

Medical Princess 1111

Chapter 1111 Consort Lan No Longer Forbore Silently

Chu Liuchen remained unmoved, his indifferent eyes on Consort Lan. When she finished speaking, he said, "Your Grace, you don't have to tell me this."

Consort Lan looked quite emotional but gradually calmed down as she heard his words. There was such a sad look in her beautiful eyes. "Chen'er, you know, you are the last person I want to hurt in the world. As long as you are happy, I am willing to do anything. I... All I wanted was to protect you..."

"You shouldn't have, Your Grace. I almost lost my life under your protection." Chu Liuchen sat down with a faint smile and tidied up his sleeves. "What can I do for you? If there's nothing urgent, we'd better not meet. Some rumors might reach Uncle the Emperor. Even if you can clarify the situation, it's not a good thing and won't be good for you."

"Chen'er... you... do you hate me so much? When you were little, you... you had a good time with me, didn't you?" Consort Lan asked with tears.

"If you feel like talking about my childhood, then forget it. I don't want to talk about my childhood when I was almost killed. If possible, never mention it!" Chu Liuchen said emphatically.

"You... Is Princess Chen okay?" Consort Lan straightened up, got her breath back, and asked, though the determined look in his eyes sent her in sore distress.

"It will be better if you don't disturb her!" Chu Liuchen lowered his eyes, and his handsome face looked grim.

"I... I had tried to protect her, but I didn't expect things to develop so fast. I... I..." Consort Lan stammered and wanted to explain, but Chu Liuchen interrupted her in a brusque tone. "Your Grace, please stop it. You are always in a dilemma, feeling helpless or improper to act. You might as well leave everything alone. In this way, good luck may come to you. As for my affairs, you don't need to worry about them!"

"What happens to my wife has nothing to do with you. And you needn't care about whether I live or die. After all, we should stay away from each other!"

Chu Liuchen raised the corners of his mouth, putting on a skin-deep smile. "Your Grace, I can't stay here for long. I have to go back home to see my wife. She was so badly injured because of me. If I had been in the mansion then, I might have been the one who was murdered."

Chu Liuchen got to his feet, swung his wide sleeves, and said leisurely. After that, he casually cupped his hands in a farewell gesture to Consort Lan, turned around, and left.

"Chen'er!" Consort Lan called out to him, large teardrops running down her cheeks.

Chu Liuchen came to a halt at the door. Seeing that, she was immediately overjoyed. She suddenly stood up and muttered, "Chen'er!"

"Your Grace, I want you to stay far away from my wife and me. Please don't look for her again. It can be regarded as a good thing. Besides, manage your affairs well. Don't let others plot against my wife when they fail to harm you."

After saying that, Chu Liuchen didn't stay any longer and strode away.

Only Consort Lan staggered to sit down behind him. Suddenly, she picked up her handkerchief to cover her face and cried bitterly. Did she regret it? She didn't know the answer, but she just didn't want to see Chu Liuchen like this.

"Your Grace, don't be sad. His Highness couldn't help it. I heard Princess Chen was seriously injured." Qing Mu, her trusted palace maid, walked out from behind her and comforted her with an undertone.

"But what could I do? I... I couldn't do anything about it. I loathe seeing this situation either..." Consort Lan leaned against the back of the chair and whimpered.

"Your Grace, I heard some people had been hindering him from returning to the capital city. Something bad happened to his carriage, and he almost lost his life. As soon as he entered the capital city, Princess Chen was also almost murdered. His Highness must have been quite distressed, so he talked to you like that... His Highness finally recovered after all the trouble. Now, some people can't tolerate him!"

Qing Mu lowered her voice and said. Only she and her master were in the room. They had been through numerous trials and hardships together, so they could say these words, even if they sounded offensive to those in power.

"Why can't they endure him? Hasn't they been in peace with each other for so many years?" Consort Lan cried out.

Qing Mu sighed. For the first time, she felt his master was too naive. "In the past, His Highness was in poor health and might collapse any day. Besides, he had given up hope for himself. So, no one had to deal with him. He himself could... Now that he has recovered and is determined to live a good life with Princess Chen, his good condition has surely provoked others!"

Qing Mu reminded Consort Lan, but the latter abruptly changed to another topic. She wiped away her tears and said with a heavy heart, "Is Princess Chen that good? She kindled his desire to live. I've devoted myself to him for many years, but he has never shown me kindness. How... how could he be so cruel?"

Qing Mu felt helpless, for she had never thought she would think of it this way. However, seeing things through her master's eyes, she said, "Princess Chen is a cause of his change, but His Highness also wants to be strong. As soon as he becomes powerful, it will arouse others' intention to kill. This time, Princess Chen should have been wounded because of His Highness's affairs."

"How dare they..." Consort Lan said through gritted teeth, focusing back on this matter. Her beautiful face clouded over, and her eyes were fixed on a square brick on the ground.

"Your Grace, for all this, why wouldn't they dare to do it? I'm afraid that keeping His Highness safe won't be as easy as when he was sick." Seeing that her master still didn't understand, Qing Mu explained in detail and made her realize the reality.

Consort Lan lurched to her feet, and her velvety eyes suddenly turned as chill as ice and frost. She twisted the handkerchief in her hand hard twice before saying slowly, "Invite His Majesty to come over tonight!"

"Your Grace, are you willing to meet His Highness?" Qing Mu asked, feeling pleasantly surprised. Consort Lan's place was generally considered a Cold Palace because the Emperor wouldn't visit her even a few times for a whole year. For one thing, it was inconvenient for him to come here. For another, Consort Lan had been holding a negative attitude and felt reluctant to see the Emperor. Gradually, her living place became deserted and quiet.

If it hadn't been for the guards at the gate, the other favored consorts would have been trampled down at her palace.

Consort Lan nodded and said, "Since they are unwilling to let us go, why should we let them go? It has been so many years... For so many years, everything should have belonged to Chen'er. No one else can take it away from him!"

"Your Grace, it's great you can think in this way. It... It should be his in the first place. His Highness is the authentic crown prince." Qing Mu knelt with tears in her eyes.

She knew the bitterness in her master's heart and understood why her master felt helpless. Nevertheless, she believed everything should be Prince Chen's. In any case, Prince Chen owned everything, not the other unjustifiable ones.

"I was seriously wrong, but I won't repeat my mistakes!" Consort Lan wiped away her tears and pulled up Qing Mu, who had been wailing miserably. At this point, her faith went very deep. She could no longer compromise. For the sake of Chu Liuchen, she should make no concession. Since those people wanted Prince Chen to die, they would have to step over her dead body first.

Otherwise, she would step over their corpses.

She had always known that this path was accompanied by wind and rain reeking of blood. Any royal family member was fully aware of that. In the past, she stood aloof from worldly success because Chu Liuchen was in poor health. There was nothing to fight for, and the most important thing for him was to take good care of himself. Back then, those people didn't hold so much malice against Chu Liuchen.

Chu Liuchen had recovered, and it was okay for him to run for thousands of miles, which meant that he had restored his health. What had happened before made Consort Lan realize that she would only become the victim of others if she chose not to fight.

She would never fall prey to others. No one could stop her!

It was enough to fall victim once in this life. For the rest of her life, she would fight for Chen'er. Even if she would be smashed to pieces, so what? Anyway, she was past caring about anything else long ago!

"Tell the imperial kitchen to prepare wine and dishes for His Majesty in the evening." Consort Lan ordered coldly, and her eyes darkened. Only at this time did she demonstrate her original demeanor. In the past, Consort Lan, seemingly weak, had been staying aloof from the affairs to keep herself safe and peaceful. But she was no longer the person that she used to be.

“Your Grace, the imperial kitchen may not prepare anything good for us.” Qing Mu hesitated for a moment and said.

It had been rumored that Consort Lan’s place had always enjoyed a superior status. Guards, who wouldn’t even allow the Empress to enter, were protecting the so-called Cold Palace. It could be seen that Consort Lan was unique. In the beginning, she appeared out of the ordinary in other people’s eyes. However, she had been confined in her palace for so long, and the Emperor seldom visited her. In this case, who would care about such an imperial consort?

There were so many beauties and imperial consorts who moved to living in the Palace after her. Who would pay attention to a deserted imperial consort like her? Many imperial consorts who had newly moved to the Palace didn’t even know her existence, so how could other people in the imperial harem pay attention to her?

The imperial kitchen had provided her with meals, but they were usually the most common and even worse ones. However, Consort Lan didn’t mind it at all. Therefore, when Qing Mu occasionally went to the imperial kitchen, she would ask her fellow villager to prepare some good dishes for her master secretly. As for the others, they might not even know who Consort Lan was.

However, those good dishes secretly prepared still couldn’t be compared with those of other imperial consorts. Consort Lan didn’t eat much and only liked a few dishes that were not precious. She just needed several better dishes.

But it was not enough for the meal today, for Consort Lan had specially invited the Emperor to come over. Of course, some good dishes were needed. In this case, these people in the imperial kitchen would not ignore her.

“Ask them to prepare a decent meal for me today. If they refuse, you can make a scene there.” A trace of coldness flashed in Consort Lan’s eyes. “The Empress can’t even fend for herself, so she won’t have time to deal with this minor matter.”

Apart from the Empress, no one else in the imperial harem could discipline her.

She had been bearing silently for so many years and desiring for nothing. But now, since they had forced her and Chen’er into this miserable situation, how could she endure any longer...

Chapter 1112 Prince Chen with No Weakness

“She... Did you say she wanted to see me?” The Emperor pressed his hand on the table and almost jumped up, looking at Derong with excitement.

Derong lowered his head and said, “Qing Mu, her personal maid, said so. Her Grace invited you to go there tonight, saying that she would be waiting for you in the Shuangxi Hall!”

“Has she forgiven me? Has she forgiven me for real?” The Emperor clenched his fists tightly in agitation.

It couldn’t be a question. The Emperor must have been talking to himself. Thus, Derong, hanging his head even lower, didn’t dare to answer it.

After a long while, the Emperor took a deep breath, controlled his emotions, and said with a faint smile on his serious face, “I’m finally forgiven. What happened back then... It was actually not my fault...”

Derong felt even more scared to say anything and just stood there motionless.

There was a long pause before the Emperor came to his senses. Then, his eyes fell on a memorial in front of him. It was from Prime Minister Wen, who opposed him deposing the Empress. He argued that the Empress was the foundation of a state and couldn't be changed casually. It appeared that Princess Chen's accident had all kinds of connections with the Empress, but no solid evidence could prove that the Empress was behind it...

"Derong, what if I give up the current Empress and make Consort Lan the Empress?" the Emperor spoke word by word.

"Your Majesty, you couldn't do that!" Hearing that, Derong could no longer keep silent. He knelt with a plop and pressed his forehead against the ground, unmoving.

Consort Lan was a deep-seated taboo in the Emperor's heart, which no one dared to touch. Derong knew it, so he didn't dare to utter a word at first, but now he had to say something!

"Can't I? Why can't I?" the Emperor suddenly became stubborn.

"Your Majesty, please think twice!" Derong said implicitly because he didn't have the courage to advise in detail.

The Emperor sat in silence for a long time. Then, he sighed heavily, "I feel sorry for her. I owe much to her!"

"Your Majesty, it wasn't your fault. It was the fickleness of fate!" Derong whispered.

The Imperial Study fell silent for a while, and only the faint sounds of their breathing could be heard.

"Get up!" The Emperor said in a gravelly voice as if he had aged a lot suddenly. He waved his hand, motioning Derong to get up.

Derong got up scrupulously and stole a glance at the Emperor's face, feeling bitter in his heart. The Emperor was old, no longer as high-spirited and vigorous as when he was a prince.

"Yue'er, Zhou'er..." The Emperor paused and added another name. "And Chen'er. Who is the most suitable?"

His voice was low, but his words shocked Derong so much that his face changed dramatically. In the past, according to the Emperor, only the former two princes were qualified to inherit the throne. But now Prince Chen was also included. Did this mean that the entire imperial court would take on an entirely newlook?

The Emperor had never considered Prince Chen. But it looked only right and proper when Prince Chen was added at this time. In the past, Prince Chen was excluded, mostly because of his poor health: though he was in imminent danger of death, he acted recklessly without considering his poor physical condition.

Now, it seemed that his only weakness was gone!

“Chen’er... He becomes a suitable candidate now!” The Emperor sighed heavily, but his voice was very, very low, barely audible, but Derong heard it.

Derong lowered his head even more, knowing well that he didn’t need to say anything at this time.

No one knew more about what had happened between the Emperor and Consort Lan than he did. Yet, he couldn’t say anything and could only be a loyal listener who kept his lips buttoned.

When the news from the imperial Palace came, Chu Liuchen had just finished dinner with Shao Wanru. He supported her as she walked. Mingqiu Nun told Shao Wanru not to always lie in the room. The wound on her arm wouldn’t split open if she was careful.

As soon as they stepped out of the courtyard, they saw the chief supervisor hurry in.

“Your Highness!” The chief supervisor said respectfully after saluting him.

Shao Wanru smiled slightly and looked up. Her black and watery eyes looked crystal clear. She said, “Your Highness, deal with your business first. I’ll take a walk with Yujie and Qu Le and talk about the previous event.”

The chief supervisor wouldn’t come here for no reason — it must be important.

“Walk for a while, but don’t go too far.” Chu Liuchen nodded and said, withdrawing his hand from Shao Wanru’s slender waist.

“I know.” Shao Wanru nodded. Her liquid eyes, full of glittering ripples, curved up with a smile.

“You don’t have to worry about the affairs in the Palace for the time being. Just focus on healing your wound.” Chu Liuchen reminded her again.

“I know.” Shao Wanru said again. Knowing Chu Liuchen was worried that she couldn’t take good care of herself, she reached out to gently pull his sleeve and shook it slightly with a hint of tenderness.

Sure enough, she couldn’t get her hands on the affairs of the Imperial Palace, especially at this time. But she worried that it would be inconvenient for Chu Liuchen. The imperial harem was full of women, so it was improper for Chu Liuchen to deal with them as a prince.

But at present, she understood he was worried about her, so he would not let her intervene at will.

When Shao Wanru agreed, Chu Liuchen showed a trace of a smile in his eyes and went to the outer court with the chief supervisor.

They entered the study outside. As soon as Chu Liuchen sat down, the chief supervisor said excitedly, “Your Highness, Consort Lan asked to see the Emperor on her own initiative.”

Since he also knew the inside story, he clearly understood the causes and effects of Consort Lan’s choice.

The gentle look on Chu Liuchen’s face slowly faded, and his eyes turned ice-like. After a long while, he asked, “Will the Palace become restless today?”

"It should be. Consort Lan has been inconspicuous for so many years. But in the past... Though she is careless about matters in the Palace, it doesn't mean that others can bully her," the chief supervisor said with bitterness.

He had witnessed everything his young master had experienced for so many years. Lots of events occurred, which involved many people. Among them, his young master was the most innocent. But why would he take all the blame?

Consort Lan had been staying away from others for so many years. It appeared that she did this to protect his young master, but she caused more harm to Prince Chen.

When Consort Lan became incapable, how could she protect Chu Liuchen? At that time, Chu Liuchen was little, and no one took him seriously.

He was the legitimate son of the deceased emperor. This identity brought him no honor but aroused the envy and hatred of others.

When he was little and ignorant, he must have lived a miserable life in a Palace, the center of power. However, at that time, Consort Lan had been totally immersed in her sadness and had forgotten that a little child was badly in need of her care.

Gradually, the child grew up. Only then did Consort Lan realize she should take care of and protect him. It was a pity that the child no longer needed her.

"Master, if Consort Lan becomes the Empress..." The chief supervisor added. The idea excited him at once, and he looked up at Chu Liuchen, his face full of expectation.

"She can never be the Empress!" Chu Liuchen mercilessly poured cold water on his fancy thought.

"But, she..." The chief supervisor still wanted to say something, but Chu Liuchen interrupted with curt finality. "Stay in frequent contact with Qing Mu, and make a deal with the Empress. It's better to let the Empress do this."

"Wh-what?" The chief supervisor was stunned and couldn't believe his ears. His young master meant to make a deal with the Empress, who had suffered her defeat. So, what was the use of cooperating with her? They should trade with Consort of Virtue because she seemed to have come out on top.

"Sir, the Empress is losing her power and influence. It won't be easy to depose her if we don't help her. Those old officials in the imperial court will protect her. Moreover, when she falls from power because of Zhuozhuo, the people on Prince Zhou's side will vent their anger on Zhuozhuo. In this way, all of this will benefit Chu Liuyue and his people only."

Chu Liuchen said lightly, not moving a muscle of his countenance.

Chu Liuyue was flushed with success, while Prince Zhou and his supporters fell into disgrace. Moreover, the Empress's matter had implicated Prince Zhou and his people. If Chu Liuchen reached out to give the Empress a hand at this time, he could get unexpected results.

He hadn't thought much of this outcome in the past, but now he needed it.

“Am I going to contact the Empress?” The chief supervisor had been serving in the Palace for so long. Just now, he was too concerned about the situation to think straight. When he heard Chu Liuchen’s words, he immediately understood that this was the best way.

“You don’t have to go. Let Qing Mu do it. Consort Lan brought up this, so she is the most suitable to handle the matter.” Chu Liuchen smiled slightly and said in a light tone, looking out of the window toward the imperial Palace.

This day had finally come!

“I see, and I’ll tell Qing Mu.” The chief supervisor nodded repeatedly. At this time, his young master couldn’t intervene personally in the crisis. It was best for Consort Lan to reach out to others. She had decided to stop keeping a low profile and earn a proper place in the Palace. Then, there was no need to hide her choice from the Empress.

However, the chief supervisor was still worried because the Empress knew some things others did not know.

“Master, would the Empress threaten Consort Lan with those things?” After thinking for a while, the chief supervisor expressed his worries.

“She wouldn’t dare. Since she didn’t dare to expose these things for so many years, she has no courage to do it now. Otherwise, Chu Liuzhou... would die!” Chu Liuchen said with a smile. His voice was gentle but ice-like, as piercing as an arrow with hostility. Both he and the Empress knew Chu Liuzhou had been her weak point.

“Trust me, Your Highness. I know how to tell Qing Mu!” The chief supervisor understood and looked at his young master with admiration. He would use Prince Zhou to pin down the Empress and ask Consort Lan to make a request. At that time, the Empress would not refuse, for she had to agree.

Consort Lan’s loyal servants had been thinking about the same thing as him. However, Consort Lan had no such ideas, and his young master had given himself up as hopeless. Now, it was all right. The chief supervisor turned sideways and wiped away his tears slightly. His eyes were filled with gratification and excitement. His young master was no longer willful and reckless, and he knew he should cherish himself.

All of this was because of Princess Chen, which made him respect her even more.

“I’ll arrange for someone to notify Qing Mu right now.” The chief supervisor paused to get his breath back and said.

Chu Liuchen waved his hand, and the chief supervisor left.

Ancheng stood behind Chu Liuchen with a bright smile. Although he didn’t say a word just now, he heard everything clearly, and a trace of sharpness flashed in his eyes — he would do his best to support his master, no matter what Chu Liuchen planned to do!

“Dispatch someone to keep an eye on Prince Zhou. If there is any news from the Palace that the Empress disagrees, take action.” Chu Liuchen ordered mercilessly.

“Yes, Master. Please rest assured. I know what to do!” Ancheng nodded decisively. Since his master needed to deter the Empress in the Palace, they would deal with Prince Zhou. “Then, the Empress Dowager...”

“I have my ways to deal with this!”

Chapter 1113 Restless Nun and Her Two Disciples

The next few days appeared peaceful!

In the Prince Chen’s Mansion, people also stayed quiet. Though Prince Chen returned home, the mansion’s gate didn’t get crowded. On the contrary, the guards at the gate became more alert.

The Emperor sent more guards over, making the Prince Chen’s Mansion a strongly fortified place.

Prince Chen needed to recuperate, and Princess Chen needed a safe and quiet place to heal her wound more than Prince Chen. Prince Chen had taken away some people, so guards inside the Prince Chen’s Mansion couldn’t ensure safety.

The officials in the imperial court were still arguing about whether the Empress would be deposed or not.

The Emperor had mentioned this tricky matter suddenly. But this time, everyone in the imperial court was well prepared: they talked sensibly with solid supporting evidence, trying to make the Emperor agree with them.

The horrifying incident happened the night before yesterday because of the imperial kitchen. After that, many eunuchs and palace maids working there were replaced, and even the eunuch in charge of the imperial kitchen was changed.

The eunuch in charge was on the Empress’s side, so it didn’t seem surprising that he was replaced now.

Some well-informed imperial consorts even heard that Consort Lan had something to do with the matter that day. It was said that Consort Lan, who had been grounded, suddenly asked the imperial kitchen to prepare dishes for the Emperor. However, these people there didn’t take her words seriously, which provoked the Emperor to anger. He severely reprimanded and replaced them in a sweeping manner.

For a moment, everyone who heard the news was shocked.

Some of the newly favored consorts hadn’t even heard of Consort Lan. Why would Consort Lan suddenly appear? Since they were eager to learn about Consort Lan, some people secretly began inquiring about her past and found out everything about her.

She had become the Emperor’s consort before he ascended the throne. At the very beginning, she was a consort. When the Emperor went out on a trip, he fell in love with her at first sight. At first, she did not stay in the mansion but occasionally showed up there. Later, she was said to be the younger sister of the previous empress. Her high status was enough for her to be the Emperor’s legal wife, but the Emperor had already had a legal wife back then.

When they were engaged in disputes, the former emperor died. After that, the Emperor brought his people into the Palace, including Consort Lan. Perhaps because of Consort Lan's relationship with the former empress, she didn't end up as one of the noble four consorts. Instead, she became Consort Lan, an ordinary consort without a title.

Later, for some unknown reason, she angered the Emperor, who no longer allowed her to leave her palace. Since then, she had been locked up for many years.

No one had expected that Consort Lan would have a chance to turn the tables after so many years of silence.

Since the Emperor had replaced many people for her, he cared about her. Such a woman should be inferior to an imperial consort in the Cold Palace, where there was no guard. In contrast, she was locked up. After spending so many years there, she could still get the attention of the Emperor, who punished others in a rage because of her.

It could be seen that the Emperor had never forgotten her.

How many women the Emperor had? There must be a lot, no matter what!

Some women were dead, some were still alive, and new women kept coming. Nevertheless, the Emperor was still concerned about Consort Lan. It could be seen that the Emperor loved her sincerely.

The Emperor had always been indifferent to the women in the imperial harem. Although he went to the imperial harem occasionally, he mainly visited the few who had grown-up princes. As for the other consorts, he had been treating them indifferently. Many imperial consorts even couldn't see the Emperor all year round. Originally, everyone thought that the Emperor cared about Consort of Virtue the most.

The Emperor must care about Consort of Virtue the most, for she had given birth to the eldest son of the Emperor. Beyond that, her title was only slightly inferior to that of the Empress. Of course, the Emperor would only confer such an honor on the woman he cared about the most.

But what did he mean now? Did the Emperor care about Consort Lan the most?

For a moment, many thoughts and plans were brewing secretly in the imperial harem. Many people were investigating everything about Consort Lan. However, matters related to her were surprisingly simple. These people easily got all the information, and obviously, there was nothing else about her to survey.

It was unknown when the officials in the imperial court had started to inquire about Consort Lan. They wouldn't have been alarmed if she were just a favored consort. Yet, she had some connections with Prince Chen.

If the Emperor was genuinely fond of Consort Lan, it must have something to do with Prince Chen. In terms of relationship, Consort Lan was Prince Chen's aunt. In this case, Prince Chen would be involved.

There was a Buddha hall in the imperial Palace. Unlike those Buddha halls outside, it was not very big but quite exquisite. A Buddha statue, a valuable one plated with gold, was placed inside. Before the Buddha statue in the middle, an old nun was sitting on a rush cushion, knocking on the wooden fish with

one hand and holding up another palm before her chest in a prayer position. She was focused on chanting scriptures.

The door of the Buddha hall was slightly opened, and Huiqing came in a hurry, "Master!"

"What makes you panic?" Pushan Nun asked slowly with her eyes closed.

"Master, we can't find out more information about Consort Lan. The previous empress's family has already declined, and many family members have even returned to their hometown. Only some people belonging to the collateral branches of the family live in the capital city. We can't find any useful information about her. It is said that Consort Lan seems to be an illegitimate daughter and was brought back later. But for those people from collateral branches of the family, the specific matters about this were beyond their reach."

Huiqing reported.

Pushan Nun opened her deep eyes but didn't say anything. Still, she was chanting scriptures.

Huiqing became anxious and couldn't help but call out, "Master, now..."

"Send this message to Secondary Consort Shao!" Pushan Nun said.

"Master, what's the use of Secondary Consort Shao? She's just a deserted imperial consort. She's exceedingly beautiful, but she can't even compare with Consort Lan, who has been locked up for so long," Huiqing said with disdain.

She had tried hard to curry favor with Shao Yanru before, but now she despised her very much. Shao Yanru had a striking look and was a versatile wit taught by Pushan Nun in person. How could she be so useless that she ended up like this?

"How could Secondary Consort Shao have nothing to do with us? After all, she is my disciple. I can't just watch her fall into such a disgraceful situation!" Pushan Nun said slowly. After that, she put down the wooden fish in her hand, put her palms together, and chanted the name of Buddha with a compassionate look.

Huiqing was a little indignant. She had a hard time getting this information. Why should she give it to Secondary Consort Shao for free? But when seeing her master close her eyes again, she knew that it was useless to argue. She could only ask in anger, "Master, will I deliver the message to her through the high tower like before?"

"You don't have to let her know. Everyone has his fate!" Pushan Nun said lightly. Behind the curling smoke, she looked increasingly solemn.

"Master, I understand!" Huiqing also put her palms together and replied.

She carefully stepped out of the door and looked back at her master, who was worshiping the Buddha seriously. Huiqing felt her master was excessively kind to Secondary Consort Shao. Her master had done so much to help her, and Huiqing thought it was enough, even though Secondary Consort Shao had been her master's disciple.

Huiqing, still in a pique over it, shook her head and sighed, thinking that her master had done too many things for her.

“What did our master say?” Huiming came out of nowhere. When she saw Huiqing, she lowered her voice to ask.

“What else can we do? Our master wanted us to help her as much as possible, saying that we couldn’t watch Secondary Consort Shao suffer in the Palace!” Huiqing was furious. “We have a lot of things to do, but we have to help Secondary Consort Shao. I hope she won’t drag us all down with her!”

After entering the Palace, Huiqing had never had time to rest. She was much busier than when she was in the Yuhui Nunnery. From time to time, she had to deal with the imperial consorts, who were all very arrogant. Although the Emperor took no notice of them, they acted haughtily before her as if they were favored imperial consorts.

From time to time, those domineering ones would even make trouble with her master.

Sometimes, they said they would learn to paint. Then, they wanted to chant scriptures. Some said they would chant the Mantra of Rebirth in Pureland for their parents here. Because of them, all those people in the Buddha hall had to bustle around. Her good-tempered master could endure all of this, but she had long been unable to bear it. They could go back to the Yuhui Nunnery, right? As long as her master mentioned it a few more times, there would always be a chance.

However, her master endured everything in silence.

“Huiqing, don’t talk nonsense if you don’t know about it. Secondary Consort Shao is still useful for our master. Besides, Secondary Consort Shao is not stupid and will find a way to save herself. She still has a chance at the moment.” Huiming was more far-sighted than Huiqing and understood Pushan Nun’s intention. She immediately warned in a low voice, “You have so many complaints. Don’t ruin our master’s business!”

“Don’t worry. I won’t make trouble. I always keep what our master told me in mind and won’t make any mistakes.” Huiqing said repeatedly and sighed. “I know my master must have a reason to bear all of this. It was not easy for us to enter the Imperial Palace. So, she won’t leave at this point. But it’s dangerous to stay here. When we are busy enough with our affairs, how can we have the extra energy to take care of Secondary Consort Shao? Anyway, she suffers from her own actions!”

Her master cared so much about Secondary Consort Shao, and she was dissatisfied with that.

Basically speaking, Secondary Consort Shao was also her master’s disciple. But for nuns, as long as she was not a Buddhist disciple, she was not a genuine disciple. However, it made no difference for her master. For Huiqing, she was an authentic disciple, while Secondary Consort Shao was merely her master’s newly-accepted apprentice of calligraphy and painting. Then, how could she be inferior to Secondary Consort Shao in her master’s eyes?

“Well, stop complaining. Our master is going to be angry!” Huiming warned her, “Hurry up and think of a way to send the message to Secondary Consort Shao.”

“I see. I’ll arrange it now. You should be careful. Secondary Consort Shao will probably send someone to ask you for your opinion.” Huiqing nodded and curled her lips sarcastically. “Tell me, what did Secondary

Consort Shao mean? I got the news, and it was sent to you. She even asked you if she should be on guard against me. I only veiled my face and didn't let her see who I was. I've sent many messages, but she still hasn't confirmed if I'm being kind. Secondary Consort Shao is not as smart as what our master has said!"

"She's cautious. You show up but never reveal your face. Compared with you, Secondary Consort Shao cares more about our master and will listen to her. That's good. One acts under cover while one is in the open. In this way, we can deal with things better." Huiming didn't have the same idea as Huiqing, so she immediately explained.

Seeing that it was getting late, they took action separately according to Pushan Nun's arrangements. Since they entered the Palace, only Pushan Nun had been staying in the Buddha hall. Even Shao Yanru didn't know that the person who often sent her messages through the high tower in the Palace was Huiqing, her acquaintance...

Chapter 1114 About Nanny Wei's Future

Shao Wanru sat before Chu Liuchen. Her dark hair had just been washed and combed, and Chu Liuchen was drying it up for her. Accidentally, he touched her arm, and Shao Wanru felt Chu Liuchen's hand stiffen.

She stretched out her injured arm, gently pulled his sleeve, and comforted him softly with a smile, "The medicine from Mingqiu Nun and Doctor Qi is good. The wound has almost recovered. It won't burst open if I don't exert much strength."

As she spoke, she exerted a little force and slightly pulled down the sleeve of his robe.

"Okay, I know. Stop pulling it, or my handkerchief will drop!" Chu Liuchen said helplessly. He reached out to touch her hair and found it was almost dry. Then he put down the handkerchief in his hand and led her to lie on his lap. Her black hair spread out.

He changed a comb and carefully combed her hair.

Shao Wanru opened her eyes and stared at his serious and handsome face. With great care, he combed her long hair. When there was a kink, he would straighten out her hair there. For fear that she would get hurt when he pulled her hair, he gently pinched the top of the kink before handling it with a comb.

Shao Wanru blinked her eyes and blinked again. Her eyes were full of tenderness. When she was reborn, she would never have imagined such a scene.

Everything in her previous life had gone with the wind. Even if there had been something between him and her, she could no longer remember it. Fortunately, she was blessed with a new life. In this life, he had walked into her heart without her noticing it, and his eyes were no longer the fierce and bloodthirsty ones in her memory.

She valued this man at the bottom of her heart, perhaps not merely in this life but also in her previous life!

Her vague and lost memory might be about him. Fortunately, in this life, they were together.

...

The rims of her eyes turned red unconsciously. The memory of her previous life was cut off when the part about him appeared.

"What's wrong? Does it hurt?" Noticing that Shao Wanru's eyes were red, Chu Liuchen put down the comb in his hand, gently pressed her forehead, and asked softly.

"No..." Tears suddenly rolled down from the corners of her eyes, slowly sliding down her fair and tender cheeks.

Chu Liuchen sighed softly. Suddenly, he lowered his head and kissed her pink and tender lips. At this moment, Shao Wanru froze.

All her senses and emotions surged out because of this warm kiss. Though with overwhelming emotion, he kissed cautiously. She could feel his heavy breath and unique scent with a faint smell of medicine, reminding Shao Wanru that the person before her was Chu Liuchen.

Her long eyelashes covered the excitement in her eyes. She could feel that his breath became increasingly hot, and he was tasting the corner of her mouth...

This posture was not comfortable. His chin pressed against her nose, and all her breaths seemed to have gathered on him. It became difficult for her to breathe. Yet, she felt incredibly relieved. Involuntarily, she wrapped her arms around Chu Liuchen's neck. But after exerting strength, she felt a sharp pain in her arm. "Ah!" She cried out in a low voice.

Chu Liuchen moved his lips away from her cherry lips and stared at her with his pretty eyes still burning with passion. "What's wrong? Did you get hurt?"

As he spoke, he gently lifted his hand and let her wide sleeves fall. He checked the white bandages around her wound and found nothing wrong. Then, he heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Luckily, it's fine."

"I'm fine!" Shao Wanru bit her lip and muttered. At that moment, not only his but also her passion was aroused.

"May I continue?" Chu Liuchen's eyes lit up. He looked at her watery eyes with his charming ones and asked in a gentle and elegant way, but for Shao Wanru, the meaning in his words was too embarrassing to be mentioned aboveboard.

...

Shao Wanru had never expected that he would ask such a question. Her face turned scarlet. Could he be more shameless? She pinched his hand hard with her uninjured hand.

"Well, I know. There will be a time for that. It's not appropriate for us to do that now. So, let's talk about it after your recovery," Chu Liuchen said primly as if he were asking if she would like to take a meal.

Shao Wanru blushed furiously, biting her lip, and looked at Chu Liuchen as he said these shaming words gracefully.

Could he be even more shameless?

Chu Liuchen helped her pull back her sleeve, put her hand down gently, and placed it well. Then, he glanced at Shao Wanru's burning face. After hesitating for a while, he couldn't bear it anymore. He lowered his head and kissed her gently on the forehead. Then he raised his head and said in a very matter-of-fact way, "That's all I can do now. Why haven't you reached an adult age?"

Shao Wanru quickly closed her eyes, feeling too ashamed to look at him. How could he say such shameful and meaningful words so openly? Wasn't he afraid of ruining his gentle and elegant reputation?

Well, he only had a reputation for being refined. What he had done had nothing to do with his reputation at all. His delicate appearance could only deceive those who met him for the first time. Whoever believed it and tried to take advantage of him would be in trouble.

"I've been waiting for a long, long time!" His sigh entered her ear, making her feel even more ashamed. How could he appear as if he had suffered a significant loss?

"You... How is the Empress Dowager? What about the table screen..." To avoid talking about this, Shao Wanru had to suppress her embarrassment and change the topic.

Hearing Chu Liuchen's clear laughter, she knew he was laughing at her.

Shao Wanru pretended not to understand and continued to ask, "How is it going?"

...

She finally realized that she could never be as thick-skinned as Chu Liuchen, so she might as well change the topic and talk about something serious.

"Of course, someone intended to frame you up with the screen. First, they besieged our mansion to kill you. Then, there was the incident with the table screen. It was even related to Nanny Wei, who served my Imperial Grandmother. After all of this, you were drugged. Fortunately, you didn't eat the rice and escaped the disaster. Anyway, the murder with poison happened."

Chu Liuchen answered Shao Wanru.

Looking at her, Chu Liuchen knew she would become angry from embarrassment if he went on their previous talk. At this time, he had better stop before going too far, lest she got anxious and deliver him a blow. He was most experienced in stroking cats. That cat enjoyed his massage, didn't it?

"How is Nanny Wei?" Shao Wanru's heart skipped a beat. She suddenly opened her watery eyes, looked into Chu Liuchen's beautiful eyes, and asked subconsciously. Nanny Wei was actually a key figure.

How could such an important person become useless before doing anything critical?

"Imperial Grandmother demoted Nanny Wei's rank, but she still serves my Imperial Grandmother. According to her, she had been serving the Empress Dowager for many years, so my Imperial Grandmother needed her for the time being. Besides, she was deceived by her nephew and deliberately misled you into choosing something the Empress Dowager didn't like. She promised that she would never do it again!"

Chu Liuchen said with a faint smile.

When he went to the Palace of Benevolent Peace, Nanny Wei kept kowtowing to him, saying that she felt very reluctant to leave the Empress Dowager. At present, the Empress Dowager fell ill, and there was no proper servant to take good care of her. At this time, she would rather die than leave. Nanny Wei begged him for forgiveness.

When the Empress Dowager recovered in the future, she was willing to accept any punishment from her.

Chu Liuchen agreed on the spot.

...

"Did you leave her there on purpose?" Shao Wanru thought for a moment and asked tentatively.

"It was good to keep her there. She is in the open now, and it is easier for us to deal with her than those in the shadows. She was right about one thing: my Imperial Grandmother was in poor health, so she would feel uncomfortable if served by someone else. It was better for Nanny Wei to serve her. I would ask someone to keep an eye on her!" Chu Liuchen reached out and gently combed Shao Wanru's hair again, with a trace of gloom in his eyes.

His black eyes looked bottomless and dark.

Shao Wanru didn't see his eyes. She just thought for a moment and said, "That's good!"

Nanny Wei was exposed, so she was better than those who acted under cover. Even if Nanny Wei persuaded the Empress Dowager to keep her, it would be inconvenient for her to say anything for Wei Dahai. After all, Wei Dahai was the cause of this matter.

As for the affairs in the imperial court and the siege of so many men in black in his mansion, Chu Liuchen would deal with them. Shao Wanru wouldn't ask too much about these things. At present, she just needed to heal her wound and recuperate. Chu Liuchen would take care of other affairs.

Since Chu Liuchen returned to the mansion, Shao Wanru had been much more relaxed. It seemed that she didn't have to worry about anything because Chu Liuchen was here.

Chu Liuchen helped her up and held her in his arms with a faint fragrance of medicine. Chu Liuchen's chest wasn't quite broad but was firm, which made her feel safe that secure. She knew she wasn't all alone in the world. Leaning her head close to Chu Liuchen's neck, she smelled his warm scent, feeling comfortable and languid. It seemed she had nothing to worry about because he was protecting her the whole time.

With his backing, she feared nothing. Whatever happened, she had someone to rely on.

This secure feeling was excellent, so good that Shao Wanru felt like crying. After her previous life, she ended up in this world. And in this life, she had been alone and had no one to depend on. What she wanted most was a warm and safe harbor, which could calm her down when she was nervous and fearful.

Sensing Shao Wanru's dependence on him, Chu Liuchen reached out and held her tighter and tighter in his arms. Her fragrant and soft body filled the most delicate part of Chu Liuchen's heart.

...

He had always been heartless. Since he could even abandon himself, what couldn't he give up? But he cherished Shao Wanru, considering her more important than himself. He must be stronger to protect this beloved woman in his arms. He glanced at her injured arm, blaming himself for not being powerful enough and making Shao Wanru suffer so much!

He could go ahead with his continuous plans step by step. Since he had taken a fancy to that position, he wouldn't give it to anyone else. To achieve his purpose, he wouldn't hesitate to make a hell where blood flew in rivers.

A smile appeared in his eyes. If Shao Wanru saw this smile, she would find it both gentle and soul-stirring. A gorgeous young man, as beautiful as a picture, turned out to be so unearthly and chilling. Like a divine being climbing out of bloody hell, he appeared bloodthirsty and evil...

Chapter 1115 Two Women in Inverted Positions

When night fell, the Palace quieted down. Endless disputes and troublesome things were going on in the Palace. No one dared to walk around casually for fear of causing trouble. Recently, the situation in the Palace had been constantly changing, which was incomprehensible to many people.

The door of an empty hall was left ajar, and the Empress quietly appeared at the palace gate with her two trusted subordinates. This place was far from the Phoenix Palace, so the Empress could no longer remember who had lived there. Since the Emperor moved into the Palace, this place had been empty. A consort of the deceased emperor seemed to be the last one living in it.

After so many years, no one had ever moved in.

This palace was not big, but it was one of the main palaces in the Palace. When the Emperor had just moved into the Palace, he made several imperial consorts masters of the main palaces. Since then, no more consorts, including those newly entered consorts, had received such an honor. As a result, a few palaces were left empty. This one before her should be one of them.

A light appeared in the depths of the hall. The woman holding the lamp looked at the Empress with her beautiful eyes, which were calm and a little cold. Even though she was not as tall as the Empress, the Empress was slightly stunned by her distinguished bearing. She could not help but stop walking. For a long time, she had never seen a woman standing so erect and proud before her.

Looking at her beautiful face of peerless charm, the Empress felt ashamed of her inferiority. Somehow, she began to hate her out of jealousy.

Princess Chen was also a stunning beauty, but her face still looked slightly childish. In contrast, this strikingly attractive face before her brought the Empress an immediate sense of crisis.

Only the face in front of her could make her feel aggrieved, angry, and hateful.

Yes, the more jealous she was at that time, the angrier she was now. Her eyes were almost blazing with anger as she glared at the woman before with resentment and said, "Consort Lan, you are indeed restless and discontented!"

Quietly, Consort Lan put the lamp in her hand on the candlestick before her and turned around. In the shadow of the lamp, Qing Mu was on high alert.

Everyone in Consort Lan's palace had always been on guard against the Empress.

"Your Highness, do you dare to say this to His Majesty?" Consort Lan looked at the Empress and asked slowly after putting down the lamp and turning around.

As her face darkened slightly, she automatically showed an imposing manner, which made the Empress feel suffocated, as if something had humbled her pride. Instantly, it put the Empress into a slightly weaker position.

"You... you are still so..." The Empress gritted her teeth, intending to scold.

"Your Majesty, please watch your words!" Consort Lan looked up, her beautiful eyes becoming deep, and said with disdain, "After so many years, you're still so hot-tempered. Don't you think it's not good?"

"You... why haven't you died yet?" The Empress gritted her teeth.

"If I die, you won't live in peace. You must have forgotten who wants to kill you!" Consort Lan sat on a chair near her, pointed to the chair opposite it, and said, "How about sitting down for a talk, Your Majesty?"

"I don't want to talk to an imperial consort who has descended to the Cold Palace." The Empress took a step forward proudly and said.

"If so, please go back. There's no way for us to cooperate. I can go to see Consort of Virtue. Maybe she's very willing to work with me!" Consort Lan pointed outside the hall with a gloomy look and said casually.

Her manner when talking reminded the Empress of a scene in the past. At that time, the woman before her was also sitting gracefully there with great dignity, but the Empress had to kneel at her feet.

The feeling of humiliation made the Empress see reality more clearly. If she refused Consort Lan, she would turn to cooperate with Consort of Virtue. With Consort of Virtue's character, she would agree to join hands with her. After all, Consort of Virtue didn't know as much inside story as her.

"You... if you push me like this, I'll expose your scandal!" The Empress threatened in a harsh voice.

Consort Lan's long eyelashes fluttered. Carelessly, she picked up the teapot on the table and poured herself a cup of tea. Then she pushed the teapot close and said unhurriedly, "Say it if you want, but I'm afraid that even Prince Zhou will be implicated when you reveal that."

If she dared to do that, she would have made it public long ago. Consort Lan knew how much the Empress hated her. If possible, the Empress would kill her.

But she had no guts to say it, even to her son. It might bring them a dreadful disaster if her son made a slip of the tongue. Thus, she could only keep it to herself and tell no one.

"You..." The Empress was so angry that her face turned livid. In the end, logic prevailed, and she abandoned the previous idea. "Tell me how we can cooperate?"

"I guarantee your position as the Empress, and you propose Prince Chen to be the crown prince of the Eastern Palace." Consort Lan looked at the Empress and said word by word.

Upon hearing Consort Lan's words, the Empress flew into a rage and said with a stern and terrifying look, "Impossible. Consort Lan, you'd better give up this idea. I... I will never say that."

Consort Lan was not surprised by the Empress's flat refusal. She reached out to lead the way and said, "Since you don't want to do that, forget it. Everyone in the imperial court is talking about deposing you, and you should be clear about the Emperor's intention. If you don't mention it, I can ask other consorts to do it, though the effect may not be that good. Of course, without you, I will become a high-ranking imperial consort even if I can't be the Empress. I can make Prince Chen a son under my name at that time. It might be a smoother way for him to become the heir to the throne. As for Prince Zhou..."

Speaking of this, Consort Lan paused, looked at the Empress, who slowed down her pace and continued with a smile, "His mother had been removed from the position of Empress. No matter how promising Prince Zhou is, he has nothing to do with the throne. Then, it will be successive battles for the throne among Prince Yue, Prince Chen, and Prince Cheng."

"Prince Zhou is the legitimate son of the Emperor!" The Empress suddenly turned around and looked at Consort Lan with deep hatred. Her ashen face even turned a little blue.

"When you're no longer the Empress, how can he be a legitimate son? Speaking of this, Prince Chen is the only legitimate descendent. So, we will benefit a lot if you are out of power. Maybe I shouldn't have come here to meet you today." Consort Lan said indifferently.

"What... what do you want?" The Empress was not stupid. Although her face was still dark, she asked the critical question.

"Nothing. I just want to get Prince Chen a fair chance. As for whether he can succeed in the future, it's up to his fate. I can't control it. How much do you think I can help him with my current situation?" Consort Lan's voice was soft, but her eyes darkened, inexplicably making people sad.

Prince Chen had a prominent status as the eldest legitimate son of the deceased emperor. Nevertheless, he was the deceased emperor's son. At this point, he might even become the arch-enemy of the other princes.

Looking at Consort Lan like this, the Empress felt delighted. When her old rival showed such an expression, it looked more persuasive than any explanation. Gradually, the Empress calmed down. If they went against each other, they would lose simultaneously, but once they united, both sides could win. She might as well propose that Chu Liuchen should be the crown prince. Anyway, her suggestion would not make it real instantly.

If her words had been useful, his son would have become the crown prince of the Eastern Palace long ago.

"His Highness may not listen to me!" The Empress said slowly,

"You just need to submit a memorial. Leave the rest to fate. At least, Prince Chen should have such an opportunity, right?" Consort Lan raised the corner of her mouth and said with a sarcastic smile.

It seemed she was mocking herself instead of the Empress.

"Then you should help me be in charge of the imperial harem again, but how can you guarantee that?" The Empress's eyes flashed, and she asked.

"Do you still want to manage the imperial harem?" Consort Lan asked.

The Empress was stunned. "But didn't you say that you would help me? Was it a joke?"

"Your Majesty, I said I would not let His Majesty depose you. You could be the Empress, but I didn't say you could regain your power over the imperial harem. You've done many sinister things, so you're not completely innocent, are you? If His Majesty continues investigating, he might find out something else!"

Consort Lan said coldly.

The Empress instantly weakened. She tilted her head uneasily to avoid Consort Lan's eyes and said, "I didn't poison Princess Chen, nor did I assassinate her..."

Consort Lan interrupted her, "Your Majesty, it's useless to tell me these things. But your words might work if you tell them to His Majesty. I just don't know if His Majesty will listen to what you say."

The Emperor wouldn't have thought about deposing the Empress if he had believed her words.

The Empress said viciously through her gritted teeth. "I will find out who framed me behind the scenes."

Princess Chen's servant girls had picked up a few suspects, all of whom had something to do with her. However, she didn't ask them to do anything that day. At most, she just asked them to inquire about the news. How could she become the one plotting behind the scenes? Even worse, she got involved in the assassination targeting Princess Chen. The Empress had thought she was in full control of the imperial harem, but she didn't know when she had started losing this control.

It must be that bitch Consort of Virtue. If anything happened to her at this time, Consort of Virtue would be the only one who benefited the most. After this crisis was settled, the Empress would not let go of her.

"In that case, we'll wait for your memorial!" Consort Lan said.

"But, how can I trust you?" The Empress asked again. This time, she did not dare to ask about the matter of regaining her power. At this moment, firmly seizing her position as the Empress was the most important thing for her. As for the things in the future, she would think about them later.

Consort Lan slightly lifted the corners of her mouth, pulled out a faint smile, and said lightly, "Your Majesty, please remember that I won't break my promise. It won't do me any good. Your memorial is effective when you are still the Empress. But if you are not, we might as well find another consort to submit a memorial."

...

Her words accelerated the Empress's heart rate, but she knew it was true. Then, the Empress swung her sleeves and said, "Wait for my good news. But please keep your promise. Don't force me to fall out with you."

“Rest assured, Your Majesty. I’ll do my best!” Consort Lan said. She looked at the Empress’s back, hiding the hatred and pain in her eyes. If possible, she only wanted to kill the Empress. If it hadn’t been for the woman in front of her, all of this might not have happened. It was this woman who had harmed her...

Chapter 1116 Second Brother, Do You Prefer Discussing Deposing the Empress

The Empress’s memorial to the throne caused an uproar in the restless imperial court.

The news gave many officials a jolt — how could Prince Chen be a qualified crown prince of the Eastern Palace?

Only the Empress, who would soon lose her power, dared to say that. However, because of this suggestion, many people appreciated her selflessness as the Empress and secretly became partial to her. After all, the Empress had a son, Prince Zhou. She recommended Prince Chen instead of Prince Zhou. She was in her influential position as the Empress but had no personal consideration. It could be seen that she was very unlikely to harm Princess Chen.

Soon after that, everyone’s attention was shifted from deposing the Empress to choosing the crown prince.

Disempowering the Empress was a significant issue closely related to the imperial court, but it exerted less impact on the imperial court than the appointment of the crown prince. It was unreasonable to make a nephew instead of a son the crown prince. But if the deceased emperor was considered, Prince Chen was indeed the perfectly justifiable heir.

It was reasonable to pick up Prince Chen as the crown prince.

Though the deceased emperor died more than ten years ago, many elderly officials had been missing him and fully intended to help Prince Chen take the throne. To their dismay, Prince Chen, in poor health, might fall any moment. Of course, a sick prince like him couldn’t ascend to the throne. But now, many people learned that Prince Chen had recovered.

Even if he hadn’t fully recovered, he was still as healthy as ordinary people.

Prince Chen had rushed to the capital city for the Empress Dowager’s birthday, and only a vigorous constitution could support his remarkable speed on this long journey. Prince Chen was said to have restored his health, but others didn’t believe it. After all, he had been sick for more than ten years and almost lost his life several times. How could he miraculously recover?

But now, they no longer doubted that Prince Chen was fully fit. After all, facts are more eloquent than words.

Since Prince Chen was all right, he could inherit the throne. He was the eldest legitimate son of the deceased emperor. Besides, even with his relationship with the Emperor, Prince Chen was qualified to move into the Eastern Palace. When the Emperor ascended the throne, he said before all the officials that he regarded Prince Chen as his son and made him the third prince.

Before the Emperor, Prince Chen considered himself his “son.” Since they were “father and son,” he certainly had the right to inherit the throne.

Compared with Commandery Prince Qing, the Emperor's nephew, it was more legitimate for Prince Chen to become the crown prince.

In the imperial court, those officials got into in vehement argument again. But this time, they were arguing about whether Prince Chen could enter and host the Eastern Palace. Some agreed while others objected. Each imperial censor spoke in excitement, mentioning various things. Even these imperial censors were divided into two parties. Each side insisted on its own point of view, and neither could convince the other.

Almost all the officials in the imperial court were involved, but the few princes responded with indifference as if they had nothing to do with this. In addition, a few high-ranking officials remained neutral in the debate and didn't join the others.

This quarrel was fiercer than the previous one of deposing the Empress. The officials tried their best to win over the Emperor. It could be said that they had racked all their wits. In private, they argued even more heatedly, with many secretive thoughts and ideas surging into their minds.

At this time, no one cared about deposing the Empress or not.

The Emperor's attitude was unpredictable. Wearing the imperial crown, he sat high up in the main hall and watched the officials quarrel, surprisingly in silence. He was far from them, so his expression could not be seen clearly.

Prince Cheng stole a glance at him and hurriedly lowered his head. Although he stood in the front row close to the Emperor, he couldn't catch the Emperor's look. Was he angry or resentful?

That was how Prince Cheng guessed the Emperor's attitude.

The Emperor took the throne, yet these officials wanted him to pass the throne to his nephew. "If I were him, I would be furious too." Prince Cheng thought to himself.

The Emperor had sons, three grown-up sons. So, why should he pass the throne to his nephew?

But Prince Cheng couldn't see through his royal brother. How could he bear this silently? Could it be that he cared about Prince Chen sincerely? Did the deceased emperor die in an accident for real?

Prince Cheng still thought it was impossible. He had found out some relevant information and also made plans. It was hard for him to believe that the deceased emperor died right after taking medicine.

In the past, he had secretly plotted with others but didn't expose what had happened that year in public. Unexpectedly, this matter closely related to Prince Chen was made public.

The Empress actually submitted a memorial to suggest Prince Chen be the Crown Prince. It came as a great surprise to Prince Cheng. In his heart, Chu Liuchen, one of his nephews, was the least likely to win the throne. Compared with Chu Liuxin, he felt that Chu Liuchen was much less competitive. No matter what, the throne could never fall upon this sick man who was just the Emperor's nephew.

Prince Cheng had never taken Chu Liuchen seriously.

Many things concerned the Prince Chen's Mansion because others intended to cause something by using Prince Chen. Or, they could make the Prince Chen's Mansion the center of conflict and use it as a sharp sword to attack others.

It had never occurred to him that this sword would develop its independent will! The change had caught Prince Cheng off guard.

When did Chu Liuchen recover? He didn't hear any news regarding it, so he could hardly cope with this sudden change. At this point, he was at a loss for what to do next.

He had secretly planned and prepared for so many years. To avoid arousing his imperial brother's suspicion, he even deliberately made a scene several times, saying that he would live and cultivate himself as a monk. He didn't even get married and had no children in the public's eyes.

Prince Cheng thought he had made a comprehensive plan. But against all expectations, Chu Liuchen came on stage. If he had found out early that Chu Liuchen had recovered, he would have taken action secretly and dealt with him with all his strength. He shouldn't have underestimated Chu Liuchen like before.

But it was too late to do anything now. Regardless of the Emperor's attitude, many officials had learned that Prince Chen also stood a chance to be the crown prince of the Eastern Palace. Prince Cheng was sure of that. In addition, some officials from the previous dynasty had obtained senior posts.

He had been operating secretly for his ambition for over a dozen years. In contrast, Chu Liuchen made a high-profile and powerful move. After that, anyone sparing no effort to deal with him would inevitably arouse others' suspicion.

That was why Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou, who had been competing with each other in private, barely conflicted on the surface.

Most importantly, Chu Liuchen managed to steal a march on his competitors.

First, he convinced these officials that he had fully recovered. Then, the Empress's memorial followed. Everything was perfectly arranged, and he achieved what he wanted without difficulty.

Clenching his fists, Prince Cheng lowered his head. He could bear it, but his two nephews might not. They had thought that the throne was in their hands.

In this case, he might as well watch them fight and reap the benefits.

His grip slightly slackened. "I should strengthen the cooperation with those people. At least, it won't be a big deal to give in to those people when I gain the throne."

When making up his mind, Prince Cheng lowered his head and stood still while hearing the officials debating fiercely.

Chu Liuyue's cold eyes roved round the hall and fell on Chu Liuchen from time to time. After a while, he also looked down.

Chu Liuzhou's mood was the most evident: his face took on a most ghastly expression. Yet, he also lowered his head hard for fear of being seen through by others.

Her mother presented a memorial to the Emperor, recommending Chu Liuchen as the crown prince. In a rage, Prince Zhou almost smashed everything in the study.

Chu Liuxin had also come to the court. Still, he looked quite absent-minded and gazed into space blankly. It seemed as if no matter how heated the dispute was, it was none of his business.

Though he was the youngest among the princes, he looked the most decadent and listless. He had been in this state for a long time. The Emperor reprimanded him several times, but Chu Liuxin's life still went on as usual. He appeared too spiritless to follow any advice.

When it was almost time, Derong announced loudly that the court ended. The Emperor walked out in silence with his people, leaving behind those officials who had been arguing with each other with flushed faces and necks.

Since the Emperor was gone, what was the point of arguing? Immediately, the hall quieted down, and everyone looked at each other in silent embarrassment. Then, they snorted coldly, swung their sleeves, and left.

Several princes lingered, and Chu Liuchen walked behind the others, just like before. But he saw Chu Liuyue stop and wait for him.

"Third Brother!"

"What's up, Eldest Brother?" Chu Liuchen asked lightly.

"What an ingenious plan!" Prince Zhou couldn't help sneering with a livid face. He clenched fists, trying hard to prevent himself from hitting his Third Brother.

"What do you mean?" Chu Liuchen suddenly smiled lazily, stretched out his hand, and pointed to Chu Liuzhou's hand. "Do you prefer these officials to talk about deposing the Empress?"

Upon hearing his question, Chu Liuzhou suddenly paled, and his anger retreated like the tide. He was not stupid but just a little impulsive. When Chu Liuchen made him realize the reality, he heaved a cold groan and turned to leave after casting a glance at Chu Liuyue beside him.

...

He was afraid he would strangle both Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuchen if he walked more slowly.

Depriving the Empress was equal to excluding Chu Liuzhou from the throne. So, for Chu Liuzhou, this result was better. Yet, he was very anxious to ask his mother what she meant. But he could not enter the Phoenix Palace these days even if he was in the Palace. Every time, the Empress would refuse him with the excuse of not feeling well.

He had never seen the Empress in private since the incident.

"Third Brother, how about taking a walk with me?" Seeing Chu Liuzhou leave, Chu Liuyue invited him.

"Okay!" Chu Liuchen replied in a lazy tone.

They walked out of the main hall, one behind the other.

Chu Liuxin was about to leave, but he hesitated at this time and followed them.

Prince Cheng was the last one to go out of the hall. Glancing at his nephews in front of him, he was not in the mood to join them. He should have pretended to care about nothing. Especially at this time, he could not let his imperial brother notice anything unusual about him.

He swiveled around and headed for the Empress Dowager's Palace of Benevolent Peace. Recently, Prince Cheng accompanied the Empress Dowager every day and took good care of her.

He was the most filial one among the others. Of course, compared to them, Prince Cheng was fully aware of his weakest point: his royal brother would never pass on the throne to him under normal circumstances.

He wouldn't get a chance unless his nephews were all dead or disabled.

...

Of course, it would be better if he had an imperial edict left by the deceased emperor before his death. The elder brother passing the throne to the younger brother would be a perfect inheritance rule. His brother had achieved this, and so could he. Since Chu Liuchen caught him off guard, he had to act faster...

Chapter 1117 Surprising, Eldest Brother Will Take the Palace Examination?

Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuchen walked side by side in the front, followed by Chu Liuxin. The three of them remained silent, and only the footsteps could be heard.

"Third Brother, well done!" Chu Liuyue suddenly turned around and said with a smile.

"So, what do you want to say?" Chu Liuchen beamed and asked, with a hint of sarcasm in his eyes.

On his noble robe, the four-clawed gigantic dragon overturning rivers and seas displayed an overwhelming momentum. It made his handsome and exquisite face appear even more extraordinary.

However, his impressive bearing contained a trace of otherworldly coldness, which chilled Chu Liuyue's heart. In a flash, he remembered that Chu Liuchen before him was never easy to deal with. Even though he was the Emperor's eldest son, he could never establish his supremacy before Chu Liuchen.

Chu Liuyue coughed in a low voice and turned his head, regretting acting on impulse.

At this time, he shouldn't be so irrational as to confront Chu Liuchen. Somehow, Shao Wanru's figure appeared in his mind, and he frowned involuntarily.

"How is the Empress now?"

"Oh, that's strange. Shouldn't you ask my Second Brother about it? The Empress would see him instead of me." Chu Liuchen's eyes dimmed.

"You must find out who hurt Princess Chen!" Chu Liuyue gave a slight cough and intended to change this inappropriate topic.

"Who do you think did it?" Chu Liuchen gently asked him back with a smile. His every move became more and more gorgeous and graceful!

Chu Liuyue was again stunned by the question and secretly gritted his teeth, thinking that Chu Liuchen was a tough nut indeed.

"I didn't know that, so I asked you. Couldn't you find out the truth until now?" Chu Liuyue asked.

Chu Liuchen looked unperturbed, and there was a hint of evil coldness in his smile. "Isn't everyone investigating it? You have spent more time surveying it. After all, I have only been back in the capital for a few days!"

Since such a great sensation happened in the Prince Chen's Mansion, anyone involved had to do some research in order to show their innocence.

The Emperor initiated the survey while the other princes assisted him in the investigation.

Chu Liuyue felt a sudden surge of anger. There was no loophole in Chu Liuchen for him to exploit, but Chu Liuchen managed to hurl a critical question at him. Chu Liuyue suppressed his anger hard and said slowly in a low voice, "Since this matter has something to do with the Palace, it's better to let our imperial father verify it. Before he does a thorough investigation, you should be careful when looking into the matter!"

"Be careful? What do you mean? Do you want me to stop investigating? But my wife was seriously injured and almost died. How could you advise me to slow down the investigation?" Chu Liuchen asked in reply. Although his tone was sharp and forceful, he was still smiling gently.

Such a smile looked offensive to Chu Liuyue.

He badly wanted to pour out his wrath on Chu Liuchen but had to think twice.

After a violent flick of his sleeve, he said with a black look, "Third Brother, since you said so, I won't meddle in your business."

After finishing his words, he ignored Chu Liuchen and strode away with a straight face.

Chu Liuchen watched him leave with a smile and turned around, ready to go. Then, he saw Chu Liuxin still behind him.

"What's the matter, Fourth Brother?"

"I... Nothing!" Chu Liuxin stammered, stepped aside, and let Chu Liuchen go first.

Chu Liuchen glanced at him carelessly. Then, he turned around and went to the Empress Dowager's Palace of Benevolent Peace. His Imperial Grandmother was sick, so he had to see her before returning to his mansion.

Shao Wanru told him he didn't have to rush back to the mansion today. The Marquis Xing's Mansion would send someone to visit her. It should be Zhao Xiran, the Eldest Young Madam. So, if he returned early, he would have nothing to do.

Chu Liuxin watched Chu Liuchen leave, pursed his thin lips tightly, and slowly lowered his head. He was not supposed to ask how she was. It was best to remain silent about it because he lost the right to ask if she was safe long ago.

Shao Wanru had become his sister-in-law, no longer a single woman. Even if he fell in love with her first, she married his Third Brother, not him!

“Your Highness, shall we go back to the mansion?” Seeing his master standing in a daze, Eunuch Liu reminded him carefully.

Chu Liuxin vigorously took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. Once again, he slipped into low spirits and said weakly, “Go back to my mansion!”

“Your Highness, but Consort Ming asked you to go to her palace after the court,” Eunuch Liu reminded.

Chu Liuxin waved his hand and said, “No, let’s go back home!”

Of course, he knew what his mother had in mind — she wanted him to marry someone beneficial to him. What did she mean by that? His mother, able to accept reality as it was, was still urging him to fight for the throne.

But he didn’t want that!

He missed the woman he cared about the most. Worse still, she knew such an unbearable scene. What else could he fight for? It was better to spend this life as an idle prince. There was no need to sink deeper and deeper into the mire.

Overflowed with pain and sadness, he was near to tears. However, he struggled to hold up his head, fighting back the tears in his eyes. She was seriously injured, yet he couldn’t ask about her condition or visit her.

At present, he held no unrealistic expectations and just worried about her safety.

When Shao Wanru married his Third Brother, he thought she could live an easy life even though Prince Chen could never ascend to the throne. Unfortunately, that seemed not to be the case. His Third Brother was sent to the heart of the struggle for ultimate power. What should she do?

“She is a girl even younger than me. How can she stand such significant things? If... if it were me, she wouldn’t fall into such a dilemma, would she?”

Chu Liuxin couldn’t help breathing heavily, and his eyes gradually lit up. Since the incident related to Shao Yanru, it was the first time that his expression had changed. He no longer looked dejected, as if he had lost all interest in life. “So, am I still useful?”

He composed himself and said with a trace of firmness in his eyes, “Let’s go. I’ll go to see my mother!”

After saying that, he strode to Consort Ming’s palace. At first, Eunuch Liu was stunned. But when he saw that his master looked much better, he was so excited that the rims of his eyes turned red. This was the first time that his master had shown such an expression. This was really... great. As Chu Liuxin’s trusted servant, how could he not understand his master?

"Your Highness, wait for me!" Eunuch Liu wiped away the tears in his eyes and chased after him.

Anyway, at least his master's spirits began to flourish, which was great...

What had happened in the imperial court had little to do with Shao Wanru, who was still recuperating.

Mingqiu Nun and Doctor Qi worked together and prepared the medicine for her. It was highly potent. In the past few days, she was okay and recovering fast.

When she cut herself, she knew how far to go and when to stop. Her wound looked scary, but she was not as badly injured as she appeared. These days, she had let Chu Liuchen handle her things, so she had nothing to do and felt carefree and content.

Yesterday, Zhao Xiran sent someone to ask if she could come to visit her and see her condition.

Before Chu Liuchen returned to the Prince Chen's Mansion, its gate had been heavily guarded. Even the people from the Marquis Xing's Mansion were not allowed to enter. This time, Rui'an Great Elder Princess came over to protect Shao Wanru in person. In the past, even Zhao Xiran had been shut out.

Shao Wanru had almost recovered, so she just needed to go on taking good care of herself. Thus, she agreed to Zhao Xiran's request and invited her to come today.

Zhao Xiran was not the only one who came. There were actually Shao Caihuan and Zhao Xiqiong, Zhao Xiran's younger sister.

The group was led to Shao Wanru's courtyard, and Shao Wanru greeted them. After exchanging salutes, the guests and the host took their designated seats.

"Your Highness, are you feeling better?" Zhao Xiran looked at Shao Wanru with concern and asked, "I've always wanted to pay a visit but was unavoidably delayed because of my husband's matter."

...

In fact, she had been turned down by the Prince Chen's Mansion. By saying so, she preserved the dignity of both mansions. After all, it wasn't decent for the Prince Chen's Mansion to shut out visitors from Princess Chen's parents' home.

"I'm fine. Is my brother in better health?" Shao Wanru asked with a smile.

"He is much better. Now, he just needs to rest and build up his strength. He will take the imperial exam three years later. It's not that bad for him to calm down and study hard in the study!" Zhao Xiran said, smiling bitterly.

She could only say it this way. The conflict with Infanta Yuan'an was left unsettled. They had wanted Shao Wanru to stand up for them, but Shao Wanru had an accident. At this time, they couldn't force Shao Wanru to take up this matter.

Zhao Xiran, sensible enough, never brought up this matter again.

"Does my brother want to take the imperial exam?" Shao Wanru raised her watery eyes and asked with a smile, "Why haven't I heard him mention it?"

Shao Hua'an enjoyed a good reputation and was said to be talented. Nevertheless, the Marquis Xing's Mansion had never intended to let him take the imperial exam. They had been waiting for him to inherit the title of nobility of the Marquis Xing's Mansion. By taking this chance, he could achieve amazing success.

With his brilliance, Shao Hua'an could easily win the Emperor's appreciation. In her previous life, Shao Hua'an had done this.

It was true that most people took the imperial examination to become an official. However, descendants of aristocratic families would usually inherit the noble title before striving for greater ambition. In particular, for people like Shao Hua'an, who could inherit the noble title, it was an easier way to stand out.

Many of the sons of aristocratic families were good for nothing, but a few weren't. If Shao Hua'an took this path, he would win recognition from the Emperor more quickly, and his career as an official would be smoother!

"When a man passes the imperial exam, he can get a broader platform to realize his aspirations!" Zhao Xiran explained. Then, to make her words more credible, she added, "My father passed the imperial exam and eventually earned his current position."

...

Indeed, Minister Zhao started his official career through the imperial examination. The Zhao family was also an aristocratic family. But since Minister Zhao was not the legitimate eldest son, he had no right to inherit the title of nobility. In this case, he threw himself wholeheartedly into studying. Fortunately, Minister Zhao had been brilliant since he was a child, and his official career had been smooth after he succeeded in the examination. Now, he was more outstanding than his Eldest Brother, who had inherited the title of nobility.

This was an inspirational success story.

Zhao Xiran mentioned this to show Shao Hua'an's determination and that her husband had no intention of competing for the heir of a duke with Shao Yuanhao.

"It's a good choice for Eldest Brother to take the imperial examination. If he needs anything, tell me. Our mansion may have it!"

Shao Wanru said gently, remaining calm and collected.

"That's great. The Marquis Xing's Mansion doesn't have many books, but the Prince Chen's Mansion might have the books we need. At that time, I may have to trouble you, Your Highness!" Zhao Xiran got up to thank Shao Wanru and bowed deeply to her.

Shao Wanru hurriedly asked Yujie to stop her and said, "Sister Zhao, you are too polite. It's not a big deal."

Chapter 1118 Help, A Mistress Will Move into the Mansion

"Your Highness, it's great that... you can help us at this time. The other will know... our mansions are still in a good relationship..." Zhao Xiran stood straight with Yujie's help, and the rims of her eyes suddenly turned red.

"Sister, don't be sad!" Zhao Xiqiong also stood up in a hurry, took her hand on the other side, and comforted her in a low voice.

Shao Wanru knitted her delicate eyebrows, slightly raising her liquid eyes. "Was there anyone gossiping like that?"

"No... no one said that. I thought so..." Zhao Xiran realized she had lost her composure. Hastily, she turned her head away and wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes with a handkerchief. She shook her head, forced a smile, and said, "Your Highness, I was impolite, and I do beg your pardon. It has been cold and cheerless in our mansion recently, so I could barely suppress my emotion!"

The inner court of the Marquis Xing's Mansion was indeed very desolate at the moment. Old Madam was not there, and Madam Jiang was locked up. Only Zhao Xiran and the mother and daughter of the third branch were there, but Third Madam had always stayed aloof from the affairs in the mansion. So, unlike before, the mansion indeed lacked a lively atmosphere.

"Your Highness..." Zhao Xiqiong was about to speak but restrained the words which sprang to her lips.

"Second Miss Zhao, what's the matter?" Shao Wanru looked at Zhao Xiqiong with interest. Compared with Zhao Xiran, Zhao Xiqiong was more pretty and charming. When looking at others with her beautiful eyes, she appeared a little lovingly pathetic, but it wasn't obvious. So, others wouldn't think she was charming people on purpose.

By holding herself slightly aloof, she kept others at arm's length. This kind of seductive look was the most subtle and attractive.

"Second Sister!" Zhao Xiran shouted angrily and stopped Zhao Xiqiong with a severe look.

Zhao Xiqiong hummed unwillingly and glanced at her sister. At last, she didn't say anything but lowered her head. "Nothing serious. I want to go out for a walk. Is that okay?"

All the people present were from the Marquis Xing's Mansion. Although Zhao Xiqiong was Zhao Xiran's younger sister, she was indeed an outsider here. It was sensible for her to go for a walk and let them chat more freely.

Shao Wanru knew this was not what she had tried to say. But since Zhao Xiqiong chose not to say it, she didn't want to force her. She nodded at once and said, "Qu Le, take Second Miss Zhao to the garden for a walk!"

Qu Le answered, bowed to Zhao Xiqiong, and left with her.

"Sister Zhao, if you have any difficulties, you can tell me!" Shao Wanru looked at Zhao Xiran, who was sitting down again, and said softly.

"Er... Actually..." Zhao Xiran paused and seemed a little hesitant. She looked up at Shao Wanru with an uneasy look in her eyes.

"Please go ahead, Sister Zhao!" Shao Wanru didn't push her to say it and just added.

Zhao Xiran composed herself and raised her head again as if she had made up her mind. "Your Highness, I can tell you this matter... My father-in-law, he... he wants to marry someone..."

Finally, Zhao Xiran said it, and her face flamed with embarrassment. After all, she was talking about Shao Jing's personal affairs. As his daughter-in-law, she shouldn't say such things.

"Get married?" Shao Wanru asked in confusion.

Since Zhao Xiran had made a start, it was not so difficult for her to say the following words. Zhao Xiran pinched her handkerchief and said, "I heard... I heard that the woman has been with him for a long time... He said there was no elder in the mansion, and I was a daughter-in-law too young to be thoughtful enough. Anyway, he insisted on bringing that woman into the mansion, and... they have a daughter..."

"That woman called E'niang?" Shao Wanru immediately thought of that woman whom she had forgotten about. Last time, she even came to the Prince Chen's Mansion, exclaiming that she knew something important about her parents. This woman was not ordinary.

"Usually, this kind of thing should be handled by my mother-in-law or Old Madam, but now my mother-in-law... And Old Madam can't manage these affairs for the time being... I really don't know what to do. I just want to discuss it with you, but I'm afraid it's inappropriate." Zhao Xiran lowered her head and finished her words in a determined burst of energy.

It was a tough job for her. Her father-in-law had kept a mistress and wanted to take her into the mansion. What a shameful thing. Although the Marquis Xing's Mansion was Shao Wanru's parents' home, Zhao Xiran still felt very uncomfortable when she talked to her about this.

Upon entering the door, Shao Caihuan sat there with her head down. At this time, she slightly raised her head and glanced at Zhao Xiran — she was surprised to hear this news about the second branch.

"Have you reported it to Old Madam?" Shao Wanru asked, not batting an eyelid.

"According to my father-in-law, Old Madam lived her secluded life in the nunnery, so it was improper to disturb her. He said it was not a big deal and asked me to prepare a feast of two tables to celebrate it. And... And he said that you had met that woman... It could be said that you had agreed to their marriage long ago!" Zhao Xiran moved uneasily, and her face turned scarlet with embarrassment.

Given the situation, Zhao Xiran didn't know whether to object or agree. Even if she thought she was smart, she had never heard of such a thing. As a daughter-in-law, what could she say?

In particular, Shao Hua'an had no objection to this.

But how could a daughter-in-law conduct such a ceremony? Old Madam and Zhao Xiran's mother-in-law were still alive, so Zhao Xiran was not supposed to be in charge of this matter, no matter what.

Shao Wanru had met that woman, but did it mean she agreed to this marriage? Shao Wanru couldn't help sneering in her heart. Shao Jing was determined to make her the matchmaker. Over time, he might assert that she had found a woman for him. Ever since Chu Liuchen was recommended as the crown princess in the imperial court, all the civilian and military officers were watching the Prince Chen's

Mansion closely. If such a rumor was spread out at this time, wouldn't these officers send memorials to the throne and criticize Chu Liuchen?

As Shao Jing's daughter-in-law, Zhao Xiran had no right to interfere with his affairs. But as his niece, did she have the right to do so?

Evidently, Shao Jing intended to shift the blame onto her and make her the target of others. It seemed he indeed had quite a deep affection for E'niang.

However, was he such a man? Over the years, the mother and daughter had been wandering outside. If he loved her genuinely, how could he let this happen?

In any case, even an illegitimate daughter of the Marquis Xing's Mansion stood a higher chance of marrying into a prominent family than an ordinary woman. Shao Wanru heard that the daughter had become an adult. Yet, she chose to return to her original family at this time. Inevitably, others would talk about her sordid past if she wanted to get married. So, for the daughter, a good marriage was hard to get.

If they got back earlier, she would be carefully cultivated as other noble Misses for some time. Then, fewer people would gossip about her, and it would be easier for her to marry into a distinguished family.

"Besides, my father-in-law meant... she would marry him as a secondary legal wife..." Zhao Xiran murmured.

This time, even Shao Caihuan also raised her head and looked at Zhao Xiran in astonishment, thinking that her Second Uncle must be crazy. "How can the woman become a secondary legal wife so easily? In particular, she has been a mistress kept outside the mansion for many years. She must not be a decent woman from a good family. So, how can she become a secondary legal wife?"

"How could Second Uncle dare to say that?"

Shao Wanru took a deep breath and said slowly, "Go and invite Old Madam to go back to the mansion!"

"Wha... what?" Zhao Xiran asked in great surprise.

"Ask Old Madam to return home!" Shao Wanru said with certainty. No matter what intolerable things Shao Jing wanted to do, Old Madam was the only one who could suppress him on the surface.

But if Old Madam agreed to it, this matter would seem quite suspicious!

She decided to sound out Old Madam's and Shao Jing's attitudes.

How could she not take revenge on her parents? Recently Chu Liuchen was in charge of the affairs in the mansion, so she was free and could investigate further.

"But... But Old Madam is... According to the Empress Dowager..." Zhao Xiran stammered. Old Madam certainly didn't go to the Yuhui Nunnery of her own accord. How could it be so easy for her to come back now?

"Tomorrow, I'll see the Empress Dowager in the Palace and talk about it. If Her Majesty agrees, I'll send someone to inform you. Go and get Old Madam back right away. Without Old Madam in the mansion, it won't be easy for you to make any decision!" Shao Wanru had an idea in her mind.

The Empress Dowager didn't punish Old Madam publicly, but she had to inform the Empress Dowager of the situation. Though the Empress Dowager might not care much about it, she had to tell her this matter. Otherwise, others might use it against them.

"Will Her Majesty agree?" Zhao Xiran asked, looking at Shao Wanru. In her mind, it was also the best way, but she was still a little worried.

She didn't hold out much hope for Madam Jiang's return. Because of the old grudges between Shao Wanru and her, Zhao Xiran would never mention her. Besides, she didn't want Madam Jiang to come out either. She just wanted her to be locked up forever as the legal wife. In this way, Shao Hua'an could at least ensure his position as the eldest legitimate son.

"I think so. Just wait for my message tomorrow!" Shao Wanru nodded and said.

"Thank you, Your Highness. If it weren't for you... I wouldn't know what to do. This matter is not up to me!" Zhao Xiran breathed a sigh of relief and said to Shao Wanru gratefully.

No matter how Old Madam dealt with this matter when she came back, it would have nothing to do with Zhao Xiran. No one would speak ill of her.

"Sister Zhao, don't mention it. The Marquis Xing's Mansion is my parents' home. How could I take no notice of your difficulties?" Shao Wanru answered softly with a smile.

"Fifth Sister, I... I..." Shao Caihuan finally opened her mouth. This was the first time she had spoken since she entered the door. She looked very hesitant and uneasy, flushing red in the face. She seemed to have something to say but couldn't say it at the moment.

...

"Third Sister, what's the matter?" Shao Wanru raised her eyes and asked.

"I... I'm fine, but my mother wanted to know when you would return to our mansion. She said that you hadn't been back for a long time." Shao Caihuan said with some difficulty but no longer stuttered. But it shouldn't be what she wanted to say in the first place.

At present, in the inner court of the Marquis Xing's Mansion, Third Madam was the only elder. However, as the second branch was between them, and the third branch had always followed the second branch, they were not close to Shao Wanru.

"When Old Madam comes back, I will go back to have a look!" Shao Wanru gently held her injured arm and said with a smile.

"Okay... Then... then let's talk about it when you're back!" Shao Caihuan lowered her head again, bit her lip, and hid the anxious look in her eyes.

Zhao Xiran looked at her in surprise. When she was about to go out, Third Madam brought Shao Caihuan to her, saying that she could accompany her to visit Princess Chen in the Prince Chen's Mansion. Now, there seemed to be something.

"Did something happen to the third branch?" Zhao Xiran had been keeping an eye on Marquis Xing, so she barely learned about the third branch's business. After thinking about it for a while, she believed nothing serious had happened. They merely wanted to invite Shao Wanru back to improve the relationship, didn't they?

Princess Chen became increasingly important. There were a lot of disputes in the imperial court. Her father told her that Prince Chen had a reason to compete for the throne openly.

In a great hurry, Nanny Yu walked in and whispered in Shao Wanru's ear. Shao Wanru abruptly raised her head, looked at Zhao Xiran calmly, and nodded.

The sudden glance struck fear into Zhao Xiran's heart. Hurriedly, she lowered her head, feeling troubled and uneasy!

Chapter 1119 Warning, Fifth Sister Will Not Like It

Nanny Yu glanced at Zhao Xiran and hurried out.

This was just a small episode. It seemed that no one took it seriously, and they continued to talk for a while. Zhao Xiqiong came in and sat back in her seat beside Zhao Xiran. Holding her handkerchief, she lowered her head and blushed slightly.

Shao Wanru remained unperturbed as her beautiful, penetrating eyes flicked across Zhao Xiqiong's pink cheeks.

It was getting late, so Zhao Xiran and Shao Caihuan stood up and said goodbye. Zhao Xiqiong was the slowest to respond. When they rose to bid Shao Wanru farewell, she finally noticed that her sister had pulled her just now. Hurriedly, she stood up as well.

Shao Wanru asked Yujie to see them off.

Only when they left did Shao Wanru look back at Qu Le.

"My Lady, I didn't mean to take Second Miss Zhao there. She heard the bamboo forest in our mansion was good, so she insisted on me taking her there. At that time, I thought His Highness wouldn't come back so early!" Qu Le knelt with a plop and explained anxiously.

"Get up and talk!" Shao Wanru nodded and said unblinkingly.

Qu Le stood up as she was told. With her hands folded in front of her chest, she said with innocence, "I took Second Miss Zhao to see the bamboo forest in our mansion. Then, she said there were a few black bamboos from Huaguang Temple inside. I took her there, but I didn't expect to meet His Highness in that place. My Lady, I didn't take her there on purpose!"

There was a bamboo forest in the Prince Chen's Mansion. It was not big, but it happened to be very close to Chu Liuchen's study — it was right behind the courtyard of the study. They had gotten a few

purple bamboos from Huaguang Temple and planted them there. Over time, they had grown into a small forest, making a pretty sight of the Prince Chen's Mansion.

It hadn't been long since these purple bamboos were moved into the mansion. Three years ago, Shao Wanru took a fancy to the purple bamboos of Huaguang Temple. But because there were only a few bamboos in the beginning, the Prince Chen's Mansion took good care of them. Thus, though it had only been three years, the bamboo forest in the Prince Chen's Mansion became by no means inferior to that of Huaguang Temple. It was just that they were not as old as the purple bamboos of Huaguang Temple. As a result, they were not so solid when they were used to make some items.

But at least these items looked equally outstanding.

Because of his poor health, Chu Liuchen seldom met outsiders. Thus, not many people knew about this bamboo forest in the Prince Chen's Mansion. So, how could Zhao Xiqiong happen to hear others mention it?

Zhao Xiqiong's sudden visit was a little strange, but the reason seemed to have come to light.

"What did Second Miss Zhao say to Prince Chen?" Shao Wanru asked with a smile.

"She just bowed to him. Before she could say anything, His Highness walked away!" Qu Le thought for a moment and answered. At that time, she felt very relieved. When Second Miss Zhao saw Prince Chen, she didn't avoid him but went up to make a bow. After that, Qu Le, who had nothing against her personally, became highly critical of her.

Prince Chen had a superior status, but she didn't have to walk over and give a bow. A sideways salute from a distance was enough. After all, the two of them didn't meet head-on.

When Qu Le noticed her unusual move, she asked the young servant girl beside her to tell Nanny Yu about it. Thus, Princess Chen could know what had happened in time.

"Later on, you came back?" asked Shao Wanru.

"Prince Chen just took one look at her and walked past her. However, she blushed and stayed in the bamboo forest for a long time before coming back with me," Qu Le reported.

It didn't seem a big deal: a female relative accidentally ran across Prince Chen. Since they didn't exchange a word, it was nothing serious. Nevertheless, Qu Le was vigilant and felt she shouldn't have brought Second Miss Zhao there today.

Qu Le couldn't forget Second Miss Zhao's shy and lovely look. Prince Chen only cast a glance at her, yet she was instantly filled with tenderness and charm.

It could be seen that she held an ambitious idea. Even if it was a spur-of-the-moment decision, it had crossed her mind.

"If any other visitors ask to see the garden next time, show them the inner court!" Shao Wanru had already understood and ordered.

A deep look flashed across her watery eyes. Such a thing had never happened before. It was because of Chu Liuchen's poor health and his embarrassing identity. But now, these disadvantages disappeared.

More than that, he might achieve amazing success with one start. So, some people could no longer sit still.

Ridiculous! Even a Prime Minister's legitimate second daughter fancied herself to be Prince Chen's consort. Of course, Shao Wanru believed they were more interested in replacing her as Princess Chen.

"Yes, Your Highness, I understand!" Yujie nodded and said softly, "Your Highness, I think Second Miss Zhao... looks a little bit like you!"

"Why do you say that?" Shao Wanru raised her sparkling eyes and asked with great interest.

"That's how I feel, but I don't have any specific reasons. I just think Second Miss Zhao is beautiful and a little charming. She has a temperament similar to yours," Qu Le said after thinking for a while. She couldn't describe this feeling. It was not because of their looks. Actually, Second Miss Zhao's features had nothing in common with Princess Chen's. But somehow, Qu Le felt they were the same kind of people.

It was just that her master was much more gorgeous than Second Miss Zhao.

Shao Wanru understood. With a smile, she picked up the teacup at hand, took a sip, and slowly put it down. So, Zhao Xiqiong was a woman like her. They thought Chu Liuchen liked this kind of woman, so they found a girl similar to Shao Wanru to sound Chu Liuchen out.

Second Miss Zhao was probably the first one making this attempt but definitely not the last one.

Those who had looked down on Chu Liuchen in the past might scramble for him like a swarm of bees. In particular, Chu Liuchen had such an impressive bearing. Thus, Shao Wanru believed many Young Madams would have the same idea as Zhao Xiqiong.

In the Prince Chen's Mansion, she could guard against them. But when Chu Liuchen was outside, it was hard for her to prevent these ladies from doing anything.

Some had a liking for the power of the Prince Chen's Mansion, some believed it had a promising future, and some took a fancy to Chu Liuchen. A handsome and elegant young man like him could easily win the hearts of many Young Misses. Even in the past, many Misses were more than willing to throw themselves at him, not to mention that Chu Liuchen's original shortcomings no longer existed now!

"You should pay more attention to it in the future. Don't take any outsiders to His Highness's place, especially female family members!" Shao Wanru's eyes were full of glistening tenderness, and there was a trace of understanding in her clear eyes. At this time, she couldn't let anyone impede Chu Liuchen.

"The Minister Zhao's Mansion, huh? Both daughters of Minister Zhao are not easy to deal with; what does Minister Zhao really want? It seemed to have something to do with the Marquis Xing's Mansion. Well, I'm looking forward to it..."

There was only one carriage from the Marquis Xing's Mansion. Zhao Xiran, Zhao Xiqiong, and Shao Caihuan got into it.

The spacious carriage had enough space for three of them.

Color hadn't yet faded from Zhao Xiqiong's cheeks. She looked at Shao Caihuan and wanted to talk to Zhao Xiran, but it was not convenient. So, she could only twist the handkerchief in her hand and lower his head.

The exceedingly handsome face still lingered in her mind, and her fingers couldn't help twitching. How could anyone have such an attractive appearance? Even though he just glanced at her, she flushed to her ears, and her heart raced. This man was Prince Chen. How could Prince Chen be so outstanding?

If she had known this, she would have agreed to marry Prince Chen anyway.

In fact, Minister Zhao had gotten his eye on Prince Chen at the very beginning and had mentioned him to Zhao Xiqiong. He said that if she agreed, he would find someone to ask for the marriage before the Empress Dowager.

At that time, Zhao Xiqiong refused without hesitation, telling him that Prince Chen was said to be a dying, sick man. If she married Prince Chen, she would become a widow. In tears, she blamed Minister Zhao for not caring about her.

However, Prince Chen had recovered, so she was a little tempted. She followed Minister Zhao's advice and went to see Prince Chen in his mansion. Unexpectedly, Prince Chen was such a striking and imposing man. With his refined and elegant image as a gentleman, he was more outstanding than any man she had ever seen.

Back then, Prince Chen, as appealing as superior precious jade, merely glanced at her coldly and walked past her. Even though he turned a blind eye to her, Zhao Xiqiong's heart was still thumping wildly.

If she could marry Prince Chen, she was even willing to be his consort!

She regretted her previous decision. If she had seen Prince Chen and agreed with her father, would she have become Princess Chen? She heard that Prince Chen cherished Princess Chen. If she hadn't believed the rumors, she would have been the woman enjoying his love now. At this time, she was beside herself with regret.

Her heart was filled with unspoken words, but she couldn't say anything to Zhao Xiran when Shao Caihuan was with them. Helplessly, she could only refrain from speaking for the time being.

"Fifth Sister won't like it!" In the quiet carriage, Shao Caihuan suddenly began to talk.

Abruptly, Zhao Xiqiong looked up at Shao Caihuan, and Zhao Xiran also frowned.

Shao Caihuan's eyes fell on Zhao Xiqiong's blushing face, and she continued, "Fifth Sister won't be happy about it. If she is upset, Prince Chen will be unhappy!"

"Third Miss Shao, what do you mean?" Zhao Xiqiong flushed crimson from her face to her neck, feeling ashamed and annoyed when she had been seen through.

"What do I mean? Second Miss Zhao, you can pretend that it doesn't matter, as long as Fifth Sister is okay with it. Just keep it in mind!" Shao Caihuan glanced at her a few times in silence. Under her gaze, Zhao Xiqiong almost lowered her head. But the next moment, she stared at Shao Caihuan again with an unfriendly look and said, "Third Miss Shao, you can eat as much as you want, but you can't talk nonsense!"

...

"You're smart, but don't think others are stupid." Shao Caihuan said with a sarcastic smile. She was pretty familiar with Second Miss Zhao's behavior because she had also been like this.

"Third Sister, you've gone too far." Seeing the two of them glaring at each other, Zhao Xiran had to interrupt.

"Sister Zhao, if you think she did the right thing, I have nothing to say!" Shao Caihuan looked at Zhao Xiran, curving up her lips coldly. Since she was released, she had become increasingly withdrawn. On the way here, she barely said anything to Zhao Xiran. But now, she had talked a lot.

Shao Caihuan felt she had done her best for Zhao Xiran, her sister-in-law. If Zhao Xiran couldn't stand listening to it, she could do nothing about it. Since she and Zhao Xiran were in the same mansion, she had warned Zhao Xiqiong for her.

It was easy to guess what Zhao Xiqiong was thinking. She should have met Prince Chen, so she returned with a red face and looked shy while biting her lip. Unfortunately, even before she came back, Fifth Sister had already known it: Nanny Yu must have come in to report Zhao Xiqiong's affair.

Yet, Zhao Xiqiong foolishly thought Fifth Sister knew nothing about it!

"Shao Caihuan, you..." Zhao Xiqiong got very unsettled and short-tempered at this time.

Chapter 1120 A Couple with Different Ideas

"Well, stop arguing!" Zhao Xiran scolded harshly, and her face fell. At this time, she was so preoccupied with anxiety that she had no mood to care about her sister's business.

When Zhao Xiqiong told her about it shyly, she felt it was a joke. How could Prince Chen fall for another woman so easily?

She had seen Prince Chen before. He was exceedingly handsome, but there was no place for any other women in his eyes. He seemed to be gentle and elegant, but his eyes looked emotionless. No matter whom he faced, he appeared like this. Only when he watched Shao Wanru would a trace of gentleness come into his eyes.

This kind of man was heartless.

When they arrived at the Prince Chen's Mansion, Zhao Xiran had warned Zhao Xiqiong about it. But Zhao Xiqiong suppressed her criticism, saying it was her father's idea. The Prince Chen's Mansion was very likely to flourish, so she was asked to leave a good impression on Prince Chen before others could do anything.

However, Zhao Xiqiong didn't tell Zhao Xiran that Minister Zhao felt she had a temperament quite similar to Princess Chen.

They were all the kind of woman who looked indifferent but charming. Also, Madam of Minister Zhao said if Prince Chen favored this kind of woman, her daughter could also win his heart!

At first, she just listened to Minister Zhao's suggestion, thinking she might as well take a look at Prince Chen. She could refuse her father if she didn't like him. As the legitimate daughter of the Minister Zhao's Mansion, how could she be a consort? But she didn't expect to fall in love with Prince Chen at first glance.

Seeing that Zhao Xiran was angry, Zhao Xiqiong lowered her head. Though she ignored Zhao Xiran and Shao Caihuan, she was still very enthusiastic about Prince Chen in her heart.

According to her father, Prince Chen liked women that looked like her. Not only Prince Chen but also many men wanted this type of woman. In this case, Zhao Xiqiong thought she still had a lot of opportunities.

Since Prince Chen had stood out conspicuously, Princess Chen couldn't be the only hostess in the inner court of Prince Chen's Mansion. With her father's support, she could marry him effortlessly if she was willing to be a consort. Moreover, she was good-looking. Although she was not as pretty as Princess Chen, there was one thing that Princess Chen could not compare with her.

Princess Chen was younger than her. She heard that Princess Chen was still underage and a little immature, but Zhao Xiqiong was different.

Zhao Xiqiong didn't intend to go to the Pageant, so she was absent under a plea of illness. Now she regretted it very much. If she had participated in the Pageant, Shao Wanru wouldn't have gotten the chance to marry Prince Chen!

She was the first one to think about Prince Chen. Her father chose Prince Chen long ago, but she refused this marriage.

At present, she could only listen to her father's advice and marry into the Prince Chen's Mansion as a consort. She would take her time with her ambition. Better than Princess Chen, she was supported by her father, a Prime Minister. So, Zhao Xiqiong believed she would be the winner in the end.

After weighing the pros and cons in her heart, she became increasingly excited. Since her sister didn't help her, she would go back and talk to her father. After all, her father had such an idea in the beginning.

The three people in the carriage quieted down again. Each of them had some ideas of their own and remained silent without disturbing each other.

When they arrived at the Marquis Xing's Mansion, Zhao Xiqiong got out of the carriage and went straight to her carriage. Right away, she went straight to the Minister Zhao's Mansion, not wanting to stay in the Marquis Xing's Mansion for a moment longer.

Shao Caihuan went to the third branch to reply Third Madam, who had asked her to do something.

Zhao Xiran stood still and watched her sister-in-law and sister leave, wearing a worried frown with a bad feeling. At the moment, she couldn't control either Shao Caihuan or Zhao Xiqiong. After thinking for a while, she did not go back to her yard. Instead, she went to Shao Hua'an's study outside.

She couldn't make up her mind about something, so she had to ask Shao Hua'an about it. She always felt Shao Hua'an seemed to have hidden something from her.

Two young male servants were guarding the study. Seeing her coming over, one of them immediately went in to report. When she approached, the other servant sensitively stepped forward and bowed to her. The one, who went to report, came back and said, "Eldest Young Madam, Eldest Young Master invited you in!"

"What is your master doing?" Zhao Xiran casually asked.

"He is reading a book," the servant replied.

Zhao Xiran walked into the study. There, Shao Hua'an was behind the writing desk in the study, reclining on the couch. When he saw her coming in, he put down the book in his hand and said with a faint smile, "You visited Fifth Sister. How is she?"

His legs had not fully recovered yet, so it was better for him to lay back against the pillows to read. If he was tired, he could lie down to rest.

Zhao Xiran turned to the couch behind the desk and sat down. Looking at Shao Hua'an's pale face, she sighed in her heart and thought, "Dissatisfied with the reality?" Of course, she was. Anyway, Shao Hua'an was her husband. If she felt reluctant to face reality, so what? The Marquis Xing's Mansion had declined, no longer as prosperous as the Duke Xing's Mansion. Even when Infanta Yuan'an abused her power and bullied them, they couldn't devise any revenge plan.

And now, her husband even lost his position as the heir of a duke!

"She looks fine. She could get up and meet us. I think she should be okay. She was not in danger as the rumors had said." Zhao Xiran restrained many thoughts welling up in her mind and answered.

"After all, it was just hearsay, an unreliable source of information." Shao Hua'an gently comforted her. He reached out to hold Zhao Xiran's hand and looked at her affectionately. "You have suffered a lot these days. I've been a useless husband and put you to great inconvenience!"

"I... never feel wronged..." Zhao Xiran's eyes turned red, and she lowered her head. Even though she had a lot of plans in her mind, she still felt sad when she thought of the lost child in her belly. Involuntarily, her eyes fell on her belly again.

She could have seen a baby bump now if nothing had happened back then. After a few months, she could have given birth to her baby.

"I'm sorry. It's all my fault!" Seeing her eyes on her belly, Shao Hua'an knew she was thinking about the lost baby. He felt more and more tender and protective toward her. Putting forth some strength, he pulled her into his arms and patted her gently. "It's okay. It'll all blow over. Everything will be fine."

His father told him what had happened back then. At first, he wasn't the heir of a duke either, but he got it in the end. One step back today for two steps forward tomorrow.

When the time was right, all wishes would come true.

"Don't say that. It's not your fault. Today, Third Sister came with me. I was quite surprised. She seemed to have something to tell Fifth Sister, but it was not convenient for her to say it in front of me. Eventually, she could only ask Fifth Sister to come back, saying Third Aunt wants to see her."

Zhao Xiran quickly collected herself. She sat up, wiped the corners of her eyes with a handkerchief, and refreshed herself a little.

"Third Aunt wanted to see Fifth Sister?" Shao Hua'an frowned and asked. He couldn't figure out why Third Aunt would like to meet Shao Wanru. Even when Shao Wanru stayed in the mansion, the third branch had little contact with her. So, it was quite strange that she suddenly reached out to Shao Wanru. He should ask his father to investigate it later so as not to let the third branch ruin their plan.

"I think so. Third Sister has never shown up in public before. I felt a little strange when she volunteered to go with us this time," Zhao Xiran nodded and said.

Shao Caihuan kept a low profile now, more low-key than before. It was said that the third branch had been looking for a husband for her. It was unknown if her face had fully recovered. Since she came out of the Palace, her face had been covered with a veil. But it had been so long. Hadn't she recovered yet?

"You have to pay more attention to the third branch. Third Aunt used to be well-behaved, but now..." Speaking of this, Shao Hua'an paused for a moment, showing a trace of sadness on his face. He held Zhao Xiran tighter and said, "At this time, Third Uncle and Third Aunt may have some other thoughts."

When the Marquis Xing's Mansion was on the wane, the third branch might make other plans. It was acceptable for him as long as they didn't target his branch.

Initially, Shao Hua'an didn't care about the affairs of the third branch and was not close to his Third Uncle, who was a good-for-nothing in his eyes. But ever since his father had revealed some things to him, he viewed the others in a totally different way and couldn't help paying attention to some things.

His father was right — he had indeed been careless!

Perhaps, he was not the only one who was negligent. Both his mother and sister were careless. The cousin had just been found and come back. No one had thought she would cause so many things in his family.

If he had known this result, he would have acted in person instead of letting his mother and sister act blindly. They thought everything about the cousin could be settled within the inner court of the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

He was beginning to regret his carelessness. Since then, he would have to pay more attention to the affairs of his inner court. Unconsciously, Shao Hua'an's eyes darkened, but when he realized Zhao Xiran was still near him, he immediately regained his previous gentle look.

"I will watch Third Aunt and the two younger sisters closely. Today, Princess Chen asked me to invite Old Madam out of the Yuhui Nunnery. She said she would see Empress Dowager tomorrow and ask for her forgiveness. Then she told me to take Old Madam back." Zhao Xiran nodded in agreement and mentioned what had happened today.

Shao Hua'an, who was holding her hand, froze. Abruptly, he raised his head and cried out involuntarily, "What does she want to do?"

"Princess Chen said she didn't know that woman. No elder is in our mansion, and she thought it inappropriate. Thus, she wanted to ask Her Majesty for a favor. I also think grandma shouldn't stay in the Yuhui Nunnery all the time. Others will think we are unfilial juniors," said Zhao Xiran.

Shao Hua'an's face darkened with displeasure. He looked at Zhao Xiran suspiciously and said, "Father has made his decision. Grandmother can't stop him. You might as well treat that woman as an elder in the future. Anyway, she doesn't have a son. We can marry her daughter off and give her a dowry at most. It's not a big deal. You don't have to worry about that!"

"I don't care about that, but I was afraid you would and wanted to soothe you. Since our grandmother is not here, I'm really in a dilemma as a daughter-in-law. It seemed Fifth Sister wouldn't help me in this matter."

Zhao Xiran reacted quickly and said with a note of apology in her voice, "I'm useless and get you into trouble because of father!"

Shao Hua'an thought for a moment, and his face softened. With a smile, he added, "It's a tricky matter for you. Then, let's talk about it when my grandma comes back. She won't be happy to see the descendant of our mansion be left outside."

"Will father make that woman his secondary legal wife? If so, he will be laughed at by other mansions, won't he?" Zhao Xiran said, her arched eyebrows slightly creasing. In her opinion, it was ridiculous. It was good enough for a mistress to be a concubine in the mansion. How could she be a secondary legal wife? She couldn't be more shameless! No mansion would agree to this!

Everyone in the Marquis Xing's Mansion would feel humiliated when meeting outsiders, wouldn't they?

"I heard from my father that this woman had another identity. We are juniors. Let's wait for my grandmother and father to make the decision!" Shao Hua'an said casually.

A trace of doubt flashed across Zhao Xiran's eyes. "What magic identity could make others accept such a mistress as a secondary legal wife?"