

All Hail 171

Chapter 171 - 171 Cousin Looks Good Too

Now, Young Master could remain calm. As he flipped through a book, he asked him to do the massage without even frowning.

In the past, he did not like to eat sweet things. However, ever since she had tied the Pomegranate Flower sachet around his waist, he could still eat candy.

The more Chang An thought about it, the more incredulous he felt. He simply stopped thinking and quickly went over to help his young master change.

Yu Youyao took another careful look at the zither on the desk. The more she looked at it, the more she liked it. Before long, her cousin came out.

The black clothes were tinged with red. It wasn't as deep as pure black, but it wasn't as ostentatious as red, making her cousin look even more reserved.

This outfit was also the style that Yu Youyao had thought of.

His clothes were straight and had a straight collar. The black embroidered gold belt outlined her cousin's thin and narrow waist, making him look a little charming.

If it were anyone else, they would probably look a little weak and slender.

However, her cousin's chest was solid and broad. With a wide chest and narrow waist, he really revealed his outstanding bearing and looked highly dignified.

There were vines embroidered on his clothes, and the weeds climbed up from his waist like vines. They suddenly spread out on his shoulders, making him look elegant and reserved. He was peerless in this world, but also thin and bright.

Yu Youyao no longer knew how to praise her cousin. Her eyes sparkled. "Cousin, you're good-looking. You look good in anything."

Zhou Linghuai suddenly heaved a sigh of relief. If she still praised him like that, he probably wouldn't be able to take it anymore. His gaze landed on the little girl and paused slightly. "You..."

As soon as Fang said this, his voice paused.

Yu Youyao looked at her cousin suspiciously.

Zhou Linghuai was slightly embarrassed. He raised his hand and was about to rub the top of the little girl's head when he realized that she was wearing a flower crown today. Her raven black hair was gathered in the crown, and she did not even leave her fringe behind. Only the jade beads hanging from the flower crown swayed with the little girl's little head, revealing a cheerful and graceful look.

Zhou Linghuai put his hand down again and chuckled. "Cousin, you look good too."

Today, she looked especially good.

Her silver-white embroidered clothes were flowing with luster, but she was beautiful and noble. Her young face looked much older.

Yu Youyao immediately smiled. She stood up and spun around in front of her cousin. Her eight-piece dress spread out to reveal blooming flowers. She was indescribably beautiful.

There was a smile on Zhou Linghuai's lips, like the bright moon.

Yu Shuangbai was crawling beside the rockery and feeding the fish in boredom. When she saw that Yu Youyao had returned happily, she glared at her angrily. "You're finally back. I've been waiting for you for almost an hour."

"I was looking for Cousin." Yu Youyao took the fish food from her hand and sprinkled it into the water. The colorful koi fish gathered and fought for the food.

Yu Shuangbai rolled her eyes. "Come on, you're stuck to Cousin Zhou every day. I almost thought that Cousin Zhou had become your only cousin, and that all of us were fake cousins."

Yu Youyao's lips curved into a smile. "Oh, those words are so sour. You're just envious of the sandalwood fan Cousin made for me."

The sandalwood fan was too exquisite, so she did not show it off. She just took it out in the courtyard to use it, but Yu Shuangbai, who was looking for her to hang out, saw it. Yu Shuangbai was envious.

She had originally wanted to find her cousin and ask him to make one for her, but Yu Shuangbai wasn't familiar with her cousin, so she couldn't just say it directly and asked her to speak on her behalf.

She said, "It's very troublesome to make sandalwood fans. Cousin isn't in good health, and he's busy with schoolwork, so he doesn't have time to make this. It was also because it had rained for a few days previously that Cousin's leg disease acted up and his bones hurt terribly. I helped take care of him for a few days and made some medicinal oil that worked well. That's why Cousin made a sandalwood fan and thanked me."

Yu Shuangbai was not an unreasonable person. After hearing this, she did not insist anymore.

And that was that.

At the mention of this, Yu Shuangbai pouted. "Who wouldn't be envious of such an exquisite fan? Cousin Zhou is really impressive. He's good at studying, knows how to play the zither, and even knows how to make sandalwood fans. Compared to him, Big Brother only knows how to study, and Second Brother is even more useless."

Yu Youyao did not know how to respond to this, so she just pursed her lips and smiled.

At the mention of Yu Shanxin, Yu Shuangbai had a bitter expression. "You don't know this, but I found Second Brother a few days ago and asked him to make a fan for me. When he heard this, he chased me out of the door like he was chasing away a fly and told me not to disturb him while he was reading. I said that Cousin Zhou would make a fan for Eldest Sister. Second Brother said that I would be disappointed as he wasn't a capable person like Cousin Zhou, so it's useless for me to look for him. He wouldn't know how to make a fan in his entire life."

She straightened her neck and imitated Yu Shanxin's voice. Yu Youyao laughed until she fell. She only managed to stand steadily after holding on to the pillar in the corridor.

After Yu Shuangbai finished talking, she looked at Yu Youyao. "Don't you think it's infuriating?"

Yu Youyao finally stopped laughing, but she was amused by Yu Shuangbai's dejected expression. She took her handkerchief and pressed it against the corner of her mouth. "To think you could think of asking Second Brother to make you a fan."

Yu Shuangbai was unconvinced. "If I don't look for him, I can't possibly look for Big Brother, right? You also know that there are still two to three years before Big Brother will take the imperial examination. If I dare to disturb him from studying, will my mother let me off?"

Yu Youyao laughed again. "You don't know that Second Brother is very jumpy. How can he calm down and do such meticulous work? Didn't you say that you couldn't stand learning needlework? This is what you don't want others to do to you. Besides, Second Brother usually dotes on you the most. When he went out to shop, he would find some exquisite items for you. You're really greedy."

Upon hearing Yu Youyao's words, Yu Shuangbai thought about it and realized that it was indeed true. Her anger dissipated. "Forget it. On the account that he usually treats me well, I'll forgive him generously this time."

Yu Youyao was smiling when Cao Cao arrived.

Yu Shanxin went onto the white stone bridge. When he saw Yu Youyao and Yu Shuangbai under the corridor not far away, he hurriedly ran over and jumped forward like a monkey. With one hand on the fence, he flipped himself up and over the fence.

"Eldest Sister and Second Sister." Yu Shanxin smiled with his white teeth that were rather flattering.

Yu Youyao smiled and called out, "Second Brother."

Yu Shuangbai was clearly not angry anymore, but she still tilted her head and snorted lightly, as if she did not care.

Yu Shanxin gave Yu Youyao a look, asking her to help put in a few good words. Yu Youyao blinked, looking helpless.

Yu Shanxin took out a box and approached Yu Shuangbai fawningly. "Second Sister, take a look. I found another novel item for you today. I guarantee that you'll like it."

Yu Shuangbai turned around and ignored him.

Chapter 172 - 172 Third Cousin Xie Jingliu

"Second Sister, this thing is called a kaleidoscope. It didn't exist in the capital in the past. It was also transported into the capital with the southern merchant ships this time, so I found one." Yu Shanxin shamelessly leaned over again and even took the initiative to open the box.

Upon hearing that it was a novel item from the south, Yu Shuangbai couldn't help but take a few more glances.

There was a flower pot inside, and there were carvings of flowers and birds on the outside. Although it wasn't as good as Cousin Zhou's sandalwood fan, with one side of it having apricot branches and the other having flowers that were unique and exquisite, it was still beautiful.

Yu Shuangbai deliberately turned her face away. "Why are you still talking to me? I don't have a brother like you, who chased his sister out."

Yu Shanxin lowered his head and apologized, "Dear sister, you have to forgive me this time." As he spoke, he saw that her expression had softened and her eyes were fixed on the kaleidoscope. He quickly added fuel to the fire and reached out to pretend to slap his face. "Aren't you making things difficult for me by asking me to make a fan for you? I'm not someone who can do this. However, I, your second brother, don't have any other abilities, but my eyes are sharp. No ordinary thing can escape my eyes. Look, I've found this for you. Although it's not as exquisite as Cousin Zhou's fan, it's still novel."

Yu Youyao covered her mouth and laughed as she watched from the side. Seeing how sly he was, Yu Shuangbai couldn't get angry anymore. She stomped her foot and said, "How can you slap yourself in the face? You'll be a joke if others see you like this. Forget it. I made things difficult for you that day, so I'll forgive you this time. Don't do this again."

Yu Shanxin immediately smiled and hurriedly handed the kaleidoscope over. "This thing is really interesting. You play with Eldest Sister. I'll go look for Cousin Zhou to learn some military tactics."

Without waiting for Yu Shuangbai to speak, she jumped off the fence and ran away.

Yu Shuangbai immediately stomped her feet. "He's been causing trouble in the past. After learning martial arts from his martial arts master for a few days, he no longer takes the ordinary path. However, he's so smug. I'll definitely talk to Mother tomorrow and ask her to discipline him."

With that, the two of them played with the kaleidoscope together.

After a while, Yu Lianyu and Yu Fangfei also came over one after another. The sisters gathered together to play and chat. It was really a harmonious and lively scene.

It was now ten o'clock.

Xia Tao ran over smartly. "Young Miss, the people from the Xie family are here."

Yu Youyao was overjoyed. She suddenly stood up from her chair. "Third Cousin is here. I've never seen him before. Let's go and take a look."

At this moment, Qing Xiu came over. "The third young master of the Xie family is in Old Madam's house and greeting her. Old Madam wants to invite Eldest Miss over." Seeing that Yu Shuangbai and the others were also there, she chuckled and said, "Let's go over to meet him with the other young misses."

Yu Youyao often wrote letters to the Xie Residence, but she had never been there. She had only heard of her cousins and had never seen them.

This time, when her third cousin entered the capital, she was naturally overjoyed. Her smile never stopped, and her silver-white embroidered dress bloomed like lotuses as she walked.

Qing Xiu had never seen such good etiquette before, so she couldn't help but take a few more glances.

Eldest Miss had been taught by Nanny Xu to become a noble lady. She looked delicate and exuded a noble and gentle aura. However, she was not like the Fourth Miss of the Hanlu Courtyard. Although she had learned the rules well, she was very rigid.

As soon as Yu Youyao entered the house, she saw her grandmother sitting in the hall with a smile.

Yang Shuwan, Second Aunt, Madam Yao, was sitting on the lower right. Her cousin was dressed in black and looked elegant. Her eldest brother, Yu Shanyan, her second brother, Yu Shanxin, and Yu Jianjia were all present.

She tilted her head and saw a man in red sitting on the lower left.

This was his third cousin, Xie Jingliu. He was about eighteen or nineteen years old, but he was very handsome. His lips were small, and even sitting down, one could tell that he was tall and slender.

In terms of appearance, he was on par with her cousin and Song Mingzhao.

However, her cousin was noble and graceful, exuding a calm and indifferent aura. Song Mingzhao was handsome and noble, while her third cousin looked like a mix between a man and a woman. He was carefree and handsome, but not very feminine. He also had his own style.

She had heard that her Third Cousin was also a capable person.

While Yu Youyao was in a daze, Yu Shuangbai and the others had already greeted Xie Liujing.

Old Madam Yu waved at her. "Yao Yao, this is your third cousin. Come and meet him."

Only then did Yu Youyao react. She went forward to greet her grandmother first, then greeted Yang Shuwan and Madam Yao one by one. Only then did she turn to her third cousin. She blinked and called out softly, "Third Cousin?"

Xie Jingliu couldn't help but lose his smile. "Yao Yao has already grown so big and looks just like Aunt. Even if I've never seen her before, I'd recognize her at a glance."

When his aunt married into the Yu Residence, he was already very old.

Yu Youyao shook her head. "I don't look like Mother."

Her gentle voice melted Xie Jingliu's heart. He couldn't help but stroke her hair. "Yes, your eyes don't look like her eyes, but they're just like your grandmother's. Your grandmother also has a pair of sleeping phoenix eyes. When you have the chance to go to Quanzhou in the future, you'll know when you see her."

Zhou Linghuai, who was sitting opposite Xie Jingliu, saw that the little girl was close to her cousin from Quanzhou. He immediately felt that the tea in his mouth was a little bland.

Perhaps this tea was not personally made by the young lady, but even the rare Longjing tea had lost its taste.

At the mention of her mother and grandmother, Yu Youyao asked softly, “Grandfather, Grandmother, Uncle, and Aunt... Are the other cousins doing well?”

Xie Jingliu smiled. “They’re all fine, but they often talk about you.”

After all, they were related by blood. After chatting for a while, the siblings became closer and no longer had any barriers.

Xie Jingliu called a servant and instructed him.

Not long after, the servant brought by the Xie family led a few servants over with many bags. After three trips, they filled the ground in the middle of the living room.

Even Old Madam Yu took a few more glances.

Not to mention the excitement on the faces of the younger ones.

Yu Jianjia tilted her head and glanced at Yu Youyao. She was envious that Yu Youyao had such a rich relative. Even her cousin was outstanding and handsome. Ordinary people could not compare to him.

At this moment, Old Madam Yu said, “When you came back, you brought so many of these things that the house won’t be able to accommodate them. I know you want to find all the good things in the world and give them to Yao Yao. It’s as if the Yu Residence will not take care of my precious granddaughter. The in-laws are too polite.”

This was just a joke, so no one would take it seriously. Xie Jingliu also smiled respectfully and said, “Isn’t that so? It’s precisely because I’m not around to take care of her that I’m always worried that there won’t be enough to eat. When I come back, I can’t wait to move everything over.”

How could Old Madam Yu not understand? She immediately smiled and said, “Grandfather and Grandmother dote on their granddaughter. They can’t be stopped, nor can I stop them.”

Chapter 173 - 173 Simply Too Scary

The name “Jiujia” had been passed down for a long time. Although the Xie family was a merchant family, their rules were not inferior to that of a scholarly family. There were family rules that did not accept concubines. A man could only divorce his wife and marry another woman.

The entire family was related by blood, so they had a deeper relationship than other families.

Not to mention, Xie Roujia was the only daughter in the Xie family’s three generations. Since she was young, she had been raised by Jin Jiayu. She was willing to marry Xie Roujia into the Yu Residence because the Xie family had been kind to the Yu Residence. In addition, the rules of the Yu Residence were much stricter than many other families. At the very least, no one dared to treat Xie Roujia badly when she entered the Yu Residence.

However, he never expected...

Back when news of Xie Roujia’s death had spread to Quanzhou, the entire Xie family had gone to the capital. If it weren’t for the fact that Yao Yao was still around, the two families would probably have become enemies.

The Xie family had wanted to bring Yao Yao back to Quanzhou but she had invited a respected elder of the Yu family over to talk about it. She had also personally promised that she wouldn't treat Yao Yao badly. The Xie family couldn't win against them, so this matter was left unsettled.

Old Madam Yu lowered her eyes and looked up again. She said to Xie Jingliu, "Recently, the imperial court has been busy, and Eldest Master and Second Master can't leave, so I asked Yao Yao to accompany them and have a good chat."

Even if Xie Jingliu was a guest, there was no reason for him to trouble his elders to wait at home and personally welcome him.

At the mention of the word "Imperial Court", Xie Jingliu's eyes flickered. "They can't neglect their tasks because of me."

Old Madam Yu nodded and turned to look at her obedient granddaughter, who was sitting obediently at the side. "It's rare for your cousin to come here, so don't just sit here and do nothing. Invite him to the Jade Courtyard and treat him well so that he can talk more."

This was exactly what Xie Jingliu wanted.

"Thank you, Grandmother." Yu Youyao was also very happy. She immediately brought her cousin out of An Shou Hall.

As soon as she left, Old Madam Yu instructed a servant to bring over a list of gifts. According to the list, she handed the gifts prepared by the Xie family to everyone.

The Xie Residence had always been very thorough, so naturally, nothing went wrong.

Everyone received a large pile of gifts. Old Madam Yu turned to look at Yang Shuwan and asked, "How's the preparation for the small banquet at noon?"

Yang Shuwan was holding a gift that Mu Jin and Sang Zhi could not hold. She was a little unhappy, but she still smiled and replied, "Old Madam, don't worry. I've already gotten up to take care of it when it's morning. It won't go wrong."

After everyone in the house had left, Old Madam Yu went to the inner room.

A maidservant came to the living room to sweep the floor. Her sharp eyes noticed a crack on a certain teacup.

The young maidservant was shocked and quickly called Bai Kui over. "Sister Bai Kui, Young Master Zhou's teacup cracked for some reason."

Bai Kui took a look at the teacup in his hand and called the people in the tea room over. He said carefully, "... Young Master is one of us, so it's not rude. You can be more careful in the future. Don't be careless. Don't neglect the guests and embarrass the residence."

The maidservants in the tea room replied in fear and trepidation.

However, they were a little suspicious in their hearts. There was a lot of attention to detail in serving tea. They had all been trained before coming to the tea room to work. Every day, they would carefully check the tea set. For example, a teacup that was missing a corner, mouth, or flaw at the bottom of the cup would not be presentable.

Now that there was an important guest in the residence, she was even more careful.

The teacup was clearly fine. How could it have cracked?

It was really strange.

However, as she thought about it, she also made up her mind to be more careful in the future, in case anything went wrong and this dignified job was gone.

In the inner room, Old Madam Yu said to Nanny Liu, "The Xie family has an ancestral rule that no one in the family is allowed to become an official. However, this Third Young Master of the Xie family has had a talent for studying since he was young. He asked Old Master Xie to send him to the Wu Mountain Academy in Rudong to learn more. However, this Third Young Master is also a capable person. For some reason, he managed to hide it from the family and took the imperial examination. It was only when Xie Jingliu became a High Scholar at the age of 14 that the Xie family finally realized. Old Master Xie personally went to Rudong and used a whip to whip him. After receiving his guarantee, he didn't continue taking the examination. Otherwise..."

She didn't finish the sentence.

However, she understood what he meant. Nanny Liu smiled and added, "When I saw this Third Young Master Xie today, I felt that he was carefree and handsome. He's a rare young talent in the capital."

Old Madam Yu nodded. "He's not inferior to Young Master Song. It's a pity that the Xie family has such family rules. Otherwise, with Third Young Master Xie's abilities, Young Master Song would probably not be able to surpass Xie Jingliu, even if he was Mr. Xian Yun's disciple."

These words did not mean to belittle Song Mingzhao.

However, the two of them were different in age. Xie Jingliu had become famous first. No matter how talented Song Mingzhao was, he was still a step behind. It was not about talent, but age.

This time, Nanny Liu did not say anything.

However, Old Madam Yu frowned. "I originally thought that he was indeed a rare talent, but I've never seen him before. I just thought that others were exaggerating. Now that I've seen him today, I know that others probably don't know much about him and actually don't think much of him. In that case, I'm afraid there's a deeper reason why the Xie family sent such an accomplished junior to the capital personally."

In the past, she had only treated it as an ordinary family visit. However, when she saw Xie Jingliu now, she felt that it was not simple.

Nanny Liu lowered her head a little.

"Moreover, the merchant ship of the Xie family this time was eight or nine days later than usual. This has never happened before..." Old Madam Yu pondered for a moment and pinched her prayer beads.

She had not thought much about it before, but now that she had met Xie Jingliu, she felt that it was unusual.

Old Madam Yu wrapped the prayer beads around her wrist and turned to instruct Nanny Liu, "Get someone to inform Eldest Master and Second Master to return early today."

Zhou Linghuai wheeled himself out of the north courtyard. Chang An followed closely behind, his head lowered to his chest.

Xia Tao ran over smartly. "Young Master, Young Miss said that it's rare for Third Cousin from Quanzhou to come. She's a little young and can't entertain everyone, so she invited Young Master over to accompany her."

Although he would be accompanying her, it also revealed how close they were. Zhou Linghuai's pursed lips suddenly relaxed. "Okay!"

Chang An, who was following behind, heaved a sigh of relief.

Earlier in An Shou Hall, when he was standing behind his young master, he could also feel the pressure emanating from his young master. He did not even dare to breathe loudly. Even though he had been practicing martial arts since he was young, he almost couldn't breathe after holding his breath for a while.

It was simply too scary!

Seeing that her cousin, who had come from Quanzhou, had left happily, he almost crushed the teacup in his hand.

He couldn't help but sigh!

The newcomers laughed, but the old ones cried.

When Young Miss's biological cousin arrived from Quanzhou, she seemed to have forgotten about Young Master. No wonder Young Master was angry.

Chapter 174 - 174 Angering the Little Girl

After returning to the Jade Courtyard, Nanny Xu ordered someone to set up tea, snacks, fruits, and so on. It looked even more exquisite than the ones in An Shou Hall. The table was filled to the brim. It was obvious that it had been prepared long ago.

Yu Youyao personally served the tea to Xie Jingliu and smiled. "Third Cousin, this is medicinal tea that I made myself. Try it quickly."

Xie Jingliu put away his folding fan and took the tea from his younger cousin with a smile. The moment he smelled it, the tea's fragrance immediately became clear and refreshing. After taking a sip, he felt refreshed, as if he had relieved a lot of his fatigue from the long journey.

He laughed. "Cousin, you've really grown up."

Yu Youyao's voice was gentle. "I've made a lot of this tea. Grandfather, Grandmother, Eldest Uncle, Eldest Aunt, Second Uncle, Second Aunt, Eldest Cousin, Second Cousin..." The little girl's voice was soft as she spoke. As she spoke, she tapped her tender little finger. "Everyone has it. Not only this, but I've also made a lot of medicinal fragrances that can nourish one's health... Grandfather and Grandmother are old. Even if their health is good, they should rest more. The business in the residence is huge, so the uncles and aunts can't help but work hard. They should rest more. Cousin and the others..."

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Every word was filled with concern and filial piety for his family. The smile on Xie Jingliu's lips deepened. He suddenly picked up his fan and knocked on his little cousin's head.

"Ah!" Yu Youyao held her forehead, which didn't hurt much, and glared at her third cousin plaintively. "Third Cousin, why did you hit me? It hurts."

Xie Jingliu smiled. "You're so young, but you're already worrying about all this. Why don't you ask me what fun, delicious food, and good-looking things I've brought you? How are you like a young lady? You're simply like a young mistress."

Speaking of this, his eyes darkened.

He had followed the merchant ship into the capital for three days and was not in a hurry to go to the Yu Residence. It was also because this was his first time here that he had inquired about the matters in the Yu Residence in advance.

The mistress of the household was sick and couldn't manage the household. Instead, they asked a young child to help manage the household. Old Madam Yu was kind-hearted and paved the way for her granddaughter.

However, Yao Yao was only a child, and she had to be busy managing the house like an adult. Even with her grandmother's protection, her days in the residence weren't so comfortable.

He had also noticed Madam Yang before. On the surface, she looked generous and proper.

However, when she spoke to him, her eyebrows were subconsciously raised, and her gaze became a little sharper. She was polite, but her attitude was obvious.

It was obvious what kind of person her stepmother was.

However, it made sense. A hundred days after his aunt's death, Yu Zongzheng couldn't wait to welcome her into the residence.

To the outside world, it was said that Old Madam Yu was too old and didn't have the energy to take care of her eldest daughter, who was still in her infancy. In addition, Yao Yao was born a few days earlier, so it was really worrying. They were afraid that they would neglect her. They couldn't not have someone in charge at home, because she was the daughter of Yu Zongzheng's concubine. First of all, it wasn't appropriate to talk about it in the Imperial Court. Although outsiders felt that it was too rushed and would inevitably have some guesses, they couldn't say anything in the end. They just had to talk after dinner.

However, the Xie family knew very well that these words were just to fool outsiders.

A trace of mockery flashed across Xie Jingliu's eyes.

Old Master Yu had probably hooked up with Madam Yang long ago. Yu Jianjia wasn't really born prematurely. The so-called generations of scholars were just a bunch of dirty tricks.

Yu Youyao's eyes welled up with tears. She blinked to hide the tears in her eyes and pouted unhappily. "Third Cousin, how can you say that about a mistress? Do you think I'm wrong for being filial to my elders?"

In the past, her father had despised her for not knowing her limits and being sensible.

Her grandmother did not dislike her, but she also hoped that she would learn more rules. She even invited Nanny Xu into the residence.

Only her maternal grandfather and the others treated her sincerely. Only they thought that she was only a half-grown child and should be thinking about eating and playing at this age.

At this moment, there was a rumbling sound.

Yu Youyao turned around and saw Chang An pushing her cousin over. She quickly said, "Cousin, tell me, in what way do I look like a mistress?"

Zhou Linghuai's expression paused for a moment. Thinking of how the little girl often said that he was like a "little old man", he felt inexplicably amused.

However, the young lady cared about her face. He really couldn't laugh and anger her.

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "Cousin isn't even ten years old."

Xie Jingliu raised his eyebrows and looked at Zhou Linghuai.

He was a young man sitting in a wheelchair. He was dressed in black, making him look dignified and noble. He looked elegant and reserved.

Other than Old Madam Yu, her cousin rarely mentioned anything about the residence in her letters. However, the last time, she had written a lot about her cousin.

At An Shou Hall, Xie Jingliu had paid special attention to Zhou Linghuai.

As if sensing Xie Jingliu's undisguised scrutiny, Zhou Linghuai looked up.

When their gazes met, Yu Youyao felt that the atmosphere was a little off. She turned to look at her third cousin, then back at him.

Hence, she quickly said, "Third Cousin, this is my cousin, Zhou Linghuai, from Youzhou. He's been taking good care of me recently..."

She kept saying that her cousin's health wasn't good, but he still had to take time out every day to go to the Jade Courtyard to teach her calligraphy, studies, and zither skills. He even cut off wood from the Parasol tree and wanted to personally make a zither for her. Previously, he had even given her a fan...

It was as if she was afraid that others wouldn't know how well her cousin treated her.

Zhou Linghuai did not know whether to laugh or cry.

However, Xie Liujing was not in a good mood. He tapped his fan against his palm. "You're already learning so much at such a young age. How can you have time to play?"

From her words, it was obvious that she was very close to Zhou Linghuai. She called him Brother Linghuai and addressed him as Third Cousin. He was already ranked third in the Xie family, so couldn't he be called "Cousin"?

He really did not expect that his younger cousin would be living such a life in the Yu Residence. It was inevitable that she would dislike the Yu Residence and would vent her anger on Zhou Linghuai.

Yu Youyao stopped what she was about to say. However, when she saw her third cousin's dark expression, she did not dare to say anything else. She quickly looked at Zhou Linghuai and introduced, "Cousin, this is my third cousin..."

Before he could finish speaking, Xie Jingliu knocked his fan on her forehead. "Call me Cousin!"

Zhou Linghuai pursed his lips slightly and looked at Xie Jingliu's hand that was holding the fan. He was glaring at him, and a trace of ruthlessness flashed across his eyes.

Yu Youyao, who had been knocked lightly, did not feel any pain. However, she had been delicate since she was young. Even though she had learned many things from Nanny Xu and had suffered a lot, her delicate nature could not be changed.

She covered her forehead and blinked. When she looked at Xie Jingliu, her eyes were as black as an onyx.

Chapter 175 - 175 King Ping's Movements

"Third Cousin, you're knocking on my head again. How can you be my cousin like this?" As she spoke, Yu Youyao turned around and looked at Zhou Linghuai. "Cousin won't knock my head with a fan."

Although he would knock her forehead with his hand...

The little girl's pitiful gaze made Zhou Linghuai frown. He turned his wheelchair and walked up to her, asking gently, "Does it hurt? I brought medicine with me..."

Yu Youyao blinked at her cousin innocently. "It was a little painful at first, but it stopped hurting when you showed concern."

Zhou Linghuai did not know whether to laugh or cry. He suddenly understood Xie Jingliu a little. He felt his hands itch to hit the little girl's forehead with his fan.

The two of them were childhood sweethearts and loved each other, but she had forgotten about him, her "third" cousin. Xie Jingliu felt very stifled.

Zhou Linghuai had clearly only lived in the Yu Residence for two months and he had never interacted with her before. No matter what, he could not compare to his relationship with her in the Xie Residence.

However, he saw that his younger cousin and Zhou Linghuai had an invisible tacit understanding. Even if no one could interfere, it was no longer just the word "close".

At this moment, Yu Youyao thought of her third cousin and turned around. "Third Cousin, I have to write a letter another day and tell Eldest Cousin and Second Cousin that you don't want me to call you Third Cousin. Let's see if Eldest Cousin and Second Cousin will listen to you." After saying that, she pouted and said seriously, "Third Cousin is already so old. Why are you so particular about how to address you?"

Xie Jingliu's expression cracked!

Yu Youyao even sighed, looking troubled. "My two cousins are both present. I can't possibly call both of you cousins, right? If I really did, wouldn't it be awkward if both of you responded?"

A smile appeared on Zhou Linghuai's pale lips.

Xie Jingliu turned to look at him and felt stifled. He was about to say, "Then why can't I be your cousin while the other person is Cousin Zhou?"

Then, she heard Yu Youyao say in distress, "I can't call him Cousin Zhou, right? There's no point in being distant. Besides, there's only one cousin in the residence, and all the other sisters call him Cousin. It's not appropriate for me to call him Cousin Zhou."

He looked at his little cousin who was acting like a little adult and shaking her head as she explained everything. She looked so cute compared to how big he was. Xie Jingliu was speechless after being taught a lesson by her.

There was only one cousin in the Yu Residence, so it was only natural for her to call him cousin. The Xie Residence had a few cousins, so she couldn't possibly call him cousin.

These words were clearly reasonable, but they made him feel unhappy. Xie Jingliu looked at Zhou Linghuai and did not miss the faint smile on his lips, but it was a little hurtful.

With this commotion, the matter of name addressing was over.

On a whim, Yu Youyao asked Chun Xiao to bring over a tea set and place it under the Parasol Tree. After the leaf buds were opened, the leaves on the tree looked different every day. In the first two days, they were still tender green, but now, they were green and the leaves were much bigger.

Under the mottled sunlight, the three of them sat together and chatted.

Yu Youyao wanted to show off her tea skills, so she performed a few difficult tea patterns on the spot, winning the praise of her two cousins. For a moment, she smiled until her eyes curved, unable to hide her smug expression.

She then performed some tea techniques.

Her tea whisking skills were even better than her tea dividing skills. The tea she divided was already a little overboiled.

The tea liquid fused together. The tea was like cream and fat, thick and dry. It was top-grade even though it was not removed from the cup. Even when competing with others, it was still presentable.

The fragrance of tea filled the air, and the atmosphere became much warmer.

It was rare for Xie Jingliu and Zhou Linghuai to have a conversation. Most of the time, they were talking about some articles and theories, mixed with some government affairs.

At first, Yu Youyao could understand them. She held her cheek and smiled as she listened. However, after a while, Yu Youyao felt dizzy from listening, so she took the opportunity to go to the small kitchen.

As soon as she left, Xie Jingliu changed the topic. “To be honest, I didn’t come to the capital just to see Yao Yao.”

Just now, the two of them had been chatting casually, but they were just testing each other.

In this way, they could roughly figure out each other’s depths.

Zhou Linghuai looked sick and weak, and he was still young. However, his shocking talent was rare in the world, so it was inevitable that he felt a sense of admiration for him.

Zhou Linghuai did not seem surprised. He held a teacup in his hand. It was the tea that Yu Youyao had just made. “But what happened to King Ping of Liangzhou?”

Liangzhou was located in the extreme south, where there were many large and small barbarian tribes. The barbarians were good at poison and insect control, and were not close to Quanzhou. However, the two were also in the south. Liangzhou was in the extreme south, and Quanzhou was in the hinterland, so they were a little related.

There were many trade routes in the south of Quanzhou. All of them had to pass through Liangzhou, so they knew the situation in Liangzhou better than the Imperial Court.

Xie Jingliu’s eyes flickered slightly, and there was a hint of meaning in his eyes. “Before the new year, the Southern Barbarians sent troops into the city. King Ping led his troops to fight, but he was ambushed and severely injured. The Southern Barbarians plundered wantonly in the southern border, and many people died. Not long after, there was a report from Youzhou. The Marquis of Changxing made a contribution in the north and handed a memorial to the imperial court. As a result, the entire court focused their attention on Youzhou, and very few people noticed Liangzhou.”

The fact that Zhou Linghuai had noticed Liangzhou showed that he was a shrewd person.

Zhou Linghuai did not say anything. The tea in his cup melted as soon as it entered his mouth. It was smooth and fragrant. “Without the crushing defeat in Liangzhou, how could the Marquis in Changxing have his glory?”

With Liangzhou as a foil, after the Palace Examination in April, the glory of the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence could no longer be suppressed. At that time, Xia Yansheng would have a headache.

Xie Jingliu laughed. “You really understand what’s going on. The vassal king guarding the border has a relationship with the new nobles of the Imperial Court. How interesting.”

Zhou Linghuai looked up at him. It was really interesting that he could still smile at this time.

As expected, Xie Jingliu smiled for a moment before stopping. “The Xie family has received news that King Ping will be bringing the heir to the capital to apologize soon.”

Zhou Linghuai’s expression was calm, as if this shocking news was not as important as the tea in his mouth. “The vassal king is not allowed to enter the capital until he has been summoned. If he violates the order, he will be guilty of conspiracy. Not only did King Ping enter the capital himself, but he also brought his heir. I’m afraid that the plan is very serious. He’s sure that the emperor won’t punish him, and the Weining Marquis Residence will also protect him.”

It was satisfying to talk to smart people. Usually, one would be able to hear the zither and understand the elegant exchange of words. Xie Jingliu smiled faintly. "Why do you think Prince Ping entered the capital?"

Not only had he suffered a defeat, but he also dared to enter the capital on his own accord. It was not an exaggeration to accuse him of "conspiracy." However, King Ping was fearless. After thinking about it carefully, he might be able to figure out the deeper meaning behind this.

Zhou Linghuai said calmly, "Since he brought the heir, it must be related to him."

Chapter 176 - 176 How Arrogant

He did not say it clearly, but Xie Jingliu already understood that this was as he had guessed. "Once King Ping and the Crown Prince enter the capital, the imperial court will be in chaos. Even the cabinet ministers led by Xia Yansheng might not be able to suppress the arrogance of the Marquis of Weining. I'm afraid the vassal lords will not be able to live in peace."

Zhou Linghuai agreed deeply and changed the topic. "Are you planning to tell the Yu Residence about this?"

Xie Jingliu shook his head. "Just give them a few reminders. It's a huge matter for King Ping to bring the crown prince into the capital. It's not much different from King You's rebellion. It's supposed to be kept a secret. It's not easy to publicize it at this time, and it shouldn't spread from the Xie Residence."

Zhou Linghuai's eyes flickered slightly, but he did not say anything.

A gentleman did not stand under a dangerous wall. The Xie family probably had to make some arrangements when they entered the capital this time. In order to prevent chaos in the capital from affecting the Xie family, it was no wonder that Xie Jingliu had personally entered the capital.

With Xie Jingliu's achievements, it was much more convenient for him to do things in the capital.

Xie Jingliu lowered his eyes and looked at the tea in his cup. His voice became more sincere. "Before the New Year, Grandfather and Cousin Xin had suggested that she should stay in Quanzhou for a while, but Cousin had rejected them."

At this point, there was a hint of regret in his tone.

Zhou Linghuai said calmly, "Even if Yao Yao doesn't refuse, the Yu Residence won't agree."

Everyone knew this very well. Otherwise, after his aunt's death, the Xie family would have brought his cousin back to Quanzhou. However, his grandfather refused to give up.

At the thought of this, Xie Jingliu looked at Zhou Linghuai with a faint smile. "I heard that there's a son in the Zhou family of Youzhou. He can read at the age of three, recite at the age of five, and study at the age of seven. Unfortunately, the heavens are jealous of geniuses, and extreme wisdom will come at a price. He's originally a peerless genius, but he's innately lacking and has suffered from a weak illness since he was young. That's why he's always been in seclusion and rarely shows his face. The world only knows that the heir of the You King, Yin Huaixi, is outstanding. He's the best in the world, but they don't know that this Young Master Zhou is also the best in the world."

Zhou Linghuai remained calm. "You investigated me?"

Xie Jingliu did not deny it. "A cousin from Youzhou suddenly joined the Yu Residence, and this cousin is on good terms with my cousin. You don't know this, but my cousin mentioned a lot about you in her letter last time. I had to investigate it before I can feel at ease."

Zhou Linghuai looked up at him, his eyes deep.

The smile on Xie Jingliu's lips disappeared, and he did not avoid him at all. When he looked at him, there was a piercing cold light in his eyes, as sharp as a sword being unsheathed.

This was no longer just a test, but a confrontation.

After a while, Zhou Linghuai calmly picked up his teacup.

Xie Jingliu's gaze shifted slightly, and a smile appeared on his lips. "Young Master Zhou is a heavenly person. Even if Youzhou is a dragon's den or a tiger's den, it's not necessarily impossible for him to establish himself. I'm afraid he has other motives for suddenly coming to the capital. According to what I know, Old Master Zhou didn't just die of illness..."

Towards the end, there was a smile on his lips, but his eyes were cold.

Although it was far from the truth, the meaning behind it was not vague at all. Zhou Linghuai did not deny it. He lowered his head and took a sip of tea. Only the fragrance of the tea that came from his cousin could appease the ruthlessness in his heart. "It's not simple for the Xie family to be able to find out about this."

Xie Jingliu thought more highly of him and changed the topic. "No matter what your motive for entering the capital is, it has nothing to do with the Xie family. I can tell that you still treat Cousin with some sincerity. Quanzhou is a little far from the capital. Even if you can take care of Cousin a little, it won't help much. Once the capital is in chaos, I hope you can take care of Cousin more. Take it that the Xie family owes you a favor. As long as it's within your ability, the Xie family won't decline."

He did not trust anyone in the entire Yu Residence.

He might not have much trust in Zhou Linghuai, but he had no choice. Since Zhou Linghuai had a scheme, he had to have a bargaining chip. No one in the world could refuse the Xie family's favor.

As such, the Xie Residence did not care about the price and tried their best to take care of Yu Youyao. However, Zhou Linghuai did not buy it. He said calmly, "Yao Yao? I'll take care of her."

Even though his tone was indifferent, and it was not difficult to hear the unquestionable arrogance in it. It was as if everything that Yu Youyao did was Zhou Linghuai's own business and had nothing to do with the Xie Residence in Quanzhou.

His request was futile and ridiculous. Xie Jingliu was not surprised. His smile became more genuine. "How arrogant."

Even the Xie family did not dare to say that they could protect themselves in this chaotic world. Where did Zhou Linghuai's confidence come from? How dare he be so arrogant?

He did not even care about the benefits that were readily available.

Zhou Linghuai said nothing.

At this moment, Yu Youyao led Xia Tao over and said happily, “Third Cousin and Cousin, there’s no good banquet food. The dishes at the banquet look sumptuous, but they don’t feel good when you eat them. I’ve prepared medicinal cuisine early in the morning. Have some medicinal cuisine to nourish your stomach first, lest your stomach suffers during the banquet.”

Zhou Linghuai and Xie Jingliu looked at each other and stopped talking.

The little girl had made sea cucumber soup, which was nourishing and gentle.

Third Cousin was a guest, so naturally, she had to give it to him first. Then, she scooped another bowl and handed it to her cousin. Finally, she scooped hers.

Xie Jingliu knew that his younger cousin liked to eat seafood, so he smiled and said, “I brought you a lot of seafood this time. There are more than a hundred white jade sea cucumbers alone. I also brought a lot of red sea cucumbers, yellow jade sea cucumbers, and blue jade sea cucumbers. It’s enough for you to eat for a long time.”

Yu Youyao smiled. “Thank you, Third Cousin.”

After eating the medicinal cuisine, Zhou Linghuai said that he was a little tired and asked Chang An to push him back to the Green House.

Although he did not want to leave at all, they were still biological siblings after all. It was inevitable that they would say something personal when they saw each other. It was not appropriate for him to be present.

As soon as Zhou Linghuai left, Xie Jingliu said, “Let’s go. I’ll bring you to see the good things I’ve brought you this time.”

Yu Youyao agreed crisply, her face filled with joy and anticipation.

Xie Jingliu knocked on his little cousin’s forehead. “That’s more like it.”

When they arrived at the hall, there were already mountains of gift boxes inside.

She had long known from Xia Tao that her third cousin had brought over three large carriages of things for her this time. Tea leaves, cloth, spices, jewelry, and so on were all customary. There was no lack of them every time, and there were also many new things.

Xie Jingliu picked out an exquisite sandalwood box and handed it to Yu Youyao. “This is a new item from overseas. It’s called a clock. It’s a little bigger and can tell the time.”

When Yu Youyao heard this, she was surprised and couldn’t wait to open it.

The clock was less than the size of a baby’s palm. It was made of glass, and it was thin and bright. There was also a kind of red stone inlaid on the side of the watch, looking dazzling and resplendent.

Xie Jingliu leaned over. “The red gem on it is called a diamond. It’s actually the same as our diamond. It’s just that we don’t use it often. The diamonds are made into objects used by craftsmen. The Kunwu Knife used for carving is made of diamonds.”

Chapter 177 Tacit Agreement

Yu Youyao came to a realization. "Don't take on the job of making structures if you don't have diamonds."

Xie Jingliu smiled. "Yes, it's a diamond." With that, he pointed at two needles, one long and one short. "Wherever the short needles are, it's when..."

"It's so magical." Yu Youyao was smart. She had already understood after just a few words. She couldn't help but exclaim, "It's more accurate than a funnel or a drip, and you can even wear it on you. In the future, you don't have to worry about missing the time. Third Cousin, how many of these clocks do you have?"

Xie Jingliu's hand, which was holding the fan, felt a little itchy again. "Why? Did you see something good and want to send it to your cousin?"

Yu Youyao's thoughts were exposed. She argued, "Why don't you say that I want to give it to Grandmother?"

Xie Jingliu said unhappily, "Although this thing is novel, Old Madam is old, so she might not really like it. She'll just take a look."

Yu Youyao pouted and stopped talking.

Xie Jingliu smiled. "This is an expensive item. I only brought five this time, so I'll give two to you. The remaining three have to be sent to the palace. You can use them in your room for a while. Soon, the other families in the capital will have them too. When the time comes, it won't be eye-catching anymore."

Yu Youyao hugged her third cousin's arm. "Thank you, Third Cousin."

Xie Jingliu picked another box. "This is a kaleidoscope. It's nothing special. It's just a novelty."

Yu Youyao thought of the kaleidoscope that Yu Shanxin had given to Yu Shuangbai earlier. She couldn't help but smile and ask, "Third Cousin, I wrote previously and asked Grandfather to help inquire about a strange insect. Is there any news?"

Xie Jingliu felt a little stifled. He couldn't help but knock his little cousin's head again. "You're always thinking about your cousin. Could it be that I've become someone else's cousin?"

Yu Youyao pouted unhappily. "If Third Cousin says that, then you won't have a share of the medicinal tea and medicinal fragrance I've prepared. I've been preparing for a month."

Xie Jingliu was speechless for a long time. "I only said a few words to you, but you've already lost your temper."

Yu Youyao giggled, her eyes sparkling.

Seeing such a gaze, Xie Jingliu's heart softened. He felt that even the stars in the sky could be picked for her. No wonder Zhou Linghuai did not hesitate to cut the wood and personally create a zither for her.

Hence, he called the servant beside him and instructed him.

The servant ran away and disappeared.

Only then did Xie Jingliu say, "The Xie family's ancestors passed down medicinal artifacts. Later on, after a few wars, most of the family's inheritance was lost, causing the inheritance to fall. The Rhinoceros Bug you wanted was one of the few artifacts that had been passed down. There was none outside, but our ancestors had once offered one to Emperor Taizong of the previous dynasty. It was probably because of this that there were also records in the ancient books. The medicinal dew that you usually used for bathing was added with the medicinal liquid of the Rhinoceros Bug."

Yu Youyao's eyes widened in shock and joy. "What a coincidence."

The servant returned with a bamboo tube in his hand. There were only a few simple but elegant bamboo patterns carved on it, and the tube was covered with small holes that were larger than needles.

"The Rhinoceros Bugs aren't easy to raise, and there aren't many in the Xie Residence. I only have two for you. One is enough for your cousin, so you can use the other one yourself." Xie Jingliu reached out to take the bamboo tube and handed it to Yu Youyao.

The two rhinoceros bugs. They were smaller than cicadas, but looked like cicadas. They were brownish-black and had no cicada wings. They were generally similar to what Uncle Sun had said and were still alive.

Yu Youyao was a little vexed and couldn't help but ask, "How do I raise this thing? I've never raised it before. If it dies, wouldn't it be a waste?"

Xie Jingliu smiled. "Don't worry about that. Feed it some expensive herbs. I also made a medicinal liquid for you. Before you feed it, soak it in the medicinal liquid for two hours. This medicinal liquid is a secret of the Xie family. It's not that I can't tell you, but it's also troublesome to refine. It requires many extremely poisonous items. You don't know how to use these herbs, and it's not convenient for you to deal with these poisonous creatures in the Yu Residence. Grandfather asked me to bring some prepared ones for you. In the future, I'll bring some over every season."

Yu Youyao was relieved.

At noon, Yang Shuwan sent Mu Jin over. "First Madam has announced that the banquet is ready. Young Master Xie, please move to the banquet hall."

The small banquet at noon was also sumptuous. There were two tables, one for men and one for women. Yu Qingning and Concubine He did not come. No one asked much, as if these two people were not in the residence.

Eldest Master and Second Master were not in the residence, but there had to be elders at the banquet. Old Madam Yu sat down.

Zhou Linghuai invited Xie Jingliu to the Green House. Yu Shanyan and Yu Shanxin were accompanied by Yu Shanli.

Xie Jingliu sat beside Old Madam Yu on the left while Zhou Linghuai sat on Old Madam Yu's right. On the other hand, the eldest son, Yu Shanyan, was arranged to sit next to Zhou Linghuai.

Although this was her cousin, his grandmother did not treat him as an outsider. She allowed him to bypass his big brother and accompany her on behalf of the eldest son.

During the banquet, there were no mistakes.

Yang Shuwan, who was holding the banquet, also looked proud. The smugness in her eyes could not be concealed.

After everyone gathered and chatted for a while, Old Madam Yu felt tired. She turned to Zhou Linghuai and said, "Treat Young Master well." With that, she turned to look at Yu Shanyan and Yu Shanxin. "You too."

Seeing that they had agreed, Old Madam Yu asked Nanny Liu to help them back to An Shou Hall.

Zhou Linghuai invited Xie Jingliu to the Green House. Yu Shanyan and Yu Shanxin were accompanied by Yu Shanli.

Yu Youyao returned to the Jade Courtyard and asked someone to bring the medicinal cuisine over.

After that, Yu Youyao asked Chun Xiao to prepare gifts for everyone in the Xie Residence.

She had personally made two medicinal pillows for her maternal grandfather and grandmother to calm their minds. She had also prepared all kinds of medicinal tea and medicinal fragrance. She had also added some spiritual dew, so the effects were obvious.

In addition, there were also some popular items in the capital, dried goods from the farmstead, some good medicinal herbs, supplements, local specialties, and so on.

Although the Xie Residence did not lack these, she had carefully prepared them. There was a pile of them.

Yu Youyao took the gift list and checked them one by one. After confirming that there were no mistakes, she called a few old maids over and carried the gifts to the Xie family's carriage.

It was a large carriage.

At this moment, Qing Xiu came over. "First Madam is preparing a gift for the Xie Residence. Old Madam has asked Eldest Miss to come along to help."

Yu Youyao chuckled. Madam Yang liked to do things on the surface. Her grandmother was worried that she would be rude, so she did not decline.

When they arrived at the main courtyard, Yang Shuwan was discussing the gift list with Nanny Liu.

Seeing Yu Youyao walk over, Yang Shuwan's expression immediately darkened. Just as she was about to speak, she saw Qing Xiu following behind Yu Youyao. How could she not know what Old Madam meant? She was so angry that her head hurt.

Yu Youyao smiled and said, "Grandmother said that this gift is very important, so she asked me to come over and learn from Mother. Mother, you have to teach me well."

Chapter 178 - 178 Return Gift

When Qing Xiu heard this, she sighed.

It was obvious that Old Madam did not mean that, but Eldest Miss was a meticulous person.

Nanny Liu's smile deepened. "Of course. I've been with Old Madam for most of my life, and I often make mistakes in returning gifts. Eldest Miss, you have to learn carefully."

Although her words were pleasant to the ears, Yang Shuwan was still unhappy. She said calmly, "Then watch from the side. Ask me if there's anything you don't understand."

Yu Youyao nodded. She sat at the side and listened to Yang Shuwan and Nanny Liu discuss.

After listening for a while, Yu Youyao pointed at the gift list. "Mother planned to give a pair of peony plates from the previous dynasty, but the flowers are blooming very luxuriously. What's so special about this pair of jade bottles?"

What special features could there be?

The Xie Residence had given her a pair of Ru ware bowls. The Yu Residence did have a Ru ware tea set that was comparable. Logically speaking, this tea set was just right. However, Ru ware was an expensive item and was a lost art. How could she bear to let such a good thing go to the Xie Residence for nothing?

Hence, she replaced it with a pair of expensive but not rare jade bottles.

When Yu Youyao asked, Yang Shuwan was stunned for a moment. "This pair of jade bottles is very expensive. There's the word 'Jade' in it, and it also has the meaning of fulfillment."

The reason was a little far-fetched, so Yu Youyao nodded.

Nanny Liu, who was at the side, understood what Eldest Miss meant. "Since there's already a pair of blue and white flowers, it's not good to give them another one. Do you want to change it to something else?"

Yang Shuwan was a little unhappy, but Nanny Liu smiled and did not say anything.

Seeing that the atmosphere had turned stiff, Yu Youyao smiled and said, "When I was taking stock previously, I saw a pair of jade bracelets with purple ribbons. They were just like the jade vases and spring bottles and were also a decent gift."

A purple ribbon was pure and rich, but it was very rare. It was much more expensive than the jade bottle, but it was still inferior to Ru ware. Yang Shuwan nodded reluctantly.

Next, Yu Youyao really displayed the essence of the word "learning" to the fullest. From time to time, she would point at the gift list and ask some questions.

Nanny Liu's eyes flickered.

The questions that Eldest Miss had raised were all things that Yang Shuwan had overlooked. However, Eldest Miss had grasped the situation well and did not embarrass Yang Shuwan.

She knew how to do things and behave.

Nanny Xu had really taught her a lot.

An hour later, the gift list was prepared. Yang Shuwan had also bled internally, so how could she still be happy? She said coldly, "If there's no problem, get someone to prepare it."

Nanny Xu nodded, and Yu Youyao returned to the Jade Courtyard.

Yang Shuwan had always wanted to take advantage of the loopholes in the gift list to save face, but she did not care about personal feelings. It was no wonder that her grandmother was worried. Even she was angry when she watched from the side.

However, on second thought, she was just a concubine. How could she have any connections with the Xie family?

There was nothing wrong with doing this.

When she was making the gift list just now, she had asked some obscure questions. Nanny Liu understood what she was thinking and was trying to say something. Even if Yang Shuwan was unwilling, she couldn't refuse.

Even so, the gift that the Yu Residence had prepared was still a little too standard compared to the Xie Residence. It was nothing special, and no one would pick on it. It was not bad.

After working for a long time, it was finally time.

Yu Zongshen was the first to leave the government office. He changed into his official uniform and went to the main residence.

When Xie Jingliu received the news, he had to come over to greet his elders.

Seeing him, the faint smile on Yu Zongshen's lips deepened. "I originally wanted to take a day off, but I really couldn't leave the government office, so I neglected you."

Xie Jingliu's name was Xie Yue. Only close elders and relatives would call him by his courtesy name.

Back then, when he had gone to Quanzhou, he had coincidentally interacted with the Xie Residence, so he had gotten to know Xie Jingliu. At that time, Xie Jingliu was a little older than him. When he heard that he was ranked second in the Imperial Court, he pestered him for guidance.

Xie Jingliu was a very big kid and was a rare talent in the world. When he saw him, he was delighted and inevitably became closer to him. He had a close relationship with the Xie family, but the person he was closest to was still Xie Jingliu.

It was also because of Xie Jingliu that the Xie Residence had helped him so much.

However, Xie Jingliu's expression was indifferent. "Uncle, you're being too serious. I've already disturbed you by visiting today."

Her cold attitude was obvious even to a fool. Yu Zongshen picked up his teacup and lowered his eyes. The fragrance of the tea in the cup lingered in the air, covering his eyes. "Is Old Master's health good? Are Old Master and Old Madam well?"

Xie Jingliu smiled sarcastically and did not say anything.

Yu Zongshen was silent for a while. "Back then..."

Xie Jingliu interrupted him. "After King You's rebellion, the entire court has been in turmoil. When I went to the capital this time, it was also because Great-Grandfather felt that the capital was about to fall into chaos. He asked me to secretly transfer a portion of the Xie family's business back to

Quanzhou.” He laughed silently. After a while, he said, “Old Master asked me to tell you to take care.”

After saying that, Xie Jingliu stood up and bowed to Yu Zongshen. “It’s rare for me to enter the capital. I’ll go to the Jade Courtyard to talk to Cousin first.”

Before Yu Zongshen could say anything, he had already left.

After he left, Yu Zongshen’s expression was calm, and there was a trace of his usual smile on his lips. With a wave of his sleeve, the teacups, bowls, and plates on the table spilled all over the ground, and the sound echoed in the silent room.

Even if he was angry, he would not change his expression.

“Xie Roujia!” An inaudible voice escaped from his lips, and his smile turned into a bitter smile.

No one in the residence knew about this episode.

It wasn’t until nine o’clock that the Eldest Master, Yu Zongzheng, returned to the residence with his official authority. It was obvious that he hadn’t heard the message sent by Old Madam Yu.

Yu Zongzheng first went to An Shou Hall to greet the Old Madam. “I was busy with court matters today and couldn’t leave early to return to the residence.”

Old Madam Yu sneered in her heart. Second Brother, a cabinet aide, could even return to the residence at midnight. How could he, a censor, be busier than a cabinet aide?

He obviously did not take the Xie Residence seriously. It was also because Xie Roujia’s death had made him timid. Even meeting the people from the Xie Residence was difficult for him.

Old Madam Yu couldn’t say anything else. She only waved her hand. “It’s fine since you’re back.”

Yu Zongzheng heaved a sigh of relief. Although the government office was busy, it wasn’t to the extent that they couldn’t leave. It was also possible to bring some official matters home to handle.

However, he had never liked to interact with the people of the Xie Residence. He just felt that after the people from Xie Residence returned, the entire residence was filled with a yellow and white stench.

It was unknown what his mother was thinking. Every time a merchant from the Xie Residence returned, not only did he have to work hard, but he also had to return early.

Xie Jingliu was just a junior. How could he be worthy of him letting go of court matters?

Old Madam Yu took a look and guessed what he was thinking. She sneered in her heart. “Your wife has arranged a banquet. Even if it’s for her sake, she should know the importance of being there.”

Chapter 179 - 179 Completely Embarrassed

Her thoughts were exactly the same as Yang Shuwan’s.

Yang Shuwan looked down on the Xie family, but when the Xie family ever brought gifts, wasn’t she happily carrying so many gifts that she even complained that the gifts she prepared were too little?

Master usually interacted with his colleagues, so his money did not seem to have decreased. How much of it belonged to the Xie family?

It was obvious that if they were not family, they would not enter the same house.

Yu Zongzheng was a little displeased. "What does Mother take me for? I know how to treat my guests. I won't embarrass the Yu Residence."

Old Madam Yu nodded and did not say anything.

However, her heart was thinking about something else. After Second Brother saw Xie Jingliu, he said to her, "Mother, although the Xie family didn't say anything explicitly, it's certain that the vassal king will act strangely. I'll get someone to investigate the situation and ask Mother to work harder to manage the family. I'm afraid there won't be a break in April."

After leaving An Shou Hall, Yu Zongzheng met Xie Jingliu. The two of them chatted for a while before greeting each other.

The banquet tonight had to be more grand.

There was only one person in the house, so it shouldn't be so busy. However, it had only been two days since Yang Shuwan had regained control of the house. She wanted to take the opportunity to establish her authority in the residence and make a show of it. She had already arranged everything, so there was no reason not to do it. As a result, there were even more things to do.

Yang Shuwan was still a little pretentious in the morning, but in the afternoon, she was really busy. She was also worried that something would go wrong and make Master angry, so she wanted to ask Madam Yao for help. This was human nature, but when she thought about how Madam Yao had taken the initiative to help in the morning, but was sent away by her, she couldn't bring herself to do it.

This was finally done on time at 7pm.

After Old Madam Yu sat down, Yu Zongzheng, Yu Zongshen, and Xie Jingliu followed suit. Then, it was Yang Shuwan, Madam Yao, and finally Zhou Linghuai and the other juniors.

Yu Jianjia looked at the empty seat beside her and frowned slightly. "I didn't see Fourth Sister at noon. It was just a small banquet, so it wasn't that rude. But why didn't Fourth Sister come over at night?"

Her voice was neither high nor low, and even the other table could hear her.

Yu Zongzheng frowned. Just as he was about to ask, he heard Yu Youyao say, "She probably hasn't learned the rules well, so it's not appropriate for her to go out."

Yu Jianjia pursed her lips and said weakly, "There's an important guest in the house, so it's only right that we hold a banquet. Everyone is here, but Fourth Sister is missing. Isn't that rude?"

"That makes sense!" Yu Youyao nodded.

Yu Jianjia was stunned for a moment, as if she had not expected Yu Youyao to agree with her. Just as she was about to speak, she saw Yu Youyao call Qiu Xing over. "Send a few dishes to the Hanlu

Courtyard. Since Third Cousin is here, even if it's not convenient for her to come, she should enjoy the banquet like us. She might not be here but we understand her intentions."

The eldest daughter had always been thorough in her work, so this arrangement was definitely not wrong. Yu Zongzheng did not say anything, but he glanced at Yang Shuwan solemnly.

Yang Shuwan was in charge of the household, so such matters should be arranged by her.

As the first wife, she had actually neglected her daughter.

It could be seen that she had always said that she was devoted to Qingning, but it was all to fool others.

Yang Shuwan's eyelids twitched. She understood her oversight and quickly smiled. "Old Madam said yesterday that there were guests at home today, so she didn't restrict Qingning and Nanny to learn the rules together and let her leave the courtyard to join us for the banquet."

Nanny Li understood and immediately echoed, "In the morning, Eldest Miss felt that Fourth Miss hadn't learned her manners well, so she sent Fourth Miss back to the Hanlu Courtyard. At that time, the residence was busy and chaotic. I was afraid that something would happen to the guests, so I didn't report it to Madam in time. It was my mistake."

When Old Madam Yu heard this, she immediately felt sick of it.

Yang Shuwan had been negligent, yet she still had to indirectly blame her eldest daughter for making such a decision.

She did not even think about it. She was in charge of this family. Even though she was in charge of a banquet, she was already flustered. If she neglected her daughter, it would seem like she was not good at managing the family and did not care about her.

Her reputation as a "kind mother" would probably be greatly reduced.

Madam Yang was the first wife, so she had to take responsibility for raising her daughter. If her daughter didn't learn the rules well, it would mean that she had lost her upbringing. No matter what, she couldn't blame her daughter for this. Even a smart person would know what kind of person Yang Shuwan was after hearing this.

To think that Madam Yang was still feeling smug and self-conscious about grabbing onto Yao Yao's tail. However, she had already exposed herself completely with just a few words.

Yang Shuwan turned to look at Yu Youyao and smiled. "Fourth Sister is a little rash. As her elder sister, you should be more tolerant. Today, your relative came knocking on my door. He should be welcomed by the residence..."

Although there was no criticism in her words, it was obvious from her words that Yu Youyao shouldn't have made such a decision on her own.

Yu Youyao did not argue and nodded. "Mother is right."

Seeing that Yu Youyao had suffered a loss, even Yang Shuwan raised her eyebrows slightly. "You're still young, but you don't know that the rules and regulations of this banquet are too important..."

Seeing that her eldest daughter was listening to her stepmother obediently and didn't retort, Yu Zhengzong couldn't help but say, "You talk too much. Even eating can't stop you from talking. You only know how to teach your daughter at banquets. Why don't you teach Qingning more often? If you had paid more attention to Qingning, she wouldn't have failed to learn the rules well. Even Yao Yao knows how to care about her younger sister's upbringing. As her mother, you've forgotten about her. This is your fault. Who are you blaming?"

Fourth Miss's upbringing wasn't good. It was because Concubine He who couldn't teach her well, but wasn't it also because Yang Shuwan, her legitimate mother, wasn't doing her best? What did Yao Yao have to do with this?

Even Yao Yao knew how to show concern for Fourth Sister and asked her to learn more of the rules. What had Yang Shuwan, the legitimate mother, done?

She probably no longer cared about Fourth Miss.

She had been negligent, yet she was blaming Yao Yao?

Who was in charge of this family?

"Master, I..." Yang Shuwan's face turned pale. Her lips trembled, and she felt a lump in her throat, but she couldn't say a word.

However, she did not expect that Yu Zongzheng would disregard the relationship between husband and wife and her face. He had reprimanded her in public at the banquet, causing her to lose all face.

No matter how glorious and capable this banquet was, it would still be a loss of face.

She knew that one couldn't just think about things that weren't presentable. She had to think deeper. Old Madam Yu picked up her chopsticks and said calmly, "Let's start the banquet!"

Yu Zongzheng turned around and ignored Madam Yang. However, it was inevitable that he would feel a little awkward after his outburst earlier.

Yang Shuwan couldn't keep a straight face anymore. She picked up her handkerchief and pressed it against the corner of her mouth before putting on a smile again. "It's getting late. It's time for the banquet."

The atmosphere inevitably became a little stiff.

A faint smile appeared on Madam Yao's lips. Someone was trying to embarrass her, but she couldn't stop him.

Chapter 180 - 180 I Can Only Pamper You

Yu Jianjia covered her lips and coughed. Her pale face also turned a strange red. It was obvious that this cough was real and uncomfortable.

Yu Youyao was sitting beside her, so it was inevitable that she would be concerned. "Third Sister's health isn't good. The dishes at the banquet are oily and meatier. It's better to eat less. I've made some light and nourishing medicinal cuisine in the small kitchen in my courtyard." After saying that, she turned around and instructed Xia Tao, "Go and get a pot for Third Sister."

Just as Xia Tao was about to leave, Yu Youyao added, "Grandmother's stomach isn't very good, and Cousin's body is also a little weak. Bring some for Grandmother and Cousin too."

Yu Jianjia's throat felt uncomfortable, and she couldn't cough anymore. However, her throat felt itchy. As she endured it, it became more and more itchy. For a moment, she couldn't help but cough violently a few more times.

The atmosphere in the room eased a little. Yu Zongzheng heaved a sigh of relief and smiled. "Yao Yao is still the most thorough. She even thought of this."

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His praise completely embarrassed Yang Shuwan.

If Yu Yao was thorough, didn't that mean that Yang Shuwan, an adult, was inferior to a half-grown child?

Yang Shuwan, who had worked hard for the entire day and was so busy that her feet did not touch the ground, was really doing a thankless job. She had done everything for Yu Youyao just to let her show off. Her dignity and glory had actually become Yu Youyao's. Then, what was she?

Yang Shuwan felt resentful and couldn't help but look at Yu Zongzheng sadly.

Only then did Yu Zongzheng realize that he had misspoken. He felt a little guilty.

However, when he thought about how Yang Shuwan couldn't even hold a proper banquet, he realized that it was her fault for not being a good household manager. So what if he praised Yao Yao?

Hence, he ignored Yang Shuwan's gaze.

Yang Shuwan tightened her grip on the handkerchief in her hand, almost tearing it apart. She blamed Yu Youyao for this.

Old Madam Yu glanced at her and changed the topic. "All of you usually say that I'm biased towards Yao Yao. Look at her filial piety. Let's see if you still have the cheek to say that in the future."

Although it was a joke, it was the truth.

However, Madam Yao smiled and agreed. "Isn't that so? She's even better than me, your daughter-in-law."

After being praised, Yu Youyao's face turned red and she felt a little embarrassed. "Mother woke up early in the morning to manage it. The banquet was also sumptuous. I was worried that everyone wouldn't think too much at the banquet and eat happily for a while. However, your stomachs would suffer, so I asked the small kitchen to prepare some medicinal cuisine."

When they heard this, everyone laughed. This was embarrassing for Yang Shuwan, who had just lost face.

She had come up with all sorts of ways to say that Madam Yang had worked hard to hold the banquet, and the banquet had been held well. It was obvious that Yu Youyao was a sensible and filial person, afraid that she would steal her mother's face.

Even the servants at the side couldn't help but sigh. Eldest Miss was really a kind and magnanimous person.

Yu Zongzheng's face lit up as he nodded repeatedly.

The awkward atmosphere completely dissipated.

Madam Yao knew what was going on and immediately said, "Thank you, Eldest Sister-in-law."

Yang Shuwan had regained some face, but she was not happy at all. When Yu Youyao said this, it made her seem even worse.

Now, she was no longer embarrassed, but she had lost her dignity.

Yu Jianjia couldn't even cough. Her chest felt stuffy, and her face turned even paler. "Thank you, Big Sister. It's also because my body isn't strong enough. I have to trouble the elders in the family and Big Sister to think more about me."

When she said this, her voice was weak, and her light pink lips trembled slightly. The redness between her lips made her skin look as white as snow and pale. She looked so pitiful.

Everyone praised Yu Youyao.

She sat beside Yu Youyao and coughed for a while, but no one cared.

Yu Youyao chuckled. "It's only right since we're sisters. You don't have to worry about it. You should focus on recuperating in the future."

Yu Jianjia nodded, suddenly not feeling like talking anymore.

After a while, Xia Tao brought over the medicinal cuisine.

After Old Madam Yu, Zhou Linghuai, and Yu Jianjia ate some, they felt that the medicinal cuisine was very filling. Even Yu Jianjia felt much better after eating it.

The banquet became lively.

At noon, there were old and young people at the table. It was not suitable for them to drink too much wine and they only drank as a form of respect. It was good that they were polite. However, it was inevitable that they would drink wine at night.

Yu Youyao was worried about her cousin, so she couldn't help but look over.

Zhou Linghuai was talking to Xie Jingliu when his eyes moved slightly. Their gazes met, and their tacit understanding was obvious.

Zhou Linghuai gave her a reassuring look. Only then did Yu Youyao purse her lips and look away with a smile.

The two of them exchanged glances and did not hide it from Xie Jingliu. He glanced at Zhou Linghuai's legs and knew that Yu Youyao was worried about his cousin. He felt stifled again.

After three rounds of wine and the etiquette was complete, a maidservant came over to refill the wine. Zhou Linghuai pushed her away and said, "I'm not in good health, so I can't drink too much wine. I'll use tea as wine."

Yu Zongzheng and Yu Zongshen expressed their understanding.

Before Xie Jingliu could speak, he saw his little cousin next to him hurriedly winking at him, as if she was afraid that he wouldn't speak.

It was really frustrating to see.

What could he do? She was his only cousin, and he couldn't see her often, so he could only dote on her. Xie Jingliu also said, "Of course, health is more important."

Yu Youyao smiled.

After the banquet, it was already 9pm.

Nanny Xu brought people over and distributed the medicinal cuisine that she had prepared to everyone in the residence. The medicinal cuisine was light and delicious, and it was also satisfying. She had eaten a lot of meat and oily food previously, and her stomach was so full that she couldn't eat more.

After finishing a bowl of medicinal cuisine, her stomach felt a little better.

It wasn't until late in the evening that the banquet completely ended.

Xie Jingliu initiated to leave.

Old Madam Yu was already tired, so she forced herself to stay awake. "If you're not busy returning to Quanzhou, you have to come over more often to get closer to Yao Yao while you're in the capital."

Xie Jingliu cupped his hands and agreed, letting Zhou Linghuai, Yu Shanyan, and the others send him out.

After getting into the carriage, the steward brought over the gift list from the Yu Residence. Xie Jingliu took a look and was no longer interested, so he took the gift list that Yu Youyao had prepared.

After reading it, Xie Jingliu's heart ached, but he was also happy. "What's wrong with this girl? She made so many things herself. Not only does it take a lot of time, but it also requires a lot of energy. She's not afraid of tiring herself out and making it seem like her family is lacking."

After the guests left the house, it was quiet.

Yang Shuwan had put in a lot of effort to arrange this banquet, but she ended up in a terrible position. However, this helped Yu Youyao's reputation of being thorough and filial.

Yang Shuwan still had to drag her exhausted body to look for Yu Zongzheng. "Master has drunk a lot today. I'm afraid he can't go to the study to handle official matters. He also doesn't need to be served by me. Come to my room..."