

Noble Wife 401

Chapter 401 Mrs. Liu and Liu Jingyu

"Lady, as you instructed me, I said that it was my own idea and that I have to ask you for the specific time." Yu Dong reported. He rolled his eyes and continued, "Judging from the lad servant's reaction, I think he didn't know that you have become the owner of Yue's Gold Pavilion. However, he seemed to want to keep you waiting for a while."

Yu Dong was shrewd. He could tell at a glance that the lad servant specially came for him and that he intentionally stalled for time. If the owner of Yue's Gold Pavilion was still Madam Duan, she might really sell the shop because the case couldn't be solved in private in time, and she was suppressed by Old Lady Ji and the second branch.

At most, the other party would compensate her a little, and this case would be considered to be over.

Qu Moying nodded. "When will you reply to him?"

"I said that I would go there two days later. That lad servant asked me to see him directly." Yu Dong said. He decided to take the easy option and act as the other party wanted. Judging from the way the lad servant left, Yu Dong could tell that he was quite satisfied. The lad servant kept telling Yu Dong to go directly to see him if he came to Zhao Mansion.

The lad servant seemed to think that Yu Dong's side wouldn't be able to wait for so long, so he specially told Yu Dong that it was fine if he wanted to come earlier than the appointed time.

Of course, if Yu Dong really went to Zhao Mansion, the other party would definitely make things difficult for him so as to make his Master even more anxious. In the face of such a matter, the one who waited with patience until the last moment would win.

"Return this Buddhist scripture to Madam Duan later and tell her to pay attention if someone visits Earl Ling'an's Mansion. Ask her to help stall for time. If she can't, she must inform me."

Qu Moying reached out and picked up the Buddhist scripture on the table. It was the one sent to Qu Qiuyan by Yu Dong previously. Of course, it was broken. It was sent back by Qu Qiuyan arrogantly,

saying that she already had the real Buddhist scripture that the ex-Crown Princess had used before and that she did not need this wrong one.

However, Qu Moying only smiled. She did not care about it at all.

Now, this Buddhist scripture could be sent back.

Yu Dong complied and left with the Buddhist scripture. Qu Moying frowned. She was still confused. There were still some things that she couldn't think through.

Even though Earl Ling'an's Mansion was not as powerful as it used to be, normal people would not dare to plot against it. But someone did plot against Earl Ling'an's Mansion. Moreover, this person really seemed to have no background in the capital. Even if Xiao played a part in it, how could she find such a daring person so easily? It was more likely that this person took the initiative to find Xiao.

This person made this matter more suspicious.

This matter was really confusing.

A big merchant from the North suddenly came to the capital and seemed to want to go all out to gain a foothold in the capital, and Pei Yuanjun had gone to the North. Could it be that something big happened in the North?

Otherwise, with Pei Yuanjun's identity, he would not have gone to the North for no reason!

However, these things were not something that Qu Moying could manage. She thought for a while and took her mind off the matter. After all, these things were too far away from her.

The most important thing for her right now was Duke Qi's Mansion's invitation. This strange invitation really made her think a lot.

“Mother, what do you think Grandfather is thinking? Why is he going to hold a chrysanthemum viewing party? There is no chrysanthemum now! I heard that there are a few pots in the palace. But how can Grandfather borrow them just to hold such an event?” Liu Jingyu sat in the room and shook the round silk fan in her hand with a frown.

After returning from Duke Qi’s Mansion, she went straight to see her mother, Mrs. Liu.

Mrs. Liu sat opposite her. She was a beautiful woman. She looked like Duke Qi, and one could tell that she was the daughter of Duke Qi at first glance. Her eyes were similar to those of Duke Qi as well as Duke Qi’s Mansion’s Eldest Young Master.

“There is going to be a chrysanthemum viewing party?” Mrs. Liu looked up at Liu Jingyu with a bit of surprise. In Liu Jingyu’s eyes, her mother was the gentlest and the most elegant. However, her father had always been cold to her mother and only pretended to love her mother for show.

This was what Liu Jingyu was most furious about.

“Mother is such a good woman. Why is father not good to mother? Why is he always thinking about Qu Moying’s mother? She has long died! Moreover, what is there to think about such a woman?”

“I’m father’s only daughter! That woman’s daughter is not his daughter!”

Even if Qu Moying was really Minister Liu’s daughter, Liu Jingyu would not take her seriously because Qu Moying was just an ill-bred blind in her eyes. She couldn’t help but get angry every time she thought of this.

Qu Moying’s existence was like a nail in her heart. It was so sharp that it made her feel uncomfortable.

She always felt that the peace and happiness of her family on the surface would be destroyed because of Qu Moying. She had realized long ago that she couldn’t let Qu Moying live.

She thought Qu Moying, the daughter of that woman, should not be born in the first place!

Liu Jingyu answered, "Yes, I don't know what Grandfather is thinking. He has never cared about this kind of thing in the past. Moreover, I saw Eldest Cousin Brother take out a qin music score from Grandfather's study. It's really strange!"

Mrs. Liu looked out of the room thoughtfully. The weather was good, but it was not a good time for chrysanthemums to bloom. Even if there were a few chrysanthemums in blossom, they were not enough for holding a party. Duke Qi did not seem like someone who would pay attention to such a party. Therefore, this thing was really suspicious.

Mrs. Liu said gently, "I will send someone to Duke Qi's Mansion to ask your grandfather what he needs. If he needs chrysanthemums, I will go to the palace to beg the Empress for help. Maybe I can get one or two pots of the flowers."

Recently, the Empress had been sending people to call Mrs. Liu into the palace. They had almost reached an agreement on the marriage, and they were just waiting for a good time.

"Mother, when..." Liu Jingyu blushed and lowered her head shyly. Even though she was facing her mother, she felt a little uneasy when it came to her marriage.

"It should be around this month." Mrs. Liu said. She reached out and patted Liu Jingyu's head. "During this period of time, don't go out and don't clash with that Fourth Lady Qu again. You are too high to be reached by a lowly being like her. She is not on the same level as you at all."

Liu Jingyu had already roughly told Mrs. Liu about what had happened in Grand Princess Changyu's mansion. Mrs. Liu knew that her daughter did not like Qu Moying, so she immediately cautioned her daughter.

Liu Jingyu raised her head and said unhappily, "Mother, I know you are magnanimous, but I can't be so magnanimous. With her identity, how could she have the face to return to the capital? I didn't care whether she was alive or dead when she was in the village. But she is in the capital now. Who knows what will happen?"

Mrs. Liu said softly, "Alright, after you become the Crown Princess, you can deal with anyone you want!"

Such words actually successfully comforted Liu Jingyu. Liu Jingyu's face softened. "Mother, I know. I shouldn't make a move at this time. I overreacted that day."

"It's best that you think this way!" Mrs. Liu said with a smile. She looked very kind as if she would never lose her temper or had no temper at all.

However, Liu Jingyu knew that it was not true. Her mother was really scary when she lost her temper. Liu Jingyu thought that although her father always had a straight face and her mother always smiled, her mother was scarier than her father, which was why she feared and obeyed her mother more.

She believed that her mother's words were true and correct!

As for her father, since he didn't take her seriously, she wouldn't take him seriously either.

"Go back first. Don't think too much. It's not good to think too much!" Mrs. Liu patted her daughter's arm. "In the future, you will be the Crown Princess. Your status will be much higher than Princess Jing, and you have more possibilities!"

"Mother, do you think Lord Jing will be the one who inherits the throne in the end?" Liu Jingyu looked around the room and found that only she and her mother were in the room. She lowered her voice and asked. These words were outrageous, but she wanted to talk this out with her mother.

In fact, she had been hesitating, not knowing whether she was right or wrong to take this step.

"Lord Jing is indeed powerful, but it is mostly because his mother is in favor, which is unstable. If Noble Consort He is not in favor, Lord Jing will only be an ordinary prince. However, the Crown Prince will always be the Crown Prince. The Empress is always in charge of the harem. It doesn't matter whether the Emperor dotes on her or not. As long as she is the Empress, the Crown Prince will always be the Crown Prince."

Mrs. Liu slowly and reasonably analyzed.

Liu Jingyu was relieved. She had always been convinced of her mother. She nodded. "Mother, a few days ago, Lord Jing Mansion even sent me a gift. Do you think I should send something in return?"

In the past years, Lord Jing Mansion had sent gifts over, and Liu Jingyu always sent gifts in return. She even specially prepared some small gifts, which seemed to be considerate. Although the two of them did not say anything, their feelings were conveyed by the gifts.

"Of course, you should send gifts in return. Since Lord Jing still has feelings for you and is willing to send you gifts, you naturally have to reciprocate. Just send him gifts as you did in the past!"

Mrs. Liu smiled.

These words sounded a bit strange, but Liu Jingyu nodded and revealed a shy smile on her face. She lowered her head slightly and pulled the fan in her hand, "Yes, Mother. I will go and prepare the gifts later."

"OK!" Mrs. Liu nodded and looked at Liu Jingyu gently. "Did you send a maid to Qu Mansion?"

"Yes, she was the maid you left in Duke Qi's Mansion. I asked Grandmother for her." Liu Jingyu naturally remembered this matter. Her mother said that there was no need to directly use the people around her, so she thought of a way, and that was to find a maid in Duke Qi's Mansion.

Even if Qu Mansion found something weird about the maid, they wouldn't be able to track down the real mastermind in the end!

"How is that maid doing? Is she of any use there? If she is of no use, let her come back. There's no need to leave her there." Mrs. Liu seemed to casually mention the maid as she picked up the teacup at hand and took a sip.

"Mother, how could she be useless? She is of good use. Second Young Master Qu has been making good use of her." Liu Jingyu smiled complacently. Suddenly, her eyes lit up as she thought of an idea.

Although she couldn't directly make a move now, she could have her agent in Qu Mansion do it for her...

Chapter 402 Second Young Master Qu Made His Move

On the way back, Yu Dong met Second Young Master Qu, Qu Mingcheng!

Yu Dong's head began to sweat as he walked. Seeing Qu Mingcheng coming over with a lad servant, he hurriedly bowed. "Greetings, Second Young Master!"

Qu Mingcheng had almost recovered from his injury. Seeing that Yu Dong bowed to him, he stopped and looked at Yu Dong's sweaty face. He asked kindly, "Yu Dong, right? Where did you come back from? Why were you in such a hurry? Did something happen?"

Yu Dong answered respectfully, "Yes, I'm Yu Dong. Just now, Fourth Lady ordered me to return the book to Earl Ling'an's Mansion!"

He lowered his head and kept looking at the ground. He was very well-behaved.

"That Buddhist scripture?" Qu Mingcheng asked. Obviously, he had already known about the dispute between his younger sister and Qu Moying.

Yu Dong answered, "Yes, Earl Ling'an's Mansion's Madam Duan said that she lent us the wrong one, so our Lady asked me to return it immediately."

Qu Mingcheng smiled even more gently as he said, "It's not urgent. I don't think you have to go there on such a hot day."

He looked like his father, Qu Zhizhen, who was quite handsome. Otherwise, Little Yue would not have been bewitched by his good looks and thought that he was a handsome and talented young master.

As a maid, it was really difficult for Yu Dong to answer these words, so he simply lowered his head and did not speak.

"I was originally going to see Moying, but I happened to meet you. So, I would like to ask you what exactly happened between Moying and Qiuyan. I heard it was about the Buddhist scripture the ex-Crown Princess used before."

Qu Mingcheng continued to ask gently.

It seemed that Qu Qiuyan had already told on Qu Mingcheng just now, but Qu Mingcheng seemed to be fair because he wanted to hear Qu Moying's account of the event.

Yu Dong was in charge of this matter, so he naturally knew about it. After hearing Qu Mingcheng's question, he immediately told him everything in detail.

He told Qu Mingcheng that Third Lady accidentally broke the Buddhist scripture, and Fourth Lady was frightened and did not know how to deal with it. Later, Earl Ling'an's Mansion's Madam Duan had someone send another copy over and said that the previous Buddhist scripture was not the one that the ex-Crown Princess used. It was just an ordinary copy used by Madam Duan herself.

He said that it was lucky that the Buddhist scripture was used by Madam Duan. Otherwise, it would be a great disrespect to the ex-Crown Princess.

It was a long story, but Yu Dong retold it fluently and quickly because he had a glib tongue.

After knowing the whole story, Qu Mingcheng asked Yu Dong thoughtfully, "So, it's lucky that the Buddhist scripture was used by Madam Duan herself. Otherwise, big trouble would have happened."

His voice was as gentle as ever.

Yu Dong nodded. "Yes."

Qu Mingcheng continued to ask, "Did Moying find her own Buddhist scriptures?"

"I don't know. Not yet, I guess!" Yu Dong hesitated for a moment and answered. He had been running the errands outside just now. If he said he knew, it would sound unreal.

"Did Moying send someone to look for them?"

"Yes, Lady asked Granny Zhou to help her find them, but I don't know if she has found them now." Yu Dong answered honestly and shook his head.

Seeing Yu Dong's reaction, Qu Mingcheng couldn't help but laugh out loud. He looked at Yu Dong with appreciation as he said, "What an honest girl!"

Hearing his words, Yu Dong lowered his head shyly. He seemed to be blushing.

Seeing this, the lad servant behind Qu Mingcheng handed over a pouch to Yu Dong. "This is a reward from Second Young Master to you."

Yu Dong hurriedly bowed. "Thank you, Second Young Master!"

Qu Mingcheng shook his hand, looked at Yu Dong again, and left with the lad servant.

Yu Dong raised his head with a frown. He felt disgusting. He was not a woman. He felt that Qu Mingcheng was really disgusting to be so gentle to a maid.

Besides, he was Qu Moying's maid but not Qu Mingcheng's maid.

With a mocking smile at the corners of his mouth, he turned around and headed to Qianyue House. As soon as he returned to Qianyue House, he reported to Qu Moying about everything. He passed on Madam Duan's words and then talked about bumping into Qu Mingcheng.

"Take a look at what's in the pouch." Qu Moying's expression became strange.

Yu Dong nodded and took out the pouch. He opened it and got annoyed as soon as he saw the item in the pouch. "Lady, it's a pair of earrings!"

As a Master, Qu Mingcheng gave his younger sister's private maid a pair of earrings, which was quite abnormal. Qu Moying sneered. As she expected, Qu Mingcheng had set his eyes on the people around her.

Fortunately, the one he tried to utilize was Yu Dong. Otherwise, it would be easy for him to have his way with this method. However, wasn't it too despicable to use this method on a maid?

In addition to a pair of earrings, there was also a piece of check in the pouch.

Yu Dong held the check and shook it in the air. He laughed mockingly. "Lady, Second Young Master really thinks highly of me. He gives me a check of a hundred tales of silver, which is enough to buy a few maids like me."

It was not expensive to buy maids from servant traders, and it was indeed enough to buy several maids with a hundred tales of silver, so Qu Mingcheng was quite generous.

Qu Moying asked with a smile, "If you were just an ordinary maid, what would you do?"

Yu Dong thought for a moment, and his hand clenching the check trembled. He sneered. "If I were a daring maid, I would accept it. After all, Qing Mei sent gifts on behalf of Second Young Master to me from time to time and implied that Second Young Master had feelings for me. However, I didn't expect Second Young Master to come to me in person."

Qu Moying nodded with a smile. "Maybe Second Young Master is getting anxious!"

If Qu Mingcheng was not anxious, he would not take up the matter personally.

Yu Dong continued to make an assumption, "If I am a coward, I will think of a way to return these things to Second Young Master because if I keep these things without telling you, I will get into trouble easily."

Qu Moying pondered for a moment before asking. "If you accept his gifts but don't go to him, what will he think?"

Yu Dong rolled his eyes and said, "If I accept his gifts but don't do anything, Second Young Master will think that I have feelings for him. Even if I don't have any feelings for him, he will try to make me fall for him."

"Then just keep them for now!" Qu Moying blinked, and her eyes gleamed with a trace of enchanting light, "Let's wait for them to come to you."

Yu Dong understood. "Lady, I get it!"

They looked at each other and smiled. Everything was implied in silence.

As expected, at dusk, when Yu Dong came out of Qu Moying's room, he saw a junior maid waving at him. Seeing that no one was around, Yu Dong walked over.

The junior maid pointed at the gate and said, "Sister Yu Dong, Third Lady's maid, Sister Qing Mei, is here. She said that she has something important to discuss with you."

Yu Dong nodded, looked at the junior maid thoughtfully, and walked out.

Behind the big tree outside the yard, Qing Mei was waiting there with a smile. When she saw Yu Dong coming out of the yard, she hurriedly came out from behind the tree and pointed at herself.

Yu Dong frowned and walked over.

"Sister Yu Dong." Qing Mei smiled warmly as usual and bowed to Yu Dong. Then, she winked mischievously at Yu Dong. "Sister Yu Dong, congratulations!"

Yu Dong asked in surprise, "What for?"

“Sister Yu Dong, are you still hiding it from me?” Qing Mei stood up straight with a smile and carefully observed Yu Dong. Seeing that Yu Dong lowered his head, she guessed that Yu Dong was shy. She lowered her voice and said, “I heard that Second Young Master met you on the way and even rewarded you. You are so lucky. I heard that Second Young Master has always been generous, but he didn’t often reward others.”

Her words were implicative, which could make a normal maid blush.

“What nonsense are you spouting!” Yu Dong reached out to hit Qing Mei. Qing Mei smiled and dodged to the side to avoid Yu Dong’s hand.

“Sister Yu Dong, don’t forget me when you prosper in the future!”

“Don’t talk nonsense. If our Lady hears this, I will be in big trouble!” Yu Dong’s face darkened, and he said uneasily. He twisted the handkerchief in his hands, and it could be seen that he was very hesitant.

“What will happen? This is a good thing. Fourth Lady wants you to live a good life, doesn’t she? I think Fourth Lady is very good to you. Now that you have a way out, Fourth Lady will definitely agree. Even if you directly tell Fourth Lady about this matter, Fourth Lady will not be displeased. She will even send you directly to Second Young Master’s place.”

Qing Mei giggled.

Her words sounded to be reasonable, but she was clearly egging on Yu Dong and making a fool of Qu Moying. How could a lady give her personal maid to her brother? What would others think about this lady if they knew about this matter? They would definitely despise and disdain this lady for doing this!

“I... I don’t think it is a good idea!” Yu Dong shook his head. He didn’t look happy. Instead, he looked worried.

“Why not? What’s wrong with that?” Qing Mei said. She reached out to hold Yu Dong’s hand and shook it. She said warmly, “Sister Yu Dong, tell me what’s the problem. I will help you think of a way. Two heads are better than one. We can figure out the best way together!”

"No... nothing!" Yu Dong shook his head again. His movements were much slower, and he looked like he was hesitating.

"Sister Yu Dong, I have been in the mansion for so long. Since the first time I saw you, I felt like we are fated to be friends. Although I serve Third Lady and you serve Fourth Lady, our friendship is solid. If you have a better future, I will be really happy for you."

Qing Mei said seriously and removed her hands from Yu Dong's arm, "But you still refuse to treat me as your friend after such a long time. I'm really sad."

Then, she turned around and was about to leave!

Yu Dong grabbed her and said anxiously, "I didn't mean that!"

"Since you don't mean that, why are you still hesitating? Is there anything you can't tell me? Although Third Lady and Fourth Lady have some misunderstandings, they are still biological sisters. As their maids, we hope for them to be happy and harmonious. So, why can't you tell me?"

Qing Mei had a glib tongue. Her words were flawless and considerate. If Yu Dong still hid things from her, he would appear to be too hypocritical!

Chapter 403 A Tricky Maid

Yu Dong couldn't help but secretly sigh in her heart, "This maid is really unusual!"

After listening to Qing Mei's words, even he was a bit bewildered for a moment because Qing Mei somewhat got a point.

Yu Dong lowered his head and muttered, "Well, regarding Third Lady and Second Young Master, Fourth Lady is..."

Qing Mei was overjoyed to hear Yu Dong's words. The smile on her face became brighter and warmer. She pulled Yu Dong to sit on a big stone behind the tree and talked to Yu Dong with a sincere look on her face, "Sister Yu Dong, it's inappropriate for me to comment on Fourth Lady and Third Lady... They are sisters. They are not on good terms because they have different characters. Our Lady is going to enter Lord Jing Mansion in the future, and Fourth Lady may have to rely on our Lady in the future. They don't have to be like this."

Yu Dong asked in surprise, "Is it true that Third Lady will enter Lord Jing Mansion?"

Although everyone was saying so, there was no official announcement yet.

"Of course, it's true. Lord Jing has promised our Lady." Qing Mei raised her head and said proudly. She reached out and pulled Yu Dong's sleeve. "Sister Yu Dong, I don't look down on Fourth Lady, but do you think it is possible for Fourth Lady to marry someone better than Lord Jing? The one better than Lord Jing can only be the Crown Prince. It's not good for either of them that she is in a stalemate with Third Lady now!"

Everyone in Qu Mansion knew that the relationship between West Mansion's two young ladies was not good.

"But... but, Third Lady hurt our Lady before." Yu Dong said angrily. As Qu Moying's private maid, he naturally stood on Qu Moying's side.

"I don't think Third Lady really hurt Fourth Lady! Sister Yu Dong, although I haven't been in the mansion for a long time, I have also heard about those things. I don't think Third Lady did those things. At most, they were done by Madam. Now that Madam is grounded, it's better to forget these things. She can't kill Madam as revenge, right?"

Qing Mei said.

Her extreme words made Yu Dong fall silent.

"Think about it. Third Lady listened to Madam before, which was why she had a bad relationship with Fourth Lady. Madam is grounded now, and Fourth Lady may have to rely on Third Lady in the future. If

Fourth Lady doesn't try to build a good relationship with Third Lady, Third Lady will not agree to help her if she needs help in the future."

Qing Mei added.

These words seemed to make sense, but they were actually specious. It seemed that everything that had happened was Yu's idea, and Qu Qiuyan only did as her mother said, which was why she had a bad relationship with Qu Moying. But it was no big deal in the root.

After all, Qu Qiuyan and Qu Moying were sisters.

"But Fourth Lady doesn't like Third Lady." Yu Dong said. Since the topic had been started, it was not difficult to continue.

Qing Mei rolled her eyes and suddenly said, "Sister Yu Dong, we both hope that they can get along with each other. For the sake of the two of them and also the two of us, why don't we think of a way to let them reconcile?"

Yu Dong's eyes lit up. "What good ideas do you have?"

"Listen to me..." Qing Mei leaned over and whispered into Yu Dong's ear. Yu Dong first shook his head, but then he hesitated. It could be seen that he was really impressed by Qing Mei's suggestion.

Seeing his reaction, Qing Mei became more and more excited. She was secretly pleased with herself. She didn't expect this matter to go so smoothly. This matter was a camouflage. She was actually up to something else. She glanced at Yu Dong and sneered in her heart, "How dare such an idiot dream of being together with Second Young Master? Who does she think she is?"

"Second Young Master will not let her off because she is Fourth Lady's private maid!"

"When the time comes, Yu Dong can do nothing but only agree on it..."

“Lady, I heard a maid say that Yu Dong has been talking with Third Lady’s maid, Qing Mei, for a long time. She hasn’t returned yet.”

Yu Chun came into the room with a cup of tea. She said these words uneasily after placing the teacup on the table. Qu Qiuyan’s people were suspicious, so it was better to avoid getting in touch with them.

Qu Moying asked as she was tuning her qin, “Who told you about this?”

“An old maid who guards the gate. She said she had been eyeing Qing Mei and Yu Dong outside. She said that the two of them were talking secretly behind a tree. It seemed that they didn’t want their conversation to be heard, and they seemed to be close to each other.”

Qu Moying said indifferently, “Let that old maid keep an eye on them!”

Yu Chun hesitated. “Lady...”

Qu Moying smiled and turned to look at Yu Chun, “What do you want to say?”

“Lady, I think the maid next to the gate-keeping old maid is suspicious.” Yu Chun said after thinking for a moment. She was not as knowledgeable as Yu Dong, and she was less talented and imposing than Yu Dong.

However, her loyalty was no less than that of Yu Dong. Therefore, she had been observing everyone carefully because she was afraid that someone would hurt Qu Moying. She had followed Qu Moying from an early time and was a real maid. Sometimes, she could see something Yu Dong couldn’t see.

However, she was not sure if she was right. Compared with Qu Moying and Yu Dong, Yu Chun felt that she was much less intelligent, so she was not confident in her words.

“What do you mean?” Qu Moying asked with interest. She got up from the chair before the qin table, washed her hands, and wiped them with a towel.

"I saw that maid said something to Yu Dong just now. After that, Yu Dong left. Before the gate-keeping old maid came over here, I saw this maid standing together with the guarding old maid. I don't understand why a junior maid like her is so free. She was present whenever there was something related to Yu Dong."

Yu Chun frowned in confusion. Then, she asked Qu Moying, "Lady, what do you think?"

"I think you are right!" Qu Moying smiled, her eyes as bright as water. She truly felt that Yu Chun had done very well.

"Lady, do you think I am right?" Yu Chun's eyes also lit up, and she was excited. In her opinion, she must be right because she had received Qu Moying's praise.

Qu Moying smiled and said thoughtfully, "Of course you are right. It seems that the people in our yard are not that trustworthy."

Qu Moying's servants were chosen after she returned to the mansion, but it didn't mean that they were completely loyal, which could be seen from the fact that the maid called Qing Mei had been trying to get close to Yu Dong.

"Yu Chun, go and call Yu Dong back and show him that I am very angry." Qu Moying smiled slightly and blinked twice. Her long eyelashes fluttered.

Since someone was trying to sow discord between her and her private maid, she would act as they wished to see what the other party was up to.

Yu Chun was not stupid. What she needed was self-confidence. After being praised by Qu Moying, she reacted much faster. She immediately understood and clapped, "Lady, I will go and call Yu Dong back now!" Qu Moying smiled and nodded silently.

Qu Moying smiled and nodded silently.

Yu Chun put on a straight face and turned to leave. When she walked out of the main room, everyone in the yard could see that she was unhappy.

She went straight to the gate of the yard. Seeing her coming over, the junior maid next to the gate-keeping maid walked up to her with a smile, "Sister Yu Chun, Sister Yu Dong and the maid Qing Mei are still talking there. Why do they talk so much?"

Everyone in the mansion knew that Qu Moying was not on good terms with Qu Qiuyan, so the servants of these two ladies tried not to get in touch with each other lest they anger the two ladies.

Yu Chun nodded. With a straight face, she walked over to where Yu Dong and Qing Mei were secretly talking. When she reached the tree, Qing Mei saw her and immediately stood up. "Sister Yu Chun, why do you come over so silently? You stood there without making a sound, which gave me a big fright!"

As she spoke, she even intimately tugged at Yu Dong's sleeve. She acted as if she was having a private conversation with Yu Dong and that she was trying to hint Yu Dong to cover it up with her.

Seeing her action, Yu Dong mocked her in his heart. Although Qing Mei was clever, she was still too naive. Her action seemed to be flawless, and it was easy to sow discord between him and Yu Chun. However, one with sharp eyes could tell that her action was too dramatic and pretentious.

Unfortunately, Yu Dong had sharp eyes.

"I just came. I didn't mean to make a sound." Yu Chun said unhappily. Then, she turned to look at Yu Dong, "Yu Dong, you've been out for so long. Lady is looking for you."

She didn't wait for them to say anything and directly turned to leave in a huff.

Seeing Yu Chun act like this, Yu Dong hurriedly stood up to leave.

Qing Mei grabbed Yu Dong again and pointed at Yu Chun's back. "Sister Yu Dong, are you afraid of Sister Yu Chun?"

Yu Dong said, "Yu Chun has been serving our Lady for a long time, so she has a special relationship with our Lady. I served our Lady a little later than her."

"So what? Everyone can see that you are the most capable one. The capable one deserves the better. Having a close relationship with the Master is not enough. Moreover, you also have a special relationship with Fourth Lady. You will have a good future, but you are still wholeheartedly devoted to Fourth Lady. You are not only capable but also loyal!"

Qing Mei pouted with an unconvinced expression.

"Why did you say these? Yu Chun is a good person." Yu Dong frowned, obviously unwilling to hear Qing Mei speak ill of Yu Chun.

Qing Mei patted her own face gently and apologized with a smile, "It's all my fault. You are such a good person. You definitely won't think as I think. Sister Yu Dong, I'll go back first. Don't forget what we have just talked about. We should try to let our ladies be close to each other. Otherwise, it's not good for us and we have to avoid others even if we only want to have a private talk!"

Then, she pointed at Yu Dong's sleeve. Yu Dong subconsciously reached out and pressed the thing in his sleeve.

Her words seemed to prick Yu Dong in the heart. Seeing Yu Dong nod solemnly, Qing Mei felt that it was almost done. She waved to Yu Dong and turned to leave.

After walking away from Qianyue House, Qing Mei did not return to Qu Qiuyan's Furong House. Instead, she went toward the outer yard. After turning a few corners, she saw her destination. Just as she was about to go over, a hand reached out from behind an artificial hill and pulled her in...

Chapter 404 Lord Jing's Jade Pendant Was Missing

The one who pulled Qing Mei away was a lad servant of Qu Mingcheng!

After pulling Qing Mei to the back of the artificial hill, the lad servant asked in a low voice, "How is it? I saw that you had handed the thing over to that maid just now, right?"

In fact, the lad servant had been following Qing Mei, and he had been staring at Qing Mei and Yu Dong from afar, but he couldn't see them clearly because he was a bit far away from them.

Qing Mei said proudly, "Don't worry, I've already handed it over."

"Second Young Master gave this to you!" The lad servant took out a pouch from his pocket. The pouch was bulging, which showed that there were quite a few things in it.

Qing Mei took it and pinched it. She smiled and said, "Thank Second Young Master for me! Many thanks!"

The lad servant said, "You can go back now. I will report this to Second Young Master. If others see you in the outer yard now, there will be some bad rumors again."

"Yes, yes, I will go back immediately!" Qing Mei said with a smile. Then, she turned around and walked back. However, when she turned around, she stole a glance at the lad servant and curled her lips in dissatisfaction slightly. "Second Young Master is interesting. He seems to believe me, but the fact that he asked a lad servant to keep an eye on me shows that he doesn't completely trust me."

She tossed the pouch in her hand in the air, looking quite complacent...

However, she did not know that all of this had fallen into the eyes of Yu Dong, who had been following her all the way here!

"Lady, Qing Mei went to the outer yard, but she was pulled away by someone on her way. It was a lad servant of Second Young Master. After talking with the lad servant, she left with a pouch, which looked the same as the one Second Young Master gave me. It can be seen that they were both the rewards from Second Young Master."

After entering Qu Moying's room, Yu Dong reported to Qu Moying what he saw when he secretly followed Qing Mei all the way just now.

He was not Qing Mei. He had methods to follow someone without being noticed. He followed Qing Mei all the way until the latter returned to Qu Qiuyan's yard.

Qing Mei would never expect that Yu Dong, whom she thought she had instigated, had followed her all the way.

"Lady, I think Qing Mei is very strange!" Yu Dong found out something new. "I don't think that she has much respect for Second Young Master!"

Qu Moying glanced at him and asked, "Why do you say so?"

"I saw her behavior and expression after leaving with the reward. She didn't seem to respect Second Young Master. An ordinary maid will not dare to show contempt to a Master like her." Yu Dong clearly saw a hint of contempt on Qing Mei's face, which an ordinary maid would not dare to show.

"Lady, I heard from Qing Mei that she used to be a maid in another mansion, but she accidentally broke something and was chased out. After that, she was bought by East Mansion. Second Young Master thought that she was good and saw that Third Lady did not have enough maids, so he gave her to Third Lady."

Yu Dong had already investigated Qing Mei's background, which seemed to be normal.

Some strict families were very strict with their servants. If their servants displeased them, they would sell the servants as a punishment. This was not rare in the capital.

"No matter whom she works for, she can't get away with it since she is involved this time!" Qu Moying sneered and looked at the thing that Yu Dong had just taken out.

It was a piece of jade pendant that Qing Mei had given to Yu Dong just now. Qing Mei said it was something that could let Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan reconcile and benefit everyone.

Qu Moying picked up the jade pendant and looked at it carefully. She found that the jade pendant was made of top-quality jade, and it didn't seem to have anything different from an ordinary jade pendant.

"Qing Mei said that this is Third Lady's new jade pendant. She likes it very much. If she finds it missing, she will be anxious. At that time, if you say that you have found it and ask someone to send it to her, Third Lady will definitely thank you. Qing Mei will say something to persuade Third Lady like a peacemaker. Then, you and Third Lady will be reconciled."

Qing Mei mentioned another benefit, but Yu Dong did not bring it up now because he felt disgusted at the thought of it. Qing Mei said that Yu Dong could follow Second Young Master if the two ladies reconciled, and Third Lady would not make things difficult for him in the future.

Hearing Yu Dong's words, Qu Moying frowned. She took a closer look at the jade pendant, but she didn't find anything strange about it. She stood up and walked to the window with the jade pendant in her hand. She narrowed her eyes to look at the jade pendant under the light coming from the window. Then, she found a tiny crack in the middle of the jade pendant, and her eyes became unfathomable.

Qu Moying handed the jade pendant to Yu Dong. "Yu Dong, do you see any words in this?"

Yu Dong took it and looked at it under the light. His eyesight was better than that of Qu Moying, so he immediately saw that there was a small word in the crack.

It was the word "Sheng", which was not so common. Remembering that it was sent by Qu Qiuyan's maid, Yu Dong immediately understood.

"Is it Lord Jing's jade pendant?"

"It should be. They are taking a big risk!" Qu Moying sneered. She took the jade pendant from Yu Dong and took a closer at it. Finally, she confirmed that there was indeed the word "Sheng" carved on it. She got Lord Jing's jade pendant, so the following part of the scheme would be unfolded with Lord Jing as an excuse.

It was Lord Jing's belonging. It belonged to the royal family and also to a man. Qu Moying had nothing to do with Lord Jing, but she got his jade pendant now. Should she say that she picked it up somewhere?

If she picked it up, where did she find it? Recently, Qu Qiuyan had rarely come out of her Furong House, and Qu Moying had not visited her either. Therefore, the origin of this jade pendant would be suspicious. However, was only this jade pendant involved?

"Father, it's a big deal. What should we do?" Qu Mingcheng stood in front of Qu Zhizhen, his face full of worry, "Qiuyan is so anxious now. If it is really lost, she will be in big trouble!"

Qu Zhizhen's face was gloomy. "How did she lose it?"

Qu Mingcheng frowned. "I don't know. Qiuyan has been staying in the mansion for the past few days. She has only paid respects to Grandmother these days. Other than going to Grandmother, the only person she saw might be Moying. But if Moying finds it, I think she will tell Qiuyan."

Qu Zhizhen stared at him with a meaningful look.

"Do you think it is in Moying's place?"

Qu Mingcheng shook his head. "I don't think so. But perhaps a servant in the mansion accidentally picked it up and didn't hand it in. He or she might think it was an unexpected fortune."

His words made Qu Zhizhen's expression ease up a bit. Qu Zhizhen nodded in agreement.

Qu Mingcheng asked anxiously, "Father, what should we do now? Lord Jing will come to our mansion tomorrow. When the time comes, he will probably ask us about the jade pendant. If we can't take it out, what should we do?"

The jade pendant was accidentally dropped by Lord Jing in Qu Mansion that day. Lord Jing had sent someone to Qu Mansion to ask about the jade pendant, but they didn't send the jade pendant back to him because he was going to come to Qu Mansion tomorrow. They could just return it to him tomorrow. It was temporarily kept by Qu Qiuyan, but Qu Qiuyan actually lost it.

This was not just Qu Qiuyan's matter alone. How were they supposed to find the jade pendant before tomorrow?

Qu Zhizhen stood up and said, "Search each yard one by one. I'll go and inform your grandmother so that she won't be alarmed."

Qu Mingcheng asked, "Father, do you want me to do it?"

"You do it. There are only a few places in the mansion. Find out where Qiuyan has been to in the past few days and the people she might meet on the way." Qu Zhizhen looked at the sky outside. It was getting dark, but they had to find the jade pendant.

"Father, should I go to Grandmother's place first or Moying's place first?" These two places were where the jade pendant was most likely to be found.

"I will go to your grandmother's place. You go to Moying's place." After thinking for a second, Qu Zhizhen added, "Take care not to disturb Moying."

Qu Mingcheng nodded. "Father, don't worry. I know. I will inform Moying first."

Seeing that Qu Mingcheng was acting properly, Qu Zhizhen first brought people to check on the Old Lady's yard, while Qu Mingcheng brought some lad servants and old maids over to Qianyue House.

Qu Moying had just finished her dinner when she heard the noise outside the yard. She exchanged a look with Yu Dong and waved her hand. Yu Dong understood and went out to check. After a while, he came back and reported, "Lady, Second Young Master is here. He said that something important is missing. He wants to search all the yards."

Qu Moying asked indifferently, "What is missing?"

Yu Dong answered, "He didn't say what exactly is missing. He just said that it is something important."

Qu Moying stood up and held Yu Chun's hand as they walked out. There were indeed quite a few people in the yard. There were three lad servants and about six old maids. They were clearly here to search the yard.

Qu Mingcheng walked in the middle and cupped his hands towards Qu Moying. He said gently, "Moying, I came in a hurry. Sorry to disturb you. It is truly my fault. However, I have to follow Father's order. Moying, please take a rest in your room. I will leave after searching the servants' rooms. I will apologize to you the other day!"

He made things clear with a few words, and he seemed to be sincere and honest.

Qu Moying sneered in her heart. "The real thief is trying to accuse someone else of the theft!"

"Second Brother, do as you please!" Qu Moying bowed politely. She did not show her emotions. Since it was her father's idea, she could not stop Qu Mingcheng.

Qu Mingcheng ordered Yu Chun, "Yu Chun, help your Lady go in and rest. It will be chaotic outside!"

Yu Chun complied and helped Qu Moying into the inner room. Qu Moying sat down in the main room, picked up the teacup at hand, took a sip, and then slowly put it down. A hint of coldness flashed through her eyes. She was waiting for Qu Mingcheng to come to her...

Qu Mingcheng called out to Yu Dong, who was about to leave with Qu Moying, and said in a gentle voice, "Yu Dong, you are the senior maid of this yard. Take me to look around."

Since he said so, it was inconvenient for Yu Dong to leave. He could only accompany Qu Mingcheng to search from the first room in the east. Granny Zhou came over in a hurry and saw this scene. She hesitated for a moment but still followed them.

Chapter 405 Why Don't We Go and Check Third Sister's Place?

They checked the wing rooms one by one, but they didn't find anything. Finally, they stopped at a wing room, and Yu Dong looked hesitant.

Qu Mingcheng asked gently as usual, "What's wrong?"

"This is my... room!" Yu Dong said timidly, lowering his head.

Qu Mingcheng asked, "Who do you live with?"

"I live here alone." Yu Dong shook his head. According to Qu Mansion's rules, two senior maids shared one room. But Yu Dong lived in a single room because he was actually a man. Therefore, Yu Chun also lived alone.

Qu Mingcheng stopped and asked with a gentler voice, "You live alone?"

"Yes... I live alone. There are many rooms in Qianyue House, so Lady let me and Yu Chun live alone." Yu Dong pinched the handkerchief in his hand with an uneasy and flustered look.

"Go in and take a look!" Qu Mingcheng waved his hand, and two old maids went into the room to check.

Yu Dong carefully followed them in.

The two old maids skillfully searched and soon rummaged through everything. However, although they checked everything, they didn't find any forbidden items in the room. Just as they were about to leave the room, a sharp-eyed old maid saw a pouch hanging behind Yu Dong's bed. They just checked the front of the bed, but they did not notice that there was a pouch tied to the corner behind the bed.

The place where the pouch was placed was suspicious. The old maid walked over and wanted to take a look at the pouch.

The old maid's movement startled Qu Mingcheng. He looked at the old maid and then looked at Yu Dong, whose hands were trembling while holding a handkerchief. He knew that the pouch should be the

one he had given Yu Dong before. He waved his hand and said, "If there's nothing strange, let's go somewhere else!"

The old maid pointed to the back of the bed and said, "Second Young Master, there is something over there..."

"Let's go!" Qu Mingcheng walked out without even looking at the old maid. The old maid thought for a second and decided to let it go. Since Second Young Master didn't intend to check the pouch, she didn't have to insist and offend Fourth Lady's senior maid.

She would pretend not to see it. Anyway, she really didn't see it just now.

They searched the next few rooms one by one, but they did not find anything. However, they did not dare to check Granny Yan's room because Granny Yan used to be a high-grade palace maid, and lowly old maids like them were not qualified to check her room.

The few old maids stood at the door of Granny Yan's room, not daring to enter. Sitting in the room, Granny Yan took a sip of tea and glanced at the old maids.

A lad servant rushed over and drove the old maids away. Then, he bowed deeply to Granny Yan at the door and slowly retreated. This was to give Granny Yan a face and also show his respect for her.

Granny Yan stood up and walked to the window. She looked at Qu Mingcheng in the yard. Qu Mingcheng was young and good-looking. Dressing in a brocade robe, he looked exactly like a handsome young master. His eyes were especially like Yu, and there was a trace of a smile in them. He looked gentle, but there was a hint of slyness deep in his eyes.

Granny Yan had seen many people. Moreover, she used to work in Empress Dowager's palace, so she had seen many people who looked gentle but actually had ulterior motives. Thus, she could tell at a glance that Qu Mingcheng was not as casual as he appeared on the surface. He was targeting Qu Moying.

Fortunately, Qu Moying had already instructed her to sit here quietly and told her that she didn't have to worry about anything else.

The several old maids didn't find anything after checking the rooms in the yard. Qu Mingcheng went to the door of Qu Moying's main room. After thinking for a while, he walked forward. Yu Chun had already seen him inside the room, so she walked forward to lift the door curtain for him.

Qu Mingcheng walked in. Yu Dong hurriedly made a cup of tea and placed it on the table in front of Qu Mingcheng. He hesitated for a moment but still stood in front of Qu Moying. His eyes involuntarily looked at the desk at the window, where the brush, ink, paper, and inkstone that Qu Moying usually used were placed.

Yu Dong took a few more glances at the bottom drawer on the left side of the desk and then quickly looked away as if he was frightened.

Although Yu Dong's movements were short and brief, they fell into the eyes of Qu Mingcheng, who was sitting opposite Qu Moying. He now figured out, "Qing Mei is quite capable. It seems that Yu Dong has put the jade pendant in Qu Moying's room."

Qu Mingcheng said to Qu Moying with a warm smile, "Moying, Qiuyan lost an important item that she is supposed to use tomorrow. Father just went to Grandmother's place to check around, and he asked me to come to your place to have a look. If what I have done just now offended you, please forgive me."

Qu Moying asked indifferently, "Second Brother, what exactly did Third Sister lose? Why do you guys make such a scene and even alarm Grandmother?"

They really made quite a scene and even alarmed Old Lady Qu. Qu Moying was speechless.

"Actually, it's just a jade pendant, but this jade pendant... is not ordinary. Maybe a servant picked it up and thought that it was a common valuable item. Qiuyan hasn't been out for the past few days. Other than going to see Grandmother, she only met you. That's why I came to your yard."

At this time, Qu Mingcheng did not beat around the bush and directly explained his purpose, "Moying, can you let me take a random look at the things in this room? I don't mean that you take the jade pendant, but I'm afraid that there may be some insensible servants who hid it in your room."

Qu Moying's face darkened. "Second Brother, what do you mean? Are you suspecting my two private maids? Or my Nanny?"

They were in Qianyue House's main room. Only Qu Moying's few confidants could enter this room.

Qu Mingcheng said with an apologetic smile, "Moying, I have no choice but to do so. I actually don't want to think this way, but Father has already gone to Grandmother's place... He was there to check Grandmother's room. If I don't search your room, it will be difficult for both of us to explain to Father!"

He was putting pressure on Qu Moying with Qu Zhizhen and the Old Lady.

"Second Brother, did Third Sister really lose the jade pendant?" Qu Moying asked with a cold expression and pursed her lips tightly.

Qu Mingcheng laughed. "Of course, she lost it. If she didn't lose it, why did she say that she lost it?"

"It's hard to say. Previously, I borrowed a Buddhist scripture from Earl Ling'an's Mansion and sent it to Third Sister, but it was broken after it was sent to Third Sister's yard. What happened next confused me. Earl Ling'an's Mansion's Madam Duan actually said that the Buddhist scripture she lent me was the wrong one. It was not the one that was used by the ex-Crown Princess. I didn't expect it to turn out this way."

Qu Moying said coldly.

"Moying, if you don't believe her, let's go to Qiuyan's place to take a look if I find nothing here in your room. Is this OK?" Qu Mingcheng acted like he was trying to calm things down.

Qu Mingcheng was just trying to appease Qu Moying. He believed that the jade pendant was in Qu Moying's place. He had deliberately shown his affection to Yu Dong before. At the very beginning, he asked Qing Mei to convey his feelings to Yu Dong. Later, he sent Yu Dong the pouch. Yu Dong did not reply after receiving the pouch, which was taken as a sign of accepting Qu Mingcheng's offer.

After that, Qu Mingcheng asked Qing Mei to bring the jade pendant and let Yu Dong hide it. Qing Mei claimed that it was for the good of Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan and also for the good of Yu Dong. If Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan were at odds, it would be difficult for Yu Dong, Qu Moying's maid, to go and serve Qu Mingcheng, who was Qu Qiuyan's biological brother. Even Qu Qiuyan might not accept such a thing, let alone Qu Moying.

The traps were all set, and he was waiting to catch his prey.

Qing Mei told Yu Dong to hide the jade pendant in Qu Moying's room as soon as possible. Otherwise, it would be difficult for him to defend himself if anyone saw the jade pendant in his room. She told Yu Dong to put the jade pendant in a random spot in the yard after today and let other maids or old maids pick it up and give it to Qu Moying, who would return it to Qu Qiuyan. After that, they would be reconciled.

Qing Mei repeatedly warned Yu Dong not to keep the jade pendant because it would be difficult for him to defend himself if anyone saw it.

Since Qing Mei had said so, any sensible person would not keep the jade pendant by their side, and Yu Dong had always been smart and quick-witted by Qu Moying's side.

In fact, this plan was not perfect. There were some flaws in it. However, if a maid tried to reap the benefits by making the two young ladies reconcile with each other, she might be blinded and think that she was doing the right thing. Most importantly, this plan didn't seem to harm Qu Moying at all. It was intended to help Qu Moying in the first place.

Qu Mingcheng felt that it was not so easy to make Yu Dong betray Qu Moying, but it was still feasible to let Yu Dong put something in Qu Moying's room out of "good intentions" and for her own benefit.

Qu Moying raised an eyebrow. "Go to Third Sister's place to see if the jade pendant is there?"

"Yes, as long as it can make you satisfied." Qu Mingcheng said generously as if he only wanted to make Qu Moying happy.

Yu Dong, who was behind Qu Moying, became increasingly uneasy. He looked up at Qu Mingcheng and then looked at Qu Moying's back. He couldn't help but move his feet. It seemed that he was really nervous.

Qu Moying asked calmly, "What if Third Sister doesn't allow us to search her room?"

"I will make her agree!" Qu Mingcheng patted his chest. Qu Qiuyan gave the jade pendant to Qing Mei, and Qing Mei gave it to Yu Dong, so how could it be found in Qu Qiuyan's place?

"Second Brother, since you have said so, you may let your people search my room!" Qu Moying said coldly.

Qu Mingcheng nodded and looked at the old maid beside him. This old maid had followed him in just now. After hearing Qu Mingcheng's instructions, she bowed to Qu Moying and carefully began to check around.

Qu Moying looked at her coldly and did not say that she wanted to leave. Qu Mingcheng sat to the side with a smile and seemed to have forgotten to remind Qu Moying to leave.

In fact, there were not many things in the outer room. The old maid checked it in a few seconds, but there were a few closed drawers under the desk in front of the window. After looking at the things on the table, the old maid turned back to look at Qu Mingcheng. Her meaning was very obvious.

Chapter 406 Where Are the Words on the Jade Pendant?

"Fourth sister, may I take a look at the drawer beneath the table?" Qu Mingcheng asked politely, turning to Qu Moying.

"Since you've come this far, just take a look!" Qu Moying remained unfazed and casual in her response.

Qu Mingcheng nodded at the Granny.

The Granny deftly opened the first drawer, inspected it briefly, and found nothing out of the ordinary. Then she proceeded to open another drawer, followed by shaking her head.

“Miss, there are some of your belongings in here... Some items you’ve collected that are not convenient for others to see.” When reaching the last drawer, Yu Dong suddenly took a decisive step forward, blocking the Granny, her face filled with nervousness as she spoke hesitantly.

Her actions only served to further convince Qu Mingcheng that this particular drawer was where the jade pendant was stored.

“What kind of things does your lady find inconvenient for others to see?” Qu Mingcheng remained composed and turned to Qu Moying for clarification.

Qu Moying seemed unable to come up with an answer at the moment and looked up at Yu Dong.

As everyone’s gaze fell upon her, Yu Dong grew increasingly anxious. She reached out and pressed against the table, as if seeking strength. Her eyes pleaded with Qu Mingcheng as she spoke with a hint of desperation, “Second Young Master, these are some ornaments left behind by the previous lady. They were meant to be placed inside the dressing table, but it hasn’t been tidied up yet, so they were temporarily stored here. If anything were to be damaged, it wouldn’t be good!”

“Fourth sister, I will ensure extra caution, and if anything is accidentally damaged, I will compensate you twofold,” Qu Mingcheng reassured Qu Moying gently.

This was an indication that he was determined to investigate further.

Yu Dong’s face turned pale, and she tightly grasped the handkerchief in her hand.

“Let’s step aside for now,” Qu Moying pondered for a moment before suggesting.

“My lady...” Yu Dong’s voice involuntarily became louder.

"Yu Dong, step aside!" Qu Moying's face darkened as she gave Yu Dong a skeptical look and waved her hand.

Yu Chun, who was standing nearby, approached and pulled on Yu Dong's sleeve, leading her away from the table.

The Granny cautiously opened the final drawer. Since Yu Dong had mentioned it, the items inside must be valuable, and she didn't dare to damage anything.

The drawer slowly opened, and from Qu Mingcheng's perspective, the first thing that caught his eye was a jade pendant. Immediately, his expression changed. "Fourth sister, what does this mean?"

The Granny also reached out to retrieve the jade pendant, intending to hand it to Qu Mingcheng, but it was snatched away by Yu Dong. "This is our lady's jade pendant!"

She said, hiding it behind her.

This attempt to conceal the truth amused Qu Mingcheng, and his smile turned cold as he looked at Qu Moying. "Fourth sister, where did you get this jade pendant? Why does the third sister's jade pendant end up in your possession?"

Based on Yu Dong's previous behavior, he was convinced that this jade pendant was the one he had Qing Mei deliver.

At first glance, he had suspected as much.

"What do you mean, second brother?" Qu Moying's expression grew peculiar. "Are you suggesting that I stole the third sister's jade pendant? I haven't been to the third sister's yard recently, so how could I have obtained her jade pendant?"

"Fourth sister, given the circumstances, is there any point in denying it?" Qu Mingcheng furrowed his brow, clearly displeased. "You may not have gone there, but your maid did!"

He then shifted his gaze towards Yu Dong, a hint of threat in his eyes. "Yu Dong, why don't you tell us what really happened?"

"Second Brother, your words are really funny. Are you sure that I took Third Sister's jade pendant, and it's such a mediocre one at that?" Qu Moying smiled and asked calmly.

"Who knows what you were thinking? Perhaps you believe this jade pendant holds special significance, or maybe it's because Third Sister has treasured this jade pendant." Qu Mingcheng said coldly, his gaze carrying a hint of aggression. "Yu Dong, tell me, did you steal this jade pendant?"

"Second... Second Young Master..." Yu Dong's face turned pale.

"Speak up. Since you gave it to your lady, there must be a reason. If your explanation is reasonable, I will ask Father to spare you this time. But if you can't clarify the situation, don't blame me for being harsh." Qu Mingcheng asserted with a cold and imposing manner.

In this situation, anyone with intelligence would shift the blame onto Qu Moying. After all, if such a matter fell on Qu Moying's shoulders, it might not be a big deal, but if it involved a maid girl, it could be fatal.

Observing Qu Mingcheng's certainty that Yu Dong was responsible, Qu Moying smiled instead of getting angry. "Second Brother, I know you are the brother of Third Sister, and you naturally stand on her side. But by acting like this, aren't you afraid of Grandmother and Father's reprimands?"

"I am Third Sister's brother, as well as your brother, so I won't favor anyone. I even agreed earlier that if the jade pendant couldn't be found with you, we would go and search in Third Sister's yard. But now? How did you repay my trust? As for Father and Grandmother, you need not worry. Once they learn about your actions, they will both be furious."

Qu Mingcheng responded.

"Second Brother, are you accusing me of taking Third Sister's jade pendant?" Qu Moying asked.

"The evidence is right here. Do you still want to argue? Please explain why you took Third Sister's jade pendant." Qu Mingcheng's gaze silently swept over Qu Moying's face. Although he couldn't see her eyes, he could observe her composed demeanor, which made him slightly uneasy.

Regardless, the facts were clear. Did Qu Moying truly have another way out? This time, no matter what, Qu Moying had to face the consequences.

"Second Brother, I didn't take Third Sister's jade pendant. Since you promised earlier to take me to Third Sister's residence to investigate, let's go!" Qu Moying stood up.

"What nonsense! The jade pendant is clearly with you. Why would we need to check Third Sister's place?" Qu Mingcheng angrily slammed his hand on the table, causing the teacups to jump and spill tea, emitting steam on the tabletop.

In an instant, all the maids and servants in the room lowered their heads, and the atmosphere grew tense.

"Second Brother, are you deliberately causing trouble for me in order to help Third Sister?" Qu Moying's face darkened. "In that case, let's go see Grandmother now and settle this matter."

"Fine. You tell the maid girl to hand me the jade pendant, and we will go together to explain things to Grandmother and Father." Qu Mingcheng confidently stood up, unafraid and annoyed.

"Yu Dong, give the jade pendant to this Granny," Qu Moying coldly instructed Yu Dong. Then she looked at Qu Mingcheng and proposed, "Second Brother, let the Granny hold onto the jade pendant. Neither of us will touch it to avoid any further complications. How about that?"

"That works!" Qu Mingcheng nodded.

Accompanied by their respective entourages, the two of them headed towards the courtyard of the Old Lady.

The news had already spread out, and when she saw them approaching, Granny Wu was already waiting by the courtyard gate, ready to lead them in.

The Old Lady, seated above, had a furrowed brow. Qu Zhizhen, sitting next to her, didn't have a pleasant expression either. He glanced at his son as he entered and then at Qu Moying. His lips tightened, and his brow furrowed. This matter was difficult to handle.

The two individuals entered and first paid their respects to the Old Lady and Qu Zhizhen. Then they took their seats on chairs to the side.

Qu Mingcheng first recounted the events that had just taken place and mentioned that Yu Dong, the maid by Qu Moying's side, had snatched the jade pendant and hidden it behind her, clearly displaying guilty behavior.

After Qu Mingcheng finished speaking, the Old Lady looked at Qu Moying and asked, "Ying, is this how it happened?"

The Old Lady couldn't believe that Qu Moying would do such a thing!

"Grandmother, Second Brother's arrival today was suspicious. He claimed that Third Sister had lost her jade pendant and insisted on searching my room. Then he found a jade pendant and accused me of taking her pendant. He even suggested that if it wasn't me who took it, I might have sent someone to take it. Since I had previously sent Buddhist scriptures to Third Sister and had some interaction with her, he shifted the blame onto me."

Qu Moying said coldly.

Qu Zhizhen remained silent, his gaze shifting between his two children as he scrutinized their expressions.

"Mingcheng, how do you know that this jade pendant belongs to Yan?" The Old Lady furrowed her brow, looking displeased as she found it hard to believe the situation.

“Grandmother, you will know once you see it!” Qu Mingcheng said confidently.

The Old Lady observed him closely, nodded, and instructed Granny Wu to take the jade pendant.

Granny Wu took the jade pendant and handed it to the Old Lady. After a quick glance, her frown deepened, and she passed it to Qu Zhizhen without a word.

Qu Zhizhen took the jade pendant and examined it. He fell silent for a moment, then raised his gaze to Qu Mingcheng and asked, “How do you know that this jade pendant belongs to your third sister?”

The jade pendant appeared ordinary, not of the highest quality. Qu Zhizhen had only heard that Lord Jing had lost the jade pendant without any description of its appearance, which led him to doubt.

“Father, if you hold it up to the light and examine the hole where the pendant is attached, you will find words inside,” Qu Mingcheng suggested.

Qu Zhizhen held it up, inspected it against the light, but found nothing. He tried again, still unable to find anything. He looked at Qu Mingcheng and said, “There are no words inside.”

“That’s impossible... how could it be?” Qu Mingcheng involuntarily exclaimed, realizing his mistake in speaking too soon. He quickly corrected himself, “Father, could you take a look? I didn’t check it because the maid wouldn’t let me.”

Qu Zhizhen handed the jade pendant to Qu Mingcheng, who examined it and then held it up to the light. His expression froze.

Doubting it, he took a few steps forward, standing beneath the room’s central lamp, and carefully examined it again. Still, he couldn’t see any words. He began to panic. How could it be without words? He had seen the jade pendant before, and it definitely had words inside. Why were they absent now?

Refusing to believe it, he meticulously inspected every angle, feeling an unsettling sensation in his heart.

Seeing his reaction, Qu Moying sneered inwardly. She had taken this jade pendant from her own collection, which resembled the one Yu Dong had, but it wasn't apparent at first glance.

Since it wasn't the same as the one Qu Qiuyan had, it naturally had no words inside. Even if Qu Mingcheng could stare at it forever, it was still impossible for it to have any words inside...

Chapter 407 The Scene Where the Thief Cries out to Catch the Thief

"What did you discover, Second Brother? Why do you think it's impossible? Have you concluded that the jade pendant is in my possession, or is there another reason?" Qu Moying spoke coldly. "Please explain clearly, what is the truth behind this? Why are you so certain that I took the jade pendant?"

Qu Mingcheng panicked; after all, he was still young and hadn't experienced a situation like this before.

Especially the gazes of the people present, including his own father and grandmother, carried a hint of anger.

Feeling flustered, he suddenly felt the weight of the jade pendant in his hand increase tenfold.

"Fourth Sister, perhaps I made a mistake," Qu Mingcheng said, putting down the jade pendant and stammering.

"Second Brother, if you made a mistake, then you falsely accused me of stealing Third Sister's valuable jade pendant. I wonder if you have also made a mistake regarding this matter. Perhaps Third Sister's jade pendant is still in her courtyard and hasn't been lost at all," Qu Moying sneered, a faint trace of mockery appearing on her lips. "Earlier, you mentioned that if the jade pendant wasn't found with me, you would personally search Third Sister's belongings. I wonder if you still intend to keep your word?"

"Of course... of course, it still counts!" Qu Mingcheng had no choice but to force himself to respond. At this moment, all he wanted was to escape. His gaze shifted and fell upon Yu Dong, who stood timidly by Qu Moying's side. He pointed his finger at her and said, "Fourth Sister, I still have some doubts. Why was Yu Dong so frightened earlier? She appeared guilty, as if she had something to hide."

"You should ask Yu Dong herself!" Qu Moying said coldly, turning her head to look at Yu Dong.

Yu Dong stepped forward and respectfully bowed to the Old Lady and Qu Zhizhen. Then, she raised her head and looked at Qu Mingcheng. "Second Young Master, you said I was frightened, but I only wanted to protect my lady's precious belongings. These were all left to her by the late lady. I was afraid they might get damaged, so I took them away."

"Then why were you so nervous?" Qu Mingcheng's gaze remained fixed on Yu Dong.

"I was nervous because each item left by the late lady holds great significance to my lady," Yu Dong replied.

Qu Mingcheng wanted to ask further, but the words stuck in his throat. With a cold glare, he cast a disdainful glance at Yu Dong. At this point, he finally understood that this maid had clearly set him up. The previous purse was probably deliberately shown to him, making him feel more at ease the more he looked at it.

"Second brother, let's go. Let's go and see Third sister. Maybe she has found the jade pendant again!" Qu Moying interrupted Qu Mingcheng's words.

"Grandmother, may we go and visit Third sister?"

"Granny Wu, you go with them." The Old Lady nodded and instructed. At this point, it was indeed necessary to go and see Qu Qiuyan's situation. It was frustrating that the situation had escalated based solely on Qu Qiuyan's one-sided account, and she felt a sense of annoyance.

At this time, she really had to give Qu Moying an explanation. Otherwise, it wouldn't be justifiable since things escalated to this extent.

Qu Zhizhen frowned, wanting to speak up to stop them. However, after glancing at Qu Moying's angry expression, he ultimately remained silent and simply waved his hand.

This time, Qu Mingcheng and Qu Moying led a group of people to Qu Qiuyan's Furong House.

Inside the Furong House, Qu Qiuyan was still awake, sitting under the lamplight, waiting for news from Qu Mingcheng. She was in a good mood, laughing and chatting with a few maids.

Amidst their lively conversation, they heard a commotion outside the gate. Thinking that Qu Mingcheng had returned, Qu Qiuyan wasn't too surprised and had the maids draw the curtains.

To her surprise, it wasn't just Qu Mingcheng who entered but also Qu Moying. Seeing Qu Mingcheng's grim expression, Qu Qiuyan became uneasy.

"Second brother!" Qu Qiuyan stood up and respectfully bowed to Qu Mingcheng before turning her gaze to Qu Moying at the side. She spoke in a nonchalant tone, "Why is Fourth sister free to come here at this hour?"

"I was originally going to sleep, but Second brother said there was turmoil in the Mansion. So we came to your place to see if the jade pendant was truly lost," Qu Moying said coldly.

Qu Qiuyan was momentarily stunned, unable to react. She then shifted her gaze to Qu Mingcheng and said, "Second brother..."

"Fourth sister mentioned that your jade pendant might not be lost, so we came to take a look together," Qu Mingcheng's expression was grim. Throughout the journey, he had pondered on the situation, growing increasingly annoyed. Everything had been prepared, so why did Qu Moying manage to escape at the end? Was it because of that despicable maid, Yu Dong?

"Third sister, you claimed that the jade pendant was lost, but I believe it may not be. I want to help you search for it. Father and grandmother are still waiting. Second brother, let's have someone search for it!" Qu Moying sat down on a chair and spoke without politeness.

"Coming to my place to search for my lost belongings?" Qu Qiuyan finally understood and immediately became furious.

“Let her search, Third sister!” Qu Mingcheng impatiently interrupted Qu Qiuyan’s words. He was in a very unpleasant mood, feeling like he had been punched but retaliated with heavy cotton.

He felt stifled to the point of wanting to vomit blood!

Qu Qiuyan wanted to say something more, but seeing Qu Mingcheng’s attitude, she realized that the situation had changed. So, she no longer opposed and coldly instructed the maids around her to step back.

This time, it was Yu Dong and a Granny brought by Qu Mingcheng to search. The Granny casually searched two places and then stopped for the sake of the Second Young Master.

Yu Dong had fewer scruples and, after rummaging through the items, found a small cloth pouch by the window on the desk. Opening it, she discovered a jade pendant inside.

“My lady, take a look at this,” Yu Dong walked over and handed the cloth pouch to Qu Moying.

Qu Moying reached out and took it, holding it up to the light and smiling faintly. “There is a word inside. I wonder if this is the piece Third sister was searching for.”

Saying this, she passed the jade pendant to Sister Wu.

Granny Wu took it and glanced at Qu Qiuyan, her expression turning unpleasant.

Qu Qiuyan didn’t pay much attention initially, but after hearing Qu Moying’s words, she examined it closely and her face changed drastically. She immediately recognized this jade pendant.

However, she had already given this jade pendant to Qing Mei, asking her to deliver it to Yu Dong. So how was it still here now?

Her gaze shifted to Qing Mei by her side, and her eyes grew cold and fierce.

“Third Lady, could you please come with me?” Granny Wu turned to Qu Qiuyan and asked in a gentle tone. The situation had reached a point where it was beyond the control of a mere servant like her.

Qu Mingcheng simply couldn’t believe what he was seeing. His gaze shifted from Qu Qiuyan’s face to the Qing Mei on the side. Qing Mei could no longer stand, trembling uncontrollably. Her mouth opened but no words came out. How could she speak when she was the one who gave the jade pendant to Yu Dong?

Looking at Qu Qiuyan’s face, Qing Mei turned deathly pale and her body swayed. She reached out to grasp the edge of the table, filled with despair. The situation had changed too quickly. She never imagined it would backfire on her.

Qing Mei was the only one left behind as the three Qu siblings led the way back to the Old Lady’s residence.

As soon as they entered, Qu Qiuyan knelt before the Old Lady, crying and saying, “Grandmother, I truly have no idea why that jade pendant was there. Someone must have intentionally taken it. I thought it was lost, so I hurriedly told my brother about it. I never expected it would still be with me.”

At this point, Qu Qiuyan had no choice but to acknowledge the situation.

The Old Lady had already learned about the incident from Granny Wu. After taking a glance at the jade pendant, she handed it to her son and gestured to him, pressing her head, “You ask.”

Qu Zhizhen also took a quick look at the jade pendant. This time, it was clear. When he shone a light on it, he could clearly see a word engraved inside. It was indeed Lord Jing’s jade pendant. Comparing it to the other one obtained from Qu Moying, they were not identical, but when they were not placed together, they bore some resemblance.

“Qiuyan, how could you allow such an important item to be hidden, leading to such a huge commotion?” Qu Zhizhen paused for a moment before speaking.

“I... I truly didn’t know, father. I also didn’t know someone around me would do such a thing. Father, please rest assured that when I return, I will thoroughly investigate this matter and find out who is

responsible,” Qu Qiuyan said, pressing the corner of her eye, her voice tinged with sadness and grievance.

Qing Ju, standing behind Qu Qiuyan, trembled. Her face immediately turned pale. Were they going to pin the blame on someone else again? The person who could enter the Third Lady’s room must be someone close to her.

“Father, since it was the sister’s carelessness, punishing the people around her would be appropriate,” Qu Mingcheng also stepped forward to mediate.

Qu Moying sneered inwardly. The two siblings had reached such a point, where everything was laid bare. Yet they still put on this act, pretending to be wronged, attempting to smooth things over. Things were not as simple as they seemed.

“Father, when my Second brother came over, he didn’t clearly see the jade pendant in Yu Dong’s hand. He hastily accused me of taking Third sister’s jade pendant. However, I don’t understand why he was so certain. The hiding spot for the jade pendant is not a place an ordinary person can find. Father, please ask my Second brother and Third sister to clarify the situation.”

Qu Moying coldly smiled. Even though her eyes were veiled, they could still sense the coldness on her face. “The situation has unfolded mysteriously. Leaving aside the origins of Third sister’s jade pendant, even if I did have ulterior motives, how would I know that the jade pendant was with her? With so many people around Third sister, isn’t it possible that someone else took it?”

The jade pendant belonged to Lord Jing. When it fell into Qu Qiuyan’s hands, she naturally treated it as a precious possession. Such an important item could not be easily obtained by Qu Moying, even if she truly had intentions to do so.

Of course, there was another possibility—someone was framing her.

Recalling what his son had said earlier, his certain expression when Qu Moying brought over the jade pendant, and the current situation, Qu Zhizhen was almost certain that his son and third daughter were involved. He was extremely infuriated.

“Fourth sister, don’t accuse others baselessly. I genuinely thought that the jade pendant was missing, and genuinely believed that the jade pendant belonged to her. I didn’t think further than that!” Upon hearing Qu Moying’s words, Qu Mingcheng couldn’t sit still and hurriedly defended himself.

Chapter 408 Which Maid Should be Pushed out to Offset the Crime

“Second brother, is it all in my imagination?” Qu Moying sneered coldly. “There are so many impossibilities, yet you insist that it’s me. If you had any doubts, it wouldn’t have escalated to this extent. And now you’re telling me that I’m the one overthinking?”

Qu Mingcheng’s expression turned extremely unpleasant. “Fourth sister, do you really think I did it on purpose?”

Since he wasn’t going to deny it, Qu Mingcheng figured it was better to speak frankly. He increasingly resented Qing Mei for her incompetence in handling matters.

“How could you not know whether it was intentional or not? Some people, some things, leave traces when they are done. As the saying goes, What man does, the heavens are watching. It’s not that there’s no retribution, it’s just that the time hasn’t come.”

Qu Moying mocked.

Qu Mingcheng relied solely on being Qu Zhizhen’s only son.

Back then, when he was just born, he became the backing of Yu. But so what? Wasn’t Yu locked up now?

Qu Mingcheng deeply regretted his involvement. If he had known that Qing Mei would be so incapable, he would never have meddled. It seems that it’s too late now to say anything else.

“Fourth sister...” He wanted to explain, but Qu Zhizhen slammed the table, causing him to retreat two steps. Faced with Qu Zhizhen’s furious eyes, he found himself unable to speak.

Throughout his life, Qu Mingcheng rarely angered Qu Zhizhen. In Qu Zhizhen's eyes, although his son occasionally misbehaved, he excelled in other aspects. Whether it was his academic achievements or character, Qu Zhizhen considered him superior to his older brother's son. So, when it came to Qu Mingcheng, praise was more common and punishment was minimal.

And even if there was punishment, it was never severe!

After all, he was Qu Zhizhen's only son and the sole young master of the West Mansion. The servants always handled him with care.

Qu Moying glanced at Qu Zhizhen, whose forehead veins were bulging, but remained silent.

"Apologize to your fourth sister!" Qu Zhizhen's voice was stern.

"Father!" Qu Mingcheng cried out without considering his fear. In his eyes, apologizing to Qu Moying, whom he despised the most, was more painful than killing him.

"Apologize now!" Qu Zhi Zhen shouted.

Seeing his father so enraged, Qu Mingcheng's resentment turned into anger, his eyes turned red. However, he had no choice but to turn around and bow deeply to Qu Moying, lowering his voice: "Fourth sister... I was wrong to blame you!"

Being young, he couldn't control the tone of his voice, and it trembled with suppressed anger.

"Is it truly a wrongful accusation? You knows the truth best!" Qu Moying had no intention of letting Qu Mingcheng off the hook and sneered.

"What do you mean? Second brother has already apologized to you," Qu Qiuyan's eyes turned red with anger. After helping Qing Ju stand up, she rushed to Qu Mingcheng and angrily confronted Qu Moying.

As twin siblings, they could sense each other's feelings, especially in this situation. Qu Qiuyan could feel the humiliation that made Qu Mingcheng feel ashamed.

"What are you implying, Third sister? Are you suggesting that if second brother committed murder, a simple apology would suffice? And if others refuse to accept it, it's their fault?"

Qu Moying retorted, refusing to back down.

Since the situation had escalated to this point, she had no intention of retreating.

When these two siblings plotted against her, they probably didn't expect that the outcome would be unfavorable to them, not her.

"The jade pendant has been recovered, and you haven't suffered any losses. Why would it escalate to talk of murder?" Qu Qiuyan asked with an unpleasant expression.

"No murder? Isn't this Lord Jing's jade pendant? Lord Jing's jade pendant went missing, and it could have ended up in my possession. How would Lord Jing react?" Qu Moying sneered. "I heard that the second sister went to Lord Jing Mansion before, and it was just a small misunderstanding. But what about me?"

As soon as these words were spoken, Qu Zhizhen's heart sank, and he suddenly broke out in a cold sweat.

Qu Moying was wanted by Lord Yun. Earlier, when he went to the West Prison, he had been warned that if something happened to her and she became involved with Lord Jing and ended up a lowly concubine, just like Qu Caifeng, this would be consequences.

Although Lord Yun was currently not in the capital, if he returned and decided to investigate, it would be accurate and thorough. The staff at the West Prison were well-informed.

The likelihood of such an event was small, but it existed nonetheless. Perhaps Lord Jing had taken an interest in his fourth daughter, or perhaps Lord Jing was deliberately provoking Lord Yun.

What would he do then? He couldn't afford to offend Lord Jing, after all, he was the emperor's son. But he was different; he was just a Vice Minister, someone insignificant in the eyes of Lord Yun.

"Qiuyan, apologize to your sister along with your brother!" Qu Zhizhen, who had initially considered downplaying the situation, couldn't tolerate it any longer and sternly admonished.

Qu Mingcheng was taken aback. He couldn't fathom that his father, who had always been tolerant of his sister, would say such things. Could Qu Moying, a blind person, determine his sister's identity?

Qu Qiuyan, filled with disbelief, turned back and looked at Qu Zhizhen. She let out a sorrowful cry, "Father!"

"Don't you dare disrespectfully refuse to offer tea as an apology?" Qu Zhizhen's voice was stern, and a servant behind him approached, pouring a cup of tea and presenting it to Qu Qiuyan. "Third Lady, please apologize to Fourth Lady!"

Qu Qiuyan was overwhelmed with shame and anger. She had to apologize to Qu Moying and even offer tea in front of her father and grandmother, displaying her vulnerability.

She lifted her gaze to her father, but his face remained stern without a trace of warmth. When she turned to look at her grandmother, she too wore an expression of deep displeasure.

Qu Qiuyan's eyes filled with tears of grievance as they fell, but she had no choice but to accept the tea. Her fingers trembled as she lowered her head to Qu Moying and said, "Fourth sister, I was wrong before... I... offer you tea as an apology!"

"Third sister, I hope such incidents won't happen again in the future, and the same goes for our second brother. If there is another issue in the future, please make sure our second brother thinks it through before speaking," Qu Moying coldly responded, her gaze fixed on the two siblings without a hint of fear.

Qu Zhizhen watched the scene before him and let out a heavy sigh. He had always believed that his eldest daughter had a promising future, but now it seemed that his youngest daughter might be the one with the most potential.

Even with her long veil covering her eyes, she exuded an impressive aura.

Since he had started paying attention, he had been amazed by her actions, as if she were a blooming peony, gradually revealing her identity as the Flower Kingdom's princess.

However, it was a pity that her status was still somewhat low, especially considering the premature death of her mother, making it difficult for her to attain a higher position.

Qu Mingcheng clenched his teeth and forced himself to calm down. After bowing his head slightly, he said, "Fourth sister, I was also in the wrong. I won't let it happen again."

"Fourth sister, I... I will be more careful in the future," Qu Qiuyan also gritted her teeth and suppressed her resentment. With teary eyes, she spoke softly.

Qu Moying accepted the tea as a sign of accepting their apologies. However, after taking a sip and placing the cup down, she asked, "Third sister, this jade pendant must have been hidden by someone close to you. I wonder if it was your private maid or the Granny?"

These individuals were Qu Qiuyan's confidants and the most likely culprits. The suspicious maid named Qing Mei seemed like a good candidate to be blamed. Qu Moying wanted Qu Qiuyan to reveal her involvement.

Qing Mei was brought up by Qu Mingcheng, and even if she had done something wrong, Qu Mingcheng might not have informed Qu Qiuyan about it. This sudden incident occurred before they had a chance to discuss it, which made the situation quite intriguing.

"It must be Qing Mei, this maid. She only recently came to my side, and I don't know much about her character!" Qu Qiuyan gritted her teeth and stated firmly.

Qu Mingcheng knew it was not good as soon as he heard Qu Moying's question. However, it was too late to intervene and stop her. His expression turned pale as he listened.

"How do you plan to handle this, third sister?" Qu Moying pressed for an answer.

Though it seemed like she was pressuring Qu Qiuyan, Qu Moying's gaze subtly focused on Qu Mingcheng.

"Third sister, let's wait for our grandmother and father's decision before taking any action," Qu Mingcheng quickly intervened, sensing that the situation was unfavorable.

"What do our grandmother and father think?" Qu Moying didn't give him any leeway and turned to the silent Old Lady, who was sitting above.

"If it's truly her, we can't keep such a maid," The Old Lady had already made up her mind.

"Father?" Qu Moying didn't wait for Qu Mingcheng to respond and immediately turned to Qu Zhizhen.

"You should inquire about it today, and I'll send someone to handle it tomorrow!" Qu Zhizhen's words made Qu Mingcheng's face turn pale. It was a direct order to end the maid's life, and he didn't care about the maid herself; he only had other plans for her.

However, he couldn't defy Qu Zhizhen's wishes. He looked up, hoping to plead with the Old Lady, but her gaze carried anger as it swept down upon him. He immediately fell silent.

At least he managed to save himself; that was already good enough. Now he could only take things one step at a time.

"Well, since it was a servant who caused this trouble, we'll dispose of that servant. Make sure you don't damage your relationship," Qu Zhizhen stood up, trying to smooth things over. He was also unhappy about the situation, and after a few words to the Old Lady, he bid his farewell.

"Yes, it's all my fault for causing such a big commotion, but I didn't know that the root cause was with the third sister," Qu Mingcheng quickly responded, following Qu Zhizhen's lead. His attitude also appeared amicable.

"It's my fault!" Qu Qiuyan suppressed her bitter resentment, her head drooping as she looked helpless and pitiful. "I hope my younger sister won't blame me and my brother for this matter."

"If third sister and second brother can find the person responsible, it would be for the best."

Qu Moying stated calmly.

Indeed, that would be the ideal outcome. Qu Moying wanted to see who this cunning and audacious Qing Mei really was. She had a hunch that this matter might be connected to Liu Jingyu once again.

Qing Mei had been by Qu Qiuyan's side for some time now. Whenever she found an excuse to get close to Yu Dong, Yu Dong would discreetly investigate the maid's background.

In the end, Yu Dong concluded that this maid was no ordinary servant. She was remarkably knowledgeable, astute, and meticulous in her work, making it difficult to uncover her true intentions. Even with Yu Dong's skills, the information he could gather was limited. Such a maid was not something an ordinary family would possess; she seemed more like someone who had been carefully taught.

Similar to Qu Mingcheng's diversionary tactics, this situation carried the same meaning. Judging from Qu Mingcheng's earlier behavior, it was evident that he intended to find a way for Qing Mei to escape. This put the other individuals around Qu Qiuyan, such as the longtime servant Qing Ju, in danger...

Chapter 409 Something Went Wrong in the North

"Second brother, it must be Qing Mei, that maid, who is not performing her duties well. We just need to get rid of her. However, her background is also dubious, and we don't know who she has connections with. We can't let her cause any trouble. When I go back, I'll beat her until she's half-dead, so she won't be able to reveal anything even if she wants to, or we can just kill her directly."

Qu Qiuyan and Qu Mingcheng walked together, discussing as they went.

In front of them, Qing Ju held the lantern, desperately trying to control her trembling hands, afraid of attracting the attention of her masters.

She had witnessed the third lady get rid of a few maids before, but she had always been distant from such matters. Only the incident with Qing He had made her realize that even as a trusted private maid, she could be disposable, just like Qing He.

Qing Ju was now even more aware of the danger she faced.

The second young master's gaze towards her earlier had carried a chilling undertone, causing cold sweat to trickle down her back.

She was well aware that Qing Mei had been brought by Second Young Master himself. They had become close, and he always conveyed important matters through Qing Mei. This time, he had assigned Qing Mei to handle the current situation. Compared to her, Qing Ju held no significance in the eyes of the Second Young Master.

It was clear that only one of them would be sacrificed this time. Besides Qing Mei, Qing Ju was the only senior maid by the young lady's side. If it wasn't Qing Mei, then it could potentially be Qing Ju.

The Second Young Master remained silent for a long time, increasing Qing Ju's anxiety. She tightly grasped the lantern pole in her hands, her back covered in cold sweat.

"Second brother, why aren't you saying anything? I can't afford to be clueless when father sends someone to inquire tomorrow," Qu Qiuyan expressed her dissatisfaction with her brother's contemplative silence.

Qu Mingcheng's gaze shifted to Qing Ju, carrying a hint of hostility. Deep down, he was more inclined to sacrifice the Qing Ju standing before him. After all, Qing Mei still held significant value.

"I'll discuss this matter with you once we reach the yard," he replied evasively.

Qing Ju's legs grew weaker, and she could barely see the path ahead.

“What is there to discuss? Second brother, as I’ve said, Qing Mei’s background is suspicious. It doesn’t matter where she came from. This time, I’ve already decided to give her up. I agreed to it in front of Father and Grandmother.” She was well aware of the matter between Qing Mei and her brother.

On one hand, it was because he was her own brother, and on the other, Qing Mei had proven herself to be capable. Thus, Qu Qiuyan was not too concerned.

Qing Mei was still inexperienced and had only been with her for a short time. She had occasionally even been by second brother’s side, neglecting her duties towards Qu Qiuyan. In truth, Qu Qiuyan wasn’t entirely satisfied with her. If she had to choose, she would undoubtedly let go of Qing Mei and keep Qing Ju, who had been a reliable maid for many years.

Qu Mingcheng remained silent once again but quickened his pace.

Leading Qu Qiuyan back, he entered the main house with his hands behind his backs. After Qu Qiuyan followed him inside, he waved her hand, and Qing Ju retreated, leaving only the two siblings in the room.

Qu Qiuyan sincerely spoke, “Second brother, Qing Mei is someone you brought here, your person. She has always been working for you. Whether I keep her or not doesn’t matter much. But Qing Ju is different. She is the only one I have around me now. If I don’t have someone useful by my side, even if we go to the Lord Jing Mansion, I won’t be able to carry out my tasks.”

“Qing Mei is more useful than Qing Ju,” Qu Mingcheng replied.

“But Qing Mei’s background is questionable, Second brother, tell me, where did Qing Mei come from? You said she’s a new maid from the East Mansion, because you think I don’t have someone to serve me. After bringing her here, you told me to promote her to private maid and give her the privileges of a private maid. Second brother, you are cautious and not someone who would engage in such matters.”

After suffering such a significant loss tonight and being forced to apologize to Qu Moying in the end, Qu Qiuyan was filled with pent-up anger. All of this was because of Qing Mei. If Qing Mei hadn’t mishandled the situation, such things wouldn’t have occurred.

"This Qing Mei has a background," Qu Mingcheng hesitated for a moment before stating.

"I don't care about her background. I don't want a maid with a questionable background by my side. Second brother, if you can protect her, then protect her. I won't." Qu Qiuyan grew impatient.

The thought of someone backing up this maid disgusted her. She wasn't lacking others by her side, so why did she need such a maid?

"Someone, take Qing Mei down and give her a severe lashing of thirty strikes." Qu Qiuyan ceased speaking to Qu Mingcheng and walked stubbornly to the front door, issuing orders to the outside.

This maid girl must be punished today, preferably to the point of death. Thirty lashes, many maids couldn't endure that.

"Third sister, you..." Qu Mingcheng wanted to say something, but when he saw Qu Qiuyan's cold and angry face, and remembered the state in which they had been forced together today, he couldn't help but sigh and loudly proclaimed, "Silence her and give her a beating, make sure she doesn't cause trouble anywhere else."

Although this maid had some connections, she wasn't indispensable. It all depended on her fate. Thirty lashes meant she would lose more than half of her life, if not her life itself.

After Qu Mingcheng and Qu Qiuyan left, Qing Mei remained kneeling on the side, watched over by two stern maidservants, listening to the master's instructions.

One maid forcefully stuffed a cloth into Qing Mei's mouth, while the other grabbed her and dragged her down. Qing Mei struggled fiercely, desperately trying to scream, but she was helpless against their firm hold and was promptly dragged away.

Just outside the yard, a large bench had been set up, ready for her to be restrained and beaten.

Qing Ju, standing at the entrance of the main house, gradually relaxed her tense body. She knew she had narrowly escaped a disaster this time, but what about the next time?

With a lingering sense of fear, Qing Ju looked towards the doorway, where the light from inside the house revealed two figures standing in front of it—one tall, one short—Second Young Master and Third Lady...

“My lord, a letter has arrived from the North,” Ji Hai presented the confidential letter cautiously. Pei Yuanjun reached out to take it, opened it, and read it. After finishing, he smiled lightly and stood up, “The situation in the North is indeed significant. Even the Crown Prince and the princess have disappeared!”

Dressed in a black robe that accentuated his slender and graceful figure, Pei Yuanjun exuded an air of elegance. His handsome face, tinged with a hint of nobility, bore a smile that appeared ethereal, as if he were aware of matters unrelated to this treasonous affair.

The North rebellion was not entirely unexpected. However, it could not exactly be termed a rebellion, but rather a case where the Second Prince held more power than the Crown Prince. This had compelled the Crown Prince of the North to flee with his sister, their whereabouts still unknown.

“My lord, did you not already know?” Ji Hai grinned and said, “Look, there’s another letter. It was sent by the Crown Prince from the North.”

Ji Hai smiled, his eyes narrowing. In fact, this letter was the most important reason for his lord’s visit from the capital.

Amid the turmoil in the North, the Second Prince had forced the Crown Prince to flee with the princess. However, the Second Prince was not the legitimate son of Lord of the North. He was the son of his sister. With the scarcity of royal bloodline in the North, the princess’s son had been placed in the position of the Second Prince. This Second Prince clearly lacked legitimacy.

Yet, he was an evidently capable individual who had managed to force the most legitimate Crown Prince of the North to flee.

"I have met Crown Prince Qi Ze of the North, and he is quite an impressive figure," Pei Yuanjun smiled faintly, taking another letter from Ji Hai's hand. He quickly skimmed through its contents before slapping it onto the table. Leaning against the nearby couch, he asked lazily, "Ji Hai, do you think I should lend him a hand?"

"My lord, your judgment is clear!" Ji Hai replied, his smile undiminished.

"I wait for him and he doesn't show up, but instead sends a letter like this, it seems Crown Prince Qi Ze is not yet at his wit's end!" Pei Yuanjun extended his finger and lightly brushed it against his chin, giving him an unusually alluring and sinister appearance that deterred others from meeting his gaze.

"What does you mean?" Ji Hai blinked and inquired.

"The Second Prince could use a little more assistance, and I can help him," Pei Yuanjun chuckled, his voice chillingly cold. "Since the Second Prince requires aid so urgently, I have more to offer than anyone else."

Ji Hai understood the implications of these words and nodded, a smile appearing on his face. "Yes, I understand. I will take care of it immediately!"

Who could have imagined that the rebellion in the North was connected to his lord? Even though there were vast distances and mountains separating them, the final outcome was anticipated by him.

"It is time to prepare for the return to the capital!" Pei Yuanjun leaned back and spoke nonchalantly.

"My lord, Miss Liu is still requesting a meeting. What do you think?" Ji Hai asked cautiously, referring to this persistent Miss Liu. Despite repeatedly explaining that the lord wanted to rest and did not wish to see anyone, she continued to send handmade pastries.

Could it be that his words were not clear enough? Is the lord's intention not expressed clearly?

Ji Hai, as a servant, felt that he was just a eunuch and did not understand the thoughts of these young ladies. Did she think that with her persistence, she could soften the heart of his lord?

Ji Hai had served his master for many years and had seen all kinds of beauties, both inside and outside the harem. Only Fourth Lady Qu, had managed to make his master let down his guard.

“Let her go back. Inform her that I will return to the capital in a few days!” Pei Yuanjun said lazily, a faint smile playing at the corners of his thin lips, emanating a chilling and sinister aura.

“My lord, don’t you plan to meet her? General Liu only has this daughter.” Ji Hai advised in a low voice.

“Liu Xiangshan has had an easy time in these past years, and he has put in a lot of effort for just one daughter. Very well, I will help him a little and allow him to find a good son-in-law,” Pei Yuanjun chuckled, flicking his finger on the edge of the couch. His long eyelashes fell slightly as he closed his eyes and said, “Summon Liu Xiangshan. I will see him again before I depart!”

“Yes, I will make the arrangements immediately!” Ji Hai understood. This Guardian General was not an ordinary person; he needed to be handled carefully.

Chapter 410 The Daughter of the Guardian General

“Eunuch Ji Hai, this is the osmanthus cake I made for His Lordship. Please deliver it to him,” Liu Lanxin said softly, accompanied by two maids.

Passersby who recognized Lady Liu showed great respect, especially upon hearing that she had been injured while fighting against the enemy. This only increased their admiration for her. Not every lady had the privilege to accompany her father stationed at the border, let alone participate in battles.

“Lady Liu, I’m always grateful for your effort in bringing these pastries every time,” Ji Hai said, his smile widening, as he hurriedly approached her.

“It’s no trouble at all. I simply worry that His Lordship may not be accustomed to other flavors. Although my baking skills are not exceptional, I have prepared them in the style of the capital.” Liu Lanxin replied gently.

Her veil was narrow and short, serving merely to shield her eyes from the sun, revealing her strikingly beautiful face with well-defined features and a touch of elegance.

“Lady Liu, you are too kind. On behalf of His Lordship, allow me to express gratitude to you,” Ji Hai stepped forward to receive the food basket from one of the maids. The maid, glancing at her mistress, discreetly moved her hand back.

Ji Hai’s hand was left awkwardly extended.

“Is His Lordship available today?” Liu Lanxin inquired, seemingly oblivious to Ji Hai’s uncomfortable hand gesture.

“His Lordship is currently reviewing military affairs and is unable to meet visitors. Please understand, Lady Liu,” Ji Hai chuckled, retracting his hand slowly, yet his friendly smile remained unchanged. It was as if the awkwardness belonged to someone else entirely; as long as he remained at ease, the discomfort of others had no impact on him.

“Even in the midst of a military emergency, His Lordship should prioritize his own well-being. I have brought some medicinal wine infused with herbal remedies. I wonder if I can meet His Lordship and give it to him directly?” Liu Lanxin asked with a smile. When she arrived, she had dressed meticulously, even with a veil covering her eyes, every expression and smile exuded an exceptional charm.

She wore a flowing wide dress that danced in the wind. It was already autumn, and it had become slightly colder on this side of the border. There were few people on the streets wearing such elegant and voluminous attire. Liu Lanxin’s appearance made people perceive her as a beauty as radiant as jade, with a graceful and enchanting demeanor.

“Well... I’m afraid that won’t be possible,” Ji Hai hesitantly shook his head.

Liu Lanxin’s face darkened. This was not the first time she faced rejection. However, she couldn’t accept it. While she might not be unparalleled in terms of appearance, she believed she surpassed ordinary young ladies. Moreover, she felt she possessed a certain boldness that those women lacked. Not to mention, she was her father’s only legitimate daughter. Just based on this, no other woman could compare to her.

But why couldn't Lord Yun see it?

Even a counterfeit caught Lord Jing's attention, and he repeatedly sent letters expressing his affections. Yet, when Liu Lanxin, the genuine one, stood before Lord Yun, vivid and alive, he ignored her, even treating her with such indifference. Liu Lanxin was both heartbroken and resentful.

Was she destined to become the concubine of Lord Jing?

Compared to Lord Jing in the distant capital, she admired Lord Yun more and was more willing to become his consort.

"When will His Lordship be available?" Suppressing her displeasure, Liu Lanxin asked softly. She was well aware of her lack of influence in front of Lord Yun.

"His Lordship needs to meet with the general to discuss matters. Lady Liu, if you have time, you can join the general for the discussion," Ji Hai said with a cheerful smile.

Last time, she also came with her father and met Lord Yun. However, her father's presence made it inconvenient to speak freely or ask questions. When they finally left, they hadn't exchanged a few words. Would she have to come with her father again this time?

But when she thought about it, besides coming with her father, she seemed to have no chance of meeting Lord Yun. With this in mind, Liu Lanxin furrowed her brows tightly, her face showing a touch of severity.

But there was no other way!

Nodding to the maid by her side, and the maid took two steps forward and handed the food basket in her hand to Ji Hai. Another maid behind her also carried one and placed it in front of Ji Hai.

Ji Hai reached out and accepted them one by one, thanking Liu Lanxin with a smile. "Thank you, Lady Liu. His Lordship will enjoy these delicacies again this time."

“You’re welcome. If there’s anything else His Lordship doesn’t like, please let me know. I’ll always find a way,” Liu Lanxin replied with a smile.

“Thank you, Lady Liu.” Ji Hai placed the two food baskets down and bowed his head once more.

Liu Lanxin also nodded, then turned around and left with her two maids. Along the way, anyone who saw this young lady quickly moved aside to avoid her.

Ji Hai let out a soft tsk. Miss Liu was truly skilled at creating a favorable impression for herself. She turned an unexpected incident into her own accomplishment. Judging by the looks of it, the people in the borderlands genuinely believed in her.

However, even so, what difference would it make? His master’s nature couldn’t be coerced. Otherwise, the Lord Yun Mansion wouldn’t have been without its lord and lady for so many years.

Ji Hai sighed once again; fate was truly something that could not be sought after.

Some people tried every means and strategy, but in the end, achieved nothing. Others didn’t even put in half the effort, yet they obtained the best results.

Of course, there was another crucial point—never underestimate others, especially when that person happened to be his own master. Otherwise, there might be a risk to one’s life. His master had never been a person to pity or value fragility...

“My lady, I have gathered all the information about last night’s incident. It was done by the chief maid of Furong House. After being taken away by Second Master’s men, she was severely beaten and sold off. The entire family was also sold off,” Yu Dong reported as she entered with lunch.

“My lady, you’ve guessed it right again. This Qing Mei is indeed unharmed,” Yu Chun put down the tea cup and curiously asked, “With everything that’s happening, why is this Qing Mei safe while the chief maid encountered trouble? I heard that she was once the trusted aide of the Second Madam.”

The chief maid who managed Furong House was sent by Yu and was once her confidante. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been assigned to take care of Qu Qiuyan's affairs.

Such a person needs not only to be capable but also loyal.

It was interesting that all this trouble was because of this Qing Mei. She was so important that Qu Mingcheng was willing to get rid of Yu's people but keeps her around.

"However, I've also heard that Qing Mei was beaten yesterday and still cannot get out of bed. The beating was quite severe," Yu Dong took out the lunch from the food basket and mentioned it.

"What did Qing Mei do?" Qu Moying asked with a smile.

"They say Qing Mei offended the Second Young Master in some way. He was very angry. As for the rest, I couldn't find out. Right now, everyone is focused on the position of the chief maid at Furong House. I've heard that many women are interested in the position. I wonder who Third young lady will choose in the end!"

Yu Dong explained.

The kitchen was buzzing with discussions about this matter. The position itself was quite desirable.

"Is it chaotic?" Qu Moying raised an eyebrow and inquired.

"Yes, it's chaotic. I heard that the salary for this position is considerable. It's one of the best positions in the mansion. Many people used to envy the maid in this role. They just didn't expect it to suddenly become vacant like this," Yu Dong said. She had deliberately gathered more information in the kitchen and had a clear understanding of what people were focused on.

"What are they thinking in the kitchen?" Qu Moying seemed to become interested, smiling slightly as she asked.

“It’s hard to say. Many people are eyeing this position, but it’s not something an ordinary person can handle. Some say that the Second Madam’s approval is necessary. The previous maid was also chosen by her. Although she doesn’t handle matters now, Third Lady is still her own daughter.”

Yu Dong replied.

Qu Moying pursed her lips lightly, a ghostly glimmer appearing in her eyes. “Lord Jing came to our house today. Is he still in the front yard?”

Qu Moying had already learned about Lord Jing’s visit beforehand.

“Yes, Second Master and Second Young Master are accompanying Lord Jing. They should be having lunch in the front yard. I don’t know about Third Lady’s situation, but I think she may not have gone there. I heard that she had a minor incident in her own courtyard, possibly spraining her foot. It doesn’t seem too serious, but she needs some rest.”

Yu Dong explained. “Could it be that she was so angry yesterday that she accidentally sprained her foot?”

Qu Moying’s heart stirred, her gaze shifting. “Go and fetch Granny Miao.”

Granny Miao was experienced in handling such matters, and being a Granny, she had more convenience compared to a maid.

After Yu Dong left for a while, Granny Miao entered the room. “My lady, what can I do for you?”

“Granny Miao, go and deliver a message to Lord Jing. Inform him that Third Lady has injured her foot and it’s quite serious. She’s unable to get up from bed.”

Qu Moying instructed.

“You want Lord Jing to visit Third Lady?” Granny Miao immediately grasped the implication in Qu Moying’s words.

“If Third Sister hadn’t injured her foot, she would definitely have gone to see Lord Jing. So many things happened yesterday, some of which may have gone against Third Sister’s wishes. We must give her an opportunity to speak,” Qu Moying smiled faintly, hinting at her intentions.

Having experienced many things, Granny Miao understood Qu Moying’s meaning in an instant. She clapped her hands and said, “My lady, I will go and find one of the eunuchs by Lord Jing’s side. He brought quite a few eunuchs today, so it will be convenient to pass on the message.”

Qu Moying nodded slightly. Qu Qiuyan’s foot injury had impeccable timing. When she left yesterday, everything was fine. Was it truly an accident?

So many things had happened that it didn’t seem like a coincidence. Since Qu Qiuyan was so suffocated, Qu Moying could give her a push. Now, she wondered if Qu Mingcheng’s final plan would fall through.

Was this a disagreement between the two siblings?