

Medical Princess 1091

Chapter 1091 Being in a Fatal Situation, Seeking a Chance to Survive!

The person behind this matter hadn't yet emerged.

It might be the Empress or Consort of Virtue in the Palace, but perhaps, neither of them had done that. It could be someone else who deliberately stirred up trouble and fanned the flames of disorder, pushing the imperial court and the Palace into chaos and even forcing the Emperor to subdue his son.

The previous scheme centered around the maple-leaf painting, but at present, every intrigue revolved around Shao Wanru.

Shao Wanru was crystal clear that if nothing happened to her, others would investigate this matter slowly and secretly. Even if others were suspicious of her, they couldn't know the truth. The Duke Cheng'en's Mansion would keep silent. Around this topic, the Empress Dowager and the Emperor would also maintain a wall of silence. As for Shao Wanru, she would undoubtedly button up her mouth.

But if anything happened to Shao Wanru, this matter couldn't go into hiding. Then, it would cause earthshaking changes to the entire imperial court and even the whole situation. Both the court and the commonality would be in tumult. What was worse, new forces might suddenly come to the fore.

In her previous life, the incident started on the birthday of the Empress Dowager and ended with Prince Zhou's rebellion. The trouble was over on the surface after Prince Zhou died.

Other things happening during this period were unknown to Shao Wanru. She seemed to have had only a limited view of the whole affair. Accidentally, she had fallen into the eye of the storm.

"Sir, now that things have come to this, I have an idea. What do you think of it?"

A group of people riding their horses was going on their trip in a hurry, galloping along the government-financed road at full speed. All of them were in black suits of light armor. At a glance, pedestrians on both roadsides knew they weren't ordinary people and hurriedly jumped aside to dodge them.

Suddenly, one of them pulled sharply on the reins and stopped. Behind him, his followers did the same thing in unison.

They rested in the pavilion on the side of the road for the time being, and some surrounded the pavilion, not allowing any unrelated people to get close.

Chu Liuchen wore a dark cloak hanging loosely from his shoulders and a veil to keep out dust, revealing only his stunning eyes. With a fierce look in his blazing eyes, he appeared less refined and delicate at this time.

As he sat on a stone bench in the pavilion, a carrier pigeon fell from the sky and landed in the hands of a guard beside him. The guard skillfully took out a rolled-up letter under its feather and presented it respectfully to Chu Liuchen.

Chu Liuchen took it. After he browsed through it, his eyes turned cold and deep. He narrowed his eyes thoughtfully and asked for the writing brush and ink.

“Yes.” The guard hurriedly prepared the writing tools. Chu Liuchen stood up, held the writing brush, and thought for a moment before finishing a letter in one go.

After that, he took up the paper to see it and nodded.

When the ink dried up, the guard came over and folded the paper. Then he put it under the carrier pigeon’s wings and tossed it into the air. It spread its wings and disappeared eventually into the horizon.

“How long can we reach the capital city?” Chu Liuchen sat down again and asked.

“Before the Empress Dowager’s birthday.” The leader of the guards said with great respect. They left the carriages behind and hurried to the capital city on horses because they intended to catch up with the Empress Dowager’s birthday.

The carriages were far behind them, carrying the two princesses from the Xu State to the capital city. The one at the forefront belonged to Chu Liuchen, who was not there. Only Xiao Xuanzi was left to deal with the others in case anyone should find out that Chu Liuchen was gone.

Of course, even if either the two princesses from the Xu State, Qin Huaiyong, or Chu Qing found anything wrong, Chu Liuchen did not care at all. He only worried that someone would secretly hinder him from returning to the capital city quickly.

There were always accidents along their way back to the capital city — some people deliberately tried to stop him. So, he got rid of the carriage and rode a horse swiftly to the capital city like the wind.

“Master, did anything happen in the capital city?” Ancheng, the leader of his guards, asked. When Ancheng was little, he became an orphan and was picked up by Chu Liuchen from a pit of bodies. After that, he followed Chu Liuchen and served him heart and soul.

Something did happen in the capital city. The chief supervisor, the only one who knew Chu Liuchen was hurrying back, sent this carrier pigeon. They didn’t even reveal all the news to Shao Wanru for fear that someone would target her. It was best to keep this matter from her.

Unexpectedly, even so, some people started conspiring against her.

Whenever Chu Liuchen thought of Shao Wanru in danger, his eyes turned icy cold. Since they intended to mess with her, he decided to throw these people into turmoil. They didn’t want him to enter the capital city so fast, did they? In that case, he might as well cause an uproar among them first.

“No big deal. Let’s march faster and return to the capital city as soon as possible.” Chu Liuchen slightly squinted his eyes and smiled with an evil and chilling look.

“Master, are you feeling all right?” Ancheng, feeling worried about his health, asked softly. Even though his master was much better now, those who had accompanied him for a long time would still be anxious.

His master had depended on medicine for so many years. Did he fully recover?

“I’m in good condition!” Chu Liuchen said lightly. Gracefully, he stood up and strode to the horse outside the pavilion. After taking the reins from a guard, he pulled the reins and got on the horse. Then, the

group of guards behind him also rode on their horses. With a swing of the horsewhip, they galloped forward.

Ancheng was on the first horse beside Chu Liuchen. With concern, he looked at Prince Chen on the horse before him and sighed in his heart. "Xiao Xuanzi is right. Our master will go to protect Princess Chen regardless of his health!"

He thought more highly of Princess Chen.

Even though Ancheng had always been strong, he could hardly bear this rapid march. Unlike him, Prince Chen had always been sick and weak. Even if he recovered at present, he was just as healthy as an ordinary person.

Ancheng gave the signal to a guard beside him. The guard nodded, got out of their team, and pressed ahead to find a place for refreshment. When there was a suitable place, they would persuade Prince Chen to have a good rest.

Ancheng took a few steps back and whispered to Qi Jue, who was on a horse near him, "Doctor Qi, our master's health..."

Because of this hasty journey, Qi Jue was so exhausted that he didn't even want to say a word. Impatiently, he waved his hand, puffing for breath, and said, "Don't ask me. I'm whacked. His health is much better than mine. But if we go on like this, he can't stand it, no matter how healthy he is. You'd better persuade him to rest early!"

Qi Jue felt that he suffered a great loss. Initially, he felt great following his master's carriage because they would rest from time to time. But why would they suddenly leave the carriage and march in a hurry? Besides, he was asked to go with them. But he was just a doctor, not a guard. Why must he follow them? In fact, it didn't matter whether they had him or not!

"That's good. Take care, Doctor Qi!" Hearing that his master was in good health, Ancheng was relieved. Looking at Doctor Qi's feeble look, he teased, "Doctor Qi, you'd better do some exercises. If you remain delicate in health, I'm afraid no woman wants to marry you!"

"Alas, what are you talking about!" said Qi Jue a little crossly after wiping the sweat off his face. He hated it the most when others talked about his marriage.

"Doctor Qi, take care. I have to go and see our master!" Ancheng laughed and left.

Chu Liuchen and his men covered their tracks and advanced rapidly to the capital city, which was beyond everyone's expectations. At present, all these people were focused on the Prince Chen's Mansion.

The chief supervisor received the message from the carrier pigeon in the evening. After sitting in the room for a while, he went to see Shao Wanru. After the two of them had a discussion, the chief supervisor returned to deal with affairs at the outer court. As usual, he handled most of the matters of the Prince Chen's Mansion.

This chief supervisor stayed up late every day to do his work. Since he had made Xiao Xuanzi his heir, Xiao Xuanzi could usually share some of the burdens. As a result, when Xiao Xuanzi was away from the mansion with Chu Liuchen, he became especially busy.

Darkness was gathering. It was almost late spring, so the weather was getting hotter, and it got dark later. But even so, after the sunset, the light was fading rapidly. The night grew blacker.

In Shao Wanru's inner court, the lights were still on, and she didn't fall asleep. Under the lights, there seemed to be a few servant girls with her. Now and then, there were voices rising, which sounded clear in the night.

A man in black came out of nowhere and suddenly broke into the Prince Chen's Mansion. After an arrow was shot at the figure showing up in the half-open window, women screamed, and some people shouted, "My Lady, My Lady!"

"Come here! Save Her Highness!"

"Anyone! Help!" A servant girl rushed out and cried aloud.

In the night, a man in black looked around blankly. The people he brought were still here and hadn't taken action yet. How could someone go and shoot an arrow right into Princess Chen's room?

But shouldn't assassins use swords? Some people used arrows. Attacking in a big way was not a good sign. This place was connected to the imperial Palace, with its gate protected by guards sent by the Emperor. At first, they planned to get to work undetected, but was their plan ruined by others?

"Leave!" The leader in black ordered decisively. Whether Princess Chen was fine or not, they could not stay here any longer.

When they were on their way to leave by leaps, another group of men in black appeared on the opposite side. It seemed that they were about to walk away too. The two groups bumped into each other.

Both sides were stunned for a moment and began fighting. Anyway, the two parties working for different masters were not on the same side.

Many people were plotting against Princess Chen in secret. Since they had encountered each other, they could go ahead to strike.

As blades flashed coldly in the dark, blood splashed, and screams rang out continuously. They all exerted every ounce of their energy to eliminate the other side. Then they would flee from the scene as fast as they could. No one dared to stay here any longer. The whole city would be under martial law if the matter were blown up. The longer they stayed, the greater the risk of them being exposed. Who wouldn't fight desperately?

Lots of crossbows aimlessly shot into the crowd. No one knew where they came from, and many people were injured under the indiscriminate attack.

Lights seemed to have come up in the outer court. From there, lots of people rushed over. These men in black belonging to different groups felt that serious trouble was imminent. In response, they helped

each other to escape and killed those who were too severely wounded to go away. Immediately, all the men in black dispersed and ran for their lives separately.

The chief supervisor finally rushed over with guards.

Half of these guards were from the Prince Chen's Mansion, and the other half were sent here by the Emperor.

Dead black-clad men were scattered inside and outside Princess Chen's courtyard. The bloody scene astonished everyone.

The chief supervisor hurriedly stepped forward to knock on the courtyard door, but no one inside opened it. A guard jumped in from the wall and opened the door. There, they saw several servant girls and old maids serving in this place, but they felt weak all over and couldn't move at all. After all, women in the inner court had never experienced this. They were so freaked out that their face paled. Their legs were so weak that they could hardly stand. Therefore, none of them could get on their feet to open the door.

The chief supervisor tore into the main room and said to the guard with a gloomy face, "Hurry up. Get doctors here."

Chapter 1092 Heavy Military Crossbows, Who was Behind This Vicious Attack?

"Princess Chen is just a lady living in the inner court. How could anyone think of murdering her? And with heavy crossbows? Enlighten me, how could crossbows in the army show up in the Prince Chen's Mansion? Were they going to slaughter Princess Chen or wipe out the entire Prince Chen's Mansion? Princess Chen is merely a delicate woman. What the hell was wrong with you?"

In a magnificent hall with a high ceiling, the Emperor angrily threw away the memorials near him, which happened to land around Prince Yue and Prince Zhou.

The two princes stood before the other officials, and the Emperor didn't fling the few memorials far away. Therefore, they happened to drop right before them, and one even hit Prince Yue on his head.

Nevertheless, Prince Yue didn't make any sound after being smashed, nor did he dare to touch his head. He just stood very still.

Did the Emperor bang the things on the two princes deliberately or accidentally? It was hard to figure out what he meant. What was more confusing was that Prince Cheng also came to the imperial court.

In the past, Prince Cheng seldom attended the imperial court. Why did he happen to come here today? Was it a coincidence or something else?

"Has Princess Chen been attacked? Why would anyone hurt Princess Chen?" Many officials were at a loss. Not all of them were well-informed, especially regarding things in the Palace.

Princess Chen was involved in the previous matter, but many officials didn't know about it. Thus, they felt completely in the dark about this question and didn't know the purpose of others targeting Princess Chen.

It was just a princess, and she was Prince Chen's wife. Why would anyone harm Princess Chen when Prince Chen was not in the mansion? Did these princes intend to do something that couldn't bear the light of day?

It would sound more reasonable if some people were plotting against Prince Chen. How would these people make such a mess only to deal with the harmless Princess Chen living in the inner court? In particular, it was heard that they had used heavy military crossbows. Ordinary people, who were not allowed to keep these crossbows, would be charged with a felony for collecting them. Based on what they learned, some people had stored up and used such powerful military crossbows, which deeply shocked everyone.

Were these people planning to rebel?

In a panic, these officials glanced at Prince Yue and Prince Zhou from time to time. Some looked at Prince Cheng. Frankly, Prince Cheng also looked suspicious, didn't he?

Ordinary people couldn't use so many powerful weapons. The others might haven't figured out why they wanted to murder Princess Chen, but it didn't matter. Nevertheless, one thing was sure: it must have been done by royal family members.

At present, the three people were indeed the most suspicious. Of course, it also might be Prince Xin, who was not in the imperial court now.

However, it was much less likely for Prince Xin to do that compared to the few princes in the imperial court.

"Tell me, why did you want to kill Princess Chen? If Prince Chen had been home, you would have turned to attack him instead, wouldn't you?" The Emperor reproached them, pointing to his sons one by one in a frenzy of rage.

The Emperor received the report right after last night's incident. Something had happened in the Prince Chen's Mansion, and Princess Chen was wounded. She was in the room but happened to lower her head back then, so she luckily avoided the arrow. But still, she was hurt. When everyone was in the ensuing panic, someone rushed in and stabbed her. At this time, Princess Chen was still lying in bed, and her life was uncertain.

Thinking of this, the Emperor couldn't help shuddering with anger.

"I'm still alive, and all of you can't bear it. You can't even put up with the Prince Chen's Mansion. Who else can you tolerate? It would be best for you to kill all the other royal descendants after I die. Right?" The Emperor pounded on the table hard and growled.

Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou couldn't stand the pressure anymore, and they knelt with a thud.

Prince Cheng looked at his two nephews and the Emperor, his furious brother sitting on the throne. Then he had no choice but to kneel. At present, they were the only ones in the court who were supposed to take the blame.

"Imperial Father, I left the Palace late yesterday, so I spent the night where I lived in the past." Chu Liuyue explained.

"Imperial Father, I was out drinking with my friends yesterday, and someone can testify for me," Chu Liuzhou said with a righteous look.

"Imperial Brother, I was listening to the sutras yesterday. Many people in the Huaguang Temple can prove it for me!" Prince Cheng sighed and said helplessly.

Their explanations could dispel others' suspicions of them. In addition, they all had alibis and witnesses for last night.

But they all happened to be occupied with something yesterday and had people to prove it, which made others on the spot a little suspicious.

How could all of them have something to do last night and witnesses? Such a coincidence sounded overly deliberate. Could all three of them have intervened in it?

The officials kept their mouths shut but secretly guessed who did it. It must be one, two, or even three of them. Otherwise, how could it be so coincidental that all three of them had alibis? Usually, even if they were in their mansions last night, they might not have witnesses to prove it.

If their movements weren't suspicious, they must have faked it on purpose.

The three princes also noticed the problem. With sullen faces, they looked at each other, feeling each other very suspicious. How could it be such a coincidence?

"Oh, lucky for you! All three of you have witnesses. Even better, your witnesses are not from your mansions. Did I blame you unjustly?" The Emperor sneered with a livid face.

"Imperial Father, I don't dare!"

"Imperial Father, I decided on it long ago and didn't act on impulse yesterday!"

"Imperial Brother, I've also made the appointment early with the monks in Huaguang Temple."

Their contrived explanations were virtually the same in essentials. Even the most slow-witted officials could see that something was wrong: the three princes had some skeletons in their closets.

"I will find out the truth and won't spare anyone who did this!" The Emperor snapped, "Guards! Send Prince Yue, Prince Zhou, and Prince Cheng back to their mansion and keep them under close surveillance."

He intended to detain all the princes.

The officials knew they could no longer look on and do nothing. One after another, they knelt on the ground. Only two Prime Ministers remained standing before them.

"Your Majesty, please think it over. This incident might be a frame-up. Supervising and controlling all three princes can be exactly what the one behind this hopes for!" advised Prime Minister Zhang.

Prime Minister Wen also said, "Your Majesty, there are many questionable points. But in any case, Princess Chen isn't in danger now. So, I suppose it's inappropriate to confine the three princes because of her!"

“Please reconsider it!”

“Your Majesty, please think carefully!” All the officials kowtowed together.

In the main hall, the Emperor watched the officials kneeling on the ground coldly, his face clouding over and his gaze icy.

Derong, the chief eunuch responsible for writing documents, stood there motionlessly, keeping his eyes fixed on his nose. He didn’t dare to make a sound because the Emperor flared up. As a humble eunuch, he had better not get involved in it.

The imperial court was in a mess, and the imperial harem was also in chaos. The Empress knelt before the Empress Dowager, crying sadly. Beside her, Consort of Virtue also sobbed too bitterly to straighten herself up.

“Mother, this has nothing to do with the two princes. Prince Yue and Prince Zhou couldn’t be that crazy to hurt Princess Chen. What’s the good of harming Princess Chen? Why would they do that at all costs? Mother, please intercede with His Majesty for the two princes. His Majesty wants to lock them up.”

When the Empress begged for mercy, she especially mentioned Chu Liuyue.

The news that the Emperor exploded with rage in the imperial court quickly reached the imperial harem. This time, the Empress and Consort of Virtue, who had been going against each other, stood together and pleaded for the two princes wholeheartedly.

“Your Majesty, Prince Yue has been sensible and kind since he was a child. How could he dare to do such a thing? He appears cold-hearted because many women have been excessively enthusiastic about him. But in fact, he has a mild nature. Your Majesty, please investigate this matter. Don’t let His Majesty misunderstand the two princes!”

Consort of Virtue choked with sobs. Compared with the Empress, who occasionally became aggressive, Consort of Virtue looked much gentler.

Consort of Virtue was the biological mother of the Emperor’s first son, which made her more important than the other imperial consorts. Later, in the leading place among the four consorts, she was favored by the Empress Dowager.

At this moment, she prostrated herself before the Empress Dowager, crying too hard to get up.

“Mother, Prince Zhou and Prince Yue are innocent. Please save them and don’t let them get involved in these things. Princess Chen is fine. I heard that she was much better!” The Empress said as she wiped her tears.

“Your Majesty...” Consort of Virtue wept out.

“Okay, stop talking!” The Empress Dowager slammed her hand on the table heavily, her gloomy eyes sweeping across the faces of the Empress and Consort of Virtue.

What happened last night was so unexpected that the Empress Dowager still couldn’t believe it. How could anyone use such powerful weapons merely to deal with Shao Wanru? Were they planning to rebel?

Who could get and hide such heavy and mighty crossbows? They were killing machines several times more destructive than ordinary arrows. When the Empress Dowager thought that Princess Chen was nearly killed last night, her heart still fluttered with fear.

“If Shao Wanru were dead, what would happen to Chen’er? He might not accept the grievous news and die. Did these people merely want to kill Princess Chen? No, they obviously wanted Prince Chen’s life.” With this in her mind, a wave of fierce wrath rolled up in her.

Consort of Virtue, who had given her a good impression, became an eyesore. The Empress Dowager didn’t believe it had nothing to do with the other princes.

“Why can’t you tolerate Chen’er? You can’t stand him even though he is in such poor health! This time, Princess Chen is injured. Would Prince Chen be your next target?” The Empress Dowager reached out to point at the Empress and Consort of Virtue and scolded them angrily.

“Imperial Mother, I didn’t.”

“Your Majesty...”

“Anyone? Come here and take the Empress and Consort of Virtue back. Before this matter is settled, they should temporarily stay in their own places. As for all the affairs in the Palace, I should let...” The Empress Dowager thought for a while and continued, “Let Consort Ming take charge of them with two elder imperial consorts.”

The Empress Dowager announced her decision.

“Imperial Mother...” The Empress whined. She had always been managing the affairs in the imperial harem. To her great dismay, such an incident deprived her of her power. How could she take such a consequence lying down?

“All of you should leave now. Let’s talk about it after we find out the truth!” The Empress Dowager said sharply. She had already made up her mind. The Empress and Consort of Virtue must be kept under observation in the Palace lest they should conspire with her two grandsons outside the Palace and stir up more trouble. Although Consort Ming was also a suspect, she was much less suspicious than them.

It was best to let Consort Ming replace the Empress for the time being and perform her duty of managing the imperial harem.

Chapter 1093 Four batches of Men in Black Appeared

Shao Wanru was indeed wounded — her arm got injured. Of course, she herself, instead of others, did this.

Mingqiu Nun was changing fresh dressing for her wound. Then, she said, “My Lady, you should be careful. If the sword went deeper, it would hurt your major blood vessels and risk your life!”

Mingqiu Nun remembered the time when dealing with Shao Wanru’s wound before and couldn’t help palpitating with anxiety and fear. Since she could be considered Shao Wanru’s master, how could she not feel distressed when Shao Wanru was seriously wounded?

In the past few years, Mingqiu Nun had been living a quiet and peaceful life in the Yuhui Nunnery. When she knew Shao Wanru was seriously injured, she was greatly frantic with worry.

"Please don't worry. I'm fine now, right?" Looking at Mingqiu Nun's pallid countenance, Shao Wanru stayed calm and said with a smile.

Her left arm was cut and carefully bandaged. In the past, she always had a fine color on her white and delicate face. However, her complexion became pale and pasty, and even the corners of her mouth turned colorless. Her black hair hung loosely down her back, making her look daintier and more slender.

At this moment, she endured the pain of the wound and comforted Mingqiu Nun with a smile. Mingqiu Nun was kind-hearted, so Shao Wanru felt reluctant to let her get involved in this disturbance. It was better for her not to know it.

"So ruthlessly they struck. Who on earth were they? They wanted your life!" Mingqiu Nun looked at the window broken by the arrow and said. The broken window had been replaced by a new window, but the heavy crossbow grazed the desk and left its shocking trace. At one glance, one could tell that the crossbow was powerful.

Fortunately, it didn't hit Shao Wanru and her servant girls. Otherwise, if the arrow had been shot in someone's arm, the arm would have been broken. If it had thudded into someone, the person would have been killed immediately.

The dead bodies in the courtyard had been dragged away, and the blood had been washed away. Mingqiu Nun had a keen sense of smell, so she could still smell blood. Inexplicably, the unpleasant smell made her feel the whole courtyard was gloomy.

All the servant girls and old maids were walking in the courtyard with fear and trepidation as if the invisible fierce aura from yesterday was still lingering in the air.

No woman in the inner court had witnessed such a gory scene.

"Madam, is our master okay?" Yujie lifted the curtain and came in, asking urgently. Since the incident happened last night, the servant girls here hadn't slept. Though their faces were as white as paper, they felt greatly stressed and did not want to sleep.

"She needs a good rest!" Mingqiu Nun observed Shao Wanru's face and told Yujie, "Recently, make sure to let your master have a good rest. Talk about those annoying things after His Highness comes back. She was merely a lady in the inner court but suffered such a big disaster. It's really..."

Speaking of this, Mingqiu Nun sighed. Even if she was not involved, she felt something strange about it. Very likely, it was related to the succession of the throne in the royal family.

Affairs like this in the royal family would greatly fluster ladies in the inner court, especially girls like Shao Wanru. In Mingqiu Nun's eyes, Shao Wanru was actually an immature little girl.

"Trust me. I will take good care of my master!" Yujie breathed a sigh of relief. Since Mingqiu Nun said this, Yujie knew her master must be fine. She turned to look at Shao Wanru whose delicate face had become ghastly pale. Even though Yujie was not injured, she still had a lingering fear.

If she hadn't seen it with her own eyes, she couldn't have believed that her master dared to stab her arm with a sword.

Blood spurted from the nasty cut. The few servant girls stood there transfixed with horror. After all, no one had expected that their master would really cut herself in real earnest.

Even a man couldn't do such a courageous act, but Princess Chen, a tender woman, had the guts to do it.

"My Lady, Great Elder Princess comes!" Qu Le came in and reported in a hurry.

"Yujie, please take Mingqiu Nun to rest!" Yujie nodded and left with Mingqiu Nun.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess held Shao Yuanhao's hand and walked in with unsteady footsteps. When she entered, she almost fell at the door.

"Zhuozhuo, you...you...you...are you okay?" Seeing Shao Wanru lying on the bed, Rui'an Great Elder Princess asked with bloodshot eyes. She had been tough and strong, but she could hardly stand up. If Nanny Gao and Shao Yuanhao hadn't supported her, she would have collapsed long ago.

"Grandma, I'm fine!" Shao Wanru forced a smile and comforted Rui'an Great Elder Princess.

Shao Wanru was lying there, her face pale and bloodless. Rui'an Great Elder Princess couldn't help remembering her daughter. At that time, she also lay there with an ashen face and never woke up again.

No longer could she restrain her tears as she hurriedly took two steps forward and reached out to grab Shao Wanru's hand. When Rui'an Great Elder Princess felt the little warmth in her hand, she breathed a sigh of relief and choked out, "You're okay. Great! It's so good you're fine!"

"Sister, are you okay? Do you need more doctors?" Shao Yuanhao also came forward and asked worriedly like a grown-up.

"I'm all right. Don't worry!" Shao Wanru said softly, smiling.

Qu Le brought a chair and invited Shao Yuanhao to sit on it while Rui'an Great Elder Princess sat at the head of Shao Wanru's bed.

"What happened last night? Did some people attack the Prince Chen's Mansion at night? What did they want to do? Prince Chen is a prince with no real power. Can't they even tolerate him?" Rui'an Great Elder Princess tried to compose herself and said through clenched teeth.

Everyone could see this attack must be related to the few princes fighting for the throne.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess got the message a little late. The news that Shao Wanru had an accident nearly scared her into unconsciousness. Then, Shao Yuanhao brought her here with him. At that moment, Rui'an Great Elder Princess seemed to have come back to the day when her daughter died, and she could no longer think clearly.

She felt better only when she saw Shao Wanru was fine.

"Grandma, I'm fine. The Emperor will find out the truth!" Feeling the warmth from her grandma's hands, Shao Wanru felt touched in her heart.

"I'll go to look for the Empress Dowager in the Palace. Prince Chen hasn't affected anyone's business and has been sick and weak for many years. But they can't tolerate him and even you when he is slightly better. These people are too heartless!" Rui'an Great Elder Princess rebuked angrily.

"Grandma, don't go there now. The Palace must be in a mess now. The Empress and Consort of Virtue will get you involved in this matter," Shao Wanru comforted her grandma and said.

"So what if I'm involved? I'm not afraid of getting into trouble because of this." Rui'an Great Elder Princess said in resentment. She was very anxious to go into the Palace and rebuke Prince Yue and Prince Zhou before the Empress and Consort of Virtue, who must have instigated the two princes to do the evil thing. Otherwise, who would attack Shao Wanru?

These cruel-hearted people couldn't even tolerate Princess Chen, who was not a threat to them. If any of them ascended to the throne one day, only a few people might stay alive. Rui'an Great Elder Princess didn't believe others would have no idea about it.

"Grandma, it may or may not be done by them. Let's wait and see. Stay here to take care of me, okay?" Shao Wanru was afraid that her grandma would rush to the Palace to make trouble.

Before the situation became clear, she didn't want Great Elder Princess to get involved.

At this time, horrible things might happen to whoever got involved in the dispute. The best way was to wait for some time. Since this disturbance was not a small matter, the Emperor would investigate it. That night, they had drawn out a lot of people in black. Though well prepared, she was pretty taken aback. To make the show more authentic, she stabbed herself with a sword.

She had planned to let the guards left by Chu Liuchen in the mansion fake an ordinary assassination of her. She discussed it with the chief supervisor, and they agreed to carry out their plan at night. But later, the chief supervisor came over, saying that he had received new orders from Chu Liuchen: more people would part in the assassination so that she and her servant girls should hide.

In fact, it was not Shao Wanru who stayed in her room that day. She and a few servant girls were hiding in the wing room. Therefore, the crossbow entering the room didn't hurt anyone, but the noise was loud.

After that, several groups of black-clad men were drawn out. In the darkness, many people were locked in a tangled fight, but no one knew who the other parties were. When the chief supervisor rushed in with some people, those intruders wearing black clothes had run away. Then, Shao Wanru returned to her room with her servant girls and cut herself with a sword.

Everything had been arranged except that Shao Wanru stabbed herself, which was a complete surprise to everyone. The chief supervisor almost passed out when learning that Princess Chen was injured for real.

Prince Chen had reminded him many times to protect Princess Chen well, but he didn't expect that she was still hurt. The chief supervisor kept blaming himself for having failed his master.

At that time, Shao Wanru had clearly seen more than two batches of black-clad men. There seemed to be about four groups. They looked like two parties, but how could four teams show up?

There were three groups respectively from the Prince Yue's Mansion, the Prince Zhou's Mansion, and the Prince Cheng's Mansion. Then, who sent the fourth squad? These people from the Prince Chen's Mansion didn't appear when those men in black were attacking each other in the melee. These people from the Prince Chen's Mansion shot the crossbows and quietly retreated. None of them was injured or died there.

Shao Wanru decisively stabbed herself after discovering the appearance of the fourth group. The matter was so complicated that she did not want to expose Chu Liuchen's secret merely because of a fake wound on her.

Since she was supposed to get injured, she had better have a real wound in the eyes of everyone, whether the imperial physicians from the Palace or other people. This was why she didn't hesitate to cut herself on the spot.

A lot of people might be implicated in this matter, but Shao Wanru couldn't let the Prince Chen's Mansion get involved. In this case, it would be her responsibility to prove their innocence.

"Grandma, many people in black came here yesterday. I don't think they belong to one large group. I'm afraid that many people will be involved. I'm the victim, so you should know the right thing to do and the principles to follow. Even if the Emperor doesn't want to look into the matter, he has to get to the bottom."

Shao Wanru implicitly reminded her grandma.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess, after all, had experienced big events. Before this, she only cared too much about Shao Wanru to think clearly. After listening to Shao Wanru's advice, she pondered for a moment and knew now was the best time to do it. No matter how the Emperor viewed it, this matter had to be investigated, and it had to be surveyed thoroughly. Some people struck a prince's mansion with military crossbows late at night. Then, would these people attack the imperial Palace next time?

If the Emperor could not guarantee his safety, how could he sleep peacefully? Even if this trouble was stirred up by his sons, so what?

Chapter 1094 Who Was the Secret Troublemaker?

"Do you know when Prince Chen will return to the capital city?" After calming down, Rui'an Great Elder Princess paused and asked with a serious look. She wanted to say something but stopped on second thought. "I heard from Ruiping that Prince Chen couldn't come back before the Empress Dowager's birthday. So, no one in your mansion can go to inquire about the news before the Emperor, even in this critical situation..."

There was no male master in the mansion, and the female master was injured. It was inconvenient for others in the mansion to ask for information from others. Rui'an Great Elder Princess had wanted to ask around, but Shao Wanru told her not to act rashly at this time.

If this condition continued, the Prince Chen's Mansion couldn't get any new messages and might not rise to the emergency. Therefore, Rui'an Great Elder Princess had been very worried.

In fact, Rui'an Great Elder Princess kept a few words to herself. The words from Ruiping Great Elder Princess had some hidden meanings: Prince Chen had been wandering about to enjoy the landscape

with Princess Yutao from the Xu State, and that was why he returned so slowly. In addition, it was said that Princess Yutao was the most beautiful woman in her country.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess didn't like her implications, which terribly worried her. Yet, it was not the right time to talk about it with Shao Wanru. She feared these words would disturb the balance of her granddaughter's mind.

"Grandma, rest assured. Chu Liuchen will return to the capital city soon!" Shao Wanru said softly.

If it had been her plan, she wouldn't have done such a violent and tragic thing. The chief supervisor then secretly told her about Chu Liuchen's plan, so she did that to cooperate with Chu Liuchen's plot. Of course, Chu Liuchen had never asked her to stab herself. Thinking of this, Shao Wanru felt inexplicably guilty.

When Shao Wanru recalled the chief supervisor's deathly pale face, she felt sorry for him.

The chief supervisor meant to let a servant girl get injured. Never had he asked Shao Wanru to hurt herself.

However, at that time, Shao Wanru felt that their plan could work better only when she was wounded for real. Moreover, as she was proficient in medical skills, she knew the best place to stab herself. As a result, though her wound looked terrible, she wasn't seriously hurt.

"I heard the woman from the Xu State, Princess Yutao... She is outstanding..." Rui'an Great Elder Princess frowned tightly. At the sight of her granddaughter's colorless face, she couldn't bear to keep the news from her. What could she do if Princess Yutao insisted on marrying into the Prince Chen's Mansion?

Recently, Rui'an Great Elder Princess had frequently received the news about Princess Yutao from outside, which terribly upset her.

At first, she was never suspicious of Chu Liuchen, who had expressed his intention to marry Shao Wanru three years ago. Chu Liuchen told her his health was not as bad as the rumors said. If he were well nourished, he would get better. In the past, he abandoned himself, so he didn't recuperate well. After that, as Chu Liuchen had promised, he was getting better.

Though he still looked as sickly as before, he was good in other aspects. Even the Empress Dowager had said happily that even his incompletely cured illness seemed to be eliminated, and he only needed to nourish himself well.

Only then did Rui'an Great Elder Princess feel relieved. However, there were a great many rumors about Princess Yutao, which reached her ears from time to time.

Princess Yutao seemed to have determined to marry Chu Liuchen. But what about her granddaughter? As a princess of a country, Princess Yutao would never be Chu Liuchen's consort.

But if so, would her granddaughter become a consort instead?

Impossible. Rui'an Great Elder Princess had already made up her mind. If the Emperor had such an intention, she would smash herself to death in his audience hall before all the officials. After this tragedy, the Emperor wouldn't dare to make her granddaughter a consort or a secondary legal wife.

Although she had gotten ready to do it, Rui'an Great Elder Princess was reluctant to see her granddaughter be heartbroken, especially when her granddaughter had suffered so much.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess had wanted to keep something from her granddaughter. But she felt that she couldn't hide it. So, Rui'an Great Elder Princess thought she might as well tell her granddaughter the truth so that she could prepare for future changes.

"Don't worry, Grandma. Everything will be fine." Hearing her words, Shao Wanru instantly knew what she meant, so she comforted her grandma with a smile at once.

"Princess Yutao from the Xu State..." Rui'an Great Elder Princess thought that Shao Wanru did not understand, so after coughing in a low voice, she explained in detail, "She has been going back to the capital city with Prince Chen. Something might happen on this trip. The Xu State is a small country. Since it is too remote, it is inconvenient for our state to send troops there. Thus, the imperial court mainly takes the policy of conciliation to deal with them."

Depriving Shao Wanru of her position as Princess Chen to appease the Xu State and its princess was not a big deal for the royal family because it could ensure the peace of the two countries.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess didn't think it mattered, but it was related to her only granddaughter, so she was very unwilling to give in.

"Grandma, don't worry. Nothing bad will happen. Even if Princess Yutao accepts this marriage, Prince Chen will make an excuse and refuse it. Besides, Princess Yutao won't marry into our country. It's Princess Yuyan, Second Princess of the Xu State, that will enter the capital city and get married." Shao Wanru comforted Rui'an Great Elder Princess in a soft voice. She did not want her grandma to worry about her.

Seeing that Rui'an Great Elder Princess held back the words which sprang to her lips, Shao Wanru knew some people must have deliberately delivered the rumors to her.

With her grandma's character, how could she believe it? Shao Wanru guessed that the rumor must have been mentioned before her many times.

"It's not Princess Yutao. Instead, the Second Princess of the Xu State will get married?" Rui'an Great Elder Princess was stunned and asked in astonishment. She had never heard of such a thing.

"That's right. Please be at ease, Grandma. Princess Yuyan and Commandery Prince Qing have been in a close relationship for a long time. She will marry Commandery Prince Qing when she comes to the capital city. Princess Yutao is just going to send her off, and it has nothing to do with Prince Chen," Shao Wanru smiled and explained.

"That's great!" Rui'an Great Elder Princess was overjoyed, feeling freed from a grievous burden. Her solemn face broke into a wide grin.

"Prince Chen has promised to treat my sister well." At first, Shao Yuanhao didn't understand, but now he knew what they were talking about. Immediately, he responded with dissatisfaction, "Grandma, Prince Chen promised me that on the day my sister got married! If he dares to marry any princess of the Xu State, I will not spare him!"

Hearing his childish words, Rui'an Great Elder Princess and Shao Wanru burst out laughing.

"Grandma, who told you that Princess Yutao of the Xu State was going to marry Prince Chen?" Shao Wanru asked after laughing.

"Ruiping liked talking about it when she visited me with Yuan'an. Also... Madam of Prime Minister Zhang occasionally came to see me with her daughter, and she had mentioned it."

Rui'an Great Elder Princess said.

"Madam of Prime Minister Zhang and Zhang Qilan?" Shao Wanru was slightly stunned.

"Yes, but Ruiping and Yuan'an talked about it the most. As for Madam of Prime Minister Zhang and Zhang Qilan, they casually brought up this matter only once when Ruiping was around."

Rui'an Great Elder Princess thought for a moment and nodded.

"Are you close to Madam of Prime Minister Zhang?" Shao Wanru asked curiously. She had never heard Zhang Qilan mention this before.

"Well, not exactly. We have occasional contact but don't see each other often. Recently, because Prince Yue paid me visits sometimes, people from Prime Minister Zhang's Mansion met me a few more times," Rui'an Great Elder Princess said.

Chu Liuyue was very nice to Rui'an Great Elder Princess but not sincere. For so many years, he often came to see Rui'an Great Elder Princess, who had been living in widowhood. Zhang Qilan would marry into the Prince Yue's Mansion, so she need to please Prince Yue's elders by going to the Rui'an Great Elder Princess's Mansion with Madam of Prime Minister Zhang.

It was not strange for them to do that.

However, Shao Wanru just had a strange feeling. She couldn't tell it clearly or explain it. It was an uncomfortable intuition.

There were no elders in the Prince Chen's Mansion, and Princess Chen was sick, so Rui'an Great Elder Princess moved into the Prince Chen's Mansion to take care of the injured Shao Wanru as an elder.

Shao Yuanhao also stayed at the Prince Chen's Mansion as a guest. Also, he invited his tutor over and let him live temporarily in the guest room of Prince Chen's Mansion.

The courtyard, which had been messed up by those men in black, was restored. Rui'an Great Elder Princess managed the affairs while Shao Wanru rested quietly to recuperate.

The rewards from the Palace kept coming like flowing water. First, the Empress Dowager sent some good items. Then there came things from the Empress. Besides Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming, some other consorts also sent gifts to the Prince Chen's Mansion. Shao Wanru had only heard of the titles of most of them but didn't know who they were.

For a moment, the Prince Chen's Mansion became lively.

Guards cordoned off the gate of Prince Chen's Mansion and would closely question anyone who came there for fear that anything horrifying would happen again.

In this case, many aristocratic families who wanted to make a special trip to call on Princess Chen remained quiet. If they went to the Prince Chen's Mansion at this time, it would be easy for them to have some accidents. Thus, many people decided to wait and see.

Prince Yue, Prince Zhou, and Prince Cheng were all punished by forbidding them from leaving their mansions.

From time to time, soldiers from the Five-district Military Department could be seen investigating others in the capital city. They would arrest anyone who was furtive in movements. All of this happened on the surface. It was unknown how many more people were surveying this matter in the dark. For a time, all the people in the capital city were in a state of extreme suspicion and fear.

In her Phoenix Palace, the Empress knelt before the Emperor and said with tears in her eyes, "Your Majesty, Zhou'er didn't do it. He has always been reckless. Among the princes, he is the least scheming one. This time, Princess Chen was hurt, but why would he hurt Princess Chen for nothing?"

A few days had passed since the accident. This was the first time the Emperor stepped into her Phoenix Palace after the incident. As soon as she saw the Emperor, the Empress shed tears of grievance.

The Emperor looked down coldly at the Empress with a gloomy face full of disappointment.

"At first, I thought you were capable and let you manage the entire imperial harem. I didn't expect that... you couldn't tolerate Prince Chen."

"Your Majesty, what are you talking about? I can't understand it." The Empress asked anxiously, her heart throbbing.

"How could you not understand what I said?" The Emperor asked coldly with a gloomy look in her eyes. He had just come back from Consort Lan's place. Now, feeling angry and annoyed, he didn't know how he could give vent to his pent-up feelings. A few things that happened recently, for instance, the maple-leaf painting sent to the Empress Dowager and the sneak attack targeted Princess Chen, were like a fishbone getting stuck in his throat, and he could not bear it any longer.

"I have thought it over. Among all the people in this Palace, you knew best the tableware used by the deceased emperor. Am I right? The Empress?"

The painting vividly showed the medicine bowl used by the deceased emperor and the scene when the Empress Dowager fed the medicine to him. How could the painter have described the scene that day in detail if no one had revealed it to the painter?

Chapter 1095 Be a Substitute and Behave Properly

In the large hall, wisps of light fragrance wafted out of the incense burner decorated with a phoenix head, which was refreshing and relaxing.

The Empress, however, tensed up and felt cold as if her heart had fallen into a freezing cave. The center of her back was sweat-stained. Her hands placed on both sides of her skirt were also wet with sweat.

"Your Majesty..." The Empress wailed, her eyes bloodshot. Then she choked out, "Your Majesty, it has been many years since I married you. I know what I can't do and have never overstepped. I didn't

intervene, and your people handled this matter later. Why do you suspect me now? What happened that year, that year..."

The Empress looked very painful. Slowly, she pressed her bosom and continued, "If, if I had wanted to deal with Prince Chen, why would I have made efforts to harm Princess Chen instead..."

Speaking of this, the Empress smiled wanly. "There are other things, aren't there? That was what you told me personally and what only I know about!"

Her voice sank. She spoke in a low mumble as if to herself. However, the Emperor heard it clearly, and his gloomy face changed slightly.

"Your Majesty, you were just a prince when I married you. When the deceased emperor was on the throne, I was drawn into the fight in the imperial harem and almost lost my life. Back then, you proved my innocence. After that, I followed you wholeheartedly. Even though...even though you didn't care much about me in your heart, I still performed my duty with devotion. But you accused me of plotting behind the scene. I can't be responsible for what I haven't done."

"I was not on the spot when the thing happened in the Palace. Only those present could know about it, right? Your Majesty, you didn't go to ask about these witnesses but came to blame me. I feel so wronged. If you think those who weren't present could do it, then Consort of Virtue, Consort Ming, and Prince Cheng are also suspects!"

When the deceased emperor died, only the Emperor entered the Palace. After he ascended to the throne, his principal wife and consorts also went into the Palace with him. In such a mess, anyone could do it.

In merely a few days, the old dynasty was replaced with a new one, and it was not the deceased emperor's son who succeeded the throne. Officials held different opinions about it. Many affairs of the imperial court hadn't been settled yet, let alone things of the imperial harem.

At that time, the imperial harem was in a mess. It was not difficult for someone to get a few palace maids who had seen what happened. Besides the Empress, those imperial consorts entering the imperial harem could also do it. Since everything was in turmoil, no one knew who did it.

The Emperor fell silent. Of course, he understood what the Empress said. When he thought about the whole thing carefully, he thought her words made sense.

He had just thought that it was most likely to be the Empress. But on second thought, he found that many others could also do it. Some consorts went to the Palace with the Empress. Many others, like Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming, moved to the Palace with him from his previous mansion. As for Prince Cheng, he especially came to the Palace to accompany the Empress Dowager, who had just lost her eldest son. It was also possible for him to do that.

"Your Majesty, if it weren't for the chaos at that time, how could we not find that Commandery Prince Qing's mother was pregnant? How could we let her move into the Yuhui Nunnery with a prince in her belly?"

Looking at the Emperor's face, the Empress knew that her words worked and appeared more and more pitiful.

After the former emperor passed away, only his consorts without any children would be sent to live in the Yuhui Nunnery. Those who had given birth to a child would be left behind. When they were taken to the Yuhui Nunnery, the imperial physicians would check their pulse first. They would go to the Yuhui Nunnery if everything was okay.

However, the previous emperor suddenly died, and the entire Palace became a mess. As a result, the pregnant consort held back the information that she had been pregnant and entered the Yuhui Nunnery with a baby in her belly.

Two lines of tears fell from the Empress's eyes, but she did not reach out to wipe them away. She allowed the tears to slide down her cheeks slowly. "Your Majesty, if you don't believe me, you should deprive me of my position. I am willing to take all the blame. But you won't suspect Prince Zhou, will you? He was just a newborn baby back then!"

Her words sounded pathetic to the extreme, and large teardrops rolled down her cheeks. After saying this, she sobbed too bitterly to speak.

When the Emperor heard her pitiful words, his expression softened a little, but he was still angry. "You were the Empress and had been in charge of the imperial harem. After so many things had happened, you couldn't be absolutely ignorant of them all, could you?"

"Your Majesty, I...I also wanted to learn about many more things and manage the imperial harem well. Then, you could focus on the affairs of the imperial court, but...but how could I have a hand in everything? That day, something happened in the Empress Dowager's place. Before I invited Princess Chen to ask her about this matter, I had to find another reason in case others would misunderstand her."

The Empress explained with grievances. Without reservation, she mentioned why she had asked Shao Wanru to meet her in the Palace that day and didn't use any other excuses to cover her real purpose up. Those excuses might fool others but not the Emperor. Given the Emperor's character, it was best for her to be honest about it.

"Your Majesty, there were so many things in the imperial harem. You didn't allow me to get involved in many of them, so I ignored these matters, whether they were about the Empress Dowager or Consort Lan...I listened to and attended to your every order. But sometimes, I had to inquire about something to maintain the peace of the imperial harem. Wasn't it part of my duty? Your Majesty, what exactly should I do to earn your trust?"

Speaking of this, the Empress was all tears.

The Emperor fell silent and looked at the Empress deeply, trying to perceive something from her face. Although she felt wronged, she forced herself to hold back her grievance feeling. For a moment, he heaved a deep sigh in his heart. "Do you really have no idea about it?"

"Your Majesty, if you don't believe me, you can call Princess Chen over and ask her if she revealed anything to me that day. What I have done is to maintain the peace of the imperial harem. I don't know anything else. As for the previous thing you blamed me for, I was busy taking in the people of the imperial harem and cleaning up those belonging to the former dynasty. At that time, I had just entered the Palace. How could I get so many people to do the investigation?"

"Then, who do you think is the most likely one?" The Emperor's manner relaxed.

"Your Majesty, I don't know. I have been in the imperial harem and only paid attention to the trifles there. You have always been in charge of those significant matters related to our fate. If you don't know about it, how could I know?" the Empress said, wiping her tears.

The Emperor lapsed into silence as the Empress sobbed out her grievances with strategies. First of all, she said she felt wronged. Then, she strategically mentioned the matter related to Consort Lan, hinting that she had endured a great grievance. Then, how could she not accept other things? All of this proved she was kindhearted and generous and would not harm others.

Consort Lan lived alone in the imperial harem. Though she was said to be "locked up," it was just a way to protect her. In this way, she didn't need to greet others day and night, including the Empress Dowager and the Empress. Measures were taken mainly to protect her. The Emperor granted her many privileges merely because she was the deceased empress's younger sister.

Every time the Empress thought of this, she felt her heart was in great pain as if ten thousand ants were gnawing at it. How wouldn't she wish Consort Lan could die as soon as possible.

However, she did not dare to do anything to Consort Lan. After staying with the Emperor for so many years, she had long ago learned that Consort Lan was the woman that the Emperor loved sincerely. But because she was the deceased empress's younger sister, Consort Lan couldn't get a high position and might be hated by other jealous women in the imperial harem, so she was "grounded."

The Empress knew Consort Lan sneaked out sometimes, but she pretended not to know it. She even knew that Consort Lan had always wanted to get in touch with Chu Liuchen but was rejected by him.

She thought that she was generous enough to deal with the matters of Consort Lan, who was safe and sound at the moment. Not only did the Emperor protect her, but she also indulged her. At this point, the Emperor must be grateful to her.

This was also an important reason why she tolerated Consort Lan for so many years and kept things about her strictly confidential.

Although she and Consort Lan also had secret conflicts, at least on the surface, she was a fair and kind Empress. With this, the Emperor would doubt her less.

"Get up. Have a good rest these days. I have something else to do!" The Emperor stood up and said with an ambiguous attitude. He did not blame the Empress, which meant that he sort of believed what the Empress said.

"Yes, I understood!" The Empress nodded and said softly with tears in her eyes.

The Emperor strode away. The Empress stood up with her hand on the chair. Her eyes turned cold, and her back was soaked in a cold sweat.

At that moment, she clearly sensed the Emperor's intention. If she gave a wrong answer just now, she might lose her high position as the Empress.

How could he care so much about the insignificant Princess Chen? Long ago, she knew that the Emperor treated the former empress differently. But why did he even have to protect her son?

The son of that unchaste woman was sick and would die at any time. Did he want to pass the throne to this bastard?

How could she accept it? She was the Empress and the master of the imperial harem.

The former empress had died long ago, and even her bones were rotten. How could she compete with her? Consort Lan, even if she was the younger sister of the former empress, so what? Consort Lan was just a substitute for her sister.

As a shadow, she had her duties and limitations. Did she want to rely on Prince Chen to make her the Empress Dowager?

"Your Highness, Prince Zhou secretly sent someone in!" A Nanny came in and reported carefully.

"Tell him not to act rashly. Do what we should do, and make no more careless moves." The Empress ordered.

"Prince Zhou was worried about your health, so he specially sent a miracle-working doctor here," added the Nanny.

"Who? A miracle-working doctor? Stop messing around! Aren't there any imperial physicians in the Palace?" The Empress was stunned for a moment and reproached.

"But this person...has already come in!" The Nanny's face twitched. It was not that she didn't want to stop the doctor but that Prince Zhou had sent him together with the message.

"Nonsense. Who needs a miracle-working doctor at this time? Send this person out of the Palace," the Empress growled in a towering rage.

"Yes, I'll arrange it right away." The Nanny nodded and was about to withdraw, but the Empress stopped her. "Let him wait in the side hall with the imperial physicians!"

Chapter 1096 A Period of Rapid Change, Who Is Behind the Scenes

Since the doctor had already entered the Palace, sending him out would arouse suspicion. It was better for the doctor to stay here. For one thing, it displayed Prince Zhou's filial piety. For another, it meant they were perfectly open in all their actions. In addition, it would sound perfectly reasonable to the Emperor if he heard she let the doctor stay with the imperial physicians. At this time, they had better do everything in an open and aboveboard way so as not to awaken the Emperor's suspicion.

The Empress thought this was the most difficult time for her, and she couldn't afford to arouse the Emperor's suspicion, not even the slightest.

At present, she could be considered to be grounded. Her power had been divided and given to Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming. Outside the Palace, her son was also forbidden to leave his place. Thus, she could no longer discuss matters with her son.

Everything happened fast. Not only Prince Zhou but also other people had sent assassins there. To everyone's surprise, such a small assassination eventually caused a sensation.

Assassinations were usually completed in a low profile. Even if these killers successfully finished off their targets, they would keep silent and lie low. How could anyone carry on the assassination in such a big way by using heavy crossbows from the army? It should be an assassination instead of a forcible kill. Which fool would choose such a heaven-shaking killing weapon to kill Princess Chen, who lived in the deep inner court?

Princess Chen didn't count for much in this situation. But because she had been involved in the Empress Dowager's matter, others thought she had also joined the competition for the throne and was even a key figure. Her sudden death would generate a lot of unexpected results. Once anyone shifted the blame onto someone else, it might cause enormous damage.

After a brief discussion, the Empress and Prince Zhou decided to assassinate Shao Wanru. Now thinking back on the whole thing, they were not the only ones with such a plan.

The Empress had such a panic fear after the incident. Fortunately, she had thought about what would happen if their scheme failed and was discovered, so she had prepared a series of countermeasures.

At this moment, it was time to deal with sudden changes. How were they doing so far?

Nothing serious had happened to her and her son, which was the best result they could get.

Then, who else was secretly plotting against Shao Wanru? Did they want to kill Shao Wanru, create confusion, and fish in troubled waters? In the end, they pushed the blame on her. After thinking everything over and over again, the Empress only came up with one suspect: Consort of Virtue. Only Consort of Virtue, who had arranged many back-ups in the Palace, was powerful enough to compete with her.

It was bound to be Consort of Virtue or Prince Cheng.

The Empress didn't pay much attention to Prince Cheng in the past. But now, things related to him happened one after another, which made Prince Cheng especially suspicious in her eyes. Besides those imperial consorts, Prince Cheng might also know what had happened in the past. Back then, Prince Cheng had been raised by the Empress Dowager and was favored by her.

It was said that he had devoted himself to studying Buddhism and wanted to become a Buddhist monk. However, after talking animatedly about it for so long, he still wasn't a real monk. It was just his deceptive trick to deflect suspicion from himself.

Everyone knew that she and Consort of Virtue were bitterly hostile to each other. At present, only Prince Yue was the most likely one to compete with her son. When their people came back from the scene that day, they said there were several groups of people instead of two, which meant that the third and fourth parties must have intervened.

If no one in black hadn't come back to report this, the Empress would have only guessed that. Now she was sure that Prince Cheng had also sent some people there.

No one knew what had happened in the Empress Dowager's place. Shao Wanru had been involved accidentally and became the key. Everyone secretly felt it had something to do with the fight for the throne. Shao Wanru's death would inevitably arouse the others' suspicion of Prince Zhou and Prince Yue. At this time, the least likely one would usually benefit.

The Empress thought the whole situation over and concluded Prince Cheng was the likeliest to gain benefits.

The Empress thought that Prince Cheng was the most likely to use military weapons compared with Consort of Virtue. First, he would benefit from the struggle between the two princes. Secondly, he had been to the army before, so it was much more convenient for him to get these military crossbows.

Chu Liuchen was not in the capital city, and Chu Liuxin was just being childish. In fact, it was only worthy of investigating Prince Cheng.

“Ask Prince Zhou to keep an eye on Prince Cheng secretly and send more people.” The Empress gnashed her teeth and said sinisterly. This time, she must have been set up by Prince Cheng. Unexpectedly, there was Prince Cheng around them, who glared at the throne like a ravening and dangerous tiger.

The Nanny answered and left.

Meanwhile, in her living place, Consort of Virtue was also issuing similar instructions to her subordinates. Even in Consort Ming’s place, Consort Ming was pondering this question: if all the princes suffered the loss of power, who was the most likely to benefit?

In the past, the throne was not passed to the former emperor’s son but to his brother. Would they follow the same old road this time? In this case, Prince Cheng was indeed their most formidable enemy.

Prince Cheng was very annoyed. This incident gave him a terrible headache. He had circled his study several times but couldn’t stop. He had been hiding in the dark and planning for so many years. At present, he just needed to slowly haul in the net and watch Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou fight for the throne.

But now, his ambition was unmasked.

Although the Emperor did not say anything, he grounded him, as he did to Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou. It seemed to be fair. The Emperor sent his guards to guard the gate of each mansion.

But how could it be the same with Prince Cheng?

He was the Emperor’s younger brother, so he was not supposed to take over the throne. Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou were the most likely to be the heirs to the throne. Then why would the Emperor treat them equally and ground all of them? This meant he was fighting for the throne like Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou.

“Master, what do you think?” After turning a few circles, Prince Cheng sat down, picked up the teacup on the table, and took a few gulps before putting it down heavily.

Master Jieyan would come to live in the Prince Cheng’s Mansion from time to time. Everyone knew that he was Prince Cheng’s good friend and an eminent monk indifferent to fame and wealth. For this reason, it was not surprising for him to appear in the Prince Cheng’s Mansion.

Prince Cheng was also glad that Master Jieyan was with him at this time.

“Your Highness, don’t worry!” Master Jieyan remained calm.

"I know I should stay composed, but how can I not be in a hurry? At this time, whoever shows up in the limelight will become the public enemy. The Emperor, my brother, must have discovered my ambitious intention." Prince Cheng was in a fret. His heart, which had always been peaceful, could no longer be at ease.

He had been practicing an ascetic life for many years, but all his previous efforts were wasted.

"Your Highness, it looks like you made the same mistake as Prince Zhou and Prince Yue, but that is not the case. The Emperor hasn't found anything. It is impossible to punish you for your crime. He won't bring Prince Zhou and Prince Yue to justice. Otherwise, will he pass the throne to Prince Chen or Prince Xin?"

Master Jieyan sneered, curling up his lips with sarcasm.

In his opinion, Prince Chen and Prince Xin couldn't be suitable candidates. Prince Chen, needless to say, was not the Emperor's biological son. Besides, he had been sick. How could he inherit the throne?

As for Prince Xin, Master Jieyan thought he was childish and immature and couldn't bear such weighty responsibility.

For the Emperor, the proper candidates should be Prince Zhou and Prince Yue. Therefore, he wouldn't punish both of them, which suggested Prince Cheng would also be fine. After all, the Emperor couldn't let go of his two sons and punish his younger brother, who wasn't closely related to the throne. His decision should sound convincing to all the officials!

"Chu Liuchen may inherit the throne. He is the eldest legitimate son of the deceased emperor. It is proper for him to take the throne. If so, he could get the support of many old officials who had worked for the deceased emperor. It would be even more justifiable for him to ascend to the throne than Chu Liuzhou," Prince Cheng said. He was not that optimistic.

"Perhaps it's the most reasonable for Prince Chen to get the throne. If the Emperor wants to pass the throne to him, he just needs to say the word. Better still, no one will say that the Emperor murdered the deceased emperor back then. But so what? Prince Chen is not the biological son of the Emperor, and the Emperor will not pass the throne down to his nephew instead of his biological son. If Prince Chen feels like fighting for the throne, he will not live long. With his frail body, he will die when facing a minor accident."

Master Jieyan said disapprovingly.

Prince Cheng fell silent and thought his words made sense. However, he suddenly stood up in annoyance and said, "Who is so stupid as to assassinate Princess Chen with a crossbow? Wasn't the person afraid that my imperial brother knew it?"

Thinking of this, Prince Cheng felt very aggrieved. He couldn't figure out who was so stupid to cause such a considerable disturbance. After that, they all suffered and were grounded. The words and behavior of his imperial brother in the main hall that day didn't seem to be unintentional. It was obvious that he had noticed something.

Prince Cheng had been scheming for so long, and he had pretended to seek no fame or wealth for a long time. He had always stayed invisible to others in the fight for the throne. Now someone uncovered his

ambition and pushed him under the watchful eye of everyone. Flames of wrath leaped into Prince Cheng's breast, making him very uncomfortable.

"Master, could it be done by the people over there?" Prince Cheng stopped, tilted his head, and looked at Master Jieyan with a gloomy face.

"That's impossible. They wouldn't be willing to make such a big deal out of it. If they irritate you, they will have to suffer!" After thinking for a while, Master Jieyan shook his head and denied it.

Those people felt even more reluctant to attract the Emperor's attention. When Prince Cheng was noticed, he would be fine for the time being. But if those people were brought to the Emperor's notice, they would die no matter what. The surviving dregs of the previous dynasty were looking for a place to live, so it was not a big deal, and they wouldn't take the initiative to do something sensational.

"Since it was not done by them, who else would do it? The people who came back from there reported that at least three other groups had come. Two of the groups belonged to Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou. Then, who dispatched the third assassination squad? And who was trying to fish in troubled waters? Could it be Chu Liuxin?" Prince Cheng muttered to himself, thinking the third team shouldn't have been those remnant evil elements of the previous dynasty.

"It doesn't seem to be Prince Xin. Maybe the people returning from the scene feared you would punish them, so they deliberately added one more group. At that time, there was such chaos that no one could see it clearly." Master Jieyan thought it was impossible and shook his head.

"Since no one couldn't have done it, who precisely sent the third group? The most important thing is which group used military crossbows. How could they take the road to their doom and dare to violate my imperial brother's taboo?" Prince Cheng's mind was in a whirl. He circled twice with his hands clasped behind his back but couldn't come up with any brilliant idea. He could only growl, "How could such a champion idiot also want to seize the throne?"

Prince Cheng was like this, and so was Chu Liuyue. Several groups of people who took action on the sly guessed each other, but they couldn't figure out who had caused such big trouble. At this time, the one who manipulated all of this behind the scenes was pushing on with his journey to the capital city by galloping at full speed.

No one had expected Chu Liuchen to use this opportunity to achieve his end. Yet, little did he know that Shao Wanru stabbed herself with a sword to prove her innocence...

Chapter 1097 Loosen Reins the Better to Tighten them, Lay a Trap with Fresh Bait

While Chu Liuchen was spurring the flying horse on his way to the capital city, even at night, Shao Wanru welcomed the imperial physician.

The imperial physician took a female physician with him. After feeling Shao Wanru's pulse, the female physician came in to change the fresh dressing for Shao Wanru's wound. After that, she left.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess sat outside with a severe face, and the female physician came forward to salute her.

"How is Princess Chen?" Rui'an Great Elder Princess asked coldly, looking nervous.

"Your Grace, Princess Chen should take good care of herself," the female physician replied respectfully.

"How is she?" Rui'an Great Elder Princess asked again.

"Princess Chen is seriously injured." The female physician had to admit that although she was mentally prepared, she was greatly shocked when seeing Princess Chen's haggard look. Princess Chen was nearly killed. Fortunately, it was close, but she didn't die!

Thinking of the position of that wound, the female physician still had a lingering fear.

Because of Princess Chen, everyone in the Palace was very scared and jittery. If something terrible happened to her, it was unknown how a reign of terror would overwhelm all the people related to the Palace. Even so, everyone in the Palace felt in danger for fear that they would be surveyed and severely punished. Even the imperial physicians were implicated. They hadn't come back after being taken away.

At this time, everyone was cautious with their words and actions. Any slight mishap might bring them a fatal disaster.

"How is the medicine for her?" Rui'an Great Elder Princess took on a ghastly expression. It was widely known that she doted on her granddaughter, who was lost and eventually returned to her. Sure enough, she would look distressed.

"The medicine for her is of high quality." The female physician hurriedly replied.

Rui'an Great Elder Princess stopped asking and waved her hand to let her withdraw.

The female physician carefully retreated to the door and left the Prince Chen's Mansion with the imperial physician who brought her there. When they returned to the Palace, they met the Emperor first.

The female physician certainly did not dare to lie and told him the whole truth. After hearing their report, the Emperor asked them to leave and was immersed in thought.

Princess Chen was indeed injured. In particular, she was severely hurt and almost lost her life. This demonstrated that this matter had nothing to do with Chu Liuchen.

Others might not know Chu Liuchen's feelings for this young Princess Chen, but the Emperor was very clear about it. Because of Princess Chen, Chu Liuchen no longer lived in self-abandon, and his health gradually improved. In the past, no matter how the others asked him to take care of himself, he would never listen and let his health worsen.

From this point, it could be seen that Chu Liuchen liked Shao Wanru, so he would never hurt Shao Wanru. Besides, she was so badly injured that she was almost killed.

Chu Liuchen cared about Shao Wanru's well-being more than his own life.

When the Emperor thought of this, his last doubt about Chu Liuchen was cleared up. It couldn't be Chu Liuchen.

The Emperor only knew that Chu Liuchen couldn't hurt Shao Wanru but had never imagined Shao Wanru taking the initiative to stab herself with the sword. She did that on purpose to dispel the Emperor's suspicion of Chu Liuchen.

Chu Liuchen wouldn't harm her, but it didn't mean she wouldn't hurt herself. Besides, she was proficient in medical skills and knew how to stab herself appropriately. Her wound looked fatal, but she had strategically avoided touching the most dangerous part of her body.

The Emperor did not expect the seemingly weak Princess Chen would be so decisive and cruel to herself.

Lots of women in the Palace were used to intriguing each other. Many were extremely cruel and merciless to others and were even capable of the most heinous acts. However, that was how they treated others. How could any of them be so decisive and cruel to themselves?

In addition, Shao Wanru's appearance was as fragile as Chu Liuchen, which was deceptive. No one had thought that Shao Wanru had cut herself with a sword.

As long as the Emperor didn't doubt Shao Wanru, he wouldn't suspect that Chu Liuchen sent those people with military crossbows.

In the next few days, both the imperial city and the imperial Palace were under martial law. Any suspicious person would be immediately arrested and interrogated.

There emerged many suspects. When the Ministry of Justice handed over the outcome of many trials to the Emperor, the Emperor was so pissed off that he pounded the table angrily. "The remnant evildoers of the previous dynasty! How are they still alive?!"

"Your Majesty, it has something to do with the leftover evils of the previous dynasty. I heard some of them had lived near the Prince Chen's Mansion but disappeared later!" The minister of the Ministry of Justice reported.

The people sent by him caught a lot of people, most of whom were people of goodwill. Only a few of them were very suspicious, but it was not easy to let them confess. Only one or two of them couldn't hold on and revealed a few things but not many. They were only responsible for a small amount of work, so they didn't know much.

"Search through the entire capital city. Execute the whole family of anyone involved with the leftover evils of the previous dynasty," the Emperor ordered with hatred.

After the previous dynasty, so many years had passed, but evil remnants were secretly stirring up trouble. Now, they were audacious enough to create a nuisance in his Palace.

"Your Majesty, I think the leftover evils of the previous dynasty did it to alienate you from the princes. The Empress Dowager's birthday is coming soon, and the princes should still be released," Prime Minister Wen suggested.

Prime Minister Zhang looked at Prime Minister Wen. He narrowed his eyes, thought for a moment, and nodded in agreement. "Your Majesty, since Prince Yue and Prince Zhou are above suspicion, let them out first. They can't still be locked up on Empress Dowager's birthday."

“Your Majesty, I will find out what these leftover evils of the previous dynasty have done. I will never give them any chance to make more trouble,” the minister of Ministry of Justice promised.

The Emperor fell silent. After a while, he said, “But the truth of this matter hasn’t yet been found!”

“Your Majesty, although this matter has not been investigated clearly, it is definitely related to the leftover evils of the previous dynasty. If the two princes are always locked up like this, it will harm their reputations. In the future...” Prime Minister Zhang paused, but everyone in the Imperial Study understood his meaning.

If there were no accidents, one of them would inherit the throne. At this time, regardless of the truth, they were locked up, which would become a black mark against the future emperor. Since they had discovered that the previous dynasty’s evil remnants were involved, they might as well shift all the blame to them to put an end to this matter.

Prime Minister Wen echoed, “Your Majesty, you’d better release the two princes first. The day after tomorrow is the Empress Dowager’s birthday. If you release them at this time, it will show the deep affection between the royal family members and that the two princes are innocent. As for the investigation into other things, it can be done secretly!”

It was inconvenient for Prime Minister Zhang to mention some things, but not for Prime Minister Wen. Prime Minister Zhang’s daughter was going to marry Prince Yue as his legal wife, which made him no outsider in this matter. Thus, he couldn’t talk about this matter at will.

But Prime Minister Wen was different. He wasn’t directly relevant to the two princes, so he could offer unbiased opinions.

Hearing what they all said, the Emperor nodded and said, “Let go of Prince Yue and Prince Zhou first. Although their punishment is lifted, they are not allowed to enter the Palace and should read more books in their mansions.”

The Emperor would withdraw the guards at the gate of their mansions but didn’t intend to let them go out. Though they were released from supervision, they should take the initiative to stay in their places. In this way, it would do less harm to their public reputations.

Prime Minister Zhang and Prime Minister Wen nodded, feeling it was appropriate to deal with this matter in this way.

“Anyone? Come here and give out my order to withdraw the guards before the Phoenix Palace!” The Emperor ordered again. Since Prince Zhou was no longer suspected, he shouldn’t keep the Empress under surveillance.

A eunuch answered and left.

Shao Wanru recovered a bit fast. The wound was on her left arm, so she only needed to take care of her left arm and ensure it stayed still.

However, she looked ghastly pale after losing too much blood and was as white as a sheet. She leaned against the bed and asked several maids to take out the table screen she had prepared. She kept the

maple leaf painting under lock long ago. The birthday gift she chose to present to the Empress Dowager was this table screen.

"My Lady, are we really going to hang this decorative border on it?" Yujie looked at the trimming in her hand, tried it, and turned back to ask.

This frill was unsuitable no matter how she looked at it. With large and long fringes, it looked wonderful, but when it was added to this elegant table screen, they were unpleasant to the eye.

"Use this one!" Shao Wanru said with a nod. She had thought about it for the past two days and finally decided to use the border recommended by Nanny Wei.

"My Lady, you said that it would be best to use the one we chose first. But why do you change your idea? This one looks disgraceful at first glance!" Qu Le also advised.

Shao Wanru raised her long eyelashes and said softly with a smile, "I kept a low profile back then because the situation was inappropriate. But things have changed. Even if my table screen isn't decent enough, the Empress Dowager won't be angry with me. If such a table screen is presented, the Empress Dowager will be suspicious!"

"Why?" Yujie asked in confusion and looked at the long tassels in her hand.

"How will you view such an incongruous gift?" Shao Wanru asked, smiling.

"I think you do it on purpose. Am I right, My Lady?" Qu Le hesitated for a moment and said. It must be her deliberate plan, for no rational person would make this table screen so intolerable to the eye.

"I haven't recovered yet, and I was seriously wounded," Shao Wanru said meaningfully.

Yujie rolled her eyes and said, "My Lady, you are still sick, and the table screen from you looks so unpleasant to the eye. The Empress Dowager will suspect that someone has sabotaged this gift on purpose. Even if she doesn't mention it at that time, she will know it in her heart!"

"My Lady, do you want the Empress Dowager to ask about it?" Qu Le's eyes lit up, and she felt that she had guessed it right.

Shao Wanru shook her head and said, "No!"

"No?" The two servant girls were stunned. Both Yujie and Qu Le thought so. Why would she bother to do it if it were not for this reason?

"His Highness will be returning to the capital city soon. Even if His Highness wants to investigate the assassination, he won't be allowed to. His Majesty won't let him interfere in it. At most, he will let him sit in on some trials and discussions. But the matter of the table screen is different. It will be less significant than the survey of assassination and will not be connected to political reasons. If His Highness insists on interfering, the Emperor will surely allow it."

When Shao Wanru thought that Chu Liuchen would return to the capital city soon, she couldn't help smiling tenderly. Although he hadn't been away for a long time, she often thought of him and hoped he would return to the capital city as soon as possible. Thinking that she could see Chu Liuchen soon, Shao

Wanru couldn't help blushing slightly. Her pale face with a touch of redness appeared surprisingly tender and sweet.

Of course, those who knew she made the severe wound with a sword wouldn't think so. Her two servant girls viewed their master differently. Princess Chen's delicate appearance with tenderness and charm was only a false impression that she wanted to give to others. As a matter of fact, Princess Chen was incredibly tough. How could she be as weak and powerless as ordinary women? Of course, she showed a different side to Prince Chen.

Seeing the smile on Shao Wanru's face, the two servant girls couldn't help smiling. Prince Chen would arrive in the capital city. Finally, Princess Chen had someone to rely on, and she would never stab herself with a sword in the future. Seeing their master cut herself, the few servant girls nearly fainted out of fear. After all, none of them expected Princess Chen to do that, which was not what they had planned...

Chapter 1098 Some People Walking Together Parted

The assassination was so significant that the Emperor would not let Chu Liuchen intervene.

Even if Chu Liuchen had been clear of all suspicion, the Emperor would not let him get involved. However, the thing about the table screen was different. Obviously, it was a frame-up that happened before Shao Wanru was injured.

Wei Dahai was not simple. Shao Wanru had a hunch that such an unimportant person, who appeared inconspicuous, was related to many events.

If Chu Liuchen investigated such a person, he seemed excessively mean and made people feel strange. But if there were a reason, it would be another matter...

On the day of the Empress Dowager's birthday, the Palace of Benevolent Peace was permeated with a jubilant atmosphere.

There would be a great feast for everyone present in the main hall. It was still early, and no one had come yet. From time to time, those busy imperial servants would go to the Palace to fetch something. Nanny Wei was responsible for many things and was terribly busy.

When the womenfolk came later, they would go to the flower platform first and only come to the main hall at the start of the banquet.

The Palace gate opened early, and carriages were parked one after another. The palace sedan chairs were ready at the door of the inner part of the Palace. Madams whose husbands were officials above the fourth-rank official got off the carriage with the Misses of their mansions and walked through the long passageway behind the Palace gate. The elders could get on the imperial sedan chairs. Others walked to the Empress Dowager's Palace of Benevolent Peace while chatting.

When some people met those close to them, they would chat and walk in together.

In previous years, the atmosphere in the Palace was the most relaxed at this time. This day could be the most relaxing day for everyone in the entire Palace.

But today was not like before. The dull atmosphere in the Palace seemed to have faded a lot, but it was not the case. Although the Empress had been released and was accompanying the Empress Dowager, everyone could tell that this matter was not over.

In the past years, Prince Zhou and Prince Yue would enter the Palace early to spend some time with the Empress Dowager. However, at this time of this year, several princes were still detained outside by the Emperor. Later, the Emperor would come in with a group of officials and several princes to pay their respects to the Empress Dowager. After that, the banquet would begin.

A tall flower terrace was in a garden outside the Palace of Benevolent Peace.

Many rare flowers surrounded the high platform. The flowers were in garish colors, and even the air had a faint floral fragrance, which was very pleasing.

The weather was nice. When it was neither cold nor hot, Misses dressed up very brightly. Those who had failed in the Pageant or had not participated in it before wanted to take this chance.

At that time, the princes only chose their legal wives and picked up only a few consorts. Notably, there was Prince Xin, who had not even chosen a legal wife. Today, Consort Ming was here, so there might be an opportunity for those Young Madams.

Something bad seemed to have happened to Prince Yue and Prince Zhou. Therefore, many people aimed at Prince Xin, who had been unnoticed by all. At least Prince Xin was also the Emperor's son.

It was unclear to all who could win the position of crown prince. Before the final result came to be obvious, anyone might get it. Who could be sure that Prince Xin had no chance?

Even if Prince Yue and Prince Zhou did something unforgivable, the throne wouldn't be passed down to Prince Chen anyway.

Many people thought so in their hearts. After receiving instructions from their parents, Misses were also waiting with joy. If Consort Ming or Prince Xin liked one of them, she might be the future Princess Xin!

Of course, some people had been thinking highly of Prince Yue or Prince Zhou, so they wanted to marry into their mansions as their consorts.

Some Young Madams who were not interested in getting married would make efforts to please the Empress Dowager. No matter what their purposes were, the Misses sitting before the flower platform were all well-dressed.

On the flower platform were several rows of tables filled with fruits and snacks. Chairs were placed beside the tables for the Madams and Misses to rest and sit down.

There were several gauze curtains set up right opposite the flower platform. The one in the middle was the largest, which undoubtedly belonged to the Empress Dowager, the Empress, and several highest-ranking imperial consorts.

On the right was a much smaller curtain for other titled imperial consorts to rest.

The tent on the left was reserved for the princesses born in the Palace, their daughters-in-law, and granddaughters-in-law.

Some sharp-eyed people noticed a particularly small tent near the Empress Dowager's big tent, and some people were in it. They were recognized as maids of Rui'an Great Elder Princess.

It was said that Princess Chen, who was seriously injured, also came and stayed to rest in that tent. It was the first time that Princess Chen celebrated the birthday of the Empress Dowager, so she came here, though she wasn't fully recovered. After she presented her gift, she would go back home to rest without attending the banquet.

Everyone knew Princess Chen was severely wounded. It was said that she had been close to death. Unexpectedly, Princess Chen would come over.

This matter had not been settled yet. The Emperor's attitude was ambiguous. The Empress and three Princes had been punished all because of Princess Chen. If any other accidents happened to her, some people would have to take the blame.

There were all kinds of comments about this.

Zhang Qilan couldn't sit still beside Madam of Prime Minister Zhang. Luo Xiaowan had come to sit with her, so she pushed her face toward Luo Xiaowan's ear and said, "Let's go and see Princess Chen?"

Luo Xiaowan intended to see Prince Chen long ago, but people in her mansion didn't allow her to, saying that Prince Chen's Mansion wouldn't receive any guests for the time being. Rui'an Great Elder Princess had been watching over her in Prince Chen's Mansion, and she only wanted Princess Chen to rest well.

Hearing Zhang Qilan's words, she nodded.

They walked to the most inconspicuous small tent together. As soon as they arrived at the tent's entrance, they saw that Nanny Gao, the trusted maid of Rui'an Great Elder Princess, was guarding the tent, so they hurried forward to salute.

Nanny Gao returned the salute politely.

"Nanny Gao, is Princess Chen inside?" Zhang Qilan asked in a low voice, pointing to the tent's inside.

"Her Highness is in poor health, so she struggled to be here. Rui'an Great Elder Princess asked her to rest. She was resting in repose with her eyes closed at this moment. When the Empress Dowager comes over, she will present her gift and go back," Nanny Gao said.

"There is a bed inside?" Zhang Qilan asked in astonishment.

"The Empress Dowager offered this favor and even prepared a bed for Princess Chen. Otherwise, Princess Chen wouldn't be able to hold on there. Princess Chen is filial. Her Majesty originally asked her not to come, but she didn't listen. She will have to watch someone present her gift to Her Majesty." Nanny Gao sighed and said helplessly,

"Is Princess Chen badly hurt?" Luo Xiaowan asked anxiously.

"She was seriously injured and almost died. Fortunately, she was blessed with good luck and survived." Nanny Gao put her palms together devoutly and kept making bows to the air with gratitude.

Zhang Qilan looked deeply at Nanny Gao, who appeared excited and frightened after the accident. Then, lightly frowning her arched eyebrows, she said, "Nanny Gao, can we go in and see Princess Chen?"

Nanny Gao looked awkward. She looked at Zhang Qilan and Luo Xiaowan as if she had no right to agree to her request.

Luo Xiaowan didn't want to push Nanny Gao into an awkward situation, so she pulled Zhang Qilan's hand and said, "Nanny Gao, then we'll come to see Princess Chen next time. Please tell her to take good care of herself and recover without any aftereffects."

"I will. Thank you, Miss Zhang and Miss Luo!" Nanny Gao nodded repeatedly and put down her hands that she had put together to pray.

Luo Xiaowan pulled Zhang Qilan's hand and motioned for her to go, but Zhang Qilan was unwilling to go. She deliberately tilted her head to look into the tent from the part that was slightly lifted up.

Seeing Nanny Gao look slightly displeased, Luo Xiaowan forcefully pulled Zhang Qilan away. They had been too rude just now.

When they reached a place far away from the tent, Zhang Qilan shook off Luo Xiaowan's hand unhappily and said, "Xiaowan, I just wanted to see if Princess Chen was okay and only needed to glance at her from a distance. I wouldn't disturb her. Why wouldn't Rui'an Great Elder Princess let me see her no matter what?"

"Qilan, Princess Chen is injured and has been forcing herself to struggle up and send her gift to Her Majesty. Without the part of sending gifts, Princess Chen might not even come here."

Luo Xiaowan said.

"So what? Since she is here, we should go and see her. It's rare for us to have such a chance to meet her. Maybe she needs our help!" Zhang Qilan said with displeasure.

"But Rui'an Great Elder Princess doesn't allow us to go over..." Luo Xiaowan murmured. Nanny Gao was guarding the entrance, which explained everything. "Princess Chen is so seriously hurt that she doesn't have the strength to talk to us now. We can't help her and may even waste her energy."

"But I'm worried if I can't see her!" Zhang Qilan said.

"Then... then what should we do?" Luo Xiaowan looked around and asked, not knowing what to do.

"How about we go to see her secretly?" Zhang Qilan rolled her eyes and said with a smile, pointing to the back of the tent.

"There's no one behind." Luo Xiaowan looked at that place and said helplessly.

"Let's gently ask Princess Chen a few questions. I'll ask her how she is doing to make sure she is fine. I don't want to do anything else. We can't rest assured until we get to the bottom of it," Zhang Qilan said.

What she said did make sense. Although Luo Xiaowan was timid, it should not be a big deal to say a few words across the tent. Eventually, she agreed with a nod, then shook her head. "No. Rui'an Great Elder Princess is there. It's useless for us to go there. We will be discovered."

"What are you worried about? Rui'an Great Elder Princess will go to meet the other princesses later. Princess Chen is not feeling well, so she can't stay with her all the time. She doesn't want to disturb Princess Chen's rest, does she?" Zhang Qilan pointed to the tents prepared for the princesses and said, feeling very pleased with her idea.

"Then... OK!" Luo Xiaowan agreed with profound resignation.

They didn't return to their seats and had been waiting there. After a while, they saw Rui'an Great Elder Princess come out, but Nanny Gao still stood at the entrance. Obviously, she was afraid that someone would break Shao Wanru's rest.

After Rui'an Great Elder Princess left, the two looked at each other and turned to the back of the tent. There was indeed no one in the shady area. It was a quiet place with no one around.

They didn't take their servant girls with them and walked to the back of the tent hand in hand. When they arrived at the small tent, they moved about more and more softly.

It wasn't winter, so the tent was not tightly set up. They could even hear some people talking inside. For fear of being noticed by others inside, they were very cautious.

Suddenly, Zhang Qilan stopped and pulled Luo Xiaowan hard. Luo Xiaowan was drawn to the right side fast. If she hadn't reacted quickly, she would have fallen.

"Qilan..." Luo Xiaowan was about to say something but saw Zhang Qilan nervously put her finger before her mouth, intending to hush her. Immediately, her footsteps became lighter...

Chapter 1099 People Show Concern Coming in Flocks

They walked over cautiously without any noise and stood outside the small tent.

"My Lady, if you don't feel well, go to sleep first. I'll wake you up later." The tent wasn't that soundproof, so they could hear Yujie's voice coming from inside.

"No, I'm fine!" Shao Wanru said in a very low voice, which could hardly be heard without listening carefully.

Yujie hesitated for a moment and said, "My Lady, you know, Great Elder Princess can present the gift on your behalf."

Shao Wanru leaned against the couch with a large cloak covering her up. The set of clothes she had chosen before was just right. Although it was in quiet colors, it looked noble and graceful because of the embroidery pattern outlined by gold threads, which was very suitable for her status as Princess Chen.

Her black hair was tied up and held in position by merely a hairpin.

Her plain face, without any make-up, was still of dazzling beauty. However, her pallid face and pale lips made her look extremely frail.

"I won't bother grandma. Since I can still get up, I have to do it myself. It's also a display of my filial piety," Shao Wanru answered softly, her eyes falling on the tent.

Her tent was built on the spur of the moment. The Empress Dowager didn't intend to let her come over and allowed her to rest at home.

However, Shao Wanru insisted on coming, so servants in the Palace came up with an idea to build a tent for her. They decided to let her rest here and go back if she was tired.

The tents were temporarily set up. Besides, the weather was neither hot nor cold, so the tent's material was a little thin.

Coincidentally, this tent was facing the east, and the sun had already risen, so she could see the shadows of two people on the tent. Two women were standing beside the tent.

When Shao Wanru was looking at the shadows of the tent, Yujie also saw them. She was stunned for a moment. Then, she wanted to go over there but saw Shao Wanru gently waving at her.

She immediately understood what her master meant and was about to say something when Qu Le, guarding outside the tent, suddenly came in and said, "My Lady, Her Majesty is here to see you!"

As she said, she stepped aside, and the Empress walked in with two palace maids.

With her hands pressing down on the bed edge, Shao Wanru tried to get up. However, the Emperor reached out to stop her with a smile and said, "Don't do that. You are so seriously injured. There is no need to get up at all."

"Greetings, Your Majesty." Shao Wanru leaned sideways, lowered her head to greet her, and said, "I'm injured and can't make a full salute. Please forgive me, Your Majesty!"

"Look at you! You are so seriously injured. Why would you apologize for not getting up? You've shown your best filial respect to Her Majesty by attending her birthday banquet. Her Majesty once told me that you must be very bored when spending so much time in the mansion alone. It's good that you chose to be here. I'm worried about you, so I came to see you. You don't have to get up."

The Empress walked to the couch and looked at Shao Wanru with a benign look.

"What did the imperial physician say?"

"The imperial physician said that I should take good care of myself. If my arm couldn't fully be recovered, it would become useless." Shao Wanru lowered her head and said with a bitter smile.

If a young girl in her prime lost an arm at this time, she wouldn't stand the tragic result.

"The imperial physician didn't say it for sure. He meant if you made a good recovery, you still had a chance. I heard that Prince Chen has a miracle-working doctor with excellent medical skills. You will be fine with him around." The Empress comforted her.

"Doctor Qi is not in the capital city. He went out with His Highness in case His Highness suffered poor health on the trip!" Shao Wanru said, forcing a smile. It could be seen that she was trying hard to look happy, though she was sad.

"It doesn't have to be so troublesome. Prince Zhou has sent a good doctor into the Palace to nurse my health. I happen to be fine, so I brought him here to treat you," the Empress said with a smile.

A person dressed in the clothes of an imperial physician came in with a medicine chest on his shoulder. Upon entering the tent, he bowed to Shao Wanru first.

"Does she think I'm feigning illness?" Shao Wanru sneered in her heart, and her eyes fell on the imperial physician coming over. There was an understanding smile on her lips. It turned out to be an acquaintance: Doctor Qiu!

"But didn't he return to his home village?"

"Feel Princess Chen's pulse and see how badly she has been hurt. If she needs any medicinal materials, I will try my best to get all the superior medicines for her," the Empress ordered.

Doctor Qiu answered and stepped forward.

Yujie took the small cushion for pulse feeling from Doctor Qiu, put Shao Wanru's hand on it, and covered her wrist with a handkerchief before retreating aside.

The tent became quiet, and everyone's attention fell on Doctor Qiu.

After a while, Doctor Qiu put down his hand and observed Shao Wanru's face. Her face was drained of color, which showed that her illness had taken a heavy toll on her.

Doctor Qiu had seen Shao Wanru when she was still Fifth Miss Shao. At that time, she was gorgeous and vivid, but now she was weak and pale.

"Doctor Qiu, how is her illness?" asked the Empress.

Her son sent Doctor Qiu to her, so the Empress trusted him very much. Those imperial physicians in the Palace were all thoroughly sophisticated. Even if they knew something, they would not say it. She brought Doctor Qiu here to see if Shao Wanru was truly injured because the Empress always felt something fishy was going on.

"Her Highness is seriously injured. She needs to take good care of herself. Otherwise, she'll suffer from after-effects," Doctor Qiu said bluntly.

"How could it be real?" The Empress frowned because such a result was totally different from what she had guessed, so she froze there for a moment.

"Your Majesty..." Shao Wanru raised her watery eyes and looked at the Empress.

"Well, do you need any special medicinal materials?" When the Empress was awakened, she coughed awkwardly and asked.

"Thank you, Your Majesty. Our mansion has plenty of them," Shao Wanru said.

There were a lot of medicinal materials in the Prince Chen's Mansion, which might be even more than those in the Palace. Because of Chu Liuchen's poor health, he would receive rewards from Palace from time to time. They had sufficient medicinal materials.

"That's good. If you need anything, tell me. Take good care of your health. Prince Chen is not in the capital city. When the person in charge of the mansion is away, you should be more careful." Seeing that

she could not find anything, the Empress said a few more polite words and left with Doctor Qiu and her servants.

After the Empress left, Qu Le said indignantly, "My Lady, did Her Majesty come to check if your injury was true?"

"Maybe she thought I wouldn't be so seriously wounded!" Shao Wanru muttered.

"That night, you had a narrow escape and nearly dead. Those arrows would have hit us if we hadn't been standing by the window." When Yujie mentioned these things, she shivered with fear.

Qu Le's voice also began to tremble. She was not willing to mention what had happened last night. How could any girls spending most of their time in the inner court ever experience the brutal assassination that day? "My Lady, from now on, more guards in the mansion will make more inspection tours every day. The chief supervisor said the Emperor had sent more guards over and wouldn't allow such a thing to happen in our mansion again!"

"My Lady, His Majesty will find out who intended to hurt you. These men in black attacked us by vicious means and obviously wanted to kill you!" Yujie gnashed her teeth and said angrily, "I only hate myself for not knowing martial arts. Otherwise, I would find out who wanted to kill you that day."

"Is Princess Chen here?" When they were talking, a voice came from outside the tent.

The voice was sharp, which belonged to a eunuch in the Palace.

Yujie hurriedly went out to welcome them, and after a while, she came in with a group of people. Shao Wanru actually knew the two in the front. One was Consort of Virtue from the Palace, and the other was Prince Yue, Chu Liuyue.

It was reasonable for Consort of Virtue to come, but it was rude for Prince Yue to come in here.

Shao Wanru sat up, supported by Qu Le's hands. Then she struggled to stand up and salute but was also stopped by Consort of Virtue.

"Princess Chen, you don't have to be so polite. I just came to see you. I heard you were seriously injured and planned to see you, but I haven't found the right chance to do it." Consort of Virtue smiled more sincerely than the Empress. She looked very kind with her gentle female image, which always helped her make a great impression on others.

A woman who could give birth to the eldest prince was indeed extraordinary!

"Thank you, Your Imperial Highness. I... I'm fine!" Shao Wanru said. Now that Prince Yue was here, it was inconvenient for her to lie down again.

"It's good that you're fine. His Majesty will find out what happened that night. He won't let go of those who make you suffer so much," Consort of Virtue comforted her. Her eyes fell on her arm and her face. Indeed, Shao Wanru seemed to be badly injured. At this moment, her complexion was way different from before. Her illness could be seen at a glance.

Chu Liuyue didn't say anything and just stood near Consort of Virtue silently as if he casually dropped in on her with his mother. Yet, his eyes were glued to Shao Wanru's face. He carefully observed her expression to see if she had applied white powder to cover her face.

After a long time, he concluded that Princess Chen was injured for real. She wasn't pretending.

Consort of Virtue soothed Shao Wanru for a while and was about to leave. Before Chu Liuyue left, he suddenly said in a deep voice, "Third brother is not in the capital city. If you have anything inconvenient to tell the Palace, you can send someone to the Prince Yue's Mansion for help."

"Thank you, Your Highness!" Shao Wanru murmured her thanks.

After Consort of Virtue and Prince Yue left, the tent became quiet again. Qu Le held Shao Wanru's hand and helped her lie down again. After lying down, Shao Wanru sighed in a low voice and looked at the two shadows on the tent. The shadows shook twice and were gone...

"My Lady..." Yujie whispered.

Shao Wanru smiled a little sadly, her long eyelashes fluttering twice, and she slowly closed her eyes. "Let Nanny Gao tell other imperial consorts that I'm too feeble to receive guests if they come over!"

She hadn't yet recovered from the wound. If visitors came one after another, she could not hold on any longer.

"Yes, I'll inform Nanny Gao right away!" Qu Le nodded and left to tell Nanny Gao, who was guarding outside. Rui'an Great Elder Princess left Nanny Gao here because she feared some people would disturb Shao Wanru's rest.

Though Nanny Gao couldn't keep the Empress and Consort of Virtue out of the door, she could stop others.

Chapter 1100 Slanders Entering the Ear, Taking Root in the Heart

Outside the tent, Zhang Qilan lowered her head and looked at her toes silently for a long time with a sad look.

Luo Xiaowan had never seen her look like this. She hurriedly reached out to pull her and asked in a panic, "Qilan, what's wrong with you?"

After leaving the small tent just now, they had arrived at this place, far away from the tent. Thus, they could no longer hear the sounds in the tent, and those in the tent couldn't hear their conversation either.

"Xiaowan, do you think Prince Yue likes me?" Zhang Qilan thought for a while and suddenly asked.

!!

Luo Xiaowan flushed, subconsciously looking around. When she was sure that no one noticed them, she breathed a sigh of relief. How could Young Madams from aristocratic families like them say something like that? But Zhang Qilan had been her good friend for many years, so she knew that Zhang Qilan was not that strictly upright and correct in behavior.

Was it because she had misunderstandings about what had just happened?

In Luo Xiaowan's heart, although Zhang Qilan was a good friend, Princess Chen was her benefactor. She didn't want them to have any bad feelings about each other.

After pulling herself together, she suppressed the shyness in her heart and said, "Qilan, of course, he likes you. You said that he often sent you gifts. Since you were chosen as Princess Yue, Prince Yue always brought you many things whenever he went to your mansion. When you encountered problems, Prince Yue would come to you as quickly as he could."

"Why would he come to see Princess Chen? And he came when Princess Chen was still lying in bed. It was inconvenient for her to see some other men. Although he is the elder brother of Prince Chen, it was not polite to see Princess Chen at this time." Zhang Qilan stared blankly at the ground. It was unknown if she was talking to Luo Xiaowan or herself.

These words were hidden deep at the bottom of her heart. At first, she didn't believe those words and thought they wouldn't affect her. But now she realized the reality was contrary to what she thought — she had been unconsciously influenced. Was Shao Wanru the one Chu Liuyue liked in the beginning?

Chu Liuyue couldn't make Shao Wanru his wife, so he chose to marry her, who must be less attractive than Shao Wanru in his heart. But even so, Chu Liuyue still had feelings for Shao Wanru. When he heard that Shao Wanru was injured, he deliberately went to check up on her with Consort of Virtue, despite the fact that others might think he behaved frivolously.

"Is he just unable to let go of Shao Wanru in his heart?"

"If that is the case, how does he think of me? Am I a substitute for Shao Wanru?"

Zhang Qilan had a lively personality, and she was proud. How could she be willing to be a replacement? Moreover, she became a replacement for Shao Wanru, her good friend!

"Why didn't Shao Wanru tell me about her relationship with Chu Liuyue? Aren't we friends?"

"Could it be possible that she wants to keep in touch with Chu Liuyue behind me? I'm the future Princess Yue and the one who will marry Prince Yue. Why does Shao Wanru keep hold of Prince Yue? She married Prince Chen, didn't she? Why must she do this? Isn't she afraid of letting me down?"

Luo Xiaowan, quite taken aback by her reaction, hurriedly said, "Prince Yue went there to keep Consort of Virtue company. If Consort of Virtue insisted on visiting her, what could he do? Don't think so much about it. Prince Yue didn't say anything but one sentence in the end."

Looking at Zhang Qilan's sinister expression, Luo Xiaowan panicked.

"He didn't say much, but the one sentence he said was the most forcible one. He told her to go to him for help when necessary. But why must she look for him? Who is he? He is just Prince Chen's cousin. When Prince Chen is not at home, he should avoid arousing suspicion rather than take the initiative to reach out to Princess Chen. The Empress also paid the visit, but Prince Zhou didn't follow her. Why would Prince Yue come?"

Zhang Qilan's eyes were bloodshot as she wept out her grief to Luo Xiaowan.

The Empress went there, but Prince Zhou didn't come. Then, when Consort of Virtue visited Shao Wanru, Prince Yue came along with her, which meant something was wrong. Zhang Qilan didn't think that she thought about it too much. There was definitely something wrong between Shao Wanru and Prince Yue!

"Qilan, it must not be what you think. Prince Yue must have come there for other reasons." Luo Xiaowan, burning with anxiety, hurriedly appeased her.

She was weak, but it did not mean that she was stupid. She could see the whole thing more clearly than Zhang Qilan. After all, those closely involved usually cannot see as clearly as outsiders.

"I'm tired and want to go back to rest!" Zhang Qilan shook her head and turned back.

"Qilan..." Luo Xiaowan still wanted to say something to calm her down, but Zhang Qilan left decisively without looking back. Then, she could only follow her with a wry smile. Luo Xiaowan didn't want her to feel hatred toward Princess Chen. They had been good friends, but why would it be like this now?

It was not proper for Prince Yue to do this. At this time, to avoid arousing suspicion, he should not go to see Princess Chen. Inexplicably, she got a little annoyed with Prince Yue. It was indeed his fault. Just now, she had witnessed and heard the whole thing, so she was sure that Princess Chen had nothing to do with this matter.

Zhang Qilan returned to her seat, throwing herself onto the seat heavily. She looked distressed. Madam of Prime Minister Zhang, who was talking to the Madam next to her, noticed her unusual act and asked softly, "What's wrong? Are you not feeling well?"

"Mom, I'm fine. I just have a headache!" Zhang Qilan reached out and touched her head.

The Madam next to them said with concern, "Are you sick? The weather has been good recently, but it's easy to fall ill when the season changes."

"She's still a naughty child. She has been pretty fit and will be fine after a little rest!" Madam of Prime Minister Zhang replied with a smile.

"Thank you, Madam. In fact, I'm tired of walking. I'll recover in a while!" Zhang Qilan thanked the Madam decently.

Shao Xiaowan came over and sat next to her. When she saw that Zhang Qilan's face had returned to normal, she breathed a sigh of relief. She was really afraid that Zhang Qilan would make a scene recklessly. It would humiliate Prince Yue and Princess Chen.

She reached out to hold Zhang Qilan's hand. Feeling that her hand was icy cold, she hastily gripped it with great care and looked at Zhang Qilan, trying to comfort her.

Zhang Qilan turned around and smiled at her. Her face was indeed much better than before. She leaned over and said to Luo Xiaowan in a low voice, "I misunderstood them just now. Don't tell Princess Chen. Otherwise, she might laugh at me!"

"Don't worry. I won't. It's indeed...But I will ask Princess Chen about it in the future." Luo Xiaowan vigorously expanded her chest and said. No one could be more delighted than her when she saw that

Zhang Qilan got past this matter. How could she tell Princess Chen something that had not been confirmed? It might damage the friendship between them.

Everyone would lose control of their emotions sometimes. The key problem was that Prince Yue didn't do this thing properly.

After thinking for a while, Luo Xiaowan suddenly thought of a rumor. She hesitated for a moment but still leaned over and whispered in Zhang Qilan's ear, "In fact, I heard that First Miss of the Marquis Xing's Mansion...that woman."

To avoid being overheard by others, she deliberately said it vaguely, knowing Zhang Qilan could understand.

Shao Yanru, First Miss of the Marquis Xing's Mansion, was the one that everyone thought might become Princess Yue at first. Luo Xiaowan thought that if Prince Yue had some connections with someone, it must be Shao Yanru, definitely not Princess Chen.

"Don't talk nonsense." Zhang Qilan reached out and pinched Luo Xiaowan hard. Her arched eyebrows slightly creasing in pain, Luo Xiaowan frowned. "I know, he wouldn't have an...with her."

"Well, that's good. It's good that everyone is fine!" Seeing that Zhang Qilan bore no grudge, Luo Xiaowan cracked a smile. It was good that everyone was still the same...

"My Lady, who were they?" When the two long figures left, Yujie asked carefully, "Were they palace maids?"

They couldn't be men because they wore women's outfits.

Palace maids came and went most frequently.

"No, they aren't palace maids!" Shao Wanru shook her head with certainty and pointed out their traits. "One of them has a hairpin with a string of pearls. Besides, they wore more than one hairpin."

Since their shadows were quite stretched, she couldn't see them so clearly. Vaguely, she saw a string of pearls shaking near the hairpin above one woman's head. There was not only one but a row of pearls. Besides, there was more than one hairpin in her hair. Thus, she couldn't be a palace maid. The palace maids were dressed in the same style today, and there was no such a luxurious row of pearls on their hairpins.

Another woman had no hairpin with pearls, but Shao Wanru could tell she used a few hairpins sticking out high from her hair. This woman should be a noble lady entering the Palace for the banquet.

Neither of them had taken any servant girls with them.

A trace of darkness slipped across her watery eyes. She hoped they were not the two people she thought of.

In this life, she was cautious and meticulous about everything at her heart. Not many people were like this among all the people she knew.

“My Lady...” Yujie wanted to say something more but was interrupted by Shao Wanru. She reached out to touch her head and asked, “Is Doctor Qiu still with us?”

Just now, the Empress asked Doctor Qiu to stay here because she feared that Shao Wanru would feel uncomfortable later.

Both Doctor Qiu, brought by the Empress, and Prince Yue were here to check up on her. The Empress did it more straightforwardly: she let Doctor Qiu feel her pulse, while Consort of Virtue brought Chu Liuyue here to see if she was truly injured according to his past experience.

Fortunately, Shao Wanru was indeed injured, so she was not afraid of being examined by them.

They all suspected that the Prince Chen’s Mansion had plotted the whole thing. So, the more seriously she was hurt, the less suspicious Chu Liuchen would be.

“Doctor Qiu is still here. My Lady, he is not a good person.” Hearing Shao Wanru’s words, Yujie answered immediately because she loathed Doctor Qiu.

As a doctor, Doctor Qiu brought death to his patient. How could she like a doctor like that? People like Doctor Qiu could no longer be called a doctor. They were actually more like killers who murdered others by underhand, subtle means.

Shao Wanru didn’t like Doctor Qiu either. When such a person staying at her tent entrance kept watching her movements, how could anyone like it? However, the Empress ordered him to stay here in the name of protecting Shao Wanru. How could Shao Wanru refuse such a well-meaning offer?

Shao Wanru slightly rolled her liquid eyes and hit upon an idea. She didn’t want Doctor Qiu to stay nearby, so she had to ask someone to take him away. Doctor Qiu appeared to be a nobody like Wei Dahai, but Shao Wanru couldn’t help being on guard against them...