

All Hail 51

Chapter 51: Won't Be Let Off Easily

Old Madam Yu, who had been watching from the side, couldn't help but smile to herself. After the incident, Yao Yao had learned to be smarter. She knew that a child who cried would get candy.

However, compared to Yu Jianjia, who always used the excuse of being sick to fool her father, Yao Yao had really suffered a grievance, and was much more pitiful.

Yu Youyao shook her head with tears in her eyes. "I've thought it through. The Yu family has been a scholarly family for generations. If the children in the family don't know how to read and write, they will definitely invite mockery and be looked down on by others. In the past, I was ignorant and did not understand your painstaking efforts. I've disappointed you. Father, don't worry, wait for me to make you proud." She pursed her lips slightly and looked sad. Then, she continued, "When my face recovers, I'll go to class to study. Father, don't be angry with me anymore."

Her words were really gracious, and she was already exuding the poise of the first young mistress of the residence. Yu Zongzheng nodded in agreement. "I'm very relieved that you think this way. In the future, you should learn as much as you can from Ms. Ye every morning, but you don't have to over-exert yourself. You can continue learning from Nanny Xu during the remaining time."

Just now, because of Old Madam Yu's lecture, Yu Zongzheng had felt a little pity and affection for Yu Youyao, but only now had he truly begun to approve of her.

Yu Youyao's eyes lit up. "Thank you, Father."

Yang Shuwan, who had been standing at the side waiting for Yu Zongzheng, was so angry that her face stiffened when she saw him behaving like a kind father towards Yu Youyao.

All these years, she had tried her best to make him distance himself from Yu Youyao, so that he would come to completely hate this eldest daughter of his. However, Yu Youyao had now managed to win his heart back by simply shedding a few tears?

This was not at all what she had planned!

Yu Zongzheng said a few more encouraging words to Yu Youyao before leaving the Jade Courtyard with Yang Shuwan.

As soon as they stepped out, Yu Zongzheng scoffed coldly. He flicked his sleeves and prepared to leave, as he had no intention of following Yang Shuwan to the Main Courtyard to visit Yu Jianjia.

Yang Shuwan was worried that he would go to the Clear Autumn Courtyard to be with Concubine He again. She panicked. "Master, where are you going? Jia Jia is still sick. You..."

Yu Zongzheng exploded with rage. "Yang Shuwan, you know very well whether Jia Jia is sick or not. Don't treat me like a fool."

Yang Shuwan said anxiously, "Master, I..."

Yu Zongzheng erupted in a fit of anger and interrupted her sternly, "I had originally thought that although you were the daughter of a concubine, the Yang family was well-educated, and you were well-versed in literature and calligraphy, so you would naturally be different from other concubine daughters. I have always treated you with great respect, but I didn't expect that I had misjudged

you. Look at your face, full of jealousy and schemes. How can you be the mistress of the household? Jia Jia is a good child. Don't you dare use her again in the future. If I find out, I won't let you off easily."

With that, he turned and left.

"Master!" Yang Shuwan shouted, but did not receive a response. She stomped her foot angrily, feeling uneasy and panicked.

This was the first time that Master had lost his temper at her and said such harsh words. It was obvious that he was enraged, and it would probably be difficult to continue fooling him like before.

Yang Shuwan was filled with worry. When she saw many maidservants craning their necks to look around, she was so incensed that her heart hurt. Her eyes darkened and she almost vomited out blood on the spot.

Where was her dignity as the mistress of the Yu Residence?!

As soon as Madam Yang left, the second-in-charge under Yu Youyao, Xia Tao, poked her head out from behind the wall and cleverly ran into Yu Youyao's room.

Old Madam Yu was getting on in years and couldn't afford to be vexed. After Yu Zongzheng left, she also asked Nanny Liu to help her back to the north courtyard.

Meanwhile, Yu Youyao was busy eating cake. Ever since Nanny Xu arrived, she had been controlling Yu Youyao's meals, making sure she ate more meals but in smaller portions. She also did not allow Yu Youyao to eat too many sweets. However, it was rare that Yu Youyao was not being disciplined today. Nanny Xu had even personally gone to the kitchen to make a few lovely snacks for Yu Youyao to eat freely.

As she ate heartily, the sadness in her heart faded completely.

Xia Tao said with glee, "Madam Yang was given a good scolding by Master."

After saying that, she imitated Yu Zongzheng's tone and speech, having memorized every word that he had said to Madam Yang and reenacting it perfectly.

When Yu Youyao heard this, she almost spat the pastry in her mouth all over Xia Tao's face.

Xia Tao was quick to pour a glass of water for Yu Youyao as she gloated, "There were many servants nearby who also witnessed it. Madam Yang was so angry that her face turned crooked and she was really humiliated. Let's see how she'll be able to continue acting like the mistress of the household."

Yu Youyao drank her water slowly. First, her father had been reprimanded by her grandmother, so he was already suppressing a stomach of anger. Then, he had been embarrassed in front of her grandmother, so he had to hold back his anger once again. As the head of the family, how could he let a woman from the household fool him like that? How could he maintain his pride and dignity?

All the anger he had within him was unleashed at once, so of course it was impossible to block or deflect it.

Earlier, her father admitted that he had been wrong to hit her, but he did not actually think that he was really at fault.

She had deliberately cried in front of her father to let him know that she had really suffered. The sadder and more aggrieved she looked, and the harder she cried, the more guilty her father would feel, causing him to feel more dissatisfaction with Yang Shuwan, the real culprit.

The tears she shed were equivalent to precious fodder.

Her father's unhappiness with Yang Shuwan would increase from 70 percent to a hundred percent, so it would no longer be easy for the woman to deceive her father as she usually did.

She had even suggested that her grandmother set stricter rules and standards for Yang Shuwan too, so that the woman could be properly and openly disciplined.

She would be so busy all day keeping to the rules set by Grandmother, that she wouldn't have the time or energy to think about how to coax Father or dispel his dissatisfaction and mistrust towards her.

Once cracks appeared and weren't mended immediately, they would cause deeper and wider fractures, making it very difficult to be restored to its original condition.

Yu Youyao had planned carefully, step by step. It seemed that Yang Shuwan, who always made her suffer in the past, and Yu Jianjia, who often made her suffer in silence, weren't that difficult to deal with after all.

Xia Tao was unaware of these thoughts in Yu Youyao's mind, and was still chattering away, saying, "This time, Master was really angry. I reckon that even Third Miss has been implicated in his wrath. Madam Yang kept repeating that Third Miss was sick, but Master ignored her and went straight to the study, even though it's an even date today."

Yu Youyao smiled and said, "Father won't really be angry with Third Sister."

It wasn't easy to invite Imperial Physician Hu over to check on Yu Jianjia's health condition, so how could it be said that their father didn't care about her?

Her father truly doted on both Yu Jianjia and Yu Qingning. He wouldn't think that they were in the wrong just because of a few words from others.

He was merely angry at Yang Shuwan.

He most likely thought that Yang Shuwan was using Yu Jianjia to fool him.

Xia Tao was a little disappointed.

Yu Youyao gently rubbed the sachet in her hand. She had just started learning embroidery, so the needlework wasn't too fine, and the texture was a little rough. She wondered if her cousin would mind.

Seeing that it was dark outside, she felt a little regretful. She had originally planned to send the sachet to her cousin today, but she hadn't expected so many things to happen so suddenly.

She had no choice but to wait until tomorrow!

She hoped her cousin wouldn't be angry that she'd kept him waiting.

Chapter 52: A Scheming Person

Yang Shuwan suppressed her anger and brought Imperial Physician Hu back to the Main Courtyard.

Although she was angry and frustrated, it was very rare that Imperial Physician Hu was visiting. Of course, she couldn't miss this opportunity. She had to let him Hu take a good look at Jia Jia's health condition.

Imperial Physician Hu entered the inner room with Yang Shuwan.

In front of Yu Jianjia's bed, the sheer, light gray curtain had already been lowered. Yu Jianjia leaned against the pillow, looking very weak. Her fair hand reached out from behind the curtain, revealing only a thin wrist.

Yang Shuwan said politely, "Imperial Physician Hu, please take a look. How is she?"

He said, "Before I came over, Lord Yu had already informed me that she was born prematurely and weak, with some congenital defects, causing her to be sick often."

It wasn't the time for Yang Shuwan to be concerned about keeping Yu Jianjia's heart disease a secret, so she quickly said, "She often suffers from heart palpitations. She's been managing it with medicine all these years, so she's generally fine. It's just that she's usually treated by an ordinary doctor. Of course, his medical skills can't compare to yours; you often work in the palace and it isn't easy to get a consultation with you. Please help her as much as possible."

Imperial Physician Hu said politely, "Madam, you're too polite. Since I've entered your residence today, I'll naturally do my best."

As he spoke, he reached out and started taking Yu Jianjia's pulse.

Yang Shuwan did not dare to disturb him, so she turned around and left the inner room. Then, she called Nanny Li over. "Gather all the maidservants and old maids who were in the area around Jade Courtyard earlier. Warn them sternly and tell them to watch their mouths, making sure not to gossip unnecessarily. Also, give each of them two taels of silver."

Nanny Li left to carry out her orders.

Yang Shuwan also sent someone to find out if Yu Zongzheng had gone to Clear Autumn Courtyard. Then, she returned to the inner room, where Imperial Physician Hu had already finished the health check and was led to the outer room by Hui Xiang.

Yang Shuwan ordered someone to serve tea. After Imperial Physician Hu took a sip and placed the teacup down, she asked anxiously, "Can my daughter's illness be cured completely?"

It was true that she was born with a congenital deficiency, but premature birth might not necessarily be the case. Imperial Physician Hu pondered for a moment before saying, "She was indeed born with a congenital deficiency. All these years, I believe your family has also used a lot of good medicine to treat her."

Yang Shuwan nodded. "We've hired many famous physicians in the capital and tried all kinds of prescriptions. We've also used expensive tonics like ginseng. She was doing fine before, but for some reason, in the past two months, she has had four to five bouts of illnesses, both serious and minor."

Imperial Physician Hu understood and said, "Her illness can be nursed with good medicinal herbs. Although it can't be cured completely, it's not a critical matter. However," his tone changed and stroked his goatee, "Did she have a very serious case of sickness recently?"

Yang Shuwan suddenly felt a surge of anger in her heart. "Last month, Jia Jia accidentally slipped and fell. It gave her a shock and she had a high fever that night, which lasted for two days and two nights." At this point, she gritted her teeth so hard that they almost cracked. "She almost lost her life."

At first, Jia Jia had only had a low fever. She wanted to call a doctor, but Jia Jia had stopped her, saying that they should invite one later.

At first, she did not agree. However, when she thought about how Master was about to leave the office, and how Jia Jia had suffered because of Yu Youyao, she felt that she had to let him, as their father, know about it. So, she listened to Jia Jia and got the maidservant to wait on her attentively while she went to take care of other matters.

Others might not know about her daughter's health, but as her mother, how could she not know it well?

She usually had a low fever, but would usually be fine after drinking a bowl of medicinal soup.

Unexpectedly, when it was late at night and Master was still in the government office, Hui Xiang came over to report that Jia Jia was having a high fever. Only then did she panic and quickly sent someone to get a doctor.

But it was too late.

The doctor said that Jia Jia had caught the flu because the weather was cold and she had not worn enough. Furthermore, the harsh winds had caused her to catch a cold. Due to Madam Yang's lapse in hiring a doctor in time, Jia Jia's symptoms had worsened and triggered a high fever.

She was filled with regret, but she did not think that it was her own blunder. She felt that all of this was caused by Yu Youyao.

Hence, she used money to change the doctor's words, such that he would only say that Jia Jia had fallen and due to the shock, she had developed a high fever.

Which had caused Old Madam to be furious and punished Yu Youyao to kneel in the Temple Hall.

When Master returned from work the next day, Yu Youyao was also having a high fever. Her situation was even more critical than Jia Jia's, so he wasn't able to flare up no matter how angry he was.

In the end, this matter was left just like that.

Therefore, Yang Shuwan hated Yu Youyao even more now. "It was also after this serious case of sickness that Jia Jia's health had begun to deteriorate again."

Imperial Physician Hu did not respond. Although Third Miss Yu's body was a little weak, she had been recuperating well. There was nothing life-threatening. Even if she had fallen and been shocked, she would not have developed such a high fever from it, to the point of almost losing her life. There had to be more to it.

It was inevitable for a prominent family to be secretive. He also knew that there were things he shouldn't probe about, so he did not ask a single question further. "That's right. She had been recuperating well in the past, but this bout of sickness had greatly damaged her vitality. After recuperating for more than ten years, the fruits of her labor were destroyed in one day, and she has

to start recovering from scratch again. However, she's older now, so it's naturally not as easy to heal as when she was young."

At this point, he suddenly stopped talking. For a moment, he looked troubled, as if he had something he couldn't say.

Yang Shuwan did not notice his hesitation. When she heard this, her heart burned with frenzy. "Then what should we do?"

Imperial Physician Hu hesitated for a long time, but in the end, he only said, "I'll prescribe a set of medicine for Third Miss to take. In the future, she has to take care to recuperate well. This illness is extremely troublesome. She cannot think or worry too much, and has to relax to replenish her blood and vital energy. Otherwise, she won't be able to recover no matter what."

A doctor with brilliant medical skills could easily perceive the patient's temperament with accuracy.

Joy, anger, worry, and all sorts of emotions would be reflected in one's body. Looking at Third Miss Yu's condition, he could tell that she wasn't a simple person, but was someone capable of scheming and playing tricks.

When she was young, she was still able to rest and recuperate well. However, now that she was older, she had not been managing her illness well. This time, her foundation was completely destroyed, and it might even affect her offspring in the future.

For a young lady, this was an extremely serious issue. That was why he had hesitated to say it.

After careful deliberation, he eventually decided not to bring it up.

After all, this was only a one-time house call, and he had only come over because it was a request from his colleague.

In the future, he wouldn't be in charge of Third Miss Yu's illness either, so he would just do his best to prescribe the most effective medicine for Third Miss Yu, instead of saying too much and inviting trouble for himself.

He wrote down the prescription. Before he left, he repeatedly instructed, "Although medicine is important, recuperation is fundamental. Remember to relax and calm your heart to increase blood flow. Only then can you recover well from your illness."

As long as Third Miss Yu listened to him and took his prescription, after recuperating for three to five years, there would still be hope for her. It would be a little more difficult to have children, but it wouldn't be impossible.

However, if she did not heed his advice, infertility would be considered a light consequence, while the heavier consequence would be a shortened lifespan or even the loss of her life.

Yang Shuwan nodded repeatedly and ordered someone to hand him the silver and a few very expensive medicinal herbs. She politely saw him out of the courtyard, where she saw Chun Xiao waiting at the entrance.

Chapter 53: Big Cousin's Showtime

Chun Xiao stepped forward and bowed to Madam Yang. Then, she said, "Imperial Physician Hu, it's a rare opportunity that you're here. Eldest Miss has ordered me to come over and trouble you to head to the Green House to take a look at Young Master."

Upon hearing this, Yang Shuwan knew that she had been thoughtless. She quickly said, "Imperial Physician Hu, I'll have to trouble you to make another trip."

Compared to the Old Madam and Yu Jianjia, there was a real patient in the Yu Residence. Since Imperial Physician Hu was here, he naturally had to make a trip to the Green House.

Since he was already here, of course he had to show generosity and graciousness. He nodded. "Of course."

And so, Chun Xiao led him there.

At this moment, the sky was already dark, and there were lights everywhere in the residence. The door of the Green House was locked. Chun Xiao went forward and knocked on the door. After a while, the old maid opened the door and stuck her head out. She immediately smiled. "Miss Chun Xiao, it's so late. Is there something wrong?"

Chun Xiao said politely, "The residence has hired an excellent imperial physician. Eldest Miss has asked me to bring him here for Young Master to take a look at his health condition."

The servant boy quickly ran in to inform them, while the old maid hurriedly opened the door and respectfully invited them in, then led them into the courtyard.

Zhou Linghuai was painting in the study while Chang An was serving him. Chang An turned to look at the table not far away. There were a few simple dishes and a plate of tonics which had not been touched at all. He couldn't help but turn to look at his young master, who was engrossed in writing.

The words flowed with such bold and forceful strokes, exuding a powerful and strong aura. At a glance, the words instantly resembled swords, looking so sharp and aggressive that it was intimidating.

Chang An shook his head and sighed. He didn't know who had provoked his young master, whose personality had also become more and more unpredictable recently.

"Knock, knock, knock—" There was someone at the door. "Eldest Miss has sent Miss Chun Xiao over with an imperial physician."

Chang An turned to look at his young master. At some point, the young master, who had been waving his brush, had stopped. He had even thrown aside the large brush he had been holding. It seemed that he did not intend to continue writing. Chang An felt a little puzzled, but still said, "Quickly invite Miss Chun Xiao and the imperial physician in."

With that, the servant boy went quickly.

Chang An walked to the desk. Before he could even speak, he heard Zhou Linghuai say calmly, "I heard it."

Chang An was stunned for a moment. He took a closer look at his young master and saw that his young master's expression was as usual, no different from before. However, his dark eyebrows were thick and long, revealing a calm and relaxed disposition.

While Chang An was still in a confused state, Zhou Linghuai had already wheeled out of the study and gone straight to the hall.

Chun Xiao and Imperial Physician Hu were both waiting in the hall.

Seeing Zhou Linghuai approach, Chun Xiao stepped forward to greet him and explained the reason for their visit. “This is Imperial Physician Hu from the palace. He’s a divine doctor, and is extremely skilled.”

Zhou Linghuai’s pale lips slowed a slight smile as he stretched his wrist out. “Thank you, Imperial Physician Hu.”

Imperial Physician Hu had already heard a little about this young master who had come to seek refuge as a relative of the Yu family. He’d known that his legs were a little weak, but he had not expected him to be in a wheelchair, so he couldn’t help looking up and down a few times.

He saw that although Zhou Linghuai was still young, he was already an outstandingly handsome and sophisticated man, exuding a noble aura beyond compare with ordinary folks. He couldn’t help but feel impressed, yet also feel pity.

A moment later, he composed himself and stroked his long beard as he checked Zhou Linghuai’s pulse. After a while, he said, “Young Master Zhou, your tongue is light red in color, and your pulse is thin and weak. Your blood flow and circulation aren’t smooth. Eldest Miss has informed the maidservant that in the past, you fell off a horse and it even stepped on you. That must have caused you to injure your spinal cord, which damaged your core and your vitality. I’m afraid I don’t have any treatments for this either.”

As he spoke, he shook his head and looked helpless. It seemed clear from Young Master Zhou’s body that he would pass away at a young age.

Zhou Linghuai nodded and said nothing.

Seeing his indifferent attitude, Imperial Physician Hu could guess that all these years, Young Master Zhou had probably already sought a lot of doctors, but had always been told the same words as what he’d just heard, so he was no longer affected much by it.

Therefore, he had a whole new level of respect for this young master. Most people would definitely be dispirited if they were to find out that they had become disabled. However, Zhou Linghuai looked calm and indifferent, and he smelled vaguely of ink, so it was obvious that he was still an industrious person.

After having considered for a moment, he felt that he had to try harder to help him. “Young Master Zhou, you need to nurse your core energy to treat your condition. I have a secret medicinal formula for nourishing it. You can give it a try.”

This secret formula had been passed down from the previous dynasty and was stored in the library of the Imperial Academy of Medicine. His discovery of it had actually been by chance, as the medicinal herbs needed were not only rare, but many also contained extremely poisonous parts. For example, one of the medicinal herbs required the feces of a certain bug. The nobles in the palace were all particular about not using such filthy ingredients. Hence, usually if such ingredients were needed for a medicine, he would think of means and ways to replace them with other medicinal herbs.

It also contained some highly poisonous properties, which could result in death if not handled carefully.

Therefore, no matter how good or effective a prescription was, he never dared to prescribe it to the nobles, nor did he dare to let them know about it.

He was willing to let Zhou Linghuai use it, not only because he felt some pity for him, but also because he wanted to know how effective this prescription actually was.

If this trial was successful, he could also use it with more assurance in the future. Perhaps he could even use it to gain recognition in the palace.

On the other hand, even if it failed, it wouldn't have much to do with him.

Zhou Linghuai did not know that the doctor was having such thoughts, so he simply thanked him. "Thank you, Imperial Physician Hu."

Imperial Physician Hu nodded. He sat at the table and wrote down two prescriptions. One was the secret formula, while the other was a prescription for strengthening the core and nourishing the blood.

After that, he gave a few more pieces of advice and instructions.

Before Chang An could pay the doctor, Chun Xiao handed over an exquisite snuff bottle. Imperial Physician Hu was about to politely decline when he saw the craftsmanship of the bottle, which he had only seen owned by the sages in the palace. His eyes immediately widened. He gasped inwardly at Eldest Miss Yu's generosity and said a few courteous words before accepting it.

After sending off the imperial physician, Chun Xiao immediately returned to the Green House and said, "I won't disturb Young Master's rest. I'll take my leave."

Zhou Linghuai nodded but suddenly asked, "Is Cousin not feeling well?"

He knew about Imperial Physician Hu. He was the palace's Imperial Physician, and his medical skills did not lose to Uncle Sun's. Most folks would not be able to invite him over. Something must have happened for Imperial Physician Hu to be invited over so late at night.

Something flashed across Chun Xiao's eyes and she said, "No, it's just that Third Miss had suddenly fainted. Master used his badge to invite Imperial Physician Hu to the residence, so of course Young Master had to get a visit from the doctor as well."

Zhou Linghuai nodded, then asked Chang An to send Chun Xiao off.

As soon as Chang An left, Zhou Linghuai's expression turned grave and he shouted, "Yin San!"

There was a rustling sound from a big tree in the courtyard. A black shadow suddenly appeared in front of Zhou Linghuai. "Young Master, what are your orders?"

Chapter 54: Shot in the Foot

Zhou Linghuai said in a low voice, "Tell me in detail about everything that happened in the Yu Residence today."

Since he was staying with the Yu family, he had naturally assigned someone to keep an eye on everything that was happening in the Yu Residence.

As Yin San recounted the events, his voice revealed no emotion, and Zhou Linghuai's expression remained indifferent too. His hands rested on the armrests, and his fingers tapped occasionally as he listened, until the thread of conversation suddenly took a turn. "... In the afternoon, Eldest Master

Yu returned to the residence. He first went to the Main Courtyard, then angrily marched to the Jade Courtyard...”

Zhou Linghuai’s tapping fingers suddenly paused.

“... Old Master Yu slapped Eldest Miss Yu in a fit of anger, alarming Old Madam Yu...” Yin San could sense the rise in Young Master’s emotions, and his tone became more cautious. He explained everything about Yu Youyao without missing a single detail.

After everything was recounted, Zhou Linghuai said, “Okay.”

In a flash, Yin San’s figure disappeared, and the only trace of his movement was a few falling leaves from the big tree in the courtyard.

Zhou Linghuai pursed his lips. After being hit by her father and suffering such a grievance, she still remembered to ask the maidservant to bring Imperial Physician Hu over to treat him, although the sachet she had promised him was still nowhere in sight.

“Young Master, where did you get this medicinal formula?” Suddenly, Uncle Sun’s excited voice came from behind.

Zhou Linghuai turned around in his wheelchair and saw Uncle Sun’s hunched figure walking over quickly. “Is this the Xie family’s secret recipe? This is an extremely rare recipe for cultivation of the core spirit and vitality. No wonder it’s been so effective for Young Master.”

Zhou Linghuai frowned. “Show me the prescription.”

Uncle Sun took a deep breath and handed it over.

The more Zhou Linghuai looked at it, the worse his expression became. In the end, his entire face turned pale and he couldn’t help but wonder if this was the medicinal cuisine he usually ate.

Even an ordinary doctor could tell the value of this secret formula. It was impossible that Imperial Physician Hu didn’t know as well.

Imperial Physician Hu was usually very cautious, and was very conservative when it came to diagnosing patients. He almost always hid some powerful treatments and did not reveal them to others easily.

Although Imperial Physician Hu and Yu Zongzheng knew each other personally, they were colleagues at most. Furthermore, they were neither relatives nor friends. It was impossible for him to give such a precious prescription to him so easily.

Could it be that Yu Youyao had actually asked Imperial Physician Hu to write this prescription for him?

After all, even Uncle Sun believed that this recipe was most likely the medicinal cuisine he had been eating recently.

The more he thought about it, the more likely it seemed. Zhou Linghuai’s expression turned complex.

Seeing that the young master had finished reading the prescription, Uncle Sun hurriedly retrieved it and, as if talking about a precious treasure, said, “Of course! The young cicadas that have lived

deep under the Agarwood tree for twelve years, sucking on the sap of the tree—amazing! Why hadn't I thought of this? Agarwood is a type of tree with extremely precious medicinal properties. Many medicine formulas use Agarwood as well. Young cicadas suck on the sap of the tree for years as they wait to break out of the soil. Hence, the medicinal properties would have accumulated in their bodies over twelve years, and would have even been enhanced further within them."

Zhou Linghuai said nothing.

Uncle Sun continued, "And this Five-Miracle herb, is it the feces of a creature? Oh, that's right, it looks like congealed fat and contains the spiritual energy of the five elements. That's how its name had come about..."

Zhou Linghuai couldn't stand it anymore. With a somber expression, he turned his wheelchair and returned to the study.

This type of creature was also known as the orange mole. It was often used as an extremely expensive ingredient for Chinese medicine, but at the thought of its feces being used instead, he wished that he had not seen the formula instead.

When Chun Xiao returned to the Jade Courtyard, she told Yu Youyao about Imperial Physician Hu's diagnosis. "Young Master Hu's spinal cord was injured, and his foundation was damaged. Imperial Physician Hu said that there was no way to treat him, so he could only prescribe a formula for Young Master to nourish his vitality."

After saying that, she repeated everything that Imperial Physician Hu had said, without leaving out a single word.

Yu Youyao was a little disappointed, but when she thought about how her cousin had already come to terms with it, she decided that there was no need for her to take it to heart. Recently, she had been learning medicinal cuisine from Nanny Xu. There were many medicinal dishes from the inner palace that could nourish one's vitality. Her spiritual dew also worked wonders for nourishing the body, and her grandmother's health had improved a lot recently. From now on, she would continue to send medicinal cuisine that contained her spiritual dew to her cousin every day, and it would probably be beneficial to his health.

Meanwhile, Madam Yang had returned to the Main Courtyard.

The curtains had already been put away. Yu Jianjia was leaning slightly against the head of the bed. Her face looked pale and drained of any color, while her beautiful eyes were misty. There was a hint of red between her light-pink lips, revealing a soft beautiful look.

Yang Shuwan sat on the edge of the bed and held Yu Jianjia's hand. Seeing that she looked haggard and defeated, Yu Jianjia's heart dropped. "Mother, what happened with Father..."

When Yang Shuwan recalled what Imperial Physician Hu had said, she did not dare to say anything that might agitate her. "Imperial Physician Hu said that your vitality was damaged when you fell seriously ill previously. You need to relax and nourish your body, so that you can overcome your illness. I've been married to your father for many years, so naturally, I know how to handle him. After a few days, when your father's anger has subsided a little, I'll coax him a little more. He'll definitely be appeased."

Yu Jianjia had already guessed that her grandmother was probably completely furious. Her father was also furious this time and would not be coaxed so easily. However, when she thought of her mother's usual ways of dealing with her father, she felt a little more at ease.

Hence, she bit her lower lip lightly and nodded in agreement.

After leaving the inner room, Yang Shuwan turned around and instructed Hui Xiang, "From now on, don't mention any matters of the residence unnecessarily in front of Third Miss."

Hui Xiang quickly nodded.

Only then did Yang Shuwan feel relieved and returned to the main courtyard.

At this moment, Mu Jin came over to report, "Master has gone to the study in the front courtyard. He did not go to the Clear Autumn Courtyard."

Yang Shuwan heaved a sigh of relief. Regardless of everything else, she and Jia Jia had achieved their goal.

As long as Yu Zongzheng did not go to stay at Concubine He's place, he didn't break the rules and her dignity as the first wife was preserved. As for Master's dissatisfaction and anger, she always found a solution somehow.

But she had no idea—

Yu Zongzheng had returned to the front courtyard angrily, planning to rest in the study.

However, Concubine He was someone who knew how to please men. How could she not know that Master had a fire burning within him? Furthermore, he had yet to have dinner. Hence, she ordered someone to cook a pot of bird's nest soup and secretly brought it to the front courtyard alone.

When Yu Zongzheng saw how thoughtful Concubine He was, he immediately removed her clothes and pressed her against the desk.

The two of them were being too loud, which caused the servants in the front yard to have flushed faces and knew to avoid disturbing them. Judging from the situation, it was likely to last through most of the night, so the old maids very sensibly headed to the kitchen to boil a few huge pots of water.

In the past, such a matter would definitely have been discovered by Yang Shuwan. However, after today's ordeal, she was both mentally and physically exhausted.

She returned to the house in a daze, then suddenly realized that she hadn't even had dinner. She was so hungry that body ached and her stomach hurt.

She had been unhappy to see Yu Youyao riding on the crest of success recently and that everything had been going smoothly for the girl. She had wanted to use Master to teach Yu Youyao a lesson in order to expunge her arrogance. Unexpectedly, in the end, she had shot herself in the foot, and had to swallow all of the bitter consequences herself.

It really made her feel sick.

Yang Shuwan's stomach hurt terribly. With a pale face, she asked Nanny Li to prepare a few snacks from the kitchen, planning to fill her stomach first.

However, after taking just two bites, Mu Jin entered and said, "Nanny Liu is here."

Chapter 54: Shot in the Foot

Zhou Linghuai said in a low voice, "Tell me in detail about everything that happened in the Yu Residence today."

Since he was staying with the Yu family, he had naturally assigned someone to keep an eye on everything that was happening in the Yu Residence.

As Yin San recounted the events, his voice revealed no emotion, and Zhou Linghuai's expression remained indifferent too. His hands rested on the armrests, and his fingers tapped occasionally as he listened, until the thread of conversation suddenly took a turn. "... In the afternoon, Eldest Master Yu returned to the residence. He first went to the Main Courtyard, then angrily marched to the Jade Courtyard..."

Zhou Linghuai's tapping fingers suddenly paused.

"... Old Master Yu slapped Eldest Miss Yu in a fit of anger, alarming Old Madam Yu..." Yin San could sense the rise in Young Master's emotions, and his tone became more cautious. He explained everything about Yu Youyao without missing a single detail.

After everything was recounted, Zhou Linghuai said, "Okay."

In a flash, Yin San's figure disappeared, and the only trace of his movement was a few falling leaves from the big tree in the courtyard.

Zhou Linghuai pursed his lips. After being hit by her father and suffering such a grievance, she still remembered to ask the maidservant to bring Imperial Physician Hu over to treat him, although the sachet she had promised him was still nowhere in sight.

"Young Master, where did you get this medicinal formula?" Suddenly, Uncle Sun's excited voice came from behind.

Zhou Linghuai turned around in his wheelchair and saw Uncle Sun's hunched figure walking over quickly. "Is this the Xie family's secret recipe? This is an extremely rare recipe for cultivation of the core spirit and vitality. No wonder it's been so effective for Young Master."

Zhou Linghuai frowned. "Show me the prescription."

Uncle Sun took a deep breath and handed it over.

The more Zhou Linghuai looked at it, the worse his expression became. In the end, his entire face turned pale and he couldn't help but wonder if this was the medicinal cuisine he usually ate.

Even an ordinary doctor could tell the value of this secret formula. It was impossible that Imperial Physician Hu didn't know as well.

Imperial Physician Hu was usually very cautious, and was very conservative when it came to diagnosing patients. He almost always hid some powerful treatments and did not reveal them to others easily.

Although Imperial Physician Hu and Yu Zongzheng knew each other personally, they were colleagues at most. Furthermore, they were neither relatives nor friends. It was impossible for him to give such a precious prescription to him so easily.

Could it be that Yu Youyao had actually asked Imperial Physician Hu to write this prescription for him?

After all, even Uncle Sun believed that this recipe was most likely the medicinal cuisine he had been eating recently.

The more he thought about it, the more likely it seemed. Zhou Linghuai's expression turned complex.

Seeing that the young master had finished reading the prescription, Uncle Sun hurriedly retrieved it and, as if talking about a precious treasure, said, "Of course! The young cicadas that have lived deep under the Agarwood tree for twelve years, sucking on the sap of the tree—amazing! Why hadn't I thought of this? Agarwood is a type of tree with extremely precious medicinal properties. Many medicine formulas use Agarwood as well. Young cicadas suck on the sap of the tree for years as they wait to break out of the soil. Hence, the medicinal properties would have accumulated in their bodies over twelve years, and would have even been enhanced further within them."

Zhou Linghuai said nothing.

Uncle Sun continued, "And this Five-Miracle herb, is it the feces of a creature? Oh, that's right, it looks like congealed fat and contains the spiritual energy of the five elements. That's how its name had come about..."

Zhou Linghuai couldn't stand it anymore. With a somber expression, he turned his wheelchair and returned to the study.

This type of creature was also known as the orange mole. It was often used as an extremely expensive ingredient for Chinese medicine, but at the thought of its feces being used instead, he wished that he had not seen the formula instead.

When Chun Xiao returned to the Jade Courtyard, she told Yu Youyao about Imperial Physician Hu's diagnosis. "Young Master Hu's spinal cord was injured, and his foundation was damaged. Imperial Physician Hu said that there was no way to treat him, so he could only prescribe a formula for Young Master to nourish his vitality."

After saying that, she repeated everything that Imperial Physician Hu had said, without leaving out a single word.

Yu Youyao was a little disappointed, but when she thought about how her cousin had already come to terms with it, she decided that there was no need for her to take it to heart. Recently, she had been learning medicinal cuisine from Nanny Xu. There were many medicinal dishes from the inner palace that could nourish one's vitality. Her spiritual dew also worked wonders for nourishing the body, and her grandmother's health had improved a lot recently. From now on, she would continue to send medicinal cuisine that contained her spiritual dew to her cousin every day, and it would probably be beneficial to his health.

Meanwhile, Madam Yang had returned to the Main Courtyard.

The curtains had already been put away. Yu Jianjia was leaning slightly against the head of the bed. Her face looked pale and drained of any color, while her beautiful eyes were misty. There was a hint of red between her light-pink lips, revealing a soft beautiful look.

Yang Shuwan sat on the edge of the bed and held Yu Jianjia's hand. Seeing that she looked haggard and defeated, Yu Jianjia's heart dropped. "Mother, what happened with Father..."

When Yang Shuwan recalled what Imperial Physician Hu had said, she did not dare to say anything that might agitate her. "Imperial Physician Hu said that your vitality was damaged when you fell seriously ill previously. You need to relax and nourish your body, so that you can overcome your illness. I've been married to your father for many years, so naturally, I know how to handle him. After a few days, when your father's anger has subsided a little, I'll coax him a little more. He'll definitely be appeased."

Yu Jianjia had already guessed that her grandmother was probably completely furious. Her father was also furious this time and would not be coaxed so easily. However, when she thought of her mother's usual ways of dealing with her father, she felt a little more at ease.

Hence, she bit her lower lip lightly and nodded in agreement.

After leaving the inner room, Yang Shuwan turned around and instructed Hui Xiang, "From now on, don't mention any matters of the residence unnecessarily in front of Third Miss."

Hui Xiang quickly nodded.

Only then did Yang Shuwan feel relieved and returned to the main courtyard.

At this moment, Mu Jin came over to report, "Master has gone to the study in the front courtyard. He did not go to the Clear Autumn Courtyard."

Yang Shuwan heaved a sigh of relief. Regardless of everything else, she and Jia Jia had achieved their goal.

As long as Yu Zongzheng did not go to stay at Concubine He's place, he didn't break the rules and her dignity as the first wife was preserved. As for Master's dissatisfaction and anger, she always found a solution somehow.

But she had no idea—

Yu Zongzheng had returned to the front courtyard angrily, planning to rest in the study.

However, Concubine He was someone who knew how to please men. How could she not know that Master had a fire burning within him? Furthermore, he had yet to have dinner. Hence, she ordered someone to cook a pot of bird's nest soup and secretly brought it to the front courtyard alone.

When Yu Zongzheng saw how thoughtful Concubine He was, he immediately removed her clothes and pressed her against the desk.

The two of them were being too loud, which caused the servants in the front yard to have flushed faces and knew to avoid disturbing them. Judging from the situation, it was likely to last through most of the night, so the old maids very sensibly headed to the kitchen to boil a few huge pots of water.

In the past, such a matter would definitely have been discovered by Yang Shuwan. However, after today's ordeal, she was both mentally and physically exhausted.

She returned to the house in a daze, then suddenly realized that she hadn't even had dinner. She was so hungry that body ached and her stomach hurt.

She had been unhappy to see Yu Youyao riding on the crest of success recently and that everything had been going smoothly for the girl. She had wanted to use Master to teach Yu Youyao a lesson in order to expunge her arrogance. Unexpectedly, in the end, she had shot herself in the foot, and had to swallow all of the bitter consequences herself.

It really made her feel sick.

Yang Shuwan's stomach hurt terribly. With a pale face, she asked Nanny Li to prepare a few snacks from the kitchen, planning to fill her stomach first.

However, after taking just two bites, Mu Jin entered and said, "Nanny Liu is here."

Chapter 55: Damned Old Woman, She's Too Vicious

Yang Shuwan's heart skipped a beat. She couldn't be bothered to eat anymore and quickly went to the outer room. "Nanny, why are you here? Do you have any instructions for me?"

Nanny Liu looked at Madam Yang with a smile, as seeing that she didn't look too good, she knew that she had been having a bad day. "Old Madam feels that everyone in the residence is too undisciplined. Not only are they gossiping, but they're also allowing the matters of the residence to be spread outside and causing Eldest Master trouble."

Yang Shuwan's expression stiffened.

Nanny Liu was clearly implying that she had no manners and had been gossiping in front of Master, while also insinuating that she was not competent in managing the household, and was only capable of playing tricks to deceive her Master.

Only she knew whether the heart of the lotus seed was truly bitter.

But what could Yang Shuwan do?

No matter how dissatisfied her mother-in-law was, as the daughter-in-law, she could only listen obediently, but not open her mouth to defend herself. Otherwise, wouldn't she be proving all of this to be true?

Nanny Liu continued, "Therefore, Old Madam has sent me here specially to inform First Madam that from tomorrow onwards, you will have to go to the north courtyard at dawn to observe the rules and set an example for everyone in the residence. This will also be a way for you to show your filial piety. In turn, the young mistresses will be able to learn from you as well, and Eldest Master will not scold them for behaving improperly and being unruly."

Yang Shuwan felt like she had been struck by lightning, and she felt dizzy for a long moment. Immediately, she felt a burning pain in her abdomen, and the blood drained from her face. Her body was on the verge of collapse.

Her mouth trembled, but her voice seemed to be stuck in her throat, and she was unable to say anything.

It was only now that she truly realized what being taught a lesson really meant!

"Madam, did you hear everything clearly?" Seeing Madam Yang's ashen face and her silence, Nanny Liu thought of Yao Yao's swollen face and felt a surge of glee.

This whole commotion today had been started by Yang Shuwan.

With Old Madam's temper, she was definitely going to find an opportunity to teach Yang Shuwan a lesson. However, if she did that, Eldest Master would definitely still have protected Madam Yang, even if it was just on account of Third Miss and Fourth Young Master.

And it would've inevitably caused some unhappiness between Old Madam Yu and her son. It hadn't been easy for him to have become dissatisfied with Yang Shuwan—if she did that, wouldn't it just make Master's heart return to Yang Shuwan?

In the end, it was Eldest Miss who had come up with such an ingenious way to deal with Yang Shuwan that left no room for dispute.

She was simply ruthless. Even Old Madam Yu and Nanny Liu herself, who had been in the inner residence for most of their lives, could not compare to Yu Youyao.

Madam Yang's mouth trembled as she squeezed out the words from her throat. "I-I'll be there first thing tomorrow morning."

More rules!! This was a method of bullying and torture used in rich families. It was her nightmare.

Yang Shuwan's First Mother, her father's legitimate wife, was an extremely shrewd person. She often threw her weight around, setting rules and standards for the daughters of the concubines in the residence. Waking up at dawn, making and serving tea were the simpler chores, but washing and handling of the trash were common chores as well.

It was common for most First Mothers to deliberately make things difficult, using punishments such as kneeling and copying books!

However, she had been married into the Yu Residence for nine years—when had Old Madam Yu ever set any rules?

But today, she actually had the thought of establishing more rules and standards?

Nanny Liu smiled and nodded. "In that case, I'll convey your reply to Old Madam."

Her smile looked more like a sneer dripping with mockery in Yang Shuwan's eyes. Yang Shuwan was so angry that her heart throbbed in pain. She looked at the back view of Nanny Liu walking out arrogantly, and wished that she could pounce on her right then and there to tear her apart.

That damned old woman was really getting on her nerves, deliberately using the excuse of setting rules to torment her, punish her, and avenge Yu Youyao.

But what could she do?

Even if Master weren't angry with her right now, wasn't it only natural for a mother-in-law to set rules for her daughter-in-law?

Not long ago, she and Jia Jia had put on a show of "filial piety" in front of Yu Zongzheng. Now that the opportunity to express their "filial piety" had actually arrived, if she rejected it, wouldn't she be slapping herself in the face and provoking Yu Zongzheng's displeasure?

Damn old woman, she was too vicious.

The next day, after having a great night's sleep, Yu Youyao woke up before dawn.

When Chun Xiao heard sounds, she quickly walked over. "It's still early. Why don't you sleep a little longer?"

Usually, in the morning, she would sleep right down to the last minute until Nanny Xu personally came to wake her up. Today, however, she actually woke up on her own without anyone coming to call for her.

Yu Youyao shook her head and yawned. "It's almost time to learn etiquette from Nanny Xu. I can't possibly depend on her to drag me out of bed every time."

Chun Xiao pursed her lips as she smiled, and lit a fragrant incense that refreshed and energized the mind.

Yu Youyao leaned against the couch and smelled the faint fragrance in the room. Her muddled mind cleared a little. "Has there been any movement in the main courtyard?"

Chun Xiao nodded. "Madam Yang got up as soon as she heard the rooster crow. I guess she'll be going to Old Madam's room to obey some rules soon. Madam Yang has never suffered like this before, so she's probably feeling dismal."

Yu Youyao chuckled.

Chun Xiao called over a maidservant on duty and began to prepare to serve Yu Youyao, saying, "It's one thing for Madam Yang to gossip in front of Master, since he often falls for her tricks anyway. But how could she dare to bring Old Madam Yu into her schemes? I wonder what she was thinking."

Yu Youyao said calmly, "She was just fearless because she felt that she had a strong backing."

Yang Shuwan had been married into the Yu Residence for nine years. Yu Zongzheng had always treated her well and often protected her in front of Old Madam Yu, afraid to let her suffer any grievances.

Therefore, even though her grandmother didn't like Yang Shuwan, she never made things difficult for the woman on account of her relationship with her son.

As time passed, Yang Shuwan also started to feel that her Old Madam Yu did not dare to be too harsh on her as she was afraid of pushing her own son away from her.

Gradually, she simply started to treat Old Madam Yu lightly, and only showed superficial respect for her.

Chun Xiao agreed deeply. "In the past, Old Madam never held it against them. She simply turned a blind eye, probably because they hadn't truly crossed her. But today, Madam Yang had instigated Master to hit Young Mistress, which already angered Old Madam. Then later, when Imperial Physician Hu went to take her pulse, it truly and completely infuriated her."

Throughout her entire life, Old Madam Yu had raised two important court officials—Eldest Master and Second Master—and it showed how capable she was. However, Madam Yang had probably been mistaken, thinking of herself as the one in charge in the residence, since Old Madam Yu did not interfere in most matters of the household.

Once a person was smug, it was easy to become careless.

Meanwhile, Madam Yang, whom Yu Youyao and Chun Xiao were discussing about, had not been able to sleep at all that night. She'd tossed and turned, feeling tormented. Finally, Nanny Li called out for her, which got her up.

Since Yang Shuwan hadn't slept well, her head hurt terribly. She lashed out at Nanny Li, but Nanny Li reminded her that she had to go to Old Madam's courtyard at dawn to follow the rules. Hence, she had no choice but to bear with the headache and exhaustion, getting out of bed to wash up.

She had been married into the Yu Residence for nine years. When had she ever woken up so early? When had she ever suffered like this? When had she ever been bullied like this?

However, no matter how much resentment Yang Shuwan felt, she still arrived at the north courtyard at dawn.

A maidservant on duty outside invited her into the hall. "Old Madam is still sleeping. Please wait in the hall."

Chapter 56: Pillow Talk

Yang Shuwan's face was covered with a thick layer of makeup, but it couldn't hide her haggard appearance. She groaned inwardly, but could only obey. "Please let me know when Old Madam is awake."

The maidservant nodded, then picked up a feather duster and proceeded to dust the hall.

Yang Shuwan had wanted to take advantage of the fact that Old Madam was still asleep, to sit on the chair and rest for a while.

However, no matter how careful the maidservant was when sweeping and dusting the place, it was inevitable that she would still make some noise. Yang Shuwan was annoyed and her headache worsened. She wished she could rush over and grab the feather duster to whip this maidservant.

Time passed excruciatingly slowly. Finally, Qing Xiu came over. "Old Madam has woken up. Madam, you may please go and serve her now."

Yang Shuwan's eyes widened. There were so many maidservants in the house, but she was the one who had to serve Old Madam Yu?

What did this have to do with the rules?

This was clearly just a way of torturing her!

Yang Shuwan lowered her head to hide the resentment on her face, and she assented obediently.

After entering the room, Yang Shuwan greeted Old Madam Yu first, then stepped forward to help Old Madam Yu put on her clothes. However, she had not served anyone in many years.

Occasionally, she would serve Master, but that was only to keep things playful and interesting in their married life, and he wouldn't blame her even if she was a little clumsy. However, how could serving her mother-in-law be the same?

Yang Shuwan made mistake after mistake. Soon, her forehead was covered in sweat. Old Madam Yu did not say anything and merely let her continue to struggle with whatever she was doing.

This way, Yang Shuwan would be even more nervous and make more mistakes.

Yang Shuwan knelt respectfully on the ground and helped Old Madam Yu put on her shoes. Then, she heard Old Madam Yu say calmly, "It must be really hard on you to have to serve an old woman like me."

Yang Shuwan immediately replied, "Of course not," but her back was drenched in layers and layers of sweat.

After a long and exhausting morning, Yang Shuwan was both hungry and tired.

Nanny Liu looked at the time and asked the maidservant to prepare breakfast.

Just then, Yu Youyao came over to greet her grandmother. She glanced at Yang Shuwan, who was standing at the back and waiting on Old Madam Yu, with her head hung low and eyes looking down. Then, she went forward to greet the two of them.

Old Madam Yu pulled Yu Youyao to sit down beside her, and looked at her face carefully. "The swelling on your face has gone down a little. Does it still hurt?"

Yu Youyao nodded. "I asked Nanny Xu to roll an egg on my bruise, so it doesn't hurt as much anymore."

After exchanging a few words, they began to eat.

Old Madam Yu did not say anything, so Yang Shuwan did not dare to sit down and eat with them. Looking at the table full of appetizing food, she instantly felt a pang of hunger. Her head throbbed and she felt dizzy, but she could only perk up and continue to serve Old Madam Yu.

After eating a few mouthfuls of food that Madam Yang had put on her plate, Old Madam Yu put down her chopsticks. "You've only been putting food on my plate. Why aren't you giving any to Yao Yao? My son always tells me that you treat Yao Yao kindly and with motherly love. Now she's right in front of you, so you can't neglect her, right?"

These words were like a slap to Yang Shuwan's face, making her feel both awkward and helpless. She quickly bent down and picked up some pickled diced radish for Yu Youyao.

Before Yu Youyao could react, Old Madam Yu had already taken away all the pickled radish in the bowl. "You keep saying that you treat Yao Yao as your own daughter, but why don't you know that she doesn't like to eat radishes?"

"I-I was negligent." She didn't dare to say anything else, in case she made more mistakes.

Yang Shuwan was thoroughly embarrassed once again. Each time her sweat finally dried off, she only ended up becoming drenched in yet another layer in no time. Her body also felt a little cold. For a moment, she felt like she was going to faint.

Without even looking at Madam Yang, Yu Youyao picked up the beets from her grandmother's plate and placed them on her own plate. "Grandmother doesn't like to eat beets, but I do."

Old Madam Yu beamed. Yao Yao had always known what she liked and didn't like to eat, since a young age. Every time they had a meal together, she would always push aside the food that she didn't like.

However, while Old Madam Yu was happy, Yang Shuwan's face alternated between shades of green and white.

After breakfast, Old Madam Yu chatted with Yu Youyao. With Old Madam Yu's permission, Yang Shuwan finally headed to the side hall to have her meal.

However, she no longer had much of an appetite, so she only forced herself to eat a few mouthfuls. Then, she heard the maidservant outside say that Yu Zongzheng had come to greet Old Madam Yu.

Yang Shuwan perked up and hurriedly entered the hall with her handkerchief. She looked at Yu Zongzheng with glistening eyes, her face filled with grievance and sorrow. She looked pitiful and weak.

Yu Zongzheng's heart skipped a beat, but then he frowned. "As a daughter-in-law, it's your duty to serve your mother-in-law. Why are you putting on such an expression? Are you implying that I'm too much for expecting you to serve my mother?"

Yang Shuwan stared agape at Yu Zongzheng in disbelief.

If it were in the past, upon seeing such an expression on her, he would definitely have thought that Old Madam was bullying her. Then, he would have felt bad for her and stood up for her in front of his mother.

But the words that Master had just uttered—what did he mean by that?

It had already been a night since then. Even if he was still angry, he shouldn't be acting like that.

After reprimanding Yang Shuwan, Yu Zongzheng turned to his mother and said, "Mother, you're really thoughtful. Madam Yang is still young and doesn't know propriety. She's not as prudent as you. Thank you for keeping her by your side to teach her well, so that she'll be able to take care of the household more capably in the future. Besides, Mother, you're already getting old. As your daughter-in-law, she should be around to serve you often."

Hearing this, Yang Shuwan's eyes darkened and she almost collapsed to the ground right then and there.

Yu Zongzheng was going to head to the government office today, so he did not stay long.

In all these years, this was the first time that Old Madam Yu had seen Madam Yang receive such treatment from her son. It wasn't that this made her happy, but she felt it was time Yang Shuwan learned that she wasn't one to be trifled with.

However, even though she wanted to make Yang Shuwan follow strict rules, she also didn't want Yang Shuwan to hang around her all day, so she waved her hand and said, "I plan to prepare more scriptures to worship Buddha during the Buddhist Festival in April. Go to the Temple Hall to copy the scriptures."

She did not say how many scriptures to copy nor how many hours to spend.

Looking grim beyond despair, Yang Shuwan had no choice but to obey and head there.

There was a strong sandalwood fragrance in the Temple hall, and it was so quiet that a pin drop could be heard. Even though Yang Shuwan didn't believe in Buddhism, she couldn't help but feel intimidated when she saw the dignified and solemn Buddha statue in the temple. She didn't dare to act imprudently in front of Buddha, so she could only bury her head in copying the Buddhist scriptures. She had no idea how much time had passed, but she only knew that her wrist was starting to feel sore and painful, while her neck also felt stiff and swollen. She also felt dizzy and nauseous.

A while later, Nanny Li secretly came over. “Madam, I’ve asked around. Yesterday, that vixen, Concubine He, had gone to the study to deliver some bird’s nest to Master and ended up staying there. I heard that she’d asked for three to five trips of water at night. It wasn’t until dawn today that she secretly returned to the Clear Autumn Courtyard.”

When Yang Shuwan heard this, she swept all of the brushes, ink, papers, and ink stone off the table and onto the ground. “No wonder Master treated me that way today. It’s because that vixen had been serving him well last night, and she’d definitely been whispering a lot into his ear during their pillow talk. Ugh, that vixen is getting more and more out of hand. She’s simply too hateful.”

Yesterday, it was true that Master hadn’t gone to Concubine He’s house.

However, the two of them were fooling around in the study instead. How was that any different from going to the Clear Autumn Courtyard?

Chapter 57: Bullied to Tears

Yu Youyao returned to the Jade Courtyard and picked out a navy blue brocade from her box. She planned to embroider a seven-treasure brocade for her grandmother with a symbolic pattern, which was even simpler than the green bamboo pattern. With the experience of embroidering the green bamboo patterns, her embroidery this time indeed went much more smoothly.

Chun Xiao lifted the curtain and entered. She poured a cup of tea and handed it to Yu Youyao. “Fourth Miss is here to see you. She’s waiting in the reception pavilion.”

Yu Youyao put down her embroidery tool and gingerly pointed at her face with her finger. “She’s probably here to see my face. Look how badly I’ve been slapped by my father. I’m the eldest daughter of the first wife, but in the eyes of our father, I’m not even as favored as she is. She’s always been very smug about that.”

Chun Xiao’s expression didn’t look too good. “I’ll send her away.”

Yu Youyao laughed coldly. “In the past, I never bothered to argue with her. But today, she just had to provoke me when I happened to be feeling annoyed. Go, get a portrait of my mother.”

Chun Xiao did not understand what was going on, but she still turned around and went into the side room. She opened a wooden box, which was full of paintings of Madam Xie.

When she was young, Eldest Miss had cried for her mother constantly and couldn’t be coaxed no matter what. Old Madam had no choice but to get Second Madam, who was good at calligraphy, to draw many portraits of Madam Xie. Every time Eldest Miss looked at these portraits, she stopped crying. Even when she slept at night, the portraits had to be placed beside her pillow so that she could sleep soundly.

When she got older, Eldest Miss no longer cried and begged for her mother as much, but every time she missed her mother, she would look at them.

This box of portrait paintings was her most precious possession.

After taking one from the box, Chun Xiao returned.

Yu Youyao unfolded the scroll. In the painting, there was only a table and a chair. Madam Xie was dressed in a silver and red peony dress. She held a teacup and sat on the chair. Her long eyebrows were as beautiful as art, while her hair was long and thick. She looked elegant and charming.

Yu Youyao resembled her mother, but her eyes looked a little different.

Madam Xie's phoenix eyes were longer and narrower, exuding elegance and a hint of shrewdness. On the other hand, Yu Youyao's phoenix eyes were gentle and expressive, making her look even more charming.

Yu Youyao handed the portrait to Chun Xiao and instructed, "Hang it on the wall."

Chun Xiao muttered to herself in confusion but did as she was told. Then, she heard Eldest Miss say evenly, "Go and invite Fourth Miss in."

Chun Xiao was a little hesitant. "Young Mistress, Fourth Miss is up to no good. Just send her away. Why invite her into the house?"

Yu Youyao said calmly, "Do as I say."

Chun Xiao had no choice but to agree. She turned and left the room. Yu Youyao asked Xia Tao to put away the embroidery basket. Although she had learned the double-sided embroidery technique, her embroidery skills were still too crass. It just wasn't presentable, so it wouldn't be good for Yu Qingning, who had exquisite embroidery skills, to see it. Otherwise, she would no doubt have to put up with condescension and mockery once again.

"Big Sis, you've been busy learning from Nanny Xu, so I haven't seen you in a few days." As soon as Yu Qingning entered the house, her gaze landed on Yu Youyao's swollen face. The gloating in her eyes could not be concealed.

Nanny Liu had specially warned against spreading of the incidents in the residence yesterday, so it was kept hushed very well. Still, there was no way to have kept it from Concubine He.

Big Sister had indeed been slapped by her father.

Before Yu Youyao could speak, Yu Qingning exclaimed, "Big Sister, why is your face so red and swollen? What happened?"

As she spoke, Yu Qingning's eyes gradually turned red. Soon, tears welled up in her eyes, as if she was the one who had been hit.

Large drops of tears flowed out of Yu Youyao's eyes, streaming down her cheeks and to her sharp chin. Her fragile and helpless appearance looked heart-wrenching even to someone with a heart of stone.

It was rare for her to cry so pitifully, so Yu Qingning almost laughed aloud on the spot. She quickly covered the smile on her face with a handkerchief. "Big Sister, don't cry. Father has always been strict with us sisters. He didn't mean to hit you. In the future, you have to attend classes with us. Father will definitely forgive you..."

When Yu Youyao heard this, she raised her tear-stained face and looked at Yu Qingning. Word by word, she asked, "How do you know I was slapped by Father?"

Yu Qingning was stunned for a moment before she stammered, "I-I just happened to hear from a servant and I was worried about you, so I specially came to visit."

Yu Youyao laughed grimly as she continued to tear. "The servants had been dismissed when Father came to the Jade Courtyard. Which servant did you hear this from?"

Yu Qingning was stumped for words, and did not know how to answer.

The Jade Courtyard was under Nanny Xu's strict supervision, so it wasn't easy to get information or news about the place. Furthermore, what happened yesterday was even more tightly kept under wraps.

It was just that her mother had heard a little about it from their father last night.

Yu Youyao's eyelashes were wet with tears, and her gaze was cold. "I had indeed been slapped by Father, but it was just a misunderstanding and he had hit me by mistake. Seeing as how you started talking about this the moment you came over, I'm afraid you're not here to visit me, but to laugh at me!"

As soon as she heard this, Yu Qingning knew she was in trouble. "Big Sis, I-I was just worried about you, so I came to see you. I didn't mean anything else..."

In the past, her father often lectured and scolded Yu Youyao. She naturally believed that Yu Youyao had done something wrong and angered her father again, which was why she had been hit. Who would have known that it was a wrongful slap?

Yu Qingning was in disbelief!

Immediately, Yu Youyao slammed her teacup down and covered her face as she wailed. She pointed at the portrait on the wall. "It's true that I don't have a mother, but that doesn't mean everyone can step over my head. Go and kowtow three times to my mother's portrait."

Yu Qingning glanced at the wall and saw Madam Xie's sharp brows. Instantly, she was frightened and instinctively took a step back.

Yu Youyao was crying so hard that she was out of breath. Then, she lost her temper. "Y-you, why are you still standing there? My mother was Father's first wife, and she's your legitimate First Mother. Is it wrong to ask you to kowtow to her? Could it be that you feel wronged having to kowtow to her? Yu Qingning, do you have no regard for her anymore? I'm going to tell Grandmother that you don't honor my mother and that you've been disrespectful to her."

At this point, Yu Qingning had no choice even if she was unwilling. If she really ended up with the reputation of disrespecting her late First Mother, she would have to bear severe consequences.

She gritted her teeth angrily and went forward to kneel on the ground. She kowtowed three times perfunctorily, but just as she was about to get up, she heard Yu Youyao say coldly, "Although my mother is dead, I won't allow a concubine's daughter to patronize her. Do it again."

Yu Qingning's eyes turned red with anger. "Yu Youyao, don't push it."

Yu Youyao stopped crying. A teardrop that looked like it was about to fall hung onto her lower eyelid. She said icily, "You're the one being disrespectful. How dare you talk about being reasonable. Why don't we go to Grandmother's house and ask for her opinion on this?"

Chapter 58: Yu Youyao, That's Enough!

"You..." At the mention of Old Madam Yu, Yu Qingning was so angry that she almost cried. Clutching her handkerchief, she had no choice but to properly kowtow three times.

Yu Youyao took the teacup from Chun Xiao and held it in her hands. "Doesn't look respectful at all. Again!"

"Yu Youyao, that's enough!" Yu Qingning suddenly stood up and glared furiously at Yu Youyao.

Yu Youyao lowered her head and took a sip of tea. She placed the teacup on the table and turned to Chun Xiao. "Press down on Fourth Miss's head to make sure that she kowtows properly and shows her full respect."

Yu Qingning's eyes widened. Before she could react, Chun Xiao strode over and kicked Yu Qingning's legs. Yu Qingning's knees buckled and she fell to her knees with a thud.

"Yu Youyao!" Yu Qingning shrieked.

Chun Xiao pressed down on the back of Yu Qingning's neck and forced her to kowtow yet another three times, making Yu Qingning dizzy.

"That's enough," Yu Youyao finally said.

Chun Xiao retreated to stand at her side.

Yu Qingning finally asked Jin Ju, who was in front of her, to help her up. The blood had completely drained from her petite face, and she stood rooted to the ground, trembling, feeling angry and resentful.

Yu Youyao gave a smug chuckle. "From now on, my mother's portrait will be hanging there. You have to fulfill your duty as a concubine's daughter and kowtow every time you see her."

Yu Qingning finally recovered from her shock and trembled with anger. "How, how can you treat me like this? Aren't you afraid that Father will berate you if he finds out?"

"Berate me?" Yu Youyao chuckled again. "Father wronged me with a slap and made me cry. If he really finds out about this, he'll only feel bad for me. Besides, I'm asking you to kowtow to my mother. Do you think that's being unfair?"

Yu Qingning looked at Yu Youyao with her mouth agape. She had originally wanted to take the opportunity to mock Yu Youyao, but who knew that Yu Youyao would force her to kowtow to her mother and take the opportunity to punish her instead? Furthermore, she simply did not have a choice, because if news of this was really spread to others, people would definitely think that she was disrespectful and it would incur Old Madam's unhappiness.

In other words, she had really shot herself in the foot.

Not long after, Old Madam Yu heard the news and slammed her hand on the table in anger. "That disgraceful thing. She saw that Madam Yang had been reprimanded, so she, a concubine, became arrogant and climbed over the head of Yao Yao, the eldest daughter of the legitimate first wife, even causing her to cry."

Nanny Liu lowered her head in silence.

Old Madam Yu tightened her grip on the prayer beads in her hand. "Yu Qingning will be punished to copy 'Female Virtue' a hundred times. Concubine He will be grounded for a month, and her

allowance will be halved. Also, warn Concubine He that the study is an important place for Eldest Master to handle official matters. Others are allowed into or out of it, and definitely no one else should be staying overnight in the study.”

How could she not know about them messing around in the study yesterday?

She had originally planned to give him a warning when he came back from the government office today, but who knew that after receiving his favor yesterday, Concubine He would already cause trouble early in the morning?

Nanny Liu nodded. There was already a rule forbidding anyone from entering or leaving the study as they pleased. However, Master did not abide by it, while Old Madam Yu also closed one eye to it in the past.

Today, Old Madam was making it clear that she wanted to deal with Concubine He. It was time to enforce these rules. No matter how much Eldest Master liked Concubine He in bed, he wouldn't go against Old Madam for a concubine. Besides, he was in the wrong for fooling around in the study in the first place.

That was the difference between a wife and a concubine!

However, Old Madam Yu was not done yet. “I remember that Concubine He had only managed to become a concubine due to Rou Jia's grace and kindness. When Rou Jia was still around, Concubine He acted humbly and often sent gifts like fragrance pouches, silk and handkerchiefs. However, she revealed her true colors as soon as Rou Jia passed away. She's truly a heartless actress.”

Nanny Liu also added, “Although First Madam Xie has passed on, as a lowly concubine, Concubine He should still remember her kindness.”

At the very least, she shouldn't have caused trouble for Yu Youyao.

Thinking of how Yao Yao had asked Yu Qingning to kowtow to Rou Jia's portrait, Old Madam Yu sneered. “Go, take one of Madam Xie's portraits from the side room and send it to Concubine He. Ask her to burn three incense sticks every morning and night in the future, and kowtow three times. Soon, it will be the Buddhist Festival in April. I've arranged for an incense lamp for Rou Jia at the Precious Peace Temple, so she has to prepare to offer something too. Instruct her to copy the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra a hundred times.”

At this moment, Yu Qingning had just returned to the Clear Autumn Courtyard in tears. She threw herself into her mother's arms and complained aggrievedly, “Mother, I've never suffered such a grievance. When Father comes over later, I must let him know and have him teach her a lesson so that I can vent my anger.”

Concubine He's heart ached as she held her handkerchief and gently stroked her daughter's bruised forehead. “Don't cry anymore. Once there's a first time in hitting someone, there will always be a second, third, and countless more times. Your father doesn't like Yu Youyao. When he sees that you were bullied by her, he will think that she's arrogant and will definitely stand up for you.”

Still, Yu Qingning couldn't take it lying down and continued to curse and grumble about Yu Youyao.

Concubine He hugged her daughter in her arms and comforted her gently while thinking about how she should invite Master over after his work later, so that Yu Youyao could be taught a lesson.

At this moment, a maidservant came over to inform her, “Nanny Liu is here.”

Concubine He was slightly taken aback, but when she thought about how Master doted on her, she heaved a sigh of relief. She instructed the maidservant to console Yu Qingning and turned to leave the inner room.

Concubine He was dressed in pink, and she exuded a charming aura. She greeted Nanny Liu.

Nanny Liu nodded indifferently and explained everything that Old Madam had instructed.

Concubine He’s charming face immediately turned pale.

If she had to be grounded for a month, then Master wouldn’t be coming to her house again within this month, nor could she get anyone to invite him over.

It wasn’t easy for Master to be dissatisfied with Madam Yang. Furthermore, Madam Yang was punished and had to be with Old Madam Yu to serve her all the time. This was the perfect opportunity for her to gain favor with Master. Now that she was grounded, wouldn’t she be wasting such an opportunity?

And Qingning!

The person who had been bullied was clearly Qingning, but not only did Old Madam want to ground her, she’d also ordered her to copy “Female Virtue”. Old Madam was really too biased.

Even though she was a concubine’s daughter, she shouldn’t be treated so lowly.

Then, Nanny Liu held up Madam Xie’s portrait and slowly unfolded it. “Concubine He, do you still recognize the person in this portrait?”

Concubine He’s expression changed. Her body swayed, and she knelt on the ground, lowering her head. “Of course I recognize her. I was originally a member of the family of a criminal official. It was Eldest Madam Xie who pitied my poor life and redeemed me. She even let me enter the Yu Residence to serve Eldest Master. I dare not forget to thank Eldest Madam for her kindness.”

Nanny Liu revealed a smile, but continued to look at her calmly. “It’s good that Concubine He still remembers Eldest Madam’s kindness.”

Concubine He’s eyelids twitched, and she had an ominous feeling within her.

Chapter 59: Cousin, the Sachet’s Ready!

As expected, Nanny Liu changed her tone. “In the future, you will burn three incense sticks every morning and night. You will need to kowtow three times to show your gratitude to Madam Xie. In April, it will be the Buddhist Festival. Old Madam has lit a lantern for Madam Xie at the Precious Peace Temple, so she will need to prepare some offerings, and will need to trouble you to copy the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra a hundred times to express your gratitude towards Madam Xie.”

When Concubine He heard this, her body suddenly lost all strength and she collapsed to the ground.

Nanny Liu added, “First Madam will be supervising you, so you can’t be slack or treat it lightly.”

Concubine He's body twitched as she gripped the handkerchief in her hand tightly. Old Madam's methods were really impressive—to have her and Madam Yang fight to the death while she watched coldly from the side.

Then, just as Nanny Liu was about to leave, she turned back around. "By the way, Concubine He, I have to remind you that there are distinctions between the first and second wives. Don't raise the expectations of Fourth Miss to be too high, such that she tries to compete with the legitimate young mistresses of the residence. Whether Fourth Miss has a good or bad path in the future, it all depends on Old Madam."

Concubine He's face went completely ashen as she remained on the ground, shaking.

With that, Nanny Liu left with a few old maids. As they left the Clear Autumn Courtyard, they locked the door and blocked off the courtyard completely.

In the Jade Courtyard, Chun Xiao told Yu Youyao about what had happened in the Clear Autumn Courtyard. "Concubine He is usually a smart person. Why was she so foolish today?"

Yu Youyao continued embroidering her brocade without looking up. "Receiving favor made her arrogant and complacent."

Grandmother knew that her father was a little muddle-headed when it came to women and did not have strong morals, so she had forbidden him from having more concubines. There was only one wife and one concubine in the residence.

In the past, her father treated Madam Yang with high regard and respect, often spending most of his time at Madam Yang's place.

Concubine He was also doted on, but she could never compare to Madam Yang.

Now that Madam Yang had been reprimanded by her father and had to observe the rules in her grandmother's house, he naturally gave more attention to Concubine He. How could she not become smug?

Chun Xiao laughed. "Let's see if anyone in the residence dares to climb over your head again in the future."

Yu Youyao said nothing.

Concubine He's current plight had actually been carefully planned and caused by her.

She had asked Chun Xiao to take out her mother's portrait on purpose, to make herself seem more vulnerable, like a child without a mother who was wronged but had no ability to defend herself, and could only cry while thinking of her dead mother.

After hearing about this, Grandmother naturally would think of using her mother to keep Concubine He in check, since Concubine He had been brought into the residence by her mother after all.

No matter how arrogant Concubine He was, in front of her grandmother and mother, she could only swallow her punishment and blame her own bad luck.

But she would not have planned and caused this if they had not provoked her!

At this moment, Dong Mei walked over. "Young Mistress, Young Master is here."

When Yu Youyao heard this, her eyes widened. She quickly put down the embroidery tool in her hands and stood up. She was about to walk out, but turned around after taking a few steps. "Quick, bring over my green bamboo embroidered sachet."

Chun Xiao smiled. "I already have it here."

Yu Youyao happily took the sachet from Chun Xiao and rushed excitedly to the reception pavilion. Sure enough, she saw her cousin sitting in the hall with a teacup in his hand, looking at the Spring Apricot Painting that she had hung up in her hall, which was the very painting he had created not long ago and asked Chang An to send over.

"Cousin!" Yu Youyao's eyes lit up.

Zhou Linghuai put down his teacup and looked up. Yu Youyao was wearing a high-waisted pink and white embroidered apricot skirt and a slightly thicker long-sleeved top. It had been a while since he had seen her, and she had lost a lot of weight. Her round little face had become the size of a palm, and her chin had become sharper. She was now taller than when she was at the Precious Peace Temple. She looked delicate, and already had the aura of a young lady.

Yu Youyao ran up to her cousin, her eyes filled with joy. "This is the first time you've come to see me in the Jade Courtyard."

Zhou Linghuai nodded and glanced at her slightly swollen face. He frowned slightly and asked, "Does your face still hurt?"

Yu Youyao smiled and shook her head. "It doesn't hurt much anymore. Nanny Xu said that I'll be fine in a few days. Cousin, don't worry about me."

Zhou Linghuai glanced at Chang An, who was behind him. Chang An understood and took out a small jade box, handing it to his young master. Zhou Linghuai reached out to take it, then handed it to Yu Youyao.

Yu Youyao looked at the small jade box and reached out to take it. "Cousin, what is this? Is it for me?"

Zhou Linghuai said calmly, "This is the Nine Flowers Jade Dew Cream. It's more effective at reducing swelling than the Jade Beauty Cream."

Standing in the back, Chang An thought to himself.

This was a holy healing medicine. How could the Jade Beauty Cream compare?

Yu Youyao did not know any of this. She handed the jade box to her cousin and brought her face close to his. "Cousin, quickly help me apply it."

Chang An's eyes widened in shock when he heard this. How could a girl be so shameless as to take the initiative to place her face right in front of a man's face? How improper.

Young Master did not like to touch others, so he was definitely going to refuse.

But the very next instant, it was almost as if he got slapped in the face.

Zhou Linghuai looked down at the jade box in his hand, then looked up at the girl's face. He was stunned for a long moment, until the girl urged, "Cousin, hurry up. I'm still waiting here."

The delicate and clear voice made Zhou Linghuai react. He subconsciously opened the jade box and used the small jade spoon to pick out some jade-white colored paste. He gently applied it on her face, then circled the bottom of the spoon around her face and spread it evenly.

It wasn't until he finished applying the medicine that he realized his actions seemed a little improper.

The Nine Flowers Jade Dew Ointment had a faint fragrance. When it was applied on her face, it was cool to the touch, and her slightly painful cheeks could not help but feel refreshed.

Yu Youyao smiled even more happily and said in a sweet voice, "Cousin, the Nine Flowers Jade Dew Ointment is really effective. It didn't hurt at all when it was being applied to my face."

Zhou Linghuai closed the ointment and handed it to Chun Xiao.

Chun Xiao quickly received it.

"Cousin, I have a gift for you too." Yu Youyao smiled and took out the green bamboo sachet from her sleeve. However, she held it in her hand and was a little embarrassed to pass it over.

Zhou Linghuai took a look and his gaze stopped moving. Suddenly, he smelled a slight fragrance of fresh and elegant apricot flowers in the air.

He had thought that she had forgotten, but he didn't expect her to have really made it. "Is this the sachet you had promised me?"

Yu Youyao nodded slightly.

Seeing that she was holding the sachet with her head lowered and had no intention of giving it to him, Zhou Linghuai raised his eyebrows slightly and reached out his hand. "Hand it to me!"

Yu Youyao hesitated again, feeling a little embarrassed. "I-I embroidered this sachet myself. I've only just started learning needlework recently, so I didn't embroider it well. Cousin, don't mind my poor skills."

'She embroidered it herself?'

Previously, he had heard from Chang An that Eldest Miss Yu had hurt her hands while learning embroidery, and had cried and shouted that she did not want to learn.

When he had heard this, he couldn't help but laugh at this girl for being too coddled.

Only now did he recall that the rumors in the residence about Yu Youyao learning embroidery seemed to have started after Yu Youyao had returned from the Precious Peace Temple. So, that meant that the reason she hadn't sent him a sachet for such a long time, was because she was learning embroidery and personally made a sachet for him?

For this, she had even pricked her fingers!

Chapter 60: Cousin Is So Amazing

Seeing that her cousin was silent, Yu Youyao gritted her teeth and made up her mind. She placed the sachet in her cousin's hand. "I'd originally planned to hone my needlework skills before making the sachet for you, but it wouldn't have been good to keep you waiting."

For a moment, Zhou Linghuai did not say anything. He stared at the sachet in his hand, but his mind was actually picturing this pampered and delicate little girl—who had never had to suffer before—holding a thin needle and threading it, but constantly poking her own fingertips because of her clumsiness. It was so painful that her eyes welled up with tears and she sobbed, shouting that she no longer wanted to learn, but still ended up gritting her teeth through it and finishing the embroidery carefully.

All of a sudden, the light sachet in his hand felt so heavy that he almost couldn't breathe.

This gift was indeed much too heavy for him.

Yu Youyao was still chattering away. "Cousin, you're not allowed to criticize my embroidery. It's the first time I've embroidered anything. At the very most, I'll give you a better one when I've mastered needlework."

The first thing she had ever embroidered—she was giving to him. Zhou Linghuai swallowed. "I like this sachet very much. Thank you, Cousin, it must've been tough to make it."

Yu Youyao suddenly stopped talking. She looked at her cousin and her face turned red. "No, it wasn't tough. As long as you like it, Cousin. As long as you like it."

Seeing the little lady standing a little distance away, Zhou Linghuai laughed lightly. "Come here."

Yu Youyao ran over and crouched down in front of her cousin. She looked up at him with sparkling eyes that were even more beautiful than the stars in the sky.

Zhou Linghuai suddenly reached out to hold her hand. Yu Youyao was stunned for a moment. She blinked and looked at her cousin, but did not resist.

Her soft little hand seemed to be boneless as he held it in his own hand. It was soft and smooth. Zhou Linghuai flipped her hand over and placed the sachet on her palm. "Cousin, please help me wear it."

Yu Youyao's eyes widened, then she smiled brightly. She held the sachet in her hand and nodded eagerly. "Okay!"

It seemed that her cousin really liked this sachet that she had embroidered.

Her efforts in making this green bamboo sachet had not been wasted.

Zhou Linghuai's pale lips also showed a hint of a smile. He watched as the little lady lowered her head and twirled the green knot, attaching it to his waist and nimbly tying an exquisite knot. She tilted her head and took a serious look at it, then frowned as if she was not satisfied. She reached out to adjust the knot and assessed it carefully for a while. Then, she pursed her lips and said reluctantly, "Cousin, you shouldn't wear it. People will laugh at you for it."

Her cousin was dressed in light green clothes with dark patterns, and he had an indescribably noble and dignified air.

This sachet clearly did not match her cousin's aura. It was not worthy of him.

Zhou Linghuai looked down. "I think it's quite good. It has a very special fragrance."

Feeling that the sachet wasn't completely useless, Yu Youyao's eyes lit up, and she stopped worrying about her embroidery. "The apricot flowers inside are the ones from you at Precious Peace

Temple...” As if realizing that she had misspoken, she quickly tried to salvage the situation. “I’ve recently been learning how to mix incense from Nanny Xu. I also handled the apricot flowers myself. Nanny Xu said that I’m very talented at making incense. This sachet can last for a long time.”

Zhou Linghuai gently rubbed the sachet in his hand with his fingers. The stitching was not exquisite, and it was a little rough to the touch, but he liked it very much. “Cousin, you’re really amazing.”

Yu Youyao did not want to show off in front of her cousin. She was happy to be praised by him, but also a little embarrassed. “Cousin, this sachet uses double-sided embroidery, and there are patterns on both sides. Although the other side is also embroidered with green bamboo patterns, the type and posture of the bamboo are a little different. I’ve only just started learning this embroidery skill, so I couldn’t make two completely different sides. but when you’re tired of this side, you can flip it.”

“Okay.” Zhou Linghuai nodded.

“This is your first time in the Jade Courtyard. I’ll take you for a walk.” Yu Youyao stood up and walked around to Zhou Linghuai’s back. Just as her hand was on the armrest of the wheelchair, she recalled how she had almost caused Cousin to fall previously. She lowered her hand awkwardly and retreated to the side.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. “Okay.”

The Jade Courtyard was not renovated like the Green House, so it wasn’t as convenient for wheelchairs to come and go. They stopped at the door, and Chang An half-carried the wheelchair over the threshold.

After that, Zhou Linghuai turned the wheels and went ahead.

Seeing that her cousin was moving with such ease, Yu Youyao couldn’t help but take a few more glances.

Noticing her gaze, Zhou Linghuai explained, “My legs aren’t nimble, so I’ve trained some arm strength, and my arms are more flexible and strong.”

Yu Youyao praised sincerely, “Cousin, you’re amazing.”

Zhou Linghuai laughed and changed the topic. “Imperial Physician Hu’s prescription is excellent. Thank you.”

Yu Youyao’s eyes lit up when she heard that. She was sincerely happy for him. “That’s great.”

He did not ask if the prescription had been given by her. Imperial Physician Hu couldn’t have produced something like that for him, but the Xie family of Quanzhou could.

Zhou Linghuai felt a headache coming on when he thought of the messy medicinal herbs needed for the prescription. However, he naturally had to accept and appreciate the young lady’s kind intentions.

According to Uncle Sun, this Essence Protection Pill was a secret recipe that could replenish his vitality. If he managed to take this pill for a long time, at least he wouldn’t have to worry about his lifespan anymore.

In the afternoon, Yu Zongzheng returned from the government office. When he heard that Concubine He had been grounded and Yu Qingning had been punished, he frowned.

His fourth daughter, Qing Ning, was smart and charming, and he doted on her a lot. The moment he heard that she had been punished, he immediately asked Zhao Da about what had happened in the residence.

Zhao Da did not dare to hide anything any longer.

Yu Zongzheng's impression of his eldest daughter had changed a little, but compared to his fourth daughter, whom he had always adored, he couldn't help but feel a little biased. Still, he couldn't say much since Qing Ning had caused Yao Yao to cry while hugging her mother's portrait.

At this moment, Qing Xiu came over. "Old Madam has invited Master over."

Yu Zongzheng hurriedly went to An Shou Hall and saw Old Madam Yu sitting on the soft couch, leaning against the pillow and dozing off. She did not look too well. When he looked around but did not see Madam Yang, he was a little unhappy. "Mother, Madam Yang is supposed to be observing the rules by your side. Why isn't she serving you?"

After a day, the anger in his heart had dissipated a little. Thinking that Madam Yang had used Jia Jia's health to trick him only because she had been jealous when she found out that he had gone to Clear Autumn Courtyard, he had planned to speak up for her in front of his mother.

But now, he was a little displeased once again.

Other families had daughters-in-law who observed rules by being by their mother-in-law's side at all times, serving tea and water. Madam Yang, on the other hand, had run off somewhere to slack off—how unbecoming of a daughter-in-law.

His mother was already at such an old age, and did not have great health, but still had to fret and be concerned over the household matters due to Madam Yang's incompetence at management.

Yet, Madam Yang did not reflect on herself, and went somewhere to hide instead.