

Venomous 131

Chapter 131: Imprisonment (6)

"What are you talking about?" Shen Miao said indifferently, "Ren Wanyun's people are guarding the west courtyard now. Not even a fly can fly out. If I escape, what will happen to the people in the courtyard? Although I'm not a benevolent person, some of them were specially left to me by my parents. Once I leave, Ren Wanyun will immediately kill everyone in the courtyard?"

Jingzhe and Gu Yu were stunned.

"Besides, do you think sending a message is that simple? There are people guarding this place all day long. They want to lock me up. Do you think they will give me a chance? Then you're looking down on my second aunt."

In Shen Miao's opinion, Ren Wanyun was nothing to be afraid of. However, in this world, an angry mother was the most terrifying. For the sake of Shen Qing's happiness, Ren Wanyun would naturally do her best to make sure her plan was carried out. On this matter, Ren Wanyun had placed a huge bet. After all, she had probably not discussed the matter with Shen Gui. It was her own idea. If it succeeded, everyone would naturally be happy. If it failed, Ren Wanyun would probably no longer have a place in the second branch.

"But Miss, are we just going to wait?" Jingzhe said anxiously, "I won't let you marry that homosexual!"

"Can you tell what's going on?" Shen Miao pointed at the chessboard on the table.

On the chessboard, the white pieces and black pieces were arranged in two rows, looking a little strange.

After a while, Gu Yu replied carefully, "I have no clue about chess."

"What did you see?" Shen Miao asked.

Jingzhe boldly replied, "White and black lining up in two rows. They're very distinct."

"That's right." A glint flashed across Shen Miao's eyes. "This chess game is about putting all the chips on the table. You know my chess piece, and I know yours. Whoever is more capable will be the winner."

Jingzhe and Gu Yu looked at each other, not understanding what Shen Miao meant.

"Ren Wanyun thought that she knew all my chess pieces, but that's not the case." She took out another black chess piece from behind and placed it beside the white chess piece. "I still have a trump card."

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"The old madam's birthday is next month, right?" she suddenly asked.

"Yes," Jingzhe replied. "I heard from Chun Tao that Second Madam wants to announce Miss's marriage at Old Madam's birthday banquet."

"They wanted to make it a done deal before my father returned to the capital." Shen Miao smiled.

“That’s right. There are still a few months until the end of the year. I’m afraid it’ll be too late when Master comes back.” Gu Yu was worried.

“Is that so?”

When Shen Xin returned to the court, it would indeed be the end of the year. Unfortunately, in the 68th year of Ming Qi, because Shen Xin defeated the enemy army in the northwest, the enemy army fled and gave him a letter of surrender in advance. The Shen family army returned to the capital a few months earlier with the letter of surrender.

Every time Old Madam Shen held her birthday, Shen Xin was not in the capital. After a while, people said that Shen Xin was unfilial. Therefore, on Old Madam Shen’s 70th birthday in the 68th year of Ming Qi, Shen Xin returned to the capital early.

That day, Shen Xin suddenly returned to the mansion. Old Madam Shen was holding a banquet at the mansion, but Shen Miao did not attend. The reason was naturally because she was hiding in Prince Ding’s mansion. Shen Xin went to Prince Ding’s mansion to look for his daughter. However, because of Fu Xiuyi’s sweet words, she turned a deaf ear to her father and even told her father she wanted to marry Fu Xiuyi.

Now that she thought about it, she felt ashamed.

In this life, she did not escape the Shen family because of Prince Yu, nor did she continue to be infatuated with Fu Xiuyi. If Shen Xin came back and saw a different daughter, would she be able to redeem herself a little?

“My father has always respected Old Madam,” Shen Miao said indifferently.

“Yes,” Jingzhe replied.

Old Madam Shen was born in the gutter and was good at putting on a show. Back then, she acted flawlessly like a kind mother. When the old general was alive, he could not find any fault with her. In the early years, he had received motherly care from Old Madam Shen, so he could not imagine how she could be a vicious woman.

“I have to thank Second Aunt this time,” Shen Miao said with a smile, her eyes shockingly bright. “I’ll expose them all.”

Chapter 132: Birthday Banquet (1)

The third day of November was a sunny day. It was rare to see such good sun in winter, and it happened to be the 70th birthday banquet of Old Madam Shen.

The General’s Mansion had been cleaned up inside and out, and a lot of money was spent to buy new things. The birthday banquet was naturally held in the east courtyard. The east courtyard was quiet and elegant, and the flowers were trimmed in an orderly manner. The maidservants were wearing refreshing and neat dresses, and their words and actions were not tacky. All of them were delicate and obedient.

Old Madam Shen sat in the main hall of the Rongjing Hall. Many madams and ladies had already come to greet her. After all, the Shen family was a first-class military family in Ming Qi. The high-ranking officials and nobles had to come forward to greet her.

Although Chen Ruoqiu was temporarily in charge of the family, in the past, Old Madam Shen's birthday was all handled by Ren Wanyun. As for dealing with these noble ladies, Ren Wanyun could do better than Chen Ruoqiu. Chen Ruoqiu was from a scholarly family, but Ren Wanyun was different.

Shen Yuanbai leaned against Old Madam Shen and ate the honey candy. From time to time, the ladies would praise him for being so smart at such a young age. Old Madam Shen smiled when she heard that.

On the other hand, when Chen Ruoqiu saw that everyone was praising Shen Yuanbai and Shen Yuan, who was taking on a post far away, she felt very uncomfortable. The thing that she hated people bring up the most was sons. Everyone knew that Chen Ruoqiu had been married to Shen Wan for many years and had no sons except for a daughter, Shen Yue. However, Shen Wan was not interested in other women. Old Madam Shen once wanted to give Shen Wan a few concubines, but they were rejected by Shen Wan. Because of this, Old Madam Shen took her anger out on Chen Ruoqiu. Compared to Chen Ruoqiu, Ren Wanyun was obviously more liked by Old Madam Shen.

"By the way, why didn't I see First Miss and Fifth Miss today?" Mrs. Yi smiled.

Ren Wanyun was in charge of receiving these madams, so Shen Yue naturally went to get close to those young ladies from noble families, bringing them to the garden to drink tea and chat. But today, Shen Miao and Shen Qing were nowhere to be seen.

When Ren Wanyun and Old Madam Shen heard this, their expressions darkened at the same time.

Shen Qing was not fully recovered yet. She kept saying that she would tear Shen Miao into pieces. Of course, these words could not be heard by outsiders. Over the past few days, Ren Wanyun had been comforting Shen Qing, in case she had thoughts of killing herself. As for how she comforted her, Chen Ruoqiu could imagine it. Ren Wanyun probably promised her daughter that she would punish Shen Miao and make her life miserable.

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As for Shen Miao, Ren Wanyun did not know how she received the news that Old Madam Shen had secretly accepted the marriage invitation from the Wei family for her. From that day onwards, she fought back like crazy, threatening to run away and ruin this marriage. When Old Madam Shen heard this, she was shocked. Ren Wanyun and Old Madam Shen thought that if anything happened to Shen Miao, their entire plan would fall flat.

Therefore, ever since Shen Miao threatened to go against the marriage, Old Madam Shen and Ren Wanyun locked Shen Miao up in the ancestral hall. The ancestral hall was in the courtyard in the southwest of the Shen family. The guards outside had increased by at least half. Old Madam Shen also found the contracts of the servants in the west courtyard, including Shen Miao's four personal maids.

Chapter 133: Birthday Banquet (1)

In other words, if Shen Miao dare to do anything, these girls would die.

Therefore, for the past few days, Shen Miao had been locked up in the Shen family's ancestral hall, copying scripture and praying every day. Ren Wanyun hoped to use this to reshape Shen Miao's personality and prevent any accidents from happening. If Shen Miao was released today, they were afraid that she would say something shocking in front of everyone. After discussing with Old Madam Shen, they decided not to let Shen Miao out today.

At the thought of Shen Miao, Ren Wanyun felt a headache coming on. She had been in the mansion for so many years, but now, she couldn't even tell what a little girl was thinking. People thought Shen Miao was stupid, but she managed to set Shen Qing up and ruined her life. Now they thought she was calm, but she refused the marriage and shouted to escape then Shen family. So they could only lock her up.

Chen Ruoqiu smiled and said, "Qing is not fully recovered yet, so she won't come out now. She'll come out at Old Madam's birthday banquet later. Miao is sick and can't come out. Or she'll catch a cold. There are so many ladies present. I'm afraid she'll spread the disease to us, so we let her stay in her room.

If Shen Miao was only sick, some people would definitely want to check in on her, but if her sickness was contagious, people would naturally give up the thought.

Jiang Xiaoxuan's mother, Mrs. Jiang, also smiled. She said tentatively, "I see. I thought it was because the two girls were busy embroidering the dowry and didn't want to see us. Wanyun, you have to take good care of the girls. Don't let their illnesses come in the way of their marriage."

The news of the marriages was spreading like wildfire in the capital. Unfortunately, the Shen family had never confirmed it, which made people feel a little strange. There were many people who wanted to test the waters. They wanted to find out who was marrying whom.

Ren Wanyun's eyes flashed. She naturally knew Madam Jiang's intentions. She smiled and said, "What are you talking about? If not for the fact that the two children are really sick, why wouldn't they come out to see the madams?"

In the garden of the Autumn Water Garden, a group of young girls was gathered. They were playing chess, eating snacks, and chatting.

"Speaking of which, Yue," Jiang Xiaoxuan said, "I haven't seen your sister yet. Is she really sick?"

"She's really sick." Shen Yue shook her head, a trace of worry in her eyes. "Eldest Sister is getting better, but Fifth Sister's illness is a little serious. The rash on her face has even infected the maids around her." She lowered her head, speaking in a low voice, "You didn't even see her maids when you came today, did you?"

"No wonder." Bai Wei was enlightened. "There are so many people guarding the west courtyard, but no one came out. I think the servants in the courtyard are afraid of infecting by others. Didn't Mr. Pei say in the school that in order to prevent the plague from spreading, the sick have to be isolated?"

"That's right," Shen Yue said.

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Yi Peilan touched her shoulders and shuddered. "How scary. Don't get us infected."

"Don't worry." Shen Yue smiled and said, "As long as you don't go to the west courtyard, you'll naturally be safe. Look, I didn't get infected either, right?"

"You're really broad-minded to stay with such a sister." Yi Peilan curled her lips. "Why is this Shen Miao like a jinx? Why does she always attract this kind of disease?"

On the other side, anger flashed across Feng Anning's eyes. She suppressed it and cursed softly, "What a hypocrite."

She was naturally talking about Shen Yue.

Qin Qing, who was on Feng Anning's side, snorted. Her expression was still arrogant, but she looked at Shen Yue with disdain.

Among the two of them, Feng Anning was now on good terms with Shen Miao, so she was naturally rejected by Shen Yue. As for Qin Qing, she was beautiful and arrogant. In Guangwen Hall, she was Shen Yue's opponent. Today, Shen Yue came to greet the girls, so Qin Qing was naturally ignored. Therefore, the two of them sat together away from the other girls.

"Who knows if it's because of disease." Qin Qing had never hidden her disdain for Shen Yue. When Feng Anning heard this, she immediately said, "So you think so too. Why don't we go and see Shen Miao?"

"I'm not close to Shen Miao. If you want to go, go yourself." Qin Qing refused without hesitation and added, "However, no one is allowed to enter the west courtyard of the Shen family now. I don't think you can get in."

"How can that be?" Feng Anning was indignant. "She's the daughter of the Shen family. Why can't she attend Old Madam Shen's birthday banquet and has to be locked up in the west courtyard? Isn't that no different from prisoner?"

"It's better if you don't interfere in the affairs of others." Qin Qing glanced at Feng Anning. "It has nothing to do with you and me."

Feng Anning bit her lip indignantly, but she could not say anything. She could only glare hatefully at Shen Yue, who was surrounded by people and chatting happily.

However, no one saw a figure flash and quickly disappear into the bushes.

There was a desolate courtyard in the northwest corner of the Shen family's mansion. Because the terrain was not good and there were many weeds growing, it was directly abandoned. Other than the occasional birds and wild cats that traveled past, no one usually came.

Today, there were a few people standing under the wall.

The person in the lead had his back to the garden and was deep in thought. Someone behind him said, "Master, I passed by the east courtyard of the Shen family and heard that the west courtyard is guarded."

Another person said, "I've already checked. Though the west courtyard is guarded only by some servants. The guards are all outside the Shen family's ancestral hall. Could it be..."

The man turned around and revealed a handsome face. "The thing is in the Shen family's ancestral hall."

Chapter 134: Burning the Ancestral Hall (1)

The east courtyard of the General's Mansion was naturally very lively. Guests came and went, congratulating and giving gifts. Before the banquet started, it was already filled with joy.

Old Madam Shen had always pretended to be generous in front of outsiders. Every time a girl went up to congratulate her, she would always give them some expensive gifts. Seeing this, the smiles on those ladies' faces became more sincere, but Ren Wanyun gritted her teeth.

Ren Wanyun was in charge of the money in the government. Usually, she had to settle the affairs of the three branches. The more the old madam squandered, the less money she could fill her own pockets. Moreover, Shen Gui usually needed money to socialize in the bureaucracy. In this way, she would probably be short of money in the coming days.

The ancestral hall in the southwest corner of the Shen family's mansion was quiet. Outside the door, there were people dressed like guards. The reason why this was the case was that these people were responsible for keeping an eye on Shen Miao to prevent her from escaping.

The ancestral hall was in a cold place where the sun couldn't reach all year round. It was winter, and as soon as one walked in, they would feel a bone-chilling cold wind. The smell of incense filled the air as it burned non-stop.

"Miss." Gu Yu rubbed her hands. "Today is Old Madam's birthday, but they deliberately locked you up here. They're simply bullying you!"

They didn't allow Shen Miao to go out, nor did they send anyone to ask her about who she was doing. They simply treated Shen Miao like a servant who had made a mistake.

"Don't be anxious." Shen Miao stood in front of the window. Outside the window, there were trees with withered leaves. In the winter, the bare branches looked especially sad.

"Miss, how can you not be anxious?" Gu Yu had been holding it in for so many days. In the end, she couldn't help but say, "They locked you here because they wanted to force you to marry into the Huang family. By the time Master and Madam come back, you will already be married, and your life will be ruined!"

Jingzhe had been fiddling with the charcoal brazier on the ground. In the cold ancestral hall, only this charcoal brazier could give some warmth. A small bed was placed in the inner room. Shen Miao shook her head. "Take the blankets and dry them outside for two hours."

"Miss!" Gu Yu stomped her feet, a little anxious about Shen Miao's nonchalant attitude. However, when Shen Miao glanced at her, she shut up. She could only hold back her anger and take the blanket out of the room.

"Today is a rare good day." Shen Miao looked out of the window. The sunlight couldn't reach the ancestral hall, but it could reach the courtyard. She couldn't leave the courtyard and was unwilling to leave the ancestral hall.

“Miss, are Master and Madam really going to come back today?” Jingzhe finally stopped fiddling with the charcoal.

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Shen Miao told Jingzhe that she did not have to worry about anything, because on the day of Old Madam Shen’s birthday, Shen Xin and his wife would return to the capital. This sounded ridiculous because there was no messenger who came to inform the Shen family that Shen Xin would return to the capital today. Shen Miao was locked in the ancestral hall every day, so how did she get this news? However, when Jingzhe looked at Shen Miao, she could not bring herself to ask the questions that puzzled her. Shen Miao suddenly had a majestic aura that was never seen in her before.

Shen Miao said, “Later, think of a way to make the guards outside to go away from this courtyard. They won’t possibly leave, but get them to stay as far away as possible.”

Chapter 135: Burning the Ancestral Hall (2)

“I understand,” Jingzhe said. Although she did not know why Shen Miao was doing this, she had been with Shen Miao in the ancestral hall these days. She realized that Shen Miao was not flustered by the situation. She was not flustered by the terrible situation because either she was stupid and did not know the danger she was in or she already had a plan to deal with it. As for Shen Miao, Jingzhe did not think that she was stupid. Therefore, even though she was as worried as Gu Yu, Jingzhe trusted that Shen Miao would definitely be able to handle the situation.

Shen Miao noticed her gaze and sighed.

Among her four maids, Gu Yu was the smartest, Bai Lu was the calmest, Shuang Jiang was the most loyal, and Jingzhe was the bravest.

Back then, in order to help Fu Xiuyi rope in powerful officials, Jingzhe used her beauty to become the concubine of that powerful official. Although she was eventually beaten to death by the official’s wife, before she died, she successfully obtained important information about that powerful official, and Fu Xiuyi used it to rope him in.

Gu Yu, Bai Lu, and Shuang Jiang were not suitable for doing this. Only Jingzhe could have the courage to do it. However, after Jingzhe knew what she wanted to do, Shen Miao did not know if she would continue to help.

After all, what she wanted to do was too shocking.

“Actually,” Jingzhe endured it and said softly, “if Miss wants to, it’s not impossible for Mo Qing to think of a way to bring Miss out.”

Mo Qing was more skilled than the guards of the General’s Mansion. Although it was difficult to confront so many guards alone, it was not impossible for him to seize the opportunity to bring Shen Miao out.

“And then?” Shen Miao asked. “The world is huge. Will everything be perfect once I escape? The contract of the four of you is in the hands of Old Madam. If I leave, what will she do to you?”

Jingzhe knelt on the ground and said, "I know that Miss is willing to stay here for the sake of our lives, but if Miss is harmed because of us, I will be guilty. Back then, Master and Madam chose the four of us to be your maids because they wanted us to take care of you. How can we let you take care of us?"

A trace of sadness flashed across Shen Miao's eyes. Shen Xin was indeed good at picking people. In her previous life, even when she was in her most difficult time, her maids had never betrayed her. However, people were not goods. She had to repay kindness with kindness, take revenge with hatred, and win over people's hearts, but she couldn't do so at the cost of the lives of her maids.

"Don't worry." Shen Miao said, "You and I will be fine. I heard that Second Sister made a Buddha Painting for Grandma. They forgot about me here, but I didn't forget about them." She smiled. "I also have a big gift for Old Madam, but I wonder if she has the fortune to enjoy it."

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Dozens of kilometers away from the capital, horses were drinking water by the frozen stream. The grassland looked a little yellow and withered, and soldiers were taking a nap here.

Sitting at the far end of the group of soldiers was a middle-aged man. His skin was bronze, probably caused by the sun and rain on the battlefield, but it made him look strong. His figure was like a small mountain, and his eyes were filled with righteousness. He had thick eyebrows, big eyes, and a beard. At a glance, he looked extremely fearless.

The woman sitting beside him was stroking the head of a horse that was lowering its head and eating grass. The woman was also middle-aged. She was wearing a green robe that was shorter than an armor and a pair of embroidered gold sparrow breeches. Her hair was tied into a simple knot. Her eyes were extremely bright, and she was born delicate. However, what was attractive was her heroic aura. There was a pair of double-ringed silver bracelets on her wrist, and when she stroked the horse, the bracelets made a clanging sound.

Chapter 136: Burning the Ancestral Hall (3)

"Madam, we'll be able to reach the capital in about two hours." The middle-aged man smiled and said, "After staying in the Northwest every day for so long, I find the air particularly sweet in the capital."

"What's wrong with the Northwest?" The woman glared at him and asked fiercely, "I grew up in the bitter cold land of the Northwest. If you like sweet things, why did you marry me?"

The man quickly said with a bitter face, "Madam, you're right. The air in the capital is too sweet for rough men like me. The northwest is better. In winter, we can still go to the deep mountains to hunt."

When the woman heard this, the corners of her mouth curled up as she said with a smile, "You fence-sitter!"

These two people were none other than the mighty general Shen Xin and his wife, Luo Xueyan. They had rushed back today to attend Old Madam Shen's birthday. Before this, they had not informed the capital

of their return. Because they had obtained the letter of surrender from the enemy in advance, they wanted to return early to give everyone in the capital a surprise.

"We've never attended Old Madam's birthday before." Luo Xueyan said, "In the past, when I came back at the end of the year, I would give His Majesty's reward to Old Madam as a birthday gift. We came back in a hurry today. I wonder if that wolf cloak will be enough to make Old Madam happy."

"Why can't that be not enough?" When Shen Xin heard that, he immediately asked, "That's a good thing. Even on the battlefield, it's a treasure. Whoever wears it will be invincible. Back then, in order to hunt that wolf I guarded the mountain for seven days and seven nights. You said you wanted to give it to Old Madam, so I... gave it to you." At the end of the sentence, Shen Xin's voice gradually lowered. Clearly, he was a little unwilling. Although Old Madam Shen treated Shen Xin very well, she was not his biological mother after all. Shen Xin naturally doted on his wife more. Moreover, Luo Xueyan was usually on the battlefield with him. This wolf cloak was much more useful to her than to Old Madam.

"What do you know?" Luo Xueyan glared at him. "You miss Old Madam's birthday every year. Even if you give all the rewards to Old Madam when you go back at the end of the year, no one will really know. The last time we returned to the capital, I heard that there were even people in the capital who said that you deliberately neglected your stepmother. I did this for you."

As soon as she said that, Shen Xin was silent for a while. Indeed, although the conditions in the capital were not as difficult as the harsh conditions in the northwest, and there were no enemies' weapons and traps, it was not really peaceful. Since the couple was not in the capital, rumors were spreading like wildfire.

Luo Xueyan continued, "You know that I am a straightforward person. In my family, we don't play power games. This wolf cloak is precious. If Old Madam likes it, she will be happy. When everyone sees this, the rumors will naturally be debunked."

After a while, Shen Xin said, "You are indeed more thoughtful."

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"I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing this for Jiaojiao." Luo Xueyan snorted and suddenly looked a little sad. "You and I are not in the capital all year round. Although the Northwest is too dangerous and Jiaojiao is still young and can't be brought there, we've never taught her anything and accompanied her all these years. We've let her down."

When Shen Xin heard this, he sighed and lowered his head.

There were no heartless parents in the world, nor were there parents who did not love their children. However, he and Luo Xueyan were destined to fight on the battlefield, and Shen Miao could not go with them. When the two armies fought, dirty methods would be used. They could only bear the pain and separate from their daughter. At least in the capital, they did not have to worry about Shen Miao's safety.

Chapter 137: Burning the Ancestral Hall (4)

The more Luo Xueyan thought about it, the sadder she became. She continued, "I often wonder if it's really safe to leave Jiaojiao in the capital. Without us by her side, I wonder if she's really living a happy life. Every year, when we meet her at the end of the year, she always treats us coldly. It's all our fault to begin with, so no matter how she treats us, we can't blame her."

Shen Miao wasn't close to Shen Xin, Luo Xueyan, and even Shen Qiu, because they were never by her side since she was young. She was close to Ren Wanyun, Chen Ruqiu, and even Old Madam Shen, because these people were all with her day and night. They were the "families" in her eyes. As for Shen Xin and his wife, they gave their daughter whatever she wanted. No matter how infamous Shen Miao was in the capital, they had never been angry at her because they knew they were to blame.

Shen Xin patted Luo Xueyan on the shoulder. "One day, Jiaojiao will understand us."

"Will she really understand?" Luo Xueyan smiled bitterly. "Sometimes, I even wonder who caused Jiaojiao to be so mischievous now. The Shen family..." She suddenly stopped and looked at Shen Xin in frustration.

Shen Xin naturally understood what she meant, and his expression changed slightly. A moment later, he sighed and held his wife's hand. "Madam, you're thinking too much. Old Madam and Sister-in-law will teach Jiaojiao well. If not, Jiaojiao won't be so close to them."

Shen Miao's attitude towards her two aunts was so good that it made people jealous.

"I was thinking too much," Luo Xueyan said. She was the precious daughter of the first wife of the Luo family in the northwest, which was also a military family. Although it was a third-grade military family, her family was filled with honest and upright men. Luo Xueyan was the youngest sister and had three brothers. Therefore, ever since she was born, she only had her parents and brothers in her family. She did not have much experience in the ways of the world and did not know the dangers involved.

If she knew, she would definitely rather Shen Miao take the risk to stay with her than leave her alone in the terrifying Shen family.

As she spoke, she heard someone call out from behind, "Father, Mother."

Shen Xin's face darkened and he said angrily, "When we are outside, call me..."

"General Shen!" The person quickly said.

"Ignore your father." Luo Xueyan rolled her eyes at Shen Xin. "Stop acting like a general."

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The person was a young man in his twenties. He was handsome and had wheat-colored skin. When he smiled, he had two dimples, making him look like a child. This young man looked quite similar to Luo Xueyan. He was Shen Xin's son, Shen Qiu.

Shen Qiu was 22 years old this year. When he was ten years old, he was brought to the battlefield by Shen Xin to train. It was said that a strict teacher produced a good disciple. Shen Qiu was quite brave. Over the years, he had earned some meritorious service. Now, he was a junior fourth-grade general.

"Father, Mother, what gift should I give?" Shen Qiu scratched his head in confusion.

“Don’t you have a brain? Why are you asking us what gift you should give? As a man, if you can’t even make up your mind about such a small matter, why are you going to the battlefield?!” Shen Xin seized the opportunity to discipline his son.

“I haven’t been to Grandmother’s birthday in a long time.” Shen Qiu said awkwardly, “I don’t know what to give her. I can’t tell her how many enemies I killed, can I? It’s not an appropriate birthday gift.”

Luo Xueyan was amused by Shen Qiu’s words. “Don’t worry. Didn’t His Majesty reward you with a piece of silk brocade? Give that to Old Madam. I heard that there is an extreme shortage of this silk brocade in the capital now. Even the ladies in the palace might not have it. Old Madam is naturally happy to have one.”

Chapter 138: Burning the Ancestral Hall (5)

“But that’s for my sister!” Shen Qiu hurriedly said.

Shen Xin waved his hand. “Have you ever seen your sister taking a fancy in that kind of brocade?”

Even though Shen Xin did not know anything about women, he knew that his daughter did not like those elegant materials. She just liked to wear gold and silver. The tackier, the better. Although he was displeased with her choice of jewelry, there was nothing he could do.

When Shen Qiu heard that, he felt that what his father said made sense. He lowered his head, saying softly, “I came back in a hurry this time and didn’t bring any gifts for my sister. I feel guilty just thinking about it.”

In fact, in the past, Shen Qiu and Shen Miao had a good relationship. The siblings supported each other and lived a happy life. However, later on, Shen Qiu went to war with Shen Xin every year and met with Shen Miao once a year. Later, Shen Miao’s temper became worse, and the siblings were estranged from each other. No matter how close Shen Qiu was to his sister, Shen Miao treated him indifferently.

Shen Qiu did not know the reason, but Shen Miao did. Shen Miao was young and would be easily affected by a few words. Looking at her brother, she naturally felt that he had snatched all the love from their parents and was unwilling to be close to him.

“Forget it.” Shen Xin patted the dust off his body and stood up. “Wake up the soldiers. We’ll continue on their way. In two hours, we have to return to the capital!”

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Soon, the birthday banquet was about to begin. All the madams and ladies were already seated, and there were more than ten tables. All the wives of the officials in the capital were here. Of course, everyone came not because of Old Madam Shen, but because of Shen Xin. Even so, the birthday banquet was still lively, just like in the past.

Shen Yue was wearing a pleated dress. The white color made her look extremely graceful and gentle. She was originally delicate and pretty. Today, she was specially dressed up, so she caught the attention of everyone. Now that Shen Qing and Shen Miao both had engaged, the ladies present looked at Shen

Yue thoughtfully, thinking that if their son married Shen Yue, what benefit could she bring to their family.

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After the men delivered the birthday gift, they were all on the other side, accompanied by the two brothers, Shen Gui and Shen Wan. Shen Gui and Shen Wan naturally would not give up this opportunity to win people over. They chatted and laughed happily.

Mr. Su held his wine glass and felt a headache coming on. His family had a good relationship with the Xie family, but the Shen family and the Xie family had always been at odds with each other. However, the Shen family had sent him an invitation. Mr. Su was a good person. Since they had sent him an invitation, he couldn't turn down the invitation. He could only bite the bullet and come. In his heart, he was a little envious of his "sick" eldest son. At least he didn't have to watch this group of old men with ulterior motives drink and test each other.

"Dad," Su Minglang said. Today, he was also dressed up by his mother. Even so, he still looked like a chubby meatball. He tugged at Mr. Su's sleeve. "I want to go out for a walk."

"No, don't go around," Mr. Su instructed. Although his eldest son didn't attend, his youngest son, who had always been uninterested in these things, insisted on coming. Mr. Su didn't know why, but since Mrs. Su agreed, he had no choice but to bring this little burden along.

Chapter 139: Burning the Ancestral Hall (6)

Su Minglang sat back down, pouting. He heard that this was Old Madam Shen's birthday banquet, so he came. Thinking that he had not seen Shen Miao in Guangwen Hall for so long, he was very concerned. He originally wanted to take this opportunity to see Shen Miao, but Shen Miao hadn't shown up.

In the women's section outside, Mrs. Jiang smiled and said, "Speaking of which, Mrs. Huang and Mrs. Wei, shouldn't you guys toast Old Madam too?"

After all, they would be in-laws in the future.

Mrs. Huang dressed exquisitely with heavy makeup on. Hearing this, she just smiled. She probably knew that this marriage was just a matter of exchanging benefits. If the Shen family really cared about their daughter, they would not agree to this marriage at all.

On the other hand, Mrs. Wei looked a little uncomfortable. The Shen family was indeed a good family. However, Shen Miao in the past was too stupid to be the madam of the family. Later, after the test, she asked around and found out that Shen Miao seemed to have been enlightened and became much smarter. That was why she came to propose marriage for her son.

However, she did not see Shen Miao today. When she heard that Shen Miao had a rash, Mrs. Wei was a little worried. If Shen Miao got a bad disease, it would ruin her son's life. Thinking of this, she looked a little unwilling.

When Chen Ruoyu saw these expressions, she sneered in her heart. She was not a fool. How could she not tell what Ren Wanyun was up to? Old Madam Shen and Ren Wanyun were hiding it from others, but

they could not hide it from her. However, this was even a good thing for her. Ren Wanyun was too concerned about her daughter and made a wrong move. She did not take into consideration how angry Shen Xin would be when he returned. At that time, the first and second branches would fight and hurt each other. Her daughter, Shen Yue, would be able to stand out.

Ren Wanyun smiled and stood up. "In that case, I should toast to the two madams first."

Everyone laughed even louder. Feng Anning frowned and looked a little unhappy.

In the ancestral hall on the other side, all the maids were sent away. Shen Miao knelt in front of the memorial tablet and looked at the hourglass in her hand. The sand was about to leak out and the time was almost up.

She burned the three incense sticks and bowed gently.

At this moment, she heard a soft sound.

In the years spent in the State of Qin, she had developed a habit of being extremely vigilant at all times. Shen Miao stood up and said, "Who is it?"

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"Little girl, you're quite sharp." A familiar voice sounded. Shen Miao turned around and saw the purple-clothed youth leaning against the window, looking at her with a faint smile. Seeing that she was looking at him, he jumped into the ancestral hall.

No matter how calm Shen Miao was, she couldn't help but be a little stunned. Xie Jingxing was actually wandering around someone else's house in broad daylight. It was naturally impossible for him to be invited over. The relationship between the Shen family and the Xie family was like walking on thin ice, unless Shen Gui and Shen Wan were crazy.

Now, there were guards in the courtyard outside the ancestral hall. How did he get in? Shen Miao accidentally asked the question in her heart.

"The guards of the Shen family are really useless," Xie Jingxing said. "I walked straight in."

Chapter 140: Burning the Ancestral Hall (7)

Shen Miao frowned. "What are you doing here?"

Xie Jingxing smiled and ignored her. He seemed to be looking for something in the room. In less than the time it took to burn an incense stick, he finished searching. However, the result was obviously not satisfactory. He did not find anything.

Shen Miao stared at his every move and was suspicious. From the looks of it, Xie Jingxing seemed to be looking for something in the Shen family. However, what was there in the General's Mansion that was worth him taking such a huge risk to personally come and search for it?

"What are you looking for? Tell me. I can help you find it," Shen Miao said.

Xie Jing paused and turned to look at her inquisitively. He said with interest, "Shen girl, I know you're the smartest among the Shen family, but don't play tricks with me."

"Then why did you come to my house to steal something in broad daylight? Are you targeting the Shen family?" Shen Miao was unmoved, but she was a little angry at Xie Jingxing for not telling her anything. She only wanted to know what he was searching for.

"Steal?" Xie Jingxing seemed to have heard something funny. A dangerous glint flashed across his beautiful peach blossom eyes. "That's mine to begin with. I'm just here to take it."

Shen Miao's heart skipped a beat. She seemed to have caught something important, but the idea disappeared too quickly for her to catch it.

"However." Xie Jingxing took a look at the ancestral hall. "There are so many people guarding this place. I thought they were protecting something, but it turns out that they are guarding you." He looked at Shen Miao and crossed his arms. "What did you do wrong? The ancestral hall is not a place for a rich lady to live."

"What does it have to do with you?" Shen Miao looked at the hourglass. The last bit of sand had already flowed from the top to the bottom. It was about time. However, Xie Jingxing had not left yet. Her patience was running out, so she said, "Since Young Marquis hasn't found your things, please leave. The ancestors of the Shen family didn't invite you over."

She was sarcastic. No one had ever dared to speak to Xie Jingxing like this, let alone a little girl. However, he was not angry and only teased, "Indeed, the ancestors of the Shen family don't wanna see me, but do they want to see their descendants being forced to marry?"

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"You don't want to marry Wei Qian, do you?" he asked.

"Doesn't it change a thing if they want or not?" Shen Miao asked.

"Wei Qian is a good man. You should consider yourself lucky to marry him. This is the first time I've seen such a person who doesn't know what's good for her." He narrowed his eyes, and the evil smile on his lips was so handsome that it made people dizzy. He said frivolously, "Don't tell me you don't want to marry Wei Qian because you like me."

Shen Miao was so angry that she almost laughed. She turned around and glared at Xie Jingxing. "If that's what you think, I have nothing to say. I just want to advise you not to get involved in some things. Otherwise, when you regret it, it will be too late."

Her face was a little pale. Perhaps because she had not been eating and sleeping well in the ancestral hall these days, she had lost some weight, but it made the girl's outline even more obvious. Her chin had become chiseled, and her eyes were extremely clear.

"Miss!" Jingzhe ran in. When she saw Xie Jingxing, she was shocked. She immediately shielded Shen Miao behind her and pointed at Xie Jingxing. "H-How did you get in?"

Xie Jingxing shrugged and did not answer.

“Just pretend he’s not here.” Shen Miao couldn’t be bothered with him and asked Jingzhe, “How’s the preparation?”