

Indulgence 381

Chapter 381: Greatly Displeased

Yun Jinnian was no fool; these people kept emphasizing their respect for her, which naturally wasn't due to the Sacred Relic and Spiritual Poisonous Insect in her possession, but rather because of her.

It was because her blood was being consumed by the small cauldron, and the Spiritual Poisonous Insect also liked to drink her blood. All these signs explained too much.

"I need to think about it, you guys go and send a message for me first, I've been missing for so long, my family must be extremely worried!"

The most important one was Tianci!

Elder Jin immediately made a discreet signal to Amdo, who promptly responded, "Your subordinate will go at once!"

"If they are willing to come, bring them here," Yun Jinnian said.

She didn't want to take action just yet, "By the way, what time is it now?"

"It's the tenth day of the twelfth lunar month!" Elder Jin echoed.

The tenth day of the twelfth lunar month, in just eight more days it would be Tianci's seventh birthday, which meant he would be eight years old.

But she hadn't prepared any gifts for him.

With this in mind, Yun Jinnian then said, "Please help me find the best fabric, in treasure blue and brocade blue, and some bright red as well. Do you have fox fur trimmings? I want fox fur trimmings too, preferably pure white!"

Yun Jinnian was skilled in embroidery, and she wanted to make clothes for Tianci and Chu Yu.

Seeing as the New Year was approaching, this year's celebration could only take place within this valley.

But once Chu Yu and the others arrived, they should be able to go out to Nanjiang City.

"Yes, yes, yes!"

The five elders were not afraid of taking orders from Yun Jinnian; they feared she wouldn't give them any orders.

Actually, they didn't have that many ill intentions; it was just that the Watch Moon Sect was declining more and more. Now that they had the Saintess, as well as the Sacred Relic and Spiritual Poisonous Insect, the rise of Nanjiang was not far off.

Therefore, they naturally listened to Yun Jinnian's orders.

Elder Jin then ordered someone to leave, and soon after, four women in white dresses floated in, each of them refined and noble, their garments flowing as if they were celestial beings.

"They are..." Yun Jinnian was puzzled.

"They are maids to serve the Saintess!"

"I don't need them!" Yun Jinnian had barely finished speaking when the four beauties knelt on the ground.

"We beg the Saintess to keep us!"

These four beauties had originally been considered to become the Saintess, but after the Spiritual Poisonous Insect drank their blood, it ignored them and did not excrete spiritual essence.

Therefore, they never became the Saintess, which left them in an awkward position within the Watch Moon Sect, neither here nor there.

Now that Yun Jinnian had arrived, they wanted to come and serve her. Some were happy, some were worried, and others harbored resentment!

Yun Jinnian thought that she too was in a difficult position but needed to abide by her own principles; compassion was acceptable, but it could not be extended to irrelevant people. She exhaled slowly, "I still can't keep you, please go back!"

She then turned to Elder Jin, "And don't pressure me, just speak directly if there's something you want to say!"

On the surface, it was service, but in reality, it was also surveillance.

"This..."

Elder Jin hesitated.

"Yes, then we will do as the Saintess wishes. However, since there is no one to serve the Saintess at the moment, why not keep them here for now, and once the Saintess's personal maids arrive, we can make arrangements for these women? What do you think?" Elder Mu interjected anxiously.

He was afraid that Elder Jin might upset Yun Jinnian.

After all, she had just been injured; causing any more trouble could lead to a loss greater than the gain.

Yun Jinnian thought that this was acceptable.

"Alright!"

The five elders were overjoyed and naturally instructed the four beautiful maids with many orders, essentially to serve well and not provoke the Saintess's ire. They should not act on their own but do exactly as the Saintess instructed; their highest priority was the Saintess and they must show her the utmost respect!

They rattled off a long list of orders.

Chapter 382: Waiting

The four beautiful maids lowered their heads and responded one by one—with only themselves knowing how much they really took in.

"All right, go pay your respects to the Saintess, and while you're at it, let her know who you are!"

Yun Jinnian leaned back in her chair, staring at the sky.

Outside it was the cold of winter, but here it was as warm as spring, with flowers blooming in rage.

It was beautiful.

If there were no quarrels, no scheming, no conspiracies of any sort—no ideals even—growing old in this valley with a loved one, watching the sunrise in the morning, the sunset in the evening, and the stars and moon at night, passing the seasons in warmth until the end of one's days, would be peaceful.

"This servant Telan (Ji'an, Sanglin, Liuka) pays respects to the Saintess!"

Yun Jinnian, seeing that they were older than her and more slender, asked, "How old are you?"

"This servant is already sixteen!"

"Oh, sixteen—such a wonderful age!"

Having said that, Yun Jinnian let them stand.

As for their names, Yun Jinnian wasn't curious; each area had its own unique customs.

These four beauties might have thought they were hiding their feelings well, but their eyes betrayed them nonetheless.

Each one actually felt quite resentful, though as to why they felt this way, Yun Jinnian did not care. She would not be associating with these four for long—they would eventually go their separate ways.

The fabrics and fox furs that Yun Jinnian wanted were quickly delivered. Instead of cutting the fabric immediately, she embroidered patterns onto it first—pale yellow auspicious clouds against bright red, strikingly vivid. Once she later cut out the shapes, Yun Jinnian planned to embroider a few characters for "fortune" along the edge to complete it. Although it was simple, simplicity had its own advantages.

The four beautiful maids soon decided that Telan and Liuka should serve Yun Jinnian closely, and Telan was currently helping her sort threads.

Liuka stood to the side, her gaze on Yun Jinnian blank.

Her expression was unfathomable, with a flash of envy sparkling in her eyes!

She thought she was good at concealing her feelings, but Yun Jinnian slightly lifted her head and still noticed it. She subtly curled her lips but said nothing else.

She continued embroidering the garment in her hands.

She restrained her thoughts—having Liuka harbor resentment was good. If she stirred up trouble, Yun Jinnian would have something to say. If a mere maid couldn't tolerate her, let alone the others in the sect.

Yun Jinnian could be a good person, but she would not be anyone's pushover.

Capital City

Yun Residence

Mrs. He's dowry for Yun Zihan was meager and consisted mostly of items that looked fine on the surface but were actually cheap—appealing to the eye but worthless at heart.

Auntie Cui was so distressed she cried, yet she dared not confront Mrs. He. She did hint at it in front of Yun Chen, but Yun Chen did not say much nor did she take a stand for Yun Zihan or insist Mrs. He properly prepare a dowry.

After getting over her anger, Yun Zihan had no choice but to muster her spirits and embroider her wedding dress.

In this family, she was never really considered a daughter, never really regarded at all.

She once thought her father was decent, but now, it seemed he was no different!

Her meager dowry—how could her marriage into the Liao Family turn out well?

"Second Miss, the Second Madam is requesting your presence," said Duoduo.

Yun Jinnian glanced at Duoduo, stood up, took a deep breath, and said, "Let's go!"

Qiyue Academy

Mrs. Han was embroidering a piece of clothing and, seeing Yun Zihan come in, hurriedly said, "Zihan, come and give me a hand. The New Year is approaching and this garment isn't finished yet. It needs to be sent to Nanjiang tomorrow, and I had no choice but to ask for your help!"

"Is it for the Fourth Sister?"

"Mhm!"

Yun Zihan nodded and sat down next to Mrs. Han to help with the garment.

Yun Zihan was skilled with needlework, her stitches fine and dense. Knowing it was for Yun Jinnian, she was especially careful.

Mrs. Han lowered her eyes with a shallow smile, asking nonchalantly, "Is the dowry ready now?"

Yun Zihan felt as if her heart bled, yet she forced a joyous smile, "Mother is taking care of it!"

Chapter 383: The Generous Aunt

Mrs. He's stinginess was well known to Mrs. Han.

After all, Yun Zihan was not her birth daughter, so how could she possibly prepare a generous dowry for her.

Thinking for a moment, she finally said, "What about the silver hidden away, how much did your mother say she would give you?"

"Mother said she would give me twenty thousand taels of silver!"

Twenty thousand taels were nothing more than a pittance.

Mrs. Han grew increasingly speechless at Mrs. He's pettiness and signaled Bai Que, who immediately brought over a purse, "This is from your Fourth Sister and me as extra dowry for you. Just take it privately for now, we will publicly give you two sets of head ornaments later, and you just need to be aware of it!"

Yun Zihan was touched in her heart.

Mrs. Han's extra dowry for Ruan Wanrong and Hu Shuiling was head ornaments. But just one set of those ornaments was worth more than twenty thousand taels of silver, which showed their value.

Refuse? She truly did not dare, nor could she bear to.

Her mother's dowry was indeed not presentable, and who knew what her situation would be after marriage.

Yun Zihan took the purse and knelt before Mrs. Han, "Thank you, Aunt!"

"The floor is heated, but it's still quite cold. Get up quickly!" Mrs. Han said gently.

It was also because she remembered Yun Zihan's genuine affection for Jinnian; otherwise, she might not have gotten involved.

Yun Zihan stood up, took a handkerchief to wipe her tears, and safely put away the purse.

"Aren't you going to take a look?" Mrs. Han asked with a smile.

"Whatever Aunt gives, it must be exceedingly fine!"

Mrs. Han truly smiled.

This child was indeed clever and bright.

Yun Zihan, seeing Mrs. Han smile, cautiously and hopefully opened the purse and took out a stack of papers.

They were neatly folded.

Upon unfolding one, it was a deed for a manor with five hundred mu of paddy fields.

"This..."

Yun Zihan's hands trembled slightly, and she unfolded another paper, which was also a deed for a manor with five hundred mu of paddy fields.

The third paper was a deed for a two-entrance shop on East Street in the Capital City.

Such shops were nearly impossible to acquire in the Capital City.

The fourth piece was a silver note for a hundred thousand taels.

"Aunt, this is too valuable!"

This added up to at least several hundred thousand taels; what did she do to deserve this!

"Take it. Life in the Capital City is expensive, and besides, the Liao Family's son still has to study hard for three years, which will bring substantial expenses. I met Liao's son once; he's eloquent and decent. He's bound to have great fortune in the future. After your marriage, having silver in hand and a monthly income will ensure that you can manage your days!"

"But Aunt..."

Yun Zihan began to cry again.

Her mother's dowry would probably not exceed fifty thousand taels. Adding the twenty thousand taels kept aside, at most, it wouldn't reach a hundred thousand taels.

"Alright, the reason I gave you this today is to tell you that the shop sells rouge and powder. The shop's inventory is all yours too. If you wish to continue the business, find some time to see the shopkeeper and discuss the future plans with him. The supply channels are all set up, making it convenient. Otherwise, you could also rent out the shop and earn rental income every year!"

Yun Zihan was no fool; she would of course continue the business.

Having a livelihood and managing it well could support a family's monthly needs.

"Aunt, I plan to keep running it!"

"In that case, once the year-end accounts are settled, the shop will be officially yours. Work hard and live a prospering life, better than anyone else!"

"I'll follow Aunt's advice!"

She stayed with Mrs. Han making clothes until it got dark, and even had her lunch at Qiyue Academy. Then Mrs. Han let Yun Zihan leave.

Watching Yun Zihan walk away, Bai Que finally asked in confusion, "Madam, why give such a heavy dowry? With estates, shops, and silver!"

Chapter 384: Omnipresent

Mrs. Han smiled faintly, "First of all, it was Jinnian who brought the marriage about, and moreover, I don't lack for silver, but she is in dire need of it. Thirdly, when Jinnian was tortured by the old devout woman and nearly died from sickness, it was Auntie Cui who took care of her all night without resting. Besides, this Sister Han is a clever and quick-witted girl; she knows exactly what she wants and is certainly not a vulgar and useless person!"

Mrs. Han paused before continuing, "That day I met Young Master Liao. He has a gentle appearance and refined speech. Although he comes from a small town, he hasn't been dazzled by the splendor of the Capital City. His ability to wait another three years for the imperial examination shows he's a man of depth. My encounter with him today will surely bring more benefits to my Jinnian and Tianci in the future!"

Bai Que hadn't thought that much, but upon hearing Mrs. Han's analysis, felt it made sense.

"This Lady is really ruthless!"

"It's not just ruthless, she's shameless too, taking all the good stuff from the Liao Family's betrothal gifts for Yun Muyou and giving Yun Zihan all things that look pretty but are actually worthless. The people of the Yun Family are truly disgusting," Mrs. Han said, taking a deep breath.

Then she heard a maid calling softly from outside, "Madam, Auntie Rou has sent someone to say that the Fourth Young Master is sick and is asking the Madam to fetch a doctor to have a look!"

Auntie Rou gave birth to a son on the twenty-seventh of September, who was fourth in the Yun Family lineage, and the eldest child born of concubinage from the second branch.

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Han's eyebrows did not even frown, "Go tell the Lady to make the decision!"

She couldn't care less about these trivial matters.

"Yes!"

The maid responded and went down.

Mrs. Han took a deep breath, "In a few days, it will be Tianci's birthday. I wonder how he and his sister will celebrate?"

"It's definitely going to be lively!" Bai Que chimed in.

Mrs. Han smiled, "Jinnian adores Tianci, and Tianci is also fondest of his sister!"

She owed these two children a great deal.

Because they sympathized with each other's past sufferings, their affection was truly strong.

At that thought, Mrs. Han asked again, "Isn't Auntie Lian due to give birth soon?"

"It should be soon!"

"Tell her to be careful not to fall into someone else's trap!"

Nowadays, Auntie Lian and Auntie Rou were fighting fiercely, both openly and covertly. Auntie Rou had just given birth to the eldest son of the second branch, Yun Qi, who wouldn't say it out loud but was pleased in his heart, and went to visit Auntie Rou's quarters every day after returning from court.

Scarcity makes things precious. If only Auntie Lian's womb proves to be capable and also bears a son...

Due to Yun Zihan's matter, Auntie Su and Auntie Hua have been rather tranquil, including their three daughters born out of wedlock.

"Bai Que..."

"Hmm?"

"What do you think about me getting a divorce from Yun Qi?"

Bai Que was silent for a moment before responding, "Madam could ask the Old Master and the young lady and young master what they think!"

"They will support me!"

Mrs. Han said this, looking out the window, lost in thought...

Nowadays in the Capital City, when talking about the most prominent young talents, Feng Wushuang tops the list.

So when Feng Wushuang invited Liao Shijie to drink tea and discuss art, Liao Shijie was utterly astonished.

Their meeting was also an accident, introduced by others. Liao Shijie had never expected to be invited to Feng Wushuang's residence.

As an imperial top scholar, Feng Wushuang's invitation was an honor, and naturally, he would go.

After preparing a gift, he went to the Feng Residence.

Feng Wushuang was very learned, and after their conversation, Liao Shijie benefited greatly. Feng Wushuang also had Liao Shijie critique the paintings he had made.

"Feng Sir is truly talented and extraordinary!"

"I dare not accept such compliments!"

Feng Wushuang was not only exceptionally talented but also adept at networking; after learning from the bookshop that the hermit of Hanshan was the current top scholar, he promoted the fact, and now his paintings have soared to a price of thirty-thousand taels each.

Chapter 385: Reluctant to Part

Feng Wushuang suddenly sent over thirty sets, and after deducting some expenses, he made 600,000 taels of silver. He quietly rented a three-room three-story shop and opened a tea house. Since he frequented the place, it attracted countless students from humble backgrounds. Although the profits were slim, the high volume of sales meant that after a month, while not making a fortune daily, he still had tens of thousands of taels left after expenses—money Feng Wushuang managed himself without turning it over to Old Lady Feng.

Old Lady Feng was in poor health and didn't manage household affairs, leaving the inner court in the hands of a butler, who had been bestowed by the emperor himself and had a bit of arrogance. However, Feng Wushuang caught her vulnerability and sternly chastised her. With another butler in charge of the main court's provisions, Old Lady Feng always enjoyed the finest food and clothing. Even if the butler wanted to mistreat her, she was powerless to do so. After a few attempts, not only was her arrogance gone, but she even wished she could bury herself in the dust.

Feng Wushuang was a man with a plan. To win Yun Jinnian, he laid the groundwork at every turn and often lingered around Yun Qi. Many joked about marrying their daughters to him, yet Yun Qi never mentioned it, truly driving him mad with impatience.

However, upon learning that Yun Jinnian was not faring well in the Yun Family and her only close sibling was Yun Zihan, and that Yun Jinnian was about to marry Liao Shijie, Feng Wushuang began to scheme. He first befriended Liao Shijie, sure that he would have the chance to see Yun Jinnian at the Liao Family in the future, where he could then bring up past events.

A beggar transformed into the Top Scorer would surely be remembered by Yun Jinnian.

And he was also handsome and graceful—Yun Jinnian would surely be moved by him...

Feeling insecure, he became even more eager to amass more silver to lavish his beloved lady with fine silk and jade, ensuring she would live a carefree life!

"Mr. Feng, Mr. Feng..." Liao Shijie softly called.

Why was Mr. Feng lost in thought?

Upon hearing him, Feng Wushuang regained his focus and apologized with a smile, "My apologies, I was lost in thought!"

"No harm, no harm!"

Liao Shijie quickly waved his hand.

He was particularly curious—about what could this distinguished and handsome Top Scorer be daydreaming?

"I heard Brother Liao is about to get married?" Feng Wushuang asked.

"Indeed, I hope Mr. Feng will come and enjoy some simple wine at that time!" Liao Shijie hurriedly said, handing over an invitation he had prepared in advance.

"Certainly, certainly!"

Nanjiang

"Prince Yanjun, is what he said true? Is my sister really waiting for us in the valley?" Han Tianci asked.

Prince Yanjun shook his head slightly.

He was unsure.

"But this is indeed my sister's pouch!" Han Tianci stared at the pouch in his hand.

He was torn about whether to follow Amdo or not.

"Wait!" Prince Yanjun wrote one word on the table with his finger dipped in water.

Han Tianci quickly calmed down, "Yes!"

He firmly refused to go with Amdo.

They would wait for Chu Yu and the others to return before taking action.

Amdo, being both angry and anxious, could only send a message to the valley and wait in the small courtyard.

Shi Jiayu took great care of Han Tianci, treating him as her own younger brother and doing many things personally.

Han Tianci, in turn, grew somewhat fond of her.

In the blink of an eye, it was December 17th. The Yun Family was going to the Liao Family to set up the bridal bed. Mrs. He had invited relatives and sisters-in-law from both her own and her husband's families, and Mrs. Han also went along. With two children to officiate the bed setting, the event was indeed lively.

Tomorrow would be Yun Zihan's wedding day. Yun Muyou sneaked a peek at Yun Zihan's dowry and almost died laughing.

Because it was so meager.

Mrs. Cui was at her wits' end, but she felt a little relieved upon learning that Mrs. Han had provided a generous dowry supplement.

Otherwise, she would have been truly distressed.

"Aunt!" Yun Zihan called softly, her heart filled with reluctance.

Chapter 386: Congratulations Congratulations

Grasping Yun Zihan's hand, she said, "You must live a good life with your husband in the future. If you can endure, then endure. You may not be able to rely on the Yun Family, so you must depend only on yourself. Remember, everything is governed by fate, and very little is in our hands. You must make sure to secure your husband's heart, understand?"

Yun Zihan nodded.

"Auntie, I really wish I could take you with me!"

She had truly grown cold towards the Yun Family.

In the past, when she saw her younger sister being mistreated, her heart would chill, yet she could do nothing about it.

Fortunately, her little sister was blessed.

"Silly child, where have you ever seen an aunt get married along with someone!" Auntie Cui said, laughing, but she was also somewhat sad.

Mother and daughter talked for a long time before Auntie Cui reluctantly left.

Yun Zihan leaned against the headboard.

The dowry from the Yun Family consisted of just two storefronts in the Outer City, a hundred-acre farm in the suburbs, and two thousand taels of silver as her nest egg. As for her dowry,

Yun Zihan hadn't seen it but, judging by her aunt's troubled expression, she knew it must be quite poor.

She was determined to prove herself, determined to find a way to get her aunt out of there.

Absolutely!

On the eighteenth day of the twelfth month, an auspicious day for marriage,

Yun Zihan was woken up, bathed, dressed in her bridal gown, and had her makeup done.

Ruan Wanrong, Chen Danyan, and Dai Hanmi had agreed to come early to help add to her adornments, each gifting her a set of exquisite and lavish headdresses.

Mrs. Han gave two sets of headdresses, one of Imperial Green and one of pink jade, both truly valuable.

Mrs. He and Yun Muiyou were green with envy, thinking that when Yun Muiyou married, Mrs. Han should also add such adornments.

Many from the main branch of the Yun Family also came, bringing simple gifts like gold bracelets and hairpins.

Yun Zihan sincerely thanked each one of them; she would stay in touch with those she could, and for those she couldn't, today's gifts would be enough.

Liao Shijie's family did not come; those who came to the wedding today were friends made in the Capital City, including Feng Wushuang.

Though his parents were not in the Capital City, Liao Shijie had still prepared eight grand bridal chairs, making quite the festive procession.

Yun Zhen and his brothers, accompanied by their male cousins, stood guard at the door and interrogated Liao Shijie, who responded calmly and accurately.

The onlookers then realized that this son-in-law of the Yun Family was not someone to be trifled with.

In the imperial examination three years later, he would surely secure a place.

Yun Zihan bid her parents farewell and was carried out of the house on Yun Zhen's back, riding in the bridal sedan.

She tossed away a folding fan, and as a basin of water was thrown out at the doorway, Yun Zihan officially became a daughter-in-law of the Liao Family.

A married daughter is like water spilt out of the house.

Auntie Cui hid in a small courtyard, weeping till she became a tear-stained figure.

Fortunately, fortunately the fourth young miss had planned ahead for her daughter, marrying her to a young and promising man as his principal wife. If they had been a step later, and she had been married off by Mrs. He's black heart to Tongqu City, to be a concubine to some old man over fifty, Auntie Cui couldn't bear the thought.

Auntie Cui, weeping, actually started to laugh.

Now that her daughter's future was bright, she should stop crying and instead be happy!

From now on in this household, she too could live more freely and unrestrained, far better off than Auntie Kang.

Thinking of Yun Tai, the third young miss of the house, Auntie Cui couldn't help but sigh.

When the bridal sedan arrived at the Liao Residence, Yun Zihan was led by the wedding matron down from the sedan and into the main hall.

Since Liao Shijie's parents were not there, and there were few elders present, it was mostly Liao Shijie's friends, making the occasion less oppressive and quite lively.

After leading the newlyweds to the bridal chamber, everyone clamored to see the bride.

Liao Shijie, smiling, lifted the veil, revealing Yun Zihan's delicate and lovely visage.

"Liao brother is truly fortunate!"

"Indeed, sister-in-law is like a heavenly fairy!"

Liao Shijie, smiling, clasped his fists towards his friends, "Thank you, thank you!"

Chapter 387: Those Little Thoughts

Feng Wushuang was also watching from the side, thinking in her heart that the stunning beauty would surely bring the nation to its knees and capture every heart if she were to don bridal makeup and wear the phoenix crown with the bridal robe.

Thinking of that scene, Feng Wushuang couldn't help but smile.

After all, they were just scholars, knowing how to make fun during the wedding night, but they wouldn't go too far, so they took the opportunity to leave the bridal chamber.

Since Liao Shijie's parents hadn't come and his family wasn't from around here, there weren't many guests, just barely three tables. Among them, Feng Wushuang held the highest official position, and besides the groom, it was Feng Wushuang who led the toasting today.

Feng Wushuang was delighted in her heart and didn't refuse any of the drinkers.

Bridal Chamber

Looking at the delicate and lovely Yun Zihan, Liao Shijie's face instantly flushed red.

The matron saw this and laughed, "It's time for the bride and groom to drink the bridal cup!"

Liao Shijie picked up the bridal cup and handed it to Yun Zihan, "My lady!"

"My lord!" Yun Zihan called out softly, and the two drank from the bridal cup.

They exchanged glances, both feeling a bit shy, swiftly turning their heads away only to find themselves unable to resist looking back, catching each other's gaze once more.

Yun Zihan laughed, and Liao Shijie laughed too.

Though they had only met once before, they were getting on harmoniously now.

"My lady, you should wash up and rest for a while, and maybe have something to eat, I'll go and toast the guests!"

"Alright, but drink less!" Yun Zihan said, and her face blushed with shyness.

Liao Shijie felt quite happy, nodded, and left the bridal chamber.

Getting married felt good.

From now on, there would be someone who would share his joys and sorrows, follow him through life and death, grow old together, and raise children.

As long as she was sincere, he would never let her down!

Nanjiang

Drinking the decoction made from the Snow Lotus every day, Yun Jinnian's injuries healed quickly.

Today was the eighteenth, Tianci's birthday, but Tianci did not come.

Yun Jinnian knew all too well, it was probably because Tianci didn't trust Amdo, and since Chu Yu and the others hadn't returned from their search for her, he was afraid to follow, in case it was a trap.

"I want to leave the valley!" Yun Jinnian said this with resounding determination.

She made it clear to Telan and the others that she was serious.

"Saintess, you've been injured and your body isn't fully recovered, you should rest properly..." Liuka began, only to scream and jump back several steps.

Because Yun Jinnian had just thrown the teacup from the table beside her.

"Since I am the Saintess, what I say goes. You've been told to bring someone back and after so many days, you still haven't succeeded, and now you dare argue!"

A few days earlier, she couldn't move without hurting all over, each movement brought on cold sweat, but now she felt much better and couldn't sit still anymore.

Liuka's pretty face flushed with anger.

Quickly, Telan said, "Please wait, Saintess, I will immediately instruct someone to prepare the carriage!"

She was also going to inform the five elders.

Yun Jinnian gestured with her hand for Telan to go quickly.

Only Liuka was left beside her.

It was then that Yun Jinnian looked indifferently at Liuka, "You don't like me, why is that?"

Liuka, startled by the question, pursed her lips, "Why should I like you? Without you, I would have been the Saintess!"

"In all these years without me, you didn't become the Saintess, did you?"

"That's because..." Liuka started to say, then suddenly fell silent.

Her little hands clenched into fists.

She couldn't possibly tell Yun Jinnian that without the Sacred Relic, and with the Spiritual Poisonous Insect not preferring their blood, refusing to excrete essence even if it fed, they wouldn't be acknowledged by the five elders. But if the Spiritual Poisonous Insect was willing to drink their blood, it meant they weren't ordinary either!

But with Yun Jinnian's arrival, they were suddenly demoted from their lofty status to the bottom of the valley, turning into mere maidservants, unable to fight back — how could she possibly not hate her!

Chapter 388: Exposing Liuka

"Because there's no Sacred Relic, because the Spiritual Poisonous Insects don't like drinking your blood, don't heed your commands, am I right?" Yun Jinnian said calmly, lifting her eyes to the distant green mountains, "I don't wish to be any Saintess; I only want to finish what I've started, and return to the Capital City!"

"You're not staying in Nanjiang?" Liuka exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, I won't be staying in Nanjiang!"

"Why?"

Yun Jinnian slightly pursed her lips and smiled, "Because this isn't my home, my home is in the Capital City. There I have my mother, my maternal grandfather, my sisters; I must return there!"

"The elders won't agree!"

Yun Jinnian smiled, "They will agree!"

If she insisted stubbornly and the Spiritual Poisonous Insects didn't obey them, the five elders had no choice but to compromise.

Liuka bit her lip, originally wanting to say some harsh words to provoke Yun Jinnian, but then she saw Telan approaching quickly, bending over to greet Yun Jinnian, "Saintess, the carriage is ready, and we will set off in a moment!"

"Mhm!"

These past few days had been very worrisome for Yun Jinnian, but there was no helping it.

She couldn't leave, couldn't escape, so she had to nestle down and recover first.

Not that she hadn't mentioned it, but the five elders kept delaying without agreeing, yet unexpectedly, today they were willing.

Casually dressed, Telan stepped forward to lift Yun Jinnian into the carriage. Inside, thick carpets were laid out, and Yun Jinnian took up most of the space, with four beautiful maids sitting on either side. Telan poured some warm Snow Lotus Dew for Yun Jinnian to drink, "Saintess, please drink some water first. With our current pace, we should arrive by tomorrow evening!"

Yun Jinnian nodded her head.

Actually, these people had been good to her and never skimmed on food or clothing.

Eating Snow Lotus daily, her wounds healed quickly.

After all, Snow Lotus was an extremely valuable item, yet they gave it to her daily.

Of course, it was also to nourish her body to feed the Poisonous Insects with her blood.

The Elder Jin would also talk to her about matters of Nanjiang, but she showed little interest. However, she was rather curious about Nanjiang's medical skills, so the Elder Tu was sent instead.

All along the way, accommodations for eating and staying were well arranged. Even when Yun Jinnian needed to relieve herself, Telan and a few others were very meticulous in their service. Liuka, on the other hand, seldom intervened.

In the blink of an eye, another night passed, and Yun Jinnian couldn't help but sigh.

She wouldn't be able to celebrate Tianci's birthday!

The main city of Nanjiang was Licheng, and at this moment, Han Tianci was glaring at Amu. He detested Amu, and Amu didn't like the little devil Han Tianci either, finding him extremely vexing.

He even dared to put croton in his meal, nearly causing him to lose his life!

"Young Master, it's time to eat!" Shi Jiayu came to call Han Tianci to dine with Prince Yanjun.

Han Tianci stuck his tongue out at Amu and pulled a mischievous face before scampering off.

"This little brat, one day, I will have my revenge!" Amu said bitterly.

Turning his head away.

Once bustling with people, now only two were left, even Hemei and Henuan had gone to find Yun Jinnian.

"Commandery Prince, I feel unwell!" Han Tianci held his chopsticks, unwilling to eat.

Prince Yanjun rubbed Han Tianci's head, silently picking food for him and scooping soup.

This child was actually very sensible and quite endearing.

At least, he liked him very much.

Han Tianci looked up at Prince Yanjun and obediently lowered his head to eat, but he found it hard to swallow.

Watching him, Prince Yanjun felt a pang of distress yet said no words of comfort.

The carriage stopped in front of the manor entrance. As the doorman saw who descended from the carriage, he was stunned momentarily before running towards the house, "Young Master, Young Master, the Miss is back, the Miss is back!"

Chapter 389: The Sibling Pact

Han Tianci heard the words and almost knocked over the bowl in front of him.

He threw down his chopsticks and ran outside.

Prince Yanjun also gently put down his chopsticks and slowly got up to look outside.

"Sister..."

As Han Tianci ran, he cried until he saw Yun Jinnian standing at the doorway. Without a care, he ran over and hugged her, "Wuu, sister, you've finally come back!"

Yun Jinnian, looking at Han Tianci who had obviously lost a lot of weight and looked much haggard, felt terribly heartbroken.

Her eyes reddened slightly as she hugged Han Tianci tightly, gently patting his back to comfort him, "Sister is back, don't be afraid, sister is back!"

Tender as water.

It was only then that Telan and the others realized that when Yun Jinnian was gentle, she could be like this.

It was completely different from her smile in the valley, which was too fake and forced.

"Sister, let's go to the room to talk!" Han Tianci cried sobbingly.

Yun Jinnian laughed, "Sister is injured and can't walk. That sister will have to carry me in!"

"Sister is injured? Is it serious? Where is the injury?" Han Tianci asked in a panic.

No matter how smart he was, he was just a seven-year-old child with a deep affection for Yun Jinnian. He was distraught these past days, and now, hearing that Yun Jinnian was injured, his mind was in a daze.

"It's nothing, it's nothing serious. Let's go inside to talk, sister can't stand much longer!" Yun Jinnian said softly.

Telan immediately came forward to carry Yun Jinnian, with Han Tianci leading the way. Shi Jiayu had already prepared the bed, letting Yun Jinnian lean on it.

Han Tianci also took off his shoes, climbed onto the bed, and lay next to Yun Jinnian, his little face resting in her embrace.

"Sister!"

"Hmm?"

"It's so good that you came back!"

Yun Jinnian started to smile and rubbed Han Tianci's dark hair, sighing, "Yes, it's so good to be back!"

When she fell from that great height into the raging waters of the stream below, it was Momo who kept calling out to her to keep going forward and not give up when she could no longer hold on.

"Tianci, I will show you something!"

Saying this, Yun Jinnian took off her waist pouch, opened it, and took out a small cauldron, letting Han Tianci see the Spiritual Poisonous Insect inside.

"Isn't this insect cute?"

Upon seeing it, Han Tianci shook his head, "It's not cute, sister. When we go back, can we keep a puppy instead?"

"Alright!"

Seeing that Han Tianci didn't like the Spiritual Poisonous Insect, Yun Jinnian didn't talk much about its value and instead started talking about other things.

She talked about what happened in the mountains, how she found the Snow Lotus, and how she fell into the underground river and got injured.

Han Tianci listened very anxiously and hugged Yun Jinnian tightly again, "It's a good thing sister came back!"

Yun Jinnian stroked his head, "That's why Tianci must practice his Martial Arts well. Sister will do the same, and must work hard on refining her Martial Arts too!"

Even if she couldn't defeat the enemy, at least she should be able to escape and protect herself.

At any time, staying alive was the most important thing.

When Shi Jiayu brought over some food, Telan was also carrying "snow lotus water". They met at the door, and Shi Jiayu asked, "What are you carrying?"

"Snow lotus water, for the Saintess to drink!"

Snow lotus water, from the Snow Lotus of Tian Mountain?

Shi Jiayu raised an eyebrow, "Then let's go in together!"

Yun Jinnian let Han Tianci also drink some snow lotus water. After taking a sip, Han Tianci said, "It doesn't taste very good!" and then grabbed his chopsticks to start eating.

Yun Jinnian smiled and slowly drank the rest before she began to eat with Han Tianci.

Shi Jiayu was rather indifferent toward Telan and the others, arranging a place for them to rest before sitting down for a while with Yun Jinnian. When talking about Chu Yu's anxiety and secretly going to see Yun Jinnian, she saw that Yun Jinnian's face was calm.

She couldn't help feeling puzzled. Did Yun Jinnian not like Chu Yu?

"Miss..."

Chapter 390: Kissed Once

"You should go to sleep and leave the light on for me," Yun Jinnian said indifferently, also suggesting that Han Tianci should rest as well.

Han Tianci left reluctantly.

Only after Shi Jiayu had left did Yun Jinnian slowly close his eyes, but he didn't fall into a deep sleep.

The door creaked softly.

Chu Yu entered the room slowly, tiptoeing to the bedside, careful not to wake the seemingly sleeping Yun Jinnian.

She had lost weight, her already slim figure now even more delicate, her chin more pointed than before.

His heart ached intensely.

Chu Yu gently reached out to touch Yun Jinnian's face.

These days had been hard on him, searching everywhere in the snowy mountains, his hands worn rough and cracked, even suffering from frostbite.

Everyone said Yun Jinnian would never return, but only he persisted in the search.

How could he return without finding her? What if she was trapped somewhere in the snowy mountains, waiting for him to rescue her?

Now that he saw her safe and sound, his heart settled back into his chest, the pain not as sharp.

Sitting silently by Yun Jinnian for a long time, Chu Yu finally prepared to get up, wash up a bit, have something to eat, and then get some sleep. He wanted to appear handsome and dashing in front of Yun Jinnian the next day.

His large hand was gripped tightly.

Chu Yu looked at her in surprise only to see the beloved person gazing at him with tender eyes. Propriety dictated he should withdraw his hand, but convention kept him still.

"I..."

Yun Jinnian, gripping Chu Yu's hand, sat up and placed it on the blanket, speaking solemnly, "Big Brother Chu, I have something to tell you!"

Chu Yu's heart thumped wildly as he managed a rough 'um', his face flushing deeply.

Yun Jinnian's face also reddened.

She had never confessed to anyone before.

Even with Chu Liange, they had simply married, coming together as a matter of course. As for love, Yun Jinnian thought, her feelings for Chu Liange definitely weren't as strong as what she felt for Chu Yu.

"Big Brother Chu, I know your feelings, but I am still young, I..."

"I can wait!" Chu Yu, fearing Yun Jinnian's rejection, quickly interjected.

Yun Jinnian smiled, asked Chu Yu to sit on the edge of the bed, and looked at him seriously.

His face, usually well-cared for, now sported a stubble and some frostbite marks, along with a few wounds, due to the days of toiling.

"Alright, give me time to think properly. When I come of age, I will definitely give you an answer!" Yun Jinnian said, pausing before continuing, "My father and mother, it's said, were also deeply in love, but later, some events drove them apart, making reconciliation impossible!"

"I hope that in the future, we won't end up like my parents," Yun Jinnian concluded, her head bowed.

Chu Yu's eyes brightened.

Understanding Yun Jinnian's implication, he was so overjoyed he didn't know what to do.

"Hehe, hehe!"

He laughed foolishly, and then, when Yun Jinnian was not paying attention, he kissed her face quickly and ran off.

"..."

Yun Jinnian blushed, her eyes widened, and she remained dazed for a long time.

Once she came to her senses, she touched the spot on her face where Chu Yu had kissed her; it was burning hot, as if on fire.

"Chu Yu, you scoundrel!" she thought, both angry and resentful.

Thinking of Chu Yu leaving with a flushed face, Yun Jinnian gradually felt a joy blooming in her heart.

Lying askew on the bed, she considered her past life carefully and realized that even when she had deep feelings for Chu Liange, she had never felt the happiness and shy anticipation she felt now.

In that life, she was so overcome with inferiority that she couldn't raise her head and was pressured to study music, chess, calligraphy, painting, poetry, singing, and medical skills. She had to learn embroidery to make clothes for Chu Liange, toiling during the day until her back was stiff and suffering torment at night.

There was no joy, only endless suffering.

Maybe being taken by Chu Yu to cure his poison that half a month was the most carefree and untroubled time of her past life!