

Indulgence 271

Chapter 271: Ruan Wanrong's Betrothal

Although he had many things he wanted to say to Yun Jinnian, he was afraid of being too abrupt with the lady, so he could only say to Dai Hanmi, "Play as you like, and I will come pick you up later!"

Dai Hanmi's eyes curved into smiles, "En en, I'll listen to Third Brother, Third Brother is the best!"

After Dai Hanbo politely bowed with his fists clasped, he got up and left Huiquan Tower.

As he prepared to leave in his carriage, he saw Ruan Sicheng from the Ministry of War Residence alight from his carriage first to assist Ruan Wanrong down, which made Dai Hanbo smile.

There were many brothers in the Ruan family but very few girls; by Ruan Wanrong's generation, she was the solitary precious pearl of several households.

"Brother Ruan!" Dai Hanbo stepped forward with a bow and clasped fists in greeting.

Ruan Sicheng laughed, "Are you escorting your sister to her appointment?"

"Indeed!"

The two young men looked at each other and laughed, and after Ruan Wanrong gave her respects to Dai Hanbo, she went upstairs with her maid.

Ruan Sicheng shook his head, "This temperament of hers-- still not steady even though she's about to get married!"

"Your sister is engaged?"

"Hmm!"

Ruan Sicheng nodded but did not disclose which family it was.

Dai Hanbo did not ask further, "Let's go, since we have to wait for my sister anyway, we might as well get a private room upstairs and have some fun!"

"That's great!"

The two went back up the stairs, took a private room, and chatted over tea.

Once Ruan Wanrong entered the private room, it immediately became lively.

Even though it was strange to see Yun Muyou and the others there, since Yun Jinnian had brought them, she wouldn't trouble them on purpose.

The atmosphere was quite good.

Yun Jinnian handed the prepared coming-of-age gift to Ruan Wanrong. "Sister Ruan, I'm truly sorry for not keeping my promise and not showing up!"

Ruan Wanrong glared at Yun Jinnian, "If it were someone else, I would have definitely taught her a stern lesson, but with you being so endearing, I just can't bear it. Now that I've accepted your gift, I can't be too demanding of you!"

As she spoke, Ruan Wanrong laughed first.

Yun Jinnian also presented the amulet and the embroidered purse she had requested for Ruan Wanrong.

Ruan Wanrong became even more delighted and took Yun Jinnian's hand. "I'm going to be married in a few days. Can you come visit me at the residence more often when you're free?"

"Ah..."

Yun Jinnian was utterly stunned.

"Ah what, I'm of age now, so naturally, I must get engaged!" Ruan Wanrong said with a smile.

It was quite obvious that she was pleased with the marriage arrangement.

"Isn't this a bit rushed?" Yun Jinnian asked.

Dai Hanmi felt the same.

"My future grandmother-in-law is not well. I must marry over soon!"

One reason was to bring joy to offset sorrow, and the other was the fear that if the old lady suddenly passed away, there would be a need to observe three years of mourning.

Moreover, since she and Duan Qimeng had been childhood sweethearts and both families had this intention, she naturally wouldn't oppose.

Thinking of the old lady, Ruan Wanrong stopped herself.

Yun Jinnian looked at her with a smile, "Is something the matter?"

"It's a bit presumptuous to say, so I won't mention it," Ruan Wanrong hesitated, quite unlike her usual self.

Dai Hanmi then teased her, "Wow, it's going to rain red from the sky, the sun is going to rise from the west—it's opened my eyes to see Sister Ruan hesitating!"

Ruan Wanrong then went to pinch Dai Hanmi, and the teasing escalated into playful scuffles.

Dai Hanmi dodged everywhere, but coming from a prestigious military family, Ruan Wanrong wouldn't let her escape that easily.

It wasn't long before Dai Hanmi was begging for mercy.

Yun Muyou, Yun Zihan, Yun Musi, and Yun Mulan were all laughing uncontrollably.

Once the laughter and teasing subsided and Ruan Wanrong and Dai Hanmi sat down, Yun Jinnian smiled and asked, "Sister Ruan, if you have something to say, please do; as the saying goes, 'Three humble cobblers make a great Zhuge Liang.' Maybe I can help!"

Ruan Wanrong was about to speak but still hesitant, yet Yun Jinnian had guessed it already.

Ruan Wanrong had been kind to her, so she naturally wanted to reciprocate the favor. If the Duan Family were in Capital City, even if it tired her, she would go to see the old lady overnight—only if Ruan Wanrong and the Dai Family trusted her, of course!

Chapter 272: Hu Shuiling's Grievances

Ruan Wanrong's eyes suddenly reddened, "Sister Jinnian, thank you!"

She tightly grasped Yun Jinnian's hand and took a few deep breaths before speaking, "My grandmother has been unwell for quite some time, and I have approached the Han Family several times, but the Divine Doctor is not in the Capital City..."

Even if he returned, trying to request a meeting would be in vain, as one could not simply see him.

She had mentioned Yun Jinnian's medical skills to Duan Qimeng, who had pleaded with her to try and invite Yun Jinnian to the Duan Family for a visit.

But ever since Yun Jinnian's return a few days ago, she had been so busy that Ruan Wanrong didn't dare to approach her.

Today, when Yun Jinnian sent a letter inviting her over to Huiquan Tower for a meal and some fun, Ruan Wanrong immediately begged her brother to bring her along.

"Is the Duan Family far from Huiquan Tower?" Yun Jinnian asked.

"Not at all, it's about the time it takes to burn two sticks of incense to get there!" said Ruan Wanrong, filled with emotion.

Having a plan in mind, Yun Jinnian turned to Dai Hanmi and said, "Sister Hanmi, I won't hide it from you, I must leave on a long journey early tomorrow morning, and there's no telling when I'll return. I'll accompany Sister Ruan for a visit first, and when Hu Shuiling and Chen Danyan arrive, please tell them for me that we will definitely return before dinner!"

Dai Hanmi nodded, "Go ahead. Be careful on the way. I'll explain everything to them, just leave the gifts here, and I'll handle the rest to silence their questions!"

"I owe you one, Sister Hanmi!"

After saying this, Yun Jinnian immediately left with Henuan and followed Ruan Wanrong out to the entrance of Huiquan Tower where they hailed a carriage and headed to the Duan Family.

In the private room, Dai Hanmi seemed a bit listless without Yun Jinnian, though she still laughed and chatted with Yun Muyou and her sisters.

Dai Hanmi didn't really like Yun Muyou and her sisters, not even Yun Zihan.

What's more, since Yun Zihan hardly spoke at all, Dai Hanmi liked her even less.

But luckily, no sooner had Yun Jinnian left than Hu Shuiling and Chen Danyan arrived, shouting.

Hu Shuiling's eyes were red, as if she had been crying.

Dai Hanmi quickly asked, "What's wrong?"

Hu Shuiling sniffled, "My parents have arranged a marriage for me!"

"Not happy with it?" Dai Hanmi probed gently.

"It's not that I'm not pleased, it's just so far away. How many years and months will it be before I can see you all again!"

Though it is also a Prestigious Family, it pales in comparison to the Count Xuanping Residence.

Plus, she didn't even know what her future husband looked like.

Marrying into Su Hang, she would be a stranger in a strange land...

"Where exactly is it?"

"Su Hang, they're said to be a Prestigious Family too!"

Dai Hanmi laughed aloud, "Silly girl, what are your brothers for if not to help you out? Can't they gather some information for you, take the chance to sketch what the man looks like? Moreover, since your future brother-in-law is from a Prestigious Family, once you marry him, you can encourage him to study hard, and when he comes to the Capital City for the exams, if he becomes the top scholar, he'll be an official here. You're his first wife, so naturally, you'll live in the Capital City too. Then we can meet up again. Isn't that right?"

Hu Shuiling paused and then nodded.

Indeed, what Dai Hanmi said made sense.

With her father and brothers having connections in the Capital City, and as she was the legitimate daughter of the Count Residence, marrying below her status, she could lead a comfortable life if she didn't stir up trouble, living peaceably with her husband and urging him to study...

Thinking of these possibilities, Hu Shuiling suddenly smiled.

Seeing her smile, Dai Hanmi and Chen Danyan heaved a sigh of relief.

Yet, Yun Muyou and her sisters truly envied the friendship between Dai Hanmi, Hu Shuiling, Yun Jinnian, Ruan Wanrong, and Chen Danyan.

Feeling better, Hu Shuiling said, "Where's Sister Jinnian? She's the host, why hasn't she arrived? Don't tell me she's deceiving us!"

Chapter 273: Comfort

"Sister Jinnian has already been here; since the grandmother of Sister Ruan's future husband is not feeling well, Sister Jinnian suggested we go visit her!" Dai Hanmi hurriedly explained.

"So soon?" Hu Shuiling asked anxiously.

"Sister Jinnian has to make a trip out tomorrow!"

Hu Shuiling immediately felt a bit upset, "Then she won't be able to see me off when I get married!"

Dai Hanmi took Hu Shuiling's hand, "Sister Jinnian is someone who has to deal with important matters. Let's not trouble her with these sentimental trifles of young love!"

Hu Shuiling nodded.

"We've only just returned, haven't had a proper gathering, and she has to leave again..."

Dai Hanmi was really scared of Hu Shuiling's feelings, hurriedly presenting the gifts Yun Jinnian had prepared, "Look, this is a peace charm that Sister Jinnian got for us from Huguo Temple. It has been blessed in front of the Buddha for many years. This purse was also embroidered by Sister Jinnian herself, and the fabric is Yunyan Brocade!"

Upon hearing there were gifts, Hu Shuiling smiled again.

Dai Hanmi and Chen Danyan exchanged smiles and finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Ruan Wanrong was the most vivacious, Dai Hanmi the most astute, Hu Shuiling the most melancholic autumn moon, and Chen Danyan the most knowledgeable and reasonable.

And Yun Jinnian, she had some of the best qualities of all four people.

But she lacked Ruan Wanrong's vivacity.

After all she had been through, Yun Jinnian just couldn't be vivacious no matter what.

The carriage stopped at the entrance of the Duan Residence.

The Duan Family itself was also quite legendary. The Duan Family originally were farmers, poor commoners at that. Later on, through trade, they even became royal merchants at the height of their wealth. In recent generations, they had produced many talented individuals, with dozens becoming scholars or completing scholarly achievements.

Ruan Wanrong's betrothed, Duan Qimeng, was particularly remarkable. Skilled in both literature and martial arts, he was the top scorer in the imperial examinations just three years ago at the age of eighteen.

Now he worked at the Hanlin Academy as an editor with the official rank of forth-grade.

Once Ruan Wanrong stepped down from the carriage, with another young lady by her side, the gatekeeper paused, then quickly understood—immediately one came forward to greet them while another quickly ran to report their arrival.

"This humble one greets Miss Ruan, and also extends greetings to this young lady!"

The gatekeeper had barely finished speaking when the beaming butler arrived, "Miss Ruan has arrived, we have already sent someone to call the madam!"

The head of the household, Mrs. Duan Qimeng, Duan Qimeng's mother.

As Duan Qimeng was the eldest son in the household and also a top scorer, Mrs. Duan as the mother of the top scorer was also very respectable.

Upon learning of Ruan Wanrong's visit and that she brought another young lady, Mrs. Duan was pleased.

"Quick, go inform the master and the young master that they have returned; also, please have the third and fourth young ladies come over to entertain the guests!"

She was extremely satisfied with Ruan Wanrong in her heart.

If the old madam passed away, her son would have to observe mourning.

Observing mourning for three years, who knows if he would still have a foothold in the imperial court by the time he returned!

That Ruan Wanrong could invite Yun Jinnian showed that she was on good terms with Yun Jinnian, had the Duan Family in mind, and already considered herself a daughter-in-law of the Duan Family.

Mrs. Duan greeted them cheerfully, "Wanrong is here!"

Ruan Wanrong quickly performed the formalities, "Greetings to my aunt!"

"Good child, good child!" Mrs. Duan was so delighted she couldn't stop smiling, then turned to Yun Jinnian, "And this is?"

"Yun Family's Jinnian greets the madam!"

"No need for formalities, no need!" Mrs. Duan was overjoyed and immediately presented Yun Jinnian with a meeting gift—a green old jade bracelet.

"It's a bit big; keep it to wear later!"

"Thank you, madam!"

Old jade was rare, and Mrs. Duan's heavy meeting gift left Yun Jinnian quite flattered.

Ruan Wanrong immediately explained the purpose of their visit, and Mrs. Duan nodded in agreement, "Then go to the old madam's courtyard first. The silver needles and such, I will have someone prepare and send over immediately!"

Chapter 274: Requirements

The Duan Family was wealthy, so the estate was lavishly constructed, with pavilions, terraces, and towers all incredibly delicate.

Everywhere there was that particular scent, "I am rich."

The old lady's courtyard was quite dignified and grand, but as soon as Yun Jinnian entered the old lady's room, he knew he had been thinking too much.

Those jade vases and ornaments, each was a rare treasure.

Scarce in this world or entirely unique.

The attendants in Grandmother Duan's courtyard were well-disciplined and polite; after bowing, they led Yun Jinnian and Ruan Wanrong into the bedroom.

The weather had turned somewhat hot, and the windows of the old lady's bedroom were tightly shut.

Although it was very clean, the lack of air circulation still left a particular odor.

"Open the windows!" Yun Jinnian said lightly.

The Head Maid Fubao by Grandmother Duan's side promptly said, "The old lady catches cold easily!"

"Even if she's afraid of catching cold, the windows must be opened. The lack of air flow in this room is even more detrimental to her illness!"

Hearing this, Fubao did not dare to hesitate and immediately opened the windows.

Yun Jinnian and Ruan Wanrong paid their respects to the old mistress.

The old lady was quite severely ill, lying in bed with her head tilted, watching the two of them. She seemed to recognize Ruan Wanrong and smiled weakly, "You've come!"

"Yes!" Ruan Wanrong responded, her eyes reddening.

The maids and old women took care of everything, allowing Yun Jinnian to take Grandmother Duan's pulse.

While Yun Jinnian was seriously taking the pulse, the sons of the Duan Family hurried back, standing to one side holding their breath in silence.

Duan Qimeng glanced at Ruan Wanrong, his look laden with too much.

Beyond joy and adoration, there was also gratitude.

Ruan Wanrong naturally saw it too.

She knew that, with this great service rendered, as long as she did not act foolishly, her position as the young mistress of the Duan Family was secure and could not be shaken.

Then, there was the matter of winning her husband's heart.

Having exchanged glances with Duan Qimeng since they were young and sharing mutual affection, he had waited for her for many years, and she believed he truly loved her!

After taking the pulse, Yun Jinnian slowly rose to his feet.

He didn't speak until he reached the small hall. "Grandmother Duan's condition is not optimistic. The illness has been prolonged for too long, and all her internal organs are weakened. I'm afraid..."

The sons of the Duan Family looked at each other.

All eyes turned to Duan Qimeng, who, after a moment, stepped forward and bowed to Yun Jinnian with clasped fists. "Is there a way to treat her?"

"If we administer a strong medicine, after the old lady endures great suffering, and with proper care afterward, she may live for another year or two. However, she won't see more than three years. During this time, we must ensure that the old lady does not get frightened, or experience great joy, anger, or sorrow..." Yun Jinnian said, his expression growing solemn.

Another silence ensued.

No one asked Yun Jinnian to sit down to talk or anything else.

"Meng'er!"

A weak but insistent soft call came from the bedroom.

Duan Qimeng hurriedly bowed to Yun Jinnian and then entered the bedroom, kneeling by Grandmother Duan's side, "Grandmother!"

"Is two years enough?"

Duan Qimeng fell silent.

It was a while before he said, "It's enough!"

"Then let's proceed according to Miss Yun's method!"

"Grandmother!" Duan Qimeng gripped Grandmother Duan's hand, calling out in agony.

"Go!"

Yun Jinnian did not know what the Duan Family was planning for the next two years, he quickly wrote a prescription and had someone fetch and prepare the medicine.

However, one ingredient was missing: Su Ren.

"Miss Yun," Duan Qimeng hesitated, unsure how to proceed.

Yun Jinnian was silent for a while before saying, "I'll write a letter. Master Duan, please go to the Han Family immediately to get it!"

Yun Jinnian knew his maternal grandfather's temperament well; if Duan Qimeng were to ask for medicine, Han Xuzi would certainly not provide it.

After writing the letter quickly, Duan Qimeng went straight to the Han Family without even riding a horse, using his light footwork.

Meanwhile, Yun Jinnian was busy preparing acupuncture needles and other things that would be needed shortly.

Chapter 275: True Filial Piety

The Duan Family, being wealthy, had no shortage of medicinal pills for Yun Jinnian to choose from, arrayed in rows.

Yun Jinnian recognized several bottles as ones she had concocted in the valley; she wondered whether they were gifts from Chu Yu or if the Duan Family had purchased them at a high price.

When Duan Qimeng arrived at the Han Family, as usual, he was not allowed entry. He hurriedly took out Yun Jinnian's letter, "I have in my hand a letter from Miss Yun the Fourth to Divine Doctor Han!"

The porter paused briefly before taking the letter and quickly going to see Han Xuzi.

Han Xuzi, Han Tianci, and Mrs. Han were talking when they learned that someone from the Duan Family had come with a letter from Yun Jinnian. Despite his astonishment, Han Xuzi still read the letter.

"Father?" Mrs. Han softly called.

"It's Jinnian requesting the herb Su Ren!" Han Xuzi spoke indifferently.

Without meeting Duan Qimeng, they had someone pack the Su Ren to send back with him.

"Jinnian..." Mrs. Han hesitated to speak.

"She's more like a Divine Doctor than I am!" Han Xuzi exclaimed with a sigh.

Mrs. Han stayed silent.

Then Han Xuzi said to Han Tianci, "Follow your sister closely in the future. Speak less, observe more, and learn how your sister handles matters, understand?"

"I understand!" Han Tianci replied loudly.

This was his first time traveling far, and it was for training.

"You must take good care of your sister. She has suffered a lot these years..." Han Xuzi trailed off, unable to continue.

Thinking of the person he cherished, enduring such grievances over the years, the feeling was truly unbearable.

Han Tianci nodded firmly.

When Duan Qimeng brought the Su Ren back, Yun Jinnian had already prepared everything and immediately had someone start brewing the medicine.

She also said to Duan Qimeng in the outer room, "After the old lady takes the medicine, she will cough violently until she coughs up the blood stasis in her chest. In the meantime, I will have to apply needles to the old lady and will need assistance!"

"I'm here!" Duan Qimeng replied, his voice heavy.

Yun Jinnian shook her head, "Let's let a maid or granny with good Martial Arts strength assist instead. But remember, you must make no noise, question none of my actions, and do not disturb me, or else for the old lady..." Yun Jinnian paused, "today will be her last day!"

When Duan Qimeng heard that a maid or granny was needed, he knew it involved undressing, but how many maids or grannies had the composure and courage for such a task?

"Let me do it. She is my grandmother!"

Seeing Duan Qimeng's insistence, Yun Jinnian had no choice, "Then let Sister Ruan help as well!"

"Alright!"

Once the medicine was ready, Duan Qimeng fed it to the old Madam Duan spoonful by spoonful, "Grandmother, do not fear. Your grandson will be with you shortly, and so will your granddaughter-in-law!"

The old Madam Duan looked at Ruan Wanrong wiping her mouth with a towel, "Don't worry, don't worry, I'm still waiting to hold my great-grandson!"

Ruan Wanrong's face turned red.

After taking the medicine, the old Madam Duan soon began to react to it.

She coughed and coughed, as if she was trying to expel her entire heart, liver, and lungs.

Yun Jinnian took the old Madam Duan's pulse, then placed her hand on her chest to gently press and rub.

"Help the old lady to sit up!" Yun Jinnian ordered.

Duan Qimeng promptly helped the old Madam Duan sit up, with Ruan Wanrong swiftly assisting.

The old Madam Duan's coughing was severe, and the entire person seemed to be struggling to breathe.

Yun Jinnian kept pressing and rubbing the old Madam Duan's chest, then began to undress her, leaving only a red unterwäsche.

Duan Qimeng blushed but said nothing and did not move.

Considering she was his grandmother, his own flesh-and-blood grandmother who had raised him from a bare-bottomed child, dealing with all his messes as he grew up, his respect for her grew even greater, and he dared not have a single thought of disrespect.

"Hold the old lady tightly; I'm going to apply the needles now. It will be very painful; do not let her struggle!"

Chapter 276: Success

Duan Qimeng nodded and tightly hugged the elder Mrs. Duan.

Yun Jinnian glanced at him and undid the old lady's bellyband.

Duan Qimeng's forehead broke out in a fine sweat as he steadfastly stared ahead.

Ruan Wanrong's eyes reddened slightly, the man she loved was truly a man.

Yun Jinnian inserted the needles swiftly, causing the elder Mrs. Duan to scream out in pain.

"Ah..."

Duan Qimeng hugged her tightly, "Grandmother, grandmother, it will stop hurting soon, it will stop hurting very soon!"

But the elder Mrs. Duan just couldn't spit out the blood, making Yun Jinnian somewhat anxious.

If that mouthful of blood wasn't expelled, the old lady could die at any moment, and the emergency rescue would be in vain.

Without even caring to take off her shoes, Yun Jinnian quickly climbed onto the bed, straddling the elder Mrs. Duan's legs and vigorously massaging her chest.

Even after a good while of rubbing, the elder Mrs. Duan started to spasm and cramp, but still couldn't spit it out.

"Silver needle, the longest one!" Yun Jinnian called out urgently.

Ruan Wanrong immediately handed Yun Jinnian the silver needle, and Yun Jinnian took a deep breath, "Master Duan, hold on tight!"

"Mhm!" Duan Qimeng gave a small affirmative response.

And held the elder Mrs. Duan tighter.

Yun Jinnian took the silver needle and slowly aimed for the old lady's chest.

Her forehead was covered in sweat, her clothes soaked through, but Yun Jinnian remained calm, gently twisting the silver needle to push it in.

Sweat dripped drop by drop.

Ruan Wanrong wanted to wipe Yun Jinnian's sweat with a handkerchief but was afraid to disturb her.

Duan Qimeng also glanced at Yun Jinnian.

Her clothes clung wetly to her petite body, he could only see her forehead, her face was hardly clear.

But Duan Qimeng knew that for many years to come, he would never forget this moment—how much strength and determination were contained in that small body.

She saved the Duan Family, he owed her, the Duan Family owed her.

This debt of gratitude was as heavy as a mountain.

"Pfft..."

The elder Mrs. Duan spat out a mouthful of blood; Yun Jinnian couldn't dodge in time and it splashed across her face and front of her clothes.

"Sister Jinnian?" Ruan Wanrong called out softly.

But Yun Jinnian let out a sigh of relief, not caring about anything else, "We succeeded!"

Duan Qimeng and Ruan Wanrong were overjoyed.

Yun Jinnian started to slowly withdraw the silver needles, and with each one pulled out, the old lady's pain lessened until Yun Jinnian had removed them all and got off the bed, "Dress the elder lady now!"

Having said this, she took a handkerchief to gently wipe her face.

She exhaled deeply.

Without hesitation, Ruan Wanrong immediately began to dress the elder Mrs. Duan.

As Yun Jinnian was about to get up to open the door, Duan Qimeng quickly got off the bed and draped his coat over Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian was taken aback and turned to look at Duan Qimeng, "Thank you, Master Duan!"

She hadn't thought of that herself.

"It's the least I can do!" Duan Qimeng said with a deep voice, then asked, "Can my grandmother be bathed now?"

Yun Jinnian laughed, "Look at me, of course, it's fine. I will go to freshen up myself and will come back quickly!"

Duan Qimeng bowed deeply in gratitude.

Yun Jinnian bowed slightly in return and left the bedroom.

Outside the room, all the members of the Duan Family who could attend were present. When Duan Qimeng's wife saw Yun Jinnian open the door with bloodstains on her face and chest, wearing Duan Qimeng's clothes, she quickly asked, "Miss Yun, how is it?"

"We succeeded. Please prepare a change of clothes for me and some hot water, I need to bathe myself!" Yun Jinnian said, then looked around at the Duan Family members.

The men all turned aside out of propriety, feeling a slight warmth in their chests.

They felt that today's exertion and effort were all worth it!

Chapter 277: Discovery

Duan Qimeng hurriedly said, "Yes, yes, Miss Fourth, rest assured, hot water is already prepared, and the clothes are newly made for my daughter, never worn before. Can the maid and old servant take Miss Fourth to refresh yourself?"

"Yes!" Yun Jinnian nodded, "Also, prepare some more hot water to wash the grandmother, clothes can be omitted for now, I will come back later to administer acupuncture to the grandmother!"

"Very well, very well!" Duan Qimeng quickly agreed, instructing her most capable maid and old servant to take Yun Jinnian for washing.

Then she entered the room with several other old servants and maids.

Seeing her son drenched and Ruan Wanrong equally sweat-drenched, though unclear about the actual danger, they both had their clothes soaked with sweat, and recalling the grandmother's agonizing shrieks, she gently said, "You should both also freshen up, I can take care of things here!"

"Yes, mother (aunt),"

Ruan Wanrong's legs were weak, her walk slightly unstable, and Duan Qimeng immediately supported her.

In a soft voice, he said, "Thank you!"

Ruan Wanrong paused slightly, turned to Duan Qimeng with a sweet smile, "It's only right!"

Duan Qimeng felt his heart flutter as if he had consumed countless sweetresses, or obtained a rare treasure, his whole being so elated he hardly knew what to do, his hand tightly grasping Ruan Wanrong's that it hurt, yet she didn't say a word and instead held back firmly onto Duan Qimeng's hand.

Because of this incident, Duan Qimeng loved Ruan Wanrong for a lifetime, with neither concubines nor secondary wives, cherishing her throughout his life, and also feeling grateful to Yun Jinnian for a lifetime, but that's another story!

After washing up, Yun Jinnian returned to find the grandmother already cleaned up, the room also tidied up properly, and even the silver needles were washed and rearranged.

Yun Jinnian took the grandmother's pulse, then administered acupuncture to her. The grandmother slowly regained consciousness, looked around at everyone, and then fainted again.

"As long as she's woken up, it's good. I'll write a prescription soon, and you all should prepare the medicine according to the prescription, three times a day, without interruption. A month from now, I'll ask my maternal grandfather to come for the grandmother's follow-up visit!"

As Yun Jinnian spoke, she put away the needles, stood up, and went to the side to write a prescription. Ruan Wanrong and Duan Qimeng came in together, followed by a young maid exuding a strong fragrance that was nauseating.

Yun Jinnian glanced up at her, "Who might this be?"

Duan Qimeng didn't understand why Yun Jinnian would ask, "This is my cousin Xu Ya!"

Xu Ya immediately stepped forward and bowed to Yun Jinnian, "Xu Ya pays her respects to Miss Yun Fourth!"

Yun Jinnian just looked at her indifferently.

"Xu?"

In her past life, there was a cousin named Zhu Yan and another named Xu Xinmo, and Yun Jinnian truly despised cousins.

"She's a cousin from my grandmother's side!" explained Duan Qimeng.

Yun Jinnian nodded, indicating she understood, "Does Miss Xu know that the grandmother cannot stand the smell of Chenke and strong fragrances, and that the strong fragrance on Miss Xu could aggravate the grandmother's condition if she's exposed to it too much?"

Yun Jinnian and Ruan Wanrong didn't know the full story.

Yun Jinnian was only speculating, but unexpectedly...

Duan Qimeng understood very well and commanded loudly, "Take Xu Ya away!"

Xu Ya was terrified, "No, no, cousin, cousin, she's talking nonsense, she's talking nonsense..."

Her heart was filled with extreme fear.

"Before the grandmother fell severely ill, you never used scented products. But since the grandmother's illness, the scent on you has been getting stronger by the day. I have suspected everyone, yet never you!" As Duan Qimeng spoke, he ordered Xu Ya to be subdued and gagged, dragging her away.

Ruan Wanrong was astonished and looked towards Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian gave a faint smile. What followed was the Duan Family's family affair, which was none of her concern.

But Duan Qimeng turned to Yun Jinnian with a fist salute, "Miss Fourth, may I go to Xu Ya's quarters to have a look?"

Chapter 278: Love

Yun Jinnian didn't really want to go, for there was no part of a grand mansion that wasn't sordid.

Seeing Yun Jinnian seemingly reluctant, Duan Qimeng thought for a moment and then said, "Could Fourth Miss please check the pulse for me and my family members?"

"Alright then!"

Yun Jinnian first took Duan Qimeng's pulse, her brows gradually knitting together, a look of concern directed towards Ruan Wanrong.

Secretly rejoicing, fortunate that...

"How is it?" asked Duan Qimeng.

Seeing Yun Jinnian's expression, he already sensed something was wrong.

"Someone has poisoned you!" Yun Jinnian withdrew her hand and took a damp cloth to wipe it.

"What medicine?"

"Barrenwort!"

Yun Jinnian's voice was very soft, yet it dropped like a bomb, causing the Duan Family members in the room to erupt in chaos.

Several young masters who had been married for years yet remained childless stepped forward, "Fourth Miss, please check me as well!"

Yun Jinnian nodded, asking them to sit down, and checked their pulses one by one.

The expression on her face grew increasingly grave.

"How is it?" Duan Qimeng asked.

"The same as Young Master Duan!"

Duan Qimeng stepped back several paces, suddenly letting out a cold laugh, "Heh, hehe!"

He had never dreamed that he was drugged, and with Barrenwort, no less.

It was truly detestable...

"Fourth Miss, is there a cure?"

Yun Jinnian nodded slightly, "There is, but it will take some time!"

She couldn't help but sigh in her heart.

Fortunate she had come today, otherwise when Ruan Wanrong married into the family and years passed without pregnancy, the Duan family would surely blame Ruan Wanrong for being infertile.

Duan Qimeng heaved a sigh of relief and looked at his cousins, "We'll have to take it slowly!"

Yun Jinnian nodded, "I will have to go out tomorrow, and I'll prescribe some medicines for you to start with. I'll also ask my maternal grandfather..." Yun Jinnian paused, fearing Han Xuzi might be unwilling to come, then added, "Or you can wait till I return!"

Duan Qimeng knew that Han Xuzi was now reluctant to practice medicine, and his coming to give the old lady a follow-up consultation was already a favor for Yun Jinnian's sake. How could they push their luck?

"Waiting for Fourth Miss to return is also fine!"

"Mhm!"

Yun Jinnian nodded.

Duan Qimeng was no fool. As soon as she left, he would probably clean every nook and cranny of the Duan Family mansion to find those filthy things.

Even if they couldn't find anything, he would have other methods. After all, he was a top scholar!

Yun Jinnian stood up and said to Duan Qimeng, "Young Master Duan, Sister Ruan and I should head back now. Sister Jinnian and others are still waiting for us at Huiquan Tower!"

"I'll send someone to escort you!"

"Alright. My clothes, could you please have the maid pack them up for me? I will take them with me, or better yet have them burned immediately!"

"Alright, I will have someone burn them right away!"

Duan Qimeng immediately sent someone to do it.

Only after Yun Jinnian had taken the old lady's pulse did she and Ruan Wanrong leave the Duan Family.

In the carriage

Ruan Wanrong leaned on Yun Jinnian and called softly, "Sister Jinnian!"

"Mhm!"

"I'm scared!"

She truly couldn't imagine the Duan Family being like this.

All the men had been given Barrenwort.

Yun Jinnian held Ruan Wanrong tightly, "Don't be afraid, Young Master Duan is here, he will protect you!"

"Mhm!" Ruan Wanrong nodded, her heart still racing, "I know he will protect me, but we still don't know who wants to harm the Duan family members. What are we to do? I'm worried about him..."

"Young Master Duan will handle this. What you need to do is stand by his side unhesitatingly, quietly supporting him with your love, giving him strength!" Yun Jinnian said, and added, "Once I return, I will take good care of his health and ensure you have several plump little babies in the future!"

Ruan Wanrong, feeling both shy and agitated, softly hit Yun Jinnian, "You and your naughty mouth, no matter what he becomes, as long as he is the Big Brother Duan who loves me, I will unhesitatingly stand by his side, love him and support him!"

Chapter 279: Creating Opportunities

Yun Jinnian smiled gently and softly.

She wondered if Ruan Wanrong knew that the coachman outside was from the Duan Family, a fact she herself dared not forget.

Fortunately, Ruan Wanrong's final words were quite pleasing to the ear, and if relayed to Duan Qimeng, they would certainly add luster to her.

"Sister Ruan is truly kind!"

Ruan Wanrong shook her head slightly, "You're the truly kind one to have followed me to the Duan Family without a second thought, I don't know how to thank you enough!"

"To live a harmonious and happy life with Young Master Duan for a lifetime is the greatest thanks you could give me!"

Ruan Wanrong paused, then nodded firmly, "I will!"

Huiquan Tower

A few girls chatted about poetry, Buddhist studies, and then about playing Doudizhu.

Since they had brought some silver with them, they started to play, but the stakes were small, with limited wins and losses, purely for fun.

Just so the atmosphere wouldn't grow cold.

Yun Jinnian and Ruan Wanrong had been gone for quite a while without returning, seemingly caught up in a thorny issue. The others didn't complain; when compared to a human life, what was there to fuss about?

When Yun Jinnian and Ruan Wanrong returned, the girls noticed they had changed clothes. "What happened?" Dai Hanmi asked.

"The elderly madam vomited blood while I was giving her an acupuncture treatment, and it stained our clothes, so we changed!" Ruan Wanrong explained, seating Yun Jinnian down and pouring her a cup of water, "You must be thirsty!"

At the Duan Family, Yun Jinnian had been busy for quite some time and hadn't even had a chance to drink a cup of water.

"I'm okay!"

Even if her throat was parched, Yun Jinnian didn't take it to heart and could understand the Duan Family's feelings.

She took the teacup and sipped slowly.

Only then did they bring up Hu Shuiling's marriage.

"Sister Hu is betrothed too?" Yun Jinnian was indeed surprised.

"Yes, to a family from Su Hang!" Hu Shuiling said, blushing.

"Congratulations to Sister Hu, but I wonder, is the wedding date set?" Yun Jinnian asked softly.

"It's set, for this September. Could Sister Jinnian possibly make it back in time?" Hu Shuiling asked, holding Yun Jinnian's hand.

She definitely couldn't make it back.

If she went, Yun Jinnian planned to stay a bit longer.

"I'll try my best!"

Hu Shuiling nodded slightly, "Your matters are more important. If you can come back, then do, if not, when sending gifts, don't forget and make sure they are substantial!"

After Hu Shuiling finished speaking, she was the first to laugh.

Everyone else bent over laughing along, teasing Hu Shuiling.

The sorrow of parting was diluted somewhat.

Dish after dish was served, and the girls ate heartily.

It wasn't dark yet, but their families had sent people to pick them up. They were all waiting downstairs at Huiquan Tower, Dai Hanbo and Ruan Sicheng also came over.

Ruan Sicheng, already betrothed, was very fond of his future wife. He politely bid farewell to Yun Jinnian, then left with Ruan Wanrong.

Dai Hanbo, preoccupied with Yun Jinnian, kept stealing glances. Dai Hanmi, aware of her third brother's affections, dragged her feet in conversation with Yun Jinnian, allowing time for Hu Shuiling and Chen Danyan to leave while still appearing reluctant to part.

"Sister Jinnian, why don't you stay at our place tonight? We can have a proper talk!" Dai Hanmi suggested.

Doing so would also give her foolish third brother more time to spend with Yun Jinnian.

"Maybe next time. For sure next time, I'll come over to Sister Hanmi's for an all-night conversation!" Yun Jinnian declined gracefully.

"All right then, we have a deal. Next time you come back, we'll talk all night long and, oh, remember to bring back some rare treasures from the outside world!"

"Certainly!"

After sending off Dai Hanmi and her brother, Yun Jinnian and her sisters boarded the carriage to return to the Yun Family.

Chapter 280: Contradiction

As soon as he got into the carriage, Yun Jinnian yawned.

Yun Zihan quickly asked, "Little sister, are you very tired?"

"Mm, a bit tired!"

He hadn't slept well in the morning, and had gone to the Imperial Palace early to exhaustingly treat Elder Madam Duan's illness. With his frail body, it was no surprise he was tired!

"Then lean on me and take a short nap. Let's have the carriage slow down a bit!" Yun Zihan offered.

"That sounds good!"

Yun Jinnian leaned against Yun Zihan's chest and soon fell asleep, even softly snoring.

This was the first time Yun Zihan felt that he was like an older sister.

Gently, he hugged Yun Jinnian tighter.

Yun Muyou was also in a reflective mood.

Why was Yun Jinnian so good to Dai Hanmi and the others? With just a word, he immediately followed Ruan Wanrong to the Duan Family. Even though he returned exhausted to the bone, he didn't utter a single complaint. Of course, they were also extremely good to Yun Jinnian.

Their kindness was something he felt clearly today, completely and thoroughly.

He wasn't even one-tenth as good to Yun Jinnian as Dai Hanmi and the others were. Nor was he a good older sister, whether to Yun Jinnian, Yun Zihan, or even Yun Musi and Yun Mulan.

The bottom line was, he was too selfish!

The carriage stopped at the gates of Yun Residence. Bai Que had been waiting there for quite a while. Upon learning that Yun Jinnian was asleep, he didn't ask any further questions and carried Yun Jinnian straight back to Niannian Garden.

Mrs. Han sighed softly upon hearing the news, but ultimately said, "Heaven is about to place a great responsibility on this person, so it must first suffer his mind and work his muscles and bones!"

The next morning, as soon as dawn broke, five women dressed in black appeared in the courtyard of Niannian Garden Academy. Hemei approached them, "Who might you be?"

"We are here under orders to protect the Fourth Miss on her journey to Nanjiang!" one of them said, producing a token.

"Please wait a moment. The young lady is still asleep!"

The five exchanged glances. The woman who spoke first suggested, "The carriage is already waiting at the gate. Go and wake the Fourth Miss. Sleeping on the carriage is just as good!"

Hemei, upon hearing this, wasn't pleased, and was just about to speak up when Yun Jinnian's voice came faintly, "Hemei, prepare breakfast!"

Grinding her teeth, Hemei secretly thought there would come a day, these people would get what they deserved!

She quickly went to prepare the food.

After breakfast, Yun Jinnian, dressed as a man, had them carry a few books about Nanjiang onto the carriage.

"Fourth Miss, the Emperor has already prepared books for you, all about Nanjiang, all on the carriage!" offered the woman who had spoken before.

Yun Jinnian looked at her, impassive.

Tall, imposing, stern, and rather arrogant.

These books would have to be returned later. It was uncertain if they could be brought back from Nanjiang, so it didn't matter if they weren't taken along.

However, Yun Jinnian took two more bottles of a sleeping potion with him.

If those people didn't provoke him, all would be well. If they did, they would have to face the consequences.

"Fine, I'll go say goodbye to my mother!"

"Fourth Miss, the carriage has been waiting outside the residence for a long time!"

Suddenly a bit annoyed, Yun Jinnian retorted, "And you think saying goodbye to my mother will take a long time?"

"..."

"Hmph!"

With a cold snort, Yun Jinnian went with Hemei and Henuan to Qiyue Academy to exchange a few words with Mrs. Han before heading out the door with them.

Looking at the ten men seated atop the carriage and the woman standing aside, Yun Jinnian took a deep breath.

"Servant Qian greets the Fourth Miss!"

"Matron Qian, there's no need for such formalities!" said Yun Jinnian before he, along with Hemei and Henuan, got into the carriage.

Matron Qian also boarded the carriage.

Yun Jinnian glanced at her, furrowed his brows, but chose not to say anything more.

Once they reached the outskirts of the city, Tianci came aboard, and he directed Matron Qian to take the second carriage.

At the command of "Drive!" the carriage began to move.

"Fourth Miss, why aren't you reading?" Matron Qian inquired while sizing up Yun Jinnian.

Truth be told, she didn't believe that the young Yun Jinnian's medical skills could be that impressive.