

A PRINCE'S ENDLESS INDULGENCE

Chapter 26: Chapter 0026, Punishment

Yun Jinnian was slowly walking with the support of two old maidservants, feeling pain all over her body, so cold, so very cold.

For a moment, Yun Jinnian felt as if she had entered the nightmare.

She watched helplessly as Momo devoured her flesh, unable to cry out or stop her, only able to watch in despair.

"Momo!"

As she was passing out, Yun Jinnian called out softly.

When Yun Jinnian fainted, it scared the two maidservants so much that they no longer dared to support her but instead carried her on their backs, quickly heading to Niannian Garden.

One went to report to Mrs. He to summon a doctor.

If she truly were to die, the reputation of Lady being unkind would surely spread, and the Yun Family would indeed be ruined.

Yun Jinnian was carried back to Niannian Garden.

Mrs. Yuan looked on with tears blurring her vision, while Danxia and Ru Yang quickly helped change her clothes, only then noticing the bruises on Yun Jinnian's neck, the bruises on her chest over her heart, and the redness on her arms.

The two exchanged looks, not daring to make a sound.

But Mrs. Yuan could see everything clearly and cried even more pitifully, heartbroken.

When Yun Chen arrived with the doctor, Yun Jinnian had already been changed into clean clothes, and her forehead had been wiped clean, revealing a fierce wound.

The doctor came in to examine Yun Jinnian, and Mrs. Yuan ran out of the bedroom, fell to her knees before Yun Chen, and pleaded, "Lord, please save my young lady, I beg of you, let them spare my young lady, your servant kneels before you, your servant kneels before you!"

Yun Chen took several steps back.

"Get up!" he scolded.

Mrs. Yuan's face was streaked with tears and snot.

Ru Yue immediately went to help Mrs. Yuan to her feet and handed her a handkerchief, just as the doctor stepped out.

"How is she?" Yun Chen eagerly asked.

"Suffering from long-term malnutrition, her body is extremely weak. It seems she was also chilled a few days ago, further injuring her health, and today's events have only made things worse. The patient has bruising on her neck and the wound on her forehead needs to be carefully treated, otherwise, it will leave a scar!" said the doctor, pausing briefly before adding, "My lord, it would be best to have a female doctor take a detailed look at the young lady's condition. I am not skilled enough to treat her body issues!"

Yun Chen immediately understood that Yun Jinnian had other injuries that a man should not see.

"Thank you, doctor!"

Someone escorted the doctor out, giving him a generous red envelope. The doctor would not say more, though he could not help but sigh.

A rich family, and yet not short of sordidness.

Yun Chen ordered Mrs. Yuan to take good care of Yun Jinnian and afterward had someone send over many medicinal herbs, as well as inviting a female doctor.

This time, the one who received the female doctor was not the lady of the house, Mrs. He, but Yun Chen's concubine, Cui's mother, Yun Zihan's biological mother.

Yun Chen, having arrived at Nuanxin Garden, looked at Yu Musi and Yun Mulan who were kneeling on the ground, "Return to your own courtyards, and do not step out of your rooms until the New Year. You will copy the women's propriety, virtue, and rituals a thousand times!"

"Father..."

The sisters called out quietly.

"Whoever dares to speak another word will be sent to the family temple!" After saying this, Yun Chen turned to Mrs. He, "Do you have any objections?"

Mrs. He hurriedly shook her head.

At this point, how could she dare to have any objections.

"From now on, Cui's mother will assist in managing the house's provisions so that you have more time to educate the children!" After saying this, Yun Chen no longer cared for Mrs. He's expression and left with a sweep of his sleeve.

Mrs. He immediately collapsed into a chair.

Covering her eyes with her hand, she wiped away her tears with her fingers, feeling angry, resentful, and aggrieved.

How could it be all her fault, yet she was the one to bear it all.

Looking at her two daughters on the ground, she said, "You two also go back, and from now on, stay away from your cousin!"

Chapter 27: Chapter 0027, Quietly

Yun Musi and Yun Mulan were increasingly frightened upon hearing these words.

"Mother..."

"You were wrong today, terribly wrong. Jinnian is your sister, your legitimate sister. You are the legitimate daughters of the senior branch, and she is the legitimate daughter of the second branch, and the eldest legitimate daughter at that. Just as your elder sister represents the senior branch, she represents the second branch. You should not have joined in Xu Xinmo's reckless actions. No matter how grave her mistake, she has your grandmother to shield her, whereas your grandmother will not shield you. As for me, even if I wanted to help, my willingness exceeds my capacity. Look at today's events; did I have any say? No!"

Mrs. He paused and continued speaking, "Like today, your grandmother will not give me the chance to speak, nor will your father. Look at what you did today; it's disgraceful enough to tarnish the reputation of a legitimate daughter from a noble house!"

"Mocking, insulting, and framing your legitimate sister, courting favor with your cousin; will your reputation be any better once word gets out? Those ladies from noble families won't befriend you, not to mention marrying into those prestigious clans!"

Mrs. He's scolding grew more and more intense, as if she hated that iron could not become steel.

In the end, she only shook her head, "Go now, heed your father's words, stay quietly in your rooms. I will also hire a governess to teach you proper behavior, to make you understand that in a great clan, all share in the honor and the disgrace."

But while Mrs. He found it easy to say these words, she herself could not achieve them.

If she could have, today's events would never have happened!

The sisters were already terrified and dared not speak further, promptly returning to their rooms to behave.

Mrs. He immediately had someone send medicinal herbs to Niannian Garden.

Tianmi returned with a report, "Madam, Auntie Cui has gone there. The Fourth Miss was badly injured, and after the female doctor examined her, she prescribed medicine. Auntie Cui is still keeping watch over there!"

Mrs. He fell silent.

Auntie Cui had always been uncompetitive and gentle, holding a special place in Yun Chen's heart. Now, Yun Chen sending Auntie Cui to take care of Yun Jinnian was a slap to her face, as well as making Auntie Cui help the butler, which meant to curtail her own authority.

Mrs. He took a deep breath.

She had to make Yun Jinnian leave this family, no matter what...

When Yun Jinnian woke up, it was already dark.

Mrs. Yuan was by her side, a charcoal brazier burning in the room, making Yun Jinnian feel suffocated and eager to sit up.

Mrs. Yuan immediately came forward, "Nurse!"

Mrs. Yuan helped Yun Jinnian sit up, "Miss, do you feel better? Would you like to have some porridge first? It's still warm on the stove in the small kitchen!"

"Put out the charcoal brazier and open the windows; I feel stuffy and can't breathe!" Yun Jinnian, leaning against the headboard, said weakly.

Mrs. Yuan immediately went to open the windows and then hurried back to the bed, "Miss..." She called out, then burst into tears.

Yun Jinnian gently patted the back of Mrs. Yuan's hand, "Nurse, what happened afterward?"

"So much has happened afterward!"

Mrs. Yuan told Yun Jinnian in a soft voice about some of the things she knew, but events within Cixin Academy were beyond her knowledge and reach.

The matter of Cixin Academy had already been silenced.

Yun Jinnian merely curved her lips faintly.

For some reason, with those dreams in her mind, she was always able to remain calm in many situations and accept things serenely.

"Nurse, I'm hungry; please bring me a bowl of porridge!"

"Yes!"

After Mrs. Yuan brought back the porridge and fed Yun Jinnian, she told her to rest.

She was deeply distressed.

"Nurse, if you keep the room heated with a charcoal brazier, don't close the windows entirely. Leave one open to air out the room!"

"Oh, okay!"

Mrs. Yuan opened a window and tucked Yun Jinnian in, "Miss, go to sleep, your nurse will watch over you!"

"Nurse, you go rest as well. I want some time alone to be quiet."

Chapter 28: Chapter 0028, Don't Cry

Mrs. Yuan originally intended to stay, but Yun Jinnian insisted.

"If you need anything, just call the nanny," she said.

Yun Jinnian nodded.

Mrs. Yuan carefully exited the room, closed the door,

and Yun Jinnian slowly sat up, kneading the quilt.

Everything about today's strategic suffering was calculated; after today, she thought, there should be no one daring to trample upon her at will.

After all, making a spectacle would do no one any good.

This much was evident from today's events.

Alone, Yun Jinnian quietly contemplated, and without reason, her thoughts wandered to Momo from her dreams.

That child who couldn't speak, who had no thoughts of his own.

But in the beginning, the child wasn't like that.

He was lively and cheerful, intelligent and sensible; it was only after too many things had happened that Momo changed.

Was he frightened into silence?

Yun Jinnian massaged her temples.

She didn't want to live as suffocatingly, as devoid of dignity as she did in her dreams.

A figure slipped into the room, soundlessly; Yun Jinnian didn't notice at all.

Under the dim yellow glow of the oil lamp,

Chu Yu approached the bedside step by step, and upon seeing Yun Jinnian's pale face with transparent ointment on her forehead, the injury was clearly visible.

"Having not seen you for just a day, how did you manage to torment yourself like this!" Chu Yu spoke.

Yun Jinnian suddenly looked up, towards Chu Yu who was very close.

She was momentarily stunned, then composed herself, "When did you get here?"

"I've been here for a while, watching you. But honestly, you don't look like a ten-year-old at all!" said Chu Yu, sitting down beside the bed.

He took out a handkerchief from his embrace and gently wiped Yun Jinnian's forehead.

Yun Jinnian didn't struggle, just watched him indifferently.

After cleaning the ointment off her forehead, he applied the ointment he brought, "Well, apply it three times a day, avoid getting it wet, and in three days the wound will heal, and in half a month it will be completely healed, without even a scar left. Of course, you must avoid certain foods!"

"Why are you so good to me?" Yun Jinnian asked.

He said she didn't look like a ten-year-old, but what about him?

He didn't seem like the him from her dreams, not so cold-hearted, not so ruthless.

"Because I'm still waiting for you to cure the poison!"

That reason was a good one.

Yun Jinnian believed him.

"Let's wait until after the New Year; after that, I will request to go to Yingci'an!"

"Why choose Yingci'an out of all the temples? It's so small there, and there are only a few nuns, plus it's an austere life!"

"It's peaceful there!"

That was just one reason; another was that the abbess of Yingci'an, Hui Ling, was an Imperial Physician with profound medical skills who had traveled throughout the Great Chu Country. If she could receive guidance from her, or accompany her on travels, her own medical skills would undoubtedly make great progress.

"Oh, then I'll immediately have a thatched cottage built next to Yingci'an, and I'll trouble you at that time!"

"Agreed!"

Chu Yu did not leave.

Instead, he sat at the edge of the bed.

Yun Jinnian was young and had never been taught about the propriety between men and women; in the dreams, her encounters with men were limited, and she didn't understand why she suddenly lost Chu Liange's heart.

She didn't send Chu Yu away; the two of them just sat and leaned there, each lost in their thoughts.

Outside the window, the snow fell heavier and heavier.

In the courtyard, on the rooftops, it was already piled very deep.

After a long while, Chu Yu finally asked, "What happened today?"

"Nothing much, just being wronged and then punished a bit!" she said nonchalantly, indifferently.

Because everything was within her calculations.

"Why didn't you cry?"

Upon hearing this, Yun Jinnian looked at Chu Yu in surprise and after a long while, spoke faintly, "I've already cried; why should I cry again?"

Chapter 29: Chapter 0029, New Year

Previously, she cried because she wanted something, and crying could make people feel sorry for her, thinking she was wronged, leading to their pity.

Wasn't Xu Xinmo the best at this trick?

"..."

Chu Yu had no words to respond.

Yun Jinnian was also silent.

She was human, not a deity, she could feel heartbroken, sad, and aggrieved.

But no one would feel sorry for her, even if she died of grievance, no one would truly care for her, so she wouldn't cry, nor would she make a fuss.

She would only quietly put her heart in its proper place so it wouldn't get hurt.

Chu Yu stood up, "You rest well, I'm leaving now!"

"Mm!"

"Is there anything you need me to do?" Chu Yu asked tentatively.

Like seeking revenge, perhaps?

Yun Jinnian shook her head.

"..."

Chu Yu pursed his lips.

Such a heartless person, not even asking if his injuries had gotten better?

Coming to see her in such cold weather was not good for the wounds, but she didn't even show concern.

After Chu Yu left, Yun Jinnian felt at peace.

The days that followed were much better.

She lacked nothing to eat or wear, monthly silver arrived on time, Niannian Garden had a small kitchen, and if she wanted to eat something, the wet nurse could take some silver to buy raw materials and make it herself. However, Mrs. Yuan, Xu Xinmo, Yun Musi, and Yun Mulan had all fallen ill.

Physician after physician visited, and Yun Chen even summoned the Imperial Physician, but to no avail.

But Yun Chen got news that these people were all feigning illness.

Yun Jinnian had visited Mrs. Yuan, but the elder woman didn't let her into the room. Instead, she had Ming Liu give her Ming Yang's Servitude Contract.

Mrs. He immediately sent over the servitude contracts of the others as well.

Ming Yang could read and write, so she taught Yun Jinnian how to read. Yun Jinnian pretended it was her first time too, earnestly learning and diligently copying.

Therefore, Ming Yang had a special status in the Niannian Garden, not only teaching Yun Jinnian how to read, but also making clothes for her.

In the blink of an eye, it was the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, the day to eat Laba porridge.

Mrs. He had the main kitchen cook Laba porridge and sent it to Niannian Garden, where Yun Jinnian rewarded Mrs. Yuan with two taels of silver.

"Miss!"

"Hmm?"

Yun Jinnian was focused on reading her book and responded absentmindedly.

Ming Yang wasn't sure how to proceed for a moment.

Her young mistress didn't know how to read but learned very quickly. Her temperament was excellent, composed and dignified, neither showy nor impertinent. She lived well, all by herself in the Niannian Garden.

"Would you like to go to the yard and build a snowman?" asked Ming Yang.

Danxia and the others had already built several early on.

"No thanks, I don't like it."

In her dreams, she also built a few snowmen for Momo, but Zhu Yan had them smashed to pieces.

The feeling of being consumed with hatred yet powerless was not pleasant at all.

She also didn't like snow because it meant it was winter.

Ming Yang said no more.

Finally, the snow stopped.

But the accumulation on the roads and rooftops was indeed too thick.

The New Year was approaching, and the Yun Family was unusually lacking in festive atmosphere this year.

Mrs. He was in charge of preparing the food, with the help of Aunt Cui.

However, Aunt Cui was clever enough not to meddle too much. She only did as Mrs. He commanded, and didn't inquire about the rest.

Mrs. He was very pleased with this.

"Master!"

Yun Chen looked up at Mrs. He, "?"

"There are only a few days left until the New Year's Eve dinner. What do you think about sending someone to invite the second master?"

Though an invitation would likely go unheeded.

"Send someone to invite him, and we will have the New Year's Eve dinner in the dining hall. Everyone should be there, no exceptions!" Yun Chen said, pausing slightly, "If the second brother doesn't come back, then so be it!"

If Yun Qi came back, they might as well skip the New Year's Eve dinner.

"But mother's health has not recovered, and Xinmo is also ill, looking unwell every day. How should we handle that?"

Chapter 30: Chapter 0030, New Year's Money

Yun Chen heard the words and remained silent for a long time.

Only much later did he speak, "If others ask, just say mother fell ill, and the children got sick from taking care of her!"

This not only preserved the children's reputation but also made outsiders think they were filial.

"And about Jinnian..."

"Jinnian is also a granddaughter of mother!"

Mrs. He immediately dared not say more.

In the blink of an eye, the New Year was upon them.

Niannian Garden

"Nanny!"

"Miss!" Mrs. Yuan called softly, placing a tray beside Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian picked up a purse, "This purse is nice, who embroidered it?"

"Reporting to miss, it was Ru Yue who embroidered it!"

Yun Jinnian smiled, "Since the purse was embroidered by Ru Yue, naturally she should be rewarded first!"

Ru Yue stepped forward, curtsied, and received the New Year's money from Yun Jinnian with both hands.

"Thank you, Miss!"

The others followed suit, each receiving a purse in turn.

"No matter how much New Year's money I've given you, when you go out, you must not talk nonsense. If someone really asks, just say it's one or two taels of silver, understood?"

"Yes!"

The New Year's money given by Yun Jinnian was five taels of silver per person, which was quite a generous reward for those at Niannian Garden.

It was even more than what the Head Maid and the chief nannies at Cixin Academy received.

However, they also received other jewelry rewards, but Yun Jinnian only had so many pieces of jewelry. Even if she were willing to give them away, they wouldn't dare to accept them.

Yun Jinnian's mood wasn't very good.

Because of the New Year, others were reuniting with their families, while she was left alone.

"Nanny!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian gently set down her book and said wistfully, "Tell me, how can I leave the estate to see mother?"

The nanny felt a slight pain in her chest, "Miss, it would be difficult for you to leave the estate!"

"I know, it's hard enough to leave the estate, let alone to see mother!"

If mother was in the estate, she just had to tell her she wanted to go out and take a few more people with her.

On the twenty-eighth day of the twelfth lunar month, Tianmi came with a message, asking Yun Jinnian to go to the dining hall for a meal on New Year's Eve, and then stay up together to see in the New Year.

The New Year's supplies had already been sent over by Aunt Cui.

There were several bolts of fabric, and two sets of ready-made clothes. Yun Jinnian tried them on and they fit quite well, but she didn't like the colors or the patterns.

At first, nobody had asked her to choose the fabric, let alone the styles.

The Lady, Mrs. He, was only superficially cordial to her, making sure she didn't lack food or clothing, just enough to keep up appearances and avoid criticism.

But today's life was so much better than before; Yun Jinnian wouldn't nitpick. As long as she could get by, it was enough.

In the blink of an eye, it was New Year's Eve.

Although the old lady was ill, she still made an effort to have Ming Liu distribute New Year's money to the younger generation, all placed in purses. Yun Jinnian didn't know

what to expect, but looking at her deflated purse compared to Xu Xinmo and others' bulging ones, she knew it was different.

Lady Mrs. He gave a gold hairpin to each person, each with different designs; her three sons each received a small box of fine Hui Ink and two reams of exquisite Xuan paper.

No one dared to say much about this because the future of the Yun Family depended on them, so it was only right to give the best to them.

Yun Chen gave each of his children two hundred taels of silver.

Very common, but practically useful.

However, what no one expected was that Yun Zhen had prepared New Year's money, "Fourth Sister, come here!"

Yun Zhen was the first to call Yun Jinnian.

Everyone was shocked.

Because Yun Zhen and Yun Jinnian were not close, seeing each other only a few times a year.

Yun Jinnian was also surprised but obediently stepped forward and curtsied, "Greetings to Big Brother!"

Yun Zhen smiled, and like a magic trick, drew a pair of five-treasure golden butterfly hairpins from his sleeve and gently inserted them into Yun Jinnian's hair, commenting, "Hmm, it looks much better this way! In the future, don't pick such faded red colors, it makes you look old. You are young, so bright pink or red would be very nice, the pink is fresh and lively, and red is auspicious!"

Since it was the New Year's Eve dinner, Yun Jinnian had Mrs. Yuan choose her best attire, as she didn't want Mrs. He to feel like she was being slighted.

But Mrs. He was somewhat clever; although she hadn't personally seen to Yun Jinnian's clothes, she had a rough idea of what they were.

What Yun Jinnian wore was made from fabric left over from the old lady's clothes. Mrs. He hadn't given it much thought at the time and had simply let someone make it for Yun Jinnian.

However, today, although Yun Zhen did not openly express his disapproval,

he advised Yun Jinnian to choose different colors when selecting fabrics in the future.

"Thank you for the gift, Big Brother!"

Yun Zhen nodded.

He also gave similar five-treasure golden butterfly hairpins to his other sisters, but each was a different design.

The fifteen-year-old second son, Yun Yi, had been giving out gifts one by one since he was young.

The twelve-year-old third son, Yun Xuan, did the same, showing nothing special or particular.

Yun Chen was very satisfied with his three sons.

The old lady's heart was a mixture of feelings; she took a deep breath and spoke faintly, "Let's start the meal!"