

All Hail 631

Chapter 631: Personal Expedition!

Yu Youyao understood the crux of the matter. The previous emperor valued literature over martial arts, but he had appointed Duke Ning, who was a general, to teach the Eldest Prince's emperor how to ride and shoot.

From this, it was obvious that the previous emperor did not value his son very much.

Zhou Linghuai continued, "In the first year of the emperor's ascension, the Di Clan repeatedly invaded the North. There was a huge drought in the east, and there were external and internal troubles. Natural and man-made disasters seemed to imply that the current emperor was not worthy of his position." That was why the King of Dongning could flatter him so well.

The Four Seas Dragon Dagger was indeed a rare divine weapon. When this dagger was forged, it was still debatable if there was thunder and rain in the east.

Of course, this was not the most important thing.

The important thing was that the emperor believed it.

Yu Youyao rested her chin on her hand and asked her cousin curiously, "What happened after that?"

Her oval face was the size of a palm, small and exquisite. Zhou Linghuai lowered his eyes. "His status was unstable, and the country did not prosper, so the emperor thought of a stupid move?"

Yu Youyao quickly asked, "What stupid move?"

Zhou Linghuai's lips twitched slightly. "He would personally lead the expedition!"

Yu Youyao's eyes suddenly widened. "The current emperor has even personally led an expedition? Why haven't I heard of such a big matter?"

With that, she realized something.

She had never heard of it and it must be because the outcome of the imperial expedition was not good. The court officials did not dare to mention it, and the world did not dare to say anything. As time passed, people would not know.

They were really covering their own ears!

Yu Youyao puffed up her cheeks. 'Ever since the Great Zhou Dynasty was established, it has always been very tough on external military matters. There are also many generals who are good at war. A few emperors have personally led expeditions and left behind great achievements in literature and martial arts. When the current emperor ascended the throne, he was also young and frivolous. It seemed reasonable for him to want to imitate his ancestors and make a name for himself.'

Why was it called a stupid move?

She was a little puzzled.

Zhou Linghuai understood her question and explained, "The previous emperor valued literature over martial arts. Although he was benevolent and empathetic to the commoners and could be said

to be a virtuous king, when the previous emperor was in power, the generals were suppressed very badly by the civil officials. Old nobles like the Zhenguo Marquis Residence were all gone, and there weren't many generals available in the court. Most of the external troubles of the Great Zhou Dynasty gradually developed during the previous emperor's time. However, the previous emperor was benevolent and the world was united. The vassal lords didn't dare to make any moves, and the outsiders didn't dare to invade on a large scale."

With that said, Yu Youyao understood.

There was iron blood flowing in Emperor Gaozu's bones. After he ascended the throne, it was normal for him to personally lead an expedition. When he was in power, he swept through the six directions and thousands of dynasties came to congratulate him.

As a result, there were many descendants who were good at war.

The relatives could not take the imperial examination. Other than benefiting from what was left behind by their ancestors, they could only join the army and make contributions.

In the history of the Great Zhou Dynasty, many generals had come from the imperial family. The previous emperor valued literature over martial arts, causing the generals to be suppressed greatly. The relatives could not join the army and make contributions. They only had their ancestral businesses, causing most of the relatives to be reduced to idle imperial families. They idled all day and had nothing to do, so it was inevitable that there would be more profligate sons.

Even though the current Emperor of Xiaozong had ascended the throne and regained many noble titles, it was very difficult to change this current situation for the time being.

The current Great Zhou was no longer the powerful Great Zhou as before.

As soon as the dog emperor ascended the throne, it was indeed not a good time to personally lead an expedition. It would take at least two to three years to change the phenomenon of the court prioritizing literature over martial arts.

At the thought of this, Yu Youyao asked, "What did the dog emperor want to conquer?"

As she asked, she picked up her tea and took a sip. Then she heard her cousin say, "Northern Barbarians!"

"Pfft—" She spat out the tea that she didn't have time to swallow. She choked on the remaining tea in her mouth and felt uncomfortable. She couldn't help but cough. As she coughed, she seemed to be in disbelief. She asked with difficulty, "Cough, cough, what did you say?"

"Be careful." Zhou Linghuai, who had been splashed with tea, was not angry at all. He took a handkerchief and helped Yu Youyao wipe her lips first. Only then did he slowly wipe the tea stains off her face. His large palm circled her back and stroked her back again and again. He did it very naturally, as if he did not feel that this was inappropriate at all.

Yu Youyao was used to her cousin's thoughtfulness, so she did not think that this was inappropriate.

After a while, Yu Youyao's throat felt a little better, but her voice was a little hoarse. "Cousin, did I hear wrongly? Did you say Northern Barbarians just now?"

Had the dog emperor gone to the North to personally lead an expedition? Was he out of his mind, or was he caught in a trap?

When Emperor Gaozu was in power, although the northern expedition was successful, the Northern Barbarians was a large tribe and a nomadic tribe. They did not have a fixed place to live. The grassland was vast, and the Northern Barbarians were familiar with the terrain. They were very difficult to eradicate. Therefore, the two sides signed a truce. Every year, the Northern Barbarians had to give the best warhorses to the Great Zhou Dynasty.

Where did the dog emperor get his confidence from? Did he think that he could succeed in the north expedition?

Zhou Linghuai smiled. "Do you think it's not wise for him to choose the Northern Barbarians?"

Yu Youyao nodded. "The Great Tribe of the Northern Barbarians has powerful troops. For generations, they've occupied the North and caused trouble. In every dynasty, many emperors have mobilized their troops to attack the north, but no one has ever really succeeded. Emperor Gaozu's move was unprecedented, but he can't eliminate the Northern Barbarians."

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "Although that's the case, it just so happens that he's brilliant in choosing the Northern Barbarians. After the emperor ascended the throne, his status was already unstable, and the country was not prosperous. There are vassal lords guarding the east, west, and south lands. Only the North has never been ruled by any vassal lords because of its special territory. If the emperor goes to the territory of the vassal lords, he'll be like a sheep entering a tiger's den."

Yu Youyao was enlightened. Although she was disgusted by the dog emperor's power play, she had never questioned his intelligence.

Zhou Linghuai explained, "Besides, at that time, the generals guarding the northern border came from the Ning Residence. Duke Ning often went to the North and had a lot of experience fighting enemies. When the previous emperor was in power, the Ning Residence was a powerful barrier in the

North."

Yu Youyao nodded. This was also the reason why the Xu family had always been very prominent.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "The Di Clan is a nomadic tribe and isn't good at farming. Every year during summer and autumn when the plants are lush, it's when the army is strong. Once it's winter, they have to recuperate because of a lack of supplies. Therefore, the Di people often invaded the North in autumn to snatch supplies and store them for the upcoming winter."

From the looks of it, the emperor had also thought about it carefully. Yu Youyao sighed slightly. "It's not that he was wrong, but that he shouldn't have led the expedition personally."

War emphasized timing, status, and harmony. If it was not the right time, no matter how good a plan was, it was useless.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "Speed is important in war. At that time, it was still early in the year. The ice and snow had yet to melt, and everything had yet to recover. After winter, when the troops of the

Di Clan were weak, the current emperor ignored everyone's objections and insisted on doing things his own way. He ordered Duke Ning to mobilize the troops. The court officials tried their best to persuade him, but to no avail. Duke Ning had no choice but to follow orders. The emperor led an army of 800,000 and personally led the battle in the North..”

Chapter 632: Complete Extermination

Yu Youyao gasped. “He had an army of 800,000 which was almost half of the country's troops, and they still lost in the end?”

Zhou Linghuai nodded. “Initially, it was the emperor's first time leading an army, so he was willing to listen to Duke Nings suggestions and arrangements. After winning a few battles, it was inevitable that the emperor would become arrogant. In a small battle, he was accidentally besieged by the Di Army. Duke Ning led his troops to save him, but he was ambushed by the Di people and died on the spot. The heir of Duke Ning risked his life to save the emperor, but he also died from his serious injuries.”

Yu Youyao was in disbelief. “Since Duke Ning and his son died to save the emperor, why did the Ning Residence get punished later?”

No matter what crimes the Ning Residence had committed, they should be punished lightly because Duke Ning and his son sacrificed their lives.

“If that's all, then Duke Ning and his son were naturally loyal officials. After that, the emperor will definitely give them a posthumous title. However...” At this point, Zhou Linghuai's tone was also a little emotional. “Duke Ning and the heir have extremely high prestige in the army. As a result of their deaths, the morale of the army became unstable and the hearts of the people collapsed. There were rumors in the army that they were dissatisfied with the emperor...”

With that said, Yu Youyao understood. “The dog emperor was too petty. When he heard these words, he would definitely be embarrassed and angry. Not only will he not feel guilty towards Duke Ning and his son, but he will also blame them.”

He was really heartless.

“That's right.” Zhou Linghuai changed the topic and continued, “Three days later, the leader of the Di Army led a 200,000-strong army to the city. The emperor sent troops and fought in a panic. The 800,000-strong army was completely wiped out. At that time, Duke Xu, who was the general of the expedition to the north, risked his life to lead 1,000 elite troops and escort the emperor back to the capital.”

At this point, Yu Youyao could already guess why the Ning Residence was sealed later. “As the ruler of a country, he personally led an expedition, but in the end, he was completely wiped out. He was like a dog that had lost his family and fled in panic. If news of this gets out, it will be a great humiliation to the emperor. Not only will it damage the dignity of the royal family and the

emperor's reputation, but it will also cause the people's hearts to be unstable, and there will be many consequences."

At this point, Yu Youyao's entire body was already cold. Her voice seemed to be stuck in her throat. She used all her strength to say, "Therefore, the fault of leading the expedition personally can't fall on the emperor. Someone needs to take all the blame to protect the dignity of the imperial family and the emperor's face!"

Her voice began to tremble, and she felt a lump in her throat. "That was an army of 800,000 people. It's not 10,000 or 100,000. They used more than half of the country's troops, but they were completely wiped out just like that. How can anyone take the blame? Only a general's mistake can cause such tragic consequences."

Therefore, all the mistakes in the end became Duke Ning and his son's.

The 800,000-strong army had been completely wiped out. The emperor had to give an explanation to the world. Even though Duke Ning and his son were already dead, the emperor still had to punish the rest of the Ning Residence to put on a show.

Poor Duke Ning and his son who were actually so loyal. After their deaths, their reputations were tainted. Even the Ning Clan ended up being exiled.

Zhou Linghuai knew that she was feeling terrible. "After returning to the capital, General Xu Jun, the general of the expedition to the north, participated in the reporting about Duke Ning and his son. He said they delayed the military opportunity, misdirected the troops, and did not supervise the battle well. They committed more than ten crimes."

"He pointed out that Duke Ning and his son made a mistake in their intelligence, causing the emperor to be surrounded by the Di people and be in deep danger. To put it bluntly, although Duke Ning and his son risked their lives to save the emperor, they could be exempted from the crime of making a mistake in their intelligence."

"However, because of the death of Duke Ning and his son, the morale of the army was unstable and the hearts of the people collapsed, causing the 800,000-strong army to be completely wiped out. This crime could not be tolerated."

Yu Youyao was so disgusted that she wanted to vomit.

Although Duke Ning and his son had taken on the responsibility of personally leading the expedition, the court officials knew very well that the Ning Residence had already taken on all the mistakes for the emperor. If the emperor did not treat his wife well, it would be intolerable.

This was the fundamental reason why the dog emperor did not need to rebuild his power.

Just as her cousin had said, the reasons she had thought of previously were all obvious.

The dog emperor had used the entire Ning Residence and the Empress to establish a deeply loyal image for himself. It was simply disgusting.

Zhou Linghuai continued, "After that, General Xu rose all the way to the position of Duke Xu because of his contribution of saving the emperor. It was also because of this battle that the treasury

was emptied, causing the strength of the country to decline. The foundation that the previous emperor had accumulated for many years was destroyed.”

The number of soldiers, rations, swords, armor, horses, and so on of an army of 800,000 was usually not a small number.

In war, the losses would increase exponentially.

Furthermore, as the emperor was personally leading the expedition, all of them had to be equipped with the best equipment. If anything went wrong, they would lose their heads.

If they won a battle, they could also plunder the enemys swords and horses to nourish themselves in battle.

Once he suffered a defeat, he would be the one being plundered. At that time, less than 10% of the herbivores, soldiers, knives, armor, and so on survived.

Fortunately, it was 800,000 against 300,000, and they had the best equipment and the most elite army. They also defeated a lot of the Di people’s troops, causing them to be injured and weak.

Otherwise, the consequences would be unimaginable.

However, the aftermath of the war was a huge problem.

The 800,000-strong army had been completely wiped out. After that, they needed a large sum of money to compensate the families of the soldiers. The emperor had just ascended the throne, so he could not be careless in such matters.

After losing 800,000 troops in the country, he also had to recruit new and train them. They needed a large number of rations, equipment, and so on.

This was another huge sum of money.

Fortunately, later on, Yu Zongshen suggested that the sea ban be lifted. Later on, with the help of Madam Xie, the lifting of the sea ban went smoothly and reduced the burden of the treasury.

However, maritime trade was only enough for the Imperial Court’s expenses.

Yu Youyao sneered. “It’s already like this. The vassal lords haven’t rebelled, and the Imperial Court hasn’t fallen into chaos. Fortunately, the dog emperor has a good younger brother who’s willing to work hard for him.”

If it weren’t for the fact that King Li of Zhou had guarded Youzhou, defeated the Di people, and intimidated the vassal lords and the court, how could there have been a good day for the dog emperor to stabilize his position? However, in the end, King Li of Zhou was only another Duke Ning!

It was extremely ridiculous.

Zhou Linghuai smiled but said nothing.

Yu Youyao calmed the anger in her heart. With a thought, she couldn’t help but ask, “What happened after that? How did the Eldest Prince die young?”

Emperor Gaozu was born in the countryside and was very orthodox. The eldest son of the first wife was an orthodox Confucian. Therefore, if there was no eldest son of the first wife, the eldest son of the second wife would be considered and so on.

Firstly, the dog emperor was not the eldest son of the first wife, secondly, he was not the eldest son of the second wife, and thirdly, he was not even the eldest son of the third wife. This was also the biggest reason why his status had been unstable since he ascended the throne..

Chapter 633: Even a monster will not hurt its own children

The Eldest Prince was the eldest son of the first wife, and he was almost the best choice for the heir to the throne. From the moment he was born, there was a court official who wanted to make the eldest son of the emperor the crown prince. As the eldest son of the first wife existed, unless the other princes rebelled, there was no possibility of them inheriting the throne.

However, if the Empress and the emperor had a feud, then the Eldest Prince...

Zhou Linghuai was surprised by her sharpness, so he said, "When the emperor was in the palace, there was still Secondary Consort Yang. She was the second daughter of the first wife, Yang Zhan, from the former Zhan Residence. After the emperor ascended the throne, he was grateful for Yang Zhan's kindness in teaching him, so he respected Prime Minister Fu. This Secondary Consort Yang was also conferred the title of Consort Xian. Not long after the Ning Residence was convicted, Secondary Consort Yang was sentenced to death for murdering the Eldest Prince, and the entire Yang family was executed."

Yu Youyao's heart sank. "Even a monster won't hurt its own children. The dog emperor is really inferior to a dog or pig." At this point, she thought of what had happened to the Ning Residence and her cousin's family. She felt a suppressed anger in her heart. "The dog emperor's path to the throne was forged by countless bones and blood..."

The 800,000 loyal souls who had died tragically in the North, Duke Ning's entire family, Grand Tutor Yang's entire family, and King Li of Zhou's entire family, as well as the Empress of the Central Palace who had been sick for a

long time...

Zhou Linghuai agreed deeply.

Yu Youyao asked again, "What about Concubine Lu? What role did she play in all of this?"

Zhou Linghuai said meaningfully, "The eldest son of the emperor died prematurely, and the second prince took over. She only needs to play the role of a favored concubine. Why should she get involved in so many things? Yu Youyao did not know what to say.

It seemed that she was not involved in anything, but in fact, she was always the biggest beneficiary. Only when the Ning family was punished did Ning Yuanbo's residence stand out. Only when the eldest son of the emperor died prematurely could the second son of a consort fight for the throne.

This Concubine Lu was the ruthless one.

At seven o'clock, Yu Zongzheng and Yu Zongshen returned from the government office.

Old Madam Yu invited Zhou Linghuai and Yu Youyao to An Shou Hall.

Yu Zongshen said, "Consort Xu and the Third Prince are imprisoned. This concerns the dignity of the imperial family. Looking at the Empress Dowager and the emperor's attitude, it's time for a conclusion in the court tomorrow."

Things that happened in public only needed to be asked from the beginning to the end. There was no need to go through complicated processes like investigation and evidence collection.

Yu Zongshen said, "There's no clear evidence that the Third Prince was involved. The Princess Consort of Duke Rongs Residence has also taken all the blame, but the emperor has punished Xu Guidao and the Third Prince." At this point, he changed the topic. "I received news that the emperor has reinstated Concubine Lu and she has returned to Lanyi Palace."

After resting for a while, Old Madam Yu felt better.

She suddenly recalled what Zhou Linghuai had said to her at the Precious Peace Temple on the day of the Buddhist Festival.

Even if there were any actions in the palace, they would have to wait until after the examination. At that time, the Third Prince would probably no longer be in the mood to think about these people who were out of their league.

There was still Concubine Lu in the palace. Even if she was banished to the cold palace, she used to be the imperial consort who was in charge of the phoenix seal and the harem.

How long had it been? Zhou Linghuai's words came true one by one.

Was this really just a coincidence?

Old Madam Yu composed herself and looked at Zhou Linghuai. "What do you think?"

Zhou Linghuai said calmly, "As far as I know, Concubine Lu invited herself into the Cold Palace back then."

With that said, what was there not to understand?

Concubine Lu's actions were to retreat in order to advance. Since she had been invited into the cold palace, the emperor would not vent his anger on the Second Prince. He would even pity the Second Prince for losing the protection of his mother. Furthermore, because the Second Prince had lost his backer, he trusted him even more. During this period of time, the emperor's attitude towards the Second Prince had already explained everything.

Concubine Lu did not need to do much. She could achieve her goal by staying low-key.

What about Imperial Consort Xu?

The Xu Residence was powerful to begin with, and Consort Xu was in charge of the phoenix seal, so she became the head of the concubines.

If Imperial Consort Xu behaved herself, she would be able to live in peace.

Once Consort Xu and the Third Prince made a move, they would anger the emperor.

Concubine Lu's move of retreating in order to advance was really scheming.

An Shou Hall was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop!

Yu Youyao lowered her eyes. Imperial Consort Xu and the Third Prince had been imprisoned. If they wanted to be released again, it would depend on the emperor. Concubine Lu was still the final winner.

After a while, Yu Zongzheng sighed slightly. “Recently, the emperor’s health has been deteriorating. The second prince is often summoned into the imperial study by the emperor to help the emperor deal with government affairs. The second prince is also the eldest son of a consort. If...”

“Shut up!” Old Madam Yu interrupted him with a sharp gaze.

Yu Zongzheng realized that he had misspoken, but he did not think much of it.

“Mother, Concubine Lu has regained his favor. The emperor trusts the Second Prince. Our family can take this opportunity...”

Consort Xu and the Third Prince were imprisoned because of Yu Youyao.

It was all thanks to the Yu Residence that Concubine Lu could come out of the Cold Palace. Concubine Lu also had to thank them. This was a good time to position themselves well.

If one did not enter the inner palace, it was not impossible to rise in the ranks.

Old Madam Yu raised her hand and smashed a teacup at Yu Zongzheng’s chest. It fell to the ground and shattered.

“Mother—” Yu Zongzheng was shocked. His chest was wet, and he subconsciously jumped up from his chair.

Old Madam Yu stared at him coldly. “I think you’re tired of living. Is this something you can interfere in? Think about the memorial tablet personally bestowed by Emperor Gaozu in the Yu Clan. Who’s worshiped on it?”

Yu Zongzheng’s face turned red from his mother’s reprimand in public, and he couldn’t raise his head. “It’s Duke Zhonglie!”

Old Madam Yu sneered. “Why should our family be on good terms with the Zhenguo Marquis Residence? That’s because the Zhenguo Marquis Residence is a royalist party. Our family can only be a royalist party for generations. Our

family can only be loyal to whoever becomes the emperor. Why do we want to take sides? Why do we want to interfere?

At this point, she gritted her teeth. “You can only do it over my dead body.

Before I die, I’ll definitely write a letter and ask you to be fired for three years. Otherwise, you won’t just harm the entire Yu Residence, but you’ll also harm the entire Yu Clan.”

With an ancestor who had killed his king, how could he dare to think about anything else?!

Did he have a death wish?

Yu Zongzheng’s expression did not look too good. He said awkwardly, “Mother, I was just saying it casually. Don’t be angry. What do you mean by over your dead body? It’s too inauspicious.”

He had just stabilized his position in the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs. If he really lost his position, it was still unknown if he could return to the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs after three years. His bright future would be ruined.

Yu Youyao's lips twitched slightly. Her grandmother was also impressive. She was used to controlling Yu Zongzheng's personality. Why would Yu

Zongzheng want to be involved in the competition for the position of heir?

Naturally, it was still because of his future.

If he realized that taking sides could not achieve his goal and would instead throw away his current future, he would be afraid and not dare to cause trouble..

Chapter 634: Expelling the Duke from the ancestral chart

However!

Yu Zongzheng had been in the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs for a few years. Now that he was an official, he had become more ambitious.

Yu Zongshen said calmly, "Recently, the emperor has been taking medicinal

pills every day and is becoming more and more temperamental. As officials in the court, we still have to be cautious. The matter of choosing an heir ultimately depends on the emperor."

Yu Zongzheng had no choice but to temporarily give up on this idea. However, only he knew what he was thinking.

The next day, Yu Zongzheng attended the morning court assembly.

It wasn't until noon that there was news from the palace that the emperor had angrily reprimanded Duke Rong for humiliating his ancestors. Hence, he retracted his title, removed his ancestral plate, and demoted him to a commoner.

Duke Rong seemed to have been struck by lightning and fainted.

He had thought that the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence had taken all the blame, and Fifth Miss had also lost her life. At most, the emperor would seize his title and give the Yu Residence an explanation.

All these years, the old princess consort had managed the family's business very well. With a livelihood, they could also become a wealthy and idle imperial family.

Unexpectedly, not only did the emperor want to seize his title, but he also wanted to remove the name of the Duke Rong's Residence from the ancestral list.

From now on, he would no longer be a member of the imperial family.

When Yu Youyao heard this news, she was more or less surprised.

Expelling him from the ancestral chart was the same as expelling someone from the clan. Unless they had done something outrageous, treasonous, and unfilial, they could not be expelled easily.

Wasn't this a little too serious?

On second thought, since Imperial Consort Xu and the Third Prince had both been imprisoned, what really angered the emperor was probably not the rotten character of Duke Rong's Residence, but the fact that he had joined forces with Imperial Consort Xu and coveted his territory.

The dog emperor would do anything for the throne.

How could such a selfish and ruthless person hand over his territory so easily?!

He did not choose an heir because he did not want to.

He would eliminate anyone who threatened the imperial power without hesitation.

Yu Youyao was surprised for a while, but she did not pay much attention to it. In a few days, it would be the Dragon Boat Festival. She called Concubine Jiang over to discuss the arrangements for the Dragon Boat Festival.

Yu Youyao said, "Grandmother was sick in the past and hasn't gone to the moat to watch the dragon boat race for many years. She has to go and take a look this year. I'll have to trouble you to take care of the family matters."

Concubine Jiang quickly agreed. "That's only right. Although Matriarch is old, she can't stay at home all the time. She should take advantage of the festival to go out for a walk to relax. If you need to prepare anything, just tell me. I'll go down immediately to make preparations."

She had been a household manager for a year or two, so she knew about the rules.

However, as a concubine, she still had to ask the eldest daughter of the first wife about many things. Only then would it be more appropriate. When the eldest daughter of the first wife was satisfied, she could stabilize her position at home.

Yu Youyao instructed them on how to arrange the family during the Dragon Boat Festival. They needed to prepare everything when they went out. They also had to occupy the location at the moat in advance and build a temporary shed.

After everything was explained, Concubine Jiang rushed to prepare it.

Yu Youyao went to the incense room, planning to personally mix some incense powder and fill a sachet during the Dragon Boat Festival.

In the afternoon, Xia Tao ran into the house excitedly. "Young Miss, the emperor has sent the imperial guards to surround King Rong's Residence. Eunuch Zhu personally went to King Rong's Residence and took out the warrant. He kept an eye on the entire family in King Rong's Residence and took away the python robe, luxurious clothes, and jewelry. Not a single one was allowed to stay. In the end, he ordered someone to personally search them."

Yu Youyao nodded and said nothing.

Xia Tao continued, "I heard that the eunuch found 5,000 taels of silver in Yin Huaizhang's boots. The eunuch who searched his body immediately wanted to confiscate the banknotes. Yin Huaizhang refused to hand it over and even pushed him. Eunuch Zhu immediately ordered the imperial guards to press Yin Huaizhang to the ground and hit him 20 times with the cane. The Princess Consort of the Rong Residence was eager to protect her son and wanted to take the punishment on behalf of her son, but she was also hit ten times."

After being expelled and losing her family's wealth, she was even worse than ordinary people. In the future, her family would no longer have any land or a livelihood. How could someone who had been pampered in the past endure the feeling of hunger?

It was normal for her to take the risk.

Yu Youyao remembered that Eunuch Zhu seemed to be the godson of the emperor's favorite, Eunuch He. He was also the emperor's favorite. Previously, her cousin had gone to Shandong to quell the rebellion, and he had accompanied Eunuch Zhu.

Her eyes flashed. Why did this feel a little like her cousin's style?!

No, no, no, this must be an illusion!

Xia Tao continued, "I heard that Yin Huaizhang was beaten until he was on his last breath, and the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence was also seriously injured. The entire family of Duke Rong's Residence turned white and was escorted out of King Rong's Residence by the Imperial Guards and thrown onto the streets. All these years, the imperial family was domineering and bullied others. Many commoners ran to Duke Rong's Residence to watch the commotion. Some even threw stones at them..."

Thinking of what had happened to the Duke Rong's Residence, Xia Tao gloated.

They deserved it!

They did this to themselves. It was fine if a person lacked anything, but they couldn't lack virtue. Otherwise, they would suffer retribution.

Xia Tao sighed again. "Young Miss, the entire family of Duke Rong's Residence is penniless. They were chased out just like that without even a place to stay. How are they going to live?"

Yu Youyao said calmly, "Don't they still have the maiden family of the Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence? Although a married daughter is like spilled water, they have to more or less help her in her current situation. Otherwise, they would be exposed."

As for how much help she would receive, it wouldn't be so bad that she wouldn't even have a place to stay or food to eat.

But that was all.

They probably would not get anything else.

The emperor had demoted the family of Duke Rong's Residence to commoners not to let them enjoy life. Wouldn't anything additional be disobeying the emperor?

They could barely fill their stomachs and live a good life.

Xia Tao was enlightened.

Yu Youyao's heart did not waver much. "What happened after that?"

Xia Tao quickly said, "After that, the Imperial Guards confiscated the Duke

Rong's Residence. The gold, silver, treasures, and many valuable things were directly carried back into the palace."

After the Duke Rong's Residence was reinstated, he made use of the Xie family's connections. Using his status as an imperial relative, he had managed many businesses over the years and accumulated a lot of assets.

Now, all his wealth had been confiscated and fallen into the hands of the dog emperor.

Yu Youyao even suspected that the dog emperor was eyeing the wealth of Duke Rong's Residence.

At the thought of this, she couldn't help but think of the Xie family.

Yu Youyao's heart skipped a beat. She quickly went to the study, spread out paper and ink, and wrote a letter to the Xie Residence.

She wrote down everything that had happened at the flower festival, the commotion in the harem, as well as the outcome of the Duke Rong's Residence. She was worried that someone would investigate the letter, so she did not write too many sensitive words. It was more of a show of indignance. The Duke Rong's Residence had used the Xie Residence's channels to obtain many benefits, but in the end, they actually wanted to harm her.

When others saw this, they would only think that she had suffered grievances and was complaining to her distant family..

Chapter 635 - 635: Not Knowing Humiliation

The letter did not mention anything about the dog emperor, but after the Xie family read this letter, they would definitely have some guesses.

After writing it, Yu Youyao was worried. She looked at it carefully again. After confirming that she had not missed anything, she took out an envelope and sealed the letter. The paint seal was intact.

The Xie family might be able to hear about the commotion in the capital.

However, Quanzhou was a long way away, so it would definitely take a long time for the news to reach them. It would also not be as detailed as what she knew in the capital.

It was only a guess if the dog emperor was really coveting the wealth of Duke Rong's Residence.

But what if it was true?

In that case, the dog emperor was probably eyeing the Xie family the most. Now, there were varying degrees of drought in all parts of the country, and the treasury was empty. The Imperial Court had not released silver for a long time. The Xie family's wealth was indeed too eye-catching.

She was just worried that the information the Xie family had obtained was not detailed enough and they would not be on guard.

There was nothing wrong with being careful.

Yu Youyao handed the letter to Xia Tao. "Hurry up and send this letter to the Xie Residence in Quanzhou."

Seeing Young Miss's serious expression, Xia Tao knew how urgent this was. She quickly went to the outer courtyard to look for Tao Da's family.

Yu Youyao sat in the study, feeling more and more uneasy.

The dog emperor had already sacrificed too many people to retain his power. As long as he could achieve his goal, what was a small Xie family?

It wasn't without reason that Yu Youyao would think this way.

At the very least, in her nightmare, she had been raised as a medicinal test subject by Song Mingzhao, and the Xie family never cared about her. Yu Youyao knew very well that if her world was in shambles, it was not that the Xie family did not care about her but the Xie family no longer had the ability to care about her.

Even though it was just a nightmare.

However, every time she thought about it, she felt flustered. She could no longer treat it as a pure nightmare.

Yu Youyao thought about it carefully again. She had a strong feeling that the older Yao Yao in her nightmare must have been coveted by the Third Prince and damaged her reputation.

That night, Yu Youyao had a dream.

In her dream, the older Yao Yao had participated in the Flower Festival at Duke Rong's Residence with her grandmother. Her grandmother's hair was gray, and she looked very old. She was far from being as lively as in reality.

As her grandmother's health wasn't good, the older Yao Yao was also wary of Duke Rong's Residence, so she gave up on admiring the flowers and accompanied her grandmother in the reception pavilion.

After a while, the other young misses in the reception pavilion had already left.

The Princess Consort of Duke Rong's Residence Prefecture came over. "Eldest

Miss Yu, why aren't you going to Fangfei Courtyard to admire the flowers with the other young misses? Could it be that the flowers and plants in Duke Rong's Residence don't catch your eye?

These words were too serious. The older Yao Yao quickly shook her head. "Princess Consort, you must be joking. Grandmother isn't in good health and rarely goes out..."

Before she could finish speaking, Yang Shuwan smiled and said, "The Princess Consort is right. You came to the Dukes Residence today to admire the flowers. If you don't go and admire the flowers and just sit here, others will think that the Duke Rong's Residence doesn't treat our guests well. Wouldn't that be rude?" At this point, she chuckled. "As Matriarch's daughter-in-law, I'll take care of her. You can play with the others too!"

The older Yao Yao pursed her lips. At this point, if she refused to leave, she would be insensible, rude, and unruly.

After all, her stepmother had already said that she wanted to take care of her mother-in-law. It was not her place to show her filial piety.

However, her grandmother's health had been deteriorating recently.

Usually, she was the one attending to her grandmother's illness, so Madam Yang and Second Aunt might not be as appropriate as her.

Under the probing gazes of others, the older Yao Yao couldn't sit still anymore.

Old Madam Yu glanced at Yang Shuwan indifferently and smiled. "My health isn't too good. Usually, it's my granddaughter who takes care of my illness she couldn't leave for the time being. We must have embarrassed ourselves in front of everyone." At this point, she looked at Yu Youvao. "It's also unlucky to follow an old woman like me around every day. It's rare for you to come out. Don't just sit around. Go out and play too!"

In the eyes of outsiders, it was appropriate for her to have her daughter-in-law by her side to take care of her. It was not Yu Youyao's place to interfere.

Moreover, it wasn't good for her granddaughter to stay when the adults were talking together.

These words were brilliant. The Madams and Madams who had originally thought that Yu Youyao was an eldest daughter without a mother immediately thought highly of her.

It was really rare for her to be so filial at such a young age.

It wasn't good for the older Yao Yao to stay. After instructing Nanny Liu, she said, "I'll take a walk nearby and not go far. If there's anything, get Sister Qing

Xiu to come and look for me."

Madam Luo solicitously led Eldest Yao Yao out.

Fifth Miss Yin welcomed her warmly and dragged her to the corridor.

After walking for a while, the older Yao Yao saw that there were fewer and fewer people on the way and was about to go back.

Fifth Miss Yin did not allow it, so it was inevitable that the two of them would have a conflict.

Seeing that her plan to trick Eldest Yao Yao to go to the crepe myrtle garden had failed, Fifth Miss Yin stopped pretending and called three burly old maids over.

The Duke Rong's Residence had come prepared. Chun Xiao and Xia Tao were restrained by the old maids.

Another old woman covered her mouth and dragged her to the crepe myrtle garden.

No one knew that the area near the crepe myrtle garden had been cleared. As expected, the older Yao Yao "met" the Third Prince in the crepe myrtle garden.

Her grandmother was so angry that she fainted on the spot, and her health deteriorated.

Everyone accused her of not knowing shame and even seducing the Third Prince.

She tried her best to defend herself, but no one believed her. Her father punished her to be sent to the ancestral hall.

The Third Prince felt that he had "offended" the older Yao Yao, so he felt very guilty. He began to brazenly enter and leave the Yu Residence, often sending over some good things.

On the surface, he wanted to compensate them and even promised to marry

Eldest Yao Yao as his secondary consort.

Her father had tacitly agreed, but her grandmother had never relented.

Everything that had happened in the nightmare made Yu Youyao feel that things were absurd. She was deep in the nightmare, but she kept shouting in her heart, “Go find Cousin. Hurry up and find him...”

It was as if she had heard Yu Youyao’s shout. The older Yao Yao couldn’t defend herself. She was here... At this moment, The Green House was still called The Lotus House.

There was no one in the empty courtyard. Only an apricot tree in the courtyard had green fruits on it.

The older Yao Yao heard a servant say—

“Young Master Zhou has been back in Youzhou for more than ten days. He was originally so sick that he was about to die. It’s not good for him to die in our residence and bring bad luck to our residence.”

“He’s just hanging on by a thread. It’s not good for Matriarch to stop him if he wants to return to his roots. I wonder if she can return to Youzhou.

Otherwise...

“Shh, don’t say it. If Eldest Miss finds out, she’ll be flogged again. You don’t know this, but on the day Young Master left, Eldest Miss chased him all the way to Chang An Street. Later, she was knocked unconscious and carried back by a maidservant...”

Yao Yao, who was isolated and helpless, sat under the apricot tree and sobbed..

“Cousin...”

Chapter 636 - 636: Withered Lights

Yu Youyao suddenly woke up and stared blankly at the green ceiling above her head.

In the nightmare, the reason why the Duke Rong’s Residence was so brazen and dragged her into the crepe myrtle garden was because the Princess

Consort of Duke Rong’s Residence had long colluded with Yang Shuwan.

Even if the matter was exposed, Yang Shuwan would stand up for the Duke Rong’s Residence and push all the blame to the older Yao Yao. No one would believe the words of an eldest daughter with no mother.

Chun Xiao, who was in the nightmare, did not have the powerful skills to fight against three people alone, and her cousin did not have any arrangements in the crepe myrtle garden. With a stepmother with ill intentions, no matter how guarded the older Yao Yao was, she could not disobey her stepmother outside.

The outcome was almost predestined.

This was the reason why she had been engaged to Song Mingzhao later.

In the nightmare, the older Yao Yao had ruined her reputation. She already had the intention to die, but she couldn't let go of her grandmother.

In the nightmare, the older Yao Yao did not have any spiritual dewdrop and had no way to save her cousin's life. Her cousin lasted for three years and was finally at the end of his life...

"Cousin—" Yu Youyao was completely disheartened and desperate. She hugged her legs and buried her face in them, sobbing.

For a moment, she couldn't tell reality from dream.

After an unknown period of time, she suddenly got up from the bed. She was wearing inner clothes and her hair was disheveled. She walked out barefoot.

When Chun Xiao heard the commotion, she quickly entered her house. In the dark room, Young Miss's white figure was thin and delicate.

"Young Miss, did you have a nightmare?"

Yu Youyao turned a deaf ear to her, as if she hadn't heard her. Her eyes were wide open as she walked out of the house barefooted.

Chun Xiao thought that Young Miss hadn't heard her clearly, so she shouted again, "Young Miss, it's already midnight. Where are you going?"

Yu Youyao turned a deaf ear.

Chun Xiao sensed that something was amiss. She had heard from the old maid in the courtyard that when she fell asleep at night, she would get out of bed and do some strange things. This was called sleepwalking.

In the past, there was an old woman in their residence who had suffered from sleepwalking.

A maidservant woke up in the middle of the night and saw her. When she saw the old woman running to the woodshed in the middle of the night to get a machete, she was so frightened that she screamed and shouted. The old woman, who was in a daze, was frightened awake and went crazy. In a few days, she passed away.

Chun Xiao's face turned pale with shock. She didn't know if she should wake Young Miss up or not.

Seeing that Young Miss had already left the room, Chun Xiao quickly called for the young maidservant on duty. "Young Miss is a little unwell from the nightmare. Hurry up and invite Nanny Xu over."

The young maidservant did not dare to ask further and quickly ran away.

Chun Xiao quickly chased after her out of the room. Seeing that Young Miss had left the Jade Courtyard in a daze, she did not dare to make a sound. She could only secretly feel anxious as she followed behind her.

Soon, Yu Youyao arrived at The Green House.

Yin San, who was hiding on an elm tree, rushed into the house.

Zhou Linghuai, who had always been a light sleeper, heard the commotion.

“What is it?”

The old elm tree in The Green House had also been there for many years. Standing on it, one could almost see the entire Yu Residence. Yin San said, “For some reason, Young Miss is lingering at the entrance of the courtyard.”

Zhou Linghuai immediately got up and put on his boots. He took his outer robe from the shelf beside the bed and put it on as he asked, “What time is it now?”

Yin San said, “It’s just past midnight.”

There was a dim lamp hanging diagonally on the courtyard door of the Green House, and the shadows of the lamp scattered sparsely on the closed courtyard door. Shentu was pasted on the door. The clueless deity sat under the peach tree on both sides, his chest bare and his stomach exposed. He had a long beard and horns on his head, and he held a peach wood sword in his hand. Under the dim light, he looked even more ferocious.

The gatekeeper of The Green House had been personally drawn by her cousin.

At that time, she was still very disdainful. “Cousin, your painting of the door god is too ugly. It looks scary.”

Her cousin said, “The fiercer the door god’s painting is, the more ghosts and evil can be repelled. The house will have better protection.”

Yu Youyao snapped out of her daze.

Only then did she realize that her previous nightmare was too real, waking her up with a start. In a daze, she couldn’t tell reality from dream. Unknowingly, she had arrived at The Green House.

This was clearly against the rules. Why didn’t anyone stop her?

Yu Youyao’s hair was disheveled, and she was only wearing a thin inner shirt. It was only April, and the night was as cold as water, but she already felt her entire body turn cold. The coldness drilled into the soles of her feet, along her calves, and crawled up her back.

Yu Youyao shivered and turned to go back

At this moment, the courtyard door of the Green House opened with a creak.

Yu Youyao was stunned and suddenly turned around

Her cousin stood under the sparse light. He was tall and slender.

Suddenly, she turned around and saw the person there in the dim light. Yu Youyao’s eyes suddenly turned red, and large drops of tears rushed out. “Why are you crying?” Zhou Linghuai strode out of the courtyard and walked to Yu Youyao. Before Yu Youyao could react, he had already taken off his outer robe and draped it over her.

Yu Youyao’s thin and cold body was wrapped in her cousin’s warmth, and she couldn’t help but feel warm. She stammered, “Cousin!”

The little girl’s eyes were red, and even her voice was hoarse. She looked pitiful.

Zhou Linghuai lowered his head. The little girl’s fair feet were folded together, and her small and exquisite toes were also curled up uneasily.

The limestone floor was cold and hard. Just like that, she walked barefoot all the way!

“Why are you running around without even wearing shoes?!” Zhou Linghuai felt his scalp tingle. He reached out and picked the little girl up horizontally.

“Ah!” Yu Youyao exclaimed softly, her hands instinctively grabbing her cousin’s shoulders.

Outside the door, Chun Xiao, who was following behind Yu Youyao at a distance, suddenly widened her eyes in shock and covered her mouth.

Suddenly, someone patted her shoulder from behind.

Chun Xiao was shocked. She suddenly turned around and saw Nanny Xu standing behind her. She quickly said, “Nanny, Young Master, he... Just now, Young Miss...”

Nanny Xu nodded. “Go back. Young Master will send Young Miss back later.”

Chun Xiao was also stunned. “But, Young Miss, she...”

Nanny Xu reminded, “Don’t make a fuss. You’re Eldest Miss’s most trusted maidservant. Just pretend not to see it and don’t tell anyone.” At this point, she sighed slightly. “The huge inner courtyard of the Yu Residence can’t trap a phoenix with wings. Sooner or later, it will fly out.”

Chun Xiao was stunned. For a moment, she did not understand what Nanny Xu meant and did not know what to do.

Nanny Xu patted her back. “Go back!”

In a daze, Chun Xiao followed Nanny Xu back.

Zhou Linghuai carried Yu Youyao back to the study and placed her in the inner room. On the bed where he usually rested, he held her hand, and his palm was cold. “It’s late at night. Why aren’t you even dressed properly? Why are you running outside barefooted? It’s still April.. What if you catch a cold?”

Chapter 637: Don’t Cry, I’m Not Lying to You

Thinking of her previous nightmare, Yu Youyao’s eyes turned red again. “I-I had a nightmare.” She threw herself into her cousin’s arms again and cried until she was out of breath. “I dreamed that Grandmother brought me to the Duke Rongs Residence to attend the flower festival. An old woman dragged me into the crepe myrtle garden and forced me to meet the Third Prince.

Everyone scolded me and said that I shamelessly seduced the Third Prince. No matter how I explained, no one believed me.”

Thinking of the nightmare where the older Yao Yao couldn’t defend herself and was betrayed by everyone, Yu Youyao suddenly felt a sense of resentment.

Although it had only been a nightmare, she knew very well that without her cousin, she wouldn’t have ended up much better in reality than in her nightmare.

“Grandmother had a stroke, and her mouth was crooked. She couldn’t even speak properly. Yu Zongzheng was about to marry me to the Third Prince as his secondary consort. I was unwilling and wanted to die, but I couldn’t bear to part with Grandmother, so I planned to cut my wrist with a hairpin on the day of my marriage and let the Third Prince welcome a corpse into the residence. Everyone would know that it was the Third Prince who harmed me...”

She and the older Yao Yao were in different situations, but they would rather die than be dishonored.

Zhou Linghuai closed his eyes. In his mind, he seemed to be able to see the little girl crying helplessly and in despair. As she was used to enduring her grievances, she did not even dare to cry loudly in front of others. She had to find a place with no one around and whimper softly.

He seemed to be able to imagine that the little girl was sitting in the sedan chair. The blood on her wrist had also dyed the secondary consort’s red clothes bright and pure red.

Zhou Linghuai had a feeling that if he hadn’t interfered in the scheme of the Duke Rongs Residence, such a thing would very likely have happened.

For no reason, Zhou Linghuai felt a chill run down his spine.

He suddenly tightened his arms around the little girl in his arms. His big hand gently stroked her back. ‘Don’t cry. It was just a dream. It’s not real...’

Yu Youyao fell into her cousin’s arms and cried until her small body trembled. “Cousin didn’t have the spiritual dewdrop to nourish his body. In less than three years, he was already at the end of his life.. No one believed me. In order to protect me, Grandmother promised me to Song Mingzhao. Song Mingzhao wasn’t a good person. He locked me in the courtyard, took the blood from my heart, and gave it to Yu Jianjia. I was treated as a medicinal test subject. Chun Xiao died, and so did I. Song Mingzhao cut out my heart and used it as medicine...”

Zhou Linghuai’s mind was constantly analyzing the possibility of her nightmare.

Without the spiritual dewdrop, his body would indeed be exhausted in three years at most. At that time, the arrangements in the capital would have been completed.

Next, the Great Zhou Dynasty would be in chaos.

He was living in the Yu Residence. He was about to die, and he could not die in the Yu Residence, Soon, he would return to Youzhou, and no one would be able to interfere in the Flower Festival in Duke Rongs Residence.

It was possible that Song Mingzhao did not care about Yu Youyao’s reputation. Just the medicinal test subject and using her heart as medicine parts were a little suspicious.

The little girl pouted and cried her heart out. Clearly, she was affected by the nightmare. Even reality and dreams were a little confusing to her.

“Don’t cry...” Zhou Linghuai’s heart ached. He had a glib tongue which was equivalent to a million soldiers. However, every time Yu Youyao cried, he was completely at his wit’s end.

His glib tongue was useless.

Buddhism had five senses, namely: eyes, ears, mouth, and nose.

Due to the five senses, there were six consciousnesses, namely: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and intuition.

People with spirituality, kindness, and virtue were often more sensitive than others. There was a saying that went, “The heart moves the mind.” Therefore, this sixth consciousness was also known as a feeling.

Ordinary people only had five senses, and their sixth sense was often only their subconscious. They couldn’t even realize it.

A person with a strong subconscious had a very sharp “intuition” that could reap benefits from and avoid harm.

People with strong intuition often had “omens”, which were also known as “mind perception.” They received information beyond their five senses and could predict what was about to happen.

Such a capable person had been known since ancient times.

Most people only had a vague impression of their dreams after waking up. The only things they could remember clearly were often some fragments.

When Yu Youyao mentioned her nightmare, her logic was clear and matched reality very well.

In Zhou Linghuai’s opinion, as Yu Youyao was so deeply affected by this ridiculous dream, it was very likely not a simple dream. It might be an omen.

People who were clear-minded, intelligent, kind, and virtuous often had fewer distracting thoughts and stronger intuition. Yu Youyao was such a person.

Grandmaster Hui Neng, Mr. Xian Yun, and even Hui Ji had all said that Yu Youyao was fated with Buddha.

Previously, he had also felt that it made sense for Yu Youyao to be spiritual and fated with Buddha. However, from the looks of it, this “Buddhist fate” should be related to intuition.

Realistically speaking, this nightmare was just a big dream.

However, the omen made Yu Youyao experience those nightmares in her illusory dream. Therefore, after Yu Youyao woke up, she couldn’t differentiate between nightmare and reality.

It was both real and fake. It was difficult to tell if it was real or fake.

“Don’t cry.” Zhou Linghuai had no choice but to treat all of this as a ridiculous dream. “Look, the nightmare and reality are the opposite.” In the nightmare, her cousin’s life was already ending.

However, in reality, her cousin was still doing well!

In her nightmare, she had damaged her reputation.

However, in reality, the Duke Rongs Residence had been stripped of its title, Consort Xu and the Third Prince had been imprisoned, and Yang Shuwan had also been locked up in the Tranquil Heart Residence.

Her cousin was right. Her dream and reality were the opposite.

Yu Youyao cried badly and vented her emotions. However, she had cried too miserably just now. She had restrained her tears, but she was still sobbing, and her thin body was trembling.

However, Zhou Linghuai's heart ached terribly. "I said I would protect you for the rest of my life. I won't go back on my word."

Unexpectedly, when Yu Youyao heard this, the tears that she had just restrained rushed out of her eyes again. Her voice was hoarse from crying, and even her tone was broken. "You're lying. It's impossible for you to protect me for the rest of my life. You're not Zhou Linghuai at all, nor are you my cousin. You're Yin Huaixi, the heir of King Li of Zhou, and Yue Fei, who was personally conferred the title of King of the North by the emperor. It's impossible for you to stay in the Yu Residence forever..."

Zhou Linghuai finally understood why his father always opened his mouth and said, "Only villains and women are difficult to raise..."

Damn it!

"You lied to me. Liar! Sooner or later, you'll leave me behind and leave the capital." As Yu Youyao cried, she punched him angrily. After hitting him a few times, even her hand hurt. She felt aggrieved. "You're bullying me..."

"Don't cry. I'm not lying to you." Zhou Linghuai was worried that her hand would hurt, so he quickly held her wrist.

His thin wrist felt small in his hand.

Zhou Linghuai panicked and subconsciously exerted less strength. He was worried that he would accidentally break such a weak wrist and hurt it..

Chapter 638: Holding Hands

"You, you're still holding my hand." Yu Youyao struggled hard twice and cried again. "Let go of me. Let go of me quickly..."

Zhou Linghuai was worried that he would hurt her, so he quickly let go. "Okay, okay. I won't hold your hand. Don't cry. I'm not lying to you. I..."

"You're bullying me." Yu Youyao fell into his arms again and cried. Her weak fingers tugged helplessly at his shirt. "I don't want to believe your words anymore. I don't want to acknowledge you as my cousin..."

The veins on Zhou Linghuai's forehead twitched. It wasn't because he was angry, but because he was helpless.

The little girl was in a fit of anger and wouldn't listen no matter what.

Or should he wait until she was tired of crying...

But!

Instead, Yu Youyao cried even harder. "Why aren't you saying anything? People are all like this. You said that you wanted to protect me for the rest of my life, but you were lying to me. Yin Huaixi, you big liar." She came out of her cousin's arms and accused him while crying. "You really want to leave me behind. I'm already crying, but you didn't coax me. In the past, when I cried, you would think of ways to coax me..."

"Who said I was leaving you behind?" Zhou Linghuai's forehead hurt. He sighed softly. "I was still worried that you wouldn't leave with me because you were worried about the Yu Residence."

Yu Youyao was stunned when she heard this. She even forgot to cry. "Cousin?"

The little girl's eyes were red as she looked at him in a daze. The tears in her eyes were still flowing out. Her pitiful appearance made his heart ache.

Zhou Linghuai took a handkerchief and gently wiped her tears. "How can I bear to leave you alone in the capital? What if you're bullied?"

Yu Youyao looked at her cousin in a daze. She had probably cried for a long time just now and had shed too many tears. Even her mind was a little slow.

She had heard every word her cousin had said just now, but when they were combined, she suddenly felt a little flustered and did not understand anything.

The little girl looked at him with tears in her red eyes. She was about to cry.

Zhou Linghuai was worried that he hadn't made it clear enough and had made this little ancestor cry again. "I indeed plan to return to the North in September at the latest." Halfway through his sentence, he saw Yu Youyao purse her lips and tear up again. He was shocked and quickly said, "However, I plan to bring you along. I don't plan to leave alone."

He thought that Yu Youyao would not cry when she heard this.

Unexpectedly, Yu Youyao's eyelashes fluttered and she threw herself into his arms to cry again. As she cried, she complained to him, "You, why didn't you say so earlier? Did you deliberately make me cry? You bullied me. I don't want to acknowledge you as my cousin anymore..."

Zhou Linghuai wanted to say that it did not matter if she acknowledged him as her cousin or not. In any case, he would have to change his words in the future. However, as long as he did not leave the Yu Residence, he could not say this openly.

Although he thought so, he was still very honest. "I didn't bully you. It's just that the time wasn't right previously, so I couldn't tell you."

Yu Youyao's voice was hoarse from crying. "But, Cousin, I..."

In the nightmare, the older Yao Yao was deserted and alone. This triggered Yu Youyao. On impulse, she exposed the fear buried deep in her heart.

Now that she had calmed down, she suddenly felt a little flustered.

Zhou Linghuai looked at her steadily. "You just have to tell me if you're willing to leave with me."

Her cousin's gaze was deep, firm, and gentle. Yu Youyao's lips moved, and she slowly lowered her head, but she did not see the gloom and disappointment in Zhou Linghuai's eyes.

His lips tightened, and his expression was frighteningly dark.

Between him and the Yu Residence, Yu Youyao finally chose the Yu Residence and gave up on him.

That made sense!

No matter how bad the Yu Residence was, it was still where Yu Youyao had lived since she was young. It was her home. Old Madam Yu had protected her for 13 years. There was no reason for her to give up on her family and leave with him.

Heh, she said that she would treat him well for the rest of her life.

It was all a lie!

Zhou Linghuai's eyes turned red as he stared at Yu Youyao. Did she think he would let go?

Dream on!

It was Yu Youyao who had disturbed him first and said that she would treat him well for the rest of her life. She could forget about escaping from him for the rest of her life.

Yu Youyao lowered her head and bit her lip. Suddenly, she looked up. "Okay!"

"What did you say?" For a moment, Zhou Linghuai thought that he had heard wrongly. The redness in his eyes was suddenly replaced by shock. Zhou Linghuai held Yu Youyao's shoulder and looked at her forcefully. "Say it again."

"Okay!" Yu Youyao smiled until her eyes curved into crescents. However, there were tears in her eyes. Her smile was like a pear blossom with raindrops, gentle and moist. "Brother Jingzhi!"

Zhou Linghuai was overjoyed. He suddenly pulled her into his arms, and even his voice became hoarse. "Are you really willing to come with me?"

"I'm willing." Yu Youyao did not think that the Yu Residence and her cousin needed to make a choice beforehand. "I really want to go to the North with

Brother Jingzhi and see the place where you grew up. I also want to see the Xie Residence and Quanzhou's wealth..."

In this world, only her cousin and the Xie family treated her well.

She did not have to make a choice.

When she had the chance to follow her cousin, she definitely wouldn't hesitate.

"Yao Yao!" Zhou Linghuai was very excited.

Yu Youyao said softly, "I actually don't have any feelings for the Yu Residence. It's just that Grandmother..."

Worried that she would go back on her word, Zhou Linghuai hurriedly interrupted her. "Don't worry. As long as you agree, I'll arrange the rest."

Concubine Lu had come out of the Cold Palace. His arrangements in the palace had already been completed. Soon, the palace would be in chaos. At that time, the vassal lords would definitely rebel, and the rebel forces from all over the world would surface one after another.

The capital would become a troublesome place.

Yu Youyao smiled. "Okay, I believe you."

At this point, Zhou Linghuai did not hide anything. "No matter where I go in the future, I won't leave you behind. Don't cry so easily. Your eyes are swollen from crying." There was a lump in his throat. He swallowed his heartache and said, "It'll hurt your eyes if you cry too much."

Thinking of how unreasonable she had been just now, Yu Youyao was embarrassed and tried to explain, "I didn't mean to cry. I was just frightened by the nightmare."

She pouted and realized that when she mentioned the nightmare again, she no longer had the suffocating despair in her heart.

Zhou Linghuai frowned. "You said previously that in the nightmare, you later married into the Zhenguo Marquis Residence?"

Her cousin's voice was cold and terrifying for no reason. Yu Youyao felt that the exposed part of his neck was a little cold. She couldn't help but shrink her neck and say softly, "I hadn't reached adulthood at that time, and Grandmother had just passed away. The Zhenguo Marquis Residence was worried about the mourning period." Seeing that her cousin's face had darkened, she hurriedly changed her phrasing. "Heir Song's marriage is a big deal, so I suggested that we get married within a hundred days. A legitimate daughter just has to mourn for a year. When the mourning period is over, I would have reached adulthood..

Chapter 639: Don't Hit Me!

Zhou Linghuai frowned and called Chang An over.

As soon as Chang An entered the inner room, he sensed that the atmosphere was amiss.

Young Miss sat on the bed with disheveled hair. Her eyes were red and swollen, and her face was stained with tears, like a pitiful child who had been bullied and cried.

He looked at his young master carefully. Perhaps it was because the light in the room was a little dim, but he felt that his young master's face was inexplicably a little dark.

Zhou Linghuai glanced at him indifferently.

Chang An immediately straightened his back and lowered his head. He looked down, as if he could not feel the dense atmosphere in the room at all.

Seeing that he had become obedient, Zhou Linghuai instructed, "Go get a basin of warm water and bring over a piece of ice."

Chang An fled.

The room fell silent again.

An inexplicable pressure made Yu Youyao feel a little guilty and afraid. She did not dare to look at her cousin and was about to lower her head to her chest.

Strange.

Her cousin had been fine just now. Why had his expression changed so suddenly?

Could it be that she had said something wrong just now to make her cousin unhappy?

But she had only said what had happened in the nightmare. She had not said anything else?

Why did she still feel guilty?

Her little head was staring too hard, and after a while, her neck felt a little sore. Yu Youyao raised her little neck and glanced sideways. From the corner of her eye, she carefully glanced at her cousin to see if he had calmed down.

Unexpectedly, as soon as her gaze landed on her cousin's face, she was caught in his deep eyes.

Her eyes seemed to have been stung by a bee. Yu Youyao hurriedly retracted her eyes and buried her head in her chest, not daring to look at her cousin.

Looking guilty, Zhou Linghuai was caught between laughter and tears. He raised his hand...

Yu Youyao lowered her head. From the corner of her eye, she was still paying attention to her cousin's movements. She saw her cousin's hand on his leg suddenly raise—

Yu Youyao was shocked and dodged to the side. "Don't hit me!"

The air immediately fell silent—

"I want to hit you?" Zhou Linghuai's arm froze in midair, and he was so angry that he was about to laugh. He took a deep breath and couldn't help but grind his teeth. His voice seemed to be squeezed out from between his teeth. "Do you think I'll hit you?!"

Yu Youyao's desire to live exploded. "I-I didn't. You heard wrongly just now. Cousin is the best cousin in the world and treats me the best. I like Cousin the most. Why would I think that Cousin wants to hit me?" At this point, her eyes darted around and she raised her head bravely with an expression that said, "I'm not afraid of death." She met her cousin's eyes and accused him righteously, "You can't accuse me wrongly. You must have heard wrongly." She didn't really think that her cousin was going to hit her.

She just felt that her silent cousin was a little too scary. She felt a little guilty. When she saw he walking back like a constable, she thought that he was here to arrest her.

The corners of Zhou Linghuai's mouth twitched. He said it self-righteously, but his eyes were sparkling, and his eyelashes fluttered. He tried his best to look innocent and pitiful.

The anger in his heart seemed to have been doused with a bucket of cold water. With a puff, it was completely extinguished. Sparks flew tenaciously a few times before completely extinguishing.

"You..." Zhou Ling was helpless. His stiff hand landed on the top of her head and rubbed it hard twice.

This time, Yu Youyao did not dodge at all.

She blinked and looked at her cousin eagerly. She was obedient and her eyes were pitiful, as if she was trying to appease him. I knew that Cousin wouldn't hit me. I didn't dodge this time!

Zhou Linghuaijun couldn't help but feel the unhappiness in his heart completely dissipate.

Why should he be calculative with a nightmare?

This was not just a nightmare, but a premonition between reality and falsehood.

It was just an omen.

In the nightmare, he was already terminally ill. It was already very difficult for him to set up the chess game. He probably did not have much energy to worry about Yu Youyao.

With his personality, even if he was no longer able to protect her for the rest of his life, he probably wouldn't have too many ties with Yu Youyao, lest he implicated her and dragged her into his chaotic world.

It was also because he wasn't able to protect Yu Youyao that she had fallen into the trap of the Duke Rongs Residence and lost her reputation.

Generally speaking, in the nightmare, Yu Youyao's reputation had only been damaged, and her reputation had not been ruined. She could not marry into a wealthy family, but there was definitely no problem with a smaller family. It wasn't that the Yu Clan couldn't find such a family.

If they knew someone, her life would be good.

However, the person who had taken a fancy to Yu Youyao was the Third Prince. Ordinary poor families definitely did not dare to offend him.

Since Yu Zongzheng had agreed to the marriage, Yu Youyao was disillusioned and wanted to cut her hair and become a nun.

Other than marrying into the Third Prince's residence as a secondary consort, Yu Youyao could only find another family that was not afraid of the Third

Prince's noble family. Otherwise, she would only die.

In the nightmare, Song Mingzhao had no feelings for Yu Youyao.

Then, it was very likely that Old Madam Yu had used some method to force Song Mingzhao to marry Yu Youyao.

He had not interacted much with Song Mingzhao, but he had observed him in the past two years. This person seemed to be polite and quiet, but he was ruthless. He had a high tolerance. There was a knife above the word "endurance" in Chinese. People who were used to enduring were all ruthless people,

Song Mingzhao clearly held a grudge against Old Madam Yu and Yu Youyao. It was also because Yu Jianjia was sick and weak that he had no scruples and raised Yu Youyao as a medicinal test subject for Yu Jianjia to extract her blood. In the end, he cut out her heart and she died.

Then the latter part of the nightmare made sense.

For the sake of her granddaughter, Old Madam Yu had also thought of everything. Unfortunately, she did not know that from the day Yu Youyao's reputation was damaged, she had no way out.

Marrying the Third Prince was death, but marrying Song Mingzhao was a fate worse than death.

Was Old Madam Yu wrong?

That's right.

She was a person who was about to die. She had long expected that her granddaughter would only die if she married into the Third Prince's residence. She just wanted to find a way out for her granddaughter.

In the end, it was just a nightmare.

In the nightmare, Yu Youyao had married into the Zhenguo Marquis Residence in name only.

In reality, Yu Youyao also kept a respectful distance from Song Mingzhao. With him protecting Yu Youyao, it was unlikely that she would have too much interaction with Song Mingzhao.

Whether it was a nightmare or reality, Song Mingzhao was not qualified to have Yu Youyao.

Seeing that her cousin had not said anything, Yu Youyao panicked a little. Her fair fingers pinched a small corner of her cousin's sleeve and tugged at it gently. She called out fawningly, "Brother Jingzhi, are you still angry?"

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "I'm not angry with you. It's just that I felt a little regretful that I couldn't protect you in your nightmare."

Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief and quickly said, "Cousin also said that nightmares and reality are the opposite.. Look, aren't I fine now?"

Chapter 640: Yes. I Like It

Zhou Linghuai nodded and tilted his head to see Chang An poking his head in. "Bring it in!"

Chang An quickly entered the house and placed a small basin of water and a bowl of ice on the small table by the bed before leaving the room.

"Sit still obediently." Zhou Linghuai dipped the towel into the water.

Yu Youyao was very obedient and did not move obediently. She let her cousin twist the handkerchief and gently wash her face. She had cried for a long time just now, and her face was dry and uncomfortable. After wiping her face clean, she felt much more refreshed.

Zhou Linghuai picked up a few pieces of ice and wrapped them in a towel. "Your eyes are swollen from crying. It'll reduce the swelling faster if you apply ice on them. Otherwise, it'll be very uncomfortable."

The ice that was wrapped around the towel was placed on her eyes. It was cold, but it was not too uncomfortable. Instead, it was very cooling. Her eyes, which felt swollen and uncomfortable just now, were more comfortable.

Every time she felt that it was too cold, her cousin would move the ice to another eye.

After repeating it more than ten times, he finally stopped. Zhou Linghuai looked at her carefully. "The swelling has mostly subsided. Sleep well. When you wake up, you'll be fine."

Yu Youyao smiled. "Thank you, Brother Jingzhi!"

Ever since the day of her birthday, when Yu Youyao called him Brother Jingzhi for the first time, she would say it from time to time when there was no one else in private. Every time he heard Yu Youyao call him "Brother Jingzhi" obediently, gently, and sweetly, he couldn't help but feel a little distracted, so he kept forgetting to ask, "M/hy are you calling me Brother Jingzhi?"

Yu Youyao felt as if someone had seen the secret in her heart. She subconsciously lowered her eyes to avoid his gaze. When she looked up again, her lips were curved, and her soft fingers gently tugged at her cousin's sleeve. She pouted. "Cousin, don't you like me calling you that? Then I won't call you that anymore."

"It's not that I don't like it," Zhou Linghuai quickly explained.

Yu Youyao's smile curved. "Then you like it?"

There was a hint of slyness in the little girl's smile. Zhou Linghuai reacted and nodded helplessly. "Yes, I like it."

Yu Youyao blinked. "I also think that I feel closer to you when I call you Brother Jingzhi instead of Cousin."

Zhou Linghuai also gave up on continuing to probe. Anyway, there was still a long way to go. As long as Yu Youyao did not leave the Yu Residence, the Yu Residence would be a restriction to her.

She turned around and saw that it was already four o'clock. Dawn came earlier in summer. In an hour, it would be dawn.

Previously, she had a nightmare and cried for half the night. Now, the little girl was tired and yawning.

Zhou Linghuai's heart ached. "Sleep a little longer."

Yu Youyao subconsciously tightened her grip on her cousin's sleeve and said pitifully, "I'm afraid of nightmares."

"Don't be afraid." Zhou Linghuai helped her lie down and covered her with a thin blanket. "I'm not going anywhere. I'll stay here and guard you. Nothing will happen."

"Okay Yu Youyao finally felt relieved and slowly closed her eyes.

Not long after, Zhou Linghuai heard Yu Youyao's even breathing. She must have really fallen asleep.

Zhou Linghuai was about to go to the study outside when he remembered that he had promised Yu Youyao that he would guard her in the house. He stopped in his tracks and lowered his voice to call out to Chang An.

Chang An was guarding outside. When he heard his young master lower his voice, he also lowered it. "Young Master?"

Zhou Linghuai thought for a moment. "I remember that a merchant ship from Zhejiang brought a box of black onyx beads from overseas. Go to the storeroom and find it. At the same time, bring my tool box over."

After Ye Hanyuan established the navy, his cooperation with Yu Youyao on maritime trade also progressed smoothly. In the past two years, maritime trade had brought him a huge wealth.

There were many areas in the Great Zhou Dynasty that were rich in agate, but black agate was very rare. This box of black agate was also very rare

Soon, Chang An returned and handed it to Zhou Linghuai.

It was filled with black onyx. It was black, bright, pure, and impenetrable. Zhou Linghuai picked out a bead the size of a soybean, took the smallest Kunwu Knife, and carved scripture patterns on the bead.

When Yu Youyao fell asleep again, it was already seven o'clock.

The window opened a crack, and sunlight shone into the room. On the small table beside the bed, there was a lacquer tray. There was a set of clothes neatly folded, as well as shoes and socks.

Only then did Yu Youyao realize that this was the inner room of her cousin's study, where he usually took a nap.

She had not returned to the Jade Courtyard last night and had fallen asleep in the Green House.

Her cousin was no longer around.

Yu Youyao's heart skipped a beat. She slowly sat up on the bed and inadvertently saw a string of black and pure onyx bracelets beside her pillow.

She remembered that it wasn't there before she went to bed!

Yu Youyao's eyes lit up. She quickly picked up the bracelet. The small black onyx stones were like black jade beads. They were pure and smooth. When she leaned closer to take a look, every one of them was carved with detailed patterns. The patterns on the beads were of the micro-carved type, so they were not easy to recognize. After taking a closer look, she barely recognized that this was the language of Sanskrit.

Yu Youyao quickly put the bracelet around her wrist twice. It was just the right size. If she wore it, it would not fall off.

The newly carved black agate was polished and smooth. It had even been enhanced with wax a few times. It wouldn't hurt when worn on her wrist. If it was kept close to her body for a while, the color would be even smoother and more beautiful.

Agate was one of the seven treasures of Buddhism. It had the blessing of determination and courage. Wearing it could help overcome fear, uneasiness, and evil. Black agate also had the effect of calming the mind.

Yu Youyao was overjoyed that her cousin had specially made it for her.

At this moment, footsteps sounded outside the door.

Zhou Linghuai lifted the curtain and entered. The little girl was sitting on the bed with her hair draped over her shoulders. She looked rosy, full of energy, and in good spirits. After a nap, her mood finally calmed down.

Zhou Linghuai was finally relieved. His gaze subconsciously landed on her wrist.

The black agate was black and pure, making her fair wrist look as smooth as jade. The small beads also made her wrist look thin. The contrast between her fair skin and black agate was impactful.

Yu Youyao raised her wrist. "Cousin, does it look good?"

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "It's very beautiful."

Yu Youyao fiddled with the beads on her wrist. "Cousin, are the patterns on the beads in Sanskrit? What scripture is it?"

Zhou Linghuai smiled. "It's the Sutra of the Medicine Buddha, your favorite chapter."

Yu Youyao's eyes widened and she smiled. "His body is like glass, clear inside and out. It's pure and flawless. It's bright and vast, and his merit is majestic. His body is good and stable, and his flame is dignified. It's more dignified than the sun and moon, and all living beings in the Netherworld. Is this the part?!"

She had an inexplicable fate with this scripture. That day, in a daze, she had seen this scripture in the space where the child Buddha was sitting on the lotus..