

All Hail 291

Chapter 291 Spoiling Things

Cao Yingxue thought that now that the Empress Dowager had punished her, her reputation would be ruined. No matter how she tried to salvage it in the future, it would be impossible. Her mother had previously agreed that it would be impossible for her to become the lord of a county.

What was hateful was that Yu Youyao had stepped on the dignity of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence and obtained the Empress Dowager's praise for no reason. She had even been given a palace token. Although it was only a palace token, it depended on who had rewarded it. Since it was given by the Empress Dowager, it was equivalent to the title of a fifth-grade county lord.

Yu Youyao had taken all of her glory.

Cao Yingxue lowered her head and looked at her toes.

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Yesterday, she and her mother had stayed in the palace until dusk and the sun had set before they were allowed to leave the palace. When they returned home, it was already dark.

As soon as she stepped out of the carriage, she was invited to her grandmother's house by a maidservant.

Old Madam Cao was so angry that she smashed the teacup on the spot. The teacup landed beside Cao Yingxue's feet, and fragments flew everywhere, scaring her so much that she closed her eyes and screamed.

Old Madam Cao shouted angrily, "Shut up!"

Cao Yingxue's body went limp and she fell to the ground, crying.

The Marquis of Changxing's wife's face turned pale with fright. She knelt at the side, not daring to even breathe loudly.

Cao Yingxue was already crying, but her grandmother still did not let her off. She pointed at her nose and scolded, "You disgraceful thing. How dare you cry? Even though the Eldest Miss of the Yu family's reputation was almost ruined, she can still straighten her back and argue with others. Why are you crying? How dare you cry?"

They were all granddaughters who had been raised by noble families. Why was there such a big difference?

She was usually a little smart, but in front of her, she was used to currying favor and pretending to be obedient.

However, once this matter was settled, her mind would be blank.

At the thought of this, Old Madam Cao became even angrier. "Look at your useless character. You've embarrassed the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. Your father worked hard to earn glory for you in Youzhou. You're a scourge and a burden to your family. Back then, when your mother gave birth to you, why didn't I drown you in a basin of water?!"

The sound of guns being fired was like a firecracker. Cao Yingxue fell to the ground, her mind blank.

No matter how much the Marquis of Changxing's wife doted on her daughter, she did not dare to say anything.

Old Madam Cao was tired of scolding. She handed a cup of tea to the nanny in front of her. After drinking the tea, she turned her anger to the Marquis of Changxing's wife. "Seventh Miss is only a growing child. Even if she did something wrong, it's still a quarrel between children. You're an elder, yet you've even been given a warning. Why are you meddling blindly? Is your brain muddled by feces and urine? All you can see is that Eldest Master Yu is only a fourth-grade censor. Eldest Miss Yu lost her mother when she was young, but why haven't you thought about the background of the Yu Clan?"

The Marquis of Changxing's wife was so scolded that she couldn't raise her head. She didn't even dare to say anything. She opened her mouth to explain, but when she saw the Old Madam's angry expression, she quickly lowered her head.

Old Madam Cao's chest rose and fell. "The Yu Clan has been a scholarly family for generations. Their ancestors were extremely prominent. They used to be with the Ye Clan of the Linjiang Prefecture and were known as the number one literary school in the world. They were known for their status. Back then, before the Great Zhou Dynasty was established, there were flames of war everywhere in the world. The last minister of the previous dynasty was from the Yu Clan. He was Prime Minister Yu, who was known later as the number one minister of the six dynasties. He studied Confucianism and Daoism at the same time. Looking at the stars, he asserted that the dragon vein of the previous dynasty had been severed and that his life was over. He said, 'The people live in suffering, but the people die in suffering.' In the end, he was the one who risked the world's condemnation and killed a king. At that time, the Great Zhou Empire was spared from the flames of war."

At the mention of this past, even Old Madam Cao's tone became serious.

The Marquis of Changxing's wife, who was kneeling in the hall, was even more shocked. With such a history of the Yu Clan, how could they be easily provoked?

Old Madam Cao looked at her trembling face and was even angrier. "When Emperor Gaozu entered the Imperial City, he was grateful for Yu Xiang's help and called him into the palace overnight. Do you know what happened after that?"

The atmosphere in the hall suddenly turned solemn. Old Madam Cao raised her voice and said, "Other than the children who were learning how to walk, all the men, women, and children in Prime Minister Yu's branch committed suicide in the family shrine."

The Marquis of Changxing's wife's pupils constricted.

As Old Madam Cao sucked in a breath of cold air, she said, "When the previous emperor received the news, he rode out of the palace overnight. He used the blood of the Yu family to write the words 'Honourable Lord' and 'Loyal Lord'. Then, he conferred the title of Minister Yu."

Old Madam Cao also sighed. "It's also because of this tragic past that the Yu Clan hasn't fallen. It's also because of this past that the Yu Clan has become much more low-key. No one dares to mention their ancestors' names, afraid that they will disgrace the loyalty of Minister Yu's branch."

At this point, Old Madam Cao changed the topic. "However, the bloody words and the meritorious deed are still shown in the ancestral hall of the Yu Clan. Duke Lie is also known as the 'Little Saint' among scholars. The Yu Clan is still a place for scholars in the world to make pilgrimages."

The Marquis of Changxing's wife gritted her teeth and did not dare to speak.

Old Madam Cao's eyes turned green with anger. "Although the Yu Clan is in dire straits, the previous emperor once left a decree that the future generations should treat the Yu Clan well and promote them more often. The loyal lord is the monument of the Yu Clan. With this monument, the Yu Clan will be associated with the most reliable minister of the Great Zhou Dynasty. Therefore, as long as any outstanding disciple of the Yu Clan enters the imperial court, they will have a place in the imperial court."

At this point, she thought of Second Master Yu, who had been ranked second place at palace examinations. She glared at her daughter-in-law.

"Why do you think Second Master Yu has been in the Ministry of Revenue and was the third-grade Assistant Minister of Revenue for so many years?"

The Marquis of Changxing's wife's lips trembled.

When Old Madam Cao saw her stupid expression, she really wanted to slap her. "It's because he's waiting to take on the position of Xia Yansheng's Grand Secretary. He's trying to gain experience. Eldest Master Yu doesn't look outstanding, but it's the Xia family who has a knife in the Imperial Courtyard. They'll stab wherever they point."

The Yu family was going to have a Grand Secretary? The Marquis of Changxing's wife was stunned.

Old Madam Cao took a deep breath and said, "Old Demon Yu is a widow and has been quite fierce in the past. Even the old lord of the Marquis of Weining's Residence doesn't dare to provoke her. You should be glad that she didn't ask Yu Youyao to ruin you and your daughter's reputations yesterday. Otherwise, that old thing would have been able to get an imperial order and charge into the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. At that time, the Marquis of Changxing's future would have been ruined."

The Marquis of Changxing's wife's eyes darkened and she almost fainted on the spot. "How can this be!"

Cao Yingxue was so frightened that she collapsed and did not even dare to cry.

After Old Madam Cao's outburst, she calmed down a little and said coldly, "Since the Empress Dowager has come forward to punish you, the Yu Residence won't hold on to it anymore."

Chapter 292 Future Ruined

The Marquis of Changxing's wife heaved a sigh of relief and wiped the sweat off her forehead.

When she heard this, her mother-in-law, Old Madam Cao, pondered for a moment and frowned.

"Tomorrow morning, I'll personally make a trip to the Yu Residence. The two of you, come with me

and apologize properly. Old Madam Yu, you have to at least give me some face. At the very least, you have to smooth over this matter. In the future..." As she spoke, she looked at Cao Yingxue sharply. "Yingxue's reputation is ruined. She'll be a joke if she stays in the capital. Send her into the clan to lie low."

The Marquis of Changxing's wife's eyes immediately widened in shock. She crawled to Old Madam's feet and cried, begging for mercy...

Even Cao Yingxue's breathing became heavier.

At first, she did not understand what it meant to be sent into the clan to lie low. She even thought that her grandmother was really looking out for her.

Later, she watched as her mother knelt on the ground and cried her heart out.

Only then did she suddenly understand that hiding from the limelight was only on the surface. As long as she returned to the clan, she probably wouldn't have a chance to return to the capital in this lifetime.

When she was a little older, they would choose a family with a son of about the same age and with an ordinary family background among the in-laws she was familiar with. With a few gifts of dowry, she would be married out quietly.

From now on, she would not be able to raise her head high in her husband's house, and her future would be completely ruined.

To her, such a punishment was considered merciful.

No matter how powerful a family was, if their reputation was ruined, they had to be sent to a nunnery to worship Buddha or cut their hair and become a nun.

Even worse, they would be forced to drink a bowl of arsenic and lose their lives.

Cao Yingxue thought in a daze. If it had been Yu Youyao who had ruined her reputation yesterday, what would have happened to her?

It was probably not far from her!

Old Madam Cao told Old Madam Yu about the past and finally managed to get things straight. She was more or less glad that the Yu Residence was a scholarly family that valued relationships and etiquette.

Old Madam Cao changed the topic and said with a smile, "Call the few young masters in your family out for me to take a look. At the flower festival yesterday, they should have brought them to my house to let me take a look and recognize them. However, my body had turned cold a few days ago and I'm taking medicine. It's not convenient for me to see them, and I don't want to pass my sickness to them."

She did not know for the time being if she was really sick, but as soon as she said this, she also expressed her goodwill, indicating that she had just recovered from a serious illness today and was showing her sincerity.

Old Madam Yu naturally pointed at the screen and said, “Don’t hide either. Come out and greet Old Madam Cao.”

Yu Youyao was the first to walk out, followed by Yu Shuangbai. Yu Jianjia asked Ai Ye to help her out alone.

As soon as the three sisters walked out, Old Madam Cao’s turbid eyes lit up. “All of them are as tender as flower buds. They’re really very cute.” With that, she glanced at Old Madam Yu with envy. “You old thing, no one’s luck is as good as yours.”

Of her two sons, one was going to be the Grand Secretary in the future, and the other was also capable in the Imperial Court.

Her granddaughters also seemed to be learning from each other. Their every move was generous and not ostentatious at all. Just by looking at them, one could tell that they were well-mannered. She wondered what kind of bright future they would have in the future.

Yu Youyao brought Yu Shuangbai and Yu Jianjia to greet Old Madam Cao. “Old Madam, how are you?”

Old Madam Cao immediately saw Yu Jianjia. She glanced at her legs and quickly asked with concern, “It’s Third Miss, right? What’s wrong?”

Yu Jianjia lowered her head and said gently, “Old Madam, I accidentally sprained my ankle yesterday. Please forgive me if I’ve been rude.”

Although she was being supported, her personality, manners, and etiquette were all top-notch. However!

Old Madam Cao glanced at her pale and weak face, but her expression did not show it at all. “You sprained your ankle at my house yesterday, right?” As she spoke, she glanced at the Marquis of Changxing’s wife beside her and rebuked, “What a sin. You can’t even take care of a young lady well and she suffered like this.”

The Marquis of Changxing’s wife quickly looked at Yu Jianjia with an apologetic expression. “It’s my fault. Third Miss is a guest, so she should be treated well. I didn’t expect Third Miss to sprain her ankle at my house.” After saying that, she asked with concern, “How’s your ankle? Did you invite the imperial physician to take a look?”

Yu Jianjia’s pale lips curled up slightly, revealing a shy smile. “Thank you for your concern, Old Madam and Madam.” Then, she said gently, “The family has hired Imperial Physician Li, who’s good at tendons and bones, to take a look at it. It’s just a sprained tendon. It’ll be fine after recuperating for a while. Madam, don’t worry.”

“It’s good that you’re fine. It’s good that you’re fine.” The Marquis of Changxing’s wife was relieved and smiled again. “I have some good supplements and medicine at home. I’ll get someone to send them over later. You have to recuperate well during this period.”

Old Madam Cao smiled. She took out a green jade pendant from her waist and stuffed it into Yu Jianjia's hand.

Yu Jianjia only felt that it was smooth to the touch, but it was a high-grade green jadeite. She quickly declined. "Old Madam, how can this be..."

Old Madam Cao smiled and said, "It's just a small thing. It's not worth much. Take it!"

Yu Jianjia looked troubled as she looked up at her grandmother.

Old Madam Yu waved her hand. "It's a gift from an elder. Take it!"

Only then did Yu Jianjia thank Old Madam Cao.

Old Madam Cao patted her hand. "You sprained your ankle. Sit down quickly. Don't stand and talk."

Yu Jianjia thanked her again and asked Ai Ye to help her sit down on a small stool at the side. Her feet immediately felt lighter, and the piercing pain eased a little.

Old Madam Cao looked at Yu Shuangbai again. Seeing that Yu Shuangbai was generous, lively, and stood obediently, her bearing and etiquette were excellent. Even her smile became a little gentler. "This must be Second Sister. She looks really good." With that, she glanced at Madam Yao. "Second Madam Yu is really well-mannered."

Yu Shuangbai's appearance was beautiful and generous, and she was the favorite of her old family. Any elder who saw her would like her and praise her.

Madam Yao pursed her lips and chuckled. "You're like a mischievous monkey. How can you receive such praise from Old Madam?"

Yu Shuangbai immediately stomped her feet and said with a delicate expression, "Mother, the guests are still here. Please save me some face!"

The room immediately burst into laughter.

"Good girl." As Old Madam Cao smiled, she pulled out a jade bracelet from her wrist and put it on Yu Shuangbai's wrist without any explanation.

Even this jade bracelet, which was half red and half white, was valuable.

After Yu Jianjia accepted her gift, Yu Shuangbai also accepted hers generously and thanked her sweetly, "Thank you, Old Madam."

Chapter 293 I Regret It So Much

Old Madam Cao smiled until her eyes narrowed. She held Yu Youyao's hand and turned to look at her. "This must be your darling, Yao Yao, whom you've been raising since she was young." Before Old Madam Yu could finish speaking, she turned around again. As she sized up Yu Youyao, she smiled. "She's a delicate and beautiful person. If I had such a granddaughter, I'm afraid I would dote on her so much that she would find it unbearable."

This praise was really heartfelt.

Even Yu Jianjia couldn't help but lower her head when she heard this. She immediately felt that the tea in her mouth had lost its taste.

Yu Youyao pursed her lips and smiled shyly.

She was a growing child, but her eyes were naturally smooth. Every move she made exuded the aura of a noblewoman. Her thin figure was very delicate, and there was indeed a delicate fragrance on her thin back.

How many families in the capital could afford to raise such a delicate and expensive person?

She wondered how much good fortune she would have.

Old Madam Cao's eyes trembled slightly as she hid the deepness in her eyes. She looked at the palace token on Yu Youyao's waist and smiled. "Just now, on the way to the Yu Residence, I bumped into a carriage from the palace. I also found out that Aunt Shen was ordered by the Empress Dowager to give Eldest Miss Yu a reward. This palace token is really beautiful." Her tone also sighed. "The Empress Dowager likes Lantian jade. Back then, when Old Master asked me for a conferment, the Empress Dowager rewarded me with a white and green Lantian jade."

Everyone thought that she was just gossiping and just listened.

Yu Youyao lowered her head and heard Old Madam Cao change the topic. "The Empress Dowager said to me that Lantian jade has four good characteristics, namely harmony, gentleness, trueness, and firmness. There are also five virtues that show its beauty, namely benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, bravery, and purity. There are also six qualities namely, purity, transparency, silence, moisture, clarity, kindness, and fragrance."

As soon as these words were spoken, An Shou Hall was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

Everyone looked at Yu Youyao.

She had originally thought that a palace token was already very dignified. How could she have known that this palace token had four characteristics, five virtues, and six qualities? This was the Empress Dowager's praise for Yu Youyao and a warning to her.

It was also obvious how much the Empress Dowager valued Yu Youyao.

Old Madam Yu smiled and said, "I know that the Empress Dowager has a yellow and white Lantian Jade Buddha that's worshiped in the temple hall of the Longevity Palace."

Yang Shuwan secretly pinched her handkerchief, feeling a little upset.

The round stool was very hard. Her sprained ankle was also in unbearable pain when it was placed on the ground. Yu Jianjia couldn't sit still anymore and wanted to return to her courtyard immediately.

Yu Youyao was a little surprised herself. "Thank you for clearing my doubts, Old Madam."

Old Madam Cao nodded and looked at Yu Youyao with admiration. "Cleanliness and integrity. Yao Yao is kind-hearted. It's because her family has developed a strong character that she has such a demeanor." At this point, she sighed softly, her face filled with gentle apology. "Good child, you suffered at the flower festival yesterday."

"Old Madam, you flatter me." Yu Youyao bit her lip and looked at Old Madam Cao.

Old Madam Cao was of high seniority. After saying this, as a junior, she shouldn't be putting on airs.

Old Madam Cao turned to look at the maidservant standing behind her.

The maidservant was also smart and quickly handed a treasure box to her.

The top of the treasure box was filled with pearls and jade treasures. Seeing how dazzling they were, everyone couldn't help but guess how impressive the gift in this box was.

Old Madam Yu's eyes flickered as she looked down and twirled her prayer beads.

Old Madam Cao opened the box and took out a silk book. "Previously, our family received a silk book. The words on it were all in the ancient language of the Pre-Qin Dynasty, and no one in the family recognized them. However, there was an emblem on the head of the silk book, and it has some ties with your maternal family, the Xie family."

She gently unfolded the silk book. These pages looked old, but they had been preserved extremely well. The golden words on it had the shape of the oracle bone script and looked very obscure. There were also some drawings of ghosts and gods. At the end of the silk book, there was indeed the emblem of the Xie family. However, this emblem was different from the Xie family's. It seemed to be more complicated.

However, Yu Youyao knew that it should be the emblem of the Xie family.

This scroll was indeed an old item of the Xie family.

Yu Youyao's breathing tightened. Old Madam Cao had said that she had obtained it by chance a long time ago, but she might not be telling the truth. This silk book was an ancient artifact from the pre-Qin dynasty, so it must have been kept at home long ago.

Today, Old Madam Cao had indeed brought the silk letter to visit her with sincerity.

Seeing her serious expression, Old Madam Cao knew that she had achieved her goal. She placed the silk book into the treasure box and handed it to Yu Youyao. "I'll give this silk book to you today. It can be considered to have returned to its rightful owner."

"Thank you, Old Madam." Yu Youyao held it with both hands and turned to hand it to Chun Xiao.

Old Madam Cao watched the situation and glanced at the Marquis of Changxing's wife.

The Marquis of Changxing's wife was shocked and quickly smiled. "Good child, it was really hard on you yesterday. As an elder, I'm old but I'm inexperienced. Didn't I make a mistake? I'm so embarrassed and regretful. I'll swallow my words and apologize to you."

She had completely put down her status as an elder and really apologized.

Now, Yu Youyao admired the Marquis of Changxing's Residence.

As a junior, how could she be worthy? She quickly said, "Madam, you're being too serious. It was originally just a dispute between Seventh Miss Cao and me. Who knew that it would also cause a commotion at Madam's flower festival? I feel very apologetic."

If someone respected me, I would respect them tenfold. If someone respected someone, they would also respect them.

Whether or not the Marquis of Changxing's apology was sincere, as a junior, she naturally had to show some respect.

The Marquis of Changxing's wife heaved a sigh of relief. She immediately felt that even her clothes were drenched with sweat.

She smiled. "My Seventh Miss has been spoiled by me since she was young. I actually raised her to be so ignorant. I also brought her here today to apologize to Eldest Miss Yu." With that, she turned to look at Cao Yingxue, and even her voice became stern. "Come over quickly and apologize to Eldest Miss Yu."

Cao Yingxue quickly stood up from her chair and walked forward with small steps. She lowered her head and bowed deeply to Yu Youyao. Then, she said hoarsely, "Eldest Miss Yu, I'm sorry. It was my fault at the flower festival yesterday. Please forgive me."

Seventh Miss Cao lowered her head, so she couldn't see the expression on her face. She could only see a sharp chin that was smooth and jade-like.

Yu Youyao nodded. "Seventh Miss Cao, you're too polite."

Anything more was not necessary.

She did not say that she would forgive her, but on the surface, she considered it.

Chapter 294 Cousin Is Not Obedient

The atmosphere in the room immediately relaxed.

Old Madam Cao and Old Madam Yu chatted casually. Madam Yao, Yang Shuwan, and the Marquis of Changxing's wife joined in on the fun, while a few young misses listened in.

After chatting for about an hour, Old Madam Cao looked tired. "I'm old and my body is useless. I've lost half my life already."

Old Madam Yu agreed deeply. "Isn't that so? I really have to admit that I'm old."

Old Madam Cao naturally bade farewell. Old Madam Yu only said a few polite words and did not stay. She sent Madam Yao, Madam Yang, and a few younger ones out of the house.

The group got into the carriage and it drove out of the Yu Residence.

The Marquis of Changxing's wife lifted the curtain of the carriage and looked up at the red-painted door of the Yu Residence. She smiled and her expression immediately turned cold.

Due to the Empress Dowager's authority and the Old Madam's authority, she had also lost her face today and swallowed her words. Without even asking for face, she brought her daughter to the Yu Residence to apologize to Yu Youyao.

She really hated them!

The Flower Festival had turned into a joke. The one who had lost all face was the Marquis of Changxing's Residence. The one who had ruined their reputation and their future was also her

daughter. After being punished by the Empress Dowager, even the dignity and pride of the residence had been lost. It was still the Marquis of Changxing's Residence that was affected!

What did she, Yu Youyao, suffer?

Why did she have to swallow her pride and bring her daughter to apologize to her?

At the thought of her daughter, she remembered that she was about to be sent back to the Cao Clan. She had been pregnant for ten months and had risked her life to give birth to her. She had carefully raised her for many years before she had such a grown daughter!

Yu Youyao had not only gained fame, but also praise and rewards. She was very glorious.

However, this glory had stepped on the dignity of the Marquis of Changxing's Residence, her daughter's reputation and future, and her face.

After the carriage left the residence, the people from the Yu Residence returned to An Shou Hall.

Madam Yao and Yang Shuwan chatted with Old Madam for a while before leaving with their children.

Yu Youyao helped her grandmother into the house and helped her into her chambers. "Grandmother, you're tired. Rest well. I'll go back first."

Old Madam Yu nodded. "Go back quickly!"

When Yu Youyao returned to the Jade Courtyard, her cousin was sitting in the reception pavilion drinking tea.

Yu Youyao glared at him and walked over aggressively. "Cousin, you stayed up all night yesterday. Didn't I tell you to rest? Why are you still running around? You're not obedient at all!"

Zhou Linghuai put down his teacup and chuckled. "After breakfast, I heard that someone from the palace had come, so I came over to take a look." As he spoke, he looked at the palace token on the little girl's waist and rubbed the blue jade beads on his hand. "The residence is shaking. How can I sleep?"

Yu Youyao pouted. "Cousin, you have so many excuses."

Zhou Linghuai untied the beads one by one and played with them in his hand. The newly made incense beads had to be played with often to be useful. "The palace token is very beautiful and suits you."

With the palace token rewarded by the Empress Dowager, in the future, when the little girl went out, there would no longer be any ignorant people rushing to find trouble and make her suffer. Others would have to respect her when they saw her, and it would save a lot of trouble.

In this way, his goal was achieved.

Yu Youyao untied the palace token at her waist and played with it in her hand. "Cousin, why did the Empress Dowager receive the news so quickly?"

Zhou Linghuai smiled but said nothing.

Yu Youyao was a little puzzled. "Since the Marquis of Changxing's Residence was holding a flower festival, the palace will naturally pay some attention to it. However, outside the palace, there's a strict palace wall and countless palace doors. If a piece of news wants to reach the ears of the higher-ups, it has to pass through countless people's mouths. Therefore, a lot of the news will be gradually changed. More than half of the ten pieces of news would have disappeared. It's already not bad to leave three to four points."

At this point, she frowned and emphasized, "Not to mention that now, Imperial Consort Lu is in charge of the Phoenix Seal in the palace and is in charge of the harem. The Empress Dowager is deeply residing in the Longevity Palace and is no longer involved. When the news is sent to the palace, how can she surpass Imperial Consort Lu?"

It was also because the Empress Dowager had taken action before Imperial Consort Lu had received the news that the Marquis of Changxing's Residence was caught off guard.

Otherwise, if the news got through Imperial Consort Lu, the Empress Dowager would have nothing to do with it.

Yu Youyao looked at her cousin.

Zhou Linghuai tapped his fingers on the armrest and said nothing.

Yu Youyao continued, "The Marquis of Changxing's Residence isn't stupid. After such a thing happened at the Flower Festival, their first reaction wasn't to deal with it, but to cover up this matter first before thinking of a way to deal with it and resolve it. Every big family in the capital has to deal with it like this."

However, the Empress Dowager had announced the Marquis of Changxing's wife and Seventh Miss Cao's actions after entering the palace. It was obvious that what had happened at the Flower Festival had not escaped the Empress Dowager's notice at all.

This was ridiculous.

She knew just by looking at Old Madam Cao's swift and decisive methods today.

Even if the Flower Festival had happened a few hours later, Old Madam Cao would have made a move and gotten in touch with Imperial Consort Lu. Today, it would probably have been a different situation.

The Empress Dowager would notice her and perhaps have praises for her, but she would not specially send Aunt Shen to give her a palace token.

An apology from the Marquis of Changxing's Residence would still come, but the extent of the apology would be greatly reduced.

Wasn't this too strange?

He did not expect the little girl to be so sharp and think so deeply. Zhou Linghuai smiled. "I ordered someone to send the news to the palace."

Yu Youyao's eyes widened in shock. "Cousin, you, you..."

Zhou Linghuai did not say much and stroked her hair. "Remember, in the future, you'll be the one bullying others. There's no reason for you to be bullied, okay?"

Yu Youyao was in a daze. She only knew how to nod quickly.

After nodding, she had a complicated expression. Her cousin had sent the news to the palace for her, so she could obtain the Empress Dowager's praise and reward.

However, the methods that her cousin had revealed were definitely extraordinary.

The Yu Residence had also planted someone in the palace, but it was only an ordinary informant. Those who were more secretive might not be able to find out. The Zhou family was much inferior to the Yu Residence. The Zhou family was far away in Youzhou, so how could they have interfered in the Empress Dowager's palace?

Also, as soon as the matter at the Flower Festival blew up, Cousin knew about it. This also reflected that Cousin's spies had also infiltrated the Marquis of Changxing's Residence.

Her cousin seemed to be playing a very big game of chess.

Yu Youyao's heart skipped a beat, and she couldn't help but tremble in fear. She looked at her cousin with a complicated expression and opened her mouth to ask, but before she could say anything, she said, "Thank you, Cousin!"

There were some things she shouldn't say, let alone ask.

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Chapter 295 Secret of the Silk Book

The little girl stared at her toes, her eyelashes lowered and trembling slightly.

Zhou Linghuai stroked her hair again. Her soft hair made his palm itch. "What did the people from the Marquis of Changxing say when they visited just now?"

Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief and looked up. "She gave up her face to apologize without any hesitation. Old Madam Cao even told Grandmother about the past."

Old Madam Cao and her grandmother talked about the past. A polite person would talk about it. In this way, even if they did not have a relationship, they would still get to know each other.

Once people had a relationship, they had to show some consideration. Later on, no matter if it was an apology, as long as they showed sincerity, the Yu Residence would definitely accept it.

Therefore, Old Madam Cao was a smart person.

Zhou Linghuai was not surprised.

Yu Youyao recalled the silk book that Old Madam Cao had given her and quickly asked Chun Xiao to get it. "Cousin, the Marquis of Changxing's wife gave me a silk book. She said that she has some ties with the Xie family."

Zhou Linghuai was a little surprised. "The silk book has a pre-Qin text. At that time, most of the recorded words were made of skin and simple items. Silk weaving was a precious item, so the silk book wasn't widely used. Only some important documents were recorded in the silk book. In that case, this silk book should have a background. However..." he thought for a moment and said, "the

content of the silk book is unknown, or the content recorded isn't very important, so the Marquis of Changxing's Residence gave this to you."

Even so, it was a lot of effort for the Marquis of Changxing's Residence to give Yu Youyao a silk book.

Yu Youyao thought the same. "Since it's an item of my maternal family, I'll give it to Third Cousin when he returns to the capital."

Zhou Linghuai nodded.

At this moment, Chun Xiao came over with the silk book.

Yu Youyao opened the box and took out the silk book. She unfolded it bit by bit.

The words on it were all in oracle bone script. It was probably too old, and some of the words were a little blurry. Yu Youyao did not recognize a single word, so she looked at the pictures on it.

She was even more confused.

These paintings were all simple paintings drawn with thin lines. They were green, red, white, and black. However, Yu Youyao knew that there were not as many paints in the Pre-Qin Dynasty as there were now. Among them, green, red, white, and black were the most expensive.

She looked at it carefully and realized that the method of drawing was a little strange. The Great Zhou Dynasty did not have such things. It was as if there was a special totem drawing. Even if it was a simple structure, its expression was different and vivid. Most of the people were standing or lying down, running or jumping. All of them were lifelike, but they exuded a sense of solemnity. The work and detail of the brush were not pleasing at all.

Yu Youyao couldn't understand it, so she handed it to her cousin. "Cousin, help me take a look. I don't understand anything recorded in the silk book."

Zhou Linghuai was a little hesitant. "It's an old item of the Xie family after all..."

Before he could finish speaking, Yu Youyao understood what he meant. "Cousin, you're thinking too much. The Marquis of Changxing's Residence has obtained the silk book. Who knows how they'll interpret it? Although the silk book is in my hands, it's still an antique. It's impossible that the Marquis of Changxing's Residence hasn't copied it. Moreover, it's impossible that the really important things are in my hands."

Since it wasn't too important, there was no harm in taking a look.

Zhou Linghuai was indeed a little interested in the silk book. Hearing her reasoning, he did not decline and took it to read.

Seeing that her cousin was reading with interest, Yu Youyao suddenly realized. "Cousin, you can actually understand the contents of the silk book? You even know the oracle bone script?"

She had no idea that her words were very contradictory.

Zhou Linghuai laughed when he heard this. "I know a little."

Yu Youyao was speechless. Her cousin was still as humble as ever.

Zhou Linghuai was amused by her expression and asked, “You don’t know if I can understand the silk book. Why did you give it to me just now and ask me to help you take a look? It’s as if I’ll definitely recognize it.”

Only then did Yu Youyao react. She pouted. “I’m used to looking for Cousin if there’s anything I don’t understand, so I didn’t think that Cousin couldn’t understand it.”

She was probably certain that her cousin would understand.

After all, her cousin was so capable and knew so many things.

Zhou Linghuai smiled. “The content of this silk book is quite interesting. Come over, I’ll read it to you.”

“Cousin, what did the silk book say?” Yu Youyao smiled and sat down beside her cousin, leaning close to him with one hand supporting her head.

Zhou Linghuai looked down at her and pointed at the picture on it. “Strictly speaking, this isn’t considered an old item of the Xie Residence. It should have been recorded by the Xie Residence in the past. It records the myths, legends, and customs that have been circulated in the Chu Kingdom. It also includes aspects like yin and yang, the five elements, and Heaven’s Perception. There are also some astronomical phenomena, the Cataclysm, the four seasons, and climate and phenology in a lunar month. Although the silk book is small, it has rich and varied content.”

Yu Youyao listened with interest.

There were paintings of ghosts and gods on it. Every time her cousin read them, he would point at the pictures on the silk books and tell her those circulating ghost stories.

Her eyes lit up when she heard this. She did not expect her cousin to know some ghost stories in the Chu Kingdom.

As he read, Zhou Linghuai’s expression turned a little solemn, and his eyes were filled with surprise.

Yu Youyao quickly asked, “Cousin, what’s wrong?”

Zhou Linghuai stopped reading the silk book. He carefully rolled up the silk book and placed it in the box. “Have you heard of witchcraft?”

Yu Youyao nodded. “I only know that according to the books, there was a calamity of witchcraft in every dynasty. Every time, it involved a lot of people and blood flowed like a river. The Great Zhou Dynasty prohibited witchcraft. Once it was discovered, the person involved would be executed according to the law.”

Zhou Linghuai explained, “Evil spells are called witchcraft while blessings are praised by the Lord. Shamans are divided into good and evil. Those who are good are blessings, and those who are evil are witches. A curse is different from a blessing.”

Yu Youyao’s interest was piqued.

Zhou Linghuai continued, “It records the witchcraft culture of blessings, prosperity, rain, drought, disaster relief, long-distance illness, and so on. It includes benevolence, farming, astronomical

phenomena, military tactics, medical skills, and so on. However, in addition to the oracle bone script, there's also a large number of golden and hieroglyphic words mixed in. There are a few types of words that aren't big, and many of the informative words aren't clear."

The shaman culture was based on gods, ghosts, and humans.

Shape, posture, movements, rituals, taboos, and so on were just its appearance. There were first shamans in the world, and then there were Daoism and Confucianism. Both Daoism and Confucianism were affected by shaman culture.

The shaman culture was extremely practical.

The auspicious blessing included benevolence and merit. From there, one could obtain blessings from gods and ghosts. In good years, it also included farming times and seasons. In the calm wind and drought, there was a weather spell to predict the rain. The disaster relief soldiers were even more impressive. There were descriptions about strange armor and formations. New illnesses were cured by medical skills.

The Gu medicine inherited by the Xie Residence in Quanzhou was probably from this sect.

Chapter 296 Broke a Leg

This scroll was indeed related to the Xie family, but it was not an old item.

Yu Youyao's eyes widened. "Cousin, is this scroll that powerful?"

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "Yes, since the Han Dynasty, witchcraft has been banned, and related books have also become banned and burned in large quantities. If anyone who is a witch is discovered, they will be executed according to the law. The witchcraft culture is incomplete, so the Marquis of Changxing's Residence has obtained this silk book but has never discovered its secret."

No one knew sorcery.

!!

Yu Youyao opened her mouth. Her mind was not thinking about the value of this silk book, but about how amazing it was that he even knew sorcery!

Zhou Linghuai laughed when he heard this and shook his head. "I don't know anything about sorcery. It's just that when I was young, I was curious and secretly read a few injunction letters. Later, when Father found out, he broke my leg and it took me two to three months to recover. Therefore, I know more about witchcraft than others."

After saying that, he was a little annoyed that he had spoken too quickly. Why did he mention this?!

Yu Youyao's eyes widened and she couldn't help but mutter, "Uncle is too strict with Cousin. It's fine even if he just takes a look secretly and doesn't let others know. How can he be so ruthless as to break Cousin's leg?" At this point, she looked at her cousin with heartache and held his hand. "Cousin must have been in a lot of pain back then."

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "It's been too long. I don't remember much."

Yu Youyao pouted. If her uncle was still alive and found out that her cousin's leg was really broken, his heart would ache even more. He might even regret breaking his leg back then.

Zhou Linghuai changed the topic. "There are less than ten thousand words in this book, but every word contains a huge amount of information. The most important information is hidden in the painting. When I looked at it just now, I only caught a glimpse of one autumn leaf. It takes a lot of time to decipher it. It's not an easy thing."

Yu Youyao nodded, then frowned. "Since the silk book isn't considered an old item of the Xie Residence and it records the witchcraft culture, it's ultimately a disaster. It's not easy to send it to the Xie Residence. Cousin, you should keep it."

Her cousin looked very interested in the silk book. Besides, it would be more appropriate to leave it in his care.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "Alright, I'll find someone to interpret the silk book another day and copy the medical skills inside. When the time comes, you can send it back to the Xie family. It'll be considered fate between this silk book and the Xie family."

Yu Youyao felt that this was great. "Alright, I'll listen to Cousin."

Zhou Linghuai did not say anything else. Instead, he asked, "Have you read the 'Zizhi Tongjian' that I gave you yesterday? Is there anything you don't understand?"

Yu Youyao nodded. "I did. I've memorized everything I don't understand. I'll ask Cousin for guidance another day. Today..." She glared at her cousin, looking delicate and fierce. "Cousin, it's time to go back and rest."

Just now, she had unknowingly said a lot to her cousin, and she had almost forgotten about this.

"Okay!" If he did not rest, the little girl would really be angry.

Thinking that they were going to have lunch later, Yu Youyao quickly called out to Chun Xiao, "The medicinal cuisine brewed in the small kitchen should be almost ready now. Hurry up and bring it over."

Chun Xiao quickly agreed and turned to leave the room.

Yu Youyao turned to look at her cousin and quickly said, "Cousin, have some medicinal cuisine before you sleep!"

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "I'll listen to Cousin's arrangements."

Yu Jianjia sprained her ankle and asked a few old maids to carry her chair back to the courtyard.

The maidservants and old maids in the residence were in an uproar because of Aunt Shen's entry into the residence. All of them were so happy that they could not hide the joy on their faces.

"Aunt Shen, who was in front of the Empress Dowager, entered the residence and gave Eldest Miss a palace token. She even praised Eldest Miss for being clean, honest, and kind..."

"Is the palace token made of jade that's yellowish-green? There are titled madams and young misses in the imperial family who wear similar ones. In the

future, our Eldest Miss will be as dignified as the noble ladies of the imperial family.”

“Our Eldest Miss is really amazing. She’s only turned ten years old a few days ago, and this is the first time she’s gone out. She’s already earned herself a reputation and dignity. No one is luckier than her.”

“Isn’t that so? Eldest Miss is kind-hearted. Just like Old Madam, she’s like a Bodhisattva. Great blessing is still ahead.”

The maidservants did not do anything serious and gathered together to chat. When the stewards saw this, they did not say anything to stop them. They even gathered together to talk. As if they were proud, they felt that they were the ones who were rewarded and praised.

When Yu Jianjia returned to the courtyard, she heard that the servants in her courtyard were also talking about this. She bit her lip and said, “Big Sister has received the Empress Dowager’s reward and praise, but it’s not appropriate for her to talk about it openly. If others find out, they’ll think that our family is frivolous.” As she spoke, she frowned slightly. She felt that these words were a little inappropriate. If others heard them, they would think that she was jealous of Yu Youyao, so she added, “Go the small kitchen to make a few more dishes and add a few more to the servants in the courtyard.”

Hui Xiang was unwilling, but since Young Miss had instructed it, she agreed.

They were clearly sisters from the same family. They had gone to the Flower Festival together. How could Eldest Miss be the only one who had gained some dignity? Not only had she sprained her ankle, but she had also suffered and even been reprimanded by Eldest Master.

Really, Eldest Miss had taken all the good things.

All the bad things were tolerated by Young Miss.

After Hui Xiang left the house, Yu Jianjia leaned against the couch, feeling vexed. She couldn’t calm down for a moment. Even though Ai Ye had changed to a calming incense, she still felt uneasy.

Her mind was filled with what had happened at the flower festival yesterday, the scene of her father reprimanding her, and her grandmother looking down at her, making her heart turn cold.

Fortunately, after her father reprimanded her, her grandmother did not say anything.

Yu Jianjia also thought that this matter would end here, so she heaved a sigh of relief. Unexpectedly, not long after she returned to the courtyard, Nanny Liu came over.

Yu Jianjia was shocked and quickly got up.

Nanny Liu stopped her with a smile. “Third Miss sprained her ankle. Don’t get up quickly. Sit down.”

Although her attitude was gentle, Yu Jianjia also understood that Old Madam had not said anything in An Shou Hall just now. It was not that she did not intend to pursue the matter, but that she did not intend to pursue it in front of her father.

Her father had already punished her. If Old Madam punished her again, it was inevitable that her father would defend her a little.

Old Madam doted on Yu Youyao. Yu Youyao had suffered because of her, so how could Old Madam let her off?

Yu Jianjia lowered her head to hide the cold sarcasm in her eyes. She thanked Nanny Liu and asked gently, “Does Grandmother have any instructions?”

Nanny Liu said, “Old Madam said that Third Miss’s body is weak. The first time she left the house, she sprained her ankle and suffered. In the future, she has to recuperate carefully in the house. She can’t go out and cause trouble again.”

Chapter 297 Yu Youyao Is Not Worthy

When Yu Jianjia heard this, she couldn’t help but feel an itch in her throat. This was indirectly restricting her from walking outside anymore.

Nanny Liu handed her a copy of the Heart Sutra. “When Old Madam was young, she was very impetuous and couldn’t rest for a moment, so she went to the Precious Peace Temple to ask for a copy of the Heart Sutra. This Heart Sutra was from Old Madam’s previous book. Previously, Imperial Physician Hu had taken Third Miss’s pulse and instructed her about her illness. She had to calm down and rest to nourish her heart, qi, and mind. Only then could she revitalize her blood flow and heal her illness. Old Madam asked Third Miss to read more and copy the Heart Sutra. When her heart has calmed down, she would be free and calm, and all her illnesses would disappear.”

These words were like needles stabbing into her heart, and her vision darkened. Yu Jianjia sat there in a daze, not reacting for a moment.

Nanny Liu handed the Heart Sutra to her. “Third Miss, keep it. Old Madam is paying respects to Buddha. Once Third Miss has copied the Heart Sutra, send a copy to Old Madam’s house every now and then. Let Old Madam worship it in front of Buddha so that Third Miss can be safe.”

!!

Not only did she have to read and write it, but she also had to copy it and send it to An Shou Hall to be read.

Yu Jianjia’s eyes darkened and her arms trembled. She held the Heart Sutra with both hands and lowered her head. She said respectfully, “Grandmother is kind and remembers my health. I can’t repay her. I naturally have to remember Grandmother’s kindness and read and write the Heart Sutra seriously to reassure her.”

How was she concerned about her body?

It was obvious that he was dissatisfied with her words and actions at the flower festival, so she punished her to copy Buddhist scriptures.

However, because she had sprained her ankle at the flower festival yesterday and her body was weak, she had taken a detour and used her physical condition as a tool to show her “caring” heart. It was really disappointing.

Yu Jianjia thought of the palace token tied around Yu Youyao's waist. Her voice was soft, smooth, greasy, cold, and quiet. She enunciated each word clearly and hissed, "Cleanliness is good, and Yao Yao's heart is good..."

As soon as she finished speaking, she suddenly waved her sleeve—

Clang, bang, bang. The sound of cups, tea, plates, bowls, and so on fell onto the ground.

Yu Jianjia's gaze was cold as she stared at the mess on the ground. Her low voice sounded in her ear. "Yu Youyao, are you worthy?!"

Hui Xiang had returned after knocking on the servant's door. When she heard the commotion in the house, she was shocked. She quickly entered the house and saw that the things on the small table had fallen to the ground. "Young Miss, what's wrong?"

Yu Jianjia lowered her head and said in a gentle and hoarse voice, "I suddenly thought of the Heart Sutra that Grandmother sent over yesterday. I haven't read it today, and I accidentally knocked over the things on the table."

Hui Xiang hurriedly said, "Young Miss's body is still injured. She can also read the Heart Sutra later. How can she be in a hurry?"

However, she was blaming Old Madam in her heart. She knew that Young Miss's leg was still injured, but she still asked her to copy the Heart Sutra. Wasn't this torture?

She kept saying that it was for Eldest Miss's own good, but Eldest Miss used to be impetuous and couldn't even attend school at home. Why didn't Old Madam ask Eldest Miss to write Buddhist scriptures?

However, she was biased.

Yu Jianjia changed the topic. "Have the servants been warned?"

Hui Xiang pulled a long face and said, "I've just passed on Young Miss's message when the old maids from the north courtyard came over. They said that Eldest Miss had received a reward. Today, there were additional dishes in the residence, so everyone was happy for a day. Tomorrow, they'll put away their smugness and even ask the servants to go to the stewards to receive the reward money later. Everyone has it. The stewards and maidservants who performed decently will get two taels each. Even the servants in the stable can get 500 copper coins. The entire residence is overjoyed..."

However, no one remembered that Third Miss had sprained her ankle yesterday and her foot was in pain.

It was infuriating.

Yu Jianjia felt a lump in her throat again, and she couldn't even breathe.

"Young Miss..." Hui Xiang was shocked again. She quickly poured a cup of hot tea and took out the sachet at Young Miss's waist. She dropped a pill into it and dissolved it into hot water. She stirred the spoon and fed Young Miss some hot tea.

After finishing the cup of hot water, Yu Jianjia still felt uncomfortable and leaned against the couch to rest.

Hui Xiang knelt beside her and massaged the acupuncture points on her hand. "Young Miss, your illness has acted up a few times recently. Do you want to tell Madam and ask her to think of a way to invite Imperial Physician Hu into the residence to take a look?"

Imperial Physician Hu's medicine was excellent. If Young Miss was feeling unwell, she would recover after taking the medicine for a while.

However, this illness was getting more serious day by day, and it was also very worrying.

Yu Jianjia bit her lip lightly. After a while, she said, "Imperial Physician Hu can't enter the residence easily. He needs Father's help." At this point, she bit her lip lightly, looking aggrieved. "Father was angry with me yesterday. How can I use this matter to trouble him again? I'll wait a little longer."

Hui Xiang's heart ached for her young miss, but that was all she could do.

Yu Jianjia lowered her head and said softly, "Mother's head disease has acted up a few times. Fortunately, Doctor Ding's pulse reading is good and the prescribed medicine was effective. That's why she's better."

Hui Xiang lowered her head and said nothing.

Madam's heart ached for Young Miss. Seeing that Eldest Miss, the bereaved eldest daughter, had received the Empress Dowager's reward and praise, but Young Miss had sprained her ankle and suffered from Master's reprimand, she was unhappy. Only then did she return to the courtyard from An Shou Hall, shouting that she had a headache. Nanny Li did not ask her to tell Young Miss so that she would not worry.

Yu Jianjia looked down at her still swollen feet and said softly, "Grandmother is angry that Mother didn't protect Eldest Sister at the flower festival and caused her to suffer. Mother doesn't feel good either. Call Fourth Brother to my house later. I'll talk to him properly. He's not young anymore. He can't eat, drink, and play like before. It'll be too much for Mother."

Hui Xiang's heart ached. Even though Young Miss was injured, she was still thinking about her mother and younger brother. There was no one more kind and considerate than Young Miss.

How could Eldest Miss compare to her?

Why did she have to suffer?

There was really no justice!

For the entire day, the residence was filled with joy and smugness.

In the afternoon, Yu Zongzheng and Yu Zongshen left the government office and came to An Shou Hall to greet Old Madam Yu. They had to mention this matter.

Old Madam Yu happily explained everything that had happened since Aunt Shen had arrived at the residence. She also asked Qing Xiu to call her granddaughter over.

Yu Zongzheng looked at his eldest daughter, unable to hide the pride on his face. "Cleanliness is virtue. Yao Yao, you have to remember these words in the future so that you can live up to the Empress Dowager's good intentions."

This was both a praise and a warning.

The palace token made of Lantian jade had three sets of significance.

Four good characteristics namely harmony, gentleness, trueness, and firmness.

Five virtues namely benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, courage, and purity.

Six qualities included purity, transparency, silence, moisture, clarity, kindness, and fragrance

Chapter 298 Symbol of Identity

This was the Empress Dowager's appreciation of Yao Yao, and also her expectations.

From this, it could be seen that the Empress Dowager valued Yao Yao very much. Yu Zongzheng was also proud, so he had to give his daughter some advice.

Yu Youyao nodded. "Thank you for your guidance, Father. I'll remember it."

Yu Zongshen also smiled and said, "Yao Yao has received a reward from the Empress Dowager at a young age. Don't feel too pressured. It'll be fine as usual."

!!

Yu Youyao pursed her lips and smiled. "Second Uncle, I understand!"

After saying a few more words, Old Madam Yu mentioned Old Madam Cao and brought the Marquis of Changxing's wife and Seventh Miss Cao over to apologize.

Yu Youyao couldn't stay any longer, so she returned to the Jade Courtyard.

The next day, Yu Youyao went to school. At ten o'clock, Liu'er came over to report, "Young Miss, Third Miss Song of the Zhenguo Marquis Residence and Sixth Miss Qi of the Imperial Censor's family are here."

Yu Youyao quickly applied for leave from Ms. Ye and returned to the Jade Courtyard.

At this moment, Song Wanhui and Qi Sinian were chatting in the reception pavilion.

Seeing that Yu Youyao had returned, Qi Sinian quickly put down the pastry he had just picked up. "Quickly bring me the palace token that the Empress Dowager gave you yesterday. Let me take a look and broaden my horizons."

Song Wanhui also said, "If it weren't for the fact that it wasn't easy to visit yesterday, I would have come over early in the morning to take a look."

Yu Youyao was a little speechless. "So you didn't come to see me. I was happy for nothing. If I had known earlier, I wouldn't have come back so quickly. You should have waited longer."

With that, she turned around and instructed Chun Xiao to get the palace token.

Qi Sinian smiled when he heard this. He turned to look at Song Wanhui. "Hurry up and listen to this. This girl's acting is improving. She's already here, but we still have to wait."

Song Wanhui covered her mouth with her handkerchief and laughed. "Who asked her to be a dignified person with a palace token? The noble ladies in the imperial family are just like her."

The two of them teased together, making Yu Youyao feel so embarrassed.

She stomped her foot and said indignantly, "How can you be like this? You specially came here to find someone to be happy. If you continue like this, I won't let you see the palace token."

Qi Sinian and Song Wanhui couldn't help but laugh again.

Even after receiving the Empress Dowager's reward and praise, she was still the same as before.

At this moment, Xia Tao brought over a porcelain bowl.

The tender jade tofu was soaked in the yellow sugar water that had been poured with osmanthus honey. There were bits of osmanthus and almonds floating on it, and there was a refreshing fragrance.

Yu Youyao and the others' eyes lit up.

Xia Tao pursed her lips and chuckled. "The weather is hot today. Nanny Xu was busy in the kitchen early in the morning. She made osmanthus almond tofu and only took it out after placing it in the well."

There was an ice cellar at home, but Nanny Xu had said that Eldest Miss was still too young and couldn't be too greedy for cold food. She wouldn't be able to use ice until it were the dog days.

Qi Sinian couldn't wait to pick up a small spoon and scoop a mouthful of sugar water.

The cold sugar water was thick and sweet. It had the fragrance of osmanthus and a strong bean and almond fragrance. As soon as it entered her mouth, even her hair felt refreshed.

"It's really delicious." As she spoke, she couldn't help but glance at Yu Youyao and sigh. "There's no one more blessed than you. When Nanny Xu left the palace, my family also went to look for her, but she didn't agree to come to my house. My mother regretted it for a long time."

Previously, at Yu Youyao's birthday banquet, Nanny Xu had made chestnut mutton soup. She had used red beans, chestnuts, sweet potatoes, and so on to make different flavors. The taste was really indescribable.

Later on, Qi Sinian even asked Yu Youyao for a prescription and asked the kitchen maid at home to make it accordingly. However, the taste was not as good as Nanny Xu's.

"Isn't that so?" Song Wanhui put down the small bowl and pressed a handkerchief against the corner of her mouth. "Cao Yingxue made a fuss with you because of Nanny Xu. It's not unexpected."

Who wouldn't want such a powerful nanny?

Looking at Yu Youyao's demeanor, self-restraint, and bearing, anyone who looked at her couldn't help but feel a little jealous.

At the mention of Cao Yingxue, Qi Sinian also had a complicated expression. "Have you heard? Old Madam Cao is bringing Cao Yingxue back to the clan to pay respects to her ancestors."

Upon hearing this news, Yu Youyao couldn't help but be stunned. "Return to the clan?"

Song Wanhui sighed slightly. "I'm afraid it's only on the surface. It's true that she's sending Cao Yingxue back to the clan. However, Old Madam Cao has personally sent Cao Yingxue back to the clan. As long as Cao Yingxue behaves herself in the clan, it's not impossible for her to return to the capital in three to five years."

Large families were more strict with their daughters who had ruined their reputation.

Cao Yingxue's family was already not that bad to her.

Yu Youyao lowered her head and immediately felt a chill run down her spine. What she hadn't thought of before rushed into her mind.

What if she was the one whose reputation had been ruined in the Marquis of Changxing's Residence the day before yesterday?

It was true that her grandmother doted on her, but even if she was not criticized in the capital, she would still agree to send her back to the clan. Once she returned, as a bereaved eldest daughter, even if she had her grandmother's love, it would be too late. How could she have a good ending?

Perhaps the clan would take care of her more because of the 50% profit of her mother's dowry shop.

They would also treat her more kindly because of her maternal family.

However, the main branch, split branches, and side branches of the family were intertwined. There were also some small families that relied on the Yu Clan. From the outside, they looked harmonious, but the Yu Residence wanted their relatives to take the imperial examination and become an official. The resources in the family were limited. Every descendant who had passed the imperial examination needed a huge amount of resources from studying to becoming an official. There was also competition internally.

How could she have a good ending in such an environment?

Cao Yingxue was lucky. Her grandmother was an old noble with a fief, her father had a strong army, her mother was an imperial wife, and her sister was an imperial concubine. Even if she did whatever she wanted in the clan, no one dared to provoke her.

Yu Youyao smiled and changed the topic. "Osmanthus almond tofu is complicated and tiring to make, so Nanny Xu has only made it a second time. If you like it, copy the recipe later and bring it home to eat."

Qi Sinian and Song Wanhui quickly agreed and did not continue this topic.

At this moment, Chun Xiao came over with a treasure box containing the palace token.

Yu Youyao received the treasure box and took out a palace token. Qi Sinian and Song Wanhui quickly leaned over to take a look.

Song Wanhui sighed. “The Great Zhou Dynasty values Lantian jade, and Lantian jade is yellow and green. The Empress Dowager really treats you differently!”

Qi Sinian agreed deeply. “Jade is virtuous. The Empress Dowager praised you for being clean and honest. Yao Yao is kind-hearted and doesn’t show any weakness. It’s obvious that she really thinks highly of you.”

The two of them looked at the palace token and exclaimed repeatedly. They were not praising the palace token, but Yu Youyao.

At this moment, Yu Youyao also understood that the palace token bestowed by the Empress Dowager had become a symbol of her status. In the future, no matter where she went or who she met, when people saw this palace token, they would definitely praise how dignified it was.

...

Chapter 299 Asking for a Beating

In the end, they had to praise her for being clean and honest like the Empress Dowager.

At this moment, Yu Youyao finally understood what this palace token represented.

This was the glory that her cousin had schemed for her.

Qi Sinian held the palace token in his hand and looked at it carefully. She could tell that it was extraordinary. “The jade bead tassel under the palace token doesn’t seem to be made of Lantian jade.”

The craftsmen of the Internal Affairs Department had all been through thousands of refinements. This palace token was also beautiful, and the craftsmanship was obvious. If one did not take a closer look, they would not be able to tell the difference in the materials used.

At the very least, no one had noticed it before.

Yu Youyao and Song Wanhui quickly leaned closer to take a look.

Song Huiwan picked up a yellow and white jade bead and carefully observed its texture. “This yellow and white jade bead is an expensive Dushan Jade. Its texture is delicate and smooth. The luster on the bead is mottled and varied.”

Qi Sinian also said, “The dark green one is made of Biyu jade. It’s firm and warm, delicate and round, transparent and lacking in flaws. It’s also a rare and precious item.”

Yu Youyao looked at the last white jade bead. It was Hetian Jade.

The palace token was made of three colors: yellow, green, and white. There were Lantian Jade, Hetian Jade, Xiuyan Jade and Dushan Jade. When the four precious jade pieces were used together, the quality was also carefully selected, and the craftsmanship was even more exquisite.

Yesterday, everyone in the house was dazzled by the Lantian jade. No one really noticed the falling jade beads.

Song Wanhui was shocked. “It’s really beautiful!”

Yu Youyao glanced at her waist and she happened to be wearing a light white to pink hibiscus red jade pendant. This was the most precious and expensive piece of jade.

Then, she looked at Qi Sinian. She was wearing a dark green jade bracelet. It was also the rarest and most expensive color of jade.

The Great Zhou Dynasty especially praised the four precious jade pieces.

Other than the Lantian jade, which was often used by the imperial family, all the wealthy families liked to wear expensive jade. The eldest daughter of a wealthy family had to find good expensive jade the moment she was born and the family had to make expensive jade accessories for her. When the sisters were a little older, they were given jade to carry around with them to nourish their lives and health.

Therefore, other than being a reward from the Empress Dowager, there was nothing special about this palace token.

Qi Sinian noticed her gaze and pursed his lips. "How can what we're wearing be the same as the Empress Dowager's reward? But put away your eyes. You're really asking for a beating."

After being rewarded with the palace token, Yu Youyao put it away and asked Chun Xiao to put it back.

Yu Youyao changed the topic. "The peach blossom water in the cellar was ready a while ago. I made peach blossom face cream, lip gloss, and peach blossom dew. I wonder if you like it."

With that, she instructed Xia Tao to get it.

When Qi Sinian heard this, his interest was piqued. "What's bad about what you make? The sheep cream you gave me a while ago is excellent."

Song Wanhui also said, "The sheep cream is smooth and white. I think I've become a little fairer these past few days."

Yu Youyao chuckled. "The weather has been getting hotter recently. The texture of the sheep cream is a little thicker, and you'll feel oily after using it. The peach blossom face cream is more refreshing. After washing your face, you first massage it with peach blossom dew. Apply some lipstick around your eyes. Then, you apply the peach blossom face cream. Not only can it improve your complexion, but it can also whiten your skin."

At this moment, Chun Xiao brought something over.

In the glass bottle, there was a crystal clear peach blossom dew. It was pink and as beautiful as honey. The peach blossom paste was placed in a round porcelain box. It was pink and white, like jade paste. The texture of the lipstick was thicker and redder, like a ball of sparkling red pig fat.

As soon as the things were opened, a faint peach blossom fragrance filled the room.

Song Wanhui and Qi Sinian's eyes lit up.

What they usually used on their faces were also expensive goods bought from shops. They were not bad, but they were still a little inferior to what Yu Youyao had personally made.

After all, it was a secret recipe of the palace. How could it be different from ordinary ones?

Song Wanhui poured some peach blossom dew on the back of her hand. She wiped the oily dew on the back of her hand and spread it bit by bit. The places where the dew had been applied were thin and sparkling, not greasy at all.

She was amazed. "This is really good stuff. It's even more refreshing and smoother than the rose water that was sold for five taels of gold in the shop. It also smells good."

Qi Sinian also took some lip gloss and turned to ask Yu Youyao, "Isn't lip gloss used on the lips? Why do you have to apply lip gloss to your eyes?"

Yu Youyao did not say anything. She picked out a ball of lip fat with the tip of her little finger and leaned closer to Qi Sinian. She used the tip of her ring finger to circle her eyes a few times and apply the lip fat evenly.

When she was finished, she asked, "How do you feel?"

Qi Sinian blinked. "It seems to be much more moisturized. It's not as dry as before."

Yu Youyao explained, "This lipstick looks red and bright, but it doesn't have any color when applied. The texture is also thinner, and the eyes and lips are more tender. It's clearer and smoother when applied. When you go out, apply a layer of peach blossom fat before applying it. The lipstick will be more even, and the color will be brighter."

Upon hearing her words, Song Wanhui shouted that she wanted to give it a try.

Qi Sinian was also eager to try.

Yu Youyao brought them into the room and they washed their faces again. They used the peach blossom dew, peach blossom fat, and peach blossom face cream one by one. The two of them were indeed very satisfied.

The two of them pulled Yu Youyao to the pavilion and asked her for advice on her beauty and skin nourishment secret techniques.

Yu Youyao did not hide anything. She had given away a lot of things in her hands.

In the afternoon, when Qi Sinian and Song Wanhui left, their hands were filled with bags again.

The Marquis of Changxing's Residence put in a lot of effort to organize the flower festival, but it did not end quickly.

Seventh Miss Cao had ruined her reputation, and the Marquis of Changxing's wife had been reprimanded by the Empress Dowager. Old Madam Cao had personally gone to the Yu Residence to apologize, and the Marquis of Changxing's Residence had lost all its dignity.

Old Madam Cao rushed to bring Seventh Miss Cao back to the clan the day before the imperial examination.

This matter also came to an end.

After that, the most discussed topic in the capital was that although Eldest Miss Yu was a bereaved eldest daughter, she had grown up in front of Old Madam Yu and had been raised extremely well by her. Even the Empress Dowager praised her and specially rewarded her with a palace token made of Lantian jade.

Yu Youyao was also in the limelight in the capital.

However, after discussing her for two days, they stopped.

After more than half a year, the final palace examination finally arrived.

Just like the previous time, Yu Youyao helped Nanny Liu manage the place. Unknowingly, she had been busy for the entire day.

In the early morning of the 26th, Yu Shande and the others from the Yu Clan who were participating in the palace examination arrived.

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Old Madam Yu said solemnly, "I won't say anything else. I also hope that you can become famous on the Golden Ranking List and bring honor to your ancestors."

Yu Shande agreed respectfully.

After that, Yu Zongzheng told her about his previous palace examination and encouraged him.

Yu Zongshen only explained the rules of the palace examination.

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After chatting, the residence sent Yu Shande and the others to the palace gate.

The process of the palace examination was the same as the second examination in front of the hall. Yu Shande and the others had gone through it once, and this time, they were much calmer.

At dawn, the palace door opened and the candidates entered.

Due to the palace examination, classes at home were suspended for another three days. Yu Youyao did not have to go to school, so she took a sachet that was already half-embroidered and sat under the Parasol Tree to embroider it.

Nanny Xu instructed Chun Xiao, "If she does it for too long, it'll hurt her eyes. Keep an eye on her from the side. Every three minutes, make some tea for Eldest Miss. She can only continue embroidering after resting for ten minutes."

Chun Xiao quickly agreed. "Nanny, don't worry. I understand."

Yu Youyao embroidered for the entire morning. Her efficiency was also very gratifying. By lunchtime, the sachet was already more than half embroidered. She estimated that it would be done in two to three days at most.

Yu Youyao was very happy. She flipped the embroidery over and over again. The embroidery was smooth and tight, and the stitches were exquisite. Her skills were already comparable to others who had worked hard for three to five years. She was already very capable.

Chun Xiao handed her another cup of tea. "Young Miss, it's time for lunch."

Yu Youyao nodded and left the embroidery place.

She recalled that she had just given her cousin the wooden osmanthus incense bead bracelet two days ago. Her cousin wore it every day. After a few days, he also carried a trace of refreshing osmanthus fragrance.

The wooden osmanthus incense bead was mixed with agarwood, borneol, amber, and so on. Its scent was reserved and thicker, and it was suitable for men and women.

However, her cousin was a man after all. If he wore a sachet again, it wouldn't be suitable for him to smell like cosmetics.

After thinking for a while, Yu Youyao asked Chun Xiao, "How about changing the sachet to a pouch?"

Chun Xiao nodded. "Young Master also brought a pouch with him. If it's changed to a pouch, it can also be used to store some important items."

However, this way, the pouch would have to be embroidered a little bigger. The "scented bag" that she had promised her cousin would have to be delayed for a few more days. It seemed that she had to hurry up.

Yu Youyao stood up and stretched before returning to the house to eat.

Today, Nanny Xu had personally cooked partridge soup.

With white jade sea cucumber, *Dendrobium officinale*, *Cordyceps sinensis*, red dates and other medicinal ingredients, the soup could invigorate the qi, nourish the blood and moisten dryness, repair the spleen and stomach, and strengthen the muscles and bones.

This medicinal cuisine was suitable for all ages. It was very nourishing and suitable for all four seasons. Yu Youyao gave her grandmother and cousin a bowl each.

After lunch, Yu Youyao returned to the study. After practicing calligraphy for an hour to digest her food, she returned to her room to take an afternoon nap.

Another hour passed.

When she woke up, Chun Xiao came over to report, "Young Miss, all the little girls picked from the manor have been sent to the residence. Nanny Xu went over to take a look and asked me to ask if you want to go over and take a look."

Yu Youyao shook her head. "I'll take a look after Nanny Xu has chosen someone!"

If a maidservant in the residence made a mistake, she would be sent out of the residence. If she was old enough to be matched with someone, or if her contract expired and she took back her contract...

As a result, there were not enough people.

Every year, the residence would choose some young maidservants to enter the residence to fill the gaps.

Even if she went to pick someone, it wouldn't be safer than Nanny Xu.

Yu Youyao leaned against the chaise longue and read a few pages of *Zizhi Tongjian*. Nanny Xu led a few maidservants back to the Jade Courtyard and asked her to go over and take a look.

Yu Youyao put down her books and went to the courtyard.

The seven little girls stood in a row. The youngest was only eight or nine years old. This was the best way to teach them. After teaching them well, they would not lack rules and loyalty. When they were older, they would be more to their master's liking.

The oldest was twelve or thirteen years old. He was a little older, but he was more knowledgeable and sensible. With a little guidance, he was also a capable person.

All of them stood obediently. Other than the rules being a little lacking, there was nothing wrong.

Yu Youyao had an idea. Her voice was gentle. "Look up."

When the maidservants heard this, they quickly raised their heads. They had never seen such a dignified person. Unexpectedly, they were dazzled by Eldest Miss's noble aura and quickly lowered their eyes.

Yu Youyao took a closer look and her gaze landed on a girl who was about twelve or thirteen years old.

Her blue dress could not hide her beauty and revealed a portion of her jade neck. She was thin and slender, and her head was bent like a swan's.

She was really outstanding.

Nanny Xu was sitting beside Yu Youyao. When she saw Yu Youyao take a few more glances at the young girl, her eyes flashed and she said, "She's also a poor girl. She has three younger sisters in the family, and a younger brother who fell sick after falling into the water last winter. He fell sick and couldn't stop taking medicine. This girl is still young, but she's both the eldest sister and mother. She helped her parents and siblings. She couldn't survive anymore, so she signed a contract to sell herself and enter the residence."

When Yu Youyao heard this, she understood the crux of the matter.

She had a clean background and was also the eldest sister in the family. She had helped to raise her younger sister-in-law for many years, so she was responsible. If she was taught well, she would definitely be a capable person.

The youngest brother in the family had an illness. This illness could only be treated and not cured completely. How could the commoners afford to take medicine for a long time? However, they only had one younger brother in the family. Even if they had to sell everything, they had to support their unique roots and rely on their male heir.

With weaknesses, he was easier to control.

At the very least, there was no need to worry about loyalty.

Yu Youyao nodded and looked at the girl. "What's your name?"

The girl was shocked. She quickly lowered her head and replied softly, "I-I don't have a name. My parents at home call me Eldest Miss."

Although she was nervous, her words were clear, so Yu Youyao was a little more satisfied. "Since you've entered the Jade Courtyard, you'll be called Qin Xin from now on. Learn the rules from Nanny."

Qin Xin knelt on the ground with a thud. "Thank you for the name, Miss."

Yu Youyao looked at Qin Xin with a complicated expression. She was a little dispirited. "Get up. The rules in my courtyard aren't that strict as long as you do your job well."

Only then did Qin Xin stand up.

Nanny Xu's expression darkened and she said, "You still lack a second-in-charge maidservant, so I'll let Qin Xin serve you tea in the future. What do you think?"

Yu Youyao looked away and nodded. "We'll arrange it as Nanny said."

Nanny Xu picked three more maidservants. "There aren't enough maidservants in your house. I picked three. Eldest Miss, are you satisfied?"

These three maidservants were quiet and delicate, and they looked like they were well-behaved.

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Yu Youyao looked down at the name list. They were all eight or nine years old. She nodded. "Why wouldn't I be satisfied with the people Nanny chose? They'll do!"

Nanny Xu smiled and agreed.

Yu Youyao pointed at the girl on the left and gave her names one by one. "Qi Yu, Shu Yun, and Hua Yi."