

Indulgence 821

Chapter 821: Daydreaming

Although there were other young ladies who came with their brothers, none had become the topic of conversation like Yun Jinnian.

Sitting not far away, Feng Wushuang and Liao Shijie exchanged glances before rising together to approach Yun Jinnian.

"Commandery Princess (Fourth Sister)!"

Yun Jinnian looked toward them upon hearing, and slightly bowed, "Brother Feng, Brother-in-law!"

Xu Xinmo and the others also followed with their greetings, "Second Brother-in-law!"

Liao Shijie responded indifferently, without looking at the others, he earnestly told Yun Jinnian, "Fourth Sister, your second sister has been talking about you often, come visit our home when you have time!"

"Okay!"

After a brief greeting, she returned to her seat, but ordered the servant to bring some snacks and dishes over.

"The Honourable Prince Ru is here, Princely Heirs Zhaowei and Renzhi, Prince Yanjun have arrived!"

With a loud announcement, the bustling hall suddenly quieted down.

Chu Yu entered with his head held high, accompanied by Prince Yanjun, Princely Heirs Chu Zhaowei and Chu Renzhi.

Upon entering the hall, Chu Yu immediately spotted Yun Jinnian, the gloom in his eyes vanished in an instant.

He strode up to Yun Jinnian and cupped his fists, "Princess Yijia!"

Yun Jinnian hastily bowed, "Greetings, Honourable Prince Ru!"

Chu Yu glanced around briefly before speaking, "Bringing your siblings here for a stroll?"

"Yes!"

Chu Yu smiled and walked to the table next to Yun Jinnian's. The people originally sitting there immediately stood up and made way, with flattery and not a hint of displeasure.

Chu Yu sat down.

Servants immediately tidied up the table.

Prince Yanjun looked at Yun Jinnian, "Princess Yijia, how are you today?"

"Thank you for your concern, Prince Yanjun. Everything is fine!"

"That's good!" Prince Yanjun nodded and sat down beside Chu Yu.

Chu Renzhi and Chu Zhaowei looked at Yun Jinnian with smiles full of flattery, but given the many people present, they restrained themselves from being too forward.

"Greetings, Princess Yijia!"

"Greetings, Princely Heirs!"

"Good, good, good!"

After greeting them, Yun Jinnian turned to leave, and the two approached Chu Yu, heaving a sigh.

This future Empress is truly beautiful and gentle.

From now on, we won't have to worry about being scolded by the little Emperor Uncle!

At first, there were murmurings, but soon everyone understood that Yun Jinnian was indeed Princess Yijia.

The nobles greeted her one after another, which seemed appropriate.

Xu Xinmo was extremely excited, looking at Yun Jinnian, then at Chu Yu, Chu Renzhi, Chu Zhaowei, and finally at Prince Yanjun.

What handsome men.

She was almost entranced by them.

Yun Jinnian poured tea for Xu Xinmo, "Xinmo, drink tea!"

"Ah, oh!" Xu Xinmo suddenly snapped out of her daze, picked up the teacup, and took a sip absent-mindedly, while thinking about many things.

Although all were Princes, Commandery Princes, and Princely Heirs, she was destined to become the Empress, and despite their noble statuses, they were not her ultimate goal.

However, if they liked her, she wouldn't mind having a few close confidants.

At this thought, Xu Xinmo felt jubilant.

Yun Jinnian glanced at Xu Xinmo but didn't expose her thoughts.

She saw Yun Musi and Yun Mulan as well, their faces slightly flushed, secretly eyeing Chu Yu and his companions, and Yun Jinnian comprehended.

Then she looked at Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingqing, Yun Qingzhi, and saw their eyes also burning with passion; clearly, they had fallen for them.

She smiled and didn't expose them either.

She offered pastries to her three younger brothers.

"Cousin..." Xu Xinmo whispered.

Yun Jinnian shivered slightly at the sound, "What is it?"

"I, I, I..."

Xu Xinmo stammered.

Yun Jinnian noticed a group of people entering from the main entrance behind Xu Xinmo...

Chapter 822:

Some people, Yun Jinnian thought, after she deliberately avoided them, she would never see them for the rest of her life. Yet, unexpectedly, he appeared so suddenly, without any warning.

In her past life, at the beginning, she had also hoped that he had her in his heart and would protect her for a lifetime. So whatever he asked her to learn, she gave her all.

But in the end, it was he who personally pushed her into the abyss, from which there was no return.

She took a deep breath, her heart aching with bitterness.

"Jinnian?"

Dai Hanmi whispered softly.

Upon hearing the voice, Yun Jinnian turned her head, looking at Dai Hanmi indifferently, as if asking silently, "?"

"What's wrong?" Dai Hanmi asked with concern.

Seeing Yun Jinnian's face looking a bit off.

She scanned around carefully, finding nothing amiss.

Yet, facing the approaching princes and princesses, Dai Hanmi sighed softly.

What was going on today? Why were these princes and princesses all joining the fun?

Within the palace, the princes had some sense, but those princesses, tsk tsk tsk, were truly beyond words.

It's unclear how those concubines were teaching their children.

Perhaps it was because the princes had learned from the tutors, while the princesses were taught by the concubines themselves, resulting in their arrogance and lack of regard for others.

"Greetings, Royal Uncle!"

The princes and princesses saluted Chu Yu.

Chu Yu glanced at them indifferently, "Have you reserved private rooms?"

"Yes, Royal Uncle!" The first prince responded steadily.

"Hmm, since you have reserved private rooms, go and enjoy yourselves, but remember not to cause any trouble!" Chu Yu said lightly, waving his hand dismissively, showing no intention of dealing with them.

The princesses did not wish to stay close to Chu Yu, fearing his difficulties.

When they saw Yun Jinnian, they did not greet her, only giving her a passing glance before heading to the private rooms upstairs in twos and threes.

Led by the first prince, the princes approached Yun Jinnian, "Princess Yijia!"

Yun Jinnian stood up and curtsied, "Hello, Princes!"

Dai Hanmi and others also started to rise.

The first prince quickly said, "No need for formalities, let's enjoy the Lantern Festival!"

Hearing this, Dai Hanmi and others sat down.

Xu Xinmo stared at the princes.

She had already inquired and found that many princes were married. Among those suitable for her were the fifth prince, the sixth prince, and the seventh prince, as the others were too young.

Among these three, the fifth prince was the most handsome.

She had earlier obtained a portrait of Chu Liange through Madam Jin, so upon seeing him, she guessed who he was immediately.

Hence, she kept staring at Chu Liange.

Chu Liange, who had been observing Yun Jinnian, felt Xu Xinmo's intense gaze. He glanced at her, furrowing his brow but did not show much reaction.

The first prince said to Yun Jinnian, "Princess Yijia, we will head to the private rooms on the second floor first!"

"Please, Princes!" Yun Jinnian replied calmly.

Her hands, hidden within her sleeves, were already soaked with sweat.

Throughout, she did not look at Chu Liange once, nor did she look at any of the princes.

The first prince gave a slight bow with clasped hands.

The group then left for the private rooms on the second floor.

Yun Jinnian sat down slowly, and Dai Hanmi poured her a cup of hot tea.

"Thank you!" Yun Jinnian accepted the tea and sipped it lightly, remaining silent.

Dai Hanmi did not speak, stealing a glance at Chu Yu.

Seeing Chu Yu looking at Yun Jinnian with furrowed brows, Dai Hanmi's heart skipped a beat.

Could it be that the two had an argument? Or had one of them, Jinnian or the Prince, changed their heart?

But...

Dai Hanmi dared not let her thoughts run wild.

Chapter 823:

Chu Yu had been watching Yun Jinnian all along. Seeing her displeased expression and a look of utter sorrow, his frown deepened. He wanted to get up several times, but each time, Prince Yanjun discreetly stopped him.

Chu Yu felt a surge of anger.

He took several deep breaths to stop himself from standing up and going to question Yun Jinnian for clarification.

Marquis Residence of Yuanshen

Weng Jianrui also brought Yun Muyou, his second brother Weng Jianxun, and his younger sister Weng Mingzhu to enjoy the lanterns.

Weng Jianxun and Weng Mingzhu were already of marriageable age, but their prospects had been a series of missed opportunities.

In the past one or two years, they had been living off Yun Muyou's dowry. The Marquis Residence of Yuanshen couldn't produce much silver.

Thus, Weng Mingzhu had set her sights on the palace. She believed she was quite attractive, not a peerless beauty, but fair-skinned and pretty, so she wanted to enter the palace.

First, she could enjoy endless wealth and honor by gaining favor, and second, she could support her maternal family.

Especially after a consort known as Lady Yue had emerged in the palace.

It was decided that after the Lantern Festival, Noble Consort Wang would bring her into the palace, and then she would find an opportunity to serve the Emperor.

As soon as the four entered Huiquan Tower, they saw Chu Yu's table.

"Your Highness, Prince Rui!" Weng Jianrui greeted respectfully.

Chu Yu glanced at Weng Jianrui indifferently, "Mm!" and waved his hand lightly.

Weng Jianrui understood, "Then I shall take my leave!"

He pulled Yun Muyou away.

Yun Muyou had already seen the table where Yun Jinnian was sitting and looked down on her for bringing the concubine-born children from the second household.

But with Yun Musi and Yun Mulan still present, and Yun Jinnian now being Princess Yijia, mingling with high-ranking officials and the royal family, Yun Muyou had no choice but to step forward.

"Big sister!"

Yun Musi and Yun Mulan immediately stood up and flanked Yun Muyou on her left and right.

Yun Muyou smiled at them and then looked at Yun Jinnian, Dai Hanmi, and Xu Xinmo, completely ignoring the concubine-born siblings.

"Miss Dai, fourth sister, cousin!"

Dai Hanmi smiled slightly, grabbing her teacup and sipping tea.

Yun Jinnian stood up, just about to speak when Yun Musi and Yun Mulan quickly intervened, "Big sister, where are you sitting? How about we sit with you?"

"Alright!"

After Yun Muyou replied, she turned to Yun Jinnian, "Fourth sister, we'll be heading over there first!"

"Alright!"

Yun Jinnian couldn't be happier.

She didn't want to speak with Yun Muyou anyway.

Xu Xinmo watched Yun Musi and Yun Mulan leave, cursing them as fools in her heart.

Although it was a marquis estate, Weng Jianrui was still merely a fifth-rank official.

It would be better to stick with Yun Jinnian.

Weng Jianrui thought the same. His position hadn't advanced, even though he had used all possible connections, to no avail.

Now, he had decided to pursue Yun Jinnian.

He glanced at Weng Jianxun beside him and saw him gawking at Yun Jinnian, almost drooling.

He found it both amusing and disappointing, feeling a tinge of regret.

Yun Jinnian was incredibly beautiful with unmatched medical skills. Each consultation fee was substantial, not to mention the rewards from the palace.

If he had waited longer, how wonderful it would have been to marry Yun Jinnian!

But there was still a chance. If Yun Muyou were to die...

Ever since this thought occurred to him, Weng Jianrui had been feeling excited. As he sat next to Yun Muyou, he kept pinching her thigh under the table.

Yun Muyou gave him a confused look, feeling very nervous but also somewhat thrilled, her voice trembling as she spoke with Yun Musi, Yun Mulan, and Weng Mingzhu.

Chapter 824:

Weng Jianxun deeply understands his elder brother's background.

Moreover, they had slept with the same prostitute together, so Weng Jianrui's tricks were well known to him.

He instantly recognized what his elder brother was up to.

He smiled and turned to look at Yun Jinnian; if he could marry Yun Jinnian, it would be excellent.

After all, Yun Jinnian represented mountains of gold and silver!

Yun Jinnian felt disgusted by Weng Jianrui and Weng Jianxun's gaze, she turned her head away in disdain, but deep inside, she thought of teaching these two a lesson.

Chu Yu felt the same.

For instance, the possessive gaze from Zhou Yunshen in the elegant room upstairs.

The obscene eyes of Weng Jianrui and Weng Jianxun were leering.

The discussions of those scoundrels on the second floor.

Feng Wushuang's subtle yet ardent affection, the whispers of the hall audience, the pointing of several princesses; Chu Yu just wished he could take Yun Jinnian home, hide her away, and not let anyone see her.

A heavy slap hit the table, and the previously noisy hall fell completely silent.

"Why hasn't it started yet?"

The shopkeeper broke into a sweat and quickly responded, "Your Highness, we will start immediately, immediately!"

"Get out!"

Chu Yu yelled angrily.

The shopkeeper immediately left quickly as if afraid Chu Yu would change his mind.

Chu Yu's anger silenced the hall's whispers.

Chu Yu turned and scanned the elegant room upstairs, and when his eyes met Zhou Yunshen's, he raised his teacup at him from a distance.

Zhou Yunshen also raised his teacup in acknowledgment.

Their eyes meeting, sparks flew.

Both were extraordinary individuals, superior to millions, and their imposing aura made those around feel intimidated.

Few people could remain calm.

Suddenly, Chu Yu laughed, "Ahaha, interesting, interesting!"

What was interesting?

Everyone speculated but dared not ask.

The shopkeeper went on stage and raised his voice, "Welcome everyone to Huiquan Tower to participate in tonight's lantern riddle competition. The prizes for our competition are quite generous, allow me to explain!"

"Alright!" Chu Zhaowei shouted and clapped his hands.

Only then did everyone else clap along.

The shopkeeper was very pleased with Chu Zhaowei's support, he gave Chu Zhaowei a grateful smile and continued, "Our lantern riddle competition has five awards, judged by tables. Guess one riddle, win one lantern, the table with the most lanterns wins first place, and so forth for the top five with most lanterns!"

"The fifth prize is the Zodiac Yuanbao Lamp, the fourth is the Four Great Beasts Panchi Lamp, the third is the Hundred Flowers Shadow Play Lamp, the second is the Mandarin Duck Turn Heron Lamp, and the first prize is the Phoenix Dance Nine Heavens Gold and Jade Treasure Lamp!"

"These lanterns were crafted by masters, making them one-of-a-kind. Though there are other prizes, due to time constraints, I won't detail them all!"

The shopkeeper smiled respectfully, "So we will start the lantern riddle competition, judged by tables!"

With the shopkeeper's announcement, the sound of a qin suddenly began to play, clear and ethereal.

What great skill!

Yun Jinnian sighed softly.

Then she saw beautiful women holding lanterns appearing on stage.

Each woman's lantern was unique, but all were gorgeous and exquisite, completely different from the ones she bought for Yun Kuan, Yun He, and Yun Mu on the street.

This was her first time participating in a lantern riddle competition.

Unable to help herself, she told her three half-brothers and half-sisters, "You heard them, right? It's judged by tables. You have to do your best, even if we don't get first, being in the top five would be great!"

The three half-brothers nodded repeatedly.

They didn't really understand Yun Jinnian's words.

Yun Zuomo, Yun Qingzhi, and Yun Qingqing were, however, quite serious.

They'd read quite a few lantern riddles, hoping to guess a couple to help Yun Jinnian.

Xu Xinmo seemed a bit frustrated, saying she went to Songshan Academy to study, but hadn't grasped much.

When the qin sound stopped, the shopkeeper said, "Everyone, the first round begins now, raise your hand to answer!"

"First riddle, half and half, then another half!"

As soon as the shopkeeper spoke, someone raised their hand.

Everyone looked to see it was Feng Wushuang.

They couldn't help but admire him, indeed worthy of his status, incredibly sharp-witted.

The shopkeeper had just finished speaking, and he already knew the answer.

"Scholar Feng, please answer!"

Though his official position wasn't low, many people liked to call him Scholar Feng.

Feng Wushuang stood up and cupped his fists, "Friend!"

"Congratulations, Lord Feng, correct answer! Bring the lantern to Lord Feng!"

However, Feng Wushuang went to take the lantern himself, surprising everyone.

Did Scholar Feng want to win the top prize tonight?

Holding the lantern, he walked to Yun Jinnian, "Princess Yijia, thank you for saving my life. Without you, I wouldn't be here today. This lantern is my gift to you with utmost gratitude, please accept it."

Given his words and everyone's eyes on them, not accepting the lantern would offend Feng Wushuang.

Especially since people were talking, saying Feng Wushuang was a true man.

Yun Jinnian hesitated a moment and accepted the lantern.

She turned to look at Chu Yu, seeing his face dark with anger.

Yun Jinnian's heart skipped a beat, but she felt vindicated.

After all, he let Qu Mianke stay at his residence for over a year, so why couldn't she accept a lantern from Feng Wushuang?

However, Yun Jinnian didn't expect that after Feng Wushuang, several princes would send their lanterns over, including Zhou Yunshen and Dai Hanmi's brothers.

Even the Wang Residence sent over two lanterns.

In the end, she hadn't guessed a single riddle but had received nearly twenty lanterns.

The beautiful and exquisite lanterns were delightful. Her three half-brothers and half-sisters were quite happy.

Yun Jinnian found it odd that Chu Yu hadn't sent his lantern. His table had over thirty lanterns!

After all, each round's lantern riddle was quickly answered by Chu Zhaowei or Chu Renzhi, and Prince Yanjun. They got every riddle correct.

"Next riddle: one word, one sour!"

Yun Jinnian quickly raised her hand.

The shopkeeper smiled at Yun Jinnian, "Princess Yijia, please answer!"

"Vinegar!"

"Congratulations, Princess Yijia, correct answer!"

Finally winning her first lantern, Yun Jinnian's eyes sparkled with delight.

But then, Yun Jinnian noticed that Chu Yu's table was fierce; even Zhou Yunshen seemed determined.

Many people didn't dare to compete and let them battle it out.

Yun Jinnian and Dai Hanmi exchanged glances, feeling bored and snacking on cakes.

"White body, fat figure, hidden in mud, full of holes, edible raw or cooked!"

As soon as the shopkeeper finished speaking.

Again, only Zhou Yunshen and Chu Yu raised their hands.

Wiping the sweat from his forehead, the shopkeeper said to Chu Yu, "Your Highness, please answer!"

"Lotus root!"

"Congratulations, Your Highness!"

Another lantern added, Chu Yu's mood was still dark.

Especially since Yun Jinnian hadn't glanced at him, his anger flared.

Competing fiercely with Zhou Yunshen, they raced to answer.

"Next up is the final riddle!" The shopkeeper's voice grew hoarse, "A family named 'death'; a family named 'mouth'; death says I love the moon, mouth says I love treasure, death says they are all ordinary!"

Chapter 825: The Character of Love

The shopkeeper had already known the answer when Chu Yu raised his hand quickly.

Zhou Yunshen naturally had guessed it too.

But the shopkeeper said, "Your Highness, Prince Yu, please!"

Zhou Yunshen snorted coldly at these words.

Chu Yu spoke calmly, "Win!"

"Congratulations to Your Highness, Prince Yu!"

Chu Yu smiled faintly.

The shopkeeper handed the lantern to Chu Yu.

A pile was already gathered beside Chu Yu.

"Next, it's time to announce today's results!" The shopkeeper spoke, unable to hide his excitement.

The answer to who got first place was already known.

"The fifth place goes to Feng Wushuang!"

Feng Wushuang smiled, waiting for the attendant to bring the prize over.

"The fourth place goes to the Princes!"

"The third place goes to Princess Yijia!"

"The second place goes to the Crown Prince of the Great Zhou Kingdom!"

"The first place goes to His Highness, Prince Yu!"

Everything was as expected, yet also unsurprising.

Since the start of the contest between Prince Yu and the Crown Prince of the Great Zhou Kingdom, no one dared to answer the riddles, even the Princes and Princesses refrained from competing.

Although they were usually quite afraid of Chu Yu, at this moment, they still hoped Chu Yu would win.

The shopkeeper instructed the attendants to bring the lanterns over.

Yun Jinnian felt unworthy but still took it, looking at it in her hand and discussing it with Dai Hanmi.

Chu Yu looked at the Phoenix Dancing in the Nine Heavens golden-jade treasure lantern brought over by the attendant, then slowly stood up and walked towards Yun Jinnian.

The previously quiet hall suddenly burst into noise.

"His Highness, Prince Yu is..."

This Phoenix Dancing in the Nine Heavens golden-jade treasure lantern was much more precious than those given to others.

Chu Yu stood before Yun Jinnian.

Yun Jinnian looked up at Chu Yu, and Dai Hanmi nudged Yun Jinnian, signaling her to stand up.

Xu Xinmo looked envious and jealous, gripping her handkerchief tightly and biting her lip.

"Jinnian!"

Chu Yu called softly.

Yun Jinnian hesitated for a moment before standing up, "Yes!"

In fact, she also wished to be acknowledged by Chu Yu in front of everyone, not in secrecy.

Perhaps their love would draw countless rumors, but if he loved her wholeheartedly, she would not be afraid.

She was also willing to face everything with him.

"Words can't express my gratitude enough, but without you Yun Jinnian, there wouldn't be the Chu Yu of today. If you would accept me, I am willing to devote myself to you entirely..."

Chu Yu spoke earnestly, and Yun Jinnian's face turned a deep red.

"Alright!" Chu Zhaowei cheered loudly, clapping vigorously.

Chu Renzhi also clapped along.

Even the gentle and mild Prince Yanjun joined in the applause.

Seeing this, the others could only follow suit, and soon the entire hall was filled with applause.

Zhou Yunshen clenched his fist, holding a wine cup and sipping lightly from it.

His heart was full of bitterness.

Being always so clever, he could see through many things at a glance.

Just like with Yun Jinnian and Chu Yu, if he had once deceived himself, at this moment, he finally understood that Yun Jinnian's feelings for Chu Yu and him were not the same.

If he had won first place today and offered the lantern to her, Yun Jinnian would find ways to reject it!

"Take it, take it, Princess Yijia, quickly take it!" Chu Zhaowei shouted out.

Yun Jinnian, hearing this, looked at Chu Zhaowei and then at Chu Yu, blushing as she reached out to accept the lantern, softly saying, "Thank you!"

Chu Yu laughed.

Truly like gentle rain, he looked at Yun Jinnian beaming.

He was also glad that Yun Jinnian understood his intentions.

"Princess Yijia, tell us your thoughts at this moment!" Chu Zhaowei shouted loudly.

Those who loved watching the commotion would never think it was too much.

Chapter 826: Beat Around the Bush

Yun Jinnian smiled slightly, "Thank you, Prince, for the lantern. It is very beautiful, and I am very happy. I will surely take good care of it!"

"Good!"

Chu Yu quickly responded, bowing to Yun Jinnian with clasped fists before returning to his seat.

Their seats were originally close to each other, and Yun Jinnian seemed to still be able to smell the scent lingering on Chu Yu, feeling his happiness and joy.

Sitting down with the lantern, Yun Jinnian also started to smile.

Dai Hanmi naturally noticed Yun Jinnian's good mood and couldn't help but feel a pang for her older brother, who had not returned since that trip out, leaving her wondering about his situation outside.

But, the most uncontrollable thing in the world is love.

"Are you happy?" Dai Hanmi asked softly.

Yun Jinnian looked at Dai Hanmi and nodded slightly.

"Happy for you!"

Yun Jinnian was a good girl, and even if she couldn't become her third sister-in-law, she deserved someone better.

"Thank you, Sister Hanmi!"

Feng Wushuang sat in his seat, holding a wine cup, unable to regain his composure for a long time.

"Brother Feng?" Liao Shijie called softly.

Feng Wushuang responded to the voice and looked at Liao Shijie, "What's the matter?"

"Nothing much. Are we going directly back to the Feng Residence later, or will you come to my place for a drink with me?"

"That sounds good!"

"Then let's bring a jar of good wine from the Huiquan Tower!"

"Sure!"

At this moment, Feng Wushuang needed something to numb himself, to not think, to not guess, to not doubt.

That way, that person in his heart was still that person, and he still had a chance.

Closing his eyes, Feng Wushuang held up the wine cup, hiding the emotions in his eyes.

The riddle competition thus came to an end.

Yun Jinnian looked at her three happy younger brothers and three happy younger sisters and the absent-minded Xu Xinmo. She said to Dai Hanmi, "Sister Hanmi, it's getting late. I'll take them back first, and we'll meet again another day!"

"That's fine!"

Knowing it wasn't easy to manage so many children, Dai Hanmi did not insist on Yun Jinnian staying to play.

Yun Jinnian looked at Yun Zuomo, "Zuomo, go and ask Mu Si and Mu Lan if they are going back with us or if Elder Sister is taking them home."

"Alright!" Yun Zuomo quickly got up and walked over to Yun Muyou's table, "Elder Sister, Fourth Sister asked me to ask, are Eighth Sister and Ninth Sister going back with us or are you taking them home?"

Yun Musi and Yun Mulan also had a few lanterns. Though envious of Yun Jinnian's precious two lanterns, they knew Yun Jinnian would not give them away, and naturally did not want to return with Yun Jinnian.

"We'll let Elder Sister take us home!"

Yun Muyou nodded slightly, "Then I'll take them home!"

"Alright!"

Receiving the answer, Yun Zuomo returned to inform Yun Jinnian.

"In that case, let's go back!"

Yun Jinnian held the precious phoenix dance lantern, one hand holding Yun Kuan, Yun Zuomo holding Yun He, Yun Qingzhi holding Yun Mu, Yun Qingqing and Xu Xinmo following behind as they left Huiquan Tower together.

Yun Jinnian walked with an aloof elegance, not greeting anyone.

As for the other lanterns, several servants had already carried them out.

"Miss, you won so many lanterns?" Hemei asked cheerfully.

"Mm, you can all pick whichever you like when we get back," Yun Jinnian said, casually pointing.

Hemei looked at the exquisite lantern in Yun Jinnian's hand, adorned with gemstone inlays in many places.

It was already so beautiful unlit; how magnificent would it be when lit?

Hemei wanted to ask if this one was also won.

But under the eyes of the crowd, she refrained from doing so.

The group boarded the carriage and left to return to the Yun Residence.

In the carriage, the three younger brothers and three younger sisters were all immersed in joy and were not keen to talk. Xu Xinmo hesitated for a long time, preparing himself before finally speaking, "Cousin, your relationship with Prince Rui is not ordinary, is it?"

Chapter 827: Illusory and Real

Yun Jinnian laughed out loud, "What do you mean by 'not an ordinary relationship'? A life-saving grace? Or traveling to Nanjiang together and coming back? But speaking of it, I have indeed met Prince Rui many times!"

"Cousin, do you like Prince Rui?" Xu Xinmo probed.

"?"

Yun Jinnian raised an eyebrow, silently questioning.

Xu Xinmo giggled, "Many girls in the Capital City like Prince Rui, after all, he is handsome and elegant, noble and powerful. It's normal to like him. Even I secretly like him!"

"So, there are quite a lot of people who like Prince Rui!"

"Yes, yes. I heard that Prince Rui's cousin, who also lives in the Prince Rui Residence, likes him too. And I heard that Prince Rui also likes his cousin. The two of them have already, already..." Xu Xinmo said, pausing.

She had a hesitant and difficult-to-speak expression.

"Already what?" Yun Jinnian pressed on.

She laughed coldly in her heart.

Look, even Xu Xinmo knows about this, yet Chu Yu thinks that if he does nothing, others will have nothing to say!

Really don't know why he thinks so naively!

"I heard that they have already been intimate, and that girl even, even had a miscarriage..."

Yun Jinnian laughed out loud, "That is truly nonsense!"

"Why?" Xu Xinmo asked urgently.

"Think about it, Prince Rui doesn't have any children. If his cousin had a child, how could there be a miscarriage? This is just the first point!" Yun Jinnian said, looking indifferently at Xu Xinmo, "And there's a second point!"

"What is the second point?"

"The second point is, if they like each other, why not get married? Why not be together openly, but sneak around? Would Prince Rui need to sneak around to have a woman?"

Who dares to oppose? Who dares to meddle?

Even the current Emperor would have to consider carefully!

Xu Xinmo was silent.

Yun Jinnian continued, "You too, such words must not be said again in the future. Rumoring about royal relatives, especially Prince Rui, if someone hears it and reports you to Prince Rui, even if you don't suffer physical pain, punishment is inevitable, and it will ruin your reputation, not worth the candle!"

"Is it that serious?" Xu Xinmo asked.

"It will only be more serious than what I said!"

After Yun Jinnian finished speaking, she said no more.

The Capital City is too peaceful now, Xu Xinmo doesn't know the severity of imperial power.

One day, when she truly gets into trouble, she will know that one rank higher can oppress a person to death, let alone the favorite son of the previous Emperor, the Prince Rui whom even the current Emperor dares not touch!

The group returned to the Yun Residence.

Several concubines were already waiting at the second gate.

Yun Kuan, Yun He, and Yun Mu were still unwilling to go back. Yun Jinnian smiled, patting their heads, "Go back with the concubines first. Tomorrow, come to my yard to choose lanterns, okay?"

"Okay!"

The three of them said in unison, obedient and cute.

"Good, go back now!"

Concubine Rou and Concubine Lian quickly bowed, extremely grateful.

Yun Jinnian smiled slightly, "Take them back. They ate quite a lot outside, let them walk around to digest before sleeping!"

"Yes, thank you, Commandery Princess!"

After expressing their thanks, they took their beloved children back.

Only when they safely returned could their hearts finally be at ease!

Xu Xinmo yawned, "Cousin, I'll go back first too. Tomorrow, I'll go to your Niannian Garden to choose a couple of lanterns, okay?"

"Sure!"

Xu Xinmo smiled at Yun Jinnian and walked towards her Yicai Garden.

But once she was out of Yun Jinnian's sight, the smile vanished, and her eyes were filled with intense jealousy and hatred...

Chapter 828: Longing

The small hall at the second gate.

Yun Jinnian asked Yun Zuomo and the other two to go back and rest.

It was only then that Mrs. He sluggishly came out, "Jinnian, where are Mu Si and Mu Lan?"

"They met the eldest sister at Huiquan Tower, and they went to sit with her. The eldest sister said she would send the eighth sister back but hasn't returned yet."

Upon hearing this, Mrs. He slightly nodded, "That's good. It's getting late, you should go back and rest too!"

"Yes, Aunt!"

When Yun Jinnian was about to leave, she still courteously bowed.

Watching Yun Jinnian's departing figure, Mrs. He asked the old maid beside her, "Mama Zhao, can you see through her?"

There had been several changes to the old maids around Mrs. He; Mama Zhao was newly purchased, but she was respectful and efficient, earning Mrs. He's trust.

"I really can't see through her!"

"Indeed, she has now become a Commandery Princess, yet she still speaks and acts politely. By logic, she should be arrogant and displeasing. This way, she's really hard to figure out!"

"Since she's hard to figure out, Madam shouldn't try to. We don't need to do anything; someone else will handle it!"

Hearing this, Mrs. He turned to look at Mama Zhao.

Mama Zhao leaned towards Mrs. He's ear and whispered, "Today, a message came from Yicai Academy that it seems the cousin prepared something to deal with the Commandery Princess, but seeing the cousin's and the Commandery Princess's current state, it seems it hasn't succeeded!"

"Is there such a thing?" Mrs. He asked urgently.

Her two daughters were involved too; what if something went wrong?

"Madam, rest assured, upon hearing this news, I had people secretly protect the eighth and ninth young misses!"

Mrs. He let out a sigh of relief, "If something like this happens again, make sure to inform me immediately!"

"Yes, I'll remember!" Mama Zhao responded respectfully.

Yun Jinnian had planned to go to Qingjue Academy to speak with Mrs. Han, but Bai Que came over, "Commandery Princess, Madam said that if there's nothing urgent, you should go back to bathe and rest; you can come over tomorrow as well!"

"Is mother asleep?" Yun Jinnian asked.

"No, Second Master is there!"

Yun Jinnian suddenly understood.

She wouldn't interfere with her parents' matters.

Whether they end up separating or reconciling, it's their choice. She would only give her blessings.

As for her father, she was genuinely disheartened, no longer holding any expectations or feelings.

Her father, much like the Yun Residence, was just a title, nothing more.

Returning to Niannian Garden

Yun Jinnian took a hot bath, changed into clean clothes, and then had Hemei extinguish all the lights in the room, lighting up the "Nine Phoenixes Dance" golden jade treasure lamp instead.

As soon as the lamp was lit, the room seemed to have divine phoenixes dancing gracefully, too beautiful for anyone to dare to blink, fearing they would miss the spectacle.

"So beautiful!"

Hemei exclaimed.

Huanan, Hongxiu, Hongdou, Hongye, Shi Jiayu, and Ru Yue were all stunned.

Even Nanny An couldn't help but sigh, "So exquisite, it must have taken a lot of effort to make such a lamp. Can there be a second one in this world?"

Afraid not!

Yun Jinnian smiled, thinking of what Chu Yu had said.

Thousands of words, endless talk, it couldn't be told or finished.

Love, just like this.

"It's getting late, you should all go to sleep!"

"Miss, what about you?"

Yun Jinnian pondered for a moment, thinking Chu Yu might come tonight, "I'll wait a bit longer. Nanny An, tell Yaniang not to sleep yet. I might need a bowl of dumplings or have her prepare a pot of dumplings to bring over. I'll cook them myself later!"

After speaking, Yun Jinnian thought Chu Yu might prefer the dumplings she made herself, "It's better if Yaniang brings them over so I can cook them myself!"

Chapter 829: Meeting at Night

Yun Jinnian thought of Chu Yu and smiled gently.

Yun Jinnian's thoughts were somewhat known to Hemei and the others. Without asking much, they went to the kitchen to inform Yaniang, who specially prepared glutinous rice balls to send over.

They then went to sleep.

Yun Jinnian was in an excellent mood. Impulsively, she wanted to play the guqin, but it was late at night and it wouldn't be good to disturb others.

She got up, found a Jade Meteor from the box, opened the window, and leaned lazily against the window, playing the flute softly.

This tune was written by Chu Yu when they were in Nanjiang. Back then, Chu Yu played the xiao while she played the guqin, creating a perfect harmony that was extremely beautiful.

Sometimes Chu Yu played the guqin while she danced.

Those days were pleasant and comforting. Every time she remembered them, it made her nostalgic, unwilling and unable to forget!

With a gentle smile, her eyebrows were like a painting.

Chu Yu came with a food box and saw Yun Jinnian leaning by the window.

The familiar melody and the deep love that permeated his bones could no longer be suppressed.

Lightly landing, Yun Jinnian noticed him too.

The two exchanged a smile, filled with deep affection.

Her eyes were only for him, and his gaze was only for her.

One was inside the window, the other outside.

Chu Yu held the food box in one hand and gently cupped the back of Yun Jinnian's head with the other, kissing her lightly.

Yun Jinnian slowly closed her eyes, responding to Chu Yu's kiss.

One hand holding the Jade Meteor, the other grabbing Chu Yu's lapel.

Until both were out of breath, Chu Yu released Yun Jinnian, his large hand gently stroking her face.

His heart pounded wildly.

Yun Jinnian suddenly pushed Chu Yu away, stepping back a few steps, "You, you..."

"Haha!" Chu Yu laughed happily, carrying the food box as he flipped over into the room.

He reached out and pinched Yun Jinnian's nose, walked to the table, placed the food box on it, and took out two small bowls and two spoons.

Then opened the next layer.

"I prepared tangyuan. Let's eat together. I made them myself. You have to eat a few more. We'll be together forever!"

Yun Jinnian felt a mix of emotions she couldn't describe.

Heart sour, a bit uncomfortable, but more of joy and happiness.

No matter if Chu Yu's words were true or false, at this moment, she believed it was true.

She stepped to Chu Yu's side and sat down, watching as he scooped the tangyuan into the bowls.

"I soaked and ground the glutinous rice myself. The filling, too, I selected, ground, and mixed. It's sesame, peanut, and walnut flavor. You'll love it!"

Chu Yu babbled, placing the bowl in Yun Jinnian's hand and a spoon in her hand, "Eat!"

Yun Jinnian sniffled, scooping one and chewing it slowly.

"Is it good?" Chu Yu asked.

"Delicious!"

Yun Jinnian replied, scooping one and bringing it to Chu Yu's lips, "Sharing a good fortune!"

Chu Yu opened his mouth and bit it.

Watching Yun Jinnian smile, he swallowed before saying, "Next year we can make them together. By then, I'll make several flavors for you to choose from!"

Chapter 830: A Bit Too Much

"A gentleman should stay away from the kitchen. Let the cook do these things. There's no need for you to personally handle everything!"

"It's different!"

Chu Yu served himself and began eating slowly.

The feeling was so blissful. She was eating what he personally made, smiling brightly.

The happiness he wanted was simple: Yun Jinnian by his side, being good to her. Wanting to hug, he can hug; wanting to kiss, he can kiss; wanting to...

"Cough, cough, cough!" Chu Yu suddenly started coughing.

His thoughts wandered off!

"What's wrong?" Yun Jinnian quickly put down her bowl and patted Chu Yu's back.

"Nothing, nothing!"

He dared not tell Yun Jinnian what he was thinking.

Seeing the concern in Yun Jinnian's eyes, he held her hand and pulled her to sit down.

"I'm fine. You should eat while it's hot. It won't taste good if it gets cold!"

"Are you really okay?" Yun Jinnian asked with concern.

"I'm really okay!"

Seeing Chu Yu's confident assurance, Yun Jinnian felt at ease and continued eating.

Chu Yu didn't prepare much, so they finished eating quickly.

Sitting there like this felt a bit awkward.

"Wait for me a moment!" Yun Jinnian got up and went into the inner room. She soon came out with a bundle and handed it to Chu Yu.

"What's this?"

"Open it and see!"

Chu Yu quickly opened it. It was a pair of black shoes.

"For me?"

"Yes, try them on. Do they fit?"

"Okay!"

Impatiently, he changed into the shoes and walked around the room a few times. "These shoes are very comfortable!"

The size was just right, and the soles were very soft.

The lining material was excellent, and the stitching was dense, not rubbing against the feet at all.

"If you like them, I'll make you a few more pairs when I have time!"

"No need for now. Wait until these are worn out before making more. You should get more rest!" Chu Yu said as he walked around a few more times.

Yun Jinnian couldn't help but laugh.

The embroiderers at Prince Rui Residence surely made better shoes than she did; she only added a touch of her heart.

So she didn't insist.

"Jinnian!"

"Hmm?"

"Have you thought about what's next?"

Yun Jinnian was silent for a moment. "I've thought it through!"

"As long as you're ready, be brave and move forward, claim everything owed to you!"

Yun Jinnian smiled and remained silent.

Chu Yu knew Yun Jinnian was tired today and didn't want to disturb her more. He hugged her tightly, kissed her deeply, and then said reluctantly, "I'll leave now. Get some rest. I'll find a chance to see you!"

Before leaving, he took Yun Jinnian's hand and placed a key in it. "This is the key to the storeroom in Prince Rui Residence. Since you've accepted it, you can only marry me. You're not allowed to marry anyone else. Remember that!"

"Uh..."

Yun Jinnian was stunned.

"I asked if you remember!" Chu Yu emphasized.

Today, he had seen and understood too much.

Zhou Yunshen's ambitions were clear, and Feng Wushuang was also no good, constantly eyeing Jinnian.

The scoundrels at Marquess Yuanshen Residence also dared to disrespect Jinnian. They would pay for that.

"I remember!" Yun Jinnian replied, standing on tiptoe to gently kiss Chu Yu's lips. "It's getting late. You should head back...ah...!"

Suddenly, Chu Yu lifted her up horizontally. Before she could react, he carried her into the bedroom and threw her onto the bed. Just as she was about to say something, Chu Yu pounced on her, kissing her fiercely and passionately.

The familiar breath, the intense love, Yun Jinnian wasn't a fool, she could feel it.

She was reluctant and didn't want to push Chu Yu away.

So she reached out and wrapped her arms around his neck to respond to him!

Even if tonight, he really wanted her, she would accept it wholeheartedly.

This time, Chu Yu indeed went a bit too far, his big hands reaching inside her clothes.

"Mmm..."