

My Crown 621

Chapter 621: Icy Winds and Frosty Rain

“We are killing you, this witch, who is ruining the kingdom and causing suffering to the people in order to police villainy and punish evil! So as to keep to the correct path!” Like lightning, the sword in Mo Lian’s hand had already arrived at Noble Consort Zheng’s head.

Noble Consort Zheng shrieked and squeezed into the old king’s embrace with all her might. Feeling a chill, she reached behind her head before discovering that the sword energy had chopped off a part of her fine black hair.

Nearly about to faint, Noble Consort Zheng hugged the old king with a death grip as she shrieked while bawling her eyes out, “My king, my king, save me, my king!!”

King Mo quickly hugged his beloved consort and frantically waved a hand back and forth as he repeatedly shouted, “My royal son!! My royal son, my royal son—”

Mo Lian glared coldly with a sullen face at his old father who was blocking his way. “You step aside.”

Everyone: “...”

Crown Prince the Great, your tone of voice doesn’t seem right!

“My royal son!” The old king hastily pushed his beloved consort behind himself and tried to smooth things over. “Put your sword away, put it away, put your sword away!”

“Put it away and then speak, okay, my royal son.” The old king retreated several steps backwards in succession while guarding Noble Consort Zheng. Immediately afterwards, though, he felt that he was being a bit cowardly by acting like this in front of his son and daughter-in-law. He quickly thrust out his chest and chided, “Preposterous! Crown Prince, how could you draw your sword at your concubine mother so readily? It really is too...”

“Anyways, immediately put your sword away! Quickly!” Seeing that Mo Lian remained unmoved, the old king couldn’t stay composed any longer and quickly ran forwards.

Seeing his feeble-minded royal father charge straight at the tip of his sword, Mo Lian could only put away his sword with an inexplicable expression.

“My royal son! That’s right, everyone can talk things out. We’re all one family, so there isn’t anything that can’t be said.” The king released a sigh of relief before turning to face the crown prince consort, who wore a bone-chilling expression and had not a hint of warmth.

“Cough.” The king was momentarily at a loss for words when he saw that small stoic face.

It was only after organizing his thoughts with difficulty that he said in a low voice, “Crown Prince Consort, as you’ve seen, Handsome Fairness Huang has already pleaded guilty and has died for it. She admitted that she sent people to kidnap your mother and sister in addition to slandering the noble consort. Since this incident is unrelated to my beloved consort, let’s drop this matter.”

Qiao Mu merely swept a cold gaze at the king before turning around, walking outside without saying a word.

The king's heart jolted slightly. He only felt that his daughter-in-law's despising look simply made him feel incomparably crushed.

"Shriek!!" Qingluan, who dived down from the sky, raised all of the royal guard's hackles in the blink of an eye, putting them on high alert.

"Pulverize this vile place for me!" Qiao Mu bellowed angrily.

At her order, Qingluan abruptly spat out a mouthful of icy frost at Noble Consort Zheng's bedchamber, and a storm of hailstones pelted it at once in a downpour.

The entire roof was riddled into a sieve by this terrifying burst of icy winds and frosty rain.

As bits of rubble from within each hole in the roof fell down into the interior, the king and noble consort quickly rushed out of the bedchamber while being escorted by the royal guard.

Immediately, they saw the crown prince consort leap up onto Qingluan's back, looking down at them from high above. She spoke in a never-before freezing tone of voice, "Courtesan Zheng! Today, I will let you off for the time being on the crown prince's account! If you offend me again, even if you are the Heavenly King or from the Six Prefectures and Three Provinces, I will have your entire family die without a burial place! Just like this palace!"

"Boom!!" As soon as Qiao Mu finished speaking, Noble Consort Zheng flusteredly looked behind her with bulging eyeballs and witnessed Sophora Flower Palace's previously intact main bedchamber completely disintegrating into rubble within a split second.

On the other hand, the old king clutched at his chest in continual terror.

Chapter 622: Berated

"Royal Father, watch over your consort properly! Don't let her take half a misstep out of line." After saying this coldly, Mo Lian promptly leaped up next to the little fellow and pulled her into his embrace, patting her back to placate her.

Qingluan released a long cry before immediately beating its huge wings, carrying the crown prince and crown prince consort to the Eastern Palace.

Only after seeing the two people going off into the distance did Noble Consort Zheng finally exhale a long sigh of relief. She feebly lay against the old king's chest and wept, "My king! Look at that crown prince! Even the consort he's marrying is so insufferably arrogant! Completely disrespecting your wife! They heckle me, their concubine mother, precisely like this! Wuwuwu, my king, you have to do me justice! My king!"

However, her tantrum only gave the old king a headache, and a hint of fury surfaced in his eyes. He abruptly flung away Courtesan Zheng's hand and pushed her to the floor at once. "Don't think that We don't know what fine deeds you did!"

“We were giving you face in front of the crown prince consort earlier!” The old king admonished furiously. “That Handsome Fairness Huang was clearly one of your people! You’re still not admitting it? Look at what stupid thing you’ve accomplished! Hah? Why did you go kidnap the crown prince consort’s mother and sister without rhyme or reason? Ah? You’re just asking for trouble! If not because of Little Fifteenth, We wouldn’t have bothered to save you just now! We just didn’t want Little Fifteenth to lose her mother’s care at such a tender age!”

“My king!! This wife has been accused wrongly! My king...” Noble Consort Zheng’s delicate body quivered as she wept charmingly. She shuffled forward on her knees and groveled in front of the king as she wailed, “My king. No matter what, this wife is also the crown prince and crown prince consort’s concubine mother! How could they treat me like this? Disrespecting their concubine mother makes them unfilial! As paragons for the common people, how could the crown prince and crown prince consort, the future king and queen, disregard propriety, justice, integrity, and honor like this and treat their concubine mother like this! Ahhh, my king, this wife’s dignity has completely been swept away by the crown prince consort’s tantrum. How can this wife assist Her Majesty the Queen in managing the six palaces.”

“Then you don’t need to assist in managing!” The king swung his arm forcefully as he shouted.

Noble Consort Zheng’s voice instantly hushed. She raised her tearful eyes and gazed numbly at the old king, seemingly unable to understand the old king’s intent.

“Someone, draft up Our decree! Née Zheng has been disrespectful to the heir apparent with her unruliness and discourtesy. As there are deficiencies in her moral conduct, she will be demoted to a consort as of today. She will be stripped of the authority to assist in managing the six palaces, which We will temporarily hand over to Zhaoyi He! We expect Consort Zheng to repent inside her palace and not take half a step outside for the next month without Our permission.” After finishing his speech, the old king furiously turned around to leave.

On the other end, Consort Zheng almost fainted, but she was promptly supported by Nanny Su, who had quickly run over.

Consort Zheng bawled her eyes out as she latched onto the king’s leg, crying repeatedly, “My king, my king!! Please take back your order, my king! This wife knows her mistake, my king! My king! Although this wife is at fault, is the crown prince consort not to blame either? She disregarded the palace rules and barged straight into this wife’s Sophora Flower Palace, smashing the bedchamber into smithereens! How can such a crown prince consort shoulder the heavy responsibility of being the future mother of the kingdom! My king, my king.”

The old king flared up and kicked aside Consort Zheng as he hollered, “If you want to resent someone, resent yourself! You clearly knew that those two aren’t to be trifled with, yet why did you have to lose your mind and just have to oppose them? Everything’s great now! It’s blown up into such a big racket that both the imperial court and the common people have seen a spectacle! Properly reflect on yourself inside Sophora Flower Palace! Don’t come out if you haven’t realized where you went wrong!”

Chapter 623: Developments Take a Turn

At this moment, the king was fuming so much that he didn’t even mention the one-month limit again.

Consequently, by making Consort Zheng continuously reflect on herself inside Sophora Flower Palace, it was just like he was throwing Consort Zheng into the Cold Palace.

When Nanny Su realized the king's implication, she jolted in alarm and quickly groveled before him. She hastily covered up Consort Zheng's mouth while dissuading her insistently in a whisper, "Your Highness, don't say anymore, Your Highness! Quickly kowtow in thanks, Your Highness!"

Ultimately, Consort Zheng ended up fainting.

By the time the news travelled to the queen's Central Palace, it was already 10 o'clock at night.

The queen hurriedly got up to change clothes, intending to visit the crown prince over at the Eastern Palace, but in the end, she was dissuaded against it by her personal nanny.

"Noble Consort Zheng has been demoted to Consort Zheng, Your Majesty." Her personal nanny, Huaxuan, pursed her lips in a slight smile.

"This crown prince consort truly is extraordinary."

"Sigh, I don't know what to say about my royal son, that child. From where did he find this wife of his? That stoic face really agonizes me to death." The queen sighed. "Originally, my child is willful and unbridled in front of his father. It's great now! The wife he's marrying is even more unruly and reckless than him. My my, these future days are going to be very lively."

Her personal royal maid, Hexiang, giggled before consoling the queen. "The king definitely understands that the crown prince and crown prince consort are both candid people."

The queen also started laughing as she pointed at Hexiang. "Nanny, look at what He is saying. They're clearly unruly and reckless, but it turns into praise coming out of her mouth. What do you mean by candid people, hahaha. Sigh."

"Your Majesty, the younger generations will do all right on their own. This old servant thinks that you shouldn't get involved tonight." The old nanny said, "The king will definitely still be in a temper right now. This servant also heard that the king had summoned the second prince to the royal study earlier tonight."

The old nanny's voice lowered as she muttered something right against Queen Zhao's ear.

The queen nodded. "This Consort Zheng is indeed strange. Why was she in such a hurry to make a move against the crown prince consort's mother and sister at Dongshun Gate? This doesn't really match up with her usual cautious manner from the past."

"This servant heard that His Highness the Crown Prince even very intimately called the crown prince consort's mother 'Mom.' His Highness and the crown prince consort escorted them out the door, but for some reason, they got ambushed when they got to Dongshun Gate."

Yet when the queen heard this, she immediately humphed. "I don't see that child being so intimate with me normally."

The maidservants covered their mouths as they laughed up their sleeves.

Afterwards, the queen pushed aside the jewelry on the dressing table and turned around in a huff. "I'm going to bed."

The news that the crown prince consort had furiously pulverized the Classics Reverence Chamber and shot down Sophora Flower Palace in frost had seemingly grown wings as it spread all over the entire royal court within a night.

Some of the more well-informed high officials had naturally received the news, and they exclaimed in admiration while tutting in amazement.

Based on their knowledge, Noble Consort Zheng's favor with the king hadn't diminished for years. Yet who would've expected that she would be so unfortunate when confronting the crown prince consort tonight, even being stripped of her status as a noble consort.

Suddenly realizing that developments had taken a new turn, the officials sent letters home to their sons, admonishing them not to speak of the matter.

Although Qiao Mu didn't show anything on her face after returning to the Eastern Palace, Mo Lian knew that she was still fuming.

Mo Lian raised his hand and called, "Xiao'ye[1]."

"This subordinate is present!"

"Didn't you mention that Courtesan Zheng summoned her Zheng Estate's Second Manager today? Go investigate the reason," the crown prince commanded.

"Yes! This subordinate will leave right now."

"Darling, don't be angry, we'll take revenge in secret!" Mo Lian immediately hugged his wifey and stroked her back in order to pacify her.

Chapter 624: A Club

"I've already sent people to escort Mom and Second Sister back to the Qiao Estate. They've received a shock today, so we'll let them rest properly for now. We'll see them when we go back tomorrow." Mo Lian hugged his little wife and said, "Qiaoqiao, I'm to blame for being careless, not ordering more people to escort them back."

Qiao Mu shook her head at this. "How would you have known that Courtesan Zheng would be so unscrupulous to this extent, daring to make a move on my mother at Dongshun Gate."

When she finished speaking this, she raised her head to look at him. "Mo Lian, I won't let her go this easily."

Mo Lian quickly nodded and declared, "Okay! Do whatever you want to do. Since Royal Father is obstructing us from touching her, it's the same if we take revenge in secret. I'm first having Xiao'ye investigate before we plan out the next step."

Qiao Mu's anger eased a bit, and she nodded while saying, "This Courtesan Zheng really is an intolerable bully! If she couldn't resist attacking my mother and sister because of our altercation, then her breadth of mind is too overly narrow."

"She thought that you were like the rest of the people inside the palace who could be kicked around as she pleased. It's also fine like this that we've given her an unforgettable lesson." Mo Lian sneered with a cold smile. "Can't let her mistakenly assume that no one is able to control her in this world."

"Qiaoqiao, it's been too eventful today. You must be tired, so rest earlier. Oh, that's right. Give me Big Treasure and your broken ferule, and I'll see if I can restore them."

"They can be restored?" Qiao Mu's eyes immediately brightened!

"That should be the case." Seeing a hint of radiance surfacing in her expression, Mo Lian was also automatically very joyous. He pinched her small face and said, "I previously obtained a supreme-grade material. With it, I reckon that not only will I be able to restore them, but I might also be able to improve them by leaps and bounds."

"What kind of improvement." Darling Qiao was curious.

However, the crown prince left her hanging as he teased her small face. "You'll know when I give them back to you."

"Okay!" Qiao Mu delightedly gave both the ferule and Big Treasure to Mo Lian.

"I'm not anxious, so take your time."

"I know." Mo Lian's gaze was incomparably deep and gentle.

"Also, can you make me a club too? Whenever I bump into blind and birdbrained people, I'll use the club to bash them! So I don't have to always summon out the ferule." Darling Qiao followed up with a sudden flash of inspiration.

Our dear Huifeng, who was waiting on the side, twitched his mouth slightly.

"Okay!" As expected, his crown prince agreed without heed to his principles. "Do you want to add some spikes to the club?"

"Mhm, mhm. Add some barbs. They'll definitely feel a tingling pleasure upon getting bashed." The little fellow's vicious eyes brightened again, her pupils like two vast and abyssal stars.

The scene was very bizarre!

Huifeng was unable to concur as he watched how this savage couple spiritedly discussed how to perfectly forge that club!

The little lady was already savage by nature, yet His Highness was still raising her so crookedly without the slightest self-awareness. Did His Highness's conscience really not hurt!

"We're leaving." Mo Lian's voice returned our dear Huifeng to the present, and he blindly followed the crown prince out of the bedchamber in a hurry.

“Huifeng, what kind of expression did you have on your face just now? You don’t approve of this crown prince’s actions?” The crown prince questioned serenely.

Huifeng really wanted to be like Hidden Flower and fawningly say to His Highness the Crown Prince: ‘Of course not, this subordinate thinks that anything and everything Your Highness does is right!’

But he really wasn’t that shameless, so he could only whisper, “N-Not at all, Your Highness.”

The crown prince nodded with his hands behind his back. “It’s great that you didn’t.” *If you did, you’d immediately be sent away for punishment!*

Chapter 625: The Black-Bellied Lord

Huifeng inexplicably felt a chill behind his neck and turned his head to glance at the darkness of the night. *Mhm, it must be that the night breeze got stronger!*

“Your Highness, are we still going back to the study?”

After turning to glance at the somewhat dim candlelight inside the bedchamber, Mo Lian let out a long sigh into the night. *What a bitter life! Exactly when will I be able to grandiosely enter the inner chambers...*

“Your Highness?” Seeing how His Highness was gazing fixedly at the bedchamber, reluctant to leave, Huifeng hesitated to roast him.

Lord, it’ll only be for the night that you won’t be able to see the little lady. You’ll report back right on time tomorrow morning!

Can’t you not make it seem like you’ll be separated in life and death after this? Ah, bah bah bah! You won’t be separated in life nor in death!

“Let’s go.” Our dear Mo Lian listlessly stuck his hands into his sleeves as he pitifully turned around to leave.

The winter winds were blowing the entire way to the study, and his back view looked desolate as his tottering footsteps tread upon the thick layer of accumulated snow!

Conversely, Huifeng couldn’t resist twitching his mouth continuously as he thought: *What is the Lord acting for; it’s not like the little lady is here!*

No matter how well you act, the little lady won’t see it at all, nor will she keep you here!

How is staying in the study making you feel wronged? With your cultivation, you’d be able to reach the study in three seconds if you flew properly.

But you just have to tread slow as a turtle, advancing unevenly in the snow.

The small partitioned bedroom inside the study had long been prepared with bathing water and heated with charcoal. The servants had even steeped tea and had fully readied everything that was needed. What were you lacking!

Not long after Mo Lian left, the bedchamber's window opened up a narrow crack, from which Darling Qiao's large eyes peeped out.

A cold breeze blew in the snowy night, causing a wisp of snow to float past her eyes. *So chilly!*

Squinting her eyes slightly, she closed the window before hopping onto the bed and covering herself with the comforter again. However, her small head couldn't snuff out the crown prince's pitiful figure amongst the cold winds.

If it was still snowing late at night tomorrow, should she... not drive him away to sleep in the study? There shouldn't be a problem letting him stay for a night, right. Was the study warm?

This was originally his bedchamber, but she had seized it for herself instead.

Mhm... tomorrow...

Our dear Qiao Mu hugged the covers as she flipped over, curling up her body as she drifted off to sleep in a daze.

Early the next morning, Qiao Mu was awakened by a chattering noise, yet she was momentarily at a loss when she opened her eyes.

Three black-winged butterflies, each the size of a finger, fluttered to her face.

They've returned! Qiao Mu immediately became clear-headed, throwing off her covers as she sat up.

"Little Master, Little Master." Xiaoxiao's crisp voice rang out beside her ear. "The estate that you wanted investigated has been quite lively these two days."

"Quick, tell me." Qiao Mu urged as she put on her clothes by herself.

"The ruckus in that family had started since the day before yesterday." Xiaoxiao breezily recounted, "First, a thief infiltrated into the estate and snuck into the study to steal something, but was caught red-handed."

"Last night's drama, especially, played out one episode after another. A group of people came to the estate, declaring that they had been tipped off to catch the infamous thief."

"The one who snuck inside the study to steal something?"

"Yep yep yep yep, that's him!"

"But is it that easy to search the Second Prince's Estate?" Qiao Mu was taken aback.

The estate that she had the small butterflies keep a watch on previously was precisely the Second Prince's Estate.

"Hahaha, that official leading the search party was overwhelmingly arrogant. He said that the infamous thief had stolen something from Her Highness the Noble Consort, and he came to investigate after being tipped off. Then, without room for objection, he ordered his men to search through that person's estate, turning it on its head."

Xiaoxiao laughed happily as she said, “The little butterflies said that they didn’t find anything. Unexpectedly, that infamous thief had ultimately disappeared without a trace. So hilarious!”

Chapter 626: Skyrocketing Misfortune

The small hands with which Qiao Mu used to wash her face paused slightly. *Hm?* She had heard that that unfortunate second prince had already been detained last night.

Xiaoxiao chattered noisily, “They found a large pile of letters inside that whatever prince’s study. Oh, and they also captured someone!”

As Xiaoxiao was speaking, Mo Lian entered. Seeing that Qiao Mu had already gotten up, his eyes involuntarily curved as he walked over. “Why didn’t you call for the servants when you woke up this early?”

“It’s not as if I can’t take care of myself,” Qiao Mu muttered. She finished washing her small face by herself before being pulled over by Mo Lian.

“I’ll comb your hair for you.”

“You know how?”

“No, but I’ll learn.”

Forget it, don’t pester me blindly! Qiao Mu was in a hurry to call for Shaoyao, yet Mo Lian pulled her towards himself and pressed her down onto the small round stool in front of the mirror.

“Qiaoqiao, it’s snowing so heavily outside today that some roads have even closed. Let’s wait until tomorrow or the day after that and see the situation then. We’ll go back once the snow stops.”

It’s snowing very heavily? The little fellow tilted her head as she looked outside. However, she couldn’t see clearly past the dense bead curtain layered with brocade and silk.

He twisted her small head back, positioning it to face the mirror, before giving her hair two decent strokes of the comb.

“The winds are strong and the snow is heavy, so let’s not go outside.” Mo Lian coiled her hair into a casual hairdo in passing. When she inspected it in the mirror, it actually looked like the real thing.

“What do you think.” The man couldn’t help being slightly proud of himself.

Yet Qiao Mu glanced at him from the corner of her eyes. “Exactly what kind of tricks did you play at the second prince’s place yesterday? Does the infamous thief from the day before that have anything to do with you?”

“How could I have anything to do with the infamous thief.” Mo Lian pleaded for his innocence. On the contrary, he was still quite indignant at the mention of this topic. “That infamous thief is actually quite widely known on Sikong Planet. He’s called some Thief Sage Ding Tingding. He is able to steal anything that he targets.”

Qiao Mu couldn’t resist twitching her mouth. “What Dingdingding?” *I’ll be Dongdongdong then!*

Mo Lian simply carried her up and beamed while nuzzling his head against hers. "Not Dingdingding. It's Ding Tingding!"

Sitting beside the table, he dipped his finger in tea and wrote out the three characters.

"Oh, what did Ding Tingding do then, to make the crown prince so disdainful."

After chuckling in amusement, Mo Lian hugged his little fellow before saying with a smile, "This Ding Tingding almost messed up my plans. I had sent someone to plant something in Second Brother's study."

"The letters, right." The little fellow rolled her eyes.

Uh... so you knew already. Mo Lian lowered his head to glance at her. "Who knew that that Ding Tingding had hid inside Second Brother's study all along. Afterwards, he even purposely let Second Brother capture him."

"Then, doesn't that mean that he witnessed you finding someone to frame the second prince??" Qiao Mu's expression immediately turned grave.

Mo Lian curved the corners of his lips. "What framing? Those letters are genuine. It's just that they weren't inside the study previously."

"Second Brother has gotten into cahoots with a downtrodden royal descendant of Western Qiu Kingdom, whom he hid inside the Second Prince's Estate with a plot in mind. Sir Ge was able to find follow-up evidence, catching the man together with the goods. This matter isn't a misunderstanding at all."

"Then how did that Sir Ge just coincidentally happen to get tipped off and rush to the Second Prince's Estate in time?" Qiao Mu cast a sidelong glance at the crown prince.

"I just had someone casually leak out the news that Ding Tingding was at the Second Prince's Estate. Naturally, some people were unable to sit still and jumped out for my use." The crown prince explained with a smile.

At this time, Shaoyao led a line of junior royal maids inside to place the dishes and set the table. Glimpsing that her two masters were once again glued to each other, she couldn't resist covering her mouth as she laughed secretly.

"So Ding Tingding really did escape."

"His getaway tactics are first-class." The crown prince humphed lightly in displeasure.

Chapter 627: Hatching a Plan

"Second Brother, that dimwit, truly thought that he could capture him. Regardless, Second Brother is casting off all the blame on this Ding Tingding now, arguing with conviction in front of Royal Father that the letters are Ding Tingding's mischief. However, how could his handwriting be forged?"

"Your father is so muddleheaded that it's possible that he'll believe it." Qiao Mu pursed her lips grumpily.

The crown prince kissed her small face with a grin. "Good darling, don't be so unbelieving. My muddleheaded dad is rather competent at dealing with major issues of principle."

Qiao Mu merely declined to comment.

As the two people held hands while walking to the dining table, Shaoyao cut in, saying indignantly, "Miss, this servant heard that Consort Zheng fell ill from anger, but she still kept clamoring persistently in a daze that Miss was the one who infuriated her so much that her chest hurt."

While rolling her eyes at the news, Qiao Mu picked up her spoon and drank two mouthfuls of porridge. "Such boring gimmicks, indeed. Didn't the king order her to reflect on her mistakes in seclusion? Then why would news still travel out. How could this be considered seclusion, and what mistakes is she reflecting on."

"That's right." The crown prince nodded immediately, fully supporting his wife. "Someone, send some more people over to heavily guard Consort Zheng's Sophora Flower Palace. If more false news travels out without end, We will hold you solely responsible!"

"Such a light punishment of reflecting on her mistakes in seclusion, how fortunate is it that your muddleheaded father was the one who punished her!" Qiao Mu was slightly fuming again as they discussed the topic.

Shaoyao had already grown accustomed to her Miss's tone of voice, but that didn't mean the royal maids on the side were.

Who had ever criticized the king in front of the crown prince? The crown prince consort indeed had shocking guts.

However, the crown prince and Sister Shaoyao's expressions were both boundlessly tranquil and rather unperturbed.

Clearly, the crown prince consort was used to speaking without a filter in front of the crown prince.

The group of junior royal maids were all people who acted according to the circumstances. They silently admonished themselves to shut their mouths and lower their heads and eyes, not daring to speak unnecessarily.

"My lord, Xiao'ye has returned." Huifeng came in and announced.

Mo Lian raised his head and issued an order to the crowd of royal maids, "You're all dismissed."

At this, other than Shaoyao, the crowd of junior royal maids all retreated out of the room.

Immediately, Xiao'ye's pitch-black figure appeared at the door like a phantom and gesticulated on one knee. "Greetings to the crown prince and crown prince consort."

"You can rise." The crown prince beckoned to him and questioned anxiously, "What did you find?"

"It is precisely as the crown prince expected." Xiao'ye reported seriously. "The Zheng Estate's Second Manager never visits someone unless he needs something. This time, his purpose was to offer medicine

to Consort Zheng. Reportedly, a merchant has obtained a beautifying pill, so now, the Zheng Estate's Second Manager is most likely conspiring how to get his hands on it."

"The Zheng Family has always been ruthless." The crown prince knitted his brows.

"Courtesan Zheng is unlikely to go so far as to kill the person's whole family for a tiny beautifying pill, right," Qiao Mu said as she pursed her lips in disdain.

Yet Huifeng and Xiao'ye both glanced at the crown prince consort furtively. They only felt that the little lady truly was emitting a strong sense of disdain and derision from the depths of her eyes. This meant that she really turned her nose up highly at this beautifying pill, right.

"It can't be said for certain, Crown Prince Consort. The Zheng Estate's conduct is precisely as the crown prince said—always ruthless, and complete annihilation when necessary. In order to curry favor with Consort Zheng, they will do anything and stop at nothing," Shaoyao quickly commented.

"Mo Lian, I have a way to secretly retaliate against this Courtesan Zheng." The corner of Qiao Mu's lips curled up into a satirical sneer as a plan steadily hatched in her mind.

Meanwhile, both Huifeng and Xiao'ye couldn't help thinking that it was better if the crown prince consort didn't smile. This tug at the corner of her mouth created a stiff sneer that caused a chill to travel down from their heads to their feet.

Chapter 628: Attempt at Summoning

It was as if the corner of an ice sculpture's mouth had suddenly been sliced open. The sneer was simply so lifeless that it made people shiver uncontrollably.

However, Mo Lian still leaned in to listen while gazing tenderly at this little one.

The two subordinates couldn't resist shivering again.

They surmised that the crown prince consort wasn't saying anything decent right now, but when solely looking at the crown prince's expression, it was like... it was like the crown prince was currently listening to the crown prince consort tender-heartedly confessing her feelings. The scene was quite bizarre.

When they finished their discussion, the two people merely exchanged glances before rather cheerfully continuing with their meal, not bothering to humor their two subordinates' bewildered moods.

Qiao Mu soon wiped her small mouth. "I'm going to the garden in a bit to use the summoning talisman."

Ever since she summoned the weak chicken, it was no use no matter how she tried summoning again. She just couldn't summon a ferocious beast, sigh!

That's why she suspected that the summoning talisman couldn't allow one to summon limitless beasts!

Perhaps, the limit was linked to her own talisman energy.

For example, after summoning a weird, permanent Qingluan as a beginner-level talisman practitioner, it was possible that she had already reached her summoning limit for that level!

Therefore, according to this reasoning, if someone else used the summoning talisman that she made to summon out a beast whose level was higher than her present intermediate talisman practitioner level, then perhaps that person wouldn't get a chance to summon anything else, even if she gave that person a wad of summoning talismans.

She had previously even naively daydreamed of summoning a horde of beasties, leading them to bulldoze enemy troops. However, from the looks of it now, that was purely a pipe dream!

"It's snowing heavily outside, Little Master," Shaoyao couldn't help speaking up.

Yet Qiao Mu shook her head. "No harm, it'll be quick."

"Although it's snowing heavily outside, the scenery is rather nice. We'll go together after we finish eating," Mo Lian responded with a smile.

The two people sat next to the small stove as they ate breakfast inside the Eastern Palace's bedchamber.

On the other end, Qiao Zhongheng, Xu Jiao, Granny Niu, and company had holed up inside a rundown temple for three days already.

This situation was poles apart from what Xu Jiao had originally imagined. After all, he had thought that Qiao Zhongbang would definitely invite the Elderly Lady along with them and their families back to the marquis's estate while begging and kneeling.

It could even be said that Xu Jiao completely couldn't comprehend why Qiao Zhongbang was so hardhearted this time.

Granny Niu's family huddled in front of the bonfire, their tattered lined jackets completely unable to block out the wind.

Other than their group, a few other families were also staying in the other corners of this rundown temple.

Because those families had come here earlier, they had long occupied the best spots inside the rundown temple.

The spot that was left to Xu Jiao's group was near the rundown temple's entrance, and there was even a hole in the roof above them. The cold winds were whipping past with a swoosh outside while snow drifted over their heads. It was so cold that the group had frozen into popsicles.

When they had first arrived at the rundown temple, Xu Jiao had previously had her husband stir up trouble in order to snatch a good spot to stay in.

However, in the end, two of the families' body cultivators who hailed from the same sect joined hands in beating up Qiao Zhongheng. The meddlesome couple instantly turned into scaredy cats, not daring to say anything else.

Granny Niu was currently stirring a small pot of meager fare. Two leaves floated on the colorless surface, and the porridge was so diluted that it was almost like water. However, the group of people beside her still swallowed their saliva as they fixated on it with starry eyes.

“Didn’t you say that your family’s Eldest Uncle was definitely going to come pick up that granny within two days? Why hasn’t there been a peep even until now? Did you leak the news that the granny is here to people in the marquis’s estate?” Granny Niu pursed her lips in disdain as she gave a sidelong glance to the whimpering Elderly Lady Qiao who was lying to the side.

“Of course I did.” Xu Jiao was also so anxious that she suffered from excessive internal heat[1], causing a string of pimples to form at the corner of her mouth.

Granny Niu gave a humph. Truthfully speaking, if it were not that she coveted the marquis’s estate’s great wealth and wanted to claim connections to the marquis’s estate through Xu Jiao, she couldn’t bear to dole out part of their food.

Chapter 629: Squandering a Good Hand of Cards

The porridge with two floating leaves inside the small pot started boiling, and numerous pairs of eyes were all fixated on it anxiously.

When Granny Niu took the small pot down from the prop stick, Eldest Junior Wei’s family fought to scoop out the porridge in impatience.

When it was Qiao Zhongheng’s family’s turn, there really was only a mouthful of soup left. Who knew whose stomach it could even fill up?

In the end, the couple could only reluctantly let their darling son eat it.

“Mom, I’m close to starving to death.” Qiao Long drank a mouthful of soup, but he only felt his stomach rumbling even more in hunger.

Rubbing his sunken belly, Qiao Long recalled the varieties of pastries placed on the table when they barged into the marquis’s estate. He regretted that he hadn’t first rushed up and grabbed several pieces to stuff his stomach before quarreling with them.

“Sigh, wait until your dad finds a custodian job, then we’ll be able to have a bite to eat.” They wouldn’t be able to last if they continued starving like this. Even worse, they might even have to resort to eating soil soon.

Meanwhile, Elderly Lady Qiao whimpered as she lay on the layer of dry grass on the floor.

Xu Jiao simply flared up after casting her a glance.

This d*mned old woman really was a pampered one. For the past few days, she would order her about here and there the entire day. She even needed to be waited upon no matter if it was eating or pooping. She was simply an old piece of trash!

It had to be known that Elderly Lady had been enjoying the good life these past few years. How could she suffer this kind of hardship? The first night after arriving at the rundown temple, she started coughing after catching a cold from the winds.

She hadn’t gotten much better these two days either, and she kept clamoring to return to the marquis’s estate in a haze. She harped on it so much that it made Xu Jiao annoyed.

She lay there in a lethargic sleep and needed Xu Jiao to help her defecate, which disgusted Xu Jiao to no end. But if she just threw her aside and let her pee and poop on herself, they would still be the ones to suffer from the stink in the end.

Ultimately, Xu Jiao thought of a good idea. Since there wasn't enough food anyways, then they just wouldn't give her food or water. After eating and drinking less, it wouldn't be as troublesome anymore.

As a result, Elderly Lady had only drank two mouthfuls of watery soup in these last few days. By this time, she had long fallen into an ill stupor.

"Your mother-in-law isn't going to die from illness, right!" Granny Niu turned her nose up very much at Elderly Lady Qiao née Wang's behavior. If she wasn't born into the pampered lifestyle, then she shouldn't pretend to be a noble family's old madam.

After all, they had both come from a similar village, yet Elderly Lady Qiao née Wang was plump and fair-skinned, adorned in gold and silver accessories. When Granny Niu saw her like that that day, she felt immensely stifled.

However, Elderly Lady Qiao née Wang had slimmed down a size after these three days of wind and rain, on top of getting quite tanned. Now, she did look quite like an old woman from a farming village.

To exchange for food, Xu Jiao had sold all the valuable items Elderly Lady had on her, as well as her cold-resistant fur-lined coat.

It was also precisely because she didn't have this cold-resistant fur-lined jacket that Elderly Lady's pampered body fell ill from the cold winds on the very first day.

"Of course not, Auntie Niu. Rest assured, I'll find people to weep in front of the marquis's estate again and say that the mother of the marquis's estate's master is nearly dying from illness and starvation. What else can my family's Eldest Uncle do but take his mother back. So, well... Auntie Niu, I'll still have to trouble you to lend me some grain."

However, Granny Niu tightly held onto her bag of grain as she looked at her with a guarded gaze. "I gave you quite a bit two days ago because you said that you would use it to hire people to weep in front of the marquis's estate, but there hasn't been news even until now. In my view, your family's Eldest Uncle is eighty percent a black-hearted person. If that isn't the case, how could he drive his own mother out of the estate. Your family's eldest branch won't welcome you guys back."

"Aiyo, Auntie Niu, that must've been because I didn't entrust the right person. This time, I guarantee that I'll entrust the job to an honest person and weep for a whole day in front of my family's Eldest Uncle's place."

Granny Niu was skeptical, but she still nipped a truly small pinch of millet with her fingertips and reluctantly released it into Xu Jiao's open pouch.

Chapter 630: Activating the Talisman

Xu Jiao automatically grumbled on the inside at Granny Niu's stinginess, but she still faked an embarrassed smile before taking the pouch of millet with her to make arrangements.

Outside, the roads were piled with accumulated snow, making it difficult to tread on.

Xu Jiao stood on the side of the street and weeded people out for half the day before deciding on an old beggar that looked to be on the verge of death. She gave the old beggar half of Granny Niu's pitiful pinch of millet before hiding the remaining bit inside her pocket in case of unforeseen circumstances.

However, no matter how much Xu Jiao was furiously scheming on this end, she had no idea that the old beggar wouldn't even be able to step into Minshun Boulevard.

It seemed that ever since Xu Jiao and company stirred up a commotion last time, the royal guard had started patrolling Minshun Boulevard. Loitering beggars, hoodlums, and the like would be chased away before they could even get close to the various estates' entrances.

Therefore, Xu Jiao was happily daydreaming of living the good life after returning to the marquis's estate, yet she had no idea that Qiao Zhongbang and the rest had absolutely no clue as to where they had gone.

Of course, Qiao Mu also wouldn't pay attention to Xu Jiao and company again.

To her, these people had already lost their significance in her life, and she regarded them as if they didn't exist.

After finishing breakfast, the crown prince draped a thick cloak over her shoulders and held her small hand as they walked to the garden together.

It was only after seeing the drifting snow that filled the entire sky once she stepped out the door that Qiao Mu felt a chill hitting her in the face.

Yet the crown prince's hand was comfortably warm, like a ball of burning flames. Holding his hand was like holding a small stove, and she didn't feel cold at all.

As the two people ambled along, they left behind two lines of crooked, differently-sized footprints that were imprinted unevenly into the snow.

After turning her head around for a look, Qiao Mu's eyes brightened slightly as she curled her lips.

"If this snow continues, it'll become a calamity." While holding up an umbrella for the two people, Shaoyao also treaded unevenly as she followed behind them.

"There's no need to worry about that. Two days ago, the Ministry of Works' Sir He had already reported to His Highness the Crown Prince about the possibility of a calamity. All the large fortifications have already been alerted to give out orders to repair the roads," Huifeng couldn't help cutting in.

"He Qizheng is a capable one," The crown prince praised as he held Qiao Mu's small hand. Soon, the two people arrived at a somewhat open area inside the garden.

"Darling, you can summon it here!" The crown prince retreated two steps backwards.

Shaoyao ran over to hold the umbrella over Qiao Mu and excitedly said, "Miss, it's not going to summon some weak chicken again, right! Oh, that's right, where's the weak chicken?"

Qiao Mu twitched her mouth.

“Caw!” The weak chicken that Shaoyao was thinking of suddenly flapped its wings as it flew onto Shaoyao’s shoulder.

Shaoyao stretched out a hand to hold it before laughing mischievously. “Miss, you don’t say. I don’t know if it’s because I’ve gotten used to seeing it, but I feel that this weak chicken is actually quite pleasing to the eye now. Look, does it seem prettier than before?”

Huifeng rolled his eyes up at the sky!

Big Miss, that’s because you didn’t witness the “weak chicken” furiously pulverizing the Classics Reverence Chamber and shooting down Sophora Flower Palace in frost that day!

If you had seen what happened, you wouldn’t be saying such a thing right now.

“Miss, may you summon out a large, ferocious beast this time!”

Qiao Mu waved her hand at her, gesturing for her to walk farther away! *That’s right! She was a person that was about to summon out a ferocious beast!*

Taking a deep breath, Qiao Mu took out an intermediate-level blue summoning talisman made from ebony. She muttered to the blue summoning talisman for a while before a faint glint suddenly flashed across it. *Talisman, activate!*

A bright blue light suddenly pervaded the area.

Everyone made sure to open their eyes wide as they waited with bated breaths. Shaoyao was even glancing around curiously, anxiously checking from where in the snow might a ferocious beast pop out.