

All Hail 111

Chapter 111 I'm Afraid It Won't Be a Big Deal

Ting Lan Courtyard was a guest residence in the front courtyard. Xia Tao led two strong old maids into the courtyard.

Although the four of them were all farmers, they were obedient and did not speak much along the way. One of them, the tallest and strongest one, was called Zhou Yongtian, and he was the leader. The other three followed his instructions.

Xia Tao turned around and instructed the two old maids beside her, "Bring some food and wine over. The few of you must be a little hungry from the long journey."

The moment they heard the word "food and wine", the eyes of the other three lit up.

Seeing that everyone had left, Zhou Yongtian frowned and said, "All of you, be careful. If you accidentally interfere with Steward Zhou's matters, don't blame me for not reminding you."

Upon hearing this, they all agreed.

Not long after, two old maids brought over two jars of wine and seven or eight dishes.

The few of them immediately widened their eyes and couldn't help but gulp them down.

The two old maids left immediately after delivering the food and wine.

At first, the few of them could still restrain themselves a little, but as a few cups of spicy and strong meat entered their mouths, they felt a little dizzy.

At first, Zhou Yongtian could still resist himself, but gradually, he couldn't. After drinking two glasses, he felt that the wine was strong enough and didn't dare to drink too much, so he picked up his chopsticks and ate.

After finishing the jar of wine, Xia Tao brought over another plate of roasted chicken and asked with a smile, "I wonder if the food suits your taste?"

Zhou Yongtian was alarmed and hurriedly said, "We farmers usually lack oil and meat, but we've never had such good food and drink. Thank you for your trouble."

Xia Tao smiled and nodded, then started chatting with them.

Zhou Yongtian felt that something was amiss. Why did they have to wait until they were all drunk to talk? They were all used to drinking, so how could they not understand the logic of telling the truth after drinking?

After chatting for a while, they got to know each other better. Xia Tao changed the topic. "What crops did Little Zhou plant in the village? How was the harvest last year?"

When Zhou Yongtian heard this, a trace of wariness flashed across his eyes. According to Steward Zhou's instructions, he said, "We only planted some wheat, rice, vegetables, fruits, and so on. In the past, the harvest was quite good, but this year, the weather was a little cold, and the vegetables on the farm weren't growing well."

Xia Tao nodded. "The vegetables aren't growing well, so the other crops must have also been affected. I wonder if it's serious?"

Zhou Yongtian was a little nervous, and his muscles tensed up. "Although the other crops have been affected a little, the weather has warmed up recently. If we take care of them carefully, they should be able to recover..."

Xia Tao frowned and interrupted him. "What if they don't recover well?"

When Zhou Yongtian heard this, he felt that something was amiss. "The farmers in Little Zhouzhuang are all farmers who have been farming for generations. They're all good at tending to the crops..."

However, Xia Tao did not want to listen to his explanation. She waved her hand and said, "It's just a casual remark. The crops on the farm haven't grown well, right? You said that the weather is a little cold this year, and the vegetables haven't grown well, but our residence grows big and juicy from the vegetables sold outside every day. I heard that there's also from a farm near the outskirts of the capital. It's all the same cold weather. How can the vegetables in our farm not grow well but others have grown them well?"

"B*tch, what did you say? Say it again. You're just a servant sold into the residence and don't know how to farm. Our Little Zhouzhuang is also an old tenant of the residence. Don't spout nonsense."

The farmers hated it the most when others said that they did not farm well. This was worse than scolding their parents.

Zhou Yongtian immediately glared at her. He was so angry that he clenched his fists tightly, as if he was about to punch Xia Tao in the face.

Xia Tao's face turned pale immediately. She stomped her feet and ran out of the house with her hands covering her face.

Seeing this, the other burly men also sobered up a little and felt a little uneasy. "Brother Datian, this maidservant doesn't look like an ordinary maidservant. Just now, you..."

Zhou Yongtian sneered. "No matter how extraordinary she is, she's still a lowly person who has sold herself. She can't compare to good citizens like us. Brother Dachang has already said that if we nod and bow to her, we'll be giving her face."

The few of them felt a little more at ease and ate some more food. Zhou Yongtian went out and asked an old woman where Mao Bian was before leaving on his own.

He had just finished relieving himself when he heard two old maids talking not far away—

"Eldest Madam is sick. Now, Eldest Miss is in charge of this residence. I don't think Eldest Miss is simple either. She has Old Madam's support."

"At noon, Eldest Miss ordered Mother Yang and pointed to the account book. She said that the vegetables in the residence were too expensive. Mother Yang said that the weather was cold this year and the vegetables on the manor

weren't growing well. Only then did the people from the manor arrive in the afternoon. That Steward Zhou asked Eldest Miss to invite them over."

"I think Eldest Miss is going to get together with Mother Yang and Steward Zhou. This is the first day Eldest Miss is managing the household. She'll definitely use Mother Yang to establish her authority outside the residence."

"Just now, Xia Tao, who was in front of Eldest Miss, invited the people Steward Zhou had brought over to the Ting Lan Courtyard's side courtyard. She even ordered someone to deliver good wine and food. These farmers are inexperienced. After drinking a few cups of rice wine, they must have confessed everything. Eldest Miss is young, but she's quite scheming."

Zhou Yongtian's expression changed.

The vegetables on the farm did not grow well, but they were the ones in charge of the stewardship. It was their responsibility if they did not get along with the tenants. If Eldest Miss was determined to be calculative, then...

At the thought of this, Zhou Yongtian hurriedly left, and Xia Tao also came out from the corner.

The two old maids were both from the outer courtyard. They quickly smiled and said politely, "Miss Xia Tao, we've already said everything you wanted us to say."

Xia Tao nodded in satisfaction. "There's one more thing. If it's done well and Eldest Miss is satisfied, you'll get credit!"

When the two old maids heard this, they rubbed their hands happily and quickly nodded. "Miss Xia Tao, please instruct us."

Xia Tao moved closer to them and said in a low voice, "... Remember this clearly. Make a big fuss. Don't be afraid of making a big fuss, just be afraid that it won't..."

The two old maids nodded as they listened.

Yu Youyao was a half-grown child and was raised in her own home, so naturally, she couldn't bring Zhou Yongchang to the Jade Courtyard. Hence, Dong Mei brought him to the side courtyard in the north.

The north courtyard was where the Old Madam lived. Zhou Yongchang lowered his eyes, not daring to look around. He hurriedly knelt down. "Greetings, Eldest Miss."

"Steward Zhou, please get up quickly," Yu Youyao said politely, then quickly called for Qiu Xing. "Quickly get a chair over and let Steward Zhou sit and talk."

Qiu Xing ran into the house. Zhou Yongchang also stood up, but he bowed respectfully.

Soon, Qiu Xing brought a chair over. Zhou Yongchang thanked Eldest Miss gratefully before sitting down cautiously, waiting for her to ask him a question.

She couldn't help but raise her eyes and look under the stone table.

Chapter 112 Oh No, I've Hit Someone

On the surface of a red silk shoe, a gem had been polished into a bead that was smaller than a green bean. It was sewn into the shape of a lotus pattern on the shoe. There was also a large pearl on the top of the shoe. The pearl was the size of a peanut and had a glossy color. He wondered if it was an eastern pearl or a southern pearl?

Zhou Yongchang couldn't help but gasp. Eldest Miss's shoes were the harvest of a year and a half.

Unexpectedly, Yu Youyao did not ask about the matter which was the most crucial. Instead, she took the initiative to say, "The weather is cold this year. I'm afraid it won't be easy to manage the crops in the village. The subsequent harvests will probably be affected as well. If the crops aren't good, the farmers won't have a good life either. How about this? The rent for this season will be reduced by 50 copper coins per mu."

Zhou Yongchang was stunned. He had thought that Eldest Miss was going to ask about the crops that had not grown well this year. He had already found an excuse to fool her. However, he had never expected that she would ask about it without even asking. Instead, she wanted to reduce the rent of the farmers?

In Zhouzhuang, each household rented at least five acres of land. Every acre cost 50 copper coins, which was 250 copper coins. This was enough for an ordinary family of five to eat for two to three months. If the harvest was indeed not good, this would be life-saving money. Eldest Miss's actions were indeed very benevolent.

Zhou Yongchang was filled with excitement and was about to thank Eldest Miss.

Xia Tao ran in with her hands covering her face. She knelt on the ground with a thud and cried until her eyes were red. "Young Miss, you have to help me!"

Yu Youyao frowned. "You're my maidservant. If you have anything to say, stand up and speak slowly. I'll make the decision for you."

Zhou Yongchang couldn't help but glance at Xia Tao. This maidservant was wearing silk and jewelry. She was no different from the eldest maidservant, Dong Mei, who was standing beside Eldest Miss. He couldn't help but wonder who in the residence was so bold to dare to bully someone who looked good in front of Eldest Miss.

As the saying went, if you don't look at the monk's face, look at the Buddha's face. Even if you hit a dog, look at its owner!

To put it simply, he was blind.

To put it simply, it was a slap to Eldest Miss's face. He was someone who did not take Eldest Miss seriously.

Upon hearing her young miss's words, Xia Tao wiped her tears. "It's, it's the few men who came with Steward Zhou. Young Miss understands their difficulties and instructed me to bring them to the Ting Lan Residence to rest. I've ordered someone to prepare some food and wine for them, so I asked them about the matters in the village."

Zhou Yongchang's body trembled, and his expression changed drastically. This stupid person was actually one of his own?

Today was Eldest Miss's first day of managing the household, and it was time to establish her authority. Yet, Zhou Yongtian had already scolded his maidservant. Wasn't this a slap to Eldest Miss's face?

He opened his mouth and was about to say something to defend himself when he saw Eldest Miss's expression darken. The teacup that she had been holding in her hand was placed on the table. The bottom of the cup clinked against the table with a soft sound.

Zhou Yongchang felt a lump in his throat. He swallowed the words that were about to come out of his mouth and kept quiet out of fear.

Seeing that Xia Tao had stopped talking, Yu Youyao said coldly, "Continue!"

As Xia Tao cried, she said, "Who knew that Zhou Yongtian would scold me and call me a b*tch, saying that I was a slut who had sold myself. He even clenched his fists and wanted to rush up and hit me. Fortunately, I ran away quickly, or else..." After explaining what had happened clearly, Xia Tao cried aggrievedly. "Young Mistress, you have to take responsibility for me."

"Eldest Miss..." Upon hearing this, cold sweat broke out on Zhou Yongchang's forehead. Da Tian was a bold and cautious person. He was the most useful person around him.

Could it be that Xia Tao had asked something that had something to do with him and had angered Da Tian?

Before he could finish speaking, he heard another commotion outside. Everyone in the courtyard looked out.

An old servant scrambled into the courtyard. When she saw Eldest Miss, she fell to her knees and said in a panic, "Eldest Miss, bad news, someone's being hit..."

Dong Mei was shocked and quickly asked, "What do you mean? Tell me!"

The old woman seemed to be frightened. She trembled for a long time before calming down. "The four men who entered the residence with Steward Zhou beat Old Madam Zhang up for some reason..."

When Zhou Yongchang heard this, his eyes darkened.

They had just scolded Eldest Miss's maidservant, and now they were causing trouble in the residence. Not only were they slapping Eldest Miss's face, but they were also ignoring the dignity and face of the Yu Residence?

Yu Youyao's face darkened. She glanced at Zhou Yongchang and stood up from her chair. "Let's go and take a look."

Zhou Yongchang felt like dying when he saw this.

The group made their way to Ting Lan Court.

From afar, they could hear the sound of an old woman crying. When they got closer, they saw Old Madam Zhang sitting on the ground with her hair disheveled, hugging her feet and crying. Her face was scraped and bleeding, looking a little scary.

Meanwhile, Zhou Yongtian and the other three were pressed to the ground by the guards stationed in the outer courtyard, still struggling desperately.

Upon seeing Yu Youyao, Old Madam Zhang hurriedly stood up and limped over to greet her. However, she had only taken two steps when she fell to the ground with a thud. She crawled over to Yu Youyao and cried out for justice—

“Eldest Miss, I’m a maidservant from the outer courtyard’s Tinglan Courtyard. Just now, Miss Xia Tao had brought a few men into the residence with Steward Zhou of the Little Zhouzhuang and asked me to take care of them. Who knew that after eating a table of food and wine, those men were about to go out to look for Steward Zhou. I didn’t let them go out and said that they couldn’t walk around the residence lest they offended Master. Who knew that they would actually attack me? I’ve lived for most of my life, but I’ve really never seen anyone so barbaric as to bully the main family...”

After hearing what had happened, Yu Youyao looked at the four men. “Let them go first.”

The guards released Zhou Yongtian and the others.

Zhou Yongtian and the others collapsed to the ground, looking dazed.

Although they had often followed Steward Zhou into the Yu Residence and had seen some of the world, they were still farmers after all. Seeing how grand the Yu Residence was and hearing that the two old masters of the Yu Residence were both high-ranking officials in the Imperial Court, they were also terrified. They had never seen such a scene before.

Zhou Yongtian went to the toilet. When he heard the old maids’ words, he returned to the side courtyard and discussed with his companions about finding Manager Zhou.

Old Madam Zhang stopped them. When they first entered the residence, this old woman had been polite to them, but now, she was looking down on them and was very arrogant. She even scolded them for being useless.

Zhou Yongtian thought that something had really happened to Steward Zhou, which was why this old woman was so arrogant. He panicked.

They had come here together with Steward Zhou. Now that something had happened to him, they were afraid that they wouldn’t be able to escape. Hence, they were anxious. Seeing that Old Madam Zhang had come up to pull them back, how could they just stand there and let her pull them back? Before they could do anything, they heard Old Madam Zhang let out a scream and fall to the ground, injuring her foot...

Chapter 113 Deceit

Old Madam Zhang shouted, “Someone’s being beaten up. Someone...”

This shout stunned them. Before they could react, five or six guards rushed over from nowhere and knocked them to the ground.

The guards were wearing stylish clothes and had a large saber at their waists. They looked majestic, and the few of them were immediately shocked.

Zhou Yongchang knelt on the ground with a thud. "Eldest Miss, Zhou Yongtian and the others are all farmers. They don't know the rules of the residence, and they didn't cause trouble on purpose. Eldest Miss, please let them off."

No matter how stupid he was, he understood that on the first day that Eldest Miss was in charge of the household, she had wanted to use Mother Yang as a tool to deal with him. However, he had been in charge of Little Zhou's residence for many years, so he couldn't be easily manipulated.

Hence, Eldest Miss bypassed him and directly targeted the people he had brought.

They were all farmers, so how could they have seen much of the world? If they tried to scare them, wouldn't they be scared silly?

Yu Youyao ignored Zhou Yongchang and looked at Zhou Yongtian and the others. "The four of you are causing trouble in the residence. Are you unhappy with the Yu Residence?"

These words were serious. Zhou Yongtian trembled in fear and hurriedly said, "No, no, we didn't cause any trouble, nor are we dissatisfied. We just, just..."

Yu Youyao held her teacup. "But what?"

Zhou Yongtian opened his mouth and couldn't help but glance at Zhou Yongchang. Then, he lowered his head and didn't dare to say anything else.

Yu Youyao waited for a while, but when he didn't say anything, she said, "The Yu Residence has always been generous and benevolent to their tenants. In the past few years, the weather has been good. All the families in the capital have increased their rent by 50 copper coins one after another. The Old Madam in our residence is kind and respectful, so she only increased it by 20 copper coins. I heard that the weather is cold this year and the crops in the manor aren't growing well. I even discussed with Steward Zhou that the rent for this season will be reduced by 50 copper coins per mu."

Zhou Yongtian and the others suddenly widened their eyes, and even their breathing became rapid. Each mu of land cost 50 copper coins, but each family had rented 10 mu of land, which meant 500 copper coins...

When Xia Tao heard this, she hurriedly said, "Eldest Miss, you can't do that. You've always been soft-hearted and kind-hearted, just like Old Madam. Don't be deceived by the people of Zhouzhuang. I've asked around. The weather is a little cold this year, but our residence has been buying vegetables from outside every day. They're big and juicy, and they're also from the farmsteads in the suburbs of the capital. They're all the same. Why aren't the vegetables on Little Zhouzhuang's farm growing well? It's just that they're too useless and don't know how to manage the farm, so they're trying to fool you."

Upon hearing this, Zhou Yongtian and the others looked even more uneasy and panicked.

As farmers who relied on farming to survive, it would be a huge mistake if the crops were not handled well.

Therefore, when they had heard from the old servant of the Tinglan Residence that Eldest Miss had wanted to find fault with Steward Zhou because her crops had not grown well, they thought that

what Steward Zhou had done in the village had been discovered by the residence. That was why they had panicked and wanted to look for Steward Zhou. That was why they had gotten into a fight with the old servant, and in the end, it had ended up in a mess.

Yu Youyao frowned when she heard this and waved her hand. “You caused trouble in the residence today, ignoring the dignity and face of the main family. You also don’t have any respect or gratitude for the main family. In the future, the four of you shouldn’t rent the farmland of the residence. Since the farmers of the Zhouzhuang can’t manage the crops well and caused the main family to suffer losses, it’s fine if you want to fool the main family and reduce the rent. According to the rules of the other families in the capital, you’ll have to pay an additional 30 copper coins per acre. If you don’t want to farm anymore, you can inform Steward Zhou. The Yu Residence won’t force you either. Let me make it clear first. If you still don’t plant good crops and cause the residence to suffer losses, you don’t have to farm anymore.”

Zhou Yongchang collapsed to the ground.

Eldest Miss’s move to take drastic measures had simply caught him off guard. If Eldest Miss wanted to punish him just because he hadn’t handled the vegetables well, even the entire Zhouzhuang would be in an uproar.

However, Eldest Miss had shown both kindness and power. She had tried to reduce the rent for the farmers by a season, but the farmers did not know how to be grateful and were disrespectful to the main family. If this were to be mentioned outside, it would be because they were ungrateful. They would not be able to raise their heads in the future, and other families in the capital would not rent land to them in the future.

The others in Little Zhouzhuang would also resent him and Zhou Yongtian for angering the main family and causing them to suffer losses.

He had quite a bit of prestige in Little Zhouzhuang, but all of this was based on the fact that he could benefit the farmers of Little Zhouzhuang so that they could have fields and food to eat.

Once their interests were involved, their previous respect would turn to dissatisfaction.

Even without the Yu Residence taking action, he probably wouldn’t be able to keep his position as a steward.

In order to appease the Yu Residence’s anger, they would even push him out to take the blame without hesitation. Then, they would choose a more suitable manager who would satisfy the main family.

Zhou Yongtian and the others were even more shocked. The farmland was the lifeblood of the villagers. If the Yu Residence did not allow them to rent farmland, how were they supposed to live?

One of them knelt on the ground with a thud. “Eldest Miss, I’m Zhou Yongniu. I’ve been farming for generations, and I’m good at farming. We don’t have to worry about the crops, nor do we want to fool you...”

Xia Tao said angrily, “You’re still quibbling. Why is it that other families’ crops are growing well, but ours are not? You’re still trying to fool Young Miss...”

These words made Zhou Yongniu feel ashamed. “Although the weather is a little cold this year, the younger ones have long built straw sheds and prepared a lot of thatch. They’ve also prepared some expensive vegetables and fruits and a heater. As long as we put in the effort, we can grow the vegetables well.”

Yu Youyao lowered her head and drank her tea. Her slender eyebrows were slightly furrowed, revealing an unfathomable coldness.

However, Zhou Yongniu continued, “It was Manager Zhou who asked us to raze the straw shed. He said that if the harvest at the farmstead was good, the Yu Residence might increase rent more. In the past two years, the farmsteads in the suburbs of the capital had been rented one after another, so we listened to him. We didn’t want to fool the main family. It was just that there were many people in the family, so we wanted the women and children to have more food. For a moment, we were confused, but there were still some vegetables that grew well, and they were sent into the residence every time...”

When Yu Youyao heard this, she was shocked and furious. She looked at Zhou Yongchang. “Y-you actually dare to fool the main family like this?”

Lying to the higher-ups and being greedy for the master’s money was considered betraying the master. Although he was not a servant of the Yu Residence, he was still a servant who had signed a contract with the master. If the master were to be calculative, he would be sued, punished, and sent to jail.

Zhou Yongchang’s face turned ashen. “Eldest Miss, I had no choice. Yes, yes...”

His eyes widened as he looked around. He was even more shocked when he saw the impressive guards, a few burly old maids, and some maidservants standing in the courtyard.

Chapter 114 Biting Each Other

When he suddenly saw Mother Yang, who was dressed in a dark green outfit, Zhou Yongchang pointed at her and shouted, “It was Mother Yang who instructed me to do this. It was Mother Yang...”

Mother Yang was so shocked that she fell to her knees. “Young Miss, I’m innocent!”

Zhou Yongchang couldn’t care less about Mother Yang, who was crying out for justice. “I’m just a small manager of the manor, but Mother Yang is someone who’s well-known to the master of the residence. I didn’t want to lie to the master, but Mother Yang threatened me with an additional lease, so I had no choice but to consider the farmers of Little Zhouzhuang, so...”

When Mother Yang heard this, she cried. “I’m just a servant. How can I threaten Steward Zhou? Whether or not the rent increases is up to the master. Since when did it become my turn to make decisions? Steward Zhou is slandering me. Eldest Miss, please investigate...”

As she listened to the two of them bickering, Yu Youyao asked calmly, “So, you’re using the cold weather and the fact that the vegetables aren’t growing well as an excuse to buy vegetables from outside to hide the money you’re using to buy vegetables? I see that you’re all deceiving and colluding with each other. It’s obvious that you’ve done this a lot...”

Most of the vegetables did not grow well. When the residence asked about it, their answer was just that the weather was not good, so the master could not be too harsh on them.

There were good ones that had been secretly sent into the residence for the master to eat. The money used to buy vegetables was considered fraud.

This method was not very brilliant, but the steward of the residence had colluded with the steward of the village. Furthermore, all of this was instigated by Yang Shuwan, so it was not easy to detect.

Even if they had sensed it, anyone else would have been fooled.

Zhou Yongchang and Mother Yang suddenly stopped talking, their faces ashen.

What else could they say?

Could it be that they had said to Eldest Miss that all of this had been instructed by Eldest Madam Yang, and that they had only done as she had instructed? That all the money they had kept had ended up in Eldest Madam's hands, and they had only enjoyed a little of it?

Even a smart person would know that these words could not be said.

Eldest Miss's management had Old Madam's backing, but she knew a thing or two about filial piety. If Eldest Miss knew the truth, she would only thing they were deliberately biting each other and would become more furious.

With a loud bang, Yu Youyao smashed the teacup in her hand angrily and stood there with a dark expression, not saying a word.

However, everyone present trembled in fear.

Oh my god, Eldest Miss was not even ten years old. She was only a child, but why did she already have such a terrifying aura?

At this moment, Yu Zongzheng had just left the government office and was about to head to the study when he saw the commotion in front of him. He said to Zhao Da, who was beside him, "Go over and see what's going on."

"Yes—" Zhao Da quickly went over. Seeing Butler Mo standing at the side, he asked him what had happened.

Butler Mo did not dare to hide anything, so he explained everything in detail.

After hearing this, Zhao Da hurriedly returned to report to Yu Zongzheng, "Eldest Madam is seriously ill. She handed the butler's key back to Old Madam, but she couldn't manage the house. Old Madam is also old, so it's not good for her to work too hard, so she asked Nanny Liu to help Eldest Miss manage the house."

Hearing this, Yu Zongzheng frowned.

Although Yao Yao was the eldest daughter of the first wife, and although it was her duty to manage the household, she was still young and had never learned how to manage the household properly. He was afraid that something had gone wrong, which was why this matter had blown up. His expression darkened.

On second thought, he thought of Madam Yang!

In the past, although Madam Yang's management had made some mistakes, it had never been as big as this. It could be seen that she still had some redeeming qualities.

As a result, he thought of the first few days when he had reprimanded Yang Shuwan for not knowing how to manage the house because of the matter of the Tian-tsui. He was afraid that it would hurt Yang Shuwan's heart and she fell sick the moment he turned around. She couldn't even manage the house, so he couldn't help but feel a little guilty.

Yu Zongzheng was thinking that he would go to the storeroom later to pick out a good item and visit Madam Yang in the main courtyard to comfort her. Then, he heard Eldest Miss continue, "Eldest Miss looked at the account book and realized that there was a problem with the main kitchen's purchasing account book, so she asked Mother Yang, who was in charge of purchasing. Mother Yang only said that the weather was cold and the vegetables on the farm weren't growing well, so she had to buy them outside with money. The vegetables outside were more expensive."

Hearing this, Yu Zongzheng nodded. "Continue."

Zhao Da said, "After Eldest Miss heard this, she was worried about the harvest in the village, so she met with Steward Zhou, who was delivering vegetables. Eldest Miss thought that Old Madam was the kindest and most understanding of the villagers, and was worried that the crops wouldn't be good, so she wanted to reduce the rent by 50 copper coins per mu..."

Yu Zongzheng's expression softened. He wouldn't have known if he hadn't heard it, but when he heard it, he felt that although Yao Yao was young, she was thoughtful and kind-hearted like her mother.

All these years, he and his second brother had been able to establish themselves firmly in the imperial court because his mother had done good deeds and cultivated Buddhism, giving the family a good reputation that no one could criticize.

Zhao Da changed the topic. "Who knew that after drinking a few cups of rice wine, the few farmers who came with Steward Zhou started making a fuss in the residence. Not only did they scold Eldest Miss's maidservant, Xia Tao, but they also hit Old Madam Zhang from the outer courtyard. Eldest Miss felt that these people were ungrateful and disrespectful to the main family. She refused to let them continue renting the land in our residence."

Even Yu Zongzheng was furious. "He deserves this."

Zhao Da continued, "One of the farmers panicked when he heard that they couldn't continue to rent farmland. He revealed that Mother Yang from our residence had colluded with Steward Zhou and deliberately managed the farmers poorly. Not only did they not manage the crops well, but they even secretly transported some of the good crops from the village to the residence for the people to eat. This way, the money for the vegetables from the main kitchen's accounts was embezzled by them!"

"How dare they!" Yu Zongzheng was furious when he heard this. He strode over in his official boots.

Upon seeing the old master of the residence, the servants quickly bowed. Yu Youyao also walked up to her father and called out, "Father!"

Zhou Yongchang's face turned ashen.

Zhou Yongtian and the other two looked at the old master in the residence. He was wearing a red official uniform and a dignified official hat. Even the shoes on his feet looked mighty. His entire demeanor was so shocking that they did not even dare to breathe loudly. Their tall and strong bodies could not help but tremble.

Yu Zongzheng ignored them and asked Yu Youyao, "What do you plan to do?"

He had thought that there was a slip-up on Yao Yao's part.

Who would have known that Yao Yao herself was so capable? On the first day, she had discovered that the internal and external managers were colluding with each other and were greedy for the money in the residence. It was obvious that her mother had raised her well over the years. In the past, he had misjudged his eldest daughter.

Chapter 115 Digging a Hole for You

Yu Youyao thought for a moment and said, "Mother Yang and Steward Zhou are both old servants in the residence. In the beginning, they worked for Grandmother, then followed my mother. Now that they're working for my mother, they naturally have a special relationship. It's not good for me to be in charge of the household on my first day. Although I'm in charge, I'm still young and my mother is the mistress of the household. However, some important matters still have to be decided by my mother."

Yao Yao was in charge of the family and could still care about Madam Yang, but she truly respected her stepmother, Yang Shuwan. Yu Zongzheng nodded. "Since you've thought it through, let's do this."

However, the guilt he felt towards Yang Shuwan had completely dissipated.

Just as Yao Yao had said, Mother Yang and Steward Zhou were both old servants in the residence. In the past, they had always worked with their mother and Madam Xie, and had never made a mistake.

However, as soon as they started following Yang Shuwan, they became greedy. It was obvious that Yang Shuwan was indeed not good enough as a household manager. In fact, she was not even as good as a half-grown child like Yao Yao.

It was simply a disgrace.

In addition, Yang Shuwan used to be in charge of the household. It was Yao Yao's first day managing the household, so it was Yang Shuwan's responsibility if anything happened.

At the thought of this, Yu Zongzheng felt a rare warmth for his eldest daughter. He reached out and stroked the top of her head, sighing sincerely. "Yao Yao, you've really grown up. Now, you know how to share your mother's and grandmother's burdens."

Yu Youyao pursed her lips, feeling a little shy. "Mother is sick and Grandmother doesn't have much energy, so I have to take responsibility. This is what I should do."

At this moment, Old Madam Yu also found out about this matter. "This girl is really meticulous when it comes to handling matters. She might not be able to control Steward Zhou, but she can still easily control a few of them."

Nanny Liu also said, "Isn't that so? Even if Zhou Yongchang can cover the sky with one hand in Zhouzhuang, can he still rent his own fields for the farmers to farm? There are old and young people in the village, so how can they support their families without fields? If Eldest Miss were to scare them, wouldn't they panic? Even if Eldest Miss doesn't kill anyone, she can still show them her gratitude and authority."

Old Madam Yu smiled meaningfully. "Has Master returned to the residence?"

Nanny Liu did not understand what she meant for a moment, so she replied obediently, "What a coincidence. When Master returned to the residence from the government office, there was a commotion in the front courtyard, so he found out about this and wanted to go to the main courtyard with Eldest Miss."

Old Madam Yu gave a faint smile. "That's unfortunate." She paused for a moment before continuing, "Yao Yao specially chose the Ting Lan Courtyard."

Nanny Liu was stunned for a moment before she realized what was going on. She immediately slapped her thigh. "Isn't it a must to go through the main study next to the Ting Lan Residence? But how would Eldest Miss know when Master will return? If he returns later today, wouldn't that be..."

Old Madam Yu rolled her eyes at her again. "Stop pretending. I don't believe you haven't guessed it."

Nanny Liu smiled awkwardly and did not say anything.

She could not say everything that Eldest Miss said. Even if she knew, she had to pretend not to know.

Old Madam Yu did not hide anything. "Eldest Brother's leg was injured a few days ago. Although he can already go to the government office, Imperial Physician Li asked him to recuperate carefully for a while. The people in the government office also know that Eldest Master is injured, so they won't trouble him to go there. If he doesn't leave the government office early, he will leave at the right time. No matter what, this matter can't be avoided."

Nanny Liu nodded. Eldest Miss had calculated the time and place, and had arranged a good show.

Old Madam Yu stopped counting the Buddha beads. "Yao Yao is the stepdaughter and it's her first day managing the household, yet she's already finding fault with Mother Yang and Steward Zhou. No one thought that she's deliberately making things difficult for her stepmother. If I step in, there will be people who say that I dote on Yao Yao."

"Now that Eldest Son has appeared, Madam Yang doesn't dare to pursue this matter anymore. She's causing a ruckus in the residence looking for trouble with Yao Yao. Even the servants don't dare to say anything else."

From this, it could be seen that Yao Yao not only knew how to do things, but also how to conduct herself.

In this world, there were many people who knew how to do things.

There were very few people who knew how to conduct themselves.

Usually, if one wasn't too smart, they wouldn't have a good ending. In history, such people were everywhere. However, if one was too stupid and didn't understand the situation, they would end up harming themselves. There was one in the residence.

There were even fewer people who knew how to conduct themselves.

Old Madam Yu sighed slightly. "In the past, Yao Yao was ignorant. I was always worried about what she would do in the future. But now, in just a month or two, she seems to have changed into a different person. I feel terrible."

Nanny Liu did not know what to say.

Old Madam Yu was silent for a while. "That's good too. As an old woman, I'll have to go one day. I can't take care of her forever. She has to be able to stand on her own so that she won't be bullied."

Yu Youyao ordered a few old maids and escorted Steward Zhou and Mother Yang to the main courtyard.

Even if Yu Zongzheng didn't care about his work, such a terrible thing had happened at home, and he happened to run into it. Naturally, there was no reason for him to ignore it so he followed along to take a look.

The group met Yang Shuwan halfway.

She had a thick layer of powder on her face, which made her look even more pale. She was wearing a plain water-colored dress with a wide belt tied around her waist, making her waist look thin and tight. She looked weak and vulnerable, but also slender and charming.

As soon as she saw Master, Yang Shuwan's eyes turned red and she looked like she was about to cry. "Master, although my management isn't as good as Sister Xie, all these years, I've been busy taking care of all the household matters. I often have to bite my tongue. Furthermore, this is such a huge family. Although there have been some mistakes in the family, it has been stable until today."

She had not forgotten that a few days ago, Master had immediately compared her to Madam Xie.

She had been sick for a few days and had even handed over the butler's key. Wouldn't Master feel guilty towards her? She had taken the initiative to mention Madam Xie to deepen his guilt towards her.

When Yu Zongzheng heard this, he also felt that what she said made sense, and the anger in his heart dissipated a little.

Yang Shuwan observed his expression and felt relieved. She wiped her tears with a handkerchief and continued to cry miserably. "I haven't been feeling well these past few days. The doctor asked me to recuperate carefully for a few days. Even though I couldn't continue to manage the residence, I handed over the key. Old Madam asked Eldest Miss to manage the residence, but I had no objections. Eldest Miss is the eldest daughter of the first wife and isn't young anymore. It's time for her to learn and set an example for the other young misses in the residence."

At this point, she stopped talking, but her tears fell even more fiercely. She was truly a weeping beauty, so weak—

“Mother Yang and Butler Zhou are both old people. After I became the person in charge, I followed the previous rules. I didn’t know that they had done something wrong, but they just had to blame it on me...”

Chapter 116 Bad News

In the afternoon, Nanny Li went to look for Mother Yang. Only then did she realize that Mother Yang hadn’t taken the initiative to look for her because she was with Chun Xiao and couldn’t leave.

She knew that something bad had happened.

Immediately after, she followed the people from the manor into the residence. The people that Steward Zhou had brought had caused trouble in the residence, and she was worried, so she asked Nanny Li to secretly go to Ting Lan Courtyard to listen to the news.

In the end, Nanny Li saw that her master had left the government office. Without even bothering to listen to the news, she rushed back to the main courtyard to report to her.

She quickly got someone to change her clothes and was about to rush to Ting Lan Courtyard.

Unexpectedly, Yu Youyao had indeed led Old Master here and trapped Mother Yang and Steward Zhou in the main courtyard. It was obvious that she had been set on fire.

This was why Yang Shuwan had cried and complained when she saw Yu Zongzheng.

At first, Yu Zongzheng still felt that Madam Yang’s words made sense, but as he listened, he felt that something was amiss. “You mean, Butler Zhou and Mother Yang are trying to accuse you?”

Yao Yao hadn’t mentioned this just now. She had only said that Mother Yang and Steward Zhou had deceived their superior and concealed their mistakes.

Yang Shuwan was stunned for a moment before crying her heart out again. “They were already tied up and brought to the main courtyard. Wouldn’t they have accused me? Why didn’t you bring them elsewhere?”

Yu Zongzheng’s expression darkened even more. “Are you blaming Yao Yao for leading them to you? Do you think she deliberately brought Steward Zhou and Mother Yang here to criticize you?”

Yang Shuwan’s face turned pale. She quickly said, “I-I didn’t say that!”

Yu Zongzheng said angrily, “You didn’t say that, but that’s exactly what you meant.”

Seeing that her master was angry, Yang Shuwan had a bad feeling. She hurriedly denied, “I really didn’t mean that...”

Seeing that she was still quibbling and was about to flare up, Yu Youyao took a step forward. “Father’s leg hasn’t recovered yet, so you can’t get angry. It won’t be good for your health. Mother is recuperating in the main courtyard, and I’m afraid you don’t know the details of what happened earlier, so she has some misunderstandings about me. When I explain it clearly to Mother, Mother will naturally understand.”

Yu Zongzheng took a deep breath and calmed his anger. He remained silent with a dark expression. But when Yang Shuwan heard this, she knew that something was wrong.

According to the situation, after Old Master returned to the residence, was there any other inside information that Nanny Li had not found out?

So what she had said earlier had backfired?

Yu Youyao bowed to Yang Shuwan and continued, "Mother has been in charge of the household for many years, and she has worked hard and done a lot. This time, Mother has been seriously ill, and Grandmother has asked me to manage the household because she wants to share Mother's burden. I'm young and inexperienced, and I've never been in charge of the household seriously in the past, but I'm very cautious and don't dare to be careless at all. I'm worried that if I don't do a good job, not only will I not be able to share Mother's burden, but I'll also burden her. I'm also very careful and don't dare to make any mistakes."

Yu Zongzheng nodded as he listened. It was obvious that this was the reason why she had discovered the collusion in the main kitchen. It was obvious that she was really trying to manage the household.

Yang Shuwan's face stiffened. She did not know whether to laugh or cry. For a moment, she did not know what to say.

Yu Youyao continued, "I also felt that since all the vegetables in the manor had grown, why were they still buying so many vegetables outside? I asked, and Mother Yang said that the weather was cold this year and that the vegetables in the manor hadn't grown well. I thought that the other crops must have also been affected, so I met with Steward Zhou to discuss reducing the rent."

Hearing this, Yang Shuyuan suddenly tightened her grip on her handkerchief. She opened her mouth, wanting to interrupt—

"Who knew that the person Steward Zhou had brought along would cause trouble in the residence. As the head of the household, how could he tolerate this? He didn't expect that Mother Yang and Steward Zhou would collude and covet the money in the residence."

Yang Shuwan's eyes widened in shock. They hadn't mentioned her at all. So, Butler Zhou and Mother Yang didn't implicate her?

Then why had Yu Youyao brought Mother Yang and Steward Zhou to the main courtyard to look for her?

Yu Youyao looked ashamed. "I was still young and hadn't experienced such an important matter, so I panicked for a moment. I thought that since Mother was the mistress of the household and I was only helping to manage the household, there were some important matters in the family that needed Mother's decision to show how important the rules in the residence were. Therefore, I brought Steward Zhou and Mother Yang over to look for Mother, hoping that Mother would make a decision. I didn't expect that Mother would misunderstand. I was in the wrong. Mother, don't be angry. It'll be my fault if you're angry."

When Yang Shuwan heard this, her vision darkened and she almost fainted on the spot. Her head, which had stopped hurting a few days ago, started throbbing again.

If this matter did not implicate her, then what she had said the moment she met the Eldest Master just now would be measuring the stature of great men by the yardstick of small men. Furthermore, the one who was judged was her stepdaughter, and she did so in front of the Eldest Master and many people in the residence.

In that case, her reputation as a gentle and magnanimous mother would probably be greatly reduced.

A person's reputation had to be accumulated slowly.

Back then, as the daughter of a concubine, she had married into the Yu Residence as a second wife within a hundred days of the first wife, Madam Xie. Even then, she had been criticized by many people. It was only after she had entered the Yu Residence that she had used a lot of money to win people's hearts and become known as a loving mother. Then, she had slowly built up her reputation as a gentle and magnanimous person. In the past few years, she had finally established herself in the noble circle of the capital.

However, this time, even though the residence was closed off, it involved the matters of the village. There were too many people involved and there should be some news outside.

Seeing that Yang Shuwan hadn't said anything, Yu Youyao was a little panicked. She quickly said, "It's my fault for making you work so hard for the residence. Please forgive me."

Yang Shuwan's head hurt terribly. Her mouth trembled as the words left her mouth...

However, Yu Zongzheng shouted back, "Madam Yang, even if you don't know about Steward Zhou and Mother Yang's greed for the money in the residence, you were in charge of this family previously. You were also at fault for not doing your job properly and managing the household properly. This matter should have been handled by you. Don't put on airs."

"I..." In front of so many people, Yang Shuwan was on the verge of collapse, and her ears were ringing.

However, she thought to herself, It's over, it's over. After this commotion, even if I use my recovery as an excuse for her to hand over the right to manage the family, Master wouldn't feel guilty about it at all.

He would probably be even more dissatisfied!

After figuring this out, Yang Shuwan knew that Yu Youyao had deliberately dug a hole for her to jump into.

However, she had shot herself in the foot. She had handed over her authority as the head of the household, but she had not gained anything. Instead, she had made Yu Youyao, who was a good-for-nothing, take the opportunity to play dirty tricks.

However, the more Yu Zongzheng spoke, the angrier he became. He suddenly raised his voice and said, "Yao Yao'er is only a half-grown child. Now that this has happened, not only did she not deal with it privately, but she also didn't report it Old Madam. Instead, she directly brought them to you and let you deal with them. This is to save your face and let the servants see your dignity as the mistress of the household, so that they won't dare to criticize you because of this."

Chapter 117 Grace and Power

When the servants heard this, they thought about it carefully and realized that it made sense. For a moment, they looked at Yu Youyao differently.

It was said that the Third Miss in the residence was kind-hearted.

However, they felt that Eldest Miss was even more generous and proper. She was kind and filial.

Yu Zongzheng sneered. "Yao Yao has good intentions, but you actually suspect that she deliberately brought Steward Zhou and Mother Yang over to criticize you. Do you still need to criticize her? If they make a mistake, it means that you didn't manage the house well. It's your fault in the first place. You can't deny it even if you want to."

Yang Shuwan's mouth trembled as she suppressed her headache. She quickly said, "I-I didn't know the truth and misunderstood Yao Yao." With that, she held Yu Youyao's hand and forced a smile. She said gently, "Yao Yao, I apologize. Don't be angry with me."

Yu Youyao only felt that Madam Yang's hand was wet and cold. It was sweaty and uncomfortable to hold. Hence, she lowered her head and lowered her eyes, saying softly, "Mother, you're being too serious. You're not feeling well and should be recuperating well, but I'm the one who's being insensible and causing you trouble."

After the two of them said a few words of "filial piety", Yu Zongzheng's anger subsided a little.

Yu Youyao quietly removed her hand from Yang Shuwan's grip and asked, "Mother, Mother Yang and Steward Zhou are both here. How should we deal with them?"

At the mention of this, Yang Shuwan gritted her teeth and said angrily, "These dog slaves are deceiving their superiors and subordinates. How dare they covet the money in the residence? They must be bold. We can't let them off easily."

Yu Youyao listened carefully and said nothing.

Mother Yang and Steward Zhou, who were kneeling on the ground, were so frightened that they almost fainted. They quickly broke free from the old maids' grip and crawled to Yang Shuwan's feet, crying and begging for mercy.

"First Madam, please spare me. I know my mistake. I won't dare to do it again. First Madam, please spare me on account of how I've always done my best for you..."

"First Madam, I'm loyal to you and have always done as you instructed. Please spare me this time, First Madam..."

When Yang Shuwan heard the cries of Mother Yang and Steward Zhou, her heart skipped a beat.

These two old fellows were clearly threatening her openly. If she did not let them off, they would really bite her in front of Master.

Previously, they had deliberately gone to Yu Youyao for a way out by not calling her out in front of her.

Yang Shuwan panicked, but at this moment, the Old Master and all the servants in the residence were watching. If they were to be punished lightly, it would seem like she was really guilty. Hence, she made up her mind and said, "Each of you will be punished with 50 strokes of the paddle and sent to the authorities to be convicted."

Mother Yang and Steward Zhou were so frightened that they cried on the spot.

When the servants of the Great Zhou Dynasty arrived at the government, they would be punished with 30 strokes of the paddle. Then, they would be locked up for half a month. If they were still alive, they would be exiled to do manual labor. Most of them were injured and would never be treated by a doctor. Furthermore, they would travel a long way. On the way, they could not take it anymore and their corpses were exposed in the wilderness.

Even if they could reach the place of exile, there were very few who could endure the endless hard work every day.

Even a person would not be able to withstand 80 strokes of the paddle. First Madam was asking for their lives!

Looking at the miserable state of the two of them, the others in the residence also felt that First Madam was too ruthless.

Everyone was working in the residence, so how could they not know who had instructed Mother Yang and Steward Zhou to be so blatantly greedy for money?

How could they not know whose pocket the money had entered?

First Madam had taken all the benefits, but in the end, she burned the bridge after crossing it. She didn't even want to give them a way out.

With First Madam's personality, they wouldn't dare to work for her in the future.

Yu Zongzheng couldn't care less. He frowned and turned to look at Yu Youyao. "Yao Yao, what do you think of this?"

Yang Shuwan clenched her handkerchief tightly in anger.

What did Master mean? She was the head of the household, yet he had to ask Yu Youyao about how she was handling the servants? Did he think that she was inferior to a half-grown child like Yu Youyao?

Yu Youyao glanced at Steward Zhou and Mother Yang. She couldn't bear to see them like this. She hesitated for a moment, not knowing what to say.

Seeing her troubled expression, Yu Zongzheng guessed that she was concerned about Madam Yang, so he said, "Just tell me!"

When Steward Zhou and Mother Yang heard this, they hurriedly crawled to Eldest Miss and cried for mercy. "Eldest Miss, we're all servants. Even if we had the guts of a bear or a leopard, we wouldn't dare to be greedy for the money in the residence. I did do something wrong, but we weren't the ones who were greedy for the money. It was..."

Yu Zongzheng's gaze focused on Yang Shuwan.

Yang Shuwan was shocked. Just as she was about to shout at them to stop talking, she heard Yu Youyao say in a gentle voice, "Father, Mother was angry that Steward Zhou and Mother Yang had fooled her. In a moment of anger, she wanted to punish them severely. This is only human nature. However, I feel that Mother Yang is a member of the family and has served the family for generations. Even if she loses all her assets and is sent to the village to continue working for the residence, it can still be considered a master-servant relationship."

However, she could not let Mother Yang and Steward Zhou really accuse Madam Yang. Otherwise, Madam Yang's reputation would be tarnished and it would also affect the Yu family's reputation.

On the first day of managing the household, she had already been involved in matters of the residence, and now, she had even implicated Yang Shuwan. It was inevitable that people would think that she had done it on purpose, and it would not be good for her reputation.

It was too late.

Now that her father was dissatisfied with Yang Shuwan and had doubts, it was time to stop.

When Mother Yang heard this, she stopped blaming Yang Shuwan. She was instantly filled with gratitude and kept kowtowing to Eldest Miss. Every kowtow was sincere. In just a few moments, her forehead was bruised. "I thank Eldest Miss for her kindness. Eldest Miss is as kind and benevolent as Old Madam. You will definitely be rewarded in the future. When I go to the village, I will definitely do my best and not let down Eldest Miss's friendship. In the future, I will eat vegetarian meals, pay respects to Buddha with Old Madam, and pray for Eldest Miss every day."

First Madam wanted her dead.

But Eldest Miss was willing to help her. This was a life-saving favor, a huge favor.

Butler Zhou also looked at Eldest Miss expectantly.

Yu Youyao did not let him down. "As for Steward Zhou, although he's not a servant in the residence, I heard that his father used to help out with the matters in the residence. All these years, there have been no major mistakes in Little Zhouzhuang. We can confiscate his money and release him from his contract.." At this point, she paused for a moment and thought for a moment. Then, she continued, "I heard that there was a large forest in Little Zhouzhuang. As the soil was too shallow, people didn't spend much effort on it. I asked Steward Zhou to plant pine wood there. Pine wood is easy to grow, and it can grow everywhere. Pine nuts and pine flowers are extremely good things. Pine oil can be used to make wax, pine wood can be used to make furniture, smoke meat, and used as firewood. It also has many other uses."

Chapter 118 Stick and Carrot Approach

Zhou Yongchang thought that although planting trees was hard labor, not only would it save his life, but he would also have a job in the future, so that he could live his life well.

For servants like them who had made mistakes, if it was serious, they would be punished like First Madam and sent to the government. If they were beaten and exiled, their lives would be in danger.

Even the lightest mistakes would cause them to be chased out. Such an experience could easily be found out by others. In the future, they wouldn't be able to find any work outside. Soon, their days would be numbered.

Even though Eldest Miss dealt with the servants, she was still sincere and righteous. Zhou Yongchang also kowtowed gratefully like Mother Yang.

After thinking about it carefully, Yu Zongzheng could tell that Yao Yao had put in a lot of effort to deal with this matter. It was indeed a show of kindness. "Alright, we'll do as you say."

The other servants also felt that Eldest Miss was benevolent and looked at her with admiration.

Yang Shuwan watched helplessly as Yu Youyao tried to win others over. She was so angry that she was trembling, but she had no choice but to laugh. "Yao Yao, you handled this very well. Just now, Mother was so angry that she said some harsh words. Mother Yang and Zhou Yongchang are both old servants in the residence, so we have a strong relationship with them. Naturally, we can't really send them to the government. Otherwise, others will think that our family treats the servants harshly."

Yu Youyao pursed her lips and chuckled. "I've only learned a little from watching you manage the household. I hope you don't blame me for crossing the line."

How was this learning from her? It was obvious that someone was guiding her from behind.

Yang Shuwan felt a stab in her heart and quickly said, "Of course not. I'm sick now. If Yao Yao can help manage the household, I can also recuperate in peace. I can't thank you enough, so how could I blame you?"

Yu Youyao felt relieved. "Mother, you don't look too good. You must be tired. I'll get someone to find a doctor to take a look at you. Mother, you can rest!"

Yang Shuwan was stunned for a moment before she realized what she had meant. Her expression froze again, and she couldn't refuse even if she wanted to. "Thank you, Yao Yao."

Previously, she had deliberately used her illness to hand over the butler's key. Now, Yu Youyao's words made it clear that she wanted to use this illness to let her continue recuperating.

At this moment, it would be difficult for her to take over the position of butler from Yu Youyao.

Yu Zongzheng patted Yu Youyao's small shoulder and praised, "Yao Yao, you're really thorough. I was right about you. From now on, you'll have to spend more effort in this family."

These words undoubtedly affirmed Yu Youyao's ability as a household manager. Even if Yang Shuwan recovered in the future, she probably wouldn't take back all the authority as a manager easily.

At the thought of this, the blood drained from Yang Shuwan's face. She held Yu Youyao's hand and said gently, "Yao Yao, it's already very tiring for you to have to go to school every day and learn from Nanny Xu. You also have to help manage the household because of Mother's illness. It's been hard on you during this period. When Mother recovers, I'll definitely thank you."

Yu Youyao said softly, "Mother, you're too polite. It's only right."

Yu Zongzheng also realized that it wasn't appropriate to keep letting Yao Yao manage the household, so he said to Madam Yang, "Take good care of yourself and recover as soon as possible. You can't let Yao Yao manage the residence alone. It will affect her studies."

At first, Yang Shuwan was delighted when she heard this, but when she heard the rest, her face stiffened. What did Master mean? Even if she recovered, he still wanted Yu Youyao to continue managing the house with her?

How could that be?

Yang Shuwan couldn't help but want to speak.

However, Yu Zongzheng had never liked to deal with these matters in the residence. Now that everything had been settled, how could he stay any longer? "I still have something to do in the study, so I'll leave first."

With that, he strode away without waiting for Yang Shuwan to react.

Yang Shuwan almost fell over in anger. She had to ask Nanny Li for help to prevent herself from losing her composure.

Yu Youyao pursed her lips and bowed to Yang Shuwan. "If Mother isn't feeling well, you should rest well. There are still some matters in the front yard that haven't been settled. I'll go over now."

With that, without waiting for Yang Shuwan to react, she had already led the maidservants to the front courtyard.

Yang Shuwan watched helplessly as Yu Youyao was escorted away by the servants of the residence. This scene was so piercing that her eyes hurt, and she even tore the handkerchief in her hand. "She's rebelling. This little b*tch is rebelling. Look at her, she's pretending so well in front of her father. Those who don't know better would think that she came from my stomach. Once her father leaves, she'll ignore me completely..."

Nanny Li felt her scalp go numb. "Madam, lower your voice. We're still outside the main courtyard..."

Yang Shuwan reacted and looked around. Her head hurt again and again. If she had known earlier, she would have stayed in the main courtyard and waited for Yu Youyao to bring Zhou Yongchang and Mother Yang over. In her own courtyard, she could have covered it up no matter what.

But now, it was really embarrassing. She had lost all her face.

Yang Shuwan complained to Nanny Li, "How did you hear the news? I was reprimanded by Master for no reason."

When Nanny Li heard this, she was so frightened that she bent down and trembled. "I-I panicked when I saw Master. I was afraid that Eldest Miss would gossip about it in front of Master, so I wanted to hurry back and report it to Madam so that you could react in time. Who knew..."

Yang Shuwan gritted her teeth in anger. "Why don't you use your brain to think about it? You've spent a lot of time here and there. It's time for that b*tch Yu Youyao to be humiliated."

Nanny Li felt very wronged, but she apologized in a panic. "It's all my fault."

However, she thought to herself, "How could I have known that Master would actually come to the main courtyard with Eldest Miss? Master usually doesn't care about the affairs of the household."

Even First Madam herself had not expected this. Otherwise, why would she be so panicked?

After Yu Youyao returned to the front courtyard, she ordered someone to call Zhou Yongtian and the other three over. “Although you have nothing to do with Zhou Yongchang and Mother Yang’s greed for money in the residence, it’s also a fact that your Zhouzhuang has been fooling the main family. It’s also a fact that you didn’t manage the crops well. Go back and make things clear to the people in the residence. In the future, there will be an increase of 30 copper coins per mu. The harvest this season has to be 15% more than in previous years. If you can’t do it, don’t farm on the land of the residence in the future.”

On the other hand, Zhou Yongtian and the others were deeply grateful. What Eldest Miss meant was that they could continue to rent farmland in Zhouzhuang. This was more worth it than anything else.

In other words, the Yu Residence was still very kind.

Even after such a thing happened, the rent did not increase much. It was only about the same as the other residences in the capital. In the past few years, the situation had been going well, so they had to take good care of the crops. These rentals were considered light to them. If they could eat their fill and save some money, they could still live well and have some hope.

Chapter 119 Kind and Benevolent

Yu Youyao continued, “As soon as I took over as the manager today, Old Madam told me that the farmers in Zhouzhuang had been working for many years and were all capable people. She told me to treat them well, so I wouldn’t turn a ship full of people upside down. Now that Steward Zhou has ended his contract, someone needs to represent the village. Go back and discuss this. Pick a capable steward to come to the residence to see me. After all, the farmland in Little Zhouzhuang will be rented out to him. It’s convenient for you to manage it yourself.”

Zhou Yongtian was overjoyed when he saw the stick and the carrot.

Eldest Miss was still willing to trust Zhouzhuang, so the few of them were sincerely grateful and respectful to her. “Eldest Miss, don’t worry. When we return to Zhouzhuang, we’ll definitely discuss it with Elder Zhuang and find you a capable and honest steward. We won’t disappoint you again.”

Yu Youyao was very satisfied. She called Xia Tao over and handed them some pastries that she had prepared. “Take these snacks with you on the way.”

It took more than four hours to travel from the capital to Zhouzhuang. It was the hardest to travel on an empty stomach. Zhou Yongtian and the others each held a large oil paper bag and kowtowed a few times to Eldest Miss, wishing they could die for her.

After dealing with all this, Yu Youyao had originally planned to return to the Jade Courtyard to rest. However, Qiu Xing immediately came over to report, “Eldest Miss, Manager Sun of the Jinxiu Manor is here. He’s waiting in the guest courtyard.”

Yu Youyao sat back down. “When did Manager Sun arrive?”

Qiu Xing hurriedly said, “He’s been here for half an hour. I heard that First Madam is sick, and Eldest Miss is helping to manage the household. He has something to discuss and can’t leave, so he’s been waiting in the guest courtyard.”

Yu Youyao thought for a moment and said, “Bring him to the Windfall Courtyard, which is not far from the main courtyard. I’ll be there soon. From now on, all the matters in the family will be

handled there. It's closer to Mother, so if there's anything important, we can report it to her as soon as possible."

Qiu Xing complied and left.

At this moment, Nanny Xu brought over a bowl of medicinal cuisine. "It's been hard on you, Sister. Have some food and rest for a while. You're still young, you can't work too hard."

Yu Youyao threw herself into Nanny Xu's arms and whined, "Nanny, why is it so difficult to manage the household? It seems like there are endless things to do. I don't want to manage the household anymore..."

Nanny Xu looked at her childish behavior and felt a little amused.

This girl had just instructed Xia Tao and the others to arrange a good show in the residence. She did not look like a half-grown child, but like a little "house manager".

Now, she had revealed her true colors. She really did not know what to say.

Nanny Xu coaxed her, "It's also the first day. There are rules and routines in the residence. Nanny Liu can handle them herself. I can't let you tire yourself out. Bear with it for now."

In Windfall Courtyard—

Manager Sun held a cup decorated with pink plum blossom branches and drank some tea. The top-grade Biluochun was green and tempting in the porcelain bowl. It curled up like a snail and tasted fragrant and fresh.

It was rare for her to have such good tea in other houses. Now that the Yu Residence had a new manager, even the way they treated their guests had become much more polite.

When Manager Sun arrived, there was a commotion in the residence.

Even though the Yu Residence had strict rules, it was inevitable that she heard a few words from the maidservants. After thinking about it carefully, she could roughly guess what had happened.

The Eldest Miss of the Yu Residence was not an ordinary person. On the first day, she had exposed the wrongdoings of the residence and the stewards who were greedy for money. Not only had she established authority in the residence, but she had also helped the Yu Residence to avoid any losses.

Just as Manager Sun was lost in thought, she heard the young maidservant's deliberately low voice from outside—

"... Eldest Miss said that Mother Yang was a child of a family that had a relationship of serving the family for generations, so she was sent to the village to continue working for the residence. It was also to fulfill the master-servant relationship..."

Manager Sun recalled the last time she had seen the Eldest Miss of the Yu Residence. She was still a young child, but she had just revealed her beauty. Every word and action of hers was filled with generosity. She couldn't help but tilt his ear—

“... Steward Zhou and his son have done many things for the residence for many years, and they rarely make mistakes... Let him plant trees in the forest of Little Zhouzhuang to make up for his mistakes...”

Manager Sun looked out and saw a maidservant and an old servant talking together. From the corner of her eye, she happened to see that the two of them were smiling. When she mentioned Eldest Miss, she respected her from the bottom of her heart.

“Eldest Miss is really like Old Madam, kind and benevolent.” Then, she continued to praise Eldest Miss Yu.

Manager Sun understood what was going on. Eldest Miss Yu cared about the relationship between master and servant, so she always let others live. Which of the servants in the residence could guarantee that they wouldn’t make mistakes?

Which servant wouldn’t be convinced by such a kind and benevolent master?

It was truly a show of grace and power!

Manager Sun took a sip of tea. The young maidservant in the room served her a new cup of tea and replaced the old one. Even though she had to wait for almost an hour, she still felt very comfortable with such a polite greeting.

It was no wonder that the servants in the residence praised Eldest Miss.

Just as she was thinking this, a young maidservant’s voice came from the door. “Eldest Miss is here.”

Manager Sun hurriedly put down her teacup and stood up from her chair. She turned to look at the door, only to see the green curtains of the room being lifted as Eldest Miss Yu walked in.

Even Manager Sun, who was experienced and knowledgeable, couldn’t help but gasp.

She was wearing a red dress with embroidered golden branches, and a thin muslin shirt with golden branches. On her chest was a red-gold peony hairpin with seven-colored gems embedded in it. She looked like she was wearing jewelry. Her head was combed to resemble a single conch, and there were small red-gold peony accessories wrapped around it. There were also red gems embedded in the center of the peonies.

It didn’t matter if the jewelry was exquisite, especially the fine muslin shirt that was draped over her. The silk garnet pendant patterns on it were made of gold thread that was slightly thicker than hair. It was true gold. It was said that this craftsmanship was only available in the Quanzhou Prefecture. There were only a few pieces a year, and most of them were sent into the palace as tributes.

She had only heard of it, but had never seen it before!

But who wouldn’t recognize gold?

Eldest Miss Yu’s outfit was truly imposing. Even though she was young, she still exuded a noble aura that made others feel very humble. They did not even dare to look at her directly.

As expected of a leader.

Manager Sun quickly stepped forward with a smile and said politely, “Eldest Miss, you’re very busy. Sorry for disturbing you.”

Yu Youyao also smiled and said, “It’s my first day managing the household, so there are many things I don’t know how to do. I’ve made you wait for a long time. Manager Sun, please take a seat.”

Manager Sun sat back down obediently.

The maidservant quickly served fresh tea.

Manager Sun waited for Eldest Miss Yu to put down her teacup before saying, “A few days ago, some of the clothes ordered by the Yu Residence were made. Thinking that the residence was waiting to wear them, I sent a few over first.”

Yu Youyao nodded. “Thank you, Manager Sun.”

The two old maids quickly moved the box that Manager Sun had brought to the middle of the living room. Manager Sun opened the box and neatly folded the clothes one by one.

Chapter 120 Another Demon Child

Yu Youyao looked at them one by one.

After taking a closer look at the style and colors, she was worried that there would be something inappropriate. If the young misses in the residence were to wear it out, they would lose their composure and etiquette. It would be a small matter if they were made a fool of. However, if they lacked etiquette, it would be a disaster.

Immediately after, Yu Youyao saw a loose-fitting shirt with a round collar and large sleeves. There was a seam at the knee of the dress, and a pleated skirt at the bottom. The loose-fitting shirt was made of snow satin, but it didn’t even have a pattern. However, it looked simple and elegant.

Yu Youyao could imagine how elegant and beautiful this set of clothes would look on her. When she moved, there would be a row of pleats at the bottom, gently rolling in the wind like a flower swaying. How elegant and beautiful would that look?

Among all the dresses, this one was particularly eye-catching.

Yu Youyao turned to look at Manager Sun, who quickly said, “This was made by the Third Miss of the residence herself. She also made the design herself.”

Yu Youyao nodded slightly. “According to the ‘Records of the Great Court’ of the previous dynasty, the tunic was made of thin white cloth, with a round collar and large sleeves. Below it was a horizontal robe as an outer garment. At the waist, there was a layer of silk. The scholars and the students of the state and county had to wear it.”

Manager Sun was stunned. He couldn’t help but take a closer look at the clothes. Although these clothes were a little different from the description, he could roughly see many similarities.

At this point, Yu Youyao’s tone changed slightly, revealing a hint of warmth and indifference. “When it came to the Great Zhou Dynasty, it was no longer popular. Students and scholars all liked to wear long and deep clothes, but the tradition of wearing the lanshan had not been abolished.

Furthermore, on some important occasions, such as the memorial ceremony of the countryside school, the students' celebration, and the worship of the Confucius Temple, all of them had to wear lanshans to show their respect to Confucius. Is this a precedent?"

When Manager Sun heard this, even his body trembled. He hurriedly said, "It's all because of the Jinxiu Manor's negligence. I didn't expect that the style of this outfit would be made according to the style of the lanshan. The lanshan was not very popular in the Great Zhou Dynasty, so I didn't pay much attention to it. I only saw that Third Miss looked good, but I almost made a mistake."

There were also some clothes in the books that looked like the lanshan, but most of them were men's clothes and were a little different from the real thing. How could the tailors who made the clothes know how to do this? They just followed the looks.

Unexpectedly, when the clothes were made, they looked just like a lanshan.

The Yu Residence was an official's residence, so they had to be even more careful with their words and actions. A lanshan was nothing much, but if news of this were to spread, it would be inevitable that someone with ulterior motives would take the opportunity to attack the Yu Residence. It would be disrespectful to wear a lanshan.

The Yu Residence was a scholarly family, and they respected Confucius. If word got out that they didn't respect Confucius, it would really stir up a hornet's nest for all the scholars in the world.

Just this outfit alone could destroy the scholarly reputation that the Yu Clan had accumulated for generations.

At that time, Jinxiu Manor would also be implicated.

Yu Youyao's voice became a little calmer. "Every dynasty has extremely strict clothes-making etiquette. If there's a mistake in the clothes, it'll be too serious. Even if this lanshan isn't part of the popular culture, there's still the etiquette of wearing it. It's very important. Third Sister is raised in her own room, so she doesn't know about this. Jinxiu Manor is an old embroidery house that the Yu Residence uses. It's a place where everything is new and unique. It also has the mentality of a business. Even the Yu Residence feels that the clothes in Jinxiu Manor are new, so they've been using it all this time. However, we have to be careful."

Although Yu Jianjia did not fight for it, she had to be different in every way, so she wanted to make clothes that looked like a lanshan. Lanshans were not popular in the Great Zhou Dynasty, and the Confucian school did not have a clear rule that a lanshan was important.

It made sense that Yu Jianjia did not know about this.

Manager Sun's face turned pale. Other than agreeing repeatedly, she could not say anything else.

Eldest Miss Yu was a formidable person. Her words just now were clear and logical, but she understood the severity of it.

The Third Miss had been raised in ignorance, but the Jinxiu Manor had not been cautious. With just a few words, they had removed the Third Miss from the painting, and the wrong ones had become the Jinxiu Manor.

At such a young age, she already had such knowledge, breadth of mind, and methods.

At the thought of Yu Jianjia, Yu Youyao softened her tone. "This lanshan has to be modified. The round collar will be made into a fashionable round collar. The wide sleeves will remain the same, and the cross between the knees will be moved down a little. The missing material will come from me. Remember to be more cautious in the future."

Manager Sun heaved a sigh of relief and quickly said, "Thank you, Eldest Miss."

Although it was Third Miss Yu who had requested for the garment to be made, the stakes involved were the fault of the Jinxiu Manor. Now that the material had been damaged, it was time for the Jinxiu Manor to compensate.

She was the one who had handled the clothes of the Yu Residence, so this responsibility had fallen on her shoulders. Even the Jinxiu Manor had to be calculative, so she probably wouldn't be able to keep her position as the shopkeeper.

Since Eldest Miss Yu was willing to come up with something herself, even if she did not pursue this matter anymore, she did not have to take responsibility and let others catch her red-handed.

No wonder everyone in the Yu Residence said that Eldest Miss Yu was kind.

Yu Youyao looked at the other clothes one by one. Other than this lanshan, there was nothing wrong with the other clothes. She nodded in satisfaction. "The Jinxiu Manor lives up to its reputation."

As soon as she said this, Manager Sun finally heaved a sigh of relief. "Eldest Miss, you flatter me. The Jinxiu Manor will definitely work harder on the remaining clothes. Even if we have to push aside the other residences' requests, we have to make the Yu Residence's clothes first."

Yu Youyao smiled and asked Xia Tao to give her the silver. "Thank you, Manager Sun."

Manager Sun weighed her wallet lightly and her smile deepened. She was about to make a trip to the second house when Yu Youyao said, "It's getting late. Manager Sun, you should go back first. I'll make the arrangements to send the clothes to the second house. If there are any problems, I'll get someone to send them back to the Jinxiu Manor to be changed."

Manager Sun thanked her profusely.

It was indeed not appropriate to go to the second house now, but since the clothes had already been delivered, there was no reason to take them back. Even if they had made the clothes together, there was no reason to give them to the first house first.

Eldest Miss's suggestion was very considerate.

After Manager Sun left, Yu Youyao looked at a few more sets of clothes. After confirming that there were no problems, she got someone to send the clothes to the second house. She then pointed at a pomegranate dress. "Send it to Fourth Sister."

Qiu Xing hurriedly took the clothes and went to the Hanlu Courtyard.

After being taught a lesson by her father, Yu Qingning had become more well-behaved recently.

At this moment, Yu Qingning was carrying five books and learning to walk in the courtyard. She no longer fell all the time like before, but the books on her head were not allowed to fall. Every time they fell, she would be punished with an incense stick.

She had been walking for two hours straight. The blisters on the soles of her feet had yet to heal, but new ones had already appeared. Her legs were sore and numb, and her stomach and legs were trembling.

At this moment, a sharp voice came from outside. Yu Qingning tilted her head to listen. “Jinxiu Manor has sent a set of clothes over. Eldest Miss asked me to bring it over for Fourth Miss quickly.”