

Noble Wife 81

Chapter 81 A Trouble Caused by an Old Woman and a Young Servant

End in the water, start in the fire!

It sounded exactly like her rebirth!

As the queue slowly moved forward, Qu Moying clenched the divination stick hard and tried to suppress her unsettled feeling. She always felt like she had been pushing forward by the hand of fate, and somehow, she could feel it more in this kind of place.

“Ouch! Why did you bump into me?!” A loud sound came from the front.

Qu Moying raised her somewhat pale face and looked towards it.

It was a young servant and an old woman, who looked unfriendly, bumping into each other.

“Hey, watch your mouth! You bumped into me, and you blame it on me?! Are you blind?” The old woman was irritated immediately, talking aggressively.

“You did it! You did it on purpose.” The young servant was only eleven or twelve years, wearing clothes made of coarse cloth, which meant his master’s family was not a wealthy one. At this moment, he started to sob in a grievance, “You broke my thing. You need to pay me back!”

“Brat, how dare you blackmail me? Do you know we are in the capital where the emperor lives? You can’t just blackmail anyone as you want!” The old woman argued back while grabbing the young servant’s sleeve.

Seeing the old woman’s uncompromising attitude and the poor little boy, many people chose to support the boy.

“Which family are you working for? How can you treat a child like this? If you bumped into him, an apology would be fine. Don’t talk about blackmailing to a kid!”

“Exactly. Look at him. He’s at your grandchild’s age. What’s the point of arguing with a little boy?”

“Poor boy. She doesn’t look like a kind one. It must be her bumping into the child.” The crowd burst out discussing and started to scold the old woman.

The old woman was indeed a tough one. She glared at people and said in rage, “Watch your mouth! How can you blame me for it while he did it on purpose? If you didn’t see it, don’t talk nonsense!”

Her words irritated more people and caused more blame towards herself.

Overwhelmed by people’s scolding, the old woman suddenly sat down on the ground and wailed, “How can you all blame it on me? I’m just a poor old woman. The Buddha is watching all of us, and I swear that if I am the one who bumped into the boy, I’m willing to take any punishment and die miserably. If he is the one who bumped into me, the same thing will happen to him!”

The old woman’s wailing and screaming echoed in the entire hall. Soon, a monk from the Dabei Temple showed up.

The skinny middle-aged monk walked up to the old maid and bowed to her politely. “Madam, please talk while standing. You can’t speak too loudly in front of Buddha.”

“Then why did Buddha not see that they all have wronged me? I’m here just to worship the Buddha. I don’t want any trouble either.” The old woman wailed even more loudly.

Seeing her making a swear, some people were convinced by her. Since the old woman was here to worship the Buddha, she must follow the teachings of Buddha. Although there were some people telling straight-up lies, this woman didn’t look like one of them. Otherwise, she wouldn’t dare to make a swear to prove her innocence in front of the Buddha. If she did something wrong, she should be afraid of the consequence!

“Boy, maybe she really did it by accident. What things of yours were broken?”

“Yeah, let’s see what the broken things are. If they are not valuable, just let it go.”

“We are all here to worship the Buddha. It’s better to avoid troubles...”

Some people started to persuade her while everyone’s eyes fell on the young servant. Qu Moying looked in this direction curiously as well. As she took a glance at the boy’s face, surprisingly, he turned his head and looked back at her. She felt weird about it but still maintained her usual calm look.

After her eyes met his, he avoided her gaze immediately.

They so happened to argue near the queue Qu Moying was standing in right now. As other people circled them to watch what was happening, Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan were also surrounded.

“I-It’s nothing important...” the boy stuttered, clenching the long wallet in his hand.

Somehow, his reaction made people feel he did something wrong.

The long wallet looked like one used by a male, but a lotus flower was embroidered on it. The stitchwork looked pretty terrible as most of the females present could do a better job on embroidery than this.

However, this woman with terrible stitchwork skills still did it. Moreover, the flower was embroidered on a male’s wallet.

Seeing the boy’s weird attitude, many people had a guess in their minds.

Was it a gift from a lady for her lover?

“What is it? Take it out and let me have a look. Don’t just say it,” the old woman sitting on the ground was the first one who realized it, then she pointed at the boy and yelled.

“This...this is my young master’s personal belongings. I can’t show it to some random people.” The boy was in a panic, still holding the wallet in his hand tightly. There was obviously something in it. Since the wallet was made of soft cloth, people could tell the thing inside had a long shape.

“What’s inside?” someone asked him curiously.

“I-It’s nothing. It’s my young master’s...” The boy became more and more flustered. As sweat clung to his forehead, he tried to leave but found out the old woman was holding his foot.

“Why are you getting so flustered? Are you scared? Is it something that shameless woman gave your young master? Show it to us! There’s no point in arguing if I bumped into you or you bumped into me. Just show it to us, and if it’s really broken, I’ll just compensate for your loss.” The old woman couldn’t accept taking the blame and wouldn’t let the boy go easily.

The boy ran into her while she was just walking, but he blamed it on her. If she didn’t prove her innocent and teach the boy a good lesson, she would not let him go.

“Yeah, just show it to us.”

“If it is really broken, you can’t pay it back yourself. Show it to us first.”

“Yeah, yeah, show it to us!” Who would’ve known a random argument revealed a scandal involving a young master and a lady? Those onlookers became excited immediately.

More and more people encouraged the boy to take out the item inside.

The young servant was just an eleven or twelve years old boy. The overwhelming pressure really scared him. His eyes turned red, looked at the crowd pitifully, and then fell on Qu Moying as he tried to approach her. Then he called her name in a low voice, “Fourth Lady Qu.”

Yu Dong walked in front of Qu Moying immediately and stared at the boy warily.

"If you have something to say, just say it. Don't come any closer and scare the lady," he said coldly.

"Moying, is this boy calling you?" Qu Qiuyan asked in a low voice. While everyone saw the boy looking at Qu Moying, some people already noticed her, and some heard what the boy said. Although they still didn't grasp the situation, now that Qu Qiuyan said something, people started to relate Qu Moying to this matter immediately.

"Fourth Lady Qu? This is Fourth Lady Qu?" The person standing next to the boy heard him the most clearly. He mumbled to himself with confusion while sizing up Qu Moying.

The veil on Qu Moying's face showed people that she had an eye problem. But she could walk by herself, which meant she was not fully blind and could still see things.

"I-I'm...Fourth Lady Qu..." the boy stuttered in panic.

The old woman on the ground stood up. She held the boy's arm to prevent him from running away while gazing at Qu Moying, "My lady, is he your servant?"

In fact, the boy had already told people that he was working for a young master. Besides, a lady usually only brought maids with her instead of male servants.

"The lady doesn't know him," Yu Dong raised his chin up and snorted to the old woman. Then he pushed them away, "Get away from the lady. Don't come any closer. The lady has nothing to do with it."

Being pushed by Yu Dong, the old woman staggered back. "Who else would it be? This lady has an eye problem, right? Only a person like her can do such an embroidery," after she steadied herself, she glared at him and said in rage.

First, a young servant bumped into her, then a young maid pushed her. The old woman couldn't bear it anymore.

“What’s wrong with the lady having an eye problem? Why would she do something like embroidery to hurt her eyes? Don’t take any groundless guess and get away from the lady. You can’t afford offending her,” Yu Dong said aggressively with his hands on his waist. He had been perfectly playing the role of a mean, spiteful maid.

“Miss...Miss Yu Dong...” The boy suddenly pulled Yu Dong’s sleeve as if he was asking for help.

Yu Dong shook his hand off at once, “Who are you? How did you know my name?”

“Miss Yu Dong...” Scolded by Yu Dong, the boy felt more flustered while waving his hands in a hurry, “I-I don’t know you. I don’t know you.”

Even though he said so, everyone heard him calling Yu Dong’s name. However, a stranger couldn’t possibly know a lady’s maid’s name.

Before, people were just suspecting them, but right now, they started to believe it – this boy was obviously related to Fourth Lady Qu.

The vulgar old woman suddenly understood the situation and vented all her anger on this boy. “What do you mean by not knowing them? Obviously, your young master has something to do with this lady. You bumped into me because you were trying to give the thing in your hand to this lady. Am I right?” She stamped her foot furiously, pointed at Qu Moying first and then at the young servant.

“No wonder you were in a hurry and bumped into me while I was just walking. The lady you were looking for is right behind me. You only saw her and didn’t notice me, and this is why you bumped into me. No wonder! No wonder you want to blame it on me!” the old maid yelled in a pleasure of exposing the truth.

“Moying, is it true?” Qu Qiuyan whispered to Qu Moying cautiously.

A trace of coldness flashed across Qu Moying’s eyes as she said, “Let’s see if it is true or not. Since they started it, we have to let them put it to an end first.”

Qu Moying looked totally undisturbed, and even the veil couldn't hide her calmness. No matter how people looked at her, she didn't seem like a lady who was secretly dating another man. Because she was way more tranquil than the young servant who was avoiding everyone's gaze in panic.

"You have to show what's inside the wallet to us to prove yourself. You can't just say it without any evidence. That's what you did to me to make me take the blame. Show it to us!" The old woman suddenly grabbed the wallet from the boy's hand. However, the skinny little boy was even shorter than her and didn't have any strength to take it back.

As the old maid rudely tore the wallet apart, everyone heard a clang and saw something shiny drop on the ground. It was glaring with golden purple light...

Chapter 82 A Tribute to the Royal Family

"It's a hairpin."

"Huh, a golden hairpin decorated with purple pearls."

"I've never seen purple pearls before. I wonder how much do they cost."

"It must belong to a rich family."

"Judging by the clothes the boy wears, his young master must be pretty poor. He shouldn't afford such a valuable thing. Wait, what's this? A note?"

Someone noticed a note dropped from the wallet and hurriedly picked it up before anyone else.

"I have to return these beautiful pearls with tears in my eyes. I wish I had met you before getting married." The one who picked the note up was not illiterate, and he read the words on it out loud.

Although some people couldn't comprehend the first sentence, the second one was straightforward enough to understand.

It meant a lady was interested in a man and gave him her hairpin as a gift. But the man returned it to her, saying he had already married and didn't want to betray his wife. It was an apparent rejection from him.

The man should be from an ordinary family, but the woman sounded like a wealthy one.

However, the man rejected the woman after she ignored the etiquette and sent him her hairpin as a keepsake in private.

This story was even more entertaining than one about a couple secretly dating each other.

People didn't expect to witness this kind of scandal in the Dabei Temple and couldn't wait to see it through.

And everything simply started from a young servant bumping into an old woman. No one would've known such a big secret would be revealed.

People all fell into wild imaginations, getting more excited.

Those curious and thrilled eyes all fell on Qu Moying, standing behind Yu Dong. It seemed like no one could be the lady in this scandal except for Fourth Lady Qu.

"Moying, this...this hairpin... Isn't it the one I...I gave to you?" Qu Qiuyan's expression suddenly changed as she subconsciously reached out her hand and touched her hair, catching everyone's attention on the hair ornaments she was wearing. The hairpin on her head so happened to be the same as the one on the ground.

No one noticed Qu Qiuyan before. After seeing her reaction, everyone found that the hairpin on her head and the one on the ground were a pair.

So, it was confirmed that Fourth Lady Qu broke the rules, fell in love with a man, and even shamelessly gave her accessory to him as a gift.

After a second thought, people started to understand why she did it. Although Fourth Lady Qu was from a noble family, it would still be hard for her to find a suitable husband with her eye problem. So, she picked a man from an ordinary family and tried to privately send her hairpin as an engagement keepsake. Unfortunately, she probably didn't expect the man was married.

Fourth Lady Qu? The Fourth Lady, Vice Minister Qu's daughter? Since she was known for being ugly and dumb and losing her mother at a young age, people didn't find it strange that she did something like this.

Some people in the crowd had already realized Qu Moying's identity and started to talk about it.

The young servant suddenly pushed the old woman away and ran out of the crowd. Some nosey people chased him and saw him running to a tree outside the Buddha hall where a slim young master stood. The young man was wearing clothes made of coarse cloth too, but he was a good-looking man who seemed pretty gentle.

Seeing the boy staggering over, he even reached out to help steady him. After a short conversation, he looked up at those chasing after his servant, turned around, and left immediately.

However, he was stopped by a maid soon. It was Yu Dong.

She was one of the people chasing after the boy.

"Mister, are you the one trying to frame my master? Since you are here, please clarify the situation with us face to face." Yu Dong stood in his way.

On the stairs of the Buddha hall, Qu Moying was walking down slowly, followed by Qu Qiuyan.

Qu Qiuyan originally wanted to find an excuse and leave as soon as possible. But after Yu Dong left, Qu Moying started to hold Qu Qiuyan's maid Qing Ju's hand while walking. Qu Qiuyan couldn't leave without her maid, so she had no choice but to stay with them.

Then all the onlookers were outside to see what would happen next.

Qu Moying strolled to the young man and looked at him. After confirming she had never met him before, she pulled a long face and asked coldly, "Who are you? Why do you try to frame me?"

"Fourth...Fourth Lady Qu, I...I'm sorry that I caused you trouble," having no chance to leave, the man directly turned around and said to Qu Moying.

Qu Moying's identity could be easily told since no one wore such a long veil except for her.

At the same time, other people nearby were attracted by the noises, and one of them was Lord Jing, Pei Yusheng. Standing behind the crowd, he recognized the two ladies in the center were Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan, and frowned. He really hated that Qu Qiuyan was involved in such a big scene.

It was clearly not something decent. How did Qu Qiuyan show up here?

Beside Pei Yusheng were some young masters and noble ladies, including County Lady Jingyu, who was liked by Noble Consort He. She also looked at the crowd, but her eyes fell on Qu Moying.

No one in Lord Jing's group intended to get into the crowd, purely observing the situation. They didn't see what had happened before, so they didn't know anything about the hairpin, which was in Qing Ju's hand right now. Qu Moying asked Qing Ju to pick it up before.

"Who are you?" Qu Moying stared at the young man calmly, ignoring his words. "Do I...know you?"

"Fourth Lady, When I was on my trip to the capital, I passed by the village you lived in and even stayed there for two days. You can't lie about not knowing me. The village head can prove it."

The young man's face turned red and then pale, irritated.

“Fourth Lady Qu, I know I caused you trouble. But please don’t send any gifts to me. Thank you for letting me stay in the village before,” after finishing his words, the young man was about to leave, looking pretty furious.

He didn’t say much, but it had already explained everything.

First, he had a solid reason for knowing Qu Moying. Second, there was even a witness. Third, Qu Moying let him stay in the village since she was already interested in him at that time. Then people all knew what happened next – Qu Moying sent him a gift to show her affection but got rejected by the young man.

Their relationship should be ended in private, but no one expected a young servant would ruin everything.

“You say you know me?” Qu Moying suddenly giggled.

“Of course. I met you when staying in the village,” said the young man.

This good-looking man had good manners and seemed to be well educated. Even though he was irritated right now, he was still talking politely. Moreover, he returned another woman’s hairpin because he didn’t want to betray his wife, leaving people a good impression of him.

Everyone was more convinced by his words than Qu Moying’s.

“You say I gave you the hairpin?” Qu Moying continued to question him, “When did I send it to you?”

“Before lunchtime. I ran into you and received this hairpin later. Fourth Lady, I know you might think I’m a poor man and want to support me financially, but I can’t take such a personal item. Please forgive me, Fourth Lady,” said the young man.

What a kind gentleman!

He knew Fourth Lady Qu broke the etiquette by sending her hairpin, but he used a good reason to save her from embarrassment.

People all started to like this young man.

But which lady would financially support a man by giving him her private hairpin? She could just give him some money instead!

Qu Qiuyan started to feel it was not bad staying here. She lifted her hanky to cover her lips, hiding her complacent smile from others. It was truly amazing to see Qu Moying's name getting ruined with her own eyes.

How dare this blind bitch compete with her? And her grandmother even treated her so nicely. Today, she would reveal this low-life girl's true colors to everyone!

If Qu Moying didn't get killed this time, she would be locked in a nunnery on some remote mountain for the rest of her life and could never come back again.

Qu Qiuyan didn't think her father would disagree. The only trouble would be her grandmother, but the Old Lady couldn't do anything about it. It would be a mercy that Qu Moying was not forced to kill herself to protect their family reputation. After Qu Moying was driven away to a nunnery, she could just hire a rogue to rape her. By then, Qu Moying would probably kill herself instead of living in shame.

The more Qu Qiuyan thought about it, the more exciting she felt. She almost couldn't hide the big smirk on her face and quickly lowered her head to calm herself down.

Qu Qiuyan knew this young man named Gao was found by her mother Yu to deal with Qu Moying. But they didn't expect Qu Moying to come back to the capital so soon and lost the chance to frame her while she was in the village. Now, it seemed not bad that Yu Qingmeng used this man.

If Qu Moying died, that man was useless to them anyway.

"Are you sure this was sent by me?" asked Qu Moying.

"The maid who sent it to me said so," the young man responded.

"Which maid?" Qu Moying continued her questioning.

The young man looked around. His eyes fell on Yu Dong's face for a second, but then he shook his head, "I don't see her here. I don't know who she is."

He was a scholar, and a smart one. His initial plan was to leave before Fourth Lady Qu walked out, but he didn't expect this maid called Yu Dong to make such a fast move and stop him here.

Qu Moying's calmness gave him an unsettled feeling, so he didn't do as Yu Qingmeng said, which was blaming it on Yu Dong.

"Are you sure this hairpin is mine?" Qu Moying pointed at herself as her pale lips curled up.

"Well... That maid said it was yours." Gao An started to feel flustered. He thought it was a piece of cake before, but things turned out to be way more complicated than he expected. Clearly, Fourth Lady Qu was not an easy one to deal with.

People all said the Fourth Lady in the Qu Family was an ugly, dumb, solitary girl who had an eye problem, but the calm lady standing in front of him was apparently well-educated, not scared at all. Was she really Fourth Lady Qu everyone talked about?

Qu Moying took the hairpin from Qing Ju's hand, lifted it, and shook it in front of everyone. The purple pearls gleamed beautifully under the sunlight, even looking shinier than before. Seeing the hairpin, Pei Yusheng's expression suddenly changed. He was just watching what was happening behind the crowd, but then he recognized the hairpin. It was a gift from his mother for his future wife, and he took out two of them and secretly gave them to Qu Qiuyan.

"This hairpin is a tribute to the royal family!" Qu Moying's following words made him feel even worse. Plus, he also saw someone he really didn't want to see right now, and that person was squeezing through the crowd from the opposite side.

Chapter 83 Everyone Was Playing the Blame Game

It was Liu Lanxin's private maid, Chun Xiu.

This maid was even more beautiful than many noble ladies in the capital, and it was hard not to notice her in the crowd.

She was trying pretty hard to squeeze in, which irritated the people around her. Those angry people were all about to scold her. But they fell into silence and even made some space for her after seeing her gorgeous face.

Chun Xiu moved into the crowd with a curious face, standing towards Pei Yusheng, who was outside of the circle.

In fact, Liu Lanxin was the most suitable wife candidate in Pei Yusheng's heart, and he planned to give the other two hairpins to her. If her maid told her that he gave two of the hairpins to Qu Qiuyan, it would totally ruin his big plan.

County Lady Jingyu noticed the hairpin in Qu Moying's hand and took a careful look at it. Then she said in a low voice, "That pearl hairpin...looks quite familiar."

She turned to glance at Pei Yusheng with a meaningful look on her face.

Hearing her words, Pei Yusheng suddenly remembered something. When his mother wanted to pick County Lady Jingyu as his wife, she once mentioned that she wanted to give her a set of hairpins, which was a tribute to the royal family. Maybe County Lady Jingyu even knew that the Crown Princess wanted it too, but his mother asked them from the empress.

"Moying, is it...the hairpin I gave it to you before?" Qu Qiuyan whispered to Qu Moying, reminding her again while touching the one on her head.

She thought Qu Moying would ask her why she got something from the royal palace.

“Third Sister, did you give me another one? You didn’t give this one to me? You couldn’t possibly have such a valuable hairpin!” Qu Moying had been waiting for this question from Qu Qiuyan for the whole time. Before, she was even worried about how she could pass the buck to Qu Qiuyan if she didn’t say anything.

“Moying, what...what do you mean?” Qu Qiuyan was stunned for a second and opened her eyes widely in shock, “I gave it to you when we were at Grandmother’s yard, and Granny Wu even saw it! Are you saying that I’m lying?”

“Granny Wu was indeed there, right behind us when you gave the hairpin to me. How about we invite her here and ask her about it?” Qu Moying said in a flat tone. At that time, she purposefully blocked Granny Wu’s sight. Granny Wu indeed saw Qu Qiuyan giving a hairpin to Qu Moying, but she definitely didn’t see which one.

“Then where’s the hairpin I gave to you?” Qu Qiuyan’s face turned pale due to anger. She never expected Qu Moying to be so bold to use what she said and blame it on her.

“After I said goodbye to you, an old maid bumped into me and made me lose the hairpin. It happened in front of First Sister’s yard, and I saw her maid standing at the door at that time. She should’ve heard everything,” Qu Moying continued.

Qu Xuexin was a smart girl, and a smart person knew how to make the best choice in this kind of situation. She would definitely not choose to lie and cause herself trouble.

“Third Sister, you already asked me once. Didn’t I tell you the same reason before? You even said you were going to tell Grandmother. Haven’t you forgotten it already?” Qu Moying seemed even more undisturbed.

Hearing her words, Qu Qiuyan remembered she did say something similar before. But she was talking about this pearl hairpin. Why did it suddenly become a totally different hairpin? It sounded not right at all.

And she became the person related to Gao An?

It even sounded like she was the one trying everything to frame Qu Moying and ruin her name. Qu Qiuyan took a glance over people's faces and found them all looking at her with suspicion.

She started to feel irritated and anxious.

Qu Qiuyan calmed herself down and scolded Qu Moying loudly, "Moying, it is your business. How can you blame it on me? I gave you a hairpin out of good intention. I don't care if you gave it to someone else, but how can you involve me in your trouble? How can you be...so ungrateful?"

"Don't be so ridiculous, Third Sister! You've never seen eye to eye with me before. Why would you give me such a valuable hairpin? You just gave me an ordinary hairpin, and I accidentally lost it soon afterward. We don't have any evidence to prove our words, and I agree! But now, a man has a hairpin that looks exactly the same as the one you have on your head, and you say you gave it to me before. Third Sister, I don't understand what you are talking about. Besides, if you really gave it to me, where did you get it in the first place?"

The look on Qu Moying's face was still calm, but her words were very sharp.

"Third Sister, how about you tell us where you got the hairpins, and then we can talk about who gave it to this man."

Qu Qiuyan flew into a rage. She was always in the position of controlling other people and couldn't accept being framed by others, let alone her useless, blind sister. Without thinking, she said furiously, "This hairpin is..."

"Third Lady Qu, this hairpin was lost by me. When did you get it?" A cold voice came behind the crowd and interrupted Qu Qiuyan.

As the crowd moved away to two sides, Pei Yusheng and his group walked closer. He was wearing a displeased look on his face and gave Qu Qiuyan a stern glare.

Qu Qiuyan was overjoyed seeing Pei Yusheng, thinking with his support, Qu Moying couldn't get around with it. She hurriedly moved up to him but was scared by his glare. She stood there, looking at him pitifully, and didn't even listen to what he said.

"Lord Jing, it's an honor to meet you here." Qu Moying curtsied to him.

By then, Qu Qiuyan realized her misbehavior and curtsied to him hurriedly.

"Third Lady Qu, this pair of hairpins belong to me. But I lost them after a thief paid a visit to my mansion. Could you tell me where you bought them?" said Pei Yusheng.

He had no choice but to put an end to this drama because of Chun Xiu and County Lady Jingyu's words.

He glared at Qu Qiuyan with a sullen face, fearing that she would say they were his gift.

"Where...where did I buy them?" Qu Qiuyan's mind was totally blank. She didn't know what to do, only repeating his words.

"Yes. Where did you buy this pair of hairpins, Third Lady Qu? Please tell me, and I will really appreciate it," Pei Yusheng said with a righteous look.

Qu Moying took a step back and gave the stage to this couple who was really secretly dating. But ironically, it didn't seem that Lord Jing wanted to admit it anymore.

"I...I...indeed bought them somewhere outside. I...I bought them from a person I ran into before on the street. I found them really pretty, so I bought them," Qu Qiuyan stuttered. She finally understood Pei Yusheng's intention and explained it to him as her eyes turned red. She looked at him pitifully.

No one would know about the hairpins better than them two.

"Alright. Thank you, Third Lady Qu." Pei Yusheng cupped his hand in front of his chest and bowed to her slightly. He glanced at Gao An, who was standing aside anxiously, and said, "You can't just believe

whatever other people say to you. A maid said the hairpin belonged to Fourth Lady Qu, and then you just believe it. But Fourth Lady Qu couldn't possibly own such a thing. You are a scholar, and you can't even read people properly? Get lost, now."

Pei Yusheng swung his arm in anger as his long wide sleeve flapped in the air. His expression was frigid.

Everything started with this man, which already gave Pei Yusheng enough reason to dislike him. He didn't think Qu Qiuyan had something to do with this man, but he could see that Qu Qiuyan was trying to frame Qu Moying.

He had known Qu Qiuyan disliked Qu Moying since long ago. Of course, this was none of his business, so he didn't care even though he found it a bit annoying. But Qu Qiuyan kept emphasizing how innocent her mother Yu was, set up by Qu Moying's mother. That was why Yu ended up marrying into the Qu Family as a concubine, and she didn't even dare to mention her history. Qu Qiuyan also felt ashamed in front of other noble ladies.

But judging on the situation right now, Qu Qiuyan must be behind it.

Pei Yusheng had unexplainable anxiety deep down inside, finding Qu Qiuyan less pleasing than usual.

At the same time, Gao An felt very regretful. He thought it was just a tiny thing that people wouldn't notice – sending a wallet to someone, letting people find it out, and revealing the hairpin and the note. That was it. All the work would be done by the young servant, and he didn't even need to show up in public.

He didn't expect to cause such a big scene and irritate Lord Jing. He still needed to pass the royal exam and start his career in the political field. He couldn't leave a negative impression on Lord Jing.

He quickly came up with a plan, turned around, and bowed to Qu Moying deeply. "Fourth Lady Qu, I'm very sorry. When I stayed in the village, I actually never met you. It's just I was irritated hearing the maid saying that she sent this hairpin on behalf of Fourth Lady Qu. So, I lied about meeting you before since the maid told me you were easy to recognize with the long veil. After I take a second thought about it now, someone probably is trying to set you up. Fourth Lady Qu, it is my fault. Please forgive me."

Gao An quickly passed the buck off himself.

Now, he became a righteous man who met a misbehaved lady and wanted to teach her a good lesson. With the note he wrote before, people's impression of him was even better.

Plus, his handsome face and gentle aura made things more convincing. At this moment, many people nodded at him, thinking he made the right choice but just got misled.

Qu Moying was indeed the easiest person to recognize among all the people. Her long veil almost became her unique symbol. Even people who didn't know her would find her immediately in the crowd after learning her feature.

"Your Royal Highness, it is my fault, and I will lock myself in my house as self-punishment. Please forgive me, Your Royal Highness." Gao An hurriedly walked up to Lord Jing and bowed to him politely. Then he walked away, leaving all the trouble behind. What would happen next had nothing to do with him anymore.

As Pei Yusheng's eyes fell on Gao An, he showed a meaningful look with a trace of respect instead of annoyance.

Everything was witnessed by Qu Moying. She raised her brow, impressed by his decisiveness and cruelty. He pushed all the responsibility on Qu Qiuyan and got himself out of trouble without any hesitation, leaving Qu Qiuyan no chance to defend herself. It seemed like she needed to carry out an investigation on this man later.

"Don't leave. Explain it to me. Who gave you the hairpin?!" Qu Qiuyan was about to chase him as her face turned pale in rage.

Pei Yusheng reached out his arm to stop her...

Chapter 84 Yu's Impressive Acting

“Third Lady Qu, there might be a misunderstanding. Maybe someone is trying to use this hairpin to set up your family. You can ask your father to check on it. There have to be some clues that he can find out. You and your sister are just two ladies, and it will be inconvenient for you to make an investigation,” said Pei Yusheng.

His words acted as an excuse for Qu Qiuyan, implying that someone wanted to frame Qu Zhizhen by ruining his daughter’s name. Qu Qiuyan was also a victim and had nothing to do with it.

Qu Moying raised her brow and stepped back quietly, leaving the space to Qu Qiuyan and Pei Yusheng.

Chun Xiu arrived pretty late and didn’t see the whole process. Frowning, she looked at the two people in the center and whispered to an old woman next to her, “What happened? Why does Lord Jing spend so much effort defending Third Lady Qu?”

At the same time, Qu Qiuyan took out her hanky to wipe her tears, feeling wronged. If there weren’t many people here, she would’ve already rushed into Pei Yusheng’s arms and asked for his comfort pitifully.

“I don’t know. But by the looks of them...they indeed seem pretty familiar with each other... Maybe Lord Jing is interested in Third Lady Qu!” the old woman answered her in a low voice. She was not talking so quietly, but with all the people around discussing, no one could hear her clearly.

“So, Lord Jing is helping Third Lady Qu to get her out of trouble?” Chun Xiu exclaimed, catching many people’s attention, including Pei Yusheng’s. People all turned around and looked at her while she covered her mouth in embarrassment. She gave people an apologetic smile and lowered her head hurriedly.

People all fell into silence for a second and then looked back at the center where Qu Qiuyan and Pei Yusheng stood. They started to have a guess in their minds.

Everyone believed that it was Third Lady Qu who wanted to frame her younger sister. She said she gave the hairpin to Qu Moying. However, the hairpin ended up in a man’s hand who claimed he received it from a strange maid. Since Third Lady Qu was the hairpin’s owner, naturally, she was the one who sent it.

She sent it on behalf of her younger sister to a poor scholar. Although the scholar was a hard-up one, he still had the backbone to return the hairpin, feeling annoyed by the lady's misbehavior. What happened later clearly showed that Third Lady Qu was trying to blame it all on her younger sister.

But then Lord Jing showed up, saying someone was trying to set up Vice Minister Qu's family?

Hinted by Chun Xiu's words, many people didn't buy Lord Jing's excuse.

"Okay, this is over. Third Lady Qu, Fourth Lady Qu, please ask your father to make an investigation on this when you are back home." Pei Yusheng pulled a long face, took a glance at Chun Xiu, and left with his group.

If Chun Xiu weren't Liu Lanxin's maid, he would vent his anger on her for being rude, but he couldn't do anything to her right now. Moreover, he even needed to come up with a proper explanation to tell Lady Liu. He couldn't make her think he had something to do with Qu Qiuyan.

He used to think Qu Qiuyan was a kind, considerate girl whose appearance was his type too. Although sometimes she would have a temper, all he needed to do was to say some pretty words and let her vent it out. However, seeing her made Lord Jing feel inexplicably annoyed. He started to regret meeting her in private on Old Lady Qu's birthday banquet. Otherwise, people wouldn't spread the rumors about them, which kind of ruined his plan.

Following Pei Yusheng, County Lady Jingyu turned back to look at the crowd and then asked softly, "Your Royal Highness, what's going on?"

"Nothing surprising there. It's just the conflict between officials. I need to go back and report it to my father." Pei Yusheng swung his wide sleeve furiously.

County Lady Jingyu didn't dare to say anything more and left with him. However, when they almost walked out of people's sight, she turned her head again. This time, her eyes fell on Qu Moying...

After all the things that happened, there was no time for Qu Moying to worship the Buddha anymore.

"My lady, where's your divination stick?" Yu Dong looked around and noticed the divination stick in Qu Moying's hand was gone.

Qu Moying's eyes darkened as she looked down at her hand and shook her head, "I probably lost it when I walked out of the hall."

"Well, that's a pity. Otherwise, you can ask the monk to analyze it for you. I heard the sticks' fortune-telling is pretty accurate," Yu Dong said regretfully.

Qu Moying didn't respond and lowered her head. Actually, she threw the stick herself because it somehow gave her an unsettled feeling as if her secret would be exposed in public.

What she didn't know was her lost divination stick was picked up by a monk...

When Qu Qiuyan and Qu Moying returned to the Old Lady's yard, she had already got the news. As her two granddaughters came in, the Old Lady's cold gaze fell on Qu Qiuyan, "Yan, tell me about the hairpin."

"Grandmother, I really gave the hairpin to Moying. Granny Wu saw it too," Qu Qiuyan said hurriedly. She pressed her pink lips and stared at her grandmother pitifully with her teary eyes. "Grandmother, I don't know why the hairpin I gave to Moying showed up in a man's hand. At first, he said it was sent by Moying, and in the next second, he said he didn't know about it."

"Third Lady, I did see you pull out a hairpin from your hair and give it to the Fourth Lady. But I didn't know which one you gave her," Granny Wu walked up and said politely.

She was standing in the hallway and heard them talking about it, but she couldn't see it clearly. Qu Qiuyan always wore multiple hairpins on her head, and Granny Wu couldn't tell which one she had taken off at that time.

"Third Lady, we've asked the First Lady's maid already. She said she did see someone stole the Fourth Lady's hairpin after bumping into her. The Fourth Lady even searched it around for a while with her two maids," added Granny Wu.

“Grandmother, I...” Qu Qiuyan didn’t understand why things turned out this way. She should have nothing to do with it except for giving Qu Moying the hairpin out of good intention. How come all the evidence proved that she was the one trying to frame Qu Moying?

“Go pack your stuff, and we are going back to the mansion right now,” the Old Lady’s voice was stern. After they arrived at the Dabei Temple, bad things kept happening. If they were in the mansion, things wouldn’t be known by so many outsiders. Feeling furious, the Old Lady was having a heartache and didn’t want to spend one more second in this place.

The Old Lady had the most amount of stuff, but all her things had been packed up already before the ladies came back. Soon, everyone else finished their packing and got on the carriages.

However, Qu Moying was sitting with Qu Xuexin this time while Qu Caiyue was in the same carriage as Qu Qiuyan.

In the carriage, Qu Qiuyan was wearing a sullen face and gnashing her teeth, on the edge of an explosion.

Qu Caiyue had known what had happened as well. She showed a concerned look on her face and asked discreetly, “Qiuyan, don’t be so angry. It must have something to do with that bitch Qu Moying. She must’ve set you up! That’s what she did to me before!”

“Bitch, bitch, bitch!” Qu Qiuyan lowered her voice and kept cursing Qu Moying, looking malicious.

Qu Qiuyan couldn’t even say how bitter she felt right now. First, her plan about framing Qu Moying backfired. Then, Lord Jing said these hairpins were something he lost and refused to admit they were his gift to her while County Lady Jingyu stood next to him. Qu Qiuyan once heard that Noble Consort He picked Liu Jingyu as Lord Jing’s wife candidate. Thinking about it, she couldn’t feel more jealous and resentful.

Although Lord Jing explained to her before that it was just Noble Consort He’s own wishful thinking, Lord Jing was literally with County Lady Jingyu just now. Moreover, he didn’t want to admit that he gave her those hairpins as a keepsake of their love.

Liu Jingyu didn't say anything, but Qu Qiuyan clearly saw the sarcasm in her eyes, which fired Qu Qiuyan with anger.

The first person she hated the most was Qu Moying, and the second was Liu Jingyu.

Liu Jingyu got her title of County Lady only because her grandfather was Duke Qi and nothing else. Nothing was outstanding about her, and how dare she think she was the future Madam Jing?!

"Qiuyan, how about considering the next step first? Grandmother has always been defensive about that low-life girl, and she won't go easy on you this time. Besides, those...those outsiders..."

Looking at Qu Qiuyan, whose eyes were bulging in anger, Qu Caiyue didn't dare to continue speaking.

Rumors had spread everywhere that Qu Qiuyan wanted to frame her younger sister. Qu Qiuyan didn't have any evidence to prove the rumors wrong. Moreover, there was evidence to prove that she had been lying the whole time, which was very unfavorable to her. Qu Qiuyan didn't expect any of this at the beginning.

It took her some time to suppress her anger. Hearing Qu Caiyue's words, Qu Qiuyan's eyes darken as she sneered, "Second Sister, are you enjoying it a lot?"

"No...no, I'm not. I...I'm just worrying...worrying about you." Glared by Qu Qiuyan, Qu Caiyue hurriedly waved her hands.

"Good. Otherwise... You know me, Second Sister..." Qu Qiuyan said in a cold voice.

"Yeah, I know. Of course, I know. Qiuyan, you can ask me for help anytime. I'd love to do anything for you," Qu Caiyue flattered.

Qu Qiuyan curled up her lips in disdain. What else could Qu Caiyue, a concubine's daughter, do expect for flattering her? Nothing! However, Qu Caiyue wasn't totally useless to her right now. Her mother Yu must've been thinking of a way to fix the current situation, and maybe Qu Caiyue still had her value in it...

In front of the Qu's Mansion, Yu had known everything that happened and waited for a while. Seeing the carriages, she hurriedly walked up.

The Old Lady got out of the carriage first. Her face was pale, and she looked fatigued. The Old Lady was still sick when they left, but she pushed herself to go out with her granddaughters so that they could have a good time in the Dabai Temple. However, she never expected terrible things to keep happening, making her more and more stressed.

Following the Old Lady, Qu Xuexin got out of the carriage and then Qu Moying. Yu immediately rushed up with a beam, "Ying, how do you feel on the mountain? Did you have a good time? If you need anything, just tell me. I know you still feel strange in the mansion after all the years in the village, and you rarely speak for yourself. I've always worried that I do something wrong in terms of taking care of you. If there's anything that makes you unhappy, feel free to tell me about it. After all, we are mother and daughter, and we should be close to each other."

Yu even took out her hanky to wipe her faked tears.

Anyone who didn't know them would think Qu Moying must be Yu's own daughter since she had deliberately ignored Qu Qiuyan for the whole time.

At the same time, the Old Lady was standing at the gate, steadied by Granny Wu. The Old Lady turned around with a stern look on her face and watched Yu acting.

Qu Qiuyan walked towards the gate with Qu Caiyue. Seeing Yu, her eyes turned red immediately, and she pouted, "Mother..."

Tears flew down her cheeks. She was too upset to say anything else, using her hanky to cover her eyes. Losing all her strength, Qu Qiuyan almost fell to the ground. Qu Caiyue hurriedly went up to steady her.

Meanwhile, Qing Ju, Qu Qiuyan's maid, rushed up and curtsied to Yu.

However, in the next second, Yu threw a hard slap on Qing Ju's face. The unexpected pain made the maid step back and fall to the quartzite floor in front of the mansion...

Chapter 85 An Unintentional Mistake?

No one expected Yu to hit the maid at the mansion's gate, making a big scene here. Noticing the noise, a few passers-by stopped walking and looked in their direction curiously.

It was not strange that a wealthy family punished their maids, but usually, they all chose to do it inside their mansions. No one would want to make a big scene outside and shame the family name.

Standing at the gate, the Old Lady was trembling in rage. Before she was about to walk down, Granny Wu hesitantly whispered something in her ear, making her stop and stare at Yu and others with a stern look.

"You low-life girl, don't you know which hairpin the Third Lady usually wears?" Yu pointed at Qing Ju and asked furiously.

"Second Madam...I..." Startled by the sudden slap on her face, Qing Ju didn't know what to say. She covered her aching face and started to sob.

"Are you in charge of managing all the Third Lady's hairpins?" Yu's finger was trembling in anger as if she held her rage for a long time and finally vented it out.

"Y-Yes, it's...it's me..." Qing Ju nodded, crying.

Right now, she was Qu Qiuyan's only private maid. Another spot had been vacant since Qing He left.

"Since you are the only private maid that the Third Lady had, managing all her accessories, shouldn't you know the Third Lady has two similar pairs of hairpins? They are both purple pearl hairpins. One pair was gifted by the Yu Family for the Third Lady's birthday. Another pair was bought by the Third Lady herself when she went shopping outside."

The expression on Yu's face was furious, her voice cold and angry, "These two pairs looked similar. But this time, in the Third Lady's accessory box were the pair she bought and one from the pair given by the Yu Family. Didn't you notice it when you packed her luggage? Is it how you normally do your job?"

Hai Lan, who was standing behind Yu, walked up and presented the hairpin in her hands.

It was a hairpin decorated with quite big pearls, and the color of the pearls was also purple, looking pretty and exquisite. But there was only one hairpin in her hands.

"I...I..." Qing Ju talked helplessly and looked at Qu Qiuyan, seeking help. "Third Lady, I...I..."

Hai Lan took back the hairpin and put it in an accessory box held by another young maid. Then she stepped back behind Yu again.

Although Hai Lan didn't say anything, the accessory box was big enough for everyone to see it clearly. There were two delicate frames in the box, particularly for hairpins, and now one of the hairpins was missing.

The big scene they made attracted many people's eyes, and even those far away walked closer and surrounded them.

Watching Yu putting on this big show, Qu Moying sneered inwardly. No wonder Yu hooked up with Qu Zhizhen before she married into the Qu Family and made Qu Zhizhen abandon his first wife and daughter. Qu Moying started to feel lucky that she somehow survived after all those years. Living in the village kept her away from this malicious and cunning woman. Yu did make a few attempts at killing Qu Moying before. However, after her plans failed, luckily, Yu didn't put much effort into continuing since Qu Moying was too far away to affect her life.

A girl abandoned by her own family was truly powerless. After Qu Moying moved back to the mansion, Yu tried to use Qu Qiuyan's maid to kill her again. But no one knew that at that moment, Qu Moying was reborn in the fire.

Otherwise, she would've been long dead.

Compared to her daughter, Yu was a wily old fox, malicious but much more thoughtful. Qu Moying had already predicted Yu's next step, and the only question was who she would pass the buck on.

A maid's unintentional mistake couldn't be enough as an explanation to help Qu Qiuyan get around with the current situation.

If Yu didn't have a thoroughly considered plan to get Qu Qiuyan out of trouble, she would never make a scene at the mansion's gate.

Yu must've planned to make a big sacrifice to help her daughter. Since she had already made the opening, Qu Moying didn't even need to do anything now. However, Qu Moying would make sure to add some fuel to the fire later so that Yu would lose big this time...

Under the veil, Qu Moying's eyes raised and fell on the Old Lady, who was standing in front of the gate, holding Granny Wu's arm and watching them quietly. Qu Moying couldn't help but let out a sign in silence. No matter how much the Old Lady liked her, she was also Qu Qiuyan's granddaughter. There would never be a person like her father protecting her at any cost in the past life. Thinking about it, tears started to form in Qu Moying's eyes. She lowered her head and bit her lip, suppressing the sorrow and hatred in her heart.

"Do you have any other excuse? You helped the Third Lady pack up her luggage, including her accessory box. The Third Lady should wear the hairpin given by the Yu Family, and the one she gave the Fourth Lady should be from the Yu Family too! Although these two pairs look similar, they are still different. It was fine that the Third Lady didn't notice they were mistaken, but as her private maid, shouldn't you know about it? Also, when you packed the hairpins for the Third Lady, why did you only take one from this pair?"

Yu continued, her voice annoyed, "Because of your mistake, the Third Lady and the Fourth Lady were framed by someone else. Our family name has even been affected. Even your death can't make up for the loss you caused!"

"Second Madam, it's not me. It's really not me... I remember I packed up everything correctly..." Qing Ju started to cry out loud.

Those onlookers didn't know what had happened in the Dabei Temple, but clearly, it was something serious. They looked at each other and kept watching them quietly, feeling confused.

"It's not you? Then who would it be? Do you mean someone else somehow reached the Third Lady's accessory box and changed the hairpins inside? In the temple, who else had been to the Third Lady's room? Who could reach the Third Lady's accessory box without you and her noticing?" Yu said angrily.

Qu Moying raised her eyebrow, understanding Yu's intention. So, she wanted to make Yu Qingmeng the real culprit instead of Qing Ju. It was indeed more reasonable since a maid shouldn't make such a big mistake.

At this moment, Qing Ju figured out Yu's purpose as well and immediately started to cry louder, making herself sound more aggrieved. "Second Madam, Lady Yu came to the Third Lady's yard before... It was Lady Yu! She went to the Third Lady's bedroom while I...I was serving tea to the Third Lady. I didn't pay attention to her since Lady Yu is the Third Lady's cousin. I didn't think she would do anything to harm the Third Lady."

"Qingmeng?" Yu looked shocked. She suddenly lost all her strength in her legs and almost passed out.

Hai Lan hurriedly went up to steady her.

At the same time, the Old Lady twisted her brow into a frown but didn't say anything.

"Yes, Second Madam. I felt strange about it at that time. When Lady Yu arrived, it seemed that she wanted to have a good chat with the Third Lady. But she left soon after she spent some time in the Third Lady's bedroom. I was wondering why she acted like that, but I...I didn't think too much about it. I heard after leaving the Third Lady's yard, Lady Yu went to visit the Fourth Lady and started an argument with her..."

Qing Ju was still sobbing, but her words became more organized.

Since she figured out Yu's intention, she started to work with Yu to finish her drama.

"My cousin...? Why...Why did she?" Qu Qiuyan quickly responded as tears already flowed down her pale cheeks. She said sorrowfully, "But she is my cousin!"

She surely learned acting skills from her mother Yu.

Qu Moying stood aside, quietly watching this mother and daughter acting.

"My lady, remember? Lady Yu married Young Master Yongning right after he broke the engagement off with the Fourth Lady. Lady Yu has...has never seen eye to eye with the Fourth Lady..." Qing Ju didn't care if she offended Yu Qingmeng and even mentioned Xu Lipeng, desperately trying to get herself out of trouble.

The show of buck-passing amused Qu Moying. It was not time for her to speak yet.

"You mean...You mean Qingmeng did...it b-because she didn't like the Fourth Lady?" Yu muttered as her whole body was trembling in shock and anger. Then she fell straight down on the ground and lost consciousness.

Hai Lan held Yu in her arms and said hurriedly, "Second Madam...Second Madam, are you alright?! Maybe Lady Yu was just too impulsive at that time and decided to use the Third Lady. She is still young, and young people inevitably make wrong choices. You can't be too upset about it! Being angry is terrible for your health!"

Qu Qiuyan pushed Qu Caiyue aside, rushed over, and took her mother from Hai Lan's arms, crying pitifully. "Mother, it's my bad. I was too careless. I thought I was wearing hairpins from the same pair and gave one to Moying. I didn't expect the one I gave Moying was from another pair. Who would've known my cousin put two different hairpins in my accessory box? After I came back and saw there was only one hairpin left in that box, I thought the one Moying had was the same as the one I wore. Mother, it's all my fault."

As she talked, her sobbing became more sorrowful. At the moment, all kinds of noises spread in front of the mansion's gate.

“What’s the point of making a scene in front of our mansion’s gate?! Take them inside first!” the Old Lady said coldly.

Granny Wu nodded at her and asked a maid to walk into the mansion with the Old Lady. Then she walked down and started to control the situation. Qu Qiuyan was pulled aside by someone, and Yu, who was still in a coma, was carried back to her room. Granny Wu comforted Qu Qiuyan, who was still crying, and then took all the ladies inside.

Qu Moying was walking at the end of the group. Her eyes behind the veil were dark and expressionless, as if they could absorb everything inside.

What a show! But she liked it!

This was truly the end for Yu Qingmeng. Not only her, Xu Lipeng, her husband, was affected as well. He just broke off the engagement with the Fourth Lady of the Qu Family and soon married a concubine, who was hostile to his ex-fiancee and even tried to frame her. It seemed like this newly married couple was not as intimate as they looked. From now on, people would doubt if Xu Lipeng’s behavior of saving Second Lady Duan was out of real kindness.

This time, Yu responded quickly by sacrificing Yu Qingmeng to protect Qu Qiuyan. Although her explanation was still a bit suspicious, Yu’s purpose was achieved anyway, which was getting her daughter out of trouble. Now, this became a fair battle between Yu and Xu Lipeng, who was a hypocritical and shameless man, trying everything to protect his good reputation. No matter who was the final winner, Qu Moying would happily see it through.

But things hadn’t ended yet. Knowing Yu’s personality, Qu Moying expected her to make some preparation for the next step. Standing on the stairs, she turned around quietly, recognized an old maid in the crowd, and pressed her lips. The old maid worked for Yu. Qu Moying called Yu Dong over and whispered something to him. Yu Dong nodded at her and walked down the stairs, heading to the carriage Qu Moying took before.

He stopped the coachman, “Wait! The Fourth Lady has something left in the carriage!”

The carriage stopped, and Yu Dong climbed into it to look for something. Meanwhile, people started to discuss what had happened before outside the carriage...

Chapter 86 Mother, Please Spare Her This Time

“What just happened?”

“Something about Lady Yu, a lady related to the Qu Family. It seems that she used her cousin, Third Lady Qu, to frame Fourth Lady Qu.”

“Isn’t Lady Yu Second Madam Qu’s niece?”

“Yeah, but it doesn’t matter now. I heard Lady Yu married Young Master Yongning.”

“But Young Master Yongning just broke off the engagement with the Qu Family. It’s said that he is going to marry Second Lady Duan. Why is he involved with Lady Yu now? Lady Yu must’ve married him as a concubine! She literally couldn’t wait a single second to be his concubine after his engagement was canceled. So shameless!”

“I can’t believe a noble lady like her lowered herself to marry someone as a concubine. It’s disgusting.”

Yu Qingmeng moved into the Marquis Yongning’s Mansion secretly, so not many outsiders knew about it.

“I heard Young Master Yongning took Lady Yu and Fourth Lady Qu to go shopping one day, and they had an accident when sitting in the carriage. But Young Master Yongning ignored his fiancée and went to save Lady Yu. Moreover, the two directly held each other in public. In the end, Young Master Yongning sent Lady Yu home instead of his actual fiancée at that time, Fourth Lady Qu.”

Someone who witnessed their carriage accident told everyone about it.

“I see, so they hooked up long ago.” These vulgar people didn’t care about formalities and said it out loud directly while smirking at other people. The crowd burst out laughing.

“Then it means Young Master Yongning has been dissatisfied with his engagement since long ago and trying to find a way to break it off. Didn’t they say that Young Master Yongning saved a lady who fell into a lake and was forced to break off his initial engagement and marry her?” Rumors about the real reason behind the breaking off of Xu Lipeng and Qu Moying’s engagement had been spread these days.

Before, everyone said the lady Young Master Yongning saved was a shrew. She fell in love with him and designed a shameless trap to force him to marry her. She was the real reason why the Marquis Yongning’s Family cut the relationship with the Qu Family and broke off the engagement.

But after seeing what just happened, people started to suspect the authenticity of those rumors. It seemed that Young Master Yongning was not a responsible, devoted gentleman as they thought. Maybe he had always looked down on Fourth Lady Qu, so he hooked up with Lady Yu, who lived in the Qu’s Mansion, and framed the Minister of Food and Beverage’s daughter. After abandoning his fiancée, he married a concubine and would soon marry another lady as his wife. In the end, he gained the most benefits from the situation!

Meanwhile, Fourth Lady Qu’s life was really miserable. As everyone remembered seeing Fourth Lady Qu just now, wearing a long veil on her eyes and standing quietly alone, they started to grow some pity toward her.

Rumors are always like wildfire. Soon, the story became way more exaggerated than it was initially. People all said that Yu Qingmeng was jealous of Qu Moying because she started to secretly date Xu Lipeng long ago. That was why she used her cousin’s hairpins to frame Fourth Lady Qu. After her evil plan was revealed, her aunt, Second Madam Qu, was so angry that she even passed out.

Third Lady Qu’s careless maid packed three hairpins from two similar pairs. Lady Yu knew her cousin, Third Lady Qu, gave one of her hairpins to Fourth Lady Qu when she visited her. So, she sent someone to steal the hairpin from Fourth Lady Qu to frame her. Afraid of being noticed by Third Lady Qu, Lady Yu went to check the left hairpins at Third Lady Qu’s place and found out the one Fourth Lady Qu got was different from the ones Third Lady Qu wore. Then she replaced one in her accessory box with the current one she stole from Fourth Lady Qu.

Later, Third Lady Qu saw the purple pearl hairpin in her accessory box and thought it was the one she wore before. Without noticing the difference, Third Lady Qu put it on and went to worship the Buddha with Fourth Lady Qu. But she found that Fourth Lady Qu didn’t wear the one given by her before. Moreover, she didn’t know the one she gave out was not the same as the one she wore.

Then, Third Lady Qu found that a man had the same hairpin as the one she wore, so she thought it was the one she gave to Fourth Lady Qu. That was why she said that she gave Fourth Lady Qu that hairpin...

The whole thing was complicated, also confusing. Yu sent some old maids to mingle with the crowd and explain it to them.

Those maids dressed up like ordinary citizens so that no one would suspect their identities. Their words were organized, making people figure it out immediately. After hearing their explanation, those listeners all nodded at them, agreeing that Lady Yu was indeed a malicious lady. Destroying Fourth Lady Qu's engagement was not enough for her. She even wanted to ruin her name and take her life.

As for Young Master Yongning, he didn't sound like a gentleman that everyone praised either. Otherwise, he wouldn't choose such an evil woman over Fourth Lady Qu and even break off their engagement for her.

Now, they had more pity toward the poor, blind Fourth Lady Qu, who lost her engagement. Some people claimed that they saw Fourth Lady Qu was trembling while hearing the truth. She must be so angry and upset...

As the whole place was buzzing, Yu Dong took a plate from the carriage and went back to the mansion. The Fourth Lady asked him to stay near the crowd for a period to see if Yu would do anything else for her plan. As the Fourth Lady expected, some old maids mingled with the group and deliberately explained everything to those curious onlookers after the Qus returned to the mansion.

Thanks to Yu Dong's good hearing and sight, he noticed it immediately!

Yu was indeed willing to do anything to protect her own daughter, including sacrificing her niece's name...

In the Old Lady's Kangming House, Yu, who already woke up, was kneeling on the ground while wailing, "Mother, I really didn't know it was Qingmeng. I...I promise I will let my big brother give her punishment. We will never allow her to do this again. I've treated her so nicely these years. I...I can't believe she did this to me."

Next to the crying madam, Qu Qiuyan was kneeling as well, quietly wiping her tears with a hanky. Her eyes were red and swollen.

“Humph, I’m impressed by you...and Yu Qingmeng...” the Old Lady sneered furiously, staring at Yu.

Granny Wu hurriedly pulled the Old Lady’s sleeve to calm her down.

The Old Lady pressed her lips, trying to suppress her anger, and then asked, “Is it true that Yu Qingmeng designed all of it?”

“Mother, it was really designed by Qingmeng. Look at this hairpin left in the mansion. Qingmeng should have the other one from the same pair right now. I will go ask her to return it soon,” Yu was well-prepared for this scene and said with a grievance. Then she bowed her head on the ground in front of the Old Lady, “Mother, I know Qingmeng made a big mistake, but after all, I’ve watched her growing up. I...I can’t stand watching her like this...”

“What do you want?” the Old Lady’s voice was cold.

“Mother, can’t we just call an end to it? Qingmeng has already had her punishment now. She’s Young Master Yongning’s concubine, not even a noble concubine, and her whole life will be like this. If we make the scene bigger and irritate Marchioness Yongning, Qingmeng...Qingmeng’s life will be miserable,” Yu cried sorrowfully, “Mother, please spare her this time.”

“Spare her this time? When she was thinking about framing Ying, why didn’t she spare my granddaughter?” The Old Lady sneered and said sternly, “She made a man claim that he received a hairpin from Ying and wanted to return it. Was it have any different than killing Ying directly? Ying just lost her engagement, and now...now...”

The Old Lady was too irritated to finish her words.

The cancellation of Qu Moying’s engagement plus her own conditions already made it very hard for her to find a suitable husband. If people thought she was interested in another man when she was in the village, her name would be totally ruined!

Reputation was the most important thing for a female. Qu Moying was already affected after her engagement was broken off. No matter what the reason was and whose responsibility was, females were always on the weaker side. The Old Lady was sure that her son would do something to punish Ying if that were to happen.

Even though her son didn't want to do it, his wife Yu would find an excuse to make him do so. Being around Yu for so many years, the Old Lady just knew her too well. Yu was the kind of person who couldn't allow anyone to stand in her way.

If Yu was really a kind-hearted woman, she wouldn't pretend that she didn't understand the Old Lady's hints of bringing Qu Moying back to the mansion. She only did it because the Old Lady showed her determination directly in front of her.

Watching Yu faking her care about Qu Moying just now outside the mansion, the Old Lady was disgusted by her, but she had to tolerate it quietly. The harmony of a family is the cornerstone of its prosperity. The Old Lady still believed that Qu Qiuyan was a good girl deep down inside but was influenced by Yu too much. Moreover, Qu Qiuyan's marriage hadn't been settled yet. Ruining her name didn't do any good for the Qu Family.

Lady Yu became the shield for Qu Qiuyan, which was the only positive outcome the Qu Family could get in this troublesome situation.

That was why the Old Lady wanted to stop Yu's acting but ended up not doing it.

"Xuexin, Caiyue, Moying, you should all be tired now. Go back to your yards and have some rest!" the Old Lady waved her hand at them and said. She needed some private time to talk to Yu.

Understanding the Old Lady's intention, the three ladies stood up, curtsied to their grandmother, and headed back to their yards.

Qu Moying's yard was close to the Old Lady's, while Qu Xuexin's and Qu Caiyue's were far away in the East Mansion. But there was a path they had to walk through together in the beginning.

"Moying, are you alright?" After a few steps, Qu Xuexin asked with a soft look on her pale face, "Don't be afraid. Grandmother likes you the most among us. She won't let anyone take advantage of you right now."

"Thank you, First Sister. I'm fine now! What about you? Do you feel any better?" Qu Moying raised her eyes to look at Qu Xuexin. Her words sounded soft, but the look in her eyes was indifferent.

"Nothing new there. Like Grandmother, I've always been like this. It happens when it happens. Sometimes I just can't even get off my bed." Qu Xuexin let out a sigh, "It's partly my fault too. If I didn't feel unwell, I should be with you and Qiuyan at that time. Then we could clarify the situation immediately, and you two wouldn't be through all this trouble."

"I appreciate it, First Sister." Soon, they walked to a crossing and were about to separate.

"Are you really alright, Moying? How about I stay here with you for some time? I'm not in a hurry to go back anyway," Qu Xuexin suggested worriedly, holding her maid's hand. Her body was still slightly wobbling. Clearly, she was still feeling unwell, and right now, she was struggling to stand.

"Don't worry about me, First Sister. I'm fine. Just go back and have some rest. Grandmother has made everything clear already," Qu Moying shook her head and rejected.

"Well, then be careful by yourself. If you feel upset, you can come to me and talk about it," Qu Xuexin added amiably. She didn't seem fully relieved.

After Qu Moying thanked her again softly, Qu Xuexin took Qu Caiyue away, who had been quiet for the whole time. Surprisingly, her face was as pale as Qu Xuexin, and she acted very differently than usual.

"My lady, the Second Lady looks frightened," Yu Dong said with confusion, watching the two leaving.

Qu Moying curled up her lips, "she was frightened."

Chapter 87 Mother, I Don't Hate Ying

“What is she frightened about?” Yu Dong asked out loud subconsciously. After finishing his words, he realized it immediately as his eyes opened wide. “Is the Second Lady afraid that Second Madam will sacrifice her to protect the Third Lady too?”

Qu Caiyue always fawned on Qu Qiuyan, doing whatever she was asked to do. Sometimes, she would even do things on her own to flatter Qu Qiuyan.

“As she should be. Compared to her, Yu Qingmeng was much closer to Yu as her niece. Before, Yu Qingmeng had a higher status in the Qu Family and was more favored by Yu. Yet, Yu was even willing to sacrifice her own niece, let alone Qu Caiyue,” Qu Moying said in a flat tone.

“My lady, that was obviously a trap set by the Third Lady and Lady Yu together. Does the Old Lady really believe what the Second Madam said?” Yu Chun was concerned about another thing and said aggrievedly.

“Of course, the Old Lady believes it,” said Qu Moying coldly.

“But this is so fake! The Third Lady already tried to burn you before. After her plan failed, now she came up with a new one to destroy you. Even I can tell how malicious she is. I don’t believe the Old Lady can’t see that!” Yu Chun said in surprise.

“It doesn’t matter if the Old Lady can tell it or not. Right now, it is the best outcome she can get,” a trace of coldness showed in Qu Moying’s soft voice.

Sometimes, she could understand it logically, but it still felt bad.

Even though the Old Lady saw Qu Qiuyan’s true colors and liked Qu Moying more, but after all, they were both her granddaughters related by blood. She couldn’t choose one over another...

The only one that Qu Moying could depend on was herself now!

Qu Moying clenched her fists hard to suppress the upset feeling. When she raised her head again, the look in her eyes returned to the firm one she usually had. She knew it better than anyone that

everything would be on herself from that moment she was reborn. No one would care about her and protect her at any cost like her father did before!

If she still put hope on other people, she would just be the same soft-hearted, weak person. And a weak person was not suitable for revenge.

“Yu Dong, tell me about what you heard outside,” Qu Moying said slowly.

“Yes, my lady. I heard that those old maids sent by the Second Madam said...” as he walked, Yu Dong reported in a low voice to her.

“Tell me, what on earth is going on?” After the ladies left, the Old Lady pulled a long face and stared at Yu and Qu Qiuyan, kneeling on the ground.

Feeling flustered, when Qu Qiuyan was about to speak, her hand was held by Yu. Yu pinched her, signaled her to stay quiet, and started to wipe her own tears with a hanky again.

“Mother, I know Qingmeng made a big mistake. It’s my fault that I didn’t educate her well and that she disobeyed the etiquette and tried to frame the Fourth Lady. Luckily, nothing happened this time. Mother, I promise you that she will never do that again. She’s just a concubine of the Marquis Yongning’s Family, and we have nothing to do with her anymore. I will not allow her to step into our mansion again.”

Knowing the Old Lady’s intention, Yu was not flustered since she had prepared for this already. She deliberately showed anger, regret, and determination on her face.

“It’s all Yu Qingmeng’s fault?” the Old Lady fell into silence for a few seconds and asked.

“Yes, she did everything. Yan is just a victim who has nothing to do with it. When it happened in the Dabei Temple, Lord Jing saw it too and was quite angry. Maybe he will even ask the Second Master about it later,” said Yu hurriedly.

Yu had known well about what the Old Lady cared about and what she didn't. If Qu Qiuyan really married Lord Jing, it would be beneficial for the whole family.

This was a critical thing related to the future of the Qu Family, so the Old Lady wouldn't allow it to be hindered!

The Old Lady sat quietly with a long face for a while, and then she asked, "Yu, what if Yu Qingmeng refuses to admit her fault?"

"Mother, Qingmeng is just a concubine. Since Young Master Yongning hasn't married his wife yet, she can't leave their mansion. Even if she wants to say something about it, who can she talk to? Moreover, no one will believe her anyway." Yu sounded irritated, "She first framed Yan, then it's Ying. For me, she's not my niece anymore."

The Old Lady stared at her suspiciously. She could always tell that Yu treated her niece very well. Because of Yu's attitude toward Yu Qingmeng, the Old Lady even felt more aggrieved for her own granddaughter, Qu Moying, who had to live alone in the village without anyone's protection.

"Mother, don't worry. I can handle this," Yu added immediately. Seeing the Old Lady's hesitant face, Yu knew that she was partly convinced already.

"What about the Marquis Yongning's Family? Young Master Yongning is also involved this time," the Old Lady's voice was still cold.

"Mother, it's all Qingmeng's fault. Even though Young Master Yongning is involved, it has nothing to do with us. To be honest, Young Master Yongning owes the Fourth Lady anyway since he broke off the engagement first," said Yu as if she felt aggrieved for Qu Moying. "The Fourth Lady's marriage hasn't been settled, and it's all because of Young Master Yongning."

Still kneeling on the ground, Yu moved closer to the Old Lady and bowed her head on the ground three times with all her strength. When she lifted her head again, her forehead was red and swollen as tears flowed down her cheeks. "Mother, I've treated Qingmeng well, and I always wish she could be a good-hearted lady. I didn't expect her... I didn't know that she had been secretly dating Young Master Yongning. Otherwise, I would drive her away to a nunnery and prevent her from shaming herself and our family long ago."

Then she covered her face with a hanky while wailing, and her whole body curled up in pain as if she felt it genuinely.

Qu Qiuyan, kneeling on the ground behind Yu, moved closer to her mother and reached out to hold her. She called her mother pitifully, "Mother, Mother, don't be so upset. It's not...it's not your fault that my cousin did it. Who would've known that...that she would do this?"

Their crying echoed in the whole room, sounding pitiful.

The Old Lady quietly watched the mother and the daughter holding each other and wailing together for a while, and then she gave out her final warning, "Yu, I know you don't like Ying. But no matter what, Ying is also Zhizhen's daughter. She and Yan are both ladies of the Qu Family, and their name and future are bound together!"

"Mother, I don't hate Ying. It's just she reminds me of Sister Yue a lot. Sister Yue died of dystocia, but I always feel it's my fault. If I didn't marry the Second Master at that time, she might be still alive right now. Ying looks like her a lot, and the more I look at her, the more sorry I feel for Sister Yue. That's why I didn't dare to see her all those years. It's not because I dislike her."

Yu raised her head. The tears on her face and the bruise on her forehead made her look very pitiful.

"At that time, if it weren't for the two babies in my womb, I'd rather die instead of shaming myself and irritating Sister Yue. It was all my fault that...that Sister Yue ended up like that. I owed her a lot. If I had a chance to relive that moment, I would choose to die with my two babies in my womb together."

Her crying worked well this time, and the Old Lady fell into silence again. The Old Lady knew that it was Yu's fault for shamelessly hooking up with her son. But she was still her granddaughter and grandson's mother. Moreover, Yu gave birth to Qu Zhizhen's only son. No matter how much the Old Lady disliked Yu, she never wanted to see Yu and her children die at that time.

The past memories hit the Old Lady hard and filled her heart with sorrow. She leaned back, closed her eyes, and waved her hand feebly at Yu. "Just mind your behavior in the future. You can leave now!"

"Yes, Mother. I promise I will treat Ying as my own daughter. I've done it so wrongly these years. Because I didn't dare to see Ying, who looks like Sister Yue a lot, I've ignored her and made all the servants disrespect her. I've realized that it's all my fault. I won't do it again," Yu promised.

The Old Lady didn't say anything else but only waved her hand to let them leave. Granny Wu looked at Yu to signal her. Yu understood it immediately, pulled up her daughter, and excused herself to the Old Lady. Then she and Qu Qiuyan hurriedly left. After they walked out of the Old Lady's yard, they asked their maids to stay away from them and started to whisper to each other while walking.

"Mother, Young Master Yongning won't go easy on us," Qu Qiuyan said worriedly.

"So what? He did start to date Qingmeng long ago," Yu sneered.

"But you allowed it to happen, right? What if he uses you as an excuse?" Qu Qiuyan was confused. Yu had encouraged Yu Qingmeng a lot after knowing she was interested in Xu Lipeng. Technically, Yu was a big reason why Yu Qingmeng could hook up with Xu Lipeng in the beginning.

"He can't get around with it anyway. He won't dare to say more about it," Yu sneered carelessly.

"But what about my uncle..." Qu Qiuyan still sounded worried.

"A daughter who married someone as a concubine and is almost impossible to be a wife, and a niece who can help his career in the future. Your uncle can surely tell which one is more beneficial to him," Yu said carelessly.

She had sent a letter to the Yu Family and was sure that her older brother could have a good grasp of the situation.

A daughter who was a concubine didn't have much value for him anymore. No matter what happened, Yu Qingmeng couldn't be degraded into a maid with Yu's support. Moreover, Xu Lipeng himself also had responsibility in it, so he couldn't do anything to Yu Qingmeng.

“Okay. Mother, it’s all thanks to you this time. Otherwise, I will be doomed.” Qu Qiuyan still couldn’t calm herself down due to the fright and worry she had before. She bit her lips as a trace of maliciousness showed in her eyes. “Mother, it must be Qu Moying. That low-life girl must’ve done something, or things wouldn’t go like this.”

“It couldn’t be Qu Moying. She’s not able to do such things.” Yu shook her head. She didn’t believe Qu Moying could be so thoughtful.

“Mother, I indeed gave Qu Moying that hairpin, and she lied about it. She said I gave her another one instead of the purple one, and she lost it after getting bumped by a person. She doesn’t even have any evidence to prove it.” Seeing her mother didn’t believe her words, Qu Qiuyan felt anxious.

“Don’t worry about it. I have ways to deal with that low-life girl,” Yu sneered as her eyes darkened, and she looked in the direction of Qianyue House. Yu wanted to do her own investigation first to see if it was an accident or a trap set by Qu Moying. After all, her daughter was still inexperienced in judging this kind of situation. Maybe Qu Moying just didn’t want to admit the truth because she was afraid of being framed.

Maybe she just tried to save herself from trouble instead of purposefully framing Qu Qiuyan. But no matter what, what she did indeed caused problems to Qu Qiuyan, and even her death couldn’t make up for it. Yu would never go easy on that bitch’s blind daughter again.

“What’s your plan, Mother?” Qu Qiuyan leaned over and whispered.

Chapter 88 Big News! The Crown Princess Passed Away

“I have my own ways. Don’t worry about it. All you need to do is be a noble lady, staying in your room, doing some embroidery, and reading some books until the situation calmed down. As for Qu Moying, we still have your father’s support, remember?” Yu sneered.

“Okay. After Father comes back, I will teach that low-life girl a good lesson!” Qu Qiuyan said resentfully. She had never lost this big before, and she would make sure to ask her father to give Qu Moying some proper punishment.

Father trusted her and her mother the most. If she and Yu both said the same things, Qu Qiuyan was sure that her father would make Qu Moying pay for what she did.

When Qu Zhizhen came back, it was fifteen minutes before one pm. Hearing he first went to the Old Lady's yard, Qu Qiuyan couldn't wait anymore and hurried there with her maids. When she arrived at the Old Lady's yard gate, she saw Qu Zhizhen coming out and rushed over.

"Father, Moying framed me!" Seeing her father, Qu Qiuyan walked up and said pitifully as tears formed in her eyes.

She knew that her father liked her mother acting feebly, so she learned well from her mother. As long as Qu Qiuyan showed this sad face, Qu Zhizhen was willing to promise her anything she wanted.

However, Qu Zhizhen pulled a long face and threw her a glare, "Talk to me later when I have time."

He passed by his daughter directly this time, totally ignoring her complaint.

Such a thing never happened before. Stunned by her father's reaction, Qu Qiuyan thought of the Old Lady immediately. That annoying old woman must've said something to her father. Although she tried to rush over as quickly as possible, she still didn't make it in time.

"Father, it's true. Qu Moying tried to frame me, but Grandmother...Grandmother always protects her. Father..." Qu Qiuyan walked up and grabbed Qu Zhizhen's sleeve, the look on her face even more heartbroken. She raised her head and stared at Qu Zhizhen with those watery, pitiful eyes.

If it were before, Qu Zhizhen would immediately stop and comfort his daughter. However, he didn't have time for this right now.

"I still have something to do. Go tell your mother about it," he said impatiently while shaking off Qu Qiuyan's hand.

The impact made Qu Qiuyan stagger back and almost fall to the ground. She looked at her father in shock, "Father, Mother can't help me either. Since Moying has Grandmother's protection, what can my mother do about it?"

"If she can't even deal with these trifles, what else can she do?" Qu Zhizhen blurted, almost irritated by his daughter's persistence, and then he left quickly.

Meanwhile, Yu was rushing over as well. When she walked to a flowering shrub not far from them, she heard what her husband said. His impatient words hit Yu's heart hard. As the expression on her face suddenly changed, she covered her belly, leaned on a maid's shoulder with her eyes turning red.

She had never expected her obedient husband to say such words and blame her for mismanaging the family. Did he think she was incompetent to deal with the trifles in the mansion?

She hurried over because she also got the news that Qu Zhizhen went to the Old Lady's yard immediately after returning. However, she didn't expect to hear such hurtful words from him. Feeling heartbroken, Yu started to doubt if she was just a mansion butler in her husband's eyes.

"Mother!" Qu Qiuyan saw Yu and rushed over with her full speed, feeling aggrieved. Yu tried to avoid her subconsciously, but they still bumped into each other since Qu Qiuyan ran too fast. If Hai Lan didn't try to pull Qu Qiuyan away, she would definitely make Yu fall to the ground because of her carelessness.

However, Yu still curled up in pain. The abrupt bump seemed to hurt her a lot.

"Second Madam, how do you feel?" Seeing Yu's reaction, Hai Lan was so anxious that she pulled away Qu Qiuyan immediately. "Second Madam, are you alright?"

"My...my belly hurts..." Beads of sweat flowed down from Yu's forehead. She clenched Hai Lan's hand hard as the veins were bulging on her hand.

"Hurry! Help the Second Madam go back immediately. She needs to see a doctor." Hai Lan asked the maids to support Yu, and the group hurriedly headed back to Yu's yard as Qu Qiuyan followed behind.

The chaotic situation was finally settled after a while. Qu Qiuyan was convinced to leave long ago, and the doctor went to pick up some medicine. At this moment, Yu was lying on her bed only with Hai Lan accompanying her.

"Second Madam, you should be careful next time. Luckily, the Third Lady didn't make you fall on the ground just now." Fear was still lingering in Hai Lan's heart.

"I'm fine. I just need some rest." Yu rubbed her belly. The doctor said she was pregnant yesterday, but she didn't have time to tell Qu Zhizhen yet. Right now, she changed her mind. She was not in a hurry to inform Qu Zhizhen anymore since the doctor said he needed some time to observe her health condition, and she'd better have some good rest first.

Did he mean that her pregnancy was not stable yet? Hearing the doctor's words, Yu felt a bit flustered.

"Second Madam, how about telling the Old Lady and the Second Master first? They will be happy to know," noticing her silence, Hai Lan reminded her in a low voice.

"I might not be able to keep this baby. I want to...wait for a bit first. I don't want to give them hope and disappoint them later." Yu was still rubbing her belly that had been hurting a bit for a while. The pain was bearable but still uncomfortable.

After marrying into the Qu Family, it was not the first time she got pregnant. But every time, her pregnancy ended in miscarriage. The longest time she had been pregnant was six months, but she still lost the baby in the end. So, she wanted to keep it a secret this time until three months later. It was said that the baby in her womb wouldn't get startled in this way, and her pregnancy would be more stable afterward.

She initially planned to tell her husband today but almost lost her baby again. What happened just now was very worrisome for her, so she decided not to tell anyone about it until it was safe.

"Second Madam, so we don't tell anyone about it now?" Hai Lan still thought it was better to tell others about Yu's pregnancy.

"No, we don't tell anyone now!" Yu nodded at her firmly.

"Second Madam, did something big happen? I've never seen the Second Master acting so anxiously. No matter how urgent the thing he needed to do, he would always inform you first," Hai Lan changed the subject of their conversation.

"It should be, and I assume it's something severe." Yu nodded since it was also the first time for her during all the years after she married into the Qu Family.

As she expected, Granny Wu arrived at her yard soon.

"The Crown Princess passed away?" Hearing the news, Yu couldn't hold her excitement and sat up on her bed immediately. She used to have a big scruple while dealing with Qu Moying since the Crown Princess was Qu Moying's cousin. The Crown Princess's death was great news for her.

"Yes, the Crown Princess passed away. The Old Lady says the whole family should be in mourning for ten days, abstaining from eating meat and wearing white mourning belts," said Granny Wu.

She glanced at Yu and let out a sigh inwardly, feeling unsure about her choice. When the former Second Madam was still alive, she was such a gentle, kind woman but unfortunately ended up like that. Then Yu became the lucky one who got her position.

Well, it was mainly because Yu gave birth to a daughter and a son.

"Second Madam, do you feel unwell? Have you seen a doctor? If working is too much for you right now, how about we ask First Madam Luo of the East Mansion to help you manage the mourning affairs?" asked Granny Wu. She thought Yu was sick seeing her lying on the bed.

"I'm fine. It's not a big deal. Granny Wu, please tell the Old Lady that she doesn't need to worry about it, and I will try my best to handle it." Yu never liked Luo from the East Mansion. Although Luo didn't say anything about her, she always had the feeling that Luo looked down on her as if she was a real noble lady while Yu was just a low-life, shameless woman.

They rarely saw each other, and even when they met, they never talked. Holding a grudge against Luo, Yu didn't want her help at all. Otherwise, this would give Luo more reason to disdain her.

Also, it was not Luo's place to manage the West Mansion. Since the Second Master had a higher official rank than the First Master, the entire Qu Family gave priority to the West Mansion. If they invited Luo to help manage the mansion, those outsiders would think of the East Mansion as the more important one in their family.

Yu spent so much effort on climbing up to her current position. She would never allow anyone to stand in her way.

"I'm glad to hear that you are alright, Second Madam. The Old Lady wants you to start preparing the mourning clothes and belts first for all family members in the mansion. The mourning clothes should be made of sackcloth, and every person should have four sets. We need to ask the embroidery workshop to stop all the work at hand and start to make these first. If they don't have enough time to make all four sets, they need to finish at least one for each person as soon as possible. Except for the clothes, we also need to prepare some sacrificial offerings."

Usually, the mourning clothes didn't have to be white since the most basic colors like grey, dark blue, or black should all be proper. There shouldn't be any patterns on the clothes. During these ten days, people couldn't wear any bright-colored or luxurious clothes and exquisite accessories except for mourning clothes and a mourning belt on the waist.

However, the Qu Family was a different case. Since Qu Moying was related to the Crown Princess, they had to wear white sacking clothes and go to the funeral in person.

"Granny Wu, leave it to me. I will start the arrangement right now. You can leave to report back to the Old Lady first," said Yu.

Since Yu sat up immediately and seemed quite energetic, Granny Wu nodded at her and got ready to leave. But before she walked out, she was stopped by Yu suddenly. "Granny Wu, did the Second Master say when he would return?"

"I'm afraid the Second Master won't be back for a few days. He and his colleagues from the Ministry of Works need to stay in the Eastern Palace to help the Crown Prince manage the mourning affairs. He will probably be swamped with work these days," said Granny Wu.

"Alright, I see." Yu nodded at her.

After Granny Wu left hurriedly, Yu got off the bed with Hai Lan's help.

"Second Madam, how do you feel?" Hai Lan asked her worriedly while observing her face.

Yu let go of Hai Lan's hand, calmed herself down, and started to walk outside. She said, "I'm fine. Don't worry about me. Call the manager of the embroidery workshop over. I want to instruct the manager in person about this."

Since the work assigned to the embroidery workshop was the most important right now, she had to handle it in person and avoid any mistakes. There was nothing better than the death of the Crown Princess for her. In Yu's opinion, the Crown Princess should be dead long ago. Her existence had been dragging everyone's feet and made many people exhausted.

Thinking about it, a sick pleasure showed in Yu's eyes.

Due to Qu Moying's relationship with the Crown Princess, the entire family needed to attend the funeral in the Eastern Palace. Then she had to pay extra attention to making some arrangements about those mourning clothes. Otherwise, such a great opportunity to frame Qu Moying would become a waste. If Qu Moying did something wrong on her own cousin, the Crown Princess's funeral, she had to make up for it with her death, and even the Old Lady couldn't do anything about it...

Knowing the Crown Princess was dying soon before, Yu actually had already started to make preparations. But it was even sooner than she expected...

Chapter 89 Wring the Last Bit of Value From the Crown Princess

The news of the Crown Princess's death also spread to the Qianyue House while Qu Moying was enjoying her reading time. Looking at Yu Dong, who was still panting from running, the book in her hand suddenly dropped to the ground, making a thud.

“My lady, what’s wrong?” Her reaction was a bit unexpected for Yu Dong, but then he remembered Qu Moying was the Crown Princess’s cousin, although she never met her in person. Hurriedly, he comforted her, “My lady, don’t be too upset. The Crown Princess had been unwell for a long time. It would happen sooner or later...”

Yu Dong couldn’t finish his words because he saw tears flowing down Qu Moying’s cheeks. Since he started to work for Fourth Lady Qu, they had been through a lot together, but he had never seen her crying!

“My lady, I’m sorry for your loss!” Yu Chun said worriedly as she and Yu Dong looked at each other, feeling a bit flustered.

Unlike Yu Dong, she used to see her master shedding tears quietly when they were still in the village. But after they came back to the Qu’s Mansion, the Fourth Lady seemed to become a totally different person. She was confident and brilliant, no longer the weak, introverted lady who didn’t like talking and hid everything in her heart.

Yu Chun felt very happy about her master’s change.

But right now, seeing her crying, Yu Chun thought of the old Fourth Lady who had been very helpless.

“I’m not feeling sad for her. I think life is much more painful than death.” Qu Moying stood up and walked to the window. She looked at the sky with tears still on her face, but her soft lips curled to a cold smile. The Crown Princess had finally “died!” Pei Luo’an chose a good time to announce it after such a long waiting.

When she heard that someone tried to assassinate Pei Yuanjun, she had already thought about it.

The Crown Princess’s death was meant to happen since the real Ji Hanyue had died long ago. It was not told to the public because she had just married into the Eastern Palace at that time, and Pei Luo’an didn’t want anyone to suspect him.

So, it was kept a secret to protect Pei Luo’an’s name!

They announced it now, again, to help Pei Luo'an get out of trouble. Since Pei Luo'an was deeply in love with the Crown Princess, everyone would think he was too sad to have anything to do with the assassin and wouldn't suspect him at all. That was truly thoughtful of him!

Who would have thought that her death could be used to prove Pei Luo'an's innocence? He didn't stop until he wrung the last bit of value from her.

Pei Luo'an, Ji Youran... When she thought of these two people, a trace of ruthlessness appeared in her eyes, making her look as cold as a devil from hell. Since she was reborn, it was time to let them pay her back.

"My lady..."

Yu Dong was about to say something but got interrupted by Qu Moying. "As the Crown Princess's cousin, I can attend the Crown Princess's funeral, right?"

"Yes. Not only you, my lady, but the whole Qu Family also need to go. Any family related to the Eastern Palace should attend the Crown Princess's funeral," Yu Dong nodded. He was pretty familiar with all the etiquette.

"My lady, I can help you prepare the mourning clothes," Yu Chun suggested politely since her embroidery was not bad.

"Alright!" Qu Moying nodded at her.

"My lady, shouldn't your mourning clothes be provided by your family? Why do you need to prepare it by yourself? Moreover, you are not the only one who needs to visit the Eastern Palace. Every master in this mansion should go with you. How can they let you do the preparation work alone?" Yu Dong asked in confusion. In his opinion, Yu was responsible for all the preparation.

"They will prepare those, of course. But it would be better that we make some by ourselves." Qu Moying turned to glance at Yu Dong, her eyes looking cold. She sat back down on her chair with the usual calm look on her face, and the weakness she just showed was already far gone. Right now, she was Qu Moying, not Ji Hanyue anymore, who was murdered miserably and wrung the last bit of value from.

“My lady, do you mean that woman and her daughter will do something to harm you?” Clever as Yu Dong, he immediately understood Qu Moying’s implication and pointed at Yu’s yard.

Qu Moying slightly nodded at him and then added, “Yu Dong, I need you to go visit my cousin, the vice minister of the Dali Temple. Help me ask him when he will go to the Crown Princess’s funeral. I want him to go mourn for the Crown Princess at the same time with the Ji Family.”

Yue Wenhan, the Vice Minister of the Dali Temple, was both Qu Moying and Ji Hanyue’s cousin. He would definitely attend the Crown Princess’s funeral.

She wanted to meet Yue Wenhan first and then take the chance to meet the Ji Family with him together. After she was reborn, she had never met anyone from her original family except for Ji Youran.

Now she had the perfect occasion to meet them all at one time and think about the next step. Qu Moying didn’t believe no one in the Ji Family knew that her father and sister had died long ago. But if they knew about it, who could be the one helping Pei Luo’an secretly? She didn’t think Ji Yong’an, Ji Youran’s father, had the power to block every information about her father by himself.

Now that the Crown Princess’s death was announced, how would her family, the Ji Family, react to it?

In the imperial study where the emperor had meetings with others, the emperor just heard about his daughter-in-law’s death, his face looking pale. He had been sick for a long time, and right now, he seemed even more fatigued than usual because of the bad news.

He just knew about the assassination of Pei Yuanjun, which was a shock for the emperor. Thanks to a noble lady who accidentally passed by and screamed for help, Pei Yuanjun luckily survived. Now, the death of the Crown Princess gave him a bigger mental blow.

The emperor always felt pitiful for the Crown Princess. That poor girl had known the Crown Prince since they were kids, and their engagement had been confirmed long ago. The Crown Prince was a few years older than her and had been waiting for her to grow up and marry him. He even didn’t marry any other concubines and only had some maids to sleep with, and he did it all for the Crown Princess. Even the emperor, the Crown Prince’s father, was touched by his love for Ji Hanyue.

The emperor had approved their relationship and felt happy for their marriage. Yet, he never expected someone tried to assassinate the Crown Prince on their wedding day. Because the Crown Princess protected her husband from the killer, she was severely injured. She had barely recovered and been wandering near death's door, even though they used much medicine on her. Now, she finally couldn't hold it anymore.

Before, the Crown Prince invited the Crown Princess's cousin over to the Eastern Palace to care for his wife and even married her as his second wife. It was said that the Crown Princess proposed it herself, and the Crown Prince disagreed initially. But seeing his feeble wife, who was still trying to consider for her family, the Crown Prince finally agreed while crying beside her bed.

Then, her cousin became the only woman the Crown Prince officially married except the Crown Princess.

No matter how much the Crown Prince had done, the Crown Princess still passed away. Witnessing a young family member's death, the emperor felt very upset. However, he was not shocked since the Crown Prince had told him many times about the Crown Princess's severe conditions. Compared to this, the emperor was angrier about the attempted assassination of Pei Yuanjun.

Looking at Pei Yuanjun, sitting in the big chair next to him, the emperor let out a quiet sigh and rubbed his brow.

The emperor had not been in good health conditions for a while. Because of the medicine he took every day, he still had the energy to finish his job. However, he left all the military work to Pei Yuanjun and asked him to help protect his empire.

How could he not be angry when knowing that someone tried to kill Pei Yuanjun secretly?

"Yuanjun, you really can't find any clue?" the emperor asked him again and then threw a glance at Yu Chengyu, the Minister of Justice.

"Not at all. All the men sent to kill me were ready to die. Even those who survived and were caught alive all ate poison and committed suicide. Your Majesty, don't worry about it. I'm still alive. This is not the first time that someone has tried to kill me," Pei Yuanjun said casually with a lazy look on his face. He didn't seem like a person who had just been through a fierce fight and almost lost his life.

When he half-closed those pretty downturned eyes, he looked particularly elegant and noble!

Seeing Pei Yuanjun talking about the assassination so carelessly, the emperor felt even more furious. Although no specific clues were found, the emperor had his own guess. He knew better than anyone that his sons had started to compete for the throne because of his sickness. Even the Crown Prince had made some moves secretly, making the emperor displeased.

“We can’t go easy on the culprit. The Ministry of Justice should implement a thorough investigation. I can’t believe that killers sneaked into the Dabei Temple.” Then the emperor suddenly paused and started to cough quietly. His chief eunuch immediately handed him a cup of warm water. The emperor took a sip, calmed himself down, and continued, “Check every suspicious person.”

“Yes, Your Majesty. I will start to do it immediately.” The Minister of Justice kept nodding at the emperor. After he walked out of the imperial study, he realized the clothes on his back were soaked by his cold sweat. Everyone knew that the assassination was arranged by one of the emperor’s sons. The investigation job was just a hot potato, but he had to hold it since he was the Minister of Justice.

Whoever attempted to kill Lord Yun should be very confident in his own power. Minister Yu felt exhausted already, stuck in the middle of two big forces.

Lord Yun was someone he couldn’t afford to offend! If Lord Yun was irritated and took his own revenge, the whole empire would be in danger.

Minister Yu inwardly complained about the person who dared to assassinate Lord Yun. He looked up and let out a sigh. The sky looked dark, and it was about to rain soon. He still needed to rush to the Eastern Palace and check on the situation there since it was his duty to keep the Crown Prince safe. If anything wrong happened there, he would lose his job immediately.

The Crown Prince had had a tough time before. First, someone tried to kill him on his wedding day. The Crown Prince turned out to be safe, but the Crown Princess was heavily injured for protecting him. Then, a fire was set in the Eastern Palace and burned down the tallest house there, which lit up half of the capital and shocked everyone in the city.

The two cases in the Eastern Palace hadn't been solved yet, which was a big headache for the Minister of Justice. Thinking about it, he shook his head and walked down the stairs. Suddenly, he noticed a group of people walking over from a distance. In the middle was a beautiful woman in a white dress, surrounded by many maids and eunuchs. The Minister of Justice hurriedly stepped aside and lowered his head respectfully.

The woman was Noble Consort He, who he had met several times before. Although Noble Consort He was not young anymore, the emperor still liked her a lot. Sometimes, she would go to the imperial study to give the emperor some pastries he liked, and the emperor would always take the food she sent.

"Your Grace, it's a pleasure to meet you," Minister Yu bowed to her as she walked closer.

"Same, Minister Yu. Is His Majesty having some rest right now?" Noble Consort He stopped and asked softly, showing her gentle personality.

"Lord Yun is still inside talking with His Majesty," Minister Yu told her honestly.

Noble Consort He slightly frowned and then gave him a smile, "Since then, I will just wait outside." Then she walked up the stairs in an elegant, graceful manner. Those eunuchs and maids following her were all well-behaved, walking quietly with their heads lowered.

After Noble Consort He left, Minister Yu started to walk toward the outside again, feeling pity for Lord Jing, her son. Noble Consort He was an elegant, kind woman favored by the emperor, and her son was a talented young man suitable for taking the throne. However, the Crown Prince so happened to be born by the empress and older than him...

Chapter 90 Four Sets of Mourning Clothes

"Do you really think it's feasible?" sitting in his study room, the Crown Prince asked his advisors with a sullen face.

They were the only people in the room, and all the eunuchs serving them stayed outside the yard gate, not daring to move closer at all.

“Your Royal Highness, this is the only option. If His Majesty finds out you are the one behind it, that will be very troublesome.” One of his advisors shook his head, frowning, “What you did was a bit careless, Your Royal Highness.”

“Your Royal Highness, I agree with him. Lord Yun is such an evil and arrogant man. Your Royal Highness, you didn’t get rid of him this time. If you continue to try it, he will cause you trouble. But after we announced the Crown Princess’s death, everyone thinks you will be occupied by the sorrow, and they won’t suspect you at all. People know that the assassination was designed by someone from the royal family. Except for you, the only suspicious people left were Lord Jing, Lord Wei, and even...”

The advisor stopped talking and pointed at the sky, implying the emperor.

Lord Wei was the emperor’s third son, who had been sickly since he was a child and rarely showed up in public. But his innocence hadn’t been proved yet since the last person who won the game of throne could be someone that people ignored initially.

As for the emperor, who favored Pei Yuanjun a lot, no one could tell if his favor was out of appreciation or the fear for Pei Yuanjun’s military power.

As long as the emperor was not stupid, he wouldn’t allow Pei Yuanjun to become even more powerful than himself.

“So, the Crown Princess has died. But what about Earl Ling’an’s family?” the Crown Prince suddenly changed the topic and asked coldly. He looked pale and haggard, but there was a trace of annoyance in his eyes.

“Since the Crown Princess’s death has been announced already, we can tell people about Earl Ling’an’s death soon before more troubles find you. Since you have married Princess Ji, her father, the Second Master of the Ji Family can be the next Earl Ling’an. Then, things will gradually calm down, Your Royal Highness,” another advisor suggested.

Hearing his proposal, the other advisors nodded at him and glanced at each other with an affirmative look.

The deaths of the Crown Princess and Earl Ling'an were two hot potatoes in their hands, making them flustered every time they thought of them. Who would've known that the Crown Princess died right after she married into the Eastern Palace? It happened so fast that even the Crown Prince was forced to make a choice. They had to make up a story to block the news, saying that the Crown Princess was heavily injured for protecting the Crown Prince.

And Earl Ling'an vomited blood and became severely sick because of worrying too much about his dear daughter.

As for the Crown Princess's younger sister, she suddenly died of sickness. They had to bury her hurriedly to not affect the Crown Princess's wedding.

If people knew these things happened simultaneously, the Crown Prince would become the first one to blame. So, he had to use a lie to cover the truth.

But people in the study right now all knew that the Crown Princess was forced to enter the Linyuan Pavilion and killed herself long ago.

Regarding how Earl Ling'an died, it was even a bigger secret they had to take to the grave...

Feeling the vessels near his temples were bulging, Pei Luo'an lowered his head and rubbed his temples. For a moment, the whole room fell into dead silence, with gloominess lingering in the air.

Suddenly, ten steps away from the door, a little eunuch reported with a timid voice, "Your Royal Highness, Princess Ji is here to serve you some snacks made by herself."

Behind the little eunuch quietly stood Ji Youran in an elegant dress. Her hair was tied in a delicate bun, decorated by two phoenix-head hairpins. The round pearls on her hairpins swung with her slight movement, making her beauty even more eye-catching. She looked into the study affectionately with a gentle smile on her face, yet she didn't enter rudely.

The Crown Prince pressed his lips into a straight line and then said, "I'm not hungry. Just let her leave!"

The little eunuch glanced at Ji Youran behind him nervously.

Ji Youran twisted her eyebrows into a slight frown, feeling a bit embarrassed. She was not the first wife of the Crown Prince, but as his second wife, the only rightful woman in the Eastern Palace, her life couldn't be better right now. Everyone treated her as the only princess here and showed a lot of respect for her.

Pei Luo'an treated her well and was very considerate of her. Sometimes, he even stared at her blankly, with tenderness in his eyes that everyone could tell. He even protected her from those maids' provocation who used to sleep with him. Since then, Ji Youran's life in the Eastern Palace had been peaceful and pleasing.

Whenever she came to the Crown Prince's study, she always obeyed the rules and never entered rudely, but the Crown Prince always let her in. Even if he was with his advisors, he would ask them to wait aside first. This was the first time that she was rejected by the Crown Prince. She was so embarrassed that she even felt the little eunuch was looking at her with sarcasm.

The gentle smile froze on her face.

After a while, she forced a smile again, curtsied to the study door, and said softly to the little eunuch, "Since His Royal Highness is occupied right now, I won't bother him. If he feels hungry later, you can help me serve him these snacks."

Then she asked the maid behind her to pass the food basket to the little eunuch and left, perfectly showing her grace and good manners.

Hearing the conversation at the door, the stern look on Pei Luo'an's face softened a bit as he was pleased by Ji Youran's elegant manner.

"Let's do as you said and announce Earl Ling'an's death soon. Then I will request an imperial edict from His Majesty to name Ji Yong'an, Princess Ji's father, as the next Earl Ling'an," Pei Luo'an made up his mind and said.

"It can't be better."

“Yes, let’s do it this way.”

The advisors nodded at him.

However, one of them added with concern, “Your Royal Highness, we have to keep a close eye on Earl Ling’an’s family these days too. We can’t allow any accident to happen.”

“That’s for sure. Ask the Ji Family when they will attend the Crown Princess’s funeral. After the funeral, we will announce Earl Ling’an’s death,” Pei Luo’an said firmly. This was the best option right now.

After the Crown Princess and Earl Ling’an’s deaths were both announced, he could finally get rid of the two biggest troubles at hand and bury all the dirty things he did forever.

Because of Ji Yongming, all his arrangements for years became in vain, and even Ji Hanyue was involved. If Ji Yongming was willing to give him what he wanted, many unnecessary things could be avoided. He was forced to make these choices, and if Ji Hanyue wanted to blame it on someone, it should be her father.

He wanted to spare her life, but she was too stubborn to accept it and jumped off the Linyuan Pavilion by herself.

His trembling hand accidentally unrolled a painting on his desk, and a part of a fluttering dress showed up on the corner of the paper. Flustered, the Crown Prince rolled it up and threw it into a pot beside hurriedly. When he raised up his head again, it was still the usual gentle, a bit fatigued look on his face.

It was natural that the Crown Prince looked sorrowful and exhausted after the Crown Princess died. Knowing the truth, the advisors couldn’t help but inwardly feel impressed by the Crown Prince’s acting skill. They were almost touched by his “love” for the Crown Princess, but certainly, it was all faked by him.

They all knew that the Crown Prince liked Princess Ji more since he treated her very well and even killed the Crown Princess, who was standing in her way, for her. It seemed that they had to show more respect for Princess Ji when they met her in the future...

Meanwhile, Qu Moying heard from Yue Wenhan that Earl Ling'an's family would attend the funeral tomorrow. Then she told the Old Lady that she wanted to mourn the Crown Princess on the same day. The Old Lady agreed, thinking it was a suitable date since people closely related to the Crown Princess or the Crown Prince would all go tomorrow.

At night, the manager of the embroidery workshop brought some mourning clothes to Qu Moying's place.

Granny Miao introduced the manager to Qu Moying.

"Fourth Lady, these mourning clothes are newly made by the embroidery workshop. We are in a hurry, so there are not many choices. We've made one set for the Old Lady, the Second Madam, the Third Lady, and you, respectively. The Second Madam told me to let you choose first. Although the Old Lady will show up as the head of the family tomorrow, you are the one actually related to the Crown Princess. So, you have to be more careful about the mourning clothes you will wear than everyone else. We can't allow any mistake on this," said the manager with a polite smile on her face.

She was a middle-aged woman in her thirties or forties, apparently good at talking. After finishing her words, she asked the two old maids behind her to put all the clothes they brought on the table in the middle of the room.

"Fourth Lady, please choose the one you want first, and then I will present the rest to the Old Lady."

"Does Grandmother know I will pick the clothes first?" Qu Moying asked, frowning at her. It was obviously against the rule to let her pick the clothes first.

"Yes, the Old Lady knows. I actually came from the Old Lady's yard. She said you should pick the clothes first, too. Fourth Lady, since you were not living in the mansion and never picked your own clothes before, the Old Lady wants you to be the first one this time. There's just one thing I want to inform you. You might notice a fragrance on the clothes because we were using scented candles when we made them," the manager said beamingly.

Lighting up scented candles on the offering table while making mourning clothes was to show respect for the deceased. Moreover, it was the Crown Princess this time. According to the etiquette, even after

Qu Moying picked her clothes, she needed to put them on the offering table and only wear them right before she left for the funeral.

Qu Moying rubbed her forehead, looking exhausted. Then she waved her hand and said, "Any one of them is fine for me."

"Fourth Lady, I know you feel very upset, but you can't be careless, especially right now. You should come to pick one set and try it on. Then I can have enough time to make adjustments if needed. The Crown Princess's funeral will be an important occasion for the Qu Family. The Old Lady asked me to let you pick one set carefully, Fourth Lady," the manager kept blabbering with enthusiasm.

Qu Moying finally stood up and walked to the table where the four sets of mourning clothes were put on top. Although they were made of sackcloth, the design looked elegant, and the stitch work was exquisite. Each one seemed fine, and she couldn't find any part that she disliked.

"Fourth Lady, please take your pick first."

It could be easily told that all four sets were plain mourning clothes made of sackcloth. After Qu Moying took a careful look at them, she found that two sets were made of better cloth. But at first sight, no one would notice such a tiny detail.

It was reasonable that they were made of different cloth since the materials could be from two batches.

Qu Moying's eyes fell on the two sets made of coarser cloth. As the Crown Princess's cousin, she should wear rougher clothes to show more respect.

At last, she pointed at the far right set and said to the manager, "I'll take this one!"

"Okay, I will bring the left three to the Old Lady and let her pick for the Second Madam and the Third Lady." The manager packed the rest clothes hurriedly and left with the old maids.

After Granny Miao returned from walking them out, she saw Qu Moying sitting next to the table, staring at the clothes. The scene somehow made her feel unsettled. She hurriedly asked, "My lady, is there

something wrong with the clothes? Do you want me to call the manager back and switch another set for you?"