

Ghost 247

Chapter 247: Invitation of Bonds and Beginnings

The afternoon sun had begun to soften when Lian An (the Empress) stepped out of the private room at Whisper Bowl.

Behind her, the quiet conversation between Lian Rou and Chen Ruyi continued—gentle, unhurried, like two lives slowly weaving together.

Outside, Lian Hua immediately rushed toward her.

"So?? What are they talking about?"

Lian An gave her a calm look.

"None of your business."

Lian Hua pouted.

"I'm the younger sister, I deserve to know."

"You deserve to behave," Lian An replied lightly.

Lian Hua huffed.

"...Fine."

But her eyes still kept drifting toward the closed door.

Lian An smiled faintly, then turned her gaze toward the bustling restaurant below.

Her expression shifted slightly.

Now—

It was time to talk business.

—

They moved downstairs.

The moment the staff saw her, they straightened immediately.

"Madam."

"Greetings."

Respect.

Discipline.

Warmth.

Everything she had built with effort.

Her friend stood near the counter, giving instructions to a group of workers.

"Make sure the trays are clean."

"No delays in serving."

"And smile properly—customers notice everything."

Her tone was firm, confident.

A leader.

Lian An watched her for a moment, pride flickering in her eyes.

Then she stepped forward.

"Busy as always."

Her friend turned.

For a second, surprise crossed her face.

Then—

She smiled brightly.

"You're here!"

Without hesitation, she walked forward and hugged her.

"You didn't even send word!"

Lian An laughed softly.

"I came with family."

Her friend pulled back and glanced behind her.

Lian Hua waved cheerfully.

"Hello!"

Her friend smiled.

"So this is the famous younger sister."

Lian Hua beamed.

"Yes."

"Famous for what?" Lian An asked.

"For being cute," her friend replied.

Lian Hua nodded seriously.

"That is true."

Lian An shook her head.

Unbelievable.

—

They moved to a quieter corner of the restaurant.

Her friend poured tea for them.

"So," she said, leaning slightly forward.

"What brings you here officially?"

Lian An's expression softened, but her tone turned purposeful.

"I came for two reasons."

Her friend raised an eyebrow.

"I'm listening."

Lian An continued,

"The wedding."

Her friend straightened.

"Your cousin's?"

"Yes."

"It will be formally announced in four days at a banquet."

Her friend's eyes lit up.

"That's fast."

Lian An nodded.

"The Duke wants it done properly."

Then she added,

"And he wants the banquet to be handled by us."

Silence.

For a moment—

Her friend just stared at her.

Then—

"Wait... what?"

Lian An smiled slightly.

"He specifically asked for Whisper Bowl."

Her friend leaned back, stunned.

"The Duke himself?"

"Yes."

"And not just a small gathering."

"A full banquet."

Her friend's expression slowly shifted.

Shock—

To excitement—

To determination.

"...We're doing this."

Lian Hua clapped immediately.

"Yes!"

Her friend stood up.

"Of course we're doing this!"

"This is huge!"

She began pacing slightly.

"How many guests?"

"What kind of setup?"

"Indoor? Outdoor?"

"Formal seating or flowing service?"

Lian An watched her with a small smile.

This—

Was exactly why she trusted her.

"Formal," Lian An replied.

"High-ranking nobles."

"Dignified presentation."

Her friend nodded rapidly.

"Understood."

Then she looked at her seriously.

"Menu?"

Lian An leaned forward slightly.

"We need variety."

"Traditional dishes for nobles."

"But also..."

She paused.

"...something unique."

Her friend grinned.

"You mean your style."

Lian An smiled.

"Yes."

Her friend tapped the table.

"Alright."

"We'll combine both."

"Something familiar—something unforgettable."

Lian Hua raised her hand.

"I volunteer to taste everything."

Both of them looked at her.

"...No."

Lian Hua sighed.

"Tough crowd."

—

At that moment—

Two familiar figures approached.

The twins.

And behind them—

The new man.

They bowed slightly.

"Madam."

Lian An nodded.

"I need all of you."

Her friend turned to them.

"You heard her."

"Big banquet."

"Four days."

The twins exchanged excited looks.

"Finally something big!"

The new man nodded seriously.

"We won't disappoint."

Her friend crossed her arms.

"You better not."

"This is not just any event."

"This is the Duke's banquet."

"And..."

She glanced at Lian An.

"...the Empress's reputation."

The room fell silent for a moment.

Then the twins straightened.

"We understand."

—

Lian An stood.

"I also came to personally invite all of you."

Her friend blinked.

"To the banquet?"

"Yes."

"You're not just working."

"You're guests too."

Her friend looked at her for a moment.

Then smiled softly.

"...Thank you."

Lian Hua grinned.

"Of course you're coming!"

"You're family!"

Her friend laughed.

"Since when?"

"Since now," Lian Hua declared.

—

The planning began immediately.

Tables.

Decor.

Serving flow.

Dish order.

Staff training.

Everything discussed in detail.

Lian An participated actively.

Correcting.

Suggesting.

Guiding.

Her friend handled execution.

The twins took notes.

The new man calculated logistics.

Time passed quickly.

—

As the sun began to set—

The restaurant glowed with warm golden light.

The discussion finally slowed.

Her friend leaned back, exhausted but satisfied.

"This is going to be amazing."

Lian An nodded.

"Yes."

Her friend looked at her carefully.

"You seem happier."

Lian An paused slightly.

Then smiled.

"...I am."

Her friend didn't ask more.

She didn't need to.

—

Before leaving, Lian An looked around the restaurant once more.

The staff.

The warmth.

The life.

This place—

Was part of her.

No matter where she went—

This would always be hers.

—

As they stepped outside—

Lian Hua stretched.

"That was fun."

Lian An smiled.

"It's just the beginning."

Behind them—

Inside Whisper Bowl—

Preparations had already begun.

And ahead—

The banquet would not just announce a marriage.

It would—

Bring worlds together.

By the time they stepped out of Whisper Bowl, the sky had begun to melt into shades of gold and rose.

The streets of the capital were alive.

Vendors called out loudly, children ran between stalls, and the air was filled with the scent of roasted chestnuts, sweet syrup, and freshly cooked snacks.

For a moment—

All titles disappeared.

They were no longer nobles.

Just four young people stepping into the warmth of the evening market.

—

Lian Hua was the first to react.

"Wow!"

Her eyes sparkled as she grabbed Lian An's arm.

"Jiejie, look! There are so many things!"

Before Lian An could respond, she had already pulled her toward a stall.

"Wait—slow down," Lian An said, laughing softly.

But Lian Hua had no intention of slowing.

Meanwhile, Lian Rou walked beside Chen Ruyi, slightly behind the sisters.

He glanced at her.

"Is this your first time in the capital market?"

Chen Ruyi nodded gently.

"Yes."

"I've heard about it... but never visited like this."

Her gaze moved across the lively street.

"It's... more vibrant than I imagined."

Lian Rou watched her expression carefully.

"You like it?"

She smiled.

"I do."

—

At the first stall—

Lian Hua had already picked up three different things.

A hair ribbon.

A small carved figurine.

And something she didn't even recognize.

"I want all of these."

The vendor grinned.

"Good choice, miss."

Lian An crossed her arms.

"You don't even know what that is."

Lian Hua looked at it, then shrugged.

"It looks nice."

Lian Rou sighed.

"This is why you should not shop alone."

Chen Ruyi laughed softly.

"It's alright."

"It suits her."

Lian Hua immediately beamed.

"See? She understands me!"

Lian An shook her head but paid the vendor.

"You're not carrying all this."

"I will," Lian Hua insisted.

Five seconds later—

"Jiejie, carry this."

"...Of course."

—

They continued walking.

The deeper they went into the market—

The more lively it became.

Lanterns began to glow as dusk settled.

Soft lights flickered above them, casting a warm golden hue over everything.

At a jewelry stall—

Chen Ruyi paused.

Her eyes lingered on a pair of delicate earrings.

Simple.

Elegant.

Not overly expensive—but beautiful.

Lian Rou noticed.

"You like them?"

Chen Ruyi hesitated.

"They're pretty."

"But..."

She stepped back slightly.

"It's fine."

Lian Rou didn't say anything.

He simply walked forward and picked them up.

"I'll take these."

Chen Ruyi's eyes widened.

"No—"

"It's a gift."

She shook her head gently.

"You don't have to."

Lian Rou looked at her.

"I want to."

There was something steady in his tone.

Something that left no room for argument.

Chen Ruyi slowly lowered her gaze.

"...Thank you."

Her voice was soft.

But sincere.

Lian Hua leaned toward Lian An and whispered loudly,

"They're already acting like a married couple."

Lian An elbowed her lightly.

"Quiet."

—

They stopped at a food stall next.

The smell was irresistible.

Grilled skewers.

Sweet dumplings.

Fried pastries.

Lian Hua inhaled deeply.

"I'm hungry again."

"You just ate," Lian Rou said.

"That was earlier."

"That was ten minutes ago."

"Time moves fast."

Chen Ruyi covered her mouth, laughing softly.

Lian An shook her head.

"Fine."

"But only a little."

Five minutes later—

They had four different plates.

Lian Hua happily bit into a skewer.

"This is amazing!"

Chen Ruyi tasted a dumpling.

Her eyes widened slightly.

"It's very good."

Lian Rou watched her.

"You like it?"

She nodded.

"Yes."

Then she looked at him.

"You should try."

He did.

And for a moment—

They stood side by side, sharing food, talking quietly.

Simple.

Peaceful.

Lian An noticed.

And smiled.

—

Further ahead—

A street performer had gathered a crowd.

Music played softly.

A dancer moved gracefully under the lantern light.

Lian Hua immediately pulled everyone closer.

"Let's watch!"

They stood together in the crowd.

Chen Ruyi's eyes followed the dancer.

"It's beautiful..."

Lian Rou glanced at her instead.

Not the dancer.

Not the crowd.

Just her.

And for a moment—

Everything else faded.

—

As the performance ended, the crowd clapped.

Lian Hua clapped the loudest.

"That was amazing!"

Then she turned suddenly.

"I want to try something!"

Before anyone could stop her—

She stepped forward and attempted to mimic the dancer's movements.

It lasted three seconds.

Then she almost tripped.

Lian Rou caught her arm.

"Stop embarrassing yourself."

"I was doing great!"

"You were falling."

"That's part of the performance!"

Chen Ruyi laughed softly again.

Lian An sighed.

"This is hopeless."

—

They moved toward a quieter section of the market.

Less crowded.

More calm.

Lanterns swayed gently above.

A soft breeze passed through.

For the first time since they arrived—

Everything slowed down.

Chen Ruyi walked slightly ahead now.

Her steps unhurried.

Her expression peaceful.

Lian Rou joined her.

"You seem more relaxed."

She nodded.

"I am."

She looked at him.

"It feels... easy."

He understood what she meant.

"No pressure."

"No expectations."

"Just... being here."

Chen Ruyi smiled.

"Yes."

They walked in silence for a moment.

Then she said softly,

"...I'm glad."

Lian Rou looked at her.

"About what?"

She hesitated.

Then—

"...About this."

"About us."

His expression softened.

"...Me too."

—

Behind them—

Lian Hua nudged Lian An.

"They're getting along well."

Lian An nodded.

"They are."

Lian Hua grinned.

"This wedding will be fun."

Lian An smiled.

"Yes."

"It will."

—

The night deepened.

The market lights grew brighter.

And laughter followed them as they walked.

Not as nobles.

Not as responsibilities.

But as family.

And for one quiet evening—

That was enough.