

Chapter 151: Shen Qiu (3)

Shen Miao sighed in her heart. Shen Qiu had a kind of innocence that made him look like a teenage boy. This innocence made his personality very precious. He was sincere and full of vitality. It was hard to imagine that such a person would end up drowning in a pond. Back then, people said that Shen Qiu killed himself because he felt that he was too ashamed of himself. But now that she thought about it, with Shen Qiu's happy-go-lucky personality, he would not kill himself just because of someone else's criticism. Now it seemed that it might be someone else's scheme.

"Sister, why do you keep staring at me?" Shen Qiu was confused. "Is there something on my face?" He felt that the current Shen Miao was strange. The Shen Miao who was not temperamental and cold made Shen Qiu feel unfamiliar, as if he was not facing a little girl.

"Brother, why aren't you going to the palace today?" Shen Miao asked softly.

"His Majesty only summoned Father and Mother." Shen Qiu smiled and said, "Sister, you haven't told me what happened yesterday. Why were you trapped in the fire in the ancestral hall?"

He was concerned about Shen Miao's injuries, so he had to find out what happened.

"Will you believe what I say?" Shen Miao smiled. "If you don't believe me, there's no need to say anything."

"Of course I believe you." When Shen Qiu heard that, he hurriedly grabbed Shen Miao's arm. "You're my sister. If I don't believe you, who will?"

"I can tell you about what happened, but you must promise me one thing. You can't tell Father and Mother what I told you today. If you tell them, I'll never talk to you again."

"Why can't I tell our parents?" Shen Qiu was a little confused, but then he realized something. "Could this have something to do with Prince Ding?" In the letter he received from the capital in the northwest, it was also mentioned that Shen Miao had a crush on Fu Xiuyi. However, Shen Miao was a girl from a rich family after all. She did not know that princes would fight for the throne. It was best for officials not to get involved. The sooner they got involved, the sooner they would die.

"It has nothing to do with him." Shen Miao didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She didn't expect Shen Qiu to think of this. She said, "Before you came back, Second Aunt brought the three of us to the Wolong Temple to pray. That day, I changed rooms with Eldest Sister. Eldest Sister was raped by a villain. Second Aunt and her family thought that Eldest Sister suffered on my behalf and that I was the schemer. If I don't admit my mistake, I will be grounded and punished to copy scriptures in the ancestral hall."

When Shen Qiu heard this, he broke out in a cold sweat. He was extremely angry. What did this have to do with Shen Miao? Why did she have to be grounded?

"This is ridiculous!" Shen Qiu said angrily. He did not have a good impression of Shen Qing, because Shen Qing often looked down on Shen Qiu because she had a brother, Shen Yuan. She had even mocked Shen Qiu for being a military man who did not know anything about arts.

"Not only that." Shen Miao continued, "Coincidentally, the secretary of the palace, the Wei family, came to propose marriage to me. The Huang family, the director of the imperial court, also came to propose marriage to Eldest Sister."

Shen Qiu was stunned. "Propose marriage?" They had received a letter from the Shen family, but they had never mentioned Shen Miao's marriage. This was too ridiculous. How could the Shen family not inform them of Shen Miao's marriage?

"The young master of the Wei family, Wei Qian, is a young and talented man. The young master of the Huang family, Huang Dexing, is a homosexual. Second Aunt wanted to trick me into marrying Huang Dexing. When I found out about this, I said that I didn't want to marry him. If they force, I will run away. Therefore, they locked me in the ancestral hall. The guards you saw yesterday weren't there to put out the fire. They were there to keep an eye on me so that I couldn't escape."

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Shen Qiu's expression changed as Shen Miao explained. In the end, he slammed his fist on the table. The smile on his face had long disappeared, and his eyes were red. "Sister, is what you said true?"

"I naturally don't have to lie to you." Shen Miao said, "The fire came out of nowhere. I suspect..." She smiled faintly. "After all, if I die, Eldest Sister will be able to marry who she wants."

"This is too much!" Shen Qiu shouted angrily and turned to leave. Shen Miao grabbed him and asked, "Brother, where are you going?"

"I'll go and argue with them. Whoever sets you up will pay with their blood!" Shen Qiu said.

Shen Miao looked at him and asked calmly, "How do you plan to argue? Where's the evidence? Do you want to curse them all or kill them all?"

The sarcasm in her tone woke Shen Qiu up a little. He turned around and looked at Shen Miao, frowning. "Sister, what do you mean?"

"Brother, think about it. Why don't I want to tell Father and Mother about this?" Shen Miao said calmly, "Father and Mother are both straightforward people, and Father is very impulsive. Yes, they will stand up for me, but what about what happens next? The Shen family is a big family in Ming Qi, and there are many eyes watching us. Today, Father will seek justice for me, and tomorrow, people will talk bad about Father." The corners of her lips curled up. "In this world, whoever has the number has the advantage. The third branch and second branch have more people than us. Do you think people will believe us or them?"

Shen Qiu was shocked by Shen Miao's words. What surprised him even more was the expression on Shen Miao's face when she spoke. That calm analysis hit the nail on the head. This was not something supposed to come out of a girl of Shen Miao's age. He hesitated for a moment. "Sister..."

With a glance, Shen Miao knew what Shen Qiu was thinking. Shen Qiu was too upright, or rather, the entire first branch was too upright. In this world, good people did not have good endings.

Shen Miao lowered her eyes and said, "Brother, you are curious how I become like this, aren't you? Because that's how I survived the days in the mansion."

"After experiencing so many things, no one can remain the same. Brother, I'm not the person I used to be, and you're not the person you used to be. Now, let me ask you something. Do you hate them after listening to me?"

Shen Qiu was stunned. He looked at Shen Miao and slowly gritted his teeth. "Yes."

"Why do you hate them?"

"Because ... how could they do this to you?"

Shen Miao shook her head. "That's not the reason you should hate them."

Shen Qiu was surprised. He suddenly realized that his sister was making him more and more confused. However, he felt that what Shen Miao said made sense.

"What you have to hate is that we trusted them and treated them sincerely, but what we got in return was false love that is worse than our enemies. For their own sake, they can take our lives. This is not family. This is worse than enemy."

Shen Miao looked at Shen Qiu and sighed in her heart. If possible, she even hoped that she could protect the young man in front of her well and make him a hero that everyone respected. However, she was really afraid that one day, the scene by the pond would repeat itself. She could only build a wall for Shen Qiu now.

"Sister, what do you want to say?" Shen Qiu finally asked.

Shen Miao heaved a sigh of relief. Shen Qiu was not really stupid. Once he understood, some things would be much easier.

"I hate them, and Brother wants to avenge me. Even if our parents want to stand up for me, they can't possibly kill them all," Shen Miao said. "I want to deal with these people personally, but I need Brother's help." No matter what, Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan didn't have any evidence. If they killed the second branch, they would have to pay with their lives according to the law. For her, Shen Xin might really do this. She could use her life as a bet, but she didn't want to see Shen Xin and his wife in danger.

Moreover, the big fish had yet to take the bait.

"Sister, what do you want to do?" Shen Qiu asked.

Shen Miao smiled. "There's no hurry. We have plenty of time. Let's take it slowly but steadily and surely."

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It had been a long time since Shen Qiu and Shen Miao had a long chat. The guards outside the west courtyard were the soldiers who came back with the general. No one could enter. Two hours was not a long time, but it was not a short time either. Shen Miao had always been the one listening to Shen Qiu. Shen Qiu probably wanted to make Shen Miao happy and talk about some interesting things in the army. He even asked her what she had been through in the past year, but Shen Miao avoided the questions.

There were some things that were not suitable to be said now. Moreover, the current Shen family had not reached the point where they could frame the first branch like in her previous life.

After talking for a while, Shen Miao looked a little tired. Shen Qiu was worried about his sister, so he said, "Sister, you're not fully recovered yet, so I won't disturb you. Rest well. When Father and Mother return to the mansion, it will probably be dark. When they come back, I'll come over with them to visit you."

Shen Miao nodded in agreement.

Shen Qiu stood up and was about to leave when he suddenly thought of something. He hesitated for a moment and turned to look at Shen Miao. "Sister, you said that Shen Qing's virginity was taken. Do you know who did it?"

Shen Miao looked at him and smiled. "That raper is very cunning. He escaped."

"I see." Shen Qiu lowered his head thoughtfully and looked at Shen Miao with a calm smile. "In that case, I'll take my leave first." He strode out of the house. When he walked out of the door, the youthful smile on his face suddenly disappeared, leaving only a gloomy expression. When the servants outside saw this, they couldn't help but shiver. He instructed the guards beside him, "Get two people to go to the Wolong Temple to investigate." He glanced at Shen Miao's door, clenched his fists, and said in a low voice, "Sister, what exactly happened this year..."

In the house, Shen Miao said to Gu Yu, "Go and give some money to Chun Tao and Doctor Chen. At the most critical moment, we have to make sure the baby in Eldest Sister's stomach is safe and sound." She touched the scar left behind by the burn on her arm. The scar was especially glaring on her fair skin, as if a piece of top-grade brocade had been burned for no reason. She did not feel sad at all because the outcome was satisfactory. "I need to rely on this unborn nephew of mine for the rest of the show."

"Miss." Jingzhe asked, "Why didn't you tell Eldest Young Master everything just now?" Shen Miao held back from telling Shen Qiu some of the things. For example, the raper was Prince Yu. Jingzhe said, "If Eldest Young Master takes action, at least Prince Yu won't dare to act rashly. Moreover, if Master and Madam know, they will also protect Miss."

"Even if I didn't tell him, he would still go and investigate it." Shen Miao looked out of the window. "I'm afraid he's already gone to find out what happened at the Wolong Temple."

"But can Eldest Young Master find out?" Jingzhe was worried. "If he will eventually find out, then what's the point of hiding it from him?"

"Prince Yu does things flawlessly. If I'm not wrong, the monks of the Wolong Temple have probably been replaced inside and out. Not to mention Eldest Brother, even Father can't find any evidence."

"Oh my god." Jingzhe covered her mouth. "Then doesn't that mean that no one will find out the truth?" She thought that after Shen Xin and his wife returned, they would be able to stand up for Shen Miao. However, Shen Miao's words seemed to indicate that everything that happened that day at the Wolong Temple would remain unknown forever.

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"I don't intend to seek justice for myself through the just way," Shen Miao said indifferently. "There are many ways to achieve your goal in this world..."

Justness was useless and was used to restrain the weak. During her years in the harem, she understood a lot of things. It was not that there were no good women in the harem, but those women were like flowers in the winter. They were too fragile and could not even withstand the wind before being crushed into mud. Since she was on a dark and bloody path, her methods along the way were destined to be dark and bloody.

"But Miss, what can you do?" Jingzhe said, "At least Master and Madam can protect you and stand up for you. After all, you're just a girl. Even if you want to take revenge, there are many things that are outside your control."

"If Father and Mother are furious, they will directly go against Prince Yu and intimidate him so that he will not dare to covet me" Shen Miao said, "But it's impossible for the Shen family to be unharmed when confronting Prince Yu. What's more, I want more than just intimidating him."

Jingzhe was getting more and more confused. What Shen Miao meant was that she wouldn't let Shen Xin go against Prince Yu, nor would she let Shen Xin intimidate Prince Yu so that Prince Yu wouldn't dare to do anything to Shen Miao. However, looking at Shen Miao, she obviously wouldn't let this matter rest. What was Shen Miao up to?

Shen Miao smiled. "If anyone offends me, I will kill them all."

Jingzhe was shocked and subconsciously looked up at Shen Miao, only to see the girl bathing in the morning sun. The smile on her lips was clear and pure, but she was like a young beast baring its fangs in the dark forest.

She was shocked, and at that moment, she actually felt terrified. She couldn't say a word and lowered her head in fear. She thought to herself that Shen Qiu was right. Why did Shen Miao seem to have changed completely in just a year? Not to mention Shen Qiu, even maids who were with her day in and day out didn't know how she changed.

Shen Miao narrowed her eyes in satisfaction. Now that everyone was back, the chess game could begin. Shen Qing was a pawn, and Prince Yu was that knight. As for the Ming Qi Royal Family, they were like white pieces. When would they be captured? That depended on God's will.

This time, she would play God.

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At the Marquis of Lin'an's Residence.

Even in the harsh winter, the entire marquis's mansion was still filled with flowers. When the late wife of the marquis, Princess Yuqing, was alive, she liked flowers the most. When she married the Marquis of Lin'an, he was full of sweet words. Xie Ding doted on Princess Yuqing and renovated the entire marquis's mansion into the look of the princess hall where Princess Yuqing lived in the palace. At that time, it caused a huge sensation.

Later on, when Princess Yuqing passed away, Xie Ding still retained all the scenery when Princess Yuqing was alive. He hired someone to protect and take care of it, so after so many years, even though it was winter, this place still did not feel desolate.

However, although the scenery was prosperous, what was bleak was not the scenery but the people. Things were the same, but people were different. Though everything was maintained to the point of perfection, deep down, it was no longer what it was.

Xie Changwu and Xie Changchao were practicing their spear skills in the courtyard. Ever since the test, the two of them rarely left the mansion. Firstly, it was because they were too ashamed to go out. Secondly, because their injuries were not fully healed, they could not go out to train. Speaking of which, although Xie Jingxing looked like he didn't beat up his brothers too hard, he was actually very harsh on them. Even after resting for a few months, they still felt some pain.

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At the thought of this, the two brothers gritted their teeth in hatred. Xie Changchao shook his arm. That day, when Xie Jingxing stepped on his shoulder, he hurt so much that his arm was still in pain. He said, "Second Brother, I heard that Shen Xin and his wife entered the palace today. This time, they made military contributions. I'm afraid His Majesty will reward Shen Qiu."

The Shen and Xie families had always been enemies with each other. It was not that Xie Changwu and Xie Changchao regarded Shen Qiu as an eyesore because the political stance of the Shen and Xie families was different. In fact, they regarded all the young talents in the capital as their opponents, and Shen Qiu was undoubtedly the most outstanding among those young talents. Although Xie Jingxing was also very outstanding, he had not become an official after all. Moreover, with Xie Ding protecting him, he could do anything they wanted. However, Shen Qiu was different. If Xie Changwu and Xie Changchao became officials, everyone would probably compare them to the sons of the Shen family.

What Xie Changwu and Xie Changchao hated the most was being inferior to others.

"What are you afraid of?" Xie Changwu said disdainfully, "He's just a military man who only knows how to fight and kill. He knows nothing about the affairs of the imperial court. In the Shen family, only Shen Xin has outstanding military achievements, but what can he do? Now that the Shen family is at the end of its rope, it looks good, but in the end..." He suddenly stopped talking.

"Second Brother is right." Xie Changchao smiled. "It's the Shen family's fault for being neutral. In this world, if one chooses a neutral stance, they will only be hated by both sides. It's all thanks to the Shen family, at least in the future, we will have one less opponent."

If anyone else heard their conversation, they would probably be shocked. After all, Xie Changwu and Xie Changchao were all smiles outside, and the Xie family did not side with any prince over the competition for the throne. However, what Xie Changchao and Xie Changwu said just now hinted that they had already sided with a prince behind the Xie family's back.

"The Shen family is nothing to be afraid of. We have one at home." Xie Changchao suddenly turned in another direction. That was the courtyard where Princess Yuqing used to live, and it was also the courtyard where Xie Jingxing lived now. He thought of the way Xie Jingxing pointed the spear at his head at the test field and felt a burning fury. A moment later, he said, "That bastard is getting more and more arrogant."

He actually called Xie Jingxing a "bastard" in private. Usually, when he saw Xie Jingxing, he would be very respectful to him.

"That's right." Xie Changchao went along with what Xie Changwu said and said, "He's been much more well-behaved recently, so Father values him more. Could it be that a strategist is helping him?"

For so many years, Xie Jingxing had been stubborn and did not enter the government. Although he was a headache, his choice of not entering the imperial court made the two brothers happy. However, even so, when people mentioned Young Marquis Xie, they were full of praise for his heroic acts on the battlefield. Not only that, no matter how Xie Jingxing went against Xie Ding, Xie Ding treated Xie Jingxing with all his heart. On the contrary, his attitude towards his two illegitimate sons was neither cold nor warm. As a result, their jealousy towards Xie Jingxing became stronger and stronger.

In the past, as long as Xie Jingxing was in the capital, something big would happen every few days. However, ever since the incident at the test venue, he seemed to have changed. He lived in seclusion every day and was busy with something. However, such an abnormal silence obviously made Xie Ding very happy. He even felt that Xie Jingxing was finally getting serious with his life.

It was precisely because of this that Xie Changchao and Xie Changwu were even more nervous.

"Who cares if he has a strategist?" Xie Changwu sneered. "One day, he will be stepped on by me. That woman was a princess back then, but she still didn't end up well, let alone her son."

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"In short, we have to build a good relationship with Prince Ding during the royal banquet," Xie Changchao said. After saying that, he raised his spear and stabbed it fiercely into the straw in front of him.

At this moment, the protagonist of their discussion was sitting at a table in the room.

The courtyard where Princess Yuqing used to live was filled with flowers and plants. Some looked lush even in winter. In front of the house where Xie Jingxing lived, the leaves of the trees almost blocked the entire window. Even in the daytime, the house still looked gloomy.

However, in the gloom, the young man sitting upright was as dazzling as the sun. The guard in front of him handed him a letter. He read it carefully and threw it into the heater in the house. In an instant, a puff of dust flew out and the letter disappeared.

"So, how's the situation?" The young man in white poured tea for him in a relaxed manner, as if he was really here to drink tea with someone.

"The situation has changed." Xie Jingxing did not turn around, as if he was thinking about something.

"Oh?" The young man in white paused and frowned at him. "Didn't you already..."

"Gao Yang." Xie Jingxing suddenly said, "How about we take action now?"

"You're not like that." Gao Yang was stunned at first. Then, he shook his head and said, "Don't you always like to hide your strength and bide your time? If you aren't one hundred percent sure you will win, you won't do it. I'm surprised by what you said today." He asked, "Did something happen to you?"

"I met a lunatic." Xie Jingxing raised his eyebrows. "She makes me realize that it's not a bad idea to take a gamble." He stood up. The corners of his purple robe were embroidered with cloud patterns with golden thread. If one did not look carefully, they would not be able to tell. However, in the dark, it emitted a faint glow.

"Are you talking about the daughter of the Shen family?" Gao Yang hit the nail on the head. "I heard from Tie Yi what happened that day. Although she's bold, she's too rash. Now that Shen Xin is back, I'm afraid with his personality, he'll cause a scene again."

"The thing is not in the Shen family." Xie Jingxing said, "I've changed my mind."

"You don't intend to use the Shen family anymore?" Gao Yang was a little surprised.

"There are too many variables in the Shen family." Xie Jingxing shook his head. Once the young man got serious, he revealed a calmness that exceeded his age. The natural elegance and nobility made him look mysterious and dazzling.

"What variables are you talking about?" Gao Yang asked.

Xie Jingxing smiled. "I have a feeling that the Shen family will become the greatest variable in the future of Ming Qi."

Gao Yang seemed to be in disbelief, but his trust in the young man was stronger than the doubts. He said, "How do you know? How can the Shen family become a variable? Shen Qiu? Shen Xin?"

"There is someone smart from the Shen family." Xie Jingxing said lazily, "But fate is too cruel. Her struggle will be futile." He said, "In short, there's a change in plan. Let's think of another way."

"Don't tell me..." Gao Yang said with hesitation.

"I've endured it for too long." Xie Jingxing said, "I endured it because I had worries, but now..." He smiled casually, as if the dark clouds had suddenly retreated and the sun was casting all its light into the room. Xie Jingxing stood with his hands behind his back and said indifferently, "Gao Yang, I'm tired of lurking. I'll take action in the shortest time possible."

“But what are you willing to let go?” Gao Yang asked.

“I’m willing to let go of anything.”

Gao Yang sighed. When he looked up again, he had already become determined. “In that case, we’ll do as you say. Let’s keep it a secret for now. Who do you think we should start with in the Ming Qi royal family?”

“As usual, I’ll throw a ball. Whoever the ball lands will be tackled first.” He smiled faintly. However, his fingers felt something in his sleeve. With a thought, he took out an exquisite bottle with his fingers. It was a medicine bottle given to him by Gao Yang. The medicine bottle was what Gao Yang called a priceless medicine. It was specially used to treat scars. Gao Yang said that with this medicine, no matter how deep the scar, it could be removed completely.

He held the bottle in his fist. When he let go of it, the exquisite bottle had already turned to dust.

Just like what Shen Miao did, a fire would break the false balance, and the ugly truth that was exposed was the real thing. Shen Miao used her scar to prevent the possibility of her plan falling flat. What about him? What would he do?

He glanced out of the window. He had seen the dark sky of the Marquis’s mansion too many times over the years. Because of the warmth in his memory, he was willing to maintain the false balance.

Now, it was time to break the balance.

He closed his eyes. His long eyelashes were as beautiful as butterfly wings in spring, but when he opened them, his gaze was sharper than the sharpest knife.

At this moment, there was a map spread out on the table. It was none other than the map of Ming Qi’s territory. From Youzhou to the Dingyuan City in the north, from Yuzhou in the south to Donghai, from Lin’an to Luoyang, the map covered every nook and cranny of Ming Qi and in the very center of it was the most prosperous Dingjing City.

The world was filled with heroes. He reached out and gently wiped his finger at the center of the map.

It was as if he was deciding the rise and fall of a dynasty.

Chapter 157: Plans (1)

In the evening, Shen Xin and his wife finally returned to the mansion. Along with them was a carriage full of rewards sent by the emperor. In the past, these rewards would definitely be shared among the three branches, but today, Luo Xueyan asked the servants to carry the boxes into the west courtyard.

The boxes were filled with treasures. The servants in the east courtyard watched as the boxes passed by. From time to time, the sound of items shattering could be heard from Rongjing Hall. Clearly, Old Madam Shen was furious because of this and was venting her anger.

Shen Miao was sitting at the table and reading. She was reading Ming Qi's political books and laws. Previously, Gu Yu and the others bought her some poems and novels but they were all thrown away by Shen Miao.

A hearty laugh came from outside the door. "Jiaojiao!"

Shen Miao turned around and saw Shen Xin walking in with big strides, followed by Luo Xueyan. They probably rushed over as soon as they returned to the house. Shen Qiu walked in the back and made a face at her.

Shen Miao stood up and nodded at them. "Father, Mother, Brother."

Her gentle demeanor stunned Shen Xin and his wife. Shen Miao was never close to them. In the past, when they came back, she would get impatient with them after saying a few words. It had been a long time since they saw her like this. However, in her gentleness, there seemed to be a trace of alienation. This alienation was very slight, but as parents, Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan were still sensitive enough to sense it.

Shen Miao sighed in her heart. She couldn't cling to Shen Xin like a real 14-year-old girl, let alone pretend that nothing had happened. In her previous life, she was the one who dragged the Shen family down into the abyss. When facing Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan, she only felt a strong sense of guilt.

Luo Xueyan paused for a moment. Her concern for her daughter quickly replaced her confusion. She took a few steps forward and grabbed Shen Miao's hand, asking anxiously, "Jiaojiao, how are you feeling? Do you feel unwell?"

"I'm fine," Shen Miao replied with a smile.

"Jiaojiao, I got a few big boxes of treasures from the emperor today. When you're feeling better tomorrow, go and pick something you like. I heard that those jewelry and hairpins are the best in the capital," Shen Xin said softly. Such a burly man was trying to please his daughter, which made him look a little funny.

Shen Miao smiled. "Thank you, Father, but there's no hurry. Lock those treasures in the storeroom in our courtyard. I'll go and pick them one day."

As soon as she said that, the expressions of the people in the room changed.

In the past, when Shen Xin brought the boxes back, he would always let Shen Miao choose first and send the rest to the other branches. He had always doted on his daughter like this, and no one had any objection because after all, these rewards were earned by Shen Xin himself through shedding blood on the battlefield. However, in the past, Shen Miao would not choose first. She would let Shen Yue and Shen Qing choose first, and then she would start to choose after the second and third branches were done.

However, today, not only did Shen Miao not decline, but she even suggested locking the boxes in the storeroom. Everyone saw the change in Shen Miao's attitude towards the other members of the Shen family.

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They could tell that something was strange about Shen Miao. Luo Xueyan held Shen Miao's hand and said softly, "Jiaojiao, what happened? Tell me. Dad and Mom are back. No one will dare to bully you in the future."

"No one dares to bully me." Shen Miao smiled and said, "Nothing happened to me."

"What exactly happened on that day?" Shen Xin asked in a low voice, "Why did you stay in the ancestral hall alone?" The couple went to the palace early this morning to meet the emperor, leaving only people to investigate in secret, but they did not have the time to ask the details.

"I made a mistake and was locked up in the ancestral hall. Unexpectedly, it was caught on fire..." She said matter-of-factly.

When Shen Qiu saw this, he wanted to say something but hesitated. He knew what was going on, but Shen Miao repeatedly reminded him not to tell their parents about this.

As expected, Shen Xin asked Shen Miao, "What mistake did you make? No matter how big the mistake was, you shouldn't be locked up in the ancestral hall alone."

Shen Miao said casually, "Because I talked back to Second Uncle in front of Grandma and the others."

"What?" Luo Xueyan frowned, but she didn't reprimand Shen Miao. Instead, she said, "Doesn't Second Brother know how old he is? Why did he argue with a little girl?"

"Sister, why did you go against Second Uncle?" Shen Qiu couldn't help but ask.

"I don't want to get married," Shen Miao said.

"Marry?" Luo Xueyan and Shen Xin exclaimed in unison. Luo Xueyan looked at Shen Miao and asked anxiously, "Marry who? Why don't your father and I know?"

Shen Miao lowered her head. "The Wei family proposed marriage for their son, Wei Qian. However, I don't wanna marry him, so I went against him in front of everyone."

"Wei Qian..." Shen Xin pondered for a moment." The Wei family is a big family, and their son seems to be a young talent too." He was actually considering this marriage. Shen Xin had been an official for so many years. Although he was not in the capital all year around, he knew most of his colleagues in the bureaucracy. If the Wei family had a prodigal family, he would naturally know about it. However, Wei Qian was a rare good boy.

"What are you thinking!" Luo Xueyan roared, "Even if he's the emperor, if Jiaojiao doesn't want to marry him, then she won't."

Luo Xueyan was a fierce woman born to a military family in the northwest and had fought for this marriage with Shen Xin. Therefore, Luo Xueyan didn't believe in arranged marriages. She said, "Besides, neither of us know about this. Who knows what they're up to!" Ever since she saw Shen Miao trapped in the sea of fire and Ren Wanyun and the others looking calm, Luo Xueyan was filled with disgust towards the rest of the Shen family.

Shen Xin also frowned. Logically speaking, it would not be a bad thing for his daughter to marry the son of the Wei family. After all, such a young talent as Wei Qian was rare in the capital. But since it was such a good marriage, why did the Shen family hide it from them?

Shen Qiu sighed. He knew what was going on and was also a little angry with Shen Miao for not telling their parents about Ren Wanyun's idea of swapping her marriage with Shen Qing's. For some reason, every time Shen Miao looked at him, her gaze seemed to be intimidating. Shen Qiu didn't want to believe that he, who was invincible on the battlefield, was actually afraid of his sister.

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"But Jiaojiao," Shen Xin said softly, "the eldest son of the Wei family is not bad. Are you so resistant because you already have a man you like? You..." He wanted to say something but hesitated. In the letter sent by the Shen family, there was often news that Shen Miao was infatuated with Prince Ding. In this world, if Shen Miao liked any man, he and Luo Xueyan would not stop her. However, the royal family was different. Now that the prince was fighting for the throne, if the Shen family was involved, they would probably all be dragged into the fight.

However, a little girl like Shen Miao would never understand these things. On the way back, Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan had discussed countless times how to persuade Shen Miao to give up on this idea, but in the end, they were all helpless. Shen Miao was stubborn by nature.

Shen Miao knew what Shen Xin wanted to say at a glance. She said indifferently, "I don't have a man in my heart. The reason why I'm unwilling to marry is because I once heard that Young Master Wei already has someone he loves. No matter how good he is, he won't like me. Why should I be a person who breaks up a couple?"

Her words made Shen Xin and his wife a little puzzled. Why did Shen Miao sound like a woman who had seen a lot? And why did she say she didn't have a man she liked?

Shen Miao only knew about Wei Qian after becoming the empress in her previous life. In her previous life, there was no such thing as the Wei family coming up to propose marriage. Wei Qian later married his cousin and he doted on his wife very much. At that time, their love story was envied by many girls in the capital. From this, it could be seen that Wei Qian and his cousin were definitely childhood sweethearts. Wei Qian was probably displeased with her parents proposing marriage on his behalf.

"Jiaojiao, don't you like... Prince Ding?" Luo Xueyan asked tentatively.

"Prince Ding?" When Shen Miao heard that, she said indifferently, "Prince Ding is a noble. We don't match. Back then, I didn't know my place. Now that I've calmed down, I know my place. I don't dare to pursue him ever again."

Luo Xueyan was stunned again. Although she had a carefree personality, she was still a woman. Women understood women the most. She thought that Shen Miao was just making it up, but when she carefully sized up Shen Miao's expression, she realized that when Shen Miao mentioned Prince Ding, she was not moved at all, as if she was talking about a stranger.

Without waiting for Luo Xueyan to speak, Shen Xin shouted, "Jiaojiao, I don't agree with you. You are the daughter of the Shen family, so you are a match for any man in the capital. No one in Ming Qi dares to despise you, even if..."

"Ahem." Luo Xueyan coughed and glared at Shen Xin. Now that Shen Miao had finally given up on Prince Ding, Luo Xueyan didn't want her to have hope again.

Shen Xin knew that he had said something wrong and quickly looked away as if nothing had happened.

Luo Xueyan sized up Shen Miao again. Seeing that her expression was calm, she was relieved and said with a smile, "Jiaojiao is still young and isn't in a hurry to get married. There are so many good men in Ming Qi, and our Jiaojiao is outstanding. She won't have to worry about not being able to find a good husband. Don't worry, our Jiaojiao's husband will definitely be a hero."

Shen Miao lowered her eyes and smiled, not saying anything. In her previous life, she was too hurt and disappointed by the man she spent decades with. In this life, she had no intention of getting married, but she couldn't possibly tell Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan about this.

When ordinary girls heard their marriage being brought up, they would more or less be shy. Moreover, in the eyes of Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan, Shen Miao was not a calm person. However, after Luo Xueyan finished speaking, they did not see any reaction from Shen Miao. The two of them could not help but feel a little strange. In the past, although Shen Miao was not close to them, they still knew her personality. This time, Shen Miao became more and more unfamiliar. She seemed to have grown much older mentally, making Shen Xin and his wife not know how to treat their daughter anymore.

Chapter 160: Plans (4)

When Shen Qiu saw his parents' puzzled expressions, he chuckled. His parents were terrifying on the battlefield, but when facing his sister, they were at a loss. However... Shen Qiu's gaze gradually darkened. A person's personality would not change so drastically overnight. Something must have happened to make a pampered girl become so calm and composed.

"Father." Shen Miao suddenly said, "In a few days, the palace will hold a banquet."

The banquet was held by the emperor to reward the Shen family for defeating the enemy. All the civil and military officials had to attend. At the banquet, the emperor would reward the meritorious officials according to their contributions.

In her previous life, at the banquet a few days later, the emperor wanted to promote Shen Qiu. However, because of Shen Miao, Shen Xin didn't ask for any rewards. Instead, he asked the emperor to marry Shen Miao to Prince Ding.

It was an outrageous thing for a woman to ask a man to marry her. Shen Xin had dominated the battlefield for his entire life, but at the end of the day, he did not beg the emperor. At that time, Shen Miao was only happy to become the princess consort, but she did not see the bitter smile on Shen Xin's face.

From the moment she married Prince Ding, it meant that the Shen family was tied to Prince Ding. Fu Xiuyi could openly squeeze out the last bit of value of the Shen family's army.

"That's right." Shen Xin smiled and asked, "Jiaojiao, do you want something? I can help you ask His Majesty for it."

Shen Miao was choked with emotions. Why didn't she realize her father's love for her in her previous life? The death of the Shen family was undoubtedly caused by her enemy, but it was also caused by her stubbornness and stupidity.

"I don't want anything." Shen Miao smiled. "However, if His Majesty wants to reward Dad..." She paused, and when she looked up again, her eyes were clear. "Ask His Majesty to allow you to stay in the capital and accompany me for half a year."

As soon as she said that, Luo Xueyan, Shen Xin, and Shen Qiu were stunned.

Shen Miao never asked the couple to stay because they were not by her side when she was young. They were not close to each other, so Shen Miao naturally didn't want to spend time with them. Every year after the new year ended, Shen Xin and his wife would leave the capital to guard the northwest. Even if there were no enemy, they had to guard their territory to prevent enemies from invading. Actually, there was no need to do that, but the emperor still assigned the task to him every year. In addition, the old general had this habit when he was alive, so Shen Xin did the same and never refuted.

Though Shen Miao's request was a little out of line, Shen Xin and Luo Xueyan were overjoyed to hear that. At least this meant that Shen Miao still loved them.

"Of course!" Delighted with his daughter's change in attitude, Shen Xin agreed without even thinking about it. Luo Xueyan was also a little excited. Shen Qiu pouted unhappily. He did not want to stay in the capital. To him, there was nothing interesting in the capital. He would rather fight in the Northwest Desert than become friends with those noble men. However, looking at Shen Miao's face, his heart softened. At least with him around, no one in the capital would dare to bully Shen Miao.

After talking for a while, Shen Xin, his wife, and Shen Qiu left. After they left, Shen Miao closed the book on the table and walked to the window.

"Miss..." Gu Yu whispered, "I talked to Chun Tao. The baby in First Miss's stomach is fine. I heard that Second Madam and Second Master are arguing about Miss's marriage."