

Indulgence 551

Chapter 551: Coaxing and Deceiving

Chu Yu stood to one side, a cold smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth, his eyes flickering with shrewdness.

He took a small sip from the wine jug, gently savoring it before swallowing it down.

Then he spoke out, "The two of you, disturbing Uncle Prince's romantic affairs is really not proper!"

"Heehee, little royal uncle, since you say that, why are you watching too?" Chu Zhaowei asked.

But his gaze was on the stark naked body pinned down beneath the Prince of Loyalty.

So this is what a woman's body looks like.

Following Chu Yu around, yet Chu Yu forbade him from sleeping with women too soon.

This might have been Chu Yu's desire, as well as his own parents' earnest requests; otherwise, with Chu Yu's philosophy of avoiding unnecessary troubles, he wouldn't bother with how many women they slept with.

Chu Yu curled his lip and said nothing.

In the room

Le Xun was so frightened she felt as if her soul had scattered, and the Prince of Loyalty was similarly startled into immediate abstinence.

One hurriedly covered her face, while the other haphazardly dressed, both too shy to face Chu Yu, Chu Zhaowei, and Chu Renzhi.

Le Xun hid away.

The Prince of Loyalty's face flushed red, "Ayu..."

He knew that both Chu Zhaowei and Chu Renzhi followed Chu Yu's lead; if Chu Yu was willing to keep their secret, then no one else would know.

If Chu Yu wasn't willing...

If this incident caused a stir, losing face would be the least of problems; arousing His Majesty's suspicion would be the real issue.

"Prince Grandpa, then we'll take our leave!" Chu Zhaowei and Chu Renzhi said, and ran off in a cloud of dust.

As they passed through the archway, they even called out and dispersed a bunch of dandies, leaving the gagged servant dumped on the ground. No one paid him a second glance, allowing him to lie there, his eyes brimming with tears, full of grievance and indignation.

He was originally going to find the Princess, but was blocked by a group of dandies.

Each of them teasingly asked him if his flustered look was from doing something bad, so they followed him to this courtyard.

He wanted to warn the Prince, but his mouth was covered.

Chu Yu took a sip of wine, "Uncle Prince, according to etiquette, we ought to address you as 'Royal Uncle'. Why did you insist so adamantly on us calling you 'Prince Uncle'?"

Chu Yu asked indifferently, not even glancing toward the house.

It was as if the people inside the house didn't matter to him at all.

"Ayu, this matter, it's a long story. The people inside the house..." The Prince of Loyalty sobered up as well.

He was full of regret, and also deeply remorseful.

"Who is in the house is not important, what's important is that Uncle Prince should take care of his health, as you are no longer a young man. Also, cousin Xinhuan is already a father. If you were to have a child younger than your little nephew, others may praise you for your perennial youth, but it would be extremely embarrassing for Aunt Princess and cousin Xinhuan!"

The Prince of Loyalty replied tentatively, "You make sense!"

Chu Yu grinned, his smile carefree and heartless, "Then, Prince Uncle, I will take my leave first!"

The Prince of Loyalty nodded, relieved, and then asked, "Why isn't Jinfeng here today?"

"Jinfeng has gone back to her fief!"

"Ayu, Jinfeng isn't getting any younger, why hasn't she sought out a consort yet?" The Prince of Loyalty felt it was his duty to show concern for his niece.

It was a gesture meant to curry favor with Chu Yu and prevent him from gossiping.

"Jinfeng has always been extremely headstrong; she doesn't want to casually choose a consort, saying she wants to find a man who will be devoted to her for life, regardless if he's a peddler or a beggar, a thief or a bandit. As long as he is sincere with her, she won't seek a consort; she would rather marry one!" Chu Yu said, then bowed his fists toward the Prince of Loyalty, "Prince Uncle, if in the future Jinfeng truly marries a man of low status, I hope you will speak kindly on her behalf, and prevent too many irrelevant people from gossiping about her!"

Chapter 552: Ruthless and Merciless

Prince Zhuangyong paused.

He had always valued matching doors and windows.

But Jinfeng was the deceased emperor's youngest daughter and also the most favored one, spoiled to the skies.

She acted willfully, doing as she pleased.

However, today, caught in such a significant compromising position by Chu Yu, he dared not boss around concerning Jinfeng's marriage.

"Ayu, rest assured, when the time comes, Uncle Wang will prioritize Jinfeng's wishes!"

Chu Yu smiled, made a cupped fist salute, "Thank you, Uncle Wang, then I will leave first!"

Having said this, he turned around.

His smile was profound and inscrutable.

It was also exuberant.

Speaking of this matter, the emperor won't do anything, but there will definitely be a loss of loyalty.

He went through so much trouble to stage this scene, not to cause a scandal that everyone would know of.

Le Xun is a fox spirit; naturally, the best strategy is to send her into the palace to bewitch the emperor.

He now had a hold over Prince Zhuangyong and Le Xun, even the wife of Prince Zhuangyong, hmph...

This is just the beginning.

Those who scheme against Jinfeng and him are truly courting death.

After Chu Yu left, Prince Zhuangyong's body felt somewhat weak.

Seeing Le Xun dressed and sitting on the ground weeping, he took a deep breath before saying, "Stop crying, it is my fault today. If you still wish to enter the palace, remember nothing happened today, and I will try my best to help you ascend to the position of Noble Consort! If you are willing to stay in Wang Residence as a concubine..."

The Empress' natal family is the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence.

Though the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence is known for its integrity, they hold substantial influence, not easily shaken.

In this lifetime, unless the Empress passes away or commits an atrocity intolerable by heaven, she will not be deposed.

Especially since the Empress has neither sons nor daughters and manages the harem efficiently – no consort dares provoke her but instead makes every effort to curry favor with her.

No matter which prince ascends to the throne in the future, he can't bypass the Empress.

"My lord..." Le Xun called softly, tears streaming down her face.

"Enter the palace. The emperor is in his prime. If you're lucky, you might give birth to a child or two. If it's a son..." Prince Zhuangyong paused, a fleeting thought crossing his mind, too fast to catch.

Le Xun's eyes lit up.

With these words from Prince Zhuangyong, she naturally wouldn't speak of today's events.

If she indeed bore a son, she would certainly contend for power, but given that the current princes were already grown, her chances of success were nil.

But with the support of Prince Zhuangyong...

"Yes!"

Le Xun replied.

She could not hide her excitement.

Prince Zhuangyong sighed in relief upon hearing her response.

At last, he had appeased her!

This incident was suppressed by Prince Zhuangyong and his wife and did not get out.

Deep in her heart, the wife of Prince Zhuangyong hated Le Xun.

This little wench, if not for the emperor's command, she would have found a way to kill her and dump her in the mass grave, not even leaving a whole corpse.

Despite her hatred, she could do nothing.

After thinking it over, the wife of Prince Zhuangyong quietly sent a message to Noble Consort Wei in the palace, who immediately sent a message back out.

The wife of Prince Zhuangyong then arranged for a nourishing soup to be prepared and delivered to Le Xun to drink.

At Prince Rui Residence

Chu Yu leaned back in his chair, toying with the cup in his hand.

Listening to Luoyi report the news gathered from inquiries, "Wait a few days, once she enters the palace, let Imperial Physician Zhang take her pulse, and inform her of when she was poisoned!"

One must let these people suffer the consequences of their actions and bring about their own demise.

Otherwise, it won't quell the hatred in one's heart.

At this thought, Chu Yu exerted force in his hand, crushing the cup, opened his fingers, and the fragments fell from his hand.

Chapter 553: Bully the Weak, Fear the Strong

After taking the medicine prescribed by Imperial Physician Zhang, Yun Jinnian's Auspicious Water remained unclean, and in fact, it increased even more.

Frightened, Mrs. Yuan no longer dared to give it to Yun Jinnian.

Mrs. Han couldn't care less and personally invited Han Xuzy to come over.

After Han Xuzy took Yun Jinnian's pulse, he was somewhat puzzled.

"Father?" Mrs. Han called softly.

"Jinnian's body appears to be quite robust," he noted, seeing Yun Jinnian's rosy cheeks and excellent color.

The pulse was calm and steady, showing no signs of weakness.

"Then why?" Mrs. Han questioned.

Yun Jinnian was silent for a moment, pursed his lips, and then gathered the courage to say, "Grandfather, I feel as if some filthy substance is being expelled from my body!"

Han Xuzi nodded his head in agreement.

This was also what puzzled him.

Yun Jinnian's constitution had improved a lot compared to before.

Previously, she was frail and seemed difficult to nurture back to health, but after her menstrual cycle began, her body started to recover.

"In that case, let's wait a few more days!"

Yun Jinnian nodded her head in agreement.

When Han Xuzi was leaving, Yun Jinnian asked him to help find some Medical Books on women's diseases.

Having lain in bed for so many days, she had begun to want to read Medical Books again.

Han Xuzi nodded, "Alright!"

Mrs. Han saw off Han Xuzi from the residence, watching him board the carriage before she prepared to turn back, but then she saw Yun Qi's carriage approach, and her brow furrowed slightly.

She turned and quickly left.

She didn't bother to look back as Yun Qi got out of the carriage, carefully assisting the lavishly dressed Shuangxi.

"Be careful!"

Shuangxi burst into laughter, "Second Master, I am fine!"

But, looking at Mrs. Han's receding figure, "Second Master, that's the Lady!"

Yun Qi turned his head to look, seeing Mrs. Han walking unhurriedly and leisurely, and asked Shuangxi with a smile, "Would you like to become a concubine?"

Shuangxi was taken aback, and then quickly asserted, "This servant is willing to serve the Second Master all my life!"

Yun Qi laughed.

He was taking Shuangxi to Qingjue Academy, but Bai Que blocked their way.

"Second Master, the Lady does not wish to see you. If you are here for Shuangxi, the Lady has said to reward this hairpin to Shuangxi, and from now on, she will be Lady Xi!"

In this way, it was also a clear path.

Whether to drink tea or not no longer mattered.

Yun Qi looked at Bai Que, "Are these Mrs. Han's exact words?"

"Yes!"

Bai Que felt a sense of astonishment inside.

The relationship between Yun Qi and Mrs. Han was now truly beyond any chance of reconciliation.

"Go tell your mistress that I am asking her to go to the main hall to grant Shuangxi her status!" Yun Qi finished speaking and pulled Shuangxi away with him.

Bai Que stood stunned for a moment then quickly entered the house.

She opened her mouth, uncertain of what to say.

Mrs. Han, however, was very composed as she looked up, "I heard it all. Does he think he can humiliate me like this? Yun Qi really underestimates people too much!"

She stood up and straightened her creaseless dress, "Let's go see this Lady Xi!"

Mrs. Han felt somewhat amused in her heart.

She schemed to bring Concubine Lian to Yun Qi's side, yet Concubine Lian foolishly brought Shuangxi into the residence; she would have her own difficulties to face in the future.

Mrs. Han walked ahead, with Bai Que following respectfully behind her.

As they passed maids and old women of the residence, who paid their respects, they also discretely sized up Mrs. Han with scorn, pity, or even disgust in their eyes.

Mrs. Han's lips curled up slightly as she asked Bai Que, "Bai Que, what would you say is the appropriate way to deal with insubordinate servants in a residence?"

"In response to the Lady, for those with Servitude Contracts, beating, killing, or selling them away is possible. Even those without contracts can be taken to Jingzhao Prefecture for record, and expelled!" Bai Que's voice was calm, but it scared the onlooking maids and old women into scattering.

It was then that Mrs. Han said to Bai Que, "You see, they're all a bunch of people who bully the weak and fear the strong!"

Chapter 554: Gentle and Graceful

Bai Que remained silent.

Mrs. Han took strides into the main hall.

Seeing Yun Qi sitting at the head position and glancing at Shuangxi standing to the side, who looked quite attractive and was dressed beautifully, she indeed appeared somewhat noble and distinguished.

Mrs. Han sat down on the other side of the host's seat, "Serve the tea!"

A maid immediately brought over a teacup, and Shuangxi, holding the teacup, knelt in front of Mrs. Han, "Madam, please drink the tea!"

Mrs. Han took the teacup, touched it to her lips, then set it beside the table, and took a hairpin from Bai Que's hand to insert it into Shuangxi's hair—her movements fluid and graceful.

"Concubine Xi, serve Second Master well from now on, bear him several children, and you will live in the courtyard next to Concubine Lian!"

"Thank you, Madam!" Shuangxi was overjoyed.

She hastily kowtowed.

From this moment on, she was Concubine Xi.

Once she bore children, she too could live a comfortable life just like Concubine Lian.

"Rise," said Mrs. Han indifferently, motioning Bai Que to help Concubine Xi to her feet.

She then stood up and said to Yun Qi, "I shall take my leave now!"

Yun Qi remained silent.

He had wanted to ask how Jinnian was doing, yet he didn't know how to broach the subject, let alone how to face her.

That was his and Shu Niang's child.

Now she hated him, and Shu Niang hated him too.

Mrs. Han took her leave.

Concubine Xi stood up, looking at Yun Qi, "Second Master, is Madam angry?"

"It's nothing, come, let me show you your courtyard. If anything is missing, we'll go out and buy it tomorrow to complete it!"

Concubine Xi nodded, "Yes!"

She was exceptionally happy.

With an additional favored Concubine Xi in the household, Mrs. He said nothing more. The main branch had also gained several newcomers; she had since grown indifferent to Yun Chen, only intending to manage the household well, marry off her three sons, and await the marriage of her two younger daughters.

As for anything else, she no longer dwelt on it.

Love and affection, at her age, were feelings that should have been looked upon lightly long ago.

"Send a congratulatory gift to Concubine Xi. It need not be too extravagant, just respectable enough will suffice!"

Regardless of her favor, she was still merely a concubine.

No better than pets.

Bearing children, left to be raised by concubines—forever barred from the main gate and unable to step through the second—what could they learn?

A child raised by a concubine, how much promise could they hold?

Tianmi immediately went to prepare the gift.

Mrs. He then inquired about Yun Jinnian's situation, and Tianmi reported everything in detail. Mrs. He fell silent for a moment, "Could there be some hidden illness?"

Almost half a month had passed and the Auspicious Water had not yet cleared; if it wasn't some hidden illness, then what was it?

Nevertheless, the specific nature of this hidden illness still required careful investigation.

Mrs. He gently sipped from her teacup.

Unbeknownst to herself, why her thoughts seemed to begrudge both Mrs. Han and Yun Jinnian of their well-being.

On the second day of September, Yun Jinnian, who had been bedridden for nearly twenty days, finally felt completely recuperated.

After a comfortable hot bath and putting on clean clothes, she felt her chest was swollen and a bit painful.

Having experienced it once before, she knew what had happened to her.

"Miss, it seems you have grown taller!" Mrs. Yuan said while styling Yun Jinnian's hair into a beautiful hairstyle.

She adorned it with lovely hair accessories and earrings.

"Nanny, these days have been hard on you!"

"Not at all, not at all!" Mrs. Yuan replied with a smile, feeling joyful in her heart.

Her miss had grown from a baby to a child and now, at last, to a young lady.

How wonderful.

"Nanny, I plan to go out for a while, will you come with me?" Yun Jinnian asked softly.

"Where to? I'd rather not, there's nothing of interest outside for me. I'll stay in the Niannian Garden to prevent those unsavory people from causing trouble!"

Chapter 555: Soft Persuasion

Mrs. Yuan initially wanted to go but then changed her mind and was not willing anymore.

She hadn't left the house for over a year, fearing that she might embarrass herself and cause trouble for Yun Jinnian.

But Yun Jinnian took Mrs. Yuan's hand, "Nanny, let's go. We'll stop by Xufuji to buy pastries first, then head to Huiquan Tower for tea and lunch, and afterward, we can visit the fabric store to see if there are any new styles of clothing. We should also buy some jewelry!"

In her hand, she already had some silver, and with those millions of taels from Chu Yu, she was indeed one of the wealthiest people around.

Nanny Rong and Yaniang absolutely could not go out at whim, afraid of being recognized by acquaintances.

For people like them, unless their wrongful grievances were cleared or all their acquaintances had died, they could not freely appear in public—being recognized would spell disaster.

Yun Jinnian did not insist, for Niannian Garden could not really be left without anyone.

Taking Mrs. Yuan, Hemei, Henuan with her, even Ru Yue was brought along by Shi Jiayu.

Nanny Rong then took her sewing materials and, calling Yaniang over, sewed under the eaves, occasionally talking with Yaniang.

This serene and beautiful time hardly felt real.

It seemed so surreal, yet knowing that all her loved ones had died and she was the only one left, it felt so true.

"Yaniang, if I were young, I would have wanted to marry someone and have two children, but it's too late..." Nanny Rong said, not without a sigh.

Hearing this, Yaniang stopped her thread dividing and glanced at Nanny Rong.

Then continued with her work, and after a long while, spoke in a hoarse voice, "We are barely protecting ourselves now, how tough would that be—you still really want to have a child?"

Nanny Rong stiffened.

Indeed, they were barely protecting themselves at the moment. If their identities were discovered, even the young miss would be implicated.

"I was being foolish!"

Having had good days for too long, she had started to indulge in fanciful thoughts.

That truly wouldn't do.

Yaniang, without lifting her head or looking at Nanny Rong, focused solely on dividing the thread.

Yun Jinnian went to Qingjue Academy to invite Mrs. Han to go out with her, only to find out that Mrs. Han was having her period and couldn't join.

Yun Jinnian felt a tinge of disappointment.

"Mother has sent Bai Que to bring you silver!"

She had intended to say she had silver of her own, but seeing Mrs. Han's enduring gaze, Yun Jinnian nodded, "Thank you, Mother!"

"Bai Que, bring more!" Mrs. Han instructed Bai Que.

Bai Que went and soon returned with a purse; only Bai Que knew how much was inside.

"Take it for your use, and keep the rest for yourself. It will come in handy if you want to buy something!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian took the silver note and left Qingjue Academy.

It was only after Yun Jinnian had disappeared from the doorway that Mrs. Han stood up and watched from the window, asking Bai Que with a distant voice, "Do you think she's closer to Mrs. Yuan than to me?"

Towards Mrs. Yuan, Yun Jinnian would sweetly cajole and speak softly.

She would even share little secrets with Mrs. Yuan, looking at her warmly.

Towards her, there was plenty of respect but not enough intimacy.

Bai Que couldn't help but sigh upon hearing this.

The lady was overthinking again.

"My lady, during Miss's hardest years, it was Nanny Yuan who stayed by her side and endured it all with her. No matter what, all that Nanny Yuan did was expected of her!"

Mrs. Han shook her head, her eyes reddening slightly, on the verge of tears, "Bai Que, nothing is expected. There may be certain expectations between a master and a servant, but during those years, Mrs. Yuan could have left, yet she didn't go. Her affection for Jinnian is not less than mine; she may not have given as much wealth as I have, but her sincerity to Jinnian is greater than mine!"

Mrs. Han had a feeling.

If one day she and Mrs. Yuan faced danger together, Jinnian would definitely choose to save Mrs. Yuan.

Chapter 556: Spending Generously

This feeling was so intense it nearly drove Mrs. Han to the brink of madness.

She took deep breaths, in and out, again and again.

She felt she should stay at the Huguo Temple for a few days, or perhaps at Yingci'an.

"Bai Que!"

"Madam?"

"Pack up. Once I feel a bit better, let's visit Yingci'an," Mrs. Han said faintly before turning and entering the bedroom.

Bai Que stood rooted to the spot, unable to come back to her senses for a long time.

It was the first time she realized her mistress was actually somewhat selfish.

She pursed her lips and went to pack things up.

Yun Jinnian, leading Mrs. Yuan and the others, entered Xufuji and bought a lot of pastries.

"Miss, do you want one of each type?" Mrs. Yuan asked anxiously.

Having not been out for a long time, she was both excited and nervous.

Yun Jinnian nodded, "Nanny, have a taste. Whatever you like, let's buy some to take back first, and later, we can have someone come out every few days to buy them for you to eat!"

The nanny smiled, her eyes crinkling, "All good, all good!"

What she ate was not important; what mattered was that Yun Jinnian had her, the nanny, in her heart.

Yun Jinnian sighed gently, "Shopkeeper, pack all the tasty things you have, and prepare an extra portion to send to the Han Residence!"

Having not seen Han Tianci for several days, Yun Jinnian wanted to visit the Han Family to see him, but feared disturbing his martial arts practice.

She could only send over some pastries.

Tianci liked sweets.

She could also tell Tianci that she was better now and that he could sneak over to the Yun Family to play with her.

The shopkeeper immediately had the boy pack up the pastries; after Yun Jinnian paid the silver, she led Mrs. Yuan and the rest out of Xufuji and they strolled aimlessly on the street.

At first, everyone was a bit constrained, but they eventually relaxed and bought all sorts of rare items. After all, the silver they had saved for over a year had yet to be spent.

Shi Jiayu didn't have much silver on her, but that didn't dampen her joy.

If she found something she liked, she would beg Yun Jinnian to buy it for her. Yun Jinnian, treating no one unfairly, picked something out for everyone, including Maid Rong and Yaniang.

"Miss, are we also going to Jinshang Pavilion?" Mrs. Yuan asked.

She didn't really want to go.

Because Jinshang Pavilion bore the name 'Jin', which clashed with Yun Jinnian's.

"Of course, we are. Later, each of you can pick out two sets of clothes, or you can choose fabric to take back and make your own!"

It was rare to come out, so naturally, they should enjoy themselves.

Mrs. Yuan pursed her lips.

Yun Jinnian knew what she was upset about but didn't explain. She simply smiled softly, warmth suffusing her eyes and brows.

A beautiful miss, accompanied by seven or eight maids and older women, walked the streets; two horse-drawn carriages trailed them, one carriage used to store things. Vendors on both sides of the street were exceedingly warm, beckoning people to come and buy.

It was because the miss was generous with her money, only caring about whether she liked an item, with no regard for the price.

She would buy in dozens whenever she made a purchase, delighting vendors immensely.

After buying some trinkets on the street, they headed to Jinshang Pavilion.

As Tianchu Country's largest clothing store, Jinshang Pavilion had branches throughout all the major towns of Tianchu Country. The clothes were exquisite and gorgeous; one could buy ready-made clothes, or just the fabric to make their own.

Most importantly, the attendants and shop boys at Jinshang Pavilion were all women, wearing uniforms. Upon seeing Yun Jinnian enter, they immediately greeted her, "I have seen the young miss. Would you like to look at ready-made clothes or fabrics?"

"Is there a private room on the second floor?" Yun Jinnian inquired.

"There is, miss, please follow me!" said the attendant, a tad more respectfully.

Entering a private room on the second floor was subject to a spending requirement.

Yun Jinnian, accompanied by Mrs. Yuan and the others, followed upstairs to the private room, where the window was open to the bustling street below. It was somewhat noisy but exceptionally real. She then said to the attendant, "Bring over several more cups of tea, and get the finest fabrics you have here at Jinshang Pavilion, as well as some ready-made clothes. We'll take our time selecting!"

Chapter 557: The Third Brother Across

The servant had a keen eye for quality.

Yun Jinnian's remark also made it clear that he intended to reward the servants with tea. His gaze swept over them, taking note of the numbers, and he walked to the doorway to quietly instruct a few people. Those few immediately set out to carry out their tasks.

Before long, the tea was steeped and served.

Yun Jinnian's was of the highest quality, with Mrs. Yuan's and the others being slightly inferior.

Mrs. Yuan and her companions also found the tea exceptionally good.

When the fabric was brought over, Jinnian smiled and said, "Nanny, everyone pick your own, two outfits per person. When we cut the fabric, we'll cut some extra for making the tops of shoes or perhaps use it to make lace edges!"

Mrs. Yuan hurriedly said, "Miss, even if these fabrics were made into clothes for us, we wouldn't be wearing them out. It would be better to give us something more ordinary!"

Hearing this, Jinnian felt that Mrs. Yuan made sense and after a moment's thought, "Then each of you take two bolts of this brocade to save for future clothes, and make two outfits from ordinary cotton fabric!"

Mrs. Yuan seemed to want to say something, but Jinnian had already made a final decision, "That's decided, then. Pick whichever colors you like!"

He sipped his tea in small gulps, observing the passersby on the street.

Utterly relaxed.

Little did he know, he had already caught someone else's eye at that moment.

Feeling watched, Jinnian turned his head and saw Dai Hanbo.

"Dai third brother?"

Dai Hanbo lowered his gaze, then quickly looked up again, nodding politely to Jinnian across the street.

Jinnian also nodded back, lifted his teacup, and gestured a toast to Dai Hanbo from across the street.

Dai Hanbo felt a wave of nervous excitement, hastily lifted his teacup, and toasted to Jinnian before taking a sip of his tea.

He had never found the tea of this establishment anything special.

He had come to this restaurant today to meet a friend, who was late. Out of politeness, he had already waited for two hours, and his friend was yet to arrive, but instead, he ended up seeing Jinnian, who was buying fabric in the Jinshang Pavilion.

He wished he had the opportunity to accompany her in buying clothes and fabrics, to stroll through the streets with her, to buy everything she liked.

But, considering himself a gentleman, he dared not desecrate a fair lady.

Just being able to glimpse her from afar satisfied him greatly.

Looking over at Jinnian again, he saw her leaning by the window, watching the people on the street or occasionally nodding to a servant.

Dai Hanbo let a contented and gentle smile play on his lips, not even realizing that his friend had arrived.

"Brother Dai, I'm really sorry, I was delayed by some trivial matters!" His friend arrived, drenched in sweat and profusely apologizing.

Dai Hanbo shook his head, "It's alright, have a seat!"

He was, in fact, somewhat relieved by his friend's tardiness.

The friend sat down, attempting to chat with Dai Hanbo, but could tell Hanbo's mind was elsewhere. Following Hanbo's gaze, he saw Jinnian by the window across the street.

He inwardly sighed at the sight of such a stunning beauty, understanding why even the serene Dai Hanbo was moved with worldly thoughts.

He did not disturb Hanbo, leisurely sipping his tea.

Jinnian could feel Hanbo's gaze on her, yet it wasn't very focused, as if it were just an occasional glance.

Jinnian didn't read too much into it.

She set down her teacup to help Mrs. Yuan choose the colors of the fabric.

She also selected two bolts each for Mrs. Han and Bai Que before paying the Silver and leaving the Jinshang Pavilion.

Dai Hanbo watched Jinnian go and felt an impulse to follow her out, but he also knew that doing so would reveal his feelings.

Upon leaving the Jinshang Pavilion, everyone was in high spirits, and Jinnian suggested they go buy accessories.

They all happily agreed.

Even the typically composed Ru Yue was blushing with anticipation, whispering excitedly with Shi Jiayu.

Hemei, Henuan, Hongxiu, Hongdou, and Hongye all came from the same place, sharing a strong bond and unity that made it hard for outsiders to intrude upon.

Chapter 558: Saving Someone

Mrs. Yuan was a nanny, and at Niannian Garden, she was the second in command only to Yun Jinnian; everyone had to heed her words. Ru Yue and Yaniang mostly kept to themselves, handling their assigned tasks without much interaction with others. Becoming close with them was also quite difficult.

Shi Jiayu came later and could talk with Ru Yue. The two of them got along quite well.

In the Capital City, there was a Jinshang Pavilion that sold clothes and a Qiaoshi Pavilion that sold ornaments. It was said that both establishments were owned by the same person, but who that person was remained a mystery to most; only that it wasn't someone from the Duan Family.

That day, Qiaoshi Pavilion seemed to be doing good business; when Yun Jinnian and her party arrived, several carriages were parked at the entrance.

Yun Jinnian entered Qiaoshi Pavilion with her entourage. The shop attendants in the pavilion were all women, but the shopkeeper was a middle-aged, lean man.

A maid approached, still polite and respectful, "This servant greets Miss!"

"Do you have a private room available on the second floor?"

"Yes!"

"Lead us up, please!"

"Right away!"

Upon reaching the second floor, as they passed through the corridor, they heard a woman's scream from one of the private rooms. Yun Jinnian frowned but didn't meddle in others' affairs. She followed the maid into a private room, where soon after, they heard someone crying for help outside.

The maid's expression changed slightly, and she quickly said, "Miss, please wait a moment; this servant will order someone to bring over the tea and ornaments!"

"Mm," Yun Jinnian nodded slightly.

She signaled to Hemei once the maid had left.

Hemei nodded and also went out.

A woman covered in blood ran down the stairs, several other women were chasing her. She ran fast, but missing a step on the staircase, she tumbled down.

The incident provoked a series of screams.

Hemei hastily returned to the private room, "Miss, someone fell down the staircase!"

Yun Jinnian pursed her lips slightly and said to Mrs. Yuan, "Nanny, go ahead and choose; I will take Hemei and Henuan to take a look."

Mrs. Yuan understood the urgency of the situation, "Alright!"

When Yun Jinnian arrived, several women in brocade were surrounding the blood-soaked woman, "I didn't push her; she fell down all on her own!"

A maid-like girl knelt to the side, weeping.

Yun Jinnian took a deep breath before speaking faintly, "Have you sent for a doctor yet?"

The women turned to look at Yun Jinnian.

Although they had seen Yun Jinnian before, it had been several years, and back then, Yun Jinnian had been frail and short. Now, she had grown taller and her complexion was rosy; her features had developed beautifully.

They looked at Yun Jinnian's face with a mix of envy and jealousy, forgetting to answer.

"The doctor has been sent for. Since she fell from the stairs, we fear that she might have broken bones, so we dared not move her recklessly," the middle-aged male shopkeeper explained.

Yun Jinnian hummed in agreement.

Taking another deep breath, Yun Jinnian stepped forward, crouched down, and inspected the woman's injuries.

"There is a fatal wound on her forehead!" Yun Jinnian took out a handkerchief and gently wiped the wound. "There are porcelain shards in the wound; she was hit by a cup!"

Yun Jinnian extended her hand toward Hemei, who promptly handed her a pristine handkerchief. Yun Jinnian wiped her hands before she took the woman's pulse, "The pulse is weak and floating; she could be in mortal danger!"

She took out a porcelain bottle from her bosom, poured out a pill, and fed it to the woman. "Bring a cup of warm water and a teaspoon!"

At Yun Jinnian's command, a maid immediately brought the warm water.

However, fetching a teaspoon from the kitchen would take some time.

Yun Jinnian extended her hand to Hemei again, who gave her another snow-white handkerchief. Yun Jinnian soaked the handkerchief in the cup, wrung it out above the woman's mouth, and gently squeezed water into her lips.

Chapter 559: Taking Action to Save Someone

Yun Jinnian moved very slowly, gently and patiently feeding the woman water.

"Will she make it?"

Several women discussed on the side.

The entrance to Qiaoshi Pavilion was also crowded with people, all talking nonstop.

Few in Capital City knew Yun Jinnian, and even fewer were aware of her superior medical skills, mainly a few households with strict lips that would not spread rumors.

"Look, the woman still hasn't moved; could she be dead?"

"Did she die from the fall? Or was it the treatment?"

"Hard to say!"

Hemei and Henuan were trembling with anger.

"You people, do you know who my miss is? Do you know how precious my miss's medicine is? You all pretend to know when you don't! If you really had the skill, why don't you come and check on this miss? Instead of just running your mouths without any real ability!" Hemei retorted sharply.

Her voice was cold and stern, with quite an imposing manner.

"You brat, how old is your miss, you..." someone retorted with a flushed face.

"So what if she's young? Being young does not mean she has no ability. On the contrary, why are you so angry? You're older, if you've got the skills, why don't you come and see if you can wake this miss up!" Hemei snapped back vehemently.

"You, you..."

Faced with doubt, Yun Jinnian remained calm, continuing to feed the woman water.

She was bleeding, yet she took no action.

First, she had no acupuncture needles; second, she carried no wound medicine; third, she did not wish to invite trouble.

She had used the Blood Lotus Elixir to sustain the woman's life. The injury was to the woman's head and had not affected her internal organs, neither had any bones been broken. The injury to the head was severe, but after taking her Blood Lotus Pills, it was no longer a major problem.

"The doctor is here, the doctor has arrived!"

The crowd parted to create a path, and a doctor in his forties or fifties hurried over with his medicine box.

After checking the pulse of the woman on the ground, he frowned and remained silent for a long time.

"How is it?" Yun Jinnian asked indifferently.

"This..."

The doctor considered his medical skills to be quite good.

"She can be saved, can't she?" Yun Jinnian asked again.

Upon hearing this, the doctor looked at Yun Jinnian, stood up, and saluted her, "Was it the young lady who treated her earlier?"

"Yes!"

"Did the young lady feed her some sort of elixir?"

"Yes!"

The doctor suddenly breathed a sigh of relief, "The young lady's medical skills are beyond mine. Could the young lady perhaps prescribe a formula for this woman?"

Yun Jinnian thought for a moment before saying, "Very well!"

On the side, pen, ink, paper, and inkstone had already been prepared. Yun Jinnian wrote a prescription, allowing the doctor a glance.

"The prescription the young lady wrote is very gentle!"

"She has already taken a life-sustaining pill. Taking strong medications now would be harmful. Follow the prescription, prepare the medicine with five bowls of water reduced to one, and feed it to her!" Yun Jinnian spoke, then turned to the young ladies, "Which one of you is her relative or friend?"

A woman clad in pink clothes came out slowly, "I'm her cousin!"

If it was the cousin who got hurt, this cousin had been hiding behind the crowd.

"Take your cousin home. However, it would be best to have a doctor take a look, especially since it's a head injury!" Yun Jinnian finished speaking. After the woman was lifted onto a wooden plank and taken away from Qiaoshi Pavilion, Yun Jinnian then went upstairs.

As for Qiaoshi Pavilion, they presented two pieces of jewelry to the woman as an apology, even though the fault was not theirs, the injury had happened at their premises.

Once everyone left, the servants immediately cleaned up the ground and stairs.

As soon as Yun Jinnian left, many people started gossiping.

"Who is that, really? So young and already so skilled in the medical arts?"

Chapter 560: The Shopkeeper is Polite

"Who knows when such a stunningly beautiful woman with such incredible medical skills appeared in Capital City!"

"Did you all smell that? There's a scent of lotus, yet it smells even better than actual lotus flowers!"

"Right, I didn't notice at first, but now that I smell it, it really is delightful!"

"Speaking of which, it was that pill just now, smelling of lotus and also quite valuable. Could it be the Tian Mountain Snow Lotus..."

"It can't really be the Tian Mountain Snow Lotus, can it!"

"It's possible!"

"A bunch of fools, that was a pill made from the Tian Mountain Snow Lotus!"

For a moment, everyone was curious about Yun Jinnian's identity, wondering which young lady she was, to casually give away a Snow Lotus Elixir like that.

Moreover, to save such an unrelated, unfamiliar person.

Truly, the heart of a doctor is benevolent.

Yun Jinnian didn't know any of this, nor who the person she had casually saved was.

Returning to the private room, after Mrs. Yuan asked a few questions, Yun Jinnian didn't hide anything, "They should be out of danger now!"

"Miss, it really is like you, to give away such a precious pill!" Mrs. Yuan muttered.

Yun Jinnian smiled faintly.

Mrs. Yuan grumbled a bit more and then said, "They say saving a life is more meritorious than building a Seven-Level Pagoda, Miss, you're accumulating blessings!"

"It's because Nanny knows me well!"

Yun Jinnian, smiling, took a gold hairpin and compared it against her nanny's hair, then inserted it into her nanny's hair, "Nanny looks lovely with this one on!"

"Isn't it too expensive?" Mrs. Yuan asked.

"Not at all!"

Yun Jinnian specifically chose those with novel and exquisite designs.

The value of gold jewelry lies not so much in the raw metal but in the craftsmanship. The more delicate the design, the higher the price, and they often remain in vogue for many years.

"You all pick out a few pieces too. After this occasion, who knows when you will get another chance!"

"Can we choose anything?" Shi Jiayu asked with a laugh.

She really had her eye on several hairpins.

"Anything!"

With Yun Jinnian's permission, Shi Jiayu's laughter brightened, "Then I won't hold back!"

Shi Jiayu really did pick several hairpins, earrings, and bracelets, all extremely delicate.

Seeing everyone had made their choice, Ru Yue also picked out two items she fancied.

Some joy is hidden in the heart, growing deeper with time.

She had always been cautious, fearing offending someone and losing her life. Following Miss to Yingci'an for that tough year was, however, exceptionally peaceful.

Now that Miss was climbing higher and higher, if she served diligently, might she earn the grace to never marry.

After making their selections, Yun Jinnian paid with silver. Seeing the purse given by Mrs. Han, she picked out a White Jade Hairpin to take back to Mrs. Han.

Gold and silver have a price, but jade is priceless.

Just as they were about to leave, the shopkeeper presented a green jade hairpin fashioned with a blooming lotus, exquisite and eye-catching.

"What is this for?" Yun Jinnian asked the shopkeeper.

"Miss, this is Qiaoshi Pavilion's token of gratitude to you. Although the young lady who was injured earlier has no ties to Qiaoshi Pavilion, had she died here, it would have been very bad for us. Fortunately, Miss intervened. Please accept this small token of our thankfulness!" the shopkeeper said.

"It was a mere trifle, no need for such a gesture from the shopkeeper," Yun Jinnian responded lightly.

The shopkeeper chuckled, "Then may I ask, Miss, had the young lady's life not been in danger, would you have given away such a valuable elixir?"

Yun Jinnian shook her head without hesitation.

The shopkeeper laughed, "In that case, why not accept this? It's not something of great value. Besides, you seem to quite enjoy the scent of lotus, and this lotus hairpin is most apt to the occasion. It is merely a small token from Qiaoshi Pavilion, please accept it, Miss!"

The shopkeeper pushed the tray a little closer to Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian turned her head to consult with Mrs. Yuan, who began to smile, "Then I will accept it on behalf of my Miss, many thanks for the shopkeeper's kind intentions!"