

My Crown 1001

Chapter 1001: I Missed You Too

Giving a nod, Qiao Mu quickly picked up the brush and scribbled a voluminous and sentimental letter addressed to him.

After examining it for several minutes, Crown Prince Mo then folded the letter with satisfaction and put it away in the cloth fold in his chest.

He then smiled at her with a gaze so tender that it seemed to melt into spring water. "Qiaoqiao."

Yet for no reason, Qiao Mu's small body involuntarily trembled.

"Will you casually toss me a letter before running off again next time?"

Qiao Mu was obedient and shook her head vigorously. "I won't."

"I just know that my Qiaoqiao is a good girl." Mo Lian pinched her small face before carrying her to the bed.

"I-I was just thinking that you were quite busy recently. I was trying not to inconvenience you." Qiao Mu muttered under her breath, "Besides, I'm so familiar with Hulan Mountain..."

"Qiaoqiao, you still don't understand my heart. Do you not realize?" Crown Prince Mo placed her down on the bed and looked at her with extreme earnestness. "No matter how busy I am, your matters are more important than anything else."

Qiao Mu's eyes suddenly brightened, and she reached around to hug him. "I understand. Should I have something to take care of in the future, I will tell you in person, okay?"

Mo Lian looked down at her small face, and he felt that this little one looked so palatable under the dim light.

His gaze subsequently deepened a bit.

Sighing as he sat down on the edge of the bed, Crown Prince Mo said, "Even though you only ran off for less than four days, I still missed you."

When he thought of how the little fellow was going to enter the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm later on for a month, Mo Lian was very upset on the inside and even felt unwell all over.

"I missed you too," Qiao Mu chimed in offhandedly.

Upon hearing this, Mo Lian pulled her into his arms as a smile instantly emerged on his handsome face. "I really did miss you. You little heartless one are just coaxing me thoughtlessly, don't think that I don't realize that. Do you have anything you want to tell me?"

Speaking of this, Qiao Mu was a bit pleased with herself, and she recounted her gains from the secret inheritance realm.

When she got to the part where the old Daoist was pursuing her, she started to exultantly gesticulate her big battle with the old Daoist and his ultimate annihilation by Heavenly Law.

Mo Lian just kept gazing at her the entire time.

Whenever this child talked about fighting, both her eyes and her body simply seemed to be shining. *How combative was she!*

"I will fight Shuntian Prefecture to the end." When she thought of how that prefecture lord had plotted against her during both her lives, Qiao Mu felt as if she had swallowed a fly and was unwell all over.

"Okay," he responded softly before embracing her as he comforted, "Don't worry about anything and just fight them fearlessly. No matter what happens, I will stand beside you, accompanying you, protecting you."

She turned her head to look at him with sparkling eyes. "Lian!"

"Hm?"

"What I said earlier wasn't to coax you," Qiao Mu suddenly said.

Mo Lian was startled, but after chewing her words over, his phoenix eyes shone resplendently. While gazing at her tenderly, he lowered his head and gently sealed her soft, small mouth with his own.

Sensing that his body was tingling from this light contact, he involuntarily tightened his arms as he snuggled against the little fellow's soft body.

Just now, the little one told him that she had said that "I missed you too" with extreme seriousness. She wasn't coaxing him thoughtlessly...

Chapter 1002: Ring

In a remote corner of Chonghua Palace.

"Ah, ah!!" Continuous screams were coming from a distant building wing.

Luckily, this place was extremely remote, and in normal times, even sparrows were disinclined to fly over this area. That's why no one would be coming over no matter how heartrending Zheng Ru's cries were.

As Nanny Su looked worriedly at Zheng Ru, who was rolling about on the floor in agonizing pain, she wiped the tears from her eyes. She couldn't bear seeing Zheng Ru like this.

"Nanny, Nanny, what's going on! My face, my... ah!" Upon flopping in front of a dusty bronze mirror, Zheng Ru saw her rotting and bloated face. When she scratched at her face, lots of gray, flaky skin peeled off, as well, as if all her skin had cracked open.

"Ah, Nanny, Nanny." Zheng Ru screeched, "Didn't Sir Black say that my body will be completely restored after consuming that extra-strength regeneration pill?"

Why did she turn into this state? Why did her previous condition start to relapse when night fell?

Her beauty no longer existed!

Nanny Su snuck Zheng Ru a pitiful glance. "Xiao Ru, do you still remember what Sir Black instructed you?"

"I do, I do. He wants me to find a way to deal with the crown prince consort within seven days. I know, Sir Black must be reminding me that I have to dispose of her as soon as possible, that's why he is giving me a warning every day!" Zheng Ru was so furious that she threw the bronze mirror to the ground. "But that b*tch, she actually acted on her own in leaving the capital! The queen must be displeased in regards to this."

At the beginning, the crown prince had planned to cover up for her and only said that she was recuperating at home.

However, she found out after sending people to investigate that the d*mn lass had left the capital several days prior and simply wasn't at the Marquis of Jiayuan's Estate.

It was a seven-day deadline, but four days had gone by already. She simply didn't have much time left. *If this d*mned wench didn't come back, how could she deal with her?*

Nanny Su hesitated before informing, "Xiao Ru, I heard that the crown prince brought that crown prince consort back to the Eastern Palace at eight o'clock in the evening."

"Truly?" *She returned? It's good that she has, it's good that she has!*

Upon hearing this news, Zheng Ru's mind eased, but she couldn't endure the itching pain on her face.

She hastily told Nanny Su, "Go fetch some ice for a cold compress!"

Her face was really so itchy that she wanted to die. It was so unbearable!

Nanny Su's face turned very unsightly at once. "Xiao Ru, you are no longer the Noble Consort Zheng of the past. It's already considered pretty good that we were able to get transferred out from the woodshed."

Yet Zheng Ru's expression was sinister. "That's because they know that I will eventually regain His Majesty's favor."

Nanny Su sighed. "I've arranged tomorrow's matter already. You only have one chance, Xiao Ru. Grab on to it firmly."

Early the next morning, after breakfast.

Qiao Mu sat inside the audience hall and obediently waited for Crown Prince Mo to return from morning court. Afterwards, the two people boarded a carriage to return to the Marquis of Jiayuan's Estate.

The Qiao Zhongbang couple had left the doors wide open since early in the morning, awaiting their return.

After seeing that their daughter was safe and sound, they couldn't help but harp on about how risky her actions were and so on.

As Wei Ziqin held Qiao Mu's small hand, she inadvertently looked down and saw the shining white ring on her fair and slender finger.

Her expression changed instantly, and her body involuntarily trembled. She raised up Qiao Mu's small hand and couldn't resist questioning in detail, "Qiao, Qiaoqiao, where did you get this ring from?"

"This?" Qiao Mu didn't hide it from her, promptly replying, "I got it from a pill teacher's inheritance."

Chapter 1003: Don't Know Her

"Teacher?" After Wei Ziqin looked at her daughter blankly, she then excitedly grasped her daughter's small hand and asked, "Qiaqiao, you mean that? You inherited that master's pill art?"

The gaze with which Wei Ziqin was looking at her daughter practically shone with great joy in the blink of an eye.

"Mhm." Before Qiao Mu could step inside, her mother had blocked her at the door with persistent inquiries.

"Mother, what is it?" Every time she mentioned pills, her mom would be wildly excited.

Like last time, after her mom unexpectedly found out that she was a pill alchemist, her mom actually ran to tell her dad in earnest. In the end, the couple really did open up the ancestral hall to pay their respects to the ancestors.

It was too excessive. Wasn't it just becoming a pill alchemist? Did her mom have to go so far as to say things such as 'the ancestors have manifested' ...

Qiao Zhongbang merely shook his head in amusement on the side. "Let Xiao Mo and our daughter in first before talking."

"Okay, okay, okay." Wei Ziqin held Qiao Mu's hand as they stepped across the door sill together.

Mo Lian found a place to sit down with Father Qiao before chatting idly.

Wei Ziqin continued to pester her daughter with questions. Upon learning that her daughter's destination on this trip was that pill alchemist's secret inheritance realm, Wei Ziqin's eyes flashed as she anxiously pressed, "That, that great pill master, did you see with your own eyes?"

"Mhm." Qiao Mu perceived that her mother's behavior was a bit weird, and she couldn't help but ask, "Mom, do you know her?"

Wei Ziqin suddenly felt that her expression was a bit excessive, and she quickly glossed it over with a smile as she said with a wave of her hand, "Silly child, Mom is merely an ordinary village woman. How could I know the great pill master you are talking of?"

Yet as Wei Ziqin said this, her gaze settled on Qiao Mu's face with a faint smile.

Qiao Mu puckered her small mouth. "Since you, Mom, were so happy, I had thought that you had found an old acquaintance."

Wei Ziqin smiled without continuing the conversation.

Nevertheless, Qiao Mu murmured by herself, "Teacher departed the mortal world all alone in her secret inheritance realm. Later on, I must bury her properly."

Hearing these words, tears instantly gushed out of Wei Ziqin's eyes, and she sorrowfully turned aside to wipe her eyes with her handkerchief.

“Mom, what’s wrong?” Qiao Mu pressed her small face close to look at her. “Mom, why are you crying?”

“How is Mom crying?” Wei Ziqin put on a smile with difficulty, and she tugged at her daughter’s small hand. “Mom only feels that you have quite the affinity with that great pill master. This was probably predestined by fate.”

Wei Ziqin’s voice was a bit choked as she held back her gushing tears. “Mom just feels very happy.”

“Mom.” Qiao Mu couldn’t resist smiling, holding onto her mother’s arm as she bantered, “Mom cries when she is happy and when she is sad.”

“You darn lass, you’re even teasing your mom now.” Wei Ziqin poked her small forehead before stating sternly soon afterwards, “Burying your master is a big affair. You might as well let your dad help you handle it. This is your master, so you have to bury her in grandeur.”

Qiao Mu pursed her small mouth. “Mom, I want to bury Teacher next to the sect.”

She’ll lay her teacher to rest on that peach orchard slope.

Wei Ziqin’s eyes reddened slightly, and she encircled her daughter’s shoulders while softly saying, “That’s good too. If your teacher in the nether world knew, she would also be gratified. Being able to rest in peace next to the Holy Water Sect’s late masters...”

Qiao Mu nodded, smiling as she exchanged glances with Wei Ziqin.

Chapter 1004: Life-Extending Pill

On the other side, when the father-in-law and son-in-law saw that the two women had started getting sentimental in their conversation, they quickly changed the topic. “Qiaoqiao, you’ll be setting off for the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm in four more days. You must make sufficient preparations, since a round trip to that place will be at least two months.”

Qiao Mu looked back at her dad and nodded.

There actually wasn’t anything she had to prepare. Before setting out, Qiao Mu only planned to draw more talismans in case of unforeseen circumstances.

While the four people were chatting, Hei’zi rushed in. He quickly made his salutations before informing Qiao Zhongbang, “Master. Mother Xu just came over to report that...”

Hei’zi furtively glanced at Wei Ziqin and Qiao Mu before bracing himself to say, “That the old madam is dying, and wants to see Master and Madam before her death.”

Qiao Zhongbang abruptly stood up before heaving a long sigh.

Wei Ziqin subsequently stood up and said, “My lord, let’s go over then.”

Regardless of how riling the old madam was, they would fulfill their filial duties as her son and daughter-in-law by going to see her on her deathbed.

Qiao Mu actually knew that her father had gone to request for the crown prince's grace so that the elderly lady could remain in the Mo Kingdom capital.

The other people from the Qiao Clan's main family, including Xu Jiao's family of three, were banished to the Northwestern Desert. There probably wasn't any possibility of them returning in this lifetime.

Qiao Mu also knew that her father had arranged the elderly lady in a small residence on Hualing Street, but she just didn't say anything about it.

Because it was right and proper for her father to want to fulfill his filial duty to his mother, so what could she, as his daughter, say.

In both her lives, her father was just this simple, honest, and even to the point of being an unquestioning filial person.

Perhaps this was what her mother admired about him.

Yet Qiao Mu no longer wanted to evaluate the elderly lady's good and bad, nor did she want to interfere with the elderly lady's matters anymore.

After escorting her parents out the door, Qiao Mu idly turned around, but Mo Lian grabbed her small hand.

"Unhappy?" Mo Lian's gaze shifted, pinching her small face gently. "You're expressionless."

When have you not seen me expressionless!

Qiao Mu didn't want to bother with him, so she put her small paws behind her back as she strode towards her Nanzhu Garden.

"I have. Qiaoqiao will smile when she's happy. When she's unhappy, she will pull a taut face in anger!"

Qiao Mu: *Hmph!*

Mo Lian chuckled, and he held her small hand as he walked along with her on the small path that was carpeted with fine and soft leaves. "I remember that you really weren't cute when you were younger. Disregarding how expressionless you always were, you also wouldn't talk and made me guess all the time."

"Fortunately, this crown prince is outstandingly intelligent, so I immediately comprehended all the looks you gave. Mhm, I simply comprehended your meaning too expressively!"

Qiao Mu turned her small head to glare at him before moodily saying, "I went to see the elderly lady."

She quietly went to see her without disturbing anyone.

Back at that time, she knew that the elderly lady wasn't going to live for long.

She was a normal person, yet she went hungry and didn't sleep well when living with Third Uncle and his family, so her body's organs had deteriorated into an appalling state within a short period of time.

Even though her father had arranged for the elderly lady to stay in the residence on Hualing Street, it was already useless no matter how doctors tried to nurse her health now.

That was, unless she consumed a life-extending pill. Then her life would be extended by at least three years.

The life-extending pill that Teacher concocted was a supreme-grade black-veined pill.

Chapter 1005: Don't Want to Intervene

Since this pill was targeted towards dying people, it was unlike the longevity pill, which nourished and repaired with moderate medicinal effects in a gradual fashion.

It was just as if this life-extending pill had stabbed a stimulating needle in the heart meridian. It could instantly extend a person's life for three to five years, but that was it.

When the extension period was up, even the most accomplished immortals couldn't save the person.

Regardless, if she intervened, then she would carefully administer a series of acupuncture on the elderly lady. Afterwards, she would nourish her body by feeding her a longevity pill mixed in with various types of medicine.

However, even then, she might not be able to save her, but she could absolutely extend her life.

But she... *Didn't! Want! To! Intervene!*

"Isn't my heart terribly ruthless? I am a wolf that bites whatever it can catch, isn't that so?" Qiao Mu hung her head, restraining the chilliness in her eyes as she dully questioned Mo Lian.

"Not ruthless." Mo Lian shook his head. "Didn't you ask me before whether I believed in karma?"

"I believe it." Mo Lian nodded steadfastly, grasping her small hand as he comforted, "She treated you and your family like that, after all. Saving her shows that you are benevolent, but it isn't enough to show that you are ruthless even if you don't."

Bad karma begets retribution. If the elderly lady hadn't stirred up so much trouble in the past, then she wouldn't have ended up in this state today.

She even ground away all of the Qiao Zhongbang couple's filial sentiments. The fact that the couple was willing to head to Hualing Street to see her one last time was merely due to filial duty.

"Even if you are a wolf, you are the wolf cub that is dearest to me in the whole wide world." Mo Lian suddenly stretched out his hands to lift this little one straight up.

Qiao Mu was caught off guard, and she hastily circled his neck with her arms, glaring down at him with puffed-out cheeks. "Quickly set me down!"

Yet Mo Lian shook his head and said very seriously, "No can do. What do you want to eat tonight? I'll cook it for you."

Qiao Mu gave a light harrumph before reciting, "Braised eel, catfish roasted in a pot, sweet-and-sour fish fillet, five-spice seasoned lamb, simmer-fried beef, braised three delicacies, diced eight treasures, two-flavored shrimp with egg white..."

As Qiao Mu reeled off a long list of dishes, Mo Lian was simply nodding repeatedly. Afterwards, he could not help but ask, "How come they are all big meat dishes? What will Kongkong eat?"

"Make him a veggie soup! With a bowl of white rice!"

Mo Lian chortled in amusement, and an unexpected protest rang out. "Benefactress! Isn't this meal of mine too crude?"

With this, Qiao Mu's mood turned better, and she hammered Mo Lian with her fist. "Quickly set me down."

"Not going to." Mo Lian drifted off, carrying her all the way towards Nanzhu Garden. "What do you want for soup?"

Meanwhile, the Qiao Zhongbang couple had arrived at a residence on Hualing Street. Mother Xu came out to welcome, "Madam, Old Madam says that she wants to talk to you alone."

After giving an indifferent nod, Wei Ziqin followed Mother Xu into a small side room on the southern side.

Elderly Lady's emaciated body was lying on the bed, with two pillows cushioned under her head. When she saw Wei Ziqin walk in, she became slightly invigorated.

"Where is Qiao Mu? Where is Qiao Mu that d*mn lass." Elderly Lady cried miserably, "I'm about to die, yet she is hard-hearted enough to not see me one last time?"

Wei Ziqin swallowed her anger as she tightly clenched her fists. "Qiaoqiao is in closed-door cultivation. Old Madam, if you have something to say, then please do so."

After giving several hacking coughs, Elderly Lady pointed at Wei Ziqin and said, "You, all of you, very good."

Even at this time, Elderly Lady still loathed her and her daughter.

Chapter 1006: Exposed

Since that was so, why did the elderly lady say that she wanted to talk to her in person?

Wei Ziqin wanted to pull a face and leave on the spot.

But in consideration that these would probably be the elderly lady's last words, she forcefully swallowed her anger.

She instead went up and curtsied towards the elderly lady before saying insipidly, "What does Elderly Lady have to say. This daughter-in-law still has many matters to take care of at home."

"You, you!" Elderly Lady pointed at Wei Ziqin in wrath and shouted, "You think I really don't know? Qiao Mu! Qiao Mu isn't my blood-related granddaughter at all!"

Wei Ziqin abruptly raised her head, staring with wide eyes at the scrawny elderly lady on the bed.

"You unvirtuous woman. What kind of methods did you use to beguile my son!"

“My son originally had a promising future. The main family had recognized his worth when he was still young, and he had even joined the Daybreak Sect. If he didn’t get stabbed in the back later on, he wouldn’t have returned to the village and married a lowborn woman like you!”

“You merely have the lot of a maidservant!” Elderly Lady beat the bed furiously. “You even deceived our Zhongbang and cheated on him! Who knows how you got pregnant with this bastard!”

“You shut up!” Wei Ziqin shouted angrily.

As this small courtyard wasn’t soundproof, the people outside could hear their shouts clearly.

Luckily, only Mother Xu was standing inside this small courtyard, and she had long retreated out the door with a drastically changed expression.

Qiao Zhongbang hastily pushed open the door and entered. “Ziqin, what’s wrong? Mom, what is going on?”

He quickly closed the door behind him before running to his wife. As he looked at the elderly lady’s trembling body, he heaved a long sigh and lamented, “Mom, what are you saying? Ziqin has been filial to you for so many years. Don’t you know by now what kind of daughter-in-law she is? By doing this, you not only bitterly disappoint Ziqin, but you also bitterly disappoint me.”

“Zhongbang, you’re the one who is bad at judging people!” Elderly Lady continued beating the bed as she screeched with a tearful racket, “For a bastard, you drove your blood-related brother and nephew to the Northwestern Desert. Do you even still have a conscience?”

“Mom! Zhongheng and his wife mistreated you into this state, emaciated and on the verge of death, yet you still think well of them. But whatever we two do, you don’t like it, is that it?” Qiao Zhongbang asked sullenly.

“I don’t care! Xiao Long is my blood-related grandson, so I don’t care what methods you use—whether it be begging or kneeling—but you must make His Highness the Crown Prince give the word for our Xiao Long to come back.” Elderly Lady roared loudly while coughing incessantly, “I, your mom, am about to die, yet you can’t fulfill this simple wish? Besides, what virtues and abilities does Qiao Mu, that bastard, possess to claim the position of crown prince consort?”

“Shut up!” Qiao Zhongbang also yelled, “That is my daughter! Mom, You’ve disappointed this son bitterly.”

Wei Ziqin’s face was also flushed in indignation as her eyes were brimming with tears, and she clenched her fists while silently repressing her emotions.

“You, you both! You unfilial son and daughter-in-law!” Elderly Lady spurted out a mouthful of blood, and she pointed at Qiao Zhongbang while berating, “You blockhead! Your wife had given birth to a daughter with someone else behind your back! If you don’t want anyone to know, don’t do it in the first place! Qiao Mu isn’t related to you by blood at all!”

“I know!” Qiao Zhongbang’s shout instantly made Elderly Lady clam up.

Elderly Lady’s face was full of disbelief, as if she was completely unable to comprehend his actions.

Chapter 1007: Disappointment

Qiao Zhongbang clearly knew that this daughter wasn't related to him by blood, yet he had feigned ignorance this entire time?

Was he a fool? He was helping other people raise their daughter even when they were living in such impoverished circumstances previously?

"Someone had entrusted her to Ziqin. Before our marriage in the town by then, she told me this upfront." Qiao Zhongbang continued with a sullen face, "This son doesn't know when Mother found out. Could it be because of this that you never looked at them amiably ever since a long time ago?"

Elderly Lady Qiao was so riled up that she lay limp on the bed. However, because she had spurted out clotted blood from her chest just earlier, she seemed to be much more at ease, instead.

But the Qiao Zhongbang couple clearly saw that the light in the depths of the elderly lady's eyes was like her dying flash of lucidity.

"Mom, you've really misunderstood Ziqin. She absolutely didn't do anything out of bounds. She is a good woman! In your son's eyes, she is the best woman in this world!"

Wei Ziqin tearfully turned around to look deeply at her husband.

"Our lives have only improved recently. But in the past, Ziqin had endured our most difficult, most tired, and darkest days together with your son."

"Mom, just because I rejected the marriage that you arranged for your son and brought Ziqin and her daughter back to the village, you've found it repulsive all these years, is that right?" Qiao Zhongbang said to the old madam.

"Unfilial son!" Elderly Lady continued to lay limply on the bed, but she was still able to beat the bed forcefully in anger. "Fine, fine, fine! It was this old one who was sticking her nose into other people's business! Since you like raising someone else's daughter, then go ahead! But—"

"You must bring Xiao Long back! You've raised Qiao Mu for so many years free of charge, and this mere small matter is only as easy as lifting a finger for her!"

Wei Ziqin sneered. "Elderly Lady, rest assured! Qiao Zhongheng's family of three shouldn't think of returning in this lifetime!"

Following this, Wei Ziqin's eyes shot out a cold light as she cursed, "Your young grandson is doomed to die in the Northwestern Desert and be buried in the wilderness. His skeleton will crumble from the drying winds to the extent that his remains will be no more!"

After saying her piece, she directly turned to fling open the door and leave without sparing another glance at the elderly lady.

"Ah!!" Elderly Lady beat the bed furiously, and her eyeballs rolled while her lips trembled as she shouted, "Wei Ziqin, you come back right now. Wei Ziqin! I want to see Qiao Mu, I want to tell her! That she isn't part of our Qiao Clan at all! On what basis can she banish my grandson to the Northwestern

Desert? As an adopted daughter, on what basis can she send the Qiao Clan's main family members into exile? She thinks she's all that even though she's a little bastard! Ah—"

Qiao Zhongbang clenched his fists with reddened eyes as he roared, "Stop talking! Can you stop making a fuss? Qiao Mu is my daughter! Stop saying 'bastard' everytime you open your mouth!"

"You, you! Unfilial son, you unfilial son!!"

Elderly Lady wasn't able to catch her breath, and she opened her mouth to give a hacking cough.

Her old eyes were widely fixated on the bed curtain. Slowly, no more sound could be heard, and her breathing had also stopped.

Qiao Zhongbang walked out of the door dejectedly, like he had suddenly lost all his energy. When he hugged his wife, the couple started crying out loud.

"Ziqin, Your husband truly is a failure of a human being. I didn't expect that my own mother would still criticize me and call me 'unfilial son' even on her deathbed."

"My lord." Wei Ziqin shook her head, putting her head in his embrace and tearfully comforting,

"It'll be fine, it'll be fine. It will all blow over, it's fine."

Qiao Zhongbang gazed at the side room with eyes full of disappointment before telling the servants outside the courtyard softly, "Prepare for the funeral."

Chapter 1008: Trounced

Qiao Mu's father and second uncle personally handled the elderly lady's cremation and funeral arrangements.

Qiao Mu didn't meddle, and the Qiao Zhongbang couple had also ordered the servants to keep their lips sealed about what had happened in the small courtyard on Hualing Street that day.

That's why Qiao Mu simply didn't know that the elderly lady had kicked up another row before passing away.

She merely made a show of observing ceremony and propriety to outsiders by fulfilling her filial duty as the eldest granddaughter.

Frankly speaking, however, the elderly lady's funeral wasn't all that grand, but everything proceeded in an orderly fashion.

After having these few days freed up, Qiao Mu had been drawing talismans the entire time.

Today was her grandmother's encoffining ceremony, so Qiao Mu and her siblings had been busying about with their parents and second uncle until this hour.

They had just eaten a light dinner when someone hurriedly came in and announced that there was a messenger from the palace.

Qiao Mu didn't even raise her eyelid, resting on the small divan with her eyes closed in the same manner as before. "I'm tired. Go and tell her that as I am in mourning for my grandmother's passing, I fear that entering the palace may agitate their eminences and taint them with bad luck."

"Yes." Shaoyao promptly curtsied before quickly walking out.

Nanny Qing, who waited upon the queen, was waiting outside, and she raised her head haughtily.

"What did the crown prince consort say?"

Shaoyao merely repeated what Qiao Mu had said in a neither obsequious nor supercilious manner.

Nanny Qing harrumphed. "That is indeed so. Then this old one will go back to report to Her Majesty."

Yet Shaoyao abruptly clutched Nanny Qing's wrist and kicked her, causing that old biddy to trip and eat the dirt beside the flower pots.

"It seems like you still haven't paid obeisance to my master and kowtowed?" Shaoyao crossed her arms as she coldly looked askance at Nanny Qing.

"You should kowtow three times before leaving. So as to avoid other people from casually gossiping about how the people serving Her Majesty the Queen don't follow the rules, not even observing the slightest bit of etiquette in front of the crown prince consort! This may disgrace Her Majesty's repute, after all."

Nanny Qing's whole face had turned ashen by this point, and gritting her teeth, she knelt down crossly as she unwillingly kowtowed three times toward the shut doors. Humiliation overwhelmed her, not to mention the pent-up anger in her heart. She secretly thought about how she would instigate conflict and rebuke this hot-tempered crown prince consort in front of Her Majesty after getting back.

Shaoyao approached that old woman and sneered with creased brows, "Take more care! The sword in this lady's hand doesn't have eyes! Be careful that it doesn't slash your throat!"

Jolting in fright, Nanny Qing involuntarily took a step backwards.

"If I find out that you dare to wag your tongue before the queen, next time won't be as simple as making you kowtow to apologize for your offence." Shaoyao drew her gleaming flexible sword from her waist and directly flicked it in a circle to threaten Nanny Qing.

Nanny Qing quickly cowered, replying obsequiously, "W-What are you talking about. Miss Shaoyao, you truly know how to joke around."

"You know yourself whether it is a joke. My master isn't someone the likes of you, a procuress who likes to stir up trouble, can offend!" Shaoyao then kicked her butt.

The old biddy wanted to scream, but she only felt pain in her mouth as a medicinal pill abruptly slid down her throat.

"Ah, ugh, cough cough." The old biddy's face had turned green with anger, and she clutched at her throat as she turned back to ask in horror, "W-What did you make me eat?"

Shaoyao chortled, her lips parted slightly as she responded, "Poison."

“Don’t worry, as long as you behave yourself, this poison won’t break out in your entire lifetime.” Afterwards, Shaoyao escorted the stiffened old biddy out with a grin before returning to wait on Qiao Mu.

Chapter 1009: Charmed

“You’ve sent her away?” Qiao Mu didn’t even raise her head as she flipped over a page in her book.

“Mhm. She left!” Shaoyao giggled. “The old biddy was so terrified by the poison that Miss bestowed to her! This time, she probably won’t dare to say anything after returning.”

“She stares at me every time with that loathing and disdainful gaze. She thinks I don’t see it?” Qiao Mu reached over to take the medicinal bottle that Shaoyao was handing over as she continued impassively, “If she doesn’t behave, then she can slowly go blind. Since her eyes don’t seem to be doing too much for her.”

While covering her mouth, Shaoyao chuckled. “That’s right.”

Qiao Mu didn’t say any more after that. She simply leaned against the small divan and continued to flip through the handwritten medicinal practice records that Long Chengyun had left behind.

Long Chengyun had travelled to many places and was well-versed in not only the art of the pill, but she was also proficient in the art of poison. Reading her manuscripts truly benefited her a lot, allowing her to learn about many actual case studies in medicinal practice.

When night fell, Crown Prince Mo came over.

Upon walking into the small courtyard in Qiao Mu’s Nanzhu Garden, he flicked his robe in a huff as he sat down on the edge of her small divan. “Royal Father is simply ugh!”

“As for who can make you this angry, it must be your old man being muddle-headed again.” Qiao Mu set down her poison classics manuscript. She then swept Crown Prince Mo a glance before handing him a small teacup in passing. “Tell me.”

Crown Prince Mo took the teacup with eyes full of indignation. “That muddled-headed geezer. After randomly getting fooled around with, he relented again.”

Qiao Mu shot up before gazing at him curiously. “Could it be Courtesan Zheng? She got released from the Cold Palace again?”

Courtesan Zheng was definitely the king’s true love! From the royal favor that the king had lavished for years upon Courtesan Zheng, if the crown prince told her today that the king had let her out again, she wouldn’t find it too unexpected either.

“Actually, no.” Mo Lian grasped Qiao Mu’s small hand and squeezed it gently as he said, “But it’s not much different.”

By a curious coincidence, it turned out that the king, for some reason, had passed by Chonghua Palace’s backdoor today; however, he just so happened to see Courtesan Zheng, who was dressed in plain white clothes, sitting underneath a withering old tree and piously copying something.

Apparently, the scene at time was so enchanting that the king just stared fixedly at Courtesan Zheng.

She was still so charming even when dressed in what looked to be mourning clothes! Courtesan Zheng's gentle and beautiful white-robed image thus entered the king's heart again.

The king quietly alighted from the royal carriage and went over to steal a glance. Oh my, it turned out that Courtesan Zheng was copying the Original Vows of the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra with all her heart, secretly praying for the kingdom's, the queen dowager's, and the king's good fortune.

The king secretly inquired about it from Nanny Su, and it turned out that Courtesan Zheng had been copying sutras day and night under this tree to pray for good fortune. It had been three days already, and she neglected sleep and food, showing a very pious attitude.

Nanny Su even wiped away her tears as she told the king that Courtesan Zheng had already realized her former mistakes. She would definitely turn over a new leaf and treat others well.

The king was very deeply moved as he looked at the pile of hand-copied sutras next to her. Even though she was thinly clad, only adorned with a plain hairpin, she looked extremely beautiful and gentle, and his desire couldn't help but be aroused.

Qiao Mu listened to the crown prince recount what happened as if she were listening to a story. When the crown prince was done, she involuntarily widened her eyes curiously and confirmed, "And then the king brought Courtesan Zheng out?"

"He didn't." Mo Lian snapped, "He wanted to, but if he really did, it's all on whether he is shameless enough to bring her out right now!"

He had personally passed down an edict to throw that person into the Cold Palace. How long had it been, and now he wants to bring her out again? Wasn't that just slapping his own face! Did he want to lose his old face?

Chapter 1010: Curiosity

While looking at him with shining eyes, the little fellow rubbed his displeased but handsome face.

The crown prince was taken aback, but then he laughed out loud as he scooped the little fellow onto his legs at once and kneaded her in passing, since courtesy demands reciprocity!

Shaoyao just so happened to walk into the room at this time, and when she witnessed this scene, she couldn't help but cover her mouth in amusement. She then tactfully turned around and stepped out at once.

"Alright, you all don't need to stand here. Go do your work now." Shaoyao waved her hand at the maids standing outside, and they naturally dispersed.

As Mo Lian hugged the little one, he fed her the pine nuts that he had cracked. "Recently, has anything happened with that Xiang Yuanyuan here?"

"The day before yesterday, someone came at night and gave her a small brocade box with a medicinal pill in it." Qiao Mu propped up her small chin as she chewed absentmindedly. "I took a glance. It should be a slow-acting controlling poison pill."

“But Xiang Yuanyuan buried this box, just under the tree roots in her backyard.”

Mo Lian scoffed. “She indeed has some brains. She must know that you would definitely send people to keep an eye on her. The reason she did that is just to show that she is yielding to you. Do you believe her?”

Qiao Mu shook her head.

“Previously, she said again that Second Qin had specially sent a batch of people to capture you on the day of the competition!” Which caused him to be keyed up and make early preparations for that day.

However, even though Second Qin’s people didn’t come, a godd*mn Mu Qianqian came along and revolted him terribly.

Recently, the crown prince hadn’t been idle, having been fully suppressing the Mu Clan’s businesses inside the capitol. Since they made him miserable, then he must also make the Mu Clan miserable along with him.

“Sigh.” Qiao Mu sighed. “Forget it, not thinking about it anymore. She won’t be able to make much of a splash anyway.”

“But I feel that Second Qin has his purpose for using every possible means to place a pawn beside you.” Mo Lian stuffed several cracked pine nuts into her mouth. “How about driving her out and let that be the end of it?”

“I’m just a bit curious about what she wants to do.” Qiao Mu hammered her small fist.

“First of all, since she is a normal person, you definitely won’t be too guarded against her.”

“Second of all, no matter if it’s when she escaped from the Qin Estate that very night and sold out a piece of information to you. Or when she obtained poison medicine from the Qin Estate’s guard later on but was unwilling to use it on you. These events are both conveying the same message, that she is expressing her loyalty to you.”

“It’s right that you’re curious. Second Qin, that guy, knows that you will be curious and wants you to keep her in the estate.” Crown Prince Mo raised his brow and narrowed his phoenix eyes as he said, “No matter how she treated you in the past. I feel that she is dangerous. If you aren’t going to make a move, I’m going to take care of her for you.”

If he were to intervene, his methods wouldn’t be that gentle...

Qiao Mu helplessly cast him a glance. “Okay, okay, then I’ll have Xiang Yuanyuan leave.”

Soon afterwards, Qiao Mu promptly called for Shaoyao, telling her to give Xiang Yuanyuan some silver and grain and request for Xiang Yuanyuan to leave the Qiao Family.

Subsequently, she turned her small head to the crown prince. “Satisfied?”

Crown Prince Mo chuckled as he gave a nod.

After the two people chatted some more, it was time to light the lamps. At this time, Manager Gong came with people to announce the king’s decree.

When he saw that the crown prince was also present, Gong Chang'an instantly sensed the cold sweat on his forehead dripping down at once.

While withstanding His Highness the Crown Prince's severe gaze, Gong Chang'an announced His Majesty's decree with fear and trepidation: 'The crown prince consort is to wake up at 3 o'clock tomorrow morning and personally lead the womenfolk of the palace to Great Sea Monastery's Pacification Pagoda to pray for the kingdom's and the people's good fortune.'

Chapter 1011: Warning

The hand with which Second Qin was grasping his brush paused slightly, and he asked without raising his head, "Driven out?"

"Yes." A 27 to 28-year-old man lowered his head as he stood before Second Young Sir Qin's desk, holding his breath as he awaited the second young sir's wrath.

However, the second young sir didn't flare up at all, merely nodding lightly instead. "It was my miscalculation. I didn't expect that she wasn't the least bit curious at all and didn't keep her. She really is a little fellow with no conscience."

"How is it possible for Young Sir to miscalculate." Huang Chong lifted his face and creased his brows as he reported, "Our people had sent Xiang Yuanyuan a secretly-concocted poison pill the day before yesterday. But even until today, Eldest Miss Qiao did not show the slightest inclination of wanting to drive her out. Presumably, she must have been a bit curious."

"Oh?" Only after setting down the brush in his hand did Second Qin raise his eyes as he looked at Huang Chong indifferently.

"You think that it was the crown prince's idea."

Huang Chong nodded without any hesitation.

"According to this subordinate's investigation, the crown prince arrived at Miss Qiao's Estate at nightfall. Then, before the lamps were lit, Miss Qiao had someone give Xiang Yuanyuan some valuables and travelling expenses before sending her away."

Upon hearing these words, an emerald-green color flitted across the depths of Second Qin's eyes, and he smiled faintly. "That man is indeed this young sir's formidable adversary. Thinking about it carefully, even Shuntian Prefecture's people were tragically defeated by him. With this, probably no one in this Lower Star Domain can deal with him."

Huang Chong asked agitatedly, "Young Sir, should this subordinate intervene and have that Xiang Yuanyuan..."

As he made a motion of slashing his neck, murderous intent flashed across his eyes.

Yet Second Qin waved his hand unconcernedly. "So be it if she left. Just let her leave the capital."

Huang Chong was startled. "Then should this subordinate seek out Great Master Ye to remove the puppet curse on Xiang Yuanyuan?"

“Mhm, remove it.” Second Qin nodded slightly, attracting an even more flabbergasted gaze from Huang Chong.

But he didn't dare to look at his family's young sir too much. After a glance, he quickly hung his head again, but his heart was unsettled in bewilderment.

Normally, towards this kind of discarded pawn, the second young sir would send people to dispose of them cleanly, but today.../

The second young sir really was letting off Xiang Yuanyuan that young lady? And even planning to remove the puppet curse on Xiang Yuanyuan, directly letting her go!

Was this... in consideration of Eldest Miss Qiao?

As Second Young Sir Qin waved his hand with slight fatigue to dismiss this subordinate, he secretly sighed in his mind:

Since this small pawn couldn't stay by her side, then it was useless. He wouldn't care where the person went after this.

The second young sir had become soft-hearted. As Huang Chong withdrew, a viciousness flashed past his eyes.

Just as he turned around and was about to walk away, he heard Second Young Sir Qin's chilly voice ring softly in his ear. “Huang Chong, this young sir wants her to leave safely, so be sure not to feign compliance. You understand what this young sir's methods are like.”

A baleful look had only just surfaced in Huang Chong before he abruptly discarded it with a jolt. After quickly nodding, he despondently withdrew from the young sir's room in horror.

How could he forget that the young sir hated it the most when people acted one way in front of him and another way behind his back.

Shortly after, several men dressed in cyan, short-lapel robes appeared beside Huang Chong and bowed to him.

“Go request for Great Master Ye to remove the curse on Miss Xiang. You all make sure to properly escort Miss Xiang out of the capital city. No mishaps will be tolerated.”

“Yes!” The subordinates instantly dispersed, respectively going to carry out their orders.

Chapter 1012: Praying for Blessings

At this time, inside the Central Palace, the bead curtain clinked as the royal maid Hexiang entered and curtsied with good manners.

Queen Zhao gently set down the tea cup she was holding. “She didn't say anything?”

“The crown prince consort didn't say anything. The crown prince was also present at the time, and he looked very displeased.”

Queen Zhao sighed. She didn't know what to say about her son's protectiveness.

Elderly Nanny Huaxuan quietly analyzed, "But it is understandable. The crown prince consort will be setting out for the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm the day after tomorrow. And yet she still has to head to the Great Sea Monastery to pray for blessings tomorrow, so she will be a bit rushed on time. Moreover, the crown prince consort is also in mourning..."

Queen Zhao lightly cast the elderly nanny a glance. "As the crown prince consort, she naturally has to put the Mo Kingdom's safety as her priority."

Huaxuan then lowered her head and responded, "Yes."

Meanwhile, Hexiang bowed before going up towards the area behind the curtain to help Queen Zhao.

"This queen doesn't want to meddle, so let's see what happens. Most likely, there will be a big show to watch." Queen Zhao's lips tugged into a sneer.

Today, she already received definite news that the king had already relented, adding Courtesan Zheng's name to the entourage.

On this day to pray for blessings, Qiao Mu woke up early and washed up, preparing herself in a systematic fashion.

Since she was in mourning, she naturally wore a white silk mourning dress.

Since the king and the queen both weren't repulsed by her mourning dress, still specially ordering her to go "pray for blessings," then she naturally didn't care about these ordinary affairs even more so.

Today, the people participating in this prayer for blessings included the royal concubines in the palace, the princesses and commandery princesses, as well as the womenfolk of the families of third-rank officials and above.

This grandiose party assembled at Dongshun Gate before 3 o'clock in the morning.

They quietly waited for the crown prince consort's carriage to arrive before setting off together towards the Great Sea Monastery.

The Pacification Pagoda was said to be the kingdom's national pagoda because one of its monks had reportedly saved the former king's life before.

From then on, the monks of the Great Sea Monastery experienced a meteoric rise in social prestige.

Not only did the entire Great Sea Monastery become the Mo Kingdom's state protection monastery, the Pacification Pagoda inside it had also been conferred as the national pagoda, as it was said to be able to bless and protect the kingdom's well-being. It was rumored with vivid detail that you would get what you wished for if you burned joss sticks at the Pacification Pagoda.

The entire pagoda had nine floors and towered aloft Fu Mountain, which was situated near the north city gate.

There had always been the saying that Fu Mountain was made up of ranges upon ranges of ridges and peaks stretching on for hundreds of thousands of feet, and that it was that covered by green woods.

When Qiao Mu alighted from the carriage, she saw from afar that Great Sea Monastery's abbot and his retinue were already waiting at the gate.

"Greetings to the crown prince consort." Great Sea Monastery's abbot looked to be in his seventies, but apparently, his actual age was already over one hundred.

Qiao Mu nodded faintly. "Venerable Master, there's no need for so many formalities. If you're all prepared, then let's pick an auspicious time to start."

This prayer for blessings required her to lead the group of orioles and swallows through a sequence of saying their prayers and burning joss sticks. Afterwards, she had to enter the Pacification Pagoda and sweep the pagoda so as to express her piety.

Of course, she wasn't required to sweep all the floors, as it was only for a mere formality.

If this sequence went smoothly, they would probably be able to eat lunch and rest just after noon.

Everything would basically be over around 8 o'clock in the evening, and they would be able to go home then.

But if things didn't go smoothly...

A cold light flitted across Qiao Mu's eyes. She didn't mind if some people's blood were to splatter on the spot.

Besides the crown prince consort, Consort Cheng, Consort Liu, and Noble Consort Lin possessed the most honorable statuses of all the people in the party.

More than half of the womenfolk were normal people, and half of them were getting on in years.

They ordinarily lived pampered lifestyles, so it was indeed a bit unbearable for them to kneel in worship and burn joss sticks repeatedly under the gradually rising sun.

Qiao Mu didn't avert her gaze, merely faintly casting a glance at her mother and younger sister.

Chapter 1013: Torturing You People to Death

Wei Ziqin and Qiao Lin were both very spirited since their bodily strength and mystic conscious as mystic cultivators differed from normal people's. To them, repeating these motions at this time of day was simply nothing.

Retracting her gaze, Qiao Mu followed the sequence for the praying ceremony without prompt.

She even deliberately followed the most elaborate and strict sequence to sufficiently demonstrate her piety.

She wasn't tired doing it anyways. Since they made her come here bright and early in the morning to burn joss sticks and say prayers, then she'd go through the most long-winded and formal ceremony to make those orioles and swallows behind her suffer.

Afterall, separated by the lingering incense smoke, it wasn't like this clique of royal concubines, princesses, and madams could come bite her from anger!

The Venerable Abbot, on the other hand, couldn't help but repeatedly exclaim in admiration, seeing that she was unafraid of hardship and hardwork, even worrying about and praying for the kingdom's and the people's good fortune at her young age.

Sure enough, after she finished going through the sequence, it was already afternoon.

She had made everyone's stomachs rumble from hunger. In particular, the consorts and madams who were getting on in their years and also didn't move about much normally all had pale complexions. The sun made them dizzy, and they were incessantly moaning in their minds.

Those young princesses, commandery princesses, and young misses were also inwardly complaining that they couldn't endure it anymore.

Before setting out from their homes before 3 o'clock in the morning, they had merely eaten a bit of breakfast and pastries, while some had even courted disaster by coming on empty stomachs.

It was already past noon by now, but they hadn't even been able to take a sip of water!

The crown prince consort was intent on torturing all of them to death in this monastery!

At this time, they were all extremely envious of Commandery Princess Yi'an, who hadn't come because she had to wait upon to the queen dowager, as well as Fourth Princess Mo Shuang, whom the king had directly forbid from going out due to her infamous indecorum.

Originally, they had been more or less ridiculing in their minds towards this fourth princess who didn't have much standing, but right now, they all wanted to cry. They were so envious that the princess didn't have to come and suffer this torment!

The crown prince consort was still full of vitality and in great spirits. She wasn't breathless in the slightest even after completing this complicated prayer sequence.

Subsequently, Great Sea Monastery's abbot, Venerable Master Konghui, placed his palms together in particular admiration, praising, "The crown prince consort, although very young, does not fear hardship and is concerned about her kingdom and her people. Her character is especially commendable."

His overflowing praises made Consort Cheng and the others so infuriated that they saw stars.

"Your Highness." Suddenly, a shout was heard, and an accompanying royal maid hastily used her body to prop up Consort Liu's collapsed body.

It turned out that Consort Liu was tired and hungry so her body fainted before everyone else, unable to withstand it anymore.

The crown prince consort walked up apathetically and swept Consort Liu a glance. Suddenly, she raised her hand and ordered, "Someone, bring a bucket of ice water over and splash it on her!"

Yet the originally fainted Consort Liu abruptly straightened her body and jumped up, repeatedly waving her hand as she said, "No need, no need. This consort was only a bit dizzy earlier and now feels much better."

When she finished saying this and saw the surrounding monks' strange gazes, Consort Liu didn't know where to put her pride, and she was so embarrassed that her face burned up.

It only took a second after she pretended to faint that the crown prince consort freaking caught her red-handed!

Was there anything even more wretched and more merciless than this?

Everyone twitched their mouths repeatedly, but they wanted to cry on the inside.

If pretending to faint worked, they all wanted to faint.

Eighth Princess Mo You had been holding it in for a long time, but she finally couldn't stifle her laughter any longer and chuckled.

She had finally caught on that this stoic-faced little sister-in-law was intent on torturing these consorts and madams to death openly and above board!

The crown prince consort looked at them sternly as she announced, "This crown prince consort is going to sweep the Pacification Pagoda!"

Chapter 1014: A Permanent Solution

Everyone simultaneously heaved a sigh of relief, thinking: *Goodness, they finally didn't have to suffer anymore!*

Thank the heavens and the earth, they could finally return to the monastery's side rooms to rest, drink water, and eat their meals!

Yet who would have expected that the crown prince consort would icily and mercilessly announce with her small, deadpan face, "Before that, you must kneel here in front of my great Mo Kingdom's national pagoda and say your prayers to Heaven together, awaiting this crown prince consort's return from sweeping the pagoda!"

Consort Cheng's body trembled and fell backwards onto the royal maid behind her.

The group of royal concubines were nearly about to cry.

"What are you all looking at this crown prince consort with your crestfallen faces for? Could it be that you all didn't come here with all sincerity to pray for the good fortune of my Mo Kingdom's people?" The crown prince consort chastised coldly, "You're only praying for blessings for one day, yet you can't endure a tiny bit of hardship? Then why haven't I seen you all incessantly complaining in normal times about the pampered lifestyles provided to you by the Mo Kingdom's commoners?"

"You have to assume the appropriate responsibility for the treatment you enjoy!"

"After returning to the palace, I will definitely make a clear and detailed report to the king and the queen about this matter! This crown prince consort sees and bears each of your behavior in mind and definitely won't slander any of you." The crown prince consort spoke forcefully and with justice, infuriating the group of royal concubines and madams so much that they were instantly rendered speechless.

Wei Ziqin gazed at her daughter speechlessly, as well.

At the beginning, she had also thought that her daughter was completing this prayer ceremony with a particularly serious and pious attitude.

But halfway through, she perceived that something was off...

She was openly punishing those royal concubines in broad daylight!

She didn't mind kneeling in front of the pagoda. After all, from early in the morning until now, she had secretly drunk a bit of sacred water in the middle, so she didn't feel the slightest bit fatigued right now.

There was also no need to worry about Xiao Lin'er. Her small face was flushed and rosy, with only several beads of sweat seeping out on the tip of her nose as she gazed at her sister with glowing eyes.

But as for those pitiful royal concubines and madams, when had they ever suffered from such torment?

At this time, all the royal concubines had silently made a particularly momentous decision. *Next time, if the king intended for the crown prince consort to lead them in doing any kind of activity again, then they would surely oppose it to the end!*

They would vehemently request for Her Majesty the Queen to lead them for the activity!

It should originally have been the queen heading this prayer activity! But since she shirked her responsibilities, this hoodoo ended up coming and torturing them to death!

Everyone unanimously decided that for any large-scale activity in the future, they would resolutely prevent the crown prince consort, this black-heart fellow, from joining the party.

At this time, Darling Qiao was unaware that her act of killing the chicken to warn the monkey actually served as a permanent solution that would help her avoid many troubles later on.

The monks had started to chant, and with the last sound "kneel," Consort Cheng and the others persistently griped in their minds as they braced themselves and knelt down mournfully.

Yet kneeling down wasn't the end of it. They still had to accompany the monks in loudly saying their prayers to Heaven until the crown prince consort returned from sweeping the pagoda.

Everyone was crying out in their minds: *Crown Prince Consort, we beg of you! Don't sweep the pagoda, let's just go back...*

The crown prince consort's figure disappeared from everyone's despairing gazes.

Wuwu, the crown prince consort, this straightforward fellow, wasn't really going to sweep each and every floor, right? If so, would they still be able to drink a sip of water or even go home before night fell?

However, once the doors to the pagoda shut, Qiao Mu's expression completely turned cold.

With a flash of her figure, she reached the pagoda's ninth floor at her top speed. Subsequently, she gazed icily at the man and woman that were tied up in the center of the pagoda.

"Long time no see."

Chapter 1015: Courtesan Zheng is Done For

"Mfhmphph!!" The tied-up woman let out unintelligible muffled sounds.

After setting up a sound-isolating defensive boundary, Qiao Mu finally nodded in her direction.

Ao'ye then took out the rag stuffing Courtesan Zheng's mouth.

Correct, the person tied up in the center of the ninth floor of the pagoda was that Courtesan Zheng who had once been lavished with royal favor but who had now fallen into the depths of the mire.

While the pygmy tied up beside Courtesan Zheng was precisely the Sir Black Cat that the crown prince had captured alive.

At this moment, this Sir Black Cat didn't have a single piece of intact flesh, and he had long been tortured until he was barely breathing, merely clinging on to his last breath.

Was it unexpected? Are you surprised?

Qiao Mu, with a snigger drifting past her lips, pattered over with shorts steps to Courtesan Zheng.

"What are you planning to do? You witch!" Zheng Ru shuddered in complete horror, her gaze seemingly looking at a demon that was walking out from hell.

"You still don't understand?" As Qiao Mu swept her a contemptuous glance, she gently tucked her loose hair behind her ear as she said lightly, "I want you to die."

Meanwhile, Ao'ye kept his head and eyes down, doing his utmost to enter an old monk's unperturbed meditation state of "I didn't see anything at all."

"I thought you would cease your antics after entering the Cold Palace, but who knew that you would actually be this stupid." Qiao Mu sighed before turning to look at Ao'ye. "You tell her."

She felt exhausted from talking to such a moron.

Ao'ye twitched his mouth before clearing his throat and recounting, "You had someone recruit some beggars and hoodlums on the streets and spread rumors that a witch has come into the world, so disaster will befall from heaven. At the beginning, we were not sure who had set this up."

"But the crown prince consort still keenly sensed that this incident seemed to be targeting her." Ao'ye truly admired their young crown prince consort, who was still able to acutely sniff out something amiss from this confounding incident.

"The crown prince consort knew that the person behind the scenes wouldn't leave the matter as is, so she just simply left the capital for several days, which also gave us time to keep investigating."

"The pivotal point was when His Highness the Crown Prince finally pried open this pygmy's mouth and obtained a lot of information. Such as, he fed you an extra-strength regeneration pill, deceiving you that your body had recovered so that you would go against the crown prince consort. Yet in truth, you would melt into a pile of flesh and blood without hope of restoration once the seven days were up."

At this point, Zheng Ru screeched, "Impossible! My face, my body have already recovered."

“Stop kidding yourself.” Qiao Mu sniggered. “Your face starts to rot once night comes around, right. Not everyone in the world is able to detoxify the nether posy, this kind of heat poison, that I added to the beautifying pill.”

“It’s you!! It’s you!” Courtesan Zheng screeched in terror, her eyes wanting to burst out of her sockets as she glared at Qiao Mu.

Beautifying pill? What beautifying pill!? Could it be... the beautifying pill that her brother had racked his brains to seize had actually been tampered with by this young crown prince consort?

Ah! Once Zheng Ru thought of this possibility, she practically started screaming immediately from her pent-up frustrations.

“I want to see the king, I want to see the king! Let me out! The king, I want to see the king!”

“Haven’t you plotted out a good show for me?” Qiao Mu gazed at Courtesan Zheng contemptuously before coldly announcing, “I helped you arrange this show to be even more entertaining...”

Chapter 1016: Suffering from Her Own Actions

Courtesan Zheng shook all over, screaming at Qiao Mu while out of her wits, “You, what are you planning to do? You witch! What do you want! I want to see the king! Your Majesty, Your Majesty!! Ah!”

“Witch?” While chewing this word over, Qiao Mu motioned with her fair and slender finger, taking out two talismans that were radiating blue light from her inner world and handing one of them over to Ao’ye.

“Then, as you wish.”

The two figures in front of Courtesan Zheng vanished as quick as lightning, causing her to gape in disbelief.

Why?

They actually vanished in the blink of an eye before her eyes?

What talisman exactly did that witch use, ahhh!

What Courtesan Zheng experienced in her last moments was perhaps boundless terror, or it was perhaps endless regret and despair!

She was more than aware that Nanny Su had led Shuntian Prefecture’s people in digging out the area at the foot of this Pacification Pagoda, filling it in with highly volatile explosives instead.

Once it was the appointed time, they would set fire and explode the pagoda without any hesitation!

It was originally the crown prince consort, this little b*tch, who should have enjoyed this agony and dread. Yet now, she, the mastermind, had taken the crown prince consort’s place instead, losing her head out of fear in this wait.

No matter how wildly she screamed, her voice was isolated inside the defensive boundary all along.

Until her death, no one appeared before her again.

Boom!

The group of people worshipping in front of the Pacification Pagoda were the first to feel the sudden quakes and tremors from the ground, upon which they all stood up with drastically changed expressions.

Shaoyao clutched Wei Ziqin's wrist and informed quietly into her ear, "Madam, don't worry. The crown prince consort has already sent Shaoyao a message that she has already safely departed from the Pacification Pagoda. Madam and Young Miss can just sit back and watch the subsequent show."

Only then did Wei Ziqin's anxious heart settle down, and she slowly breathed out a sigh of relief.

As Wei Ziqin pulled her younger daughter along and retreated with Shaoyao to the edge of the crowd, she looked on with a cold eye at the chaotic scene before her.

By this time, due to the impact from the fire explosions and tremors, the entire Pacification Pagoda was toppling to the left side, and broken pieces of brick mixed in with ceramic glaze pelted down.

At that moment, the monastery's monks were weeping and wailing as they prostrated on the ground.

The group of royal concubines and madams were also extremely flabbergasted. They all covered their heads, momentarily cowering on the ground without moving. A more daring one even looked up and stared blankly at the toppling Pacification Pagoda that was disappearing inch by inch.

After three rounds of fire explosions, more than half of the Pacification Pagoda had collapsed from the tremors, and the remaining part was but meaningless wreckage.

The group of honorable ladies all looked at those utter ruins in fearful dread. They stared on blankly, barely able to stand up with their own royal maids from before.

Although Consort Cheng was also shocked, she was the first to recover her wits, and she shouted with her eyes flashing, "It's terrible, someone, come quickly. The crown prince consort is still inside the Pacification Pagoda and hasn't come out yet!"

Consort Liu couldn't help but snicker upon hearing this. "The crown prince consort really is funny. The entire Pacification Pagoda exploded just after she stepped foot inside."

"How much does this Pacification Pagoda loathe the crown prince consort?" The Vassal King Consort of An'nan also sniggered.

"If you are out to condemn somebody, you can always trump up a charge. The Vassal King Consort's words are too severe, so if you do not have concrete evidence, it is best if you do not speak irresponsibly. Or else, it will be hard to avoid a bad repute of being irreverent to the consort of the Eastern Palace." A feeble voice, tinged with slight ridicule, suddenly rang out.

"Noble Lady Ying, you!" The Vassal King Consort of An'nan's complexion abruptly changed.

A mere Noble Lady dared to mock her, the Vassal King Consort of An'nan. It was simply abominable!

Chapter 1017: Intimidation

“This concubine was only advising you with good intentions,” Noble Lady Ying continued daintily, her shy and delicate look very much revolting the Vassal King Consort of An’nan.

“How preposterous! Does this vassal king consort need your advice, I am also worried about the crown prince consort’s safety, that’s why I...”

“This crown prince consort’s safety doesn’t require your worry.” An icy voice abruptly broke the noisy clamor.

Subsequently, everyone stopped making sounds.

“The Vassal King Consort of An’nan has quite the imposing manner!”

Dressed in white robes, with only the simplest white jade hairpin coiling up a young girl’s bun on her head, Qiao Mu wore a sullen face as she breezily strode over with quiet elegance.

Consort Cheng gaped in slight shock, after which she immediately lowered her eyes submissively.

“Crown Prince Consort,” greeted everyone simultaneously.

After staring with an icy and deliberating gaze at this Vassal King Consort of An’nan who was wearing an ugly expression, Qiao Mu pursed her small mouth into a sneer. “The descendants of the people who assisted the former king in founding the kingdom are out of the ordinary, as expected. Since you can even disregard the king’s beloved concubine, then it may be assumed that the king doesn’t hold that much significance in your heart.”

“Crown Prince Consort, don’t you spout nonsense.” The Vassal King Consort of An’nan nervously wrung the embroidered handkerchief in her hands.

How grave were these words? What did she mean by the king didn’t hold that much significance in their hearts? The meaning being that their Vassal King of An’nan’s Estate could even disregard the king?

For looking down on the king, exterminating a person’s entire family and confiscating their property were only light punishments.

*This d*mned little b*tch, each word intended to sow discord! Her sharp tongue really could claim their lives.*

If it weren’t for the fact that there were so many people watching, she really wanted to smack this stoic face with her palm!

She truly was too abominable!

These few sentences were able to set off a fury that she could only stifle in her heart.

The Vassal King Consort of An’nan put on a show of clutching her chest, pretending that her heart was suffering from severe pain due to the crown prince consort’s provocation.

Yet Qiao Mu merely scoffed. “Vassal King Consort of An’nan. I advise you best not challenge my bottom line again and again. I am not the kind of flower that you imagine that grows in a greenhouse.”

“Have you heard of the snow territory’s divine flower? This is a very miraculous divine-rank herb that only fully blossoms in areas of extreme cold.”

The little stoic walked over step by step, causing the Vassal King Consort of An’nan’s body to subconsciously tilt backwards.

“Usually, when people approach it, it will not react from the first or second touch. However, when it flares up upon the third touch, it will suddenly spread open all its petals.” Qiao Mu flicked her sleeve lightly, simply performing this subtle and casual motion.

Yet Wu Hongmo’s heart trembled from the shock of Qiao Mu’s detached gaze, and she involuntarily backed away.

“Inside the petals of the graceful snow territory’s divine flower are countless sharp ice thorns. Tsk—”

“And it’ll swallow that person alive. Leaving behind not a bit of remains.” Qiao Mu’s aloof gaze fixated on her. “That scene truly is very beautiful, but I fear that you all are unable to imagine it.”

Everyone simultaneously sucked in a cold breath.

“Vassal King Consort of An’nan, compared to the snow territory’s divine flower, what do you think of this crown prince consort? Are we alike?”

As the cold sweat on her forehead slid down slowly, Wu Hongmo found out that she couldn’t reply at all.

Qiao Mu then announced with a somber expression. “Someone! Thoroughly investigate everyone present and find out who is absent. Immediately give me their names!”

With this order, all the royal concubines and princesses all looked at each other before subconsciously crowding together as they looked bewilderedly at this young, stoic-faced crown prince consort.

Chapter 1018: A Beauty that Brings a Kingdom to Ruin

She wants to investigate right now?

These noble ladies and madams with mandates had all suffered quite a scare, and they all pulled long faces, only wanting to go home right now!

But the crown prince consort was still unwilling to let go of them even now.

They really wanted to cry!

If Her Majesty the Queen had led them in praying for blessings today, there probably wouldn’t have been so many bizarre complications.

“Reporting to the crown prince consort!” Ao’ye and his men put on an act of looking through the crowd before going up to report, “All Her Highnesses, princesses, commandery princesses, madams, and young misses, as well as their accompanying maidservants are all present.”

Upon hearing this, everyone simultaneously let out a sigh of relief.

Good, good, their maidservants didn’t cause trouble for them!

“Only Zheng Ru, who had joined the party under the king’s decree, is missing.”

Zheng Ru? Wasn’t that the Noble Consort Zheng of the past!

Everyone hastily looked around to search for Courtesan Zheng, and sure enough, they didn’t see her.

That person was indeed someone with tactics, as few could exit the Cold Palace after entering it. Even until now, she was still the king’s dear beloved consort.

This time, she had reportedly requested for the king’s special decree to accompany the rest of the party to Fu Mountain’s Great Sea Monastery, specifically to pray for blessings and confess her sins.

Afterwards, she would even stay at the monastery for three more months to continue praying for the queen dowager and the king’s good fortune!

Instead of being indifferent, everyone could be said to be treating Zheng Ru with a faintly eager attitude on this trip.

Because they all felt that as long as Zheng Ru were to piously “pray for good fortune” in the monastery for three months, even if she temporarily couldn’t regain her status as noble consort, the king would definitely promote her from her Palace Maid status!

There was nothing they could do about it. After all, Noble Consort Zheng was the king’s true love. As long as she stood there charmingly in front of the king, the king would be so excessively partial towards her.

But right now?

Everything seemed to be developing towards a weird and unexpected conclusion.

Zheng Ru really isn’t present?

Then where could she go?

After exchanging glances with each other, the madams sealed their lips and didn’t utter a sound.

Soon, this grand show entered the jaw-dropping climax.

Under everyone’s watchful eyes, Ao’ye and his men uncovered what was left of Courtesan Zheng’s corpse, half of a body that had been blasted beyond recognition, from the Pacification Pagoda’s ruins.

The royal concubines and madams’ expressions turned quite interesting.

Consort Cheng even glanced at the crown prince consort’s icy stoic face more than once.

Even so, the crown prince consort stood there expressionlessly with an upright back and with her hands folded before her.

Glimpsing that Courtesan Zheng was the one being carried over, the crown prince consort blew up on the spot. “How preposterous! Venerable Master Konghui had already clearly stipulated that only the king, the queen, the crown prince, and the crown prince consort could enter this national pagoda. Why is a lowly Courtesan Zheng inside? With what identity did she enter?”

The surroundings were absolutely silent.

“No wonder this provoked the wrath of the deities above the highest heavens, causing them to directly explode the national pagoda! This beauty that brings a kingdom to ruin isn’t worth pitying even in death! What a pity that the national pagoda was implicated by her!”

Ao’ye merely twitched his mouth.

Venerable Master Konghui, on the other hand, also wailed sorrowfully, taking the lead in kneeling before Qiao Mu with the monastery’s monks. He wept bitterly as he pleaded, “We earnestly request the crown prince consort make a decision on behalf of our Great Sea Monastery! And punish this beauty that brings a kingdom to ruin! To uphold justice for our Great Sea Monastery!”

The elderly nanny beside Consort Cheng gave her a hard tug.

Consort Cheng regained her senses and quickly declared with a grave expression, “Courtesan Zheng insolently snuck into the national pagoda and is indeed a beauty that brings a kingdom to ruin! Will the crown prince consort please take charge for the Great Sea Monastery.”

Chapter 1019: Conclusive Evidence

“Will the crown prince consort please make a decision on behalf of the Great Sea Monastery! Thoroughly investigate this matter so as to restore peace and tranquility to the Great Sea Monastery.” Which of the madams and young misses weren’t shrewd characters? Together with Consort Cheng, they curtsied toward the crown prince consort and pleaded thus simultaneously.

Ao’ye coughed lightly, and then Lightning, who had long been waiting in impatience on the other side, bolted out from the pagoda’s ruins with a whish. Soon afterwards he shouted in a voice loud enough that everyone could hear, “Crown Prince Consort, this subordinate found out that there is also a man inside this pagoda!”

Everyone: ...

With this, whether it be those who heard him or those who pretended not to have heard him, their expressions all turned extremely weird.

This prayer activity really tormented those royal concubines and madams who were getting on in years so much that they felt like they were about to fall apart.

After returning back, they all further fortified their convictions that they absolutely must not let the crown prince consort lead them in doing activities again!

Inside the royal study of the King’s Palace.

The old king clutched the memorial that his son had presented, to the point that he didn’t realize that it had gotten all wrinkled, and he indignantly looked at the crown prince with suppressed anger.

“Impossible!”

“These are the facts, and there is no way for her to dispute them.” The crown prince said lightly, “Since the day the Luo Family Troupe entered the palace, Courtesan Zheng had been in contact with that man

the entire time. Are three eyewitnesses not enough? This son also has the letters they wrote to each other as physical evidence.”

“Courtesan Zheng’s purpose in heading to Fu Mountain’s Great Sea Monastery this time is simply for a secret rendezvous. She had planned for this way in advance!”

The old king looked to have suffered from a psychological blow, and he sat limply on the chair, dejectedly hanging his head without knowing what to say.

“Royal Father, do you still not understand?” Mo Lian looked at his old father with a chilly gaze as he coldly declared, “Shuntian Prefecture has conspired for a long time, attempting to control us by hook or by crook! Now, they have already brazenly planted someone beside you. They even ignored your sovereignty and are recklessly fooling around under your nose. They are holding you in undisguised contempt! And are also holding our entire Mo Clan in contempt!”

“Even this requires restraint?” Mo Lian abruptly flicked the hem of his robe and knelt down on one knee before his old father. He spoke in a resoundingly powerful, yet unusually detached voice, “This son petitions to summon all the mystic cultivators in the entire kingdom and lead one million troops to annihilate Shuntian Prefecture’s remnant forces in one fell swoop.”

“Royal Father! My Great Mo does not fear anyone. So what if it is the Shuntian Prefecture of the Middle Six Prefectures? Just because they are the Middle Six Prefectures, they are allowed to throw their weight around with insufferable arrogance? This son will prove it to you! In this world, no one can infringe on our royal power! No one can escape unscathed after attempting to instigate the flames of war!”

“Starting from our forefathers’ generation, our Mo Clan’s kingdom was obtained through generations of conquest! We do not need to fear anyone. Nor do we need to submit to any prefecture! This son will use his ability to let them know that my Great Mo is not to be bullied! Whatever Middle Six Prefectures, this son will make them scam back to wherever they came from.”

“Royal Father, will Royal Father please issue an edict to hang that kingdom-destroying beauty at the city gate tower and whip her for three days and nights as a warning to others!”

The king gazed at his son dazedly before giving a bitter smile.

This was his son! So daring and full of mettle that no one could rival him!

If and once he decided to deal with you, he was sure to have prepared all the evidence so that you could not argue your way out of it.

He had long told Zheng Ru not to provoke this ruthless young couple, yet, sigh...

“Draft up the edict.” The king sighed.

After watching Gong Chang’an wipe away his forehead of cold sweat as he rushed out to proclaim the edict, the crown prince then slowly strode out of the royal study.

Chapter 1020: Confiscation of Property

While gazing icily into the far-off distance, Mo Lian’s lips curled up into a sneer.

Courtesan Zheng, We won't let you enter the royal tomb even in death! We give you Our word!

As for the present... you have to bear the ignominy of being the beauty that brings a kingdom to ruin, reviled by generations hereafter.

Speaking of which, didn't you ask for all this?

The next day.

Big news, big news.

Great Sea Monastery's Pacification Pagoda really did collapse!

The civilians in the capitol lost no time in spreading the news, so everyone was soon made aware of this incident.

They even knew that the king had issued an edict to hang the corpse of the kingdom-destroying beauty that caused the Pacification Pagoda's collapse at the city gate tower to be whipped for three days and nights.

State Uncle Zheng had been demoted to the status of a commoner, and the king had also taken back the Zheng Family's residence as well as confiscated their property.

The king also issued a penitential decree and shut himself inside the King's Palace.

While on the other hand, the common people all swarmed toward the city gate tower and spat disdainfully at Courtesan Zheng's remains, hurling abuse at this beauty that brought calamity to the kingdom and the people.

But all this was unrelated to Qiao Mu.

After finishing her preparations early in the morning and saying goodbye to her family, she boarded the crown prince's carriage and arrived at the north city gate with him.

The Qin Estate's Qin Susu, the Duan Clan's Duan Siren, the Dou Clan's Dou Fengchi, the Fan Clan's Fan Qiuming, as well as the Hong Clan's Hong Bawei, had been waiting at the city gate for a long time already.

Other than Qin Susu, the other people all wore impatient expressions.

"We can depart now, right!" Third Miss Dou, Dou Fengchi asked gruffly while mocking Qiao Mu in her mind.

She really is the crown prince consort, huh. They were about to depart on a journey, yet she needed His Highness the Crown Prince to escort her over. She really was delicate to come sitting in a carriage!

She thought that this journey was just a scenic tour?

If she was so delicate, then she should just stay at home so as to avoid dragging down her teammates!

"Wait." After saying this word, Qiao Mu threw down the curtain with no intention of explaining.

This infuriated Dou Fengchi so much that her charming face flushed red at once.

On the other hand, Qin Susu gave an indifferent shrug before sitting down at a roadside stall with her sword and ordering half a teapot of tea.

At this time, some of the populace marked by turbulent public sentiment had run over to State Uncle Zheng's Estate's entrance. They blocked up the Zheng Family at the back entrance, throwing rocks and mud at whomever they saw come out.

The scene was very chaotic.

Third Miss Zheng, Fifth Young Sir Zheng, and the rest had secretly smuggled out some mystic currency and food, but these were confiscated by the royal soldiers that came chasing after them.

Those young misses and sirs that had originally lived pampered lifestyles were so anxious that their eyes turned red. It looked like they were about to fight as if their lives depended on it to take back their hidden private stashes.

It was at this time that Wu Xiao'en arrived with a bunch of his pals.

With a glimpse, he caught sight of Sixth Young Sir Zheng, who stayed taciturn in the rowdy crowd. He then hastily reprimanded those agitated passersby to move aside while also squeezing his way to Sixth Young Sir Zheng. "Sixth Young Sir, are you alright?"

Little Sixth Zheng shook his head, but he was still confused.

When he woke up early in the morning today to train his swordsmanship, he was informed that the king had sent people to confiscate the property in the Zheng Family's residence.

As a mystic cultivator, he had placed all the important items inside his inner world, so the soldiers naturally couldn't confiscate those items.

But those sisters and brothers of his who were without learning or skills suffered from this disaster.

From early morning until now, the entire courtyard had been in chaos.

Wu Xiao'en quickly reassured, "Sixth Young Sir, don't worry. I purchased my own small courtyard inside the Mo Kingdom capital, so if you don't have a place to stay, you can stay there first."

"No need." Sixth Zheng shook his head. "I have to head out of the city now, and it will probably be a month before I come back."