

My Crown 1471

Chapter 1471: Going Boating

Inside Jun Mountain's Yating Court.

The mountain range undulated as it extended uninterrupted into the distance. Although the peaks were precipitous, the court situated inside was verdant and surrounded on three sides by water.

The scenery was gorgeous, and the view delightful.

Upon arriving at their destination, Princess Mi impatiently bounced out of the carriage. She stretched out her arms and cried out happily, "Good, good. There aren't any zombies or mutated beasts, and the large stretch of lake has maintained its emerald-green. The lush trees form a leafy shade, and the fragrance from the flowers just assaults the senses. Ohohoho. I'm in love with this place!"

Qiao Mu lifted the curtain and expressionlessly burrowed out from the carriage.

When she heard Princess Mi saying this, she automatically scanned their surroundings for some reason.

Haitang immediately went into a defensive stance and cautiously glanced around, as well. She then informed in a low voice, "Crown Prince Consort, as Princess Mi stated, there are no signs of zombies or mutated beasts."

Xiao Mi twitched her mouth and looked at Qiao Mu with a raised eyebrow. "Cough, Younger Sis, this guard of yours is quite interesting. From the looks of it she is not an ordinary talent."

At this time, the noble ladies from the other kingdoms as well as the young ladies from the patrician families were also alighting from their carriages, and they were delighted by the scenery in front of them.

Her Majesty the Queen's mood subsequently improved, and she told everyone with a smile, "This place, just like Jun Mountain's royal hunting grounds, is tended to by specialized personnel."

"No wonder this deserves to be called the Northern Mo Fortification." Southern Baili's fifth princess, Baili Zhen, couldn't resist sighing with emotion.

Such a large fortification was planned out in such perfect order, from the buildings and defense to the perfected protective mechanisms and garrison arrangements. Everything inside the entire fortification had something extraordinary about it.

This Yating Court on Jun Mountain did not seem to have changed much compared to before the zombie outbreak.

"Some mutated zombie beasts had appeared inside this lake before, but we were able to deal with them promptly since there were not many of them. As of now, this lake has lost around 70 to 80 percent of its water inhabitants." Queen Zhao sighed.

"Everyone does not need to worry. We had better board the boat first."

“After you, Your Majesty.”

Everyone courteously let her go first.

An exquisite and resplendent gaily-painted three-story pleasure boat had docked at the shore. The top of the pleasure boat was fringed with colored glaze tiles that sparkled brilliantly in the sunlight.

Under Queen Zhao’s lead, everyone boarded the pleasure boat one by one. Afterwards, the boat slowly left the shore for the center of the lake.

Yating Court was just right on the small island in the center of this emerald-green lake.

From afar, it was like it was being embraced by the emerald water, and the jade leaves on the island looked to be extremely full of vitality.

That should be an unpolluted world, everyone mused excitedly.

Qiao Mu was also a bit curious since it was also her first time here.

She didn’t expect there to be such a peculiar courtyard existing in this world that was free from the world of men.

“Your Majesty, since this Yating Court has not been contaminated by zombie beasts, why have you not chosen to reside here?” Jin Hongluan of Northern Wei’s Jin Clan Fort was a candid girl.

Seeing that the environment here was so gorgeous, and the woods luxuriant, she couldn’t help but find it strange. It was not inferior to the royal palace at all.

Queen Zhao explained with a smile, “There were still mutated beasts prowling about before, but because the royal court has been tending to this area, they sent quite a few operation squads here to complete missions.. Look, there practically aren’t any fish in this lake water.”

Chapter 1472: Qingxi Spiritual Bamboo Shoot

Everyone looked down at the rippling water. Sure enough, the water was so incomparably clear that they could barely see any small fishies.

“After all, this Yating Court is just a tiny recreational residence, so how can it house so many people from the palace,” Consort Cheng added with a smile.

Jin Hongluan couldn’t help but be stunned at this, and she responded with a smile, “Hongluan did not consider the situation thoroughly.”

She had only considered how difficult it was for there to be an uncontaminated area in the apocalypse. However, she had neglected to take into account the several hundred concubines in the Northern Mo king’s three palaces and six courts, not to mention the numerous eunuchs, royal maids, and royal guards.

Where would they put all those people? The tiny Yating Court might be able to fit the three palaces, but not the six courts...

Queen Zhao waved her hand with a smile, and the group soon arrived at the island while going along with the tide.

After the boat docked, everyone swarmed onto shore as they eagerly followed Queen Zhao into Yating Court.

As this courtyard served as the royal family's recreational residence, it was naturally tended to meticulously on a regular basis.

Since Her Majesty the Queen was bringing guests here today, the manager of the recreational residence had been waiting outside with all the servants since early in the morning.

Seeing that the queen and her party had arrived, he quickly went up to welcome them inside with an obsequious smile.

The manager was a fat and bulky middle-aged man. It looked like his days were usually quite free and unfettered inside this Yating Court.

"Your Majesty, esteemed guests, please follow this humble one." That manager then led everyone inside the court with a smile. "Does everyone want to rest in their rooms, or would you like this humble one to guide esteemed guests on a tour of Yating Court?"

"It hasn't been tiring for us coming here in our carriages, so we shouldn't be tired." Queen Zhao gazed at everyone with a chuckle before saying, "Manager Hu, why don't you guide us around on a short tour of this court."

"Alrighty. After you, Your Majesty, esteemed guests." Manager Hu smiled so widely that there were crease marks on his white and fleshy face.

At this time, a domineering voice spoke up. "This princess has heard that this Yating Court has a kind of bamboo shoot that is extremely delicious. Additionally, eating it will cause one to feel their mystic energy becoming more abundant. Is this true?"

Manager Hu was someone with discerning eyes, and he recognized this person who was trying to pick trouble as the royal family's Fourth Princess Mo Shuang, that infamous unruly princess.

He rapidly nodded and responded obsequiously, "The fourth princess's words are true. However, very few of these spiritual bamboo shoots are produced every year. They have practically disappeared during the past three years especially. The few spiritual bamboo shoots that are produced each year have been presented to the queen dowager and the king."

After saying this, he looked at Fourth Princess Mo Shuang with an awkward and hesitant expression that said "I don't have any spiritual bamboo shoots here."

Reportedly, this fourth princess was a normal person and completely had nothing to do with a mystic cultivator.

Why did she suddenly think of this.

So what if spiritual bamboo shoots could imperceptibly influence and increase one's mystic energy. You don't freakin' even have an ounce of mystic energy in you, so it'd just be wasted on you!

“Where is it.” The young crown prince consort gazed curiously at Manager Hu.

When Manager Hu saw this, he rapidly cupped his hands toward the young crown prince consort with an obviously even more sycophantic expression. “Will the crown prince consort please follow this humble one. This humble one can bring all the esteemed guests over to take a look. However, we have not been able to gather any fresh spiritual bamboo shoots this year.”

He sighed as he spoke, bringing everyone to the bank of a small stream. He then pointed to the rows of bamboo on the banks and said:

“Your Majesty, esteemed guests, this place is called Qingxi.. The spiritual bamboo shoots are over there.”

Chapter 1473: Caught Red-Handed

Qiao Mu trotted up to a slim bamboo around a meter tall and flicked it with her finger: *This bamboo is short and skinny with no appreciative value. There was completely no way to compare it with the bamboo grove the Holy Water Sect’s Old Sect Master had nurtured back then.*

“Masta, these really are spiritual bamboo shoots!” Qiuqiu suddenly piped up.

Afterwards, two slim vines shot out from her sleeve without any prompt from her. They directly unearthed a stubby bamboo shoot before quickly pulling it into the paradise.

“Hehe!” Qiuqiu exclaimed happily, “You’re in luck, Master! Walk further inside so we can dig up more spiritual bamboo shoots to bring back with us.”

“At that time, we can also plant a bamboo grove on Paradise Planet. How about that.” The more Little Qiuqiu talked, the more worked up it got. “In the future, our Paradise Planet will have flowers, bamboo, and trees. Hahaha, don’t you think that it’s perfect?”

“Mhm.” Qiao Mu nodded, and then she questioned, “Flowers?”

“The jasper begonia!” Qiuqiu declared proudly, “Masta, I helped you grow a large patch of jasper begonia. Do you like it? You can come in and play when you have nothing to do!”

Qiao Mu couldn’t help finding it funny.

She hadn’t expected this little fellow to also smuggle the jasper begonia from her inner world into the paradise.

“Don’t get rid of the original pot of flowers. I have to return it to Grandmother afterwards,” Qiao Mu instructed.

“Don’t worry. There was originally a Sumeru seed inside that jasper begonia that was wreaking havoc. Masta, I extracted the Sumeru seed and planted it in the Hundred Poisons Valley.”

“Ah, is that so.” Qiao Mu couldn’t help but find it surprising.

This Sumeru seed was the seed of a poisonous plant. How did it drop inside the jasper begonia, nearly killing it? It truly was quite strange.

As Qiao Mu talked to Qiuqiu, they walked further along the stream, allowing for Qiuqiu to give free rein to its bandit nature. It dug out all the spiritual bamboo shoots that could be gathered and dragged them into the paradise.

“Masta, Masta. With Little Earth and Little Water’s help now, it will probably take some time for the spiritual tea to grow. But these spiritual bamboo shoots don’t need to be too pampered. I reckon that we will be able to feast on them soon after growing them in our paradise for several days.”

“I saw that you dug out quite a lot of spiritual bamboo shoots. Why would this Manager Hu say that there aren’t any spiritual bamboo shoots? Is he not an honest guy?”

“That is obviously the case!” Qiuqiu smirked, “From how this guy is telling lies and half-truths, he is most likely concealing selfish motives.”

Now that Qiao Mu was aware of the situation, she deliberately kicked away the dirt on the bank of the stream and allowed the only spiritual bamboo shoot that Qiuqiu did not dig up to show its tip.

This small bamboo shoot was truly too tiny and also ugly, so Qiuqiu did not fancy it.

Fourth Princess Mo Shuang had sharp eyes and noticed it at once. She could not help but shout, “Isn’t there a spiritual bamboo shoot here? Manager Hu, how come you said that you haven’t dug up spiritual bamboo shoots this year? You couldn’t be hiding something from Her Majesty the Queen, right.”

“Aiyo, heaven and earth can attest to my conscience. How would this humble one dare to deceive esteemed guests?” Manager Hu explained with a poker face, “Look at how ugly this tiny bamboo shoot is. What about it looks like a spiritual bamboo shoot. Moreover, if everyone does not believe it, I can immediately order servants to go cook this bamboo shoot for everyone to taste. This absolutely is the most common type of bamboo shoot, and not a spiritual bamboo shoot.”

“Haitang, where’s the pot!”

“The pot is here!” Haitang took out a small black pot from her inner world and held it in her arms. She then asked the crown prince consort earnestly, “Crown Prince Consort, do you want to cook it now?”

The young crown prince consort nodded emphatically. “Cook it for a taste!”

“Yes! Crown Prince Consort!”

Chapter 1474: Almost Fighting Just for a Taste...

Seeing that other people were looking at them dumbfoundedly, Haitang cut to the chase and took out firewood and a spit from her inner world before setting the small black pot over it.

She then lit the fire with a lighter and started to heat the pot.

After pouring water into the pot and letting it boil, she tossed in the slices of the tiny bamboo shoot.

Meanwhile, the young crown prince consort also took out a handful of noodles from her own inner world, as well as some prepared shredded meat.

Everyone gazed incredulously at this master and servant duo.

Th-They, they were.. do, doing what?

“Aiya, Younger Sis, I suddenly find myself starving after smelling this fragrance. It turns out that it’s almost time for lunch! Prepare a bowl for me later too.” Xiao Mi took out a bowl and chopsticks from her own inner world and crouched beside the pot to stare at it impatiently.

Queen Zhao’s mouth kept twitching as she looked speechlessly at this daughter-in-law of hers.

Commandery Princess Yi’an, who was standing beside her, couldn’t help but smile. “The crown prince consort is cooking lunch?”

“There’s none for you.” Qiao Mu glanced at her coldly before having Haitang scatter the noodles into the pot.

Soon, a pot of delicious and fragrant noodles with shredded pork and spiritual bamboo shoot was cooked to completion.

By this time, everyone noticed that Manager Hu, who was standing to the side, had his forehead covered in cold sweat. It seemed like he could faint at any moment.

Queen Zhao realized something and sent Nanny Qing a look.

Nanny Qing understood, and with a wave of her hand, a dozen royal guards darted out from the shadows and formed an encirclement around the sweating Manager Hu.

Qiao Mu took out a stack of bowls and ladled a small half-bowl each for Queen Zhao, Mo You, Xiao Mi, and Baili Zhen. She had people pass the bowls to them, while she and Haitang each also had a half-bowl too.

The remaining small half-full pot was available for other people to try.

Everyone saw that Queen Zhao and the rest had all squinted their eyes in delight after only drinking a mouthful of soup.

Thus, they hastily rushed up to fight over that remaining small half-pot of noodle soup.

There weren’t many noodles left, but it was still possible to drink a mouthful or two of the soup. Those who were quick rapidly ladled themselves a half-bowl of soup, while those who were slow could only stare at the others.

Mo Shuang and Yang Fengyan nearly came to blows for two mouthfuls of soup.

In the end, Mo Shuang sent her accompanying royal guards a look and had them restrain Yang Fengyan so that she could chug down these last two mouthfuls of soup.

Since she was a normal person, increases in mystic energy had nothing to do with her at all. However, she did taste the fragrance from the spiritual bamboo shoot soup filling her mouth, leaving a rich aftertaste.

“What an audaciously wicked servant! You actually dared to deceive the queen dowager and the king!!!” Queen Zhao’s expression instantly sunk.

Two royal guards promptly went up and kicked Manager Hu, who was sweating buckets, to his knees.

Manager Hu hastily yowled out his grievances, “Will Your Majesty the Queen exercise your penetrating judgment! This humble one dares not deceive the king and the queen dowager. This humble one really did not know that the spiritual bamboo shoots had already emerged. If this humble one knew, this humble one would naturally have sent people first thing to dig them up and present them to Her Majesty the Queen Dowager...”

“A load of lies!!” Queen Zhao castigated. “Tie him up!”

“Search his courtyard.”

Manager Hu was horrified. He did not know how things had progressed to this state.

These spiritual bamboo shoots were buried deep beneath the ground and weren’t as easy to dig up as those ordinary bamboo shoots.

Even he, who was stationed here inside this Yating Court all year long, could only occasionally dig up one or two spiritual bamboo shoots from this bamboo grove. *Why was the crown prince consort able to step on a spiritual bamboo shoot with a casual stomp?*

Soon, the people who went to search Manager Hu’s room ran back to report to Queen Zhao.

Chapter 1475: You’re Speaking Nonsense!

“Your Majesty, we have found a large storeroom under Manager Hu’s room. There are a lot of foodstuffs and supplies hidden inside, as well as a large amount of mystic currency and magnetite.”

Queen Zhao’s expression instantly turned unsightly, and her sharp eyes pierced that Manager Hu as she remarked, “Very good! All these years, these spiritual bamboo shoots have become your means of accumulating wealth!”

Manager Hu was unable to withstand the pressure and knelt down at once. He kowtowed with a pale face, shouting, “Spare this humble one’s life, Your Majesty. Spare this humble one’s life!”

“You wicked servant actually have the nerve to have this queen spare your life?” Queen Zhao was so furious that she let out a laugh instead. “What are you all waiting for? Drag him away to behead him!!”

This wicked servant didn’t present spiritual bamboo shoots to the king and rather kept watch over this place to become a mountain king.

Good, good, good. It really was extremely good!

Queen Zhao’s eyes emitted a cold light, and with a wave of her hand, two royal guards immediately stepped up to drag away the wailing Manager Hu.

“No, you cannot kill me! Your Majesty the Queen!” Manager Hu really was grasping desperately at straws now, and in his panic, he blurted out, “This old servant was, was sent over here by Her Highness Consort Dowager Shu. You cannot kill me! You cannot kill me.”

Consort Cheng's expression changed, and she immediately looked toward her daughter-in-law, Shu Quan.

Shu Quan's expression also shifted before she quickly reprimanded, "You are spouting nonsense. How can you, this wicked servant, have been sent over by Her Highness the Consort Dowager?"

"You are obviously trying to use Her Highness the Consort Dowager's name to deceive Her Majesty the Queen!"

"No, that is not so!" That Manager Hu struggled with all his might and yelled with a pale face, "I confess, I confess, I will confess everything! Your Majesty the Queen, how can this servant, a lowly manager, dare to embezzle spiritual bamboo shoots and sell them off if there was no one from above me directing me to!"

"Besides, I would need a channel through which to sell off these precious spiritual bamboo shoots in order to successfully exchange them for the supplies I need, correct?"

Queen Zhao remained silent for several seconds before waving her hand to have the royal guards drag that manager back again. She looked at him coldly and said, "You are correct. I do not think you have the guts to embezzle them. Tell me who is above you and directing you to do this."

Shu Quan's eyelid jerked, and she forcefully smothered her flustered emotions. She shouted icily with a haughty manner, "Wicked servant, you're still claiming random connections even when faced with imminent death!"

"Eldest Prince Consort, do not butt in right now." Queen Zhao swept her a cold look as a name had already surfaced in her heart.

"It was the eldest prince, it was all under the eldest prince's directions!" Manager Hu spilled the beans and confessed everything. He continued to say in a single breath, "In the past, the eldest prince had even instructed this servant to present Her Majesty the Queen Dowager and His Majesty the King with a fifth of the spiritual bamboo shoots."

"But for some reason this year, the eldest prince suddenly ran over to this servant and said that he was short of money. Because of that, he had this servant detain all the spiritual bamboo shoots and not send even a single one to the palace!"

"You're spouting nonsense!!" Her Highness Consort Cheng shrieked loudly before Eldest Prince Consort Shu Quan could say anything,

While pointing at the kneeling Manager Hu, her body trembled back and forth in anger. "You, you! You d*mned despicable servant. Someone, someone come!! Drag away this despicable servant for me!"

"Consort Cheng, why are you so impatient. Things have yet to be explained clearly, yet you are so eager to have this servant die? Is it because you are feeling guilty?"

Chapter 1476: It Was Orchestrated

Queen Zhao glanced at Consort Cheng coldly before stopping her with a light wave of her hand. She then looked at the kneeling Manager Hu again. "You wicked servant, you had better think clearly before talking! Exactly who directed you to embezzle the spiritual bamboo shoots and smuggle them for private goods?"

"It is His Highness the Eldest Prince!" Manager Hu insisted emphatically that it was the eldest prince. It was as if he had bit onto a piece of fatty meat, he simply did not relent in his statement.

However, Consort Cheng was flushed with agitation, and she suddenly ran over uncontrollably to claw this Manager Hu to death. "Don't you spout nonsense! And frame my son!"

"After we return to the palace, I will personally report this incident to the king." Queen Zhao smiled mirthlessly, "At that time, Consort Cheng must make sure to be present to thoroughly explain the situation. Don't blame this queen for not giving you the opportunity to argue your case!"

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty, please listen to me! This affair has nothing to do with my Jiao'er! Your Majesty!" With her head covered in sweat, Consort Cheng wanted to continue arguing, but Queen Zhao was unwilling to keep listening to her. She waved her hand and declared, "This queen is tired. Nanny Qing, you will temporarily take charge of managing everything in this Yating Court."

"Yes, this servant will do as you bid." Nanny Qing cracked a smile and swept a contemptuous look at Consort Cheng and the eldest prince consort, Shu Quan. Like a victorious gamecock, she left first with a group of people to arrange everyone's food and lodgings.

After dealing with the morning's trouble, Queen Zhao felt so hungry that it felt like her stomach had turned flat. After all, she had merely drunk a mouthful of soup and two bunches of noodles, so she only wanted to rest as soon as possible.

With such a bountiful harvest, Qiao Mu did not care about this boisterous crowd of damsels anymore and walked into the court along with Princess Mi.

Soon, the courtyards were distributed.

Because this was only a recreational residence, it was impossible to assign one person to each courtyard. Each courtyard was randomly assigned with two to three people.

Since the young crown prince consort and Xiao Mi got assigned to the same courtyard, they were both happy.

However, Baili Zhen and Mo Shuang had sour moods when they found out that they had gotten assigned together...

After returning to her own courtyard, Qiao Mu had Haitang cook another pot of noodles with spiritual bamboo shoots and shredded meat. Since only the three of them were sharing this one pot, they could naturally eat to their fill.

Princess Mi was very satisfied from the meal and asked while rubbing her belly, "Younger Sis, do you say that that mother-in-law of yours truly was unaware, or pretended to be unaware to use this as a pretext to make a statement?"

Princess Mi was naturally talking about this incident with the spiritual bamboo shoots.

Qiao Mu sighed. "Why do you think she brought us to this Yating Court on Jun Mountain for no reason? Could it truly just be to entertain you noble ladies from the other kingdoms?"

That was because Queen Zhao had collected enough evidence to use entertaining the noble ladies as a pretext to directly clash with Consort Cheng.

Princess Mi widened her eyes in shock. "You? How do you know?"

"Guessed it." After drinking the last bit of noodle soup, Qiao Mu tossed her bowl over to Haitang for her to wash. She then put her petite hands behind her back and walked into her room.

Taking a pleasant afternoon nap after drinking and eating her fill—now this was life!

Who cares how chaotic and earth-shaking things get outside! It had nothing to do with her anyway...

"Masta, I've planted the spiritual bamboo shoots." Qiuqiu's delighted voice rang out in her conscious pool. "From now on you will also have spiritual bamboo shoots."

"Can that bamboo grove beside Qingxi still produce spiritual bamboo shoots?" Qiao Mu suddenly thought of a problem.

Qiuqiu was startled, and then it said feebly, "You people had cooked and eaten the last spiritual bamboo shoot earlier!"

That was to say that spiritual bamboo shoots had truly become extinct in this Yating Court! Ha, what a troublemaker...

Chapter 1477: Imminent Disaster

Then fine, in any case... the spiritual bamboo shoots would eventually be exploited by profiteers like Manager Hu if they continued growing inside this Yating Court.

It would be better for her to harvest all of them and cultivate spiritual bamboo shoots on a large scale.

Hence, Qiao Mu kicked off her shoes and laid on the bed to take a delightful afternoon nap.

On the other end, Her Highness Consort Cheng did not even eat from her lunch spread and instead kept wringing her handkerchief as she paced around her room.

Besides Shu Quan, the eldest prince's two side consorts, Side Consort Zhang and Side Consort Wu, were also inside the room.

Side Consort Zhang had always been clumsy in speech and was not too liked. Seeing that Consort Cheng had flared up, she shut her mouth and hung her head without daring to take a deep breath.

On the other hand, Side Consort Wu was a smooth character and hastily advised Consort Cheng, "Mother Consort, do not get anxious. This is only Manager Hu's side of the story. Is it not simple for us to deal with a servant? There is a chance for us to make a comeback."

However, Shu Quan sighed when she heard this.

She had long warned her husband that he had to first use his brain before doing anything. Don't do everything just by relying on reckless courage.

The crown prince's position was so secure that her husband wouldn't obtain it just because he wanted to. If he had taken the crown prince's side early on, how would there be so many troubles today.

Unfortunately, her words carried little weight, as her mother-in-law and her husband each had their own plans and calculations. She was like duckweed tumbling endlessly on the surface of the sea. She simply could not see the light at the end of the tunnel.

"Shu Quan, why aren't you saying anything?" Compared to these two side consorts, Consort Cheng had more faith in her daughter-in-law Shu Quan's brains.

Yet Shu Quan did not know what to say at this time.

When Consort Cheng saw her daughter-in-law like this, she couldn't help but get agitated. "Shu Quan, why don't you say something!"

"Mother Consort, I feel that if this matter is not handled properly, it will probably be difficult for the eldest prince to make a comeback in the future!"

"You, what did you say?" Consort Cheng got worked up. "Im-Impossible! Isn't it just embezzling several lousy bamboo shoots? How could it implicate so much."

Shu Quan gazed quietly at Consort Cheng. "Mother Consort, what the eldest prince has touched this time is the cultivation resources of Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, the king, as well as the princes and the royal family. The eldest prince has exchanged all these cultivation resources for mystic currency and supplies, but what does he need so much for? When the investigation goes deeper, do you think the king can let him off this time around?"

Upon hearing this, Consort Cheng plopped down mechanically into her chair.

Shu Quan swept a chilly gaze at her before walking outside with a shake of her head.

Needless to say, this incident was indeed the eldest prince's doing on the surface. However, Consort Cheng and the entire Shu Family must have also been aware. Perhaps, the Shu Family had even received benefits.

She let out a self-mocking laugh. *So what if she had been cautious?*

With that kind of father, mother, mother-in-law, and husband, she did not need to even think of living well in this lifetime.

"Shu Quan, Shu Quan! You're the cleverest one. Quickly think of a plan to let it blow over! Shu Quan! Shu?" Consort Cheng was stunned as she watched her daughter-in-law walk outside without turning her head, and she was so angry that she picked up a teacup and smashed it on the ground.

"This ingrate! Jiao'er deeply respects her and looks to her to make a decision for everything, yet at the crucial moment, she is actually so cruel and merciless!"

Side Consort Zhang was so scared that she did not dare utter a word.

On the other hand, Side Consort Wu smirked and exhorted as she helped Consort Cheng sit down, "Mother Consort, I see that Sister cannot be depended upon. Right now, we can only think of a countermeasure ourselves before we return to the palace."

Chapter 1478: Seeking Help

Qiao Mu got up after sleeping for more than two hours.

She could care less about how flustered Consort Cheng and her group were. The little fellow's nap had been quite nice.

Regardless, there was nothing to be done about it. She reckoned that the battle was just about to descend on them, so she would make use of the time to sleep all she could. *Who the hell knew what they would encounter tonight.*

Haitang walked inside while holding a clean change of clothes. After Qiao Mu washed up, she was informed that the eldest prince consort was currently inside the small yard and had been sitting there for almost the entire afternoon.

"Shu Quan?" The eldest prince consort's gentle and refined features surfaced in Qiao Mu's mind. She said with a nod, "Invite her inside."

She normally did not have much contact with Shu Quan, but she had thought this eldest prince consort to be decent and poised in the few times she did. She was much better than that tart and mean mother of hers.

Shu Quan strode in quickly and immediately saw the young crown prince consort sitting at the table. Without saying anything further, she lifted up her skirt and was about to kneel.

However, a strange power supported her knees, not allowing her to kneel.

"What is Eldest Sister-in-Law doing?" Qiao Mu glanced at her. "If you have something to say, sit down and say it properly."

Shu Quan bit her lip as her body froze there. It would not do to get up or kneel down.

Beside her, Xi'er quick-wittedly helped her up and brought her to sit down beside the young crown prince consort.

"Crown Prince Consort. Shu Quan knows the crime of embezzling spiritual bamboo shoots is very severe. There is no possibility for my husband, and even the entire prince's estate and the Shu Family, to escape unscathed. Shu Quan is not afraid of dying, and is also willing to die with my husband. However, will the crown prince consort please grant Shu Quan a tiny request to let my three children live."

Qiao Mu looked at her coldly. "Eldest Sister-in-Law, you should beseech the king and queen for this, and not me."

"I-I know..."

Qiao Mu raised her hand to stop her from continuing to talk. "You presumably know the king's temperament. To put it offensively, with that irresolute and indecisive temper of his, is the king someone who could be so ruthless as to kill his eldest son?"

"You yourself are also aware that nothing will happen to your husband at all. With the king's modus operandi, he will at most ground your husband for five years." Qiao Mu rolled her eyes. However, Shu Quan and Xi'er were flabbergasted at these words of gross disrespect!

"As for your three legitimate sons and daughters, those are the king's grandchildren. If he cannot even crack down on his son, how could he implicate his own grandchildren?" Qiao Mu had seen through this king's innate character early on.

After sweeping Shu Quan a glance, Qiao Mu spoke, "Tell me, what exactly are you planning. Since you are seeking my help, shouldn't you tell me the actual situation? Wouldn't being frank and open be the better choice?"

For some reason, as Shu Quan looked at this cold-faced young crown prince consort, her eyes unwittingly brimmed over with tears.

"Crown Prince Consort." Shu Quan abruptly stood up and knelt down again. "Yes, I want to seek your help, just for this one time. I am not asking as your eldest sister-in-law or as the eldest prince consort. I am begging purely as the mother of three children to please help me this once. I just want to be willful this one time in my life!"

An hour later, Shu Quan solemnly curtsied toward the young crown prince consort with a tiny medicinal bottle hidden inside her sleeve. She clutched her handkerchief tightly as she departed quietly.

Besides the four people present, no one knew what had happened.

Xi'er wiped the tears from her eyes with a handkerchief before steadfastly following Shu Quan out.

Chapter 1479: Constant Attentions

Haitang prepared a sumptuous dinner for the young crown prince consort. As she set the dishes on the table, she asked confusedly, "Crown Prince Consort, why did you help the eldest prince consort?"

"I helped her because I wanted to. There is no need for so many whys and wherefores," Qiao Mu replied absentmindedly.

"Oh," Haitang responded leadenly.

"They are bound to find a scapegoat for this affair with the spiritual bamboo shoots. Since the king does not want to watch his eldest son die, there is no other choice than for Consort Dowager Shu and the Shu Family to be that scapegoat."

After saying this, Qiao Mu drank a mouthful of the tasty fish soup, and she squinted her eyes in satisfaction. She looked up at Haitang and asked, "Haitang, you've trained your cooking skills?"

“His Highness has said, Haitang must learn everything that the crown prince consort is not adept at. Such as cooking skills, needlework, planting, breeding...”

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“Got it!” Qiao Mu interrupted Haitang in speechlessness.

The freak, after Haitang started reeling off the names of these skills, she felt like there really was a lot that she didn’t know how to do!

Haitang blinked. “Crown Prince Consort, you do not need to worry. You just have to bring Haitang along with you in the future. Haitang can rob and kill and then wash her hands to cook soup. Haitang can do anything!”

Qiao Mu turned to look at this stodgy child, and she couldn’t resist laughing.

“Go away.” You annoying fella.

Haitang earnestly walked outside after collecting all the dishes and utensils. When she got to the door, however, she couldn’t resist glancing back at Qiao Mu. “Crown Prince Consort, you actually should smile more.”

Qiao Mu was stunned, and then she helplessly shook her head.

The purpose of their trip was to spend a pleasant three days in this Yating Court.

But from the situation now, Her Majesty the Queen and the others were not in a good mood, so they were probably going to head back to the palace tomorrow night.

After all, Queen Zhao was eager to report back to the king about the spiritual bamboo shoots, while Consort Cheng had trouble eating and sleeping. She was not in the mood to have fun.

With the top two personages at odds, their moods would naturally affect the people beneath them.

Qiao Mu’s bed had been made anew, with her own cotton-padded mattress and quilts. Rolling into these freshly scented sheets made everything perfect!

Before sleeping, Qiao Mu solemnly yanked out Chirpy from the paradise and patted its small head, instructing, “When Master falls asleep later, remember to wake me up in case something happens in the middle of the night!”

The little fat squirrel hugged its belly and nodded furiously.

In the end—

Not only did Qiao Mu have a good night’s sleep, but when she opened her eyes, she saw that fat squirrel curled up on her pillow with its bulging belly and in a slumber even deeper than hers.

Qiao Mu was simply exasperated. Sure enough, these cutesy little creatures were each more unreliable than the next!

Like she said, ferocious beasts were better!

“Crown Prince Consort, you have woken up.” Haitang walked inside and curtsied. “Just now, Her Majesty the Queen has sent a message. She is having all the princesses and ladies group up by themselves to go sight-seeing in Yating Court.”

“We will be returning to the palace before the sun sets.”

Qiao Mu nodded. It was as she had estimated. Queen Zhao was impatient to return to the palace and report the affair with the spiritual bamboo shoots to the king.

But this did not have much to do with her. Since the greater half of the day was free time, then she’d just... reluctantly take a stroll around.

Along with Princess Mi, the master and servant duo strolled around Yating Court for less than an hour before getting tired of wandering about.

There just so happened to be a mountain gazebo up ahead, and the scenery looked quite nice too.

Hence, the trio walked over, but then they halted when they got close.. They saw Yi’an supporting Queen Zhao as they walked into the gazebo while chatting and laughing.

Chapter 1480: Can’t Give It to You!

A dozen smiling royal maids trailed behind them. Some were holding parasols, others were holding food boxes, while some others were carrying teapots and teacups.

It was obvious that they were going to the gazebo in front for an intimate conversation.

Xiao Mi remarked without a filter, “Younger Sis, why do I see that that whatshername commandery princess looks like Her Majesty the Queen’s own daughter-in-law more than you do?”

Qiao Mu stared sullenly at Commandery Princess Yi’an. The latter also saw her when she glanced back, and she pursed her lips at Qiao Mu from Queen Zhao’s blind spot. She smirked at Qiao Mu provokingly with the air of a victor.

Yet Qiao Mu turned her nose up at this.

This woman had clearly already married into the Vassal King of An’nan’s Estate, so why was she still lacking common sense and unable to understand her own standing?

The queen had also noticed Qiao Mu by this time, and she nodded at the latter, inviting, “Crown Prince Consort, Princess Mi. If you have nothing to do, how about coming over to sit and chat with me.”

Xiao Mi tugged Qiao Mu’s sleeve. Qiao Mu nodded, and they curtsied according to etiquette before sitting down inside the mountain gazebo.

This gazebo was built on the mountain, and looking down from above, there was a line of chairs set up in a semicircle.

When looking down below, one could see several clouds drifting above the foot of the mountain. The scenery of the sun lighting up the clouds would definitely be spectacular at dawn.

After sitting down, Yi'an instructed Xu'er, who was beside her, to bring over tea and pastries. She then personally attended to Her Majesty the Queen by brewing the tea and arranging the pastries. As expected, she made it look like she was even more of a daughter-in-law than the genuine one.

Xiao Mi frowned, and she couldn't resist picking a bone with Yi'an. "Ay, Commandery Princess Yi'an, why is there the need for you to do the work of servants? You are undoubtedly lowering your status! We daughters of Southern Xiao are not so particular about these things! Just a cup of plain water will be fine!"

Nevertheless, Commandery Princess Yi'an did not get angry at Xiao Mi's sarcastic jab at her being a servant. In fact, she smiled back at Xiao Mi good-temperedly instead.

Just like that, the spectacle of the shrewish Commandery Princess Yi'an on the day of her wedding had ceased to exist. She had returned to that graceful, dignified, beautiful, and likable Commandery Princess Yi'an from the past.

However, Qiao Mu could clearly make out an intense hatred and resentment from this woman's eyes.

What are you pretending for. Qiao Mu swept her a glance before looking away.

"Your Majesty, how about trying a taste of this tea." A smile flitted across Commandery Princess Yi'an's elegant face. She then handed a plainly decorated teacup to the queen with both hands.

Queen Zhao nodded and gestured for her to set it down.

"Crown Prince Consort, you..." Queen Zhao's gaze settled on the little fellow's head.

Besides an exquisitely-styled phoenix hairpin, there was also a glistening and brightly-colored...

"It's the jasper begonia," Queen Zhao blurted out.

This jasper begonia blossom looked even larger than the ones the queen dowager cultivated. It looked really good in the young crown prince consort's hair.

Qiao Mu thought that Her Majesty the Queen had taken a liking to the only phoenix hairpin in her hair, and she quickly reached up to touch it. She declared, "I can't give you this! Mo Lian had made this for me. It's mine."

The queen: ...

Next to her, Nanny Qing rolled her eyes and informed with a frown, "Crown Prince Consort, Our Majesty the Queen does not lack jewelry!"

"That's good then." The young crown prince consort put down her petite hand and added with a nod, "I won't give it to you even if you like it! It's mine."

The queen: ...

Why did she suddenly feel like strangling this daughter-in-law to death?

Deep breath, deep breaths, take a deep breath! Mhm, this was the daughter-in-law that her son had chosen. Her son liked her, so she must stay calm and collected! She could not get angry, could not get angry!