

Indulgence 571

Chapter 571: Empress's Thoughts

Yun Jinnian furrowed his brows.

Shaoyao barked angrily, "Dammit, is this your first time taking measurements for a master? Can't you even grasp the basics? Get lost and summon your Superior here!"

"This official deserves death, it wasn't intentional!"

"Hmph!"

Shaoyao snorted coldly.

Perhaps Yun Jinnian didn't know the tricks within the palace. She entered the palace at five years old, and now twenty years had passed; how could she not be aware?

When Jinnian had first arrived at Auspicious Water, she must have been beginning to develop. Was this female official not a teenage girl who knew to avoid suspicion?

If that was the case, it meant her actions were intentional.

"Shaoyao sister, let it be, just have someone else come and take the measurements instead!"

Yun Jinnian did not want to make a big fuss.

Being taken advantage of by a female official, making a scene would also reflect poorly on her.

Shaoyao knew Yun Jinnian's concerns and decided to suppress the issue for now, planning to investigate it thoroughly later.

Whether it was intentional or not, the truth would eventually come to light.

Another female official was called to take Yun Jinnian's measurements. This official was young but extremely cautious, prompting Yun Jinnian to take an extra couple of looks at her.

The female official gave Yun Jinnian a friendly smile.

Yun Jinnian lightly pursed her lips in return, "When the clothes are ready, please bring them to me!"

The female official was overjoyed, "Yes!"

To be tasked with making clothes for the Empress, one must either be Miss Dai from the Dai Family or the lady standing before her now.

And seeing how prudently the Empress handled matters, even sending Shaoyao Auntie to attend to her, was something that hadn't even been done for Miss Dai.

Weiyang Palace

The Empress had been lounging on the chaise longue for quite some time.

A contented smile played on her lips—what was she thinking about?

Mama Ma walked up to the Empress, "Empress, someone from the side hall has sent word that the fourth young miss is well now!"

The Empress nodded.

"Mama Ma, what title do you think I should bestow upon her?"

"Considering the fourth young miss's merits, she would be worthy even of a princess's title, but too much is as bad as too little. It would be better to make her a Commandery Princess!"

The Empress chuckled, "There's no need for me to worry about this; it seems the Emperor has the same intention. I won't compete with the Emperor on this. When the time comes, I'll just ensure her title is both auspicious and grand, and bestow generous rewards." The Empress had just finished speaking when a gleam flashed in her eyes, and she continued, "Mama Ma, take the dowry from my marriage and divide it into two parts, one part for Jinnian, and the other for Mimi!"

"Empress, won't that be too generous?" Mama Ma hurriedly remarked.

Giving it to Hanmi, one half of the dowry wouldn't raise eyebrows, for Hanmi was the Empress's own niece. No matter how much she was given, it would be understandable.

But as for Yun Jinnian...

"She is worthy of it!"

She had saved him. Not just half the dowry—if it were the whole thing, she would still be worthy of it.

Yet these words could not be spoken, should not be spoken.

They would remain hidden in her heart forever, satisfied by the occasional distant glance at him, his gaze sweeping over her in a fleeting look back.

Contented with this, she did not dare to hope for more in this life—to be by his side forever, in unchanging love and favor.

"Yes, this old servant will arrange everything shortly!"

Mama Ma knew not to say too much more.

The Emperor had not stayed in Weiyang Palace for many years. Had it been any other mistress, she might have gone mad with despair, but the Empress remained calm and unhurried, always graceful, managing the harem for the Emperor, arranging the court ladies.

The Empress had her pride.

The Dai Family's men had never taken concubines for generations, yet she had married a man with three wives and four concubines, a man with a harem of three thousand beauties...

Even being the Empress, this must have been a hard pill to swallow.

The Empress nodded in satisfaction, "Let's go and see if the little beauty is well prepared. As for the Emperor, have Dezi visit him, make sure things are handled properly, and don't..."

Let something dirty Yun Jinnian's eyes!

Chapter 572: Empress Dowager

Yun Jinnian took her measurements, and her meal had already been brought in. After eating a few bites, she heard the voice of a palace maid at the door, "Greetings to the Empress!"

Yun Jinnian hurriedly put down her bowl and stood up, as the Empress had already entered the small hall.

Though it was called a small hall, it should actually be considered a palace.

"Greetings to the Empress!"

"Are you eating? Continue with your meal. Once you are done, we shall go over!"

Yun Jinnian offered a faint smile, "I am finished as well, Empress, let us go!"

"Then let's go!"

Someone carried the medicine chest, with Hemei and Henuan following along. Shi Jiayu and Ru Yue were still shocked and had not yet regained their composure, so they were left behind.

Upon leaving Weiyang Palace, the Empress took Yun Jinnian's hand and they both boarded the sedan chair.

She chatted with Yun Jinnian, back and forth, all about amusing incidents on the road to Nanjiang.

At first, Yun Jinnian did not pay much attention, but later she noticed that whenever the Empress mentioned Prince Yanjun, she would press her lips together and look at her.

She felt surprised but also somewhat understood.

So she added a few more words, "Although the detoxification process was painful, the Commandery Prince endured it all, and was very cooperative during the recuperation period, even though the medicine was extremely bitter!"

The Empress laughed, "You must have deliberately prescribed some bitter medicine!"

"Good medicine is bitter to the taste, Empress!"

"Hmm, that makes sense!"

In her previous life, when Yun Jinnian married into the Fifth Prince's residence, during her first palace visit to pay respects, many people made things difficult for her, both openly and secretly.

Only the Empress spoke up fairly and sent her back.

There were no harsh criticisms, nor were there any signs of liking or disgust.

Her demeanor was as calm as water, yet it was enough for Yun Jinnian to feel deeply grateful.

They arrived at the Yangxin Hall.

Eunuch Hai greeted them, "This servant pays respect to the Empress and the Fourth Miss!"

"Let's go inside!"

The Empress nodded slightly and took Yun Jinnian by the hand.

Upon entering Yangxin Hall, there was a thick scent of medicine that even burning incense couldn't suppress.

Eunuch Hai bowed his head.

He led the Empress and Yun Jinnian to the sleeping chamber.

The Empress Dowager was sitting on one side, and upon seeing Yun Jinnian, only raised her eyebrows slightly.

She didn't quite believe Yun Jinnian would succeed.

"Your servant pays respect to Your Majesty!" the Empress greeted.

Yun Jinnian also performed a small curtsey, "Your servant pays respect to the Empress Dowager. Wishing Empress Dowager peace and prosperity!"

"Alright, rise. Ensure you detoxify His Majesty properly. If you succeed in detoxifying His Majesty, I will reward you handsomely. However, if you fail..." the Empress Dowager spoke, her voice growing heavy, "I think the consequences would be more than you and the Yun Family can bear!"

Upon hearing this, Yun Jinnian's eyes grew stern.

If she was so disdained, why did they bother to ask her here so insistently?

What was the point of maintaining such pretense?

She did not care what would happen to the Yun Family, but she couldn't implicate her mother and the Han Family.

"Your servant understands!"

She glanced around the room. The windows of the hall were closed, probably to prevent His Majesty from catching a cold.

"Open the windows, extinguish the incense. Everyone who is not essential, wait outside. Also, prepare two large tubs, big enough for His Majesty to sit in, and fill them with hot water. Prepare four strong men skilled in martial arts to assist me, and fetch a basin of warm water for washing my hands," Yun Jinnian ordered systematically.

Eunuch Hai immediately went to the entrance of the hall to arrange everything.

Yun Jinnian then walked to the bedside. This time, the Empress Dowager stood up to make room.

Yun Jinnian gave the Empress Dowager a curtsey before sitting down.

"Bring over a table to set up the medicine chest!"

The poison in the Emperor was not difficult to cure, but unfortunately, he had broken his abstinence, and his body had likely become severely weakened overnight. Even after detoxification and a good period of recuperation, he would not have many years left to live.

And the matter of desire was like a parasitic worm in the bones. She could cure the poison, but not the devouring desire in the Emperor's heart.

Chapter 573: Handling Appropriately

Yun Jinnian's orders were promptly prepared by others.

Henuan placed the medicine box on the table, opened it to take out the silver needles, knives, and porcelain bottles, arranging each one neatly.

"Bring some of the strongest alcohol in the palace!" Jinnian commanded without concern.

Once the water arrived, Yun Jinnian slowly and methodically washed his hands, then took the towel Hemei passed to him and dried them.

Only then did he proceed to take the Emperor's pulse.

The Empress Dowager watched from the side, taking several deep breaths to prevent herself from making a sound and ordering people to drag Yun Jinnian away to be beaten to death with rods.

Was he implying that the Emperor was dirty by washing and wiping his hands before taking the pulse?

The Empress, observing the scene, was remarkably serious.

So, this was how Yun Jinnian conducted medical examinations?

It seemed somewhat peculiar.

After a long while, Yun Jinnian withdrew his hand.

"How is the Emperor?" the Empress Dowager asked.

Yun Jinnian pondered for a moment before replying, "Not very well!"

"In what way is it not good?" the Empress Dowager pressed.

She was somewhat troubled that Jinnian's menses had neither come early nor late but had to arrive during these few days, yet she did not blame herself for not resenting the Emperor's indulgence that led to such a nauseating issue, leaving him weak and unconscious.

It was quite the scandal.

"Bring a cup here!"

Hemei handed over a cup, and Yun Jinnian pulled the Emperor's hand, took the knife, and with a swift cut on the Emperor's finger, blood started to flow immediately.

"Audacious! How dare you injure the dragon's body, a crime worthy of death!" the Empress Dowager exclaimed in anger.

Yun Jinnian looked indifferently toward the Empress Dowager, speaking softly, "Empress Dowager, I am merely a physician right now. If you think that what I'm doing now is an affront to the Emperor and wish to throw me into the dungeon, then you may as well send me to the dungeon now, because what follows will be more than just such a small cut!"

It was not initially necessary to inflict many injuries on the Emperor, but since he had broken his vows, it was imperative to create wounds to allow the potency of the medicine to seep into his body, giving the Emperor the strength to endure the upcoming detoxification.

The Empress Dowager moved her lips but could not bring herself to speak.

The Imperial Physicians of the palace were at a loss, so people were sent to fetch Han Xuzi, who had already left two days prior.

Now, she found herself unable to step down from her stance.

The Empress watched, a surge of satisfaction in her heart.

But she could not allow the Empress Dowager to hold a grudge against Jinnian, quickly speaking up, "Mother, the Fourth Miss's medical skills are exquisite. She has already cured Prince Yanjun and Prince Rui of their severe poisoning. She knows how to detoxify the Emperor, so let's just follow the Fourth Miss's instructions!"

The Empress Dowager uttered a sound of agreement, softening her voice, "You need not harbor other thoughts. I am solely anxious for my son. Once you have detoxified the Emperor, I will reward you handsomely!"

The Emperor could not pass away. Should the Emperor die, she as the Empress Dowager would become the Empress Dowager, and if Prince Rui and the others succeeded in their rebellion, the consequences would be unthinkable.

"Yes!"

Jinnian responded, dropping the blood into the cup and not bandaging the Emperor's finger, just letting it bleed while placing a thick cloth underneath.

He stood up, took a medicine bottle, opened it, and sprinkled some powder into the cup. Watching the blood disperse, tiny red worms wriggled within.

Just overnight, these worms had turned red, a clear sign of their virulence.

"Empress Dowager, Empress, please take a look. These are the worms wreaking havoc inside the Emperor's body. Had the Emperor not had intimate contact with a woman, these worms would be

white. In just one night, these white worms turned red. What I need to do now is nourish these worms back to white and then proceed with the Emperor's detoxification!"

The Empress Dowager and the Empress glanced at it, instantly feeling their scalps tingle, with the Empress Dowager barely able to stand steady.

She asked, trembling, "How long will it take to nourish them back?"

Chapter 574: How Much Sincerity

Yun Jinnian shook his head.

"I don't know, but I will do my best to have the Emperor wake up sooner!"

Having said that, Yun Jinnian turned around to stop the bleeding for the Emperor. Hemei immediately grabbed a cloth towel and placed it in the empty basin beside her.

The Empress Dowager opened her mouth but then thought of the many Imperial Physicians who only knew that the Emperor was poisoned, without knowing what poison it was, not to mention extracting worms.

They didn't dare to speak the truth like Yun Jinnian did.

One by one, they only knew to cry out, "This humble official is incompetent, I beg the Empress Dowager for mercy!"

Compared to those spineless ones who sought only to protect themselves, she indeed preferred someone like Yun Jinnian who dared to speak their mind.

A calf doesn't fear the tiger; indeed, it was worth regarding him more highly.

Therefore, looking at Yun Jinnian, her expression softened a bit; there was less disdain than before and her tone became slightly gentler, "Whatever herbs you need, just tell Xiao Haizi, if Xiao Haizi doesn't have the authority to fetch them, then ask the Empress or myself!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian gave a small bow.

Ever since the Empress Dowager had learned of the Emperor's incident, she had been keeping vigil in Yangxin Hall, and by now was utterly exhausted. The Empress hurriedly said, "Mother, you should go back to Cining Palace to rest. This concubine will watch over here. Once the Emperor wakes, someone will be sent to report to you immediately!"

The Empress Dowager shook her head slightly, "No need, I'll just take a short rest on the soft couch over there. How can I rest assured and return to Cining Palace if the Emperor doesn't wake up!"

The Empress knew what the Empress Dowager was afraid of and did not insist, arranging for people to attend to her as she rested on the soft couch.

Sitting by the bed, she watched Yun Jinnian prescribe medicine for the Emperor.

Yet, she didn't take out the elixir to administer to the Emperor, feeling surprised but also secretly pleased.

Thinking about the medicine pills her sister-in-law had sent into the palace, even though there were only two, she knew they were no ordinary items.

She knew somewhat of her sister-in-law's intentions; naturally, she was willing to facilitate a match between her and Brother Bo, hoping they would find a perfect union.

Yun Jinnian was very serious about taking the Emperor's pulse and prescribing medicine.

But he didn't dare to rashly apply needles to wake the Emperor up.

The Emperor's body was already hollowed out; if the medicine wasn't boiled properly and the person woke up only to not be able to bear it, he would be gone.

He didn't dare to offer any tonics, either, as a weak body can't bear heavy supplements.

Once the prescription was ready, Yun Jinnian said to Eunuch Hai, "Use a gentle flame to boil three bowls of water down to one, and hurry!"

"Yes!"

Eunuch Hai took the prescription to the side hall where the head of the Imperial Medical Bureau saw it, "What do you think?"

"Relying to Eunuch Hai, the nature of the medicine in this prescription is very mild. Given the Emperor's current weakened state, it is indeed appropriate," the head, surnamed Pan, said.

Occupying the head's seat, one's ability was secondary; it was more important to be good at maneuvering.

He was also a person of the Noble Consort; with the support and guidance of the Prince and the Noble Consort, no one dared to openly provoke him.

"Since there is no problem, then go quickly and prepare the medicine and bring it here; the Emperor is waiting to drink it!"

Head Pan did not dare say more and immediately sent someone to prepare the medicine, respectfully handing it over to Eunuch Hai.

After breathing a sigh of relief, he sent someone to report to the Noble Consort.

Since the Emperor was just too weak without an immediate threat to his life, he spoke to the Empress Dowager, "Your Highness, may I see those who served in His Majesty's chambers last night...?"

He didn't know their ranks or how to address them.

Should it be "Your Highness"? Or "My lady"?

"They don't have any official rank; they have only served His Majesty this night. Everything waits until the Emperor wakes up to confer titles. Since you want to see them, let them come over!" the Empress Dowager said, glancing at Mama Ma, who immediately withdrew.

"How is the Emperor now?" the Empress Dowager asked, glancing at the soft couch where the Empress Dowager lay asleep, snoring. The Empress couldn't help but sigh.

How much of this concern was sincere? How much was using him, how much was calculation?

Was it truly a deep bond between mother and son, or was there another reason? Only the Empress Dowager herself knew the answer.

Chapter 575: Treating the Emperor

"The Emperor's life is not in danger, but his body must have been severely depleted. He needs to be taken good care of to recover!"

The Empress nodded.

However, she noticed that when Yun Jinnian addressed her, he would refer to himself as 'Jinnian' or 'I', but he would switch to 'this humble girl' in front of the Empress Dowager, very proper indeed.

He apparently didn't want to be associated with the Yun Family, yet he couldn't completely distance himself from them.

She seemed to forget that for a woman, a married daughter is like spilled water; once she is married, she has no connection to the Yun Family. If she's happy to, she can visit multiple times; if not, it's also okay to cut off contact entirely.

"Hmm, let's wait for the Emperor to wake up first!"

"Your Majesty, Jinnian can wake the Emperor at any time, but His Majesty's body is too frail. Waking up rashly, especially knowing that he..." Yun Jinnian paused, giving the Empress a meaningful look before continuing, "If the Emperor awakens and becomes emotionally agitated, it's not good. So, let's wait for the medicine to be ready, let His Majesty drink the medicine, then I will perform acupuncture on His Majesty. He can wake up after that, and how to detoxify further will depend on the Emperor's wishes!"

After thinking for a moment, the Empress said, "Then let's do everything as you arrange!"

"Yes!"

When the medicine was ready and brought in, Yun Jinnian instructed Eunuch Hai and a few young eunuchs to help the Emperor drink it. After the time it took an incense stick to burn, Yun Jinnian said, "Can you help remove the Emperor's clothes, please?"

"Miss Yun the Fourth?" Eunuch Hai inquired.

"To perform acupuncture on the Emperor," Yun Jinnian said calmly, as he began to inspect the silver needles.

The three women had not arrived yet; she wondered if something had happened. However, it had nothing to do with her. If they arrived, she could determine whether this poison could be transmitted through intimacy. If not, she didn't need to concern herself further.

Eunuch Hai glanced at the Empress Dowager, who gave a slight nod.

Only then did Eunuch Hai and two other small eunuchs strip the Emperor, as Yun Jinnian had already prepared the silver needles and cleaned her hands, taking a white cloth to wipe them before starting to kneel by the bed to administer acupuncture to the Emperor.

Those silver needles, one by one, were inserted from his back to his neck and then to his temples.

Yun Jinnian was very serious, and the Yangxin Hall was silent as a grave, with no one daring to speak up or even breathe heavily.

Not until Yun Jinnian began to remove the needles.

She took them out one by one, placing each back into the basin.

After all the needles were removed and the Emperor had changed back into his clothes, Yun Jinnian pricked his brow with a needle, and the Emperor faintly opened his eyes.

Yun Jinnian knew the task was accomplished and stepped aside, as an eunuch had already gone to inform the Empress Dowager that the Emperor had awakened.

"Our son..."

The moment the Emperor spoke, his voice was very hoarse, and he felt utterly weak, not wishing to move even his fingertips.

After a moment of fuzziness, his mind became clear.

When Le Xun entered the palace, he felt some excitement and agitation, and with Le Xun deliberately flattering and alluring him, having abstained for over a year, he felt aroused. Thinking once or twice wouldn't hurt, Le Xun, coaxed into weakness, called out to the Emperor with charm and soft moans.

Unable to control himself, he took Le Xun.

At first, it was indeed passionate affection, but after one release, he lost control, his mind started to blur, and eventually, he knew nothing, feeling insatiable. Afterward, he remembered nothing at all.

"My son, you've woken up!"

The Empress Dowager was the first to rush to the dragon bed, sitting on the coupler and taking the Emperor's hand, "Finally, you've awoken!"

"Mother Empress?" the Emperor called out hoarsely.

He also realized that even the Empress Dowager was alarmed, suggesting the situation was quite serious.

"You have been unconscious for a day. The Imperial Medical Bureau's Imperial Physicians were all at a loss. Fortunately, the Fourth Miss of the Yun Residence entered the palace, and you have since awakened!"

Chapter 576: Do Not Impose on Others What You Yourself Do Not Desire

Malignant in thought, ruthless in method.

Yun Jinnian had thought she would be full of rage, but unexpectedly, she was very composed, and there was no destructive fury in her heart.

There was only a growing ferocity.

She would not let him off!

"Sorry, I have nothing to teach you, gentlemen, nor do I have the time to discuss with you," said Yun Jinnian, making her way to leave.

She would rather go back to sleep than engage in pointless chatter with these people.

Not worth it!

The head of the Imperial Medical Bureau hadn't expected that Yun Jinnian, despite her young age, would have the same temperament as Han Xuzi, uncontrollable and untamed, daring to offend the entire Imperial Medical Bureau.

"Miss Yun is so loftily proud, a waste of a doctor!"

In his panic, the head of the Bureau shouted out.

Yun Jinnian stopped in her tracks upon hearing this, turned her head to look at the Bureau chief, and said word by word, "I heard that the head of the Bureau has a Medical Book at home that has been passed down from ancestors, and all of his medical skills come from this book. If the head is willing to take out this Medical Book and discuss it with the gentlemen, then I'd be willing to share all I know without reservation!"

"You..."

The head of the Bureau was furious.

That medical expertise was the Pan family's heirloom, meant only for the legitimate eldest son of the main line.

"Head of the Bureau, 'do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.' Remember this well. Although I am young, I was brought into the Imperial Palace by the Empress's Phoenix Carriage to detoxify the Emperor, and when the Emperor was unconscious, the whole Imperial Medical Bureau was at a loss, but I, despite my young age, managed to awaken the Emperor. I hope you won't belittle me just because I am young and easy to deceive. If you push me too hard, I will complain to Her Majesty the Empress and His Majesty the Emperor and make sure you won't get away with it!"

After saying this, Yun Jinnian snorted coldly, flicked her sleeves, and left.

The head of the Bureau stood there, his complexion turning from red to gradually pale.

The other Imperial Physicians behind him were silent, also understanding the head's malicious intent.

He wanted to extract Yun Jinnian's medical expertise, but she turned the tables on him. If Yun Jinnian really made a fuss, not only the head, but all of them would not be able to escape unscathed.

Just as they were about to leave, they saw Hemei the eunuch standing to the side with two little eunuchs, looking at them with a smile that wasn't a smile.

"The Emperor decrees that Pan Kai must immediately present his family's Medical Books for thorough discussion with all the Imperial Physicians of the Imperial Medical Bureau, by imperial grace!" Having said this, Hemei turned and entered Yangxin Hall.

The head of the Bureau was so shocked that his face turned white, and he fell to his knees on the ground.

Only then did he understand the meaning of Yun Jinnian's words 'do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.'

He knew Yun Jinnian was exceptionally skilled in medicine and wanted to pry into her expertise, thinking that she, being young, would find it hard to refuse a high hat placed on her head.

But unexpectedly, Yun Jinnian immediately opposed it, and her words were so sharp that she left him no way out.

It must have been that the Emperor heard his conversation with Yun Jinnian, which is why he sent Hemei with the decree.

What to do?

Hoping the people from the Imperial Medical Bureau would plead on his behalf, he turned to find they had left long ago, moving away rapidly.

Fearing they might be dragged down by him.

"All is lost!"

Now he could only hope that the Prince would plead for him, or that the Noble Consort would help him out in recognition of his loyal service!

Yun Jinnian returned to Weiyang Palace to hear that the Empress was taking a nap, so she went back to her side hall, tidied up a bit, had something to eat, and then lay down on the bed. "Hemei, let me nap for a while. Call me in half an hour!"

"Yes!"

Little did she know, her reputation for angrily confronting the head of the Bureau outside Yangxin Hall, showing no respect for her elders and being sharp-tongued, had already spread throughout the Imperial Palace...

Chapter 577: Chastising the Concubine (1 Update)

After the Empress awoke from her nap, Mama Ma immediately approached and whispered a few words in her ear, to which the Empress responded with a cold laugh, "Quick-handed indeed, contain it, don't let rumors spread outside the Imperial Palace, and have all the concubines come to see me!"

She then said to Eunuch De, "Go and tell Eunuch Hai to ask the Emperor what he intends to do. Does he want to severely punish these rumor-mongers, or just let it be!"

Mama Ma and Eunuch De immediately went about their tasks.

The rumors were not serious in themselves, merely hearsay. Who knew if they would eventually turn into accusations that Yun Jinnian had abused his power to seize Pan Kai's hereditary Medical Books.

Although the Emperor's action supported Yun Jinnian, it also tainted him with disgrace.

The Empress knew what the Emperor had in mind.

He wanted to cure the poison but also did not want the Imperial Physicians in the palace to seem inferior to Yun Jinnian, to the point where they would have to seek his aid for any illness or pain in the future.

'Petty and ungrateful' described the Emperor perfectly.

The concubines of the harem soon arrived at Weiyang Palace, starting with the Noble Consorts Wang and Wei, followed by the four consorts, then the concubines. The room was filled with seated ladies, and the other individuals could only stand outside.

After respectfully paying their respects to the Empress, she, with dignified grace, allowed them to take their seats, and then slowly began, "I summoned you here today because there is something I must make clear to you all!"

"As the Empress commands!"

Upon hearing this, the Empress looked towards Noble Consort Wang, "Noble Consort, tell me, have you made sense of what happened with Physician Pan and Miss Yun the Fourth?"

Noble Consort Wang was suddenly startled.

Could it have been discovered?

She hastily rose to curtsy, "Replying to Her Majesty the Empress, this subject concubine..."

As Noble Consort Wang spoke, she looked up at the Empress, only to see her gazing back with an inscrutable smile, her eyes calm as water, as if she had already seen through Noble Consort Wang's schemes and knew that it was her people who were spreading rumors around the Imperial Palace.

"Speak!" the Empress shouted angrily, slapping her hand on the table.

Noble Consort Wang and the rest of the concubines shuddered in fear.

This was the first time they had seen the Empress angry. Normally, even if the sky were falling, she would remain composed, never changing her expression, but now she was visibly enraged.

"This subject concubine, this subject concubine does not know!" Noble Consort Wang said with a trembling voice.

"You don't know, yet you let the people in your palace spread rumors everywhere? You don't know, yet you dare to so malign Miss Yun the Fourth's reputation? Do you realize that she was brought into the palace in the Phoenix Carriage to cure the Emperor's poison? Not to mention you, even I should treat her with an extra measure of courtesy. Yet here you are, out of favor for a mere dog, unable to distinguish right from wrong, shamefully bearing the title of Noble Consort!" The Empress continued, pausing slightly, "Do you know that Pan Kai, with a group of men, blocked Miss Yun the Fourth's way, asking arrogantly to seek her advice. Bullying the weak, these insolent words coming forth in broad daylight right outside Yangxin Hall—such a dog, and yet you seem to revel in keeping him!"

No matter if she was a Noble Consort, or if she had birthed the eldest Prince, now that the Empress had caught her red-handed, she was scolded like a lowly servant.

The other consorts and concubines felt a secret joy in their hearts, relieved that they were not involved.

"This subject concubine deserves death, this subject concubine dares not do it again, this subject concubine begs for Your Majesty's mercy!"

In her heart, she cursed Pan Kai half to death and resented him deeply.

"Hmph, don't bother begging me for mercy. You've caused the trouble, and the people from your Ganyu Palace spread the rumors, so you better go and solve it and then go and beg the Emperor for forgiveness!"

Having said this, the Empress turned to the others, "And the rest of you, remember this well: keep a tight leash on your palace's people and their tongues. Don't stir up trouble for me, or else don't blame me for showing you some color!"

Chapter 578: The Noble Consort is Snubbed (2nd Update)

"Now that His Majesty is unwell, instead of praying for his health, each of you is stirring up trouble. If you find your current positions uncomfortable, I can make a decision to demote you several ranks, never to be promoted again!"

"This concubine remembers!"

Everyone knows how difficult it is to be promoted, but to be demoted takes but a word from the Empress. And if it's about getting promoted, there is never a second chance. Who would dare to make a fuss now?

"Remembering this is one thing, but you must also remember Miss Yun, the fourth daughter of the Yun Family, entered the palace to detoxify His Majesty. Now that His Majesty has woken up, once she detoxifies His Majesty, she will become a great hero of Tianchu Country. You know what to do!" the Empress said coolly again.

"Yes!"

In the future, not to mention tripping up Yun Jinnian, even upon seeing her, everyone must be respectful. And when they return, they must instruct their children to be courteous when they see Yun Jinnian and not provoke her.

"All of you may withdraw!"

After all the concubines had withdrawn, Noble Consort Wang still knelt on the ground.

The Emperor looked at her and coldly smiled, "Noble Consort, there's a saying that goes 'Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.' If someone coveted your position and asked you to give it up to make way for another, or to come live with you in Ganyu Palace, ordering around your servants, would you agree to it?"

Noble Consort Wang slightly shook her head.

"See, such a simple thing and you're not willing. Yet, you've been fooled into doing such a wrongful act. You should go and find out the truth for yourself before thinking about how to remedy it," the Empress said, then waved her hand dismissively.

She didn't want to hear any more from Noble Consort Wang.

Noble Consort Wang knew she had caused trouble today. Although the Empress had not punished her, she would surely be severely punished by the Emperor and even more so by the Empress Dowager. Especially the Empress Dowager, who would not easily forgive her!

She got up and left Weiyang Palace.

Barely able to stand steady.

"Your Highness..."

Noble Consort Wang took hold of the Palace Maid Zhi Bi's hand, "Zhi Bi, back to Ganyu Palace!"

"Yes!"

Zhi Bi too didn't dare to breathe too loudly. Right now, the Noble Consort still had fear and was not in the mood to punish them. But once the Noble Consort came back to her senses, they would inevitably face a beating.

And that was the better outcome. If things went poorly, someone in Ganyu Palace might end up dead today.

It all started when Pan Yuan, the chief eunuch, came to visit Ganyu Palace to seek the Noble Consort's favor, claiming that Miss Yun, the fourth young lady, was arrogant and did not regard the Noble Consort in the slightest. She found it strange because Miss Yun had never met the Noble Consort. Since the Noble Consort's niece, Princess Yanran, was to be married into the main line of the Yun Family as Yun Zhen's wife, the Noble Consort wanted to establish her authority for Princess Yanran and had people spread rumors everywhere.

Now, in less than two hours, the Noble Consort had slapped herself in the face. She now needed a way to silence the rumors as if they had never happened.

Easier said than done...

Upon returning to Ganyu Palace, Noble Consort Wang immediately had people disperse the news that several palace maids in Ganyu Palace who had spoken out of turn and slandered Miss Yun had been beaten to death. The other concubines also set a good example, prohibiting the palace staff from discussing the matter, whether now or in the future. Anyone caught talking about it would be beaten to death.

The rumors came quickly and disappeared just as fast; in less than two and a half hours, they were gone without a trace.

As if nothing had happened.

Chapter 579: Several Parties Compete (3 updates)

But that was only directed at the lowly palace maids and eunuchs.

The Imperial Guards had also received some news, but to become a guard, one had to be sharp-witted, not to mention the leaders.

Without the need for their leaders' restraint, they had already fallen silent.

How many could be fetched into the palace by the Empress's Phoenix Carriage and personally received by Eunuch Dezi?

They were not fools, to offend the rising power of the future.

Although she was still a woman now, by the time she left the palace, she might already have her title conferred.

Cining Palace

With the Emperor on her mind, the Empress Dowager was unable to sleep, her thoughts a tangled mess, particularly after learning of Noble Consort Wang's foolish actions, she exclaimed angrily, "I thought she had a clear head, but it turns out she's stupid!"

"The Noble Consort merely had a moment of confusion!"

"A moment of confusion, not necessarily so!" the Empress Dowager snorted coldly, then commanded, "Convey my solemn decree, let her seclude herself to reflect and pray for the Emperor's health, and before the Emperor has recovered, no meat or strong-smelling foods are to be allowed in Ganyu Palace!"

"Yes!"

Such punishment was not too severe.

At least the Noble Consort's position was preserved.

The Empress Dowager then asked, "Have the people who served His Majesty last night been dealt with?"

"Replying to the Empress Dowager, they have all disappeared!"

Disappeared?

The Empress Dowager quickly understood upon reflection.

At that time, with the Emperor unconscious, the only person who could have made arrangements was Eunuch Hai. It was likely the Empress knew nothing of this.

"Let it be, do not bother with this matter anymore. Go to the storeroom and pick some items to be sent to Weiyang Palace for that girl—nothing too expensive, but also nothing too light; just appropriate," she instructed.

When Yun Jinnian awoke, Shaoyao personally attended to her and informed her of the disappearance of the three women who had served at night.

Yun Jinnian was startled for a moment, then nodded slightly, "I understand!"

After washing her hands, she began to examine the red Poisonous Insect.

She then made a list of the required medicinal ingredients and sent Shaoyao to fetch them from the Imperial Medical Bureau.

Soon, the ingredients were brought over. Yun Jinnian had requested double the amounts of each ingredient, a seemingly haphazard collection, and no one could discern exactly which ingredients Yun Jinnian truly needed.

With Eunuch Dezi personally attending to it, who would dare to skimp?

Not only was the quantity sufficient, but there was also a surplus.

After the Empress was informed, she just laughed, "Let her be. Whatever she needs, have Dezi fetch it from the Imperial Medical Bureau. If they don't have it, she can come to me!"

After pondering, she added, "Have her check in on the Emperor later, and once she returns, there's no need for her to leave Weiyang Palace again. If she wishes to go out and enjoy herself, she can do so tomorrow. Instruct the Imperial Kitchen to prepare some exquisite pastries and delicate, fresh meals, and have her join me for dinner tonight!"

Mama Ma responded, "Her Highness's kindness will be understood by the Fourth Miss!"

"She's a child to my liking, well-behaved and sensible, yet she's not a pushover to be kneaded at will. I'm just curious how such a good-natured girl clashed with Chief Pan and even spoke those words!"

"Should Her Highness ask tonight?" suggested Mama Ma.

"No need to ask. It's a trivial matter. However, Chief Pan did take things too far in using his power to bully others. He didn't expect to hit a soft nail—I'm quite looking forward to seeing how he will break this impasse!"

A misstep could very well lead to the extermination of a family.

"Her Highness can rest assured, this old servant will keep an eye on things. Regarding the Marquis Residence, should we send a message and ask the Marquess to..."

"There's no need. For such a trivial matter, why should my brother step in? Be assured, the Imperial Medical Bureau is not so clean; there are people who want to take the Chief's position. Previously, they had no chance, but now the opportunity has arrived, and they will certainly make a move. Let's just wait and see!"

Upon hearing this, Mama Ma knew it to be the truth.

"This old servant was too anxious!"

The Empress smiled mildly and said no more.

"Reporting to Her Highness the Empress, the Empress Dowager has bestowed some gifts upon the Fourth Miss. Eunuch An is waiting outside right now!"

Chapter 580: Encountering Old Acquaintances Again (4 Updates)

The Empress was slightly taken aback, and then she laughed, "Please let Eunuch An come in!"

Eunuch An had served by the side of the Empress Dowager for many years, and in the palace, his relationships were complex and intertwined; moreover, he was very vengeful and could not easily be offended.

When Eunuch An entered the grand hall, he paid his respects to the Empress, "Empress, may you be forever safe, this slave was ordered to deliver a gift to the Fourth Miss!"

"Mama Ma, please take Eunuch An over!"

"Yes!"

Mama Ma and Eunuch An had some acquaintance with each other, and they spoke softly along the way, agreeing on the difficulties of the Empress Dowager.

They also complimented Eunuch An on his hard work.

In fact, they had Eunuch An beaming with happiness, incessantly expressing his modesty.

When they arrived at the side hall.

Shaoyao came out to greet them, and seeing Eunuch An, she quickly performed a curtsey and said, "Greetings, Eunuch An, greetings, Mama Ma!"

"Shaoyao, Eunuch An has come on behalf of the Empress Dowager to deliver a gift to the Fourth Miss, please ask the Fourth Miss to come out and receive the reward," said Mama Ma with a gentle voice.

"Yes!"

Shaoyao entered the small hall with a curtsey and saw Yun Jinnian grinding medicinal herbs, she whispered, "Fourth Miss, the Empress Dowager has bestowed a gift upon you, and Eunuch An has brought it over, please go and receive your reward!"

"You said the Empress Dowager bestowed a gift on me?"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian was baffled, "Why?"

Even if a reward was to be given, shouldn't it be after the Emperor had been cured?

"The Empress Dowager is kind-hearted, Fourth Miss, please follow this servant quickly, so as not to keep Eunuch An waiting!"

"Hmm!"

She stood up and walked out of the small hall, and when she saw Eunuch An, Yun Jinnian frowned slightly.

In this Imperial Palace, there were still many people she knew.

For example, the Eunuch An in front of her; although he was extremely petty and vengeful, when she initially entered the palace as Empress, the Empress Dowager had passed away, and Eunuch An's days were not very pleasant. He had secretly wanted to align with her, but at that time she was muddle-headed, pitifully stupid, and pushed away someone who could have planted chess pieces throughout the Imperial Palace.

Although Zhu Yan later tried to win him over, he had refused her, and in the end, he died by Zhu Yan's hand.

Collecting her thoughts, Yun Jinnian greeted Eunuch An with a slight bow, "Eunuch An!"

Eunuch An also scrutinized Yun Jinnian carefully, his eyes lighting up immediately.

His family had the skill of fortune-telling by facial features, nothing particularly outstanding, but enough to discern one's fortunes.

And before him, Yun Jinnian, the Fourth Miss, was enveloped in an aura of prosperity, not quite a phoenix yet resembling one, and thinking back to when he had seen the Empress, her phoenix aura had waned.

His mind jolted.

Could it be that the Empress was going to encounter trouble?

And that this Yun Jinnian, the Fourth Miss, would eventually preside over the Eastern Palace?

"Fourth Miss, you needn't be too formal, this slave cannot bear such a courtesy, I am ordered to bring a gift for you, the Fourth Miss, all the items are here; please accept them first. The Empress Dowager said that when the Emperor recovers, there will be an additional reward!"

Upon hearing this, Yun Jinnian was about to kneel to express her gratitude.

Eunuch An hurriedly said, "The Empress Dowager instructed me on my way here, saying that it suffices for the Fourth Miss to curtsey without needing to perform the full formalities!"

Such a manner of bestowal was very rare indeed.

Yun Jinnian understood the Empress Dowager's intentions.

It was nothing more than wanting her to earnestly solve the Emperor's poisoning.

"Yes, this servant thanks the Empress Dowager for the reward!" said Yun Jinnian, bowing slightly.

With his task completed, Eunuch An smiled, waiting for Yun Jinnian to reward him.

However, it seemed Yun Jinnian didn't quite understand and was a bit perplexed, yet she bore no grudge—an innocent child indeed, unaware of such matters.

Especially since this Fourth Miss was to have great fortune in the future, as the Empress Dowager's health declined year by year, he too needed to find his place in this palace!

"Then, this slave will take his leave first!"

However, Yun Jinnian suddenly spoke, "Eunuch An..."