

## **Noble Wife 281**

### **Chapter 281 You Are Just a Concubine!**

Because of some people's intentional efforts in spreading the news, everyone in the capital was talking about the case soon.

The case was that Crown Prince's Mansion occupied the ex-Crown Princess' dowry. They first occupied the ex-Crown Princess' dowry shop and then the ex-Crown Princess' mother's dowry shop. They even changed the shop names. This case was undoubtedly true, and Yue's Gold Pavilion was the evidence.

Many people knew about this. Before knowing this, many people who knew about Yue's Gold Pavilion were discussing whether the shop's owner had changed or not. Otherwise, why was its name changed?

Now, many people knew that the shop belonged to the ex-Crown Princess. They knew that the ex-Crown Princess' birth mother's surname was Yue. Therefore, Yue's Gold Pavilion was really the ex-Crown Princess' dowry. They heard that the ex-Crown Princess did not die of illness, but she died to save the Crown Prince. However, the Crown Prince embezzled her dowry, which made people angry and doubt the Crown Prince's moral character.

Two people under Yu Dong spread rumors about the topic first, but many other people soon began to talk about it. It was spreading so fast that they were really surprised. They left immediately according to the order and reported to Yu Dong.

As for what would happen next, many people naturally did not want to see the Crown Prince having a good time. Many people wanted to stir up trouble, and the timing was perfect.

When the news reached Pei Luo'an's ears, he was drinking tea with Pei Yuanjun, who had come today to check on the security of Eastern Palace. Compared with Lord Jing, the Crown Prince was certainly more important.

Pei Luo'an's people walked over to him and whispered a few words. After that, his expression changed greatly.

"If you have something to deal with, you can go on with your own business. I'll leave after taking a quick look." Pei Yuanjun gracefully put down the teacup with a faint smile on his handsome face. He narrowed his eyes and looked quite calm.

"Uncle Yun, please wait a moment. I will be back soon." Pei Luo'an stood up and bowed to Pei Yuanjun. He really couldn't wait any longer to deal with this matter.

Pei Yuanjun waved his hand and said, "Crown Prince, do as you please."

Pei Luo'an turned around and strode away.

Pei Yuanjun smiled and said to Ji Hai, "Go and find out what happened."

"Yes, I'll go and take a look." Ji Hai understood and turned to leave with two guards.

After leaving the living room, Pei Luo'an headed straight for Ji Youran's yard.

Seeing Pei Luo'an returning with a darkened face, the servants in Ji Youran's yard knelt down in fear.

Ji Youran was resting with her eyes closed in the room. She didn't look good either. What the old maid told her before made her shocked and angry.

Hearing the noise from the door again, she opened her eyes impatiently and saw Pei Luo'an's furious and almost distorted face. Before she could react, she was slapped in the face heavily. She covered her face with her hand, and tears immediately flowed out of her eyes. She said with a trembling voice, "Your Highness... you... you..."

"Return all Hanyue's dowry to Earl Ling'an's Mansion." Pei Luo'an said angrily, glaring at Ji Youran coldly. He really didn't know these things, and he didn't care about such a trifle, but now it caused such a big scandal.

It was not a bad idea to keep Ji Hanyue's dowry in Crown Prince's Mansion, but on condition that nobody knew about it.

Ji Youran was slapped so hard that her head was buzzing. She even lost her usual cleverness and stammered, "Your... Your Highness... I... I don't understand..."

"Return all Hanyue's dowry to Ji Mansion immediately! Do it now! Do you want me to say it twice? You are just a Side Princess who entered the mansion in a hurry to serve Hanyue. How can you have any dowry? Moreover, the shop's name started with 'Yue'. Ji Youran, do you think everyone else is a fool?" Pei Luo'an was furious.

Thinking about the possible consequences of this matter, he was so angry that he wanted to give Ji Youran a few more slaps.

Many officials would definitely submit reports to criticize him in court tomorrow. If he didn't deal with it now, it would be difficult for him to defend himself in court tomorrow.

Ji Youran felt dizzy and blurted out, "Your... Your Highness, didn't you let me handle all her affairs?" Then, she saw Pei Luo'an's handsome face almost twisted. She immediately knelt down on the bed, lowered her head, and cried uncontrollably. She apologized, "Your Highness... I was wrong. I will deal with it right away."

"She was the Crown Princess, and you are just a concubine, but you actually wanted to occupy her dowry. Ji Youran, how shameless and greedy you are! Ji Youran, because of this, your life as my Side Princess has come to an end." Pei Luo'an said coldly, glaring at Ji Youran.

"Your Highness, Your Highness, please spare me. I will deal with it immediately." Ji Youran trembled all over, crying and begging for mercy.

"Behave yourself. Deal with it now." Pei Luo'an flicked his sleeves and turned to leave.

Behind him, Ji Youran cried and fell on the bed.

Seeing Pei Luo'an leave, two maids came over to comfort Ji Youran with trepidation.

"Your Grace, please don't cry. His Highness must have heard something against you, so he said this. His Highness has always doted on you."

"Your Grace, someone must have said something in front of His Highness to deliberately alienate you from His Highness."

"Go and find out what happened." Ji Youran wiped her face and said with hatred. She did not want to be a concubine. She wanted to be the Crown Princess and the future Empress.

The Crown Prince's words almost stabbed her in the heart, but she had to endure it.

"Yes, I will go now." The maid, Shui Ning, said hurriedly and ran out. Xie Feng helped Ji Youran stand up and wash up. Although Ji Youran's injury had not healed yet, she had to get up and deal with this matter first.

Shui Ning quickly got the news. It was said that the shop that had just changed its name was the source of the trouble. Ji Youran was angry and aggrieved. When she was about to change this shop's name, she asked Pei Luo'an. At that time, he was in a good mood and helped her pick a name for the shop.

Even though she was aggrieved, she did not dare to explain to Pei Luo'an because it would only make him angry. She applied some ice on her face and asked someone to take out Ji Hanyue's dowry list. She did not have time to collect the belongings on the list, but she could return the deeds immediately, so she brought them and headed to Earl Ling'an's Mansion.

Just as she left to deal with this matter, the rumors outside had changed again.

It was said that not only did the Crown Prince occupy the ex-Crown Princess' dowry, but he also fell for Minister Liu's daughter, County Lady Jingyu, not long after the ex-Crown Princess died. It was said County Lady Jingyu was now waiting to be the future Crown Princess.

This news spread faster than the previous news. Later, people even said that County Lady Jingyu wanted to keep the ex-Crown Princess' dowry because she was going to marry the Crown Prince, so the Crown Prince was unwilling to return the ex-Crown Princess' dowry.

Someone said that he saw County Lady Jingyu at the ex-Crown Princess' funeral, but she didn't worship the ex-Crown Princess, which made her appear more suspicious. There was no female master in Crown Prince's Mansion's backyard at that time, and the only Side Princess was not qualified to invite her over. Then, why did she appear at the funeral?

Could it be that she had met the Crown Prince privately on the day of the ex-Crown Princess' funeral? If this was the case, the two of them were not just having an affair. People even suspected that the Crown Prince's so-called deep love for the ex-Crown Princess was all faked and he might have secretly been dating County Lady Jingyu for a long time. If so, the ex-Crown Princess' death might not be an accident.

Some rumors were spread like this. Moreover, because some things were really true, the more they were spread, the more convincing they became. In the end, many people believed that the matter of the Crown Prince's Mansion's dowry was definitely related to County Lady Jingyu, who was about to become the Crown Princess.

They thought the Crown Prince's moral character didn't fit in with his reputation, and County Lady Jingyu was a mean person.

Of course, some people had a wait-and-see attitude. They didn't think it was true. They had never heard that County Lady Jingyu was going to marry the Crown Prince, but they had heard that County Lady Jingyu was going to marry Lord Jing and become Princess Jing.

But no matter what, the rumor was widely spread. Not only ordinary people but also aristocratic families had heard about it.

Liu Jingyu's elegant room was now in a mess. The ground was covered with fragments of porcelain bottles. The maids knelt on the ground, not daring to care about the fragments. They trembled and did not dare to move, fearing that they would piss Liu Jingyu off again.

Liu Jingyu, who was standing in the middle of the fragments, was so angry that her beautiful face was livid, and her eyes were gloomy.

"Madam is here!" An old maid suddenly said from outside the door.

"Yu, why are you so angry?" A middle-aged woman walked in. She was in luxurious clothes and wore valuable jewelry. She resembled Liu Jingyu and was very beautiful.

She glanced at the fragments on the ground and ordered coldly, "Clean up the ground. What a mess!"

"Yes, madam!" The maids got up one by one, ignoring the wounds on their knees that had been pierced by the broken porcelain, and cleaned the ground up together.

"Yu, come in." The woman held Liu Jingyu's hand, entered the inner room, and sat down on the chair in the middle.

She was Minister Liu's wife and Duke Qi's only wife-born daughter, Qi Xiejiao.

"Mother." Liu Jingyu stood still with tears in her eyes.

Mrs. Liu took her hand again and pulled her to sit down. She said gently, "Alright, tell me what happened. Whom did you offend recently?"

"Mother, I don't know!" Tears streamed down Liu Jingyu's face.

"There must be someone who wants to deal with you or the Crown Prince." Mrs. Liu said slowly and seriously.

"Mother, I know that someone wants to deal with me, but I don't know who it is. If I find out who is behind this, I won't let her off." Liu Jingyu said hatefully, wiping her unstoppable tears.

"What's the use of you talking big here?" Mrs. Liu reached out and patted her back.

"Mother, who is it that wants to deal with me?" Liu Jingyu wiped away her tears and bit her lower lip. Her gaze was cold.

Mrs. Liu asked, "I heard that you are dealing with Fourth Lady Qu. Is that true?"

Liu Jingyu asked in realization, "Is Qu Moying dealing with me?"

Mrs. Liu smiled and said, "I don't know, but it might be the case. I heard that the matter of Crown Prince's Mansion was stirred up because Fourth Lady Qu's shop was next to the shop in question, and the two shops' people got into a fight."

#### Chapter 282 Match Maker, Wife of Earl Fengyang

"Are you talking about the matter that happened today?" Liu Jingyu asked seriously. "Yes, today's matter." Mrs. Liu leaned back and nodded.

"That can't be done by Qu Moying." Liu Jingyu said with certainty, gritting her teeth.

"Why?" Seeing that she was so sure, Mrs. Liu was surprised.

"Today, Duan Jinxiang went to that shop to make a scene. Young Master Yongning also went there. Mother, it's impossible for her to plot against Crown Prince's Mansion. She's just a lady of Vice Minister's Mansion. How can she be so capable?" Liu Jingyu said, twisting the handkerchief in her hand.

"I don't know. Maybe you are wrong. If this girl was easy to deal with, Second Madam Qu wouldn't have fallen to this state." Mrs. Liu reminded Liu Jingyu.

Liu Jingyu's eyes widened, and her face darkened. "Mother, I don't think she is so capable. She has been suppressed by Yu for so many years. What happened now is just a coincidence."

Mrs. Liu said gently to her daughter, "I don't know about this either, but if you are not the target, then it should be the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince has many opponents, and Lord Jing is one of them. It is possible that it was done by Lord Jing Mansion if it had released the news that Lord Jing wanted to marry you."

Liu Jingyu fell silent.

It might be Lord Jing. He had a higher status than Qu Moying. After all, to powerful people like him, Qu Moying was just an insignificant person.

Liu Jingyu was going to marry Pei Yusheng before, so she was close to Pei Yusheng at that time. Every time Pei Yusheng asked her out, she would agree. However, she changed her mind later, so she didn't accept Pei Yusheng's invitation anymore. Although Pei Yusheng did not ask her out later, he might have known something.

Since he was not on good terms with the Crown Prince, it was possible he did this to ruin her and the Crown Prince's reputation.

Back then, she did think that she would marry Lord Jing.

Lord Jing might have been so angry when he heard that she was going to marry the Crown Prince that he made a move on the Crown Prince and her.

After pondering for a moment, Liu Jingyu calmed down and said, "Mother, it should be done by Lord Jing, but Qu Moying is also a suspect. I have done something to her before, she might have noticed it. What should we do now, mother?"

"If it is Lord Jing, you can't do anything about it now. The Crown Prince will deal with it. Besides, you can't rush your personal affair. You have to wait for the Crown Prince to mourn the ex-Crown Princess for another two months. You have to beware of Fourth Lady Qu. There are many ways to deal with her. Don't throw yourself into the mess because of her. She is a broken bottle, and you are a precious jade. How can she compare with you?"

Mrs. Liu comforted Liu Jingyu.



Liu Jingyu nodded. "Mother, I understand. I will be more careful. Don't worry, mother."

Mrs. Liu nodded with a gratified expression on her face. "I'm glad that you think it this way."

"Mother, can I have someone from you?" Liu Jingyu suddenly asked.

"What do you want to do? Do you still want to have another try after Granny Qing's matter? Although Granny Qing is just an insignificant old maid, it would not be good if people knew that she was our mansion's servant. Although I don't care about this kind of thing, you have been too careless!" Mrs. Liu said unhappily.

"Mother, I didn't expect Qu Moying to be so difficult to deal with." Liu Jingyu said angrily. She reached out to hold Mrs. Liu's hand and shook it coquettishly, "Mother, please lend me another person. Send the person to Qu Qiuyan. I want to do the thing through her hand, but she is indeed useless."

"I can't lend my people to you anymore." Mrs. Liu rejected flatly, but then she said, "If you want someone, go to your grandfather's mansion!"

"Is there anyone I need there?" Liu Jingyu widened her eyes and then asked in surprise, "Mother, do you also have someone in Duke Qi's Mansion?"

"Of course there is, otherwise..." Mrs. Liu smiled and paused for a moment. Then, she changed the topic and said, "You should be more careful this time. Don't make any mistakes again in case others suspect you. You will have an extraordinary status in the future. How can such a woman compare with you?"

"Mother, I got it." Liu Jingyu said gently.

Seeing that Liu Jingyu had calmed down, Mrs. Liu gave her a few more instructions before leaving with her people. Minister Liu should be back home soon. She had to go to the kitchen to see if the cook had prepared the food she had ordered before, and she had to personally make a pastry and send it over.

She was Duke Qi's wife-born daughter and the only wife-born daughter. Her identity made her proud, and she thought she deserved it. She thought some people had to pay her back...

The Liu Family calmed down as if everything had nothing to do with them. However, things were different in the Ji Family. The Ji Family made a big deal out of the case. Qu Moying knew the details after receiving Madam Duan's letter.

Madam Duan wrote it clearly in the letter. After Ji Youran went back, she cried and made a scene in the mansion. After that, she discussed with Old Lady Ji, Xiao, and the others for a long time. In the end, she called Madam Duan and Ji Yuanhai over and gave them the list of the ex-Crown Princess' dowry. Then, she returned the deeds of the shops to them. As for the other property, she told them to receive them in a few days.

Madam Duan secretly looked at Ji Youran and saw that although she had let her hair down to cover her face, her swollen face could still be seen. She must have been beaten, and it must be the Crown Prince who had beaten her.

This must be the most important reason why Ji Youran quickly returned the ex-Crown Princess' dowry!

Madam Duan took the dowry list according to Qu Moying's instructions. Then, Old Lady Ji drove her away, leaving only Ji Youran and Xiao.

When Madam Duan wrote the letter, Ji Youran had just left. It was said that when she was about to leave, she hugged Xiao and kept crying, reluctant to leave. She was not as domineering as when she returned to the Ji Family last time.

Putting down the letter, Qu Moying smiled silently. At this time, Pei Luo'an couldn't pretend to be ignorant. If he wanted to keep his position as the Crown Prince, he must have a taintless reputation. Since he had to pretend to be affectionate to Ji Hanyue, he had to settle the matter related to Ji Hanyue's dowry.

Pei Luo'an had a lot of opponents, both in public and in secret. Many people were waiting to see something happen to him and add fuel to the fire. Therefore, Qu Moying only needed to set the fire. As for the rest, she would not have to worry about it.

Was Ji Youran beaten?

But this was just the beginning. Qu Moying couldn't forget the burning hatred in her heart when she fell into Linyuan Pavilion's deep lake that day.

She could recall every word that Ji Youran said to her at that time. Qu Moying's eyes were gloomy with unfathomable hatred. She reached out and pressed on her eye veil, not saying anything for a long time.

"Miss." Yu Dong called her.

Qu Moying removed her hand from the eye veil so that Yu Dong could tie it up for her. Old Lady Qu had sent someone to call her over, so she freshened up again.

After freshening up, Qu Moying brought Yu Dong together to Old Lady Qu's Kangming House. When she entered the room, she found that there was a middle-aged woman. Seeing Qu Moying coming in, the middle-aged woman smiled and sized up her. She said to Old Lady Qu, "Your Ladyship, this must be Fourth Lady Qu. She is indeed beautiful and extraordinary. Even ladies from a centennial noble family could barely outdo Fourth Lady Qu."

Qu Moying didn't like her gaze because she felt like an object under her gaze.

"Madam Li, you overpraised her." Hearing Madam Li's praise for Qu Moying, Old Lady Qu smiled and shook her hand, but there was a hint of joy in her eyes.

She also thought that her granddaughter was outstanding and that her granddaughter's eye disease would heal sooner or later, but she couldn't say those words herself.

"Ying, come over and greet Madam Li, wife of Earl Fengyang."

"It is the wife of Earl Fengyang. What is she doing here?" Qu Moying's heart skipped a beat, but she did not show it on her face. She took two steps forward and bowed sideways. "Greetings, Madam Li."

“Get up. Get up. You are indeed a good girl, unlike my daughter. She is indeed naughty.” Madam Li said with a smile.

“Madam Li, you are too kind. Your daughter must be better. How can she compare with your daughter?” Old Lady Qu said with a smile. Then, she asked Qu Moying to sit down on the bench.

“Your Ladyship, you are too kind. I came here today to see Fourth Lady Qu. Now that I see her is as outstanding as it is said, I have good news to tell you.” Madam Li looked at Qu Moying with a smile, her eyes friendly.

However, her friendliness made Qu Moying inexplicably uneasy. She pursed her lips silently. She did not think that Madam Earl Fengyang would bring good news.

Xu Lipeng came to her today because of Yan Yujiao, and Qu Moying was sure that Yan Yujiao had a very bad impression of her. The purpose of Madam Li’s visit was suspicious, but no matter how suspicious she was, Qu Moying could not speak at this moment. She lowered her head and gently pinched the handkerchief, looking shy, but at the same time, she was paying attention to Madam Li’s words.

“What good news?” Old Lady Qu asked curiously.

“I came here to make a match for a young master. He heard that Fourth Lady Qu is beautiful and clever. Although she has an eye disease, she has almost recovered, and his family does not care too much about it. He said that he wanted to marry a virtuous woman, and Fourth Lady Qu seems to be really virtuous. Even if her appearance is imperfect, it doesn’t matter.”

Madam Li had a glib tongue. She bragged about the family that had taken a fancy to Qu Moying in a few words.

Old Lady Qu listened carefully and nodded as she listened. Although she had chosen her grandnephew for Qu Moying, it had not been decided yet. It would be better if there was a more suitable option. Moreover, she was dissatisfied with her grandnephew because of a few words he said to her a few days ago.

She picked her grandnephew for her fourth granddaughter, but now her grandnephew actually had a liking for her eldest granddaughter. She asked Granny Wu to inquire about it, and she learned that her grandnephew had gotten really close with her eldest granddaughter recently.

“Madam Li, which young master are you talking about?” After Li finished speaking, Old Lady Qu could not help but ask anxiously. If it was really a suitable person, Old Lady Qu was willing to accept it.

“The young master is Noble Consort He’s nephew. He is Lord Jing’s cousin.” Madam Li said with a smile.

Qu Moying pressed her hand on the handkerchief. There was only coldness in her eyes. She knew that the matter was not over. Madam Li did not come with good intentions...

#### Chapter 283 The So-called Third Young Master He

Noble Consort He’s family, the He Family, was once a wealthy and powerful family, but it later declined. If not for Empress Yuan, the He Family probably wouldn’t have existed. It was only because of Lord Jing that the He Family prospered again.

The current He Family was not the one it used to be. Empress Yuan was in the main branch of the He Family back then, and she was the only person in the main branch. Noble Consort He was in the side branch at that time. Later, Empress Yuan passed away, and the main branch had no descendants, so Noble Consort He naturally supported her own brother of the side branch.

Noble Consort He’s brother was now in charge of the He Family.

Third Young Master He was considered a promising one among the young masters in the He Family. He was said to be good-looking and studious, and he was not a womanizer. However, his marriage was not smooth. He had married once, but his wife died a month after the marriage. He was the one whom Madam Li wanted to introduce to Qu Moying.

Hearing Madam Li talk about Third Young Master He, Old Lady Qu secretly nodded. She had also heard of Third Young Master He. It was said that his moral character was really good among the young masters

of the He Family. Although he had married once, his ex-wife died a month after marriage and did not leave any children. In fact, it was the same as he had never married.

This was indeed not something to be picky about. As long as he had good morality, it was not a problem at all.

Seeing Old Lady Qu nod, Madam Li was overjoyed and said anxiously, "Your Ladyship, since you have also heard of Third Young Master He, then I could stop praising him. A person like him could be worthy of a young lady with a better status. However, Third Young Master He is a kind-hearted person. After hearing about Fourth Lady Qu, he thought that Fourth Lady Qu is kind and wanted to marry her so that he could take care of her."

Madam Li described Third Young Master He as an extremely kind person. Qu Moying sneered in her heart. Others might not know, but she knew clearly that Third Young Master He appeared to be kind, but he was actually a wolf in sheep's clothing. He was evil.

How did his wife die? He tortured her to death.

He tortured not only his wife to death but also some beautiful maids in He Mansion. However, nobody dared to speak up for them because they were only maids, and he was in Noble Consort He's family.

Upon his ex-wife's death, Third Young Master He pretended to be devastated, and he fainted a few times in the mourning hall. Qu Moying knew his true nature in her previous life. Her father found it out, but it had nothing to do with her father. He only sighed that Third Young Master He's ex-wife was unlucky, and he asked Ji Hanyue to stay away from He Mansion's people.

But now, Madam Li actually introduced Third Young Master He to Qu Moying. She was clearly pushing Qu Moying into the fire pit. Qu Moying did not have any special feelings for Madam Li at the beginning, but now she found her hateful.

Judging from Madam Li's behavior, it was obvious that she had known something, but she deliberately hid it from Old Lady Qu. She only spoke well of Third Young Master He, and she hinted that Qu Moying was really lucky.

Qu Moying's eyes under the eye veil were cold. She slowly raised her head and looked at Madam Li. "Madam Li, I heard that Third Young Master He is not a good person."

Her words were so blunt that the smile on Madam Li's face froze. She looked at Qu Moying with a bit of coldness in her eyes. She thought Qu Moying did take a fancy to her son, and that was the reason why Qu Moying disdained Third Young Master He. However, she would not let such a woman marry her son.

Although her son was not very good, he was still the legitimate son of an earl's mansion.

"Of course he is a good person. Third Young Master He is the most promising one among He Mansion's young masters. Moreover, he does not depend on Her Grace. I heard that Third Young Master He is going to participate in the Imperial Examination next spring. He will definitely pass the exam. But when the time comes, I am afraid it will be difficult to marry him."

Madam Li said with a smile. Her words meant that if Third Young Master He passed the examination, Qu Moying would not be worthy of him. After all, he was Noble Consort He's nephew. His future career would definitely be promising.

Old Lady Qu was silent for a moment. She was a little hesitant. She thought that Young Master He was not bad, but she could tell from Qu Moying's reaction that she was unwilling to marry him. However, Old Lady Qu didn't want to refuse it now. After thinking for a moment, she said with a smile, "Thank you, Madam Li, but I have to discuss it with Ying's father."

"Alright, but you must hurry. I heard that Noble Consort He has known about Third Young Master He's matter and is also choosing a wife for him. If you don't make up your mind quickly, Noble Consort He might not give her consent." Although Madam Li despised Qu Moying in her heart, she said with a smile, but her smile seemed a little mocking.

"Thank you, Madam Li." Old Lady Qu's gaze landed on Madam Li's face. She also saw the hint of mockery on her face, and she felt a bit displeased.

Madam Li stood up since she had said the matter. She wiped her face with a handkerchief and said goodbye with a smile.

Old Lady Qu asked Granny Wu to send her out.

After Madam Li left, Old Lady Qu turned to ask Qu Moying in a gentle voice, "Ying, did you hear anything about Third Young Master He?"

Old Lady Qu naturally trusted her granddaughter more than Madam Li.

"Grandmother, I heard that Third Young Master He... doesn't have a good personality..." Qu Moying said reservedly. Those things were not some things that an unmarried woman like her could talk about, and she shouldn't even hear about it.

"Where did you hear that? Is it just a rumor? Ying, most of the rumors are not true. You don't have to care about it!" Old Lady Qu gently comforted her, thinking that Qu Moying had only heard the rumor. "I will ask your father about the rumor. I will definitely consider it carefully. But Third Young Master He is actually not bad."

Old Lady Qu had heard of Third Young Master He, and she thought he was the only good young master in the He Family.

Qu Moying was silent for a moment. Her eyes rolled under the eye veil. She knew that Old Lady Qu was doing this for her good, but she couldn't explain it to Old Lady Qu. The only thing she could be sure of was that Madam Li didn't like her or even hated her.

She saw the mockery on Madam Li's face just now. She bit her lips and said softly, "Grandmother, Madam Li doesn't seem to like me."

Since Madam Li didn't like her, how could she introduce a good man to her?

"I don't think so. You think too much. I will discuss this matter with your father first and then ask your father to investigate it. If there is really nothing wrong, I will ask you again. I have already told your father before that I will make the decision on your marriage, but I will respect your wishes. After all, it's your marriage."



Old Lady Qu said.

Qu Moying lowered her head, and tears welled up in her eyes. She felt warm inside. In this mansion, Old Lady Qu was really good to her, and she could feel it. She gently tugged at the corner of Old Lady Qu's clothes and called her with affection, "Grandmother!"

"Alright, you can go back first. There's no rush. I asked you to come over so that you can hear it yourself. You've grown up, and you are smart. I believe that you have your own judgment." Old Lady Qu's eyes turned red at the sight of Qu Moying. She thought Qu Moying was pitiful. Nobody treated her well in the past, so she was so moved when someone treated her a bit better.

Although Qu Moying seemed to be indifferent, she was actually very grateful.

After coming out from Old Lady Qu's yard and taking a few steps behind Qu Moying, Yu Dong called out to her hesitantly, "Miss..."

"What's wrong?" Qu Moying slowly walked forward with a calm expression.

"Miss, should I send someone to investigate it?" Yu Dong suggested.

"No need. Father will investigate it." Qu Moying shook her head.

"But if there really is something wrong with Third Young Master He... People all say that he is good. It meant that he hid it well, so ordinary people could not find it out." Yu Dong said worriedly. Moreover, he felt that Qu Moying's father did not care about his daughters, especially Qu Moying. He had never taken her to heart.

The fact that he left Qu Moying in the village for so many years could prove that.

Qu Moying nodded. She understood what Yu Dong meant. With her understanding of Qu Zhizhen, she guessed Qu Zhizhen would agree as soon as he heard about the proposed marriage.

But those things were secrets that were not known by ordinary people. Moreover, an unmarried woman like her could not talk about it. Even if she knew, she could not say it out.

Even if she said it out in embarrassment, Qu Zhizhen would not believe it. He would think that she had heard a rumor and that it must not be true.

She didn't let Yu Dong investigate it because she knew the truth of the matter. However, the effect of her finding the truth was different from that of Qu Zhizhen finding the truth.

"I heard that He Mansion's eldest son, He Dachong, and Third Young Master He don't share the same mother." Qu Moying said slowly with a deep look in her eyes.

Yu Dong nodded repeatedly. It was not a secret in the capital. "Yes, I heard that the first wife of Noble Consort He's brother gave birth to First Young Master He. The second wife gave birth to Third Young Master He. They don't share the same mother, and their relationship is not good. But First Young Master He is obviously not as good as Third Young Master He."

One could tell from their reputation in the capital. First Young Master He's reputation was bad, but Third Young Master He's reputation was just the opposite. Moreover, First Young Master He was not good at studying, but Third Young Master He had already been famous for his talent when he was a child, and even the emperor knew about him and had once praised him.

This was also the reason why Madam Li mentioned that he would become an official.

However, Third Young Master He's moral character didn't match his talent. He was an evil sadist. He had harmed those young and beautiful girls with extremely vicious methods, but he hid the truth very well.

However, no matter how perfectly Third Young Master hid it, First Young Master He should be able to find some clues as long as he paid attention to it because he lived in the same mansion as Third Young Master He.

Qu Moying said meaningfully, "Try to let First Young Master He know that Third Young Master He might be the one who killed the ex-Third Madam He, and also hint him that if Third Young Master He marries Qu Mansion's lady, he might have a closer relationship with Lord Jing."

He Mansion must have known the matter between Qu Qiuyan and Lord Jing...

For any young master of any noble family, even if he was a useless dandy, he would be sensitive to this...

## Chapter 284 The Crown Prince Was Humiliated

The hall was silent. Only the Crown Prince's breath could be heard. It sounded a little rapid. A few booklets were thrown to his side, and the jade crown on his head was askew. One booklet had just hit his crown. Although it did not hit him in the face, he felt extremely humiliated.

Pei Luo'an had never been so embarrassed before. His face turned red.

He had been the Crown Prince for a long time. Although his position as the Crown Prince was not secure, he had the advantage on the surface. He was the emperor's eldest son, and no one could object to him.

However, the emperor just threw the booklets at him because of Ji Hanyue's dowry shops. Thinking of the restrained smile on Pei Yusheng's face just now, Pei Luo'an could not help but feel angry. He clenched his fists under the sleeves. The clothes' threads rubbed his skin, making him know that he was still kneeling in the hall.

He was the Crown Prince, yet he was humiliated in front of all the officials. Did the emperor really not want him to ascend the throne?

His eyes were filled with hatred and anger, but he suppressed his emotion and raised up his head to explain in a somewhat panicked manner, "Father, I really didn't mean to do this. I've been missing the ex-Crown Princess these days. I was muddle-headed. How could I care about such a thing? It's my negligence. I will find out the truth."

Sitting in the high seat, the emperor looked at Pei Luo'an with disappointment and asked, "Have you found it out now?"

This matter caused an uproar. Everyone in the capital now knew that Pei Luo'an's affection for the ex-Crown Princess was fake. Perhaps he had an affair with the Side Princess Ji long before, and that was why he let her occupy the ex-Crown Princess' dowry.

If he was sincere to the ex-Crown Princess, how could he ignore the ex-Crown Princess' affairs?

The officials wrote everything in the reports. Some of them said that the Crown Prince's affection for the ex-Crown Princess was all pretense, and some said that the ex-Crown Princess might have been angered to death by the Side Princess. They also said that the Crown Prince neglected Earl Ling'an's Mansion's affairs, and he should not let Earl Ling'an's Mansion fall to this state if he really loved the ex-Crown Princess.

It was said that the Side Princess had intervened in the dispute regarding Earl Ling'an's Mansion's title because she wanted her elder brother to inherit the title but not the young master of the mansion, who was just her younger brother born by a concubine.

The more people talked about something, the more the thing seemed to be true.

Most of the officials knew that the ex-Crown Princess died of serious injuries after blocking the assassin's attack for the Crown Prince.

If the Crown Prince was really not grateful to the ex-Crown Princess and brought a woman who had an affair with him into the mansion, who was also the ex-Crown Princess' cousin sister, the ex-Crown Princess must be heartbreaking. Even if the ex-Crown Princess was healthy, she might not be able to withstand it, not to mention that she was seriously ill at that time. She might have been angered to death.

After all, the second branch that Side Princess Ji was in seemed to be the beneficiary of the ex-Crown Princess' death.

"Father, I will definitely investigate this matter thoroughly. She might not mean to occupy the ex-Crown Princess' dowry. Perhaps she was busy with the matters of Eastern Palace and Earl Ling'an's Mansion for a while, so she did not have the time to return these things. Father, please rest assured. If she really did it on purpose, I will not spare her."

The Crown Prince heavily kowtowed three times, his face full of anger. It seemed that he would show no mercy to Ji Youran.

Pei Yuanjun looked at the Crown Prince. He stood in front of all the other generals, facing the Crown Prince. All the other officials in the court lowered their heads in panic. Even Lord Jing and Lord Yan, who also wrote reports to charge the Crown Prince, lowered their heads, afraid that the emperor would vent his anger on them.

They didn't even dare to make any noise.

Only Pei Yuanjun looked at Pei Luo'an with a big smile on his handsome face, looking presumptuous and fearless.

The emperor glanced at Pei Yuanjun as if he didn't see the disrespect in the latter's eyes for the Crown Prince. He still fixed his eyes on the Crown Prince and said, "Well, well. Then go and investigate. If it is really the case, you don't have to keep this Side Princess. The royal family doesn't want such a vicious woman."

"Yes, father!" Pei Luo'an secretly wiped away his cold sweat. Fortunately, Ji Youran was capable. She had dealt with most of the things yesterday. Now, she only needed to return the movable belongings. In the next two days, she would tidy up the belongings and return the dowry in front of everyone in the capital.

His position as the Crown Prince was shaken because of some financial matters. He thought he should really teach Ji Youran a lesson this time.

The hall was quiet again. The emperor sitting on the top was silent, and no one spoke below. Pei Yuanjun raised his eyes to look at the emperor, who was sitting in a high position, and saw that the emperor looked at him with a bit of scrutiny. Then, he smiled and looked away.

A eunuch shouted, "The court is dismissed!"

After the emperor left with a group of eunuchs, the atmosphere in the hall eased a little. Some officials who were on the Crown Prince's side hurried to help the Crown Prince up.

Pei Luo'an's legs were still trembling. He held a minister's hand and stood up. His face was livid as he looked at Pei Yusheng, who was standing at the side with gloomy eyes.

Seeing that Pei Luo'an was looking at him, Pei Yusheng walked over and said with concern, "Your Highness, are your legs sore? Please have a rest before you leave."

"My legs are not sore, but my hands are a little sore because of overreaching." Pei Luo'an sneered and pushed away Pei Yusheng's hand.

The reason why the officials dared to report to criticize Pei Luo'an was mostly because of Pei Yusheng. Now, Pei Yusheng was pretending, which made Pei Luo'an angry.

"Your Highness, why did you say this?" Pei Yusheng was surprised.

Pei Luo'an said coldly, "Lord Jing, I heard that you are going to marry a lady from Vice Minister Qu's Mansion."

The smile on Pei Yusheng's face froze. He could hardly continue to make a smile, but then he smiled again and shook his sleeves, "Your Highness, I'm afraid you misheard."

After saying that, he turned around and left. He didn't want to talk about Qu Qiuyan here. It was just about a concubine. How could such a trifle be discussed here? If the emperor knew about the matter, it would be another proof of him being a frivolous man.

He was happy to see Pei Luo'an's reputation damaged.

There were indeed some of his people who accused the Crown Prince, but there were also some impartial Imperial Censors. Pei Luo'an didn't have good morality, which was why so many people criticized him and discussed it to this extent. Pei Yusheng felt that he had nothing to do with this matter.

Pei Luo'an looked coldly at Pei Yusheng's back and sneered in his heart. Pei Yusheng must have added fuel to the flame.

He knew whom Pei Yusheng liked!

“Crown Prince, do you need to investigate it today?” A clear voice came behind Pei Luo’an. It was Lord Yun.

Pei Luo’an took a deep breath to calm himself. Then, he turned around and tried to look calm. He looked at Pei Yuanjun and said, “Yes, Uncle Yun. I have to trouble you.”

“Then let’s go!” Pei Yuanjun nodded, waved his sleeves, and walked out. Pei Luo’an hurriedly followed him. His status was higher than Pei Yuanjun, but in terms of seniority, he was the junior. Most importantly, Pei Yuanjun was highly regarded by the emperor, so he had to respect him.

The two of them walked out of the palace together and boarded their own carriage. The two large carriages drove towards the Crown Prince’s Eastern Palace.

The two carriages arrived at Eastern Palace, and the Crown Prince’s carriage stopped first. Pei Luo’an got off the carriage, only to see Ji Youran walking over with a few maids. “Greetings, Your Highness!”

At the sight of Ji Youran, Pei Luo’an’s face darkened as he recalled the humiliation he had suffered in the court just now.

“Your Highness, I have prepared some pastries. I made them in the kitchen myself. Please have a taste.” Ji Youran said coquettishly. She looked at Pei Luo’an affectionately as if she had only Pei Luo’an in her eyes. Pei Luo’an’s figure could even be reflected in her eyes.

He used to be satisfied with her devotion to him, and he felt that Ji Youran was wholeheartedly devoted to him. Even though he didn’t promise her anything at that time, she still admired him wholeheartedly. Although Ji Youran was not as beautiful as Ji Hanyue, her love for him was deeper and gentler.

But her tender love for him had become somewhat polluted. Pei Luo’an’s gaze fell on Ji Youran, carrying a bit of coldness.

“Your Highness, it was all my fault, but I have dealt with everything now. Your Highness, I won’t make such mistakes in the future.” Ji Youran’s eyes were red, and a drop of tear slowly fell down from her fair and tender cheeks. She was as beautiful as jade, carrying shyness and unspeakable pain, and she blamed everything on herself without hesitation.

Pei Luo’an’s expression softened as he saw Ji Youran act like this. Just as he was about to say something, a gust of wind blew past him, lifting up Ji Youran’s hair and revealing a scar on Ji Youran’s face. The scar made Ji Youran look uglier.

Pei Luo’an’s eyes narrowed, not only because he saw Ji Youran’s ugly face but also because he heard Pei Yuanjun’s words. “Crown Prince, it turns out that you like this kind of woman. Your taste... is very unique!”

Pei Luo’an and Ji Youran both heard Pei Yuanjun’s words that carried a bit of blatant mockery. Ji Youran quickly pressed down her hair that was blown up, and her face turned pale. She was so embarrassed that she couldn’t even raise her head to look at Pei Luo’an. She didn’t want Pei Luo’an to see it the most.

Her scar was due to Ji Hanyue’s scratch at that time. When she was about to recover, she accidentally took Yu’s medicine, so the scar swelled up again, and the recovery slowed down. She hadn’t recovered yet, and she sometimes felt pain because of the scar, which reminded her of the scene when Ji Hanyue died that day.

Pei Luo’an’s face also darkened. He was the Crown Prince, yet he was said to like an ugly woman. How could he not feel ashamed?

Ji Youran was really ugly. Even if the Crown Prince’s Side Princess didn’t need to be a peerless beauty, she must not have a scar on her face...

## Chapter 285 A Shop Assistant called Chao Yang

Qu Moying took Yu Dong and Granny Miao to Yue’s Clothing Pavilion again. Although the rectification of the shop was going well, Aunt Yang still invited Qu Moying to take a look. The goods of the South had not arrived yet. Qu Moying had written a letter to ask about the goods, but she hadn’t received any reply yet. There should be a response in the next few days.



When they arrived at Yue's Clothing Pavilion, they saw that Yue's Gold Pavilion was also being reorganized. The plaque with the name "Yue's Gold Pavilion" was hung up again. The plaque was placed next to Yue's Clothing Pavilion's plaque, which made it easier for others to know that these two shops belonged to the same family.

Now everyone in the capital knew that these two shops indeed belonged to the same family. They were the dowry shops that the South's Yue Family gave to their daughters. However, the ex-Crown Princess had passed away, so Yue's Gold Pavilion was returned to Earl Ling'an's Mansion's first branch. The first branch's young master was adopted by the elder Yue, so he deserved these shops.

Standing outside the two shops, Qu Moying raised her head and looked at the two plaques above her. She smiled coldly and walked into her shop.

Ji Youran hurt herself by her own doing this time, so she must be very depressed.

The Crown Prince would definitely be criticized. Even though he immediately took action to deal with it, others would report it to the emperor. Many people were secretly against the Crown Prince, so how could they let go of this opportunity?

Pei Luo'an suffered such a big loss and even was reprimanded by the emperor. He would definitely vent his anger on Ji Youran.

"Greetings, Miss." Aunt Yang was already waiting at the door. When she saw Qu Moying come over, she hurriedly stepped forward and bowed respectfully.

"Aunt Yang, no need for formalities. How is the recruitment going?" Qu Moying asked as she walked in. More than half of the shop assistants had run away, so they had to recruit people during this period of time.

"Don't worry, Miss. It's almost done. The people I recruited are all honest. I haven't recruited any of those who are related to Yu Qian, and there is no one who is cunning." Aunt Yang said with a smile as she led Qu Moying inside.

“How is the preparation of the goods?”

“The goods are almost ready. We just need the goods from the South and some embroideresses. We don’t have to rush to find embroideresses. After all, a good embroideress can be met but not sought. But if anyone comes to apply for the position, I will recruit her immediately. But there must not be any mistake with the goods from the South.”

Aunt Yang said.

Qu Moying knew what she meant and nodded. She was not in a hurry to reopen the shop. She would like to get everything ready first.

She followed Aunt Yang to the second floor. All the goods on the second floor were more exquisite than those on the first floor. Qu Moying stood in front of the cabinet and looked at the goods one by one. When she saw something particularly outstanding, she would take it out to have a closer look. When Qu Moying was still Ji Hanyue, she had already known a lot about the trendy style in the capital.

Seeing a pair of buttons, she suddenly stopped and frowned. “Where did they come from?”

As she spoke, she reached out and took the pair of buttons from Aunt Yang’s hands. It was a very delicate pair of buttons with a pair of rubies inlaid on them. They were finely made and beautiful. People would like them at first glance.

Qu Moying shifted her eyes to the embroidered handkerchiefs under the goods. They were embroidered with beautiful patterns and laces, which could show that they were not ordinary handkerchiefs.

She picked up a piece of handkerchief and touched it. It was indeed a fine product. It was smooth and light.

“They were made of the same material.” Qu Moying said indifferently after looking at it.

Aunt Yang nodded. “Fourth Lady, these are the samples that I found back then.”

"You said that there were not many left. But is this all?" Qu Moying raised her eyes in surprise. From Aunt Yang's previous words, she thought that there should be at least a few bolts of cloth. Otherwise, Aunt Yang could not remember it for such a long time.

"There should be more. Although I don't remember it very clearly, I could remember that there were at least a few different bolts of cloth. However, I couldn't find them. I clearly remembered that they were placed at the bottom. When the other cloth piled up on them, I was thinking that it would ruin the cloth at the bottom. But I didn't expect that when I tried to find them according to my memory, they were not there. Could it be that I remembered wrongly?"

Aunt Yang touched her head and also felt very confused. It was really hard to explain, but she clearly remembered that there were some more.

"Did you find these handkerchiefs there?" Qu Moying reached out and slid over the handkerchiefs and the pair of buttons.

"No. I found these accidentally in another place. I found nothing in the place where the cloth was supposed to be." Aunt Yang said in confusion, and then she talked to herself, "I clearly remember they were there!"

She thought she had made a mistake, but then, she thought she was right.

Even she herself could not figure it out now!

"This pair of buttons and the cloth that made the handkerchiefs are indeed tributes to the royal family." Qu Moying picked up the pair of buttons again, and a trace of coldness flashed through her eyes. The tributes appeared in an ordinary shop, which meant that there must be something wrong. Now, some of the cloth was missing, and it seemed that someone was hiding them.

Was someone covering up the traces? Or was it really an accident?

Qu Moying believed that there was something fishy about this and somebody was behind this. Aunt Yang seemed to be a shrewd person. Previously, Qu Moying had asked her something about the shop,

and she could basically recall the detail even if it had been a long time. It could be seen that she was meticulous.

There was no reason for her to suddenly forget or remember wrongly.

It was even stranger.

Who was behind this? Was Yu so capable? If it wasn't Yu, was there anyone behind Yu?

Moreover, the one behind this quit quickly. After selling the tributes for a few years, he stopped and perfectly cleared the traces.

At that time, Ji Hanyue was the future Crown Princess. In order to show her favor to Ji Hanyue and her satisfaction toward the marriage, the empress would send some tributes to Earl Ling'an's Mansion to Ji Hanyue as soon as new tributes were brought into the capital. Therefore, Ji Hanyue could recognize tributes easily.

She even knew which year the tributes were from because the tributes of that year were very special, different from those of previous years.

"Aunt Yang, is there any outstanding staff in recent years? Such a person should be favored by Yu Qian, and he could even make decisions for Yu Qian. When Yu Qian was not around, he could deal with the emergency in the shop. Yu Qian also trusted him, but he must have left now."

Qu Moying asked with an indifferent smile.

Aunt Yang thought seriously and asked, "Fourth Lady, are you asking about a year ago or a month ago?"

"Both!" Qu Moying looked at the tributes and narrowed her eyes.

Aunt Yang thought for a while and said, "Fourth Lady, there was indeed such a person. I heard that he had something to do with Yu Qian. He seemed to be Yu Qian's distant relative. I don't know if he has any

relationship with the Second Madam. Yu Qian trusted him very much, and I once saw Yu Qian discussing something with him. They seemed to have a close relationship, and Yu Qian didn't seem to be his leader at all."

"What is this person's name? Where did he go?" Qu Moying's heart skipped a beat.

"His name is Chao Yang. He is a young man about twenty years old. He smiled first when he looked at people. At that time, he had a good relationship with people in the shop. Everyone knew that he was close to Yu Qian, so when they made a mistake, they would ask him to intercede with Yu Qian for them. He always agreed to help them, and he could cool down Yu Qian every time."

Aunt Yang thought about it and said carefully, "He left the shop later. He said that his other relative had come to the capital and invited him to work as a manager. Although he had some power here, he was not a manager. In fact, when he left, many of the employees in the shop were reluctant to part with him. Two of them even followed him and left. At that time, Yu Qian did not say anything and even politely sent him a gift."

Qu Moying bit her lips slightly, and a hint of seriousness flashed in her eyes. "Is he still in the capital?"

Aunt Yang shook her head and said, "I don't know about this. He said that he wanted to leave the capital at that time. I didn't see him again after that."

Qu Moying picked up a handkerchief and looked at it again. "Is this handkerchief made here?"

"No, it's already in this form when I got it, and so is this pair of buttons. When I got them, I felt strange because I didn't remember this batch of materials had been made into handkerchiefs and buttons. Moreover, these rubies could not be inlaid with ordinary skills. We do have good embroideresses, but they could not make it so perfectly."

Aunt Yang shook her head with certainty. When she first saw the handkerchiefs and the pair of buttons, she didn't remember anything. Only after she felt their materials later did she remember they should also be tributes.

"Aunt Yang, can I bring these back?" Qu Moying asked with a gentle gaze.

"Of course, I originally wanted to show them to you." Aunt Yang nodded and handed them to Yu Dong. Yu Dong took them and was about to carefully put them in his pocket.

Qu Moying pointed at a small delicate bamboo gauze box and asked with a glimmer of excitement flashing in her eyes. "Wait, what is this?"

"I don't know. It's just a small gauze box, which is used to put these two things. When I found it, I thought it was special, so I brought it here. After taking out the handkerchief and the pair of buttons, I put the box aside. If you didn't mention it, I would have forgotten it."

Aunt Yang took the bamboo gauze box that Qu Moying pointed at from the corner of the counter and handed it to Qu Moying.

Qu Moying's face became serious. She reached out and took the bamboo box. The bamboo frame was very exquisite, and it was covered with light gauze, which could vaguely show the objects inside. It was a small box, and there were not many things placed inside. However, it was enough to put a few handkerchiefs and a pair of ruby buttons.

She could be certain that this bamboo gauze box was an item from the palace, and only the concubines of the palace could have it...

## Chapter 286 The Unreasonable Second Young Master Yan

Ji Hanyue had once seen a similar box at the empress' place. It was different from ordinary boxes, and it was made of bamboo, which gave it a different kind of style and elegance.

When she first saw the box, she took a few more glances at it and asked a maid, who told her that this kind of box was made of tributes to the royal family, and there were only a few such boxes in the palace. They were rare, so they were only given to the favorite concubines of the emperor and those concubines who had children.

The bamboo used to make that box was not ordinary either. It was not only purple, but it also had faint spots, which contrasted perfectly with the gauze on the box. It looked special, and the objects inside could be vaguely seen, which gave the box a sense of vague prettiness.

Even in the palace, there were not many such boxes.

How could such a box appear outside the palace in such an insignificant shop?

After examining it for a while, Qu Moying pursed her lips and shook her head slightly. She restrained the shock in her eyes and was lost in thought.

It was not the box she saw in the empress' place although they looked similar.

The bamboo of this box was also not ordinary, but it was not that rare. As for the gauze of the box, it was somewhat similar to the lace of the handkerchief. They should be made of the same material.

But even though the two boxes were just similar, the one who made this box must have seen the box in the palace.

Seeing that Qu Moying was examining the box in her hand, Yu Dong called out to her in a low voice, "Miss! What is in this box?"

Although he used to follow Lord Yun, he had never seen this kind of delicate box that only imperial concubines could have. Seeing Qu Moying flipping the box in her hand, he also looked at the box a few more times, but he found that it was just a slightly delicate box.

"Nothing. It just looks familiar. Put the handkerchief and the pair of buttons in the box and bring the box with us." Qu Moying handed the box in her hand to Yu Dong. She had confirmed that the box was in the same style as the one in the palace, but they were not the same.

Since this box appeared with the handkerchiefs and the pair of buttons, then she would take it with her. She had an inexplicable feeling that the tributes sold in the shop many years ago should have something to do with these objects. She would take them back first and then take time to find out the truth.

Yu Dong put the handkerchief and the pair of buttons into the box and then put the box into his pocket.

The goods Qu Moying saw later were not as eye-catching. Although there were exquisite goods that made Qu Moying stop, they were goods that were allowed to be sold in ordinary stores. There weren't goods that were exclusive to the royal family.

Just as they were looking around the goods on the second floor, they heard someone asking from downstairs. "Is there anyone here?"

Aunt Yang said, "Fourth Lady, I will go down and take a look."

After Qu Moying nodded, Aunt Yang walked down the stairs, but she soon came up in a hurry. "Fourth Lady, the person downstairs said that he wanted to see you."

"Who is it?" Qu Moying put down the lace in her hand and asked in surprise. She didn't expect someone to look for her here.

Aunt Yang said, "He said he is the second young master of Earl Fengyang's Mansion."

Qu Moying's face turned cold. She naturally knew the Second Young Master of Earl Fengyang's Mansion. It was Yan Yu, whom she had long been at odds with. He was also the one who caused these troubles. At the very beginning, he had plotted against her.

"Go downstairs and tell him that I have something to do and can't see him. If he has anything, he can go directly to Qu Mansion." Qu Moying said coldly. She did not feel that she needed to meet him.

Whether it was Second Young Master Yan, Miss Yan, or even Madam Li, they all harbored ill intentions towards her.

Seeing that Qu Moying was so determined, Aunt Yang could only go downstairs. But soon, Qu Moying heard the noise at the stairs and footsteps coming up. Then, she saw Yan Yu rushing up to the second floor with a young servant.



Aunt Yang wanted to stop Yan Yu, but the young servant pulled her sleeve, so she failed to block Yan Yu.

Yu Dong hurriedly stood in front of Qu Moying and looked warily at Yan Yu, who was rushing over.

Qu Moying slowly put down the piece of cloth in her hand. She drew back her slender hands into her sleeves and turned to face Yan Yu.

Yan Yu came over in a hurry. When he saw Qu Moying, he directly went straight to the point. "Fourth Lady Qu, Third Young Master He is not a good person."

Qu Moying said indifferently, "Second Young Master Yan, did you come here only to tell me this?"

"Yes. Third Young Master He is not as nice as he appears to be. He is not a good person. Fourth Lady Qu, please think twice." Yan Yu's face was slightly sweaty. He apparently came in a hurry.

A mocking smile appeared on Qu Moying's tender face. "Second Young Master Yan, you come to tell me this. But wasn't Madam Li the one who came to our mansion and spoke highly of Third Young Master He?"

"My mother was deceived by others and did not know about it. When I heard about it, I immediately came to inform you."

Yan Yu looked at Qu Moying and said seriously.

Seeing his serious look, Qu Moying sneered in her heart. Some of her troubles now were caused by Earl Fengyang's Mansion, yet he appeared as if he was trying to save her.

Others might think that he was chivalrous and courageous.

"Second Young Master Yan, my business has nothing to do with you and your mansion. Can you please also pass on my words to your mother?" Qu Moying said word by word with a cold face.

Her own affairs were already so difficult to deal with, yet Earl Fengyang's Mansion was still messing around with her.

Then, she turned around and said to Yu Dong, "Yu Dong, send him out."

Yu Dong stepped forward and said to Yan Yu with a fake smile, "Second Young Master Yan, please leave."

Yan Yu did not want to leave. He stood there and said to Qu Moying's back, "Fourth Lady Qu, I do this out of good intentions."

Qu Moying was a little angry. What was wrong with Second Young Master Yan? She had no relationship with him, and she could even clearly sense the malice coming from Earl Fengyang's Mansion. But he said that he came here out of good intentions, which really annoyed her.

Qu Moying couldn't help but say with sarcasm, "Second Young Master Yan, thank you for your good intentions, but since when did our two mansions become so close? Even if our mansions are close, we don't have anything to talk about with each other, right? Second Young Master Yan, please leave. What will others think if they see you rushing up like this? I'm actually not familiar with you, right?"

The two of them were indeed not familiar with each other. Looking at Qu Moying's indifferent back, Yan Yu lowered his head with an upset look. He repeated, "Fourth Lady Qu, I really meant well. Third Young Master He is not a good person."

"Second Young Master Yan, please leave!" Yu Dong urged again.

Yan Yu looked at Qu Moying's back again and left helplessly. When he came outside the shop and looked at the shop front that had been tidied up, he sighed deeply and smiled apologetically.

He knew his family's affairs best. As a matter of fact, this matter had something to do with him.

Qu Moying didn't have to suffer this, and he felt extremely guilty for Qu Moying.

The cause of the matter was that his father and mother asked him to meet some noble ladies. They said that he was not young anymore and that it was time for him to get married. He did not want an abrupt end to his carefree life, so he said casually that he had taken fancy to someone.

When his mother heard that he had taken fancy to someone, she interrogated him about who the other party was. Yan Yu knew that the woman he liked should match his mother's status. Otherwise, his mother might cause trouble for him. Therefore, he fabricated the story about a noble lady with a poor past.

He said that the lady was disliked by her fiancé because of her family, and her fiancé canceled the engagement and married another woman. Her mother had died, and her father was not nice to her. She was staying in her mansion now, but it was not a good time to propose to her now because she had just ended an engagement. He would have to wait for a period of time.

Yan Yu only wanted to stall for time. He didn't want to get married at all now.

His father and mother repeatedly questioned him who this woman was, but Yan Yu refused to tell them. Because of this, Yan Yu received a good beating and was punished to kneel in the ancestral hall.

There was no such a woman, so Yan Yu could not tell who it was.

As a result, his parents thought that he was determined to marry that woman only.

He did not know how his parents' minds worked that they actually thought that the woman was Fourth Lady Qu. His mother was furious and scolded him. Yan Yu knew that it would get worse if he did not explain the situation well, so he repeatedly said that the woman was not Fourth Lady Qu, but his mother did not buy his story. She even locked him in the mansion.

After that, he found out from his sister that his mother was going to introduce Third Young Master He to Qu Moying. He was anxious, so he specially asked people to keep an eye on Qu Moying. Knowing that she went out of Qu Mansion, he secretly came to remind her that Third Young Master He was not a good person.

Yan Yu knew about this by accident. However, Third Young Master He was from He Mansion and had the support of Noble Consort He and Lord Jing, so ordinary people could not afford to offend him. Moreover, the victims were often beautiful maids. Third Young Master He would compensate the maids' families with much money, and no one dared to sue him in Yamen.

At this point, Yan Yu was very helpless. He was afraid that Fourth Lady Qu would enter He Mansion. But now, Fourth Lady Qu did not take his words seriously at all. It made him anxious and regretful. If he had known earlier, he would not have fabricated that story. It was because of his words that his parents thought that he was deeply in love with Fourth Lady Qu and was determined to marry her.

His parents were determined to get Fourth Lady Qu into the terrible He Mansion!

Yan Yu paced outside the shop with a frown. His face darkened.

A carriage suddenly stopped next to Yan Yu, and a woman's beautiful face appeared from the carriage window. "Second Brother, why are you here?"

"Why are you here?" Yan Yu looked at Yan Yujiao, who was in the carriage, and frowned. Did his mother know that he had sneaked out?

His mother might cause trouble again.

Yan Yujiao raised her head to look at the shop behind Yan Yu, and her face immediately darkened. She asked, "Second Brother, what are you doing here? If Mother finds out, she will make trouble again. This is Qu Mansion's shop."

All the people in the capital knew that the shop behind Yan Yu and the shop next to this shop were the dowry shops of the South's Yue Family's two daughters, and the Little Yue was Qu Moying's mother.

Seeing that Yan Yu had stubbornly come here, Yan Yujiao became angry. These past few days, her family had been in chaos, and it was all because of Qu Moying. In the past, she thought her second brother was a smart person. How could he be so muddle-headed now? Why did he insist on being with Fourth Lady Qu?

## Chapter 287 Take a Look Yourself

"I came to explain the misunderstanding to Fourth Lady Qu. After all, she is implicated because of me, and it is unfair to her. But I was driven away!" Yan Yu said with a long face.

"You were driven away?" Yan Yujiao said doubtfully.

"I was indeed driven away. Yujiao, can you go in and tell Fourth Lady Qu that I want to see her?" Yan Yu bowed solemnly towards Yan Yujiao.

"Second Brother... is it really not Fourth Lady Qu?" Yan Yujiao's previous belief was somewhat shaken.

She looked up at the shop, but she could not see what was on the second floor. She only saw a window on the second floor was open. There should be people inside.

Could it be that she really misunderstood Yan Yu? Wasn't Fourth Lady Qu the woman he liked?

But who else could match her Second Brother's description except Fourth Lady Qu? She had asked him before, but he had never said that he had a crush on anyone. Recently, he said he had someone he liked. According to his description, the woman seemed to be Fourth Lady Qu.

"No, of course not. I only met her once before." Yan Yu said impatiently. He had heard this a lot recently.

"But who else could it be? Second Brother, tell me!" Yan Yujiao pressed.

Seeing Yan Yujiao like this, Yan Yu could not say anything although he had a lot to say. He was annoyed. This matter was indeed caused by him, but everyone in the family believed that the woman he liked was Fourth Lady Qu. Even though he wanted to change his words now, he could not.

“Yujiao, don’t ask anymore. I can tell you that she is not a noble lady.” At this time, Yan Yu had made up his mind to risk everything. No matter how big the trouble was, he could not get Fourth Lady Qu involved. She really had nothing to do with his affairs.

“Then who is it?” Yan Yujiao asked anxiously.

“She is not a noble lady. It meant that she couldn’t marry into our family because of her status.” Yan Yu said. He turned around and saw Aunt Yang coming out of the shop. He walked up to her in a hurry and said, “I want to see Fourth Lady Qu. Could you please tell her? I really want to explain this matter clearly.”

Aunt Yang came downstairs under Qu Moying’s order. Yu Dong saw Yan Yu and Yan Yujiao, and he reported to Qu Moying, so Qu Moying asked Aunt Yang to come down.

Aunt Yang politely bowed to Yan Yu and said, “Young Master, it is really inconvenient for our lady to see you. If there is anything, you should go to Qu Mansion.”

Her words were polite and alienated.

“Our lady said that if you have nothing else to do, please leave. After all, our lady is still here. If you insist on seeing our lady, others might misunderstand you and our lady. It is not good for you, and it is also bad for our lady.”

“But this matter is very important. I only need to say a few words to Fourth Lady Qu. It won’t affect her.” Yan Yu really wanted to explain the cause of the matter.

However, Aunt Yang came downstairs with a clear purpose, which was to reject Second Young Master Yan in front of Miss Yan.

“Young Master, I am really sorry. Our lady said that she is not familiar with you and it’s really inconvenient to see you. Please leave!” Aunt Yang stretched out her hand and pointed outside.

It was a typical gesture of sending out guests.

"I..." The smile on Yan Yu's face became awkward. Seeing that Aunt Yang was about to leave, he had no choice but to compromise, "Please tell your lady that I don't mean to get her involved. I'm sorry to her. Please forgive my unintentional mistake."

Then, he bowed deeply towards Yue's Clothing Pavilion and turned around to get in Yan Yujiao's carriage.

Yan Yujiao looked at Yue's Clothing Pavilion with doubt. Seeing Aunt Yang leave, she frowned. Could it be that it really wasn't Qu Moying? Or was Second Brother trying to cover up for Qu Moying?

Or was it just Second Brother's wishful thinking, and Qu Moying knew nothing at all?

Aunt Yang went up to the second floor and reported to Qu Moying, "Miss, they have left."

Qu Moying said indifferently, "Let them be. In the future, if this young lady comes over, just pay more attention."

She did not want to waste time on Yan Yu, and she was indeed not familiar with him.

As for marrying Third Young Master He, it was simply impossible.

Everything in the shop was well arranged by Aunt Yang. According to the current situation, this plan and arrangement were very good. After giving a few suggestions, Qu Moying brought Yu Dong back to the mansion.

When the carriage entered Qu Mansion's parking lot, Qu Moying saw there was another carriage in the parking lot. However, it was not Qu Mansion's carriage. Although it was not very big, it was quite gorgeous. Obviously, it was not a carriage of an ordinary family. There must be a visitor in the mansion, and the person did not seem to be visiting Old Lady Qu.

Yu Dong was the most observant. Seeing that Qu Moying's gaze fell on the carriage, he turned to ask an old cleaning maid nearby, "Did someone come to the mansion?"

"Yes. I heard that it is a young master from He Mansion." The old maid put down the broom and hurriedly bowed to Qu Moying. Now everyone in the mansion knew that Qu Moying was in charge of most of the things.

Qu Moying's heart skipped a beat, and her eyes turned cold.

Yu Dong also understood, and his face darkened. He felt like they were haunted by He Mansion's people because they met them everywhere. Was this He Mansion the one that he was thinking of? "Which He Mansion?"

"I don't know either. Second Master sent a servant to welcome him, and I heard from the servant that it was He Mansion's third young master. It seemed to be Third Young Master He." The old maid replied.

Qu Moying sneered in her heart. "My dear father really couldn't wait to let me get married. I've just ended the previous engagement. But now he has begun to meet Third Young Master He. Just how anxious is he?"

And how eager was he to seek connections with those powerful people?

Qu Moying asked, "When did he come?"

The old maid replied, "He has been here for two hours. A young servant of Second Master came over to pick him up. The servant waited here for a long time."

This meant that Qu Zhizhen had long known that Third Young Master He would come over. Maybe Third Young Master came at his invitation. Others might not do such a thing, but Qu Moying was not sure about her father.

Old Lady Qu said she would have the final say on Qu Moying's marriage, but Qu Moying felt it was not so simple. If her father had really listened to her grandmother, her mother might not have died so early.

What was happening now seemed to corroborate her thought.



She walked into the mansion and went to Old Lady Qu's place to tell her that she had returned to the mansion. However, she did not expect that Qu Xuexin was also there. Seeing Qu Moying enter the room, Qu Xuexin greeted her softly, "Younger sister."

Qu Moying first bowed to Old Lady Qu, and then to Qu Xuexin. She also greeted Qu Xuexin, "Eldest Sister."

Old Lady Qu knew why Qu Moying went out today, and she asked with concern, "Can the shop reopen now? How is it going?"

"Grandmother, please rest assured. Everything is almost prepared. We can reopen the shop after a short period of reorganization." Qu Moying replied with a smile. Her eyes fell on Qu Xuexin, who was sitting opposite her. Qu Xuexin was wearing a lotus color dress, which made her look even more charming than before.

Her hair was combed neatly with two pearl hairpins. The pearls fell beside her ears, which made her more beautiful.

Coupled with her gentle demeanor, she was very pleasing to the eyes.

She was more attractive than usual.

"Since everything is fine, that's good." Old Lady Qu nodded and said gently, "I heard that the ex-Crown Princess' shop is next to your shop. Now that something has happened to that shop, don't get yourself involved in it. You are just a Vice Minister's daughter. You can't handle such a thing."

Old Lady Qu had heard the rumors, but she didn't know that the cause of this matter was related to Qu Moying. She was afraid that Qu Moying would be involved in such a thing, so she reminded her.

Qu Moying nodded obediently and said, "Don't worry, Grandmother. I know. I will only care about my shop's things. The shop next to my shop belongs to my aunt, and now it belongs to Earl Ling'an's Mansion. It has nothing to do with me."

Seeing that Qu Moying was so obedient, Old Lady Qu breathed a sigh of relief. Qu Moying was more or less involved in the previous matter, and Old Lady Qu was afraid that she would accidentally get involved again. It was said that even the Crown Prince was criticized because of this scandal. If Qu Moying was involved, she would be in danger. Even if nothing happened, she might be involved in something else. Old Lady Qu was really worried.

"If you need anything, just tell me. These shops are originally yours. Although you are young, you can exercise your ability through this." Old Lady Qu added.

Qu Moying lowered her eyes and nodded with a smile, "I know, Grandmother."

"You come back at the right time. Your father said that Third Young Master He has come and asked you to go to see him yourself. You should see if you like him or not. I think it is a good idea to see him first." Old Lady Qu changed the topic with a smile and pointed at Qu Xuexin. "Just now, I sent someone to ask your Eldest Sister over. I will let her accompany you later."

Qu Moying looked up and asked in surprise, "Do you ask me to go and take a look at him?"

"Yes, but you don't have to worry. You can see him, but he can't see you. I just want you to see how he looked. You are the one to get married. I have promised you that I will let you marry someone you like." Old Lady Qu smiled. She was very happy that her son could think so much for her granddaughter.

She had planned to let her granddaughter take a look at the other party and make a decision. Since her son suggested such a thing, of course she would let her granddaughter go and take a look.

"Grandmother, I don't think it's a good idea." Qu Moying shook her head and refused. She seemed to be reluctant. She lowered her head and twisted the handkerchief in her hand, looking a little shy. Old Lady Qu did not take it seriously because she thought it was normal for young ladies to be shy when talking about their marriage.

Old Lady Qu misunderstood Qu Moying's expression and said with a smile, "Silly girl, it doesn't matter. Your Eldest Sister will be accompanying you. Just go and take a look!"

## Chapter 288 Qu Xuexin's Ulterior Motive

Qu Xuexin stood up and walked up to Qu Moying, smiling gently. "Moying, I'll go with you. Don't be afraid."

Qu Moying looked up at her and finally stood up.

Qu Xuexin was charming, and Qu Moying was also attractive though she was wearing an eye veil. Seeing the two of them standing together, Old Lady Qu was quite happy. She waved her hand and said, "Go, go quickly!"

Since Old Lady Qu insisted, Qu Moying had no choice but to bow to her and follow Qu Xuexin out.

"Moying, grandmother just told me to go to the Water Pavilion where we often play. There is a reception hall on the opposite side of the pavilion. We can turn around from the Water Pavilion and look from the window of the reception hall in the front. Second Uncle is receiving the guest there now."

Qu Xuexin said with a smile.

Qu Moying knew the place she was talking about. Although Qu Xuexin said they often played there, Qu Moying only went there two or three times recently.

It was summer. Lotuses were blooming outside the Water Pavilion, and the breeze was gently blowing. The scene was beautiful. If people were tired, they could admire the lotus over there and have a rest.

This Water Pavilion connected the inner yard and the outer yard, but at night, the corridor leading to the outside was locked. However, there was no such restriction during the day.

It was quicker to get to the outer yard from here.

Qu Moying and Qu Xuexin chatted and laughed as they walked to the Water Pavilion, and they arrived in front of the Water Pavilion. They stepped onto the Water Pavilion and walked through its corridor. Suddenly, they saw a person coming from the opposite side, and they found that they actually knew the person after taking a closer at him. He was Old Lady Qu's grandnephew, Xiao Hanyuan.

Since they saw each other now, they should greet each other.

Qu Xuexin first bowed, "Greetings, Cousin Xiao."

Qu Moying also bowed.

Xiao Hanyuan was holding a book in his hand. It seemed that he had just been out to look for a book. When he saw the two of them, he put down the book in his hand and said in surprise, "Eldest Cousin Sister, Fourth Cousin Sister, why are you going to the outer yard now?"

"We need to go to the front yard to ask Second Uncle about something." Seeing that Qu Moying was silent, Qu Xuexin answered with a smile. Her eyes were coquettish.

Xiao Hanyuan looked at them up and down and he specially looked at Qu Xuexin a few more times. Qu Xuexin was dressed more beautifully than usual. Compared with Qu Moying, who was wearing an eye veil and had her head slightly lowered, Qu Xuexin was even more eye-catching.

Xiao Hanyuan reminded them, "I don't think it's the right time to go there. I just heard from a servant that there is a male visitor."

"It doesn't matter. Second Uncle is there. Moreover, we are there to..." Qu Xuexin paused. She seemed to realize that she had misspoken, so she hurriedly smiled and glossed it over. "Cousin Xiao, thank you for your concern. It was grandmother who asked us to go over. It doesn't matter."

As she spoke, she looked at Qu Moying with a meaningful smile.

Sensing that Qu Xuexin was looking at her again, Qu Moying raised her head and looked at Qu Xuexin through the eye veil coldly.

“Since it is grandaunt’s idea, please go ahead.” Xiao Hanyuan moved to the side to make way for them with an indifferent glance at their faces.

Qu Moying could clearly feel Xiao Hanyuan’s cold gaze on her face.

The two of them bowed to Xiao Hanyuan and then left together. When they turned a corner, Qu Moying glanced back and saw that Cousin Xiao was still standing there. He seemed to be looking at their backs. A hint of gloom flashed through her eyes. She didn’t bother to think of it before, but it didn’t mean that she didn’t know about it.

Qu Xuexin said with a smile, “Cousin Xiao is grandmother’s grandnephew. This time, he came to our mansion to study. I heard from second younger brother that he is very knowledgeable. He will definitely pass the Imperial Examination next spring. Grandmother seems to appreciate him.”

“Maybe.” Qu Moying said indifferently as if she wasn’t interested.

Qu Xuexin lowered her voice and asked shyly, “Moying, what do you think of Cousin Xiao?”

Qu Moying looked at her calmly and said, “I have no special feelings for him. He’s just grandmother’s grandnephew and our cousin brother.”

Apart from that, she didn’t feel anything.

“Moying, don’t you think he is a nice person?” Qu Xuexin asked in a sweet voice, her eyes blinking. She looked lovelier than usual.

Among Qu Mansion’s ladies, Qu Xuexin was known for being gentle, but her appearance was slightly lacking. However, she now looked quite beautiful.

She was dressed up really well today.

Qu Moying said indifferently, "I didn't pay attention to him."

Seeing that Qu Moying did not want to talk about Cousin Xiao anymore and even sounded alienated, Qu Xuexin stopped talking about this matter. As the two of them chatted, they had already walked out of the corridor. They were now behind the reception hall. The window was open, and there seemed to be people inside. But before the two of them could get close, a figure suddenly appeared from the window.

They saw a young man's figure.

They even met the young man's eyes.

Qu Xuexin's face immediately turned red. She lowered her head shyly and twisted the handkerchief in her hand. On the contrary, Qu Moying looked directly at the man standing by the window.

He should be Third Young Master He. He looked handsome, and his gaze was very gentle, but Qu Moying knew his true nature, and she could see a bit of gloom in his eyes. Feeling his gaze on her, Qu Moying felt uncomfortable and found his gaze was somewhat lewd.

Both parties were sizing up the other party.

Third Young Master He first looked at Qu Xuexin. He saw her lower her head shyly, but from his angle, he could still see her charming face. She was a very good-looking woman, but unfortunately, she was not the one he was to marry. The woman next to her wore an eye veil, and that was a very obvious feature.

His gaze fell on Qu Moying.

Compared with Qu Xuexin, Qu Moying looked much thinner. A wide eye veil covered most of her face, revealing only her pink lips. Her slightly pursed lips were beautiful, and her skin was as smooth as jade. Even though he could not see her whole face, he still felt that she was good-looking.

She was even more beautiful than the one next to her.

Third Young Master He had seen many women before, so he could immediately tell that Fourth Lady Qu was not as plain-looking as she was rumored to be. If she took off her eye veil, she must be gorgeous!

Qu Moying met his eyes under her eye veil. Then, Third Young Master He smiled and bowed to the two of them gently as if he was a gentleman.

Qu Moying lightly pursed her lips, and a trace of ruthlessness flashed through her eyes. She could not even force a smile at such a monster. He acted like a gentleman, but he actually killed many young girls.

Qu Xuexin bowed shyly. Seeing that Qu Moying was still looking straight ahead, she gently pulled Qu Moying's sleeve to indicate to her that she should also bow. Qu Moying looked at her, turned around speechlessly, and walked to another place as if this was just a chance meeting.

Qu Xuexin originally wanted to say something, but seeing that Qu Moying had already left, she could only look apologetically at Third Young Master He and bowed to him again. Then, she turned to follow behind Qu Moying.

After walking for a distance, Qu Xuexin caught up with Qu Moying. She asked with a blushed and smiling face, "Moying, Third Young Master He is indeed outstanding. What do you think of him?"

Qu Moying looked at Qu Xuexin. The corners of her lips curved up silently, and she said faintly, "Just so so."

"Just so so? How is that possible? You probably didn't see him clearly. It is rare to see such a talented young master. Grandmother has really put in a lot of effort for you!"

Qu Xuexin said with a hint of envy.

Looking at Qu Xuexin's expression, Qu Moying suggested, "Eldest Sister, if you think he is good, I can talk to grandmother."

Qu Xuexin lowered her head, shook her head, and said gloomily, "No, no. Second Uncle and grandmother chose him for you. How can I poach him from you? If so, others will think that I am too insensible."

Qu Moying smiled. "But others don't know whom he is supposed to marry in the first place. Moreover, the two families have not decided on the marriage yet."

Qu Xuexin shook her head again and then looked up at Qu Moying with a bitter smile. "Moying, don't say anymore. People will laugh at me if they know about it. What should be yours is yours. It is not mine, and it is useless for me to be envious."

What she said was very reasonable, and it could show that she was helpless but sensible, leaving people a good impression of her. However, her words were not in accordance with her previous behaviors.

Qu Moying's gaze fell on her again and she secretly sized her up for a while.

Qu Xuexin dropped the vexing topic and asked with a smile, "Moying, let's not talk about this anymore. Should we go back and take a look?"

It was as if what she had said just now was just her sudden thought.

Qu Moying said, "No. I've already seen him."

Qu Xuexin urged, "Moying, I'm afraid that you were too embarrassed to see him clearly just now. Let's go and see him again secretly."

"I think we had better not. I just came back from the shop, and I am already very tired. I will go back first." Qu Moying shook her head and refused. If Qu Xuexin had not urged her in front of grandmother, she would not have come to take a look. She would not have any relationship with Third Young Master He, and she would not waste her time on him.

Seeing that Qu Moying insisted on leaving, Qu Xuexin had no choice but to let her leave.



Yu Dong secretly looked back and was surprised to see that Qu Xuexin was still standing where they had just separated. He asked, "Miss, why isn't First Lady leaving?"

"She still wants to go back and take a look." Qu Moying sneered.

"Why? Didn't she just say that she didn't want to be with him? Was she lying?" Yu Dong immediately understood and was extremely surprised. He used to think First Lady Qu was not bad, but what was going on now? Third Young Master He was not intended for her. Why did she want to go back to take another look?

Qu Moying said with a meaningful smile, "Let her go. If she doesn't go, she won't be satisfied."

#### Chapter 289 Qu Xuexin Bit the Hook

Qu Xuexin had indeed turned back as soon as Qu Moying was out of her sight.

When she returned to the place where they had previously seen Third Young Master He, she could see no one from the window. Qu Xuexin secretly stood behind the window and looked inside.

Sure enough, she saw Third Young Master He sitting there. The person sitting opposite him should be her Second Uncle. From her angle, she could not see her Second Uncle's face, but she could see Third Young Master He very clearly.

Third Young Master He was good-looking and talented. At first glance, he looked like an elegant gentleman. He seemed to sense that someone was looking at him. He turned his eyes and met Qu Xuexin's eyes. Then, he smiled at Qu Xuexin.

Qu Xuexin's face immediately blushed, and she shyly lowered her eyes. She did not dare to peep at him anymore and left in a hurry.

In her panic, she accidentally stepped on a stone and almost fell.

The maid hurried to help her, and the two of them made even bigger noises.

Inside the room, Qu Zhizhen had already heard the noise outside. Seeing Third Young Master He turned around with a smile, Qu Zhizhen knew that he must be satisfied with his daughter. He nodded secretly. In fact, he felt that it was a pity to marry his fourth daughter to Third Young Master He.

However, his mother insisted on doing so, and he had no reason to object.

To him, Qu Moying deserved someone better than Third Young Master He. Third Young Master He didn't deserve her. Nevertheless, he was still better than Old Lady Qu's grandnephew.

Although Xiao Hanyuan's family background was not bad, how could it compare with Noble Consort He's family?

Xiao Hanyuan was talented, but Third Young Master He was also talented. After the latter passed the Imperial Examination, he would have a great future with Noble Consort He and Lord Jing's support. How could Xiao Hanyuan compare with him?

Thinking of this, he felt it was a pity for Qu Moying. She was so beautiful that she could even enter the palace.

However, there was no better choice at the moment. He felt that Third Young Master He was not bad. He had specially invited Third Young Master He over, saying that he wanted the Old Lady to take a look and also to let Qu Moying see for herself. He said that Qu Moying was the one to get married, and he would not let her marry someone whom she had never seen.

Old Lady Qu was satisfied with these words, which was why Third Young Master He was invited to the mansion today.

They didn't make it clear at the moment, but they both knew the purpose of the meeting today. It was for the two to take a look at each other.

Seeing Third Young Master He's smile, Qu Zhizhen knew that Third Young Master He should be satisfied. Qu Zhizhen was pleased but not that satisfied. If it was possible, he did not want to marry Qu Moying to Third Young Master He.

After a few more words, Third Young Master He got up to take his leave.

Qu Zhizhen asked his butler to send Third Young Master He out.

After expressing his thanks, Third Young Master He turned around and walked out. He did not mind Qu Moying's eye disease. In fact, it would not affect him at all.

Anyway, their marriage might not last long. Even if it would last long, it was not a bad thing for him to have such a blind wife. What he did would not be seen by her, so he could go his own way without restraint. It was good for him to have such a wife as a cover.

As for the other lady he had just seen, he did not know if she was Third Lady Qu. If she was, he did not dare to treat her casually. After all, Third Lady Qu was Lord Jing's woman.

However, he did not think the lady he just saw was Third Lady Qu. He had heard that Third Lady Qu had an outstanding appearance and was one of the most beautiful women in the capital. Although the lady he saw just now looked not bad, she was still a little lacking compared with the top beauties in the capital.

Third Young Master He thought as he walked, but when he walked past a moon-shaped gate, he bumped into someone coming from the opposite.

It was a woman. After being hit, she took two steps back and fell heavily to the ground, letting out a painful cry.

"First Lady." The butler hurried forward.

The maid behind Qu Xuexin came forward to help her up. Maybe it was because of the pain from the fall that Qu Xuexin's eyes were red, and she looked aggrieved and pitiful.

"First Lady Qu, I'm really sorry for being in a hurry just now." Third Young Master He smiled and took a step back. He looked up at Qu Xuexin and asked, "First Lady Qu, are you injured? Shall I send for a doctor?"

At this time, Qu Xuexin found that it was Third Young Master He who bumped into her. She immediately blushed, lowered her head slightly, and bowed sideways. "I'm fine."

"How could you be fine? You fell heavily." Third Young Master He turned to the butler and said politely, "Could you please send for a doctor?"

Since Third Young Master He had said so, how could the butler refuse? He hurriedly nodded and went to find a doctor.

Third Young Master He turned to look around. Then, he pointed at a pavilion on the side and asked, "First Lady Qu, why don't you sit there for a while and wait for the doctor?"

There was a gauze hanging in the pavilion. It did not touch the floor, and it fluttered as the breeze blew. The pavilion was on the side of the rockery, and it was a graceful place.

"Thank you, young master." Qu Xuexin said shyly.

Third Young Master He went over first. Qu Xuexin held the hand of the maid and limped over. Then, she sat down at the stone table.

The clever maid said she would leave to bring tea and snacks over.

"First Lady Qu, I saw you just now. I wonder what you were doing behind the window of the hall?" Third Young Master He asked Qu Xuexin with a smile as if he did not know anything.

Although Qu Xuexin was not particularly outstanding, she could still be considered a beautiful woman. She came to offer herself to him, so he thought he could not be blamed.

He had “accidentally” met many girls before. Many beautiful maids in his mansion created chances to “encounter” him. Some of them directly bumped into him, which saved him a lot of trouble.

However, those were maids. He did not expect a noble lady to bump into him. It really surprised him.

“I came here with Moying just now. It was grandmother’s idea.” Qu Xuexin blushed even more. She was extremely shy.

Third Young Master He thought for a moment and asked gently, “Fourth Lady Qu? I only saw you just now, but I didn’t notice Fourth Lady Qu. Was the one who wore eye veil Fourth Lady Qu?”

“Yes, that was Moying.” Qu Xuexin nodded.

Third Young Master He said regretfully, “So that’s Fourth Lady Qu. First Lady Qu, I thought she was you.”

Qu Xuexin bit her lips and explained in a low voice, “How could that be? Moying has an eye disease and she is still wearing an eye veil. She doesn’t look like me.”

“It seems that my vision is really poor. First Lady Qu, I’m sorry. I thought she was you just now.” Third Young Master He sighed, and he seemed to be disappointed.

Qu Xuexin said in a delicate voice, “Moying only has an eye disease, but she is better than me in everything else.”

“No. First Lady Qu, you are the most outstanding one in my eyes. Fourth Lady Qu has an eye disease. I wonder if her eye disease can be cured?” Third Young Master asked after praising Qu Xuexin.

“I heard that her eye disease can be cured, but she hasn’t been able to take off the eye veil after being back to the mansion for such a long time. As for the specifics, I don’t know.”

Qu Xuexin said gently.

Third Young Master He frowned, looking very dissatisfied, "She is a blind girl, and she is not outstanding. First Lady Qu, she can't compare with you at all!"

Hearing this, Qu Xuexin lowered her head and dared not look at Third Young Master He anymore.

While they were talking, the maid came back. When she went out just now, she met a young maid, and she asked the young maid to bring some tea and snacks over. She quietly stood behind Qu Xuexin.

"I think Moying's eye disease could be cured." Although Qu Xuexin defended Qu Moying, she didn't sound to be firm, as if she herself did not believe it either.

Third Young Master He looked at Qu Xuexin carefully again and sighed without saying a word.

Qu Xuexin waited for a while, but Third Young Master He did not speak, so she looked up at him, held back her shyness and asked, "Young Master, do you have anything to say?"

Third Young Master He looked at Qu Xuexin affectionately and said, "Yes. I just hope it is you."

His words were vague, but she immediately understood. Her face was so red that it almost burned. She immediately stood up in a panic and bowed to Third Young Master He with the help of the maid beside her. "I... I have something to do, so I won't wait for the doctor here."

Then, she turned around and left.

Third Young Master He stood up with his hands behind his back and watched Qu Xuexin leave. Then, the smile on his face slowly faded. He had seen many beauties. Even though Qu Moying's face was covered by an eye veil and could not be seen clearly, he knew this First Lady Qu in front of him could not compare with her.

He found Qu Mansion interesting. Was First Lady Qu trying to poach him from Fourth Lady Qu?

However, he was just playing with First Lady Qu. He was more willing to marry Fourth Lady Qu because she was blind and gorgeous.

If Fourth Lady Qu was really what he wanted, he could spare her life.

He had to have a legitimate wife, and what was more suitable for him than a blind person?

With this thought, Third Young Master He turned around and left with his lad servant.

Not far away, Qu Moying and Yu Dong stood in a pavilion next to a rockery. They had been looking over and they saw the scene just now. Although they could not hear Qu Xuexin and Third Young Master He's words clearly, they could roughly guess what they were talking by their actions.

Qu Xuexin was really a scheming woman!

She brought Qu Moying over and pretended to meet Third Young Master He by accident. Both of them seemed to have feelings for each other. It seemed that she did all this because she wanted to marry into He Mansion. However, no matter how she tried, Qu Moying had already known how this matter would end up in vain when she knew about Third Young Master He...

This proposed marriage was doomed to fail...

## Chapter 290 Qu Qiuyan's New Senior Maid

Qu Moying and Qu Xuexin left Old Lady Qu's place after greeting her. Just as they were about to separate at the yard's gate, Qu Xuexin suddenly called out to Qu Moying, "Moying, let's go and see Qiuyan, okay?"

In the past few days, Qu Xuexin came to West Mansion almost every day, and she met Qu Moying more often. Every time she met Qu Moying, she would greet Qu Moying with concern, and occasionally she would go to Qianyue House with Qu Moying. The two of them seemed to be much closer to each other in the Old Lady's eyes.

Old Lady Qu felt relieved to see this. She was always worried that Qu Moying would feel lonely after returning to the mansion. Her sisters were not that kind to her. After all, they had not grown up together.

She was relieved to see Qu Xuexin getting along well with Qu Moying. She thought Qu Xuexin was kind.

With a faint smile on her face, Qu Moying shook her head and said, "Eldest Sister, I won't go to see Third Sister. Even if I go, Third Sister will not be happy to see me."

She couldn't maintain even a seemingly peaceful relationship with Qu Qiuyan as before.

Others might not know about this matter, but it was impossible for Qu Xuexin not to know.

"Moying, everything could be made clear. The matter of the seniors has already become history. Nobody will keep picking on it. After all, we are sisters. Qiuyan has thought things through recently. Let's go to see her now. Even if she doesn't talk with you, she will definitely be happy."

Qu Xuexin advised.

Qu Moying looked at Qu Xuexin coldly. Qu Moying found this gentle and kind eldest sister more and more meddlesome recently.

Was it because of the improper marriage?

Qu Moying didn't know how Qu Xuexin used to be, but she was sure that Qu Xuexin was really not simple because she actually dared to meddle in such a thing.

"Eldest Sister, since you said so, let's go." Qu Moying said lightly. No matter what Qu Xuexin meant, she should go and see Qu Qiuyan.

Recently, Qu Qiuyan had been very quiet. It was not like her at all.



Hearing that Qu Moying agreed, Qu Xuexin was very happy. The two of them headed towards Furong House together.

There was no old maid guarding Furong House's door. Ever since Qu Qiuyan finished copying the scriptures, Old Lady Qu had asked the guarding old maid to leave. However, Qu Qiuyan rarely came out. She still stayed in the yard for most of the time. She seemed to be quite obedient, which was another reason why the Old Lady let the old maid leave.

Without supervision, Qu Qiuyan was extremely obedient.

The previous rumors were unfavorable to Qu Qiuyan. Both the Old Lady and Qu Zhizhen were very troubled. Now that Qu Qiuyan was so obedient, the Old Lady and Qu Zhizhen both felt happy.

Lord Jing was noncommittal, and Qu Qiuyan's reputation was not good now. It was hard to tell what position Qu Qiuyan would have. Qu Zhizhen did not dare to ask too much about this issue.

Qu Qiuyan seemed to be obedient, but she sent a letter to Lord Jing Mansion secretly almost every day. However, she rarely got a reply. Even though she got a reply, there was only a simple sentence in the reply, which seemed to be written casually. She was asked to wait slowly, and there was nothing else. Lord Jing's words were not as enthusiastic and affectionate as before.

Hearing the maid report that Qu Xuexin and Qu Moying had come, Qu Qiuyan impatiently put down the letter in her hand. Qing Lian hurriedly took it over.

"Invite them in." Qu Qiuyan said coldly.

A maid hurried out and invited the two of them in.

Qu Xuexin and Qu Moying entered the room and saw Qu Qiuyan, who had just stood up. Her face was very pale and much thinner, which made her look more pitiful and somewhat gloomy.

Seeing them enter, Qu Qiuyan stood up and said with a very indifferent expression, “Eldest Sister, Fourth Younger Sister.”

Qu Xuexin took two steps forward and held Qu Qiuyan’s hand. After carefully looking at Qu Qiuyan’s face, she said attentively with a smile, “Qiuyan, how are you? I have been wanting to see you since I heard that you are sick. Moying also wanted to come, so we came together.”

Qu Moying sat down on a chair at the side. At this time, there were no outsiders. Everyone present was clear about her relationship with Qu Qiuyan.

Yu Dong stood behind Qu Moying and looked at the “gentle and dignified” Qu Xuexin. If he had not seen what had happened before, he would have thought that she was exactly how she appeared to be.

He was a eunuch serving Lord Yun. Although he knew a lot of dirty things in the palace, he dealt with things like killing and punishment under the command of Lord Yun. He had never seen this kind of drama queens.

Whether a woman was in a normal family or in the palace, she who acted like this might be the most ruthless one!

Fortunately, Qu Moying was smart. Yu Dong felt lucky about that, and he thought only Qu Moying was worthy of Lord Yun.

Since Yu Dong began to serve Qu Moying, he had regarded her as his master from the bottom of his heart.

Just as he stood still, a maid beside her suddenly bumped into him. He looked up and saw that it was an unknown maid. She looked very innocent, about fourteen or fifteen years old.

Seeing that Yu Dong was looking at her, the maid waved at him gently and gestured for him to come out.

Yu Dong looked at Qu Moying and saw that she was sitting there and watching Qu Qiuyan and Qu Xuexin talking. He shook his head at the maid, indicating that he would not go out.

The maid had no choice but to stand still. When she looked at Yu Dong, there was a kind smile on her face. She was a new maid here. Yu Dong had never seen her in Qu Qiuyan's place before.

Was she a new maid in the mansion?

Yu Dong thought and remained motionless behind Qu Moying.

On the other side, Qu Qiuyan and Qu Xuexin had already sat down together. The two of them were sitting close to each other, while Qu Moying was sitting further away. Qu Qiuyan and Qu Xuexin seemed to be one party, which Qu Moying didn't seem to fit in at all.

This was what Qu Moying wanted. Since she was in the same mansion as Qu Qiuyan, she couldn't avoid seeing her, but she would try not to meet her or stay away from her when meeting her.

Sure enough, Qu Xuexin also saw the distance between them and Qu Moying. She smiled and waved to Qu Moying, "Moying, sit over here. You sit so far away. It's not convenient for us to talk."

"Eldest Sister, it's fine. I can hear you here." Qu Moying said. She could hear them, but she didn't want to talk with them.

Qu Moying's meaning was very clear.

A trace of displeasure flashed through Qu Xuexin's eyes. Qu Moying made her embarrassed. However, she quickly concealed her mood with a smile. "Since you feel comfortable sitting there, just sit there."

Qu Qiuyan glanced at Qu Moying and did not say anything else. They had nothing to say anymore.

The maids served them tea and snacks.

Qu Xuexin looked at the maids around her and suggested with a gentle smile, “Qiuyan, Moying, let the maids leave so that we can have a private talk.”

Qu Qiuyan looked at the maids around her. Most of them were her maids. She waved her hand, and all her maids left. Qing Lian hesitated for a moment and also left.

Qu Xuexin said something to the maid beside her, and the maid behind her also left.

Since both of them had done so, Qu Moying naturally had to do the same. She turned around and glanced at Yu Dong. Yu Dong understood and went out as well.

When he retreated to the door, Yu Dong stopped. Here was the closest place to the room. Even if something happened, he could quickly rush in.

Just as he stood still, he suddenly felt a tug on his sleeve. “Sister Yu Dong.”

He turned around and saw the previous maid looking at him with a sweet smile. Although she was not very beautiful, her smile made people relax.

“Who are you?” Yu Dong took a few steps back and asked in a low voice. This maid had deliberately bumped into him before. Yu Dong sized her up and found that she was well dressed. She wore two hairpins. Although they were not big, they looked like solid gold hairpins. It was too luxurious for a maid.

“I am Qing Mei, a new maid in the mansion. I am Third Lady’s senior maid.” Qing Mei said proudly.

She looked somewhat simple-minded.

“You are Third Lady’s new senior maid?” Yu Dong was very surprised. He had not heard that Qu Qiuyan had a new maid recently, nor had any server-seller come to the mansion.

“Yes, Second Young Master chose me in East Mansion and specially sent me to Third Lady. He said that Third Lady didn’t have enough servants. Sister Yu Dong, you look really tall and beautiful.” Qing Mei

looked up and down at Yu Dong with envy and then continued, "I heard that the one who followed the Fourth Lady the most was you, so I could recognize you at first glance."

This was to say that East Mansion asked a server-seller to pick a maid and then sent the maid to West Mansion. No wonder he had never seen her here.

Looking at this clever and enthusiastic Qing Mei, Yu Dong smiled. "I am not beautiful. You are beautiful."

Yu Dong did not like people saying that he was beautiful. He did not need to be beautiful!

As for his height, he was originally taller than ordinary maids. Moreover, Qing Mei in front of him looked very small.

"Sister Yu Dong, I have just arrived in the mansion. I don't know much. I might have to trouble you in the future. This is a token of my appreciation. I hope you like it." Qing Mei pulled out a hairpin from her head and handed it to Yu Dong with a very warm smile.

Although the hairpin was small, it seemed to be solid gold, which was quite valuable.

Yu Dong shook his head and said, "How... How dare I accept it?"

Qing Mei reached out to hold Yu Dong's hand, put the hairpin in his hand, closed his hand, and said sweetly, "Sister Yu Dong, I like you at the first sight. If you don't accept it, then you are looking down on me. I just entered the mansion and don't know anything. I will definitely have to trouble you in the future. Sister Yu Dong, please accept my gift."

After saying that, she pointed at Qing Lian, whose face darkened, and said in a low voice, "Sister Yu Dong, I'll leave first. Otherwise, Sister Qing Lian will be angry. I just entered the mansion. I don't dare to make Sister Qing Lian angry."

Then, she turned around and ran towards Qing Lian, leaving the hairpin in Yu Dong's hands. Apparently, Yu Dong had to accept it!

A maid could not afford to buy such a hairpin even with her whole year's salary. But Qing Mei was quite generous. A hint of ridicule flashed in Yu Dong's eyes. He was not a woman and did not like such kind of jewelry. Moreover, he was not short of money...