

Pregnant Before the Royal Marriage

6 Chapter 6: Where is the Promised Wealthy Daddy?

It was a slightly purple-tinted round bowl, which seemed unremarkable, but who was Jiang Ruobai?

No matter how he looked, that bowl seemed to be something that Master Xuanyun had used during his travels.

It was a personal item of the rare master Xuanyun, truly priceless.

Such a collectible treasure, and the girl was using it as a cat bowl?

Jiang Ning doubted his own eyes.

But it really did look like it.

Jiang Ruobai couldn't help but move closer, squatting down, and staring at the bowl.

The cat was enjoying its meal when it noticed someone trying to snatch its food. It immediately turned around, hissing, and puffing up its fur.

Jiang Ning was stunned.

What happened to the wealthy father he promised?

Dressed so splendidly yet squatting on the ground trying to grab food with a cat?

This must be a fake, thinking of abducting the beautiful girl to sell her off!

That's not right either; if he was really a kidnapper, he wouldn't be so hungry as to snatch food from a cat.

Then he must be really starving.

Jiang Ning spoke up, "Uncle, if you really can't stand the hunger, I have a bit of mushroom soup left in the pot... It was supposed to be dinner, but I'll give it to you."

"Oh, oh..." Jiang Ruobai was so absorbed in looking at the bowl that he didn't hear her clearly. He just nodded a few times until a porcelain bowl appeared in front of him, making him realize that his actions could easily be misunderstood.

He chuckled, "Actually, I... Hm?"

He smelled a rich and special fragrance reaching his nose.

It came from the porcelain bowl in front of him.

When Jiang Ning saw his eager eyes, she smiled encouragingly, "Go ahead and eat."

The girl's smile was so bright, and the soup too fragrant. Jiang Ruobai couldn't help but accept the soup and took a small sip.

It was deliciously smooth and the mushrooms tender, with a lingering aftertaste.

Jiang Ruobai had never tasted such soup before, and he drank half a bowl in one go.

He came from a noble family and had seen all kinds of things in life and had experienced luxuries. Yet, in this thatched hut, he had tasted the most delicious soup of his life.

How could he not be shocked?

He couldn't help but lick his lips.

Seeing his face, Jiang Ning's heart sank.

Such a reaction to half a bowl of soup, this guy was even more miserable than Old Man Li!

And he lied to her, saying the Jiang Family had money, she could have as much as she wanted.

Pah.

She didn't want to go anymore.

Jiang Ruobai had no idea that he was marked as a pauper just for drinking half a bowl of soup.

He was staring at the porcelain bowl in his hand.

This porcelain bowl...

Its glaze was azure, with a gentle luster and brown cracks at the base. It was undoubtedly... a rare antique from the old official kiln.

The price of just this one bowl alone was worth 100 taels of silver.

Jiang Ruobai glanced at the wooden table in the main room and trembled.

There was a complete set on the table, identical to the one in his hand.

Such a set was even more precious.

It wasn't that he hadn't seen these things before, but not in such dilapidated thatched huts.

What was going on?

Shocked, Jiang Ruobai walked into the room and saw a painting spread out on a high wooden stand near a pot of orchids. Some parts were even covered in mud.

Jiang Ruobai's pupils constricted, he darted forward and took the orchids off the painting, examining it carefully.

The paper, the brushwork, the seal, and the grand atmosphere conveyed by the painting—

Yes, it was a genuine work from Zhang Linxian, a master calligrapher and painter of the Southern Dynasties period—The Sunset Glow.

He had a copy of this painting in his study, copied by a renowned painter from the Imperial Court. Although it was still a good painting, compared to this genuine piece, the gap was too big.

No, there was simply no comparison.

The fake would always be fake.

It could never become real!

Jiang Ruobai swallowed and glanced around the room, finally resting his eyes on an inconspicuous large wicker basket behind the door.

7 Chapter 7: A Basket of Miscellaneous Items

It was an old wicker basket with broken edges.

The basket was filled with various items.

He glanced at the basket and was immediately stunned by its contents.

Jiang Ning looked up at him, "What's wrong with you?"

Is he planning to rob this place?

What could he possibly steal from such a bare house?

“What is that?” Jiang Ruobai swallowed and pointed at the wicker basket, asking.

“Oh, it’s just a basket for storing old miscellaneous items.”

“Miscellaneous... items?” Jiang Ruobai’s eyes widened as he uncontrollably walked over, picked up the topmost gray-blue teacup, and examined it closely before rubbing it hard with his sleeve.

Was it polished from a sapphire?

How much would a whole gem like this be worth?

Jiang Ning watched his actions, opened her mouth, and mumbled, “Uncle, this is not Aladdin’s lamp, you can’t summon a genie by rubbing it.”

Jiang Ruobai glanced at her, put the teacup back silently, and picked up a soft cloth.

He rubbed the cloth and almost dropped it in shock.

Was it...

Made of tiger skin?

There were numerous messy and strange lines drawn on it.

An ordinary person couldn’t tell and would only think of them as creases and worn patterns.

But Jiang Ruobai was no ordinary person.

He was, after all, a distinguished scholar and the current Minister of Revenue, in charge of the empire’s finances and conferred the title of Glorious Grand Master Ziqing.

Identifying calligraphy, paintings, and antiques was a piece of cake for him.

The lines painted on this tiger skin represented the twenty-eight constellations used by ancient people to deduce celestial movements and predict the future.

Although predicting the future was elusive, this tiger skin was a genuinely precious antique.

It was far more valuable than the gem-encrusted cup he had seen earlier.

Just two items, and both were treasures.

What about the rest?

Jiang Ruobai craned his neck to get a closer look at the basket and gasped.

Every item in this broken basket was a treasure.

Either precious antiques or small trinkets made from porcelain, metal, or stone.

Items that looked unremarkable but only insiders would understand.

Taking out this whole basket of items would drive people crazy.

Jiang Ruobai looked around the thatched hut and then back at the young girl outside the door.

What was going on?

Could it be that the family who had adopted his daughter was actually a wealthy hidden household in disguise?

Were these humble huts just a cover?

“Seventh Sister, where did you get these things?” he carefully asked.

“Old Man Li gave them to me.”

“Old Man... Li?” Jiang Ruobai was taken aback.

Li was a royal surname.

Jiang Ruobai picked up a round thumb ring and vaguely remembered seeing it on someone’s hand before.

Whose was it?

He looked at Jiang Ning for a moment, and an idea flashed through his mind.

Ah!

Wasn’t this something that belonged to His Majesty?!

Li...

Old Man Li...

Could it be that the “Old Man Li” she was talking about was actually...

Jiang Ruobai started to tremble.

Was the person who adopted his daughter actually the emperor?!!

“Seventh Sister, who is Old Man Li to you?” he asked.

“He’s just a poor and fat old man who comes to our restaurant to eat. He used these items to pay for his meals,” Jiang Ning casually explained. “Although these things are just some worthless junk, he’s actually a nice guy. It’s strange, though, that this unattractive old man has such a cute grandson.”

Jiang Ruobai: “...”

Jiang Ning frowned, “Right, if I leave, Old Man Li and Xiaoqian won’t be able to find me. I should leave a note.”

Xiaoqian?

Li Tingqian, the emperor’s eldest grandson?

Jiang Ruobai shuddered and quickly stopped her, “Seventh Sister, you don’t need to leave a note. I will have someone stand guard here and inform them when they come.”

8 Chapter Eight: A Room Full of Rubbish

Jiang Ning nodded, “That’s fine. By the way, do you have any money on you?”

Jiang Ruobai groped for his money bag, yanked it off, and handed it to her, “What do you need the money for?”

“Although Old Man Li is both fat and greedy, Xiaoqian is cute and well-behaved. I won’t see him anymore, so I’ll leave him some money.” Jiang Ning took out a piece of silver and placed it on the table.

Jiang Ruobai: “...”

This child really doesn’t know the identities of that grandfather-grandson duo.

If His Majesty is incognito and intends to conceal his identity, he dare not casually reveal it.

“Shall we go back home then?” Jiang Ruobai asked, “If there is anything you want to take with you, I can get someone to carry it.”

“Carry? There’s nothing much I need to take. May I take Miaomiao?” Jiang Ning pointed at the kitten who was eating fish.

Jiang Ruobai laughed and said: “Of course.”

Jiang Ning patiently waited for Miaomiao to finish eating, then washed the bowl clean, saying: “Miaomiao seems to really like this cat bowl, so let’s take it along.”

With one hand holding the cat and the other holding the cat bowl, the clear-eyed girl looked at Jiang Ruobai, “Uncle, shall we go?”

Jiang Ruobai, whose eyes were fixed on the bowl, came back to his senses when he heard this: “Huh?”

“Aren’t we going to your house?”

She wasn’t regretting taking her in, was she?

Jiang Ruobai pointed to the room: “Seventh Sister, did you… forget to take something?”

“What?” Jiang Ning seemed clueless, she turned back to look.

Among all the useless items in the room, aside from this cat, what else was worth taking?

Jiang Ruobai hurriedly said, “I think the things in that wicker basket in the room are not bad. They were given to you as a gift…you should take them.”

He couldn’t dare call him Old Man Li.

When Jiang Ning thought about it, that made sense.

She had been here for two months and was closest to Old Man Li.

Even though the stuff was junk, it was given with kindness.

Leaving it behind wouldn’t be nice.

So, she decided to take it along.

Jiang Ruobai quickly called two servants, retrieved a pear wood box, packed the stuff inside, and loaded it onto the carriage.

Jiang Ning was then assisted by two maids into the carriage, holding the cat and the cat bowl, and they went to the Jiang Family residence in a leisurely manner.

After the carriage left, a figure left the top of the wall, entered the Imperial Palace, knelt before the Emperor, and said, "Your Majesty, Lord Jiang has brought Miss Jiang back."

The Emperor, a chubby man, stood up, pounding his chest and stomping his feet, "Damn Jiang Ruobai, he took the girl away, what am I supposed to eat now?"

"Your Majesty, if you really like her, why not bring Miss Jiang into the palace and let her become Your Highness. Then she can cook for you every day?"

"Nonsense! I'm an old man, what do I need a wife for?" The Emperor glared at him, "Besides, the girl is set to be married to the fifth one!"

"Ah, Prince Yu." The subordinate paused then whispered, "Prince Yu is not attracted to women and is disobedient, would he accept her? Besides, with Miss Jiang's leg... the Prince wouldn't agree."

"Does he still have a choice? Even if the girl is lame, even if she's paralyzed, he still has to marry her!"

"..."

How ruthless His Majesty is towards his own son.

However, Prince Yu isn't an ordinary Prince. He wouldn't easily accept just any woman.

...

The Jiang Family residence.

The old Madam Jiang has two sons, one a scholar and the other a warrior, living side by side.

The old madam stays with her elder son, and Jiang Ruobai is the younger son.

In Chang'an City, the Jiang Family is quite distinguished. However, the public opinions of the eldest and second houses are drastically different.

Jiang Mubai of the eldest house is a commanding general with military power, he disciplines his family strictly. Most of his wives and descendants are well-behaved and learned.

Jiang Ruobai of the second house is a civil servant. Ever since his legitimate daughter disappeared twelve years ago, his legal wife became mentally unstable. Henceforth, the concubines acted wild, completely suppressing the legal wife.

9 Chapter 9: I Am Your Father

Jiang Ning sat in the horse carriage, arriving at the notoriously bad second residence of the Jiang Family.

Mother Zhou led a few servants to wait at the side door. Seeing the carriage, she walked forward with an excited expression.

Jiang Ruobai came to the carriage and extended his hand: "Seventh Sister, be careful, let Daddy help you."

Jiang Ning held the cat and didn't move: "Uncle, let that aunt come and help me."

"...Seventh Sister, I'm your father." Jiang Ruobai was cautious, "That's Mother Zhou, who works for your mother."

Jiang Ning had a hard time saying the word "father."

Moreover, she didn't know if he was her real father or a godfather.

However, looking at the luxurious mansion in front of her, she thought the original owner must be the real daughter of Jiang Family.

Otherwise, the Jiang Family would not need to bring a lame and lonely girl back home.

"Call me father." Jiang Ruobai's eyes were full of stars, looking at her expectantly.

Jiang Ning glanced at the gate of the Jiang Mansion, steeled her heart, and said, "Daddy!"

Jiang Ruobai wondered, what is "Daddy"?

Anyway, Seventh Sister finally called him "father"!

Jiang Ruobai was very excited and let Mother Zhou take the maids to carry her down from the carriage.

"Seventh Sister, Daddy has prepared a courtyard for you, which is very close to your mother's. But your mother is not feeling well, so let's settle down first, and you can see her slowly later. Alright?"

The servants couldn't believe their eyes as they watched Jiang Ruobai fawning over the young girl with great care. Where was the demeanor of the Emperor's chief steward who managed the country's finances?

It was simply unbearable to watch.

Jiang Ning nodded her head.

Jiang Ruobai continued, "I'll go and check on your mother. Mother Zhou, you take Seventh Miss to her room. Seventh Sister, Daddy will come to have dinner with you later."

Jiang Ning nodded and watched him leave quickly.

Mother Zhou brought over a new wooden wheelchair and helped Jiang Ning sit on it.

Jiang Ning nodded, let Miaomiao lie on her lap, and held the cat's bowl as Mother Zhou pushed her to her own courtyard.

The Jiang Mansion was huge, with every corner being luxurious and exquisite.

Although Jiang Ning had visited various gardens before, they were all old and couldn't compare to this grand mansion in front of her.

She looked around curiously, with a heart full of touristic interest.

If only she had a camera in her hand.

Mother Zhou took her to a small courtyard, which wasn't large but was very beautiful. It had artificial hills, a small pond, and Wisteria-covered pavilions.

The whole courtyard was exquisite and romantic.

Four old women, four maids, and eight little maids stood in a row, saluting her in unison.

"Slave has seen Seventh Miss."

Jiang Ning was astonished.

Did she, just one person, need so many people to serve her?

However, Mother Zhou looked unsatisfied and guilty: "I didn't have enough time to prepare properly. Please make do with this, Seventh Miss. In a few days, I will arrange for more suitable maids to serve you."

Jiang Ning laughed, "This is enough."

Mother Zhou said, "Chunlai, Qiulai, you two go and boil water for Seventh Miss to bathe and change her clothes. I'll go and tell the kitchen to prepare the food. Seventh Miss's body is not well, so you should all take good care of her. Be careful of your skins if you mess up!"

Everyone in the house was curious about the Seventh Miss who had been missing for twelve years.

Chunlai and Xialai were first-class maids in the mansion, assigned by Jiang Ruobai himself.

There were also two maids named Qiulai and Dongxie.

Jiang Ning found this list of names quite interesting.

Especially Dongxie, who was strong enough to lift Jiang Ning by herself.

She didn't know if Jiang Ruobai intentionally chose her because of Jiang Ning's leg disability.

Lying in a large carved bathtub full of rose petals, Jiang Ning let out a comfortable sigh.

10 Chapter 10: The More You Look, the More Real It Appears

She hadn't taken a proper bath since she arrived here so long ago.

After bathing, several maids took to the task at once – drying her body, combing her hair, dressing her.

In the blink of an eye, Jiang Ning was dressed in a round-neck blouse, a willow-flower skirt, and had a simple single bun adorned with a small delicate pearl hairpin, revealing her smooth forehead and long neck.

Mother Zhou was practically mesmerized, "Seventh Miss...you look exactly like Madam did when she was young."

At that moment, a brazenly clear laughter resounded from outside.

Mother Zhou frowned, and went out to see the visitors, "Fifth Daughter, Sixth Miss is here."

Fifth Daughter, Jiang Yuan, walked straight in, "We heard Seventh Sister has returned, we came to see."

Mother Zhou attempted to deter her, only to be slapped, "Mother Zhou, who do you think you are to stop me?"

"Fifth Sister, don't behave like this." Sixth Miss, Jiang Yan, tried to persuade.

"Sixth Sister, aren't you curious what kind of person our Seventh Sister is?"

As they entered, they saw a young girl sitting in a wheelchair, a cat sprawled on her lap, and she was feeding the cat using a bowl in her hand.

The young girl's silhouette was graceful and elegant.

"So she's really a cripple?" The sight of a wheelchair reassured Jiang Yuan.

Even if she's the legitimate daughter, what use is she in such a disabled condition?

She couldn't possibly surpass her standing.

Recently it was revealed that the Emperor was looking for a consort for the Prince of Yu.

All the noble ladies of Chang'an City were eagerly waiting, and amidst this, the Jiang Family announced they found their legitimate daughter, creating unnecessary chaos.

So when they heard the Seventh Miss came back, the girls of the Jiang Family couldn't wait to meet her, keen to know what the Seventh Sister who was retrieved from the common people looked like.

Who knew, she turned out to be a cripple!

They couldn't help but feel schadenfreude.

No matter what, the royal family wouldn't possibly consider a disabled woman as the princess consort.

Jiang Fifth Daughter, completely reassured, felt relaxed, and in a good mood, she began taunting Jiang Ning.

Hearing them speaking, Jiang Ning moved her wheelchair to face them.

Upon seeing her face, both Jiang Yuan and Jiang Yan were taken aback.

Astonished by her stunning beauty, and by her striking resemblance to Madam.

Without investigating anything else, her face alone was enough to confirm her identity.

Madam was the most beautiful woman in Chang'an City in her youth, seeing Jiang Ning's face made Jiang Yuan feel a sense of bitterness.

"You're the Seventh Sister, right?" Jiang Yan approached in surprise, "Seventh sister, you look so much like Madam. Where have you been living all these years?"

“Didn’t you hear? They found her in a thatched hut of a broken-down household.” Jiang Yuan laughed lightly, “Seventh sister, there is no shortage of anything in our house. It’s one thing to bring a dirty cat, but why did you bring a broken bowl? You are not here to beg.”

Jiang Ning lifted up her bowl, “Oh, you mean this? It’s said that the Miss Jiang is knowledgeable and smart, but how come you can’t recognize such a precious thing?”

“Isn’t this just a broken bowl? How can it be a precious thing?”

“This, it’s a bowl left behind by a high monk who travelled west to seek the Buddhist scriptures, it’s worth a city!” Said Jiang Ning, making it up on the spot.

With her experience, fooling a couple of young ladies felt like child’s play.

Jiang Yuan wavered between belief and disbelief. Although she refused to believe, seeing Jiang Ning so certain, she couldn’t help but get a second look at the bowl.

Look once, look twice.

Strange.

Why does it seem real the more she looked at it?

Jiang Yan also started wondering in her heart.

She and Jiang Yuan exchanged a glance.

Jiang Yuan moved forward, “Let me have a look!”