

Indulgence 641

Chapter 641: Empress Dowager's Great Affection

Yun Jinnian's voice was soft and gentle.

And faint as well.

It seemed devoid of much emotion, yet only she knew how much bitterness and hardship it contained.

Upon hearing her words, the Empress Dowager was momentarily stunned.

With concern, she asked, "What about now, do you still feel aggrieved?"

"It's all in the past, so I no longer feel aggrieved. Perhaps in a few more years, I will even be able to laugh and tell others about how pitiful I once was. When my whole family went to Huiquan Tower for a meal, only I and my nanny were left at home eating their leftovers," Yun Jinnian said, followed by a tender smile. "Later, I too could leave the house, and I had silver in my hand. I specifically took my nanny there to dine, and although the meals were good and exquisite, they weren't as delicious and heartwarming as those made by my nanny!"

The Empress Dowager sighed and took Yun Jinnian's hand, "Good child, you've been wronged these years!"

She also thought that when Yun Jinnian left the palace, she would give plenty of rewards to fill her pockets with silver, so she could eat whatever she wanted, even if it meant going to Huiquan Tower every day.

"Empress Dowager, with your sympathy, I feel no more grievances!"

The Empress Dowager smiled, "You sweet child, why don't you stay with me tonight?"

"Alright!"

Even staying in Cining Palace, Yun Jinnian was not without propriety.

The Empress Dowager had come a long way to where she was today, not simply an unknown personage.

Yun Jinnian was staying in Cining Palace, which delighted Eunuch An the most. He personally went to Weiyang Palace to help Yun Jinnian pack her luggage and medicine chest. Seeing that Yun Jinnian also had a white cat, he teased it for a while.

Back in Cining Palace, he ordered the Imperial Kitchen to boil a white fish, removing the bones, then used the fish broth and meat to cook a thick porridge.

The kitten was extremely fond of it.

"Fourth Miss!"

"Yes?" Yun Jinnian looked at Eunuch An, puzzled.

"Why don't you give the cat a name?" Eunuch An suggested.

"Naming the cat..."

Yun Jinnian pondered for a moment before saying, "Let's call it Tuanzi!"

Princess Jinfeng's dog was called Snowball, so hers could be Tuanzi.

But she had no idea where Princess Jinfeng's dog had gone? It was supposed to be hers to raise.

"Then it shall be called Tuanzi!"

Tuanzi was of uncertain age, but seemed quite small and called out with a milky voice, becoming the treasure of Cining Palace.

The entire Imperial Palace knew that the Fourth Miss Yun had a cat, and even the Empress Dowager was very fond of it.

The cat was named Tuanzi.

There were people specifically assigned to look after it, taking great care of its every need.

By October, the Emperor's health was much improved, and the poison had been completely neutralized.

Finally, Yun Jinnian could leave the palace. As she spent her days with the princesses, she felt quite uncomfortable, especially since the princesses were very guarded and targeted her, which made her dislike staying in the Imperial Palace even more.

"You are leaving the palace tomorrow. Come, these are all my rewards for you!" the Empress Dowager said. Eunuch An immediately handed a brocaded box to Yun Jinnian.

"Empress Dowager..."

"Take it. Inside are some trinkets that I collected when I was young. I'm too old to wear them now, so I'm giving them to you!"

Yun Jinnian took the brocaded box and stood up, ready to kneel in gratitude.

The Empress Dowager laughed, "No need for so many formalities. You helped me with the poison, and I intended to reward you generously. However, I've heard that the Emperor has already prepared what I had in mind for you. Although I'm the Empress Dowager, the empire belongs to the Emperor. Such a reward is naturally more meaningful when bestowed personally by the Emperor!"

Yun Jinnian looked puzzled and furrowed her brows, "What reward is the Emperor going to give me?"

"You'll know in time. Don't worry, don't worry. Go see if you like the things I've given you, and if there's anything you want, just tell me. I have plenty of fine items here!"

Chapter 642: Reunion with Relatives (1)

Yun Jinnian hurriedly performed a curtsey, "The gifts from the Empress Dowager are all exceedingly fine, your servant daughter dares not be greedy!"

"You, always so properly mannered, have done so many times, in front of me, there's no need to be so restrained, go have a wash, ah!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian withdrew and returned to her living quarters in the Cining Palace.

Looking at the dozen or so large boxes, she asked in surprise, "Where did these come from?"

"Reporting to miss, these are gifts bestowed by the Empress Dowager!" Shi Jiayu said.

Since entering the palace, Shi Jiayu had become much more disciplined, had seen and learned a lot, and carried herself with a deportment unlike before.

"..."

Yun Jinnian handed the brocade box in her hand to Shi Jiayu, "Keep this brocade box!"

"Yes!"

As for what was in those boxes, Yun Jinnian was not very concerned.

The Empress Dowager's gifts were certainly of great value, not to be casually sold once out of the palace, they could only be kept.

Of course, giving away one or two items occasionally was also harmless.

"Fourth miss, the Emperor summons you to the Imperial Study!"

The Imperial Study?

Yun Jinnian slightly furrowed her brow.

Because that day outside the Yangxin Hall, she saw many Noble Consorts, Princes, and Princesses, her complexion had been poor, and the Emperor afterward did not allow anyone to visit the Yangxin Hall, and also exempted everyone from visiting.

And it seemed that the concubines and princes and princesses also intended to avoid her, even if they went to the Yangxin Hall, they couldn't run into the imperial concubines or the princes and princesses.

But the Imperial Study was different.

That was where the Emperor dealt with state affairs, not only could she encounter the Princes, but she could also meet the former dynasty's ministers.

But not to go was not an option.

Yun Jinnian had no choice but to follow the announcing eunuch to the Imperial Study.

At the entrance of the Imperial Study, Yun Jinnian had just arrived when Eunuch Hai came out to greet her.

"This servant has seen the fourth miss, a great joy to the fourth miss, please enter quickly, the Emperor summons the fourth miss for an audience!"

Yun Jinnian nodded slightly and stepped into the Imperial Study.

She saw two silhouettes and felt they were familiar, and when those two heard the footsteps, they also turned their heads to look back.

She also saw clearly, one was her father, and the other was her uncle.

What were they doing here?

Yun Jinnian thought quickly, her expression unchanged, and stepped forward to salute the Emperor with a curtsy, "Your servant daughter pays respects to the Emperor!"

"No need for such formality, Fourth Girl!" the Emperor laughed heartily.

Perhaps because he was recently recovered from a serious illness, he was in a very good mood and laughed with warmth and affection.

Yun Jinnian got up and turned to salute Yun Chen and Yun Qi with a curtsy, "Greets uncle, greets father!"

Yun Qi nodded.

He was very conflicted inside.

This was his daughter, who should have been the treasure he held in his palm, but due to his foolishness, she had become a stranger, she despised him and did not want to be close to him.

Even if she didn't show it, it was a real feeling.

Yun Chen also had complicated feelings.

This niece of his, whose condition in the family home in earlier years, he initially did not know about, he never meddled in household matters, but after he found out, he did intervene a bit, yet he just skimmed the surface, never truly managing the situation.

The year she was at the temple, he did not inquire at all.

Now that she had soared high, he could not shamelessly seek to gain any advantage from her, and he knew, she had long been disheartened with the Yun family, whether the Yun family was in the future, she would not lift a finger to help.

"Jinnian..." Yun Chen spoke out but didn't know what else to say.

Yun Jinnian raised her eyebrows slightly, "Uncle?"

Once indifferent, knowing she had a hard time but only superficially managed the situation, how she thought he was upright, yet in reality, he played down the issues, truly hypocritical.

Yun Chen opened his mouth, in the end, said softly, "Congratulations to you!"

Chapter 643: Bestowal of the Commandery Princess

"Congratulations to me?" Yun Jinnian looked at Yun Chen in astonishment before turning to the Emperor. "Your Majesty, for what joy should your servant daughter be congratulated?"

"You child, when your great-uncle congratulates you, it's naturally a good thing. Kneel down to receive the decree!"

In the face of his lifesaver, the Emperor was always affable and kindly.

Moreover, since Yun Jinnian was indeed obedient and well-behaved, the Emperor couldn't help but be fond of her.

Hearing this, Yun Jinnian quickly knelt down, "Your servant daughter is ready to receive the decree!"

Eunuch Hai immediately opened the Imperial Decree and read aloud, "The Yun Family has a daughter who is the fourth in line, named Jinnian. She is dignified and graceful, earnest and pure-hearted, modest and amiable. She is hereby granted the title of Princess Yijia, awarded two sets of jade Ruyi, a Princess Residence, and the entitlement to the taxes of three counties!"

After Eunuch Hai finished reading, seeing that Yun Jinnian was still stunned, he said with a smile, "Princess, offer your thanks quickly!"

Yun Jinnian came back to her senses, "Your servant daughter thanks His Majesty for his great grace. Your Majesty, your servant daughter feels unworthy of the entitlement to the counties' taxes and hopes Your Majesty will retract this order!"

The Emperor frowned.

Yun Jinnian continued, "Your Majesty, Tianchu Country has suffered two consecutive years of disasters; one year from snow calamities, the next from droughts. These have strained the people and depleted the treasury, the common folk are suffering. Your servant daughter has already received enormous grace with the title and residence of a Princess. I implore Your Majesty to take back the entitlement to the counties and use the taxes where they are most needed!"

The fact that the treasury was depleted after two years of great expenditure was true.

Thus, the Emperor was also trying hard to think of ways to raise silver. After hearing what Yun Jinnian had said, he became deeply moved, "It's thoughtful of you to consider this. I will take the entitlement back, you may rise!"

"Thank Your Majesty!"

Yun Jinnian rose to her feet and received the Imperial Decree.

Eunuch Hai hastened to say, "This servant pays his respects to Princess Yijia!"

"Eunuch Hai, there is no need for formalities!"

After all, she had been an Empress in her previous life. Although it was not for many years, and things did not go smoothly, she had held a high position and maintained a certain degree of dignity.

Watching her, the Emperor nodded slightly, "Alright, you'll be leaving the palace tomorrow. Go and prepare your belongings!"

Yun Jinnian was escorted into the palace by the Empress using the Phoenix Carriage, naturally, she would be sent back in the same manner, along with the gifts bestowed upon her.

Yun Jinnian followed Yun Qi and Yun Chen out of the Imperial Study.

Yun Qi hesitated to speak and ultimately left without saying a word.

His daughter had become a Commandery Princess through her own efforts, and from now on, her prospects were bright.

In the Capital City, no one would dare to look down on her again.

After giving Yun Jinnian a deep look, without leaving a word, he walked away.

Yun Chen sighed lightly, "Your father is just like that; don't take it to heart. Now that you are a Princess, your great-uncle is happy for you, and everyone at home is proud of you!"

"Hmm!"

A faint hum, although not rejecting, let Yun Chen know that Yun Jinnian and the Yun Family were completely estranged now.

Otherwise, at this moment, she should have been proudly saying something, but all she did was hum faintly.

"Then, your great-uncle will be leaving as well!"

"Yes!"

Yun Chen looked at Yun Jinnian, feeling a sense of helplessness.

Who would have thought that, in this family, Yun Jinnian would be granted the title of a Commandery Princess?

However, no matter what, she was still a member of the Yun Family, and everything still couldn't surpass the Yun Family's influence.

With that in mind, Yun Chen felt somewhat less upset and hastened to catch up with Yun Qi.

He also thought about asking Mrs. He to send some items to Niannian Garden.

Times had changed; they could no longer treat Yun Jinnian as they had before...

Yun Residence

The marriage between Yun Zhen and Wang Yanran was finally settled. The Yun Family had sent the betrothal gifts and fixed the wedding date for November.

There was just over a month left.

Mrs. He was very busy every day, and whenever she had a moment to spare, she thought of She Hong, the eldest son of the She Family. Mrs. He had suspected Yun Jinnian but found no evidence.

But She Hong was indeed ruined.

Chapter 644: Portrait of a Chaotic Family

Lady Wang, although she didn't specify where she was injured, from her anxious demeanor, and the rumors outside that when She Hong was found, his crotch was a bloody mess, one could surmise that his lineage was damaged.

"Lady, Lady, the young miss refuses to take her medicine again!"

Mrs. He frowned at the news.

"What's the matter with her now?"

Speaking of Xu Xinmo, Mrs. He really despised her.

On the Double Ninth Festival, she amused the aging Dowager Yun by climbing the heights, which brightened the old lady's attitude towards Mu Si and Mu Lan. But when they returned home, Xu Xinmo attempted suicide by hanging.

That had scared the Dowager Yun terribly, causing her to faint on the spot. When she awoke, she immediately called Xu Xinmo to her side to personally take care of her.

Somehow, what started as Xu Xinmo feigning illness turned into a real sickness.

Yun Zhen was about to get married, and Mrs. He certainly didn't want Xu Xinmo to die during this time.

Taking a deep breath, she said, "Let's go have a look!"

Outside Cixin Academy.

Mrs. He heard the voice of the elderly Dowager Yun coaxing Xu Xinmo, "My dear, quickly drink the medicine. It's not bitter at all. I've tasted it myself, truly not bitter at all!"

For the sake of Xu Xinmo, the future Empress, the elderly Dowager Yun was willing to shed all dignity.

Mrs. He, standing at the door, could hardly bear to listen.

She wanted to turn around and leave, or just throw Xu Xinmo out.

The Xu Family was just one step away from disowning Xu Xinmo, treating her as if dead. Yet she still had the audacity to act like a demon in the Yun Family!

Why hadn't she actually died during that hanging attempt!

"No, I don't want it, Grandmother, I don't want to take the medicine. It's so bitter. Grandmother, can you ask my cousin for the Snow Lotus Pill, please? She has plenty of Snow Lotus Pills, maybe I'll get better if I take them!"

The elderly Dowager Yun hesitated, "But she's in the palace!"

"It doesn't matter if she's in the palace, she must have some in her Niannian Garden. Grandmother, please send someone to get it. Would you do that?"

After pondering for a moment, the Dowager Yun called Ming Liu, "Go to the Niannian Garden and tell Mrs. Yuan to bring a bottle of Snow Lotus Pills for Wanwan!"

Ming Liu acknowledged the request and set off for Niannian Garden.

At the entrance of the courtyard, she encountered Mrs. He, "Lady!"

"Go on, I'm going in to see Xinmo!" said Mrs. He as she entered the Cixin Academy.

She felt the elderly Dowager Yun was truly muddled.

She should have retired to the family temple by now, but Yun Qi and Yun Chen had not spoken up, and she didn't have the authority to decide.

Entering the parlor, she saw the elderly Dowager Yun gently coaxing Xu Xinmo.

Mrs. He stood aside, wondering what bewitching potion Xu Xinmo had given the elderly Dowager Yun to make this selfish and greedy old lady so compliant, opening her heart to her!

When Ming Liu arrived at Niannian Garden and explained her purpose, Mrs. Yuan was exceedingly surprised, "The young miss took all the Snow Lotus Pills with her to the palace!"

"..."

Ming Liu's heart skipped a beat, and she promptly left Niannian Garden, returning to Cixin Academy to report back.

Ming Liu didn't voice it, but she felt extremely miserable inside.

That day in the street, she saw Ming Yang, who was now the spouse of a butler, with her own mansion, shops, and carrying a child, living a rich and flavorful life, adorned with wealth. She was no longer the Ming Yang who had once served beside her in front of the elderly Dowager Yun.

Envy and jealousy consumed her, wishing dearly that it had been her who went to plead for the fourth young lady, wishing she had been the one beside the fourth young lady.

But it wasn't, none of it was...

Returning to Cixin Academy, seeing Ming Liu come back empty-handed, Xu Xinmo immediately started crying and screaming about seeking death again. The elderly Dowager Yun was once again doting over her with gentle persuasion.

Yun Qi stood at the door of Cixin Academy for a while, listening to the noise inside, then turned around expressionless and walked away.

Yun Chen also shook his head and stepped into Cixin Academy.

He stood at the doorway watching as Mrs. He stood to the side seemingly enjoying the spectacle, Xu Xinmo was wailing and threatening to seek death, while the elderly Dowager Yun advised her earnestly. He bellowed in anger, "If she wants to die, let her die. If she can't manage it, I, as her uncle, will send a bowl of arsenic that will surely do the job!"

Chapter 645: In Cahoots

As Yun Chen's words fell, the room immediately fell into an eerie silence.

The maids and old women thudded to their knees.

None dared to even breathe.

Xu Xinmo stared with wide eyes, disbelieving as she looked at Yun Chen, her tears still clinging to the corners of her eyes.

Her little face instantly turned deathly pale.

This elder uncle was always gentle, very tolerant towards family members, and extremely filial towards his maternal grandmother. Because of his grandmother, he was also very tolerant towards her.

Over the years, she had bullied Yun Jinnian many times, several times almost to death, and he had turned a blind eye each time.

But today, he was actually going to feed her arsenic...

At this thought, Xu Xinmo felt an extreme fear, her face turned pale and she suddenly fainted.

Out of fright!

The Old Madam Yun was also terribly frightened, it took her a while to find her voice again. Just as she was about to speak, she saw Xu Xinmo faint from fright, "Wanwan... quick, go summon the Imperial Physician, hurry..."

"Today, I'd like to see who dares to leave Cixin Academy!" said Yun Chen, and in one move, he overturned the Duobao Pavilion by his side.

All the treasures on the Duobao Pavilion were the favorites of Old Madam Yun.

Last time Yun Qi had smashed quite a few, and these were all that were left.

"Eldest..."

Old Madam Yun let out a cry of alarm and abruptly stood up.

Feeling weak in her limbs, she fell back into her seat, looking at Yun Chen in shock.

This eldest son of hers, he had been the closest to her since childhood, always indulgent of her, never opposed her, whether she was right or wrong.

But today, he had said such things, this was him drifting apart from her!

"Someone, bring the Miss over here and wake her up. She wants to die, doesn't she? Well, let her have a proper death today. Go, prepare a white silk noose and a bowl of poison. I'll personally see her off today!"

Hearing this, Old Madam Yun also fainted on the spot.

"Mother!"

Mrs. He cried out in shock.

However, inside, she felt immensely delighted.

She stepped forward to support Old Madam Yun, then looked towards Yun Chen, "My lord, mother has fainted, swiftly summon the physician!"

"Stop with the pretense, roll back to your Nuanxin Academy!" Yun Chen shouted angrily at Mrs. He.

He was particularly angry today.

He was incredibly disappointed with his family.

The older generation was muddle-headed, not sparing even their own sons, daughters-in-law, and direct granddaughters.

The younger ones were troublemakers, spending their days seeking death and stirring up drama.

The ones in between were two-faced and arduous, self-serving, vicious, and ruthless.

How did he end up with such a family?

Thinking this, Yun Chen staggered to a chair on the side and sat down.

Looking at the maids and old women kneeling in the room.

His wife who was putting on airs, calling out, not sure if her mother and niece were truly or feigning unconsciousness.

He suddenly felt a sense of powerlessness.

He even didn't want to deal with them anymore, let them create chaos. One day, they would regret their foolishness today.

But if that day really came, the Yun Family would be completely ruined, and the possibility of a resurgence would be absolutely impossible.

"If you wish to be destitute one day, scorned by everyone like beggars on the street, then just keep acting out. I will not say one more word!"

After saying this, Yun Chen got up and left Cixin Academy.

Mrs. He watched Yun Chen leave, feeling no particular sorrow, just a clenching pain in her heart for a moment, followed by some disappointment.

She had originally thought that Yun Chen would severely punish Xu Xinmo, but to her surprise, he did not.

He had picked her up high only to let her down gently.

Coward!

"Help the Old Madam to the bed, and as for Miss, take her back to Yicai Garden. Tell her, if she still wants to stay properly in the Yun Family, she needs to keep herself in check. If she causes more trouble, she will be sent directly back to the Xu Family. If the Xu Family doesn't want her, send her to her father's place. The Yun Family will absolutely not keep her!"

Chapter 646: What Goes Around Comes Around

Mrs. He finished speaking and had Xu Xinmo carried away.

After waiting for the doctor to arrive and take Yun Family's Old Madam's pulse and prescribe a remedy, and once the medicine was decocted and the Old Madam awoke, she gave instructions to Ming Liu and several others to take careful care of her, before leaving wearily.

She knew very clearly that because Yun Family's Old Madam had been widowed early and raised her three sons on her own, Yun Chen, being the eldest, knew the most and was also the most foolishly filial.

If she truly neglected the Old Madam, Yun Chen might very well divorce her.

Therefore, she did not leave but chose to stay.

Xu Xinmo slowly came to her senses, somewhat unable to accept her current situation, especially the words of Mrs. He and Yun Chen, which made her clearly understand that she was despised by the Yun Family. Had it not been for her living maternal grandmother, and had her mother not entrusted her to her eldest maternal uncle's care, she would have been sent back to the Xu Family long ago.

And she knew very well that life would never be as comfortable if she went back to the Xu Family.

The people of the Xu Family certainly wouldn't pamper her as the Yun Family did.

"Nanny!"

Mrs. Hu hurriedly responded, "Miss?"

"I don't want to go back to the Xu Family. Once I'm sent back, truly, neither heaven nor earth will respond to my cries, and I don't want to live the tragic life Yun Jinnian once did. Nanny, could you please bring my grandmother back to help me?"

Mrs. Hu took a deep breath, "Grandmother has extremely important matters to attend to and can't come back for the time being. Miss, in the upcoming days, you must reflect behind closed doors and not leave Yicai Academy, and everything will be fine!"

"Really?" Xu Xinmo asked.

"Mhm, as long as the Old Madam is still here, your position in the Yun Residence will remain unshaken!"

Xu Xinmo thought it over carefully and felt that Mrs. Hu's words made sense.

"Then in the coming days, I'll be well-behaved. Whenever I've got time, I'll accompany my maternal grandmother. I won't go out anymore!"

"That's right!"

As compared to the shifting winds and clouds of the Yun Residence, Yun Jinnian was receiving many rewards in the palace.

Various consorts rewarded her with gifts, regardless of their rank, all sent by the palace maids in pairs, one as a thanksgiving for saving the Emperor, and the other to congratulate Yun Jinnian on being awarded the title of Commandery Princess.

Even several Imperial Concubines had rewarded her with precious Jade Ruyi.

The consorts didn't mind that Yun Jinnian did not personally express her gratitude, but she had to make a visit to the Imperial Concubines.

Upon knowing this, the Empress Dowager invited the Imperial Concubines to Cining Palace, where Yun Jinnian thanked each of them and took their pulses in turn, gifting each of them a Snow Lotus Pill.

"As it turns out, we few old ladies have made a profit!"

Snow Lotus was already hard to come by, let alone when made into an elixir, which also contained other precious medicinal ingredients.

The Imperial Concubines, holding the pills, wondered if the rewards they had given were too light?

But they had already been given, and it wouldn't be right to offer more. They thought about rewarding Yun Jinnian more generously the next time she came to the palace.

Yun Jinnian dined at Cining Palace that evening, and both the Emperor and the Empress were present.

Yun Jinnian had not expected the Empress to be back, but during the meal, the Empress spoke little and rarely smiled, whereas the Empress Dowager and the Emperor were in very good spirits,

After dinner, Yun Jinnian still stayed at Cining Palace.

"Jinnian!"

"Empress Dowager?"

The Empress Dowager gestured to Yun Jinnian, "Come, sit next to me and keep me company for a chat!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian spoke little, mostly listening to the Empress Dowager reminisce about the past.

The Empress Dowager had once been just a daughter from a humble family, her father a County Magistrate, and as the eldest daughter at home with an early-deceased mother and a harsh stepmother, she was not treated well.

She was supposed to marry her childhood sweetheart, her cousin, but her aunt despised her, and her father went through great lengths to have her enter the palace.

After entering the palace, she served as a favored lady in waiting, and it was only gradually that she was favored by the Emperor. However, the Empress Dowager did not have any children. It was only after the mother of the current Emperor passed away that the Empress Dowager took the Emperor to her side and plotted step by step on his behalf.

But then, Noble Consort Chen arrived.

That is, the mother of Chu Yu...

Chapter 647: Leaving the Palace to Return Home

Yun Jinnian was astounded.

It turned out that the Emperor was not the biological son of the Empress Dowager.

Some things, the Empress Dowager spoke of very vaguely, mentioning very little about Chu Yu's mother, only that she was very beautiful and highly favored.

But beauty is prone to tragedy. She passed away after giving birth to Chu Yu and Princess Jinfeng, though some say she disappeared...

"There are various accounts, but the late Emperor dearly loved his youngest children to the point of indulgence!" the Empress Dowager remarked, inevitably feeling sentimental.

If Consort Chen were still alive, at least the late Emperor would not have succumbed to grief and passed away in melancholy, and this throne would not have fallen to the current Emperor.

Thinking of this, the Empress Dowager asked, "On your trip to Nanjiang with Prince Rui, did he make things difficult for you?"

"No, we were hurrying along the way. When we arrived in Nanjiang, I went to look for the Snow Lotus of Tian Mountain. Perhaps because I am a doctor, he was quite courteous!"

The Empress Dowager smiled, "Prince Rui's temperament isn't exactly pleasant, and he's someone who can neither suffer losses nor stand grievances. In the future, you must not provoke him, avoid him if you can!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian responded respectfully.

The Empress Dowager looked very satisfied, "Alright, it's getting late, go rest now!"

"Yes, good night, Empress Dowager!"

Yun Jinnian exited the Cining Palace, walking toward her residence in the side halls of Cining Palace.

Reflecting on the Empress Dowager's words, Yun Jinnian's thoughts spun.

Was she simply afraid of her harbouring love for Chu Yu or attempting to beguile Chu Yu into falling for her, actually marrying her?

To Chu Yu, would that not be an advantage?

Yun Jinnian understood the Empress Dowager's thoughts.

Returning to the side hall, Shi Jiayu, Ru Yue, and a few palace maids were busy packing things awarded from various palaces into chests.

They would be taken out of the palace tomorrow.

"Miss, you're finally back!" Shi Jiayu said, wiping the sweat from her forehead.

Yun Jinnian chuckled, walked over to the table, and poured her a glass of water, "Take your time, there's no rush. Or you could call for a few more palace servants to help!"

"We've already called more than a dozen, these chests need to be carried outside, ready to be loaded onto the horse carts and taken out of the palace tomorrow!"

"How many are left?"

"Perhaps about a dozen chests, another two hours should be enough!"

Yun Jinnian didn't know how many things there were, but judging by Shi Jiayu's demeanor, it seemed to be quite a lot.

"Take your time, once everything is packed, go to sleep," Yun Jinnian instructed.

"Yes!" Shi Jiayu replied and turned back to her busy work.

Yun Jinnian then washed up, changed her clothes and watched as Shi Jiayu and Ru Yue directed the servants to pack everything into chests.

Actually, when each palace presented their gifts, they were packed in brocade boxes, but they had to be registered and noted from which consort they were received, as favors to be returned in the future.

Once out of the palace, with several mansions visited, there would be more free time. The rouge shop she and Tianci owned would also need to open.

Only, she wondered if her mother was in Yun Residence, whether she had returned from Huguo Temple?

And whether she had ever missed her?

With an uneasy heart, Yun Jinnian finally fell into a fitful sleep.

Upon awakening at dawn, Yun Jinnian first bid farewell to the Empress Dowager, then went to Weiyang Palace to say goodbye to the Empress, and as for the Emperor, Eunuch Hai had come early to say there was no need to visit.

She boarded the Phoenix Carriage, carrying the Imperial Decree back to Yun Residence...

Many were relieved with Yun Jinnian's departure from the palace.

Upon learning of Yun Jinnian's exit from the palace, several princesses sneered in secret.

They all thought Yun Jinnian would fawn over them, but every time they met, she would merely greet them and then stand aside, face cold and silent.

She didn't give them a second thought at all.

They were princesses, the most respected young women in Tianchu Country.

Especially when inquiring about the Yangxin Hall matters from Yun Jinnian, she kept her mouth shut, which annoyed the princesses even more.

Yet they couldn't lay hands on Yun Jinnian and could only harbor resentment.

"Finally left the palace!"

Chapter 648: Differing Thoughts (Part 1)

Yun Jinnian let out a breath.

She didn't pay attention to the dozen or so Vermilion Carriages following behind her, nor did she look at the people pointing and talking on both sides of the street, as the two pairs of Imperial Guards led the way in front of the Phoenix Carriage.

Her thoughts drifted far off.

Did her mother wait for her at home?

Had she returned from Huguo Temple?

Having experienced maternal love, Yun Jinnian especially longed for it.

"Meow!"

Tuanzi meowed.

Yun Jinnian came back to her senses slightly and lowered her head, a faint smile appearing at the corners of her mouth.

She raised her hand to stroke Tuanzi's head, scratching the itchy spot for him.

Feasting on fish and fish soup porridge every day, Tuanzi indeed grew plump, truly living up to his name.

"Miss, are we going straight back to Yun Residence like this?" Shi Jiayu asked.

"Yes, back to Yun Residence!" Yun Jinnian replied faintly, her thoughts drifting far away again.

"But, with so many things, won't people covet them?" Shi Jiayu worried.

Especially the Yun Residence, she always felt it was a dragon's den and tiger's cave, not a good place to go.

"Even if they covet and want them, if I do not give them, can they rob me? They wouldn't dare to steal, and if they dare, I will dare to report to Jingzhao Prefecture and make it known to all!" Yun Jinnian said faintly.

In the Imperial Palace these days, Yun Jinnian had seen plenty of Palace Maids and eunuchs plot and deceive each other. They would hold grudges over trivial matters and wait for the opportunity to seek revenge.

Especially the concubines contending for imperial favor and glory, they would haggle over every detail. They wouldn't say it to the face, calling each other sisters, while harboring malice in their hearts and plotting traps behind their backs.

"But those are Miss's relatives..."

"Can relatives force me to hand over the things bestowed by the palace?" Yun Jinnian retorted.

If the affection was deep, even if she gave them, what of it?

But there was not a shred of closeness between them, only the sight of each other being an eyesore.

And there was no kinship.

Seeing that Yun Jinnian was well prepared, Shi Jiayu did not ask further.

She sat quietly on the lower brocade stool.

Yun Residence

Because they heard that Yun Jinnian would return home today and that the emperor had issued an Imperial Decree to confer her as Commandery Princess, Yun Qi, Yun Chen, and the others took leave to wait at home.

Yun Zhen, Yun Yi, and Yun Xuan didn't go out either.

At this moment, the whole family, except for the ill Old Madame Yun and Mrs. Han, who had not returned from Huguo Temple, was waiting in the hall.

Mrs. He felt very uncomfortable in her heart.

Thinking that Yun Jinnian had become a Commandery Princess, while her own daughters—apart from Yun Muyou, Yun Musi, and Yun Mulan—didn't receive any titles or rewards, and her three sons, although they held positions, none held any real power and were insignificant errand runners.

Her future daughter-in-law was to marry a county princess; she had felt proud for a few days. Before the excitement had passed, someone had become Commandery Princess in their residence, and it was Yun Jinnian who was distant from everyone in the Yun Family!

Now that Yun Jinnian was conferred as Commandery Princess, as her birth mother, Mrs. Han was not at the residence. Who knew what Yun Qi felt at this moment?

What would he feel when Yun Jinnian returned later?

With these thoughts, Mrs. He sneaked a glance at Yun Qi, who was sipping tea with a stern face, and suddenly felt a sense of schadenfreude.

Yun Zhen, Yun Yi, and Yun Xuan, the three brothers, sat on one side, each with their own thoughts.

Regarding their cousin Yun Jinnian, the three usually did not pay much attention, nor did they understand her, yet unexpectedly, her medical skills turned out to be exceptionally advanced.

Her reputation was on the rise.

When going out and mingling, many people inquired of them, trying to build a connection and hoping they could introduce them or invite their sisters to a banquet at home for fun.

Chapter 649: The Grand Return

If they shared a profound love with Yun Jinnian, perhaps he would be willing to help. But to Yun Jinnian, they were kin in name only; when it really came down to it, they were merely familiar strangers—relatives with blood ties but no emotional connection.

How could they bring themselves to ask?

Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingzhi, and Yun Qingqing were all afraid of Yun Qi, standing to one side without daring to breathe too loudly, yet they were happy for Yun Jinnian.

After all, she was their legitimate elder sister, their very own flesh and blood.

Her aunt cradled a child in her arms, softly comforting it; one aunt had a child in her embrace, and a wet nurse by her side held another. The intentions of both aunts were crystal clear—they wanted to cling closely to Yun Jinnian's coattails for the sake of their sons' futures.

Yun Musi and Yun Mulan were filled with envy, hating that it wasn't one of them being conferred the title of Commandery Princess instead of Yun Jinnian!

"Big Young Master, Second Young Master!" A servant hurried in, "Big Young Master, Second Young Master, it's the Phoenix Carriage, the Empress's Phoenix Carriage that has brought back the Fourth Miss, with Imperial Guards clearing the way. Behind the carriage, over a dozen Vermilion Carriages follow. The

whole Capital City is talking about Fourth Miss now, saying she's already Princess Yijia, awarded with her own Princess Residence, and there will be rewards bestowed by the palace to her residence!"

Yun Qi was silent, as if he had not heard.

Yun Chen glanced at Yun Qi and waved his hand to dismiss the servant, then said, "Let's all start preparing."

Regardless, Yun Jinnian's ennoblement as a Commandery Princess was a significant advantage to the Yun Family.

The Phoenix Carriage came to a stop at the entrance of the Yun Residence, with Eunuch Hai personally stepping forward to stand beside it. "Princess Yijia, we have arrived!"

Hemei and Huanian stood to the side. Shi Jiayu and Ru Yue alighted from the Phoenix Carriage first, followed by Yun Jinnian, dressed in brocaded robes, who slowly descended from the carriage.

The onlooking crowd suddenly came to a realization.

"This Fourth Miss Yun is truly beautiful!"

"Not Fourth Miss Yun anymore, she's a Commandery Princess now. Didn't you hear the palace people calling her Princess Yijia? She will be a princess from now on!"

A titled princess with her own Princess Residence and land grants.

It was completely different from those casually named as princesses without being gifted an estate or grants.

Even though Yun Jinnian had graciously declined the land grants, it only made her all the more admirable.

People marveled, saying Princess Yijia was not only skilled in medical arts but also virtuous and unsullied. She desired no silver; no wonder she had once kindly given silver to the top scholar in the imperial examination and provided aid in Qiaoshi Pavilion with a single Snow Lotus Elixir.

To the crowd's discussion, Yun Jinnian acted as if she didn't hear and followed Eunuch Hai into the Yun Residence.

Yun Qi and Yun Chen, along with his family, went forward to greet them.

"Eunuch Hai!"

Eunuch Hai laughed, bowing with a clasped fist toward Yun Qi and Yun Chen, "Lords Yun!"

Yun Jinnian performed a curtsy to Yun Qi and Yun Chen. "Father, Great Uncle!"

Her gaze briefly swept around but did not find her mother, Mrs. Han. Yun Jinnian's heart skipped a beat.

In this entire month, there had not been a single greeting, not a shred of concern. Just like during those several years, it had always been her alone struggling at death's door.

Even with the title of Commandery Princess, her heart still couldn't find joy.

Yun Qi responded indifferently.

Yun Chen smiled, "Jinnian, there is no need for such formalities!"

Seeing Yun Jinnian's pallid complexion, he understood but chose not to address it.

Eunuch Hai presented the Imperial Decree to Yun Chen. "Lord Yun, His Majesty sent this humble one on this errand for two reasons: firstly, to deliver the Imperial Decree conferring the title on Princess Yijia, and secondly, regarding the rewards. His Majesty stated that these rewards belong to Princess Yijia, and

no one else may covet them. Once the Princess Residence is assigned, everything should be delivered there. Whether Princess Yijia chooses to live in the Princess Residence or the Yun Residence in the future is entirely up to the princess herself!"

With her parents alive, how could Yun Jinnian possibly take up residence in the Princess Residence? At most, she might briefly stay there for a few days unless she had a special reason.

Chapter 650: Feeling Unwell from Grievances

"Yes, yes!" Yun Qi said hastily.

A blush crept onto his face.

Too many people knew of the petty affairs in the Yun Residence.

If others weren't openly pointing fingers, it was only because Yun Jinnian hadn't made a fuss. Once Yun Jinnian kicked up a storm, there would be no more shame to hide, and that would signal the downfall of the Yun Residence.

Steward Hai sipped tea in the hall, watching as people carried in items. A Vermilion Carriage bore eight chests, and fifteen horse-drawn carts carried a total of one hundred and twenty chests. Although they were not yet opened, Mrs. He was already green with envy.

Swallowing saliva, she wished all these things were theirs.

Yun Jinnian sat on a chair to the side, hands resting on his knees, his expression soft as he gently pursed his lips.

Only after all the chests had been brought in did Steward Hai clasp his hands together and say, "Lords Yun, Commandery Princess, this servant will now return to the palace to report!"

"I will see Steward Hai out!" Yun Chen said, escorting Steward Hai out of the Yun Residence.

Yun Qi, on the other hand, stayed at a distance, looking at Yun Jinnian, and said indifferently, "Take care!" before striding off to escort Steward Hai as well.

"..."

Silence without a word.

At this moment, Yun Jinnian felt aggrieved.

No matter how gentle, strong, or hardworking she was, it seemed no one noticed.

Well then, let it be!

"Jinnian, congratulations!" Mrs. He stepped forward with a contrived congratulation.

Yun Musi and Yun Mulan also quickly came forward, "Congratulations, Fourth Sister!"

"Thank you!"

Yun Jinnian smiled faintly, looking towards Shi Jiayu, "Jiayu, I'll leave this to you. I'm tired and will go back to rest at Niannian Garden!"

Having said that, she turned and left.

Mrs. He, Yun Musi, and Yun Mulan felt embarrassed; their smiles frozen on their faces.

Smiling, Shi Jiayu said to Mrs. He, "Lady, could you please ask the maids and matrons with strength to help carry these things to Niannian Garden?"

"Hmm!"

Mrs. He grimaced, yet responded.

She called the butler over, "Have someone carry these chests to Niannian Garden!"

Niannian Garden was only so big; she didn't believe there was spare room for these hundred-plus chests.

If they could be placed in the central storeroom, it would be convenient for her to use later, but the thought was extinguished the moment she recalled what Steward Hai had specifically said.

After escorting Steward Hai, Yun Qi went straight back to his own courtyard, not asking a single question.

Yun Chen watched, sighed softly, walked to the hall, and asked Mrs. He, "Where's Jinnian?"

"She said she was tired and went back to rest at Niannian Garden. I've instructed the butler to have the items sent over," Mrs. He said, watching as the chests were carried away, her heart aching terribly.

"Hmm, keep an eye out here!" Yun Chen said, then turned to his two daughters and three nieces, "You girls should visit your Fourth Sister at Niannian Garden more often. Sisterly affection grows with frequent visits!"

"Yes, Father (Uncle)!"

They responded obediently, bowing respectfully.

Yun Chen nodded, satisfied, looking towards his three sons, "You three as well, even if Jinnian has become a Commandery Princess, she is still your sister. If there are errands to run in the future, make yourselves useful!"

Yun Zhen, Yun Yi, and Yun Xuan hurriedly agreed, "Yes, Father!"

The three brothers didn't say it aloud, but in their hearts, they somewhat resented Yun Jinnian.

Previously, when Yun Jinnian was in the hall, she had completely ignored them. Did she treat them like brothers at all?

Such a sister, running errands?

Impossible!

"Alright, all of you may leave!"

Yun Jinnian's investiture as Commandery Princess should have been a joyous occasion, but the people of Yun Residence were indifferent; Mrs. He didn't even mention rewarding the servants.

Yun Jinnian returned to Niannian Garden without having a sip of water and collapsed onto the bed.

She wanted to rest with her eyes closed, but fell ill with a fever instead; her whole body burning. Mrs. Yuan hastily had someone summon the doctor, who after taking the pulse said, "Your heart-fire is too strong, just take something to reduce the fire, and you'll be fine!"