

All Hail 281

Chapter 281 Empress Dowager

Aunt Shen lowered her head and listened. “There’s no one more meticulous than Aunt Xu.”

As she spoke, the Empress Dowager sighed again. “I originally didn’t plan to let her out of the palace, but the Marquis of Changxing’s family kept asking for Nanny Xu and wanted her to help teach Seventh Miss in the family. I didn’t agree, so she begged Concubine Zhuang. Concubine Zhuang also begged the person from Zhaoyang Palace to come to me to discuss it. If I refused again, I’m afraid even the emperor would be alerted.”

Aunt Shen lowered her head and stared at the tip of her shoe.

The “person from Zhaoyang Palace” that the Empress Dowager was talking about was Imperial Consort Lu, who lived in Zhaoyang Palace.

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The Empress Dowager changed the topic. “You’re still pretending that I don’t know. This matter was instigated by that person from Zhaoyang Palace. She saw that I had asked Auntie Xu to help Li Yang recuperate earlier, so she was also worried that I would give Auntie Xu to Liyang and add a powerful person by her side. Her schemes are really impressive.”

When she said this, her tone was very ordinary, and there was no emotion on her face.

Aunt Shen did not dare to reply and only lowered her head to listen.

The Empress had been sick for a long time, and the Yi Kun Palace was closed. Aunt Xu was good at helping people recuperate. If Aunt Xu went to Princess Liyang’s side, it would be equivalent to going to the Empress’s side.

The Empress Dowager was silent for a moment, and the hall immediately fell silent. Only the calming incense in the phoenix head incense burner was tirelessly spewing out a fragrance.

“After serving me for so many years, I couldn’t let her fall into a fire pit, so I simply let her out of the palace. In the future, her future will be entirely up to her. She’s also a sensible person, and the Yu family isn’t a bad place to go. When the previous emperor was around, he appreciated Old Master Yu very much. When I was young, I often summoned Old Madam Yu into the palace to talk.”

Aunt Shen smiled and said, “I still remember that back then, the Empress Dowager obtained a thousand-year-old agarwood and made two prayer beads. She sent one to the Precious Peace Temple for three years, and one of them remained in Your Highness’s hands.”

As she spoke, Aunt Shen glanced at the prayer beads wrapped around the Empress Dowager’s wrist. She had probably been wearing them for a long time and they did not leave her body. The prayer beads were extremely bright.

The Empress Dowager also recalled this matter. “I heard that Old Madam Yu pays respects to Buddha like me, and the other was to reward her.”

Aunt Shen laughed along.

The Empress Dowager changed the topic and continued, “The Eldest Miss of the Yu Residence seems to be from Censor Yu’s first wife, Madam Xie. Madam Xie is from the Xie Residence in Quanzhou. Previously, when Xie Sanlang entered the capital, he sent many strange things to the palace. It’s really eye-opening.”

Aunt Shen lowered her eyes and said nothing.

At the mention of Madam Xie, the Empress Dowager thought of another past matter. “I remember that one summer, at a palace banquet, all the married women entered the palace. One of them fainted from the heat. All the madams present watched helplessly. Only one madam rushed over and helped that madam up. She took a pill from her sachet and fed it to that woman. Later, I specially summoned her. When I asked, I found out that she was Censor Yu’s first wife, Madam Xie. She’s really a warm-hearted and bright person. What a pity.”

As she spoke, the Empress Dowager thought of something and saw the little palace maid kneeling on the ground. “What’s the name of Madam Xie’s daughter, the Eldest Miss of the Yu Residence?”

The little palace maid hurriedly said, “Your Highness, her name is Youyao.”

The Empress Dowager laughed when she heard this. “Her name shows that she’s young and pure. She’s also good looking when she smiles and is kind and graceful. She’s youthful and fresh and this means that she’s clean and incorruptible. She is beautiful, incorruptible, kind and virtuous.” At this point, she paused for a moment and continued, “She’s indeed worthy of her name. Old Madam Yu really raised her to have some morals.”

There were as many young misses in the capital as fish in a river. There were probably only a few who could be remembered by the nobles in the palace and taken seriously. Eldest Miss Yu was one of them.

The Empress Dowager first mentioned her master-servant relationship with Nanny Xu. After Nanny Xu entered the Yu Residence, it was inevitable that she would mention her young friendship with Old Madam Yu. Hence, when she mentioned Eldest Madam Xie, who had already passed away in the Yu Residence, it was inevitable that she would mention the Xie Residence in Quanzhou. The Xie Residence was an imperial merchant. In this dynasty, merchants were not allowed to bestow officials, but the relationship between the Xie Residence and the palace was very close.

In the end, she mentioned Eldest Miss Yu.

It was as if they were just gossiping, but no one present really thought so. With the Empress Dowager’s status, every word she said carried a deeper meaning.

All of them understood.

The Imperial Concubine Lu, Concubine Zhuang, the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence, and the Yu Residence... It was terrifying to hear.

The Empress Dowager smiled. “Go to the Internal Affairs Department tomorrow to pick a beautiful palace token and send it to Eldest Miss Yu. There’s no need for her to enter the palace to thank her. When she’s a little older, we’ll be able to see her at the palace banquet.”

The head palace maid quickly agreed.

Eldest Miss Yu had already received a huge honor from the Empress Dowager. If she was summoned by the Empress Dowager, it would indeed be too eye-catching for her.

As the saying went, when the tree is outstanding in the forest, the wind will definitely blow at it.

With her age, she couldn't afford to be in the limelight.

The Empress Dowager smiled, and her expression darkened. "Marquis of Changxing's wife, Seventh Miss Cao, should enter the palace."

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After Yu Zongzheng and Yang Shuwan left, An Shou Hall fell silent.

Old Madam Yu sat upright on the couch, looking down and twirling her prayer beads. As she often pinched the agarwood prayer beads, they were yellow in color. Mixed with the honey fat, they looked even more solid and jade-like.

Nanny Liu remembered that she had been rewarded with this string of prayer beads by the Empress Dowager back then.

All these years, Old Madam often wore it on her.

Old Madam Yu thought about what had happened at the flower festival. After a long while, she sighed softly. "It's probably because I'm old. Recently, I've often thought of the past."

Nanny Liu said nothing.

Old Madam Yu stopped reciting. "In the past, I was too scheming and schemed for Second Brother's future. Second Brother was successful, but he was separated from me. Eldest Brother also left me."

Nanny Liu hesitated and said, "Old Master passed away early. You're the one supporting the huge family business. You're a widow, so you naturally have more schemes than others. Otherwise, how could you protect the Yu family's hundred year reputation?"

Old Madam Yu shook her head. "Back then, Eldest Son was fooling around with Madam Yang, and the root of the trouble was me. The Yu Residence was a scholarly family, and they had gained their reputation through their ancestors. However, I married Eldest Son to a businesswoman. He resented me and held it in. He was dissatisfied with his wife's background and wanted to marry that scholarly woman, which was why he committed such a mistake. Wasn't it also his resistance to me? It was originally our resentment, but it harmed Madam Xie's life."

She had allowed Eldest Son to marry Madam Xie because she had selfish motives and schemes. She had too many trade-offs. Although she also cared about Eldest Son's future, she was still biased towards Second Son. She had failed to settle the score, which caused Eldest Son's resentment.

Chapter 282 Hidden Malice

Nanny Liu lowered her head. After so many years, Old Madam was still brooding over Madam Xie's death.

Old Madam Yu continued, "On the day Madam Xie died, Yao Yao cried non-stop for the entire day. When she was tired, she would sleep and wake up after a short nap. When she woke up, she would

continue crying. She had a child who was born prematurely and had a difficult time giving birth. After a long day, she almost lost her life.”

It had been more than three months since Madam Yang had married into the residence. Later on, she had taken a pregnancy-preserving medicine and managed to keep the baby for more than a month. When she couldn’t keep it anymore, she had no choice but to give birth.

It was also because Madam Yang had taken too much pregnancy medicine when she was pregnant that Yu Jianjia had been thin and sickly since she was born.

As for Yao Yao, she was really born prematurely. She had grown well in Madam Xie’s womb. Even though she was born prematurely for more than half a month, she still looked very strong.

As time passed, no one remembered that Yao Yao was born prematurely.

Nanny Liu also knew about this.

Eldest Miss was out of breath from crying, and her face was red and purple. Old Madam had said that children would want to smell their mother’s scent and she would take Madam Xie’s things when she was alive.

A child’s soul was light, and Madam Xie had just left. It was not past the seventh day yet, so she was worried that it would be inauspicious, so she stopped her.

Old Madam insisted on taking the blanket that Madam Xie had used when she was alive to coax Eldest Miss.

As Old Madam Yu spoke, tears streamed down her face. “It’s said that newborn children don’t know anything, but newborn children are the most intelligent. Poor Yao Yao’er. From the moment she was born, she already knew the pain of separation in this world. At that time, when I was hugging her, I thought that I had harmed Madam Xie’s life and owed her. I had to protect my granddaughter no matter what.”

After so many years, this was the first time Nanny Liu had heard Old Madam mention the past.

It was probably also today that Eldest Miss had been criticized and called “bereaved eldest daughter” in the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence, making Old Madam feel terrible.

If Madam Xie was still around, Eldest Miss wouldn’t have...

Old Madam felt that she owed Madam Xie and Eldest Miss, so she mentioned these things.

Old Madam Yu pinched her handkerchief and wiped the corners of her eyes. “Eldest Son was infatuated and wanted to marry Madam Yang as his second wife. He thought that Madam Yang was the daughter of a scholar. Even if she’s the daughter of a concubine, she still has some literary talent. It’s not that I couldn’t stop him, but Madam Yang’s stomach was about to show. She was focused on entering the Yu Residence. If she really causes a commotion, not only will Eldest Son’s future be ruined, but the Yu Residence’s reputation will also be damaged. I’m afraid Second Son won’t be able to stand tall in court anymore.”

Nanny Liu lowered her head a little.

At this point, Old Madam Yu looked defeated. "Of course, as long as I was a little more heartless and threatened him with a scissors on my neck, I could've made him take her in as a noble concubine but I couldn't do that. I had to preserve our mother-son relationship and scheme for Yao Yao's future. I also hope that even if he doesn't care about our father-daughter relationship, he can still take care of her on account of our mother-son relationship."

Nanny Liu poured a cup of hot tea and handed it over. "Old Madam, have some tea to calm yourself down."

Old Madam Yu took the teacup and placed it on the table again. "I've schemed so much because I want my Yao Yao'er, my little darling, to have a good future. However, my Yao Yao'er is such a smart, obedient, filial, and pleasant person. The first time she went out, they almost ruined her reputation."

Nanny Liu thought about what had happened at the flower festival and felt terrible.

Eldest Miss was a capable person, so she wasn't really bullied. However, how could she feel good when she was mocked in public? She probably endured her grievances for Old Madam An's sake.

Old Madam Yu said hatefully, "Her stepmother is evil. I don't know how she gloated and added fuel to the fire. She's half a mother. How can I count on her? Even her sisters are hiding their evil intentions and want to suppress her limelight."

In the past, although she had looked down on Yu Jianjia and her dejected behavior, she still admired her after all. She was smart, obedient, and polite. However, today, Yao Yao kept saying that she had "good intentions." Even she couldn't help but feel cold.

Madam Yang was not presentable, so she could only scheme at home.

However, Yu Jianjia, this granddaughter of hers, had ulterior motives. She really hid them well, and no one could tell.

At the thought of this, Old Madam Yu looked relieved again. "Fortunately, my little darling has grown a mind of her own, so she wasn't destroyed. Otherwise, I would knock the Marquis of Changxing's family down, cause them to bleed and drag them to hell."

Nanny Liu's heart trembled when she heard this.

Old Madam was a second-grade official. If she really did this, the future of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence would be ruined.

Old Madam Yu felt a little better after spitting out the words she had been holding in. Only then did she bring the tea over and lower her head to take a few sips. "Help me to my room."

Nanny Liu bent down and helped Old Madam up.

When they entered the room, Old Madam Yu sat down. "Bring me my imperial order. I'll enter the palace tomorrow morning."

Nanny Liu took out a carefully kept order from the box in the side room.

On her head, she wore a crown and tied her hair into a high bun. There were five green pine trees on it, and there were pearls on their branches. On the front, there were four pearl green jade flowers,

three pearl green clouds, and three flowers. At the back of the crown, there was a ball of pearl green jade and four pearl green tassels. There were three golden cloud hairpins, a pair of golden hairpins, and a golden pendant.

She wore a large red sleeved top and a dark green ceremonial robe. On the ceremonial robe, there were golden embroidery patterns of clouds. On the top layer, there were golden embroidery patterns of clouds. The material was made of silk, gauze, and so on.

Old Madam Yu stroked her magnificent makeup and muttered, "It's been many years since I've entered the palace. It's time for me to go out and exercise. My makeup will be covered in dust."

Nanny Liu lowered her head, not daring to say anything else.

The room was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

Old Madam Yu stared at the phoenix crown and robe, her eyes suddenly filled with ruthlessness.

At this moment, Bai Kui lifted the curtain and entered the room. "Old Madam, the Empress Dowager has summoned the Marquis of Changxing's wife and Seventh Miss Cao into the palace."

Old Madam Yu was stunned. The nobles in the palace had to pay attention to the Flower Festival held by the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. She did not expect this news to reach the Empress Dowager's ears so quickly.

She frowned slightly.

Bai Kui continued, "The Empress Dowager did not see the Marquis of Changxing's wife and Seventh Miss Cao. She asked them to sit in the outer hall and copy 'Biographies of Exemplary Women', 'Lessons for Women', 'The Analects of Women', and 'The Training of Women'. Seventh Miss Cao did not write it well. The Empress Dowager was furious and punished her by copying 'Lessons for Women' a hundred times on the spot."

Old Madam Yu twirled her prayer beads. At the Flower Festival, Yao Yao had used women's teachings to prevent herself from being bullied.

Chapter 283 Quiet Battle

Bai Kui continued, "The Empress Dowager also said that the Marquis of Changxing's wife is a mingfu. It's her duty to take care of her husband and teach her children well. Virtue is a must. Only by doing good deeds and virtues can she become a model woman. Otherwise, it would be considered that she's not worthy of being a mingfu. She asked Aunt Shen to teach the Marquis of Changxing's wife the rules of being a mingfu."

"When Concubine Zhuang received the news, she went to the Longevity Palace to plead for leniency with the Empress Dowager. The Empress Dowager did not see Concubine Zhuang and even asked her to stay in her own palace and learn the rules. She said that the Marquis of Changxing was working for the Imperial Court in Youzhou. As a wife and daughter, they should be considerate of a husband and father's hard work and learn more rules and upbringing to ensure that the Marquis of Changxing would not have any worries."

When Old Madam Yu heard this, she understood that this was a disguised way of restraining Concubine Zhuang.

However!

Every family had planted spies in the palace, but this news was not easily spread. It was obvious that the Empress Dowager had instructed it.

At this moment, it had probably already spread throughout the capital.

The Empress Dowager had punished Seventh Miss Cao to copy the “Lessons for the Women of the Li Family” and had also asked someone to teach the Marquis of Changxing’s wife the rules. It was obvious that she also felt that the Marquis of Changxing’s wife had not raised Seventh Miss Cao well and wanted her to relearn everything she studied.

They really lost all their face and became a laughing stock.

In the Jade Courtyard, Yu Youyao had also received this news and was deep in thought. “The Empress Dowager has used the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence’s missteps to bring up this matter. The Marquis of Changxing probably won’t have the face to ask for credit from the Imperial Court anymore. If this Flower Festival was held well, the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence would be proud and its reputation will be even greater than before. It’s only natural for him to ask for credit, but if the Flower Festival was ruined, it would also ruin the reputation of the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence.”

At the Flower Festival, she had fought with Seventh Miss Cao over her upbringing and reputation.

She argued with the Marquis of Changxing’s wife for the dignity and face of the Yu Residence.

Nanny Xu’s smile deepened. “Eldest Miss is also someone who keeps a low profile. After this incident, the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence has completely stopped its power play, and the Imperial Court can be more stable. However...” she changed the topic slightly, and her slightly lowered tone made everyone’s hearts sink. “You’re in the limelight in the capital now and have attracted everyone’s attention. Countless people in the capital are watching your every word and action, including the nobles in the palace. You have to be more careful with your words and actions in the future.”

Yu Youyao’s heart skipped a beat. She nodded. “Nanny, I understand.”

Nanny Xu sighed softly. She wondered if it was good or bad for Yu Youyao to stand out among the noble ladies so early and even be noticed by the nobles in the palace.

However, after this incident, it was obvious that Yu Youyao was a person with great fortune.

Yu Youyao did not think too much about it. To a woman, there was nothing more terrifying than ruining her reputation. Even though she knew that what she had done at the Flower Festival would completely offend the Marquis of Changxing’s Residence, the Marquis of Weining’s Residence, or even Imperial Consort Lu in the palace, she had no choice.

Actually, she would also feel uneasy and afraid.

When they returned to the residence, the auntie asked her in detail about what had happened at the flower festival. She only comforted her a little before letting her and Yu Shuangbai take a carriage back to the residence.

After that, her father, second uncle, second aunt, and Madam Yang were all invited to An Shou Hall by her grandmother.

She could almost guess that the topics they were talking about were all closely related to her. They involved the Yu family, the Yu clan, and even the court.

All of this was not something a growing child like her could interfere in.

She had no idea what the consequences would be.

She would also be terrified.

When her cousin arrived at the Jade Courtyard, she saw him sitting in the study with a book in his hand. His eyes were calm and his expression was cold. Even though he was sitting there, he was like a rugged mountain that was difficult to move.

She suddenly felt at ease.

Her cousin's casual attitude made her feel even more like she didn't have to be afraid even if the sky fell.

Yu Youyao went to the incense room. The wooden osmanthus incense beads that she had made previously had been left in the room for two to three days. Now, they were completely dry.

Nanny Xu took a small bowl and placed it on the table. The bottom of the bowl was facing up. "The bottom of the bowl is worn out. It's just right to grind the beads. Grinding the beads requires patience. It's a slow job."

Yu Youyao nodded. She picked up an incense bead and placed it at the bottom of the bowl to polish it carefully until the rough surface of the bead became round and smooth. One incense bead was almost done.

The finished incense beads were brownish-yellow in color, exuding an ancient and elegant aura. If they were often worn like jade, the color would become stronger, darker, and more beautiful.

Nanny Xu nodded. "The beads are grounded well. Smell them."

Yu Youyao lowered her head and sniffed. "The refreshing fragrance of the osmanthus flowers has become reserved and heavy. When it enters your nose, the fragrance is fragrant. After savoring it carefully, you feel that the fragrance is elegant and sweet. There's also a hint of sweetness in the remaining fragrance. It's layered."

She put down the incense bead and sniffed her fingers. She felt that the fragrance lingered for a long time.

After Nanny Xu smelled the incense, she also praised, "It's a top-notch incense bead. It's well-maintained. After wearing it for three to five years, its fragrance will be nurtured. It's very rare for it to be done so well on the first time."

Yu Youyao was pure and thorough. The incense beads she made also had this characteristic. The fragrance was also especially pure and long-lasting. This way, the incense beads also had a strong fragrance and were filled with spirituality. It was very suitable to wear.

The incense beads were easy to make, but their fragrance was rare.

Fragrance was easy to create, but spirituality was difficult to find.

Yu Youyao was smart and creative, and she did not lack patience. She was very talented in incense making.

Her studies were suspended for three days.

The next day, Yu Youyao did not have to go to school. She learned etiquette from Nanny Xu and had breakfast before sending Xia Tao to Songtao Courtyard to arrange for the servants to clean it up.

After the Songtao Courtyard was cleaned up, she went over to take a look and see how the courtyard was going to be renovated.

Yu Youyao lowered her head and drafted a list. She handed it to Liu'er. "These are the belongings, ornaments, flowers, and wood that the Songtao Courtyard needs. Take it to the front courtyard and show it to Zhao Da. If there's no problem, get the main storeroom to prepare it."

She was also worried that there were some things that weren't available in the main warehouse for the time being, or that they weren't suitable. She could also get someone to buy them outside, in case they weren't available when they moved to the courtyard. If the items were missing, she would panic.

Liu'er took the list and went to look for Zhao Da.

Yu Youyao flipped through the almanac. The best day was still seven days later. Seven days were still a little tight but sufficient.

It took almost an hour to sort out the matters of the Songtao Courtyard.

Yu Youyao stretched.

Chun Xiao couldn't help but say, "Eldest Madam Yang hasn't sent the butler's key over yet."

Yu Youyao did not mind. "Who would be willing to manage such a big family? It's really tiring. Don't worry about her."

Chun Xiao pursed her lips and smiled.

Some people seemed to hate their lives as they held onto the butler's key, refusing to let go. Others couldn't wait to push this authority away.

Chapter 284 Not Just To Thank You But To Cherish Goodwill

Yu Youyao turned around and went to the incense room.

After dinner yesterday, she spent another four hours polishing the wooden osmanthus incense beads.

More than 50 incense beads were made by Yu Youyao and had longevity and blessing patterns.

The longevity patterns were the size of longans. She had only made ten of them to give to her grandmother. When her grandmother twirled the prayer beads, her hands were filled with incense.

She made 40 of them, which were only the size of peanuts.

Yu Youyao took out a red string and threaded 28 wooden osmanthus incense beads onto it. In the middle of each four wooden osmanthus incense beads, there was a light yellow greenish blue field jade bead. The jade beads were slightly larger than the incense beads.

Nanny Xu smiled and said, “The Lantian Jade has the effect of regulating the qi and blood of Yin and Yang, preventing illnesses, and benefiting the divine. It’s also known as the longevity and peace jade. It has the three characteristics of divinity, spirituality, and human nature. It’s secretly fused with the three tenants of the life: heaven, earth, and humankind. The wooden osmanthus incense bead is made of flowers and wood, and the wood is the main vitality. The two complement each other and secretly complement the nature of the Heavenly Dao. It uses the fragrance of the pearl to nourish the jade, and the jade enhances the pearl’s nature. After wearing it for a year and a half, the pearl can enhance the jade’s nature. The texture will be dense and warm. The jade is stained with the fragrance of the pearl, and the beautiful jade is fragrant. It’s rare and elegant, but it complements each other.”

Yu Youyao’s eyes widened. “Nanny, you actually know the passage method too?”

Nanny Xu smiled. “It’s not surprising that I know these things now that I’m obsessed with dao techniques. When you’re a few years older, Ms. Ye will teach you the Book of Changes. This is the first of all scriptures, the source of the Great Dao. Although the Book of Changes is a Daoist scripture, it’s much sought after by the Confucians. It’s learned by both Confucianism and Daoism. Master Hui Neng of the Precious Peace Temple was deeply influenced by the Book of Changes in his early years. He once used the Book of Changes to verify Buddhism and called it the integration of Heaven and man. He admires the Book of Changes very much. Therefore, in addition to the Four Books, the Book of Changes is also a must for the imperial examination.”

After putting on the last Lantian Jade Bead, Yu Youyao knitted a knot at both ends and tied it up. A string of wooden osmanthus incense beads was done.

There were 28 Wood Osmanthus Incense Beads, eight Blue Field Jade Beads, and 36 beads in total. On the other two ends of the string, there was a Blue Field Jade Bead and a Wood Rhino Incense Bead each.

In total, she used a total of 29 incense beads and nine Lantian Jade Beads.

Eight was the extreme number of Yin, and nine was the extreme number of Yang. Whether it was eight or nine, it was excellent.

“This is for Young Master!” Nanny Xu smiled when she saw it.

This girl thought about her cousin in her heart. No matter what good things she made, her cousin would always have them. The relationship between the cousins was so good that there was no other in the world.

Yu Youyao stuck out her tongue. “Cousin gave me Zizhi Tongjian yesterday.”

Nanny Xu had also read Zizhi Tongjing. It was more interesting than the printed versions on the market now. Yu Youyao liked it very much and read it for two hours in a row yesterday afternoon.

For the sake of his cousin, Young Master Zhou had exhausted all his efforts. Every day, he would teach her studies and guide her in practicing her calligraphy. Not only did he teach her zither skills,

but in order to prevent her from having a hard time learning, he even gave her the Four Books and Five Classics that she had to learn every day.

As her cousin, it was to his credit that Yu Youyao could learn so quickly.

Yu Youyao smiled. "This is called giving me a gift and we'll be friends forever. I'll always think that it's good."

You gave me a gift, and I'll give you one in return.

Not just to thank you.

I treasure our friendship and will always think it's good.

Nanny Xu felt a little strange. She looked at Yu Youyao again with a smile on her face and clear eyes. She felt that she was thinking too much.

The poem "Papaya" also praised the true feelings between people. Different people would have different interpretations when reciting it.

Yu Youyao took out twelve more wooden osmanthus beads, four blue field jade beads, and one each on the tassel knot to make a string of smaller incense beads.

She put the small string of incense beads on her wrist. It still felt a little big, but it wasn't to the extent that it was too heavy for her hand. The freshly made incense beads weren't as exquisite and smooth in color and appearance, nor were they as stunning as she had imagined.

However, when the incense beads were around her wrist, they were strong, light, and did not press her wrist, let alone hurt her. They were lighter than jewelry. There was a layer of thin sleeves between them, and there was a faint fragrance. It was very elegant.

"It's really beautiful." Yu Youyao smiled and raised her eyebrows. She picked up another slightly larger incense bead bracelet and wrapped it around her right wrist. It was a little too big for her.

She wondered if it would be big for her cousin.

Yu Youyao remembered that the sachet that she had said she would give to her cousin had only been embroidered for a few days. It would take a few more days to finish.

Why don't I give the Wood Osmanthus Incense Pearl to Cousin first?!

At the thought of this, Yu Youyao couldn't sit still anymore. She quickly called Dong Mei over and found a small box the size of her palm. She carefully placed the incense beads in it and turned around. "I'll go to the Green House to look for Cousin."

Zhou Linghuai was painting in the study. It was still the "Bodhisattva" from yesterday.

The snow-white rice paper covered the entire desk. On the wide surface, the Bodhi tree was full of old branches and intertwined roots. The green tree towered into the sky, and the green cover was like a cloud. It was so big that the patterns and roots on the old branches were so small that the veins, light, and shadows on every Bodhi leaf were vivid and exquisite.

At first glance, it was dense and dignified.

Under the Bodhi tree!

The little girl raised her slender neck slightly and raised her smooth chin. She revealed half of her jade face, but it was as innocent as the moon. The brightness of the sun made her face look breathtaking.

She held the wishing silk and weighed it on the tip of her foot. Her slender figure moved forward slightly, and the belt at her waist fluttered. Her figure was as graceful as a thousand flowers, as gentle as the breeze, as graceful as a fairy's shadow, and as if she was about to ride the wind.

Her agility was vivid.

There was a pile of strange stones beside the Bodhi tree, and there were many strange barriers.

The entire scene was elegant and beautiful. Even the small person under the tree already had the words "a man is bigger than the tree, a man is heavier than the mountain." At first glance, the trees, mountains, light, and shadows all accompanied the "man."

Zhou Linghuai was good at landscapes, but he had never drawn such a large painting.

From yesterday to today, from late at night to dawn, he did not stop painting. His brush fell like rain, but it was like the wind chasing lightning. His intentions were there first, and he drew with all his heart.

After spending a day and night, it was already preliminarily completed.

After that, the outline, light, darkness, texture, meteorology, color, and so on on the scene needed to be carefully decorated and modified. The technique used was a larger and more detailed. It was not something that could be completed in a short period of time. It could take three to five days if he was faster, three to five months if he was slower, and even three to five years.

Zhou Linghuai stopped drawing and immediately felt his mouth go dry and his arms go numb.

When Chang An heard the commotion, he quickly brought some tea over from the inner room.

Zhou Linghuai picked up the teacup. The tea was warm and suitable for drinking. After drinking it in a few mouthfuls, he also felt unhappy, so he picked up the teapot and poured it into his mouth.

Chapter 285 Cousin Is So Obedient

"Young Master, drink slowly." The corners of Chang An's mouth twitched. After following Young Master for so many years, he was not surprised by this scene at all. When he served tea, he even served the pot.

After drinking a pot of tea, Zhou Linghuai finally felt comfortable. He held his right wrist and stretched his muscles.

Chang An said, "Young Master, you stayed up all night again yesterday without closing your eyes." Seeing the fatigue on his young master's face, he couldn't help but say, "Young Miss told me to keep an eye on your daily meals..."

Now that Chang An was only following the little girl's orders, Zhou Linghuai glanced at him from the corner of his eye and interrupted him. "Don't tell Cousin..."

Before he could finish speaking, the little girl's clear and cheerful voice came from outside the door. "Cousin, what are you talking about? Don't tell me what?"

Zhou Linghuai was stunned for a moment, wondering if he had heard wrongly. Why did he seem to have heard the little girl's voice?

He turned to Chang An and asked, "What time is it now?"

Seeing his young master's dazed expression, did he think that he was dreaming? Chang An wanted to laugh, but he did not dare to. "It's 8am."

Zhou Linghuai heaved a sigh of relief. It was still early, and the little girl usually didn't come over so early. He had probably stayed up all night and was a little tired, so he was hallucinating.

Just as he was about to go to the inner room to freshen up, he heard a knock on the door.

The little girl's cheerful voice came through the door. "Cousin, Cousin, open the door quickly. It's so early in the morning. Why are you closing the door?"

Zhou Linghuai was sure that he wasn't hallucinating. Even his face stiffened as he turned to look at the door.

The door of the study was closed, and he was talking to Chang An in a low voice. How could the little girl's ears be so good that she could hear him from outside?

Seeing his young master's expression change, Chang An immediately pursed his lips and chuckled. "I'll clean up the study first. Ha, after talking to Young Miss, remember to eat breakfast..."

With that, he turned his head away. His shoulders trembled and he laughed and looked at the preliminary paintings on the desk.

Yu Youyao, who was standing under the Bodhi tree, revealed half of her face, but her eyes were filled with charm, as if they were filled with starlight.

If outsiders who did not know the person in the painting saw this, they did not know what to think.

Just like Gu Kaizhi's "Ode to the Goddess of Luo", how many scholars had fallen for a girl over the millennia?

Zhou Linghuai pursed his lips and looked at the large "Bodhisattva" that covered the table. Then, he turned his wheelchair and moved to the door.

Yu Youyao raised her hand and was about to continue knocking when the door opened with a creak.

Her cousin was sitting at the door. Sunlight slanted in, as if it were coating him with light. It was dazzling.

Yu Youyao narrowed her eyes. She suddenly felt that her cousin was competing with the sun and moon, like a celestial being.

She looked at her cousin and smiled. Her voice was sweet. "Cousin, you've closed the door. What are you doing in the study? Did I disturb you?"

As she spoke, she sniffed hard. When she smelled a strong smell of paint in the room, she poked her head into the study, her eyes filled with curiosity.

Zhou Linghuai couldn't help but laugh. He turned his wheelchair and left the study.

Yu Youyao retracted her gaze and saw that her cousin's face was pale and tired, and his eyes were bloodshot. Realization dawned on her, and her eyes widened.

"Cousin, did you stay up all night again last night? You still didn't allow Chang An to tell me. You're too careless with your health. You're already so old, but you don't know how to take good care of yourself. You... you're really infuriating."

Hearing the little girl's angry voice, Zhou Linghuai's lips curled up. "I had a sudden impulse and lost track of time." At this point, he paused slightly and said, "I didn't do it on purpose."

Yu Youyao could actually understand.

She had been too engrossed in polishing the incense beads yesterday. When she woke up, it was already 10pm. Seeing that she was completely oblivious, Nanny Xu did not want to disturb her, so she let her be.

However, her cousin was not in good health. How could he stand staying up late?

Staying up late was like boiling oil.

After enduring it once, the essence oil on his body would decrease a little.

For a moment, she did not think much of it, but as time passed, her good body would be ruined. It would take more than two or three days to nourish her damaged body.

Therefore, she had to take care of her body from a young age.

Seeing that the little girl was pouting and still a little unhappy, Zhou Linghuai explained, "During this period of time, my schedule has been very regular. I rest at nine every day and only get up at six in the morning. I take a nap at noon and have seven meals a day. In addition to the main meal, I also eat the medicinal cuisine you sent me in the morning, noon, and night. Uncle Sun said that my health is a little better."

Her cousin explained his daily life seriously, just short of saying, "I'm very obedient."

Yu Youyao burst out laughing. Her eyes were watery, and under the sunlight, there were sparkling lights flashing in her eyes.

She squatted in front of her cousin and smiled. "Cousin, you're very obedient!"

Zhou Linghuai's expression turned numb.

Yu Youyao giggled happily. "So, I won't be angry if you stay up late occasionally. Cousin, you have to be as obedient as you are now every day in the future to recover as soon as possible."

Zhou Linghuai was expressionless.

Yu Youyao hugged her cousin's arm and looked at him eagerly. "Okay?"

The little girl tilted her head and looked at him expectantly. She gently tilted her head and killed him. However, Zhou Linghuai's Adam's apple bobbed and he closed his mouth without saying anything.

Yu Youyao shook her cousin's arm again and wheedled, "Cousin, quickly promise me!"

Her tender voice made Zhou Linghuai's ears itch. His eyes trembled a few times, and his lips moved as he let out a muffled "Mm."

Yu Youyao smiled and stuffed the small box in her other hand into her cousin's hand. "Cousin, you're so obedient. This is a reward for you."

At the sudden mention of the word "obedient", Zhou Linghuai's ears felt a little hot and red. He lowered his head to hide it and pressed his fist against his lips. He coughed lightly and cleared his throat, then saw an exquisite small box lying in his hand.

Zhou Linghuai was stunned for a moment. What had the little girl just said? Was this a reward?

What reward?

Yu Youyao looked at her cousin with a smile and urged, "Open it quickly."

When Zhou Linghuai reacted, he suddenly felt that the gift he had received was not that exciting. However, when he saw the little girl smiling brightly, he couldn't help but smile and open the box.

There was a string of beads in the box. He was in no hurry to pick them up. He looked up at the little girl and saw her lean over and pick up the beads in the box with her delicate fingers.

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Chapter 286 Cousin, Does It Smell Good?

Yu Youyao placed the beads in her cousin's palm. "I made this myself. I just made it today. Quick, smell it."

"Fragrance!" As soon as the box was opened, Zhou Linghuai smelled a faint lotus fragrance that was elegant and refreshing. It was ingeniously mixed with the fragrance of osmanthus. The lotus fragrance was not inferior to the laurel, and it was 30% sweet.

Therefore, there was no need to get close to smell it.

However, the little girl was looking at him with sparkling eyes. Zhou Linghuai couldn't help but listen to her and lower his head to sniff gently.

The thick incense did not rush into his nose. Instead, it was layered and sent into his nose. Layer by layer, it was like ripples of water that stretched endlessly, making his heart flutter.

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "It smells very good."

There was no better praise than the words "very good." Yu Youyao even raised her eyebrows. "As long as Cousin likes it. The Wood Osmanthus Incense Beads are sweet and not greasy. It's elegant and refreshing. Cousin can wear it whether you're reading, writing, painting, sipping tea, taking a nap, or sleeping at night. You will feel cleansed and focused. It's most suitable for you when you use your brain."

He knew that every time the little girl gave him something, it would definitely be beneficial to his body and mind.

Zhou Linghuai tightened his grip on the beads. The exquisite patterns on the wooden osmanthus beads were carved into the flesh between his fingers, and they were also carved into his heart, leaving an indestructible mark.

In her ear, the little girl was still showing off how good the incense beads she had made were. “Nanny Xu said that the Lantian Jade has the effect of regulating the yin and yang and Qi and blood, eliminating illnesses, and benefiting the divine. It’s also known as longevity jade. It has the three characteristics of divinity, spirituality, and human nature. It secretly integrates the three tenants of heaven, earth, and humankind. The wooden osmanthus incense beads are made of flowers and wood, and the wood is the source of vitality. The two complement each other and match nature.”

“By using the fragrance to nourish the beads, and using the jade to nourish the beads, this effect will last for a year and a half. The texture is firm and warm, and the jade is soaked in the fragrance of the beads. Beautiful jade produces fragrance. Then, using the beads and jade to nourish the body, they will become rare medicinal beads that can best nourish the body and mind...”

Zhou Linghuai lowered his head and wrapped the beads around his wrist in circles. There were exactly two circles. It was neither loose nor tight. The beads were neither too big nor too tight, and wearing them would not hinder the agility of his hands. The red string was also a little elastic. As he grew older, it could also be adjusted and tightened with the bones in his hands. This string could be worn for a long time.

There was nothing he didn’t like. He sucked on his lips and said in a hoarse voice, “Thank you, Cousin. It’s been hard on you.”

Zhou Linghuai had never made incense before, but the little girl liked to mix incense, so he had been reading some incense recipes recently to understand more.

However, he also knew that making incense beads was troublesome and tiring. Simple incense beads would only take three to five days to make. However, the process was the most torturous and testing. If there was a mistake in any of the procedures, it would be ruined.

Yu Youyao looked at the bracelet on her cousin’s wrist and smiled even more happily. “It’s the right size. Cousin, it looks good on you.” The newly made incense beads weren’t that smooth, but her cousin was a man, so the muscles and bones on his wrist were exposed. This roughness also revealed a hint of the heaviness of a whole. She revealed her wrist. “Cousin, look, I’m wearing one just like you.”

Zhou Linghuai’s breathing paused for a moment. The little girl revealed a small portion of her fair wrist. She was also wearing a small string of beads on her wrist. The wooden osmanthus incense beads were paired with light yellow and green Lantian jade beads. The only difference from the bracelet in his hand was its size.

The slightly textured bracelet made the little girl’s fair wrist look fair, making her look very dizzying.

He suddenly tightened his grip on the armrest. “Cousin, you look good in it too.”

Yu Youyao tilted her head. "Cousin, when it's a little hotter, I'll make you a cooling bracelet. It's hot in summer, so you'll be frustrated. Just smell it, and it'll help you cool down and relieve the heat. In autumn, I'll make an agarwood bracelet. It's dry and hot, and it's suitable for nourishing the kidneys. In winter, when it's cold, I'll make a cold-repelling bracelet to stimulate your blood. If you have any incense you like, you can tell me. I can make the incense beads you like."

Zhou Linghuai smiled again. "Alright, I don't know much about incense beads. I think whatever Cousin likes is very good."

At the mention of the cold-repelling bracelet, he remembered that when his old illness acted up a while ago, the little girl had made incense and burned it in the house day and night. There were still unfinished ones in his house.

Yu Youyao smiled and nodded. Then, she saw the sachet tied to her cousin's waist. "Cousin, it'll take a few days for me to embroider the sachet. I'll give it to you when I'm done."

Every time she did needlework, she had the illusion that she would be able to do it well soon.

However, every time, it would take a long time.

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "There's no hurry. Cousin, take your time embroidering. If you don't have time, don't embroider anymore. It's bad for the eyes to make too much needlework." He took another look at the incense bead bracelet wrapped around his wrist. The dark fragrance was strong and after staying up all night, his tired mind felt a little relieved. "Cousin, you've already given me a lot of things."

Yu Youyao waved her hand. "You have to accept gifts often in life to have surprises and expectations."

Zhou Linghuai nodded thoughtfully. "Thank you, Cousin."

Yu Youyao looked at her cousin, who was still wearing the clothes from yesterday. His clothes were wrinkled and stained with paint. "Cousin, you've stayed up all night and haven't eaten breakfast, right? Hurry back to your room to wash up. Go and rest after eating. Don't tire yourself out again."

Upon hearing her words, Zhou Linghuai remembered that he had not eaten any rice since last night until morning. He had only just drunk a pot of water and was indeed very hungry now. He nodded. "Okay!"

"Cousin, I haven't finished making my incense beads, so I'll go back first!" Yu Youyao picked up her skirt and ran, afraid that she would delay her cousin's rest.

Zhou Linghuai watched her cheerful figure disappear into the Green House. Only then did he retract his gaze and look down at the bracelet on his wrist. He raised his hand and lowered his head to smell it.

The fragrance melted and seeped into his heart.

After returning to the Jade Courtyard, Yu Youyao went to the incense room.

She packed the ten incense beads that she was going to give to her grandmother and asked Liu'er to send them to An Shou Hall.

There were only two remaining incense beads, and they were both the size of longans. Yu Youyao picked out two knots, one red and one green, and threaded the incense beads into the string. The two incense bead necklaces had a white and smaller Lantian jade bead.

Nanny Xu brought over a plate of pastries.

Yu Youyao placed one of the green string incense beads into Nanny Xu's hand. "Nanny, the incense beads I made for the first time are very meaningful. This green string is for you. You have to wear it often. It's good for your health."

"I have one too?!" Nanny Xu took the incense bead necklace in a daze. For a moment, she couldn't react. There was a green string with a longevity knot, pearl-sized white jade beads, and longan-sized wooden osmanthus incense beads.

It was a simple necklace.

Chapter 287 Visitor from the Palace

Nanny Xu's eyes suddenly turned red. "Thank you, Eldest Miss. The fragrant bead necklace you made looks very good."

Back then, when she entered the Yu Residence, she had also hoped that she could develop a relationship with her and have a good time in the future. However, she did not expect that after spending two to three months together, she would unknowingly be so close to her.

At this moment, after receiving the gift from Yu Youyao, she suddenly sighed with emotion. Not every sincere relationship in this world could be repaid.

She was so lucky to have met Yu Youyao.

This young lady would never let anyone down.

At this moment, Qing Xiu came over. "Eldest Miss, someone from the palace is here. It's Aunt Shen, who walks in front of the Empress Dowager. Old Madam wants you to change your clothes."

Yu Youyao's heart tightened, and she quickly agreed.

After returning to her room, Nanny Xu was very busy. Not long after, she helped Yu Youyao change into a silver-embroidered camellia and a high-waisted dress. She combed her hair with a single conch and decorated it with a string of flowers.

As Nanny Xu helped Yu Youyao put on jewelry, she explained, "Miss Shen is the aunt in charge of Shouyan Palace. She has been serving the Empress Dowager since she was young and is a trusted aide of the Empress Dowager. When you see Aunt Shen, you don't have to be so deliberate. You just have to be polite." At this point, she paused for a moment and pondered for a moment before saying, "Yesterday, the Empress Dowager punished Seventh Miss Cao. Today, she sent Aunt Shen over. You will probably be rewarded and comforted. Just accept it."

She was not surprised that the Empress Dowager had interfered in the matters of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence.

However, she was a little surprised by Aunt Shen's sudden visit.

It was obvious that the Empress Dowager really took Yu Youyao seriously. It was also because Yu Youyao was still young, so it wasn't appropriate for her to reward her generously, so she only sent her aunt over.

This way, Yu Youyao would also become a very respected young lady in the capital.

In the future, those who interacted with her would probably become the daughters of noble families.

In less than ten minutes, Yu Youyao was already dressed neatly. Her simple and dignified outfit made her look fresh and generous, making her look even more delicate.

Nanny Xu followed Yu Youyao to An Shou Hall.

Aunt Shen was sitting in the hall drinking tea. She was wearing a purple robe with purple patterns and had her hair combed into a bun. There was a long hairpin with red and gold patterns on her head. She was also wearing red and gold jewelry. Although the style was simple, the quality could not be better. She exuded an aura from head to toe. Two young palace maids stood behind her with their heads lowered.

Yu Youyao greeted Old Madam Yu first.

Old Madam Yu smiled and said, "This is the in-charge of the Empress Dowager's palace, Aunt Shen."

Yu Youyao quickly turned to Auntie Shen. She crossed her hands and lowered her eyes, squatting down obediently. "Hello, Aunt Shen!"

Aunt Shen saw that her every move exuded an indescribable delicateness. When she squatted down and bowed, her skirt was piled up under her feet, making her look as light as a camellia. Her appearance was also good as she waited. She had thin eyebrows, sleeping phoenix eyes, a small mouth, and a jade face. There was nothing that wasn't delicate.

However, she was really beautiful.

Aunt Shen took a look at Auntie Xu, who was standing at the side with her eyes lowered. Then, she carefully sized up Yu Youyao. Her bearing, manners, etiquette, and temperament were all excellent. She was indeed a delicate person who had been personally taught by Auntie Xu.

Aunt Shen put down her teacup and chuckled. "There's no need to be so polite!"

"Thank you, Aunt." Yu Youyao bowed.

Aunt Shen stood up and walked up to Yu Youyao. The little palace maid followed behind her with a golden eagle lacquer plate.

"The Empress Dowager praised Eldest Miss Yu's name." Auntie Shen saw that Yu Youyao was standing obediently, and her entire body was neither servile nor overbearing. She lowered her head, but her thin shoulders were stable and did not collapse. Her thin back was upright, neither bent nor crooked. Her waist was pressed down, and she revealed respect. It was obvious that she had really developed a strong character. "You're name means that you're young and pure. You're also clean and honest, and good at observing and smiling. You're kind

and graceful. Yao Yao is worthy of her name. Old Madam has really raised you to have morals.”

The Empress Dowager had asked her to say what she should say and how much she should say. It all depended on Yu Youyao’s performance. If she performed appropriately, she could say 70% of what she said. If she added 30%, it would be 100% the message.

Her performance was unsatisfactory, and she held back most of what she was about to say.

Old Madam Yu’s eyes lit up as she sat in the hall. She couldn’t help but twirl her prayer beads a few times.

There was also a requirement for praising people.

When she met someone she was familiar with and saw someone else’s sister, it was inevitable that she would praise her. The problem was how to praise her.

Anyone could say ordinary words.

For example, cleanliness and integrity.

This was the Empress Dowager’s praise for Yao Yao. The former had borrowed Yao Yao’s name and praised the Yu Residence’s style, while the latter praised Yao Yao’s looks, talent, and personality.

Her family was also praised accordingly.

In the future, no matter where she went, these words would become Yao Yao’s standard.

When Yu Youyao heard this, she quickly squatted down to greet her again. “I’m flattered by the Empress Dowager’s praise.”

As soon as she did so, she squatted so deeply that her legs bent down. She did not look superficial at all. Aunt Shen smiled and personally helped her up again. She carefully sized up her eyebrows and her smile deepened. “You’re indeed a jade-like person.”

Nanny Xu saw this scene.

She looked at her and praised her. It was obvious that she had taken Yu Youyao seriously. She had sized her up too many times, even though she had only met her once. In front of the Empress Dowager, she would say even more.

Yu Youyao said shyly, “Aunt, you flatter me.”

Aunt Shen glanced at a little palace maid following behind her.

The little palace maid quickly took a step forward with the golden eagle lacquer plate. Aunt Shen opened a long box on the lacquer plate and took out a palace token.

As soon as the palace token appeared, even Old Madam Yu sat up straight and stared at it, unable to hide the joy in her eyes.

There were two small yellow and green beads on the yellow-green knot. Below them was a jade cicada carved from a Lantian jade. Its color was light yellow to golden, and it was smooth and beautiful, like old fat. It was opaque, but extremely bright.

Below the jade cicada was a jade lock that looked like a carved peony. This jade lock was also Lantian jade. Its color was light green, but it was emerald-colored and sparkling.

The jade cicada was light yellow to golden, beautiful and noble.

The peony-patterned jade lock had a light green to yellow color, making it look elegant.

There were holes under the jade lock, and there were small tassel beads of different lengths. They were yellow, green, and white. There was also a yellow-green tassel tied to the side.

Yu Youyao did not dare to look at it too much and lowered her eyebrows. The Great Zhou Dynasty had a token that was bestowed by a noble in the palace and was worn. Therefore, the righteousness represented by the palace token was a little extraordinary.

Chapter 288 Reward from the Empress Dowager

“This three-colored jade cicada palace token was given to Eldest Miss Yu by the Empress Dowager.” As Miss Shen spoke, she tied the palace token in her hand to Eldest Miss Yu’s waist. She looked at it carefully and was very satisfied. “I think this palace token suits Eldest Miss Yu. Eldest Miss Yu will look good wearing it.”

Yu Youyao quickly restrained her clothes and knelt on the ground. Her hands were folded and placed flat on the ground, and her forehead was pressed against the back of her hand. “I thank the Empress Dowager for her generous gift. I wish her good health.”

She knew that there were as many young misses in the capital as fish in a river. There were not many who could be rewarded by the nobles in the palace. Furthermore, the Empress Dowager was deep in the palace and no longer cared about internal affairs.

In recent years, she had never heard of the Empress Dowager rewarding anyone.

It was obvious how much weight this palace token had.

Aunt Shen smiled in satisfaction and bent down to help Yu Youyao up. “There’s no need to be so polite.” With that, she took a long box from another small palace maid and stuffed it into Yu Youyao’s hand. “You’re still young, so you don’t have to enter the palace to thank her. The Empress Dowager will pay her respects to Buddha, so you can copy two Buddhist scriptures and get someone to send them into the palace. The Empress Dowager likes them too.”

Yu Youyao quickly agreed.

Aunt Shen said a few more words to Yu Youyao before bidding Old Madam Yu farewell.

Old Madam Yu hurriedly stood up, wanting to send her off personally. “I’ll send Aunt Shen off.”

“I can’t tire you out.” Auntie Shen quickly refused and looked at the agarwood prayer beads in Old Madam Yu’s hand. The golden prayer beads were of a honey color. It was obvious that she had been wearing them for many years to develop such a solemn appearance.

Old Madam Yu did not insist. “I haven’t entered the palace for many years. Aunt, greet the Empress Dowager on my behalf.”

She had already said everything else before Yu Youyao came, so there was no need to repeat it. After all, the Yu Residence was well-mannered.

Aunt Shen agreed with a smile and was about to leave.

Yu Youyao hurriedly followed to send Aunt Shen off.

When Aunt Shen reached Nanny Xu's side, she stopped in her tracks and smiled. "The Empress Dowager is a nostalgic person. Ever since you left the palace, she's been thinking about you. She's used to the incense medicine you use. In the future, when she's free, make more and send them into the palace. The Empress Dowager will be happy to accept them."

Nanny Xu lowered her head and quickly said, "Yes!"

Yu Youyao sent Aunt Shen off and sent her all the way to the carriage. When she saw that the carriage had left, she returned to An Shou Hall.

Old Madam Yu couldn't stop smiling. She quickly waved at her. "Come over quickly and let Grandmother take a closer look at the palace token awarded by the Empress Dowager."

Yu Youyao quickly walked up to her grandmother.

Old Madam Yu leaned over and held the palace token in her hand. "The texture is dense, exquisite, and strong. It's top-grade Lantian jade. What's even rarer is that Lantian jade is precious in yellow and green. Although the color of this palace token isn't pure, even a noble daughter of the imperial family can't compare to it."

Palace tokens also had different grades.

The best ones were like Yao Yao's. Even the color and style of the high-grade Lantian jade were top-notch. The jade cicadas and peony patterns on it were also very exquisite.

Yu Youyao stroked the palace token at her waist and immediately felt that it was smooth and warm. She smiled and said, "It's a pity when one's talents are not used in the world."

Lantian jade was one of the four precious jade pieces. In ancient times, there was a jade piece that belonged to the He family, and it was sent to the Zhao family intact. In addition, when the Qin Emperor first ruled, he ordered Prime Minister Li Si to pick a jade seal made of Lantian jade. As the saying went, "By the heavens, one will live forever."

Later, Emperor Ming of Tang ordered someone to pick Lantian jade and make a jade belt for Imperial Concubine Yang. Today, Lantian warm jade nourished the body and mind, cured illnesses, and improved longevity. It was called longevity jade!

Old Madam Yu was overjoyed. She pulled Yu Youyao to sit beside her. "This palace token is equivalent to the title of county monarch. In the future, Yao'er will also be a true noble lady. No matter which family she goes to, she will definitely wear it to show off."

She did not think that her granddaughter was in the limelight and had attracted too much attention.

Yao Yao was smart and pleasant. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she was outstanding. In any case, she was still useful. The reputation she had accumulated in her early years could still be

intimidating. No matter what, she could protect her granddaughter a little. If she couldn't protect her one day, it would be a disaster for the family, and it wouldn't matter anymore.

She hoped that her granddaughter would have a good reputation and a good future.

Even if she married someone, she could protect herself and establish herself in her husband's family.

Yu Youyao pursed her lips and chuckled. "The gift from the Empress Dowager naturally can't be covered in dirt."

The reward of this palace token was a little too much, but from the looks of it, it had obvious benefits for her. As for other matters, what did they have to do with a growing child like her?

Even if it was related, didn't she still have her cousin?

Old Madam Yu stroked the top of her granddaughter's head. "What's the other gift from the Empress Dowager?"

Yu Youyao took the box from Chun Xiao's hand and carefully opened it. There was a blue field white jade brush inside. She picked up the jade brush and looked at it carefully. Then, she smiled. "It's Five Sheep and Five Purple. It's just right for me."

It was obvious that this brush had been carefully chosen.

Old Madam Yu did not seem surprised. "I'll use this brush to copy two Buddhist scriptures and send them to the palace. It's also to thank the Empress Dowager for her reward."

Aunt Shen had also specially reminded her.

Yu Youyao nodded, put away the jade brush, and handed it to Chun Xiao.

Old Madam Yu pulled her granddaughter into her arms. "My Yao Yao'er has also become successful and earned a name for herself. She has to be good in the future."

As she spoke, her eyes welled up with tears.

She had originally planned to enter the palace this morning, but she did not expect that the Empress Dowager would dote on Yao Yao so much that she had sent her a gift of dignity. Now, her old bones were useless.

The Yu Residence was a royalist party and had a deep relationship with the Empress Dowager.

Yao Yao had caused a commotion at the Flower Festival at the Marquis of Changxing's Residence and handed a knife to the Empress Dowager, allowing her to take the opportunity to suppress the arrogance of Imperial Consort Lu.

Even the women and children of the inner residence could not escape the conflict in the royal court.

The lightning and rain were all bestowed by the emperor.

"Grandmother, I've already grown up and can protect myself. Don't always treat me as a child. You always feel that I've suffered. Actually, at the flower festival

yesterday, I deliberately made a big fuss out of it. This way, no one will criticize me with the words ‘bereaved eldest daughter’ in the future.”

Yu Youyao leaned into her grandmother’s arms and smelled the sandalwood fragrance on her grandmother’s body.

She had made this incense. It had a hint of medicinal fragrance and a hint of bitterness. It also had the effect of calming the mind and nourishing the blood. It was not like ordinary incense. It had a smoky smell.

She knew that her grandmother was worried about her.

Old Madam Yu smiled as she wiped her tears. “Good, good, good. My Yao Yao’er has really grown up.”

Yu Youyao sniffed hard and looked at the agarwood beads in her grandmother’s hand. As expected, she saw two wooden osmanthus incense beads in her hands. They were the ones she had asked Liu’er to send over not long ago.

Chapter 289 Good-heartedness

Old Madam Yu took a look and smiled. “The osmanthus incense beads you made smelled so good. How can you be so capable? Everyone says that you’re indeed worthy of being raised by me. I wasn’t as capable as you when I was young.”

When she was young, she was just like Yao Yao. She had been raised to be very pampered and angry. She didn’t know how to do this or that. Her mother couldn’t do anything to her, so she could only let her read a few more books and teach her more about how to behave.

It was also because of this that she had indulged Yao Yao in the past.

It wasn’t until Yao Yao fell sick that she suddenly realized.

Yao Yao was different from her!

She had been protected and raised by her mother since she was young. Even when she saw her mother doing things for others, she could still be influenced and secretly learn many principles.

However, Yao Yao’er had no mother since she was young, and her health wasn’t good, so she didn’t have much energy. She often was taught by people by her side step by step, and Madam Yang was in charge of the household. There were many principles that no one had taught Yao Yao.

Therefore, Yao Yao was already nine years old, but she was still ignorant.

It had only been two to three months since Nanny Xu had arrived, but Yao Yao seemed to have changed completely.

Yu Youyao leaned against her grandmother. “When it’s summer, I’ll make a cooling bracelet for Grandmother to wear. This is an incense recipe that Nanny Xu has concocted herself. It’s made of fragrant medicinal herbs. The fragrance of the incense bead can avoid filth, refresh the spleen, and relieve heat. If it’s too hot and you’re afraid of catching a heatstroke, you can also take off the incense beads and use them to cool down. Grandmother, summer is tough. With the cooling beads, you’ll definitely feel much better.”

Old Madam Yu laughed so hard that her wrinkles appeared. "Oh my, how can my little darling be so considerate like you?"

The grandfather and granddaughter chatted a lot.

Nanny Liu listened with a smile.

At this moment, Yu Youyao took out the red string necklace that she had made previously from her sleeve and handed it to Nanny Xu. "Nanny, this wooden osmanthus incense bead necklace is for you to wear."

Nanny Liu took it happily. "Eldest Miss, you have to make more things in the future and show filial piety to Old Madam. I can also benefit from it a little." As she spoke, she lowered her head to smell the incense beads and said happily, "When you smell this incense, it enters your brain and it's really good."

When Old Madam Yu heard this, she glanced at her from the corner of her eye. "You're still pretending to be obedient after taking advantage of me. That's what I mean."

This old fellow was getting more and more mischievous.

At this moment, the news that Aunt Shen had come to the Yu Residence and rewarded Yu Youyao had already spread throughout the east and west residences of the Yu Residence.

Not long after, Yang Shuwan brought Yu Jianjia and Madam Yao to An Shou Hall one after another.

The entire family gathered around Yu Youyao to admire the palace token around her waist.

Madam Yao held Yu Youyao's hand and praised her with a smile, "Cleanliness is good, and Yao Yao is kind. In all my life, this is the first time I've heard the Empress Dowager praise any girl so much. Our Yao Yao is really amazing." As she spoke, she stared at the palace token on Yu Youyao's waist. She couldn't help but feel a little envious. The smile in her eyes faded a little, but the smile on her lips did not fade at all. "Oh, look at this palace token. It's really exquisite. It's made of Lantian jade."

There was nothing more dignified than this.

Yu Youyao had been a smart child since she was young, but in the end, she had not been taught by her mother. She was afraid that she wouldn't be doted on. The older Old Madam was, the kinder she was. She was also very indulgent towards her. She was only an eight or nine-year-old child, but Old Madam still doted on her.

Compared to the third daughter of the main family, Jia Jia, she was very obedient and sensible.

However, who knew that after Yu Youyao's illness, she had almost lost her life? Old Madam realized this and found a capable nanny to teach her.

In just two to three months, she had changed completely. It was as if she had become a different person.

Yesterday, at the flower festival, she had seen Yu Youyao's maturity. Every word and sentence was like a knife, cutting into the Marquis of Changxing's wife and Seventh Miss Cao.

It wasn't the blood and flesh of a person that were cut.

It was a reputation that the Marquis of Changxing's Residence had earned through generations of meritorious deeds. In addition, the Marquis of Changxing had bled and sweated in Youzhou and risked his life.

The Marquis of Changxing's Residence had also lost face in the palace. The Flower Festival had become a joke and a laughing stock.

There was no one better than Yu Youyao.

Yu Shuangbai held Yu Youyao's arm. "I saw Seventh Miss Cao yesterday. She also has a palace token tied around her waist. It's made of red agate and has the same color and tassel. It's as if no one can see it. She can really show off. However..." She giggled, sincerely happy for Yu Youyao. "Hers isn't as dignified as yours."

Yu Shanyan, Yu Shanxin, and Yu Shanli also praised her.

Yang Shuwan was sandwiched in the middle. No matter how unhappy she was, she had to say a few polite words. "Our Yao Yao is really a blessed child. Not only did she receive the Empress Dowager's praise, but she also received a reward..."

As a result, Yu Youyao had become a noble lady. Be it at home or outside, Jia Jia was not only a head shorter than her, but had a lower status than Yu Youyao.

She suddenly tightened her grip on her handkerchief, and even the smile on her face stiffened.

Yesterday, Jia Jia had slipped and lost her balance at the flower festival, making a fool of herself. She had even sprained her ankle. When she reached home, Yu Youyao had even caused her to be scolded by her father. She had suffered.

However, that little b*tch, Yu Youyao, had stepped on her and her mother. Not only did she gain a reputation, but she also had dignity. Today, she had even received praise and rewards from the Empress Dowager.

There was really no justice!

Yu Jianjia's face was pale as she smiled faintly. "Big Sister has received the Empress Dowager's reward and praise. It's the Yu Residence's honor and fortune to have you as a daughter."

Now that Yu Youyao had a good reputation, the Yu Residence also had a reputation for being "well educated." The young misses in the residence would also be valued outside.

A girl's upbringing was the most important.

Education emphasized character and virtue, followed by talent and beauty.

This was the first time Yu Youyao had left the house. When she was outside, she had fought for a good reputation for herself. She had also received a sentence from the Empress Dowager—cleanliness, integrity, and kindness!

She was clear-minded.

This referred to her talent and appearance.

Integrity was a virtue.

Yao Xin was a kind and outstanding person.

Those with outstanding upbringings had good virtues.

“Congratulations, Big Sister!” After Yu Jianjia finished speaking, she couldn’t help but lower her head and cover her mouth to cough.

She could almost imagine how glorious and honorable this matter would be as soon as Aunt Shen left the Yu Residence.

After Yu Jianjia finished coughing, she couldn’t help but glance at the palace token that Yu Youyao was wearing at her waist.

The palace token was very exquisite, and the carving was very elegant.

Lantian jade was rare and precious. Even though the jade pillow in her room was made of Lantian white jade, it was also given to her by Old Madam because Lantian jade regulated her yin and yang, blood and qi. It would help to improve her illness.

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However, in the Great Zhou Dynasty, Lantian jade was respected by yellow and green, but it was not as noble as the Lantian jade on the palace token.

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Yu Lianyu also looked at the palace token, and her eyes lit up. “Big Sister is really imposing when she wears it. Third Sister was right just now. Now that Big Sister has obtained honor, we have to bask in it too.”

Compared to Yu Jianjia’s vague words, she was much more straightforward and genuinely happy.

Yu Fangfei touched the Lantian Jade on the palace token and couldn’t bear to part with it. “The Lantian Jade is really beautiful.”

Yu Youyao smiled and said, “I have a pair of white Lantian Jade Bracelets in my house. If you like them, I’ll get someone to send them to you later. One for each of you.”

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Yu Lianyu and Yu Fangfei looked at each other and saw the surprise in each other’s eyes. “Thank you, Big Sister.”

The first wife treated them well, and the jewelry she usually bought was also meticulous. However, noble jade like Lantian jade was not something they, the daughters of concubines, could covet.

Only Big Sister could do such a thing.

Yu Shuangbai pouted and quickly asked, “What about me? Eldest Sister gave Fifth Sister and Sixth Sister Lantian Jade White Bracelets. What do you plan to give me? I’ve already said that if it’s not Lantian Jade, I don’t want it.”

Yu Youyao glared at her. “How can you ask someone for a gift? Do you lack a Lantian jade?”

Yu Shuangbai refused. “You can’t favor one over the other.”

Yu Youyao looked helpless and shook her head. "I'm afraid of you. I still have a white and green blue jade bowl in my room. I'll send it to you later."

Yu Shuangbai smiled smugly.

Yu Lianyu and Yu Fangfei also laughed.

Big Sister had also put in a lot of effort to give them gifts. They were the daughters of concubines, so they did not have many precious things on hand. Hence, they gave them jewelry. If they were older, they could show off.

Second Sister did not lack these expensive things, so she gave her a bowl to decorate.

Every time Big Sister gave them something, she would sincerely consider it for them. She never sent them away with anything that was not valuable.

Yu Jianjia looked at the few of them surrounding Yu Youyao and trying to please her. She couldn't help but bite her lip.

She was sitting in the hall, and even the daughter of the second branch had given her something. However, Yu Youyao seemed to have forgotten about her third sister and did not say anything about giving her something.

Yu Youyao did not know what Yu Jianjia was thinking. Since Yu Jianjia did not ask for it herself, she did not plan to give it to her.

The things in her hands were not from a random place, but from her maternal grandfather's hard-earned family. She had given them to Yu Shuangbai because they were sisters.

It was fine if she gave it to Yu Jianjia, but she was not a fool.

Yang Shuwan was also furious, but as an elder, it wasn't appropriate for her to ask her stepdaughter for something, although she didn't want it herself.

Seeing how generous her granddaughter was, Old Madam Yu chuckled.

At this moment, Qing Xiu entered the room. "Old Madam, Old Madam Cao of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence has brought the Marquis of Changxing's wife and Seventh Miss Cao over."

Madam Yao and Yang Shuwan were shocked and almost stood up from their chairs.

Old Madam Cao was like the Old Madam at home. She was already old and experienced. Basically, she lived at home and did not go out.

She actually came personally.

The two of them couldn't help but glance at Yu Youyao. They couldn't help but sigh.

Old Madam Yu's smile also faded a little. She sat steadily on the couch and looked at Madam Yang and Madam Yao. "The two of you can go over and welcome them. Just be polite."

The Marquis of Changxing's Residence was rude, but the Yu Residence still cared about their reputation.

Madam Yao and Yang Shuwan quickly stood up, tidied their clothes, and left one after another.

Old Madam Yu swept her gaze across the room and said gently, “Yao Yao, Sister Shuang, and Third Miss, stay behind. Fifth Miss, and Sixth Miss, go back first!”

Yu Lianyu and Yu Fangfei nodded in agreement. After stepping forward and bowing to Old Madam Yu, they brought their maidservants out of An Shou Hall and returned to the second branch.

Old Madam Yu looked at Yu Youyao and the others again. “Go behind the screen first.”

Old Madam Cao’s seniority was high. The few of them had to be greeted so that they could meet her naturally. They couldn’t stand there and let others see that they were unruly.

Yu Youyao nodded and went behind the screen with Yu Shuangbai.

Ai Ye and Hui Xiang helped Yu Jianjia in. There was a round table and a small stool behind the screen. Bai Kui ordered the young maidservant to serve snacks, fruits, and tea.

Not long after, footsteps came from outside.

When Yu Youyao heard the voices of her second aunt, Madam Yao, and Yang Shuwan, she looked out of the screen and could only see faint figures swaying. Her master was leading a group of maidservants.

Old Madam Cao was supported by the Marquis of Changxing’s wife, and they entered An Shou Hall like stars surrounding the moon.

She was wearing a ginger longevity jacket and an emerald headband. She was a little older than Old Madam Yu, but she was tall and thin, looking very capable.

It wasn’t until she entered the house that Old Madam Yu asked Nanny Liu to help her to the hall. She greeted, “Oh, I haven’t seen you for many years. Why are you so busy today? Sit, sit...”

Old Madam Cao also smiled and said, “There’s a reason why I took the liberty to visit today and didn’t even send a greeting card. I’ve disturbed your peace. Please forgive me for my rudeness.”

After the group greeted each other, they sat down one after another. The maidservants quickly served tea and snacks.

The Marquis of Changxing’s wife lowered her eyes and sat beside Old Madam Cao. She was wearing a grayish-green knee-length jacket and gold-inlaid jade accessories. She looked dignified and generous, but not as ostentatious.

Cao Yingxue also put away the flamboyance on her body. She was wearing light blue clothes and had simple accessories. She sat on the small stool behind the Marquis of Changxing’s wife and lowered her head, not daring to breathe too loudly.

Her mind was filled with thoughts of how not long after Yu Youyao had left yesterday, there were already people making excuses to leave the Flower Festival one after another. Her mother couldn’t stay or stop her. She was so angry that she almost fainted.

Not long after, someone from the palace came and invited her and her mother into the palace. The Flower Festival could no longer be held.

Cao Yingxue had only entered the palace a few times in her life, and Zhaoyang Palace twice.

The Longevity Palace was very big. The ground was covered in gold bricks, and it was so dazzling that she couldn't breathe.

As soon as she entered the hall, even her legs went limp.

The Empress Dowager was separated by a dazzling bright yellow curtain, and her dignified voice came through it. It made her feel dazed and unreal, but it was intimidating. Her mind had also become muddled, so much so that she couldn't even memorize the "Biographies of Exemplary Women" that she had been taught since she was young. She was punished by the Empress Dowager.

Only at this moment did she realize how powerful and afraid she was.

Her heart was filled with regret. She shouldn't have made things difficult for Yu Youyao at the Flower Festival. Not only had she embarrassed her family, but she had also ruined her reputation.

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