

Indulgence 221

Chapter 221: Dead Person

Madame Song also realized she had inadvertently spoken too much and quickly refrained from saying more, attending to the Princess as she went to bed.

The next day.

The journey back to the capital was bustling.

A huge retinue of people and horses guarded the central carriage; the Princess lay on a soft couch, with Yuwen Ming and Yun Jinnian sitting on one side, Madame Song and Linglong attending to the Princess.

Chu Yu rode on horseback as an escort beside the carriage.

Knowing that Chu Yu was outside the carriage, Yun Jinnian's heart was slightly at ease.

Chu Yu, knowing that Yun Jinnian was inside the carriage and that a lift of the carriage curtain would allow him to see her, was overjoyed.

Around noon, they passed through a stretch of woodland.

Within the forest lay a clear stream, and Chu Yu suggested they rest by the stream and take the opportunity to catch and grill fish, or make a fish soup.

The Princess laughed and said, "Then let's rest in the little woodland!"

Chu Yu took the lead in catching fish, and Yun Jinnian and Yuwen Ming, curious, also stood by the stream.

A fish swam by, and Chu Yu, with a calm and steady hand, reached in and caught one.

Not too big, but not too small either.

"Uncle Rui is so amazing!" Yuwen Ming couldn't help but exclaim.

It was simply magical!

Yun Jinnian also felt amazed; catching fish with bare hands was quite impressive.

Seeing the astonished look on Yun Jinnian's face, Chu Yu rolled up his sleeves and continued to catch several more fish, while cooks on the side took the fish to grill or make soup.

Yun Jinnian squatted down and reached out to scoop up water to wash her hands.

Chu Yu glanced at her and immediately turned his head, his ears turning red.

After several attempts, he failed to catch any more fish.

Although Yuwen Ming did not understand the subtleties of love, as the daughter of a wealthy family, she knew a great deal, and from the look on Chu Yu, she understood a little.

Yun Jinnian stood up, inhaling deeply through her nose.

"Sister Jinnian, what's the matter?" Yuwen Ming asked puzzledly.

"There's a smell of blood!" Yun Jinnian stated calmly, "The scent of blood is coming from upstream of the stream!"

Chu Yu stepped out of the stream, "Luoyi, follow the stream and check upstream!"

"Yes!"

Luoyi immediately went to investigate upstream.

Shortly after, Luoyi returned, "Your Highness, there are several bodies upstream!"

"Is anyone still alive?" Chu Yu asked.

"I did not look closely!"

Luoyi, detached and indifferent, never concerned himself with other people's business.

"Let's go have a look!"

Chu Yu and Luoyi went to the site and saw several bodies lying by the stream, scattered haphazardly. Without needing Chu Yu's instructions, Luoyi began to examine them.

"Your Highness, they're all dead!"

Chu Yu nodded, "Find out who they are!" he said, then turned and walked away.

Luoyi began a thorough investigation before reporting back.

"The deceased are all male, the wounds on their necks, all killed by a single slash. Their clothes are made of coarse fabric; I removed their clothing to check but found nothing that could identify them. One of them had six toes on his left foot. Judging by the calluses on their palms, they're undoubtedly trained fighters!"

"What about their weapons?"

"They had common blades from a blacksmith, nothing out of the ordinary!"

Chu Yu pondered for a moment, "Go report this to the Governor's Office and make a record!"

"Yes!"

When the Princess learned that there were dead people upstream, she showed little reaction, simply asking, "Has the stream water been contaminated?"

"Those men were some distance from the stream, so no," Chu Yu replied.

"Use our reserve water then. When we reach the next village, we can refill it!"

To ensure the Princess had water on the road, one of the carriages carried a large bucket of clean water.

The grilled fish prepared by the cooks was exceptionally fragrant, and Yun Jinnian ate an entire one, while the Princess only drank a bowl of fish soup.

After lunch and a short rest, they continued on their journey.

No one really dwelled on the deaths of those men...

Chapter 222: Malice

Capital City Yun Residence

Tomorrow is the Dragon Boat Festival, and Lady He of the Yun Family had long instructed that glutinous rice should be soaked tonight, and zongzi wrapping should begin at midnight, to be cooked overnight, so that they could be delivered to several friendly households early tomorrow morning.

Lady He had, in fact, wanted to send a basket to Zhuangyong Marquis Residence, but they were not interested.

Ever since Yun Jinnian went to Huguo Temple, Yun Muyou had invited Dai Hanmi several times, each time Dai Hanmi declined, citing the old lady's poor health as a reason to stay and care for her.

The so-called friendly households were only those with official ranks lower than Yun Chen, eagerly willing to form good relations with the Yun Family.

"Sigh!"

Thinking of Yun Muyou's marital issues, Mrs. He was truly distressed.

"Has the Second Lady returned yet?"

"Madam, she returned this morning, but she didn't bring back many things. It seems that most were left at the Han Family!" Tianmi said.

News of Mrs. Han bringing several carriages of goods into the city had reached the Yun Family early, and Mrs. He thought that Mrs. Han would bring them back for her to see what fine items there were, but unexpectedly Mrs. Han did not return to the residence directly. Instead, she stayed at the Han Family for two nights before returning, which was simply...

"Alright, I got it. You may go down now!"

Mrs. He thought for a moment, then stood up and went to Cixin Academy.

To talk to the old lady about this.

When Mrs. He arrived, Mrs. Han was also in Cixin Academy, accompanying the old lady in conversation, while Mrs. Soft Concubine sat on the side, her figure plump from the pregnancy of almost five months, no longer showing subservience and humility but rather a hint of pride.

Mrs. He raised an eyebrow.

If Mrs. Han really decided to act, Mrs. Soft Concubine would be nothing.

After paying respects to the old lady and sitting down, she started speaking, "The Second Sister-in-law has come back alone, where is Jinnian?"

"Jinnian encountered Her Highness the Princess of the Town at the inn, and Her Highness took quite a liking to her, so she had her accompany her back to the Capital City!" Mrs. Han did not mention a word about Yun Jinnian treating the Princess's illness, only that the Princess liked Yun Jinnian.

The old lady and Mrs. He were surprised.

To have won the favor of the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence was already something, and now she had caught the affection of the Princess of the Town. That was the Princess of the Town, a first-rank princess, the Emperor's aunt by blood, whom even the Emperor would greet with utmost respect, and even the Empress Dowager would give way to her in courtesy. What kind of stroke of good fortune was Yun Jinnian on?

Mrs. He felt sick to her stomach, as if she had eaten something spoiled, cursing inwardly why it wasn't Yun Muyou instead. Wouldn't it have been great if it were Yun Muyou?

With that in mind, Mrs. He secretly decided to make Yun Muyou and Yun Jinnian become closer. When the time came to visit either the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence or the Princess of the Town, they could go together.

Mrs. Soft Concubine twisted the handkerchief in her hands, wishing she could wring a hole in it.

However, thinking that she had a particular craving for sour foods, which meant it must be a son in her belly — as the Second Master currently had no sons — the child would be the eldest illegitimate son. In the future, the Second Branch would be hers, which brought some comfort to her heart.

Mrs. Han did not care about the stir her few words had caused, standing up to take her leave, heading back to Qiyue Academy.

She then instructed Bai Que to go to Niannian Garden and give it a thorough cleaning.

Now, the servants at Niannian Garden all came from the Han Family, so Mrs. Han felt reassured using them.

Only Ru Yue was kept under watch by someone.

Bai Que, following orders, went to Niannian Garden. Mrs. Yuan found out Yun Jinnian was soon to return, and was overjoyed, cleaning the already spotless Niannian Garden once more.

She carefully wiped Yun Jinnian's books one more time and put them back in place.

She eagerly awaited Yun Jinnian's return.

Xu Xinmo's courtyard had changed its name; it was now called Yicai Academy, deriving from the phrase "brilliance and dazzling colors."

"That little bitch Yun Jinnian is coming back?" Xu Xinmo asked Daidai, her face full of disdain and hatred.

Chapter 223: Sorrow

Daidai didn't know why Xu Xinmo hated Yun Jinnian so much, but as Xu Xinmo's maid and military strategist, she naturally would help Xu Xinmo gather information from all quarters.

"He didn't say when he would return, but it's said that while in Huaixi County he met the esteemed Princess, who took a great liking to him and kept him by her side. The second lady returned first, they say she brought back quite a lot and sent it all to the Han Family!"

Upon hearing this, Xu Xinmo gripped her handkerchief tightly, "Such petty household airs; who cares for her trifling gifts? Yet that little wretch Yun Jinnian certainly has good luck!"

First, it was the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence, and now the Princess; those were both top-tier figures.

Why couldn't she have such luck!

Daidai didn't dare to say more and pondered before asking, "Then, Miss, what should we do next?"

"I don't know what to do either!" Xu Xinmo said, then paused before adding, "Do you think that thing has been found?"

"It's hard to say. There's been no news from Niannian Garden at all. Shall we send someone to take a look?" Daidai asked.

"Not for now. Let's wait for the nanny to come back!"

"Yes!"

Without her nanny by her side, Xu Xinmo was, after all, just an eleven-year-old girl. Even if she was ruthless, what could she possibly do.

The Princess's carriage stopped at the city gates. Chu Yu escorted Yun Jinnian back to the Yun Residence, with Yuwen Ming accompanying them, while the Princess returned to her own residence first.

And had agreed with Yun Jinnian to come pick her up to visit the Princess Residence the day after tomorrow.

The carriage stopped at the entrance of the Yun Residence. The gatekeeper, upon seeing Chu Yu on horseback, was startled, "This servant pays respects to Prince Rui!"

"You may dispense with the formalities."

Chu Yu stayed on horseback, watching as Yuwen Ming helped Yun Jinnian out of the carriage and spoke a few words to her, then under the gatekeeper's shocked and bewildered gaze, escorted Yuwen Ming back to the Princess Residence.

"This servant pays respects to the Fourth Miss!"

Yun Jinnian nodded at him, and entered the gates with Hemei and Henuan, only to see Yun Chen hurrying over.

"Jinnian, where is Prince Rui?" Yun Chen asked urgently.

Yun Jinnian curtsied to Yun Chen, "Uncle, Prince Rui has escorted Miss Yuwen back to the Princess Residence."

Yun Chen watched Yun Jinnian.

She had grown taller now, and though slender, she was vastly different from how she'd been two years ago.

"Prince Rui escorted you back?"

"It was Sister Yuwen who brought me back; the Princess wished for Prince Rui to escort us!" Yun Jinnian explained clearly.

She was brought back by Yuwen Ming, not by Chu Yu.

Chu Yu was merely an escort.

Seeing Yun Jinnian say this, Yun Chen couldn't well continue to question her, "Alright, you may leave!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian curtsied to Yun Chen and left.

Once, she had thought this uncle to be upright and incorruptible, but after enduring so much, she realized that he was just another worldly man.

Elbows don't bend outwards.

Just like her three cousins, each aware that she wasn't faring well, yet not a single one truly cared.

She arrived at Qiyue Academy with Hemei and Henuan.

Mrs. Han quickly came out to meet her, "Jinnian!"

"Mother!"

Yun Jinnian called out quietly and stepped forward to hug Mrs. Han's waist, "Mother, I'm back!"

Mrs. Han patted Yun Jinnian's head, "It's good that you're back. Go back to Niannian Garden and freshen up, then go pay your respects to your grandmother. Your mother has received the message that your father will be arriving this afternoon!"

Yun Jinnian nodded slightly.

"Then Mother, I will go now!"

Mrs. Han watched Yun Jinnian's retreating figure, unsure how to break the news to her that Yun Qi hadn't come back alone this time; he had brought a woman with him, and that woman was already two months pregnant...

Chapter 224: Scolding

Yun Jinnian returned to Niannian Garden, and Mrs. Yuan's eyes narrowed with delighted laughter. Yun Jinnian gave her a peace charm, and both An Mama and Yaniang got one as well. Although An Mama and Yaniang didn't say much, Yun Jinnian couldn't tell what they were thinking, but she saw the slight moisture in their eyes.

After washing up and changing her clothes, Yun Jinnian took a Sutra she had handwritten herself and a peace charm to the Cixin Academy.

The old madam saw Yun Jinnian but remained cool and detached.

"Greetings to Great-Grandmother!"

Yun Jinnian didn't mind, passing over her handwritten Sutra and peace charm, and the old madam gestured for Tian Mama to come forward and take them.

She then asked, "I heard you met the Princess of Zhenguojun in Huaixi County?"

"Yes! The Princess was very loving," Yun Jinnian replied indifferently.

She envied the Princess's affectionate treatment of Yuwen Ming, which was not the kind of doting Mrs. Yuan showed to Xu Xinmo, but a slow guidance.

"Did the Princess say anything to you?"

"She said she would send someone to pick me up to go to the Princess Residence to play the day after tomorrow!"

Upon hearing this, the old madam's mind spun, "Then take your cousin with you!"

Yun Jinnian looked at the old madam in astonishment.

"Is Great-Grandmother joking? The Princess didn't say I could bring someone along. Or is Great-Grandmother trying to make decisions on behalf of the Princess?"

Yun Jinnian's words were rather pointed.

Who dares to decide for the Princess? Even the current Emperor or the Empress Dowager wouldn't dare, let alone her, a woman with no formal rank, unless she had a death wish.

The old madam abruptly stood up, "You're talking nonsense! That's not what I meant at all; why would you misinterpret it like that? So young, yet not learning what you should. Is this how your mother taught you manners? You simply..."

Yun Jinnian suddenly stood up and turned to walk out.

She wouldn't play along if the old madam wanted to be unreasonable.

The old madam's rage was stuck in her throat; she couldn't utter a word, watching wide-eyed as Yun Jinnian walked out.

She grabbed the Sutra and peace charm from Tian Mama's hands and threw them out.

They hit Yun Jinnian right in the back of the head. Hemei was shocked and turned her head in astonishment to look at the old madam.

But Yun Jinnian just bent down to pick up the Sutra and peace charm.

Her copied Sutra had been greatly appreciated by Abbot Wuxin, who said it held a sense of solid dignity. She couldn't believe the old madam had thrown it away.

Looking at the peace charm, Yun Jinnian blew on it gently.

It was just as well not to have it—Master Micheng's Sutras, chanted before his desk for decades, were coveted by many.

"Let's go!"

She walked out of Cixin Academy with Hemei, heads held high, chests out.

Inside the small hall, the old madam was furious, "Look at that arrogance, just like her mother!"

She was absolutely infuriating.

How could she be so unlucky to encounter such an unfilial person?

Tian Mama didn't know what to say. Actually, the fourth miss had come with genuine sincerity, but the old madam hadn't said a single reasonable thing from the start, and later on was being utterly unreasonable.

It was within reason for the fourth miss to leave after being insulted like that.

Seeing Tian Mama remain silent, the old madam glared at her, "Why aren't you speaking, do you also think I'm wrong? Just a Sutra and a peace charm from who knows where; it's no loss if they're gone. What's so precious about them!?"

"The old madam is right; the fourth miss is indeed too arrogant!"

Hearing someone agree with her made the old madam feel much better.

Thinking that the future of the Yun Family depended on Xu Xinmo, the old madam immediately had Tian Mama call Xu Xinmo over to strengthen their bond!

Chapter 225: Cold Hearted

Yun Jinnian returned to Niannian Garden with the items. She had been scolded by the old lady, and as she got up and left, the incident of her being hit by the Sutra and the peace charm thrown by the old lady became known throughout the Yun Residence.

When a maidservant's family visited, the maidservant let the information slip while speaking to them.

Although the specifics were unknown, they exaggerated and discussed it with their own families after leaving the Yun Residence, and those people talked to others, saying how formidable Mrs. Yuan was, and how unfilial Yun Jinnian was, describing the situation in great detail.

After learning of this, Mrs. Han only stood in the yard of Qiyue Academy for a while before she said, "Bai Que!"

"Madam!"

"What do you think are the chances that Yun Qi and I divorce and leave with Jinnian?"

If the Yun Family couldn't accommodate her Jinnian, then she would change her surname to Han!

Bai Que looked at Mrs. Han and after a while, finally said, "The second master will not agree!"

"What if there's no second master?"

When Mrs. Han said this, she genuinely wanted to kill Yun Qi and then find an opportunity to leave the Yun Family with Yun Jinnian.

If they were at the Han Family, Yun Jinnian could receive a better education and live a better life.

"Madam, this thought is not advisable!" Bai Que advised earnestly.

Mrs. Han took a deep breath, "Yes, I'm just thinking about it, so I'm enduring it. Once Jinnian is married, then I can divorce...", Mrs. Han paused before continuing, "But this Yun Family is truly sickening, every one of them putting on airs, hypocritical and shameless to the extreme. Bai Que, since everything that happened at Cixin Academy has spread, go arrange for the word to be more precise!"

Vague and ambiguous rumors are useless, one has to bring out the truth to make a statement.

Since the old lady looks down upon that peace charm, someone should invite Abbot Wuxin to come and give her a severe blow to the face.

But there's no hurry. No hurry at all.

Sooner or later, she would have that old pious woman bring death upon herself and the Yun Family, let her beg for a living, live in regret every day, too scared to die and yet longing for death!

"Madam, would you like to go see the young miss?" Bai Que asked.

"No need, the child is mindful. She knows what she's doing, just leave her to it!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian returned to Niannian Garden and wrote an invitation to be sent to the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence, stating her intention to visit and play on the seventh day of the fifth month.

Before her invitation could be sent out, Dai Hanmi's invitation had already arrived, inviting Yun Jinnian to the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence to play, anytime she wished.

"Minxian, go back and tell sister Hanmi that I'll visit the Princess Residence on the sixth, and I'll be at the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence on the seventh. Please mention it to the old duchess for me!"

"Don't worry, Fourth Miss. When I came, the young miss had already mentioned that the old duchess is in good health and wouldn't mind a day or two. The Fourth Miss can visit anytime, she will surely be waiting to receive you!"

"Sister Hanmi is still as amusing as ever!"

After sending Minxian away, Yun Jinnian leaned back on the Chaise Longue to rest.

Bai Que had already come over and said lunch would be at Qiyue Academy, which Yun Jinnian naturally agreed to with pleasure.

She had intended to rest for a while, but she fell asleep instead.

Just before lunchtime, Mrs. Yuan gently called to Yun Jinnian, "Miss, Miss!"

Yun Jinnian opened her eyes groggily, "Nanny?"

"It's time to go for lunch at madam's place!"

Yun Jinnian immediately became alert, "That's right, I completely forgot!"

After freshening up, Yun Jinnian, accompanied by Hemei, set off for Qiyue Academy.

Yun Jinnian walked slowly up front, with Hemei following behind, but unexpectedly ran into Xu Xinmo in the garden.

The moment Xu Xinmo saw Yun Jinnian, she wished she could strangle her to death.

Yun Jinnian, on the other hand, looked at her indifferently, "Cousin!"

Chapter 226: Show of Force

Xu Xinmo coldly looked at Yun Jinnian, "Where are you going?"

Not calling anyone, nor bowing; her lack of manners was indeed severe.

"To Qiyue Academy for lunch. Cousin, have you eaten?" Yun Jinnian ignored Xu Xinmo's hostility.

Because so many maids came and went in the garden, even if they didn't dare to watch the commotion openly, there were quite a few hiding in the shadows enjoying the show.

They were all waiting to see who between Yun Jinnian and Xu Xinmo would lose their composure and start fighting first.

"Then you go ahead!" Xu Xinmo said, suddenly remembering in her purse, she had a bug that she had raised to scare people with.

She quickly opened her purse, grabbed the bug, and threw it at Yun Jinnian.

The bug was actually just a caterpillar, soft and squishy, looking frightening but not dangerous in the least.

Yun Jinnian, who was not afraid of Iron Sand Snakes, would not be scared of a caterpillar.

She extended her hand to wrap the caterpillar in a handkerchief, tossed it onto the ground, and then stepped on it, squashing it until its insides burst out. She then turned to Xu Xinmo with a gentle and faint smile, "Cousin, you must hold on to things more tightly next time. Don't throw anything on me again, it's not good for your reputation if this gets out!"

After finishing her words, Yun Jinnian handed the handkerchief to Hemei, "Take this and burn it!"

Instead of going to Qiyue Academy, she turned around and headed back to Niannian Garden.

Xu Xinmo stood frozen, stomping her feet with rage.

"How dare she! How dare she talk to me like this, who gave her the gall!"

Back in Niannian Garden, Yun Jinnian took off her clothes and had Hemei take them out to be burned.

"Make a fuss out of it; let the whole Yun Residence know that Xu Xinmo threw a bug on me!"

No respect for elders, no manners.

So young and already behaving so wildly; what kind of decent family would marry her? She was delusional.

Hemei understood and carried the clothes to the main kitchen. When asked, she told the truth.

Before long, there was a new wave of unrest.

Lady He of the Yun Residence, having learned of the incident, found it was already too late, as rumors had already begun to spread...

Yun Chen from the front yard did not know much about the trivial matters of the back yard.

Yun Jinnian arrived at Qiyue Academy and had lunch with Mrs. Han.

Mrs. Han did not ask about the incident between Yun Jinnian and Xu Xinmo; she trusted Yun Jinnian could handle it well.

After eating, Yun Jinnian stayed at Qiyue Academy to read.

The elder lady sent someone to call Yun Jinnian over, Mrs. Han slowly stood up, "Jinnian, let's go, mother will accompany you."

"Yes!"

Mother and daughter went to Cixin Academy.

From afar, they could hear Xu Xinmo crying, wailing with such sorrow that Mrs. Han and Yun Jinnian looked at each other in bewilderment.

They entered the small hall.

Xu Xinmo sat next to the elder lady, her eyes red and swollen from crying.

"What's the matter?" Mrs. Han feigned ignorance as she asked, taking a seat on a chair beside Yun Jinnian.

"You still have the face to ask!" The elder lady shouted angrily.

Before she could start scolding, Mrs. Han slapped her hand down on the table, startling the elder lady and causing Xu Xinmo to stop crying.

Even Yun Jinnian was momentarily taken aback.

But she soon returned to her usual demeanor.

"Why should I be ashamed to speak? It's not my daughter who's unfilial, nor did my daughter deliberately throw a bug at someone. Why should I be ashamed? If the elder lady wishes to speak of reason today, then let's discuss this properly. But the few of us here won't be able to clarify everything. Why not call over the members of the clan, or perhaps invite the Imperial Censor or someone of high status who upholds benevolence and propriety to talk this over? Let's discuss how the elder lady has mistreated her own granddaughter in favor of her external granddaughter over the years, shall we?"

Mrs. Han's words were clear and forceful, echoing with conviction.

The elder lady was so angry that her face turned red, but she could not utter a word, for there were too many people who knew about her mistreatment of Yun Jinnian. It was just that Yun Jinnian and Mrs. Han had not made a fuss, and so no storm had been raised.

If Mrs. Han truly started a commotion...

Chapter 227: The New Concubine

The matriarch suddenly recalled what Yun Chen had once said: if someone accused the Yun Family in a memorandum, the Emperor had stated that the fate of the Ministry of War Residence would befall the Yun Family next time.

The matriarch turned pale with fright and pointed at Mrs. Han, "Out, out, out..."

She didn't want to see Mrs. Han, nor did she want to confront her.

It was too terrifying; this woman was too frightening. She wanted to ruin the Yun Family.

Mrs. Han snorted disdainfully, cursed under her breath, and led Yun Jinnian out of Cixin Academy.

Yun Jinnian clutched Mrs. Han's hand tightly.

Grateful for her mother's unhesitating protection.

Mrs. Han looked at Yun Jinnian and smiled, rubbing her head, "The kind are bullied, and the compliant are ridden. Only when you are strong will others not dare to bully you at will!"

Yun Jinnian nodded, "I'll remember that!"

In the small hall.

Mrs. Han left so arrogantly that the matriarch was shocked, and Xu Xinmo was also stunned.

In that instant, Xu Xinmo believed that if Mrs. Han had a sword, she would definitely stab her with holes.

She was definitely scared.

It was a while before the matriarch allowed Xu Xinmo to return to her own courtyard; she too had been badly frightened and needed to calm down.

Yun Jinnian first accompanied Mrs. Han back to Qiyue Academy. Mrs. Han asked Yun Jinnian, "Are you afraid?"

"Not at all, Mother is mighty!"

That slap on the table, truly something to admire.

"Mother didn't want to do that," Mrs. Han said, followed by a sigh.

She also wanted to be a filial daughter-in-law, a dutiful wife, but the matriarch didn't give her the chance.

Hearing this, Yun Jinnian felt a surge of sorrow for Mrs. Han.

She grabbed Mrs. Han's hand.

But then someone came to say that Yun Qi had returned.

Mrs. Han and Yun Jinnian had no intention of going out to greet him, yet they saw Yun Qi walking in slowly with a lady, carefully supporting her.

The lady was very beautiful, with a pitiable appearance that evoked sympathy at first sight, and her slightly bulging belly and the careful way she held her waist clearly indicated that she was pregnant.

Yun Jinnian was taken aback and turned to look at Mrs. Han.

Seeing that Mrs. Han remained composed, Yun Jinnian felt incredibly heartbroken.

She didn't know Mrs. Han had long been accustomed to such situations, and that she herself had arranged for this woman to come.

Yun Qi was somewhat nervous, but he still insisted on supporting the woman by his side.

"Shu Niang!"

Yun Qi softly called out to her.

The whole man was somewhat flustered.

Mrs. Han smiled lightly, "You're back, and who might this be?"

Yun Qi swallowed nervously, the woman by his side glanced at Yun Qi, then at Mrs. Han and Yun Jinnian, before curtsying politely, "This maid, Lian Xin, pays her respects to the lady of the house, and to Miss!"

"A lovely appearance, and a fine name indeed!" Mrs. Han said, and then turned to walk inside.

Yun Qi watching hurriedly called out, "Shu Niang!"

After speaking up, Yun Qi regretted it a bit, but Lian Xin had risked her life to save him.

Mrs. Han looked back at Yun Qi, "Yes, what is it?"

"Let's have some of Lian Xin's tea before entering the house," Yun Qi said, and tightly grasped Lian Xin's hand.

Signaling to her not to be afraid.

Mrs. Han looked on, indescribable feelings stirring in her heart, "All right, Bai Que, prepare the tea!"

Bai Que acknowledged and went to prepare the tea.

Mrs. Han took Yun Jinnian by the hand into the small hall and said to her, "Go study in the study room!"

"Yes!" Yun Jinnian nodded and entered the study room next to the small hall.

Though called a study room, it also had a heated brick bed (kang).

Yun Jinnian sat on the brick bed with a book in hand, but didn't flip through it, instead she listened intently to the movements in the small hall.

Actually, there was not much activity in the small hall.

Mrs. Han had Lian Xin serve tea, drank it amiably, and asked Bai Que to bring a pair of bracelets to reward Lian Xin, "From now on, you will be called Auntie Lian, and you will share a courtyard with Auntie Rou!"

Chapter 228: Unfilial

Both new concubines were pregnant and staying in the same yard, just thinking about it made her happy.

Moreover, Rou Concubine thought she had the situation well in hand, but unexpectedly, Lian Concubine arrived. Lian Concubine's status was different from her own as a thin horse, she was from a scholarly prestigious family, only that her family had fallen on hard times, and she had saved Yun Qi, which naturally set her apart.

On top of that, in order to take care of her, Yun Qi bought her two maids and an old nurse, and even gave her a lot of nice things. With people at her disposal and silver in hand, the end for Rou Concubine could well be imagined.

So Mrs. Han is really not in a hurry at all!

"Thank you, Madam!" Lian Concubine was very humble.

Yun Qi looked on, very satisfied.

"Go back and rest, and from now on, there's no need to come to pay respects to me. Take good care of yourself and have a big healthy son for Second Master early, that's what matters!" Mrs. Han finished speaking and waved her hand.

Lian Concubine stood up and bowed deeply to Mrs. Han.

"Shu Concubine, I will escort Xinxin back first!" Yun Qi said, and immediately regretted it.

However, Mrs. Han laughed, "Alright!"

Watching Yun Qi helping Lian Concubine walk away, she laughed even deeper.

When Rou Concubine heard that Yun Qi had returned, she was overjoyed, promptly dressed up, her belly bulging as she prepared to go to Qiyue Academy. But then she saw Yun Qi helping another woman walk slowly towards her.

"Boom!"

Rou Concubine felt as though she had been struck by thunder.

How arrogant she had been in front of Mrs. Han some days ago, and now how lowly.

Now another woman had arrived, and seeing Yun Qi's treatment of her, Rou Concubine, as a woman, knew that it was different from his treatment of her.

Her face turned pale white, and she had to pinch her palm hard to steady her emotions.

"This servant pays respects to Second Master!"

"Hmm," Yun Qi nodded, looking at Rou Concubine's belly, "If you're pregnant, rest well at home, don't go walking around everywhere!"

"This servant knows the master has returned and couldn't help feeling excited!"

"Hmm," Yun Qi responded indifferently, then said, "This is Lian Concubine, she will be living in the same yard as you. You should get along harmoniously. Don't bother Madam for no reason!"

Rou Concubine felt uncomfortable, but dared not refute a single word and smiled at Lian Concubine, "Younger sister!"

Seeing that Lian Concubine was not as pretty as herself, she felt slightly reassured.

"Elder sister!" Lian Concubine performed a respectful courtesy and took a good look at Rou Concubine, making a mental note.

"Let's go inside!"

Yun Qi said, then turned and left.

He did not enter.

He wanted to sit in the Qiyue Academy for a while, even if Mrs. Han would not say anything to him, he still wanted to sit beside Mrs. Han.

When Mrs. Han entered the study, she saw Yun Jinnian staring blankly at a book and laughed, "You thought your mother would be sad?"

Yun Jinnian looked at Mrs. Han, "Mother!"

"Mother is not sad at all, because she no longer cares!"

From now on, she just needed to take care of her daughter, as for Yun Qi, let him take as many concubines and have as many illegitimate sons as he wants, it had nothing to do with her.

And she didn't have to use her own silver to support them.

Yun Jinnian reached out and held Mrs. Han's hand, "Mother, you have me!"

"Yes, I have you indeed!"

After going through some events, the bond between mother and daughter had grown even stronger.

They did not mention Yun Qi anymore, one read a book while the other made clothes.

Since coming to the Yun Residence, Mrs. Han never carved anything nor even touched it.

When Yun Qi came by, mother and daughter were in a peaceful and beautiful moment. He stood at the doorway watching for a while, but they didn't notice his presence, so he then turned to visit the old lady of the house.

The old lady of the house started crying as soon as she saw him.

"What's the matter?" Yun Qi asked indifferently.

Yun Qi didn't feel heartbroken by the old lady's tears because all his sympathy was for Mrs. Han.

He didn't know exactly when, but he had become thoroughly disillusioned with this mother of his and no longer felt a shred of filial piety towards her...

Chapter 229: Comfort

"You married a good wife, she even dared to threaten me!" the old lady said and wept even more bitterly.

"That's because you have not conducted yourself properly, and she caught you in a fault. She merely threatened you without spreading the word or seeking judgment from others, which is already generous. You didn't care when Xu Xinmo pushed Jinnian into the Lotus Pond and nearly killed him; that's enough for public condemnation, saying you lack compassion!" Yun Qi spoke slowly, finishing his words before rising to his feet.

The old lady was utterly shocked upon hearing these words.

She was a typical person who remembered only the good, not the bad; she had long forgotten about the time Yun Qi had wrecked this small hall.

"You, you, you, I am your mother, your own mother. I carried you in my womb for ten months, how dare you speak to me in such a way!" the old lady roared with a heart-wrenching cry.

The whole person trembled with fury.

What kind of sin did she commit,

"Precisely because you are my mother, you are still alive!" After saying this, Yun Qi rose and left.

Annoyed, and listless.

The old lady watched Yun Qi walk away, her hatred for Mrs. Han growing stronger.

If it were not for Mrs. Han, Yun Qi would not have changed.

Yun Qi left the Cixin Academy, not knowing where to go. Finally, with a cold face, he went to the front courtyard to find Yun Chen.

This mission for the Emperor, although successful, had met with quite a few troubles.

The two brothers spoke for a while in the study, and upon learning of Yun Qi's intent to take up an official post, Yun Chen was overjoyed, "Is this true?"

"Hmm, I've already submitted a petition to the Emperor; having completed this task successfully gives a good reason!"

"That's really great; let's have a drink, just the two of us!" Yun Chen spoke, and paused before adding, "If only our third brother were here, then the three of us could support each other..."

Yun Chen saw Yun Qi's expression change and did not continue his sentence.

That year...

Who would have thought that the third brother would be so foolish, and the second brother's wife also...

Yun Qi remained silent and drank continuously.

No one knew, at that time, he had risen from his seat hoping by some chance that Mrs. Han had wronged him just this once; that they were even, and they could go on living well.

But Yun Chen and the old lady burst in with a group.

Mrs. Han laid unconscious, yet Yun Bi was wide awake, exuding satisfaction from indulging in passion, with eyes that Yun Qi wished he could gouge out.

At that moment, Yun Qi remembered nothing of brotherly affection, just the hatred of having his wife taken.

The old lady, who was skilled in creating trouble, unable to gain any advantage from Yun Qi and Mrs. Han, and seeing that Yun Jinnian was no longer the compliant person who could be easily manipulated as in the past, turned her attention to Madam Rou and Madam Lian, sending them a good deal of things through Nanny Tian.

Madam Rou was overjoyed by this, while Madam Lian remained more composed.

They agreed to go together to kowtow to the old lady, and Madam Lian nodded in agreement.

To her sons' two concubines, the old lady outwardly expressed great pleasure, showered them with compliments, and did not show them any disdain.

Although the Dragon Boat Festival was on the following day, the old lady still instructed the kitchen to prepare a good meal for dinner in the dining hall, to welcome Yun Qi home and cleanse away the dust of travel.

Yun Jinnian spent a while looking at Medical Books, and seeing Mrs. Han staring blankly with her needlework, Yun Jinnian put down the book and took Mrs. Han's hand.

Mrs. Han returned to her senses with a faint glow of tears in her beautiful eyes.

"Mother!"

Yun Jinnian called out softly, feeling somewhat distressed.

Her mother claimed not to care, but how could she truly not care! She was her husband, a man she had once loved deeply—the depth of hurt had only eroded her feelings.

Yet Yun Jinnian didn't know how to comfort Mrs. Han.

Remembering herself and Chu Liange in her former life, it was all a mess. She didn't quite understand how important reputation and virtue were to a woman, focusing solely on studying medical skills, and she had almost foolishly learned too much! Even with a wealth of knowledge, she had no idea how to capture a man's heart.

Chapter 230: Saved

"Mother is fine!"

Mrs. Han smiled at Yun Jinnian, rubbing her head, feeling that daughters were indeed the most heartwarming.

That evening, there was a welcoming banquet and everyone arrived at the dining hall early.

Yun Jinnian took out the peace charms she had prepared; these were just ordinary yellow paper that had been placed before the Buddha for a long time, yet they were still coveted by many.

Since Yun Jinnian's departure, Yun Muyou had sent sever invitations to Dai Hanmi and her group, all of which were declined. Noble ladies also did not invite her to their banquets, clearly showing Yun Muyou that without Yun Jinnian, friendship with Dai Hanmi and the others was impossible.

Moreover, Mrs. He had already instructed her, so upon seeing Yun Jinnian, she eagerly went up to her.

"Fourth sister!"

"Elder sister!"

The two greeted each other, and then Yun Jinnian handed a peace charm to Yun Muyou.

"Thank you, fourth sister!"

Yun Jinnian smiled and said little.

Then Yun Zihan approached in blue garments, her smile genuine, "Second sister!"

"Fourth sister!"

Yun Zihan, who had been studying at Songshan Academy, was making fast progress and was highly regarded by the Master.

Especially in the art of embroidery, the Master took her as a closed-door disciple.

If she did well, she might even teach at Songshan Academy in the future.

Yun Zihan wanted to ask how Yun Jinnian was doing at Huguo Temple, but being a concubine-born daughter, she couldn't roam freely, nor did she dare to visit Yun Jinnian casually, for fear of upsetting Mrs. He and affecting her own marriage prospects.

She feared even more that Mrs. He would give her mother trouble.

After Yun Jinnian passed the peace charm to Yun Zihan, Yun Zihan remarked upon receiving it, "This looks quite old!"

"Yes, they have been enshrined in the main hall for many years. I pleaded with the Abbot Master for a long time before he gave me a few!"

Yun Jinnian had a charm for each sister in the house as well as Dai Hanmi and her group. Although the Abbot Master gave her twenty, Yun Jinnian did not plan to give them away lightly; the rest were meant to be returned to Huguo Temple.

"Then they must be very effective!"

"They should be!"

Yun Muyou hadn't expected Yun Zihan to discern the charms' age; though she hadn't been very concerned at first, she became more attentive.

She decided to keep them and consult an expert when the opportunity arose.

Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingzhi, and Yun Qingqing, all concubine-born daughters, approached together. Although the Old Madam did not treat them harshly, the daughters of concubines lacked a certain grace in their demeanour.

Nevertheless, the three were still respectful and polite.

Yun Jinnian also gave each of them a peace charm, showing no favoritism.

"Thank you, fourth sister!"

The thoughts of the three didn't concern Yun Jinnian.

Maintaining appearances was sufficient.

Xu Xinmo, Yun Musi, and Yun Mulan walked over together, their eyes filled with disdain and disrespect when they looked at Yun Jinnian, but she simply smiled faintly.

Yun Muyou became anxious, "Cousins, eighth sister, ninth sister, come and give proper greetings to fourth sister!"

Fearing their legitimate elder sister, Yun Muyou, Yun Musi and Yun Mulan quickly left Xu Xinmo to come forward and greet her, "Greetings to you, fourth sister!"

"Eighth sister, ninth sister, you needn't be so formal. These are the peace charms I procured for you!"

"Thank you, fourth sister!"

Xu Xinmo still remembered how Yun Jinnian had crushed the insect she had been raising; she wouldn't go up to pay respects to Yun Jinnian. With a cold snort, she turned and ran off.

Yun Jinnian smiled softly.

This was just as well; it saved her a peace charm.

It could be given to the Princely Heir's wife of the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence or the second young madam, which was much better than giving it to Xu Xinmo, for her to likely throw it away.

Xu Xinmo ran to the Old Madam's side, "Grandmother!"

"Why have you come here? Go play with your cousins and sisters!"

Xu Xinmo pouted her lips, "There is an annoying ghost, I don't want to go!"