

A PRINCE'S ENDLESS INDULGENCE

Chapter 6: Chapter 0006, Please Be Safe

"The plum blossoms in the garden bloomed beautifully, so I picked some for Grandmother's vase!" Yun Jinnian said, neither humbly nor arrogantly.

Previously, she was very afraid of Xu Xinmo.

But for some reason, after those dreams, she was not afraid at all.

"Grandmother likes plum blossoms, and I will pick them myself. There's no need for your pretense. Take these plum blossoms and scram, back to Niannian Garden. Cixin Academy does not welcome you. Also, do not step into Cixin Academy ever again!"

Yun Jinnian looked at Xu Xinmo and asked indifferently, "Is this what you want? Or is it Grandmother's wish?"

"Of course it is..." Xu Xinmo began to speak.

From inside the house, the old lady's voice called out, "Wanwan, it's cold outside, come into the house. You, come in too!"

Wanwan is his granddaughter.

And you are her granddaughter!

"Hmph!" Xu Xinmo scoffed and turned to enter the house.

Yun Jinnian's eyes darkened.

Was it truly an accident when she fell into the Lotus Pond that day, or was she pushed?

No matter who this person was, she would uncover them.

Feeling Mrs. Yuan's worried gaze, Yun Jinnian nodded slightly and stepped into the house.

A ground heater was burning inside the house, making it much warmer than usual.

The Yun Family's old Lady sat upright on an Arhat bed, with Xu Xinmo fawning and giggling in her lap.

The Lady glanced at Yun Jinnian, her eyes flickering with disgust.

Yun Jinnian saw it, but she pretended not to notice and bowed slightly, "Granddaughter greets Grandmother!"

"Grandmother, look at her, coming over to greet you and not even kneeling, showing no sincerity at all!" Xu Xinmo exclaimed loudly.

The old lady pinched Xu Xinmo's nose, fully indulgent, and then turned coldly to Yun Jinnian, "Since Wanwan has spoken, you should perform a full kowtow!"

To perform a full kowtow meant to bow her head to the ground.

Yun Jinnian lowered her gaze.

Standing straight, she then held the plum blossoms and gently knelt down. "Granddaughter greets Grandmother!"

Although she kneeled on a stone slab, because of the ground heater, it was much warmer than in Niannian Garden.

The old Lady did not tell Yun Jinnian to rise.

Thus, Yun Jinnian could not stand.

Xu Xinmo kept on amusing the old Lady.

When Lady and Mrs. He came to pay respects, seeing Yun Jinnian kneeling, sympathy flashed in her eyes, yet she said nothing.

When Miss Yun MUYOU came, seeing Yun Jinnian on the ground, her eyes too showed pity, but she remained silent.

Second Miss Yun Zihan came to greet and, seeing Yun Jinnian kneeling, pain flickered in her eyes. Her mind turned slightly as she knelt beside Yun Jinnian, "Granddaughter greets Grandmother!"

Xu Xinmo's face changed slightly upon seeing this.

The old Lady, immensely heartbroken, said, "Ah, Zihan is obedient. Go back to your room and copy the filial piety scriptures three hundred times. Don't leave your room until you finish!"

Yun Zihan turned pale, looked apologetically at Yun Jinnian for a moment, then rose and retreated.

Other sisters of lesser status glanced over, each pretending not to see, amusing the old Lady in the room and forgetting about Yun Jinnian still kneeling.

Yun Jinnian continued to kneel, back straight.

Head lowered.

Patiently, for she knew kneeling now would only make her great-uncle pity her more later, and she would gain more from it.

She did not want to suffer like in her dreams, so bitter and tragic; she wanted to study, so what were these troubles compared to that?

A half-hour later, Lady and Mrs. He left.

Yun Muyou also left with Xu Xinmo and the other half-sisters for their kneeling lesson, while Yun Jinnian was still kneeling.

The old Lady was then assisted by Ming Liu to go and rest.

Two hours later, Yun Jinnian was nearly at her limit.

Two and a half hours later, Yun Jinnian's body began to tremble.

After three hours, Yun Jinnian completely passed out...

Chapter 7: Chapter 0007, Expose

Ming Liu massaged the old lady's legs, while the head maid, Ming Yang, approached her and whispered, "Old madam, the fourth miss has fainted!"

"Fainted?" The old lady asked indifferently.

"Yes!"

"How useless, to faint after only two hours, let her nanny take her back!"

Ming Yang couldn't quite place the feeling in her heart, but she felt something was amiss and tentatively asked, "What about the plum blossoms picked by the fourth miss?"

"Throw them away!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian was carried back to Niannian Garden by Mrs. Yuan, the plum blossoms she had picked for the old madam were discarded, and some opportunistic maids had picked them up and thrown them back at the entrance of Niannian Garden.

At the court

Yun Chen was a bit distracted.

After the court session ended, several friends invited him for a drink, and Yun Chen gladly accepted. At the entrance of the tavern, Yun Chen was stopped by a monk.

"Honorable monk sees that your countenance suggests that you should be second to none, yet why do you hold a mere fourth-ranked position? Logically speaking, you ought to be at least a third-ranked official!"

Yun Chen's heart warmed at these words, "How do you mean, Master?"

"Allow me to calculate this carefully, sir!"

The monk said, fingering his beads for a while before speaking, "It turns out someone has destroyed your fortunes!"

Upon hearing this, Yun Chen became very anxious, "I implore the Master to guide me out of this confusion!"

"There is a darling in your household who should be cherished and pampered, yet she lives a life worse than that of dogs and pigs. It is those who harm her who have severed your blessings!" the monk said with a sigh, "Amitabha, Amitabha, it is best for you to make a decision soon. If this continues, within three months, you are certain to lose your position, and although losing the position is bearable, your life remains. What's more fearful is calamity befalling your wife and children, bringing disaster upon your entire household, Amitabha!"

Having said his piece, the monk chanted "Amitabha" and vanished without a trace.

Yun Chen stood still, unable to recover his composure for a long time.

He knew all too well to whom the monk was referring.

If outsiders were to discover that his legitimate daughter of the Yun Family lived worse than dogs and pigs, his political adversaries would surely join forces to impeach him. As an Imperial Censor, such a scandal in his own backyard would render him unfit for his role.

Furthermore, although he had had opportunities for promotion over the years, he was somehow always superseded by others. His few promotions came after he had given

Jinnian some inconsequential gifts, which made Jinnian happily say that her uncle was so kind and was sure to become a high-ranking official.

And then, inexplicably, he would be promoted.

Yun Chen felt a chill down his spine and decided against having drinks with his colleagues. He entered the tavern, announced he would cover the bill for the day, and hurriedly returned to the Yun Residence.

He went straight to his study where the Hidden Guard brought him the information he had gathered. After reading it, Yun Chen was once again rendered speechless for a long time.

He truly had no idea that Yun Jinnian lived such a life within the residence.

"Does my younger brother know about this?"

The Hidden Guard remained silent.

Yun Chen fell silent as well.

Perhaps he knew, perhaps he did not.

But no matter what, now that he knew, he couldn't ignore it.

He stood up and first went to Mrs. He's courtyard, throwing a stack of Xuan paper before Mrs. He. After she read it, she fell silent for a long time before speaking, "My lord, although I am in charge of the provisions, still, most affairs in this residence are decided by my mother-in-law!"

Yun Chen thought Mrs. He would take full responsibility, but she passed the buck to the old madam immediately.

Mrs. He is no fool; taking the blame would ruin her social standing once it became public knowledge.

Suddenly standing up, Yun Chen headed to Cixin Academy.

When the old lady heard that Yun Chen was coming, she was very happy. Xu Xinmo came forward to pay her respects, and Yun Chen gazed at her, his eyes filled with complexity.

"Uncle, why are you looking at me like this?" Xu Xinmo asked, puzzled.

"Go and play, your uncle has something to discuss with your grandmother!" Yun Chen said indifferently.

"Then uncle, I'll go to the kitchen to prepare tea and pastries for you and grandmother!"

"Mmm!"

Xu Xinmo left cheerfully.

After all, she would find out what her uncle had to say from her grandmother later.

Once Xu Xinmo had left, Yun Chen had all the maids and matriarchs leave the room before laying the Xuan paper before the old lady, "Mother, take a look for yourself!"

Chapter 8: Chapter 8, Success

The elderly lady picked up the rice paper and glanced at one page—her mood immediately soured.

Who exactly had brought these matters to her son's attention?

Were they trying to sow discord between her and her son?

"Chenchen..."

"Mother, do you realize that if these things fall into the hands of my political enemies and are proven true, and if Sister Ruonian comes out to testify, what would be the consequences?" Yun Chen asked softly.

"She wouldn't dare!" the elderly lady shouted angrily.

Yun Chen was not upset but simply said, "If the other party promises her enough food and clothing, the service of maids, and a life truly worth living as a person, what choice do you think Ruonian would make? If you were in her shoes, Mother, what would you choose?"

The elderly lady fell silent, having no response.

Yun Chen continued, "Do you remember when I impeached the former Minister of War, accusing him of failing to maintain his inner household and of the harsh treatment his second wife meted out to his first wife's legitimate eldest daughter? After all the evidence was presented to the emperor, the Minister of War was dismissed from office, bringing calamity to his whole family. His relatives were barred from court service for five generations; they couldn't even take the Scholar exams!"

The elderly lady paled with shock.

Such treatment of Yun Jinnian, if word got out, would brand her as unloving.

"Does Mother wish for her son to end up like the Minister of War?" Yun Chen asked gravely.

"No, not at all, I just..." the elderly lady frantically tried to explain.

But she didn't know where to begin.

"Mother, I still aim to rise in rank and secure an imperial decree for you, so that everyone will respect you as the Elder Lady when you go out."

The title of Elder Lady would require a first-rank imperial decree.

The elderly lady's eyes reddened.

Of course, she wanted that too.

"Did I do something wrong?" the elderly lady asked.

"Mother, you were indeed wrong in this case. If you dislike Ruonian, you could have simply ignored her; there was no need to make her kneel until she fainted, let alone order someone to throw the plum blossoms she picked back into the Niannian Garden. Our emperor values kindness and filial piety, and the Empress Dowager loves those who demonstrate such traits. If the Empress Dowager comes to know of this matter..."

Yun Chen let the consequences hang unsaid.

But the elderly lady was already frightened.

"What do you suggest we do?"

"It's simple: provide for her food, clothing, and living expenses as befits an eldest sister. Compensate her for what she's missed out on these years. Appeasing her is the priority!"

After a long silence, the elderly lady finally yielded, "Let's do as you say!"

Disliking Yun Jinnian was one thing, but her son's future was of utmost importance. Only if her son succeeded could she enjoy glory and wealth.

The Yuan Family's ancestral wealth was substantial, earning a handsome sum of silver each year. A legitimate daughter would receive fifty taels of silver monthly, but Yun Jinnian hadn't seen a single tael in years.

Looking at the silver notes in the brocade box.

"Great Uncle?"

"This is the monthly allowance you should have received over the past ten years, a total of six thousand taels. These medicinal herbs, fabrics, beaded hairpins, and jewelry should have been yours all along, only they've come a bit late!"

Yun Jinnian's eyes reddened slightly, and she bowed to Yun Chen, "Jinnian thanks Great Uncle!"

"Good child, you are sensible. These past years..." Yun Chen paused before continuing, "Let bygones be bygones. It's essential to look forward!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian was demurely respectful, bowing her head.

She didn't understand why she naturally behaved this way.

Yet she was inwardly delighted.

In one day, she went from having nothing to having everything.

Yun Chen left pleased, leaving behind four maids and two coarse servants.

"Nanny!"

"Hmm?"

"Give each of them two taels of silver!"

The six thousand taels that Yun Chen had brought, including fifty notes of a hundred taels each and a thousand taels in small change were all in individual taels.

He had thought everything through.

Mrs. Yuan immediately gave out two taels of silver as a reward, and the four maids and two servant women immediately bowed joyfully, "Thank you, Fourth Miss!"

Yun Jinnian looked at them and said faintly, "I do not wish to see another Ru Xin in Niannian Garden, and I suppose you wouldn't want to follow her example!"

"We wouldn't dare!"

"As long as you wouldn't dare, just serve well. If you are truly loyal to me, I will not mistreat you. But if you commit acts of betrayal in seeking glory, Ru Xin's fate would seem mild in comparison!"

Chapter 9: Chapter 009: Knocking

"I wouldn't dare!"

Yun Jinnian nodded.

The food had already been delivered from the main kitchen.

Yun Jinnian was really hungry. She ate first, filling her stomach, and felt much more energetic.

Looking at the six people who were still standing in the courtyard, she asked, "What are your names?"

"This servant is Danxia (Dangui), Ru Yang (Ru Yue)!"

"This servant's maiden family name is Li (maiden family name is Zhang)!"

Yun Jinnian nodded indifferently, "From now on, the wet nurse will manage this courtyard. Danxia and Ru Yang as head maids, Dangui and Ru Yue as secondary maids, Mothers Li and Zhang are in charge of the gate. Niannian Garden is not big, wet nurse, take them to settle down first!"

"Yes!"

Mrs. Yuan took them down to settle in, and Yun Jinnian then leaned weakly against the chair.

The things she once dared not even dream of were now taken for granted; had she truly experienced everything in that dream?

Rubbing her temples, Yun Jinnian felt very tired. She lay down beside the bed.

When she woke up again, it was already completely dark.

"Miss, you've woken up?"

The maid assisted her with care.

At the age of about fourteen or fifteen, with a melon-seed face, there was a seductive quality to her youthfulness.

"You?" Yun Jinnian couldn't remember who she was at the moment.

"This servant, Danxia, greets Miss!"

Yun Jinnian nodded, "It's Danxia, help me up!"

Having slept for a while, she felt even weaker.

Danxia helped Yun Jinnian to sit up while Ru Yang brought in hot water, attending to her as she washed and combed her hair into a double ear-style bun.

"Miss, the meal has been brought in. Would you like to eat now?" Danxia asked.

Yun Jinnian hummed a response and then noticed the charcoal basin in the middle of the room, looking also at the tightly closed windows and doors.

"From now on, whenever there is charcoal burning inside a room, be sure to open a window!"

Danxia and Ru Yang didn't understand but nodded in agreement.

Three dishes and a soup, one vegetarian and two meat dishes—being able to eat hot meals now seemed like something from a past life for Yun Jinnian.

From a past life...

Yun Jinnian took a deep breath and ate slowly, little by little.

The leftovers were shared out first by Mrs. Yuan, while Yun Jinnian leaned by the window, looking into the gradually darkening night.

In the dream, on the fifteenth day of the eleventh month of Yuan and fifteen years, she was still left with a cold stove and empty pot, unable to have a full meal.

But now, not only had she eaten her fill, she also had her own private savings, fabric in the storage closet, and her dressing table wasn't just adorned with beaded flowers—it had more than ten gold hairpins, more than ten silver hairpins, more than ten jade hairpins, as well as matching earrings, bracelets, and necklaces.

Such changes were good; you can't become fat with just one bite.

Next, she needed to find a way to bring her mother back from the family temple.

"Miss!"

Yun Jinnian came back to her senses and looked toward the wet nurse Mrs. Yuan, responding softly, "Hmm?"

"The Lady had Ming Liu come over with a message earlier, saying that since you're not well, you don't need to come over to greet her anymore, just rest well!"

Not having to go and greet her? She didn't want to go anyway!

Then let it be for now.

"I understand, wet nurse, you should rest early as well. Starting tomorrow, we will make new clothes for the New Year. After the New Year, I'll be eleven!"

"It's only the nominal age of eleven. After your birthday in the second month, you will truly be eleven!"

"Yes, but I haven't seen Mother for five years, and it's been half a year since I last saw Father!" Yun Jinnian said, lowering her eyes.

Mrs. Yuan was filled with unspeakable sympathy, hugging Yun Jinnian, "The second wife cherishes Miss the most, like her own life!"

"I know!"

And so she longed even more for her mother to return.

She went to bed early, with Danxia staying up for the night watch.

In her sleep, Yun Jinnian was very restless, haunted by visions of Momo's vacant gaze, walking numbly, biting into her flesh, mouthful by mouthful.

Yun Jinnian tossed and turned in bed, not feeling well at all.

The next day, she woke up looking haggard, with dark circles under her eyes.

The breakfast sent over from the main kitchen was only nibbled at listlessly before she lost her appetite.

It was the same with lunch: after two bites, she didn't want to eat anymore.

However, Ru Yue came back in high spirits, saying, "Miss, there's fantastic news!"

"?"

Yun Jinnian silently inquired.

"The great master has been promoted, advancing two levels from a third-rank Imperial Censor to duke!"

"Is that so? Then congratulations to great-uncle indeed!" Yun Jinnian finished speaking and began to smile slightly.

In the dream, it seemed that great-uncle had not been promoted, and the rise of the Yuan Family later was due to the remarkable political achievements of the third uncle

who was appointed abroad, becoming a Prime Minister of the first rank, and that was also when she caught Chu Liange's eye.

Oddly enough, the third uncle had neither requested a title for the Lady nor for the third aunt!

As Yun Jinnian pondered, Mother Li called out excitedly at the door, "Fourth Miss, the Lady has sent someone with celebratory cakes!"

This was something that had never happened before.

"Wet nurse, give taels of silver to the person who delivered the celebratory cakes!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian slouched in the chair.

With great-uncle's promotion, the house would definitely hold a banquet tonight. Would she be invited? If invited, could she bring up the matter of her boudoir studies?

Otherwise, she was supposed to be illiterate, but in the future, she would be proficient in playing musical instruments, chess, calligraphy, painting, poetry, and even possess excellent medical skills. How would she explain her past?

Chapter 10: Chapter 010, Suspicion

However, Yun Jinnian waited until it was dark, and when dinner was delivered to Niannian Garden, no one came to invite her.

Mrs. Yuan felt uncomfortable, but Yun Jinnian calmed down, peacefully eating her dinner, and actually ate more than she had at lunch.

Danxia and the others all seemed somewhat downcast.

"Don't be disheartened. The boat will straighten itself when it reaches the bridge. Go and eat, everyone. Uncle's promotion is a good thing, wet nurse!"

"Yes!"

"Reward each person with a silver!"

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Yuan pursed her lips and turned to fetch the silver.

It was only then that Danxia and the others cheered up.

With the silver in hand at Niannian Garden, and more to be had at Lady's place—how wonderful!

Yun Chen was promoted two ranks and was overjoyed, walking with a spring in his step. He went with his colleagues to the tavern for a drink and didn't return home until dark.

The old Lady, the Lady, and the concubines, children of the main branch, as well as everyone from the second branch, except for Yun Jinnian, and a few other concubines' daughters were all waiting in the hall.

"The master's returned!"

The old Lady quickly got up, smilingly watching Yun Chen enter with his head held high.

"Chenchen!"

"Mother!"

The Lady immediately came forward to greet him, and the children also hurried up, "Father!"

"Uncle!"

"Great-Uncle!"

Yun Chen responded to each of them.

But he noticed that two people were missing, one was his legitimate son Yun Zhen, and the other was Yun Jinnian!

Seventeen-year-old Yun Zhen was studying at Songshan Academy because he was to take the imperial examinations in the spring of next year, in February. If he managed to rank among the top three candidates for the tribute scholar, that would truly be a great fortune.

So it was no surprise that Yun Zhen was absent.

But Yun Jinnian's absence...

Yun Chen's expression turned somewhat unpleasant.

He had heard during the drink that the position of Imperial Censor from the third rank had already been decided upon. It was just that this morning at court in the Jinluan Hall, the Emperor suddenly appointed him.

It was quite puzzling.

But it was an appointment everyone envied.

Yun Chen, recalling the words of the monk from the day before, gradually sank into a somber mood, "It's getting late. Everyone, go back to your own places!"

"But we've prepared the meal!" The old Lady hastily said.

"Mother, I have already eaten outside, and I've had a drink too. I'm going to rest for a while; you all go ahead and eat," Yun Chen said, then turned and left.

The Lady and the old Lady were both shocked.

The children were even more frightened, and the concubines didn't dare to speak up.

"Wasn't everything fine earlier?" the old Lady tentatively asked the Lady.

At first, the Lady didn't understand, but after the old Lady mentioned it, it dawned on her.

Yet she dared not tell the old Lady, "Mother, the master must be tired from socializing outside; let's eat!"

The dinner tasted like wax in their mouths, and afterwards, everyone retreated to their own quarters.

Xu Xinmo, helping the old Lady back to Cixin Academy, said, "Grandmother, why do you think Uncle suddenly became unhappy?"

Everything was fine; what could have made him unhappy all of a sudden?

The old Lady tried hard to think, but could not figure out the reason.

"Child, don't make wild guesses. Your uncle is simply too tired. You should also freshen up and rest early, as you need to go to the girl's school tomorrow," the old Lady said affectionately.

Her most beloved granddaughter looked good to her no matter how you looked at her!

"Understood, Grandmother. You should rest early too!" After sending the old Lady back to her main house, Xu Xinmo returned to her own small room.

Her room had the best furnishings and decorations out of all the Yun family daughters' rooms, even better than those of the eldest daughter, Yun MUYOU.

"Daidai!"

"Miss!"

"Why do you think Uncle suddenly became unhappy? He seemed very pleased at first, didn't he?"

Daidai, around fifteen or sixteen years old, with a round face and single eyelids, would narrow her eyes when she was thinking.

After a while, she finally said, "Miss, do you think it could be because of the fourth Miss?"

Xu Xinmo suddenly sat up, "What did you say?"
