

## **Noble Wife 111**

### Chapter 111 A Misunderstanding

Ming Xian'er's words successfully drew Qu Moying's interest. "The Crown Princess's private maid was killed by Princess Ji's maid?" looking at Ming Xian'er's nervous face, she asked.

"Yes, it's true. That maid is not the one who follows Princess Ji around right now. It is the other one. On...on the Crown Prince's wedding night, I went to take a look and saw the two maids brought to the Eastern Palace by the Crown Princess. But one of them died that night. She...she was pushed off the Linyuan Pavilion by Princess Ji's maid," Ming Xian'er stuttered.

Her words didn't make sense because of her nervousness, hard to understand.

Ming Xian'er had never told anyone about it before.

That night, she heard that assassins broke into the Eastern Palace and went to hide in the Linyuan Pavilion in terror. She saw a woman in red escaping into the Linyuan Pavilion from the spot she was. But many people were wearing red clothes that day, celebrating the Crown Prince's wedding. What's more, she was staying far away, so she couldn't see the woman's face.

Later, another woman in red ran into the pavilion too.

Ming Xian'er soon heard a woman's angry voice, screaming and cursing. Then she saw red clothes fluttering in the air – a woman in red fell off the Linyuan Pavilion.

She was too far to hear what they said.

The splash was loud – clearly, something fell clumsily into the water. Ming Xian'er immediately realized she had witnessed a murder. She covered her mouth with her eyes wide open, not daring to utter any sound. If someone noticed her presence, she would never leave this place alive!

"You were there too?" It was indeed a piece of surprising news for Qu Moying. She didn't expect Ji Youran to be a witness to her death scene. Since Ji Youran planned to kill her in advance, she must have

driven everyone away from there. Ji Youran wouldn't let anyone unrelated have the chance to see her crime.

After all, the person she planned to murder was the Crown Princess, her own cousin, after she accompanied the Crown Princess to the Eastern Palace. If anyone knew it, she would be accused of a severe crime.

"Yes, I was there. After assassins broke into the Eastern Palace, I wanted to run toward the Crown Princess's yard because I thought it was a safer place with many guards around. However, it was too dark to see the road. After a few turns, I accidentally arrived at the Linyuan Pavilion. I found it a good hiding spot since it was quiet without anyone around. No one was going to find me there."

"Right after I hid, I saw women running into the pavilion. I was somewhere under the Linyuan Pavilion, but it was too far for me to see their faces clearly. I could only see their red clothes. Both...both of them were in red clothes, maid...maid's clothes."

Ming Xian'er's face turned pale in fear as her body shivered.

She still could feel the terror when she recalled that night.

After she saw a woman in red fall off the Linyuan Pavilion, one of the two maids sneaked out and passed by her. She recognized her face – it was one of the Crown Princess's private maids, now working for Ji Youran. As for the other maid, she had never seen her walking out again.

The next day, rumors started to spread that one of the Crown Princess's private maids went missing and might've died outside of the Eastern Palace.

With all the clues connecting together, Ming Xian'er felt she figured out the truth. Ji Youran murdered one of the Crown Princess's maids while the other one was already her pawn.

"You mean on the wedding day, Princess Ji killed one of the Crown Princess's private maids, and then the Crown Princess was severely injured?" Qu Moying bit her lip hard and asked slowly.

“Yes, it must be the truth. After the Crown Princess was injured, her body condition didn’t get any better, and she even passed away in the end. I suspect Princess Ji was involved in it as well.” Ming Xian’er kept nodding at her. “That night, I heard people talking and screaming in the Linyuan Pavilion. I was too far to hear them clearly, but I’m sure one maid died. She died in the lake under the Linyuan Pavilion.”

Qu Moying clenched the hanky with her trembling hand. Only she knew the truth – it was her, not her maid pushed off the Linyuan Pavilion by Ji Youran and died. Ming Xian’er witnessed the whole thing, but she mistook Ji Hanyue for her maid Wei Yu.

There was not only one path to the Linyuan Pavilion. She and Ji Youran went up to the Linyuan Pavilion from the other side, so Ming Xian’er didn’t see them. To her surprise, both of her private maids were there with her. Wei Yu probably was subdued and couldn’t make any sound.

Since the Crown Prince didn’t announce her death immediately, her missing maid became the most vital clue to fight against him. But was Wei Yu still alive? Qu Moying knew it was almost impossible but couldn’t help hoping.

She took a deep breath to suppress the rage in her heart. “Do you have evidence?”

“Fourth Lady Qu, I don’t have any evidence, but I know Princess Ji was not really taking care of the Crown Princess. After Princess Ji moved into the Eastern Palace, she has occupied herself with handling all the internal affairs here. She probably went to the Crown Princess’s yard once a day, at the most. The Crown Princess’s death was definitely caused by her. What’s more, one of the Crown Princess’s private maids went missing on her wedding day, and the other one is working for Princess Ji now. Fourth Lady Qu, if you don’t believe what I’ve said, you can just ask around.”

Ming Xian’er’s voice was firm, her face pale and flustered. If her words were spread out, she would definitely lose her life. However, she believed in Fourth Lady Qu. She put a big bet on Qu Moying’s willingness to avenge the Crown Princess.

When Ming Xian’er went to the Qu’s Mansion before, Fourth Lady Qu mentioned the Crown Princess in front of her. That encounter made Ming Xian’er realize every rumor about Fourth Lady Qu was false.

“You mean Princess Ji killed the Crown Princess?” Qu Moying calmed herself down and asked sternly.

"It must be. I want to reveal the truth to the public, but I'm just an insignificant concubine. It will only take an order for Princess Ji to get rid of me. I don't dare to anything," said Ming Xian'er.

"So, what do you want from me?" Qu Moying's eyes became calmer. "I'm just a vice minister's daughter. Even though I know the truth now, what can I do?"

"Fourth Lady Qu, there must be something you can do," Ming Xian'er sounded agitated. "Princess Ji came to the Eastern Palace as the Crown Princess's cousin, so can you, Fourth Lady Qu."

"You mean I can move into the Eastern Palace as the Crown Princess's cousin and marry the Crown Prince as his second wife?" Qu Moying raised her brow and sneered, figuring out Ming Xian'er's idea.

"No. Your situation is different, Fourth Lady Qu." Ming Xian'er shook her head. "Princess Ji moved into the Eastern Palace with the reason of nursing the Crown Princess. She said the Crown Princess wrote her a letter and begged her to come. It must be faked. I heard the Crown Princess had been unconscious after the wedding. How could she write letters in a coma? But Fourth Lady Qu, you don't need to do these. What Princess Ji did was suspicious enough, let alone using the same reason again."

"Then what should I do?" Qu Moying squinted her darkened eyes.

"Fourth Lady Qu, if my guess is correct, you are nothing like the dumb, ugly lady in the rumors. If your appearance is ugly, no one else in the world can be described pretty." Ming Xian'er's eyes fell on Qu Moying, staring at her sharply.

The long and wide veil covered half of Qu Moying's face. Her lips had the color of fresh rose and a beautiful shape. Her fair skin looked even smoother than the best ceramic, matching well with her whole temperament. Although Ming Xian'er couldn't see Qu Moying's entire face, she was sure Fourth Lady Qu was indeed a beauty.

All the years traveling with the opera group taught Ming Xian'er to read people. The girl standing in front of her was definitely not ugly but a stunning young lady. However, people were all misled by the veil and the rumors. Although they saw Qu Moying's half face, they still thought she was just good-looking.

Both appearance and temperament could make a beauty. Ming Xian'er believed her own judgment.

Everyone looked down on Fourth Lady Qu, but her beauty was actually peerless.

"Fourth Lady Qu, you were framed by Second Madam Qu before. Although you were treated by an Imperial Doctor, you have not fully recovered yet and can stay here longer. I heard the Crown Prince has some interest in you too. Before you leave, I think you should go to express your gratitude to the Crown Prince. If..." Ming Xian'er cast a glance at Qu Moying and took a pause. Clearly, she was hinting that Qu Moying could seduce the Crown Prince.

Qu Moying could marry into the Eastern Palace but with a different reason. After all, when Ji Youran came, the Crown Princess was still alive, so the reason Ji Youran used made sense. But it would be weird if Qu Moying used the same reason again. Ming Xian'er thought Fourth Lady Qu could surely use another reason.

Fourth Lady Qu was a poor lady who lost her mother in people's eyes. Moreover, her father didn't like her and didn't care about her at all. After losing her engagement, she became all alone, not having anyone's support. It would make sense if the Crown Prince married Fourth Lady Qu as his second wife to take care of her in the name of the Crown Princess.

Fourth Lady Qu's situation was truly pitiful, and she couldn't possibly find another fiancé as decent as Young Master Yongning. If the Crown Prince took Fourth Lady Qu in, people wouldn't have any objections but feel the Crown Prince's kindness. They might even think the Crown Prince did it because of his love for the Crown Princess.

Of course, not everyone would have the same opinion, so it would still be risky for the Crown Prince. Therefore, the only person who could convince him was Qu Moying herself.

If the Crown Prince was attracted by Qu Moying, nothing would be a problem, same for Ji Youran before.

Ming Xian'er trusted her own judgment. Fourth Lady Qu was an intelligent lady and could surely understand her implication. Ming Xian'er heard that Fourth Lady Qu was having a tough time in the Qu's

Mansion because of her malicious step-mother. For Fourth Lady Qu, her suggestion should be the best way out.

Qu Moying glanced over the curtain on the room's side door and noticed a slight movement. She looked down and then saw a shoe passing by.

Quietly, her lips curled up. As she expected, Ji Youran's maid was eavesdropping on them. She had been observing all the time and remembered the maid came when Ming Xian'er hinted her to marry into the Eastern Palace. Ming Xian'er was almost whispering, so the maid had to get closer to hear them clearly.

There was no movement near the curtain before, which meant this maid was discreet. She only approached after Qu Moying and Ming Xian'er started talking.

"You misunderstand it." Qu Moying curled her lips into a sarcastic smile. She took out a piece of paper from her sleeve and secretly showed it to Ming Xian'er. This note was prepared by her before she came.

Her thought was nothing too different than Ming Xian'er's, but the one who married into the Eastern Palace wouldn't be her. She'd rather die again than tie her life with Pei Luo'an's again. She didn't care about the position of the Crown Princess. One day, she would tear this label off Ji Hanyue too.

The so-called Crown Princess title was an insult and shame for her in the past life.

But Ji Youran was still daydreaming about becoming the Crown Princess, using her as an excuse. Qu Moying wouldn't let her plan succeed.

Knowing Pei Luo'an's personality, she was sure about one thing. Ji Youran had already moved into the Eastern Palace, which meant Pei Luo'an didn't think she was qualified enough to be the next Crown Princess...

Chapter 112 Leaving the Gifts in the Eastern Palace

“Her Majesty will soon start to pick the next Crown Princess among the noble ladies!” There were only a few words on the note. After making sure Ming Xian’er saw them clearly, Qu Moying put back the piece of paper and nodded at her. Then she turned around and walked to the side door connecting the altar room.

She wouldn’t support Ming Xian’er’s unrealistic plan, but she would still offer her a way out to ease her worry.

Hearing her footsteps, the maid outside hurriedly hid.

Then she saw Qu Moying show up at the side door with her two maids, without Ming Xian’er.

Qu Moying entered the altar room again and bowed to the coffin. Then she left with her two maids.

After seeing her hint, Ming Xian’er should know what to do as a smart girl. Ji Youran must think she was only one step away from the official hostess of the Eastern Palace, so did many people. After all, she married the Crown Prince because of the Crown Princess and had such a virtuous reputation.

But what if Qu Moying secretly spread out some different rumors? They were said to be rumors, but Qu Moying believed it was the truth.

Ji Youran used every means to get rid of her to become the Crown Princess. But there was one thing she had never considered – the most significant reason why Pei Luo’an married Ji Hanyue was her father.

It was not because of his position as Earl Ling’an but the Suppressor General. Ji Yong’an, Ji Youran’s father, could become the next Earl Ling’an after her father’s death. Still, he couldn’t possibly become the next Suppressor General. Ji Hanyue’s father got the position because of his countless victories on the battlefield. He earned it with his own hard word.

Ji Hanyue’s father’s death embodied the decline of the Ji Family. Ji Youran thought that with her father becoming the next Earl Ling’an, she was nothing different from Ji Hanyue. But in actuality, the gap between them was enormous. Ji Hanyue was qualified to be the Crown Princess, but Ji Youran was not.

Moreover, Qu Moying wouldn't let Ji Youran's family get the earl position.

For Pei Luo'an, everything was about power and status.

No matter what he had promised Ji Youran or how he misled her, it was time for Qu Moying to destroy Ji Youran's unrealistic daydream.

Seeing Ji Youran's status was only below the Crown Prince's, everyone in the Eastern Palace must've thought Ji Youran would become the next Crown Princess. But what if some different rumors started to spread out? What if Pei Luo'an began to pick the candidates among other noble ladies, and even the empress intervened in the situation?

How could Ji Youran guarantee herself to climb up to the position of the Crown Princess?

After her arrogance was challenged, Ji Youran would not have enough energy to find Ming Xian'er trouble. After all, Ming Xian'er was just an insignificant concubine whose name couldn't even be recorded on the royal family tree. At the most, Ji Youran would just find a chance to vent her anger on Ming Xian'er.

Her main enemies would be other noble ladies, those potential candidates for the Crown Princess.

Qu Moying believed Ming Xian'er would understand it and direct the situation. If she was a useless person, the Crown Prince wouldn't bring the whole opera group into the Eastern Palace just for her.

Standing at the altar room's door, Qu Moying looked back at the spacious, solemn place and felt ironic. This was the only thing she got from her marriage with the Crown Prince – this vast, pure-white altar room. She was indeed blind in her past life...

She walked down the stairs and strolled to her yard. Tomorrow was the day she packed things up and went back home.

"Moying, where have you been?" When Qu Moying arrived at her yard, Qu Xuexin was at the door. It seemed she had been waiting for a while.



"I went to visit the Crown Princess's altar room," Qu Moying curtsied to her and said. They lived together in the same yard, but it didn't mean they had to be together all the time.

Or to say, the time they spent together here was not that much. Qu Xuexin would come to accompany her for a while. But whenever she said she was tired, Qu Xuexin would leave immediately and not disturb her again.

"Why didn't you ask me to go with you?" Qu Xuexin asked softly.

"When I left before, I saw your door was closed and thought you were not in your room. So, I went out by myself. First Sister, if you want to mourn the Crown Princess, you can go right now," said Qu Moying.

Qu Xuexin's door had been pretty much always closed. Sometimes she would go out, but most of the time, she just stayed in her room, not making any sound. It was indeed hard to tell if she was there or not.

"Emm...I'll pass it. I don't want to go there by myself. Moying, before we leave tomorrow, let's go to the altar room for the last time!" Qu Xuexin thought for a second, shook her head, and said.

"Okay," Qu Moying nodded.

"Moying, when you were gone, Princess Ji sent some gifts to you, and I received them for you. You can come and take a look," as she walked inside, Qu Xuexin said softly.

"Princess Ji sent some gifts over?" Qu Moying raised her brow. Ji Youran still had time to do this?

"Yes. I put those gifts in my room first. Come and take a look," said Qu Xuexin. Qu Moying followed her to the main room and immediately noticed the gift boxes on the table.

Qu Xuexin walked up and opened one of the boxes. "They are just some cloth and accessories like hairpins. I don't see anything too valuable, so I received them for you."

Inside the opened box lied some cloth. Only by the looks of it, Qu Moying could tell it was high-quality cloth, probably a tribute to the royal family.

“First Sister, we are here because my body needs time to recover. We can’t accept gifts from Princess Ji at a time like this! The Eastern Palace is still holding a funeral. If we leave here with these gifts, how will other people think about us?” Qu Moying shook her head, frowning at the boxes on the table. It felt inappropriate to let others see them leaving with gift boxes.

They were staying in the Eastern Palace now, which was already a disturbance. Moreover, Qu Moying was a lady not favored by her family. She had nothing to make her deserve Princess Ji’s so many gifts. Even if Princess Ji sent them to show her care in the name of the Crown Princess, she didn’t need to send so many of them.

“But...I already took it. What can we do now? Give them back to her?” Qu Xuexin started to feel flustered and hurriedly asked for Qu Moying’s opinion. Clearly, she didn’t have a mind of her own.

Naturally, they couldn’t return the gifts that were already accepted. Otherwise, it would disrespect the Eastern Palace, which they couldn’t afford.

“We’ll leave them here tomorrow!” After a second thought, Qu Moying said, “If Princess Ji sends them again to our mansion, we can tell her that we accidentally forgot them here because we were too busy mourning the Crown Princess.”

Before they left, they had to mourn the Crown Princess one more time. If they brought these gifts to the altar room, it would be a disrespect for the Crown Princess.

These gifts came at the worst timing. Even though other people wouldn’t know when they left the guest yard, Ji Youran would know. She surely knew when was the right time to send these gifts.

Quietly, Qu Moying curled up her lips. She was not afraid the maids here would tell Ji Youran about Ming Xian’er and her conversation. She was destined to make Ji Youran her enemy.

The more arrogant Ji Youran was, the more Qu Moying wanted to smash her arrogance hard.

The next day, Qu Moying left those gifts in the guest yard as she said. Then she went to the altar room with Qu Xuexin again and got ready to leave. To her surprise, she ran into Ji Youran at the altar room's door.

Surrounded by a large group of servants, Ji Youran looked haggard and a bit feeble. But when her eyes met Qu Moying's, she still showed a faint smile with a trace of tenderness that would leave a good impression on anyone who saw her.

The exact same smile made Ji Hanyue wholeheartedly trust this cousin.

She had never thought one day, her cousin, the perfect lady in everyone's eyes, would push her to hell.

"Cousin, are you heading back now? Have you fully recovered?" After Qu Moying curtsied to her, Ji Youran asked softly, with concern in her eyes.

The veil on Ji Youran's face before was taken off. Except for her still hurting old wound, the skin on her face had recovered.

"Thank you, Your Royal Highness. I'm fine now!" Qu Moying's respectful attitude showed a hint of distance. Instead of walking up, she even took a step back.

This step made people feel she was not close to Ji Youran.

"Did the Imperial Doctor tell you to be careful with anything?" Ignoring Qu Moying's deliberate indifference, Ji Youran continued to ask with concern.

"The Imperial Doctor said it just needs some time to fully recover. All I need to do is use some medicine," answered Qu Moying.

"I'm glad to hear that. I can't believe this happened to you in front of the Crown Princess's coffin. It was... If you need any help after going back, feel free to tell me about it. The Crown Princess is gone, so

I'll be your cousin for her." Ji Youran surely made herself look like a good cousin by supporting Qu Moying.

Her pretentious acting made Qu Moying sneer inwardly. It was surprising that Ji Youran was still trying to improve their relationship after hearing the maid's report. What a cunning person she was! No wonder she couldn't notice the truth in her past life.

Actually, in her past life, Ji Youran sometimes still gave herself away, but Ji Hanyue had never considered the possibility. Now when she recalled her past, not everything was clueless. It was all because of her own mistrust.

"My cousin was my cousin, but Your Royal Highness, you are prestigious Princess Ji. It's not my place to bother you on such trifles." Qu Moying curtsied to her again, fully showing her respect but no intimacy. Then she left with her group without any hesitation. She had made herself clear that she didn't want to get close to Ji Youran at all.

She did it on purpose because she could guarantee that the more repulsive she was, the more Ji Youran wanted to approach her.

Qu Moying pissed her off and even started to suspect the Ji Family. With Ji Youran's personality, she would not go easy on Qu Moying.

The more Qu Moying provoked her, the more irritated Ji Youran would get. Qu Moying didn't need to do anything since Ji Youran would not let her go anyway. It just so happened that Qu Moying wouldn't go easy on her either!

No matter how sophisticated Ji Youran was, she almost lost her temper, repeatedly provoked by Qu Moying's arrogance. The faked smile still remained on her face, but a trace of irritation showed up in her eyes. She cast a glance at Qu Xuexin, standing behind Qu Moying as her smile started to fade away.

Feeling her glance, Qu Xuexin panicked and lowered her head in a hurry. While she curtsied to Ji Youran, her whole body was stiff.

"First Sister, let's go!" Qu Moying stopped and looked back at Qu Xuexin.

"Alright!" Qu Xuexin hurriedly stood up, curtsied to Ji Youran again, and rushed to catch up with Qu Moying.

Watching the two ladies leaving, a hint of maliciousness flashed across Ji Youran's eyes. She would never let Qu Moying have any chance to marry the Crown Prince and get into the Eastern Palace. Her mother's suggestion was better for the current situation, and Xiao had already implied her intention to the Qu Family. It should happen soon...

### Chapter 113 The Scum Father's Disgusting Suggestion

After they arrived at the mansion, they visited the Old Lady first. The Old Lady checked Qu Moying's arms and found the skin not swollen anymore, only looking a bit redder than usual. It was a relief for her. Then she dismissed her two granddaughters to let them have some rest first. After all, their life in the Eastern Palace was still not as convenient as back home.

After Qu Moying went back to the Qianyue House and got changed, a maid came to visit. She was sent by Qu Zhizhen, asking her to have a talk in the study.

Qu Moying washed herself up and headed to Qu Zhizhen's study with Yu Chun.

The study was located at the outer yard, quite far from the Qianyue House. After several turns, they finally saw the yard where sat the study. It was the first time Qu Zhizhen formally called her over after she came back to the mansion. Before, she only met him in the Old Lady's yard or the garden.

Every time Qu Moying saw him and curtsied to him, this vice minister would just directly pass by, totally ignoring his daughter.

Now that he sent a servant to call her over in such a formal way, it was unusual but not surprising.

Qu Moying heard that Yu's illness was severe this time, and she was still in a coma. Many doctors were seen coming and going in the Qu's Mansion.

After she arrived at the study's door, the young servant went inside to report her arrival. Soon, he came out and bowed to her respectfully, "Fourth Lady, please go in."

Qu Moying nodded and stepped into the study with Yu Chun. Qu Zhizhen, in a dark blue casual outfit, was sitting behind the wide desk, sizing her up with a stern look on his face.

She calmly walked up and curtsied to him, "Father."

Only silence answered her. Qu Moying knew this was Qu Zhizhen's test on her. She remained in the same posture, not wobbling at all. She had been through strict training as Ji Hanyue and could hold the position longer than ordinary ladies. Her body looked totally stable.

After a while, Qu Zhizhen's voice rang, "You can stand up now!"

"Yes, Father!" Gracefully, Qu Moying straightened up and took two steps back aside. Then she lowered her head, obediently waiting for her father's lecture.

Her movement looked smooth and flawless. The way she curtsied was even more standard and skillful than Qu Qiuyan. She didn't seem to be a young woman who was never trained on royal etiquette at all. On the opposite, Qu Moying's behavior was even more elegant than any noble lady Qu Zhizhen had met before.

Was she really the blind little daughter he left in the village because she had no value?

"You've learned royal etiquette?" Qu Zhizhen asked sternly.

"My cousin once sent one of her grannies to teach me," Qu Moying said softly.

Qu Zhizhen never cared about what happened to her in the village, let alone this kind of small detail. As Ji Hanyue in the past life, she also knew that no one in the Ji Family cared about it.

“Can you see things?” Qu Zhizhen nodded as his eyes fell on her face. He totally couldn’t see her eyes behind the long, wide veil.

“I can, but not when the light is too strong,” Qu Moying said honestly.

She would eventually take off the veil one day.

“When will your eyes fully recover?” asked Qu Zhizhen.

“Probably a couple of months later. By then, my eyes should be totally fine.” Qu Moying’s voice was soft, “It’s all thanks to my cousin. She sent a doctor to treat my eyes, and the treatment was very effective.”

Qu Zhizhen was aware of it since Ji Hanyue even sent a person to ask for his opinion. He agreed because he didn’t want to reject Ji Hanyue, the future Crown Princess. As for his daughter’s eyes, he never cared or expected they would be cured.

To his surprise, her eyes were really cured. He frowned at Qu Moying with a sharp look on his face, “I heard your skin suddenly became red and swollen that day. Was it really because of Yu?”

Qu Moying knew Qu Zhizhen called her over because he wanted to ask about what happened in the Eastern Palace. Yu must’ve told him that she didn’t frame Qu Moying, and he still believed in her words.

Regardless of all the facts lying in front of his eyes and all the clues pointing at Yu, Qu Zhizhen still chose to believe Yu’s innocence.

What a loving husband he was to Yu. But why did he treat his ex-wife and daughter so coldly?

“Father, I don’t know how it happened. I just suddenly felt my body was very itchy. Then it started to hurt a lot. I was trying to hold it back, but I couldn’t hold it anymore in the end and passed out,” said Qu Moying calmly.

She had no reason to directly accuse Yu of framing her. No matter what Yu did, she was still Qu Moying's stepmother. Moreover, Qu Zhizhen, who always favored Yu, deeply believed whatever Yu said.

As for Qu Moying, all she needed to do was tell him what she had been through.

"Who had touched your clothes?" asked Qu Zhizhen.

"After the servants sent them to me, I put the clothes aside and started to wear them since the next morning. If I have to point out who touched my clothes, then it should just be my two maids and me." Qu Moying lifted her head and curtsied to Qu Zhizhen, "Father, if you find it suspicious, you can ask Cousin Yue to make an investigation. He told me before that he is an expert at this kind of thing."

It was the manager of the embroidery workshop who sent her the clothes. After giving the clothes to her, she tripped and changed the rest of the clothes to clean ones. Every detail of the whole process indicated that Yu was behind it. If Yue Wenhan or anyone else came to investigate it, all the clues would point to Yu.

Qu Moying guessed that Qu Zhizhen didn't dare to let anyone investigate it.

Why would he do it when he tried every means to get Yu out of trouble?

"How can you let the vice minister of the Dali Temple investigate a family issue? This is not a child's play!" A trace of anger showed up on Qu Zhizhen's face as he remembered the scene when Yue Wenhan blocked him on the street and made him twist his ankle. Yue Wenhan surely had his own reason for doing that. If he invited Yue Wenhan to investigate in his mansion, maybe he would reveal more dirty scandals.

"Then, Father, do you know who's the real culprit behind it?" Behind the veil, Qu Moying's cold eyes fell on Qu Zhizhen, who was irritated by his own embarrassment.

Her heart was filled with disdain toward Qu Zhizhen.



“Enough. This thing is already over. The culprit should be one of the old maids around Yu, but Yu somehow took the blame. You should know the truth, and don’t trust the rumors outside,” Qu Zhizhen said impatiently, still choosing to trust Yu’s explanation.

However, the Old Lady said it was Yu, so did Qu Moying and the outsiders, which already drew his suspicion.

However, Yu was taken into his family by him, and he had his own reason to do so. For this reason and his two children, he couldn’t divorce Yu.

Compared to Yu, Qu Moying was just a daughter he never cared about. Although she was no longer blind, she still lost her engagement and had no value for him at all.

Qu Moying was so angry at this shameless man that she almost laughed aloud. Was he telling her that Yu was innocent? He called her over to let her declare Yu’s innocence for her since Qu Moying’s words as the victim were the most convincing. As long as Qu Moying said an old maid did it, Yu could gradually distance herself from the trouble.

What a brilliant plan!

“Father, do you mean the manager of the embroidery workshop framed me?” Qu Moying lifted her head. Even though her eyes were covered by the veil, Qu Zhizhen could still feel her cold gaze.

“It was indeed the embroidery workshop’s manager’s fault. Yu had punished her after she came back. Yu is still lying in bed because of her sickness. All the family affairs in the mansion have become a mess because no one is handling them. Rumors about our family are spread everywhere. Your grandmother still needs to help with the family affairs at such an old age. Anyway, if this keeps going, it won’t do any good to our family. Your marriage hasn’t been settled yet. Don’t tell me you expect your grandmother to take you out to mingle with others!”

Qu Zhizhen’s voice softened, “Ying, I know I’ve neglected you for years. You finally came back to the mansion but then lost your engagement with the Marquis Yongning’s Family. I won’t ignore you and let this kind of thing happen to you again. After all, we are family. I can ask Yu to help you find a decent husband, at least not worse than Young Master Yongning.”

He talked while standing in Qu Moying's shoes as if he was wholeheartedly thinking for her. As the head of this family, he knew that only harmony could lead his family to prosperity.

However, after all the witnesses and clues proved that Yu was behind it, Qu Zhizhen still wanted Qu Moying to stand out for Yu and declare her innocent. Qu Moying couldn't help but wonder how stupid she was in Qu Zhizhen's eyes.

If she really did as he said, it would tell everyone that she was a stupid, cowardly girl, making her a joke in the capital.

As for her marriage, she never cared about it in the beginning. Yu was determined to help Yu Qingmeng marry into the Marquis Yongning's Family, but Qu Moying never wanted it. After knowing about her engagement with Xu Lipeng, she designed the whole breaking-off situation. Luckily, her plan was a success.

"Father, I'm sorry I can't do that." She looked up at Qu Zhizhen and said in a flat tone, "Many people have already known the truth, including Cousin Yue, Princess Ji, and the Crown Prince. When it happened that day, Princess Ji and the Crown Prince were both there. I heard something else happened between the Crown Prince and Third Sister later."

Qu Zhizhen was such a scum father, trying to use his own daughter as cannon fodder!

Some things could be covered up by lies. Still, the severity of the current situation made it impossible to be covered up!

Qu Moying's words roused a feeling of anxiety in him. Except for Qu Moying, Qu Qiuyan was also involved in trouble when staying at the Eastern Palace. He heard that Lord Jing cold-shouldered Qu Qiuyan and didn't agree to see her, which was another headache for Qu Zhizhen.

He was also reminded that the rumors about Yu spread out from the Eastern Palace after Princess Ji investigated it. Princess Ji was also an innocent victim since Qu Moying helped her wipe tears with her sleeve, making her skin have an allergic reaction too.

"Alright, you should be pretty tired now. Go back to rest first!" Qu Zhizhen fell into silence for a second and dismissed Qu Moying while waving his hand impatiently. It seemed like his original plan was not feasible anymore.

Qu Moying sneered inwardly. She was speechless seeing her scum father still daydreaming about exculpating Yu. Moreover, she even needed to remind him of Ji Youran's involvement in the situation to make him realize how ridiculous and unrealistic his plan was.

Yu was determined to get out of trouble and even convinced Qu Zhizhen to force Qu Moying to prove her innocence. But she forgot Ji Youran was involved too. Qu Moying purposefully wiped Ji Youran's face with her sleeve a few more times than usual. If Qu Moying remembered it correctly, that part on Ji Youran's face was where her old wound should be.

If Yu expected exoneration, she should start from Ji Youran instead of Qu Moying. Of course, Qu Moying didn't think she could destroy Yu by this. However, it would be hard for Qu Zhizhen to pull out this stuck nail.

Soon after Qu Moying walked out of the study, she ran into Qu Qiuyan, who seemed to be in a rush. Seeing Qu Moying, Qu Qiuyan stopped immediately...

#### Chapter 114 A Visitor From the Ji Family

Both of them stopped from a distance.

After a short pause, Qu Moying walked up, curtsied to Qu Qiuyan, and left with Yu Chun immediately. Qu Qiuyan gazed at her coldly but didn't lose her temper this time.

It took her a while to actually hold back her anger. She had already realized she underestimated her stepsister before, and she couldn't let her guard down again. Right now, she finally received a message from Lord Jing. It was not the time to start another fight with Qu Moying. Qu Qiuyan's priority was power now, or all her hard work would become in vain.

After a few steps, Yu Chun made sure that no one was around. Then she looked back and asked in shock, "My lady, how come the Third Lady has such a good temper today?"

Qu Qiuyan and her maid were long gone.

"She is occupied with other things and doesn't have time to deal with me right now," said Qu Moying in a flat tone. Qu Qiuyan had to pass Lord Jing's test first, and it would be a tough one. After all, Pei Yusheng should know better than anyone about Qu Qiuyan's intention when she was alone with the Crown Prince in the altar room. It seemed like Qu Qiuyan hadn't earned his trust back yet.

"My lady, will the Third Lady frame you again?" Sensing Qu Moying's indication, Yu Chun was a bit flustered.

"What do you mean again? Hasn't she always been doing it?" Qu Moying lowered her head and chuckled. She was a thorn in Yu and her daughter's eyes long ago. If Ji Hanyue weren't reborn in Qu Moying's body, Qu Moying would be dead in that fire and long gone.

They set fire to take Qu Moying's life, and technically, their plan succeeded!

A feeling of agitation arose in Yu Chun's heart as she lowered her head slowly. The Second Madam and the Third Lady had never changed their attitude toward the Fourth Lady. Why would she still wish they could stop their scheme?

"My lady, will the Second Madam have her punishment this time?" Looking in the direction of Yu's yard, Yu Chun asked in caution.

"Hard to say." Qu Moying shook her head and looked in the same direction. "The Second Madam have managed the mansion for so long, and she still has her daughter and son. She is not so easy to deal with."

"Then, what should we do?" Yu Chun was a bit scared.

“Nothing much. We can only take one step each time.” Qu Moying shook her head. The faint smile on her face was icy cold. No one knew it better than her that she was no longer the old Qu Moying after her rebirth. Regardless of the hardships, she would walk down the path of revenge firmly, step by step.

Yu Chun was shocked by her determination, also knowing what she said was the truth. Recalling everything the Fourth Lady had been through, she felt sorry for her. But gradually, this feeling turned into anger. Her master had always been a kind person, but those people just couldn't give up on taking her life. If Qu Moying didn't make a move ahead this time, she would be the one in the scandal with the Crown Prince.

Her master's status was different than the Third Lady's. No one would protect her or give her a second chance.

If the Fourth Lady was the one in trouble, the Second Master probably wouldn't spend any effort on helping her. Instead, he might even directly let her “die of illness.”

As for the Fourth Lady's maids like Yu Chun, of course, they would be sold or killed.

“My lady, what's the next plan?” Yu Chun bit her lip to calm herself down. Somehow, her master's composed look eased her anxiety.

Her master was a good-hearted and intelligent girl. Yu Chun believed in her competence to get out of trouble.

“We go back and wait first...” Qu Moying couldn't finish her words as her eyes turned red. Waiting for what? For the announcement of her father's death. Because the Ji Family couldn't hold it anymore.

Her cousin Yue Wenhan told her that he visited the Earl Ling'an's Mansion again but still didn't meet Earl Ling'an. The doctors there all looked busy because Earl Ling'an was at the brink of death. The Crown Princess's death was a big shock for him.

That day, Yue Wenhan stayed outside for a long time before leaving. And he told the Ji Family that he would visit them a few days later.

The Second Master of the Ji Family was in charge of the mansion now, which was Ji Yong'an, Ji Youran's father. He walked Yue Wenhan to the gate and kept apologizing to him. Unlike his useless, contemptible image in the rumors, his attitude and behavior were perfectly well-mannered and honest.

Instead of a douchebag, he looked more like a real gentleman.

Hearing the news from Yue Wenhan, Qu Moying only sneered. Ji Youran's father, Ji Yong'an, was indeed a useless man. He was an official but in name only, having little work to do and indulging himself in dissipation. Once he had trouble, he always asked for Ji Hanyue's father's help.

Earl Ling'an had spent so much effort protecting his younger brother. Moreover, his military power was limited after being affected by Ji Yong'an's trouble. Thus, he couldn't fight at the border like General Liu anymore and had to return to the capital. Since then, his military influence had been largely reduced, no longer the same as Liu Xiangshan's power, who had the same rank.

Everyone thought Ji Yong'an was just an ungrateful douchebag. Still, no one expected him and his family to hold such a wild ambition. They designed to kill Ji Hanyue and her family. Now, Ji Yong'an acted like a competent person, with one clear intention – getting the position of Earl Ling'an. Fearing that people would say he was useless, he acted like a different person than the one in the rumors.

But Qu Moying knew better than anyone what kind of person Ji Yong'an was.

Surprisingly, before her father's death announcement, another piece of news came from the Ji Family.

When the Old Lady called her over, she had just finished lunch and was about to take a nap. After getting the order, she hurriedly washed up and came to the Old Lady's yard. Two old maids stood at the yard's door, whose clothes looked familiar but weren't the Qu Family's uniforms. Qu Moying twisted her brow into a frown.

After entering the room, she saw the Old Lady and another familiar old maid standing in front of her, which somehow gave her a bad feeling. But then she noticed the smile on the old maid's face.

Qu Moying had met her before since she was the chief maid working for Xiao, the Second Madam of the Ji Family.

“Grandmother,” Qu Moying walked up and curtsied to the Old Lady elegantly, holding back the questions in her heart. Why did the Ji Family send her here? With that smile on her face, the old maid didn’t seem like one to announce Earl Ling’an’s death.

“So, this is Fourth Lady Qu. What a stunning, graceful lady!” the old maid sized Qu Moying up and kept praising.

Then she came to bow to Qu Moying.

“Fourth Lady Qu, I’m the Ji Family’s Second Madam’s chief maid. You’ve left Princess Ji’s gifts in the Eastern Palace, so I’m here to send them to you in her name. Also, the Second Madam has gifts for you too, Fourth Lady Qu.”

The chief maid pointed at the gift boxes on the table.

Qu Moying recognized some of the boxes that were purposefully left by her in the Eastern Palace before. The rest of them should be from Xiao.

A trace of confusion flashed across her eyes. Why did Xiao send her gifts now?

“Fourth Lady Qu was the Crown Princess’s cousin. The Crown Princess passes away, but you still have Old Lady Ji, Second Madam Ji, and Princess Ji. They will be glad to let you have a short stay in the Earl Ling’an’s Mansion. Since the two families are related, the connection shouldn’t be cut off,” said the chief maid with a beam.

She made herself pretty clear. Although Ji Hanyue passed away, the two families could still treat each other as relatives, and the relationship could even get closer. Through her words, the Ji Family also showed their support to Qu Moying, which pleased the Old Lady a lot. With a delightful smile, the Old Lady kept nodding.

Old Lady Qu didn’t like how her second son handled things, but she couldn’t do anything about it since he wouldn’t listen to her. If he was willing to take her advice initially, the Qu Family wouldn’t be in such big trouble. The Ji Family’s support toward Qu Moying might help change Qu Zhizhen’s mind.

As his mother, Old Lady Qu knew Qu Zhizhen better than anyone.

This reminded her of Qu Moying's mother, Yue's death. It was truly a pity... If they could support her like this...she wouldn't...

After these years, the Old Lady had her guess for something that her second son didn't know about. The more she thought about it, the more sorry she felt for Yue.

But she realized it too late. If she knew it initially, she wouldn't let her second son marry Yue and let their marriage have such a tragic ending. Among all the people, the most pitiful person was her poor granddaughter Qu Moying.

"I appreciate Old Lady Ji's kindness. It so happens that I want to go visit my uncle since I heard he has been unwell. How about I go there with you right now?" Qu Moying lifted her head and said softly.

Everyone thought she would reject the Ji Family's invitation out of politeness, especially the chief maid, but she didn't.

Before the chief maid came, Xiao taught her many times about how she should say things after being rejected by Qu Moying. Xiao told her that she had to show enough respect and support for this poor lady in a bad situation. This was the best way to please Old Lady Qu.

Earl Ling'an's family proactively reached out and showed their willingness to support Fourth Lady Qu, which should be a great honor for the Qu Family. They even said they wouldn't cut off the contact between the two families even though the Crown Princess passed away. As long as Old Lady Qu was convinced, Xiao's plan would work.

But no one expected Qu Moying to grab the chance and agree immediately. Didn't Second Madam Ji say Fourth Lady Qu had rejected Princess Ji several times? What did she mean by doing this? Why would Fourth Lady Qu want to follow her back home to visit Earl Ling'an?

Second Madam Ji would definitely break her legs if she really brought Fourth Lady Qu back. The invitation was merely a formality to show the Ji Family's kindness.



The smile on the chief maid's face turned stiff. Her plan was ruined in a second. She didn't know what to say but stuttered with a forced smile, "Emm... This..."

"Anything wrong? I can't go visit my uncle?" Qu Moying asked, "Didn't you just say the Ji Family would be glad to have me there? Since my cousin passed away, it's my duty to visit my uncle as a youngster and comfort her for my cousin. I don't want him to be depressed because of grief," said Qu Moying. Her voice sounded like she was smiling, but her face was expressionless.

Her father was long gone. Yet, she still needed to cooperate with those people's lies for now. Thinking about those shameless people who took her father's life but still used his name for their own sake, she almost lost control of the boiling resentment in her heart. She dug her fingernails hard into her palms, feeling the piercing pain...

## Chapter 115 The Marriage Proposal From the Ji Family

"Nothing wrong. It's just...the earl is heavily sick right now. He usually doesn't see guests." The smile on the chief maid's face became even more awkward.

"But I'm not an ordinary guest. He's my uncle, and our families are related. Shouldn't I visit a sick elder in the family?" Qu Moying asked back.

It was natural for a youngster to visit a sick elder unless the two families didn't want to keep in touch.

A second ago, the chief maid said the two families should get closer to each other. But right now, she said Qu Moying was just a guest. Her words were clearly inconsistent, obviously rejecting Qu Moying. Shocked by the maid's rude behavior, everyone looked at her with confusion.

"Emm, I mean the earl is too weak to see people. He doesn't have the energy to meet guests now." The maid's explanation was unconvincing.

Sitting in the center, the Old Lady frowned and suggested, "How about I let Ying's father go visit the earl?"

It was indeed a bit inappropriate for Qu Moying to visit them alone since she was still an unmarried lady. But Qu Zhizhen's identity would make a lot of sense. Even though the earl was lying in bed, he could still go meet him.

"I...I think this is a bit inappropriate. The Second Madam doesn't allow anyone to disturb the earl. Madam, if you really want Fourth Lady Qu's father to visit the earl, I need to go back and report it to the Second Madam first." Tiny beads of sweat started to show up on the chief maid's forehead. The conversation went totally different from Second Madam Ji's prediction.

Everything had become wrong since Fourth Lady Qu asked to visit the earl.

"Madam, since I've sent the gifts here, let me report back to the Second Madam first. Please take your time to consider the thing I mentioned before. The Ji Family proposed it with sincerity." The chief maid from the Ji Family didn't dare to stay any longer. She excused herself to leave after curtsying to Old Lady Qu and Qu Moying.

The Old Lady looked at her in confusion and nodded.

Old Lady Qu's permission was a big relief for the chief maid. In a rush, she left with the people she brought here.

Watching the group from the Ji Family leaving, the Old Lady twisted her brows into a frown. The chief maid's reaction was far away from her expectation. Did they have any other intention?

Noticing the expression on the Old Lady's face, Qu Moying guessed there was something she didn't know about. She walked up, reached out to hold the Old Lady's hand, and asked, "Grandmother, did she say something else before I came?"

Old Lady Qu remained silent as her gaze fell on Qu Moying's face. After a while, she waved her hand and dismissed all the other servants in the room, only letting Granny Wu and Yu Chun stay inside.

“Ying, the Ji Family proposed a marriage,” the Old Lady sighed with no trace of delight on her face. “I thought they came with sincerity, but it doesn’t seem to be like that now. Clearly, they don’t want to get close to us, but why did they propose marriage to you? What’s their intention?”

If the chief maid didn’t reject Qu Moying’s request, the Old Lady thought this marriage would be surprisingly good for Qu Moying.

Although it was not Qu Moying’s fault that her engagement with the Marquis Yongning’s Family was broken off, people would still speak ill of her. Plus, Qu Moying’s own condition was not good enough, which made the Old Lady even more worried. She had already planned to sacrifice her own ego to take Qu Moying out more and give her chances to meet people.

Surprisingly, the marriage proposal from the Ji Family suddenly came, which was great news for the Old Lady.

But then things went in a weird direction beyond the Old Lady’s expectation. The chief maid from the Ji Family kept saying that the two families should get closer. But why did she insist on rejecting them when they wanted to visit Earl Ling’an? Even the chief maid’s explanation was so unconvincing.

She clearly didn’t want the Qu Family to visit the Earl Ling’an’s Mansion.

Then why did they make the marriage proposal initially?

“What? Marriage proposal?” Qu Moying was stunned for a second and almost laughed aloud because of anger. So, this was Xiao’s intention. No wonder Ji Youran kept trying to improve their relationship. Because they felt her suspicion, they wanted to take her into their family to stop her, even Yue Wenhan, from investigating their secret.

If Yue Wenhan was just an ordinary young master, he wouldn’t be a threat to them. But he was the vice minister of the Dali Temple, an expert at investigations. If he found out anything, that would be a disaster for the Ji Family. So, the best way was to force him to stand on the Ji Family’s side.

That was why they kept approaching Qu Moying.

She finally figured out their plan and connected the clues all together because of this one thing.

“Yes. The chief maid said Old Lady Ji and Second Madam Ji suggested it. They both have a good impression of you, so they sent some gifts to ask about my opinion first. If I agree, they will send a suitable person to officially make the marriage proposal,” the Old Lady nodded and said.

A marriage between two noble families wouldn't be agreed in one time. The two families needed to communicate privately first to avoid an awkward rejection in public that would make both families lose their faces. After both agreed, the man's family would send a person to make an official proposal.

“What did you say, Grandmother?” Qu Moying asked.

“I told her that I need to ask for your own opinion first. Your mother confirmed your last engagement, and I thought it was a good one too. But who knows...he's like that? This time, I want to give you the freedom to choose. No matter how good the engagement looks, I want you to choose the one you like.”

The Old Lady let out a deep sigh. She wholeheartedly wanted to take good care of this poor granddaughter and wished her all the best.

“Thank you, Grandmother.” Her words were a big relief for Qu Moying. The most worrisome thing for her was that the Old Lady or Qu Zhizhen confirmed another engagement for her without telling her ahead. She totally could understand her grandmother's sincere love for her from her consideration. “Grandmother, my engagement with Young Master Yongning just broke off. I don't think it's appropriate for me to get engaged again immediately after. People will speak ill of our family. I'm not in a hurry since all the other older sisters haven't got married.”

Qu Moying's current focus was her revenge. She had no time to consider her marriage.

“Your First Sister is an unlucky one too... You don't know it since you were still in the village at that time. She was engaged with a man before, but he...had a relationship with his cousin and broke off the engagement. Your First Sister was very upset about it, so her marriage has been delayed.”

The Old Lady explained reluctantly, “Since there's no update on your First Sister's marriage yet, your Second Sister can't get engaged before her. But you and Yan are from the West Mansion. Although we

are still one family, people from the West Mansion and the East Mansion don't have to be related closely. If Yan gets married, you don't need to wait for your other two sisters."

The East Mansion and the West Mansion were only bound together because of Old Lady Qu. But in actuality, they considered themselves two separate families. They would still go together if they attended banquets but send gifts separately. It was a common situation in the capital, and people could all understand it.

When it came to the ladies' marriages, Qu Moying only needed to let Qu Qiuyan settle it first. She could still wait for Qu Xuexin, but it was not necessary.

"Then I'll wait for Third Sister to settle down first." Qu Moying nodded at the Old Lady and felt relieved. Qu Qiuyan's dilemma wouldn't be easy to overcome. Lord Jing intended to marry her as his second wife or concubine, but Qu Qiuyan wouldn't accept it. After what happened in the Eastern Palace, there was still a long way to go before Qu Qiuyan and Lord Jing's marriage was confirmed.

"Even so, if there is a decent one, it will be better to confirm it as soon as possible. Ying, you are at the appropriate age to get married now, and there's not much time left for you. After your engagement is confirmed, we still need some time to observe the other family," Old Lady Qu nodded and persuaded Qu Moying softly. In her eyes, her poor granddaughter was just scared by Xu Lipeng's shameless behavior. Then she added, "Not every young master is as pretentious as Xu Lipeng. We can choose a reliable one for you. If it comes to the worst situation..."

The Old Lady took a pause and looked at Qu Moying with pity. "If it comes to the worst situation, we can choose one from the pass list of the Imperial Examination. We pick one from a simple but virtuous family. For me, fame and wealth are not as important as your own happiness."

Their status as a vice minister's family was not high enough to connect through a marriage with a royal family. Yet, it was far beyond sufficient for a scholar's family. The Old Lady's words brought warmth into Qu Moying's heart because she was really speaking for Qu Moying. Maybe the Old Lady would still consider Qu Qiuyan and Qu Zhizhen, but she truly put herself into Qu Moying's shoes and thought for her.

Her sincerity and love were touching enough for Qu Moying.

Qu Moying leaned over, gazed at the Old Lady gratefully, and nodded. "Grandmother, you can decide it for me later. But we can't accept the Ji Family's proposal. Their behavior is really suspicious. Why they don't let us visit Earl Ling'an? When Cousin Yue visited them before, they didn't let him meet my uncle either."

She didn't care about who would be her future husband, but it couldn't be her enemy in the past life.

The Ji Family was acting weirdly, and she needed to make the Old Lady mentally prepared. At least, the Old Lady had to understand the Ji Family was not reliable or had some evil intentions.

Recalling the chief maid's strange reaction, the Old Lady nodded. She felt unsettled about it, too, since the chief maid acted too differently before and after. Experienced in life, the Old Lady could not trust the Ji Family anymore. Therefore, the Ji Family wouldn't be the best choice for Qu Moying's marriage.

"Ying, don't worry and leave it to me. I won't let anyone decide your marriage randomly. I will keep an eye out and let you make the final decision by yourself," the Old Lady said with pity. Nobody cared about this granddaughter, so she would show her more care, even though it seemed a bit inappropriate for others.

"Thank you, Grandmother." Qu Moying felt relieved. With the Old Lady's promise, even Qu Zhizhen couldn't decide her marriage for her, which was her biggest worry before. That scum father didn't seem to be as simple as he looked.

After the short talk they had in the study, she didn't feel Qu Zhizhen was a person that could be easily tricked by Yu.

Something felt weird, but she didn't know what it was yet, as if she had missed something important. The whole situation still looked like a mess for her without a clear clue...

What was that vital thing she missed? She lowered her head and fell into deep thoughts, recalling Qu Zhizhen's behavior and the weird part about it...

“Ying, Yu has been ill recently, and her situation seems pretty serious. I wanted to lock her up in the family temple and tell the outsiders that she was sick, but I didn’t expect her to really fall ill. I want to let you and Yan manage the family affairs together. What do you think about it?”

“She’s really sick?” Qu Moying lifted her head and asked.

Judging by Yu’s personality, Qu Moying knew she wouldn’t give up like this. For Yu, the best way to get around with the situation was to take a step back. If Yu was too sick to even get off the bed, people couldn’t really do anything to her. This was what Qu Moying thought before.

Right now, what the Old Lady said seemed to be quite different than her expectation.

“It’s true. Even the Imperial Doctor we invited from the royal palace said it would be hard to treat her,” the Old Lady nodded with a sullen face.

It was not that easy to bribe the Imperial Doctors, which meant Yu’s sickness was true.

But the timing was still too suspicious since her sickness came in time to get her out of trouble. Qu Moying couldn’t find it convincing at all.

Something was definitely not right.

“Then...will she recover?” asked Qu Moying.

“Hard to say. Both Imperial Doctors from the royal palace don’t have a clear idea and need more time to observe her situation. They say she needs good rest, or she may really...” The Old Lady’s pulled a long face.

She didn’t like Yu, but she didn’t intend to make her son lose his wife again.

“Grandmother, whose idea is it to let me and Third Sister manage the mansion together?” Qu Moying changed the topic. She would find a chance to investigate Yu’s sickness, but her current focus was what the Old Lady said about letting her manage the mansion. It didn’t seem a good timing for her to take the responsibility of managing the family affairs.

On the one hand, she didn’t want to do it; on the other hand, she didn’t have to be the one who took the burden.

Qu Moying was supposed to be an ignorant lady who grew up in a village and shouldn’t have the ability to do any kind of management work. Although she didn’t fully hide her intelligence right now, managing the mansion should still be too much of a burden for her. If she really did it and did it well, this would easily draw people’s suspicion toward her real identity.

Her real identity was indeed Qu Moying, but she didn’t want to catch people’s attention because of this.

In terms of education, she could use Ji Hanyue as her excuse, saying that she was taught by the person sent by Ji Hanyue. But Ji Hanyue would never send someone to teach her about the management of family affairs.

If she did it well, people would suspect her; if she deliberately showed her ignorance, people would seize the chance to frame her again.

It seemed to be a great opportunity to learn things but was actually another trap. It should be either Yu or Qu Qiuyan’s idea.

“Your Third Sister told me that she wants to learn how to manage the mansion, but she is afraid that she can’t handle it alone. So, she asked for my help. But I think it can be a good chance for you to learn it too since you will eventually do it after getting married. My idea is to let you and Yan manage the mansion together under your aunt’s guidance. Does it sound good to you?” the Old Lady asked.

The Old Lady had considered it for a while and even discussed it with Granny Wu. Finally, she made up her mind to propose it to Qu Moying, thinking it should be a good idea.



In her eyes, Qu Moying grew up in the village and never got the opportunity to learn about mansion management. Even if she wouldn't take the management responsibility in her marriage life, it would still be helpful for her to deal with things in her own yard in the future.

Since Qu Qiuyan needed to learn it anyway, Qu Moying might as well learn together with her.

"But my health condition is not too well, and I just came to the capital. Although my cousin sent people to the village to teach me some knowledge before, those were only basic things..." Qu Moying rejected in a polite way.

Her words made the Old Lady fall into silence since the Old Lady knew it might be too hard for Qu Moying to manage the mansion right now.

After a second thought, the Old Lady didn't want to give up on her idea. She believed it would be helpful for Qu Moying's future no matter how hard it could be right now. "Then, if you have time, stay with them more and watch how they handle things. Once you feel comfortable enough, you can start to do it. How about this?"

"Grandmother, thank you. I got it." Qu Moying nodded as her eyes darkened. This was indeed a good solution since all she needed to do was watch them aside. She had the right to choose if she wanted to express her opinions on things without taking any responsibility.

Compared to the Old Lady's last proposal, this one could give her much more freedom and convenience.

The discussion about managing the mansion was put to an end. After a short chat with the Old Lady, Qu Moying went back to the Qianyue House. It was a long day for her. She quickly finished her dinner and got onto the bed when the night just fell.

In her dream, she saw herself falling from the high Linyuan Pavilion. Then she saw a fire lighting up the dark night while Qu Moying lied on the ground feebly with her eyes covered by a veil. There was something heavy on her chest, and the suffocating feeling started to get stronger and stronger...

Suddenly, she opened her eyes and found herself staring at the peony flowers carved on the ceiling in shock.

After a while, she slowly released her hand that was pressing her chest as she regained her consciousness. Then she suddenly turned her head to look at the table where a candle was lighted up. On the middle chair sat Pei Yuanjun, wearing a dark purple robe. She could clearly see the delicate embroidered iris flowers blooming on his sleeves. The golden decorative pattern aside gleamed under the dim light.

A cup of tea was beside his hand, apparently poured out from the teapot on the table. Pei Yuanjun raised his pretty eyes and looked into Qu Moying's. Under her shocked gaze, he idly took a sip from the teacup. If Qu Moying didn't know this was her bedroom, his carefree look almost could convince her that they were in his mansion.

She sat up, calmed herself down, and asked, "My lord, what emergency brings you here?"

It was not Pei Yuanjun's usual style to break into her bedroom in the mid of a night.

"I so happen to pass by here, so I come to visit you," Pei Yuanjun raised his brow and said carelessly. After he put down the cup and leaned back in the chair, Qu Moying noticed he was even holding a paper fan in his hand. He gently knocked his fan on the table while saying, "Pei Yusheng is paying a visit here."

"Right now?" Qu Moying fell in a daze and asked in surprise. Her eyelashes fluttered in shock, making her look even more stunning under the dim light.

She was more petite and slender than women at her age, looking like a young girl rather than a grown-up. As she sat on the bed, her long and black hair obediently lied behind her head, covering more than half of her body. Without the veil, her beautiful face was fully exposed.

Maybe because she wore the veil for too long, her eyes tended to be darker and waterier than ordinary women's but so clear that they seemed to contain the reflection of everything around her. Her long, fluttering eyelashes added a fragile aura to her fair face. She looked like a black-and-white artistic painting, only with a hint of bright pink on her lips.

That tiny bit of light redness might not be noticeable on other people's faces, but somehow, it brought vitality to hers. That tiny, palm-sized face showed a natural trace of coquettish charm, matching incredibly well with her elegant aura.

“Yes, right now.” Pei Yuanjun didn’t seem to notice her stunning beauty and cast a meaningful glance at her. Then he squinted her long, downturned eyes, “Do you want to go take a look?”

Pei Yuanjun didn’t have a reaction when seeing her whole face last time, which was another reason that Qu Moying could act honestly faced with him.

After all, no one could defeat Lord Yun in terms of appearance, including men and women. Seeing his own face in the mirror too many times, he probably grew a high standard that no one could reach.

Moreover, no matter how confident Qu Moying was in her appearance, she believed she was just a thing in Pei Yuanjun’s eyes instead of a living person. He never intended to take a good look at her. She was probably a pretty landscape painting to him, a still item, leaving no trace in his heart.

“My lord, you are Lord Jing’s uncle, right?” Qu Moying looked at Lord Yun, feeling speechless. She heard that Lord Yun was younger than all his nephews, though he was their uncle. But was it really okay for him to watch his nephew’s date with another woman?

His suggestion didn’t fit his identity at all.

“It doesn’t matter to me. Since I’m here already, let’s go take a look at them together!” Pei Yuanjun stood up gracefully, fetched a cloak in front of the screen for Qu Moying, and threw it on her bed. “Put it on and go with me. Maybe you can hear some important things.”

Some important things? Qu Moying was convinced and didn’t reject him again. She didn’t have any useful information in the Qu’s Mansion. If Lord Jing insisted on supporting Qu Qiuyan, it would make her his enemy and bring danger to her life. It was not a bad idea to eavesdrop on Qu Qiuyan and Lord Jing right now, since Qu Qiuyan probably would blame Qu Moying for everything that had happened.

Qu Zhizhen had set up a banquet for Lord Jing on the top floor of a building in the Qu’s Mansion. But right now, the host was replaced by Qu Qiuyan, who specially dressed up for this occasion. She sat in front of Pei Yusheng, sobbing pitifully.

“Your Royal Highness, do you really...think...I’m that kind of person? I was just kneeling in the altar room, and it’s the Crown Princess’s altar room. Even if...if I really...I wouldn’t do such a shameless thing. Moreover, you know...my feelings for you...Your Royal Highness... If you don’t believe me, I will jump from here to show you my determination.”

Crying, Qu Qiuyan stood up and rushed to the window. Startled by her sudden movement, her maid was in a daze and only screamed, “My lady!” After a few seconds, the maid remembered that she needed to stop her master. But it was too late.

Luckily, Pei Yusheng’s reaction was much faster than a weak lady’s movement since he had practiced martial arts. He grabbed Qu Qiuyan’s sleeve and pulled her back, making her fall back into his arms.

Before she fell off, Qu Qiuyan suddenly used all her strength to avoid his embrace and tilted her body aside. She couldn’t control her body while falling and ended up twisting her ankle. After a cry of pain, she knelt on the ground in front of Pei Yusheng, her face turning pale.

“Are you alright? Did you bump into anything?” The stern look on Pei Yusheng’s face softened as he reached out to check if she got hurt.

“Your Royal Highness, you don’t need to pull me up. Even though we... We can’t act too intimately right now,” Qu Qiuyan refused him in a soft voice and pushed his hand away.

Her maid hurriedly helped her stand up, but her face turned even paler because of the pain. Moved by her pitiful look, Pei Yusheng pushed the maid away with no hesitation, carried Qu Qiuyan in his arms, and put her down on a chair aside. “Don’t talk nonsense right now. Where are you hurt?”

“Your Royal Highness, I’m fine as long as you don’t misunderstand me,” Qu Qiuyan said while enduring the pain. The forced smile and teary eyes made her pretty face even look more pitiful.

Pei Yusheng let out a sigh, stood up, and lowered his head to look at her. “Alright, I trust you. Tell me who set you up?”

"I don't know who...set me up. It's just I didn't notice anything unusual when my younger sister was with me. Then she said she needed some fresh air outside because she felt unwell. I helped her walk out, and then...she never came back. Soon after she left, I...I felt my whole body heated up as the Crown Prince walked up to me and wanted to ask about her."

Qu Qiuyan cried sorrowfully, "Then I didn't know what happened later. I only...only remember Your Royal Highness and other people came inside..."

She didn't directly say it was Qu Moying, but her indication was clear enough to understand. She meant that Qu Moying framed her after she helped her walk out.

Of course, Qu Qiuyan didn't have direct proof, but she didn't need it since she didn't directly say Qu Moying was the one behind it.

"Your younger sister doesn't seem as simple as she looks!" Pei Yusheng stayed silent for a second and said with a displeased look on his face.

"I...I don't know. Moying was a simple girl who grew up in the village. I don't think she framed me on purpose. I'm just...just afraid..." Qu Qiuyan took a short pause. She looked up at Lord Jing with her teary eyes and shook her head firmly. "Moying seems different from what I remember."

"How?" Pei Yusheng sat back on the chair in front of Qu Qiuyan and asked.

"Moying moved to the village when she was still a child. She doesn't like meeting people or talking and never learned anything. She should only know some basic things. But...But to me, the way she behaves seems even more well-mannered than ordinary noble ladies. Is...is she...?" Qu Qiuyan wore a flustered look on her face.

Hearing her words, Pei Yusheng's eyes darkened as he started to take it more seriously. "Do you mean she is not your real younger sister?"

"I...I don't know. If she's my real younger sister, I don't believe she will harm me. But if she's not, then who would she be? How did she get into our mansion? What's her intention?" The expression on Qu

Qiuyan's face suddenly changed as if she had thought about something horrible. She clenched the chair arm, looking scared.

With one sentence, she convinced Lord Jing that Qu Moying was guilty.

She really learned things from her mother, Yu. With a few words, she had already drawn Lord Jing's suspicion on Qu Moying.

On the roof of the opposite building, Qu Moying stood behind Pei Yuanjun while grabbing his arm tightly. Bold as she was, she couldn't really enjoy staying on such a high rooftop and standing on a small platform at midnight.

Besides the small platform was empty space. If Qu Moying missed one step, she would fall off and die immediately.

She didn't want to die right now, or to say, die for such a stupid reason. All she could do was stay as close as possible to Pei Yuanjun, grab his arm with one hand, and hold onto his sleeve with another hand to steady herself. Meanwhile, the guard behind them read Qu Qiuyan and Pei Yusheng's lips and interpreted their conversation.

She had never heard about the lip-reading ability and felt amazed by it. Even though she couldn't hear Qu Qiuyan's words with her own ears, she knew what the guard said was the truth.

"So, you killed one thousand enemies while sacrificing eight hundred of your soldiers?" Pei Yuanjun suddenly turned his head and cast a glance at her.

When her eyes met him, her face became stiff. She could feel the coldness in his eyes even when she couldn't see his pretty eyes clearly in the darkness.

This was the real Lord Yun, who could stop a baby from crying in a blink and prevent all the noble ladies in the capital from admiring him with just a look.

However, she could smell suspicion besides coldness from those eyes. She narrowed her eyes and tried to maintain her calm look. Staring at those dangerous eyes, she answered in a flat tone, "I didn't sacrifice eight hundred. Three hundred, at the most. But even if I needed to sacrifice eight hundred of my soldiers, I still would do it. After all, one thousand is still more than eight hundred, right?"

She didn't think she could hide anything from him, nor did she need to.

A sharp look crossed Pei Yuanjun's eyes in the dark as he reached out to lift up Qu Moying's wide sleeve. Part of her arm skin was still red and swollen, with dried medicine on it, looking horrible. "Three hundred?"

"This is the best outcome I can get!" Qu Moying nodded and gave him a smile.

She didn't even bother to cover her injured arm with her sleeve again, leaving in under the judgmental gaze from those pretty eyes of Lord Yun.

Without any power, she didn't mind hurting her enemies at the cost of injuring herself.

She believed Pei Yuanjun would do the same thing in a similar situation!

"Indeed, you sacrificed three hundred of your soldiers to kill one thousand enemies. Third Lady Qu is saying that you are a fake one. Actually, I'm curious about it too. Are you the real Fourth Lady of the Qu Family?" Pei Yuanjun's darkening eyes locked on Qu Moying's slender figure.

This small platform was only enough for two people to stand on, but they had to stay very close to each other. Right now, if Pei Yuanjun moved a step, Qu Moying would immediately fall off.

Moreover, his posture totally blocked Qu Moying's feet as if he would kick her off at any second.

Qu Moying lowered her eyes as if she didn't notice her dangerous position as her lips twisted into a gentle smile. "My lord, who do you think would pose as Fourth Lady Qu? Who would impersonate an insignificant lady who can be killed by her family in any second, and for years?"

She knew her change after her rebirth was huge, which could draw anyone's suspicion, who even knew her only a bit. But she was not afraid of anyone's investigation since she was indeed Qu Moying. This was the truth that no one could change, although her behavior and intelligence seemed suspicious.

Even if Qu Qiuyan didn't mention it today, someone would say it sooner or later.

But she had been prepared for it.

Qu Qiuyan said it because she wanted to get rid of her with Pei Yusheng's hands. It was also a good chance for Qu Qiuyan to check Qu Moying's real identity, which meant she and Yu did have doubts in their minds.

"Fourth Lady Qu in the rumors is a solitary person who doesn't like talking or meeting people," Pei Yuanjun asked, feeling amused.

"My mother died when I was still a child, and my father only cares about his other son and daughter but not me. My life means nothing to him. In a story like this, anyone would think I'm an introverted, solitary girl who wouldn't think about coming back to the Qu's Mansion," Qu Moying said naturally. Meanwhile, her eyes locked on the two people still talking in the opposite building.

The guard had stopped reading their lips. But she could see Qu Qiuyan was the one talking while Pei Yusheng kept nodding at her like he found her words convincing.

Without the guard's interpretation, she could guess Qu Qiuyan was talking about her behaviors different from the rumors.

"People all said Fourth Lady Qu is ugly and ignorant. It's not possible to gain so much knowledge in a day. You are not worse than any lady in the capital in terms of manners. I wonder where did you learn those from?" Pei Yuanjun's chuckled sounded crispy and gentle, but somehow, it sent a cold shiver down Qu Moying's spine.

Qu Moying knew he had never been a good-hearted person. If she had lied to him today, she wouldn't get off the platform safely.



“So, in the rumors, Fourth Lady Qu is an ugly girl. What do you think about my appearance after seeing it, my lord?” Qu Moying lifted her head and looked straight into Pei Yuanjun’s eyes with confidence.

“You have a beautiful appearance. Peerless, I would say,” Pei Yuanjun said idly, amused by her question. But Qu Moying couldn’t sense any emotion from his words, which meant it was just a compliment out of politeness.

“Different than the rumors, right? As for the knowledge, I consider myself a passionate learner. My grandmother also put effort into my education before and hired a tutor to teach me things. Later on, the tutor left the village after she felt she had nothing more to teach me. Then my cousin sent a person to teach me too,” said Qu Moying.

A long time ago, the Old Lady indeed hired some tutors for Qu Moying. One of them taught her for several years, but she never paid too much attention to Qu Moying’s study since she was bribed by Yu. Under Yu’s order, she even quit her job, saying that Fourth Lady Qu was too foolish to learn things.

Since then, the rumors about Qu Moying being ugly and ignorant had spread out.

During the following two years, Ji Hanyue sent a granny to the village to teach Qu Moying some basic manners and rules of etiquette, along with the doctor who helped treat her eyes. But when Ji Hanyue married into the Eastern Palace, that granny went missing, and no one knew her whereabouts.

That female tutor who taught Qu Moying for years disappeared too after she received the payment from Yu and spread the rumors about Qu Moying. It was said that she moved far away from the capital and went back to her hometown, but Qu Moying guessed she was killed long ago.

With one dead and one missing, no one could prove the truth anymore. No matter how powerful Pei Yuanjun was, he couldn’t possibly find anything.

Pei Yuanjun couldn’t find any sign of scare in her eyes except for a trace of coldness. He asked jokingly, “Aren’t you afraid that I will find anything?”

However, Qu Moying didn’t dare to see it as a joke. She could feel his cold gaze falling on her as a chill shiver rippled over her skin.

"My lord, you can investigate me if you want," she said calmly.

"Oh, so you are not afraid at all." Pei Yuanjun glanced at the opposite building's window and then turned his head to look at her again. His voice was lazy, "It seems that Third Lady Qu wants to convince Pei Yusheng to make a move. He treats her pretty well, and I guess he will definitely marry her. What should you do by then?"

"What should I do? I take one step forward at a time." Staring at the darkness, Qu Moying showed a faint smile. Her clean but adorable face looked like a white lotus flower blooming at night. "They will still try to take my life if I do nothing. I don't care who is my enemy and how powerful the person is. I will always march forward even it's at the cost of blood."

#### Chapter 118 Have Your Eyes Recovered?

No one knew better than Qu Moying about Yu and her daughter's hatred for her. Since that fire they set, they couldn't tolerate her existence anymore.

There was nothing she could change, so why would she be afraid of it? Or to say, her fear had no influence on the result. Her rebirth already meant the start of this path, stained by blood. The smile on her face contained anger and indifference that she usually wouldn't show. Maybe the dark night or something else made her stop covering her real emotions with calmness.

Her words carried a trace of disdain and horrifying coldness. Still, the toughness she showed surprisingly made her look more pitiful.

After all, she was just a fourteen-year-old powerless girl, but what she had been through gave her tremendous anger, coldness, and even a spirit of rebellion. For the first time, Pei Yuanjun took a close look at this girl in front of him. He always knew she had a good appearance, looking weak and gentle. But right now, the darkness of night somehow added some unpredictable ruthlessness to her temperament.

She seemed to be the same person but somewhat different, making Pei Yuanjun feel strange. It was the first time that Pei Yuanjun observed a girl's appearance so carefully. The girl in front of him seemed a bit more vital than usual, and this bit of vitality made her different than others. In his cold, dark eyes, the girl's reflection became clearer...

In the dark night, after the misunderstanding between Qu Qiuyan and Pei Yusheng was removed, they continued to talk for a while. As a well-educated noble lady, Qu Qiuyan had to excuse herself to leave first while Pei Yusheng showed an affectionate look on his face. Then he walked Qu Qiuyan out and headed to the front yard.

Qu Zhizhen walked Pei Yusheng to the gate in the front yard while holding the butler's hand, pretending he invited Pei Yusheng for dinner, which had nothing to do with Qu Qiuyan.

But actually, he only played his role at the beginning and in the end.

The carriage from Lord Jing's mansion had been waiting outside the gate. Pei Yusheng got into the carriage, but Qu Zhizhen still stood at the gate until the carriage disappeared in his sight. Then he finally headed back, holding the butler's arm with a much more relaxed look on his face than before, almost like a faint smile.

"Grandmother, Moying won't manage the mansion with me?" When Qu Moying visited the Old Lady, she heard Qu Qiuyan's voice upon entry. But there was no pause in her movement as she continued to walk up and curtsy to the Old Lady.

The Old Lady seemed to be in a good mood and pointed at a seat aside to let her sit down.

Qu Moying looked up at Qu Qiuyan, who was smiling, and curtsied to her too. "Third Sister," she called.

"Moying, you came late today. I've been chatting with Grandmother for a while already," Qu Qiuyan's voice sounded delightful as she smiled at Qu Moying as if nothing had happened between them.

"I was too tired yesterday and overslept. Please forgive me, Grandmother," Qu Moying explained.

"Have a seat first!" The Old Lady nodded carelessly and let Qu Moying sit down.

Once Qu Moying sat on the chair, Qu Moying immediately asked with concern, "Moying, I heard...my cousin... Did she find you trouble again?"

She seemed to be embarrassed when asking about Yu Qingmeng as if she was feeling guilty.

"Lady...Concubine Yu did come to me before. I don't know what she wanted to do, but she tried to move as close as possible to me," Qu Moying said in a soft voice as a sharp look crossed her eyes. Qu Qiuyan could always get firsthand information like this.

"Moying, just ignore her. I used to think of her as a good person...and never expected her to frame us two. She doesn't need to visit us anymore. Only seeing her will make me feel angry." Qu Qiuyan's face was full of annoyance and rage.

She talked as if she would thoroughly cut off her relationship with Yu Qingmeng.

Meanwhile, her words indicated that Yu Qingmeng set her up in the Dabei Temple and tried to frame Qu Moying in the Eastern Palace.

The Old Lady was pleased by Qu Qiuyan's determination to distance herself from the Yu Family. She never liked Yu and always thought Yu was a misbehaved and rude woman. Qu Qiuyan's current behavior was what she hoped to see the most. She kept nodding at Qu Qiuyan since Qu Qiuyan finally had a good grasp of people around her and wouldn't be influenced by them anymore.

Qu Moying slightly lifted her eyes and looked at Qu Qiuyan through her veil, feeling ironic about Qu Qiuyan's behavior. The Old Lady didn't know the truth, but both of them did, aware of the hostility between them due to Qu Qiuyan's move in the Dabei Temple and Qu Moying's counterattack.

However, Qu Qiuyan totally changed her attitude and treated Qu Moying like her dear sister now, clearly holding her own secret intention. As Qu Moying expected, Qu Qiuyan was not a simpleminded person. The impulsive and inconsiderate move she made before was only because she underestimated Qu Moying, thinking she could get rid of her in one go.

Qu Qiuyan in her current state was dangerous!

Qu Moying's lips quietly curled up. "Third Sister, the past is in the past. I don't want to care about it anymore."

"How can we just let her be and do nothing? I really saw her as my real sister before. First Sister and Second Sister both live in the East Mansion and rarely come here. Moying, you grew up in the village and just returned to our mansion. If you take off your veil, I probably can't even recognize who you are. She was the only person I was close with, but I never saw her true colors," Qu Qiuyan sounded enraged.

"I told your mother a long time ago that her niece didn't need to be so close with you. After all, a cousin is incomparable with a real sister," said the Old Lady.

"Grandmother, I've known it now. My mother had the wrong idea before, which almost led me to the wrong path. Grandmother, that won't happen again," Qu Qiuyan said with an honest smile.

Her straightforward words amused the Old Lady. The stern look on her face softened as a pleased smile showed up.

The Old Lady more believed that Yu was not a good-hearted woman. But her sickness came in time to give Qu Qiuyan a good lesson. Otherwise, Qu Qiuyan would still act like a naive, spoiled lady who only knew helping her mother and totally neglected her own family's honor and benefit.

"Moying, I heard your eyes will recover soon. They just can't be exposed under strong light, right?" after pleasing the Old Lady, Qu Qiuyan turned to Qu Moying with a smile and pretended to ask without any intention.

"Yes." Qu Moying nodded at her.

"Moying, since we are indoor right now, and the light is not strong here, can you take off your veil and let me and Grandmother see your face? You lived in the village for a long time and only had short stays here during festivals. Every time I see you, you always wear the veil. Grandmother and I don't even know what you look like now."

Qu Qiuyan's face was full of curiosity. Then she said thoughtfully, "I know your eyes will soon recover. But will it be better to have an Imperial Doctor check on you again?"

Her suggestion touched the spot in the Old Lady's heart. Qu Moying's eye problem had always been a worry for the Old Lady. Although Qu Moying kept telling her that they would recover soon since she came back, she still felt concerned. After Qu Moying's engagement was broken off, she had to find another one later. If her eyes still hadn't recovered by then, she wouldn't have good choices in terms of her marriage.

"Ying, can you take off your veil here?" The Old Lady's amiable eyes fell on Qu Moying's tiny face. To be honest, she indeed couldn't remember what her granddaughter looked like.

When Qu Moying was still a kid, she would do whatever the adults told her to and take off her veil obediently. But ever since she grew up, she had never removed the veil on her face once. After Qu Qiuyan mentioned it, the Old Lady started to feel unsettled again, fearing that Qu Moying would blindly listen to one doctor's words and be too optimistic about her eyes' situation. Inwardly, the Old Lady agreed that she could have another doctor check on her again just in case.

An Imperial Doctor from the royal palace could fit the job better than anyone.

"Grandmother...I'm sorry I can't. After all, it's still daytime..." Qu Moying put on a reluctant look and rejected the Old Lady after thinking for a few seconds.

"Moying, do your eyes still hurt after you take off the veil?" before the Old Lady could say anything, Qu Qiuyan hurriedly asked.

Hearing her words, the Old Lady pulled a long face, fearing that Qu Moying's eyes situation was not as positive as she said before. Otherwise, why she couldn't take off her veil indoor where the light was pretty dull?

"They will hurt a little bit. Not much, but it will make me feel a bit uncomfortable. My eyes may get sore and start to tear up. In the worst situation, I can't really open my eyes," Qu Moying explained.

“Isn’t...Isn’t it the same as before?” Qu Qiuyan sounded shocked. “I heard from Grandmother that your eyes were like this before. Do they really get better? If they haven’t recovered, and you keep delaying seeing a doctor, this will be terrible for you. Everyone outside says Moying is blind, but she indeed can see things.”

What Qu Qiuyan said was exactly what the Old Lady worried about. All of a sudden, her eyes even turned red because of anxiety. “Ying, don’t worry. It will be alright. This kind of problem will always take a long time to solve. If this doctor can’t do his job, we will make you go see another one. I will ask your father to invite an Imperial Doctor home. I heard one in the royal palace is an expert in eye problems.”

“Grandmother, I’m really fine. My eyes are indeed getting better, and the uncomfortable feeling has receded. But the doctor said I need to take good care of them, so I can’t take the veil off right now. Please forgive me, Grandmother,” Qu Moying said softly. Her watery eyes glanced over Qu Qiuyan’s face as she figured out Qu Qiuyan’s intention immediately.

Qu Qiuyan tried to find any possible evidence to prove that she was not Qu Moying.

Qu Moying was not afraid of showing her face to Qu Qiuyan, but it was not the best timing yet. On the other hand, she would never give Qu Qiuyan what she wanted so easily.

This was the best way to mislead Qu Qiuyan and make her believe Qu Moying was trying to cover the truth up, which was a good part of her future plan...

Sometimes, the harder one tried to hide something, the more people would believe that this person was lying.

“Grandmother, we can’t let Moying think like that and trust her own judgment. After all, she is not a doctor. If the doctor treating her right now really can’t do his job, we’d better replace him with another one immediately. Grandmother, I will go tell Father about it and ask him to invite another doctor. This can’t be delayed any longer.” Qu Qiuyan surely knew how to play her role as a thoughtful sister.

The Old Lady nodded at her and turned to say to Qu Moying with a serious look, “Ying, let’s do like this. Regardless of how you feel, seeing a doctor won’t harm you.”

"Grandmother..." Qu Moying said anxiously as her eyes fell on Qu Qiuyan with a trace of irritation.

Qu Qiuyan showed her a bright smile and chimed in softly to comfort her, "Moying, let's do it like this."

While they were talking, Granny Wu suddenly rushed in, walked behind the Old Lady, and whispered something to her. The Old Lady immediately pulled a long face and frowned at Qu Moying as her eyes darkened!

## Chapter 119 It Finally Happened

Qu Moying lifted her head with her eyes wide open. An unsettled feeling arose in her heart, making her clench her clothes and hold her breath unconsciously.

"Earl Ling'an passed away," the Old Lady said in a deep voice.

Her words hit Qu Moying's heart like a heavy strike as those eyes behind the veil were immediately filled with tears. She had to bite her lip hard to suppress the pain that tasted like blood.

She knew her father died a long time ago, in a miserable way, and the current death announcement was faked. Or to say, she was the one who forced the Ji Family to announce it earlier. However, hearing it with her own ears again was still so painful. She was exhausted from controlling her boiling emotions, felt depressed, and couldn't even breathe smoothly. In a blink, time jumped back to the day when she heard it for the first time on the Linyuan Pavilion.

Those cruel words came out of Ji Youran's mouth. Every single one of them was a backstab on her heart, making it too hurtful to breathe. At that moment, she really wanted to jump off the Linyuan Pavilion together with Ji Youran. She had to let her enemy pay, even at the cost of her own life.

But in the end, Ji Youran was saved by a guard while she was pushed off the Linyuan Pavilion.

If she wasn't reborn, her body should've rotten down there.



Moreover, nobody would ever know how miserably she and her family died. They didn't even get to keep their bodies whole in the end.

Nobody would ever know that waiting for the happy bride on her wedding day was not the red, festive bedchamber but bloodshed. The blood of Earl Ling'an's family dyed the Crown Prince's bright future and Ji Youran's upward path.

How would she forget about it? Her red eyes were bulging. If possible, she would do anything to save her father's life, sacrificing her own.

"My lady, my lady..."

"Ying, Ying!"

"Moying, Moying..." The chaotic sounds around her started to get further and fainter. But after a little while, they came back, louder and closer.

"Hurry! Go call a doctor over," the Old Lady said, flustered.

"Grandmother, I'm fine!" Qu Moying lifted her head and slightly opened her eyes. She couldn't take the shock and passed out for a second.

"Are you really alright?" The Old Lady looked at her pale face worriedly.

Qu Qiuyan looked around and said hurriedly, "We should let a doctor check on her first. How come she suddenly fainted? Does she have any other sickness that we don't know? Then seeing a doctor is even more necessary."

Her words made the Old Lady more anxious.

Qu Moying adjusted her breath as she came back to her senses. Her face was still pale, but her behavior looked much more conscious and calm. She comforted the Old Lady, "Grandmother, I'm fine. It just suddenly startled me."

"Startled you?"

"Yeah. We just talked about visiting my uncle, worrying that there was not that much time left for him. But who would've thought that Uncle just...a few days after my cousin passed away. But he was a Level-One General. I know he must be grieving over my cousin's death, but why did he break down because of that while everyone else in the Ji Family is fine? Why only my uncle, the most robust one in the family, passed away?" Qu Moying sobbed.

"Indeed..." The Old Lady fell into thoughts for a few seconds and added, "General Ji had practiced martial arts for years and should be pretty healthy. Everyone else in the Ji Family seemed fine. Only he died of too much grief. It's indeed...indeed..."

Suddenly, the Old Lady stopped talking as a trace of shock crossed her face.

"Grandmother, General Ji only two daughters, and it was said the younger one even passed away before the Crown Princess's wedding. He lost both daughters, and he had been sick for a while. Maybe the grief was just too much for him," Qu Qiuyan said carelessly.

Before, she had sent people to ask about it and heard some rumors.

But this was not her focus. "Grandmother, let's ask a doctor to check on Moying. Her body seems quite weak and even can't take a little shock. This is not good."

Qu Qiuyan was determined to make Qu Moying take off her veil because she believed that this Qu Moying was someone else.

As long as she proved that Qu Moying was a fake, the stains on Yu, herself, and even Yu Qingmeng could all be removed.

The more Qu Moying didn't want to expose her face, the more suspicious she was in Qu Qiuyan's eyes. She must be someone else who posed as Qu Moying while holding some evil intention.

If she could get a doctor to check on Qu Moying, Qu Moying must take off her veil and show her true colors.

"Thank you, Third Sister, but I'm fine now. Grandmother, since my uncle passed away, I...I want to go mourn him as quickly as possible." Qu Moying totally ignored Qu Qiuyan's suggestion, making the latter more convinced that Qu Moying was guilty because she was a fake.

"Tomorrow should be the first day of the funeral. Let's go tomorrow," the Old Lady nodded.

Qu Moying shook her head, "Grandmother, I want to go there today."

"Today? But the Ji Family won't start the official funeral today. Isn't it a bit inappropriate?" The Old Lady frowned and turned to look at Granny Wu, who sent the message just now. "Did you get the message from the Ji Family?"

"No, they haven't sent people here yet. I heard it outside. Their people sent the message to the Eastern Palace first, and it may take a while for them to get here," answered Granny Wu.

Although the Qu Family was related to the Ji Family, they were not very close, and Qu Moying was in the young generation. The Qu Family should be one of the last to be informed among all the Ji Family's relatives.

"Ying, we haven't been informed by them yet. It's inappropriate for you to go now." The Old Lady looked outside. "It will probably be in the afternoon when we receive the notice. If you want to go, you can prepare yourself to visit them tomorrow. No matter what, it's quite inappropriate to visit today."

The Old Lady didn't have any opinion on the Ji Family before. But after that old maid from the Ji Family came, who acted like they were up to something, the Old Lady never considered getting close to the Ji Family again. So, she didn't want Qu Moying to visit them so early, let alone it was inappropriate anyway. No one would go there unless they were close relatives.

“Grandmother, I will go with Cousin Yue today. Then I will go with you again tomorrow.” Qu Moying shook her head and said, “Cousin Yue told me to visit the Earl Ling’an’s Mansion with him if my uncle passed away. After all, we are the youngsters among First Madam Ji’s relatives. People living in the capital who will visit them are all the Ji Family’s relatives. We are the only ones who are related to my aunt, Earl Ling’an’s wife.”

She knew the Ji Family should be in a mess now. The more chaotic, the better for Qu Moying. She must go look for some clues and take someone out of the Earl Ling’an’s Mansion when the situation was in chaos. She couldn’t reveal the truth behind her father’s death yet, but she had to cause people’s suspicion at least.

Qu Moying already expected that the Ji Family couldn’t hold it longer and would release the information about Earl Ling’an’s death these two days. So, she asked Yue Wenhan a while ago to go with her and lend a hand to the Ji Family if anything happened to Earl Ling’an. Even though they couldn’t see Earl Ling’an for the last time when he was alive, they had to show their respect.

Yue Wenhan was quite surprised by her request but still agreed.

“You promised Mr. Yue before?” the Old Lady asked while frowning. She still didn’t like the idea, but it was acceptable for her since Qu Moying had an appointment with Yue Wenhan before, and they would go together.

But Qu Moying couldn’t leave before they received the official notice from the Ji Family today.

“Grandmother...” Qu Moying begged the Old Lady while staring at her.

“Fine. Go prepare yourself. If we receive the notice from the Ji Family later and Mr. Yue comes to pick you up, you can visit them first to see if they need any help,” the Old Lady said reluctantly.

“Thank you, Grandmother.” Qu Moying stood up and curtsied to the Old Lady gratefully.

“Go get ready. Even though the funeral starts tomorrow, you can’t be too casual today. You need to take everything with you, like candles and other stuff,” the Old Lady told her about essential rules of etiquette, fearing that she would be rude unintentionally.

"I know. I will go get prepared now." Qu Moying said goodbye to the Old Lady and left hurriedly with Yu Chun.

The situation changed too drastically. Before Qu Qiuyan had time to say something and stop Qu Moying, Qu Moying had already left. "Grandmother..." said Qu Qiuyan.

"Go back first and help prepare some candles. We should still have some left after we went to the Eastern Palace. Go check to see if we have enough for the funeral this time. If the left ones are not enough, you can ask people to buy some more. You can ask me any questions. You need to help handle the affairs in the mansion right now. Your aunt will come to give you some guidance later," the Old Lady interrupted Qu Qiuyan and gave her orders.

"Yes, Grandmother. I will go right now." Feeling unwilling, Qu Qiuyan had to take the work first. After curtsying to the Old Lady gently, she left with her maid too.

After she walked out of the Old Lady's yard, she thought for a second and turned in another direction. Instead of going back to her own yard, she headed directly to Yu's.

At the yard door, she immediately noticed a strong smell of medicine lingering in the yard.

Qu Qiuyan entered the main house and walked into Yu's bedroom, where Yu lied. She waved her hand to signal everyone else in the room to leave as she and her mother stayed in the room alone.

Hearing people leaving her room, Yu slowly opened her eyes on the bed. Yu looked haggard and dehydrated. Clearly, she was severely ill and lost a lot of weight. She tried to struggle up by supporting herself with her arms. But she didn't have enough strength and fell back on the bed.

Qu Qiuyan helped her sit up and put a pillow behind her back to let her adjust her breath.

"Mother, how do you feel?" asked Qu Qiuyan in a low voice.

"I'm fine." Yu let out a heavy breath as tiny beads of sweat showed up on her forehead. She closed her eyes feebly and slowly opened them again. "Anything happened?"

"Earl Ling'an died too!" said Qu Qiuyan.

Hearing her words, Yu suddenly burst out laughing. But due to her lack of strength, she soon started to cough loudly. Qu Qiuyan hurriedly patted her back and helped her breathe better.

After a while, Yu said hoarsely, "Good, good. This is fantastic! That's great news for us!"

Then she laughed out loud again. Her skinny face was twisted by the exaggerated expression, filled with maliciousness...

## Chapter 120 Planting the Seed of Suspicion

"The Crown Princess is dead. Earl Ling'an is dead. Now that blind girl has no one to rely on. Hahaha..." Yu's laugh sounded restrained but mad.

Qu Qiuyan frowned at her and pulled a long face. "Mother, this is not the focus. We have to prove Qu Qiuyan is a fake and show her true colors to everyone."

"She's not a fake. She is the real Qu Moying, definitely the real one," Yu stopped laughing and said while panting heavily. "Mother, you lost your mind because of the sickness. You said she was a fake one before."

Annoyed by her mother's absurd words, Qu Qiuyan raised her voice.

When she told Yu about her suspicions, Yu agreed with her and even let her tell Lord Jing about it to blame what happened in the Eastern Palace on Qu Moying. But right now, Yu changed her words and said that girl was the real Qu Moying. Yu's inconsistent behavior irritated Qu Qiuyan.

Right now, she was almost convinced that the current Qu Moying was a fake one.

It must be someone else who came out of nowhere and posed as Qu Moying for some evil intention. After all, the real Qu Moying couldn't be like the person she saw every day. As a girl who grew up in a village and was taught by a tutor bribed by Yu, Qu Moying should only know a few words at the most. The calm and graceful aura she had didn't seem to belong to the real Qu Moying.

This reason alone was enough for Qu Qiuyan to believe that Qu Moying was a fake.

Yu pressed her chest hard and finally regained her normal breathing pace after gasping for some time. She leaned back on her pillow and stared at Qu Qiuyan, looking much calmer.

"She is the real Qu Moying, but she is possessed!" Yu whispered.

The serious look on Yu's face really made Qu Qiuyan believe that her mother had lost her mind. Yu's opposite behavior made herself look more like a possessed person.

"Mother, stop talking nonsense!"

Yu's eyes darkened. She took a deep breath, looked at her daughter, and said in a hoarse voice, "After Lord Jing heard it from you, what did he think?"

She hated the feeling of lacking the strength to even sit up on the bed and couldn't accept spending the rest of her life lying here. She had to stand up again.

All the blames she took right now were all because of Qu Moying.

If Qu Moying was a fake or possessed, all her troubles wouldn't be troubles anymore.

"Lord Jing said he would let someone investigate into it." Qu Qiuyan pulled a long face and said in displeasure, "Lord Jing probably believed what I said, but I don't think he will make an effort to investigate Qu Moying. It seems that he doesn't care about it at all."

Lord Jing promised that he would investigate it but also told her not to cause any trouble again and asked her to build a good relationship with her sisters. More importantly, he indicated that Noble Consort He was not satisfied with her and wanted to choose another lady as his first wife. Qu Qiuyan was irritated by his words since he almost made it clear that he wanted to marry her as his second wife.

She had considered this possibility before, but she still believed that she deserved more. She had a beautiful appearance and was well-educated. Even her father spent time tutoring her before, making her different than ordinary noble ladies. Although her father's rank was a bit low, it didn't mean that he would stay in that position forever.

Once he got a promotion, he would be a minister, a real high-ranking official in the empire. As a minister's daughter, she would be qualified enough to be Madam Jing. Her father was a talented man and still young among all the officials. Clearly, a bright future was waiting for him, and he would eventually become a minister. His current position couldn't define his future.

Qu Qiuyan couldn't understand why Lord Jing and his mother didn't think she was qualified to be Madam Jing.

Qu Qiuyan was dissatisfied with Lord Jing's implication, but what happened in the Eastern Palace became his excuse. He told her that if he was not deeply in love with her, she would never get the chance to marry into a royal family because of it. By then, she would have no choice but to marry a mediocre husband...

Pei Yusheng's words irritated her and pleased her simultaneously. In the end, she had to take a step back, saying that she didn't care about her position as long as they could be together. However, these pretty words were just a lie. Of course, she cared about her position.

What happened in the Eastern Palace became a smudge on her name. If she couldn't get rid of it, she would never be Lord Jing's first wife. Moreover, since the Crown Prince was involved, it was covered up, and she didn't have a chance to explain it in public. Thus Qu Moying turned to be the key point. She could easily solve the problem as long as she could pass the buck to Qu Moying.

But Lord Jing's ambiguous attitude made her feel impatient.



Noticing Qu Qiuyan's exasperated face, Yu knew how her daughter felt right now. "Don't be so anxious. We have two ways to do it. We can first say she is a fake and make up some evidence to prove it. If it doesn't work, we can then say she is possessed." She gave her daughter a hint in a low voice and then started to cough again feebly.

She knew that her sickness was because of Qu Moying too.

For this reason alone, Yu and her daughter had to get rid of Qu Moying and blame everything on her

It didn't matter if she was really a fake or not. All they wanted was that everyone else believed that Qu Moying was a fake.

Qu Qiuyan could tell Yu had a plan in mind through her expression. Then she leaned over and asked in a low voice, "Mother, what should we do?"

Yu moved her head closer and whispered in Qu Qiuyan's ear. Qu Qiuyan nodded as a complacent smile showed up on her face...

Qu Moying didn't wait for too long. Right after lunch, a person from the Earl Ling'an's Mansion arrived to inform them about Earl Ling'an's death. Soon, Yue Wenhan's carriage came. Since Qu Moying had told the Old Lady before, she immediately took the package prepared by the Qu Family and headed outside with a letter in her sleeve.

To her surprise, she ran into Qu Qiuyan at the place where the carriage parked.

"Moying," Qu Qiuyan called her in a sweet voice from a distance. Qu Moying stopped walking and stared at Qu Qiuyan coldly, who was moving closer. She didn't utter a word.

Their relationship seemed fine on the surface, but both of them saw each other as an enemy and knew what the other did. In front of the Old Lady, they would still pretend they were good sisters. But since no one was around right now, Qu Moying didn't want to spend any effort collaborating with Qu Qiuyan's acting.

“Moying, I’ve asked people to help prepare candles for you, but I’m not sure if they are enough. Take a look,” Ignoring the cold look on Qu Moying’s face, Qu Qiuyan pointed at a smaller carriage and said. The carriage’s curtain hadn’t been put down yet, and Qu Moying could see almost half of the carriage was occupied by candles.

These should be more than sufficient.

“Thank you, Third Sister,” Qu Moying said in a flat tone and wanted to leave immediately. She was not in a good mood right now and didn’t want to deal with Qu Qiuyan.

“Moying, you don’t need to be in a rush. The Earl Ling’an’s Mansion was the Crown Princess’s home, and the people you will meet there should all be your elders. Moreover, you are going there to offer your help. The situation there is probably pretty chaotic, but as a helper, you can’t forget about these rules of etiquette. I know candles are just a small matter, but it’s better to check carefully before you leave,” Qu Qiuyan said softly with a smile.

She pulled her sleeve. “I’ve counted them once. How about you check them again? I just took over the affairs in the mansion, and there are many things that I don’t understand yet. Moreover, Grandmother wanted you to help me with it too.”

Qu Moying stopped and gazed at Qu Qiuyan. The way Qu Moying acted was a bit too intimately without anyone around, as if she and Qu Moying were really two close sisters.

Who was her performance for?

Her watery eyes looked around, but she didn’t notice anything unusual. Then she spent a moment observing the place they were at carefully. This was a carriage parking lot in the outer yard where females’ carriages and males’ carriages departed from.

Yu Dong walked up and gently pulled Qu Moying’s sleeve toward the direction of the side door. Yu Dong started to work for Qu Moying not long ago, but they had already developed a tacit mutual understanding. Through this tiny action, Qu Moying immediately understood Yu Dong’s intention, but the expression on her face remained unchanged.

"Thank you!" Qu Moying glanced over the carriage and said coldly. Then she turned around to leave with Yu Dong as the smile on Qu Qiuyan's face gradually faded away.

After watching Qu Moying's carriage leaving, Qu Qiuyan lowered her head with a pitiful look.

"My lady, don't be upset. Fourth Lady had lived in the village, so she doesn't feel close to you," Qing Ju hurriedly comforted her.

"It's not only me but everyone in our family. She is not even close to Grandmother and Father. But shouldn't family mean everything to a person? Why does she never care about any of us and never treat me as her real sister?!" Qu Qiuyan let out a quiet sigh, feeling aggrieved.

Since no one was around, Qu Qiuyan and her maid could talk more casually than usual without worrying that outsiders would hear them and spread it out.

"My lady, as you said, Fourth Lady indeed is not close to anyone in the mansion." Qing Ju nodded and said in irritation, "Even though she grew up in the village and hadn't seen everyone for years, but family is still different than other people. Not only to you, my lady, but she is also the same frigid to the Old Lady and the Second Master. My lady, say, will Fourth Lady is actually someone else that pretends to be her?"

"Don't talk nonsense. If Father hears it, he will blame me," Qu Qiuyan scolded her as the upset look on her face disappeared.

"Sorry, my lady. I won't say it again. But...but..." Qing Ju hurriedly looked around and hesitated as if she wanted to say something but didn't dare to.

"What's wrong?" Qu Qiuyan sounded displeased, "Just say it. Don't act so strangely. If people see you like this, they will think you want to talk about some dirty rumors."

"My lady..."

"Spit it out!"

The side door of the parking lot was facing the outer yard. A moment earlier, Qu Zhizhen was walking over with some people, but he suddenly stopped moving and stood next to the wall outside of the door with his eyes darkening. He had arrived here before Qu Moying left, and he didn't intend to walk in now, still standing outside and listening to their conversation.

Indeed, his daughter Qu Moying was not close to him at all...