

Noble Wife 61

Chapter 61 The Prideful Second Young Master Yan

Something was wrong. Qu Qiuyan's eyes darkened as she was immersed in thoughts. The plan which she thought was perfect now lost its crucial evidence, making her feel unsettled. She couldn't meddle in this matter anymore, or her involvement would be exposed. But when did it go wrong?

"You were just looking around? Second Sister, if you have nothing to do with it, do you dare to let Granny Wu search your room?" Qu Moying raised her eyebrow and said coldly.

"Why will I not dare to? If you want to take a look in my room, please help yourself, Granny Wu!" Qu Caiyue had been feeling flustered for a while. However, she lost the chance to back out and had to bite the bullet.

"Granny Wu, how about you take Yu Dong there to have a look? Just in case Second Sister was blaming me for something that doesn't even exist. I'll accompany Grandma," Qu Moying said to Granny Wu gently.

"Go take a look!" as the Old Lady talked to Granny Wu, she glared at Qu Caiyue with an irritated look on her face.

This granddaughter was her least favorite one not only because she was a concubine's child but also for her mean personality. Even though the Old Lady lived in the West Mansion, she often heard rumors about Qu Caiyue from the East Mansion. People said she always fawned on Qu Qiuyan but was very mean to her servants, often cursing them and abusing them.

The Old Lady had no good impression of her at all. Still, she didn't want to take her parents' responsibility to educate her since Qu Caiyue rarely came over to the West Mansion. However, she irritated the Old Lady this time by making such a big scene involving her other two granddaughters.

Granny Wu nodded and went to Qu Caiyue's yard with Yu Dong.

Qu Moying held the Old Lady's arm and headed back to the main yard. At the same time, Qu Qiuyan rushed up and walked on the other side to help support her grandmother, acting like a filial lady.

When they just arrived at the Old Lady's yard door, Granny Wu hurriedly rushed over and whispered something in the Old Lady's ear. Then the Old Lady pulled a long face, steadied herself by grabbing Qu Moying's hand, and gazed at Qu Caiyue, who was standing aside.

She fell into silence for a while and then said, "Let's go to Caiyue's yard."

Then the Old Lady continued to walk, holding Qu Moying's arm.

The others followed her there. They closed the door after everyone was inside, shutting the guests' curious gazes outside. Those onlookers stared at each other, shocked by the sudden change of the situation. Did it mean the lady secretly dating a man was not Fourth Lady Qu but Second Lady Qu?

Fourth Lady Qu proved her innocence just now, but what about Second Lady Qu?

Some people couldn't hold back their curiosity, standing close to their yard door and trying to eavesdrop on them, while others, restrained by manners, pretended they were taking a walk around and watching the views but strained to hear every sound inside the yard.

The Old Lady vented her rage immediately after they walked into the yard and yelled at Qu Caiyue, who was following behind, "Kneel down!"

Qu Caiyue had been in a panic already, and her body reacted even faster than her mind. She knelt down at once and pouted, "Grandmother."

Qu Moying glanced at the yard and helped her grandmother sit down on the stone stool aside.

At the same time, Yu Dong walked out of the house with a small package in his hand. He put it down on the stone table in front of the Old Lady and opened it. Everyone saw a fancy piece of clothes lying inside, along with an exquisite jewelry box. Inside the box was a pair of white jade earrings, looking valuable.

Seeing the familiar package, Qu Caiyue almost fainted. She had to put her hand on the ground to support herself, shivering. She remembered clearly that it was put in Qu Moying's bag, but why did it show up here?

She recalled every moment after they arrived at the temple, but she couldn't think about one when Qu Moying had the chance to sneak into her yard and put the package in her bag. Then why was this package in her bag?

"Tell me, where did you get these things?" the Old Lady asked her angrily.

"I-I don't know. Grandmother, I-I have no idea wh-where they came from..." Qu Caiyue stuttered as her face turned pale. Her mind was a piece of blank, and she only wished she could pass out right now. Why did it happen? How come it ended up like this? Shouldn't this package be in Qu Moying's bag?

She raised her eyes and glanced at Qu Qiuyan, seeking help, but Qu Qiuyan gave her an icy glare, stepped back, and then looked away.

"This is a piece of clothes from the Huayi Boutique, right? I don't remember you bought any clothes from that shop. Neither did our family buy any clothes from the Huayi Boutique for the ladies. Did you purchase it secretly by yourself?" the Old Lady asked her coldly after checking the clothes.

The Qu Family had a strict yearly budget for the ladies' clothes – every lady had four suits of clothes for each season. If they wanted more, they needed to pay for the extra by themselves.

The Old Lady's other two granddaughters, the First Lady and the Third Lady, were both given birth by a wife. Their mothers could financially support them. However, Qu Caiyue's mother was Madam Mei, and a concubine like her wouldn't have any disposable money to buy her daughter extra clothes. Qu Caiyue couldn't possibly afford such a fancy piece of clothes from the Huayi Boutique.

"G-Grandmother...th-this piece of clothes i-is mine," Qu Caiyue said while gnashing her teeth. She had no choice but to continue the lie.

"What about the earrings?" The Old Lady's face was full of disappointment.

"I-I-I-I don't know where they came from. I was sitting in the same carriage with Moying. They must be hers... They are Moying's..." Qu Caiyue was aware that people didn't believe she would buy clothes from the Huayi Boutique because she was poor. But after all, this was just a piece of clothes. If Qu Qiuyan gave her some money, she could still buy it. That was why she dared to say the clothes were hers.

As for the earring, she'd rather have nothing to do with them. She had no idea how much they cost and their background since Qu Qiuyan prepared all of them, and she didn't even bother to ask.

Sitting in the same carriage with Qu Moying might be a feasible excuse, so Qu Caiyue immediately blamed it on her.

There were only four people in the carriage. She thought Qu Moying wouldn't have a good reason to defend herself.

"Nonsense!" the Old Lady scolded her in rage, looking furious.

"Grandmother, they must be Moying's. I have no idea when she put them into my bag," Qu Caiyue cried out loud, pretending to feel wronged. She decided to clutch at the last straw she had.

"Second Sister, you said this pair of earrings is mine?" Qu Moying glanced at Qu Caiyue and asked.

"Of course, these are yours. I don't have anything like that. We put our packages together in the carriage on the way here. These must have dropped into my bag accidentally from your bag," Qu Caiyue straightened up and said confidently.

It was ridiculous that Qu Caiyue was still trying to blame things on her at this point. Qu Moying sneered inwardly and touched the clothes on the table. "I heard the Huayi Boutique has a record of every single new piece of clothes they've sold. This one looks like one of the newest they have, and it should just come out this year. We will know who bought it once we take a simple investigation."

She had never bought any clothes from the Huayi Boutique in this life. However, when she was Ji Hanyue, she would purchase every new piece she liked from this shop, and that was why she knew about it.

Qu Caiyue was startled by her words, with her lips turning pale. She opened her mouth but couldn't utter a single word, and then she looked at Qu Qiuyan helplessly. Both of them were aware that the person who bought the clothes was Second Young Master Yan, Yan Yu. They planned to use the clothes to set Qu Moying up, but the only chance they could find to let the young master and Fourth Lady Qu meet was at the market just now.

However, the clothes obviously had been in Qu Caiyue's bag since long ago, even before they went to the market. For Qu Caiyue, admitting the clothes were her possession had no difference than admitting her secret relationship with Second Young Master Yan.

If the earrings' purchasing record could be found as well, any explanation would be useless.

Qu Caiyue trembled as tears flowed down her cheeks. There was no need to frame Qu Moying anymore since everyone was convinced that she was the one who misbehaved due to the clothes.

"As for the earrings, I'm even more clueless. Everything I did in the village should be known by the village head. I didn't even meet Young Master Xu at that time, let alone other young masters. After I came back to the mansion, I didn't have any chance to meet an outsider either. Grandmother, let's check where they came from and who bought them. Costly things like these usually had brand marks. It should be very easy to track their sources."

Now the whole situation was clear to Qu Moying.

They tried to secretly give her the clothes and then created a situation where she was rescued by a young master. That young man with upturned eyes should be the main role of this show. He looked like a righteous gentleman, but who would've known that he worked with Qu Qiuyan to set her up. If Qu Moying acted like a typical lady and talked with him a little bit more after being saved from the punks, this would become strong evidence for them to argue against her.

Love at first sight was a romantic story for a man but was deadly for a woman's name, especially when her engagement with Xu Lipeng was just broken off.

If they really found these things from Qu Moying's yard, with all the onlookers outside her place, her name would be permanently ruined.

Although she didn't care about marriage in this life, she couldn't allow Yu and her daughter to ruin her name for their own sake. Thinking about this, Qu Moying curled up her lips into a grim smile.

"Go invite Second Young Master Yan over," the Old Lady calmed herself down and said to Granny Wu. No matter how she disliked Qu Caiyue, she didn't want her family to become famous for a scandal.

The Old Lady wondered what kind of person Second Young Master Yan was. She only heard that he was a playboy but never expected him to be involved with the Qu Family. The Old Lady decided to invite Earl Fengyang, his father, over and talk with him after she returned to the mansion.

Granny Wu went out for a while. Finally, she came back with a man, walking in slowly. Qu Moying immediately recognized him – he was the man she met at the market. A trace of coldness flashed across her eyes.

Yan Yu was not flustered at all, knowing he was here to "clarify" the situation. Seeing the old maid sent by Old Lady Qu, he even changed his clothes before coming over. He stayed at the Dabei Temple as well, but in another living area specifically for male guests, not far away from here. After entering the yard, the first scene he saw was Qu Caiyue kneeling on the ground and sobbing desperately.

At the same time, Qu Moying stood beside the Old Lady while the latter held her hand tightly. The intimate posture clearly showed the Old Lady's preference in terms of her granddaughters, making Yan Yu feel more disgusted. In his opinion, Fourth Lady Qu not only had a weird and malicious personality but also was good at manipulating other people.

She should be the one who misbehaved, but Second Lady Qu became the poor one being punished. The girl was kneeling on the ground and crying, but no one dared to help her. It was exactly the same as Yu Qingmeng said – Old Lady Qu favored the Fourth Lady a lot. Even an outsider like him felt this was too much.

But since Fourth Lady Qu was such an evil-minded person, he could frame her without feeling guilty...

Chapter 62 Everyone Made a Concession

"It's an honor to meet you, Mrs. Qu." Yan Yu bowed to her and smiled, acting like a righteous noble young master.

Qu Moying pressed her lips into a straight line. She was blind enough in her past life, and she still had the same problem in this life. She couldn't believe that she even regarded a playboy like him as a dignified young master!

But fortunately, she had learned not to easily let her guard down even when a person treated her kindly.

"Second Young Master Yan?" The Old Lady turned into her calm self already. She raised her eyes and sized up the young man in front of her.

"Yes, I am," Yan Yu said, beamingly. "Is there anything that I can help you with, Mrs. Qu?"

After he finished the words, his eyes fell on Qu Moying. Everyone could tell he had peeked the Fourth Lady with a smile many times since he entered the yard.

Qu Moying stepped forward and walked up to Yan Yu. She pointed at the clothes and the jewelry box on the stone table and said in a flat tone, "You are Second Young Master Yan, right? Do these things belong to you?"

"They are indeed mine." Yan Yu smiled while staring at her. It was the first time that he had carefully looked at this lady. Under the veil, her lips were light pink, matching well with her fair skin. Even though her eyes were covered, she naturally exuded an aura of elegance and confidence, not as ugly as the rumors said.

However, her appearance didn't matter. A person with an ugly heart was more unlikable than one with an ugly face.

"Second Young Master Yan, why did you give these things to my Second Sister? When did you give these to her? She rarely went out of the mansion. How did you do it?" Qu Moying looked into his eyes calmly without any timid expression.

Yan Yu was a good-looking guy, but his appearance was not comparable to Pei Yuanjun's. Even Pei Yuanjun couldn't make her blush, let alone Yan Yu.

The so-called love was the most fragile thing in the world, and she would never trust it again. Only a relationship with clarified benefits would be the most stable one.

Yan Yu had met many noble ladies and oftentimes felt disgusted by their hypocritical behaviors. Many of them spoke ill of him behind his back but pretended to be shy and well-mannered while facing him. The Fourth Lady seemed to be different. Her confidence and straightforward attitude left him a good impression, and her words sounded even more interesting than her unexpected behavior.

"What are you talking about, Fourth Lady Qu?" Yan Yu asked her as he patted his paper fan on his palm. He gave a sophisticated glance at Qu Caiyue, who was sobbing on the ground, and then his eyes moved back on Qu Moying.

"Second Young Master Yan, have we met before?" Qu Moying suddenly changed the topic.

Yan Yu looked a bit hesitant for a second, surprised by the abrupt question from her, but then he gave her a smile, "We met earlier today for the first time!"

There was nothing wrong with him sending her a gift on the first day they met. After all, the arrow of love could hit one's heart really fast.

"Thank you for your help at the market, Second Young Master Yan," Qu Moying curtsied to him and said naturally. Her behavior was well-mannered but also kept her a proper distance from the young man.

Not knowing her intention, Yan Yu started to act more discreetly. He bowed back and cupped his hands in front of his chest. "Fourth Lady Qu, you are welcome. You don't need to mention it."

The Old Lady quietly watched these two talking.

"Although I owe you a favor, I still have to ask you about it since it's related to my family's reputation. When did you give the gift to my Second Sister? My family has very strict management of our mansion,

and we don't think it's possible for you to have the chance to give it to her. My grandmother is furious about this. Second Young Master Yan, please help clarify the situation or this matter will be reported to your family."

The smile on Qu Moying's face disappeared immediately as she put on a stern look. She pressed her lips hard. Even though her eyes were covered by the veil, Yan Yu could still feel her cold gaze.

Subconsciously, Yan Yu turned his head to look at Qu Qiuyan. Something was definitely wrong. What did she mean by he gave the gift to Qu Caiyue? Wasn't it supposed to be sent to Qu Moying? Did they screw it up?

If so, he could not continue their plan, or his father would probably beat him until his legs were broken.

Their original plan was to make people believe he and Fourth Lady Qu fell in love with each other at first sight. It would be considered as disobeying the etiquette at the most. In the worst situation, if the Qu Family had to ask the Yan Family for an explanation, he could just take Qu Moying in as his concubine. Being a wife would be impossible for her anyway, and his father wouldn't say anything about it. Everyone knew that a noble lady who strictly obeyed the engagement rule could be a wife, and a girl who secretly dated a man could only be a concubine.

Qu Moying lowered herself to have a secret relationship with him in the story that they made up. Of course, she only deserved to be a concubine.

However, the current situation didn't seem right for the young master. If his father knew that he tried to frame a lady, that would be a disaster!

Yan Yu looked away and smiled awkwardly, "I-I have no idea about it. Maybe my servant misunderstood something."

"What do you mean by your servant misunderstood something?" Qu Moying didn't intend to give him any space to get around with it.

"The clothes and the earrings indeed belong to me, but I didn't let my servant send them to the Second Lady of your family. They...they are a gift for another lady. My servant must've gone to the wrong

place,” Yan Yu had to make up an explanation. For the first time, he was glad that the Fourth Lady was wearing a veil, or he doubted if he could finish his words smoothly while looking into her eyes.

What an embarrassing situation! They failed their plan and even got Qu Caiyue involved.

Moreover, he didn’t even want a girl like Qu Caiyue to be his concubine!

“For another lady? Do you mind telling us which family she is from? Why did your servant come to my grandmother’s yard and claim that she was looking for me?” Qu Moying didn’t want to take any step back. She was told earlier that a strange maid ran into the Old Lady’s yard and said she was here for the Fourth Lady.

Her yard and the Old Lady’s yard were separated by Qu Xuexin’s yard. She doubted if anyone would mistake the location.

The Old Lady’s eyes fell on Yan Yu as she found him suspicious.

“We didn’t mean to interfere in your life, Second Young Master Yan. We don’t care whom you want to send the gift to. However, now that my Second Sister is involved, you have to tell us the truth. One of our maids also saw you wandering around with your servant near my grandmother’s house in our yard. What’s your intention?”

Qu Moying continued to interrogate him without even giving him time to come up with another explanation.

Her successive questions gave Yan Yu a hard time. The playboy’s smirk on his face disappeared and was replaced by a sophisticated look. His eyes fell back on Qu Moying’s face again as he was deep in his thoughts.

“Second Young Master Yan, tell us the truth!” the Old Lady said coldly.

“Mrs. Qu, it’s quite embarrassing to talk about it in public. I made a promise to someone and sent my servant to pass the gift because I was told that she lives here. I took a walk around but found out this

was the Qu Family's yard. I felt strange about it, so I asked my maid to take a look inside in the name of a lady in your family, to see if the location was really mistaken. But I didn't mean to offend Fourth Lady Qu. I sincerely apologize for my rudeness."

Yan Yu came up with an explanation and responded quickly. He bowed to Qu Moying deeply and wore a regretful look on his face.

"As for the gifts, Mrs. Qu, I'm sorry, but I can't tell you whom the receiver should be for the sake of protecting a lady's name," Yan Yu made an ambiguous statement.

Under the Old Lady's cold gaze, he lowered his head in embarrassment.

His words were just a formality, and everyone was aware of the truth. However, if they had to come to a conclusion, it would be a lose-lose situation for both families.

Yan Yu started to feel regretful. Inexplicably, he wanted to see Qu Moying's expression, so he raised his head subconsciously. Before his eyes met hers, he realized his rudeness and looked back at the ground again.

The whole yard fell into silence. Even Qu Caiyue didn't dare to utter a sound. The Old Lady said slowly, "Since Second Young Master Yan's gift went to the wrong place, please take it back. Also, please stay away from my second granddaughter, Second Young Master Yan."

"Y-Yes. You have my promise." The Old Lady's answer was a big relief for Yan Yu. Still feeling the gaze from Qu Moying, his face somehow blushed. Even a person like him felt embarrassed for how farfetched this explanation was. Still, it was the best outcome that everyone chose to accept.

The Old Lady didn't want Qu Caiyue to marry him as a concubine. Neither did he want to marry her. They still maintained the last bit of dignity for both families.

"Mrs. Qu, I will prepare a valuable gift for you after I go back home. Otherwise, my apology cannot be expressed properly," said Yan Yu.

“There’s no need, Second Young Master Yan. Let’s call it a day!” The Old Lady signaled him to leave, “Please, Second Young Master Yan, this way!”

Yan Yu lifted his head and peeked at Qu Moying, who had already turned around and stood beside the Old Lady. His face still blushed with awkwardness.

“Fourth Lady Qu...”

“Second Young Master Yan, please leave,” Qu Moying interrupted him in a flat tone.

Yan Yu had no idea what to say, but the embarrassment gave him the urge to say something. He asked his servant to take the small package, bowed to the Old Lady, and turned around to leave.

When he got outside and saw the curious gazes those onlookers projected, he felt more displeased. He thought they were talking about Qu Moying before since the plan was to frame her, so he didn’t really pay attention to them. Now it became his turn to be involved with someone he didn’t like.

“Keep these carefully. Don’t ever mistake it again!” He gave a cold glare at the young servant and the maid who followed him out.

“Yes, Second Young Master. We will never do it again!” The two servants lowered their heads immediately.

People’s curious gazes left him nowhere to hide. He turned around and left quickly, feeling a flame of rage stuck in his chest that he couldn’t vent it out...

Was everything Yu Qingmeng and Qu Qiuyan said true? Qu Moying didn’t look like a malicious person, yet Qu Qiuyan’s attitude irritated him a bit. The plan was started by her and Yu Qingmeng, but Qu Qiuyan didn’t do anything except for watching the innocent Second Lady getting punished.

He didn’t expect a woman to settle the situation, but her indifference was for sure not pleasing. Then a sudden idea came across his mind – did they lie to him?

He hadn't thought about this before since he grew up with Xu Lipeng and fully trusted him. Seeing his close friend being forced to marry a shrew, he felt very aggrieved for him. With Yu Qingmeng's words and Qu Qiuyan, Qu Moying's own sister's confirmation, he never doubted them.

After meeting Fourth Lady Qu in person, he couldn't help but doubt if he was wrong...

The yard became quieter after Yan Yu left. With the Old Lady in silence, no one dared to talk. Meanwhile, Qu Caiyue still knelt on the ground, wiping tears off her cheek.

The Old Lady glanced over people's faces one by one, and her icy gaze eventually fell on Qu Qiuyan, who had been quiet this whole time. Then she questioned her in a cold voice, "Yan, tell me what's going on."

The Old Lady was not an idiot. She had noticed all their petty communications...

Chapter 63 Who Was Responsible?

Since Yan Yu arrived, Qu Qiuyan had her head lowered all the time, feeling exasperated.

She had never expected things to go this way. She couldn't figure out which part of her plan went wrong, but fortunately, she didn't say anything to help Qu Caiyue. In this way, she couldn't possibly be the one to blame.

Hearing the Old Lady's words, Qu Qiuyan quickly raised her head and looked at her blankly, "Grandmother, I have no idea."

"Follow me!" The Old Lady fell into silence for a second, suppressing her rage. After standing up, she added, "Yue, kneel here and take your time to think about what you did. Ying, you must be tired now. Go back to get some rest!"

Before, the Old Lady freed Qu Caiyue from her kneeling punishment when other people left her yard. However, she only wished she had kept Qu Caiyue kneeling on the ground. Then Qu Caiyue wouldn't go out to make such a big scene.

Knowing the Old Lady wanted to have a talk with Qu Qiuyan in private, Qu Moying nodded at her grandmother and left with her two maids.

The Old Lady left an old maid to keep an eye on Qu Caiyue and then took Qu Qiuyan back to her yard. She seated herself on the chair in the middle of the main room and scolded Qu Qiuyan, "Kneel down!"

"Grandmother!" Qu Qiuyan fell to her knees with tears rolling in her eyes, "Grandmother, I don't know what I did makes you angry. Please tell me."

"Good, good. Look at what you did to your sister! What a good daughter taught by Yu!" The Old Lady let out a deep breath as she boiled with rage. "Do you really believe that I know nothing? Do you think you can get away with what happened today? Your mother is the one in charge of the whole mansion's operation. Except for your mother, who else could allow that young master to send the gift into our mansion? No one!"

She couldn't hide her anger toward Yu in her words.

Inwardly, she blamed her son for marrying a wife like Yu, who clearly was not good at parenting her daughter. The Old Lady didn't doubt that Yu was the one behind the drama today, and Qu Qiuyan definitely was aware of it. But even if her granddaughter knew about it, she would still choose to stand on Yu's side and hide it from her grandmother. Thinking about it, the Old Lady felt more furious.

However, the Old Lady still believed there was something between Yan Yu and Qu Caiyue with Yu as the middleman. Without Yu's encouragement, Yan Yu couldn't possibly contact Qu Caiyue.

"Grandmother, Mother really has nothing to do with it. Second Sister lives in the East Mansion, and Aunt Luo should be the one taking care of her daily life. Mother should know nothing about her," Qu Qiuyan hurriedly explained and pouted as tears dripped down her face. "Grandmother, why Mother and I should take the responsibility for Second Sister's misbehavior?"

"You two always hang out together, and Caiyue never dares to disobey you and will do whatever you say. I know your aunt is in charge of the East Mansion, but she will never allow a lady of our family to be so shameless. If Caiyue's name is ruined, so will be your eldest sister's. In the same way, since you both are the ladies from the Qu Family, your reputation will be affected as well," the Old Lady said with exasperation.

The Old Lady wondered what on earth Yu filled in Qu Qiuyan's mind. The young lady didn't even know that the whole family was on the same boat, sharing glory and shame together.

Luo didn't necessarily care about Qu Caiyue's name, but she definitely cared about her own daughter's, especially when Qu Xuexin was at the proper age for marriage. Luo even mentioned in front of the Old Lady before that thanks to the other ladies' good reputation, Qu Xuexin wouldn't have any trouble finding a decent husband.

However, it was before Qu Moying's engagement with Xu Lipeng broke off. Now that Qu Qiuyan seemed to marry Lord Jing soon, but the two ladies in the East Mansion hadn't got engaged yet.

Compared to Luo from the East Mansion, Yu from the West Mansion was the boldest and the most malicious. All she thought about was herself instead of the bigger picture for the whole family.

"Second Sister lives in the East Mansion. She has nothing to do with us," Qu Qiuyan was clearly not convinced.

She didn't even think that stupid girl lived in the same world with her, let alone affected her life. Since Lord Jing had already shown interest in her, these little stains on her name left by her other sisters wouldn't make any difference.

Not to mention the person involved this time was Qu Caiyue, who was just remotely related to her. Even with the Old Lady as the bond of the two families, they still lived separately. If it really came to the worst situation, she could just ask her father to settle a partition of their property to cut off the connection between the two families. By then, Qu Caiyue would be more irrelevant to her.

As for her own sister Qu Moying, Qu Qiuyan had never cared about her in the first place. In her opinion, the so-called name of Qu Moying was already notorious. Now her situation was even worse as an ugly, blind girl whose engagement got broken off. Qu Moying was born to be like this, which had nothing to do with her.

Well, she certainly was not going to tell her grandmother these thoughts. Yu and Qu Qiuyan had prepared a proper explanation before to get themselves out of Qu Moying's trouble. Now, Qu Moying was replaced by Qu Caiyue, which even became easier for them to get rid of the trouble.

“Grandmother, Second Sister lives in the East Mansion. Although she hangs out with me every time she comes over, she never tells me such private things. After all, she and First Sister are real sisters. We are just cousins, and our good relationship is a mere formality. Aunt Luo doesn’t like her staying close to me either, so she still spends most of her time with First Sister. What happened today is due to the East Mansion’s mismanagement, but I live in the West Mansion. How would I know? Grandmother, do you think Second Sister would tell me in advance? I’m as shocked as you when seeing Second Sister blame it on Moying. If I knew about it, this would never happen in the first place.”

Qu Qiuyan’s tears were still dripping. She covered her eyes and started to cry out loud, sounding pitiful.

The Old Lady’s eyes darkened, “Do you mean I blame you and your mother wrongly?”

“Grandmother, my mother has always treated Second Sister well. I’m her only daughter, so she’s always happy to see a young girl of my age. Whenever Second Sister comes over, my mother gives her anything she has, even though Second Sister is just a nephew for her. She had put a lot of effort into Second Sister. Grandmother, you can’t judge her wrongly...”

Her words ended here as she was choked while sobbing, with her face full of beads of tears. She struggled to adjust her breath, and tears dripped down even faster.

“Your mother really treats Caiyue so well?” The Old Lady couldn’t believe what she heard. She never found Yu’s personality pleasing. Yu hadn’t shown any kindness to Qu Moying, her husband’s daughter, why would she like a concubine’s daughter from another family so much?

Seeing the Old Lady’s doubtful look, Qu Qiuyan knew her words started to take effect. She wiped her tears with her hanky and put on a sorrowful look. “Grandmother, if you don’t believe me, you can ask Second Sister about how my mother treats her. Even though she hasn’t treated her like her own daughter, she will never try to harm her.”

The teary-eyed girl’s honest tone made the Old Lady hesitant. Did she not know about it? Did Yu introduce Qu Caiyue to Second Young Master Yan but hide it from her daughter at the same time?

The more she thought about it, the more convinced the Old Lady felt. As a mother, it was reasonable that Yu didn't want Qu Qiuyan, a noble lady who hadn't got married yet, to be exposed to such a disgraceful thing.

The look on the Old Lady's face softened, "You can stand up now."

Qu Qiuyan knew the toughest part was over. She obediently stood up with Granny Wu's help while still wiping her face, trying to act as pitifully as she could.

"Qiuyan, no matter how your mother thinks about this, you and Ying are sisters bonded by the same blood, who should support each other. Otherwise, our family will become a joke in other people's eyes. If Ying doesn't have a good name, you will be the one affected the most. She's just a poor girl. Don't be so narrow-minded as your mother."

The Old Lady's words were still harsh since she hadn't got over her rage yet. Even if Qu Qiuyan was unaware, she wouldn't allow Yu to get away with it.

"Yes, Grandmother. I understand. I didn't treat Moying well because I thought she wanted to disfigure my face. Since her innocence has been proven already, I won't hold any grudge against her. I know Moying had a tough time back in the village, and now her engagement with Young Master Xu was even broken off. She must feel very upset. I promise I will treat her nicer."

Qu Qiuyan said firmly to the Old Lady while wiping her tears.

Hearing her sincere words, the Old Lady didn't know what to do except for hoping what she said was true. She waved her hand to signal Qu Qiuyan to leave. Qu Qiuyan cleaned her face up and bowed deeply to her grandmother, "Grandmother, I'll go take a look at Moying first."

"Go. You should've done this earlier. Remember, Moying is your own sister. Technically, she is your father's first daughter," the Old Lady sighed.

Qu Qiuyan clenched her fist hard and dug her nails deep into her palms. This was the most annoying thing for her to hear. If Qu Moying was the first daughter given birth by a wife, did it mean she was just a concubine's daughter before?

Why? In her mind, her mother Yu was her father's official wife, the real Second Madam. She couldn't accept that a blind girl whose mother was dead appeared to compete for the position of the first daughter with her. She should be the most dignified daughter from the Qu Family, not Qu Moying!

Both Qu Qiuyan and her mother Yu were unwilling to mention Yu's previous identity as Qu Zhizhen's noble concubine. This was the biggest shame of their life.

If it weren't for the Old Lady who was talking, Qu Moying would probably walk up and throw a slap on the person's face.

"Yes, Grandmother!" Qu Qiuyan responded while gnashing her teeth. The Old Lady kept adding pressure to her mother by mentioning her father's dead ex-wife and her mother's previous identity, which had irritated her mother countless times. When she became Madam Jing, she would definitely make the old woman pay for it.

It must be luck that made Qu Moying somehow get away with their plan, but she doubted if Qu Moying could be lucky all the time. From Yan Yu's personality, she could tell that he wouldn't easily get over the shame he bore this time. All she needed was to ask Yu Qingmeng to add some more fuel to the fire.

Seeing Qu Qiuyan leaving, the Old Lady let out a deep sigh with exasperation, closed her eyes, and leaned back in the chair.

"Madam, do you want me to get you a pill?" noticing the Old Lady's exhausted look, Granny Wu hurriedly asked. There were not many pills left. It was probably the time for the Second Master to ask an Imperial Doctor to make some more.

"No need. I'm fine! There are not many left. Better to save it for now," the Old Lady shook her head and said in a weak voice.

After leaving the Old Lady's yard, Qu Qiuyan stopped outside and looked back at the yard door with a trace of hatred showing up in her eyes. She really hated that old woman!

"My lady, do you want to go to the Fourth Lady's yard?" her maid Qing Ju asked in a low voice, looking hesitant.

"Yeah, why not? The Old Lady is waiting for us to get along with each other!" Qu Qiuyan sneered, heading to Qu Moying's yard.

She passed by Qu Xuexin's yard on her way. Meanwhile, the yard door opened, and Qu Xuexin walked out, her face was still a bit pale. She was stunned for a second when seeing Qu Qiuyan and then gave her an amiable smile. "Qiuyan, are you coming in? I heard something happened in Grandmother's yard. I'm heading there right now. Do you know what is going on?"

"Nothing happened. But you'd better go check on Second Sister first!" Qu Qiuyan sounded impatient.

"Qiuyan, what happened to her?" Qu Xuexin put on a frightened face.

"Who knows? If you are worried about her, just go take a look. I'm on my way to Moying's yard," Qu Qiuyan faked a smile on her face, turned around, and ignored Qu Xuexin. Such a useless girl, she thought. She asked Qu Xuexin to come with her so that all the blame could be shifted to her eldest sister. It was lucky for Qu Xuexin that she accidentally avoided the trouble.

Chapter 64 Lord Jing's Late Visit

"Where is your master?" Qu Qiuyan asked Yu Chun, looking displeased.

"The lady went out for a walk," Yu Chun lowered her head and responded.

"When did she leave?" She hadn't fully cleared the Old Lady's suspicion, so she came to visit Qu Moying to show her grandmother their good relationship. However, Qu Moying was not even in her yard! Having her effort wasted, Qu Qiuyan flew into a rage.

Qu Moying should feel honored to be visited by her and be waiting for her obediently. Qu Qiuyan couldn't believe that she was given the cold shoulder by that blind girl.

"It was not long ago. When we arrived at the yard door, the lady didn't even enter and left immediately," Yu Chun lowered her head and said. Of course, Yu Chun was not going to tell the Third Lady that Qu Moying left because Lord Yun asked her to meet him.

"In which direction she went?" Qu Qiuyan still couldn't accept it.

"I'm sorry that I didn't see it clearly, my lady," with her head still lowered, Yu Chun sounded pitiful. However, her words implied her intention of rejecting Qu Qiuyan.

The flame of rage was burning in Qu Qiuyan's chest, but she couldn't vent it out. She really wished she could give this maid a hard slap, but it was not the time for her to make a scene again. The crowd of onlookers just scattered, but some people were still wandering around their yard, pretending they were taking a casual walk. However, Qu Qiuyan could still feel their eyes peeking at them while standing in front of Qu Moying's yard.

She came here to prove her innocence instead of causing more trouble. After all, she didn't want to get involved with Qu Caiyue's situation anymore.

She swallowed hard with annoyance and turned around to leave. She had already tried her best to suppress her anger.

After Qu Qiuyan returned to her yard, she asked a servant to shut the yard door tight and then slapped her maid Qing Lian hard, who was following behind her. "You useless low-life bitch!" she yelled at the poor maid.

Knowing her master was venting her rage, Qing Lian didn't dare to talk. She covered her face and followed the lady into the room.

"Help me send a message to Second Young Master Yan," Qu Qiuyan seated herself, pulled a long face, and said coldly.

"My lady..." Qing Lian exclaimed with shock.

“What? I can’t do that?” Qu Qiuyan gave an icy glance at Qing Lian.

Startled by Qu Qiuyan’s shout, Qing Lian shivered and said reluctantly, “My lady, Second Madam said no matter what happened, you can’t intervene in the plan, let alone directly communicate with Second Young Master Yan. If someone notices you are involved with him, there’s no proper explanation we can give to Lord Jing. What’s worse...”

Qing Lian could feel the increasing pressure from Qu Qiuyan, but she had to say it for the sake of her master, even though she was almost crying out of fear.

People regarded her as the Third Lady’s private maid, and more than half of the servants in the mansion were afraid of her. She could literally do anything she wanted to those people, but in front of the Third Lady, she was the one getting bullied. She had to do everything discreetly, but even so, being cursed and beaten by her master was still her daily life. She would also find someone to vent her grievance on afterward. Still, she couldn’t do anything about Qu Qiuyan except for tolerating her abuse.

She had to say it because if something happened to Qu Qiuyan, the Second Madam wouldn’t go easy on her. By then, the consequences would be way more than what she was bearing right now.

“Slap!” She was hit on the face again, and the impact made her fall to the ground. Her fair face now became red and swollen.

However, Qu Qiuyan hadn’t had enough yet, and she gave the maid another kick.

“Send a message to mother. Tell her our plan failed, and Qu Caiyue, that stupid girl, took all the blame instead of Qu Moying. Ask mother to contact Yu Qingmeng again,” Qu Qiuyan let out a deep breath in anger, with her voice full of hatred.

“Yes, I’ll send a man to do it later.” Qing Lian put her hand on the ground, wanting to support herself up, but she fell on the ground again because of Qu Qiuyan’s kick.

Meanwhile, Qu Moying entered a yard in a dark cloak. “My lady, please have a seat and wait for a minute. The lord just went out,” Ji Hai welcomed her beamingly.

The yard she stood in was spacious, with servants in black guarding at the entrance. It was located in a remote corner of the Dabei Temple. Even though she had been in the temple many times in her past life, this place was totally strange to her.

It was different than the ordinary yards for guests, in a league of its own. The gate she just went through had a pair of bronze door knockers with ancient beast heads carved on top, exuding a solemn and dignified temperament.

"Is this Lord Yun's yard?" Qu Moying took the teacup served by Ji Hai, had a sip, and asked softly.

"This place has been the lord's since he was a child. The old lord, his father, said the lord is surrounded by too many evil spirits. So, he built a yard for the lord here in the Dabei Temple. The lord often came here in his childhood. After being assigned to the border, he still stays here once in a while whenever he comes back to the capital," Ji Hai explained beamingly.

"So, this place is outside of the Dabei Temple?" Qu Moying recalled the gate she went through just now and was surprised by Ji Hai's words. Was that solemn gate the temple's backdoor or side door?

"We are still in the temple but on its edge. The old lord didn't want the lord to be disturbed by ordinary guests here, so he built a gate nearby to separate the other part of the temple from the lord's yard." Ji Hai was still smiling.

As the chief butler working for Pei Yuanjun, Ji Hai was not old but very intelligent, experienced in reading other people's minds. Once Qu Moying asked, he immediately understood her intention.

Qu Moying blinked, deep in her thoughts. She now realized that this place should be more like a mansion built next to the Dabei Temple. Judging by the outline she saw from far away before her entry, ordinary yards like the one they stayed at were not even comparable to this place. When she was at the gate, she could even see a multiple-story tower built far behind. This was a mansion with at least two or three yards.

She had never heard that Lord Yun had a mansion built in the Dabei Temple.

"Where did the lord go?" Qu Moying cleared her thoughts and asked.

Yu Dong sent her a message from Pei Yuanjun, asking her to come here to meet him. But she hadn't seen anyone except for Ji Hai. It was getting late, and with the dark cloak she wore, Qu Moying was not worried about being recognized by people.

Moreover, Lord Yun's place must be well protected by secret guards. She doubted if ordinary guests of the temple could even get close to this yard. Yet, she couldn't help but wonder what this meeting with Lord Yun was for this time.

"Lord Jing asked the lord to go meet him," explained Ji Hai with a smile.

"Lord Jing? He's here at the temple too?" Qu Moying's heart missed a beat as she raised her brow and asked.

"He's here to ask about you." Ji Hai didn't intend to hide the truth from Qu Moying.

"Ask about me? Why?" Qu Moying was shocked by his words. She only met Lord Jing once at her grandmother's birthday banquet. It was just a glimpse at a distance, and they didn't even talk to each other. Why was he interested in her?

After a second, she realized something and asked with caution, "Do you mean he's asking about Lady Liu?"

"Yes, he's here for Lady Liu. Because he has tried to visit Lady Liu many times, but the lady says she doesn't want to see any guest and has rejected him every time," said Ji Hai.

Rejecting Lord Jing was the only option they had since the person he wanted to visit didn't even exist. Now Qu Moying felt more confused about Pei Yuanjun's intention. The real Lady Liu didn't come to the capital, but why did he ask Qu Moying to disguise as her and cause so much trouble?

"Since the lord came back to the capital, most of his time was spent at the Dabei Temple. The day before yesterday, Lady Liu arrived at the temple to pray for her father. Luckily, you are here as well, Fourth Lady," added Ji Hai, still beaming.

Qu Moying glanced at him, "Does the lord want Lady Liu to meet Lord Jing?"

"Yes, that's the lord's intention. Lady Liu only showed up once at the Old Lady Qu's birthday banquet but has rejected all the invitations and visit requests sent by other people. Even Lord Jing has been rejected many times. It's time for Lady Liu to meet him again, or people will start to get suspicious," Ji Hai grinned and said.

Frowning, Qu Moying fell into silence. She still couldn't figure out why Lord Yun asked her to impersonate Lady Liu. However, this was not something she should try to figure out. It was an honor for her to have some value for Lord Yun and to have Yu Dong as a helper sent by him. Otherwise, with her current power, she couldn't even stand a chance against Yu and her daughter, let alone revenge for herself, her father, and her sister from the past life.

Now, she started to worry about another thing. "Mr. Ji, will Lady Liu come to the capital?"

If there were two Lady Lius in the city simultaneously, that would be a very awkward situation for her.

"Fourth Lady, don't worry. Lady Liu won't come to the capital recently," Ji Hai responded with a smile. "Lady Liu doesn't have any relatives or friends here, so she can feel free to reject all the visits during her stay. However, Lord Jing is a different story. Lord Yun wants Lady Liu to treat Lord Jing in a better way."

Qu Moying bit her lip subconsciously, making it even paler than usual and leaving a white mark on it. After she stopped biting, the white mark gradually faded. However, her lips still maintained a color of light pink, reminding people of the color of an elegant, fresh flower petal. "I see," said Qu Moying.

She understood what Pei Yuanjun wanted her to do now.

"Fourth Lady, do you really understand?" Ji Hai asked, looking jolly as he peeked at Qu Moying's expression. Ji Hai had been proud of his own sharp eye, and he could tell Fourth Lady Qu was a stunning beauty even though half of her face was covered by the veil. She was probably even more gorgeous than Third Lady Qu, who was known for her appearance.

That was wonderful!

Secretly, Ji Hai felt more and more pleased, looking at the bright and pretty lady in front of him.

“Yes, I understand!” Qu Moying nodded at him, took a sip of the tea, and put the cup down in a decent manner.

“Alright, the clothes have been prepared for you inside, my lady. Please get changed so that people won’t recognize you from your outfit.” Ji Hai signaled with his arm and pointed in one direction. Following his signal, Qu Moying stood up.

Meanwhile, a pretty maid entered the yard from the gate and bowed to her respectfully. “My lady, please follow me!”

Qu Moying had never seen such a stunning maid like this one. She was even more beautiful than many noble ladies, making her unsuitable to be a maid. After all, which lady would be willing to hire a maid who was even more eye-catching than her master?!

“Fourth Lady, this is Chun Xiu. She will be your maid from now on and help you handle everything when you are not available,” Ji Hai implied.

Did he mean that this maid would be Lady Liu’s representative when Qu Moying couldn’t disguise as her? It’s good news for Qu Moying since this told her that she didn’t need to sneak out to do the impersonation too often...

Chapter 65 Good, I Like You!

The clothes Qu Moying changed into had a color of light pink with embroidered peach blossom pattern on the edge of the dress and the sleeves. The piece’s outer layer was made of a white veil, and a soft belt weaved by gold threads was tied on her slender waist. As she walked, the dress fluttered, showing a temperament of dignity and charm that only belonged to a young woman. Although the sizeable veiled hat almost covered her whole face, her chin was revealed sometimes when she moved. Those lips could be seen, looking soft and pink like flower petals.

Her fair skin matched well with those lips, not bright but very alluring.

Looking at the young woman in the mirror, Chun Xiu was amazed. She considered herself good-looking. She even thought half of Lady Liu's beauty, who was known for her appearance, came from her temperament and dressing style. However, now she was shocked to see how beautiful Fourth Lady Qu was, who was said to be ugly and blind. Compared to this lady, Chun Xiu felt she was just an ugly girl.

Those people who spread the rumors about Fourth Lady Qu were truly blind!

If Fourth Lady Qu was ugly, no one could be considered beautiful in the world, and others were only uglier than her.

Among all the people Chun Xiu met, she had always thought Lord Yun was the most good-looking one, followed by Lady Liu. But now, her opinion had changed – Lord Yun and Fourth Lady Qu were in the same line in terms of appearance.

Before Qu Moying dressed up, Chun Xiu was already amazed. Now the Fourth Lady looked even more stunning after she got changed. As a girl, she couldn't even take her eyes off this lady, let alone those males. Well, maybe Lord Yun was the only exception since he could see his delicate face in the mirror every day. He had probably felt numb about his beauty.

It was a pity that such a beautiful face had to be covered by the hat.

After Qu Moying put on the veiled hat, only the top of her head was exposed. Her hair was tied into a complex bun, decorated with three hairpins that had heart-shaped rubies on the tips. The red jewelry matched well with her pink outfit, showing her grace and tenderness.

"My lady, do you want to put on some lip makeup?" asked Chun Xiu. Although the color of Fourth Lady Qu's lips was a bit too light, she felt it brought a trace of innocence to her charm. On her fair face with delicate features, the lips without any makeup looked even more alluring.

"Yes!" responded Qu Moying.

She should dress herself up in Lady Liu's fashion, and there was no need to keep things the same.

“Alright, my lady!” Chun Xiu felt a bit of pity hearing Qu Moying’s decision. She thought lip makeup would ruin her whole beauty instead of polishing it, and it would be better if Fourth Lady Qu used some lip balm to make her lips look moister.

After Qu Moying put on a bright red lip makeup and the veiled hat, she observed herself in the mirror for a while. She even lifted up the edge of the veil to watch her face from different angles. Then she nodded with satisfaction.

The “Lady Liu” in the mirror apparently looked different from Qu Moying herself.

The outfit, jewelry, and makeup were all different than hers. In this way, no one would doubt her real identity.

“My lady, the lord is back. He’s asking you to go over,” Ji Hai’s voice came from outside.

Qu Moying nodded at herself in the mirror and put down the veil of her hat. She stood up and walked out as Chun Xiu hurriedly followed behind her. When the two left the room, they saw Ji Hai with a beaming face standing outside.

“Lady Liu, this way, please!” Ji Hai pointed at the main house.

Qu Moying nodded and headed there.

Upon entry, she saw Pei Yuanjun sitting in the center under the dim light. He was wearing a light cyan brocade robe with embroidered light purple irises blooming at the end of his long clothes.

Usually, a combination of this kind of color and flower would be too outstanding and flighty. However, even in a robe like this, Lord Yun still exuded a mighty aura. It was the same case with his eyes – even though he was born with a pair of frivolous upturned eyes, no one dared to look into them.

A beautiful man with somewhat evil dignity and a dangerous, frightening aura – this was Lord Yun in Qu Moying's eyes. Was it the reason why his father said he was surrounded by too many evil spirits and built a mansion for him next to the Dabei Temple?

Even Pei Yuanjun's smile looked frightening. His whole serious temperament was too overwhelming, making people easily ignore his beauty. Moreover, no one dared to observe his face or make any comment about his appearance.

Pei Yuanjun sized Qu Moying up and then nodded, "Not bad. This is not bad."

"Should I go right now?" Qu Moying lowered her head and asked.

"We are not in a rush. Pei Yusheng just left. He probably will go to visit you after a while," Pei Yuanjun said softly, "Fourth Lady, you are a smart person. You know what to do, right?"

"Yes, my lord!" Qu Moying nodded. There was no place for her to back out anyway.

"Do you feel uncomfortable doing this?" Pei Yuanjun suddenly gave her a smile.

Qu Moying raised her eyes and stared at his overwhelmingly beautiful face with calmness. "There's no such a thing. My lord, I don't think you will let anything bad happen to Lady Liu. After all, Lady Liu is the Guardian General's daughter."

Speaking of it, she felt a sting in her heart. She used to be the Suppressor General's daughter. Her title was probably the actual reason why the Crown Prince, Pei Luo'an, married her.

Now what Lord Jing did was for the same reason. It turned out that no one in the royal family could be reliable.

Pei Yuanjun suddenly curled his lips into a smile. His smile looked careless, but it somehow reminded Qu Moying of a cold, sharp blade with a metallic luster that could stab into one's heart at any second.

Subconsciously, Qu Moying clenched her fists as she gazed at Pei Yuanjun's face. Her eyes, hidden behind the veil, were full of sorrow.

"You are brilliant. Instead of being a poor girl abandoned in a village, I feel you are more like a well-educated noble lady who is raised up by an aristocratic family with all their resources, particularly like a general's daughter," Pei Yuanjun said, slowly and softly. However, every word he uttered sent a cold chill down Qu Moying's spine.

She knew the best who she was. She was exactly a general's daughter, born to be the Crown Princess.

She pressed her pink lips hard as her heart was screaming inside, but she couldn't say a word.

Emotions were boiling in her, desiring to break out of her body but suppressed by the overwhelming pressure from Lord Yun. She clenched her hands harder, but her eyes were still on Pei Yuanjun with a bold look on her face.

Who was Pei Yuanjun? Many people didn't even dare to look into his eyes, but there was no space for her to back out. She couldn't back out. She had to look into those scary, cold eyes.

Amused by her calm reaction, Pei Yuanjun smiled again, with a trace of laziness. His entire face softened as his eyes gleamed. "Aren't you afraid your life will be ruined if Pei Yusheng finds out your true identity? He's not a simple man as he looks."

Qu Moying wondered who was the powerful one, Pei Yusheng or Pei Yusheng's mother, Noble Consort He. His mother moved into the royal palace using the excuse of taking care of the sick empress. In the end, Empress Yuan's life became a tragedy while Noble Consort He climbed up to her current position and gave birth to Lord Jing.

"Because you are with me, my lord!" suppressing her fear, Qu Moying carefully controlled her voice and said calmly.

"Sometimes, I will be around the border. By then, no one can really help you. If Pei Yusheng insists on meeting you, what should you do?" Pei Yuanjun's tone was lazy as he raised his brow.

Qu Moying fell into silence for a while and then responded, "My lord, if you go to the border, there's no doubt that Lady Liu will leave with you. She won't stay in the capital alone."

Her words amused Pei Yuanjun, and he started to laugh. That pair of upturned eyes gleamed, "Not bad. You are indeed a smart girl. Good, I like you!"

"Thank you for your compliment, my lord!" Qu Moying lowered her head.

"Ji Hai, take Lady Liu there," Pei Yuanjun finally stopped laughing and said to Ji Hai.

"Yes, my lord. Lady Liu, please follow me!" Ji Hai walked up to Qu Moying with a beam and pointed outside.

Qu Moying curtsied to Pei Yuanjun and left with Ji Hai.

Pei Yuanjun raised his brow and watched Qu Moying leaving as a faint smile was revealed on his face, making his expression livelier. "Not bad. Not bad, indeed!"

"My lord, are you talking about Fourth Lady Qu or the Lady Liu she disguises as?" A handsome young man in a neat black suit suddenly appeared in the room and handed the lord a letter. "This is an emergency, my lord."

"I'm talking about both!" Pei Yuanjun chuckled as his long index finger knocked on the table. Then he took the letter, opened the envelope, and started to read. After a little while, he put it down and asked, "Are they attacking us?"

"Yes. They started the attack once they heard you left, my lord. What should we do?" The young man was Pei Yuanjun's chief private guard, Qinghe.

"Since they started it, we just fight back. I don't care if we kill one thousand or ten thousand of them. Just fight until they stop!" Pei Yuanjun said carelessly.

“Then...do you want to go back, my lord?” asked Qinghe.

“Go back? For what? I’m not in a rush to go back. Maybe I’ll just stay in the capital,” Pei Yuanjun’s tone was lazy.

“What? My lord, you are not going back?” Qinghe’s eyes lit up as his face turned red with excitement. He thought the lord was still hesitating, but it turned out that he thought it through already, which was good news for everyone around him.

“Why? You want me to go back?” Pei Yuanjun raised his brow and asked.

Qinghe waved his hands and hurriedly said, “N-No, no, no... I didn’t mean that. I’m happy that you don’t want to go back. It will be a great pleasure for all your subordinates.”

Qinghe and other servants who were close to their master all knew that Lord Yun wasn’t willing to leave the border because he couldn’t let that thing go. Now Qinghe felt so happy to hear that his master was finally determined to stay in the capital. With the emperor’s recognition and Lord Yun’s own power, a bright future would be waiting for Lord Yun.

At the same time, Ji Hai just came back from walking Fourth Lady Qu and Chun Xiu to the backdoor, and it was also great news for him. He couldn’t hold back his excitement – Fourth Lady Qu was truly Lord Yun’s lucky star! Lord Yun wasn’t determined about it when he returned to the capital, and now it was fantastic that he thought it through and made up his mind.

It must be because of Fourth Lady Qu. It must be...

Ji Hai had grown more respect for Fourth Lady Qu. If it weren’t for her confident behavior, Lord Yun wouldn’t feel touched and make his decision.

This was incredible, Ji Hai thought as he wiped his swollen, red eyes. Everyone who worked for the lord had been waiting for this day...

Chapter 66 The So-called Respect!

"Are you sure Lady Liu is inside?" Lord Jing, Pei Yusheng, asked his servant, looking at the Buddha hall in front.

"Yes, Your Royal Highness. I saw Lady Liu enter this place, saying that she will stay here and pray for her father the whole night," the young eunuch said hurriedly.

"Let's go in," Pei Yusheng nodded.

It was not his fault to see her at such a late time. He had been to the Level-One Guardian General's Mansion several times before, trying to visit her but got rejected every time. She always said that she didn't feel well and did not want to meet people because of her eye problem.

Hearing that she had come to the Dabei Temple, Pei Yusheng immediately headed here to meet her.

However, he didn't know Lord Yun was in the temple too until he was called over by him. Fortunately, Lady Liu was going to stay in the Buddha hall and pray for her father the whole night, which would be a good chance for him to create an encounter. Otherwise, he would probably be rejected again if he went to her yard this late.

"Sir, please don't go any further. A lady has booked the whole Buddha hall tonight," a young monk stopped Lord Jing.

"This is Lord Jing. Watch your manner," Lord Jing's servant, the young eunuch, stepped forward and scolded the monk.

Hearing his words, the monk looked frightened and left immediately.

Pei Yusheng stepped into the hall. It was quiet inside, with two young monks sitting on both sides and chanting the sutras. A slender female figure was kneeling on a cattail hassock in the middle, with a maid kneeling one step behind her.

Pei Yusheng walked closer and bowed to the Buddha statue in the center. Then he took three incense sticks from the clever eunuch, made obeisance again, and inserted them in the burner.

Finally, he turned back and looked at the woman who raised her eyes in shock due to his arrival. Although her face was covered by the veiled hat, Pei Yusheng still recognized Lady Liu, the Guardian General's daughter.

He stepped forward, cupped his hands in front of his chest, and gently bowed to her.

Qu Moying had to stand up with Chun Xiu's help, walked aside to leave the center space to him, and dropped a curtsy.

"Lady Liu, are you praying for your father?" Pei Yusheng asked.

Qu Moying nodded at him and turned her head to gaze at the Buddha statue. "My father is risking his life every day on the battlefield. I'm praying for him, wishing the Buddha can bless him with... good luck and peace!"

Her voice became a bit hoarse as she thought about her own father, who was also a general fighting bravely for the country but ended his life miserably. She had to revenge for her father so that he could rest in peace.

"You are truly a thoughtful daughter, Lady Liu. Don't worry. Nothing bad will happen to the Guardian General," Pei Yusheng comforted her in a soft voice.

Qu Moying fell into silence for a while and then let out a deep sigh, "Thank you, Your Royal Highness."

"There's no need to thank me for the pretty words. The Guardian General deserves it. He has fought for our motherland and guarded the border well. His reputation is built through his own hard work. Lady Liu, you should be very proud of your father."

Pei Yusheng changed his tone from reassuring to respectful, "A real man will not be afraid of death and should drop his pen and pick up a sword to fight for his people. If I weren't a lord, I would fight at the frontline too. Compared to those great warriors, I'm still too weak."

"That's very modest of you, Your Royal Highness. You have been already doing your best," Qu Moying said politely.

"Not even close to the Guardian General. I've always held much respect for the Guardian General but couldn't have a chance to meet him in person. When I heard about your arrival, I was thrilled. I couldn't wait to see you and listen to your stories about your brave father."

Pei Yusheng's words became more and more humble. He looked at Qu Moying smilingly, with a trace of excitement on his face.

As if he whole-heartedly felt this way!

Qu Moying curled her lips into a sarcastic smile behind the veil. She had heard similar things from the Crown Prince, Pei Luo'an, more than once, but misfortune was the only thing she got from those pretty words. Her father was murdered cruelly, so did her other family. Those royal members were truly heartless people! They pampered you when they needed you. However, when you lost your value, they would get rid of you within one blink.

Qu Moying thought those familiar words would arouse her anger, but surprisingly, her mind was as calm as a lake.

"On behalf of my father, I appreciate your compliment." Qu Moying curtsied to him again.

Pei Yusheng seemed so thrilled that he forgot the etiquette and reached out his hand to help her up. "Don't even mention it, Lady Liu. The Guardian General is one of the people I respect the most. It's a pity that I can't go to the border, and the Guardian General doesn't come back to the capital. We have no choice but to miss the chance to meet each other."

Qu Moying stepped back and avoided Pei Yusheng's hand. "Thank you, Your Royal Highness. Father said he will come back here."

“When?” Pei Yusheng asked hurriedly as his eyes lit up. His hand was still hanging in the air, but the news made him totally forget the embarrassment.

“I have no idea. Father only said he will come back but didn’t tell me when.” Qu Moying shook her head.

“That’s wonderful news to hear!” Pei Yusheng looked overjoyed. “Lady Liu, when you know the exact time of the Guardian General’s returning, could you inform me first? I want to welcome him in person at the resting station five kilometers away from the city.”

“No problem, Your Royal Highness.” Qu Moying took one step away from Pei Yusheng, who walked a bit closer again. If Pei Yusheng really admired brave generals, shouldn’t he respect Lord Yun or Ji Hanyue’s father the most? Thinking about this, she couldn’t hold back the feeling of sarcasm deep inside.

However, when Lord Jing visited her family in her past life, he never had any excitement he showed right now. How dare he claim that he admired those gallant generals?

The Guardian General was a level-one general, same as her father. Their rank was totally the same. The only difference was that Ji Hanyue, the Suppressor General’s daughter, had already engaged with the Crown Prince. Their family had no value to Pei Yusheng at all, so he didn’t even bother to go through the formality.

“Lady Liu...”

“My lady, it’s time to offer the incense!” Chun Xiu spoke in a low voice at the same time as Pei Yusheng.

The sound made Pei Yusheng notice this maid. At first sight, he was even amazed by her beauty. It was hard to believe that a beautiful girl like her was just a maid. Then his eyes fell on the girl wearing the veiled hat as he thought of the report he received from the border – Lady Liu had a peerless appearance. That might be why she dared to use such a pretty girl as her maid.

This maid was gorgeous enough to make many noble ladies in the capital feel shameful.

This detail made Pei Yusheng believe more in the report he received. Lady Liu must be a stunning woman, and what happened to her eyes was unfortunate. Luckily, she didn't seem totally blind, which meant her eye problem was still curable. As Pei Yusheng saw her taking the incense from her maid's hand with no hesitation, he secretly took a breath of relief.

He could accept a wife with an eye problem but definitely not a blind one.

Moreover, even if he could accept it, his father, the emperor, and his mother couldn't, regardless of her identity as the Guardian General's daughter.

Pei Yusheng contemplated his future secretly. The situation seemed very beneficial for him. If he married Lady Liu as his first wife, who was not perfectly qualified due to her eye problem, the Guardian General wouldn't have any reason to require him not to take another wife within a period of time. Then after their wedding, he could soon marry another woman as his second wife.

Thinking about this, he took another glance at Chun Xiu, Lady Liu's maid. He used to be pretty satisfied with Qu Qiuyan's appearance, planning to marry her. So, he didn't care if people saw him and Qu Qiuyan standing together that day in the Qu's Mansion. However, his mind kind of changed now. If his first wife's maid was as beautiful as his second wife, it didn't make sense to him!

Qu Qiuyan was considered one of the prettiest noble ladies in the capital. Pei Yusheng couldn't find a better choice than her before, who had a good appearance, decent family background, and showed him interest and loyalty. That was why he was willing to treat Qu Qiuyan kindly and please her with some little gifts from time to time.

But right now, another good choice showed up in front of him – Lady Liu's maid. He didn't mind marrying her as his second wife or concubine.

Within a few minutes, Pei Yusheng had already painted a great blueprint of his life inwardly. Showing a more amiable smile on his face, he opened his mouth and wanted to say something while Ji Hai rushed inside. Ji Hai saw him and hurriedly walked closer, "Your Royal Highness, I've been looking for you."

"What's the matter?" asked Pei Yusheng.

"The lord has something to discuss with you," Ji Hai said anxiously while wiping off the sweat on his forehead.

"Right now?" Pei Yusheng glanced at the dim light in the hall and asked.

"Yes, Your Royal Highness, right now. I heard it's about the border..." Ji Hai whispered to him.

"Let's go!" Hearing Ji Hai's words, Pei Yusheng hurriedly turned around. There was no time for him to spend on Lady Liu anymore. The border was a territory that all the emperor's sons couldn't reach, even including the Crown Prince. If he could get first-hand information about the borderlands from Pei Yuanjun, he could make a move ahead of Pei Luo'an to please his father.

As for women, he was not in a hurry.

After Pei Yusheng walked out, Qu Moying offered another three incense sticks to the Buddha statue and then left with Chun Xiu. Pei Yusheng couldn't possibly come back again tonight.

She and Chun Xiu left from the side door of the Buddha hall. After a few turns, they stopped at a crossing and saw Yu Dong. He noticed the two and hurriedly walked up. Chun Xiu bowed to Qu Moying and left, and now it was Yu Dong's turn to lead the way for Qu Moying.

In the darkness, they finally returned to their own yard.

Back in her room, Qu Moying put down her hair, got washed and changed, and then got on the bed. Maybe because too many things had happened today, she couldn't fall asleep. While her two maids slept in the outer room, she left a candle on, leaned on her bed, and read a book of sutras.

She brought this book back from the Buddha hall just now.

The text was obscure, hard to understand. Fortunately, Qu Moying had read some in her past life and had grown some patience for it. Moreover, her rebirth made her believe in something she never believed before. The esoteric sutras surprisingly touched her heart this time.

After a while, she finally started to feel sleepy. When she was about to put down the book, she suddenly noticed a male figure in a dark purple robe at the corner of her room. She almost jumped from her bed and dropped the book on the ground. Then her eyes became wide open as she saw the iris pattern on his belt.

She clenched the book in her hand to calm herself down and asked in a low voice, "What brings you here so late, my lord? Is it an emergency?"

She slowly raised her eyes and gazed at Lord Yun's face, who was exuding an aura of anger instead of elegance...

Chapter 67 Lord Yun's Suspicion

In silence, Pei Yuanjun walked to her. He pulled a chair in front of her and sat down in a domineering posture under her surprising gaze. Wearing a judgmental look, he stared at her quietly as if he could pull her down to hell without uttering any word.

The atmosphere in the room couldn't be more frightening, especially on a night like this.

His anger came out of nowhere, making Qu Moying confused. Was he suspecting her because he saw her face?

Qu Moying clenched the other hand under her quilt. Showing no expression on her face, she asked slowly, "Is there anything I can help you with, my lord?"

Pei Yuanjun sized her up. Without the veil on her face this time, he could see her watery eyes clearly, which had a trace of confusion. Still, there was no fear or panic, as if seeing him in her room was just a usual thing.

The anger in his eyes gradually faded away, but his face hadn't softened yet. "How dare you?"

It was a question that didn't need to be answered because he had already known everything.

"Does fear help?" Qu Moying chuckled, and her smile lit up the darkness. Her long eyelashes fluttered, adding a trace of childishness to her face, but there was no actual joy in her big eyes.

"Certainly not!" Pei Yuanjun gazed at her and said affirmatively.

"Then why do I need to be scared? My lord, if you intend to kill me, you don't need to be here in person. You can just ask Yu Dong to do it and then secretly push the responsibility on Lord Jing," Qu Moying said with a serious look as she raised her eyebrow and pressed her lips.

"You believe I should think like that?" Pei Yuanjun leaned back on the chair, looking a bit more relaxed.

"Shouldn't you, my lord?" Qu Moying asked him back. Seeing his posture, she felt a bit relieved.

"And your reason is?" Pei Yuanjun's downturned eyes were wide open as his attention was caught. However, the aura of threat exuded by him was still lingering in the room. That playful, amorous lord people saw was never the real him.

"I've met Lord Jing while impersonating Lady Liu, but I believe you must keep some kind of evidence to prove it was actually me, Qu Moying. If anything bad happens to me now and you show people the evidence you have, Lord Jing will be the first one to be blamed. Then, you, my lord, who can ruin Lord Jing's future at any time, will gain definite dominance over him." All kinds of thoughts were racing in Qu Moying's mind.

It was just her guessing at the beginning. But the more she thought about it, the more feasible it seemed to her, which sent a chill down her spine.

As the Crown Prince's uncle, Lord Yun had a stranglehold on all the emperor's sons. Even the Crown Prince himself had to show respect to him. However, those ambitious royal members wouldn't allow this situation to last long.

A man with absolute power besides the emperor never had a good ending. When the next emperor ascended the throne, this man's life would be pretty much over. If Pei Yuanjun wanted to find a way out, he must control the next emperor. Right now, it seemed that he put the bet on Lord Jing. If so, everything made sense now.

It would be easy to help the Crown Prince gain the throne since he was the heir approved by the current emperor anyway. So, the Crown Prince probably would disobey Pei Yuanjun after gaining more power. However, Lord Jing was a different story. Pei Yuanjun needed to spend a lot of effort destroying the Crown Prince to help Lord Jing climb up. In return, Lord Jing would hold much gratitude to him. Plus, Pei Yuanjun had strong evidence that could ruin his life. There would be no reason for Lord Jing not to obey him.

“Are you frightened?” Pei Yuanjun chuckled, reached out his hand, and touched Qu Moying’s face. The coldness in his eyes felt the same as the chill of his hand. She was startled by the freezing touch, but then she raised her brow. “I’m just a weak woman. If this is what you believe in, I have nothing else to say, my lord.”

Pei Yuanjun could feel her subtle movement when his cold hand touched her soft and warm face, but then he was surprised by her courage, feeling her calm gaze. Those clear, watery eyes somehow settled the anxious feeling in his heart. He was just taking a walk outside. Seeing the light from her yard, he decided to check on her on the spur of the moment. Now he felt this visit was indeed worth his time.

“My lord, shouldn’t I feel frightened?” The words she said were similar to those she uttered before but worked as different answers to different questions, even though they sounded contradictory.

But they both sounded reasonable as if she didn’t try to wear any disguise. They all felt genuine from her heart!

Qu Moying grabbed Pei Yuanjun’s big hand and pushed it away with a bit of displeasure. “My lord, I know no one can see us now, but etiquette is meant to be kept, not broken.”

Amused by her reaction, Pei Yuanjun showed a lazy but sophisticated smile on his face and stood up. “You are doing a good job!”

“Thank you for the compliment, my lord!” Qu Moying straightened up.

“Good thoughts too!” Pei Yuanjun lowered his head and looked into her eyes, trying to find fear in them.

"Thank you!" Qu Moying said calmly as if they just talked about some petty, ordinary things. However, his second compliment was different than the first one as his tone exuded an overwhelming pressure.

It locked on her, leaving her nowhere to escape.

"I'm impressed!" Pei Yuanjun said and chuckled again. Suddenly, he patted her head and sized her up while getting ready to leave. "You should be born in a general's family instead of that coward Qu Zhizhen's."

Qu Moying pressed her lips, staying in silence.

Pei Yuanjun didn't expect her to say anything either. He walked up to the window, jumped out, and disappeared into the darkness.

Not until Lord Yun left did Qu Moying realize the clothes on her back were soaked by her cold sweat. As her whole body got loosened, she couldn't feel her legs and leaned straight back. Her head hit the bed frame heavily. The pain made her curl up, and she covered her head with her hands.

There was no way she was not afraid. She was so afraid that she had goosebumps all over her skin. If using her to get rid of the hazards on his way was really Lord Yun's intention, her life would end up being miserable again.

Thank god... Thank god that was not his intention...

She lay on her bed for a while before she sat up again. Then she walked to the window and made sure it was well locked this time. Leaning beside the window, her body was still trembling uncontrollably. She had to bite her lip hard to suppress the fear deep inside. The water in her cup was still a bit warm. She picked it up from the table and drank the water up...

This night, Qu Moying didn't sleep well, spending most of her time dreaming. The nightmare in the Linyuan Pavilion of the Eastern Palace kept repeating in her mind. She saw herself falling into the water and drowning again and again.

Qu Qiuyan was another one who had a tough time sleeping tonight, rolling on her bed back and forth. After hearing Lord Jing's arrival at the Dabei Temple, she secretly sent a servant to require a meeting but was given the cold shoulder. Lord Jing told her to enjoy her time in the temple. Even though he would stay here for a few days, he might not have time to meet her.

How would Qu Qiuyan accept his rejection? The Dabei Temple was the place where she and Lord Jing met for the first time. She could tell that Lord Jing was interested in her by then, so was she.

They clearly had feelings for each other. Even though everything was still under the table, they were both aware of it. But how come Lord Jing couldn't squeeze some time for her when he was already here?

What else could he do in the temple? When they met here last time, Lord Jing spent most of his time accompanying her. Qu Qiuyan felt that he just made up an excuse to avoid her.

Was he accompanying another lady? The more she thought about it, the more suspicious it felt.

The unsettled feeling occupied her whole heart, making it hard for her to fall asleep. When she went to give obeisance to the Old Lady, Qu Qiuyan looked exhausted.

In fact, none of her other sisters and cousins looked any better than her.

Qu Xuexin's face was still a bit pale. It seemed like she hadn't fully recovered after taking the medicine. Qu Xuexin had never been a robust girl. When the Old Lady got sick, she would feel unwell too from time to time. Seeing her weak status, the Old Lady was not surprised.

As for Qu Caiyue, she was expected to be upset after involving in the scandal yesterday. On her way to the Old Lady's yard today, all the guests she passed by stared at her with a weird look on their faces. The Qu Family had their conversation with their door shut tight, but all walls had ears. Qu Caiyue didn't want to be a concubine, let alone a concubine of Second Young Master Yan, who was notorious for being a playboy. Of course, she couldn't have a good sleep last night.

Right now, Qu Caiyue's whole face was full of exhaustion.

It was the same as Qu Qiuyan and Qu Moying's faces. Looking at her granddaughters' gloomy faces, the Old Lady felt more displeased. Besides, what happened yesterday had already ruined her trip.

The Old Lady's gaze first locked on Qu Caiyue as she pulled a long face.

"Grandmother!" Qu Caiyue knelt down in panic and started to wail.

"What's the meaning of crying right now? Why did you do it in the first place?" the Old Lady scolded her with rage.

Qu Caiyue didn't dare to utter a single word, just crying loudly.

"Grandmother, Caiyue has always behaved well. How come... how come this happened? Please forgive her this time, Grandmother. Luckily, Second Young Master Yan didn't say anything except that he sent the gift to the wrong place." With a pale face, Qu Xuexin stood up and knelt down next to Qu Caiyue.

She asked Qu Caiyue about what happened yesterday and got to know everything.

"Xin, get up first." The Old Lady suppressed her anger and let Granny Wu help Qu Xuexin up. Then she said to Qu Caiyue with a stern face, "Don't go out during this period. Stay in the yard and take some time to reflect on what you did."

"Yes, Grandmother." Qu Caiyue was helped up by a maid, still sobbing.

"Grandmother, you don't need to lock Second Sister in her room. Second Young Master Yan said it was just a misunderstanding. If Second Sister is punished, people will believe she really did something wrong," Qu Qiuyan defended for Qu Caiyue.

Qu Caiyue still held quite some value to her. She couldn't be locked in her room when Qu Qiuyan still needed her.

Since Qu Qiuyan's words were reasonable, the Old Lady became hesitant.

“Grandmother, if Caiyue is locked in her room, Qiuyan will feel bored by herself,” Qu Xuexin added.

Qu Moying took a glance at her three sisters as her eyes darkened. These three girls grew up together and seemed to have a good relationship, making Qu Moying look like an outsider.

But indeed, she was an outsider.

“Ying, what do you think?” the Old Lady took some time to think and then turned around to ask Qu Moying.

“I agree with First Sister and Third Sister. Second Sister should be treated the same. If she is punished, it will give people a reason to spread the rumors more. With all those people outside our yard yesterday, even though Second Young Master Yan didn’t admit anything, they will still get suspicious,” Qu Moying said calmly. Actually, people should already be convinced that there was something between Qu Caiyue and Second Young Master Yan.

Dating secretly was already a big mistake. Who would be so careless and send a gift to the wrong place, taking the risk of being exposed?

However, since the other two ladies were determined to free Qu Caiyue from her punishment, Qu Moying had to add more fuel to the fire...

Chapter 68 The Fight Had Already Begun

The Old Lady still felt unwell today. After giving her granddaughters a short speech, she lost her energy and waved her hand to let them leave. She only made one requirement to them – the four of them had to go out together, or no one could leave the yard.

If what happened yesterday became well-spread rumors, it would not only be about Qu Caiyue. People would also say the ladies from the Qu Family didn’t get along with each other. It really irritated the Old Lady. Now that they all wanted to free Qu Caiyue from her punishment, they had to make efforts to prove their good relationship.

The four ladies understood the Old Lady's intention, and all agreed. After they left the Old Lady's yard, Qu Caiyue stopped walking, her face was still pale.

"First Sister, Qiuyan, thank you for defending for me," she said sullenly.

Qu Xuexin comforted her in a soft voice, "That's what sisters should do for each other."

"Don't mention it. Be careful next time," Qu Qiuyan said while giving a sophisticated glance at Qu Moying.

"Yes, I will surely be careful next time in case someone sets me up again," Qu Caiyue said, gnashing her teeth. Qu Qiuyan's words stung her heart, and she glared at the culprit in her eyes, Qu Moying.

She did give the package to Qu Moying, but somehow it showed up in her bag again. She couldn't figure it out under stress before, but now everything was clear – Qu Moying secretly put it back in her bag when she was taking a nap in the carriage.

Qu Moying ignored her glare and her hostile attitude provoked by Qu Qiuyan. These two tried to frame her first, and now they just got what they deserved. Qu Moying knew they hated her so much that they probably wanted her dead, so she didn't bother to keep the formality and fake her kindness either.

Qu Moying kept moving forward, ignoring them.

They were still in front of the Old Lady's yard. With the Old Lady's order just now, Qu Xuexin hurriedly caught up with Qu Moying. As the eldest sister in this family, she had the responsibility to take care of every sister.

Qu Caiyue and Qu Qiuyan followed them behind quietly.

After they walked for a little while, Qu Qiuyan looked around, went up to Qu Xuexin, and suggested, "First Sister, shall we go to the peach forest together? It is the most famous place in the Dabei Temple."

The weather on the mountain tended to be warmer than the one down. The peach trees in the city had only grown flower buds right now, while the ones in the Dabei Temple had fully bloomed already. This was part of the reason why the temple had so many guests recently. Since we are here, we might as well go take a look and not miss the beautiful view.

“Moying, shall we?” Qu Xuexin stepped closer and asked beamingly.

Qu Moying nodded at her. She just wanted to take a walk around, and it was not a bad idea to enjoy the view of peach blossom in the Dabei Temple.

Led by Qu Xuexin, the group of young ladies walked toward the back of the mountain.

From a distance, they had already seen the pink color of peach flowers. There were many people under the beautiful cloud of flowers, including young masters, noble ladies, and some ordinary guests. In the Dabei Temple, people would skip some unnecessary formalities. People from different classes all gathered here to enjoy the stunning view.

In such a beautiful, lively environment, people all felt very pleased.

The temple also considerably built pavilions everywhere for guests to take a rest in case they felt tired. The pavilions could be seen beside the forest and in between the trees.

“First Sister, is that County Lady Jingyu?” Qu Qiuyan suddenly pulled Qu Xuexin’s sleeve and asked in a low voice.

Qu Moying looked in the same direction and recognized some familiar faces. She had met County Lady Jingyu a few times in her past life and had a good impression of her. In Ji Hanyue’s eyes, she was one of the few high-born ladies with a kind personality.

Liu Jingyu was the Minister of Works’ daughter, and her grandfather was the illustrious Duke Qi. She got the title of County Lady because of her grandfather. Pei Luo’an mentioned to Ji Hanyue before that Duke Qi saved the emperor’s life before, and the reward he asked for from the emperor was a noble title for

his daughter's daughter instead of his son's daughter. It clearly showed that how much County Lady Jingyu was pampered by her family.

Her background determined her high-born identity, one of the noblest ladies in the capital. Qu Moying could tell that the people around Liu Jingyu all used to hang out with her in the past life. It was just everything had changed.

After a quick glance, Qu Moying moved her eyes away. Now she was just the Fourth Lady of the Qu Family.

"It seems so." Qu Xuexin noticed the ladies in that pavilion too and nodded. Then she pulled Qu Qiuyan's sleeve, "Qiuyan, let's find another pavilion to take some rest. That one is occupied."

"Why? Everyone can sit in those pavilions," Qu Qiuyan argued back but didn't move an inch.

Qu Moying's eyes lit up behind the veil. It sounded like something had happened between them. She was surprised that even Qu Qiuyan showed a trace of fear facing Liu Jingyu.

"Let's go. The view is better at the front!" Qu Xuexin said and pulled Qu Qiuyan's sleeve again.

"Qiuyan, let's go," Qu Caiyue convinced Qu Qiuyan too as she took a cautious glance at that pavilion, showing a trace of panic on her face.

Their petty actions were seen clearly by Qu Moying. Something must have happened before that she didn't know.

Feeling interested, Qu Moying raised her eyes and looked into a pair of pretty eyes. It was County Lady Jingyu. She was staring at Qu Moying with an icy look. Then she turned around immediately, showing the back of her head as if she saw something really disgusting.

Confused by her reaction, Qu Moying was stunned for a second. She was sure that she had never met County Lady Jingyu in this life, but the sense of disgust she felt from County Lady Jingyu was real.

It seemed like County Lady Jingyu was not the person she thought in her past life either. Qu Moying's eyes darkened as she turned around and left, following her other three sisters.

"Cousin, what are you looking at?" Noticing the displeased look on Liu Jingyu's face, Qi Xiangyu, Duke Qi's other granddaughter, asked with surprise.

"Some filthy things that make me feel disgusted," Liu Jingyu said coldly as she took out her hanky to gently press the corner of her eye.

"Since it was filthy thing, you'd better not to look at them. Let's go pick some peach flowers. With so many of them here, the monks in the temple won't notice if we pick some, right?" Qi Xiangyu smiled and stopped paying attention to Liu Jingyu.

"There are many flowers, but there are also many guests here. If everyone picks one or two branches, I guess there will be no flowers left." Liu Jingyu moved her eyes away from the four sisters of the Qu Family. None of them left a good impression on her.

"Um... alright!" Qi Xiangyu nodded since her words sounded reasonable.

Other ladies around them all agreed with Liu Jingyu, and few of them noticed the four sisters of the Qu Family who passed by just now. The Qu Family was still not comparable to their families...

"First Sister, did you hear what County Lady Jingyu said...?" Qu Qiuyan whispered to Qu Xuexin as her face turned pale due to anger, and she clenched the hanky in her hand.

"Qiuyan, no matter who you will become in the future, she is County Lady Jingyu right now. Her identity is much nobler than ours," Qu Xuexin reminded her.

"But... but why? Even though my father is her father's subordinate, she can't treat me like this," Qu Qiuyan said aggrievedly.

“Qiuyan, just bear with her now. You will have everything in the future when you... Even she has to bow to you by then. You can ignore her and make her embarrassed as you want at that time,” Qu Caiyue glanced at Qu Moying, who was following behind them, and mumbled to Qu Qiuyan.

Then she gave a cold glare to Qu Moying again.

Feeling her random hostile attitude, Qu Moying didn’t care about it too much. If one got bitten by a dog, he would only get rid of the dog, not bite the animal back...

Qu Moying stared at some peach flowers as she fell into her thoughts. Liu Jingyu looked at her with such a cold face. Was it because she held a grudge against Qu Qiuyan? Consequently, she disliked everyone related to Qu Qiuyan?

But it didn’t make too much sense for Qu Moying. The emotion hidden behind the stern look Liu Jingyu wore was not as simple as dislike, more like resent and wariness.

But Qu Moying was simply a girl with an eye problem who just came back from the village. How did she make a high-born lady like Liu Jingyu hold such hostility to her? The only possible reason was Qu Qiuyan.

In her past life, she heard that Noble Consort He picked County Lady Jingyu among all the noble ladies and wanted Lord Jing to marry her as his first wife. The two families started to keep in touch after Ji Hanyue was engaged with the Crown Prince.

The empress once picked Liu Jingyu too as the candidate of the Crown Princess. But then Ji Hanyue got the position.

People found out the relationship between Qu Qiuyan and Lord Jing at the Old Lady Qu’s birthday banquet. However, their relationship had started a while ago. The outsiders didn’t know about it, but County Lady Jingyu should know. So, this time was the encounter of two love rivals?

It seemed like Lord Jing would have a tough time after getting married since the fight between his future wives had already begun.

"I can't stand it. There were so many people around last time. I can't believe she... she poured the water on me and said it was an accident. She obviously did it on purpose! She also deliberately gave me the cold shoulder before and kept mentioning... mentioning Qu Moying."

Qu Qiuyan gnashed her teeth and threw an angry glare at Qu Moying.

If it weren't for this blind girl, she wouldn't be laughed at by other people. Liu Jingyu teased her last time, saying it was unbelievable that the Qu Family raised a wife's daughter in the village and allowed a concubine's daughter to mistreat Qu Moying. Both Qu Qiuyan and her mother were insulted by Liu Jingyu. Qu Qiuyan was so angry that she almost lost her temper immediately, trying to argue with her.

She didn't do it only because her mother grabbed her hand hard, signaling her not to offend Liu Jingyu.

She felt aggrieved every time she thought about it.

She was the woman that Lord Jing liked. Liu Jingyu only got the noble title of County Lady because of her grandfather, who would be nothing compared to Qu Qiuyan after she became Madam Jing in the future.

"Qiuyan, look... over there..." Qu Caiyue suddenly pulled Qu Qiuyan's hand and pointed in a direction with excitement.

Qu Qiuyan looked in that direction. After she recognized the person, joy showed up on her face. She lifted her dress and got ready to rush over...

Chapter 69 A Concubine's Daughter or a Wife's Daughter

A two-story pavilion was built in the peach forest, higher than all the other ones. It was decorated with light pink veils, purfled with golden threads, looking elegant in the sea of pink flowers. Moreover, the stunning people sitting inside looked even more beautiful than the view around them.

A man sat in a big chair, wearing a light purple brocade robe. His face was covered by the veil and couldn't be seen clearly. However, when the veil was blown up by the breeze, his god-like face was revealed, looking even more enchanting surrounded by the flowers.

The other man sitting in the pavilion was Lord Jing. Lord Jing was considered a handsome young man among all the pretty royal members. Still, his appearance was not even comparable to the man beside him.

Qu Qiuyan stopped suddenly and pulled a long face, "Who... who is that woman?"

Qu Qiuyan had never seen such a beautiful person before, so she believed a stunning person like that could only be a woman disguised as a man.

Thinking about Lord Jing said he had no time to meet her while accompanying another woman disguised as a man, Qu Qiuyan couldn't hold back her hatred. She glared at the stunning figure on the second floor of the pavilion.

"This... this is..." Qu Xuexin's expression changed immediately. At her grandmother's birthday banquet, she sat in the female area, far away from the male guests. However, she still tried to glance at Lord Yun, and what she saw stunned her. She didn't expect Lord Yun, who was said to be a monster eating human flesh at the border, to be such a beautiful man.

No one would forget a face like that after only one glance. Now Qu Xuexin saw him again, feeling frightened.

"Who is that?" Qu Qiuyan was busy meeting Lord Jing that day, so she didn't see Lord Yun. Now she could only vaguely see those people's faces from a distance and had no idea who Qu Xuexin was talking about.

Qu Xuexin grabbed Qu Qiuyan's hand hard. She almost lost control of herself due to fear and hurriedly whispered to Qu Qiuyan, "Qiuyan, let's leave. We can't go there."

"Why? Lord Jing is there. Qiuyan, look! He saw us." Qu Caiyue didn't recognize Lord Yun either.

She was also at the area for female guests that day after Lord Yun arrived. But frightened by his name, she only dared to peek at him from the corner of her eye. All she knew was Lord Yun was a good-looking man but nothing else.

It was nothing unusual for her since many of the royal members had good appearances.

At this moment, the young eunuch beside Lord Jing whispered something in his ear. Then Lord Jing nodded at him and looked in the four ladies' direction again.

"Third Lady Qu?" Pei Yuanjun asked lazily as he glanced at his nephew's awkward face. "I heard you came to the Qu's Mansion that day because of her. Why not invite them over?"

Then he waved his hand, and Ji Hai walked down the pavilion with a smile.

Pei Yusheng didn't want Qu Qiuyan to come at all, but he had already missed the chance to stop Ji Hai. He had no choice but to say reluctantly, "Uncle, it's not a big deal. She is the second wife candidate my mother picks for me."

As the emperor's son, he still cared a lot about his name. He couldn't directly tell Lord Yun that he had been secretly dating Qu Qiuyan.

If they weren't talking in person, he wouldn't care about these formalities. After all, he was a man, the emperor's son. It was nothing strange that he would marry multiple women, let alone the one he was interested in.

"The candidate of your second wife or your concubine? Although Vice Minister Qu doesn't have a high rank, I can tell you are quite fond of her," Pei Yuanjun sounded indifferent. He picked up the teacup in front of him, took a sip, and looked into the distance. From their position, he could see the pavilion where County Lady Jingyu sat, feeling the gaze from her. "Will the Liu Family say something about it?"

Lord Yun looked a bit amused.

"What can they say about it? After I marry their daughter as my first wife, I will marry another woman as my second wife. Nothing's wrong about it," Pei Yusheng said carelessly. He didn't mind marrying Liu Jingyu as his first wife. After Qu Qiuyan complained about her last time, he even asked around and was told by everyone that it was just an accident, and Qu Qiuyan overreacted.

So, he didn't look into it afterward.

Pei Yusheng did care about Qu Qiuyan but not so much to offend Liu Jingyu for her. At that time, it was pretty much confirmed that Liu Jingyu would be his first wife, and he couldn't make her lose her face.

Of course, if the position of his first wife could be given to the Guardian General's daughter, that would be even better!

"That would be the best. I'm worried that your lover doesn't have a clear idea of her identity. Even though her mother became Qu Zhizhen's wife later, she is still a concubine's daughter. Your father didn't say anything about it?" Watching the ladies coming closer, the smile on Pei Yuanjun's face looked even more alluring.

"Third Lady Qu's mother is Second Madam Qu now, the official wife of Vice Minister Qu," Pei Yusheng defended for himself.

"Yeah. The title can be changed, but her mother's fault of disobeying the etiquette can't be erased. When her mother was still a noble lady, she secretly dated a married man and was forced to marry him as his concubine. I heard her mother was already pregnant when she got married. Third Lady Qu should be the baby in her womb at that time, right?"

Pei Yuanjun's smile looked more and more sophisticated as if he was enjoying a funny joke.

Meanwhile, the look on Pei Yusheng's face became more and more embarrassed. Every woman he married need to be approved by his father, the emperor, including his second wife and his concubines. In terms of identity and family background, Qu Qiuyan should be qualified enough. However, it wouldn't sound good if someone emphasized her mother's past misbehavior to his father.

"I guess the Crown Prince would love to dig into this kind of detail!" Pei Yuanjun added.

His words punched Pei Yusheng right on his heart. He was most aware of his own situation. Even though the Crown Prince was the entitled heir, he still had a chance. In the Congress, Lord Jing still got praised

by his father from time to time. He believed the one who gained the throne later would be the real winner.

He hadn't lost yet.

The Crown Prince and he seemingly had a good relationship like typical brothers, but they actually had held a deep grudge against each other. They always tried to cause trouble to the other, and the competition between them just kept going. The thing about Qu Qiuyan was not a big deal, but it was still his miscalculation.

Pei Yusheng's eyes darkened. He had to take a second thought not only about Qu Qiuyan but also about Liu Jingyu. He was satisfied with Liu Jingyu before, but now he had a better option – Lady Liu.

If Liu Lanxin could marry him, he would have military power, which would give him a significant advantage over the Crown Prince. Although Liu Jingyu's grandfather, Duke Qi, was thought highly of by the emperor, Pei Yusheng still preferred military power over political status. Even the Crown Prince chose military power, let alone him.

Before the Crown Prince got married, the Crown Prince also considered Liu Jingyu as his wife candidate for two reasons – her father, Minister of Works, climbed up to his current position at a young age and had power in the political world. On the other hand, Duke Qi's son only had one daughter, who was given birth by a concubine and couldn't be a wife, so the duke cared more about his daughter's daughter, Liu Jingyu.

If the Crown Prince married Liu Jingyu, he would get support from both Duke Qi and Minister Liu.

However, at last, the Crown Prince still chose Ji Hanyue mainly because her father Ji Yongming was Earl Ling'an, the Level-One Suppressor General.

As the Crown Princess was dying, the Crown Prince immediately married another wife's daughter from the Earl Ling'an's family to keep the connection with the Suppressor General. However, the hand of fate still reached out to the Crown Prince. Not only the Crown Princess was about to die, so did her father for being too sad. People all said the Suppressor General, who had always been robust, was really going to collapse this time.

Now, it was the best chance for Lord Jing. If he could make Liu Lanxin marry him as his first wife, he would gain much more power.

A complacent smile showed up on Pei Yusheng's face when he thought about the possibility of defeating the Crown Prince in the future, whose power was on the edge of collapse...

Qu Qiuyan walked toward the pavilion with a flame of rage burning in her chest. Lord Jing belonged to her, and she couldn't allow another woman to hook up with him so shamelessly. The more furious she felt, the faster she walked. Following Ji Hai, she was the first one who stepped up to the second story of the pavilion. Ignoring Pei Yuanjun, she curtsied to Pei Yusheng, "It's an honor to meet you, Your Royal Highness."

Pei Yusheng calmed himself down as his cold gaze fell on Qu Qiuyan. He used to think highly of Qu Qiuyan, but now his mind changed a bit. He still wanted to marry her, but he needed to take a second thought about her position. Then he lifted his hand slightly, "Good to see you, Third Lady Qu."

His tone sounded a bit cold, totally different than how he acted when they met in private.

Qu Xuexin walked up at this moment. Seeing Pei Yuanjun, she lost all the strength in her legs and knelt down immediately. "Lord Yun... It's an honor to meet you, my lord."

Lord Yun? Qu Caiyue, who was standing beside Qu Xuexin, was startled as well and knelt down immediately. She said while shivering, "I-It's my pleasure to see you, my lord."

Lord Yun was notorious for his ruthlessness while killing people without a blink. Qu Caiyue always thought of herself nobler than Qu Moying, but right now, she would rather be some mud on the ground than catch this cruel killer's attention.

Qu Moying stepped closer calmly and curtsied to Pei Yuanjun and Pei Yusheng, "It's my pleasure to see you, my lord, Your Royal Highness!"

Hearing the words her sisters uttered, Qu Qiuyan raised her head in shock, and her gaze fell on an extremely beautiful but frightening face. Her face turned pale immediately. Before, she thought he was

a woman because she could only see his gorgeous face from a distance. However, she had a clear look at those sharp and cold eyes that clearly didn't belong to a woman.

Even though he just raised his eyebrow slightly, a cold shiver was sent down her spine.

There was no trace of a woman but a heartless monster who didn't hold any pity for women. People said the emperor sent ten beauties to the border as a gift to Lord Yun, but they were almost beaten to death and given to other men.

"I-It's my... my... honor... to meet you, my... my lord." With a dull sound, Qu Qiuyan fell on her knees next to Qu Xuexin as she almost cried out. She bent her whole body on the floor while shivering uncontrollably.

How much anger she felt before was how much fear she had right now. Lord Yun was a totally different person than Lord Jing. Moreover, he was deeply trusted by the emperor. If he did the same things to her as to those ten beauties sent by the emperor, even her father couldn't say anything about it.

How could she be so blind before? A woman disguised as a man? It was actually a scary monster coming from hell. Right now, Qu Qiuyan couldn't even remember what he looked like because of fear...

Chapter 70 A Big Humiliation For Qu Qiuyan

Right now, Qu Qiuyan could only see those gruesome eyes and feel the overwhelming pressure from this man.

"The Third Lady of the Qu Family is such a unique person," Pei Yuanjun chuckled and said slowly.

Pei Yusheng's face turned red in embarrassment as he glared at Qu Qiuyan's flustered face, showing a trace of rage in his eyes. Qu Qiuyan had always been well-mannered and confident, but he couldn't believe with only one glance at his uncle Lord Yun, she directly bent her whole body on the ground. Compared to the other two who were just kneeling, Qu Qiuyan totally made him lose his face and embarrassed him.

Could a girl like her be qualified for the position of his second wife or even concubine?

Pei Yusheng felt more annoyed toward Qu Qiuyan.

“Enjoy your time here. I have to go first.” Pei Yuanjun stood up, knocked the stone table with his finger, and looked at the three ladies kneeling on the ground. “I don’t have patience for timid women. Fourth Lady Qu, you seem to be a brave one. You can walk me out, and I want to hear about your mother’s story on the way,” said Pei Yuanjun as he started to walk out gracefully.

Pei Yusheng hurriedly stood up and bowed to him.

Qu Moying hesitated for a second and followed him downstairs.

As they walked away from the pavilion, Qu Moying raised her eyes and stared at Pei Yuanjun, who crossed his hands behind his back and walked in front of her, feeling confused.

In silence, the two of them walked farther into the forest. The two servants following them, Ji Hai and Yu Dong, kept communicating using hand gestures but didn’t dare to make any sound.

Finally, Pei Yuanjun stopped walking. Qu Moying stood three steps away from him. As she looked around, she uttered a quiet sound of exclamation.

Some peach trees close to her were blooming beautifully here. But the color of the flowers was light purple instead of light pink, seeming very unusual.

“This... This place is the purple peach forest?” Qu Moying turned around and noticed all the trees around her had light purple flowers. She had been deep in her thoughts all the way here and didn’t realize she entered a yard where these rare peach trees were planted.

She heard about purple peach flowers in the Dabei Temple long ago but never had the chance to see them in person. She asked the Crown Prince about it several times before, but he always gave her an ambiguous answer. Now she understood it – the purple peach trees indeed existed, but they all belonged to Pei Yuanjun, so ordinary people couldn’t enter this space, not even the Crown Prince.

Then she took a quick observation of the surroundings. This should be the backyard of Pei Yuanjun's mansion in the temple. She entered his place through the front gate in the darkness last night and couldn't have a clear view of it. Now she realized how spacious his mansion was, so was this purple peach forest.

"How do you think of this place?" Pei Yuanjun suddenly chuckled, looking pleased.

"These purple peach flowers are very different from the usual ones. They are stunning," Qu Moying nodded at him, but she still couldn't figure out why Pei Yuanjun brought her here.

Purely for showing her the beautiful flowers?

Was Lord Yun that type of person? Of course not!

Her heart suddenly missed a beat as her eyes glanced over these trees. All the trees here looked thick and sturdy. Someone must've taken good care of them. "Where did you get these purple peach trees, my lord?"

"It's a foreign breed, hard to cultivate. These trees need to be fed with human blood, but luckily, it is easy for me," Pei Yuanjun said slowly. He glanced at Qu Moying, who lowered her head to look at the roots, and found her very interesting.

Hearing his words, Qu Moying felt something cold and blood-thirsty had quietly flashed across his heart.

Qu Moying clenched her fists to suppress her fear, "That's a good joke, my lord."

"It's not a joke. Didn't you hear from other people that I am surrounded by countless evil spirits? For everyone I kill, I shatter their bones into pieces and trap their souls forever with me." Pei Yuanjun leaned on the peach trees lazily. His alluring downturned eyes matched well with these unusually beautiful flowers.

It was supposed to be a pleasing view, but somehow it exuded an aura of gruesomeness.

The space fell into silence. A rotten, blood-like smell was lingering in the air, along with the sweet fragrance from the peach flowers.

His gloomy eyes stared at her with a cold look that only a dead person had.

Even a man who fought on the battlefield would be scared by those ruthless eyes and lost all the strength in his limbs.

Qu Moying raised her head and curled her lips into a faint smile, with the usual calm look she always wore. "My lord, spirits are not scary. The scariest thing in the world has always been people's mind."

Were spirits scary?

She had no fear for them at all because she was actually one of them. But she never intended to harm anyone except for taking her revenge for herself and her loved ones.

Compared to spirits, people's minds were the most frightening things. She was so blind in her past life and deceived by the people around her. She gave out her love but got such a miserable ending in return.

"My lord, people's minds are the scariest things in the world," Qu Moying repeated as she looked straight into Pei Yuanjun's beautiful but gruesome eyes.

Pei Yuanjun suddenly gave her a sophisticated smile. He reached out to pick a branch where flowers were blooming beautifully and passed it to her, "Good point. Take this as a gift from me."

The overwhelming pressure from Lord Yun faded away. Ji Hai, who was standing aside, wiped off the sweat on his forehead and put on a bright smile with his eyes squinted. He knew Lord Yun's temper the best. He had never seen his master send any gift to a woman, let alone flowers from this place. Lord Yun's gift meant something totally different than what he said to scare Fourth Lady Qu just now.

Purple flowers... Special place... Ji Hai knew things were not as simple as Lord Yun said.

"Thank you, my lord!" Qu Moying took the branch and curtsied to Lord Yun...

Qu Qiuyan couldn't relax until Lord Yun left, but her whole body still felt weak. With Qu Xuexin and Qu Caiyue's help, she struggled up and sat down beside the rail of the pavilion.

"Will Moying be alright?" Qu Xuexin felt worried and flustered, watching Qu Moying leaving with Pei Yuanjun.

No one would suspect there was something between Pei Yuanjun and Qu Moying. People would only imagine the worst scene when Qu Moying's neck was broken by Pei Yuanjun, and the poor girl died under a peach tree.

"It has nothing to do with us... She left by herself... We... we can just tell Grandmother... the truth if she asks later," hearing Qu Xuexin's words, Qu Qiuyan rolled her eyes and said in rage.

Her face was pale, with her voice still trembling.

Qu Moying acted so calmly just now while she was so scared that she forgot everything about manners. Qu Qiuyan knew she lost her face in front of Lord Jing, and once again, she blamed it on Qu Moying.

If Qu Moying didn't stand there just now, she wouldn't be so embarrassed right now.

Qu Qiuyan tried her best to calm herself down and looked at Lord Jing. However, he pulled a long face as his eyes darkened. There was no trace of affection as usual, which made her flustered. She straightened up immediately, "My lord."

"Third Lady Qu, please leave first. I'm alone here. If anyone sees us together, it will be bad for both our names," Pei Yusheng said in a flat tone.

"My lord..." Qu Qiuyan's face became paler. She didn't expect Pei Yusheng to embarrass her in front of her two elder sisters.

It was not the first time that they had hung out in private. With so many people enjoying the view around, no one would say anything about them. Even if they did, Qu Qiuyan didn't care. She would marry Lord Jing anyway, and he didn't even say anything about people seeing them standing together in her family's mansion.

Why did he change his attitude now?

"Third Lady Qu, please!" Pei Yusheng said impatiently. We were sitting on the second floor of this pavilion, higher than everyone else in the forest. We could see other guests clearly, and the guest could also see us. Now Lord Jing was concerned about Lady Liu the most, fearing that she would know about it. Even if she couldn't see them herself with her eye problem, people around her might still tell her. He thought of the pretty maid he met yesterday, who looked like a smart one.

He couldn't allow Qu Qiuyan to ruin his big plan.

If someone saw Pei Yuanjun with a woman, they wouldn't suspect anything. However, he was Lord Jing, not Pei Yuanjun. He was at the crucial moment of picking his wife candidate. He had been careless about it before, but he had to reconsider it carefully now. He must find himself some valuable support that could help him win the throne.

"Third Lady Qu, let me walk you out. This way, please," the young eunuch next to Pei Yusheng said beamingly to Qu Qiuyan and pointed at the stairs.

No matter how polite he acted, it couldn't hide the truth of them being driven away by Lord Jing.

Qu Qiuyan's face turned red in embarrassment as tears rolled in her eyes. She flew into a rage, suddenly stood up, and curtsied to Pei Yusheng, "Excuse me, my lord."

Then she covered her face and walked down while crying.

Qu Caiyue and Qu Xuexin looked at each other, curtsied to Pei Yusheng reluctantly, and went to catch up with Qu Qiuyan.

This scene was witnessed by many people who had been paying close attention to this special pavilion. Some people showed a complacent smile; some showed disdain on their faces; some didn't even bother to hold back their laughter. Even if Lord Jing was interested in Third Lady Qu, everyone knew that he would never marry her as his first wife. She was the only one who held an unrealistic ambition, forgetting her own identity and the stains that could never be erased from her name.

If Yu didn't marry Vice Minister Qu as his concubine, Qu Qiuyan was just an illegitimate daughter. Even though she eventually became a wife's daughter, she would still carry the stains on her name forever. Her life was like a white piece of clothes dirtied by mud. In those high-born ladies' eyes, Qu Qiuyan was just nothing.

After the young eunuch walked them downstairs, he stood aside as Qu Qiuyan rushed away, crying. Qu Caiyue and Qu Xuexin hurriedly followed her.

"Qiuyan, wait for us."

After striding for a while, Qu Qiuyan stopped under a peach tree and kept sobbing.

Qu Xuexin walked up to her, grabbed her hand, and comforted her gently, "Qiuyan, Lord Jing might be worried about your name because the pavilion is built high, and everyone can see us clearly. I think he must've done it for your sake."

Her words reminded Qu Qiuyan. She stopped crying at once and raised her teary eyes, "First Sister, do you really think this is his reason for doing that?"

"Of course. That day in our mansion, people who saw you two together were all guests who had a good relationship with our family, so they won't speak ill of you. But there are many guests in the temple, and he can't guarantee what they will say about you two. For example, noble ladies like County Lady Jingyu..." Qu Xuexin's voice became lower.