

Indulgence 681

Chapter 681: Utter Disgust

Han Xuzi spoke, and with a slap, his hand hit the table.

Mrs. Han jumped with fright, staring at Han Xuzi in disbelief, "Father, what are you doing?"

"What am I doing? I should be asking you, what do you intend to do? Is that not your child? How could you hate her because of her father? Shuniang, you were never like this before!"

Mrs. Han's face turned ashen, "Yes, she is my child, but she is also Yun Qi's child. She has Yun Qi's blood in her veins. Yun Qi is so filthy, so shameless, how could Jinnian be any better with his blood?"

Mrs. Han's voice nearly rose to a scream towards the end.

The sound was shrill and grating; Han Xuzi could hardly believe it.

This was his carefree and unrestrained daughter, how had she become this unreasonable?

"Shut your mouth!"

"Shut my mouth, why should I shut my mouth? Father, Tianci is my son. She, Yun Jinnian, wants to send Tianci to Nanjiang. Has she ever asked me? In her heart, does she even consider me her mother?" Mrs. Han bellowed, shaking her head, "No, she hasn't. She treats Mrs. Yuan better than she treats me, she's closer to Mrs. Yuan than to me!"

Han Xuzi wanted to say something.

But then he saw Yun Jinnian standing in the courtyard, dumbfounded.

The words he wanted to say choked in his throat as he watched Yun Jinnian turn around and slowly walk towards the outside.

"Jinnian..."

Han Xuzi exclaimed, chasing after her.

Mrs. Han suddenly came back to her senses, her mind somewhat cleared. Realizing what she had said, she hurriedly followed but tripped over the threshold and fell to the ground.

"No, no, no..."

Mrs. Han burst into tears.

This wasn't what she thought.

That was her daughter, the daughter she had cherished in the palm of her hand, she liked her so, so much.

How could she despise her?

"No, this is wrong, she is the daughter of that filthy Yun Qi. Her body carries Yun Qi's blood, filthy, base!"

Mrs. Han lay on the ground, alternating between agony and hatred. She felt a severe pain in her head and eventually began banging her head against the ground.

"Madam..."

Bai Que rushed in and saw Mrs. Han in such a pathetic state, her heart aching.

She hurriedly helped Mrs. Han to her feet, "Madam, are you alright?"

"I hate her, Bai Que, I hate her. She's just like Yun Qi, just like Yun Qi..."

Bai Que, seeing Mrs. Han's nearly mad state, urgently called out, "Someone, come quickly, go and fetch the old master, hurry!"

Yun Jinnian had never known, this was how her mother saw her!

She couldn't choose her own parents, was that her fault?

She had lived in lowliness all her life. In this life, she wanted to strive for better, to pave a bright path for herself and her future children. Was that wrong?

Why did her own mother think of her so poorly?

"Jinnian..." Han Xuzi caught up with Yun Jinnian, softly calling out.

Yun Jinnian, with her back to Han Xuzi, was shaking violently. She had thought she would cry, but although her eyes were in pain, not a single tear would fall.

Although she had long known that her mother's fondness for her was not like it had been in early years, she had always believed that her mother loved her.

"Grandfather, don't come over here, I'm fine, really," Yun Jinnian said, clutching at her own clothes.

Gasping for air in great gulps.

Hoping this would make her feel a little less miserable.

"Jinnian, listen to your grandfather, your mother, she..."

Han Xuzi was cut off before he could finish, as a maid ran over, "Old master, something's wrong with the elder madam, you must come quickly!"

Hearing this, Han Xuzi was torn.

On one side was his granddaughter, on the other, his own daughter.

He was struggling to choose.

But Yun Jinnian made the choice for him as she trotted away.

"Alas..."

Han Xuzi sighed and turned back to his study.

He resolved to give Mrs. Han a stern talking-to and to make her apologize to Jinnian...

Chapter 682: Furious

Han Xuzi hurried back to the study.

Bai Que was holding Mrs. Han, calling her name with worry, while Mrs. Han's body twitched slightly.

It was then that Han Xuzi realized the situation might be serious.

He quickly stepped forward to take Mrs. Han's pulse, his frown growing tighter. He glanced coldly at Bai Que, carried Mrs. Han into the bedroom in the study, laid her on the bed, and applied acupuncture with silver needles.

A good while later, Mrs. Han gradually stopped twitching.

Han Xuzi stood up and looked coldly at Bai Que standing to the side, "How long has Mrs. Shu been like this?"

Bai Que dropped to her knees in front of Han Xuzi, "Replying to Master, the mistress has been in this condition for nearly a month now. Previously, she did not suffer convulsions, but today, when the young mistress returned, the mistress had been waiting a long time, and the young mistress did not come over. At that time, her emotions were somewhat disturbed, so..."

She was stimulated.

Han Xuzi closed his eyes.

He could never have dreamed that his daughter, Han Xuzi's daughter, would suffer from hysteria.

And it had already progressed to the middle stage; if it hadn't been discovered this time, or if Bai Que had concealed it and not reported it...

"Go down and receive punishment; you need not serve Mrs. Shu any longer!" Han Xuzi voiced out coldly, not giving Bai Que any chance to explain.

A maid so close to Mrs. Han, Bai Que surely knew of any unseemliness with her, yet she allowed it to develop to this state today.

Bai Que had long lost the qualification to stay by Mrs. Shu's side.

Bai Que knelt on the ground, unable to utter a word, with nothing to say.

"Go down!"

Han Xuzi said sternly.

He did not want to see Bai Que any longer.

Bai Que rose to her feet and slowly left.

Han Xuzi looked at Mrs. Han who had fallen into a coma. Her complexion was pale, her hair in disarray, long stripped of the arrogance of earlier years, and even more so of the rosy hue of youth, with wrinkles at the corners of her eyes and brows.

"Mrs. Shu..."

Han Xuzi called softly and tucked the blanket around Mrs. Han.

He then called out quietly, "Someone come here!"

"Master!"

Two shadows appeared before Han Xuzi.

After looking at Mrs. Han for a long time, Han Xuzi finally said coldly, "Go assassinate Yun Qi, but don't let him die!"

He should never have agreed to this marriage in the first place.

No matter how outstanding a person might be in youth, if there is a confused mother at home, they should not be brought into the family.

Yun Qi was truly wonderful in his youth.

The Third Place Scholar of the court, chaste and upright, excelling in both literary and martial skills, graceful in every movement, every gesture spoke of charm and suavity, and his oration could craft Chapters—his behavior in society was beyond reproach.

But it was precisely such a man who had hurt his daughter so deeply!

Han Xuzi summoned the maids into the room, "Take good care of the young miss!"

"Yes!"

Han Xuzi glanced at Mrs. Han one last time, then left the study.

Yun Jinnian strolled slowly back to Chaoyang Academy.

Looking at the plaque of Chaoyang Academy, he whispered softly, "Life is like the morning sun's dew, things change like waves upon water. Vast is the idle universe, what then is the essence of righteousness!"

He then entered Chaoyang Academy at a leisurely pace.

Hemei and Henuan quickly came to greet him, "Miss, what's wrong?"

Yun Jinnian shook his head slightly, entered the small hall, and closed the door behind him.

Hemei and Henuan were left outside, their expressions instantly changing.

Hemei opened her mouth to call out, but Henuan quickly covered her lips and shook her head slightly.

Although Yun Jinnian did not say anything, Hemei and Henuan could see that Yun Jinnian was very upset.

Yet neither of them knew what had happened.

Yun Jinnian closed the door, bolted it, and strolled toward the bedroom.

Perhaps knowing she would come, the room had been tidied very cleanly, and the blankets were fragrantly perfumed.

On the high bed with soft pillows, Yun Jinnian collapsed onto the bed and pulled the blanket over her head.

She clutched her lips tightly, curled her body into a ball, and trembled violently...

Chapter 683: Keeping Promises

In her previous life, she longed for a mother who cherished her like a treasure, teaching her how to navigate the world—isn’t that a beautiful thought!

Yet, after the age of five, she could count on one hand the number of times she had seen her mother. After her rebirth, her mother treated her with affection, and she thought things were different from her previous life, that she indeed had a mother of her own.

Thinking about it now, it’s truly laughable.

Her father resented her because her birth gave Su Auntie and Hua Auntie opportunities to drive a wedge between him and her mother.

Her mother detested her because she carried the same filthy blood as her father, base, shameless, and despicable.

How taxing it must have been for them, to have held such hatred for her all these years!

But oh how innocent she was...

It took Yun Jinnian a while before she could take a deep breath.

Enough, enough, it might just as well be this way; after all, she was still all alone!

No, she had Tianci, had Chu Yu, and several good girlfriends! She was not alone.

At this moment, Yun Jinnian longed to see Chu Yu, to see Tianci.

She didn't want to do anything—she just wished for their company, and that was enough!

But Tianci had gone to Nanjiang, and she didn't know where to find Chu Yu...

"Sob..."

Yun Jinnian sobbed quietly, yet no tears came out.

She didn't understand what was wrong with her, feeling so sad, and yet not a single tear would fall.

Perhaps her heart had also become hardened...

Han Xuzi hurriedly made her way to Chaoyang Academy, relieved to hear that Yun Jinnian had returned.

Upon entering Chaoyang Academy, and seeing Hemei and Henuan standing at the door with troubled expressions, Han Xuzi's heart also ached tremendously.

His daughter had gone mad, and in doing so, she had injured her own granddaughter.

They say a kind word is like a three-day warmth in winter, while a harsh one is a six-month chill in summer.

For Jinnian, that was her own mother who spoke to her and repulsed her in such a way—how tormented she must be at this moment.

Taking a few steps forward, "Where is your miss?"

"Reporting to the old master, the miss is inside!"

Han Xuzi nodded, intending to enter, but Hemei indifferently said, "Old Master, the miss is in low spirits. Whatever the matter is, please discuss it another day!"

Han Xuzi was taken aback.

This maid...

She turned out to be unexpectedly bold.

"You're stopping me!"

"Old Master, you once said that having followed the miss, we servants belong to her in life and in death. Today, the miss is not in the mood to meet anyone; naturally, I will not allow anyone to disturb her!"

"Good, very good indeed!"

Han Xuzi said solemnly.

He was uncertain whether these two maids were good or bad, but to Yun Jinnian, these two maids were good.

Hemei and Huanuan remained silent.

Yun Jinnian was kind to them; they knew it.

The human heart is made of flesh—after all, where vows are made, they cannot be changed for a lifetime.

Han Xuzi did not make things difficult for Hemei and Henuan; he simply said into the room, "Jinnian, your mother didn't mean to hurt you; she's ill. If you don't trust your grandfather's words, you can go see her. With your medical skills, you should know if your grandfather is lying to you!"

As Han Xuzi spoke, he listened attentively for any movement inside the room.

But there was no sound at all.

His heart sank.

Yun Jinnian's life had been tough and full of grievances, her heart was sensitive and fragile, and he knew it.

Now, he didn't know whether she would be able to come to terms with it.

"You are a sensible child. Your grandfather is not pressuring you. Think about it carefully!"

After saying this, Han Xuzi hesitated for a moment before turning and leaving Chaoyang Academy.

Hemei and Henuan watched his departing figure and heaved a heavy sigh.

Yun Jinnian slowly sat up in bed.

Contemplating the words of Han Xuzi, she wondered whether they were true or false, hesitating about whether she should go see Mrs. Han.

Chapter 684: Immense Regret

Having sat despondently in bed for most of the night, Yun Jinnian finally got out of bed, his movements slow as he opened the door.

Hemei and Huanu quickly stood up, "Miss!"

"Hmm!"

"Are you all right?" Hemei asked with concern.

Yun Jinnian shook his head slightly.

Seeing no need for further words, Yun Jinnian eventually stepped out of the Chaoyang Academy.

Hemei and Huanu looked at each other, hurrying to follow.

Yun Jinnian inquired where Mrs. Han was at the moment and learned that she was still in the study.

He trudged toward the study at a leisurely pace.

From a distance, a strong medicinal scent wafted out, causing Yun Jinnian to frown slightly; despite his indifferent demeanor, his heart began to feel entangled.

He lingered for a while at the entrance to Han Xuzi's study before mustering the courage to walk into the courtyard.

The maid saw Yun Jinnian coming and hurriedly rose to curtsey, "Greetings, cousin Miss!"

"Hmm!"

Yun Jinnian responded indifferently.

He entered the study.

Han Xuzi stood behind the desk, a smile on his face as he looked at Yun Jinnian, "You came!"

This child had not disappointed him after all.

"Grandfather!" Yun Jinnian called softly, her voice slightly hoarse.

As if she had been crying!

"Good child!"

Han Xuzi couldn't help but be emotional.

This child, untaught, had learned propriety quite well and had a kind heart.

Yun Jinnian remained silent.

Unsure of what to say, she chose to say nothing at all.

"Go see your mother," he suggested.

"Hmm!"

Yun Jinnian agreed and walked toward the inner room.

She entered the inner chamber, where the light in the corner was brighter, but it was still quite dim by the bed.

Yun Jinnian approached the bedside and looked at the sleeping Mrs. Han.

Two years ago, when she saw her mother, her mother was gentle and serene, and simply by watching her quietly, she knew her mother loved her.

During their subsequent separation and her eventual return, she could sense subtle changes in her mother, but she hadn't taken them to heart because of trivial matters.

Sitting on the stool by the bedstead, she took Mrs. Han's pulse.

As a doctor, she knew what was truly wrong with her mother, and her heart sank further.

Gently laying down Mrs. Han's hand, she carefully placed it under the blanket and sat beside her, lost in thought.

What on earth had happened?

Hadn't everything been fine before? Why had she fallen ill?

"Your mother, she's sick," Han Xuzi murmured from the side.

"Hmm!"

"Do you have any thoughts?"

After pondering for a moment, Yun Jinnian said, "Let's start with medication and apply acupuncture daily, I will stay and take care of her!"

"Okay!"

Yun Jinnian had Hemei bring warm water, then dissolved a Blood Lotus Pill for Mrs. Han to take and wrote a prescription.

Throughout, Han Xuzi watched from the side without saying a word.

He left everything to Yun Jinnian.

Not until after Mrs. Han had taken her medicine, around the third hour after midnight, did Yun Jinnian look up at Han Xuzi, "Grandfather, please rest. I'll watch over here."

"Okay!"

Han Xuzi turned and left the room, not taking Mrs. Han back to her own courtyard.

Only then did Yun Jinnian remember Bai Que, "Henuan, go find out where Bai Que has gone."

"Hmm!"

Henuan agreed and went to inquire.

Yun Jinnian, watching Mrs. Han lying on the bed, had truly never dreamed that her mother would suffer from dementia.

Was it the adversities of recent years, the numerous grievances in her heart, or perhaps the lack of concern from her children...

She had no control over the mistakes of others, but as for the negligence of her children, Yun Jinnian felt that she might have truly erred.

Gripping Mrs. Han's hand, Yun Jinnian softly called, "Mother!"

Suddenly struck still, she widened her eyes in disbelief, frozen on the stool. When had she started to call her mother "Mother" instead of "Mom"?

Chapter 685: Not to Quibble

Perhaps, in being such a way, mother was also responsible!

Soon, Henuan came back.

"Miss, Bai Que has gone to receive punishment!"

"Receive punishment?" Yun Jinnian was taken aback for a moment, then instantly understood, "I know, you go call her back!"

"But the old master..." Henuan hesitated.

"Go on, just say it's my order, grandfather will agree!"

"Yes!"

Henuan went down and when she found Bai Que, she saw her in a sorry state. Looking at her, Henuan said, "Auntie Bai Que!"

Bai Que looked at Henuan, "Hmm?"

"Miss sent me to take you back, saying the madam also can't do without you to serve her!"

Upon hearing this, Bai Que wasn't pleased, "Go back and tell the miss, this is what I deserve. I concealed the madam's illness, causing it to worsen; this punishment is what I should accept!"

"But..."

"There are no buts, you go back. Since I am here to be punished, I must endure it. In a few days, I will return to serve by the madam's side!"

Seeing Bai Que's state, Henuan felt very distressed, "Auntie Bai Que, if you're truly this loyal and dedicated, then you should be by the madam's side during her hardest times!"

Having said that, Henuan turned and left.

Bai Que stood still, and after a while, she burst into tears.

She had served by the miss's side for many years, witnessed Aunt Su's betrayal, accompanied the madam at the manor, living in silence for years.

Upon returning, the madam actually had expectations for Uncle Er, yet, to her dismay, he repeatedly disappointed the madam, leading to her despair.

On top of that, the miss went to Nanjiang and Tianci, the young master, also left. After their return, they had both grown up and became estranged from the madam.

The madam's hidden illness gradually surfaced, and now, it had become uncontrollable.

How could she have the face to meet the madam!

Henuan returned to the study and saw Yun Jinnian slightly shaking her head.

"Leave her be!"

Some people, some matters, can't be forced.

Nor can they be brought upon by force!

She instructed someone to cook porridge, "Just light porridge!"

"Yes!"

Sitting by the bedside, after tending vigil for a while and feeling tired, Yun Jinnian leaned on the bedside, grasping Mrs. Han's hand and resting her face upon it.

"Mother, I'm sorry!"

When dawn was barely breaking, Mrs. Han woke up.

Feeling her hand being held, she turned her head and saw Yun Jinnian asleep on her hand.

At that moment, Mrs. Han was very lucid.

Looking at her beloved daughter, Mrs. Han also remembered how excessive her words had been the night before, yet she couldn't control herself at that time.

Back then, it felt like everyone had let her down. She was in so much pain, so aggrieved; it seemed right that everyone else should feel the same.

But now, upon waking up, she regretted it deeply.

Gently stroking Yun Jinnian's long hair, she didn't know how long she would remain clear-headed, she just didn't want to hurt her beloved daughter anymore.

Her eyes reddened, tears streaming down her face.

As she thought to retract her hand, Yun Jinnian held it tight, lifted her head and smiled at Mrs. Han, "Mother!"

Mrs. Han was startled.

For a long time, she dared not speak.

Afraid that her words would be hurtful again.

"Mother, you're awake, are you hungry? Do you need to relieve yourself? Shall I have someone bring water in for you?"

Gentle and filial, as if the events of the previous night had never happened.

Mrs. Han was somewhat stunned, opened her mouth wanting to speak, thought of something, and hurriedly closed it.

"Mother, shall I help you up?" said Yun Jinnian, getting up to help Mrs. Han.

Mrs. Han remained silent, but let Yun Jinnian assist her to sit up, and helped her into the adjoining bathroom. Seeing Yun Jinnian intending to help her personally, Mrs. Han was touched yet distressed, and softly said, "Go out, I can manage on my own!"

Chapter 686: Made a Decision

If it had been in the past, Yun Jinnian would have truly turned and left.

How could she leave!

"Mother, let me take care of you!"

Mrs. Han was lucid this time, and she remembered how excessive she had been the night before, how heartbroken Yun Jinnian would be upon hearing it; she stretched out her hand to tightly embrace Yun Jinnian in her arms, "Jinnian, I'm sorry!"

Tears fell like pearls slipping from a string.

Landing on Yun Jinnian's neck, they were scalding hot.

"Mother didn't mean it, it's just that many times, I can't control myself, I don't know why, but I end up saying those words, Mother..." Mrs. Han said, feeling a headache coming on again.

The buzzing in her head, as if countless bees were swarming around her, threatening to sting her.

Mrs. Han shook her head, hoping to stay lucid enough to finish speaking.

Yun Jinnian quickly noticed Mrs. Han's abnormal state and hurriedly said, "Mother, there's no rush, sit down first!"

She guided Mrs. Han to sit on a bench nearby, pressing her temples with her hand, "Mother, stay calm, don't think about those unpleasant things, focus more on the happy, heartwarming memories!"

Yun Jinnian's voice was very gentle.

At this moment, Mrs. Han was not only her mother but also her patient.

Hearing this, Mrs. Han slowly relaxed, and gradually, her head hurt less, but she felt a bit drowsy.

Leaning against Yun Jinnian's embrace, she fell asleep.

After a moment of hesitation, Yun Jinnian hugged Mrs. Han tighter, "Mother, from now on, I will protect you!"

"Henuan!"

Hearing the call, Henuan immediately entered the study from outside, "Miss?"

"Call someone to come, send mother to Chaoyang Academy!"

The study, after all, was Grandfather's place, and it was inappropriate to stay there for long.

After a moment of astonishment, Henuan hurriedly called several strong maids over, who lifted Mrs. Han onto a chair and carried her to Chaoyang Academy.

Yun Jinnian's courtyard.

Upon hearing the news, Han Xuzi was immensely relieved.

"Han Zhong!"

"Master?"

"Issue an order, everyone in the Yun Residence is to cooperate with Jinnian. Those who dare disobey, don't blame me for being unkind!"

Han Zhong promptly replied, "Yes!"

He left to instruct several butlers.

The rest, the butlers would handle well.

Yun Jinnian took Mrs. Han to Chaoyang Academy, applied acupuncture to her, then fed her the Blood Lotus Pill, brewed tea with Blood Lotus Leaves, and stewed chicken with Blood Lotus.

When Mrs. Han woke up, Yun Jinnian fed her.

She took care of everything herself.

In just two days, Mrs. Han's complexion had improved a lot.

Watching Yun Jinnian smiling, her eyes filled with tears.

"Mother, what's wrong?" Yun Jinnian asked softly, passing the handkerchief in her hand to Mrs. Han.

"Jinnian..."

Yun Jinnian smiled, "It's all in the past!"

"Is it really all in the past? You don't resent me?" Mrs. Han asked cautiously.

"I neither hold resentment nor blame, Mother, don't overthink it. When you're a bit healthier, we shall go to Nanjiang to find Tianci!"

"Ah..."

This was something Mrs. Han had not anticipated.

To go to Nanjiang to find Tianci...

Thinking of the day Tianci visited the Yun Residence and sat silently with her, Mrs. Han felt anxious.

Yun Jinnian held Mrs. Han's hand, "Mother, Tianci is a good child; it's just that we spent too little time together, and Tianci doesn't know how to interact with you. So let's go to Nanjiang, let's go find Tianci in Nanjiang!"

Once mother's health improves and her illness is cured, we will return and divorce.

By that time, she would have come of age, eligible for marriage, and whatever becomes of the Yun Family will no longer concern her.

Mrs. Han looked at Yun Jinnian, and after a while, with tearful eyes, she nodded, "Mother will listen to you, if you say we're going to Nanjiang, then we shall go to Nanjiang!"

Chapter 687: Knocking on the Step-Sister

"All right!"

On October 15th, when Yun Musi turned twelve, Mrs. Han did not return, and Yun Jinnian, bringing Hemei and Huanu with her, prepared a gift and went back to the Yun Residence.

Yun Musi's birthday guests were young ladies from lesser families, each flattering the Commandery Princess Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian handed the gift to Yun Musi, "Happy birthday!"

"Thank you, Fourth Sister!"

Yun Jinnian smiled.

Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingzhi, and Yun Qingqing hesitated for quite a while before they approached Yun Jinnian to speak.

"Fourth Sister!"

Yun Jinnian, thinking about her upcoming journey to Nanjiang in a few days, nodded slightly, "Take a seat, let's talk!"

"Yes!"

The three of them sat down next to Yun Jinnian, looking very uneasy.

Yun Jinnian took a deep breath, "In a few days, I will be leaving, and I'm not sure when I will return. Do you want to study at Songshan Academy next year?"

"Can we go?" Yun Zuomo asked eagerly.

"If you want to go, I will find a way. But one thing, you are there to study and broaden your knowledge, not to learn scheming or flattery. If you go, you must study hard. Whether your future is to be a common chicken or a phoenix, you're not three-year-olds anymore. Think about it yourself!"

The three of them stared at Yun Jinnian, dumbfounded. They had never dared to imagine that they would have the opportunity to study at Songshan Academy, nor had they thought their legitimate sister would lift a finger to help them.

"We will heed Sister's advice!"

Yun Jinnian nodded slightly, not wanting to say more than necessary.

Today, Yun Zihan had not come, nor had he sent any gifts.

The elder Mrs. Yun was still ill and did not come, neither did Xu Xinmo, although she sent Mrs. Hu, the wet nurse, with a gift.

After a short sit, Yun Jinnian returned to Niannian Garden.

This time, she wanted to take Mrs. Yuan with her.

"I'm going too?" Mrs. Yuan was utterly astonished.

"Yes, Wet Nurse, go with us. It will be good to have someone to talk to Mother on the way!"

Mrs. Yuan smiled and nodded vigorously.

Since the Princess Residence had not been decided upon yet, the items bestowed by the palace had to stay with the Yun Family, and Yun Jinnian had her own plans.

Yun Jinnian waited in the residence until Yun Qi returned.

When she saw Yun Qi, having grown much fatter, she thought she had recognized the wrong person.

"Father!"

Yun Qi looked at Yun Jinnian and responded faintly, "Hmm."

Even though there was much to say, in the end, nothing was said. "Mother is unwell, and I plan to take her out for a trip!"

Upon hearing this, Yun Qi's heart skipped a beat, but eventually, he nodded slightly, "Go!"

Then, he packed his belongings and left the Yun Residence to return to the Han Family.

Yun Jinnian knew that before she left, there were a few things she needed to do, first with Chu Yu, and secondly with the Duan Family.

Yun Jinnian sent a message to Chu Yu, asking to meet him at Huiquan Tower on the 16th.

As for the Duan Residence, Yun Jinnian found out after sending someone to inquire that several medicinal ingredients could not be found.

For this reason, she would also need to help look for medicinal ingredients when going to Nanjiang.

Early in the morning, Yun Jinnian left the Han Residence for Huiquan Tower, and upon reaching the third floor and seeing Luoyi, she knew that Chu Yu had arrived.

Upon entering the room and seeing Chu Yu, Yun Jinnian smiled.

"What has happened?" Chu Yu asked anxiously.

If it weren't for the fact that the Han Residence was inaccessible, he would have wanted to see Yun Jinnian the previous night.

"Hmm, I asked you here today because there is something!"

"What is it?" Chu Yu asked anxiously, fearing Yun Jinnian had encountered some trouble she couldn't resolve and

had been harmed.

"My mother is ill, and I need to take her to see a doctor!"

Even though Yun Jinnian's voice was light, Chu Yu knew the matter was probably not simple.

Chapter 688: The Vow Holds

"How long will you be gone? When will you return, and do our vows still count?"

"I don't know how long I'll be gone, but I will certainly come back. If you are still unmarried and have no woman you fancy by then, our vows will count. At that time, I will definitely marry you!"

Chu Yu was silent.

It was only after a long while that he looked at Yun Jinnian, "Alright, I'll wait for you!"

Yun Jinnian pursed her lips, struggling to keep from looking too sad, "When I'm back, you'll be dealing with a fifteen-year-old girl. You'd better prepare a generous dowry; if it's too little, I won't marry you!"

"Hmm, the dowry will definitely be plentiful!"

With great reluctance and against his wishes, Chu Yu let Yun Jinnian go.

By the time she returned, Chu Yu was already a striking young man in his prime, having accomplished several impressive feats that demanded a second look.

With his extraordinary identity, he became the object of many noble young ladies' admiration, with countless declaring they would marry no one but the wise prince.

The nineteenth year of Yuanhe, the twentieth day of the twelfth lunar month.

Several horse-drawn carriages clattered down the road, escorted by twenty-four horses, each ridden by a burly, imposing man.

Dressed in black cloaks, they exuded an aura so sharp that nobody dared to look at them askance.

Snow fluttered down from the sky, yet a young man galloped towards the carriage on horseback.

"Whoa!"

The horse stopped, and the carriages did the same.

A woman lifted the curtain of the carriage and called softly, "Tianci, aren't you cold? Do you want to come in for a cup of hot tea?"

Han Tianci chuckled, "Mother, I'm not sister; I'm not cold!"

Mrs. Han laughed, "Indeed, you're not cold, but who was it that insisted on sleeping with a warmer last night?"

Han Tianci's handsome face flushed red, "Mother, if you keep exposing my faults, how will I ever find a wife in the future?"

"Others might not find a wife, but I don't believe that will be an issue for you!" Mrs. Han said, taking the tea poured by Yun Jinnian and handing it to Han Tianci, "Drink a few sips quickly, or else if you do get frozen, I'll feel hurt!"

"Thank you, Mother, you always care for me the most!"

Han Tianci took the teacup and gulped down a few sips, then handed the cup back to Mrs. Han, "Mother, I want some snacks!"

Mrs. Han laughed and pinched off a piece of snack to feed Han Tianci.

"Delicious! Mother, I want more!"

Mrs. Han indulged Han Tianci, feeding him several more pieces before stopping.

After Mrs. Han recovered from her illness, she doted on her children.

Even to the point of being a little overindulgent.

Fortunately, both Han Tianci and Yun Jinnian were sensible and well-behaved children.

Yun Jinnian nestled in a corner, holding a snow-white cat in her arms, gently stroking its head.

Tuanzi enjoyed the affection quietly.

"Sister, the snow outside is getting heavy. Do you want to come out and see?" Han Tianci called out from outside the carriage.

Yun Jinnian shook her head slightly, "It's cold!"

"Alright then, let's continue on our way. In one more day, we'll reach the Capital City!"

The just-turned-nine Han Tianci was now a head taller than Yun Jinnian, his features becoming more distinct and elegant, the baby fat largely gone. He looked quite different from over a year ago, but on closer examination, he did resemble Mrs. Han.

Han Tianci still loved riding horses, and although Mrs. Han worried for him, she allowed it.

The group continued on their journey.

Inside the carriage, Mrs. Han looked at Tuanzi in Yun Jinnian's lap and reached out to stroke its head.

Tuanzi opened its eyes to glance at Mrs. Han, then closed them again to continue sleeping, looking quite proud.

"Tuanzi, do you want some fish?" Mrs. Han said, taking a small dried fish from a drawer. Tuanzi quickly opened its eyes, jumped into Mrs. Han's lap, and meowed.

"You greedy cat!" Yet she lovingly fed the dried fish to Tuanzi.

Thinking of the purpose of this journey back, Mrs. Han's resolve grew firmer, "Jinnian, perhaps we could take a shortcut!"

Chapter 689: Princely Heir Breaks Off the Engagement

Yun Jinnian heard the words and slightly lifted his head, locking eyes with Mrs. Han as he curved his beautiful lips, "Mother, you tell me!"

"I can't explain it all in a moment!" Mrs. Han took a deep breath.

"Mother, rest assured, I have a plan!"

Mrs. Han held Yun Jinnian's hand, "It's just unfair to you!"

"It's not a hardship!"

Being able to leave the Yun Residence, sever ties with those people from the Yun Family, and from then on not having to care about their lives or deaths—what was a bit of suffering in the process?

"I'll listen to whatever you say!"

Yun Jinnian smiled, "I've said I would protect Mother. Just be happy and cooperate, that's all!"

"Alright!"

The New Year was approaching, and every household was busy preparing their New Year's goods.

Inside the Prince Rui Residence

Chu Yu slouched on the chaise longue without any proper posture.

On one side, Chu Renzhi sipped tea while speaking, "Dear royal uncle, please help me!"

"Help you? Who told you to provoke Miss Chen of the Chen Family in the first place? Now that you don't want to marry her, I can't help you!" Chu Yu said, tossing a peanut into his mouth.

Without Yun Jinnian, Chu Yu felt that life lacked much of its enjoyment.

Especially since the annoying Zhou Yunshen was still living in Capital City, stubbornly refusing to return to the Great Zhou Kingdom, which infuriated him even more.

"At that time, wasn't I young and frivolous? But now, I've met my true love, so..."

Chu Yu threw a handful of peanuts at Chu Renzhi, "True love, a courtesan is your true love? Chu Renzhi, has your brain been kicked by a donkey?"

"Dear royal uncle..." Chu Renzhi exclaimed in shock.

He couldn't dodge in time and could only let the peanuts roll off his head onto the floor.

"You dislike her that much? You've met your true love? After you break off your engagement with Miss Chen, what do you plan on doing with your true love? Marry her as your wife or take her as a concubine?"

"This..." Chu Renzhi hesitated.

Chu Yu looked at him and said, "I'm telling you, with your behavior, you're not worthy of Miss Chen. Get out, I'll go find Elder Chen soon and have the Chen Family break off the engagement!"

Chu Renzhi hurriedly thanked him, "Thank you, dear royal uncle!"

Chu Yu, looking at Chu Renzhi, sighed, "Treating feelings with such irresponsibility, one day you will regret passing up a good girl, and one day you will understand why I threw these at you today."

He waved his hand, "Get out!"

An unfeeling and unrighteous man, even if he was his nephew, wasn't worth a second glance.

Upon hearing this, Chu Renzhi felt an emptiness in his heart.

But he truly didn't want to get married and felt that after marriage, having someone to control him would be unbearable.

He left the Prince Rui Residence sluggishly.

Chu Renzhi didn't know what was wrong with himself and didn't rush to leave.

Waiting in the alley, he watched Chu Yu get on the carriage to the Elder Residence, and only then did Chu Renzhi start to feel a little panicked.

Without any reason, he felt as though he had lost something important.

Chu Yu arrived at the Elder Residence, where Elder Chen personally received him.

"Prince Rui!"

"Elder!"

Chu Yu held great respect for Elder Chen.

And Chen Danyan, whom he had also met, was indeed a very fine young woman.

Renzhi was foolish.

"Why has Prince Rui come today?"

"It's about the annulment between Renzhi and Miss Chen."

Outside the room, Chen Danyan, carrying a tray, had deliberately come over to inquire about Yun Jinnian from Chu Yu. But hearing Chu Yu mention her, she felt it inappropriate to enter the room.

She stood at the doorway, waiting.

"Please speak, Your Highness," said Elder Chen, who was advanced in years and had seen much of life. He could tell by Chu Yu's hesitation that the matter was probably troubling.

"Renzhi, he..." Chu Yu licked his lips and finally said earnestly, "Elder, Miss Chen is a lady of grace and virtue, a rare jewel. In the future, many will wish to seek her hand in marriage!"

Elder Chen suddenly stood up, "Is this your intention, Your Highness? Or the intention of the Princely Heir?"

"Renzhi's intention!"

Having spoken, Chu Yu lowered his head.

The damned brat, when he gets back, he won't be coming out of bed for three days!

Chapter 690: Losing Face

Elder Chen remained silent.

Outside the room, the tray in Chen Danyan's hand fell to the ground, shattering the porcelain plate into pieces.

Tears streamed down her face.

What she had thought was her true love turned out to be nothing but a scammer.

She stepped into the study and knelt before Elder Chen, "Grandfather!"

"Danyan..."

Elder Chen looked at his granddaughter.

She was the most obedient, understanding, intelligent, and clever among all his granddaughters.

"Grandfather, since he has no heart for me, let us call off the engagement!" Chen Danyan said, taking a deep breath, "If he is heartless, then I, Chen Danyan, shall not pester or cling to him!"

After saying this, she knocked her head heavily on the ground, "I beg you, Grandfather, to grant this!"

Chu Yu raised his hand to cover his lips.

What a mess this all was. Just you wait, there will come a time when Renzhi will regret this.

"Good child, stand up. Your maternal grandfather will comply with your wishes!" Elder Chen helped Chen Danyan to her feet, "Go back!"

"Yes!"

Chen Danyan obediently left the study.

Only then did Elder Chen say to Chu Yu, "Your Highness Prince Rui, Elder Residence will call off the engagement. There won't be any issues, right?"

"No, no, no issues at all!" Chu Yu hurriedly replied.

How could there possibly be any issues at this point?

"In that case, shall Elder Residence wait until after the New Year to call off the engagement, is that possible?" Elder Chen asked again.

"Yes, yes, of course!"

Chu Yu felt ashamed.

He had immense respect for Elder Chen, yet here he was, making a fool of himself because of that scoundrel Renzhi.

"Since it is possible, then please, Your Highness Prince Rui, take your leave!" he dismissed his guest directly.

Chu Yu touched his nose as he left Elder Residence, feeling both angry and annoyed. He went straight to Chu Renzhi's home and upon finding Chu Renzhi, beat him up again.

"Uncle Emperor!" Chu Renzhi called out in a pitiful voice.

"Shut up, you've lost all face for me and your father, my brother!" Chu Yu roared in anger.

He never should have agreed to look after this troublesome kid.

Chu Zhaowei remained silent on the side.

He thought to himself that he should never hurry into an engagement; once engaged, one must follow through with the marriage.

The Uncle Emperor sure had a heavy hand!

But then, a man obsessed with his thoughts wouldn't have a gentle touch.

Chu Renzhi looked to Chu Zhaowei for help, but Chu Zhaowei just gave him a look that said you're on your own and quickly turned his head away.

Chu Renzhi inwardly cursed Chu Zhaowei for not coming to his aid.

"You'll regret this one day, just wait and see!" After Chu Yu said that, he returned to Prince Rui Residence.

This past year, he did not know how he had survived it.

It always seemed as though he had become especially good at acting.

The Capital City had seen great changes, yet not so significant.

For example, Princess Yijia's Princess Residence was awarded to her, conveniently located next to the two grand five-entry mansions given to her by the Commandery Princess of Zhen Guo.

Suddenly, everyone in the Capital City knew that Princess Yijia was an incredibly wealthy lady.

Three five-entry mansions along with a small mountain, all surrounded by high walls, set a standard larger than that of a Princess Residence. Even the Commandery Princess of Zhen Guo Residence wasn't as large in terms of area.

The Emperor also granted her thirty palace maids, thirty eunuchs, fifteen guards, five maidservants, a butler mama, and a butler eunuch.

Coincidentally, these fifteen guards and five maidservants were the same people who had initially escorted Yun Jinnian to Nanjiang. The butler mama was Qian Mama, and the butler eunuch was Dengzi, now called Eunuch Deng.

And these people, over the past year, had still been receiving their monthly silver from the palace.

Such favoritism was indeed unprecedented.

There were objections raised, but the Emperor would just respond with "Contributed to saving my chariot!" and shut down the dissent.

The surface of the Capital City appeared calm, but underneath, the undercurrents were surging.

The silent struggle between the Emperor and Prince Rui had already begun...