

Indulgence 231

Chapter 231: The Earliest

The words were overheard by Mrs. Han, who let out a cold, mocking laugh, "It's that annoying ghost, do tell me so I too can know!"

Frightened by Mrs. Han, Xu Xinmo hid in the old Lady's embrace.

The old Lady grew angry as well, "What are you fussing over with a child for!"

"Arguing with her?" Mrs. Han scoffed, "I wouldn't bother, but Lady, do you really think it's good to raise the Xu Family's child like this?"

Is this pampering the child? This is harming her, coddling her to her doom!

Anyone with a clear mind and genuine love would not fail to educate her. Speaking ill of others behind their backs is highly improper.

"Do you need to poke your nose into everything?" the old Lady drawled.

"Yes, it indeed appears I've concerned myself with matters that aren't mine!" Mrs. Han retorted and walked away.

Just let them keep raising her this way; they will have their time to cry later on.

One by one, the dishes were served, and the old Lady invited everyone to sit.

Aunt Rou, Aunt Lian, and their daughters sat together as well. The Yun Residence originally had another daughter from the main family, Yun Tai, but it was said she had been abducted. Her mother, Aunt Kang, had placed a Buddha statue in her own courtyard, taken up vegetarianism and chanting of sutras, spending many years without ever coming out.

As for what Aunt Kang looked like, Yun Jinnian had no idea.

The welcome dinner was very oppressive; Yun Zhen had consistently failed to pass the imperial exams, Yun Yi hadn't even tried, and Yun Xuan would soon be eligible to participate. As a result, Yun Zhen was in a foul mood, drinking glass after glass until he eventually passed out drunk.

Lady Mrs. He was so anxious she was in tears but didn't dare to persuade him, simply ordering people to take Yun Zhen back to rest.

Watching the Yun Family's decline, Yun Jinnian felt a sense of schadenfreude for some reason.

Returning to Niannian Garden, Yun Jinnian freshened up and then sprawled on the bed, flipping through a Medical Book. Simultaneously, she pondered how her patients looked, what prescriptions she should write for them, where they lived, the climate of their location, and which regional herbal remedies could maximize their medicinal properties.

"What are you thinking about?"

A male voice sounded, drawing Yun Jinnian back to reality. She saw Chu Yu and quickly said, "Turn around quickly!"

The days were growing hotter, and she was wearing very little.

Underneath was just a bellyband, and on top, a thin gauze that scarcely concealed her form.

"You bean sprout, what's there to look at!" said Chu Yu as he spoke, though his eyes still wandered over Yun Jinnian's body.

Enraged, Yun Jinnian grabbed a pillow and hurled it at Chu Yu, "Even a bean sprout has its time to grow, turn around now!"

Chu Yu caught the pillow and, not wanting to anger Yun Jinnian further, obediently turned around.

Yun Jinnian quickly got out of bed, put on some clothes, and tied up her hair with a ribbon before saying, "You can turn around now!"

Chu Yu turned around with a smile, and Yun Jinnian took a good look at him. She noticed he was carrying a food box, which surprised her for a moment.

"Happy Dragon Boat Festival!"

"The Dragon Boat Festival isn't here yet!" Yun Jinnian said, turning to glance at the hourglass. Seeing that the sand had flowed to the third quarter past midnight, indeed it was now the Dragon Boat Festival.

"See, I'm the first one to wish you a happy Dragon Boat Festival. I've also brought you zongzi and realgar wine; isn't that thoughtful!" Chu Yu said as he turned to place the food box on the table, lifting the lid to reveal two zongzi and a small, exquisite wine jug.

Yun Jinnian intended to say she had no gift.

But Chu Yu had come so early.

"Of course, I have something. Just wait a moment!" Yun Jinnian said, opening the wardrobe to take out a Colorful String she had woven and a zongzi-scented sachet.

"I made the Colorful String myself, but I bought the sachet!"

Chapter 232: Losing Face

Chu Yu took the Colorful String, "Let's forget about the zongzi fragrance pouch!"

Yun Jinnian didn't mind and put away the fragrance pouch.

Chu Yu invited Yun Jinnian to sit down, peeled the zongzi, placed it on a plate, and handed it to Yun Jinnian, "Try it and see how it tastes?"

Yun Jinnian picked up the chopsticks that Chu Yu had prepared, took a bite, and said, "The appearance of this zongzi isn't very impressive, but the taste is still quite good!"

Chu Yu snorted coldly and said nothing.

He also wouldn't tell Yun Jinnian that this was his first time making zongzi, to say they were ugly was kind—just being able to wrap them was an achievement in itself.

"But you're better than I am; I don't even know how to make zongzi!"

Chu Yu smiled, had Yun Jinnian take a sip of realgar wine, ate a couple of zongzi with him, cleaned up the bowls and dishes, and then took his leave.

Yun Jinnian watched Chu Yu's retreating figure and smiled faintly.

The Dragon Boat Festival

Early on, every household had hung mugwort and calamus on their doors, and prepared realgar wine; Niannian Garden also had a cup, and Yun Jinnian had everyone take a small sip.

Lady He of the Yun Family had been bustling about non-stop, sending out zongzi and also receiving several baskets of them in return. They all came from officials of lower rank than Yun Chen, and although they were given with care, and the taste was not bad, Mrs. He still felt suffocated because no family of higher rank than Yun Chen had sent zongzi. This was simply...

"Sigh!"

With the situation at home like this, the grandmother still could not see clearly; not to mention the marriage of Yun Muyou, even Yun Zhen seeking to marry a high-born legitimate daughter was difficult!

"Madam, Madam, someone from the Princess Residence is here!"

On hearing this, Mrs. He asked, "Which Princess Residence?"

There are over a dozen Princess Residences in the Capital City!

"It is from the residence of the Commandery Princess of Zhenguo. The Princess's own Mammy Song has personally come, bringing many items and two baskets of zongzi!"

Mrs. He was overjoyed, "Come, quickly follow me to the hall!"

Giving zongzi from the Commandery Princess of Zhenguo was truly a great grace.

Mammy Song sat in the hall, sipping tea.

On the ground of the hall were five large chests and two bamboo baskets. The baskets contained delicately made small zongzi.

When Mrs. He arrived, Mammy Song stood up, and Mrs. He promptly bowed in salute, "Mammy Song gracing us with your presence truly brings honor to our humble home!"

Mammy Song accepted Mrs. He's courtesy and returned a half salute before speaking, "Madam Yun, do not speak so. It truly causes me shame. I am here today to bring gifts for the fourth young miss of the Yun Family!"

The smile suddenly froze on her face, Mrs. He somewhat incredulously asked, "Gifts for the fourth young miss? For Jinnian?"

"Yes. When in Huaxi County, the Princess herself was very fond of the fourth young miss. On this Dragon Boat Festival, she specially instructed me to bring zongzi to the fourth young miss. As for these

chests of items, they are rewards for the fourth young miss!" Mammy Song said, paused for a moment, and then continued, "Madam Yun, could you please summon the fourth young miss?"

Could she refuse?

Mrs. He thought the Commandery Princess of Zhenguo was bestowing rewards on the Yun Family, but who knew they were specifically for Yun Jinnian.

"Good, good!" She immediately signaled Tianmi to fetch Yun Jinnian.

She continued entertaining Mammy Song with tea.

When Yun Jinnian learned that Mammy Song had arrived, she was a bit astonished but still went to the hall immediately.

"Mammy Song!"

Yun Jinnian bowed politely.

Mammy Song approached with a smile and helped Yun Jinnian up, "Fourth young miss need not be so courteous. Today I am here to bring you gifts, and now that they are personally delivered to you, I will return to report to the Princess."

"Mammy Song, please take your time. Allow me to see you out!"

"Alright!"

Yun Jinnian warmly saw Mammy Song out, waited until she got into the carriage, and then returned to the hall.

Mrs. He looked at Yun Jinnian, "Sister Nian..."

"Does my aunt have any instructions?"

Chapter 233: Heartwarming

Yun Jinnian asked very seriously, very frankly.

She really wanted to see just how shameless these people could be, daring to covet the items bestowed upon her by the Princess Royal.

Although some matters had not been made public, Yun Jinnian knew somewhat about Mrs. He and the old lady embezzling the birthday gifts and silver notes her mother sent her every year.

Mrs. He felt extremely uncomfortable inside.

The items from the Princess Residence were certainly of the highest quality, and those five or six large chests must be worth quite a sum of silver.

Naturally, she hoped Yun Jinnian would take them out and share, to give some to her sisters and to show filial piety to the elders.

"It's nothing much, I just wanted to ask about these items..."

"Oh!" Yun Jinnian showed an expression of sudden realization, "Just have someone take these items to Niannian Garden, and as for the zongzi, please bother Auntie to divide them out!"

She would distribute the zongzi, but the items gifted by the Princess Royal were definitely not going to be foolishly shared.

Hearing this, Mrs. He's face changed slightly, thinking to herself who would care about those two zongzi.

"Um, let's do as you say then!"

Yun Jinnian bowed to Mrs. He, "I shall return to Niannian Garden first, thank you for your trouble, Auntie!"

Having the items carried back to Niannian Garden and leaving the two baskets of zongzi behind, she left with remarkable poise.

Upon returning to Niannian Garden, Mrs. Yuan was overjoyed to learn that the Princess Royal had awarded so many fine items.

"Miss, I will record them into inventory right away!"

Yun Jinnian smiled faintly, "Nanny, reward everyone with ten taels of silver each, and later Mother wants to take me to watch the Dragon Boat Race, will you be joining?"

"I shall not be going. You take Hemei and Henuan with you. I will stay behind to watch over the house, to prevent those petty thieves from sneaking in!" Mrs. Yuan said, laughing.

Nowadays, with life being easy and comfortable, with plenty to eat and wear, Mrs. Yuan grew ever more vigilant over Niannian Garden.

"And what about Nanny An and Yaniang?" Yun Jinnian further inquired.

"They won't be going either!"

Yaniang had been silent for many years, yet her culinary skills were exceptional.

Nanny An's face had been disfigured by a great fire, and even after repairs, it was still somewhat frightful; hence, she rarely went out.

Upon opening the chests, they were indeed full of items.

Over a dozen lengths of pale blue soft gauze, two bolts of Yunyan Brocade, raw gems and precious stones, along with medicinal herbs, vase ornaments, gold and silver hair accessories, bracelets—all exquisitely made and highly valuable.

"My goodness, how much silver is this worth?" Mrs. Yuan exclaimed.

Yun Jinnian glanced at them and said nothing.

Nanny An held up two fingers.

"Two hundred thousand taels?" Mrs. Yuan asked in a low voice.

"Two million taels!" Nanny An clarified, looking toward Yun Jinnian, noticing her casually faint smile, seemingly not placing much importance on these items.

"My heavens, that's so much!"

Mrs. Yuan was simply incredulous.

A while ago, the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence also sent quite a few things, several large chests that seemed very valuable at the time, but now with the Princess Royal's gesture, it was all taken to the next level!

Mrs. Yuan immediately approached Yun Jinnian, "Miss, with so many valuable items, are you going to keep them all at the residence? Not sending some to the Han Family?"

Yun Jinnian laughed, "The items sent from the small river village City Lord Residence are all at the Han Family. Once we accumulate enough silver, I'll buy an estate outside and move everything there!"

"Then I'll go and guard it for Miss!" Mrs. Yuan quickly offered.

Yun Jinnian laughed, "Didn't Nanny say she would always take care of me? How come you're so eager to guard the silver now!"

"Oh, my dear Miss, what in this world does not require silver? Back then we toiled over embroidery work and secretly had someone sell it, just to barely keep us fed and warm. I'm certainly done with that kind of life. From now on, Miss comes first, and silver comes second, but neither should be neglected!"

Chapter 234: Displeasure

Yun Jinnian clasped Mrs. Yuan's hand, "Nanny, we will never live the way we did before again, I promise you!"

"I believe in Miss!"

The wet nurse immediately went to register and make an inventory, finding novelty and beauty in it, even taking some items to compare and admire.

Watching her, Yun Jinnian smiled warmly, "Nanny, if you like it, just take it!"

"I wouldn't dream of it. Keep them all for your dowry. I have several gold hairpins, so beautiful I can't even wear them all!" Mrs. Yuan said and then had Madam An take note of the items.

Madam An's writing was exquisite, comparable to Ru Yue's meticulous recording.

Watching, Yun Jinnian smiled, "Ru Yue, are you going to watch the Dragon Boat Race?"

"This servant will stay home to help Nanny sort things out and won't go. Miss, please be careful!"

Since returning from Yingci'an, Ru Yue rarely spoke and seldom left Niannian Garden.

Now that Yun Jinnian was back, she was very dedicated in serving her.

"Suit yourself!"

Yun Jinnian finished getting ready; anyway, Hemei, Henuan, Hongdou, Hongye, and Hongxiu had gone to Qiyue Academy to find Mrs. Han.

"Mother!"

Mrs. Han took Yun Jinnian's hand, "I heard that the Princess sent you some zongzi?"

Yun Jinnian nodded, "There were other rewards too. I had them all moved to Niannian Garden; Nanny is recording them now. I asked Auntie to distribute the zongzi!"

Mrs. Han chuckled, "That's right. Keep your things well; they are the foundation for your future security and status!"

The mother and daughter walked out laughing, only to see Yun Qi arrive accompanied by Aunty Rou and Aunty Lian.

Yun Jinnian bowed to Yun Qi, called out "Father," and then lowered her eyes.

Aunty Rou and Aunty Lian hurried to pay respects to Mrs. Han, "We have seen the lady!"

"Are you too going to watch the dragon boats?" Mrs. Han asked indifferently, giving them a glance before turning to Yun Qi.

"I'm taking them out to enjoy the festivities. Will you join us, Shu niang?"

"No need. I've already reserved the Riverside Elegant Room at Huiquan Tower. After watching the dragon boats, I'll go back to my parents' place. Father has returned to the Capital City and he might not be back for dinner. You all have fun!" Mrs. Han said nonchalantly.

Taking Yun Jinnian by the hand, they walked past Yun Qi, out of Qiyue Academy, through the second door, and left the Yun Residence, boarding a horse carriage with a group of children.

The carriage was spacious, fitting two adults and six children without feeling crowded.

Although Hongdou and the others were young, they were incredibly sensible and well-mannered. They were skilled yet not proud, still working hard to practice martial arts, learn to read, and follow Madam An in learning how to handle various calculations within noble households.

Upon reaching Huiquan Tower, they directly went up to the Riverside Elegant Room on the third floor. Seeds, pastries, fragrant tea, and floral water were already prepared.

"Don't stand on ceremony, everyone. Just grab some food and watch from the window!" said Mrs. Han, sitting on the chair and elegantly pouring herself some tea.

Setting down the teapot, "Jinnian, you pour your own tea as well!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian picked up the teapot, slightly composed her guilt, and gently poured a cup of tea.

Her movements were also extremely elegant and refined.

"Hmm, very good!" Mrs. Han praised.

"Thank you for the compliment, Mother!"

Mother and daughter exchanged a smile, holding their tea cups and gazing at the river's surface, waiting for the start of the Dragon Boat Race.

Suddenly, knocking sounds arose. Mrs. Han, fearing Yun Qi's arrival, showed displeasure and signaled Bai Que to answer the door, taking a deep breath.

Bai Que promptly went to open the door of the elegant room and heard Dai Hanmi's coquettish laugh, "Mother, Sister-in-law, Second Sister-in-law, I told you it was Sister Jinnian, you didn't believe me, do you believe me now?"

Chapter 235: Secretly Thrilled

Mrs. Han sighed in relief upon hearing the news.

As long as it wasn't Yun Qi, it didn't matter who the visitor was.

She hurriedly got up to greet the newcomer.

Dai Hanmi bowed to Mrs. Han, "I've seen my aunt!" Without waiting for Mrs. Han to ask her to rise, she rushed to Yun Jinnian's side, grasped her hand, "Sister Jinnian, you're finally back. I missed you to death. Look, I've even lost weight!"

Yun Jinnian also tightly held Dai Hanmi's hand, her heart and eyes brimming with joy.

"I was just saying I would visit you in a few days and give you your gift. If I had known I'd meet you, I'd have brought it with me!"

"No hurry, no hurry, we can have a good chat first. Gifts can be given anytime!" Dai Hanmi said, taking a close look at Yun Jinnian, "Still the same slimness, but it seems you've grown taller!"

"Hanmi, you have a discerning eye to notice even that!"

Seeing how much Dai Hanmi adored Yun Jinnian, Mrs. Han's heart swelled with joy.

She didn't find Dai Hanmi's conduct impolite anymore.

The Marchioness shook her head and sighed, "This child has been spoiled rotten. Madam mustn't be annoyed with her!"

Mrs. Han gave the Marchioness a formal bow, "What are you saying, Marchioness? Miss Dai is so lively and cheerful. I couldn't be happier, so how could I be annoyed?"

The Marchioness quickly returned the formal bow.

After all, this was the mother of the man her son would marry, the future mother-in-law. Whether the match would happen was up to her, so naturally, she was polite and did not dare accept Mrs. Han's formal bow.

"It's good you're not upset, very good. These are my two daughters-in-law!"

The Crown Princess and the Second Young Wife hurried forward to bow, speaking in unison, "We have seen Second Mistress Yun!"

The Second Young Wife was one thing, but the Crown Princess held a title of the first rank.

As Mrs. Han was about to bow, the Marchioness held her back, "They are Jinnian's sisters-in-law, and thus your juniors. There's no place for an elder to bow to the younger ones. Your chamber seems spacious and delightful. May we squeeze in here and sit with you?"

"Most welcome!"

Mrs. Han certainly felt the Marchioness's goodwill.

Yun Jinnian also stepped forward to bow.

The Marchioness looked at Yun Jinnian, "Your sister Hanmi is right, you've lost some weight but also grown taller. Go have fun, don't be restrained. I'll have a chat with your mother!"

"Yes!"

Both the Crown Princess and the Second Young Wife, although married, were fortunate to have kind mothers-in-law and loving husbands making their lives comfortable. They were free-spirited and familiar with Yun Jinnian. Soon, they were sitting by the window chatting animatedly, and even made bets on which dragon boat would win.

The four of them chattered away, creating a lively scene.

Yun Jinnian didn't talk much, but when she did, Dai Hanmi always agreed, affirming she was right.

"Those children can't stop talking whenever they're together. It's a joy to watch, and makes one envy their youth!" said the Marchioness with a laugh.

"Yes indeed, time flies. We are old now. I remember the first time I met the Marchioness, you were still in your boudoir, so graceful indeed!" Mrs. Han also sighed with emotion.

The Marchioness did not expect Mrs. Han to bring up the past.

She was born into a noble family with strict rules; she was raised to never show her teeth when smiling, never expose her feet when walking, and maintained a very serious demeanor.

It was only after marrying into the Marquis Residence and with a kind mother-in-law that her personality gradually became more cheerful.

"Not graceful, but stiff, that's more like it. When I first saw you, you were the picture of divine elegance!"

Back then, Mrs. Han was in her teens, wearing red, fiery and unrestrained.

Used to seeing demure ladies of the Capital City, the young gentlemen were astonished by Mrs. Han and took a great liking to her.

But who would have thought this fine "cabbage" would be nabbed by that "pig" Yun Qi!

Chapter 236: Surprised

Mrs. Han and the Marchioness chatted more and more amiably, even agreeing on a time to visit the Marquis Residence for fun.

The Marchioness was inwardly thrilled.

She had finally taken the difficult first step.

First, she would build a good relationship. Once Mrs. Han met Hanbo, the Marchioness didn't mean to brag, but her son was rather outstanding.

He was adept in both literary and martial arts, having wandered the jianghu in his earlier years, he was certainly a man of broad experience.

Although Yun Jinnian's medical skills were exceptional, her son wasn't bad either. If all else failed, she could simply be nice to Yun Jinnian and that would surely make up for something!

Dai Hanmi pinched a piece of pastry, took a bite, and then disdainfully put it back, "It's not as tasty as what my second sister-in-law makes!"

The Crown Princess couldn't help but laugh.

Then, the wife of the second son said, "I'll make more the day after tomorrow then. Sister Jinnian, you must come!"

"Sure!" Yun Jinnian answered, knowing that Mrs. Qu's pastries were indeed quite good, even better than those from Xufuji.

Down by the riverbank beneath Huiquan Tower, the area was already packed with people, bustling with energy.

On the river, there were over thirty dragon boats.

Among them...

Yun Jinnian immediately noticed that Chu Yu was leading one.

How come?

"I heard that the Emperor is offering generous rewards for this year's Dragon Boat Festival. The captain of the first-place team seems to be getting a pair of glass luminous cups, and the teammates will receive things like jade pendants and jade ruyis. My third brother is also leading a team in the competition. I really hope he wins first place and brings home the glass luminous cups!" Dai Hanmi said, continuously scanning the water for Dai Hanbo's figure.

But no matter how hard she looked, she just couldn't find him.

Seeing her anxious, Yun Jinnian spoke gently, "What color clothes is third brother Dai wearing?"

Each dragon boat team has its own distinct uniform.

Yun Jinnian didn't know why she could spot Chu Yu at a glance. It was strange but not unpleasant.

"Ah, my third brother is wearing a black and white team uniform!" Dai Hanmi replied, still searching, "It was so far away I almost couldn't find it. Sister Jinnian is so clever, spotting third brother just by the color of his uniform!"

This was Yun Jinnian's first time watching a dragon boat race. She leaned against the window and watched the boats rush out at the referee's command.

The dragon boat race required not just skill but also physical strength. To win, the teams raced to grab a "colorful head" (a flag or streamer) at the destination and then return first to the starting point.

The sounds of drums and gongs resounded across the river.

Each pair had their own slogan and team name, with cheer squads on shore shouting words of encouragement.

Watching, Yun Jinnian herself felt a rush of excitement.

"Sister Jinnian, do you think my third brother will win first place?"

"He will!" Yun Jinnian replied, somewhat absently.

She didn't quite mean it.

"I also think my third brother could come in first!" Dai Hanmi said and then suddenly let out an exclamation, "Oh my, isn't that Prince Rui over there? He, he, he is also participating?"

If Prince Rui, Chu Yu, was taking part, the few flatterers following him would definitely join as well.

These spoiled youths might not be good at much else, but their martial arts were not insignificant, they knew how to have fun, and were quite cunning besides.

Before Yun Jinnian could offer comfort, Dai Hanmi said, "The chance of my third brother coming in first is mysterious now!"

"..."

Although the dragon boats had surged past, the excitement remained. Many people still waited for the boats to return, and there were plenty of vendors. The crowd of buyers was considerable.

Boiled zongzi, fragrant sachets, braided colorful strings, and a variety of snacks and treats were all thriving activities.

"I really want to go down to the riverbank and experience it close up!" Dai Hanmi said wistfully.

Little did Dai Hanmi realize how many people below would love to be up high where she was!

Yun Jinnian couldn't exactly tell Dai Hanmi that, so she diplomatically said, "It's too crowded today. Look at that young woman, squeezed in the middle of several men, she's almost crying!"

Chapter 237: Sincerity

Dai Hanmi looked over and, sure enough, a young woman was surrounded by several men who were trying to touch her, "Simply despicable!"

"Hemei," Yun Jinnian called softly, "help that young woman!"

Hemei stepped forward, took out a pouch from her waist, and threw several pebbles at the men, who each covered their heads and cried out in pain.

The young woman took the opportunity to quickly run away and disappear into the crowd.

A small effort on her part, yet she saved someone from dire straits.

Dai Hanmi watched and greatly admired Hemei, bringing her some pastries to eat, "When you have time, you should also teach Minxian to do this kind of good deed for the people; it's really wonderful!"

"Thank you for the compliment, Miss Dai!" Hemei accepted the pastries and distributed them to her sisters.

Another burst of gong and drum sounds could be heard.

"They're back so soon?" Dai Hanmi said as she looked toward the river. After a clear look, she sighed, "Prince Rui won first place in the dragon boat race!"

Yun Jinnian did not speak but felt happy for Chu Yu in his heart.

Chu Yu's team had won first place, and the teams that came second and third also arrived shortly after. Dai Hanbo's team ultimately came in fourth.

Dai Hanmi sighed but did not pay much attention to winning or losing.

Winning first place is just icing on the cake; for the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence, it makes no difference if they didn't win. It was just a bit of fun for the sons.

After eating, drinking, and chatting for a bit longer, they each took their leave and went home.

Mrs. Han took Yun Jinnian with her to the Han Family.

The Marchioness went home with her two daughters-in-law and beloved daughter to the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence. As soon as they got into the carriage, the Marchioness began to laugh.

"Mother, when you laugh like that, it reminds me of the time you helped my elder brothers court their wives!" Dai Hanmi teased with a laugh.

The Crown Princess and the second wife also laughed along.

The mother-in-law was indeed kind-hearted and never gave them a hard time. The Crown Princess was put in charge of managing the household as soon as she married into the family, and after the legitimate eldest and second sons, she was given complete authority.

"You child, how do you say such things!" the Marchioness said, laughing along, "Was I that obvious?"

"Very obvious indeed!"

"Then I must be more careful next time, I can't let the cat out of the bag before things are settled!" the Marchioness said seriously.

Dai Hanmi nodded vigorously.

The Crown Princess didn't receive any direct benefit from Yun Jinnian, only smiling along, but Mrs. Qu, the second wife, had been treated by Yun Jinnian, and now her health was greatly improved. After a few more months of recuperation, she would be ready for pregnancy and quickly added, "Mother, whatever you need me to do, just tell me!"

"We'll talk about it when the time comes; don't rush!"

Thinking of Yun Jinnian becoming a daughter-in-law to the Marquis Residence, the Marchioness felt nothing but joy.

The Emperor loves the eldest son, and the people love the youngest; this saying isn't wrong.

The carriage stopped at the gate of the Han Residence, and the gatekeeper immediately came forward, "Madam, Miss, the master has already returned and is drinking tea in the main hall!"

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Han's body went weak.

Yun Jinnian was also extremely excited. After getting off the carriage with Mrs. Han, they went directly into the Han Residence and straight to the main hall.

In the hall, Han Xuzi sat at the main seat. On the chair to his right, the chubby, fair-skinned Han Tianci was swinging his legs, nibbling on confectionery, with six or seven nurses, old maids, and maids hovering around him cautiously.

Han Tianci looked towards the entrance after every bite he took.

Back when he was in Sanzhou, his maternal grandfather asked him if he wanted to go to Capital City.

And told him that he and his sister did not share the same father; to protect him, their mother had abandoned his sister. Over the years, their mother hadn't met him or his sister.

It was out of guilt.

Meanwhile, his sister had lost her father, mother, and maternal grandfather all at once, living a very difficult life in the Yun Family, a very tough one indeed!

Chapter 238: Cute

He didn't understand then what being in dire straits really meant. His maternal grandfather had taken him to a household, where there were no men left, only a grandmother and her granddaughter. The old woman's eyesight was poor due to endless embroidery work, and the little granddaughter was so skinny that a gust of wind might carry her away.

He also visited their kitchen, which had an empty rice bin and not a piece of meat in sight.

Upon leaving, he begged his maternal grandfather to give the grandmother and granddaughter a hundred taels of silver, which his grandfather agreed to.

He was only told that his sister's circumstances were slightly better than those of the grandmother and granddaughter, but mentally, not so. If this continued, his sister would go mad and eventually die!

If he could, he was willing to be the one abandoned because he was a boy, a strong man.

When those two figures entered, Mrs. Han jumped off her chair, pinching a pastry.

She looked at them, chest out and head held high.

There was scrutiny in her eyes, and also deliberation.

He was a child, but definitely not a naive one.

When the two women saw him, their eyes reddened with emotion, excitement, and joy, but they restrained themselves from coming closer.

The taller one was his mother, and the short, skinny one must be his sister.

Her complexion was fine, just a bit thin.

She looked quite pretty and somewhat like him. She could not be anyone but his sister.

Han Tianci, holding a pastry, took steps towards Yun Jinnian, and extended his small hand, the half-eaten pastry resting in his palm, "Here, for you to eat!"

Yun Jinnian was somewhat flustered, "Thank you!" He took the pastry and stuffed it into his mouth haphazardly.

This exquisite child was her brother, the one who would risk his life for her.

She quickly untied the purse at her waist, "I also have a gift for you!"

"What is it?"

"I handcrafted a Colorful String!" Yun Jinnian took out the finished Colorful String.

Han Tianci raised his wrist, "Then put it on me!"

"Okay!!"

Yun Jinnian carefully put the Colorful String on Han Tianci, and it fitted just right.

"It's beautiful, I like it, thank you, sister!" Han Tianci looked at the Colorful String on his wrist and found it quite extraordinary.

"As long as you like it!"

Yun Jinnian dared not imagine what her brother looked like when he was younger.

Pudgy and well-behaved.

"Sister!"

"Yes?"

"You've been at home for some time; can you show me around?"

When Han Tianci said this, Yun Jinnian naturally agreed, "Of course!"

Han Tianci reached out to take Yun Jinnian's hand.

Yun Jinnian paused.

Her hand was delicate, unlike Han Tianci's, chubby and soft, truly comfortable to touch.

So this was what her brother's hand felt like.

It felt wonderful.

All of a sudden, Han Tianci looked towards Mrs. Han, "Mother!"

Mrs. Han was utterly astonished.

She had not expected Han Tianci to call out to her like that, "Ah, ah!"

"I like my sister, and I like you too!" After saying this, Han Tianci, somewhat shyly, pulled Yun Jinnian along to leave.

Yun Jinnian felt a warmth in her chest. This brother of hers was already as tall as her shoulder; in another year or two, he was sure to be taller than her.

Watching the departing siblings, Mrs. Han suddenly burst into tears.

Han Xuzi watched, sighing slightly, "You're already a mother yourself, and yet you still cry like that!"

"Dad, I'm just too happy!" Mrs. Han said as she wiped away her tears with a handkerchief. "Dad, I'm going to cook. What would you like to eat?"

"Anything is fine. Tianci likes meat, so cook a couple of meat dishes!"

The two kids, Han Tianci liked meat, all kinds of meat, he would even dare to eat tiger meat if offered.

He was fearless, laughed heartily, and very easily accepted others.

Yun Jinnian, however, preferred light food, the lighter, the better, with clear porridge and salty vegetables sustaining her for months without issue.

Yun Jinnian was always composed and extremely cautious.

From this, it was evident that the different environments in which the two children lived shaped their distinct natures!

Chapter 239: Harmony

Yun Jinnian never laughed loudly; each time, his chuckle was gentle and peaceful. When he was truly happy, his eyes shone brightly; otherwise, they were usually calm and tranquil, without a ripple.

Mrs. Han spent some time talking with the father and inquired about Han Tianci's taste preferences before she rose and headed to the kitchen.

Han Xuzi shook his head with an amused smile.

The Han Family valued affection, regardless of gender.

Even Mrs. Han had given Yun Qi many opportunities, but Yun Qi never cherished them. Just as Mrs. Han was about to accept him again, Yun Qi dealt her a harsh blow, aggravating old injuries with new ones.

Han Tianci's maids and nannies followed behind, and seeing that Han Tianci got along well with Yun Jinnian, whom they had never met, made them feel somewhat anxious.

The Han Family had no places for admiring flowers or landscapes since they were all used for cultivating medicinal herbs.

"Sister, your medical skills are super good, I'm so envious!"

Yun Jinnian looked at Han Tianci in confusion.

"On the way back, grandfather took me to Xiaohe Village, where I met City Lord Dongfang, and later on the carriage, grandfather kept praising sister!"

"You've been to Xiaohe Village?" Yun Jinnian asked curiously.

"Yes, grandfather originally went there to treat the City Lord's illness, but when we arrived, we learned that sister had already been there and had cured the City Lord's poison, which made him very happy!" Han Tianci said, then continued to praise, "Sister, you're so amazing, I wish I could be as impressive as you!"

"Then I will teach you!"

Han Tianci's eyes lit up, "Really?"

"Of course, I'll teach you everything I know!"

"Sister, you're the best!"

Han Tianci was a smart child. Han Xuzi also taught him medical skills and brought him along on travels to study medicine. Tianci recognized all the medicinal materials and was currently learning processing techniques. This aspect of processing could not be taken lightly because a single mistake could mean a huge difference in medicinal properties, so Han Xuzi was especially strict about it!

However, Yun Jinnian was very gentle, which made Han Tianci like her very much.

Han Tianci knew what made a person good.

The maids and nannies were kind to her because they were afraid of Han Xuzi. There were sincere hearts indeed, but none were as warm and genuine as Yun Jinnian.

"I'll take you to see the herb garden!"

"Great!"

Han Tianci quickly told the maids and nannies following him, "You don't need to follow me anymore!"

"But Young Master..."

Han Tianci remained silent, just quietly looking at them.

Then, taking Yun Jinnian's hand, he walked away, and while walking, he said, "Sister, is it okay if grandfather finds some servants for me?"

Maids and nannies were too much like old women.

Annoying!

Yun Jinnian nodded, "Alright, you're a young man, naturally you should be together with other boys!"

Moreover, growing up with servant boys would naturally create extraordinary bonds.

"I knew sister likes me!"

Yun Jinnian ruffled Han Tianci's hair and took him to the herb garden to look at the medicinal herbs. Surprisingly, Tianci knew them all and could even recount their properties and processing methods.

Yun Jinnian knew only how to diagnose and dispense medicine but did not understand processing.

"You actually understand processing!"

"I can even process simple medicinal herbs. Sister, when I become a master at processing, I'll process any herbs you want!"

"Okay!"

When Han Xuzi came to find the siblings, they were squatting in the herb shop, studying a peculiar plant.

The siblings were very close to each other, which also looked very affectionate. Watching them, Han Xuzi stroked his beard and started to smile.

"This herb, have you figured out anything about it?"

The siblings looked at each other, and Han Tianci then spoke, "Grandfather, look how nothing grows around it, but this plant does. I think it must be a divine antidote!"

Chapter 240: Discussion on

Han Xuzi laughed upon hearing this, "Yes, the toxicity of Duanchang Grass is strong, nothing grows around it, yet this medicinal herb has sprouted here. Tianci is right, it must be a detoxifying miracle. You and your sister take good care of it, and when it's grown, we'll study it together!"

"Okay!"

Yun Jinnian and Han Tianci promptly responded.

Han Xuzi was very pleased with this and felt that it was wise to bring Han Tianci back. At least, it gave Yun Jinnian some company, and it let her know that she still has a brother. The deeper their affection, the stronger the bond.

This was also beneficial for Yun Jinnian's illness.

"Come, let's go check out your cellar!"

In the cellar, where ice blocks were stored all year round, were some medicinal materials that needed to be kept cold. Outside, Han Xuzi had the two put on several layers of thick clothing.

Since the clothes were somewhat large, Han Tianci, flapping his sleeves, said, "Sister, look, do I look like an opera singer?"

Yun Jinnian looked at him seriously before responding, "Somewhat, do you like watching operas? Shall I take you to one someday?"

"Yes, please!" Han Tianci answered, then turned to Han Xuzi, "Grandfather, would you and mother like to come too?"

"Yes, yes, as you wish!"

As soon as they entered the cellar, both children couldn't help but shiver in the cold. They looked at the rows of shelves, all topped with wooden boxes.

"Grandfather, what is all this?"

"These are poisonous creatures that your grandfather has collected from the outside!" Han Xuzi said, turning his gaze toward a wooden barrel, "That was brought back by your sister from Xiaohe Village."

Pride filled his voice.

His granddaughter, truly, was not ordinary.

"Wow, I want to see!" Han Tianci immediately ran over, standing at the edge of the large barrel, looked at the frozen Iron Sand Snakes inside, "What are these?"

"Jinnian, tell your brother!"

Yun Jinnian nodded and walked over to Han Tianci's side, looking into the barrel, she explained word by word, "These are Iron Sand Snakes from Nanjiang, which become extremely poisonous when combined with the Luozuo vine."

"All these came out of City Lord Dongfang's body?" Han Tianci asked curiously.

"Yes!"

"Sister, you're amazing, you actually managed to draw these worms out, how did you do it?" Han Tianci looked up at Yun Jinnian with admiration.

His bright eyes sparkled.

"At that time, I first determined that City Lord Dongfang was poisoned. The first step was to pick out a worm and have it roll in the medicine powder that I had prepared, observe its reaction, and then decide which medicinal herb to use to lure the worm out of the human body!"

Speaking of this, Yun Jinnian's usually still eyes suddenly brimmed with light.

Han Tianci's admiration grew even more.

Han Xuzi chuckled, "Indeed ingenious, even I hadn't thought of such a method!"

He himself had been unable to cure the poison within City Lord Dongfang, at best he could only relieve it.

Han Xuzi suddenly thought of the Emperor, and of the intelligent Prince Chu Yu.

"Jinnian!"

"Do you have instructions for me, Grandfather?"

Han Xuzi hesitated.

Yun Jinnian was growing up well, and though young, she was already showing her brilliance. If she were to be in front of the Emperor, with such medical skills, such beauty, the Emperor would surely want her in the palace, to use exclusively for himself, and then...

"Let your grandfather think it over some more!"

"Okay!"

While they started to learn about the insects and memorize their toxicities, Mrs. Han had already prepared lunch and personally came to invite them.

The family of four sat together, with seven or eight dishes, each person enjoying several small rice dumplings, all eating with great pleasure.

After the meal, Han Xuzi took the two to the pharmacy, where he gave them more careful instruction.