

Noble Wife 131

Chapter 131 Peach Blossom Cake

The entire Ji Family was filled with sorrow. The servants, who walked in and out, had bloodshot eyes and looked very sad.

"It's still early. Ladies, why don't we go for a walk?" a young lady of about fifteen or sixteen years old stood up and suggested with red eyes.

Qu Moying knew this person. She was Xiao's niece, Xiao Haitang.

Earl Ling'an's Mansion had three young ladies. They were Ji Youran, First Lady Ji from the second branch; Ji Hanyue, Second Lady Ji, and Ji Yanyue, Third Lady Ji, who were both from the first branch. In addition to these girls, there was also Ji Yuanxing, the eldest son of the second branch, who was Ji Youran's brother. There was also the Second Young Master from the second branch, but he was a concubine-born son.

Because the first branch did not have a son, everyone knew that Ji Yuanxing, First Young Master Ji, would take over the entire Earl Ling'an's Mansion in the future.

Even if this title belonged to his eldest uncle now, he would inherit it eventually.

As a result, the Ji Family's second branch was quite powerful. All the servants in the mansion knew that the second branch would inherit everything eventually. However, although the first branch did not have a son, the current title was held by the first branch, and he was the Suppressor General. In addition, Ji Hanyue was the future Crown Princess of Eastern Palace. Therefore, the servants in the mansion did not dare to offend the first branch.

The two branches had always been very balanced. After Yue, the wife of Earl Ling'an, passed away, the management of the mansion fell on Xiao of the second branch. Nevertheless, the second branch treated the first branch very well when managing the household. Everything remained as usual, and at times, the second branch would take the initiative to back down. In the eyes of outsiders, the Ji Family's second branch was doing a great job and very considerate of others.

Previously, Ji Hanyue shared the same thought. She even felt that Xiao and Ji Youran were wholeheartedly treating them well. Now that she thought about it, it was all but a joke. Due to her status back then, Xiao and Ji Youran had no choice but to curry favor with her. How could they dare to ill-treat the first branch?

The family asset and ranking in the imperial court were nothing compared to the monstrous power and authority!

As for Xiao Haitang in front of her, because the Ji Family did not have any other unmarried young lady, it was very normal for Xiao Haitang to help Xiao entertaining the guests. Moreover, Qu Moying knew that Xiao was very satisfied with this niece and wanted her to marry into the Ji Family. Previously, the Ji Family indicated that they were willing to take Xiao Haitang in, which was such a big joke.

Hearing Xiao Haitang's words, Qu Xuexin looked at the Old Lady, and the Old Lady nodded.

Only then did Qu Xuexin stand up. "Let's go then, Miss Xiao."

They had known each other before.

Qu Qiuyan and Qu Caiyue also stood up. Qu Moying hesitated for a moment, then looked up and said, "I'm a little inconvenient to walk right now, so I won't go out with you. I'll stay here with Grandmother."

"Don't worry. We'll just walk around. If you are tired, we can sit down and rest," Xiao Haitang suggested.

"Ying, just go. There's nothing to do here. I'll just have a chat with Old Lady Ji. Go out with your sisters. If you are tired, you can come back first," Old Lady Qu also advised, afraid that Qu Moying would get bored if Qu Moying stayed here with her.

"Fourth Lady, please go and take a stroll with them. Yesterday, when you came, we didn't have time to accompany you for a good walk. Now, you can walk around and look around," Xiao persuaded.

She sounded as if the conflict between her and Qu Moying had not happened yesterday.

Hearing their persuasion, Qu Moying had no choice but to stand up, bow at the elders, and follow them to the garden.

Qu Moying walked the slowest. After walking for a short distance, she fell behind.

"Fourth Lady, are you tired? Do you want to go over there and rest for a while?" Xiao Haitang waited for Qu Moying to come over with the rest of the group. When Qu Moying came over, Xiao Haitang smiled at her and asked.

Qu Moying looked up at the pavilion on the side and shook her head. "It's fine, Miss Xiao. You can go ahead. I'll walk slowly. If I am tired, I will rest by myself."

"Oh, I can't do that, Fourth Lady. You're not feeling well. How can we leave you alone and wander off? How about this? Third Lady, you've been to our mansion before. Why don't you accompany First Lady and Second Lady for a walk? I will ask someone to lead the way for you, and I will stay behind to accompany Fourth Lady."

Xiao Haitang suggested in an appropriate manner.

Qu Moying agreed to Xiao Haitang's suggestion. She stopped and looked at Qu Qiuyan. Qu Qiuyan nodded and said casually, "Alright. We'll wait for you in front."

"Okay!" Xiao Haitang nodded gently and called the maid to lead the way for the three ladies, while she stayed behind to accompany Qu Moying.

"Fourth Lady, I am Second Madam Xiao's niece. You probably haven't seen me before!" When Xiao Haitang saw the people in front of the two of them leave, she stepped forward with a smile and said to Qu Moying warmly.

"Yes, I've never seen you before, because I've always been staying in the village," Qu Moying explained with a reserved smile.

"I've heard. You've been ill since you were young and have been raised in the boudoir. Are you better now?" Xiao Haitang looked at Qu Moying's long eye veil and asked with concern.

"I'm fine now," Qu Moying replied vaguely.

"Fourth Lady, look at the beautiful scenery in the corridor. Let's go there and have a rest. I'm actually a little tired after walking all the way here." Xiao Haitang pointed to a corridor in front of them. Beside the corridor were a few blooming purple peonies.

The flowers bloomed beautifully, making the corridors and windows look even more beautiful.

Qu Moying nodded. The two of them brought the maids along and sat down in the corridor at the corner. There was a breeze blowing, and the flowers rose and fell with the wind. The petals trembled slightly. It was vivid, charming, lively, and fragrant.

"Fourth Lady, I heard that you had called off the engagement with Marquis Yongning's Mansion before. You made this decision after Young Master Yongning fell in love with Second Madam Qu's niece, and then jumped into the lake to save Second Lady Duan, am I right?" Xiao Haitang looked back from the flowers and asked gently.

Although her words sounded inappropriate, her gentle manner reduced the sharpness of her words, as if she was really concerned about Qu Moying.

"I actually don't know about that." Qu Moying shook her head and kept looking at the flowers in front of her.

"I used to think that Young Master Yongning was quite nice, but now... I think he is quite shady. I'm sorry that you have to go through this. I'm sure that you'll have a happy marriage in the future," Xiao Haitang tactfully changed the topic and comforted Qu Moying after sensing that Qu Moying did not want to talk about this matter.

"Thank you, Miss Xiao." Qu Moying nodded.

After that, the two of them did not speak for a while as if they did not know what to talk about. The atmosphere became a little dull.

Qu Moying quietly admired the flowers in front of her as if she had put all her attention on the flowers. It seemed that she was just someone who was appreciating the flowers leisurely, while Xiao Haitang was the anxious one.

Sure enough, Xiao Haitang turned around and ordered the maid behind her, "There should be a snack room nearby. Go and bring us some desserts."

"Miss, do you want me to bring over the ones that First Young Master specially made for you?" After the maid took a few steps forward, she suddenly turned around and asked.

This question made Xiao Haitang feel a little shy. She patted her blushing cheeks with her handkerchief and urged, "Go and fetch some!"

After the maid left, Xiao Haitang turned around shyly and explained to Qu Moying, "Cousin Yuanxing knows that I like to eat desserts, so he usually will bring some new varieties over. Coincidentally, he brought some today. Fourth Lady, you must try a few of them later and see if they are delicious."

"Miss Xiao, that's so kind of you." Qu Moying thanked her.

"This... is nothing." Blushing, Xiao Haitang waved her hands shyly as if Qu Moying's remark embarrassed her even more. "Actually, Cousin Yuanxing wanted to eat the desserts himself. He said that he brought them for me to eat, but he would eat most of them. He once brought such a big plate of desserts here, but he ate more than me."

"First Young Master Ji is very close to you, Miss Xiao." Qu Moying smiled and gave such a conclusion.

"Uh... This is nothing. We grew up together, so our relationship is naturally different," Xiao Haitang lowered her head shyly and explained.

Xiao Haitang was clumsily trying to "cover up" her story, but she only revealed more.

At this point, Qu Moying could understand Xiao Haitang's intention. The latter clearly knew about Xiao's plan, so she was hinting Qu Moying about Ji Yuanxing being her childhood sweetheart.

Xiao Haitang was hinting that she herself was the one that Ji Yuanxing loved.

"Congratulations, Miss Xiao." Qu Moying smiled and congratulated her.

Xiao Haitang looked at Qu Moying suspiciously, but the latter's smile was very sincere, and her expression remained the same.

"What's there to congratulate about? It's just that Cousin Yuanxing is indeed a very good person." Xiao Haitang was extremely shy.

At this time, the Ji Family's maid brought over some pastries. There were a total of five plates of pastries, and they were all extremely exquisite. The ones in the middle were the most outstanding. They were flower-shaped pastries with a delicate and pleasant fragrance. A faint peach blossom fragrance overflowed from the pastries, which were very appetizing.

"This is..." Qu Moying's eyes turned cold, but she didn't show her emotions on her face. She pointed to the pastries in the middle and asked in surprise, "Why do they smell so nice?"

"These are peach blossom cakes. Not only does the cake smell nice, but it is also very delicious. On it are cleaned peach blossom petals, but they are different from ordinary ones. I heard that the tree is not planted in the capital," Xiao Haitang explained with a smile. She picked up one of the pieces and gently took a bite. "Fourth Lady, please try it!"

Qu Moying wondered if it was from the peach blossom tree planted in her mother's courtyard. There were a few special peach blossom trees there, and it seemed that the flowers on this pastry were from these trees.

Not only that, but the peach blossom cake recipe was also the one in Ji Hanyue's dowry. In the past, it was given to her mother when she was married over from the Yue's Mansion, and then it was passed over to her. She had never taken the recipe out to make pastries when she was with the Ji Family. Had

Granny Zhou not showed her when the former was arranging the dowry, even Ji Hanyue herself would not have known that there was such a recipe.

Now, she saw the pastry in the Ji Family. It was obvious that the recipe was brought over by Ji Youran.

In other words, all of her dowry belonged to Ji Youran now.

Pei Luo'an and Ji Youran had planned to kill her, and then they took her dowry without any guilt! A trace of hostility appeared in the bottom of Qu Moying's eyes.

"Is this peach blossom cake? Is it made according to the recipe? I heard that if they don't handle it properly when putting the peach blossom petals on the cake, it will backfire." Hiding the hostility in her eyes, Qu Moying slowly asserted with some curiosity.

Upon hearing the question, Xiao Haitang froze as she was reaching over to take the pastry...

Chapter 132 Deliberately Pissing Off Xiao Haitang

"Backfire? W-What do you mean by that?" Shocked, Xiao Haitang froze, and her hand that was holding the peach blossom cake stopped in front of her mouth.

"I heard it from others, so I don't know if it is right or not. I heard that some mutated peach blossoms are not edible, especially..." Qu Moying hesitated for a moment.

"Especially what?" Xiao Haitang asked anxiously.

"Especially some specific mutated species. They might have been imported from overseas, and they are different from the ones we have here. The flower petals have to be carefully treated before being used as the ingredient for the pastry. Otherwise, it will cause other symptoms such as fever or sorts. However, it will be fine if the ones in your mansion are not mutated peach blossom trees."

The cake in Xiao Haitang's hand fell down. Did Qu Moying just mention the mutated peach blossom? Xiao Haitang once heard that the peach blossom trees in her mansion did come from overseas. It was impossible for Qu Moying to know about this. Then what she said was true!

Xiao Haitang loved to eat this peach blossom cake after she got the recipe and tried it. Compared to the peach blossoms in the capital, these overseas peach blossoms were more fragrant and had a very good taste. They were all high-grade ones. If she did not take advantage of the present time to pick more petals, there would be no more in the future.

Therefore, every time Xiao Haitang came to the Ji Family, she would eat some of these pastries.

Recently, she felt that there were some rashes on her body and hands. Although there were not many, there were always a few that popped out. She didn't get better even after she applied ointment. However, it did not seem to be a serious allergy, so she didn't think in this aspect and just assumed that her skin quality was not very good recently.

But now, Qu Moying's remarks dawned upon her. It must be because of these mutated peach blossoms.

Awkwardly wiping her hands with a handkerchief, Xiao Haitang laughed dryly before asserting, "I don't know if these peach blossoms are from overseas, but for safety reasons, let's not eat the cake. Fourth Lady, I don't want you to become sick after eating it!"

After saying this, Xiao Haitang glanced at the maid standing at the side, and the maid hurriedly went forward to take away the peach blossom cake.

"Miss Xiao, how many times have you seen my uncle ever since he fell ill?" Qu Moying restrained the smile on her face and suddenly asked Xiao Haitang, who was carefully wiping her hands.

She guessed that Xiao Haitang did not know the truth. No matter how close Xiao was to Xiao Haitang, the former would not tell her about this matter. At most, Xiao would just give her a reminder. Otherwise, the Ji Family would not have come to her house to propose marriage.

Xiao Haitang wanted to privately hint Qu Moying that her relationship with Ji Yuanxing was special, and even suggested that the two families had an agreement long ago. Coincidentally, Qu Moying wanted to get some news from Xiao Haitang too.

In Earl Ling'an's Mansion, Qu Moying could do the things that she didn't dare to do in the Crown Prince's Mansion. As long as she did proper planning, she could first arouse the suspicion of the others and then uncover the truth step by step.

"Earl Ling'an was seriously ill and didn't show up in front of others. Perhaps it was because of the matter between Crown Princess and my Third Sister. All of a sudden... he was ill abed," Xiao Haitang replied. She raised her eyes to look at Qu Moying. Then, she suddenly remembered Qu Qiuyan's remark about Qu Moying, who said that the latter was not an easy target. Her heart skipped a beat inexplicably.

"Fourth Lady, are you suspecting something?"

"No, I don't suspect anything. I just feel that it was quite a pity that Cousin Yue and I didn't get to meet my uncle before he died. I wonder if I can see my uncle one last time in the mourning hall today," Qu Moying said unhurriedly.

Xiao Haitang's expression became displeased. "Fourth Lady, although you are Earl Ling'an's niece, Earl Ling'an specifically said that he didn't want anyone to see his face that was no longer mighty. I'm not bluffing. From the way you said this, you sounded as if we forbade you from seeing him."

"Is this my uncle's idea?" Qu Moying asked as she slightly raised her watery eyes.

"Of course, it is Earl Ling'an's idea." Xiao Haitang's face turned cold.

"Has he said it in these past few days?" Qu Moying asked again, her face darkening.

"Fourth Lady, is there anything wrong with this?" Xiao Haitang asked back. She had come here for two reasons. One was to show Qu Moying about her relationship with Ji Yuanxing, and the other was because of her aunt, who had asked her to keep a close eye on Qu Moying and not let the latter cause any trouble in the mourning hall.

The most important thing was that Qu Moying must not be allowed to see Earl Ling'an's remains.

The coffin had already been nailed, and no one was allowed to have a look.

Xiao Haitang originally thought that it was easy to dissuade Qu Moying from seeing Earl Ling'an's remains. All the noble young ladies grew up in their courtyard. They were delicate and weak, so none of them would have the intention to look at the remains of a deceased person. They would definitely be afraid after seeing it.

Unexpectedly, Qu Moying wanted to see the remains. For some reason, it made Xiao Haitang feel that Qu Moying was deliberately provoking her.

"I heard that my uncle could no longer speak a few days before his death. Could it be that he had already said his request earlier? The rules in the capital have always been to allow relatives and friends to take a look at the deceased's remains on the first day after the person passed away," Qu Moying mouthed.

There was indeed such a rule in the capital, but one would basically not go up to see the deceased's remains unless they were close relatives.

On the one hand, it was inappropriate to open the coffin after nailing it, unless they were the deceased's extremely close family members who didn't get to see the deceased before he died. Only then would they open the coffin to allow a last look at the deceased.

However, the coffin would definitely be nailed after the first day.

Of course, Crown Princess Ji Hanyue was different. Because of her special identity, no one was allowed to look at her remains, not even the seniors!

"Are you saying that you're extremely close to Uncle? Why didn't you come to visit him when he was still alive? What is your intention of insisting on seeing his remains now?" Xiao Haitang's expression became unkind, and a fit of inexplicable anger arose in her heart.

She originally thought that it was not a big deal, but she did not expect that Qu Moying would insist.

At this moment, she was contemptuous of Qu Moying. In fact, those who knew about the Qu Mansion's affairs in the capital all looked down on Fourth Lady Qu.

Qu Moying had no talent, no beauty, and she was abandoned in the village since she was young. She did not even receive any proper education. Of course, she could not be considered as a noble young lady. Only this kind of uneducated person would bring up such an unruly matter. Even if it was allowed to see the remains, she, as a niece, would not have any chance.

"Miss Xiao, I heard that relatives are allowed to see his remains. If I can't, at least Cousin Yue can. Why does Earl Ling'an's Mansion not allow us to see it? Is there something shameful about it?" Qu Moying had a surprised expression on her face as she looked at Xiao Haitang in shock.

"Fourth Lady, you're going too far!" Xiao Haitang snapped angrily as she stood up and glared at Qu Moying.

"Miss Xiao, I just want to see my uncle for the last time. Why don't you let me do it? Is there something suspicious about his death?" Qu Moying continued to calmly challenge Xiao Haitang, but the surprise on her face became more and more intense.

Qu Moying didn't dare to say such things in the Crown Prince's Mansion because of Crown Princess, and it was not something she could question. But it was different here. This was Earl Ling'an's Mansion. Even if she spoke a bit more bluntly, people would at most take her as being rude and disrespectful, but it would not be considered as offensive.

No one in Eastern Palace dared to question the truth that Pei Luo'an had covered up with great effort, but it was different here.

"Y-You are really going too far!" Xiao Haitang was furious.

"Am I, or is Earl Ling'an's Mansion going too far? The mansion only has the second branch now, and the first branch is gone. Now we don't even have the chance to look at his remains, do we?" Qu Moying asked coldly.

“This is outrageous!” Xiao Haitang was so angry that she couldn’t bear to listen any longer. She flung her sleeves and turned to leave.

Even if her aunt asked her to keep an eye on Qu Moying, she couldn’t stay any longer. Xiao Haitang originally thought that even if Qu Moying didn’t have a good upbringing, she would still know some boundaries. Now, it turned out that not only did she not know any etiquette, but she was also extremely annoying. Why would her aunt want her Cousin to marry such a woman? Qu Moying would create chaos in the family.

Xiao Haitang was determined to tell her aunt when she went home how Qu Moying was like. Xiao Haitang believed her aunt would definitely change her idea.

Xiao Haitang left decisively, but Qu Moying stood up and looked at her as she left. Xiao Haitang was going to look for Xiao. Qu Moying grew up in this mansion, so she was familiar with the layout.

Although it was just a quarrel, Qu Moying had heard most of the things she wanted to know. Now that she pissed Xiao Haitang off, no one was watching her.

“Let’s go!” Qu Moying said to the two maids behind her. She turned and walked to a small path. This was the path to Old Lady Ji’s courtyard, but at this time, Old Lady Ji was still in the reception hall entertaining guests.

The path curved forward. Qu Moying was familiar with the route. She walked forward until she arrived in front of a large courtyard and turned in another direction. This was Old Lady Ji’s courtyard, but she was going to the back of the courtyard.

Like the old ladies in some other mansions, Old Lady Ji preferred a quiet place as she got older, and she would set up a small temple hall behind the courtyard.

This small temple hall was often used as a family temple.

The Qu’s Mansion was the same. There was also a small temple hall behind Old Lady Qu’s courtyard. There were many older people who believed in Buddhism. Occasionally, they would come over to light

incense and recite some scriptures. In this regard, Old Lady Qu and Old Lady Ji were similar. In fact, it was not just them. Many mansions in the capital were like this.

Sure enough, there was a small house behind the courtyard. Qu Moying stood outside and composed herself as her gaze fell on the door that was ajar. This was something that Granny Zhou had told her yesterday. Now, she was taking advantage of Old Lady Ji's absence to come over.

"You two wait for me outside. I'll go take a look," Qu Moying instructed the two maids.

"Yes, Miss," Yu Chun and Yu Dong responded. After exchanging glances, they both retreated to the side.

Today, everyone in the Ji Family seemed to be very busy. When they came over, they did not see many servants. The servants in the mansion all went to the front to help. No one noticed them at this time.

Qu Moying nodded and walked in. Her heart skipped a beat before she slowly calmed down.

She pushed open the door which was ajar. There were three rooms in a row. The moment she entered, there was a strong scent of incense. Qu Moying took a deep breath and calmed herself down again. The bigger room in the center was the Buddha hall. There were two other smaller rooms in its two wings.

"Who is it?" As soon as she arrived at the entrance of the main hall, she heard a woman's voice coming from inside.

Chapter 133 Looking for Concubine Xiang's Help

Qu Moying continued to walk in.

The Buddha hall was not very big. There were only three Buddha statues. The largest statue was in the middle, with two smaller ones on both sides. There were a few futons in the hall, and a woman was kneeling on one of them. Her hair was slightly greyish, and she was dressed in coarse clothes. She was kneeling there quietly and did not even turn around when she heard Qu Moying's footsteps.

"Are you Concubine Xiang?" Qu Moying asked in a low voice as she looked at this somewhat familiar figure.

"Yes. Who are you? I don't think you live in this mansion. You're not allowed to enter this place." Concubine Xiang replied coldly while kneeling in front of the Buddha statues without turning back.

"I am Fourth Lady from the Qu's Mansion," Qu Moying answered.

After a moment of silence, Concubine Xiang slowly turned her head and looked at the door.

Concubine Xiang was a beautiful woman about forty years old, but she looked very old. Half of her hair was already grey, making her look ten years older.

She looked at Qu Moying with a moved expression, and there was a fluctuation in her calm eyes.

Qu Moying, who was standing at the door, was petite. The long eye veil covered her eyes and hid her face. But even so, seeing the long eye veil, Concubine Xiang was still excited. It was indeed that child. Only that child would always wear an eye veil.

It was because of the eye disease that this child was still wearing an eye veil.

"Your... Your eyes still have not recovered yet?" Concubine Xiang calmed down and asked with concern.

Qu Moying stepped in through the light at the door and quietly walked to Concubine Xiang's side. She knelt down on the futon beside Concubine Xiang and shook her head gently.

When Concubine Xiang saw Qu Moying come over, she wanted to prop herself up on the futon, as if she was going to bow at the latter.

Qu Moying reached out to hold her down. "Concubine Xiang, I knew about you. Cousin Hanyue told me about you in the past. She said that the letter you sent out was missing, and it's not your fault. You don't have to blame yourself, and you don't need to suffer until now."

Concubine Xiang came to this mansion as Yue's maid when Yue married Earl Ling'an. Unlike Granny Zhou, she was promoted by Yue and became Ji Yongming's concubine.

Earl Ling'an originally had two personal maids who were later promoted to concubines. Therefore, he had a total of three concubines, including Concubine Xiang. This wasn't a big number compared to how many concubines other masters of the aristocratic families in the capital had. Moreover, it was also demanded by Yue that Concubine Xiang should be promoted to concubine. This was because Yue did not want Old Lady Ji to control the other two concubines to fight against her.

This explained Concubine Xiang's promotion.

Although Concubine Xiang was a concubine, she was very loyal to Yue, her own master.

Concubine Xiang helped Yue to deal with Old Lady Ji and protected Yue wholeheartedly.

But even so, Old Lady Ji did not like her daughter-in-law, and sometimes she would make things very difficult for Yue.

Old Lady Ji was very dissatisfied with Yue because she only gave birth to two daughters after marrying Earl Ling'an, and they had no son. Because of this, Old Lady Ji intended to find another woman with a good family background to marry Earl Ling'an as his concubine. Old Lady Ji even wanted Ji Yongming to marry a second wife. In this way, their son would still be a wife-born son.

Earl Ling'an loved his wife and did not have the intention to marry a second one. He rejected Old Lady Ji's suggestion again and again by stating that he already had three concubines and that it was inappropriate to marry again.

When Yue was seriously ill, Ji Yongming was not in the capital. He was still at the border. Concubine Xiang was the one who sent out Yue's letter that stated her intention of seeing Ji Yongming before she passed away, but Ji Yongming didn't receive the letter. When Ji Yongming returned to the capital, Yue

had passed away. Because of this, Old Lady Ji reprimanded Concubine Xiang for her incompetence, and Concubine Xiang also blamed herself.

After Yue died, Concubine Xiang volunteered to guard the temple hall. She wanted to repent for her sins and ask for Yue's forgiveness.

It had been three years since Concubine Xiang entered the temple hall. By now, she did not want to leave.

Before Ji Hanyue married the Crown Prince, she had said that she wanted to invite Concubine Xiang to help Xiao manage the Ji Family's internal affairs. However, Concubine Xiang declined, saying that she was fine living in the temple hall. She refused to appear in front of everyone. She said that she had lost her soul on the day Yue died, and that she was content with the company of the candles and Buddha statues. She was disheartened by everything.

Ji Hanyue persuaded her several times to no avail, so the former had no choice but to leave.

"Concubine Xiang, Cousin Hanyue believed you. She knew that you wrote the letter and that you hoped my uncle would come back to see my aunt for the last time. However, the letter was gone. It was not your fault. It must be Second Madam's idea. If she withheld the letter, no one in the mansion would know about it."

Qu Moying asserted.

In the past, Qu Moying did not understand the situation, so she did not expect that Xiao would confiscate the letter. Now, she understood everything.

After confiscating the letter, her mother could not see her father, so Concubine Xiang would have to take the blame for this matter. Concubine Xiang was bound to be punished, and Xiao defeated both her mother and Concubine Xiang in one go. As for the other two concubines, who had been promoted from personal maids, they had always been in the hands of Old Lady Ji and Second Madam. These two concubines would always do whatever they ordered.

Since then, the first branch had nothing to do with the management of the family, which also made her and her father unclear about the scheme of the second branch. They were kept in the dark at all times.

"Is it Second Madam's doing?" Seeing that Qu Moying was so sure, Concubine Xiang couldn't help but start to believe it, and her expression became cold.

"Yes, Cousin Hanyue said that she had discovered this much. She wanted to continue investigating, but... but disaster struck after she married the Crown Prince. Then, my uncle and Cousin Yanyue also had accidents. Now my uncle is dead, but the Ji Family won't allow me and Cousin Yue to see his remains. I wonder if there is something wrong with this."

Qu Moying said sadly as she bit her lips. She unconsciously choked a bit.

Qu Moying did not say that there was a problem with Ji Hanyue's death because she knew that with the current status, Concubine Xiang could not investigate the matter. Right now, she could only ask Concubine Xiang about her father's death and her sister's accident.

"What?! Third Lady also had an accident?" Concubine Xiang's expression changed drastically.

"Don't you know?" Qu Moying was slightly surprised as it never crossed her mind. She asked tentatively, "Do you know that my uncle died yesterday? Besides, the Crown Princess has also passed away."

"I knew about the passing of the Crown Princess and Earl, but Third Lady... I didn't know anything about Third Lady!" Concubine Xiang's voice trembled, and she became worked up. She grabbed Qu Moying's hand and asked anxiously, "When did it happen? What happened to her? Where did she go?"

"I don't know either. It was rumored that she succumbed to her illness, but her death was not publicized as it collided with Cousin Hanyue and Crown Prince's wedding, so she was buried hastily. However, there were other rumors in the aristocratic families that... she eloped with someone, but she was only ten years old!"

Qu Moying's voice unconsciously trembled, and she became worked up.

How could a young girl, who was only ten years old and had always lived in the house, elope with someone? It sounded like a joke for such a ridiculous thing to happen. She would never believe it no matter what.

“Impossible, impossible! They said that they would take good care of Third Lady. Impossible! This is impossible!” Concubine Xiang quavered with a panicked expression. She loosened her hands and shook her head anxiously.

“Who are ‘they’ that you’re referring to?” Qu Moying immediately grasped the most crucial point and asked hurriedly. Could there be something that she did not know about?

“Old Lady Ji and Second Madam. I have been staying in the temple for Madam in the past three years. In the third year, I wanted to go out to take care of First Lady and Third Lady, but Old Lady Ji and Second Madam disagreed with that, claiming that it would be bad for both of them if I went out now. They said First Lady would become the Crown Princess, and Third Lady was still young. They thought I was in no place to attend to the two ladies since I was only a lowly concubine who had made a mistake.”

“They asked me to continue to stay in the temple hall and preserve the good reputation of First Lady and Third Lady. They said that if I went out, I would have to help Second Madam to manage the household. It would not leave a good impression on others if the news about a concubine managing the family affairs spread out. It was better for me to stay here and guard Madam’s soul. As for Third Lady, Second Madam said that she would take good care of her.”

Concubine Xiang said word by word.

“Is this the reason why you repeatedly refused Cousin Hanyue’s kindness to let you leave the temple hall?” Qu Moying asked in a trembling voice.

“I am just a concubine who has made a mistake. However, we’re in Earl’s Mansion, where the first branch should be the center of it. If I get out, although I can’t manage all the affairs in the mansion, I must help Second Madam run the household. This was what I did in the past to help Madam. Since it is the management of the entire household, dealing with Third Lady’s affairs is also a part of it. Compared to having the main wife take care of things, having me, a concubine, manage the household would tarnish Third Lady’s reputation.”

At this time, Concubine Xiang also understood the entire situation and slowly explained the ins and outs of the matter.

Qu Moying felt a chill down her spine. It could be said that the second branch had planned and prepared everything in advance. Second Madam wanted to get rid of the first branch completely, and this was also what she had planned for long.

Qu Moying reached out to hold Concubine Xiang's hand and pulled her up from the futon. Then, Qu Moying informed her with a serious face, "Concubine Xiang, I suspect that something is wrong with Cousin Yanyue's incident, and I also suspect that there is something fishy about my uncle's death. But right now, neither Cousin Yue nor I have the ability to force the Ji Family to open the coffin and let us check my uncle's remains."

They were the Earl's juniors. Although they were somehow related to the Ji Family as they were the closest relatives of Yue, they were not the Ji Family's close relatives. The only one who could help them now was Concubine Xiang. After all, Concubine Xiang was not only the maid who came to the Ji Family as Mother's dowry maid, but also Father's concubine.

"T-They murdered the Earl?" Concubine Xiang was stunned.

"If my uncle was well and alive when something happened to Cousin Yanyue, wouldn't he investigate the matter? Strangely, the time of Cousin Yanyue's accident was close to the time of my uncle's passing. In fact, my uncle immediately died after something happened to Cousin Hanyue, and the Ji Family hurriedly nailed the coffin and didn't dare to show his remains to anyone. It was really suspicious."

Qu Moying analyzed.

Concubine Xiang already understood what Qu Moying meant. She gritted her teeth angrily and snarled with bloodshot eyes, "If there is indeed something fishy about this matter, I will not let them get away with it after they harmed the Earl and Third Lady. Miss, I will go to the mourning hall to take a look now."

Qu Moying nodded, knowing that this was the best solution. If things went according to the normal way of thinking, the next person the Ji Family would deal with would be Concubine Xiang. After all, Concubine Xiang would become a trouble now.

In the past, they kept her alive for the sake of their reputation. But now that everyone in the first branch had deceased, there was no need to keep her alive anymore...

Qu Moying wanted to expose their plot while keeping Concubine Xiang safe...

Chapter 134 The Son of the Second Branch Who Was Truly in Grief

When Xiao Haitang came to find Qu Moying again, Qu Moying was still waiting in the same place.

Seeing that Qu Moying was still there, Xiao Haitang heaved a sigh of relief. Just now, after she angrily went back, her aunt reprimanded her fiercely, telling her to keep a close eye on Qu Moying and not let her run around. She had to remain deaf to whatever annoying words Qu Moying said.

Xiao was also afraid that Qu Moying would cause trouble secretly again, so she became alert and sent someone to keep an eye on her.

In order to avoid embarrassment, Xiao Haitang even went to the front to find the Qu Mansion's other young ladies and come over together.

"Fourth Lady, how is the visit? Can we go now?" Xiao Haitang stepped forward and said with a smile, as if the dispute between her and Qu Moying did not exist.

Qu Moying nodded with a smile and stood up, "Oh, I've visited the place. I was waiting here for you to come back."

"I'm really sorry. Something was up just now, or I would have come back earlier," Xiao Haitang apologized politely.

The two of them exchanged pleasantries as if nothing had happened earlier. Qu Qiuyan's eyes darkened as she looked at them.

She did not believe that nothing had happened between the two of them.

Xiao Haitang and her were considered to have a good relationship. Thus, she knew that the person Xiao Haitang wanted to marry was her cousin. She had heard that the two families also had this intention. It was just a matter of time now. At this moment, Earl Ling'an's Mansion had expressed that they wanted Qu Moying to marry into their family. Xiao Haitang definitely would not tolerate this matter.

Others might not know what kind of person Xiao Haitang was, but Qu Qiuyan knew about her. Before she came, she had already written a letter to Xiao Haitang and told her everything about how Earl Ling'an's Mansion had asked the Qu Mansion about the marriage with Qu Moying. Therefore, it was impossible for Xiao Haitang to be on friendly terms with Qu Moying.

She had originally thought that Xiao Haitang must have made a move. After all, this was Earl Ling'an's Mansion. Qu Moying had never been here before. Anything could happen here. But now, nothing had happened. It was really suspicious.

Her gaze swept from Qu Moying to Xiao Haitang. Both of them seemed to be on friendly terms, and their smiles were also very amiable.

This was different from what she had imagined. What went wrong?

Qu Qiuyan did not know that when Qu Moying came to the Ji Family yesterday, she even dared to confront Xiao, not to mention Xiao Haitang. Therefore, Xiao was very vigilant against Qu Moying. She repeatedly told her niece to be careful of Qu Moying and to keep an eye on her to prevent her from causing trouble.

Although Xiao Haitang did not care, she listened to Xiao readily. Originally, she did have some thoughts, but now it was just a warning. She did not expect that she would be irritated by Qu Moying.

"Miss Xiao, can I go to the mourning hall to pay my respects again? I don't have the mood to admire the scenery right now," Qu Moying got straight to the point and said to Xiao Haitang.

Xiao Haitang's heart skipped a beat. When her aunt asked her to keep an eye on Qu Moying, she also repeatedly said that no matter what Qu Moying's reason was, she should not take her to the mourning hall again.

"You have already paid your respects just now. If you go again, they have to prepare new candles and incense sticks again," Xiao Haitang quavered awkwardly.

"It doesn't matter. I originally brought some additional ones. I want to go take a look and look for Cousin. I have something to ask him. I heard that Cousin is at the mourning hall right now," Qu Moying asserted.

Xiao Haitang was befuddled. Should she not let her go to the mourning hall or see her Cousin?

She still had a barely acceptable reason to not let her go to the mourning hall, but she couldn't say anything to stop her from seeing her Cousin.

"Miss Xiao, if you are busy, I can go by myself." Seeing that she did not respond, Qu Moying said lightly.

"Let's go together." Xiao Haitang could not refuse at this time. Her aunt had told her to keep an eye on Qu Moying.

Since the two of them were going over, the other three would also go over.

The white banners were waving at the mourning hall. The low and continuous chanting of the monks echoed across the hall, followed by the sounds of some Buddhist instruments.

Qu Moying waited outside the mourning hall for a while. Then, Yu Dong took out the candles and incense sticks she brought with her. Although the Ji Family had prepared the incense sticks, it was more sincere for Qu Moying to bring her own. In particular, Qu Moying was a junior, so she should be more sincere. Therefore, she asked Granny Zhou to prepare the candles and incense sticks for her yesterday.

When she walked into the mourning hall, she looked around and found that it was rather empty. Only the Ji Family's Eldest and Second Young Masters knelt in front of the coffin. Right now, Earl Ling'an's Mansion only had two male descendants.

The Eldest Young Master, Ji Yuanxing, was Ji Youran's older brother. The Second Young Master, Ji Yuanhai, was the concubine-born son of the second branch. He was only eleven years old, and he was born by Ji Yong'an's concubine. His mother had already died and was survived by this only child. Rumors had it that Xiao killed the boy's mother. Of course, even Ji Hanyue was not quite clear about these things.

However, there was one thing that she knew. Her younger sister had always had a good relationship with Ji Yuanhai. The two of them were about the same age. Her younger sister had a kind and gentle personality. Her relationship with Ji Yuanhai had always been very good.

In the past, whenever Ji Yuanhai suffered any grievances in the second branch, he would come to her younger sister and tell her. Although her younger sister was one year younger than him, she would try her best to appease him. Ji Hanyue didn't have special feelings for Ji Yuanhai. She simply treated him as a little brother. After all, the age gap between them was quite large, and they were not in the same branch. It was impossible for her to be as close to him as her younger sister.

Her younger sister had mentioned it more than once, saying that Ji Yuanhai was smart and well-learned. He was much better than Ji Yuanxing!

"Cousin, why are you here?" Hearing the voice, Ji Yuanxing looked up at Xiao Haitang and asked frowning. Then, he turned to the young ladies from the Qu Mansion behind her.

"Fourth Miss Qu wants to pay respects to Uncle again, and also look for her cousin... Maybe they have something to say to each other?" Xiao Haitang answered vaguely.

Cousins were the most intimate, and a lot of times, marriage relations would occur between two families, just like Xiao Haitang and Ji Yuanxing. However, this time, the Ji Family wanted to select another bride. Xiao Haitang didn't know if Ji Yuanxing knew or not, so she deliberately mentioned it to show that Qu Moying and her cousin were intimate just like them. She wanted to see Ji Yuanxing's reaction.

Sure enough, Ji Yuanxing turned his eyes to the several young ladies behind Xiao Haitang. The one with a beautiful and elegant appearance was Third Lady Qu. He heard that she might be the future Princess Jing. The one who looked faintly charming but was delicate and pretty must be First Lady Qu. There was another one who looked good, but she was clearly not as beautiful as Third Lady Qu. She should be Second Lady Qu, a daughter of a concubine, who looked a little timid.

Xiao had already told Ji Yuanxing about the few young ladies of the Qu Mansion. When he looked at them, he immediately recognized each one of them. The one on the far side with a long veil on her face should be Fourth Lady Qu, who was also the daughter of Yue. Was she the bride his elder sister and mother had selected for him?

The wide veil covered her eyes and half of her face. However, from what he saw, he felt that she looked quite pretty. It was not as bad as the rumors said.

Her skin was fair and flawless, coupled with her pink lips and glossy black hair. If her eyes were pretty, she should be good-looking. She had a curvy and petite figure. The rumors about her dull appearance and lack of talent were apparently wrong. His elder sister and mother might be wrong. It was said that she was quite outstanding.

When Ji Yuanxing was examining Qu Moying, Qu Moying glanced at him, and then glanced past him to Ji Yuanhai, who was kneeling behind him.

Ji Yuanhai was also looking at her. His eyes were so swollen that they were almost reduced to two slits. He looked like he had been crying heavily, but even though the small slits, Qu Moying saw a trace of dark hatred in those eyes. Although it was a cautious flash, it made Qu Moying's heart skip a beat.

The whole of the Ji Family were crying today. Everyone was very sad. Many people had red eyes, but only this child was crying so much that his eyes were almost swollen. He was really crying, unlike those people who deliberately wiped their eyes red.

In the past, Ji Hanyue had never paid attention to this concubine-born brother in the other branch. Now, she could not help but look a few more times at him. After all, in the entire mansion, he was the only one who had really cried.

He was still young and had not grown up yet. The eleven-year-old Ji Yuanhai looked a little younger, just like she, at the age of 14, looked a little petite for her age.

There was only one reason, and that was he had not been properly treated.

Qu Moying had been raised in the village since she was a child. Her food and supplement could not be compared with those in the mansion, so, she was naturally a little petite. What about Ji Yuanhai in front of her?

No wonder her younger sister repeatedly said that Ji Yuanhai lived miserably in the second branch, but there was nothing she could do. Xiao was in charge of the second branch, and she, an unmarried elder sister, could not make any decisions. Moreover, Old Lady Ji trusted Xiao and Ji Yong'an of the second branch. The person that Ji Yong'an liked was also Xiao's child, Ji Yuanxing...

"Prepare candles and incense for Fourth Lady Qu," Ji Yuanxing ordered.

Qu Moying composed herself and bowed. "Thank you, First Young Master Ji. I brought my own candles and incense!"

Seeing that she rejected his good intentions, Ji Yuanxing did not say anything else and retreated to the side. Xiao Haitang stomped her foot fiercely, wishing she could go forward and give Qu Moying a push. How could Cousin show such kindness to Qu Moying? Shouldn't he be disdainful of people like Qu Moying?

Could it be that Cousin really wanted to marry Qu Moying? Thinking of this, she was enraged.

"Miss Xiao, let's go and offer incense again!" Qu Qiuyan suddenly whispered and reached out to pull Xiao Haitang's clothes.

Xiao Haitang immediately understood and looked at Qu Qiuyan gratefully. She nodded and followed Qu Moying to offer incense.

At this time, she could not lose her composure and let others discover anything.

Previously, when she had followed the Old Lady to offer incense, Qu Moying had followed her every moment. The Old Lady's words and actions were her standards, and she exactly followed them when offering incense.

Her face had a sad expression as she silently offered the incense to the deceased!

At this time, she knelt in front of the coffin with tears in her eyes. She lowered her head and kowtowed three times. Tears flowed down her face, and she could not help but whimper. Even though she bit her lips so hard that a faint smell of rustic blood lingered in her mouth, she still could not control her crying.

Her father was such a heroic figure. He was loyal to the country and faithful to his family. He adored and loved his two daughters. However, he died inexplicably. His funeral even dragged until now without a proper burial. Qu Moying was extremely furious now. Her eyes were filled with hostility...

Chapter 135 Making a Ruckus at the Mourning Hall

No one expected that Qu Moying would break down in tears.

The ladies who followed her exchanged suspicious glances at the sight of her kneeling on the ground with her head hanging low, her cries choking with sobs. Throughout their way here, they thought that Qu Moying was just putting on a show, the mourning wail, but her main agenda was to meet Yue Wenhan, her cousin.

Yue Wenhan was young, handsome, and held quite a high position for someone his age. The Emperor thought highly of him too. Now that Qu Moying was no longer engaged, it was possible that she had taken a fancy on him. Qu Qiuyan and Xiao Haitang speculated even more, such as the fact that the so-called paying respect might just be an excuse.

Could it be that Qu Moying really came to pay her respects to Earl Ling'an?

There was another person in the mourning hall who looked at Qu Moying in shock. A trace of surprise flashed through his eyes, but he quickly hid his emotions. He knelt on the ground beside Qu Moying and began to cry softly.

Now that two people were crying, the others had to cry too. They wiped their eyes forcefully, even if there were no tears. It didn't look nice for them not to shed a single tear when others wailed vigorously.

After the wails lasted a while, Ji Yuanxing spoke first, "Cousin, please comfort Fourth Lady Qu. It will be bad for her health to continue crying."

Qu Moying's cries weren't very loud, but her silent sobs sounded like a little beast in despair, and those who heard it couldn't help but feel sorry. Seeing her weak body kneel on the floor without moving, they inexplicably felt pity for her.

Everyone knew that it wasn't good for Qu Moying's health if she kept crying.

"Fourth Lady Qu, please get up. You'll get sick if you go on like this." Xiao Haitang, who had long gotten tired of wailing, wiped her eyes, walked to Qu Moying, and reached out to help her up.

Yu Dong hurriedly stepped forward to block Xiao Haitang's hand. "Miss Xiao, thank you for your concern. Our miss will be fine."

When they came, Qu Moying had told Yu Dong not to let anyone interrupt her cries. She only wanted some more time and privacy to pay her respects.

Although Yu Dong did not understand why his miss cared so much about Earl Ling'an, whom she had never met before. He suspected that it might be because of the Crown Princess. He heard that Crown Princess treated Qu Moying very well. It was Crown Princess who found the doctor who treated her eyes. Qu Moying probably felt sad because Crown Princess's entire family has now passed on.

A maid dares block her?! Xiao Haitang's expression turned gloomy. However, it was Qu's Mansion's maid, so she couldn't act up. She turned back to look at Qu Qiuyan.

Qu Qiuyan wiped the corners of her eyes, looking like she was very sad. “Yu Dong, Moying is too emotional. Hurry and help her up. Moying is weak to begin with, what would you do if she really was overwhelmed and faint?”

She was also the Qu’s Mansion’s young lady, so it was natural for her to reprimand a maid.

However, Yu Dong didn’t even look at her. He only bowed to her quietly and stood beside Qu Moying, separating Xiao Haitang and Qu Moying.

This seemingly defiant action upset Qu Qiuyan so much that she was about to lose herself. Knowing that this was not the right time, she forcefully suppressed the anger in her heart.

Taking a few steps forward, Qu Qiuyan went to the other side of Qu Moying and comforted her softly, “Moying, don’t be too sad. Take care of yourself. He’s passed. The people left behind are the most important.”

As she spoke, she reached out to help Qu Moying up.

She was the Qu’s Mansion’s young lady, so Yu Dong could not directly stop her.

Qu Moying slowly raised her head. Her eye veil was wet. Yu Chun hurriedly went forward to help Qu Moying up, avoiding Qu Qiuyan, who also wanted to help Qu Moying.

As Qu Moying stood straight up, everyone looked at the corner of her lips in shock. A faint bloodstain appeared on the corner of her mouth where she bit her lips. It was visible on her fair skin, adding another layer of sorrow to the mournful mood.

No one noticed that Ji Yuanhai, who was kneeling on the ground and crying, raised his head and looked at Qu Moying in shock. Then, without anyone noticing, he lowered his head and continued to cry.

“Miss,” Yu Chun panicked and said hurriedly.

Qu Moying reached out to take out a handkerchief and gently pressed the corner of her lips. She shook her head. "I'm fine."

"Miss, your veil is wet. I'll change one for you," Yu Chun said and took out a clean veil from her pocket.

Qu Moying nodded. She took Yu Chun to a corner and stood facing inside. Yu Chun took off the wet eye veil for her and changed a new one. Then, Yu Chun spruced up Qu Moying's appearance before Qu Moying turned around.

When Qu Moying turned around, the people behind her looked at her with questions in their eyes. No one expected that Qu Moying would be so sorrowful. The few people in the mourning hall quieted down after a while, their querying glances wandering about Qu Moying.

For a moment, the hall was very quiet.

Suddenly, a loud noise came from the entrance. Originally, they thought it was not a big deal, so no one in the mourning hall paid attention to it. Unexpectedly, the sound became louder and louder. They could faintly hear the sound of someone crying.

Ji Yuanxing showed displeasure on his face. He turned his head and was about to instruct the young servant behind him when a woman in mourning clothes suddenly rushed in. He was immediately filled with anger and scolded, "Where did you come from? Guards, take her away! This is Uncle's funeral! It's not for just anyone, and especially not for someone who know no rules!"

The servant behind him nodded and hurriedly went over to pull the woman. Suddenly, the woman raised her head and snapped sternly, "I dare you!"

The young servant was shocked and quickly retreated.

"Concubine Xiang?" At this time, Ji Yuanxing also recognized the person in front of him and exclaimed in surprise. He waved to the young servant and gestured at him with his eyes. The young servant took two steps back, then turned around and ran inside to report.

Although Concubine Xiang was a concubine, she was a senior in the family. Concubine Xiang was well within her rights to be at Ji Yongming's mourning hall.

"First Young Master, why did you prevent me from coming in to see Master Ji for the last time? Surely, there's nothing off about his death?" Concubine Xiang raised her pale face and glared at Ji Yuanxing in anger.

She used to work for Yue. Back then, the people of the second branch had always been respectful when they saw her. Later, she volunteered herself to stay in the temple hall after the incident, but she still had her own imposing demeanor. Now, aided by her strong presence, her bold and confident question made Ji Yuanxing unsure how to answer.

Concubine Xiang was not Qu Moying. Qu Moying was a relative, but not a blood relative. She was related to Yue by blood but had no direct relationship with Earl Ling'an himself. So it was reasonable to refuse her request to see Earl Ling'an's body, especially considering that she was of a younger generation.

Concubine Xiang was different. She was Earl Ling'an's woman, so it would be reasonable if she wanted to see him. The only drawback was that she was a concubine.

At this moment, Ji Yuanhai had stopped crying. He wiped his tears and stared at Concubine Xiang with a pair of swollen eyes.

When Concubine Xiang joined their family, he was still young and not very sensible. In the past, it was impossible for him, the son of a concubine of the second branch, to have any interactions with the concubine of the first branch. He had only seen her from afar.

The Concubine Xiang then was in high spirits and lively. Now, she looked totally different as she was old and haggard.

But from the way she spoke and her appearance, he could tell that she was Concubine Xiang.

Qu Moying turned her eyes to Ji Yuanhai and looked at him quietly. This child was not an impulsive person. Although he was young, he had his own considerations between his demeanor and situation. He was wise and mature for his age.

“Concubine Xiang, how can you say that? Eldest Uncle died of illness. Everyone knows that. He was sick for a long time, and because of Crown Princess... he couldn’t take it anymore. Concubine Xiang, you have been in the temple hall all this time. Who instigated you to come here?”

Ji Yuanxing reacted quickly. Despite a moment of silence, he quickly asked back.

He knew that Concubine Xiang had locked herself up in the temple hall, and she would continue to do the same in the future. She should not be able to come out. Grandmother and Mother were behind this, but it was also her own intention to remain in the temple hall. So what’s different now?

It was impossible for Concubine Xiang to come without a reason. Did she hear something?

Who was the one who told her the news?

And it happened so timely. His eyes swept past the young ladies present. Finally, his gaze fell on Xiao Haitang. His cousin, Xiao Haitang, was the only one who knew about Concubine Xiang in this mansion. However, it was impossible that his cousin would take Concubine Xiang out of the temple hall at a moment like this.

Who was it then?

“First Young Master, no one instigated me. I just wanted to see Master Ji. He lived his life a hero, but his wife and children can’t be present here at his funeral. I’m his concubine. Now, only I am present send him to the other side. However, I didn’t even get to see him one last time before he passed away. It is not too much to see him now, right?”

Concubine Xiang asserted. She had always been a capable person, and now she asked with even more reason and confidence.

"Concubine Xiang, I... can't make the decision on this matter." Ji Yuanxing couldn't refute her, could only delay.

"Who can call the shots here?" Concubine Xiang said, unwilling to give in.

"Grandmother, of course," Ji Yuanxing braced himself and answered, hoping that Grandmother could come over quickly. Concubine Xiang was his uncle's concubine. His hands were tied in matters around her, so it was best for his grandmother, or at the very least, his mother to take care of her. After all, his mother was the first wife of the second branch, so a concubine couldn't go against her.

"First young master, I just want to see Master Ji one last time. Is this too much? Why are you refusing my request? Was it because he died unnaturally? Is that why you don't let me see him?" Concubine Xiang wiped her tears and rebuked furiously.

"For the past three years, I have been wholeheartedly praying for him in the temple hall. I wished for Master Ji, Crown Princess, and Third Lady to be safe and sound. I didn't expect that not only did something happen to all of them, but I can't even see Master Ji one last time. Now that the first branch is gone, everything now belongs to the second branch now. Can't you let me see him one last time?"

The more Concubine Xiang spoke, the angrier she became. Her eyes were sorrowful and filled with despair. Outside the mourning hall, there were people coming to pay their respects. When they heard the commotion inside, they couldn't help but stop. The mourning hall's door was wide open. Even though it was a bit far, they could clearly see everything that happened in the mourning hall. They could also hear Concubine Xiang's angry rebuke. For a moment, the people who came to pay their respects exchanged curious and puzzled glances.

It was as if a new door had been pushed open, leading everyone's thoughts to a direction that they had never thought of before. It went straight to the main point of the matter...

But it was a terrifying thought...

Chapter 136 No Male Descendant? Second Young Master Ji Is Perfect

As they thought about it carefully, it was indeed true. Earl Ling'an's Mansion's first branch was gone, including the Crown Princess, who had just married the Crown Prince into Eastern Palace; the young Third Lady Ji, who had an accident in the mansion out of the blue, and even General Ji, who could make the enemy tremble on the battlefield.

Was this really a coincidence?

No matter how they looked at it, they felt the Ji Family's second branch obtained all the benefits in this matter.

Crown Princess died, but First Lady Ji, who was Crown Prince's concubine, was still in Eastern Palace. She might be promoted to Crown Princess in the future. Who gained all these great benefits was no other than the Ji Family's second branch.

If something happened to General Ji, the second branch would obtain Earl Ling'an's title. Originally, the second branch was not necessarily going to inherit the title, but now that the first branch perished, they would definitely make it, which was another great benefit.

After all, General Ji was not very old. If he wanted, he could marry another concubine and could possibly try for another son. If this effort was futile, he could still adopt a son from within the family. However, now, the title had clearly fallen into the hands of the Ji Family's second branch.

Earl Ling'an's Mansion's second branch obtained all the benefits. Could it be that there really was something suspicious about Earl Ling'an's death?

Did the Ji Family's second branch plot to murder General Ji?

It was possible. After all, when looking at the results, the second branch had all the benefits, so it made sense that they had such a motive.

Some people even wondered if it was First Lady Ji, namely Princess Ji, who harmed the Crown Princess. When the Crown Princess was sick, it was not difficult for her to take action when she went to look after the Crown Princess. She was likely to do something to the Crown Princess's medicine.

Once Crown Princess collapsed, it was much easier to take action against the sick General Ji. If this matter was true, there would be so many questionable points in General Ji's death as well as the Crown Princess's!

A few people who came to pay their respects looked at each other. They were so shocked that their faces turned pale. They did not dare to think further. They felt a chill down their spines, and their bodies trembled out of fear and anxiety.

They did not dare to relate this matter to Pei Luo'an, the Crown Prince. On one hand, Pei Luo'an had always had a deep affection for Ji Hanyue in front of others. On the other hand, it was because Pei Luo'an had no direct interest conflicts with Earl Ling'an, namely Ji Yongming. It wouldn't make sense if he was involved.

"Concubine Xiang, what nonsense are you talking about? Uncle's coffin has been nailed close. Before his death, he said he had always been mighty and handsome, and that he didn't want anyone to see he had such a sickly face. After being ill for so long, he looked haggard, and he only let his own children see him for the last time. Even the other two concubines didn't get to see him."

Ji Yongxing was shocked by Concubine Xiang's fierceness and hurriedly explained.

"You didn't let anyone from the first branch see him? Is the second branch hiding something? If you don't let me see him today, I'll go to the court and sue the second branch of the Ji Family. I'll sue you for seizing the family property and murdering General Ji! Even if I have to risk my life, I will not hesitate to do so," Concubine Xiang glowered, looking despair and indignant. "If it turns out that I am wrong in the end, I will bump myself to death in front of the altar to make General Ji rest in peace."

As a matter of fact, Concubine Xiang had a will to die a long time ago. When the wife of Earl Ling'an died, everyone in the mansion blamed Concubine Xiang for it. At the time, it was because of the Second Lady's comforting words that she calmed down, and that she was willingly exiled to the temple hall as punishment. After that, Second Lady wanted to persuade her to leave the temple hall, but she refused. It was for the sake of the peace of the mansion and the reputation of the two young ladies of the first branch that Concubine Xiang remained in the temple hall.

When all the ladies in the first branch were married, she didn't need to uphold anyone else's reputation anymore, so at that time, she didn't mind if she was to remain in the temple hall or to die.

Qu Moying frowned and gently bit her lips. She could hear the determination in Concubine Xiang's tone. This was not her intention. She subconsciously glanced around and met a pair of eyes that were secretly looking at her.

There was actually someone looking at her at the moment when almost all of the attention in the mourning hall was on Concubine Xiang.

Her watery eyes met with Ji Yuanhai's eyes. The child whose eyes were red and swollen from crying looked extremely pitiful. But right now, he knelt on his knees and propped himself upright. His gaze fell on her without blinking. He looked at her with suspicion and some darkness.

He was so small and young. Inside the white mourning hall, he looked very pitiful. However, of all those present, only he seemed to be mourning for the dead. Unlike Ji Yongxing, Ji Yuanhai wore clothes that were entirely plain and white, including his inner lining. On the contrary, Ji Yongxing only wore a white mourning dress outside, but one could vaguely see the faint color of the colorful silk clothes inside.

This child was sincere to her father.

This child was smart.

This child was not bad...

Several thoughts suddenly swarmed into Qu Moying's mind. The previously somewhat helpless ideas suddenly had a new direction. She could not let anything happen to Concubine Xiang. She had other ideas before, but now there was a better way.

Qu Moying slowly walked to Ji Yuanhai. Then, she squatted down and looked straight at him, and he met her eyes directly. It was rare for a little child to be so calm.

"Are you the Ji Family's Second Young Master?" Qu Moying asked softly.

Ji Yuanhai nodded. He thought for a moment and asked, "Fourth Lady Qu, are you Eldest Uncle's relative?"

Among the ladies who came in just now, only this lady cried in earnest, and she was in such deep sorrow that she even bit open her lips.

“He is the husband of my aunt, and I am your second cousin,” Qu Moying nodded and explained.

Ji Yuanhai suddenly stretched out his hand. Qu Moying subconsciously wanted to move her hand away, but in the end, she froze. When the two’s hands touched, Qu Moying clearly felt that he had given her something, as his sleeve slid down and covered their hands.

Their hands separated instantly. Ji Yuanhai lowered his head again and no longer paid attention to the noise in the mourning hall. He was still a child, and he was a concubine-born son of the second branch. He had no say here, and no one would pay attention to him.

Even though people did spot Qu Moying going to the boy, they assumed that she was just comforting a sad child. After all, she also cried very sadly just now, and she could feel the boy’s pain. Now, everyone’s attention was on Concubine Xiang and Ji Yuanxing.

One was aggressive, but the other did not want to back down.

The main concern was whether or not Earl Ling’an’s coffin should be opened.

The two of them were in a deadlock when suddenly, another large group of people came in. Among them were Old Lady Ji and Xiao, the Second Madam.

As soon as they entered and saw that Concubine Xiang was indeed at the mourning hall, Xiao squinted coldly, and her heart skipped a beat. She first helped Old Lady Ji to sit down on the side and then glared at Concubine Xiang. “Concubine Xiang, why are you here? Didn’t you say you were guarding the temple hall? What are you doing here?”

“What am I doing here? I’m part of the first branch. Now that there’s no one left in the first branch, who am I guarding the temple and praying for? Second Madam, please open the coffin so that I can see General Ji one last time. With that, I’ll be at ease even if I die now.” Concubine Xiang raised her pale face and insisted.

She already had the desire to die, so she did not retreat at all when facing Xiao.

Qu Moying stood up. She pursed her lips, looked at Ji Yuanhai who was kneeling on the side, then slowly walked over and bowed deeply to Concubine Xiang. "Madame, are you Earl Ling'an's concubine? The only person left in Uncle's first branch?"

These words were worded like a confirmation of identity, but they made people inexplicably feel that there was something suspicious about Earl Ling'an's Mansion's second branch.

Xiao glared fiercely at Qu Moying, a trace of disgust flashing through her eyes.

"Yes, I am indeed General Ji's concubine. I was listed in the family tree when Madam was alive." Concubine Xiang sounded more polite when she talked to Qu Moying.

Concubine Xiang was already determined to die, so she would not back down when confronting Xiao and Ji Yuanxing. Her stern and harsh tone also expressed that she was on the opposite side with them.

"Concubine Xiang, since you are Uncle's concubine, you should not cause trouble at this time. Uncle is gone. Cousin Hanyue is gone. And now even Cousin Yanyue is gone for no apparent reason... Why not investigate her incident? What if there is something strange about her death? Don't you want to seek justice for her?"

Qu Moying asked gently.

The three of them were all dead. They couldn't investigate Ji Hanyue's death at this moment. They could start with Earl Ling'an's death, but to be frank, it was easier to start from Ji Yanyue. Since the Ji Family had hinted that Ji Yanyue had eloped with someone, they could investigate this matter thoroughly.

Due to the rumors, the Ji Family would not build a grave for Ji Yanyue to bury her. The pitiful Yanyue was so young. She might even have been chopped up and thrown onto the mass grave. A cold and bloodthirsty light flashed in Qu Moying's eyes. One day, she would let these people all pay for what they had done. Not only her younger sister's reputation, but also her life and her father's life...

Now, she wanted to keep Concubine Xiang alive. She could not allow Concubine Xiang to really clash head-on with Old Lady Ji and Xiao.

"I want to, but... but I can't even see General Ji one last time. How can I bring up Third Lady's matter?" Thinking of the adorable Third Lady who always pestered her, Concubine Xiang started to cry, and her tears fell down from her bloodshot eyes.

Third Lady had always been a gentle child. She was not as decisive and graceful as Second Lady, but she was very likable and was close to Concubine Xiang. Even if Third Lady couldn't enter the temple hall, she would send the maids to bring Concubine Xiang something. At the thought of this, Concubine Xiang felt a sharp pain in her heart. She was sure that Third Lady would never elope with someone.

Absolutely impossible!

Third Lady was still a child. How could they be so ruthless that they didn't even spare a child?

"Concubine Xiang, you are Uncle's concubine. You are now the only person in the Ji Family's first branch who can take charge of the mansion. At this time, you should not drown yourself in sorrow. Instead, you should cheer up. It's not like there is no one left in the first branch. Aren't you still here? If something happens to you, who will investigate Cousin Yanyue's case?" Qu Moying advised softly.

Concubine Xiang fell silent. Tears rolled down her face, and she sobbed.

Qu Moying let out a sigh of relief. She was truly afraid that Concubine Xiang would be stubborn. Right now, if Concubine Xiang and Old Lady Ji were to forcefully confront each other, Old Lady Ji, unlike Ji Yuanxing, could easily deal with Concubine Xiang. In the end, Concubine Xiang might die in the mourning hall.

Right now, the most important thing was to seize the last bit of authority for the first branch!

"Concubine Xiang, Uncle does not have any male descendant. I think that Second Young Master Ji is perfect," Qu Moying whispered softly into Concubine Xiang's ears as she approached the latter.

Chapter 137 Vice Minister of the Dali Temple

When Concubine Xiang heard these words, it was as if Qu Moying had stirred up huge waves inside her, causing her to almost be unable to return to her senses.

“Fourth Lady Qu, what do you mean by this? What does it have to do with Yanyue? She’s already dead, so there is no need to bring this matter up and investigate anything,” Xiao hissed coldly as she glared at Qu Moying.

Qu Moying turned to look at Xiao. “Second Madam, we can stop talking about letting Concubine Xiang see Uncle one last time. But can we clear up Cousin Yanyue’s matter? I would like to know what kind of illness she succumbed to, which doctor you brought in to treat her, and what the doctor said.”

To the outside, Earl Ling’an’s Mansion said that Ji Yanyue died of illness, but they secretly spread the rumors that Ji Yanyue eloped with someone. Their purpose was to stop others from investigating her disappearance because it would tarnish the reputation of the women of the Ji Family.

Of course, the so-called women of the Ji Family included Ji Hanyue, the Crown Princess, and Ji Youran, who was currently in the limelight and might even become the next Crown Princess.

With these two women of the Ji Family, no one would dare to investigate the matter further even if they were suspicious about it.

However, Qu Moying was not a bystander, she was the reborn Ji Hanyue. She was not afraid to investigate the matter or offend Ji Youran who seemed to be promising. When she thought of her own death and her sister’s death and thought that she was no longer a woman of the Ji Family, she felt a faint sadness in her heart.

Now that she’s off by herself, she should not be afraid of anything any longer!

“Moying, this is Earl Ling’an’s Mansion’s business. You should not interfere!” Qu Qiuyan walked over and reminded Qu Moying. Her expression faintly showed concern for Qu Moying.

“This is Cousin Yanyue’s matter. She had disappeared with no explanation. The dignified young lady of Earl Ling’an’s Mansion, who was also the Crown Princess’s biological sister, has disappeared out of thin air, but the Ji Family simply said that she succumbed to her illness. They didn’t even give her a funeral. Do you think it’s normal, Third Sister? As her cousin, shouldn’t I ask for clarity? Will you not ask if this happens in the Yu Mansion?” Qu Moying said with a cold expression.

She looked at Qu Qiuyan, and a trace of ridicule flashed through her eyes. They had already come to this point, but Qu Qiuyan still insisted on sticking to her good reputation, showcasing her image as a good and considerate sister.

Qu Qiuyan did not expect that Qu Moying would be so direct and harsh to her in front of so many people. She cursed Qu Moying in her heart, for being so tricky and cunning. It was difficult to answer these questions. If she said that she wouldn’t care if something similar happened in the Yu Mansion, others would think that she was cold and indifferent to her family. If she said that she would care, her earlier remarks would be in vain, and she would be seen as not putting herself in others’ shoes.

“Fourth Lady Qu, what you said is really interesting. Everyone knows what had happened to Yanyue, so why do you deliberately say this? Do you feel better by humiliating our Ji Family?” Xiao rebuked coldly, and there was a faint intention of having a fall-out.

Xiao had never been so sullen. She was actually questioned by a young girl in an inquisitorial tone.

For Ji Yanyue’s matter, many aristocratic families heard the rumor that she was sick when the fact was that she eloped. It wasn’t wrong for Xiao to cover up the fact of elopement with Ji Yanyue’s illness.

If something like this happened in the other aristocratic families, they would probably kill her. Therefore, it was reasonable for them to say that Ji Yanyue died from an illness rather than telling the truth that she eloped and disappeared.

Xiao was not afraid of an investigation at this point. Furthermore, Qu Moying was not a member of the Ji Family. All she could do was bring it up today and leave. After all, she couldn’t remain here.

As for Concubine Xiang who had no children, after the matter was settled, Xiao would think of a way to get rid of her. In any case, she was a small-time concubine who had no powerful backing, and no one would doubt Xiao even if Concubine Xiang was murdered.

“Second Madam, did Cousin Yanyue really elope with someone?” Qu Moying looked at Xiao and broke the silence and Xiao’s peaceful facade.

Old Lady Ji, who was sitting on the chair, had a drastic change of expression. Her body went soft, and she almost fainted. She had always been weak. She never thought that an unmarried girl would say such words.

“You... you...” Xiao also did not expect that Qu Moying would directly ask her such a question. How could she be so reckless to say such words when she did not know the whereabouts of Ji Yanyue? Ji Yanyue would be embarrassed if she came back in the future, and the reputation of the women of the entire Ji Family would be tarnished.

Xiao never knew that Ji Hanyue had been reborn as Qu Moying, who had long known the fact that her sister was dead.

“Second Madam, Cousin Yanyue is only ten years old, and she has always stayed in the boudoir. Please tell me how she disappeared. Did anyone see her? Or was it a part of someone’s plan? My cousin is still a child, right? Or does it mean that the security of Earl Ling’an’s Mansion is so lenient that anyone can enter the backyard as they please?” Qu Moying continued to ask.

The Ji Family’s reputation? Earl Ling’an’s Mansion’s reputation?

Why would she care? She didn’t even care about Ji Hanyue’s reputation.

In her past life, she carefully protected her reputation as a Crown Princess. She was afraid that she would implicate Pei Luo’an in some bad ways. Every time she saw that Pei Luo’an was unhappy because of the words of the officials, she would comfort him and say that those were all rumors. She said that he didn’t have to believe them, and all he needed to do was be himself.

Now, at this time, what else was she afraid of?

In order to restore her sister's reputation, she needed the intervention of the people of the Ji Family. A faint hint was nothing. She just wanted the people of the Ji Family to be nervous.

Her father was supposedly the head of the Ji Family, but the one in charge was the elders of the family, who were her father's uncles. Today, after such a huge matter occurred, someone from the Ji Family should be here.

It had been a while since she arrived at the mourning hall, so Cousin Yue should be coming over soon. She had told him the matter yesterday. According to Cousin Yue's temperament, he should have been observing the situation around the mourning hall from time to time to find clues. It was impossible for Cousin Yue, who was nearby, to be ignorant of the situation here.

She was, after all, an unmarried lady. Some things would carry more weight if Cousin Yue, instead of her, said them.

The security of the Ji Family's backyard was lenient? The people who heard this had a change of expression. This almost implied that the women of the entire Ji Family did not have good reputations, which included the recently deceased Crown Princess and the current concubine of the Crown Prince. Did that mean that the Crown Prince might be...

This thought flashed through everyone's minds, causing their faces to turn pale with fright.

"What nonsense are you talking about?" An angry roar came from behind everyone. Everyone retreated and saw a few older people roaring as they walked over. What made Qu Moying's eyes light up was that Yue Wenhan also came in with them.

The elders came a little early than she had anticipated, but fortunately, Yue Wenhan was here.

"Uncles." When Xiao saw that it was Ji Family's elders, she immediately stepped forward and bowed.

"Second Madam." One of the old men, surnamed Ji, glared at Qu Moying furiously and glowered, "Why are so many people gathering at the mourning hall? Those who don't have business here, please leave!"

This is General Ji's last resting place. No more ruckus here. The Ji Family's matter has nothing to do with outsiders."

Just now, a few Ji Family's elders heard the commotion clearly from the outside. Originally, they did not want to show themselves since the matter did sound a bit skeptical. Could it be that Ji Yongming was murdered? However, this kind of thing was extremely terrifying after careful thought. The elders were old and sophisticated, and they did not dare to be involved in such matters.

But now, they had no choice but to show up since Qu Moying was implying that the reputation of the women in their family was not good. This became a matter of their own since they all had several unmarried granddaughters.

They excluded Qu Moying directly by calling her an outsider.

Although they were talking to Xiao, their words and action were to kick Qu Moying out.

Yue Wenhan took two steps forward and stopped in front of Qu Moying. He looked at the elders, and his face turned cold, "I won't interfere with the Ji Family's matter. But I won't let it go if there is another story in Cousin Yanyue's matter."

He had indeed been lingering around the mourning hall just now, wanting to unearth something. Originally, Ji Yong'an had accompanied him, but later on, more and more people came to the mansion, so Ji Yong'an excused himself to entertain the guests. After staying in the mourning hall for a while, Yue Wenhan went for a walk. He had returned at some point, but went out again.

When he went out just now, he did not find anything suspicious. When he turned back, he happened to see a few elders led by a housekeeper walk toward the mourning hall, so he followed them. Although the two groups of people came together, they did not greet each other. The Ji Family's elders did not know who this handsome young man was.

Hearing his confident tone, the elders were angry. One of them glared at Yue Wenhan angrily. "Young man, even if you are related to the family, this so-called matter is not something you can interfere with. If there really are some hidden facts, the government officials will come forward to investigate."

"I am the Vice Minister of the Dali Temple, so I am indeed in charge of this kind of thing," Yue Wenhan announced unhurriedly.

The elders were stunned for a moment and shut their mouths in shock. They did not expect the young man in front of them to be the Vice Minister of the Dali Temple.

The clever ones immediately remembered that the nephew of Yue was the current Vice Minister of the Dali Temple. When they recalled the word "Cousin" that he had just said, they immediately understood his identity. For a moment, their faces stiffened. In the capital, everyone knew that there were a few government offices that one could not afford to offend.

Especially those offices in charge of interrogating suspects. They would walk in innocent but come out guilty.

Dali Temple was such a kind of place. No one wanted to go there.

"Mr. Yue, Third Lady Ji really died of illness. There is nothing to investigate, and there is no victim. You can't just believe her based on some hearsay. This will tarnish the reputation of the women of our entire family." After coming to his senses, the elder in the middle, who was experienced, put on a serious expression and explained.

"The victim?" Yue Wenhan raised his eyebrows and swept his gaze over the Ji Family.

The current Ji Family was not comparable to what it used to be. In the past, when the Suppressor General, Ji Yongming, was alive, they had been a first-class aristocratic family. But now, apart from the title, Earl Ling'an's Mansion was considered to have withered. When facing this young Vice Minister of the Dali Temple, there was no powerful person who could defend the family, and they were a little lacking in confidence.

"Mr. Yue, we do not have a victim." Xiao felt a bit angry, being asked by Yue Wenhan in such a way. She stepped forward and said coldly. Although she had a guilty conscience, she felt confident again when she thought of her daughter who was the Crown Prince's concubine and was likely to become Crown Princess soon.

Qu Moying slightly pursed her lips and turned her face to look at Concubine Xiang. At this time, it was time for Concubine Xiang to speak...

Chapter 138 Adoption

Qu Moying had already prepared both the executioner and the victims.

Concubine Xiang had been standing there thoughtfully. When she saw Qu Moying turn to look at her with such a dramatic movement, it startled her, but she immediately regained her composure.

Concubine Xiang took two steps forward and knelt in front of Yue Wenhan with a thud. "Mr. Yue, I am the Suppressor General's concubine. I am the victim. Third Lady's death is shady, and the rumors are ambiguous. Please investigate her case and restore her reputation."

Concubine Xiang meant that she didn't believe that Ji Yanyue had eloped.

The elders nodded and looked at Concubine Xiang with slightly kinder glances.

"Mr. Yue, she is indeed Earl Ling'an's concubine. She came with Yue as part of her dowry."

"Yes, what she said makes sense. The ladies of the Ji Family will not do anything immoral."

"Mr. Yue, please investigate the matter and restore our reputation..." The elders said righteously one after another now they had justifiable reasons.

What the elders aimed for was not the outcome of the investigation but to stop the rumors that would tarnish the reputation of the women of the Ji Family.

Otherwise, all the ladies in the entire family would be implicated.

Xiao was so angry that she almost couldn't control herself. She clenched the handkerchief in her hand and resisted the idea of going up to slap Concubine Xiang.

"Mr. Yue, Third Lady will never do something disgraceful. Please investigate the matter to clear our Third Lady's name," Concubine Xiang shouted again.

When the elders saw that she was protecting the reputation of the lady of the Ji Family, they nodded repeatedly and felt that this concubine was not bad. They even felt that she was a loyal member of the family.

They had also heard about the matter of Third Lady Ji. At first, they heard that she died of illness. After that, when the members of the Ji Family came to inquire about her incident, the Earl Ling'an's Mansion had vaguely expressed that Ji Yanyue's whereabouts were unknown and that she was not dead but had eloped with someone instead. The Mansion had no choice but to release the news that she had died, but the truth was that nothing had happened, it was all a cover-up for Ji Yanyue's elopement.

When they heard that it was an elopement, the Ji Family did not dare to ask more questions. The more they asked, the more people would know about this, and their granddaughters might also be implicated. It would be best if they did not know anything.

Now that Qu Moying unraveled the case, Concubine Xiang stood up and emphasized with a serious manner that Ji Yanyue would not do anything that humiliated the family. The elders were very pleased with the outcome.

"Concubine Xiang, you are just a concubine. How dare you call yourself the victim?" Xiao was furious and rebuked harshly.

"I am indeed just a concubine, but I'm also the only person who can speak up in the first branch. If I didn't speak up for Third Lady, her reputation would be unjustly tarnished. Second Madam, is it possible that you don't want Mr. Yue to find the truth of Third Lady's case?" Concubine Xiang retorted as she pointed at the elders. "Second Madam, even if you don't care about Third Lady, you should let Mr. Yue investigate this matter for the sake of the women of the Ji Family!"

Upon hearing her statement, the elders nodded repeatedly, and some even glared at Xiao.

Of course, they did not want to see their daughter's reputation being ruined.

"Alright, alright! Just investigate all you like!" Xiao was so angry that her face turned red. She turned to look at Old Lady Ji, who leaned weakly against the chair and looked like she was frightened, and Xiao was even more furious.

She had dealt with the matter cleanly, with both public and secret actions. In fact, the Crown Prince was involved in this matter too. She didn't believe that Yue Wenhan, a lowly Vice Minister of the Dali Temple, could reveal the truth.

"L-Let's go!" After saying this, Xiao turned around to help Old Lady Ji up, planning to calm down for the time being. There were many people here, so it was not the time to speak.

The next moment, her hand froze beside Old Lady Ji's hand. She was stunned with what Concubine Xiang said to the elders. She was up in arms.

"Elders, you are all elders of the Ji Family. I am here to ask for a favor from you on behalf of General Ji." Concubine Xiang knelt on the ground and wiped away her tears.

"What is it?" The elders exchanged curious glances.

"General Ji was a loyal and dignified soldier, serving the country wholeheartedly. But he only had two daughters. Now the Crown Princess has passed away, and Third Lady was presumed dead. General Ji is left without even a family member to complete the procession of his funeral..."

"Concubine Xiang, what are you talking about? Yuanxing and Yuanhai are both the descendants of General Ji. They will continue to observe all the traditions!" Xiao suddenly turned around and barked.

Concubine Xiang seemed to have not heard Xiao's words and kowtowed to the elders again. "Elders, please let General Ji adopt a son from within the family."

These words shocked everyone in the mourning hall.

Ji Yongming's son couldn't be casually adopted. The child would be the next Earl Ling'an. Even if he was not old enough, he would be the heir-apparent of Earl Ling'an.

In this way, the title that would have fallen into the hands of the second branch would return to the first branch.

Even if the one adopted was from the second branch, all the subsequent worshiping formalities could only be done by the first branch rather than the second branch.

Everyone understood the meaning behind this.

"Concubine Xiang, what nonsense are you talking about? Were you possessed when you stayed in the temple hall? Are you out of your mind? How dare you say such words?" Xiao shouted angrily.

Two old maids came from behind her and wanted to grab Concubine Xiang.

"Let me see who dare to do anything when I'm standing right here," Yue Wenhan snorted coldly, and his face sank. The two old maids did not dare to go forward anymore and stopped to peek at Xiao.

Xiao was exasperated. Concubine Xiang's appearance at a crucial moment like this was beyond her expectation. Had she known, she would have given Concubine Xiang a strip of cloth and strangled her. That would save all the trouble now.

She almost succeeded, but these people came out and ruined her plan. Xiao was annoyed and frustrated.

"Second Madam, why do you think that I have been possessed when I was surrounded by deities in the temple hall? General Ji had passed without any offspring. What is wrong with adopting a son to the first branch? Do you want the first branch to extinct just like that?"

The elders were all there, and there was Yue Wenhan and Qu Moying on the side. Concubine Xiang was upright and bold. At this moment, she said everything she wanted to say. She raised her eyes and looked at Xiao without fear.

The elders exchanged agitated looks and did not know what to say for a moment.

Logically speaking, they should let a successor be adopted by Ji Yongming posthumous. However, the people in the mansion did not mention it, so the elders did not dare to bring it up. The Ji Family is centered around Earl Ling'an's Mansion. If those from the Mansion did not bring up the matter, they would be happy to stay out of it. After all, no one would want to offend the potentially powerful second branch for a dead man without an offspring.

They heard that Princess Ji was now the only female Master of Eastern Palace. Because of this, the elders did not dare to offend the Ji Family's second branch unless they had no other choice.

They did not want to make their relationship with the second branch too stiff and awkward.

Although the Ji Family's first branch was very strong in the past, there was no one in that branch now, so they didn't mind offending them. The reality was harsh and cold. The current situation illustrated how superficial relationships were between humans.

However, now that someone brought this matter up and was heard by outsiders, they couldn't turn a blind eye to it.

"This matter... my son did not mention anything about it before he died. He only said that he did not need to adopt another son since he had his nephews," Old Lady Ji finally spoke. She held Xiao's hand and slightly raised her bloodshot eyes.

"Old Lady, General Ji was just being considerate to Second Master, but don't you and Second Master care about him anymore? Besides, General Ji might not know what happened to Third Lady, and he might assume that she was still here in the mansion!" Concubine Xiang cried out.

Old Lady Ji choked and looked at Xiao helplessly. However, Xiao shook her head forcefully, so Old Lady Ji sighed, "Concubine Xiang, you are just a concubine. You can't make the decision on behalf of my son. I appreciate your loyalty, but step aside!"

“Old Lady, General Ji treated this family and mansion wholeheartedly, but... but he has fallen to such a tragic end now. He didn’t even have a son. Old Lady... how can you do this to him?” Concubine Xiang cried even more sadly. She knelt there without moving, teardrops falling one after another.

Old Lady Ji felt a little helpless and looked at Xiao again.

Xiao went forward to personally hold Concubine Xiang’s hand, trying to make herself look kind. “Concubine Xiang, please calm down. Don’t worry, just stay in the mansion. We’ll take you in and take care of you. You’re General Ji’s concubine, and you’ll always be his concubine. Even though there are a few concubines in the first branch, you are the most important one.”

Qu Moying sneered in her heart. Xiao was really good at her words. She made it sound like Concubine Xiang was making a scene now due to her selfishness. Her words implied that Concubine Xiang was afraid that Earl Ling’an’s Mansion would not treat her well in the future, so she was causing trouble and making a fuss now.

Xiao’s words swept away the sad atmosphere that Concubine Xiang had created before, and even made people doubt Concubine Xiang’s intentions.

Xiao’s plan was excellent. Even with the elders present, Concubine Xiang was still in a low-ranking position simply because she was a concubine. Unfortunately, Xiao forgot there was also Yue Wenhan.

Although Qu Moying and Yue Wenhan were not victims, and she did not have any connection with her father, because they were in-laws of the family, coupling with Concubine Xiang, they could match Xiao, the Ji Family, and even Ji Youran behind them, albeit with difficulty.

Taking revenge for the deep hatred was never something that could be done in one day.

She had even given up on finding the truth of her father’s case. Instead, she focused the investigation on her most unremarkable younger sister.

Originally, if the Ji Family did not say anything, no one in the royal court would say anything either. That was, as long as the Ji Family had sorted everything properly on their end. But now, it was different. It would not be that simple for Ji Yong’an to obtain the title of Earl Ling’an.

Seeing that Xiao had turned the table around, Yue Wenhan said coldly, "Since Earl Ling'an's concubine feels that they should adopt a son for Earl Ling'an, I will submit a report to the Emperor."

Qu Moying's eyes narrowed slightly. This was originally what she had imagined before. Yue Wenhan was indeed a smart person!

Even if he could not directly interfere with the matter, he would still ruin Xiao's plan!

When the report was delivered, it would inevitably lead to controversy. The final outcome of the struggle in the royal court was not something that Xiao can control. There might even be many accidents, such as reactions from the Crown Prince Pei Luo'an...

Chapter 139 Such a Shameless Father

"What's going on? How did Fourth Lady Qu get here?!" In the room, Xiao slammed the table furiously and roared. Right now, there were no outsiders present.

Ji Yuanxing was equally exasperated. The title was almost in his hands. He hadn't expected someone to suddenly appear out of nowhere and say such a ridiculous thing. They even said it in front of the elders and Vice Minister of the Dali Temple. Even if the elders refused, Yue Wenhan would submit a letter to the imperial court. Although Concubine Xiang's status was not high in the family, she was still the concubine of the late Earl Ling'an, and she was speaking for the sake of Earl Ling'an's dignity.

A huge uproar in the imperial court was sure to be expected at that time.

"Mother, did the Fourth Lady Qu already know about Concubine Xiang?" Ji Yuanxing asked impatiently.

"Impossible..." Xiao retorted subconsciously, but she hesitated. "Maybe she knew. When she came over yesterday, she took away Granny Zhou from the first branch. Concubine Xiang and Granny Zhou were both maids that Yue brought with her when she got married. One of them came to our mansion, while

the other one went to the Qu's Mansion. They've been in our mansion for years now, so they must be close."

"Mother, what should we do now?" Ji Yuanxing nodded and asked.

"Go to your sister and tell her about this, so that she can prepare. She can tell the Crown Prince about this." Xiao thought about it carefully and came up with an idea.

"Mother, are we just going to watch Yue Wenhan submit the letter to the Emperor?" Ji Yuanxing was instantly annoyed when he heard that Xiao was concerned only for Ji Youran.

"What else can we do? Can you or your father stop him? If only I can rely on your father. He couldn't even keep an eye on a person!" Xiao hissed.

Who else could stop Yue Wenhan now? It seemed that there was no one in the Ji Family who could do so. Ji Youran might have been able to stop him if she had been here, but she was mourning in Eastern Palace now and couldn't leave. At this moment, Xiao could only rely on herself. The fact that there was no one reliable by her side drove her up the wall.

Ji Yuanxing felt sheepish after hearing his mother's reprimand. He was an ordinary person without an official position. How could he stop Yue Wenhan? He was intimidated by Yue Wenhan's oppressive aura just now even when he was standing far away from him.

"Alright, go and convey the message to your sister. Maybe she has some ideas." Xiao had no other choice but to comfort her son for the time being.

Seeing victory almost in their grasp, only to be snatched away by another hand is certainly an experience that no one will be happy with.

At present, the matter had not reached the final conclusion. The ending of this matter was still in the air.

"Yes, Mother. I'll leave the mansion immediately." Ji Yuanxing nodded and anxiously turned around to handle the matters. Just as he was about to leave, he saw his own cousin, Xiao Haitang, standing across

from him. When she saw him come out, she hurriedly walked over with a face full of concern and asked, "Cousin, are you alright?"

"What could have happened to me?" Ji Yuanxing huffed in frustration and continued walking out. He was not in the mood to talk to Xiao Haitang at this time.

Xiao Haitang chased after him, but she could not catch up with him. She could only stand still, panting. Then, tears welled up in her eyes, and she felt sorrowful.

"Don't be sad, Miss. First Young Master didn't mean to ignore you. He has something urgent to do,"

The maid who followed her hurriedly comforted her.

Xiao Haitang lowered her head and looked at the bamboo in front of her. After a long time, she quipped, "Does Fourth Lady Qu look very outstanding?"

"No, Miss, you are the most outstanding. The entire capital knows that Fourth Lady Qu is dimwitted and ugly. Third Lady Qu also said that the only reason why Fourth Lady Qu dares to say and do what she does because of Old Lady Qu's support. But in reality, she is just a good-for-nothing,"

The maid comforted again when she saw that Xiao Haitang was still upset.

Xiao Haitang shook her head and did not speak anymore. She turned and left. Would Qu Moying really marry Cousin? What should she do? What could she do? She must marry Cousin...

The carriage stopped in front of the Qu's Mansion. Old Lady Qu looked rather bad. She now knew what had happened at the Ji's Mansion. Looking at Qu Moying who came down from the carriage, Old Lady Qu sighed in relief, she had really been worried for her. She was about to call her when Luo spoke gently,

"Mother, I have something to talk to you about." Looking at Luo's hesitant appearance, it really did seem that there was something going on.

"You guys go and rest first!" The Old Lady Qu nodded and said to the granddaughters who got out of the carriage.

Then she left with Luo. She knew about Luo's worries because Qu Xuexin's marriage fell to a dead end. Qu Xuexin was not young anymore, but Luo couldn't find a suitable partner for her, so her marriage was delayed.

Actually, both ladies of East Mansion were at a marriageable age, but neither of them was engaged.

"Come with me." Qu Zhizhen, who was also getting down from the carriage, glanced at Qu Moying and ordered. Qu Moying was just about to go back, but she could only turn around and follow him after hearing his order.

Watching the father and daughter leave one after the other, Qu Qiuyan squinted, and her eyes fluttered. Ignoring Qu Caiyue's greeting, she quickened her pace and left. She had to go and tell her mother what happened today.

Yu Chun had been sent back. Qu Moying took Yu Dong and followed Qu Zhizhen into the study room.

After taking his seat, Qu Zhizhen sized Qu Moying up for a long time.

Qu Moying bowed with a calm expression and then stood aside, waiting for Qu Zhizhen to speak.

"Ying, you and the Ji Family have never had any interaction before. Why are you so affectionate to Earl Ling'an all of a sudden?" After a long time, Qu Zhizhen slowly asked.

"I've been in contact with Cousin frequently. She cured my eyes. She even sent tutors to teach me etiquette, manners, and how to navigate the capital," Qu Moying explained in a soft voice, seeming very sincere and natural with her faint and monotonous voice.

There was a reason for everything. If she suddenly became outstanding without anyone's help, it would definitely arouse suspicion. It was best to explain the reason using her predecessor.

Qu Zhizhen was silent for a moment, then looked at Qu Moying. He frowned and asked hesitantly, "Hmm... Was there any other intention for the Crown Princess to do so?"

Qu Moying's heart skipped a beat. She suddenly understood what he meant and sneered in disdain. As expected, all her father could think of was personal gains and benefits. He was selfish and greedy, and this was also the way he judged someone else. He could even use his family for his personal gain.

However, a question suddenly rose in Qu Moying's mind. Would someone like Qu Zhizhen really neglect Mother and do such a horrible thing to her for Yu's sake? His complete disregard for Mother just for Yu and her two children, could it really be for beauty?

In her opinion, this seemed to be an illusion.

No reason, no proof, all of it was her speculation.

"Father, I don't know what Cousin's intentions were. Perhaps she treated me kindly because she sympathized with me," Qu Moying replied casually.

"Did your cousin say something... special or unusual?" Qu Zhizhen looked at his daughter who was standing below. Among his two girls, Qu Moying looked very petite and smaller than her age.

As for her appearance? Others might not know, but Qu Zhizhen knew clearly. He himself had a dignified appearance, and Yue was beautiful. How could they give birth to an ordinary daughter? Even a look at her appearance under the veil could vaguely tell that she was quite good-looking. The only worry was that her eyes had disfigured her and diminished her beauty entirely.

For a moment, he was a little hesitant.

The study became quiet again, and for a moment, a strange feeling crept between them.

After a while, Qu Zhizhen broke the silence by saying, "Your cousin was devoted to you. Now that she passed, you should repay her kindness. Why don't you go to Crown Prince's Mansion for her funeral tomorrow?"

"Father, I just came back. If I go again, I'm afraid people will gossip," Qu Moying politely refused.

"Crown Princess was so friendly to you. There's no need to heed the rumors, they don't matter. With Crown Princess's passing, this is all you can do for her," Qu Zhizhen sighed.

At this point, Qu Moying already understood what Qu Zhizhen was thinking, and she smirked in contempt. This horrible father was indeed not a good person. He probably wanted her to enter Eastern Palace in the name of attending Crown Princess's funeral. Then, he probably wanted her to pretend to be sick and stay in Eastern Palace. It would be best if she did not return to the mansion like Ji Youran.

This was another person who wanted to climb up the social ladder by using Ji Hanyue's name.

"Crown Princess's funeral will go on for a few days. If you go, I'll get someone to send you some daily necessities. You will be there to attend the funeral anyway. The Crown Prince's Mansion is in a mess now. I can't let you trouble others," Qu Zhizhen said again. The meaning behind his words was very clear. He wanted to pack Qu Moying up and send her to Eastern Palace.

He was her father. How could he be so shameless?!

"Father, when I came back that day, Crown Prince said something to me," Qu Moying suddenly quipped.

"What did he say?" Qu Zhizhen asked after a moment of surprise.

"Crown Prince told us not to go to Eastern Palace if we don't have any official business since the palace is in a mess recently. He didn't want the incident to happen again and bring trouble to the concubine. He's very angry," Qu Moying answered respectfully.

Qu Moying was talking about the matter of Yu framing her and implicating Ji Youran. At that time, Ji Youran's eyes were also red and swollen. The root cause of this matter was indeed the Qu's Mansion, and it was probable that Crown Prince had said this. After all, Ji Youran was his concubine.

Did the Crown Prince mean to say that the Qu's Mansion should stay away from him? If so, Qu Zhizhen's previous plan had died even before it began!

"Alright, go back first!" Depressed, Qu Zhizhen waved his hand and dismissed Qu Moying in annoyance. Then, he warned her, "You'd better not get involved in the Ji Family's matter. You are just an unmarried young lady. Now that your engagement was called off, it doesn't look nice to show your face around!"

"Yes, Father!" Qu Moying nodded calmly and then retreated. She stood at the door and smiled coldly. Qu Zhizhen's mind was really straightforward. He would keep the people who were useful and ditch those who were useless. The so-called family affection was nothing to him!

She raised her eyes and saw an old maid who was not far away. The maid looked a little familiar...

Chapter 140 The Lost Amulet

Qu Moying walked over. The old maid retreated to the side and bowed respectfully. What a coincidence, she was Qu Qiuyan's wet nurse.

Qu Moying silently curled up her lips. This wet nurse was the one who wanted to plot against her but ended up falling into the river.

"What is your business here?" Qu Moying stopped and looked at the old maid indifferently.

Panicked, the old maid quickly lowered her head. She did not want to say anything, but now that they met face to face, she had to say something. Thinking of Fourth Lady Qu's ruthlessness, the old maid could not help but shiver in fear. Since the incident, she avoided Qu Moying every time she saw her from a distance away in the mansion.

But this time, the old maid had something to report to Second Master. She was absent-minded and filled with fright. She wasn't aware that the person coming in her direction was the Fourth Lady. When she saw her, it was too late to turn around.

"I-It's about Madam," the old maid blurted vaguely.

"What about her?" Qu Moying continued to ask.

"I..." the old maid stuttered, not knowing whether to say it or not.

"I heard that you were the one who said that Third Lady wanted to harm our miss?" Yu Dong had heard about this matter from Yu Chun. After being in the mansion for so long, of course, he recognized Third Lady Qu's wet nurse.

"I..." The old maid panicked and was about to kneel down when the nimble Yu Dong stepped forward and grabbed her hand.

Yu Dong had a smile on his face, but his tone was extremely cold when he said, "Nanny, are you afraid that Second Madam won't know? That she won't kill you?"

No one would hear the three of them talking, but someone might spot them here.

The old maid hurriedly shook off Yu Dong's hand and stood up straight. She did not dare to do anything else. As she looked around and was certain that no one was near them, she lowered her voice and said, "Second Madam found a couple who claimed that Fourth Lady is their daughter and wanted to see her."

After the old maid finished speaking, she bowed to Qu Moying and did not dare to stay any longer. She turned sideways and went to the study room.

The old maid had to spill the bean as she knew that if they continued to stay together, Madam and Third Lady would be suspicious even if she was innocent. She was very clear of their ruthlessness. Should that happen, not only her but her family would also be implicated. Her entire family would be punished because of her.

After hearing this, Qu Moying did not make things difficult for the old maid. She turned around and went back to her room with Yu Dong.

In the evening, Yu Dong received the news and came back to report the matter of the couple to Qu Moying. The couple truly existed, and they were from the village.

They used to have a daughter who was slightly younger than Qu Moying. When their daughter was a child, she suddenly disappeared.

Until now, they had no other children.

After Yu Dong finished telling Qu Moying the news, the former asked, "Miss, their daughter is gone. Why are they here to claim their child? Do they want to drag you into this matter?"

He wasn't with Qu Moying from the beginning, so he was not clear about some things.

Yu Chun's face became serious when she heard this. She grew up with Qu Moying since she was a child. Originally, she did not care about it, but she recalled the young scholar whom they met at the Dabei Temple. The man also hinted that their miss had an affair with him because he stayed overnight at the village for one night.

Fourth Lady would have been in trouble had it not been for the hairpin. Second Madam and Third Lady were behind that matter too, and in the end, they pushed the blame on Miss Yu. However, after analyzing Second Madam's method, Yu Dong knew that Second Madam was the person who did those things. But it was quite difficult to prove it.

The matter was always a mixture of truth and lie. But if one investigated, they could always find some hints to the truth.

The current situation seemed to be somewhat similar. Yu Chun was really worried that Qu Moying would take it lightly, so she reminded, "Miss, the man at the Dabei Temple really existed, and the thing really happened!"

Knowing what Yu Chun was worried about, Qu Moying nodded, and her eyes were cold. "Yu Dong, you asked someone to investigate. Did they find out if the couple has anything to do with the people around me before?"

Yu Dong thought about it. He did ask someone to investigate the matter and find a lot of things. The information was a little messy, but he still remembered it, so he nodded. "Yes, Miss. They seem to be related to Granny Gu, who was looking after you, and they seem to be her distant relatives. They occasionally interact with each other, but they are not close."

"Not too close, but not too distant either?" Qu Moying asked, not surprised.

"Yes, you're right. They don't keep in touch on usual days, but they will when something is up." Yu Dong nodded, feeling that his miss' analysis was very accurate.

Granny Gu was Qu Moying's wet nurse. She had been by Qu Moying's side since the latter was a child. Qu Moying's mother had chosen Granny Gu as her wet nurse long ago. She was a relatively gentle person and had a good character. Moreover, she was from the same village and she had been looking after Qu Moying since she was a child.

However, because Granny Gu was from the village, she was not very knowledgeable. Although she was soft-spoken and hard-working, sometimes, her behavior was inappropriate. She was not as capable as Granny Miao who worked for her later. When Qu Moying recently returned to the capital, she left Granny Gu in the village. On one hand, it was because Granny Gu was unwilling to come to the Qu Mansion. On the other hand, Qu Moying felt that she was old and it was better for her to stay in the village and live her life in retirement.

Now, Granny Gu was still in the village.

"When their daughter disappeared, I should still be in the village, right?" Qu Moying already had a plan in her heart and asked calmly.

"Yes, I heard that you happened to be ill at that time, seriously ill. When the child disappeared, everyone in the village was alarmed. However, Granny Gu was taking care of you and only went to take a look later on. She didn't go to the scene when the incident occurred," Yu Dong illustrated in detail. He secretly felt relieved that the investigator was quite able, and that he asked him clearly too. Otherwise, he would know nothing when Miss asked him now.

However, Yu Dong could predict these questions because he had always done this kind of thing. He didn't expect that such a weak girl like his miss would also be so meticulous. The more he looked at her,

the more he admired her. Why did they say that she was dimwitted and ugly? If she was, so was every woman in the capital!

Qu Moying was silent for a moment. When she was a child, she was very weak and would get sick from time to time. At that time, the doctors even said that she could only live for a few years, and it was impossible for her to live to adulthood. Unexpectedly, she managed to survive time and time again.

It was the right timing.

“Is there anything else... that is related to me?” Qu Moying picked up the tea on the table and took a sip before asking slowly.

“Uh... no, I didn’t find any.” Yu Dong shook his head. He thought of it, but he really couldn’t figure anything out. “Miss, are there any other clues around you? Something easily identified?”

“Miss, did you take the sachet that Granny Gu gave you when you came to the capital? I remembered that Granny Gu liked to give you some things like amulets,” Yu Chun cried out as something suddenly crossed her mind.

Ever since Granny Miao worked for Qu Moying, Qu Moying would take Granny Miao with her every time she returned to the capital. However, the benevolent Granny Gu could not be at ease. She would go to the temple to ask for something like an auspicious amulet to protect Qu Moying’s safety, and she would put it in a sachet and give it to Qu Moying.

“Yes, I brought one. Go and find it.” Hearing her say this, Qu Moying also remembered and ordered Yu Chun.

Yu Chun nodded. After going in and looking around, she returned empty-handed. “Miss, it’s gone!”

“It’s gone?” Qu Moying’s expression changed. It was not a small matter for something to be missing in her room. She had so much precious jewelry in the room, and what was more, someone breaking into her room could even ruin her reputation and life!

“Yes, it’s really gone. Miss, please wait a moment, I’ll call Granny Miao over.” Yu Chun also panicked. Only her miss and a few of her trusted aides could enter the inner room. How could such a personal item like a sachet suddenly disappear? If it wasn’t for them to mention it just now, no one would have found the matter either!

Granny Miao came very quickly. After entering the room, she sensed the heavy atmosphere in the room. After the courtesy, she went and stood aside.

“Granny Miao, did anyone enter the room?” Qu Moying asked softly.

“Is something wrong, Miss?” Granny Miao’s expression changed drastically as she immediately understood Qu Moying’s implication. She thought that she had guarded the courtyard well. It was impossible for anyone to enter Miss’ room, let alone her inner room.

“The sachet that Granny Gu gave Miss is missing, the one with the amulet,” Yu Chun grunted with a heavy expression. Granny Miao also knew Granny Gu’s habit.

Qu Moying stood up, and a few of her trusted maids followed her into the inner room. Yu Chun was usually the one who put away the sachet and other things. Qu Moying didn’t bring many things to the capital. Previously, Old Lady Qu had sent some things over and asked Qu Moying to change some old accessories, saying that it was not suitable to wear them in the mansion.

After Qu Moying asked Yu Chun to put them away, Yu Chun put these unused ornaments into the box.

“Miss, I swear that no one has entered the main room. Every time you are not here, I warned the maids and old maids in the courtyard. I also told them to drive the person away if they saw anyone suspicious. They would be punished if they saw someone but didn’t report to me!” Granny Miao asserted with a serious face.

Granny Miao had always been very clear about Fourth Lady’s situation in the mansion, and she was very cautious. She would pay extra attention every time Qu Moying was not around, so it was impossible for outsiders to come in.

“But the sachet inside is really gone!” Yu Chun was so anxious that her eyes turned red. She opened the box that was packed with the old things and pointed to the things inside. “The rest are still here, but the sachet is gone. I remember clearly that I put everything in here. Miss always kept Granny Gu’s amulet carefully.”

It was not because of the function of the amulet that Qu Moying cherished the sachet, but because of Granny Gu’s kind intentions. Granny Gu had been doing her best to take care of Qu Moying, so Qu Moying had always been very respectful to her.

The object was placed in the inner room, but now it was gone. Moreover, it was impossible for other outsiders to come in. The people in the room had worked for Qu Moying for many years and were loyal to her. It was impossible for them to take the sachet away.

Qu Moying looked thoughtfully at the box that Yu Chun opened. After a moment of silence, her eyes suddenly became cold and she asked, “Yu Chun, where did you get this box?”