

Ghost 246

Chapter 246: visit to the restaurant

The afternoon sun stretched warmly across the Duke residence courtyard, and the earlier formal atmosphere had now turned light and lively again.

Servants moved about preparing for the next round of wedding arrangements, while laughter echoed from different corners of the residence.

In the inner courtyard, Lian Rou stood with his arms crossed, watching Lian Hua chase a servant who was holding a tray of sweets.

"Slow down!" he called.

"You'll scare the guests away before the wedding even starts!"

Lian Hua stopped, grabbed the sweet, and turned back with a grin.

"I'm just testing the food quality!"

Lian Rou shook his head helplessly.

"...Unbelievable."

At that moment, Lian An stepped into the courtyard, adjusting her sleeve.

"What are you two doing?"

Lian Hua ran to her immediately.

"Jiejie! The sweets are good!"

Lian An laughed softly.

"I can see that."

Lian Rou cleared his throat slightly, his expression turning more serious.

"I was actually looking for you."

Lian An raised an eyebrow.

"For what?"

Lian Rou hesitated for a second, then said,

"I want you and Lian Hua to come with me."

"To meet... Chen Ruyi."

Lian Hua's eyes widened.

"The bride?!"

Lian Rou nodded.

"She has already arrived in the city."

"She is currently at the Whisper Bowl restaurant."

Lian An blinked.

"At my restaurant?"

Lian Rou nodded again.

"Yes."

"She wanted to see it herself."

"And since the banquet will be handled by your restaurant..."

He paused slightly.

"...I thought it would be best if we discuss arrangements together."

Lian An smiled.

"That makes sense."

Lian Hua clapped excitedly.

"Yes! Let's go!"

But Lian Rou quickly added,

"Change your clothes first."

Lian Hua frowned.

"Why?"

Lian Rou pointed at her.

"You look like a child who just stole food."

Lian Hua gasped.

"I did not steal!"

"...I just tasted."

Lian An laughed softly.

"He's right."

"We should dress properly."

Soon, the three of them returned to their rooms.

—

Inside her chamber, Lian An stood before the mirror again.

This time, she chose a more formal noble outfit.

A soft wine-red silk dress with subtle gold embroidery.

Elegant.

Refined.

Not overly grand, but clearly noble.

Her hair was styled neatly with a jade hairpin.

Lian Hua, on the other hand, struggled.

"This one?"

"No... this one!"

"Wait—this looks better!"

Lian An watched her, amused.

"You've changed outfits three times."

Lian Hua pouted.

"I want to look good!"

"You always look good," Lian An replied.

Lian Hua smiled immediately.

"Really?"

"Yes."

Meanwhile, outside—

Lian Rou waited patiently, already dressed in a deep blue robe.

When both sisters finally stepped out, he looked at them and nodded.

"Good."

"Now you look presentable."

Lian Hua rolled her eyes.

"Thank you, teacher."

The three of them left the Duke residence together.

—

The capital streets were lively as always.

But this time—

They walked openly as nobles.

People stepped aside respectfully.

"Greetings, Young Master."

"Greetings, Young Ladies."

Lian Hua waved happily at some of them.

Lian Rou sighed.

"Stop waving at everyone."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because you're not a street performer."

Lian An laughed quietly.

After a short walk, they arrived at the familiar building—

Whisper Bowl.

The moment they entered—

The atmosphere changed.

Warm.

Inviting.

Organized.

Staff moved smoothly between tables, dressed neatly, speaking politely to guests.

"Welcome."

"Please come this way."

"Your table is ready."

The place was full.

Yet everything was under control.

Lian Hua whispered,

"It's even better than before..."

Lian An nodded slightly.

"They've improved."

A manager noticed them immediately and approached with a respectful bow.

"Your Majesty."

"Miss."

"Young Master."

Lian Rou nodded.

"We're here to meet someone."

The manager smiled.

"She is already waiting upstairs."

They were guided to a private room.

As the door opened—

A young woman stood up.

She wore a soft green dress, simple but elegant.

Her expression was calm, gentle.

Her eyes—

Kind.

"Lian Rou."

Her voice was soft.

Lian Rou stepped forward.

"Chen Ruyi."

Lian Hua leaned toward Lian An and whispered loudly,

"She's beautiful."

Lian An nodded.

"She is."

Chen Ruyi turned toward them and bowed respectfully.

"Greetings."

Lian An smiled warmly.

"No need to be formal."

"We're family now."

Chen Ruyi smiled slightly.

That one small smile made her seem even more gentle.

Lian Hua stepped forward immediately.

"I'm Lian Hua!"

"I've heard so much about you!"

Chen Ruyi looked at her kindly.

"I've heard about you too."

Then she looked at Lian An.

"And you..."

"You're even more impressive in person."

Lian An laughed softly.

"I should say the same."

Soon, everyone sat down.

Tea was served.

Lian Rou cleared his throat.

"We came to discuss the banquet."

Chen Ruyi nodded.

"Yes."

"I wanted to understand how everything will be arranged."

Lian An leaned slightly forward.

"I'll personally handle the arrangements."

Chen Ruyi looked surprised.

"You?"

Lian An nodded.

"It's my responsibility."

Chen Ruyi's eyes softened.

"Then I feel reassured."

The conversation shifted naturally.

Menu selection.

Dish variety.

Serving arrangements.

Guest management.

As they talked, food was served.

Dumplings.

Stir-fried vegetables.

Soup.

Rice.

Chen Ruyi took a bite and paused.

"This is..."

She looked up.

"...delicious."

Lian Hua grinned.

"Of course!"

Lian Rou nodded.

"This is why we chose this place."

Chen Ruyi smiled.

"I understand now."

As the discussion continued, the atmosphere became lighter.

Lian Hua kept talking.

Lian Rou occasionally corrected her.

Chen Ruyi listened quietly, smiling.

And Lian An—

She watched them all.

Her cousin.

His bride.

Her sister.

Her creation.

For a moment—

Everything felt perfectly aligned.

Outside, the restaurant buzzed with life.

Inside, the future of two families was being planned.

And for now—

There was no darkness.

No danger.

Only warmth.

And the beginning of something new.

A Moment for Two Hearts

The private room in Whisper Bowl was filled with a gentle warmth.

The soft clink of porcelain cups and the quiet hum of the restaurant below created a calm, comforting atmosphere.

For a while, the four of them sat together—talking about the banquet, tasting dishes, exchanging light laughter.

But Lian An noticed something.

Every time Lian Rou spoke, his tone was a little too careful.

Every time Chen Ruyi responded, her voice carried a softness—but also hesitation.

They were polite.

Respectful.

But not fully at ease.

Not yet.

Lian An glanced at her younger sister.

Lian Hua had also noticed.

The two sisters exchanged a silent look.

Then—

Lian Hua suddenly stood up.

"I'm full!"

Lian Rou frowned.

"You barely ate anything."

Lian Hua waved her hand dramatically.

"I'm full in spirit."

"...That doesn't make sense."

"It does to me."

Lian An hid her smile.

Then she also stood.

"I need to check the kitchen."

Lian Rou looked at her.

"Now?"

"Yes," Lian An replied calmly.

"Since we're here, I should see if everything is running properly."

Chen Ruyi looked slightly surprised.

"Oh... should we come along?"

Lian An shook her head gently.

"No need."

She looked at Lian Rou briefly, then at Chen Ruyi.

"You two should talk."

The meaning behind her words was clear.

Lian Hua grabbed her sleeve immediately.

"Yes! Let's go!"

Without waiting for another response, she pulled Lian An toward the door.

Before leaving, Lian An turned slightly and smiled.

"We'll be back later."

Then—

The door closed.

Silence.

Inside the room—

Only two people remained.

Lian Rou sat stiffly, staring at the tea cup in front of him.

Chen Ruyi sat with her hands folded neatly in her lap.

Neither spoke immediately.

The air felt... awkward.

Then—

Chen Ruyi spoke softly.

"They are very kind."

Lian Rou looked up.

"...Yes."

Another pause.

Chen Ruyi smiled faintly.

"Your sister is very lively."

Lian Rou sighed.

"That's one way to describe her."

Chen Ruyi let out a small laugh.

The tension eased slightly.

Lian Rou cleared his throat.

"I didn't expect you to come to the restaurant."

Chen Ruyi nodded gently.

"I wanted to see it."

"And..."

She looked around the room.

"...I'm glad I did."

"It feels... warm."

Lian Rou nodded.

"Yes."

"It's different from other places."

Chen Ruyi looked at him.

"Your cousin created something special."

Lian Rou's expression softened slightly.

"She did."

"She worked hard for it."

Chen Ruyi smiled.

"I can tell."

Another silence followed.

But this time—

It wasn't uncomfortable.

Just quiet.

Lian Rou finally spoke again.

"...Are you nervous?"

Chen Ruyi blinked slightly.

"...About the wedding?"

"Yes."

She thought for a moment.

Then nodded.

"A little."

Lian Rou exhaled softly.

"Me too."

Chen Ruyi looked at him, surprised.

"You?"

Lian Rou gave a small, awkward smile.

"I've never done this before."

Chen Ruyi laughed softly.

"Neither have I."

The tension between them eased further.

Lian Rou leaned back slightly.

"I didn't think our families would agree."

Chen Ruyi nodded.

"Neither did I."

Her voice softened.

"For a long time... I thought it wouldn't happen."

Lian Rou looked at her quietly.

"But it did."

Chen Ruyi met his gaze.

"Yes."

For a moment—

Neither of them looked away.

Then Chen Ruyi lowered her eyes slightly.

"My father..."

She hesitated.

"...He is not an easy person."

Lian Rou nodded.

"I know."

Chen Ruyi continued,

"When he agreed... I was surprised."

Lian Rou smiled faintly.

"I wasn't."

Chen Ruyi looked at him again.

"Why?"

Lian Rou's expression turned more serious.

"Because I would have made sure he agreed."

Chen Ruyi blinked.

"...You would?"

Lian Rou nodded.

"Yes."

"I've already waited long enough."

Chen Ruyi's fingers tightened slightly in her lap.

"...So have I."

The words were quiet.

But clear.

Lian Rou looked at her carefully.

"Are you... happy?"

Chen Ruyi didn't answer immediately.

Instead, she looked around the room.

At the warm light.

At the table filled with food.

At the quiet space that felt safe.

Then she looked back at him.

"Yes."

Her voice was soft.

"But also... a little afraid."

Lian Rou frowned slightly.

"Afraid of what?"

Chen Ruyi hesitated.

"...Of not being good enough."

Lian Rou immediately shook his head.

"That's not true."

Chen Ruyi looked down.

"I don't know your family well."

"I don't know if I can fit in."

Lian Rou leaned forward slightly.

"You don't need to worry about that."

She looked up.

"My family is not difficult."

He paused.

"...Well, except my sister."

Chen Ruyi laughed softly.

"I like her."

Lian Rou sighed.

"You're the first person to say that so easily."

Chen Ruyi smiled.

"She's honest."

Lian Rou nodded slowly.

"That she is."

Then he looked at her again.

"You don't have to be perfect."

Chen Ruyi listened quietly.

"You just have to be yourself."

Her eyes softened.

"...That's not always easy."

Lian Rou smiled slightly.

"Then we'll figure it out together."

The words hung in the air.

Simple.

But meaningful.

Chen Ruyi nodded slowly.

"...Alright."

Outside the room—

Lian Hua pressed her ear against the door.

"I can't hear anything!"

Lian An pulled her back.

"Stop that."

"I'm curious!"

"You're nosy."

Lian Hua grinned.

"Yes."

Lian An shook her head but smiled.

"Give them time."

Inside the room—

The conversation continued.

Softer now.

Easier.

Two people who had waited a long time—

Finally getting a moment to speak honestly.

And for the first time—

They weren't just a political alliance.

They were simply—

Two hearts learning to meet.