

## All Hail 651

### Chapter 651 Distorting the Truth

Concubine Xu had failed to scheme against Yao Yao. Instead, she had implicated herself and the Third Prince.

Not only did the Xu Residence not think that they were in the wrong, but they also blamed the Yu Residence for making a fuss and causing Consort Xu and the Third Prince to be imprisoned.

The Duke Rongs Residence had been stripped of its title and Yao Yao had been conferred the title of County Lord of Shaoyi. The Xu family naturally thought that the person who had benefited was the Yu Residence.

The Yu Residence shouldn't have been putting on airs. They should have happily accepted the "compensation" from the Xu Residence and resolved their past grudges with them.

Even the Yu Residence did not hold it against them. If the Xu Residence put in more effort, Imperial Concubine Xu and the Third Prince would regain their freedom as soon as possible.

What a good plan.

However, the Yu Residence did not fall for this.

Madam Xu's expression darkened, but she endured it and did not flare up. Even her voice became a little hoarse. "I know that Matriarch's heart aches for her granddaughter and she's unhappy, but..." At this point, even her eyes turned red. "Noble Consort and Third Prince also suffered an undeserved calamity."

Old Madam Yu did not reply with a cold expression.

Madam Xu forced out two drops of tears. "You don't know this, but the Duke Rongs Residence invited him multiple times. It wasn't appropriate for Third

Prince to refuse, so he went to the Flower Festival.'

The imperial family and the royal family shared the same bloodline. The relatives who had been given titles were naturally different from ordinary idle relatives. They had to give them face. In terms of seniority, Duke Rong was still the third prince's uncle.

Yu Youyao lowered her eyes. If Madam Xu had taken this approach from the beginning, even if her grandmother was unhappy, she wouldn't have embarrassed her on the spot.

Therefore, the Xu Residence treated the Yu Residence as a pawn.

She tried to grasp it a few times, but she couldn't.

She knew that the Yu Residence was a tough nut to crack. She could only lower her status.

However, whether the Yu Residence was soft or hard, not everyone could control it. The actions of the Xu Residence had completely angered her grandmother.

After being a relative of the emperor for a few days, did she really think that everyone in this world had to follow her?

Had she forgotten how the illustrious Ning Public House had disappeared back then?

Did she remember what happened to Grand Tutor Yangs family, who was respected by the emperor? Concubine Lan's maiden family, who doted on the harem, was still in jail!

The emperor was suspicious by nature. How could Imperial Concubine Xu not tell that she was vying for the throne?

The imprisonment was only the beginning. Once the emperor found a suitable name, the Xu Residence would be the next to suffer.

Madam Xu of the Xu Residence pinched her handkerchief and wiped her tears. "That day, the Third Prince accidentally fell into the lake and was quite shocked. After that, he rushed back to the palace and didn't know anything about what had happened in the Duke Rongs Residence." She glanced at Yu Youyao vaguely and continued to cry. "Fortunately, after the Third Prince was treated by the imperial physician, he was fine after recuperating for a while.

County Lord Shaoyi's reputation was also not damaged and she was shocked. Matriarch's health improved a little. Otherwise, our Third Prince would have sinned greatly..."

If something really happened, regardless of whether this matter had anything to do with the Third Prince, it would naturally be a huge sin for the Third Prince to be involved.

However, Yu Youyao had only had a false alarm, and Matriarch Yu's health was fine. The Yu Residence had even benefited, so it was not a crime.

Moreover, the Third Prince had also been implicated innocently. He had fallen into the water and was frightened. He had even been imprisoned by the emperor.

Wouldn't it become an undeserved calamity?

The Xu family's ability to invert right and wrong was really impressive.

Old Madam Yu was sick of hearing this and interrupted her impatiently. "Just say it. Why did you come to our house today? My head hurts from you crying like this." At this point, she frowned. "You also know that I suddenly had a Yang problem previously. From time to time, I feel dizzy and frustrated."

Madam Xu felt as if her throat had been pinched by someone. Her cries suddenly stopped, and even her pale face turned red with embarrassment.

The atmosphere was in a stalemate for a while.

After the initial awkwardness, Madam Xu's face turned green. She opened her mouth and was about to flare up!

However, Old Madam Yu was an elder and Yu Youyao had just been conferred the title of county lord and was in the limelight now. Then, she thought of how Consort Xu and the Third Prince were still imprisoned in the palace...

No matter what, she had to put on a good show of "compensation" so that this matter could be completely over.

This was to prevent some people in the palace who thought that they had something on the Noble Consort and refused to let go of this matter. The

Second Prince's party would also use this matter to cause trouble and ruin the Third Prince's reputation.

The maidservant quietly poured a new cup of tea.

Madam Xu quickly picked up her tea. After drinking a cup of tea, the anger in her heart calmed down a little. She calmed down and said awkwardly, "I took the liberty to come today and was worried about your health. As a junior, I'm insensible. Please don't take it to heart."

At this point, she had already lowered her status.

Yu Youyao's lips curled up. Since she was here to apologize, she should apologize. Even if she was just here to pretend, she couldn't be perfunctory.

Old Madam Yu nodded indifferently and did not show any expression.

Madam Xu heaved a sigh of relief and smiled. "It's also because of the Imperial

Concubine that she sent a letter to our family when she found out that the

County Lord of Shaoyi had suffered some grievances because of the Third Prince. She asked our family to apologize to County Lord of Shaoyi on behalf of her and the Third Prince." At this point, she looked worried and smiled bitterly. "This matter shouldn't have been handled by our family. You know that the Imperial Concubine is grounded in the palace and the palace gate has been sealed. She can't personally apologize to the County Lord of Shaoyi. Please don't blame her for her negligence."

Old Madam Yu knew what the Xu Residence was up to, and she also knew the reason behind the "compensation."

Seeing that she did not look too good, Madam Xu's heart skipped a beat. She quickly said, "Today, the concubines of the various palaces have all given a congratulatory gift to the County Lord of Shaoyi. Since the Noble Consort can't appear, our family will express her gratitude."

The Yu Residence was not famous, but they were not arrogant. However, at this point, she only hoped that the Yu Residence would accept the "compensation" and the matter with the Duke Rongs Residence would be completely over.

Just as Old Madam Yu was about to refuse, Yu Youyao took a step forward and bowed to Madam Xu. "According to Madam, the person the Duke Rongs

Residence wants to scheme against is me. It's also because of me that Third Prince was frightened when he fell into the water and suffered an undeserved calamity. He was implicated innocently. This is my fault."

Old Madam Yu sat up straight and leaned against the couch again. She narrowed her eyes and finally felt satisfied.

Madam Xu's eyes widened in shock.

She had originally come to "compensate", but as soon as County Lord of Shaoyi spoke, it was as if she had come to "inquire" for no reason. If word got out, wouldn't it be the Xu family bullying others?

County Head Shaoyi was currently in the limelight. There was no need to wait until tomorrow. The Imperial Court's memorials to impeach the Xu family would be filled with imperial cases in the imperial study..

## Chapter 652 - 652: Ungrateful

Madam Xu was shocked and quickly said, "County Mistress Shaoyi, you've misunderstood. This matter..."

Yu Youyao continued, "In that case, I feel guilty accepting the 'compensation' from Consort Xu and Madam. I can't accept it." At this point, she squatted down and bowed. Such a big bow was naturally not for Madam Xu, but for

Consort Xu. "However, since it's Consort Xu's kind intentions, I will accept it."

Madam Xu felt bitter. She finally understood what it meant to shoot yourself in the foot.

She quickly got up and went to help Yu Youyao, who was squatting down deeply. "County Head of Shaoyi, what are you saying? The crepe myrtle garden is in the backyard of the Regional Kings Residence, and it's also Third

Prince's fault. How can you take the blame..."

She helped her up but she did not move.

Yu Youyao still maintained her deep squatting posture. Ordinary people wouldn't be able to take it after a few seconds, but she maintained this posture steadily and couldn't be helped up.

Yu Youyao lowered her eyes. "I understand what Madam means. Madam, don't worry. The Third Prince has a noble status. Since he has suffered an undeserved calamity from me, my family can't implicate him."

Madam Xu finally understood. Three years ago, the Marquis of Changxings wife had scolded Yu Youyao in front of everyone. When she was embarrassed, she felt aggrieved and angry, but also awkward and helpless.

She had specially come to the Yu Residence today because she wanted to end the matter at Duke Rongs Residence.

Yu Youyao's words were not far from her goal.

After achieving her goal, Madam Xu should be happy. However, she had come to visit in the name of "compensation", but Yu Youyao had twisted the truth with her words. It was as if the Xu family was bullying others and wanted to "warn" and "beat" the Yu Residence!

That was not what she meant at all.

Madam Xu looked at Yu Youyao with a complicated gaze. With such shrewdness, who could scheme against her?

The Imperial Concubine had made a bad move, turning a good hand of cards into a lousy one.

Before she could hit the fox, she was in trouble.

Old Madam Yu felt relieved. She leaned against the couch and narrowed her eyes as she looked at Madam Xu's defeated expression. She was like a vicious dog with its teeth pulled out.

Yu Youyao said aggrievedly, "I've also been raised by the etiquette of the family. I should have entered the palace to see the Imperial Concubine and apologize, but..." It was difficult to talk about Concubine Xu's imprisonment. She squatted down a little more. "However, Madam, please convey my apology to the Third Prince."

Madam Xu's "compensation" just now was insincere.

At this moment, Yu Youyao's "apology" did not seem sincere.

Madam Xu did not even pretend well, but Yu Youyao's etiquette was impeccable. Comparing the two, Madam Xu was so embarrassed that she felt awkward.

"County Lord of Shaoyi, please get up quickly." Madam Xu quickly held her hand and helped her up. Her voice was bitter. "It's also because Third Prince did something inappropriate. How can you be blamed? You have to accept this compensation. Otherwise, it'll be difficult to answer to the Noble Consort."

Yu Youyao glanced at her grandmother.

Old Madam Yu stopped the show and said calmly, "Our family feels guilty accepting this apology. Take it back. As for the congratulatory gift, it's also a token of appreciation from the Noble Consort and the Xu family. Keep it!"

Since Old Madam Yu had already spoken, how could she ask her to take back what she had said?

Madam Xu had never expected things to develop to this extent. If she couldn't make amends, it wouldn't be considered burying the hatchet with the Yu Residence. In the eyes of outsiders, this was still inappropriate for the Third Prince.

She had made a wasted trip.

At this point, there was no point in staying any longer.

After Madam Xu left, Old Madam Yu sneered. "Our Yu Clan was in the limelight and their Duke Xu's Residence is just an unknown family. They were only conferred the title of Duke because they had contributed to saving the emperor." At this point, she looked disdainful. "I'll just watch them. I want to see how long Duke Xu's relationship with the emperor can last."

The Xu Clan was originally a small family that relied on the Ning Public House. Although they had some foundation, they were still very weak. It was all thanks to the promotion of Duke Ning that they could become a fourth-grade general when the emperor was on an expedition to the north.

It was because they had contributed to the rescue that they had gained the emperor's recognition.

Back then, Duke Ning and his son had died tragically in the North, and their 800,000-strong army had been completely wiped out. After General Xu escorted the emperor back to the palace, he was the first to jump out and report several crimes of the Ning Public House.

It was also because of the accusation of General Xu, his trusted aide, that the emperor could naturally push all the blame of the imperial expedition to Duke Ning and his son, causing the entire Ning Public House to be punished.

Duke Xu's actions could be said to be ungrateful.

However, everyone knew that all of this was instigated by the emperor, so no one dared to say this.

However, in private, some old aristocratic families disdained to interact with the Xu family. Even though Concubine Lu had lost her power, there were still many court officials who secretly supported the Second Prince and disdained to side with the Third Prince.

With Madam Xu's character, what good daughter could she raise?

No wonder Concubine Xu was always inferior to Concubine Lu in the palace.

Not long after Yu Youyao returned to the Jade Courtyard, Zhou Linghuai came over.

The cousins sat under the Dorch and chatted.

After Yu Youyao grew up, every time Zhou Linghuai returned to the Jade Courtyard, he would no longer be in the same room as Yu Youyao.

The Jade Courtyard was not like The Green House. After all, there were too many people. If the cousins were in the same room, it was inevitable that there would be gossip.

Zhou Linghuai put down his teacup. "I'm going back to Youzhou the day after tomorrow. "

Yu Youyao was only stunned for a moment before nodding. "I'll help Cousin pack up later. When you go back this time, will you take a carriage or ride a horse?" At this point, she frowned slightly and said, "Your leg has just recovered. It's safer to take a carriage for such a long journey."

In the past two years, she had become used to parting with her cousin. She would not cry like two years ago when her cousin had gone to Shandong to quell the rebellion because she could not bear to part with him.

Zhou Linghuai, who had been preparing to ride a horse and return quickly, smiled. "I'll listen to you."

Yu Youyao felt a little relieved. "Then I'll prepare a few more things."

Zhou Linghuai nodded and suddenly asked, "Why didn't you ask me why I suddenly want to return to Youzhou?"

Yu Youyao looked at the scorching sun outside. "The festivities this year are earlier. It's only May, but it's already summer. The rice has to be planted in the fields before summer, not even a day later. This year is already destined to be a famine year. The land in the North is thin, and there are few rice fields to begin with. I think the situation will be even more serious. Cousin's rule is in the North, so I naturally understand that you're worried."

In the past, summer would only officially arrive after the Dragon Boat Festival..

Chapter 653 - 653: If You Want to Do a Good Job

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "That's one reason."

Could it be that something had happened in the North? Yu Youyao's breathing tightened, and she quickly asked, "Is there another reason?"

Zhou Linghuai did not leave her hanging. "The drought doesn't affect just the Great Zhou Dynasty. The Northern Barbarians are even more affected. They're a nomadic tribe and live as nomads. They're not good at farming and are seriously short of supplies. Previously, the leader of the Northern Barbarians,

Harmon, sent me a message and was willing to exchange the horses of the grassland for food they rely on to survive,"

Yu Youyao was a little surprised. "It seems that the drought on the grassland is already quite serious. Did Cousin agree?"

In the past two years, the Northern Barbarians had often invaded the border to hoard supplies for the drought. However, they had to suffer casualties every time and return empty-handed.

A war required a large number of resources. If they won, they could snatch the supplies of the defeated party and nourish themselves with battle spoils to strengthen themselves. If they lost, it was inevitable that their vitality would be greatly damaged.

The Northern Barbarians lacked supplies to begin with. They couldn't afford to grow them naturally or snatch them. Once there was a disaster, people wouldn't survive, let alone the precious warhorses on the grassland.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "I didn't refuse."

Yu Youyao was not surprised. "Warhorses are a rare resource. This is a rare opportunity for Cousin." At this point, she smiled. "If you want to do things well, you have to sharpen your tools first. Only when the troops in the North are strong can you avoid more deaths."

The Great Zhou Dynasty controlled military supplies very strictly.

For example, cotton, iron, medicinal herbs, food, and so on could be avoided by the Imperial Court. Through the escort business, they could buy a small number of them in different areas of the country with different identities and hoard them in large quantities.

If he was more cautious, he would not attract the attention of the Imperial Court.

Horses were a problem.

There were not many areas in the Great Zhou Dynasty where horses were raised, and almost all of them were under the control of the Imperial Court.

On the other hand, the Imperial Court had a clear rule that people were not allowed to buy or sell horses in private. The number of horses used as transportation was strictly limited according to one's status. Once the number exceeded the limit, one would be punished.

Ordinary people could only use mules and donkeys as horses.

It wasn't that there weren't horse farms that privately raised horses, but they weren't big. Moreover, the horses in the small farms weren't of good quality and couldn't be used on the battlefield.

There were also horse merchants who sold horses privately, but not only were they expensive, but there were also very few of them.

They were not as good as the warhorses of the Northern Barbarians.

The Northern Barbarians' horses were tall and strong. They were good at battle. The soldiers of the Great Zhou Dynasty had trained their muscles and bones and had strong tolerance. They had the conviction to protect their home and country. They were also elite soldiers on the battlefield.

However, on the battlefield, the morale of the army and amount of supplies was tested.

The warhorses of the Great Zhou Dynasty had always been inferior to those of the Northern Barbarians and had always been at a disadvantage on the battlefield. This was why the Northern Barbarians had bullied a vast country.

Zhou Linghuai smiled when he heard this. "The Northern Barbarians and the Great Zhou have been at war for generations. The hatred is irreconcilable.

Don't you think that my transaction with the Northern Barbarians is an act of colluding with the enemy?"

Yu Youyao frowned and said, "The art of war has the saying, don't chase after a desperate enemy. Perhaps my analogy isn't appropriate, but in my eyes, the Northern Barbarians are a group of desperate enemies. Right now, they aren't at their wits' end, so they can naturally negotiate a deal with Cousin calmly. However, if Cousin doesn't agree to a deal with the Northern Barbarians, they will be at their wits' end. In order to survive, the North will have to face a battle that's more terrifying than any other battle in the past."

Zhou Linghuai raised his hand to support his forehead. The horizons and breadth of mind often determined a person's worldview. The little girl considered the people of the world, not just the Great Zhou.

Yu Youyao blinked and looked at her cousin. "Of course. I believe that you're wise and mighty. You definitely won't be afraid of the Northern Barbarians." She smiled, her eyes sparkling. "Look, other than our dynasty's great emperor, how could the Northern Barbarians have negotiated a deal calmly with anyone? Wasn't it because they were afraid of you and intimidated by your reputation that they made peace? Otherwise, I'm afraid the Northern

Barbarians would have already mobilized a large number of troops and snatched your resources first."

In the battle seven years ago, King Li of Zhou had used his life as the price. His cousin had used his weak body as the price to turn the situation around and turn defeat into victory. In the end, he had defeated the Di people's courage and pride. Her cousin had regained control of the North, and the Northern Barbarians needed to probe carefully if they wanted to invade again.

Zhou Linghuai's smile deepened, and he enjoyed the little girl's admiring gaze.

Yu Youyao continued, "Fighting requires a lot of supplies, money, and food. However, there's a huge drought in the north now, and disaster relief can't be delayed. It's not appropriate to start a war again." At this point, she continued, "There's no eternal enemy. Only eternal benefits. Cousin has countless elite troops under him. There's no harm in being prepared for rations. What he lacks the most are warhorses that can charge in the front line. He can use food to exchange for scarce warhorses and avoid a war disaster. Cousin won't suffer."

Unless it was absolutely necessary, it was impossible for the Northern



Barbarians to exchange the powerful warhorses of the clan with the Great Zhou Dynasty and let the Great Zhou Dynasty use their warhorses to deal with them.

The one who suffered was the Northern Barbarians.

Her cousin had started hoarding supplies early on. The supplies in the North were enough for an army of 500,000 people, and it would take more than three years for them to be used up.

The sweet potatoes had already been harvested, but he did not know how many were produced. However, with drought-resistant food, the North basically did not lack rations.

There was no harm in exchanging some rations with the Northern Barbarians.

If the Great Zhou Dynasty was in chaos, a powerful army would be invincible.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "I originally planned to personally mobilize troops to attack the north in August this year before the famine erupted on a large scale.

I wanted to plunder the warhorses, cows, and sheep of the Northern Barbarians and use war to intimidate the Northern Barbarians so that they wouldn't take advantage of the chaos in the Great Zhou to take advantage of the situation.'

In the past six years, the North had never fought a decent battle.

A warrior who had never experienced the flames of war, killing, and bloodbath was never a true warrior.

The 500,000 You soldiers were like a treasured saber that had never seen blood.

Before the Great Zhou Dynasty fell into chaos, he first had to sharpen his knife with the Di people to strengthen the morale of the army and nourish the blood of the soldiers. Only then could he be invincible.

Yu Youyao's eyes widened. "Cousin, you want to attack the north? But I heard that the grassland is vast and boundless. The Di Clan doesn't have a fixed place to live. It's not easy to attack the north."

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "There's a Hidden Dragon Army, but there are less than a hundred warriors. They're good at disguise, infiltration, assassination, obtaining information, surveying the terrain, and so on." At this point, he smiled secretly. "When the Hidden Dragon Army was established, I was already preparing for the north expedition. Over the years, with some fragmented information they've obtained, I've basically grasped the scope of the Di Clan's operations and surveyed the topographic map of the grassland. Although the topographic map isn't perfect, it's enough for the north expedition."

He had never been someone who would sit back and do nothing. He had trained the Hidden Dragon Army earlier to help his father on the battlefield in the North.

Passively resisting and defending was not his style of doing things.. The Northern Barbarians could plunder the resources of the Great Zhou Dynasty, so why couldn't he go over and plunder the warhorses, cows, and sheep of the Northern Barbarians?

Chapter 654 - 654: Secondary Communication

Information and reconnaissance were not easy, but he had patience.

If he couldn't do it in a year, he would do it in two years, three years, four years or five years... The fragmented information was tested and confirmed several times before being perfected bit by bit.

Yu Youyao was in disbelief. "Cousin, you're really thorough."

He had even investigated the topographic map of the grassland. This was something that even Emperor Gaozu had not done back then. Otherwise, the north expedition would have ended quickly.

Zhou Linghuai shook his head. "The highest form of generalship is to block the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the last choice is to besiege walled cities.. Since Harmon has taken the initiative to make a deal, I have the advantage in this transaction. If I can obtain the greatest benefits at the lowest price, there's no need to make a fuss."

At this point, he paused and continued—

"I think Harmon knows very well that with the powerful warhorses of the grassland, even if the Great Zhou Dynasty is in chaos, as long as I guard the North, they won't dare to act rashly."

Yu Youyao agreed deeply. "When will Cousin return from Youzhou this time?" Zhou Linghuai said, "If there are no accidents, I'll return to the capital in July at the latest."

It would take more than two months. Yu Youyao suppressed the reluctance in her heart. "You have to be careful. Be careful that the Northern Barbarians have ulterior motives." She frowned and was a little worried. "Back then. The reason why the Marquis of Weining and the Marquis of Changxing were so bold to steal the military power of Youzhou was because they colluded with the Northern Barbarians and forged evidence of King Li of Zhou colluding with the enemy. The evidence passed the Northern Barbarians and was even more convincing. If Cousin gets in touch with the Northern Barbarians and news gets out..."

The Marquis of Changxing brazenly led his troops to besiege King You's residence. This was because once the "evidence" was "searched" from King

You's residence, the crime of colluding with the enemy would be confirmed.

It was precisely because the Princess Consort and the princess had guessed this that they did not hesitate to burn down King You's residence.

She didn't think Harmon could outsmart her cousin.

However, nothing was absolute.

Back then, who would have expected that the invincible God of War of the Great Zhou Dynasty would actually die under the scheme of someone?

The little girl frowned slightly. Her worry and reluctance for him were written all over her face. Zhou Linghuai's heart trembled. "Don't worry! Since I've agreed to Harmon's request, I've also taken precautions against all kinds of problems."

Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief. "Cousin, return to Youzhou in peace. Don't delay serious matters because of me."

Her cousin had never left the capital, but after the Imperial Court conferred her the title of County Head, how could she not guess the crux of the matter?

Every year in early spring, the army in the Northern Barbarians was at its weakest. This year, there was a spring drought in the north, and without the revitalization of the rich and beautiful aquatic plants, the situation should be very serious.

The request for a deal in the Northern Barbarians must have been conveyed to her cousin long ago.

Her cousin had not returned to Youzhou because he knew about the many schemes in the palace and was worried about her. The Imperial Court had conferred her the title of County Head of Shaoyi, and it happened to be the safest time for her.

Zhou Linghuai's lips curled up. "Don't think too much about it. Harmon's private message was handed to me at the beginning of April. The reason why I didn't leave immediately isn't entirely because of you."

Yu Youyao did not believe it. In April, her cousin's leg had basically recovered. He did not need to continue with the acupuncture and it would not affect his return to Youzhou.

Zhou Linghuai could only say, "Since Harmon made a trade request, it's impossible for me to agree rashly. First, I have to investigate clearly if the drought in the Northern Barbarians is really that serious. Only then can I control them and raise the price."

"The Great Zhou Dynasty and the Northern Barbarians have been fighting for many years, and the hostility between the two sides is still deep. It's not completely credible for the Northern Barbarians to take the initiative to show weakness. We also need time to arrange the necessary precautions to be safe."

"Harmon has a favor to ask of me, and I have the advantage. I'll leave them hanging and let them panic. When it's time to trade, I can raise the price further and gain greater benefits."

Of course, the overall reasons added up could not be explained one by one.

This was a psychological battle where smoke couldn't be seen.

It was a battle of patience, strategy, and schemes.

Yu Youyao pursed her lips, feeling a little unhappy. "Really?"

Zhou Linghuai subconsciously opened his mouth, wanting to reply that it was true. However, just as he was about to say something, he saw that the smile on the little girl's face had disappeared. She looked at him without blinking, and he subconsciously sat up straight. For some reason, he felt the need to survive this so he changed his words. "The main reason is that I'm still worried about you."

This wasn't a lie. A large reason was because he was worried about her.

The little girl smiled and repeated, "Really?"

Zhou Linghuai heaved a sigh of relief for no reason and nodded affirmatively. "Really."

At this moment, he also realized—

If he answered that the reason was solely Yu Youyao, she would feel that she had interfered in his business and feel uneasy and worried.

If he hadn't answered that the reason was solely because of Yu Youyao, she would have thought that in his heart, these miscellaneous reasons were more important than worrying about her.

Just like this, part of it was because he had schemed for other reasons, and most of it was because he was worried about her.

It would neither make her feel that she had delayed his serious business, nor that these so-called serious matters were more important than worrying about her.

It was just right!

Only villains and women were difficult to raise. The ancients were right.

Zhou Linghuai sighed in his heart and felt that he had to add, "The time isn't right this time. I'll bring you along the next time I return to Youzhou."

Indeed!

Yu Youyao's voice was sweet and soft. "Brother Jingzhi, don't worry about me.

I'll wait for you."

This time, Zhou Linghuai was really relieved. "You've been conferred the title of County Head of Shaoyi. Your current situation is considered safe, but you have to be careful. Soon, the palace will be in chaos."

Yu Youyao's eyes widened. "The palace?"

"Yes." Zhou Linghuai nodded, his smile deepening. "The emperor's dragon body doesn't have much time left."

Yu Youyao's heart skipped a beat. The first thing she thought of was Concubine Lan, who had just come out of the Cold Palace, and Concubine Xu, who was in the Forbidden Palace.

She couldn't help but ask, "I heard that taking Jinshi medicinal pills all year round can cause one to be in a daze?"

Zhou Linghuai said meaningfully, "Not only that, but it will also cause people to go crazy. It's as if they've lost their minds. The pill poison is in the body all year round. With just a little use, it will trigger the poison in the body. Even gods won't be able to save them."

Her cousin's answer undoubtedly confirmed her guess. If the emperor couldn't stay alive, the struggle for the throne would become complicated. Yu Youyao was in a daze for a moment.

Fighting for the position of heir was not only for the supreme power, but also for their lives.

The winner takes all. There was no choice.

The calamity in the palace had been destined from the day Concubine Lu came out of the cold palace.

Actually, she should have foreseen this day, but when it really came, she was a little confused. Natural and man-made disasters were endless, and the common people were the ones who suffered. It's better to be a dog in a peaceful time than be a man in a chaotic period. Zhou Linghuai sighed softly. "The Great Zhou Dynasty is at its end.."

Chapter 655 - 655: Reverse

Yu Youyao felt a lump in her throat, and even her voice became hoarse.

"Cousin, can't you abolish the emperor and reestablish him? I heard from Grandmother that although the Fourth Prince is the son of a concubine, he a good character. He's also inferior and polite to others. He's quite benevolent."

Thinking about how she had never come into contact with the Fourth Prince and had only mentioned this from others, she felt that it was inappropriate. "No matter what, Cousin, you can also choose a talented and virtuous Yin family descendant from the imperial family to inherit the throne. This way..."

It was also to prevent the flames of war in the world and the people from being displaced.

However, when the words reached her lips, she ultimately swallowed them.

She knew that all of this was unrealistic after all.

Her cousin was right. The Great Zhou Dynasty was at its end. It was not that the dog emperor was at his end.

Natural and man-made disasters accumulated into disasters, but Rome wasn't built in a day. Once the famine erupted, the commoners would be in chaos, and the vassal lords would be in chaos. The Great Zhou Dynasty roots were already rotten and everything was hopeless.

All of this was because of her cousin's scheme.

However, it was not the fault of her cousin's scheme.

Those troubles had long been buried. It was only a matter of time before they erupted.

Yu Youyao took a deep breath. "I was just spouting nonsense just now. Cousin, don't take it to heart." She pursed her lips and said, "No matter what you want to do, I'll support you. You have to remember to be fine regardless of what you do. Don't worry me."

The little girl kept her head lowered, her eyelashes trembling slightly, revealing the uneasiness and fear in her heart. Perhaps because she did not want him to see that she was worried, she lowered her eyes and did not dare to look at him.

Zhou Linghuai's heart ached. "Don't worry, I'm here."

Don't worry, I'm here!

Yu Youyao savored these words in her heart. Just these simple words were more beautiful than thousands of words.

It was as if no matter what happened, there was such a person beside her.

He helped her share her burdens, cut through the thorns, and shelter her from the wind and rain. Even if the sky fell, he could hold it up for her.

In that case, what was there to fear in this chaotic world?!

Yu Youyao looked up, her eyes bright and resplendent. “Cousin, you’re returning to Youzhou. During the Dragon Boat Festival this year, you can’t accompany me to watch the dragon boat race. When you come back, you have to make it up to me with a painting of the Dragon Boat Festival.”

In the past two years, it had been her cousin who had brought her to the moat to watch the dragon boat race with the Second Mansion. Her grandmother trusted her cousin more and more, and with the company of her elders, she let her be.

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. “Okay!”

This wasn’t the first time she had helped her cousin pack. Most of the incense, medicine, tea, and so on were usually prepared by her. He didn’t have to worry about packing and it would be done appropriately.

In the past two years, Zhou Linghuai had often traveled to Youzhou, so the Yu Residence did not interfere too much.

Back then, Zhou Linghuai had contributed to helping King Li of Zhou and his son resist the Di people and had a close personal relationship with King Yue Fei. He had also received a reward from the Imperial Court and could be considered to have gained the emperor’s approval.

There was no need to worry about the Yu Residence being implicated.

The next morning, after Yu Youyao got up, Chun Xiao brought a painting over to report, “Young Master set off for Youzhou at dawn and asked me to hand this painting to Young Miss.”

“Liar.” Yu Youyao puffed up her cheeks and was a little angry. “He clearly said yesterday that he would only leave the day after tomorrow.”

Chun Xiao lowered her head. “Young Master said that the sooner he leaves, the sooner he can return. The capital isn’t peaceful, and he’ll be gone for two months. He’s a little worried about Young Miss, so he wanted to go and return early.”

Yu Youyao felt a little better. She quickly took the painting from Chun Xiao’s hand and carefully unfolded it.

It was a painting of the Dragon Boat Festival. Under the tall Parasol Tree, there was a zither table with a Guqin and a zither on it. On the table beside it, there was a bouquet of flowers in a red vase. There were hollyhocks that were as beautiful as fire. In addition, there were dumplings, loquats, realgar wine, Wudu cakes, and so on.

If her cousin hadn’t returned to Youzhou, when the Dragon Boat Festival happened, she and her cousin would have hung a five-colored silk sachet at their waists and a calamus sword. They would have sat facing each other at the Eight Immortals Table, drinking realgar wine and eating dumplings. This would probably be the scene in this painting!

Yu Youyao was a little melancholic. She carefully put away the painting. “Did you give the five-colored silk sachet and longevity strand I prepared previously to Cousin?”

Chun Xiao nodded. "I've given them all to Young Master."

After breakfast, Concubine Jiang came over. "In three days, it'll be the Dragon

Boat Festival. The family has built a shed in the moat, which is next to the Zhenguo Marquis Residence and the Qi Residence. On the day of the Dragon Boat Festival, I'll arrange for someone to go over early in the morning. In the morning, the emperor will go to the moat to participate in the sacrificial ceremony to pay respects to the dragon and worship the water god. Hundreds of officials will accompany him. The dragon boat race will be arranged at noon. Our family will go over at noon. I heard that the dragon boat race this year is very grand. Many families in the capital have prepared dragon boats..."

The dragon boat race was to pay respects to the dragon and worship the water god to to avoid a drought. It was to pray for the wind and rain to be smooth, to eliminate evil and resist calamities.

This year, the drought was getting worse. It did not seem surprising that the emperor would participate in the Dragon Boat Festival sacrificial ceremony.

Yu Youyao nodded. "We have to prepare more tea, snacks, fruits, and so on on the day of the Dragon Boat Festival. It's rare for Grandmother to go out, so I think there will be many familiar families who will go over to greet her."

Moreover, she had also been conferred the title of county lord. The sisters she was familiar with would also come to look for her.

Concubine Jiang quickly agreed.

Yu Youyao sat under the porch and thought about what her cousin had said yesterday. Since the world was about to be chaotic, she should prepare for it as soon as possible.

In the past two years, she had taken out her savings from the bank one after another.

A portion of the banknotes in her hand had also secretly been turned into gold and silver.

Anything worth the price in the private vault was sold through the escort business.

Some businesses that were more involved with the Yu Residence had also been sold.

A portion of her assets had been transferred to the North.

She had a large sum of real money and silver in her hands. A batch of expensive pearls, jade, artifacts, books, calligraphy, antiques, and so on were also transported directly to Youzhou. They were placed in the private vault of the Yue Fei Kings Residence and handed over to her cousin to manage.

A large amount of real money would easily attract the attention of the Imperial Court.

Yu Youyao did not exchange all the banknotes. Instead, she bought a large number of medicinal herbs, cotton, rations, and so on through the escort business.

At the thought of this, she seemed to have been preparing to leave the capital a long time ago. Even if it wasn't to Youzhou, it would be to the Xie Residence.

After knowing the cause of her mother's death, she and the Yu Residence were at odds and were destined to drift apart.

In the afternoon, Yu Zongzheng left the government office and asked Wen Zhu to invite her to the large study in the front courtyard.

Zhao Da was guarding the door. When he saw Yu Youyao coming over, he quickly said, "Master said that when Eldest Miss comes over, she can go in directly. There's no need to report."

Yu Zongzheng was standing in front of his desk and using ink. When Yu Youyao came over, he seemed to have just finished writing. He glanced at her and put his brush on the table. He picked up the memorial. "Yao Yao, you're here..

Chapter 656 - 656: Unmarried Daughters Followed Their Fathers

Yu Youyao stepped forward and bowed. "Hello, Father."

Yu Zongzheng casually handed the memorial to Yu Youyao. "Take a look at this first."

Yu Youyao was stunned for a moment. She opened the memorial and saw the lines of words on it. She knew that this was a memorial for the Imperial Court tomorrow.

Upon closer look, her stomach churned, making her lose her appetite.

After barely reading the memorial, Yu Youyao closed it and handed it to Yu

Zongzheng. She took a deep breath and asked, "Father, what do you mean?"

Yu Zongzheng said, "I plan to ask the Imperial Court for an order for your mother tomorrow morning." At this point, his expression was a little complicated. "I'm already a third-grade Assistant Minister of the Ministry of

Official Personnel Affairs. It makes sense to have a third-grade woman as a first wife.'

Yu Youyao did not feel happy. She was only filled with sarcasm. "Mother has passed away many years ago."

She suddenly felt that it was ridiculous.

Previously, when she was conferred the title of County Head of Shaoyi, she couldn't help but think about how when her mother was still alive, she had been conferred the title of a sixth-grade An. It had only been a few days, but Yu Zongzheng was already going to request a conferment for her mother?

What right did Yu Zongzheng have to help his deceased first wife ask for an increase in status.

The dog emperor had conferred the title of county lord on her because he was worried that the bargaining chips he had were not heavy enough. Now, he wanted the emperor to confer the title of her deceased biological mother as a show of kindness?!

However, the price she had to pay was as heavy as this royal favor.

Since ancient times, there had only been children with a mother, a husband with a wife, and a father with a daughter.

When it came to her, she would be a daughter without a mother, or even a daughter without a father.



The first wife and daughter both received benefits, so there was no reason for the dog emperor not to give Yu Zongzheng benefits. One had to know that women had three subserviences and four virtues, and one of them was to follow their fathers while unmarried.

It meant that before a woman got married, she had to obey her father and listen to his teachings. She could not disobey her father and be disrespectful and unfilial.

There was also a saying: Accept the reward of a ruler and bear the burden of a ruler.

What was the dog emperor worried about?

The treasury was empty.

Only when Yu Zongzheng received benefits could he do his best to help the dog emperor share his burden and fill the treasury.

The Great Zhou Dynasty had a clear rule that if a wife died, the assets under her name would follow her children. If she did not have any children, they would return to her maiden family.

Yu Zongzheng could not get involved in Madam Xie's dowry. Due to the Xie Residence, he did not dare to get involved and he could not bring himself to get involved in his daughter's money.

Even the palace was coveting Yu Youyao's money.

Didn't Yu Zongzheng have any thoughts?

Could he watch helplessly as such a large sum of money that Yu Youyao had become someone else's in the future?

Naturally, that was impossible!

It was better to take it out to fill the treasury and pave the way for his future.

From the standpoint of "the righteousness of the country" and the dogma of "unmarried daughters should follow their fathers", there was no possibility of her refusing.

Yu Youyao's desire to escape from the Yu Residence had never been so strong.

She chuckled and couldn't help but ask softly, "Father, why did you suddenly think of asking for a title for my mother?"

Yu Zongzheng sighed slightly. "The minister is under the Duke's orders to use his virtue to cultivate. The Imperial Court is indebted to the nobles and treats all the husbands as nobles. Now that I've been promoted to an official, I can be bestowed with a wife. However, your stepmother is vicious and I can't bear for her to be a wife and mother. She's not as gentle and upright as your mother.

This imperial order should be bestowed on your mother."

At this point, his expression inevitably revealed a hint of nostalgia.

If Yu Youyao did not know the cause of her birth mother's death, she might have really believed this excuse. However, at this moment, no matter how beautifully Yu Zongzheng said it, it was difficult to hide his schemes.

Yu Youyao chuckled. Her laughter was filled with mockery that only she knew.

“Mother has passed away for many years. It's rare that Father still remembers Mother's gentle and quiet demeanor.”

Back then, when he was having an affair with Madam Yang, he did not think this way.

It was unknown if it was because he felt guilty or something, but these words sounded a little harsh. Yu Zongzheng frowned and glanced at Yu Youyao.

His eldest daughter stood obediently with her head lowered, looking no different from before.

Yu Zongzheng felt that he was thinking too much.

Yu Youyao did not want to mention her mother to him anymore. “Has Father discussed such a big matter with Grandmother?”

Yu Zongzheng shook his head. “I'll go over and tell your grandmother later. After all, she's your biological mother. I'm telling you in advance so that you can be happy.”

Happy? Her biological father had conspired with the dog emperor to scheme against her money. Was this worth being happy about?

Yu Youyao's lips curled up, but the smile did not reach her eyes. “The emperor has just conferred the title of county head of Shaoyi County to me, and it's already a great favor from the emperor. If Father asks for another order for Mother, will the emperor think that our family is pampered and greedy?” At this point, her face was already filled with worry. “The lightning and rain are all bestowed by the emperor. Father is an official in the court, so you have to be more careful. I can't make things difficult for Father just to ask for an order for Mother.’

Yu Zongzheng patted her shoulder. “The Empress Dowager pays respects to Buddha. In the early years, the internal and external mingfu raised money to repair the pagoda for the Empress Dowager. Your mother donated 100,000 taels of silver. Today, news came from the palace that the Empress Dowager wanted to raise money for disaster relief, so this matter was mentioned. Everyone in the palace cares about your mother, so it's only logical for her to be conferred the title. When the matter of the money raising is settled, our family will donate more money to share the burden of the emperor and the Empress Dowager. We'll also do our best for the commoners of the world. We won't let down the emperor's grace.”

His words were righteous.

Her mother had already contributed 100,000 taels of silver to build a pagoda for the Empress Dowager. In that case, how much should she donate to such a huge matter like raising money for disaster relief to not let down the emperor's grace?

From the standpoint of the country and the commoners, how much would be enough to not let down the emperor's grace? Yu Youyao lowered her head. “I'll listen to you.”

At this point, she could only obey.

Yu Zongzheng nodded in relief. "I'm proud of you for being so understanding."

After Yu Youyao returned to the Jade Courtyard, Yu Zongzheng went to An Shou Hall.

The mother and son spoke for less than ten minutes. Old Madam Yu leaned against the couch with a tired expression and waved her hand. "I understand.

Go back! "

Seeing that she did not look too good, Yu Zongzheng said, "Mother, this matter..."

Old Madam Yu closed her eyes. "Get out!"

Her tone was a little stiff, and Yu Zongzheng's expression did not look too good. "Mother eats vegetarian food and prays to Buddha all year round. When Madam Xie was still alive, she also had a reputation for being kind. Yao Yao has set up the Graceful Heart Hall because she's doing good deeds. The Empress Dowager has raised money for disaster relief, so our family definitely has to donate more.'

The businesses in the government were only enough for Yu Zongzheng to spend in the court. The food and clothes in the residence all had to be bought. Yu Zongzheng kept saying that he would donate more. Where would the money come from?

Old Madam Yu was so angry that she laughed. It wasn't enough to target Yao Yao's money alone, but he was even thinking about her own money. He was worried that if he gave the money to Yao Yao, he wouldn't be able to get it himself. He might as well make her donate it and pave the way for his future!

She did not expect him to have such a scheme..

Chapter 657 - 657: Deep Knowledge

When the emperor conferred the title of County Head to her, the first sentence of the imperial edict was about loyalty, being filial and accumulating kindness and virtue. Eldest Son kept saying that he was using kindness and virtue to prove his point. Old Madam Yu suddenly opened her eyes and stared at Yu Zongzheng. "You're right. How can our family fall behind in doing good and accumulating virtue?"

Yu Zongzheng was delighted. "Mother is indeed righteous."

As soon as he left, Old Madam Yu said weakly, "Help me back to my room."

Nanny Liu helped Matriarch Liu up. Matriarch Liu had recuperated for a few days, but because of Eldest Master's words, her spirits had weakened again.

After returning to her room, Old Madam Yu asked Nanny Liu to take out the Four Treasures of the Study. "Even if the emperor wants to request a royal order for Madam Xie, he has to see what Eldest Son thinks.'

If Eldest Son did not ask for a title, it was impossible for the emperor to give Madam Xie a title.

Nanny Liu lowered her head, not daring to speak.

Old Madam Yu sighed softly. "I've tried to block him from having these ambitions. There was news in the palace that the Empress Dowager wanted to raise money for disaster relief, so she guessed the emperor's intention in conferring the title of county head to Yao Yao. He took the initiative to ask for a title for Madam Xie and pave the way for the emperor. He wanted to use his daughter's and my money to pave the way for his future."

At this point, what was done was done.

The emperor and Eldest Son both had their own agendas. The two of them hit it off immediately. It was no longer her place to get involved.

Old Madam Yu looked down at the letter spread out in front of her, and for a moment, she seemed to have aged ten years. "Eldest Son has already been blinded by his desire for power. He doesn't even recognize his relatives. I have to leave a way out for my Yao Yao. In the future, if I die, my Yao Yao won't be controlled by an unrighteous thing."

Nanny Xu lowered her head and studied the ink.

Old Madam Yu picked up her brush and dipped it in ink...

This letter took more than an hour to write. It was more than three Dazes

long. Old Madam Yu asked Nanny Xu to get her private seal and the Yu Residence's seals were printed one by one.

After she felt that it was inappropriate and picked up her pen to write another letter.

In the first letter, every word and sentence was for her granddaughter's deep consideration. It was indescribable.

Every word and sentence of this second letter was shocking. Nanny Liu only took a glance and quickly lowered her head, not even daring to breathe loudly.

After writing, she picked up her brush and wrote another letter.

The three consecutive letters gave Nanny Liu a bad feeling. She had the illusion that Matriarch was explaining her funeral in advance. "Matriarch, why do you have to..."

Old Madam Yu sealed the three letters one by one. "With my illness, who knows when I'll lie on the ground and die?"

Nanny Liu's lips moved, wanting to persuade her.

Old Madam Yu handed the letter to Nanny Liu. "Give the letter to Chang An and ask him to send it to Linghuai at full speed. Linghuai returned to Youzhou this morning and hasn't gone far yet."

Nanny Liu took the letter. "Young Master will be back in two months at most. Why are you in a hurry to send the letter to him now?"

After writing the letter, Old Madam Yu seemed to have exhausted all her strength and leaned back in her chair. "The royal court is changing rapidly. As long as this letter isn't in your hands, I won't be at ease. I have to send it now, not a moment later."

It was too late for the Xie Residence to protect Yao Yao. Even if they had a fortune, they might not be able to protect her.

There was no one in the Yu Residence who was worthy of her trust.

Only Linghuai had a close relationship with King Yue Fei and Yao Yao...

With the Dragon Boat Festival approaching, Nanny Yue followed the people from the manor into the residence to send off the gifts.

Yu Youyao asked about the sweet potato propagation again.

Nanny Yue said, "The vines that were planted earlier have also come to life. They're growing better than the roots. After the summer, the manor has already hired commoners to cut the vines and plan to plant sweet potato vines in the free land. Not only are the manors in the capital, but Young Miss is also planting sweet potato vines in all the manors in the country."

They were more drought-resistant than beans. They were produced in large quantities and could stave off hunger.

Planting sweet potatoes during a drought was the best choice.

Young Miss was indeed far-sighted.

Back then, in order to try planting sweet potatoes, Young Miss had tried planting them in various farmsteads in the country. She wanted to see how different the yield, taste, and variety of sweet potatoes planted in different areas, climate, and soil were.

When she discovered that sweet potatoes were not picky about fertile soil and were suitable to be planted in sand, she prepared to plant them in large quantities.

Yu Youyao was a little relieved. "Nanny, pay more attention to the commotion in the brokerage house. If there's suitable land, buy it all. It doesn't matter if the land is thinner. You don't have to pick fertile soil for sweet potatoes." She did not lack money. It was the safest to buy farmland at any time.

After the world became chaotic, there were a lot of things to do. Only by starting agriculture on a large scale could she stabilize the country's foundation. The first national policy of the country stated that the fields belonged to the people. As long as there was a contract, even in the new dynasty, what should be hers would still be hers.

Even if the new dynasty wanted to conquer land, it was not free.

If she grew one mu of sweet potatoes, perhaps the famine would ease a little in the second half of the year.

Nanny Yue naturally wouldn't stop her from buying land. "The experienced old farmers in the manor said that the best time to plant the sweet potatoes is around the Dragon Boat Festival. I reckon they can be planted until late May.

There's still time to buy some more fields."

Yu Youyao nodded and said, "If there's extra sweet potato vines, distribute them to the commoners in the nearby manors. Tell them that this is a new plant that was brought back from overseas and can be successfully planted. It's high in yield, drought-resistant, and pest-resistant. Its output is greater than other crops. Leaves, stems, and vines can all be eaten. Their families all have their own land or thin plots of land that they've explored themselves. Those who are willing to plant them can

plant them themselves. This doesn't just apply only to manors in the capital but all the manors in the country."

Nanny Yue nodded. "That's good. One stalk of sweet potato vines can grow a piece. I definitely won't be able to plant them all. As long as they are willing to plant them, I'll distribute some to them to plant themselves."

After all, sweet potatoes were a new plant. No one in the Great Zhou Dynasty had planted them before, so the commoners might not waste the few fields in their families to plant new seeds that they had never planted.

However, it was not a secret that Young Miss was planting sweet potatoes on a large scale. After all, it was the manor of the young miss of an official family.

There would definitely be more commoners willing to follow suit.

Young Miss could be considered to have done a lot.

Upon hearing that there were many extra sweet potato vines, Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief. "The commoners entered the mountains early to find food. In June and July, there won't be much to eat in the mountains. There are many sweet potato vines, so the commoners can harvest the sweet potato leaves to relieve their hunger. In August, when the drought erupts, the sweet potatoes can be harvested and can more or less alleviate the famine." At this point, she felt a little regretful. "If only there were more sweet potato vines." Nanny Yue shook her head. "There's nothing we can do."

Potatoes were not a species of the Great Zhou Dynasty, so the number of them that merchant ships could obtain was very limited. After two years of cultivation and testing, it was already not easy to grow so many.

If it weren't for the fact that Young Miss had suggested cutting the potato vines and the old farmers in the manor felt that it was feasible, how could they be planted on a large scale now?

Chapter 658 - 658: Destroying the dike and drowning the farmland

The sweet potatoes had to be cut before and after the Dragon Boat Festival. As soon as Nanny Yue returned to the manor, she immediately spread the news.

In other areas, pigeons were also used to send messages. Every time a pigeon arrived at a manor, the manor would send a pigeon to the manor closest to it.

The best pigeons could fly for about eight hours a day, and could fly for almost a hundred kilometers every two hours.

Basically, within five days, Yu Youyao's message would be sent to manors everywhere in the country, and it would not delay the insertion of the vines.

Of course, pigeons could only send some simple information to a fixed location. Some important information could not be sent by pigeons.

Little Zhouzhuang also received the news.

Back then, Zhou Yongniu had exposed Zhou Yongchang for deceiving and hiding information from the higher-ups, embezzling the main family's money, and fooling them. Later on, after Yu Youyao's kindness and authority, he became loyal to her.

After Zhou Yonghe became a manager, he brought him along to work.

Later on, when Zhou Yonghe wanted to join the escort business, he recommended Zhou Yongniu to be the manager of Little Zhouzhuang.

Zhou Yongniu was very convinced by Eldest Miss, so he immediately looked for Eldest Miss Zhuang to discuss this matter. "Eldest Miss's manor is going to distribute sweet potato vines and let us plant them ourselves. I plan to arrange for the people in the manor to plant sweet potato vines on all the land that they have left at home. If there's no land for themselves, I'll let them develop a piece of land to plant them themselves. The steward in Eldest Miss's manor said that sweet potatoes are resistant to droughts. I made a trip to the

Rogue Manor today and Steward Li from the manor brought me to take a look.

Some of the sand has also been planted with sweet potatoes. After the wasteland is carefully arranged, perhaps it can be used to plant sweet potatoes too."

Elder Zhuang had already lost his teeth. As soon as he sat down, he felt sleepy and wanted to doze off. "This sweet potato isn't a crop of our Great Zhou Dynasty. No one has planted it in the past. The Imperial Court distributes new seeds every year, but there aren't many that have really succeeded in planting them. They can barely be planted and aren't very useful..."

Zhou Yongniu interrupted him. "Eldest Miss won't fool us. If she said that it can be planted, it must be true. You also know that Eldest Miss has a Bodhisattva's heart. The north has suffered a drought, and every family's life isn't easy. Many families have long run out of food. The Li family in front starved to death last year. Our Little Zhouzhuang was only able to survive because of Eldest Miss's care.'

Elder Zhuang was speechless for a moment. He thought for a moment and said, "Although that's the case, everyone doesn't have much private space. They've all planted drought-resistant beans long ago."

Zhou Yongniu gritted his teeth. "Plough off all the beans and plant sweet potatoes. Those who have strong men at home, go to the mountains to explore and try your best to plant more sweet potatoes." Worried that Elder Zhuang would not agree, he continued, "There's only so much land left for us. It's not enough for a family to survive on even if we plant a whole field of sweet potatoes. Do you see that there's a piece of the vine every time it's planted? It's edible. When they are planted, the sweet potato vines can grow in June and July."

Elder Zhuang wanted to object. "What if it doesn't work?"

Zhou Yongniu also had a bad temper and only knew how to be stubborn. "Eldest Miss said that if it can be planted, it can be planted."

Elder Zhuang felt that it was inappropriate. "What if?"

Zhou Yongniu frowned. "Eldest Miss asked us to plant them because she had grown them herself. The steward of Little Li Manor participated in the planting test. He said that Eldest Miss was a living Bodhisattva, so we would definitely be able to plant the sweet potatoes."

This was a clash between scholars and soldiers, so he couldn't explain himself. Old Master Zhuang had a headache. "Tomorrow, bring a few prestigious people from the village to the Rogue Manor."

Zhou Yongniu was not careless. The next day, before dawn, he brought more than 30 people to the Rogue Manor.

When the group arrived at the Rogue Manor, it was already noon.

When Steward Li of the Little Li Residence received the news, he personally brought them to the manor to see the cutting of the sweet potatoes. He even told them about the situation with the vines. Then, he brought them to the

Little Li Residence and realized that every family in the Little Li Residence was also preparing to cut the sweet potatoes. There were also villagers who were exploring the mountains to plant sweet potatoes.

Butler Li said, "As long as you loosen the soil and make a ridge, the sweet potato vines can grow without needing to be cared about. This thing doesn't need much resources. After being cut, it can live on its own. I've farmed for most of my life, but this is the first time I've encountered such a good living crop. Our Little Li Manor doesn't plant anything but sweet potatoes." Zhou Yongniu and the others asked many questions at once.

Steward Li had participated in the plant testing and knew about the sweet potatoes very well. The insiders had heard everything. Everyone was a farmer, so how could they not tell if he was telling the truth? Gradually, they dispelled the doubts and concerns in their hearts.

The same thing happened in Yu Youyao's manors all over the country.

Yu Youyao did not know that her small actions would saved countless commoners in the future.

In the blink of an eye, it was the fourth of May. The family was preparing for the Dragon Boat Festival tomorrow.

Yu Youyao was no exception. She carried the basket to the bamboo forest and picked a lot of bamboo leaves.

After returning to the Jade Courtyard and changing her clothes, Xia Tao rushed over. "Young Miss, bad news. An emergency report from Zhejiang has entered the capital. It's said that there's a Dragon Boat Festival in Zhejiang. It rained for three days and three nights in a row. The rain rose to the riverbank and broke down the dams in six counties. Countless villages and rice fields were flooded.'

The teacup in Yu Youyao's hand fell to the ground and shattered.

Xia Tao was shocked and knelt on the ground.

Yu Youyao's face was pale. Her hand was still holding the teacup, but her hand was trembling badly. She gritted her teeth and asked, "All six counties were flooded?!"

Xia Tao said, "The emergency report was shouted all the way into the capital.

Many commoners heard it. They seem to have drowned."

"All six counties are flooded! Yu Youyao suddenly raised her voice, and even her voice was trembling. "Zhejiang is a rich place in Jiangnan. It's densely populated. The



number of people in the six counties combined is unknown, and the number of fields is unknown.” Her trembling hands suddenly clenched into fists, and even her voice was squeezed out from between her teeth. “The rice seeds in the south are inserted into the fields. They haven’t turned green yet. It’s all over if the heavy rain washes them away.” Her eyes suddenly turned red, and her face was terrifyingly pale. “There’s a drought in the north. In the second half of the year, there will be a famine. Be it the Imperial Court or the commoners, they’re all counting on the food harvest in the south to survive.’

Six counties’ dams had been destroyed, so it was far from possible that only six counties had been affected.

At least half of the farmland in Zhejiang would be empty this year.

If Zhejiang lost everything, what about the taxes of the Imperial Court?

Without food from the south, what would happen to the drought in the north?

Xia Tao had never seen Young Miss lose control of her emotions like this and was very worried.

“Six counties. It’s not six villages or six towns. It’s six counties and millions of people.” Yu Youyao’s lips trembled. She couldn’t imagine how many people would die from the flood in the south and what the consequences would be if their fields were flooded. After the natural disaster, they would have to face the epidemic.. How many families would be destroyed!

Chapter 659 - 659: Natural and Man-made Calamity

Xia Tao called out softly, “Young Miss...”

Yu Youyao sat in a daze, feeling a little dazed. “The strong wind doesn’t end in court, and the heavy rain doesn’t end in the evening. There’s a Dragon Boat Festival in Zhejiang every year. All the dams have to be repaired with a large sum of money every year. They’re as impregnable as iron. How can a large flood destroy six dams? Unless...”

The riverbank was not as impregnable as everyone thought...

Yu Youyao couldn’t continue. She closed her eyes and got up to go to An Shou Old Madam Yu leaned against the couch. Seeing her granddaughter’s pale face and shocked expression, she sighed softly. “Were you frightened?”

Yu Youyao’s eyes turned red. “Grandmother, all six dams in Xin’an River have collapsed. How can all six dams be destroyed in one go? So many commoners are... Is this a natural disaster or a man-made disaster?!”

Her voice choked in her throat and she couldn’t continue. Tears rushed out of her eyes.

Water conservation was good for the country and the people. There was a lot of rain in the south, and the Dragon Boat Festival flood was present every year. The Imperial Court checked and repaired the dam every year to prevent heavy water flow.

Old Madam Yu hugged her granddaughter in her arms. “It’s a natural disaster, but it’s also a human disaster.’

Yu Youyao asked in a hoarse voice, “Grandmother, will the Imperial Court allocate money for disaster relief?”

There was a drought in the north and a flood in the south. All of this showed the fact that the Imperial Court was spending endlessly and the commoners were struggling. The Great Zhou Dynasty was about to die.

Old Madam Yu stroked her head. “The flood isn’t like a drought. It can be delayed for a while. I think the Imperial Court is already discussing disaster relief. We’ll wait to hear the news!”

They waited until it was dark before Yu Zongzheng returned from the palace.

After seeing the Matriarch, the first thing Yu Zongzheng said was, “The urgent report of the Dragon Boat Festival in Zhejiang was sent to the palace. The emperor immediately summoned the court officials for a meeting. The Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Works quarreled. The emperor flew into a rage and questioned the Imperial Astronomer why he hadn’t calculated the flood in the south. The Imperial Astronomer said that the flood in the south was a man-made disaster and not a natural disaster.’

Old Madam Yu gasped, and even Yu Youyao held her breath.

Yu Zongzheng took a sip of tea and continued, “The emperor asked what he meant by a man-made disaster. The Imperial Astronomer said that ever since Emperor Gaozu ordered the renovation of the dike in Zhejiang for hundreds of years, the tide of the Xin’an River has risen and fallen. Every year, the Imperial Court will pull out a large sum of silver to repair the dike to ensure safety. The dike has been diverted. If there is water overflowing the embankment, they would open another embankment to divert the water. At the most serious moment, it rained for more than ten days in a row. Some of the dikes couldn’t take the pressure and collapsed, but it wasn’t so serious that six in a row collapsed at once.”

In just three days, the dam collapsed.

Unless the levees that were allocated to the Ministry of Works every year were

not really implemented, the originally impregnable levees would gradually be overwhelmed through the years.

The Imperial Astronomer was targeting the Ministry of Works.

The Ministry of Works was in charge of water, wood, soil, construction, farming, the ban on mountains, rivers, embankments, roads, bridges, and so on. If there was a problem with the dam in Zhejiang, the Ministry of Works would be the first to bear the brunt.

Yu Zongzheng continued, “The emperor was furious. All the officials from the Ministry of Works who had participated in the repair of the dike in Zhejiang and the eunuchs who supervised the river routes were ordered to be imprisoned. Someone was conferred as the River Inspection Censor of the left capital of the Imperial Court and had to patrol the river. He needed to head to Zhejiang to investigate this matter thoroughly. He was also given a sword and a hundred palace guards to accompany him. Anyone who stopped them was killed on the spot. The emperor even gave a holy decree allowing the censor of the river route to mobilize his troops.”

They were going to make a big fuss and kill him as a warning.

Yu Youyao lowered her eyes. In the past two years, the emperor's dissatisfaction with Jiangnan had increased day by day. The Dragon Boat Festival flood had become the best reason for the emperor to manage Jiangnan and further control it.

Therefore, after the incident, the emperor's first reaction was not to fight the calamity, but to denounce him.

Jiangnan was rich, especially Zhejiang. The dog emperor even wanted her money. How could he let Zhejiang off?

Two years ago, Song Xiuwen's case of embezzling money from the army was dealt with openly and secretly. Although he had confiscated the "dirty money", it did not satisfy the emperor's appetite.

Later on, because of the "Japanese pirates", it had stopped, but Song Xiuwen had yet to be dealt with.

Now, repairing the river was a huge sum of money.

Six dams had collapsed at once. It was definitely not caused by a year or two of corruption. It had to be at least seven or eight years. After so many years, it was a huge cost.

Neither the Ministry of Works nor the eunuchs who supervised the river could take out this sum of money. Local officials would definitely be involved.

The money they were greedy for was from the treasury.

These corrupt officials were all blood- sucking insects. Whose blood were they sucking?

It was the emperor's blood.

Now that the treasury was empty, the dog emperor was worried about how to get more funds by exploiting people.

This time, blood would flow like a river in Zhejiang again.

It was not any better than the North.

Yu Youyao took a deep breath. "How's the situation in Zhejiang now?"

Yu Zongzheng sighed. "All six counties were flooded, and it was far more than six counties that were affected. The impact was very widespread. The governor joined forces with Ye Hanyuan and led his navy to evacuate and save the commoners. He also mobilized the commoners to transport sandbags in an attempt to block the dike."

For some reason, when she heard this news, Yu Youyao's panicked mind suddenly calmed down a lot.

No matter what happened to the Imperial Court, at least there were still people in Zhejiang who were willing to do their best for the commoners.

At this moment, she suddenly realized something.

Long before Ye Hanyuan went to Zhejiang, her cousin had mentioned to her that Zhejiang would be in chaos sooner or later. It would either be in chaos, or the people would rebel.

If the Imperial Court could not be benevolent this time by providing relief for the refugees and calming the hearts of the people, there would be a riot in Zhejiang.

Her cousin had not sent Ye Hanyuan to Zhejiang just to stir up more trouble. He had not only coveted Zhejiang's wealth and wanted to control it.

He also had the intention of letting Ye Hanyuan stabilize the chaos.

When Old Madam Yu heard this, she clasped her hands together. "Amitabha!" Immediately after, she frowned and asked, "The Imperial Court didn't mention anything about resisting the disaster?"

He had said a lot, but none of her words were on point.

Yu Zongzheng shook his head. "Second Brother mentioned this in the court and asked the emperor to issue a decree to order the various government offices in Zhejiang to settle down the refugees and open warehouses to provide food relief. Businessmen and the like are not allowed to take advantage of the flood disaster to raise the price of food and buy and annex the land of the commoners at a low price. They will gain a huge sum of ill-gotten wealth and so on. The emperor asked Second Brother to draft a document and distribute it to all the government offices in the country."

The storage of food in the government office was limited, so it was impossible for it to help all the refugees. Only when the Imperial Court allocated money to the government would the government step in and discuss with the merchants to buy food to help the people.

Yu Zongzheng sighed slightly. "The treasury is empty. The Ministry of

Revenue has embezzled the military salary allocated to Zhejiang in the second half of the year and gathered a million taels of silver.. We can't not be prepared for the drought in the north..."

Chapter 660 - 660: Retired

Two million taels of silver was definitely not enough.

Millions of people in six counties were to be compensated. Resources were needed to provide food relief, treat illnesses with medicine, rebuild after the disaster, preventing the epidemic, and so on. Less than five million taels of silver was not enough.

The most terrifying thing was that far more than six counties had been affected.

After returning to the Jade Courtyard, Yu Youyao immediately wrote a letter to Nanny Yue and asked her to take her token and make a trip to Zhejiang. She would transfer all the food and medicinal herbs in all the grain and medicinal shops in Jiangnan to Ningbo, Shaoxing, and Taizhou to help Ye Hanyuan resist the disaster and save the people.

This was all she could do.

That night, Yu Youyao tossed and turned, unable to sleep at all.

The next day, it was the Dragon Boat Festival.

The residence was filled with mugwort, calamus, and portraits of Zhong Kui.

It was a lively scene.

Yu Youyao had a five-colored silk sachet at her waist and a calamus sword. Her arm was also tied with a colorful rope. After breakfast, she went to An Shou Hall.

Old Madam Yu had also not slept for the entire night. Her eyes were dark and listless. "The emperor has long arranged for a carriage to go to the moat to participate in the worship of the dragon and the water god. He will pray for the wind and rain to be smooth and the country will be safe."

Yu Youyao was stunned for a moment. "The dragon boat race today has to be held as usual?"

Old Madam Yu nodded. "There's a flood in Zhejiang and a drought in the north. At this time, the dragon boat race has to be more grand." For a moment, Yu Youyao couldn't tell what she was feeling.

It was not wrong to hold the dragon boat festival to pray for smooth wind and rain.

However, she thought of the flood in Zhejiang and the commoners' sorrow and displacement. In contrast, the capital was peaceful. The scene of dragon boats playing made her feel uncomfortable.

Old Madam Yu waved her hand. "I won't be going to the dragon boat competition today. I'm old and can't stand the commotion. It's better to have peace at home."

Yu Youyao was no longer in the mood. "Since Grandmother isn't going, our family won't go either."

Old Madam Yu did not insist.

After returning to the Jade Courtyard, Yu Youyao looked for Concubine Jiang and said that Matriarch Jiang was not feeling well, so she did not go to the moat to watch the dragon boat race.

It was a good Dragon Boat Festival, but it was cold and deserted.

The family did not even hold a banquet. They only symbolically ate the dumplings, realgar wine, Wudu cakes, and so on rewarded by the palace. They celebrated the festival this way.

When it was dark, Yu Zongshen came over. His eyes were dark. He had not slept the entire night yesterday and had listened to the Ministry of Revenue's plan.

"Not long ago, the palace received news that the Xie family had deployed 20 ships of food to Zhejiang. Zhejiang probably doesn't lack food anymore, but there are too many things to do after the early disaster."

Old Madam Yu sighed with emotion. "The Xie family is quite benevolent. It's not easy to gather these 20 ships of food. I think they prepared it long ago as relief for the drought."

Yu Zongshen tightened his grip on his teacup. "The Xie family alone has almost resolved half of the food that Zhejiang lacks. Moreover, the Xie family has not only donated food, but also showed their stance. All the merchants in the world follow the Xie family's lead. As long as the government comes forward and interacts with the local merchants, they can also prepare the remaining food."

Old Madam Yu felt much more at ease. She only sighed again. "The disaster relief matter has been settled, but there should be an explanation for the thousands of people who died from the water disaster. This matter has just begun..."

Yu Zongshen said, "Elder Xia is retiring."

Old Madam Yu was suddenly shocked. "At this juncture?"

Yu Zongshen nodded. "The memorial has already been handed over, but the emperor hasn't said anything. He'll have to wait until the flood in Zhejiang is over. Old Madam Yu did not know what to say. "Then you..."

Yu Zongshen said, "It's already decided. I'll be the Grand Secretary."

Old Madam Yu did not feel happy. "The Grand Secretary has also become a hot potato."

The matter of the water disaster in Zhejiang would definitely implicate the cabinet. Elder Xia was definitely involved. After all, he was an elder of three dynasties. No matter how dissatisfied the emperor was with him, it was impossible for him to really punish him. If he retired, he would still retain the dignity of a minister.

His retirement would also cause most of the Xia Party in the court to lose power.

Things in Zhejiang were much easier.

It also made things easier for the emperor.

However, there was still chaos in Zhejiang. Second Brother had taken over as the Grand Secretary at this time, and his situation was very difficult.

Yu Zongshen nodded.

Old Madam Yu sighed softly. "Tomorrow, get your wife to block the side door from the West Residence to the East Residence. In the future, don't come to the main house too often. Just get your wife to give you some things every month. Since we've split up, let's split up cleanly. Don't worry about your eldest brother. If you have the time, take care of the clan more. I'm old. In the future, the rise and fall of the residence and the clan will be your own doing. It has nothing to do with me."

Yu Zongshen said nothing.

Old Madam Yu thought of Madam Xie in a daze, and her face turned ashen. "I'm the one who let you down for what happened back then. The Xie family helped the Imperial Court lift the sea ban, and the Imperial Court rewarded the Xie family. Roujia followed everyone from the Xie family into the capital. I held a banquet at home to entertain the Xie family. Roujia was bright and generous, and we hit it off especially well. Later, I had no objections. I realized that you were looking at Roujia, and for some reason, I mentioned marriage to

Old Master Xie.'

The Xie family did not agree at that time.

However, they did not refuse immediately. There were only two brothers in the Yu Residence, and she did not have many brothers. Their backyard was also clean. Eldest Son had just entered the royal court and still had some talent. As the Xie Residence and the Yu Residence had a relationship, the Xie Residence did not have to worry that their daughter would suffer when she entered the Yu Residence.

After all kinds of considerations, the Yu Residence was indeed a good choice for Madam Xie.

Second Brother did not know.

It wasn't until the two sides exchanged invitations that Second Brother found out the truth and had a big fight with her. However, at this point, what was done was done.

At that time, she had tested Roujia.

She also realized that Roujia and Second Brother did not have a relationship. It was all because Second Brother was hot-headed. How deep could this one-sided relationship be?

Only then did she decide to give Roujia to Eldest Son.

On the other hand, he was also worried that Roujia would get married and Second Brother would not give up. If Roujia became his sister-in-law, Second Brother would probably not let her go.

Yu Zongshen suddenly put down his teacup and the bottom of it fell onto the table with a thud. He stood up from his chair. "I'm tired, I'll go back first." With that, he strode out without waiting for Old Madam Yu to speak.

Old Madam Yu felt dizzy and collapsed on the couch, panting heavily.

"Matriarch..." Nanny Liu was shocked. She quickly took out the medicine and fed it to Matriarch.

After taking the medicine, Old Madam Yu cried. "He hates me. Even if I die, he won't forgive me. All these years, he's been playing the role of a good son, husband, and father, but his heart is cold.. In front of me, he doesn't even want to mention Madam Xie because he thinks that anyone in the Yu Residence can dirty her name by mentioning her, including himself..."