

I. Dynasty 247

Chapter 247: Empress Zhao Loses Her Composure

The razor-sharp blade halted just a few millimeters from the mirror's surface.

The imperial guards paused, confused, though they still kept their weapons drawn and eyes fixed warily on the armored figures reflected in the mirror.

Emperor Xiao Wenxuan let out a long breath. His heart had nearly leapt into his throat. In that brief instant, if they had struck even a hair closer, the mirror would've shattered.

"Stand down!" he ordered with a sharp tone.

Only then did Feng Deshui truly look at the mirror—and then at the man inside. A second later, he let out an awkward laugh. "Your Majesty, this old servant has truly made a fool of himself. As if His Highness the Prince of Qi would ever send an assassin! It's a mirror!"

The guards glanced again at the reflection, now slowly realizing what they were seeing. The mirror image... was them.

Xiao Wenxuan stepped forward and pressed his palm against the cool glass. The sensation of resistance confirmed it—it really was a mirror.

Then, laughter.

A bold, unrestrained burst of laughter rang out from the emperor, echoing through the chamber. The shock of the moment only served to underscore just how extraordinary this object was.

Feng Deshui grinned ear to ear as he walked up and pressed his fingers against the glass. “Your Majesty, this mirror... it feels like it’s made of glass!”

“Likely so,” Xiao Wenxuan chuckled. “But how did the Prince of Qi make the glass reflect a person so clearly?”

“Knowing His Highness?” Feng Deshui said with admiration, “The man always has a way. But given he only sent one mirror this time, I imagine it’s quite rare.”

That only pleased the emperor more. “Is that so? It seems the Prince of Qi is getting better at navigating the court. Good—very good. I’m quite pleased.”

“But, Your Majesty,” Feng Deshui said, looking slightly amused, “once the ladies in the harem find out about this, they’ll be begging to see it themselves!”

Xiao Wenxuan chuckled knowingly. He was still human, after all—and humans loved to show off their treasures. Especially something as rare and breathtaking as this.

Even children wanted to show off their new toys.

“Well then,” he said with a grin, “let them come. It’s better to share the joy than hoard it. Ha ha ha!”

Feng Deshui bowed and departed. “Yes, Your Majesty. I’ll inform the ladies.”

Once alone again, Xiao Wenxuan returned to the mirror, staring into it, admiring his own reflection with increasing fondness.

Soon, Empress Zhao arrived, leading a group of consorts into the room.

Feng Deshui had already briefed her on the mirror’s marvels during their walk, so the women rushed straight to it the moment they entered.

And then—they froze.

The moment they laid eyes on their own reflections, they gasped in astonishment, which quickly gave way to excitement.

In the mirror, every fine detail of their elegant faces was clear as day. Empress Zhao stood before it, wide-eyed and motionless.

She had a bronze mirror in her own quarters, of course. But its blurry image couldn’t hold a candle to this. This glass mirror was like standing face to face with oneself.

No wonder the guards had mistaken the reflection for a real person.

“Your Majesty, is this the mirror sent by the Prince of Qi?” Empress Zhao asked, her voice tinged with desire.

Xiao Wenxuan smiled. “It is. What do you think of it?”

“It’s divine... a true masterpiece. Your Majesty, could I... might I have it?” Her voice was sweet, the tone flirtatious and coy—a rare sight even in front of the other consorts.

Every woman in the imperial harem vied for beauty. Who wouldn’t want such a mirror?

The other consorts panicked. “Your Majesty! I want one too!”

“I want one as well!”

Xiao Wenxuan grinned with satisfaction. “Ahem. Well, there’s only one, and I’m rather fond of it myself. But... perhaps I’ll send an express courier to the Prince of Qi and see if he can spare more.”

The women surrounded him, some clinging to his arms, others leaning into his embrace, each giving him pleading glances. Flustered but pleased, he kept nodding and smiling.

Then someone remembered someone else.

“Consort Zhen,” a consort said suspiciously, “every time the Prince of Qi sends something, he always sends one to you. Be honest—do you already have one in Biyu Pavilion?”

“Yes! Do you?” The others crowded around her.

Consort Zhen let out a wry smile. “Honestly? Not this time. If His Majesty hadn’t summoned me today, I wouldn’t even know such a thing existed. That Prince of Qi—seems he only has eyes for His Majesty now. He’s forgotten all about his own mother.”

Hearing this, Xiao Wenxuan beamed with joy. Even this small gesture showed just how much Xiao Ming respected him.

In truth, Consort Zhen’s eyes sparkled with pride—her son had made the right call.

The consorts groaned with disappointment. With only one mirror present, they had to take turns admiring themselves in it, each trying to squeeze in just a few more seconds.

None of them wanted to leave.

Empress Zhao lingered for a while, glancing at the mirror, then at Xiao Wenxuan. Her heart was heavy.

Her nephew, Zhao Yuanliang, had sent a complaint to her after returning from Qingzhou, telling her everything.

As his aunt, she was caught in a difficult position. The artillery secrets involved were no small matter. Even if Xiao Ming had killed Zhao Kuan, it had been to protect those secrets.

With the emperor placing such high value on Xiao Ming's cannons, there was no way he'd side with the Prince of Zhao.

And now, this mirror had the emperor overjoyed. What could she even say?

Eventually, the consorts were ushered out—reluctantly and regretfully.

But it was too late. Word had already spread across Chang'an. Tales of the emperor's magical mirror, of Feng Deshui crying out in panic, of the consorts visiting the emperor's chambers daily... it was all the city could talk about.

Even court officials confirmed it. After all, those summoned to morning court had seen the mirror for themselves.

Within days, the nobles of the capital were buzzing about it. Wealthy households sent their stewards and merchants straight to Qingzhou, hoping to buy a mirror of their own.

Back in Qingzhou, the city exploded with activity. Merchants flooded in. Even aristocrats began arriving, all wanting one thing: a mirror.

And it was at that time that Xiao Ming received a letter from the emperor—an express dispatch carried eight hundred li without pause.

“Your Highness, if His Majesty is this eager...” said Pang Yukun, smiling broadly as he bowed. “It’s safe to say this mirror is even more impressive than soap or perfume. Congratulations, Your Highness! Sincere congratulations!”

Xiao Ming, on the other hand, looked exasperated.

Pang Yukun, ever the bookkeeper, had already set his eyes on the profits from the mirror. The moment the silver started pouring in, he’d divert it straight to the prefectural treasury, acting like a Great Yu version of Grandet.