Farmhouse 601

Chapter 601: How Did You Fall into the Water?

Whether she was alive or not, she didn’t know, but Cuiya said that the person had fainted.

She nodded uncertainly and said, "She should... still be alive, I guess!"

Gu Youyou’s heart went cold, and she quickly got up, stretched her neck out the window and shouted to the coachman driving the carriage, "Could you please hurry up!"

The coachman didn’t dare delay and sped up the carriage.

Fortunately, the Jie Family didn’t live far from the Lin Family, and before long they had arrived.

Gu Youyou rushed into the Jie Family’s compound, entering the deserted courtyard of Miss Du.

Cuiya, sobbing breathlessly with a hoarse voice, was overjoyed at the sight of Gu Youyou, as if seeing a savior.

Almost at the same time they entered the courtyard, the changed Concubine Du also arrived.

She was similar to Cuiya, crying breathlessly and supported by two maids.

Xie Qinyun stood at the gate of the courtyard, effectively blocking her entrance.

"Concubine Du, you plotted against my second sister-in-law; let’s see who can help you this time," she said.

"I... how could I harm my elder sister!" Concubine Du exclaimed in disbelief.

Xie Qinyun sneered and said, "Save that performance for when my second brother returns. I don’t enjoy it, nor do I believe it."

Having said this, she closed the door and instructed two old women to bring a stone stool to block it further.

Gu Youyou was in the main house saving someone; they couldn’t let this vile woman ruin everything.

"How is it going?" Xie Qinyun returned to the house where Gu Youyou was performing the rescue.

Gu Youyou said, "Fortunately, she didn’t choke on much water and should wake up soon. She probably didn’t struggle much after falling into the water. She’s so thin, there’s hardly any flesh on her bones; she floated on the surface."

Xie Qinyun sighed in relief and looked towards Cuiya, asking, "Aren’t you always with your mistress? How did you let that vile woman plot against her?"

Cuiya stopped crying, her voice somewhat hoarse.

"Today, Concubine Du came to see our mistress and even brought the pastries mistress loves. They needed to speak privately and had us leave. What they talked about in the room, I do not know. Later, I saw them come out, and mistress instructed me to get a shovel, saying she needed to dig out something left by our late master.

I thought since my mistress was going to divorce the young master, she would surely take with her whatever belonged to the late master. Concubine Du’s visit must have been about the master’s belongings as well. Seeing Concubine Du looking so sad, I thought they were reminiscing about the late master and the past, and nothing serious would happen. But I never imagined both of them would end up in the water..."

Overcome with sadness, Cuiya began crying again.

Xie Qinyun glared at her, said sternly, "Shut your mouth and tell me how the two of them ended up in the water."

That vile woman had also fallen into the water, this was problematic.

Cuiya sobbed quietly, saying, "I don’t know either!"

"You don’t know?"

"The maids and old women brought by Concubine Du kept stopping me, saying not to disturb their sisterly reunion, that whether they could reconcile depended on today. Thinking that if the two sisters could restore their former relationship, it would be a good thing and our late master’s spirit could rest in peace, so I didn’t follow them.

It was only when I heard cries for help from the direction of the lotus pond that I realized something had happened. Miss Jie, when I got there, both of them were in the water. The rescuers first pulled out Concubine Du, who was struggling fiercely, before saving my mistress. By that time, my mistress was floating on the water’s surface, like a dead person; I was terrified."

After hearing this, Xie Qinyun clenched her teeth in anger and said, "That vile woman, what play is she performing now?"

Chapter 602: The Ruse of Self-inflict Injury

Lin Qianqing peered outside and said, "Is Concubine Du just outside the courtyard?"

Xie Qinyun clenched her teeth and said, "That vile woman is indeed just outside. I didn’t let her in. She bullies us for not having a capable Family Head’s mother, and she’s almost flying to the heavens with arrogance."

Lin Qianqing chuckled, "Then why not let her in and watch the drama she wants to perform?"

Xie Qinyun shook her head, "No, Du Xintong hasn’t woken up yet. It would be terrible if she ruined everything."

From the side, Gu Youyou, who was busy saving someone, said, "Let her in. We can just tell her that Miss Du is not going to make it and see her reaction."

"My young lady is not going to make it? Young lady..." Cuiya cried out in shock.

Gu Youyou, speechless, supported her forehead with her hand and said, "Cuiya, don't cry. Your young lady is fine. I'm just guessing that Concubine Du doesn't want your young lady to live. If we show her that her wish has come true, we'll see what she wants to do, right?"

"Exactly, that wretch!" Xie Qinyun, gritting her teeth, said, "This time I must root out the poison from the Jie Family. Otherwise, when I get married off, won't she soar even higher to the heavens?"

After speaking, she went out to the door and said to the maid standing by the entrance, "Go and invite Concubine Du in, tell her the second young madam is not going to make it."

"Yes, Miss."

"Also, ask the second young master and my father to come back."

Gu Youyou gave a faint smile without saying a word, quietly applying a few more needles to Miss Du to prevent her from waking up halfway through the act.

Lin Qianqing whispered, "Cousin, if Concubine Du isn't frightened by your plan, you might end up scaring the Jie Family Head instead. The decision to not let Miss Du leave the Jie Residence has always been Family Head Jie's wish."

Reminded by her, Gu Youyou was startled.

Most elderly people aren't easily alarmed, and it would be troublesome if he actually got scared into ill health.

However, Xie Qinyun said, "No, we'll do it this way. My father is so stubborn. If we don't frighten him like this, he'll never agree to their separation. When my second brother married that lowlife, he also resorted to a ruse."

Gu Youyou: "..."

Lin Qianqing: "..."

Fine, since it's like this, let's give him a real scare.

...

Jie Family's second young master had just finished cleaning and bandaging the wound on his head, preparing to go home, when he was found by the family's messenger.

"Second young master, hurry back with me to the Jie Residence. There's been a serious incident."

As for the second young master of the Jie Family, there were major issues every day, with Concubine Du causing disputes daily. It was a constant headache.

Of course, right now, he actually had a headache. The old master had hit him hard, causing quite a large gash.

A white cloth wrapped around his head looked particularly unseemly.

"What serious incident has happened now?" He had actually become rather calm about these 'serious incidents.'"

The gatekeeper, Chen Sixi, said, "Not long after you left the house today, both ladies fell into the water. Our madam is fine, but the young madam is in bad shape, floating on the water like a dead person. She had barely any breath left when they pulled her out. Third Miss personally invited Doctor Gu from Jisheng Hall to come. Doctor Gu said... the young madam's chances are slim, and she is likely... not going

to make it! Second young master, you should hurry back and have a look. The Family Head will probably be there soon as well."

Everyone in the Jie Residence knew the second young master didn't like his lawful wife. Thinking that if they said the young madam wasn't going to make it, he might not rush back, they hurriedly mentioned the Family Head.

Unexpectedly, upon hearing this, the second young master took it very seriously. His face turned deathly pale, his hands trembling slightly as he held his medicine, and without saying another word, he stumbled his way out.

That's more like it. If the young madam really doesn't make it and you're not there, wait and see if the Family Head doesn't throw another cup at you.

Chapter 603: The Play Must Go On

They felt sympathy for the dying second daughter-in-law, but since the concubine of the Du Family held more power, their hands were tied.

In the Jie Family, such chaos prevailed that while the legitimate wife of the second son was addressed as the second daughter-in-law, the little concubine was also called Madam. In all of Beijing, except for princes and nobles, probably only the Jie Family had such a situation.

Concubine Du constantly wept, and when the maid of the third young lady came to report that Miss Du was in bad shape, she cried even louder, leading those uninformed to believe she truly shared a deep sisterly bond with Miss Du.

The maids of the third young lady looked down on her with scorn, whispering among themselves, "Our young lady always said that Concubine Du was even better at acting than the actresses in the theater troupes, and it seems she wasn't lying."

"Indeed, look at the way she's crying, covering her face with a handkerchief, her wails breaking heaven's silence, yet not a single tear to be seen."

"The tears aren't there now because the second son hasn't arrived yet, just wait until he gets here and you'll see if she has tears or not."

"That’s true, this wretched woman."

Concubine Du lay prostrate in front of Miss Du’s bed, crying hoarsely, gasping for breath.

"Sister, before father passed away he said you were my only kin. If you leave, what will I have left in this world? There will only be me left in the Du Family, what am I supposed to do..."

Xie Qinyun rolled her eyes and looked at her with scorn.

"Shouldn’t you be happy? If she dies, you’ll have a chance to be the master of the Jie Residence."

Concubine Du removed the silk handkerchief from her face, pointing at the third young lady and sobbing, "Third young lady, I know you don’t like me, but how can you say such things about me? Because of the second son, my relationship with my elder sister wasn’t great, but it hasn’t come to a matter of life and death. Now that she’s on her deathbed, how can I be happy? Third young lady, one must be responsible for their words."

"Ha! You vile woman!" Xie Qinyun stood with her hands on her hips and retorted, "How am I irresponsible with my words? Do you think no one knows how your sister fell into the lotus pond? It was none other than you, the vile woman, who pushed her."

"When did I push her? It was clear that my sister slipped and fell into the pond by accident, and I even jumped in to save her. Unfortunately, I don’t know how to swim and ended up being the one rescued, sister, your fate is indeed lamentable..."

"Someone saw you push her into the water with their own eyes."

"Who? If you don’t clarify, I will... I will... die right before your eyes!" Concubine Du was confident in her arrangements, certain that no one could have seen her push Miss Du into the water.

Xie Qinyun replied confidently, "I, myself, witnessed it. Isn’t that enough?"

"You... you are framing me."

Xie Qinyun responded with a cold snort, "Why would I bother to frame you? You are just a concubine, nothing more than a servant in the Jie Residence. Even if she dies, you won't have an easy time. You killed a person, don't you understand that murderers must pay with their lives? Haha, you still aspire to become the legitimate wife, it's pure delusion and fantasy. Let me tell you, I will definitely persuade my father to find another wife for my brother, and you shall remain a concubine even if you die."

Xie Qinyun's words made Concubine Du tremble all over.

Her greatest ambition in life was to become the legitimate wife. Her mother was a concubine, and although she was a miss of the Du Residence, she was barely a step above a servant, certainly not a true mistress. After her marriage with Du Xintong, he had a legitimate wife, and she was once again a concubine. She had spent her entire life trying to rid herself of the status of being born out of wedlock and of being a concubine, to become a true mistress, if only for a moment.

She couldn't let this dying girl ruin her grand plan, nor could she act like a rabid dog biting everyone in sight.

To pull off the performance, she made a decision.

Chapter 604: Wisdom in Death

Concubine Du glanced at Gu Youyou, then let out a maniacal laugh at Xie Qinyun and, spotting a pillar, she began to wail loudly, "Third Miss, you wrong me without distinguishing right from wrong, merely because I am a humble concubine with little influence. I cannot defend myself against this injustice, so I can only prove my innocence with death..."

Having said that, she abruptly stood up and, to everyone's astonishment, threw herself against the nearest pillar.

Today was her lucky day, for Gu Youyou was there, and since Gu Youyou was known as the Divine Doctor, capable of curing infertility that even other doctors could not, she surely would save her life.

She, a doctor, could not stand by and watch someone die...

Nobody expected Concubine Du to employ such a tactic. She had already fallen into the water earlier, a fact witnessed by all. If you speak of a self-inflicted injury to gain sympathy, wasn't that enough?

Seeing Concubine Du with her head bleeding from the collision, Gu Youyou sighed, thinking how ruthless the woman was.

If she could be this cruel to herself, of course she would be even crueler to others!

Lin Qianqing's heart skipped a beat, uneasily looking towards Xie Qinyun and whispered, "With her doing this, she's trying to shut you up. Soon these maids and old women will probably say you drove her to hit the pillar. Won't your father directly drive you out? Where would you then have the chance to speak?"

"This despicable woman!" Xie Qinyun clenched her teeth in anger.

Concubine Du, barely alive, was being held by her maid, and the room was overwhelmed with crying.

"Doctor Gu, please save our lady quickly. If the young mistress is gone, and our lady suffers any mishap, how will we explain to the late master of the Du Family?"

Gu Youyou seemed taken aback that Concubine Du would suddenly pull the rug out from under her, but reluctantly stood up to check her injuries.

Xie Qinyun snorted, "Doctor Gu, why save her? It's better if that despicable woman dies."

Xie Qinyun had not expected that despicable woman to outmaneuver her and was so angry she gasped for breath.

Gu Youyou said, "If she dies, how can the play go on?"

If Miss Du had really died, then it would be a different story; she certainly would not save Concubine Du. However, as Miss Du was still alive, if Concubine Du died, it would be hard to justify and both Miss Du and Miss Xie would bear the infamy of causing the death of Concubine Du.

In this era, women valued their reputations above all, and being entrapped by someone like Concubine Du before her death was truly not worth it.

Especially since Xie Qinyun was not yet married; she could not be duped by her.

Lin Qianqing pulled the furious Xie Qinyun aside, allowing Gu Youyou to quietly save the woman.

"We can deal with a person like her later, but now is not the time. Qinyun, alas, you are really unlucky."

"This damned despicable woman!" Xie Qinyun was so angry she didn't even know what else to say, continuing to curse that Du Wanqing was a troublemaker, causing mischief wherever she went.

Lin Qianqing laughed quietly, pulled Xie Qinyun aside, and whispered something in her ear.

After hearing this, Qinyun's anger turned to pleasure.

She nodded meaningfully and glanced at the half-dead Concubine Du, scoffing, "This despicable person did the same to my second sister-in-law back then."

"When women quarrel, it's all about who speaks first and loudest, right and wrong often have little to do with the truth; it's about who takes the initiative." This profound theory, drawn from watching her mother deal with her father's concubines, never failed.

That's why although those concubines were in the right, when it came to her mother, she was the one who called the shots.

This is the principle of 'first impressions are lasting ones.'"

...

Chapter 605: Switching Concepts

Hearing that something had happened at home, the second son, Xie, hurried back to the mansion, his father was farther away and had not yet returned.

As soon as the second son, Xie, returned to the mansion, he went straight to Miss Du's desolate courtyard. The servants all thought this to be strange indeed.

But coincidentally, both of his women happened to be there.

"What happened?"

Upon entering the room, he did not see Miss Du but first noticed Concubine Du in the outer room, who was bandaging her forehead.

He glanced towards Miss Du in the inner room, but upon seeing the pale-faced Concubine Du, he hesitated repeatedly and ultimately did not step forward into the room.

Concubine Du had already awakened, but she had lost quite a bit of blood, which made her complexion appear pale. When she saw the second son, Xie, also had a white bandage wrapped around his head, she struggled to stand up.

She expressed her concern, "My dear, what happened to your head?"

Gu Youyou watched with amusement; these two really made a pair, wearing matching headbands.

The second son, Xie, touched his own head, then asked anxiously, "And what happened to you?"

"I..." Tears welled in Concubine Du's eyes as she looked towards Xie Qinyun, who was quivering with anger nearby.

These two had been playing off each other for years; a single glance was enough to convey her meaning.

The second son, Xie, followed Concubine Du's gaze towards Xie Qinyun, and his expression grew grim as he looked at his sister with disapproval.

"Ayun, tell me what happened. Weren't they supposed to have fallen into the water? How did they also get their heads injured?"

Xie Qinyun glared fiercely at Concubine Du, and angrily said, "This lowly woman bumped into the pillar herself and blamed me. What do you think happened? Believe her or me, second brother, you decide."

"No, it wasn't like that..." Concubine Du never expected Xie Qinyun to play such a card and began to cry in panic and fear. This time, instead of a wailing cry, it was more like a quiet sobbing with tears streaming down her face.

"Dear, I didn't blame the third sister, it was..."

Xie Qinyun did not give Concubine Du a chance to defend herself and interrupted loudly, "Do you dare say it wasn't you who ran into it?"

Concubine Du was stunned, clearly recognizing the bait-and-switch tactic.

That girl had just turned fifteen; when had her mouth become so sharp?

"I, I... It was me who hit the pillar, but that was because..."

Xie Qinyun interrupted her again and said, "There, that settles it. You hit the pillar. What does that have to do with me? And you still deny while blaming me?"

The second son, Xie, grew stern and looked at the panicking and teary-eyed Concubine Du, asking, "Aqing, did Ayun really push you, or did you run into it yourself?"

This question was cleverly asked. The second son, Xie had such a surprisingly intricate thought process, so understanding of others' feelings. Little wonder that Miss Du would suffer such a complete defeat.

Concubine Du was adept at acting; surely Miss Du's disposition could not engage in such theatrics. If not her, then who would take the loss?

Here, no one said that Xie Qinyun pushed Concubine Du, which resulted in the wound on her forehead, yet the second son, Xie had already imagined a whole drama by himself.

It could have been that Xie Qinyun pushed Concubine Du, causing her to hit the pillar. Or it could have been that Concubine Du ran into the pillar herself and then blamed Xie Qinyun.

Had it been Miss Du in place of Xie Qinyun, he would undoubtedly have believed Concubine Du without question.

But now that it was Xie Qinyun, his own sister whom he had raised, he simply could not believe that she would do such a thing.

And what about Concubine Du? They had shared a deep understanding for many years, and she had no grievances with Xie Qinyun, so why would she hurt herself and blame her?

The second son, Xie's mind... at that moment was like a disturbed beehive, a complete mess.

Chapter 606: Cursing Her Speechless

"I... I..." Du Concubine was so shocked she couldn't speak. Her husband was aware of this ruse, wasn't he? Hadn't she always used this tactic of concept-swapping to defeat Du Xintong? Now, Xie Qinyun turned it against her, leaving her brain struggling to keep up.

Seeing Du Concubine stammering, coldness crept into Jie Second Master's eyes, mixing heartache with anger.

He had treated her so well, always considering her. What should he do if she truly was such a malicious woman?

Xie Qinyun was just a young girl. If he sided with her, wouldn’t his sister make a fuss and turn the world upside down?

Ever since their mother died giving birth to his sister, he had raised her himself. No one knew her character better than he did.

"Speak up!" Jie Second Master bellowed angrily.

Xie Qinyun stood to the side and broke into a grin, feeling immensely satisfied.

She thought to herself, Miss Lin’s tactic really worked wonders. If that vile woman dared to bite back, she would immediately curse her to a bloody pulp, leaving her stifled and speechless.

Once the crime was pinned, any defense would be too late.

What she had learned in the Jie Residence had successfully laid a solid foundation for Xie Qinyun to become a victorious player in future battles within the estate and the imperial harem.

The maids and old servants kneeling beside Du Concubine trembled in fear, and they tried to explain for the stunned Du Concubine, "Second Young Master, our Madam didn’t frame the young miss. It was because..."

Xie Qinyun immediately cut her off, "So you’re saying it was I who pushed her?"

"No, that’s not it..." the old servant hastily replied.

"Get out of the way! When the master is speaking, who allowed you—a servant—to open your mouth?" Jie Second Master kicked the old servant who spoke, then fixed a furious gaze on Du Concubine and demanded, "Tell me, what exactly happened?"

In the Jie Residence, when the master spoke, a lesser servant had no right to speak.

No one dared to speak up for Du Concubine anymore, so she said, "I bumped into it myself. Big sister is unwell, I just wanted to express my determination through death..."

Xie Qinyun countered, "What do your life and death have to do with me? Why bring me into it? Dare to frame me, and do you think I'm as easy to bully as Du Xintong, that pushover? Second Brother, you must stand up for me today. I, an unmarried young lady, cannot let Du Concubine unjustly accuse me. Ah, Second Brother..."

Before Xie Qinyun could finish, Jie Second Master had already turned away from her and Du Concubine, lifting the curtain to check on Miss Du.

Du Concubine, filled with shock, hurried to get up and follow.

But her headache was so severe, she ultimately couldn't get up and sat back down.

Gu Youyou said, "Du Concubine, it's your head that's injured; you should be careful. You sit here for now, we'll go in and have a look."

Xie Qinyun gave Du Concubine a triumphant smile, barely stopping herself from spitting on her.

Lin Qianqing followed Gu Youyou into the inner room where Cuiya, with reddened eyes, kept watch. She wasn't crying, just very quiet.

Jie Second Master stood by the bedside, his hand halfway extended, then withdrawn.

Hearing she was dying, he couldn't articulate his feelings. He should be happy, and yet for some reason, there was a stifling discomfort in his chest.

He raised his hand to touch his own head, thinking it might be related to his own head injury.

When she was living well, he had cursed more than once, wishing her dead.

"Jie Second Master, I heard you were about to divorce, but now you're spared the trouble," Gu Youyou said, her gaze falling on Miss Du's face, speaking indifferently.

Jie Second Master paused for a moment, then let out a bitter smile.

Chapter 607: Brought It Upon Oneself

Indeed, the whole of Beijing knows about their divorce. There hasn't been a precedent of divorce among the prestigious families in Beijing, and theirs is the first case, naturally attracting a lot of attention.

"Is there really no hope left?" He couldn't help but ask.

Gu Youyou remained silent; she considered herself a professional doctor, and she'd rather not engage in deceiving others if she could avoid it.

Entering from behind, Xie Qinyun hurriedly said, "Second Brother, I heard from the servants that Second Sister-in-law fell into the water first, followed by Du Concubine. Everyone knows that you dote on Du Concubine, and compared to Second Sister-in-law, her life is deemed more valuable. Therefore, everyone rushed to rescue Du Concubine, and that's how Second Sister-in-law missed the critical moment to be saved."

Jie Second Young Master clenched his fists, his voice heavy, "Then how did they end up in the water?"

"That..." Xie Qinyun smiled and said, "I'm afraid my account of the event might differ from what Du Concubine says. To be fair, I think it's best to wait for Father to return, and then I can tell the story together with Du Concubine. Oh, right, and Cuiya too; today's incident is very peculiar indeed."

Jie Second Young Master was taken aback, his voice stern, "What do you mean? Are you suggesting that..."

Xie Qinyun quickly interrupted him, "Hey, hey, I didn't say anything, Second Brother. Let's just see what Du Concubine has to say. After all, you believe whatever she says. Now that Second Sister-in-law is not going to survive, it doesn't matter; she won't be able to confront you anyway. Whatever you guys say will be considered the truth."

"Qinyun, how can you speak like this?" Jie Second Young Master was somewhat annoyed.

Xie Qinyun said, "Isn't this just the drama I've been watching since I was little? Am I wrong? Don't you believe what Du Concubine says anymore?"

"I only believe the facts!"

"Hehe..." Xie Qinyun snickered scornfully, suddenly finding her second brother both infuriating and pitiable. "Fine, you only believe the 'facts'."

Supporting justice over family, he truly was a blind and heartless man. Du Xintong certainly made a mistake by following him.

Jie the Senior has returned.

The family's troubles had persisted for years, but it had become quieter since Miss Du moved to the side courtyard two years ago, so he hadn't said much about it.

This was the first time in two years that he had stepped into this particular courtyard.

The most desolate courtyard in the residence, could it really be so dilapidated? Alternatively, to his genuine surprise, was there indeed such a ruined place within the Jie Residence?

"Xintong really lives here?" He almost blurted out, can people even live in this place?

The old servant replied, "Indeed, the Second Young Mistress does live here for its tranquility."

Tranquility? It seems like even the rarely inhabited Du Residence would be better than this place.

"No wonder Xintong wants a divorce from Second Master; he actually pushed her to this point."

He couldn’t help thinking that perhaps he was wrong to forcefully keep them together.

On entering the inner courtyard and stepping into the only habitable room, he saw, as before, Du Concubine weeping softly in the outer chamber with a white cloth tied around her head, soaked with quite a bit of fresh blood.

Jie the Senior paused, his face showing undisguised disgust.

"What play are you performing now?"

Du Concubine lifted her head, her face showing fear.

She had always been afraid of Jie the Senior. "I... I hurt myself on my own."

She understood Jie Second Young Master as well as Jie the Senior; he despised her, and if she claimed that she was so distressed by Xie Qinyun’s words that she had hit herself, it would only make Jie the Senior loathe her even more.

Just then, she suddenly came to a realization.

Chapter 608: I am Guilty

Previously, she could coax Second Young Master Xie into believing her and protecting her at every turn, merely because he liked herself and despised Du Xintong. But Xie Qinyun was different; she was their blood relative. Even if he trusted her greatly, he wouldn’t be biased to such an extent.

This collision was a miscalculation.

She sighed softly, weeping quietly.

"Elder sister fell into the water, and Doctor Gu said she’s afraid it might be too late. I’m truly scared, scared that our late father will blame me for not being able to save elder sister, so I... just wanted to die with her and be done with it."

Master Xie never believed a word that Concubine Du had said, merely snorting as he flung his sleeve and strode towards the inner room.

As she watched the curtain rise and fall, Concubine Du took a deep breath, forcing the tears that had flowed down her cheeks back down her throat.

If she were dead, all she'd have to do is get through this one ordeal, and everything would be fine.

"Madam, what do you think of this?" The maid at Concubine Du's side was truly worried, feeling that this time it wouldn't be so easy to get through.

Concubine Du sighed, "First help me in. Whatever is coming will come. I've weathered great storms and am on the verge of success; I cannot afford an accident now."

Du Xintong's bedroom was dark and damp yet very clean.

Upon entering, Master Xie's eyes reddened at the sight of Du Xintong's sallow complexion. He whispered with a heavy sigh, "Had I foreseen this, I would have granted you a divorce long ago. Brother Du, it is Huanzhi who has failed you...

You entrusted your children to me with your dying breath, and I've failed to raise one and to protect the other. If it weren't for me, she would not have met with such a fate at such a young age..."

At this point, he choked up and could not continue, turning to Gu Youyou, "Doctor Gu, is there really no hope? I beg you to save Xintong's life at any cost, whatever the price, I am willing to pay."

Rumors had it that Master Xie was a man of deep loyalty and affection, and it seemed to be true.

Gu Youyou remained silent, only showing a look of difficulty.

Xie Qinyun quickly stood up and said, "Father, please don’t distress Doctor Gu any further. Doctor Gu was ill herself, resting at the residence, when I insisted on bringing her here to save a life. Had Doctor Gu not arrived in time, how could Second Sister-in-law have had the breath left to wait for your return? She would’ve been gone."

Just then, as if by chance, they saw Concubine Du being supported by a maid as she entered. Qinyun glared at Concubine Du and huffed, "I didn’t expect Doctor Gu’s trip not only failed to revive Second Sister-in-law but instead ended up saving Concubine Du. Concubine Du’s arrival is rather timely; don’t you think you should explain exactly how today’s drowning came to be?"

With Qinyun’s words, all eyes turned toward Concubine Du. After so many years of acting, her emotions were easily feigned. Pushing away the maid supporting her, she fell to her knees with a thud, and as if on cue, began to weep pitifully.

"Master Xie, dear husband, today’s incident is indeed Wanqing’s fault..."

Similarly, Master Xie did not allow Concubine Du to call him father, thus neither of his two daughters-in-law had ever called him such.

His brow furrowed, he said, "Tell me precisely what happened. If there’s half a lie, I will hand you over to the Governor’s Office for judgment."

Now that Miss Du had turned out like this, Master Xie was filled with guilt.

And immense heartache as well.

An old friend had entrusted his children to his care with his last breath, and what had begun as a good relationship between two sisters brought into the family had, in less than two years, escalated to a life-and-death feud.

If it indeed turned out that Miss Du’s death was caused by Miss Du the Second, should he exact capital punishment on her? She was the only bloodline left of Judge Du.

Chapter 609: Concubine Du’s Argument

Someone had already died, and if another were to die, how would he face his friends from the past in the underworld after death...

It was all that beast's fault.

With these thoughts, Mr. Jie glared angrily with bloodshot eyes, shifting his man-eating gaze from Concubine Du to Jie Er Gongzi.

Concubine Du lay prostrate on the ground, slowly raising her head to look at Mr. Jie. Seeing his dispirited appearance and realizing he had no intention of helping her up, her heart grew cold.

How could this be? In such a situation, wasn't he always on her side?

She glanced at the person lying on the bed, her heart skipping a beat.

Could it be because she was about to die?

Ha, fine, since she was going to die, why should she bother with a dead person?

Concubine Du wiped her tears and began to speak softly.

"It was like this: today, as usual, I brought elder sister's favorite snacks to see her, and we talked about father and... about her soon leaving the Jie Residence. She said she was leaving and planned to take the letters our father left us when he died. Those letters were placed in a box by elder sister and me when we first entered the residence and buried under the willow tree next to Lotus Pond Waterside Pavilion. Later, we took a spade and dug up the box under the willow tree.

But the ground by the pond was slippery, and elder sister had been squatting for too long while digging for the box, felt dizzy, and then... she accidentally fell into the lotus pond..."

"Then how did you fall in?" The person who brought the news clearly said that both of you fell in.

Concubine Du’s tears went from a drizzle to a downpour as she continued, "When I saw elder sister fall in, and no one was on the shore to help at that moment, I hastily went down to save her. The situation was desperate, and I forgot... that I couldn’t swim..."

Xie Qinyun said coldly, "Forgot that you couldn’t swim? So you jumped in, causing all the servants who went into the water to save someone to focus on you. They saved you first, which delayed the rescue of my second sister-in-law at the critical moment?"

"I didn’t mean for this to happen, sob sob..." Concubine Du cried with a look of terror and deep sorrow.

Xie Qinyun sneered, "I think you didn’t intend to save her at all. You deliberately jumped into the water to harm her. Who knows? Maybe second sister-in-law falling into the water wasn’t an accident. It was intentionally done by you, wasn’t it, Concubine Du?"

"I didn’t!" Concubine Du shook her head continuously, crying out loud, "Third Miss, why are you framing me? I never intended to harm my elder sister..."

After finishing, she crawled over to grab the hem of Jie Er Gongzi’s robe, crying piteously with tear-streaked cheeks, "Husband, you know what kind of person I am. How could I harm my elder sister? You know, ever since I fell into the water a few years ago, I’ve been very scared of it. If it weren’t for my nervousness about elder sister, how could I possibly jump in?"

Jie Er Gongzi, snapping out of his daze, saw the woman crying her eyes out, tremblingly raised his hand, and wiped away her tears, "I believe you, this is just an accident!"

The onlooking crowd felt like they were watching a melodrama.

Gu Youyou sat in front of the bed and began to administer acupuncture on the arm of Miss Du.

What’s the use of expecting decency from such despicable people? Should she expect him to bring her justice?

With death approaching, what was there to fear?

Meanwhile, Xie Qinyun had no intention of letting Concubine Du off the hook, saying, "That’s your story, but just now, I asked my second sister-in-law’s maid, and it wasn’t as you described."

She gave Cuiya a meaningful look. Once given permission by her mistress to speak, Cuiya immediately knelt down.

Chapter 610: Cuiya’s Outburst

Cuiya was truly crying, her eyes red and swollen, her throat hoarse from sobbing. Next to the feigned tears of Du Concubine, the effect was immediate and striking.

Cuiya looked much more convincing—anyone with eyes would be more inclined to believe her.

Master Jie sighed softly, "Don’t be too sad, don’t be afraid, just tell us everything that happened today exactly as it happened."

Cuiya kowtowed and then said with a hoarse voice, "This servant and the young lady were in the courtyard today when Du Concubine came to see her. She dismissed the maids right away, saying she had private words for my mistress. I was taken outside the courtyard by Du Concubine’s maids, and truly, I didn’t know what they discussed. Not long after, the young lady and Du Concubine came out with a shovel."

"I followed them, all the way to the edge of the lotus pond, then, Du Concubine’s maids pulled me away to another place. They said that the two young ladies were to make amends today, and told me not to disturb them. However, it wasn’t long before I... I heard Du Concubine’s cries for help. When I ran back to the lotus pond, I saw my young lady already in the water, and it was at that time Du Concubine jumped in as well."

"The servants who went into the water to rescue pulled Du Concubine out first, even though they saw that our young lady was barely hanging on and didn’t save her first. By the time they went to rescue my mistress after saving Du Concubine, it was... it was already too late..."

Master Jie was furious and pointed at Du Concubine, demanding, "Why did you jump in after seeing that people were already rescuing?"

"I... I was worried about my sister, I didn't think it through," Du Concubine replied in terror.

Master Jie's second son was deeply grieved, yet when he saw the dying girl lying on the bed, he wanted to speak up for Du Concubine but ended up swallowing his words.

"Why did everyone save you first, and not Xintong who obviously fell into the water before you?"

Cuiya cried out, "That's because, in this Jie Residence, there's only one mistress in their eyes, and that is Du Concubine. What is our young lady? Despised by the second young master, she's less than a servant. At least I get to wear the uniforms distributed by the residence, but what about my young lady? She wears clothes brought from the Du family. If those clothes are too small, she adds some fabric to alter them herself. Too old, and she wouldn't dare throw them away, as though fearing that without them, she would have no clothes to cover her body even in death.

"We eat the leftovers from the kitchen, the leftovers from what Du Concubine has eaten. When has my young mistress ever suffered such humiliation in the Du family? Yet, here in the Jie family, she lives a life worse than that of pigs and dogs."

Somehow this maid summoned a surge of primal strength, perhaps from being repressed for so long. She used her raspy voice to accuse them of the suffering they'd endured these years while pointing at the dilapidated room and crying, "Look at this house. When it rains, we have to catch the water with a basin, or else the room would flood. And this oil lamp, when the third young lady asked me why we didn't light it brighter, my mistress didn't let me explain then, but I will tell you now—it's because we don't have oil. Du Concubine controls the distribution in the house, giving us just a small bottle of oil every two months. If we burn the lamp too brightly, how would it last..."

Du Concubine was already scared out of her wits, but she still instinctively defended herself, "No... it wasn't like that, you did this on purpose, lived so miserably on purpose, just to gain everyone's sympathy. This courtyard is in ruins—I had sent for people to repair it, but everyone I sent was chased away by you, saying no one is allowed to step half a foot into this courtyard. My husband, I have told you about this before, you knew it, and you said to let it be, didn't you?"