

Indulgence 561

Chapter 561: Encountering Feng Wushuang

Whether Mrs. Yuan accepts it, or Yun Jinnian accepts it, as long as the hairpin is given away, all is well.

With great respect and slow joy, the shopkeeper sent Yun Jinnian out the door, watched her board the carriage, and gazed after the carriage with no identifying marks, feeling very puzzled yet curious.

Someone approached the shopkeeper, "Should we follow to see where she is going?"

"No need, if it's meant to be, this young lady will come back to Qiaoshi Pavilion in the future. After a few more visits, it will be much easier to know who she is!"

"The shopkeeper speaks wisely!"

Yun Jinnian had no idea that her actions had already stirred the curiosity of many people.

Not to mention her medical skills, the mere fact that she took out the Snow Lotus Elixir from Tian Mountain to save people had many wishing to buy the medicine from her.

They naturally also wanted to know which family's daughter she was, thinking that making a good connection with her could never be a mistake.

Huiquan Tower occupied a vast area, but its private rooms were hard to come by, and by the time Yun Jinnian and her party arrived, there were none available.

Moreover, some families, to avoid waiting when they came to host guests, had spent a great deal of money to lease a room for the entire year.

It was not proper for ladies to sit in the main hall.

After some thought, Yun Jinnian said, "May I inquire if the private room of Yun Residence is still available?"

"The private room of the Yun Residence is occupied by Second Master Yun," the young servant respectfully replied.

Yun Jinnian pursed her lips.

She was just about to leave, but it wasn't easy to take the nursemaid out for once.

Yun Jinnian also remembered, once before, that everyone had gone to Huiquan Tower for a meal, but she and the nursemaid were left in the lonely Niannian Garden until past midnight, when somebody finally brought them leftover food.

Starving, she forced herself to eat while crying, reluctant to eat yet afraid to starve.

Back then, the nursemaid said she would save money diligently to one day bring her for a meal there.

But now, though Yun Jinnian had silver, there was no private room available.

"Then..."

"If the young lady doesn't mind, would it be all right for me to offer my room to you?" a warm and deep male voice offered.

Yun Jinnian turned to look.

Clad in blue, the man was graceful and dignified, his entire demeanor carrying a refined charm, standing as tall and proud as a green pine.

With handsome features and gentle eyes, he was a delight to behold.

She did not recognize this person.

"I am Feng Wushuang, pleased to meet Miss Yun," Feng Wushuang said, trying to contain his excitement as he greeted Yun Jinnian, his eyes not daring to wander.

"..."

Yun Jinnian racked her brains but couldn't recall when she had met this man.

"Miss does not recognize me? I am on good terms with Liao Shijie, and I heard his younger sister mention Miss Yun. Recognizing the nursemaid beside you, I took the liberty of guessing you are the Fourth Miss of Yun Residence," Feng Wushuang quickly explained.

Yun Jinnian glanced at Mrs. Yuan.

Mrs. Yuan remembered Feng Wushuang as well and whispered a few words into Yun Jinnian's ear.

Yun Jinnian suddenly understood.

"So, it is Master Feng!" Yun Jinnian exclaimed, bowing slightly to Feng Wushuang.

"Miss Yun is too kind. I have a private room here. Although it has been used earlier, I believe it must have been cleaned by now!"

By this time, it would be improper for Yun Jinnian to refuse, "Then, I thank Master Feng for his generosity!"

Feng Wushuang stepped aside, "Miss Yun, after you!"

"Master Feng, you may go ahead with your affairs, a servant can lead us there," Yun Jinnian said.

She did not wish to delay Feng Wushuang's important matters.

She was curious about this Top Scorer from last year.

Even more so, she was curious about the chef in his residence who made the mooncakes, which were so delicious.

Feng Wushuang smiled, "That was my intention as well!"

Yun Jinnian was taken aback by his words.

Indeed, this Top Scorer was quite witty and humorous; she suppressed a laugh behind her hand.

Feng Wushuang wanted to stay longer, but he knew that haste makes waste, so he quickly said, "Please make yourself at home, Miss. I have other matters to attend to and must take my leave now!"

Chapter 562: Gradually Drawing the Plan

Yun Jinnian gave a slight curtsy.

Polite and courteous.

Had Feng Wushuang not lent her the private room today, she would have truly headed back to the mansion.

Although Huiquan Tower had a main hall, it was inappropriate for their all-female party to sit and eat there.

Yun Jinnian silently took note of Feng Wushuang's kindness in her heart.

She thought that she should find an opportunity to repay him and, by the way, ask how his family's mooncakes were made. They were small, just right for one bite, and full of flavor.

She liked them very much, and Tianci would too.

If she could borrow a cook to let Yaniang learn for a few days, that would be even better.

After Feng Wushuang turned and left Huiquan Tower, he finally breathed a sigh of relief.

His palms were sweaty, and his back was drenched.

He had come to Huiquan Tower today just to discuss compiling an epic with a few adults.

Worthwhile.

Once on the carriage, Feng Wushuang started smiling foolishly, his lips curving up.

When they first met, her faint, muted smile was like the bright moon in the sky, or even a celestial maid from the ninth heaven, instantly illuminating his dark and lightless heart.

Those two hundred taels of silver, which might have been just a few pastries to her, had saved his mother's life. With that silver, he had settled his family, cured his mother, and bought brushes, ink, paper, and inkstones to make paintings and earn silver.

He, Feng Wushuang, might not be a good man, but he knew that at that time, Yun Jinnian, who had reached out to help him, must be treated well by him.

Whether or not their relationship would develop into anything, he could never forget this kindness for as long as he lived.

The group ascended to the private room on the second floor. Among the few paintings in the room, one depicted distant mountains shrouded in mist, which was quite meaningful.

The signature was that of the hermit Hanshan, and there were also many seals of other people.

"Hermit Hanshan..."

Yun Jinnian mumbled softly.

It seemed that she had bought a painting by this artist before. Having seen a good one in the bookshop, she bought it.

She had forgotten where she had placed it.

"Miss, you bought one; it's at the Han Family now!" Hemei reminded her.

Upon hearing this, Yun Jinnian recalled, "It seems so!"

Mrs. Yuan ordered the boy to serve tea and bring up all the delicious food from Huiquan Tower. She even gave the boy a tip, and he immediately went off joyously.

Feng Wushuang's private room faced the main street; sitting by the window, one could see the pedestrians on the street below.

Opposite was Rujia Inn. The front entrance of the inn was not particularly large, but the expanse it covered at the back was extremely vast.

Once the food was served, Yun Jinnian sat by the window, resting her cheek on one hand and holding a teacup in the other, watching people hurry along.

Whether they were from a rich and prosperous household or the poor common folk, they were all bustling about for their livelihoods.

Whether it was Rujia Inn or Huiquan Tower, both were bustling with guests coming and going.

"Miss, what are you looking at?" Mrs. Yuan, having swallowed a piece of cake, walked over to Yun Jinnian and asked.

Yun Jinnian looked up and asked Mrs. Yuan with a smile, "Nanny, is it tasty?"

"It's delicious, but a bit pricey. I'll take some back for Nanny Rong and Yaniang later!"

"Alright, we'll have the boy pack some later, along with some for Uncle Cheng and the others!"

"Don't worry, Ru Yue and Jiayu have already taken care of it!"

With that, Yun Jinnian nodded slightly.

One dish after another was served, beautifully decorated and delicious.

Yun Jinnian preferred lighter dishes, and after a few bites, she just sipped on her soup. Knowing Yun Jinnian's habits and appetite, Mrs. Yuan didn't urge her to eat more.

She herself ate with great enjoyment, yet also with a sense of melancholy.

She never even dared to dream that in this lifetime, she would have the opportunity to dine at Huiquan Tower. Her eyes became slightly warm with emotion, and Mrs. Yuan busied herself with picking up another dish to eat.

Yun Jinnian watched and said nothing further.

She understood the nanny's bitter feelings!

Suddenly, the sound of a melancholy guqin wafted through, and Yun Jinnian's eyebrows lifted subtly as she rose and walked to the window, listening intently to figure out from which direction it came...

Chapter 563: Just Wait and See

The sound of the Qin was pleasing to the ear, but look at the several horses on the street that had gone mad, dragging carriages and running wildly.

Several people had already been injured, and suddenly there was an uproar on the main street.

"Miss, this Qin music sounds so lovely!" Shi Jiayu exclaimed.

"However melodious the tune, if it can't cultivate one's mind and loses its true essence, then it's just like that!" Yun Jinnian said, pointing with her hand.

Shi Jiayu looked toward the main street, only to see several horses running amok, injuring quite a few people.

The carriage drivers couldn't hold them back no matter what.

"..."

Shi Jiayu was immensely shocked.

Suddenly looking at Yun Jinnian, she asked, "Miss, do you have a way to handle this?"

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

She could play the Qin, but her achievement was not so profound, only slightly better than the person currently playing.

But not by much.

So she didn't dare act rashly.

A burst of flute music came, chaotically noisy, but it disrupted the Qin music, and gradually the horses calmed down.

However, quite a few people on the street were injured, and many stalls were overturned, with incessant wailing.

Then a carriage slowly approached, driven by Luoyi in black attire, with Chu Yu in a precious blue brocade, holding the Beryl Jade Flute and standing on the top of the carriage, leaning forward as he stood.

Like a god descending to earth, majestic and powerful.

Yun Jinnian watched him, a smile curling up at the corner of her mouth.

Chu Yu also saw Yun Jinnian, raising his eyebrows at her with a smile, sunlight bright and warm.

In that instant, just a glance was needed, no need for many words, they could both feel the affection in each other's hearts.

Chu Yu winked at Yun Jinnian and got off the carriage, "Go, see who is playing the Qin, this is simply outrageous, some lousy Qin music actually disturbed the public safety, where are the people from Jingzhao Prefecture? Go call them to maintain order, then take these people to the medical hall, calculate how much the medical expenses are, assess the damages, and have the person playing the Qin compensate. It doesn't have to be much, a thousand taels for the injured, five thousand taels each for damaged property. Go handle it!"

Having finished speaking, Chu Yu entered Huiquan Tower.

He went directly to the private room on the third floor.

As for his order, naturally, someone would handle it, and many were curious to know just who was playing the Qin, it was simply too much.

As soon as Chu Yu got to the third floor, someone entered the private room.

"Greetings to the master!"

Chu Yu gave him a glance and his eyes darkened, "Make the private room opposite to mine more elegant, and from now on when Miss Yun of the Yun Family comes, it will be specially reserved for her!"

The shopkeeper was momentarily stunned.

Then he understood and recalled, previously someone mentioned the Yun Family, and Feng-da-ren called her Miss Yun the Fourth.

And Miss Yun the Fourth had gone to the second floor, into an expressly reserved private room.

"Yes, your subordinate understands!"

"Good, you may leave!" Chu Yu waved his hand.

He felt inexplicably irritable.

Yun Jinnian was just downstairs, yet he couldn't recklessly go and see her.

If only they were married, how fine it would be; he could treat his wife however he wanted, with no messy interference from others.

And there would be no one to gossip.

Luoyi jumped into the private room through the window, "My lord!"

"How did it go?"

"It was Wei Shi, the illegitimate daughter of the Wei Family, upon learning that you were coming to Huiquan Tower today, she took a room facing the street at the Rujia Inn!"

"To seduce me with Qin music?"

Luoyi remained silent.

Chu Yu sneered, "Go to the Marquis Residence of Wei personally and ask Marquis Wei how he's educating his daughter, if he doesn't know how to teach, what's the use of giving birth to her!"

Only knowing how to curry favor and cling on, such a woman isn't even fit to carry his shoes.

Luoyi set off for the Marquis Residence of Wei, which previously was just an ordinary family, only because one had become a Noble Consort, and the Noble Consort had given birth to a Prince, they didn't know their own place anymore.

Chapter 564: Slight Change

Luoyi heeded the command and once again leaped out of the window.

Inside the Rujia Inn, Wei Shi's face turned pale with fright after hearing Chu Yu's words.

Her complexion was ashen.

She was merely following her Noble Consort sister's advice, who said that Prince Rui liked listening to the guqin, and that if she could charm Prince Rui with her music, she would enjoy endless wealth and honor.

She had spent silver to learn that Prince Rui was to visit Huiquan Tower today, and had reserved a private room early at the Rujia Inn, playing her best pieces, not expecting to provoke such serious trouble.

She had heard all of Prince Rui's words and knew that she had created a huge disaster.

Losing silver was a minor issue, losing her reputation was the real disaster...

As Wei Shi was filled with regret and fear, she was unaware that Chu Yu had already sent people to the marquis residence to accuse the Marquis of failing to educate his foster daughter.

The private room on the second floor of Huiquan Tower.

Shi Jiayu looked up with admiration, "Miss, Prince Rui is so cool!"

Yun Jinnian glanced at Shi Jiayu.

She smiled without saying a word.

Cool?

Was today an accident?

If it weren't for the loyal Princess Consort sending a woman to the Prince Rui residence and inciting Princess Jinfeng to give Chu Yu an aphrodisiac, and if Princess Jinfeng hadn't returned to her fief without a word after the Mid-Autumn Festival, it might indeed have been an accident.

But with these premises, Yun Jinnian had already guessed that all of this was just a trap set by Chu Yu.

What Yun Jinnian hadn't expected was that the shopkeeper would personally come to the private room to present her with the card for the Plum Number private room on the third floor, "Fourth Miss, from now on, this Plum Number private room is yours exclusively. Please feel free to let me know what style you prefer!"

"Anything is fine!"

She wasn't planning to visit Huiquan Tower often anyway.

"As you wish!"

As the shopkeeper was leaving, he took another serious look at Yun Jinnian, committing her face to memory, to avoid offending her the next time.

After eating, Yun Jinnian had some food prepared to take back to Nanny Rong and Yaniang since they didn't come; they should also have a taste of the delicacies.

Upon leaving Huiquan Tower, Yun Jinnian looked up at the third floor and saw Chu Yu standing by the window. She curved her lips into a slight smile.

Chu Yu also smiled, watching Yun Jinnian board her carriage and leave.

"Go and check, who did the Fourth Miss encounter today?"

Luo'er stood aside and hesitated for a moment, "My lord, would that be improper?"

Chu Yu raised an eyebrow at Luo'er.

"My lord, the Fourth Miss is the lady you fancy, but she is still Miss Yun of the Yun Residence, not yet the Princess Consort of Prince Rui. If you intervene too much, would it upset the Fourth Miss?"

Chu Yu frowned upon hearing this.

After a moment, he finally said, "Forget it, don't check!"

Jinnian's temperament, he should trust her.

"Spread the word about today's events, the more people know the better!"

Noble Consort Wei...

He would make her die a miserable death and lose everything she cared about.

Yun Jinnian returned to Yun Residence and first visited Mrs. Han at Qingjue Academy. She had intended to stay and chat with her, but Mrs. Han said she was tired and asked her to return to Niannian Garden.

Yun Jinnian wanted to take her mother's pulse, but Mrs. Han shook her head in refusal.

"It's not a serious illness; I'm always like this for a few days every month, just a little rest and I'll be fine!"

Yun Jinnian slightly frowned but did not dwell on it, "Then mother, you should rest well, I'll go back first!"

"Go ahead!" Mrs. Han responded listlessly.

Yun Jinnian then arose and left.

Without any hesitation.

Watching Yun Jinnian leave, Mrs. Han turned over, facing away from the bed, her face streaming with tears.

If she truly cared about her, how could she not stay a while longer or ask a few more questions?

After all, she didn't care about her.

Bai Que saw Yun Jinnian off and, seeing Mrs. Han in such a state, was deeply concerned, "Madam, what is really wrong with you?"

Chapter 565: Persuading Mrs. Han

Mrs. Han covered her heart and asked herself, what was wrong with her?

She had been looking forward to her daughter's return for so long, she should be happy, so why the tears out of nowhere?

But when she saw Jinnian, she felt aggrieved again.

Her mind was cluttered with this and that, so muddled that she hardly felt like herself, Mrs. Han Shuniang.

"Madam, if you really want the young mistress to stay, just say so. Why say one thing and mean another, letting the young mistress leave? The young mistress has always been with Mrs. Yuan, and Mrs. Yuan was originally just a village woman without much decisiveness, not to mention knowledge of the ways of the world. How could she teach the young mistress everything? The young mistress herself is of a reserved nature; how would she know what you're thinking if you don't tell her, madam? You're suffering here, while the young mistress might even think that you don't like her!" Bai Que said each word seriously.

Mrs. Han quickly sat up and retorted, "How could I not like her? She's the child I bore through ten months of pregnancy and intense hardship; how could I not love her!"

By the end of her declaration, Mrs. Han's face was already streaming with tears.

If she loved her, why did she push her away? Jinnian had wanted to stay earlier!

"Madam!" Bai Que said with pity.

She took a handkerchief to wipe Mrs. Han's tear-streaked eyes. "When you have time, have the old master take your pulse, or after the young mistress enters the palace, we can go to Huguo Temple and stay for a while. We'll go to the former meditation room where the young mistress stayed. I think the abbot must have kept it for the young mistress and has it cleaned every day!"

Bai Que was also afraid that if Mrs. Han stayed, she might go mad.

After helping Mrs. Han to bed, Bai Que went to Niannian Garden.

Inside Niannian Garden, there was immense rejoicing, and it instantly became the envy of all the maids, matrons, and servant boys in the Yun Residence.

Gold hairpins, brocades—those were coveted rarities.

Especially since it was said that the hairpins were bought from Qiaoshi Pavilion, and the fabrics came from Jinshang Pavilion, which made the envy of the maids and matrons all the more intense.

They too wished they could serve in Niannian Garden.

However, except for Ru Yue, the maids and matrons in Niannian Garden were all brought from outside by the fourth mistress and were, therefore, extraordinary.

"Sigh..."

They could only dream about it.

Yun Jinnian was reading Medical Books by the window, and Mrs. Yuan was in the small hall dividing the items, remembering who had selected which items and making sure there were no mistakes.

When Bai Que arrived, Mrs. Yuan immediately approached with glee, "Bai Que girl has come, come quick, this is what the young mistress picked out for you!"

Mrs. Han's share had already been given out by Yun Jinnian earlier. Bai Que's share, however, was packed together with those for Mrs. Yuan and the rest.

Bai Que smiled, "I have something too?"

"Yes, yes, the young mistress has been thinking of you!" Mrs. Yuan said, her smile wide with joy.

She was naturally a person of little thought and easily contented.

She didn't notice the worry on Bai Que's face.

"Where is the young mistress?" Bai Que asked softly.

"The young mistress is by the window, reading Medical Books!"

After hesitating for a moment, Bai Que entered the study and saw Yun Jinnian lazily leaning on a chaise longue, intently reading a medical book, seemingly unaffected by the noise coming from the small hall.

It seemed as though she was even enjoying herself.

"Bai Que pays her respects to the young mistress!" Bai Que bowed slightly.

Yun Jinnian looked up upon hearing her, blinking her dry eyes, "Why have you come? Did my mother have any instructions?"

"No, madam sent me to ask when the young mistress will be entering the palace?" Bai Que changed her mind halfway through her words.

Yun Jinnian furrowed her brows slightly, "I'm not sure about that myself; it all depends on when the Emperor summons me. But I think it will be within the next few days!"

Chapter 566: Heartache and Sorrow

Now that she was well again and had gone out for a stroll, she wanted the Emperor to know, that she was well and could be summoned to the palace.

Not being summoned was not an issue either, as she was not particularly eager to enter the palace and detoxify the Emperor.

Bai Que nodded, indeed this was not something Yun Jinnian could decide on herself, she was merely asking casually.

Thinking of the things Yun Jinnian had bought for her, she hurriedly gave her thanks, "This servant thanks the young miss for her generosity!"

"Sister Bai Que, there is no need for such formalities!"

Bai Que was more than a decade older than her, and it would have been acceptable to call her aunty, but Bai Que insisted otherwise.

"Traditions must not be discarded!"

Not long after Bai Que left, someone from the palace arrived, a eunuch named De from the Empress's side, reporting that the Empress was unwell and required Yun Jinnian to enter the palace immediately.

Mrs. Yuan, taken aback, could only hastily pack a few outfits for Yun Jinnian, and saw her off from Niannian Garden.

This time entering the palace, Yun Jinnian brought Hemei, Henuan, Shi Jiayu, and Ru Yue with her.

Although Hemei and Henuan had impressive martial arts skills, they were still young after all.

Ru Yue was calm, while Shi Jiayu was lively, their personalities complemented each other, and most importantly, Yun Jinnian also wanted to take them to the palace to gain some experience.

It was about time Ru Yue, who was older, was allowed out to get married.

Yun Jinnian went to Qingjue Academy.

This time, however, she did not see Mrs. Han.

"Sister Bai Que, please tell mother that I should be able to return in about half a month!"

"Yes, miss, go with peace of mind, once the madam feels better, she might stay at Huguo Temple for a few days!"

"Alright!"

Yun Jinnian acknowledged and turned to leave Qingjue Academy.

She concealed the grievance in her heart, not letting it show on her face.

But a small cut had opened in her heart, aching piercingly.

In her past life, after the age of five, the number of times she saw her mother would not exceed the fingers on both hands, and the affection of her childhood, she could hardly even remember.

In this life, she had tried her best to do everything right, to please others, but she did not anticipate that the harmony at Niannian Garden the other day was just an illusion.

Her mother did not like her, perhaps because she was her father's daughter.

Her mother did not like her father, and by extension, did not like her either!

The carriage was the Empress's Phoenix Carriage; Yun Jinnian was taken aback when she saw it, "This..."

"Fourth Miss, please, this is the Empress's wish!"

The Empress's Phoenix Carriage could not be ridden by just anyone; the coachman who drove it was of the fifth rank, receiving the salary of a fifth-rank official.

Therefore, aside from Yun Jinnian, only two others could ride inside.

Yun Jinnian boarded the Phoenix Carriage and spoke softly, "Jiayu, Ru Yue, come sit inside with me. Hemei, Henuan, please sit next to this coachman!"

Though it was somewhat improper, Eunuch De had not expected Yun Jinnian to bring four maids to the palace.

Two older, two younger.

But he had to comply with Yun Jinnian nonetheless.

Once the Phoenix Carriage departed, the onlookers began to inquire, learning that it was the Yun Family's Fourth Miss, whose maternal grandfather was the Divine Doctor Han.

Upon reflection, they remembered the young miss from the Yun Family who had saved a life at Qiaoshi Pavilion. The crowd was both amazed and shocked, spreading the news that the Yun Family had produced a Divine Doctor, a woman no less, now entering the palace to treat the Empress.

The Empress refusing the Imperial Physician and instead summoning Yun Fourth Miss suggested that her medical skills outweighed those of the Imperial Physicians...

Yun Family

Great Madam Yun was furious, yet powerless.

Closing her eyes, she clutched the Buddha Beads and knelt before Buddha, chanting rapidly.

One must be devout when praying to Buddha, but at this moment Great Madam Yun's mind was in turmoil, her spirit unsettled as she chanted the sutras, uncertain if it was for the Buddha or for herself.

Yicai Academy

Xu Xinmo clenched her small fist tightly, "Nanny, what should I do? She was actually taken to the palace in the Empress's Phoenix Carriage!"

Chapter 567: All Kinds of Lives

She didn't care whether Yun Jinnian actually had the ability; what concerned her was that Yun Jinnian had been picked up by the Phoenix Carriage to enter the Imperial Palace— that was the Empress's Phoenix Carriage.

Throughout history, how many have ridden in the Empress's Phoenix Carriage? And she alone at that, even the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence probably didn't have many who could claim such an honor.

Mrs. Hu remained silent.

However, she thought that she should send a message back to her master, as the fate of this Fourth Miss Yun was deviating more and more from the path they had set out for her, avoiding every cunning trap she had laid.

After several instigations, the old madam seemed to be poised to stand down.

This would not do, they couldn't push the young miss to the front lines.

"Miss, don't be anxious, what place is the Imperial Palace? It's a place where people devour each other, she's just a young girl who hasn't seen much of the world, once there, she's nothing but fish meat to them. Just watch, she won't be able to be arrogant for many days!"

"But I heard she went to find an antidote for His Majesty, and now that she's back, she must have found the antidote. Hmph, so much for sisterly affection, I asked her several times, and she didn't tell me. These past days have been even worse, every time I went to Niannian Garden, she was asleep and refused to see me. She's two-faced, utterly detestable!" Xu Xinmo growled towards the end, grinding her teeth.

She wished she could tear Yun Jinnian apart and take her place.

And thinking of Yun Jinnian spending so much silver on her shopping today, she was filled with even more jealousy.

Mrs. Hu sighed softly.

Xu Xinmo had been spoiled rotten by the old madam.

She should have been dignified and magnanimous, but instead, she was petty, fixated on petty inner chamber struggles instead of thinking of greater matters.

She couldn't argue, nor could she control her.

"Why is the miss in such a hurry? Isn't the old madam still here? No matter how impressive someone is, after coming back, they still have to respectfully kowtow to the old madam, their grandmother, and attend to her at dawn and dusk every day!"

At these words, Xu Xinmo immediately hatched a plan in her heart.

These past days, her maternal grandmother had intentionally made the head of the household attend Cixin Academy at dawn and dusk daily, but later, for some reason, she had given up on that idea.

If she could bring it up again, she would be the future Empress after all, and her grandmother would definitely listen to her, wouldn't she?

"Nanny, quickly find some herbs to send to the kitchen to stew chicken soup, I'll bring it to grandmother soon!"

She remembered wanting to return to the Xu Family and had sent a message back for someone to come fetch her, but the reply from the Xu Family was that the old lady was unwell, and everyone else was tending to her illness, with no one free to come for her.

It had been a considerable embarrassment for her.

When she becomes Empress one day, the Xu Family will be the first she won't spare.

Mrs. Hu smiled.

Although Xu Xinmo was a bit foolish, she wasn't beyond hope.

Smiling, she obliged and went to carry out the orders.

Of course, Mrs. He was also filled with envy in the residence.

But this time Mrs. He didn't do anything, because she knew that someone would inevitably lose their patience and act out, so all she had to do was sit back and watch how things unfolded.

The favored Concubine Xi had been very arrogant lately, completely disregarding Concubine Lian and Concubine Rou, let alone the confined and repentant Concubine Su and Concubine Hua.

Even Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingzhi, and Yun Qingqing had suffered under her hands, but they didn't dare complain to anyone, knowing that complaints would be futile. They were concubines, nobody would care about their life or death.

The three sisters, however, had banded together exceptionally well, supporting each other.

"Concubine, Concubine Xi is getting more and more out of control, won't you intervene?" The maid Pancai asked Concubine Lian.

Concubine Lian glanced at Pancai, sighed, and said, "Intervene? How do I intervene? She's a concubine, so am I. Though I've given birth to two children for the second master, she was more favored than me. Besides, I heard that the second master bought her a house outside and freed her from slavery; she will be a proper concubine. I gave birth to two children for the second master, and he never showed me such favor, and even Mother Su doesn't bother with me anymore..."

Chapter 568: Prudent Words and Actions

Mother Su was originally the butler assigned to her by Mrs. Han, levelheaded and capable, and at first, she was wholeheartedly dedicated to her.

But she didn't know when it had started, she had begun to find Mother Su displeasing to the eye.

She always felt like she was being watched, so she gradually distanced herself from Mother Su, who, sensing her mood, also stopped meddling in her affairs, not even offering advice or a few words of caution when she arranged for Consoling Concubine to attend to the Second Master. She just watched as she made such a huge blunder.

Pancai didn't dare to speak much.

The matter with Mother Su was her own doing, stirring things up with Lian Concubine.

"What shall we do then, Concubine?" Pancai asked.

"Let's just carry on like this for now, perhaps we're worrying too much!"

However, Consoling Concubine wasn't easy to get along with, and once she had a child, she would quickly start bullying them.

It seemed that teaming up with Gentle Concubine was the way to go.

Gentle Concubine was just as worried as Lian Concubine, and before Lian Concubine came looking for her, she actually sought Lian out first. The two hit it off immediately and quickly devised a plan to deal with Consoling Concubine together.

At the Marquis Residence of the Wei Family.

Wei Shi returned, distraught, after the Marquess had fiercely slapped her, "Go kneel in the ancestral hall. The Wei Family has no place for someone as disgraceful as you!"

Wei Shi's aunt was the favorite and most doted on by the Marquess, hence Wei Shi was also favored. Additionally, since Wei Shi's aunt always followed the Marchioness's lead, despite the jealousy, she never acted against the Marchioness, who in turn treated Wei Shi quite well.

Because of this, the Noble Consort favored Wei Shi too.

She was also very supportive of her pursuing Prince Rui. It didn't matter if she became the primary wife; even being a concubine would be good enough.

But Wei Shi had somehow offended Prince Rui, and Prince Rui had even sent Luoyi to convey a message.

Paying money was the lesser issue; the loss of face was colossal.

Wei Shi didn't dare to hesitate and tearfully went to the ancestral hall.

The Marquess immediately sent someone to deliver a letter to the Imperial Palace, hoping the Noble Consort could think of a solution and plead with the Emperor on their behalf, praying that the matter wouldn't be blown out of proportion.

But unbeknownst to them, the scandal was the talk of Capital City, and Wei Shi was utterly ruined.

The Wei Family and the Second Prince were dragged into the scandal as well.

The Empress's Phoenix Carriage made its way through the streets with an unobstructed passage.

Inside the Phoenix Carriage, Yun Jinnian sat atop her seat. Ru Yue and Shi Jiayu sat on little round cushions at the door of the carriage, feeling somewhat nervous.

"Are you very nervous?"

Shi Jiayu nodded vigorously, "Aren't you nervous, Miss?"

Yun Jinnian shook her head, "You'll get used to it. Besides, there won't be another chance to ride the Phoenix Carriage after this. Today is just a special case!"

Upon hearing this, Shi Jiayu thought for a moment and realized it made sense.

Looking at Ru Yue, "Ru Yue, are you nervous?"

Ru Yue nodded, "My palms are sweating; even the back of my clothes is nearly drenched!"

Ru Yue had never dared to dream that one day, she would have the opportunity to enter the Imperial Palace and meet the most noble woman in the world.

The Empress!

It was like a dream.

"I'm the same, so nervous yet also a bit excited. The Imperial Palace, a place I wouldn't dare to dream of in my lifetime, and now I'll meet the Emperor and Empress. I thought seeing Prince Rui and Prince Yanjun was already the biggest fortune of my life..." Shi Jiayu spoke somewhat incoherently.

"Sister Shi!"

"Yes, Miss? Do you have any instructions?"

Yun Jinnian pursed her lips slightly, "Once we enter the Imperial Palace, remember not to speak too much. Beware of trouble from careless words. Caution and prudence are essential!"

Shi Jiayu nodded quickly, "I understand, I'll remember!"

One really can't speak carelessly in a place like the Imperial Palace, lest they get implicated in schemes and end up in trouble.

She couldn't cause any trouble for Miss Jinnian, who took her to the Imperial Palace to gain experience...

Chapter 569: The Empress's Generosity

The Phoenix Carriage stopped at the entrance of the Imperial Palace.

Eunuch De quickly descended from the carriage behind and stood beside the Phoenix Carriage, "Fourth Miss, we've arrived!"

Shi Jiayu and Ru Yue got off the Phoenix Carriage first.

They respectfully helped Yun Jinnian alight from the Phoenix Carriage and enter through the Palace gates, where a sedan chair awaited on the side.

"Fourth Miss, please!" Eunuch De said respectfully, waiting for Yun Jinnian to get on the sedan chair before following by its side.

This time, Shi Jiayu, Ru Yue, Hemei, and Henuan could only walk beside the sedan chair. Although the sun was not very strong, the noon heat in September was still somewhat hot.

They quickly broke into a sweat.

Along the way, Palace Maids and eunuchs paid their respects with great reverence.

The group could also sense the solemnity and majesty of the Imperial Palace. Upon arriving at the Empress's Weiyang Palace, an old matron dressed in satin immediately greeted them, "This old servant pays her respects to Fourth Miss Yun!"

Yun Jinnian hurriedly performed a curtsy, "I pay my respects to the Matron!"

"Fourth Miss is too polite. Everyone in the Palace simply calls this old servant Mama Ma!" Mama Ma said, giving Yun Jinnian a friendly smile.

"Hello, Mama Ma!"

"Mm!" Mama Ma nodded, her smile brimming as she led Yun Jinnian into the main hall of Weiyang Palace.

Inside the main hall, the Empress was holding scissors to arrange a pot of flowers. When she saw Yun Jinnian come in, she smiled, "Jinnian has come. Take a look at this; I am not certain how to trim these flowers. Come and give me some advice!"

Yun Jinnian curtsied again and approached the Empress's side with a gentle smile, examining the plant for a moment before saying, "Empress, this flower is already quite beautiful; there's no need for further trimming. But if you insist on trimming, then remove this one blossom."

Yun Jinnian's slender hand pointed out.

The Empress heeded the suggestion and, after a brief moment of thought, took the scissors and snipped away the blossom, examining the results carefully. She smiled and said, "With that one gone, the whole pot of flowers seems more spirited. I will have it sent to your quarters later. Take it with you when you leave the Palace to enjoy and tend to!"

"Thank you for the gracious gift, Empress!" Yun Jinnian curtsied once more.

The Empress chuckled, "You, my dear, know your manners far better than Mimi does. That girl acts so wildly. Every visit she makes to the Palace ends up giving me a headache!"

While the Empress spoke, her eyes revealed an unabashed fondness.

She did not have children of her own and doted on Dai Hanmi as if she were her own daughter. Dai Hanmi chirped away happily like a magpie, which the Empress found delightful.

"Mimi is a joyful person; I really like her!"

The Empress smiled, pulling Yun Jinnian to sit down beside her, studying her closely, "You seem to be in better health than before. Have you fully recovered?"

"Yes, I'm completely well now!"

"That's good to hear. The side palace has been prepared for you. Mimi also stays there when she visits. I'm sure she will be coming to the Palace in a few days, too. Then you two can stay together and keep each other company!"

"Yes!" Yun Jinnian quickly responded.

She was thrilled at the thought of living with Dai Hanmi.

"You were summoned to the Palace in such a rush, please be understanding. The Emperor..." The Empress paused, finding it improper to say that the Prince Consort's wife had sent a woman to the Emperor, and that he couldn't control himself last night, doting on the woman to the point of wild indulgence, tormenting her to the brink of death with her bitter pleas for mercy, which the Emperor callously ignored until she passed out. In the end, it was Eunuch Hai who pushed two Palace Maids into the dragon bed, which finally allowed the Emperor to vent his needs. Right now, he's lying on the dragon bed, utterly exhausted.

Though she held great contempt inside, it didn't show on her face at all. She spoke gently, "You should go freshen up; I will take you to the Emperor later to detoxify him!"

Chapter 570: A Slight Hint

Yun Jinnian was startled upon hearing this.

The Emperor had visited the Wang Residence just a few days ago, how had something happened so quickly?

"The Emperor, he..."

The Empress's face changed slightly, "These things should not be told to you, but the Imperial Physician is out of options. I will tell you so you have a sense of the situation!"

As the Empress spoke, she whispered a few words into Yun Jinnian's ear.

Upon hearing them, Yun Jinnian's face blushed crimson.

She thought to herself, deserved!

"Empress, Jinnian understands. Jinnian will go and freshen up right away, and soon accompany Your Majesty to take the Emperor's pulse and prescribe medicine!"

"Go!" The Empress beckoned a Palace Maid over, "This is Shaoyao, the head Palace Maid of Weiyang Palace. During your stay in the palace, she will serve you. If there is anything you don't understand, ask her, and let her know if you need anything!"

Shaoyao hurriedly bowed to Yun Jinnian, "Maid Shaoyao greets Miss Yun Fourth Young Lady!"

"Sister Shaoyao, please rise!"

By calling her Sister Shaoyao, she was giving face to the Empress and to Shaoyao as well.

Yun Jinnian followed Shaoyao to the side palace.

Though called a side palace, it was more than twice the size of Niannian Garden, especially the bedroom, which was extremely large. The bed was twice as big as Niannian Garden's. It wasn't just enough for her; five people could sleep on it.

And everything was elegant and exquisite, arranged with great care.

"Miss Fourth, if you need anything, just tell me, and I will take care of it!" said Shaoyao.

"This is already very good, I don't need anything!" Yun Jinnian's voice was gentle and soft.

She was only staying for a few days before she would leave, so why bother with complications.

Besides, this was where Dai Hanmi had stayed before, and Yun Jinnian very much approved of Hanmi's preferences.

Shaoyao nodded, a young Palace Maid walked in, "Sister Shaoyao, the hot water for Miss Fourth and several young ladies to bathe is ready!"

Shaoyao nodded again, and the young Palace Maid respectfully left.

"Miss Fourth, please go bathe first. I suggest your maids, who are sweaty, to bathe as well and change. Shall I assist you in bathing?" proposed Shaoyao.

"Alright!"

She cared about her own maids.

Since Shaoyao was so thoughtful, Yun Jinnian had no reason to object.

As Shaoyao assisted with the bath, she was very respectful, her gaze never wandering. When it came to helping Yun Jinnian undress, she gently shook her head, "Sister Shaoyao, please sit outside for a while, I can manage on my own!"

Shaoyao thought for a moment, nodded, and stepped out of the bath.

Yun Jinnian quickly washed up, changed into clean clothes, and came out of the bath, Shaoyao then helped her dry her hair.

"Miss Fourth, an official from the Shanggong Bureau will come to measure your size later!" said Shaoyao.

"Are they making clothes for me?"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian intended to refuse, but then she remembered this might be the Empress's wish, "Is this ordered by the Empress?"

"Yes!"

"The Empress is so good to me!"

"Miss Fourth is the second girl after Ms. Hanmi to receive the Empress's favor and kindness!"

By saying this, Shaoyao was also hoping that Yun Jinnian would feel grateful and not hesitate to assist the Empress if needed in the future.

Yun Jinnian smiled, and then the officials from the Shanggong Bureau arrived. Three of them came in total, led by a woman who appeared slightly older but whose age was imperceptible due to her attire.

Yun Jinnian stood up, allowing the senior official to take her measurements. Unexpectedly, during the process, the official's hand brushed against Yun Jinnian's chest.

"Ouch!"

The minor touch to her tender chest caused Yun Jinnian to cry out in pain.

The official was so frightened that she immediately knelt down, her face somewhat panicked yet maintaining her composure, "This official deserves death. It was not intentional. Please forgive me, Miss Fourth!"