

Indulgence 501

Chapter 501: Marital Harmony

Duan Qimeng smiled.

Towards Ruan Wanrong, it wasn't just the love of his youth, but also deep gratitude.

If it hadn't been for her, Yun Jinnian wouldn't have come to the Duan Family, let alone inviting Divine Doctor Han to treat his grandmother with acupuncture.

"All your little thoughts are written on your face, who can't see that!!"

Ruan Wanrong laughed, "I can't be bothered with you, I'm going to the front courtyard to wait for Sister Jinnian. It's her second visit to our residence; last time she didn't even have time to drink a cup of hot tea before hurrying away!"

She felt extremely sorry about it.

Duan Qimeng nodded, "Wait for me, I'll wash up and join you!"

He had heard some news, that Yun Jinnian's recent outing was on behalf of the Emperor, Prince Rui, and Prince Yanjun, and after returning, it was said that the poisons in Prince Rui and Prince Yanjun had been cured.

Entering the palace to detoxify the Emperor would happen within these few days, and afterwards, he was likely to become renowned throughout Capital City and the entire Tianchu Country.

It would be good for him to strengthen his relationship with Yun Jinnian.

Secondly, accompanying Ruan Wanrong was also to show Yun Jinnian that he, her brother-in-law, was very welcoming of her visits to their home.

And this home would inevitably be divided sooner or later. The current delay in dividing the house was just due to concerns that, after the division, without this connection, Yun Jinnian would be unwilling to treat their illnesses.

After Yun Jinnian helped with the detoxification, the house must be divided; enduring the situation for over a year was already the limit.

Duan Qimeng was also aware that all the glory and wealth depended on the Emperor's favor; without the Emperor's promotion, all the talent and ambition in the world would be useless.

"Fine!"

Ruan Wanrong smiled and let Duan Qimeng freshen up.

Some things she understood; since ancient times, men had multiple wives and concubines. If he truly cared for her, he wouldn't flirt with others, but if she wasn't in his heart, her vigilance would be pointless.

Suddenly thinking of something, she stood up and went into the bathroom.

Duan Qimeng, with his back to the door, had a tall figure, wearing only a loosely hanging undergarment around his waist. He was wiping his body with a cloth.

Ruan Wanrong's face turned slightly red, but still she approached softly and said, "Let me help you with that!"

Duan Qimeng turned his head, surprised yet happy, "Alright!"

But as they wiped, a different kind of fire sparked.

Duan Qimeng clasped Ruan Wanrong in his arms, his hand covering her chest.

"Stop, Sister Jinnian will be here soon!" Ruan Wanrong whispered seductively.

Duan Qimeng lowered his head and kissed Ruan Wanrong's lips, "I'll be quick!"

The two of them consummated in the bathroom. Duan Qimeng found it thrilling and couldn't help but exert some strength, while Ruan Wanrong, with a hoarse voice, coordinated with him.

As Duan Qimeng had said, it was a quick affair.

But both felt extraordinarily passionate. After it was over, Ruan Wanrong leaned against the rack, her bare legs trembling, as Duan Qimeng wiped her body and dressed her in clean clothes.

Then she raised her hand and punched Duan Qimeng lightly, "It's all your fault!"

Sultry and shy, she held back her words.

Duan Qimeng smiled tenderly and took Ruan Wanrong's hand, kissing it, "It's my mistake, you can punish me however you want tonight. Just leave me some dignity in front of my little sister-in-law!"

Because of this term "little sister-in-law", Ruan Wanrong began to laugh, "You really know how to take advantage. I do hope Sister Jinnian truly becomes your little sister-in-law, but I'm also afraid she won't want to!"

She knew that Yun Jinnian was closest to Dai Hanmi, and only after her, to her.

"Now you are handkerchief friends, to deepen your bond, commit to a sworn sisterhood. As long as you treat her sincerely, without scheming and with more genuine feelings, she will be willing!"

Upon hearing this, Ruan Wanrong thought it made sense, "I'll listen to you!"

After picking a hairpin for Ruan Wanrong's coiffure and drawing her eyebrows, Duan Qimeng led her to the front hall.

The maid entered the bathroom, blushing at the sight of clothes on the floor, hurriedly collected them for starching and washing, but not without someone noticing...

Chapter 502: Different Thoughts

Duan Qimeng and Ruan Wanrong had a good relationship, and since Old Madam Duan was biased towards Ruan Wanrong, not long after marrying, she had already received plenty of valuable items. Several manors and shops were clearly given to Ruan Wanrong, as well as the deeds for three more shops, which she was to transfer to Yun Jinnian. Those were all in bustling areas of Capital City, excellent shops that even with money, one might not necessarily be able to purchase. If the Old Madam said she would give them, she gave them.

The others harbored resentment, but they couldn't object, for it was true that Yun Jinnian had saved the Old Madam and helped the Duan Family through their hardest times.

The male heirs understood the greater good and felt it was appropriate to give, even if their wives were unhappy; yet, they dared not make a scene.

Should they cause a scene, their own husbands would be the first to spare them no mercy.

When Yun Jinnian arrived at the entrance of the Duan Residence, Ruan Wanrong came out to greet her with a smile, "Sister Jinnian!"

Yun Jinnian stepped down from the carriage and smiled back at Ruan Wanrong, noting that she walked a bit strangely but thought nothing more of it.

"Sister Ruan!"

Ruan Wanrong approached and took Yun Jinnian's hand, "You've grown taller but thinner!"

Yun Jinnian smiled without replying.

She let Ruan Wanrong hold her hand.

"Why are your hands so cold? Are you ill?" Ruan Wanrong asked with concern.

"No, it's just my constitution. There's nothing to worry about!"

Ruan Wanrong nodded, "You know more than I do, but even doctors cannot heal themselves. You should still have your maternal grandfather take a good look at you. If you're lacking any medicinal ingredients, just tell me. I now manage a medicinal shop and have all sorts of ingredients!"

"Alright!"

Yun Jinnian responded, then saw Duan Qimeng, and with a slight bow, greeted, "I have seen Duan—" She paused, then corrected herself, "Brother-in-law Duan!"

"Mhm!" Duan Qimeng smiled and nodded.

He invited Yun Jinnian through the main gate.

Due to Yun Jinnian's exceptional status, naturally, she entered through the main entrance.

The primary wives from the several branches of the Duan Family all came out, smiling at Yun Jinnian so widely their eyes disappeared into their cheeks.

Yun Jinnian greeted each in turn, not bothering to remember who they were.

"Sister Ruan, how is the Old Madam feeling now? My main purpose today is to follow up on the Old Madam's examination!" Yun Jinnian said gently.

It wasn't that she didn't trust her maternal grandfather, but she believed in seeing things through to the end.

She had begun the treatment and felt obligated to conclude it.

"Grandmother's health is much improved, but she keeps mentioning you. Come with me to see her!" Ruan Wanrong said with a smile.

Indeed, she was better, but the Divine Doctor Han had visited the Duan Residence several times; after his treatments improved the Old Madam's condition, he hadn't visited since.

Duan Qimeng had also summoned the Imperial Physician several times, but for the Old Madam's ailment, Chenke, they had little effect.

The Old Madam giving those three shops was partly in hope that Yun Jinnian, seeing the value in them, would continue to treat her illness.

"Alright!"

Ruan Wanrong led Yun Jinnian by the hand, with Hemei carrying the medicine chest, and Shi Jiayu and Henuan followed behind.

The Duan Residence, once royal merchants, had ample funds and had their large estate exquisitely and beautifully renovated, with attention to detail so as not to be criticized for having merely the smell of copper coins.

Shi Jiayu found the sight endlessly fascinating, while Hemei and Henuan kept their eyes forward.

Seeing mountains of gold and silver every day, sleeping next to them, yet knowing these things would never belong to them, naturally caused their desires to settle down over time.

The primary wives from different branches of the Duan Family followed, flattering Yun Jinnian now and then. It was well known that their men, and their sons below them, had all taken Barrenwort and could no longer father children.

This was also the reason the Old Madam gave Yun Jinnian three exceptional shops, and why they dared not cause an uproar.

The Divine Doctor paid no attention, and the Imperial Physicians were helpless— all their hopes now rested on Yun Jinnian.

Upon reaching Old Madam Duan's courtyard, the overseeing butler immediately approached with warm greetings, "Miss Yun has arrived, this servant greets Miss Yun!"

Chapter 503: The Duan Family Members

Yun Jinnian nodded towards her and let Ruan Wanrong lead him into the courtyard. Observing the scenery of the courtyard, Yun Jinnian felt little.

Upon entering the living hall, he saw the old lady of the Duan Family sitting on the Arhat bed. Her complexion was somewhat pale, and she looked remarkably thin, her hair also turned white.

"Grandmother!" Ruan Wanrong called softly.

The old lady of the Duan Family nodded slightly.

Ruan Wanrong stepped forward to help the old lady sit up straight, then stood by her side.

Yun Jinnian bowed slightly, "I've seen the old madam!"

"You're back, huh?" asked the old lady of the Duan Family, smiling.

She didn't recognize Yun Jinnian, but having been informed of Yun Jinnian's arrival, she had told the servants to help her bathe and change clothes, and waited here for him.

Having been through death and back to life, she actually wanted to live a long life now.

"Yes, I arrived at the Capital City yesterday. Is the old madam's health alright?" Yun Jinnian asked.

"Good, good, come sit by my side and have some tea!"

Yun Jinnian nodded, took a seat on the Arhat bed, right across a tea table from the old lady of the Duan Family. A maid served tea, and Yun Jinnian gently sipped from his cup.

The ladies of the various households also took their seats, sipping tea and looking for an opportunity to get close to Yun Jinnian, but seeing him with an unsmiling face, they found it difficult to initiate conversation.

After tea, Yun Jinnian addressed the old lady, "Old madam, may I take your pulse for you?"

"Yes, yes!"

The old lady of the Duan Family couldn't have been more eager.

Hemei immediately opened the medicine box, took out a wet towel to wipe Yun Jinnian's hands, while Ruan Wanrong rolled up the old lady's sleeve and placed her hand on a pillow prepared by Yun Jinnian for pulse-taking.

Only then did Yun Jinnian seriously take the old lady's pulse.

He sighed inwardly.

Even though his maternal grandfather had come to the Duan Residence to administer acupuncture to the old lady, it hadn't cured her ailment. This left her in a state where she couldn't die but was still suffering.

"Sister Jinnian, how is it?" Ruan Wanrong asked.

"The old madam has been suffering from Chenke for many years, so it is unlikely to be cured overnight. I will prescribe medicine for now; let's get the old madam to drink it and take good care of her. There is still hope for a full recovery!"

The most important thing was that the Duan Family had silver, so they could afford any rare medicinal ingredients needed.

This greatly increased the old lady's chances of recovery.

"Really?" The old lady of the Duan Family asked eagerly.

Ruan Wanrong was also overjoyed.

If her grandmother stayed alive, her husband wouldn't need to observe mourning, and even if he had to later, the court would already have made arrangements. After three years, he should be able to return to his position, or at least to a position not too low.

"Hmm!"

Yun Jinnian nodded and asked someone to prepare brush, ink, paper, and inkstone to write down the prescription, "Boil three bowls of water down to one. Three times a day, after meals!"

Ruan Wanrong took the prescription, carefully looked it over, then handed it to the butler on the side, "Go and prepare the medicine completely from the storeroom!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian then said, "Old madam, I haven't seen Ruan sister for over a year. We should talk for a bit!"

The old lady of the Duan Family nodded, "Go, go!"

The ladies from the other households were immediately envious, but they couldn't say much. They could only watch with longing as Yun Jinnian followed Ruan Wanrong out.

Within the Duan Residence adorned with intricately carved beams and painted rafters, small and elegant pavilions, it was now August 14th, and the weather was hot. Yet inside the Duan Residence, there was not a trace of heat to be felt. Tall trees blocked much of the sun, and the birds chirped incessantly from the branches.

"Sister Ruan's home is really nice!"

"If you like it, come and play more often. Your brother-in-law and I always welcome you!"

Yun Jinnian smiled and didn't say much.

Arriving at the courtyard of Ruan Wanrong and Duan Qimeng, Duan Qimeng was waiting at the entrance for the two of them.

"Are you going out?" Ruan Wanrong asked.

Duan Qimeng nodded, "Need to step out for a bit. You sisters have a good chat!"

Chapter 504: Crisis of the Duan Family

Ruan Wanrong's heart skipped a beat.

She had thought about having Yun Jinnian examine Duan Qimeng since Barrenwort was a powerful poison, and it was better to start the treatment early.

Yun Jinnian, being astute, understood Ruan Wanrong's thoughts.

"Brother-in-law Duan, why don't I take your pulse to get a fresh perspective? With a poison like Barrenwort, long-term care is needed, but getting an early start is also good. Let's call over the other members of the household as well, I will take each of their pulses in turn to determine their conditions!"

Duan Qimeng was pleased to hear this.

"Good, good, I will go call them right now, but it's not quite appropriate to stay here. Let's wait in the flower hall, and you sisters can come over after you've had a chat!"

"Alright!"

Duan Qimeng left, clearly delighted.

Ruan Wanrong watched him go and couldn't help but sigh, "Everything is fine with him, it's just that he's too sentimental!"

"Sentimentality is good, sentimentality means one can love deeply!"

Yun Jinnian said, taking Ruan Wanrong's hand.

Ruan Wanrong thought about it and agreed.

If Duan Qimeng hadn't been so devoted, she wouldn't have married him.

She entered the courtyard holding Yun Jinnian's hand, where pavilions, towers, artificial mountains, flowing water, and little bridges were exquisitely arranged.

"How unique!" Yun Jinnian exclaimed in admiration.

"If you like it, come by more often!"

"Yes, I will definitely come often!"

With so many in the Duan Family affected by Barrenwort, she had no choice but to visit.

The two entered a small hall, which was also uniquely and elegantly decorated, exuding an aura of wealth.

Ruan Wanrong let Shi Jiayu, Hemei, and Henuan go have some tea and snacks, while she and Yun Jinnian talked for a while.

"You all go ahead!"

Since Yun Jinnian had agreed, Shi Jiayu, Hemei, and Henuan did not hesitate to put down the medicine box and follow Ruan Wanrong's maid out of the hall, leaving only Yun Jinnian and Ruan Wanrong inside.

"Sister Ruan, I'm really sorry for not being able to come to your wedding!"

Ruan Wanrong laughed, "Silly girl, you were out of the capital on important business, my little romance is nothing in comparison. I'm relieved now that I see you've returned safely!"

Yun Jinnian smiled, opened the medicine box, and handed a porcelain bottle to Ruan Wanrong, "Sister Ruan, this is for you, keep it safe and don't just give it away to anyone!"

"Such a precious thing, you should keep it for yourself, why give it to me!"

"You could give one pill to the old madam, she will certainly remember the favor. In the future, with her backing you in the Duan Family, no one will be able to bully you!"

Ruan Wanrong thought it over and found it reasonable.

"Then I won't be polite!" she said, reaching out to take it before continuing, "Grandmother gave me the deeds to three stores for you."

"For what purpose?"

"As a thank-you gift!"

Yun Jinnian laughed, "I came to the Duan Family for your sake, and besides, the Duan Family has already provided a thank-you gift!"

"Those were from before, these are for now, to encourage you to treat her with even more care. Don't be shy, take them, these stores are in excellent locations and are guaranteed to bring in a vast income no matter the business," Ruan Wanrong urged.

Yun Jinnian thought for a moment, "Alright then, I'll accept them!"

"There's one more thing, the uncles and brothers in the family have given thank-you gifts as well, and you shouldn't hesitate to accept those too!"

Yun Jinnian felt that Ruan Wanrong was a bit off, "Sister Ruan, have you encountered any trouble?"

Otherwise, why would she persuade her to accept the thank-you gifts from the Duan Family?

"It's not really trouble, just that someone is targeting the Duan Family. As imperial merchants for many years, they have accrued a significant amount of silver. Though money is a good thing, for the Duan Family, it's like a death knell. Someone is secretly working against them, but my husband has investigated for over a year and still hasn't uncovered anything!"

Chapter 505: The Situation is Serious

Yun Jinnian was shocked; she had not expected Ruan Wanrong to discuss such matters with her.

Although she was somewhat intelligent, she had little experience with such secretive affairs.

After some thought, she spoke, "I'm afraid I won't be of much help in this area, either. The only thing we can do now is to help the people in the residence detoxify first!"

She was also worried that the walls might have ears.

Perhaps, she should find a time to let Chu Yu and Duan Qimeng meet privately.

If Chu Yu had that intention, she would naturally be willing to help him make connections and amass strength.

After all, this was her sister Ruan. During her first appearance in the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence, when a group of young ladies sized her up, Ruan was the first to hold her hand.

The Duan Family had wealth, and Duan Qimeng was capable. If Chu Yu could win over Duan Qimeng, it would be a powerful boost.

Ruan Wanrong quickly nodded, "Look at me, rambling on senselessly!"

Yun Jinnian smiled and took Ruan Wanrong's hand, writing 'wait' in her palm, then touched her own ear.

Ruan Wanrong, being clever, immediately understood Yun Jinnian's meaning.

And she soon came to a realization.

If someone could covertly render all the Duan Family sons infertile, and no investigation could uncover it, it meant the culprit was deeply hidden.

Perhaps the walls had ears, and her every move was under surveillance.

Indeed, she had been thoughtless; she never used to be careful in her speech and actions,

If that was the case for her, the same went for the other branches of the family.

They had to split the family quickly. Once divided, each would lead their own lives, and if something happened, they wouldn't all be caught in the same net.

"Sister Ruan, let's go over!"

"Okay!"

Taking Yun Jinnian's hand to help her up, Ruan Wanrong went to carry Yun Jinnian's medicine box.

Yun Jinnian carried it herself, "This medicine box isn't heavy!"

Seeing Yun Jinnian carry it on her own, Ruan Wanrong did not insist and accompanied Yun Jinnian to the flower hall with a smile.

There, the sons of the Duan Family had been waiting for a while.

Even those who had gone out in the morning, upon hearing the message that Yun Jinnian would visit the Duan Residence in the afternoon, had called them back early.

Each one, older or younger than Yun Jinnian, greeted her with a respectful fist and palm salute, "Fourth Miss!"

Yun Jinnian bowed slightly, her voice serene, "Prepare some wet towels for me, as well as brushes, ink, paper, and inkstone!"

Once everything was ready, Yun Jinnian then spoke, "Let's begin then!"

Traders are sharp, and the men of the Duan Family even more so.

One after another, they let Duan Qimeng go first, each knowing the reason in their hearts.

Because of Ruan Wanrong's relationship, Yun Jinnian was bound to treat Duan Qimeng differently, and she would be meticulous. They were all poisoned, just to varying degrees. If Duan Qimeng's poison were cured, their hopes would be greatly uplifted.

This time, the matrons of each branch were unanimous, each one calm and composed, clutching their handkerchiefs and standing aside, their eyes filled with hope, anxiously watching Yun Jinnian.

Duan Qimeng sat opposite Yun Jinnian, rolled up his sleeves, exposing his sturdy wrist, and placed it on the pillow for pulse diagnosis.

Yun Jinnian slowly wiped her hands before taking Duan Qimeng's pulse.

Just a moment later, Yun Jinnian's brows furrowed slightly.

Duan Qimeng sat in silence, while Ruan Wanrong's heart raced, not daring to breathe loud.

Yun Jinnian withdrew her hand, "Next, let me take a look at someone else!"

Uncertain, but unwilling to conclude definitively, she thought.

Duan Qimeng stood up, casually indicated a brother, and as Yun Jinnian carefully examined the pulse, her brow furrowed once again.

"Next one!"

After examining several in succession, Yun Jinnian finally spoke, "In addition to the poison you were first afflicted with, you have been poisoned with another substance. The two poisons complement and counteract each other. Most importantly, each of you has been poisoned differently, the antidotes vary accordingly, and the required medicines are numerous and mostly rare!"

Chapter 506: They're All Poisoned

Yun Jinnian's words were like a sledgehammer, striking the hearts of the Duan Family members, and several women couldn't bear it and started to cry.

Her eyes reddened, Ruan Wanrong asked, "Sister Jinnian, do you have a way?"

"Of course, I have a way, and I have the prescription for the antidote, but just finding the herbs is very troublesome. Who on earth have you offended to have such a formidable poisoner come after you?" Yun Jinnian addressed this question to Duan Qimeng.

Duan Qimeng also shook his head slightly.

They were completely unaware of such malicious intent.

Yun Jinnian fell silent for a moment, as if thinking of something, then said urgently, "Sister Ruan, let me take your pulse!"

Ruan Wanrong, who dared not hesitate, sat down in front of Yun Jinnian without caring for formalities, lifting her sleeve to reveal her pale wrist for Yun Jinnian to take her pulse.

Yun Jinnian didn't dare to delay either, she wiped her hands and took Ruan Wanrong's pulse with great care.

Her expression grew increasingly grim.

Ruan Wanrong, growing nervous, didn't ask questions and looked anxiously at Yun Jinnian with teary eyes.

"Sister Ruan, don't worry, I will help you detoxify!" Yun Jinnian said and withdrew her hand.

Hearing this, Ruan Wanrong had not yet started crying when Duan Qimeng, who stood beside her, reached out to grip her shoulder, pulled her up, and embraced her tightly in his arms, holding her firmly while clenching his fists so hard that veins popped on the backs of his hands.

Ruan Wanrong then began to sob softly.

"Wuu wuu!"

Yun Jinnian watched, her own eyes reddening.

The one who administered the poison was truly ruthless, targeting the man first, and after he shared a bed with a woman, the poison was transmitted to her. Eventually, the poison in the woman was even more potent than in the man. After intercourse, it was transmitted back to the man, and this poison also carried a malevolent nature. The poisoned would have an insatiable desire during intercourse, demanding endlessly, rapidly depleting vital energy and hastening death.

The women were immediately frightening, their faces turning pale as they pushed toward Yun Jinnian, "Fourth Miss, please take a look at me too!"

Yun Jinnian nodded slightly.

She took each person's pulse one by one, eventually arriving at the same conclusion as with Ruan Wanrong.

They were all poisoned.

Yun Jinnian said nothing, but no one was a fool.

Several could not bear it and broke down crying.

Watching Yun Jinnian, Duan Qimeng said solemnly, "Please, Fourth Sister, write down the prescription first. I will immediately send people to buy whatever herbs are missing!"

Yun Jinnian nodded and said slowly, "I will take the pulse once more, both Sister Ruan and Brother-in-law Duan together, the same for the others!"

With both husband and wife together, Yun Jinnian took their pulses one by one and then composed the prescription with grave care.

By the time the sun had set and the sky had darkened, Yun Jinnian hadn't had a sip of tea, her throat was dry with thirst, and it was improper for her to speak up.

Moreover, everyone else was distracted, occupied with their grief, and nobody took any notice of her.

She understood their feelings and didn't take it to heart.

The men of the Duan Family might have appeared composed, but their hearts were probably filled with intense anxiety. Moreover, being careless by nature, they would be less likely to consider other matters.

"If you do not trust me, you can seek an eminent Imperial Physician to review the prescription, or have them take your pulse!" Yun Jinnian said, standing up.

"There's no need, I have full trust in you, Fourth Sister!" Duan Qimeng spoke up first.

The prescription written by Yun Jinnian contained a myriad of herbs, and he guessed that some might indeed be unnecessary, but perhaps they could be useful to others...

Without asking any further, Duan Qimeng understood that he just needed to gather all the herbs listed in Yun Jinnian's prescription.

Yun Jinnian nodded to Duan Qimeng but then turned to say to Ruan Wanrong, "Sister Ruan, the day is getting late. I will take my leave now. Do not take any medicine indiscriminately; the poison has not deeply penetrated and is not a serious harm!"

Chapter 507: The Duan Family's Wretchedness

Yun Jinnian was also afraid that Ruan Wanrong, in her desperation, would recklessly try any medicine she could find, which might end up being harmful to her body, especially if she unintentionally consumed medicines that counteracted each other, the consequences of which were unthinkable.

Although Ruan Wanrong was scared, she understood Yun Jinnian's concerns, "Sister Jinnian, you've really gone through a lot today. I'll visit you at your residence to express my gratitude another day!"

"No rush!"

Yun Jinnian said this and then, with a slight bow to everyone, left the Duan Residence with Hemei, Henuan, and Shi Jiayu.

Uncle Cheng drove the carriage, "Miss, where shall we go?"

"Let's go to the Han Residence. My mother is waiting for me there!"

Upon hearing this, Uncle Cheng responded, "Alright!"

And he drove the carriage to the Han Residence.

At the Duan Residence, after Yun Jinnian had left, the women's cries grew louder, while Ruan Wanrong calmed down and clutched Duan Qimeng's hand tightly.

"You go freshen up first; I will discuss with my father and uncle what to do next!"

Ruan Wanrong nodded her head

and returned to her courtyard.

Just after she had freshened up, the aunts, sister-in-laws, and maids came over with brocade boxes in their hands, and Ruan Wanrong immediately understood what they intended to do.

After inviting them into the courtyard and having the maids serve tea, Ruan Wanrong said, "There's no hurry. Sister Jinnian just got back, and she has many things to settle. Once she takes care of everything, I will personally invite her to stay in our residence for some time!"

"Qimeng's wife, it's all up to you then. When you go to the Yun Family, please deliver these small tokens to the Fourth Miss. They are not much, and we hope she won't disdain them!"

Ruan Wanrong accepted them on behalf of Yun Jinnian.

"By the way, did the Fourth Miss accept the deed to the house given by the old lady?"

Ruan Wanrong nodded, "She did!"

With that, everyone felt relieved.

It was good that Yun Jinnian had accepted; they feared she wouldn't.

Being indebted to someone often compels people to be obliging; hence, it was expected that Yun Jinnian would do her utmost to help the Duan Family members detoxify.

They also considered offering another store to Yun Jinnian, but thought it would be better to wait until after the poison was cured to provide silver instead; stores were difficult to acquire, yet could still generate income while under their possession.

Meanwhile,

the men's faces were grave.

As the highest-ranking official in the family, Duan Qimeng was naturally the one everyone listened to.

"For over a year, we haven't been able to find out who is plotting against us. We've switched servants again and again, yet the poisoning continues!" Duan Qimeng said, clenching his fists.

"It seems that having silver alone is not enough!"

The rest remained silent.

No matter what, at this point, all their hopes rested on Yun Jinnian.

"Who knows if Yun Jinnian can really cure the poison in us or if she's tricking us," someone muttered under their breath.

Duan Qimeng swept a cold gaze over them, "If you have doubts, feel free to seek other doctors. There's a saying that goes, don't employ those you distrust and don't distrust those you employ. Miss Yun doesn't owe us anything. If not for Wanrong, try bringing her to the Duan Residence on your own; it's preposterous to think otherwise!"

The meeting hall fell dead silent.

No one dared to say another word.

"Furthermore, once each of you has been cured of the poison, we will divide the family assets. From then on, each branch can go its own way, saving you all from such scheming!" Duan Qimeng announced, stood up, and then left with a flick of his sleeve.

With all his devoted efforts, what had he received in return?

Everyone was senseless, blinded by wealth; had it not been for the poisoning, they would probably have stirred up trouble long ago.

The Duan Family was falling into disarray from within, no help from outsiders needed.

It would be better to divide the family; that way, they wouldn't all be fixated on the silver, oblivious to being harmed.

Duan Qimeng returned to his courtyard to find Ruan Wanrong had already sent everyone away and was waiting for him at the doorway.

"Back already!"

Her voice was soft, and her eyes began to redden.

Duan Qimeng felt a surge of pity and gathered her into his embrace, "Everything will get better!"

Chapter 508: Husband and Wife as One

Ruan Wanrong knew that though one could say it was just fate, it was nothing short of an undeserved disaster.

Her heart ached for Duan Qimeng, and she also despised the hidden mastermind behind this.

It was truly too malicious.

They wanted to wipe out the Duan Family's lineage completely.

How deep must the grudge be for them to resort to such extremes?

"I'm okay, just feeling a bit unwell, holding me will make it better!" Wanrong said, tears streaming down her face.

Duan Qimeng carried her in his arms back to their room.

He laid her on the bed, instructed the maid to fetch water, personally washed Wanrong's face, wiped her hands, and only then did he hold her close and heave a deep sigh.

"Wanrong, I'm sorry, for letting you suffer alongside me!"

"Fool, we've been childhood sweethearts, promised to each other from a young age.

Now that we're husband and wife, we are one. No matter what happens, I have no regrets. If we truly die, I hope we die together and are buried side by side!"

Duan Qimeng was profoundly moved by her words.

He hugged Ruan Wanrong tightly, "We won't die, we're not going to die!"

"Mhm, we must live well, for Sister Jinnian!"

Ruan Wanrong started talking about the earlier incident, and after a moment's thought, Duan Qimeng said, "Since it was given to you, you should pass it on to Sister Jinnian."

"Mhm!"

The couple then talked about other matters until they realized that in the afternoon, they had been so preoccupied with their troubles that they didn't even offer Yun Jinnian a cup of tea.

Wanrong felt very uncomfortable about it.

In contrast to her discomfort, Yun Jinnian did not take it to heart. Her carriage rattled as it made its way to the Han Family residence. Upon arrival, a servant immediately welcomed her, "The servant greets the young miss!"

"Is my maternal grandfather here?"

"Yes, the master is here, as well as the lady and the young master. They are all in the main hall at the moment!"

Yun Jinnian smiled happily and quickened her steps toward the main hall, where she heard the hearty laughter of Han Tianci.

Yun Jinnian sped up, and upon hearing him shout "Sister," she ran towards him.

He hugged her tightly, "Sister, I've missed you!"

"I've missed you too!"

Yun Jinnian replied with a tender smile.

Han Tianci then led Yun Jinnian towards the main hall.

"Jinnian pays respect to maternal grandfather, and to mother!" Yun Jinnian curtsied as she greeted them.

Mrs. Han, seeing Yun Jinnian's wrinkled clothes, hurriedly said, "Quickly go to your quarters and freshen up. The meal is almost ready; you can eat as soon as you're done!"

Yun Jinnian nodded, and as Tianci wanted to follow, Mrs. Han held him back, "Tianci, stay here and keep your mother company for a while!"

Although Tianci was reluctant, he stayed.

Yun Jinnian's quarters in the Han Family were named Chaoyang Academy, facing the morning sun, with daylight slowly rising and sunshine illuminating the earth.

Chaoyang Academy was already prepared with hot water and clean clothes. Yun Jinnian bathed and changed, and when her hair was dry, the maid came to invite her to the dining hall.

Yun Jinnian asked Shi Jiayu, Hemei, and Henuan to stay behind and rest; it was safe in the Han Family residence.

Hemei and Henuan agreed.

Just as she stepped out of the courtyard, she saw Han Tianci grinning at her, twirling a tree branch in his hand.

"Sister!"

"Aren't you supposed to be talking with mother? Why have you come here?" Yun Jinnian asked, letting Tianci hold her hand.

"Hehe!" Tianci chuckled.

He didn't voice out that he wasn't particularly fond of Mrs. Han, his mother, and that this time upon returning home, he always felt Mrs. Han's gaze upon him was strange, almost like she didn't want him and Yun Jinnian to be together.

Although it wasn't very obvious, he didn't like it.

He knew he was getting older and couldn't always be with his sister. He had to maintain decorum and consider his sister's reputation.

But he had only grown taller; in fact, he was still just eight years old.

"What's so funny, did you sleep well last night?"

Chapter 509: Tianci's Thoughts

"Mhm!"

Yun Jinnian's concern warmed Han Tianci's heart.

He nodded vigorously, and fearing that Yun Jinnian wouldn't believe him, he solemnly said, "I returned yesterday and spent some time chatting with Grandfather before cleaning up and eating. Worried about indigestion, I walked around the courtyard a few times before heading back to my room to sleep, and slept almost until noontime today, hehe!"

Yun Jinnian laughed as well.

The siblings then quietly talked about other matters.

"Sister, you've worked hard!" Han Tianci sincerely said.

While he had been sleeping like a log at home, Yun Jinnian had been up since early morning getting to work.

"You're still a child now, but when you grow up, you'll definitely be busier than your sister!"

"Then I must start working hard from now on!"

"Go for it!"

The two shared a similar smile.

Han Tianci enjoyed spending time with Yun Jinnian.

She wouldn't expect him to be this or that, nor would she impose her thoughts on him. Everything was up to him, and if he made a mistake, she would gently remind him. Even so, she wouldn't force him to change but would want him to decide for himself, kindly tolerating his mistakes.

Always presenting the best to him, she made him feel profoundly warm.

She also didn't handle him with excessive care; she was bringing him up to be a true man in her own way.

It's said that an elder brother is like a father, and an elder sister is like a mother; this saying is by no means false.

"Sister!" Han Tianci called softly, sticking his bottom out and leaning on Yun Jinnian's shoulder.

"Hmm?"

"Tomorrow is Mid-Autumn Festival, I'd like to go to the Imperial Palace too!"

Yun Jinnian was surprised for a moment but then thought it over, "Alright, but you'll need to change your clothes!"

"Hehe, I know, I'll disguise myself as a girl. Don't worry, sister, after I enter the Imperial Palace, I'll be well-behaved and won't run around, I'll stay by your side the whole time!"

The Imperial Palace was sure to be filled with watchful eyes; he wouldn't dare to act recklessly.

"I'm not afraid of those things; it's just that some places are always inconvenient!"

Han Tianci immediately understood what Yun Jinnian meant and blushed, "When the time comes, you can just keep watch for me!"

Even if he was bold enough, he wouldn't dare to relieve himself just anywhere.

Yun Jinnian nodded, smiling.

In the Imperial Palace, there were resting areas for female members, but she wondered if she was allowed to bring multiple maids. Would bringing three maids cause them to be stopped?

They would cross that bridge when they came to it. Tomorrow she would go to the Princess Residence first to check the Princess's pulse and then see Prince Yanjun.

Entering the palace with the Princess, it was unlikely that anyone would dare to question the number of maids she brought with her.

When the two reached the dining room, the table was already set with dishes full of color, aroma, and flavor, clearly prepared with Mrs. Han's careful consideration.

"Mother, Grandfather!" Yun Jinnian called out gently.

Han Xuzi stroked his beard, immensely pleased.

Mrs. Han, beaming, came forward and took Yun Jinnian's hand, "Must be starving, sit down quickly, let's have our meal!"

Then, she looked toward Han Tianci, "Tianci, come and sit down for the meal!"

Mrs. Han felt she had not given enough attention to both her son and daughter, but unlike her daughter, her son was not as affectionate towards her, and she did not know how to bond with him; although young, he already had his own ideas.

When she had pulled him away earlier, he didn't say anything, but she was sure he must have been unwilling.

Over the past year, the bond between the siblings had grown stronger and more intuitive.

She should be happy about it, yet why was there a faint ache in her heart...

Han Xuzy also motioned for the two children to sit down. It was a rare occasion for the family of four to gather and enjoy a harmonious meal.

After the meal, Han Xuzy said to Yun Jinnian, "Jinnian, come with me to the study!"

Yun Jinnian nodded in agreement, aware of what Han Xuzy wanted to inquire about.

Han Tianci quickly said, "I'll go too, I'll go too!"

Chapter 510: Step by Step

Han Xuzy didn't refuse and led the two children leisurely towards the study, inquiring about the occurrences along the way. Han Tianci skirted around the more serious matters and didn't tell him about the incidents at the Moon-Watching Sect, simply saying, "Ask Sister."

Yun Jinnian, however, didn't hide anything and carefully recounted the events one by one.

Then Han Xuzy said, "Now that you mention it, I do recall that your great-grandmother indeed came from Nanjiang, but she passed away not long after giving birth to me, leaving me with scant memories of her. There's very little in the house pertaining to her, virtually nothing at all!"

"My great-grandmother intended to conceal her past, bringing very few things with her to the Capital City. Grandfather, I've now agreed to become the Moon-Watching Sect's Saintess. Once the matters in the Capital City are resolved, I..."

Yun Jinnian intended to say she would go to Nanjiang, but then there was Chu Yu.

His heart was so vast.

In truth, it wasn't that Chu Yu's heart was vast, feeling obligated to this earthly realm. Rather, the Emperor didn't leave him any room, with assassination attempts even on the journey back to the Capital City.

Past assassination attempts were too numerous to count.

In the royal family, the bond between brothers was as fragile as paper.

Yun Jinnian also thought of her own relationships with the Yun Family and couldn't help but sigh; she and Chu Yu were always being let down.

"Do you want to go to Nanjiang?" Han Xuizi asked.

Yun Jinnian shook her head, "I'm not sure yet!"

"If you truly grow weary of the Capital City, then go. I can tell those three old men treat you well!"

With utmost respect and amiability, upon arriving at the Han Family, and after arranging accommodations, they didn't come out again.

The maids, old women, and young servants attending to them all said they were very easy to get along with.

"Mm, I will seriously consider it!"

They entered the study.

Only then did Han Xuzi ask, "How is Old Madam Dai's health?"

"Very good, fundamentally out of danger by now. As for the Duan Family, they are likely in great trouble!"

Han Xuzi did not expect Yun Jinnian to see so clearly.

He nodded and said, "That is also why I refused to treat the members of the Duan Family!"

"?" Yun Jinnian silently looked at Han Xuzi.

Han Tianci also pricked up his ears, listening intently.

He hadn't been to the Duan Family and was unaware of the situation, but he was eager to hear some gossip.

"The entire Duan Family is poisoned, and the poison all comes from Poison King Valley!"

Yun Jinnian was unaware of the matters regarding Poison King Valley.

Han Xuzi continued, "To this day, no one knows how many people Poison King Valley has or where it is located. The mere mention of Poison King Valley, however, has been around for many years. Poison King Valley sometimes emerges to sell poisons, which are incredibly expensive, and a tragedy like the Duan Family's is unheard of!"

Yun Jinnian fell silent for a moment before saying, "Grandfather, if it weren't for Sister Ruan, the lives of the Duan Family would have no relation to me. But since Sister Ruan married into the Duan Family, I only sought to cure her and Brother-in-law Duan of their poison, ignoring the others. I cannot be so unrighteous. Besides, as a doctor, I cannot stand idly by and watch others die; I just can't do it!"

Han Xuzi opened his mouth as if to say something, but Han Tianci spoke first, "I support Sister!"

Han Xuze laughed, "The two of you siblings are indeed of one mind!"

Indeed, exceedingly proud.

His granddaughter's medical skills were unmatched, already far surpassing his own.

She also had a benevolent heart, which was a good thing.

His grandson was also sensible. On this journey back, he had grown taller, become more mature, developed his own ideas, and handled himself in the world with the shrewdness and wisdom that truly only the life of wanderer could provide.

Yun Jinnian's smile was gentle, while Han Tianci's laughter was hearty and carefree.

Han Xuze was becoming increasingly gentle and compassionate, "Since you've made your decision, go ahead as you see fit. From now on, take more people with you when you go out. Tianci, your Martial Arts practice must not be neglected. Since ancient times, medicine and poison have been inseparable; you both can't just focus on Medical Books, you need to study poison production as well. Tianci, follow your sister's side from now on, observe more, learn more!"