

Ghost 125

Chapter 125: ghost also cry

The lunch rush had passed.

The workers rested with full stomachs.

Trainees stretched under the afternoon sun.

The Emperor—still pretending to be a normal man—was somewhere in the garden patch, ruining his royal shoes in a pile of mud.

But inside the kitchen...

A storm brewed.

Not of people.

Of ghosts.

Fen Yu, the female ghost, sat curled on the ceiling beam like a wilted flower, her translucent skirt torn, hair messy, face swollen from crying. She hugged her knees and continued her dramatic sniffing:

"Hic... hic... I don't want to live anymore... I want to disappear... hic..."

She kept her back to the Empress and her two ghost companions, clearly wanting attention but refusing to admit it.

Wei Rong, the general ghost, stood below her with arms crossed, his stern expression weakening with each sniff she made.

Li Shen, the scholar ghost, kept pushing his glasses up even though they were imaginary, guilt shadowing his face.

The Empress sighed.

"Fen Yu... come eat," she said gently, holding a bowl of steaming stew.

Fen Yu didn't even look.

She sniffled louder.

"Leave me... let me die again... hic..."

The Empress blinked.

"You're already dead."

Fen Yu gasped dramatically and covered her face.

"Hic... THEN LET ME DIE THRICE!"

Her shoulders shook pitifully.

Li Shen murmured, "Your Majesty... maybe we were too harsh."

Wei Rong grunted. "She deserved punishment. She was deceived because she's brainless."

Fen Yu wailed louder.

"General is scolding me again! Life is suffering!"

Empress Lian An finally put the bowl down and floated up—yes, floated up, because ghost rules in this world allowed her to stand lightly on balanced beams when she wished.

She sat beside Fen Yu, who flinched and tried to turn away.

But Lian An gently turned her face back.

Fen Yu's tearful, swollen eyes looked miserable.

Her small ghostly body trembled.

The Empress sighed softening.

"Fen Yu... why won't you eat?"

Fen Yu's chin trembled.

"Because... because... hic... I am... sad."

Even Wei Rong and Li Shen froze.

Fen Yu almost never said things directly.

She always hid behind drama, teasing, or nonsense flirting with random ghosts.

The Empress placed a hand on her cold, transparent shoulder.

"Tell me what's troubling you."

Fen Yu covered her face.

"I... I died young..."

Her voice cracked.

Wei Rong and Li Shen both turned away, suddenly uncomfortable.

They knew this story.

They just didn't like hearing it.

Fen Yu continued, tears flowing freely:

"I was just fifteen when my parents sold me to the palace. I worked in the laundry hall. I scrubbed clothes for nobles who never even remembered my name... but I didn't complain."

Her voice trembled.

"I was engaged to a boy from my village. He promised me he would wait for me... that when I finished my service, we would marry."

Her shoulders shook.

She sobbed harder.

"But when I sneaked out to meet him... he had someone else. A woman older than me, richer than me, prettier than me..."

Her voice collapsed into a whisper.

"She laughed at me. He told me he never loved me. Then... then..."

The Empress gently wiped her cold tears.

"Then she killed you."

Fen Yu nodded miserably.

"They framed it as an accident... no one cared. I died without justice, without love, without a family."

She burst into uncontrollable sobs.

"I wanted a wedding... I wanted babies... I wanted someone to grow old with... hic... but I died before I could even live..."

Even the Empress swallowed hard.

The scholar ghost wiped the corner of his eye. "I told myself I was allergic to dust, but this is painful."

The general ghost looked away, muttering, "Tch. Annoying girl... but she didn't deserve that fate."

Fen Yu continued, voice cracking:

"You two saved me from wandering alone... but you both are men! Brothers! You don't understand... family is different... a husband is different... a baby is different..."

She choked.

"I want a family too... but I'm dead. I can't have one. I can't touch people. I can't hug children. I can't grow old with someone. I can't be loved..."

She cried loudly into her hands.

"I... just wanted one ring... one proof that someone loved me... even if it was a lie..."

The Empress's heart cracked.

Fen Yu cried harder.

"I gave away your ring, Your Majesty... not because I'm greedy... but because I wished someone would choose me... even if I'm dead."

For a long moment, silence filled the kitchen.

Only Fen Yu's soft sobbing echoed.

The Empress gently pulled her into a hug.

Fen Yu froze.

No one... no one had hugged her since she died.

Lian An whispered softly,

"I understand, Fen Yu... I understand your loneliness."

Fen Yu's breath caught.

Because the Empress's voice... wasn't calm.

It was trembling.

"I also lost my parents young," Lian An said quietly. "I lived alone, working in a small restaurant. No friends. No love. No one to lean on. I cooked alone, cried alone, ate alone."

Fen Yu's sobbing softened, eyes widening.

"When I died," the Empress continued, "I thought I would be alone in this world too..."

She looked at the three ghosts.

"But instead, I got you three.

A scholar who scolds me like an older brother.

A general who protects me like a father.

And a foolish, dramatic Fen Yu...

who cries like a child but loves like a mother."

Fen Yu burst into fresh tears—but softer this time.

"I'm not useless?" she whispered.

"You are precious," Lian An said firmly.

Li Shen sniffed, pretending to adjust glasses that didn't exist.

Wei Rong turned away, blinking rapidly.

"It's dusty in here."

The Empress held Fen Yu tighter.

"You still deserve family, even as a ghost. And you have one."

Fen Yu hiccupped. "Who?"

Lian An smiled warmly.

"Me."

The scholar ghost stepped forward, placing a gentle hand on Fen Yu's back.

"And me."

The general ghost placed a hand on her head roughly.

"And... me too, idiot."

Fen Yu cried even harder and hugged them all with her wispy arms.

For the first time since her death, she felt... whole.

Not a palace servant.

Not a forgotten girl.

Not a foolish ghost.

But family.

Fen Yu wiped her ghostly tears on the Empress's sleeve, hiccupping softly.

Wei Rong muttered, "Enough crying. You'll flood the kitchen."

Fen Yu glared at him weakly.

"General, can you not ruin touching moments for two seconds?"

Before he could answer, Li Shen cleared his throat and pushed his imaginary spectacles up his nose—a habit he developed while alive and never dropped even after death.

"Ahem," the scholar ghost said. "Since everyone is crying and extremely emotional... I believe the best solution is—"

He paused dramatically.

"—a story."

Fen Yu sniffed. "A story? About what?"

Li Shen lifted his chin proudly.

"About the time General Wei Rong... accidentally kissed a horse."

Wei Rong froze.

The Empress almost dropped Fen Yu in shock.

Fen Yu's eyes widened like lanterns.

"You WHAT?!"

Li Shen smirked, already enjoying himself.

"It was during the forty-fourth border war. The general was giving an inspiring speech about discipline and bravery. Suddenly, his horse sneezed."

Fen Yu leaned forward.

"And then?"

"And the general, being the fearless warrior he is..." Li Shen continued, voice lowering,

"turned his head... exactly... at that moment."

Fen Yu gasped.

Wei Rong covered his face with both hands. "Li Shen... I swear on my spear—"

But Li Shen wasn't done.

"What followed," he said seriously, "was the loudest SMAACK I have ever heard."

The Empress burst into laughter first.

Fen Yu rolled on the beam, clutching her stomach.

"Hah—HAH!! KISSED A HORSE?!! General you kissed a HORSE?!!"

Wei Rong growled.

"It was an accident!"

Li Shen added calmly,

"The horse fell in love for three days."

The Empress almost fell off the beam.

Fen Yu laughed so hard she hiccupped.

Wei Rong glared at both of them, face red.

"The next time I train soldiers, I will strangle you two."

Fen Yu wiped her laughter tears, chest still shaking with giggles.

For the first time since she'd returned...

She smiled—bright and genuine.

The Empress handed her a warm bowl of stew again.

Fen Yu looked at it.

Looked at Lian An.

Looked at her two ghost companions.

Then nodded.

She took the bowl with trembling hands and took her first bite.

The flavor made her eyes widen.

Wei Rong smirked. "Eat slowly. You're already dead; don't choke."

Fen Yu ignored him and shoveled more food in.

Li Shen sat beside her on the beam.

The Empress leaned back against the wooden post, smiling softly.

And for the first time in years...

All four of them—

one living woman

and three wandering ghosts—

laughed together like a real family.