

Indulgence 481

Chapter 481: Immediate Face-Slapping

Yun Muyou spoke, covering her mouth, looking as if she had not meant to say that.

Yun Jinnian, too lazy to deal with her pretense, spoke gravely, "Oh, is that so? Which people were discussing this? Where? I must go listen some day and also ask that person. My journey was to find an antidote for His Majesty, Prince Yanjun, and His Highness Prince Rui, not to elope with someone. How dare he slander me like that, I must ask His Majesty to stand up for me!"

Yun Muyou was utterly dumbfounded.

She had assumed Yun Jinnian was merely out for a leisure trip, unaware of the great responsibility she bore.

Hurriedly, she asked, "Did Fourth Sister find the antidote then?"

"Indeed, I found it. Now, Prince Yanjun and His Highness Prince Rui have been detoxified and are in good health. I am just waiting for His Majesty to summon me to the palace!" Yun Jinnian said, with an indifferent air.

But to the ears of Yun Muyou and the others, this was exceedingly grating.

None of them were fools; with Yun Jinnian having saved Prince Rui and Prince Yanjun, not to speak of the rewards, just her own worth had doubled. Whether it was discussing marriage or walking through the Capital City, she would certainly be a sought-after guest among the noble clans.

Several of them envied her, jealous and resentful.

"Truly, congratulations are in order, cousin!" Xu Xinmo said, insincerely.

Yun Jinnian looked at Xu Xinmo calmly, just watching her.

For no apparent reason, she recalled how the law master mentioned someone had stolen her destiny back in Nanjiang.

The first suspect Yun Jinnian had was Xu Xinmo.

Without Xu Xinmo, the old marquise would not have detested her so much. Xu Xinmo was present during every displeasing incident.

Yet Xu Xinmo was even younger than her, unaware of the outside world. How did she come into contact with outsiders?

And Hemei and Henuan seemed to have mentioned that someone was protecting Xu Xinmo?

Was it someone sent by Xu Xinmo's father, or someone else?

"Hmm," Yun Jinnian responded coolly, somewhat disinclined to chat.

If it had been before, Xu Xinmo certainly would have leapt up and scolded her. But after more than a year at the academy, Xu Xinmo had also learned to be somewhat craftier, standing up and bowing to Yun Jinnian, "Cousin, before I was younger and ignorant. I hope cousin won't hold grudges against me, please don't take my past misdeeds to heart!"

Yun Jinnian watched Xu Xinmo, silent, neither objecting nor consenting.

Just because she was younger, she thought all could be erased so easily?

She wished it were that simple.

"You worry too much!"

Seeing this, Yun Zihan said, "Fourth Sister has been travel-weary all this way. Let's give her some rest, now that Fourth Sister has returned. There will be plenty of opportunities to see her in the future!"

"Indeed, let's not bother Fourth Sister anymore!" Yun Muiyou also stood up.

Upon learning that Yun Jinnian had healed Prince Rui and Prince Yanjun, Yun Muiyou also looked at her with new respect, though still somewhat skeptical.

Was Yun Jinnian's medical skills truly so remarkable at just thirteen?

No matter what, it was wiser to foster good relations before understanding the full situation.

Yun Mui and Yun Mulan merely smiled, saying nothing.

After all, as things related to their sisters were concerned, they were still too young to get involved, and they dared not interfere.

After seeing Yun Muiyou and Yun Zihan out, Yun Jinnian heard her maid come to report that the first brother-in-law and the second brother-in-law had come to pick up the two young mistresses and take them back.

Thinking of her own marquess husband, Yun Muiyou immediately smiled, "Fourth Sister hasn't met your two brothers-in-law yet. Why not meet them now?"

Yun Jinnian was not particularly curious about Weng Jianrui, but she absolutely must meet Liao Shijie. After all, it was she who had facilitated their union, pleading with Chu Yu to lay out a complex trap that resulted in Yun Zihan marrying Liao Shijie. She nodded amiably, "Alright!"

Chapter 482: Saying One Thing and Meaning Another

A line of people arrived at the second gate, where there was a hall in the front courtyard outside the second gate; this was where male guests were usually received.

At the moment, Mrs. He was entertaining her two sons-in-law.

Her elder son-in-law was genuinely her favorite, as for the second son-in-law, well, it didn't make much difference whether he was there or not—it was just that they were waiting for the next imperial examination, which he might very well pass with flying colors. Thus, affections had to be maintained.

"Have some tea, you two!"

"Thank you, Mother-in-law!" Weng Jianrui was polite and enthusiastic, very skilled at flattering Mrs. He.

Liao Shijie, however, was much more indifferent. If it weren't for Yun Zihan being at the Yun Family, and Yun Jinnian just happening to be back, he would not have set foot in the Yun Residence.

As long as Aunt Cui left the Yun Residence, he would cut ties with the Yun Family once and for all. There'd be no more interaction afterward.

"Madam, both esteemed sons-in-law, the eldest and second young mistresses, the fourth, eighth, ninth, and the cousin miss have arrived!"

Upon hearing this, Mrs. He's face stiffened, but she then smiled and said, "Please, invite them in quickly!"

Weng Jianrui and Liao Shijie also put down their teacups and looked toward the entrance.

Weng Jianrui caught sight at first glance of a tall figure in a white garment with stunning beauty that was truly unforgettable, a face filled with serenity that moved one's heart immensely.

This was still just a young girl; in a couple of years with a fuller bust and waist, her hips more pronounced, wearing soft silk...

Weng Jianrui swallowed hard.

He then noticed the Jade Hairpin in Yun Jinnian's hair, with its intricate and exquisite carvings, clearly very valuable, easily worth as much as Yun Muyou's entire set of pearl hairpins.

Not to mention the costly fabric of her attire.

This was truly a genuine lady of nobility.

Just look at her composed and graceful demeanor; ten Yun Muyous could not compare.

Thinking this, Weng Jianrui hurriedly stood up and even straightened his clothing, putting on what he considered his most appropriate smile.

"Marquess!" Yun Muyou called out delicately, walking over to Weng Jianrui and taking his arm.

Feeling the stiffness in Weng Jianrui's arm, Yun Muyou didn't think much of it.

Liao Shijie was considerably more detached, smiling cordially at Yun Jinnian, but his attention was focused on Yun Zihan.

"Marquess, this is my fourth sister!" Yun Muyou said, then smiling proudly at Yun Jinnian, her eyes and brows full of pride, "Fourth sister, this is your eldest brother-in-law!"

Weng Jianrui clasped his fist in greeting, "Fourth sister!"

The way he called her was somewhat lingering.

Yun Jinnian frowned slightly, curtsying to Weng Jianrui without really looking at him.

No matter his title, if he could become a part of Yun Muyou's family, he must not be up to much.

"Fourth sister, this is your second brother-in-law!" Yun Zihan spoke indifferently.

Liao Shijie clasped his fist toward Yun Jinnian, "Fourth sister has my respects!"

"Second brother-in-law!"

Yun Jinnian curtsied again.

Thus, the introductions were concluded.

Without much further conversation, they each went their separate ways.

"Jinnian!" Mrs. He called out softly.

Yun Jinnian stopped in her tracks and looked at Mrs. He, "What instructions does my aunt have for me?"

"Jinnian, harmony in the family leads to prosperity in everything. Your father... if you can persuade him, please do so; your sisters are still young, and without an aunt to look after them, it is always..."

Yun Jinnian just looked at Mrs. He calmly, making Mrs. He blush and at a loss for words.

A concubine's daughter is showing such concern, but when she, the legitimate daughter, had no one to care for her, starving or freezing to death, was there anyone who spoke a word for her?

"Why doesn't my aunt continue?" Yun Jinnian asked quietly.

Mrs. He was incredibly embarrassed. She could no longer treat Yun Jinnian the way she used to—demanding her appearance with a flick of her hand or ignoring her whenever she wished.

Now, her niece had grown too independent.

"Never mind, you may go back!"

Yun Jinnian acknowledged with a "Hmm" and crossed the second gate back to Niannian Garden.

"That little wench, just like her mother—a stone in a cesspit, hard and stinky, and unreasonable!"

Chapter 483: Two-faced and Treacherous

Mrs. He's voice was not loud, Yun Jinnian couldn't hear it, but Hemei could hear it clearly.

"Miss..."

"She scolded me, didn't she?" Yun Jinnian asked.

Hemei nodded.

"Let her scold!"

Hemei said nothing, yet thought about teaching Mrs. He a lesson for daring to scold her young mistress like that, as if she had grown tired of living.

Although Hemei had become livelier since going out, her instinct to protect her master had never changed; it had only become more rooted.

"Hmph!" Hemei snorted coldly, her lips curling in displeasure.

Yun Jinnian heard this and looked at Hemei, a smile tugging at her mouth.

Mrs. He was duplicitous, sweet in appearance but bitter in heart, playing a different hand when out of sight. Sooner or later, someone would take care of her.

"Let's talk when we get back!"

Upon returning to Niannian Garden, Yun Jinnian had Hemei and Henuan take Shi Jiayu to deliver the gifts—Beautifying Pills for the old lady, her sisters, and her aunts, and Detoxification Pills for her three elder cousins, three younger half-brothers, Yun Qi, and Yun Chen.

Yicai Garden

Xu Xinmo, seeing that Yun Jinnian had only sent a single elixir, couldn't help but disdain, "How stingy!"

"Miss, you are wrong to say that!"

Nanny Mrs. Hu said, sniffing the elixir, "This one is mixed with Snow Lotus. If sold on the market, it would fetch thousands, even tens of thousands!"

Xu Xinmo was astonished, "That expensive?"

"Uh-huh!" Mrs. Hu nodded.

She couldn't help but worry about the bowl of medicine from before—had Yun Jinnian actually taken it? But at that time, Yun Jinnian probably had no medical skills, so it seemed she did take it. If only she could check Yun Jinnian's pulse, that would be helpful.

"Then nanny, put it away quickly, I'm going to ask my maternal grandmother for hers too. I'll give it to my mother-in-law later!"

Mrs. Hu started laughing, "If your mother-in-law knew you were thinking of her like this, she would be extremely happy!"

"Hehe, my mother-in-law is so kind to me, of course I think about her!"

In the little garden cottage where Aunt Kang was praying to Buddha, she closed her eyes and wore a grim face.

Her hand holding the Buddha Beads trembled slightly.

The person she thought would remain in obscurity for a lifetime was rising once more, yet she didn't know where her Yun Tai was or whether she was still alive.

Back then, back then...

Don't think about it, Aunt Kang kept telling herself not to think, not to think...

But she couldn't help it. If Yun Tai were here, she would also be fifteen years old, coming of age in September.

But where in this vast world could she find her daughter?

She couldn't leave the Yun Residence, and even if she left, she might not survive.

Aunt Kang's thoughts were known to five people in the Yun Residence.

Aunt Su and Aunt Hua were taken aback when they received the elixir, it took them a long time to come back to their senses.

They quietly sent out messages asking their daughters to spend more time around Yun Jinnian. Having Yun Jinnian, their legitimate sister, could make their future paths a bit easier.

But they had forgotten that without them, Yun Jinnian wouldn't have suffered those years of hardship, nor would she only have a shattered family. Not to mention whether Yun Jinnian would care about Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingzhi, or Yun Qingqing, even Mrs. Han would never allow these three illegitimate siblings to come close to Yun Jinnian.

They even had the signboard of Qiyue Academy taken down and burned.

Yun Qi sat for a while at Aunt Lian's place before returning to his outer study, where he sat the entire afternoon.

"Second Master, the Fourth Young Miss has sent a gift over!"

Yun Qi remained silent.

He was well aware that Yun Jinnian didn't specifically prepare the gift for him; she just didn't want people to talk.

"Consider it a reward!"

The young servant, about to be pleased, heard Yun Qi say, "Bring it in!"

Chapter 484: Struggling Desperately

The servant had no choice but to take the pill into the room, a simple porcelain bottle with "Detoxification Pill" written on it.

Yun Qi picked it up and caressed it for a long time.

His gaze was somewhat distracted, his thoughts obscure and dark.

"When I first took in both mother and daughter, I should not have returned to the Yun Family, I should have taken them out for a trip..."

As he spoke, tears were already streaming down his face.

But where in the world is there a pill for regret?

If that year, he hadn't drunk so much in his happiness, Auntie Su wouldn't have had the opportunity.

After the first time, had he not deliberately concealed it, constantly feeling insecure and trying to drown his worries in alcohol, he wouldn't have given Auntie Hua the chance.

He never regretted snatching Shu Niang from his younger brother, but he regretted not being able to love her for life.

"Shu Niang, have you truly come to hate and resent me, I just, I just..."

His mother had lost her husband early, and raising the three brothers alone was not easy, not to mention the restive aunts, illegitimate sons, and daughters. After distributing them away, and no longer caring for their life or death, they barely communicated.

It was only now that Yun Qi remembered, legitimate children of other families would return to the main house to "glean after the harvest," yet his illegitimate siblings never came back, as if they had no such home, no, they had even moved out of the Capital City, and where they went, he did not know.

Why was it like this?

As Yun Qi stood up, he felt a sudden pang of tightness in his chest and a dryness in his throat. Dizzy and unable to stand steady, a sweet and fishy taste rose in his mouth, and he spit out a mouthful of blood.

"Master..."

The servant was scared half to death.

He hurried to step forward to support Yun Qi, Yun Qi waved his hand, "Clean up the blood, don't let word get out!"

"But, but..."

Yun Qi slumped into the chair, still with traces of blood at the corner of his mouth.

He suddenly brightened up.

If he fell ill, would Shu Niang change her mind and tender-heartedly return to his side?

If Shu Niang was willing to give him a chance, he would definitely take them far away from the Yun Family and never come back.

He would surely be a good husband, a good father.

"Don't clean up, don't clean up, go quickly and get the Imperial Physician, and say my illness is very serious!!"

The servant was stunned for a moment, then hurriedly helped Yun Qi to lie down on the big bed in the inner chamber, not understanding his plan, but feeling some sympathy for him.

Knowing that he was resorting to a desperate strategy, but would his wife fall for it?

The servant thought, probably not!

Yun Jinnian invited Mrs. Han to Niannian Garden for dinner, Mrs. Han gladly accepted. Seated together, mother and daughter, Yun Jinnian spoke softly and delicately about what she had seen and heard on the street, and paused when she came to Shi Jiayu.

Shi Jiayu laughed, "I won't talk about it, after all, it's never anything good!"

"Let's not talk about it, let's eat!" Mrs. Han decisively changed the subject, not wanting to bring up Shi Jiayu's painful past.

A few tables were put together, the courtyard door was closed, and they all sat at one table, with Yaniang personally preparing the delicious dishes. Granny An enjoyed this atmosphere, Yaniang was smiling lightly while eating, Ru Yue, Hongye, Hongdou, and Hongxiu had a good relationship and were helping each other with servings. Mrs. Yuan was seated next to Yun Jinnian, continuously serving her dishes, Yun Jinnian sat with Mrs. Han, who was flanked by Hemei, Henuan, Shi Jiayu, Bai Que, and Bai Niao.

It was very lively.

Midway through the meal, the courtyard door was knocked loudly.

Bai Que stood up, "I'll go see what it is!"

She hurried to the door and looked at the butler, quite surprised, "Butler, what brings you here?"

"Miss Bai Que, is the madam in? The second master is ill, I've come to ask the madam to have a look!"

Regarding Yun Jinnian's medical skills, the butler had never taken them seriously, always feeling that her effort was trivial.

Chapter 485: Questioning the Past

He didn't yet know that Yun Jinnian had resolved the poisoning of Prince Rui and Prince Yanjun on his trip.

If he knew, he wouldn't have resorted to this approach.

"When Second Master falls ill, just summon a doctor or fetch a prescription to invite the Imperial Physician. What's the use in seeking the lady? If it's a lack of people taking care of him, let Aunt Rou or Aunt Lian attend to him!" Having said that, Bai Que directly shut the courtyard door.

The butler's face immediately turned an ashen hue.

This maid had the same temperament as the lady, a real stone in a latrine, both stinky and hard.

Wanting to say something, in the end, he said nothing and turned to leave.

Bai Que returned to the parlor and whispered a few words to Mrs. Han, who responded with a faint smile, "Let him make a fuss, let's have our meal!"

She didn't believe Yun Qi was sick in the slightest.

Yun Jinnian pursed her lips and didn't say more.

Between parents, she didn't know what to say; towards Yun Qi, her father, she harbored resentment.

Real, tangible resentment.

Yun Jinnian didn't know how deep this resentment was, but she was unwilling to forgive, that was certain.

She picked up a bowl, took up chopsticks, and chewed slowly and carefully.

Meanwhile,

Yun Qi was aware that Mrs. Han wouldn't come, but still couldn't help looking towards the door.

He thought, as long as Mrs. Han arrived, no matter what he had to do, he would be willing.

Old Madam Yun hurried in, "Qi'er..."

Yun Qi looked at Old Madam Yun, noticing her temples were streaked with white and the wrinkles around her eyes had multiplied.

"Everyone else leave, I have a few words with Old Madam!"

The maids, granny servants, and page boys promptly exited the room.

Aunt Lian hesitated for a moment, then followed suit and left.

Aunt Rou cast a longing glance at Yun Qi before also retreating.

In the room, just mother and son remained.

Old Madam Yun looked at Yun Qi with heartache.

This son had been the most filial and considerate in his earlier years but had gradually grown distant from her after marrying a wife, and only then had she grown envious of Mrs. Han and done those things.

And having done one of those things, to cover the truth of the previous deed, she had to commit another, until she realized, when her son's life was a fate worse than death, that it was too late to retract her actions.

Yun Qi sat up, his hand gently tidying Old Madam Yun's hair, "In the blink of an eye, so many years have passed, Mother has aged!"

At these words, Old Madam Yun's eyes suddenly brimmed with tears.

"I still remember how in earlier years, Mother's hair was so dark, and there were no wrinkles at the corners of your eyes and brows, but now white strands have appeared at your temples..."

"Qi'er, what's really wrong with you?" Old Madam Yun was anxious, sensing that something was about to happen that she couldn't control.

"Mother, today I truly call you 'Mother,' and when I ask you something, you won't hide the truth from me, right?"

Old Madam Yun's eyes widened in disbelief.

She stared incredulously at Yun Qi, "What do you wish to ask?"

"I just want to ask, was it truly me who, drunk, climbed into Aunt Hua and Aunt Su's beds? Were Aunt Shu and my third brother truly engaged in an illicit affair that resulted in their illegitimate child, or were they framed by someone else's scheme?"

Yun Qi's words were heavy, hammering against Old Madam Yun's heart.

They also terrified her into shrieking, as she leaped up and asked sharply, "What do you mean by asking this? Are you doubting me?"

Yun Qi remained silent, just looking steadily at Old Madam Yun.

Watching her panic, her fear, her dread, her guilt.

So that was it, that was...

"Pfth!"

Overwhelmed, Yun Qi spit out another mouthful of blood.

Old Madam Yun wanted to step forward, but Yun Qi raised his hand to stop her, forbidding her to come closer. Despite his reluctance, he still asked, "Mother, can you tell me today, do you truly have nothing to do with all this?"

Chapter 486: Refuse to Admit Whether Dead or Alive

The elderly Mrs. Yun's forehead broke out in cold sweat as she panicked.

She would rather die than admit to it.

"What nonsense are you spouting? How could it possibly be me, it definitely couldn't be me, how could it be me? I wouldn't do such a thing, how could I ever do such a thing, I, I..."

As Mrs. Yun rambled on, she confused herself.

Yun Qi saw it all and suddenly, everything became clear to him.

"Mother, it's getting late. You should go back," said Yun Qi and, after speaking, he lay down and closed his eyes.

Mrs. Yun did not dare to stay longer and stumbled out of the room.

Nanny Tian immediately stepped forward to support her, feeling the sweat in her palms and her entire body trembling with fear. Worried, she softly called out, "Old Madam..."

"Back to Cixin Academy!"

Her heart filled with even more hatred toward Yun Jinnian.

She felt Yun Jinnian was a disaster. Without her return, Mrs. Han wouldn't have stirred up trouble at home. But ever since she came back, Mrs. Han started causing commotion, and now even her own son began to doubt her.

She truly had an unspeakable bitterness.

In the room, on the large bed,

Yun Qi lay there silently shedding tears.

Shu Niang, you were right, you were always right.

Once, he had thought Shu Niang was merely resentful towards him for breaking his promise by taking a concubine. Now, he realized, it wasn't just about that.

In vain had Yun Qi prided himself on being clever. Now it seemed he was just a fool.

"Shu Niang..."

If you wish to distance yourself from the Yun Family, I must grant you this wish. You should leave with your head held high, and even outside these walls, no one should say a single word against you!

During the night, Mrs. Han did not return home but stayed at Niannian Garden.

She shared a bed with Yun Jinnian, listening to her recount the trip to Nanjiang.

"Jinnian!"

"Hmm?"

"Do you have feelings for King Rui?" Mrs. Han asked softly.

Upon hearing this, Yun Jinnian's body stiffened and slowly relaxed. "I have feelings for him."

Chu Yu had treated her so well; how could she not have feelings for him?

Mrs. Han felt relieved yet also bittersweet.

In a blink of an eye, her daughter had grown so much.

Thirteen—a beautiful age when one should be carefree, but because of her, her daughter had become overly cautious and unusually cold and detached.

Even when speaking of the man she had affection for, her voice was very calm, devoid of any shy or expectant undertone.

"If you have feelings for His Highness King Rui, then go for it!"

Yun Jinnian responded with a "Hmm."

She and Chu Yu wanted to be together openly and legitimately. It would likely not be smooth sailing, but she was prepared and unafraid.

"If you have feelings for him, let him know your thoughts!"

"Hmm!"

"But you should maintain your dignity as a young lady, and not be reckless to the point of drawing idle gossip or tarnishing your reputation."

"Hmm!"

Mrs. Han held Yun Jinnian's hand, which was ice cold, causing her some concern, "They say a doctor cannot heal themselves. In a few days, when we return to the Han Family, how about letting your grandfather take a look at you?"

"Mother, don't worry. I'm fine!"

"Are you truly fine?" Mrs. Han was still not reassured.

"I'm fine!"

It was just that there were too many Spiritual Poisonous Insects in her body draining her essence, and having consumed Snow Lotus, it made her body rather cold. The master had said come winter, she would feel warmer.

A kind of constitution that fears neither the cold in winter nor the heat in summer.

Whether it was true or not would be determined in the winter.

"As long as you are okay. Let's get some sleep early."

"Okay!"

Yun Jinnian agreed, closed her eyes, and went to sleep.

In the middle of the night, Yun Jinnian suddenly woke up.

Her heart was racing. In her dream, Momo had confronted her, asking if she didn't want him anymore, which made Yun Jinnian feel incredibly guilty.

She reached into her clothes and pulled out a brocade pouch, took out the beads inside, held them in her hands and pressed them against her cheek.

Only then did her heart gradually calm down.

Chapter 487: Differential Treatment

"Momo, how can I win you back? Is it by being with Chu Liange once more? But Momo, I just can't do it, I really can't..." Yun Jinnian murmured in his heart, restless throughout the night.

Yun Jinnian had returned, and early on the fourteenth, the Prince Rui Residence, Princess's Marquis Zhuangyong Residence, Duan Residence, Count Xuanping Residence, and Elder Residence all sent invitations, asking Yun Jinnian to pay a visit.

Each invitation was exquisitely gorgeous and featured its own unique characteristics.

Early in the morning upon learning of this, Mrs. He's eyes reddened with envy.

These were households she couldn't even get to accept her invitations, yet now they eagerly sent their own to Yun Jinnian.

Taking a deep breath, "Send the invitations to Niannian Garden!"

Regardless of whether she admitted it or not, Yun Jinnian was now highly sought after.

But Mrs. He was not satisfied with just that.

She dared not harm Yun Jinnian herself, but that didn't mean there was no one else in the residence who dared.

She called for Tianmi, whispered a few words into her ear, and Tianmi nodded before retreating.

Mrs. He then began to laugh in a mocking and eerie manner, both frightening and fierce.

When the invitations were delivered to Niannian Garden, pride and self-respect shone in Jinnian's eyes, but there was also concern, "These are some of the most notable families in the Capital City, you must be careful when you visit them, lest they seize a handle on you!"

"Mother, rest assured, I am aware!"

Yun Jinnian pondered seriously, considering that the Mid-Autumn Palace Banquet in the palace was happening tomorrow, which she intended to attend, meaning she would have to be busy today.

"Hemei, you run an errand for me now, I'm going to visit the Marquis Zhuangyong Residence later, and then the Duan Family in the afternoon. I am not sure about the situation at Count Xuanping Residence, so send someone to find out, and do the same for the Elder Residence, and as for the Princess Residence..."

Yun Jinnian paused, "Then I will go there early tomorrow morning and enter the palace with Sister Ming!"

Mrs. Han saw that Yun Jinnian had returned and was busier than ever, which filled her heart with distress.

"Jinnian..."

"Mother, I enjoy these busy days!"

She found that being busy kept her from overthinking and made her life feel full.

She felt incredibly accomplished.

"Whatever makes you happy!"

In the end, that was all Mrs. Han could say.

Yun Jinnian offered a soft, gentle smile, "Thank you, Mother. Won't you go see grandfather's house? My little brother has grown so tall now, and his martial arts have improved dramatically. If Mother saw him, she might not even recognize him!"

It was mainly his demeanor.

He exuded an air of noble elegance and wisdom from within, and despite his young age, his aura was second to none.

"I'll go back later!"

"Then I'll come for dinner at grandfather's house tonight, it would be even better if I could stay over!"

Mrs. Han smiled, "Then we'll stay over tonight!"

"Alright!"

Since Yun Jinnian was going out, gifts were indispensable.

For this, Yun Jinnian only needed to tell Shi Jiayu how many masters were in the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence, and Shi Jiayu would have the gifts properly prepared.

Yun Jinnian may have lacked many things, but she had plenty of elixirs. Back in Nanjiang at the Moon-Watching Sect, Yun Jinnian, together with Elders Mu and Tu, had concocted numerous elixirs that all contained Snow Lotus, and the best ones even included Blood Lotus. Though Shi Jiayu might not know how many she used, from observing Yun Jinnian's meals, it was clear that if Snow Lotus could be used, nothing else would be.

The Moon-Watching Sect had treated Yun Jinnian very well.

Wholeheartedly so. Yun Jinnian hadn't done much, yet a few pills had completely won these people's loyalty.

No, Yun Jinnian actually had done something. Those elixirs had been infused with her own blood.

She drank a bowlful every day without complaint, and the entire sect knew this, ensuring it would be passed from mouth to mouth.

There's always a return on investment.

"Miss, are we sending pills?" Shi Jiayu asked.

"Yes, send the pills. Sister Mi and the others certainly don't lack silver or valuables. These pills can save lives in an emergency. Remember to take the best ones!"

Chapter 488: Quite Worried

The closeness or distance of relationships was vividly displayed in these few sentences.

Jiayu had no idea about Jinnian's situation in the Yun Family, but after only one day back, she could feel the turbulent undercurrents of the family. Among the sisters, only the second aunt seemed relatively kind, while the rest appeared amiable on the surface, but who knew what they were really thinking.

They were not good people.

She could also feel that ever since Jinnian returned to the Capital City, his entire demeanor had changed, let alone his words and actions.

Regarding his return, she seemed to have no expectations whatsoever.

Once Hemei went back with the reply, the young servant who brought the invitation left happily to claim his reward.

Zhuangyong Marquis Residence

As soon as Dai Hanmi learned that Yun Jinnian would be visiting shortly, she joyfully instructed the kitchen to prepare delicious food, while Mrs. Qu, despite being heavily pregnant, was in the small courtyard directing the making of pastries. The Marchioness was accompanying old Madam Dai in conversation.

"Now that Jinnian is back, you should first test the waters with her, and have Bobo go out more often. Prepare a few sets of clothes for him; they don't have to be too extravagant, but they should at least be dignified. They should look neat and clean as well, and you need to tell him, if he likes her, he must go and fight for her himself—a mutual affection is best!" old Madam Dai instructed leisurely.

The Marchioness listened intently, "Yes, mother, you're right. I will make sure everything is prepared, but I'm just worried that..."

"Worried about what?" old Madam Dai asked, puzzled.

"Mother, during this trip outside, it was said that Prince Rui and the seventh son of the Princess of the Nation were also there. Both are considered outstanding among their peers, and I'm just afraid that..."

In over a year, though not living together day and night, meeting a few times a day was still likely, and outside there weren't as many restrictions.

Whether it was Prince Rui or the seventh son Yuwen, both were considered extraordinary and distinguished. It was within reason for Jinnian, who was of the age when one's feelings first blossom, to develop an interest in one of them.

Upon hearing this, old Madam Dai also paused, "I hadn't considered that!"

"So, mother, we shouldn't be in a hurry. Let's just wait and see. Whether or not it works out depends on fate. It's just that regarding Bobo..." said the Marchioness, her worry evident.

Dai Hanmi was too decisive. Although she appeared gentle and weak, that was merely superficial. She knew well that her son, Hanbo, was not only skilled in martial arts but also full of knowledge. Had it not been for the Empress's sake, he might have long since gone to seek official recognition for his abilities.

Having yearned for a well-educated wife who could add fragrance to his sleeve and stand shoulder to shoulder with him in managing household affairs, Hanbo was moved by Jinnian's poetry "As the north wind brings understanding, let not the fragile be ruthlessly broken," and after seeing her beauty, he understood love even more.

Now, even though he did not speak of it, his heart probably harbored great expectations already.

"Alas!" the Marchioness sighed.

Old Madam Dai also felt uneasy.

"Regardless, we should still help them along. If wishes come true, that would be ideal, but if it's not meant to be, we must leave Bobo with a lasting memory, rather than let him become disheartened!"

The Marchioness quickly nodded in agreement.

If only they had known, they would have had Dai Hanbo accompany them from the start.

Her son was not lacking either.

Mrs. Han was a considerate mother. Knowing that Yun Jinnian had returned and would undoubtedly need to go out, she had specifically prepared a solid carriage in advance. Two horses pulled the carriage, which was spacious. Its interior was neatly arranged, and it was equipped with all the necessary items. The coachman, about forty years old, was steady and trustworthy.

He called himself Old Capital, and Jinnian referred to him as Uncle Capital.

Upon hearing this, Uncle Capital's eyes crinkled with a smile.

"Where does the young miss wish to go? There's no place in the Capital City that Old Capital doesn't know about!"

In Jinnian's absence during the past year, Old Capital had wandered every day throughout the city, traversing every main street and alley, all for the sake of being able to continue driving a carriage for Jinnian long-term.

Chapter 489: The Princess Gets Jealous

The Han Family had shown him great favor, and he had promised Mr. Han to stay by Yun Jinnian's side for ten years. If these ten years passed peacefully, he would retire with honors and return home to his wife, children, and elderly mother. If he couldn't return, it would be fate—himself and his family were prepared for this eventuality.

For the life of dozens in his family, he alone came to repay the kindness. It was a profitable deal for his family.

"To the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence!" Yun Jinnian said, helped into the carriage by Shi Jiayu.

Bringing Shi Jiayu along not only exposed her to the world but also elevated her status. Doing so might help her remarry a suitable gentleman and lead a happy life in the future.

Hemei and Henuan knew martial arts and were brought along for safety.

No sooner had Shi Jiayu sat down in the carriage than she drew in a soft breath.

So comfortable.

"Miss, next time we should prepare a stove so we can brew tea!" Shi Jiayu suggested.

"If you like, go ahead and prepare one!" Yun Jinnian didn't mind these things.

"I'll talk to the wet nurse when we get back!"

The carriage clattered down the bustling streets of the Capital City.

Shi Jiayu lifted the carriage curtain to look outside, "It's so lively!"

"When we have some free time, we can come out for a walk. Anything you like, I'll buy it for you!"

Shi Jiayu smiled, "Alright!"

"Whoa!"

Suddenly, the carriage came to a halt.

Uncle Cheng frowned slightly at the sight of the carriage that had blocked their path.

Having been around the Capital City, he could naturally tell to whom the carriage belonged.

He said to the inside of the carriage, "Miss, it's Princess Jinfeng ahead!"

Princess Jinfeng?

Yun Jinnian was surprised to hear this, yet delighted.

She lifted the carriage curtain, "Uncle Cheng, get the step stool. I'm going to pay my respects to the Princess."

"Yes!"

Uncle Cheng immediately prepared the step stool. Yun Jinnian alighted from the carriage and walked toward Princess Jinfeng's carriage, which Leng Binghan was driving.

"Big brother Leng, how have you been recently?"

"Good!"

Leng Binghan replied coldly, jumped down from the carriage, placed the step stool beside the carriage, and then stood aside without speaking.

Princess Jinfeng's joyful voice came from inside the carriage, "Sister Jinnian, come in quickly, let's have a chat!"

Yun Jinnian smiled as she boarded the carriage, lifted the curtain, and entered, only to find Chu Yu was there as well.

"Princess, big brother Chu!"

Princess Jinfeng pretended to be upset, "You call him big brother Chu, but you call me Princess. You're not being fair to me!"

Chu Yu started to laugh.

Yun Jinnian smiled helplessly, "Chu..."

"Don't you dare call me Sister Chu, I'm not your Sister Chu. Call me Xiangxiang!"

She wasn't foolish. Yun Jinnian would soon be her sister-in-law, her very own sister-in-law. She couldn't count on her brother anymore, so she would need her sister-in-law to dote on her in the future.

Starting now, it was only proper to start flattering her well.

"..." Yun Jinnian was taken aback, "That wouldn't be proper. How about I call you Sister Xiangxiang?"

Let the future take care of itself.

Calling Princess Jinfeng Sister Xiangxiang would certainly raise her own standing, a very dignified arrangement.

"Fine then, you may call me Sister Xiangxiang, and I'll call you Sister Jinnian. By the way, where are you heading today?"

As Princess Jinfeng spoke, she glanced at Chu Yu and saw his eyes fixed on Yun Jinnian, secretly scolding him for being spineless.

Not only spineless but also cowardly.

To like a girl and still need her, his sister, to give him a helping hand.

"I'm off to the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence to visit the old Dowager, and in the afternoon I'll head to the Duan Family, since old Mrs. Duan is not in good health. I'll also drop by to see Sister Wanrong!"

Upon hearing this, Princess Jinfeng snorted, "Yes, one is the grandmother of your Sister Mi, and the other is the grandmother of your Sister Wanrong. And what am I to you? Despite my sincere affection for you, this is how you treat me!"

Chapter 490: A Big Scuffle

Yun Jinnian, upon hearing this, was also filled with befuddlement.

She was not usually skilled at placating people, but Princess Jinfeng was precisely the kind who needed coddling.

After hesitating for a moment, she sat next to Princess Jinfeng, "Why would Sister Xiang say such a thing? I have always placed Sister Xiang first. Look, while I gave the others medicine pills, I prepared beauty-enhancing rouge and powder specifically for Sister Xiang, all of which I personally mixed!"

"Rouge and powder?" Princess Jinfeng said, glaring at Chu Yu.

"Yes, I asked Chu big brother to bring them to you!" Yun Jinnian explained, confused. Could it be that Chu Yu did not give them to Princess Jinfeng?

Princess Jinfeng instantly felt so angry that her insides hurt.

Chu Yu had delivered them but had not explained the origin of the rouge. Since she rarely used such beauty products, she immediately asked Chu Yu to take them back and exchange them for something else.

How would she have known they were specially made for her by Yun Jinnian?

"Ah, Chu Yu, you bastard!" Princess Jinfeng roared.

Yun Jinnian jumped, startled. What on earth had happened?

Looking puzzlingly at Chu Yu, she saw he still had a carefree and smiling demeanor, which made her even more perplexed.

"Jinnian, you go to Zhuangyong Marquis Residence first. I need to have a proper talk with Jinfeng," Chu Yu said indifferently.

Princess Jinfeng clenched her fists but smiled at Yun Jinnian, "Sister Jinnian, you get off the carriage first. I'll come visit you another day to catch up!"

Yun Jinnian nodded, "Alright then, I'll be off!"

She rose and left the carriage.

No sooner had she stepped down from the carriage than thumping noises came from within.

Yun Jinnian, taken aback, looked towards Leng Bingham, "Brother Leng?"

"It's nothing!"

Yun Jinnian figured it was alright—after all, they were siblings, and even if they fought, it would not lead to a fatality. In the end, Chu Yu would be the only one to suffer, so she felt reassured.

She mounted the carriage, "Uncle Cheng, let's go!"

"Yes!"

Uncle Cheng steered the carriage to the side, avoiding the Prince Rui Residence's carriage, and as he listened to Princess Jinfeng's shouts from inside, Uncle Cheng frowned.

His lady was quite impressive, managing to come out unscathed from an encounter with an infuriated Princess Jinfeng.

The carriage trotted smoothly all the way to the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence.

Dai Hanmi, seeing the carriage stop, quickly greeted her arrival. Catching sight of Yun Jinnian alighting, she couldn't help but smile with tears in her eyes, "You've finally come back!"

Yun Jinnian bowed graciously to Dai Hanmi, her voice gentle and restrained, "Sister Hanmi!"

Dai Hanmi immediately steadied Yun Jinnian, "Alright now, there is no need for such formalities between us sisters, let's dispense with the pleasantries. Even though it's morning, the sun is still quite fierce. Let's go inside and talk!"

Dai Hanmi, taking Yun Jinnian's hand, expressed her concern, "Oh my, how come your hand feels so cold? Are you unwell?"

"Not at all, I'm in good health, Sister Hanmi need not worry!" Yun Jinnian quickly assured her, squeezing Dai Hanmi's hand in return.

Dai Hanmi was lively and efficient in her actions, and she treated her with genuine affection; Yun Jinnian liked interacting with Dai Hanmi.

"It's good to hear you're well. If you feel uncomfortable, make sure to tell me. They say doctors can't heal themselves, so you mustn't be careless!"

"Yes, yes!"

Yun Jinnian obediently nodded her head.

Dai Hanmi burst into laughter, "Look at me, you've just returned, and I'm already lecturing you. Once grandmother hears about this, she'll probably have to school me too!"

"The dowager loves you the most; how could she bear it!" Yun Jinnian said, her voice tender, accompanied by a gentle smile.

As her smile reached her eyes, her entire being seemed to brighten.

From a little distance, Dai Hanbo watched, his mouth suddenly dry, unable to move forward, feeling very nervous, his face gradually reddening.

With somewhat clumsy hands, he shook himself and straightened his neat sleeves, then smoothed his hair.