

Indulgence 1021

Chapter 1021: Your Loved Ones

This voice calling Jinnian.

Nalan Jinlian heard it clearly.

It wasn't Jinlian, although the sound was somewhat similar, it was definitely different.

Moreover, the voice of Prince Rui, Chu Yu, was filled with urgency, a sincerity and genuine fear and concern that she could feel. Even the hand holding her waist was trembling.

What happened afterward, Nalan Jinlian had no memory of it all.

When she woke up again, it was in the bedroom of Qinglian Garden.

The room was lit, and she wanted to sit up slowly, but she couldn't muster any strength.

Her mouth was bitter.

They fed her medicine, but what medicine was it?

A few maids were moving around, and Nalan Jinlian felt she should recognize them, but somehow didn't.

"You all..."

"Miss, what's wrong?" Juan Ye asked softly.

Nalan Jinlian shook her head, "Who are you?"

"..."

Juan Ye was instantly frightened into tears, "Madam Qin, Madam Qin, come quickly, the Miss doesn't remember me!"

Soon, a woman hurried in, "Miss, you're awake. Is there anywhere you feel uncomfortable?"

Looking at the person in front of her, Nalan Jinlian shook her head.

Nalan Jinlian, she is Nalan Jinlian, but who is Jinnian?

Her mind was a mess, seemingly remembering something, but it was too blurry to recall anything.

Who is the person in front of her?

She didn't like this feeling.

Just hesitating, outside came the sounds of fighting, Madam Qin's face changed dramatically, and she quickly reached out to pull Nalan Jinlian, saying, "Miss, quickly, come with me!"

"Go?"

"Yes, those people outside have come to kill you, Miss, we must leave!" Madam Qin said, not caring for Nalan Jinlian's will, pulling her out of bed without even putting on shoes or clothes.

But it was too late.

A dark figure entered the room, and several maids immediately attacked him, only Juan Ye was scared and hid under the table.

Nalan Jinlian watched as he swiftly killed those maids with his sword, reaching out to her, "Jinnian, come, I'll take you away!"

"In your dreams!" Madam Qin shouted angrily, protecting her behind.

Nalan Jinlian looked at him, seeing him entirely wrapped in black, revealing only a pair of deep, dark eyes.

"I am Nalan Jinlian!"

"No, you are not Nalan Jinlian, you are Yun Jinnian. Jinnian, come, I'll take you away from here, back to your true home!"

A true home? Could it be this is not her home?

To be honest, she remembered nothing, only knowing she was called Nalan Jinlian, as if someone constantly whispered it in her ear, otherwise she couldn't remember.

Madam Qin wanted to say something else but was kicked away by the man in black, and as he reached to grab her, Nalan Jinlian screamed, "No, I won't go with you!"

But no one listened to her, she was wrapped in a cloak smelling of blood, embraced by the man's left hand, taken out of the room.

Nalan Jinlian had never seen such slaughter, the courtyard was filled with bodies, many men in black fighting desperately against those entering, while outside people fell one after another, charging in relentlessly.

"..."

Mouth agape, not knowing what to say, only feeling her stomach churning, she suddenly vomited.

Vomit splattered all over the man in black.

Yet he wasn't disgusted, rather he lifted his sword-wielding hand, gently wiped her mouth with the back of his hand, and softly murmured, "Don't be afraid, I'll take you home, never to lose you again!"

He used his body to shield her from the killing behind, no longer letting her see the bloody scene.

Nalan Jinlian looked at him, in her eyes only seeing his tender, entangled eyes, asking word by word, "Who are you?"

"Your kin!"

Chapter 1022: A Gentleman's Revenge

Family?

Nalan Jinlian softly murmured, finally saying after a while, "Really?"

"If there's even half a lie, may I be struck by lightning and die a horrible death!"

Nalan Jinlian hesitated for a moment, "If I go with you, will they stop killing people?"

"Yes!"

"Alright, then I'll go with you!"

Not asking where to go, not asking how the future will be.

Only because of that sentence, I am your family.

Not friends, not lovers.

Family, she now even doubts who she is, yet how could she remember any family, but she's willing to believe the man in front of her.

He said he came to take her home and that he is her family.

"Retreat!"

The people of the Marquis Residence could only watch helplessly as the man in black took Nalan Jinlian away. Faced with a ground full of corpses, the old Marquess couldn't utter a single word.

When Zhou Yunshen arrived with his men, aside from Juan Ye hiding under the table and the seriously injured, unconscious Granny Qin, there wasn't a single living soul serving Nalan Jinlian.

Even Chunqiu and Chong Ling died by a single sword stroke.

"Chu Yu, you are ruthless!"

To have the audacity to come right to the door, and even more unexpected, for her to leave with Chu Yu.

She had long forgotten everything, fainted and drugged before, yet still remembered Chu Yu.

Truly...

"Chase, bring her back dead or alive. If she refuses to return, bring back the body as well!" Zhou Yunshen finished speaking, then turned and left the Marquis Residence.

Granny Zhao, hiding in the shadows, was so shocked she was soaked to the bone.

The Crown Prince actually gave such a ruthless order, what should be done?

Granny Zhao hurried back, Mrs. Xu quickly approached, "How is it?"

Although nominally her daughter, having spent time together, she had some feelings, and with the child in her belly, Mrs. Xu naturally hoped Nalan Jinlian would be fine.

"The Crown Prince issued an order, bring her back dead or alive. If they can't bring her back, bring back the body!"

Mrs. Xu was startled, collapsing into the chair, "Such a cruel heart!"

By now, Mrs. Xu could probably guess Crown Prince Zhou Yunshen's thoughts and intentions.

He wanted to bring her back at any cost, intending to marry her as the Crown Princess Consort.

He wants the girl to be fond of him, so he did so much, yet something went wrong.

After a long time, Mrs. Xu finally let out a deep sigh, "So be it!"

Since she's escaped, let her go far away and never come back.

If she can remember, going home would be better. This Crown Prince is too extreme, not a suitable match.

More need not be said, Mrs. Xu only needed to take care of her pregnancy and give birth to the child. As for the matters in the back courtyard, there should already be reactions.

That night, many things happened at the Marquis Residence. The old Marquess was assassinated, the third concubine was frightened into a miscarriage resulting in two deaths, and the old Matriarch had a stroke, yet no one mentioned the disappearance of the Sixth Miss.

Inside Marquis Residence, everyone was on edge.

Nalan Mingzhu fainted several times from crying, while Nalan Mingcong kneeled silently beside her.

He regretted coming to the Imperial Capital, truly regretted it.

Mother is gone, brother is gone, now he can only rely on his sister.

There's no way back to that warm and harmonious home.

He knows that mother couldn't have miscarried just from fright; someone must have had a hand in it, and he had guessed who it was, but there was no evidence.

"Sister..."

Nalan Mingzhu looked at her brother upon hearing the word, "Hmm?"

"Mother?"

Nalan Mingzhu covered Nalan Mingcong's mouth, "Don't say anything, don't ask anything, as long as we both know in our hearts!"

The current Marquis Residence is unstable, they couldn't cause trouble, truly irritating Mrs. Xu, and they'd have no one to protect them.

"But..."

"A gentleman's revenge is never too late, even after ten years!"

Chapter 1023: Her Identity (Part 1)

This night, the Imperial Capital was filled with the sounds of alarm; the Imperial Guards conducted house-to-house searches, sparing no large residence. They even searched cellars and secret rooms, imprisoning all who refused to cooperate, regardless of their status or royal connection.

Outside the Imperial Capital, every junction bore the same carriage tracks, identical in weight.

Zhou Yunshen's men, not a single one returned. By the time a second group was sent to search, they discovered that the first had already been dead for some time.

The Emperor announced his abdication, becoming the Retired Emperor, while Zhou Yunshen ascended to the throne, and the Empress became the Empress Dowager.

All these changes occurred swiftly, in just a few short days.

In the Capital City, everyone was on edge, yet many people's hearts became more active.

The Fuwei Marquis Residence was one of them.

"No matter what, by any means necessary, you must find her; she can only be the sixth young lady of the Marquis Residence!" The old Marquess stated calmly.

He glanced at Nalan Bo, "Old Third, do you have any ideas?"

"Father, perhaps we can use Mrs. Xu as bait!" whispered Nalan Bo.

Mrs. Liao's death is certainly connected to Mrs. Xu, even if he has no evidence.

"It's unwise. If she returns for Mrs. Xu and discovers our deception, once she enters the palace, she can easily deal with us. That's unacceptable!" Nalan Old Lord firmly objected.

He immediately added, "Moreover, Mrs. Xu is pregnant!"

"When did this happen?" Nalan Bo exclaimed in surprise.

"Earlier, Mrs. Xu sent someone to say she was unwell and summoned the Mansion Physician over a month ago!"

That means she became pregnant while still in the border town.

Nalan Bo felt utterly exhausted.

Unexpectedly, Mrs. Xu became pregnant at this time...

"Mother..."

"Old Third, don't forget, Mrs. Xu's family is no ordinary one. It's the Count Residence. Though they may have declined in court, the Xu Family has become immensely wealthy through commerce. With money, what can't be achieved?"

So, Nalan Old Lord was very wary of Nalan Bo making a move against Mrs. Xu.

She was truly afraid that one wrong move could spell the end for the Fuwei Marquis Residence.

"Mother, you're right. I was being foolish!"

"It's good you understand. Let the past be. Don't pursue the particulars of how that concubine of yours died. Raise those two children well, so they don't turn into ingrates!"

"Yes!"

Nalan Old Lord didn't want to ask any more questions than necessary.

Who can clearly explain the matters of the past?

When news of Mrs. Xu's pregnancy spread, Nalan Mingzhu and Nalan Mingcong were stunned for quite a while, the siblings silently exchanging glances before falling into silence.

Yet the discontent in their eyes became increasingly apparent.

This is a mountain estate.

Built amidst the mountains, on the edge of cliffs and precipices.

Nalan Jinlian...

She didn't know who she was, having forgotten everything.

Standing at the edge of the cliff, watching the snow fall, she reached out her hand to let the snowflakes land in her palm, watching them melt into water.

Her body felt cold, and so did her heart.

Being unable to see the future or remember the past felt extremely uncomfortable.

A warm, thick cloak was draped around her shoulders.

She turned her head and saw a boy who resembled her, smiling sincerely and ingratiatingly.

"Sister!"

His name was Han Tianci, and he said she used to be called Yun Jinnian, and now she is called Han Jinnian.

She is the eldest daughter of the Han Family.

For some reason, she believed him.

Perhaps because he never nagged her, instead accompanying her to stand here all afternoon until nightfall.

Chapter 1024: Ruthless and Unjust

"Mm!"

Responded softly.

Turning back, she smiled at Han Tianci, "You've grown so tall!"

"Sister gave me too much good food in the earlier years, so I shot up like a weed. But this year I haven't grown much, and everyone says I might not grow any taller!" Han Tianci said, sticking out his tongue.

Such a childlike temperament.

"..."

Smiling, she silently chose a name for herself in her heart.

Jinnian.

Glorious years.

She liked this name.

Han Tianci also smiled, staying by Jinnian's side, watching the snow falling.

The Elder Council, the five grand elders, had already arrived, but no one was urging to take her pulse or mention checking her health.

Whether it was good or bad, Jinnian knew in her heart.

Over the past few days, she realized her sense of taste had been tampered with; many flavors were imperceptible. The medicinal taste in her mouth upon waking that day...

It was those people who drugged her.

This was also why she was chosen as Jinnian.

"Sister, it's too cold outside, let's go back, it's warmer inside, and you're fragile. If you catch a cold, you'll have to suffer the bitter medicine again!"

Jinnian nodded, "Alright!"

As she turned around, she saw Chu Yu.

He said that they had once been deeply in love, had many beautiful moments, and were about to get engaged when she was taken away.

She actually wanted to ask him if he feared she was no longer the same person, no longer pure.

If she had lost her purity, would he still treat her the same? But when the words were on the tip of her tongue, she couldn't utter a single word.

"Jinnian!" Chu Yu called softly and then smiled foolishly.

"Mm!"

Jinnian didn't know why he was laughing, but she could feel his happiness and joy.

"Let's go back!"

"Let's go back!"

A question and an answer.

The same words, but different meanings.

They exchanged glances, Chu Yu's eyes filled with deep affection, while Jinnian's eyes were faint, but with a hint of a smile.

"Let's go!"

She walked in the middle, with Chu Yu on one side and Han Tianci on the other.

The three of them walked in silence.

When they reached the main house, six elders came out to greet them respectfully, "Saintess!"

The elders were all very old.

One of them had completely white hair and beard, and she couldn't bring herself to show them a bad face. She nodded slightly, "Mm!"

She thought for a moment and then said, "Please help me take a look!"

"Yes!"

They all entered the main house.

The law master first took Jinnian's pulse, his face heavy as he switched to another person.

"How is it?" Chu Yu asked impatiently.

The law master pondered for a moment before speaking, "The Saintess has poison within her, but it's not exactly poison. The person is clearly very familiar with the Moon Worship Sect and the Saintess's constitution. Primarily, it seems the Saintess was injured initially and then subjected to spells!"

Jinnian remained silent. After a moment, she said, "I've had some headaches these past few days!"

"Which part?" the law master asked urgently.

Jinnian pointed to the back of her head.

The law master immediately got up to check, and the five grand elders took turns, then Han Tianci checked once again.

"There must have been a previous injury here, and the other party took the opportunity to administer a drug that caused memory loss, and used a spell. But they would need the Saintess's birth date and eight characters..." the law master said, pausing slightly.

Han Tianci shouted angrily, "It must be those bastards from the Yun Family, especially that old witch. She must have given Sister's birth date and eight characters to Zhou Yunshen, that son of a bitch!"

Jinnian was stunned.

Was it her former grandmother?

Now that was quite unexpected.

"Since she's so heartless, why should we hold back? It's just a spell. If it can be cast, it can be reversed, and if more people are watching over me, I don't believe they can take me away again!"

Chapter 1025: Ruthless and Cruel

Han Tianci and Chu Yu heard the words and looked at Jinnian.

"Sister is right, last time we were careless and let Zhou Yunshen succeed. This time we'll be well-prepared, and there's no way Zhou Yunshen will succeed. We'll cause him trouble so he won't have time to come after us!" Han Tianci said, walking to Jinnian's side, taking her hand in his, "Sister, don't be afraid. I'll protect you every step of the way. In a few days, Hemei and Henuan will come!"

Hemei and Henuan?

Who are they?

Jinnian didn't know, but she didn't mind them coming.

She nodded slightly and looked at Chu Yu.

She thought Chu Yu would say something, but Chu Yu just stood there quietly without saying a word.

Seeing Jinnian looking over, Chu Yu smiled at her.

Jinnian was startled and quickly turned her head away, not looking at him again.

New Year was approaching, and the days at the manor were leisurely. She could go anywhere she wanted, with a little tail following her, making her happy and never constraining her.

Following behind in black was Chu Yu, who didn't step forward to talk. If she looked back at him, he would smile like a fool.

But every time she saw his graying temples, her heart ached terribly, so she slowed down her pace to wait for him to catch up.

This guy was accustomed to taking advantage of the situation.

Chu Yu quickly walked up to Jinnian, giggling foolishly, "Jinnian!"

"Mm!"

Jinnian responded blandly and walked quickly ahead.

Han Tianci and Chu Yu made faces and gestures behind her, and eventually started a snowball fight.

"Sister, save me!" Han Tianci shouted, running behind Jinnian, pitifully saying, "Brother Chu is bullying me!"

Jinnian pondered for a moment, "Then let's both throw at him!"

"Okay!"

Before Han Tianci finished speaking, a snowball came flying, hitting Jinnian on the head.

"..."

Jinnian was dumbfounded, her mouth agape.

He really dared to throw it at her!

But she saw Chu Yu smiling, flashing his white teeth, as he shouted, "Chu Yu, you're doomed!"

The siblings threw snowballs at Chu Yu constantly, and he couldn't fend off their attacks with his two hands alone, getting thoroughly pelted.

His head and clothes were covered in snow.

The courtyard was filled with continuous screams and laughter, making it boisterous.

On a tall building not far away, Fazun opened the window, his old eyes full of smiles, "This is really nice!"

"Lord Fazun!"

"Has the order been passed down?" Fazun asked blandly.

"It has been passed down!"

"Mm!"

Fazun replied blandly.

His days were numbered; if he could do something for the Saintess, his life wouldn't have been in vain.

Thinking of that charming and graceful girl, Fazun gently closed the window, not to disturb their happiness.

That night, Jinnian fell ill in the middle of the night, feeling confused and kept calling out Ayu.

Chu Yu held her, his eyes red.

Even though she had forgotten him, somewhere deep in her bones, in her soul, she remembered him.

"I'm here, Jinnian, don't be afraid, I'm here!" Chu Yu comforted her softly.

Han Tianci brought in the medicine, but couldn't get her to take it.

"At that time, Sister probably refused, but there was no way out!" Han Tianci said, casually lighthearted.

But having come this far, Han Tianci's ruthless methods were something Chu Yu was well aware of.

"Tianci!"

"Don't let him off the hook. Since he has ascended the throne, let's give him a grand gift!"

Han Tianci's eyes lit up, "Brother Chu's words are so true. You feed Sister the medicine first, I'll go make arrangements!"

"Alright!"

Chu Yu gargled, took a sip of the medicine, and bent over to feed it to Jinnian.

After two sips, Jinnian opened her eyes, murmuring confusedly, "Ayu, no medicine!"

Chapter 1026: The Eunuch Emperor

Chu Yu's heart ached as if it were being slashed by a knife.

He gently coaxed, "Jinnian, be good. Take the medicine and you'll recover. When you wake up, you'll see Ayu!"

How much Jinnian actually comprehended was unknown to Chu Yu, but she obediently took the medicine and then fell into a deep sleep.

He summoned the five elders and gave some instructions; with maids attending here, he felt at ease.

"Go on, we'll be watching over here constantly!"

The best people from the Wangyue Sect had been deployed here. If they still couldn't protect one person, it would truly be incompetence.

"We will definitely return by dawn!"

After Chu Yu spoke, he left the villa with Tianci.

Imperial Palace

Zhou Yunshen stood by the window, gazing into the distance.

There was a time when he thought the Great Zhou was immensely wealthy, and its martial arts were top-notch. But after truly experiencing a showdown between top masters, he realized that the Great Zhou had been idling in place, while Chu Yu had advanced his Hidden Guards' martial skills leaps and bounds.

Not to mention, Han Tianci was wholeheartedly assisting him.

Behind Han Tianci lay the Wangyue Sect and the Han Family's Hidden Guards.

Thinking of the missing Yun Jinnian and the waves of Hidden Guards that had gone out and died, Zhou Yunshen felt a sense of dread.

Today, his mother, the Empress Dowager, summoned him to talk, forcing him to cease his pursuit and telling him to let Yun Jinnian return to Tianchu, handing this trouble over to Tianchu's Emperor.

But once Chu Yu returned to Tianchu, he would surely make certain maneuvers, possibly usurping the throne...

Once Chu Yu became the Emperor, his first target would be the Great Zhou.

Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes.

An arrow suddenly shot past, grazing his temple, and wedging into the pillar behind him.

"Assassins! Capture the assassin!"

After a sharp cry, the Hidden Guards lurking in the shadows quickly surged towards the incoming black-clad assassins.

But, as usual, the attackers came in teams, setting up formations that slaughtered his Hidden Guards, without making a move on him.

However, two of them charged at him from both the left and right.

With a thunderous momentum, he had nowhere to hide.

The two didn't take his life but swiftly made a move from above and below, leaving him to defend against one but not the other.

A sharp pain erupted from his lower body, "Ah..."

His body convulsed, collapsing to the ground.

"Ah..."

Zhou Yunshen screamed, pain filled with utter despair.

"This is the result of your ingratitude!" Han Tianci said, taking the lead in flying out of the main hall.

Chu Yu gave Zhou Yunshen a glance.

The Great Zhou would not want a eunuch as Emperor, chaos was inevitable.

Turning to leave the main hall, he shouted, "Retreat!" unrestrained excitement and joy in his voice.

Upon receiving the news, the Empress Dowager hurried over. The Imperial Physicians had already arrived, carrying out basins of blood-stained water. The Empress Dowager was so shocked her body went limp, "How could this happen?"

After a long time, a group of Imperial Physicians kneeled before the Empress Dowager, "Empress Dowager, His Majesty has been rendered useless!"

"Useless? What do you mean by useless?" The Empress Dowager screamed, urgently pressing for answers.

"His Majesty can no longer continue the bloodline..."

The Empress Dowager was too shocked to utter a single word.

She had never imagined encountering such an occurrence.

Since her journey from afar, through every step, all things had been successful, be it love or friendship.

Even if she didn't marry those two men, she still became their cinnabar mole, making them risk their lives for her, but truly never thought her only son would be turned into a eunuch.

"Get out!"

When she shouted those three words, she already had a guess on who was responsible.

Clenching her fists tightly, she entered Zhou Yunshen's bedroom, seeing her son lying stiffly on the bed like a puppet with cut strings, lifeless, she broke into tears, "I advised you back then, not to risk it for such a woman, but you wouldn't listen. Now what do you want me to do?"

Chapter 1027: No Major Issues

Zhou Yunshen seemed oblivious, allowing the Empress Dowager to chatter endlessly there.

With a part of his body missing, especially such an important part, he felt entirely despondent, as if he could see no hope.

Once in chronic pain, at least he was a whole person; now the pain was gone, but he had become a waste.

"I will not let them go, never!"

By "them," he naturally meant Chu Yu and Han Tianci.

"You know who they are?" The Empress Dowager asked in a deep voice, suddenly understanding, "Yunshen, have you ever consummated with that girl?"

"Never!"

Back then, with so many concerns, always thinking that for such a person, if she harbored affections for him, when the two were in mutual love and then consummated, it would be the most beautiful thing in the world, but now he truly regretted that.

Why waste so much thought then, should have just taken her directly. Once she became his, he didn't believe Chu Yu would still want her.

As long as she was beside him, feelings would naturally grow.

Once they had a child, for the child's sake, she would also make many compromises.

The Empress Dowager closed her eyes heavily, and only after a long while said, "You should rest well, Mother knows what to do!"

First, get through the current difficult situation, then deal with Tianchu.

Tianchu's Emperor is nothing to fear; as for the other two countries, she never held them in her eyes.

But neither Zhou Yunshen nor the Empress Dowager expected that at dawn, the entire Imperial Capital was aflame with rumors that the new Emperor was impotent, becoming an eunuch.

Almost instantaneously, every household knew, and the people were abuzz with discussions.

Zhou Yunshen's several brothers all requested an audience, even the Retired Emperor demanded the Empress Dowager and the new Emperor give an explanation.

He even brought the Imperial Physicians to examine Zhou Yunshen's body.

No matter if good or bad, a proper explanation was needed.

The silent ministers behind them!

In an instant, the Empress Dowager realized the Retired Emperor's love for her had long waned; these years he had only been avoiding crossing her path, secretly plotting her overthrow.

"His Majesty is unwell and needs proper rest, he will not see anyone!" the Empress Dowager said coldly.

"Even so, first there is the father before the son, does a father need the consent of a woman to see his son?" the Retired Emperor barked, waving a large hand, several Hidden Guards emerged from behind.

"You..." The Empress Dowager seethed with rage.

If these people truly entered the inner chamber, her son would have no way out but death.

These people must not be allowed in.

"Move aside for Us, or don't blame Us for disregarding marital sentiments!" the Retired Emperor shouted angrily.

He stepped forward and pushed the Empress Dowager aside.

Immediately, both sides began to fight.

After years of holding back, the Retired Emperor finally seized the chance to overturn, mercilessly trampling the Empress Dowager and her son beneath him.

The Royal Family would not allow an Emperor who was an eunuch.

"..."

The Empress Dowager was too enraged to speak.

Yet she heard a voice from inside the room, and Zhou Yunshen, dressed in white, walked out, "So it was Father and my brothers who came to visit Us, that's truly wonderful!"

Despite a pale complexion and appearing quite weak.

"You..."

The Retired Emperor paused, somewhat incredulous.

Being injured in such a crucial way, yet he could stand?

"It is well that Father brought the Imperial Physicians, let them take a good look at Us, to see where exactly we've been injured, lest there be too many wild rumors outside, besmirching Our name!" Zhou Yunshen said in a deep voice.

He extended his wrist.

The Retired Emperor glanced at a few Imperial Physicians, who immediately came forward to take Zhou Yunshen's pulse.

One bolder physician even reached out to examine between Zhou Yunshen's legs.

Intact and unharmed!

"Reporting to the Retired Emperor, His Majesty was merely injured by assassins, lost much blood, but there are no serious injuries!"

Chapter 1028: It's New Year

"That's impossible!" the retired emperor exclaimed.

The Empress Dowager gave a cold snort, "What is impossible about this? I have long known that many harbor ill intentions, so I discussed this with the emperor, yet the first one to be uneasy is the retired emperor!"

Despite her suspicions, the Empress Dowager decided to keep quiet at this moment.

Her son was indeed injured in such a way that his lineage would end, so the person before her could not be her son.

Yet the resemblance was uncanny.

There was not the slightest difference.

The retired emperor pursed his lips, having been suppressed by the Empress Dowager for years, he was unsure how to respond.

"Someone, take the retired emperor back to the palace!" the Empress Dowager shouted, then turned to the other princes, "You all return as well!"

However, on their way back to the Wang Residence, the princes encountered an assassination attempt.

Two were killed, several were injured, and whether Zhou Yunshen was an eunuch remained strongly suppressed.

On New Year's Eve

Every household was gathered together to have New Year's Eve dinner.

At the mountain villa, Jinnian was stoking the fire, while Chu Yu and Han Tianci were busily cutting vegetables and stirring the soup in the pot.

The five elders and the law lord were waiting for the meal.

They decided to have hot pot that evening, with a large pot of bone broth emanating a fragrant aroma; Jinnian sniffed it deeply.

Ever since she woke up that morning, her memories of the past became clear, and she began to trust Chu Yu and Han Tianci deeply.

She also chose her own name, Han Jinnian.

Not opting for the surname Yun, Han Jinnian felt no regret at all about her decision.

Outside, small stoves and pots were already set up — one large pot divided into spicy and clear broth sections.

Premium wines had been prepared early on.

Plate after plate of delicacies were arranged, ready to commence as soon as the hot pot was ready.

"How delicious it smells!" Han Jinnian inhaled deeply.

Chu Yu picked out a large bone and put it in a big bowl, handing it to her, "Quick, give it a taste, it's amazing!"

"Do I just gnaw on it like this?" Han Jinnian asked in confusion.

Wouldn't that be improper?

"Yes, that's how you enjoy it, especially satisfying!" Chu Yu said, then took a big bite from the bone himself, chewing while bringing the bone to Han Jinnian's mouth, his eyes sparkling as he looked at her.

"..."

Han Jinnian took a gentle bite, her face immediately flushed.

The taste was truly delicious, but since Chu Yu had just eaten it, wasn't it a bit improper for her to do so?

"Does it taste good?" Chu Yu asked.

"Delicious!"

Han Jinnian whispered, turning her head away, her ears turning red.

Chu Yu sidled up to Han Jinnian, eating a bite himself, then feeding her a bite.

Han Tianci, finding it bothersome, snorted coldly and threw down the vegetable knife before leaving the kitchen.

The two remained closely together, with no one bothering them. After finishing the bone, Chu Yu offered a handkerchief to Han Jinnian to wipe her mouth, his gentleness almost overflowing.

"..."

Han Jinnian looked at him seriously.

Observing his earnestness and tenderness in every expression and gesture.

He rarely smiled, but she had secretly watched him giving orders to his subordinates — his coldness was truly intimidating.

Yet, when facing her, he was always caught in silly grins, like he possessed dual personalities.

Oddly enough, she didn't find it frightening.

"Let's go, let's bring out the hot pot base!"

"Alright!"

The copper basin was very hot, and after Chu Yu brought it out, he called everyone to eat.

At this moment, there weren't many formalities; Han Jinnian ate bite by bite, sweating profusely, and when she saw everyone eating from the spicy pot, she couldn't resist reaching her chopsticks over, only to be blocked by Chu Yu...

Han Jinnian looked at Chu Yu in confusion.

"You're still taking medicine and can't eat spicy food, wait until you've stopped the medication,"

Chapter 1029: Follow Him

Han Jinnian was slightly taken aback, not expecting Chu Yu would stop her.

Unable to resist, she sulked, "Can't I even have a bite?"

"No way!" Chu Yu said earnestly.

His eyes were filled with seriousness.

Han Jinnian thought for a moment, tilted her head, and looked at Chu Yu, "Then you can't eat either!"

"Alright, I'll eat the bland dishes with you!"

Han Jinnian smiled softly.

She picked some light dishes for Chu Yu, watching him eat them. She had little appetite herself, so she kept scalding dishes and serving them to Chu Yu.

Seeing Chu Yu eating joyfully, she felt exceptionally good.

Little did she know, whatever she offered, Chu Yu would eat, regardless of what it was.

This year, Han Jinnian was very happy because, after the New Year, five girls came claiming to be Hemei, Henuan, Hongye, Hongxiu, and Hongdou.

These teenage girls all greeted her with silly smiles, then cried one by one, their laughing and crying guise a bit comical, yet she felt familiarity and warmth.

These maids made her feel good, not controlling her or speaking much. Wherever she went, they followed, without dictating what she could or couldn't do.

After several days, Chu Yu and Han Tianci mentioned they were leaving. Han Jinnian hesitated momentarily before agreeing, without asking where they were going or if they'd return.

She wanted to find her past memories and herself.

She believed Chu Yu and the others would certainly help her reclaim her past.

Along the journey, Han Jinnian sat inside the carriage, gently swaying and moving on slowly. They admired lanterns in a large city midway. Chu Yu and Tianci made one themselves and bought several very beautiful, exquisite ones for her.

She no longer worried about forgetting yesterday upon waking or losing all memory after taking medicine.

She could feel her health had improved a lot.

Traveling at this leisurely pace, Chu Yu and Tianci gave her a birthday, telling her she was sixteen.

"Sixteen?"

"Yes, exactly sixteen. We've known each other for six full years. Although we've been apart during this time, we've ultimately reunited, which is wonderful!"

Han Jinnian looked at Chu Yu, and after a moment, smiled gently, "Thank you!"

Chu Yu was instantly satisfied, "Sweet as honey!"

Han Jinnian later found out that this journey was to Nanjiang for her to recuperate, as her health was poor.

Many times she wanted to urge Chu Yu to attend to his business. Looking at his extraordinary demeanor, surely his identity must be remarkable. Yet whenever she tried to speak, the words caught in her throat, secretly wishing to keep him by her side.

"Can I not go to Nanjiang?"

Chu Yu was astonished, "Then where do you want to go?"

"To your home, back to my home, alright? You mentioned I have a mother, a grandfather; I want to go back and be with them!"

Seeing Han Jinnian speak sincerely, Chu Yu nodded cautiously, "Alright!"

Unbeknownst to him, this would disrupt the plan, making the ones Zhou Yunshen sent to pursue them in Nanjiang miss the target entirely.

In a blink, the weather became increasingly warm. They shed heavy winter garments, donned light summer clothes, and Han Jinnian became more carefree in personality and a bit spoiled due to indulgence.

Now she was clad in men's clothing on horseback, letting the scorching sun bake her.

Chu Yu, meanwhile, was dressed as a woman inside the carriage, posing as her wife, Han Tianci's sister, while Hemei, Henuan, and the others posed as servants, drawing attention as they went like a group of wealthy merchants.

The Venerable Master and five elders massaged their brows, barely able to look at their Commandery Princess causing trouble like this, unable to utter a word of reproach, merely following along in the mischief.

Chapter 1030: Turbulence Rises

Midway, Han Jinnian slashed her wrist several times to feed Fazun her blood. Fazun seemed more spirited, but this was only a temporary situation.

He had worried and expended too much; now, he clung on merely to witness the birth of the next Saintess, fulfilling his life's mission.

Han Jinnian took special care of him because of this.

Along the journey, she checked pulses and treated illnesses, gradually realizing that she must have been highly skillful in medical expertise.

"My dear!" Chu Yu called out sharply.

His coquettishness made one's skin crawl.

Han Jinnian turned her head, "What is your command, my lady?"

"It's quite hot outside; my dear should come into the carriage!"

Han Jinnian burst out laughing.

Finally able to be so carefree, he didn't want to confine himself within that small space of the carriage.

"Please just sit back comfortably, my dear!"

He tightened the reins and made the horse gallop faster.

Hemei and Henuan immediately followed.

Inside the carriage

Han Tianci looked at Chu Yu with a cold smile, quickly took off his female attire, changed into men's clothes, and jokingly said to Chu Yu, "Sister-in-law, just sit well; I'm going to ride with brother!"

He whistled, and a horse quickly galloped over. Han Tianci jumped onto the horse's back, "Giddyup!" and chased after Han Jinnian.

Chu Yu pursed his lips.

His body fell back, the corners of his eyes and brows were all smiles.

Although these days were a bit chaotic, the mood was excellent.

The beloved returned to his side; even though she had forgotten the past, the feeling within remained unchanged. Her silence didn't mean she wouldn't think about it.

That Jinnian who loved him would definitely return.

Thinking of this, Chu Yu's deep, dark eyes gradually filled with brightness, overflowing with gentle smiles.

Tianchu Country

Capital City

The Capital City had undergone many changes, such as the Empress's passing, with the harem now managed by the Noble Consort Le.

In the court, Yun Chen rose step by step, promoted to the top official rank, and was appointed as Right Chancellor, while Feng Wushuang became the Left Chancellor.

The two did not get along well at all. Feng Wushuang rallied the old network of Elder Minister Chen, especially after marrying Chen Danyan, making those who were initially hesitant completely assured.

Feng Wushuang also became Tianchu Country's youngest Prime Minister.

Liao Shijie ranked first in the imperial examinations last autumn, entered the Hanlin Academy, and transcribed for the Emperor. Yun Zihan's status rose, conferred as a fifth-rank lady, and in September last year gave birth to a son for Liao Shijie, making the family of three extraordinarily happy.

Liao Shijie pursued Feng Wushuang's lead, and a group of scholars from humble backgrounds clearly followed Feng Wushuang.

Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingzhi, and Yun Qingqing's husbands also did quite well in the exams, but ultimately had no foundation in the Capital City, secretly arranged by Feng Wushuang, each went to an external county to be County Magistrates. Although these positions seemed unnoticed, they were crucial transport hubs in Tianchu Country.

The Yun Family was momentarily in great splendor, but soon the Capital City folks understood that several daughters married out hadn't returned to the Yun Family, having no association with them. Yun Qi and Yun Bi's voluntary clan removal also raised speculation, but Yun Chen's steady rise, with Yun Zhen, Yun Yi, and Yun Xuan entering into officialdom, even if the ranks differed, still drew many to curry favor.

Lady He smiled so broadly she couldn't close her mouth, warmly entertaining the ladies who visited her mansion. As for those prestigious families that still disdained association with the Yun Family, Lady He thought someday they would come shamelessly knocking...

"Madam, madam!"

Mrs. He looked at the visitor, gracefully adjusted her hairpin, and asked casually, "What's happened that you are in such a hurry?"

"Reporting to Madam, rumors outside say the long Princess of Zhen Kingdom is returning, accompanying her is Princess Yijia!"