

Noble Wife 91

Chapter 91 Amor's Acacia

"No need. This one is good enough," said Qu Moying as she picked up the belt aside. Suddenly, something that was wrapped by the belt dropped to the ground.

It was actually a whole set of outfits, including clothes, a belt, shoes, socks, and even a hairpin with a gauzy white flower.

The gauzy white flower had light yellow stamens. It looked simple, but Qu Moying could tell it was delicately handmade, pretty, also suitable for a mourning occasion.

Attached to a silver hairpin, the flower was not complicated and only had five petals.

Qu Moying picked up the flower, stared at it carefully, and then sniffed it. Seeing this, Granny Miao asked her in confusion, "My lady, is there something wrong with the gauzy flower?"

"Granny Miao, take a look at this." Qu Moying passed the flower to Granny Miao. Granny Miao directly held it under her nose, sniffed it, and then her face suddenly turned pale. She looked at Qu Moying, "My lady, something is on the flower?"

In terms of sense of smell, even Granny Miao's was not comparable with Qu Moying's.

"It's faint, very hard to notice." Qu Moying nodded at her, "Granny, do you think it's similar to the smell of Amor's Acacia that you showed me in the past?"

Granny Miao pulled a long face and sniffed it again carefully. "Yes, a little bit." She closed her eyes to feel the fragrance for a few seconds and then opened her eyes. "My lady, it is the smell of Amor's Acacia. It is very faint, almost covered by the smell of scented candles. If you didn't tell me, I wouldn't notice it at all."

The scented candles were a perfect excuse since the aroma of Amor's Acacia was very faint and could almost be covered by the candles' smell.

Even a person familiar with all kinds of herbs like Granny Miao couldn't even notice the smell. Luckily, Qu Moying had had a keener sense of smell than ordinary people since she was a kid.

"My lady, it is the Second Madam's scheme!" Granny Miao understood it immediately as her eyes fell on the set of clothes. She hurriedly held them under her nose and started to sniff.

Then she picked up the belt and shoes to sniff them one by one.

"My lady, the shoes have that smell too." Granny Miao put an irritated look on her face, "The Second Madam is so malicious! She wants you to shame yourself on the Crown Princess's funeral..."

Amor's Acacia was not a strong-effect herb that had much use and even couldn't confuse people's minds. It was said that women in the North would use this kind of flower to attract men they were interested in.

Amor's Acacia represented the lovely and charming aura a woman showed in front of the man she loved.

Under the effect of this herb, a woman would look more charming and attractive, with her eyes more watery and her face blushing timidly. It wouldn't be a big deal if it was used on ordinary occasions since people would just find the woman prettier than usual. But what if someone used it at the Crown Princess's funeral?

As the Crown Princess's cousin, if Qu Moying showed such a flirtatious look instead of wailing sorrowfully at the funeral, people would all think she was here to seduce someone.

And the most possible person she wanted to seduce would be the Crown Prince...

The more Granny Miao thought about it, the more terrified and irritated she felt for Qu Moying.

"How can the Second Madam be so malicious!?" Yu Dong understood Granny Miao and Qu Moying's conversation too. He couldn't help but exclaim in rage, "How does she know about such an evil flower?"

Yu Dong knew Granny Miao was from the North, but no one around Second Madam Qu came from that place. Who did tell her about this flower?

“That’s not the priority right now. My lady, what should we do next?” feeling irritated too, Yu Chun interrupted Yu Dong and asked worriedly.

“I will wear the pair of shoes prepared by ourselves. But as for the gauzy flower...” Qu Moying cast a glance at the exquisite flower hairpin, “I will just wear it. Since they’ve made one set for every person, the other three hairpins look the same as this one.”

“My lady, how did they know you would pick this one among the four hairpins?” Granny Miao nodded at her while gazing at the gauzy flower.

“They are all the same, no matter which one I would pick.” Qu Moying curled up her lips. There were four sets of clothes, four gauzy flower hairpins, and four pairs of shoes in total. If her guess was right, something would probably happen to the outfits after the manager left the Qianyue House. Then they would be sent back to the embroidery workshop. That would be a perfect chance to replace them with some clean clothes without Amor’s Acacia before the mourning clothes were presented to the Old Lady.

No matter which set Qu Moying picked, they had used Amor’s Acacia on all four sets anyway. If something happened at the Crown Princess’s funeral, Yu could blame it all on Qu Moying since Qu Moying was the one who picked the clothes for herself. If the other three people’s clothes didn’t have any problem, it must be Qu Moying herself who did something on the outfits. Then, Qu Moying would become a shameless lady who wanted to seduce her cousin’s husband at her cousin’s funeral.

No one would suspect Yu.

Since Yu wanted to make a big scene at Ji Hanyue’s funeral and use this to frame Qu Moying, Qu Moying wouldn’t go easy on her this time. Anyway, she planned to reveal the truth behind the Crown Prince’s deep “love” for the Crown Princess. This so-called funeral looked more like a joke in Qu Moying’s eyes.

The Crown Prince put on his perfect-gentleman mask, showed his love and sorrow to the public to win people’s pity, and earned himself a reputation of a loyal husband. Yet, actually, he was the murderer

behind everything. Since Pei Luo'an could do anything for his own benefit, Qu Moying decided to expose the darkest side of him to the world...

"We will take all these clothes with us. Granny, I will wear the dress brought by them. Please help me smoke it with the herbs we prepared before and spray the potion on it," Qu Moying said in a flat tone.

She didn't say it clearly, but Granny Miao understood her intention immediately and exclaimed in shock, "My lady..."

"I know. It will be fine." Qu Moying shook her head as her eyes darkened. "After tomorrow, no matter what happened or will happen to Qu Qiuyan, they can't blame it on me anymore. Yu Dong, go ask around to see if anything happened to the manager of the embroidery workshop after she left here."

The information Yu Dong would get could be hard evidence to prove Yu's crimes. Since Yu dared to use Ji Hanyue's funeral to set Qu Moying up so recklessly, this was what she deserved.

"Yes, my lady," Yu Dong nodded at her and left immediately.

Soon, he came back with what Qu Moying wanted. As she guessed, after the manager of the embroidery workshop walked out of the Qianyue House, she somehow fell over and bumped into several maids who were holding some clothes. They made a big scene and were witnessed by many people.

The mourning clothes were stained because of the accident, and some gauzy flowers were even out of shape. The manager had no choice but to return to the embroidery workshop and clean the outfits first before presenting them to the Old Lady.

Since the Qianyue House was at the center of the mansion, servants would pass by this place many times a day. The accident was witnessed by people in the Qianyue House and by some other servants nearby.

"My lady, I heard one of the people who saw it is an old maid working for the Old Lady." After telling Qu Moying the whole process, Yu Dong added, "The manager of the embroidery workshop recognized her. She asked the old maid to help apologize to the Old Lady first since she would be late because of the cleaning."

Qu Moying gave him a faint smile and nodded. This was Yu's backup plan in case someone suspected her of what she would do later. But this kind of thing could be a double-edged sword since there were many different ways to explain one thing. It could be helpful for Yu, but also could be beneficial for Qu Moying...

Now, she started to look forward to attending her own funeral...

In the morning of the next day, people in the Qu's Mansion got up early to prepare for leaving. People from both the West Mansion and the East Mansion would go together with the Old Lady. Although they lived separately, they still were counted as one family. So, the Old Lady would act as the family leader and take them all with her when going out.

The Old Lady had recovered a bit recently and seemed more energetic than before. She asked Qu Moying to sit in the front carriage with her. In the following carriages sat Yu and Qu Qiuyan, Luo, Qu Xuexin, and Qu Caiyue. At the same time, First Master Qu and the two young masters followed behind on horses.

Qu Zhizhen was still staying at the Eastern Palace, working at the funeral.

Qu Zhilin, First Master Qu, was an Imperial Censor whose work was not busy at all. He was just an ordinary official and didn't show as much talent as his younger brother in his career, but he was known for his decent personality.

Following Qu Zhilin was his first and only son, Qu Minghui, who was given birth by Luo. On the other side was Qu Mingcheng, who was Yu's son and Qu Qiuyan's twin brother. Qu Mingcheng usually stayed in the outer yard and rarely went to the area where the females lived. These two young men were the First Young Master and the Second Young Master of the Qu Family, and they studied together in the Imperial College.

Occupied by his work, Qu Zhizhen usually asked his older brother to help with his son's studies. Therefore, Qu Mingcheng had his own yard in the East Mansion and spent most of his time with Qu Minghui.

Since Qu Moying came back to the mansion, she had met this sole young master of the West Mansion only a couple of times. Every time they met, they barely talked to each other.

The Old Lady noticed that Qu Moying had stayed silent since she got into the carriage. She thought her granddaughter was heartbroken because of her cousin's death. "Ying, don't be too sad about it. The Crown Princess was a good girl. She was just unlucky," the Old Lady comforted Qu Moying softly, holding her hand.

Qu Moying raised up her head. Her eyes were covered by a wide, long veil, and both her face and lips looked pale, making the Old Lady feel more sorry for her.

When the Old Lady walked down the stairs, she turned around, saw her poor granddaughter, and almost shed tears for her. In the wind, Qu Moying's loose white mourning dress fluttered, showing her slim figure and making her look even more pitiful and sorrowful. This young girl seemed so fragile as if she could be blown away by a gust of wind at any second.

"Grandmother, I'm fine," Qu Moying said softly.

"Are you feeling unwell?" asked the Old Lady.

"Grandmother, I was just thinking about my cousin. I barely met her before, but she always remembered to send me gifts and even found a doctor to treat my eyes. I was planning to say thank you to her in person, but...but..." Qu Moying lowered her head again. Although the Old Lady couldn't see her eyes, she knew they must look red right now.

"Good girl, everything will be alright. You still have me to protect you. Don't worry!" the Old Lady let out a deep sigh, held the young girl in her arms, and reassured her in a gentle voice.

"Grandmother, I'm fine," Qu Moying shook her head and said obediently in the Old Lady's arms. She was the same age as Qu Qiuyan but was much slimmer, not looking like a fourteen-year-old girl at all. Sorrow suddenly filled the Old Lady's heart as she gazed at her slender granddaughter. With tears forming in her eyes, the Old Lady muttered, "Ying, nothing bad will happen to you. Everything will be alright."

Chapter 92 A Funeral or a Performance?

The carriages stopped far away from the Eastern Palace's gate.

Qu Moying lifted the curtain and looked into the distance. Carriages decorated with white ribbons crowded the whole area, making the space look pure and solemn, like a white ocean. People were all here for the Crown Princess's funeral. The Qu's carriages were still very far from the Eastern Palace, showing how many visitors there were today.

Quietly, Qu Moying curled her lips into a sarcastic smile. These people coming and going all wore a sad look on their faces, but she didn't even know them before. They all gathered here today only to help Pei Luo'an finish his loving-husband performance.

The carriages crawled forward slowly, almost like walking. It seemed that there would be still a long time before they arrived at the Eastern Palace.

"Are these carriages from Vice Minister Qu's family?" someone suddenly asked outside.

The Old Lady froze for a second and patted Qu Moying gently to let her sit up. Then Granny Wu lifted the curtain, "Yes. It's the Old Lady, madams, and ladies from the Qu Family."

Standing outside was an old maid who should be in charge of receiving important guests. She curtsied to the Old Lady in the carriage politely and said, "Since Fourth Lady Qu is the Crown Princess's cousin, please follow me this way."

The maid was pointing at the side door of the Eastern Palace, a passway particularly opened for the royal family members. It was pretty shocking that the Qu Family shared the same privilege with the royals today. Some families that didn't know the relationship between Ji Hanyue and Qu Moying even started to ask around about the reason.

"Thank you, Granny," the Old Lady said politely.

Granny Wu got out, followed the old maid from the Eastern Palace, and led the carriages toward the side door.

Meanwhile, people waiting in the carriages behind them started to talk about gossips.

Many things had happened to the Qu Family recently, for example, the canceled engagement between Fourth Lady Qu and Young Master Yongning. It was said that Young Master Yongning rescued Second Lady Duan, who fell into the lake accidentally on the Old Lady's banquet. Because of this, Young Master Yongning was forced to marry Second Lady Duan and break off the engagement with Fourth Lady Qu, which made poor, blind Fourth Lady Qu's life even more miserable.

However, it seemed not Young Master Yongning's fault either since the Marquis Yongning's Family had kept their promise and maintained the engagement for years. Moreover, everyone knew that Second Lady Duan didn't have a good reputation. It was said that after being rescued that day, Second Lady Duan couldn't take her eyes off Young Master Yongning. Afterward, she hurriedly forced Young Master Yongning to break off his engagement and marry her. No matter how people looked at the situation, she seemed to be the most suspicious one.

But new rumors spread out yesterday that after breaking off his engagement, Young Master Yongning immediately married a concubine, who was Second Madam Qu's niece. They said she hooked up with Young Master Yongning long ago and even tried to frame poor Fourth Lady Qu in the Dabei Temple out of jealousy.

If the rumors were true, Young Master Yongning might be a sophisticated person, not as righteous as he looked.

Since the incident in the Dabei Temple happened yesterday, not many people knew about it, and the rumors were just spread in a small range. However, many carriages were stuck in the middle of the road right now. Seeing the Qu's carriages go to the side door because of Fourth Lady Qu, people's curiosity arose. Suddenly, everyone started to talk about gossips related to Fourth Lady Qu.

Some people even went into other acquainted families' carriages to have a chat to kill time. Of course, they talked about Fourth Lady Qu the most.

Anyway, Fourth Lady Qu was the most pitiful one in people's eyes. After her mother died, her stepmother Yu never treated her well and even caused her an eye problem. Her father didn't fulfill his responsibility as a father either, leaving his wife's daughter alone in a village while spoiling a concubine's daughter and son.

Her ex-fiance Young Master Yongning seemed like a righteous young man, but he turned out to hook up with Yu's niece long ago. He claimed he was forced to break off his engagement with Fourth Lady Qu, but maybe he was the one who designed it to protect his reputation. In the end, Fourth Lady Qu, a poor, weak girl, was pushed into such a helpless situation.

People all started to suspect Young Master Yongning's true colors.

This was how rumors worked – the more people talked about them, the more authentic they sounded. While everyone was stuck in the traffic jam, waiting for entering the Eastern Palace, rumors spread quickly. Soon, most people present knew about what happened in the Dabei Temple and in front of the Qu's Mansion's gate. Consequently, their opinions on Young Master Yongning, who used to have a good reputation, were totally changed.

Among them were many madams who were experienced in reading people. After they took a second thought, they remembered many details that showed Young Master Yongning's dissatisfaction toward his initial engagement.

Although he never spoke ill of Fourth Lady Qu, he never complimented her either. Moreover, when people mentioned Fourth Lady Qu in front of him, he even put on a disdainful look and tried to talk about her as little as possible. After his engagement with Fourth Lady Qu was broken off, he immediately married a concubine and got engaged with another woman. His life couldn't be better, while Fourth Lady Qu's life became even more miserable because of him.

From this perspective, Young Master Yongning seemed pretty shameless.

The gossips finally spread to a plain-looking carriage among all the luxury ones. After a maid told Marchioness Yongning what she heard outside, Marchioness Yongning started to tremble in rage. She threw a hard slap on Yu Qingmeng's face and scolded her in a low voice, "Bitch! My son's name is ruined all because of you."

"M-Mother..." Slapped on the face all of a sudden, Yu Qingmeng's eyes turned red because of aggrievance. "It was my aunt. I have nothing to do with it. They must mistake it."

For avoiding trouble, she even didn't show up that day.

"If you have nothing to do with it, why would they mention you and my son? Bitch, it's all your fault that my son's name is ruined." Marchioness Yongning started to hate herself for being too soft-hearted and allowing her son to marry Yu Qingmeng before. If they didn't get married, she would have every reason to argue back for her son. However, she couldn't do anything about the rumors right now.

Everything started from Yu Qingmeng. How could Marchioness Yongning not be annoyed by it?

Her son was her biggest hope and pride. Compared to her useless, flirtatious husband, Xu Lipeng was her whole life.

"Mother..." Yu Qingmeng cried.

"A bitch like you is not qualified to call me mother," Marchioness Yongning sneered.

"M-Madam..." Feeling aggrieved, Yu Qingmeng changed her address quickly while sobbing, "Madam, I really have nothing to do with it. All I know is my aunt wants to get rid of Qu Moying. I don't know anything else about it."

"Your aunt? Do you still believe your aunt is a good person? If it weren't for your dear aunt, my son wouldn't be involved in this nonsense. How can you be so stupid? Haven't you realized that you were used by other people?" Marchioness Yongning scolded her sternly. The more she looked at Yu Qingmeng, the more annoyed she felt.

Yu Qingmeng looked a bit like Yu and had been close with Yu. Looking at her face, Marchioness Yongning couldn't be angrier. How dare Yu use Xu Lipeng to help her daughter get rid of trouble?! Speaking of which, her daughter didn't look like a decent lady at all, so ambitious to become Lord Jing's wife. In Marchioness Yongning's opinion, Qu Qiuyan was only qualified to be a concubine.

Yu was a concubine, same as her niece and her daughter, raised up by her. No wonder they were in the same family. Marchioness Yongning would never forgive Yu for targeting her family. If she had a chance, she would not go easy on that shameless woman.

Meanwhile, Yu had no idea of Marchioness Yongning's growing hatred toward her. She got out of the carriage holding Qu Qiuyan's hand and hurriedly walked to the Old Lady to help her.

"Madams, ladies, please follow me." The guiding maid said respectfully, "Her Royal Highness has been waiting for you inside after hearing Fourth Lady Qu's arrival."

"We are very sorry for bothering Her Royal Highness," Yu said hurriedly.

"Fourth Lady Qu is the Crown Princess's cousin from her mother's family, while Her Royal Highness was the Crown Princess's cousin from her father's family. Technically, Fourth Lady Qu is also Her Royal Highness's cousin. Thus, Her Royal Highness respects Fourth Lady Qu's family as her own family. For Her Royal Highness, waiting for you is obeying the etiquette."

The maid from the Eastern Palace surely knew how to do pretty talks. With a few words, she clarified their relationships and even complimented the madams from the Qu Family.

As they talked, another carriage stopped behind them. A dignified woman in her thirties got out from it, surrounded by many servants. She was a princess. The Old Lady hurriedly asked her family to step aside and make room for her. Only after the noblewoman left, they dared to follow the old maid and walk inside.

Qu Moying walked next to the Old Lady with her head lowered, finding the situation very ironic.

As usual, Ji Youran was still good at making a show for her own benefit.

There was nothing much she could do about Ji Hanyue's father's family since Ji Hanyue's father and Ji Youran's father were brothers. But Ji Hanyue's mother's family was a different story. The Yue Family lived in the South, and the only two people in the capital who were related to Ji Hanyue were Yue Wenhan and Qu Moying. However, Yue Wenhan was a male, so it was not appropriate for Ji Youran to

meet him directly. Therefore, Qu Moying, the Crown Princess's poor cousin, became the trump card in Ji Youran's hand to show Ji Youran's family love and kindness.

Treating Qu Moying well was a performance Ji Youran made to tell people how close she was with Ji Hanyue. After Ji Hanyue passed away, Ji Hanyue would naturally put her love for her cousin on Qu Moying.

Ji Youran and Pei Luo'an were truly meant to be a couple, both malicious, cruel, and good at acting.

Quietly, Qu Moying curled up her lips and adjusted her sleeves as her heart was filled with bloodthirsty rage. Good. So many people wanted to use her to achieve their own goals. She couldn't wait to see what kind of performance they would make today.

Except for Yu and Ji Youran, Qu Moying didn't forget another person who could have an important role in this – Marchioness Yongning. Knowing Marchioness Yongning's personality, Qu Moying didn't think she would just sit tight after Yu ruined her son's reputation. If anything bad happened to Yu, Marchioness Yongning would definitely be the first to make it even worse for her, which would be fantastic for Qu Moying.

Qu Moying took a deep breath and gazed at the white, solemn scene in front of her coldly. Who would've known that under the peace and sadness hid everyone's dirty secret and scheme? These malicious people were like clowns, and their fake smiles made her disgusted. Including Pei Luo'an, each of them was so pretentious and hypocritical...

As the maid said, Ji Youran had been waiting inside. Seeing the people from the Qu Family, she walked up to them with her eyes turning red. When the Old Lady was about to curtsy to her, Ji Youran hurriedly held her hand and stopped her, saying she was just a youngster and the Old Lady shouldn't bow to her. But facing Yu and Luo, she still acted as Princess Ji, whose status was high above them. After Yu and Luo curtsied to her, she slightly waved her hand at them to let them stand up.

Then she saw Qu Moying, who was wearing a white veil on her face. Ji Youran rushed over, wrapped her arms around Qu Moying, and started to wail, "Moying, we lost our cousin forever!"

Chapter 93 Mourn for Herself

Hearing Ji Youran's words, even the Old Lady's eyes turned red.

Crying in grief, Ji Youran held Qu Moying's slender body tightly in her arms, making Qu Moying start to feel sad with her. Qu Moying wiped the tears on Ji Youran's face with her sleeve and comforted her, "Your Royal Highness, don't be too sad. If the Crown Princess in the underworld knows you are heartbroken because of her death, she will feel worse."

She was indeed feeling bad, for failing in the attempt to jump off the Linyuan Pavilion together with Ji Youran.

The rough cloth on Qu Moying's sleeve brushed Ji Youran's soft skin and eyes, and she particularly rubbed against Ji Youran's wound near her temple. Feeling the sting, Ji Youran couldn't continue her acting anymore. She pushed Qu Moying away, wiped her eyes with her own hanky as her disdain toward Qu Moying was growing.

What a village girl! Qu Moying didn't even prepare a hanky before attending a funeral. Thinking about Qu Moying's dirty and rough sleeve brushing her face, Ji Youran felt so disgusted that she didn't even want to continue acting.

Ji Youran wondered what kind of cloth was Qu Moying's funeral dress made of since it felt unbelievably rough. Compared to hers that was made of the best and the most comfortable sackcloth, Qu Moying's felt like a piece of trash. If it weren't for those princesses, lords' wives, and infants, Ji Youran would never lower herself to hold Qu Moying and cry with her.

The wound near her temple, left by Ji Hanyue when she jumped off the Linyuan Pavilion, had recovered gradually. Still, it would take some time for the scar to disappear. That was why she left some hair lying in front of her ear to cover the wound. Ji Youran didn't expect Qu Moying to brush it with her rough sleeve, and after her touch, Ji Youran's wound started to ache a little bit.

Maybe Qu Moying's careless behavior made her wound open up again! As Ji Youran thought about it, she started to feel more and more displeased.

"Madam, Moying, please follow me." Suppressing the annoyance, Ji Youran put on a gentle look and led them inside. She even went to hold the Old Lady's arm while Qu Moying did the same thing as if they were really two sisters.

Ji Youran had been acting humbly and left the main seat in the center for the Old Lady. However, knowing her identity, the Old Lady was aware that she was not qualified enough to sit in the main seat in front of Princess Ji. She ended up choosing a standard one on the side, which was more appropriate.

Ji Youran had no other choice but to sit down on the main seat first to mingle with the guests while paying extra attention to Old Lady Qu, clearly showing her preference.

Princess Ji's behavior drew all the noble madams and ladies' attention to the Qu Family. Naturally, their eyes fell on Fourth Lady Qu, who had already been a hot topic in the capital, Yu, and Yu's daughter, Third Lady Qu.

The complacent feeling of being favored by Princess Ji made Yu's guard down. She started to chat with some madams she was acquainted with, leaving her daughter aside.

A maid approached them to refill the tea for some ladies sitting behind Yu.

As she came between Qu Qiuyan and Qu Moying and started to pour the tea for Qu Moying, someone suddenly bumped into her, making her splash the tea on the table.

Qu Moying hurriedly stood up and almost fell over. The noise caught the Old Lady and Yu's attention, and they both turned around to see what was going on.

"Ying, what happened?" the Old Lady asked Qu Moying worriedly.

"Moying, did you get burned?" Yu sounded even more concerned.

"I'm alright." Qu Moying hurriedly looked down to check her clothes. Luckily, she reacted quickly, and only a small part of her dress's edge was stained by the tea.

But the mark still looked quite apparent since she was wearing a rough, white dress.

Ji Youran also noticed the little chaos caused. After knowing the situation, she sent someone over to take Qu Moying to get changed.

"It's alright. It's just a little part of my clothes," Qu Moying rejected, shaking her head.

"Just go. Your sister will go with you together to accompany you," said Yu amiably. She even let Qu Qiuyan go together with Qu Moying as if Qu Moying was her real daughter.

The Old Lady nodded too. She was worried about Qu Moying going alone, so she planned to ask Qu Xuexin to go with her. However, since Yu proposed it first, she had to agree with her no matter how much she disliked Yu. Otherwise, it would make their family lose face in public.

After all, Yu was the Old Lady's second son's wife, representing the Qu Family.

The Old Lady nodded and said, "Yan, Ying needs to get changed. Go with her together."

"Moying, let's go then," said Qu Qiuyan while she stood up and tried to hold Qu Moying's hand intimately. She treated Qu Moying especially friendly today, but Qu Moying, solitary as usual, avoided her touch immediately.

"Sorry for the bothering, Third Sister," Qu Moying said in a low voice.

Qu Qiuyan's hand hung in the air awkwardly for a second. Luckily, she reacted quickly and brushed her dress with her hand. Then she nodded, "It's okay. Let's go."

Following a maid, they left the living room one after another and headed to a room prepared for the guests.

There were extra mourning clothes in the guest room already. Compared to those made by the Qu Family, these clothes were made of better quality materials and had an elegant design, especially the exquisite fringes. They looked simple but totally different than the ones made by the Qu Family.

"I don't think I need to change my clothes anymore," Qu Moying said hesitantly.

"Fourth Lady Qu, you don't like them?" the maid who led them here asked in confusion.

Qu Moying shook her head, "I'm here to mourn for my cousin's death, not for caring about what I wear. The mourning dress made by our family represents our grieve. Since the tea stains have dried already, there's no need for me to get changed anymore."

Hearing her words, Qu Qiuyan looked around and added, "We are grateful for Her Royal Highness' kindness. Since the stains on my sister's clothes have dried, she can just keep wearing them. Our family made the clothes by ourselves, and they represent our lament for the Crown Princess."

Qu Qiuyan didn't care about the formality at all, but she noticed some princesses and lords' wives kept peeking at her, probably because of Lord Jing. If so, the more sorrow the Qu Family showed here, the better. Since Qu Moying was also a member of the Qu Family, it would be inappropriate if she wore a better dress than others.

Her mother told her that something would happen to Qu Moying later and asked her to sit tight and watch. But no matter what would happen later, it was better to show as much grieve as possible.

That was why Qu Qiuyan helped Qu Moying reject Princess Ji's maid.

The maid of the Eastern Palace was ordered by Ji Youran to help Qu Moying get changed. After being rejected, she didn't know what to do but went back to report it to Ji Youran.

"Third Sister, should we tell Grandmother about it?" Qu Moying looked at Qu Qiuyan and asked.

Qu Qiuyan didn't think it was a big deal that was worth telling the Old Lady initially. But since the maid of the Eastern Palace went to report it to Princess Ji, she'd better tell her grandmother and mother too. So, Qu Qiuyan sent her maid Qing Ju back, who had been following her.

After the two people left, the guest room fell into silence. Yu Dong walked behind Qu Qiuyan, trying to fetch something, but he accidentally bumped into her. While he kept apologizing to Qu Qiuyan, he

swiftly pulled out the gauzy flower hairpin on Qu Qiuyan's head and replaced it with the one in his sleeve.

Yu Dong moved so fast that Qu Qiuyan only felt the bump and the abrupt pain from some of her hair being pulled. If they were not in the Eastern Palace, she would give a slap in Yu Dong's face immediately. But right now, she had no choice but to control her temper. She threw a stern glare at Yu Dong without saying anything.

The two maids came back soon. Both Princess Ji and the Old Lady said Qu Moying didn't need to get changed if unnecessary.

After they returned, the mourning ceremony had started. The Qu Family should be far back in the line. However, Ji Youran changed the order, saying that the Qu Family should go first since they were closely related to the Crown Princess. Meanwhile, she wanted Qu Moying to stay with the coffin for a period as the Crown Princess's cousin.

It was soon the Qu Family's turn. Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan both held the Old Lady's one arm and walked up with her, followed by all the other people from their family, including Qu Zhilin, Qu Zhizhen, and the Old Lady's two grandsons. After they finished the mourning, Qu Moying stayed inside with Qu Qiuyan accompanying her.

From Ji Hanyue's perspective, it was appropriate that she asked Qu Moying to stay with the coffin since Qu Moying was the only relative younger than her. As for Qu Qiuyan, she was asked to accompany Qu Moying by the Old Lady and Yu to show the close relationship between the Crown Princess and the Qu Family.

Everyone knew that Ji Hanyue's younger sister died a long time ago, and they didn't hold a funeral for not affecting the Crown Prince's wedding.

Since then, the only person whose identity was suitable to stay with the coffin could be Qu Moying.

Naturally, the responsibility fell on Qu Moying's shoulder.

At the same time, Yue Wenhan, as the Crown Princess's cousin, was helping the Crown Prince receive the guests.

Before Yue Wenhan left the living room, he found a chance to talk to Qu Moying. He told her that the Ji Family would arrive soon, and their representatives were Old Lady Ji and Ji Youran's mother, Xiao.

Worried about Qu Moying, Yue Wenhan promised her that he would lead the Ji Family here by himself and check on her again in passing.

Knowing Yue Wenhan's concern about her, Qu Moying nodded.

In front of the altar, Qu Moying grabbed some pieces of paper money and threw them into the fire. Looking at the huge coffin placed in the center, she only felt sarcasm at the moment.

The funeral looked so decent and appropriate, but actually, there was probably nothing inside the coffin.

She died in the lake under the Linyuan Pavilion in her past life. She doubted Pei Luo'an could find her dead body, and neither would he try to. Ironically, everyone believed that she passed away because of sickness.

To the outsiders, the Crown prince claimed that the Crown Princess had been severely sick since she married into the Eastern Palace. To their families and relatives, his excuse was that she was heavily injured for saving his life. Either way, the Crown Princess would die soon, and now, he chose the best timing to announce her death. Thinking about it, Qu Moying's lips curled into a sullen smile, and her expression even looked creepier in front of the altar.

When Pei Yuanjun entered, he saw Qu Moying grab some paper money, throw it in the fire, and stare at the coffin blankly with a stern look. He raised his brow and then cast another glance at Qu Qiuyan kneeling next to Qu Moying. The comparison made his eyes darken. Then he asked the Crown Prince, who accompanied him inside, in a lazy tone, "Who are these two? Why are they staying with the Crown Princess's coffin?"

The Crown Prince turned to look at Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan. Since Ji Youran had introduced them to the Crown Prince, he already knew their identities. He answered with a hoarse voice, "These two ladies are the Crown Princess's cousins, and they are helping guard the coffin for a period. I'm sure...their companionship can help make the Crown Princess rest in peace."

Chapter 94 Charming, Coquettish Qu Qiuyan

"Why will the Crown Princess rest in peace?" Pei Yuanjun raised his brow and asked. It seemed that he didn't understand Pei Luo'an's words.

Although Pei Yuanjun's clothes were pure white, they still had exquisite embroidery patterns, obviously not made for a funeral. He looked more elegant than usual in white but weird since even the Crown Prince was wearing rough clothes. However, no one dared to blame Pei Yuanjun for not obeying the etiquette.

Moreover, even the Crown Prince couldn't expect more from Pei Yuanjun. He thought Lord Yun had already shown enough respect for him and the dead Crown Princess by wearing white clothes.

Pei Yuanjun was his uncle who had a dignified identity and was favored by the emperor. Pei Luo'an didn't dare to challenge him on such a small matter.

Hearing his words, the Crown Prince froze for a second and then explained to him in embarrassment, "When the Crown Princess was still alive, she felt sad every time she mentioned Fourth Lady Qu, thinking Fourth Lady Qu was a poor girl. Although the Crown Princess passed away, I will treat Fourth Lady Qu as my own cousin and take care of the Qu Family in the name of the Crown Princess."

Pei Yuanjun's eyes darkened. His sullen glance fell on Qu Moying as he suddenly chuckled, "So, you will treat her in the same way as to First Lady Ji?"

Pei Luo'an's expression changed immediately as a trace of irritation showed up in his eyes. But he held it back in the next second and said, "Uncle, stop teasing me. Princess Ji, of course, is different than Fourth Lady Qu..."

“How? Because Princess Ji is prettier, or because you are more into Princess Ji?” Pei Yuanjun asked jokingly.

His evil sarcasm almost made Pei Luo’an lose his sanity. Pei Luo’an had to gnash his teeth and clench his fists to suppress the burning anger in his chest. He knew Pei Yuanjun dared to laugh at the Crown Prince, the future heir of the throne, only because of the military power he had.

Pei Luo’an thought he must win back the military power in the future. Someday, he would show this evil person what the rules were and who was the real boss.

“Uncle, please choose your word wisely in front of the Crown Princess’s coffin,” Pei Luo’an lowered his head and said.

“In front of the Crown Princess’s coffin? Oops, I almost forgot how the Crown Princess passed away. She was indeed a poor woman who loved you so much but ended up like this. On the opposite, I can tell that Princess Ji has been doing pretty well, caring for the Crown Princess for you. After the Crown Princess died, she can finally become the only princess in the Eastern Palace.”

Hearing Pei Yuanjun’s words, Pei Luo’an almost lost his temper again. But seeing Pei Yuanjun take some incense sticks from a young eunuch and put it on the altar in person, he dropped his jaw in shock.

Knowing Pei Yuanjun’s arrogant personality, Pei Luo’an only expected him to go through the formality and let his servant finish the mourning session. He was so surprised to see Pei Yuanjun doing it by himself to show respect for Ji Hanyue.

After putting the incense sticks in the burner, Pei Yuanjun stepped back, cast a glance at the coffin in the center, and narrowed his eyes. “The Crown Princess... What a pity!”

Then he swiftly brushed his sleeves and turned around to leave. When he walked to the door, he suddenly turned back and said to Pei Luo’an, who was following behind him, “Your Royal Highness, you must’ve been exhausted. You don’t need to mingle with the guests outside. Stay here with the Crown Princess and leave everything to me! I will help you make all the arrangements. Just let Vice Minister Yue help me with it.”

“Uncle, thank you,” Pei Luo’an said while holding a eunuch’s arm to steady himself. His face looked pale and haggard as if he would collapse at any second because of grief. “She is dead. This is the only thing I can do for her...”

Pei Luo’an’s eyes became red, and he turned his head aside while wiping his tears. The mourning music in the back made everything look even more sorrowful.

While everyone else was showing their sadness, Qu Moying didn’t feel grieved at all. Her face and even her lips looked as pale as the Crown Prince’s as her whole body was trembling. With her head lowered, no one could see the icy smile on her face.

Pei Luo’an was acting truly like a loving husband. If she weren’t the one who went through it, she would believe him herself.

This malicious couple took her life and cruelly murdered her father and younger sister. Right now, they even used her funeral to build a good reputation for themselves.

Qu Moying gnashed her teeth. This body she had was too weak, but she could still hold it a bit longer. She was a person who should’ve been dead since long ago but was reborn by accident. She didn’t mind waiting and tolerating pain at all as long as she could achieve her goal.

Qu Qiuyan didn’t notice Qu Moying was trembling abnormally since she literally couldn’t take her eyes off Lord Jing, who entered the room together with the Crown Prince and Pei Yuanjun. Lord Jing cast a glance at Qu Qiuyan and immediately was attracted by her appearance. The annoyance he had since yesterday even became less.

Qu Qiuyan looked gorgeous today. Lord Jing’s attention was immediately caught by her fair skin, watery eyes, and red, soft lips. Feeling Lord Jing’s gaze, she blushed at once, looking even more coquettish and charming. Pleased by her reaction and her appearance, Lord Jing stared at her affectionately.

He almost forgot how angry he felt yesterday. After all, he heard Qu Qiuyan was framed by Yu’s niece later.

The rough clothes outstood Qu Qiuyan's beauty more than usual. Qu Qiuyan was always a beautiful woman, but her face looked particularly attractive and alluring at this moment, giving Pei Yusheng an impulse that he never had when he saw her before. Right now, he literally couldn't take his eyes off her.

After their eyes met, he gave Qu Qiuyan a gentle smile. They didn't say anything to each other, but their minds were connected at this second.

Seeing Lord Jing's affectionate smile, Qu Qiuyan's face turned redder as she looked even more coquettish. She lowered her head, trying to hide the grin on her face. She knew Lord Jing still liked her the most, and Liu Jingyu stood no chance to compete with her.

"Your Royal Highness, have some rest here first. I'm leaving," ignoring Pei Luo'an's pretentious acting, Pei Yuanjun said impatiently and strode away.

Pei Luo'an wanted to follow him out, but he was indeed exhausted from this loving-husband performance. Reluctantly, he looked at Lord Jing, "Yusheng, help me take care of our uncle."

"Yes," Lord Jing had to agree since he had no excuse to stay. He glanced at Qu Qiuyan again and turned around to leave.

Yue Wenhan looked at the Crown Prince, bowed to him, and followed Lord Jing out.

Without Pei Yuanjun's presence, Pei Luo'an didn't need to keep up with his disguise anymore. In a weak voice, he said to the young eunuch who was holding his arm, "Help me sit down."

The eunuch hurriedly seated him on a chair opposite to Qu Moying and Qu Qiuyan. As the Crown Prince, whose status was much higher than the Crown Princess, he had already shown enough love for the Crown Princess by staying with her coffin.

During this period, many families had come to mourn for the Crown Princess. In a short break, Qu Moying walked outside with Yu Dong's help for some fresh air. When she got to the door and saw Yue Wenhan rushing over, she stopped to talk to him. But before she opened her mouth, she suddenly lost consciousness and fell to the ground. Startled, Yu Dong hurriedly steadied her falling body.

Yue Wenhan hurriedly walked to them but didn't reach out to help her up. Although they were cousins, the etiquette still didn't allow Yue Wenhan to touch her since he was a male. Noticing Qu Moying's pale face, he asked in worry, "What's wrong?"

"I...I don't know what's going on. The Fourth Lady has been feeling unwell and trembling for a while. I thought she was just exhausted, so I helped her walk out to have some fresh air. I don't know why she...she suddenly..." Flustered and worried, Yu Dong started to cry with Qu Moying in his arms.

"Take your master to the private room aside," Yue Wenhan said. He had helped the Crown Prince with the funeral and knew an Imperial Doctor was waiting inside that private room. The Crown Prince had ordered the doctor to stand by there since the funeral started, knowing his own health conditions.

Two maids of the Eastern Palace came to help Yu Dong, who was in a panic, to move Qu Moying away. Suddenly, one of them started to scream, seeing the red and swollen skin on Qu Moying's wrist that hung out of her sleeve. Startled by what she saw, she almost dropped Qu Moying on the ground.

Yu Dong hurriedly went up to steady Qu Moying's body and gave a stern glare at the maid.

"The...the skin on her hand is...is so swollen and red..." in shock, the flustered maid explained.

"Move her to the room, quickly," Yue Wenhan said hurriedly as the expression on his face changed. He saw Qu Moying's hand just now too.

Even the Crown Prince noticed the chaos and sent a servant over to check on Qu Moying since meeting a lady in private was inappropriate for him.

Qu Qiuyan wanted to get up and take a look at Qu Moying, but she soon dropped the idea. Since her mother told her to sit tight and watch when something happened to Qu Moying, all she needed to do was pretend she didn't know anything.

No matter what happened to Qu Moying, she had nothing to do with it. Before someone called her over, she wouldn't get up. She didn't care if Qu Moying died or did something to shame herself.

After Pei Luo'an sat in front of the altar for a while, he felt a bit better than before. Then his eyes fell on Qu Qiuyan, who was still kneeling on the ground as his brows twisted into a frown. What a selfish woman Third Lady Qu was! How come she still knelt here after knowing something bad happened to her own younger sister?

After standing up and steadying himself, Pei Luo'an walked to Qu Qiuyan and softly called her, "Third Lady Qu!"

Since Third Lady Qu didn't have a grasp of the situation, he had to remind her. Qu Moying was an essential tool for him to show people his deep love for Ji Hanyue right now, and he couldn't allow anything terrible to happen to her.

While kneeling on the ground, Qu Qiuyan had peeked at the Crown Prince many times. She had never been this close to him before. She noticed that the Crown Prince looked very gentle and was even touched by his affectionate glances at the coffin. Although the Crown Prince had a weaker body than Pei Yusheng, he had his own unique aura of tenderness, which was also very attractive.

Having the Crown Prince's deep love, the Crown Princess must've died happily!

If the Crown Prince could treat her like this, would she fall in love with him too? After the Crown Princess's death, the Crown Prince had to marry another woman. Did that mean she could stand a chance too? The impulsive thought made Qu Qiuyan more and more excited as she started to feel the gentle and affectionate Crown Prince was also a good choice for her.

If she married Lord Jing, she would be Madam Jing. But if she chose the Crown Prince, she would be the future empress. From this perspective, Lord Jing was not even comparable with the Crown Prince.

Lost in her wild thoughts, Qu Qiuyan suddenly heard someone calling her softly. She hurriedly looked up and saw the Crown Prince. As her eyes became even more watery and charming, she talked to him in a coquettish voice, "Your Royal Highness..."

Chapter 95 A Chance Given by Princess Changyu

Qu Qiuyan looked extremely alluring inside this pure white altar room.

Her watery eyes showed the charm that only women had, matching well with her blushing cheeks and soft, red lips. Even her coquettish voice sounded as smooth as silk. Once she called him, Pei Luo'an was distracted by her alluring expression and froze on his spot. Seeing her face, he totally forgot his real intention – reminding her to go accompany Qu Moying.

Pei Luo'an had met many beautiful women, but Qu Qiuyan's coquettish appearance was such a conflict against the solemn, plain environment, which gave him a shock.

"Your Royal Highness?" seeing the Crown Prince staring at her blankly, Qu Qiuyan blushed more and called him coquettishly again with her face red as a rose.

"Are you...the Third Lady of the Qu Family?" Pei Luo'an avoided her gaze subconsciously and asked.

"Yes, my father is the Vice Minister of Works," Qu Qiuyan answered him in a soft voice.

"Your Royal Highness, Your Royal Highness... I...I have...some...some bad news..." A maid rushed inside, and the expression on her face changed immediately as she saw the Crown Prince and Qu Qiuyan. She stepped back hurriedly and stared at them in shock.

In her eyes, the Crown Prince was gazing at Qu Qiuyan affectionately while the latter almost leaned on him with a shy look on her face. Their bodies were abnormally close to each other's, and the atmosphere was subtly strange without any people around.

The maid walking in worked for Ji Youran. After she had a clear look at them, she ran away at once, as quickly as she came inside.

Even though Pei Luo'an wanted to stop her, he didn't have time to do so. He frowned and was about to say something when Pei Yusheng took Princess Changyu and her family inside. The group of people noticed the weird position of Pei Luo'an and Qu Qiuyan immediately.

For a moment, the room fell into dead silence. People all looked at each other, not knowing what to say.

Pei Yusheng pulled a long face. Many people knew his relationship with Qu Qiuyan, but what did Pei Luo'an mean by doing this?

Princess Changyu was the emperor's younger sister, the former emperor's fifth child. Born as a royal, she was a brilliant woman and immediately grasped the situation. She stepped forward and curtsied to the Crown Prince as if she didn't notice the strange atmosphere inside at all.

"Your Royal Highness, is the paper money running out?"

One of Qu Qiuyan and Qu Moying's duties was burning the paper money while kneeling next to the fire basin. Qu Moying almost used all the paper money in her pile while Qu Qiuyan, lost in her own thoughts, didn't pay much attention to it. There was still a big pile of paper money next to her, clearly showing that she didn't do her job well.

The paper money was just an excuse that Princess Changyu came up with to give the Crown Prince a chance to explain himself. People all knew these two brothers, the Crown Prince and Lord Jing, were competing against each other for the throne. Still, it was inappropriate that they started an argument in public, especially in this altar room in front of Princess Changyu.

If it really happened, the emperor might even blame it on her.

So, she hurriedly gave the Crown Prince an excuse to get out of trouble.

"Fourth Lady Qu suddenly passed out, so I want to ask Third Lady Qu to go check on her," said Pei Luo'an as he regained the usual look on his face and strolled toward his chair.

"Fourth Lady Qu passed out? How's she right now?" Princess Changyu cast a sarcastic glance at Qu Qiuyan, whose face was red as a rose. Clearly, Qu Qiuyan wanted to hook up with the Crown Prince. Born in the imperial family, Princess Changyu had seen many maids working in the palace trying to seduce her father or brothers. Right now, Qu Qiuyan had the exact same look as those shameless maids.

Showing a shy and coquettish face, all these women wanted to climb up and gain more power by seducing the royal males.

However, what Qu Qiuyan did was even more disgusting. She was so shameless that she tried to hook up with the Crown Prince in the Crown Princess's altar room when her own sister was in a coma. Moreover, she was involved with Lord Jing too.

Princess Changyu knew Qu Qiuyan because of the rumors about Lord Jing. Otherwise, she wouldn't pay any attention to an ordinary lady like Qu Qiuyan.

Princess Changyu asked Qu Qiuyan, but Qu Qiuyan didn't care about Qu Moying, nor did she ever ask about Qu Moying's situation. Questioned by Princess Changyu, Qu Qiuyan panicked immediately. She lowered her head and said, "Your...Your Royal Highness, I have stayed in the altar room this whole time and haven't got time to check on my younger sister."

"Third Lady Qu, you spend all your time here accompanying the Crown Prince and don't even have time to ask about your own sister. That's very respectable!" Princess Changyu chuckled. The disdain and sarcasm in her tone pulled Qu Qiuyan back to reality immediately. Qu Qiuyan quickly looked up and explained with tears in her eyes, "Your Royal Highness, it was not that I didn't want to go. I didn't leave because I hadn't heard any news from her..."

"So you don't need to check on your sister since you haven't heard any news about her. I see. Nothing is more important than the Crown Princess!" as Princess Changyu walked further in, she said to Qu Qiuyan in a flat tone.

The maid following her hurriedly passed her some incense sticks. Princess Changyu held them respectfully in her hands, bowed to the altar with her husband, Marquis Jingyang, and her children, and put them on the altar.

"Your Royal Highness, I..." Qu Qiuyan was so anxious that she almost cried out. Princess Changyu's words were very sharp. It sounded like she was talking about both the Crown Princess's coffin lying in the middle of the room and the position of the Crown Princess.

"Silence! Watch your behavior in the Crown Princess's altar room!" after Princess Changyu put the incense sticks into the burner, she scolded Qu Qiuyan sternly. Then she turned around and looked at the Crown Prince, "Your Royal Highness, the Third Lady of the Qu Family made noise in the Crown Princess's altar room out of no reason. Shouldn't you ask her to leave as a punishment?"

Hearing about the punishment, Qu Qiuyan cried quietly in fear. Then she turned around and stared at Pei Luo'an pitifully. Seeing her reaction, Pei Yusheng's eyes darkened as he exuded an aura of anger.

"Let her leave!" Pei Luo'an rubbed the middle part between his brows and said in annoyance.

He was totally innocent and had no interest in Qu Qiuyan at all. He was just stunned by her appearance and expression that looked totally out of place in the altar room. He admitted that he was amazed for a moment, but only for a moment.

Qu Qiuyan was a pretty woman, but the Crown Prince had seen many beautiful women. The deceased Crown Princess was much more stunning than Qu Qiuyan, and even Ji Youran was as pretty as Qu Qiuyan. Moreover, he knew Pei Yusheng wanted to marry Qu Qiuyan. His ego as the Crown Prince wouldn't allow him to compete against Pei Yusheng for a mere woman.

Knowing Princess Changyu was giving him a chance to explain that he had nothing to do with Qu Qiuyan, Pei Luo'an naturally would make the most of her words.

"Alright. Someone! Come to drive Third Lady Qu away. Let her kneel outside of the yard and have some fresh air to clear her thoughts," hearing the Crown Prince's words, Princess Changyu immediately gave her order in a cold voice.

Two old maids showed up at once, held Qu Qiuyan's arms, and started to pull her toward outside.

"Your Royal Highness, Your Royal Highness..." In fear, Qu Qiuyan struggled hard, staring pitifully at Pei Luo'an with tears in her eyes. Many people attended the funeral today. If they saw her kneeling outside, she could never show up in public again.

She only thought her best bet was to beg the Crown Prince since he was the owner of the Eastern Palace and the most dignified and powerful person present. Unfortunately, she didn't realize that her behavior even confirmed her secret relationship with the Crown Prince. In Lord Jing's eyes, she was literally showing the affection between her and the Crown Prince in front of him.

Lord Jing's face turned even paler in rage. He couldn't believe Qu Qiuyan was such a shameless woman, who implied her feelings for him many times in front of him and tried to seduce Pei Luo'an in the Crown Princess's altar room behind his back. Did she really think he was blind?

After Old Lady Qu's birthday banquet, everyone knew that Qu Qiuyan would marry Lord Jing. Right now, her behavior was nothing different than cheating on him in public. Although only Princess Changyu and her family witnessed it, Lord Jing still felt he had lost his face.

Lord Jing walked up to Qu Qiuyan and kicked at her hard all of a sudden.

Seeing Pei Yusheng walking over, Qu Qiuyan thought he was going to save her. Thrilled, she wailed, "Your Royal Highness, please help me. Your Royal Highness..."

At the next second, a sharp pain came from her chest. After the kick, she threw out blood and lost consciousness immediately.

No one expected Pei Yusheng to kick a woman in public. The two old maids fell to the ground together with Qu Qiuyan. For a moment, the whole room was silent.

"Alright. Since then, take Third Lady Qu to a doctor. How come the ladies from the Qu Family are so weak, and both passed out here?" Princess Changyu reacted quickly as an explicable expression showed up on her face.

Seeing Pei Yusheng's reaction, Princess Changyu realized she had made an inappropriate decision. Since everyone knew the relationship between Qu Qiuyan and Pei Yusheng, if Qu Qiuyan was pulled outside and ordered to kneel in public, it would be a big shame on Pei Yusheng too. Princess Changyu only tried to stop the two brothers from arguing and teach this shameless lady a good lesson. Yet, she forgot to consider Pei Yusheng's ego.

It was her fault for making the scene even worse, so she had to calm it down quickly.

The Crown Prince was an important character, but Lord Jing couldn't be underestimated either. Even the empress had to show some respect for Lord Jing's mother, Noble Consort He, who had occupied the emperor's heart for so many years.

Princess Changyu's words pulled Pei Luo'an back to reality. He rubbed his forehead, feeling more and more annoyed. "Someone, take Third Lady Qu to Fourth Lady Qu's room and let the doctor treat them together."

Fortunately, there was no outsider here, and only Princess Changyu and her family saw it. Otherwise, if rumors about the imperial brothers competing against each other for a woman spread out, both Pei Yusheng's and his names would be ruined.

His messy situation hadn't been settled yet. Now getting involved with Third Lady Qu was truly troublesome for him.

Third Lady Qu was obviously a slutty woman. Now, Pei Luo'an was convinced that Qu Qiuyan was trying to seduce him. Otherwise, why would she dress up and act so coquettishly at a funeral?

His younger brother Lord Jing must've hooked up with Third Lady Qu a long time ago. No wonder Pei Yusheng was so angry that he even kicked her. If Ji Youran acted intimately with Pei Yusheng, he would be even angrier. However, Pei Luo'an believed that Ji Youran was not this kind of shameless woman.

After Qu Qiuyan was moved away, the altar room fell into dead silence again.

Pei Luo'an cleared his throat in embarrassment and turned to Pei Yusheng, "Yusheng, about what happened..."

Chapter 96 Ji Youran's Sudden Allergy

Pei Yusheng calmed himself down as the irritated look on his face softened. "Brother, I know you have nothing to do with it. I should have a sharper eye," he bowed to Pei Luo'an and said.

Pei Luo'an patted his shoulder with a bitter smile on his face, "I really appreciate your trust. You know...who I love the most...in my life. My dear is gone... She took away all my love..."

Pei Luo'an turned his head away with tears forming in his eyes and wiped them with a hanky. Then his gaze fell on the coffin in the center, full of sorrow that everyone could see.

"Brother, I'm so sorry for your loss. The Crown Princess died for saving your life. If she knew how heartbroken you are, she would be upset too in the underworld," Pei Yusheng comforted him.

"I know... But I...I lost the love of my life forever..." Tears flowed down Pei Luo'an's cheeks. He clenched his hanky, his body trembling in grief.

Pei Yusheng hurriedly walked up to steady him, "Brother, you have to take care of your health and have more rest. The Crown Princess wouldn't want to see you like this."

"I'm just too sad," Pei Luo'an nodded. He wiped his tears, let out a deep sigh, and put on a desperate look on his face. "If it weren't for Father and Mother, I would leave the world with her."

"Brother, Father and Mother always know you are a filial son..." Pei Yusheng added.

Seeing them turn back to their usual, friendly attitude was a relief for Princess Changyu. She signaled her husband with a glance and backed out with her family. Afterward, her husband and her son went to the outer yard, while Princess Changyu went to the inner yard with her daughter, Infanta Xiangrong.

Princess Changyu wanted a talk with Ji Youran to remind her to beware of Qu Qiuyan. Usually, a woman like Qu Qiuyan wouldn't be worth so much effort, nor did Princess Changyu care if the Crown Prince liked her or not. However, everyone knew the relationship between Qu Qiuyan and Lord Jing. If the Crown Prince was involved, especially during the Crown Princess's funeral, that would be a big scandal about the imperial family.

Princess Changyu was not a meddlesome person, but she didn't want to get involved in the trouble. She and her family were the only people witnessing the whole thing, and they would surely keep it a secret. However, walls always have ears. If rumors spread out later, both the Crown Prince and Lord Jing would blame her family. She would rather talk to Ji Youran directly about it first.

Then it would be up to Ji Youran for the next step, which had nothing to do with her anymore.

While heading to the inner yard, Princess Changyu and her daughter saw a large group of people walking over. The leading person was Ji Youran. If it weren't for those servants of the Eastern Palace around her, Princess Changyu couldn't even recognize her since she wore a veil to cover her face.

"Your Royal Highness," seeing Princess Changyu, Ji Youran hurriedly went up to curtsy to her.

Princess Changyu let Ji Youran up at once. She frowned at her face, "What happened?"

She remembered Ji Youran looked fine when she entered the Eastern Palace. But right now, it seemed that something was wrong.

"My face suddenly became swollen. I don't know if I touched something weird," Ji Youran said with her head lowered.

"Have you seen an Imperial Doctor?" Princess Changyu twisted her brows more. At the Crown Princess's funeral, Ji Youran was the only master in charge of the inner yard of the Eastern Palace. How could she receive guests with her face swollen?

"I've seen a doctor. He said this is an allergic reaction caused by the sap of a particular herb." Ji Youran said, feeling aggrieved, "I don't know if this is someone's revenge, but only the Fourth Lady from the Qu Family touched my face today. I'm here to ask her about it."

"Third Lady Qu?" Princess Changyu misheard her and asked in shock.

"Not her. Fourth Lady Qu, the Crown Princess's cousin. I know she is a poor girl, so I cried while holding her in my arms. At that time, she used her sleeve to wipe my tears. I didn't expect... Who would've known...my face..." Ji Youran wished she could shatter Qu Moying into pieces right now.

Not only Qu Moying, but Qu Qiuyan was also a shameless girl. She even wanted to make friends with them before, and it turned out that they were totally not worth it.

Ji Youran couldn't believe Qu Moying wiped her tears on purpose to disfigure her face. The Imperial Doctor said it would take a few days for her face to fully recover, and her old wound opened up and might even get worse. Feeling the sting from her face, Ji Youran couldn't be more furious.

As for Qu Qiuyan, Ji Youran had heard everything she did from her maid. The Crown Prince and Qu Qiuyan acted intimately in the Crown Princess's altar room, and the Crown Prince even wiped Qu Qiuyan's tears. It must be Qu Qiuyan who took the initiative and seduced the Crown Prince. Ji Youran wouldn't go easy on her.

After Ji Hanyue's death, Ji Youran was finally closer to the position of the Crown Princess. She couldn't allow Qu Qiuyan, who came out of nowhere, to stand in her way.

She spent so much effort getting rid of Ji Hanyue and her family. If Qu Qiuyan dared to affect her plan, Ji Youran would dare ruin her name and make her die miserably.

She rushed over because she planned to force the Crown Prince to punish Qu Qiuyan and prove his innocence.

Even Ji Hanyue was no match for her, let alone a vice minister's daughter.

"Fourth Lady Qu is in a coma. An Imperial Doctor is treating her right now," said Princess Changyu.

"What? She's in a coma? Why?" Ji Youran was stunned for a second and then asked in shock.

"Not only Fourth Lady Qu but also Third Lady Qu is there. The ladies from the Qu Family both seem quite weak, and they are treated by the doctor together. Princess Ji, go take a look!" Princess Changyu pointed in a direction behind. Someone had already told her the private room's location, but it was not her responsibility to check on the two ladies.

Then she strolled outside with her daughter. She would leave everything to Ji Youran and get away from the trouble as far as possible.

“Mother, does Princess Ji know about what Third Lady Qu did?” after Ji Youran left hurriedly, Infanta Xiangrong, who had been quiet for the whole time, watched Ji Youran’s back and asked curiously.

“Of course, she knows.” Princess Changyu curled up her lips in disdain and started to educate her daughter, “Beware of Princess Ji. She could climb up to her current position not only because the Crown Princess wanted her to.”

“Mother, do you mean she married into the Eastern Palace, not because of the Crown Princess but the Crown Prince?” Infanta Xiangrong strode to catch up with her mother and asked in a low voice.

“That woman is not stupid.” Princess Changyu said, “The Crown Prince had been deeply in love with the Crown Princess. He even rejected all the women who wanted to marry him as his wife for her. However, after the accident on his wedding day, Ji Youran married him immediately as his second wife. Now that the Crown Princess is dead, Princess Ji becomes the only official wife the Crown Prince has.”

Growing up in the imperial palace, Princess Changyu knew well about schemes and conspiracies. Even she found the whole situation very suspicious, no matter how simple it looked on the surface. No one expected Ji Youran could marry into the Eastern Palace before the Crown Princess’s wedding. Clearly, Ji Youran was the biggest winner in the game.

At that time, Ji Youran had already missed the best age to get married. However, Princess Changyu never heard any news about her family looking for a suitable husband for her. It meant Ji Youran and the Crown Prince’s secret relationship probably started a long time ago and was hidden from Ji Hanyue, the Crown Princess.

Princess Changyu had met Ji Hanyue before. No matter from appearance, temperament, and competence, Ji Hanyue was a qualified Crown Princess in her eyes. Moreover, the Crown Prince had been in love with Ji Hanyue for many years, so she became the acknowledged Crown Princess long ago. Princess Changyu didn’t think their relationship was faked since she could tell the affection in the Crown Prince’s eyes when he was with Ji Hanyue. Even though Ji Hanyue was with Ji Youran when she met the Crown Prince, he would never cast a single glance at Ji Youran.

However, Ji Hanyue ended up losing her life, and Ji Youran became the biggest winner.

"That woman wants to become the Crown Princess?" Infanta Xiangrong blinked her eyes as she figured it out.

"She probably started to want that position since long ago. Unfortunately, a fake one is still a fake one, no matter what she does. You cannot falsify the truth nor verify lies," Princess Changyu said disdainfully.

"Will the Crown Prince promote her as the Crown Princess?" Infanta Xiangrong didn't fully understand her mother's words and asked in confusion, "Isn't she the only woman who won the Crown Prince's heart in the Eastern Palace?"

"The only woman who won the Crown Prince's heart? She is just his second wife. Even if it was the Crown Princess, the empress wouldn't..." Princess Changyu suddenly paused as she realized her words were inappropriate here. "Alright, let's help them receive the guests. Ji Youran probably can't show up in public for a while."

Ji Youran's face must look pretty horrible, or she wouldn't wear a veil to hide it.

"What? Second Madam Qu put the sap of an herb that could cause allergic reactions on Fourth Lady Qu's mourning clothes and made her faint in the Crown Princess's altar room with her whole body red and swollen? Yu is such a cunning woman!"

"For real?"

"It's true! Even Princess Ji is a victim. I heard because Fourth Lady Qu didn't know there was a poisonous thing on her clothes, she helped Princess Ji wipe her tears and made Princess Ji's face swollen too."

"That's...That's...outrageous!"

"It's not the first time Yu did this kind of thing! She almost made Fourth Lady Qu lose her sight permanently before. Maybe the former Second Madam Qu's death was designed by Yu as well. She was just a concubine before and finally climbed up to her current position because the former Second Madam Qu died of dystocia after giving birth to Fourth Lady Qu."

“True! That sounds totally possible. Right, I also heard Yu’s niece became Young Master Yongning’s concubine after she made Fourth Lady Qu lose her engagement. Does she want to walk down the exact same path as her aunt?”

“Probably. I can’t believe Yu is such a malicious woman! So cunning! How come she even dares to be here? Sitting with her in the same room makes me feel disgusted...”

...

Talking with some madams, Yu didn’t pay attention to the spreading gossips. She even felt confused seeing them leaving one by one. Right now, she was still immersed in the complacent feeling because of Ji Youran’s different attitude toward the Qu Family. Everyone changed their opinion of her. Even some madams from aristocratic families approached her proactively, which had never happened before.

However, the madams, who were talking to her, all left soon, and even the rest all moved to the seats far away from her. The madams were discussing something while pointing at her, but they stopped talking immediately after she looked at them. Yu was not a stupid woman and immediately smelled something wrong. Something must’ve happened.

Alerted, her whole body tightened up as she clenched the hanky in her hand nervously...

Chapter 97 Being Driven Out of the Eastern Palace

Yu’s panic soon passed as it was replaced by excitement since she assumed that something had happened to Qu Moying according to her plan. She then pretended that she didn’t notice people’s strange behavior, waiting for what would happen next.

Even Qu Moying’s death couldn’t be enough to pay for a mistake like seducing the Crown Prince in the Crown Princess’s altar room. In Yu’s eyes, Princess Ji didn’t look like a kind one who would go easy on Qu Moying if she really did as Yu planned. Maybe Qu Moying would end up marrying a mediocre husband and move to a small town far away from the capital. By then, Yu could literally do whatever she wanted to Qu Moying, including taking her life.

Suddenly, a maid rushed inside and looked around. After her eyes fell on Yu, she ran up to her with a flustered face.

“Madam, Second Madam, Princess Ji wants to meet you.”

It was Qing Ju, Qu Qiuyan’s maid. After recognizing her, the Old Lady pulled a long face. She was occupied talking with a close friend before and didn’t notice Yu’s and other people’s behavior, but Qing Ju’s words somehow made her unsettled. Since they were at the Eastern Palace, if Princess Ji wanted to meet them in an ordinary situation, she should send someone from the Eastern Palace instead of a maid from the Qu Family. Something must have happened.

“Mother, let’s go,” Yu said beamingly, looking calm. She stood up and went to help the Old Lady up, more convinced that something had happened to Qu Moying. Of course, Princess Ji should be the one to handle it since it was related to the Crown Prince. Yu even wished the scene could be made bigger.

“Qing Ju, where’s your master?” the Old Lady asked the maid in a low voice after standing up, thinking something might happen to Qu Qiuyan. Seeing Yu’s beam, the Old Lady couldn’t understand why Yu didn’t seem concerned about her daughter at all.

“The Third Lady... The Third Lady...” Qing Ju’s face was flushed with nervousness. Even she couldn’t repeat Princess Ji’s embarrassing insult. Right now, she only wished she could find a crack on the ground and hide inside.

Yu finally realized something was wrong. “What happened to Qiuyan?” the smile on her face disappeared as she asked worriedly.

Unconsciously, she raised her voice, which gave those madams and ladies a perfect excuse to look at them. After all, everyone had been paying close attention to people from the Qu Family after hearing about the rumors.

“Let’s go there first,” the Old Lady said and cast a glare at Yu. Then she strode outside, followed by Luo and her two unmarried granddaughters, Qu Xuexin and Qu Caiyue. Yu froze at her spot for a second and immediately went to catch up with her family.

The group of people arrived at the private room near the altar room. Upon entry, they saw Ji Youran sitting in the center with her face covered by a veil and Qu Qiuyan kneeling in front of her while sobbing. There was no sigh of Qu Moying but a strong smell of herbs lingering in the air. Apparently, something was wrong.

The Old Lady's heart missed a beat when she saw the situation in the room. Hurriedly, she went up to curtsy to Ji Youran, followed by Yu, Luo, and other people.

"Madam, please have a seat," said Ji Youran as a maid came to help the Old Lady sit on a chair aside.

Luo, Yu, and other people stood up and seated themselves on the two sides of Ji Youran. Yu couldn't wait but asked directly, "Your Royal Highness, what happened? Did someone offend my daughter?"

Yu couldn't stand seeing her daughter's pitiful look. If it weren't in front of Princess Ji, she would've helped Qu Qiuyan up long ago.

"Second Madam Qu, you probably don't know what happened," said Ji Youran with a friendly smile on her face, but her eyes looked cold. "The Third Lady from your family surely dresses herself up for the funeral today. When her younger sister was in a coma, she stayed in the altar room and had a good talk with the Crown Prince. She was even too occupied to notice Princess Changyu and Lord Jing when they entered the room."

"What?" The Old Lady trembled in shock and almost passed out.

Ji Youran's words were not as friendly as her tone. Qu Qiuyan dressed herself up and spent some time alone with the Crown Prince in front of the Crown Princess's coffin after Qu Moying fainted. Even Princess Changyu and Lord Jing witnessed everything?

"That's impossible!" after hearing Ji Youran's words, Yu yelled. "Your Royal Highness, do you mistake someone else with my daughter? Yan has always been a well-behaved lady and will never make this kind of mistake. She is different than the Fourth Lady!"

Moreover, Yu knew better than anyone that this was a trap designed for Qu Moying. Shouldn't the person who made mistakes be Qu Moying? However, she would never say her doubt out loud.

"How's Ying right now?" the Old Lady took a deep breath and asked.

"The Fourth Lady's clothes were soaked in some sap of a specific herb which will make people's skin red and swollen. The Fourth Lady has an allergy reaction all over her body. Even my face started to swell because the Fourth Lady swiped my tears with her sleeve. Second Madam, I heard you are the one who prepared all the mourning clothes for the Qu Family. I'm truly impressed by your scheme."

Ji Youran's aching wound made her lose all the patience to keep up with a friendly attitude. Her words turned sharp and sarcastic.

She had yet to climb up to the position of the Crown Princess. If her face was disfigured because of Yu and her daughter, she would make them pay for it.

"Yu, what's going on?" the Old Lady turned around and asked Yu sternly.

"Mother... I-I don't know..." Yu stared at her blankly and stuttered. Things turned out to be far from her expectations since she only put something on the gauzy flower hairpins and shoes but not the clothes.

"Second Madam Qu, please give me the cure right now." Ji Youran's tone was flat, but the threat in her words was clear enough. The Imperial Doctor who checked her face had sent an ointment, saying that her allergy could be cured after she applied it on her skin for a few days. However, her old wound opened up again and had been aching.

The pain from her face reminded her of those things she tried to forget. In annoyance, she wished she could ask someone to beat Qu Qiuyan to death, but she knew she couldn't. She could only try hard to suppress the boiling anger.

She had to act as the Crown Prince told her, to be a noble lady who was elegant and well-behaved. After all, she had to make herself qualified to be the Crown Princess!

"Your Royal Highness, I have no idea. I don't know anything about it..." Yu was truly in a daze. She turned to look at the Old Lady, "Mother, I really don't know what's going on..."

“Madam, I don’t know how your family has educated the ladies, so it’s not right for me to judge it. However, what the Third Lady did in the Crown Princess’s altar room is quite disgusting. Even the Crown Prince agrees that she needs a good lesson. As for Second Madam Qu, I really wonder why do you allow such a malicious woman to marry into your family.”

Ji Youran picked up her teacup, drank it up, and showed the Old Lady the bottom of her cup, rudely signaling her to leave.

“I have something else to do. Madam, sorry that I won’t have time to walk you out.” Ji Youran stood up, “Fourth Lady Qu is still lying inside. It’s better not to move her for now since her whole body is hurt. Let her stay in the Eastern Palace for a few days, and I will send her back after she feels better.”

“Your Royal Highness, can I leave a maid here to care for Ying?” the Old Lady had to bear the insult and act politely.

“Sure. Just don’t leave another one here like Third Lady Qu. Otherwise, I won’t act as friendly as this time,” Ji Youran snorted and turned around to leave with her servants.

Qu Qiuyan cried out loud right after Ji Youran left and went up to hug Yu. Holding her daughter, Yu started to wail with her. She felt so irritated but couldn’t tell others the real reason.

The Old Lady ignored them directly and went to the inner room to check on Qu Moying.

Qu Moying was lying feebly on the bed with her sleeves rolled up. The clothes she was wearing still had the same white color but apparently was not made by the Qu Family. Her lips looked almost as pale as her face. With her veil still covering her eyes, she lied there quietly, making people feel more sorry for her.

“Madam,” seeing the Old Lady coming in, Yu Dong hurriedly curtsied to her. Qu Moying heard the noise and wanted to struggle up, but the Old Lady stopped her by pressing her arm.

“Lie down. Tell me what happened.”

“Grandmother...” Qu Moying replied faintly, trying hard to move her lips.

“Madam, please allow me to speak for Fourth Lady,” Yu Dong hurriedly said. The Old Lady nodded at him. He then described the whole process to the Old Lady, including things about Qu Qiuyan that he heard when Ji Youran called Qu Qiuyan over and scolded her.

The Old Lady couldn’t believe Yu and her daughter were the cause for everything. She was so furious that she wished she could let them kneel outside immediately. But she knew it was not the time for it since they were still in the Eastern Palace.

“Ying, have some good rest here for a couple of days. Once you feel better, send someone back home, and I will ask people to come to pick you up,” the Old Lady told her granddaughter, suppressing the anger.

“Grandmother, don’t worry,” Qu Moying nodded at her obediently.

“Your First Sister will stay here to accompany you. People won’t have a chance to spread any rumors about you with her being here,” the Old Lady added.

It was inappropriate for an unmarried lady to stay in the Eastern Palace alone. That was why the Old Lady wanted Qu Xuexin to stay with Qu Moying.

“Thank you, First Sister,” Qu Moying looked up at Qu Xuexin and said.

“Don’t even mention it, Moying. It’s my responsibility to take care of you as your older sister,” Qu Xuexin’s voice was soft.

After telling the two ladies about things they needed to be careful with, the Old Lady went out to silence Yu and Qu Qiuyan, who were still weeping and left with them. Qu Zhizhen had been waiting for them outside since he heard the news. Seeing them coming out, Qu Zhizhen flushed in anger and hurriedly went up to slap Yu in her face. He said with hatred, “You are such a vicious woman...”

“Enough. We will talk about it once we are home,” the Old Lady glared at her son sternly and said in irritation. Many people came for the funeral today, and she didn’t want to catch everyone’s attention.

Knowing his mother’s intention, Qu Zhizhen stared at Yu with a scowl and turned around to get on his horse.

Yu was about to cry out loud again, but her voice softened immediately once her eyes met Qu Zhizhen’s fierce stare. In a low voice, she started to sob.

People from the Qu’s Mansion all got on their horses or climbed into the carriages and left hurriedly from the side door of the Eastern Palace.

Since they left, rumors had spread out from people with big mouths. All the clues had pointed at Yu, making people more convinced that Yu was trying to scheme her husband’s ex-wife’s daughter.

It was said that when Fourth Lady Qu’s clothes were stained by tea, Third Lady Qu even stopped her from changing her clothes. Otherwise, Fourth Lady Qu wouldn’t have such a strong allergy reaction and end up lying in bed with her whole body red and swollen.

Third Lady Qu’s behavior clearly showed that she was a part of the scheme, working with her mother to frame her younger sister. But she said she always treated her younger sister nicely, and it had always been Yu’s niece who wanted to frame Fourth Lady Qu. What a pretentious girl! It turned out that none of Third Lady Qu and her cousin was a kind lady.

It was even possible that Yu and her daughter masterminded the scheme, and Yu Qingmeng was just their helper.

Marchioness Yongning was the first one who explained for Yu Qingmeng, and people found her words even more convincing in this situation. Rumors about Yu being a malicious woman and trying to harm Fourth Lady Qu existed long ago. Now, the cold truth was presented in front of everyone’s eyes. Even Princess Ji was involved in this absurd drama.

Technically, Princess Ji was one of their victims as well!

Chapter 98 The Mysterious Person Behind Qu Zhizhen

People all knew that Princess Ji's face became red and swollen because Fourth Lady Qu wiped her tears with her sleeve. As for Fourth Lady Qu, she was probably the most miserable one among all the people. She was still in a coma, lying in bed. People didn't even know if she could survive this time.

All the rumors pointed at Yu as things about Qu Qiuyan were deliberately covered. People only knew that Qu Qiuyan was a part of the scheme, as malicious as her mother.

Soon, another piece of news spread out, saying that Yue Wenhan, the vice minister of the Dali Temple, stopped the Qus' carriages with his men after knowing Yu had framed his cousin. He started an argument with Qu Zhizhen on the spot, during which Qu Zhizhen fell off his horse and broke his leg.

The news immediately confirmed the rumors before. If the words were not valid, the vice minister of the Dali Temple, a brilliant and competent young man, would never start such a big fight with Qu Zhizhen.

Since then, people's attention had been drawn toward the history between Yu and Qu Zhizhen and some dirty things covered in the past. It was said that Yu hooked up with Qu Zhizhen long ago, and there might be some other reason for Yue, Qu Zhizhen's ex-wife's death. According to Yu's personality, it seemed even possible that she was the one who killed Yue.

She couldn't even tolerate Yue's daughter, let alone Yue...

In Qu Zhizhen's study, a doctor had treated Qu Zhizhen already. He actually didn't break his leg but just twisted his ankle. When the argument started, his horse had stopped moving already. However, Yue Wenhan was a young man stronger than Qu Zhizhen and pulled him on the ground directly in anger. For the next few days, he couldn't go to work until he could walk again.

"What should we do now?" after the Old Lady asked everyone to leave, including Yu and Luo, she asked her two sons.

Qu Zhilin stayed silent. Everyone respected his younger brother more than him. Moreover, it was about his younger brother's wife and children, so it was not his place to show his opinions. But he was not

surprised by what happened since he never had a good impression of Yu. Thinking of Yue, Qu Zhilin had to admit no matter how brilliant his younger brother was as a politician, he truly didn't have a sharp eye for women.

As he expected, Yu was indeed a vicious woman.

Qu Zhizhen didn't talk as well, sitting behind the desk with a sullen face.

"Let's talk about Yan first. Although her misbehavior in the Crown Princess's altar room has been covered, it did happen. The Crown Prince knows, Lord Jing knows, even Princess Changyu and Princess Ji know." The Old Lady let out a deep sigh. She had calmed herself down already. Right now, the Qu Family's priority should be overcoming the trouble caused by Qu Qiuyan.

"Mother, just let Yan meet Lord Jing and explain herself to him," Qu Zhizhen said coldly.

"Let her explain it? She's still an unmarried lady! How can she explain it?" The Old Lady hit the table in anger.

"Mother, what other choice do we have? Yan likes Lord Jing, and he seems interested in her as well. I think it was just a misunderstanding. Yan wouldn't do such a foolish thing. It won't be a big deal after she explains it to Lord Jing," Qu Zhizhen said impatiently.

"No big deal? If people know that the Crown Prince and Lord Jing..." The Old Lady trembled in rage. She couldn't believe her son didn't realize the severity of the situation and allowed his daughter to meet Lord Jing in private merely for playing up to Lord Jing.

Even the Old Lady was not sure if something really happened between Qu Qiuyan and the Crown Prince. Yu and her daughter fixated on Lord Jing so much before due to his status and power. The Old Lady wouldn't find it strange if they changed their target to the Crown Prince, who had just lost his first wife.

But she couldn't speak ill of Qu Qiuyan in front of Qu Zhizhen. After all, Qu Qiuyan was still his daughter.

"Mother, just leave it to me. I will handle this. As for Lord Jing, I will invite him over. If Lord Jing doesn't believe the rumors, who will dare to spread them?" Qu Zhizhen interrupted his mother carelessly.

"Okay. Okay. I don't want to deal with it anyway. Do whatever you want." The Old Lady couldn't stop trembling, feeling more and more irritated by her son. Since long ago, she had told him that Yue was a good wife for him, and he should respect her and treat her well. But instead of listening to her, her son brought Yu home and pampered her. He even sent Yue, who was still pregnant at that time, to a nunnery for Yu.

If Yu didn't say her premature delivery was because of Yue, he wouldn't force Yue to leave.

Recalling the past, the Old Lady stood up in frustrated anger and wanted to leave the room.

"Mother, don't be so angry. I have no other choice. If Lord Jing can forgive Yan, her trouble will no longer be trouble. But if he doesn't want to forgive her, I will just betroth her to someone else." Qu Zhizhen rubbed his forehead as his pale face looked reluctant. "But after all, I'm her father. I can't watch her life being ruined like this!"

Seeing her son's painful face, she sat back down as her anger was softened. For a moment, the study fell into silence, and everyone in the room pulled a long face.

"Mother, let's just do as Zhizhen said!" Qu Zhilin had to say something to save everyone from the annoyance.

"Okay, let's do it like this. But what about Yu? I've asked around already. Yu did send the clothes to Ying and let her pick the ones she liked. After those servants left Ying's yard, the manager of the embroidery workshop fell over on the way and stained the clothes. When the clothes were presented to me, she had already replaced the dirty ones with some clean ones."

As her eyes fell on her second son again, the Old Lady said, "Yu did intend to frame Ying. What do you think about this? The Yue Family has been in the South, but Yue Wenhan lives in the capital now. Imperial Censors will definitely report this to the emperor."

"That's inevitable." As an Imperial Censor, Qu Zhilin knew his colleagues wouldn't go easy on his younger brother this time. He rubbed his forehead, looking tired, "They can say Zhizhen has mismanaged his own family. Or Yu is a malicious woman who climbed up to the position of a wife as a concubine. Or they can say Zhizhen hooked up with Yu long ago, which severely broke the etiquette. Yue Wenhan can even say that Yu is the real culprit behind Yue's death. It is Zhizhen's fault that he pampered his concubine and gave her the reason to kill Yue."

The Imperial Censors could talk about so many things to complain about Qu Zhizhen. If the emperor was really convinced, Qu Zhizhen's career would probably end here.

The Yue Family was a famous scholar family in the South. Not many of them worked as officials, but the Yues had a high reputation among the scholars for their talent in literature.

"Then what can we do?" The Old Lady started to feel flustered. No matter how she disagreed with her son, she was not willing to see her son's career end in such a miserable way. "You'd better just divorce Yu."

"I can't divorce her," Qu Zhizhen clenched his teeth.

"Why? You still want to let that vicious woman stay with our family?" The Old Lady was so angry at her son, who still couldn't see the true colors of his wife, that she stamped her foot hard.

"Mother, Mingcheng is my only son now. If I divorce Yu, Mingcheng would be a concubine's son again," Qu Zhizhen explained in a low voice.

Hearing his words, the Old Lady fell into silence. She had never seen eye to eye with Yu and her daughter, but she always regarded her only grandson as a promising young man. Qu Mingcheng spent most of his time in the East Mansion and seemed not close to his mother at all. The Old Lady couldn't stand seeing his life affected by his mother's scandals.

"Mother, you can go back first. Give me some time to think about it," Qu Zhizhen waved his hand at them. Both his mother and his older brother couldn't help him right now. He had to come up with a solution by himself.

"How about letting her stay in the family temple to cleanse her mind," the Old Lady stood up and suggested reluctantly.

After a second thought, Qu Zhizhen felt it seemed to be the only solution right now. "Let's just say that she becomes ill after coming back and can't get off the bed. Then she moves to the family temple to cleanse her own mind. It's just that all the work she did before will fall on you and my sister-in-law, Mother," said Qu Zhizhen while frowning.

After the trouble caused by Yu, she had to be too sick to leave her bed or be divorced by Qu Zhizhen. On the way back, Yue Wenhan threatened that he wouldn't go easy on Qu Zhizhen if he didn't make Yu pay for her sins.

However, Qu Zhizhen had his reason for not divorcing Yu.

"Okay, I will ask Luo to help Mother with the affairs in the West Mansion," Qu Zhilin agreed immediately.

The discussion was finally over, and the Old Lady and Qu Zhilin left. The family temple mentioned was actually an empty yard at the back of the Qu's Mansion near the back door. The Old Lady liked that place for its quietness, so she asked people to build a small family temple there and often went to worship the Buddha and read scriptures.

After the two left, the study fell into silence. Sitting in the shadow behind the desk, Qu Zhizhen's face looked even more sullen.

A young servant's voice came from outside, "Second Master, some...someone sent you a letter."

"Give it to me," Qu Zhizhen said coldly.

The young servant rushed inside and passed the letter to him. Seeing the familiar mark on the envelope, Qu Zhizhen waved his hand at the servant, "You can leave now!"

"Yes, Second Master!" The young servant hurriedly left and stood outside of the door.

Qu Zhizhen opened the letter and read it rapidly. Then he folded it and stared at the air with a hesitant look on his face. After a while, the expression on his face became determined again. He quickly took a brush pen and a piece of paper and started to write. Soon, he finished a letter.

He waited for some time to dry the ink. Then he put the letter into an envelope, sealed it carefully, and called the young servant, "Come in!"

The young servant hurriedly ran inside and bowed to him politely, "Second Master!"

"Be careful. Don't let anyone see it," Qu Zhizhen said to him in a low voice while pointing at the letter on the desk.

"Yes, I understand," the young servant didn't even dare to raise his head. Cautiously, he picked up the letter and put it in his chest pocket. After he slowly stepped back to the door, he started to rush toward the mansion's back door.

After he walked out of the back door, he hopped on a carriage that had been waiting there. The carriage circled around on the nearby streets and then stopped at a small pawnshop. Only a few people passed by the shop, and none of them paid attention to the carriage that just stopped.

The young servant jumped off the carriage, took out a jade pendant from his chest pocket, and walked into the pawnshop naturally as if he had done this many times. There were not many people in the shop either. Some just cast a glance at him when he walked in and immediately went back into their own business. People were used to seeing a servant like him show up here. Rich people cared about their so-called name even though they became broken. They always sent a servant over to help them sell stuff instead of coming here by themselves.

The young servant came to a window and said to a person inside, "Mister, I have something to sell!"

"No problem!"

Chapter 99 Ming Xian'er's Dilemma

"The Second Madam can't get off her bed?" Qu Moying raised her eyes and looked at Qu Xuexin in shock after hearing the news Qu Xuexin told her.

"I just received a message from my mother. She said Second Uncle and Second Aunt argued right after they came back home. Second Uncle slapped Second Aunt in her face and said he's going to divorce her. Then Second Aunt passed out immediately. Grandmother called a doctor to check on Second Aunt. After the basic treatment, she woke up but couldn't stop shivering. Right now, she is too feeble to even talk, and the doctor is still treating her," said Qu Xuexin softly.

She then lowered her head and used her hanky to press the corner of her red eyes gently.

They stayed together in a guest yard of the Eastern Palace. Qu Moying lived in the side room while Qu Xuexin stayed in the main room as the older sister.

Right now, both of them were in Qu Moying's room. She still felt unwell, her face as pale as a bedsheet.

"How come Second Madam suddenly got sick?" asked Qu Moying.

"Em... My mother had no idea either. She just said Second Aunt suddenly became severely ill, and they had called several doctors to check on her." Qu Xuexin shook her head as her eyes fell on Qu Moying. She sounded hesitant, "Moying..."

She didn't finish her words, only staring at Qu Moying with a sorrowful look on her face.

"First Sister, I still feel unwell. Could you please leave me alone for some time?" Qu Moying asked feebly. She was exhausted due to the pain from her body. The skin on her hand and arms was dreadfully red and swollen. She tried her best to tolerate the pain until she passed out. Right now, Qu Xuexin's hesitant look made her feel more tired, and she didn't want to deal with her at all.

Even a fool could tell that Qu Xuexin wanted to speak for Yu.

“Moying...” Qu Xuexin regained her nerve and wanted to finish her words.

“First Sister, I’m really exhausted. Can we just talk later?” Qu Moying closed her eyes and leaned on the pillow weakly.

“Em... Al-Alright!” Qu Xuexin stood up reluctantly. She looked at Qu Moying and let out a sigh. Judging by Qu Moying’s attitude, the relationship between her and Yu couldn’t possibly be fixed. Even though Qu Xuexin wanted to do something, Qu Moying wasn’t willing to give her a chance. But at least, she gave it a try.

Qu Xuexin walked out and saw Yu Chun waiting outside and holding a pot of medicinal liquid in her hands. Due to her eyes, Qu Moying brought two maids with her today, but she only took Yu Dong inside for the funeral while leaving Yu Chun in the carriage. Now, Yu Chun was brought inside to serve her too. However, Qu Xuexin only had one maid with her.

“Yu Chun, do you think Moying will forgive Second Aunt?” Looking at Yu Chun, Qu Xuexin sighed again, her voice sounding tired.

“First Lady, I’m sorry I don’t know,” Yu Chun answered her politely with her head lowered.

A bitter smile showed up on Qu Xuexin’s face as she mumbled to herself, “You are right. How will a maid like you know? Technically...this is Grandmother’s decision... But Moying and Qiuyan... They are both Second Uncle’s blood!”

Then she stared at the yard door blankly, smiling bitterly.

Yu Chun stayed silent and didn’t look up at her.

“Yu Chun, I’m going back to my room. If Moying needs anything, just come to tell me,” Qu Xuexin told Yu Chun.

“Yes, First Lady,” Yu Chun answered.

After seeing Qu Xuexin go back to her room, Yu Chun walked inside with the medicine in her hands.

She put down the pot on the table and said, "My lady, it's time to use the medicine again."

Qu Moying, whose eyes were still closed, nodded and sat up. Yu Chun went up to help her take off her outer clothes. The skin on her arms and neck was still red and swollen with some brown, dried potion stains left on, looking horrible.

It was the same on her back. Luckily, she picked relatively large-sized underwear to wear today, which protected the skin on her front body below her neck and a small part of her back. Even so, Yu Chun still felt pain seeing her master suffering, and tears started to form in her eyes.

She had helped her master apply the medicinal liquid once, and Qu Moying's skin looked actually much better than the beginning. It looked even more dreadful before.

Yu Chun wiped Qu Moying's skin carefully with a towel soaked by the medicine. "My lady, please don't treat yourself like this again," she whispered to her with her eyes turning red. She knew better than anyone that it was her master's own choice to make her body like this.

Qu Moying's eyes were still half-closed as she struggled to tolerate the sting when the medicine touched her skin. She forced a smile on her face, "It's okay. It just looks horrible, but I will recover soon after a few days."

"My lady, I know it hurts a lot. You can make a sound if you feel too much pain," Yu Chun said in a choked voice, looking at Qu Moying's pale face. She could feel Qu Moying's muscles tightening up every time she touched her skin with the towel. Even though the medicine had a strong effect, it must hurt a lot when it touched the skin.

"It doesn't hurt that bad. It just looks terrible," Qu Moying took a deep breath. Compared to the pain she had mentally, this was nothing to her. She could bear with it.

"My lady, please don't do this again..." Yu Chun turned her head away to wipe her tears. Her eyes fell on Qu Moying's clenched, skinny fists where the vessels were bulging, making her feel even sadder.

Every lady from a noble family was raised up in a mansion and pampered by the family. But her master was so unlucky that her family abandoned her and left her in a village. After her master came back to the mansion, people still treated her like a low-life servant. Then her master almost died in the fire set by the Third Lady's maid. But in the end, only the maid got punished, yet no one ever blamed the Third Lady and the Second Madam for it.

Right now, even though her master was hurt like this, the Second Madam still might not be punished as she deserved.

When she thought about this, Yu Chun's heart was filled with grievances and sorrow.

"I'd rather be like this instead of being in Qu Qiuyan's current position," Qu Moying said in a flat tone with her eyes closed. A faint smile showed up on her pale face.

If she didn't choose the brutal way to torture her own body, she would be the one whose name was ruined. She was not Qu Qiuyan. If the same things happened to her, Yu would love to use every means to make her life even more miserable. As for Qu Zhizhen, that man had never cared about his ex-wife, let alone her daughter, who he didn't love at all.

She was not comparable with the daughter he had pampered all these years, who would bring him wealth and fame in the near future.

Qu Moying was sure if the same thing happened to her instead of Qu Qiuyan, her life would be permanently ruined, and her hatred from these two lives could never be resolved.

She might even die more miserably than in her past life!

She was just a weak girl living in the danger of being framed by others at any second who didn't have parents to protect her. If she weren't tough enough to herself, how would she clear a way out?

"My lady..." Yu Chun couldn't stop sobbing as she turned her head away to wipe her tears again, feeling sorry for her master's painful life. Everyone in the Qu Family overlooked Qu Moying and mistreated her, but even so, Qu Moying still had the will to fight back. Yu Chun had made up her mind. As Qu Moying's maid, she would never back out. She would always try her best to protect her master.

"My lady, is everything done?" Yu Dong's voice suddenly came from outside.

Yu Chun hurriedly turned back. She helped Qu Moying put on the clothes and lie down on the bed. Then she tucked her in carefully and left with the pot.

Yu Dong was waiting outside with a maid from the Eastern Palace.

"I just helped the lady apply the medicine to her body," Yu Chun said in a low voice and cast a glance at the maid from the Eastern Palace.

"I know." Yu Dong nodded at her and let the other maid wait out of the door when he went inside to report. The purpose of him going out just now was to encounter some maids from the Eastern Palace. As Qu Moying expected, after a few times he walked around, someone came for him...

"My lady, I met a person, and she wanted to talk to you about something," Yu Dong came inside and told Qu Moying.

"Let her in!" said Qu Moying.

Yu Dong then left and came back with the maid from the Eastern Palace.

After entering, the maid saw Qu Moying half-lying on the bed and knelt down immediately, "Fourth Lady Qu, I beg you. Please save Sister Ming."

"You mean Ming Xian'er?"

"Yes, Sister Ming." The maid started to wipe her tears. "Her Royal Highness beat Sister Ming up, saying that she disrespected the Crown Princess. And...and she said she's going to sell Sister Ming to someone else and drive her out of the Eastern Palace."

Knowing Ji Youran's personality, Qu Moying knew she couldn't allow a woman like Ming Xian'er to stay near the Crown Prince. It was the perfect excuse for her to get rid of her enemy in the name of the dead Crown Princess. Therefore, after everything was settled, she could still be the gentle, graceful, and well-behaved Ji Youran, who would never be jealous of others.

Ji Youran wouldn't show her true colors until the last moment. Before that, she just looked like a kind, harmless woman.

Even though Ji Youran was aware of Pei Luo'an and Ming Xian'er's relationship, she wouldn't do anything to her since it would affect her image. Then the Crown Princess's funeral became her best chance to give Ming Xian'er a sudden strike and get rid of her permanently.

Qu Moying sent Yu Dong to walk around outside because Ming Xian'er would send someone to ask for help. If no one came, Yu Dong could still check Ming Xian'er's situation. It turned out that her guess was correct.

"Tell me what happened," Qu Moying said in a flat tone.

The maid nodded, wiped her tears off, and said, "After the Crown Princess passed away yesterday, all the bright-colored clothes were forbidden in the Eastern Palace. Meanwhile, everyone received a set of white mourning clothes, so did Sister Ming. But there was a big stain on the clothes she got. Sister Ming had no other choice but to wear her own white clothes first. On the way to the embroidery workshop to ask for another set of mourning clothes, she encountered Her Royal Highness. Her Royal Highness scolded her for being disrespectful for the Crown Princess, asked her men to catch Sister Ming on the spot, and made them give her ten strokes with a heavy stick."

"After being beaten up, Sister Ming was locked in the woodshed. I tried to ask His Royal Highness for help, but I couldn't even have a chance to see him. Until now, Sister Ming is still locked there and hasn't had any food. She doesn't have anyone to help treat her wounds. If she stays there any longer, she might lose her life!" The maid said with a choked voice.

"Ming Xian'er sent you to me?" asked Qu Moying.

"Fourth Lady Qu, Sister Ming heard you are in the Eastern Palace, so she sent me to beg you for help. Fourth Lady Qu, can you say something for her or tell His Royal Highness about it? Sister Ming will

definitely pay you back if you save her. She didn't mean to disrespect the Crown Princess. Someone wants to set her up." The maid bowed her head onto the ground twice.

Chapter 100 A Way Out?

The maid had served Ming Xian'er for a long time. She was also a member of the opera group and regarded Ming Xian'er as her older sister. After Ming Xian'er was taken away by Ji Youran, she stayed near the woodshed till midnight but couldn't find a way to help her. This morning, she hurriedly finished some of her work and went to meet Ming Xian'er secretly again.

She found a chance when the old maid guarding the woodshed was called away and hurriedly sneaked inside to talk to Ming Xian'er.

Ming Xian'er specifically asked about Qu Moying. After hearing that Fourth Lady Qu was staying in the Eastern Palace, she became overjoyed and asked the maid to seek help from Qu Moying.

It was just a simple thing, and Qu Moying immediately figured out Ji Youran's intention after hearing the maid's story.

Ji Youran would never degrade herself to envy a female performer like Ming Xian'er since she was the Crown Prince's second wife. If she really did so, it would also displease the Crown Prince. However, she used the chance to manipulate the situation, making it look like Ming Xian'er showed disrespect for the Crown Princess out of jealousy and made a scene deliberately.

No matter as the Crown Princess's cousin or the Crown Prince's only wife in the Eastern Palace, Ji Youran had every right to punish Ming Xian'er. Ten strokes with a heavy stick could be counted as a light punishment, almost like a warning. So, even if Pei Luo'an asked about it later, Ming Xian'er still had to take it. Regarding why Ji Youran didn't send food or a doctor to treat Ming Xian'er afterward, Ji Youran could just say everyone was too occupied by the funeral and didn't remember such a small matter.

So, Ji Youran wouldn't have anything to do with what happened to Ming Xian'er now.

Her next step, for sure, was to take Ming Xian'er's life secretly.

Qu Moying curled up her lips quietly. Her watery eyes slowly opened and fell on the maid kneeling on the ground through the veil. She asked in a hoarse voice, "What do you want me to do?"

Hearing her words, the maid thought Qu Moying didn't hear what she had said before and repeated in a thrill, "Tell His Royal Highness about what happened to Sister Ming. His Royal Highness will definitely save her." Then she added, "His Royal Highness always likes Sister Ming's performance. He will trust her."

"How much he likes her?" Qu Moying asked back.

"Huh...?" The maid froze for a second and then blushed in embarrassment. Ming Xian'er told her that if Fourth Lady Qu asked about her relationship with the Crown Prince, she could give Fourth Lady Qu some clear evidence. "His Royal Highness treats Sister Ming very well. He even promised Sister Ming that he would give her an official title and let her marry into the Eastern Palace."

Clearly, Ming Xian'er had a relationship with the Crown Prince, kept as a secret. But she became the Crown Prince's woman long ago.

"Since when?" Qu Moying couldn't feel anything in her heart.

"Since a long...long time ago," the maid stuttered. She didn't hear any answer from Qu Moying, so she hurriedly added, "It was His Royal Highness who allowed Sister Ming to move into the Eastern Palace. He intended to do so since a long time ago."

That meant they hooked up a long time ago.

"Is Princess Ji aware of it?"

"Her Royal Highness always knows. Before Her Royal Highness moved into the Eastern Palace, she had a pretty good relationship with Sister Ming. When Her Royal Highness accompanied the Crown Princess here, she would come to visit Sister Ming from time to time, saying that she liked her performance. I can't believe Her Royal Highness wants to take Sister Ming's life right now."

The maid started to weep again.

In short, Ji Youran had worked with Ming Xian'er since long ago, and they hid the truth away from Ji Hanyue. Qu Moying found it very ironic. No wonder she knew nothing before and ended up so miserably.

She thought Pei Luo'an loved her deeply. She had to mourn for her mother for three years, making their wedding delayed, but he didn't say anything about it and even rejected the empress's suggestion to make him marry a second wife or a concubine first. Ji Hanyue was so touched at that moment and gave him her full trust because of it. Now, it turned out that he hooked up with other women a long time ago. Moreover, it was not only one woman.

Ji Youran and Ming Xian'er could work together before since they had the same enemy – Ji Hanyue. But after the Crown Princess was gone, Ji Youran would never allow Ming Xian'er to compete for Pei Luo'an's love against her. Moreover, it sounded like Pei Luo'an wanted to marry Ming Xian'er officially, which Ji Youran would never let happen.

When Qu Moying saw Ming Xian'er before, she had guessed that Pei Luo'an was interested in Ming Xian'er and might even marry her. Otherwise, why would he allow a performer to live in the Eastern Palace and barely let her show up in public since then? He was obviously preparing for the future.

Qu Moying was just not sure how much Pei Luo'an was willing to do for Ming Xian'er.

"Even if I tell His Royal Highness about what happened to Ming Xian'er. Do you really think His Royal Highness will blame Princess Ji for Ming Xian'er? She was the one who disrespected the Crown Princess first. Even if she was beaten to death, His Royal Highness would never think it is Princess Ji's fault," Qu Moying directly destroyed the maid and Ming Xian'er's dream.

"Then...then what should we do?" The maid was scared by her words. She thought everything could be solved after His Royal Highness knew about it.

"If Ming Xian'er still wants to keep her life, let her save herself!" said Qu Moying. She wouldn't help Ming Xian'er, but she didn't mind showing her a way out.

Ming Xian'er might not be a friend for Qu Moying. But helping the enemy's enemy at the right time could give the enemy a fatal strike.

She had implied enough when she met Ming Xian'er for the first time.

"What should Sister Ming do?" flustered, the maid looked up at Qu Moying.

"You said the woodshed door is locked, but no one is guarding it currently, right?" asked Qu Moying.

"Yes. I heard the old maid who was guarding it before was called away to work in the kitchen. But the door is still locked," the maid kept nodding.

"Can you just smash the lock? If Ming Xian'er doesn't run away right now, only death will be waiting for her. Let her get herself out and beg His Royal Highness for help. Maybe his attitude will be softened after seeing her and spare her life."

"Will Her Royal Highness really...take...take Sister Ming's life?" The maid muttered to herself blankly. Beads of sweat started to show up on her forehead as the look on her face became more and more sullen. The more she thought about it, the scarier it felt. Since she worked for Ming Xian'er, if anything happened to her master, she would be involved as well.

"Of course, she will. If two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind. According to your words, Ming Xian'er even moved into this place earlier than Princess Ji. Also, His Royal Highness intends to marry her." Qu Moying's lips were curled into a faint smile as she said sarcastically, "If Ming Xian'er is a weak woman, she can only run away from this place and never show up in front of Princess Ji again. Otherwise, her life will be in danger."

"No, no. Sister Ming can beg His Royal Highness for help. His Royal Highness will surely forgive her." Out of scare, the maid kept waving her hands, feeling more and more flustered.

Running away? But to where? Could they really run away from the Eastern Palace? The best solution now was to beg His Royal Highness. She couldn't do it as a maid. Fourth Lady Qu didn't seem capable of doing it either. Only Sister Ming could do it.

“Many people came for the funeral today, and the whole Eastern Palace is crowded with people. If she really wants to run away, I doubt she will succeed. This is all I can tell you. Go back and help your Sister Ming! She doesn’t have a proper position in the Eastern Palace, so she can’t blame anyone else for this. Even a concubine would be in a better situation than her!”

Qu Moying closed her eyes again as her voice became fainter. The last words she said confused the maid even more, “The Crown Princess was such a poor woman! She didn’t even have a private maid to stay with her coffin today.”

Since Ji Youran framed her for the position of the Crown Princess, she would destroy her plan step by step, making her big dream end in vain.

Ming Xian’er could maintain the relationship with Pei Luo’an for such a long time, which meant she was not a fool. A person would dare to do anything if she was desperate.

Right now, it turned out to be the best chance!

Ji Youran moved into the Eastern Palace under the excuse of caring for Ji Hanyue, who was severely ill before. Now, Qu Moying wondered how Ji Youran would maintain her grace and elegance after the Crown Prince knew she designed a scheme to set Ming Xian’er up because of jealousy. Would she stay as calm as before? Would she say she didn’t care about her position as the Crown Prince’s second wife, and all she did was for taking care of Ji Hanyue...?

Since Qu Moying stayed in the Eastern Palace now, she would take her time to break Ji Youran’s pretentious mask, slowly but surely!

Qu Moying noticed the two private maids who should stay with Ji Hanyue’s coffin never showed up in the altar room. Ming Xian’er was not a stupid woman. Hearing her hint, she should know this is the opening for her to start her performance...

Also, Qu Moying had to use this chance to contact the Ji Family...

After finishing her words, Qu Moying waved her hand at the maid. Yu Dong pulled the girl on the ground up and said, "Go back first. Fourth Lady just used the medicine and needs some rest."

A strong smell of herbs was still in the room.

After the maid was pulled outside by Yu Dong, she stared at the air blankly for a few seconds and suddenly started to run away. Fourth Lady Qu was right. The Eastern Palace was crowded with people right now, so no one would notice Sister Ming escaped from the woodshed. As for running away or begging the Crown Prince for help, she would let Sister Ming decide for herself.

There was still no one around the woodshed. The maid picked up a brick from the ground and smashed it at the iron lock on the door. Growing up in the opera group, she worked a lot and built some strength. After a few seconds, she successfully broke the lock and rushed inside. Seeing Ming Xian'er, leaning on some woods and looking messy, the maid walked up and started to wail immediately.

"Sister Ming."

"Did you talk to her?" Ming Xian'er struggled to sit up. Her body had been wounded after the ten strokes. It sounded like a light punishment, but she was just a weak woman and didn't receive treatment in time. Right now, she couldn't even move too much.

"Sister Ming, it was Princess Ji. She envies you and wants to take your life. She said you disrespected the Crown Princess... If you tell His Royal Highness...he will choose to stand at Princess Ji's side... Fourth Lady Qu... to run away...because there are many people here for the funeral... No one will notice you. But if Princess Ji catches you...you...will be dead."

The maid told her what Qu Moying said before while weeping.

"Ji Youran wants to kill me?" Ming Xian'er froze for a second and asked hurriedly, "Does His Royal Highness know?"

"Even if the Crown Prince...knows, he won't blame it on Princess Ji... He will only think it is your fault. I heard that you can be killed if you disrespect the Crown Princess... Sister Ming, just run away, or they

will kill you sooner or later... You are not even the Crown Prince's concubine... Princess Ji can do whatever she wants to you, and the Crown Prince will still think she is being a good wife..."

The maid helped Ming Xian'er up while still wailing, "Fourth Lady Qu said the Crown Princess was a poor woman who didn't even have private maids to stay with her coffin. Why does this have something to do with you, Sister Ming? I don't understand what she wants to say!"

On her way here, the maid kept thinking about Fourth Lady Qu's words and finally understood her implication. Princess Ji was actually jealous of Sister Ming. Still, she pretended to have a good relationship with her and picked the perfect chance to set Sister Ming up. Moreover, the Crown Prince didn't have a reason to protect Sister Ming. He would even think Princess Ji gave Ming Xian'er a fair punishment.

Even a maid could figure it out, let alone Ming Xian'er. She was particularly shocked hearing the maid's last few words. Suddenly, she recalled some guesses she had in mind before and things she witnessed.

She was still a young girl but experienced in reading people because of her years traveling outside. She immediately understood Ji Youran's scheme. She was still suspecting those maids in the Eastern Palace who had slept with the Crown Prince before, and it turned out the person behind was Ji Youran.

Even though Ji Youran was the Crown Prince's second wife, Ming Xian'er didn't want to give up like this. She wouldn't run away, neither could she. Right now, she could only do as Fourth Lady Qu hinted.

This was her only way out!

"Take me to see the Crown Prince," Ming Xian'er gnashed her teeth.