

ALL HAIL COUSIN BROTHER

Chapter 1

Nightmare

It was after the first day of the new year, and the courtyard was covered with a thick layer of snow.

At the An Shou Hall, in the north courtyard of the Yu Residence of Jingzhao.

It was warm and cozy, with the fireplace burning in the house. Old Madam Yu, who was in her fifties, was wearing a yellow lined jacket, and resting against a large pillow with her eyes closed. There was a string of rosewood seven-treasure prayer beads around her wrist as she was a devoted Buddhist.

Seeing that the food on the ebony table was still untouched, Nanny Liu consoled, "Old Madam, this congee porridge is light and easy to digest. You should have a few mouthfuls at least."

Old Madam Yu let out a cry. "Oh! At the thought that my Yao Yao is still suffering in the Temple Hall, how could I possibly still eat?"

Nanny Liu did not know how to persuade her further.

Old Madam Yu doted on the Eldest Miss most. Usually, she could eat an additional half a bowl of rice whenever she saw her. Now, it had only been an hour since Eldest Miss had been punished to stay in the Temple Hall, but Old Madam Yu was already feeling completely enfeebled.

At the mention of her granddaughter, Old Madam Yu let out a string of lamentations. "Sigh, Yao Yao lost her mother when she was young, while her father favored her sickly step sibling. Seeing this as her grandmother, I indulged her a little more at times. Tell me, am I wrong for that?"

Nanny Liu used the massage stick to massage the Old Madam's legs. "No, that sounds too harsh. Eldest Miss is nine years old; she's still a child. It's common for sisters to squabble. Perhaps she pushed Third Miss by accident, I'm sure it wasn't intentional. You've already reprimanded and punished her, and Third Miss is fine too. First Madam couldn't possibly bear a grudge with her stepdaughter. Besides, Eldest Miss is still young. There's still time to teach her in the future."

Of course she understood how Old Madam was feeling.

Even before Eldest Miss turned a month old, her biological mother had passed on and her stepmother had married into the family soon after. Old Madam's heart ached for her eldest granddaughter, so she kept Eldest Miss close by her side as she loved and took care of her like she was the apple of her eye.

If it weren't for the fact that Eldest Miss had accidentally pushed Third Miss to the ground, startling the already frail girl and causing her to have a high fever for two consecutive days—almost costing her life—Old Madam would not have been willing to punish Eldest Miss to kneel in the Temple Hall.

"Only you understand me." Old Madam Yu's spirits improved slightly and her appetite returned a little as well. Nanny Liu helped her to her feet and she walked to sit down at the table.

Nanny Liu heaved a sigh of relief. It seemed like after Old Madam finished her meal, she would finally be tasked to go to the Temple Hall to fetch Eldest Miss.

Old Madam Yu had just finished a small bowl of porridge when hurried footsteps approached from outside the door. "Old Madam, Eldest Miss has fainted in the Temple Hall."

Upon hearing this, she felt a wave of dizziness. Immediately, she stood up from the stool. “My Yao Yao, quick, quickly, help me there to take a look at Yao Yao...”

An Shou Hall fell into chaos.

The entire Yu Residence also fell into a chaotic frenzy.

Old Madam Yu sat in front of the bed, staring at her granddaughter’s tiny little figure in bed. Her chubby little face was now as pale as a sheet of paper, and her mouth kept mumbling incoherently, “No, it hurts. Yao Yao is in so much pain. I’m scared, Grandmother. Grandmother, save Yao Yao...”

The Eldest Miss of the Yu family, Yu Youyao, had already been unconscious for an entire day. She even had a high fever at night, where her body alternated between feeling cold one moment, and hot the next.

Doctors were called over one after another, but all of them said that she’d had a fright and was possessed.

They prescribed calming soup and fever medicine, which were sent into the room bowl after bowl, then one by one poured into Yu Youyao’s little mouth while pinching her nose. But nothing worked.

The little girl curled up on the bed and curved herself into a ball. Her hands were on her chest and clutching tightly onto her shirt. At times, she would cry out that she felt cold, while at other times, she would cry out that she was in pain. No one knew what was hurting her, and Old Lady Yu’s heart ached terribly.

Old Madam Yu twirled her prayer beads in one hand and wiped her tears with a handkerchief in the other. “My poor, unfortunate Yao Yao, who lost her mother at a young age, and has a weak, elderly grandmother like me, who has caused my darling granddaughter to suffer so much. If Yao Yao doesn’t make it, I’ll just go with her too.”

Everyone in the room stiffened. The Old Madam's words clearly meant something else; she was scolding someone else. In reality, she was completely biased towards the apple of her eye.

To her, only Yu Youyao was her real granddaughter, and any others were insignificant.

However, despite having these thoughts, no one dared to say anything. Instead, they rushed to say words of consolation.

"Mother, what are you saying? Yao Yao is blessed by the heavens. She'll be fine after a while."

"Grandmother, you're not young anymore. You have to be mindful of your health."

"Old Madam, Eldest Miss is still unwell. Don't say such inauspicious things."

"..."

In a subconscious state, Yu Youyao could hear a cacophony of voices in the room, but she was still trapped in a terrifying nightmare.

In her dream, an already grown version of herself was lying on a cold, hard bed. She shivered from the cold as she pulled the shabby, moldy blanket tightly around herself.

Her throat felt a little itchy, but as she opened her mouth and coughed, a mouthful of cold air rushed in.

"Cough, cough, cough—" A burst of sharp coughs caused an ache in her chest. She clasped over her mouth tightly, as dark red blood seeped out from between her fingers.

"Chun Xiao... Cough..." Yu Youyao called out for her personal maidservant.

With a creaking sound, someone pushed open the door.

Yu Youyao looked up as she thought that Chun Xiao had returned. However, it was a young man wearing a sapphire garment and a crane-patterned overcoat standing at the door, looking at her apathetically.

He was tall and slender, with a handsome face. Even the shabby courtyard could not shadow his elegance.

Marquis of Zhen, Song Mingzhao—

Her husband!

He walked to her bed and looked down at her, his eyes showing nothing but indifference. “Yu Youyao.”

Yu Youyao suppressed the cough in her throat, then opened her mouth, wanting to hurl abuse. However, when she saw the man’s apathetic expression, she came to a sudden realization—

Cursing at him would only be futile.

Song Mingzhao gently tucked Yu Youyao in. “Jia Jia has been in a coma for five days and has yet to wake up. The blood from your heart no longer works for her.”

Upon hearing this news, Yu Youyao was stunned for a moment, then she started laughing. Her laughter was heart-wrenching, and tears flowed down her face. A shrill and piercing quality strained through her hoarse, gravelly voice.

“Hahaha... Cough, cough...” She laughed and coughed at the same time, as if she had gone mad.” Yu Jianjia is finally going to die. Hahaha, she deserves to die anyway...”

When she was fourteen, her grandmother—who loved and doted on her the most—had passed away due to illness.

At the time, Song Mingzhao was still an heir, but he was already nineteen years old. The Marquis Residence was worried that she would need to observe three years of mourning, causing a delay in producing offspring for their family, so they suggested to her father, Yu Zongzheng, that the wedding should be held within a hundred days.

A married daughter only needed to observe mourning for a year. Although this was a little hasty, the necessary formalities were still observed.

Her father agreed!

Due to the situation, it was not convenient to arrange a lavish wedding. The Marquis Residence kept everything quiet and casual, where she was brought into the Residence in a simple manner and they hastily performed their marriage ceremony.

She had become the wife of the heir to the Marquis of Zhen, inciting envy from all others.

However, as she was still too young for her coming-of-age ceremony, coupled with the fact that she was still in deep mourning, it was inappropriate for them to consummate their union, so she and Song Mingzhao slept in separate rooms.

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