

Medical Princess 1171

Chapter 1171 Is Secondary Consort Shao Dead?

The Emperor delivered another imperial edict to Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming. He asked Consort of Virtue to choose three noble ladies to marry into the Prince Zhou's Mansion with Prince Zhou's consort, who had been engaged to him.

That was to say, on Prince Zhou's wedding day, he would marry five ladies in total: one legal wife, two consorts, and two concubines.

On the wedding day, Prince Zhou could feel free to spend the wedding night with any bride. He didn't need to do everything according to the predetermined schedule: consorts and concubines should marry into the mansion one month after the legal wife moved to the mansion.

The legal wife, consorts, and concubines would marry together. It would be a crowning humiliation for the legal wife.

Later on, the royal family would even recognize the status of the eldest son of a concubine. The Emperor gave Infanta Yuan'an a hard slap in the face for what had happened. Even if Infanta Yuan'an was unconscious and her life seemed in danger, the Emperor punished her severely.

At the end of the Emperor's edict, he said if something serious happened to Infanta Yuan'an, Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming should pick up another noble lady from a prestigious family and let her marry into the Prince Zhou's Mansion. The lady must be quiet and virtuous. Anyone lack of manners with bad intentions would not be allowed to marry Prince Zhou, no matter how outstanding her appearance or family was.

The intent of these words was crystal clear — the Emperor stripped Infanta Yuan'an of her dignity. If Infanta Yuan'an died, so be it. They could choose another lady to be Princess Zhou. But even if she recovered, she would suffer in the following days.

Infanta Yuan'an would marry on the same day as those consorts and concubines, who were all selected noble ladies from eminent families. Their status might not be inferior to that of Infanta Yuan'an. If Prince Zhou favored any of them, Infanta Yuan'an would be degraded to an insignificant place, though she was the legal wife.

Since the Emperor issued such a decree, he must loathe Infanta Yuan'an.

Meanwhile, the Emperor appeased Zhang Qilan and Shao Wanru, rewarding them with many things. Even Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming gave them awards. Then they were sent back to their mansions.

Zhang Qilan and Shao Wanru, who were in safety despite the storm, were the last to leave. When coming out of the Consort of Virtue's place, Zhang Qilan looked at Shao Wanru. It seemed she wished to speak but stopped on a second thought.

Shao Wanru walked past her calmly with indifferent eyes. Ever since Zhang Qilan was obsessed with the idea of hurting her, they became enemies. It was meaningless to find out if it was a misunderstanding!

Shao Wanru was a loner by nature. Never would she waste a trace of affection on someone who had framed her.

The two of them met, passed by, and gradually drifted apart. They might have been fated to be together at a certain point. But once they missed the opportunity, they would draw further apart.

A palace maid walked past Shao Wanru in a hurry. It seemed she was going to report to the Consort of Virtue.

Shao Wanru stood still and turned to look at a place not far behind the palace maid — a familiar figure stood there with her hands down. Her eyes narrowed fractionally. “She is Mo Yan, Shao Yanru’s maid. Was it Shao Yanru?”

Not long after she returned to the mansion, Chu Liuchen came back. When he entered the door and saw Shao Wanru’s face, he asked worriedly, “How about I let Qi Jue check on your health?”

“I’m fine. I didn’t eat the pastries. Yujie pointed somewhere and made Zhang Qilan turn her head. By that chance, I put the poisonous pastry in my sleeves.” Shao Wanru had changed her clothes and explained with a smile. At that time, she had begun to suspect Zhang Qilan, so how could she eat the pastry she sent?

Though Shao Wanru knew some medicinal materials, she would not dare to try the poisonous pastry herself. Who knew what Zhang Qilan had put in the pastries? The fragrance of the pastries was so strong that she couldn’t distinguish different kinds of smells. Now she congratulated herself privately for not trying the pastry. Zhang Qilan’s drug powder was highly poisonous. Not only would it make her dizzy for a moment, but it might also impair her fertility.

When she came back, she asked Qi Jue to test it. She was unsure about this because Qi Jue said Doctor Qiu might have developed this medicine, and some details had not yet been confirmed.

This reminded Shao Wanru of Doctor Qiu. He worked for Shao Yanru first and had something to do with the Mansion of the Prime Minister. Then, when he served Prince Zhou, he even treated the wounds on Infanta Yuan’an’s face. After that, he entered the Palace, probably with some ulterior motives.

She spotted Moyan there just now. In Shao Wanru’s eyes, Mo Yan must be there for a reason.

“I’m going to change my clothes!” Nothing serious had happened to Shao Wanru. Seeing that she looked fine, Chu Liuchen said.

Shao Wanru raised her nose and got a sniff of the air. Abruptly, her face changed, and she stood up to pull Chu Liuchen’s robe, asking with deep concern, “Are you hurt?”

“How could it be? It’s not my blood but two palace maids’.” Since Shao Wanru looked so alarmed, Chu Liuchen knew he couldn’t hide it from her. Thus, he pulled a corner of his sleeve and explained with a smile.

There were bloodstains on his wide sleeves.

“Are you all right?”

“Nothing serious. Don’t worry. When I arrived at the palace gate, I saw a few people coming out. I was so angry that I asked someone to kill them,” Chu Liuchen said carelessly.

“Who did you kill?”

“Princess Yuyan’s two palace maids. Their blood splashed on Zhang Qilan’s imperial sedan chair, and she collapsed to the ground on the spot. She seemed so timid. How could she have the courage to plot against you?” Chu Liuchen said disdainfully with an icy voice.

Princess Yuyan passed out and was carried out of the Palace. Although Zhang Qilan was behind, she walked quickly. They almost reached the palace gate at the same time. However, Chu Liuchen did not return from the side door this time. Instead, he went to the palace gate and slayed two palace maids of Princess Yuyan on the spot. Zhang Qilan, who had just walked out of the palace sedan chair, was so scared that she crumpled down onto the ground.

“Your Highness, any imperial censor seeing this will lodge a complaint with His Majesty against you,” Shao Wanru said worriedly. Thinking that Chu Liuchen helped her vent her anger, she felt a touch of sweetness in her heart. However, she was still a little worried.

Of course, she didn’t believe he had met them by chance. How could they come across Chu Liuchen? He could never run into them at the palace gate if he intended to avoid them.

“What’s there to be afraid of? No one will mention it. Both Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou will be reluctant to embroil themselves in this matter. As for Chu Qing, he has no right to object at all.” Chu Liuchen’s lips curled up slightly. If he pursued this case further, Princess Yuyan would have to offer up her life as penance for her crime. Infanta Yuan’an would be severely punished. As for Zhang Qilan, she was also not innocent.

No one in the imperial court was willing to expose this matter.

Hearing his words, Shao Wanru breathed a sigh of relief. She pushed him into the room and helped him change into a pale pinkish-purple long robe. Then she took off his golden crown tied up high and casually put her hair up with a hair ribbon. After that, he felt much more relaxed and comfortable.

“What about Miss Qin?” Shao Wanru asked softly while tying the waistband for Chu Liuchen.

“Why bother your head about such trifles? She will give me everything. Don’t worry!” Chu Liuchen comforted Shao Wanru. After thinking for a while, he added, “You don’t have to worry about Consort Lan. If she looks for you, just show her some respect. But if she makes things difficult for you, put the blame on me and ignore her!”

“But she is an elder, after all!” Shao Wanru said tentatively.

Chu Liuchen gave a cold snort and said with a gloomy face, “You don’t have to worry about it. Leave her alone.”

He sounded neither happy nor angry. There was only a hint of aloofness in his words.

Shao Wanru reached out to hold his waist with distress and snuggled up in his arms. “I know what to do!”

Since Chu Liuchen didn't care, she didn't have to compromise out of consideration for the general interest. If Consort Lan was sincerely kind to them, she would not make things awkward for her. However, if Consort Lan wanted to plot something else that might threaten Chu Liuchen, Shao Wanru didn't mind getting rid of Qin Yiyan, who collected information for Consort Lan in their mansion.

It was not that she didn't dare to deal with Qin Yiyan, but she had to consider Chu Liuchen's feelings.

The Second Princess of the Xu State would marry Commandery Prince Qing. As the news came out, many people felt relieved. Princess Yuyan was going to marry Chu Qing, who had had an ambiguous relationship with her. She was supposed to marry Chu Qing in the first place.

However, some well-informed people revealed that Princess Yuyan wanted to marry Prince Yue. They had feelings for each other. Unfortunately, she and Commandery Prince Qing had been engaged to be married, and their relationship even got the blessing from Xu State King. Thus, she could not change her mind.

These words sounded reasonable, as if Princess Yuyan had no choice but to marry Commandery Prince Qing eventually.

In private, many people despised Princess Yuyan from the Xu State, regarding her as a promiscuous woman. She took a fancy to a prince while thinking about another prince. To the general public, she was shameless and degenerate to the extreme.

How could any woman be capable of doing such an immoral thing?

Later, it was said that the Second Princess of the Xu State would marry Commandery Prince Qing, but she would be demoted to a consort. Many people applauded the decision, which was a great satisfaction to them.

If not for her noble and high status, such a woman like her should have been drowned in a pig cage.

They secretly despised this Xu State princess.

Three more noble ladies were bestowed on Prince Zhou, who would marry into the Prince Zhou's Mansion together in a gorgeous way. This was a piece of surprising news to many people. After the shock, they curiously inquired about what had happened in the two foreign princesses' courtyard. That day, a large group entered the Palace before the banquet began.

They were three princes, a princess, two future princesses, and two foreign princesses.

...

After they entered the Palace, Princess Yuyan was punished. Also, Infanta Yuan'an was penalized. Needless to say, Infanta Yuan'an and Princess Yuyan must have done something seriously wrong together. However, they couldn't find out the details.

Later, at the palace gate, Prince Chen killed two palace maids in a towering rage and scared Prime Minister Zhang's daughter unconsciousness on the ground. Since it happened at the palace gate, many people had witnessed it, so it was impossible to keep it a secret.

As for this matter, many people secretly guessed what had happened. Under normal circumstances, Prime Minister Zhang and Prince Yue would not tolerate it, even if the Emperor did nothing to punish Prince Chen. However, no one impeached Prince Chen the next day. There must be another inside story behind this matter. Perhaps, Miss Zhang, who was about to become Princess Yue, was also involved. Anyway, the whole case looked muddled and unclear.

Female seniors and elders in many mansions like Zhang Qilan, who had always been kind and adorable. After this incident, even Zhang Qilan aroused many people's suspicion.

Whoever got involved in this kind of thing would fall on hard times.

However, no one doubted Prince Chen and Princess Chen. No matter how the others looked at this matter, the Prince Chen's Mansion was on the right side.

Another piece of news came from the Palace: Secondary Consort Shao died!

Many people were not surprised when hearing the news of her death, but some found it hard to believe. Shao Yanru had moved into the Palace not long ago. Though banished to the Cold Palace, she wouldn't have died in such a short time.

When Shao Wanru received the message about her death, she was also stunned. Yet, she felt things would not be so simple. In her previous life, Shao Yanru managed to hook up with Chu Liuyue even after she married into the Palace. So, how could she be so useless? Recently, misfortunes happened one after another in the Palace. The Empress was left out in the cold, and Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming were not in a fit and proper position to handle affairs in the Palace. Moreover, she was an unfavored concubine. After entering the Palace, she had only offended the Empress.

Consort Lan was high in the Emperor's favor, but she remained calm and peaceful. Only the Emperor would visit her place from time to time. Since guards were outside her door, no other imperial consorts could enter her residence. Then, who murdered Secondary Consort Shao?

Did she die of a sudden illness? But this sounded so unreal, like a joke...

Chapter 1172 Any Nun Coming to the Palace of Benevolent Peace?

"Did Shao Yanru die because of an acute disease?"

The moment Shao Wanru heard the news, she doubted it. How could she believe it? Who was Shao Yanru? How could a person like her die of an emergency?

Whether others believed it or not, she didn't.

In Shao Wanru's previous life, Shao Yanru had also entered the Palace as a favorite consort. Compared with the current situation, she had to face more enemies who were more brutal. Even so, she had enjoyed a comfortable and privileged life.

"Is it because of me that her fate changed?" Anyway, Shao Wanru did not believe this news.

"My Lady, His Highness asked if you were ready?" Yujie came in and reported. They were going to the Palace.

With a nod, Shao Wanru stood up. She had dressed up and waited for Chu Liuchen from the outer court.

Together, they entered the Palace through the side door, heading straight for Empress Dowager's Palace of Benevolent Peace.

Ever since the Empress Dowager fell ill, she had been in low spirits and didn't feel like accepting visitors usually.

They went in and bowed to the Empress Dowager. Today, the Empress Dowager seemed to be in good spirits. She sat in the main hall, twirling the Buddhist prayer beads in her hands in a calm state of mind.

After they finished saluting, the Empress Dowager told them to sit down and asked, "What happened that day? Why did Infanta Yuan'an get so seriously injured? It was just a banquet, wasn't it?"

Ruiping Great Elder Princess came to complain tearfully several times. Her sobs gave the Empress Dowager a headache. Since she didn't want to ask others about it, she specially called her grandson and granddaughter-in-law over to ask about it.

"Imperial Grandmother, Yuan'an harbored hostile intentions. With Princess Yuyan from the Xu State, she schemed against Prime Minister Zhang's daughter and my wife. Later, she and Princess Yuyan fell out and became enemies. She suffered the consequences of her misdeeds!" Chu Liuchen casually explained, "Uncle the Emperor also knows about it, so you don't have to worry about it."

Although she was the Emperor's biological mother, the Empress Dowager's power was mainly confined to the imperial harem. Since the Emperor had taken over this matter, the Empress Dowager should no longer intervene in it to avoid any conflicts with the Emperor.

The Empress Dowager also understood this point. Regarding this point, she thought she had done an excellent job. Even when she saw anything dissatisfactory, she would, at most, give some suggestions to her son in private. She was very clear about her son's character: he stubbornly adhered to his opinions and always went his way.

"I got it. So, that's the end of the matter!" The Empress Dowager didn't want to get involved in this matter. At the thought of it, she felt a headache and had an extremely low opinion of Princess Yuyan from the Xu State. "I heard Princess Yuyan from the Xu State is not a decent woman. It was a pity that Commandery Prince Qing started an intimate relationship with her early. Otherwise, it would be better for him to marry Princess Yutao!"

Although Infanta Yuan'an was not virtuous, she was well-behaved at least. The Empress Dowager felt she was damned unlucky to see the mess happen.

"I feel listless recently, and the Empress is in such a helpless situation... Only Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming assist me with affairs in the Palace. It isn't a long-term policy, after all. As for Consort Lan..." At this point, the Empress Dowager glanced at Chu Liuchen and held back the words that sprang to her lips.

"Imperial Grandmother, you don't like Consort Lan, do you?" Chu Liuchen asked bluntly without scruples.

Again, the Empress Dowager watched Chu Liuchen closely. Seeing his face as calm as usual, she sighed and said, "She is a wretched woman!"

"The pathetic people certainly have something to be despised."

"Chen'er, don't say that... At least you can't say that..." The Empress Dowager rebuked him in a low voice and reached out to press the space between her eyebrows for relaxation. Then, she said with a trace of tiredness, "I feel sorry for her. Because of me, she ended up like this... In this case, you shouldn't look down on her. She is always sincere with you. After all, she is your biological aunt!"

Shao Wanru's eyes fell on a stone brick in front of her. Her eyes became inexplicably deep. She sat aside in silence. Only her clenched hands showed that she was extremely uneasy.

Chu Liuchen disliked Consort Lan, not on the surface, but from the bottom of his heart.

"Consort Lan's business... It is the last dark secret in his heart and the last thing he wants to mention, right?"

She gently bit her cherry lips. Since she lowered her head slightly, she could not see his face. But when her eyes landed on the lower hem of his clothes, she felt pain as if a knife were piercing her heart.

Like her, Chu Liuchen was weakly linked with his parents by fate ties.

"Imperial Grandmother, let's not talk about her. I happen to have something to do in the front. Uncle the Emperor wanted to see me today. I'll go to the Imperial Study first and come back to accompany you later!" Chu Liuchen said. Obviously, he still kept an attitude of avoiding.

"Okay, go ahead!" The Empress Dowager sighed and nodded kindly.

She was his aunt connected by blood, but they were not in constant contact. Therefore, letting him care about Consort Lan quickly was not so easy.

The Empress Dowager asked Shao Wanru to send Chu Liuchen to the palace gate.

"Uncle the Emperor may have something to do with me today. You can go back first. Don't wait for me. You can also walk around and enjoy the scenery in the Palace. Don't get tired!" At the palace gate, Chu Liuchen turned to tell Shao Wanru with concern.

Shao Wanru reached out, grabbed his sleeve, and gently shook it with a charming look. Then, she put it down. "I know. Take good care of yourself."

Recently, the Imperial Study had not been peaceful. It was said that there had been disputes about the few princes occasionally.

"I know!" Chu Liuchen took the chance and grabbed Shao Wanru's hand, his handsome face all smiles. Softly, he pinched her small hand and put it down.

At this moment, they felt deeply connected by hearts, though neither expressed their feelings. In silence, Chu Liuchen had already understood what she wanted to say. Looking at her enchanting smile, his heart softened. He had felt gloomy when recalling past events, but now he felt much better.

When Chu Liuchen strode away and was out of her sight, Shao Wanru turned around. Suddenly, out of the corner of her eye, she saw a figure and frowned slightly, thinking of the prayer beads on the Empress Dowager's wrist.

She re-entered the hall where the Empress Dowager was reading the scripture. Seeing Shao Wanru coming over, she put down the scripture, and Nanny Wei gently put it aside.

"I'm sorry for what happened that day!" The Empress Dowager gently apologized after telling Shao Wanru to sit down.

They had punished a few people for the incident in the foreign princesses' mansion. However, considering the relationship between the two countries, they hadn't punished Princess Yuyan severely and duly.

Princess Yuyan was the chief plotter. Since she could stay alive and get married, it was unreasonable to harshly punish Infanta Yuan'an, an accomplice. Besides, her life was uncertain. No one knew if she could be saved.

"Her Majesty, I'm not aggrieved. Prince Chen is protecting me!" Shao Wanru said softly with a smile, her eyes crystal clear.

The Empress Dowager looked at her and found no resentment in her eyes. She liked Shao Wanru from the bottom of her heart. Patting her hand affectionately, she said, "Nanny Wei, bring me what I have prepared!"

"Yes, Her Majesty. I am quite ready!" Nanny Wei smiled and said. Then, she asked someone to fetch a brocade box from the side hall.

When four palace maids came forward, Nanny Wei stepped forward and opened the brocade boxes. Each was full of glittering jewelry.

"These... These are..." Shao Wanru said in great surprise. Her keen eyes had a good taste for treasures. Each piece of jewelry in these boxes was top-grade, and it was incredible that there were so many of them.

"Good kid, this is the reward for you. Ask someone to take them back later!" The Empress Dowager smiled with satisfaction. The more she looked at Shao Wanru, the more satisfied she was. In her eyes, she was worthy of her grandson. She was shocked and surprised when she saw so many precious jewels, but she did not look greedy. It could be seen that she was pure-hearted.

She was good by nature!

"Imperial Grandmother, there... there are too many..." Shao Wanru said, wondering why the Empress Dowager suddenly gave her several boxes of superb jewels. The Empress Dowager had given her a handsome reward in the past, but it was the first time she had received so many treasures.

"Prime Minister Zhang only has one daughter. She is as dearly as jewelry for her family and receives a large dowry. It is the same with Infanta Yuan'an. Ruiping Great Elder Princess has almost given her all her private property. Prince Yue is the biological son of Consort of Virtue, and Prince Zhou is the

biological son of the Empress. But Chen'er only has me. Since I dote on you, I can't let others outshine you."

The Empress Dowager sighed softly and patted Shao Wanru again, "This is my love for you. Take my gift!"

"Thank you, Imperial Grandmother!" Shao Wanru felt warm in her heart, and her eyes turned slightly red. At this time, in her eyes, the Empress Dowager looked much like Old Madam Qin. This kind of sincere love didn't need many words to express.

The Empress Dowager took pity on her because her dowry was not as much as the other two's. Prince Chen's Mansion had a weaker foundation, so she especially sent these things to her. She had got back many things, and her grandmother wanted to add a lot to her dowry. However, she refused to take most of these items and asked her grandmother to leave them to Hao'er. She believed she could live a good life by herself.

The Empress Dowager's reward was her kindness to Chu Liuchen and her. At this moment, she was more like an old lady who cared about her grandson.

...

"Well, you can go back now. I'm tired. Before leaving the palace, go to see Consort of Virtue. She has something to talk to you about!" The Empress Dowager yawned and gave an order in a low voice, looking tired out.

"Yes. Are you feeling unwell?" Shao Wanru stood up and observed the Empress Dowager's face. "She looks fine, but after sitting for a while, she is in low spirits. Is it because she becomes much weaker after recovering from her illness?"

"I'm okay. I just feel a little fatigue." The Empress Dowager said, pinching the prayer beads in her hands and twirling them.

"Imperial Grandmother, I'm leaving now!" Seeing the Empress Dowager yawn again, Shao Wanru said. Maybe she was worn out. Shao Wanru had wanted to tell her many things, but it seemed she could only do it next time.

Nanny Wei sent Shao Wanru to the palace gate and stopped there with a beaming face. Since what had happened, Nanny Wei had been smiling gently at Shao Wanru as if there was no grudge between them at all.

"Nanny Wei, did Her Majesty let the nun come from the Buddha Hall to the Palace of Benevolent Peace?" Shao Wanru stood still and asked calmly. Just now, she saw a woman in the nun's gray clothes but didn't see her face. Thus, she had no idea if the woman was one of the nuns she was familiar with.

"That's right. The Empress Dowager invited one of them to come over and talk about the Buddha scriptures for a while. She was here when you came with His Highness." Nanny Wei nodded and said with a smile, secretly suppressing the panic in her heart. Princess Chen's eyes were too sharp. Nevertheless, this kind of thing couldn't be hidden from others, and there was no need to hide it.

Chapter 1173 The Loyal Servant Girl Getting Out of the Palace

Consort of Virtue had asked Shao Wanru to deal with Shao Yanru's matter.

Shao Wanru was now the only capable person handling things for the Marquis Xing's Mansion. As Consort of Virtue had ordered, Shao Wanru had to go to Shao Yanru's residence and see if there was anything that needed to be packed up.

She asked a palace maid to lead the way for Shao Wanru.

The courtyard was very remote. They made a long detour to get there.

The palace maid left after taking Shao Wanru to Shao Yanru's place.

The door stood ajar. There was no trace of vitality in it. Qing'er stepped forward to push the door open. Then, they found someone packing up in the corridor. When the person saw Shao Wanru coming in, her eyes turned red. It was Shao Yanru's maid, Mo Yan.

"Greetings, Your Highness!" After putting down the things in her hands, Mo Yan stepped forward, bowed, and knelt on the ground. "Your Highness, my First Miss..."

As she spoke, she began to cry.

"Get up!" Shao Wanru said lightly and walked inside.

Mo Yan got up as she was told but stumbled. Yujie reached out to help her.

There was only Mo Yan in the cold and empty courtyard. The door of the main room was open. However, only an empty bed was in this bare room.

"Where is your master?" Shao Wanru looked at the spacious bed and asked.

"She... She has been sent outside and buried..." Mo Yan cried again and wiped her tears with a handkerchief. "Only... only wrapped in a blanket when she was carried out..."

"Her room looks desolate and chilly. In my previous life, Shao Yanru led a prosperous life of luxury. How could she die like this?" Shao Wanru felt a world of differences between Shao Yanru's two lives and could hardly believe it. "Shao Yanru, scheming and vicious, died so quietly?"

Shao Wanru walked in. The barely furnished room showed Shao Yanru was out of favor.

If the Emperor did not like her, she would be ignored in the Palace. What was worse, Shao Yanru's rank was low. It could be said she was the humblest imperial concubine in the Palace. Therefore, anyone could trample on her at will.

"Your master has always been in good health. How could she suddenly fall seriously ill?" Shao Wanru sat down on a chair and asked.

This chair looked good but when Shao Wanru sat down it was a little shaky. "Sure enough, there is nothing good here. With Shao Yanru's temperament, she could never stand it."

Her heart skipped a beat.

"Your Highness, please uphold justice for my master!" Mo Yan knelt again and pleaded.

"Is there anything behind it?" Shao Wanru asked and looked at Mo Yan, who choked with sobs and couldn't speak.

"Your Highness, my master died with injustice unredressed. My master... my master..." Mo Yan sobbed too bitterly to speak. It took her a long time to finish her words.

It turned out that there was inside information.

Shao Yanru, neglected by the Emperor, had never seen him since she entered the Palace, let alone serve him in bed. The Palace was full of snobs. As a result, this place was even colder and more dismal than the Cold Palace. Even the food here was leftovers.

That day, it was time for dinner again. When Mo Yan carried a hamper and went to get food, she encountered an imperial consort. She was also a newcomer to the Imperial Palace, who belonged to the same batch as Shao Yanru in the Pageant. Although her rank was not high, her status was much higher than that of Secondary Consort Shao. It was said that she was from the same clan as the Empress. Thus, no one dared to offend her, even if she had not won the Emperor's favor.

However, Mo Yan almost bumped into her accidentally. In a fit of anger, she asked someone to knock over Mo Yan's food box. Seeing the food scattered all over the ground, she laughed and said even dogs would not eat such things.

Then she ordered Mo Yan to kneel under the scorching sun as punishment. The weather gradually became hot. After kneeling for two hours, Mo Yan couldn't hold on any longer and fainted directly. Then she was sent back by imperial servants passing by.

A woman who had been inferior to her bullied her servant. Seeing this, Shao Yanru couldn't let it go and went to that imperial consort's door for justice. However, she was forcefully driven out and injured.

After that, the Imperial Institute of Medicine sent the medicine to her. Unexpectedly, she did not recover after taking medicine. In the end, she died.

After Mo Yan finished speaking, she fell to the ground with tears in her eyes. "Your Highness, you are from the same family. Please redress the grievance for my First Miss. She died with injustice unredressed. After that, she was wrapped in a blanket, sent out of the Palace, and buried. Until now, I don't know where her grave is!"

After such a tragic thing happened, Mo Yan, as a servant girl, was certainly out of her wits. At this moment, Shao Wanru was like a family to her. She had plotted against Shao Wanru with Shao Yanru in the past, but who would care about it now? Shao Yanru was dead. How could others blame her for the past things? Moreover, she died so miserably.

Obviously, she was poisoned by the imperial consort.

"Has anyone from the Imperial Institute of Medicine come to examine her?" Shao Wanru asked with a trace of contemplation in her eyes.

"No, no one came to see her. After my master died, I reported her death. Then, someone came to take her away. No imperial physician had come to see her. I cried and begged them to send an imperial

physician here, telling them that my master died with a grudge. But none of them believed me, and no one paid attention to me. They just took First Miss away!”

Mo Yan cried out.

Not to mention a servant girl like her, even Shao Yanru couldn’t be treated as she wished in the Imperial Palace. Not everyone could ask for imperial physicians at will.

“So, that was how she got an acute illness?”

Shao Wanru narrowed her eyes slightly, her eyes with a deep look landing on the big empty bed. “Did Shao Yanru die like this?” Perhaps because Shao Yanru had given her a strong impression in her previous life, she didn’t believe this matter even when seeing the large bed with nothing on it. She always felt she had neglected something in the whole case.

“What happened to the imperial consort later?”

“I don’t know. I am alone in the Palace now. I cry and think about First Miss while packing up the things I need to take away with me,” said Mo Yan.

“Are you leaving? Where are you going?” Shao Wanru asked.

“I don’t have any other place to go. I’m not a palace maid. I temporarily lived in the Palace for First Miss. Now that she is gone forever, I certainly will go back.” Mo Yan said, “I’ll return to the Marquis Xing’s Mansion. Even if my master is no longer there, I can go to serve First Young Master and First Young Madam!”

“Since you’ve entered the Palace, you may not be allowed to leave as you want.” Shao Wanru reminded her. Once consorts or even servants entered the palace gate, they could hardly decide their own destiny.

Even if Mo Yan moved into the Palace for Shao Yanru, she could not leave at her own will.

“Your Highness, please save me. First Miss passed away, and I don’t want to stay in the Palace!” Mo Yan kowtowed to Shao Wanru a few times. Then, she raised her head and looked at Shao Wanru in tears while pleading, “Your Highness, I know my master had plotted against you and owed you an apology. But now, she is dead. No matter what, she is your family. Please help me go out of the Palace. I only want to light a few incense sticks for First Miss and serve her family in the future.”

She cried mournfully and wiped her tears hard. After a while, her eyes became red and swollen.

“Get up and talk,” Shao Wanru ordered.

Yujie came over to pull Mo Yan’s hand, intending to help her up. However, Mo Yan struggled and shook off her. “Your Highness, I won’t get up. If you still want to vent your anger, you can beat me. I hope you can be magnanimous and forgive my master. Then, I’ll be happy even if I die today.”

Her words meant Shao Wanru still bore grudges against Shao Yanru. That was why she was unwilling to help Shao Yanru’s servant girl.

The dead should be honored and forgiven. Most people would not be hard on the deceased. After all, when a person died, there was nothing left. How could anyone fuss too much over past events? Thus, those still alive would usually leave the dead in peace.

“Where is the other palace maid?” Shao Wanru didn’t answer her. Her eyes swept around the room, and she found Han Dan, the other palace maid, was not there. Then, she asked lightly, her long eyelashes fluttering.

“When First Miss is gone, all the other palace servants have left. Han Dan seemed to have served First Miss with all her heart, but... but after all, she was not brought here by First Miss. So, she... she also left!” Mo Yan said bleakly, with sadness on her face.

There were only a few people here. It was the Empress who sent some people here to serve Shao Yanru. But those servants were all unhappy when degraded to an inferior place. In this case, how could they do their best to help Shao Yanru? They were relieved to see Shao Yanru fall seriously ill and die. After that, they found different places to go and left one by one.

“Didn’t you mention it to Consort of Virtue and Consort Ming?” Shao Wanru brought up the topic again as if she didn’t see the panic in Mo Yan’s eyes. Mo Yan looked a little flustered. When Shao Wanru began talking about something else, she finally calmed down.

...

“I’m just a palace maid serving First Miss. I couldn’t even enter the gates of their living places, not to mention meet them!” Mo Yan felt very wronged. “If I hadn’t seen you today, I wouldn’t have dared to say that just now. I... I just... want to leave the Palace and serve my master’s family!”

Mo Yan insisted.

From this point of view, Mo Yan was a loyal servant. Even if she was not Shao Wanru’s servant, she was faithful to the Marquis Xing’s Mansion. Masters were always kind to such loyal servants.

“You can get out of the Palace, but...” Shao Wanru thought for a moment and said.

“What is the method? Your Highness, no matter what it is, I’m willing to try it as long as I can return to the Marquis Xing’s Mansion!” Hearing that there was hope, Mo Yan was excited and looked at Shao Wanru expectantly, waiting for her answer. She was determined to leave the Palace. Since she could not go out with First Miss, Princess Chen was the only one she could ask for help.

This was also First Miss’s idea.

“I can ask these people in the Palace to do this favor. But since you are still a palace maid, you can’t leave the Palace casually. So, you can come to my mansion first and wait some time. When this matter is settled, I will send you back to the Marquis Xing’s Mansion,” Shao Wanru said, “but I don’t know if you are willing to go to the Prince Chen’s Mansion?”

“Yes, I do. Thank you, Your Highness. Thank you very much.” When Mo Yan heard she had a chance to leave the Palace, she kowtowed heavily to Shao Wanru a few more times in tears, full of gratitude.

It hadn’t been long since she entered the Palace, but she had endured various hardships. When Shao Yanru was alive, they lived in misery. After Shao Yanru’s sudden, unnatural death, Mo Yan must be too

scared to stay. Nothing happened to that imperial consort. She might think of Mo Yan and choose to kill her to keep her mouth shut!

"What's that? Do you want to take it out with you?" Shao Wanru didn't care about Mo Yan's answer. Instead, her eyes fell on a candlestick, and she asked meaningfully.

A ray of light flashed across her eyes.

Chapter 1174 The Suspicious Candlestick

This simple candlestick was the only one here. Like this empty room, it was inconspicuous.

"This... Let me take this candlestick. When First Miss was still alive, the room was lit by this one light only. This candlestick was not very big. I want to take it out and put it before First Miss's memorial tablet as an offering to her. It can be saved as a keepsake for those miserable days." Mo Yan was a little uneasy at first. She looked at the candlestick and Shao Wanru's face. When ensuring that her expression was normal, she said.

"You can get up first!" Shao Wanru said.

Mo Yan didn't refuse this time. She rose to her feet, patted the dust off her knees, and walked up to serve Shao Wanru. In this position, she happened to block the candlestick, so Shao Wanru couldn't see it after sitting down.

"Bring me this candlestick, and let me have a look!" Shao Wanru suddenly ordered.

Mo Yan was so scared that she trembled, and a haunted look flashed across his face. "My Lady, this is not a good piece. It was dropped here. My master came over and wiped it clean. Afterward, she had been using it. There was barely anything good here, but my master fancied this candlestick."

"Bring it over!" Shao Wanru's face darkened, and she ignored Mo Yan's explanation.

Mo Yan moved and wanted to say something. Meanwhile, Yujie had already walked over, got the candlestick, and presented it to Shao Wanru. Mo Yan couldn't help feeling nervous. "Why haven't I put the candlestick away? Did Princess Chen find anything?"

Shao Wanru took the candlestick from Yujie's hand. It was not big and had a small half-burned candle on it. At this time, the candle had already stopped burning. However, there was still a faint smell of burning candles. It was not very strong, but there was a light scent of incense, which smelled wonderful.

"Where did this candle come from?" Shao Wanru asked, turning it over and looking closely at it. It was a small candlestick, not particularly exquisite, but someone must have given it a good polish. This was mainly why it caught Shao Wanru's attention. Just now, a ray of sunlight fell on the candlestick, so Shao Wanru happened to see it glitter. Otherwise, she would not have found such an inconspicuous candlestick.

The fragrance on it was very faint. Shao Wanru would not catch the scent if she did not hold it up to her nose and smell it.

"I heard the imperial Palace allocated it... I wanted to change it to a better one, but they were almost the same. In... In the end... we only used this one," Mo Yan stammered.

Shao Wanru turned over the candlestick several times but found nothing unusual. "Did your master like it?"

"Yes, First Miss loved it." Mo Yan hurriedly replied. Since she answered in such a hurry, she was afraid of causing misunderstandings. Therefore, she added, "When First Miss couldn't fall asleep at night, she would embroider something. Fortunately, there was this candlestick. Otherwise, First Miss would be sad. This item looks bright because my master wiped it often. Sometimes, I wanted to clean it for her, but she didn't allow me to do that."

"Anyway, your master was an imperial consort. How could she not get anything better?" Shao Wanru casually put the candlestick in Yujie's hand and wiped her palm clean with a handkerchief.

It had been scrubbed clean and shiny, but some parts were a little dirty and greasy. After holding it for a while, she felt it a little oily.

Mo Yan carefully breathed a sigh of relief. "Your Highness, my master lived a hard life in the Palace. No one helped us, let alone come and take a look at us. She barely had any good items. When she just entered the Palace, there were some nice things. But later on, we gave them to eunuchs and palace maids. How could we get anything better?"

Speaking of the past unbearable to recall, Mo Yan felt wronged, and her eyes turned red again.

In the Palace, she didn't live a happy life but suffered a lot. Even as a servant girl, she was not used to such a hard life, let alone First Miss, who was brought up in luxury.

"My master deserves a much better life. She will ascend to a higher position."

Thinking of this, she looked less aggrieved.

"Well, in this case, you can go with me. The candlestick is nice. Take it with us!" Shao Wanru ordered calmly and stood up, "Yujie, go to keep a record, telling them I'll take this palace maid away!"

The information about palace maids was all recorded. Thus, all palace maids could not be taken away casually, including Mo Yan, who did not enter the Palace in a conventional way.

"Yes, I'll go now!" Yujie gave the candlestick to Qing'er. Since her master liked this item, it is hers now.

"Thank you, Your Highness, but this... a favorite of First Miss..." Mo Yan stuttered, pointing to the candlestick in Qing'er's hand. However, she didn't dare to reach out to take it and could only look at Shao Wanru with a pleading gaze. She hoped that Shao Wanru could return the candlestick to her.

"First Miss is gone. How could Princess Chen rob her of such a worthless thing?"

"Princess Chen can't have such poor taste, right?"

"Let's go!" Shao Wanru ignored her and said lightly. As she walked out, Qing'er followed closely.

Mo Yan hurriedly said, "Your Highness, I still need to pack some things..."

"What else do you want to pick up? Just take a packet with you. I'll wait for you in the yard for a while. Pack up your possessions immediately!" Shao Wanru said unhappily.

Seeing that Shao Wanru was displeased, Mo Yan dared not say anything more. In haste, she put a few simple things in the package she had prepared earlier and came out with a small bag. She looked back at the courtyard door behind her and felt sad. "My master had no choice but to live there for so long. Now..."

"Let's go!" When Mo Yan was still in a daze, Qing'er urged her in a low voice.

Mo Yan nodded quickly, wiped away her tears, and walked out after Qing'er and Shao Wanru.

Along the way, the two servant girls said nothing and followed Shao Wanru quietly. They were surprised to see Qin Yiyan and her servant girls at the side door. Seeing Shao Wanru coming over, Qin Yiyan bowed to her and looked somewhat dreadful.

She entered the Palace with Chu Liuchen and Shao Wanru. As soon as they were in the Palace, Chu Liuchen sent her to Consort Lan's place. She had come back first.

"Why don't you go back to your courtyard first, Miss Qin?" Shao Wanru asked indifferently after Qin Yiyan greeted her.

Qin Yiyan didn't look at all well. She looked at Shao Wanru, seemingly wanting to say something. But when she saw the two servant girls behind her, she swallowed her words and said something usual, "I waited for you here to talk to you about something."

"Miss Qin, please come with me!" Shao Wanru nodded and did not refuse.

She took them to the courtyard where she lived. Upon entering the courtyard, Shao Wanru asked Qing'er to fix Mo Yan up with a place to stay and invited Qin Yiyan into the main room.

When Qin Yiyan stepped into the room and sat down, her face looked weary. With a strange look, she examined Shao Wanru, her eyes a little uneasy.

Calmly, Shao Wanru put down the teacup in her hand and looked up, her limpid eyes on Qin Yiyan's face. "Miss Qin, please go ahead."

"You... Won't you hinder my cousin?" Qin Yiyan blurted out.

"Miss Qin, what do you mean?" Shao Wanru raised her eyebrows and asked with a smile.

Qin Yiyan swallowed hard. Inexplicably, she felt Princess Chen's manner imposing, though Princess Chen was younger. This situation choked her words. It seemed she couldn't bring herself to mention something. After thinking briefly, she said bluntly, "I went to see my aunt just now. She asked me to listen to you, but do you... have such great capabilities?"

Qin Yiyan felt Princess Chen was full of momentum but still did not believe Shao Wanru was qualified to be Princess Chen. She was the hope of her family. Since she was a child, she had been educated in this respect. Though she was still a timid, unmarried girl, she thought she was of a broader outlook than ordinary women. Her life was not limited to the inner court.

In her view, she was a more suitable partner for her cousin!

She was very bitter about Consort Lan's instructions just now.

With an indignant and disturbed look, Qin Yiyan appeared somewhat childish. Shao Wanru couldn't help laughing and asked directly without beating around the bush, "Miss Qin, what can you do?"

All the people in the room were their trusted servants, so there was no need to conceal the actual situation.

"I can help my cousin manage the inner court well. No matter how many women he takes in, I can handle them well. Not only can I make these women obedient, but I can also force their families to work for my cousin. My secret guards can also secretly assist him, relieving him of worries and helping solve his problems."

Qin Yiyan raised her head and pridefully said, "I'm good at martial arts. But do you know how to fight, Your Highness?"

"Has she learned martial arts?" Shao Wanru looked at her in astonishment. If Qin Yiyan hadn't said it, she couldn't have been able to see that.

"I mean it. I have been practicing combat skills since I was a child." Thinking that Shao Wanru might not believe it, Qin Yiyan explained in detail. Compared with ordinary delicate women, she was the most powerful guard.

If she were Princess Chen, she could better protect her cousin. No one would know that she knew martial arts. If anyone tried to assassinate her cousin, she could rush out to defend him in the first place. Her surprise attack could catch the enemy off balance and help her gain the upper hand.

...

"But people with martial arts skills are usually guards." Shao Wanru suddenly felt Qin Yiyan was a little cute, and her smile widened.

"I have an advantage over the other guards because I can take enemies by surprise. They won't know I can fight." Qin Yiyan was still unconvinced. She looked Shao Wanru up and down several times and continued, "I don't understand why my cousin likes you. You look so fragile. Not to mention assassins, you will suffer even if attacked by other women. This time, an accident happened in the foreign princesses' courtyard. If it were me, I would go and knock them down!"

Qin Yiyan clenched her small fists and fiercely shook them in the air.

Her threatening act amused Shao Wanru, who gently wiped the corners of her mouth with a handkerchief and said, "So, are you going to beat all the women like this and force them to stay loyal?"

"Of course not. I have other tactics. Sometimes, I need to use strategies. I'm not reckless." Qin Yiyan felt very upset. She could do better, but she had to give up the position to the weak and delicate Princess Chen before her. She was truly unconvinced!

But no matter how unwilling to give in, she had to obey her aunt's order. Besides, her cousin's meaning was evident. Her aunt had been very hesitant before. When she learned about Chu Liuchen's firm attitude, her aunt had to give up her original idea. Then, Qin Yiyan reached out to take something out of the pocket before her chest, reluctantly pushed it to Shao Wanru, and said in a low voice, "Her Grace asked me to give it to you!"

Chapter 1175 It Jogged Her Memory

“What is it?” Shao Wanru’s eyes fell on a small piece of jade before her. It looked like a token. The fruit was made of blue jade, while yellow jade was the base. It should have been like a fruit, but this token looked like a flattened fruit. At first glance, it seemed an authenticating object of the inner court.

Of course, it couldn’t be a real authenticating object. Instead, the word “token” appeared in Shao Wanru’s mind.

“This token will be yours from now on!” Qin Yiyan looked at the token on the table, feeling reluctant to part with it. Her nose twitched, and she felt like crying. “This token should be mine!”

Shao Wanru did not expect it to be an actual token and couldn’t help laughing in surprise. Entirely at ease, she reached to take it and played with it carefully.

“You accepted it for real?” Qin Yiyan was slightly annoyed because Shao Wanru took it over casually and didn’t treat such a valuable thing seriously. She neither expressed her thanks nor pretended to refuse such a precious item.

“Can’t I take it?” Shao Wanru squinted at her and said, “Since it’s for His Highness, I can have it!”

She said it in such a very matter-of-fact way. Qin Yiyan was so annoyed that she burst out laughing. For some reason, she felt Princess Chen looked different from what she had expected. Qin Yiyan had thought she was a hypocritical and delicate beauty who looked impressive but lacked real worth. At least Princess Chen was now lively and courageous in her eyes.

She could take her cousin’s things whenever she wanted.

“This is for my cousin, and he may not give it to you,” argued Qin Yiyan. Although less irritated in her heart, she still appeared to be foaming with rage.

“Since it belongs to your cousin, he will give it to me.” Looking at Qin Yiyan’s reluctant look, Shao Wanru smiled.

Previously, she had misunderstood Qin Yiyan, thinking she was interested in Chu Liuchen. Thus, Shao Wanru was pretty hostile to her, especially when Qin Yiyan said she would be a better legal wife for Chu Liuchen. But now, she could tell Miss Qin seemed to be more interested in this token, and Chu Liuchen was more like a target she would acquire in passing. Thinking of this, Shao Wanru immediately felt much better and inexplicably liked her.

It was hard to pin down the relationship between people. When they first met, they loathed each other, but now both felt it was not difficult to get along.

Shao Wanru was so confident, and Qin Yiyan felt a little uncomfortable. “This is a precious thing from the deceased empress. Later, she sent it to my family. Before I came to the capital this time, my father gave it to me. Now that I have transferred it to you, I will never interfere in any affairs of your mansion.” Qin Yiyan said in a huff.

Her father repeatedly told her to protect Prince Chen and support him. In his opinion, although Prince Chen was in poor health, he was the most orthodox descendant of the royal family and the Qin family. Therefore, they must do all in their power to help Prince Chen ascend the throne.

She wanted to be loyal and contribute to Prince Chen, but he didn't allow her to do so. The more Qin Yiyan thought about it, the angrier she became. She had been cultivating martial arts hard for so many years because she fully intended to protect the sick and weak Prince Chen. Unexpectedly, he didn't appreciate her effort.

"I'm going back!" Qin Yiyan suddenly stood up. The more she thought about it, the more resentful and aggrieved she felt. In the past, Consort Lan supported her and praised her for being a nice choice for Prince Chen. But after hearing Prince Chen's words, she changed her mind.

All her hard work over the years seemed to go for nothing!

"Cousin Qin, wait a minute!" Seeing that she was leaving in anger, Shao Wanru put down the token in her hand and said to her.

"What did you call me?" Qin Yiyan turned around in disbelief. Since they met, Princess Chen had never been close to her and kept calling her Miss Qin.

"Cousin? Aren't you His Highness's cousin? Then, you are also my cousin, right? Cousin Qin, please sit down first. I have something to tell you!" Shao Wanru's long eyelashes fluttered twice, and she revealed a gentle smile.

But Qin Yiyan was unwilling to talk because Shao Wanru seemed to take her undeserved gain for granted. Shao Wanru was younger, so how could she have the nerve to treat her like a younger sister? Nevertheless, Qin Yiyan sat back in her chair. Tilting her head, she snorted coldly like a defeated rooster.

Shao Wanru burst into laughter and said, "Since you've come to the capital, it's inconvenient for you to live outside alone. Don't move out of the mansion in the future. It's better for you to live in the mansion. If you want to visit Consort Lan, you can go and see her. It may be improper for me to visit her!"

With this, the smile on Shao Wanru's face faded. She gave a gentle sigh and frowned slightly.

"Why can't you go to meet Consort Lan? Do you know how much she wants to see you? But you and my cousin never visit her when in the Palace!" Qin Yiyan said indignantly. Consort Lan was so pitiful and devoted to Prince Chen. How could Prince Chen ignore her like that?

Consort Lan would agree to anything Prince Chen said.

"You know your cousin. He doesn't want me to see Consort Lan, and it's indeed not inappropriate for me to visit her often. But you're different. You're her niece, so it's proper for you to visit her. Now you live in the Prince Chen's Mansion. It will be easier for Consort Lan to send messages through you if anything happens."

Shao Wanru said in a soft and earnest voice.

She had grown quite fond of Consort Lan, but at the same time, she had to respect Chu Liuchen's ideas. There were some things that she didn't want to recall. The more she thought about them, the more distressed she felt for Chu Liuchen and the less she wanted Chu Liuchen to be sad. On the other hand, she pitied Consort Lan and hoped she would be happy.

She didn't know how to deal with this relationship before. Luckily, with Qin Yiyan, many knotty problems could be smoothly solved.

Qin Yiyan's earlier performance had helped her win Shao Wanru's recognition. Meanwhile, in her heart, she accepted Qin Yiyan as her cousin.

"Why doesn't Prince Chen go to see Consort Lan?" Shao Wanru's words sounded reasonable, and she seemed quite considerate to Consort Lan. The anger in Qin Yiyan's heart gradually dissipated, but she was still unwilling to give up. Thus, she deliberately asked this. In her eyes, Prince Chen was also Consort Lan's nephew. Why didn't he visit Consort Lan? It was not a shameful relationship.

"He has his considerations. At present, the imperial court is not at peace either. Consort Lan is now the favorite consort of the imperial harem. With so many people watching, it is inconvenient for His Highness to meddle in it even if he wants to. He has to act the same as before. Otherwise, others will think he accepts her only after Consort Lan regains the Emperor's favor. This will not be good for His Highness and Consort Lan," Shao Wanru said. Her words were vague, but the meaning was realistic.

Qin Yiyan thought for a moment and agreed with Shao Wanru. With a nod, she said, "Okay, I got it. I will visit Consort Lan in the Palace from time to time. If you enter the Palace, take me with you. Consort Lan is too lonely."

"Okay!" Shao Wanru said. She rolled her watery eyes slightly and asked, "You live a little far away from me. Do you want me to change a bigger and closer courtyard for you?"

Back then, she suspected Qin Yiyan had bad intentions, so she deliberately found a remote corner for her to live in. Now that all their misunderstandings had been cleared up, she had to ask her how she thought about her dwelling.

"No, that place is fine. Don't let me live too close to you. I'm afraid my cousin will throw me out." Qin Yiyan snorted and was very distressed. Her cousin had badly discouraged her. She felt a little scared when she thought about it and didn't want to get anywhere close to him.

Looking at Shao Wanru, she felt her cousin-in-law was more thoughtful. She was not in a good mood after giving out the token, but still, she felt satisfied with the overall situation.

While they were talking, Qin Yiyan was observing this new cousin-in-law. The more she watched her, the more she felt her cousin-in-law was not as delicate as she looked on the surface. Instead, she was a very independent-minded young woman in a position of power to manage affairs in the Prince Chen's Mansion. Even her cousin could not decide and act arbitrarily in his mansion, was he?

Thinking of this, Qin Yiyan felt even more satisfied.

Chu Liuchen had treated her harshly, so she was glad to see him being bullied.

"That's good. Everyone knows Consort Lan arranged for you to live here, and you never get along well with me. Maybe, someone will come to you and ask you to make trouble for me!" Shao Wanru joked, feeling it a good idea.

"Then I'll wait and see who will invite me to deal with you, my little cousin-in-law!" Qin Yiyan's interest was aroused. She happened to be very bored after handing in her treasure.

“Just wait and see!” Shao Wanru said with a smile, and a trace of deep meaning flashed in her eyes. Qin Yiyan had moved in with such a unique background. As an explicit “threat” to her, how could she not attract attention?

Fortunately, they now stopped quarreling and made peace with each other. This way, she would not have to spare much effort to deal with Qin Yiyan, not to mention that Consort Lan was also involved.

The current situation was the best...

After Qin Yiyan left, the room quieted down. Shao Wanru’s eyes became cold with a trace of hostility.

How could she forget that candle?

She didn’t see it clearly then and wondered what it was. But at the sight of the candle, she remembered it was about a candle. The candle looked nothing special but was the most critical thing. She should have seen this candle at the last moment of her previous life, right?

Her blood suddenly ran cold, and her chest tightened. She felt suffocated by the dull chest pains. It had been a long time since she remembered the last bloody scene. When she recognized the candle, she shivered with cold. Only when her heart pounded did she feel she was alive.

Everything about the little prince, the child who had been murdered, seemed to appear before her. Bloody waves rose and surged as if they were going to drag her back into the sea of blood, into the last moment full of desperate cries.

He was cut into half at the waist but didn’t die immediately...

That day, they had all been in the Southern Palace. Why? What had she heard and seen when coming to the Southern Palace? Some vague memories had popped up in her mind all of a sudden. The candle seemed to have opened part of her sealed memories.

Involuntarily, she pressed her hands against her chest and bent down. It was the most basic protective gesture she subconsciously did to make herself feel safe and secure. Behind the bushes that day, she heard some people talking. It should be a conversation between Shao Yanru and Chu Liuyue...

After so many twists and turns, she met the same thing again.

...

Now she could be sure that Shao Yanru was not dead and must be hiding somewhere. No matter what, she would not let them succeed...

Chapter 1176 In Her Last Life, She Was Killed As an Eyewitness

“Playing dead... Hide well?” The man’s calm voice dropped to a whisper. Somehow, the woman heard it feel her heart palpitate a little.

“Yes, I hide very well. It’ll be fine. No one sees me.” The woman’s voice was excessively soft and charming, with obvious attachment and coquetry.

“Then hurry up and leave. Don’t... don’t let others find it out!”

"I see... When will you come to see me? It's inconvenient to talk here."

"I'll be here tomorrow night... Don't worry... Be careful." After saying that, the man turned around and was about to leave. Suddenly, he heard a slight noise behind him. When he saw a pair of panicked and beautiful eyes behind the bushes, his heart skipped a beat.

Seeing he had discovered her, the woman behind the shrubs turned around and ran.

She didn't dare to look back for fear that she would die. Prince Yue and Zhaoyi Shao were standing behind the tree shadows, and they looked like a couple now.

Prince Yue was the Emperor's son, while Zhaoyi Shao married the Emperor. How could she think too much about this? All she wanted to do was escape from this place. However, in the end, she couldn't escape her fate of being cut in two at the waist.

"Why would they kill me? At that time, I could not resist and was trampled under Shao Yanru's feet. Even if they wanted to shut me up forever, they didn't have to make a big thing out of it.

"It turned out that they murdered me to keep their secret. I heard and saw their secret!"

Slowly, Shao Wanru closed her eyes, and her bloody memories flooded into her mind.

The specific words or scenes were not in her memory. She only remembered that something should have been buried in the Southern Palace, now the Prince Chen's Mansion.

She wanted to dig out that thing when she first entered the Prince Chen's Mansion. Her memory was very vague. Faintly, she felt that thing with the property of medicine was very important. Thus, she especially took a small medicine bag for clearing hearts and tranquilization, holding a small medicine hoe in her hands.

She obtained no chance for the first time. Later, there was still no chance at all.

After she married Chu Liuchen, she secretly found an opportunity to dig it up, but there was nothing.

Shao Wanru thought that her memory was wrong. Many things had vanished, but only such an obsession remained in her heart. She might have made a mistake about that.

Thinking of this, she didn't take this matter to heart...

"What's wrong?" She fell into a warm embrace with a light medicine fragrance. It was Chu Liuchen. Feeling he was with her, she gradually relaxed, letting him hold her in his arms.

Shao Wanru could feel his scent around her. At this moment, the smell of blood in her memory faded a lot, and she felt as if she had come back to life. Tears welled up in her eyes and fell silently.

Every time she faced Chu Liuchen, she was extremely fragile.

If she were alone, she would swallow all the bitterness by herself, no matter how hard it was.

Gently, she shook her head and leaned her head against Chu Liuchen's chest, closing her watery eyes tightly.

Chu Liuchen looked down at her. Seeing her little pale face as delicate as jade, he felt distressed. When he entered the door just now, he saw her curl up into a ball, and a trace of coldness flashed in his eyes.

He gently patted her on the back, and his thin lips fell on the corners of her mouth. He kissed her tenderly and slowly before letting go of her. "What happened? Can't you tell me?"

"The candle!" She managed to say it softly, though she had thought it would be difficult. Her eyelashes fluttered when feeling Chu Liuchen's gentle stroke to appease her.

Her tension faded away like tidewater, and she slowly became lucid.

She raised her freezing hands, gently holding Chu Liuchen's.

"Where did the candle come from?" Chu Liuchen asked in a low voice.

"It is from the Palace, Shao Yanru's living place. She doesn't seem to be dead!" Shao Wanru murmured, leaning her head on Chu Liuchen's chest.

Chu Liuchen reached out and grasped her hands. Gently, he took her hands in his to warm her up with care and love.

"Rest assured. I'll find it out. Don't be afraid!"

His eyes turned deep and cold when Shao Wanru didn't see him. He found Shao Wanru was particularly concerned about Shao Yanru's affairs. Whenever Shao Yanru made any move, she would feel shocked and nervous.

He had always been clear about what happened after Shao Wanru came to the capital. She didn't often come into contact with Shao Yanru. Both of them had stayed in the Yuhui Nunnery, and Shao Wanru had spent a short period in the Marquis Xing's Mansion. Had Shao Yanru hurt her?

At the thought of this possibility, Chu Liuchen felt a surge of hostility in his heart.

"I'm not afraid... I just..." Shao Wanru knew Chu Liuchen misunderstood that she was scared. However, she couldn't explain this matter and didn't know how to begin. If such a thing hadn't happened to her, she wouldn't have believed it.

"I just... hate her very much. To achieve her purpose, she can sacrifice anyone, poison anyone, and..." After thinking for a while, she explained softly.

When she finished speaking, she froze all of a sudden. In fact, Shao Yanru had the same character as Shao Jing. In the eyes of these people, the affection between blood relations could be used and sacrificed.

Forcefully suppressing the surging emotions in her heart, she put forth her strength and pulled Chu Liuchen's hand. "Help me find out where Shao Yanru went. Who sent her out of the Palace that day? And who dispatched these people? I suspect it has something to do with Prince Yue or Prince Zhou. Of course, it may also be Prince Cheng."

Shao Yanru had lapsed into a form of suspended animation. There was no one else but these three who could take her away.

In Shao Wanru's last life, Chu Liuyue and Shao Yanru were having an affair even until the last moment. Thus, he was the most suspicious. Shao Wanru suspected Prince Zhou because of Doctor Qiu. Prince Cheng and Shao Jing had been close. Shao Wanru even suspected Prince Cheng had something to do with her father's death.

At that time, Shao Jing had no power or status. How could he find her father at the border without anyone noticing his movements?

"Help me with other things, and I'll avenge my parents!" She gritted her teeth hard, leaving a deep bite mark on her cherry lips.

She put some old grudges aside because it was not time for revenge.

"Okay, I know!" Chu Liuchen patted her on the back again and said gently.

Shao Wanru didn't say anything more this time and nestled against his chest for a long time. Like her, Chu Liuchen also remained silent and just hugged her tightly.

It was tranquil in the room. In the silence, their breathing intertwined as if they were destined to be entangled forever.

After a long while, Shao Wanru completely calmed down. She gently pushed Chu Liuchen away and handed the token to him. She said with a smile in her eyes, "Cousin Qin just brought it here. She said Consort Lan asked her to give it to me."

Chu Liuchen snorted. At the mention of Consort Lan, his face darkened, but he didn't push the token away. "Since she gave it to you, you can keep it. It's yours originally."

Shao Wanru gently pushed him and said, "Cousin Qin is nice. Although older than me, she appears very childish. She even knows martial arts. She said she was supposed to have this token and was unwilling to give it away. Since she was a child, her mission in life was protecting you, but I have taken her position!"

Thinking of Qin Yiyan's aggrieved look, Shao Wanru curled her lips and smiled.

Qin Yiyan looked as if her toy had been snatched away.

When she smiled, a faint blush appeared on her delicate little face, making her more charming. Only then did Chu Liuchen show a smile on his face. At this moment, he did not have so much resistance to Qin Yiyan. In fact, he had had a lot of fantasies about this uncle's family in his childhood. However, these relatives had left the capital long ago and lived somewhere far away.

"In this case, let her live in the mansion!" Chu Liuchen said. Since she had martial skills, he had to sound her out. If she had no ulterior motives, he should let her stay closer to Zhuozhuo. Although Qing'er also knew martial arts, she was a servant girl. Sometimes, she couldn't follow Zhuozhuo closely. If Qin Wanru knew how to fight, she could be a great helper to Zhuozhuo.

As for the secret guards under her control, Chu Liuchen took them lightly. However, they would be helpful for Shao Wanru. Shao Wanru could be protected by such a guard team and Qin Yiyan, its former leader. Then, he could feel relieved and cast off many restrictions to action. After all, he no longer needed to worry that someone would harm Zhuozhuo to crack down on him.

...

"You don't have to give her the cold shoulder in the future. She looks delicate, but in fact, she is efficient and able. She is different from ordinary Misses from aristocratic families."

Shao Wanru carefully chose her words to express her thoughts more clearly.

"Okay, it's up to you! But before I find out the truth, don't get too close to her," Chu Liuchen agreed and advised softly in a low voice.

"Okay, I'll ask her to accompany Consort Lan when she is free. She doesn't have to pay all the attention to us." Shao Wanru said as she observed Chu Liuchen's expression. Although his face fell again, and his thin lips were slightly pursed, he said nothing. Only then did she let out a sigh of relief in her heart. She decided these things for herself and was afraid Chu Liuchen would object.

"Do whatever you want then!" Chu Liuchen's dark eyes darkened, but he still agreed.

He pulled Shao Wanru to sit down and took the token, saying, "I'll find out the truth for you. Then, the team will be sent to Xiao Xuanzi for training. After all this, I will return the token and guards to you!"

His only weakness was Shao Wanru. How could he casually trust others to protect her? Even if it was about those secret guards, he must check them out first. He would have to meet, train, and investigate them in person.

Shao Wanru nodded meekly, feeling warm in her heart. It was an indescribable feeling. She trusted him wholeheartedly — he would protect her anytime and never let her be sad or scared.

Because of this reason, she felt more and more confident. He gave her courage and confidence. Changes happened without her noticing. Now, she knew she couldn't live without him.

Her long eyelashes fluttered as she slowly stood on tiptoes and gently kissed his handsome face. Then she blushed scarlet and pushed him away. Hardly could she believe she was so bold just now.

At first, Chu Liuchen was stunned. Then he burst into laughter and grabbed her back when she was about to escape. Holding her tightly in his arms, he almost crushed her. He was suddenly overcome by the burning desire to do the most intimate things with her. At this time, both of them could feel his strong sexual impulse.

...

Lowering his head slightly, Chu Liuchen let out a long steamy breath and sighed softly, "When can you grow up? I have been waiting for you for too long!"

At first, Shao Wanru didn't understand what he meant. Then, when he breathed fast beside her ear and gently licked her delicate earlobe, she blushed up to the roots of her hair. However, she didn't push him away and just held his firm waist closer to him...

Chapter 1177 Are You Sure It Is Related to the Feign Death

Mingqiu Nun and Qi Jue, two top-notch doctors, seldom met each other. Of course, this was mainly because Mingqiu Nun felt reluctant to see Qi Jue.

Even in the Prince Chen's Mansion, Mingqiu Nun would avoid Qi Jue, but it was often her wishful thinking. Qi Jue would fall into an unusual state every time she came — he was no longer a mysterious master of superior attainments. Like any other ordinary foolish man, he had every intention of getting closer to Mingqiu Nun and didn't care about being treated coldly by her.

Losing face was nothing to him. Qi Jue himself had said the so-called dignity of man was superficial. As long as Mingqiu Nun was happy, he was willing to let her step on his pride.

This was the first time that Mingqiu Nun did not avoid Qi Jue. They sat together, and Shao Wanru was between them.

There was a partly burnt candle between the two of them. It was the one from the Palace.

"Mingqiu Nun, what do you think?" Seeing Mingqiu Nun put down the candle in her hand, Shao Wanru asked.

Mingqiu Nun pursed her lips tightly. With a frown, she studied the tiny fragments in her hands. "Some drug powder had been cautiously added to the candle, but it doesn't seem the drug can make people look as good as dead."

"Your Highness, can you be sure it has something to do with the fake death?" Qi Jue asked suspiciously. It was rare for him to appear serious before Mingqiu Nun. At this time, he also picked up a little candle powder, put it under his nose, and sniffed it.

"Yes!" Shao Wanru hesitated for a moment and nodded.

Although her memory was blurred, she remembered the few words very clearly. Moreover, Shao Yanru had indeed entered this state at the moment. Pretending to be dead was the best way Shao Yanru could think of to get out of the Palace.

It could solve her current predicament.

Shao Wanru had thought that if Shao Yanru escaped from the Palace in a state of suspended animation, she would have to get another identity. Then, she could marry into the mansion of one prince. However, it was unknown which prince she would pick up.

"If Doctor Qiu made it..." Mingqiu Nun couldn't help glancing at Qi Jue with a trace of sadness across her eyes. It could be said that Doctor Qiu got them into this unpleasant situation.

Her father had accepted two disciples. The elder one was Doctor Qiu and the other was Qi Jue. Both of them had excellent medical skills. Because Mingqiu Nun was also interested in medicine, she had also been practicing medicine with her father.

Unexpectedly, everyone fell into a plight, and she became a nun. Unconsciously, the corners of her eyes turned slightly red. Mingqiu Nun hurriedly turned away to hide the sadness in her eyes.

She was going to marry Qi Jue back then, but because of Doctor Qiu, they fell into such a mess. Though she was smiling, a trace of bitterness touched her lips.

"He has never been a good person. It was in vain that my master did that for him..." Qi Jue said indignantly, "It's not a surprise that he can make strange things. Initially, he studied these aspects. As a doctor, he aims at harming people instead of saving them."

"Mingqiu Nun, Doctor Qi, how do you think the fake death happened? Is it has something to do with the candle?" Shao Wanru had inquired about something between them from Mingqiu Nun, but she could only sigh with emotion in her heart.

Doctor Qiu, as a paranoid doctor, injured both others and himself.

"Your Highness, it's not easy to get to the bottom of this matter. We have to look into it carefully." Qi Jue said, looking at Mingqiu Nun.

Mingqiu Nun didn't object this time and nodded. She couldn't figure it out for a while, so she had to study it with caution.

Shao Wanru, with her eyes on Mingqiu Nun, said softly, "Mingqiu Nun, don't go back to Yuhui Nunnery now. You can stay here for a few days to study the candle. I always feel this matter is not simple."

Though she was not officially recognized Mingqiu Nun as her master, she had been learning from her. These distressed things in the past were all Doctor Qiu's fault. Neither Mingqiu Nun nor Doctor Qi was wrong. Thus, Shao Wanru had always wanted to make them a couple, but Mingqiu Nun had no intention. As a result, this matter between Mingqiu Nun and Qi Jue was put off.

Now that there was such an opportunity, Shao Wanru would try to ask Mingqiu Nun to stay.

Qi Jue's eyes sparkled, and he stared at Mingqiu Nun. It could be seen that he was nervous.

Mingqiu Nun wanted to refuse and said that she would come every day. But when she looked at Qi Jue, whose eyes were shining, she found it hard to refuse. There was a long pause before she nodded.

"Great, that's so great. Let's go and study it now!" Qi Jue jumped up excitedly and reached out to pull Mingqiu Nun's hand, but Mingqiu Nun avoided him.

He didn't mind it at all. His face, beaming with happy smiles, looked so dazzling. He picked up the candle wrapped in paper on the desk and hurriedly stuffed it into his arms. "Your Highness, Mingqiu and I will go to do the survey."

In his heart, he felt very grateful to Princess Chen. He had been looking for an opportunity to get close to Mingqiu, but she had avoided him. This time, there was no way for her to keep a distance from him! He was overcome with unexpected joy!

Since he saw Mingqiu three years ago, he had always wanted to get back together with her. Now, he finally had a chance.

"Thank you, Doctor Qi!" Shao Wanru nodded with a smile.

Mingqiu Nun frowned. Looking at Qi Jue's silly deeds, she felt inexplicably annoyed. "I'm already a nun. What else does he want me to do? He has always wanted me to resume secular life, but I don't want to do it!"

She stood up and bowed to Shao Wanru. Then she turned around and reluctantly left after Qi Jue.

They left one after the other. When they got out of the door, Qi Jue deliberately stopped and waited for Mingqiu Nun to come. Seeing them like this, Yujie couldn't help laughing. As Mingqiu Nun's disciple, she certainly hoped she could be happy.

Mingqiu Nun, living in the nunnery, had led an overly self-disciplined and ascetic life. If Doctor Qi treated Mingqiu Nun well, she was also very willing to see them become a couple.

"Doctor Qiu is indeed a troublemaker. It's all his fault. If not for him, Mingqiu Nun and Doctor Qi might have had many children now." Yujie wiped the corners of her eyes and accused angrily. She had a deep hatred for Doctor Qiu. Suddenly, she remembered another thing and asked in confusion, "My Lady, doesn't Doctor Qiu work for Prince Zhou? Why is he with First Miss? First Miss chose Prince Yue, didn't she?"

"Doctor Qiu... may not be Prince Zhou's subordinate." Shao Wanru blinked her eyes with a hint of sarcasm.

Chu Liuyue was very scheming. It could be seen from the fact that Qi Rongzhi married into the Prince Zhou's Mansion instead of the Prince Yue's Mansion. He had maintained an ambiguous relationship with Qi Rongzhi. When Qi Rongzhi took him to her place to talk, she had been guarding outside. It could be seen how intimate they were.

However, according to the imperial edict from the Palace, Qi Rongzhi married someone else instead of Chu Liuyue. This matter was a good example to prove how cunning he was.

It seemed to be the same with Doctor Qiu.

On the surface, Doctor Qiu moved into his mansion to treat his injury when Chu Liuzhou's leg was hurt. After that, Infanta Yuan'an had an accident, and Doctor Qiu was sent to heal her wound. His treatment had worked well. But later, Shao Wanru was surprised to see Doctor Qiu in the Palace because Infanta Yuan'an's injury had not recovered yet.

Infanta Yuan'an had been nervous and flustered, for her face might have been disfigured. Nevertheless, Doctor Qiu still entered the Palace. Chu Liuzhou ignored Infanta Yuan'an's injury and sent Doctor Qiu to the Palace. Shao Wanru had thought he did it to please the Empress or he was worried about the Empress. Now, she realized Shao Yanru might have something to do with it.

At that time, Shao Yanru was in the Palace.

When Doctor Qiu was in the Palace, it was more convenient for Shao Yanru to contact him and get the medicine she wanted. If she had to pretend to be dead, she would be less likely to get into trouble with Doctor Qiu's guidance.

"Is First Miss still with Prince Yue and Prince Zhou?" Yujie widened her eyes and asked in astonishment.

Shao Wanru smiled slightly with sarcasm in her eyes. It was not that Chu Liuzhou still wanted to marry Shao Yanru because she had bewitched him. They just took what they needed from each other.

Seemingly, she enchanted two princes, who were always obedient to her wishes. But did Shao Yanru genuinely believe she could be so influential?

Shao Yanru overestimated her value, thinking she could manipulate the two princes. In the end, she would come to a tragic ending. Of course, Shao Wanru would never let go of the chance to aggravate the situation for her.

Since they were destined to be opponents and had to fight to the death with each other, she certainly would not give Shao Yanru a chance to survive.

Shao Wanru looked out of the window without answering Yujie's question. After taking a deep breath, she slowly ordered, "If Qing'er has any news, report it to me immediately!"

Chu Liuchen said he would inform Xiao Xuanzi of the latest news and ask him to pass the message to Qing'er. How could a Secondary Consort disappear from the Palace without leaving a trace?

"Don't worry, My Lay. I know!" Yujie knew how important this matter was and nodded hurriedly.

"How is Mo Yan?" Shao Wanru changed the topic and asked.

"She behaves properly in her room. When I went to see her and mentioned the candlestick again, she appeared to know nothing about it. However, she paid special attention every time I spoke of the candlestick!" Yujie said with a sneer. Since she looked down on Shao Yanru, she certainly despised her two servant girls.

...

The two servant girls had done a lot of nasty things with Shao Yanru. Though Mo Yan looked pitiful now, she had secretly murdered many people.

"Keep an eye on her." Shao Wanru nodded and picked up a blank invitation card beside her. After thinking for a while, she wrote something down. When she finished writing, she waited for the ink to dry and said, "Send it to the Marquis Xing's Mansion. Tell them I want First Young Madam to come over for a chat!"

Some things should come to an end. A trace of fierceness flashed across her eyes.

At present, in the Marquis Xing's Mansion, only Zhao Xiran had ulterior motives. It could be a good breakthrough point for Shao Wanru. Moreover, Third Madam was about to fulfill her promise. At this critical point, Shao Wanru needed someone to handle some things for her.

Zhao Xiran was a perfect candidate. She was smart and had other plans. At least, there was no conflict between their aims for the time being. Moreover, Zhao Xiran couldn't accept such a concubine to be her mother-in-law...

Chapter 1178 Husband and Wife Harboring Different Designs

Zhao Xiran acted quickly. As soon as she received the invitation card, she went to Shao Hua'an's study.

Seeing her coming, the servant at the study door quickly went in to report. When she arrived, he was already back at the door. He stepped forward and bowed with a smile. "Greetings, First Young Madam!"

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

"He had been reading for a while. He felt tired, so he is resting now!" The servant smiled and pushed open the study door.

With a nod, Zhao Xiran entered the study. Shao Hua'an was leaning there. When he saw her coming in, he smiled and waved to her.

Zhao Xiran walked over and sat down beside the couch.

Shao Hua'an reached out to hold her hand and asked softly, "What's wrong? Do you have anything to tell me?"

"Princess Chen asked me to go to her mansion," Zhao Xiran said. "And she especially sent me an invitation, inviting me to enjoy the flowers."

Princess Chen sent the invitation card instead of casually asking someone to see her. It would be improper for Zhao Xiran to refuse such an earnest invitation.

Did it represent the overbearing attitude of Prince Chen's Mansion? Shao Hua'an said with his face darkening, "Fifth Sister is so... I'm sorry you have to put up with this!"

Zhao Xiran had to go even if she didn't want to. The domineering attitude of Prince Chen's Mansion disgusted him.

"I won't feel wronged with you around." Zhao Xiran sighed, her tender eyes on Shao Hua'an. She did marry into this mansion for another purpose. Even now, she was working to achieve her aim. Nevertheless, she was more and more concerned about Shao Hua'an. Seeing him like this, she inexplicably felt a little uneasy.

"Don't worry. I won't let you suffer like this for long," Shao Hua'an seriously promised, but in his eyes, there was a trace of coldness that she couldn't understand. Somehow, Zhao Xiran felt flustered. She grabbed Shao Hua'an's hand and comforted him, "It's okay. Just study hard. I'll take care of the affairs in the mansion..."

Speaking of this, she paused with a bitter look on her face. She could handle anything except for the matter of Shao Jing. She had thought Old Madam could stop Shao Jing, who was eager to bring his mistress home as his secondary legal wife. What a crazy idea he had!

If Shao Jing got what he wanted, they would feel too shameful to see others.

Unexpectedly, Old Madam agreed and specially called her over to scold her. Every time she thought of this, Zhao Xiran felt depressed. What was worse, she even felt Shao Hua'an and Old Madam had been hiding something from her.

She seemed to be the only one kept in the dark. Only she thought this arrangement inappropriate, while all the others felt it was okay.

She had privately complained to Shao Hua'an, but Shao Hua'an said she was too narrow-minded. The mistress gave birth to a daughter, who was his younger sister. In this case, they could no longer let that woman be a mistress. It was normal to give her a title. Since her position was unrelated to matters about sons and heirs, it was not a big deal.

Even so, how could such a mistress ask to get married as a secondary legal wife? It was an excessive demand in Zhao Xiran's eyes.

Although the Marquis Xing's Mansion was apparently declining, it was still an aristocratic family. At least, it had to maintain its dignity on the surface.

It was a scandal to keep a mistress outside, but it was not a rare thing. When a mistress was exposed, she would become a concubine in the mansion at most, and her daughter would be a concubine's daughter.

How could any mistress get married in an open, grand way?

"Well, let's forget it. It was my father's choice. Since he is our elder, we have to listen to him!" Seeing her like this, Shao Hua'an knew she would mention this matter again. Inexplicably, he felt a little displeased. In the past few days, Zhao Xiran would talk about this matter with him whenever he was free. He was annoyed.

E'niang turned from a mistress to a concubine. So what? It was nothing serious.

The illegitimate daughter was the key. Only when the illegitimate daughter rightfully became the legitimate daughter could her status be raised. As a humble concubine, who was once a mistress, how could she fight for power?

"Hua'an, about this matter..." Zhao Xiran still wanted to persuade him, but when Shao Hua'an's face darkened, she could only give up. She stood up and said, "I'll go to the Prince Chen's Mansion in a while."

When she stopped talking about that matter, Shao Hua'an calmed down and said with a gentle face, "Be careful. If you feel upset when talking with her, don't mind it. I apologize to you on behalf of my Fifth Sister. Remember to ask Fifth Sister about my sister later."

He was sure Shao Wanru would not say anything nice. Moreover, he only focused on Shao Yanru. So, Zhao Xiran was supposed to get some information today, and he knew Zhao Xiran would have been wronged.

Zhao Xiran was very disappointed. She just nodded and lowered her head to hide the disappointment in her eyes.

She was utterly disappointed. After leaving the study, she stood outside and looked back with inexplicable bitterness in her eyes.

She had ulterior motives and wanted to do something secretly, but all of this was for Shao Jing, not Shao Hua'an. She believed she had done nothing wrong to Shao Hua'an. In addition, she increasingly cared about Shao Hua'an.

However, unlike what he had promised, Shao Hua'an didn't seem to take her seriously.

Because Shao Hua'an repeatedly expressed his affection for her, she agreed to marry into the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Perhaps, she was seriously wrong!

Clenching her handkerchief hard, she hid all the sadness in her eyes with a sigh and went out with her servant girl!

When Zhao Xiran arrived at the Prince Chen's Mansion, Shao Wanru was admiring the flowers in the garden. She was on the pavilion's second floor. From the window there, she could enjoy the lake's natural beauty and these lovely flowers. Green bamboos stood upright, accompanied by exquisite waterside pavilions. Such a view was pleasing.

Some tender, pink lotus buds on the water's surface made the lake look even more charming.

Seeing Zhao Xiran coming over, Shao Wanru waved the round silk fan at her and asked her to sit with her behind the fence.

The terrace behind the fence was very wide. There were fruits and snacks on the table. The tea had just been poured into the cups. Zhao Xiran enjoyed the view and smelled the tea fragrance wafting in the air, feeling pleasant and refreshing.

She sat opposite Shao Wanru as she was told and looked out of the window. When she saw the incredible view of the lake, the depression in her heart seemed to have faded a little. This was indeed a nice place to appreciate flowers.

Taking a deep breath, Zhao Xiran looked at Shao Wanru with a smile and asked, "Your Highness, are you all right?"

It seemed to be a blunt question, but the meaning was obvious — people in the Marquis Xing's Mansion had also heard of the incident in the two foreign princesses' courtyard.

"I'm fine!" Shao Wanru glanced at Zhao Xiran and smiled.

"That's good." Zhao Xiran looked relieved. "Fortunately, you're okay. You'd better be more careful when you go out in the future..."

Speaking of this, she looked a little embarrassed. Something had happened to Shao Wanru when she came to the Marquis Xing's Mansion last time. Although it had something to do with Old Madam, she felt embarrassed. After all, she came here as the First Young Madam of Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Luckily, Shao Wanru didn't mention it and just talked about something else with a smile. "Has Second Uncle's problem been solved after Old Madam returned?"

"About him..." Zhao Xiran lowered her head and sighed. This matter had been weighing on her mind for a long time. A cheap bitch would be her mother-in-law. Whenever she thought of it, Zhao Xiran would feel agitated. No matter how hard she tried, Zhao Xiran couldn't get over it.

A woman like her had always been proud and arrogant. How could she not hold such a mistress in contempt?

"Old Madam agreed to their marriage, saying that... the woman also came from a good family. She seems to be a Miss from an aristocratic family!" Zhao Xiran felt stuffy in her chest.

Zhao Xiran didn't believe it anyway. That woman had been her father-in-law's mistress for so many years. How could any decent lady do that? If she was a daughter of an aristocratic family, her family

must have been pissed off by her shameless conduct. They would quickly get rid of her so as not to implicate other unmarried girls in the family.

When that woman came to their mansion, Zhao Xiran glanced at her from afar. It was apparent she was not from a decent family. Although she was not overly coquettish, her ingratiating and luscious manner with Marquis Xing was simply intolerable to the eye.

Once the mistress became her father-in-law's secondary legal wife, she would attend the social activities of the mansion. Madam Jiang was locked up now and couldn't go out to socialize. As a result, Zhao Xiran would have to appear in public with this disgraceful woman and regard her as her mother-in-law. Whenever Zhao Xiran thought of this, she felt as uncomfortable as if she had swallowed a fly and only wanted to throw up.

In her heart, she repeatedly told herself to ignore this insignificant woman. Anyway, she was not her husband's biological mother, and she didn't have to take her seriously. However, Zhao Xiran just couldn't accept it.

"Which aristocratic family is she from?" Shao Wanru asked with a trace of surprise in her watery eyes.

...

"I heard that the matter happened more than a decade ago. An imperial censor was exiled because he offended the former emperor. That woman was a Miss in the imperial censor's family. She met my father-in-law when she left the capital. Back then, she was supposed to leave the capital with her family. Unexpectedly, some wicked people dispersed their carriages on the way, and she was separated from her family. After that, she encountered my father-in-law."

Zhao Xiran said in detail. She didn't believe the whole thing. After she heard the story, she asked her father, Minister Zhao, to inquire about it. It turned out that there was such a thing indeed. It was said that the imperial censor lost his daughter in the chaos. Surprisingly, she came across Shao Jing and became his mistress. Well, the story sounded flawless.

As for the imperial censor, he had not returned to the capital for so many years. He had been a small official outside the capital for more than ten years and never came back to the capital. She couldn't find the imperial censor even if she wanted to ask him about the truth.

In other words, it was useless to investigate. Zhao Xiran had to believe it, no matter what.

"You should ask some people to investigate this matter. Who knows if she is a liar!" Shao Wanru casually reminded her.

"I've checked it out but found nothing useful. Besides, that woman even took out a jade pendant. The people who saw it said the imperial censor's wife indeed had such a jade pendant on her," Zhao Xiran said helplessly.

She didn't believe a word of this story.

If this mistress were a Miss of the imperial censor's family, she should be well-bred and have a sense of shame. How could she get involved with Marquis Xing? For so many years, Marquis Xing didn't marry

her. However, she was willing to live with him and even gave birth to a daughter for him. Didn't she know it was despicable to be a mistress?

From her deeds, Zhao Xiran didn't think she looked like a daughter of an aristocratic family.

Anyway, Zhao Xiran would never believe it!

"The jade pendant belongs to the imperial censor's wife, but it can't prove that she is the imperial censor's daughter. Hasn't anyone seen her other family members?" Shao Wanru asked in confusion.

...

"It's been so many years. Even if some people had seen her family, they must have forgotten it." Zhao Xiran became more and more annoyed and answered with a wry smile. The more she thought about it, the more anxious she became.

"Things that happened many years ago may be unclear to you, but others may know something... Hasn't Second Uncle done anything unusual when he was in the mansion?" Shao Wanru asked casually, gently shaking the round fan in her hand. Then, she turned to see the scenery outside the fence. She seemed not to take this matter seriously and just commented on it casually. "Marquis Xing has kept this mistress for so many years. Even if others are in the dark about this, how could the shrewd Old Madam not know it?"

There was a hint of sarcasm in her words.

If it were someone else talking about her grandmother, Zhao Xiran would think she was wrong. But now, Zhao Xiran felt that Shao Wanru's words made sense. Suddenly, an idea came to her mind...

Chapter 1179 An Chance, Ask First Young Madam for Help

"Shrewd?"

"Old Madam is not the only shrewd person in the Marquis Xing's Mansion." Subconsciously, she clenched the handkerchief in her hand. "Madam Jiang? "Madam Jiang has always been shrewd. Does she really know nothing about this?"

She was suddenly enlightened. "Others may not care about it, but what about Madam Jiang? Could Madam Jiang accept such a secondary legal wife?"

She stole a glance at Shao Wanru and found that she was focused on the scenery outside the window. Her eyes flashed, and she subconsciously hid her thoughts. She did not want Shao Wanru to see through her mind.

She leaned against the fence and looked at the large fish vats below. There were graceful water lilies planted in them. Outside, those lotus flowers covered a large area. Compared with them, each water lily in the fish vats looked more like a slender beauty, elegantly nodding her head slightly in the breeze.

"The water lilies are so charming!" Zhao Xiran praised them from the bottom of her heart. The fish vats were very big, so the water lilies didn't crowd together. The longer she looked at them, the more attractive they became in her eyes.

Shao Wanru's eyes also fell on the water lilies. Thinking of past events, she smiled sweetly. "A few years ago, I had this idea and wanted to plant some in my previous mansion. I didn't expect to see such a scene here!"

A tender smile appeared on Shao Wanru's delicate face. At the sight of such a stunning smile, Zhao Xiran had to admit that Princess Chen must have lived a happy life. How could she smile happily like an innocent child if no one protected and loved her?

Somehow, she felt depressed. They were both married, but she had been working hard for the future of her husband's family. Except for her mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law, she would soon get another elder whose identity was unknown. Compared with Princess Chen, Zhao Xiran was living in utter misery. In the past, she thought she was very clear about Shao Hua'an's background and his deep love for her. It turned out that all the beautiful things existed only in her imagination but not in reality.

"Your water lilies in the few vats look so good. If I had known they would grow so well, I would have raised lilies in a few vats!" She forced a smile and suppressed a trace of annoyance in her heart.

"It's not a complicated thing to do. If you want them, I can give you some!" Shao Wanru said with a chuckle.

"You don't need to do that!" Zhao Xiran refused.

"It doesn't matter. In fact, except for the water lilies in these vats, we have planted some in other places. But the other vats are not so big. I hope you won't mind it!" Shao Wanru turned around with a smile. Then, she ordered Yujie to prepare the gift and send two vats of water lilies to the Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Because of her idea of planting water lilies, Chu Liuchen sent some large vats to her not long after she entered the capital. But later, many things happened fast. Even when she left the Qin's Mansion, she did find a chance to plant a vat of water lilies. Later, she moved from the Marquis Xing's Mansion to the Yuhui Nunnery. Chu Liuchen specially asked some people to grow water lilies in his mansion and sent some to her place.

When Shao Wanru saw water lilies placed in a different place, she thought of this warm past.

"Thank you, Your Highness!" Zhao Xiran no longer refused and thanked her with a smile.

The two of them talked for a while. Suddenly, a servant girl came over in a hurry and said a few words to Shao Wanru. The smile on Shao Wanru's face froze. Then she stood up and said to Zhao Xiran, "Sister Zhao, please sit here for a while. I have something to do and will be back soon."

"Please do as you like, Your Highness!" Zhao Xiran stood up and said with a smile.

Shao Wanru left with her servants, leaving Zhao Xiran and her servant in the pavilion. Zhao Xiran sat down again and looked out of the fence. "Shao Wanru left in such a hurry. Did something happen? Something big seems to have happened. Is it has anything to do with me?"

Since she married into the Marquis Xing's Mansion, Zhao Xiran had always been living in terror and uncertainty. The harsh reality made her realize she was just a woman and spent most of her time in mansions. Her father had taught her many other things than those affairs in the inner court, but so

what? She had no chance to do anything and could only be an ordinary woman from an aristocratic family.

In the past, she had been too naive.

When Zhao Xiran soberly realized this, she became increasingly dependent on Shao Hua'an. Only when Shao Hua'an made more extraordinary achievements could he take her to a bigger world.

"First Young Madam, why hasn't Princess Chen returned yet?" Seeing that Zhao Xiran kept drinking tea impatiently, the servant girl who came with her couldn't help complaining in a low voice.

"Something must have happened!" Zhao Xiran was no longer in the mood to enjoy the scenery and frowned.

"What important thing could alarm Princess Chen? I heard the Prince Chen's Mansion had no other consorts!" The servant girl lowered her voice and said.

Prince Chen married no other woman and didn't even have a woman serving him in his mansion. It was said that Prince Chen had never been close to women since he was a child. He didn't accept any girls sent to him as awards, whether from the Empress Dowager or the Empress in the Palace.

Then, who would provoke Shao Wanru? Or who alerted Shao Wanru? Was it something about the outer court?

When thinking about it carefully, Zhao Xiran suddenly felt the bead curtain at the door sway slightly. She couldn't help turning her eyes over. The servant girl also saw it and quietly walked to the door. When she reached the curtain, she suddenly pulled it open — Mo Yan was standing there. The servant girl couldn't help but be stunned.

"Is First Young Madam inside?" Mo Yan was also startled. Then, she asked happily.

The servant girl knew Mo Yan, so she nodded and looked back at Zhao Xiran.

"Is it Mo Yan? Let her in!" Inside, Zhao Xiran also heard the conversation at the door and said. She had intended to mention Shao Yanru and inquire about some information about her, but unexpectedly Shao Wanru suddenly left.

After the Marquis Xing's Mansion got the news of Shao Yanru's death, nothing happened. People in the mansion calmly accepted her death without even making detailed inquiries about this matter.

Although Zhao Xiran didn't really like Shao Yanru, she was secretly disappointed by the cold and indifferent attitude of those people in the mansion. Shao Yanru had been Old Madam's favorite granddaughter. But when Old Madam heard the news, she didn't even cry a few more times. She just said that she was in a bad mood and drove her out.

As for Shao Hua'an, he didn't say anything. He just let out a long sigh and said this was the best. His face darkened when she asked more questions about that.

Everyone in the mansion was extremely calm. They reacted indifferently as if Shao Yanru were not the First Miss Shao they doted on but an inconspicuous servant girl in the mansion.

Zhao Xiran didn't understand it. Since Mo Yan was here now, she could resolve her doubts.

Mo Yan followed the servant girl into the room. When she saw Zhao Xiran, she knelt and said, "First Young Madam, please take me back to the mansion."

Zhao Xiran looked Mo Yan up and down and asked, "Why are you here? Shouldn't you be in the Palace?"

"Princess Chen took me out of the Palace, but I want to go back to our mansion." Mo Yan cried.

"Don't you want to stay in the Prince Chen's Mansion?" Zhao Xiran asked in confusion. The Marquis Xing's Mansion was declining, while the Prince Chen's Mansion was increasingly thriving. Anyone could see the difference, right?

Moreover, in her mind, Mo Yan was a servant girl of insight much wiser than ordinary servant girls. How could she be so loyal and choose to take a nasty turn with the Marquis Xing's Mansion?

"First Young Madam, I used to be First Miss's servant girl. Even if my master died, I had to offer a sacrifice to her from time to time. How could I serve another master? Besides, even if Princess Chen doesn't mind that I served First Miss, the few servant girls accompanying her will not be happy about it," Mo Yan said sadly.

She was telling the truth. Zhao Xiran knew what had happened between Shao Yanru and Shao Wanru. They had waged tit-for-tat struggles against each other, so how could Shao Wanru's servant girls accept Shao Yanru's?

"Get up first. I'll ask Princess Chen later," Zhao Xiran said.

"Thank you, First Young Madam. Thank you so much!" Mo Yan wiped away her tears and stood up.

"When I heard you were here, I sneaked out to see you. I have to be very careful not to be seen here. I'll have to leave now."

"Go ahead!" Zhao Xiran nodded.

Mo Yan left in a hurry. Seeing no one around, she breathed a sigh of relief and walked back.

After she left for a while, Shao Wanru came back with a servant girl and an old maid.

When she sat down again, she asked the servant girl to change the tea. Then, she picked up the pot and poured a cup of tea for Zhao Xiran in person. She apologized, "Some things happened at the front. I was astonished when I heard the news. Thus, I specially went to ask about it. Sorry to keep you waiting!"

"It doesn't matter. You're too polite, Your Highness. The scenery here is so beautiful. I won't feel bored even if I sit here all day!" Zhao Xiran smiled and said, seemingly in a good mood. She took the tea from Shao Wanru, took a sip, and put it down with a bright smile. "I saw a person in the distance just now. She seemed to be Mo Yan, but I'm not sure. I was amused. The people serving Shao Yanru should be in the Palace. How could she appear in the Prince Chen's Mansion?"

"Sister Zhao, did you see Mo Yan just now?" Shao Wanru asked, smiling.

"Yes, I saw someone like her, but it might not be her. It must have been someone else!" Zhao Xiran put it tactfully. Of course, she wouldn't ask for Mo Yan directly from Shao Wanru.

"It's indeed Mo Yan. After Secondary Consort Shao passed away, she lived alone in the Palace. She temporarily entered the Palace then, so I applied to take her away. Now she is in my mansion." Shao Wanru carelessly told the truth without hiding anything.

"Is she really here?" Zhao Xiran was very surprised and sat upright as if she had just known it.

...

"Yes. There are so many people in the Prince Chen's Mansion. It's nothing serious to take in one more person!" Shao Wanru nodded and said.

Zhao Xiran wanted to say something but stopped on second thought. At last, with her eyes on Shao Wanru, she said, "Your Highness, I have an unreasonable request. I don't know if I should tell you."

"Sister Zhao, please don't stand on ceremony with me. If you have anything to say, just say it." Shao Wanru said with a radiant smile on her delicate little face, which made her look beautiful and elegant.

"Can you give Mo Yan to me? She had been Shao Yanru's personal maid. Old Madam feels sad whenever she remembers something about Shao Yanru. She may feel better if she sees Mo Yan and makes everything clear. She is old and always worries about many things, not to mention that she cares about Shao Yanru the most!"

Zhao Xiran sounded helpless.

If Shao Wanru didn't know Mo Yan had been here, she might believe it.

"Mo Yan is a palace maid. Although she was temporarily appointed as a palace maid, her identity was officially changed. Thus, this matter hasn't yet been completed. After finishing all the formalities, I'll send her to the Marquis Xing's Mansion!" Shao Wanru behaved with perfect composure and said steadily.

Chapter 1180 Meeting Madam Jiang Again

"Thank you, Your Highness!" Zhao Xiran thanked her. This matter had gone smoothly. Today, she didn't come here in vain.

"Sister Zhao, don't mention it. She asked me to take her out of the Palace, saying she wanted to offer incense to her master. She was unwilling to stay in the Palace," Shao Wanru explained.

"Your Highness, may I ask... if she died of any sudden illness?" Seeing that Shao Wanru looked fine, Zhao Xiran asked cautiously.

Shao Yanru had been fine but died all of a sudden.

If it happened outside the Palace, the Marquis Xing's Mansion would find out the truth. However, she died in the Palace. Moreover, Shao Yanru had entered the Palace under such circumstances, so the Emperor never doted on her. In fact, he detested her. In this case, how could the Marquis Xing's Mansion have the courage to investigate this matter? They could only accept the result silently.

Even if they wanted to inquire about it, they could only ask around secretly and didn't dare to mention it openly. Shao Wanru was just suitable for such secret inquiries.

"I don't know much about it. When Consort of Virtue told me about it, I didn't believe it, but it turned out to be true," Shao Wanru answered briefly. It seemed that she didn't feel like talking about it. Then, she casually added, "I asked Mo Yan about it later, but she couldn't explain why it was so. She just said that there were some disputes. As for the details, we'd better wait for her to tell Old Madam herself when she sees her!"

Since Shao Wanru didn't want to say it, Zhao Xiran wouldn't mention it again to avoid annoying Shao Wanru. Anyway, her purpose of coming to the Prince Chen's Mansion today had been achieved. Even better, she got the news about Mo Yan. Then, she could give a reasonable explanation when she went back.

"Then let's wait for the matter of Mo Yan to be settled!" Zhao Xiran said.

Shao Wanru nodded noncommittally and abruptly changed the topic. "What do you think of the matter between Eldest Brother and Infanta Yuan'an last time?"

Zhao Xiran was stunned. "It has been so long. How could she mention it again at this time?" After thinking for a while, she answered carefully, "Infanta Yuan'an is powerful, so your brother has nothing to say!"

After saying that, she sighed heavily. At first, she just answered perfunctorily. But when she finished sighing, she couldn't help sighing again and felt inexplicably sad.

"What if he testifies against Infanta Yuan'an?" Shao Wanru asked.

This proposal scared Zhao Xiran so much that her face tightened. Hurriedly, she restrained the worry in her heart. Infanta Yuan'an would be Princess Zhou in the future. Although this matter had deeply humiliated her, Prince Zhou would not allow others to push her too hard.

"Well... A long time has passed. Back then, we didn't make that matter clear. If we bring it up now, it will get you into trouble," Zhao Xiran said meaningfully.

Of course, Shao Wanru understood what she meant. There was no need for Zhao Xiran to elucidate. After a moment of silence, she seemed to have made a decision, "In that case, forget it. I've wanted to help Eldest Brother give vent to his anger!"

"No need. He is much better now!" Zhao Xiran said with a hollow laugh.

She was afraid that he might lose his life in the end instead of venting his anger. His life would be in danger once he became the immediate cause of the fight between the two princesses.

The Marquis Xing's Mansion was in internal and external troubles, so Zhao Xiran was not confident enough to do that.

Being refused, Shao Wanru seemed to be a little unhappy. After talking with her for a while, she looked a little tired. Zhao Xiran was sensitive enough to know that this should be the reason why Shao Wanru asked her to come here today. Since she disappointed her, Shao Wanru was not in the mood to chat with her. Thus, Zhao Xiran stood up and said goodbye to her considerately.

Perfunctorily, Shao Wanru asked her to stay longer, but she soon asked Yujie to send her to the mansion's gate.

After getting on the carriage of Marquis Xing's Mansion, Zhao Xiran leaned against it and carefully pondered her conversation with Shao Wanru. She was increasingly convinced that Shao Wanru invited her over because she wanted the Marquis Xing's Mansion to confront Infanta Yuan'an.

Something had happened in the two foreign princesses' courtyard, and Infanta Yuan'an was said to have fainted. But after that, several noble ladies were given to Prince Zhou. It could be seen that Infanta Yuan'an must have irritated the powerful figures in the Palace.

Princess Chen didn't get along well with Infanta Yuan'an. Thus, she wanted to use her family's power to trample on Infanta Yuan'an at this time.

Thinking of this, Zhao Xiran broke out in a cold sweat on her back. The Marquis Xing's Mansion couldn't withstand the revenge of Prince Zhou and Ruiping Great Elder Princess. It was better for them to behave well and stay meticulous. First of all, they had to solve the problems in their mansion.

Madam Jiang. She was going to find Madam Jiang.

Princess Chen failed to achieve her goal but accidentally reminded Zhao Xiran of something important. She must tell Madam Jiang that a mistress would marry into the mansion as a secondary legal wife. Madam Jiang should be more anxious than her regarding this matter. It had been so many years. Zhao Xiran didn't believe that her shrewd mother-in-law didn't know anything about it. If she had a backup plan, she could use it to prevent that woman from marrying into the mansion.

After returning to the mansion, Zhao Xiran went to the study and honestly told Shao Hua'an about the conversation between her and Shao Wanru. Shao Hua'an nodded repeatedly and felt her response proper and reasonable. At this time, they couldn't become a sharp tool for the Prince Chen's Mansion to deal with Infanta Yuan'an. They were not capable enough to do that. If they were stupid to get involved, they might be finished off without noticing it.

It would be best for them to suffer this loss quietly.

It had been a long time, and Shao Hua'an was not as angry as before. He could calm down and think about the cause and effect of the matter and the best way to handle the current situation.

After the discussion, Zhao Xiran went back to the inner court. As soon as she sat down in her courtyard, she heard from the servants that the Prince Chen's Mansion had sent two vats of water lilies over.

After thinking for a while, she asked some people to move the two vats of water lilies to her courtyard. It could show that she attached great importance to the Prince Chen's Mansion.

The Prince Chen's Mansion had sent a few rough old maids who looked very strong. An old maid in charge took them in. After greeting Zhao Xiran, she politely asked where they should place the vats of flowers.

Zhao Xiran sent a trusted servant girl to give the order. She sat inside and pondered for a while. Then she got up and went to Madam Jiang's living place in the inner court with only one servant girl.

The courtyard was still the same one. It was large but very desolate. The front door of the yard had long been sealed. Only a small side door could be opened, which had been used to send food.

Zhao Xiran knew very well that only a few servants were left inside. However, no one wanted to be locked up with Madam Jiang until she died. The people inside could not leave unless there were any special reasons.

Since Madam Jiang was locked up, Zhao Xiran had never come into this place again. She stood at the side door and asked a servant girl to knock on the door. An aged maid who looked old and clumsy opened it. When seeing Zhao Xiran, she was stunned and hurried forward to bow. "Greetings, First Young Madam!"

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

"She was walking in the yard just now!" The old maid reported. Apart from taking a walk, Madam Jiang could only sleep. She couldn't and didn't dare to walk out of this courtyard. Shao Jing had long warned her that he would divorce her if she made any trouble again.

Zhao Xiran walked in. This was the first time she had come to Madam Jiang's courtyard since the accident. The courtyard had not been cleaned for a long time. This place was completely overgrown with weeds, and the branches and leaves were all over the ground.

She stood in the yard and did not go to the main room. Madam Jiang had got the news and came out with a servant girl. There were only two or three servants left in this place.

"What are you doing here?" Madam Jiang glared at Zhao Xiran in displeasure and vented her anger on her, blaming Zhao Xiran for her miserable life. "This daughter-in-law brings bad luck. If it weren't for her, I would still be the Madam of Marquis Xing. How could I possibly end up like this? Fortunately, I can still depend on Ru'er. When she rises to a high position, I will ask my son to divorce her."

"Greetings, Mother!" Zhao Xiran stepped forward and bowed.

"If you have anything to say, just say it. Don't come if you have nothing important to report. I hate seeing you!" Madam Jiang said coldly. She raised her head and stood on the steps, looking at Zhao Xiran coldly.

"Mother, I do have something to tell you, but I don't know if I should," Zhao Xiran said in a mild and roundabout way.

"Cut the crap and get straight to the point. You don't have to be so courteous because no one pays attention to you. I'm not Hua'an, so I never think you have a good character. At that time, I was blind to believe you could prosper your husband. It had never occurred to me that you would squander our family fortune. Our mansion is so damn unlucky to take you in!"

Madam Jiang poured out a torrent of abuse on Zhao Xiran, venting her pent-up anger.

She racked her brains for the most sinister swearing words.

Zhao Xiran clenched the handkerchief in her hand for fear that she would lose control of her emotions and behaviors. Madam Jiang's vicious and mean face looked indeed annoying. She would never come here to see her if it weren't necessary.

Zhao Xiran lowered her head slightly to hide the anger in her eyes.

Suppressing the rage in her heart, she said, "Mother, Father is going to marry a secondary legal wife. Do you know that?"

"Marrying a secondary legal wife? That's great! Let Hua'an marry a secondary legal wife in case you..." Madam Jiang cursed without thinking. After letting out a few curses, she suddenly came to her senses, and her eyes instantly became icy cold. Facing Zhao Xiran with frowning brows and angry eyes, she repeatedly asked, "What did you say? Who will marry a secondary legal wife? Who will do that?"

When she asked the last question, her shrill voice became ear-piercing.

"Father is going to marry a secondary legal wife. She is said to be a mistress kept outside for more than ten years. Also, she is a Miss from an aristocratic family. When in trouble, she came across Father. Father said he would bring her in as his secondary legal wife." Zhao Xiran calmly looked at Madam Jiang's almost distorted face, feeling a surge of joy in her heart.

...

Madam Jiang said she could hardly wait to see Shao Hua'an marry a secondary legal wife. Now, it was her turn to face the harsh reality. Zhao Xiran would like to see how she would deal with it!

"A Miss from an aristocratic family? How could there be such a woman from an aristocratic family? I knew Shao Jing had a mistress outside. Who knows how that cheap bitch hooked up with him? How dare she say she is a Miss from an aristocratic family?" Madam Jiang hurled all kinds of abuses against that mistress, fuming with anger.

She had long felt that Shao Jing had a mistress outside, but she had never found out who the woman was. To her huge surprise, this slut wanted to marry into the mansion now.

"I'm the legal wife. If I disagree, this whore can't marry into our mansion." How Madam Jiang wished that Shao Jing was right in front of her. In that case, she would pounce on him and bite off his flesh. Then, she would cripple that woman and send her to a brothel.

"Mother, you are not the legal wife but a secondary legal wife!" When Madam Jiang was in a frenzy of rage, Zhao Xiran fanned the flames of her anger.

Shao Jing had no legal wife but two secondary legal wives. It was against the rules.

She had never brought it up to Shao Wanru, nor had Shao Wanru mentioned it before her, but they both understood this thing.

A man was only allowed to marry one legal wife and one secondary legal wife. How could Marquis Xing have two secondary legal wives? In theory, there seemed to be no solution to this matter!