

Venomous 361

Chapter 361: Turning Over a New Leaf (2)

"This bastard..." Shen Miao gritted her teeth. Jingzhe knocked on the door. "Miss, the bath is ready. I'll put some herbs in for you first." As soon as she entered, she asked curiously, "Miss, why are you standing in front of the window? Be careful not to catch a cold."

Shen Miao retracted her gaze. "I'm fine. I just chased away a wild cat."

"Oh, it's a wild cat." Jingzhe said with a smile, "Wild cats are common in this season. They're really annoying. I'll get the servants to clean them out tomorrow."

"It's better to just put them to death," Shen Miao said.

"Eh?" Jingzhe was a little confused.

On the other side of the Shen mansion, Concubine Wan looked worried and seemed to be a little angry. She said to Shen Dongling, "I wonder what Fifth Miss said to Second Madam that day. I heard from the servants of Rosy Cloud Garden that Second Madam's illness is getting better day by day. Now, she can recognize people and doesn't lose her temper that easily. She even instructed her maids to make porridge for Master. She probably wants to be favored by Master again. If that day comes, I'm afraid we'll suffer again." Concubine Wan complained, "It seems like Fifth Miss is really going to help Madam and even treat her illness."

Shen Dongling was combing her long hair at the table. Facing the light, her face looked even sharper and her eyes bigger. She said, "Mother, you're thinking too much. No matter how capable Fifth Sister is, it's impossible for her to cure madness. It seems that Second Madam has been pretending to be mad all this time. Fifth Sister said a few words to her and convinced her to stop pretending."

"What?" Concubine Wan was shocked. "Dongling, are you saying that Second Madam has been pretending to be mad? That means she knows your father has been treating us well. In that case, once Second Madam has a chance, she will definitely punish us."

"What are you worried about, Mother?" Shen Dongling combed her hair with a silver comb and said, "Because of what happened to Eldest Sister and Second Brother, Father already despised Second Madam. Even if Second Madam really becomes sane, Father will at most be kinder to her, but he will definitely not take her seriously anymore. It's already impossible for Second Madam to regain her previous status. She knows this too. Mother, don't worry."

Concubine Wan was puzzled. "Since Second Madam knows that Master won't forgive her, why doesn't she continue with her show of pretending to be mad? What exactly did Fifth Miss say to her to make her change her mind?"

"Other than Seventh Brother, Second Madam has nothing else now. Fifth Sister probably used Seventh Brother to provoke Second Madam. Mother, you have to work hard to give birth to a son for Father. As long as you have a son, you will have more say. No one will dare to look down on you."

Concubine Wan smiled bitterly. How could she not want to give birth to a son? In the early years, she was suppressed by Ren Wanyun. If not for the fact that Shen Dongling was a daughter, the two of them would probably not have lived to this day. Shen Gui had always been a cold and heartless person. She was not a young woman after all. Why would Shen Gui choose to have a son with her?

As her thoughts ran wild, Concubine Wan changed the topic. "Why are you talking about this? Dongling, why don't you try to guess what Fifth Miss wants to do? Helping Madam is equivalent to going against us."

"That's not necessarily the case." Shen Dongling shook her head. "Fifth Sister is not a simple person. Don't get involved in these things and live our own life. Otherwise, we'll get into trouble if we're not careful."

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Concubine Wan was on tenterhooks as she asked tentatively, "So..."

"Don't look, don't ask, and don't speak." Shen Dongling looked at herself in the mirror. "Let nature take its course. One day, we will live a good life."

In the Shen family, not only were the people of Rosy Cloud Garden discussing Ren Wanyun, but also the people of Autumn Water Garden.

Chen Ruoqiu was wearing a plain white undergarment. She sat on the bed and said, "Second Sister-in-law is getting better day by day. Master, did Second Brother say anything about it?"

Shen Wan rubbed his forehead. Because of Shen Yuan's case, his colleagues in the imperial court were all unhappy with the Shen family. Even he was affected, and his days had not been easy. He shook his head and said, "Second Brother didn't mention this."

"Even if Second Sister-in-law really recovers, there's only Shen Yuanbai left in the second branch." Chen Ruoqiu said, "With Second Brother's tendency to take in concubines, I'm afraid..." At this point, she actually felt a little sad. The difference between her and Ren Wanyun was that Chen Ruoqiu could firmly hold onto Shen Wan's heart, but the third branch had never had a son. Now that Shen Yuan was dead, Old Madam Shen was probably anxious to let her two sons have more children. Shen Gui was not a loyal person to begin with, so he naturally didn't mind having more concubines. However, if Shen Wan was pushed too hard... Chen Ruoqiu could not help but panic. How long could he resist before giving in to the idea of marrying a concubine?

Shen Wan noticed the change of expression on Chen Ruoqiu's face and asked in confusion, "What's wrong? Are you feeling unwell?"

Chen Ruoqiu forced a smile and shook her head. "I was just thinking about Eldest Brother and Sister-in-law." After a pause, Chen Ruoqiu said, "Eldest Brother and Sister-in-law have already decided to split up. They even threatened to invite the elders of the family over. I'm afraid they really meant it this time."

“Mother is to blame this time.” Shen Wan said, “She messed it up. If Eldest Brother is furious and decides to make it public how Mother tried to scheme against Shen Qiu, the entire capital will criticize us.”

Chen Ruoqiu nodded and said, “We’ve been living in harmony for so many years. Why did they want to split up at this juncture?” She couldn’t help but think of Shen Miao. Ever since Shen Miao’s personality changed drastically, many things in the Shen family had changed. In the past, Shen Xin and his wife were good to the rest of the Shen family because Shen Miao was on their side. Now that Shen Miao showed disgust and dissatisfaction, Shen Xin and his wife’s attitude immediately changed.

Shen Wan let out a long sigh. Chen Ruoqiu asked, “Master, is there a way out?”

Shen Wan shook his head. “If it were us, we wouldn’t be able to take it lying down either. Eldest Brother can’t tolerate nasty tricks, and the person he values the most is Fifth Miss. The Jing family and Mother have already violated Eldest Brother’s taboo by plotting against Qiu and Fifth Miss. He’s being merciful enough to only ask to split up from the Shen family. If Eldest Brother was still as impulsive as he used to be, he would probably have torn this Shen family apart.”

“But...” Chen Ruoqiu said, “It’s not a good thing for us to split up now.”

Shen Wan looked out of the window. “Now that the second branch has been dealt a huge blow, Second Brother and I have both been hindered in our official careers. In the past, we could still rely on Eldest Brother’s power and influence. Once we split up, everyone will know that the Shen family is on bad terms. For the sake of pleasing Eldest Brother, the officials won’t side with us. Our official careers will only be more difficult.”

“Not only that, but also financially...” Chen Ruoqiu said. In the past, Shen Xin would be rewarded handsomely everytime he returned to the capital. He could not spend it all because he was away in the Northwest. All of the rewards were used to run the Shen family. Old Madam Shen spent money extravagantly, and Ren Wanyun occasionally had to make up for it. Now that they were going to split up, even if Shen Xin did not want the assets left behind by the old general, their lives would only become more and more difficult.

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A trace of gloom flashed across Shen Wan’s eyes. “After splitting up, with Eldest Brother’s military strength and reputation, he will only get better and better. In the end, he will be stronger than us.”

Chen Ruoqiu was shocked when she heard that. She had been married to the Shen family for so many years, so she naturally knew that the Shen family was internally divided. Shen Xin and his wife were not at home, so they did not know, but she and Ren Wanyun knew very well. In the Shen family, Shen Xin and Shen Wan were not from the same mother, so they naturally wouldn’t treat each other with absolute sincerity. The better Shen Xin’s life was, the worse the other two families were. One day, everyone would take up arms against each other, but she did not expect this situation to happen so quickly.

“Master, for the sake of Yue, we must not be suppressed.” Chen Ruoqiu massaged his shoulders. “But how should we deal with them?”

“Now that Brother is wary of us, it won’t be that easy to make a move.” Shen Wan shook his head. “Besides, his soldiers are not ordinary people. It’s even harder to find a chance. We still have to wait for an opportunity.” Shen Wan said, “The most important thing now is to find a good family for Yue.”

Chen Ruoqiu said tentatively, “Master, Prince Ding...”

“Leave Prince Ding for now.” Shen Wan said sternly, “After what happened to Yuan, everyone in the imperial court is trying to not have anything to do with the Shen family, not to mention the princes.”

Chen Ruoqiu nodded. “I understand. Master, rest early.”

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The next morning, just as Shen Miao finished eating, she saw Shuang Jiang running in, panting. As soon as she entered the house, she said, “Miss! Something happened!”

“What’s the hurry? Take your time. Don’t startle Miss,” Gu Yu reprimanded. Shuang Jiang stuck out her tongue, but she still couldn’t hold it in and blurted out, “A few days ago, the Jing family set off for Suzhou. Today, the officials said that the Jing family encountered bandits on the way back to Suzhou and were all killed. The officials knew that the Jing family was related to Old Madam, so they came to inform us.” Shuang Jiang patted her chest and said with lingering fear, “Now, the bandits are getting more and more rampant. They actually dared to kill people like this in broad daylight. If they had known this would happen, the Jing family would definitely not come to the capital.”

Shen Miao lowered her eyes. Whether or not the Jing family was killed by bandits was not all that clear. She knew that Sun Tianzheng had always been ruthless and decisive, just like in the imperial court. This matter was caused by Jing Chuchu, and Sun Cainan died. How could Sun Tianzheng be willing to let go of it just like that? Shen Miao believed that if possible, Sun Tianzheng would kill everyone in the Shen family. However, the Shen family was not the Jing family after all.

The Jing family still had the same ending as in her previous life. They died because of Jing Chuchu’s greed. Now that Jing Chuchu was still in Sun Tianzheng’s hands, Sun Tianzheng would not let her die so easily. Living in such despair might be more painful than death.

However, this had nothing to do with her anymore.

Shen Miao said to Gu Yu, “Where’s the thing I want you to prepare?”

Gu Yu said, “It’s in the box, but...” Gu Yu was a little hesitant. “Miss, are you really going to...”

“Go get it,” Shen Miao interrupted her.

An hour later, four people walked out of the west courtyard of the Shen family.

Among the four of them, the one in the lead was a young master with delicate features. He was wearing a moon-white dress and a hat. He was considered handsome, but he was a little short and looked cute. His eyes were big and clear.

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Behind him were two people dressed as servants. However, they were a little clumsy and awkward when they walked. Behind the servants was a guard. Compared to the three of them, he looked much taller.

“Don’t be afraid.” Shen Miao said, “Be brave. Don’t give yourself away.”

These four people were none other than Shen Miao, Jingzhe, Gu Yu, and Mo Qing.

Jingzhe and Gu Yu were not used to wearing men’s clothes. They looked like they were in pain, but Shen Miao was very calm, which surprised Mo Qing. However, little did they know that when Shen Miao was a hostage in the State of Qin, she was teased by the royal family and was asked to dress up as a man for a few months. Now she felt quite comfortable in man’s clothes.

After the three of them got into the carriage, Mo Qing personally drove the carriage. Gu Yu asked Shen Miao, “Miss, are we really going to the Treasure Fragrance Chamber?”

“Of course.”

“But...” Gu Yu said, “Can’t we talk outside? If someone sees you inside the brothel...” She couldn’t continue, because Gu Yu didn’t know what would happen if women were found patronizing a brothel.

“Treasure Fragrance Chamber is a place to do business. As long as one offers money, one will be welcomed.”

Jingzhe and Gu Yu looked at each other and saw the helplessness in each other’s eyes. Shen Miao was very decisive. Whatever she made up her mind to do, no one could change it. Now that they had already come this far, they could only bite the bullet and finish it.

In the elegant room in the Pleasure Restaurant, someone lifted the curtain and walked in. Ji Yushu said, “Third Brother Xie, you came at the right time. I have something to tell you, Prince Ding...”

“Wait.” Gao Yang suddenly said. His hand that was holding the wine glass paused and he muttered to himself, “Why is it different this time?”

“What’s different?” Xie Jingxing sat down at the window and poured himself a cup of tea, following Gao Yang’s gaze.

A carriage stopped at the entrance of the Treasure Fragrance Chamber and a few people got out. The person in the lead was Mo Qing, and behind him were three young men.

“In the past, Mo Qing was always alone. Why are there so many of them here today? Did Shen Miao instruct them to come?” Gao Yang held his chin and sized them up.

“Let me see.” Ji Yushu craned his neck to take a look. A thought flashed across his mind. “Could it be that this is how Miss Shen treats her subordinates? Whoever does a good job will be rewarded with money to have fun in the Treasure Fragrance Chamber. I also want to be her subordinate!”

"Get lost." Gao Yang pushed Ji Yushu's head away and said, "Why do I feel that these people look a little familiar?"

Before he could finish his sentence, Xie Jingxing spat out a mouthful of tea.

"Third Brother!" Ji Yushu, who was spat at in the face, jumped up. As he wiped his face, he said angrily, "What are you doing!"

Xie Jingxing ignored him and stared at the people downstairs in surprise. "She actually came in person."

"She?" Gao Yang took another look at the group of people carefully. When he saw it clearly, he almost fell over.

Who else could the young man in the lead be but Shen Miao?

In the world, there were really women who disguised themselves as men to patronize a brothel. If Gao Yang hadn't seen it with his own eyes, he would have thought that such a thing would only appear in opera.

Shen Miao followed Mo Qing into the Treasure Fragrance Restaurant. When the girl at the door saw Mo Qing, she went up to him with a smile and said, "Master Mo, still Miss Liu Ying, right?"

Mo Qing nodded. The girl seemed to have just noticed the people behind Mo Qing and hesitated for a moment. "These people..."

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"They're with me," Mo Qing said.

The girl was stunned at first, then she thought of something and looked at Mo Qing mischievously. "I didn't expect Mr. Mo to like this... It's fine. The more the merrier."

When Jingzhe and Gu Yu heard that, they immediately blushed. Mo Qing also felt a little uncomfortable. Among the group, Shen Miao was the calmest.

The girl led them to Liu Ying's boudoir. Mo Qing was a frequent visitor of the Treasure Fragrance Restaurant. Everyone here knew him, so they were not surprised. However, they were surprised to see the three delicate young men, especially Shen Miao. She was born with a fair complexion. From time to time, girls would look over with smiles.

When they arrived at Liu Ying's boudoir, the girl who led the way knocked on the door and said, "Liu Ying, Master Mo is here to see you." With that, she said to Mo Qing and the others, "I'll go down first."

Mo Qing pushed open the door and walked in. A woman was sitting in front of the dressing mirror. Her clothes were loosely draped over her body, and her black hair was like a waterfall. When she heard the commotion, she said without turning around, "You're early today."

Jingzhe and Gu Yu looked at Mo Qing strangely. Mo Qing cleared his throat and said, "I'm not the only one."

Liu Ying paused and turned around. When she saw Shen Miao and the others, she was first stunned, then a trace of anger appeared on her pretty face. "What do you mean?"

"I..."

Without waiting for Mo Qing to finish, Liu Ying sneered and said, "If you want to play like this, fine, but you have to pay twice as much!"

As soon as she said that, not only Jingzhe and Gu Yu, but even Shen Miao looked at Mo Qing strangely.

"Miss Liu Ying, I'm Mo Qing's master." Shen Miao broke the silence and smiled. "We're not here to 'play' today."

Jingzhe and Gu Yu wanted to cover their eyes and pretend not to know.

Hearing the word "Master", Liu Ying was stunned for a moment before looking Shen Miao up and down warily. Shen Miao walked over, and Jingzhe and Gu Yu quickly moved the stool in front of the table to a place near Liu Ying and waited for Shen Miao to sit down.

"Did you ask Mo Qing to see me?" Liu Ying asked.

Shen Miao nodded.

Liu Ying supported her chin with one hand, and her gaze suddenly became charming. "Young Master, you're making me confused. Are you in love with me or what?"

Shen Miao looked at her. "Miss Liu Ying, what do you think?"

Liu Ying carefully sized up Shen Miao. She paused for a moment and suddenly smiled. "Miss, why are you pretending to be a man?"

Shen Miao was not surprised that Liu Ying could see through her. She was born delicate and pretty. Even if she was dressed as a man, her skin was still as fair as jade, and her eyebrows were delicate. There was nothing about her that looked like a man.

"I want to buy your freedom," Shen Miao said.

Liu Ying's smile froze.

She had been sold to the Treasure Fragrance Restaurant since she was young. Now, she was naturally not as popular as before. Fewer and fewer people would pay to have fun with her, let alone spend a large sum of money to buy her freedom.

"Miss, I don't understand."

"I was once lucky enough to get a handkerchief. It's a rare double-sided embroidery. There are only a few dozen people in Ming Qi who know how to make double-sided embroidery." Shen Miao said, "I asked around and found out that it was made by Miss Liu Ying."

"You!" Liu Ying clenched her fists. "How did you know it was made by me?"

Shen Miao waved her hand. "It doesn't matter how I know. What's important is that I have an embroidery shop and am short of an embroiderer. Miss Liu Ying, are you interested in managing the shop for me?"

Liu Ying looked at her in disbelief and suddenly smiled somewhat sarcastically. "Miss, don't tell me you want me to turn over a new leaf?"

Jingzhe and Gu Yu were a little dissatisfied with Liu Ying's attitude at this moment. Mo Qing also frowned slightly. How many prostitutes wanted to have a chance to turn over a new leaf? Liu Ying was still young. If she could pull herself together, she might have a good future.

"I've been sold here since I was young." Liu Ying looked frivolous. "The only thing I know is how to serve and please men. You asked me to take care of the embroidery shop and sell labor. I can't live such a hard life. Aren't you afraid that I'll ruin the shop?"

Shen Miao stared at her and smiled. "That is my business. It's not for you to worry." She said casually, "It's just that... this is the only way out for you."

"Everyone has their own way of living. To me, I don't think that brothel girls are cheaper or dirtier, but this is what people think." Shen Miao said, "Just like my Guard Mo, he serves me, but no one will look down on him. Some people will even envy my personal maids. People are divided into different levels. Who doesn't want to be superior to others? Who wants to be criticized every day?"

Chapter 366: Roping In Pei Lang (1)

"You!" What Liu Ying hated the most was people talking about her background as a brothel girl. Hearing this, she was even angrier.

Shen Miao said, "Why don't you think about it?"

"Miss, since you look down on brothel girls, why do you have to waste your breath on me?" Liu Ying smiled instead of flaring up.

"What I look down on is people who are willing to become brothel girls." Shen Miao stood up and said, "In a few days, Guard Mo will come again. Miss Liu Ying, you don't have to be in a hurry to answer me. However... nothing good will come of selling your body."

Shen Miao gave Mo Qing a look. Mo Qing quickly took out a silver ingot and placed it on the table. Liu Ying glanced at him, looking a little angry. Mo Qing was also very embarrassed. Shen Miao did not intend to stay long. She nodded at Liu Ying and stood up to leave.

After leaving the Treasure Fragrance Chamber, Jingzhe said indignantly, "Miss wanted to buy her freedom out of goodwill, but I didn't expect her to be so ungrateful. It's really a waste of time to be kind to her."

Mo Qing wanted to say something, but in the end, he thought better of it.

Gu Yu asked, "Miss, are we going back now?"

Shen Miao did not answer and did not move. Gu Yu was a little puzzled. She saw that Shen Miao seemed to be looking at something and followed her gaze to see that she was looking at the corner opposite the street. There was a man in green standing there and looking at the second floor of the Treasure Fragrance Chamber.

Before Gu Yu could speak, she saw Shen Miao walking over.

Under the roof, the green-robed man stood upright, his gaze fixed in the direction where Liu Ying lived. He was so engrossed in it that he did not even notice when someone walked up to him. Only when a light cough interrupted his train of thought did he see four people standing in front of him. The young man in the lead was dressed in a moon-white robe. He had delicate eyebrows and a fair face. At this moment, he looked at him with a faint smile.

Pei Lang was stunned and felt that this young man looked familiar. The young man nodded at him. "Mr. Pei."

"Shen Miao!" Pei Lang widened his eyes slightly. He looked at the people behind Shen Miao and then at Shen Miao. He was probably a little shocked and said, "You... why are you dressed like this?"

It was not uncommon for women to dress up as men. In Ming Qi, for the sake of convenience, many young ladies would occasionally wear men's clothes when they went out to do things.

"I just came out of the Treasure Fragrance Chamber," Shen Miao said.

Pei Lang cleared his throat, and his face was a little red. It was not uncommon for women to dress up as men, but this was the first time he had heard of a woman dressing up as a man to visit a brothel. However, Shen Miao still looked very calm, not embarrassed at all.

Shen Miao suddenly took a step forward to get close to Pei Lang. She opened the folding fan in her hand and blocked their faces from being seen. On the other side of the folding fan, she said softly, "Everyone says that the girls of the Treasure Fragrance Chamber are the most beautiful in the world, so I specially went to take a look. Recently, there have been many new Persian dancers. All of them are gorgeous."

Pei Lang was at a loss as to what to say to Shen Miao. Moreover, what Shen Miao said made him suddenly have the illusion that the person in front of him was really a young master from a rich family who often visited brothels.

Chapter 367: Roping In Pei Lang (2)

"Stop messing around!" At the thought of his status as a teacher, Pei Lang reproached.

Shen Miao smiled slightly, her eyes curved like crescent moons. She said, "But I chose Miss Liu Ying."

As soon as she said that, Pei Lang froze.

Shen Miao put away the folding fan and looked at him with a smile. "Mr. Pei, I noticed that you've been looking at Miss Liu Ying's room for a long time. Do you also yearn for her?"

Pei Lang stared at Shen Miao, his calm expression suddenly turning a little fierce.

Shen Miao was unmoved. She continued to smile and pointed at the Pleasure Restaurant at the side. "Since you are also interested in Miss Liu Ying, why don't we go in to have a drink and talk about beauties?" She put her folding fan in front of her chest and went upstairs first. As she walked, she said without looking back, "Drinking wine and talking about beauties is the best thing in the world."

Although Jingzhe, Gu Yu, and Mo Qing did not understand what Shen Miao meant, they had never refuted Shen Miao's decision and immediately followed her in.

Pei Lang stood rooted to the ground for a moment before making up his mind to follow her in.

Ji Yushu, who was sitting by the window upstairs, jumped up. "See! I told you that Miss Shen likes Pei Lang. She went out of her way to see Miss Liu Ying just to get a chance to talk to Pei Lang today!"

Gao Yang ignored him and said, "Just now, she blocked their faces with a fan. What exactly did she say to Pei Lang?" As he spoke, Gao Yang looked at Xie Jingxing.

Xie Jingxing shrugged, not intending to comment.

"Speaking of which, when Miss Shen unfolded her fan just now, she did it smoothly and elegantly, even better than me." Ji Yushu sighed. "Why did such a beautiful woman fall for a poor scholar? In what way am I worse than him?"

Xie Jingxing stood up. Ji Yushu asked, "Where are you going?"

"Of course I want to hear what they have to say." Xie Jingxing smiled meaningfully. "I want to see what kind of chess piece Pei Lang is."

In the elegant private room of the Pleasure Restaurant, Mo Qing was guarding the door. Jingzhe and Gu Yu stood on both sides with their heads lowered, as if they didn't want to be recognized.

At the table, Shen Miao was pouring wine.

The wine was amber-colored and gave off a fragrant smell. This wine was not intoxicating. As long as one's alcohol tolerance was not too bad, they would be fine.

Shen Miao poured two cups of wine. The way she poured the wine was very graceful. Her fingers grabbed the handle of the wine pot and poured the sparkling wine into the small jade cup.

Pei Lang watched as Shen Miao pushed a cup of wine to him and smiled. "Sir, please enjoy."

"Shen Miao." Pei Lang called her by her name. His expression had never softened since he entered. He said, "What exactly do you want?"

"Mr. Pei, why are you in such a hurry? It's considered a violation of good etiquette to talk before you sample the wine." Shen Miao looked at him calmly.

Pei Lang was stunned by her words. He had been in Guangwen Hall for several years and had always been respected by everyone he met. Even the most mischievous student would not speak to him in such a frivolous manner. If it were anyone else, it would be fine, but it was Shen Miao. Pei Lang always felt that Shen Miao was not a frivolous person. However, after their encounter today, he found Shen Miao more mysterious.

Seeing that Pei Lang did not speak for a long time, Shen Miao chuckled and said, "Mr. Pei, I was just joking with you. Why are you so nervous?"

Chapter 368: Roping In Pei Lang (3)

When she said this, her eyes were clear, but there seemed to be a hint of mischief in them. She clearly looked like an innocent girl, but for a moment, she had a charm that was unique to a woman who had seen the world. Pei Lang was stunned for a moment.

"This wine is from Qi Lu." Shen Miao picked up the wine cup and raised it at Pei Lang. Pei Lang's expression suddenly changed, but Shen Miao did not seem to notice his expression. She said slowly, "In the land of Qi Lu, the wine brewed is of amber color."

Pei Lang looked at her and suddenly picked up the wine cup on the table and finished it in one gulp.

"This wine is not intoxicating." Shen Miao smiled and said, "Otherwise, when people see that, they will think you are a drunkard." Her tone was soft and casual. "Speaking of which, people from Qi Lu are good at drinking. When they drink, they use jars. Mr. Pei looked like someone from Qi Lu just now."

Pei Lang pursed his lips and did not speak, but there was a deep frown on his face.

Shen Miao rested her cheek on one hand. As she drank, a faint blush gradually appeared on her face. When she narrowed her eyes slightly, she looked like a flower in bloom. However, because she was dressed as a man, she looked delicately handsome. She said, "I remember that more than ten years ago, a magistrate in Qi Lu seemed to have the surname Pei too. Those who don't know better would think that Mr. Pei is family with that person."

Pei Lang immediately smacked the wine cup on the table. At the same time, Mo Qing glared at him and put his right hand on the scabbard.

"Unfortunately, at that time, Magistrate Pei's entire family was executed by His Majesty because he was involved in something in the previous dynasty. All the men in the mansion were executed, and their daughters were sold to be courtesans. I heard that Magistrate Pei had an outstanding pair of children. They were still young, but they died in this calamity."

Pei Lang's lips were trembling slightly. He asked word by word, "Who exactly are you?"

"Shh." Shen Miao made a shushing sound at him and downed another cup of wine. Her snow-white face turned red as she continued, "Actually, I once heard a secret. Since you two have the same surname, I don't mind sharing it with you."

"Originally, Magistrate Pei had the ability to save his son and daughter to avoid the disaster. Unfortunately, because the constables were chasing after them, he had to make a choice between the two. Therefore... Magistrate Pei let his son escape while giving his daughter in to the constables." She shook her head regretfully. "The constables are all ruthless and will never show mercy to the families of the guilty officials. How can that little girl have a good time after being captured?" Shen Miao sighed. "In my opinion, Magistrate Pei knows that his daughter will definitely die if she falls into the hands of the constable, but he still pushed her out. Isn't he a little heartless?"

Pei Lang closed his eyes, looking pained.

“Mr. Pei, you can feel their pain, right?” Shen Miao looked at him with a smile. “But I don’t think you are that son who escaped, because you’re not from Qi Lu. You were born in the capital. I said all this only because I get sentimental from drinking too much.”

The gentle expression on Pei Lang’s face suddenly disappeared, and it was replaced by intense vigilance. He said, “Is this General Shen’s idea?”

Shen Miao shook her head.

“My father doted on me and gave me an embroidery shop. The embroidery shop needs an embroiderer.” Shen Miao dragged out her voice. “I heard that the eldest daughter of Magistrate Pei knew about double-sided embroidery since she was young. Coincidentally, Miss Liu Ying from the Treasure Fragrance Chamber also knows double-sided embroidery. I thought Miss Liu Ying might have something to do with Magistrate Pei, so I bought her freedom from the brothel.” Shen Miao looked at Pei Lang and said, “Mr. Pei, do you think I’m doing the right thing as your student?”

Chapter 369: Roping In Pei Lang (4)

When she looked over with a smile, she looked like a young man. However, in her clear eyes, there was a deep meaning hidden, making people unable to see through her.

When interacting with her, one felt like they were walking on a tightrope on a cliff. They couldn’t tell if she was a friend or foe.

Pei Lang turned his head. “What do you think?”

Shen Miao smiled. Her smile was pure, as if she was really happy that she had done something good. She said, “I think it’s good. Even if that son of Magistrate Pei finds out about his sister’s whereabouts and comes to buy her freedom, I’m afraid Miss Pei won’t be willing to accept his goodwill because she still resents her father for abandoning her back then. Instead, she will try to ruin her life.”

Pei Lang did not speak.

“Some people in the world are originally jade, but after being in a pile of stones for a long time, they will become stones. Some people will never bow even if they are only an inch away from falling off the cliff. I heard that although Magistrate Pei was convicted of a crime, he did not beg for mercy. I think the children he raised will also inherit his character. Tell me,” Shen Miao looked at Pei Lang, “would that girl rather live as a noble lady who no longer has a home to go back to or as a prostitute?”

“After saying so much.” Pei Lang sneered. “What do you want me to do?”

“Mr. Pei, you’re very smart. I knew I couldn’t hide it from you. That’s right.” Shen Miao praised Pei Lang generously before saying, “Mr. Pei, you’re talented and knowledgeable. Why don’t you enter the officialdom?”

“Shen Miao!” Pei Lang suddenly shouted. It was unknown what Shen Miao said had hit his sore spot, but he immediately became excited. Even Jingzhe and Gu Yu were startled and looked at him. Pei Lang said angrily, “Don’t even think about it!”

“Mr. Pei, don’t get worked up just yet. Why don’t you let me finish?” Shen Miao smiled and said, “Perhaps you are frightened by the story I told you just now and felt that in the bureaucracy, if one is not careful, one will die without knowing why. After becoming an official, you probably won’t be as carefree as you are now.”

Pei Lang gradually regained his composure and became that gentle scholar again.

“But Sir, you are alone now. You don’t have a family, so there’s no need to worry about putting your family at risk. Moreover... in this world, the higher one stands, the more they can do. If you want to protect someone, being a teacher is not enough. Although you can have a lot of students in the world, but...” Shen Miao raised her cup calmly. She was clearly smiling, but in an instant, there was a coldness in her eyes. She said, “When something really happens, even your beloved students will cut ties with you.”

“You can only rely on yourself.” Shen Miao’s voice seemed to be bewitching, even more bewitching than the erotic songs in the Treasure Fragrance Chamber.

“Who taught you to say these words? What’s the purpose? What good will it do him if I become an official?”

Shen Miao smiled. Pei Lang was someone who cared about nothing else other than teaching. However, every time he engaged in a discussion, he could always grasp the point immediately. In her previous life, Fu Xiuyi tried his best to rope in Pei Lang as his aide and even promoted him to become the state preceptor. It wasn’t just a coincidence.

“Mr. Pei, why do you ask what good it will do to others but not yourself?” Shen Miao did not answer him. Instead, she took a roundabout way and replied indifferently, “When you become an official, you’ll get rich and marry a wife. The one who benefits in the end will only be you.”

Chapter 370: Roping In Pei Lang (5)

Pei Lang stared at Shen Miao. If he still did not understand Shen Miao’s intentions at this moment, he would really be a fool.

“What do you want to do after I become an official?” Pei Lang asked.

Shen Miao looked at him in satisfaction. It had always been Pei Lang’s style to weigh the pros and cons in the shortest time and make the most advantageous choice. However... She couldn’t help but recall that when Fu Xiuyi abolished the crown prince, she had also knelt down and begged Pei Lang. The tone Pei Lang used back then was as rational and heartless as now. Now, she had the say, and this once high and mighty state preceptor could only be manipulated by her. A trace of joy appeared on Shen Miao’s face.

“Actually, it’s nothing.” Shen Miao said, “Sir, you are talented. Even if you don’t take the initiative to become an official, a year later, someone will come to recruit you. I just hope that at that time, you won’t reject that person and agree to join hands with him, but only on the surface.”

“You want me to be a spy?” Pei Lang looked at Shen Miao in disbelief.

Shen Miao shook her head. “How can you put it that way? Sir, you will get promoted and be rich. I promise not to expose your identity. All I ask is just some information now and then.”

Pei Lang was silent for a moment before looking at Shen Miao. “Who is the person you’re talking about?”

Shen Miao smiled. “Prince Ding, Fu Xiuyi.”

Pei Lang was shocked and couldn’t help but look at Shen Miao again. He knew that Shen Miao used to love Prince Ding, which made her a laughing stock in the capital. He also knew that Prince Ding disdained Shen Miao. Later, at some point, Shen Miao changed completely. Pei Lang had always felt that there was probably someone guiding Shen Miao in secret. However, now that he thought about it, he couldn’t help but wonder if it was because of resentment of being rejected by Prince Ding that she wanted to scheme against him.

But did she have to go this far?

Pei Lang was a little confused. The girl in front of him was dressed in men’s clothes. After drinking the wine, there was a faint blush on her face. She was young and cute. Her eyes were like a newborn beast, but there was a hint of frivolity in her movements. Pei Lang felt a little ill at ease.

In terms of age, he was Shen Miao’s elder, and in terms of their relationship, he was Shen Miao’s teacher. However, at this moment, it was as if he was the one at a disadvantage and was led by the nose all this time.

“What exactly do you want to do?” Pei Lang had asked this question many times. Even now, he was still not sure if Shen Miao was instructed by someone else to do this or if she wanted to do it herself. Shen Miao knew everything that was on his mind, but he couldn’t even figure out what Shen Miao was up to.

“Nothing in particular. I just want to make a decision that’s beneficial to both me and you.” Shen Miao smiled and tucked a lock of hair behind her ear, revealing more of her fair neck. She said, “Sir, agree or not?”

“Do I have to answer you here?” Pei Lang asked.

“You have...” Shen Miao pointed at the wine pot. “This much time. After finishing this pot of wine, tell me the answer.”

“There’s no need.” Pei Lang interrupted her. “If you can fulfill your promise, I’ll agree.”

The room was silent for a moment. A moment later, Shen Miao smiled. She picked up the wine pot and filled the two empty wine glasses. Then, she picked up the glass in front of her to toast with Pei Lang.