

Indulgence 701

Chapter 701: Magnanimous Long

Yun Jinnian smiled without saying a word, gestured to Hemei, and Hemei immediately went to fetch a jar.

"Nurse Song, please have some tea!"

"Good, good!"

Although the tea was excellent, Nurse Song stopped after drinking half a cup, as propriety dictated in this setting.

"Commandery Princess, the Princess has sent this old servant to ask if a carriage should be sent to pick you up tomorrow, or will you come on your own?"

"I will go by myself."

Nurse Song smiled, "That's settled then. Now that you have returned, your vermilion carriages will be sent over, and as for the Princess Residence, when will you have a look there?"

"I'll go there after I have given thanks in the palace first!"

"That would be proper indeed!"

It made sense to first appear at the palace before the Emperor to express gratitude, then afterward visit the Princess Residence.

When Nurse Song left, Yun Jinnian gave her Snow Lotus Leaf Tea and a bottle of Health Preserving Pills.

"One pill a day!"

Nurse Song held the porcelain bottle, her heart filled with mixed emotions.

Nothing given by Yun Jinnian was ever of poor quality.

Although she was a first-rank female official, at the end of the day she was still a servant. However, seeing Yun Jinnian treat her with courtesy and respect, not considering her a servant but purely as an elder, the girl had a kind heart.

"Thank you for the Commandery Princess's generous gift!"

"I actually like it when you call me Jinnian!"

Nurse Song squinted with a smile, "Rituals must not be abandoned, rituals must not be abandoned!"

Nurse Song left cheerfully.

People from the Zhuangyong Marquis Residence and the Duan Residence also came one after another.

They were all respected stewardesses from within the residences, and Yun Jinnian treated them with the same respect as Nurse Song, not looking down on anyone.

However, after lunch, Yun Jinnian received several visiting cards.

One was from Zhou Yunshen of the Great Zhou Kingdom, stating she could visit anytime, another was in the name of Madam Chen from the Elder Residence, and there was also a card from the Prince Wang Residence.

It seemed that the grandsons and granddaughters of Prince Wang were ill, the Imperial Physicians were at their wits' end, and Han Xuzi could not be consulted, so they had come to seek her aid.

"Miss, will you go?" asked Hemei.

"Go? Of course I'll go. But when you reply, say that I will charge a consultation fee. I don't want gold or silver, only medicinal ingredients!"

She was a doctor, and she needed medicinal ingredients to treat more people.

Some poor people couldn't afford medicine and were unable to treat their illnesses. Suddenly, Yun Jinnian knew what to do with those three big estates.

"Miss, why are you smiling?" Hemei inquired.

"I didn't really want those three big estates and the small hill before; they would make people too jealous. But now I have another use for them!"

"What would that be?"

"Like my maternal grandfather's place, use them all to grow medicinal herbs!"

Hemei was stunned for a moment, "Miss, that's a great idea! Even if you move there, no one can gossip about it, since it's to take care of the herbs!"

Yun Jinnian tapped Hemei's forehead, "You're always full of ideas!"

While they were talking, someone from the front hall announced that someone from the palace had arrived to issue a decree!

"The palace? Who?" Yun Jinnian asked, puzzled.

"It's Eunuch Hai from beside the Emperor!"

Yun Jinnian was momentarily taken aback, not expecting the Emperor to be so prompt.

Upon reaching the front hall, Eunuch Hai hurriedly paid his respects, "This servant pays homage to the Commandery Princess!"

"Eunuch Hai, no need for formalities!"

Eunuch Hai began to smile, "Commandery Princess, the Emperor said that from now on, when you receive a decree, you don't need to kneel, just a bow is sufficient!"

"This..."

The Emperor's favor was truly generous.

"Commandery Princess, please receive the decree!"

Upon hearing this, Yun Jinnian modestly bowed.

Eunuch Hai opened the Imperial Decree, "By the mandate of Heaven, the Emperor decrees: Princess Yijia is virtuous and noble, and is granted a Princess Residence."

"Thank you for the Emperor's grace!" After giving thanks, Yun Jinnian received the Imperial Decree and handed it to the butler at her side.

Inviting Eunuch Hai to sit down, and after serving tea, which Eunuch Hai drank, Yun Jinnian then asked, "Eunuch Hai, how is the Emperor's health?"

Chapter 702: Consort Yue's Thoughts

"The Emperor is in good health," he said as he came in, "He instructed Miss Fourth to first take care of the affairs outside the palace, and then come to reside in the palace for some days next year!"

Yun Jinnian was astonished, "This..."

"Noble Consort's health isn't well!" Eunuch Hai gently reminded.

Yun Jinnian immediately understood, "Please, eunuch, after you return to the palace, report to the Emperor that Princess Yijia knows!"

"Yes!"

After a short sit, Yun Jinnian gave Eunuch Hai a packet of Snow Lotus Leaf Tea and a vial of Blood Lotus Pills.

"Eunuch Hai, keep these pills for yourself to take!"

Eunuch Hai began to smile.

As a eunuch, there are always some ailments, but ever since Eunuch An started taking the medicine Yun Jinnian had given, his complexion had greatly improved, and he even seemed to breeze along as he walked, drawing envious glances.

So the pills Yun Jinnian provided were worth much more than money or jewels.

Eunuch Hai happily took them and went back to the palace to report.

On the way, he opened the porcelain bottle and took a sniff. The lotus scent was rich.

It seemed even better than what Yun Jinnian had prepared for the Emperor.

He quickly popped a pill into his mouth, swallowed it with warm water, and leaned against the carriage wall, savoring the sensation.

Although he had just taken it and it might be psychological, Eunuch Hai felt more energetic.

Upon returning to the palace, Eunuch Hai reported back at Yangxin Hall.

The Emperor nodded slightly, "You may leave."

He had never felt before that having a child was such a joyous matter, but now that he had Noble Consort, he indeed wanted to have a child with her.

If it was a boy, he would one day hand over Tianchu Country to him; if a girl, he would ensure she lived a life like the Commandery Princess of Town, elevated and honorable for her lifetime.

Eunuch Hai responded and withdrew.

Regarding Noble Consort's situation, he would not speak of it now; at least not until his master instructed otherwise. He acted as if he knew nothing.

Eunuch Hai thought to himself, then saw Noble Consort approaching slowly, swaying her hips, "This servant pays his respects to Noble Consort!"

"Eunuch Hai, no need for formalities!" Noble Consort spoke softly, with an aura of seduction that seemed to tempt at every moment.

"Thank you, Noble Consort!"

Noble Consort laughed, "Eunuch Hai, I heard that Princess Yijia is called the most beautiful woman in Tianchu Country, is that true?"

"To answer Noble Consort, this servant is ignorant and rarely leaves the palace, I have never heard of it!"

"How does Princess Yijia look?"

"Beautiful!"

Noble Consort thought for a moment before speaking, "How does she compare to me?"

"Noble Consort is the Emperor's wife, dignified and extraordinary. The Commandery Princess, though also noble, is to some extent lighter!"

Noble Consort laughed again, "You're right. Oh, you serve beside the Emperor; did he ever mention wanting her to come to the palace to attend?"

"To reply to Noble Consort, when Divine Doctor Han came to the palace, he mentioned that Princess Yijia should not enter the palace, and the Emperor consented. His decree is unchangeable, and even if the Emperor wants the Commandery Princess to come to the palace, it is to adjust Noble Consort's health!"

Speaking of adjusting health made Noble Consort's teeth itch with anger.

That lowly consort of the Loyal Prince dared to give her Barrenwort, but she didn't suffer either. She took actions against the Loyal Prince's wife's most cherished grandson. Now, the Loyal Prince's wife probably has trouble sleeping and eating.

But there was still Noble Consort Wei in the palace.

Noble Consort Wei cared most about the Second Prince, and she would always find opportunities to discipline the Second Prince, ensuring Noble Consort Wei tastes her own bitter medicine.

As for Princess Yijia, it's said her medical skills are exceptional. She would meet with her and see.

As long as she does not oppose her, everything will be fine, but if she does, there are plenty of ways to deal with her.

"Alright, you may leave!"

"Yes!"

Eunuch Hai responded and withdrew.

Noble Consort tidy up her thin dress, swaying her hips as she entered Yangxin Hall, calling out sweetly, "Your Majesty..."

Chapter 703: The Empress's Thoughts

The Consort Yue entered Yangxin Hall with a delicate air.

As soon as she stepped in, news of her arrival spread throughout the entire harem.

The other consorts, with varying thoughts, despised her but dared not act rashly.

Weiyang Palace

Shaoyao quickly entered the Weiyang Palace and approached the Empress, "Your Majesty!"

The Empress slightly lifted her head, "Hmm?"

"Princess Yijia has returned, Eunuch Hai has announced the Imperial Decree. The princess is to settle her affairs outside the palace before she comes in, and she has been exempted from the need to kneel and pay homage to anyone!"

"Such favoritism!" the Empress murmured softly.

Her heart was still somewhat jealous.

She had thought several times about requesting a princely title for her own niece, but never managed to speak up.

Even if she had, the Emperor and Empress Dowager might not have agreed, but their affection for Yun Jinnian was truly profound.

"Your Majesty..." Shaoyao called softly.

The Empress waved her hand slightly, "There's no need to meddle, just let her be. With so many who wish her dead now, why should we take action?"

Shaoyao felt it was courteous.

The Empress then said, "As for Princess Yijia, we shall watch and wait!"

A year ago, after Yun Jinnian left Capital City, Bobo also left under the guise of traveling and has not returned to this day.

Apart from the occasional letter home, no one knew where he'd gone or how he was getting on.

Bobo's affection towards Yun Jinnian was something she had approved of, but now that Bobo had left Capital City, it was uncertain what the future would hold...

On the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar month, the Han Residence bustled with activity early in the morning.

Yun Jinnian got up early, dressed in a red cotton-padded jacket, adorned with festive hair accessories, and even applied peach blossom makeup—she was truly more charming than any flower, peerlessly lovely.

Her every move was graceful and elegant, and the glance of her eyes could captivate the soul.

It made hearts quiver, yet her pure and untainted aura deterred any disrespect, as if even glancing a few times was a sin.

"Sister!"

Han Tianci, dressed in a treasure-blue brocade jacket, ran up swiftly. Upon seeing Yun Jinnian, he was momentarily astonished, "Sister, you're really beautiful today!"

"Am I not usually beautiful?" Yun Jinnian asked with a smile.

"No, you've always been beautiful, but today you're exceptionally so, pleasing yet untouchable. Sister, you should dress up like this more often, it looks really nice!" Tianci said, smiling proudly as if he were sharing in the honor.

"Such dressing up is occasional enough, seeing it too much would spoil its rarity, haven't you had breakfast yet?"

"I have, two big bowls of porridge, with five little buns and five crystal dumplings, really full!" He patted his round belly.

Yun Jinnian looked at him, believing that he had eaten his fill, "Eat less in the future, overeating will harm your stomach, not worth the loss. It's better to have some snacks instead, avoid indulging excessively in food!"

"Sister's advice is good, I'll listen to everything sister says from now on!"

"Then let's go!"

Yun Jinnian, along with Han Tianci, left the Han Residence. Uncle Cheng had already prepared the carriage.

This time Tianci had returned bringing two attendants with him. Although they were just attendants, they had been meticulously selected from among the Moon-Watching Sect, passing through several stages before reaching Tianci.

Playful as he was, Tianci named them Bun and Dumpling. Both felt aggrieved but didn't dare to retort. Yun Jinnian, seeing this, couldn't bear it and renamed them Zhengwen and Zhengwu.

Upright and honorable, both talented in letters and martial arts.

The taller one was called Zhengwen and the shorter, chubbier one was Zhengwu. Both were a year older than Tianci, turning eleven after the New Year, yet both were shorter than Tianci. They had decent foundations in Martial Arts, medical and poison skills, and had also learned about the Five Elements and Eight Trigrams from Tianci. Given time, these two would surely hold significant positions in the Moon-Watching Sect and the martial arts world.

"Miss, Young Master!"

Chapter 704: Letting Nature Take Its Course

Zhengwen and Zhengwu are very well-behaved. From a young age, they hardly ever joked around, always treating Yun Jinnian and Tianci with the utmost respect, never committing the slightest error.

When they went out today, the two of them followed as well, but they sat in front of the carriage with Uncle Cheng, while Hemei and Henuan joined Yun Jinnian and Han Tianci inside the carriage. In the frigid winter month, the two were clad in dark cyan cotton-padded jackets, looking very spirited.

Inside the carriage, Han Tianci sat up straight, feeling uncomfortable from eating too much.

Yun Jinnian looked at him and sighed softly, "Come, let me rub your stomach for you!"

"No, I'm not a little kid anymore!"

Boys and girls should not sit together after the age of ten, and he was already nine years old, which counted as ten.

He could be close to his sister, but he shouldn't let others gossip.

It was fine for him, but not for his sister.

When the siblings arrived at the entrance of the Princess Residence, Nanny Song and Yuwen Ming came to greet them.

"Sister Ming, Nanny Song!"

Yuwen Ming smiled and took Yun Jinnian's hand, "Grandmother has been missing you for a long time, follow me in quickly!"

Looking towards Han Tianci, "Is he your brother?"

"Yes, he is!"

"Is he the one called Tiantian?" Yuwen Ming asked, puzzled.

Yun Jinnian nodded, smiling without a word.

Yuwen Ming observed Han Tianci seriously, "He really does have a bit of the family resemblance!"

There were no shortage of boys in the Princess Residence, and when they heard that a boy had arrived, several teenagers eagerly surrounded Han Tianci to talk.

Yuwen Ming led Yun Jinnian through the main gate and into the hall where several Marchionesses were present. Yun Jinnian and Han Tianci bowed to them one by one, and then went together to the Princess's courtyard.

Haven't seen her for over a year, the Princess of the state showed little change and seemed to be in good spirits.

Perhaps it was because her most beloved Prince Yanjun was by her side.

"Greetings to Your Highness!"

The Princess burst into laughter, "Dispense with the formalities, please!"

Yun Jinnian rose, followed by Han Tianci.

The Princess looked at Han Tianci, then turned to a few of her grandsons and great-grandsons, "Why don't you guys go and play with little Master Han!"

Several young lords of the Yuwen family immediately led Chu Yu to the front.

Boys have their own ways of playing.

The Princess beckoned to Yun Jinnian, "Come, sit by my side!"

"Yes!"

Yun Jinnian sat down next to the Princess.

She then asked, "Your Highness, how have you been this past year?"

"Well!"

"And what about the Prince?"

"He's also doing well, but I still can't help worrying about him a bit. I'll call for him in a moment, and you can take his pulse for me!"

"Of course!"

Seeing that Yun Jinnian agreed, the Princess immediately sent for Prince Yanjun.

She then asked Yuwen Ming and several Marchionesses to step down, having a private conversation with Yun Jinnian.

Yuwen Ming was already betrothed, to be married into a prestigious family outside the Capital City, as the principal wife, and in the future, she would have to manage household affairs.

Thus, these days she was learning from the Marchioness and the butler.

Today, as Yun Jinnian came over, it was her responsibility to arrange the lunch; the dishes, desserts, and pastries all required her personal attention, while the Marchioness simply offered guidance.

"Your Sister Ming is already betrothed. She will be the principal wife in the future and will have to take care of all the big and small matters in the house. Now she's learning from her aunt so that she won't be flustered when she goes to her in-laws in the future!"

"Sister Ming is betrothed?" Yun Jinnian asked curiously.

"Hmm, she got engaged in June this year and will be married off in March next year!"

"That's truly a cause for congratulations for Sister Ming!"

The Princess smiled, "What about you? What do you plan to do about your engagement with His Majesty's son?"

Yun Jinnian was slightly taken aback and after a while, she spoke, "Let nature take its course!"

Chapter 705: Shocked in the Heart

"Let nature take its course..."

Commandery Princess Zhen shook her head slightly, "Love is the one thing that you must never leave to take its course!"

Yun Jinnian was silent.

"Do you know, in the year you've been away, there has been a girl who has continuously kept Ayu in her thoughts, and she even resides in Prince Rui Residence now!"

At these words, Yun Jinnian suddenly stood up.

She stared blankly at Commandery Princess Zhen, pressing her lips together without speaking.

Her complexion turned somewhat pale.

Many people yearn for Chu Yu, but there are very few who can move into Prince Rui Residence.

And for Chu Yu to agree to let someone live in Prince Rui Residence, she must have an extraordinary relationship with the Prince.

"That's why I say, when it comes to the man you like, you must never just let things be. What would you do if someone snatched him away carelessly?"

Yun Jinnian was silent, unsure of how to speak to Commandery Princess Zhen.

"Jinnian!" Commandery Princess Zhen patted the spot beside her, "Come, sit down, let's continue our conversation!"

Yun Jinnian sat back down beside Commandery Princess Zhen, "Princess..."

"Good child, I know about you and Ayu. I also know that Ayu holds you in his heart. It was only right for Ayu to wait for you when you were younger, but now you're almost fifteen and of marriageable age. It's time to start considering your marriage arrangements. What do you think?"

Yun Jinnian thought about it seriously, "I am willing!"

"Willing to what?"

"I'm willing to marry Chu Yu, willing to cooperate with him, and willing to compete and strive for it!"

"That's the spirit!"

By the time Prince Yanjun arrived, the two had nearly finished their discussion.

After exchanging greetings, Yun Jinnian took Prince Yanjun's pulse, "Everything is well with your Highness!"

Prince Yanjun gave a gentle smile.

After recovering for over a year, his health had improved, as well as his complexion.

Being naturally calm and uncompetitive, he spent most days at home reading, playing the zither, practicing calligraphy, or chatting with Commandery Princess Zhen, cultivating his mind and spirit. With such a lifestyle, living past ninety-nine wouldn't be a problem.

"That's wonderful, just wonderful!"

Commandery Princess Zhen's eyes crinkled with a smile.

This was her youngest son, the one she cherished the most. Previously, she had no choice, but now that he was healthy, she found herself wishing for him to take a wife.

There were plenty of good women in the world, many legitimate daughters who would be willing to marry into their family.

After all, her son was handsome and had a good temperament. He had lived a chaste life these years, which would certainly bode well for his future wife.

"Princess!"

Commandery Princess Zhen looked at Nanny Song, "What is it?"

"Prince Rui and Princess Mianke have arrived!"

At this news, Commandery Princess Zhen turned to Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian was equally astonished.

They had come together?

"Let them in!" Commandery Princess Zhen said indifferently.

Qu Mianke had been in the Capital City for more than a year, and her visits to Commandery Princess Zhen Residence were infrequent, but of course, there were other reasons, such as her desire to stay in Prince Rui Residence and develop a relationship with Chu Yu.

Nanny Song complied and went out.

Yun Jinnian watched Nanny Song's retreating figure, fingers pinching her handkerchief.

She was very curious what kind of woman could live in Prince Rui Residence and come out with Chu Yu to the Princess Residence.

Soon, she saw Chu Yu in a black brocaded robe approaching, followed by a woman in pink brocade.

As they drew closer, Yun Jinnian could see her face more clearly.

She had an oval face with willow-leaf-shaped eyebrows and wore fresh, lovely makeup, with elegant and quiet accessories. Her pink brocade dress was this year's new design from Jinshang Pavilion, worth a fortune and not necessarily available for purchase.

Her cheeks were rosy, and she boldly gazed at Chu Yu, not hiding her fondness and admiration for him.

Princess Mianke, whose daughter was she?

Chapter 706: x Overt Conflict and Covert Struggle

Just as Yun Jinnian was sizing up Chu Yu and Qu Mianke, the two had already reached Princess Zhen Guo's presence.

"I've seen Aunt before!" Chu Yu greeted her respectfully, yet his eyes burned hotly as he looked at Yun Jinnian.

He broke into a smile.

Princess Zhen Guo also followed with a smile, "There's no need for such formalities!"

Qu Mianke hurried to greet her as well, "Mianke has seen Auntie!"

"Ah, Mianke, it's been some days since you last visited the Princess Residence. This time you're here, why not stay for a few days? How about spending the New Year with your aunt?"

"Auntie, Mianke would love to, but Cousin will be lonely by himself at his residence, so Mianke should stay at Prince Rui Residence to accompany Cousin," Qu Mianke said, looking towards Yun Jinnian by Princess Zhen Guo's side.

From the first glance, she took a disliking to Yun Jinnian.

A woman's intuition told her that Yun Jinnian would stand in her way.

Secondly, Yun Jinnian was too beautiful, as perfect as a delicately carved porcelain doll.

She had always thought herself quite attractive, but next to Yun Jinnian, she felt overshadowed.

And so, she disliked her.

Especially since Yun Jinnian was seated beside her aunt.

Without even knowing her status, she already despised her.

Princess Zhen Guo burst into laughter.

Yun Jinnian lowered her head.

Cousins, a family kinship.

Not staying at her aunt's house, yet living together with a cousin; everyone would understand the implied intentions, as clear as Sima Zhao's heart.

This Princess Mianke seemed quite brazen.

"Mianke, since Aunt has invited you to stay at the Princess Residence, you should come and stay. Besides, it's not proper for you, a young lady, to reside at Prince Rui Residence!" Chu Yu said, his gaze incessantly fixed on Yun Jinnian.

But she did not look at him, nor did she stand up to greet him.

That made Chu Yu anxious.

"Cousin..." Qu Mianke called out sweetly and plaintively.

She looked at Chu Yu unwillingly.

She appeared ready to cry if Chu Yu truly wanted her to come to the Princess Residence.

Princess Zhen Guo remained silent, smiling warmly and kindly throughout.

Prince Yanjun, too, didn't speak; he was never a man of many words.

Yet he felt some concern for Yun Jinnian.

Princess Ning'an was not an easy person to deal with, and her years of caring for Chu Yu had given her unique affections for him. If she set her mind on marrying her daughter to Chu Yu, it would be difficult for him to refuse.

Moreover, when he was young, Chu Yu had said he would marry Mianke when they grew up.

Even though it was just child's play, the Qu family and Qu Mianke took it seriously!

Worried that Chu Yu might really leave her at the Princess Residence, Prince Yanjun hastily interjected, "Ayu, have you found the inkstone that I asked you to look for last time?"

Chu Yu looked at Prince Yanjun, "I've found it, and I'm delivering it to Cousin myself today. Mianke insisted on coming along!"

Yun Jinnian watched for a while and finally figured out Princess Mianke's identity.

Calling Princess Zhen Guo "Aunt" and Chu Yu "Cousin," she must be the daughter of a princess, but I'm not sure which one.

Standing up, she greeted Chu Yu with a slight bow, "Greetings, Prince Rui!"

"There's no need for such formalities, Princess Yijia!"

Yun Jinnian smiled pleasantly and greeted Qu Mianke in turn.

Qu Mianke quickly returned the courtesy, asking Princess Zhen Guo with a smile, "Auntie, is this beautiful sister the unrivaled physician from the Capital City, Princess Yijia, known for her miraculous healing?"

She called her "sister" because Yun Jinnian wasn't wearing a hairpin, presumably signifying she wasn't of age yet.

But she had come of age and thus could wear a hairpin.

"Yes, that's her. Jinnian's medical skills truly live up to the title of 'miraculous healing'. You two are of similar ages; you should get along well in the future!"

"Yes, Mianke will listen to Auntie!" Qu Mianke said, then walked up to Yun Jinnian with an air of arrogance, squinting at her with a smile, "So you are the Princess Yijia, personally titled by the Emperor. I had just come to Capital City last year, and you had left the city. I intended to meet you but never got the chance. Unexpectedly, we meet by chance today; indeed, it seems to be fate!"

Chapter 707: Looking Down on Someone

Yun Jinnian watched Qu Mianke as she took his hand, as her insincere laughter echoed, and as the light of jealousy gradually tainted her eyes.

"Hmm, it really is fate!" He responded indifferently.

He showed little emotion.

Qu Mianke was a Commandery Princess, and so was he.

Qu Mianke's title of Commandery Princess came through her mother, while his was earned through his own efforts.

He had no need to flatter or fawn over Qu Mianke.

A detached coolness was best maintained until the end.

Qu Mianke leaned on Yun Jinnian with a smile, but her smile was tainted with jealousy.

Yun Jinnian's hand was so soft, as if boneless, the skin was silky smooth, slicker than fine silk, touching it felt like the highest quality Hetian Warm Jade, irresistibly delightful to the touch.

His brother often said, beauty lies in the bones, and the Yun Jinnian in front of her was one whose beauty shone from within, surpassing all others in appearance.

It made her jealous and it made her anxious.

The cousin seldom visited the Princess Residence, yet this time he did come, supposedly to deliver an inkstone for another cousin. But an inkstone could be delivered anytime. Why choose this particular day, and just when Princess Yijia was here as well? Was it really just about delivering an inkstone?

She didn't believe it.

"Then we must visit each other more often from now on!"

Yun Jinnian nodded lightly.

Qu Mianke let go of his hand and sat next to the Commandery Princess, coquettishly taking her arm, "Aunt, Princess Yijia is really beautiful!"

The Commandery Princess smiled, "Mianke is also very beautiful!"

"Hehe!" Qu Mianke laughed and took a hand warmer she had allegedly made from her maid, "Aunt, this is a hand warmer I made myself. Please try it on, does it fit your hand?

"You've put in the effort!"

The Commandery Princess had no intention of calling out Qu Mianke's lie.

Who made the item was immediately obvious, and Qu Mianke's needlework wasn't all that great, yet she loved to show off, making trinkets to please others.

She still preferred Yun Jinnian's straightforwardness.

She did not engage in these lowly tactics, thinking she was the smartest and everyone else fools.

This trait was very much like Ning An's; no wonder they were mother and daughter.

Qu Mianke smiled joyfully.

The Commandery Princess signaled for Yun Jinnian and Chu Yu to sit down. After the maid served tea and sweets, Chu Yu finally said to Yun Jinnian, "Princess Yijia!"

"Present!"

Yun Jinnian responded earnestly.

He looked at Chu Yu with a faint smile.

Chu Yu felt an inexplicable sourness in his heart.

He still liked how Yun Jinnian looked at him with a subtle smile, no words needed for him to know her affection.

But not like now, so serious, hiding her feelings behind a facade of seriousness.

"Find some time to take my pulse too!"

"Yes!"

Upon hearing this, Qu Mianke recalled something and hastily said, "Princess Yijia, thank you for helping my cousin detoxify. I'm not good with words and don't know how to express my gratitude, so please allow me to bow to you!"

As she spoke, Qu Mianke stood up and walked in front of Yun Jinnian, preparing to bow.

Chu Yu's voice suddenly sharpened, "Mianke, sit back down!"

"Cousin?" Confused, Qu Mianke looked at Chu Yu.

She would eventually be his wife, his Princess; what was wrong with her standing in for him?

"Sit back down!" Chu Yu's voice was stern once more.

This was between him and Yun Jinnian, and he did not want Mianke to get involved.

And with Qu Mianke residing in the Prince Rui Residence, it had already caused enough misunderstandings.

Qu Mianke's face turned pale, then flushed.

She turned with a look of hurt toward the Commandery Princess, who said with a smile, "Mianke, come here. Auntie will have a good talk with you later."

"Yes, I'll listen to Auntie!"

Qu Mianke stepped down gracefully and sat down beside the Commandery Princess, secretly resenting Yun Jinnian in her heart.

Chapter 708: Casual Family Chit-Chat

What sort of thing is this, a woman from a humble family, even if being ennobled as a Commandery Princess, still doesn't understand how she obtained this position of Commandery Princess...

Yun Jinnian simply looked on calmly, not speaking unless absolutely necessary.

Chu Yu seemed about to speak several times, only to stop himself.

It was only then that the Princess of the First Rank gestured to Nanny Song, who immediately went down and soon came back holding a brocade box.

"Jinnian!"

Yun Jinnian stood up, "Princess!"

"This is a token of my gratitude for you, firstly for saving me back then and secondly for saving Little Five!"

The Princess of the First Rank said as she received the brocade box and stood up to walk towards Yun Jinnian.

"Princess, you have already bestowed many gifts upon your servant's daughter, to give more, your servant's daughter dare not accept!"

Especially since she already knew the Princess of the First Rank intended to give her two five-entry mansions and a small mountain, all of which were already surrounded by encircling walls.

Yun Jinnian felt the gift was somewhat hot to handle.

"Good child, you are sensible. I know that with these two mansions and that small mountain, you will put them to good use. It's always said, 'One mustn't refuse a senior's generosity.' Today I give this to you, you must accept!" the Princess of the First Rank said as she took Yun Jinnian's hand and placed the brocade box in it.

"Originally, these property deeds should have reached your hands last year, but since you left the Capital, it has been delayed!"

"Princess..."

"Take it!"

Yun Jinnian pursed her lips and accepted the brocade box, "Thank you, Princess, your servant's daughter will always remember the Princess's teachings!"

When the new year begins, she would tear down the houses and divide them into separate courtyards to grow medicinal herbs.

With the medicinal herbs, she could heal even more people in the future.

To accumulate blessings for Momo!

"Good child!"

The Princess of the First Rank patted Yun Jinnian's hand, smiling contentedly.

She then turned around and sat down on the Arhat bed, still smiling.

Qu Mianke clenched her fists.

Property deeds?

She had heard people say that the aunt had prepared two five-entry mansions and a small mountain as a thank-you gift for Princess Yijia, and had thought it was just a rumor, but it turned out to be true.

In the inner city of the Capital, where land was worth its weight in gold, two five-entry mansions and a small mountain, how much Silver would that be?

And the Emperor had also bestowed the Princess Residence...

Yun Jinnian was probably going to be the wealthiest unmarried girl in the Capital overnight.

Chu Yu said with a smile, "Since my aunt and imperial brother have given their tokens of gratitude, this prince must also express something!"

Prince Yanjun smiled warmly, "Indeed, cousin, but the Emperor has been quite generous and mother's gifts are not lacking either. You mustn't outdo our mother and the Emperor, must you?"

"Look at what my cousin is saying, as for what token of gratitude to give, I haven't decided yet, there's no rush!"

The Princess of the First Rank started laughing, "You all, stop bickering, Jinnian as a doctor, what she lacks most is medicinal herbs. Ayu, if you truly want to thank Jinnian for saving your life, then gift her medicinal herbs. The more the better, let Jinnian develop more elixirs to heal those in need. That truly would be a great deed benefiting the people!"

"Auntie makes a good point, I know what to present!"

Yun Jinnian stood up, gave a slight bow to Chu Yu, "Then your servant's daughter thanks Prince Ayu in advance for the medicinal herbs!"

"No problem at all!"

With this light-hearted banter, the atmosphere grew lively.

Qu Mianke watched, feeling somewhat displeased.

How could Princess Yijia have such a thick skin? Not even a hint of decline, simply accepting it outright.

She had accompanied her cousin to Nanjiang back then, spending a long time back and forth together. She wouldn't have developed feelings for her cousin, would she?

At that thought, Qu Mianke grew even more restless!

As they chatted, it was soon midday, and the Princess of the First Rank naturally wanted to keep Yun Jinnian for lunch.

Yuwen Ming, graceful as ever, approached, "Grandmother, uncle, cousin-uncle, cousin-aunt, Sister Jinnian, lunch is ready, let's go!"

Chapter 709: Resentment in the Heart

The Princess of the State laughed, "Good, let's go eat. Mingming, go call Han Tianci and those other rascals. Tell them all to come to the dining hall for the meal. Check if your father and uncles are around too, so they can join us in the dining hall!"

"Yes!"

This meal brought together several Marquesses and Marchionesses, as well as the young masters and misses of the household, both legitimate and illegitimate.

Not a single aunt had come.

Children of relatives who were staying at the Princess of the State's Residence also attended.

At the men's table, Han Tianci was the guest of honor, sitting beside Chu Yu.

The two of them were whispering to each other, chatting very animatedly.

At the women's table, the Princess of the State assumed the seat of honor, with Yun Jinnian sitting to her right.

Qu Mianke was seated beside Yun Jinnian.

At first, Qu Mianke thought she would be sitting next to the Princess of the State, but unexpectedly, the Princess took Yun Jinnian by the hand and asked her to sit beside her.

This almost left her unable to save face.

The Marchioness Zhongyi sat next to the Princess of the State, which had been the unchanging rule for many years. Next to her was the Marchioness Zhongyi, followed by the Marchioness of Trust and Loyalty, and then the Marchioness of Ritual and Loyalty.

Next was an empty seat, reserved for Yuwen Ming.

And Yuwen Ming should dish for the Princess of the State. That was something she had to learn this year.

This was the rule of the Princess Residence: any daughter preparing for marriage must learn the proper courtesy of dishing and rules from the Marchioness Zhongyi after getting engaged.

All the other legitimate daughters, illegitimate daughters, and daughters-in-law sat at different tables.

"Let's start the meal!"

It was only after the Princess of the State spoke that everyone picked up their chopsticks.

The Princess of the State served a dish into Yun Jinnian's bowl, "Jinnian, try this 'Treasure Delicacy.' Your sister Ming always favors you. On normal days, when this old lady wants to have it, she makes up all

kinds of excuses not to let the kitchen prepare it. The moment you come, she immediately orders the kitchen to make it. This girl is too biased!"

Yun Jinnian smiled, knowing full well that the Princess of the State's words were far from true.

After tasting the dish and swallowing, she set down her chopsticks and said softly, "Princess, you might be wronging sister Mingming!"

"How so?"

"While this 'Treasure Delicacy' is indeed delightful, becoming more fragrant with every chew, as Your Highness has aged, your teeth are naturally not as good as when you were young. Sister Mingming, out of concern and filial piety, would prefer not to serve it to you. But according to my guess, Mingming has definitely made this 'Treasure Soup' in deep filial respect for Your Highness!" Yun Jinnian said, pointing to an exquisite porcelain bowl to the side.

The Princess of the State just smiled without saying a word.

The four Marchionesses also started smiling.

Yuwen Ming ladled some 'Treasure Soup' into a bowl in front of the Princess of the State, "Grandmother, at last someone has proven the granddaughter's intent, and I finally feel vindicated!"

The Princess of the State smiled, "All right, all right. I appreciate your filial piety. There's no need for you to serve today, go sit down and eat!"

"Thank you, Grandmother!"

Yuwen Ming bowed deeply and took her seat.

She felt somewhat deflated not to be seated next to Yun Jinnian.

She did not like Qu Mianke, her cousin once removed. On the surface, she appeared amiable, but she was actually the most cunning and arrogant, particularly disdainful of her, although they both held the title of Commandery Princess.

"Let's eat, let's eat!"

The Princess of the State, being elderly, didn't eat much, but she served Yun Jinnian several times, then stuck to soup.

She casually called out to Qu Mianke, "Mianke, you eat too!"

"Auntie, I've been eating, you should eat more!" Qu Mianke replied with a smile, feeling utterly choked up inside.

She had no appetite.

Yuwen Ming also served Qu Mianke several times, "Cousin, try this!"

Chapter 710: Unintentional

Qu Mianke responded with a smile that didn't reach her eyes.

She perked up her ears at the sound of the man's hearty laughter on the other side, wanting to hear if they mentioned her.

As she listened, she couldn't help but become distracted.

So, when the maid was ladling soup for Yun Jinnian, Qu Mianke lifted her left hand and accidentally bumped into the maid, who hadn't expected Qu Mianke to suddenly move, and she lost her grip on the bowl.

The entire bowl of soup then spilled onto Yun Jinnian's chest.

"Ah..."

Yun Jinnian let out a soft cry.

The maid turned pale with fright and knelt down with a thud, "This servant deserves death, this servant deserves death!"

Prince Rui's Eldest Princess hurriedly said, "Jinnian, quickly go and wash up, change into clean clothes. Mingming, take Jinnian to your courtyard!"

"Yes, Grandmother!"

Yuwen Ming stood up and walked over to Yun Jinnian, "Sister Jinnian!"

Yun Jinnian nodded to Yuwen Ming and then reached out to help the maid still kneeling on the ground, "It's not your fault, I was the one who touched you when I was about to get up!"

"No, it's not..." The maid opened her mouth to argue.

Yun Jinnian shook her head slightly, signaling Henuan to fetch the clothes prepared in the carriage, and followed Yuwen Ming out.

Whether it was or wasn't, it didn't matter.

It was deep winter, and she was dressed in multiple layers; although the soup had wet her collar, it hadn't penetrated through.

She just needed to change her clothes.

The maid watched Yun Jinnian leave and then glanced at Qu Mianke, who sat prim and proper; opening her mouth, she wanted to say something, but Marchioness Zhongyi spoke indifferently, "Cuixiang, go down!"

Cuixiang opened her mouth, looked at Marchioness Zhongyi, and stammered a response, "Yes!"

After Cuixiang stepped down, Marchioness Zhongyi smiled and said, "Mother, let's continue eating. I'll instruct the kitchen to send a portion over to Ming's courtyard so the sisters can eat and talk together!"

The Eldest Princess was taken aback, then smiled, "That's a good idea, let's continue our meal!"

Meanwhile

Upon learning that Yun Jinnian had been scalded, Chu Yu almost stood up but was swiftly pulled back by Han Tianci.

Chu Yu gave Han Tianci a puzzled look and saw that Han Tianci was quite composed.

Chu Yu couldn't quite articulate the feeling in his heart... it was very discomfiting.

He could swear that Han Tianci knew Qu Mianke was staying at the Prince Rui Residence and that was why he held Chu Yu back from going to see Jinnian.

It had to be said, Chu Yu's guess was correct.

Han Tianci indeed knew, and he was very displeased.

The Prince Rui Residence only had one master, Chu Yu, who was unmarried, and yet a single lady had moved in.

And she was Chu Yu's first cousin...

Ha! Han Tianci internally scoffed.

Yun Jinnian followed Yuwen Ming to her courtyard, and upon entering, she saw basin after basin of dark Sword Orchids. They hadn't bloomed yet, but they would be fragrant next year, prompting her to remark, "Ming's courtyard is quite serene!"

"Next year when they bloom, I'll give you a few basins, and you can ensure your courtyard is as fragrant!" Yuwen Ming said with a smile.

"Do you like Sword Orchids, Ming?"

"I do, but it's a shame they're not growing wild in a valley; I feel like I've spoiled them a bit!"

Yun Jinnian laughed, "Ming, you've taken such good care of them, without any disease or pests. In the wild, their leaves might have been eaten by insects and suffered from drought or floods. But here, you've been tending to them so well, extending their lifespan, which is a good thing!"

"You're always so good at cheering others up!"

Yuwen Ming felt much better inside and led Yun Jinnian into her room.

Her room was adorned with various orchids, and even the mosquito netting was embroidered with orchid flowers.

Yun Jinnian realized that even Yuwen Ming's clothes were adorned with orchid petals.

"Quickly take off your clothes and see if you've been scalded!"