

Royal Marriage 231

Chapter 231: The Face of Master Thirteen

Jiang Ning glanced at Wenren Zong.

Wenren Zong was lying silently with his face towards the wall.

All of his secrets had been spilled out by the women in his household.

How could he maintain his aloof image as Master Thirteen.

Seven or eight sisters were crowding around Jiang Ning. One caressed her hair, one patted her cheek, another attempted to touch her waist but was promptly stopped by Jiang Yi.

“Sisters, you can continue chatting with Master Thirteen, we won’t disturb you. Let’s go, sister,” he pushed Jiang Ning’s wheelchair as the two siblings made their collective escape.

Jiang Ning thought they were here to take Thirteen home, but unexpectedly, they came to visit in such a bustling manner but ultimately left together without Thirteen.

When Lin Zizi heard that her best friend was visiting, she specially came over to meet her, expressing her extreme guilt.

Madam Wenren laughed and said, “What’s a slight injury to a man? Zizi, don’t dwell on this matter.”

“This matter...”

“I already know about it. It was the Prince of Yu who did it.” Madam Wenren took her hand, “Thirteen would do anything for the woman he loves, whether it’s getting injured or whatever, it’s all his own will. Now that I’m here today, let me ask you, do you agree to this marriage?”

“The Prime Minister and I have discussed it. We have no objections to this matter, as long as Ningning is willing.”

“Then start preparing?”

“But Ningning is still undecided.”

“Why?”

“After all, our Ningning is not an ordinary maiden. Given her condition... she is still hesitating whether to remarry or not.”

“How old is she? Fifteen or sixteen?”

“She will be sixteen after the new year.”

“At the tender age of sixteen, are you planning to have her live as a widow for the rest of her life? She must still marry when the time comes.”

Lin Zizi laughed and said, “I know that you won’t mind Ningning’s circumstances.”

“How could I be so rigid?”

“Because we know you’re not, the Prime Minister and I have no objections to this marriage. Otherwise, we’d definitely not let Ningning remarry and suffer.”

Madam Wenren patted her hand: “Just because she is your daughter, I will love her like my own. Rest assured.”

Lin Zizi laughed and said: “Li’er, you were originally against this marriage, weren’t you?”

“With you, I don’t have to hide anything. Initially, I did dissuade Thirteen not to cross paths with the Prince of Yu. Now, the Prince of Yu beating Thirteen publicly clearly shows he hasn’t let go of Ningning from your family. Am I wrong?”

Lin Zizi remained silent.

Everyone was now aware of the Prince of Yu’s feelings towards Jiang Ning.

If he truly let go, why would he bother who Jiang Ning socialises with.

The Fifth Prince, publicly beating an official of the imperial court, and even over a woman unrelated to him. This matter couldn’t possibly be settled so easily.

The chastisement of the historian, the imperial censor, the gossip of the people, the outrage of the courtiers, all would inevitably pressure the Emperor to punish the Prince of Yu.

The Prince of Yu had a good reputation among the court officials over the years, and this incident would cause a steep decline in his stature.

This will surely affect the succession matter.

No matter what angle one considers, the Prince of Yu committing such an act was a huge mistake.

Especially considering that the Wenren family weren’t nobodies to be bullied easily.

Although Madam Wenren and her daughters seemed calm, how could they not be upset when their child was beaten up this bad?

They were also angry at the imperial family’s overbearing demeanor.

Even though they were already divorced, there was still so much interference and obstruction..

Chapter 232: Fighting for a Breather

Can a prince really act like this?

Ministers work hard to serve the royal family, only to end up like this. It's truly disheartening.

Before coming here, Madam Wenren held a meeting with her family.

At the meeting, everyone unanimously decided that since the Prince of Yu had treated them so unfairly, the Wenren family would make sure to marry Jiang Ning as their daughter-in-law.

Once Jiang Ning became a part of the Wenren family, they would see if he could still be so overbearing and arrogant, and whether he would dare to come to the Wenren family to cause trouble.

Madam Wenren had previously advised her son not to get involved in this muddy water, but now, even if her son didn't want to marry Jiang Ning, she would force him to do so.

Not for anything else, but to regain some dignity.

She couldn't say these things to Lin Zizi.

But Lin Zizi could guess some of it.

She knew her friend's character: upright and clear about love and hatred. She never started trouble but never feared it either.

She smiled and said, "Regardless of what the Prince of Yu does, the emperor has ordered them to divorce, so they won't have any relationship from now on."

"Yes, but Ningning won't get married while the Prince of Yu still hasn't given up. Don't you think? Zizi, my son has risked his life and shed blood for Ningning. Could you please persuade her on my behalf?"

"I won't persuade her; I'll let her make her own decision."

"Fine, fine, if you won't persuade her, I'll go talk to her personally."

As expected, Madam Wenren went to speak with Jiang Ning herself.

Jiang Ning thought they had all left and was surprised to see Madam Wenren.

"Ningning, I came to see you." Madam Wenren's demeanor was elegant and her words were gentle, making others feel comfortable and refreshed.

Jiang Ning asked Huang Ying to pour tea and said, "Madam, please have a seat."

Madam Wenren smiled and asked, "Where are the little master and the little mistress?"

"They are in the side room, being looked after by the wet nurse and maidservants."

"You must be tired taking care of them by yourself?"

"I'm not tired, there are so many people helping me." Jiang Ning smiled and asked, "Have my sisters already taken Thirteen back home?"

"They were so noisy, so I asked them to leave first. As for Thirteen, let him stay here for a few more days. The doctor said he injured his head and needs to rest quietly, without moving around too much. I'm afraid the carriage ride might make his headache worse."

Jiang Ning felt remorse, “Madam, if it weren’t for me, Thirteen wouldn’t be like this. Don’t worry, I will definitely take responsibility and take care of him until he’s fully recovered before sending him back.”

“So have you thought about when you’ll marry Thirteen?” Madam Wenren joked.

“This...” Jiang Ning thought for a moment and smiled frankly, “Madam, I haven’t made up my mind yet.”

“Well, you can take your time to think about it. I’m not exaggerating when I say that Thirteen is a truly excellent young man. If you marry into our family, he will surely cherish you.”

“I believe that. But, Madam, aren’t you worried that if I really do marry Thirteen, the Prince of Yu won’t let it go?”

“That’s because you haven’t married yet. Once you do, even if he’s unwilling, there’s nothing he can do.”

“Madam, your magnanimity makes me feel ashamed.”

“Ah,” Madam Wenren sighed, “To be honest, I didn’t quite agree at first. But Thirteen has always been stubborn and made his own decisions; ever since he was a child. As long as he sincerely loves you, I, as a mother, have no choice but to grant him his wish. Besides, you are a sensible and understanding young woman. Let’s put the past behind us and look forward, okay?”

Jiang Ning nodded, “Thank you, Madam, for your consolation.”

“Can you give me a definitive answer today?”

“Madam... I still need some more time to think.” Jiang Ning said softly, “Once Thirteen’s injuries have healed, I will give him my answer..”

Chapter 233: Not Fighting, But Getting Beaten

Madam Wenren saw how gentle and agreeable she was and grew more fond of her.

“Alright, I’ll be waiting for your letter then. Don’t disappoint me.”

“I will seriously think about it.”

After seeing Madam Wenren off, Jiang Ning went to visit Wenren Zong.

Upon waking up, Wenren Zong opened his eyes to find Jiang Ning sitting by his bedside.

His heart felt warmed: “I never thought that getting hurt could fulfill my wish so soon.”

With medicine in hand, Jiang Ning smiled and asked: “What wish does Thirteen have?”

“To wake up to the sight of Ningning every day.”

“One would get tired of it eventually.”

“Not me.”

“At first, it might be fresh and exciting, but after a year or two, if someone doesn’t get tired of it, that person must be extraordinary.” Jiang Ning handed him a bowl, “Take your medicine first.”

Wenren Zong sat up, leaned against the pillow, and asked, “Has mother and the rest left?”

“They’ve all gone back.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Why are you apologizing to me?”

“You must have been frightened by them today, right?” Wenren Zong drank the medicine and put down the bowl, “They didn’t come here to blame me. They just found it amusing that I fought for a woman, so they came to watch.”

Jiang Ning laughed, “The Thirteen they mentioned is quite different from the one I know.”

Wenren Zong looked a bit embarrassed, “When I’m working outside as a government official, especially when I’m investigating cases, I must be authoritative to keep those under me in line.”

“You really don’t know any martial arts?”

“I don’t.” Wenren Zong admitted, somewhat ashamed, “Eldest Sister is right; I’ve never fought with anyone.”

“No wonder my sisters were so happy.”

“Today wasn’t really a fight, I was just beaten by the Prince of Yu.”

Jiang Ning chuckled, “You seem quite accepting of it.”

“What else can I do? Should I deny getting beaten?” Wenren Zong laughed, “Anyway, I’ve made a fool of myself in front of you.”

“There’s no folly. I’m the one who should feel guilty.”

“Ningning, don’t feel guilty.” Wenren Zong took her hand and held it, “I’m really happy that I could do this for you.”

Jiang Ning patted his hand and smiled: "You should rest well. It will take at least three to five days of quiet recuperation. Madam Wenren didn't take you away because she wanted you to stay and recover."

"I know what she's thinking. Tell me, Ningning, did my mother talk to you alone and pressure you to agree to the marriage?"

"She didn't pressure me, she just asked."

"I knew it." Wenren Zong frowned, "Ningning, I won't use my family to pressure you nor will I force you to make a decision because I got hurt. All of this is my own choice."

Jiang Ning smiled, "I know. You should just rest and don't worry. Your smart brain must recover well; otherwise, Chang'an City will be short of a great detective."

She pulled her hand from his grasp, watched him lie down, and then turned to leave in her wheelchair.

Wenren Zong lay quietly. A moment later, his servant Sanli came in and asked respectfully, "How are you feeling now, sir?"

"It's nothing, just a skin injury."

Wenren Zong sat up, his expression cold.

Completely different from his gentleness and tenderness towards Jiang Ning earlier.

Sanli said, "As long as you're alright, I can be at ease."

Wenren Zong asked, "What's happening outside?"

“The news of this incident has spread, causing quite a stir in the court. The imperial censors and ministers have denounced Prince of Yu, and His Majesty is furious. He has summoned the Prince of Yu to the palace for reprimand, and punishment is inevitable..”

Chapter 234 Prince of Yu Punished

Wenren Zong pondered.

Sanli continued, “Sir, given the current situation, things are already very unfavorable for Prince of Yu. After all, he is neither the oldest nor the legitimate son, and after divorcing Princess Consort of Yu, he also lost such a significant ally like Prime Minister Jiang. Moreover, there is a piece of good news.”

“What is it?”

“Princess Consort of Chen is already three months pregnant, the imperial physician has diagnosed her pulse, and it is highly likely to be a boy.”

“I see,” Wenren Zong raised his hand, “You may go.”

Sanli asked, “Will you be staying in the Jiang residence to recover for a few days?”

“Yes, I will. If there is any news, tell me when I return.”

“I understand, sir.” Sanli bowed and withdrew.

From that day on, Wenren Zong stayed at the Jiang residence to recover from his injuries.

His wounds were not very serious, and after three or five days, they were more or less healed.

Every day, Jiang Ning would visit him and personally serve him water and medicine.

The Wenren family, on the other hand, completely ignored him, as if they had handed him over to the Jiang family.

What could the Jiang family do?

They could only serve him.

At first, Jiang Ning was wondering whether Li Hongyuan would do anything once Wenren Zong moved into the Jiang family's residence.

However, nothing happened these few days.

Everything was calm.

Li Hongyuan not only did not do anything, but he also never even appeared or visited the two children.

This was highly abnormal.

According to the past habits, he would almost visit the children every day, and if he didn't come the day before, he would definitely come the next day.

But now, counting back and forth, he had not appeared for five days already.

Had he finally given up?

As Jiang Ning was feeling puzzled, she heard from Jiang Yi, who had just returned from the court, that Prince of Yu had been detained.

"Why was he detained?" Jiang Ning asked.

“Because of the incident where he hit Wenren Zong,” Jiang Yi replied. “The matter has caused great anger among the court, and everyone is seeking justice for Wenren Zong.”

Indeed, the incident of Li Hongyuan hitting people was completely unjustifiable, with no reason whatsoever.

The key point was the terrible impact.

No one should punish doctors, let alone ministers, even if they have committed a crime. And Wenren Zong had not done anything wrong at all.

If Prince of Yu behaves so unscrupulously even before becoming the Crown Prince, wouldn't he turn into a tyrant or foolish ruler who can't tell right from wrong once he ascends the throne?

What does he take the state and the people for?

Many who originally supported him have now started to withdraw their support.

The Emperor, unable to bear the headache, could only punish Prince of Yu to pacify public anger: confining him for three months, and having him write scriptures on the wall as repentance.

Jiang Ning said after hearing this, “It's just that he won't be allowed to leave his residence for three months, not a big deal.”

“Seventh sister, you're oversimplifying it.”

“Why?”

“If he were only confined to Prince of Yu's residence for three months, it would be different. This time, he's been confined to the Hall of Virtue, not allowed to leave for even half a step, and there are imperial guards watching outside.” “That serious?” Jiang Ning looked shocked.

The Hall of Virtue might sound pleasant, but it was actually a standard place of hardship, not much better than the cold palace where abandoned consorts were sent. Originally a hall for worshipping ancestors, it only had memorial tablets and cushions, with nothing else.

There were no beds, tables, or chairs, and in the winter months, there was no brazier for warmth.

Being confined for just a day or two might be bearable, but not three months, and having to write scriptures every day, would be quite tormenting for a pampered prince.

Jiang Yi continued, "Now is the crucial moment for appointing a Crown Prince. Because of this incident, it's hard to say who will end up winning. Oh, I heard that Princess Consort of Chen is pregnant with a male heir too."

Jiang Ning furrowed her brow.

If Li Hongyuan does not become the Crown Prince, could the two children remain in the Jiang family forever?

Chapter 235 Answer

The once firmly established position of Crown Prince had now become uncertain.

Not only that, but he was now confined in the freezing Hall of Virtue to copy the scriptures.

With the New Year approaching, it was the coldest three months of the year. Wouldn't he get sick from the cold like this?

Jiang Ning could hardly imagine what Li Hongyuan was feeling at this time.

Looking at Wenzan and Lingzi, Jiang Ning thought that after all, he was the father of the two children.

In the future, when they grow up and find out it was because of her that their father couldn't become the Crown Prince, would they hold it against her?

At dinner time, Jiang Ning brought the food she made herself and went to the front yard to visit Wenren Zong.

Wenren Zong had gotten much better, sitting up in bed with a pile of thick documents.

"You should be resting and not taxing your mind," Jiang Ning said.

Wenren Zong looked at her and smiled, "It's not taxing at all. I was just reviewing a case that has progressed well. I wanted to see if there's anything missed."

"You're really working hard."

"I just want to find out the truth, so that the innocent won't be wrongly accused, and the guilty won't escape the law."

"Thirteen, you're a good official," Jiang Ning praised him sincerely, "I hope you always stay true to your original intentions and continue to be a good official who fights for the people."

Wenren Zong put down the documents and smiled, "I will."

"Take a break and drink your medicine first," Jiang Ning handed him the medicine, "Then come and eat."

Wenren Zong smiled, "It's just my last meal at the Jiang Family."

"Why?"

"I'm going home tomorrow."

“You don’t have to rush. You can leave once you’re fully recovered.”

“I’m fine already.” Wenren Zong looked at her tenderly, “Ningning, thank you for taking care of me these days. Although I don’t want to leave, I have to for the sake of your reputation.”

“I don’t care about those things,” Jiang Ning smiled.

“Even if you don’t care, I have to.”

“Alright, drink your medicine.”

Wenren Zong drank the medicine and got out of bed, sitting at the table.

Jiang Ning laid out the food.

Wenren Zong smiled, “It would’ve been nice to have some wine.”

“Why would you drink wine when you’re injured?”

“A little bit of rice wine won’t hurt. I’m fine. Look...” He shook his head vigorously.

Jiang Ning laughed, “If you want to drink, just drink. But when your head aches later, I won’t care.”

She told Huang Ying to fetch a pot of wine, and also told her to take Xiaoman back to eat dinner. There was no need for them to serve here. This way, Wenren Zong could eat more comfortably.

Wenren Zong poured two glasses of wine, handing one to Jiang Ning.

Jiang Ning waved her hand, "I don't drink."

"Just keep me company for one glass."

"Well, alright." Jiang Ning picked up her glass, "Just one glass, you should drink less too."

"I will also drink only one."

The two clinked glasses and drank it all.

Jiang Ning felt that the wine was rather bland and tasteless.

But Wenren Zong seemed to enjoy it.

During the meal, he ended up drinking another two glasses.

Afterward, he asked Jiang Ning, "I'm leaving tomorrow. Have you thought it through these days?"

Jiang Ning knew what he was asking.

She said earnestly, "Thirteen, I think... I still can't agree to this."

"Why not?" Wenren Zong pressed.

His expression showed disappointment.

Jiang Ning lowered her eyes, softly saying, "I'm sorry."

“No, don’t say you’re sorry.” Wenren Zong took her hand, “Can you tell me the reason? I thought... we were doing well.”

If she didn’t like him, why did she agree to meet him for the snow-watching and fish-eating gathering, and accept his bracelet?

Chapter 236: I Just Want You

Jiang Ning pulled her hand back, took off the bracelet on her wrist, placed it in his hand, and said, “I’m sorry.”

“Why?” he asked again.

“Because we’re not a good match.”

“In what way are we not suitable? I like you, and you have a good impression of me too, don’t you?”

“I do have a good impression of you, but... having a good impression doesn’t mean we can get married.”

“I don’t understand.” Wenren Zong frowned, “I like you, my family accepts you. Your family also agrees, and you don’t dislike me. Why can’t we get married and be together?”

“Because I don’t want to be separated from the children.”

“Even if we get married, you can come back to see them whenever you miss them.”

“But I can’t come back every day, can I?”

“Ningning, that’s not a real reason. Tell me the real reason.” Wenren Zong squatted in front of the wheelchair, grasping her shoulders, “Or is it that I’ve done something wrong these few days that has made you dislike me?”

“No, you’ve been great.”

“Then what is the reason?”

“Maybe it’s because I haven’t liked you enough to get married to you immediately.” Jiang Ning smiled, “Thirteen, you’re a talented young man, and there are countless noble ladies who would be willing to marry you.”

“I don’t want them, I only want you.”

“Alright, Thirteen, rest well. I’ll have Third Brother take you back tomorrow.” Jiang Ning pushed her wheelchair and turned to leave.

Wenren Zong looked at her retreating figure, his emotions complicated.

Jiang Ning pushed her wheelchair back herself, passing an archway, and saw Jiang Yi leaning against a door pillar, arms crossed, smiling, “Wenren Zong is a very good husband candidate, and you just rejected him like that. You’re really ruthless.”

Jiang Ning snorted and ignored him.

Jiang Yi followed and helped her push the wheelchair: “What a pity.”

Jiang Ning lazily leaned against the chair back, “If it’s such a pity, why don’t you marry him yourself?”

“It’s a pity I’m a man.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t discriminate against you.”

“...You’re naughty.” Jiang Yi laughed, “Wenren Zong is quite loyal to the King of Chen, even risking his own lifelong happiness. He’s a tough character, capable of great things.”

Jiang Ning pouted.

Jiang Yi glanced at her and smiled, “You’re pretty tough too.”

“What’s so tough about me?” Jiang Ning lazily propped her chin, “I just don’t want to be used and be someone else’s pawn. The Emperor won’t do it, Prince of Yu won’t do it, and Wenren Zong is even worse.”

Jiang Yi was curious, “When did you know he was using you?”

“From the beginning.”

“Huh?”

“Ever since his family started asking for my hand in marriage.” Jiang Ning said indifferently, “Brother, put yourself in his shoes, would you be willing to marry a disabled woman who has been married and has children?”

Jiang Yi laughed, “I understand what you mean, most people wouldn’t. But... Seventh Sister, you’re so beautiful, it’s hard to say.”

“Does Wenren Zong look like someone who would lose rationality and do anything for love?”

“He doesn’t.”

“So isn’t his motive very obvious?” Jiang Ning smiled, “He’s using me to hit Prince of Yu. And he’s been successful.”

“If you knew that, why did you still associate with him?”

“I had nothing better to do. Besides all that, Wenren Zong is handsome, romantic, and hanging out with him is still pretty enjoyable.”

Jiang Yi glanced at her, “I feel like you’re using Wenren Zong too.”

“Nonsense, I’m not.”

“Then it must be true.” Jiang Yi raised an eyebrow, “Wenren Zong uses you to attack Prince of Yu, and you play his game. Is that it?”

“Why would I want to scheme against Prince of Yu.”

“Because you don’t want him to become the Crown Prince, and you don’t want to give the children back to him!”

Chapter 237: Is It Not Good to Be a Crown Prince for a Lifetime?

Jiang Ning didn’t speak, not denying his words.

In the dim twilight, Jiang Yi pushed Seventh Sister’s wheelchair and slowly walked.

Little snowflakes were still falling from the sky.

Jiang Ning felt a bit cold and tightened the cloak around her.

“Seventh Sister, have you ever thought about one thing?” Jiang Yi asked.

“What?”

“You cooperated with Wenren Zong and undermined Prince of Yu, making the Emperor dissatisfied with him. If by any chance, he really cannot become the Crown Prince and the King of Chen takes the position, have you ever thought about the more serious consequences?”

“I’ve thought about it.”

Jiang Ning knew clearly that the King of Chen and Prince of Yu were enemies. No matter which one of them ascends to the throne, neither would let the other go.

If the King of Chen ascended to the throne, Prince of Yu would definitely meet a tragic end.

As for the Jiang family, given their connection with the Prince of Yu, and with Wenzan and Lingzi’s children, they would inevitably become targets of the King of Chen’s attacks.

If the Prince of Yu became the emperor, he would at least not do anything to the Jiang family and their children.

Either way, the calculation didn’t seem profitable.

Jiang Yi still had concerns in his heart.

Jiang Ning said, “The Emperor is still in good health now. Even if the King of Chen becomes the Crown Prince, he would have to wait for a few years. But if Li Hongyuan becomes the Crown Prince, the two children would be taken to the East Palace immediately.”

“Although His Majesty is not too old, this kind of thing... Who can say for sure.”

“Third Brother, you are speaking rather rebelliously.”

“I was just saying it casually to you.”

“Don’t worry. With the Emperor’s condition, living for another twenty or thirty years is not a problem.” Jiang Ning smiled, “How old is the King of Chen? Wouldn’t it be nice to let him be the Crown Prince forever?”

Jiang Yi laughed out loud, “Only you could think of that. You’re really gambling on this.”

“Let’s wholeheartedly wish the Emperor a long life of a hundred years.” Jiang Ning smiled and said, “Besides...”

“What?”

“Who says that after becoming the Crown Prince, one can definitely inherit the Imperial Throne?” Jiang Ning calmly said, “If I remember correctly, our current Emperor has never been a Crown Prince, has he?”

The current Emperor Li Changgeng seized the throne from his elder imperial brother through a military coup.

If there’s real ambition, whether one becomes a Crown Prince or not doesn’t really matter.

Jiang Yi felt chills down his spine after hearing this: “Seventh Sister, you must never speak of these things in the future. This is the Emperor’s taboo, and it is now a topic that no one dares to mention.”

“Third Brother, don’t be nervous. I was just saying it.”

“You girl... I thought you were nurtured in a poor household and wouldn’t have much knowledge. I didn’t expect you to outmaneuver both Prince of Yu and Wenren Zong. If Prince of Yu knew that it was you manipulating things behind the scenes, he would be furious.”

“What did I do? I am just a disabled girl; what kind of waves can I stir up? I simply took advantage of the situation. If Wenren Zong hadn’t tried to scheme against me, I wouldn’t have been able to turn the tables.”

“What about Prince of Yu? Although he’s a bit two-faced, he hasn’t done anything to hurt you... Even if it’s for the sake of the children, there’s no need to harm him too much. After all, he sent the children to our family because he cares about you.”

Jiang Ning didn’t make a sound.

She couldn’t tell anyone about what Li Hongyuan had done to her.

No matter if it was Li Hongyuan or Wenren Zong, she didn’t like either of them.

Manipulating them, she didn’t feel guilty at all.

After a night passed, the snow stopped, and the weather cleared up.

Wenren Zong was going to return home.

Jiang Yi personally escorted him.

He stood at the gate of the Jiang family, and couldn’t help looking back at the house.

Jiang Yi smiled and said, “The carriage and horses are prepared, Master Wenren, please..”

Chapter 238: She Will Not Marry You

Wenren Zong turned his head back to look at the Jiang family’s gate, “Brother Jiang, is Seventh Miss Jiang...”

“Oh, Seventh Sister is feeling slightly unwell and couldn’t come to bid you farewell. I sincerely apologize.”

“What happened to her?”

“It’s nothing major, she just spent a bit too long in the snowy grounds yesterday and caught a cold. The doctor said she just needs to take a dose of medicine and sweat it out. He specifically warned her not to come out in the wind. I made her stay in, please don’t mind.”

“Of course not,” Wenren Zong paused, “She is delicate.”

“Isn’t she,” Jiang Yi smiled kindly.

With no other choice, Wenren Zong said his farewells, “I did indeed cause Brother Jiang some trouble these past few days.”

“Not at all, not at all. It’s our duty after all.”

“Take care, Brother Jiang. Farewell.”

Wenren Zong bowed slightly, turned around and got into his carriage.

As the carriage began to move, he lifted the curtain and looked back at the Jiang family’s doors one last time.

In the end, he didn’t see that frail figure sitting in a wheelchair.

He lowered his head and opened his palm, revealing a bracelet.

The bracelet, intricately inlaid with golden pieces, seemingly still held the warmth and lingering fragrance of her.

His attendant, Sanli, rode up to him, peered through the window and noticed he was deep in thought, holding a bracelet. He asked, "Master, when is the marriage between you and Seventh Miss Jiang going to take place?"

"There is no more marriage," Wenren Zong lifted his head and simply stated.

"Ah? Why is that?" Sanli was surprised, "Didn't anything come out of Master's five-day stay at the Jiang's?"

"Nothing."

"But hasn't Seventh Young Mistress Jiang already accepted Master's gifts? Not to mention Master, for her sake, was even wounded by the Prince of Yu."

"Do you take her for a gullible woman who would marry someone just to return a favor?"

Sanli saw that the master was not in the best of moods, but he couldn't help but say, "Still, Sir, I thought she felt the same for Master too. How could she change her mind all of a sudden?"

"Perhaps, she's smarter than I thought."

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I..."

Wenren Zong didn't continue speaking. He frowned and carefully went through the events in his mind, over and over again.

When did she figure it out?

He had no idea at all.

Upon returning to the Wenren residence, Madam Wenren went to see him. She saw him sitting silently in the study, which prompted her to start strategizing.

“This is a specialty ginseng tea that I have asked someone to prepare for you. You were just healed and ginseng can restore vitality and replenish blood.” Madam Wenren placed the teacup in front of her son.

“Thank you for your concern, Mother.”

Wenren Zong picked up the teacup and took a small sip before putting it down.

Madam Wenren glanced sideways and saw a bracelet resting on the edge of the table.

She picked it up, looked at it, and said, “This bracelet...”

“She gave it back to me.”

“She won’t marry you.”

“Yes.” Wenren Zong sighed lightly, “So be it.”

Madam Wenren frowned, “What happened? Everything seemed fine initially. She took care of you when you were injured, she clearly wasn’t disliking you.”

“The Prince of Yu was punished by the Emperor,” he said, seemingly irrelevant.

Madam Wenren somewhat understood.

She frowned, "You are always like this! In the end, it's because you were not sincere, you had ulterior motives from the start. It's no surprise she doesn't want you."

Wenren Zong countered, "No matter what intentions I had at the beginning, I only wanted to marry her. I would have treated her well, taken care of her for a lifetime. I would never let her suffer or be wronged."

"You think she cares," Madam Wenren glared at him, "I thought you genuinely liked her, but you remain the same. She is already magnanimous by not berating you.."

Chapter 239: Disheartened as if Lost

Wenren Zong said, "When I left, she didn't show up."

"That's because she has a sense of measure and left you with some dignity. What, do you want her to argue with you openly and say you're calculating her?"

"I just followed the trend, I never really wanted to plan anything against her." "In my opinion, Jiang Ning is a clever girl. No matter what, the Prince of Yu is the father of her two children. Even if they divorce, she won't help you oppose the Prince of Yu. Just forget about this relationship, and don't think about it in the future."

"Yes, I understand."

"Ah," Madam Wenren stood up, sighed, and felt somewhat regretful, "When we were going to arrange a marriage for you two from a young age, that girl got lost. Now you've lost the chance again like this. If you really treat her well, she may not refuse. In the end, it's a lack of fate. Forget it, it's our Wenren family who has no good fortune to have her as our daughter-in-law."

"I really do want to marry her."

“Your true feelings are not pure enough. She is a clear-headed girl, and she doesn’t tolerate any deception. If she could compromise, why would she divorce the Prince of Yu? She could give up the position of Princess Consort of Yu without any hesitation, let alone you.”

Wenren Zong fell silent.

“You, I have warned you early on. When you do things, don’t always have a utilitarian mindset, especially when it comes to matters of feelings. What do you take her girl’s true heart for? Have you ever thought that she might be hurt and sad because of this? Forget it, I won’t say more. As long as you don’t regret it in the future.”

She turned and left.

Wenren Zong stood up to send her off. After a while, he sat down and his eyes fell on the bracelet.

He picked up the bracelet, lost in thought.

His mother was right. Since they are not fated, there’s no point in thinking about it anymore.

But why is there a lingering sense of loss in his heart?

Imperial Palace, Hall of Virtue.

Concubine Jin showed her token to the Imperial Guard, who allowed her to pass. She pushed open the door and entered.

A cold chill greeted her face.

There was a faint musty smell from the long-unused room.

Concubine Jin frowned and saw the Prince of Yu sitting on a cushion with his back to the door, copying sutras at a small square table.

By his side, there was a stack of neatly written papers.

Concubine Jin walked over, "Your mother is here, and you don't even look at me."

Li Hongyuan said indifferently, "Is concubine mother here to mock me?"

"Not really. After all, you are my son. If I don't come, it would seem too heartless."

"Well, you can go now that you've seen it."

"You don't have to be so cold." Concubine Jin stood across from him, "Do you need me to plead for you with your father? It's cold and damp in this room. If you stay here for three months, you'll get rheumatism."

"Will concubine mother plead for me?"

"No."

Li Hongyuan seemed to have anticipated this answer, his expression unchanged as he continued to copy sutras diligently.

Concubine Jin said, "Your father is punishing you like this to calm public anger. Even if I go to plead for you, it would be useless."

"I know."

"Since you were a child, you have taken after me temperament-wise. You've always been a cold and detached person. Why would you do such an irrational thing in public?" Concubine Jin didn't

understand, “You and the King of Chen have been at odds for a long time, but he has never taken advantage of you. Why this time—”

Li Hongyuan put down the brush, paused for a moment, and said quietly, “Perhaps, it’s because I never truly cared about anyone before.”

Concubine Jin raised an eyebrow, “You mean Jiang Ning?”

Li Hongyuan didn’t answer.

Concubine Jin laughed, “I never thought that my son would have a day when he would be entangled by a woman..”

Chapter 240: Jealousy at Play

Li Hongyuan ignored her words, picked up his brush and continued to write.

“Aren’t your hands cold?” Concubine Jin handed him the hand warmer she held in her embrace.

Li Hongyuan glanced at it and placed it on his lap.

Concubine Jin said, “You were so irrational, beating Wenren Zong in the street. Have you ever thought about the consequences? Now that you are locked up here, you are completely unaware of the things happening outside. In three months, when you are released, everything will have changed. By then, Jiang Ning will have married Wenren Zong, and your position as the Crown Prince will be snatched away by the King of Chen.”

“I didn’t think about that at the time.”

“Why not? When did you become so impulsive?”

“Because I was angry.”

“I think it was jealousy that got the better of you.” Concubine Jin shook her head. “Now look, you and Wenren Zong are both fighting over Jiang Ning, to the point where it’s causing a scene. The King of Chen benefits from this. The current atmosphere at the Imperial Court is not in your favor. Moreover, the Princess Consort of Chen is pregnant. Imperial Physician Dong examined her pulse and said it could be a boy.”

Li Hongyuan remained unmoved, “You don’t care if you become the Empress Dowager or not, why worrying so much? Aren’t you afraid of getting wrinkles?”

“You’re right. Anyway, I should go back to sleep now.”

Concubine Jin left without any hesitation.

Sometime later, a eunuch brought bedding and a brazier.

With the help of a palace maid, Concubine Jin strolled slowly, admiring the snowy palace scenery.

A group of people were approaching, led by Concubine Xian and Concubine Lan.

Concubine Xian’s son was the Prince of Huai, and Concubine Lan’s son was the King of Chen.

Prince of Huai’s birth mother was Concubine Shu.

Concubine Shu had always kept a low profile, rarely interacting with others.

Apart from the Empress and Concubine Jin, there were Concubine Xian and Concubine Lan in the palace now. The other lower-ranked concubines, even if they were beautiful and favored, couldn’t surpass them.

In the palace, having children made all the difference.

“My humble self pays respect to Your Highness.”

Concubine Xian and Concubine Lan bowed.

Concubine Jin casually picked a plum blossom, not even bothering to look at them. “No need for formalities. If your heart isn’t sincere, don’t bother.”

They had spent so many years in the palace together, everyone knew each other’s true character.

Concubine Xian sneered, “Your Highness still speaks in such a strange tone. How you came to be a concubine, we all know.”

As Concubine Xian, she ranked fourth and had her own son. She had entered the palace earlier than Concubine Jin and was not afraid of her at all.

Now her son was also punished by the Emperor.

He probably wouldn’t become the Crown Prince, so there was even less reason to pay her any respect.

Concubine Jin responded with a faint smile, “Why don’t you tell me how I got this position of Concubine?”

“Isn’t it because you look like someone from the Jiang Family...”

“Indeed, you should blame your parents for not making you as beautiful as me. At this age, I’m still favored. Concubine Xian, it’s been ten years since you were last called to bed, hasn’t it? How pitiful.”

“You...” Concubine Xian murmured, “Shameless.”

Concubine Lan laughed, “Why must you two sisters be like this, spoiling the harmony? I heard the Prince of Yu is locked up; it’s terribly cold lately, so I thought I’d go see him.”

Concubine Jin said, “Just look at your arrogant demeanor when you’re victorious.”

“My sister, what do you mean by that?”

“Concubine Xian, you’re such a fool. Your son is still imprisoned due to King of Chen’s scheme, yet you have the nerve to flatter Concubine Lan.”

“Concubine Jin, what are you talking about? How can you say Prince of Huai was schemed against by King of Chen?! Clearly, it was Prince of Yu’s doing!”