

Venomous Empress Reborn

Chapter 11: Undercurrent (2)

Chen Ruoqiu was stunned. She looked at the old madam, who was obviously unhappy, and said reluctantly, "Although that's the case, it's really too careless of you to fall into the pond. How do the maids around her take care of her? In my opinion, it's better to replace these maids."

Shen Miao lowered her head. "Why does Third Aunt want to replace Gu Yu and the others? They were all left to me by my father and mother. Now, many people in the West Courtyard have changed. I don't know any of the second-class maids who were recruited here a few days ago. If you replace Gu Yu and the others, I won't know who to talk to in the West Courtyard."

Ren Wanyun stopped smiling.

In the west courtyard, Shen Xin and his wife were not in the capital all year round. Almost all the servants in the courtyard had been replaced. There were people from the old madam, the second branch, and the third branch. However, because Second Madam was managing the house, there were naturally more people from the second branch. If outsiders heard this, they would think that it was because the second and third branches were up to no good that the daughter of the first branch did not know a single servant in her own courtyard.

Ren Wanyun glanced at Chen Ruoqiu and then said to Shen Miao, "Your third aunt is just joking with you. Gu Yu and the other girls are just careless. Our Shen family is kind-hearted and won't do such an inhumane thing. Don't be anxious."

Shen Yuanbai looked at his mother, then at Chen Ruoqiu, and yawned. Old Madam Shen was a little impatient with the verbal battle between her second and third daughters-in-law. Seeing this, she said, "It's done. It's just some trivial matters. Second Madam, bring Yunbai over and then you all can disperse. You people are giving me a headache."

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Ren Wanyun quickly carried Shen Yuanbai to Old Madam Shen's bed and said, "Mother, then we'll leave first. Yuanbai, be a good boy when you play with grandma."

Chen Ruoqiu glanced at Shen Yuanbai, placed her hands on her stomach, and slowly walked out of Rongjing Hall. The second branch had a son, and Old Madam Shen thought highly of him. No matter how capable she was, she only had a daughter. In the Shen family, the things of the first branch would be snatched away sooner or later. If she had a son, she would at least be on par with the second branch...

As she thought, Chen Ruoqiu raised her head and her gaze landed on the few people heading towards the west courtyard.

The girl was wearing a dark red dress. She had always liked to wear bright colors, and without her parents by her side, she did not know how to dress up.

Now, the dark red color made her skin look even fairer. She still looked the same, but her aura became more powerful.

Gu Yu whispered, "Miss, you're not fully recovered yet. Why are you in a hurry to go to Guangwen Hall? Since you've already explained your condition, there's no hurry to go to school."

"No." Shen Miao interrupted her. "Prepare the carriage immediately."

For some reason, Gu Yu shivered with fright and did not dare to ask anything.

Guangwen Hall was a school in the capital.

The officials and nobles of Ming Qi sent their sons and girls to the Guangwen Hall. The men of the Guangwen Hall were all famous scholars. The young children of the nobles who could enter Guangwen Hall would be respected.

Shen Miao also studied at Guangwen Hall.

Unfortunately, Shen Xin and Mrs. Shen were both from military families, and Shen Miao's elder brother, Shen Qiu, wasn't cut out for study at all. Shen Miao had been raised by Old Madam Shen since she was young. Old Madam Shen was a singer and could not read a word. Shen Miao's first lesson was taught by Third Madam Shen, Chen Ruoqiu. Chen Ruoqiu came from a scholarly family, but what she taught Shen Miao back then was all thick and complicated textbooks. Children were playful to begin with, so after studying for some time, Shen Miao began to hate reading and writing.

Seeing that Shen Miao did not like to study, Chen Ruoqiu did not force her. She taught her how to eat, wear, and gave her a pampered life. Later, when she was old, she went to Guangwen Hall. Shen Miao could not keep up with the knowledge of the teacher's lecture no matter what. She was even worse than a first-year student. Later on, she

came last in the exam. After a while, Shen Miao disliked studying even more, and she became famous for being ignorant and stupid.

Among the three daughters of the Shen family, Shen Yue was the most famous. She was good at music, chess, calligraphy, and painting. Although Shen Qing was not as outstanding as Shen Yue, she still did a good job, especially good at embroidery. She was also the best at math. For girls who would eventually manage a house, being good at math was an outstanding quality.

The more outstanding Shen Yue and Shen Qing were, the more Shen Miao looked like she was not good at anything.

In the carriage, Jingzhe asked, "Miss, why aren't you traveling with the first and second Miss?"

Normally, Shen Miao would always ride in the same carriage as Shen Qing and Shen Yue. Shen Miao felt with her cousins around, she would feel more emboldened. As for Shen Yue and Shen Qing, they probably just wanted a stupid sister to contrast them.

But now, Shen Miao didn't want to pretend anymore.

"We're not from the same family to begin with, and our paths are completely different. How can we go together?"

Jingzhe stuck out her tongue. Not knowing why, she felt like her Miss was getting more and more incomprehensible, but she felt that this was good. Shen Miao had always been too weak-tempered and was controlled by the second and third branches. Now after falling into the water, she seemed to have picked up some intelligence. This was only right. The first branch's daughter shouldn't be inferior to everyone in terms of status.

In the other carriage, Shen Yue lifted the curtain and looked behind. She said softly, "Eldest Sister, Fifth Sister is following behind."

"She's deliberately throwing a tantrum at me." Shen Qing snorted. In front of Shen Yue, she never hid her contempt for Shen Miao. "Let her be. Anyway, I won't be the one who loses face in the end."

Shen Yue said worriedly, "But she caught a cold. Besides..."

"Shen Yue?" Shen Qing said, "Do you think I don't know what you're thinking? Stop pretending to be a good person. If you really care about her, go sit in her carriage. Why tell me?"

Shen Yue bit her lip and lowered her head, not saying anything else.

After half an hour, the carriage finally arrived at Guangwen hall.

It was still early, and the class had not started yet. Most of the second-year students had arrived and were sitting in the classroom talking. As soon as Shen Yue and Shen Qing arrived, girls immediately greeted them warmly.

In Guangwen Hall, Shen Yue was the top female student. She was beautiful, humble, and gentle, so she was naturally popular. Although Shen Qing was not as talented as Shen Yue, she was capable and outgoing. The noble ladies liked her very much.

A girl in pink said, "Yue, why isn't Shen Miao here today?" Usually, Shen Miao followed Shen Yue and Shen Qing like a maid, but today, she was missing, which was a little strange.

"I'm afraid she's too ashamed to come." The girl who said this was pretty, but her voice was a little loud. She had a mocking expression on her face. "I heard that she fell into the water while peeping at the Duke of Ding."

"Peilan, it's not like that..." Shen Yue shook her head.

"You're too protective of your sister." Yi Peilan said, "She's such a stupid girl. She doesn't look like a girl from your Shen family at all. But she's really an eye-opener. She looks timid usually, but she's very brave when she meets the Duke of Ding. People who don't know her might think that she's an uneducated girl raised by a peasant family."

Hearing that, Shen Qing smiled and said, "Fifth Sister is just being naughty."

"I think it's because General Shen and Mrs. Shen aren't around to educate her." Another girl with a ponytail said, "She doesn't know what proper etiquette is."

"Caixuan, you're wrong." Shen Yue said gently, "Although First Uncle and First Auntie are not in the capital, Fifth Sister has been raised by Grandma. My mother and Second Aunt have been teaching her well."

In other words, shamelessness was something Shen Miao was born with. It had nothing to do with the education she received.

As expected, as soon as Shen Yue said that, Yi Peilan said, "It's strange. You are all raised by the same family. Yue, Qing, you two are really different from Shen Miao. She is just useless." As she spoke, she giggled. The ladies around her all laughed. Even the young men couldn't help but look at her.

The next moment, someone shouted, "Look, Shen Miao is here!"

Everyone looked at the door, waiting to watch a good show.

A young girl slowly walked in from the door. She was wearing a dark red dress with a pair of red thread and a dark blue embroidered cloak. This color was too old for a girl, especially since Shen Miao was born with a round face. If she was not careful, she would look like a child who had stolen the clothes of her elders.

Her footsteps were very slow, and the corners of her dress did not move at all. Although her steps were light, they were extremely heavy. For some reason, she gave people a feeling that she was graceful and magnanimous. Her chin was slightly raised, and her eyes were calm. As a result, her puppy-like eyes looked like a bottomless pit. All her strength was contained in them, and she was like a ferocious beast that had taken in its claws.

Her facial features were still pleasing to the eye, and they looked cute because of their roundness. Now, there was no trace of stupidity, because she had not grown up yet. Coupled with her dignified bearing, the dress matched her quite well.

She did not look like a girl. Instead, she looked like... one of those rich ladies who were in high positions, or the madam of the powerful family.

The school gradually quietened down.

What was Shen Miao like?

If anyone asked the students of Guangwen Hall, they would probably know. She was stupid and timid, always pretending to be a virtuous girl.

There was nothing special about her appearance, and her temperament was not outstanding. The fact that she was infatuated with the Duke of Ding was known by people throughout the capital.

Therefore, if one were to ask who the most outstanding woman in Guangwen Hall was, it would naturally be Shen Yue. If one were to ask who the most vulgar woman was, it would naturally be Shen Miao.

They were both from the Shen family, but their images were completely different. Everyone was used to Shen Miao, who was like a maid beside Shen Yue. One day, when Shen Miao became someone else, everyone was not used to it.

Yi Peilan nudged Shen Yue. "Yue, is your sister crazy? Why does she look like a different person today?"

Shen Yue looked at Shen Miao, feeling a little puzzled. It seemed that ever since Shen Miao woke up, her personality had changed a lot. Could it be that she had suffered a huge blow, so her mind wasn't right? Just as she was about to speak, her good friend,

Jiang Caixuan, said, "Shen Miao, I heard that you fell into the water. Why, have you recovered from the cold?"

If it were the usual Shen Miao, she would definitely look at Shen Yue at a loss and beg her to speak up for her. However, today, she only glanced at Jiang Caixuan and said indifferently, "I'm alright, thank you for your concern."

Jiang Caixuan was stunned, and so was everyone in the school. Perhaps not expecting Shen Miao to be so indifferent, Jiang Caixuan felt that Shen Miao's attitude was extremely annoying. She immediately said, "Since you've recovered from the cold, don't you think it's wrong to come to the school instead of going to apologize to the Duke of Ding?"

Shen Miao took a deep breath. No matter if it was the boys or girls around her, they had no intention of speaking up for her. She had no friends to begin with, and watching Shen Miao make a fool of herself was probably the only fun these noble children had in the school.

She glanced at the crowd and then at the gloating look in Shen Qing's eyes. Just as Shen Miao was about to speak, she heard Shen Yue say, "Your Highness is magnanimous and won't blame Fifth Sister for such a small matter. Fifth Sister naturally came to the school because she is thirsty for knowledge."

"Thirsty for knowledge?" The young man on the other side couldn't help but laugh. He had secretly admired Shen Yue for a long time and usually looked down on Shen Miao. He felt that having a sister like Shen Miao was simply a tragedy for Shen Yue. He said, "Shen Yue, if you want to help this sister, you don't have to use such a phrase. Thirsty for knowledge... She doesn't even have the knowledge of first grade! Besides..." He sized up Shen Miao maliciously and continued, "Who knows if she fell into the water on purpose or not? Falling into the water is a typical scene in plays where women want to win pity from their Prince Charming. However, she probably didn't expect the ending to be different from what the plays show!" After saying that, he probably found it interesting and laughed loudly.

He was the leader of this group of youths. As soon as he said that, the surrounding youths laughed. The noble ladies around Shen Yue also found it funny. For a moment, the laughter surrounded Shen Miao, and the gazes that landed on her were filled with malice.

Words were the most hurtful weapon. In her previous life, such a scene had happened countless times. She was used to being looked down on, insulted, and mocked, and she was even more unwilling to take the initiative to change people's mind. In the end, Shen Yue and Shen Qing became friends with all these noble children, while she became more and more distant from this circle.

She used to think that this was the greatest misfortune, but compared to the tragedies that happened later in her previous life, these were nothing. These young men and women were about the same age as Wanyu and Fu Mingda. Were these really her enemies?

Of course not. These noble children were either rich or noble, and there was no lack of large families among them. What happened to the large families in their previous lives? They were all killed by the late emperor and Fu Xiuyi one by one. For example, the person in front of her who mocked her, Shen Yue's admirer, the eldest son of a courtier, the Cai family, Cai Lin. A few years later, because the Cai family was involved in a corruption case, they were sent to the labor camp.

These teenagers were not her enemy, and some of them were even on the same side with her.

There was no need to turn an alliance into an enemy. In her previous life, when she was the Empress, Shen Miao had learned a lot.

"Cai Lin, how can you say that about Fifth Sister?" When everyone was done laughing, Shen Yue suddenly said, "Fifth Sister is not that kind of person."

"Cai Lin," Shen Miao interrupted Shen Yue and said calmly, "Who told you that I fell into the water because I'm infatuated with the Duke of Ding?"

Saying it out loud like that should have made people laugh, but when Shen Miao said this, she was calm and her tone was very indifferent, which stunned everyone.

Cai Lin was the little tyrant here. Usually, when Shen Miao saw him, she did not dare to say anything. Moreover, there was a hint of order in her tone. For some reason, Cai Lin was scared. He continued in a much softer tone, "Isn't that so?"

"Is that so?" Shen Miao muttered to herself. Suddenly, she smiled and looked at Shen Yue and Shen Qing. "First Sister, Second Sister, it's fine if he doesn't know, but don't you know? Why don't you defend me?"

Shen Yue and Shen Qing were stunned at the same time. They suddenly remembered what their mother told them not to say anything wrong about Shen Miao falling into the water. Shen Qing was more considerate than Shen Yue and immediately said, "Yes, don't spout nonsense. At that time, I was with Fifth Sister. I saw with my own eyes that Fifth Sister accidentally slipped into the water. At that time, the Duke of Ding happened to pass by, so he saw it. It has nothing to do with love."

Although no one believed her, they were not as serious as before. Shen Miao said, "You spout nonsense without having any evidence. I think Guangwen Hall needs to teach you about morals more than knowledge. Moreover, love is a beautiful word. Why do you make it sound like a nasty word? I, Shen Miao, love someone, but I also have to love

with dignity. Your Highness, the Duke of Ding, is a noble. How can I have designs on him? You are all wrong.”

In this world, it was very difficult to change an impression at once. Moreover, everyone knew that she was infatuated with Fu Xiuyi. No one would believe that she did not love him now.

But no matter what, she had to draw a line.

Before she could finish her sentence, she heard a praising voice. “Love with dignity. Well said!”