

My Crown 71

Chapter 71: Self-exile from the Clan

Qiao Mu silently followed behind her mother to return to the courtyard. Elderly Lady Qiao had temporarily stopped crying and was sitting on a chair, superficially wiping her tears while secretly glancing at Qiao Mu and her mother from the corner of her eyes.

“Qiao Mu,” Qiao Zhongbang angrily shouted. When he looked up and saw his wife protectively pushing their daughter behind her, looking like she was afraid he would eat their daughter, he could not help but ache in anger.

What did his wife mean by this? Did she think he would shred and devour their daughter?

“Elderly Lady.” Wei Ziqin stood upright, neither obsequiously nor superciliously, and inwardly sharpened her claws as she calmly said, “May I ask why you brought so many people here in such a large display? My child is still young and is easily scared. If she is freaked out, who will give me another good daughter?”

Elderly Lady Qiao’s eyes were round from shock, as though she could not recognize her daughter-in-law, and she looked at Wei Ziqin in reevaluation. Wei Ziqin had been married into the family for many years, but she had never acted like today and coolly called her “Elderly Lady” in mockery.

“Eldest Sister-in-Law, what’s with this attitude of yours?” Xu Jiao immediately interrupted. “From the looks of it, I reckon you still don’t know how that child of yours nearly angered Mother to death earlier! Do you know how your child called Mother? Ey, I can’t bear to repeat it for you.”

“Old b*tch.” Qiao Mu frostily finished it for her.

Everyone stared at her, flabbergasted, like they did not recognize the child.

Qiao Zhongbang erupted on the spot as he raised his arm high and swung his hand toward Qiao Mu’s face, his eyes enraged. “Shut up.”

Qiao Mu did not dodge or hide and merely looked at her father with a bone-chilling cold in her eyes. Her fathomless and cool gaze sent Qiao Zhongbang’s heart trembling, and his hand involuntarily froze mid-air, unable to swing down.

“It’s good that you are all present today.” Qiao Mu swept her eyes over everyone’s faces. “Wait a moment. We will continue talking business after everyone arrives.”

There was absolute silence in the courtyard, and even the crickets stopped chirping. It was a while before Elderly Lady Qiao regained her voice. She pointed her finger toward Qiao Mu and shakily said, “Revolt! A revolt! You have revolted!”

Qiao Zhongbang looked at his mother who was trembling from rage and then looked back at his aloof daughter, whose face was frosty like a flurry of ice and snow, and he could not help but release a long sigh.

“Third Great-Grandfather and Old Village Chief are here,” ten-year-old Qiao Hu called before darting through the courtyard entrance.

“Thank you for your trouble, Brother Xiao Hu.” Qiao Mu nodded at Qiao Hu before bowing toward the entering Qiao Clan elder and Old Village Chief. “Third Great-Grandfather, Grandfather Village Chief, I invited you two here today to have you act as a witness for a matter.”

“Grandmother is spiteful and targets my younger sister and me time and again. First, she ignores my mother’s wishes and insists on selling my sister to a wealthy family to raise. She vainly attempts to break up my family and rip a family apart, giving us pain that is worse than death. Second, she ignores my safety and forces me to put myself in danger repeatedly. Today, she actually barges into my home with people in tow to capture me! I am young, but I’m truly terrified. I don’t know how I became a nuisance to Grandmother and blocked her path and caused her to mercilessly make a move on me over and over again. If the clan doesn’t have a place for my sister and me, then why don’t you exile us from the clan. We don’t seek glory or wealth, we merely wish for peace and safety, where we don’t need to live fearfully under Grandmother’s tyranny and spend our days drowning in terror and trepidation.”

When Elderly Lady Qiao caught Third Great-Grandfather’s severe gaze, her lips trembled, and she wished for nothing more than to faint from anger. Was this child possessed? How could her every word be a jab to its listeners’ hearts? Catching the contemptuous gazes of Third Great-Grandfather and Village Chief, Elderly Lady Qiao felt her face flush so red that she wished for nothing more than to close her eyes.

Just how large of a grievance did a young child like her have to suffer to force her to say that she wanted a self-exile from the clan?

Chapter 72: Family Division (1)

Elderly Lady Qiao could feel her face boiling with shame, but her lips were trembling so much that she could not speak.

It was originally just some family business that could be resolved behind closed doors. Who would have expected this d*mn girl to invite the two most important people in the village? Now, after this disturbance and publicization, she had completely lost all of the good reputation that she had accrued over the last 20 years. Where should she put her pride now? Won’t she be ridiculed to death by the people both inside and outside the village!

“You...” Elderly Lady Qiao pointed at Qiao Mu, entirely caught off guard by her advantageous first move.

“Enough.” Third Great-Grandfather wore a stern expression on his square-shaped face and spoke to Elderly Lady Qiao, née Wang, “Old Five’s Wife, I already warned you two years ago to not interfere too much in the business of your children’s households, and to let them handle it themselves.”

“Since this branch of ours was divided and separated from the main clan and arranged to live in such a small mountain village, it’s already good if we can live our days well. Our children and grandchildren grow older every day, and those who should be divided should be divided so as to let them live their own lives. You can also have a leisurely life. Ever since Old Five passed away, I know that it hasn’t been

easy for you, Old Five's Wife. However, when you have to meddle with every little matter of the younger generation, aren't you tired?"

"From what I see, Qiaoqiao, this child, is quite good and has good future prospects. She has raised to the ranks of a mystic cultivator at her young age; her future is unlimited," Old Village Chief also injected.

"Look at how you have forced such a good child."

Elderly Lady Qiao's lips uncontrollably shuddered from how angry she was. She could not resist refuting, "Third Uncle, Old Village Chief, you don't know anything. Do you know what this child did two days ago? She ran to Long Gate Inn by herself and violently beat up Miss Liu from Heavenly Dao Sect! People from the Heavenly Dao Sect have come seeking justice with me. I had to deal with them for several days and gave them who knows how many items before I could finally resolve it. After I sent away the powerful Heavenly Dao Sect with great tribulation, I finally found time to visit today. I haven't even had time to discipline this arrogant child, and you two elders arrived."

"Grandmother, you clearly came today because of Younger Sis' business. Why did you pull me into it now? Although the middle-woman, Wu Yanzen, disappeared, didn't you directly find that family and settle this sale with them?"

"You—you are spouting nonsense!" Elderly Lady Qiao guiltily cried.

That expression revealed everything to Qiao Mu. She merely swindled the old woman, but who knew this old woman would be so easy to deceive and spilled everything immediately.

"Grandmother, Xiao Lin'er also calls you Grandmother. Yet, you are cheaply selling Younger Sis for that tiny bit of money. When you sleep, aren't there demons who climb up from hell and crawl to your bed to drag you back to Nine District Purgatory to be punished?" Qiao Mu's chilly words contained a boundless amount of ghostly aura.

Elderly Lady Qiao shivered from fright.

How could Wei Ziqin not understand after this? She charged forward swiftly and picked up Qiao Lin, who was pulled to stand beside Xu Jiao. She looked at Elderly Lady Qiao and her group, on guard, as she furiously said, "Mother, although our family is poor, we are still far from the point of selling my daughter! Mother, you better put away these thoughts and don't ever mention sending Lin'er away in front of me!"

"Great, great! Are all of you rebelling against me!" Elderly Lady Qiao angrily pounded her chest and stomped her feet, misery written on her face. "I was doing this with your wellbeing in mind! That child in your belly is coming out soon! How will you raise three children at that time? The burden is already so heavy with two alone, this..."

"Enough!" Third Great-Grandfather shouted.

Chapter 73: Family Division (2)

"Old Five's Wife, you!" Third Great-Grandfather pointed at Elderly Lady Qiao and sighed. "Muddleheaded!"

Quite a crowd of villagers was standing outside the courtyard, gesturing and pointing as they whispered. Elderly Lady Qiao felt like they were all looking at her with ridicule, and her heart started stinging with pain. Even breathing became more difficult.

“Third Great-Grandfather, Mother is only doing this for Eldest Brother and his family’s own good.”

“You, quiet!” Third Great-Grandfather rebuked Xu Jiao. “Do you think I am a dotard? Zhongheng’s Wife, keep your nose inside your own family’s business. Don’t you find it shameful and unsightly to forcefully stick your hand into Zhongbang’s family?”

Xu Jiao instantly wilted and did not dare to speak again.

“Old Five’s Wife, you don’t need to manage Zhongbang’s family from now on. Although our branch has declined to Qiaotou Village, it doesn’t mean our clan can’t raise a single child! It’s merely one more mouth to feed. Zhongbang’s Wife, don’t worry, for as long as Third Great Uncle is alive, your children won’t have to starve. Give birth without worry; don’t have too much burden.”

“Third Uncle!” Elderly Lady Qiao nearly fainted from her fury.

“Old Five’s Wife, let me discuss a matter with you. From what I see, Zhongbang, Zhongxing, and Zhongheng have all formed their own families and have their own children. Look, your youngest daughter is also getting married in September. How about this, I will make a decision for you, and that’s to divide the family here today.”

“They can’t divide!” Elderly Lady Qiao screamed as she fell onto the ground in a puddle. “Third Uncle, although you are my senior, you can’t bully a widowed mother and her poor children this openly! How could this family separate simply because you said so!”

“If you don’t separate, take a look at yourself!” Third Great-Grandfather dryly looked at Elderly Lady Qiao, disgust flitting through his sharp eyes. “Then it’s decided. Since Old Village Chief just so happens to be here, he can be a witness too.”

“Separate! Separate now, separate immediately!”

Seeing his mother laying on the ground, Qiao Zhongbang felt like knives were cutting into his heart and interceded. “Third Great Uncle, Old Village Chief, for this matter, shouldn’t we wait until Second Brother returns to discuss it, we...”

“Oh, Zhongbang, I know you are a filial and honest, child, but sometimes, you should consider your wife. Ziqin hasn’t had an easy time these past years...” Third Great-Grandfather sent Qiao Zhongbang a look and pulled him to the side to have a few words with him.

After Qiao Zhongbang returned with Third Great Uncle, he did not say anything more. Instead, he kept secretly glancing at the steely-faced Wei Ziqin.

The family division occurred fairly smoothly, and the elderly lady’s ghost-like wails were completely useless. With Old Village Chief as a witness, Third Great-Grandfather single-handedly directed the family division ceremony and even dug out the documents that clearly recorded it.

Qiao Mu’s lips turned up, and her piercing gaze swept over Old Village Chief and Third Great-Grandfather. When she turned around, faint amusement involuntarily leaked out of her eyes.

She returned to her room, closed the door, and sat next to the table for a very long time. Then, she poured a cold cup of tea for herself and muttered to herself, "Power—it truly is wonderful."

When I possess power, then I will possess everything too.

A little less than an hour ago...

Third Great-Grandfather and Old Village Chief knelt in front of Crown Prince Lian with fear and trepidation. As they watched the youth who was holding a cheap teacup in his hand but looked as if he was grasping the unmarred bright moon instead, they held their breaths and did not dare to speak.

Alas, after an eighth of an hour had passed, the youth's cool voice indifferently rung, "Before today ends, separate Qiaoqiao's family. From now on, for every time that the old woman blindly seeks trouble from Qiaoqiao, We will seek trouble from you as well."

Whoosh. An iron arrow flew over the tip of the two old men's hair and pierced straight into a pillar further down the corridor. The pillar instantly leaned over, nearly causing half of the ceiling to fall down as well.

"We wonder... Will the total of 18 people from your two families withstand Us seeking trouble from you three times."

The crown prince stood up with a flick of his sleeves, and the two old men immediately devoutly prostrated themselves at his feet. "As Your Highness orders!"

Chapter 74: A Talisman Practitioner's Challenges

Elderly Lady Qiao was quite angered this time and felt like she had lost all of her face in front of the whole village, so after she was lifted home, she crumbled onto her bed and fell ill.

Meanwhile, as Qiao Mu flipped through the family division documents, there was a faint trace of a smile on her lips.

After covering the document well, Qiao Mu took out the gold-beaded talisman pen that she snatched from her apparition and laid the 30 talisman papers that Brother Xiao Hu newly bought for her in front of her. She took a deep breath, eliminated all her stray thoughts, and concentrated her attention. Then, she silently recited the mind technique for the beginner-level talisman method, and her hand followed the finger gestures that she learned from the Golden Talisman Jade Tome; afterward, she became engrossed in drawing talismans.

Earlier in Hulan Mountain, she had exhausted all of the strength talismans and speed talismans that she had, so she must replenish them.

Thankfully, she was so familiar with drawing strength and speed talismans that she could do it with her eyes closed; therefore, she finished drawing 10 strength and speed talismans each in less than an hour. What astonished her was the faint blue glow that emitted from the paper when she drew her last strength talisman and speed talisman.

It was different from the faint yellow glow that emitted from her other 18 talismans. These two talismans were encased in a blue glow.

Qiao Mu naturally did not understand its cause, so she could only think of a solution in a pinch and release her mystic conscious into her conscious to check in the Golden Talisman Jade Tome.

The originally rolled second jade slip flew toward her and suddenly transformed into a thin and large golden tome before her eyes.

The pages of the tome were very wide, and every character in it was about the size of a fist. They shakily jumped and floated in front of her.

In truth, when she first opened the Golden Talisman Jade Tome, a large amount of information had already rushed into her mind, but she had a feeling that releasing her mystic conscious in here to flip through the tome would be faster than blindly searching for information inside her mind.

After all, she did not know where to start at all and cluelessly searching for some unknown information felt extremely exhausting.

Currently, her apparition was currently squatted on the ground while hugging the golden tome. Qiao Mu's lips slightly twitched as she ignored the dolt and swiftly swept her mystic conscious over the content of the second jade slip.

According to the tome, there were four grades of talismans: normal-grade yellow talismans, fine-grade blue talismans, supreme-grade purple talismans, and divine-grade gold talismans.

And the two strength and speed talismans with a blue glow that she just drew were considered fine-grade blue talismans. Blue talismans were of much higher quality than yellow talismans, its talisman strength was double that of a yellow talisman.

The strength of a talisman directly affected the effective time of a talisman as well.

Blue talismans were double the effective time of yellow talismans. In other words, a talisman that could originally last only 5 minutes could now last at least 10 minutes after its upgrade.

While the demand for quality was not apparent in beginner-level talismans, once a practitioner reached intermediate-level and advanced-level talismans, the time-doubling advantage in high-quality talismans would become clear as day.

What was comical was that this tome also said a talisman practitioner encounters challenges unfathomable by the world on their journey. The sole feat of drawing fine-grade blue talismans would exhaust a large amount of time, energy, and money, as well as require at least three years of practical training before a talisman practitioner could manage to barely draw a few blue talismans.

Hence, she—someone who had not drawn more than 100 talismans in her life—really hit the jackpot and suddenly managed to draw blue talismans?

What three years! She had not been drawing for three days! What was more bizarre was that she felt an indescribable fluidity when she held the pen in her hand. Even if she was a bit unaccustomed in the beginning, she managed to regain that familiar feeling after drawing less than 10 talismans! Heh, it was like she had practiced it a thousand times and drawn a million talismans before.

Her mystic conscious was about to withdraw from the tome when the golden tome transformed back into a jade slip and returned to its original location. Several talisman papers floated from the air like before. Qiao Mu drew back from her conscious and pulled the new talisman papers out to take a look. They were new demonstrative beginner-level talismans.

Chapter 75: Utterly Useless!

Protective Talisman: It courts luck, avoids disaster, and dissolves misfortune and calamities. A beginner-level yellow talisman can guarantee one day of safety.

Peace Talisman: It allows a person to swiftly concentrate and calm down for two hours, absorbing twice as much mystic energy from the outside world.

Dizzying Talisman: It dizzies someone for five minutes, but opponents one or more level higher than the user are immune to the effects.

Immobilization Talisman: It immobilizes someone for five minutes, but opponents one or more level higher than the user are immune to the effects.

Qiao Mu knelt in front of the table and flipped through the talismans in her hand. When the explanation for these talismans surfaced in her conscious, a certain child rolled her eyes, contempt visible in her eyes. Why were all of these so weak!

What use was one day of guaranteed safety from the protective talisman? Didn't you return to your original state after a day? Moreover, the beginner-level talisman strength on this protective talisman must not be high, so whether it could avoid giant calamities was still up in the air!

The peace talisman was even weaker! What could you do in two hours? For some people, after they sit down to meditate, perhaps they had not even finished connecting with the outside world in two hours, let alone capturing mystic energy, so what use was the doubling?

As for that immobilization talisman and dizzying talisman, Qiao Mu had no desire to insult it.

With her current cultivation, she could only immobilize nobodies under level three, but it was completely useless when she encounters mystic cultivators with a higher level than them, so what use was it?

As for those normal people, why would you still need to immobilize them or use dizzying methods? Wouldn't using a finger to crush them down suffice?

Weak! Weak! Qiao Mu tossed away every talisman that she saw and got angrier with every talisman that she tossed. So infuriating! In the end, the tiny figure flopped onto the bed and touched the last two talismans, bored to death. She glanced at it without much hope.

Hm?

Wall-crossing Talisman: It allows its user to cross through walls that are less than one meter thick however they want.

Storage Talisman: It allows its user to create a one-cubic-meter storage space however they want, and the user can store and extract items 100 times each, but live objects are not permitted.

Qiao Mu's eyes brightened!

She finally found two decent talismans! She must draw at least two talismans that were essential items in a household like wall-crossing talismans.

The storage talisman was more unexpected. In her previous life, she had once seen an intermediate-level storage talisman in the hands of a young elite disciple from the main clan. The intermediate-level storage talisman could only store three cubic meters of items but it was already a very miraculous item in everyone's eyes.

As an example, currently, storage talismans were in such popular demand that it could be sold for an astonishingly high price whether it was in the black market or the normal market. Once a storage talisman appeared in a market, it would instantly evoke a giant fight from multiple parties.

Qiao Mu glanced at the remaining 10 talisman papers and eagerly laid them out. She then started drawing wall crossing talismans and storage talismans.

Initially, she was very out of practice, but after failing two or three times, she started gaining familiarity. It was as though she was born to draw talismans and every brushstroke was extremely fluid. If another talisman practitioner were present, then their eyes would surely pop out of their sockets from shock.

Excuse me, but which talisman practitioner could start drawing talismans so quickly and fluidly after two or three runs?

Of the last 10 blank talisman papers, she failed three times and drew three yellow beginner-level wall crossing talismans and three yellow beginner-level storage talismans. For her last one, she actually managed to draw a blue beginner-level storage talisman.

The strength of a blue talisman was double that of a yellow talisman, so her final blue beginner-level storage talisman had an entire 2 cubic meter storage space, and its user could store and extract 200 times.

Unfortunately, she did not have enough money to purchase more blank talisman papers. Otherwise, perhaps she could draw a few more blue talismans. She had a feeling that fine-grade blue talismans were not as difficult to achieve as the tome stated. The child propped her chin on her hand and happily stored away all the talismans she drew. Then, she stood up and looked at the dreary sky outside the window. Her eyes shifted, and a plan raised in her mind.

Chapter 76: A Night Visit to Xu Jiao

The entire Qiaotou Village had about a hundred households. Aside from the nouveau riche Zhou Family, the Qiao Compound that Elderly Lady Qiao lived in was considered as one of the wealthier families in the village.

Youngest Uncle and Xu Jiao's home was situated next to Qiao Compound and there was a side door that they had installed in between to connect the two residences.

Elderly Lady Qiao was fairly indulging toward her youngest son, and this led to the grandchild who she favored the most also being Xu Jiao's child, Qiao Xiaobang¹.

When Qiao Mu stealthily sneaked outside the window of her youngest uncle's house, she became a witness to four-year-old Little Chub throwing a great tantrum inside the house. Xu Jiao was wrought with distress from trying to pacify the child and was also berated a few times by her husband in displeasure.

Xu Jiao tossed the little chub onto the bed in anger before turning back to point at Qiao Zhongheng and yelling, "Comfort him yourself then if you're so good."

After the day she had, Xu Jiao was nearly angered to death. She made a trip to Eldest Brother's house and not only did she not gain anything, but she was also admonished by the old-fashioned old man, Third Great Uncle, causing her lungs to nearly explode from anger.

"I have to say, doesn't our son merely want a clay figurine toy? Just buy it for him! You caused him to make such a din, how should we pacify him now!" Qiao Zhongheng got angrier as he spoke.

"Buy buy buy! With what money! That lousy toy costs half a tael of silver! If you think it's so easy, why don't you buy it for our son yourself!" As soon as money was brought up, Xu Jiao turned more incensed. "You know full well that the thing with Xiao Lin'er is mucked! The down payment that we accepted from the buyer is all returned too. Your mother even told me to forget about this matter from now on! Money money money, this needs money, that needs money! Why don't you give me 10 or something taels of silver to spend then?"

"Why are you shouting at me?" Qiao Zhongheng's face turned the color of a pig's liver from his wife's berating. He had always been someone who idled about and waded through life in a drunken stupor. The money that his mother gave her did not last him more than a few days, so how could he know about the financial straits that their home was in.

"I... it's not like I knew Xiao Lin'er's thing was spoiled! Didn't you say last time that we can gain 20 taels of silver if we sell Xiao Lin'er?" He had wanted to swindle a few taels of silver from his wife to buy two jars of good liquor.

"Sell, sell, sell! They won't sell anymore!" Xu Jiao's head ached from her fury. She exclaimed while glaring at her husband, "That niece of yours is quite talented, alright! Don't you know how she slapped your mother's face again and again in front of everyone today?"

"Let me tell you, that niece of yours is truly a debt-collecting demon! So young, but already so skilled at scheming. I truly don't know how she considered so many aspects even though she's so young. She actually invited Old Village Chief and Third Great Uncle here to be officials and caused Eldest Brother and Eldest Sister-in-Law to be separated from the family with a few words."

"What?" Qiao Zhongheng raised his voice. "Eldest Brother's family had separated from the family?"

"Drink, drink, drink. All you do every day is drink. How could you know anything! I think that everyone in the family knows about this matter besides you. Who doesn't know that Eldest Brother and Eldest Sister-in-Law's family were divided from the family today?" Xu Jiao was so angry that she shoved Qiao Zhongheng away and resentfully twisted the handkerchief in her hand.

“So the 20 taels are gone like this?” Qiao Zhongheng shouted in pain. “That’s 20 taels!”

“Bah! 20 taels? We even lost the middleman fee!” Xu Jiao wished for nothing more than to take a bite out of him. Why did she marry such an unambitious thing; her liver was aching in pain from the rage! She pulled the comforter over her and fell straight asleep on the bed.

After Qiao Zhongheng shouted at their son, he blew out the candle and also went to bed. He put on a fawning look as he pulled Xu Jiao into his arms, asking, “Wife, about our 20 taels, are we just gonna leave it at that? I know you have more ideas and are smarter than me. Think of a way.”

Chapter 77: Ghost!!!

How could Xu Jiao be content? Her mind was churning and her innards were on fire from how hard she was trying to think of something. Although Qiao Zhongheng was unambitious, as long as he wanted, he could sweet talk like no one’s business, softening Xu Jiao with a few words.

After hanging out like this for some time, Qiao Zhongheng fell sound asleep while Xu Jiao was turning back and forth, unable to sleep due to her fixation on those 20 taels of silver.

After hiding under the eaves of the house and eavesdropping for half the night, Qiao Mu was tightly clenching his fists from fury.

Her guess was correct. Xu Jiao really did stir up trouble in Xiao Lin’er’s matter. No wonder she warm-heartedly visited her house so diligently and kept persuading her mother to send Xiao Lin’er away as soon as possible. It turned out she could gain a 20-tael bonus from the transaction.

Twenty taels. How pitiful that her younger sis’ life was only worth 20 taels in Xu Jiao’s eyes.

If it were not for her adding fuel to the fire from inside, Xiao Lin’er would not have been picked up by Wu Yanzhen so smoothly.

This g*dd*mn woman!

Qiao Mu pulled out a wall crossing talisman from her pocket and ripped it in half, a cold glint sparkling in her dark eyes.

Xu Jiao turned over on the bed and grievously sighed toward the wall. She was unable to think of any workable solution after thinking it over for half the night; she was truly at her wit’s end.

However, if she had to give up on those 20 taels of silver just like this, she was truly unwilling.

It was all that d*mn child, Qiao Mu’s, fault. If it were not for her putting a spoke in her wheel, Eldest Sister-in-Law would have handed Xiao Lin’er over already, and there would not be so much trouble now!

Xu Jiao turned over again and opened her eyes, feeling her mouth and tongue go dry. She was about to go to the table to pour herself a cup of water when she suddenly saw a black shadow float in front of her.

She instantly jolted from fright, any sleepiness disappearing without a trace. She shot up to a sitting position like a spring and fearfully called out, “Who?”

The perfectly sound asleep Qiao Zhongheng snored like a swine.

Seeing nothing in front of her, Xu Jiao calmed her mind and secretly breathed a sigh of relief. She assumed that her eyes were playing tricks on her from lack of sleep, and she was overly anxious.

She did not want to drink water anymore. She half laid down and turned over again, but her eyes promptly shot open, nearly bursting out of their sockets.

There was a small dreary and wretchedly white face dangling in front of her eyes, causing Xu Jiao's heart to nearly jump out of her chest!

Her mind crashed for three seconds before she could comprehend the scene in front of her. A terror-stricken shriek ripped out of her mouth, startling the sleeping Qiao Zhongheng out of dreamland and causing him to shoot up.

"What? What?" Qiao Zhongheng looked at Xu Jiao and angrily demanded, "Why are you screaming your head off in the middle of the night?"

Xu Jiao pointed behind Qiao Zhongheng. Her lips were trembling and her eyes were cracking from how wide they were. She fixedly stared as the deathly white face on the wall shrank back into the wall little by little and disappeared from sight.

When Qiao Zhongheng looked back, there was nothing but a blank wall.

"Face... face..." Xu Jiao was shuddering from fright.

"What face?" Qiao Zhongheng, who did not see anything, was completely befuddled.

"Ghost!" Xu Jiao's eyes rolled back, and she fell straight back.

Qiao Mu wiped away the dust smeared on her face before turning to look at the brightly lit house of Qiao Zhongheng, a cold smile turning up on her lips.

Afraid already? 'Good days' are waiting ahead of you!

Between a sway of the trees and the next, the little girl's figure swiftly disappeared from the dark residence. A floor of leaves deposited by the light breeze was all that remained.

Early next morning, Qiao Mu was woken up by the commotion of supplies being unloaded outside.

She jumped up energetically, messily wiping her face before sprinting outside. She ran into Wei Ziqin on the way out, who asked with a face of curiosity, "Qiaoqiao, a group of people are outside saying they came to deliver goods for you."

Chapter 78: Cozying up to Someone Powerful

"Mother, I will take a look and then return." Qiao Mu joyously rushed past Wei Ziqin.

Wei Ziqin turned around, a smile on her face. How long has it been since she saw her daughter this happy? Only now did she resemble an energetic child.

As soon as Qiao Mu bounded out of her home, she saw 10-20 carriages stopped outside and a lot of workers unloading boxes one by one from the carriage, temporarily piling them up next to the entrance.

One of the youths in tight-fitting black clothes received Qiao Mu and respectfully bowed. "Little Lord, should we move all the boxes in?"

"Yes. Move it to beside the woodshed." Qiao Mu glanced at the youth and waved her hand.

The villagers were attracted by the large commotion at Qiao Mu's home, and they were circled around the carriages, admiring the snugly shut boxes.

"Qiaoqiao, did you spend all the gold from the Heavenly Dao Sect after buying this much?" Their neighbor, a middle-aged woman, looked at the items in front of Qiao Mu's home with curiosity on her face. Moving this many boxes in, wouldn't it fill that tiny amount of space in the courtyard to the brim?

Qiao Mu nodded and pulled Qiao Hu outside to help to direct the boxes' transportation. As for her, she followed the youth in black through her home's door and had them move all of the boxes to the space next to the woodshed.

The number of boxes somewhat exceeded Qiao Mu's estimation, so she blinked, looking toward the youth in black with confusion in her eyes.

"There are 3000 iron arrows in here, each of them is forged from fine-quality iron. There are 30 boxes and each box contains 100 arrows." The youth in black opened one of the boxes next to Qiao Mu and showed her the sparkling jet-black iron arrows in the box.

Then, he took a small silver box plated with gold and handed it to Qiao Mu. "Little Lord, store this safely. There are 10 crow-gold arrows in here. After you claim an arrow with a drop of blood, you can summon it back every time after you shoot it. This item is hard to come by, so you must safe-keep it well."

Qiao Mu's eyes twinkled as she looked at the youth. "What?" The 900 taels of gold that she gave were not enough to buy a fraction of a crow-gold arrow, let alone one whole arrow.

Regardless of how ignorant and inexperienced she was, she would have still heard of crow gold. This was a superior-grade material that was specifically used for forging mystic weapons and was very spiritual. An entire magnetite mine mountain might not produce even one tiny nugget of crow gold.

This was a material that had a price but no supply. Yet, that rich crown prince could produce 10 crow-gold arrows in a whoosh! Why did she feel like she had cozied up to someone powerful?

The youth in black smiled. "Little Lord, don't worry, these don't cost any money."

Qiao Mu pettishly rolled her eyes, inwardly stating, *"If you dare to ask for money, I will immediately kick you into the distance!"*

The youth in black suddenly felt like his comprehension skills were very fine-tuned. He could actually glean a trace of viciousness from the little girl's eyes. Heh. He hastily closed the box and carried another box to hand to Miss Qiao Mu. "This is a crow repeating crossbow, it is a level 12 mystic weapon forged from crow gold. His Highness said that like the ferule he gifted to Little Lord, he had suppressed its level to around level three, so Little Lord can use it immediately."

Qiao Mu turned over the 30 normal repeating crossbows and put it away safely with the crow repeating crossbow. Then, she turned around to look at the boxes of clothes being carried inside.

According to what they agreed upon, a certain crown prince had helped her purchase 20 years worth of clothing.

Qiao Mu rubbed her nose. *Cough, cough.* Twenty years seemed to be a bit of a stretch. She really did have the intention of making things difficult for him back then.

Chapter 79: Outrageous Relatives

In consideration of how satisfactorily the crown prince carried out her request, Qiao Mu glanced at the youth in black in a surprisingly amicable manner. "You are called Yu Xiu, right? Um, help me thank His Highness the Crown Prince when you return. Alright, you can leave after carrying everything inside!"

Look! Look at what this heartless child is saying! No wonder His Highness previously told him to be careful of this child and her routine of ignoring someone as soon as she obtained what she wanted.

The youth in black fixed his expression and cupped his hands toward Qiao Mu. "Little Lord, His Highness told this subordinate to follow your side from now on and work for you. Also, this subordinate isn't called Yu Xiu! This subordinate's name is Ao'ye¹."

"Yu Xiu is the captain of the Dragon Saliva Guard, Miss! Just how blind are you! Yu Xiu is always next to His Highness the Crown Prince, never farther than an inch away. It was reasonable to say that you had seen him more than one or two times, so how could you not recognize him? Shouldn't you reflect on yourself!!!"

"Ao'ye?" the child looked at the handsome youth in black with a curious expression and quietly asked, "Is it because you frequently stay up all night that your crown prince gave you such a dodgy name?"

Ao'ye thought, *"Heh! Miss, you've guessed incorrectly, that's not it!"*

"This subordinate is a member of the Night Pavilion, and every member of the Night Pavilion has the character Ye¹ in their name."

"Oh." Qiao Mu uninterestedly looked away, disinterested in asking him about what the Night Pavilion was. She guessed it was probably an organization under the rich crown prince's control.

"You know how to drive a carriage?"

Ao'ye: *"...Why do I feel like my life will be very unassuring by following Miss from now on!"*

There was suddenly a commotion outside the courtyard, causing Qiao Mu to frown. "Stay here to watch over these items, I will go out and see what's going on."

"Yes," Ao'ye responded with a fist salute.

With a hand, claws out, held behind her back, Qiao Mu walked out the door with a solemn expression and saw a 12-or-13-year-old young girl in red clothes who looked a bit familiar. She was quickly browsing through the wooden boxes, gasps and exclamations continuously coming out of her mouth.

“Mother, look at this satin. It feels so soft and comfortable. I have never seen such superior-quality material in my life! It can make two outfits and several handkerchiefs for me.”

“That’s right, that’s right! When our Yingchun wears this satin, she will surely be prettier than an immortal, hahaha!” A middle-aged woman who looked to be between 30 to 40 years old stood forward and picked up the silver-threaded satin from Qiao Yingchun’s hands, holding it against her daughter while continuously giggling.

Heavens, did Qiao Zhongbang’s family become wealthy overnight? So many carts of damask and satin, her eyes had turned dizzy from the variety! It would be even better if she could carry this all home! The woman was beaming like a blooming flower.

The workers who were moving the boxes were at a loss to know what to do as they looked at this pair of mother and daughter talking to themselves and mumbled, “This... this all isn’t... Little Miss...”

“Oh, what’s inside this small box?” Qiao Yingchun sharply caught a little maidservant around 10 years old, who was wearing a light green garment, climbing down from a carriage. Her sight immediately landed on the rosewood box in the little girl’s arms.

“Hm?” The little girl jolted in surprise. Seeing Qiao Yingchun about to shoot up and snatch it, the girl hastily protected it in her chest like she was guarding her food, tightly clutching the box without releasing it, and noisily protested, “You, you, you! Let go already! This isn’t for you. It belongs to our little master, hurry and let go.”

“You let go! Let me see what this is.” Qiao Yingchun’s eyes were all but glued to the box. Taking advantage of how she was taller than the girl, she furiously pulled on the box, finally wrestling it out of the little girl’s hands.

Chapter 80: This, This, As Well As That Are, All Mine

An entire box brimming with jewelry that blinded people’s eyes immediately caused Qiao Yingchun’s eyeballs to nearly jump out of their sockets. How could she be willing to let go after getting a hold of the box?

She had never seen so much beautiful jewelry in her entire life! Amethyst pendants embedded in gold, necklaces adorned with colored crystals and cornelians—a single look revealed more than 10 styles of bracelets and chain bracelets. Amongst them, the bracelet wound with pure gold silk threads was considered the most unnoticeable! The gorgeous bouquet of red and green sent her eyes spinning. She rushed to her mother, Madam née Li, with the box in her arms and impersonated a spoiled child as she exclaimed, “Mother, Mother, look! Look at these! They are so pretty!”

“Oh my!” the woman shouted with a slap of her thigh. “These are all treasures! Chun’er, you must store it safely and mustn’t lose it.” The woman acting like all of this belonged to her daughter in such a matter-of-fact manner caused the little maidservant, who had tears hanging from her eyes, to widen her eyes in shock!

Heavens! The little girl swore that she had never seen such shameless bandits!

“Mother, there’s no way I would lose it.” Qiao Yingchun gleefully held the box tightly against her chest. She wildly looked left and right before arrogantly and bossily pointing at 10-20 boxes as she ordered the flabbergasted workers next to the carriage, “This, this, as well as that, load it into the cart and carry it away.”

After saying that, she walked forward with a grin and continued petting the soft silk from earlier before looking back at her mother and commenting, “Mother, don’t you think it’s weird that there’s such a large commotion here, but Elderly Lady Qiao and that Youngest Aunt-in-Law from the third branch haven’t come over?”

This was quite illogical! If that old woman and Youngest Aunt-in-Law came first to snatch this, what would be left for her mother and her?

Madam née Li also found it odd. That old hag and Xu Jiao of the Third Branch weren’t easy-going people and were instead people who flocked to anywhere with benefits. How could they not come? If they knew that the eldest branch had bought so many high-quality materials home, there was no way they would not come here to snatch it.

Carrying a high-quality roll of brilliantly colored and patterned cloth, Madam née Li’s mouth could not close from how much she was smiling. “Who cares about them? First come, first serve. Who told them to come so slowly? They have no one but themselves to blame for being like snails.”

Qiao Yingchun was fondling the rosewood box of jewelry in her arms admiringly, and her face was beaming with joy as she nodded in agreement. Then, she pointed at the dumbfounded workers on the side. “Mother, then let’s hurry and leave! You, and also you! What are you waiting for? Hurry and load these things onto the cart and follow us home.”

Heh! Qiao Mu did not expect to witness such an entertaining and brilliant show as soon as she came out. This was truly eye-opening!

A slip of her figure and the dainty child arrived in front of Qiao Yingchun. She mercilessly sent a kick to Qiao Yingchun’s kneecap.

When she cried out in pain and crumbled forward into a kneeling position, causing the box to fly out of her hands, Qiao Mu caught the box of jewelry with one hand while sitting triumphantly on a box at the same time.

Bang. The lid of the box slammed down, nearly crushing Madam née Li’s hastily retracting fingers.

“Darn girl, what are you doing?” Madam née Li screamed with her hands on her hips.

“This, this, as well as that, are all mine! Where are planning to take it?” Qiao Mu disdainfully looked at the two of them and sarcastically remarked, “Not only are you audacious but you are also quite gutsy! So many carts of my possessions and you want to drag it away without a word? I would really like to ask you two who gave you such audacity and bravado?”

Madam née Li was flushed red, and her chest was heaving as she pointed at Qiao Mu and angrily admonished, “You little girl, do you know who you are speaking to?”