

Royal Marriage 171

Chapter 171: This is a Set-up, This is a Frame- up!

The sons hurriedly knelt down, begging Emperor Father to calm his anger and punish them as he saw fit.

Emperor said, "You useless bastards! When you are in front of me, you pretend to be harmonious brothers who are filial. Don't think I don't know about the schemes you are involved in behind my back!"

The brothers dared not utter a word.

Emperor swept a pile of objects on the table to the floor, angrily saying, "Third son, take a look for yourself!"

Prince of Huai saw that it was sleeve arrows, hidden weapons, and belts.

"What... what is this?"

"You still dare to play dumb with me?" Emperor slapped the table, "Get over there and have a look yourself!"

Prince of Huai hurriedly picked up a short arrow, and found the character "Huai" carved on the tail of the arrow.

His face turned pale, and he quickly knelt down, "Emperor Father, I have been framed, I swear I have never used such things to harm the Princess Consort of Yu!"

"Did I say you used sleeve arrows to harm the Princess Consort of Yu? How did you know it was an arrow injury that the Princess Consort of Yu suffered?"

Li Hongyuan said, "After the Princess Consort was injured, I captured all the assassins and blocked any information. So... how did you know that my Princess Consort suffered an arrow wound?"

"This... it's because Emperor Father took out this!" He raised the short arrow in his hand, "I never had such a thing, if this isn't slander, what is it?"

"You still dare to argue!"

Emperor picked up a teacup and threw it at his face, "Bastard, daring to harm your own brothers, someone take him away and lock him up!"

"Emperor Father, your son has been wronged, I really haven't done such a thing, please investigate!"

Prince of Huai was dragged away while crying out.

Emperor's remaining anger had not subsided, so he called on Wenren Zong to thoroughly investigate the matter, promising no leniency if the Prince of Huai was found guilty!

Although Wenren Zong was young, since taking office in Yingtian Prefecture, he had solved numerous suspicious and unjust cases. His stability, carefulness, and strong reasoning skills were highly valued by the Emperor.

This case involved two princes, and as a Fourth-rank capital official, it would be difficult for him to handle.

However, Wenren Zong showed no fear or hesitation, and humbly accepted the task.

Prince of Huai was directly locked up in the prison.

This was the first time a prince had been detained in the Ministry of Justice's prison.

In the past, when the princes committed mistakes, the most severe punishment would be scolding, a fine, or house arrest.

It was clear that Emperor was truly furious this time.

As soon as Prince of Huai was imprisoned, his birth mother, Concubine Xian, knelt before the entrance to the Emperor's study, weeping, claiming that Prince of Huai was simple and honest by nature and could not possibly have committed such a crime.

Concubine Xian had been with the Emperor for many years, came from a prominent family, and had always been quiet and obedient.

Emperor still had some genuine affection for her. Seeing her crying pitifully with a plain face, red eyes, and white strands in her hair, he could not help but feel pity.

"You can get up," he said, as he helped Concubine Xian to her feet.

Tearfully, Concubine Xian said, "Your Majesty knows the temperament of our third son. He has been honest since childhood and isn't very clever. He doesn't even realize when others are plotting against him. What wrong could he have done? He doesn't have that kind of malicious heart. Your Majesty, I beg you..." "This matter has not yet been settled, and a clear investigation is required. If he is innocent, how could I wrong him?"

"But he is a prince, and he has never experienced such hardship. How can he bear being imprisoned?" Concubine Xian wept with grief, "Even if Your Majesty is angry, don't imprison him. The weather is getting colder, and his health is not strong, he won't be able to endure it..."

Emperor, irritated, ordered the eunuch to escort her back..

Chapter 172: The Opportunity to Fly onto the Branch and Become a Phoenix

Concubine Xian went back and cried, resenting the Emperor's cold-heartedness. But thinking of her son imprisoned in the dungeon, as a mother, she could not just watch and do nothing.

She sat in front of the mirror, looking at her own face.

In her forties, she was no longer young, with wrinkles already appearing at the corners of her eyes.

In the past two years, she had hardly spent the night with the Emperor.

To seduce the Emperor to come here with her beauty was no longer possible.

She sighed faintly.

The palace maid, attending to her, whispered, "Why does Your Highness sigh?" "Women age too easily," Concubine Xian felt frustrated, "I just wonder why Concubine Jin is still so beautiful? She is only a few years younger than me, but look at her, with her jet-black hair, and bright face. Where does she look like she's in her forties? It's no surprise that His Majesty still favors her the most." "But she doesn't serve the Emperor at night either."

"Her not serving is different from mine. She chooses not to serve him. His Majesty just spoils her, indulging her. Others beg for the opportunity to serve him but can't."

"People are different," the palace maid said.

From the mirror, Concubine Xian glanced at the maid's 17-year-old delicate face, and an idea formed in her mind.

She pulled the maid closer and smiled, "You've been with me for two years and are extremely clever and agile. How do you think I treat you?"

"Your Highness treats me well. Last year, when my father was sick, it was Your Highness who gave me money so that my father could seek treatment and get better. I will serve Your Highness for a lifetime."

"I don't want you to serve me, but I want to give you the chance to fly to the top and become a phoenix."

The palace maid lowered her head, "Your Highness..."

"Go dress up properly."

"Yes, I understand."

The palace maid turned around and left.

When she returned, she had changed into a gorgeous palace dress. Although she was not an exceptional beauty, she was young and charmingly attractive. Concubine Xian was satisfied.

In the evening, just as the Emperor had finished his work, he received news that Concubine Xian had fallen ill.

The Emperor had originally planned to go to the Splendid Palace but changed his route to visit Concubine Xian instead.

Concubine Xian was lying in bed, saying she could not get up and wanted some water to drink.

The Emperor looked around and saw no one attending to her. Despite his anger, he poured a glass of water and handed it to her.

As a result, the glass tilted, spilling water all over the Emperor's clothes.

Concubine Xian hurried to get up, looking both frightened and sick, coughing non-stop.

The Emperor could not say more.

Concubine Xian called out, "Is there no one here to help the Emperor change his clothes?"

Hongling came in and attended to the Emperor to change clothes in the next room.

As they changed, Hongling's gentle fingers wound themselves around the Emperor's body, her eyes seductive and mesmerizing.

The Emperor was a man, and he understood her intentions.

But he couldn't just give in here in Concubine Xian's room.

In any case, he remembered her.

The next day, he summoned her to serve him in bed.

In the harem, such tactics were common. Consorts who were no longer youthful would choose palace maids with good looks to serve the Emperor.

Firstly, even if such maids served the Emperor, they could not be promoted too high due to their lowly status; secondly, they were easier to control since they belonged to the consort.

Everyone knew this unspoken rule, and no one interfered.

As long as the girl could make the Emperor happy, it was enough.

However, Concubine Xian's arrangement for Hongling to serve the Emperor was not to win his heart but to save her son, the Prince of Huai, who was still in the dungeon.

This conflicted with the interests of another person in the palace.

To be precise, it was the son of Concubine Jin from the Splendid Palace.

As for why it was not Concubine Jin herself, it was because she had always been cold and indifferent, caring only about herself..

Chapter 173: The Fragrant Noble Consort

She wouldn't necessarily take her son's requests seriously.

People who are too spontaneous are not considered rivals.

Concubine Xian completely disregarded her, using a young palace girl to seduce the Emperor, precisely because she knew she wouldn't bother with this matter.

However, this time she miscalculated.

As soon as the Emperor had sent someone to bring Hongling to Crystal Frost Hall, a eunuch from Splendid Palace rushed over, knocking on the door: "Your Majesty, Your Majesty, Concubine Jin says she has a headache."

"Concubine Jin has a headache?" The Emperor immediately got up and came out, "I'll go and see."

Hongling was wrapped like a bundle, left on the bed. Seeing the situation, she anxiously cooed, "Your Majesty..."

But the Emperor didn't even look back and ran off.

Hongling was angry, anxious, and embarrassed.

She was wrapped up, wearing nothing inside, and now she was left hanging like this.

Normally, Concubine Jin would keep the Emperor waiting and pay him no attention. But now, with just a single mention of a headache, he abandoned the woman he was about to sleep with and hurried off to her side.

He was utterly smitten.

The Emperor ran to Splendid Palace, only to see Concubine Jin reclining on the bedhead, leisurely reading a book, with a small jar in her hand, not knowing what she was eating.

“Zhuzhu, are you alright?” The Emperor asked with concern, “Where’s the Imperial Physician? Why hasn’t he come?”

“The Imperial Physician has already been here.”

“What did the Imperial Physician say?”

“There’s no major issue, just dizziness. The Imperial Physician said I need to rest calmly and avoid getting upset,” Concubine Jin said languidly. “I’m sorry for troubling Your Majesty to come all this way. I really shouldn’t delay your important affairs.”

The Emperor sat next to her: “I don’t have much to do.”

“I feel much better now, Your Majesty. Please go back. Don’t keep others waiting anxiously.”

The Emperor leaned closer to her: “I’m too lazy to go back. It’s tiring running back and forth.”

Concubine Jin did not reply.

The Emperor smelled her and said, “Zhuzhu, what scent are you wearing today? It’s so fragrant.”

“Nothing much. It’s just some osmanthus honey preserves sent by the fifth daughter-in-law.”.

“No wonder there’s a strong osmanthus fragrance.” The Emperor laughed, “The fifth daughter-in-law is quite filial.”

“Yeah.”

“I am quite tired.” The Emperor called someone, “Bring water. I’ll rest here tonight.”

Seeing that Concubine Jin didn’t object, he immediately called someone to bring water for washing and changing clothes, and then got into the bed.

That night, the Emperor stayed at the Splendid Palace.

Hongling, on the other hand, was left in Crystal Frost Palace all night.

As for how she was brought there, and how she was sent back after dawn...

Concubine Xian was eagerly waiting for good news, such as the Emperor promoting Hongling to a female attendant or freeing Prince Huai from prison.

Who would have thought that instead, she would hear that Hongling had been returned in disgrace.

Not only that, but the eunuch from Crystal Frost Palace said to please send Hongling away and not let her appear in front of His Majesty again.

The meaning was very clear.

The Emperor, in order to please Concubine Jin, did not hesitate to kick Concubine Xian aside.

So, they definitely couldn't release Prince Huai from prison before things were clear.

Concubine Xian was so angry that she almost vomited blood.

She never expected that Concubine Jin, who had never fought for favor in the harem, would suddenly make a move.

What did it matter if Hongling, a mere palace maid, was involved?

Don't even mention a palace maid, even if Concubine Xian herself was lying in bed at that time, the Emperor would not hesitate to throw her aside and rush to the embrace of Concubine Jin's Splendid Palace.

All these years, it was the first time that Concubine Jin took the initiative to get close to the Emperor.

The Emperor was ecstatic.

Concubine Xian had a fit of temper, cursing Hongling as useless, saying that she had been given a chance but failed to take it.

Lastly, she sent her to the hard labor house.

As for Concubine Jin in Splendid Palace, she didn't help the Emperor dress in the morning, and slept in until late. When she woke up and remembered the preserves, she discovered that she had eaten them all.

She slapped the box: "How come there's none left?"

The palace maid hurriedly said, "The Princess Consort of Yu only sent this little bit."

"Go and ask for more! Does this palace only deserve this small box of preserves? At least send three more boxes.."

Chapter 174: No Need to Indulge Her

The chief eunuch of the Splendid Palace came to Prince of Yu's mansion.

Li Hongyuan thought his concubine mother was looking for him, but the eunuch was actually looking for Jiang Ning.

"Concubine Xian asked for some osmanthus honey preserves from the Princess Consort of Yu." The eunuch spoke with a smile, "Your Highness loves those. She hadn't got any this morning, and she was almost upset. I rushed over here at once."

"Honey preserves?" Li Hongyuan responded, "If my concubine mother fancies them, I can buy her some."

"Oh no, the stuff made by those people outside cannot be eaten by Your Highness." The eunuch tried to dissuade him while smiling, "Her Highness specifically wants the ones made by the Princess Consort of Yu. I dare not go back without them. Please pity me, Prince."

"You wait here, I'll go check."

Li Hongyuan had the housekeeper invite the eunuch to have tea and pastries. He himself went to the Crystal Clear Manor.

Jiang Ning, leaning on Huang Ying and Chunlai, was strolling slowly in the little courtyard.

Her belly was already quite large, making her dress protrude.

However, her limbs still appeared slim, not at all cumbersome.

Li Hongyuan watched for a moment. Seeing her stop to rest, he approached. "Your belly, is growing a bit quickly."

Jiang Ning sat down, wiping sweat with a handkerchief, not responding to him.

The larger the belly, the harder it became. She often wanted to lie down but could not. She forced herself to keep moving.

Who is the cause of all this?

He had the nerve to comment.

"Your Highness loved the honey preserves you sent her yesterday," he finally commented.

"That's good."

"She sent someone to say she wants more to take back."

"I'm out."

"You're out?"

"Look at me. How much do you think I can make at a time?" Jiang Ning pointed at herself. "Tell Your Highness to wait until I have rested for a few days, then I'll make more."

Li Hongyuan said, "Your Highness has always been favored. Whatever she likes, Emperor Father must give it to her. You refuse her now."

"I am not her man. I don't need to be at her beck and call."

"You... you're insubordinate."

What nonsense was he saying?

But... Li Hongyuan didn't seem truly angry.

Ever since he discovered that Jiang Ning's temperament was similar to his concubine mother's, he had become tolerant of her whims.

Emperor Father had put up with his concubine mother for decades. Surely he could do the same.

Still, he warned, "You can say such things in your own room, be cautious when outside."

Jiang Ning looked at him, her expression a mixture of a smile and a smirk.

Li Hongyuan asked, "What are you laughing at?"

"Don't you notice a resemblance between your concubine mother and my mother, Zizi?"

"Why bring that up?"

Li Hongyuan did not retort.

How could he not have noticed? Anyone with eyes could see it. Once his concubine mother entered the palace, she was greatly favored – she was spoiled for so many years. No matter what she did, Emperor Father doted on her.

In the end, she was just a substitute for Zizi.

Plenty of people thought so back then, but after so many years, no one brought it up anymore.

Emperor's affection for his concubine was real and visible to all.

No wonder why his concubine was always cold to the Emperor.

Jiang Ning said, "I was just thinking, if your father Emperor prefers the same type of women, doesn't that make him somewhat loyal?"

"That has nothing to do with me."

Li Hongyuan replied calmly, "I just came to ask you, when can you make more honey preserves?"

"When I'm in a good mood in a few days, I will make them."

"Yesterday, with just one box of honey preserves, you captured my mother's heart and prompted her to compete with Concubine Xian for favor.."

Chapter 175: Specializing in Treating All Kinds of Dissatisfaction

"Don't you want to get more sweets to win over concubine mother?" Li Hongyuan persuaded gently, "In recent years, there's very little that concubine mother truly cares about."

Jiang Ning remained unmoved: "That's what makes it precious due to its scarcity. If she's completely satisfied, she wouldn't value it anymore, would she?"

"Do you use the same tactic with concubine mother?"

"Why not?" Jiang Ning glanced at him, "The things I make are indeed delicious. Your Emperor Father loves them, concubine mother likes them, and your nephew likes them even more. In this life, who wouldn't crave that?"

"Well, maybe not to that extent."

"That's just because you don't understand," Jiang Ning said leisurely, "For you, food isn't the most important thing because you have other desires, such as power and the Imperial Throne. But for your Emperor Father and concubine mother, they have already experienced the best things the world has to offer and have no other pursuits."

Li Hongyuan said: "You've got quite the twisted logic. Concubine mother helped you yesterday, and today she purposely sent someone to demand sweets. Are you going to let them leave empty-handed?"

"That's true." Jiang Ning thought for a moment, then said to Huang Ying,

"Aren't there still some cakes? Let's give those to her."

"Cakes?" Li Hongyuan couldn't believe it, "Jiang Ning, are you just brushing concubine mother off? She wants sweets, and you give her a few cakes. Aren't you afraid of angering her?"

"I just don't have any right now. Even if you kill me, I can't produce any."

Huang Ying brought a paper box tied with a blue silk ribbon in a bow, which looked rather elegant and delicate.

Li Hongyuan took the box and said, "If concubine mother gets angry... you deal with it yourself."

"What would she do if she got angry?"

"She might ask Emperor Father to release the Prince of Huai."

Is Concubine Jin really that whimsical?

Living so carefree and happy-go-lucky.

Jiang Ning said, "If a little food can change Concubine Jin's mind, then the Prince of Huai might have to spend his life in prison."

"What do you mean?"

"Emperor Father can control the Prince of Huai, Concubine Jin can control Emperor Father, and I... can control your family's Concubine Jin." Jiang Ning said, "You don't believe it? That's fine. I specialize in dealing with stubborn people."

Li Hongyuan glanced at her belly and said, "This prince would like to see who will control you in the future."

He carried the box back to the front courtyard and handed it to the eunuch, "Give this to the Queen Mother. Although it's not the sweet osmanthus honey, it is something Jiang Ning made personally."

"Ah, my lord, this slave came to request sweet osmanthus honey. If I take something else back, will Concubine Jin be happy?"

"If she's not happy, there's nothing I can do."

Li Hongyuan said, "How can I force Jiang Ning with her big belly to do anything?"

"That can't be allowed. The little prince is important." The eunuch hurriedly took the box, "Let this slave return and report first."

The box was brought to Concubine Jin.

She looked at it and asked, “Where is my sweet osmanthus honey?”

“Princess Consort of Yu said there was only so much, and if you want more, you’ll have to wait a few days. This box of cakes was also personally made by Princess Consort of Yu. Please try it, Your Highness.” The eunuch explained with a smile.

Concubine Jin opened the box and saw six small compartments, each containing a golden yellow cake shimmering with a thin layer of oil.

“These cakes do look quite interesting.” Concubine Jin took a piece and sniffed it. It smelled sweet.

Her mood immediately improved.

She loves sweets most of all,

Taking a bite, the outer layer was crispy, while the inside was soft. It was sweet and fragrant without being too greasy.

It only took a few bites to finish the small cake.

Concubine Jin picked up some tea, took a sip, and reached for another cake..

Chapter 176: Concubine’s Cake

In a short while, only two of the six cakes were left.

“Your Highness, don’t eat too much at once, or it won’t digest well.” Nanny brought over some hot tea.

Concubine Jin nodded and instructed, "Keep these two for when we wake up in the afternoon."

Nanny smiled, "It's rare for Your Highness to have such a good appetite."

"What's this cake called?"

"I'm not sure, but I'll go find out."

So the eunuch ran back and brought some rewards like jewelry and fabric, saying that Concubine Jin really liked the cakes Princess Consort of Yu sent and wanted to know their name.

Li Hongyuan didn't expect that his concubine mother would really like these cakes.

He knew better than anyone how picky his concubine mother was.

She even looked down on the Imperial Kitchen's dishes and usually just nibbled on some snacks to pass the time.

Yet, she unexpectedly loved the food made by Jiang Ning so much.

Li Hongyuan arrived at the Crystal Clear Manor.

This was already his third visit today.

Jiang Ning said, "Thank you for thinking of me, but you don't need to make three trips for one thing."

"You think I want to come." Li Hongyuan said, "My concubine mother likes the cake you made, and she specifically asked what it's called."

"It's called wife..."

“What?”

“Ahem, I mean, it’s called Concubine’s Cake.” Jiang Ning said with a smile, “Specially made for Concubine Jin.”

“Concubine’s Cake? You’re quite cunning.”

Jiang Ning ignored him.

Li Hongyuan stood for a while and then turned around and left.

Although the two still didn’t speak much and didn’t show good expressions, at least they were calm and no longer as tense as before.

Li Hongyuan walked out of the Crystal Clear Manor and looked back.

Jiang Ning was sitting in a wheelchair, alone under the veranda, looking at the withered leaves on the branches after the rain.

The young girl was dressed in a light pink dress, her starry eyes deep and her beautiful, aloof face out of this world.

He couldn’t deny that when she stopped being frivolous, she was indeed very beautiful.

Inheriting the beauty of Lin Zizi, who was once the number one beauty in Chang’an City, there was no doubt about Jiang Ning’s beauty.

“Master, what are you looking at?” Chashan’s voice interrupted Li Hongyuan’s thoughts.

He looked away: "Enter the palace."

Chashan followed, "Master, were you just looking at the Princess Consort? She is truly beautiful, like a fairy. This servant has seen a lot of women following Master but has never seen any madam or miss as beautiful as our Princess Consort."

"What do you know about beauty, you little rascal?"

"Although this servant lacks experience, I can still tell the difference in looks." Chashan laughed, "Master must treat the Princess Consort better. Look how much Concubine Jin likes her."

"Is that really liking? It's just bribery."

Li Hongyuan thought to himself, how could the things this woman made taste so good that even Emperor Father, Xiaoqian, and the concubine mother all like them just from a small box of cakes?

He, as a son, went to beg for so long, but she ignored him. However, just for a jar of candied fruit, she actively sought favor.

It was simply outrageous.

Li Hongyuan entered the palace and met his concubine mother, paying his respects.

Concubine Jin said, "How is your wife?"

This was the first time she took the initiative to ask about Jiang Ning.

Li Hongyuan replied, "She's doing very well, and her wounds are almost healed. Now she's just resting and waiting for the birth. She hasn't been going out."

"Since she's fine, tell her to make more things to eat."

“...Does my concubine mother ask how she is just for the sake of food?”

“What’s the name of that cake?”

“This son specifically asked her, she said it’s called Concubine’s Cake.”

“Concubine’s Cake?” Concubine Jin laughed, “I’ve never heard such a name before; it must be made up.”

“Yes, that woman always talks nonsense and never looks proper..”

Chapter 177: You’ve Really Lived in Vain

“So, it’s really called Concubine’s Cake?”

“Yes, it was created specially for Her Highness the Concubine, so it’s called Concubine’s Cake.”

“Although it seems a bit flattering, I like it.” Concubine Jin seemed in a good mood.

Li Hongyuan smiled and said, “After all these years, it’s the first time I’ve heard you say that you like someone, Mother.”

“I don’t really like her, I just like the snacks and desserts she makes.” Concubine Jin returned to her indifferent, cold demeanor and yawned lazily, “In my eyes, no one is worth liking, including your Emperor Father and you.”

“I haven’t offended you.”

“What do you think you are? You’re just doing everything you can to fight for the throne. What’s the point?” Concubine Jin said lazily, “Go back. Tell your wife that if she wants my help in the future, she should bring me delicious food.”

Li Hongyuan: “...Mother, haven’t I been filial to you all these years? You’re picky about food, but I’ve found you many delicacies. Why haven’t you taken a closer look?”

“What you brought me wasn’t tasty.”

II II

Concubine Jin glanced at him: “Isn’t eating an important thing? You’ll starve if you don’t eat.”

“Yes, it’s very important.”

“Have you eaten what your wife made before?”

“Never.”

“Then you’ve lived in vain.”

Li Hongyuan bowed, “Rest well, Mother. I take my leave.”

As he walked to the door, he heard her say, “Do you know why I’ve never liked you?”

Li Hongyuan stopped in his tracks.

Concubine Jin said lightly, “Because you are too much like me. Both of us, mother and son, have cold, aloof natures. On the surface, you’re filial and respectful to your Emperor Father and me, but you don’t truly care about us. Your wife is skilled in cooking, but you haven’t tasted her food, which shows she

doesn't like you. She shouldn't dislike you because you're her husband, of noble status, and handsome, but she does. Do you know why?"

Li Hongyuan didn't respond.

Concubine Jin said, "It's because you have no heart. You only care about yourself, and you see her only as a tool. People who never open their hearts to others will never win the hearts of others."

Li Hongyuan remained silent for a moment and then smiled easily, "Why did Mother think of saying these things today?"

"It's nothing, really. I just happened to eat something delicious, which put me in a good mood, so I rambled on." Concubine Jin touched her own face and asked the palace maid beside her, "Is it possible that I'm getting old and becoming a chatterbox?"

Li Hongyuan shook his head and walked away.

On the day the results of the Imperial Examinations were announced, Jiang Ning personally made a box of food and had it sent to Third Brother.

If he passed, it would be a congratulations.

If he didn't, the delicious food would serve as consolation.

But Jiang Yi did well, ranking eighth in the first class.

The Jiang family was overjoyed, and Jiang Yi immediately sent someone to Prince Yu's Mansion to inform Jiang Ning and asked for more food, saying it was delicious.

Jiang Ning sent someone to ask, "How did He Tang perform in the exam?"

“He Tang did even better, ranking third in the first class!”

“Isn’t that the third place scholar?”

“After the Palace Examination, only when the Emperor personally examines the result can it be decided.” The servant grinned, “Our Third Master will also participate in the Palace Examination. Maybe the Emperor will like him and promote him.”

Jiang Ning was very happy, rolled up her sleeves and personally cooked more delicious food.

When Li Hongyuan returned, he heard that Princess Consort had personally cooked and sent food to her family and the He family..

Chapter 178: Feed it to the Dogs

Well, just send it then.

Li Hongyuan didn’t care much.

As long as she didn’t make trouble, she could think about or like whoever she wanted. It was up to her.

But for some reason, he suddenly remembered what his concubine mother had said.

There was more than one person praising Jiang Ning’s cooking skills.

Many people around him had tasted it, but he, the one who should have the closest relationship with Jiang Ning, had never tried it once.

After some thought, he went to the kitchen.

He could smell the aroma from afar.

Nowadays, when Jiang Ning cooked, it didn't cause panic among the kitchen staff. Instead, they looked forward to it.

Because every time the Princess Consort cooked something delicious, she would leave some and share it with them.

Such a kind master, who wouldn't welcome her?

They'd rather have her live in the kitchen.

When Li Hongyuan arrived, he saw Jiang Ning surrounded by people like stars surrounding the moon.

When they saw him coming, the servants hurriedly paid their respects and left.

"Who are you sending food to again?" Li Hongyuan walked over and looked at the contents of the plate.

It looked weird, and he didn't know what it was.

"Anyway, it's not for the Prince."

"Aren't the rice, flour, and oil you used from my mansion?"

"Or, should I deduct it from my monthly pay?" Jiang Ning called Huang Ying over, "Take this and split it into two parts, one for Third Brother and the other for He Tang."

"Why give it to He Tang? I'm curious, what's your relationship with He Tang, giving him both food and essentials?"

“Nothing in particular.” Jiang Ning wiped her hands, “I just want to be good to him.”

“You’re a married woman, and you can say this without blushing and trembling. Your skin is really thick.” Li Hongyuan sneered, “If you’re so concerned about him, why didn’t you marry him?”

Jiang Ning picked up a pear, took a bite, and said, “If it weren’t for your Emperor Father meddling, I might have married him already. I think He Tang is great, honest, and treats me well. We grew up together as childhood sweethearts, and he’s smart and ambitious. If I married him, he must be affectionate.”

“Don’t dream.”

Li Hongyuan sneered, “Once you entered the Prince of Yu’s Mansion, even if you die, you’ll still be the dead belonging to my mansion. And you’re still thinking about other men. Unless I die!”

Jiang Ning smiled, “When you die, not only will I remarry, but I’ll also have your son calling someone else daddy.”

“You—”

Li Hongyuan couldn’t do anything to her, so he took the pear from her hand, threw it away, and shouted angrily, “Eat, eat, eat! I hope you choke!”

He stormed out of the kitchen and saw the housekeeper carrying two food boxes, so he stopped him immediately, “What are you doing?”

The housekeeper hurriedly replied, “This was sent by the Princess Consort to Jiang’s Mansion.”

“And the other one?”

“It’s for the He Family in the back alley.”

“Give it to me!”

“Which one?”

“The one for the He Family!”

The housekeeper handed it over quickly.

Li Hongyuan opened the food box and saw several delicate pastries inside, along with a floral note congratulating He Tang.

Li Hongyuan threw away the note and grabbed a pastry to eat.

He was initially angry, but upon tasting it, he became even angrier.

Why did he, the dignified Prince of Yu, have to compete with a poor scholar for food?

He threw the half-eaten pastry back into the box and handed it to the housekeeper, “Take this box and feed it to the dogs.”

“Master, this is the Princess Consort’s...”

“Is my command not valid?”

“No, no, this servant obeys. But... in case the Princess Consort finds out... she’s not in good health now, and she can’t get too upset. If something terrible happens, this servant can’t bear the responsibility.”

“What an idiot, keep your mouth shut.. Do you think the dog that ate the pastry will run to her and tell her?”

Chapter 179: I'll Make You Drink

"Oh, oh, oh, I understand now!"

The housekeeper took the food box and left quickly.

Li Hongyuan returned to the study in a foul mood and was even more impatient when he saw Ms. Li and Ms. Fang. He ordered them to leave. He took a sip of tea and found it scalding hot.

Everything just seemed to irritate him.

Chashan carefully suggested, "Why doesn't Master apologize to the Princess Consort?"

"Why should I apologize?"

"Are you jealous, Master?" Chashan chuckled, "You weren't like this before. Ever since the Princess Consort arrived, you've become so irritable. It's not like you."

"When she wasn't here, the mansion was so peaceful. Now there are so many problems. It's just annoying."

"In the past, you told me that when a woman is being troublesome, just let her be. You never wasted your time with women, so why are you always having an issue with the Princess Consort? Is it because you care about her in your heart?"

"Care about her?" Li Hongyuan sneered, "Such a flirtatious woman, fooling around with other men, unclear, vague, and murky. I've been enduring her for the sake of the child she's carrying. Once the child is born, I'll send her back where she came from!"

Chashan dared not make a sound.

Li Hongyuan added, "Also, she's not allowed in the kitchen to make anything anymore!"

He was the Prince of Yu, the master of this mansion, so when he ordered that the kitchen be off-limits to Jiang Ning, no one dared to disobey.

When Jiang Ning tried to go in again, she found the kitchen door tightly closed.

The head chef was in a difficult position.

Everyone liked her, but they couldn't disobey the Prince's orders.

If they wouldn't let her in, Jiang Ning planned to build a small kitchen in the Crystal Clear Manor herself. After all, it wasn't like she didn't have the money.

On her way back, she overheard two servants talking about how the housekeeper had thrown her dim sum to the dogs.

Jiang Ning said, "Xiaoman, call them over and ask them what's going on."

Xiaoman immediately went over, grabbed both women, and brought them over.

It didn't take much effort to get the truth out of them.

Jiang Ning ordered Xiaoman to push her in the direction of Misty Cloud Pavilion, where they happened to meet Li Yuanyuan bringing tea to Li Hongyuan.

She took off her shoe and hurled it at her.

Li Yuanyuan screamed, and the tea spilled all over the floor.

“Master, my hand...” Li Yuanyuan cried out.

Li Hongyuan’s face darkened, “Jiang Ning, what’s your problem now?”

“You fed the food I made to the dogs, didn’t you? Why would you do such a thing?”

Li Hongyuan looked at the door.

The housekeeper hurried in and knelt with a thud, “Princess Consort, please calm down. I did it, as my mind was blinded by stupidity at that moment. I am guilty!”

“Housekeeper, I understand your loyalty to the Prince, but you don’t have to take responsibility for this. After all, the Prince is not someone who would do something and not take responsibility for it.”

“It was me who ordered the housekeeper to do it.” Li Hongyuan said coldly.

“Why?”

“Don’t forget that you are now the Princess Consort of Yu, not that lame girl from before! If you don’t stop interacting with He Tang, I will break your other leg too.”

“Li Hongyuan, you’re so domineering! You think no one can control you, don’t you?” Jiang Ning said, “Just wait and see. Xiaoman, let’s go.”

Xiaoman pushed Jiang Ning away.

Li Yuanyuan continued to sob.

Li Hongyuan glanced at her, “How’s your hand?”

“Master, my hand’s fine...”

“If it’s fine, go back.”

“...” Li Yuanyuan stood up, feeling wronged, and left.

Before leaving, she glanced at the spilled tea on the floor.

Back at Lan Pavilion, Nanny Mo followed her in, “Miss, what happened?”

“What do you mean ‘what happened’?.”

“The tea... did the Prince drink it?”

“Drink? The tea was knocked over by the Princess Consort.” Li Yuanyuan replied irritably.

“Ah?” Nanny Mo was a little alarmed, “Does the Princess Consort suspect something?”

Chapter 180: Production is Imminent

Li Yuanyuan was a bit irritable, “How should I know? As soon as she walked in, she took off her shoes. I don’t know if she wanted to throw them at the Prince or at me, but she ended up hitting the teapot, which scalded my hand.”

“Is your hand okay, Miss?”

“It’s nothing.”

The tea had cooled off a bit on its journey, only leaving her hand a little red.

However, the fear and confusion in her heart were harder to dissipate.

Nanny Mo rubbed her hands, saying, “This won’t do. No matter if it was an accident or if the Princess Consort realized something, we can’t just sit here and do nothing.”

“What do you mean, Nanny?”

“Miss, it’s time to make a move.” Nanny Mo whispered, “The Princess Consort is already showing such a big belly, look at the time – in two or three months, she will give birth. If we don’t act soon, it will be too late. The master has been urging.”

“I know, but... it’s really hard to find a chance.” Li Yuanyuan frowned, “Nanny, you know that since the Prince brought her back last time and found out she was carrying a boy, she was almost assassinated in the street. Since then, the Prince has been more protective of her; I can’t even get close to the Crystal Clear Manor.”

“You are clever, Miss. You will find a way. No matter how well-guarded the Crystal Clear Manor is, there isn’t a solid iron wall. People inside must come and go. The Princess Consort can’t stay inside all the time. Didn’t she come to Misty Cloud Pavilion today?” Nanny Mo pondered, “How dare she have such a big fight with the Prince? What’s the reason behind it?”

“Apparently the Prince threw the snacks she made for him to the dogs, which angered her.”

“Would the Prince really do that?” Nanny Mo was astonished.

In her impression, the Prince of Yu had always been indifferent and rarely smiled. Apart from a few close attendants, no one else dared to even have a second glance at him.

He was a Prince, his mind occupied with the matters of home and country; how could he do such childish and boring things?

Nanny Mo shook her head: "Men, in the end, they are all just children in front of women."

"I have been with the Prince for several years, and I have never seen him do that."

"That shows he doesn't care about you."

"Why?"

"You still don't understand?" Nanny Mo sighed, "The Master took you in when you were twelve, trained you because you were smart, gentle, and perceptive. That's why he arranged for you to be by Prince Yu's side, hoping you would win his heart. Who would have known that you can't even compete with a disabled woman who just entered his life? You've never seen the childish side of men. What could it be other than that they don't like you?"

Li Yuanyuan remained silent.

Nanny Mo sighed, "I really don't know what he likes about Princess Consort, the cripple. In terms of gentleness, thoughtfulness, and service, she is no match for you, Miss."

"Don't forget, Nanny. She has that stunning face that I could never compete with."

"That's true. Looking past everything else, she is indeed incredibly beautiful. But if men only like her for her face, what's the point? Even the freshest flower will eventually wither; how many years can a beautiful face last?"

"What's the use of saying this now?" Li Yuanyuan frowned.

"In my opinion, a solution is not impossible. Since we managed to get the Princess Consort out of Crystal Clear Manor today, we can do it again." Nanny Mo smiled, "Both the Prince and the Princess Consort are

easy to provoke – he is cold and distant, she is proud and domineering. Wait until she leaves the Manor again, that will be the perfect opportunity for you to act.”

Li Yuanyuan nodded, calculating silently in her heart.

Who would have thought that after the outburst from Jiang Ning that day, she never left Crystal Clear Manor again?

She stayed in the Manor, all through the autumn and into winter, until the day she was due to give birth was about to arrive.

The atmosphere in the Prince of Yu’s residence became more and more tense.

How many pairs of eyes were watching them?