

MEDICAL PRINCESS

Chapter 1271 - 1271 Consort Dowager Qing's True Identity



Chapter 1271 Consort Dowager Qing's True Identity

Commandery Prince Cheng had been very annoyed recently. Locked up in the mansion, he could not even go out. He had thought this situation would only last for a few days. Unexpectedly, the Emperor never softened his attitude after so many days. He heard that the Emperor was sick, so he was not in the mood to care about him now. But would the Emperor lock him up until the new emperor ascended the throne? If that were the case, everything would be too late.

In the study, Commandery Prince Cheng paced up and down in agitation. He mustn't be confined here like this. The Emperor fell ill. This was probably the best time for him to achieve his wild ambition. If he operated adequately, he would get the chance he had longed for over the years.

For such an opportunity, he chose not to marry. Finally, his chance came after years of waiting. But he was abruptly imprisoned because of Shao Jing. He would have stayed far away from Shao Jing if he had known this. Never would he help Shao Jing keep his secrets from the people in the capital city.

Sending Shao Jing to the position of Duke Xing was a secret trick he had set up and a backup plan. The Duke Xing's Mansion was powerful and trusted by the Emperor, his elder brother. Once Shao Jing won the position of Duke Xing, he would take his side. Unexpectedly, Shao Jing ruined such a brilliant plan. When he thought about this matter, its failure always surprised Commandery Prince Cheng. It was initially not a big deal. How could it cause such a sensation?

“Master, there is news from Master Jieyan.” A guard came in and reported.

“What’s the matter?” Commandery Prince Cheng asked with a grim look.

“Master Jieyan wanted to know if things about the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion would continue.” The guard said. The Commandery Prince Cheng’s Mansion was under strict surveillance, but a few messages could leak in.

The Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion had been in a mess for a period. After finding out something, Commandery Prince Cheng asked them to stop. But since this small matter wouldn’t cause great damage to Chu Qing, there was nothing to be alarmed about.

If it weren’t for Chu Qing, Commandery Prince Cheng would remain untouched and keep his advantage. Just because of this, Commandery Prince Cheng wouldn’t let go of Chu Qing. However, he wouldn’t crack down on Chu Qing, who was still of great use to him. At least he could distract his imperial brother’s attention.

He had underestimated Chu Qing and never considered him as a possible threat. Even after he was locked up, Commandery Prince Cheng didn’t change his opinion. But surprisingly, he discovered something unusual after these so-called ghosts haunted Chu Qing’s house a few times. Commandery Prince Cheng had come into contact with some surviving evils of the previous dynasty, and Chu Qing had something to do with them. Because of this news, Commandery Prince Cheng immediately suspended all actions against Chu Qing.

To get some extra help, he did have dealings with the remaining evildoers of the former dynasty. Those people said they would help him ascend the throne as long as he secured a place for them in his newly-established imperial court. In other words, once he ruled the country, he couldn’t hunt them down.

Instead, he would have to give them the title of nobility so that they could have a foothold in the new dynasty.

Since it would not be a big deal to shake the country's very foundations, Commandery Prince Cheng agreed quickly.

The surviving dregs of the previous dynasty had some power. It would be best if he could use it. The more hidden strength he had, the more likely he would achieve his dream. The leftover evils of the former dynasty could survive until now and had great strength. They would be a great help to Commandery Prince Cheng.

It had been decades since the previous dynasty ended. Making tremendous changes was impossible for them, not to mention overthrowing the rule of his eldest and second imperial brothers. The surviving evildoers of the former dynasty must have seen this possibility. Thus, they turned to him, their only choice. In Commandery Prince Cheng's opinion, he was more thoughtful and had a better chance to win than his nephews.

With this in mind, Commandery Prince Cheng was very proud. But in the Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion, he was quite surprised to see the remaining evildoers of the previous dynasty. These people, not in a small number, seemed to be more respectful to Chu Qing than to him. In particular, Chu Qing had just entrapped him. An idea suddenly came to Commandery Prince Cheng.

These remaining evildoers were Chu Qing's real supporters determined to send him to the throne. He was just their backup plan, a dispensable diversion from Chu Qing. These people only approved of Chu Qing.

Because Commandery Prince Cheng figured this out, he ordered his people to stop harassing Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion.

They were dealing with symptoms and not the root cause.

“Have you discovered the relationship between Chu Qing and the former dynasty?” Commandery Prince Cheng said after composing himself.

“Master Jieyan hasn’t found out the truth about the relationship of Prince Qing with the remaining evildoers of the former dynasty. But Master Jieyan said Commandery Prince Qing has close ties with these people of the former dynasty. Consort Dowager Qing in the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion was used to be a collateral relative of one of the eight aristocratic families in the former dynasty. He is not quite clear about other things,” the guard reported.

Commandery Prince Cheng took a deep breath and pressed his forehead, struggling to control his emotions. Chu Qing? How could it be Chu Qing? Commandery Prince Cheng had despised him the most. Unexpectedly, Chu Qing might be his most potent rival.

“Tell Master Jieyan to spread the news: Chu Qing may have something to do with the former dynasty!” Commandery Prince Cheng ordered.

“Should we release all the information we have discovered?”

“Let’s take our time to spread what we have learned about and even our guesses. Consort Dowager Qing? When that woman entered the Palace, my imperial brother had fallen ill. Besides, she was not found to be pregnant when my brother passed away... As for Shao Yanru, ask her to hurry up. The schedule for Chu Liuzhou progresses too slowly!”

Consort Dowager Qing was related to remaining evildoers and was said to be a Miss of one of the eight aristocratic families in the previous dynasty. As soon as the shocking news was released, it immediately caused a sensation in the capital city.

The previous dynasty came to an end long ago, and lots of things had been forgotten. The people had lived and worked in peace and contentment for

many years. Much of the information about the previous dynasty was hearsay. Now, it seemed this matter might be true. More shockingly, Commandery Prince Qing might be a descendant of the previous dynasty. In the former dynasty, the eight aristocratic families and the imperial family had always been close and tightly connected by marriage.

Another rumor came out. When Consort Dowager Qing married into the Palace, the previous emperor was still ill. How could he be intimate with her? She had just stayed a few months in the Palace, and the deceased emperor passed away. No one could tell Consort Dowager Qing was pregnant when she entered the Yuhui Nunnery. Here came the question: was Commandery Prince Qing really the deceased emperor's son?

If so, why didn't Consort Dowager Qing say it then? She might not have found it at the beginning. But when in the Yuhui Nunnery, she could tell others the truth. Was she afraid that the Emperor would harm her son with the deceased emperor?

But it didn't make sense. Even as the deceased emperor's eldest legitimate son, Prince Chen was safe and sound. Commandery Prince Qing was merely a concubine's son. In this case, he had no reason to be afraid at all!

Some words sounded reasonable back then but seemed farfetched now. Could Commandery Prince Qing's previous explanation convince others?

These rumors got out. Before Consort Dowager Qing and her son could discuss it, they were summoned to the Palace together. Commandery Prince Qing went to the Emperor's Imperial Study, while Consort Dowager Qing headed for the Empress Dowager's place.

Shao Wanru happened to be with Empress Dowager. Thus, she sat aside and quietly watched Consort Dowager Qing.

This was the second time she had seen Consort Dowager Qing. When Commandery Prince Qing got married, she took a look at her from a distance and only felt she was a dazzling beauty. No wonder she could strive for the deceased emperor's favor with the previous empress, who was said to be unequaled in beauty. Even after so many years, she was still a real beauty with delicate skin and a fair complexion — she didn't seem to have suffered a lot in the Yuhui Nunnery.

When observing Consort Dowager Qing nearby, Shao Wanru found her pretty face glowing with health. She was more convinced that Consort Dowager Qing had lived a wonderful life in the Yuhui Nunnery.

"Greetings, Your Majesty!" Consort Dowager Qing knelt to salute the Empress Dowager.

The Empress Dowager let her eyes settle upon her, not show her feelings. Then she slowly asked, "Are you from one of the eight aristocratic families in the former dynasty?"

"Your Majesty, my family is related to the eight aristocratic families in the previous dynasty, but it is a distant collateral branch. I am not even the daughter of an aristocratic family but a nobody!" Consort Dowager Qing smiled bitterly and kowtowed again to the Empress Dowager, "If I had come from a suspicious background, the deceased emperor wouldn't have brought me into the Palace."

At the mention of her eldest son, the Empress Dowager looked a little upset and sighed heavily. She did not want such a thing to happen. It was unfair to her eldest son, but when recalling the Emperor's words last night, she had to inquire deeply into this matter.

"Can we get to the bottom of your family background?" The Empress Dowager drawled her words.

With a nod, Consort Dowager Qing said, "Sure. Please check it out. I never lie about this. Otherwise, I would be too ashamed to meet the deceased emperor after my death." Speaking of this, Consort Dowager Qing burst out crying and wiped away her tears hard. But a while later, her eyes turned red again.

The Empress Dowager stopped talking. Consort Dowager Qing was still kneeling on the ground. Looking at her, she couldn't help smiling bitterly. There were some things she didn't want to think about or ask. However, she was now the only one in charge of the imperial Palace. Since the Empress had not handled affairs lately, she said, "Go to the Empress's Phoenix Palace and let her ask you about these things."

"Go to see the Empress in the Phoenix Palace?" Consort Dowager Qing was stunned and looked awful.

She used to be the deceased emperor's favorite consort, while the Empress was just a Prince's wife. Consort Dowager Qing had a much higher status than the Empress, but now the situation was reversed. Therefore, she was unwilling to see the Empress.

"Yes, go ahead!" The Empress Dowager waved her hand.

"Your Majesty..." Consort Dowager Qing still wanted to say something. But Nanny Wei, who had been standing aside, came over with a smile and helped her up. "Your Grace, you'd better go to see the Empress first. Her Majesty is not feeling well and doesn't have much energy to deal with this."

Seeing the Empress Dowager sit in repose with her eyes closed, Consort Dowager Qing had to lower her head and leave. Nanny Wei accompanied her to the gate and asked a palace maid to take her to the Empress. Then, she turned around and returned to the main hall.

The hall was very quiet. With a haggard look, the Empress Dowager closed her eyes and leaned against the back of the chair. Shao Wanru lowered her head and quietly straightened the handkerchief in her hand.

Hearing Nanny Wei's footsteps, the Empress Dowager asked, "Has she left?"

"Please rest assured. She is away!" Nanny Wei smiled and stepped forward. Standing behind the Empress Dowager, she gently massaged her back and said, "What a pitiful lady. She has to deal with such a mess."

"It is said that Commandery Prince Qing may not be the deceased emperor's son... Do you believe it?" Since there were no outsiders here, the Empress Dowager asked straightforwardly.

Stunned, Nanny Wei subconsciously looked toward Shao Wanru. Seeing that she just lowered her head in silence, she smiled, "Your Majesty, I don't dare to comment on such things. It would be best if you could discuss it with the Empress or the Emperor. Frankly, I am merely a servant looking after you."

Nanny Wei was merely a Nanny in the Palace. How dare she say whether or not Commandery Prince Qing was the deceased emperor's son? In particular, Princess Chen was here. Though she did not say a word, Nanny Wei still felt under a lot of pressure.

"You know what happened. Because he had an argument with the former empress, he let that woman enter the Palace..." The Empress Dowager whispered in a low voice. When Shao Wanru heard it, she stopped pinching the handkerchief in her hand...

Chapter 1272 The Inner Chamber in Prince Zhou's Study

Shao Wanru left the Palace through the side door. Upon entering Prince Chen's Mansion, she went straight to Chu Liuchen. On the third floor of his study, she saw Chu Liuchen work on memorials to the throne behind the large desk.

Few knew many memorials to the throne had been sent to Chu Liuchen since the Emperor was ill. The side door connected the Prince Chen's Mansion and the Palace was tightly guarded. The officials thought the Emperor replied to these memorials to the throne despite his illness. But in fact, most of them were handled by Chu Liuchen. Hearing Shao Wanru coming up, Chu Liuchen put down the memorial in his hand.

"What's wrong?" Seeing Shao Wanru come in with a tight face, Chu Liuchen waved to her and asked.

Shao Wanru came over and nestled in his arms, rubbing her small head against his chest with a touch of softness that Chu Liuchen could feel.

She reached out and hugged his strong waist, speechless for a long time.

"Did Imperial Grandmother make things difficult for you?" Chu Liuchen knew she had gone to see the Empress Dowager in the Palace. Thus, seeing her like this, he couldn't help laughing, and his soft eyes fell on her.

"No, Chu Qing went to the Palace with Consort Dowager Qing," Shao Wanru said, pursing her cherry lips, "I feel Nanny Wei seems to be helping Consort Dowager Qing."

"What makes you think so?" Chu Liuchen smiled and asked.

Shao Wanru buried her head in his arms, not wanting him to see her face. "I can't tell the reason. Anyway, I think it may be like this. I have a feeling."

It might be difficult for others to comprehend. She had no evidence, and Nanny Wei did not say much to help Consort Dowager Qing. But she just felt that way. On an impulse, she came to share this feeling with Chu Liuchen. To her dismay, she could not find evidence except for these words, which deeply depressed her.

"How about I check it out?" Seeing her in a dark mood, Chu Liuchen asked with a smile.

"Okay!" Shao Wanru said bashfully. That was what she thought. She would be relieved if they could find out the truth. Wei Dahai had been determined to plot against her, disregarding her high status as Princess Chen. Thus, she had always felt some people supported him in the dark. Besides, his niece Mo Qiuyi married Commandery Prince Qing. However, Chu Qing would never pay a debt of gratitude by his marriage.

There were various reasons. Viewed apart, each looked normal. But when looking at them as a whole, she felt something wrong. However, she could not

find out the truth of such a problem. She asked Chu Liuchen to investigate it because she wanted him to pay attention to things about Chu Qing.

No matter what the truth was, there must be something fishy.

"I'll check it out. You can rest easy. Don't go to the Palace frequently these days if there is nothing urgent." Chu Liuchen comforted her with a smile. Knowing she was emotionally unstable, he complied with all her whims.

"Imperial Grandmother is in poor health, so I want to see her more often." Shao Wanru said, shaking her head. The Empress Dowager had fallen ill. Though almost recovered, she was not as vigorous as before and had visibly aged. Shao Wanru had been trying to develop dishes cooked with medicinal herbs for her.

The Empress Dowager wholeheartedly doted on Chu Liuchen, so Shao Wanru hoped she was all right.

"Okay, do as you see fit!" Chu Liuchen said softly.

"I didn't dare to take action directly these days. Today, I have carefully observed her complexion. I will find Mingqiu Nun and Doctor Qi and ask them to write a prescription. We can make a medicated diet together!" Shao Wanru said.

Her smile became sweeter and broader when she mentioned Mingqiu Nun and Doctor Qi.

Mingqiu Nun did not say she would resume secular life, but at least she was willing to live in Prince Chen's Mansion and did not ask to return to the Yuhui Nunnery. This was a good thing. Doctor Qi was in a better mood now. From time to time, he would find out some complicated cases and study them with Mingqiu Nun. On the surface, he wanted to solve medical problems. But all of this was because he was unwilling to let go of Mingqiu Nun.

They were fellow disciples with the same master. It was Doctor Qiu who caused their misunderstanding of each other. They then parted with each other. Doctor Qi had not yet married, while Mingqiu Nun shaved her head and became a nun. Their current relationship was quite harmonious. Shao Wanru estimated that they could still be together after many years.

"Don't be too tired!" Chu Liuchen nodded and lowered his head. His soft breath fell on her neck. "Does it still hurt now?"

After his question, a red flush spread from Shao Wanru's face to her neck. She put forth her strength and pinched him hard on his back. How could he be so shameless?

“What’s wrong? Did I ask the wrong question? It was my fault last night. I’ll be more careful. Tell me if it still hurts. I’ll ask Qi Jue for some medicine and give it to you later,” Chu Liuchen said, preserving a mask of solemnity. The smile in his beautiful eyes made him look more elegant.

“Elegant and refined, seriously?” Shao Wanru felt she had misjudged him, a man who didn’t know what shame was. How dare he ask Doctor Qi for medicine? How could she have the cheek to see Mingqiu Nun and Doctor Qi?

She pressed her hand hard on the soft flesh of his waist. She intended to give him a sharp pinch this time but failed because of his hard muscle. This man always gave people false impressions. His face looked pale, but he was strong with a sturdily-built body. Although he was sick, she heard he had been practicing martial arts since childhood. Ever since he recovered, he obtained a good level of physical fitness.

He just appeared sick and weak. Last night, he shamelessly did intimate things with her for much of the night. Remembering that, she was too ashamed to look up at him. People said that his lips were pale and his body was weak, but now all of this was fake, absolutely not true.

She bit her lip and almost couldn’t say a word, her face flaming with embarrassment.

His head was gently lifted, and his delicate lips landed on her pink, tender lips. He bit them gently and went deeper into her mouth...

“Chu Qing may be the descendant of the former dynasty?” Chu Liuzhou patted the table and became excited. Going around in circles, he reached out and threw his arms around Shao Yanru, exclaiming excitedly, “That’s great. It’s a good reason.”

Chu Liuzhou didn’t think it was true, but it didn’t matter. He asked, “Do you have any way to contact Commandery Prince Cheng?”

“Well... Prince, I’m yours now.” Shao Yanru said aggrievedly. Her delicate and charming face was suffused with blushes as she rested her slim and supple body on Chu Liuzhou. Seeing her like this, Chu Liuzhou could feel himself heating up.

“Your father used to work for Commandery Prince Cheng, didn’t he? Give him a fake message,” Chu Liuzhou said.

“But... but I’m yours now,” Shao Yanru spoke in an affectedly sweet voice. Chu Liuzhou was aroused. With a gentle stretch, she pushed him a little further away and said, “Prince, Infanta Yuan’an sent someone to check this

place today. What should I do if she finds me? I'm supposed to be dead now, so I can't meet anyone. More importantly, I can't let Infanta Yuan'an misunderstand you, Prince."

"Don't worry. I'll warn her to behave herself." Speaking of Infanta Yuan'an, Chu Liuzhou became agitated. Since she entered the mansion, Infanta Yuan'an frequently made a scene, which annoyed him intensely.

Many women married into his mansion with her, so she was not indispensable to him. Recently, he had just visited Infanta Yuan'an once. However, never had he rested at Infanta Yuan'an's place. Sometimes, he would secretly meet Shao Yanru. As such, how could he have so much time to coax Infanta Yuan'an?

If Infanta Yuan'an behaved well, he would not mind making her the future empress. Otherwise, she would never get the leading position.

Infanta Yuan'an was inferior to Shao Yanru in every aspect. Not to mention her appearance, her mind was much less intelligent than Shao Yanru's. Moreover, Chu Liuzhou was very satisfied with Shao Yanru's charming exterior. How could anyone bear to part with such a smart and affectingly sweet beauty? Five days in the past ten days, he sneaked into Shao Yanru's place on the pretext of living in the study.

Shao Yanru was the most favored one in his mansion.

"Prince, Infanta Yuan'an is your legal wife. I know how to treat her. I will avoid her and not make things difficult for you. But at this time, I can't visit her even if I want to," Shao Yanru said in a pleasant voice. She lowered her head with a sense of grievance and said with red eyes, "You took such a big risk to get me out of the Palace. I can't let others criticize you because of me."

Chu Liuzhou would have to face much more severe consequences than criticism. If the terrible secret about Shao Yanru was exposed, even Chu Liuzhou might not bear the consequences.

Shao Yanru was so devoted and obedient to him. Hearing her words, Chu Liuzhou felt increasingly tender and protective toward her and disliked Infanta Yuan'an even more. Her appearance was not as good-looking as Shao Yanru, and her character was never lovable.

"Prince, Princess Zhou arrives!" A servant rushed in with a flustered face.

"Prince!" Shao Yanru also panicked. Anxiously, she pulled Chu Liuzhou's clothes and became tearful, looking extremely pitiful.

"You go to the inner room first!" Chu Liuzhou said with a sullen face and pointed toward somewhere inside. There was a bed for rest in his study. He was said to have slept in the study. Sometimes, he spent the night with Shao Yanru in the study, and sometimes he went to live in Shao Yanru's place.

Shao Yanru hid inside, and Infanta Yuan'an entered in a huff. As soon as she came in, she looked around but found no one. Then, she looked up at the inner room of the study.

"Greetings, Prince!" Infanta Yuan'an stepped forward and asked a servant girl to put the food hamper on the tea table. "I've made a decoction of medicinal ingredients for you. Have some first."

"Thank you," Chu Liuzhou said lightly.

"I heard you have been living in the study for the past few days. It's getting cold, so please let us change the quilt for you." Infanta Yuan'an pointed to the soft quilt held by a servant girl behind her and said with a smile. After that, she went to the inner door of the study without waiting for Chu Liuzhou's answer.

When Chu Liuzhou saw her go over so presumptuously, his face instantly fell. He slammed his hand on the table. "Yuan'an, are you trying to stir up trouble here?"

Infanta Yuan'an came to a halt with a look of surprise. "What did you say, Prince? I kindly wanted to change a thicker quilt for you. Why would you think like that? Or, have you hidden any beautiful lady, your secret lover, in there?"

Infanta Yuan'an had always suspected a woman outside her surveillance was hiding in the mansion. She did not believe Chu Liuzhou would live in the study with a pure heart and few desires. There was something fishy about it. Today, she decided to check Chu Liuzhou's inner room with the excuse of changing the quilt. Infanta Yuan'an believed she would find some clues as long as a woman had been to Chu Liuzhou's inner room.

Chu Liuzhou had been neglecting her since she married into the mansion. Thinking of this, Infanta Yuan'an showed a trace of gloom in her eyes. She was the legal wife of Prince Zhou. Why could those bitches be more favored than her?

Chapter 1273 Who Did Consort Qi Meet Secretly

"What nonsense are you talking about? No one is allowed to see my inner room without my permission. Put the quilt here and leave!" Chu Liuzhou waved his hand and said with a gloomy face.

“Prince, but I’m your legal wife. Can’t even I see it?” Infanta Yuan’an asked in exasperation, unable to restrain her fury.

After Chu Liuzhou took a deep breath, his face softened a little. “Yuan’an, you have to understand it. Even if you are my legal wife, there are some things that you are not supposed to know. Help me manage my inner court well, and I will grant you what you deserve!”

Infanta Yuan’an was so angry that her face turned livid. Aside, She was about to lose her temper. Her trusted nurse, who moved here when she married, saw things going from bad to worse. In a hurry, she pulled her sleeve hard and whispered, “My Lady, Prince Zhou still has to handle official business here. It’s indeed improper for you to be here.”

She stressed the words “official business.”

With an effort, Infanta Yuan’an contained her irritation and slowly relaxed her clenched hand. “Since it’s inconvenient for you to show it to others, I’ll put the quilt here.”

“Thanks for that!” Chu Liuzhou said blandly.

Infanta Yuan’an asked the servant girl to put down the hamper and quilt in her hands and left. When she got outside, she looked coldly at the servant outside and asked, “Is there any woman coming here?”

“Your Highness, no woman is here. My master has been dealing with official affairs in the study!” The servant lowered his head. How could he dare to tell the truth?

Infanta Yuan’an snorted coldly. Knowing she couldn’t get anything out of him, she turned around and walked out. After walking for a while, she suddenly stopped and turned around. She seemed to go back and make trouble with Chu Liuzhou.

“My Lady, you have married. You are Princess Zhou now.” Her trusted nurse hurriedly stopped her.

“I am Princess Zhou, but who is the woman inside?” Infanta Yuan’an was so furious that her face turned livid. The more she thought about it, the more resentful she became. “When I married him, he devotedly attached to me, and we were quite pleased with each other. He would share everything with me. What’s going on now? He hid a woman in this mansion and warned me not to enter the inner room at will.”

Another woman entered the inner room and was more cherished than her, the legal wife. At this thought, Infanta Yuan'an couldn't suppress the anger in her heart.

"In fact, it may not be another woman..." The trusted nurse hesitated and comforted her.

"How could it be? There must be a woman in the inner room. I smelled the lingering fragrance of a woman in his study. She must be in the inner room. I want to see who this bitch is."

Infanta Yuan'an interrupted the trusted nurse in a sharp voice.

"Don't be angry, Princess. Even if His Highness has another woman, so what? Two consorts and two concubines married him with you. There might be more women in the future. How could you deal with all of them?" The trusted nurse said meaningfully, trying to persuade her.

Chu Liuzhou was now Prince Zhou, the Emperor's son. It was normal for him to have more women in his mansion. If he ascended the throne in the future, he would have more women around him. However, the trusted nurse didn't think all this was a big deal. Infanta Yuan'an only needed to seize the position of the legal wife and be the future empress respected and esteemed by people all over the country.

How many women Prince Zhou had? Did he hide a woman in his inner room? None of these things mattered.

This woman had not been sent to Princess Zhou. It meant she had no status at all. Since she was just a cheap plaything, there was no need to take this matter seriously.

"You don't understand. Chu Liuzhou may let this woman be his legal wife," Infanta Yuan'an said with a sullen face.

"Princess, don't be silly. No matter what he has done, he wouldn't think so. You are his legal wife and the granddaughter of Ruiping Great Elder Princess." Her trusted nurse appeased her, feeling that her master was overthinking.

Infanta Yuan'an knew her trusted nurse reminded her she had her grandmother's support. But what if that was what he had in mind? Many empresses in the world had been dethroned, right? Every single one of them had an excellent family background, but in the end, they lost their envious position and were trampled on.

The more Infanta Yuan'an thought about it, the more uneasy she became. She felt she had to know who the woman was. Thus, she sent an astute old maid to wait at the study's door. No matter what, she must find out who the woman was.

Infanta Yuan'an didn't expect the old maid to be knocked out cold. She didn't see anything and limped to her the next day to report.

Seeing the old maid like this, Infanta Yuan'an was more certain that Chu Liuzhou had hidden a woman there. Otherwise, the person she sent over would not have been discovered and battered unconscious.

Who on earth was it? She had to find out the answer.

Infanta Yuan'an felt uncomfortable and impatient as if being set on fire. As a result, she kept a closer eye on the other women in the mansion. In particular, she told her people to watch the few consorts and concubines more closely. When Infanta Yuan'an got married, she brought over many people. Though she could not go against Chu Liuzhou and was unfamiliar with Prince Zhou's Mansion, she could deal with a few consorts and concubines...

At night, a servant girl carried a lantern and followed a person in a cloak to the back door. When arriving at the back door, they gave gratuities to an old maid there. The old maid opened the door, and someone outside was carrying a lantern. It was a man with a servant. When they met, they exchanged a few words and wanted to leave.

Suddenly, the clamors of the people bubbled up. With the light of the lanterns, a large group rushed out and surrounded the few people. The old maid guarding the door was so scared that she collapsed to the ground with a plop.

Infanta Yuan'an appeared in the light with a large group of servant girls and old maids. With a frosty look, she stared at the person coming out in a cloak and asked, "Consort Qi, who is the person you are meeting secretly at the back door?"

"Princess!" Qi Rongzhi took off the cloak on her head and timidly stepped forward to bow. Infanta Yuan'an had taught her a lesson a few days ago, so she didn't dare to argue against her.

"How dare you have a secret date with another man? Consort Qi, how could you be so audacious? I've sent someone to Prince Zhou. Such a matter needs him to deal with," Infanta Yuan'an said sarcastically with a faint curl of her lips.

Since Prince Zhou had been close to Qi Rongzhi these days, she was a little disobedient when facing Princess Zhou. But after Infanta Yuan'an seized a chance and punished her last time, she slightly restrained her behavior.

Infanta Yuan'an felt an overwhelming desire to find the woman hidden by Chu Liuzhou, but she didn't expect to discover that Qi Rongzhi had a secret date with a man.

"Princess, this is my Eldest Brother." Qi Rongzhi said. The man from outside took off his cloak and hat, exposing his handsome face — it was actually Qi Tianyu.

"Greetings, Princess!" Qi Tianyu came up and greeted her gracefully as if he was not surprised at all.

However, Infanta Yuan'an was startled. She looked at Qi Rongzhi and Qi Tianyu, frowning. "You are siblings, so why did you meet secretly?"

"Princess, my father was not feeling well and sent me a letter. I should tell my sister about it, so I sent a message. But my sister said there were many things in the mansion recently. Since she didn't dare to trouble you, she asked me to wait at the back door. I planned to leave after telling her our father's situation." Qi Tianyu said calmly. Though he was caught, he didn't seem worried at all.

"Do you think it's easy to fool me? And I can let go of you after hearing such a shoddy reason?" Infanta Yuan'an sneered, "I don't care about this matter. Prince Zhou will deal with you. You sneaked around at the gate of the backyard. Did you want to do something harmful to our Prince Zhou's Mansion?"

"Princess, please be careful with your words!" Qi Tianyu no longer managed to keep a straight face. Lowering his head, he said.

"I want to be cautious with my words. But what about you, Lord Qi? I heard you were the Number Three Scholar three years ago. You met a woman late at night in the mansion of a Prince. Don't you know you should avoid arousing suspicion even though the woman is your biological sister? Besides, there isn't anything troublesome going on in our mansion recently. How could she say she didn't dare to trouble me? Or do you and your sister have other plots?"

Infanta Yuan'an asked meaningfully, her eyes falling upon Qi Tianyu's sleeve, "Haven't your sister passed on any important but secretive messages to you?"

"Princess, my sister is so naive that she doesn't understand these things. As for me, I am not the kind of bad person you have talked about." Qi Tianyu explained.

"Then tell me, why would you stay outside my back door at this time?" Chu Liuzhou came and snorted. The crowd parted to let him through when he came from behind these people.

"Greetings, Prince!" Qi Tianyu stepped forward and bowed.

Chu Liuzhou narrowed his eyes and asked coldly, "Tell me, Qi Tianyu, why are you here? Don't tell me those stupid lies you used to trick fools."

Infanta Yuan'an's face suddenly paled. "Did he mean I was an idiot?" She was simmering with rage. Gritting her teeth with hatred, she clenched the handkerchief in her hand. It was not the time for her to quarrel with Chu Liuzhou.

"Prince, I just told my sister some past things," Qi Tianyu said.

"You don't want to tell me the truth, do you? Well, take him away!" Chu Liuzhou said with a malicious face.

"Prince, I am also an official of the imperial court. We have to go to court tomorrow. If you lock me up, how can I go to court tomorrow?" Qi Tianyu had thought that Chu Liuzhou would not say anything. At most, he just needed to give him a casual explanation. Unexpectedly, there were a lot of secrets in Prince Zhou's Mansion, and Chu Liuzhou acted arbitrarily. Eventually, he detained Qi Tianyu.

"Prince, my Eldest Brother didn't do anything wrong. He just talked about my father's health condition with me." Qi Rongzhi rushed over and cried.

However, Chu Liuzhou didn't want to talk to her and waved his hand. Then two guards came to pull Qi Tianyu away. Qi Tianyu tried to fight his way out, but two guards dragged him away by force.

"Prince, Prince..." Qi Rongzhi knelt on the ground in a panic. Previously, Qi Tianyu was there, so she was not very afraid. But now, she was so scared that her face turned pale. "Prince, it was nothing serious. Please let my Eldest Brother go!"

"Take her away too and let her know who this mansion's master is," Chu Liuzhou ordered coldly.

Infanta Yuan'an was satisfied with Prince Chen's intention to teach her a harsh lesson. With a smile, she nodded and said, "Prince, you can leave now."

Leave Consort Qi to me. I will punish her severely and let her know who her master is and whom she should listen to.”

She was worried about finding a chance to teach Qi Rongzhi a lesson. Much to her surprise, the opportunity came just at the right time.

Chu Liuzhou nodded and turned to leave. He was going to interrogate Qi Tianyu overnight. He always felt that it was not a simple matter. It struck terror into his heart. Somehow, he had a feeling that some people in the darkness were still watching Prince Zhou’s Mansion.

Someone was indeed watching Prince Zhou’s Mansion in the night. The person was on the big tree in the backyard of Prince Zhou’s Mansion. When everyone left, and this place quieted down, a black shadow flashed and disappeared into the darkness...

Chapter 1274 Changes in Each Mansion

“Master, the person is in the Prince Zhou’s Mansion.” When Ancheng came to report, Chu Liuchen still sat in the study of the outer court, leisurely replying to the memorials in his hand. There were many memorials to the throne recently, so he had a hard time doing this job.

“Is there anything unusual about Qi Tianyu?” Chu Liuchen put down the writing brush dipped in red ink and asked lightly.

If Zhuozhuo had not mentioned Qi Tianyu repeatedly, he would not have found such a person secretly doing something suspicious.

“I guess Qi Tianyu didn’t anticipate Prince Zhou being so rude and unreasonable — he detained him for further investigating,” Ancheng said.

“He naively thought no one dared to target him, an official appointed by the imperial court.” Chu Liuchen smiled delightedly. Now that Qi Tianyu had been exposed, he could no longer be an imperceptible secret pawn.

What a surprise. Qi Tianyu, an unsuccessful Number Three Scholar on the surface, was working for Chu Liuyue. More surprisingly, it was Chu Liuyue who sent Qi Tianyu’s sister into the Prince Zhou’s Mansion. For this reason, Chu Liuzhou would not let go of Chu Liuyue.

A consort was nothing, but if this consort was suspected to be Chu Liuyue’s helper, Chu Liuzhou would never let off Chu Liuyue.

“Send a message to the Prince Yue’s Mansion!”

“Now?” Ancheng asked.

"Yes. I can't keep Eldest Brother in the dark!" Chu Liuchen said casually. It was getting late, and he had to return to the inner court.

He stood up, flung her loose robe, and was about to leave.

"Prince, aren't... aren't you going to deal with the memorials?" Ancheng didn't think it was that late. "Why is my master so lazy now?" There were so many memorials. In his mind, his master might need to sleep in the study tonight.

"Princess Chen is waiting for me!" Chu Liuchen smiled, slightly raising the corners of his mouth. It was apparent that he was in a good mood.

Xiao Xuanzi was waiting outside with a broad smile, carrying a lantern in one hand. He knew his master would return to the inner court at this time. Since Princess Chen came of age, his master had never lived in the study or returned too late.

Watching his master striding away, Ancheng felt very depressed. His master was a changed man! Was Prince Chen still the master with a pure heart and few worldly desires? Ancheng could tell that his master was in a hurry when he walked off quickly.

Chu Liuyue didn't sleep either. He was in Zhang Qilan's room. They had just cleaned up and were about to sleep. Suddenly, Xiao Qizi, Chu Liuyue's personal servant, came to report in great haste. Zhang Qilan didn't hear it clearly, but she saw Chu Liuyue's face drastically change. He took the coat hanging aside, put it on, and said, "You go to sleep first. I have something to do!"

After that, he turned around and left.

Zhang Qilan stood at the door and watched Chu Liuyue leave in a daze, with sadness in her eyes.

"My Lady, it's getting late. You can go to rest!" Her servant girl came in and whispered.

"Did you hear what the Prince said?" Zhang Qilan asked. The servant girl had just stood at the door. After Xiao Qizi entered the room to report, Chu Liuyue had been talking to him there.

"I seem to have heard... heard Qi Rongzhi..." The servant girl watched Zhang Qilan's expression and whispered, "Maybe... I have misheard..."

"Qi Rongzhi?" Zhang Qilan looked up at the vast night sky. Chu Liuyue was gone, and it was completely black outside. She happened to know Qi

Rongzhi, Chu Liuzhou's consort. But what was her relationship with Prince Yue?

Zhang Qilan thought she must have misheard them, but unfortunately, she heard that right.

"Who on earth is Chu Liuyue in love with? Why are there so many women? Shao Wanru, Qi Rongzhi, and Shao Yanru, right? What about me? Am I just an ornament in his mansion that he doesn't care about? I finally became Princess Yue, but is Princess Yue merely a showy and not substantial title? Did Shao Wanru seduce Chu Liuyue because of this?"

"Is the situation the same with Qi Rongzhi? Like Shao Wanru, this woman of easy virtue also intends to seduce Prince Yue?"

Finally, she seemed to have figured everything out. A trace of jealousy and hatred flashed across her eyes. Since Shao Wanru made her unhappy, she would also stir her mansion into a tempest. She wondered if Qin Yiyan had asked Consort Lan for support. According to her words, Consort Lan had determined to make her Chu Liuchen's consort.

The next time she entered the Palace, she might as well mention it to the Empress Dowager. Jealousy ran red-hot through her eyes...

With Xiao Qizi, Chu Liuyue entered the study, where a guard in this mansion was waiting for them. Seeing Chu Liuyue coming in, he quickly handed over a letter. "Someone threw it into the mansion's courtyard. It was tied with a brick. I didn't see anyone outside when I went out to chase after the person."

With a nod, Chu Liuyue took the letter and looked at it. The handwriting belonged to Qi Tianyu. He opened the letter and raced through it. The more he read, the uglier his face became.

After going through it, he read it again from the beginning. Then, clenching the letter in his hand, he sat down heavily.

Mr. Liu, his assistant, was also called over. Chu Liuyue showed him the letter in his hand without hiding it from him. After reading it, Mr. Liu raised his head and said seriously, "Do you have any dealings with the Qi's mansion?"

Then the person he had seen must be Qi Tianyu.

"Yes. Qi Tianyu and Qi Rongzhi are helping me. If I ascend the throne, I will mind her past and make her my consort. Qi Tianyu will also be promoted." At this time, Chu Liuyue answered honestly without hiding anything from Mr. Liu.

"Prince, you made such an unwise decision!" Mr. Liu patted his leg and lamented.

"Sir, why do you say that?" Chu Liuyue asked.

"You are a Prince of noble birth and superior status. Qi Tianyu certainly wants to play up to you. But you should not have made any agreement with him. And least of all, you should not have let a useless woman spy on Prince Zhou. Prince Zhou is never a person who is easy to be plotted against. Qi Rongzhi is merely a consort. There is no shortage of women in Prince Zhou's Mansion. If this woman is not smart, she can't do any harm to Prince Zhou and may even affect you. And that is what is happening now."

Chu Liuyue looked sullen after hearing his analysis, but what he said was true. Though under the light, his face darkened. He paused for a moment and asked, "What should I do now?"

After a short silence, Mr. Liu pointed at the letter and asked, "Prince, are you sure the letter was from Qi Tianyu?"

"It should be him. He is cautious and always has a backup plan!" Chu Liuyue said.

He was right. Qi Tianyu had made a contingency plan, but the people from Prince Chen's Mansion had cracked it. In the end, this letter fell into Chu Liuyue's hands.

Others could not forge Qi Tianyu's handwriting, but Qi Baiyu was a master of imitation. Moreover, he knew Qi Tianyu's character very well. So, the letter looked fair and reasonable.

"Do you want to keep him?" Mr. Liu asked.

"I'm unable even to fend for myself. Chu Liuzhou will report it to my father. It will be challenging for me to explain myself." With a frown, Chu Liuyue said. He deeply regretted listening to Qi Tianyu's advice and sending Qi Rongzhi to collect information near Chu Liuzhou. How could the slow-witted Qi Rongzhi be a match for Infanta Yuan'an?

Qi Rongzhi was useless even when she was in the Marquis Xing's Mansion. The more Chu Liuyue thought about it, the more regretful he became. Why would he follow Qi Tianyu's advice and consider it an excellent plan to use Qi Rongzhi?

"Since you don't want to keep him, just put all the blame on him!" Mr. Liu said. He had an extremely low opinion of Qi Tianyu. Initially, he was Prince Yue's first assistant, but Prince Yue kept Qi Tianyu's affairs from him. It meant

Prince Yue couldn't trust him with this secret about Qi Tianyu. Anyway, this feeling made Mr. Liu very uncomfortable.

When he competed with Third Young Master Wen, he wouldn't complain even if he had a grievance. It was because Mr. Liu felt a heartfelt admiration for his outstanding talent. But whom the hell did Qi Tianyu think he was? How dare he try to surpass him?

He would drop the matter if he had no chance to fight back. But now, there came such a rare chance to fight back. Anyway, he could never honestly want to save Qi Tianyu.

"Prince, please do everything as usual tomorrow. You should pretend that you don't know anything. If the Emperor asks you to go to the Palace, you can go there open and aboveboard. When Consort Qi and Lord Qi are mentioned, you can..."

Mr. Liu lowered his voice and whispered in Chu Liuyue's ear. Chu Liuyue nodded in agreement. Obviously, he thought it was a brilliant idea.

That night, Chu Liuyue did not return to the inner court and directly slept in the study. When it was time to go to court the next day, he got up early, freshened up, and went to court.

Because of poor health, the Emperor didn't meet his officials as frequently as before. Many memorials to the throne were sent to the Imperial Study by the two Prime Ministers for the Emperor to review.

No one knew if the Emperor would go to court on a specific day. It depended on whether he was feeling well that day. When these officials arrived at the waiting room, they received a definite message from the Palace: the Emperor was not feeling well today and would not go to court. He asked all the officials to go back. If anyone had to see the Emperor for something, they must wait for a while and meet the Emperor in the Imperial Study.

Of course, not everyone could see the Emperor. Only two Prime Ministers, several Ministers, and a few Princes had this honor.

The officials left, and after a while, the waiting room for officials became empty. It was still early when they went to see the Emperor in the Palace. Therefore, several first-class officials and the few Princes sat down and started chatting.

"Eldest Brother." Chu Liuzhou entered later than the others. Upon arrival, he glanced at Chu Liuyue, who was sitting aside. Then, Chu Liuzhou came over and greeted him with a smile.

“Second Brother!” Chu Liuyue smilingly put down the teacup in his hand as if he knew nothing.

Chu Liuzhou sat in the chair next to him and said with a funny look, “Eldest Brother, you look a little different today!”

“How could it be?” Chu Liuyue said with a smile.

“You seem to have no idea what has happened?” Chu Liuzhou raised his eyebrows and yawned. “I’m worn out today. It’s all because of you.”

“What do you want to say today?” Chu Liuyue’s face darkened, and his eyes turned cold, “Second Brother, feel free to say anything you want. I really don’t understand your words!”

“Oh, you look genuinely innocent!” Chu Liuzhou’s lip curled sardonically. Qi Tianyu was tight-lipped and an official appointed by the imperial court. Since Chu Liuzhou didn’t dare to torture him, he didn’t get much information out of Qi Tianyu. However, unlike him, Qi Rongzhi was his consort. So, she confessed everything after a bit of torture.

His consort turned out to be on Chu Liuyue’s side. Whenever Chu Liuzhou thought of that, the anger in his heart flared up. Before he could do anything harmful to Chu Liuyue, Chu Liuyue took preemptive measures and placed his trusted follower in Prince Zhou’s Mansion instead.

As their words gradually turned sharp, several officials couldn’t help turning their heads to see them. Prime Minister Zhang frowned more tightly. Chu Liuyue was his son-in-law. What was going on between them now? It didn’t sound like a good thing...

Chapter 1275 Dead, Chaos

Chu Liuyue looked at Chu Liuzhou indifferently and said, “Second Brother, if you have something to say, go and tell our father. You don’t have to say such words. It’s annoying.”

“Of course, I will tell our father. At that time...” Chu Liuzhou said complacently, feeling he had the upper hand.

Chu Liuyue interrupted him rudely and said, “Second Brother, please do as you wish.”

After that, he ignored him and sat aside to rest with his eyes closed.

Chu Liuzhou gnashed his teeth in a towering rage. When he was about to provoke Chu Liuyue again, several officials looked toward them. He knew he

might place himself at a disadvantage if he went on forcing Chu Liuyue to submit. He might as well deal with Chu Liuyue when their father came later.

They had been waiting in the room for a long time. Perhaps because the two Princes had a quarrel, the others remained silent. This waiting room was very quiet.

Chu Qing also sat there and stole a glance at Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou. He didn't feel at ease and had a headache. Recently, there had been a lot of rumors about him, and he was having a hard time. Though the Emperor had never asked him about it aboveboard, it didn't mean that he wouldn't inquire about it. Thinking of what his mother had said, Chu Qing felt anxious and fearful.

Finally, the Emperor summoned these high-ranking officers and Princes to the Imperial Study.

The Emperor looked terrible. His pale face was a little blue with sickness, and he was in low spirits. He looked at them weakly and let the eunuch lead them to seats.

"Father, something happened in my mansion last night. My consort had an affair with my Eldest Brother and sent messages to him through her brother." Chu Liuzhou took a step forward and knelt.

Hearing this, several officials looked at each other in astonishment. So, Prince Zhou's woman had cuckolded him. Besides, the man she had an affair with was Prince Yue, Prince Zhou's Eldest Brother. Of course, it was not just a matter of an affair. Anything related to the royal family could not be that simple. Some people turned their eyes to Prime Minister Zhang, Princess Yue's father.

Prime Minister Zhang sat there with a poker face, listening quietly as if this matter had nothing to do with him.

"Prince Yue, is that true?" the Emperor asked.

Chu Liuyue also stepped forward and knelt. "Father, it has nothing to do with me. I stayed in my mansion last night and didn't see anyone. I don't even know who his consort was."

He looked calm and replied with composure. Therefore, his words sounded quite convincing.

"Nonsense. You and Qi Rongzhi have been together for a long time. You let Qi Rongzhi marry into my mansion with bad intentions. Qi Tianyu secretly met Qi Rongzhi at night and wanted Qi Rongzhi to give you the recent information

she had collected.” Chu Liuzhou said with hatred, “Eldest Brother, why would you send your woman to my mansion? What did I do that made you hate me so much? You keep your eye on my mansion and press so hard upon me.”

Why would they bear a grudge against each other? Of course, all of this was for the throne. Everyone present knew it.

After hearing Chu Liuzhou’s words with righteous indignation, everyone looked toward Chu Liuyue.

“Second Brother, what are you talking about? Our father bestowed the few consorts on you. What happened to Infanta Yuan’an has nothing to do with me too. Besides, even if your consort is unfaithful to you, you can’t blame it on me, right?”

Chu Liuyue did not panic at all, though his scheme was exposed. He just looked confused. Looking at Chu Liuzhou and the silent Emperor, Chu Liuyue seemed to have suddenly understood the situation. “Second Brother, do you really think it is related to me? Since your consort cheated on you, you should investigate it carefully. You can ask our father for help if you can’t get to the bottom of it.”

He looked at ease and calm.

Such a shameless reply choked Chu Liuzhou, whose eyes widened in anger. The trouble caused by Infanta Yuan’an seemed to have nothing to do with Chu Liuyue. After all, the Emperor selected a few women for Chu Liuzhou to displease and punish Infanta Yuan’an.

A little displeased, the Emperor looked toward Chu Liuzhou in silence. “Could it be that Yuan’an instigated Chu Liuzhou for some ulterior purposes? Did she criticize me for giving Chu Liuzhou a few consorts and concubines?”

“Eldest Brother, she is not chosen by my father. She is the consort sent to me during the Pageant,” Chu Liuzhou explained in a huff.

“Then, it is even less likely to be my business. The Empress selected her for you.” Chu Liuyue shook his head. “I don’t know anything about it.”

Chu Liuzhou was stunned again. It was true. The Empress picked up Qi Rongzhi and sent her to him. Back then, she even praised Qi Tianyu before Chu Liuzhou, saying he was smart and could significantly help Chu Liuzhou. She also said that although Qi Rongzhi seemed to have a weak background, she was the best candidate to be a consort. In the future, his legal wife could well manage such a woman. She was inconspicuous now, but once her two

elder brothers, one in civil and the other in military, made some achievements, they would greatly help him.

“Well, Qi Tianyu is an official working for our father. I suppose you wouldn’t arrest him at will, would you?” Chu Liuyue taught Chu Liuzhou a lesson as an elder brother and didn’t give him a chance to speak. “He is working for our father and also an official in the imperial court. Even if he made a mistake, you should report it to our father and ask him to deal with Qi Tianyu!”

In the beginning, Chu Liuzhou wanted to launch a sudden attack and catch Chu Liuyue off guard, but he didn’t expect Chu Liuyue to convert defeat into victory. When Chu Liuyue criticized him with fervor and assurance, Chu Liuzhou burst into a fury. Raised his hand, he punched Chu Liuyue. “You have an affair with my consort. How could you appear so justified and confident? Chu Liuyue, shame on you. You had the cheek to have an affair with your sister-in-law.”

“How dare you!” The Emperor said harshly.

“Father, he indeed has something to do with that bitch Qi Rongzhi. She admitted it herself.” Chu Liuzhou felt wronged.

“Second Brother, since there is something fishy with your consort, you must investigate it carefully. At this time, she may frame me deliberately and destroy our bond of brotherhood to protect the person behind the scenes.” Chu Liuyue advised in “earnest” words and with “good” intentions. Though Chu Liuzhou punched him, he didn’t lose his temper.

He appeared much more magnanimous and tolerant than Chu Liuzhou.

“Who else will plot against me except you?” Chu Liuzhou was furious and roared in a hoarse voice. In a towering rage, the blue veins on his forehead stood out.

“How could it be?” Chu Liuyue glanced around and finally fixed his eyes on Chu Qing. At this time, Chu Qing cowered in a corner for fear of being noticed. “A group of people in the capital city have been acting wildly recently. They stirred up trouble behind the scenes and deliberately exposed their action. Then, they shifted the blame onto us. Sure enough, they did that to lead others to watch us brothers make fools of ourselves.”

Recently, Chu Qing’s identity was a hot topic. It was rumored that he might be the descendant of an aristocratic family in the previous dynasty. That was to say, Chu Qing also was related to the royal family in the previous dynasty. If people thought about this matter more deeply, they might think that Chu Qing might not even be the deceased emperor’s son.

The ministers looked at Chu Qing more suspiciously.

Chu Liuyue meant Chu Qing's people might have stirred up trouble behind the scenes and deliberately messed everything up...

Chu Liuzhou pursed his lips. Following Chu Liuyue's gaze, he watched Chu Qing with a gloomy look and hesitated in his heart. "Perhaps, Chu Qing instead of Chu Liuyue is behind Qi Rongzhi and Qi Tianyu?"

"Second Brother, think about it. I stayed in my mansion and didn't do anything. But all of a sudden, your consort accused me of scheming against you. When you heard that, you certainly would get angry and complain to our father about it. Then our father might reprimand and punish either of us or both of us. No matter what, we might fall into someone else's trap and let go of the real troublemaker."

Chu Liuyue analyzed, and his eyes were still fixed on Chu Qing.

Chu Liuzhou pursed his lips tightly and inexplicably felt that it made sense. Looking at Chu Qing and Chu Liuyue, he said, "Father, please use your penetrating judgment to distinguish between right and wrong. No matter who framed me, this person must harbor malicious intentions. More importantly, the person must have plotted against us for a long time. My mother indeed chose this consort for me during the Pageant."

The Empress was Prince Zhou's biological Mother. Of course, she couldn't attack Prince Zhou secretly. It meant someone had even tricked the Empress into sending Qi Rongzhi into Prince Zhou's Mansion. As such, this person must have other motives.

"Where are they?" The Emperor finally asked.

"They are still in my mansion. I didn't do anything to Qi Tianyu but just scared Qi Rongzhi." Chu Liuzhou said with a sullen face.

"Second Brother, didn't you bring them here? Since your consort is a spy sent by other people, how could you keep her in your mansion? You should send her to our father as soon as possible." Chu Liuyue said in surprise.

Chu Liuzhou was stunned, and his face changed. He said hurriedly, "Father, please send some people to take her away. I want you to help me find out the truth."

He spoke the same way as Chu Liuyue to show that he had no selfish consideration and was not afraid of being investigated.

The Emperor waved his hand, and some guards hurried to take the people away from Prince Zhou's Mansion. Since this matter was related to the two Princes, it couldn't be trivial.

Chu Liuchen entered the Imperial Study at this time. He had recovered, but since everyone knew he had been in poor health, he could casually decide if he would go to court. Anyway, it was not too late for him to enter the Emperor's Imperial Study. As soon as he entered the door, he saw his two elder brothers kneeling there. Without saying anything, he sat in the chair granted by the Emperor.

Lying on the spacious back of the chair, he casually glanced at the two of them. Then he listened lazily as several ministers and Prime Ministers reported to the Emperor about their routine tasks. Then he glanced at Chu Qing, who looked sullen and slowly closed his eyes to rest.

The guards returned quickly, but Qi Rongzhi, whom they brought back, had died.

"Your Majesty, Consort Qi is dead!" A guard came in and reported to the Emperor.

Chu Liuzhou suddenly sat up straight and asked, "How could she die? She was still alive before I left. Who poisoned her? Father, see? As soon as something happened to me, my consort died. This time, it was this woman. Next time, it might be my turn. Father, please uphold justice for me!"

Chu Liuzhou was not always insolent. At this moment, he felt wronged, and even his eyes turned red.

"How did she die?" The Emperor glanced at his son and asked in a deep voice.

"She hanged herself. I heard from the servants in the mansion that they heard no sound after Consort Qi was locked up. They thought she had fainted. Unexpectedly, she untied her waistband, hung it onto the crossbeam, and took her life in despair," the guard reported.

Chu Liuzhou glared at the guard and said, "What nonsense are you talking about? I didn't do anything to her! How could she hang herself?"

He just flogged her a few times. After all, he had wanted to keep this woman alive as the evidence to confront Chu Liuyue. No matter what, he couldn't kill her.

The guard glanced at him and reported impartially, "She indeed hanged herself. There are many traces of injury on her body. It seems that she has been abused."

Chapter 1276 Cunning Prime Ministers

After suffering from cruelties, she hanged herself when no one was around. It was because she couldn't stand the torture?

Chu Liuzhou was struck dumb with astonishment. He opened his mouth and anxiously defended himself loudly, "Father, it's not like that. I only asked someone to flog this woman a few times. We didn't abuse her."

The Emperor looked at him with disappointment in his eyes. This son made such a scene, but the matter still ended up like this. A consort was of little significance, but she was the daughter of an official. Before she was convicted for her part in the crime, they abused her so brutally that she even committed suicide by hanging herself. When such a thing happened, even the royal family couldn't find any reasonable excuse to convince the public.

A daughter from an official family happily married into his mansion. But a few days later, she was forced to hang herself. No matter what charges others pressed against her, she was innocent before she was officially convicted.

This son was a little stupid!

"Father, trust me. I'm wronged!" Prince Zhou cried out his grievances loudly.

"Guards, take Prince Zhou away to reflect on his mistakes. Send Qi Tianyu back to his home. Consort Qi died of illness. Record her death and bury her as a consort." The Emperor rolled his eyes and ordered lightly. At this point, it was impossible to trace what had happened. The key figure was dead: she actually hanged herself.

"Father, it's not me. I did nothing wrong." Prince Zhou said at the top of his voice, still trying to defend himself. However, two guards pulled him away, one guard on each side.

The Emperor fixed his eyes on Chu Liuyue. Though he didn't say anything, his sharp eyes looked penetrating.

Chu Liuyue lowered his head and inexplicably panicked. Although the crisis brought by Chu Liuzhou had been solved perfectly, he couldn't gain an insight into his father's mind.

The Imperial Study quieted down, and everyone's breathing became much lighter.

After a long while, he heard the Emperor ask, "Commandery Prince Qing, what do you want to say?"

"Is he asking about Chu Qing?" That was a great weight off Chu Liuyue's mind. Sweat glistened on his forehead. At this very moment, he thought his father had seen him through.

"Your Majesty!" Chu Qing knelt in a daze.

"Are you related to the former dynasty's royal family by blood?" The Emperor asked lightly.

"Your Majesty... Well... It's totally groundless. My mother has the same surname as one of the eight aristocratic families in the previous dynasty, but she is just a very distant relative."

Chu Qing felt a chill on his back.

He had a feeling that the Emperor might talk to him about these rumors, but little did he know that the Emperor would be so straightforward. When Chu Liuyue vaguely mentioned that he was secretly stirring up trouble, Chu Qing fell into a panic. He kept shrinking back for fear that the Emperor would notice him.

More and more rumors appeared outside. Chu Qing had not been living a peaceful life these days. There seemed to be a sword hanging over his head. Now the sword fell, and he shivered all over.

"Prime Minister Wen, how's your investigation going?" the Emperor asked in a deep and slow voice.

Prime Minister Wen presented a memorial to the throne from his sleeve and handed it to the Emperor. "Your Majesty, I've checked it out in the past few days. Consort Dowager Qing does have something to do with the aristocratic family of the previous dynasty, but she is indeed a very remote kinsfolk."

Chu Qing's face looked a little better, and he felt like a weight had been slowly lifted from his shoulders. His family background was true. No matter how thoroughly others examined this, they couldn't find anything. His mother also told him to rest assured and said others couldn't discover anything improper.

"But I found something else!" Chu Qing's face turned livid at this moment, and his fingers pressing on the ground twitched.

"Before Consort Dowager Qing entered the Palace, she seemed to have had contact with the people of the previous dynasty. The fleeing prince of the previous dynasty appeared in that area and contacted the family of Consort

Dowager Qing. At that time, the deceased emperor got the news and personally took people to investigate it, but found nothing. But because of this, he met Consort Dowager Qing!"

Prime Minister Wen reported.

Not many people knew about this past. It took Prime Minister Wen a long time to find it out.

Chu Qing could feel the sweat trickling down his back. Motionlessly, he knelt there, trying hard to appease his thumping heart. "They cannot find anything. It's impossible to find anything.

"Mother told me not to panic. Take it easy. Don't panic!"

The Imperial Study quieted down again. After a long time, Chu Qing heard the Emperor say lightly, "So, you didn't find anything special?"

"Yes, there is nothing special about it. The prince of the previous dynasty was later found in another place and killed by the deceased emperor." Prime Minister Wen nodded.

The Emperor waved his hand, and Prime Minister Wen stepped back.

"Commandery Prince Qing, get up!" The Emperor said.

"Thank you, His Majesty... Thank you so much!" Chu Qing choked with sobs and said excitedly.

"Get up. I will give you justice since it has nothing to do with you. Get up first!" The Emperor said slowly.

When Chu Qing stood up, he staggered and almost fell. At that moment, he thought he was doomed, and all his plans failed.

Chu Qing considered himself very lucky... Luckily, his secrets hadn't yet been discovered.

"Chu Liuyue."

"Yes!" Chu Liuyue said hurriedly.

"You have been quite unsettled recently. So, enjoy a peaceful time in your mansion! The conflicts between you and Prince Zhou gave me a headache," the Emperor ordered languidly.

Since the Emperor fell ill, he had been in poor condition. As a result, he could only recline on the voluminous armchair for rest and drawled slightly. Somehow, Prime Minister Wen inexplicably felt such a scene looked quite

familiar. Looking up at the Emperor, he saw him narrowing his eyes thoughtfully. Somehow, he felt such a scene quite familiar.

His heart skipped a beat. Then, he raised his eyes and looked at Prince Chen on the other side. Prince Chen was usually in such an idle state. Although he had recovered, he still viewed everything with a languid attitude. Without saying a word, Prince Chen slightly closed his eyes. Surprisingly, they were alike in appearance and spirit.

“Alike? Familiar?”

Prime Minister Wen’s heart throbbed twice. Suddenly, he lowered his head with horror in his eyes.

Why did the Emperor treat Prince Chen so well? Prime Minister Wen had thought of all kinds of reasons. All this should be done for fame and social compliments. Raising a useless Prince Chen was good for the Emperor’s reputation.

After Prince Chen had recovered, he posed a threat to the throne, but even so, the Emperor still doted on and spoilt Prince Chen. Only Prince Chen remained safe despite the storm when the Emperor suppressed Prince Yue and Prince Zhou. Anyway, Commandery Prince Cheng couldn’t be the heir to the throne.

Others might not know it, but Prime Minister Wen did. Many memorials to the throne had been sent to the Prince Chen’s Mansion, and Prince Chen helped the Emperor review them. When the Emperor was not feeling well, he could ask his sons to check and reply to these memorials. But why didn’t he ask Prince Yue and Prince Zhou to do that? “Isn’t it more justifiable for the two princes to do that?”

Prime Minister Wen clutched his fist. Slowly, his grip loosened, and his face gradually calmed down. He heard that Prince Yue had left. Afterward, the Emperor asked Prince Chen about his health calmly and patiently.

When the Emperor learned that Prince Chen was in good health, he nodded with a smile.

Next, the few ministers reported to Prince Chen about what had happened. Most of the time, the Emperor just sat aside and listened. He would let Prince Chen decide everything and only occasionally make some comments.

Only the heir to the throne could enjoy such special treatment. When Prime Minister Zhang and Prime Minister Wen inadvertently looked at each other,

they saw the meaningful look in each other's eyes. Then they smiled cunningly at each other before looking away.

The matter about Prince Zhou was a big deal for the Prince Zhou's Mansion, but it had little influence on the capital city. It was because the problem was minimized. First, Qi Tianyu forgave Prince Zhou so that the matter wasn't blown up, and Qi Rongzhi was buried quietly. Though she was buried as a consort, very few people knew a consort in the Prince Zhou's Mansion had died.

After all, her death was suspicious.

Qi Tianyu was even promoted because of this. He was transferred to the Ministry of Justice and became Wen Xichi's subordinate.

They became officials in the imperial court at the same time. Wen Xichi soared up into the sky with one start, but Qi Tianyu didn't have such a good fate. He was far inferior to Wen Xichi though promoted to a higher rank.

Shao Wanru had been living a peaceful life these days.

Prince Yue and Prince Zhou returned to their mansions to "reflect on" their deeds. Their family members had to follow suit. Shao Wanru didn't see the few people who liked kicking up a row in the Palace, and days suddenly became peaceful. But during such a quiet period, Shao Wanru didn't expect Qi Tianyu to come — he officially presented a post and asked to see her.

It was unreasonable, but Chu Liuchen let Shao Wanru make her own decision.

After thinking for a while, Shao Wanru went to the front hall to meet Qi Tianyu.

Qi Tianyu had been waiting in the front hall for a long time. When he saw Shao Wanru coming in, his eyes fell on her face. They hadn't seen each other for a long time. Now when they met again, it felt like a lifetime had passed.

The lively girl had become the steady Princess Chen, but he became a good-for-nothing. Subconsciously, he took a step back and bowed to Shao Wanru.

"Greetings, Princess Chen!"

"Lord Qi, you're too polite!" Shao Wanru said calmly and sat in the main seat in the middle, "Please sit down!"

Qi Tianyu sat down in the chair silently. When he looked up at Shao Wanru, he smiled bitterly and said bluntly, "Do you still hate me?"

His words sounded extremely rude. Yujie looked annoyed and was about to scold him, but Shao Wanru reached out and stopped her.

“Well, what you said is wrong. So many years have passed. Even if you let me down back then, now I have nothing to say about it!”

Shao Wanru said calmly.

“It was my fault. For Qin Yuru, I... I was determined to ruin you.” Qi Tianyu said. His smile grew bitter. “The little girl who followed him had been so kind to me, but I made up my mind to destroy her. How could I be so vicious?”

“She disturbed the marriage between Qin Yuru and me, but I didn’t actually care much about it, did I?”

“Lord Qi, a long time has passed. I can’t clearly remember it. If you come here today just for things in the past, I’ll tell you it’s all over!” Shao Wanru said. She reached out to pick up the teacup, took a sip, and put it down. It was apparent that she wanted him to leave.

“Yes, it’s all over. Everything is over. Rongzhi is dead because of me!” Qi Tianyu lowered his head and said with sarcasm in his eyes. He had made mistakes again and again and suffered the consequences of his deeds. There was indeed nothing to say. He took a letter from the pocket before his chest. “I owe you an apology. Today, I’m here to pay off the debt!”

“What’s this?” Shao Wanru asked. Her deep and solemn eyes fell on the bulging envelope, but no one could tell whether she was happy or angry.

“Princess Chen is no longer the innocent little girl she used to be!” Qi Tianyu felt a sharp pain in his heart. “Maybe after I framed that girl, she was no longer that innocent!”

He lowered his head to hide the pain in his eyes and said, “I’m going back to Jiangzhou. It’s useless to keep it. If you need it, you can use it. If not, you can throw it away!”

Chapter 1277 Going Back or Not, He Will Die

After saying that, Qi Tianyu stood up and bowed deeply to Shao Wanru again. Then he turned around and strode away.

“My Lady, what... what does he mean?” Yujie asked in confusion with her eyes on the envelope Qi Tianyu left behind. Then, she looked in the direction that Qi Tianyu walked away.

"Qi Tianyu resigned from his official position!" Chu Liuchen's voice came from behind the screen. Then he came out with Xiao Xuanzi and sat beside Shao Wanru.

"He resigned?" Shao Wanru asked, fluttering her long eyelashes. He resigned as soon as he was promoted. It was quite surprising.

"Yes. Uncle the Emperor also agreed," Chu Liuchen said indifferently and reached out to take the envelope on the table. After tearing it open and reading it, he raised the corners of his mouth sarcastically.

"What's wrong?" Shao Wanru asked anxiously.

"It is the evidence of the deal between Chu Liuyue, Qi Tianyu, and his sister," Chu Liuchen said indifferently.

Shao Wanru certainly had heard about what had happened in Prince Zhou's Mansion. Qi Rongzhi brought trouble upon herself, but Qi Tianyu's behavior made her feel very strange.

She just felt a little curious, but that was not what she cared about. "Is it true?"

"Yes!" Chu Liuchen put down the evidence in his hand and said casually.

"Then shall we hand it over to His Majesty?" Shao Wanru asked. Since it was evidence of Chu Liuyue's schemes, giving it to the Emperor would be better. In her previous life, Chu Liuyue was almost close to achieving a final victory. After dealing with Chu Liuzhou and Chu Liuxin, he would have been the final winner if it hadn't been for Chu Liuchen.

"No need!" Chu Liuchen smiled lazily. Qi Tianyu thought it was the best evidence, but it was not crucial to Chu Liuchen. Not only that, but he also knew the truth about Qi Rongzhi's death.

Of course, Qi Rongzhi didn't hang herself. Chu Liuyue's subordinates faked it. Chu Liuzhou rushed to the Palace and complained to the Emperor about it. But in his mansion, Princess Zhou and his consorts were in a mess. Each of them had different ideas. Who would pay attention to Qi Rongzhi? As a result, Chu Liuyue took this chance and fabricated the evidence. Thus, it looked to others that Qi Rongzhi committed suicide by hanging herself because she couldn't stand the torture.

Chu Liuzhou was supposed to be the victim, but now he had become the bad guy who couldn't distinguish right from wrong. Even if others knew he didn't intend to make a false charge, they would think he was not smart enough. Besides, his reputation was tarnished, for his brutal means led to the death of an official's daughter. Ordinary people didn't know the truth, but the officials

did. His plan became a complete failure, which terribly upset Chu Liuzhou. At this time, it was better not to act rashly as an onlooker.

Chu Liuzhou had always been hot-tempered. How could he bear to suffer such a loss?

“Then what should we do about it?” Shao Wanru pointed at the letter and asked. She didn’t think too much about it. Chu Liuchen would deal with external affairs, and she trusted him very much.

“I will keep it. There is no need to see Qi Tianyu again!” Chu Liuchen raised the corners of his mouth and said with a gentle smile, but his words sounded chilling.

The so-called “no need” meant this person could not be seen again.

“Do you think he regrets it?” Shao Wanru didn’t notice the killing intent in his eyes. Qi Tianyu was an irrelevant person now, so there was no need to waste more effort on him.

“Anyway, he is already a worthless wreck!” Chu Liuchen said gloomily.

Whether Qi Tianyu was sincere or not was not a big deal. He was indeed useless. There was only the road to extinction if he chose to stay in the capital city. He would have to work for Chu Liuyue, who would not allow him to get out of his control. Meanwhile, Chu Liuzhou must also want to get some evidence against Chu Liuyue from Qi Tianyu.

Once they had a conflict, Qi Tianyu’s life might be in danger. Staying in the capital city was courting death, so he might as well retreat to somewhere else far away from the capital city.

However, Chu Liuchen didn’t want to let go of Qi Tianyu for nothing. Even if he didn’t do it himself, there were Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou, right? He would never allow others to spy on and utilize his people.

Qi Tianyu had almost ruined Zhuozhuo’s life. After that, he joined hands with Chu Liuyue to plot against Zhuozhuo again and again. Now, he chose to leave when at a disadvantage. He came here to curry favor with Zhuozhuo, trying to seek shelter from Chu Liuchen. It was such a good deal for him! He was vengeful, not to mention that Qi Tianyu was coveting his most precious treasure. For Chu Liuchen, Shao Wanru was much more valuable than his life...

The news of Qi Tianyu’s death was not spread to the capital city. The two groups who took action came back quietly. Since then, Qi Tianyu forever disappeared in the vast world.

He resigned from his position and went to Jiangzhou, which was far away. The few noble princes were not to blame if anything terrible happened to him on the road.

"Your Highness, Qi Tianyu is dead!" Several guards carefully entered the back door of Prince Zhou's Mansion and reported to Chu Liuzhou in the study.

"How did he die?" Chu Liuzhou asked with cold eyes.

"When we went there, another group also happened to come. We happened to meet each other and started a fight. I don't know who else participated in it secretly. But before we figured out everything, Qi Tianyu was already dead."

The guard reported.

It was a mess in the darkness, and no one noticed who killed or accidentally injured Qi Tianyu. When they checked him over, Qi Tianyu had been stabbed to death by a sword.

"Chu Liuyue did it. He sent his people to do it!" Chu Liuzhou growled with a livid face. After this conflict with Chu Liuyue, he suffered a great loss again. This time, he simply couldn't restrain his fury.

He found out the truth about Qi Rongzhi and forced her to tell the truth, but he was rebuked in the end. Chu Liuzhou's heart thumped violently in his chest, and he couldn't control his anger. If it went on like this, he would be suppressed by Chu Liuyue and lose all chances to win. As the legitimate son of the Empress, how could Prince Zhou be so helplessly aggrieved?

"All of you, leave first!" He waved his hand and ordered coldly.

The guards withdrew.

"Your Highness, don't be angry." Shao Yanru came out from behind the screen and comforted Chu Liuzhou in a low voice.

"How can I not be angry? Chu Liuyue, it's all because of Chu Liuyue. How I wish I could stab him to death this time," Chu Liuzhou gnashed his teeth with hatred and said.

"Prince Yue is cunning. I'm afraid you are no match for him. You'd better think twice before you act!" Shao Yanru comforted him in a sweet voice.

Her words didn't calm him down. Instead, they added fuel to his angry flames. Chu Liuzhou really could no longer stand it and said, "I can't bear it anymore."

"So what if you can't bear your unfavorable situation? Prince Yue is the Emperor's eldest son and your Eldest Brother. See? After such a sensational

event, he is only asked to behave properly and cultivate himself in the mansion.”

Shao Yanru said softly.

Chu Liuzhou suddenly flared up into a fury and said, “I am the Empress’s legitimate son, the only legitimate son.”

“You are wrong. Prince Chen is also the legitimate son!” Shao Yanru said.

“So what? The deceased emperor died long ago, and I am the only legitimate son now. Are you suggesting that Chu Liuyue can surpass me?” The more Chu Liuzhou thought about it, the more annoyed he became. These words sounded sharp but not convincing enough to himself. Even he himself did not believe these words.

“Your Highness, I’m afraid the Emperor doesn’t care whether the heir to the throne is a legitimate son. In his mind, you are all his sons at different ages. You should carefully handle the situation. Don’t get angry. It will spoil your health.” Shao Yanru leaned over, full of tenderness. She gently rubbed Chu Liuzhou’s chest with a coquettish smile.

However, Chu Liuzhou pushed her away with a livid face, not in the mood to accompany her.

Shao Yanru hit the corner of the table heavily and painfully bent down in great pain, but she didn’t dare to cry out in pain and could only watch Chu Liuzhou with a grievance.

But Chu Liuzhou’s mind was occupied by Chu Liuyue. How could he pay attention to her? Frowning, he walked around in circles and said, “No, I’m going to meet my mother in the Palace and ask her to make a decision for me.”

The Empress had met Consort Dowager Qing, who was sent there by the Empress Dowager. The Emperor did not say anything about it. It meant the Empress was not strictly held in confinement. In this case, it was proper for him, her biological son, to see her.

Chu Liuzhou thought so in his heart and took it for granted. Since the ban was lifted once, he didn’t have to meet his mother secretly.

“I’m going to see my mother in the Palace tomorrow.” Chu Liuzhou calmed down a little.

Shao Yanru stood up with a stoop. Finally, the pain wore off. She raised her slightly red eyes and said, “You should be careful. Prince Yue... Maybe the

Emperor prefers Prince Yue. If anything happens to you, I don't want to live either."

Her affectionate confession successfully attracted Chu Liuzhou's attention to her again, but with his eyes on Shao Yanru, Chu Liuzhou felt increasingly perturbed. Both he and Chu Liuyue wanted to get the throne, but only one of them would succeed. Therefore, he had to trample Chu Liuyue underfoot no matter what.

He took Shao Yanru's arm and brought her to the inner room. There, they had another romantic night.

Early the next morning, Chu Liuzhou went to the Palace. But Shao Yanru was still lying in bed, aching all over. Yesterday, Chu Liuzhou was in a bad mood and eagerly tortured her in bed. Now, it was not easy for her to get up with blue and red marks covering her jade-white skin.

"Master, you want to get up?" Her personal servant girl helped her up.

After freshening up, Shao Yanru looked at the gorgeous woman in the dressing table's mirror and silently raised the corners of her mouth. Her smile appeared cold and ferocious. She didn't even have an identity now. She believed it was all Shao Wanru's fault. Even at the cost of her life, she would pull Shao Wanru down and make Shao Wanru fall into a more miserable situation than she did.

"Is there any news from Commandery Prince Cheng?" Shao Yanru asked.

"He asked you to put this thing in Prince Zhou's Mansion." The servant girl took orders from Commandery Prince Cheng. She came to Prince Zhou's Mansion with Shao Yanru and was responsible for contacting the Commandery of Prince Cheng's Mansion.

The servant girl took out an item from her sleeve pocket. Shao Yanru took it. As she looked at it closely, her face changed drastically. "What... what is this?"

"This belongs to the surviving evildoers of the previous dynasty. It is the evidence that could prove they were in contact with each other. Commandery Prince Cheng asked you to keep it in Prince Zhou's place. Of course, it would be best if it fell into Infanta Yuan'an's hands," said the servant girl.

Infanta Yuan'an was Chu Liuzhou's legal wife. Things from her were equivalent to being from Chu Liuzhou. This arrangement could bring the best effect.

Looking at the illegally made pair of phoenix hairpins in her hands, Shao Yanru raised the corners of her mouth and sneered. She knew about Infanta Yuan'an. In the past, she had specially studied several noble Misses who might be her opponents, and Infanta Yuan'an was one of them...

Chapter 1278 One Plot After Another

"Is there really someone in the study?" Infanta Yuan'an asked with a gloomy face. The incident about Qi Rongzhi had nothing to do with her. At most, she uncovered their secret in the beginning. That night, Chu Liuzhou especially praised her and rested in her place. Infanta Yuan'an was complacent about it. Unexpectedly, she was slapped hard by Chu Liuzhou the next day.

In tears, Infanta Yuan'an said she wanted to return to the Ruiping Great Elder Princess's Mansion. But the person she sent over came back with the persuasion from Ruiping Great Elder Princess. She told Infanta Yuan'an that it was not a big deal for a couple to quarrel with each other. At such a critical time, she should work in concert with Prince Zhou.

Ruiping Great Elder Princess was well-informed. Chu Liuyue had delivered a blow to Chu Liuzhou, and Infanta Yuan'an was also involved. Hearing this, Ruiping Great Elder Princess sent a few suggestions to Infanta Yuan'an. Later, Infanta Yuan'an was asked to stay in the mansion in case she made a fool of herself.

After the person from the Ruiping Great Elder Princess's Mansion left, Infanta Yuan'an had no one to support her, so she had to swallow the insult.

In the next few days, Chu Liuzhou didn't come to her courtyard and lived in the study every day. Infanta Yuan'an had sent someone there. Though she didn't find anything, she always felt a woman lived there.

Today, Chu Liuzhou went to the Palace. Again, she was told that a woman seemed to have appeared in the study. From a distance, she didn't look like a servant girl who served the writing brush and the ink in the study.

All the people sent to keep an eye on the study would get into trouble. After that incident, Infanta Yuan'an behaved much more obediently. She didn't send anyone to monitor the study closely. Instead, she asked her people to watch the study from a distance.

"Yes, I saw it clearly just now. There are two women. One looks like a servant girl, and the other is dressed gorgeously. She doesn't look like a servant girl," the old maid who stared at them from a distance reported.

"Let's go and have a look!" Infanta Yuan'an thought for a moment and said.

“My Lady, you’d better not go. His Highness has a bad temper!” Her trusted nurse implicitly reminded her. They hadn’t yet spoken to each other. It couldn’t be good to provoke Prince Zhou at this time. “It’s just a small matter about a woman. Nothing serious. You’d better let it go!”

Her words made Infanta Yuan’an hesitate. The person Ruiping Great Elder Princess sent over also told her to hold on. At this time, she could not irritate Chu Liuzhou.

But she really couldn’t stand it anymore. Gritting her teeth, she suddenly became speechless.

“My Lady, Princess Yuyan is here!” A servant girl came in and reported.

“What’s the matter with her?” Infanta Yuan’an asked grumpily.

“Princess Yuyan said that she has something important to tell you!” the servant girl said.

On second thought, Infanta Yuan’an said, “Let her in!”

She had intended to get the bitch in the study, but she was afraid Chu Liuzhou would explode with rage again. Since Princess Yuyan came, she might as well took this opportunity to suppress her anger. Otherwise, she might mistakenly touch something belonging to Chu Liuzhou and greatly offend him. In the end, she would be in an unfavorable situation.

Princess Yuyan came in quickly. When she entered and saw Infanta Yuan’an, she was all smiles. “Oh, you don’t look well. What happened?”

She stepped forward with a smiling face and sat on the chair next to Infanta Yuan’an.

The servant hurriedly served tea and retreated aside.

“Nothing serious. Maybe I’m not very well today.” Infanta Yuan’an said listlessly. She was in low spirits, and her face was a little pale.

She had been having a hard time recently. She often got angry. How could she feel happy? Initially, she didn’t want to see Infanta Yuan’an.

“Since you’re not feeling well, you must let doctors check your health. I happen to bring some medicinal herbs here. If you need anything, take some. I’ll take the rest to give some to Consort Dowager Qing.” Princess Yuyan said with a smile. She clapped her hands, and two servant girls standing at the door came in, each carrying a brocade box.

Princess Yuyan stood up, walking up to the servant girls. She opened the brocade boxes one by one and asked Infanta Yuan'an to come over and have a look. "Look, there are a lot of them. All of them are precious medicinal materials from the Xu State. I'm afraid you don't have them here."

"What... what's the use of these things?" Infanta Yuan'an asked, casually pointing at a tuberous root in a brocade box. She didn't know much about medicinal materials. Hearing Princess Yuyan's introduction, she came over to see them.

"It can regulate your body functions and is particularly good for women. It can also warm the uterus and help women get pregnant." Princess Yuyan said proudly, "You don't have this here, and it can only be found in our Xu State. There is not much of it. I wouldn't share it with you if it weren't for our good relationship."

"How to use it?" Infanta Yuan'an was curious about it. Ruiping Great Elder Princess sent someone over and repeatedly reminded her not to be angry with Prince Zhou for such a trivial matter. Instead, she should hurry up and give birth to an eldest legitimate son.

"Grind it into powder and keep it in the pouch on you. It will give out a medicinal fragrance and slowly adjust your physical condition," Princess Yuyan said.

"Well... There is no need to take it?" Infanta Yuan'an asked in surprise.

"Of course not. You can't take it. Even though the medicine is good, it should not be taken orally. If you eat it, something bad will happen," Princess Yuyan replied with a smile.

"What will happen?" Infanta Yuan'an asked with her heart skipping a beat.

"If any woman takes it, she may not feel anything in the beginning, but it will make women infertile. Gradually, the woman will find that she cannot get pregnant. So, never eat it! You should be careful when using it. It has no taste. If you accidentally take it, it will be troublesome."

Princess Yuyan warned her.

Infanta Yuan'an appeared a little shocked but soon smiled. "How could I take these medicinal materials? Thank you anyway."

"Don't mention it. We are of the same family and good friends. There is no need to thank me!" Princess Yuyan said casually. Then, she walked to the second brocade box with a few stalks of grass.

“What... what is it?” Infanta Yuan’an didn’t know the Changxing Grass. Seeing a few stalks of grass carefully placed in the box, she was surprised. No matter how she looked at them, these stalks of grass didn’t look like precious medicinal materials.

“This is... Oh, there is a mistake!” Princess Yuyan blushed, put down the grass in her hand, and quickly closed the brocade box.

“What exactly is this?” Infanta Yuan’an became increasingly curious and reached out to open the brocade box.

“They are really not decent items!” Princess Yuyan pulled Infanta Yuan’an’s hand away with an embarrassed look.

Seeing her like this, Infanta Yuan’an became even more curious. She put down her hand, but her face darkened. “You said we were close, but I don’t think you mean it. You even feel reluctant to show me a few stalks of grass. How can you say that we have a good relationship!”

After that, she turned to leave.

Seeing that she was pissed off, Princess Yuyan anxiously stamped her feet and said, “Okay... I’ll give them to you. They are just ordinary grass, not of the highest quality.”

“I want ordinary ones as well!” Infanta Yuan’an curled her lips and secretly blamed her for being very stingy about sharing her treasures. However, she didn’t show displeasure on her face. “Of course, if you hate to part with them, then forget it. A gentleman does not take something others love!”

“Okay. Give the brocade boxes to Princess Zhou! Leave all the boxes here!” Princess Yuyan ordered loudly. Great! This time, even all the previous medicinal herbs became hers. Infanta Yuan’an, very satisfied with this result, pulled Princess Yuyan to sit down. “How are you doing in the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion? Did the woman surnamed Mo bully you?”

“What else could I do? Mo Qiuyi is scheming. She has been bugging Commandery Prince Qing all day long,” Princess Yuyan denounced crossly and even forgot to feel distressed about her brocade boxes with treasures.

“But she is far less beautiful than you!” Infanta Yuan’an said.

“So what? They are childhood sweethearts.” Princess Yuyan looked sullen.

“Since I married into the mansion, I have been getting along well with Consort Dowager Qing. But I can hardly be on good terms with Mo Qiuyi!”

“Then what should we do?” Infanta Yuan’an frowned and said with sympathy, “After entering the mansion, those cheap women are all shameless. They tried every means to seduce Prince Zhou. Don’t they know their inferior status?”

“That’s right!” Princess Yuyan sighed and said fiercely, “I will drag that bitch Mo Qiuyi down one day. I am the future legal wife of Commandery Prince Qing.”

She used to have many wild ambitions, but since she had married into the Commandery Prince Qing’s Mansion, she could only bind her fate with Chu Qing. What angered her most was Mo Qiuyi. This woman considered herself the legal wife of Commandery Prince Qing. Every day, she put on airs in the mansion without rhyme or reason, as if she were the legal wife.

For the overall situation, she didn’t retort upon her and even came here according to the arrangement of Commandery Prince Qing and her.

Now that everything was done, she stood up and left.

Infanta Yuan’an affectionately sent them to the gate of the mansion. As soon as Princess Yuyan left, Infanta Yuan’an’s face darkened. “Let’s go to the study!”

“My Lady...” The servant girl said fearfully. She tried to stop her but did not dare to do it. This time, the trusted nurse was not around, so no one had the guts to go forward and persuade her.

“Let’s go!” Infanta Yuan’an turned around. She would not give up until she went there and checked it out.

There was a servant at the door of the study. Seeing Infanta Yuan’an coming over, he hurried forward to bow and said, “Greetings, Your Highness. The Prince is now in the Palace.”

That was to say, Chu Liuzhou was not in the room, so Infanta Yuan’an should go back.

“I’m going in to find a few books!” Infanta Yuan’an said coldly.

The servant didn’t dare to make way for her. He looked at her hesitantly and said, “Your Highness, how about you go back and wait for a while? When my master comes back...”

“Drag him away!” Infanta Yuan’an interrupted him and snapped.

Two old maids came over, stood on each side of the servant, and pulled him away. While struggling desperately, the servant shouted at the top of his voice. “Your Highness, my master said the study is an important place and

outsiders are not allowed to enter! Please, please spare me. If my master returns, he will kill me!”

“Am I an outsider?” Infanta Yuan’an snorted indignantly. The more flustered the servant was, the more firmly she believed there was something fishy inside. With a deep frown, she took a few steps forward, pushed open the half-closed door, and looked inside — there was no one. Everything in the study was in order, and nothing unusual appeared. However, this was only the outer room.

Infanta Yuan’an asked the others to stay outside the door. Then, with only one servant girl, she took a few steps and walked to the inner chamber’s door. There, she composed herself. This was the place that she had never entered since she got married. Chu Liuzhou’s people handled everything inside it. She could not get anything out of them since they were Chu Liuzhou’s trusted subordinates.

She placed her hand on the door. Gently, she pushed it inward, and it opened in response to her move...

Chapter 1279 Rebellion, Mother and Son’s Conspiracy

Infanta Yuan’an didn’t expect the study to be so quiet.

She had prepared for so long and repeatedly told herself she was the legal wife. Therefore, it didn’t matter even if Chu Liuzhou angrily complained about it to the people in the Palace. She had been hesitating for so long, but nothing was inside. She felt confused and powerless. There was nothing suspicious inside. How could it be?

Infanta Yuan’an was stunned for a while. Then, she stepped into the room and checked everything there carefully. She didn’t believe Chu Liuzhou would live here alone.

The study’s inner chamber was almost the same as an ordinary inner room. However, it was very large. Chu Liuzhou’s study was much larger than an ordinary person’s, and the inner chamber of his study was larger than an ordinary family’s. Even the inner room where Infanta Yuan’an lived was a little smaller than this one.

There was a table by the window with a complete set of writing brushes, ink sticks, paper, and inkstones. These items were neatly arranged. It was obvious that someone was especially in charge of tidying this place.

Infanta Yuan’an found nothing wrong.

She stood before the window and frowned deeply. She looked at the room again unwillingly, but there was nothing unusual.

“My Lady, what’s that?” The servant girl who followed her in was sharp-eyed. She suddenly saw something flash in the sunlight by the window and asked anxiously.

Infanta Yuan’an lowered her head to see what she was pointing at. When her eyes landed on a half-open drawer, she was stunned and took out a phoenix hairpin from inside the drawer.

The hairpin was gorgeously engraved with a phoenix of nine tails. The gems inlaid on it were all rubies of the same size. They were polished very carefully and were flawless. At first glance, she knew it was a rare piece of jewelry. Then, Infanta Yuan’an took out another hairpin. There was a pair of hairpins instead of one.

The two phoenix hairpins looked precisely the same. Only the phoenix heads were different, one turning to the left and the other right.

“My Lady, the Prince will give you this pair of hairpins, right? It’s stunning!” The servant girl exclaimed.

Infanta Yuan’an looked at a strand of hair on the hairpin. There was a faint fragrance lingering on it. The hair must have been accidentally torn off when a woman removed the hairpin from her head.

Therefore, this pair of hairpins was not for her but for another woman.

She felt a surge of anger in her heart. “If Chu Liuzhou ascends the throne, I will be the future empress. Then I will be qualified to wear such a phoenix hairpin. But who is the woman hiding in Chu Liuzhou’s study? Did Chu Liuzhou promise her anything? Will he make her the future empress? Otherwise, he would not have made such a hairpin for this woman.

“There is more than one hairpin but a pair. He must dote on this woman very much.”

She closed her eyes hard and suppressed the jealousy and hatred in her heart. She recalled her life since she married into Prince Zhou’s Mansion. Chu Liuzhou had always been indifferent to her: he had only been to her place twice. She remembered what happened when he stayed in her room the second time. He came over because she had caught Qi Rongzhi for him. It could be regarded as a reward. But for all the rest of the time, he had been living in the study and accompanying another woman.

“Does it mean I will have to give the position as an empress to that woman if he becomes the Emperor? After all, if I don’t give up the position, I will be killed.”

“My Lady...” Infanta Yuan’an, grasping the hairpin tightly in her hand, had been standing there with a ferocious face. Seeing this, the servant girl asked in fear.

“Put the hairpins away!” Infanta Yuan’an gritted her teeth with hatred and said. She violently threw the hairpin in her hand into the drawer, turned around, and left.

The servant girl didn’t dare to hesitate. She went to the drawer and put away the two hairpins. A jewelry box was in the drawer, and the two hairpins were supposed to be inside it.

The servant girl hurried out after putting the jewelry box in her sleeve pocket. At this time, Infanta Yuan’an had walked far away...

Prince Zhou met the Empress.

The Empress was in a good mood. When she heard her son had come, she did not refuse to see him. Instead, she asked someone to lead Chu Liuzhou in.

“Greetings, Mother.” Chu Liuzhou hadn’t seen the Empress for a long time. Although the Empress was thin, she sat there safe and sound, which relieved him. Without the Empress’s guidance, Chu Liuzhou had a hard time recently.

“Take a seat. Didn’t your father ask you to reflect on yourself in the mansion? Why did you come here at this time?” asked the Empress.

“Why should I do that? Chu Liuyue plotted against me, but my father didn’t find the truth. Instead, he said it was my fault and ordered me to reflect on my mistakes.” Chu Liuzhou was full of anger and said with hatred, “Father is getting older, so he becomes so muddle-headed when handling things.”

“How dare you!” The Empress reproached harshly, and her face darkened.

“Mother, do you also think I was wrong?” Chu Liuzhou felt so wronged.

“A consort died in your mansion. Didn’t you think about why it would happen? Your father asked you to return to your mansion and reflect on yourself. Straighten out all the affairs in your mansion now. Isn’t Yuan’an in your mansion now? Let her help you put the inner court in order, and you should put things in the outer court straight.”

The Empress said.

“Yuan’an is useless. She caught Qi Rongzhi but didn’t keep an eye on her. As a result, Qi Rongzhi hanged herself.” Chu Liuzhou was quite angry at Infanta Yuan’an. “Mother, why did you choose her? She is no good to me and even hinders me. Other brothers only married a legal wife or a legal wife and a consort at most. However, I married my legal wife and consorts at the same time. It was so humiliating.”

The cause of this matter was that Infanta Yuan’an and Princess Yuyan plotted against Shao Wanru and Zhang Qilan.

“Yuan’an is, at the very least, on your side. Besides, I was deceived by Qi Rongzhi. If I had known that she had something to do with Chu Liuyue, I wouldn’t have let her marry into your mansion. She hanged herself in your mansion. It showed that there was something wrong with your mansion. Your father asked you to reflect on yourself because he was angry with you for being unreasonable.”

The Empress said.

“But I think my father is partial to Chu Liuyue and wants to make him the crown prince.” Chu Liuzhou did not believe her words.

“What nonsense are you talking about!” The Empress said unhappily.

“Mother, you have been living a secluded life in the Phoenix Palace during this period. But Chu Liuyue set me up this time. Have you ever thought about it? The matter is not complex, but my father always helped Chu Liuyue. He is in poor health, so he must want to appoint someone to be the crown prince. At this time, either Chu Liuyue or I will be the crown prince. However, Chu Liuyue stole my thunder.”

Chu Liuzhou said unconvincedly.

“Are you telling the truth?” The Empress was dubious of his words.

“Of course, it’s true. Mother, since you can go out now, go to meet my father. I’m afraid that he will suddenly... I might be caught off guard outside the Palace. I heard Consort of Virtue went to his place often, though she might not see him every time. But you’re different. As the Empress in control of the imperial harem, you can always see him. The previous empress was said to be there when the deceased emperor died of illness.”

Chu Liuzhou suggested.

His words made sense, and the Empress had the same idea. She had wondered if she should wait a little longer and could not be too anxious. But now she felt the urge to do it.

“Your father is seriously ill?”

“He doesn’t seem to have much strength. My father used to sit upright, but recently I saw him lazily lean back in his chair like Chu Liuchen. If he weren’t in low spirits, he would sit straight up like before.” Chu Liuzhou analyzed.

The Empress was silent. She looked around and found no one else around them. Her eyes became slightly cold. “Do you think your father may...”

Before she finished her words, Chu Liuzhou understood it. He nodded vigorously and unconsciously lowered his voice. “Mother, think about it... No one can sit still when my father is seriously ill. And I heard he suddenly vomited blood. I didn’t see the previous medical records, but he can’t be good with such a feeble look. He is not in a good condition recently.”

To persuade the Empress, Chu Liuzhou deliberately exaggerated the facts. From his words, his father seemed to be in danger.

The Empress’s face changed, and she sat up slightly straight. “Then, what do you want to do?”

“Mother, do you remember you gave me the token of secret guards last time? I think we can use it now!” Chu Liuzhou cautiously lowered his voice until only the Empress could hear it, even though only he and his mother were in the hall.

“You... you want to...” The Empress was terrified.

“Mother, there is no other way. You are supposed to be the powerful Empress. However, you are not as influential as an imperial consort. If you are willing to cooperate, I will... Only you should be the master of the imperial harem. My future empress would have to get your approval before making any decision. Now, except for Consort Lan, even Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming do not respect you. Two imperial consorts, instead of you, are holding the power of the imperial harem. Mother, are you willing to stay in such an inferior position?”

“Am I willing to accept this? Of course not.”

The Empress gritted her teeth with determination. She had endured so many humiliations for so many years just for her son to ascend the throne in the future. Then, as the mother of the future emperor, even the Empress Dowager living in the Palace of Benevolent Peace now could not do anything to her. She could even drive the old woman to another palace and occupy the Palace of Benevolent Peace.

The emperor in the future would be her son, not the old woman's son. Her son had always been close to her instead of that old woman.

Her heart thumped twice, and there was a trace of malicious pleasure in her eyes. At that time, she would be sitting up high in a leading position with real power. Now, she was still the powerless and aggrieved Empress.

"Are you sure you can do that?" The Empress also lowered her voice and asked in a queer, tight voice.

"Mother, don't worry. Nothing serious. I just want you to keep a close eye on my father. Besides you, you can send more people to watch him closely. If there is a chance..." Speaking of this, Chu Liuzhou made a neat motion of chopping his head with his hand. The Empress was so scared that she trembled and hurriedly covered her mouth with a handkerchief. "Don't... don't talk nonsense. That's your father!"

"Mother, you are my only family. As for my father, he has many sons, Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuxin. And he even preferred Chu Liuchen to me. Because Consort Lan is his favorite consort, he cares about his nephew more than his son!" Chu Liuzhou said furiously. He had spent some gloomy days recently. As soon as Shao Yanru stirred him up, he felt an impulse to do something in a rage.

The Empress swallowed hard and gritted her teeth. "Then... then you have to be careful. You can't take action unless you have no choice."

"Mother, don't worry. I won't do anything before I'm fully prepared. Is the token in my hand or yours?" Chu Liuzhou asked.

The Empress grabbed Chu Liuzhou's hand and panicked in her heart. The mother and son were now discussing how to murder the Emperor of this country. If others knew it, both of them would be sentenced to death. "You can take it. If... if anything happens, you must put the blame on Chu Liuyue or Chu Liuchen."

"Mother, don't worry. I have my own plan!" Chu Liuzhou said.

Chapter 1280 A Nasty Mess With Kindnesses and Wrongs!

"Master, Prince Zhou went to see the Empress." After entering the room, Xiao Xuanzi reported to Chu Liuchen, who was standing before the window.

Chu Liuchen was dressed in a black robe with a wide collar. The wind blowing through the window was cold. In the darkness, only this room had a trace of light. His figure looked only in black and white, exuding a gloomy and strange aura.

“Keep an eye on him!” Chu Liuchen said without looking back.

“Then... What about First Miss Shao?” Xiao Xuanzi asked. Their people had been watching First Miss Shao and found she had secretly contacted people outside the mansion. In the end, they found out that the person behind the scenes was under the command of Commandery Prince Cheng.

“If she leaves the mansion, try to send her to Chu Liuyue,” Chu Liuchen said indifferently, slightly curling up his delicate lip.

“Will she leave Prince Zhou?” Xiao Xuanzi smacked his lips and asked. First Miss Shao was now favored by Prince Zhou. Compared with Infanta Yuan'an, she was the one Prince Zhou cared about. Would she be willing to leave at this time?

“She will leave. Keep an eye on her. If she wants to go back to find Commandery Prince Cheng, inform Chu Liuyue's people first.” Chu Liuchen said casually. As he turned to walk out, his wide sleeves moved along, leaving a dark trace. They fluttered a little under the orange light but still looked dark.

“Yes, I understand!” Xiao Xuanzi followed out and said.

They went downstairs. Instead of going to the inner court, Chu Liuchen went straight to the side door to the imperial harem. When the door opened, Chu Liuchen strode out into the Palace. Two royal guards were hiding in the dark outside. When they saw Chu Liuchen step out, they came out of the hiding place and bowed respectfully to him. Then they retreated silently as if no one had ever appeared there.

Chu Liuchen took a path to the Emperor's Imperial Study, and Xiao Xuanzi followed closely behind him. Since both of them were dressed in dark clothes, so their figures were not conspicuous at night.

There was a shortcut leading to the Emperor's Imperial Study. It was inconspicuous during the day. There was a locked door in the middle of this path. No one would come here. At night, many trusted guards of the Emperor would hide along the way. As such, no one could reach this door without permission.

As Chu Liuchen walked over, these secret guards showed up one after another. After bowing to Chu Liuchen, they returned to their original positions. When they arrived at the door, a guard came out of his hiding place and opened it. Chu Liuchen entered the door with Xiao Xuanzi, and the door was locked again. Then, the path still looked like a dark dead end.

After passing through the door, they reached a small courtyard and went around its front door. Then, there appeared another path. They were now very close to the Imperial Study.

The Emperor was still in the Imperial Study with the lamp lighted. Hearing the sound outside, he raised his head and saw Chu Liuchen. A faint smile emerged on his pale face. He had short dry coughs. Involuntarily, he turned his eyes to the screen behind him and looked back calmly.

"Greetings, Uncle the Emperor." Chu Liuchen stepped forward and bowed.

"Sit down first!" The Emperor gave a slight cough again and said mildly. Under the light, he looked frail and leaned against the chair in low spirits.

"What have you found so far?" After Chu Liuchen sat down, the Emperor coughed again and asked.

"Nothing in particular, but I found something strange... My Second Brother went to the Empress's place today," Chu Liuchen said bluntly.

The Emperor looked sullen. After a long while, he said, "Keep an eye on Chu Liuzhou."

"Yes!" Chu Liuchen answered indifferently.

The Emperor pointed to the two stacks of memorials beside him and said, "Take them away and reply to them later!"

"Uncle the Emperor, you can ask Eldest Brother to deal with them." Chu Liuchen looked up at the two piles of memorials and refused.

"Chen'er... Consort Lan..." The Emperor frowned and carefully observed Chu Liuchen's expression with guilt in his eyes.

"Uncle the Emperor, I know nothing about her!" Chu Liuchen stood up and bowed deeply to the Emperor. "You are in poor health and should take good care of yourself. Don't worry too much!"

He was leaving without any intention of playing up to him.

The Emperor sighed. At this time, Chu Liuyue, Chu Liuzhou, and Chu Liuxin would be sensible enough to say something to flatter him. None of them was as careless as him. Thinking of his self-abandon actions in the past, the Emperor knew Chu Liuchen almost had no intention to butter him up for the throne. His heart softened. Chu Liuchen was the most like him!

The Emperor felt the most reassured to use him. The other sons might hurt him for the throne, but this child was the least likely to have such an idea. The

Emperor felt guilty about many things, but he could do nothing. He was most sorry for this child.

Xiao Xuanzi walked after Chu Liuchen, holding the memorials in his arms. Seeing Chu Liuchen leave, the Emperor sighed heavily again.

Footsteps came from behind, and a woman appeared behind the screen with tears on her fair-skinned face. It was Consort Lan. Gazing affectionately after Chu Liuchen's receding figure, she whispered, "Chen'er!"

She sobbed too bitterly to speak.

The Emperor stood up. When he walked up to Consort Lan, he took her hand, pulled her to sit on a large dragon chair aside, and comforted her softly, "Don't cry. Chen'er..."

"Does he hate me... Does he hate me deeply..." Consort Lan cried with sadness in her eyes. "It has been so many years. He has never been close to me since he was a child. No matter what I gave him, he didn't want it... He... Can't he accept me?"

"Don't be so sad... He will figure it out slowly." The Emperor comforted her.

"I don't think he could come around. Otherwise, he wouldn't have abandoned himself to despair. I know it's all... my fault... I'm a sinner..." Consort Lan burst into tears. If it hadn't been for Chu Liuchen, she would have broken down long ago. He was the only reason that kept her going. "Back then... Back then, I said if anything bad happened to Chen'er, I would follow him..."

"Don't mention these past things. Chen'er has always been fine, hasn't he? You also said that he used to live in self-abandon. Now he is fine and enjoys his life with his beloved wife. He may be upset when he learns about something, but he won't do anything stupid. In the past, he gave himself up as hopeless, but he won't think so now."

The Emperor looked at Consort Lan's sad face, held her hand, and comforted her. "It's all my fault. I let you and your son down. Because of me, you two got into serious trouble. I will make up for it. Trust me. Chen'er will be fine, and so will you."

As the Emperor, he could choose any woman he liked. But in fact, his most beloved woman was only this one right before him. Because of many unexpected things, they couldn't be together. Although they accompanied each other now, he had to conceal her identity.

“Chen’er must have known it a long time ago.” Consort Lan looked up at the Emperor with tears, but her eyes were empty. Though her eyes were on the Emperor, she seemed to look at another person through him.

“He is so smart... He should have guessed it long ago.” The Emperor sighed. He had no choice in this matter. He felt something bad would happen to Chu Liuchen, the child he protected wholeheartedly. He felt even more afraid that something terrible might happen to Consort Lan. He had been carefully guarding her in the depths of the Palace for so many years. Even the Empress had no right to see her, let alone ask Consort Lan to salute her.

They had guessed many times whether Chu Liuchen knew the truth or not. However, they were too embarrassed to tell him the truth. They carefully protected him for fear that he would die if he took things too hard.

They had been carefully cherishing him for so many years because they wanted Chu Liuchen to be fine. Consort Lan would find various ways to please Chu Liuchen. It was okay when Chu Liuchen was little and ignorant. But Chu Liuchen detested Consort Lan when he grew up a little. Moreover, he would throw away all the things she sent over.

“He hates me... He still hates me!” Hearing the Emperor’s words, Consort Lan burst into tears.

“It’s okay. He has Princess Chen now, and he treats his young wife very well,” the Emperor comforted softly. Lowering his head, he coughed lightly a few more times. His health was getting worse day by day. Though he had been taking medicine recently, he didn’t get better. The imperial physicians had said his illness was not serious, but why couldn’t he recover?

In the room, the aroma of burning incense made of sandalwood was the best for calming the mind, but the Emperor still felt uncomfortable.

“What’s wrong? Are you feeling unwell?” Consort Lan wiped her tears with a handkerchief. She observed the Emperor’s face and said anxiously, “I’ll ask the imperial physician to come over and check on you.”

“It’s okay. This happens a lot. Maybe I’m old!” The Emperor said indifferently, reaching out to hold Consort Lan’s hand. After thinking for a while, he said, “If I let Chen’er inherit the throne, are you willing to go around with me? Just the two of us!”

“Your Majesty... You...” Consort Lan raised her eyes in surprise when she understood what the Emperor meant.

“Yes, that’s what you think. I’m tired and old. Chen’er has grown up and is healthy. I’ve asked the imperial physician. Chen’er is fine now. He looks weak, but in fact, he is stronger than ordinary people. Although he was not strong in the past, he has been practicing martial arts. This can be regarded as his hobby!”

The Emperor said.

Consort Lan cried even more sadly. Others practiced martial arts for self-defense, but Chu Liuchen did it only because he liked it. He kept practicing it even if he had just vomited blood and even fainted at last. He could exert every ounce of energy for his hobby. Consort Lan once secretly saw this scene and felt very distressed.

“His pretty young wife is perfect... He loves her very much... Fortunately, she is with him.” Consort Lan cried and said. She was delighted that Chu Liuchen could marry a woman who could inspire him. Otherwise, he might still have no urge to progress and soon pass away in desperation. Just because of this, Consort Lan couldn’t be more grateful to Shao Wanru.

Without Shao Wanru, Chu Liuchen wouldn’t have changed for the better. Consort Lan was very clear about this.

“Well, stop crying. It will harm your health. You are not in perfect condition!” the Emperor said.

Consort Lan had been living in seclusion for so many years. Although no one disturbed her, she had always been depressed. The Emperor said again, “You will have to accompany me to see these beautiful rivers and mountains in the future. Take good care of yourself. I will fulfill all my promises to you.”

“Really?” Consort Lan lifted her tearful eyes.

“Of course!” the Emperor said softly.

“Your Majesty, the Empress is here!” A eunuch came in and lowered his head, not daring to stare at them.

“Why would she come here at this time?” Consort Lan stopped crying.