

## All Hail 201

### Chapter 201 - 201 I'll Accompany Cousin From Now On

This time, he took his pulse for a long time. It was probably the first time he had taken the Essence Protection Pill. The Essence Protection Pill had just entered his stomach, so the subtle changes in his pulse were not too obvious.

Yu Youyao sat beside her cousin and stared at Uncle Sun without blinking.

After waiting for a while, seeing that Uncle Sun had yet to finish taking his pulse, she couldn't sit still anymore. She opened her mouth a few times to ask, but was afraid of disturbing Uncle Sun, so in the end, she shut her mouth.

Yu Youyao had heard from Uncle Sun that only by recuperating her cousin's vitality would there be hope for his leg to be cured.

In the past, Uncle Sun had tried many methods, but they had little effect.

The Essence Protection Pill was a secret medicine that could nourish one's bones and vitality. If the effect of the Essence Protection Pill did not work, the hope of Cousin's treatment would undoubtedly be even slimmer.

Therefore, after Yu Youyao obtained the medicinal liquid of the Lingxi Bug, she had been especially concerned about the Essence Protection Pill. She was worried that something would go wrong.

The little girl sat beside him, so nervous that her small body was tense. Her eyes were fixed on Uncle Sun. It was not a bad sight.

When Uncle Sun stroked his long beard, she could also nervously pinch his sleeve. When Uncle Sun's eyebrows twitched, she would even hold her breath. When Uncle Sun's breathing became heavier, her hands would be clenched into fists.

She was even more nervous than him.

Zhou Linghuai's heart sank. It was as if he had suddenly eaten a green plum fruit, and his mouth was filled with bitterness. He suddenly held the little girl's tightly clenched hand. "Don't worry."

Yu Youyao was stunned for a moment. She looked up at her cousin and then down. Her cousin's palm was very big. His fingers were long and well-defined, as if they were carved from white jade. They looked exquisite. His palm was slightly cold, but it was very dry. He wrapped her hand in his and suddenly felt very at ease. Her tense heartstrings couldn't help but relax.

She slowly let go of her clenched fists. Yu Youyao looked up at her cousin with a smile. "Cousin, I'm not worried. I just want you to be well. No matter what happens in the future, I'll be with you."

"Okay!" Zhou Linghuai's voice was hoarse. He suddenly tightened his grip on her hand, but it did not hurt her.

Yu Youyao smiled.

At this moment, Uncle Sun, who had been taking his pulse for a long time, glanced at the loving cousins. A trace of understanding flashed across his eyes, and he stroked his long beard. "There's no

doubt about the effect of the Essence Protection Pill. It's even better than I expected. In the future, Young Master, take it every day and use the medicine and needles I've prepared. In less than three years, Young Master's foundation and vitality will recover."

As soon as he finished speaking—

"Really?" Yu Youyao was excited as she looked at Uncle Sun with a burning gaze.

Uncle Sun couldn't be bothered with her.

Fireworks suddenly bloomed in Yu Youyao's eyes, and they were extremely bright. "That's great." As the little girl spoke, she tilted her head to look at him. "Cousin, did you hear what Uncle Sun said just now? Uncle Sun said that Cousin should take the Essence Protection Pill every day in the future. In less than three years, your foundation and vitality will recover."

As if she was afraid that her cousin hadn't heard her clearly, the little girl repeated Uncle Sun's words. Between her curved eyebrows, her delicate eyes were filled with a dark luster, looking extremely beautiful.

"I heard him." Zhou Linghuai chuckled and lowered his head. The little girl's fair hand was held in his. It was very smooth and felt like cream.

For a moment, the little girl forgot about her hand being held and looked excited. "In the future, Cousin won't have to sit in a wheelchair anymore. You can even bring me out to play."

Zhou Linghuai replied, "Okay!"

The second examination lasted all day.

It wasn't until dusk that the tightly shut palace door opened.

The students who had participated in the second examination were suddenly enlightened. They stepped out of the palace gate, and the servants waiting outside went up to greet them.

Yu Shande and the others were the same, but they were in better spirits than the others.

Yu Youyao had prepared light food in the carriage. The few of them were also starving. They ate listlessly and returned to the small courtyard. They washed up briefly and fell asleep.

They only went to the Yu Residence the next day to greet Old Madam Yu.

Seeing that he was in good spirits and that he looked very calm, Old Madam Yu knew that he had done his best for this second round of examination. She did not ask if they had done well, but only told them not to focus on studying for the time being and to rest well to deal with the upcoming palace examination.

Yu Shande nodded and cupped his hands at Yu Youyao. "This time, I have to thank Sister Yao for your efforts."

Yu Youyao quickly said that there was no need for that. She then asked Chun Xiao to bring them the medicinal tea and medicinal fragrance that she had prepared early on. "I wish you all the best in the palace examination."

After the second examination, the candidates did not walk out. Instead, they rested in the Guan family's room and gathered their strength, intending to amaze the world with a single brilliant feat in the palace examination. From then on, they would be successful and famous, and their hard work would not go to waste.

Yu Youyao spent some time sorting out her mother's dowry, then called a few capable stewards into the residence.

One of them, Nanny Yue, was a nanny who had served her mother before. She was about 50 years old, but she looked very old.

After seeing Yu Youyao, Nanny Yue knelt on the ground with a thud. Tears streamed down her face. "I was wrong. Miss is already so big. I'm sorry for what Madam told me before she died."

After First Madam passed away, the entire Xie Residence came to bring Eldest Miss back

Old Madam had no choice but to invite a respected elder of the Yu Clan over. She wrote a guarantee in front of everyone in the Xie Residence that she would treat Eldest Miss well.

Later, when Old Madam wanted to send them to the farm, they were also unwilling.

However, Madam Yang was too detestable. She had her eyes on the dowry that Madam had left for Eldest Miss. Old Madam had also made up her mind. They could not win against her, but they were also worried that if they angered Old Madam, Eldest Miss would not have a good life in the residence in the future.

After entering the manor, she carefully arranged Madam's dowry. Eldest Miss was also more confident in the residence and would not be easily bullied.

Although they were in the manor, they could still hear the news from the residence.

Initially, Yu Youyao only wanted to see the person in the shop and understand some of the people there. However, Nanny Yue's kneeling and crying made her heart ache.

For a moment, she was stunned, not knowing how to react.

She had heard from her grandmother that her mother had reorganized all the businesses under her name before she passed away. She had changed some people and sent some people away. Anyone who could stay was the most capable, loyal, and trusted person to her mother.

What her mother had left her was not a lousy stall, but a group of loyal and capable old servants.

The other stewards also lowered their heads and wiped their tears.

After Madam passed away, Eldest Miss's dowry was handed over to Old Madam to manage. Although Old Madam had sent them out, she did not restrict them from entering and leaving the Yu Residence. They would also enter the residence from time to time. They could see Eldest Miss in her grandmother's house, but under Old Madam Yu's watch, they did not have much to say.

## Chapter 202 - 202 Pitiful and Admirable Parent

Nanny Yue cried and said in relief, "Young Miss, you've grown so capable that you can manage things yourself now..."

Yu Youyao reacted and quickly went forward to help Nanny Yue up. "Nanny Yue, get up quickly. You used to serve my mother. Don't be so polite."

Xia Tao cleverly brought a stool over, and Chun Xiao also served tea.

Yu Youyao quickly called for everyone to sit and talk.

When a master and servant met, they had to reminisce.

Nanny Yue told her a lot about Madam. "... I heard that Eldest Miss learned pharmacology from Nanny Xu and mixed incense. It turns out that Madam also likes this and often plays with it. Madam also likes to play chess, but she's a lousy chess player. She's also a chess fanatic. Her chess skills aren't good, but she doesn't care if she loses or wins. She just wants to start over..."

Yu Youyao listened carefully with a teacup in her hand.

She could almost imagine her mother making incense in the fragrance room, looking serious and focused, because she was usually like this.

She could also imagine her mother regretting her move, cheating, stealing, and throwing a tantrum when playing chess, because she was also like this when playing chess with her cousin.

Previously, she had also been puzzled. She was clearly a fast learner, but why was she not talented in chess? Now, she knew that she had taken after her mother.

She immediately felt a strange feeling in her heart. Even though they were separated by Yin and Yang, she still had an emotional resonance with her mother.

After talking for a while, Nanny Yue took out a yellowed letter with trembling hands and handed it to Young Miss. "This letter was handed to me for safekeeping before Madam passed away. She asked me to pass it to Young Miss when she's a little older..."

Yu Youyao's breathing tightened. She couldn't wait to take the letter from Nanny Yue's hand and open it on the spot. On the yellowed paper, there were rows of neatly written words.

She read it word for word—

My child, Yao Yao:

In October, golden chrysanthemums were everywhere. Suddenly, when I heard that I was pregnant, I cried tears of joy and took care of him. Being a mother, I have three regrets in my heart. Firstly, I felt that I couldn't always accompany my child and ask about her well-being. Secondly, I felt that I couldn't protect her and shelter her from the wind and rain. Thirdly, I felt that I couldn't raise her well. I was afraid that my child would lose her upbringing and wouldn't be able to establish herself, manage the world, and be a good person... There was nothing to be sorry about your mother's death. I hoped that my child would remember that everyone in the Yu Residence was trustworthy. I hope that you can be faithful and amiable.. I also hoped that you can be filial and not so filial... Your father was narrow-minded, and I couldn't be close to him. Madam Yang was fierce, and I had to be wary of her. I was close to your grandmother, but I couldn't rely on her too much... The longevity locks will accompany you. Wear the locks as your companions. Cherish them and love them...

There were dozens of pages of thick letters, recording the bits and pieces of her mother's pregnancy.

First fetal movement, first fetal dream, favorite food...

Gradually, she felt that her body was no longer strong enough. Her worry for her daughter, her guilt over not being able to personally raise her daughter, and her regret...

Arrangements for her daughter's future...

And her final warning to his daughter!

Every word was heartfelt and sincere. It was all the love and care a mother would give her daughter before she died. Yu Youyao immediately burst into tears.

She asked in a choked voice, "What else did my mother say before she died?"

Nanny Yue wiped her tears and looked around. The maidservants in front of Young Miss were all very sensible. When they knew that Young Miss wanted to talk to her mother's old servant, they all retreated far away.

Back then, before Madam died, she had held her hand and explained word by word. Each word held the weight of the world. "The Yu Residence isn't a good place. From top to bottom, it's full of schemes. Yu Zongzheng is shameless and heartless. After I die, he will definitely marry Madam Yang's daughter as his concubine and definitely won't treat my Yao Yao well. Old Madam is old and wise. She's scheming for her son's future. Even though she has some pity for her eldest granddaughter, there are also all kinds of schemes mixed in. But, poor Yao Yao. She's still so young, but she already lost her biological mother..."

She knelt in front of Madam and watched as Madam's lips trembled and she coughed out blood. At the same time, she held Eldest Miss in her arms and pulled open her lapel to feed her the last mouthful of milk.

Then, she was about to get someone to carry Eldest Miss out.

Perhaps it was because the mother and daughter were connected, but the young mistress opened her dark eyes and looked at her mother intently. Her soft little hands gripped the belt on her mother's chest, refusing to let go.

The maidservant carefully pried away Eldest Miss's hand. Eldest Miss was anxious and kept waving her hands in front of Madam's eyes. She opened her mouth and cried. No matter how hard she tried, she could not be coaxed.

Madam leaned against the pillow with tears streaming down her face. She held her hand tightly. "I-I've drafted a letter. I'll donate 30% of the profits from my dowry to the Yu Clan every year, and 20% of the profits will be given to the residence. Even if it's just because of this large sum of money, the clan will still have to treat Yao Yao well. Old Madam, you have to protect her a little more, and the Xie Clan will take care of her. Take good care of her. My Yao Yao will probably grow up safely..."

She knelt on the ground and wiped her old tears. When she saw the doctor and vomited blood, her eyes widened. She couldn't waste her last breath, so she explained word by word, "If, if the Yu Residence doesn't have a place for Yao Yao, bring her back to the Xie Residence. I won't let Yao Yao be bullied and humiliated."

Nanny Yue could no longer cry.

In An Shou Hall, Old Madam Yu was kneeling in the temple hall, twirling the seven treasure prayer beads in her hand. She looked at the white jade Bodhisattva in the Buddhist shrine and suddenly understood.

Back then, when Madam Xie had married into the Yu Residence, she had sent a piece of excellent Kunlun Jade to the Precious Peace Temple and donated 50,000 taels of silver for the incense oil. That was why she had asked Master Hui Neng to personally sculpt this rare Kunlun Jade Bodhisattva.

Master Hui Neng saw that there was a spot on the Kunlun Jade where cinnabar grew naturally and blood lotuses were born. She muttered a Buddhist prayer and used this spot to carve a jade pendant of a child Buddha sitting on a lotus.

Madam Xie had given this Jade Bodhisattva to her.

She was delighted to see it and worshiped it in the temple hall. Every morning and night, she would burn three incense sticks.

Before Madam Xie died, she personally hung the jade pendant of the child Buddha on Yao Yao's chest in front of her. She stared into her eyes and said word by word, "The man wears Guanyin, and the woman wears Buddha. Back then, I had just married into the Yu Residence not long ago. Master Hui Neng didn't carve anything but the child Buddha. It's obvious that our Yao Yao is a child with Buddhist affinity."

Old Madam Yu sat at the table. Madam Xie kept looking at her with her dark and cold eyes.

She was deep in thought!

Madam Xie had a dream about Buddha when she was pregnant with Yao Yao. Yao Yao was also born in April, and it was during the Buddha Bathing Festival. She was indeed fated with Buddha.

Madam Xie hugged her daughter tightly. "This jade pendant has been blessed by Master Hui Neng. It's a rare Buddhist treasure. After I die, get Yao Yao to wear it every day." At this point, she stared straight at Old Madam Xie. Blood flowed out from the corner of her mouth and dripped onto her white clothes, causing blood puddles one after another. It was a shocking sight. "Don't take it off."

Chapter 203 - 203 I Will Protect Yao Yao

Old Madam Yu looked at Madam Xie and was silent for a long time. Finally, she lowered her head and said solemnly, "Okay!"

Upon receiving Old Madam's promise, Madam Xie let out a cry and spat out a mouthful of blood, which landed on the jade pendant on Yu Youyao's chest.

The little baby was lying in bed, snoring loudly. There were even small bubbles in his mouth. She looked innocent. Perhaps because mother and daughter were connected, as soon as Madam Xie spat out a mouthful of blood, the child opened her eyes and stared at her mother with her dark eyes. She started crying.

Madam Xie was also crying. Blood and tears rolled down her face. "Yao Yao, my Yao Yao'er, don't be afraid. Even if Mother is no longer around, I'll still protect you and let you grow up safely. Yao Yao'er, don't cry, don't cry..."

As she coaxed her daughter, she even hummed an intermittent tune...

Old Madam Yu gripped her prayer beads tightly. “Don’t worry, I’ll protect Yao Yao.”

The past was still vivid in her mind. At some point, Old Madam Yu’s hand that was twirling the prayer beads had stopped.

Madam Xie personally hung the jade pendant of the child Buddha on Yao Yao’s chest and said those words to her. Other than entrusting her with an orphan, she was also reminding her to treat her granddaughter well.

Every time she saw the jade pendant on Yao Yao’s chest, she couldn’t help but think of Madam Xie.

When she thought of Madam Xie, she couldn’t help but think of the terrible things her eldest son had done.

When Madam Xie gave birth to Yao Yao, she knew that she wouldn’t live long and wouldn’t be able to protect her daughter when she grew up. Therefore, she didn’t expose her eldest son’s disgraceful deeds to others.

Instead, she helped to cover it up!

Therefore, she also planned that since she was a Buddhist, she would protect her granddaughter more in the future because of the guilt in her heart.

It was obvious that Madam Xie had made arrangements before her death to send the people from the Xie Residence out easily.

Madam Xie donated 30% of the profits of her businesses to the clan.

The Yu Clan was a scholarly clan, so they needed to maintain their reputation. Since they had received a favor from the Xie Clan, and the Yu Clan also had to rely on the Xie Residence for many businesses, it was inevitable that they would respect Gu Yaoyao.

Madam Xie had given 20% of her profits to the residence. She had to protect Yao Yao using this large sum of money and her sons’ future.

Before Madam Xie died, she had schemed in every way, all for the sake of her daughter.

What a pitiful and admirable parent!

At this moment, Nanny Liu lightened her footsteps and walked in quietly. “Old Madam, Eldest Miss has recruited an old servant from the Xie Residence. When a master and servant meet, it’s inevitable that they’ll talk a lot. You...”

Old Madam Yu was silent for a while before she slowly opened her eyes and reached out to Nanny Liu.

Nanny Liu quickly stepped forward and helped Old Madam up from the futon. The two of them left the temple hall.

Old Madam Yu twirled the prayer beads in her hand around her wrist. “The Xie family’s dowry will have to be handed over to Yao Yao sooner or later, so some things can’t be avoided.”

She had originally wanted to wait until Yao Yao was a little older before handing over the dowry to her.

However, as Yao Yao grew up day by day, it was obvious that she was maturing. It was time to know that some things should not be delayed.

There was a strong sandalwood smell on Old Madam's body. Nanny Liu was a little hesitant. "Eldest Madam Xie didn't say anything about what happened back then, and even the people around her weren't clear about it. However, after serving her for so many years, she might have known about it. It's also hard to guarantee that First Madam Xie wouldn't have left a backup plan before she died and told the people in front of her about it. Now that the master and servant are meeting, if..."

Before her death, First Madam Xie had schemed and planned for her daughter's future. It could be said that she had done everything possible.

Old Madam Yu shook her head. "Xie Roujia's old servants are all very smart. Back then, when she sent them out of the residence, they didn't complain at all. All these years, they've often been in and out of the residence. At most, they would find an opportunity to meet Yao Yao and confirm if she was really a good person, but none of them approached her. Why do you think that is?"

Nanny Liu said nothing.

Old Madam Yu's voice was also calm. "They have eyes. They can tell that I dote on Yao Yao very much, so they're worried that if they interact with her privately, they'll make me unhappy with her, so they might as well not interact with her. Even if they meet Yao Yao and become her servants now, they still have to establish themselves in the Yu Residence. In the future, I'll plan everything, so they'll naturally be more cautious."

Nanny Liu also heaved a sigh of relief. "Old Madam has thought it through."

Old Madam Yu sighed slightly. "Back then, although the matter between Eldest Son and Madam Yang was tightly covered up, it wasn't even a hundred days later after Madam Xie's death when he married Madam Yang. Madam Yang isn't anyone special, but the daughter of Eldest Son's concubine. Even outsiders have many speculations about Eldest Son's daily visits to the Yang Residence. They just think that it's a love affair between Master and Madam Yang. We can have a chat after dinner. Such a matter isn't considered new in the capital. Every family has at least one or two cases. Yao Yao can roughly guess it. I'm just worried about her..."

In the first few years, she didn't want Yao Yao to interact with the people in front of Madam Xie because she was young and she was afraid that someone would instigate her to leave home.

Nanny Liu agreed deeply. "Eldest Miss knows what's good for her. She also understands who has been protecting her and treating her well all these years."

Old Madam Yu lowered her eyes and didn't say anything. "In the end, it's all thanks to the two of them. They've both lived for more than half their lives. Now that they will be involved for the next half of their lives, it's time to let go of all their schemes. I can only hope that Yao Yao will recover and that she'll be able to rebuild her relationship with Madam Xie and her daughter-in-law. Her relationship with Yao Yao will also make up for some of my..."

The rest of her words were already inaudible.

Yu Youyao returned to the Jade Courtyard with the letter from Nanny Yue.



Seeing Miss's serious expression, Chun Xiao was a little worried. "Miss..."

Yu Youyao did not seem to hear her. In silence, she walked into the study and sat at the table. She opened the letter in her arms and read it page by page.

She read it very slowly, almost word by word and over and over again.

Chun Xiao glanced over. Miss had been looking at it for an hour.

After an unknown period of time, she finally reached the last page of the letter. Yu Youyao looked at the end of the letter steadily—

Yu Xie's calligraphy was brilliant!

Her eyelashes trembled slightly, and the tears that had been in her eyes for a long time splashed onto the bottom of her name.

Yu Youyao panicked and quickly wiped it with her sleeve. When the ink on the letter was smudged, she realized that she couldn't wipe it with her sleeve, but there was already a ball of black ink at the bottom of the letter. It was useless.

Yu Youyao couldn't help but tear up. "Mother."

Chun Xiao poked her head in from the outside and saw Young Miss sitting there in a daze, crying silently. Her tears kept flowing out.

Chapter 204 - 204 Cousin, I'm Fine!

Chun Xiao felt a lump in her throat and couldn't help but lower her head to wipe her tears.

Such a silent cry made one feel even worse. It was as if there were too many grievances, sadness, and sorrow that someone couldn't say out loud and could only bear.

As she cried, her remaining tears flowed out. Yu Youyao did not continue crying.

She opened the incense box.

There were five layers of incense boxes, and each layer contained the incense that Yu Youyao usually used. On the lowest layer, there were incense sticks. She picked up a jade spoon and a handful of the incense sticks. Then, she threw them into the incense burner. There was a soft sound, and wisps of smoke floated out of the furnace.

Yu Youyao placed the letter on it and flipped it to burn it.

As soon as Zhou Linghuai entered the Jade Courtyard, he sensed that something was wrong.

She heard a girl named Xia Tao in front of Yu Youyao say, "Should we comfort Young Miss? She feels terrible. If she stays alone like this and keeps it in her heart, her body will suffer."

Dong Mei and Chun Xiao stood still. Even if they were worried about Young Miss, how would they know how to comfort her?

"What happened?" Zhou Linghuai suddenly asked.

Xia Tao's eyes lit up. "Young Master, you're finally here. Miss is in a bad mood after seeing her mother's old servant today. She's staying in the study alone and ignoring everyone."

Zhou Linghuai's expression darkened slightly as he nodded.

Dong Mei heaved a sigh of relief. “Young Miss is the closest to Young Master. With him by her side, she probably won’t feel so uncomfortable.”

After Zhou Linghuai entered the room, he did not disturb Yu Youyao.

He looked at the little girl and carefully read the slightly yellowed letters one by one. Then, he carefully flattened them and smoked them one by one. After the fragrance penetrated the paper, he placed them into a wooden box.

He knew that musk-scented paper could last for a long time, and the wooden box was resistant to moisture and insects. Some important letters had to be kept like this to last.

She was so focused that she did not notice that there was someone else in the study.

Zhou Linghuai felt depressed. It was not that the little girl had ignored him.

However, the little girl’s face was tense, and her delicate eyes revealed heartbreaking sadness. There was too much grievance and sadness hidden, but it was difficult to express.

He didn’t know what to do.

It took Yu Youyao two hours to finish burn dozens of pages of the letter. The study was filled with a strong fragrance.

Yu Youyao closed the box carefully. When she looked up, she saw that her cousin had come over and was looking at her. She was stunned for a moment before smiling again. “Cousin, why are you here?!”

Her smile was as bright as ever, but Zhou Linghuai felt his heart ache.

In these two hours, the little girl had experienced countless sufferings of life and death before she could smile again when she saw him.

Zhou Linghuai gently rubbed the top of the little girl’s head. “I’ve arranged for a few old servants to enter the capital. Take some time to meet them. I’ll lend them to you. They’ll be yours. You can make the arrangements yourself.”

At her cousin’s mention, Yu Youyao recalled that she had asked to borrow some people from him previously. As she had been busy at home recently, she was delayed. “Thank you, Cousin.”

Zhou Linghuai glanced at the wooden box in the little girl’s arms and paused for a moment. “Have you learned the new song I taught you previously? That song is a little difficult for beginners. Do you want me to teach you another one?”

Yu Youyao tilted her head. “Cousin, have you forgotten? I just played that song yesterday. You even asked me to practice more.”

Yesterday, on a whim, she thought of the “Parasol Zither Painting” that her cousin had drawn for her, so she pulled her cousin under the Parasol Tree and played a new song for him.

Her cousin had said that she played well and wanted her to practice more.

Zhou Linghuai was stunned for a moment. Then, he recalled the scene of the little girl wearing a yellow and green dress yesterday and playing the zither under the tree. Her pleated dress was spread all over the ground, and there were branches and leaves embroidered on it. Even before the flowers bloomed, he still felt that it was beautiful.

Rubbing the armrest of the wheelchair gently with his fingers, Zhou Linghuai continued, "Ms. Ye's class talked about the Spring and Autumn Period. It involves Confucianism, Daoism, law, ink, soldiers, fame, and other Hundred Schools of Philosophy. The content is demanding and complicated. I'll teach you again. In the future, it'll be easier to learn it at home."

Yu Youyao smiled and said, "Cousin teaches me every day, and you always talk about the content of Spring and Autumn. I can actually handle Ms. Ye's classes thanks to you."

Zhou Linghuai was speechless for a moment. Then, he remembered that the little girl liked to play chess, so he suggested, "Why don't I play chess with you and see if your chess skills have improved?"

Yu Youyao burst out laughing. "Cousin clearly doesn't like to play chess with me. You're so reluctant every time. You thought I couldn't tell."

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "It's not that I don't like playing chess with you, but..."

Yu Youyao held her cousin's hand and smiled. "Actually, I'm deliberately pulling you along to play chess with me. I just want to see you. You clearly can't stand my chess skills, but you can't bear to reject my request. Not only are you coaxing me, but you're also trying your best to set me up so that I can win and be happy. You don't have to explain. I know everything."

Zhou Linghuai opened his mouth, but no words came out.

Yu Youyao said softly, "I know. Cousin, you're worried about me." The little girl's eyes were red, and after the baptism of tears, her eyes were also bright. "Cousin, I'm fine!"

Zhou Linghuai's throat choked, but he still said, "The dead are gone. You..."

He had just started to speak when his words turned into nothing under the little girl's bright gaze. He couldn't say anything else.

Yu Youyao climbed onto her cousin's lap. "I've never had a mother since I was young. No matter how much Grandmother doted on me, I just know that she's different from my mother. I don't know what it's like to be doted on by my mother. I've always been envious of Second Sister. I always thought that if my mother hadn't died..." At this point, her eyes turned red, but she didn't cry. "Cousin, when I saw Nanny Yue today, I realized that I was also someone who had a mother's love. Even though my mother was no longer around, her love for me didn't decrease at all."

The little girl sniffed, and tears welled up in her eyes. She looked pitiful, as if she was about to cry again.

Seeing that she was holding it in, Zhou Linghuai said, "If you want to cry, just cry..."

"I'm not crying." Yu Youyao sniffed stubbornly and tried her best to hold back the tears in her eyes. Even her voice was choked with sobs. "I'm just happy. My mother said in her letter that when I was in her womb, I was very obedient and didn't torture her at all. When she was three months pregnant with me, she had

a dream about a golden Buddha. Mother told Grandmother that she was very happy and said that I had a Buddhist affinity. Also, when my mother was pregnant with me, she especially liked to eat sour food.”

Chapter 205 - 205 Little Master

At this point, the little girl wrinkled her little nose. “This isn’t like me. I like to eat sweet food and not sour food at all.”

Zhou Linghuai took out a blue handkerchief and gently wiped the tears from the little girl’s eyes. The little girl was very obedient and allowed him to wipe her tears.

The little girl chattered on and on. “Mother told me that every longevity lock she made for me has a different meaning. Unfortunately, I broke one. However...” her eyes lit up and she said happily, “Perhaps it’s precisely because my mother is here to protect me that I’ve avoided disaster.”

The thief was fierce and did not even blink when he was killed.

The little girl was pure and clear-minded. She did not need his comfort and had already thought it through. Zhou Linghuai nodded. “If you’re well in the future, I believe your mother will be at ease in heaven.”

Yu Youyao nodded vigorously. Thinking about how she had cried just now and how she must look very sorry, and how her cousin had even seen it, she quickly covered her face with a handkerchief. “Cousin, I’ll go back to my room to wash up first. I’ll be back soon.”

With that, before her cousin could react, she had already run away. Her figure was cheerful, and the atmosphere in the Jade Courtyard, which was heavy just a moment ago, instantly became lively.

Zhou Linghuai suddenly heaved a sigh of relief, and his grip on the armrest loosened.

The little girl left quickly and returned quickly.

She had changed into a pink and white butterfly dress. When she ran, her dress fluttered like a butterfly. The butterflies embroidered on her dress immediately seemed to come alive and fly with her, making her look even more beautiful.

Yu Youyao squatted in front of her cousin and held his hand. Her eyes lit up. “Cousin, you’ve been taking Essence Protection Pills for a few days. You look much better than before. Even your hands aren’t as cold as before.”

Zhou Linghuai smiled and nodded.

After accompanying her cousin for a while, Yu Youyao met Nanny Yue and the others again to discuss the rules.

It was inevitable that Madam’s dowry business had something to do with the Yu Residence. Nanny Yue and the others were also aware that Eldest Miss had previously set new rules. Now that the rules had been implemented for a period of time, results could be seen. They were all under Eldest Madam Xie’s command. After Eldest Madam Xie passed away, her little master, Yu Youyao, was also very supportive of her.

After that, Yu Youyao asked, “Is there a new seed from the Imperial Court on our farm?”

Nanny Yue nodded. "It's just a symbolic planting. There are many new seeds distributed by the Imperial Court every year. No one has planted them before, so it's not good for the time being. Not to mention that it's tiring, but there hasn't been any harvest in the end. In the past, they were a little more important, but these years, the times are good, and the current emperor doesn't value them as much as the previous emperor, so no one cares too much."

Yu Youyao frowned. "We still have to find a few people to plant it carefully. It doesn't matter if there's no harvest. In any case, I'm not short of those few acres of harvest profits. The key is the Imperial Court's matters. We can't be perfunctory. We don't have to care about how other families are doing. We just have to care about our own matters."

She always felt that the court was tense. In this way, she had to be careful about everything at home. In addition, it was also a good idea to plant new seeds. If they could be harvested, it would also be a good thing. Her grandmother at home paid respects to Buddha, so everything had to be done well.

Nanny Yue nodded. "You're right. I'll look for a few people to take care of this matter later."

This was not something too important. It only needed some arrangements.

Yu Youyao nodded. "My cousin has a few old servants at home. They're all useful people. You can meet them tomorrow and let them do this!"

This suggestion made sense.

Even Nanny Yue couldn't help but sigh with emotion. Eldest Miss was smart and sensible, and she did things that made people feel comfortable. "We'll follow Eldest Miss's arrangements."

The manpower in the dowry industry was all arranged properly. If they rashly arranged for new people to enter, not to mention that the old servants would not be happy, the jobs were not that easy to arrange. How could they move so easily?

Eldest Miss had taken the initiative to mention the planting of new seeds in the manor because she wanted to arrange for them to be planted here.

Firstly, it was true that the manor did not take this matter very seriously. Eldest Miss had only needed to say the word to arrange for someone to go over. Secondly, planting new seeds was not too important, and the old servants would not think too much about it. Thirdly, this job was very light, so that the old servants of the Zhou family would have a suitable place to go.

It seemed that Eldest Miss was indeed as kind as Madam. All these years, Old Madam had also personally raised Eldest Miss. It was not in vain that Madam had made such arrangements before she died.

Yu Youyao left Nanny Yue and the others to have lunch in the residence.

When Old Madam Yu received the news, she looked at the porridge and dishes on the table and immediately lost her appetite. She waved her hand and said, "There's no need to keep telling me about Yao Yao's movements in the future. She has grown up and has a way of doing things. There's no need for me, her grandmother, to watch over her."

Nanny Liu was also helpless. She wanted to persuade her, but she did not know how.

At this moment, Qing Xiu entered. “Old Madam, Liu’er from Eldest Miss’s courtyard is here.”

Old Madam Yu was stunned for a moment before turning to look at Nanny Liu.

Nanny Liu smiled and explained, “Liu’er is the goddaughter of Old Madam Ma. She was originally working in First Madam’s house. Later, she committed a crime and was sent to the outer courtyard by First Madam. Eldest Miss pitied Liu’er’s poor life, so she sent Liu’er to her courtyard. She took on the role of Qiu Xing’s errand girl and asked her to serve her in the study. Liu’er’s just recovered, so she went to the Jade Courtyard to take on the job.”

It was also this sentence that allowed Old Madam Yu to understand the crux of the matter. She couldn’t help but laugh. “Yao Yao is growing up, and the girls in front of her are indeed not enough. We have to choose a few more capable servants. Let her in!”

It was probably because Old Madam Ma had caused a ruckus and embarrassed Yang Shuwan, and the main courtyard couldn’t accommodate Liu’er. Yao Yao had to help out a little out of consideration for the servants, which was why she had made this arrangement.

However, Old Madam Ma was wholeheartedly on her side, so it didn’t matter that Yao Yao had used Liu’er.

Qing Xiu received the order and left.

Immediately after, Liu’er entered the house to greet Old Madam Yu.

Old Madam Yu’s eyes lit up when she first saw the dumplings that Liu’er had placed in the wooden tray. Then, she saw that this girl was thin and weak. She looked a little ordinary, but she also looked a little delicate and pretty. She was even more satisfied. “Old Madam Ma is a good person. You’re her goddaughter, so I think you’re not bad. Work hard when you’re at the Jade Courtyard.”

Liu’er was flattered and agreed repeatedly. Then, she told her the reason for her visit. “It’s April, and it’s the Buddha Bathing Festival. Old Madam eats more lightly than usual. Seeing that Old Madam had lost a lot of weight, Young Miss was worried that Old Madam’s body wouldn’t be able to take it anymore, so she personally went to the kitchen to make nourishing medicinal cuisine for Old Madam to nourish her body.”

Chapter 206 - 206 Flower Festival Invitation

Old Madam Yu immediately beamed with joy. She turned to look at Nanny Liu. “This girl! She doesn’t know that money can’t buy youth.”

It was obvious that their relationship was as close as before. Nanny Liu also smiled. “Eldest Miss is trying to be filial to you.”

Old Madam Yu liked hearing this, and her face broke into a smile.

April was destined to be an eventful month. After Yu Youyao left school, Qing Xiu came over. “Old Madam has something on and has invited Eldest Miss over.”

Yu Youyao nodded without thinking.

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After Qing Xiu left, Xia Tao whispered into her ear, “In the morning, a nanny came to the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence and went to Old Madam’s An Shou Hall.”

Yu Youyao’s eyelids twitched.

The Marquis of Changxing’s Residence did not have much contact with the Yu Residence, so when they suddenly visited...

For some reason, Yu Youyao recalled what she had heard outside her father's study that day. She suddenly felt like a storm was brewing.

Before the New Year, Chang Xinghou had won a battle in the You Prefecture and handed over a request for credit to the Imperial Court, allowing the cabinet to suppress it. After the palace examination, this matter should be settled...

When Yu Youyao arrived at An Shou Hall, Madam Yang and Madam Yao were both there. To her surprise, even Yu Jianjia and Yu Shuangbai were sitting in the room.

Old Madam Yu waved at Yu Youyao.

Yu Youyao went forward to greet the elders before walking to her grandmother's side and sitting down obediently, attracting Yu Jianjia's attention. She pretended not to see her.

Yu Jianjia lowered her head. The Old Madam did not hide her love for Yu Youyao at all.

Since everyone had arrived, it was time to talk. Madam Yao smiled and asked, "Old Madam, why did you call us over today?"

When the nanny from the Marquis of Changxing Residence entered the residence, Old Madam did not hide it. Naturally, she understood what was going on.

Yang Shuwan glanced at Madam Yao from the corner of her eye. She had originally planned to ask this question first, but who knew that while she was still thinking about the people from the Marquis of Changxing's Residence, Madam Yao had already snatched the opportunity.

Old Madam Yu did not answer Madam Yao and only turned to look at her.

Yang Shuwan was staring at Old Madam Yu, waiting for her to speak. Suddenly, her gaze darkened. She held her breath and her heart skipped a beat. Before she could react, she heard Old Madam Yu ask her, "When did you meet Madam Changxing?"

Yang Shuwan was first shocked, but then her eyes were filled with joy. However, she did not dare to show it because of Old Madam's question. "The last time I went to the Precious Peace Temple, I brought Sister Jia and Qingning to the temple to admire the plum blossoms. I bumped into the Marquis of Changxing's wife and said a few words. She even praised Jia Jia for being obedient and polite."

It was on the seventh of February that she had seen a woman in the Plum Garden. She was wearing a brown-gold felt jacket with large golden peonies embroidered on it. It was originally made of old-fashioned material, but now, she was dressed in an imposing and domineering manner.

In the capital, the Marquis of Changxing's wife was a dignified person. She usually went to visit various families, so they had naturally seen her before. She went forward to say a few words.

She had originally thought that the Marquis of Changxing's wife was someone who was not easy to get close to. Unexpectedly, she actually smiled and chatted with her, even holding Jia Jia's hand and praising her for being well-mannered.

After talking to the Marquis of Changxing's wife, they had a realization!



It turned out that when they were in the palace, Qingning had offended a master who knew about lot writing. He couldn't help but reprimand her and actually asked the Marquis of Changxing's wife to listen to Jia Jia's words to comfort her.

At the side, Yu Jianjia's eyes lit up. She recalled that day when the Marquis of Changxing's wife had kindly held her hand and praised her for her good looks and manners. She couldn't help but put down the tea in her hand and tilt her head and ears.

Yang Shuwan couldn't help but ask, "Old Madam, why are you suddenly asking about this?"

Old Madam Yu's expression darkened a little. She took out the golden invitation card on the table and showed it to everyone. "The Marquis of Changxing's Residence is holding a flower festival on April 22. They are inviting our family over a few days after the palace examination." At this point, her voice paused for a moment. She first glanced at Yu Jianjia, then at Yu Youyao and Yu Shuangbai. "They also asked us to bring a few younger ones from the family."

Madam Yao was stunned. She couldn't help but ask, "Why did the Marquis of Changxing's Residence choose this time to hold a banquet..."

They still had to take care of a few younger children, and the younger children in the family were all half-grown. It was not the right age to take them out yet. This was a little against the rules!

Yu Jianjia's eyes lit up a little more. She tightened her grip on her handkerchief and looked at Yang Shuwan.

Yang Shuwan understood and couldn't help but ask, "Our girls are all a little young. Everyone in the capital knows that they haven't reached the age to be brought out. Why did they suddenly mention bringing them out?"

Just now, Old Madam had specially asked her when she had gotten to know the Marquis of Changxing's wife. Could it be that she liked Jia Jia and felt that she was well-mannered, so she had specifically mentioned that she wanted to bring her sisters along?

Old Madam Yu smiled faintly. "That nanny said that Eldest Madam Yang is very well-mannered. Even though the sisters in the family are young, they're not ordinary. She said that Seventh Sister in the residence is about the same age as Yao Yao and the others, so they should be able to play together."

Towards the end, her tone became indifferent.

Yu Jianjia's eyes were filled with joy.

That day, the Marquis of Changxing's wife held her hand and kept sizing her up. She had a kind smile on her face, and even her somewhat mean face was very gentle. It was obvious that she really liked her.

She turned around and glanced at Yu Youyao, who was looking down and thinking about something, and Yu Shuangbai, who was eating and drinking foolishly. She pursed her lips slightly.

Since she was going to be brought along, the other sisters in the family naturally had to be brought along as well to not be disrespectful.

Yang Shuwan immediately raised her eyebrows, unable to hide her smug expression. She said, “The Marquis of Changxing only saw Jia Jia and spoke to her...”

In other words, the few sisters in the family were only able to attend the Flower Festival at the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence because of Yu Jianjia.

The room fell silent.

Old Madam Yu closed her eyes and fiddled with her prayer beads. Yu Youyao sat beside her grandmother with her head lowered. No one knew what she was thinking. Madam Yao brought over some tea, but Yu Shuangbai did not notice that the atmosphere was amiss at all. She ate happily.

Yang Shuwan also realized that she had misspoken. She quickly smiled and tried to salvage the situation. “It was probably because I was sick a while ago. Yao Yao helped to manage the household and made a name for herself outside. Madam Changxing heard about it.”

Old Madam Yu opened her eyes and looked at Madam Yang. “What do you think?”

Yang Shuwan was stunned by the question. She subconsciously replied, “Since this invitation has already been sent to my door, how can I not go? We would offend someone for no reason.”

Old Madam Yu did not want to say anything else. She waved her hand and said, “In that case, go back and prepare. I’m old, and it’s not appropriate for me to go out. Just the two of you can bring Eldest Miss, Second Miss, and Third Miss along!”

Chapter 207 - 207 I Have a Daughter

Yang Shuwan was overjoyed. Her mind was filled with thoughts of how to dress up so that she could show her face at the Flower Festival in the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence. She stood up and was about to take Yu Jianjia away.

On the other hand, Yu Jianjia took a step forward and bowed to Old Madam Yu. “Grandmother, take care of yourself. I’ll take my leave first and not disturb you.”

Even though Old Madam Yu did not like her granddaughter for thinking too much, she had to admit that Yu Jianjia was a polite and sensible person. She was meticulous in everything she did.

Madam Yao sat still.

After Yang Shuwan and her daughter left, Madam Yao glanced at her daughter, who was sitting on the chair and eating and drinking foolishly. “There are too many people at the Flower Festival. Yao Yao and Shuangbai are still young children. They usually don’t go to other people’s houses, so how can they be brought out?”

She was asking her for advice, so Old Madam Yu’s expression became a little more sincere. “It’s not a big deal. Our family isn’t familiar with the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence, so we’re just going through the motions. As for Yao Yao and Shuangbai, you can bring them along. They’re younger, so no one will say anything. If you really can’t bring them along, you can look for the Zhenguo Marquis Residence and let them stay with the sisters of the Zhenguo Marquis Residence. The sisters of the Zhenguo Marquis Residence are older and more polite and they don’t have to stay with Madam Yang.”

Upon hearing the last sentence, Madam Yao felt relieved and left with Yu Shuangbai.

When the room was empty, Yu Youyao helped her grandmother back to the inner room.

Old Madam Yu took a sip of tea and turned to glance at her granddaughter. “What do you think?”

Yu Youyao pondered carefully for a moment. “Previously, I happened to hear Father mention that the Marquis of Changxing had won a battle in You Prefecture years ago and had sent a letter to the imperial court asking for credit. This matter was asked by the cabinet to be suppressed. At this time, the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence is holding a flower festival to bring this matter to the surface. After the palace examination, it would be difficult for the cabinet to suppress this matter anymore.”

Although it was just a flower festival, it was aimed at the royal court.

She knew that Eldest Son had asked Yao Yao to manage the large study. Old Madam Yu looked at Yu Youyao for a long time. “Your third cousin came to the capital with news that the vassal king is acting strangely!”

Yu Youyao was shocked, and even her eyes widened.

Old Madam Yu did not speak directly. Instead, she asked Yu Youyao, “Do you understand what I mean?”

Yu Youyao’s breathing tightened, and she subconsciously asked, “Do you know which vassal king...”

Old Madam Yu’s eyes lit up when she saw Yu Youyao’s gaze. Then, she shook her head. “Your second uncle has sent someone to investigate. There’s no news yet.”

Why did the young mistresses of wealthy families read the Four Books and Five Classics?

It was also for the sake of helping the family take care of the inner residence better.

Naturally, they had to know some things.

Yu Youyao took a deep breath. “Youzhou is located in the extreme north, and it corresponds with the capital. In the past, the soldiers and horses in Youzhou have always been strong. They used their strength to fight with outsiders and protect their territory and intimidate the vassal lords. Ever since... the incident in Youzhou, the vassal lords haven’t been as peaceful as before.”

Old Madam Yu’s eyes lit up even more. She stopped twirling her prayer beads and looked at Yu Youyao, asking her to continue.

Yu Youyao said, “The Marquis of Changxing won a battle in Youzhou years ago. It’s not like the cabinet can’t suppress this glory. Back then, when King You was guarding Youzhou, he won many battles. If he were to be rewarded every time he returned, I’m afraid the Imperial Court wouldn’t be able to reward him either. Moreover, it’s the Marquis of Changxing’s duty to guard Youzhou, and it’s also his duty to win a battle. However, if the vassal lords make any movements at this time, then the Marquis of Changxing, who has won battles, will seem especially eye-catching. The emperor will have to use this matter to praise the Marquis of Changxing greatly to show his generosity and dignity as an emperor to intimidate the various vassal lords.”

At that time, the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence would probably be in the limelight.

As a direct descendant of the Marquis of Weining, the Marquis of Changxing's Residence was probably unstoppable. The cabinet might not be able to suppress the flames of the Marquis of Weining's Residence, and the entire court would be in chaos.

Old Madam Yu had obviously thought of this too. She sighed slightly. "Your father is a censor, so he can't leave this matter alone. Your second uncle is a court official, and he's also from Old Master Xia's lineage. He can't avoid this matter either. I don't think our family will be at peace."

Yu Youyao agreed wholeheartedly.

Old Madam Yu looked at her granddaughter. "The news of the vassal king's strange actions will probably only spread after the palace examination. Don't spread it now."

Yu Youyao nodded. "Grandmother, I know what's important."

Old Madam Yu then thought of the Flower Festival at the Marquis of Changxing's Residence and reminded her, "Although the Flower Festival isn't a big deal, you have to be more careful. You're the eldest, so you have to be more thorough in your actions, so bring more..." Before she could finish speaking, she thought of Yang Shuwan and her daughter, who looked like they couldn't wait to get into the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. She frowned and waved her hand. "Forget it. Take care of yourself and don't mix with Madam Yang. As for Shuangbai, she came from your Second Aunt's stomach. You definitely have to take care of her first."

Yu Youyao nodded. "Don't worry, Grandmother."

Old Madam Yu held her hand. "Don't worry too much too and just let her do as she pleases. Anyway, I'm not dead yet, so it's not up to her to decide at home."

Yu Youyao was not worried, but she still nodded in agreement.

Old Madam Yu changed the topic and asked, "The 18th of April is your birthday. When the time comes, invite the sisters of your close family over for a gathering. It'll be fun and lively. We'll let everyone outside know that my granddaughter has just grown up."

A ten-year-old child was already at the age of visiting relatives. She had the right to show her face.

Yu Youyao shook her head. "Forget it. April 22nd is the Flower Festival of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. Our family has to prepare early. It's just a family meal. It's not too important."

Old Madam Yu shook her head. "How can the Flower Festival be more important than this? It's not up to you to decide. Prepare the invitation yourself later. I'll get Nanny Liu and Nanny Xu to arrange it."

Yu Youyao had no choice but to nod and agree.

Yang Shuwan happily pulled Yu Jianjia back to the main courtyard. Her face was full of pride, and even the servants saw it clearly.

When they reached the inner room, Yang Shuwan held Yu Jianjia's hand. "It's also because you've caught the eye of the Marquis of Changxing's wife. She likes you, so she asked you to bring your sisters along. Eldest Sister and Second Sister also benefited from you."

Yu Jianjia's pale face turned slightly red. "Mother, don't say that. The Marquis of Changxing is holding a flower festival. He definitely won't only invite me. It would only be appropriate if all the sisters in the family were present."

Yang Shuwan smiled and pulled Yu Jianjia to the side room. "This is your first time going out. You can't be careless and let Yu Youyao steal the limelight."

Yu Jianjia frowned. Someone from the Xie Residence had come over first with three large carriages of expensive items for Yu Youyao.

Chapter 208 - 208 I'll Protect You!

Yang Shuwan rummaged through her belongings and said, "There's still a top-notch moonlight wishing silk in my bag. It's made of high quality material, and the color is bright and elegant. It's the most suitable for you. Tomorrow, I'll bring you out to shop and buy you a good outfit... You can't dress up in plain clothes this time. You have to look radiant. Yes, the moonlight wishing silk is elegant. It has to be paired with the Southern Pearl to look good..."

"The Marquis of Changxing's Residence has sent out invitations..." Zhou Linghuai held a special soft brush and carefully painted the zither. It was unknown if he was listening to the secret guard's report.

The shape of the zither had already been carved. The body of the zither was carved with nine feathers and was painted in honey yellow. It looked sweet and beautiful, exuding an indescribable luxury.

It took Zhou Linghuai an hour to finish applying a layer of paint. He threw the small brush into a jar at the side and said calmly, "You can remove the red wishing silk bag."

Yin San's figure flashed and disappeared.

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Zhou Linghuai looked at the zither. The paint was even and bright. It was specially decorated. The paint that was just applied was naturally left to dry. It was the best.

He wheeled himself back into the study. Not long after, Zhou Linghuai pricked up his ears and heard the little girl's footsteps. They were light and cheerful, unlike the others around him. Every time, he could always tell that she was here.

Even if someone was following him, he could tell which footsteps belonged to the little girl.

"Cousin, you didn't go to school today. Are you feeling unwell? Did Uncle Sun treat you? Did you eat the Essence Protection Pill on time every day?" As soon as Yu Youyao entered the house, she ran to her cousin and looked at him anxiously, unable to hide the worry on her face.

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "In the past few days, Mr. Hu Shan has been giving me advice. I've learned all of this in the past. Moreover, I won't be taking the path of an imperial scholar in the future, so I don't have to learn to be one."

Both the second and third examinations tested strategy.

Yu Youyao held her cousin's hand and pouted. "Cousin, you should study more carefully. Your leg will definitely recover in the future. It's hard to determine that you won't take the path of a scholar in the future."

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "I hope Cousin can earn an honorary title?"

The imperial examination was the best path for a man. Of course, she hoped that her cousin would receive a high salary. Just as Yu Youyao was about to nod, she thought of the Flower Festival in Changxing and shook her head. "As long as Cousin is well, it doesn't matter what happens. It doesn't matter if he takes the examination or not. Ever since the incident in Youzhou, the Imperial Court hasn't been peaceful. It might not be a good thing for him to take the examination."

She did not have to avoid talking to her cousin anymore.

Hearing Yu Youyao mention Youzhou, Zhou Linghuai's eyes flashed. Before he could say anything, he heard the little girl continue, "The Marquis of Changxing is holding a flower festival. Not only did he send an invitation to the residence today, but he also deliberately mentioned that he wanted the sisters from the residence to go. I wonder why?"

She did not believe that the Marquis of Changxing's wife had really fallen in love with Yu Jianjia after meeting her once at the Precious Peace Temple and had only invited them because of Yu Jianjia.

Zhou Linghuai was also a little surprised. "What did Grandaunt say?"

Yu Youyao shook her head. "Grandmother only asked me to take care of myself during the flower festival. She didn't say much else. I don't think there's anything urgent."

Zhou Linghuai's eyebrows twitched slightly. "You're a young lady who has just reached the age where you can explore the outside world. As long as you're doing well on the surface, others won't mind even if there's a lack of etiquette." Thinking that Old Madam Yu also had the same thoughts, he changed the topic slightly. "However, since the Marquis of Changxing has deliberately mentioned you all, there's a reason for it. Later, get someone to ask about the sisters in the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. The adults don't need you to entertain them, but you have to interact with them. If you know more, you can also be on guard."

The banquets of the big families were all hosted by male guests. The women were invited separately, and the older ladies were not with the elders. Instead, they were entertained by the first daughters of the main family. The rules were not that strict, but when a group of young ladies gathered together, it was inevitable that there would be a lot of trouble.

When Yu Youyao heard this, she understood the crux of the matter. No matter what the Marquis of Changxing was thinking, it had to be revealed from the few of them.

She looked at her cousin and smiled. "Cousin, you're amazing. I hadn't even thought of this."

Zhou Linghuai shook his head and laughed. Then, he instructed, "During the Flower Festival, bring Nanny Xu over. Chun Xiao has some tricks up her sleeve. If you bring Xia Tao along, you'll be able to hear some news and won't be in the dark."

Since Old Madam Yu wasn't going to the Flower Festival, Yu Youyao could only follow Madam Yang.

Madam Yang wouldn't take her seriously, and Madam Yao had to take care of her daughter first. This was the first time Yao Yao was going out officially, so she couldn't do without someone guiding her. Nanny Xu definitely had to take care of her.

This was the first time they were going out officially. Not only were they not familiar with each other, but they were also going to such a grand event like the Flower Festival. The Marquis of Changxing did not look like a good person either. Yu Youyao did not know what was going to happen at the Flower Festival, and even she was a little flustered.

After hearing her cousin's analysis and arrangements, Yu Youyao felt relieved and nodded. "I understand, Cousin!"

Zhou Linghuai said calmly, "You don't have to take the Flower Festival of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence to heart too much. When the time comes, you can just make a trip there." At this point, he paused slightly, and his thin lips turned pale and sharp. "You don't have to endure it when you encounter trouble. Don't let yourself suffer. If anything happens..." He stared into Yu Youyao's eyes and said word by word, "I'll take care of it for you!"

Yu Youyao's heart trembled. She widened her eyes and looked at her cousin, smiling. "I'm not the type to be bullied. Don't worry, I won't let anyone make me suffer."

Three years ago, after King You's rebellion, the Marquis of Weining recommended the Marquis of Changxing to the emperor to guard Youzhou. The emperor agreed, and the Marquis of Changxing was given a lot of troops and stayed in the limelight.

She didn't know where her cousin got his confidence from to say such a thing to her.

It was as if the Marquis of Changxing was just a grasshopper after autumn to him, and he could crush him at any time. This undoubtedly confirmed her guess.

Her cousin must have something to do with the vassal king's abnormal behavior.

She just didn't know what her cousin was going to do.

Yu Youyao felt a little uneasy, and she was more worried. She held her cousin's hand. "Cousin, you have to be fine."

Zhou Linghuai was stunned for a moment. Then, he held the little girl's hand. It was soft and delicate, like cream. He opened his mouth, but in the end, he only replied with a soft "Mm."

The little girl changed the topic with a smile. "Cousin, it's my tenth birthday on April 18th. Grandmother said that she wants to hold a small banquet and asked me to invite my acquaintances to join in the fun."

Zhou Linghuai suddenly remembered that had prepared a gift for it for a long time that he kept in the house. He smiled and said, "You deserve to have some fun."

## Chapter 209 - 209 Cousin Is Too Annoying

The Yu Residence was a family of scholars. In addition to having a close relationship with the Marquis Zhen Residence, there was also the Tang family, the Chancellor of the Hanlin Academy, and the Qi family, who were related to the Imperial Court. As for the Yang family, even if it was because of Yang Shuwan, Yu Youyao probably wouldn't be invited. With Old Madam Yu around, she wasn't afraid of being criticized.

Yu Youyao looked a little sad. "Cousin, when I was young, there were even rumors in the residence that I was bad luck and jinxed my mother to death."

At that time, she was still young. She had heard from the servants that her mother had given birth early because she had fallen and had a difficult time giving birth. In the end, she did not survive her confinement and passed away.

She was very upset. She ran alone to her room and cried until her eyes were swollen under the blanket.

Zhou Linghuai felt a lump in his throat.

!!

Yu Youyao sniffed. "Later, when Grandmother was sick, a Daoist nun suddenly came to the house. The Daoist nun said that I was a jinx and had to be sent to the temple to be treated for a few years. When Grandmother found out about this, she was so angry that she couldn't even care about being sick anymore. She brought my birth characters to the Precious Peace Temple and met Master Hui Neng. Master Hui Neng said that I had a Buddhist affinity and that if I could be kind, I would enjoy great fortune..."

Zhou Linghuai tightened his grip on the armrest. The veins on his back bulged, and a ruthless glint appeared in his deep eyes. "Your mother's death has nothing to do with you..."

He frowned. After all, it was a family matter of the Yu Residence, so he couldn't say much.

Yu Youyao took a deep breath. "When I was young, I spent my birthday with my grandmother. Actually, I wasn't too willing to hold a party."

Zhou Linghuai understood. Although Old Madam Yu had resolved this matter, the young lady still believed from the bottom of her heart that her mother's death had something to do with her. Even her birthday every year was not a happy one.

He held the little girl's hand and pursed his lips.

The little girl suddenly smiled and looked at her cousin with sparkling eyes. "When it's my birthday, you can't forget to give me a birthday gift."

She had gone to the Green House to look for her cousin today to tell him her birthday.

Who would ask others for a birthday gift? Zhou Linghuai didn't know whether to laugh or cry, but he nodded. "Okay!"

With this assurance, Yu Youyao smiled even more happily. Suddenly, she wanted to know what her cousin wanted to give her. She asked, "Cousin, what gift do you plan to give me?"

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "There won't be a surprise if I tell you."

Yu Youyao pouted and said unhappily, "Cousin, tell me. Just a hint. Even if I know what you're giving me in advance, I'll still be happy and surprised when I receive a gift..."

The things that her cousin had given her were all extraordinary. Even now, she was still surprised and happy to see the fan that he had given her.

Zhou Linghuai chuckled and said nothing.



Yu Youyao tried to persuade him, but she didn't manage to get anything out of him. She was both angry, curious, disappointed, and expectant. After dawdling for a long time, she finally left the Green House.

After Yu Youyao left, Zhou Linghuai heaved a sigh of relief. He took a blue handkerchief and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

The little girl was really too torturous. He almost couldn't hold it in anymore and wanted to take out the gift that he had prepared for a long time and hand it to her.

The capital became lively again because of the Flower Festival at the Marquis of Changxing's Residence.

The next day, Yang Shuwan brought Yu Jianjia out.

Xia Tao was a little unhappy. "First Madam brought Second Miss out to shop without even asking her. How can she bring one out without bringing the other? Isn't she afraid that others will say something?"

It was understandable that First Madam did not bring Fourth Miss along, but it did not make sense for her to bring Eldest Miss along.

Yu Youyao's expression was indifferent.

Yang Shuwan did not want to bring her out, nor did she want to go out with Yang Shuwan. Once a child left the residence, she would be out of her grandmother's sight. It was better to be cautious.

However!

Without an elder by her side, there were indeed many inconveniences.

Yu Jianjia often went out to shop with Yang Shuwan, but she did not go out much in a year. Her grandmother was old, so it was not appropriate for her to bring her along.

Just like the last time they had set up a porridge booth, Yu Jianjia was still young, so Yang Shuwan had brought her out to show her face. She did so even though her grandmother looked down on such behavior.

But actually, it wasn't that bad.

She hoped that her cousin's leg would recover as soon as possible so that he could take her out in the future.

When she thought of her cousin, she couldn't help but think of what her cousin had said yesterday about giving her a gift. She felt an unbearable itch in her heart. Then, she thought of how stubborn her cousin had been yesterday. She was really angry.

In the past, as long as she frowned, pouted, wrinkled her nose, wheedled, and acted shamelessly, her cousin would definitely think of ways to make her happy.

It didn't work this time.

As she thought about it, Yu Youyao pouted aggrievedly.

Hmph, Cousin was too annoying!

She had to hold it in today and not look for her cousin.

She would just leave Cousin alone in the Green House to rot!

Xia Tao did not know that her Young Miss had gone to the Green House and did not hear a word she said. When she saw the announcement that Eldest Miss had drafted, she was unhappy. "In a few days, it will be Eldest Miss's birthday. As her stepmother, Eldest Madam should care about it, but Eldest Madam's eyes are fixed on the outside. She's only thinking about buying clothes for the Flower Festival at the Marquis of Changxing Residence." At this point, she could not help but feel angry. "The invitation from the Marquis of Changxing Residence was just delivered yesterday, and she can't wait to run out today. She's afraid that others won't know that she's rushing to curry favor with the Marquis of Changxing Residence."

Although the Marquis of Changxing's Residence was a prestigious family in the capital, the Yu Residence was also a scholarly and noble family. First Madam had probably forgotten that there was still an elder in the family.

Yu Youyao laughed. "Due to the imperial examination, the capital has been very quiet for a while. There haven't been many banquets. It's rare that the Marquis of Changxing's Residence is holding a flower banquet. Madam Yang is probably anxious to show off. It's not just her. Other families are probably the same."

Yang Shuwan had always been an ostentatious person. Since it wasn't easy for her to manage the household, she wanted to show off outside. In addition, as soon as Yu Jianjia went out, she wanted to make sure that she presented herself well.

As her mother, she was proud when Yu Jianjia revealed her face.

Xia Tao widened her eyes and rolled her eyes. "Third Miss is only a young girl, so how can she dress up? The person who should be getting new clothes in the family is you, who is ten years old and has the right to walk around outside."

Yu Youyao shook her head. "It's appropriate for Nanny Xu and Nanny Liu to manage the birthday celebration. Besides, it's just a small banquet between the sisters. It's not too important. I don't lack these things."

Xia Tao pursed her lips.

Yu Youyao did not want to talk about this topic anymore. She handed the prepared announcement to her. "Give it to Nanny Xu."

The Yu Residence had some dealings with all the families in the capital, but they were not really close to one another. There were only a few sisters who were of the same age as Yu Youyao.

#### Chapter 210 - 210 Marquis's Wife

Yang Shuwan happily brought Yu Jianjia into the carriage. Only then did she think of Yu Youyao. She also realized that as her stepmother, it was rare for her to go out for a stroll. If she only brought her biological daughter along, it would inevitably be exposed. However, since they were already in the carriage, it wouldn't be right to get someone to invite Yu Youyao.

Yu Jianjia also thought of this. "In a few days, it will be Big Sister's birthday. I think the family will have to prepare for it. Big Sister probably won't have time to go with us."

Yang Shuwan smiled and nodded. "That's true!"

Yu Jianjia pinched her handkerchief and gently pressed the corner of her mouth. No one knew what she was thinking.

The carriage drove all the way to the street. Yang Shuwan first brought Yu Jianjia to Jinxiu Manor.

After discussing the cost of the clothes with Jinxiu Manor, the two of them handed over a piece of high-quality moonlight wishing silk and a piece of dazzling flowing light wishing silk.

After that, Yang Shuwan reminded worriedly, "These are used to make clothes for the Flower Festival at the Marquis of Changxing's Residence on the 22nd. You have to hurry up and make them. Don't delay the date."

The Flower Festival at the Marquis of Changxing's Residence was also the grandest day in the capital recently. This morning, the Jinxiu Manor received many orders, and they were also very busy.

However, the Yu Residence was an old customer, so they naturally couldn't be negligent.

Manager Sun smiled and said, "Eldest Madam Yang, don't worry. I'll definitely send it to you in three days."

Yang Shuwan was relieved. She then brought Yu Jianjia to the largest rouge shop in the capital, the Jade House, and picked out a lot of high-quality rouge powder.

Yu Jianjia liked simple and elegant makeup, so she chose a few boxes of nude colors. Such makeup did not look eye-catching, but when it was on her face, it made her skin look even more translucent and fair. Others could not tell that she was wearing makeup, but they felt that her skin color was just like this. Compared to heavy makeup, it was much better.

Seeing that her daughter had chosen inconspicuous colors, Yang Shuwan said, "You can't choose all these bland colors. At the flower festival, all the daughters from the various families are gathered together. Even if they're a little older, they will be compared together. Jia Jia, you're so good-looking. You can't let others steal your limelight."

Yu Jianjia said, "I'm still young, so it's not good to smear so much makeup on my face. If others see it, they'll think that I'm arrogant and frivolous."

Only then did Yang Shuwan remember that Jia Jia was only nine years old. It was indeed not appropriate for her to dress up too much. She still said, "You still have to put on some lipstick to look more dignified, lest others think that our family is too casual."

Yu Jianjia nodded.

Yang Shuwan immediately saw a box that had peach blossom lipstick. She picked it up and looked at it carefully. Then, she smiled and placed it in Yu Jianjia's hand. "This color suits you. It's only eye-catching. I rarely see anyone use such a color. It's probably too tender. Ordinary people can't use this color."

Yu Jianjia also felt that this color was not bad, so she nodded. "This box will do!"

When the shopkeeper who was serving them heard this, she hurriedly said, "This color is only available when the merchant ships from Quanzhou enter the capital this time. It's just that the color is a little too bright, and it's not easy to match. There are only three boxes in total. Madam, why don't you take all of them? I guarantee that Sister will use them. It'll be the first time a family in the capital uses such a color."

When Yang Shuwan heard this, she quickly said, "Of course."

Yu Jianjia's face was also filled with joy. Who didn't like to be unique and outstanding?

"Go to the Thousand Gold to pick out a few decent accessories." Yang Shuwan was a frequent visitor of Thousand Gold. As soon as she entered the store, she asked the young shopkeeper to lead her to the second floor. At a glance, she saw a woman wearing a sapphire hairpin and a pure gold peony on her head.

Yang Shuwan was delighted and quickly brought Yu Jianjia over. "What a coincidence to meet the Marquis of Changxing's wife here today."

The Marquis of Changxing's wife turned around and was stunned for a moment when she saw Yang Shuwan, who was full of smiles. Only then did she remember that this was Imperial Censor Yu's second wife, Madam Yang. She also smiled and said, "So it's Eldest Madam Yu. What a coincidence!"

She was a little thin and had a high forehead bone. Her smile was a little overbearing.

Yang Shuwan's smile deepened. She turned around. "Jia Jia, come over and greet the Marquis of Changxing's wife."

It wasn't good for Yu Jianjia to hide behind her mother. She strode forward in small steps and bent her body gently. Her pink and white dress touched the ground, and she looked as beautiful as a blooming lotus. "Hello, Madam."

The Marquis of Changxing's wife smiled again. "I haven't seen Third Miss Yu for a while, but she's grown again."

Yu Jianjia said shyly, "Madam, you flatter me."

She was about to say a few more pleasing words—

"Jia Jia is here too. What a coincidence."

Yu Jianjia turned her head and saw a petite and cute green-clothed girl walking over with a slender pink-purple girl.

The Marquis of Changxing's wife waved her hand. "Go play together. I'll have a good chat with your mother."

Yu Jianjia smiled and agreed. She quickly walked forward to greet the green-clothed girl with a smile, "That day, I felt like old friends with Seventh Sister Cao at the Precious Peace Temple. After parting, I thought that Seventh Sister had forgotten about me."

Seventh Miss Cao was none other than Cao Yingxue, the seventh daughter of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. The two of them had spoken together at the Precious Peace Temple that day, so they knew each other.

As Yu Jianjia spoke, she looked at the pink and purple girl beside Seventh Miss Cao.

She looked a little older than them, no less than eleven or twelve years old. She was wearing a pink and purple flower dress and a shark veil. However, she looked extremely expensive. She was like a flower bud. Even though she had yet to bloom, she was already extremely beautiful.

Yu Jianjia had a guess, but her eyes were filled with doubt. She turned to look at Seventh Miss Cao.

Cao Yingxue had no choice but to introduce her. "This is my cousin, the fifth young mistress of the Marquis of Weining's Residence, Lu Mingyao. She came to my house as a guest today and asked me to take her out."

"Yao?" Yu Jianjia was stunned for a moment. She subconsciously asked, "Which Yao?"

After asking, she realized that she had been a little rash and quickly bowed to Lu Mingyao. "My eldest sister also has the word 'Yao' in her name. I apologize for my rudeness just now."

No one liked that there was someone whose name was similar to hers. Lu Mingyao frowned slightly. "Third Miss Yu, you're being too serious."

Yu Jianjia heaved a sigh of relief and smiled. "Thankfully, Fifth Miss Lu is magnanimous and doesn't blame me. Otherwise, I would have become a saw-billed hermit in the future."

Lu Mingyao suddenly felt that although Third Miss Yu was a little rash, she was still polite and sensible. She said openly, "My 'Yao' character comes from 'Song of Purity and Peace, 1 of 3'. If we don't see each other at the peak of Jade Mountain, then we will meet by chance on the Jade terrace under the moonlight. I wonder what the 'Yao' character of your sister is?"

It was obvious that she was a little concerned that someone had the same name as her. Yu Jianjia smiled and said, "It's 'The Book of Poetry—Guan Jia'. Beautiful girls, gentlemen's desire."

As soon as she finished speaking, Cao Yingxue covered her mouth and laughed. "This name is very frivolous, and it's not as good as my cousin's."