

All Hail 781

Chapter 781 - 781: Set Fire to the Residence

Xie Xun refused to leave. He was so anxious that his eyes were red. "Little Yao'er, leave. I'll stay..."

"I'm not in a hurry." Yu Youyao listened to the miserable cries that were getting closer and closer. Worried that she would delay any longer, she called someone over to open the secret passage. "Yin San, send my uncle into the secret passage."

Yin San did not hold back. He raised his leg and kicked Xie Xun into the secret passage. Xie Xun fell and watched helplessly as the entrance of the secret passage closed with a bang.

Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief and asked, "How many people are there?"

The guard replied in a low voice, "About 500 people. All of them are well-trained elite soldiers."

Yu Youyao's heart skipped a beat. "How many of us are there?"

The guard said, "In addition to the 50 elite soldiers who stayed behind, the Xie Residence also has 50 guards, so there are a total of 100 people."

A hundred people against 500!

Although the 50 people that Yin Huaixi had left behind could fight against ten people alone, the other party was also an elite army that had been carefully nurtured. They were not easy to deal with.

Yu Youyao clenched her fists tightly. The two sides had been fighting for fifteen minutes. The longer this dragged on, the more casualties there would be. She couldn't watch them die!

She had to think of a way to save them.

Moreover, she had to think of a way to delay the people sent by the Jiazhou Residence.

Otherwise!

Once they realized that the Xie Residence was already empty, as long as the Jiazhou Residence sent someone to stop them outside the city, the Liangzhou army, who had disguised themselves as bandits, would no longer have any scruples and would be even more unscrupulous.

At that time, as long as the Xie Residence was casually accused of breaking the law and planning to escape, the Xie Residence would become meat on the chopping block, at his mercy.

There was no way out for the Xie Residence. Yu Youyao gritted her teeth and decisively said, "Find all the oil in the residence and set fire to the residence."

Only if there was a big commotion would the outsiders be wary.

Not long after, a few men in black charged into Old Master Xie's courtyard. Yin Shi and Chun Xiao guarded Yu Youyao one after another.

The enemies who invaded were all dealt with by Yin San on the spot.

There were lanterns in the courtyard!

The dim yellow light reflected the bloody scene.

Her ears were filled with shrill screams, and blood splattered in the night. She could even feel warm blood splattering on her face.

Yu Youyao's face was extremely pale, but her petite body was still standing firmly in the courtyard.

After an unknown period of time, a guard came over to report, "Princess, everything is ready."

"Light the fire!" Yu Youyao took a deep breath and raised her voice. "Everyone, retreat out of Quanzhou City immediately. Stay alive first."

As soon as she gave the order, Yin Shi had already carried her on his back and jumped onto the roof. Thick smoke rose in the huge residence, and flames suddenly rose from the residence, turning into a sea of fire.

Across the street, Jiazhou Residence, which was secretly paying attention to the Xie Residence, saw a sea of fire burning in the direction of the Xie Residence. The soaring tongue of fire bared its fangs and brandished its claws in the air, like a huge beast with flames that wanted to devour the sky.

The expression of the Jiazhou Residence's head changed.

At this moment, a spy came over to report, "Lord, the people from the Xie Residence have set fire and fled the city."

The head of the Jiazhou Residence slapped the table and roared in exasperation, "Trash, all of you are trash. Five hundred seasoned elite soldiers can't even deal with a hundred ordinary people from the Xie family. They even caused such a huge commotion. What are you doing? Ah!"

Five hundred elite soldiers were not a small number. Each of them could fight against ten people alone. On the battlefield, if used well, this group of elite soldiers was enough to control the battle.

The spy hurriedly said, "Lord, in order to prevent the Xie Residence from escaping, the people we sent spread out their troops and guarded the various entrances and exits of the Xie Residence. I didn't expect that there was a group of experts hidden in the Xie Residence and they caught us off guard, giving them a chance to set fire and escape."

Their forces were scattered, giving them a chance to defeat the enemy one by one.

The Xie Residence was very big, and the terrain was a little complicated. They were familiar with the terrain and used it as a cover. In less than ten minutes after the two sides fought, almost half of them were dead or injured.

The head of the Jiazhou Residence did not believe it and shouted, "What expert can compare to His Highness's most elite secret guards?"

"This..." The spy was also at a loss for words. "That group of people are all proficient in infiltration and assassination. As soon as the two sides fought, more than a hundred of our people died. They should be from some organization in the martial world..."

The Xie family was rich. It was not impossible for them to bribe a group of martial arts experts to escort them out.

The head of the Jiazhou Residence had an ashen expression as he looked at the growing fire in the direction of the Xie Residence. He heard shouts coming from the streets—

“Fire, fire, the Xie Residence is on fire...”

“Everyone, quickly put out the fire. Quickly inform the government to put out the fire...”

“Put out the fire, quickly put out the fire...”

“...”

Seeing that the head of the Jiazhou Residence had not spoken, the spy quickly asked, “Lord, the Xie Residence is definitely leaving the city. Should we continue chasing?”

The head of the Jiazhou Residence was so angry that he was about to vomit blood. “They have already escaped from the residence, so why are we still chasing after them? Didn’t you say that the other party has experts escorting them? If we continue chasing, it’s inevitable that the two sides will fight and cause a commotion. They’re all pretending to be bandits. Such a huge commotion has already alarmed many people.”

The Xie Residence had deliberately set fire to the residence to cause a commotion. King Liang had yet to completely control Quanzhou, and the Sea Defense Institute was still a big problem.

The spy was indignant. “Are we going to let them leave so easily?”

After the people from the Xie Residence left, they couldn’t get any money. Even such a huge residence had been burned into a sea of fire. Putting aside the fact that every inch of land in Quanzhou was worth gold, the Xie Residence’s residence was vast and in the best area. It was worth at least a million yuan.

The Xie Residence had left in a hurry. They couldn’t possibly move everything in the family away together. The value of all the things left behind was immeasurable.

But now, everything had turned into nothing.

The head of the Jiazhou Residence paced around the house. “The Xie Residence will definitely go to the dock to take a boat. Take my token immediately and go to the dock at full speed to pass down an order. Tell them that a group of bandits has infiltrated Quanzhou to kill and set fire. The government wants to capture the bandits. From now on, the Quanzhou dock is under full martial law. No one is allowed to enter or leave Quanzhou.”

He hoped that he could stop the Xie Residence before they left by ship.

They had already alerted the enemy. They had to completely control Quanzhou before the Imperial Court reacted. There were still many merchants and wealthy families in Quanzhou, so they could not let any of them off.

The spy immediately agreed.

The head of the Jiazhou Residence pondered for a moment. "The Huai River area is where the Min people live. Many of the Xie family's side branches are in the Huai River area. They will definitely escape to the Huai River."

The Xie Residence was rich, so it was impossible for them to go to a unfamiliar place. The Huai River area was the best choice.

"Immediately send a message to the government along the Huai River. Tell them that there's a group of bandits killing and burning people in Quanzhou City. Get them to strengthen the investigation of the various docks and ports. The Xie family is a huge taxpayer of the Imperial Court, and there are paintings and images left in all the government offices. As long as they pass through the checkpoints along the way, they will be exposed no matter how careful they are."

Chapter 782 - 782: Sealing the Dock

This was to prevent the Xie family from escaping from the docks in time.

The Liangzhou army had disguised themselves as bandits. Even if the Xie family suspected them, they did not have any evidence. The army could push everything to the Xie family and accuse them of disturbing the peace in Quanzhou and escaping for no reason.

The spy calmed down. "Lord, you're wise."

The head of the Jiazhou Residence looked at the growing fire and instructed the guards beside him, "Gather people immediately to evacuate the commoners and isolate the fire area. Mobilize the commoners to help the government put out the fire. Otherwise, once the fire spreads, the consequences will be unimaginable."

If they waited for the fire to spread, before His Highness could enter Quanzhou, the black veil hat on his head would be the first to be lost.

Yin Shi carried Yu Youyao and quickly fled towards the city gate. Yin San and Chun Xiao were behind him. The wind screamed in their ears, revealing a chill that hurt their ears and numbed their faces.

Yu Youyao looked back in the direction of the Xie Residence. The sea of fire lit up the night, and there was a commotion in her ears.

Before she decided to start the fire, Yu Youyao's mind raced for a short moment. The high wall of the Xie Residence was made of green bricks and could isolate the fire. The residence occupied a large area, and it would take some time for the fire to spread out of the residence. The flowers and the trees near the residence would be cut off and isolate the area of the fire so that the nearby residents wouldn't be affected.

When they arrived at the city gate, Yin San took out the token of the Yue Fei's Residence.

The soldiers guarding the door saw that they were behaving suspiciously and were even stained with a lot of blood. However, the token of the Yue Fei's Residence could not be faked. They immediately did not dare to stop them and quickly opened the city gate to let them leave the city.

After leaving the city, the Xie family arranged for someone and a carriage to receive them.

When Yu Youyao found out that her maternal grandfather and eldest uncle had already left the secret passage and rushed to the docks, she couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief. "There are clothes and accessories prepared in the carriage. Hurry up and change your clothes first. The Jiazhou Residence will definitely think of a way to rush in front of us. The various docks in Quanzhou will be under martial law. The speed of the carriages is limited. We have to speed up and board the ship first."

Yu Youyao changed into a green jacket dress and a waist-length gray rat fur cloak. She put up her hair simply and fixed it with a headband. She dipped a handkerchief in water and wiped her face clean. As expected, there was blood on it.

She pursed her lips. She wondered how many of the people who had left the Xie Residence could escape alive and instruct someone to pick them up.

After they changed their clothes, Yin Shi immediately unloaded the carriage. There were just two horses, so it was suitable for the two of them to ride one together.

This was Yu Youyao's first time riding a horse. Yin Shi sat behind with the reins and wrapped her in his arms. Accompanied by the whistling cold wind and the strong bumps, Yu Youyao's heart was about to jump out of her throat. The soft flesh on her inner thigh was scraped due to the bumping and hurt sharply.

However, she said nothing.

When the horse gradually stopped, Yu Youyao's face was pale. Her legs were so weak and numb that she couldn't even stand.

Seeing her ugly expression, Chun Xiao was shocked. "Young Miss..."

As she did not know the situation at the dock well, Yu Youyao stopped her. "Yin San, go to the dock to gather information and see how it goes."

After a while, Yin San returned. "The docks aren't under martial law yet."

They finally heaved a sigh of relief. Without any delay, they rode to the dock, and soldiers came over to check.

Yin San took out King Yue Fei's token and said that many areas in the North had suffered a drought. King Yue Fei took a portion of the military's relief and sent them to Quanzhou to sell some military supplies.

With the token in hand, the soldiers did not dare to stop them.

Yu Youyao boarded the dock. There was a merchant ship parked at the dock. In order to avoid attracting attention, the Xie family had specially changed to a more old and low-key merchant ship.

Xie Jingliu guarded the deck and quickly went forward to pull Yu Youyao into the boat. "Are you alright?!"

Yu Youyao shook her head. "Grandfather, have Eldest Uncle and the others boarded the ship?"

Xie Jingliu nodded. "They've already boarded the ship. The secret passage at home leads straight out of the city, saving a lot of time. They're all waiting for you. It's windy outside. Hurry up and go in."

Yu Youyao quickly entered the boat. The entire Xie family was waiting in the cabin. Seeing Yu Youyao board the boat, they couldn't help but feel like they had survived a calamity.

They had originally thought that the plan to evacuate Quanzhou would be foolproof. Unexpectedly, news had leaked and the Jiazhou Residence had sent someone to kill them.

Old Madam Xie hugged Yu Youyao and cried, regretting leaving her behind.

Madam Wang was also wiping her tears.

Yu Youyao comforted her grandmother, her Eldest Aunt, and the others before mentioning that she had set the residence on fire.

The days she had been living in the Xie Residence were considered the most leisurely days in her life. Now that they had been reduced to ashes, she felt terrible.

It was difficult to leave their old residence, so the people from the Xie Residence couldn't help but feel disappointed.

However, they also knew that under such circumstances, only by setting fire to the residence and causing a commotion could the Jiazhou Residence be wary of harming them. Only then could Little Youyao'er and the Xie Residence escape successfully.

Old Master Xie sighed softly. "It's already very fortunate that Little Yao'er is fine. It's good that the residence was burned down. Otherwise, the Jiazhou Residence will benefit. Our good residence will also be ruined."

Old Madam Xie held Yu Youyao's hand. "The residence is gone. We'll just build it in the future. The most important thing is for the family to be neat. Don't let your imagination run wild."

Madam Wang also said, "After we leave Quanzhou, it's not certain if the residence will be ours in the future. It's fine if it's burned."

Everyone comforted Yu Youyao at once, afraid that she would feel terrible.

Actually, they were the ones who felt the most uncomfortable. Yu Youyao changed the topic. "The people who stayed in the residence fled separately. Let's wait for another hour. We'll set off immediately when the time is up."

The Xie Residence had turned into a monstrous sea of fire. The Jiazhou Residence probably wouldn't send anyone to chase after them anymore. As long as they were still alive, they would definitely be able to arrive in an hour.

In the next period of time, people rushed over one after another.

The first to rush over were the 50 elite troops under Yin Huaixi. Fifty of them had been through hundreds of battles. Although some of them were injured, they all survived.

More than ten guards who were guarding the Xie Residence also came.

However, before the hour was up, a loud shout from the soldiers came from the dock. “The government office of the state capital has ordered that thieves have infiltrated Quanzhou City to kill and set fires. From now on...”

Before the soldier could finish speaking, Xie Jingliu ordered in a low voice, “Set sail!”

“...Lock down all the docks in Quanzhou and capture the bandits with all your might. Any merchants and ships are not allowed to enter or leave the docks. Those who disobey will be treated as bandits.”

As soon as he finished speaking, the second-floor ship rushed out of the dock like an arrow leaving the bow.

The soldiers on the shore sensed that something was amiss. They raised their voices and shouted, “What are you doing? Stop the boat. Stop the boat quickly. Didn’t you hear the order from the government office?”

The merchant ship that left the dock ignored the soldiers’ warning.

“Everyone on the ship, listen up. Quanzhou’s dock has been sealed. No one is allowed to leave. Stop the ship immediately, or you’ll be treated as thieves.”

Chapter 783 - 783: Fate

“The merchant ship in front, turn around immediately.”

“If you don’t stop the ship, we’ll shoot.”

“Fire!”

“...”

Countless arrows were shot at the merchant ship. Fortunately, the Xie Residence had considered this situation. The old and inconspicuous merchant ship was made of iron birch wood. This wood was very hard, more than twice as hard as steel. It could be used like gold and iron and could withstand long-range arrows.

It was extremely dense, and it sank when it entered the water. Even if it was soaked in water for a long time, the wood could still be kept dry and not rot.

The core secret of the Xie family’s manufacturer’s ship was to use iron birch wood to make bearings.

Iron birch wood was lighter than iron, but harder. Merchant ships could travel faster. Iron birch wood did not rot in the water, and merchant ships were more stable and durable. Even if they encountered Japanese ships at sea, they could risk their speed and dodge the bullets.

However, iron birch wood was very rare, and cultivation techniques were also the core secret of the Xie Residence.

The merchant ship quickly left the port. Yu Youyao pursed her lips slightly. “There are still more than 30 people who haven’t arrived. What should they do?”

Old Master Xie said, "They're all voluntarily staying behind. The pros and cons have been explained clearly. The Xie family gave each of them 10,000 taels of silver and rearranged their fake identity documents. They're not afraid of the government's investigation. They'll stay in Quanzhou for the time being and it'll be fine to change their identities."

The Xie Residence had traveled extensively and had a wide network of connections in the underworld. The guards were all people of the martial world. Most of them had received the favor of the Xie Residence or had their lives saved by the Xie Residence, so they were very loyal to the Xie Residence.

That night, Yu Youyao had a nightmare. She dreamed that the Xie family had sensed that the Jiazhou Residence was colluding with King Liang and was preparing to escape from Quanzhou.

At this moment, the Xie family received a secret report about her being imprisoned by the Zhenguo Marquis Residence.

The person who had sent the secret report was a trusted aide of the Xie family who had been arranged to take care of Yu Youyao in the capital. He had once been saved by the Xie family, so the Xie family did not suspect anything.

Immediately, he couldn't care less about escaping. He used his connections in the capital to secretly send Yu Youyao a message.

Ten days later, the Xie Residence evacuated Quanzhou by water and passed by the Jin County pier.

At that time, the Xie family would arrange for someone to create chaos in the Zhenguo Marquis Residence and save Yu Youyao in the chaos. They would send her to the port of Jin County to meet up and bring her to the North to join the Great General of the North, Ye Hanyuan.

However, the Xie family never expected that all of this was just a trap.

The so-called secret letter was just an act directed by Song Mingzhao.

When Song Mingzhao found out that King Liang was about to rebel and the Xie Residence was about to escape, he wanted the Xie Residence's money. However, he was worried that he would alert King Liang and deliberately lured the Xie Residence into a trap so that he could capture all the Xie Residence's merchant ships and money.

The Xie Residence fell for it.

That night, Yu Youyao was escorted to the port of Jin County to meet up with the Xie family.

Just as they were about to leave in a boat, Song Mingzhao brought his men and surrounded the Xie Residence.

Her maternal grandfather had covered for her Third Cousin's escape and was shot dead on the spot.

Her Third Cousin had fled into the sea, his fate unknown.

Song Mingzhao accused the Xie family of escaping privately and plotting a rebellion. He confiscated all of the Xie family's wealth, and everyone in the Xie family was sentenced to be executed after autumn.

Only her Fifth Cousin, who was the youngest, was pardoned.

This was the only survivor that the older Yao Yao had obtained in exchange for begging Song Mingzhao and willingly becoming a blood medicinal catalyst for Yu Jianjia to extract blood.

For the sake of the only survivor of the Xie family, no matter how painful and desperate the older Yao Yao was, she could only endure it silently.

Song Mingzhao had stepped on the blood of the entire Xie family and supported the Fourth Prince to ascend the throne. He had become a high-ranking official step by step. With this sum of money, after the new emperor ascended the throne, he was exempted from rewarding the commoners and compensating the army, quickly stabilizing the overall situation in the court.

On the day of the Xie family's execution, Song Mingzhao was benevolent and allowed her to send the Xie family off.

The older Yao Yao left.

Even though she knew that she had to watch her relatives' heads fall to the ground one by one, she still didn't want to run away cowardly. She couldn't bear to see her family's corpses exposed with no one to collect them.

She knelt on the ground with a bowl of white rice and fed all the relatives of the Xie family the last mouthful of rice. As she screamed and cried, she looked at all the people of the Xie family. Their heads fell to the ground and their blood spilled on the execution ground.

"Song Mingzhao, you won't die a good death..." Yu Youyao screamed and woke up. Old Madam Xie hugged her.

"Don't be afraid." Old Madam Xie hugged her tightly and comforted her. "Little Yao'er, don't be afraid. Your Grandmother is here."

Yu Youyao panted quickly. She raised her head with difficulty and looked at her grandmother with red eyes and tears. She said in a panic, "Grandmother, leave quickly. This is a trap. Run..."

"Hurry up and escape... Don't worry about me..."

"Grandfather, Grandfather, run..."

"Song Mingzhao is here..."

"No..."

"Little Yao'er!" Old Madam Xie shouted, waking her up. Yu Youyao was stunned. She looked at her grandmother, tears gushing out and blurring her eyes.

"I'm sorry..."

Yu Youyao broke down and cried. "It's all because of me. I'm... sorry..."

She kept apologizing, her mind filled with the nightmare just now. In the nightmare, the entire Xie family was wearing prison clothes and kneeling at the entrance of the market. At the order of the main official, the executioner raised his butcher knife.

The bright blade reflected the scorching sun at noon, making one's eyes hurt and dry.

She watched helplessly as the butcher knife emitted a piercing light under the sunlight. It suddenly swung down, and warm blood sprayed on her face.

She watched helplessly as her grandmother's head rolled to her feet. She fell to the ground and hugged her grandmother's head crazily, breaking down on the spot.

“Little Yao'er, don't be afraid. Don't cry.” Old Madam Xie hugged her granddaughter and stroked her back. “It's fine. Your Grandmother is here.”

Yu Youyao had a nightmare and was in a bad state of mind. She fell asleep again in a daze.

After a while, she had a low fever.

The doctor came over to take her pulse. He said that she had been frightened previously and had prescribed a prescription to calm her mind. However, this fever was intermittent, so it was not good.

Chun Xiao recalled that previously, Young Miss had watched the bloody battle in the courtyard with her own eyes. At that time, Young Miss's face was terrifyingly pale. Later, she was so focused on escaping that no one cared if she was frightened.

Yu Youyao was groggy. When she felt that the boat had stopped, she asked Chun Xiao, “Where are we? Did we leave Quanzhou?”

Chun Xiao quickly said, “We've already arrived at the Jin County pier. Your fever has been low. Old Master and the others are worried about your health and have decided to stop at the Jin County pier to rest for a few days before setting off.”

Nightmares and reality were always shockingly similar. Yu Youyao felt as if her heart was being tightly gripped by a pair of large hands called fate. It hurt as if she was suffocating.

Immediately, the world spun, and her eyes darkened. She bit her tongue hard, and there was a faint taste of blood in her mouth. The sharp pain cleared her mind. “Help me up.”

Chun Xiao subconsciously said, “Young Miss, you're not feeling well. The doctor has instructed that you have to rest in bed. You...”

Chapter 784 - 784: Cruel

Yu Youyao did not wait for her to finish speaking. She supported her weak body and got up from the bed. Chun Xiao was shocked and quickly went over to help her.

At this moment, Madam Wang brought a bowl of Rogue rice porridge into the house. She quickly placed the small bowl on the table and came to the bed. “What's wrong? Hurry up and lie back down...”

Yu Youyao grabbed her Eldest Aunt's hand. “It's impossible for the Jiazhou Residence to let us off easily. They will definitely join forces with the large and small docks near Quanzhou and force us back to Quanzhou in the name of investigating the bandits. The Xie Residence is a huge taxpayer of the Great Zhou Dynasty and is controlled by the government. There will definitely be portraits of the Xie Residence left in the large and small government offices. Once we go ashore, we might be exposed.”

Madam Wang looked at her pale face and her eyes welled up with tears. "Don't worry. The Old Master and the others have already discussed it. When we left Quanzhou, we made two preparations and arranged for fake identity documents. We'll rest outside the city for a day or two and not enter the city."

Yu Youyao shook her head with a pale face. "We won't go ashore. After sending someone ashore to buy supplies, we'll leave the Jin County pier immediately."

Madam Wang stroked her hair with heartache and coaxed her gently, "Your fever has been low. In winter, the wind on the sea is strong and it's wet. The ship isn't as comfortable as usual and isn't suitable for recuperation. If we cross the Jin County pier, it will take at least ten days to reach the next pier."

Yu Youyao suddenly closed her eyes.

In the end, it was still for her.

It was like this in the nightmare.

It was still the same in reality.

Yu Youyao hated herself for being disappointing. Her eyes turned red. "Eldest Aunt, the pier in Jin County is very close to the capital. If anything happens, we won't even have a chance to escape. I don't want you to take the risk for me."

Madam Wang was still a little hesitant.

Yu Youyao held her Eldest Aunt's hand tightly. Her heart, which had been uneasy because of the nightmare, calmed down bit by bit. "These past few days, I've had nightmares every day. I kept dreaming that the Xie family hadn't escaped, which was why I was shocked. That's why my fever didn't subside. I'll only be completely at ease when I reach the next pier and it's close to the North."

Madam Wang also knew that Little Youyao had often cried in her sleep these past few days, shouting, "Hurry up and escape. Don't worry about me. I'm sorry..."

Her expression gradually turned solemn. "Lie back down first. I'll discuss it with your grandmother."

The Xie Residence used the excuse of purchasing for the You army to negotiate with the soldiers. It was not a problem to stop at the dock for a while and rely on a boat to go ashore. It was very risky.

She did not dare to delay and quickly looked for Old Madam Xie to mention this.

Old Madam Xie's heart ached for her granddaughter. If Little Yao'er was really worried about the Xie Residence and had endless nightmares, stopping the boat and docking would only increase her uneasiness and fear.

For a moment, she did not know what to do.

In the end, it was Old Master Xie who settled the matter. "Yin San, go ashore and buy some fresh fruits, vegetables, and some appetizing snacks to replenish some fresh supplies. We'll set sail later."

With the token of the Yue Fei's Residence, the dock did not investigate them strictly. The customs clearance document had already been handed over to the soldiers at the dock. As long as the people from the Xie Residence did not show their faces, there would not be a big problem.

If their identity was exposed, they could also immediately sail away.

Yu Youyao was finally a little relieved. After eating a bowl of Rogue rice porridge and being coaxed by Nanny Xu to eat a bowl of bird's nest porridge, she felt a little stronger.

It was rare for them to reach the shore. Fresh water could be replenished on the shore. Nanny Xu made a medicinal bath and let Yu Youyao take a bath.

After washing away her fatigue, Yu Youyao felt much better.

"It's not good for your health to be cooped up in the boat all the time." Nanny Xu helped her change into a jacket dress with a fur collar and a snow fox fur cloak to wrap her up tightly.

Although the dock in Jin County was close to the sea, the climate was not as warm as in Quanzhou.

As soon as she left the ship's hold, the salty sea breeze blew into her neck with a bone-chilling cold. Yu Youyao shuddered and couldn't help but shrink her neck, hugging the hand warmer tightly.

Yu Youyao looked at the dock and her eyes couldn't help but pause.

On the dock, there were many refugees in hunched clothes begging from passers-by. A young master dressed as a scholar seemed to be unable to bear it and gave up a small ingot of silver.

"Young Master, please..."

All the nearby refugees pounced over crazily and fought for it.

The young master was shocked and shouted in fear, "Don't come over, don't come over. Help..."

And yet!

It was as if the refugees did not hear him at all. More and more people rushed over, pushed down the young master, and tugged at his clothes.

When the soldiers at the dock heard the commotion, they drew their knives and rushed over. They shouted angrily, "What are you doing? What are you doing? You're not allowed to rob in broad daylight. Is there any law? Move aside..."

The refugees pushed one another, and screams and curses mixed together.

"All of you, stop." The soldiers finally couldn't take it anymore and pulled out their knives.

Blood splattered everywhere, and the gathered refugees screamed and fled in all directions. However, the young master lay on the ground with his eyes wide open, already dead.

Yu Youyao's eyes were filled with tears and she was trembling.

She wholeheartedly believed that by donating to the Imperial Court and helping the refugees, she could save everyone and save them from the famine.

However, the scene in front of her cruelly told her how naive she was.

If it was already like this at the dock in Jin County, who knew how many places the same scene was cruelly playing out at?

Poverty did not make people crazy. Only famine did.

These refugees were the most pitiful and innocent citizens, but they were also starving beasts. Once someone showed weakness, they would swarm forward.

As long as they targeted someone, there was no way out.

Yu Youyao looked at the corpses on the dock in a daze. Some had been hacked to death, and there was the corpse of the young master. This was probably the truest and cruelest side of the world.

It was far more terrifying than the bloody battle in front of her.

Chun Xiao felt a little uneasy. “Young Miss.”

“I’m fine. Let’s go in!” Yu Youyao tried her best to control her softened heart.

She kept telling herself in her heart, “This is the way of the world. Yu Youyao, you can save them for a while, but you won’t be able to save them for a lifetime. Do you see the refugees who were slashed to death at the dock? The Xie Residence is still running for their lives. Your so-called kindness might harm the Xie Residence or even those refugees.”

At this moment, Song Mingzhao, who was about to go to Dehua to take office, rushed to the dock in Jin City by land from the capital. He seemed to sense something and glanced at a large ship parked in front of the dock.

However, he only saw the back of a person that was covered in snow fox fur. It lowered in front of him and disappeared into the ship’s hold.

He couldn’t help but take a few more glances.

The accompanying soldier hurriedly said, “That’s a merchant ship sent by King Yue Fei to Fujian to buy military supplies. There are many areas in the North that have suffered from drought. King Yue Fei was noble and used military supplies to help the people.”

Chapter 785: So Painful That She Wanted to Die

Song Mingzhao felt that it was a little strange, but after thinking about it carefully, he felt that this situation was reasonable. The Liao Province in the North was close to the sea, and the sea route was very convenient. Fujian’s trade was also prosperous, so it made sense to go to Fujian to buy.

The ship left the dock.

Yu Youyao thought of what she had seen at the main dock just now and asked, “How’s the situation in Jin County?”

Yin San’s expression was very serious. “The streets are filled with refugees. When they see the old, weak, women, and children, they rush over like crazy to snatch from them. I heard that during this period of time, many people have already died. The government office can’t even take care of themselves.”

Yu Youyao frowned.

Yin San said, "In some remote areas in the north, as they suffered a drought, there was a famine. Some were plundered by the pirates and couldn't survive, so they all rushed into the capital. However, the capital closed the city gate and didn't allow refugees to enter the city. The refugees had no choice but to rush into the towns around the capital. By the time the nearby government offices reacted, a large number of refugees had already surged into the towns. Riots often happened, and the government couldn't suppress them."

No wonder there were refugees openly robbing the docks, and the soldiers slashed at them without any scruples. The order of Jin County was already on the verge of collapse.

Yu Youyao did not look too good. "Didn't the Imperial Court send disaster relief? Why are there still so many refugees?"

Yin San shook his head. "The Imperial Court's disaster relief is also selective and targeted. Some areas with more prosperous agriculture and trade are the first areas to receive relief. Most of the remote areas basically just receive a formality. They are only distributed a small amount of money and food. Some are simply left simply to fend for themselves."

Yu Youyao's breathing tightened. "Actually, most people haven't received relief from the Imperial Court."

Yin San nodded. "The range of the drought is too large. Seven to eight prefectures and provinces, including Shandong, Henan, Hebei, Shanxi, and Shaanxi, have disasters of varying degrees. Among them, Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Hebei are the worst. However, under the king's rule, the situation in Shanxi and Shaanxi is better because they're promoting the planting of sweet potatoes. The situation in other areas is very serious. I heard that so far, more than 400,000 people have died from famine."

Tens of millions of people were waiting to eat. The treasury of the Great Zhou Dynasty was empty to begin with, and the past two years had not been good. The production of food had decreased drastically, and it could not support so many people.

Yu Youyao knew that this was not the most difficult time.

After this winter, who knew how many more people would die of hunger and cold.

By next spring, if the drought continued, the famine would continue to spread. The entire north would be filled with starving corpses, and it would become a living hell.

Yu Youyao only felt that it was ironic and ridiculous.

The emperor was busy engrossed in alchemy, the court officials were busy fighting for power, the vassal lords were busy plotting rebellion, and the aristocratic families were bewitched by the illusion of prosperity and peace. They were busy enjoying themselves.

Who would really care about the lives of the commoners?

Song Mingzhao waited for a while, but no passenger ship came to Quanzhou. He sent Kong Qing to ask for information.

Kong Qing only went for a moment before returning. "It's a message from the government office in Quanzhou. A group of bandits is killing and setting fire in Quanzhou. All the large and small docks near Quanzhou have to be under martial law. They will immediately start the martial law investigation. The official ship to Quanzhou will be a little late. Young Master, wait patiently."

Song Mingzhao felt a strong sense of contradiction. "Go and investigate again and ask what happened in Quanzhou, especially regarding the Xie Residence. Make sure to be thorough." He felt that this matter was not that simple.

Then, he recalled that everything about Quanzhou recently was related to Yu Youyao and the Xie family. He had a bad feeling.

Time was especially torturous as he waited.

After an unknown period of time, Kong Qing returned. "Other than bandits killing and setting fires in Quanzhou City, I haven't heard anything else, nor is there any news about the Xie family."

Quanzhou had changed!

Song Mingzhao's expression did not look too good. He asked Kong Qing to prepare a brush and ink and wrote a letter to his family, asking the Zhenguo Marquis Residence to pay close attention to the movements in Quanzhou.

After writing the letter, he carefully packed the seal and handed it to a guard accompanying him. "Send it to the Matriarch at full speed."

They waited until it was dark before Song Mingzhao finally boarded the official ship to Quanzhou.

That night, Song Mingzhao had a nightmare.

In his nightmare, he was sitting in a carriage. He opened the window of the carriage and looked at the market not far away. Yu Youyao fell to the dirty ground and hugged a bloody head as she broke down and cried.

As she cried, she cursed loudly, "Song Mingzhao, you won't die a good death..."

Song Mingzhao suddenly woke up from his dream. His heart seemed to be blocked. He coughed hard and spat out dark red blood on the snow-white handkerchief.

He stared blankly at the shocking mass of blood, and his body gradually turned cold.

In the past few years, he had had many muddle-headed dreams on and off. At first, they were just blurry fragments. Only the sound of the girl crying and cursing was clear.

Later on, he gradually could see the girl's appearance in the fragmented dream.

It was Yu Youyao.

Yet, it wasn't Yu Youyao.

In the nightmare, Yu Xiyao was scrawny and thin. It seemed to be caused by him.

Later on, there were more and more fragments of the dream.

Song Mingzhao was very clear-headed. The person in the dream wasn't him, but those nightmares were too real, as if everything had really happened. Every time, it hurt so much that he wanted to die.

How was that possible?

Even if Yu Youyao did something wrong to him, he would at least let her off on the account that she had once saved his life at the Precious Peace Temple.

That wasn't him!

It couldn't be him!

... .

After the merchant ship left the dock of Jin County, Yu Youyao's body became more and more energetic day by day. The people from the Xie family finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Old Madam Xie's heart ached. "The next dock is in Liancheng, Liao Province. After entering the territory of the North, we'll get off the ship and turn to the land route. Although the carriage is a little bumpier than a merchant ship, we can stop on the way at any time. It's a little better than floating on a ship. Look, you've finally gained some meat, but you've lost weight again."

Yu Youyao shook her head. "Liancheng is considered a relatively rich area in the North. I reckon many refugees have surged in. It's even more difficult to travel by land than by sea."

Although the situation in the North was a little better after the disaster, the resources in the North were not abundant to begin with, so no matter how good it was, it would not be any better.

At most, there were no riots like elsewhere.

Old Madam Xie sighed softly. "This world will be chaotic sooner or later."

The merchant ship passed through many states and provinces. When it arrived at the dock, it had to buy supplies and process the customs clearance document. They also obtained a lot of information.

The north had suffered a drought and was filled with refugees. The richest area on the southeast coast had been burned, killed, and plundered by pirates. There were also many refugees.

Once there were more refugees, there would be frequent riots everywhere. The government could still barely suppress them.

However, if the government could not settle the refugees, there would be more and more of them. At that time, it would only be the officials forcing the people to rebel.

Chapter 786: Liancheng

Yu Youyao's heart felt heavy. "In short, we have to be careful. It's best not to reveal the supplies on the ship in front of others, in case it attracts trouble."

Old Madam Xie nodded. "Don't worry. The Old Master has arranged for someone to arrive at Liancheng first and wait to receive us. In addition to the elite soldiers and guards on the ship, there are more than 300 people in total. Not to mention refugees, even bandits are not their match."

Yu Youyao came to a realization. There were 100 elite troops of Yin Huaixi on the ship, and the Xie family had also arranged for more than 100 martial arts experts to guard against pirates hijacking the ship at sea. This was also the Xie family's confidence in sailing at sea. It was indeed very safe if another group of people from Liancheng was arranged.

"There's still a journey of at least eight to nine days to Liancheng. Let's not talk about this." Old Madam Xie sighed softly. "I didn't have a good new year previously, so I keep feeling that it's inauspicious. Tomorrow is the Lantern Festival. Our family will gather and have a good reunion meal."

On New Year's Eve, Little Yao'er's fever did not subside, and she was not in the mood to celebrate the holidays.

Only the men in the family pasted a few couplets on the merchant ship to seek auspiciousness. They prepared a table of food and wine to worship their ancestors and symbolically celebrate the festival.

After that, they were even less in the mood to celebrate the holidays.

Yu Youyao felt a little regretful that she had missed her first year with the Xie family.

The next day was the Lantern Festival.

Yu Youyao excitedly pulled her grandmother and her Eldest Aunt along for the Lantern Festival.

She had always been very knowledgeable about food. She wrapped osmanthus honey, peach dew, rose sauce, and so on in the Lantern Festival and made more than ten flavors. Even Old Master Xie, who did not like to eat sweet food, ate a lot for the first time and was full of praise.

The Lantern Festival passed with laughter.

In the days that followed, the atmosphere on the ship was finally not as heavy as before.

The days of sailing at sea were very boring, and Yu Youyao did not have anything to do. Considering that it was bitterly cold in the North during winter, she made a lot of incense medicine that was cold, moist, and nourishing.

As soon as she got busy, time passed quickly.

When the merchant ship stopped again, Yu Youyao suddenly realized that they had already arrived at Liancheng, Liao Province.

Yin Huaixi was guarding the east of Liao Province. It covered a large area and included the three major provinces in the northeast. It was recorded in the Pre-Han Book of Geography. "The Liaodong Prefecture and the Qin Prefecture belong to Youzhou as part of the 18 counties!" Originally, Youzhou included the three northeastern provinces and the three capital provinces, namely Beijing, Hebei, and Tianjin.

During the Great Zhou Dynasty, the three provinces of the capital were no longer under the jurisdiction of Youzhou.

Due to the fact that the north-western regions of Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Ningxia stretched for 100,000 miles, the terrain was very complicated and bandits often appeared. There was also a trade route that was connected to part of the Northern Barbarians. When the Imperial Court redistributed the state's territory, it divided the three lands in the north into the territory of Youzhou.

Due to the large area and special location of Youzhou, the Imperial Court did not set up a vassal state in Youzhou.

Later on, King Li of Zhou invited himself to Youzhou to guard it. Today, he set a precedent and was conferred the title of King Dingbei. It was originally to intimidate the generals guarding the North.

Unexpectedly, King Li of Zhou himself had made many great achievements in the North.

The Great Zhou Dynasty didn't have county towns. Among the 18 counties in Liaodong, Xiangping was the principal county. The ancient city of Xiangping had existed since ancient times and housed the local government of Youzhou, so it was also called Youzhou City.

Yin Huaixi was in Xiangping City.

There was a large saddle mountain between Yu Youyao and Yin Huaixi. It was a resource-rich area in the northeast. It produced many minerals, such as strange stones, beautiful jade, and relatively expensive medicinal herbs. At the same time, they could also obtain abundant resources from the sea through the coast of the city. It could guarantee the You Prefecture army's strategic supplies to the greatest extent.

The climate in Liancheng was similar to that in Quanzhou.

Winter was not cold, and summer was not scorching. Even in winter, it did not feel cold.

However, once they crossed the mountain between Liancheng and Youzhou City, it would be a completely different scene.

There were many rainstorms in Youzhou. There was very little sunlight in summer and autumn. As winter was very long and the temperature was very low, the spring climate was not obvious. Every year, it was also bitterly cold in autumn, winter, and spring.

The merchant ship stopped at the dock, and Madam Wang came over. "The situation in Liancheng is unknown. Yin San and Jingliu went ashore to gather information. We'll wait on the ship first."

Yu Youyao nodded and asked, "Are the people who are going to receive us here?"

Madam Wang smiled and said, "After they arrived at Liancheng, they've been lingering at the Liancheng Dock every day. As soon as the merchant ship arrived at the dock, they contacted us. We've contacted them about the carriages and cargo. When Yin San and Jingliu return from scouting for information, they'll discuss how to arrange it. We might still need to stay on the ship for two to three days."

They had just arrived and had even brought a large number of supplies. Some of them were too eye-catching. They definitely had to understand the situation in Liancheng first before making their next plan.

Yin San and Xie Jingliu left for two days.

When he returned, Xie Jingliu had obtained a map of Liancheng.

Almost all the prohibited items in the map were in the hands of the government and some aristocratic families. Even the Xie family had to take the route planned by the Imperial Court when they traveled outside. They didn't dare to take their own route without permission.

“I’ve asked around. King Yue Fei has set up nearly a hundred refugee camps in a relatively rich area in the North. Liancheng is facing the sea, and the supplies are very abundant. Outside the city, he has arranged for tents to accommodate the refugees. The government and King Yue Fei have sent troops to guard the camps to prevent the refugees from causing trouble. With the families as units, each family will send out a strong laborer to exchange labor for food. If there’s no strong laborer in the family, they can do some mending of the military clothes. They are provided with a bowl of hot soup and a piece of sweet potato every day.”

Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief.

No matter how much food there was, it could not withstand the consumption by a large number of refugees. They would not be full, but they would not starve to death. There was also a relatively stable environment. This was already the best outcome for the refugees.

A smile also appeared on Xie Jingliu’s face. “When the weather warms up, the sweet potatoes will be promoted to be planted in all areas of the North. King Yue Fei has encouraged the planting of trees and the raising of silkworms. He has already contacted local people who are good at raising silkworms and taught the refugees the technique of raising silkworms. The Yue Fei’s Residence will step in and contact some silk merchants to collect silk cocoons, silk, and so on.”

It was very likely that those who had fled over would settle down locally in the future. However, the refugees did not have any fields and had left their hometowns. It was not easy to find work locally, and their future days would be even more difficult.

A large number of refugees were gathered in one place. If this problem could not be resolved, there would definitely be trouble over time.

The silkworm farming of the Great Zhou Dynasty was mainly concentrated in Henan and Shandong.

The forest in Liancheng was very wide, and it was mainly made of trees. It had a natural environment for silkworm cultivation. However, silkworm cultivation was all in the hands of the local big families, so the production was limited.

If it could develop to a large scale, not only would it ensure that some refugees who had no fields would escape, but their future lives would also lead to trade in the North. It would be beneficial without any harm.

Cultivating silkworms was a good thing. The silk cocoon could be used to make silk. The silk could be woven to produce brocade, silk, gauze, and so on. It also involved various craftsmanship skills, such as printing and dyeing.

Chapter 787 - 787: Yin Huaixi Is Here

The silkworm chrysalis could be used for both medicinal and food purposes. It was very valuable. The residue could be used to feed fish, livestock, and birds. It was a very complete business chain. Every step was a business opportunity, and the potential and profits were very impressive.

The Xie Residence had a portion of the silk business. They had natural channels and connections. How could they digest the silkworm business in the entire Liancheng area? They could cooperate with the Yue Fei's Residence and vigorously develop the planting of trees, silkworm farming, and so on.

Yu Youyao smiled. "You know everything at a glance. It seems that the situation in the North is much better than we thought."

Xie Jingliu nodded and said meaningfully, "I also heard that Princess Shaoyi has almost become a living Bodhisattva in the hearts of most people in the North."

Yu Youyao's eyes widened. "This..."

Xie Jingliu said with a faint smile, "The main food for the refugees is sweet potatoes. These things are very filling and make one resistant to hunger, greatly reducing the consumption of food. This is King Yue Fei's confidence in taking in the refugees from the North. The sweet potatoes were the first to be successfully planted, and you spared no effort to promote planting them in the North. King Yue Fei also publicized your contributions wantonly. Every day, when the camp distributes food, there will be refugees holding food in their hands and kowtowing to you."

He had seen such a scene with his own eyes. There were hundreds of refugees shouting that Princess Shaoyi was the best. The scene was very shocking.

Yu Youyao was a little stunned. "I—I actually didn't do anything."

Xie Jingliu stroked her hair and chuckled. "In the Wenchang Dijun's Text on Hidden Good Deeds, people are advised to do good deeds. At all times, they should do good deeds and accumulate virtue. They should do deeds regardless of the size of the deed. When doing good deeds, one doesn't care about the gains and losses. When they see thorns in the way, they cut them off. They will fill the road when it's uneven. One might think this is convenient for them to pass through, but it's also convenient for the pedestrians behind them."

She could tolerate everything. On the outside, she was pure and gentle, but her heart was magnanimous. She did not deliberately do good deeds, but good deeds were naturally done. This was a kind of magnanimity and bearing as a person, and also an attitude towards dealing with others.

She was as kind as water.

Water benefited all things and followed what was right.

This was "real."

Xie Jingliu spoke a little more about the situation in the North and discussed bringing the goods on the ship onshore.

At this moment, there was a commotion on the dock.

The commotion was huge. Xie Jingliu quickly left the ship's hold and saw a group of soldiers in black and red cotton armor surrounding the entire dock.

The cotton armor reached below their knees. The hem of their clothes was split, making it convenient for them to fight immediately. As they moved neatly, the cotton armor on their bodies

clanked, and copper and iron pieces were sewn into the interior of the cotton armor to defend against the enemy.

The weather in the North was bitterly cold, and the armor was knee-length. It was longer than the armor in other places. In order to ensure that the armor was coldproof and resistant to the enemy, the armor was 500 grams heavier than that of other places.

This was the armor of the You army.

With a thought, Xie Jingliu saw a general in black armor not far away. He had a curved saber on each side of his waist and a Zhanmadao as he strode towards the dock.

Yu Youyao sat in the ship's hold and did not hear any commotion for a long time. She could not help but lift the curtain and bend down to walk out.

There was a clang in her ear. Yu Youyao seemed to sense something and suddenly looked up...

Yin Huaixi suddenly stared at her without blinking.

The bright daylight above her head suddenly pierced into her eyes. Yu Youyao felt dizzy.

Everything around her turned into an illusory outline. Only the person in her eyes seemed to carry light like fire. His thunderous steps stepped on her heart and he walked towards her step by step.

Her heart began to beat faster, and her blood rushed through her veins. Her heart pounded again and again. It was the sound of his footsteps on her heart, like thunder and lightning, making her ears numb and deaf.

The ship shook violently. Yu Youyao's vision spun, and the illusory scene began to collapse. She felt dizzy and her body swayed uncontrollably.

Xie Jingliu was about to help her when someone was faster than him.

In the blink of an eye, he had pulled Yu Youyao into his arms.

The boat was still swaying. Yu Youyao, who was clearly used to sitting in a boat, felt a little dizzy from the swaying of the boat. She stayed obediently in Yin Huaixi's arms and did not dare to move anymore.

Xie Jingliu's voice sounded in her ears. "What happened?"

Someone replied, "Just now, a merchant ship entered the dock. When it stopped, it accidentally collided with our ship. It's fine now."

Only then did Yu Youyao realize something.

Yin Huaixi was here!

The soft armor made of golden silk was hard and cold. Yu Youyao cowered and reminded him softly, "The boat doesn't seem to be shaking anymore."

"Yes." Yin Huaixi's voice was low and hoarse. It was as if he had been accelerated by the wind and sand, making him look obscure and quiet. He was no longer as cold as before. "It's not shaking anymore."

There was a moment of silence.

“Then, let go of me first.” Yu Youyao’s face was red, and her voice was as soft as a mosquito’s, revealing a hint of panic. “There are too many people at the dock. If, if someone sees us...”

Yin Huaixi had come with great fanfare. Even if the people at the dock did not know him, they at least knew the You Prefecture army. After asking around, they knew that it was him.

She couldn’t help but step back, but her heel pressed against the wooden wall.

The merchant ship was modeled after a warship. There were arrow towers around it that could be used as sentry and archery towers. Therefore, the arrow towers had to be a little higher. They could stand under the arrow towers and were very hidden.

Yu Youyao panicked even more.

“You’ve lost weight again!” Not only did Yin Huaixi not let go of her, but he also tightened his grip on her. He still felt that her waist, which was in his arms, was not tight enough in his hands, making him feel as if he had not grabbed her tightly. His heart was empty, as if he could not fill it no matter what.

This thinness was unbearable.

She was too light. He felt that she was fragile, and that he could lose her easily. As a result, he wanted to use more strength and try his best to hold her tightly, never letting go again.

With just this sentence, Yu Youyao’s nose stung, and even her eyes felt a little sore.

Her eyes turned red. “Yes, I’m growing, so I won’t gain weight. Look, my height is at the bottom of your chest now.”

Yin Huaixi finally let go of her and observed her.

He had left Quanzhou last winter. When they met again, it was already the next spring. They had missed ringing out the new year and ringing in the new year. They had also missed the reunion festival.

They had not seen each other for almost three months.

The person in front of her seemed to have suddenly grown up. Her facial features were much clearer, and her figure rose and fell beautifully, like a flower that was about to bloom.

After sitting on the boat for almost a month, her face was almost translucent white, but her young eyes had turned into mountains and seas. At a glance, they were a thousand miles long and colorful. There were several peaks between the clouds, and she looked magnificent after experiencing the world. She lowered her eyebrows and eyes. She was delicate and bright, revealing a mysterious and reserved beauty.

She seemed to have suddenly completed the transformation from a young girl to a woman.

However, Yu Youyao was only thirteen years old.

Chapter 788 - 788: Marrying Her?

Growth had nothing to do with time. It was only related to the world. After experiencing many things, a person would naturally mature and grow up.

Yin Huaixi was both excited and heartbroken. "I should have gone to Quanzhou to pick you up personally."

He had left a hundred elite troops in Quanzhou, thinking that nothing would go wrong, but he had put her in danger.

He thought that he knew everything and was conceited enough to hold the chess piece in his hand and control the overall situation. However, there was nothing in this world that was truly foolproof. One could never be too careful.

He had lost to Yu Youyao because of his conceit.

"With the people you arranged to protect us along the way, it was a close call." Yu Youyao smiled and changed the topic casually. "I heard from my Third Cousin that the North hasn't been stable after winter. Large numbers of refugees have surged in from all over the place, and the Northern Barbarians are also restless. There have already been several small-scale battles at the border. Not only do you have to settle the refugees, but you also have to lead troops to war."

Her Third Cousin had inquired about a lot of information, including the border war.

"You've lost a lot of weight too." Yu Youyao looked up at him.

The once graceful and noble young man also seemed to have grown a lot taller. His body was cold, and he had an additional heroic and majestic aura. It was as if his temples had been cut by knives, and his face highlighted the sharp edges of a knife. His long and narrow eyes were deep, but they were turbulent.

He had also changed a lot.

Even standing in front of her, he felt majestic.

He was the god who supported the entire North.

It made her fall in love and admire him.

"Yu Youyao." Yin Huaixi gently lifted her chin, his eyes reflecting her pale, thin, and haggard face. "You saved my life."

He had heard that there was a secret religion in the Western Region. The King of the Brahmin Sect, "Vina Nightja", was cruel by nature and had a demonic temperament. Shakyamuni had sent Guanyin to enlighten him.

Guanyin could not subdue Nightja no matter what she did.

Helpless, she transformed into Concubine Ming and consorted with Vina Nightja. In the warm arms of the Guanyin, Vina Nightja was dispelled of all evil. His heart was filled with love, and he finally converted to Buddhism and became the lord of all Vajra.

Sometimes, Yin Huaixi also suspected that Yu Youyao had all kinds of abnormalities and even mysterious things like the spiritual dewdrop. Was she a living Bodhisattva sent by the heavens to save and reform him?

Yu Youyao's eyes widened as she saw Yin Huaixi approaching her. His red lips hung below her nose.

"According to the rules of Youzhou, you saved my life. From now on, my life belongs to you." Yin Huaixi lowered his head and his thin lips met her flower-like lips. The delicate and soft patterns on her lips were like stamens, and there was a faint fragrance that tugged at his heartstrings.

Yin Huaixi suddenly closed his eyes.

"Don't, uh." Yu Youyao's eyes widened. Yin Huaixi pressed hard against her lips, blocking her unfinished words.

The unbelievable softness suddenly made Yin Huaixi feel a desire to ravage it. He wanted to eat the flower lips and chew them hard.

In the end!

Yin Huaixi sighed faintly and let her go. He hugged her to his chest. "How about devoting your life to me?"

Yu Youyao was stunned.

If she didn't know that Yin Huaixi had already passed the path of an elder, she might have been ignorant, hesitant, and even rejected him. However, Yin Huaixi had told her before he left Quanzhou.

It made her heart feel like vines, and distracting thoughts appeared in her mind.

When they parted, her shy face had just bloomed, and she felt the affection of a girl. She wrapped this affection in the sweet and sour green fruit, hiding it in the Shaoxing Wine that had been hidden in the cellar for more than ten years, and also in the song "The Three Variations of Yangguan."

For the past three months, she deliberately did not think about him.

However, this person did not need to be deliberately thought about. Her longing for him was already bone-deep.

When she ate, drank tea, played the zither, practiced calligraphy, or read...

Every time she thought of him, her lips would curl up slightly. Even when they parted, she did not feel bitter. She only felt calm.

Yu Youyao asked in a low voice, "Did you plan this long ago and just wait for me to walk into a trap?"

Yin Huaixi had already planned it.

When he left Quanzhou, he told them that there was an engagement between them and revealed this to her grandmother and elders. As a result, she abandoned etiquette and dogma, leaving her shy face.

When they arrived at his territory, Yin Huaixi did not even pant. In broad daylight, he could not wait to express his feelings to her.

It was as if she had already stepped into his cage from the moment she stepped into the North.

She knew that the stronger a person or beast was, the stronger they would have a strong sense of territory. Naturally, they would treat the prey that stepped into their territory as theirs.

And that was exactly what he had done.

It was straightforward and rough.

He did not hide it at all.

Yin Huaixi chuckled. "Do you remember what I said before I left Quanzhou?"

Yu Youyao's heart skipped a beat, and his words seemed to echo in her ears. "I'll wait for you!"

At that time, Yu Youyao's heart was hazy and ignorant, and she felt bitter and happy. However, she actually did not really understand the meaning of these words.

It wasn't until this moment that she suddenly understood.

Yin Huaixi had never been a passive person. When he said these words, he had already become the person who had been chosen and accepted.

He did not say, "I'll wait for you in the North."

There were only four simple words. "I'll wait for you."

He did not set a condition and time limit for these words.

"I'll wait for you!"

Actually, there was no time limit and no conditions.

Yin Huaixi said softly, "Yu Youyao, I've been waiting for you."

For a moment, Yu Youyao had mixed feelings. "You just said that according to the rules of Youzhou, if I save your life, you'll belong to me from now on."

She had gotten rid of the words "your life".

She directly changed it to, "You belong to me from now on."

It was straightforward and passionate.

It was bold and reserved.

Yin Huaixi immediately held his breath and felt his heart stop beating. "Yes."

Yu Youyao's face burned. She lowered her head and stared at the tips of her shoes. "Since this is the rule of Youzhou, now that I'm in Youzhou, shouldn't I follow the customs?"

Yin Huaixi chuckled. "Of course. In 'Zhuangzi: The Tree on the Mountain', it's recorded that one has to follow the customs and orders."

It was as if quoting from the classics was more convincing.

Yu Youyao pursed her lips slightly, and there was a small smile in her eyes that was as bright as the stars. "You know that I have to observe mourning for my Grandmother for three years, so..."

Yin Huaixi hurriedly interrupted her, as if she was about to back out in the next second. "I know. I promised the Old Master that our marriage would be discussed in three years."

He even mentioned her maternal grandfather. Was he afraid that she would go back on her word?

Yu Youyao chuckled inwardly and deliberately frowned. "So, our marriage hasn't been agreed, and the token is just a verbal agreement?"

Chapter 789: Quite Silly!

Yin Huaixi had never mentioned this before.

He only combined the two jade pendants into a round pendant and told her that they were a pair.

She naturally thought that this pair of jade pendants was their engagement token. Her attitude towards him had changed when they parted.

However, on careful thought, Yin Huaixi had never mentioned anything about a marriage.

He was clearly deliberately misleading her.

Yin Huaixi's eyelids twitched. "I was the one who asked for the agreement. They allowed me a chance, a promise that I have to fulfill even if I have to risk my life."

Actually, Yu Youyao was just saying it casually.

Yin Huaixi's actions were not considered deception, nor could they rise to the level of scheming. He had only used the token given by his elders to test her intentions.

However, after a normal person found out that they were engaged, they should have asked their elders and everything would be clear.

But she did not do so.

Yu Youyao was not a fool. The marriage was indeed arranged. It was impossible for her not to know anything. Before her grandmother passed away, she had a chance to explain it to Yu Youyao, but her grandmother did not.

In her grandmother's opinion, this token was a talisman for her.

With this agreement, King Yue Fei would protect her.

After coming to the Xie Residence, her maternal grandfather had never mentioned anything about a marriage.

The Xie family's attitude coincided with her grandmother's.

"Yin Huaixi..." Yu Youyao called him.

“Yes?”

“Silly!” She was just playing dumb for once.

She had been used to playing dumb since she was young. She had lied to her grandmother, Yin Huaixi, Yu Jianjia, and even everyone in the Yu Residence.

Even Yang Shuwan, who treated her as a thorn in her side and wished she could get rid of her quickly, felt that she, the eldest daughter of the first wife, was extremely mischievous and stupid. It was more useful to keep her around to make Yu Jianjia look understanding, pure, and kind than to take a risk and get rid of her directly.

Yu Youyao smiled. “I’m pretending to be stupid, but you’re really stupid.”

Yin Huaixi’s gaze darkened.

“I’ve learned women’s teachings since I was seven years old.” Yu Youyao lowered her head and stroked the pouch at her waist. In the pouch was the token she had always carried. “I know what women should and shouldn’t do, but I turned a blind eye to them. I ignored them because you dote on me and protected me.”

Yin Huaixi had always felt that his father was a little stupid. He had always believed that his intelligence was inherited from him. However, now that Yu Youyao said that he was a fool, he was actually willing to endure it. He even felt that it was good to be a fool.

At the very least, he had his wife.

Although they hadn’t fully warmed up yet, at least they had started, right?

After a while, Yu Youyao did not hear any commotion. She looked up in confusion and saw Yin Huaixi standing stiffly on the spot, as if he had become a statue that could not move.

In order to ensure that the cotton armor was light, flexible, and convenient for combat, the cotton armor was made of a layer of golden silk and a layer of red silk.

The silk was extremely elastic and tough. It was resistant to moisture and brittleness, and it was even better at keeping one warm. Hundreds and thousands of strands of silk were woven into silk thread that was used to weave armor. It had a certain resistance to swords.

Therefore, silk was a must for making military armor.

As a result, the military armor made of golden thread and silk looked heroic. When worn, it would not look stiff or heavy.

When ordinary people wore smart and divine cotton armor, their auras also had to increase.

Yin Huaixi was wearing cotton armor, making him look cold and tall. However, Yu Youyao saw him standing there stiffly, making him look stiff and clumsy.

It was quite silly!

Yin Huaixi was a little stunned. His mind was filled with thoughts of how his father had gone to a banquet back then. Before he reached home, that family had sent a beautiful dancer over.

When his father returned home, his pupils trembled.

He immediately sent the dancer away, apologized humbly, and took the initiative to kneel on the washboard. He finally obtained his wife's initial forgiveness.

She asked the nanny in front of her to come over and pass on a message. "On account of Your Highness's sincere apology, the Princess Consort asked you not to kneel on the washboard."

But!

His father was panicking!

He knelt on the washboard and refused to get up. He looked like he would not swear until he knelt on the washboard to the point of breaking it!

At that time, Yin Huaixi was sitting on an old elm tree in the courtyard, munching on melon seeds and watching a show. "The actors on the stage don't act as much as you do."

His father looked smug. "What do you know? Your mother forgives me now because she's gentle and kind and not good at making things difficult for others. If I get up now before she gets over this, she'll definitely be unhappy. In the future, if there's a conflict between us, we'll definitely settle old scores."

It would hurt their relationship to dig up old scores.

Yin Huaixi scoffed.

His father was already kneeling on the washboard with deep understanding. "Just you wait. In less than fifteen minutes, your mother will definitely come over personally."

Indeed!

His mother was touched by his father's "sincere apology" attitude, so she couldn't sit still anymore and quickly came over personally to persuade him.

His father said righteously, "Madam, you forgave me because you're magnanimous and understanding. You don't hold it against me. Madam, you've abandoned the glory and wealth in the capital and distanced yourself from your family. You've accompanied me all the way to the border to suffer. You're loyal to me and have sacrificed a lot. Due to a moment of carelessness, I allowed others to take advantage of the situation and cause trouble for you. This is my fault. Madam, let me continue to kneel. This way, I can learn from you."

It would have been better if he hadn't mentioned this. At the mention of her family, she was indeed still angry. Seeing that he refused to get up, she said, "Then continue kneeling!"

Yin Huaixi mocked his father. "You're overdoing it. Haha, continue kneeling!"

However, his father was not anxious and looked confident. "What do you know? The fact that your mother is willing to come over personally means that her heart aches for me and she has already forgiven me in her heart. However, she hasn't vented her anger. If I get up now, your mother might

still be angry in her heart. In the future, she might be angry at the thought of this and even be unreasonable.”

It was harmful to the body to be angry.

Yin Huaixi sneered. “Is my mother an unreasonable person?!”

His father glanced at him. “Don’t doubt me. If you really want to live a good life with her, you can’t avoid the main point and live with it. I’ve gotten over it, but your mother hasn’t. I have to face my mistakes head-on and reflect deeply on them. I have to swear to the heavens to show my loyalty.”

Yin Huaixi mocked him soulfully. “Continue kneeling!

His father was so angry that he wanted to take off his shoes and slap him. Then, he realized that he was still kneeling, so he could only kneel obediently. “You, I say, kid, why aren’t you convinced? Your mother is such a smart person. How can she really think that I’m disloyal to her just because someone sent a woman over? A truly smart woman never needs an explanation. An explanation is equivalent to contempt for her intelligence. Her heart is as clear as a mirror. What is needed is an attitude!”

Chapter 790: Good Thoughts

His father looked like he was afraid that Yin Huaixi wouldn’t be able to find a wife in the future. He instructed Yin Huaixi earnestly, “Do you know what an attitude is? Be upright and serious. Don’t escape, don’t be vague, don’t dodge, and express your concern for her. Do you understand?!”

Yin Huaixi munched on his melon seeds and ignored him.

His father looked up. “Young brat, how dare you mock your father? The tables have turned. It might be your turn one day. Just wait and see. At most, your mother will come over and pull me up in half an hour.”

In less than half an hour, his mother had personally come over and pulled his father up.

So, was Yu Youyao angry or not?

Was it too late for him to buy a washboard to kneel on?

Yin Huaixi took a step forward and hugged Yu Youyao, who was in front of his chest. “We used to call each other cousins, but I know that we’re not cousins. I can never treat you as my cousin, nor are we satisfied with our relationship as cousins. Since I’m overstepping etiquette, I don’t plan to let go.”

His every word and sentence was honest. Through the thick cotton armor, Yu Youyao could hear his heart beating. “Okay! When my mourning period is over, you’ll discuss marriage with my Grandfather.”

... .

Due to etiquette, Yin Huaixi suppressed the excitement in his heart and went to visit his elders with Yu Youyao.

Ever since the Xie Residence had retreated from Quanzhou, Yin Huaixi’s feelings for Yu Youyao were no longer a secret. The last time he was in Quanzhou, he had used Zhou Linghuai’s identity to

visit. Furthermore, it was on the Xie Residence's territory, so the Xie Residence could still hold it in.

Things were different now.

When the Xie Residence found out that Yin Huaixi had boarded the ship, how could they dare to be negligent?

Seeing Yin Huaixi come over, Old Master Xie brought his family over to greet him.

"Old Master, you flatter me." Yin Huaixi did not dare to accept such a great greeting. He hurriedly went forward to support Old Master Xie and prevent him from kneeling. "The situation in Liancheng was better after the disaster, so a large number of refugees surged in. The Yue Fei's Residence has set up a camp, but many refugees are still gathering to cause trouble. Many bandits have gathered in the Anshan area and are robbing the merchants. These people have gone up the mountain to be bandits and down the mountain to become citizens. Until now, they've been running wild in the Anshan area."

The government was busy settling the refugees down to prevent them from causing trouble, so they were also too busy to be suppressing the bandits.

The bandits used their status as refugees to cover up, and even the government was helpless.

King Yue Fei was a vassal lord who was mainly in charge of external defense. Without the decree of the Imperial Court, he could not send troops to the interior. Otherwise, he would be guilty of a conspiracy.

These bandits had most likely also planted spies at the dock to coordinate their actions from the inside and out. The Xie family had brought a lot of supplies on this trip. It seemed that they had already caught the eye of the bandits as soon as they entered the pier.

Yin Huaixi changed the topic. "Previously, when the Xie family evacuated Quanzhou, I received news from the North and used the excuse of patrolling the borders and inspecting the disaster to patrol all over the North. I also deduced that you would arrive in Liancheng soon, so I moved to Liancheng to pick you up and escort you to Xiangping City."

When Old Master Xie heard this, he understood that these words were meant to seek favor.

King Yue Fei was guarding the Liaodong area and couldn't leave the base easily. It was appropriate to use the name of patrolling and inspecting. However, this way, it was inevitable that he would travel a long way.

He had put in a lot of effort.

Old Master Xie could not bear to blame Yin Huaixi and bowed. "The Xie Residence was able to successfully evacuate Quanzhou because of Your Highness's care. I thank Your Highness for your kindness. The Xie Residence owes you a favor. In the future, if there's anything we need, the Xie Residence is willing to work for you."

The others from the Xie Residence also bowed with Old Master Xie.

Even Yu Youyao was no exception.

Yin Huaixi looked helpless. “Old Master, you’re too polite. I...”

Old Master Xie knew what he was about to say and interrupted him. “The Xie family distinguishes between gratitude and grudges. Your Highness has done the Xie family a favor. No matter what the reason is, the Xie family will naturally repay your kindness.”

The Xie Residence also separated the relationship between Yao Yao and him from this matter.

He only talked about kindness and not friendship with him, and he did not implicate Yao Yao. No matter what benefits there were between the Xie family and him, it was between the Xie family and him and had nothing to do with Yao Yao.

It could be said that he had put in a lot of effort.

At the thought of this, Yin Huaixi could only say, “We’ll discuss this later. I’ve arranged a courtyard at the Liancheng courier station. Why don’t we move over first to rest?”

He had made arrangements in advance for the checkpoint from Quanzhou to Liancheng. After leaving Fujian, it was fine to occasionally go ashore to rest for a day or two.

However, the Xie Residence was too cautious. Along the way, other than resupplying at the dock and asking for information, they had never come ashore. They arrived two to three days earlier than he had calculated.

Fortunately, he had set off in advance and arrived at Liancheng to receive the Xie family’s merchant ship. He rushed over in two days.

The courier station was a place for the Imperial Court to pass on military intelligence, settle court matters, and for officials to eat, sleep, and change horses on the way.

Emperor Gaozu placed great importance on courier stations. He had set up courier stations in all the major prefectures and counties in the country. They were divided into three stations, namely land, water, and land stations. They were directly under the authority of the Ministry of War.

News from all over the world could be sent to the capital in four to five days at the earliest through the courier stations, even in the far southeast. Such a speed was unprecedented in all the dynasties.

The courier station was heavily guarded and was much safer than the inn. Old Master Xie naturally couldn’t ask for more. “Thank you, King Yue Fei.”

Yin Huaixi was using the excuse of an inspection to stay in Liancheng for a few days. The Xie family had bought many businesses in Liancheng and had just come to the North, so they wanted to gather more information.

It could be said that they had hit it off.

After sitting on the boat for too long, Yu Youyao rested for three to four days before coming back to her senses. She asked Yin Shi and Chun Xiao to accompany her to Liancheng for a while.

The shops were mostly selling fruits, seafood, medicinal herbs, silk, and some other local goods. The goods in the shops were not the most popular. From this, it could be seen that the trade in Liancheng was not prosperous.

Chun Xiao was a little curious. “Young Miss, the climate in Liancheng and Quanzhou is similar, so it must be rich in resources. Why are there so few merchants coming and going?”

Yu Youyao said, “Liancheng is located in the extreme north and is the gateway to the three lands of the capital. It’s adjacent to Goguryeo, Fusang, and other countries. It’s close to the outer sea and it’s very dangerous to travel by water. Very few merchants can take the risk. The three northeastern provinces are filled with mountains, and it’s very dangerous to travel by land.”

Liancheng’s resources were not irreplaceable, so no one would take the risk.

“Moreover, Liao Province is an important military area. The coastal docks are strictly investigated. The Imperial Court buys the military supplies from the local area first. The local supplies have to satisfy the needs of the military first before they can be used for trade. Therefore, the Imperial Court controls the local trade very strictly.”

It also caused most of the resources to be in the hands of the local large clans and nobles. The economy had solidified to a certain extent, even forming a situation where the people bullied the officials.

It was the Imperial Court who bought the military supplies, not the You army. The ones who benefited the local nobles were also the people in charge of the Imperial Court, not the You army.

Therefore, the local nobles only needed to satisfy the appetite of some people in the court and look at their expressions.