

Ghost 236

Chapter 236: quite day of recovery

The days following the Empress's awakening slowly brought a sense of calm back to the palace.

The terrifying rumors of her death had faded, and the mourning banners had long been removed. Though whispers still lingered in corners of the palace corridors, the overall atmosphere had begun returning to normal.

Inside the Empress's courtyard, however, life moved more gently than before.

Lian An's recovery had become the most important matter for everyone around her.

The physician had ordered strict rest, herbal medicine every few hours, and warm food to restore her strength. The wound on her head from falling into the lake had mostly healed, but her body was still weak from the days her soul had hovered between life and death.

Yet each day, her health improved a little more.

That morning, the sun shone softly into the courtyard. The winter air was cold, but the light made the space feel peaceful.

Lian An sat on a cushioned chair near the window, wrapped in a thick cloak. Her long hair had been loosely tied behind her shoulders, and a warm cup of herbal tea rested in her hands.

Her maid carefully arranged blankets around her legs.

"You must not catch cold, Your Majesty," the maid reminded gently.

Lian An gave a small smile.

"I'm not made of glass."

The maid shook her head immediately.

"The healer said Your Majesty must be careful for at least another week."

Before Lian An could reply, footsteps were heard outside the courtyard gate.

The guards announced respectfully,

"His Majesty has arrived."

The maid immediately stepped aside and bowed.

Moments later, the Emperor entered the courtyard.

He had come without a large escort, dressed in his usual dark robes after finishing the morning court session.

His sharp eyes quickly scanned the courtyard until they found Lian An sitting by the window.

For a brief moment, relief passed across his face.

She was sitting upright.

Her color looked better than before.

And most importantly—

She was alive.

The Emperor walked toward her slowly.

"You should be resting in bed."

His voice sounded calm, but there was clear concern beneath it.

Lian An lifted the teacup lightly.

"I've been resting for days."

"If I lie down any longer, I'll turn into a statue."

The Emperor almost smiled at her stubborn tone.

Instead, he pulled a chair closer and sat beside her.

The maid quietly retreated, leaving them alone.

For a few moments, neither spoke.

The Emperor studied her carefully.

The pale color in her face had faded slightly, and though she still looked fragile, there was life in her eyes again.

"You look better today," he said finally.

Lian An shrugged lightly.

"The healer's medicine tastes terrible, but I suppose it works."

The Emperor's expression softened faintly.

"That medicine saved your life."

She looked at him curiously.

"You sound very grateful to the healer."

"I am," he replied calmly.

"Because if anything had happened to you..."

His sentence stopped halfway.

Lian An noticed it but did not ask.

Instead, she sipped her tea quietly.

After a moment, the Emperor spoke again.

"You should not go near the lake again."

Lian An nodded.

"I don't plan to."

Her eyes lowered slightly.

"I still don't understand what happened that night."

The Emperor's gaze darkened.

"We will find out."

His tone carried quiet determination.

Lian An did not reply, but she could feel the seriousness in his words.

Before the conversation could continue, cheerful footsteps approached the courtyard.

A familiar voice called from outside.

"Lian An!"

Princess Zhi entered the courtyard with a bright smile.

Behind her walked two maids carrying trays of food.

The moment she saw the Empress sitting comfortably, relief filled her eyes.

"You look so much better!"

She hurried toward Lian An and gently took her hand.

"I told the temple monks to pray for you every day."

Lian An smiled warmly.

"You've been praying enough for both of us."

Princess Zhi laughed softly.

Then she noticed the Emperor sitting beside them and quickly bowed.

"Your Majesty."

The Emperor nodded lightly.

"You came early today."

Princess Zhi gestured toward the trays behind her.

"I brought food."

She looked at Lian An proudly.

"I personally supervised the kitchen this morning."

The maids placed the trays on the table.

Warm steam rose from the bowls.

There were light soups, soft rice porridge, herbal chicken broth, and small steamed buns.

Princess Zhi lifted one bowl and handed it to Lian An.

"You must eat properly if you want to recover."

Lian An laughed softly.

"You sound like my mother."

Princess Zhi grinned.

"Someone has to make sure you eat."

The Emperor quietly watched the two women.

Seeing them laugh together made the tense weight in his chest feel slightly lighter.

For days he had feared that laughter would never return to this courtyard.

Princess Zhi sat beside Lian An and continued chatting happily.

"I also brought something sweet."

She pointed toward a small plate.

"The kitchen prepared rice cakes with honey."

Lian An's eyes brightened.

"That actually sounds good."

The Emperor raised an eyebrow.

"The healer said you should avoid sweets."

Princess Zhi waved her hand dismissively.

"One small piece won't kill her."

The Emperor shook his head slightly but did not argue.

The warm sunlight, the quiet courtyard, and the soft conversation created a peaceful scene.

For the first time since the terrible night at the lake, the Empress's courtyard no longer felt like a place of fear.

Instead, it felt alive again.

But even as they laughed and shared food—

Everyone in that courtyard knew the truth.

Someone in the palace had tried to kill the Empress.

And somewhere within those palace walls...

That enemy was still waiting.

The courtyard slowly became quiet again.

After spending some time talking with the Empress, the Emperor had returned to the court to deal with the endless matters of the kingdom. Soon after, Princess Zhi also left, promising she would send more nourishing food later in the evening.

The maids finished clearing the dishes and quietly stepped outside the chamber, leaving the Empress alone to rest.

For the first time since morning, the courtyard was silent.

Lian An leaned back against the soft cushions placed behind her. The sunlight filtered gently through the branches of the winter trees, warming the room with a peaceful glow.

She let out a slow breath.

"Alright..."

Her voice was soft but clear.

"You can come out now."

For a few seconds, nothing happened.

Then suddenly—

A faint ripple appeared in the air.

From the corner of the chamber, Wei Rong, the general ghost, slowly appeared first. His arms were crossed and his expression looked unusually serious.

Behind him floated Li Shen, the scholar ghost, adjusting his sleeves as if he had been thinking about something important.

Finally, Fen Yu, the female ghost, appeared near the window.

Her eyes were red.

She looked like she had been crying for a long time.

The three ghosts hovered in front of the Empress.

But none of them spoke.

The silence between them felt heavy.

Lian An looked at them quietly.

She could feel it.

They were angry.

Or maybe—

Hurt.

She sighed softly.

"I know."

Her voice carried a hint of guilt.

"I know you're angry with me."

Fen Yu sniffed loudly.

"Of course we're angry!"

Her voice cracked as she spoke.

"Do you know how scared we were?!"

Her words burst out all at once.

"You were dying!"

"We tried calling your soul!"

"We tried pulling you back!"

"But you kept going toward that white light like you didn't care about us at all!"

Tears rolled down her ghostly face again.

"We thought you were leaving us forever!"

Wei Rong looked away, clearly uncomfortable with Fen Yu crying so loudly.

But even his usually calm expression looked strained.

Li Shen spoke more quietly.

"You really scared us."

Lian An lowered her eyes.

She had expected this reaction.

When she had been standing in that endless white light with her parents, everything had felt peaceful and warm.

For a moment...

She had almost chosen to stay.

But now, looking at the three ghosts in front of her—

She understood something.

They had been waiting for her.

Fighting for her.

Crying for her.

"I'm sorry."

Her voice was gentle.

Fen Yu sniffed again.

"You should be!"

She wiped her eyes angrily.

"We were calling you for so long!"

Wei Rong finally spoke.

"You almost left."

His tone was calm, but the weight behind his words was clear.

"You were very close."

Lian An nodded slowly.

"I know."

She looked at them one by one.

"But I came back."

Fen Yu frowned slightly.

"Why?"

Lian An smiled faintly.

"At first... I almost didn't."

Her voice was soft.

"I saw my parents again."

The three ghosts went silent.

"They told me to come with them."

"They said they missed me."

Her eyes lowered as she remembered the warmth of that moment.

"For a second, I thought maybe it would be easier to stay there."

Fen Yu's expression softened slightly.

Then Lian An lifted her head and looked at them again.

"But then I remembered something."

Wei Rong raised an eyebrow.

"What?"

Lian An pointed at them.

"You three."

Fen Yu blinked.

"Us?"

"Yes."

She smiled.

"I remembered how annoying you are."

Wei Rong looked offended.

Li Shen coughed awkwardly.

Fen Yu stared at her.

Then Lian An continued.

"I remembered our restaurant."

"Our cooking."

"Our arguments."

"Our stupid jokes."

She paused.

"And Princess Zhi."

"And my family."

"And..."

Her voice softened slightly.

"...even the Emperor."

The ghosts watched her carefully.

Lian An's expression became serious.

"I realized something."

"What?"

Li Shen asked quietly.

Lian An answered simply.

"I'm not alone here."

She looked directly at them.

"I have people who care about me."

Fen Yu's eyes filled with tears again.

"And three ghosts who refuse to leave me alone."

Wei Rong snorted.

"That's because you still owe us food."

Li Shen nodded seriously.

"You promised dumplings."

Fen Yu quickly added,

"And spicy noodles!"

Lian An laughed softly.

"There it is."

"That's the real reason you wanted me back."

Fen Yu crossed her arms.

"Well of course!"

But her expression softened again.

"...We also missed you."

The room fell quiet again.

But this time—

The silence felt warm.

Lian An leaned back comfortably against the cushions.

Then she looked at them with a small smile.

"I know you were angry."

Fen Yu sniffed again.

"We still are."

Lian An chuckled.

"That's fair."

She lifted her hand slightly.

"But I came back."

Her eyes softened.

"And I'm not leaving again."

The three ghosts looked at each other.

Then slowly—

Their expressions relaxed.

Because the person they had been waiting for...

Had finally returned.