

SHADOWS OF THE LOST TEMPLE



The Secret of the Moonshade Blossom

ANDERSON ALEXANDER GUILLEN GOMEZ

MEI - THE EXPLORER



Mei stands in her small apothecary garden, surrounded by bundles of drying lavender and mint. Her fingers are stained with green juice as she carefully grinds a dried root into a fine powder with a stone mortar.



SECRET ALLIANCE

Prince Jin leans against the wooden garden gate, fanning himself with a silk fan decorated with golden cranes. He tells Mei that the palace is whispering about a ghost in the Lady's chambers, but his playful smile suggests he finds the drama quite amusing.



They walk together through the grand corridors of the Imperial Palace, where tall red pillars reach toward a beautifully painted ceiling. Mei notices the heavy, sweet smell of a new incense hanging in the air like a thick, invisible fog.



Inside the Lady's bedroom, the air is dim and filled with the sound of soft weeping. The Lady points at the empty air with a trembling hand, claiming that glowing blue butterflies are dancing around her bed and whispering secrets.



Jin chuckles softly and asks Mei if she brought a small net to catch the invisible spirits for the royal collection. Mei ignores his teasing and leans down to inspect a vase of rare, pale flowers sitting right next to a smoking incense burner.



Mei picks up a fallen petal and holds it up to the light, recognizing the dangerous Moonshade Blossom. She explains that when these flowers are kept in a closed room with spicy incense, the mixture creates a vapor that makes people see strange dreams while awake.



Mei quickly opens the heavy wooden windows to let in the fresh evening breeze and carries the offending flowers out of the room. She begins to prepare a simple tea made of ginger and dried orange peel to help clear the Lady's clouded mind.



As the Lady begins to breathe easily and the 'butterflies' disappear, Jin admits that Mei's medicine is more powerful than any ghost story. He jokes that he should hire her to solve the mystery of why his morning tea is always served three minutes late.



The next morning, the palace is peaceful again, and the scary stories of ghosts have vanished like mist in the sun. The Lady thanks Mei with a grateful smile, realizing that her frightening visions were just a trick of nature and a closed window.



GUARADIANS OF THE LOST SANCTUARY

Back in her quiet garden, Mei finds a small wooden box left on her worktable by the Prince. Inside is a rare medicinal seed and a small note in elegant ink that says, 'For the girl who sees what everyone else misses.'