

Medical Princess 861

Chapter 861 The Situation in the Palace

Shao Wanru got up a little earlier this morning and had not listened to any news from her servant girls yet.

"The two servant girls of Eldest Young Madam did once leave the bridal room yesterday. I heard that they have come to our mansion several times before to add decorations for the bridal chamber. They are quite familiar with our mansion," Yujie reported.

"Who did they go to meet?" Shao Wanru asked, playing the handkerchief in her hands with her slender fingers.

"Nothing important! It seemed that they went to ask the kitchen staff for some food because Eldest Young Madam was hungry. But it took them about an hour from leaving to coming back. I have inquired that they knew the way. With such a long time, they could even visit many places in the mansion, not to mention the kitchen!" Yujie said after thinking for a moment.

She had inquired the people of the kitchen and confirmed that they had indeed been there. The servants guarding outside the bridal chamber also proved that they had once left. But she didn't get the proof to show which way they had taken, because they had visited the mansion several times and didn't need anyone to lead them. It was very free for them to come and go.

"Did the two servant girls leave together?" Shao Wanru asked after thinking for a second.

"No, I heard that one of them left first, but she didn't come back after a long while. So Eldest Young Madam sent the other. But they came back together!" Yujie sorted out the information she had gathered.

"How long?" Shao Wanru frowned slightly and asked again.

"Around an hour. It's quite long," Yujie was sure and said. "Even if Eldest Young Madam did want to eat something, why not send the servants in the mansion to the kitchen? There is no need to send even two of her private servant girls out," Yujie murmured to herself.

She really didn't understand why Eldest Young Madam did that.

There were many servants in Marquis Xing's Mansion. Lots of them were arranged to work in the yard and outside the main room. If the master needed anything, they could just give an order. More importantly, here was Marquis Xing's Mansion. No matter how familiar the two servant girls were with it, they could not be as familiar as the servants living in it. There was really no need for them to go there in person.

Shao Wanru, however, fell silent and paused. The two servant girls must be Zhao Xiran's henchmen. Such henchmen should not have left Zhao Xiran for such a long time yesterday, but they did! Shao Wanru didn't believe that they just went to the kitchen for food.

Zhao Xiran was a patient person who was very good at enduring. The evidence was that she could still smile at everyone even though she was grieved this morning at the flower hall. So, even if she was really

hungry, she was least the type of person who would ask the kitchen for food. In addition, even if she did not bring some food from her home, there must be some in the room that could fill her up.

Brides always took great care over their manners. Afraid of leaving an impression of a greedy woman on their husbands' family, many of them would not ask the kitchen for food even if they were indeed hungry.

But if they didn't go to get food, what did the two servant girls do there? Shao Wanru couldn't figure it out at the moment. She felt that there was a mystery in it, which made her unable to see it clearly or figure it out.

It seemed to have something to do with her, but she didn't know where to start the investigation after she had thought about it carefully.

"Keep an eye on her two servant girls!" Shao Wanru instructed after thinking. That she couldn't figure out anything now didn't mean that there was nothing. Zhao Xiran seemed to be a key figure, but she didn't know exactly what the key point was. She just had an intuition that she would definitely get something if she went on keeping an eye on Zhao Xiran...

Marquis Xing's Mansion became the heated debate topic once again.

On the day when Minister Zhao's eldest legitimate daughter married Duke Xing's eldest legitimate son, something unpleasant had happened and it had humiliated the royal family. It was said that two princes were conspired and the Emperor vented his anger on Duke Xing. Then Duke Xing's Mansion was degraded to be Marquis Xing's Mansion. The plaque of Duke Xing's Mansion was also removed.

When the news had just come out, few people believed it and thought it was nonsense.

However, as more and more people talked about it, they became more and more convinced. Some people even came over to take a look at the plaque on the gate of Marquis Xing's Mansion, and they said that the plaque of Duke Xing's Mansion, which had been hanging up for a long time, was indeed taken down. For a time, more and more people were talking about it.

Demotion! Was it demoted? Not only the civilians were gossiping about it, but also the nobles felt uneasy because of it. What did the Emperor mean? Was he going to demote everyone? Or was he going to reclaim the title that had been given out?

The country hadn't been established for long, so many aristocratic families had just had the title of nobility for one generation. But they had several generations of descendants. It was a big deal if they were demoted at this time!

Such punishment as demotion was too severe!

But no matter what the truth was, it could be seen that Marquis Xing's Mansion had declined, and it was unlikely for the Shao family to regain its former glory.

Some felt sorry for them, some took pleasure from it, and some decided to be the passers-by with indifference. Marquis Xing's Mansion, where it was lively and noisy yesterday, was deserted. There were merely a group of people in the distance pointing at the gate of the mansion and talking about the gossip of it.

At this moment, a team of carriages showing tremendous momentum arrived at the gate of Marquis Xing's Mansion. Some sharp-eyed people could tell at a glance that there was the seal of Prince Chen's Mansion on them. They were the carriages of Prince Chen's Mansion. That was to say, Prince Chen did not blame Fifth Miss Shao, who was about to marry him. Look, he sent gifts to her!

After the carriages stopped, several servant girls got off and walked into the mansion with various exquisite boxes in their hands. Seeing this, the idle people nearby became more curious and their gossip more heated.

They all said that Fifth Miss Shao was a lucky woman. Even though Marquis Xing's Mansion had fallen, Prince Chen's attitude to her remained the same. It seemed that he was fond of her character instead of her family background.

Hearing that gifts from Prince Chen arrived, Shao Wanru asked Nanny Yu to receive them. Then she met Xiao Xuanzi, who came to deliver the gifts this time.

"Fifth Miss, my master asked whether you want anything or not. Just tell me if you do," Xiao Xuanzi came over and greeted her with a smile. He had been in a good mood recently. There would be a new master in the mansion soon, and his master's health was getting better and better. Xiao Xuanzi felt that he was getting more and more energetic.

Shao Wanru shook her head with a smile, then she rolled her eyes and asked, "What's the situation in the palace?"

"There's nothing wrong. Master said you could rest assured!" Actually, Xiao Xuanzi was sent to reassure Shao Wanru today. The gift-giving was just a formality.

"How are the servants sent to the palace?" Shao Wanru's long eyelashes fluttered. She indeed wanted to ask Xiao Xuanzi something, and it was the best time for her to do so.

"Nothing influential could be got from them. They just said that the drink from Third Madam was served to the princes. My master was in poor health, so he didn't drink it. The other two princes only drank a little, but they got drunk! It might be caused by the fact that they didn't drink that type of spirits often. In addition, the two princes were vexed at that time, so they..."

Xiao Xuanzi kept half of his words, but Shao Wanru understood them all.

At this point, the royal family was not going to pursue the matter. On the one hand, they couldn't figure out anything more. Though Marquis Xing's Mansion was to blame, they just sent a pot of spirits, which was not bad. On the other hand, the two princes had once fought against each other in the palace before, so it was no surprise that they did it again by means of Dutch courage!

Perhaps the two princes did it on purpose because they might have a grudge against each other, which was caused by Shao Yanru. When they were in Marquis Xing's Mansion that day, they wanted to vent their discontent anyway, and it was the best way to do that with the excuse that they were drunk.

Shao Wanru gently hooked the handkerchief with her index finger and smoothed it a few times. Then she raised her eyebrows and asked again, "Was the drink drugged?"

"The scene was in chaos at that time so that many things were broken, not to mention the drink in the pots. So nothing could be dug out from it. But the two princes said that they fainted after a cup and had no awareness of what happened later. They didn't wake up until they were forced to drink two bowls of cold water by my master!"

Xiao Xuanzi answered in full detail with a smile.

So now no one could be sure whether there were drugs in the drink or not. However, whatever the two princes claimed was always right. Therefore, Marquis Xing's Mansion was charged with disgracing the two princes in front of others and even their title of nobility was degraded. Honestly speaking, Marquis Xing's Mansion was quite wronged in the matter.

But in terms of everything they had done, Marquis Xing's Mansion was not wronged at all. The scandal that Shao Yanru hooked up with the two princes was enough to directly remove its title.

"So your master wants to say...?" After thinking it through, Shao Wanru felt more and more relieved. There was a lazy smile in her eyes and she looked more relaxed.

"Master wants you to know that you don't have to worry about anything. Just wait until the wedding. Master will deal with everything. There won't be anything important in the palace. But if you are in need, Master will help you!" Xiao Xuanzi said with a little pride.

Everyone thought that his master wouldn't be able to live long, not to mention having power and strength. But in fact, his master disdained to get involved. When he wanted to cut in, how could he be manipulated by others?

Shao Wanru felt warm in her heart. She blinked her watery eyes and said softly, "Tell your master that I'm fine."

"I'll definitely tell him when I get back! If there's nothing else, Fifth Miss, I am leaving. My master is still waiting for me in the palace!" Xiao Xuanzi said with a smile and in a good mood.

Shao Wanru nodded and motioned for him to leave. After he left, she opened a delicate jewelry box in front of her. This was the gift that Xiao Xuanzi brought to her just now.

That was a very exquisite jewelry box. She saw an exquisite headwear inside after opening it. The phoenix wings were decorated with layers of luxurious gems, but they didn't look unwieldy. It was very beautiful. The sunlight shone through the window on it and made shimmer that dazzled everyone in the room. Shao Wanru's hand stopped at the edge of the jewelry box. She had an inexplicable familiarity with this headwear...

"Is Fifth Miss here?" A gentle voice came from outside the courtyard.

Chapter 862 Everything Is Settled; Summoned to the Palace

Shao Wanru looked up and motioned to Qu Le. The latter hurried out and saw Zhao Xiran standing in the yard with a smile on her face, accompanied by her servant girls. She hastened to step forward and bow, "Eldest Young Madam!"

"Is your Miss here?" Zhao Xiran asked softly.

"Yes, she is. She was meeting the people who came to send the gifts from Prince Chen's Mansion just now, and they have just left," Qu Le stepped aside and said with a smile.

Zhao Xiran nodded and walked inside with a smile. Yujie had lifted the curtain for her.

"Sister Zhao!" Shao Wanru stood up and greeted her in the main room.

"Fifth Sister, you're all politeness! I just came to see whether you need anything," Zhao Xiran said politely. Her eyes fell on the jewelry box in front of Shao Wanru. At first glance, she knew that it was something extraordinary. However, the lid of the jewelry box was closed so that she couldn't know what was inside. "Was it the special gift sent by Prince Chen?"

"I thank you, Sister Zhao!" Shao Wanru said with a calm face after they sat down, showing no intention of being intimate.

"It shouldn't be me to arrange your wedding, but now you have to be tolerant of me, Fifth Sister. I have just married into the mansion, and I might know little about the rules. If I do something wrong, please point it out! I will make up for it," Zhao Xiran said modestly.

A newly married woman though she was, she had to deal with the domestic affairs of Marquis Xing's Mansion on the first day after her wedding. She was so busy that she didn't even have time to eat lunch. How unfair it was for her! But she didn't have any complaints, only which was sufficient for her to make a good impression on others.

"Thank you for your hard work, Sister Zhao!" Shao Wanru still looked calm.

"Did Prince Chen mention how his family will handle this matter? My father-in-law asked me to ask you, Fifth Sister!" Zhao Xiran sighed and said softly.

She was sincere. Obviously, it was not a coincidence that she happened to appear in Piaoyun Courtyard at this time, so she did not hide it at all.

If it had been anyone else, they would have thought that Zhao Xiran was a sincere person at this time, even if they had doubts about her before. She even said out the person who sent her. What an honest person she was!

"It was Prince Chen's private servants who came here just now. He didn't say anything, and I didn't ask anything. If you came a few earlier, you could have asked him directly," Shao Wanru smiled slightly and said with elegant indifference.

It was not easy to follow such words. Zhao Xiran hesitated for a moment and then said with a smile, "Since Prince Chen didn't say anything serious, that's good news. Grandma and Third Aunt have been sick because of the matter. If those servants had talked more nonsense, our mansion will not have a good end!"

Zhao Xiran's smile was reluctant. This was really an unexpected disaster. It should be a satisfying banquet, but bad things had happened on that day. That made her not only lose the favor of her husband's family but also have to manage the family affairs. No matter in what aspect, Zhao Xiran was at a loss.

It fell silent all of a sudden in the room. No one knew what to say next.

After a moment of silence, Zhao Xiran stood up and said, "Fifth Sister, since there is nothing that I could do for you, I shall leave first. If there is any news, please tell me. Our mansion is demoted from Duke's Mansion to Marquis's Mansion, and it has become a joke in the whole capital city. Now we should share the same enemy. We can't let them see more jokes!"

She meant to unite every person in Marquis Xing's Mansion and ask them to work together!

Shao Wanru slightly smiled in silence, and then nodded and said, "Of course, you are right, Sister Zhao!"

As Shao Wanru didn't oppose her, Zhao Xiran breathed a sigh of relief. Now that she had married into Marquis Xing's Mansion, she certainly did not want to see anything bad happen to it now.

After walking with Zhao Xiran to the door, Shao Wanru returned, sat in the chair, opened the jewelry box, and took out the exquisite headwear inside, which was very familiar to her.

But she couldn't remember though she had tried hard to do so. She watched it carefully with her hand holding it. The golden light on it flashed under the sun, catching the sight of everyone in the room.

"Miss, can it be worn now?" Yujie asked.

"No!" Shao Wanru shook her head and said. Even though she would be a princess, she couldn't wear such an exquisite headwear. There were nine hairpins on the phoenix which shaped the headwear. That was customized for the empress but not for the princess!

"Since it is not for you, why did Prince Chen give it to you?" Yujie was shocked. She didn't ask the question until she saw the phoenix sign.

"It is not new-made," Shao Wanru said after she lowered her head and looked at it carefully. There were some worn signs on its pattern. At first glance, one could tell that it had existed for a long time.

"Then... then did it belong to Prince Chen's mother?" Qu Le thought of another answer and asked in surprise.

Although Chu Liuchen was only Prince Chen, his mother was the Empress of the former Emperor. So if it was her legacy, it was reasonable for her to have such a kind of headwear.

"It should be!" Shao Wanru also guessed so. She turned and observed the headwear in her hand again but still couldn't remember whether she had seen it before.

She felt that she had seen it before, but she didn't have such a memory in her brain and she couldn't be sure whether she had seen it or not.

"Since it belongs to the former Empress, why did Prince Chen give it to you?" Yujie still didn't understand. It could be regarded as a relic, so it was reasonable that Prince Chen wanted to give it to her Miss. But her Miss couldn't wear it now, then why was it sent here now? Shouldn't he give it to her after she married into Prince Chen's Mansion?

Shao Wanru observed the headwear in her hand again and then her eyebrows frowned due to its shiny reflection. What did it mean? Chu Liuchen could not give it for no reason. Whom did he do that for?

With a flash of light in her eyes, her look at the hair ornament became deeper and deeper.

"Put it away first!" Since Shao Wanru couldn't figure out the reason, she carefully put it back in the jewelry box and asked Yujie to put it away.

At this time, Nanny Yu rushed in. After bowing to Shao Wanru, she said, "Miss, there is news from the palace!"

"What is it?" Shao Wanru was stunned, thinking that it was about the servants of Marquis Xing's Mansion sent to the palace. Didn't Xiao Xuanzi just now say that there was nothing serious about them?

"It's about the Pageant. Everyone is talking about it now," Nanny Yu had just come back from outside, so she came to report after hearing some rumors on the street.

"What's the detail?" Shao Wanru asked with interest.

"Miss Qi has become Prince Zhou's consort and another Miss Prince Yue's, but neither Princess Zhou and nor Princess Yue was selected in the Pageant. A few new consorts were chosen to enter the palace, and our First Miss is also on the list," Nanny Yu said.

"The positions of Princess Zhou and Princess Yue are still available?" Shao Wanru asked in surprise.

"No, no! It's said that the candidates were not among those selected beauties. Infanta Yuan'an is Princess Zhou, while Miss Zhang is Princess Yue. Prince Xin is too young to be engaged. Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion also received a beauty, but it is heard that he has been engaged before and the position of his princess has been decided, so he didn't accept her," Nanny Yu explained.

Shao Wanru couldn't remember who Princess Yue was in her last life, but she remembered who Princess Zhou was. She was indeed Infanta Yuan'an. Shao Wanru had met her once when she came to Marquis Xing's Mansion. Unexpectedly, it was always her either this life or last life.

Shao Wanru's eyes flashed with a trace of cold. Infanta Yuan'an could become Princess Zhou without competing in the Pageant. It could be seen that she had been engaged since a long time ago. However, nothing relevant had even been heard before. The Empress did a good job in blocking the news!

What she didn't expect was that Princess Yu was Zhang Qilan. The Pageant was just a formality for her and she had left the palace early. But she was chosen though she showed such a perfunctory attitude. It made Shao Wanru speechless. However, when it came to the fact that her father was Prime Minister Zhang, Shao Wanru felt that it made sense.

"Prince Yue and Prince Zhou each take a princess and a consort, and Commandery Prince Qing a princess. First Miss Qi is Prince Zhou's consort. The imperial edict has been issued now. At this time, everyone should have been informed, and all the remaining consorts have left the palace."

After working for Shao Wanru for a while, Nanny Yu became more and more sophisticated and reassuring in Shao Wanru's eyes now. She was no longer reckless and could deal with things concisely and clearly, completely different from what she used to be when they were in Jiangzhou. Of course, it was also owed to Nanny Zheng's help.

"Let's wait and see," Shao Wanru said extremely calmly. She had thought that this matter was very far away from her. After all, the engagement between her and Chu Liuchen had been settled early.

However, she didn't expect that she would be involved in it so soon. The next morning, she received an imperial edict summoning her to the palace.

Before she set off, Old Madam specially called her over and repeatedly reminded her to be cautious in the palace. She warned Shao Wanru that Marquis Xing's Mansion could no longer suffer anything in the current situation. She also hinted that if something bad happened to Marquis Xing's Mansion again, Shao Wanru might not necessarily be able to keep her position as the future Princess Chen.

Shao Wanru stood in front of Old Madam, with her head obediently lowered.

Old Madam was satisfied with Shao Wanru's docile look. She reached out to touch her head which was in pain, waved her hand, and said, "I've said what I want to say. It's up to you next. That's all I can do for you!"

It sounded like Old Madam was truly worried about Shao Wanru.

Shao Wanru raised her watery eyes to look at Old Madam and then smiled softly under Old Madam's gaze. Then she left with her servants.

The carriage of the imperial palace had already been waiting at the gate of the mansion. Shao Wanru got on the carriage with Yujie. The carriage rushed to their destination and stopped when they arrived at the gate of the imperial palace. Yujie jumped out of the carriage first and then helped Shao Wanru get off.

The sedan chair was waiting at the door. Shao Wanru got on the sedan chair and Yujie walked beside her. They went all the way to the palace.

Sitting in the palace sedan chair, Shao Wanru

frowned slightly. She didn't think that she should enter the palace at this time. But why was she called to come in such a hurry?

She twisted the handkerchief in her hand hard, with a trace of suspicion in her eyes...

Chapter 863 Two Imperial Consorts' Provocation

The sedan chair stopped in front of Phoenix Palace. With the towering imperial-red palace in front of her, Shao Wanru's eyebrows frowned. She had thought that it was Empress Dowager who summoned her, but it turned out to be the Empress.

A palace maid had been waiting there for a long time. When Shao Wanru arrived, she greeted her with a smile and said, "Fifth Miss Shao, Her Majesty is waiting for you. Please come with me!"

Shao Wanru nodded and followed the palace maid inside without Yujie, who was ordered to stay outside.

When they arrived at the main hall, Shao Wanru saw that a few guests had been there sitting next to the Empress. She immediately lowered her head to salute the Empress.

Although the Empress, who was sitting high on the main seat, had a smile on her face, the smile was not warm. She fixed her eyes on Shao Wanru with a cold look.

The laughter in the hall suddenly stopped and the atmosphere became odd. Those guests sitting next to her could feel the Empress's displeasure, and they couldn't help thinking about what attitude they should show to Shao Wanru.

People living in the palace were the best at grasping others' minds.

Some of them started to cast a sarcastic look at Shao Wanru. "She is no more than the fiancée of Prince Chen. It is hard to say what changes will happen in the future."

Even if Prince Chen was favored, the future Princess Chen might not be. Look, the Empress's attitude was very obvious.

When it came to what had happened to Duke Xing's Mansion recently, none of them was pleasant. First, it was First Miss Shao's scandal, then it was the fight between the two princes at the wedding banquet of First Young Master Shao, which had just happened. No, no! It was not Duke Xing's Mansion anymore. It was Marquis Xing's Mansion now.

Thinking of that, someone among the guests suddenly sneered out loud. Low as her laughter was, it broke the silence in the hall.

"You may stand up," the Empress said indifferently.

The palace maid helped Shao Wanru up and the latter sat down on a chair beside.

After sitting down, Shao Wanru looked at those guests, only to find that she knew most of them.

Both Infanta Yuan'an and Zhang Qilan were present. Not only them but also Qi Rongzhi and a Miss she didn't know. But she had once seen her during the Pageant. She might be Prince Yue's consort. As for the other two sitting just next to the Empress, Shao Wanru guessed that they were the favored consorts in the palace because both of them were good-looking and gorgeously dressed.

One of them, who was covering her smiling face with a round fan, looked Shao Wanru up and down and then said to the Empress with a smile, "Is this the Fifth Miss of Duke... Marquis Xing's Mansion? Oh, how silly I am! I always forget that there is no Duke Xing's Mansion anymore. It should be Marquis Xing's Mansion."

The lady said with a charming smile, which sounded like she didn't say that on purpose. But every word she said was to sneer at Shao Wanru.

"Yes, Secondary Consort Li. I always forget, too. We have called it Duke Xing's Mansion for so many years, but suddenly we have to change it into Marquis Xing's Mansion. How unexpected it is!" The other consort in splendid clothes said with a smile.

It was obvious that she meant no kindness in her words.

Shao Wanru calmly listened to the two imperial concubines talking about the gossip of her mansion. The expression on her face had always kept the same, as if they were not talking about anything relevant to her.

The two consorts had an eye contact with each other and then became more and more disdainful of Shao Wanru. The future Princess Chen was not a powerful figure. She didn't even dare to refute. The Empress had thought too highly of her before.

She was timid and cowardly. There was no need to be afraid of her.

"If the ancestors of Marquis Xing's Mansion knew that their descendants were so disappointing, I wonder whether they would have come out from the earth to have it out with their children. I heard that the former Duke is a hero of his generation. He fought with the former Emperor for the throne. Now, his Mansion, instead of being brought to glory, have fallen so quickly under the rule of his unworthy descendants!"

The consort who spoke before fanned herself and looked at Shao Wanru with increasing sarcasm. There was no need to fear a timid future Princess. She would certainly taunt her as many times as she could.

The Empress didn't like Shao Wanru either, did she? In this case, why not taunt her in front of the Empress?

Shao Wanru looked up at the Empress, who turned to whisper to the palace maid behind her. It seemed that she didn't hear the two consorts' sarcasm to Shao Wanru.

"Fifth Miss Shao, do you agree with us? I heard that your father used to be the Heir of Duke Xing's Mansion. Unfortunately, he died early. If it were still your father who was in charge of Duke Xing's Mansion now, such kind of disaster might not have happened to it!" Seeing that the Empress didn't react to their words, the other consort talked to Shao Wanru directly.

Shao Wanru took a deep breath, with a trace of coldness in her watery eyes. She blinked, with her long eyelashes fluttering, which made her look beautiful and charming. But it was the coldness in her eyes that caught people's eyes most.

"What do you mean, Your Highness? Could you please make it clear? I am young, so I don't quite understand what you mean. Do you think my father is not qualified to be the Heir of Duke Xing, or do you despise my grandfather?"

As soon as she finished her words, the whole hall fell silent again. Those who were talking with each other immediately stopped and looked at Shao Wanru in astonishment.

The Empress turned to look at Shao Wanru, and she couldn't help frowning when seeing Shao Wanru was looking at the two consorts neither obsequiously nor arrogantly.

The Empress had seen Shao Wanru several times during the latter was staying with Shao Yanru before. She knew that Shao Wanru was a gentle and beautiful woman. Even though she had not fully grown up, it could be seen how beautiful she would become in the future. Therefore, the Empress was not surprised that Chu Liuchen was fond of her.

Shao Wanru not only had a beautiful face but also had a powerful maternal grandmother.

But no matter how powerful her grandma was, she was a delicate girl, beautiful and pure. It was actually very easy to deal with such a girl.

But what was wrong with the current situation?

Seeing that the two imperial consorts were shocked, Shao Wanru smiled slightly and continued to focus her eyes on them, as if she hadn't known that what she said just now made everyone speechless.

"How presumptuous!" One of the two consorts stood up in anger. She was being favored by the Emperor, so no one dared to treat her with disrespect in the palace, let alone a Miss from an official's mansion.

"What did I say to make you angry, Your Highness? Didn't you keep talking about my mansion? I don't know which mansion you are from, but I bet you must come from a noble family." Shao Wanru tilted her head with a slightly confusing face, looking as quite cute as a silly girl.

But it was a strong provocation in that consort's eyes. For a moment, she was so furious that she raised her eyebrows, widened her almond-shaped eyes, and shouted with anger, "What an unruly person! How dare you speak like that in front of the Empress? Kneel!"

Few families in the capital city could be compared with Marquis Xing's Mansion. This imperial consort was born in a declined aristocratic family, which was not at all the same class as Marquis Xing's Mansion. Even if it was degraded, it was still much above her declined family.

The imperial consort mentioned the Empress. If the Empress got involved, Shao Wanru was bound to face her. The imperial consort felt complacent in secret, thinking that she was helping the Empress to oppress Shao Wanru, which was also the reason why she came here.

Shao Wanru stood up, turned to look at the Empress with her watery eyes, and apologized to the Empress, "I'm guilty. Empress, please punish me!"

"It is sure enough that she was timid, and it was easy to deal with her. So I can't go too far for the time being," the Empress' face relaxed, and she smiled slightly, being about to say something polite.

However, Shao Wanru raised her head, with her bright eyes flashing with a trace of coldness, and said, "Your Majesty, I'm guilty, but the two Highnesses seem to be wrong too. I wonder why they kept provoking me just now? Is it because my grandma or my grandfather has once offended them, or because they dislike me due to I am Prince Chen's future wife? "

Since she was summoned to the palace today, Shao Wanru had made up her mind already.

In the past, Shao Wanru always showed weakness in front of the Empress, for her marriage with Chu Liuchen was not officially declared yet and her identity was just the daughter of an official. What's more, her eldest sister Shao Yanru had done something disgraceful at that time. So she had to be more cautious with her manners and avoid making any mistakes.

Now she was officially claimed to be the future Princess Chen. If she didn't fight back today, she would lose not only her face but also Chu Liuchen's. Therefore, she would never give in even if the Empress was angry with that.

No matter what was the Empress' intention, she had no intention of making a concession today.

The Empress's face darkened. She didn't expect that Shao Wanru, who looked as delicate and young as a teenager, would say such sharp words. Not to mention the first two reasons, the latter one she said just now could even get the Empress punished, let alone the two imperial consorts.

Others might not know how much the Emperor favored Chu Liuchen, but how could the Empress not know?

"Your Majesty, you must uphold justice for me. The Fifth Miss of Marquis Xing's Mansion despises us so much that she even dares to say such words in front of you. She is too presumptuous!"

The two imperial consorts were stunned at first, then they felt embarrassed and so angry. Suddenly they stood up, knelt in front of the Empress, and cried out loud. One of them even messed her clothes and hair, looking as if she had been torn and beaten.

"Your Majesty, if you don't uphold justice for me, I don't deserve to live anymore. How could you let an official's daughter defame us?" Said another consort, who was more irrational, suddenly standing up and then crashing into a pillar aside.

The palace maids were shocked and rushed to hold her, and then they all tumbled.

The solemn main hall of the Phoenix Palace instantly turned as messy as a market. It was really noisy in the hall with shouts mixed up with the cry of hitting the pillar.

The Empress glanced over the noble ladies present and stopped on the face of Shao Wanru, who was extremely calm. Her facial features were delicate and beautiful enough to make people jealous of her. It was unbelievable that she still could remain calm when seeing the unreasonable behavior of the two favored consorts of the Emperor. Even the Empress started to admire Shao Wanru's self-restraint.

"His Majesty arrives!" The sharp voice of a eunuch came from outside the hall, and the two imperial consorts stopped crying immediately.

Chapter 864 The Flattery Backfires

"What's going on?" After sitting down and seeing the scene in front of him, the Emperor's face turned cold.

"Your Majesty, I don't want to live anymore. I just asked something about Marquis Xing's Mansion, but Fifth Miss Shao mocked me, saying that my family was in a lower class than hers. I was so angry that I argued with her. But She pushed both of us... I disgraced you, Your Majesty. I don't deserve to live any longer!"

The imperial consort, who was crying and shouting just now, walked to the Emperor with her knees and complained to him with tears on her face.

And her complaints shocked Shao Wanru very much. "How shameless she is to talk nonsense in front of so many people!"

After all, there were a few people present, but most of them were from the Empress' palace. The rest were the Misses who were about to enter Prince Yue's Mansion and Prince Zhou's Mansion.

No one dared to say anything before the Empress spoke.

"Your Majesty... Your Majesty, please uphold justice for us!" The other imperial consort also cried and complained. She looked even more miserable. However, both of them gave direct hints that it was Shao Wanru who had bullied them.

Every imperial concubine living in the palace was so proficient in framing, slandering, and distorting the truth. With just a few words, they had made Shao Wanru at a disadvantage.

Zhang Qilan moved a little, wanting to explain for Shao Wanru, but Infanta Yuan'an who was beside her grabbed her sleeve. She shook her head to indicate Zhang Qilan not to take reckless actions.

The two of them had known each other before and got along well. Zhang Qilan understood the kindness to her from Infanta Yuan'an. At this time, it was not her turn to speak first. However, she couldn't stand to watch Shao Wanru being bullied by the two imperial consorts. Then she turned to look at the Empress.

Only the Empress could explain what had happened just now, and only she could speak at such a scene. However, she looked very calm, pursing her lips tightly and showing no intention of helping Shao Wanru.

Infanta Yuan'an waved Zhang Qilan's sleeve again and motioned for her to keep waiting. Zhang Qilan had to nod helplessly.

Shao Wanru did not see the interaction between them. She stood with her head down and listened to the two imperial concubines' complaint that pushed all the blame on her. And she was not surprised by the Empress' silence. She had known early that the Empress's attitude toward her was not kind at all. "Even if she had a smile on her face, the smile is nothing but a cold mask."

It was impossible that the Empress would explain for Shao Wanru that she didn't push the two imperial concubines. She was kind enough if she didn't strike Shao Wanru who was in trouble now.

The Empress was venting her dissatisfaction with Shao Wanru and her hatred towards Marquis Xing's Mansion on Shao Wanru.

"What noise is it, Uncle the Emperor? Has this place become a market?" A lazy voice with a little gloom suddenly came from outside the hall.

When the Empress looked up and saw Chu Liuchen standing at the door with his hands clasped behind his back, her heart skipped a beat.

Standing in the shadow, Chu Liuchen didn't look gentle anymore. Instead, he looked creepy and cold.

Only as he walked in slowly and showed the smile on his face did he start to look a little friendly. He was still the gentle and elegant Prince Chen, wasn't he?

He walked forward and bowed to the Emperor and the Empress. After that, he sat on a spacious chair. He looked up and down at the two consorts who were crying and then said with disgust, "Uncle the Emperor, who are these two? Did they do something wrong? They are just two women. Why not ask someone else to interrogate them if they made mistakes? There is no need to do it by yourself."

Chu Liuchen said that casually with ripples of elegance in his eyes, which made his face even more gorgeous, but his words were scary enough to tremble the two imperial concubines.

"Your Majesty, you have to uphold justice for us. It's all Fifth Miss Shao's fault. I've disgraced you and I am ashamed to face you. I... I'd better go to die!"

The crying imperial consort came to her senses, acting as if she was about to stand up and crash the pillar again.

The palace servants sank into panic again, for fear that the consort would do hit a pillar. It was a serious offense in front of the Emperor.

“Why do you stop her? Since she wants to die, just let her do it,” Chu Liuchen said with indifference.

His words attracted everyone’s attention. At this moment, his delicate face was no longer as pure and gentle as before in their eyes.

“Your Highness, she said Fifth Miss Shao hurt her. Is that true?” Chu Liuchen looked up at the Empress and asked bluntly, as if he hadn’t noticed the horror and shock in everyone’s eyes.

The question was so direct that the Empress couldn’t avoid it. She could have pretended to be unclear if Prince Chen hadn’t asked her. But now she couldn’t. Even if most of the people in the hall were her subordinates, the truth couldn’t be kept as a secret because there were others.

The truth would be found out at last.

She coughed in a low voice as if she had just come to her senses from shock. “Your Majesty, Fifth Miss Shao didn’t hurt them. They did that by themselves!”

The Empress’s explanation was very neutral. It sounded like she was standing at the same side as Shao Wanru to help her. But she did not mention the two imperial concubines’ sarcasm to Shao Wanru before.

Shao Wanru looked up at the Empress and saw her smiling kindly at her. She bowed sideways to the Empress and remained silent.

It was not her turn to speak yet. Since Chu Liuchen was here, she was relieved.

“Your Highness, do you mean that they framed Fifth Miss Shao? But why? Fifth Miss Shao spends most of her time in the boudoir and has rare contact with others. She couldn’t have offended many people. Is it because of me?” Chu Liuchen examined the two imperial concubines who no longer dared to cry and suddenly smiled.

The Empress’s smile froze on her face. Chu Liuchen was such a difficult man. She just said something neutral, but he turned it into a confession of the bad deeds of the two imperial concubines.

Anyway, the two consorts did that to please the Empress. They were very smart and also flattered her. As long as she was annoyed and unhappy, they would immediately follow her wishes. They could be considered useful women. So she did not want them to be punished now, especially because of her.

“It’s not a big deal. It’s just an intense debate between women. There! Help them up! The Emperor is here. How can they be allowed to be presumptuous!” the Empress said slowly.

Her tone was very gentle, and it was obvious that she wanted to smooth it over.

“Uncle the Emperor, my fiancée was humiliated! How can I swallow it?” Chu Liuchen’s raised his eyebrows with an evil smile.

The Empress wanted to let it go, but Chu Liuchen didn't agree. How could he allow others to bully his woman at will?

"Take the two women outside and beat them with thick sticks ten times each!" Looking at Chu Liuchen's face, the Emperor said coldly with a gloomy face. Two eunuchs came in and dragged the two consorts away.

"Please forgive me, Your Majesty. I promise I won't do it again!"

"Help me, Your Merciful Majesty!" Aware that they were in crisis, the two imperial concubines begged the Empress for mercy with sincere tears. They had thought that the Empress would think highly of them after they flattered her, but they didn't expect they would infuriate the Emperor and that Prince Chen would show up to protect Fifth Miss Shao wholeheartedly.

The two consorts regretted it. If they had known that Prince Chen was so protective of his fiancée, they would not have taunted her like that just now!

Even if they were lucky enough to survive the punishment today, they would be laughed at by every woman in the harem. The two were both regretful and irritated.

"Your Majesty..." The Empress showed a shocked face and pleaded. She wanted to save them.

"I should have not intervened in this. But since you are merciful, I have to make decisions for you once. If the women in the harem are all scheming like these two, then there will be no peace in the palace. Empress, you should pay more attention to teaching them!"

The Emperor rebuked them with a cold voice, including the Empress. The Empress was annoyed and gnashed her teeth, but she could say nothing to retort. She had long known that the Emperor was partial to Chu Liuchen rather than her.

Since he was a child, Chen Liuchen had never shown respect to her and often embarrassed her in front of others

The Empress took a deep breath, suppressed her anger, and warned herself in her heart again and again. Then she slowly raised her head with a gentle smile on her face and she bowed to the Emperor and said, "You're right, Your Majesty! I shouldn't have been so inconsiderate. I thought that I should be generous towards your consorts!"

"You are too merciful!" Although the Emperor's voice was still cold, his expression softened. He looked around and said meaningfully, "Are they all the future princesses?"

"Yes, they are!" The Empress answered with a smile as if nothing had happened just now. The two imperial consorts had been taken away, and no one knew where they were executed. The hall had been restored to peace.

Shao Wanru and other guests had been rearranged to sit down. The Emperor glanced at those women and nodded. He had seen most of them. At this time, he felt quite satisfied.

However, he became very discontented and frowned when his eyes fell on Shao Wanru.

His dissatisfaction, on the one hand, came from Shao Yanru. When thinking of her character, he would feel uneasy. Although Shao Yanru was announced as his consort, she was deserted in a distant corner of the imperial palace, just like living in the Cold Palace.

There was never a lack of beauties in the palace. So however beautiful Shao Yanru was, the Emperor would never fall in love with such a vicious woman as her, who might even provoke the fight between his sons. The Emperor gave her the title as his consort in order to avert another argument between Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou because of this woman.

The Emperor felt that the Fifth Miss Shao was too charming at such a young age. That was a kind of inborn charm, which made her one of the most gorgeous ones among a group of beauties. However, a hint of coldness in her eyes and eyebrows diluted the excessive attraction and made her more attractive when she blinked and looked at others.

“Can my nephew withstand the temptation when facing her?” Looking at Shao Wanru, the Emperor frowned his eyebrows more and more tightly. He kind of regretted promising Empress Dowager and agreeing on their marital engagement...

Chapter 865 Do You Want Me to Keep It for You?

The Emperor’s cold eyes were fixed on Shao Wanru, and his powerful aura oppressed her. Even though her head was lowered, she could also sense the Emperor’s displeasure.

Shao Wanru held tightly the handkerchief in her hand. She didn’t understand what had offended the Emperor.

However, the Empress felt delighted in secret. She could see that the Emperor didn’t like Shao Wanru. That was good! She raised the corners of her mouth, smiled, and said softly, “Though Fifth Miss Shao is young, she is a decent girl, and she just made little trouble just now!”

However, it was the truth that she had made some trouble. Recalling that the two imperial concubines had said that Shao Wanru mocked them just now, the Emperor became more displeased.

“She seemed to be a troublemaker too.”

“What do you mean by saying that she made little trouble, Your Majesty the Empress? Please tell me what trouble did she make just now?” Chu Liuchen asked, with an interested smile on his handsome face and his eyes flashing.

The Empress was stunned. Though she said Shao Wanru had made trouble, in fact, she merely said few words. so how could it be considered to be creating a disturbance?

With an embarrassed smile, the Empress explained, “It’s not a big deal. Anyway, Fifth Miss Shao is young!”

What the Empress meant was that Shao Wanru was still young, so it was not a big deal for her to make trouble. However, she did not make clear what the trouble was.

“But I’m curious about what kind of trouble she has made. She cultivated in seclusion in the nunnery for three years. And it is said that no matter how noisy a person used to be, he or she won’t make any trouble after that,” Chu Liuchen rolled his eyes and said with a smile.

The Empress couldn't keep the smile on her face. If Shao Wanru had been an impetuous person, she wouldn't have stood such kind of loneliness and bitterness in three-year seclusion. But Shao Wanru could cultivate in seclusion in the mountain for such a long time at such a young age. It showed that she was a sober person. It was unreasonable to say that she made trouble because she was still young.

The Emperor glanced at the Empress secretly with a trace of darkness in his eyes.

Although he was not fond of Shao Wanru, he was not happy to see the Empress oppress her. Since Chen Liuchen had been engaged with her, Shao Wanru's dignity was equal to Chu Liuchen's. For this reason, the Emperor would never allow the Empress to do so.

Moreover, since she could spend three years living in the nunnery, she could not be impetuous. In addition, Chu Liuchen was in poor health, so he couldn't be tolerant of a noisy woman. The only unpleasant thing was that she looked too charming.

Thinking of these, the Emperor slightly changed his impression of Shao Wanru.

"She deserves a compliment for the good deed of cultivating in seclusion in the nunnery and observing mourning for her parents for three years. You should award her later, Empress," the Emperor said.

The Empress didn't dare to refuse. She could only nod and say in a soft tone, "That's what I want to do. I have always been satisfied with Fifth Miss Shao. I intended to award her with some jewelry long before!"

The Empress summoned these people today because she did want to give them the jewelry. Hearing her words, the leading palace maid behind her clapped her hands gently.

Several palace maids showed up from the side door, each of them holding an exquisite box with dragons and phoenixes carved on it. At first glance, one could tell that they were made in palace.

"Your Majesty, these are the gifts I prepared for them. I have intended to award them before," said the Empress, reaching out to point at those boxes.

The palace maids stood in two rows, three in the front and two at the back. The jewelry boxes in the front row were bigger, and those at the back smaller. Three princes each had a princess. Chu Liuchen did not have a consort, so the two smaller boxes were prepared for Prince Yue's and Prince Zhou's consorts.

The Empress was so considerate that the Emperor couldn't help showing a satisfied smile on his face. He nodded and appreciated the Empress.

The Empress asked the palace maids to give the jewelry boxes with a smile. A palace maid stood in front of Shao Wanru and raised the box in her hand over her head, showing great respect.

The gift recipients hurriedly knelt to express their gratitude!

"These are what the Emperor and I prepared for you. I invited all of you to come to the palace because I want to get familiar with you. You will marry into the royal family soon. I want you to live a good life with your princes and never have any false ideas. Otherwise, it is not the gorgeous jewelry that will be rewarded to you at that time!"

The Empress changed to be solemn and dignified. There was an obvious warning in her words, so her real intention of summoning them was to warn them.

Shao Wanru rolled her eyes and understood what she meant. She immediately thanked her with others.

After they finished the salute, the Empress asked someone to help them stand up and get seated again.

The palace maids opened the jewelry boxes in their hands and then a burst of light of jewelry shone and dazzled everyone's eyes. At first glance, they knew that they were not ordinary items.

Seeing that they were shocked, the Empress smiled and explained to them, "These ornaments are specially made to add to your dowries."

Shao Wanru's attention was caught by a headwear among them. A headwear she had seen before appeared in front of her here! Although it was at the bottom of the box, she recognized it at a glance because it was almost the same as the one she received from Chu Liuchen a few days ago.

Wasn't such an ornament exclusive to the Empress? How could it appear in the jewelry box given to her?

The box was almost full of jewelry, with the headwear placed at the very bottom. She would not have been able to discover it in a second if she had not carefully observed the one Chu Liuchen gave to her before. Other jewelry in the same box was as gorgeous as the headwear. It was not easy to figure it out.

Her long eyelashes fluttered, and then she raised her eyes calmly to look at Chu Liuchen, only to find that he was smiling, with his eyes looking deep and leisurely. He seemed to be in a good mood.

After thinking for a second, Shao Wanru walked up to Chu Liuchen and bowed deeply.

"What's the matter, Fifth Miss Shao?" Chu Liuchen asked in a leisurely tone.

"I don't dare to directly accept such valuable gifts from the Empress," Shao Wanru said with an awkward look. Her voice was low, but those Misses, who were about to take the jewelry box, heard her and became embarrassed.

It looked that they were a little impatient.

"Don't you like them?" Chu Liuchen's voice was not high, but everyone in the hall heard it and felt it gentle.

Qi Rongzhi looked at Shao Wanru and then at Chu Liuchen. She pursed her lips.

In fact, she didn't want to get close to Shao Wanru.

"They are the presents from the Empress. How can I not like them?" Shao Wanru said with a blush on her face. She handed the box in her hand over to Chu Liuchen, and looked like she didn't know what to say.

However, Chu Liuchen understood what she meant. He reached out to take the jewelry box and said, "Do you want me to keep it for you? Well, I will reluctantly accept it!"

After that, the jewelry box had been in his hand. Shao Wanru became shy and her delicate face turned red, which made her more beautiful in others' eyes.

The Empress was astonished by what they did. She had thought that Shao Wanru would refuse to accept the gift, but she didn't expect that she would give the jewelry box to Chu Liuchen.

"Fifth Miss Shao, don't you like my gifts?" The Empress looked unhappy.

"No, I like them very much," Shao Wanru shook her head and explained in a low voice. She looked awkward and seemed to be too bashful to explain.

Of course, the gifts given by the Empress could not be refused at will. If something went wrong, she would be accused of disdain for the royal family. Shao Wanru would not be so stupid to refuse her. Moreover, the Emperor was still here. She could feel that he did not have a good impression of her!

"Since you like them, why didn't you keep them yourself but gave them to Prince Chen?" The Empress's face turned completely cold. If Shao Wanru didn't give a reasonable explanation, she would punish Shao Wanru even if the Emperor was here.

"Your Merciful Majesty, in fact..." Shao Wanru looked more and more bashful and said, "Prince Chen has also given some presents to me before, but I sent them back, because I want His Highness to keep them for me first..."

Before she finished her words, Shao Wanru's face had been totally red.

The Emperor saw her through. Looking at the charming and elegant girl with a blushed face, and then at his handsome nephew, who took his future wife's behavior for granted, he suddenly burst into laughter.

"Good... good!" He praised in a casual manner. Of course, the Emperor was willing to see his nephew have the upper hand. It was his nephew's idea. Shao Wanru just looked charming and was nothing but an ignorant girl. Otherwise, she would not have done such a thing.

It was a good habit to ask her fiancé to keep the good stuff for her instead of keeping it for herself.

The Empress curved her lips. It looked like she was smiling, but she couldn't smile at all. After the Emperor's laughter stopped, she said softly, "The jewelry should be kept by a woman. Prince Chen has a lot of things to deal with. Besides, he is in poor health, so how can you trouble him with such a thing? What's more, the two of you haven't..."

As she said that, the Empress cast a glance at Chu Liuchen. The Empress was considerate enough towards him. But everyone understood what she meant. She hinted that Shao Wanru and Chu Liuchen had an affair before marriage, indicating that Shao Wanru had a bad character.

Chu Liuchen replied in a lazy voice, "Your Merciful Majesty, the engagement between us has been settled early, but it has not been announced yet. Even if we have met and talked to each other several times, it should not be a big deal! Imperial Grandmother has also given a lot of things to Fifth Miss Shao before. At that time, it was inconvenient for her to keep them in the nunnery, so they were all sent to my mansion!"

Even Empress Dowager had acquiesced in their relationship, so it seemed that Empress Queen was deliberately provoking Empress Dowager if she kept arguing about it.

The engagement had been settled since a long time ago? Had it just been decided? Qi Rongzhi's eyes narrowed.

"The jewelry given by you is really good. I'll put it away for Fifth Miss Shao after I go back!" After saying that, Chu Liuchen weighed the jewelry box in his hand without looking at the Empress's pale face caused by anger. Unexpectedly, he didn't hold the box tight and it fell off and the delicate jewelry inside was scattered on the ground. Some ornaments were broken.

Among the ornaments, there was an exquisite headwear, which was the most eye-catching. It was made of fine and exquisite gold. The jewels embedded into its surface flickered and a dazzling shape of a phoenix...

Chapter 866 Three People Walking Together

"Why... why is it here?" The Empress stood up and asked the lead palace maid behind her in angry.

Obviously, this Huasheng could only be used by Empress, but now it appeared in the jewelry box of Shao Wanru.

"I... I don't know. I'll ask the reason!" The lead palace maid knelt down with a thud and said in a trembling voice.

Chu Liuchen smiled mockingly and leisurely, "The servants in your palace are really muddled. Could this kind of thing be sent to others? Why should you let these useless servants stay in your palace!"

Such an exquisite jewelry which could only be worn by the Empress, just as precious as the emperor's imperial robe, even appeared in others' belongings. If they did not discover it now, how could Shao Wanru explain it clearly?

"Uncle the Emperor, it seems that some people really don't want me to recover!" After saying that, Chu Liuchen stood up and bowed deeply to the Emperor before the Empress said anything more. "Uncle the Emperor, I have to leave now!"

After saying that, he took two steps back with great respect, then turned around and strode away.

He was thin, which made him seem to be more lonely and cold now. The Emperor pitied him in his heart, and showed anger on his face.

"Your Majesty, I can explain it!" The Empress found things bad to her, so she said in panic.

"Empress, if you cannot even manage your own palace, I will ask my mother to find someone else to replace you. Do you still want to keep such a servant?" The Emperor asked with a cold expression.

"Empress Your Majesty, please forgive me! I really did not know about it. It must be someone else who put it here. I will check it out immediately," seeing this situation, the lead palace maid cried and begged loudly.

In fact, the Empress really wanted to agree. This lead palace maid was her trusted subordinate and helped her a lot. But when she saw the expression of the Emperor, she did not dare to do so. If she blamed this on other palace maids or eunuchs, the Emperor would definitely not be satisfied.

Having stayed in the palace for so many years, the Empress knew that the Emperor was furious at this time. The best way was to obey whatever he said. Otherwise, she could not afford the consequences.

"Someone comes to take her away. If she can't even do such a small thing, what else could she do?" The Empress didn't dare to disobey the Emperor's order and lowered her head.

"Empress Your Majesty, Empress Your Majesty..." The lead palace maid screamed with a pale face.

Two old maids in the palace came over. One of them skillfully covered her mouth with a handkerchief, and the other tied up her hands from the back. They dragged her out together.

She would definitely be killed. All the young ladies in the hall lowered their heads and trembled. The lead palace maid, who had stood beside them just now gently, had lost her life in the blink of an eye.

The royal family was always like this. So was the imperial palace!

The Emperor snorted and stood up to leave. On the halfway, he suddenly turned around and looked sharply at the Empress's face. "You really should manage your palace. Things keep happening. I am afraid that you are unable to deal with so many things!"

The Empress's face immediately turned pale. Her lips trembled, but she couldn't say anything. She could only watch the Emperor leaving angrily.

The Emperor did blame her, just as what he did after the thing of Shao Yanru. The thing just now reminded the Emperor of the thing of Shao Yanru.

The hall became deadly silent. All the young ladies lowered their heads and didn't dare to breathe loudly for fear of annoying the Empress.

After a long while, they heard the Empress take a deep breath and say exhaustedly in a low voice, "You can leave now and stay for lunch. I'm tired now. I'll go to take a rest!"

"Farewell, Empress Your Majesty!" They stood up together and bowed to the Empress.

The Empress nodded. She held the hand of a nanny and turned to walk inside.

"Misses, please come to the side hall and take a seat," a eunuch came over with a smile. He reached out to lead the way to the side, and then showed them the way in front.

All the people followed him to the side hall. Compared with the solemn and dignified main hall, although the side hall was small, it was not so solemn, which made people feel relaxed.

"I was really scared just now. I wanted to help you by saying something, but... I don't dare!" Zhang Qilan came over to hold Shao Wanru's hands and felt that she could finally relieve.

The scenes in the main hall just now still frightened her.

"I also don't dare to talk!" Shao Wanru smiled softly and gently.

Her words resonated with Zhang Qilan so she nodded repeatedly. She leaned over and whispered near Shao Wanru's ear, "Does the Empress dislike you?"

Shao Wanru shook her head with a bitter smile and said, "I don't know."

Zhang Qilan looked around again. Seeing that no one noticed them, she moved her head closer to Shao Wanru and asked in a low voice, "Was it because of your Big Sister's matter that she vented her anger on you?"

She did not say the Empress directly, but she meant the Empress.

"Maybe!" Shao Wanru didn't shake her head this time. There was a trace of deep worry and coldness in her watery eyes. Shao Yanru's matter was just one of the reasons. Another reason should be Chu Liuchen.

The Huasheng of the Empress appeared in her hands, which not only indicated her sinister intentions, but also led people to suspect Chu Liuchen. If she had Huasheng, then Chu Liuchen should be the future Emperor. The disobedience was obvious.

Even if the emperor would not do anything to Chu Liuchen, he would not dote on him as much as he used to. A small leak will sink a great ship. His affection for Chu Liuchen would finally be eliminated. After all, he was just a nephew. Maybe the Emperor did not suspect Chu Liuchen before because of his illness. But now, he got better, which meant that he would become the obstacle of someone.

The thing that happened today was just an attempt.

Fortunately, Chu Liuchen had sent the Huasheng worn by his mother before. And luckily, he came here today. Otherwise, this Huasheng would have fallen into her hands and she would be unable to explain it.

"Let's go out for a walk!" Zhang Qilan looked around and felt that it was more convenient for them to talk in private outside. Just now, the Empress asked them to enjoy the scenery in the Phoenix Palace, so they were free to walk here.

"Okay!" Shao Wanru nodded.

"Sisters, where are you going? I'd like to go with you!" Seeing them stand up, Infanta Yuan'an also stood up and said with a smile.

"Okay, let's go out together!" Zhang Qilan said with a smile.

The three of them went out hand in hand. Qi Rongzhi stayed in the corner and did not intend to go with them. The other Miss looked at her and the three Misses who were going out without saying anything in the end. The three Misses were all future Princesses, but she was just a concubine with a much lower status.

"Fifth Miss Shao and Prince Chen have known each other for a long time?" Infanta Yuan'an said with a smile as she walked. She looked gentle and elegant, and said that: "Speaking of this, Fifth Miss Shao and I could be considered as cousins!"

Considering the identity of the two Great Princesses, they were indeed cousins. However, the two Great Princesses had little contact with each other. Moreover, Shao Wanru was just the daughter of the Great Princess's daughter rather than granddaughter.

"You're welcome, Infanta!" Shao Wanru answered her politely and changed the topic, "When Prince Chen was in Jiangzhou, he lived in the mansion where I lived at that time!"

Even though they had relationship, Shao Wanru would not be so arrogant to call this infanta sister. When she saw this infanta at the first time, she was with Shao Yanru. Due to this, Shao Wanru would not trust her.

“Ningyuan Army General’s Mansion in Jiangzhou?” The voice of Infanta Yuan’an was not high with a natural mellowness, which left a good impression on people.

“Yes!” Shao Wanru nodded. She could not hide it from her. Almost everyone who had inquired about her knew it.

“I have met the Princess of Duke Yong’s Mansion before...” Infanta Yuan’an suddenly covered her mouth and laughed. “I heard...”

“Heard what?” Zhang Qilan asked curiously. She was older than Shao Wanru, but she seemed to be less mature.

“I heard that this Princess had a bad relationship with the heir of Duke Yong’s Mansion,” Infanta Yuan’an smiled and just said a little about it.

Because Prince Cheng had publicized what had happened three years ago, Qin Yuru had a bad reputation. If it weren’t for Duke Yong’s Mansion, she would have been locked up for a lifetime.

Shao Wanru smiled but said nothing.

“At that time, this Princess and the Madam of general disliked Fifth Miss Shao very much. After so many years, Fifth Miss Shao lives better,” Infanta Yuan’an said with a sigh. Then she turned to look at Shao Wanru and said, “I heard that Prince Chen has always been cold and indifferent, but he tried his best to protect you just now.”

Her words reminded Zhang Qilan of the thing before. Prince Chen seemed to really care about Shao Wanru. She felt very happy for Shao Wanru and nodded again and again, “You are so lucky!”

“Actually, when I lived in Qin’s Mansion, I also lived well. General Qin, Aunt Shui and Madam Dowager all treated me very well!” Shao Wanru shooked her head and said softly without any hatred. Let the bygones be bygones. But no other kindness could compare with their upbringing!

This was her explanation for Infanta Yuan’an’s words just now. She was not proud at all, nor did she blame Qin’s Mansion. Instead, she even felt grateful to Qin’s Mansion. Her generosity worths people’s appreciation.

Infanta Yuan’an pointed at a pavilion not far away and stopped talking about the previous topic. “Shall we go there and sit for a while? It’s still early for lunch!”

Shao Wanru and Zhang Qilan nodded to agree. They went to the pavilion together, but were stopped by a palace maid when they arrived at the pavilion.

“Misses, this pavilion hasn’t been repaired yet. It’s not convenient for you to enter into it. If you want to enjoy the scenery, the pavilion in the front would be more suitable. The scenery watched from that pavilion would be more beautiful and you can see far!” The palace maid pointed to a pavilion in the left front of them with a smile.

They took a look and felt satisfied. Then they followed the palace maid and walked forward.

After they left, a part of the palace curtain, which had been lifted, fell slowly...

Chapter 867 Be Careful of Villians, Childe Yan

Chu Liuxin sat in the pavilion covered by palace curtains, frowning. He, who was handsome and bright, looked a little gloomy now.

"Master, shall we go to visit the Empress?" Eunuch Liu stood behind Chu Liuxin and asked cautiously.

They had intended to see the Empress, but later they heard that the Emperor was there, so Chu Liuxin came here. Since that incident, Chu Liuxin had tried to meet the Emperor as little as possible, unless he had no choice.

"In a while!" Chu Liuxin said. Looking through the gauze curtain, he fell into deep thought. How he wished that he could go out as he wanted, just as he had done in the past, but not the current situation where he felt ashamed to face Shao Wanru. His heart was severely torn. It was very painful. She was going to get married, and the man she would marry was his Third Eldest Brother. Chu Liuxin felt that he had no reason to meet her anymore.

If it weren't for Shao Yanru, and if that accident had never happened, it might have been him who was her fiance now. At the thought of such a possibility, Chu Liuxin felt a pain in his heart.

After waiting for a while, Eunuch Liu said uneasily, "Master, it's the time! We have to go now. Otherwise, the Empress may come to us later!"

He had entered Phoenix Palace but didn't pay a visit to the Empress. She would definitely be suspicious when she knew it.

"Let's go!" Chu Liuxin stood up.

"Are we... going back?" Eunuch Liu asked in surprise.

"Yes!" Chu Liuxin had already strode out, and Eunuch Liu could only follow behind.

On the attic, Shao Wanru and the other two girls were looking into the distance, with their backs leaned against the railing. Suddenly, Chu Liuxin's figure appeared in their sight. They couldn't tell who he was from his back, only to know that he was a young noble master.

"Could it be Prince Zhou?" Zhang Qilan said in surprise. Prince Zhou was the most likely one who would appear in the Empress' palace at this time. Prince Chen had just left, so he could not be here now. Moreover, Prince Chen's clothes were different from what the man wore.

Zhang Qilan was engaged to Chu Liuyue, so it was no psychological burden for her to mention Prince Zhou.

While Infanta Yuan'an blushed. She also thought it was Prince Zhou. Only Shao Wanru was still hesitant. She couldn't recognize him at a moment, but it didn't seem to be Prince Zhou in her eyes.

"It seems to be him!" Infanta Yuan'an said hesitantly with a slightly red face. She was the future Princess Zhou, so she felt a little embarrassed to see him right now.

It seemed that Infanta Yuan'an wanted to share her embarrassment, so she looked at Shao Wanru and said, "Fifth Miss is going to marry Prince Chen soon. Have all your dowries in the mansion been prepared? I heard that when Infanta Qinghua married into Marquis Xing's Mansion, she had a large number of dowries. They should be left to you!"

"Some of them were rewarded to me by my grandma, and some to Hao'er!" Shao Wanru blinked her eyes, which were as bright as crystals.

"Is your younger brother still living in Great Elder Princess's Mansion?" Infanta Yuan'an asked curiously, "He is a descendant of Marquis Xing's Mansion and the only legitimate son of the former Heir of Duke Xing. It is better for him to stay in Marquis Xing's Mansion."

Though Infanta Yuan'an's words were very euphemistic, Shao Wanru understood their hidden meanings. She smiled slightly and replied, "Hao'er is still young and my grandma is old, but I don't have time to take care of both of them. My grandma happens to have time and energy, so she can take care of Hao'er!"

Zhang Qilan's attention was also caught by their talking. Although she looked naive, she couldn't help saying in a low voice, "Will it affect him if he doesn't go back now?"

Since Shao Wanru was recognized as the daughter of Marquis Xing's Mansion three years ago, there had been some arguments on the position of the Heir of Marquis Xing's Mansion. Marquis Xing had once requested to confer the title of Heir of Marquis Xing on his son, and later on Shao Yuanhao. It was still hard to say who would inherit the position. But it could be certain that if Shao Yuanhao kept staying in Great Elder Princess's Mansion, it would not be beneficial to him, at least from the perspective of inheriting the title. He would not be recognized by the Shao family.

Although the title of Marquis Xing was conferred by the Emperor, the heir should be recognized by the Shao family.

"I know little about this." Shao Wanru didn't want to continue the topic. She just replied vaguely and shook her head to show that she didn't understand.

"Fifth Miss, you have been very sure that your brother will take it, haven't you?" Infanta Yuan'an covered her smiling mouth with a handkerchief and made fun of Shao Wanru.

"How can I be sure about such kind of thing? I only want Hao'er to be safe and sound!" Shao Wanru said with a wry smile, unwilling to talk about this matter anymore. She looked at a cluster of flowers close at hand, stood up, and asked, "What flowers are those? They don't seem to be winter jasmine, do they?"

Winter jasmines were the flowers that bloom the earliest in such a season. But the ones in front of her, which looked charming and gentle, were not winter jasmines with small petals.

"I don't know what they are. They may be flowers from another country. They are so beautiful!" Zhang Qilan also stood up and was very surprised. She couldn't see them when she was still in her seat...

"I heard that it was from a small country. I forget to tell you. I was told by the palace maid of the Empress when she led me into the hall," Infanta Yuan'an said with a smile.

"It turns out that you paid a visit around Phoenix Palace after you arrived here, Infanta. When I reached the palace, I was directly led to the palace by the palace maid and didn't have time to walk around," Zhang Qilan said, sounding envious.

"I might have come earlier, so the Empress asked someone to show me around the palace first," Infanta Yuan'an explained with a smile.

Shao Wanru looked at Infanta Yuan'an's pretty but non-aggressive face. She looked very delicate but not very eye-catching at first glance, especially among the beautiful girls. However, if you carefully looked her up and down, you would find that she was very good-looking. In addition, her words were decent and calm, which left a good impression on others.

However, for some reason, Shao Wanru felt that she should be wary of this Infanta.

What she said just now sounded like a casual joke, but there seemed to be some provoking connotations in it.

Shao Wanru didn't know whether her words were only a joke or a hint of sarcasm, but she was sure that an Infanta shouldn't say such words. As the granddaughter of Great Elder Princess and the future Princess Zhou, how could she be so ignorant?

Infanta Yuan'an kept asking whether she was confident in getting the position of the Heir for her brother. However, she was just a weak girl living in the boudoir, so she could do nothing, unless Chu Liuchen offered help. Then another matter was involved. How much power could Chu Liuchen have?

How much power did he have to help her to get the position of the Heir of Marquis Xing's Mansion?

Obviously, Infanta Yuan'an was trying to find it out. In her last life, she was Princess Zhou, too. It was said that she had a good relationship with Prince Zhou and was valued by the Empress. She once witnessed that this Princess Zhou was admired by people and showed a noble and arrogant attitude towards others, which was quite different from now.

Moreover, in her last life, Infanta Yuan'an was also a close friend of Shao Wanru's.

"The Empress is so kind to you!" Zhang Qilan sighed and said with a teasing smile on her face. Infanta Yuan'an suddenly blushed and coughed in a low voice, "I'm not joking!"

"Look, I didn't take it seriously. Why are you shy and awkward?" Zhang Qilan bent down with a smile and said, "What a coincidence. Prince Zhou was also here just now. Could it be that Prince Zhou accompanied you for a walk just now?"

After she was teased like that, Infanta Yuan'an's face turned even redder. She gave Zhang Qilan a bashful glance and said, "You are talking nonsense. I don't talk with you anymore. I would rather talk to Fifth Miss. When you saw Prince Chen just now, why didn't you make fun of Fifth Miss Shao?"

Hearing that they changed the subject, Shao Wanru waved her hands and hastened to say, "Keep gossiping about yourselves. Don't even try to drag me in. I didn't ask anyone to accompany me to walk around the Phoenix Palace!"

"You... you two..." Infanta Yuan'an stammered with a red face, pointing at Shao Wanru and then at Zhang Qilan. Then she said with a grievance, "Fifth Miss Shao, I didn't make fun of you!"

Her bashful manner made Zhang Qilan burst into laughter without control.

As they were laughing and chatting, a palace maid came in and invited them to have lunch. They looked up at the sky and found that it was still early.

When they followed the palace maid to where the lunch was set, Qi Rongzhi and another Miss had been there waiting for them. Then a eunuch came and told them that the Empress didn't feel well and that they could help themselves.

Surrounded by the palace maids and eunuchs who served them, they felt very awkward when eating the meal, even though the Empress was not with them. After taking a few bites, they all put down their chopsticks.

A eunuch arranged palanquins for them and saw them off one by one.

When they arrived at the gate of the palace, they got on their own carriages and went back to their mansions.

When Shao Wanru reached the gate of the mansion, she saw Yan Xi again, who had just come back. She blinked her watery eyes and winked at Yujie, who was right beside her. Yujie got the hint, took two steps forward, and bowed respectfully to Yan Xi, "Childe Yan!"

Yanxi had intended to pretend that he didn't see her, so he walked quickly so that they could miss the chance to meet each other. Now he also knew that she was the Fifth Miss of Marquis Xing's Mansion, the future Princess Chen.

But he was stopped by Yujie, so he had to greet Shao Wanru. When he turned around, Shao Wanru was just bowing gracefully to him. Yan Xi hurriedly returned a salute and said, "Fifth Miss!"

"I heard that Childe Yan came to the capital city for the Spring Imperial Examination!" Shao Wanru straightened up her body and started a chat.

"That's indeed the reason why I lived in your mansion!" Yan Xi nodded.

"Your ancestors had a good relationship with my family, so it's certain that you live here in the capital city!" Shao Wanru said with a smile, and then bowed sideways, "I wish you to pass the examination!"

"Thank you for your kind words, Fifth Miss!" Yan Xi stepped aside politely.

Shao Wanru with Yujie walked past him and went to the inner court. Old Madam had instructed her to report what had happened in the palace as soon as she returned to the mansion.

Watching Shao Wanru leave, Yan Xi frowned. When Shao Wanru went past him, she said to him in a low voice, "Childe Yan, be careful of the villains around you!"

Chapter 868 Old Madam With Irrational Conduct

After her slender figure disappeared behind the moon-shaped arched door, Yan Xi slowly looked away.

As he lived in Marquis Xing's Mansion, he had little contact with the people there, except for Wang Shengxue, the cousin nephew of Marquis Xing. Did she refer to Wang Shengxue?

Wang Shengxue was the first person that came to Yan Xi's mind. He had felt that Wang Shengxue was weird. After being warned by Shao Wanru, he was more sure about his supposition.

After all, he was not a stupid man. He didn't ignore Shao Wanru's admonition, because he didn't believe that Shao Wanru, as a girl in the boudoir, and who was the future Princess Chen, could make irresponsible remarks, and there was no need for her to do that.

Seeing Yan Xi standing still, the servant behind called him, "Master!"

He was the young male servant Yan Xi brought from his home. Two servants were sent by Yan Xi's family to take care of him, one to look after his daily life and the other to serve when he was studying.

Because he was a guest in the mansion, Yan Xi was very polite. He never asked his servants to inquire people there for messages, in case that some unnecessary misunderstandings would be made.

"Go and inquire about Childe Wang. Find out why he didn't take the imperial examination!" Young Yan raised his head and made up his mind.

He remembered that once in a talk about the Spring Imperial Examination, Wang Shengxue told him that he had the official qualification to take the exam, but he was delayed because of his sister's health, and he couldn't take the exam for the time being. Yan Xi didn't care about it at that time, but now he remembered it and wanted to know the details.

"Yes, Master! I'll go and inquire about it later!" The clever servant said.

Since they had been living in Marquis Xing's Mansion for a period of time, it was not hard for him to find a few people to inquire about it. It didn't take long for Yan Xi's servant to get the information.

"Sir, all the servants in the mansion say Childe Wang is a scoundrel. When his sister died, he extorted a lot of money from the mansion. I heard that though Childe Wang is a distant nephew of Marquis Xing, he has a bad character. He once wronged Fifth Miss several times. His official rank was removed because he annoyed Fifth Miss. Now he is unqualified to take the exam!"

The servants of Marquis Xing's Mansion didn't like Wang Shengxue at all. Although they didn't know the details of what Wang Shengxue had done before, they knew that Wang Shengxue had benefited a lot, while Marquis Xing's Mansion had suffered a loss. In their opinion, Wang Shengxue should be driven out directly and stopped from coming to Marquis Xing's Mansion again.

However, when he came to the mansion again, they were told by their masters to turn a blind eye to Wang Shengxue. After all, he was the Marquis's nephew, so they couldn't be estranged from him.

How ridiculous it was to consider the relationship after he had caused such trouble to them!

However, as servants, they didn't know what was behind it and did not dare to gossip about it either. All they could do was to despise Childe Wang in secret.

"Childe Wang has such a bad character?" Yan Xi was shocked when he heard that. Although he didn't approve of some of Wang Shengxue's behaviors, he had always regarded Wang as a decent and righteous gentleman who would never hesitate to do what was right. He had never thought that Wang had such a bad character.

After pondering for a moment, Yan Xi asked, "Is the information you gathered exactly accurate?"

"Yes, Master. I have specially asked several different people, and all the information was learned from indirect inquiries. It was also not eye-catching. But everyone I inquired said the same about Childe Wang!" The servant said with confidence.

Yan Xi was silent. He was already starting to believe it.

In the past, when he went out with Wang Shengxue, he could always sense something strange in the servant's eyes, although they bowed to them respectfully. He could even sense a little pity from the servants who were looking at him. At that time, he couldn't tell what it meant, but now he seemed to understand it.

If Wang Shengxue's character was indeed as bad as he had heard, was there any secret behind his enthusiastic help to save Miss Zhao?

"Go to Miss Zhao's home, monitor the back door, and find out whether Miss Zhao contacts with anyone secretly, and especially see whether Childe Wang goes there in private!"

When he doubled one thing about Wang Shengxue, he started to doubt everything about him. Yan Xi immediately thought of the Miss Zhao whom Wang Shengxue had helped enthusiastically.

When Miss Zhao couldn't find her relatives and encountered harassment from a playboy, she was lucky to meet Yan Xi. Was it just a coincidence or an arrangement by Wang Shengxue? The enthusiastic Wang Shengxue did not seem to be a person with a bad character, but the person the servant inquired about was the real Wang Shengxue. If that was the case, there was something unbeknown to him in the matter between him and Miss Zhao. And Yan Xi strongly felt that Miss Zhao was the key.

Yan Xi was enlightened by a word of Shao Wanru. So he immediately sent someone to secretly investigate the Miss Zhao he met in the capital city.

Shao Wanru went to the Chuntang Courtyard, and Old Madam had waited there early. After Shao Wanru reported what had happened in Phoenix Palace in detail, Old Madam darkened her face and said nothing for a long time.

Shao Wanru sat aside and lowered her head, waiting for Old Madam's response.

"Fifth Girl, do you think the Empress was discontented with you or Marquis Xing's Mansion?" Old Madam asked slowly after a while.

Shao Wanru raised the corner of her mouth and showed a cold sneer on her face. Old Madam still hoped that the Empress hated her instead of Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Shao Wanru raised her head, with the sneer on her face disappearing. She shook her head calmly.

Old Madam carefully looked at her eyes and found they were bright and pure. They were charming but simple. After all, she was still young. When she said nothing and just shook her head, she looked a little confused.

"Fifth Girl, now the title of nobility of Duke Xing's Mansion has become Marquis Xing's Mansion. I am ashamed to face your grandfather and father. But the title still needs to be inherited. Hao'er is not a kid anymore." Old Madam sighed and looked depressed.

Since Old Madam passed out last time, she had lost her energy and looked very weak after she woke up.

As she said that, she suddenly felt sad, and her eyes got moistened. Then she wiped the corners of her eyes with a handkerchief.

Shao Wanru lowered her head. It was hard to answer, and she didn't know what to say. So she kept silent and simply waited. Hao'er was not young anymore? It sounded like that Hao'er had gained the position of the Heir of Marquis Xing. And it was the first time that Old Madam had mentioned it in front of her.

She pursed her red lips and didn't respond to Old Madam.

Shao Wanru's silence displeased Old Madam a lot. She raised her eyebrows and suppressed the anger in her heart. Her voice became lower and gentler. She said, "When I think that your father was the last Duke Xing, but now the title of Duke has been degraded to Marquis... I am ashamed to meet your grandfather and father after I die... Everything has always been fine, but who has ever expected that..."

Old Madam became sadder. She looked like an ordinary old lady, sorrowing when thinking of her son who died early.

Nanny Yu had begun to comfort her in a low voice. Old Madam mentioned Shao Wanru'd father again and again. Shao Wanru clenched the handkerchief in her hand tightly and could not hide the cold sneer in her lowered eyes.

When Old Madam was in need, she would mention her father, and when she wasn't, she would even harm her life. At this time, Old Madam talked about the title of nobility again and again. Needless to say, she had come up with some new tricks. She must want to rely on her strength or Chu Liuchen's.

What a wonderful idea!

Old Madam was sad. Nanny Yu tried to comfort her again and again, but Shao Wanru just sat there like a block of wood and didn't respond at all.

Old Madam was too irritated to keep pretending. She suddenly pushed Nanny Yu away and was about to get angry. Seeing her grandma be sad for so long, Shao Wanru, as a granddaughter, just sat there without any reaction! Of course, Shao Wanru was not brought up by Old Madam and didn't have any feelings for her grandma at all. Old Madam was extremely annoyed.

Realizing that Old Madam was going to lose her temper, Nanny Yu hurriedly grabbed her hand to stop her. She shooked her head and motioned for Old Madam not to get angry with Shao Wanru.

Old Madam tried hard to suppress her anger. She didn't want to beat around the bush anymore and said bluntly, "Fifth Girl, the restoration of our title depends on you! After all, you will be a daughter-in-law of the royal family, the future Princess Chen. If you can say something good for our mansion in front of Prince Chen, it will definitely be effective!"

As expected, Old Madam wanted her help. Shao Wanru's watery eyes became deep. She slowly raised her head with a little shock in her eyes and said, "Grandma..."

Old Madam cut Shao Wanru and said impatiently, "You don't have to feel awkward to ask for it. Marquis Xing's Mansion belongs to you juniors. I will live for few years at such an old age, and what I want is to restore the title of the Duke. Even if I die now, I will never turn over in my grave!"

"Grandma, Prince Chen is not that capable," Shao Wanru said lightly.

"How do you know whether he has the ability or not without a try? It is said that Prince Chen is the most favored prince of the Emperor and Empress Dowager. He can get whatever he wants. How do you know he can't help if you don't try to persuade him?" Old Madam waved her hand and refused to listen to Shao Wanru's refusal. She directly drove her away. "You must be tired. Go and have a rest. Think about how to talk with Prince Chen about this matter. The title can't be lost in our hands!"

This meant that Shao Wanru must mention it to Chu Liuchen in any case, and he must help to restore the reputation of Marquis Xing.

After Old Madam finished her words, she went into her bedroom to have a rest with Nanny Yu's help, leaving Shao Wanru alone.

Yujie showed an angry expression on her face. Old Madam was too much, pushing the matter to her Miss, as if her Miss would be to blame if it didn't succeed.

Shao Wanru still looked calm and was not surprised by Old Madam's irrational conduct. She turned around and walked out of Chuntang Courtyard with Yujie and went back to Piaoyun Courtyard.

The Piaoyun Courtyard had been very busy recently. Everyone was busy preparing the dowries for Shao Wanru. Except for Yujie who had to accompany Shao Wanru, several trusted servant girls were so busy that they could rarely be seen in the courtyard.

When Shao Wanru came back, large pieces of furniture in Piaoyun Courtyard were being sorted off. Nanny Yu was carefully moving them out with several strong old maids.

Seeing Shao Wanru, Nanny Yu hastened to come over and bowed. Then she pointed at that large pile of furniture and said, "Miss, what do you think of these?"

Chapter 869 Trampling on Others' Reputation

Shao Wanru nodded.

"Then I will ask people to come to move. Eldest Young Madam has sent someone to ask me if I am ready before," Nanny Yu said.

Now Zhao Xiran was in charge of the affairs in the mansion, of which the most important thing was preparing for Shao Wanru's marriage.

These large pieces of furniture should be moved to Prince Chen's Mansion today to decorate the couple's room.

As a part of a woman's dowry, big things like furniture could be placed in the bridal chamber first.

Shao Wanru carefully walked around a big pile of furniture in the garden, went into the inner room, and sit down. Then she ordered Yujie, "Bring me yesterday's headwear."

She always felt that this headwear looked familiar, but she couldn't remember where she had seen it before.

Yujie replied and fetched the headwear. Shao Wanru opened the brocade box, and examined it carefully again. And she found that it was very similar to the one in the Empress' jewelry box just now.

However, it seemed different when she observed more carefully. It was obvious that the headwear in her hand was more exquisite and ingenious. Each part of it was designed elaborately, making it look natural and noble.

On the headwear, the phoenix's head could shake gently with beads hanging down. With a slight shake, there would be gorgeous fine lines, looking extremely attractive.

Picking up the headwear, she presented it on her hair and looked into the mirror. She didn't know why but she kept feeling that it looked familiar.

Then she put it on the table and looked at it narrowly.

Seeing that Shao Wanru had been studying this headwear for quite a while, Yujie began to look at it carefully. But she found nothing. After a long time, she noticed Shao Wanru's abstraction and couldn't help asking, "Miss, is there anything wrong with this headwear?"

"No!" Shao Wanru didn't know what she was looking for. She felt it familiar as if she had seen it several times before. But where had she seen it?

She seemed to recall something, but when she thought about it carefully, she couldn't remember anything. Not even a clue.

Where had she seen this headwear before?

It couldn't be in this life, maybe somewhere in the last life. Shao Wanru had forgotten a lot of things of her last life, so she had no confidence in recalling this headwear now.

She carefully considered what had happened in her last life. This headwear could only be seen after she entered the palace, but she was a mere painter in the palace at that time. How could she have any chance to see this headwear which was a relic of Chu Liuchen's mother?

She rubbed her brows, and slowly closed her watery eyes. Her long eyelashes fluttered slightly like exhausted butterflies and cast two jagged shadows on her pale face.

She quietly thought about it for a while, but still, she recalled nothing.

She got up and walked to the window, looked into the sky, and saw a tall building at distance. It was the courtyard where her Second Uncle lived. She somehow remembered that her father had moved some things there before.

She was wondering whether her father also had ever stood on that tall building and looked around the scenery of the whole Marquis Xing's Mansion.

If her parents hadn't left at that time, all the tragedies might not have happened then, and her parents would still be alive now.

Her heart inexplicably ached, and her eyes turned red.

If her parents were alive, they would not let their own son and daughter live so hard. Without parents, they were like duckweed, rootless and helpless. If she did not become stronger, she would end the same way as she did in her last life. Instead of giving a helping hand to her, those so-called relatives would push her into a deeper abyss and gnaw away all her blood and bones until beyond redemption.

Shao Wanru raised her head slightly and looked at the tall building calmly as if she could see her parents in there...

"Ah!" Suddenly, sounds of exclamation rang out the yard, which interrupted Shao Wanru's thoughts. She looked down at the noisy yard to find that someone seemed to be hit.

"Go and check it!"

Yujie replied and went out. She got into the crowd, took a glance quickly and came back to report, "Miss, an old maid's leg got hit by a cabinet. Don't worry about it. Nanny Yu has been dealing with it. I suppose it is not a big problem. I've checked, the maid is fine!"

Yujie had learned medical knowledge before, so she could tell the condition at a glance.

Shao Wanru nodded and squinted her watery eyes slightly. When she was about to turn around and go back, suddenly, she heard another scream. Someone else fell down.

Shao Wanru stopped and looked to the yard. Many people worked in a rush. In a short while, they gathered into two groups. Some of them were screaming in a panic, while others were helping solve the issue. It was a mess.

"Stop moving anything. Rescue the injured first and send them to have a rest. You can come back and move these things later!" Shao Wanru said decisively.

"But, Miss..." Yujie wanted to say that things were very urgent and they didn't have time to rest.

Shao Wanru waved her hand and said, "It doesn't matter to let them rest for a while!"

Seeing that Shao Wanru had made up her mind, Yujie turned around resignedly to tell Nanny Yu about it. Then, she helped Nanny Yu get the two injured old maids out to the wing room to rest.

Others were also allowed to go back to rest first. These people had been busy since morning, and had not even had lunch yet. They had been told to move several pieces of furniture out of the yard before resting, but now they were told to have lunch first. Everyone thanked profusely and went back.

After checking the two old maids' injuries, Yujie came back.

"Miss, it's not a big deal. The furniture fell down accidentally when being moved and hit the maids."

"Didn't they have lunch before?" Shao Wanru just knew that these servants hadn't had lunch yet. It had already been late for having lunch now.

"I've asked them just now. They were told to move these big pieces of furniture out of the yard first and then they were allowed to have lunch. Actually, some pieces of furniture looked light, but they were not easy to move at all. In addition, the servants' legs and feet were weak as they worked till now. They were exhausted, thus they failed to carry them firmly and caused the maids to be injured!"

Yujie learned all the ins and outs of the affairs clearly and reported in full detail to Shao Wanru.

"Who gave them the previous order?" Shao Wanru raised her eyebrows and asked indifferently.

"Someone sent by the Eldest Young Madam. Eldest Young Madam specially promised to give them more rewards if they worked harder. She said that after they finished, they would be given other rewards," Yujie answered.

A smile slowly appeared on Shao Wanru's lips, beautiful, charming, but cold.

Once something happened to those servants, Shao Wanru would be blamed for it. Zhao Xiran had well planned everything. If Shao Wanru hadn't found Zhao Xiran's ulterior motives before, she would also think that Zhao Xiran was a good person now, given that she not only dedicated her efforts but also paid a lot of money.

Zhao Xiran was always maneuvering. Although she hadn't caused any substantial harm to Shao Wanru yet, it was really annoying.

"Send the two injured old maids to the Qiuhui Courtyard and tell them that they accidentally got their feet injured. Ask Sister Zhao to help treat them. Whatever it costs, I will pay for it!" Shao Wanru said

Since Zhao Xiran played tricks to disgust her, Shao Wanru thought she should get back at her. She believed that Zhao Xiran was tiring to feel out her, and she wanted to give Zhao Xiran a warning. No matter what Zhao Xiran's purpose was, she should not treat others as her stepping stone. Shao Wanru was not to be trampled easily. Whether Zhao Xiran wanted others to think that she was a person or she wanted to get praises from the whole mansion, she should not ruin the reputation of others to benefit herself...

"Eldest Young Madam, Fifth Miss sent two old maids over saying that they were injured. They obviously got injured at her place and were working for her. How could she let us take care of them?" Qiu Yue came in angrily to report to Zhao Xiran.

In the room, Zhao Xiran looked mad and gloomy. She had been well prepared when she married into Marquis Xing's Mansion, and she even had played some tricks in order to take charge of the mansion. But she had never expected that so many things happened to her marriage. On her wedding day, they even lost the title of duke. In any case, it was very unlucky.

After that, Old Madam turned her anger on Zhao Xiran. Although Zhao Xiran was in charge now, it was difficult to get started without any guidance. Besides, some supervisors of the mansion didn't obey her. Everyone knew that she could hardly please her elders since so many things happened after she married into the mansion.

Therefore, she had to be more patient now. If possible, she was willing to cooperate with others.

“Bring them in and ask someone to take good care of them. Then go to find a doctor to check them. Don’t worry about money. Make sure to cure them!” Zhao Xiran ordered.

“Eldest Young Madam, Fifth Miss said that if you need money, just ask her for it. It sounded sweet, but she didn’t give us any substantial help. Sweet words are easy to speak!” Qiu Yue pursed her lips and said angrily.

In front of so many servants, what the people from Piaoyun Courtyard said sounded so sweet, and the two injured old maids kept showing their sincere gratitude to Fifth Miss.

It was Eldest Young Madam’s effort, while Fifth Miss gained the gratitude. Qiu Yue was very unconvinced. Eldest Young Madam had just married into Marquis Xing’s Mansion and encountered such a big event. She really needed a good reputation to support herself in the mansion. Why did Fifth Miss want to grab Eldest Young Madam’s chance to build a good reputation?

“Just forget it. It will be Prime Minister’s wife’s birthday in a few days. Have you prepared all the gifts?” Zhao Xiran was very calm while the servant girl was in anger. She had known that Fifth Miss Shao was not simple. Things came out as she had expected—Fifth Miss Shao was a tough person. She had to be more careful.

“Everything is ready, but why are you planning to give away the good stuff among your dowry as presents? Shouldn’t Old Madam be the one to prepare gifts?”

Thinking of this, Qiu Yue got angry again. No newly married woman would be asked to spend her own money on the family. However, Old Madam said that their mansion couldn’t be outshone by other mansions in terms of the Prime Minister’s wife’s birthday gifts. She also said that most good stuff in the mansion had been given to the Fifth Miss as her dowry and there was barely anything precious. Wasn’t she forcing Zhao Xiran to give away her own dowry?

Fortunately, Zhao Xiran was good-natured. Otherwise, she would not have endured it.

Qiu Yue felt more and more indignant for Zhao Xiran.

Chapter 870 The Hypocritical Eldest Young Madam

Zhao Xi smiled with a gentle face as if she didn’t care. “No matter how good the dowries are, they will be devalued if I keep all of them myself. So why not pick one or two pieces of high quality and give them away as gifts? That will also bring glory to the recipients. So there’s no need to think that we will suffer loss!”

When Qiu Yue was about to follow her words, the curtain was suddenly lifted and Shao Hua’an came in. He happened to hear what Zhao Xiran had said when he was outside the door, and his heart was full of shame.

He entered the room and waved his hand, and Qiu Yue left after receiving his instruction.

Shao Hua’an sat down beside her, hold her hands, and said softly, “Xiran, I am sorry to have made you go through this!”

It was his idea to marry Zhao Xiran. Though he was happy to marry the woman he liked, his happiness was diluted because of the degradation of their mansion. He didn't see a happy and cheerful atmosphere as he had imagined.

Fortunately, Xiran was a virtuous wife. She had never made more trouble since that day when she argued to go back to her parents' home. And she managed the family affairs wholeheartedly even though she knew that his grandma was making things difficult for her.

However, even a clever woman couldn't cook a good meal without rice. How could Shao Hua'an not know how difficult it was for her? He took out a key from his pocket and put it in Zhao Xiran's hand. "This is the key to my private storehouse. If you need anything, you can take it yourself from there. I know it is hard for you that you were asked to manage the family affairs as soon as you enter the mansion. However, there is no other better choice in the mansion."

"Hua'an... I don't need it. Keep it for yourself." Zhao Xiran pushed the key back to Shao Hua'an with a red face.

"What's mine is yours. You just keep the key and make use of it. And if you need anything else, just tell me. You can't just make up for them with your dowries!" Shao Hua'an's voice became softer and softer. He held Zhao Xiran's hand tightly and sighed, "I will help you get revenge for the grievances you have suffered now in the future!"

His words were full of love and sincerity. Zhao Xiran's face became redder and redder. After all, she was just a newly married woman. When hearing these words of love, she couldn't help but blush.

Shao Hua'an was pleased by her bashful beauty. He opened his arms, held tightly her in his arms, and patted her on the back gently. "Xiran, I finally marry you!"

Treated with his gentleness, Zhao Xiran couldn't help but relax her body and close her eyes slightly. She was married now. She was not only the First Miss of the Zhao family but also the wife of the First Young Master of Marquis Xing's Mansion.

After a long while, Zhao Xiran pushed Shao Hua'an's arms and said gently, "Look at the list I've prepared. This is the first time I'm in charge of the domestic affairs of the mansion. Grandmother and Third Aunt are not willing to teach me. Please check it for me!"

"Okay!" Seeing that she was so gentle and considerate, Shao Hua'an couldn't help feeling more guilty. He let go of Zhao Xiran and took over the list from her. He nodded while reading the list of gifts, feeling gratified that he had married a good wife.

It was always said that if a man married a woman, he should marry a virtuous one. Not to mention other things, it could be seen from the fact that Zhao Xiran could handle family affairs in an orderly way so that he could deal with the official business wholeheartedly.

She was such a talented woman. Even though no one guided her, she had done a really good job!

"Everything is well arranged, but some more valuable gifts are needed. Our two mansions are neighbors and we have been friends for many years. The children of our two families have known each other and grew up together since I was young. Our relationship is not comparable," Shao Hua'an suggested after reading it.

Zhao Xiran agreed, picked up a writing brush, and added a few gifts.

Shao Hua'an checked it again and thought that everything was appropriate. Then he nodded and said, "That's perfect! You can show it to my grandma later. If she is not satisfied with these among the gifts, you can exchange them for other valuable ones. Because they seem to be not lucky enough!" Shao Hua'an pointed at several gifts on the list and said. Zhao Xiran marked them.

The couple talked for a while, and then Shao Hua'an was summoned and he left with the servant sent by Shao Jing.

Zhao Xiran put the gift list back on the desk. After thinking for a moment, she decided to write a new copy of it and change the gifts Shao Hua'an had pointed out to her. When she read them again, she found that the value of all the gifts remained the same, but they had better symbolic meanings and became much more to the elders' taste.

Qiu Yue came in with a cup of tea.

"Take this list to Fifth Miss and request her to see whether there is something inappropriate. Tell her that I know little about it because I have just entered Marquis Xing's Mansion. I can turn to no one but Fifth Miss for help," Zhao Xiran put down the writing brush in her hand and ordered.

"Miss, you are the sister-in-law of Fifth Miss and also the housekeeper. Why should you show it to Fifth Miss? Even if the list needs a review of other people in the mansion, you should show it to Old Madam and Third Madam who are your elders, or Third Miss and Fourth Miss who are older than Fifth Miss. I heard that Fifth Miss comes from a poor family..."

Qiu Yue was very dissatisfied with Shao Wanru because of what had just happened, so she blurted out a lot of words.

"Shut up!" Zhao Xiran's face darkened.

"Miss, I..." Qiu Yue felt very wronged.

"You have no idea about what this place is and what kind of person Fifth Miss is! How can you as a servant girl slander her? If Fifth Miss wants to sentence you to death, even I cannot save you because of what you said just now!" Zhao Xiran said coldly, "This is not Minister Zhao's Mansion, and I am not the First Miss Zhao here. I am now the wife of the First Young Master of Marquis Xing's Mansion."

Zhao Xiran almost gnashed her teeth and said with sharp eyes. The two servant girls were the best among her servants, but now she found that they had been spoiled by her in the past so that they dared to say anything behind. Zhao Xiran understood that Shao Wanru was not an easy person to deal with, so she could only make friends with her.

"Forgive me. I overstepped my bounds!" Qiu Yue knelt. She felt aggrieved but didn't dare to refute.

"Well, you can leave now. Tell Fifth Miss to help review it. If she has any suggestions, tell me when you come back!" Zhao Xiran's face softened.

"Yes, Eldest Young Madam!" Realizing that she had annoyed Zhao Xiran, Qiu Yue did not dare to speak a word anymore. She hastened to respond and left with the list.

Shao Wanru was very surprised by this unexpected gift list. No matter in what aspects, Zhao Xiran should not have shown it to her.

"The gifts listed by Sister Zhao are flawless. I can't see anything wrong with them. In fact, I also know nothing about family management. If Sister Zhao is worried, she can show the list to grandma," Shao Wanru said to Qiu Yue with a smile, and then she asked Yujie to pass the gift list back to Qiu Yue.

"Our Eldest Young Madam means to ask Fifth Miss to check it anyway. If there is any mistake or taboo, please point it out for us. Eldest Young Madam has just entered the mansion and doesn't know much about it. She doesn't know whether there is something wrong!"

Qiu Yue smiled and made clear her master's words in one breath. Now, no one could tell that she had been angry before.

Yujie handed the gift list to her and answered with a smile, "The list is as perfect as our Miss said just now. Nothing is needed to be changed. In fact, our Miss has just returned to the mansion. Compared with other Misses, she's not very familiar with the domestic affairs of the mansion!"

She meant that Zhao Xiran had asked the wrong person.

The various taboos or conventions in the mansion were not what Shao Wanru, who had just come back to the mansion, could know.

Fortunately, everyone was just going through the motions. After the two servant girls said a few polite formulas to each other, Qiu Yue took the gift list and went back to report to Zhao Xiran.

"Miss, what is Eldest Young Madam thinking? Why did she show you the list? It has nothing to do with you, right?" Yujie softened her stiff face with her hands. She spared no efforts to pretend to smile at Qiu Yue just now.

Yu Jie was having a battle with Qiu Yue in polite formulas and with a fake smile, which had numbed her teeth. What a show it was!

"She is making a show to others!" Shao Wanru said with a slight smile. By no means could she become fond of such a sister-in-law, who showed a hostile attitude to her as soon as she married into the mansion. Shao Wanru just glanced at the list casually. She didn't pay much attention to it.

"Miss, why do we have to go to the Mansion of the Prime Minister for the birthday party this year? I remember that they said we didn't have to go before? Moreover, we were asked to go with Eldest Young Madam," Yujie asked curiously. They were informed by the old maid sent by Old Madam before Qiu Yue came.

Shao Wanru was about to get married, and she didn't have too much time. Old Madam had wanted her to refuse those unnecessary banquets, except for those held in the palace that she had to attend. She was required to spend most of her time preparing her dowries and something like that in the mansion.

"It might be owed to the close relationship between the two mansions!" Shao Wanru said and turned her watery eyes to the window. Would she visit the Mansion of the Prime Minister again in her new life?

She had thought that her mood would fluctuate, but now she found that she was as calm as water. She was indeed calm, without the slightest ripple.

In her last life, once she was asked to enter the Mansion of the Prime Minister to suppress the bad luck. But she was reprimanded by Madam Wen in the mourning hall that her lips were too gaudy and then she was expelled.

That was a rainy day. She was wet by the freezing autumn rain. She was cold and hungry, and had no one to turn to for help. Now when she thought of it, she felt as if it had happened in a different life.

She closed her eyes slightly. At that time, she almost lost her soul. Without a home or reliable relatives. She was alone in the vast world. In the street, some passers-by pointed at her and mocked her because of the wet clothes.

She bit her lip hard. The sharp pain sobered her up in a second that she was Shao Wanru now, not the panicky and helpless Qin Yuru in her last life.

She slowly opened her eyes, which were cold, sharp, and stained with anger. And then she slowly calmed down. Her lips showed a mocking smile that was without any warmth.

Her new life was completely different from the last one. In this life, she had nothing to do with Wen Xichi. After repaying Wen Xichi's kindness in the last life, she would not have much contact with the Mansion of the Prime Minister again.

So it was not so difficult for her to enter the Mansion of the Prime Minister again...