremony. She was said to be Consort Lan's niece and Chu Liuchen's cousin.

Zhang Qilan had seen her in the hall, feeling that this girl was gentle and amiable. Now it seemed she was indeed very soft but useless.

Zhang Qilan's arched eyebrows frowned slightly, but she did not move. She still stood there and pricked up her ears to catch their words. Her servant girl was about to leave after her. But unexpectedly, her master stopped. Looking at her in surprise, she did not dare to say a word.

"Miss, don't get upset. You are the person closest to Consort Lan, and Prince Chen doesn't mean to neglect you. But with Princess Chen around, it is inconvenient for him to see you." The servant girl consoled her.

The girl sobbed softly. Then, there came her melancholy voice. "Will Princess Chen let me in?"

The meaning of her words was vague, but Zhang Qilan understood it. In the past, she might not understand it. But she had repeatedly played against Chu Liuyue's concubines many times in the past few days. As a result, she became particularly sensitive to these vague words. She raised the corners of her mouth. Shao Wanru's life seemed not as happy as she had seen. Consort Lan must have promised this cousin Miss something.

However, Shao Wanru disagreed with it. That was why the identity of this cousin Miss remained unchanged. If given a chance, she would be eager to change her current situation.

After figuring this out, Zhang Qilan moved her feet, made some sounds, and walked out.

The noise she made alarmed people on the other side of the rockery. Qin Yiyao turned around with her servant girl. Seeing Zhang Qilan before her, she immediately recognized her. She bowed sideways and said with an injured look, "Greetings, Princess Yue."

Among all the womenfolk today, Princess Yue was the most gorgeously dressed. She looked even more flashy than Princess Yuyan. Anyone who had seen her in the hall would recognize her.

"Miss Qin, are you Prince Chen's cousin?" Zhang Qilan asked softly. After looking her up and down, she wore a gentle look.

"Yes!" Qin Yiyan lowered her head and didn't look well.

"Are you Consort Lan's niece?" Zhang Qilan asked again.

"Yes!" Qin Yiyan was unable to pull herself together. Zhang Qilan, whom she couldn't afford to offend, saw her cry with a deep sense of grievance. How could anyone feel good in such a situation?

"Miss Qin, would you like to walk with me?" Zhang Qilan invited her with delight.

"I have just stayed in Prince Chen's Mansion for a short period. Usually, I stay in my courtyard and seldom go out, so I'm not familiar with the scenery here. How about I get a familiar servant girl to lead the way for you?" Qin Yiyan seemed in low spirits and answered Zhang Qilan with a perfunctory attitude.

"It's okay. I'm just taking a walk around this place. I don't care where I go or if I can see good scenery. I'm just walking around."

Zhang Qilan said patiently.

Since she said so, it would be a little impolite for Qin Yiyan to turn her down again. Helplessly, she nodded and followed Zhang Qilan to a path.

The two of them remained speechless for a while. After a long time, Qin Yiyan heard Zhang Qilan ask softly, "Doesn't you like being with too many people? I rarely see a Miss as young as you prefer quiet places. Princess Chen and I used to be very lively. We would go wherever we wanted before we got married. Anyway, we were unwilling to waste our good time before we got married."

Zhang Qilan said casually.

"Your and my... cousin-in-law are best friends?" Qin Yiyan asked curiously.

"Not the best. When I was in the Yuhui Nunnery, I did her some small favors, but now..." Zhang Qilan stopped talking.

"Now what?" Qin Yiyan asked with interest.

"Now we are married, Wanru... Prince Yue..." Speaking of this, Zhang Qilan stopped, shook her head, and continued with a bitter smile, "If I had known it, I wouldn't have... married into the Prince Yue's Mansion."

Her words were ambiguous and vague, but it was easy for anyone hearing them to associate Shao Wanru with Prince Yue. Qin Yiyan widened her eyes in great surprise and looked at Zhang Qilan in disbelief.

“Well, let’s not talk about these unpleasant things. I figure it’s all over. Princess Chen has become your sister-in-law, and I have married into Prince Yue’s Mansion. We have gone our separate ways and will live different lives in the future.”

Zhang Qilan said. Slightly turning her head, she glanced at Qin Yiyan. “I heard you talk. So, has Consort Lan promised you anything?”

Qin Yiyan blushed instantly. Pinching her handkerchief, she lowered her head and said with an almost inaudible voice. “Nothing serious. Consort Lan just mentioned it casually. It’s not meant to be taken seriously.”

“Consort Lan is your elder of higher status. What she says carries weight.” When Zhang Qilan mentioned Consort Lan, she was very respectful.

Although Consort Lan didn’t show up in public, everyone knew her importance. It was said that only Consort Lan was allowed to take care of the Emperor when he fell ill.

The Empress had sent her people to the Emperor several times and asked to look after him in person. However, the Emperor refused the request of her and many other women in the imperial harem.

Consort Lan was the only one who stayed with the Emperor.

“There are some things that she can’t decide.” Qin Yiyan remained silent for a moment and said with a grievance.

“Consort Lan has such a high status and is completely trusted by the Emperor. There is nothing that she can’t do. You can ask her for an imperial edict if you want anything.” Zhang Qilan said carelessly. “It would be great to have a powerful aunt like Consort Lan. At least I wouldn’t need to give in to others, and no one would bully me.”

“Is my aunt really... that useful?” Qin Yiyan found it hard to believe this.

Since she seldom appeared in public in the past, she was not familiar with many people. It was normal that she didn’t find the value of Consort Lan.

“Who is Consort Lan? She is the former empress’s biological sister and the Emperor’s most trusted lover. I suppose even the Empress won’t go against her,” Zhang Qilan implicitly reminded her.

In this case, it was a piece of cake to deal with Shao Wanru. No matter how powerful Shao Wanru was, could she be as mighty as the Empress?

“That’s great!” Qin Yiyan understood. She looked up with joy on her face and bowed sideways to Zhang Qilan. “Thank you for solving my doubts.”

"Did I say anything?" Zhang Qilan asked in surprise. She rubbed her forehead and said, "I don't think I said anything. I only told you Consort Lan was very influential, and you could rely on her."

"Of course, I know it. You didn't say anything; I just came up with it myself." Qin Yiyan sensitively explained for her. Her words were just right, and Zhang Qilan looked at her with a much more gentle look.

She nodded and pointed to a path not far away. "I want to go there for a walk. I have a headache and want to have some peace and quiet."

She hinted that Qin Yiyan should leave her alone now.

"I have something to do, so I can't accompany you any longer." Qin Yiyan sensibly took a step back and said respectfully.

"Miss Qin, suit yourself!" Zhang Qilan smiled mildly and walked away with her servant girl, leaving Qin Yiyan, who looked gentle and delicate, alone.

Zhang Qilan had gone far away. In a place where she couldn't see, Qin Yiyan raised her face with a mocking smile and looked at Zhang Qilan's back thoughtfully. Her cousin-in-law had guessed it right. Princess Yue was also a troublemaker, but Qin Yiyan mistakenly believed she was a good person, unlike the other princesses.

Qin Yiyan couldn't help blaming herself for being superficial and embarrassing herself before her cousin-in-law.

"Let's go to meet my cousin-in-law!" Qin Yiyan turned around decisively and went to Shao Wanru's courtyard. It was not yet time for the banquet. Shao Wanru must have been resting there after the coming-of-age ceremony.

Shao Wanru had changed into two sets of clothes. At this time, she wore a simple suit and rested in the room. When she heard that Qin Yiyan had come, she asked someone to invite her in.

"Cousin-in-law, you're right." No sooner had she entered the room than she gave a seemingly pointless remark. At this time, she looked completely different from what she had been before Zhang Qilan. All of a sudden, she no longer looked yielding and timid. As soon as she came in, she sat opposite Shao Wanru and saw her reading a medical book. She wanted to say something but stopped on second thought.

"Do you want to say something?" Shao Wanru didn't raise her head, but she could sense her feelings. She smiled slightly and asked after turning over the page.

“Cousin-in-law, you knew it long ago, didn’t you?” Qin Yiyan couldn’t help asking and reached out to press the medical book before Shao Wanru.

Shao Wanru looked up at her, nodded, and asked back, “Don’t you think the same way?”

“Cousin-in-law!” Qin Yiyan widened her eyes and said, “Princess Yue is not a good person!”

“Not a good person?” For a moment, Shao Wanru was lost in thought. Zhang Qilan was indeed nice at the very beginning, but there were conflicts that they could not avoid. She was going to marry Chu Liuchen, while Zhang Qilan would be Chu Liuyue’s wife. Since then, it was destined that they could no longer be friends on very intimate terms. But Shao Wanru did not expect Zhang Qilan to become so ruthless and heartless...