

All Hail 621

Chapter 621: Hostility

It was an indisputable fact that Rui i er had fallen into the water in the Duke Rongs Residence. If this matter was investigated, it would definitely cause the Duke Rong's Residence to be unable to bear the consequences.

The Third Prince suddenly heaved a sigh of relief.

Imperial Consort Xu continued to explain, "During this period of time, just say that you're sick in bed. Everything outside has nothing to do with you. Don't worry, this matter involves the face of the royal family and the reputation of an imperial relative's family. The Yu Residence won't dare to criticize you."

Her only worry now was that once the matter blew up, the Second Prince would use this matter to slander Rui i er.

On the way back to the residence, Madam Yao and Yu Youyao accompanied Old Madam Yu in a carriage.

As soon as Old Madam Yu got into the carriage, she hugged Yu Youyao and cried.

No matter how Madam Yao and Yu Youyao tried to persuade her, it was useless.

Seeing that the carriage had arrived at Chang An Street, the more Old Madam Yu thought about it, the more she couldn't take it lying down. She hit the window hard and shouted, "Stop the carriage, stop the carriage immediately..."

Tao Da, who was driving the carriage outside, quickly stopped the carriage and asked through the curtain, "Matriarch, do you have any instructions?"

Old Madam Yu looked at Madam Yao with swollen eyes. "Bring Yao Yao and the others back first. I want to enter the palace to meet the Empress Dowager." Madam Yao was shocked and quickly advised, "Matriarch, you've just woken up from a sudden illness. You have to take care of your health. How can you go to the palace to cause trouble again? Eldest Uncle just turned around and went to the government office of the Imperial Court. Master has also entered the palace, so he definitely won't let the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence off. Don't worry and return to the residence to wait for the news first."

After Matriarch had gotten into the carriage, she had been anxious and repeatedly instructed Tao Da to drive slower, afraid that the bumpy journey would cause trouble again when Matriarch had just woken up.

Now that she heard that Matriarch Lu wanted to go to the palace, she was so anxious that her teeth hurt.

Yu Youyao advised, "Grandmother, there won't be a conclusion to this matter for a while. At the very least, we have to return to the residence first and hand over a token to the palace. We have to change into big makeup. We can only enter the palace logically when a letter is sent from the palace. It's really inappropriate for you to ask to see the Empress Dowager so rashly."

No matter what, she had to coax her grandmother back to the residence first.

Old Madam Yu did not listen to her advice and insisted, “No, that old woman from the Duke Rongs Residence looks kind, but her heart is harder than a rock. If I don’t enter the palace before her and ask to see the Empress

Dowager, she might beat me to it and run to her to apologize. The Empress Dowager cares about the dignity of the imperial family, so she might be able to let them get away with it.”

When it came to the Empress Dowager, wouldn’t the Duke Rong’s Residence be at an advantage?

The Duke Rong’s Residence did not have the guts to lie to the Empress

Dowager, but they could avoid the main problem.

The higher-ups did not care about the process of a matter. They only valued the outcome.

The outcome of this matter was that Yao Yao’s reputation was not damaged.

However, if this matter blew up, it would affect the dignity of the imperial family.

It was obvious which was more important.

When Madam Yao heard this, she knew that she couldn’t persuade her. “But, your health...”

The Matriarch waved her hand. “There’s no need to say anything else. All of you, get out!”

Yu Youyao was also worried, but she had no choice but to turn around and instruct Nanny Liu.

She had always prepared all kinds of incense pills for her grandmother. When she went out today, she picked out some that she could use and asked Nanny Liu to bring a portion along too.

There were also many taboos regarding her illness. Previously, she had handed the incense medicine she had brought over to Imperial Physician Hu for a check. Imperial Physician Hu had picked out incense medicine that nourished the Yin and kidneys. He said that it could stabilize her condition.

She picked out two more emergency medicine and instructed that if Matriarch had a headache or dizziness, she could use emergency medicine to relieve the symptoms.

Yu Youyao explained everything without missing a single detail.

Nanny Liu also noted them down one by one.

After explaining everything that needed to be explained, Yu Youyao threw herself into her grandmother’s arms with tears in her eyes. “Grandmother, where’s there’s life there’s hope! You have to be well. Don’t let Yao Yao worry.”

Old Madam Yu patted her granddaughter’s back. “Don’t worry. I know what I’m doing.”

Madam Yao and Yu Youyao alighted from the carriage.

Madam Yao was worried about Matriarch Yu and couldn’t help but glance at Yu Youyao.

A 13 -year-old girl had delicate hair and was waiting to spit out stamens. Her chest rose and fell, making her figure look even more slender and gentle. She stood quietly and was different from others. Her figure seemed to be boneless, revealing a kind of elegance.

She was very graceful and looked a little pitiful.

How exquisite!

She had a beautiful voice and expression. She was elegant.

No wonder even Imperial Consort Xu took a fancy to her.

Thinking of what had happened in Duke Rong's Residence just now, Madam

Yao felt a surge of hidden anger.

This was not Yu Youyao's fault.

However, it still happened because of Yu Youyao.

Logically speaking!

All these years, the Second Mansion had treated Yu Youyao well. Yu Youyao had also taken good care of Shuangbai and the others, taking care of Matriarch. As her daughter-in-law, she had saved her a lot of trouble.

She was not dissatisfied with Yu Youyao.

However, seeing that Yu Youyao was becoming more and more like Madam Xie back then, Madam Yao couldn't get close to her.

Back then, when she married into the Yu Residence and served tea the next day, this was the first time she had seen a semblance of her eldest sister-in-law.

Madam Xie was wearing a red dress with black and gold peonies. She was exquisite and charming. At that moment, she felt a sense of hostility towards her beautiful and bright eldest sister-in-law. There was no inexplicable hostility.

They were all daughters-in-law, so there was naturally some comparison. Matriarch Xie was clearly more biased towards Madam Xie.

At that time, she was young and impetuous, not because she was competitive, but because she felt a little uncomfortable being suppressed by a businesswoman from Madam Xie. She couldn't help but complain to Master.

Master had a smile on his lips as he reminded her calmly, "Eldest

Sister-in-law is like a mother. You should respect her more. Don't mention what you said today again in the future. It's an insult to your upbringing as a scholar."

That was the first time she had heard such sarcasm, scolding, and even warning from her gentle and refined husband.

She looked at the gentle smile on her new husband's lips and almost thought that she had heard wrongly.

Fortunately, not long after, Master suggested to Matriarch that they split up the family.

At that time, she had naively thought that Yu Zongshen had taken the initiative to ask to split the families up for her, so she was naturally overjoyed.

However, the days after the separation were not as easy as she had thought.

Other than resting in her room on the first, fifteenth, and thirtieth days of the new year, Yu Zongshen usually stayed in the study. Even when he rested in her room, he often used the excuse of being tired and was unwilling to touch her.

At that time, she was filled with longing and love for him. Naturally, she was unwilling to be ignored. After failing to please Yu Zongzheng, she returned to her maiden home and looked for her mother to come up with an idea. Her mother told her not to think too much about it. Her son-in-law had a bright future, so it was inevitable that he would be concerned about the royal court. Although he was gentle and not as considerate as others, he still treated her with great respect.

As a wife, she shouldn't cause trouble for her husband..

Chapter 622: Ruined Reputation

Perhaps because she could tell that she was really uneasy, her mother advised her to give birth to a son and a daughter for Yu Zongshen as soon as possible.

With children, a man would have half of his heart at home.

However, she felt bitter.

Yu Zongzheng did not touch her often. Even if she wanted to give birth, she could not.

She said vaguely that Yu Zongshen had a lot of work to do every day and was often busy late at night.

Her mother did not think too much about it. As soon as Yu Zongshen entered the royal court, he was placed in an important position. It would definitely be more difficult for him than others, so her mother secretly gave her a prescription.

If she took the medicine half a month after her period, it would be easier for her to get pregnant.

Her three children were all obtained through this method.

For some reason, when Madam Yao thought of Madam Xie, she suddenly thought of the past. Her heart turned cold, and she glanced at Yu Youyao, who was standing beside her.

She looked 50-60% like Madam Xie and she felt frustrated.

The carriage behind her gradually stopped. Madam Yao took a deep breath.

"You sisters will take a carriage. I'll squeeze in with the maidservants at the back."

It wasn't until the Yu Residence's carriage resumed its journey that Zhou Linghuai lowered the window curtain.

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

Zhou Linghuai rubbed the string of honey-yellow incense beads on his wrist.

This string of incense beads was made by Yu Youyao two years ago with Myrrh and Frankincense.

The effect was the opposite of the cooling beads.

One was for clearing heat, and the other was to prevent dryness.

Perhaps because they were played with often, the incense beads were shiny. The honey yellow color also looked solemn.

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "No wonder I feel so frustrated today. It turns out that I forgot to change the cold-repelling incense bead to the cooling beads."

Yin San knelt on one knee in the carriage and lowered his head, staring at the dust on the ground.

Just now, he had watched helplessly as Young Master crushed a black chess piece between his fingers into a handful of black ash.

"What despicable thing is this?" The person who had been laughing just now suddenly had a dark expression. His sinister voice made one's heart skip a beat. 'Go and send a message to that person in the palace. Concubine Lu has been in the cold for long enough. It's time for her to come out."

Yin San lowered his head in agreement.

Zhou Linghuai thought about it and felt that this was too easy on that dog. He pondered for a moment. "I heard that there are also many idle relatives in the imperial family who want to imitate the current emperor and refine medicinal pills? There are even people who are bold and rash enough to secretly refine the Hanshi powder recipe?" At this point, he changed the topic. "Think of a way to get Yin Huairui, that dog, involved."

In the past dynasties, Hanshi powder had been banned repeatedly but enforcement was not strict. Even the medicinal pills that the current emperor had taken in the past two years had some Hanshi powder added.

One's stamina would become stronger after taking this medicine, he was in high spirits. Even though most people knew that this medicine was harmful to their bodies, they still felt they would be lucky. As long as they controlled the dosage, they would be fine.

In the end, they became addicted to it and couldn't extricate themselves. Yin San was shocked when he heard Young Master say, "Get someone to take care of Old Madam Yu in the palace. Don't let anything happen to her."

Zhou Linghuai thought about it again. The little girl had been standing by the roadside just now, and her eyes were red and swollen. It was obvious that not only had she suffered grievances in Rong Residence, but she had also been frightened.

When the Third Prince became addicted to Hanshi powder and made a fool of himself, it would be time for his reputation to be ruined.

He had always liked to cut his flesh with a blunt knife. Moreover, he was the kind of person who would give others a taste of their own medicine.

In the Yi Kun Palace, the Empress, who had been sick for a long time, was wearing a grayish-blue silk robe. Her head was combed into a bun and was simply fixed with a wooden stick. There were no more accessories on her body.

Perhaps because she had been sick for a long time, the Empress's face was a little sallow and she did not look too good, but she was in good spirits. She carried a small wooden bucket and watered the flowers in the courtyard like an ordinary farmer's wife.

There were many expensive peony flowers planted in the courtyard.

April and May were flowering seasons. All kinds of peonies were rushing to bloom, and they were beautiful.

At this moment, the head palace maid, Dan Hong, walked over. "Your Majesty, there's news from outside the palace."

The Empress patiently watered the vermillion peonies in front of her before throwing the ladle into the wooden bucket. "Oh? Ever since the Flower Festival in the Marquis of Changxings Residence three years ago, you haven't taken the initiative to send a message to me for a long time." At this point, she smiled meaningfully. "What news was spread this time?"

Dan Hong took a step forward and whispered into the Empress's ear.

After a while, the Empress smiled again. "Consort Xu's move is very brilliant, but she's a little anxious and her steps are too fast and big." At this point, she sighed slightly. "She doesn't lack schemes and brains. It's just that she's been suppressed by Concubine Lu for too long after so many years. Now that

Concubine Lu has entered the Cold Palace and she's in charge of the phoenix seal, she became arrogant once she gained power. In the end, it's difficult for her to achieve anything big like Concubine Lu."

It was not that she was not smart, but that she was too smart. It was inevitable that she would be arrogant.

She had thought it through very well and her schemes were not bad. If it were anyone else, she would have succeeded. However, she had forgotten that Old Madam Yu was a widow and had guarded her family for half her life. How could she be someone who would let her family suffer?

Dan Hong lowered her head and said nothing.

The Empress took a pair of small gold scissors from the tray in the little palace maid's hand and bent down to trim the branches. "There will always be many flower buds on a flower tree. If you want the flowers to bloom beautifully, leave a flower bud on each branch. You have to trim all the excess." At this point, she picked out a pot of peony that had yet to bloom and trimmed the extra flower bud on it. "As the Empress of the Flowers, how can you have two masters at once?!"

Dan Hong took a look. The pot had the Empress's favorite peonies. The flowers were purple-red and in the shape of a lotus crown. The flowers were large and voluptuous. They were incomparably noble and beautiful. They were praised by the world as the Empress of Flowers!

The Empress continued to trim the excess leaves. "At night, go to the Qianji Palace and tell the emperor that my appetite hasn't been good recently and I often miss the milk cake that Concubine Lu made in the secret residence. I looked for the imperial kitchen to make some. However, it doesn't taste the same."

Dan Hong lowered her head in agreement.

All these years, the Empress rarely asked for anything. If she wanted to eat a mouthful of milk cake, there was no reason for the emperor not to fulfill her wish.

Back then, the emperor had married Concubine Lu first, and only welcomed the Empress into the residence half a year later. When he mentioned the secret residence back then, the emperor couldn't help but think of his relationship with Concubine Lu.

The Empress sighed slightly. "What a pity. There's no difference to me who becomes the emperor except the Third Prince."

The Xu Residence was powerful. If the Third Prince really took that position, would Imperial Consort Xu still be willing to continue living under someone else and hand over the position of Empress Dowager to someone else to be a concubine?

Ning Yuanbo's residence was sealed. If the Second Prince wanted to ascend the throne, he would need the Empress's help. In the future, when the Second

Prince ascended the throne, he would still need the legitimate Empress to stabilize the court for him.

There was even less of a need to talk about the Fourth Prince..

Chapter 623 - 623: Consort

The Empress continued to cut the branches. "We have to return the 354 blood debts of the Ning Residence one by one."

Dan Hong lowered her head tightly.

Ever since the entire Ning Residence was executed back then, the Empress had lost her beloved son in a daze. After being sick for a long time, she was now very pitiful.

People thought she was mourning for the late emperor.

However, her curses and hatred for the emperor had never stopped.

At this moment, the Empress Dowager of the Longevity Palace also received a token from Old Madam Yu.

The Empress Dowager put down her teacup. "The last time I saw Old Madam Yu was two years ago. When King Li of Zhou died, Old Madam Yu entered the palace. At that time, Old Madam Yu was still weak, but she was in good spirits."

Auntie Shen smiled and said, "Old Madam Yu is also blessed. Eldest Miss Yu has learned fragrance, medicine, and food from Auntie Xu and has nourished

Old Madam Yu's health well."

The Empress Dowager was clearly not unfamiliar with Yu Youyao. "Filial piety is the most important. I wasn't wrong."

Miss Shen hurriedly said, "How could the Empress Dowager be wrong? Eldest Miss Yu even opened two good halls in the capital. One is in the east) and the other is in the west. She has taken in many orphans and widows. It's obvious that she's really virtuous."

The Empress Dowager also knew about this. She pondered for a moment.

"Fourth Brother isn't young anymore, right?"

Auntie Shen lowered her eyes. "Fourth Prince is 17 years old, half a year younger than the Third Prince."

The Empress Dowager twirled the prayer beads on her wrist. "Second and Third Brothers will naturally be managed by their mothers, so there's no need for me to worry. Poor Fourth Brother..." At this point, her expression softened and she said, "What do you think about me giving Eldest Miss Yu to Fourth Brother as a concubine?"

Miss Shen even lowered her head. "I think the Empress Dowager has already made a decision."

Since the Empress Dowager had mentioned it, there was no need for her to say anything else. No wonder the Empress Dowager had been paying a lot of attention to Eldest Miss Yu in the past few years. It turned out that she had such thoughts long ago.

The palace emphasized that a child's status depended on its mother. The Fourth Prince's status was a little low, but he was still a prince. He was more than worthy of Yu Youyao.

With the Empress Dowager's decree, this marriage was suitable.

The Empress Dowager picked up her teacup again. When Old Madam Yu came over later, she could take the opportunity to ask her for her opinion.

After handing over the token asking to see the Empress Dowager, not long after, an eunuch from the Longevity Palace came over. "The Empress Dowager has invited Old Madam Yu over."

"Thank you for leading the way, Eunuch." Old Madam Yu quickly took the pouch she had prepared in advance and stuffed it into the eunuch's hand.

After entering the palace, they had to follow the rules.

She had to make sure that all the palace servants she needed to interact with were clear.

The eunuch weighed it quietly and smiled more solicitously. "Matriarch's health isn't good. The Empress Dowager has specially allowed Matriarch to bring the servants into the palace to take care of her."

Although the Empress Dowager allowed her to bring servants into the palace, Old Madam Yu was also sensible and only brought Nanny Liu along. Qing Xiu and Bai Kui stayed in the carriage.

Nanny Liu supported Old Madam Yu and followed behind the eunuch. Along the way, she lowered her eyes and took countless turns before finally arriving at the Longevity Palace.

Immediately, a nanny from the palace came over and took Nanny Liu away.

The eunuch continued to lead Old Madam Yu into the outer hall. "Matriarch, please sit down for a moment."

Old Madam Yu knew that she had to report to the Empress Dowager first, so she nodded. "Please go ahead."

The eunuch lifted the bright yellow curtain and entered the inner hall.

Old Madam Yu sat in the outer hall and waited. The little palace maid cleverly served tea and snacks.

After rushing all the way here, Old Madam Yu happened to be a little thirsty. Before the Empress Dowager's arrival was announced, she quickly picked up her tea and drank it.

After drinking a cup of warm tea, she remembered that there was still a tough battle to fight later. She forced herself to eat a few more snacks to fill her stomach and finally felt a little more energetic.

It took more than an hour to enter the palace from outside.

At this time, the figureheads in the palace would not summon them immediately. They would need time to rest and tidy up their clothes and appearances in order not to lose their manners in front of the nobles. After that, Old Madam Yu went to the side hall to tidy up her clothes.

Not long after, an eunuch led Old Madam Yu into the inner hall.

Old Madam Yu lowered her eyes until she saw a pair of bright yellow embroidered shoes. Then, she knelt on the ground and bowed. "Greetings, Empress Dowager. May you live a long and healthy life."

The Empress Dowager looked at Old Madam Yu arrogantly. She was dressed in an imperial mandate dress. Clearly, she had long planned to enter the palace to seek an audience.

Thinking of the Flower Festival at Duke Rong's Residence today, her gaze darkened slightly. "Get up!"

Old Madam Yu crawled on the ground without moving. "I beg the Empress Dowager to make a decision for me."

The inner hall was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop!

The Empress Dowager looked at Old Madam Yu for a long time before saying, "If you have anything to say, sit down and talk."

"Thank you, Empress Dowager."

Auntie Shen gave the little palace maid a look, and the little palace maid

hurriedly went forward to help Old Madam Yu up.

The Empress Dowager's heart skipped a beat. Old Madam Yu's face was ashen, her lips were purple, and her eyes were swollen. When she stood up, her old body trembled.

She looked like she had suffered a huge blow.

The Empress Dowager frowned. "Go to the Imperial Hospital and call an imperial physician over to take a look at Old Madam Yu."

Old Madam Yu was flattered and almost knelt on the ground to thank her.

Seeing that Old Madam Yu had settled down, the Empress Dowager asked, "If you have anything to say, say it slowly!"

When Old Madam Yu heard this, tears streamed down her face. She quickly wiped her tears with a handkerchief. "It turned out that the Duke Rong's Residence was holding a flower festival today and had sent an invitation to our family. I brought my daughter-in-law along with a few older sisters

in the family. Who knew that the Duke Rong's Residence would lose their conscience and actually want to ruin our Eldest Miss's reputation..."

An eunuch stood silently behind the bright yellow curtain of the outer hall.

In the inner hall, Old Madam Yu was crying to the Empress Dowager about what had happened at the Flower Festival in Duke Rong's Residence. Towards the end, she was already sobbing uncontrollably.

Her low voice made anyone's heart ache.

Old Madam Yu had been a widow in her early years, and her virtue had always made her a role model. Which family in the capital didn't praise Old Madam Yu?

Even the Empress Dowager praised Old Madam Yu when she occasionally mentioned her.

However, such a role model was bullied by the imperial family. A young miss in the family almost ruined her reputation.

If Old Madam Yu had not reported about what the Duke Rong's Residence did, this matter could have been reduced to a small matter. However, if Old Madam Yu reported it, they had to give an explanation.

In the past, they were relatives of the Great Zhou Dynasty who had humiliated external ministers and were punished and conferred titles.

The eunuch waited until there was no sound in the inner hall before raising his voice to report, "Your Highness, the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence is requesting an audience outside the palace..

Chapter 624 - 624: Brothers Fighting for a Daughter

The Empress Dowager raised her eyebrows slightly. "Go ahead!"

After hearing Old Madam Yu's tearful complaint, she already understood what had happened.

Since Old Madam Yu had brazenly reported it to her, this matter couldn't be fake.

However, the Empress Dowager wouldn't only listen to Old Madam Yu's words and still sent someone out of the palace to investigate.

Seeing Old Madam Yu's tears, the Empress Dowager also sighed. "The Duke

Rong's Residence is indeed too outrageous. Since the Princess Consort of Duke

Rong's Residence has also entered the palace, I'll listen to what she has to say. Old Madam, calm down."

At this point, she glanced at the agarwood prayer beads hanging on Old Madam Yu's wrist and recalled that before the previous emperor was alive, he valued Old Master Yu very much.

It was also because of this that she often invited Old Madam Yu into the palace to talk. She also made two strings of prayer beads and gave one to her.

Old Master Yu was patrolling the water disaster for the Imperial Court. On the way, he had asked the mudslide that had rolled down the mountain to be buried in the ground. That was why he lost his life.

When the previous emperor received this news, he was very heartbroken. "I've lost another good minister."

From then on, the previous emperor took good care of the Yu Residence.

Thinking of the past, the Empress Dowager looked at Old Madam Yu again.

She used to be beautiful and straightforward, but after experiencing hardships, she was already old and pitiful.

Old Master Yu had lost his life for the Imperial Court. Old Madam Yu had been loyal and righteous for most of her life. Second Master Yu and the Xie family had also contributed greatly to helping the Imperial Court lift the sea ban. Eldest Master Yu had not made much progress in the Imperial Court, but he was considered diligent. The entire family was loyal and contributed greatly.

The matter of the Duke Rong's Residence could not be covered up in public.

The Empress Dowager continued, "No matter what, Eldest Miss Yu almost ruined her reputation. Old Madam Yu suddenly fell ill and injured your body. Even the Duke Rong's Residence can't escape responsibility. I will definitely make a decision for you."

Old Madam Yu knelt on the ground with a thud. "Thank you, Empress Dowager."

The Empress Dowager hurriedly said, "You're not in good health, so don't kneel for no reason. Get up quickly!"

The little palace maid hurriedly went forward to help Old Madam Yu up.

At this moment, an eunuch came over to report, "Matriarch, Imperial Physician Hu is here."

Old Madam Yu was a little surprised.

On second thought, she understood that Imperial Physician Hu was the Imperial Physician of the Imperial Academy of Medicine. Now that the matter of the Third Prince falling into the water had spread, Imperial Physician Hu would definitely have to return to the palace early.

Not long after, Imperial Physician Hu carried the medicine box into the inner hall and knelt down to the Empress Dowager. He was ordered to take Old Madam Yu's pulse.

Previously, Old Madam Yu suddenly had a Yang problem. As she had received first aid and acupuncture and taken the incense medicine to treat it. She was fine now, but because she had not rested well, her symptoms had worsened.

Imperial Physician Hu prescribed a pill to relieve the symptoms and instructed repeatedly, "Don't let your emotions intensify. You have to be calm and nourish your mind. Rest more and don't tire out."

The Empress Dowager lowered her eyes. It seemed that Old Madam Yu had really suffered a lot when she was unconscious in the Duke Rong's Residence.

She had already taken a fancy to Old Madam Yu's character. At the Flower

Festival in the Marquis of Changxing's Residence, she had also found out that Eldest Miss Yu was a virtuous girl like Old Madam Yu. That was why she was moved.

In the past few years, there had been droughts of varying degrees everywhere in the country. This year, it was especially serious. She also had the intention to borrow Eldest Miss Yu's family's wealth and the Xie family's channels to resolve the droughts everywhere.

However, she had never thought of tainting the good young lady of someone else's family to secure the fourth prince's concubine.

The fourth prince had a good personality. This was not considered random matchmaking and harming a good young lady.

However, now that something happened in Duke Rong's Residence, it was not good to mention the marriage anymore.

Otherwise, wouldn't it become a competition between brothers over a daughter? It would be considered a conflict between family members. If word got out, it would damage the dignity of the royal family.

At the thought of this, the Empress Dowager couldn't help but feel angry.

After Old Madam Yu took the medicine, she asked the little palace maid to help her to the side hall to rest. She only returned to the inner hall when the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence came over.

The Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence was wearing heavy makeup and did not even apply any powder on her face. Just like that, her face was pale and her eyes were swollen as she knelt in front of the Empress Dowager to apologize.

As Old Madam Yu was present, she had already thought it through and avoided the main point. She did not dare to say anything else.

The Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence Prefecture cried miserably. "Empress Dowager, it's because I saw that Eldest Miss Yu was well-mannered that I had designs on her. However, our Brother Zhang doesn't have the title of heir, nor does he have a position. How can he be worthy of Old Madam Yu's meticulously raised eldest daughter? I'm just worried that if Old Madam Yu doesn't say it, my daughter-in-law will be snatched away..."

Old Madam Yu was not surprised by this explanation. None of the old fellows in wealthy families who could last until their age were simple.

It was not rare for a wealthy family to use all kinds of methods to marry a virtuous wife for the next generation.

The Empress Dowager held a pink peony teacup and lowered her eyes, not saying anything.

Old Madam Yu only said that Fifth Miss Yin had lured Eldest Miss Yu to crepe

myrtle garden. Eldest Miss Yu sensed that something was amiss and returned to the reception pavilion, not taking it seriously.

Unexpectedly, as soon as Eldest Miss Yu returned to the reception pavilion, a maidservant rushed over to report that the Third Prince had fallen into the water.

Old Madam Yu only explained what had happened in the reception pavilion, not daring to implicate the Third Prince. She did not mention anything about him after that.

The crepe myrtle garden was in the inner courtyard, so it was already inappropriate for an outsider to go to the inner courtyard. It was impossible for the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence not to know about this. Not to mention what happened to the Third Prince, the intentions of the Duke Rong's Residence to harm Eldest Miss Yu were obvious.

This matter could not be more obvious.

The Princess Consort was taking all the blame alone. This excuse could be maintained. As long as it did not implicate the dignity of the royal family, some things would be easier.

The Duke Rong's Residence was still sensible.

The Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence cried. "The old Princess Consort lost her temper and said that she wanted to send Fifth Miss to a nunnery. Who knew that our Fifth Miss was also a stubborn person? She actually took it too hard and hung her head in the house. The maidservant in front of her also knew that she couldn't escape and died with her..."

If her master hung her neck right under her nose, the maidservant in front of her would definitely not survive. If she took the initiative to die for her master, she would also gain a good reputation for being loyal. The residence would also treat her family well.

Old Madam Yu's hand trembled, and she felt suffocated.

Fifth Miss Yin and the maidservant in front of her were people that Yao Yao had interacted with and participated in this matter. Now that they were dead and there was no evidence, everything was still up to the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence to say.

Fifth Miss Yin had given up her life. The Duke Rong's Residence had pretended to be pitiful in front of the Empress Dowager to hide the truth) so it could be considered an explanation to the Yu Residence.

Fifth Miss Yin was the daughter of a concubine, so she naturally couldn't compare to Yao Yao.

Yao Yao's reputation had not been damaged, but people in the Duke Rong's Residence had lost their lives after all. The Empress Dowager had to show pity when she paid respects to Buddha.

The Empress Dowager said calmly, "Your Duke Rong's Residence is really too outrageous.."

Chapter 625 - 625: The Emperor Is Not Dead Yet

When the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence heard this, her body fell to the ground and she cried miserably, "Empress Dowager, it's all my fault. Please punish me."

The Empress Dowager was annoyed. "Go out and kneel."

However, she did not say how to punish her.

The Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence left the inner hall with an ashen face. The Empress Dowager looked at Old Madam Yu. "I already know about this. Old Madam Yu isn't feeling well, so you should go back first."

Old Madam Yu heaved a sigh of relief. The Empress Dowager had finally given her an explanation.

Next, it depended on the situation of Second Brother entering the palace to meet the emperor, as well as the actions of the Imperial Court.

After Yu Zongshen left the palace, the memorials from the Imperial Court to impeach the Duke Rong's residence were sent into the palace in an endless stream. The emperor called Duke Rong into the palace for questioning.

Duke Rong's words were generally the same as the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence.

The emperor was sitting in the imperial study. He had been taking medicinal pills all year round, causing his face to be green and gray, and his lips to be purple. He supported his forehead with one hand, looking listless.

"Is there anything extraordinary about Lord Yu's eldest daughter?"

Eldest Miss Yu alone had stirred up the entire court. He had to understand what kind of situation Eldest Miss Yu was in.

Eunuch Zhu's eyes flashed, and he lowered his head. He bowed and said, "Lord Yu's first wife is from Madam Xie's family in Quanzhou. Madam Xie is unlucky and passed away not long after giving birth to her eldest daughter. Eldest Miss Yu has been raised by her Grandmother, Old Madam Yu. It's said that at such a young age, she already has her Grandmother's demeanor. She can already manage the family business and the dowry business left behind by her biological mother, Madam Xie. Three years ago, she was even praised by the Empress Dowager. The Empress Dowager personally gave her a palace token made of Lantian jade. I even heard that Eldest Miss Yu is the number one beauty in the capital."

After hearing this, the emperor could only tell three key points.

Firstly, Eldest Miss Yu's maternal family was the Xie Residence in Quanzhou.

Everyone in the world knew that the Xie Residence was wealthy.

Secondly, Eldest Miss Yu had inherited a large dowry from her mother, or even most of the Yu Residence's assets.

Thirdly, Eldest Miss Yu had even been praised by her mother.

The emperor gently rubbed the green ring in his hand. "Oh? In that case, it would be good to have a marriage with her."

Eunuch Zhu lowered his head.

There was a moment of silence in the imperial study—

After a while, the emperor opened his eyes and said ambiguously, "How's the Third Prince?"

Eunuch Zhu hurriedly said, "Not long after Eldest Miss Yu returned to the reception pavilion, the Third Prince accidentally fell into the water. I heard that he was quite shocked and returned to the

palace with wet clothes.” At first glance, there was nothing wrong with his words.

However, after thinking about it carefully, it made people feel strange. The Third Prince was a grown up. Why did he suddenly fall into the water?

Why did he not fall into the water earlier or later? Why did he fall into the water after Eldest Miss Yu sensed that something was amiss and returned to the reception pavilion?

Moreover, after falling into the water, he did not even care about her health and returned to the palace. This was suspicious.

If the same words were said in different ways, the meaning would be very different.

Anyone who could reach Eunuch Zhu’s position in the deep palace was proficient in this.

The emperor’s expression changed. “Duke Rong said that the Princess Consort of Duke Rong’s Residence Prefecture has taken a fancy to Eldest Miss Yu and was momentarily obsessed. She wanted to lure Eldest Miss Yu to the crepe myrtle garden to meet her son, Yin Huairui, privately.” At this point, the corners of his mouth twitched, and he looked like he was about to laugh. “Why wasn’t Yin Huaizhang at the crepe myrtle garden? Instead, Third Brother is involved?”

He did not believe a word that Yin Huaizhang had unknowingly lured the Third Prince to the crepe myrtle garden.

Eunuch Zhu even bent down.

The emperor changed the topic and asked, “Does the Third Prince know how to swim?”

Eunuch Zhu hurriedly said, “Yes, Your Majesty.”

The emperor looked as if he had expected this. His expression was dark. “He knows how to swim, so why was he still shocked? I’m afraid that he was deliberately putting on a good show of falling into the water and using it as an excuse to return to the palace.”

Eldest Miss Yu first sensed that something was amiss with the crepe myrtle and returned to the reception pavilion. Only then did Third Brother fall into the water and return to the palace.

It appeared to be a coincidence.

Eunuch Zhu did not dare to say anything else. “After the Third Prince returned to the palace, the imperial physician was summoned to Jingren Palace to treat him. I heard that he has to recuperate for a while. He should have suffered some injuries.”

It was as if he was saying that the Third Prince was really frightened, but in the emperor’s ears, that was not the case at all. “How long will it take for Duke Rong’s Residence to reach the palace?”

Eunuch Zhu said, “About an hour.”

The emperor smiled playfully. “Look, if his body was really injured and frightened because he fell into the water, he wouldn’t have waited until he returned to the palace to call the imperial physician. It would take more than an hour to travel back. Wouldn’t that delay his treatment?”

Eunuch Zhu lowered his eyes and said nothing.

The emperor was already very suspicious. In the past two years, his health had been deteriorating, and he couldn't do without the Jinshi medicinal pills. The amount of medicinal pills he used had also increased, and his personality had become more unpredictable.

Just a little guidance could arouse the emperor's suspicion.

The emperor sneered. "If he really wants to marry her as his main concubine, he only needs to discuss it with the Empress Dowager. After receiving the

Empress Dowager's permission, she can ask Madam Xu to go to the Yu Residence to look for Old Madam Yu. It doesn't matter if it's successful or not. This is the proper way.

Eunuch Zhu knelt on the ground with a thud.

"He just had to use this despicable move." Due to his anger, an abnormal flush appeared on the emperor's pale face. "I remember very clearly that the Yu Clan has the rule that women can't become concubines. They were so insistent that they did not hesitate to ruin the reputation of a woman. If they didn't have other thoughts, why would they have schemed to this extent?"

Yu Youyao was the eldest daughter of the first wife of the Yu Residence.

Not to mention that the Yu Clan had the rule that women were not to be concubines, even if there was no such rule, how could the eldest daughter of a wealthy family be a concubine?

Even if she was a prince's side concubine, she was still a concubine.

They knew very well that it was impossible for Old Madam Yu to agree to let the eldest daughter of the first wife be the prince's secondary concubine so they wanted to force her to agree.

The emperor was cold. With a flick of his sleeve, he swept the stack of memorials on the imperial table to the ground and said angrily, "I'm not dead yet, but they're already coveting my position?!"

Eunuch Zhu knelt on the ground and trembled.

After being angry, the emperor's body panicked, and his heart became even more irritable. "Go and call Consort Xu over."

Eunuch Zhu felt as if he had been pardoned and quickly left the imperial study.

At this moment, his godfather, Eunuch He, walked over with a silver tray. When he saw Eunuch Zhu standing at the entrance of the courtyard wiping his sweat, he asked, "What's wrong?"

Eunuch Zhu took a step forward and moved closer to his godfather, telling him everything the emperor had said in the imperial study.

However, he did not say what he had said to the emperor.

Eunuch He immediately felt that the medicinal pill in his hand was a little hot.

"There aren't many peaceful days left in the palace."

He had served the emperor for many years and understood him well..

Chapter 626 - 626: Reinstated

The emperor refined medicinal pills to live forever in order to enjoy his blessed life. He had not chosen an heir for many years because he was longing for imperial power and was unwilling to let go.

Consort Xu had taken a step too quickly, causing the emperor to be suspicious.

In Yongning Palace, when Imperial Consort Xu found out that the emperor wanted to summon her, her heart skipped a beat. She did not dare to delay and quickly dressed up before going to the imperial study.

Along the way, Imperial Consort Xu felt very uneasy and had to ask Eunuch Zhu about it.

However, Eunuch Zhu was too tight-lipped and only said, "I'm not sure either. When the Imperial Consort sees the emperor, she'll naturally know."

After offending that person, he still wanted to escape unscathed?

She was asking for trouble!

Consort Xu's left eyebrow twitched violently. At this point, she wouldn't confuse her left eye with her left eyebrow. She didn't know if it was true that her left eye was twitching.

But!

Her left eyebrow must be twitching out of danger!

Consort Xu rode the carriage all the way to the imperial study uneasily. The carriage stopped. Auntie Ye helped Consort Xu down and followed Eunuch Zhu into the imperial study.

Eunuch He waited until Imperial Consort Xu's carriage arrived at the imperial study before carrying the tray into it.

The emperor was leaning against the dragon throne, taking a nap. When he saw her enter, he frowned. "Why were you gone for so long?"

Eunuch He walked over quietly and placed the tray on the small table. He held the box containing the medicinal pills in his hand and bent down to hand it over. "The medicinal pills that just came out are still warm."

There was no need to say anything else. The emperor understood that he had been delayed because he was waiting for the medicinal pills. Hence, his expression softened a little, and he swallowed the medicinal pills and water.

As soon as the medicinal pills entered his stomach, the emperor felt his tired body regain its strength.

At this moment, Eunuch Zhu's voice came from outside. "Your Majesty, the Noble Consort is here."

The emperor sneered. "Come in!"

When Imperial Consort Xu entered the imperial study, she quickly bowed

The emperor had just taken the pills and his entire body was burning. He was flustered. He grabbed the memorial in front of him and threw it at Consort Xu's face. "Kneel!"

"Your Majesty." Imperial Consort Xu's legs went limp and she knelt on the ground. Immediately, tears welled up in her eyes as she said in a sorrowful voice, "I...

The emperor stared at Consort Xu with his red eyes. "Send the phoenix seal to the Longevity Palace and hand it over to the Empress Dowager. You!" He slowly stood up and pointed at Consort Xu. His dark purple lips turned cold. "You'll be punished with half a year of silver. The palace's allocation will be halved and you'll be grounded for three months." He looked at Consort Xu's shocked eyes. "Since Third Prince fell into the water and damaged his body and needs to recuperate, it's good that he's recuperating in the palace. Without my permission, you're not allowed to step out of the palace door!"

Imperial Consort Xu's body went limp as she explained miserably, "Your Majesty, I don't know what mistake I made to provoke you..."

The emperor was so frustrated that he was sweating. He panted heavily through his nose and glared at Consort Xu with red eyes. He was furious.

"Don't you know? You covet my empire. Do you also want me to die early? Are you also wishing for my death in private? Are you cursing me too? You b*tch..."

His roar was like a beast's, filled with ferocity. He stared fixedly at Consort Xu, wishing he could pounce on her and tear her apart.

Imperial Consort Xu looked at the emperor in horror. Her eyes were dark and wide, and they were shockingly red. There was a strange flush on both sides of his face, making his face look even more distorted, as if he wanted to eat someone.

"Your, Your Majesty, I'm innocent..." Imperial Consort Xu's body fell back. She placed her hands on her back and cowered in a sorry state, wanting to escape.

She had long heard that every time the emperor took a pill, he would be delirious, angry, and temperamental for no reason.

At this moment, Eunuch Zhu, who was guarding outside the imperial study, knocked on the door lightly. "Your Majesty, Auntie Dan Hong from Yi Kun Palace just came over and asked me to send a message to the emperor. She said that the Empress misses the milk cake that Consort Lu made back then."

The furious emperor sneered. "If she wants to eat it, let Concubine Lu make it for her. She even came over to bother me with such a small matter."

At this point, he seemed to have recalled that Concubine Lu had been sent to the cold palace and had even been conferred the title of Concubine Lan. However, everyone in the palace addressed her as Concubine Lu.

The emperor glanced at Consort Xu, who was in fear and trepidation. He couldn't help but think of his first wife, who cursed him to die early at all times. He had originally thought that Consort Xu

was still considered obedient, but who knew that she was also a b*tch with ulterior motives? Among the women in the palace, only Concubine Lu had followed him the longest.

Other than Ning Yuanbo's residence, Concubine Lan had indeed never bothered him all these years.

The emperor sneered. "Someone, send my decree. From today onwards, Concubine Lu will be reinstated as Concubine Lan..."

At this moment, Concubine Lu, who was in the cold palace, was holding a teacup and listening to the little palace maid report the commotion in the palace.

She was wearing a light green soft Yanluo style outfit. There was a deeper meaning behind it. Since she entered the Cold Palace, she should act like a

Concubine of the Cold Palace. It's better to be plain than show off and anger everyone.

However, even a light color could not suppress her beauty.

Concubine Lu had been with the emperor from the very beginning. When she was Secondary Concubine Lu, she was already glorious and doted on. Later on, after the emperor ascended the throne, she rose from a concubine to an imperial consort. She even took charge of the phoenix seal and governed the harem.

Even after entering the Cold Palace, she was a huge force with deep roots who could still control the lives of those people, forcing them to continue working for her and not dare to betray her easily.

Moreover, as long as the Second Prince did not fall and Concubine Lu did not die, it was only a matter of time before she made a comeback.

After the little palace maid finished reporting, Concubine Lu's lips curled up.

"Your scheme is quite good. If it weren't for the fact that Ning Yuanbo's Residence had long become enemies with the Yu Residence back then, I would have given Eldest Miss Yu the position of the main concubine."

In the palace, a child's status depended on its mother. Consort Xu was the head of the concubines and was in charge of the Phoenix Seal. She had the backing of the Xu family and thought that the Third Prince's status was the most important. Although she knew very well the value of Eldest Miss Yu, she couldn't bear to give her the position of the main concubine. Instead, she wanted to use her reputation as the eldest daughter of the first wife who had passed away and was carefully raised.

Three years ago, she indeed did not take Eldest Miss Yu seriously.

However, things were different now. There was a drought everywhere in the Great Zhou Dynasty, and the treasury was empty. The Yu and Xie Residences were ultimately a little eye-catching.

Concubine Lu felt a little regretful, so she changed the topic. "It's just that she's not as good in the end. Is she a spy? She's just like the emperor. She doesn't know the emperor better than me. Does she think that the best time for the Third Prince to take over is when I enter the Cold Palace and she's in charge of the phoenix seal?"

The little palace maid lowered her eyes and did not dare to speak.

“Idiot.” Concubine Lu gently lifted the lid of the teacup. Her fingers loosened, and the lid was placed back on the teacup with a clang. “She thinks she’s me.. Why didn’t she stay in the Orchid Palace? Why did she come to the Cold Palace to be a concubine?”

Chapter 627 - 627: The Heavens Wanted Her Dead

Now that the case of cheating in the examination had been exposed, Ning Yuanbo’s residence was sealed and her maiden family had lost their power. Naturally, the Xu family would not let her and her son off.

Instead of guarding against Imperial Consort Xu’s sneak attacks, it was better to take the initiative to go to the Cold Palace to lie low and find a chance to counterattack.

Concubine Lu sneered. “There’s a saying that goes, if the heavens want you to die, they’ll definitely make it happen.”

The little palace maid’s pupils constricted, and she quickly lowered her head again. Thinking about what had happened in Duke Rong’s Residence today, she vaguely understood Concubine Lu’s scheme.

As expected, Concubine Lu chuckled. “Think about what happened to the Ning Residence, to Grand Tutor Yang’s family, and to my Ning Yuanbo Residence. Does Consort Xu really think that the Xu Residence, which is also a distant relative, will have a good ending? Wealth, glory, flowers, and brocade will come and go.”

After Ning Yuanbo’s residence was locked up, she finally understood.

Be it the Ning Residence, Grand Tutor Yang’s entire family back then, or her Ning Yuanbo Residence, when they were useful to the emperor, they were rewarded. Once they lost their value, they would be useless and sacrificed...”

Concubine Lu seemed to have had enough of laughing, and her expression gradually turned cold. “Imperial Consort Xu is actually very easy to deal with. Look, as soon as I entered the Cold Palace, she controlled the phoenix seal and became the head of the concubines. With the backing of the Xu family, she thinks that she can do whatever she wants behind the palace. Tsk, tsk, tsk.

How glorious.”

If the heavens wanted her to die, they would definitely make it happen!

After being suppressed by her for decades, the feeling of gaining power overnight was too wonderful. If she did not want to give up on her desire for power, she could only rack her brains and be smart.

But!

Concubine Lu rubbed the pink color on her teacup with her fingers. “Since the emperor doesn’t have the heart to choose an heir, fighting for the throne isn’t just a normal fight. Instead, it’s called rebellion. If you do too much and make too many mistakes, it will arouse suspicion.”

The little palace maid quickly flattered, ‘Your Highness, you understand the situation best.”

Concubine Lu said calmly, "Go and pack up briefly. When the emperor's decree arrives, it's time for me to return to Lanyi Palace."

Since she dared to step into the Cold Palace, she naturally had a backup plan. When Consort Xu lost her power, it would be time for her to return to the harem.

At that time, no one in the harem could threaten her anymore.

On the way back to the residence, Yu Youyao had a heavy heart.

No matter how Yu Shuangbai or Yu Jianjia asked, she did not say a word about what had happened at the flower festival.

It wasn't that Yu Youyao wasn't willing to say it, but it was a serious matter that involved the imperial family, the prince, and her reputation. Before this matter spread, it was naturally not appropriate for her to say anything.

After returning to the residence, Yu Youyao went straight to The Green House.

Her cousin was not around.

Chang An said, "Not long after Young Miss left, Young Master also followed you out."

She felt an inexplicable certainty that her cousin's sudden departure must be related to the Duke Rong's Residence. Yu Youyao's heart calmed down, and as soon as the tense tension in her body relaxed, her limbs immediately softened.

Chun Xiao helped Yu Youyao back to the Jade Courtyard.

After washing up, Nanny Xu personally cooked a simple bowl of white jade sea cucumber soup. Yu Youyao was worried about her grandmother and did not have much of an appetite. After forcing herself to eat a small bowl, she lost her appetite.

Time passed especially slowly as Yu Youyao waited anxiously.

After an unknown period of time, Xia Tao finally came over to report, "Young Miss, Matriarch is back..."

Before Xia Tao could finish speaking, Yu Youyao quickly left. She walked along the corridor and quickened her pace to the Flower Gate in the backyard. The two carriages entered the Flower Gate one after another.

Parked in front was her cousin's low-key gray-topped carriage. Yin San was wearing a brown suit and pushed his cousin out of the carriage first.

Her cousin was wearing a black robe with dark python dragon patterns, making him look even more dignified.

All the nobles of the Great Zhou Dynasty liked the python robe. The royal family used yellow, and the imperial relatives used purple. The scholars and officials used green and blue. Other than the color of the clothes, the number of python dragons and the number of scaled toes had strict rules. Her cousin was considered a scholar who worked in the Teng library. Naturally, he could wear a python robe.

Yu Youyao had a well-managed weaving workshop in Dingzhou, Hebei. Previously, she had sent over a few pieces of silk material. There was a rare silk embroidery cloth that combined various

crafts in silk making, embroidery and painting. The python dragon patterns on it were made of dark golden threads. The python dragon patterns were well-defined, had clear outlines, and were lifelike.

When she saw this, she was overjoyed, so she drew a mock up and asked Jinxiu Manor to create this python robe for her cousin.

This was the first time she had seen her cousin wearing a python robe. He was sitting in a wheelchair, and the python dragon patterns on his clothes were motionless. He looked dignified. With every move, the python dragon patterns became lively. They bared their fangs and brandished their claws. They looked so ferocious that they seemed to be able to overturn rivers and seas.

Yu Youyao's eyes turned red as she called out aggrievedly, "Cousin!"

Zhou Linghuai's gaze darkened as he said calmly, "Don't worry, I'm here!"

The person in front of her had a peerless appearance that was as deep as water. His casual attitude gave her a lot of confidence, as if she did not have to be afraid even if the sky fell.

He would hold up the sky for her.

She suddenly felt very at ease.

Just as Yu Youyao was about to ask about her grandmother, she saw Nanny Liu get out of the carriage and turn around to help Old Madam Yu down.

After entering the palace, Old Madam Yu's expression darkened again, as if she had aged more than ten years. Yu Youyao felt a lump in her throat.

'Grandmother!'

Old Madam Yu patted her hand. "Good child, everything went well in the palace just now."

Madam Yao had hired a doctor who was good at curing Yang deficiency. When she was waiting in An Shou Hall, Old Madam Yu had finished washing up and changed out of her cumbersome outfit. She looked a little more energetic.

The doctor took Old Madam Yu's pulse, and it was roughly the same as Imperial Physician Hu's diagnosis.

Madam Yao heaved a sigh of relief and quickly ordered someone to bring over the medicine that had been brewed. She personally fed it to Old Madam Yu.

This was the prescription that Imperial Physician Hu had prescribed in Duke Rong's Residence previously.

After returning to the residence, Madam Yao immediately ordered someone to get the medicine and instructed the servants to brew it.

Old Madam Yu had been working hard for most of the day and was already mentally and physically exhausted. After drinking the medicine, she reluctantly ate some Rogue rice porridge and laid down.

Yu Youyao finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Madam Yao glanced at Yu Youyao and said coldly, "You've had a long day. Go back and rest. I'll take care of Matriarch."

Yu Youyao nodded. "Thank you, Second Aunt."

She was usually the one taking care of her grandmother. Although Second Aunt's filial piety to her grandmother was not bad, her grandmother was not feeling well. As her daughter-in-law, she naturally had to attend to her mother-in-law to show her filial piety.

Unknowingly, the sun had already set.

Seeing that Yu Youyao had returned, Zhou Linghuai closed the book in his hand. "I passed by the restaurant just now and bought your favorite peony cake. Chun Xiao said that you haven't eaten much all day.."

Chapter 628 - 628: Envied and Framed

The peony cake was made of fresh peony petals and could only be eaten during the peony flower season every year.

Yu Youyao's eyes lit up. On a small table, there was a plate of brown cakes, a bowl of milky white jade sea cucumber, and some exquisite snacks and fruits.

There were more than ten types.

Only then did Yu Youyao feel hungry. Her stomach growled a few times.

She couldn't help but blush. Perhaps because she felt guilty, her voice subconsciously sounded delicate and angry. "I was worried about

Grandmother previously, so I didn't have much of an appetite..."

Her delicate, sweet, and obedient voice was so gentle that Zhou Linghuai's ears itched. He rubbed his ears hard, and they turned red.

Zhou Linghuai scooped a small bowl of white jade sea cucumber soup and placed it in front of her. "Have some soup to fill your stomach first."

When it came to other people's houses, everything was out of their control, so they naturally had to be more cautious. Anything that entered the door had to be checked when the elders were present.

At other times, she would try her best not to use them.

Not to mention that there were too many people at the banquet and there were many private matters. If she ate, she needed to consider if it was easy to change clothes. It would be more troublesome if she was alone.

Previously, in the Duke Rong's Residence, Fifth Miss Yin had dared to scheme against her because she was alone.

Therefore, many families would bring some food themselves, and their maidservants would secretly bring it to their masters to eat.

However, after her grandmother fainted, the reception pavilion was in chaos. She did not have the chance, and she was worried about her grandmother. As a result, she did not have much of an appetite.

After finishing a bowl of white jade sea cucumber soup, Yu Youyao couldn't wait to take a piece of peony cake and take a bite. The yellow peony filling was sweet and mellow.

Seeing that her eyes were curved as she ate, Zhou Linghuai smiled.

After eating some food, Yu Youyao was in the mood to ask, "Cousin, why did you come back with Grandmother?"

Perhaps because she was starving, the little girl's pink lips were stained with powder. Zhou Linghuai took out a handkerchief from his sleeve and reached out to gently wipe her lips.

Yu Youyao blinked and did not move obediently.

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "I knew that you were worried about Grandmother's health, so I got someone to arrange for someone to enter the inner palace and wait at the palace gate to receive her."

When the Yu Residence's carriage entered the second palace gate, there was an eunuch specially waiting there to help Old Madam Yu send a message.

The news was also sent to the Longevity Palace immediately without any delay.

If it were anyone else, they would have to follow the rules and wait for more than an hour to send a message.

Yu Youyao smiled. "As expected, it's easy to do things with someone in the palace. Otherwise, Grandmother would have suffered so much more."

Zhou Linghuai smiled. Seeing that she had eaten three peony cakes in a row, he was worried that her mouth would be dry, so he scooped a small bowl of milky white jade soup and placed it in front of her.

Yu Youyao lowered her head and stirred the milky white soup in her bowl. "Cousin, do you know that the Duke Rong's Residence and the Third Prince are in cahoots and want..."

She bit her lip and her face turned a little pale.

It wasn't that she wasn't afraid that her reputation had almost been ruined. In fact, she couldn't care less. Now that she thought about it she was only a door away from the crepe myrtle garden. If Duke Rong's Residence was more ruthless and sent a few burly old maids to guard there, as long as there was a commotion, it would be difficult for her to escape unscathed.

Zhou Linghuai raised her chin slightly, and the little girl was forced to raise her head. Her eyes trembled slightly, and a sparkling tear slid down her cheek and landed on his hand.

"Don't cry." Zhou Linghuai's voice was hoarse. Every time she cried, even his bones went limp. He couldn't help but blame his father in the past. He was a dignified seven-foot-tall man who had been through hundreds of battles.

Even his bones had been tempered thousands of times. In front of his mother, he became soft. His pride as a man would be forgotten. "I didn't mean to not tell you."

Yu Youyao sniffed, and even her eyes turned red.

Zhou Linghuai quickly explained, "I originally planned to deal with such a despicable thing secretly, in case it dirtied your ears. It's just that it's easy to deal with Third Prince and Consort Xu, but it's not easy to fool the Empress

Dowager."

Yu Youyao was stunned when she heard this. Tears hung on her eyelashes, making her look even more delicate and gentle. She looked pitiful. "Why is the Empress Dowager involved?"

Zhou Linghuai felt pity for her, so he took a handkerchief and helped her wipe her tears. "In the past two years, disasters have been happening all over the country. The capital is peaceful) but actually, many people have starved to death. The Imperial Court has been unwilling to allocate money for disaster relief for a long time, and the local officials have also pretended to be deaf and mute, unwilling to release food relief. Why do you think that is?"

Yu Youyao's mind exploded, and her expression turned ugly. "It's because the treasury is empty."

Everyone knew that the Xie Residence in Quanzhou was rich.

As her granddaughter, not only did she own a large number of her mother's dowry businesses, but she also enjoyed all the connections under the Xie family and managed the businesses under her name well.

Under normal circumstances, the businesses under her name would pay a large sum of tax money to the Imperial Court every year. This was a win-win situation.

However, as they were in the middle of a drought and the treasury was empty, they envied her and wanted to take advantage of her.

"The Empress Dowager wanted to make you the fourth prince's concubine?" Zhou Linghuai's shocking words made Yu Youyao tremble in fear.

Yu Youyao's face turned pale.

This was why Zhou Linghuai hadn't told her.

His heart ached, and he couldn't bear to tell her.

Hui Ji's orders could only block an open spear, not dodge a hidden arrow, let alone guard against someone like the Empress Dowager.

She was not just talking about it.

Once the Empress Dowager opened her mouth, it would be useless even if Old

Madam Yu took out her life and said it was not appropriate for her to get engaged before the age of 14. This could only be said to normal families.

However, once the Empress Dowager opened her mouth, it was already done. It was impossible for the Yu Residence to disobey the Empress Dowager and help her find another marriage. Other families would not dare to get married to the Yu Residence because of the Empress Dowager.

When Yu Youyao turned 14, the Empress Dowager's decree would be issued.

Zhou Linghuai pulled her into his arms. "Even the emperor has to submit to the Empress Dowager's decision. Besides, the benefits of this marriage to the royal family are obvious, so he won't give it up easily."

Yu Youyao's voice was hoarse. "It's an ugly matter for brothers to fight for the same daughter in a family. It's also a source of trouble. Only this can dispel the

Empress Dowager's thoughts. So, Cousin was also involved in the matter at the Duke Rong's Residence today?"

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "Before you went to the crepe myrtle garden, I arranged for someone to lure another woman who was dressed like you to the crepe myrtle garden. There's no need for everyone to know that the Third Prince covets the Eldest Miss of the Yu Residence. As long as the emperor and the Empress Dowager know, this matter will be settled."

This concerned Yu Youyao's reputation, so he did not plan to make a big deal out of it.

Unexpectedly, he had calculated everything, but he did not expect Yu Youyao to have grown up. She knew that Yin Jinwei had led her to the crepe myrtle garden and her actions were inappropriate. Not only did she not expose Fifth Miss Yin, but she also knocked Yin Jinwei unconscious and quietly arranged for Chun Xiao to push the Third Prince into the lake.

It made his plan a step too late.

However!

Chapter 629: Fearless

Yu Youyao had suffered grievances and was shocked because of this matter. Old Madam Yu had also suddenly become sick because of this and experienced a dangerous situation.

Zhou Linghuai felt a little regretful. "I should have told you."

Yu Youyao leaned into her cousin's arms and shook her head. "Cousin didn't tell me because he wanted to protect me."

As a young lady, even her elders would not easily tell her about her marriage. Unless they liked someone, they would not ask her for her opinion.

How could her cousin, a man, tell her this?!

This involved the people in the palace. Not to mention her, even if her grandmother found out) other than being worried and waiting for her cousin to help her resolve it, what else could she do?

Her cousin wanted to resolve it quietly, protect her, and give her peace. He did not want those dirty schemes against her to trouble her. It was also for her own good.

Her cousin's schemes had never been wrong. He would scheme against everyone in the world except her. He had never thought that she would complicate matters.

There were some things that she had not noticed before.

However, once she found out the truth, something was amiss.

It was understandable that the Third Prince did not bring any guards with him, but the noble prince did not even bring his companions. Wasn't he too careless when he was alone in the crepe myrtle garden?

Even if Yin Huaizhang left the crepe myrtle garden, it was impossible for him to go far. Wouldn't it be rude to let the Third Prince wait alone in the crepe myrtle garden?

However, according to Chun Xiao, Yin Huaizhang only rushed over when the Third Prince was saved ashore by the guards. Wasn't it too late?

If the Third Prince had an eunuch by his side, or if Yin Huaizhang was still in the crepe myrtle garden, she probably wouldn't be able to plan for the Third Prince to fall into the water.

Clearly, her cousin had made arrangements.

She had also borrowed her cousin's arrangements to do this.

It was her cousin who had indirectly helped her resolve her trouble.

Zhou Linghuai stroked her back and comforted her. "Don't worry. Everything in the palace has been arranged. You'll probably hear the news tomorrow. It won't affect your reputation."

Yu Youyao looked up, her bright black eyes shining even brighter after being filled with tears. "Actually, it's not that I'm not afraid, but..." Her lips curved, and her eyes flashed with a clear light. "I'm fearless!"

Seeing her smile through her tears, Zhou Linghuai finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Yu Youyao's smile was clear. "Someone wants to ruin my reputation. The first thing I thought of wasn't fear or anger, but indignation." She burst out laughing and looked at her cousin. "I can't stand any grievances, nor can I endure them."

In fact, before her cousin entered the residence, even though her grandmother doted on her, she only suffered more and not less.

A child without a mother always lacked confidence in front of her sisters. Even if there was a little friction between sisters, the elders would still think that she was in the wrong.

This was because she had lost her mother since she was young. It was said in books that a eldest daughter with no mother was not educated well!

Be it at home or outside, everyone felt that a motherless child was inferior to others in terms of upbringing. This was an irreversible fact.

She could only admit it!

Besides, her grandmother was not in good health, so she did not want her grandmother to worry all the time.

As time passed, she learned to play dumb.

Everyone said that she was insensible and ignorant.

However, she knew that the more she fussed over it, the more those who had ill intentions towards her would not want her to have an easy time. It would do her no good.

It was only after her cousin entered the residence that she had the confidence to defend herself.

She instructed Chun Xiao to push the Third Prince into the lake.

Chun Xiao was afraid that the imperial family would be powerful, and she was afraid that she would be beheaded if she offended Consort Xu because of the Third Prince's noble status.

In reality, Chun Xiao's reaction was the reaction a daughter of an external minister should have.

Even though her reputation had almost been ruined, she could only admit that she was unlucky and settle the matter.

In everyone's opinion, her actions were bold and disobedient. If she was not careful, her entire family would be implicated.

However, when she decided to push the Third Prince into the water, she did not hesitate at all. She did not even consider the consequences.

Was she too stupid to think of this?

Was she too rash and not cautious enough?

Of course not!

It was because she was fearless!

How could a mere daughter of an external minister be fearless?

She only had a cousin with extraordinary hands and eyes.

Zhou Linghuai smiled. "That's good." At this point, his tone darkened slightly. "I don't want you to hold it in and suffer."

At this point, he remembered that on the day he first entered the Yu Residence, Chang An had pushed him into An Shou Hall.

At that time, the little girl lowered her head and was dejected. When she looked up in a panic, her eyes were red. She endured her grievances and sadness, but she still stubbornly held back her tears and pretended that she was fine.

At that time, he thought that this was a young lady who was used to suffering.

Later on, this little girl smiled at him flawlessly.

He felt curious again. Such a young lady who was used to suffering and enduring grievances had such a clean and clear gaze.

Everyone said that Eldest Miss Yu was ignorant and did not know much.

But he found it funny.

Would an innocent and ignorant little girl be stared at by others because of his broken leg, so that she could divert everyone's attention and ease his awkwardness?

How could a young lady who had yet to gain any knowledge memorize "Born in Troubles and Live in Peace" to help him out after Yu Zongzheng asked about his broken leg?

How could Yu Youyao not know if she could memorize those quotes?

Then why did she have to recite them in public?

Didn't she know that if she couldn't memorize it, she would make a fool of herself in public?

Of course she did.

It was a lie to comfort him, because the little girl looked at him without pity. She was only curious and helped him out in public.

She looked innocent and ignorant, but she actually had a delicate heart. She knew how to judge the situation and think for others.

From the beginning, she had expressed pure kindness to him.

Therefore, from the beginning, he had treated her differently.

Since she was the girl he was protecting, how could she be bullied?!

Yu Youyao sniffed and blinked, holding back the remaining tears in her eyes.

Zhou Linghuai looked at her. The tip of her nose was red, and her eyes were red. She looked like an innocent little rabbit and he couldn't help but want to laugh. "You're not crying anymore?"

Yu Youyao was embarrassed and said guiltily, "I'm just a little afraid."

When she schemed against the Third Prince, she did not hesitate at all. However, when she thought of her grandmother, who had almost gotten into trouble because of this incident, her hands and feet turned cold with fear.

After that, Yu Zongzheng went to the government office of the Imperial Court.

Second Uncle entered the palace to meet the emperor, and even her grandmother was sick. Only then did she suddenly realize that she seemed to have poked a hole in the sky..

Chapter 630: Lifetime Agreement

She had only thought of this matter and wondered if it would implicate her and the Yu Residence. She had not expected the consequences of this matter.

She panicked a little.

Zhou Linghuai smiled and asked, "Are you afraid now?"

Yu Youyao nodded vigorously. "With Cousin around, I'm not afraid."

Her obedient and soft appearance really made him want to bully her into crying.

Zhou Linghuai rubbed his forehead. Just now, when she was really crying, he wished he could kneel down and beg her not to cry. Now that she wasn't crying, he wanted to bully her and make her cry.

He was going crazy!

Yu Youyao tugged at her cousin's sleeve and said in a delicate voice, "Cousin, quickly tell me about the palace." At this point, she pouted and felt aggrieved. "It's all related to me. I can't just sit back and do nothing. I can't not know anything about the people in the palace!"

After this matter, Yu Youyao finally knew that the so-called nobles in the palace could be unscrupulous, scheming and even make sacrifices for their own interests. Compared to this, the private matters in the inner residence and the filth between the nobles were nothing.

That was why her cousin did not want her to get involved in the matters of the palace.

Seeing Jiaojiao's soft and aggrieved expression, Zhou Linghuai did not know what to do with her. He raised his hand and messed up the bun on her head.

“You’re really capable.”

Yu Youyao blinked and looked innocent. “Didn’t Cousin teach me all of this?”

Her moist eyes blinked gently, and Zhou Linghuai immediately felt half his body go numb. He could only change the topic. “The palace has a long story. I have to mention the Empress who has been sick for a long time.”

Yu Youyao took a piece of peony cake and was about to eat it. “Nanny Xu mentioned earlier that the Empress is from the Ning Residence. The Ning Residence is the same as the Zhenguo Marquis Residence. They’re both old noble families that have titles passed down from their great ancestors. The Zhenguo Marquis Residence is a royalist party, so it’s inevitable that they’ll fall. However, the Ning Residence has always been very prominent and was once ranked among the three dukes.”

She did not know much about the Ning Residence.

Nanny Xu had mentioned it a little, and her grandmother had also mentioned it a little, but it was only one-sided. Now that her cousin had deliberately mentioned it, it seemed that it was definitely not that simple.

At the thought of this, Yu Youyao thought of the outcome of the Ning

Residence. “Not long after the emperor ascended the throne, the Ning Residence was punished. Some died, and some were exiled. The emperor took into account their relationship as husband and wife and did not vent his anger on the Empress. As a result, the Empress lost her beloved son and fell sick for a long time.”

Zhou Linghuai nodded. “This is just an excuse on the surface. Back then, Emperor Gaozu was crowned emperor with a mustard grass python robe. He doted on his first wife, who had gone through thick and thin with him.

However, in the early years of the Empress’s life, she followed Emperor Gaozu on expeditions to the north and south and fell sickly. In a few years, she died. Emperor Gaozu was very sad, so he gradually stopped visiting the concubines in the harem, and the selection was put on hold.”

Yu Youyao also knew that perhaps it was because of Emperor Gaozu’s influence, later on, every emperor of the Great Zhou Dynasty did not seem to value women much. There were even two Casanovas.

Emperor Mingzong only doted on the imperial palace maid beside him. There was even a time when he wanted to abolish the rules for her. This imperial palace maid was very smart. She rejected all the conferments and took the initiative to take the childless medicine. As a palace maid, she was specially doted on for more than 20 years.

Later on, Emperor Xianzong encountered many beautiful women but there was only one in his heart. For the rest of his life, his harem was empty, and he only married one empress.

Even the current Emperor Xiaozong was focused on one woman and had an empty harem. He had not been selected anyone to enter the palace for many years.

Yu Youyao glared at him. “Cousin, I realized that your Yin Imperial Family seems to be quite infatuated with one woman at a time. Not to mention the Great Ancestor, Mingzong, and Xianzong,

even the current emperor only dotes on Concubine Lu. The imperial examination has been rigged for so long, and the crime of Ning Yuanbo's residence has yet to be completely addressed.

Also, your father only married your mother..."

Zhou Linghuai smiled and said, "That's not surprising. It's human nature to be influenced by your surroundings. Inheriting traits is not just limited to one's bloodline. Emperor Gaozu was the glorious creator of the Yin Clan. It's inevitable that future generations will trace the merits of their predecessors.

This is an instinct engraved in their bones."

Yu Youyao couldn't help but ask) "Is Cousin the same?

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "I also hope to make extraordinary contributions and establish peace."

On Yu Youyao's birthday, when he named the zither, he realized that Yu Youyao liked Shaoyu more than Shaoyi.

She admired Emperor Shun for his benevolence and virtue in governing the country. At that time, the Yu Country was filled with beautiful dances, attracting phoenixes and ten thousand beasts to celebrate. How peaceful was that scene?

That was the pureness in Yu Youyao's heart.

However, Yu Youyao did not impose all of this on him. Later, she suggested the name Shaoyi.

Since all of this was what Yu Youyao hoped for, even if he had to overcome all obstacles, he had to make it happen for her.

Of course, his parents' tragic death had also made him understand that if he couldn't reach the peak, he would still be a fish on someone's chopping block. He only wanted to be the knifeman who could control life and death.

They had been in love for half their lives. What was benevolence?

Since Yu Youyao had promised to be with him for a lifetime, they naturally had to live and die together in this life.

Her cousin had never hidden his ambition from her, but this was the first time he had been so clear.

Yu Youyao was so nervous that her heart was beating wildly. Only then did she realize that she had gone astray just now. "There's no precedent of a crippled empress being reestablished in the Great Zhou Dynasty so far, which is why the Empress hasn't been punished."

Emperor Gaozu respected the Empress Yuan, and this would more or less affect his descendants.

When the Empress was in the palace, she married the current emperor, who was still a prince. She had a relationship with him and even gave birth to his eldest son.

After the previous emperor's death, as his daughter-in-law, the Empress had observed filial piety for him. She was a daughter-in-law who would observe mourning for her in-laws for three years.

Moreover, a married daughter was like water that had been splashed out.

As long as there was no clear evidence that the Empress had lost her virtue and was not worthy of the throne, the fault of the Ning Residence should not be blamed on the Empress.

Not to mention that the Ning Residence had also helped the current emperor.

If they did not even let the Empress off, it was inevitable that it would disappoint all the ministers.

At that time, the emperor had just ascended the throne not long ago, so he naturally couldn't do as he pleased.

The emperor did not vent his anger on the Empress, not because he cared about their relationship as husband and wife, but because he could not rebuild the family.

Zhou Linghuai nodded and continued the previous topic. "When the emperor was in the palace, Duke Ning was once assigned by the previous emperor to teach the fourth prince how to ride and shoot. Although he wasn't known as the Grand Tutor, he was indeed a Grand Tutor. The previous emperor valued literature over martial arts, and the fourth prince wasn't the most suitable candidate to be emperor. Later on, it was also the Ning Residence that supported the current emperor to ascend the throne. Other than my father, the six princes of the previous emperor all died tragically for various reasons. As the throne didn't come gloriously, the emperor's status wasn't stable after he ascended the throne.."