

Nobel Ruler 311

Chapter 311: Retort

The sentence that the Empress lightly said was as if a poisonous snake had spat out shingles and was filled with venom.

Once this kind of situation was confirmed, it wasn't something good for both Rong Xiu and Chu Liuyue.

In that case, the crowd would think that Rong Xiu was a devoted person that would sacrifice everything for a woman, and Chu Liuyue would be known as a 'femme fatale.'

No matter how much Emperor Jiawen was biased toward Rong Xiu, he couldn't pass his kingdom to such a person. At the very least, the officials in court wouldn't agree.

As for Chu Liuyue... it went without saying. The royal family always avoided such women like the plague.

As expected, Emperor Jiawen's expression froze once she said that.

The situation was previously too tense, and he didn't have the time to think about this. Now that the Empress mentioned it, he also felt that something was amiss.

"Rong Xiu, Liuyue, was what the Empress said true?" He suspiciously sized the two of them up. *Thinking back closely, these two people did come out together. Did Rong Xiu really enter the tower because of Chu Liuyue?*

Probably because Rong Xiu had used Ye Zhiting's pill, but his face looked a lot better.

His pale lips moved slightly, and he forced a smile. "Father, that's not what happened. I went in for another reason. It was just that I coincidentally met Ms. Chu inside, so we came out together."

The Empress sneered in her heart, but she didn't show it on the surface. Instead, she gently asked, "Oh? So it seems like it's just a coincidence? But... why are you so injured, Prince Li? On the other hand, Ms. Chu doesn't seem like she suffered much. People not in the know would think that you, Prince Li, were injured because you wanted to save her."

She then glanced at Emperor Jiawen and sighed. "Luckily you have a tough life, Prince Li. If not, if you really... His Majesty would be devastated! Don't you think so, Your Majesty?"

Emperor Jiawen's gaze swept past Chu Liuyue, and it was filled with judgment.

The Empress's words were logical. Anyone who saw the duo's situation would think that it was weird.

"Speaking of it, Prince Li and Ms. Chu really have some affinity. Previously at the Crown Prince's banquet, Prince Li seemed to take extra care of Ms. Chu."

Emperor Jiawen knitted his brows slightly. *That's right! I remember this too. Even though it was just a small matter, it did seem weird now that I think about it.*

The Empress lowered her voice and suddenly laughed. "Your Majesty, don't mind me. I'm just casually talking about it. Prince Li didn't spend much time in the Imperial City, so he shouldn't be too familiar

with Ms. Chu beforehand. All of these are just my conjectures. Besides, if Prince Li really likes Ms. Chu, it's a good thing!"

However, there were no signs of happiness on Emperor Jiawen's face.

Rong Xiu smiled warmly. "Father, I actually have to thank Ms. Chu for today. If she didn't save me in time, I'm afraid I would've died in Jiuyou Tower."

Everyone was stunned.

Emperor Jiawen couldn't help but ask, "You're saying that... Liuyue saved you?"

"Yeah. At that time, cough cough—" Rong Xiu clenched his fist, placed it on his lips, and coughed. "When Jiuyou Tower started collapsing, I was trapped on the sixth floor, and my injuries came from there. At that time, the sixth floor was sealed by rocks that dropped down, and I had no way of getting out. Luckily I met Ms. Chu at that time... She was the one who helped me and brought me out without regard for danger. That's why I can see daylight again. If not..."

Rong Xiu didn't continue speaking, but his meaning was clear enough.

Emperor Jiawen's expression looked much warmer. "So it seems like you didn't get injured because of her. Instead, she saved you?"

Rong Xiu slightly nodded. "Yes, Father."

Emperor Jiawen then heaved a sigh of relief, and he looked at Chu Liuyue with a different gaze from before. "So that's what happened! Liuyue, it seems like we really have to thank you this time around! Rong Xiu wasn't by my side all these years. Now his body finally recovered, and he returned to the Imperial City. If something really happened... How would I explain it to Wan'er...?"

He suddenly paused in his sentence, and pain flashed across his eyes.

The Empress looked down and hid her jealousy and hatred. She then smiled nonchalantly. "Oh, so that's what happened; I really got it wrong. I didn't expect a thin girl like Ms. Chu to be able to save Prince Li from such a perilous situation. You're incredible!"

Chu Liuyue raised her eyebrows slightly. *It seems like the Empress isn't giving up. She still wants to drag me down, even though Rong Xiu has said this much. It's a pity that such methods won't work here.*

Rong Xiu smiled nonchalantly. "Ms. Chu also took first place in the Qing Jiao Competition's warrior and Xuan Master competitions, while I am sickly all year round. Of course, I can't compare to her in this area."

The Empress was stumped. *I actually forgot about this! Although Chu Liuyue looks thin, she has strength!*

Chu Liuyue bent her knees and bowed, looking very humble. "Thank you for your praises, Her Majesty. Even though my little ability isn't enough to impress you, it's my honor to be able to help Prince Li a little."

The Empress was speechless. *If Chu Liuyue has 'little' ability, then what about the people that lost to her at the Qing Jiao Competition?*

“What? Lass, you came in first at the Qing Jiao Competition?” Ye Zhiting suddenly spoke up, and he was shocked.

After he came out from his seclusion, he had been busy with Jiuyou Tower’s matters. Hence, he didn’t have the time to care about anything else.

Sun Zhongyan chuckled. “Uncle-Master, I almost forgot to tell you about this. Liuyue did come in first in two competitions!”

Ye Zhiting’s eyes widened, and he took a while to recover his senses. “What about the heavenly doctor competition?”

Chu Liuyue frankly said, “Mentor, I didn’t sign up for the heavenly doctor competition.”

“Ah?” Ye Zhiting was instantly disappointed.

Even though he knew Chu Liuyue might not even look up to the Qing Jiao Competition considering her standards, no matter what... she was his disciple.

She took first place in two competitions, but they had nothing to do with heavenly doctors... It would be a lie to say that he wasn’t disappointed.

Sun Zhongyan held in his laughter and said, “Uncle-Master, even though Liuyue didn’t sign up for the competition, she was the one who produced the pill that won first place.”

Ye Zhiting was dazed.

Sun Zhongyan briefly explained the entire incident.

“...So from a certain perspective, Liuyue also won first place for the heavenly doctor competition!” said Sun Zhongyan emotionally as he looked at the Empress with deep meaning. “And now, Tianling Dynasty’s Lieutenant Mu has already chosen Liuyue, and he has high expectations of her!”

The Empress’s body shook.

She didn’t like the person that Mu Qinghe did. Wasn’t this finding trouble for herself?

“I didn’t—” The Empress was very anxious, and she wanted to explain herself, but she realized that harping on this topic would be disadvantageous for her.

An idea popped in her mind as she suddenly thought of something and retorted, “Oh, right. There seems to be a barrier on every floor of Jiuyou Tower. Prince Li, your body is frail, so how did you go up to the sixth floor?”

Chapter 312: Grant our Marriage

The moment she said that, the surroundings fell silent. Even Sun Zhongyan and the rest couldn’t help but look at Rong Xiu.

Actually, this was also what they were most curious about.

During the situation back then, even Wei Yun was stopped outside of Jiuyou Tower. However, Rong Xiu smoothly barged into the tower and had successfully made it to the sixth floor.

One needed to know that even Sun Zhongyan and the rest could only go to the fifth floor at best.

The Empress stared straight at Rong Xiu as many conjectures popped up in her heart. *Ever since Rong Xiu came back, he has been staying in his residence. Other than nourishing his health, it seems like he has rarely participated in other tasks. It seems like he has no desires and is very docile, but I just feel that there is something amiss.*

She couldn't pinpoint what was wrong, but it was a gut feeling that told her that Rong Xiu wasn't as simple and harmless as he seemed on the surface.

If he really was a sickly person, how did he enter Jiuyou Tower and go up to the sixth floor?

Countless eyes landed on Rong Xiu with a deep meaning of inspection.

Rong Xiu looked calm, and he smiled lightly. However, his smiling intent didn't reach his eyes. "The reason why I can reach the sixth floor is that my mother had gone up there before."

Emperor Jiawen was shocked. "What did you say?"

Rong Xiu took out something from his arms; it was an oval-shaped, palm-sized jade pendant. It was completely jade green in color like tree leaves that had just sprouted—crystal clear.

Some patterns were carved on the jade pendant.

Chu Liuyue used her peripheral vision to look at it, and she realized that a peach blossom pattern seemed to be carved on it.

It was clearly a jade pendant made from high-quality jade, but there was nothing special about it other than that.

But when Emperor Jiawen saw the jade pendant, his entire face changed. He quickly went forward as if he wanted to take a closer look at that jade pendant. However, he suddenly paused when he stretched out his hands halfway.

Chu Liuyue had never seen such an expression on Emperor Jiawen's face before—complication, conflict, reminiscence, and regret...

Chu Liuyue scanned her surroundings and saw that the Empress—who was standing behind Emperor Jiawen—had a pale face as if she had seen something terrifying.

A thought popped up in her mind, and she had roughly guessed the jade pendant's origins.

"W-where did you get this jade pendant from?" asked Emperor Jiawen with a shaky voice.

"The sixth floor," answered Rong Xiu lightly. "When I saw that Jiuyou Tower was on fire, I remembered that this item was still on the sixth floor. I was worried about it, so I went up without a care. Even though I'm injured, I luckily still managed to get the item back in one piece."

“This was the first present your mother personally gave me back then... When she left the palace, she took it with her. I-I tried finding this for many years, but I didn’t expect—” Emperor Jiawen’s heart seemed to be clogged, and he didn’t say anything else for a long time.

Chu Liuyue instantly understood the situation. It turned out that this jade pendant was the love token between Emperor Jiawen and Consort Wan. It was no wonder that Emperor Jiawen had such a strong reaction.

It seemed like he truly loved Consort Wan deeply.

Back then, rumors had it that Consort Wan was the most favored in the palace. But she later fell out with Emperor Jiawen for some reason and left the palace in a fit of anger. Then, she entered Tian Lu Academy and became a teacher.

She had never returned to the palace again, even after she died.

Nobody knew what happened back then, which even made Consort Wan take back the love token she gave out. It seemed like she didn’t want to leave any item for Emperor Jiawen to reminisce.

It now seemed like a large portion of why Emperor Jiawen thought highly of Rong Xiu was because of Consort Wan.

Rong Xiu looked at Emperor Jiawen’s moved appearance, and he still smiled warmly.

But in Chu Liuyue's eyes, this smile had a clear distance to it. It was obvious that Rong Xiu didn't care about Emperor Jiawen's reaction at all.

"Before Mother passed on, she told me that she left this item on the sixth floor of Jiuyou Tower, and she instructed... Unless absolutely necessary, I wasn't supposed to tell you about it. Thus, I hope you'll forgive me, Father."

Emperor Jiawen was stunned. "She really still hates... Never mind, you did it for her anyway. It's right that you didn't tell me. Since the item is with you, then you can keep it in the future."

Emperor Jiawen then sighed, and he looked as if he had aged a century within that one moment. "I'm tired; I'll head back to the palace first."

Then, Emperor Jiawen turned around to leave, not waiting for anyone to say anything.

The Empress was dazed, and her heart was filled with confusion. *He left? His Majesty just left? Wasn't he asking Rong Xiu how he got up to the sixth floor? Rong Xiu only mentioned the jade pendant briefly, and he doesn't want to ask anymore?*

The Empress turned around to look at Emperor Jiawen—who had left—and her rationality told her that she should immediately follow him. However, too many things had happened today, and she couldn't control the urge in her heart.

Hence, she still asked persistently, "Prince Li, this is Consort Wan's belongings, and you're filial to risk your life to get it back. Your actions are praiseworthy, but... you haven't clearly explained how you got up to the sixth floor."

Stifled laughter was suddenly heard from the side.

The Empress turned around and realized that it came from Ye Zhiting.

Ye Zhiting shook the fan in his hands and slowly asked, “Her Majesty, don’t you know that the jade pendant is a Yuan instrument?”

The Empress was dazed. “W-what?”

“That item was placed on the sixth floor, and Rong Xiu is Consort Wan’s descendant, so he naturally can go up.” Ye Zhiting was initially filled with suspicion. However, he immediately understood everything when he saw the jade pendant.

Looking at the Empress’s persistent questioning, he couldn’t help but feel irritated and lazily said, “It seems like you don’t know about this, Her Majesty. That’s true; it’s normal if you don’t know things between His Majesty and Consort Wan.”

The Empress was so angry that her face turned pale, but she didn’t dare to rebut Ye Zhiting in public. Even though she was the Empress, even Emperor Jiawen had to give Ye Zhiting face, let alone her.

There were so many pairs of eyes glued on her from the surroundings, which made her feel even more awkward.

It seemed like she couldn’t do anything about Rong Xiu and Chu Liuyue now, so she had to find another opportunity.

Thinking of this, the Empress forced a smile. "Thank you for solving my question, Elder Ye. Since His Majesty has left, I won't stay here any longer."

Then, she hurriedly turned around and followed Emperor Jiawen.

"Father, please stay." Rong Xiu suddenly opened his mouth, and his clear and cold voice sounded like jades crashing against each other.

Emperor Jiawen—who had already walked a distance—turned his head in confusion when he heard this. "What's the matter?"

Rong Xiu stepped forward. "I have a request to make."

Rong Xiu stood there and looked very tall and handsome. His body was clearly stained with blood, but the composure and elegance in his face made one fear him unknowingly.

Emperor Jiawen asked, "What's the matter?"

Rong Xiu's lips strangely curved up. "This time, it's false that I went into Jiuyou Tower to save Ms. Chu, but it's true that I do like Ms. Chu."

Chu Liuyue's heart skipped a beat. She then saw the calm and composed man stretch out his arm, lift up his robe, and kneel down.

“I have no other requests in my entire life. I just want to do what my mother said—to hold one person’s hand and grow old with her for the rest of my life. Father, I hope you’ll grant this marriage.”

Chapter 313: I Object

Chu Liuyue had never seen this man kneel down before.

To the outsiders, he was the frail Prince Li—docile and humble and had no conflicts with the world. However, Chu Liuyue knew that he was strong. Rong Xiu killed people without batting an eyelid, and he was one of the most distinguished strong warriors in the world!

This type of man would never bow down to anyone. But at this moment, he knelt down so swiftly because of her. This was just to have a legitimate marriage.

Chu Liuyue felt like something was oozing out of her heart, which made her limbs numb, and her eyes dreamy.

Her surroundings became blurred, but only that one person’s figure was increasingly clear.

He wore white, and his entire body was stained with blood. Those terrifying wounds were everywhere, and it was shocking. However, he held his head high as if he could forever hide her from the extremities of the weather.

Rong Xiu left so many wounds on his body without hesitation, but he couldn’t bear to stain her with even a tiny bit of blood.

He said: It is true that I like her.

He said: To hold one person's hand and grow old with her for the rest of his life.

He said...

Chu Liuyue's eyes turned red, and something hard in her heart broke silently. She suddenly recalled that if she didn't experience that heartbreaking betrayal in her previous life and hadn't been reborn, she would've never met Rong Xiu for her entire life.

If Rong Xiu was the compensation given by heaven, then she would finally and willingly accept all the pains she had suffered.

Some scars would never go away. Once one looked at them, they would remember how much they suffered back then.

But now, someone finally could give her more happiness and could refill the empty spaces one by one, giving her a safe and happy future.

This was her greatest fortune.

...

Rong Xiu's words shocked everyone present.

Emperor Jiawen almost suspected that he had heard wrongly. “W-what did you say? Y-you want me to grant you a marriage between you and Liuyue?”

Rong Xiu lightly nodded, and his gaze was calm and determined. This was clearly not an impulsive decision.

Emperor Jiawen opened his mouth as he looked at the both of them with a complicated gaze. *Rong Xiu is actually interested in Chu Liuyue... Even though it is surprising, it is still logical upon closer thought. In terms of looks, Chu Liuyue is definitely at the top of the country. In terms of abilities, Chu Liuyue has just taken first place in two competitions of the Qing Jiao Competition, and she is undeniably a top talent.*

In terms of background, even though Chu Liuyue and her father quarreled with the Chu family, Chu Ning is currently the imperial guards' Commander-in-Chief, while Chu Liuyue is even Ye Zhiting's only disciple.

No matter what way one looked at it, Chu Liuyue is definitely deserving of Rong Xiu. Besides, Rong Xiu took the initiative to request it this time. All these years, Rong Xiu has never asked for anything. He only asked this one time—for a marriage!

Emperor Jiawen suddenly remembered that Rong Xiu used all sorts of reasons to reject him when he wanted Rong Xiu to choose his wife. He didn't realize it at that point in time, but thinking back on it now, Rong Xiu probably already had this idea back then.

I actually could not tell all this while... But after the shock, an idea popped up in Emperor Jiawen's head, and he felt that this was a decent idea. Rong Xiu should marry someone, and Chu Liuyue is very outstanding. Moreover, she can forgo the dangers ahead just to save him, so she is indeed a good choice.

His expression changed.

...

Rong Xiu's sudden request for marriage shocked everyone, and they didn't know how to react.

Quite a few women in the crowd looked disappointed and regretful.

"I didn't expect Prince Li to like Chu Liuyue..."

"How is this surprising? After all, Chu Liuyue is very outstanding in all areas. In the past, everyone avoided her because she had offended the Chu family and the Crown Prince, but things have changed after the Qing Jiao Competition! I heard that quite a few aristocratic children proposed to her. But since Prince Li has already made a request personally, I'm afraid that the others won't have a chance..."

"Hah, actually, other than his looks, Prince Li is not very good in other aspects. The strong rule the world. There's nothing to want from a frail, sickly person like him."

"Anyway, His Majesty dotes on Prince Li dearly. So what if he's a frail, sickly person? I think some people are just being sour grapes."

"Don't talk nonsense!"

...

Situ Xingchen—who was standing at a quiet corner—looked at the faraway scene in a daze as her hands and legs turned cold.

All sorts of discussions from the surroundings entered her ears, and they formed daggers that struck her heart.

She clearly wasn't injured, but she felt pain all over her body for some reason. Initially, she was quite worried when she saw that Rong Xiu was heavily injured, and she wanted to go forward and comfort him later on.

But her legs now felt like they were filled with iron, and they were as heavy as ever.

She had clearly heard what Rong Xiu said earlier—*He actually said that he likes Chu Liuyue! He even took the initiative to ask for her hand in marriage!*

Situ Xingchen had known Rong Xiu for so many years, and she had never heard him say 'please.' Now, he was willing to do so for Chu Liuyue!

What's so good about that cunning and scheming Chu Liuyue?! Situ Xingchen clenched her fists tightly and harshly shut her eyes.

...

Chu Ning quietly walked to Chu Liuyue and shot her a questioning gaze—*What's going on with Prince Li? Why did he suddenly ask His Majesty for your hand in marriage? Is it true when he said that he likes Yue'er? And does Yue'er like Prince Li?*

Chu Ning's gaze swept past the two of them, and he felt that his question was redundant. *If there really was nothing between the both of them, why would they come out of Jiuyou Tower together? I actually didn't notice this at all!*

...

Emperor Jiawen looked at Rong Xiu, and many thoughts flashed across his mind. In the end, he only thought of Rong Xiu's last sentence.

He spoke every word clearly as he asked, "Have you chosen her for sure?"

Rong Xiu nodded. "I hope you'll fulfill my request."

Emperor Jiawen looked at Chu Liuyue. "Liuyue, what about you?"

Chu Liuyue took a deep breath. "It will be my honor."

Emperor Jiawen kept quiet for a while and finally laughed. "Hahaha, great! Since this is so, then—"

At this point, a voice was suddenly heard from far away. "Wait! I object to this marriage!"

Chapter 314: Remove the Crown Prince

The crowd looked over and realized that the incoming person was the Crown Prince, Rong Jin.

Ever since Rong Jin was openly humiliated by Mu Qinghe at the palace banquet, he had been staying at Crown Prince Mansion the whole time.

He had planned to wait for a while until the incident was over. Hence, he didn't make any moves, even when he had heard about the strange happenings in Jiuyou Tower.

He only rushed over when he heard that even his father and mother were was there. However, he didn't expect to hear Rong Xiu asking his father to grant him a marriage the moment he reached the place. Also, it was for him and Chu Liuyue!

Rong Jin couldn't care about anything else as he stopped them without thinking.

Rong Jin hastened his steps and rushed to Emperor Jiawen under everyone's gazes. He swallowed a mouthful of saliva and opened his mouth with much difficulty. "Father! You can't agree to this!"

"Crown Prince, you're too rude!" Emperor Jiawen knitted his brows. Who does he think he is? How dare he suddenly pop out at this timing and talk to me with such a tone?

Rong Jin was stunned and then realized that his actions were really unsuitable. However, the situation was tense, and he had no other way.

When the Empress saw Rong Jin, she immediately recalled that he had stupidly said that he wanted to remarry Chu Liuyue as his Crown Princess, and her heart skipped a beat. *Is Rong Jin crazy to pop out at such a time?!*

“Crown Prince, there’s nothing for you to do here. Dismiss yourself first,” said the Empress with determination and a hint of warning in her voice.

However, Rong Jin wouldn’t heed any advice at this time.

I’ve finally realized that I like Chu Liuyue with much difficulty. How can I just let this slip by? It is impossible if they want me to just give her to someone else. Thinking of this, Rong Jin clenched his teeth and directly knelt down. “Father, granting a marriage is a very serious matter. I hope you’ll reconsider your decision.”

Emperor Jiawen knitted his brows even tighter. *It is a good thing to grant a marriage. Why does it sound like something evil when coming from Rong Jin’s mouth?*

“You object? Rong Jin, even though you’re the Crown Prince, you’re in no position to butt in for the marriages I want to grant.” Due to the incident at the palace banquet, Emperor Jiawen was still upset with Rong Jin. In addition to today’s series of events, Emperor Jiawen had lost all patience. Thus, he didn’t give Rong Jin any face at all.

The Empress noticed that Emperor Jiawen was about to rage, so she hurriedly went forward and helped Rong Jin up. “Didn’t you hear what your father said? Get up quickly! Prince Li and Ms. Chu are in love with each other, and they’re a good couple. If you say any more nonsense, don’t blame me for punishing you!”

The Empress pinched Rong Jin’s arm harshly and shot him a threatening gaze from an angle that the crowd couldn’t see.

Rong Jin’s image in Emperor Jiawen’s heart had already been damaged. If this continued, his position as the Crown Prince would definitely be in danger.

Rong Jin felt the pain, but he felt even more conflicted. Of course, he knew the consequences of his actions, but...

He couldn't help but look at Chu Liuyue at the side.

She stood there prettily. Even though her body was stained with messy blood, it didn't spoil her glamor.

In the past, this woman was clearly mine! Even though I canceled the marriage agreement between us in a moment of folly, I can't accept watching Chu Liuyue being married to someone else, especially if the person is Rong Xiu!

Rong Jin grabbed the Empress's hands and pushed them away with determination.

The Empress's heart sank, and she heard Rong Jin say, "Father, I'm serious. This is because... I like Liuyue too!"

Gasps could be heard from the crowd.

"Did I hear wrongly? The Crown Prince actually said that he was interested in Chu Liuyue?"

"...I really don't get it. When he had a marriage agreement with Chu Liuyue in the past, he was the one who wanted to dissolve it. Only a short period of time has passed, and now he's regretting it?"

"Hehe, isn't it normal to regret? The current Chu Liuyue is a very outstanding character. I would definitely regret it if I missed out on such a fiancée!"

“Even so, as the Crown Prince, it’s not good to go back on your words. Besides, Prince Li was clearly the one who asked for her hand first, yet the Crown Prince is interfering with it... No matter what, it’s still overboard...”

“I wonder what His Majesty is thinking... Prince Li and the Crown Prince fighting for a woman in public is really...”

Chu Xianmin—who had rushed over with Rong Jin—watched the scene coldly. Her lips underneath the mesh veil couldn’t help but curve up into a mocking smile.

Chu Xianmin originally thought she would be heartbroken, but when she saw Rong Jin saying all of that in public, she shockingly discovered that she only wanted to laugh.

He has always been such a person, right? In the past, when Chu Liuyue was a good-for-nothing and was miserable from being constantly bullied, Rong Jin felt that this fiancée humiliated him. He didn’t want to spend an extra moment with her.

Now, Chu Xianmin’s appearance was disfigured, and her reputation tarnished. Hence, Rong Jin also gave up on her.

The Crown Prince was constantly pursuing better things as if everything good in the world should be his.

What a joke. I accompanied him and served him day and night, but I didn’t get any form of love in exchange. Instead, I have to stand here and watch him go crazy over another woman. Chu Xianmin looked down and hid the ripple in her eyes.

Emperor Jiawen was shocked. "What did you say?"

Rong Jin took a deep breath in and said, "In the past, I was immature and didn't cherish Liuyue. I've now awoken, and I hope that you can restore the marriage agreement between the two of us, Father. I will definitely treat her well! I hope you can agree to this, Father!"

Emperor Jiawen almost thought that Rong Jin had a screw loose. *He was the one who wanted to dissolve the marriage agreement, yet he is also the one who wants to restore it. Does he think this is child's play?*

"Rong Jin! Do you know what you're talking about?" hollered Emperor Jiawen.

Rong Jin's heart trembled, and he knew that Emperor Jiawen was getting angry. He was very clear that his doings would tarnish Emperor Jiawen's reputation. However, he was already caught between a rock and a hard place at this moment.

He had already knelt down and said all that he had to say.

Wouldn't it be more ridiculous if he just gave up now? Besides, he really didn't want to give up on Chu Liuyue!

He straightened his back, looked at Emperor Jiawen, and said, "I have already made up my mind."

"So what if you've already made up your mind? How can you be so unruly about this?"

Rong Jin was stumped for a moment. “I’m the Crown Prince, and Liuyue is the only choice for the Crown Princess.”

Emperor Jiawen was enraged, and his chest kept rising and falling intensely. If there weren’t so many people around, he would’ve kicked Rong Jin long ago.

In the past, he felt that Rong Jin was good at everything and that he was the only choice for the position of Crown Prince. But starting from a certain point, Rong Jin became petty and calculative. He would use all sorts of despicable methods to achieve his goals.

Emperor Jiawen forgave him again and again and felt that Rong Jin would change. However, he now knew that he was utterly wrong—Rong Jin’s personality wouldn’t change at all!

Rong Xiu asked for Chu Liuyue’s hand in marriage in public due to the gratitude and admiration he had for her.

What about Rong Jin? He was publicly fighting with his brother for a woman! Moreover, this woman was the one he had previously dissolved a marriage agreement with.

The entire royal family’s face was thrown away by him!

Emperor Jiawen pointed at Rong Jin’s face and sneered. “It seems like you’re getting very annoyed at being the Crown Prince. Today, I will remove you as the Crown Prince!”

Chapter 315: Forever and Always

“Your Majesty!” Once the Empress heard the words ‘remove the Crown Prince,’ her limbs and hands turned cold, and she instinctively yelled, “Your Majesty, please don’t be angry! The Crown Prince was just being impulsive! You mustn’t—”

“Impulsive? I think he clearly thinks that the whole world needs to listen to him just because he’s the Crown Prince!” Emperor Jiawen’s anger did not subside. “He’s not fit to be the Crown Prince!”

He long knew about Rong Jin’s desire for the throne. *In the past, he secretly sent assassins to his third brother, and now he wants to snatch his seventh brother’s wife. He hasn’t even sat on the throne, yet he’s so arrogant! Once he is in charge, god knows what he’ll turn into!*

The Empress’s legs went limp, and she almost collapsed on the floor.

Emperor Jiawen’s sentence was almost akin to giving Rong Jin a death sentence. Once he was truly removed, he could never make a comeback in the future.

“Your Majesty, it’s all my fault! I didn’t bring the Crown Prince up properly! Please, let him off this once!” The Empress knelt down and begged miserably.

“F-father?” Rong Jin was dazed. *I just wanted to marry Chu Liuyue as my Crown Princess. I didn’t do anything to harm the whole world, so Why is Father so angry? Why does he want to remove me from my position as the Crown Prince?*

Pak!

A deafening slap was heard.

The Empress had harshly slapped Rong Jin, and she angrily hollered, "Hurry up and apologize to your father."

Rong Jin's face was slapped to one side, and his cheeks immediately swelled up as blood flowed out from the corner of his mouth.

It could be seen how much force the Empress had used in this slap.

"Why are you still standing around?!" The Empress was very anxious and worried as her face flashed green and white. There were even tears in her eyes due to anxiety.

At this moment, she really wanted to go forward and slap Rong Jin awake. Does he know what kind of situation he's in?! His Majesty has already opened his golden mouth. If we don't stop this, he will definitely be removed from his position as the Crown Prince! By that time, it will be impossible to salvage the situation!

Rong Jin has always been smart. Why did he become so stupid today? No, I should say that he has gradually become like this ever since he started interacting with Chu Liuyue. All of this was caused by Chu Liuyue. If it weren't for her...

Rong Jin was slapped until his eyes were giddy, and he finally woke up a little after the Empress's scolding.

He inched forward while kneeling down. "Father, don't be angry! I know that I'm wrong!"

Emperor Jiawen sneered. “Now you know that you’re wrong? Didn’t you have your Crown Prince aura previously?”

Actually, even though he was angry about Rong Jin sending someone to kill Rong Jiu previously, he didn’t have any intentions of removing Rong Jin from his position.

The people in the royal family didn’t have any familial ties, especially the emperor. It wasn’t totally a bad thing if Rong Jin was heartless enough. However, today’s incident disappointed him greatly.

Rong Jin actually did this in public for a woman! It is very hard to give this type of person great responsibility!

Rong Jin was panicking. He then realized that the situation was developing in an uncontrollable direction. “Father, I-I didn’t!”

Emperor Jiawen was too lazy to hear his explanation as he called out in a low voice, “Someone! Help me write my edict—”

“Your Majesty, hold on!” The Empress suddenly thought of something, and her eyes sparkled. She hurriedly said, “Your Majesty, did you forget Country Xing Luo’s previous invitation? Previously, you’ve already agreed to let Rong Jin go. Now, we only have less than 20 days left. If you remove Rong Jin from his Crown Prince position, what should we do about this?”

Emperor Jiawen paused for a while, and his brows tightly knitted together. *I actually forgot about this.*

Actually, this invitation wasn’t the most important thing. The key point was that Country Xing Luo wanted to arrange for a marriage alliance between Rong Jin and Situ Xingchen.

If Rong Jin was removed from his position now, then... it would indeed bring about a lot of trouble.

He currently couldn't confirm if the other party had their eyes on Rong Jin's status as Crown Prince or Rong Jin himself.

Emperor Jiawen was in a difficult position and instantly quietened down.

Situ Xingchen—who wasn't far away—was dazed when she heard this. *What does this mean? Since when did Father and Emperor Jiawen agree on this? Why don't I know about it? Also, I didn't know that Rong Jin was going! Country Xing Luo and Country Yao Chen have always minded their own business. Why did they suddenly have such close interactions? And I, the eldest princess, had no clue about this!*

Just as Situ Xingchen was confused, a thought popped up in her mind. *Hang on! Could it be like what Elder Lian Ning had said before... Father has the intention to let Rong Jin and I have a marriage alliance? I don't even know why Father would have such a thought, and he seems rather persistent.*

Situ Xingchen looked terrible. *I don't like Rong Jin at all. If this can make Father stop thinking about the marriage alliance, I would really want it to happen. However, Emperor Jiawen seems to be very hesitant.*

The Empress saw that there seemed to be a turning point in the matter, so she hurriedly pushed it forward. "Your Majesty, Rong Jin made a huge mistake today, and you can punish him however you want. However, you must reconsider about him and his position as the Crown Prince!"

Emperor Jiawen seemed to be affected by her words. It wasn't because he still harbored hopes for Rong Jin, but... he did have to consider Country Xing Luo.

The Empress hurriedly looked at the officials who rushed over. These few people were in the Crown Prince's party, so they would naturally fight for Rong Jin with all they had.

"Your Majesty, Her Majesty is right! The Crown Prince was just foolish for a moment, but he doesn't deserve to die. You're magnanimous and kind; we hope that you'll give him another chance."

"The Crown Prince has been very outstanding all these years, and he has labored day and night just to share your burdens. Even if he didn't accomplish much, you should still take his efforts into account!"

"Your Majesty, if you really remove him from his Crown Prince position, what should Prince Li and Ms. Chu do in the future?"

...

Chu Liuyue raised her eyebrows slightly; she didn't like to hear this. *What does Rong Jin courting death have to do with Rong Xiu and me? I didn't even say how disgusted I was by Rong Jin's series of actions today!*

Rong Xiu looked as calm as usual. He smiled lightly and said, "The few officials are right. Father, I just want you to grant my marriage; I don't want this to happen. If you really won't forgive Brother today, then... it's my fault."

"Rong Xiu, you're always the mature one." Emperor Jiawen sighed. *If it weren't because Rong Xiu's body was frail, this Crown Prince position would long be his; it would've never been Rong Jin's. What a pity...*

Emperor Jiawen's look of regret stabbed another wound in the Empress and Rong Jin's hearts. However, they didn't dare to show any form of dissatisfaction at this moment.

After a tense moment, Emperor Jiawen finally looked at Chu Liuyue. "Liuyue, what do you think?"

Chu Liuyue bent her knees and bowed. "Your Majesty is wise. Ever since my marriage agreement with the Crown Prince was dissolved, we've never interacted anymore. Hence, I'm also unsure of his sudden actions today. On the other hand, Prince Li has helped me multiple times, and I'm very grateful to him. Thus, I'm willing to take care of Prince Li forever and always, and I'll never leave his side."

Chapter 316: Disappear

Her every word and sentence was pronounced very clearly.

Emperor Jiawen looked at Chu Liuyue with a profound gaze. After a long while, he finally said, "Chu Liuyue—the daughter of the imperial guards' Commander-in-Chief, Chu Ning—is gentle, elegant, kind, and magnanimous. I am pleased to announce that my seventh son, Prince Li, is of marriageable age. I will marry Chu Liuyue to Prince Li, and she will become his wife. They will complete their marriage another day!"

Emperor Jiawen's powerful and solemn voice reverberated in everyone's ears.

Everyone fell into silence. Before this, nobody expected Prince Li to marry Chu Liuyue.

These two people—who didn't seem to interact—actually became a couple.

With the imperial edict, everything couldn't be changed.

Rong Xiu's thin lips curled up. "Thank you for your grace, Father."

This sentence made the crowd recover their senses. The crowd respectively gave their thanks before they congratulated Chu Ning.

No matter what, Chu Liuyue was also a prince's wife from now on, and her status would be largely different from before.

Even though Prince Li wasn't in good health and didn't have much power in his hands, today's situation proved that His Majesty doted on Prince Li differently.

With this relationship alone, Prince Li wouldn't have a difficult life in the future.

As for Chu Liuyue... She had previously dissolved her marriage agreement with the Crown Prince. Even though she had become an enviable talent, this incident was still sensitive.

It was the best outcome now that the Emperor gifted her a marriage with Prince Li, which was something he requested for.

All in all, this marriage was much more advantageous to them.

In the midst of the happy atmosphere, only Rong Jin looked terrible. He stared at Chu Liuyue dazedly, but he saw that Chu Liuyue had already gotten up, walked to Rong Xiu, and helped him up.

Rong Xiu coughed a few times, and his face became even paler.

Rong Jin clenched his teeth. *I can accept it if it were anyone else who got Chu Liuyue, but why must it be Rong Xiu?! In the past, my mother couldn't win against Rong Xiu's mother, and I still can't win against Rong Xiu now. I long knew that Father acted differently toward Rong Xiu, but it seems like the situation is more serious than I thought.*

Whatever Rong Xiu wants, Father will give it all to him as long as he opens his mouth. As for me, I have been so cautious and diligent as the Crown Prince for so many years, yet I didn't get any benefits in the end. I was even humiliated by Father in public as he almost removed me from my position! How can I be okay with this?

The Empress finally heaved a sigh of relief as she managed to save Rong Jin's position as Crown Prince. She felt even more thankful when she heard Emperor Jiawen grant the marriage between Rong Xiu and Chu Liuyue.

This way, Chu Liuyue would have no way of seducing Rong Jin.

From now on, Rong Jin should also give up completely and not waste any more time or effort on Chu Liuyue. The Empress glanced from the corner of her eyes and realized that Rong Jin was staring at Chu Liuyue and Rong Xiu dazedly.

She closed her eyes in frustration and tried her best to make her voice sound warm and calm. "Your Majesty, as for the Crown Prince..."

"Crown Prince Rong Jin is impulsive and unruly! From today onwards, he needs to reflect on himself in Crown Prince Mansion. Without my orders, he's not allowed to come out, and nobody is allowed to visit him!"

This was akin to grounding him.

Even though Rong Jin was also grounded as punishment the previous time, not many people knew about it. But this time, Rong Jin had completely lost his face in front of so many people.

However, the Empress was already very content with this result. As long as Rong Jin hadn't been removed from his position, everything could be changed.

"Crown Prince, hurry up and thank the Emperor." The Empress glared at Rong Jin with much warning.

Rong Jin then recovered his senses. "...Thank you for your kindness, Father."

Emperor Jiawen was too frustrated to take another look at him. He sneered and turned to walk away.

The Empress and the rest hurriedly followed.

Eunuch Min first congratulated Rong Xiu, Chu Liuyue, and the rest before walking to Rong Xiu and advising, "Crown Prince, His Majesty and Her Majesty have already left. You must be very tired from the whole day. You should go back and rest as well."

Eunuch Min then looked at the people beside him before leaving quickly.

After walking a distance, Eunuch Min turned around to take a look and shook his head. *Even though this Crown Prince managed to save his position today, I'm afraid it might not be stable in the future.*

The Crown Prince Mansion's people hurriedly went forward, wanting to help Rong Jin up.

Rong Jin then realized that countless eyes from the surroundings were glued to him.

Mockery, contempt, disdain!

Humiliation overwhelmed his heart, and his face turned green.

Chu Xianmin walked over. "Your Highness, let's go back..."

Rong Jin pushed her away. "Get lost!" He then left hurriedly with indignance.

Chu Xianmin was pushed to the side, but she didn't say anything and silently followed him.

Their figures quickly disappeared from the crowd.

Quite a few people sighed.

"I didn't expect the high and mighty Crown Prince to have such a day..."

“Who would’ve known? Even if he’s still the Crown Prince, it’s not easy to tell what will happen to him in the future...”

“In comparison, the Third Prince is much more outstanding. At least he’s more accomplished, unlike the Crown Prince, who goes back on his words and doesn’t deliver on his promises...”

“I feel quite pitiful for Chu Xianmin. Back then, she was the enviable Third Chu Missy, but she ended up like this... It seems like the Crown Prince isn’t very nice to her!”

“Everyone has their own fates! I heard that she bullied Chu Liuyue quite a fair bit at the start, so it’s just retribution!”

...

Chu Liuyue looked at Rong Xiu, and her gaze slowly swept past his wounds, still feeling uncomfortable.

Rong Xiu seemed to know what she was thinking as his pale lips curved up slightly, and he nodded.

Everything was worth it for this outcome.

Chu Liuyue’s heart felt sour, but her entire person was immersed in immeasurable relaxation and happiness. *It turns out that there is still a person in this world who would do anything for me.*

Chu Ning looked at them from the side and squinted his eyes, giving a complicated gaze. *It turns out Prince Li liked Yue’er since a long time ago!*

Initially, he always didn't understand why Prince Li would repeatedly help them both. Now, everything seemed to have an answer!

Upon closer thought, Prince Li is a decent choice. It's just a pity that he's slightly weak... However, he's much better as compared to Rong Jin.

Chu Ning walked toward Rong Xiu. "Prince Li..."

Rong Xiu smiled warmly. "Lord Chu Ning, you don't have to be so polite now that I have a marriage agreement with Yue'er."

Chu Ning hesitated for a while and finally said, "I have a few things I wish to talk to you about in private—"

"You're not allowed to bully Liuyue!" Before Chu Ning could finish his sentence, Ye Zhiting had already spoken up first. Rare seriousness filled his face as he glared at Rong Xiu with much warning. "She's my only personal disciple! If you dare to bully her... Don't blame me for being rude to you!"

Chu Ning was speechless. *Nice, even my lines have been stolen...*

Rong Xiu smiled with deep meaning. "Of course. Elder Ye, Lord Chu Ning, you don't have to worry."

Ye Zhiting was about to say something else when Elder Wei Yun suddenly gasped. "Director! Oh no, the ferocious fiend is missing!"

Chapter 317: Seen Before

Ye Zhiting was shocked. “What happened?!”

Elder Wei Yun rushed over and looked very anxious. “Just now, we carefully checked under Jiuyou Tower, but we didn’t find the fiend’s aura. At first, we thought that it temporarily quietened down because Jiuyou Tower collapsed. However, it still had no movements after a long while. We then discovered that the fiend is no longer in the Pit of Heavenly Origins below!”

Chu Liuyue’s eyes sparkled slightly.

Ye Zhiting hurriedly walked toward the debris. “How can that be? There would definitely be a commotion if it escaped!”

Even though the Locking Heaven Formation was broken, the silver pestle was still working, and it could detect any happenings within Jiuyou Tower. However, Ye Zhiting didn’t notice anything amiss previously.

Elder Wei Yun felt even more nervous as he wiped his sweat. “This... Um, we’ve checked for a long time, but we didn’t discover anything...”

At this point, Ye Zhiting had already reached the side of the collapsed Jiuyou Tower. He closed his eyes, and his force circulated out, instantly covering it.

After a moment, he opened his eyes and furrowed his brows. “The beast really isn’t around anymore...”

Sun Zhongyan dazedly asked, "Uncle-Master, you said that the fiend is gone. What... does that mean?"

Did the fiend run away, or is it dead?

Ye Zhiting was silent for a while before he turned around to look at Chu Liuyue and Rong Xiu. "Did you two discover anything wrong when you were in Jiuyou Tower?"

Chu Liuyue's brows twitched.

Rong Xiu was the first to speak up. "Nope. Back then, both of us were on the sixth floor when Jiuyou Tower collapsed, and we got out with much difficulty."

Chu Liuyue looked at him silently. *Why does Rong Xiu keep emphasizing the sixth floor?*

"Did anyone go up another floor?" asked Ye Zhiting again.

Chu Liuyue had telepathy and shook her head together with Rong Xiu.

Ye Zhiting sighed. "Perhaps I'm too foolish. How can the two of you go in there..."

Faint confusion flashed across Chu Liuyue's heart. *Elder Ye seems to know what was on the seventh floor, and he might even be very sure that the fiend was suppressed on the seventh floor! He is Tian Lu Academy's director, so it is normal for him to know these things. But... what about Rong Xiu?*

Back then, he was outside the seventh-floor barrier, and he had personally seen me coming out from the seventh floor. However, he doesn't seem to want others to know about this. It is clear that he knows that the seventh floor was different. Perhaps... Rong Xiu also knows the secret of the seventh floor—both the legendary three-eyed eagle and... the Heavenly Square Cauldron?

“Weird... Why would the fiend suddenly disappear...?” Ye Zhiting slowly shook the fan in his hands and was very confused.

Sun Zhongyan suddenly said, “Oh, yes. Previously, the green sparrow had also entered Jiuyou Tower. Perhaps we can get some clues from it?”

Ye Zhiting's eyes sparkled as he hurriedly walked toward Mu Qinghe.

From the start till now, Mu Qinghe had been watching the event unfold coldly, but Ye Zhiting didn't mind this.

As Tianling Dynasty's envoy, Mu Qinghe had no reason to interfere in this. However, he was formidable and had been watching the whole time, so he might know something.

When Ye Zhiting walked over, Hong Yao was squatting on Mu Qinghe's shoulders, lazily brushing its feathers.

“Lieutenant Mu, I have a few questions. May I ask your fiend?”

Mu Qinghe looked at Hong Yao.

Hong Yao then stopped and scrutinized Ye Zhiting.

Ye Zhiting coughed. "May I know... if the wound on your body is caused by the fiend?"

Hong Yao's eyes widened, and it angrily turned its head. *I just suffered a minor injury, and I've basically recovered already. Why must you talk about this?*

Mu Qinghe was expressionless. "That's right."

Ye Zhiting asked again, "Then... Do you know what happened to it?"

Hong Yao crazily shook its head.

However, Ye Zhiting didn't quite believe it. "Really? Then... you should at least know if it's dead or alive, right?"

The green sparrow was an advanced fiend and had a distinguished status. How could Hong Yao leave it lying when it got injured?

Hong Yao continued to shake its head and decisively buried its head under its wings, unwilling to say anything else.

Looking at it, Ye Zhiting knew that he wouldn't find out anything if he continued asking, so he gave up. "Thank you, Lieutenant Mu. It seems like I have to investigate this matter from another perspective."

Mu Qinghe suddenly said, "Jiuyou Tower is built specifically to suppress that fiend, right?"

Ye Zhiting was dazed first, and then he nodded.

"Now that the fiend has already escaped and Jiuyou Tower has collapsed, it's not important anymore. What are you worried about? The most important thing is that the Pit of Heavenly Origins below is still here, right?" Mu Qinghe's voice was still cold and nonchalant.

"You're right to say that, Lieutenant Mu. However..." Ye Zhiting felt his head hurt. *However, Jiuyou Tower had been here since the establishment of Tian Lu Academy. Now that it is ruined, I, the director, don't feel good about it.*

That fiend... Many thoughts popped up in Ye Zhiting's heart, but he could only sigh. "Since things have already ended like this, we have no other way."

As he talked, he turned around to look at Elder Wei Yun and the rest. "Use the Xuan formation to lock this place up first and then clean it up."

The crowd hurriedly agreed.

Sun Zhongyan hesitated for a while and still asked worriedly, "Uncle-Master, what should we do in the future then? Without Jiuyou Tower, the Pit of Heavenly Origins's force can be a little hard to tolerate for many students..."

"You don't have to worry about this. After a while, we can just build another nine-story tower here."

This newly-built tower definitely wouldn't be as strong as the one before, but at least it could provide a place to let the students cultivate.

Since the fiend was gone, there was nothing much to worry about.

The crowd looked at each other and agreed to it when they realized that this was the best solution.

Then, Sun Zhongyan quickly let the students leave, leaving behind the elders and teachers to handle the pile of debris together.

Mu Qinghe didn't want to stay any longer, and he turned around to leave. But when he walked past Chu Liuyue, he looked at her with deep meaning. "You seem to be stronger than I had imagined."

Chu Liuyue looked calm. "Thank you for your praise, Lieutenant Mu."

"You know yourself if it's praise. After all, not everyone can make it to the sixth floor with a Yuan instrument." Mu Qinghe's gaze was filled with inspection intent.

Chu Liuyue smiled. "Actually, this is all due to Tuan Zi's efforts. I'm just a stage-two warrior, and I'm really too lowly."

The battle with Heng Jingchuo at the Qing Jiao Competition let everyone know that she had an abnormal blood ferret.

Mu Qinghe's gaze swept past Tuan Zi—who was on Chu Liuyue's shoulders—and he suddenly said, “I seem to have seen the aura around your fiend from somewhere before.”

Chapter 318: Departure

Chu Liuyue raised her brows and was slightly shocked. “Oh? I wonder where you've seen a fiend similar to Tuan Zi, Lieutenant Mu? If they have the fate to meet, I believe Tuan Zi would love the other party a lot.”

Mu Qinghe stared at Chu Liuyue as if he was considering whether her words were true or false. “It's my old friend's fiend, but it wasn't a blood ferret. It's...”

He paused, and a cold smile suddenly appeared on his lips. “Forget it. Anyway, it's dead; there's no point talking about it.”

Chu Liuyue's heart was tugged hard.

She heard her own voice say, “Oh, that's such a pity... Something that is similar to Tuan Zi must be very cute too, but why did that fiend die? Did it die in battle?”

Mu Qinghe slowly retracted the smile on his face, and his expression was as cold as ice. “Its owner died, so it followed her. But as that fiend was pretty strong itself, it knew that it wouldn't be easy for it to die on its own. Thus, it chose to commit suicide by exploding.”

Every single word was like a sharp knife that harshly stabbed into Chu Liuyue's heart. Even if she had long expected it, she still couldn't accept it when she heard it herself.

“Oh, right. That old friend was the one whom I said you looked similar to.” Mu Qinghe’s face had no expression, and he talked in a calm manner as if he were just narrating something simple.

Chu Liuyue forcefully moved her lips as her limbs were cold and hard to move. “...Is that so...?”

“Cough cough—Cough cough.” At the side, Rong Xiu suddenly coughed violently.

Chu Liuyue hurriedly looked over. “Rong... Prince Li, are you okay?”

Rong Xiu stopped with much difficulty, and his pale lips curved up into a smile. “Nothing much... I’m just a little... tired.”

Chu Liuyue immediately said, “Then, I’ll send you back to Prince Li Mansion.”

A faint smile was plastered on Rong Xiu’s face. “Thank you.”

Chu Ning was still worried. “Yue’er, I’ll accompany you.”

Then, the few of them planned to leave together.

Mu Qinghe still stood there, looking at Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue walked for a while and turned around to ask, “Is there anything else, Lieutenant Mu?”

Mu Qinghe paused and turned around to leave without saying anything.

Chu Ning stared at his back view, walked to Chu Liuyue, and whispered, "Yue'er, did you offend Lieutenant Mu before?"

Chu Liuyue nonchalantly smiled. "Perhaps, but that's not important."

...

Since Emperor Jiawen and the rest left, Rong Xiu and the others quickly returned home.

The crowd of onlookers also respectively went home after the event ended.

Tian Lu Academy regained its quietness.

Looking at the pile of Jiuyou Tower debris, Ye Zhiting rubbed his glabella painfully. *Everything in the Imperial City has been in such a mess lately...*

"Elder Ye." A voice suddenly sounded.

Ye Zhiting looked up, and he quickly knitted his brows. "Fu Yunshan? Cheng Han?"

“Elder Ye, we really didn’t expect this kind of thing to happen. Sorry that we came late and couldn’t help,” explained Fu Yunshan with a face filled with regret.

Cheng Han’s eyes swept past the debris, and he felt very delighted. He couldn’t help but mock, “Yeah! This Jiuyou Tower seems to have been here ever since Tian Lu Academy existed. Now that it’s ruined, you must be feeling terrible, right Elder Ye? However, there’s nothing you can do about it. Who asked for the fiend to be too incredible? Everything’s great as long as nobody is affected! Elder Ye, do you agree?”

Ye Zhiting squinted his eyes at the two people and then laughed. “That’s right. This time, our academy isn’t strong enough, thus causing things to escalate to this extent. That ferocious fiend was indeed very powerful. Even if you came to help at that time, I don’t think it’ll be of much use. After all, your abilities... Haha! I have always been blunt with my words. You won’t find fault with me, right?”

Fu Yunshan instantly looked very awkward. He secretly shot Cheng Han a look—*I have long said that, given Ye Zhiting’s cultivation level, he must’ve noticed that we were just at the side.*

They clearly could’ve helped, but they didn’t move at all. Ye Zhiting must’ve hated them!

Cheng Han was mocked until his face was gone. However, he thought of it in another way and realized that Tian Lu Academy was still the one who suffered the greatest loss today.

This point alone could make him happy for a very long time. So, he didn’t really care about Ye Zhiting’s words. “Elder Ye, you’ve been in seclusion for a long time, and you might not know much about what’s happening outside. Our abilities might not be as good as yours, but it’s not as bad as—”

“Hahaha, I was just joking! Cheng Han, did you really take me seriously? It’s like how you lost to me back then and then jokingly said that you would send your disciple to fight with mine in the future, right?”

Cheng Han's expression froze.

Ye Zhiting asked in confusion, "Why? Is that not so? I heard that the pill your disciple used to win the heavenly doctor competition that day was made by my disciple! If you were really hung up about what happened back then, you wouldn't have let your disciple accept the championship title, right?"

Cheng Han's face changed, and it looked incredible. *Even after not seeing him for so many years, Ye Zhiting still shows no mercy. His mouth is as annoying as ever.*

"I suddenly remembered that our academy is going back tomorrow and that there are some things I need to attend to. Now that Tian Lu Academy has met with this incident, we'll only cause trouble if we continue staying. Therefore, I'll take my leave first," said Cheng Han as he turned around to leave.

Fu Yunshan was also very awkward as he forcefully added a few sentences, having no intentions of staying around anymore.

The moment Cheng Han walked away, he felt like there was someone missing from his side—Situ Xingchen.

He scanned his surroundings, but he didn't see Situ Xingchen's figure.

Cheng Han asked a familiar student, "Did you see Xingchen?"

"I think she just left. Perhaps she went back to the inn."

Cheng Han thought about it and agreed. *She must feel terrible after personally seeing Rong Xiu and Chu Liuyue being granted a marriage, so it is normal for her to go back. It's good if she has some alone time to calm down.*

Cheng Han took a deep breath in. "Let's go!"

Chapter 319: Marriage Alliance

Chu Liuyue and Chu Ning followed Rong Xiu back to Prince Li Mansion.

The people there seemed to have received the news; they were especially enthusiastic toward Chu Ning and Chu Liuyue. It was as if they were welcoming their own family members.

Chu Ning felt a little uneasy.

After spending some time in Prince Li Mansion, Chu Ning wanted to let Rong Xiu get some proper rest, so he left with Chu Liuyue.

Rong Xiu sent a carriage to send the two of them back home.

Chu Ning didn't want the trouble at first, but he gave in in the end.

The father and daughter each sat on one side of the carriage. The pair stared at each other wordlessly.

Chu Ning stared at his daughter. He wanted to say something, but he wasn't sure where to start.

"Father, just speak your mind," Chu Liuyue said softly.

Chu Ning pondered for a moment before he spoke. "You and Prince Li... Did the two of you have something going on already?"

Chu Liuyue smiled. "What are you referring to?"

Chu Ning paused. "I mean... Did you know that he was interested..."

"Yes." Chu Liuyue didn't intend to keep this from him. "Just as you imagined, Prince Li and I have feelings for each other, which resulted in His Majesty granting the marriage today."

Even though he had imagined it, Chu Ning was still a little surprised to hear this. "This... When did this happen? Could it be... when he helped you back then..."

"Prince Li saved me first. We didn't know each other back then."

Chu Ning heaved a sigh of relief. *That means the two of them only got closer after Prince Li returned. If that's the case, it is much easier for me to accept.*

"You truly like Prince Li?" Chu Ning asked with a solemn expression as he stared at her eyes.

Chu Liuyue nodded.

Chu Ning froze for a moment. He then muttered, "...That's good... that's good..." His expression was a little complicated. It seemed like joy, but it also seemed like regret.

Chu Ning understood Yue'er's personality. If she weren't interested in Prince Li, she would've never agreed to the marriage today.

"Prince Li is a really good person."

Compared to Rong Jin, he is several times better. Yue'er didn't have an eye for people before; she liked Rong Jin for years and was humiliated and embarrassed for it.

However, things were different now. Chu Ning could tell that Prince Li valued Yue'er. It could even be said that he saw her as a piece of treasure.

He could finally put his mind to ease.

"But... Prince Li's body... Yue'er, have you checked Prince Li's pulse before? Is there anything you can do to help him recover?"

Prince Li was born with the illness. They had hired countless heavenly doctors, but the situation never changed for the better. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been sent to Mingyue Tianshan to recuperate for years without returning to Imperial City.

Looking at Chu Ning's worried manner, Chu Liuyue felt touched, but she also found it humorous. "Father, don't worry. I'll try my best. Regardless of the condition of Prince Li's body, I'll take good care of him."

Chu Ning sighed and then nodded. "That's great."

He had once hoped that Yue'er would marry a healthy, ordinary person and have an ordinary life. But Yue'er had now exhibited phenomenal talent, so there was no way she could lead a normal life.

"Your mother would be really happy if she were still here..." Nostalgia filled Chu Ning's eyes.

Chu Liuyue felt her heart ache.

For so many years, Chu Ning played the role of father and mother to raise Chu Liuyue. One could only imagine how tough it must've been.

She moved forward and held Chu Ning's hand.

The father-daughter duo sat across from each other wordlessly, but the inside of the carriage was a rare scene of warmth and harmony.

...

Pak!

A crisp slap echoed in the room.

The Empress glared at Rong Jin—who was standing before her—coldly. “You must’ve been insane today!”

Rong Jin hung his head without uttering a word.

“I already told you to keep your hands off of Chu Liuyue! Do my words mean nothing to you? I thought you were just uttering nonsense when I saw you lying in bed before, but I didn’t expect you to go over there and fight with Rong Xiu over Chu Liuyue!”

The Empress’s fingers were almost touching Rong Jin’s forehead. “Your father got one thing right today—you must really be tired of being the crown prince!”

Rong Jin wiped the blood away from the corner of his mouth. A ball of fire was building up in him, and he finally couldn’t help it. “She was mine to begin with! Why can’t...”

“You annulled your marriage agreement with her a long time ago!” The Empress suddenly raised her voice as her eyes made their way down Rong Jin’s body, sharp as knives. “Don’t forget that you brought the annulment up yourself! What did you say then? You said that you wanted to annul your marriage agreement with Chu Liuyue and make a clean break, no matter the cost!”

“It’s only been a couple of months since then, but it’s like you’re possessed! How do you want the others to regard you as the Crown Prince!? Do you know how much effort it took me to put you in the Crown Prince position back then!?”

The Empress was already a little hysterical.

Rong Jin looked up.

The Empress's face was twisted, and her eyes were filled with grudges.

Rong Jin was stunned. It was only then that he realized that the Empress seemed especially emotional today.

He took a deep breath and lowered his voice, but he was still indignant. "But... But why does it have to be Rong Xiu? What does that lowly person have that I don't? Look at him! He'll probably faint from walking a few extra steps!"

He felt disgusted at the thought of Chu Liuyue marrying someone like that!

The Empress's expression turned grim before she laughed out coldly. "Why? 'Why,' you ask?! Rong Xiu asked your father for it himself, so how could he not agree to it!? You're better than him in every way, but his mother was a vixen, that's why!"

She's been dead for this long, but she's still haunting us! I couldn't beat her back then, and now my son cannot beat hers! How can I not be upset?!

Rong Jin only understood then that the Empress was behaving like this because she had recalled the person and the things from back then.

The Empress seemed to have realized that she was a little out of control. She took a deep breath and forced herself to calm down. "In any case, it's not easy to keep you in your position. Your father can put up with you once or twice, but there will not be a third time!"

Rong Jin pursed his lips. "I know my mistakes."

"What's the use of knowing your mistakes? You've got to find a way to make up for them."

Rong Jin's eyes lit up. "Mother, you have an idea?"

The Empress stared at him intently. "Of course. But you've got to swear that you'll never mention Chu Liuyue. You've got to get that thought out of your head!"

Rong Jin froze. "But mother, she's the only one I..."

The Empress looked at him with warning in her eyes.

Unconsciously, Rong Jin swallowed his words.

After a long while, he finally replied with clenched fists. "...Yes."

The Empress was relieved, and she relaxed a little as she picked up the teacup from the side. "The only way to secure your position as Crown Prince is to have a marriage alliance with Situ Xingchen."

Chapter 320: Ambush

“What?” Rong Jin was stumped for a moment.

“Country Xing Luo has brought it up to your father before. They want to form a marriage alliance using you and Situ Xingchen. She’s of high status, and she’s favored there. If you can marry her, it’ll help you a lot.”

The Empress sipped on her tea and glanced at Rong Jin coldly. “If not for this, why did you think your father let you off the hook today?”

Rong Jin frowned. “But Situ Xingchen... Is this the only way?”

“You’re still unwilling?”

Bang!

The Empress slammed the cup down, and she laughed coldly. “No matter how you look at it, Situ Xingchen is a good fit to be the Crown Princess. What’s there to be unhappy about?”

She didn’t like Situ Xingchen. Her years of experience in the palace told her that Situ Xingchen was no simpleton. However, she could not be bothered now.

Rong Jin quietened down at this moment. He understood that he was in a precarious position and that Situ Xingchen was the best candidate for helping him solidify his position.

“Try to get in touch with Situ Xingchen and win her affection. This will make things a lot easier in the future.”

Rong Jin frowned. “But I’m under house arrest, and I can’t get out. Besides, the Qing Jiao Competition has ended, and they’re leaving tomorrow.”

“Does that even count as a problem? As long as you want to, all of this can be solved.” The Empress was undeterred. “Unless... you really don’t want to be the Crown Prince.”

Rong Jin gritted his teeth. “I understand.”

...

Chu Ning and Chu Liuyue returned home together.

At the door, they saw a pageboy waiting.

Chu Liuyue squinted her eyes. She knew this pageboy—he was from the Chu family.

The pageboy eagerly ran over the instant he saw the father-daughter duo alight from the carriage. “Lord Chu Ning, Big Chu Missy, you’re finally back.”

Chu Liuyue and Chu Ning looked at each other. *They never visit unless they need something. It is clear why the Chu family has sent someone over now.*

“Mu Teng? What are you doing here?”

The pageboy bowed with an overzealous smile. He took an invite out and handed it over respectfully. “Hehe, I’m flattered that you remember me, Lord Chu Ning! First Elder said that he would like to invite you to take a trip back home. This is the invite.”

Chu Ning had a half-smile. “You made Yue’er fetch water on your behalf for three months back then; she had cold sores. How could I forget?”

Mu Teng’s smile suddenly froze on his face awkwardly. “Th-this... It was all my fault. Please have mercy and forgive me! I’m begging for your forgiveness!”

Seeing that the father-daughter duo didn’t budge, Mu Teng gritted his teeth and began slapping himself. “It was all my fault! I was wrong! I deserve to die; I deserve to die!”

His face quickly swelled up, leaving clear palm prints behind. He dared not stop if Chu Ning didn’t ask him to.

Chu Ning laughed coldly when Mu Teng’s mouth became bloody. He led Chu Liuyue toward the door.

Mu Teng panicked when he saw that the two of them were leaving. He hurriedly ran after them. “Lord Chu Ning, please accept the invite! Otherwise, I will get in trouble when I return!”

Chu Ning didn't want to pay attention to the pageboy; he didn't even look at Mu Teng.

Mu Teng knelt down and began kowtowing. "Lord Chu Ning, I'm begging you! Big Chu Missy, please help me convince Lord Chu Ning!"

Chu Liuyue curled her lips. She took the invite and opened it.

Chu Xiao had written it himself, and the wording was very cordial. He clearly wanted to make peace.

Chu Ning knitted his brows together, and disdain flashed across his eyes. "Yue'er, what's there to look at? It'll only dirty your eyes."

Chu Liuyue winked at him and then looked toward Mu Teng. "You're saying that you'll be dead if you don't send this invite out?"

Mu Teng looked at her gratefully. "Yeah! Big Missy..."

"That's great; hang onto it." Chu Liuyue stuffed the invite back into Mu Teng's hand with a smile. "Bye."

Mu Teng was stunned. However, he realized something, and his face paled. "Big Missy..."

"We have already severed our ties with the Chu family. I don't deserve that title." With that, Chu Liuyue turned and left with her father.

Mu Teng's face was filled with despair. He cried out anxiously as he watched the two of them leave. "Lord Chu Ning! First Elder said to think about the family head even if you're not willing to return to the Chu family!"

Chu Ning paused, and struggle flashed across his face.

Chu Liuyue glanced at him.

Mu Teng felt that he had a chance, so he continued shouting. "The family head really values you. He would be rather disappointed to see the Chu family's current state when he comes back from seclusion!"

Chu Liuyue moved her lips. *Here they go again. When they bullied the two of us back then, they didn't seem worried about disappointing the family head.*

Doubt flashed across Chu Ning's eyes, but it was fleeting. "Come on."

Chu Ning didn't turn around; he tugged on Chu Liuyue and prepared to walk away.

Chu Liuyue sighed softly. "Father, why don't you go back and take a look."

Chu Ning looked up in surprise. "Yue'er?"

Chu Liuyue patted his arm gently.

She had no feelings toward the Chu family. How they and the family head were doing meant nothing to her. However, Chu Ning was different. After all, the head of the Chu family was his father.

It would be impossible to say that they had no ties.

Chu Liuyue knew that a large part of why Chu Ning broke away from the Chu family was because of her.

Mu Teng's words had no effect on her, but they would move Chu Ning.

"No matter what, Yue'er doesn't want to see father unhappy," said Chu Liuyue softly.

Chu Ning instantly knew what she meant, and his heart felt warm.

He hesitated for a moment. "Don't worry. Since we've broken away from the Chu family, then we'll never go back, no matter what. I'll just go and explain things to the family head; I'll be quick."

Chu Liuyue nodded. "I'll wait for you at home."

Mu Teng instantly felt rejuvenated when he heard that Chu Ning had agreed to go to the Chu family. "Thank you, Lady Chu! Thank you, Big... Thank you, Ms. Liuyue!"

Chu Ning left with Mu Teng after leaving some instructions to Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue watched Chu Ning leave before she turned and passed through the door to the courtyard when he disappeared.

She then headed for her room.

When she reached the door, she placed her hand on it and was about to push it open.

She suddenly paused, and a cold glare flashed across her eyes!

The next moment, she abruptly backed away!

A black shadow broke out of the door!

In the blink of an eye, it was right in front of Chu Liuyue!

Before she could get a closer look at the other party, she was captured by a large net!