

Indulgence 411

Chapter 411: Jinnian's Probe

When I visited the Moon Appreciation Sect, I didn't bring Madam Qian and the others with me, but left them in Licheng.

Yun Jinnian pondered for a moment after hearing this, "How about I develop some medicine pills and have them take them back to the Emperor?"

Yuwen Ya shook his head, "I don't think that's appropriate. I haven't had much contact with the Emperor, but I always feel that His Majesty is not very magnanimous. If Madam Qian and the others return, I'm afraid they won't be able to live!"

"How could that be..."

Yun Jinnian was surprised.

Although they had been unsuccessful in their task, Madam Qian and the others hadn't made any serious mistakes.

"Whether that will be the case is still hard to say for now, but once we get back to the Capital City, if the Emperor rewards them to you, you should accept them. At worst, you can spend some silver to keep them and send them far away!"

"Hmm, I'll listen to Seventh Brother on this matter!"

Yuwen Ya began to smile, "Ah, by the way, since you mentioned making medicine pills, could you spare a few for me? I'll pay you with silver. My grandmother is getting on in years, and I'm thinking..."

Yun Jinnian smiled warmly and tenderly, "If Seventh Brother wishes to show filial piety, naturally, I should help you fulfill this. Just one thing, you must not give them to me as a gift!"

"Deal, I'll wait for you to give them to me, and then take them to show my filial respect to Grandmother. Maybe I can keep some for myself first, in case I make a mistake and my father wants to punish me, I can bribe Grandmother to spare me a beating!" Yuwen Ya said, laughing heartily to himself.

Yun Jinnian continued to smile tenderly, her expression gentle and light, but her eyes and brows carried a hint of mirth.

Being able to make Yun Jinnian laugh, Yuwen Ya felt quite accomplished.

He also doted on Yun Jinnian as if she were his little sister.

Although he had many sisters, those sisters had more tricks up their sleeves than a hornet's nest, and he found them tiresome. Yuwen Ming was slightly better and wasn't so petty.

After sitting for a while, Yuwen Ya left.

Yun Jinnian was going to refine the elixir with Elder Mu and Elder Tu. They said in a few days, all the disciples would come back to pay respects to the Saintess, and she needed to reward them for their efforts.

For this, she had already given blood once.

A small bowl of it.

It was only then that Yun Jinnian learned her blood could detoxify and was the primer for all poisonous insect poisons in Nanjiang.

"Saintess, the soup is ready!"

Telan said, bringing in the soup cup, placing it beside Yun Jinnian, urging her to drink all of the Blood Lotus Soup.

Three bowls a day, morning, noon, and night, Yun Jinnian was almost sick from drinking so much.

But she couldn't stop drinking it, and after consuming the Blood Lotus Soup, she found herself growing taller, her leg injuries healing faster, and even the wounds on her wrists healing quickly.

She frowned as she drank, then asked Telan, "Does the young master have some?"

"Yes, it's already been sent over!"

Yun Jinnian smiled and nodded slightly.

Tianci was clever, drinking half a bowl and saving the rest for Chu Yu. Chu Yu knew it was Yun Jinnian's instruction and didn't mind, gulping it down in a few swallows.

For this, Yun Jinnian had specially praised them.

The Law Master and the five elders all knew what Yun Jinnian was doing, but they pretended not to know. Han Tianci was in good health, and indeed, consuming too much tonic was not good for him. As for Chu Yu, his health was also fine, eating too much was not appropriate, and sharing half a bowl with Han Tianci was just right.

"Saintess, Elder Mu said the first batch of the elixir is about to be ready, please go over!" Liuka spoke softly.

Ever since the Law Master showed up, Liuka knew she was no longer destined to be the Saintess.

On the surface, she was respectful to Yun Jinnian, but her mind was full of schemes.

Yun Jinnian frowned, "Is it ready so soon?"

According to the estimates, it shouldn't be until tomorrow.

"Yes, that's why the elder has asked for the Saintess to come over!" Liuka said, lowering her gaze, not daring to look at Yun Jinnian.

Guilty.

Yun Jinnian pursed her lips slightly, "You go tell Elder Mu that I've just had the soup and don't feel like moving. Let them handle it themselves!"

Chapter 412:

"..."

Liuka was utterly dumbfounded, yet she had no idea what to say.

Because Yun Jinnian would not leave, she had no way to take him out.

Telan was very anxious on the side.

Although she didn't know what exactly Liuka was plotting, she always felt that Liuka's behavior was not good.

She feared being thrown into the Poisonous Pit.

Yun Jinnian sighed, "Liuka, do you really think that without me, you could certainly become the Saintess?"

Liuka pursed her lips, remaining silent.

Yun Jinnian continued, "If that's what you think, then you're gravely mistaken. Let me ask you, do you have the Sacred Relic in hand or does the Spiritual Poisonous Insect favor you? Or perhaps you have the bloodline of a former Saintess? You were merely selected from among the common folk of Nanjiang

because the insect would drink your blood, but have you forgotten? The insect doesn't just feed on your blood; it also feeds on the blood of Telan, Anji, and Sanglin. You're not unique. I don't know who you've colluded with to harm me, but I advise you not to be gullible, to ignore the instigations of others, and to end up harming others and yourself. Leave now, you no longer need to serve me!"

Liuka's face turned ashen.

She wandered out as if she had lost her soul.

The sunlight outside was particularly dazzling, yet Liuka felt utterly cold all over.

After turning a few corridors, she was knocked unconscious and taken away...

Inside the room

Yun Jinnian glanced at Telan, "Now that everything is set in stone, no one can change it. I will return to Capital City in a few days. Telan, do you want to come with me, or go back home?"

Telan looked at Yun Jinnian, her lips quivering, then she knelt down in front of Yun Jinnian with a thud, "Saintess, I wish to go home!"

She had been selected by the sect at seven, and it had been nearly ten years since then, having never returned home, not seeing her parents, her brothers, or her sisters.

Every year, she could only receive food and some miscellaneous items brought by someone sent by her parents. Now with this grace, she wanted to go home to marry. With this experience, she could marry into a respectable family.

Telan was well aware that she and Yun Jinnian were different.

Yun Jinnian was a direct descendant of a former Saintess, with direct blood ties, both the Sacred Relic and the Spiritual Poisonous Insect were in her possession, and the Law Honor and the four Elders treated her with the reverence due to a Saintess, unlike her, a mere puppet.

"Okay, in a few days, I will allow you to leave!" Yun Jinnian helped Telan stand up.

She then asked who else was in Telan's family, and Telan recounted them one by one.

Yun Jinnian also asked her to inquire about the wishes of Ji'an and Sanglin.

Yet Elder Mu arrived, brimming with joy, "Saintess, Saintess, the elixir is ready!"

"Really?" Yun Jinnian stood up, thought of her leg injury, and sat back down.

"Yes, it's ready. It will be heated on a gentle flame until tomorrow, and then we can start making the pills. You must come and see it!"

"About how many will there be?"

"Combining all the Pill Furnaces, there should be around eight hundred pills!"

Yun Jinnian gave a faint smile, "That's excellent. Once the elixirs are out, we will see how effective they are, and if they're good, we can produce more!"

"This is all to your credit, Saintess!" Elder Mu was delighted, yet also felt a twinge of pity.

She was, after all, just a twelve-year-old child.

"It's just a bowl of blood, I've been eating well these days, I've already recovered!" Yun Jinnian spoke the truth.

The little bit of blood she had shed had indeed already been replenished.

She didn't bring up the matter with Liuka.

But little did Yun Jinnian know that at that very moment, Liuka and her conspirator had been exposed and thrown into the Poisonous Pit.

Upon learning this, Telan's expression changed subtly, and she was secretly relieved that she hadn't been as foolish as Liuka, harming both herself and others.

In the blink of an eye, it was New Year's Eve, and yet a major incident had occurred in the Yun Family of Capital City...

Chapter 413: The Image of Chaos

Aunt Yu became pregnant and told Yun Chen about it, keeping it a secret all along. Yun Chen allowed Aunt Yu to have the child, but somehow she got into trouble with Mrs. He. Mrs. He punished Aunt Yu, forcing her to kneel in the ice and snow for two hours, which resulted in Aunt Yu having a miscarriage.

And it happened on the very day of New Year's Eve.

Aunt Yu writhed in agony in the back yard for a full day, and cursed Mrs. He the whole time.

In the end, she couldn't hold on. Both she and the child died.

How could Mrs. He not know that Aunt Yu was pregnant? She just didn't want Aunt Yu to give birth to the child, that's all.

Of course, Yun Chen knew about it as well.

After Aunt Yu's death, Yun Chen felt upset inside and slapped Mrs. He hard across the face, cursing, "Vicious woman!"

He immediately chose two maids from Mrs. He's quarters, forced them to become aunts as punishment, namely Aunt Xiao and Aunt Gui, giving Mrs. He a heavy blow to her pride.

Aunt Xiao and Aunt Gui, the most beautiful maids in Mrs. He's service, often flirted with Yun Chen, exchanging glances full of meaning. Now their wishes were fulfilled and they were overjoyed.

So, there was no need to celebrate the New Year anymore.

At Qiyue Academy,

Upon hearing the news, Mrs. Han was silent for a moment before saying, "This is the image of a house in disarray. Bai Que, we must root this out sooner rather than later!"

"Yes!"

"Also, move those things from Niannian Garden and Jinnian out earlier. If there are maids who can be sent away, do so and settle them somewhere before we run into trouble trying to remove them later!"

Mrs. Han paused and continued, "And for the maids and old women in Qiyue Academy, send a batch away after the New Year as well. Pass the message to Aunt Lian too, so she can be prepared!"

Aunt Lian had given birth to boy and girl twins on the twenty-fifth of December.

Now she had truly captivated Yun Qi.

Mrs. Han, faced with this, truly felt neither sorrow nor joy.

Bai Que bowed her head, "Madam, Miss Yun Muiyou might have had a hand in the affair concerning Aunt Yu as well!"

"Yun Muiyou?" Mrs. Han was puzzled.

"Yes, that day someone saw Miss Muiyou's maid getting quite close to Aunt Yu's maid..."

Mrs. Han understood immediately and snorted coldly, "She's not afraid of ruining her own good fortune!"

A girl of marriageable age still dares to engage in such filthy deeds.

She deserves to be betrothed to someone like Weng Jianrui, a scoundrel. Like mother, like daughter – both short-sighted, only seeing that Weng Jianrui holds the rank of a first-grade Marquess, yet not realizing that he receives the salary of a mere fifth-rank official, and the Marquis Residence is already in shambles.

Furthermore, in this Capital City, there are many Marquesses. If you pull them out for a count, if not thirty, there would at least be twenty-five.

Fools.

At this moment, in Nanjiang

The Moon Viewing Sect

There was joy and excitement all around.

The stage was filled with singing. As the Saintess, Yun Jinnian started with a few encouraging words before ordering the feast to begin.

Originally, subordinates were to be rewarded tonight, but some people, unaware of the new Saintess of the Moon Viewing Sect, could not make it back in time. After discussing with the five elders, it was decided to wait until everyone was present before proceeding with the recognition and reward.

What rewards?

Gold, silver, and jewels were not scarce among them, but elixirs were a rarity.

Therefore, in these past days, Elder Mu, Elder Tu, and Yun Jinnian had all been working hard at concocting medicines.

When the time came, these would be used to reward the deserving subordinates.

The members of the Moon Viewing Sect had long heard that henceforth, the Saintess would recognize and reward them every year. Word spread, and even those members abroad as merchants were hastening to return.

A member of the Sect approached with a wine glass, "Saint-, Saint-, Saintess, I toast to you!"

Stammering and with a flushed face,

Yun Jinnian smiled slightly and raised her glass, "Hmm, work hard in the coming year!"

"Yes!"

Having drunk, the member went down with joy, almost floating with happiness.

One success spurred on others; they became lively and started coming forward to toast Yun Jinnian. In her cup was Blood Lotus Water, which ensured she would never get drunk. She turned none away, facing each one with gentleness...

Chapter 414: The Old Woman's Thoughts

Han Tianci and Chu Yu were invited as the most honored guests and were seated to one side. Many people, emboldened, came forward to offer toasts—even the young ladies, their faces blushing with shyness.

Chu Yu's face looked somewhat unhappy.

Han Tianci covered his mouth and snickered secretly.

Dish after dish was served, all piping hot. Seeing Yun Jinnian graciously and gently smiling, never refusing anyone who came by, Chu Yu felt a pang of jealousy.

But he dared not speak thoughtlessly, for fear of embarrassing Yun Jinnian, and so he drank sullenly alone.

Glass after glass, he drank.

Yun Jinnian looked over, her smile gentle. Chu Yu happened to look up at the same moment, and her smile became even warmer.

She gently lowered her head, the image of ethereal grace, blushing with demure charm.

Then, she picked up her wine glass and toasted Chu Yu.

Chu Yu was overjoyed, quickly raising his glass and toasting Yun Jinnian from afar. In his excitement, some wine splashed out.

He hurriedly took a sip to cover up the spill, then coughed because he had drunk too hastily.

Han Tianci quickly stood up to pat his back.

Yun Jinnian watched, her smile growing even more tender.

If she could make a wish today, it would be for the one she loves to always be healthy and get his heart's desires and for the one who loves her to always love her.

It was a bit greedy.

She sipped from her cup. After a moment of thought, she finished the rest in one gulp.

There were still many others coming forward to drink a toast with her, but Yun Jinnian continued to smile gently, occasionally glancing at Chu Yu and offering him a toast.

Yet, she subtly soothed Chu Yu's restless heart.

Yun Jinnian was actually a bit tired, but everyone was still very excited, insisting on pulling her to dance around the bonfire. With her leg injury not fully healed, she let Chu Yu and Han Tianci go dance in her stead.

Initially, Chu Yu was somewhat reserved, but as he got swept up in Han Tianci's screams and shouts, he too let loose and began to enjoy himself, his eyes shining brightly whenever he turned to look at Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian smiled, picking up the sweet soup that had just been served and sipped it slowly.

Capital City

Liao Residence

This was the happiest new year Yun Zihan had ever had because she had brought her mother, Auntie Cui, to Liao Residence to celebrate the New Year together, free from pressure and schemes.

Feng Wushuang and her mother were by themselves at home, and given the good relationship between Feng Wushuang and Liao Shijie, Yun Zihan suggested, and after Liao Shijie agreed, as did Feng Wushuang and the elder Madame Feng, they invited Feng Wushuang and the elder Madame Feng to the Liao Residence to celebrate the New Year together.

A dozen small dishes and a hot pot without too much formality made up their meal. They all sat at one table, three women chatting softly and gently, leisurely enjoying their meal, and the two men sipped their liquor, discussing inconsequential political matters.

Liao Shijie offered some suggestions, which Feng Wushuang greatly admired after hearing them.

Liao Shijie indeed had talent.

Without a civil examination this year, they would have to wait three more years. Feng Wushuang wondered, if he competed against Liao Shijie, who would emerge as the top scholar?

"Madame Liao is truly wonderful. I wonder if the Madame has any sisters of marrying age who are yet to wed?" Madame Feng asked with a smile.

Her son often visited the Liao's and was even willing to spend New Year's there; there had to be a reason.

Yun Zihan was taken aback upon hearing this.

She turned to look at Auntie Cui, who started laughing, "Elder Madame, the oldest lady of the family is already betrothed, and the other girls are still too young!"

Plus, the oldest unmarried lady was the fourth young mistress, and since Feng Wushuang was already twenty, considering the second wife's character who doted on her daughter, she would certainly not agree.

Madame Feng looked rather disappointed, but then said, "If a suitable match does arise, my son Wushuang can wait another two years!"

With Madame Feng putting it that way, Auntie Cui was unsure of how to respond.

Feng Wushuang quickly said, "Mother, please don't speak like this. If it ruins the reputation of the Yun Family's young lady, it would be most improper!"

"I was thoughtless, my apologies!" Madame Feng chuckled, chagrined.

Yet in her heart, she considered that if the Yun Family could marry their daughter to Liao Shijie, her son, now a government official, should surely be a suitable match too, but she wondered which Yun daughter her son had taken an interest in.

Chapter 415: Those Little Thoughts

Lady Feng thought about it and brought up other matters, but eventually, she still circled back to talking about Miss Yun of the Yun Family.

Although Lady Feng was old and her health not the best, which meant she preferred not to manage affairs, she was educated, literate, and quite capable; otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to raise a good son like Feng Wushuang.

"The one I'm closest to in my family is my fourth sister, but she's not in the Capital City at the moment. When she returns, I will definitely take her to visit Lady Feng at the Feng Residence. My fourth sister loves the pastries from Xufuji the most!"

"Very well, when the time comes, I will have someone buy whatever fine pastries Xufuji has to bring back home!"

Upon hearing this, Feng Wushuang's hands trembled slightly.

Finally, he would be able to see her, to have the chance to meet her—just as long as she returned, he could meet her through the Liao Family.

Did she still remember him, that dirty beggar?

Or perhaps, would she come to like the him who painted those works of the Hermit of the Cold Mountain which she bought?

Just a little, even a little bit would be good!

"Big Brother Feng, Big Brother Feng?" Liao Shijie called softly.

Returning to his senses, Feng Wushuang said, "Come, come, let's drink!"

The two of them resumed their drinking.

After the meal, they inevitably sat together to chat. It had been a long time since Lady Feng had felt so happy. Despite feeling tired, she did not want to retire to bed. Yun Zihan and Auntie Cui gently kept her company. Feng Wushuang turned and looked at his mother, his heart and eyes filled with warmth.

Looking toward Liao Shijie, he said, "Brother Liao, my thanks to you!"

Although in the past he may have used him more, now there was more sincerity and gratitude.

"No need to be polite!"

Liao Shijie also felt that what his wife had done was right.

To marry well is to marry a virtuous wife, and he indeed had struck it lucky.

On the first day of the new year, Mrs. Han returned to the Han Family with seven or eight large trunks. No one knew what was inside and no one dared to ask.

Han Xuzi was taken aback for a moment.

After Mrs. Han recounted the matters of the Yun Family, Han Xuzi let out a cold huff.

Mrs. Han quickly caught on, "Father..."

"How they have treated my granddaughter, I will not let them off lightly—just you watch!" Han Xuzi said, then took a gentle sip from his tea cup.

Mrs. Han pursed her lips and said no more.

The Han Family was known for their favoritism; the men of the Han Family even more so.

From her grandfather's generation, none had taken concubines. After her grandmother passed away, her grandfather soon followed in sorrow. Reflecting on her mother's side, Mrs. Han thought if only she were born a son, she would have taken a wife and cherished her dearly, producing many children to flourish the Han Family tree.

February arrived in the blink of an eye.

No one knew who spread the word, but Yun Jinnian's birthday was on the fifteenth of February. Many birthday gifts were sent early to Zizhu Academy, where Yun Jinnian lived. There was a wide variety of gifts, filling several rooms.

Yun Jinnian opened each gift personally, then made a note of them on the side, planning to have Elder Jin send an elixir back when his own birthday came.

Chu Yu still followed Han Tianci to learn Martial Arts. The law sage did not teach intentionally, but Chu Yu had a good foundation and was learning much faster than Han Tianci.

Having consumed so much Blood Lotus Dew, he was in no hurry to grow taller, but his shoulders had broadened quite a bit. As for how much his Martial Arts had improved, no one knew except Chu Yu himself.

Tianci also grew taller rapidly, surpassing Yun Jinnian in height. Yun Jinnian's leg injury had completely healed, but he still seldom walked. Wounds to muscles and bones needed a hundred days to heal, and he feared any complications, so he rested well.

Through the mutual learning, discussion, and research with Elders Mu and Tu, Yun Jinnian's medical skills had improved by leaps and bounds.

"A genius, truly a genius!" Elder Mu exclaimed, overcome with excitement.

Chapter 416: Happy Birthday

Yun Jinnian smiled gently and delicately as she packed the herbs into the brocade box.

All were offerings from the traveling merchants, aged for many years, and quite the treasures. Yun Jinnian planned to make them into pills and give them back.

She had met many of these people: tall and short, chubby and slim. They were all spirited and beaming with joy, respectfully kowtowing to Yun Jinnian, stating their names, followed by a greeting to the 'Saintess'.

And they presented their gifts for the first meeting.

Over the past month, Yun Jinnian's hands had grown weary from accepting gifts.

Knowing that Yun Jinnian's birthday was on the fifteenth of February, they sent birthday presents again, a wide assortment, but mostly precious items.

Yun Jinnian realized then that these people truly treated her as the Saintess. The human heart is made of flesh, so while concocting the elixirs, she was even more meticulous, truly considering herself the Saintess of Nanjiang, seeing the rise and fall of the Moon-Worshipping Sect as her responsibility.

Prince Yanjun's recovery surpassed Yun Jinnian's expectations in speed, but convalescence was delicate like unraveling silk; he needed proper care. Fortunately, the Moon-Worshipping Sect possessed exotic and valuable medicinal herbs. No one refused Yun Jinnian's requests for such items, and they eagerly delivered them, all to make an impression and have her remember their names so that she would recognize them elsewhere.

For this reason, Yun Jinnian made a point of drawing portraits and noting their names, glancing at them from time to time.

Yuwen Ya could only see Chu Yu and Han Tianci at dinner time, knowing they were practising martial arts. He felt envious but harbored no jealousy.

February fifteenth.

Yun Jinnian had never celebrated a birthday like this before. From the morning, people came to congratulate her.

"Wishing the Saintess blessings as vast as the Eastern Sea and a life longer than the Southern Mountains!"

She returned their salutations, giving the men a Detoxification Pill each, and every woman a Beautifying Pill.

All were made from the Blood Lotus.

Yun Jinnian had never imagined that she could employ the Blood Lotus for these purposes without opposition. The five elders, along with the Patriarch, seemed proud as if it were a rightful expenditure, much to her embarrassment.

But what Yun Jinnian didn't know was that ever since the previous Saintess had left in a huff, although there were many rewards every year, there had never been any elixirs.

Now that Yun Jinnian had returned, she was like a cherished treasure finally back in their hands, naturally to be held in high esteem.

Besides, the Blood Lotus that had been accumulated over decades was naturally meant for Yun Jinnian to use in securing loyalty and affection from the followers below.

From morning to noon, after a brief rest, and continuing until evening, everyone had made their visit in front of Yun Jinnian.

Having received the pills that Yun Jinnian gave away.

Yet Yun Jinnian couldn't remember a single one, although she kept smiling until her face stiffened.

"Sister, you've worked hard!" Han Tianci said, as he took Yun Jinnian's hand and led her into the house.

What was done earlier didn't count as a proper birthday celebration. Han Tianci had already arranged with Chu Yu, Shi Jiayu, Hemei, and Henuan for a feast.

It was a mix of everything, but when Yun Jinnian's first glance fell on the feast, she felt warmth in her heart.

"Did you all make this?"

"Yes, Sister. I steamed these egg custards, and Big Brother Chu roasted the meat. This one, this one..." Han Tianci explained each dish, ushering Yun Jinnian to sit down.

Hemei and Henuan promptly brought a basin for Yun Jinnian to wash and dry her hands.

Yun Jinnian's hands were used for taking pulses with silver needles, and they were always well cared for, without the slightest neglect.

Only fingers that were tender and fine could accurately detect the pulse without missing a beat.

"I'm so happy. Let's all sit down and eat!" Yun Jinnian said, no longer smiling. She had been smiling all day, and her cheeks hurt.

Chapter 417: Hard Work Pays Off

Han Tianci held up his wine cup, "Sister, happy birthday!"

Yun Jinnian nodded her head, "Thank you!"

The siblings clinked their cups and each took a sip.

Han Tianci then said cheerfully, "Sister, I also prepared a gift for you!"

"What is it?"

"Sister can't look at it now. Wait until there's no one else around before you can see it!"

"Alright, I'll listen to you!"

Yun Jinnian was indulgent towards Han Tianci.

Chu Yu also stood up, "Jinnian, happy birthday!"

This was the third birthday Chu Yu had spent with Yun Jinnian. The first time was in a valley, where he had personally cooked longevity noodles; although they were not tasty, Yun Jinnian still ate them.

The second year, Yun Jinnian was at the Yun Family, and he had also given a gift.

"Thank you, Big Brother Chu!"

Yun Jinnian spoke softly, her eyes filled with deep affection.

"You're welcome!"

Yuwen Ya and Prince Yanjun also presented birthday gifts. Prince Yanjun could now speak, but the prince had advised him not to do so yet, fearing it would damage his vocal cords. His eyes could see, but he covered them with a cloth, worried about harming his recently recovered vision.

The usually distant Prince Yanjun was now often seen with a gentle smile, and although he struggled with expressing himself to Yun Jinnian, he took great care in teaching Han Tianci.

Every evening, Han Tianci would spend two hours with Prince Yanjun, learning from him.

The birthday was simple yet warm, and Yun Jinnian was very happy. A sincere smile appeared on her usually subdued face. Han Tianci, jumping up and down, constantly tried to make Yun Jinnian laugh, which she rarely did out loud.

Chu Yu quietly observed on the side, realizing that to make Yun Jinnian happy, he had to be shameless like Han Tianci, brazen and unrestrained in his approach.

But it must be heartfelt.

Yun Jinnian was sharply intelligent; she could tell genuine sentiment from the false at a glance.

Before long, it was April. Yun Jinnian's injuries had fully healed, and Prince Yanjun could speak and see again.

The changes in Chu Yu and Han Tianci were even more visibly apparent.

Over the past few months, Yun Jinnian, along with Elder Mu and Elder Tu, had been tirelessly refining elixirs and studying medical skills, keeping incredibly busy.

All the followers of the Moon-watching Sect had gathered.

On this day, under clear skies, Yun Jinnian sat in the chief seat, dressed in white, with heavy and ornate silver adornments in her hair, summoning all the followers in her capacity as the Saintess of Nanjiang. They stood in rows with a path left in the middle for the distribution of rewards.

The least awarded received a single elixir. Elder Jin began by reading out a hundred names, and those hundred people quickly ran up to Yun Jinnian. She encouraged them with a few words, hoping they would work even harder and receive greater rewards in three years.

For Yun Jinnian, a brief meeting and a few spoken words sufficed; others distributed the elixirs.

There were 23,000 people who received a single elixir.

The second group was given two elixirs each, totaling 8,000 people.

The third group received three elixirs each, amounting to 17,000 people.

The fourth group got four elixirs each, with a count of 9,600 people.

The fifth group had five elixirs each, totaling 6,542 people.

The sixth group, awarded six elixirs each, shrank considerably to just 923 people.

The seventh group, with seven elixirs each, was even fewer, totaling 321 people.

The eighth group received eight elixirs each, numbering 100.

The ninth group, with nine elixirs, consisted of eight individuals, namely the four Hall Masters and the four Saint Envoys.

The tenth group included the five Elders, each receiving ten elixirs.

With tens of thousands of people, even just reading out names took ten days with the five Elders taking turns.

Yun Jinnian had endured for ten days.

Now she was lying on the bed while Shi Jiayu vigorously massaged her shoulders.

"It's a good thing it only happens once every three years, or else I really couldn't take it!" Shi Jiayu complained.

"Actually, it's quite fulfilling. You didn't see it—many people cried when they received the elixir, especially the older ones who thought they would never get this opportunity in their lifetime!" Yun Jinnian said, feeling a wave of emotion.

Chapter 418: Sincerity and Devotion

"You really spared no expense, bleeding a bowl every day, but luckily the Spiritual Poisonous Insect is obedient, quietly nourishing itself within the Sacred Relic, and it's even laid eggs. You didn't see it, but every time the five elders see me, they're all smiles, reminding me to take good care of you!"

Yun Jinnian smiled faintly.

Over these days, Shi Jiayu stopped referring to herself as a servant.

But she is even more attentive towards him.

Yun Jinnian decided that after the Dragon Boat Festival, he would set out to return to the Capital City. The Law Master naturally would follow him, intending to teach Han Tianci Martial Arts and other skills, and he was becoming more fond of Han Tianci. Although Chu Yu had not formally been taken on as a disciple, the Law Master didn't make a distinction and taught Chu Yu alongside; it was evident he considered Chu Yu a disciple too.

The Wood and Earth elders also planned to accompany him to the Capital City to take care of the Spiritual Poisonous Insect and to concoct more elixirs.

Ten Blood Lotuses had already been picked to take with them, and Yun Jinnian had another ten Snow Lotuses picked, planning to give one to the Lady Dowager, one to the Princess of the State, and even one to the old lady of the Duan Family, because of Ruan Wanrong's relationship. Yun Jinnian planned to send one her way as well.

Chen Danyan and Hu Shuiling's families would each receive one too.

The remaining five would go to Yun Jinnian's maternal grandfather.

But the Law Master said to pick fifty, arguing that since they had plenty, it wasn't anything rare anyway.

Yun Jinnian really wanted to throw a tea cup at him; selling for several million taels each, these Tian Mountain Snow Lotuses that people used to save lives, so many risking their lives to search the mountains for them, were apparently not anything rare.

"Things are precious because they are scarce, and besides, when we take these Snow Lotuses to the Capital City, I have no intention of showing them off. It's enough for us to know that we have them, and we don't need more. If word gets out and everyone learns that the Sect of the Full Moon possesses Tian Mountain Snow Lotuses and Blood Lotuses, what would we do if we are attacked by the masses? 'The innocent invites trouble by flaunting his wealth,' don't you understand, Law Master?" Yun Jinnian spoke nonchalantly.

The Law Master said nothing, his eyes brimming with a smile.

So did the five elders, their eyes alight with laughter.

Looking at them, Yun Jinnian realized that she had been calculated and tested by these old men once again.

"Alright, everyone should get some rest early. After the Dragon Boat Festival, we'll set out back to the Capital City!"

If they didn't return soon, the Emperor would likely go crazy with waiting.

And she was already thirteen years old.

Yun Jinnian didn't know why she suddenly had this strange thought; it just appeared out of nowhere.

"What are you thinking about?" Chu Yu leaped into the room, silent as a cat.

The young man was naturally handsome and striking, with the presence of a dragon and phoenix, and the dignified ease of the clear wind and bright moon. Now, with his head lowered, his eyes and heart were filled with the sight of the girl in front of him, his smile warm and gentle.

Yun Jinnian lifted her gaze to Chu Yu and smiled slightly, "How did you come over here?"

Chu Yu took out a porcelain bowl and presented it to Yun Jinnian, "Fresh raspberries picked from the mountain!"

Because Yun Jinnian particularly craved this treat, he had gone before dawn to pick them, and waited for daylight to bring them back. He planned to share some with Han Tianci.

And so, he eagerly brought them to her.

"Don't go into the mountains so early in the future. I don't really need to eat these!" Yun Jinnian said, sitting up straight.

Chu Yu laughed, picked a large, red raspberry, and brought it to Yun Jinnian's mouth, "Try this, is it sweeter than the ones from yesterday?"

Yun Jinnian's face flushed pink, but she still opened her mouth and ate it.

She nodded lightly, "Mhm, very sweet!"

Sweet enough to melt her heart.

Nothing could warm the heart more than being cherished and gently offered such delights by someone special.

"Tastes good, right? I'll go pick more for you early tomorrow morning!" Chu Yu said as he removed the stem, feeding Yun Jinnian only the fruit.

Yun Jinnian ate it in small bites, her tiny, pink tongue inadvertently licking Chu Yu's fingers.

Chapter 419: A Hint of Deep Affection

Yun Jinnian wanted to say it wasn't intentional.

Chu Yu only felt a warmth in his fingers, followed by a numb sensation, his body shuddering, and he became completely stiff.

He looked at Yun Jinnian in astonishment and surprise, silent for a long while.

"I..."

Yun Jinnian's face immediately turned red with embarrassment, and she dared not look at Chu Yu.

Chu Yu wasn't faring much better either, his face was flushed through, and his earlobes were also a rosy red.

"You..." Chu Yu also stammered.

Being a man, he was somewhat bolder and looked up at Yun Jinnian. Seeing her face as red as blood, his own heart seemed to boil with fervor.

Yun Jinnian also looked up, staring at Chu Yu.

"You go first!"

"You go first!"

The two of them spoke in unison, somewhat dissipating the thick romantic tension in the room.

"The raspberries are really delicious!" Yun Jinnian said softly, her voice gentle.

It brushed against Chu Yu's heart like a feather, a feeling he thoroughly enjoyed.

"If you like them, I'll go pick more tomorrow morning!" Chu Yu said, picking up another berry with the intention of feeding it to Yun Jinnian.

But he froze, unsure whether to feed her or not.

The previous palpitation was so clear, so stirring that his whole being seemed to boil.

"Can I come along? I'd like to see it for myself!" she said.

Chu Yu turned to Yun Jinnian, "You want to go too?"

"Can you take me along?"

Once she returned to the Capital City, she would no longer be able to act as freely.

The Capital City, with its numerous rules and dreaded gossip, was unlike the Zizhu Academy, where people revered her blindly. Whatever she did was seen as right.

"Of course, I'll come for you tomorrow morning, or shall we go now? There are still plenty of raspberries in the mountains!"

Yun Jinnian thought for a moment, "Then let's go now!"

"You get ready quickly, I'll wait for you!" Chu Yu said, setting the porcelain bowl aside before picking it up again to eat.

The sweet and sour taste of raspberries was indeed good.

Recalling how Yun Jinnian had licked his finger earlier, Chu Yu glanced at her and, seeing she was braiding her hair, he tentatively tasted the finger she had licked.

The flavor seemed quite nice.

After Yun Jinnian finished braiding her hair, she noticed Chu Yu acting strangely and asked in confusion, "Big Brother Chu, what are you doing?"

"Ah... nothing!" Chu Yu was extremely embarrassed and quickly asked, "Are you ready?"

"Yes, I'm ready!"

"Then let's go!"

Chu Yu wrapped his arm around Yun Jinnian's waist, jumped out of the window, and swiftly leaped onto the roof. With a few bounds, they were already out of Zizhu Academy.

Yun Jinnian clung tightly to Chu Yu's neck, her entire body pressed against his chest.

At this moment, Yun Jinnian was feeling both nervous and excited.

Chu Yu's heart was brimming with joy, although he couldn't show it on his face, he took Yun Jinnian to the back mountain.

Bunches of raspberry branches were laden with fruits,

the red and green berries were especially attractive.

Yun Jinnian popped a red raspberry into her mouth and exclaimed, "So sweet!!"

"This patch of raspberries is the best, even better than in other places. Pick and eat as much as you want!"

Chu Yu was a bit proud.

He had searched many places before he found such a spot with the best raspberries.

Yun Jinnian had never felt such relaxed enjoyment.

No need to read medical books or attend to trivial matters, just peacefully steal a half-day of idle time.

The mountain stream flowed gently, and the birds chirped vividly.

While Yun Jinnian ate raspberries, Chu Yu stood guard nearby, occasionally patrolling in case snakes would scare her, unaware that with the Spiritual Poisonous Insect and Sacred Relic she carried, no creatures dared to come close.

His protective behavior was seen by Yun Jinnian and cherished in her heart.

Wildflowers bloomed beautifully as well. Chu Yu picked one after another, thinking of giving them to the person who brought him joy, but for some reason, at that moment, watching Yun Jinnian eating raspberries bit by bit under the sunlight, he hesitated...

Chapter 420: Departing Back to Beijing

Could someone as wonderful as she ever really be his match?

To take her home as his wife in the future, he would have to put in a lot of effort, as he is still somewhat disadvantaged at present.

All the things he once dismissed with contempt, he must now pick up again for her sake, as well as for their future.

"Big brother Chu, what are you thinking about?" Yun Jinnian, holding raspberries, approaches.

The white handkerchief, embroidered with clusters of bright red raspberries.

Yun Jinnian hands it to Chu Yu, "Big brother Chu, try these, did I pick sweet ones?"

Chu Yu nods, picks up a raspberry, and tosses it into his mouth, "Sweet!"

Sweet to the core, and warming to the heart.

Yun Jinnian lowers her eyes and offers a gentle smile, soft as water.

Chu Yu musters his courage and tucks a wildflower into Yun Jinnian's hair, grinning, "It looks beautiful!"

The flower is beautiful, but she is even more so.

She outshines the flowers in loveliness!

Yun Jinnian reaches out to lightly touch the flower, her smile deepening.

Fearing that Han Tianci would get anxious not finding them, Yun Jinnian picks some more raspberries and lets Chu Yu take her back.

Upon returning to the sect, Han Tianci indeed comes looking. Seeing raspberries in Yun Jinnian's hands, he knows Chu Yu had taken her to the back mountain. He glares fiercely at Chu Yu and pulls Yun Jinnian into the house.

Chu Yu touches his nose, admitting he's utterly at loss with this future brother-in-law and decides it's better to keep him pleased.

"Sister, all our belongings are packed. We will set out for Capital City on the sixth day of the month at dawn. Shall we take the same path we came by?"

Yun Jinnian nods, "Let's not take the same route back. We'll go through Hengzhou and pass Yangxi on our way to Capital City!" She remembers that her Third Uncle Yun Bi is the Magistrate of Hengzhou.

She glances at Han Tianci.

Yun Jinnian's thoughts are shadowy and indistinct.

Although it is only a conjecture, Yun Jinnian's journey to Hengzhou is also to meet this uncle who, in her previous life when she became the Empress, supported her a lot and showed her genuine affection,

treating her better than her own father did, even though she does not know what the end result was afterwards.

Thinking back on her previous life, Yun Jinnian feels she was truly foolish. Having been dealt a good hand, she ended up with such a fate, which she deserved.

This Dragon Boat Festival, the followers below in the sect still received their rewards.

Each person received a pouch of medicine, supposedly blended personally by the Saintess. They treasured it immensely, and learning that the Saintess would be leaving for the Capital and not return for three years, they were reluctant to part and immediately presented her with many more gifts.

Yun Jinnian looks on, torn between laughter and tears.

"With so many things, we can't possibly take them all with us. Let's leave them here; who knows, I might come back one day!"

Living here feels comfortable.

And it's free from all the filthy scheming.

In the nineteenth year of Yuanhe, on the sixth day of the fifth month, Yun Jinnian and her party left the Moonview Sect and reunited with Momo Qian and the others in Licheng.

During these months, Momo Qian and her group were anxious and worried, visibly thinner.

No longer possessed the haughtiness she once had when facing Yun Jinnian.

"This servant pays respects to the Fourth Miss!"

Yun Jinnian smiles faintly, "Momo Qian, have you packed all your belongings?"

"In response to the Fourth Miss, yes, everything is packed!" Momo Qian replies, glancing towards the carriages behind her.

This time returning, there are fifteen more carriages, joined by more than a hundred of Moonview Sect's top guards, the Law Venerable, the Earth Elder, the Wood Elder, and the Hidden Guards of the Twenty-Four Solar Terms.

They also bring gifts for the Emperor, and incidentally inform the Emperor that Yun Jinnian is now the Saintess of Nanjiang.

Yun Jinnian doesn't ask where Liuka has gone, but she decides for the other three, providing them with generous dowries, and sends them home to reunite with their families and take their time in finding husbands.

Thus, she fulfills the brief bond of master and servants.

As for the two Hidden Guards sent by the Emperor, they couldn't even enter the Moonview Sect, let alone know what had happened to Yun Jinnian inside.

"Big brother Chu, let's go!" Yun Jinnian calls out to Chu Yu, who is leading the way.

Chu Yu turns back, smiles at Yun Jinnian, and with a grand gesture, proclaims, "Let's set out!"