

Pregnant Before the Royal Marriage

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Chapter 21: Chapter 21: Everything Changed When Jiang Seventh Daughter Returned

Madam Hua and her daughter were in the room, selecting from a large table of silk, satin, and jewelry, preparing for the selection in two days.

Although it was not a grand selection, it was for the handsome and beautiful young Prince of Yu to choose his Main Consort, which was much more exciting than the selection for the Emperor's consorts.

Jiang Yuan was full of confidence in her beauty and was determined to dress herself up in a manner unrivaled by her peers, seizing Prince Yu's heart in one fell swoop.

Madam Hua naturally hoped that her daughter would stand out, and had already taken out all the valuable items from the warehouse and bought many more outside so that her daughter could choose freely.

When Jiang Ruobai entered, he saw this scene.

It was normal for women to like silk, satin, and jewelry, and the Jiang Family had the ability and willingness to spoil and indulge them.

Jiang Ruobai used to see this scene often, but it never really affected him.

But now, he couldn't help but think of his youngest daughter.

When he had found her, she was living in a broken house, wearing old clothes, and her face was filled with the color of hardship. Jiang Ruobai's heart trembled slightly at the thought.

He walked in with a serious face, and Madam Hua and her daughter quickly stood up to greet him.

Although Madam Hua was over thirty, she still looked fresh and charming: "Old Master, have you had your dinner? I'll have the servants prepare for it."

“No need,” Jiang Ruobai said coldly, “I heard that today, Seventh Miss sent someone to withdraw her monthly allowance, but you not only refused to give it, but also ridiculed and slapped the girl. Is that true?”

Madam Hua didn't expect him to come to Jiang Ning for justice so soon and hurriedly smiled, “Old Master, I'm being wronged. I really didn't know that you had already agreed. I have to manage such a large household, and the rules cannot be broken. I thought that Seventh Miss had just arrived and might be instigated by some troublemakers, so I took the initiative to teach that girl a lesson for her.”

Jiang Ruobai used to find Madam Hua charming and versatile, but today, he felt nothing but disgust: “I specially instructed the housekeeper to inform you. Are you saying that the housekeeper lied to me?”

“No, no, I was just too busy and forgot,” Madam Hua replied.

“Since you can't manage the household affairs, you'd better not bother with them anymore.”

“What do you mean, Old Master?”

“From now on, the household matters will be handed back to the Black Bamboo Garden,” Jiang Ruobai said meaningfully, “As for you, teach Jiang Yuan the rules properly so that she can participate in the selection. Don't disappoint me.”

At first, Madam Hua was both shocked and angry.

She had been in charge of the household affairs for many years, and now they were taken away from her just because of a newly found disabled girl.

How could she not be angry?

But upon further thought, the Old Master had specifically reminded her to teach Jiang Yuan properly and send her to the selection. Could it be that he had already arranged everything in the palace and Jiang Yuan had a good chance of being chosen?

As long as Jiang Yuan became the Main Consort of Prince Yu, what would she have to fear in the mansion?

With this in mind, Madam Hua concealed her shock and anger, and smiled, “Old Master is right, these household affairs should have been the responsibility of Madam. Now that Seventh Sister has returned, it's only natural for Madam to recover as well. Tomorrow, I will have the keys sent to Madam.”

Jiang Ruobai said, “Go now, take Jiang Yuan with you, and apologize to the Seventh Daughter on your way!”

“What, apologize to her?” Jiang Yuan was surprised.

“What, do my words have no effect?” Jiang Ruobai said in cold tone.

Madam Hua hurriedly stopped her daughter, and said with a smile, “Of course not, don’t worry, Old Master, we’ll go right away. It’s only right that we apologize for the wrongs that Seventh Miss suffered today.”

Jiang Ruobai grunted, and left with a flick of his sleeve.

Jiang Yuan, in her anger, smashed a jade teacup, “Ever since Jiang Seventh Daughter came back, everything has changed.. Not only did my father take away my mother’s control over the household, but he also doesn’t care about me anymore!”

Chapter 22: Chapter 22: Thin Soup

Aunt Hua quickly comforted her daughter: “Why can’t you be more patient? As a daughter of the Jiang family, a high-born lady, you should be knowledgeable and well-mannered, virtuous and good. With such impetuous and irritable behavior, how can you catch the eye of the ladies in the palace and win over Prince Yu’s heart?”

Jiang Yuan was stunned: “Mother, what are you talking about?”

“My silly daughter, can’t you understand what your father is implying?” Aunt Hua couldn’t contain her joy, “Your father said, we should prepare well for the selection and not disappoint him.”

Jiang Yuan’s heart slowly filled with ecstasy: “Mother, are you saying... I will be chosen?”

“Isn’t it obvious? Your father is close to the emperor and is the Minister of Revenue. It’s not impossible for him to have some influence in the palace. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have said such things.” Aunt Hua stroked her daughter’s head, “Besides, my daughter is beautiful, Prince Yu is sure to take a fancy to you.”

Jiang Yuan was secretly delighted but soon became downhearted: “I have always been proud of myself, thinking that I am quite good among the sisters of the Jiang family. But, mother, you have seen the appearance of Jiang Seventh... she looks so much like Madam.”

Mentioning this, Aunt Hua’s face also darkened.

“Madam was the most beautiful woman in Chang’an when she was young. She has just grown old and haggard over the years. But who would have thought that her daughter

would be even more beautiful than she was? No wonder your father dotes on her so much.”

“Since she came, my father has had no time for me.” Jiang Yuan felt wronged.

“Don’t belittle yourself. Apart from her beautiful face, she has nothing else. Besides, she’s disabled and can only sit in a wheelchair or lean on a crutch. For the selection, the Jiang family still has to rely on you.” Aunt Hua proudly said, “My daughter is, after all, the best. Once you become the Princess Consort of Yu, whether it’s Madam or Seventh Miss, none of them can surpass you!”

Jiang Yuan couldn’t contain her joy.

Aunt Hua said, “That’s why we have to be tolerant now. We still have to show respect to Black Bamboo Garden. After the selection, it won’t be too late to get even.”

She called for a maid, picked up two pieces of clothing, and asked Jiang Yuan to hold them.

Jiang Yuan sneered, “Look at how poor and shabby Seventh Miss looks. She must have never worn such fine clothes in her life.”

“Don’t say such things. Your father wouldn’t be pleased if he heard. Remember, everything now should be about patience.”

“Yes.”

“Let’s go, we should head over before it gets dark.”

The mother and daughter went to Black Bamboo Garden.

Jiang Ning was having dinner with Lin Zizi. There were four or five dishes of stewed vegetables on the table, mostly bland, with only a small bowl of egg drop soup that could be considered meaty.

Jiang Ning had no appetite while eating.

She realized that the food in this dynasty was relatively simple, not focusing much on various cooking methods like frying or boiling, and was mostly stewed dishes.

No wonder Old Man Li and Xiaoqian enjoyed the dishes she made so much.

Lin Zizi ate very little, only taking a few bites of the millet porridge, and just smiled as she watched Jiang Ning eat, from time to time picking food for her.

Faced with her affectionate gaze, Jiang Ning couldn't refuse, but had no appetite, so she ate slowly, in small bites.

At this moment, a maid came in and said that Aunt Hua and Fifth Daughter had arrived.

Lin Zizi showed no reaction, her gaze still tenderly fixed on Jiang Ning.

Jiang Ning had to speak up: "What are they here for?"

"They say they're here to apologize to Madam and Miss."

"Apologize?" Jiang Ning glanced at Lin Zizi, "Madam, shall we let them in?"

Lin Zizi didn't seem to care much: "Whatever."

Jiang Ning said, "Since they're here to apologize, let's let them in."

As soon as Aunt Hua and her daughter entered, their faces were full of smiles like the warm spring breeze in March. There was no trace of the previous sharp and domineering attitude..

Chapter 23: Chapter 23: Mother is an Experienced Person

Aunt Hua first handed over a key with both hands and looked respectful: "Madam, this is the key to the storeroom. I brought it specifically to return it to you."

Lin Zizi seemed not to hear her, her gaze fixed on Jiang Ning."

Jiang Ning asked, "You're not the housekeeper anymore?"

Aunt Hua smiled somewhat awkwardly: "The Old Master said that from now on, the Black Bamboo Garden should handle housekeeping matters."

"That's good." Jiang Ning stretched out her hand to take the key and put it into Lin Zizi's hand.

Jiang Yuan looked on, gritting her teeth secretly, but she remembered what her mother had said— for the sake of becoming the Princess Consort of Yu, tolerate it.

She brought over the clothes and said to Jiang Ning, "Seventh Sister, it was my mistake before. We are blood-related sisters, don't be upset with me."

Jiang Ning knew it was because of her father showing his bias that they were now apologizing.

She laughed, "I don't really care, but what do you say about slapping Chunlai?"

Aunt Hua quickly said, "It was Mother Liu who did it. If the young lady can't vent her anger, just let Lady Chunlai retaliate."

"All right." Jiang Ning called Chunlai over, "Did you hear what Aunt said? Go and retaliate."

Chunlai's eyes sparkled, and she hurried off.

She took Xiaqu and Dongxie with her and several maidservants. They held Mother Liu down and severely punished her.

Mother Liu relied on being Aunt Hua's wet nurse and had always been domineering in the house, causing many maidservants to be bullied. Now that Seventh Miss returned, this old woman finally met her match.

Aunt Hua's smile was about to break, but she still beckoned Jiang Yuan to apologize to Jiang Ning.

Jiang Ning accepted the clothing but didn't respond to the apology.

Everyone knew if it was sincere or not, no one was blind to it.

Would they come to apologize if Jiang Ruobai hadn't forced them?

After the apology, no one paid any attention to Aunt Hua and her daughter, leaving them standing awkwardly.

Lin Zizi's eyes were fixed only on Jiang Ning. She brought a spoonful of egg custard to Jiang Ning's mouth, speaking softly, "Look how thin you are, eat more."

Jiang Ning opened her mouth to eat, and the taste of the egg custard immediately made her feel nauseous.

She retched, looking pale.

Lin Zizi became somewhat flustered, "Ningning, what's wrong?"

"I'm fine, I just don't have an appetite."

Aunt Hua and Jiang Yuan exchanged glances.

"Madam, Seventh Miss, if there's nothing else, we'll leave now," Aunt Hua said.

Lin Zizi didn't acknowledge her, and Jiang Ning, who was drinking water to ease her rolling nausea, had no energy to do so either.

Aunt Hua led her daughter away from Black Bamboo Garden, looking back with a strange expression on her face.

"Mother, Jiang Seventh seems to be sick," said Jiang Yuan. "I heard earlier that Father had specifically called a doctor to check her pulse."

Aunt Hua replied, "You foolish child, I've been through this before."

"What?"

"I think she looks like she might have a child in her belly."

"Really?" Jiang Yuan was startled.

"Why not? Let me tell you, when I was pregnant with you, I was just like her. Every time I smelled something fishy, I wanted to vomit." Aunt Hua sneered, "Such a shameless girl, she actually carried a bastard conceived in secret. Your father even invited her back as if she were a treasure. If he knew, he would be furious."

Jiang Yuan was somewhat excited, "Mother, let's tell Father now."

"We can't just tell him without proof, especially when we're only suspecting at this point," Aunt Hua pondered. "We need to present the evidence in front of your father so he has no choice but to believe."

"How can we make Father believe it?"

"She just said she's not feeling well, right? It's only natural for us as a family to be concerned about her. Tomorrow, let's invite a doctor from outside to check her pulse."

"Mother, don't we have a doctor in the house?"

"He's from the household.. Who knows if he's been bought by her? Otherwise, how come he didn't diagnose her today?"

Chapter 24: Chapter 24 Carefully Take the Pulse

Jiang Ning was just planning where to find a doctor, when the doctor himself showed up at the doorstep.

An old man with a head full of white hair and a matching beard, he clearly had many years of medical practice under his belt.

Chunlai was somewhat puzzled: "I haven't even sent anyone to get a doctor yet."

"I asked the housekeeper to invite him here," came Aunt Hua's voice from outside the door.

She slowly made her way in, resplendently attired, with Jiang Yuan and Jiang Yan trailing behind her.

Aunt Hua said with a kind smile, "I noticed that the Seventh Miss was not feeling well yesterday, so I took the initiative to call a doctor. I hope you don't mind, Seventh Miss."

Jiang Ning laughed, "Of course not. An opportunity to see a doctor without spending a penny? I would never turn that down."

Looking at Jiang Ning's strikingly beautiful face, Jiang Yuan felt an overwhelming sense of jealousy.

Even though she was a cripple who needed to get around on a wheelchair, that excessively beautiful face was still so infuriating.

At the moment, Jiang Yuan couldn't wait to reveal the fact that she was pregnant, so she could be shamed badly.

She urged the doctor, "What are you waiting for? Hurry up and feel Seventh Sister's pulse."

Jiang Ning looked at her and said with a quasi-smile, "Fifth Daughter cares so much about me, it's really touching. If the Prince of Yu doesn't choose such a kind-hearted lady, he must be blind."

The crowd:

Aunt Hua said awkwardly, "Seventh Miss, it's not appropriate to say such things. It's one thing to banter in our own home, but if it gets out, people might say that the ladies of the Jiang Family lack manners."

"Anyway, I didn't grow up in the Jiang Family, so if they say I lack manners, it would be understandable."

Jiang Yuan said, "Seventh Sister, you're talking so much, are you scared of being examined by the doctor?"

"Actually, I'm a little scared."

“Oh, what are you scared of?” Jiang Yuan’s eyes lit up.

Jiang Ning said, “Do I have to let any random doctor you bring treat me?”

“So what do you want before you agree?” Jiang Yuan asked eagerly.

“If there was, say, a few hundred taels of silver, I might reluctantly agree.”

“Silver?” Jiang Yuan was taken aback, and looked at Aunt Hua.

Aunt Hua was so angry she was ready to grind her teeth, but still managed a warm and radiant smile, “Money is not a problem, Seventh Miss. Just don’t let a little thing like this delay treating your health.”

“I knew Aunt was generous.”

Jiang Ning dangerously stretched her claw-like hand out to the doctor, “Doctor, make sure you examine carefully.”

Jiang Ning knew full well what Aunt Hua and Jiang Yuan were trying to achieve: they simply wanted her to make a fool of herself and lose face in the Jiang Family.

But Jiang Ning didn’t care.

She rather hoped they would catch her out, that way Jiang Ruobai would stop obstinately trying to send her to the selection.

As for the rest, like reputation and such, she didn’t care.

She was a modern person, and she wouldn’t let herself be perturbed by a bunch of uncivilized people from the past.

The old doctor covered Jiang Ning’s wrist with a piece of silk cloth, then began to feel her pulse with shaky hands. After considering for a long time, he stood up and said with a bow, “The young lady’s health is not in serious danger, she is just a little bit weak. Good rest and recuperation will suffice.”

Everyone was dumbfounded.

Jiang Yuan was extremely disappointed and couldn’t help but ask, “Doctor, could you have misdiagnosed?”

The old doctor said blandly, “I’ve been in the medical profession for over thirty years and rarely make mistakes. Besides, the young lady is healthy, there’s really nothing worthy of diagnosis.”

“But I clearly saw her vomit yesterday after she smelled something fishy!”

“It might be because of her weak digestion. The young lady should eat less meat and go for a light diet. I’ll take my leave now if there are no other matters..”

Chapter 25: Chapter 25: Pretending Again, Bah!

The old doctor didn’t get angry about being questioned and bowed out politely.

Jiang Ning yawned, feeling a little sleepy.

It was still early morning.

Aunt Hua glanced at her and laughed, “Seventh Miss, how do you feel yourself?”

“Not good.” Jiang Ning rested her cheek on her palm and sighed, “I feel nauseous and want to vomit, I can’t wake up fully, and I always want to go to the toilet.”

Aunt Hua frowned.

These were clearly signs of pregnancy.

Even if it wasn’t pregnancy, with so many symptoms, how could the doctor say there was no illness at all?

It must be due to the old man’s failing eyesight and poor medical skills!

Aunt Hua didn’t give up and turned to her connections to invite an Imperial Physician from the palace.

Although the Imperial Physician usually treats the ladies in the palace, they would also treat the noble families when asked. Not only they couldn’t refuse, but they would also earn some silver.

Jiang Ning slept in her fragrant room for the whole afternoon. When she woke up, Aunt Hua hurried in with the Imperial Physician.

Jiang Ning was deeply touched and sincerely said, “Aunt, you really treat me better than my own parents. I will make sure to repay you when I become successful in the future!”

Aunt Hua gave a dry laugh, “We are family, and you are the only legitimate daughter in our family. If I don’t care about you, who else will I care about?”

“That’s true.” Jiang Ning yawned and stretched out her hand, “Doctor, please. Once the diagnosis is over, I need to sleep a little more.”

The Imperial Physician quickly came over to take her pulse. After a long examination, he smiled and said, “The young lady is fine, but a bit weak. She needs proper nourishment in her meals. How about I prescribe something to supplement her energy and blood?”

It’s the same old suggestions.

“Who needs that thing.” Aunt Hua got a little impatient as she didn’t get the answer she wanted.

The Imperial Physician didn’t get angry and happily left.

There were people present to offer silver.

Jiang Ning felt puzzled, but since no illness was diagnosed, she couldn’t do anything about it. Seeing the bitter look on Aunt Hua’s face, she laughed and said, “Aunt, if you’re not reassured, why not look for a few more skilled doctors? We are bound to find one who can diagnose my illness.”

“Ah? Oh, no, no, that’s not what I meant.” Aunt Hua quickly waved her hands, “I’m just glad that Seventh Miss is mostly fine.”

Jiang Ning didn’t feel like talking anymore and yawned without energy.

Seeing this, Aunt Hua awkwardly laughed and said, “Since you are fine, you should rest well.”

She left the room, disappointed.

At dinner, Jiang Ruobai gathered the whole family together for a meal.

The main dish was a little fat lamb.

Jiang Ruobai personally cut the fattest and tenderest piece for Jiang Ning, but she spat it out after one bite.

Aunt Hua and Jiang Yuan both scoffed at her.

Just pretending again.

Tsk!

But this time, Jiang Ning’s retching was serious, almost throwing up bile.

Lin Zizi was worried and asked Jiang Ruobai to find another doctor.

Aunt Hua somewhat sarcastically said, "Madam, don't worry. The young lady just has a weak stomach and can't eat meat. I've already had her diagnosed by the Imperial Physician from the palace."

Lin Zizi said, "But she's still very tired."

"Just lazy." Jiang Yuan's voice chimed in with a disrespectful tone, "I heard that lazy girls from the countryside were very common."

Jiang Ruobai glared at her, then comforted Jiang Ning, "Are you not used to living in the manor? How about having your brother accompany you out for a walk tomorrow?"

"Brother?"

"Three Brother is coming back?" Jiang Yuan asked excitedly.

Mentioning his only legitimate son, Jiang Ruobai was also delighted, "Tomorrow is the Academy's day off, and I've already sent word saying Seventh Miss has returned. Your Third Brother will be home tomorrow.."