

Ghost 270

Chapter 270: The Whisper Beyond Shadows

The palace night had grown silent.

After the warmth and noise of the Duke residence, the palace felt... different.

Heavier.

Colder.

As if something unseen lingered in the air.

—

The lanterns in the inner courtyard flickered faintly as Shin Gu stepped forward.

Her movements were slow.

Graceful.

But her expression—

Unreadable.

—

Behind her—

Footsteps approached.

—

"Shin Gu."

—

Prince Liang.

—

She paused.

Just slightly.

Then turned.

A gentle smile appeared on her face.

"My Lord... why are you here?"

—

Prince Liang stepped closer.

His brows slightly furrowed.

"I came to see you."

"You left the dinner early."

—

His gaze softened.

"...Are you unwell?"

—

Shin Gu lowered her eyes slightly.

A delicate expression forming.

"...Just a little tired."

—

Prince Liang frowned.

"I'll call the healer."

—

"No."

—

Her response was soft.

But firm.

—

He paused.

"...Why not?"

—

She stepped closer.

Just enough to close the distance.

"It's nothing serious."

"I just need rest."

—

Her voice was calm.

Gentle.

Convincing.

—

"If I still feel unwell in the morning..."

"I will call the healer."

—

Prince Liang studied her face.

Searching.

—

But found nothing unusual.

—

After a moment—

He sighed.

"...Take care."

—

She smiled faintly.

"I will."

—

He lingered for a second.

As if wanting to say something more.

—

But didn't.

—

Then turned.

And left.

—

The moment his footsteps disappeared—

—

The smile on Shin Gu's face vanished.

—

Completely.

—

The warmth.

The gentleness.

The softness—

Gone.

—

Only coldness remained.

—

She turned slowly.

And walked into her chamber.

—

The door closed behind her.

—

And then—

—

She drew the curtains.

—

One by one.

—

Blocking the moonlight.

Blocking the outside world.

—

The room darkened.

—

Only a single candle remained lit.

—

Its flame flickered—

Unnaturally.

—

Shin Gu stood still for a moment.

Listening.

—

Silence.

—

Then—

She moved.

—

From beneath a hidden compartment—

She took out a small box.

—

Inside—

Strange objects.

—

Black thread.

Burnt incense.

A thin blade.

And a piece of parchment.

—

She placed them carefully on the table.

—

Then—

She sat.

—

Her posture straight.

Her expression calm.

—

But her eyes—

Dark.

—

She lit the incense.

—

The smoke rose slowly.

But instead of dispersing—

It curled.

Twisted.

—

As if alive.

—

Shin Gu lifted the blade.

—

Without hesitation—

She cut her finger.

—

A drop of blood fell onto the parchment.

—

Then—

She began to write.

—

Not with ink.

—

But with blood.

—

The characters formed slowly.

Each stroke deliberate.

Each word precise.

—

"The girl survived."

"The man was seen."

"The plan was disrupted."

—

The air grew colder.

—

The candle flame flickered violently.

—

The shadows in the room began to shift.

—

Then—

She placed the parchment on the altar.

—

Closed her eyes.

—

And began to chant.

—

Her voice—

Low.

Whispering.

Unfamiliar words.

Ancient.

Forbidden.

—

The blood on the parchment began to glow.

—

Faint at first.

Then brighter.

—

The smoke twisted tighter.

Forming shapes.

Symbols.

—

Then—

—

The message vanished.

—

Gone.

—

As if swallowed by darkness.

—

Shin Gu opened her eyes.

—

Her expression calm again.

—

"...It has been sent."

—

Far away—

—

In a place unknown.

—

Dark.

Silent.

—

A man sat in deep meditation.

—

His body unmoving.

Breath almost nonexistent.

—

Around him—

The air itself seemed still.

—

Then—

Suddenly—

—

His eyes opened.

—

Sharp.

Cold.

—

In front of him—

The air distorted.

—

A faint glow appeared.

—

The message.

—

He read it.

Without expression.

—

But the temperature of the room dropped.

—

"...So."

—

His voice was low.

Heavy.

—

"They have seen."

—

He stood slowly.

—

Tall.

Shadowed.

—

His face—

Unclear.

As if hidden by darkness itself.

—

He stepped forward.

—

"Guards."

—

The word echoed.

—

From the shadows—

Figures appeared.

—

Kneeling instantly.

—

"My Lord."

—

He looked at them.

—

"Kill them."

—

The command was simple.

—

Cold.

—

"Find the girl."

"Find the man."

—

"Erase them."

—

The guards stiffened.

—

"...Yes, Master."

—

But before they could move—

—

A sudden force struck one of them.

—

The guard was thrown back violently.

Crashing against the ground.

—

Blood spilled from his mouth.

—

The others froze.

Terrified.

—

The man lowered his hand slowly.

—

His voice dropped.

—

"...Do not fail."

—

"Do not alert anyone."

—

"If this spreads..."

—

He stepped closer.

—

"...you won't need enemies."

—

"You will die by my hand."

—

The guards trembled.

—

"...We understand."

—

Their voices shook.

—

"We will be careful."

—

The man turned away.

—

Returning to the darkness.

—

"...Go."

—

The guards disappeared instantly.

—

Silence returned.

—

But the air—

Remained heavy.

—

Back in the palace—

—

Shin Gu stood before her altar.

—

The candle burned lower.

—

The room still dark.

—

She wiped the remaining blood from her finger.

—

Then—

Slowly—

A faint smile appeared.

—

"...Now..."

—

"Let's see how long you survive."

—

Her eyes gleamed.

—

Cold.

—

Unforgiving.

—

Outside—

The palace slept peacefully.

—

Unaware—

That death had already been ordered.

—

And the shadows—

Had begun to move.

Quiet Warnings Before Dawn

The banquet had finally come to an end.

What remained behind was not laughter—

But a lingering weight in the air.

—

Lanterns burned low in the Duke residence courtyard as guests departed one by one.

The Dowager had already left earlier, escorted with formality and care.

Servants began clearing the remains of celebration.

But in the inner hall—

A small group remained.

—

The Emperor.

The Duke.

His elder brother.

And Lian Rou.

—

The mood had shifted.

From celebration—

To quiet seriousness.

—

The Duke stood with his hands behind his back, gaze fixed ahead.

"...Today was not ordinary."

—

The Emperor remained silent.

Listening.

—

The Duke continued,

"The ambush..."

"The strange movements..."

"These are not isolated incidents."

—

His voice lowered.

"...Something bigger is moving beneath the surface."

—

The elder brother nodded.

"Yes."

—

He stepped forward slightly.

"I have heard things."

—

Everyone turned toward him.

—

"Rumors."

"Stories."

"People gaining unusual strength."

"Shaman rituals... dark practices."

—

He paused.

"But every time I tried to follow the lead..."

"...there was nothing."

—

His brows furrowed.

"No trace."

"No proof."

—

"It was as if..."

"...everything disappeared."

—

Lian Rou spoke quietly,

"...So either it's false..."

"...or someone is hiding it very well."

—

The Emperor's gaze sharpened.

"...It's not false."

—

Silence.

—

"I have heard similar reports."

"But none reached the court."

—

His voice turned colder.

"...Which means someone is suppressing it."

—

The Duke exhaled slowly.

"...Then this is more dangerous than we thought."

—

The Emperor nodded slightly.

"Yes."

—

He stepped forward.

"...For now, we do nothing."

—

They looked at him.

—

"We cannot alert them."

"Whoever is behind this..."

"...is watching."

—

A pause.

—

"For the incident today—"

—

His voice steadied.

—

"We will treat it as misunderstanding."

—

"The girl saw something wrong."

"No deeper meaning."

—

Lian Rou frowned slightly.

"...And the marriage?"

—

The Emperor looked at him.

"It will proceed."

—

His tone was firm.

—

"No delays."

"No suspicions."

—

"We act normal."

—

The Duke understood immediately.

"...So they lower their guard."

—

The Emperor didn't reply.

But his silence confirmed it.

—

The elder brother nodded slowly.

"...Understood."

—

A quiet agreement settled among them.

—

This was no longer just family matter.

—

It was war.

—

Unseen.

—

The Emperor stepped back slightly.

"...I must return."

—

"The morning court cannot wait."

—

The Duke bowed his head.

"We understand."

—

Lian Rou added quietly,

"...Be careful."

—

The Emperor glanced at him briefly.

"...You too."

—

Then—

Without further delay—

He turned.

—

But instead of heading straight out—

—

He walked toward a familiar direction.

—

The Empress's chamber.

—

—

Inside—

The room was calm.

Softly lit.

—

The Empress sat near the window.

Her thoughts distant.

—

The door opened.

—

She turned.

—

"...You're leaving?"

—

The Emperor stepped inside.

"Yes."

—

A brief silence passed between them.

—

"...So soon?" she asked quietly.

—

"I have duties."

—

He stopped a few steps away.

—

"...But I will return."

—

Her eyes lifted slightly.

—

"...When?"

—

He looked at her.

"...The day after tomorrow."

—

"I will come to take you back."

—

The words were simple.

But carried meaning.

—

Not command.

—

A promise.

—

She nodded slowly.

"...Alright."

—

A pause.

—

Neither moved.

—

Neither spoke.

—

Then—

The Emperor turned.

—

But just before leaving—

He stopped.

—

"...Take care."

—

She blinked slightly.

—

"...You too."

—

Then—

He left.

—

The door closed softly behind him.

—

And the room returned to silence.

—

Outside—

The carriage wheels began to move.

—

Taking him back—

To the palace.

—

To responsibilities.

To danger.

To the unseen enemy.

—

And inside—

The Empress stood still.

—

Looking at the closed door.

—

Her heart—

Quietly unsettled.

—

Because now—

She knew.

—

Something was coming.

—

And when it did—

—

Nothing would remain the same.