

My Crown 111

Chapter 111: Disaster is Here

Mo Lian quickly entered, and his mind relaxed when he saw his mother was safe and smiling. He walked forward, lifted his robes, and knelt down. "Royal Mother."

"My son, hurry and get up." Queen Zhao stepped forward to help him up personally in a haste. "Child, look at you. You mustn't have rested well while you were busy outside. Your face has thinned greatly."

Mo Lian glanced at his mother, exasperated, and helped her sit down. "Royal Mother, did anything happen in the palace these past two days?"

"Everything is fine with Her Majesty. Don't worry, Your Highness the Crown Prince." Queen Zhao's personal elderly female attendant handed her a cup of tea with a smile before retreating a few steps and standing behind the queen.

"Yes yes. Everything here is fine with Mother." Queen Zhao continued with a smile, "Child, you returned covered in dust, you must be very tired. You should return to the Eastern Palace and rest first. The two of us can talk tomorrow, it's not urgent. Look at you, there are dark circles under your eyes. You must have traveled day and night, right?"

Mother and son were conversing when a sharp scream and a rush of footsteps were heard from outside the palace. A junior eunuch scrambled inside and started furiously kowtowing as soon as he saw them. He shouted with tears streaking down his face, "Help, Your Majesty! Help, Your Majesty!"

Queen Zhao's dignified and elegant face immediately darkened, and she reprimanded, full of displeasure, "Who are you? You dare to trespass into the Central Palace."

Without needing an order from the queen, the notified royal patrol guards had already burst inside with sabers drawn and spears raised, surrounding the junior eunuch who intruded into Queen Zhao's bedchamber without permission. The unfortunate soul was sent shivering into fear.

"Spare me, Your Majesty. Spare me, Your Majesty." The junior eunuch kowtowed loudly.

"Your Majesty, this is Xiao'en'zi who serves Noble Consort Zheng," the elderly maid whispered to her mistress, Queen Zhao.

Hearing this, Queen Zhao turned even more displeased. She was having a perfectly fine conversation with her son, but a rabid dog from somewhere started barking nonstop upon entering. It really spoiled people's appetite!

"Xiao'en'zi, why did you run here and make a commotion instead of serving your mistress in Sophora Flower Palace?"

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty!" Xiao'en'zi kowtowed furiously like a bobblehead while weeping bitterly, "Something odd suddenly happened to a junior royal maid. She is immensely strong and started choking people at first sight. She has already choked three royal maids and eunuchs to death in succession, and the people who were killed all quickly turned strange just like her and started bringing mayhem to the

other people in Sophora Flower Palace. The royal guards who were passing by are about to lose control over them! I, the inferior one, escaped at the risk of my life to seek help from Your Majesty!”

Shock entered Mo Lian’s heart. With raised brows, he straightforwardly asked, “That junior royal maid was mutated from a corpse, right?”

It could not be any more ordinary for a few junior eunuchs and junior royal maids to die in the royal palace every day.

This especially applied to that particular consort in Sophora Flower Palace. Relying on the doting affection of Royal Father, she typically strutted around ostentatiously. It was extremely common for her to order the beating and killing of the royal maids or eunuchs around her for the slightest misdeeds.

Xiao’en’zi was shocked and buried his head to his chest without speaking.

Queen Zhao’s gaze turned severe, and she slapped the sandalwood low table as she harshly demanded, “Did you not hear Crown Prince’s question?”

Xiao’en’zi was easily scared and confessed everything in a few words. The abnormal junior royal maid was the dress and make-up maid who was flogged to death on the order of Noble Consort Zheng this morning. They originally intended to drag her out at noon and bury her at a random place before this unforeseen event occurred unexpectedly.

“Huifeng,” the crown prince quietly called.

A youth in black with sword brows and bright eyes immediately appeared next to the crown prince and bowed. “Your Highness.”

“Quickly bring 20 Dragon Saliva Guards to Sophora Flower Palace to handle it. You mustn’t allow this situation to spread,” the crown prince coldly ordered.

An ill omen lingered in his heart. He feared this unforeseen event... would eventually spread.

Chapter 112: This Was Merely the Beginning

The situation was more serious than Mo Lian expected, so he did not plan to hide it from his mother and explained the events that happened on his journey back to his mother.

Hearing the peril that the crown prince experienced on his return to the capital, Queen Zhao’s face turned pale from fright. She grasped onto the crown prince’s hand and asked, “Were you harmed?”

“Mother, don’t worry. Your son is unharmed,” Crown Prince Mo comforted. “As for the root cause of this matter, your son has already ordered Yu Xiu to investigate it. However, currently, from the looks of it, it should be related to the mutation of corpses. Therefore, a thorough search will need to be led inside the city for the next few days with the focus being families who held a burial recently.”

Queen Zhao nodded furiously.

“Royal Mother, I’m afraid Guanlan City will be chaotic for a while. You and Twelfth Brother should stay inside the palace for now and not go out.”

“Mother understands.” Queen Zhao gently said with a frown, “It’s you who should be more cautious since you frequently leave the palace.”

Mo Lian nodded and spoke with his mother for a little longer before hastily bidding farewell and heading for the royal study.

He should naturally report this situation to the king so as to avoid criticism later.

As Mo Lian slowly walked on the quiet and secluded path powdered with osmanthus flowers, Mo Lian could sense that this calamity of mutated corpses was merely... the beginning.

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The rain stopped, but the ground remained wet.

Clack clack clack. A horse and carriage were the only presence on this empty street.

There was not a single person on the boisterous main street of Anshan Town. The stalls of street vendors that were placed on both sides of the street were also missing.

The doors of grain shops and steamed bun shops were knocked down long ago and the inside was ransacked thoroughly, as though a tornado had visited.

Qiao Zhongxing lightly sighed and pulled on the horse’s reins to stop the carriage. He turned to look inside the cabin, “Qiaoqiao, we have arrived at Anshan Town.”

Qiao Mu was still muddled from sleep. Upon hearing Second Uncle’s call, she opened her fatigued eyes.

She did not close her eyes until the latter part of the night yesterday, so she had not slept for more than four hours.

The little foodie also woke up, but she was well-rested and energetically called “Sister” when she opened her eyes.

Qiao Mu had no words for her and placed the child into their mother’s arms before putting on her outer robes. She opened the cabin curtain and nimbly jumped down.

“Second Uncle, let’s rest here for a bit.” Second Uncle had driven a whole night, she had to let him rest.

“Miss.”

Qiao Mu turned around and saw Shaoyao jogging over with a small sac in her arms. “Here’s some mantou and water. Have some.”

“Okay.” Qiao Mu nodded. She looked behind Shaoyao but did not see Ao’ye’s figure. He must have hidden himself in some corner.

“Second Uncle, eat a mantou.”

The timing was perfect. Qiao Zhongxing just happened to be starving beyond belief and hastily took two white mantou and a sack of water.

After giving some food to the impatiently watching Qiao Zhongbang, Shaoyao went into the cabin to distribute the rest of the food. However, the pleasant meal was quickly disrupted by a jarring voice.

“You want me to eat this???” A voice an octave higher than normal was heard from inside the carriage.

The anger that Miss High and Mighty, Qiao Wenjuan, had repressed the entire journey erupted for good at this moment!

Slap! She stretched out and knocked the mantou out of Elderly Lady Qiao’s hand and also splattered the water from the water sack onto the old woman’s hands.

“Mother! How could I eat such coarse and lowly food? I might get a stomachache after eating it!” Qiao Wenjuan completely disregarded the stab of pain in her mother’s heart and ignored her mother’s longing stare at the white mantou that rolled onto the ground.

“It won’t, it won’t! This is kneaded and made by Shaoyao last night. It’s very clean and won’t cause an upset stomach!”

Chapter 113: Retard

“It won’t just because you say so? I can tell that crude food like this will taste awful just by its look!” Qiao Wenjuan sneered with a face of distaste.

Qiao Zhongxing, who was inhaling his mantous with large bites, slightly choked and looked down at the remaining half of the mantou in his hand. “It won’t. It tastes quite good too, the feel is fine and smooth. Quite good.”

“Second Brother, you! Couldn’t you be a bit more ambitious!” Qiao Wenjuan rolled her eyes at the foolish Qiao Zhongxing before reaching out to help her shaky mother up. “Mother, don’t eat such crude food. Let’s get off. I remember there’s a restaurant in Anshan Town whose dishes taste quite good. Let’s go and eat there.”

Qiao Zhongbang could not resist inputting, “Sister, we still have to hurry on later! Let’s just make do and take a few bites for now. After we reach Xijiu City, we can...”

“How could that do! Mother, let’s head over there. I remember the restaurant is just around the corner.”

Qiao Mu watched her “naive” aunt with disbelief on her face. She had originally thought this woman was merely a bit dumb, but it turned out she was not dumb, she was a retard!

She had to ask, the entire Anshan Town had scattered like birds and beasts, so where was she going to find a master chef to cook for her mother and her...?

Qiao Mu held her hand up to stop Shaoyao from speaking up. "Let her. Shaoyao, stay inside the carriage and help me look after Mother and Younger Sis. As for those two women, ignore them."

"Yes, Miss." Shaoyao bobbed her head up and down.

Qiao Mu turned to speak to her uncle, "Second Uncle, rest here for a bit. I am going to go across the street to take a look."

Qiao Zhongxing nodded with a grin.

When Qiao Mu walked past Qiao Zhongbang, she heard her father quietly say, "Qiaoqiao, be careful and return quickly."

"Hn," Qiao Mu dryly made a sound in response before running across the street.

Qiao Zhongbang, however, was startled for a while before suddenly exclaiming in excitement, "Zhongxing, did you hear Qiaoqiao's 'Hn' just now! She responded to me!"

During this period of time, Qiaoqiao had coldly treated him like a transparent person and did not look at him directly, let alone respond to him... His mood would often take a dive thinking about this.

Qiao Zhongxing glanced at him both amused and exasperated. "Brother, how could father and daughter have any overnight enmities? Don't worry, Qiaoqiao is quite sensible, and her intelligence is extraordinary. She is knowledgeable about a lot of things."

"Shaoyao, are there more mantous?" Qiao Zhongxing asked toward the carriage.

"Yes, yes, yes! I have a lot." Shaoyao stuffed another mantou toward Qiao Hu before jumping down from the carriage and running toward Qiao Zhongxing and Qiao Zhongbang.

Qiao Mu sprinted the whole way toward the entrance of the shop across the street and used the tip of her foot to wipe the sign on the ground. As expected, it was a talisman shop.

She kicked open the remaining half of the broken door that blocked her path and bent down to enter.

The inside of the store had long since been turned upside down with a few talismans scatted on the floor now and then. Qiao Mu picked them up to take a look but grew disappointed when she could not sense any talisman energy imbued in it.

A talisman was not a talisman without talisman energy. It appeared that this little shop merely hung a sheep's head while selling dog meat and sold fake talismans that deceived people.

What a waste of blank talisman papers!

Qiao Mu made a round through the shop but did not discover anything. When she turned around, her sight suddenly focused on the fallen bookshelf.

After falling down, the books of the bookshelf dropped onto the floor in disarray, but there was one book that remained firmly stuck on the shelf, unmoving.

No one would believe it if it was not a secret mechanism.

Qiao Mu walked up and kicked the book. A light whoosh came from behind her as the wall slid open to the side.

This was accompanied by the sound of a suppressed shout. A zombie abruptly leaped out from behind the wall, pouncing toward Qiao Mu.

Chapter 114: Help!

Qiao Mu stood a small distance in front of the bookshelf. When the zombie jumped out, it was merely three steps away from Qiao Mu.

“Roar!” It bared its fangs, and its whole face became contorted.

When the zombie abruptly jumped in front of her, even if Qiao Mu was talented and brave, she could not help but jump from the shock.

...Seeing this “gorgeous beauty” up close truly sent chills down a person!

Qiao Mu subconsciously summoned her ferule and slapped it like a clap of thunder, hitting the head of the pouncing zombie.

Although the zombie’s mouth had already grown fangs, its movements were still not fast enough.

With a slap of her ferule, Qiao Mu had crushed the head of the zombie.

She pursed her mouth and mumbled to herself, “They are growing fangs so quickly already.”

Fangs were the mark of a level two zombie. This zombie outbreak not only started in advance, but the speed of mutation was also astonishingly quick.

In her previous life, zombies did not advance to level two until at least seven days after the outbreak. The abnormal change this time truly caught her off guard.

Walking around the dead zombie, Qiao Mu entered the secret room behind the moving wall.

This was probably a storage room, and there were also two zombies hiding in the corner.

The two female zombies, whose original looks could not be identified, opened their bulged out eyes and charged toward her with ferocious faces one after the other.

These two zombies were evidently feeble in the face of a level four mystic cultivator.

After Qiao Mu quickly took care of them, her mood turned a bit downcast and upset.

This... was probably the owner of the talisman shop and his family, wasn’t it.

After the zombie outbreak, the shop owner likely moved his wife and daughter into the secret room to escape disaster.

However, one of the three people must have suffered a serious injury and died before long.

Then, something heartwrenching occurred.

After the dead corpse mutated and lost their mind, they killed their two closest family members with their own hands, and the originally perfect family was destroyed like this.

Qiao Mu recalled her father. Her resentment and anger had actually vanished long ago like smoke in thin air when she saw the zombie pulverize her parents' bedroom.

Any resentment could crumble to dust in the face of disaster and family.

In comparison to the tragedy of the owner of the talisman shop and his family, Qiao Mu sincerely felt like nothing was better than a family being whole and safe.

In truth, her father was intrinsically kind. When faced with death, he would push away his wife without any hesitation.

It was just that he was foolishly filial some times, but she reckoned he could not change that in his lifetime no matter what.

As Qiao Mu circled the storage room, she found 10 bags of husked rice and several hundred fake talismans without talisman energy.

She naturally threw away the fake talismans and tossed the husked rice into her paradise. When she was about to leave, her foot kicked a pitch black wooden box.

Qiao Mu stooped down to pick it up. Opening it, her eyes involuntarily brightened. There was a nondescript jade tablet the width of three fingers laying inside the wooden box, as well as about 300 blank talisman papers.

It was truly "One will search high and low only to find it when one least expects to." With these 300 blank talisman papers, she would not have to worry about drawing more storage talismans.

Qiao Mu turned and flipped the jade tablet in her hand but could not discern anything, so she simply tossed it back in its box and threw it into the paradise along with the husked rice.

After putting away the Heart of Paradise, Qiao Mu stepped out of the talisman shop.

The rain had stopped, but there were still traces of moisture in the air.

Qiao Mu turned around to look at the lamentable family and secretly stated, *"I hope your family can live happily and safely together in your next life."*

"Help! Help!!!" Qiao Wenjuan's panicked screech could be heard from around the corner.

Qiao Mu brusquely looked over and saw Qiao Wenjuan running at the forefront while Elderly Lady Qiao totteringly followed her in a scramble.

And 10-20 ferocious-looking zombies closely chasing them from behind.

Qiao Mu's eyes twitched and found it amusing. *The Qiao mother and daughter are here...*

Chapter 115: Hurry and Get Lost

"It appeared they were unable to eat their meal," Qiao Mu commented in a mocking tone as she languidly walked to her father's side with her arms crossed.

Qiao Zhongbang did not know what to say. He spun in a circle before randomly grabbing a wooden stick on the street and wanted to run up by himself to save the mother and daughter duo.

Qiao Mu rolled her eyes and sent a look to Second Uncle.

Second Uncle hastily swung his arms up to block his brother's path. "Eldest Brother, stay here. I will go save them."

Qiao Zhongbang's hand holding the stick froze, and he turned pale for a moment. Only then did he remember that he was no longer the genius young mystic cultivator from back then who was high-spirited and vigorous.

Now, he was nothing but a cripple. He would merely be seeking his own death by charging into a group of zombies.

Qiao Zhongxing had reached the third-layer body cultivation, so it was incredibly easy for him to handle these level one zombies. He could finish one off with each punch.

It did not take long for him to bring the ragged mother and daughter back to the carriage.

Currently, Elderly Lady Qiao's hands and legs were trembling from fright, and she was panting for air.

The mother and daughter's clothing, which were already wrinkled from a night of escaping, turned dirtier and more beaten, their outer robes were hanging on them like tassels after being scratched by the zombies.

Wei Ziqin climbed down from the carriage and obtained some water for Elderly Lady Qiao to drink and calm down.

On the side, Qiao Wenjuan snatched the water sack from Wei Ziqin's hands without any politeness and gulped down a few mouthfuls. The fear in her eyes could not be concealed.

"What in the world are those things? How come Anshan Town has these monsters too?" Qiao Wenjuan started shrieking again as soon as she had drunk some water and calmed her mind.

"These things are zombies; they mutated from corpses. Who told you that Anshan Town didn't have any zombies?" Qiao Zhongxing questioned, displeased. "Eldest Brother had told you to stay earlier, why did you have to drag Mother and run to find some restaurant?"

"Hey! Are you saying you all knew!" Qiao Wenjuan's face turned contorted as she pointed her finger at everyone and screeched at them at the top of her lungs, "You knew there was danger but did not tell us? And watched Mother and I foolishly go to a restaurant! If you told us earlier, why would we endanger ourselves!"

Qiao Zhongxing turned incensed. He had never been good with words, so he was rendered speechless by Qiao Wenjuan's screams.

Qiao Mu stood on the side and dryly glanced at her ballistic aunt. "It was you who wanted to go to a restaurant and eat and wouldn't listen to anyone. You rashly took Grandmother and left. When did you care about what we said?"

"Shut up!" Qiao Wenjuan was utterly discomfited. "Why is a child like you interjecting when adults are speaking! No manners at all! Is this what Eldest Sister-in-Law taught you!"

Wei Ziqin's face was livid with anger, and she grabbed Qiao Mu's hand. "Let's get on."

"Mantou. Where's the mantou from earlier? Quickly bring it out for us to eat!" After a night of trouble without eating a grain of rice, Qiao Wenjuan felt like she was about to starve to death. Hence, she snapped her head to the side and yelled at the little maidservant foolishly standing there.

Her haughty attitude and matter of course tone indicated that she did not realize at all the major trouble that her earlier idiotic actions had brought to the other people.

Qiao Mu's face instantly turned cold, and she reached out to stop the little maidservant's subconscious action of stepping forward. Her tone was chilling to the bones. "Do you think it is still a time of peace and you are still that Miss High and Mighty of the Qiao Family who lived a pampered lifestyle, completely sheltered from the world? If you want food, then you need to trade it with equal labor. From today onward, this is my, Qiao Mu's, rule!"

"If you don't want to follow it, that's fine!" Qiao Mu calmly watched Qiao Wenjuan, who had her mouth open but did not know how to respond. "You can hurry and get lost!"

Chapter 116: Selfish

"What did you say!" Qiao Wenjuan glowered, her body was trembling and her face was livid from the anger caused by the child's words.

It was a while before Qiao Wenjuan's lips shuddered and she turned to look at the embarrassed Qiao Zhongbang. "El-eldest Brother, y-your child treats me like this? I-I... I am her biological aunt!"

She donned on a pitiful look of being so wronged that she wanted to cry. It was as though she was completely different from the arrogant person earlier.

This talented at face changing, why don't you go join a troupe and perform in an opera?

Qiao Mu waved her hand at Shaoyao, and the girl immediately went up eagerly.

"Son, Mother won't live..." Elderly Lady Qiao was truly crying this time. When the group of zombies was on her tail earlier, Elderly Lady Qiao felt like she would be choked to death by those monsters if she was any slower.

Not only had she not consumed a single grain of rice since last night, but she was also shocked and scared and had endured a night of wind in a 'convertible' carriage!

Ever since she made it out of being widowed, she had never experienced such hardships, so how could she not be miserable?

The old woman cried as she slapped her legs, tears dripping down handful by handful. There was both bitterness and resentment in her, secretly resenting her own daughter as well. If they had eaten that perfectly fine mantou earlier, wouldn't everything be fine right now? Why did she have to slap that mantou onto the ground and find some restaurant...

"Mother." Seeing his mother's tired and hungry appearance, Qiao Zhongbang could not bear it and covetously glanced at the hard-faced Qiao Mu.

"Qiaoqiao, Grandmother can't starve at her old age. How about Mother helps her into the carriage and have Shaoyao give her two mantous to eat," Wei Ziqin carefully asked.

"Alright." Qiao Mu nodded and did not object.

To Qiao Mu, this was an insignificant matter, but Qiao Zhongbang and Wei Ziqin both sighed deeply like a weight had been lifted off of them.

Seeing this, Qiao Mu's eyes glinted, and warmth encased her heart. She knew that her parents really cared about her wishes.

Her parents were both very kind and filial people. It was absolutely impossible for them to abandon their mother and escape by themselves.

As long as Elderly Lady Qiao did not seek trouble from her, Qiao Mu was not unwilling to feed an extra mouth. She also did not want her parents to be stuck between their daughter and mother for such a minor matter.

Although Qiao Mu still did not have any good feelings toward Elderly Lady Qiao inside her heart, she was willing to try to accept this harsh and merciless elderly woman for her parents.

"Good child." Wei Ziqin gently smiled and went up to support the embarrassed elderly woman who had stopped crying.

Qiao Zhongbang also smiled and said. "Alright, alright, everyone, get on. We must make haste on our journey and can't be delayed any longer."

"Right, hurry and eat and drink, and let's prepare to continue. When we leave Anshan Town, we will head for the south. I estimate we will need one day and night to reach the next town." Second Uncle jumped down from the carriage and said with a chuckle, "Alright, I fixed the carriage as best as I could. We will have to make do. Let's go!"

This time, no one had any objections, and everyone squeezed into the carriage one after another.

Qiao Wenjuan acted first to snatch the most comfortable spot against the back of the carriage, disregarding her mother.

Wei Ziqin glanced at her but did not say anything. After helping Elderly Lady Qiao sit down, she pulled her daughters over to find a spot near the door to sit down. Then, she took two mantous out of the bag that Shaoyao handed to them to give to Elderly Lady Qiao. "Mother, eat this to fill your stomach for now. At noon, we will find a place, and I will cook some hot cake soup for you."

Elderly Lady Qiao nodded and accepted the mantou with mixed feelings in her eyes.

Qiao Wenjuan hurriedly called out, "Mother, I'm also hungry. Give me one, quickly."

Elderly Lady Qiao's lips trembled, but she handed a mantou to her daughter without any objection. Qiao Wenjuan started taking large bites out of it.

Outside the carriage, Second Uncle swung the reins and shouted, leading the carriage toward the exit of the town. Qiao Zhongbang mounted his horse and followed after.

Chapter 117: Secret

The mediocre-sized carriage was packed with three adults and four children. Now and then, someone could stretch their limbs, but most of the time, everyone consciously sat curled up.

Everyone except for Qiao Wenjuan. She dominated the entire back of the carriage by herself and sat comfortably. She would also flip open the curtain of the window to look outside frequently, joyful calls coming out of her mouth. "Look! We haven't seen any of those monsters this whole journey, and the hillside is covered with lush green grass and fragrant flowers. I am certain that Xiangyang Town ¹ ahead of us is fine."

After the torment of this journey, Elderly Lady was already nodding off but was startled awake by Qiao Wenjuan's flustering scream, and shock entered her face.

No one paid attention to her in the carriage. Qiao Mu was rendered speechless by this "extremely naive" aunt of hers.

Could it be that she was not fleeing for her life and was on a field trip instead? Her ignorant and cheerful persona was truly dumbfounding.

Qiao Wenjuan put down the curtain and looked at everyone, her curving brows knitted together, and she took a big sniff. "What's that smell?"

"Auntie! Your body! Stinky!" Xiao Lin'er, who was curled up in her mother's arms, had a deep frown on her face and was furiously fanning her chubby hand. She had nicely answered Qiao Wenjuan's question.

Joy entered Qiao Mu's heart, and she maintained her composure as she looked at Qiao Wenjuan, whose face had turned into the color of a pig's liver.

After all, it was July and nearly noon, so the weather was a bit stuffy. Also, the rain shower earlier did not bring a fresh feeling to them and made people feel blistering hot afterward instead.

Moreover, the air inside the carriage was quite stagnant, and the carriage was packed with people, so they did not detect it earlier, but the smell became prominent after sitting for a while and the heat.

Qiao Wenjuan and Elderly Lady Qiao had rolled around in the wet ground previously and were also 'visited' by zombies, so the smell on them could not be any good. Xiao Lin'er's honest words were quite comical though.

Qiao Mu inwardly clapped for her sister and sent a look to Shaoyao with her eyes.

Shaoyao immediately understood her and nodded and said, "Since it's not raining now, this servant will roll up the curtain to ventilate the air."

Ventilate! The! Air! Qiao Wenjuan was gritting her teeth. Was she that stinky? Did she need these people to open the curtain to ventilate the air? She harshly tossed down the curtain in her hand before resignedly shrinking into the corner and sulking by herself, her noisy voice finally receding.

The carriage finally stopped at the bottom of the hill. Second Uncle jumped down from the carriage and shouted, "Let's rest for a bit and let the horses eat some grass before continuing."

"Second Brother, you've worked hard." Wei Ziqin got down from the carriage while holding a giant cloth sack. "Rest for a bit. I will go cook some simple noodles for everyone to eat."

"Great, I will go collect some branches and start a fire."

Qiao Hu carried the foodie and left the carriage. The children all sat down on the side and waited for food, and the little foodie's eyes were glued to her mother's every movement impatiently.

Wei Ziqin started working and pulled a pot and several bowls out of the sack.

Qiao Wenjuan followed over and looked at Wei Ziqin with suspicion. "Eldest Sister-in-Law, how did you make so many preparations in your haste to leave? You even brought pots, bowls, and cooking utensils?"

"Ah, yes, it's my habit." Wei Ziqin's hand movement paused, and she randomly made up an excuse before turning around and busying herself with the noodles.

"Wait, how come we didn't see this sack in the cabin earlier?" Qiao Wenjuan pursued.

Wei Ziqin did not answer and pushed away the figure blocking her sight. "Youngest Aunt, move to the side. Don't be burned by the hot soup."

She had cut the noodles beforehand and placed them into the storage talisman as individual bags. Now, she used the sack as a cover and took out a small bag of cut noodles from the talisman. This way, she could cook the noodles directly.

Chapter 118: Master!

Quickly, several bowls of steaming noodles were cooked. With narrowed eyes, Qiao Wenjuan watched her sister-in-law finish cooking the noodles smoothly and add spices into each bowl according to each individual's taste.

There must be something odd with this woman. Say, perhaps you have the time to pack up pots, bowls, and cooking utensils while fleeing for your life in the middle of the night, but how could you also bring condiments like oil, salt, and spices on your person! This was strange no matter how you look at it, alright!

Qiao Wenjuan sized Wei Ziqin up and down with a face of suspicion. However, there was no way that she would think that Wei Ziqin possessed storage talismans.

No one paid attention to her thousands of “Whys,” and everyone happily held their bowl of noodles and ate, even Elderly Lady Qiao had delight and gratefulness leaking from her eyes.

After a whole day of turbulence, to be able to hold a cup of hot cake soup and eat it was such a blissful thing!

Qiao Wenjuan ate her noodles without tasting it and hounded Wei Ziqin again, “Eldest Sister-in-Law, tell me. This sack was clearly not in the carriage earlier...”

“You must have seen it wrong. The sack was there all along.” Wei Ziqin glanced at Qiao Wenjuan with feigned surprise before quickly turning around and cleaning the dishes and chopsticks. She was well aware of the type of person that her youngest sister-in-law was, so she naturally would not reveal the storage talisman to her.

The storage talisman was a treasure given to her by her daughter. Every time that she thought about it, Wei Ziqin’s heart would fill with sweetness.

Qiao Wenjuan stomped her feet and unwillingly walked to her mother’s side, pulling her mother’s sleeve and swinging it. “Mother, look at Eldest Sister-in-Law, she must be hiding something from us.”

“Take a rest. Our current utmost priority is to find a safe place to rest.” Only now did Elderly Lady Qiao realize that her daughter had been excessively spoiled by her.

Qiao Wenjuan curled her lips. Seeing that her mother did not help her berate Eldest Sister-in-Law, she gave in again, but she was rather outraged inside and thought that her eldest sister-in-law must have a secret.

The group rested for a little less than an hour before deciding to get on the carriage again and hurry on due to their rush to head to Xijiu City and settle down.

Qiao Mu waited until everyone got on and was about to jump on when she heard a familiar squeak and chirp.

She initially thought that she had imagined it, but she still unbent her leg and peeked out to look behind the carriage. Suddenly, her eyes grew round and she jumped onto the carriage without another word. She pulled down the curtain before hastily urging, “Second Uncle, let’s go, quickly!”

Panic struck Second Uncle’s heart. Qiao Mu’s anxious tone seriously made Second Uncle wrongly assume that there was a large number of zombies chasing after them, so without a word or look, he flicked the reins and drove the carriage forward in a dash.

Qiao Zhongbang hurriedly followed after on his horse. “What’s wrong? Is there another batch of zombies?”

“I don’t know!” Second Uncle was focused on driving the carriage and snapped the whip. He could feel cold sweat drenching his back. “Qiaoqiao said to leave quickly, so the situation must be dismal!”

“Squeak...” Seeing the carriage speeding up, the madly running white squirrel felt like the distance between its master and it was growing further apart, so it hastily turned into a ball of white light and charged through the hill like a bolt of lightning, heading straight for the roof of the carriage.

Qiao Mu flayed down next to her mother, her hand clapping her chest. " *Sh*t, I think I just saw that poisonous squirrel from the mystic realm!*"

"Squeak!!!" A ball of white light dropped down from the roof and plopped itself right on top of Qiao Mu's face.

Qiao Mu immediately got a mouthful of white fur and her nose was also stuffed with a certain creature's fur, causing her face to be livid with anger.

Chapter 119: Scram...

"Scram!!!" Qiao Mu furiously shouted as she pulled the lousy squirrel from her face without any gentleness.

Then, she did not bother looking at the little guy's black, tearful round eyes before directly flinging a certain squirrel out of the hole in the roof.

The cabin of old and young people was completely silent as they watched Qiao Mu, stupefied.

"Such an adorable little guy! Y-you! How could you treat it like this???" Qiao Wenjuan screeched!

"Squeak!!!" The white squirrel persevered and fiercely burrowed through the wall of the cabin.

However, its chubby body was half stuck inside the cabin while the other half was immobile outside the cabin. Its furry little head was plopped on Qiao Mu's shoulder as it tearfully looked at its little master.

Qiao Mu's lips involuntarily twitched.

Seeing its dumb look as it twisted its stuck round body and tried its best to pull itself out of the hole, Qiao Mu did not know whether to laugh or be angry.

"Squeak!" The little white squirrel revealed a human-like pitiful expression, begging for help.

Qiao Mu extended a small finger and poked its chubby body.

"Squeak." Little Master did not look like she liked it! Its fragile heart sought comforting!

"I'll help you." Qiao Wenjuan forcibly squeezed her way over from the corner of the cabin and lifted her hand to hold the white squirrel with a smile.

"Squeak!" The originally adorable face suddenly turned hostile and revealed a ferocious look in its eyes. Without waiting for Qiao Wenjuan to react, it harshly bit her palm.

Qiao Wenjuan fell over with a gurgle, a gingery yellow quickly spreading over her face.

"Juan'er." Elderly Lady Qiao jumped with shock and swiftly went up to examine her daughter. She turned her head and angrily asked Qiao Mu, "What did you do to your youngest aunt?"

Qiao Mu dug the white squirrel out from the hole in the wall and expressionlessly glanced at Elderly Lady Qiao. "I bit her?"

Elderly Lady Qiao immediately choked off.

“How long will she be unconscious?” Qiao Mu could tell that the white squirrel’s bite this time was different than previously.

Back in the mystic realm, the people who it bit all lost their lives on the spot. This time, Qiao Wenjuan merely laid unmoving but her eyes could still move. However, she had a face of terror, as though she could faint at any time.

“Squeak?”

Qiao Mu extended one finger after another. When she reached the third finger, she asked, “Three two-hours?”

The white squirrel nodded successively, looking very cute.

Satisfied, Qiao Mu nodded and stated, “We can have some quiet until nighttime then.”

Being rid of Qiao Wenjuan’s babbling was quite good!

“Leave then.” Knowing that the white squirrel could understand her words, Qiao Mu placed its round body down and flicked it with her hand.

“Squeak!!!” The white squirrel hastily pounced onto Qiao Mu and rolled around crazily, waving its limbs frantically and begging for adoption.

“I can’t protect too many people,” Qiao Mu stated aloofly.

“Squeak!” The white squirrel immediately bounced up and shook its four stubby limbs, energetically showing a series of unintelligible marital moves.

It expressed that it was very strong and did not need protection. It could even protect other people.

Its dumb appearance amused Wei Ziqin and the others until they wanted to laugh.

“Sister, it’s very fun!” Qiao Lin suddenly stretched out her hand to pet it, scaring Wei Ziqin.

Qiao Mu sent a fleeting glance at the white squirrel who started emitting a ferocious light in its eyes again. “No biting.”

The white squirrel curled up its tail and pitifully stopped moving.

Qiao Lin picked up its round little body with a hand and happily shouted, “Sister, fun! Fun!”

Qiao Mu shook her head, exasperated. Suddenly thinking of something, her brows twitched.

Chapter 120: Magnetite

Elderly Lady Qiao suddenly spoke up, “Qiao Mu, why aren’t you waking your youngest aunt up already?”

“Whoever bit her will treat her.” Qiao Mu’s words rendered Elderly Lady Qiao speechless.

By now, Qiao Zhongxing also discovered that there were not any zombies chasing them. His back still drenched in cold sweat, he helplessly glanced at the child who had jumped down from the carriage.

This little scoundrel, couldn't she say things more clearly? This indolent habit of reticence needed to be cured!

"Second Uncle, wait a moment for me."

Qiao Mu walked farther away while holding the white squirrel. Then, she knelt down and poked its chubby body. "Can you enter the paradise?"

Only after seeing the white squirrel did she remember that everything alive, including herself, could not enter the paradise, but the paradise's own lake contained fish.

This meant that it did not truly reject all living things, it merely exclusively rejected foreign living things.

However, this white squirrel was an authentic entity that naturally came from the paradise. As for why it existed in the paradise from the start, it was a bit strange...

"Squeak! Chirp!"

"You are a squirrel, not a bird!" *Don't keep uttering such incongruous bird calls.*

Qiao Mu poked it again. "Can you mine the magnetite mines? Can you extract magnetite from the mines?"

The little girl did not feel any guilt when speaking these words.

It had to be said that extracting magnetite ores from the mines was a technical skill. Many engineers work together with separate designated tasks day and night nonstop before they could extract a magnetite ore, and the portion that they could extract was pitifully little, losing countless amount of magnetite in the process.

The child was actually conversing with the white squirrel, but what was weirder was that the white squirrel was responding by furiously nodding its head.

"*Master, Master, I am useful!*" That was the meaning pouring from its adorable beady eyes.

"Ao'ye."

"Little Master, don't worry, there aren't any mystic cultivators nearby," Ao'ye said as soon as he appeared.

Qiao Mu nodded and negotiated with the listless sapling before taking the Heart of Paradise with a sigh.

A white light suddenly flashed.

As expected, the white squirrel entered the half-transparent valley without any hindrance.

Qiao Mu's eyes shifted as she watched the white squirrel dash inside the magnetite mine mountains incredibly fast, its tiny white figure disappearing in the blink of an eye.

Qiao Mu originally thought that it would require some effort before it could exit. After all, it was such a gigantic mountain, she would need some time as well if she went in herself to personally mine a part of the magnetite mine.

To her surprise, Qiao Mu was about to put away the Heart of Paradise when a white figure suddenly leaped out.

The white squirrel appeared with its stubby forelimbs holding a round-shaped ore.

“Squeak chirp chirp,” the white squirrel called and then sat in Qiao Mu’s arms. It started peeling the skin of the ore with its two forelimbs.

It was really peeling its skin like peeling a banana!

Qiao Mu was not the only one dumbfounded. The watching Ao’ye was also stunned beyond words.

Since when did the skin of a magnetite ore become as soft as a banana peel? Didn’t it require the careful chiseling with tools from engineers?

Quickly, a pitch-black but transparent rock—its jade-colored core could faintly be seen—appeared in Qiao Mu’s palm.

Hm? This magnetite was so brightly black? There was also a dash of jade color floating inside of it? Having never seen this, Qiao Mu turned and flipped the magnetite in her hand.

Ao’ye had already started sputtering with excitement on the side. “I-it! It’s high-grade magnetite, Little Master!”

High-grade magnetite? Such a giant one too? It was the size of two and a half adult palms.

According to the size of magnetites normally sold in magnetite stores, this magnetite could be cut into 10 high-grade magnetites at least.

Of course, it was guaranteed that each piece would be sold at a sky-high price where the supply falls short of demand!

Even Ao’ye who was experienced and knowledgeable from being in Guanlan City was stuttering from excitement at seeing such a giant high-grade magnetite. From this, it could be seen how rare this item was.