

## Medical Princess 1081

### Chapter 1081 Get Ready to Lose for Advancing, Who Will Get That?

"What kind of painting do you want?" Rui'an Great Elder Princess was drawn to this matter and exclaimed in surprise, "The painting you've prepared for the Empress Dowager is nice. Do you need more?"

She was worried that Shao Wanru didn't know how to choose gifts, so she patted her hand lovingly and remarked, "Too many gifts aren't necessary. Just pick the best one for her. The Empress Dowager has seen all kinds of good things. The expression of your goodwill is the most important thing. Your painting of maple leaves expresses your kind feelings and has a striking originality. It is the best. Why take the trouble to collect other inferior gifts?"

"Grandma, I want to view more scripts and paintings. Maybe I can do better," Shao Wanru explained.

"That's good. I have some. You can take away any of them that takes your fancy." Rui'an Great Elder Princess nodded approvingly, thinking that Shao Wanru meant to put all paintings' ideas together to perfect her previous painting.

"I certainly will see the calligraphy and paintings you collected. But, Grandma, please also pay attention to other works of art for me. If you encounter any suitable ones, buy them for me. Later on, pass on a message saying that you are looking for some first-class artworks," Shao Wanru made an immediate explanation. Anyway, she should first spread this news.

"Okay, I know!" Rui'an Great Elder Princess agreed with a nod.

"Sister." Shao Yuanhao came out from the door curtain. He has grown up to be an early youth, no longer the profligate boy he used to be. As he saw Shao Wanru, his eyes lit up with joy. He took two steps forward and bowed respectfully to Shao Wanru and Rui'an Great Elder Princess. "Greetings! But why didn't you take me with you when you went out?"

Shao Wanru smiled. The outlines of his face showed his fine features, which were somewhat different from Shao Wanru's. He looked handsome. Though his face was still childish, Shao Wanru could tell he would become a man of remarkable presence.

Compared to three years ago, he has not only grown taller but has also been more sensible. He was no longer the little boy who cried with a flood of tears when forced to study three years ago.

"You should concentrate on your study. How could we disturb you?" Shao Wanru said.

"Hao'er, come here and sit next to me!" Rui'an Great Elder Princess said, looking at her beloved grandchildren with a bright smile.

Shao Yuanhao sat beside Rui'an Great Elder Princess and said, "Sister, I've been very serious about studying. Even if I went out with you, I wouldn't delay my study. Before Prince Chen left, he told me to accompany grandma and you if you had to deal with something. Since there are no other men at home, I should be there to support you even if I don't need to do anything!"

Shao Yuanhao threw back his slim shoulders and promised, feeling that his brother-in-law was right. Shao Yuanhao feared Prince Chen at the beginning, but he now admired him very much. Of course, he

changed his attitude through a painful process. Anyway, he didn't feel like mentioning the insignificant past. As an ignorant and mischievous boy, Shao Yuanhao had done many improper things that he couldn't bear to think of!

Prince Chen said he must accompany his dear wife though he was sick and weak. Likewise, Shao Yuanhao was also obligated to look after his elder sister as a man, though at such a tender age.

Seeing him display the firm attitude of a mature man, Shao Wanru and Rui'an Great Elder Princess exchanged a glance and couldn't help smiling in unison.

"Great, Hao'er, study hard, and I'm waiting for you to realize your big ambition," Shao Wanru said with a smile.

"Sister, don't worry. I will back you up. If, if Chu Liuchen dares to bully you... I, I will never spare him."

Shao Yuanhao clenched his fists. Although slightly frightened, he still gritted his teeth with determination to show that he could keep his word.

He was afraid of this scheming brother-in-law, but even so, he must demonstrate his masculinity before his sister, letting her know he could protect her.

Shao Wanru stood up, walked to Shao Yuanhao, and asked softly, "Hao'er, you've grown up and are now the Heir of Marquis Xing. But Hao'er, if... I mean, if you lose the title, can you bear it?"

"I don't care. I'll be fine if you and my grandma are okay," Shao Yuanhao said without hesitation.

When he was little and naive, people in the mansion often told him that his Eldest Brother would take charge of this mansion. Everything there had nothing to do with him. Everyone, including his personal servants, kept telling him to eat, drink, and have fun. Having been gradually influenced by what he constantly heard, Shao Yuanhao never took the title of "heir of a duke" as his.

Whenever talking about his parents in the mansion, all the people around him would shake their heads, blaming them for being irresponsible. Tragically, they not only caused Old Madam to lose her son and daughter-in-law, and left him without parents at such a young age. According to these people, Infanta Qinghua, Shao Yuanhao's mother, was overly self-opinionated and unfilial to Old Madam back then. Later, Infanta Qinghua instigated her husband to leave the mansion, which was the start of the tragedy.

In a word, his parents brought the great calamity upon themselves, while the mansion had been treating them with the utmost tolerance and kindness.

These remarks made Shao Yuanhao very uncomfortable because he had begun to learn some facts about life. He even scolded and beat his servant for this. But even so, they insisted on gossiping about his parents. Even if they didn't say it before him, they would talk behind his back and intentionally let him hear their conversation.

At that time, he was too young to handle mundane affairs. So, he went straight to tell Old Madam and Madam Jiang, who he thought loved him the most. On the surface, they appeased him and gently reproved the servants who gossiped behind him. After that, these servants stuck to their old way and slandered him secretly with ever-increasing intensity.

Shao Yuanhao was puzzled about this situation in the past, but now he understood everything.

All this was because all the people in Marquis Xing's Mansion took malicious pleasure in seeing him in misfortune. Deep in his heart, Shao Yuanhao didn't want at all to be the heir of the duke of Marquis Xing's Mansion.

"Sister, the position of the heir of the duke is of little significance. I don't care whether I have it or not," Shao Yuanhao said in all seriousness with a straight face.

Looking at this pair of grandchildren, Rui'an Great Elder Princess was on the verge of crying and turned away from them to wipe her eyes with a handkerchief. Like Shao Yuanhao, she also took the Marquis Xing's Mansion title lightly. After so many years of trouble, she simply couldn't bear to see the second branch of Marquis Xing's Mansion get the title that initially belonged to her daughter and son-in-law.

If it hadn't been for the second branch, her daughter and son-in-law wouldn't have been forced to leave the capital. All the tragedies wouldn't have happened.

Fortunately, both Shao Wanru and Shao Yuanhao were sensible. Lucky for Rui'an Great Elder Princess, her granddaughter had come back and helped her bring Hao'er to her mansion. Now that she could bring him up in person, these people in the Marquis Xing's Mansion could no longer harm his healthy growth.

Her two grandchildren had a close blood relationship with masters in the Marquis Xing's Mansion, so she couldn't understand why these people were so partial and treated them harshly.

"Zhuozhuo, Hao'er doesn't care about this title of nobility, and I don't care about it either. Do what you want to do!" Rui'an Great Elder Princess wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes, turned around, and said with a bright smile.

Shao Wanru pulled Shao Yuanhao to sit down beside Rui'an Great Elder Princess. With her other hand on her grandmother, she said, "Grandma, rest assured!"

She fluttered her long eyelashes twice, secretly hiding the sharp light in her eyes. They didn't have to give up this title, but Shao Wanru wanted to know how the people she cared about looked at it. Since no one cared, she had a plan in her heart.

If some people believed she and her grandma cared most about the title of nobility of Marquis Xing's Mansion, they would be terribly disappointed!

It would be great if someone took this title as a trump card...

"Rui'an Great Elder Princess is collecting calligraphy and paintings?" Zhao Xiran looked at Madam Zhao in astonishment and asked.

Madam Zhao lowered her head, twisted her handkerchief, and shook her head. "Your father had inquired about it. Rui'an Great Elder Princess is gathering artistic works for Princess Chen."

"Why does Princess Chen need those things? For the Empress Dowager's birthday?" Zhao Xiran asked in confusion, "If so, she should have made preparations early. Her Majesty's birthday is just around the corner. Why would she suddenly think of collecting them? Wouldn't it be too hasty?"

"Your father wanted to know... if it was because of... that?" Madam Zhao said, drawing a half circle in the air with one hand. It was the entire Marquis Xing's Mansion that she was referring to.

"It can't be. Princess Chen hasn't returned here. How could she suddenly do such a thing?" Zhao Xiran whispered.

She had asked all servants to leave, so only she and her mother were in the room. Today, Madam Zhao came to visit her daughter.

Shao Hua'an couldn't sit still here and ordered two servants to carry him to the study in the front yard.

The condition of his injuries was stable. He just needed to recuperate. Since he was grievously wounded, he would have to lie in bed for at least a few months. Besides, he was no longer able to ride a horse.

"Haven't you gotten any information from your husband?" Seeing her daughter make no progress, Madam Zhao asked discontentedly. Her question sounded like a disgruntled reproach.

"Mother, if I knew, why didn't I tell you and father?" Even her mother couldn't understand her. Zhao Xiran was annoyed. "I accepted this marriage to help my father. Haven't I done well enough?"

After that, she cried with grievance. Thinking of the baby she lost, she felt sadness welling up.

It was true that she married into the Marquis Xing's Mansion with ulterior motives. Nevertheless, she also wanted wholeheartedly to have a happy life with Shao Hua'an. It never entered her mind that she would get into this terrible state. In the past, she was ambitious and arrogant, believing she could earn a good living no matter what.

Unexpectedly, she suffered setbacks soon after marrying into the mansion. Bad things happened one after another. She was at a loss for how she could change her fate.

When Zhao Xiran got married, she didn't expect this mansion to be on the decline, especially at such a fast speed.

Tears showered down Zhao Xiran's cheeks. In a hurry, Madam Zhao appeased her. "I'm so sorry. I was very worried. Your father failed to handle things well, and now he has to rely on you. He is afraid that the Emperor will know about it. Not only can't he save his life, but all the people in our mansion may also be put to death. Your father has no choice!"

Speaking of this, Madame Zhao also burst out crying.

"Xiran, we've been hard on you. I'm sorry you have to go through so many annoying things in the Marquis Xing's Mansion. I would never have agreed to this marriage if I had known this earlier. How I wish I hadn't listened to you and your father."

#### Chapter 1082 The Real Purpose of Zhao Xiran's Marriage

Thinking of these frustrating things, Madame Zhao felt dejected. If it hadn't been for her husband, her daughter wouldn't have had to waste so much effort and energy.

Madam Zhao raised Zhao Xiran from birth. Her daughter had always been smart and quick-witted, even better than her son. Even Minister Zhao had repeatedly mentioned that it would be great if Xiran were a son.

But her daughter had gotten bogged down in the abyss of misery because of the Marquis Xing's Mansion, and she couldn't get away.

When Madam Zhao was also in tears, Zhao Xiran calmed down and put away her sense of grievance. With a soft voice, she consoled her mother, "Don't be sad. What's done is done. We should take more time to achieve our goal. If those characters are in this mansion, I think what we want is most likely in the study of Hua'an's father, but Hua'an doesn't know about it."

She had searched inside and outside her husband's place several times, including his study. Beyond that, directly and indirectly, she had asked Shao Hua'an about this matter many times. However, every time she mentioned this topic, Shao Hua'an looked absolutely ignorant of it.

"As a daughter-in-law, you can't search for Marquis Xing's study at will." Madam Zhao wiped her tears, and her forehead knotted in a frown.

The once-prosperous Marquis Xing's Mansion was deteriorating rapidly, but people here still had to comply with the strict rules of aristocratic families. It was inappropriate for Zhao Xiran to rummage through things in her father-in-law's place, which would undoubtedly arouse suspicion. What was worse, if there appeared any rumors intolerable to the ear, her daughter might feel too ashamed to live.

"I could hardly get a chance in the past, but I might make it now. I am in charge of the mansion. Old Madam isn't in the inner court, and Madam Jiang is locked up. People of the third branch don't care about other people's business. As long as I don't provoke them, they won't say anything."

Zhao Xiran composed herself and said.

Now was an excellent time to seek an opportunity; even so, it was not easy to succeed. As a daughter-in-law, she should never interfere in affairs at Shao Jing's place.

"Recently, Mother, I think there is something unusual with my father-in-law!" Zhao Xiran said thoughtfully.

"What's wrong?" Madam Zhao was shocked. She warily glanced around and asked in a low voice.

"I'm not sure about it. I sent some people to keep an eye on his courtyard. In the past few days, he has spent much more time there. Occasionally, there was a flicker of light from the place piled up with sundries that few people would visit, but the light didn't last long. It seemed that someone was searching for something. But the person couldn't always do that, especially when every time my father-in-law was in the mansion," Zhao Xiran said.

Since she suspected Shao Jing, she certainly would pay special attention to him.

In the past, she had no chance or ability to do that. Recently, everyone in the Marquis Xing's Mansion lived in terror and uncertainty. As a result, it became much easier for her trusted subordinate to spy on that place.

She managed the inner court. Two elders, Old Madam and Madam Jiang, the former was not in the mansion, and the latter was locked up. Since she was solely responsible for the inner court, these servants vied to fawn over her.

“Mother, I think there is nothing special about Princess Chen collecting paintings. You can go back and tell my father that. If he is still worried about it... Well, aren’t you in contact with Rui’an Great Elder Princess? It’s okay for you to visit her sometimes and inquire about it. But you can’t talk too much. My father should keep an eye on what’s happening outside the mansion, and I’ll go on carefully handling the affairs in the Marquis Xing’s Mansion.”

Zhao Xiran briefly summarized the whole situation when noticing that her mother was still panicked.

“Okay, that’s all we can do now. Take care.” Madam Zhao wiped the corners of her eyes and nodded gravely. She looked up at her daughter, feeling extremely distressed. “You’ve suffered a lot this time. You must not be careless. Take good care of yourself. Madam Jiang is vicious. It’s better to lock her up like this forever.”

Madam Zhao was very anxious to see the death of Madam Jiang. Only then would her daughter get her revenge.

“Don’t worry. I know what I should do,” Zhao Xiran said softly.

After chatting about some intimate things, Madam Zhao got up to leave. Today, she came to tell Zhao Xiran that Princess Chen was collecting scripts and paintings. Since Zhao Xiran was not clear about it, she had to go back and tell her husband about it.

After Madame Zhao left, Zhao Xiran sat down with a gloomy face.

She didn’t tell Madam Zhao all the facts. How could she casually enter her father-in-law’s courtyard? Even if she found something unusual, she had no right to search his place.

Things in the past were full of twists and turns. Her father only found part of the truth. According to what he knew, he concluded that Shao Jing had the thing and kept it in his mansion.

Mishaps happened one after another in the Marquis Xing’s Mansion, but they didn’t inflict heavy losses. Shao Jing must have given something to someone in exchange for protection.

Of course, money was never what descendants of the royal family cared most about. It couldn’t be Shao Jing’s loyalty, either. These people might have been glad to accept the Duke Xing’s Mansion in the past. But now, there wouldn’t be anyone willing to support the declining Marquis Xing’s Mansion. In that case, Shao Jing must have offered something that these people were interested in.

This item was highly likely to be the item that Zhao Xiran’s father had been looking for.

It was lost long ago. Her father had been living with fear and trepidation for so many years, for fear that something horrifying would happen. Back then, the deceased emperor entrusted him with this task and asked him to look for it. To his dismay, the former Heir of Duke Xing elicited the message from him. When her father set out to look for it, it had been long gone.

This matter was entrusted to her father by the deceased emperor before he died. After the present Emperor ascended the throne, her father didn’t dare to act rashly. Later on, almost all the people who knew about this matter were dead. Her father thought this matter was over, so he just needed to wait and keep this secret with great care.

Somehow, the former Heir of Duke Xing got the news and visited her father. Under his threats and inducements, her father had no choice but to reveal the truth to him. After that, this Heir of Duke Xing disappeared into the crowd.

It was said that he fell out with his family and left with Infanta Qinghua.

He never returned after leaving.

Minister Zhao was on tenterhooks every day, very afraid that Shao Jiang would find those things and present them to the Emperor. He would be in serious trouble.

The only way was to find these objects and submit them to the Emperor to make up for his mistakes.

Shao Jiang was dead. Minister Zhao pried the news that Shao Jing must have murdered Shao Jiang. At that time, Shao Jing was also at the border. Later, he heard that Shao Jiang died in an accident and that Infanta Qinghua, his widow, became crazy after being brought back to the capital. She also passed away shortly after giving birth to a son.

Her ignorant young child couldn't tell anything. There seemed to be no way to investigate this matter.

Shao Jiang and his wife, who knew about this matter, were all dead.

At first, Minister Zhao watched Shao Jing closely because he thought it was Shao Jing. When Shao Wanru, Shao Jiang's daughter, appeared, Minister Zhao had a new suspect. This was why Zhao Xiran hurriedly married into the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

At first, they kept the Marquis Xing's Mansion in suspense. But after Shao Wanru returned to the mansion from the Yuhui Nunnery, Minister Zhao agreed on the marriage between Zhao Xiran and Shao Hua'an.

In those days, no outsiders could see Shao Wanru due to her identity.

However, things were changing so fast. Minister Zhao and Zhao Xiran could hardly cope with their difficult position. When Zhao Xiran moved into the Marquis Xing's Mansion, she thought she could easily find out the truth and get what his father needed. However, she didn't succeed in carrying out her intention. Involuntarily, Zhao Xiran began to doubt her ability.

"Eldest Young Madam, old maid Han has something to report to you!" Qiu Yue, her personal maid, reported in the corridor.

"Let her in!" Zhao Xiran put aside a myriad of thoughts crowding into her mind and said gently.

Qiu Yue lifted the curtain and came in. She was one of Zhao Xiran's two maids who moved here with Zhao Xiran when she married, and the other was Qiu Lian. They were Zhao Xiran's trusted followers. At present, they helped her deal with the affairs of Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Following her was an old maid in her fifties, who was very thin and small. She was shrewd looking. When entering the room, she kept her eyes averted but didn't dare to be presumptuous. In a hurry, she bowed respectfully. "Greetings, My Lady."

"Don't bother!" Zhao Xiran waved her hand. She had accepted this old maid in the Marquis Xing's Mansion as her reliable helper. She was merely a servant who took care of a large area of flowers and plants outside Shao Jing's courtyard, so it was convenient for her to go in and out of Shao Jing's place.

"My Lady, I saw the light in the room last night. I seemed to have seen more than one shadow but couldn't see clearly. After that, the light went out. I kept staring at that place until midnight. Later, I was so sleepy that I almost fell asleep. Suddenly, a loud noise came out. I was shocked. When I looked over there, the light flickered again. Then there was no more sound."

Old maid Han reported.

She was in low spirits, her eyes bloodshot. She must have stayed up late.

"Okay, thank you for your hard work. You can go down and get your reward later! Go on watching that place." Zhao Xiran nodded and said.

"Thank you, My Lady. Thank you so much. I will." Old maid Han repeatedly thanked with gratitude.

After Qiu Yue took her out and rewarded her, she returned to the room. Seeing Zhao Xiran sitting there with a gloomy face, she hurried forward and bowed, "My Lady."

"How is First Young Master?" Zhao Xiran asked suddenly. She had sent Qiu Yue to Shao Hua'an's study to see if he needed anything.

"First Young Master said he didn't need anything. He was studying in the study and told you not to worry," Qiu Yue said, thinking that First Young Master was a good man. When badly wounded, he was still devoted to studying and wanted to get the honorary title of Eldest Young Madam.

After he injured his leg, Shao Hua'an was depressed for a period of time. Unexpectedly, he strove to improve and decided to achieve something big by studying wholeheartedly. He said he had wasted so many years and never thought of seeking a bright future through study. Now that he had lost the position of the heir of a duke, he found his purpose in life. Since his leg was broken, he could focus on studying.

Zhao Xiran sighed softly. Her husband's words comforted her.

Shao Hua'an was talented and knowledgeable, but he had never considered taking the imperial exam. If he sincerely concentrated on reading books in search of success and fame, he could make it.

Shao Hua'an could let go of the position of the heir of a duke, but she couldn't do it.

Shao Yuanhao was so young and not close to the Marquis Xing's Mansion. How could he get the title? Since she married into this mansion, she had only seen Shao Yuanhao a few times. Obviously, he only considered himself the grandson of Rui'an Great Elder Princess, who had nothing to do with the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

No matter how she looked at it, this title should belong to Hua'an.

"Go and ask about his situation every day. If there is anything he likes to eat, send it to him immediately. Let old maid Han go on keeping an eye on that place. Tell her to report to me if there is anything." Zhao Xiran ordered methodically.



She had to do all the things one by one. Her father had taught her more things than methods of dealing with affairs in the inner court. Compared with women who only knew how to fight for their husband's favor, she was much more tactful. If she were a man in Shao Hua'an's current situation, she would make the same choice as Shao Hua'an. So, she admired her husband more and more...

#### Chapter 1083 Dig up the Past, the Deceased Emperor's Death

After returning from Rui'an Great Elder Princess's Mansion, Shao Wanru immediately sent someone to invite the chief supervisor.

When the chief supervisor sat down, she immediately told him what she had seen in the Duke Cheng'en's Mansion and asked for his advice.

The chief supervisor tightly frowned when listening to Shao Wanru's detailed account of the painting. His face changed as he listened to her. When Shao Wanru stopped, he asked hurriedly, "Was the Empress Dowager... Was the mother in the painting feeding the eldest son medicine?"

"It should be like that. The child was lying in bed with a towel covering his forehead. His face was pale, and the medicine in the bowl was black. It didn't look like the ordinary drink at all." Shao Wanru thought about it carefully and said. At that time, she deliberately saw it clearly because she wanted to come back and tell the chief supervisor about it.

Since the chief supervisor had served in the Palace, he might know something.

Compared with others, the chief supervisor was most likely to know about this kind of thing. Her grandmother acquired many messages merely by relying on hearsay, which she could not take seriously.

"That... that bowl... what did it look like..." The chief supervisor's face turned dreadfully pale. His lips trembled twice as he asked in a low voice.

Shao Wanru couldn't remember what the medicine bowl looked like. At that time, she didn't pay attention to the bowl but only observed the appearances, manners, and other things related to the figures and their movements. However, she overlooked the medicine bowl. When she thought of it, it seemed that the patterns on the bowl were very clear. She just cast a glance at it and didn't watch it closely.

Seeing that Shao Wanru couldn't come up with an answer, the chief supervisor reminded her, "Was the bowl... with a bright red pattern on a white background... and with a pearl-playing pattern?"

Even though so many years had passed, when the chief supervisor mentioned this matter, he still felt that his throat tightened and his back was sweating.

Hearing his descriptions, Shao Wanru thought for a moment and recalled something, "Yes, the background was white because white could set off the patterns. The bright red pattern was very conspicuous. This was the first thing I saw. Were there any beads? Yes, there were, and they were also very eye-catching."

Shao Wanru said, recalling little by little.

The chief supervisor nearly collapsed and reached out his hands to steady himself against the table. Then he looked at his trusted subordinates in the room and waved his hand, motioning for them to leave. At this time, even his henchmen couldn't hear this highly confidential thing.

Seeing the chief supervisor do that seriously, Shao Wanru also ordered the few trusted maids to leave with a wave of her hand. They closed the door slightly, leaving only the chief supervisor and Shao Wanru in the room.

After everyone left, Shao Wanru whispered to him, "Sir, is there anything wrong?"

"Your Highness, there are some things that I don't dare to say, and I don't even know if they're true. It was just that the former empress was also there at that time, so I followed her and had a look."

Speaking of this, the chief supervisor paused and hesitated. Honestly, he didn't want to mention this kind of thing. Or even if he had to mention it, he should say it to his master instead of Princess Chen. But his master was not in the capital, and Princess Chen was brilliant. In addition, the Empress Dowager's birthday was around the corner. If anything happened and Princess Chen was not in the know, he was afraid she would fall into someone's trap.

"Sir..." Shao Wanru urged him in a low voice.

"Your Highness, it's inconvenient for me to say anything about it, and I may omit something. I'm worried that you may get it wrong," the chief supervisor looked up and said with a pale face.

"Rest assured. I know what's important. Anything related to Her Majesty can't be a small matter." Shao Wanru said calmly.

Of course, she knew how to handle it well. She still had a lingering fear about what had happened in her previous life. Even the Empress Dowager and the Empress were involved, so how could it be a trivial matter?

Even if she didn't know the exact details, she wouldn't act rashly or tell anyone about it.

Although there was a nervous look in Shao Wanru's eyes, she maintained her composure. What she was going to know was a huge secret in the Palace, yet her face didn't turn ashen with fear.

The chief supervisor gently exhaled and said slowly, "I don't know all the things that happened back then. I only remembered that the deceased emperor was seriously ill, and his condition was getting worse. The Imperial Institute of Medicine had sent someone to inform the former empress and the Empress Dowager of this. That day, the Empress Dowager personally fed the former emperor the medicine, but before he finished drinking the medicine, he died... and the medicine bowl rolled to my feet..."

At this point, the chief supervisor couldn't finish what he was saying. Even though many years had passed, he still remembered the scene clearly.

No one had expected that the former emperor would suddenly pass away. Many people in the hall subconsciously looked toward the Empress Dowager. Only he lowered his head because he noticed the medicine bowl under his feet. Then these people were all found guilty of ignoring their masters' majesty. Later on, all of them met a violent end.

The former emperor had passed away, and the whole country was in mourning. Who would care about the death of a few servants in the Palace?

The chief supervisor stayed alive. He didn't look at the Empress Dowager, so he didn't irritate her. Besides, he knew the former empress must have done something in the Palace to keep him alive.

He buried the event deep in his heart after the former empress died. It had never occurred to him that this matter would be brought up again. His lips trembled a few times, and it took him a long time to calm down. "Your Highness, it's all in the past. But the appearance of this painting proves that someone must have also known what happened that day. The person wants to hurt the Empress Dowager..."

The chief supervisor stopped there, but Shao Wanru understood what he was referring to.

This painting was meant to accuse the Empress Dowager of murdering the deceased emperor.

Shao Wanru suddenly saw the whole thing in a clear light when the chief supervisor's words helped her solve many doubts. The three children were referring to the three sons of the Empress Dowager. Her eldest son was sick, her second son was close to her, and the third son was playing alone. When she was feeding the eldest son the medicine on the bed, the second son leaned on her. It seemed that the mother and the second son loved each other deeply, but this scene could also mean that the mother and the second son conspired to kill the eldest son.

The mother and the second son snuggling up together showed they were close, so they might gang up on the deceased emperor.

In this case, how could the Empress Dowager not be shocked and angry when she saw such a painting?

"Did the former emperor really... die because of this bowl of medicine?" Shao Wanru knew that she should not ask this question. Even if she had to know the answer, she should let Chu Liuchen do this. At this time, she swallowed hard, trying to make herself appear calmer. Her long eyelashes hid the panic in her eyes.

In her mind, the Empress Dowager was the only elder who sincerely cared about Chu Liuchen! She was Chu Liuchen's grandma who loved him wholeheartedly. If Chu Liuchen learned about her false display of affection, it would be a great blow to him!

He had always been alone and had given up hope for many years. Shao Wanru didn't know what would happen if he suffered such a fatal blow. She was panicked.

"The deceased emperor was seriously ill at that time. The Imperial Institute of Medicine stated that... At that time, the Empress Dowager would not... be so irrational," the chief supervisor replied with an ashen face.

He had hidden these words in his heart for many years, and now he was still very nervous when mentioning this horrifying thing.

Shao Wanru breathed a sigh of relief, pinched the handkerchief in her hand hard, and felt that her hands were wet. Slowly, she put her mind at rest.

She knew what the chief supervisor meant. As long as the Empress Dowager was not stupid, she wouldn't deal with and murder the deceased emperor at that time. Her eldest son was dying, so how

could she plot against him? Even if she did nothing, the deceased emperor could only live for a few more days. Therefore, unlike what the painting suggested, the Empress Dowager had no intention of killing her eldest son.

That was to say, the Empress Dowager loved Chu Liuchen genuinely, and she didn't do it because she felt guilty about killing his father.

The Empress Dowager was still Chu Liuchen's Imperial Grandmother, who had been very affectionate toward him.

"Sir, were there any other people present at that time?" Feeling greatly relieved, Shao Wanru asked again, and the huge emotional burden in her heart was significantly reduced.

"The Empress Dowager and the former empress were both there with the deceased emperor's trusted subordinates. Most of these people were dead. Even if some survived, I don't know where they are now." The chief supervisor forced himself to calm the turbulence in his breast. After composing himself, he could speak much more fluently.

"Is the Empress there?" Shao Wanru asked again. This matter should have something to do with the Empress. Otherwise, the Empress would not have been implicated later.

"The Empress was not there. Back then, she was just a princess and didn't come to see the deceased emperor. The Emperor was also not there either. When the incident happened, he was not in the Palace. It was the Empress Dowager who invited him over. After the deceased emperor died of illness, the Empress Dowager and the former empress talked things over and asked the Emperor to go there. When they were discussing, I and the others all withdrew."

The chief supervisor pieced together what had happened and said.

Back then, everything happened suddenly and came as a surprise to all.

"So, no one knows the conversation between the Empress Dowager and the former empress?" Shao Wanru said thoughtfully. Their conversation was the crux of the matter. In this conversation, they must have discussed who would ascend to the throne, Chu Liuchen, who was still a baby in swaddling clothes, or the second son, who was young and vigorous.

"No one knew it. At that time, only the Empress Dowager and the former empress were inside, but I felt their conversation was pretty short. It seemed they made the final decision in a few words." The chief supervisor calmed down and said while recalling.

Did they choose the successor to the throne just after a brief conversation? Shao Wanru was stunned. Wasn't they supposed to think about it carefully? Even if the former empress didn't care about the throne, she had to fight for her son. How could she give the throne to the current Emperor without demurring?

This was truly puzzling.

A woman may be soft, but a mother should be strong. Why didn't the former empress do something for her son?

In history, there was no lack of emperors ascending to the throne when they were still babies in their mothers' arms. Why didn't the former empress do likewise? She couldn't understand the choice of the former empress. Something seemed to have been missing. As a result, she always felt that things that happened at that time were against common sense.

"Your Highness, who can dig it out? I think it's most likely to be the current Empress. After all, she's the only one who has the ability to dig up such a thing. And there must be someone behind the painting. Someone deliberately sent the painting to the Duke Cheng'en's Mansion. If Duke Cheng'en presents it to the Empress Dowager before all the officials, something sensational will happen!"

The chief supervisor had lived in the Palace for a long time, so he had developed a keen insight into matters. After connecting the head and the tail of this matter, he immediately thought of the possible trouble. Then, he reminded Shao Wanru that something serious would happen if the painting were displayed at the birthday party before so many important figures.

#### Chapter 1084 The Empress Dowager's Doubts

Shao Wanru's face clouded, and there was a severe look in her penetrating eyes. She fully understood what the chief supervisor meant.

Others might not understand the painting presented to the Empress Dowager before many others on her birthday, but how could the Empress Dowager not understand it? When the painting displayed by her brother dredged up a distant memory, the Empress Dowager might not bear the scene and faint. After that, she would be seriously ill.

The Emperor could also get the hidden meaning of this painting. Even if he was not on the spot, he must have asked about it later, so he also knew the truth. When he saw that the Empress Dowager could only remain in bed due to an emotional breakdown, he would fly into a towering rage. To his dismay, the Emperor had nowhere to vent his anger because this painting was from Duke Cheng'en, his mother's brother.

The Emperor could not punish Duke Cheng'en when the Empress Dowager was still sick, so he didn't do anything to Duke Cheng'en, who presented the painting in public. This matter seemed to have quieted down quickly as though nothing had happened.

But later, there should be some rumors in the imperial harem saying that the Empress Dowager murdered the deceased emperor. Her health deteriorated rapidly, and she had been sick and depressed in her bed until she died of grief.

All of this implied that the mastermind behind this scheme was the Empress.

Few people in the Palace knew what had happened back then, and the Empress would be the most suspicious. The Empress was the one most likely to target the Empress Dowager because she would become the most powerful one in the imperial harem as long as the Empress Dowager died.

As a result, the Emperor broke into a furious rage and locked the Empress up. What was more, he was even considering deposing the Empress. Later on, Prince Zhou rebelled. It could be said that Prince Zhou wouldn't get any benefit from the whole thing.

So it was not done by the Empress and Prince Zhou but by someone else. Could it be Chu Liuyue's mother, Consort of Virtue, or Prince Cheng outside the Palace?

Shao Wanru's brain worked fast. At present, she suspected these two people the most.

In her previous life, Chu Liuyue failed in the end. Shao Wanru didn't know why he failed. As for what happened to Prince Cheng, she had no memories of that.

Shao Wanru reached out to rub her temples to relax. In her previous life, she was far from the center of power, so she didn't know many things. Besides, some of her memories were missing. Thus, she didn't know the specific details.

"Your Highness, you should be careful!" The chief supervisor reminded her when he saw that she was silent. Since Princess Chen saw the painting, she would be involved.

When his master was not in the mansion, he must not let anything wrong happen to Princess Chen. This was also what Prince Chen had repeatedly told him before he left.

"Your Highness, before Prince Chen left, he said that if people in the Palace became suspicious of you, you should wear the delicate natural jade he had given you."

The chief supervisor reminded again.

Shao Wanru certainly remembered the tip-top jade pendant. Back then, the Empress Dowager saw it and agreed to her marriage with Chu Liuchen for the time being. Then she exchanged it with another jade pendant and gave it back to Chu Liuchen, who had been wearing it all the time.

Before he left the capital city, Chu Liuchen deliberately left this jade pendant to her and said she would think of him when seeing it. That pendant turned out to be a shield that he had prepared for her early. In her heart, Shao Wanru felt deeply touched. Biting her lips in determination, she nodded in agreement.

As she had expected, someone from the Palace came soon to tell her the Empress Dowager summoned her to the Palace.

Shao Wanru dressed up a little, put on the jade pendant from Chu Liuchen, and followed the messenger to the Empress Dowager's Palace.

There was no one else in the hall, and the Empress Dowager was sitting magisterially on the principal chair.

Shao Wanru, sharp-eyed, saw a wet patch on the ground. Although it had been cleaned up, she could still tell that this place must have been dripping wet. In the far corner, there was a piece of porcelain that had not been taken away in time.

Shao Wanru guessed that Duke Cheng'en had been here and presented the painting to the Empress Dowager. Fortunately, no one else was there, so the gift from Duke Cheng'en didn't bring shame on the Empress Dowager and humiliate her in public. At this time, she could still remain calm.

Many things got tangled up, so Shao Wanru had no choice but to make Duke Cheng'en present the painting before the birthday banquet. If he showed the painting on her birthday before the Emperor and his officials, it would cause quite a stir.

But the Empress Dowager had an aversion to her because of Nanny Wei. At this time, the Empress Dowager had a bias against her, so it was challenging to tide over the upcoming crisis.

Subconsciously, Shao Wanru pressed the jade pendant near the hem of her skirt and calmed down.

She was in difficulty but felt relieved when touching the item Chu Liuchen had prepared to protect her.

She took two steps forward and knelt respectfully before the Empress Dowager. "Greetings, Imperial Grandmother!"

The Empress Dowager's stern and unsmiling eyes fell on her. She didn't let Shao Wanru get up and began to survey her instead. In the end, her eyes moved down and fell on the jade pendant hanging on her waist. Only then did she look less serious.

She gave this jade pendant to Chu Liuchen, so how could she not recognize it? She was depressed when learning that her dear grandson gave it back to Shao Wanru again and again.

However, no matter how unhappy she was, it reminded her that Shao Wanru was the only woman Chu Liuchen had fallen in love with over so many years. Though very displeased, the Empress Dowager suppressed her anger toward Shao Wanru.

"Get up!" The Empress Dowager said lightly.

Of course, if Shao Wanru were proven to harbor evil intent, she would not show mercy. But before that, the Empress Dowager had to stay calm and prevent herself from convicting Shao Wanru because of one-sided remarks. After all, what happened at that time had nothing to do with Shao Wanru. Even Rui'an Great Elder Princess knew nothing about it.

Everything seemed to have nothing to do with Shao Wanru.

Shao Wanru responded and stood up.

"I heard you visited the Duke Cheng'en's Mansion?" The Empress Dowager asked coldly.

"Yes. I saw a painting of Duke Cheng'en there. It was similar to what I had prepared but more meaningful and made me ashamed. So, I want to see the other artists' works to improve my painting." Shao Wanru lowered her head and answered softly without any hesitation.

She had been collecting paintings because she needed some famous paintings as references to perfect the painting she had prepared.

Shao Wanru did that only to cope with the Empress Dowager's possible questions. Luckily and unexpectedly, it attracted the attention of Zhao Xiran and the people in Minister Zhao's Mansion.

Seeing that she answered smoothly and with full composure, the Empress Dowager nodded in her heart. "She seems to have nothing to do with that matter."

“How did you know there was such a painting in the Duke Cheng’en’s Mansion? Why would you bring one of your paintings at that time?” The Empress Dowager asked again.

She suspected Shao Wanru because Shao Wanru quickly brought out her painting at that time.

“I took the painting with me even when I went to my grandmother’s place. Initially, I just wanted to ask Madam of Duke Cheng’en for some advice. She was the closest to you, so I supposed she must know your tastes. I hadn’t finished my painting so that I could modify it a little.”

Shao Wanru explained unhurriedly as if she didn’t notice the Empress Dowager was scrutinizing her face.

She had planned to go to the Duke Cheng’en’s Mansion early. Also, the notification card about their visit had been sent there in advance. Thus, it sounded reasonable for her to come with the painting.

Madam of Duke Cheng’en was the Empress Dowager’s sister-in-law, so the Empress Dowager had been close to her in the past.

After this explanation, the Empress Dowager thought it was nothing sinister for Shao Wanru to take her painting to the Duke Cheng’en’s Mansion. Besides, Shao Wanru carried herself with ease and natural poise. If she was caught scheming something, she should appear guilty and nervous.

“How long have you prepared your painting?” The Empress Dowager looked a little relaxed. Although she was dissatisfied with her, evidence was needed to prove that Shao Wanru was plotting against her.

“Yes, I’ve been doing it for a long time. I began collecting maple leaves when I was in the Yuhui Nunnery.” Shao Wanru looked a little shy and lowered her head even more. “Prince Chen told me that you liked maple leaves.”

Some beautiful maple leaves were worthy of being appreciated and collected. Some people loved flowers, while others loved maple leaves.

Of course, the gift should be something the Empress Dowager liked.

“When I was in the Yuhui Nunnery, something happened between me and Secondary Consort Shao. At that time, there were a lot of maple leaves in the maple woods, so I picked up a lot of them. Later, I did it a few more times and finally got these good ones,” Shao Wanru added.

Something did happen in the maple forest of the Yuhui Nunnery — Shao Wanru had plotted against her.

Since the Empress Dowager intended to let Shao Wanru marry Chu Liuchen, she paid special attention to her and certainly heard about this incident. At that time, Nanny Wei had no malice against Shao Wanru and knew Prince Chen seemed to care much about her, so what she told the Empress Dowager was beneficial to Shao Wanru.

Thinking of Secondary Consort Shao, the Empress Dowager frowned and was very unhappy. That lady seemed to have linked with Commandery Prince Qing. She heard they even did some shady activities in the maple forest. At the thought of Secondary Consort Shao, who had married her son, the Empress Dowager felt sick, although that woman had been locked up in the Cold Palace.



Since Shao Wanru mentioned this, she did have evidence to prove that she had prepared for the painting early. It was not that she made this painting on purpose after she knew something confidential.

“Sit down!” The Empress Dowager pointed to the chair aside and motioned for Shao Wanru to sit there.

Shao Wanru answered softly, walked to the chair, and sat down. She looked natural and at ease, not overly relaxed after being nervous. Every movement she made was normal.

“It seemed that she knew nothing about it!”

In her heart, the Empress Dowager was sure that it had nothing to do with Shao Wanru and that she couldn’t be the person behind the plot.

Since it was not her, the Empress Dowager no longer asked her about the maple leaves. She changed the topic and said, “What happened to the Butterfly Clothing Shop you mentioned before? Did that female shopkeeper really want to give you the shop? How could she give it up and let you get all the profits?”

Shao Wanru knew she no longer suspected her because of the painting. Otherwise, the Empress Dowager would not have asked about such a trivial matter.

At this time, Shao Wanru felt truly relieved in her heart. Finally, she managed to dodge this disaster, but she didn’t show it on her face. In a leisurely manner, she raised her head and reported, “Imperial Grandmother, there is something behind this matter, and... it is related to Nanny Wei. I don’t know how to tell you the whole thing!”

It was a rare opportunity for Shao Wanru, though she didn’t know how Nanny Wei had slandered her before the Empress Dowager and how she and Wei Dahai had plotted against her.

Chapter 1085 Tell on Others, Retreat to Advance

The matter they talked about before was so secretive that the Empress Dowager didn’t want others to hear their conversation, so even Nanny Wei was not with them.

In fact, it didn’t matter whether she trusted Nanny Wei or not. When Shao Wanru talked about some secrets with the chief supervisor, she also asked Yujie and the others to go out. Knowing too many secrets was not a good thing for them.

The Empress Dowager must have had the same considerations, which showed that she trusted Nanny Wei very much. Shao Wanru was fully aware that she should be more careful when talking about Nanny Wei.

“It has something to do with Nanny Wei? How could it be possible?” asked the Empress Dowager.

From her surprised reaction, Shao Wanru knew what she said had successfully attracted the Empress Dowager’s attention. At first, she just asked this question casually after making sure that Shao Wanru had nothing to do with the matter related to the maple leaf painting. To her great surprise, the shop was relevant to Nanny Wei.

"The heartless man had a relationship with Nanny Wei, which I didn't know before. Today, I've just learned from the shopkeeper that someone pretended to be her and colluded with Lord Wei to deceive Nanny Wei," Shao Wanru said.

Then she told the whole story in detail.

She said that when the shopkeeper saw Wei Dahai come over, he took a female guest out of the shop. Because the female guest looked and dressed like the shopkeeper, shop-boys paid attention to her. Later, when Wei Dahai entered the shop and led the female guest away, a shop-boy followed them to a carriage. The shop-boy heard Wei Dahai introduce the woman to the people in the carriage, saying she was the shopkeeper of Butterfly Clothing Shop. In addition, he called the person in the carriage his aunt, who was said to be a maid serving the Empress Dowager.

The shop-boy couldn't hear everything clearly nor understand their conversation, so he went back to report this to the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper felt that something was wrong and immediately reported it to Shao Wanru.

"Someone pretended to be the shopkeeper of Butterfly Clothing Shop and misled Nanny Wei?" The Empress Dowager immediately believed it, her face darkening.

She believed in Nanny Wei. If Shao Wanru said Nanny Wei conspired with them, the Empress Dowager wouldn't buy it. But when she said that Wei Dahai lied to Nanny Wei, the Empress Dowager believed it right away. Shao Wanru's words couldn't be more authentic, and she looked perfectly calm without any sense of guilt.

"If you don't believe it, you can check it out. According to the shopkeeper, that woman is the trusted nurse of Lord Wei's mistress, who is about the same age as the shopkeeper." Shao Wanru dropped another sensational message.

She asked the Empress Dowager to investigate it by herself. Since Nanny Wei was involved in this matter, she wouldn't send her to do the survey. As long as it was not Nanny Wei, others could easily find out the truth and learned the news that Wei Dahai kept a mistress outside his mansion.

Previously when Nanny Wei was with them, Shao Wanru usually replied cryptically and never directly mentioned Wei Dahai's name. But when Nanny Wei was not here, she could talk about Lord Wei without scruples.

There was Lord Wei, Nanny Wei, and so many other pieces of evidence to verify. Immediately, the Empress Dowager believed everything Shao Wanru mentioned.

Her expression changed dramatically as soon as she learned about and believed the whole story.

The Empress Dowager remembered the dropped contract she had seen before. If what Shao Wanru said was true, that contract must have been faked, and the story that Shao Wanru lost the contract was also a lie.

Did all of this mean that Nanny Wei was disloyal to her? So, she deliberately led the Empress Dowager to the contract to mislead her.

When they came back from outside the Palace that day, Nanny Wei had helped her choose Misses from aristocratic families. The Empress Dowager could still remember everything clearly. In the past, Nanny Wei would advise her to let Chen'er choose for himself. If Prince Chen picked up any lady, the Empress Dowager would no longer need to do so many things. In this way, the Empress Dowager wouldn't make Prince Chen feel uncomfortable.

That day, Nanny Wei didn't persuade her to give up this idea. Instead, Nanny Wei suggested that she choose a few noble ladies to marry into the Prince Chen's Mansion, saying that they could guarantee Prince Chen's wealthy life in the future.

Long ago, the Empress Dowager had such an idea, but it was no longer suitable for the current situation. Although the Empress Dowager had disappointed Shao Wanru because of the Butterfly Clothing Shop, she didn't intend to make Shao Wanru leave Prince Chen. Once Misses from distinguished families married Prince Chen, the whole Prince Chen's Mansion would be in a mess.

At that time, the Empress Dowager felt nothing weird, and she even nodded in approval after hearing Nanny Wei's advice. Now when she calmed down and pondered on this matter, she immediately found that there was something unusual. The Empress Dowager began doubting Nanny Wei's loyalty to her.

Impossible! That was impossible!

As the Empress Dowager's trusted maid, Nanny Wei had gone through ups and downs with her. How could Nanny Wei betray her at this time? Wei Dahai must have deceived Nanny Wei.

Thinking of this, the Empress Dowager vigorously suppressed the uncomfortable feeling in her heart and said, "You go back first. I'll have to check it out first."

"I see. Thanks for that, Imperial Grandmother!" Shao Wanru stood up, bowing respectfully to the Empress Dowager. Then she turned around to leave, but the Empress Dowager suddenly stopped her.

"Wei Dahai, I seem to have heard this name. Is there anything else about him?"

"I don't know that." Shao Wanru shook her head and said with doubt in her bright watery eyes.

"So, she really has no idea about that." The Empress Dowager looked at her and waved her hand, signaling her to withdraw.

Shao Wanru stepped out of the room as she was told. Seeing Nanny Wei standing at the door, she smiled gently, nodded to her, and was about to leave.

"Greetings, Princess Chen!" Nanny Wei took the initiative to say.

Shao Wanru stopped and asked, "Nanny Wei, what's the matter?"

Nanny Wei looked Shao Wanru up and down several times and found nothing improper. However, she was pretty confused. The Empress Dowager had even thrown a teacup at Duke Cheng'en, but how could Princess Chen come out safe and sound?

"I just want to know if Her Majesty is angry?"

"Imperial Grandmother asked me some questions. Why could she get angry?" Shao Wanru said, looking at Nanny Wei calmly.

Nanny Wei felt increasingly confused. When the incident happened, she happened to be outside. It was said that the Empress Dowager hit Duke Cheng'en in person with a teacup. In a mess, Duke Cheng'en went back home in a panic. She had intended to go in and comfort her master, but she was told that the Empress Dowager needed to spend some time alone to calm down, and no one was allowed to get in.

Shao Wanru came later, but now she seemed fine. Nanny Wei was greatly surprised.

Duke Cheng'en was the biological brother of the Empress Dowager. Although Duke Cheng'en was not that capable, the Empress Dowager had always been very good to him. How could Princess Chen get out of trouble when even Duke Cheng'en suffered?

Recently, the Empress Dowager liked Princess Chen less and less. She even wanted to get some new consorts for Prince Chen!

Nanny Wei had a bad feeling in her heart, so she stopped Shao Wanru.

"Yes, I made a mistake. This way, please, Your Highness!" Seeing that she couldn't get any information, Nanny Wei stepped aside, reached out to show the way, and replied respectfully.

Nanny Wei reflected on what she had done in the Prince Chen's Mansion. At that time, she soon regretted losing her composure. How could she arouse the vigilance of Princess Chen? She should have behaved as usual.

Before others, Nanny Wei returned to normal. Although she was the Empress Dowager's trusted maid, she had always been respectful to the royal family members in public.

Shao Wanru responded with a light smile and turned to leave without taking it seriously.

With a deep frown, Nanny Wei stood behind her and watched her go down the high steps, feeling perturbed. In the past, whenever the Empress Dowager came across anything, she would tell her the first time. But now she didn't even allow her to enter. What happened?

The Empress Dowager didn't tell Nanny Wei about it. At present, what she cared most about was the matter of the maple leaf painting. So, she invited the Emperor over and asked all the servants to leave.

The Empress Dowager put the painting brought by Duke Cheng'en on the table, looked at the Emperor, and said, "Look at this painting!"

The Emperor didn't know what had happened. Seeing his mother's serious look, he took the painting and unfolded it in confusion. His face immediately changed. He slammed his hand on the table and said sharply, "Where did this come from?"

The Empress Dowager sighed and smiled bitterly, "It's from Duke Cheng'en!"

The Emperor was at a loss for words. He would think that the person was against his mother and him if it were someone else. But it turned out to be Duke Cheng'en. The Emperor could guarantee that his kind but useless uncle would never do such a thing deliberately.

The Empress Dowager was Duke Cheng'en's biological sister. If something terrible happened to his sister, how could he be at peace?

The Emperor took a deep breath and said with a gloomy face, "Who set Duke Cheng'en up?"

His uncle was indeed a good-for-nothing. From time to time, some people would swindle some money out of him. The Emperor never accused him when learning about these things about money. However, he was becoming more and more irritated by his foolish behavior. How could he dare to send this painting to the Empress Dowager?

"Worse still, he had intended to demonstrate it to me before all the officials." The Empress Dowager gave a long sigh. Fortunately, he didn't choose to do that. At least the current situation is not that bad. He didn't bring disgrace on the Emperor and her in front of all the officials.

"Duke Cheng'en has made great progress in bringing trouble upon us. He even had the guts to do such a stupid thing! Then why did he choose not to do it?" The Emperor said furiously. Since Duke Cheng'en had always been a man who would spoil rather than accomplish things, the Emperor had decided to remove his uncle from the Imperial Household Department. The older he was, the more muddle-headed he became. At such an old age, it was better for him to recuperate at home so as not to cause any new trouble.

"It was Princess Chen. She happened to visit the Duke Cheng'en's Mansion with a painting of maple leaves she made because she wanted to ask them what I liked. Madam of Duke Cheng'en felt that the painting in her mansion could not compare with Princess Chen's, so she let Duke Cheng'en bring the painting to me before my birthday, saying that it was a token of his kindness!"

The Empress Dowager felt hatred and anger, but she could do nothing.

Her elder brother did it all out of kindness, though this action was stupid. How dare he present it in front of the officials without scrutinizing it?

"Mother, don't worry. I will investigate the people around Duke Cheng'en. I will find out the people behind it and deal these people a crushing blow." The Emperor pushed the painting aside and had a clear idea.

This matter had something to do with people in the Palace. Perhaps, it was the Empress, Consort of Virtue, and several other high-ranking imperial consorts. Of course, the Empress was the most likely to be related to this plot, followed by the Consort of Virtue. It was because both of them had grown-up sons.

"Don't alert the suspects." The Empress Dowager nodded and reminded him.

"Mother, rest assured! I will be careful about it." The Emperor nodded. After thinking for a while, he said, "Mother, you'd better take a look at Princess Chen's painting first, lest something unexpected happen again!"

With the lesson drawn from Duke Cheng'en's mistake, the Emperor was afraid that Princess Chen would be ignorant and would send a similar painting to Empress Dowager.

Chapter 1086 The Empress Was Enraged

Nanny Wei had walked back and forth outside the Palace gate many times, feeling troubled and uneasy. Absentmindedly, she pretended to look at the Palace gate and the sky, but she was in terror and uncertainty.

“What did Princess Chen say to my master? Why did she even invite over the Emperor?”

“Is there anything that I don’t know happened? What is going on?” In the past, the Empress Dowager would ask me to serve her. What went wrong? Was it about Wei Dahai?”

When Nanny Wei thought about this, her heart fluttered more and more wildly, and she felt very guilty about lying about the contract. Of course, the story about the contract was cooked up by Wei Dahai and her. It was her nephew who told someone to bring the contract to the Palace and dropped it there. Then she accompanied the Empress Dowager to take a walk nearby, and they saw it.

If the Empress Dowager learned the truth about this matter, she would be in a towering rage.

Nanny Wei’s face turned livid. She gulped for air, repeatedly telling herself not to panic and trying to calm down. Maybe it was not what she had guessed. No matter how furious the Empress Dowager was about this, she didn’t have to look for the Emperor, let alone let him take action.

Over and over again, she told herself not to scare herself. It couldn’t be that thing. It couldn’t have happened.

The heavy gate opened wild, and the Emperor, wearing a bright yellow brocade robe, stepped outside. Hands behind his back, he looked at the people standing by there. Finally, his eyes fell on Nanny Wei. “Nanny Wei, Imperial Mother is inside. Go and serve her!”

After that, he strode out with his servants waiting at the gate.

Nanny Wei answered respectfully. After the Emperor left, she straightened up, trying to calm her flustered mind, and walked into the main hall.

The Empress Dowager was sitting in the main hall, still with a sullen face. Hearing her voice, she looked up at Nanny Wei solemnly. Again, Nanny Wei’s heart began racing.

“Your... Your Majesty!”

“Deliver my imperial order: tell Consort of Virtue to come over.” The Empress Dowager said coldly.

“Your Majesty, did anything happen? She has always been filial to you!” Nanny Wei asked tentatively.

Consort of Virtue had been accompanying the Empress Dowager for many years. Nanny Wei knew her master liked her, though she was not the Empress.

“Did I ever say she was unfilial?” The Empress Dowager’s cold, icelike, and distant eyes landed on Nanny Wei as she said, “We have been standing together through thick and thin for so many years in the Palace. One kind of person can’t live long here. You should know that, right?”

“What, what kind of...” Nanny Wei asked. Fear made her teeth chatter.

“Those who betray their masters and talk too much.” The Empress Dowager said flatly.

Nanny Wei's back was covered with cold sweat, and she lowered her head in a panic. She gritted her teeth and composed herself before replying, "I understand. I'm going to invite Consort of Virtue over."

No matter what, what happened to Consort of Virtue had nothing to do with her.

"You can leave now. Be cautious with your words!" The Empress Dowager waved her hand and said.

She was in no mood to deal with Nanny Wei's matter. Compared with the trouble started by Duke Cheng'en's painting, Nanny Wei's thing was just a small matter.

After their discussion, she and the Emperor agreed that the Consort of Virtue and the Empress were the most likely suspects.

Yet, they couldn't investigate the two of them together, for it might expose their purpose. Thus, to find out who was the most likely to be behind this plot, the Empress Dowager would ask the Consort of Virtue while the Emperor would go to see the Empress.

Consort of Virtue came quickly. Upon seeing the Empress Dowager, she bowed with great respect and began asking about the Empress Dowager's health condition. She was a favorite with the Empress Dowager and was in the leading place among the four consorts. It was only right and proper that she gave birth to the eldest son of the Emperor.

After chatting with Consort of Virtue for a while, the Empress Dowager asked her to go back and sit in the main hall alone, pondering deeply.

She was very reluctant to recollect what had happened that day: she helplessly watched her son die before her. There had always been a doubt lingering in her mind — she wondered if her eldest son really died of illness.

Otherwise, why would he suddenly pass away halfway through the treatment?

The imperial physician had always said that his illness was worsening and that there was no hope. But, never had he mentioned that her eldest son would die in a few days. Besides, he died abruptly without leaving his last words. Could he no longer endure his long illness? Or was there something unexpected?

The Empress Dowager had secretly sent people to investigate it but found nothing.

The past event was brought up again, implying that she had something to do with it. Who did it? This person knew the Palace inside out...

Pieces of news secretly spread out from the Palace, and those who got the information were silently terrified.

First, the Empress Dowager harshly scolded Duke Cheng'en and smashed a cup against him. Later, the Emperor met the Empress while the Empress Dowager called in Consort of Virtue. It was heard that the Emperor was severely scolding the Empress loudly in his Imperial Study. When Consort of Virtue came out of the Empress Dowager's palace, she was preoccupied with anxiety and nearly fell over on her way back.

How could one painting from Duke Cheng'en cause all of this?

A painting couldn't be powerful enough to lead to these grave consequences. Duke Cheng'en was useless, but the Empress Dowager had always respected him. So, even if she was displeased, she couldn't throw a teacup at him. When Duke Cheng'en was walking out of the Palace, he hadn't yet wiped off all the blood stains on his forehead. Some people who saw him said he looked pathetically embarrassed.

This matter must have been of great importance and caused by Duke Cheng'en.

With his character, Duke Cheng'en must have been deceived by someone and said something improper to the Empress Dowager, which annoyed her and got him into trouble. After that, Duke Cheng'en was dismissed from his post with little work in the Imperial Household Department. It could be seen that he had incensed the Empress Dowager and the Emperor.

Then the Empress and Consort of Virtue also got involved in that.

Such a matter caused these reactions. Many people guessed that this matter must be related to the succession of the throne.

When discussing the establishment of the crown prince in the imperial court, many officials argued that the vacancy of an heir was very bad for a nation. So, these officials asked the Emperor to make the decision early and not to leave them on tenterhooks.

On this premise, what happened made some sense. There were so many imperial consorts in the Palace. Why didn't they question others but only the Empress and Consort of Virtue? It must be because of Prince Yue and Prince Zhou.

As for Prince Xin, he was young and had been too much ignored by the Empress Dowager and the Emperor. He was said to be in poor physical condition recently and had not appeared in public for a long time. Even if Consort Ming in the Palace had some ambitious ideas, so what? Prince Xin was much less competitive than Prince Yue and Prince Zhou.

Were they going to choose the crown prince? Everyone was anxious and worried about who would be chosen, always regarding the answer as something of a great enigma. Anyway, they had to deal with it cautiously and wait for the final decision from the Palace. Which prince would the Emperor and the Empress Dowager choose to become the heir to the throne?

This was something big that would affect everyone in the next few decades.

Changes in the imperial court might cause awful disasters...

In the Empress's Phoenix Palace, the Empress slammed her hand on the table, gnashing her teeth in anger.

"Your Majesty, don't be angry." Her trusted Nanny soothed her in a soft voice.

"How can I not be angry? How do I know what happened that year? I'm suspected of taking advantage of some things to stir up trouble in the Palace! But I was not there back then. I know nothing about the matter." The Empress said rather fretfully.



For some inexplicable reason, the Emperor rebuked her and even ordered her to kneel as a punishment. For the Empress, it was a disgrace to her. She had been respected as a motherly model of the nation. After this, how could she manage the imperial harem in the future?

She was living in peace in the Phoenix Palace. Then there came the unforeseen misfortune. She was in a peeve over it, like having a fishbone stuck in the throat.

She had been sitting up high in a leading position for so long and had only suffered one setback because of someone. Most importantly, she didn't have the slightest idea of what was going on and why the Emperor would blame her without rhyme or reason.

"Your Majesty, you didn't do this, then it could be Consort of Virtue. Prince Yue has always been resourceful, and Consort of Virtue is used to progressing with preconceived plans. Both you and she were asked to answer questions, but only you were reprimanded. It's thus clear that Consort of Virtue came well prepared."

Her personal Nanny helped her analyze.

While listening to her, the Empress nodded vigorously. She fell prey to the dark scheme because she was ill-informed. The Emperor and the Empress Dowager invited her and Consort of Virtue, so Consort of Virtue was also a suspect. For her, since she didn't do it, it must be Consort of Virtue.

"That bitch!" The Empress was very anxious to visit Consort of Virtue's place and give her a few tight slaps to make her see her inferior position.

"At this time, you shouldn't lose your temper. It is best to calm down, think about this matter, and investigate it carefully. You can't go to see Consort of Virtue on impulse."

The personal Nanny knew the Empress' temper. Seeing her master clench her teeth in bitter hatred, she knew things might go wrong. Thus, she hurriedly tried her best to soothe her anger.

"Your Majesty, your words and deeds will affect Prince Zhou, so you can't implicate him!" The Empress got so furious that she gasped for breath. The Nanny feared she would mention Prince Zhou again in a moment of impulse.

Hearing that, the Empress looked a little less irritated. At this time, she mustn't make any move without thinking carefully. The Emperor had just severely rebuked her so that she couldn't provoke any more dispute. Since she was the Empress and had a legitimate son, she would never allow Consort of Virtue's son to override her and her son.

"I can bear it," the Empress said through gritted teeth.

"I've asked around. After Duke Cheng'en brought trouble to himself, the Empress Dowager met Princess Chen first and asked her to leave. Nothing serious happened. After that, she sent for the Emperor. As soon as His Majesty returned his Imperial Study from the Palace of Benevolent Peace, he asked you to come over!"

The Nanny got enough information from the outside and figured out the whole thing. In fact, it was not exactly a secret at all. In just a while, many people had secretly learned about some things. In the Palace, many people were keen on collecting this kind of message.

"I'll see Princess Chen tomorrow!" The Empress gritted her teeth, suppressed her anger for the time being, and said. It was already late, so it was inappropriate to order Shao Wanru to enter the Palace. Otherwise, she would meet Princess Chen now and make everything clear.

"But such a thing happened today. You should find a really good reason to summon her tomorrow. Do you think so?" The personal Nanny suggested helpfully.

"There is a reason, a justifiable one. She can't refuse to come!" The Empress said with hatred. At this moment, she even had a grudge against Shao Wanru. She resented the Shao sisters for a long time and hated them even more at this time.

#### Chapter 1087 Facing an Aggressive Consort, Not Yielding an Inch!

"Her Majesty wants me to see her in the Palace?" asked Shao Wanru in surprise. She had just had breakfast, and a familiar face came to her. Unexpectedly, it was Nanny Xi.

"Yes, my master said she hadn't seen you for a long time. You had been ill before, and she was worried about you. So, she specially asked me to invite you and wanted to discuss something about Secondary Consort Shao with you in passing." Nanny Xi said with a broad smile. Her attitude was completely different from when she was in the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

With kindness, her smile appeared pretty amiable.

"Something about Shao Yanru?" Shao Wanru secretly frowned because she didn't want to interfere in Shao Yanru's things at all. Who knew what this unruly woman had done?

"I've never been in charge of her business. Why didn't Her Majesty look for my Second Uncle?" Shao Wanru asked. Nanny Xi's last sentence was crucial, but she didn't want to get involved in Shao Yanru's business. Or it could be said that she didn't want to do it when Chu Liuchen wasn't around. She alone was not powerful enough to deal with Shao Yanru in the Palace.

Shao Yanru's business was too deep to be fathomable!

"She intended to invite the elders of Marquis Xing's Mansion, but at present, no proper elder in its inner court could do that. My master had thought it over and found you were the only person she could meet. So, Your Highness, please go ahead! Her Majesty is waiting for you!" Nanny Xi said with a smile. Her words sounded reasonable, and this invitation was irresistible.

The Empress just told her to come without issuing a formal order. Even so, Shao Wanru had to go.

The Empress invited her for a good reason.

Shao Wanru could only nod and ask Nanny Xi to go back first. She would arrive later.

After Nanny Xi left, Yujie and Qu Le looked nervous. Yesterday, the Empress Dowager summoned their master, and today the Empress wanted to see her, which would never be a good thing. Worse still, Shao Yanru was involved in it.

Secondary Consort Shao's affairs had nothing to do with their master.

"Your Highness..."

“My Lady...”

“Don’t worry. She probably wants to ask about what happened when I was in the Empress Dowager’s place yesterday,” Shao Wanru said, fluttering her long eyelashes. She had no idea what had happened in the Palace yesterday. However, according to her memories of her previous life, the Empress would inevitably be rebuked, but she suffered less than last time.

At least at present, the Empress Dowager was fine and didn’t get humiliated in front of all the officials.

The Empress Dowager and the Emperor would certainly break into a furious rage when finding anyone plotting against them. Yesterday, the Palace must be in a state of unrest, so the Empress summoned her today.

The stir caused by this matter was much less severe than in her previous life. Only some people in the Palace were amidst secret turbulence. At least, the situation looked peaceful on the surface from the outsiders.

After washing up and changing into a lotus-pattern dress of different shades of light blue, Shao Wanru entered the Palace from the side door with Yujie.

Someone immediately reported it to the Empress when they arrived at the Phoenix Palace. With a big grin, Nanny Xi came out and said, “Your Highness, please. Her Majesty has been waiting for you for a long time!”

With this, she stepped aside to make way for Shao Wanru and let her go first.

Shao Wanru nodded at Nanny Xi and walked into the hall while Yujie stood outside in well-mannered silence.

When she was inside and saw the Empress sitting high in the main seat, Shao Wanru stepped forward and bowed.

“Princess Chen, please sit down!” The Empress said politely and asked a palace maid to lead Shao Wanru to sit down on a brocade stool nearby.

In the hall, there were three or four young and beautiful consorts besides the Empress. They were all looking at Shao Wanru curiously. They were here to pay their respects to the Empress and were about to leave after chatting with the Empress for a while. But the Empress said it was not a big deal and asked them to stay longer.

“I heard the Empress Dowager was shocked yesterday, and you were involved in it. What exactly had happened? How could the Empress Dowager get into a great rage?” The Empress came straight to the question.

Shao Wanru slightly lifted her eyes and said with a little surprise, “Was she angry?”

She had a puzzled look on her delicate and fair face.

The Empress looked at Shao Wanru’s face but didn’t detect anything unusual. Then, she said slowly, “Princess Chen, do you know your visit yesterday caused a great disturbance in Palace?”

Shao Wanru's face also darkened. The Empress pushed all the blame onto her without investigating.

"Your Majesty, Imperial Grandmother just asked me a few ordinary questions and asked me to go home. She didn't mention anything else but a few trivial matters about the Duke Cheng'en's Mansion. Do you want to inquire about what she said then?"

The Empress, thinking Shao Wanru was weak, was bullying her and intended to put all the blame on her.

In her previous life, the consequences were catastrophic and damaging. Although she had done a lot in this life to prevent devastating things from happening, she couldn't afford to bear the responsibility for the turbulence in the Palace. According to the Empress's exasperated look, Shao Wanru knew the Emperor must have rebuked her, which was a better result after she changed the major accident to a minor one in this life. If everything in her previous life had happened, the Empress would have been locked up.

"How dare you speak to Her Majesty like that?" A consort rebuked harshly for the Empress.

"Your Grace, what should I say now? Should I say what the Empress Dowager ordered me not to say?" Since Shao Wanru's face clouded, she no longer pretended to be weak and let the Empress step on her.

"You, you audacious..." No one in the hall had expected that Shao Wanru would suddenly become so tough. The imperial consort, who flushed scarlet after being scolded, couldn't utter a word.

She couldn't say that the Empress's words mattered, so Princess Chen could ignore the request of the Empress Dowager and tell the Empress whatever she wanted to know.

"No matter how brave I am, I'm not as bold as you, Your Grace. You're driving a wedge between the Empress Dowager and the Empress. How can I casually spread confidential words the Empress Dowager has forbidden me to tell others? Everyone in the Palace knows the rule. Even if I have stayed in the Yuhui Nunnery for three years, I understand this rule. Why don't you know it?"

Shao Wanru mocked her.

Since she wasn't going to play the weak, she might as well be fierce both in look and voice.

At this critical moment, the Empress didn't have the guts to make a big deal out of it because she hadn't been cleared of all suspicion. She would have to face imminent disaster if she stirred up more trouble.

"Princess Chen, how dare you talk nonsense? How could I sow discord between them? You are slandering me!" The imperial consort couldn't sit still after being criticized by Shao Wanru. She stood up and argued aloud in a furious. She just wanted to help the Empress, but she didn't expect Princess Chen was not someone to be trifled with.

The other imperial consorts didn't say anything, and their expressions changed when they looked at Shao Wanru.

At first sight of Princess Chen, everyone felt she was gentle and delicate. Her eyes and brows were full of tender charms. With her outstanding facial features, she was exceedingly beautiful. Such a woman like her must be gentle and pitiful. But since no man was here, no one would take pity on her.

No one had expected that her character was widely distant from her appearance. She dared to fight for a powerful position even before the Empress.

A few smart consorts observed the Empress's expression and lowered their heads.

The Empress was in charge of the imperial harem and managed all the consorts, but Princess Chen was dauntless and unyielding.

Prince Chen was a very difficult character. Who knew what kind of big trouble he would make after he came back? They were not the Empress. No matter how aggressive Prince Chen was, he couldn't do anything to the Empress.

The large hall suddenly quieted down. Some consorts folded the handkerchief in their hands, some tidied up their sleeves, and some played with the bracelets around their wrists. They all pretended not to see what was going on before them.

"Your Grace, the Empress and the Empress Dowager can judge the meaning of your words. As for the slander, I never said it was you. Why did you insist on bearing the responsibility out of your guilty conscience?" Shao Wanru said coldly.

Since they talked about everything open and aboveboard, Shao Wanru was not afraid of consorts like her at all. The consort before her was eager to fawn over the Empress. Before the Empress started the argument, she jumped out to defend her. It was a pity that she didn't know how humble she was.

"I just wanted to ask you what you said in the Empress Dowager's place yesterday. Since Her Majesty didn't allow you to tell others, you could keep it a secret. You didn't have to despise the Emperor's consort. At least, she is your elder." The Empress finally spoke with displeasure, and her tone was reproachful.

The imperial consort responded quickly and knelt before the Empress with a thud. She cried sadly, "Your Majesty, I just gave Princess Chen a kind reminder. How could she treat me so harshly? I feel ashamed to meet His Majesty again."

After that, she stood up and covered her face with her long sleeves as if she was going to bump against a pillar nearby.

The palace maids on the side hurriedly stopped her. The imperial consort was all tears, and her voice was choked with sobs. When several palace maids pulled her to prevent her from doing anything stupid, she fell and knelt on the ground, crying. "Your Majesty, please uphold justice for me!"

"Princess Chen, it was originally a small matter. I don't know why you had to make such a scene. How can I explain it to the Empress Dowager and His Majesty?" The Empress looked at Shao Wanru with a gloomy face and said, "Since you provoked this conflict, I should punish you. You must..."

"Wait!" Shao Wanru raised her voice and interrupted the Empress.

The imperial consort who had fallen to the ground burst into tears again, waving her hands and feet as if she was trying hard to get up.

"Your Majesty, I really don't know what happened. You asked me about the conversation yesterday between the Empress Dowager and me. I told you Imperial Grandmother didn't allow me to reveal the

secret. Then, this lady stood out to accuse me and forced me to share the secret. A moment ago, she even deliberately threatened to kill herself, and you immediately decided that she was right and I was wrong, and you were going to punish me. You think I didn't do it right, so I should tell you about the confidential chat with the Empress Dowager yesterday. Is that the right thing I must do?"

Shao Wanru looked at the Empress calmly. She connected everything that happened, and her analysis sounded logical and reasonable.

The Empress let her supporter malign her. After that, she could justifiably punish her. However, no matter what punishment she planned to inflict on her, Shao Wanru wouldn't accept it. Otherwise, she would harm her dignity and even Chu Liuchen's.

They wanted to sacrifice the Prince Chen's Mansion to preserve the Empress's dignity, and the Empress was going to shift all the blame onto the Prince Chen's Mansion. Shao Wanru could never retreat at this time!

#### Chapter 1088 Is Shao Yanru Seriously Sick?

"Princess Chen, do you know what you were referring to?" No one in the hall spoke except for the imperial consort who had been forced to argue with Shao Wanru. In this case, the Empress had to ask personally.

"Your Highness, I know what I'm talking about. Even if the Empress Dowager and the Emperor were here, I would say the same thing," Shao Wanru raised her head and said coldly.

She showed no fear and looked steadily at the Empress, her soft and charming eyes appearing piercing and steely as the Empress watched her closely.

With her current status, the Empress couldn't punish her in private. Since it was so, she did not have to give in to the Empress. In her eyes, the Empress was just making an empty show of her strength. Shao Wanru knew she didn't dare to do anything to her.

After Shao Wanru finished speaking, the Empress was so angry that her face turned pale. But as Shao Wanru had expected, her anger gradually cooled. In the end, even her face had strangely softened.

She asked someone to pull the imperial consort up and let her sit aside.

"Princess Chen, I had no intention of asking about the conversation between the Empress Dowager and you, but I'm worried about the peace of the imperial harem. Since the Empress Dowager ordered you to keep it a secret, I won't blame you. It's just that you've made such a mess with this consort. It's really embarrassing. No matter what improper things she has done, you've been disrespectful."

The Empress reproached her again, but her voice was not as stern as before.

Shao Wanru withdrew the stern look on her face and stopped before going too far. With great respect, she bowed to the Empress and said in a tone that was neither humble nor pushy, "Just now, I thought someone intended to plot against my Imperial Grandmother, so I spoke too hastily. Your Majesty, please forgive me."

She said that she spoke impetuously but refused to admit her mistake.

By saying that, she also meant to stick up for the Empress Dowager. Therefore, even if the Empress wanted to blame Shao Wanru, she had no reason. It was because what she said was reasonable, and there was no mistake.

"Your Majesty, please uphold justice for me!" Shao Wanru remained calm, but the imperial consort panicked. She looked up at the Empress and begged while wiping her tears.

She also regretted it in her heart. At the moment, she was in a dilemma. If she had known this result, she would not have rushed out. Unexpectedly, Princess Chen looked so young and delicate, but she had such a strong temper. Even if the consort made a terrible scene, she failed to drag Princess Chen into trouble. If the Emperor learned about this, she might have to suffer.

At this moment, she was no longer interested in gaining merit but only in avoiding blame.

The other imperial consorts lowered their heads. They had wanted to help because the Empress seemed to be in a superior position. But at present, they all felt grateful that they didn't react fast enough in the beginning.

"You go back first. I will explain it to His Majesty!" the Empress said.

The imperial consort didn't dare to make any more trouble and left tearfully, holding a palace maid's hand.

"Princess Chen, I will report it to His Majesty." The Empress said lightly.

"Thank you for your justice, Your Majesty." Shao Wanru bowed respectfully again.

"In fact, the most important thing is the matter about your eldest sister. That was why I invited you here. I just asked about your chat with the Empress Dowager in passing. You know, because you had been to the Palace yesterday, a lot of things happened. Since I'm in charge of the imperial harem, I should ask about everything clearly," the Empress Queen said seriously.

She had brought up the topic of "the discord between the Empress Dowager and the Empress," so she had to explain it away at this time.

Shao Wanru, knowing full well when to stop, slightly knitted her willowy eyebrows and asked, "Did anything happen to Secondary Consort Shao?"

"She is seriously ill," the Empress said.

Shao Wanru looked up in astonishment and asked, "Really?"

"She fell ill before. At the start, she just caught a chill, but her condition worsened. The imperial physicians went to see her and said she only had a slim chance of surviving with her illness." The Empress said solemnly.

"Did all the imperial physicians say so?" Shao Wanru said with a deep look in her watery eyes. "Is Shao Yanru going to die of illness?" She really couldn't believe it.

"The imperial physicians said so. This time, I asked you to come to the Palace to see her. If anything untoward should happen to her, she won't feel regretful, for she has seen someone from her family of

origin. Recently, no one but you can go here on behalf of the Marquis Xing's Mansion." The Empress said.

"Thank you, Your Majesty." Shao Wanru agreed.

She couldn't refuse. Outsiders knew she didn't get along well with Shao Yanru, but it was not the time to bother about it. When Shao Yanru was about to die, how could she still bear a grudge against her? If Shao Wanru didn't go to see her, others would look down on her because she was cold-blooded.

"Come on, take Princess Chen to see Secondary Consort Shao." The Empress waved her hand and ordered.

Nanny Xi stepped out from behind the Empress, took the order with a big smile, and left with Shao Wanru.

Seeing Shao Wanru leave, the few imperial consorts also excused themselves. Right after getting out of the Phoenix Palace, they all breathed a sigh of relief. In their hearts, they secretly decided not to intervene in anything related to Princess Chen in the future because they couldn't afford to offend her.

They didn't dare to provoke Prince Chen and Princess Chen!

After everyone left, the Empress's face clouded, and she revealed the anger she had tried hard to hide. How could even the inferior Princess Chen get the nerve to disobey her?

"Your Highness, don't get angry. Princess Chen has Prince Chen backing her up, so you can't punish her without the most careful thought. But without Prince Chen, Princess Chen is nothing!"

A personal Nanny beside her came forward to soothe her.

"Your Majesty, don't worry. Do you remember Princess Yutao from Xu State? I heard she was a beauty with a heroic spirit. Prince Chen is in poor health, so he will prefer women of valiant and heroic bearing." Another Nanny advised.

Hearing their words, the Empress looked a little relieved and nodded. "I have underestimated Princess Chen. I didn't expect her to contradict me."

She had thought it would be a piece of cake to inquire about what had happened in the Empress Dowager's place from Shao Wanru. To her great dismay, Shao Wanru was so difficult to deal with that the Empress was at a loss for the right words to frame her up. In addition, she acted in an overbearing manner. With Chu Liuchen behind her, the Empress really didn't dare to do anything to her, not to mention that the Emperor had just rebuked her yesterday.

In the near future, she should not cause any more trouble. But what exactly did Shao Wanru say to the Empress Dowager yesterday? Because of that, the Empress Dowager was in a rage, and the Emperor scolded her.

The Empress was deep in thought, thinking about how to get the answers to these questions. If she knew who was playing tricks behind her back, she would never let the person go!

Of course, Consort of Virtue was the most likely one. Chu Liuyue had been targeting the throne. He and Chu Liuzhou had plotted against each other many times.



"Keep an eye on Consort of Virtue. Whenever Prince Yue enters the Palace, ask some people to monitor his schedule closely!" The Empress said unwillingly. She believed that she could find something if she closely watched Consort of Virtue.

The Empress didn't get any benefits from Shao Wanru, so she vented all her anger on Consort of Virtue. Although some people had secretly watched Consort of Virtue for her, she dispatched more this time.

From time to time, several servants would pass by the place where Consort of Virtue lived. For a time, all the people in the Consort of Virtue's place remained in a state of suspicion and fear...

Shao Wanru followed Nanny Xi, and they walked for a long time before arriving at Shao Yanru's residence. It was a small courtyard much smaller than Shao Yanru's courtyard in the Marquis Xing's Mansion. There were only three simple rooms. Although one was the main room, it was just slightly bigger than the two side rooms.

As soon as Shao Wanru entered the room, she smelled a strong smell of medicine.

A palace maid squatting in the corridor heard the sound and looked up. When she saw Shao Wanru, she was pleasantly surprised. In a hurry, she dropped the palm-leaf fan in her hand and ran over to bow to Shao Wanru. "Greetings, Your Highness!"

She was Han Dan, the palace maid with Shao Yanru.

"How is your master?" With a wave of her hand, Shao Wanru motioned her to stand up and asked.

"Our master, our master..." The rims of Han Dan's eyes turned red. She wiped her tears but couldn't even speak a word.

"Your Highness, I'll go back and report to my master." Nanny Xi didn't go in. She looked at the empty and low courtyard with disgust and said.

"Thank you, Nanny Xi!" Shao Wanru nodded and said.

"Nanny Xi, please wait a minute. My master has something important to tell you!" Mo Yan, Shao Yanru's servant girl, suddenly appeared in the corridor. She was sent to the Palace to serve Shao Yanru later. Shao Wanru saw her not long ago, but she looked much thinner and more gloomy.

She walked to the corridor and bowed to Shao Wanru sideways. Then she also saluted Nanny Xi. Mo Yan had met Nanny Xi when in the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Nanny Xi looked at her from head to toe and said arrogantly, "I have something else to deal with in my master's place, so I won't see Secondary Consort Shao."

After that, she turned around and was about to leave. With Shao Yanru's poor situation, anyone who saw her would have a bad time. Nanny Xi couldn't see the benefit of going in.

"Nanny, don't go yet. It's from my master!" Mo Yan took out a small purse from her breast pocket and handed it to Nanny Xi. Nanny Xi took it and pinched it to feel what was inside. It was not a banknote but more like a piece of jade. She could feel that it was smooth but angular.

Although she didn't know what it was, she knew it should be a nice piece.

Before Shao Yanru entered the Palace, she was the legitimate eldest daughter in the Marquis Xing's Mansion. Thus, she had a lot of good items. This one in the pocket must be one of them. Compared with those cheques for silver, it was much more valuable.

Thinking of this, Nanny Xi immediately smiled and said, "Since your master said so, I'll go and have a look. Your master has been ill for a long time. If it goes on like this, it will be troublesome."

"Thank you for your concern, Nanny Xi. Our master said she felt much better and should be fine after drinking a few more doses of medicine." Mo Yan breathed a sigh of relief and smiled faintly.

Shao Wanru shifted her eyes from Nanny Xi's face to Mo Yan. So, Shao Yanru was not seriously ill, but just sick.

For this reason, the Empress summoned her to the Palace so that she could ask about what had happened in the Empress Dowager's place yesterday. Shao Yanru's illness was just an excuse.

Sure enough, Shao Yanru was not so easy to die. Even though she was in such a mess in the Palace, she could still secretly stir up trouble.

"Your Highness, let's go in and have a look!" After Nanny Xi finished talking with Mo Yan, she said to Shao Wanru with a smile.

Shao Wanru nodded and walked inside.

She hadn't seen Shao Yanru for a long time, but no matter how long it had been, she wouldn't forget that the person lying in this room was a beautiful villain with a murderous heart that was vicious to the extreme. Shao Wanru had to deal with her with the greatest care at any time in case Shao Yanru should take advantage of the information to cause trouble.

Even before she entered the Palace, Shao Yanru had done many dirty things...

Chapter 1089 Regretting or Acting?

It was a very plain room, and the simple decoration was not bad. However, the layout was far inferior to that of Shao Yanru's room in the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Fortunately, the arrangement was simple but clean.

They turned around the screen and saw Shao Yanru on the bed. She was dressed in very simple white clothes and leaning against the headboard with a white ribbon on her head. She looked very haggard, and her rosy lips were pale. It could be seen that Shao Yanru was in a pretty bad condition.

But inexplicably, she looked pitiful.

Shao Wanru stood still and looked at Shao Yanru's face. She had seen the emaciated Madam Di and Madam Jiang thinned to the bone, but she had never seen Shao Yanru when she was very thin.

This skinny and pitiful beauty could make others feel sorry for her.

She had been the eldest legitimate daughter of the Marquis Xing's Mansion, yet she ended up in such a humble, pitiful position.

Leaning against the headboard, she was expecting visitors eagerly with a sorrowful look in her eyes. Her tousled hair fell untidily on her back. Her clothes were simple, but they did not affect her attractive appearance. Shao Wanru's heart also skipped a beat when she saw her.

Since Shao Yanru no longer lived the same wealthy life as before, she looked much less flashy and more pitiful. She was already in such a miserable state, and her days were numbered, so no matter how big the past event was, others would feel reluctant to haggle over old grudges with her!

"Fifth Sister, Nanny Xi!" Hearing the voice at the door, Shao Yanru looked up at them, the rims of her eyes slightly red. She looked excited and reached out her arms to prop herself up from the bed. However, she was frail, so she collapsed.

Han Dan hurriedly stepped forward to support her and slowly lifted her to sit on the bed. Then, she put several thick cushions behind her so that she could lay bolstered up in bed.

Shao Yanru leaned back and said weakly, "Thank you for coming to see me, Fifth Sister and Nanny Xi!"

"Are you feeling any better?" Nanny Xi looked Shao Yanru up and down and asked.

"I'm slightly better. The medicine sent before was very good...I felt much better after taking it!" Shao Yanru said softly. Although she looked weak, she was beautiful.

"That's good! Great!" Nanny Xi said with a wide smile and looked around. In the end, her eyes fell on several long brocade boxes on the table.

There were three or four brocade boxes, and the top one was half-opened. Several ginseng roots could be seen outside. Her eyes lit up. Ordinary people couldn't afford such good ginseng.

Shao Yanru, in poor condition, didn't seem to be able to afford this kind of ginseng. Besides, it was obvious that the ginseng in these boxes was sent by someone.

"If you need anything, I'll tell the Empress." Nanny Xi's eyes were glued to these brocade boxes with ginseng as she made these polite remarks.

The Empress loathed Shao Yanru. Even if Shao Yanru begged her in person, she would ignore her.

This time, an imperial physician had come to help Shao Yanru. It was said that she had asked someone else for help. Nanny Xi did not care much about it at first. The one who was willing to help must have casually invited an imperial physician over merely for the sake of the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Unexpectedly, she saw such tip-top medicinal materials here. It meant the person didn't do it merely for the sake of courtesy. Could Secondary Consort Shao turn the tables one day?

Nanny Xi was old and sophisticated. When she entered the room, she noticed that though Secondary Consort Shao looked languid, her delicate face was fragile and pitiful. Even Nanny Xi was startled by her morbid beauty. If a man saw such a pitiful and beautiful countenance, his heart would ache for her.

What if the Emperor saw her like this?

Thinking of this, she immediately became more concerned about Shao Yanru. She picked up a stool and sat before Shao Yanru's bed. Holding Shao Yanru's hand in hers, she looked at her and said with tears,

"Why are you so weak? You looked fine before, but now you have become so sick. Please don't worry. I will ask the imperial physician to take good care of you. You'll get better soon."

"Thank you for your kind words, Nanny Xi!" Shao Yanru said. A faint blush suffused her pale face as she lowered her head shyly. Even when Nanny Xi saw her like that, she felt a sudden tender pity for her, her heart pounding fast.

"Well, have a rest first, and I will come to see you later!" Nanny Xi said after seeing her, "I won't disturb you and Princess Chen now!"

"Mo Yan, see Nanny Xi off for me!" Shao Yanru ordered softly.

Mo Yan responded and walked out with Nanny Xi.

"Your Highness, please sit down!" The smile on Shao Yanru's face slowly faded away. She closed her eyes powerlessly, looked at Shao Wanru standing beside her, and said.

Shao Wanru sat down, staring at Shao Yanru's face with penetrating eyes in silence.

"Is it particularly satisfying to see me in a sorry plight? You must think I got the punishment I deserved. Right?" Shao Yanru said with a casual air and added with a wry smile, "Indeed, I have only myself to blame. I brought this upon myself, but... I feel so regretful!"

Speaking of this, Shao Yanru lowered her head with red eyes, unwilling to let Shao Wanru see the weakness in her eyes. Then she slowly raised her head and said, "Fifth Sister, my bad! I was wrong!"

"Fifth Miss, please save our master." Mo Yan came in and saw this scene. She knelt before Shao Wanru and wiped away her tears. "If we're locked up in here any longer, our master will die."

Han Dan also knelt and begged, "Please save our master, Your Highness!"

Shao Wanru's eyes looked extremely calm. She overlooked the two servants kneeling on the ground and landed her eyes on Shao Yanru. At this time, Shao Yanru appeared extremely pitiful. Her delicate face was full of regret and hatred, and she seemed overburdened with remorse. She looked at Shao Wanru with eager eyes as if Shao Wanru was all her hope.

"Secondary Consort Shao, whether you believe it or not, I just came here today to visit you, a patient, according to the Empress's order. I've seen you will recover soon, and I'll have to go!"

After saying that, Shao Wanru stood up, turned around, and walked out.

"Fifth Miss!"

"Your Highness!" Mo Yan and Han Dan called anxiously.

Shao Wanru didn't stop walking and continued going outside. At first, Yujie was a little taken aback, but she hurriedly followed up after a brief pause.

"Master, I'm going to get Fifth Miss back." Mo Yan stood up and was about to chase after Shao Wanru.

"There's no need!" Shao Yanru said with a cold snort. She hid the weakness on her face and said with a trace of gloom across her eyes. Shao Wanru's visit today was unexpected for her.

Initially, she wanted to improve their relationship through this gathering. Even if they couldn't forget old grudges entirely, they could at least relieve the tension between them. Unexpectedly, Shao Wanru reacted like this.

"Master..." Seeing Shao Wanru walk out of her sight, Mo Yan stamped her feet anxiously.

"Shao Wanru won't give in so easily!" Shao Yanru looked out of the room with gloomy eyes, without the slightest weakness she had a while ago. Shao Wanru was just an accident. She could include such an accident in her plan, but it didn't matter if there wasn't Shao Wanru.

Moreover, this incident had sort of happened.

"Master..."

Shao Wanru came out of Shao Yanru's room and went straight to the Prince Chen's Mansion.

Yujie led the way in front. She was an expert at finding her way. It was the first time she had visited this place, but she had paid attention to remembering the way. Therefore, they didn't get lost.

The place was very remote, and they hardly saw any people around.

After they walked for a while, a eunuch abruptly came from the side of the road. With a kind smile, he looked pretty amiable, "Greetings, Your Highness!"

The eunuch smiled and blocked Shao Wanru and her servant's way.

"Who are you?" Yujie stepped forward and stopped him. She looked him up and down warily. Neither of them had seen this eunuch.

"Consort Lan ordered me to send this letter to Princess Chen!" The eunuch took out a letter from his chest pocket and handed it over.

Yujie, not entirely convinced, asked, "You serve Concubine Lan. Can you prove it?"

"I have nothing to prove this, but Nanny Zheng, Princess Chen's trusted maid, used to be Consort Lan's personal palace maid. She had always been with my master." The eunuch lowered his voice and said with a smile, "Your Highness, please accept the letter first. I am afraid that others will see it!"

Before Yujie could say anything, Shao Wanru said softly, "Take it!"

Yujie took it obediently and hid the letter in the deep pocket on her sleeve.

"Your Highness, my master asks you to be careful. The palace remains far from tranquil. If you send a birthday gift to the Empress Dowager, pick up an ordinary gift. You don't have to choose something eye-catching. Prince Chen is not at home, so you should be more cautious. Don't cause unnecessary trouble for him."

Seeing Yujie receive the letter, the eunuch breathed a sigh of relief. After delivering the message, he saluted Shao Wanru again before he turned around and left.

"Hey, you... How could you say that..." Yujie was so angry that she could hardly restrain herself from stamping with rage. His words suggested that her master was a troublemaker who always got Prince Chen in trouble on purpose.

Shao Wanru stopped Yujie, shook her head at her, and ordered calmly, "Let's go!"

"My Lady..." Yujie was furious, but she could only continue walking out. The rest of their way was very peaceful, and no more unexpected people appeared.

They didn't go to the Phoenix Palace of the Empress. Instead, they took a turn before the Phoenix Palace and returned to a familiar road. Then they walked straight back to the Prince Chen's Mansion.

When they arrived at the main room, Shao Wanru sat down. Qu Le served tea and asked with concern, "My Lady, Her Majesty invited you over. Did she make things difficult for you?"

"Of course she did. An imperial consort even quarreled with our master and was taken away." Yujie was standing outside the hall at that time. When seeing the imperial consort returning with tears running down her cheeks, she was quite perturbed. Fortunately, her master had been very calm after coming out. Also, Nanny Xi seemed to be very obsequious to her master.

"No big deal. The Empress forced me to yield to her and say what the Empress Dowager had discussed with me. Everything is fine now!" Shao Wanru shook her head. Unless she ended up in a desperate situation, the Empress wouldn't go all out. "Yujie, give me the letter and invite Nanny Zheng here!"

She had to let Nanny Zheng check this letter to see if it was from Consort Lan.

"Yes, I will bring her to you right now!" Yujie nodded, took out the letter from her sleeve, and presented it to Shao Wanru respectfully. Then she left in a hurry to get Nanny Zheng.

#### Chapter 1090 Mistakes, Growing Crises

Nanny Zheng came quickly. After entering the room, she bowed to Shao Wanru first.

"Nanny, take a look at this letter. Did Consort Lan write it?" Shao Wanru came straight to the question.

Nanny Zheng took the letter and looked at it with a solemn face. When she saw the handwriting and a small mark on the envelope clearly, she nodded and said, "My Lady, it is indeed from Consort Lan. There is a tiny mark here. Do you think it looks like an orchid?"

Shao Wanru took the letter, looked at it, and shook her head. The mark was very light and small, but it didn't look like an orchid at all. It seemed that she accidentally made it.

"My Lady, please turn it over and look at it again," Nanny Zheng said with a gentle smile.

Shao Wanru turned the letter in her hand around. When she looked at the mark again, it was a bit like an orchid to her. But if Nanny Zheng didn't tell her about it in advance, she might not guess it right because the pattern was in the cursive style.

"Before I left the Palace that day, Consort Lan had told me this. Originally, I planned to go to the Prince Chen's Mansion that day." Nanny Zheng sighed with a trace of bitterness in her eyes. "My Lady, rest assured. Consort Lan will never harbor any bad intentions toward you."

Shao Wanru glanced at Nanny Zheng and asked, "Consort Lan, what's her relationship with His Highness?"

"I don't dare to reveal their relationship." Nanny Zheng lowered her head.

Seeing her reaction, Shao Wanru knew she would not tell her, so she didn't pursue the matter. Instead, she opened the letter and began to read it. The more she read, the more serious her face became.

The letter described what had happened in the Palace yesterday.

The Emperor rebuked the Empress in the Imperial Study, and Consort of Virtue was summoned to the Empress Dowager's place. Many people in the Palace were wondering what Shao Wanru had said to the Empress Dowager after entering the Palace. Was it a coincidence? Or did the Empress Dowager specially order Shao Wanru to see her?

Before Shao Wanru came, Duke Cheng'en met the Empress Dowager, who then scolded him severely. In a towering rage, the Empress Dowager even hit him. After Duke Cheng'en left, she had a conversation with Shao Wanru first. Then the Emperor came to see her. Finally, she talked with Consort of Virtue.

In the overall situation, Shao Wanru was like a round peg in a square hole among all these people. She looked like an outsider who accidentally got involved but also seemed to be the centerpiece of the whole thing.

Consort Lan warned Shao Wanru that people in the limelight would bear the brunt of an attack, so she should keep a low profile and avoid making any trouble. Chu Liuchen was not in the capital, so she had to be more careful. Moreover, she told Shao Wanru that Chu Liuchen couldn't arrive in the capital before the Empress Dowager's birthday...

Shao Wanru looked at the letter in her hand twice before slowly putting it down, tightly knitting her willowy eyebrows. She knew these words were not groundless.

"My Lady, did Consort Lan say anything crucial?" Seeing her put down the letter, Nanny Zheng said anxiously, "Did anything serious happen? Otherwise, Consort Lan would not have contacted you at this time."

Shao Wanru glanced at Nanny Zheng in surprise but did not ask for the reason. She simply nodded and said, "They talked about what happened in the Palace yesterday. The Empress was scolded, and Consort of Virtue was also involved. I had been to the Palace to meet the Empress Dowager yesterday. Many people think that these things might have something to do with me!"

Upon hearing her words, several trusted subordinates could not help gasping.

"My Lady, did someone direct all the attention to you on purpose?" Yujie asked.

"I also think so. Why do they feel this matter must have something to do with you?" Qu Le echoed.

Shao Wanru tightly pursed her pink and tender lips and remembered what the Empress had done. On the sly, someone aggravated a complicated situation, put all the blame on Shao Wanru, and made her the center of attention. Then the Empress confirmed those rumors. She kept the few imperial consorts in her place because she wanted them to spread the word that Shao Wanru was the key that had triggered all these things.

The Empress summoned her not to learn about the talk between her and the Empress Dowager but to prove to others that this rumor was authentic, which imperceptibly put Shao Wanru in danger.

Before she read Consort Lan's letter, she was a little confused and couldn't see the whole picture clearly. But now, Shao Wanru immediately understood that she was in a perilous situation: when various forces suspected her, how could she come to a good end?

"My Lady, you should be even more discreet at this time. Since His Highness is not in the mansion, you are the only master. Nothing can go wrong with you." Nanny Zheng looked more nervous than Shao Wanru. Her face paled a little, which showed that she was in a panic.

Nanny Zheng had always been steady and reliable, though this was not the first time the two servant girls saw Nanny Zheng in a fluster. Yujie and Qu Le's faces immediately clouded.

"My Lady, please pretend to be sick!" Yujie came up with an idea and said.

Nanny Zheng shook her head and said, "No, this excuse sounds unconvincing, and the others will know that our master cooks her illness up on purpose. It will make her more suspicious in their eyes. Besides, when some people intend to deal with Your Highness, they can do it even if she fakes illness."

Pretending to be sick at this time was too far-fetched. In the past, when nothing serious happened, it was okay for Princess Chen to pretend to be sick. At the very worst, she would displease the Empress Dowager.

Now was not the best time.

"Then... Then let's move out early to avoid the trouble. We can leave the mansion. Perhaps, we can move to the Rui'an Great Elder Princess's Mansion?" Hearing that some people might hurt Princess Chen, Qu Le was so scared that she reached out to pull Shao Wanru's sleeve and said, "My Lady, let's go to the Rui'an Great Elder Princess's Mansion. There are many guards!"

If Prince Chen were here, they certainly didn't need to care so much about it. But now, Princess Chen was the only master in the mansion, so Qu Le was deeply worried.

"We can't do that. If we hide there, we might bring trouble to Great Elder Princess. Although the Rui'an Great Elder Princess's Mansion also has many guards, those guards are far inferior to those in Prince Chen's Mansion!"

Nanny Zheng objected again.

"We can't do this, and we can't do that. Then, what should we do? We can't just watch Her Highness get into trouble!" Qu Le was so anxious that she was about to cry.

Before they talked about it, Qu Le sensed no danger. But after hearing Nanny Zheng's analysis, she felt that lurking dangers surrounded them. In her eyes, no place was safe anymore.

Shao Wanru composed herself, pondered for a while, and said, "I'll stay in the Prince Chen's Mansion, not going anywhere else. I don't need the maple leaf painting anymore. I'll use the table screen!"



Shao Wanru personally embroidered the table screen she prepared as a birthday gift long ago. After all, one painting was not enough, and it was more thoughtful to present it with a table screen. But since the painting with maple leaves had become the key to everything, it was better not to take it out.

“The table screen and other treasures will be my gifts for the Empress Dowager.”

These gifts, neither outstanding nor shabby, were a token of her regard. As a granddaughter-in-law, she needed to send some gifts, though they were not particularly eye-catching.

Without the maple leaf painting, she could, at least, make people less suspicious of her.

This time, she made a very unwise move. Initially, she didn't want Chu Liuchen to be sad, for he had always cared about the Empress Dowager, who doted on him. Unexpectedly, because of this painting, Shan Wanru brought trouble upon herself. It could only be said that this matter was overly complicated. She had only a smattering of knowledge of what happened in her previous life and thought little about this matter.

She could only remedy the situation like this.

“My Lady, what if someone comes to stir up trouble in our mansion?” Yujie was still worried. Even if her master had adequately prepared the birthday gifts, she thought they had many other things to worry about.

There were not many guards in the Prince Chen's Mansion. Before Chu Liuchen left, he had informed Shao Wanru about this. The chief supervisor took charge of some of his subordinates. According to Chu Liuchen, she could use these people in a crisis. However, Shao Wanru didn't want to let these people protect her at this time.

This would attract more attention to Chu Liuchen. She couldn't put Chu Liuchen in danger because of her negligence.

There were so many people secretly spying on them when their future remained problematic. It was not right and proper for Chu Liuchen to expose his strength in front of others, which would give him much trouble.

“Nanny Zheng, I know what to do. Don't worry. You can go back first, and don't go anywhere tonight. Restrain the others in the mansion with Nanny Yu. Something may happen tonight. Don't panic. I will ask the chief supervisor to arrange everything. We'll all be safe.”

Shao Wanru comforted them.

“My Lady, will we be fine?” Nanny Zheng was visibly not convinced. Watching Princess Chen, who still looked like an overgrown little girl, Nanny Zheng was quite worried.

Although Princess Chen did not look as weak as she appeared, she was just a young girl who hadn't even reached the age of fifteen. At such a young age and being brought up in the boudoir, she had never faced a dangerous situation like this.

“Nanny Zheng, please set your heart at ease about it. I will ask the chief supervisor for ideas. Even if I'm at a loss, the chief supervisor will always be there for us, won't he?” Shao Wanru said unhurriedly.

Seeing that she was so calm and unperturbed, Yujie and Qu Le felt relieved and even produced a light smile. Princess Chen would always have a way of solving problems, so they didn't have to panic.

Only Nanny Zheng still felt worried. After thinking for a while, she added, "My Lady, if you have no other way, I will go to the Palace to beg Consort Lan, asking her if you can hide in her place. Consort Lan will protect you and not let anyone hurt you!"

"I shouldn't go there. Consort Lan herself has been occupied with continuous troublesome things. Something bad will happen if she spares her time and energy to protect me. Nanny Zheng, rest assured. I will be fine." Shao Wanru refused with a smile.

If Consort Lan hadn't gotten anything to worry about, the Emperor wouldn't confine her to a place to protect her. Under the Emperor's protection, she could stay safe. But still, she had been locked up in one place and had not much freedom to go around. Shao Wanru did not think it was a good idea to go into the Palace and ask Consort Lan for help. Moreover, she had to think of some good reasons and explanations when telling others why she must go to the Palace and why she had to find Consort Lan.

Since she didn't want to leave the Prince Chen's Mansion, there must be a reason for that, and she also had a reason, which could prevent those who wanted to hurt her secretly from launching assaults.

She persuaded Nanny Zheng to leave. Qing'er and the chief supervisor were led to her together. After the chief supervisor heard the whole story from Shao Wanru, his face changed drastically. He had experienced ups and downs in the Palace, so he knew Shao Wanru was in a dangerous situation.

"Your Highness, you are now the key to everything. After the maple leaf painting emerged, the Emperor and the Empress Dowager will inevitably suspect Prince Yue and Prince Zhou as well as Consort of Virtue and the Empress behind them. This matter hasn't been disclosed in public, so they are secretly conducting a thorough investigation. At this critical moment, if anything happens to you, the key of the whole matter, we'll be in one heck of a mess." The chief supervisor immediately grasped all the key points and pointed out the hidden danger for Shao Wanru.