

Ghost 134

Chapter 134: journey start

The Whisper Bowl looked different at night.

All lanterns dimmed, the streets empty, kitchen fires dying out. The training hall was silent—no shouting twins, no scholar scolding workers, no clatter of bowls.

But inside one small room...

The Empress was glaring at her reflection with the fury of a thousand storms.

A rounded pregnancy pillow was tied to her stomach under her soft robe.

A sash wrapped around it, making her appear exactly six months pregnant.

She poked the pillow.

It bounced.

She poked it again.

It bounced harder.

She wanted to murder someone.

Fen Yu drifted around her like a dramatic actress in a tragedy play.

"This is humiliating... You, a queen, pretending to be pregnant... truly, men are the worst."

Li Shen nodded solemnly.

"He tricked you with logic. Male strategy. Very common."

Wei Rong sighed deeply.

"Just accept it. We tried arguing; you still have to go."

The Empress gritted her teeth.

"I will kill him one day."

A soft tapping interrupted her rage.

Three faint knocks.

The Emperor's signal.

Fen Yu instantly jumped behind the bed, whispering,

"He's here! The tyrant is here!"

Wei Rong crossed his arms.

"Behave. Don't embarrass Empress."

Li Shen floated to the ceiling so fast he hit his head and fell back down.

The Empress inhaled sharply, wiped her expression, and opened the door.

The Emperor Arrives

He stood there in a dark cloak, moonlight reflecting on his face.

He looked entirely like a nobleman playing commoner.

His eyes dropped instantly to her stomach.

"...Good," he said, voice low.

Her eyelid twitched.

"I look ridiculous."

"You look convincing," he corrected calmly. "That is the point."

The Empress wanted to strangle him.

Behind her, Fen Yu muttered loudly,

"He just wants an excuse to make her look fat."

Li Shen smacked her ghostly head.

"He can't hear you, idiot."

Wei Rong rolled his phantom eyes.

"He wishes she was pregnant. That's the problem."

The Empress shot them all a glare.

"Silence."

They froze instantly.

The Emperor, who heard nothing, walked in and inspected her disguise.

He tugged the sash tighter around her false belly.

She slapped his hand away.

"Stop touching me."

"I'm making sure it doesn't fall," he replied calmly. "A pregnant woman cannot have her stomach deflate in the middle of the road."

The ghosts snorted.

Fen Yu: "He's enjoying this way too much."

Li Shen: "He is imagining how she'd look actually pregnant."

Wei Rong: "He needs purification."

The Empress nearly choked.

Preparing to Leave

The Emperor gave her a simple travel cloak.

"Put this on. The roads are cold tonight."

She snatched it and wore it with a dramatic swing of the cloth.

He handed her a small satchel.

"To pretend you packed for a journey."

Inside were essentials — dried food, a comb, a pouch of silver, two handkerchiefs.

Her lips pressed into a line.

"This is excessive."

"It must look real."

Fen Yu whispered,

"He wants to play house so badly."

Li Shen added,

"He calls it undercover. I call it fantasy role-play."

Wei Rong coughed,

"Focus. He's turning around."

They snapped quiet again.

Sneaking Ghosts

As the Emperor turned to blow out the lanterns, the three ghosts lined up behind the Empress like a secret guard unit.

Fen Yu saluted.

"We are ready to serve, Your Majesty!"

Li Shen frowned, "We're sneaking. Quiet."

Wei Rong added,

"We're not servants. We are soldiers of the afterlife."

The Empress pinched the bridge of her nose.

"Just don't cause trouble."

Her ghosts nodded like children being told to behave at a wedding.

The Secret Followers

Outside, in the shadows behind crates, Yao Qing, the twins, and Wei Jie crouched awkwardly.

Twin girl whispered,

"Shhhh! Don't breathe so loud!"

Twin boy whispered louder,

"YOU'RE the one breathing like a buffalo!"

Wei Jie elbowed both.

"If you two fight before we even leave, I will bury you."

Yao Qing slapped all three.

"Focus! We are following her quietly, not attacking each other!"

They peeked over the crates.

The Emperor stepped out of the Whisper Bowl with the Empress at his side, her fake belly disguised beneath the cloak.

Twin girl clasped her hands dramatically.

"Look how he touches her elbow... he's acting like a real husband."

Twin boy nodded.

"This is the first time they look like a normal couple."

Yao Qing hissed,

"Normal couple? That man is a walking disaster."

Wei Jie raised a thumb.

"We follow from far enough. If danger comes—we jump."

They nodded.

The mission had begun.

Undercover Journey Begins

The Emperor walked slightly ahead, checking the dark alley for danger. His posture was sharp, alert.

The Empress walked behind him, expression blank but eyes filled with silent rage.

The pregnancy pillow bounced under her cloak with every step.

Fen Yu drifted beside her.

"You walk like a noblewoman, not a pregnant villager. Bend a little."

The Empress glared.

"I have never been pregnant."

Li Shen instructed,

"Waddle. Just a bit. Pregnant women waddle."

Wei Rong added,

"And keep a hand under your stomach. They do that too."

The Empress tried.

She waddled.

She hated every second.

The Emperor glanced back, saw her awkward attempt, and suppressed a smile.

"Better," he said.

She wanted to stab him with her hairpin.

Yao Qing and Group Following Behind

From the rooftops and alleys, her group followed like amateur spies.

Twin girl whispered,

"She's waddling! So cute!"

Twin boy whispered,

"She looks miserable—so cute!"

Yao Qing slapped them both again.

"She looks angry enough to kill. NOT cute!"

Wei Jie nodded.

"Accurate."

Leaving the Whisper Bowl Behind

They reached the city gates. Guards nodded at them, thinking they were just traveling villagers.

No one suspected the Empress was under a hood.

No one suspected the Emperor was disguised as a common man.

No one noticed the ghosts floating above the gate like three glowing lanterns.

Finally, the Emperor whispered,

"Tonight, we reach the forest. Tomorrow, we blend into the barbaric refugee group. Stay close."

The Empress lifted her chin, voice cold.

"Just remember—this is your plan, not mine."

He looked at her with a strange softness.

"...Yes. But I promised to protect you."

She froze—not ready for that tone.

Fen Yu whispered,

"OHMYGOD STOP FLIRTING—WE ARE IN A MISSION!"

Li Shen agreed,

"Focus! Romance later!"

Wei Rong added,

"We kill barbarians first. Then gossip."

The Empress almost burst out laughing.

Almost.

And So, the Journey Began...

Under the moonlight, disguised as a pregnant couple, with three ghosts hovering like bodyguards and four idiots secretly following behind...

The Emperor and Empress left the Whisper Bowl.

A new arc began.

Danger. Mystery. Undercover missions.

And chaos—because she was traveling with HIM.

The road ahead was long.

And absolutely nothing would go smoothly.

The night wind brushed softly through the forested path as the Emperor guided the Empress down the quiet slope toward an abandoned granary outside the city. A single lantern flickered beside the small wooden hut — the meeting point.

Fen Yu floated above Lian An's head, whispering dramatically, "Look! A haunted hut. Perfect for our chaotic fate."

Li Shen elbowed her ghostly side. "It's not haunted, idiot. It's an army meeting point."

Wei Rong, calmer, added, "Stay alert. Anyone here might know martial arts."

The Empress wanted to shove all three inside her sleeves so they would stop drawing attention, but of course — only she could see or hear them.

The Emperor stopped in front of the hut and knocked twice — their signal.

Inside, feet shuffled.

The door opened.

General Xie appeared first, dressed in rough villager clothes, beard smeared with charcoal to look darker, hair tied sloppily at the back. His face was serious — but the moment he saw the Empress' fake belly his eyes widened so much he nearly fell backward.

"Y-Your Majesty— I mean— Sister Lian—" he corrected nervously.

"You look... very... pregnant."

The Empress glared.

That was not a compliment.

Behind him, four soldiers stepped out — also disguised as villagers.

And behind them, four women slowly emerged — the soldiers' wives — each carrying a cloth bundle tied around their backs. Their faces were pale from worry.

The moment they saw the Emperor, they kneeled instinctively before remembering they had to pretend.

They jerked up awkwardly, saluting like confused chickens.

"W-We greet— No— We... bow? No... hello???"

One soldier stuttered as his wife elbowed him fiercely.

The Emperor's expression twitched with restrained annoyance.

"We are refugees from the north," he reminded them coldly.

"Not soldiers. Not nobles. Not imperial anything."

They all straightened, nodding vigorously.

"Yes, yes, refugees!"

"We come from... from that cold place... northy north!"

"Our homes burned... by... um... barbarians!"

Fen Yu pinched the bridge of her ghostly nose.

"They're terrible liars."

Li Shen whispered,

"This undercover mission will collapse in ten seconds."

The Empress inhaled deeply, praying for patience.

THE EMPRESS IS INTRODUCED

One of the soldier's wives — a timid young woman — stepped forward and bowed politely toward Lian An.

"Sister... you must be tired. Being pregnant and traveling..."

She glanced lovingly at the Empress' belly.

"How many months?"

Before the Empress could answer, the Emperor stepped behind her and placed a firm hand under her pillow belly — too naturally.

"Six months," he answered.

Fen Yu choked on air.

"He said that too smoothly."

Li Shen: "He's enjoying pretending to be the father."

Wei Rong: "Focus."

The Empress elbowed the Emperor sharply.

He didn't even flinch.

THE GROUP SITS TO DISCUSS THE COVER STORY

Inside the hut, straw mats were spread on the floor.

The Emperor motioned for everyone to sit.

He remained standing, hands behind his back — even disguised as a commoner, his authority filled the room.

His voice lowered.

"From this moment onward, we are one family."

All eight villagers and their wives nodded nervously.

"No rank. No military. No palace. No formality."

He pointed at the Empress.

"She is my wife."

At that, three things happened simultaneously:

1. Fen Yu screamed internally: "He said WIFE with SO MUCH SPIRITUAL ENERGY!"
2. Yao Qing, hiding outside with the twins, nearly fainted.
3. The Empress strangled her cloak string to avoid strangling him.

The Emperor continued calmly,

"We came from the northern villages. Bandits destroyed our home. We seek shelter with the barbaric camp. We will blend in as desperate refugees."

One soldier raised his hand timidly.

"Your— Brother... uh... Big Brother... why would the barbarians accept us?"

The Emperor's eyes sharpened.

"Because they recruit without checking. They need numbers. They will take anyone claiming to be homeless."

Another soldier whispered to his wife, "So even barbarians are desperate like us..."

His wife elbowed him.

THE UNDERCOVER ROLES

The Emperor pointed to each pair.

"You two are siblings. You two are cousins. You two are neighbors. And you two—"

He paused, pointed to General Xie.

"—you are my wife's distant uncle."

The Empress coughed hard.

Fen Yu burst out laughing.

"UNCLE?! Perfect! He's old enough."

General Xie looked like he had swallowed a live frog.

But the Emperor was still explaining.

"If anyone asks why we wander together — we escaped one village together. We lost everything."

A soldier's wife trembled slightly.

"We have to lie... for a long time?"

The Emperor nodded.

"As long as needed."

His tone softened just slightly.

"No one there can know who we truly are. For your safety — and hers."

His eyes drifted toward the Empress.

For a moment, no one else existed.

Fen Yu squealed.

"He looked at her with emotions! Did you SEE that?!!"

Li Shen slapped her.

"Quiet. He's still speaking."

THE GHOSTS EVALUATE THE SOLDIERS

While the Emperor instructed the group, the Empress' three ghosts floated around inspecting them.

Fen Yu: "These soldier wives look kind."

Li Shen: "The husbands are strong enough to fight demon-level creatures."

Wei Rong: "Good. We will need them."

The Empress whispered, "We are not here to kill ghosts. We are here to investigate barbarians."

All three ghosts replied simultaneously:

"We can do both."

She sighed.

THE EMPEROR'S FINAL WARNING

He stepped forward, voice dropping lower.

"The barbarians are strange."

Everyone quieted.

"Fast. Silent. Impossible to track. Even skilled martial artists cannot kill them easily. They vanish without footprints. They strike without sound."

His eyes darkened.

"And the worst part — they seem to know our guard movements before we even move."

A chill spread through the hut.

Fen Yu whispered, "Maybe ghost-breeding is involved..."

Li Shen nodded slowly.

"I feel a twisted energy around their name."

Wei Rong's expression hardened.

"Be cautious."

The Emperor continued,

"We are not going there to fight. Not yet. First we gather information. We must understand how they operate."

Everyone straightened.

He reached into a sack and distributed plain villager shawls, dirt smudged clothes, worn shoes, and scarves.

"These are your disguises. Wear them tomorrow."

The soldier wives nodded obediently.

"Tonight we rest. Tomorrow, the mission begins."

THE EGRESS

The Empress stood slowly, her fake belly swaying slightly.

One soldier wife rushed to support her arm.

"Please be careful, Sister! You must not fall!"

The Emperor stepped in front of the woman instantly, lifting the Empress by her waist — too naturally.

"She's fine," he said coldly. "I'll walk her."

Fen Yu fainted mid-air.

Li Shen groaned.

"He's flirting while planning war."

Wei Rong sighed.

"He can multitask."

The Empress slapped his hand off.

"Do not touch me."

He simply let his hand fall, expression unreadable.

"Tomorrow... you'll have to act like my wife in front of others."

She glared.

"That is the worst part of this mission."

Yao Qing, hiding behind a tree, whispered to the twins:

"This fake husband-wife mission will kill me before the barbarians will."

Twin girl: "But they look cute—"

Yao Qing slapped her.

And the Night Ends...

Inside the hut, the soldiers whispered, amazed.

"She's so pretty... pregnant women usually look tired..."

"Her husband is so protective..."

"They must love each other very much..."

General Xie muttered into his hands, "If only they knew."

The ghosts hovered above them, listening.

Fen Yu: "Tomorrow will be chaos."

Li Shen: "Tomorrow will be death."

Wei Rong: "Tomorrow will be important."

The Empress looked up at the moon.

Tonight was the last peaceful breath before stepping into the unknown.

And tomorrow—

They would enter the barbaric camp.

Together.

Disguised as one family.

And absolutely nothing would go as planned.