

## Ghost 76

Chapter 76: the ghost get fashion power

The Duke's estate was finally quiet.

Lanterns had been snuffed out, guests long departed, and the courtyard shimmered only with moonlight reflected on empty wine cups.

Inside her chamber, Empress Lian An sat cross-legged on her bed, arms folded, her expression dark enough to make even the shadows flinch.

The air was thick with her annoyance.

"Three days," she muttered to herself. "Three days of peace. And tonight, this chaos. Dancing dumplings, floating ducks, flying chopsticks—why do I even try to live a normal life?"

Her fan snapped open with a sharp click, though she wasn't fanning herself. It was a warning sound.

In the far corner of the room, her three ghostly companions sat huddled together like naughty children awaiting punishment.

Fen Yu, the dramatic ghost girl, peeked out from behind her translucent sleeve.

Wei Rong, the general ghost, looked ready to salute for mercy.

And Li Shen, the scholar ghost, stared determinedly at the floor, pretending he wasn't part of the problem.

The silence stretched.

Finally, Lian An's calm, cold voice cut through the air.

"Would one of you," she said sweetly, dangerously, "like to explain where you've been for the last three days?"

None of them moved.

"Or," she added, her tone turning razor-sharp, "should I start calling monks from the temple again?"

That did it. All three jumped.

Fen Yu flung herself forward, waving her hands. "No! No monks! We'll talk!"

Lian An raised one eyebrow. "Good. Start."

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The Great Ghostly Excuse

Fen Yu cleared her throat and pointed accusingly at Li Shen. "It all started because of him!"

Li Shen blinked, scandalized. "What? Me?"

"Yes, you!" she huffed, stamping her translucent foot. "He went on another date! At that cursed tea house near the cemetery!"

Lian An's eyes narrowed. "You what?"

Li Shen looked insulted. "It wasn't a date! It was a scholarly discussion about metaphysical poetry and posthumous ethics."

Fen Yu crossed her arms. "With a ghost girl who wears too much rouge and calls you 'Sweet Ink Brush'?"

Lian An pinched the bridge of her nose. "Sweet. Ink. Brush."

Wei Rong snorted behind his hand.

Li Shen sighed dramatically. "It was harmless!"

"Harmless?" Fen Yu snapped. "That ghost witch nearly killed us! We followed him to stop him from embarrassing us, and guess what? She came out with two other ghosts—her sisters! They attacked us the moment they saw me!"

Lian An blinked. "They attacked you?"

Wei Rong nodded solemnly. "It was a massacre, Your Majesty. Three days of relentless haunting."

"Three days?"

"Yes!" Fen Yu cried, clutching her ghostly sleeve as if reliving the trauma. "They stole my fan, my hairpin, and my dignity!"

"You lost that last one years ago," Li Shen muttered.

Fen Yu threw a slipper at him. It passed through his head harmlessly.

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The Celestial Training Arc

Lian An rubbed her temples. "So, instead of coming back here for help, you—?"

"We went to train!" Wei Rong interrupted proudly, puffing his chest. "We sought a celestial master at the edge of the spirit mountains!"

Lian An stared. "You went where?"

Fen Yu nodded rapidly. "We needed power, Your Majesty! That witch ghost humiliated us! We couldn't let her win!"

Li Shen raised a finger. "Technically, we didn't find the real master. Just his junior apprentice, who looked suspiciously like a squirrel spirit in disguise."

Fen Yu glared at him. "He was a wise sage! He made us drink celestial dew and chant mantras for seventy-two hours!"

Lian An folded her arms. "And what did you gain from this... training?"

Fen Yu grinned proudly. "Strength!"

Wei Rong beamed. "And refined aura control!"

Li Shen adjusted his translucent robe smugly. "And now, apparently, we can taste food."

Lian An blinked. "Taste. Food."

Wei Rong nodded solemnly. "Fen Yu cried over a dumpling. It was a moving experience."

Fen Yu wiped imaginary tears. "You don't understand, Your Majesty. To taste again—after centuries! Even the vinegar felt like heaven!"

Lian An leaned back, utterly speechless.

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The Fashion Disaster

"And," Fen Yu continued, eyes gleaming, "we also got an upgrade!"

She twirled dramatically, her ghostly gown flickering into a vivid pink with silver accents. "Look! I can change colors now! I even have a bow!"

Wei Rong saluted proudly. His armor gleamed brighter, etched with golden patterns that hadn't been there before. "Celestial polish. Repels low-level exorcisms."

Even Li Shen, always the calm one, looked smug as his scholar robes deepened into royal blue silk. "My aura now resists ink stains."

Lian An stared at them in disbelief. "So let me understand this correctly. You vanished for three days. Started a fight with another ghost because of romantic stupidity. Got beaten. Found a squirrel pretending to be a sage. Drank mountain dew. And came back with new outfits."

Wei Rong nodded. "Yes."

Fen Yu added proudly, "And we can now eat dumplings!"

There was a long, dead silence.

Then Lian An stood, slow and deliberate, folding her fan with a sharp snap.

"You three are impossible."

All three ghosts cowered.

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The Empress's Wrath

Fen Yu held her hands together. "We're sorry! We didn't mean to make trouble at the banquet either!"

Lian An's gaze turned deadly. "Oh, I haven't even started about that yet."

Wei Rong cleared his throat nervously. "In our defense, no one saw us."

"They saw flying ducks, floating wine jugs, and dancing chopsticks!" she snapped. "The only reason no one fainted was because they were drunk!"

Fen Yu giggled softly. "They said it was entertainment!"

"Entertainment?!" Lian An hissed. "If anyone had brought a priest—"

Li Shen interjected carefully. "But no one did. So technically, we improved the party's atmosphere."

She glared at him so sharply that even the ghost of Confucius would have apologized.

"Next time," she said slowly, "if you want to show off your new 'powers,' go haunt the chicken coop. Leave my banquets alone."

"Yes, Your Majesty," they chorused in terrified unison.

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### The Quiet After Scolding

For a moment, the only sound in the room was the flicker of the lantern flame.

Then, Fen Yu peeked up shyly. "Your Majesty... you're not that angry, right?"

Lian An sighed, her anger softening despite herself. "I should be. But... I'm glad you're safe."

The ghosts blinked in surprise.

"You vanish for days and come back looking like performers from a celestial opera," she continued, shaking her head. "At least you're all in one piece."

Fen Yu brightened immediately. "You care!"

"Don't push it."

Wei Rong grinned. "We missed you too, Empress."

Li Shen added softly, "We brought something back for you."

He produced a tiny crystal bottle filled with faint silver light. "Celestial dew. The master—or squirrel—said it clears the mind and strengthens one's spirit. It's yours."

Lian An blinked, genuinely touched. "Thank you."

She set the bottle on her bedside table and smiled faintly. "Now, since you're all so powerful and so fashionable, perhaps you can help earn some silver to buy your own fancy robes next time."

Fen Yu gasped. "Are you saying—"

"Yes," Lian An said dryly. "You're all freeloaders."

Wei Rong groaned. "We can't exactly get hired as guards."

Li Shen smirked. "We could help at the restaurant. I write menus, Wei Rong carries plates, Fen Yu entertains children."

"I love that idea!" Fen Yu clapped. "We'll make the Whisper Bowl the most haunted restaurant in the empire!"

Lian An dropped her face into her hands. "That's not what I meant..."

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Peace Returns — Briefly

After a long evening of scolding, laughter, and ridiculous plans, the chamber finally grew quiet.

Fen Yu floated near the window, admiring her reflection in the glass. "Look at me! I have color again."

Wei Rong yawned. "If ghosts could sleep, I'd do it right now."

Li Shen adjusted his robes, already scribbling invisible notes in the air. "We must test whether we can now eat noodles tomorrow."

"Try not to steal them from my kitchen," Lian An muttered.

The three chuckled softly, settling like children after a storm.

Finally, Lian An lay back on her bed, exhaustion tugging at her eyes. "Troublesome idiots," she murmured, though there was fondness in her tone.

From the window, Fen Yu's voice floated back, teasing and warm. "You love us anyway, Your Majesty."

"Maybe," Lian An murmured, already drifting toward sleep. "But don't push your luck."

Outside, the moonlight spilled across the courtyard, and the Duke's estate rested in peace—haunted, chaotic, but very much alive.