

Noble Wife 361

Chapter 361 They Were Shameless

The Old Lady slammed her hand on the table and snapped, "Tell me what exactly happened! Why did you instigate Xiao Hanyuan to cause trouble for Moying?"

Qu Xuexin was so scared that her eyes turned red, and she almost knelt down in grievance.

Qu Mingcheng's reaction was relatively calm. He looked at the Old Lady calmly and said, "Grandmother, you know I grew up with Eldest Sister. I take her as my elder sister, and Qiuyan is my only younger sister. I don't have any other younger sister."

"You..." The Old Lady was so angry that she trembled. Qu Mingcheng meant that between Qu Xuexin and Qu Moying, he chose to be on Qu Xuexin's side.

He also meant that he had never taken Qu Moying as his younger sister.

"Grandmother, don't blame me for this. It was father who sent Moying to the village. For so many years, Moying did not take the initiative to contact us. We siblings didn't know her before, but then she suddenly appeared. How can we accept the situation at once?"

Qu Mingcheng's eyes turned red as he looked at the Old Lady.

The Old Lady pressed her hand against the armrest, trembling and unable to say a word for a moment.

"It was my fault regarding the trouble caused by Cousin Xiao. I shouldn't have said those words to him, but I really was too angry. Grandmother, if you want to punish anyone, punish me alone. I will definitely apologize to Moying in the future and try to treat her as my younger sister. But right now, I... I still feel more intimate with Eldest Sister's side."

Qu Mingcheng fell to his knees with a thud.

Qu Xuexin couldn't stand still. She also immediately knelt down. It was a good chance for her to explain something, "Grandmother, it's my fault. I... I always thought that Cousin Xiao was arranged for Moying... Before, I was good to Cousin Xiao because of Moying. But now... now, he was said to be my... I was too angry and wanted to deal with Moying."

Qu Mingcheng was also anxious to confess, "Grandmother, it's my fault. I saw that Eldest Sister was angry, so I wanted to help her vent her anger. Previously, it was me who instigated Cousin Xiao to cause trouble for Moying."

"Mingcheng, this is my business. You did it for me... Grandmother, I was wrong, but I really don't want to marry Cousin Xiao. I always thought that he would marry Moying..." Qu Xuexin cried and wiped her tears with a handkerchief. She was resentful inside. Just now, she was having a private talk with Qu Mingcheng, and she didn't expect Granny Wu to come.

Granny Wu came over and stopped the lad servant from reporting her arrival to Qu Xuexin and Qu Mingcheng, and she overheard their conversation.

If not for Qu Mingcheng's vigilance, Qu Xuexin would have said something even more outrageous.

When Qu Xuexin saw Granny Wu leave, she knew something bad would happen. Fortunately, Qu Mingcheng was calm and helped her analyze the situation. Otherwise, she would not know what to do now.

She secretly gritted her teeth and felt endless hatred for Granny Wu.

In the inner room, Qu Moying sneered. "Qu Mingcheng was really quick to react. He showed his close kinship with Qu Xuexin and indicated that I was more like a stranger to him. But this could not be blamed on them since I didn't grow up with them."

She pursed her pink lips and lowered her eyes so that her gloominess could not be seen.

"How could they be so righteous after framing others? They seemed to mean that it was someone else's fault, whereas they were both innocent!"

“Qu Xuexin even took this opportunity to express her thought about the marriage with Xiao Hanyuan. How clever!”

The Old Lady was not easy to fool. She looked at Qu Xuexin with disappointment and snapped, “Who said that Xiao Hanyuan entered the mansion because of Moying?”

She used to think highly of Qu Xuexin. Even if Qu Xuexin couldn’t get married for the time being, she didn’t look down upon her and believed that Qu Xuexin would live a good life in the end.

But right now, she was deeply disappointed. She even felt that her previous thoughts were wrong.

“Is Xuexin really so despicable? Did I really mistake her?”

“I... I heard it by chance... from my mother.” Qu Xuexin guiltily looked away and mentioned Luo.

“Why didn’t I know that your mother knew about this?” The Old Lady sneered. She did not say much to Qu Xuexin but ordered an old maid beside her, “Go and invite First Madam over.”

The old maid nodded and was about to leave. Seeing this, Qu Xuexin panicked and said, “Grandmother... I... I didn’t hear it from my mother. I... I guessed it.”

She had no choice but to bite the bullet and reply.

“You guessed it? Why did you guess so? Moying is not the only unmarried lady in the mansion. You are also unmarried. Moying doesn’t need to worry about her marriage, but you should. However, you didn’t guess that Xiao Hanyuan was arranged for you but for Moying. Since you have guessed it, why did you get so close to Hanyuan? You said you were close to Hanyuan for the sake of Moying. But even Moying herself kept a distance from him, so why did you get so close to him? You even made Hanyuan hate Moying because of you. Why?”

The Old Lady asked coldly with anger on her face. She glared at Qu Xuexin, causing the latter to feel guilty and blush.

The Old Lady didn't hold back anything at all. She bluntly pointed out that Qu Xuexin deliberately got close to Xiao Hanyuan, but now Qu Xuexin blamed it on Qu Moying.

"Grandmother..." Qu Xuexin started crying out of shame and embarrassment.

"Don't feel like you are wronged. If you didn't take the initiative to bump into Third Young Master He, nothing would have happened to you. Why would Third Young Master He still insist on marrying you? Do you think this matter is also Moying's fault? Do you think that we are partial to Moying that we sacrifice your reputation for Moying?"

The Old Lady's face was full of disappointment. She looked at Qu Xuexin without a trace of a smile.

These words were hidden in the Old Lady's heart and also in Qu Xuexin's heart. At this time, the Old Lady bluntly said it out. Except for Granny Wu, there was no other servant in the room. Even Qu Mingcheng and Qu Xuexin's personal attendants were asked to wait outside the door.

"Grandmother, you are too partial to Moying. At that time, the proposed marriage was between Third Young Master He and Moying." Qu Xuexin couldn't control her resentment and contradicted the Old Lady with tearful eyes.

"But we didn't come to an agreement in the end. Moreover, that blind date was arranged by your Second Uncle and me. Moying didn't know about it, so what did you mean by running into Third Young Master He? As an unmarried lady, you should stay in your room to avoid causing trouble. Why did you take the initiative to bump into Third Young Master He?"

The Old Lady snapped, feeling distressed when she looked at Qu Xuexin.

She had already made it so clear, but Qu Xuexin was still pretending to be innocent, and she even contradicted her. The Old Lady was really annoyed.

Her words were even more merciless.

"Grandmother, it... it was an accident..." Qu Xuexin felt so ashamed.

The Old Lady said coldly in anger, "If it really was an accident, why did Third Young Master He say that he chatted happily with you? If nothing really happened, why did Third Young Master He insist on marrying you but not Moying? I didn't let him say so, right?"

"Grandmother..." Qu Xuexin was speechless and fell to the ground crying.

The room quieted down. Only Qu Xuexin's sorrowful cries could be faintly heard in the inner room.

In the inner room, Qu Moying's eyes were filled with coldness. She would not be soft-hearted by Qu Xuexin's show. She would repay kindness with kindness and also go in for revenge. She wouldn't swallow her own sufferings to forgive someone like Qu Xuexin, nor would she sympathize with her. If she fell into the trap of Qu Xuexin and Qu Mingcheng, the one who was crying would be her.

The Old Lady said coldly, "You can go back. Forget about your marriage with Xiao Hanyuan. From now on, you should stay in the mansion and cultivate yourself. Forget about the marriage."

"Grandmother!" Qu Xuexin cried out in grief. She was afraid that her grandmother would lock her up for the rest of her life, but she still had to get married. She wanted to enter Crown Prince's Mansion. She couldn't let her grandmother do this.

The Old Lady ordered, "Send First Lady back!"

Granny Wu walked over and helped Qu Xuexin up. She whispered, "First Lady, please come with me."

"Get lost! It's all your fault. You damn old maid." Qu Xuexin shouted angrily and rudely as she pushed Granny Wu away.

Granny Wu was caught off guard. She staggered and almost fell down. She stabilized herself by holding the pillar by the side and looked at Qu Xuexin in shock.

The Old Lady shouted angrily, "Someone, send First Lady to the Eldest Master. Have him look after her."

Hearing the Old Lady's order, two lowly old maids came in from outside the door.

Seeing that the Old Lady was so angry, Qu Xuexin did not dare to make any more noise. Covering her face with her sleeves, she whimpered as she turned around and ran out. The two lowly old maids followed her out.

"Mingcheng, you have disappointed me too." The Old Lady looked at her grandson in the room. Qu Mingcheng was one of an auspicious boy and girl twins. The Old Lady had long thought that Yu was not good, so she specially asked Qu Zhizhen to have Qu Mingcheng raised in East Mansion, hoping that Qu Mingcheng would be different from his mother.

"Grandmother, I was wrong. I treated Eldest Sister as my own sister but didn't treat Moying the same. I only saw her as a relative." Qu Mingcheng lowered his head in shame, his face full of regret.

Hearing his words, Qu Moying sneered in her heart. "Qu Mingcheng is much cleverer than Qu Xuexin. His words are really watertight. Everyone has their own close relationship. He didn't grow up with me, so it is natural that he doesn't treat me as his family. I can't compare with Qu Xuexin in this case, so it is normal for him to stand on Qu Xuexin's side."

"As for the fact that I didn't grow up with him, he is not to be blamed."

"Mingcheng, get up. I only hope that you won't disappoint me in the future." The Old Lady said slowly. There were some unfathomable emotions in her eyes.

"Don't worry, Grandmother. I will never do this again. I am sorry for Moying." Qu Mingcheng said shamefully, and his expression showed that he did seem to feel regretful.

His action seemed to be blameless.

Granny Wu went over and helped him up. He stood up and thanked Granny Wu. He was extremely respectful to the people around the Old Lady. Although Granny Wu had overheard his conversation with Qu Xuexin, he did not resent Granny Wu. He respected her as always.

“You can go back now! Have a good rest and study hard. Don’t bother to care about any other things.”

The Old Lady said.

“Yes, Grandmother!” Qu Mingcheng answered meekly. He turned around and left without saying anything else. He acted calmly. But Yu Dong, who was bending behind the curtain at the door of the inner room, clearly saw the resentment in his eyes...

Chapter 362 It Was a Long Story

Qu Moying was quite calm and had an expressionless face.

In fact, she was really calm. Her eyes were also as calm as water. She had never had any expectations for the so-called family members in Qu Mansion. Ever since she was reborn, she had been framed by them again and again. She had no feelings for the people in Qu Mansion except the Old Lady.

The Old Lady sat down opposite Qu Moying. Looking at her calm face, she felt sad. “Moying...”

She didn’t know how to continue. She looked at Qu Moying guiltily and didn’t know how to start the conversation. She felt sorry for Qu Moying. She knew that there was something wrong with Qu Mingcheng, but she had no choice but to let him go.

It was because Qu Mingcheng was her second son’s only son!

She couldn’t really have control over her second son. Right now, she was just warning Qu Mingcheng and protecting Qu Moying according to Qu Zhizhen’s wishes.

In fact, only Qu Zhizhen was in charge of Qu Mansion.

Neither she nor Yu was able to call the shot in Qu Mansion!

Qu Moying held the Old Lady's trembling hand and comforted her softly, "Grandmother, I know what you mean. I won't be dissatisfied with you."

The Old Lady's eyes turned red. She tried hard to suppress her mixed feelings and gently patted Qu Moying's hand. "Good girl, you are a good girl. But I failed to protect you, just like how I failed to protect your mother back then... Your mother is also a good woman, but..."

At this point, the Old Lady's voice became hoarse, and she couldn't continue speaking for a while.

Her sentence seemed to be unfinished. Qu Moying's heart skipped a beat, but then she reached out and gently shook the Old Lady's hand. "Grandmother, I found that my Eldest Sister is close to County Lady Jingyu, but County Lady Jingyu didn't seem to like me."

After saying this, she looked a little distressed.

She did not probe into the meaning behind the Old Lady's words. In fact, she knew it all. She didn't need the Old Lady to feel embarrassed. The Old Lady had done very well in some things. She was asked to stay here because the Old Lady wanted to remind her to be on guard against Qu Xuexin and Qu Mingcheng.

Obviously, Qu Mingcheng was also untrustworthy.

However, the Old Lady was Qu Mingcheng and Qu Xuexin's grandmother. Moreover, Qu Mingcheng was treated as a treasure by Qu Mansion. Unlike Qu Moying, who had been abandoned since she was a child, Qu Mingcheng received much care from Qu Zhizhen. Qu Zhizhen even specially sent him to East Mansion and let Qu Zhilin take care of him because he was afraid that Yu would misguide Qu Mingcheng.

It could be seen that Qu Zhizhen really cared about Qu Mingcheng.

It could also be seen that Qu Zhizhen did not care as much about Yu as people expected. Otherwise, he would not have taken Qu Mingcheng away from her and sent him to East Mansion. Although Qu Mingcheng had grown up now, Qu Zhizhen believed that he would not be affected much by Yu because he rarely saw Yu.

However, Qu Zhizhen was wrong!

Qu Moying did not want to make things difficult for the Old Lady, so she directly skipped the topic. They could just keep this thing to themselves.

What she wanted to ask now was another thing. Since it might have happened in her previous life, she inexplicably felt that the Old Lady might know something.

“County Lady Jingyu?” The Old Lady was shocked. She suddenly sat up straight and subconsciously pinched Qu Moying.

“Grandmother?”

After a moment of silence, the Old Lady said, “Stay away from her and also Minister Liu’s wife.”

“Grandmother, why? Mrs. Liu seemed to be a kind person.” Qu Moying looked at the Old Lady in surprise.

The Old Lady was silent for a moment before saying, “Maybe I was wrong, or maybe County Lady Jingyu has heard of something else. But since she doesn’t like you, you should be careful.”

Qu Moying asked again, “Grandmother, why doesn’t she like me?”

The Old Lady sighed and said, “It has been so long. I don’t know if it is because of this reason. Initially, your mother was not going to marry your father but Minister Liu. The Yue Family of the South first chose Minister Liu, but later on, Duke Qi’s Mansion also took a fancy to Minister Liu, so your mother married your father in the end.”

The Old Lady had heard this matter from others before. She asked the Yue Family about it in private and found out that it was true.

Qu Moying's long eyelashes fluttered as she asked, "It sounds like... my mother was the one who suffered a loss. Why are they still holding grudges?"

Qu Moying could tell that her mother was obviously the one who suffered a loss in this matter. Since her mother had passed away, why was Mrs. Liu still holding grudges against her? This really did not make sense.

"I don't know the exact details. Your grandma told me about this back then, and she also told me to guard against Mrs. Liu. But after so many years, I didn't find anything wrong with her. Before she got married, she was a very decent noble lady. After she married Minister Liu, her status became unusual, and she was one of the few most notable noble madams in the capital."

The Old Lady shook her head and smiled bitterly.

She could understand some things, but not everything. If Old Lady Yue did not tell her about this, she would not have taken this matter to heart.

Now that Qu Moying mentioned Liu Jingyu, this matter naturally came to her mind.

She had felt that this matter was not a convincing reason as soon as she started to say it, but since she had started her account, she decided to tell the whole story.

"Alright, that's all I have to say. Don't take it too seriously. It's been so long, and it's all small matters. After that, your mother didn't have much contact with Mrs. Liu, and your father was quite a troublemaker. Things happened one after another. Your mother was tired of dealing with matters in the backyard, so she rarely went out."

The Old Lady sighed again and looked at Qu Moying with more pity. "Poor child! Her mother also had a hard life. It was not easy for her mother to give birth to her, but her mother only saw her once and then passed away, leaving her alone. Her father did not care about her. Worse still, Yu was her stepmother."

Qu Moying asked thoughtfully, "Grandmother, what kind of person is Mrs. Liu?"

"She was Duke Qi's only wife-born daughter. I heard that Duke Qi had another daughter before, but she died, so Mrs. Liu of the second branch became the only wife-born daughter of Duke Qi, and he cherished her very much. It was said that she had been very sensible since she was a child. She behaved well. Everyone thought that even if she was not chosen by His Majesty, she was worthy of any prince. However, she married Minister Liu, who was unfamous and had just passed the imperial exam at that time."

The Old Lady said after thinking for a while. Because the topic had switched from the previous heavy one, the Old Lady felt that her chitchat with her granddaughter was relaxing.

It had been more than thirty years since this matter about Duke Qi happened, but Ji Hanyue had heard of it. However, she did not pay attention to it at that time because it happened too long ago, and it had nothing to do with her. She just read it from a historical record.

At that time, she was a little curious about the episode and specially read about it.

In fact, the current Duke Qi was not the former Duke Qi. He was the younger brother of the former Duke Qi. The former Duke Qi was involved in the rebellion of the three lords, so people of Duke Qi's Mansion's first branch were all beheaded, including the former Duke Qi, Duchess Qi, and their children.

If the current Duke Qi had not coincidentally saved the Emperor, he would definitely have been implicated, too.

Because he saved the Emperor, the Emperor gave the title to Duke Qi's Mansion's second branch, and he became Duke Qi.

The current Duke Qi was not the original one.

However, no matter which one of the two brothers was Duke Qi, he had great power. As Duke Qi's one and only wife-born daughter, Mrs. Liu indeed had an extraordinary status. But she took fancy to a scholar who had just passed the imperial examination. It seemed that she was quite discerning because this scholar later became Minister Liu.

But Qu Moying thought it was a bit far-fetched.

She couldn't figure it out for a while. After chatting with the Old Lady for a while, Qu Moying left with an invitation card that the Old Lady gave her. The Old Lady said that whether to go or not was up to her and didn't explain much. Qu Moying took the card and left.

She said she would read it later.

It seemed to be just a gathering of some noble ladies in the capital. It was not a formal gathering but a gathering of friends. In the past, such invitations had been sent to Qu Mansion, but the Old Lady usually gave them to Qu Qiuyan. However, she gave it to Qu Moying this time.

After returning to her room, Qu Moying sat in front of the qin. She stretched out her hand and gently stroked the qin. She frowned slightly because she found this matter strange.

"Yu Dong, go and see if Granny Zhou is in the yard." Qu Moying ordered, her hand on the strings.

Yu Dong complied and left. In a short while, he brought Granny Zhou over.

Qu Moying directly asked Granny Zhou, "Granny Zhou, did my mother want to marry Minister Liu in the past?"

"Lady, how... how did you know about this?" Granny Zhou asked subconsciously after being stunned for a moment.

It could be seen from Granny Zhou's reaction that there was really such a thing. Qu Moying's eyes turned cold. "Granny Zhou, tell me, what exactly happened?"

Granny Zhou hesitated. "Lady, it has been so long, and Madam is gone now. I am afraid it is not good to talk about it!"

Yu Dong quickly said, "Granny Zhou, you can just say it. Otherwise, who knows when our lady is hurt by County Lady Jingyu! I don't know why County Lady Jingyu hates our lady so much. She always wants to deal with our lady. Now she even colluded with First Lady."

There were some things that Granny Zhou did not know. She was now helping Qu Moying manage Qianyue House and was usually very busy. Qu Moying's personal affairs were mainly handled by Yu Dong. This was the first time Granny Zhou knew about this kind of matter. However, she had long known that Qu Xuexin held ill intentions.

Hearing what Yu Dong said, Granny Zhou was stunned for a moment as if she did not understand what Yu Dong meant for a moment. But then she understood, and her face turned red with anger. Waving her hand, she said angrily, "What do they mean? Are they still unsatisfied after snatching Madam's marriage? They even want to deal with our lady. How shameless they are!"

Chapter 363 Granny Zhou's Account of the Past

Qu Moying asked calmly, "Tell me, what exactly happened?"

"Lady, I didn't want to talk about this because it was related to Madam's reputation, but I have to say it now. At that time, the one who was supposed to be engaged with Minister Liu was Madam. The two families had already agreed on their marriage. Minister Liu had even seen Madam and expressed his satisfaction. But when they were about to get engaged, Duke Qi's Mansion suddenly took a fancy to Minister Liu."

Granny Zhou was so angry that her face turned red. She still felt uncomfortable about this matter and was indignant for the sake of Little Yue.

Qu Moying asked in surprise, "He had seen my mother? But I heard my mother had seldom seen any outsiders before getting married."

"It was a coincidence. At that time, Minister Liu was only a scholar who came to the capital for the imperial examination. He stayed in Yue Mansion for a few nights. One night, he accidentally saw Madam. He was amazed by Madam and stood under the wall for half a night. Then he proposed to Yue Mansion. He said that he would marry Madam after he passed the imperial examination with a high

grade. Old Master Qu did not agree immediately but said to Minister Liu that they could talk about it after Minister Liu passed the examination.”

“Later, he passed the imperial examination and sent someone to propose the marriage again. Old Master Qu was very satisfied, and Madam also agreed. They even accepted the betrothal presents from the Liu Family. However, at this time, Duke Qi applied for an imperial edict to let Minister Liu marry his daughter. Madam could only marry someone else, so she chose Second Master, who also passed the imperial examination at that time.”

Granny Zhou told the whole story and then sneered, “I don’t know why they are so shameless. Not only did they snatch Madam’s marriage, but they even want to deal with you now. How dare they do such a thing? Madam’s tragedy was all caused by them.”

“Them? Who else?” Qu Moying gently bit her lips.

Granny Zhou said disapprovingly, “Other than Duchess Qi, who else could it be? Duchess Qi and Mrs. Liu must have approached Duke Qi together to ask him to help Mrs. Liu get the marriage. Otherwise, how could a man like Duke Qi care about such a trifle?”

Qu Moying was silent. She gently plucked the strings of the qin. Listening to the elegant and familiar music could always calm her down.

But right now, she could not calm down.

Granny Zhou’s narration of the past made her understand some things she could not figure out previously, but she also had some new doubts now.

“Did the matter of Eunuch De Fu looking for the purest girl really have nothing to do with my mother? Was it really just a coincidence?”

“It was an episode that happened so many years ago. But it was restarted, and the fire almost burned on me.”

“Was County Lady Jingyu behind this? Or was there someone else behind it?”

“Is there someone I don’t know egging on Qu Mingcheng and lending support to him? If not, how could a person like Qu Mingcheng approach someone with a high status like Eunuch De Fu? He couldn’t even know about Eunuch De Fu by himself alone.”

As long as this matter had something to do with Qu Mingcheng, Qu Moying could not treat Qu Mingcheng as an ordinary scholar or an ordinary young master of a noble family.

Qu Moying knew this very well.

Although Minister Liu was forced to marry Mrs. Liu because of the imperial edict, they were said to be a really loving couple for so many years. Minister Liu only had two concubines, and that happened many years ago. It could be said that Minister Liu was a very self-disciplined person. He loved Mrs. Liu very much. In other words, he and Mrs. Liu was indeed a loving couple.

Mrs. Liu did not give birth to a son, so Minister Liu only had a son born by one of his concubines. It was unknown whether this concubine was the dead one or the other one who was still alive.

This concubine-born son kept a low profile. It was said that this son was good at studying and was probably older than Qu Mingcheng.

Mrs. Liu only gave birth to a daughter, Liu Jingyu.

“Does Duke Qi dote on Mrs. Liu very much?” In the sound of the music, Qu Moying suddenly asked, but she did not stop playing the qin.

“Yes, I heard that Duke Qi dotes on Mrs. Liu the most, even more so than his two sons.” Granny Zhou nodded and felt rather resentful towards Duke Qi, “If Duke Qi hadn’t asked for a bestowed marriage, Madam wouldn’t have married into Qu Mansion, and she wouldn’t have...”

At this point, Granny Zhou could no longer continue. Her voice choked with sobs. In her opinion, all the tragedy of Little Yue was caused by Duke Qi’s Mansion.

"If Duke Qi hadn't asked for the bestowed marriage, Old Master Yue would not have chosen Second Master for Madam in a fit of anger. If so, Madam might still live safe and sound now."

Qu Moying pressed her hand against the strings and felt the vibration of the strings. Hearing Granny Zhou's words, she suddenly looked up with her watery and unfathomable eyes, "Why? Why was my grandfather so anxious? Even if Minister Liu married someone else, there should be someone else."

"I don't know about this. I only know that Old Master Yue was really anxious at that time. He asked someone to send the list of the scholars who had passed the imperial examination. After reading it, he chose Second Master. Then, he sent someone to ask about the intention of Qu Mansion. After a few days, the marriage was arranged. The wedding ceremony was also done in a hurry, so much so that Madam's wedding clothes were directly bought from a clothing shop."

Granny Zhou said.

"Really? Did they need to be in such a hurry?" Qu Moying frowned. She felt that this matter was too unreasonable.

Granny Zhou shook her head. "It was really hasty. I asked Madam why the haste back then, but Madam also didn't know why. She only said it was Old Master Yue's order, and Old Lady Yue also repeatedly told her to get married immediately."

At that time, she was Little Yue's private maid, so the Madam she mentioned could only be Little Yue. However, since Little Yue did not know either, she naturally had no way of knowing. She just felt that Little Yue's hasty marriage must have something to do with the aborted engagement with Liu Family.

"Lady, I think it might be Duke Qi's Mansion's idea. Not only did they steal Madam's marriage, but they also even used their power to force Madam to marry quickly because they were afraid of the unwanted result if Madam remained single."

Granny Zhou said indignantly.

For so many years, she felt aggrieved for Little Yue every time she thought of these things. She thought it was really despicable for Duke Qi's Mansion to do such things.

"I heard that Duke Qi was close to my maternal grandfather. Is that true?" Qu Moying looked at the strings in front of her and pressed hard with her fingers, causing her fingertips to turn pale.

"I also heard of it when I was at Yue Mansion, but that was all. I didn't see how close Yue Mansion and Duke Qi's Mansion were. When some important events happened, Duke Qi's Mansion had never sent presents to Yue Mansion. Of course, Yue Mansion had never sent presents to Duke Qi's Mansion as well. The so-called close relationship between the two mansions is just gossip. I don't know if it's true." "

Granny Zhou said disapprovingly.

Therefore, the so-called good relationship might just be intended to cover something up.

But why?

The image of Duke Qi suddenly appeared in Qu Moying's mind. "What kind of mood did Duke Qi have when he saw me that day? With his status, he didn't need to see me. Did he happen to think of me because I am his old friend's granddaughter? But when I was still Ji Hanyue, why didn't he treat me differently?"

Ji Hanyue was Elder Yue's daughter, and Qu Moying was Little Yue's daughter. Duke Qi's daughter snatched the marriage of Little Yue and even forced her to marry someone hastily. Was he feeling guilty?

Originally, Qu Moying thought that by calling Granny Zhou over, she would be able to figure out many things, but now, she had more doubts.

Those things seemed to be a myth, but she felt that she had ignored something so that they were incomprehensible.

It was related to the Liu Family, Duke Qi's Mansion, and the Yue Family of the South, and it might even be related to the matter she was facing right now.

But the clues she got were not enough to connect these things together.

"You can leave first!" Qu Moying raised her slender fingers and then slowly plucked the strings under her hands. Amidst the sound of the music, her eyes slowly became cold.

She was wondering which thing could connect all the things together.

"What did I neglect? Or is it because this key point hasn't appeared yet, and what I have found is too superficial to connect things together?"

Granny Zhou calmed down and bowed to Qu Moying. She looked at the silhouette of Qu Moying who was lowering her head, sighed softly, and retreated.

When she came out to the corridor, she stood still and stretched out her sleeve to wipe her tears. She thought these things were unfair to Little Yue.

Little Yue had a miserable life and died alone in the end. If not for Qu Moying, no one would remember her.

Some things of the past clearly appeared in front of Granny Zhou, making her feel sad. She clenched her fists and gritted her teeth. She made up her mind that she would not fail Little Yue's trust. For Little Yue's sake, she would protect Qu Moying even if she had to sacrifice herself.

She would keep the oath she made in front of Little Yue's bed back then.

She would not hide things from Qu Moying if possible. She thought Little Yue was really pitiful. If Qu Moying was capable, she even wanted her to know those things and take revenge for Little Yue.

She had never thought that Little Yue's death was an accident, but she was the only one who was suspicious about it now. She didn't even mention it to Elder Yue because it involved a lot of things.

Little Yue had told her not to investigate it if she was not capable enough. Otherwise, she would die. Moreover, Little Yue also took Qu Moying into consideration.

Little Yue was the kindest, and she didn't want her daughter to be hurt.

She told Granny Zhou to keep those things to herself if she couldn't change the situation...

"Granny Zhou, what did lady ask just now that made you so sad?" Granny Yan's voice sounded in her ears. These days, Granny Zhou and Granny Yan had gotten along well with each other. She knew that Granny Yan was also Qu Moying's confidant.

Granny Zhou turned her head aside and wiped her tears with her sleeves. Then she turned and shook her head. "It's nothing. It's just that Lady asked about Madam's past. Thinking of Madam... I feel bad."

Speaking of this, Granny Zhou burst into tears again.

"Did Lady come back with an invitation just now?" Granny Yan tilted her head to listen to the music. The sound of the qin was melodious. There was not a single trace of disturbance. She could not help but secretly praise in her heart. "Although Lady was young, her temperament was extraordinary. Even Granny Zhou became so emotional. Lady is not affected, and she still plays the qin well."

Not only Qu Moying's bearing but also her skills in playing the qin were amazing.

Chapter 364 Invitation Card from Grand Princess Mansion

Just now, when Yu Dong came out to look for Granny Zhou, he saw Granny Yan and told her about the invitation. Granny Yan didn't take it to heart at first, but then she thought of one thing and was anxious to report to Qu Moying.

"I don't know. Lady didn't tell me about this just now," said Granny Zhou, shaking her head. She stayed in the room just for a while, and she only talked about the things in the past with Qu Moying. "But I saw an invitation card on the table."

She noticed the invitation card because it looked unusual.

Even its cover was unique. It was actually embroidered, and the embroidery was very exquisite.

"Then I'll go take a look." Granny Yan nodded and felt that the situation might be what she had guessed.

When she walked to the door of the main room, Yu Chun happened to come out from inside. Seeing Granny Yan, Yu Chun immediately went back to report. The sound of the qin in the room stopped, and Qu Moying's soft voice was heard, "Invite Granny Yan in!"

Granny Yan entered the room. She first looked at the table and indeed saw the invitation card. Then, she went forward and bowed to Qu Moying. "Greetings, Lady."

Qu Moying noticed that Granny Yan looked at the invitation card after entering the room, so she asked gently, "Do you find anything wrong with the invitation card?"

She blinked, casually took the invitation card, and handed it to Granny Yan.

She didn't pay attention to the invitation card when she was with the Old Lady just now. Later when she returned to Qianyu House, she still didn't pay attention to it. Even at the moment, she still didn't take it seriously. Although this invitation card was delicate, she used to receive many beautiful invitation cards in her previous life, and this one didn't particularly stand out from them.

Granny Yan took it, opened it to take a look, and found that it was exactly the one she had guessed. She sighed, looked up at Qu Moying, and asked, "Lady, do you know that some noble ladies in the capital will hold small-scale gatherings from time to time?"

"I know a bit!" Qu Moying said calmly. Her long eyelashes fluttered twice, and she had already slowly collected her thoughts.

She couldn't find an answer to those past events for the time being, but she would take time to do it.

No matter what the truth was, she believed that she could find it out in the end. As for Liu Jingyu, Qu Moying would take her as an enemy because she had repeatedly schemed against her.

Qu Moying was not a forgiving person. She would definitely retaliate.

Although she was Qu Mansion's lady now, she had the spirit of the daughter of a general in her body and practiced the principle of an eye for an eye. If the other party made a move on her, she would definitely fight back. She would not compromise and expect the other party to be kind because they would never be.

She was Ji Hanyue, but at the same time, she was also Qu Moying. Both Ji Hanyue's life and Qu Moying's life were clearly imprinted in her mind.

She remembered everything that she should have remembered in her two lives.

The memories of the two lives were perfectly imprinted in her heart. She had separated Ji Hanyue and Qu Moying from inside to outside and lived two different lives. But in fact, she was both Ji Hanyue and Qu Moying. Right now, she was just combining the two of them into one person.

She had the memory of Ji Hanyue, which allowed her to know things that the original Qu Moying was not supposed to know.

Granny Yan was not surprised. Although she knew clearly that according to Qu Moying's experience, it was impossible for her to know such a thing, Qu Moying had always surprised her, so she didn't feel strange when she heard what Qu Moying said now.

If Qu Moying was the same as the other noble ladies, how could Lord Yun take a fancy to her?

Noble ladies occasionally gathered together to admire flowers and even drink wine. There were not many rules in such gatherings. They might even do something like writing poems, which was quite an elegant act. Was this invitation card intended for such a gathering?

When Qu Moying was still Ji Hanyue, she didn't like these gatherings. She thought they were too pretentious. At such a small gathering, a lady would be highly praised as a talent if the poems she wrote were spread outside. Such parties were actually held to hype up the ladies so that they could marry into distinguished families.

For those invitations sent to Earl Ling'an's Mansion and addressed to her, she always refused to attend. If the invitations were not directly addressed to her, she always gave them to Ji Youran. As for whether Ji Youran would go, Ji Hanyue was never concerned.

Granny Yan reminded her, "Lady, this one is different."

"What's the difference?" It was rare for Qu Moying to be curious. Right now, she was Qu Moying. Of course, she could not act as boldly as Ji Hanyue. She couldn't casually refuse invitations. Moreover, she really wanted to see what would happen in this small gathering.

Ever since she entered the capital, she had not been able to blend in with the young ladies yet.

Since the Old Lady had given her the invitation card, she would treat it as an opportunity to get familiar with the ladies. Right now, she really needed it.

"This is one of the best small gatherings. Few people are eligible to get an invitation. It was sent from Grand Princess Changyu's mansion." Granny Yan turned the invitation to show Qu Moying. Qu Moying did see the seal of Grand Princess Changyu's mansion at the bottom right corner of the signature.

"Didn't you say that these gatherings are intended for noble ladies? Why did Grand Princess Changyu get involved?" Qu Moying asked. She really didn't know about this.

She remembered that Grand Princess Changyu was very low-key in the past.

“It has not been long since such gatherings became popular. There was the seal of Grand Princess Changyu’s mansion on this invitation card, but it was not sent by Grand Princess Changyu. It was sent by Grand Princess Changyu’s daughter, Prefectural Princess Xiangrong. Prefectural Princess Xiangrong is not young, but she has not been engaged yet.” Granny Yan answered meaningfully.

Qu Moying understood what she meant. She gently pressed on the strings of the qin, took the handkerchief from Yu Dong’s hand, and wiped her hands. Then, she asked gently, “Is this gathering held to find out suitable candidates from noble young masters?”

She remembered that Grand Princess Changyu was not fond of boisterous events in the past.

As the Emperor’s Fifth Imperial Sister and the one who married Marquis Jingyang, Grand Princess Changyu had always been very low-key. In the past, even Ji Hanyue rarely saw her.

Now that she had taken the initiative to hold such a gathering and considering the fact that her daughter was not young, it was evident that she was anxious to choose a suitable marriage for her daughter.

By inviting some aristocratic young ladies over to such a relaxing gathering, she could obtain some information from their conversations. The ladies’ words could be more trustworthy than what she heard from the outside world.

After all, there were some young masters from aristocratic families whose moral characters didn’t fit in with their reputations. However, it was not that easy to find out the truth.

“I think so. I heard that the invitation cards for such gatherings used to be sent by others in Prefectural Princess Xiangrong’s circle of friends. Prefectural Princess Xiangrong didn’t attend all of them. But she sent the invitation cards by herself this time, and the gathering will be held in Grand Princess Changyu’s mansion, so she is likely to show up.”

Granny Yan said with certainty.

Qu Moying raised her eyebrows and looked at Granny Yan. “So, I should go and see Prefectural Princess Xiangrong?”

“Yes, Lady. You should go, and you should also try to get on good terms with Prefectural Princess Xiangrong.” Granny Yan nodded. “I was afraid that you would miss it, so I specially came over to tell you about it. I heard some news before, but I was afraid that you couldn’t get the invitation. Now that there is an invitation card for you, it is best.”

Qu Moying asked in confusion, “Why?”

Although there were not many Grand Princesses alive, Grand Princess Changyu was not the only one. Moreover, Prefectural Princess Xiangrong was not a princess but only a Prefectural Princess. Qu Moying couldn’t see why she should be going.

Granny Yan looked at Qu Moying and said, “Prefectural Princess Xiangrong likes Lord Yan very much!”

Qu Moying asked with a leisurely smile, “So what?”

Granny Yan hinted, “Lord Yan doesn’t want to marry Prefectural Princess Xiangrong, but Lord Yan listens to Lord Yun the most.”

Was this why the invitation was sent to Qu Mansion?

Qu Moying finally understood. “So, Prefectural Princess Xiangrong wants to see me?”

“Yes, it should be Prefectural Princess Xiangrong who wants to see you, so she sent an invitation card over. Ever since you came to the capital, you have never attended such a small gathering of young ladies. This kind of gathering is insignificant in the eyes of those madams, but it is extremely important to you. It can help raise your status.”

Qu Moying tilted her head and asked in a playful tone, “What do you mean?”

“Lady, if your status is high, you will enter Lord Yun Mansion with a high title.” Granny Yan did not hide anything, “Your status as Vice Minister’s Mansion’s daughter is a little low, but if you are known as a talent among these young ladies, your status could be raised. This is what Lord Yun wants.”

“Didn’t he just leave?” There was a ripple in Qu Moying’s watery eyes, which was light and soon disappeared.

Her eyes were beautiful, but people couldn’t see fluctuations in her feelings.

Granny Yan said with a bitter smile, “Yes, he just left, but before he left, he had someone bring me a message.”

Qu Moying was not surprised that Pei Yuanjun was able to bypass her and pass a message to Granny Yan. He could do anything he wanted.

Qu Moying said indifferently, “Actually, it doesn’t matter.”

“Lady, it does matter. It is not just about status, but it also helps you have a real foothold in the capital. You were raised in the village for many years. It can be said that every noble lady thinks that you are neither beautiful nor talented. Now it is time to break the rumor. Otherwise, even if you enter Lord Yun Mansion in the future, you will be at a disadvantage when you face those ladies in the palace.”

Granny Yan said with a serious face.

Qu Moying understood these words. Men had their own affairs, and women in the backyard also had their own affairs. They all had their particular means of dealing with things. Sometimes, even with the protection of men, women might not be able to live a peaceful life in the backyard. Moreover, she would also have to face the harem.

It was not that she didn’t understand this issue. She just didn’t pay much attention to it before, but now she fell silent. For the first time, she considered Lord Yun Mansion’s backyard and the relationship between Pei Yuanjun and the royal palace.

She was destined to have dealings with those imperial concubines and even Empress in the palace.

“Granny Yan, I understand.” Qu Moying nodded slowly and agreed to attend the gathering. Her heart throbbed inexplicably, making her feel rather uneasy. She reached out and subconsciously pressed her

chest. Only after she pressed it did she feel better. Her hand slowly fell down, carrying a bit of uneasiness.

She gently bit her pink lips and subconsciously asked, "Will County Lady Jingyu attend it?"

Chapter 365 She Was Forced to Be a Home-based Nun

"Will County Lady Jingyu attend it?"

After asking this question, Qu Moying couldn't help but laugh. Since this gathering was a high-level one, how could Liu Jingyu not attend it?

However, Qu Moying thought it was not bad because she could have the chance to see how Liu Jingyu tried to curry favor with Grand Princess Changyu or Prefectural Princess Xiangrong. After all, Liu Jingyu had a clear goal now, and that was to marry the Crown Prince, Pei Luo'an.

Whether she had to face one or two enemies at this gathering didn't affect Qu Moying in the slightest.

The situation was not bad. At the very least, the gathering was held in Grand Princess Changyu's Mansion, so even if Liu Jingyu was Duke Qi's granddaughter and Minister Liu's daughter, she would not dare to act rashly.

Granny Yan did not know the real meaning of Qu Moying's question and answered honestly, "County Lady Jingyu will possibly attend it."

"Then... prepare some clothes and accessories for me. I'll attend it." Qu Moying smiled and nodded. She seemed to be full of smiles, but if one looked closely, they would find that there was actually no smile in her eyes.

There was no rootless hatred in this world. Moreover, Liu Jingyu hated her so much that she tried several times to kill her...

Granny Yan nodded. "Lady, please rest assured. I will."

To attend such a party, one's makeup couldn't be too simple and plain, but she couldn't look so gorgeous as to steal the limelight of the host. It was not easy for ordinary people to strike a balance.

Granny Yan placed the invitation card back in front of Qu Moying and retreated.

Qu Moying took it and read it carefully this time. She saw the date on the top and found that the gathering would be held seven days later, so there was no need to hurry. She nodded.

Two things happened in Qu Mansion in succession, and both things were related to Qu Xuexin. Words got out. There were various comments on Qu Xuexin, some of which were unpleasant to hear. After all, when Qu Xuexin fell into the water, she was saved by a man who held her in his arms.

Many people saw it, and even more people heard about it. It was a lively night, and most of the young men and women went to the streets. Such a romantic thing spread very quickly, and it almost became the most discussed thing at the Qixi Festival this year. Everyone was discussing whether or not Qu Xuexin would marry the man who saved her.

If she didn't marry him, who else would she want to marry in the future?

There were also some people of aristocratic families who knew that Qu Xuexin had a dispute with Crown Prince's Mansion's Side Princess and even started a fight. They heard that it had something to do with the Crown Prince's Love Lanterns.

The question was, with whom did the Crown Prince hang the Love Lanterns? If he didn't go with Princess Ji, who was with him?

If it was Princess Ji, she could not have argued with Qu Xuexin.

The Crown Prince had not officially engaged with someone yet, and he had always appeared to be affectionate to the ex-Crown Princess. If he didn't go with Princess Ji, who was the lady who hung Love Lanterns with him?

Did the Crown Prince completely forget his deep affection for the ex-Crown Princess after such a short time?

Some people vaguely heard that the lady was County Lady Jingyu. As a result, more people came to know that County Lady Jingyu and the Crown Prince were going to marry.

The first rumor was spread by almost everyone in the capital.

The second rumor was only spread secretly among the noble families. Everyone was wondering if County Lady Jingyu was about to enter Eastern Palace.

People had various comments on the matter that County Lady Jingyu hung Love Lanterns with the Crown Prince. Some people felt disdain for her because she hung the lanterns with the Crown Prince before their relationship was officially announced to the public. Was she confident that she would definitely enter Crown Prince's Mansion?

Was she willing to be a Side Princess as long as she could enter the Crown Prince's Mansion? If this was the case, it seemed that she was not properly following the rules that an unmarried noble lady should follow.

It made people feel that in order to be the Crown Princess, County Lady Jingyu had disregarded her reputation as an unmarried lady. Maybe the matter got big because of County Lady Jingyu. After all, only in this way could she get engaged with the Crown Prince quickly.

The Crown Prince was not an ordinary person. Even if the rules for women and men were loose during the Qixi Festival, he was still expected to strictly abide by the rules.

He was not an ordinary person but the Crown Prince. Many people were watching his every move. Although they did not dare to discuss him openly, they judged him in their hearts.

The ex-Crown Princess probably died in vain!

Ji Hanyue sacrificed her life to block the sword for the Crown Prince, but she died in vain. Not long after she died, the Crown Prince had already shifted his love to another person. He went out to hang Love Lanterns with County Lady Jingyu together!

People were saying these words in private. But in public, they only dared to talk about Qu Xuexin.

Therefore, news was spread from Qu Mansion that Qu Xuexin was going to spend her life like a nun at home.

When this news came out, many people in the capital were shocked. They all thought that Qu Xuexin would marry the man who saved her or marry someone who was not from the capital. Of course, if someone had taken a fancy to her and pitied her, he could marry her under pressure.

However, they didn't expect that Qu Xuexin would choose to be a home-based nun.

Many people who knew Qu Xuexin and Luo felt that this matter was strange. They knew Luo was very keen on taking Qu Xuexin on a blind date. But now, Qu Xuexin was going to be a home-based nun. Did she see through the vanity of life?

How could Qu Xuexin really devote herself to religious cultivation?

Or could it be that there was no suitable person to marry her temporarily, so the news was deliberately spread out?

However, some people thought that the measure of Qu Mansion was not bad. Based on Qu Xuexin's situation, there would not be any young master who wanted to marry her. Moreover, the previous matter related to Third Young Master He had ruined Qu Xuexin's reputation, and the present matters exposed her to the focus of public criticism.

Whenever Qixi Festival was mentioned, she would be discussed. Whenever people thought of the Crown Prince's improper behavior, she would be immediately related as well.

It could be said that Qu Xuexin had somewhat taken the blame for the Crown Prince.

Many things related to Crown Prince's Mansion's Princess Ji were dug out as well.

Qu Moying heard that Qu Xuexin had caused a lot of trouble in East Mansion, and she even wanted to look for Xiao Hanyuan. But before Qu Xuexin was able to make trouble, Xiao Hanyuan had moved out to a quieter and more suitable place for his study in the capital. It seemed that he had completely given up on Qu Xuexin.

In this regard, Qu Moying felt that Xiao Hanyuan was not that stupid. At least he could figure out some things. At present, Qu Mansion was not a suitable place for him to study. It was best to move out. Otherwise, something might land him in trouble even if he did nothing, so how could he study?

Qu Xuexin did not stir up too much trouble. She was not locked up in East Mansion but in West Mansion. She lived in an unused yard behind the Old Lady's yard. When she moved to this yard, Luo cried all the way behind her and was then sent away by the Old Lady.

Therefore, Qu Xuexin started cultivating in this place. As for how long she would cultivate, the people in the mansion did not know. However, the servants in the mansion said that the Old Lady was soft-hearted and would not necessarily let Qu Xuexin cultivate for a lifetime. She had to cultivate now because no one was willing to marry her.

Even Xiao Hanyuan moved out to avoid her.

Qu Xuexin stopped making a fuss these few days and gradually calmed down. It was said that she seemed to have accepted her fate. Qu Moying once saw her in her yard in very simple clothes. Qu Moying could not see her expression clearly from afar, but she seemed to have changed into a different person, looking quite obedient.

However, Qu Moying knew very well that Qu Xuexin was never an obedient person, and she was just waiting for an opportunity.

Qu Mingcheng also behaved well. Recently, he moved back to East Mansion to recuperate and also study. The restless ones were locked up in West Mansion, including Yu and Qu Xuexin. As for East Mansion, nobody caused trouble recently.

Qu Xuexin's matter gradually died down. Since she had already started cultivating, what else was there to say against her?

People thought it was pathetic for a noble lady like her to fall into such a state. She was like the abbot of Qingyun Temple. Therefore, people in the capital began to feel pity for Qu Xuexin.

They thought Qu Xuexin was innocent in the incident of Third Young Master He. The marriage was not arranged for her at the beginning, and it was the elders in her family who failed to see through Third Young Master He's evil nature.

They began to say that Qu Xuexin did not fall into the water on purpose but because she wanted to protect Qu Moying from falling into the water.

As for the thing spread around the aristocratic families that she bumped into Princess Ji, it was also an accident, but who would have expected that Princess Ji was so ruthless...

These rumors were spread among the common people and also among the aristocratic families. They were spread so widely that they also reached Crown Prince's Mansion. Hearing these rumors, Ji Youran was so angry that she smashed several antiques, but she still felt angry...

"How are things going in the capital?" Pei Yuanjun narrowed his long and narrow eyes, and his thin lips curled up slightly, making him look rather casual.

Ji Hai hurriedly said with a smile, "Fourth Lady Qu is doing well. I heard that she is going to attend the gathering of noble ladies held by Grand Princess Changyu's mansion! I have already told Granny Yan to do according to your instructions!"

"It's not bad to attend it... As for the Crown Prince..." Pei Yuanjun smiled languidly with a trace of wickedness in his eyes, but it made him look even more handsome.

The sunlight fell on his face through the gauze curtain. He looked gloomy and handsome. The red iris flower embroidered on the collar of his purple brocade robe gave off a strange color that looked like flowing blood.

The carriage was moving forward. The guards lined up in two rows and walked forward in an orderly manner. Only the sound of uniform footsteps could be heard.

Ji Hai did not dare to say anything. As a servant, he did not dare to talk about the Crown Prince outside.

Pei Yuanjun gently tapped on the table in the carriage and gracefully tilted his head to the side, which made his handsome face look more wicked. He looked unreal.

“Is anyone coming from the North?”

Ji Hai squinted his eyes and answered with a smile, “They should be coming. Your Highness, since you have already come out of the capital, there must be people coming from the North. They will not let go of this opportunity.”

When Pei Yuanjun was at the border, he could predict what had happened in the capital. Things were the same when he was in the capital. Even if he was in the capital, nothing in the North could get out of his control.

The Crown Prince thought that he could control everything. He feared Pei Yuanjun, but he also appeared to be respectful and showed weakness. In fact, he was just trying to confuse people!

Chapter 366 The Truth of the Accident

“If Liu Xiangshan sends someone over, just let them wait first.” Pei Yuanjun said lazily as he closed his unfathomable eyes.

“Yes, Your Highness.” Ji Hai complied, but then he asked hesitantly, “But what if he sends Miss Liu over?”

“Same!” Pei Yuanjun said lazily, “The one I brought into the capital turned out to be a fake Miss Liu. It was generous enough for me to send the fake one back safe and sound.”

Ji Hai was clear about what happened when Pei Yuanjun returned to the capital. If not for this matter, Pei Yuanjun wouldn’t have noticed Qu Moying. Thinking about it this way, Ji Hai thought it was a good thing.

As for the incident Pei Yuanjun had mentioned, Ji Hai thought it was an accident. It happened because Pei Yuanjun was unwilling to bring Miss Liu to the capital.

Of course, Pei Yuanjun was innocent, to the extent that he was as innocent as a lamb.

Ji Hai asked cautiously, “Your Highness, what do you plan to do?”

Pei Yuanjun said indifferently, “I don’t plan to do anything. I just want her to stay away from me! I feel sick to see her!”

“Yes, Your Highness. I get it.” Ji Hai understood what Pei Yuanjun meant. Pei Yuanjun would refuse to see anyone Miss Liu sent over and would return any letter she delivered to him.

Ji Hai was somewhat impressed by Miss Liu’s audacity. How dare she try out Pei Yuanjun’s feelings? If Pei Yuanjun did feel interested in her, she would not have to test him again and again because he must have taken action.

It was just like what he did when he met Qu Moying. Although he didn’t have the chance to know her at first, he created a chance to bump into her.

There were many rumors about this incident in the capital. Many people thought that Qu Moying deliberately bumped into Pei Yuanjun, but the fact was that Pei Yuanjun took the initiative to bump into her. Ji Hai knew this clearly and felt he had the most say in this matter.

Of course, this was also an accident for Pei Yuanjun. He didn't want to see the Empress at that time because the Empress was going to choose a wife for him, whereas he didn't have the slightest intention of marrying anyone. Bumping into Qu Moying gave him an excuse not to go.

However, if Pei Yuanjun had taken Qu Moying as an ordinary lady, he would not have bumped into Qu Moying. There were quite many people in Crown Prince's Mansion that day. If he wanted to make an excuse for not going to the Empress' place, he could bump into any princes, young masters, or officials, and he didn't have to bump into a lady.

Ji Hai felt that he had the most thorough understanding of Pei Yuanjun's feelings for Qu Moying and perhaps even more thorough than Pei Yuanjun himself.

Therefore, he thought it was really ridiculous for Miss Liu to play hard to get with Pei Yuanjun. She was like a clown, but she seemed to be complacent with her doing.

Pei Yuanjun came to the border because the North was in chaos, not because of Miss Liu. Ji Hai hoped that Miss Liu would not get it wrong again!

As for General Liu, he was also a troublemaker, and he had been making trouble for many years...

Ji Hai knew all of this, but he kept it in his heart. Although he was Lord Yun's confidant, he was nothing more than a eunuch...

Qu Moying did not know that someone far away from the capital was paying attention to her every move. Right now, she was looking at what Granny Yan had prepared for her.

Granny Yan prepared not only a set of clothes but also some accessories, which amazed Qu Moying.

"Is this fan an accessory?" Qu Moying asked in surprise as she picked up a small jade fan. It was very small, only the size of three fingers, and every section was similar in length. The white jade handle and the picture on the fan were clearly visible and vivid.

There was a faint red at the top of the fan, which ordinary jade could not produce.

As she held it in her hand, she could see that the jade material of the fan was exquisite, and the top part was red, like a layer of light red embroidery on the fan. It was elegant, somewhat bright and beautiful.

“Yes, it is an accessory. It is usually hung next to the sachet by the waist. Lady, you can put a tassel on it, which could make it look delicate and unique. If you wear it, others won’t think your accessories are too simple.”

Granny Yan pointed at the fan and said with a smile.

Qu Moying looked at the fan and saw a small hole in the handle of the fan, which should be the place to hang a tassel. Although her embroidery skills were not the best, she knew how to make tassels.

Qu Moying put down the jade fan in her hand and pointed at the other things in front of her. “Do I need to bring a qin and chess set with me?”

Everything was ready for her to show her skills of qin playing, chess, calligraphy, and painting.

In front of Qu Moying, there was her own Fengyu Qin, together with a delicate chessboard, writing brushes, ink, paper, and inkstone. Granny Yan had really prepared a lot for her. It seemed that Qu Moying was not going to attend a gathering but to go on a talent show, which was what scholars usually did.

“Lady, such gatherings of ladies often have competitions. It is the first time for you to attend such a gathering since you returned to the capital, so there must be other ladies making things difficult for you and deliberately embarrassing you. If you don’t show your real ability, I’m afraid you won’t be able to blend into the circle of these noble ladies, and people in the capital city will ridicule you.”

Granny Yan said.

Granny Yan was very confident in Qu Moying. The rumors about Qu Moying had always been fake. If she had not stayed with Qu Moying for a period of time, she might have believed that Qu Moying was neither beautiful nor talented. After all, it was reasonable for Qu Moying to be untalented because she used to live in that kind of environment.

However, Qu Moying was not only beautiful but also talented.

In addition, with the support of Lord Yun Mansion, Granny Yan thought it was not difficult for Qu Moying to gain a foothold among the noble ladies. This was the first time Qu Moying attended such gatherings, and there would naturally be someone who was determined to challenge her. Therefore, Qu Moying had to be fully prepared so that she wouldn't be flustered and other ladies wouldn't look down on her.

Since she was going to attend it, she had to play her best.

Granny Yan was confident in Qu Moying.

"So, I have to bring two maids with me this time?" Qu Moying really did not understand the hidden rules of such gatherings. She didn't have to know it in her previous life because no one dared to offend the future Crown Princess. Moreover, Ji Hanyue's original status was high enough that no one dared to look down upon her.

Granny Yan nodded. "Yes, Lady. Bring both Yu Chun and Yu Dong with you. In addition, take two other young maids with you, and ask them to stay by the carriage to guard these things. If you need anything, just let them send it to you."

Qu Moying turned around, sat down on the chair, and asked with a smile. "So, there will be someone challenging me?"

Granny Yan said with a smile, "There should be. Every newcomer will be put in a difficult position. This is an unwritten rule in the circle of noble unmarried ladies in the capital city. In fact, it can't be considered to be deliberately against you."

Qu Moying's eyes swept over the things on the table. In addition to the matching clothes and accessories, a qin, chessboard, and so on occupied a large part of the table. It was not like she was going to attend a gathering, but that she was going to compete in a test to prove herself.

Qu Moying asked thoughtfully, "This will happen to every attendee who is new in the capital?"

“Basically. It won’t happen unless you don’t want to be accepted by the noble young ladies’ circle. In that case, even if you have a high status, you will feel alienated and uncomfortable. I met an imperial concubine in the palace before. She wasn’t a native of the capital and only entered the capital after she grew up. I heard that when she first came to the capital, she was not recognized and was always despised and ridiculed by others. Later, she studied diligently for a long time and gradually integrated into the noble ladies’ circle.”

Granny Yan said, “But even so, she was still mocked by other imperial concubines after she entered the palace.”

“There are such gatherings among young unmarried ladies. What about young madams?” Qu Moying bit her lips. She did not ask about the imperial concubine that Granny Yan mentioned but switched the topic and asked, “What will happen to a madam who has just married into the capital? Will she be isolated by others?”

“Many young madams have been friends with each other when they were unmarried. Unlike those old madams, their status didn’t change much after getting married. They will gather together for chitchat occasionally. It is easier to blend into young madams’ circle than to blend into noble young ladies’ circle. At least, madams have different ideas. They could make friends with whomever they want, but if...”

At this point, Granny Yan glanced at Qu Moying. She had already guessed the meaning of Qu Moying’s question.

Granny Yan still said bluntly, “But if a madam is not recognized, she will be isolated by her peers.”

Hearing her words, Qu Moying was lost in thought, “It means that my mother was probably isolated when she just married into the capital. She was new in the capital and rarely appeared on open occasions. Moreover, there was the previous marriage matter that involved my mother and Mrs. Liu, which even Liu Jingyu minded so much, so Mrs. Liu must have ill feelings towards my mother.”

Mrs. Liu was said to be a paradigm of nice manners among madams, but Qu Moying had been skeptical about this.

Liu Jingyu was quite vicious, and she probably inherited it from her mother. Since Liu Jingyu hated Qu Moying to the core, her hatred must have been rooted in something big.

But when Mrs. Liu snatched Minister Liu away from Qu Moying's mother, Liu Jingyu hadn't been born!

Qu Moying curled her lips silently. She really needed to step into this circle to investigate what had happened back then. There must be something worth exploring.

She even suspected that her mother died not because of the difficult labor.

She pressed her hand on the chair hard to suppress the emotions in her heart. Her long eyelashes fluttered, and then she slowly raised her head. Her watery eyes were unfathomable, beautiful but dangerous.

Qu Moying said, "Granny Yan, prepare a few more chess books for me!"

In the four arts, she was relatively a little worse at playing chess, so she decided to read more chess books to improve her skills in these few days.

"Yes, I understand." Granny Yan smiled and nodded. She was relieved in her heart. She was afraid that Qu Moying would refuse to attend the gathering. Now that Qu Moying had agreed, it was the best.

Then, she turned around and was about to leave.

"Granny Yan, where did you get this jade fan?" Qu Moying asked casually. Her eyes casually glanced at the outstanding jade fan. Qu Mansion did not have such a fan, and she did not have one before.

Granny Yan immediately stopped and explained, "Lord Yun Mansion sent over a set of jewelry. I didn't dare to keep the whole set, but I saw that this jade fan was pretty good, so I kept it and brought it to you. Just now, you didn't ask me who sent it over, so I didn't dare to say it."

Chapter 367 Each Had an Axe to Grind

Qu Moying asked thoughtfully, "These were sent from Lord Yun Mansion?"

"Yes, they were sent from Lord Yun Mansion. They were sent on the day you agreed to attend the gathering when I was thinking about what accessories to prepare for you."

Granny Yan said with a smile.

If Qu Moying hadn't asked where she got the accessories, she would not have said it for the time being, but she would find an opportunity to remind Qu Moying to be attentive to her clothing wherever she was. If Qu Moying entered the palace, a trifle might determine her life, so she needed to be careful.

Now it seemed that Qu Moying did notice this question, but she didn't mention it at first. Thinking of this, Granny Yan smiled brightly, and the doubt in her heart was totally gone.

Qu Moying raised her eyes and asked, "Is there anything special about this jade fan?"

Granny Yan nodded vigorously. "Yes, it's indeed special. I heard that this jade fan used to be worn by Lord Yun's mother, Old Consort Yun. Grand Princess Changyu should recognize it."

This was exactly what the servant of Lord Yun Mansion who sent these accessories over said, which was also the most important reason why Granny Yan had chosen this fan.

By hanging this jade fan on her waist, Qu Moying could get the protection of Grand Princess Changyu's mansion.

"Others could not recognize it, right?"

"No, I don't think so. Old Consort Yun had passed away long ago when Lord Yun was a child. Young ladies certainly don't know Old Consort Yun, so they will not be able to recognize Old Consort Yun's jade fan. Even I took a while to recognize it."

Granny Yan replied.

Granny Yan remembered this jade fan after hearing the servant's words. When Old Consort Yun was alive, Granny Yan was just a young maid. She sometimes saw Old Consort Yun at Empress Dowager's place, and she thought Old Consort Yun was a gentle princess consort. Moreover, Old Consort Yun did like this jade fan because she always hung it by her waist.

Qu Moying fell silent with a strange expression on her face.

"Lady, Grand Princess Changyu is His Majesty's younger sister. Her status is not ordinary, but the statuses of the young ladies attending the gathering may also be extraordinary. Your status is still a bit low, so it's safer for you to wear it." Granny Yan said meaningfully, afraid that Qu Moying would refuse to wear it.

Qu Moying nodded with a bitter smile. "Don't worry, Granny Yan. I'll wear it."

It was better to be protected than not.

In her previous life, her father, the only one who protected her, was gone, so her entire world collapsed.

She didn't want to pretend to be lofty, strong, and independent. She knew she had to compromise sometimes, just like how she compromised to make a deal with Pei Yuanjun, which had nothing to do with love at all.

Moreover, she was certain that this gathering wouldn't be just a peaceful gathering. Since Liu Jingyu would attend it, this gathering definitely couldn't be peaceful...

Qu Moying calmed herself down and said with a faint smile, "Go to the Ji Family and pass a message to Madam Duan. Ask her if there is any good accessory in her shop. If there is, let her prepare a set for me. Tell her that I am going to the gathering at Grand Princess Changyu's mansion. There will be many noble ladies, and County Lady Jingyu will probably be attending as well."

Granny Yan did not understand what Qu Moying meant. She thought that Qu Moying was not satisfied with the accessories she had prepared, and she hurriedly explained, "Lady, do you want Yue's Gold Pavilion's accessories? Although its accessories are good, they are inferior to what I have prepared for you!"

Qu Moying smiled calmly. "No, it's just an excuse. I just want the news that I and Liu Jingyu are going to attend Grand Princess Changyu's mansion's gathering to be spread to Earl Ling'an's Mansion."

Her words had so many meanings that Granny Yan was stunned for a moment, but then she reacted and asked in confusion, "Lady, do you want Princess Ji to attend the gathering?"

In Granny Yan's opinion, if Ji Youran were to attend the gathering, something unexpected might happen, and the gathering might be messed up. However, this was Qu Moying's first time attending such a gathering, and Granny Yan hoped that it would end perfectly without any mishap.

"I don't really want her to attend it, but she will definitely attend it if she gets the information." Qu Moying narrowed her eyes and hid the coldness in her eyes. She believed that Ji Youran's biggest rival now was Liu Jingyu!

Ji Youran had been dreaming about being the Crown Princess and plotting for it for so long. In order to become the Crown Princess, she even stained her hands with the blood of Ji Hanyue and her family. However, she was not the only one coveting that position. She was at a disadvantage compared with another competitor Liu Jingyu.

Granny Yan was still a little worried. "Lady, Princess Ji is not easy to deal with. Will you suffer a loss this time if she shows up?"

Qu Xuexin's matter had escalated into a great disturbance mainly because of Ji Youran. If Ji Youran hadn't made a big deal out of it, Qu Xuexin would not have been in such a difficult situation.

"Don't worry. First Lady chose to be a home-based nun because of her. Although people did criticize First Lady at first, they disliked Princess Ji later because she went too far."

Qu Moying smiled silently and said meaningfully.

She was really looking forward to seeing the drama when Ji Youran and Liu Jingyu met. She hoped that the two of them could meet up as soon as possible. If they met, even Pei Luo'an would not be able to control the situation!

"Lady, I will go send a message right now." Granny Yan was still a little worried, but she eased up when she saw Qu Moying's confident look. She appreciated Qu Moying more and more. Although Qu Moying was young, she was well aware of everything.

Granny Yan couldn't help but be convinced by Qu Moying's intelligence!

Watching Granny Yan leave, Qu Moying lowered her eyes and looked at her wrist with a bit of gloominess. The corners of her lips curled up in ridicule. There was a follow-up of Qu Xuexin's matter, and there were a lot of discussions about Ji Youran and Liu Jingyu. It sounded like people were crying out about Qu Xuexin's grievances, but their words were actually against Ji Youran and Liu Jingyu.

Ji Youran was Crown Prince's Side Princess, and Liu Jingyu was said to be the future Crown Princess. The Crown Prince's enemies were naturally their enemies.

But the two of them were bound to be like fire and water!

It was ridiculous that while Ji Youran and Liu Jingyu were both fighting for the position of the Crown Princess, Ji Youran was obsessed with her jealousy for the deceased Ji Hanyue.

She would rather die than let Ji Hanyue's memorial tablet be placed by Pei Luo'an's side...

"What? An invitation card was sent to Qu Mansion?" Liu Jingyu pressed her hand on the table and suddenly stood up with fury. She felt annoyed as soon as she heard the word "Qu".

"Yes, I heard from the people around Prefectural Princess Xiangrong that they did send an invitation card to Qu Mansion, but I don't know which lady in Qu Mansion will attend it. However..." Hai Tang stole a glance at Liu Jingyu and continued in a low voice, "I heard that Prefectural Princess Xiangrong believed that it will be Fourth Lady Qu."

“Why?” Liu Jingyu forcefully suppressed her anger and sat down again. Her mother had reprimanded her and told her not to be as rash as before because she had something more important to do now.

“On one hand, only Fourth Lady Qu can go out of Qu Mansion and attend the gathering for the time being. Third Lady Qu has been behaving herself recently, and I haven’t heard that she has received this invitation. On the other hand, Prefectural Princess Xiangrong wants to see Fourth Lady Qu. It was said that she has a good impression of Fourth Lady Qu.”

Hai Tang explained.

Hearing this, Liu Jingyu was unhappy. She snorted, “How could Prefectural Princess Xiangrong be interested in the daughter of a Vice Minister? Moreover, she is a shameless one.”

She hated Qu Moying from the bottom of her heart.

When she was a little girl, she heard her mother talk about Qu Mansion’s Madam and the abandoned daughter who was raised in the village. People said that the abandoned daughter was pitiful, but Liu Jingyu just didn’t like her.

She remembered seeing Qu Moying once. At that time, hatred suddenly rose in her mind, and she almost killed Qu Moying. However, Qu Moying was actually so lucky that nothing happened to her, which Liu Jingyu thought was a pity.

She thought that Qu Moying should repay Little Yue’s debt since she was Little Yue’s daughter, and she would not let Qu Moying off the hook.

Liu Jingyu calmed herself down and asked, “Miss Yan will also attend it this time, right?”

“I... I don’t know about this.” Hai Tang looked at Du Juan with embarrassment and winked for help.

Duan Juan hurried forward and said with a smile, “Lady, Miss Yan has always been on good terms with you, and she has always been invited to such gatherings. She should be going.”

“That’s good!” Liu Jingyu sneered. Yan Yujiao’s temper was not good. Moreover, she had crashed into Qu Moying once before. When Liu Jingyu schemed against Qu Moying, she utilized Yan Yujiao, so Yan Yujiao would definitely be unhappy when she saw Qu Moying. She would seize the chance to instigate Yan Yujiao, and the latter would definitely make things difficult for Qu Moying.

This was Qu Moying’s first time attending the gathering of noble ladies. There would be many people eager to make things difficult for her. Even if she secretly added fuel to the fire, no one would notice it.

Thinking of this, she calmed down a lot.

She asked, “Are my accessories ready?”

“Yes, I’ve already prepared them. Hearing that you are going to Grand Princess Changyu’s mansion, Madam specially sent over a set of jade jewelry. I saw that there is a beautiful small jade fan. Why don’t you hang it on? It’s more beautiful than common sachets and jade pendants.”

Hai Tang suggested with a smile. She knew Liu Jingyu’s personality well and knew she didn’t like to be similar to others. It was summer now, and jade was cool. On the one hand, others did not have a jade fan, and on the other hand, they definitely did not come up with the idea of wearing a jade fan.

Liu Jingyu nodded with satisfaction. “Alright, I will choose that set of jewelry. There’s no need to be too gorgeous, but it has to be elegant and refined. I don’t like to be similar to those common people.”

“Of course. How can those people compare with you? Their collections couldn’t compare with yours, not to mention their status.” Du Juan had a glib tongue, and Liu Jingyu was happy to hear her flattering words.

She smiled arrogantly!

Chapter 368 She Had Planted an Agent There

Liu Jingyu was very proud of one thing.

When her mother married into the Liu Family, the dowry she brought with her was almost half of Duke Qi's Mansion's savings. Her maternal grandfather loved her mother the most and gave her whatever she liked. Even her maternal grandmother felt the dowry was way too substantial, but her grandfather was still very generous.

On her mother's wedding day, more than a hundred servants carried her dowry items over to Liu Family. Moreover, some dowry items had been moved into the Liu Family before the wedding.

It was said that when Ji Hanyue married the Crown Prince, Ji Hanyue's dowry was also extravagant, which was quite a sight. But Liu Jingyu believed that if she was going to marry the Crown Prince, her dowry would definitely be much more substantial than that of Ji Hanyue.

She believed that she would have whatever Ji Hanyue had and also what Ji Hanyue didn't have.

In this regard, she thought she could exceed Ji Hanyue. Moreover, behind her, she had Duke Qi's Mansion and the Liu Family, which were much more powerful than Earl Ling'an's Mansion.

If her grandfather was still holding the military power when the Crown Prince first chose a wife, she would have been chosen at that time. However, her grandfather had not been in charge of the military for a long time, so Ji Hanyue took the position which Liu Jingyu thought should be hers. But she didn't worry about Ji Hanyue now. What made her unhappy was that if she married the Crown Prince, she would be his second wife.

She was dissatisfied with the word "second".

But she was not anxious to deal with it now because she believed she would have a way to deal with it in the future.

Ji Hanyue was dead. How could she really occupy the Crown Prince's heart? In Liu Jingyu's opinion, the Crown Prince didn't love Ji Hanyue that much, and he was just pretending to be affectionate.

And she was confident that she could win the Crown Prince's heart and make him obsessed with her. As for Ji Youran, she was not worried about her at all because Ji Youran was just a Side Princess, and she could deal with her easily after she entered Eastern Palace. Unlike Ji Hanyue, she would not show mercy to Ji Youran...

As for how to deal with Qu Moying, she already had a plan. She knew which place in Grand Princess Mansion Prefectural Princess Xiangrong loved the most, and the gathering should be held there this time. She had long asked her maid to get along well with a maid who was working in that place. She had planted an agent there for a rainy day, and she could make use of her this time...

Grand Princess Changyu's mansion sent out quite a few invitations, and many young ladies had received them. Some of them couldn't attend it, and they specially apologized to Prefectural Princess Xiangrong.

As for those who could attend the gathering, they were all busy preparing clothes and accessories. Although they didn't want to cause a sensation, they didn't want to be outdone by other ladies. After knowing that the controversial Qu Moying would also attend the gathering, they worked even harder on their preparations.

It had been a while since Qu Moying had returned to the capital, but not many people had seen her. Many young ladies still believed the rumor that Qu Moying was neither talented nor beautiful.

However, the rumor had faded recently. Many people who had seen Qu Moying said that she was not as untalented as they had imagined, and she might be good-looking. Although the eye veil covered her face and concealed her specific features, it was certain that she was not ugly.

Some people were curious about her. Some people wanted to make things difficult for her. Some people found it sarcastic. Qu Qiuyan had always been the one in Qu Mansion to attend such gatherings, but Qu Moying was the one to show up this time. What did this mean? After all, everyone was saying that Qu Qiuyan would definitely enter Lord Jing Mansion, and even Lord Jing vaguely showed his interest in Qu Qiuyan.

It was not explicitly stated, but since Lord Jing was interested in Qu Qiuyan, they naturally thought highly of her. Who was this Qu Moying?

Qu Mansion didn't let Qu Qiuyan attend the gathering but sent Qu Moying. It seemed that there was no better option than Qu Moying in Qu Mansion.

However, they were happy to see Qu Moying make a fool of herself. Recently, a number of incidents happened in Qu Mansion from time to time, and they were happy to watch the fun.

People held different kinds of thoughts. The ladies who were going to attend the gathering were actively preparing clothes and accessories. Even the business of Qu Moying's shop, Yue's Clothing Pavilion, was much better. It was mainly because the five-color brocade that Yue's Clothing Pavilion purchased from the South was nice, and many ladies liked it and went there to make clothes.

Qu Moying also chose the clothes made from five-color brocade for herself because she thought it was a good opportunity to publicize her shop. She had not worn the clothes that her grandmother sent to her from the South yet, so she chose a set from those clothes. She wore a light purple coat and an eight-piece white dress with light purple flowers, which immediately stunned the maids.

"Lady, you are really beautiful. I know this dress is beautiful, but I didn't expect it could be so beautiful when you put it on." Yu Chun's mouth was wide open in astonishment. Qu Moying was really beautiful after dressing up, but it was a pity that she was still unwilling to remove the eye veil and show her face.

Yu Dong also nodded repeatedly and smiled brightly. "Lady, you are really beautiful. I thought that this set of clothes was a bit plain, but you look so good in it."

Yu Dong's aesthetic standard was different from that of ordinary maids. He thought that fancy clothes were the most beautiful, and he had just argued with Yu Chun about this. But after seeing Qu Moying put on the dress, he thought there was no need to argue because Qu Moying was really beautiful!

Qu Moying wore a light purple belt, which outlined her slender waist. During this period of time, Qu Moying was taken good care of. She had grown taller, and her figure became slenderer and more elegant. Recently, Granny Yan had even chosen a prescription from the palace to help her recuperate, so Qu Moying appeared to radiate a special aura like jade now.

She was even more outstanding than before.

Her skin was as fair as jade, and her face was tender and pink. Her dark hair was tied up high. The pair of pearl earrings and pearl hairpins she wore were both faint purple. Although the pearls were small, they matched the clothes very well, making her look even more charming.

The belt she wore was also light purple. Its color was really light, but its purple color could be seen if one took a closer look, and it matched her clothes well.

The most eye-catching accessory she wore was the small jade fan with a purple tassel on her slender waist. It was chic and elegant, making Qu Moying look much nobler.

Moreover, Qu Moying's conduct and bearing were eye-catching. People would be amazed by her with just a glance and know that she was a beautiful lady.

Looking at Qu Moying, Granny Yan kept smiling and nodding. She felt she had good taste because the things she picked were in line with Qu Moying's status and were also elegant and decent.

After dressing up, Qu Moying went to report to the Old Lady that she was leaving for the gathering. Seeing Qu Moying, the Old Lady also smiled. She let Qu Moying twirl twice to take a better look at her. Then, she let Qu Moying go with satisfaction.

Qu Moying brought two senior maids and two junior maids with her, and everything she might need was ready.

They walked out in a group. Unexpectedly, they saw Qu Qiuyan at the inner gate.

Qu Moying slightly bowed to her and said, "Greetings, Third Sister."

Qu Qiuyan sized up Qu Moying with an unfriendly gaze as she snorted, "Moying, are you going to the gathering? I heard that it is held in Grand Princess Changyu's mansion. I wonder if Grand Princess Changyu knows that you are the one who is going to attend the gathering!"

Qu Qiuyan had already known about this matter for a few days and was very angry.

Qu Moying raised her head and smiled. "Third Sister, you can also go if you want!"

Grand Princess Changyu's mansion only sent one invitation card over, which meant that only one lady from Qu Mansion was invited, so how could she go with Qu Moying together? If Qu Qiuyan were to attend the gathering, she would be humiliated.

Qu Qiuyan said arrogantly, "Moying, you are quite lucky. Grandmother is partial to you and gave you the invitation card, so you are naturally the one to attend it. I hope you can have the last laugh."

"Third Sister, thank you for your kindness. Since you will not be there, I believe I will be fine." Qu Moying said indifferently and walked straight out. When she passed Qu Qiuyan, she deliberately glanced at her with endless ridicule, almost making Qu Qiuyan lose her temper.

Qu Qiuyan glared at the receding figure of Qu Moying and gritted her teeth.

Qing Mei cleverly comforted her, "Lady, don't be angry. In the future, you will definitely do better than Fourth Lady. Second Young Master is still waiting for you. Lady, do you want to go over now?"

Qu Qiuyan was originally going to East Mansion to see Qu Mingcheng, but she deliberately came here because she wanted to see how Qu Moying dressed. In her opinion, others would laugh at Qu Moying no matter how she dressed up because she had never attended such gatherings, so how could she know what to dress?

She didn't expect Qu Moying to dress so well that even she was stunned, which also made her even more resentful.

"Let's go!" Qu Qiuyan gritted her teeth and turned her gloomy gaze to Qu Moying's back, and she fumed again.

Qu Qiuyan thought she was the noblest lady in Qu Mansion, and she behaved the best outside. But now, she could only stay in the mansion, whereas Qu Moying was going to attend the gathering. She couldn't accept it.

She forcefully suppressed the anger in her heart. Qu Mingcheng had told her to be patient. Thinking of his words, Qu Qiuyan turned around and left. Her grandmother and her father were both on Qu Moying's side, she had better listen to her brother and be more careful...

The carriage had already been waiting at the entrance of the mansion. Qu Moying and four maids got on the carriage together. This carriage was much more spacious than the usual ones. It was the one that Old Lady usually took when she went out.

It was spacious even for five people.

The carriage went all the way to Grand Princess Changyu's mansion. Although Grand Princess Changyu married Marquis Jingyang, they usually lived with their children in Grand Princess Changyu's mansion.

Grand Princess Changyu had a son and a daughter. Her son was Young Master Jingyang. Her daughter was Prefectural Princess Xiangrong, and this title was bestowed from the palace at her request. Prefectural Princess Xiangrong was said to be extremely outstanding.

The carriage drove past a few streets before finally arriving in front of Grand Princess Mansion. An old maid was already waiting there, and she walked up to the carriage and asked.

"May I ask which mansion you are from?"

Yu Dong lifted the curtain and said to the old maid outside, "We are from Vice Minister Qu's Mansion."

"So, it's Fourth Lady Qu. Please come with me." The old maid had seen the name list and knew which young ladies were coming. Hearing Yu Dong's words, she immediately knew it was Qu Moying in the carriage. As she spoke, she curiously looked inside the carriage. Qu Moying was the most controversial one and had eye disease, so the old maid was curious about her appearance.

Yu Dong raised his eyebrows and glared at the old maid, which forced the old maid to look away...

The old maid lowered her head in embarrassment. Previously, she didn't pay enough respect to Qu Moying because she thought Qu Moying was just the daughter of a Vice Minister, which was why she impolitely looked at Qu Moying. However, she didn't expect Qu Moying's maid to be so fierce that she dared to glare at her.

The old maid pretended not to notice Yu Dong's glare and lowered her head to avoid meeting Yu Dong's eyes. Then, she continued to lead the way with a smile but did not dare to be disrespectful to the young lady in the carriage anymore.

The carriage entered Grand Princess Changyu's mansion through the side door and arrived at the parking lot after making a turn. A few carriages had already been parked there, and two ladies were getting off the carriages. After looking at each other, they greeted softly and walked to the inner yard together.

They behaved intimately and naturally. Obviously, they were close friends.

Qu Mansion's carriage stopped. Yu Dong got down first, followed by Yu Chun with a qin box in her arms. Then, the two junior maids got down as well. Finally, Qu Moying got off the carriage by holding Yu Dong's hand.

Yu Dong took the qin box from Yu Chun, and he would be holding it!

Hearing the noise on their side, the two young ladies who were walking forward turned their heads and looked over. From their angle, they only saw the slim back of Qu Moying, who was listening to Yu Dong telling the two junior maids what to do next.

Seeing Qu Moying's dress, the two ladies were somewhat amazed. Qu Moying's dress and temperament were obviously better than normal ladies. The two ladies looked at each other. They could not figure out which lady who came today would have such a temperament.

However, they did not know Qu Moying. They turned their heads and walked inside while guessing who the lady was. They made a lot of guesses, but neither of them thought that the lady was Qu Moying, who had eye disease and couldn't face strong light.

After Yu Dong gave the order, Qu Moying led him and Yu Chun while following the old maid who was leading the way.

At this time, the old maid had learned her lesson. She no longer looked at Qu Moying rudely. On the way, she would introduce the view for Qu Moying whenever she saw Qu Moying stop.

The scenery in Grand Princess Changyu's mansion was indeed beautiful. The mansion was much bigger than Qu Mansion, and the pavilions and towers here were spacious and made people feel more relaxed. Qu Mansion's scenery was also beautiful, but the space was a bit limited, and the vision wasn't wide enough.

Qu Mansion's foundation was still too weak. It couldn't even compare with some of the old aristocratic families, not to mention a princess' mansion.

Suddenly, Qu Moying stopped in her tracks and landed her gaze on the edge of a tower's eave.

She felt that the tower looked familiar. She once saw it in a picture, but now it was built into a real object.

It was a new tower, not big but was built delicately. It had eight edges, but it wasn't a regular tower. There were some walking beasts carved on the eight edges. The edge Qu Moying was facing had a glutton carved on it. It had a sheep's body and a human face. Under its armpit, there were tiger teeth and human claws. It had a big head and a big mouth. It was the Taotie among the nine sons of the dragon.

In fact, Taotie was rarely carved on the edges. It would sometimes be carved, but it would be carved behind other beasts. After all, it was said to be a greedy beast.

On the other hand, Taotie was once an auspicious beast of the previous dynasty, so it was unpopular in the current dynasty. It was rare to see Taotie being carved first in the buildings.

The old maid puffed out her chest and proudly pointed at the tower. "This is the tower that our Young Master got people to build. The Crown Prince has also seen it. He quite fancied it and said that he also wanted to build such a tower in Eastern Palace."

Qu Moying asked after a moment of silence, "The Crown Prince likes it too?"

"Yes, the Crown Prince said that he really liked its design. He even asked our Young Master to give him the design paper. I heard it is about to be built in Eastern Palace in a few days." Even the Crown Prince liked this tower. Thinking of this, the old maid became prouder, almost appearing complacent.

"Where did your Young Master get the design paper for this tower?" Qu Moying seemed to ask casually, but she clenched the round silk fan in her hand but soon relaxed after a while.

She slightly curled up her lips and thought to herself, "There aren't so many whys. I'm overthinking."

"What does Pei Luo'an have to do with me? Even if the design paper of it looks like the one I drew for fun before, so what? The answer doesn't really matter."

"I don't know. I guess our Young Master paid a high price to hire someone to draw it. He was excited after getting the design paper, and he specially let people build this tower here." The old maid shook her head. She had only heard about it and didn't know where exactly the Young Master got the design paper.

But she was not completely ignorant of it, so she added a few more details, indicating that she knew something.

After she finished speaking, she saw Qu Moying turn around and walk away leisurely without any compliments. Just now, she clearly saw Qu Moying's surprised face. In the past, those young ladies who came here and saw the tower would ask her about it. When they knew it had something to do with the Crown Prince, they would definitely be impressed and ask a few more questions.

They would even take the chance to ask whether the Crown Prince would come or when he would come. However, this Qu Moying seemed to have no interest in it.

She was really different from the other young ladies!

With this thought in mind, the old maid turned around and chased after Qu Moying, continuing to lead the way in the front.

The curtain on the second floor of the tower was lifted up. A handsome man stood in front of the window. He looked somewhat sick, but he was still noble and gentle. His light-yellow brocade robe showed his identity. He was the Crown Prince, Pei Luo'an, and beside him stood a tall young master.

He was Zhao Qingxuan, Grand Princess Changyu's only son and Young Master Jingyang. He was a handsome young man, not inferior to the Crown Prince in terms of facial features, and even a little more heroic. The royal family members were all good-looking. Moreover, Marquis Jingyang was a rare talent when he was young, and his son was even more outstanding.

Pei Luo'an's eyes fell on Qu Moying's back. When he lifted the curtain just now, Qu Moying had already turned around. Now, he could not recognize who she was from her back. Although Qu Moying's eye veil was slightly fluttering with the wind, it was of the same purple color as the clothes, so he just thought it was a decoration although he noticed it.

Many noble ladies were coming today, and many of them were specially dressed up.

Seeing Pei Luo'an looking at Qu Moying's back silently, Zhao Qingxuan smiled and teased. "Your Highness, do you take a fancy to this young lady?"

He was Grand Princess Changyu's son, and his status was not ordinary. He was about the same age as the princes, and they were cousins. They grew up together and had a close relationship, so it was natural for him to joke with the Crown Prince.

Pei Luo'an frowned slightly, deep in thought.

When he lifted the curtain just now, he almost thought the lady was Ji Hanyue. Although her figure and face were different from Ji Hanyue, her bearing and manner easily reminded him of Ji Hanyue. Was it that all the noble ladies acted similarly after practicing royal etiquette and rules?

Pei Luo'an couldn't figure it out for a moment. He just looked at Qu Moying's back, deep in thought.

Hearing Zhao Qingxuan's words, he smiled bitterly, shook his head, and said helplessly, "How is that possible? My marriage is not something I can decide right now."

After saying that, he turned around and sat down in the chair in the middle. He picked up the teacup at hand and took a sip. The tea was his favorite Longjing, but it tasted much thicker than usual, so much so that it felt a little bitter today.

He played with the cup in his hand for a moment and put it down.

"Your Highness, how could it be? If even you couldn't decide your marriage, how desperate will I be? You see, my mother asked me to sit here to watch the ladies. If I take a fancy to any lady, she will propose marriage to her family for me. It seems that she will be satisfied no matter whom I like. Am I that bad? She seemed to get enough of me."

With a helpless smile on his face, Zhao Qingxuan sat down and sighed heavily, "Your Highness, no matter whom you will marry, at least you have once married someone you like. As for me, I still can't find a suitable one."

Thinking about how his mother forced him to watch here in stealth to choose a wife, Zhao Qingxuan felt unhappy. He was actually younger than the princes and really wasn't that eager to get married so early.

Pei Luo'an's eyelids twitched as he heard Zhao Qingxuan mention Ji Hanyue. He said, "Why don't you try to pick someone? I can't give you any advice. I heard that the noble ladies coming today all have a good status. If you take a fancy to any of them, Grand Princess will definitely be happy."

"But I don't like any of them. Didn't you also see a few ladies just now? They were pretentious. Some of them seemed to notice us, so they walked really quietly and even didn't want to leave. The so-called distinguished families' ladies are boring! Really boring!"

Zhao Qingxuan let out a sigh and leaned back, feeling extremely depressed.

Suddenly, he saw Pei Luo'an slowly lower his head and seemed to be thinking about something. He rolled his eyes, leaned over to Pei Luo'an, and whispered, "Your Highness, I think the young lady in purple just now is not bad. Although we only saw her back, she looked quite elegant. Judging from her silhouette, she must be a rare beauty. Why don't you pick her as your extra option?"

He asked Pei Luo'an to pick an extra option because he knew that Pei Luo'an was probably going to marry Liu Jingyu, but the Empress hadn't made up her mind yet.

Zhao Qingxuan actually didn't like Liu Jingyu. Previously, Liu Jingyu wanted to marry Lord Jing, another cousin of his. He thought Liu Jingyu really thought too highly of herself. How dared she pick among princes? Who did she think she was?

Zhao Qingxuan wouldn't hesitate to make things difficult for her!

Pei Luo'an sighed. "There's no need. Anyway, they are all the same. It's meaningless to choose one more. I will just wait for Mother Empress' decision! I will listen to her. She can choose anyone for me. I don't care!"

His words were so sad that even Zhao Qingxuan couldn't help but look dejected.

Looking at Pei Luo'an, he couldn't help but want to say something...

Chapter 370 A Sample Built for the Crown Prince's Reference

There were no outsiders at this time, so Zhao Qingxuan boldly asked, "Your Highness, are you really going to marry County Lady Jingyu?"

Pei Luo'an nodded. "It is what Mother Empress wants."

"Did you... really go to hang Love Lanterns with her?" Zhao Qingxuan continued to ask. Many aristocratic families knew about this matter, and he naturally had heard his mother talk about it.

Pei Luo'an said calmly, "Yes."

"But didn't you say... that you were deeply in love with the ex-Crown Princess?" Zhao Qingxuan stuttered, and his face turned red.

"It was Mother Empress' idea... I have to listen to her." Pei Luo'an's face darkened. He looked at a corner of the window and smiled bitterly.

"But... but County Lady Jingyu used to be with..." Zhao Qingxuan stopped before finishing his words. He did not dare to say it out bluntly.

The marriage between Liu Jingyu and Lord Jing had once been discussed, but the two sides didn't reach an agreement in the end. In this regard, Liu Jingyu did nothing wrong.

"Alright, let's stop talking about it. I know, but I don't want to know. Hanyue has been gone. Marrying anyone makes no difference to me." Pei Luo'an seemed to know what Zhao Qingxuan wanted to ask. His words carried so many meanings that Zhao Qingxuan had to ponder them over and he finally gave up on saying what he wanted to say next.

Zhao Qingxuan thought to himself, "The Crown Prince has already made it very clear. Since even I know it, how could he not know?"

Zhao Qingxuan stopped talking about Liu Jingyu but reminded Pei Luo'an of another matter, "Your Highness, the matter between Princess Ji and Qu Mansion also happened on Qixi Festival. The rumors about it are not pleasant to hear."

The Crown Prince himself had nothing to blame, but because of Ji Youran and Liu Jingyu, people kept gossiping and doubting him.

Pei Luo'an said, "She is the ex-Crown Princess' cousin."

Zhao Qingxuan said with a straight face, “Your Highness, you treat her well because she is the ex-Crown Princess’ cousin, but what she did have already affected you.”

Pei Luo’an nodded. “I know. It was indeed because of the ex-Crown Princess that I tolerated her again and again. I have told her to reflect on herself.”

Although Qu Zhizhen and Qu Zhilin, especially the latter, were not high-ranking officials, they were still courtiers. Moreover, Qu Xuexin was forced to be a home-based nun now, which was quite pitiful. Knowing that it had something to do with the Crown Prince’s women, some courtiers were indignant, and some of Qu Zhilin’s colleagues were preparing to condemn the Crown Prince by submitting reports to the Emperor.

Of course, behind these matters, there were Lord Jing’s people fanning the flames.

If no one instigated them, the officials would not dare to criticize the Crown Prince, who was slated to become the future Emperor.

“Alright, you don’t have to worry about my matters. I am here today to help you pick a suitable wife so that Grand Princess won’t be worried about you all the time.” Pei Luo’an shook his head and stopped Zhao Qingxuan from continuing the topic. He smiled and switched the topic.

Seeing that the Crown Prince was not willing to talk about his private affairs, Zhao Qingxuan tactfully stopped. He stood up and walked to the window. The window was covered with a piece of chiffon, and one could see the outside from the inside, but the people outside couldn’t see the inside. The path below was the only way to the inner yard, and here was perfect for observing every young lady.

Of course, some well-informed ladies knew that today’s gathering was related to Zhao Qingxuan’s marriage.

A young lady walked over slowly. She deliberately stopped when she was about to reach the tower and seemed to ask the old maid something. Then, she sat in the pavilion on the side and happily talked with her maids. She looked very charming. If she hadn’t looked up at the tower a few times when leaving, Zhao Qingxuan would have thought she had come over unintentionally.

But he had noticed it, and he was really displeased.

He didn't like this lady because she was too pretentious. He liked straightforward ladies, but he only knew one such kind of lady, and she was not someone he could covet.

He felt depressed as he thought of some things, but then he restrained his thoughts and turned around with a smile. "Your Highness, why don't you come and take a look? Maybe you will see someone you like. Who knows? There are so many beauties in this world. With your status, you can get whatever kind of beauty you want."

Pei Luo'an waved his hand and didn't go over. Then, he looked around the room and said, "This place is not bad, but it needed to be modified. Otherwise, it will not be perfect."

"Your Highness, this is built as a sample for your reference, so it is totally based on the original design paper. If you find any place unreasonable, you can modify it. You are so affectionate to the ex-Crown Princess. If the ex-Crown Princess knew about this, she would definitely be grateful."

Zhao Qingxuan pointed around and stopped in front of the window, "Your Highness, do you think this place should be improved? Isn't it a little small?"

Pei Luo'an nodded. He also felt that the window needed to be bigger, and the protruding part was not enough, which made the window appear not magnificent enough. If he were going to build this tower in his mansion, he would make it more exquisite. "I have brought people here today. They will sort out the places that need to be improved, and I will make some adjustments. Hanyue is no longer around me. This is all I can do for her."

The idea of building such a tower first appeared in Ji Hanyue's mind. At that time, she even drew a design paper, but actually, she only briefly mentioned the idea and drew a simple picture. As for the details, they could not be demonstrated in such an amateur design paper.

However, this tower of Zhao Qingxuan was built according to the design paper. Although some places were unreasonable, as Zhao Qingxuan said, it was just to give Pei Luo'an a reference. Pei Luo'an could modify it if he found any place imperfect. Anyway, Zhao Qingxuan was just an heir-apparent to a marquis. It was his own business if the building was flawed.

Zhao Qingxuan sighed again. "Your Highness, you are so affectionate."

While the two of them were talking, the craftsmen of Crown Prince's Mansion arrived. Zhao Qingxuan invited Pei Luo'an to follow him to another place to rest so as to leave this place for the craftsmen to have a better examination.

Not many people knew that the Crown Prince was at Grand Princess Changyu's mansion, but there were still people who knew this...

After Pei Luo'an and Zhao Qingxuan left, a few other ladies came around the tower. The one in the lead was dressed very well. It was County Lady Jingyu, who had been discussed the most secretly in the capital. After hearing that she was about to become the Crown Princess, the young ladies around her began to curry favor with her.

Although Liu Jingyu was bestowed the title of County Lady, such a title could not compare with the Crown Princess.

Qu Moying followed the old maid inside. After passing the flower gate, she came to a reception hall where a few ladies were seated. Seeing Qu Moying, the ladies were stunned. They immediately knew who she was after seeing the eye veil on her face.

They knew that Qu Moying had an eye disease.

Prefectural Princess Xiangrong was sitting in the middle. Seeing Qu Moying come in, she smiled slightly. She appeared to be quite gentle. "Fourth Lady Qu, here you are. Please take a seat!"

"Greetings, Prefectural Princess Xiangrong!" Qu Moying stepped forward and bowed, ignoring the prying eyes of the people around her. There was not the slightest mistake in her manners.

Such a bearing impressed Prefectural Princess Xiangrong, and the smile on her face became gentler, "Fourth Lady Qu, please save the formalities. Come and sit next to me!"

Prefectural Princess Xiangrong pointed to a chair on the left of her, and it was close to her chair. Seeing her action, the ladies in the reception hall quieted down.

Many of them looked at Prefectural Princess Xiangrong in shock and then looked at Qu Moying suspiciously.

In their opinion, Qu Moying was not qualified to take that seat. It was the seat closest to Prefectural Princess Xiangrong, and it used to be taken by County Lady Jingyu in the past. Now, the other seat next to Prefectural Princess Xiangrong was taken by another Prefectural Princess.

County Lady Jingyu was about to become the Crown Princess, how could she lose her seat?

Was Prefectural Princess Xiangrong mistaken?

Under the confused gazes of the ladies, Qu Moying sat down steadily on the seat with a smile on her face. She was here to blend into the circle of noble ladies, so she could not appear nervous or petty in public. If she hesitated and acted cowardly, she would not be accepted by them and would become a joke in the capital.

She had a big goal. The current situation was an opportunity for her. She would definitely not allow today's event to stand in her way.

Seeing that Qu Moying actually sat down without hesitation, the ladies around could not help but examine Qu Moying once again. Was she too ignorant to be fearful? Or was she confident?

How could Qu Moying be so confident?

However, she was totally different from what the rumors said. If she did not wear an eye veil, they would not believe that she was Qu Moying.

Just based on the way she took her seat, they could tell that she was not an ignorant woman.

They had clearly seen how Qu Moying bowed. Her words and actions were all flawless. They were noble ladies who had practiced their manners of speech and demeanor since childhood, but they were surprised by how Qu Moying behaved. Qu Moying was said to be vulgar because she was brought up in the village, but if such a well-behaved lady was vulgar, almost everyone present today was a vulgar person.

The way Qu Moying walked and bowed really convinced these noble ladies.

As for Qu Moying's appearance, although her eyes were covered by an eye veil, they saw that her lips were pink and tender, and her face was as fair as jade. They could tell that she was not ugly.

It seemed that Qu Moying's stepmother deliberately spread rumors that Qu Moying was neither talented nor beautiful to ruin her reputation and then abandoned Qu Moying.

But Qu Moying's appearance and manners quashed the rumors!

Many ladies felt that they had found out the truth. Qu Mansion's Second Madam Yu was not a good person, and she was still locked up now. If she hadn't given birth to Vice Minister Qu's only son, she might have been divorced long ago...