

Royal Marriage 31

Chapter 31 The Girl is Pregnant

Although it was a dirty dress she would no longer wear, after all, it belonged to a young lady from the Jiang Family; it couldn't just be carelessly discarded to someone else.

"Seventh Sister," Jiang Yi walked in, followed by a rather young doctor, "The elder doctor here has gone out for consultations. Let him check your pulse first. If there's nothing serious, we can go back home and seek the Imperial Physician's opinion."

Jiang Ning took a glance at the young doctor, her heart stirred slightly.

Her departure this time was precisely to seek medical advice. Now, it seems quite convenient.

Not only did she rescue Xiaoqian by chance, but someone also agreed to cover her medical expenses.

After expressing gratitude to Jiang Yi, she extended her hand to let the doctor examine her pulse.

The doctor was young, but his attitude was very serious. Facing the beautiful young lady from the affluent family, he didn't dare to look up, sitting upright and seriously taking her pulse.

However, after a while, he slightly furrowed his brow and even involuntarily glanced up at Jiang Ning.

This glance was somewhat profound.

Jiang Yi noticed it and couldn't help feeling a bit unhappy.

This doctor lacked proper etiquette.

Just as he was about to reprimand and dismiss the doctor, the doctor spoke first: "I have a few words I would like to say to the young lady privately. May I ask if Sir can leave us alone?"

"What did you say?" Jiang Yi frowned.

"Third Brother," Jiang Ning hastily said, "Since the doctor has mentioned this, there must be a reason. You and Sixth Sister can wait by the door. If anything happens, I will call."

Seeing she insisted, Jiang Yi reluctantly agreed, exiting with Jiang Yan.

With no one else in the room, the young doctor whispered: "How have you been feeling recently, young lady?"

"Dizzy, nauseous, constantly wanting to sleep."

"I see."

"Doctor, what's wrong with me?"

"Please don't be scared when I tell you, Young Lady. You are...pregnant."

"Oh, are you sure?"

Her expression was very calm, as though she had expected this, which somewhat surprised the doctor.

The doctor stood up and said: "I have been studying medicine with my grandfather for ten years. Although I have not started practicing medicine formally, I can confirm that this is the pulse of pregnancy. You are already two months pregnant."

Jiang Ning quickly said: "Can you prescribe me some abortion medicine? Look, I'm not even married yet. If I keep this child, I will be ostracized."

"Ah? This..." The doctor's young face showed some difficulty, "Truthfully, I am still an apprentice now and don't have the authority to prescribe medicine. Besides, this kind of medicine isn't something anyone can freely prescribe. It requires official certification. Otherwise, one could be arrested."

The Imperial Court encourages childbirth and does not permit random abortions.

Jiang Ning sighed, tears streaming down her face: "When I go back and my parents find out, they will surely have me killed. Doctor, good favours will be rewarded. Saving a life earns more merit than building a seven-story pagoda. Please help me, I will give you too taels of silver!"

This was not a small sum of money.

But the doctor still shook his head: "I really can't get the medicine. Every prescription in the shop has to be personally reviewed by my grandfather." "Where is your grandfather then?"

"My grandfather has gone for a consultation and should be back now."

"Please call your grandfather here."

"Alright, please wait a moment, young lady."

The young doctor lifted the curtain and walked out, inviting the elder doctor with a white beard to come in.

The old doctor with white hair and beard glanced at Jiang Ning's face a few times before taking her pulse.

After finishing the examination, he said: "The young lady is healthy. She is just a little bit cold. You just need to take some warming medicine."

Jiang Ning looked at the young doctor and laughed: "Old sir, your grandson didn't say the same thing just now. He said I was pregnant.."

Chapter 32: The Reward from the Palace

The young doctor also looked surprised: "Did grandfather make a wrong diagnosis?"

"I have been practicing medicine for forty years, and I have diagnosed countless cases of slippery pulse, never making a single mistake." The old doctor was displeased at the comment, and he stared at his grandson with a stern face, "You haven't even formally started practicing medicine, and you dare to question me? Who permitted you to diagnose the patient? Get out!"

The young doctor frowned, wanting to argue, but was unceremoniously dragged out by the old man.

"Huh?" Jiang Ning reached out her hand, "Don't leave."

No one paid her any attention.

She scratched her face.

This was a tricky situation.

The grandson said she was pregnant; the grandfather steadfastly denied it.

Still, Jiang Ning trusted the grandson's words more.

But the grandson was too honest and timid; he wouldn't dare to prescribe an abortion potion for her.

It had already been two months, once it passed three months, it would be too late to abort the fetus without causing harm to her body.

Jiang Yi caught up with the old man, but he was told that the girl was fine and just a bit cold. The old man prescribed a few tonics and let them go.

After listening, Jiang Yi felt a sense of relief and lost the mood to wander around. He quickly took his two sisters back to their mansion.

On the way home, Jiang Ning saw some cloaks piled up on one side. She reached over and picked one up to take a look.

The fabric and tailoring were both extremely luxurious, even more so than the one Jiang Yi was wearing.

Jiang Yan asked with a laugh, "I haven't asked you yet, Seventh Sister, whose cloak is this?"

Jiang Ning shook her head.

She only saw a figure from behind.

When Jiang Yi heard them speaking, he glanced over their way and said, "The boat today had no markings, so it's impossible to tell whose family it belongs to. But the attendants on that boat were rather unusual, it's definitely not just anyone. However, that cloak of yours, Seventh Sister, it appears to be from the palace."

"What?" Jiang Yan exclaimed, "Could it be someone from the palace?"

"Not necessarily, it could also be worn by royalty or nobles," he added.

Jiang Ning thought about Xiaoqian upon hearing this.

Thinking back, the boy was rather eloquent for his age, definitely a child from a noble family.

She'd have to make sure to clear things up next time she saw him.

When they returned to the Jiang family, Jiang Ruobai and Lin Zizi were both very worried when they heard about Jiang Ning falling into the water. They expressed their concern and tension when they found out that Jiang Ning was unharmed, and still scolded Jiang Yi.

Jiang Yi also regretted it.

Because of her fall into the water, Jiang Ruobai did not want to let the Nanny that was invited to teach her manners, do so anymore.

When Aunt Hua heard this, she took the opportunity to invite the Nanny to their side, saying that since she was already invited, and Seventh Miss was not well, then let Jiang Yuan learn manners first.

Jiang Ning didn't mind this, but seeing Jiang Yan looking lonely, knowing her aunt was a pushover and wouldn't argue, she took the initiative to let Jiang Yan learn with them as well.

Jiang Yan's eyes flashed with joy and gratitude.

Jiang Ning didn't think much of it.

When people treated her with kindness, she was more than willing to return the favor.

What troubled Jiang Ning now was the child in her womb, who was tenacious enough to survive even the fall into the water.

Quite a tough one.

What if she went into the palace like this... She was actually a little curious if they could figure it out.

The next day, very early in the morning, an eunuch surprisingly showed up at the Jiang family, bringing a lot of gifts – all for the Jiang family's Seventh Miss.

Everyone in the Jiang family was puzzled.

Why was the palace suddenly rewarding Jiang Ning?

It was only after Jiang Ruobai stuffed some silver into the eunuch's hand that they found out— it turned out that Jiang Ning had saved the Emperor's eldest grandson the day before. This was all in reward for her deed.

Jiang Ning was stupefied after hearing this.

Xiaoqian was the emperor's eldest grandson?

Then his grandfather...

Old Man Sun, wasn't that the current Emperor?

Thinking of the short, fat, and greedy old man, Jiang Ning shuddered violently. The Emperor of the Great Sheng Dynasty, was he really that kind of person?

Chapter 33: I'm Really Pregnant!

Jiang Ning carefully recalled the details of her interactions with Old Man Li, but she couldn't see him as the Emperor of the Great Sheng Dynasty.

People believed that Prince of Yu was incredibly good-looking, but could he really have given rise to such a handsome son?

Jiang Ning was somewhat doubtful.

There were many rewards sent from the palace like fabrics, jewelry, and cosmetics, all things that young ladies could use.

Jiang Ning glanced through them, uninterested.

These various rewards were less practical than receiving money.

But there was one person who had red eyes from envy.

That person was Jiang Yuan, the fifth daughter.

She learned that the child Jiang Ning saved was none other than the emperor's eldest grandson, and she was full of regret and remorse.

If she had taken the initiative to jump down and save the child, all these rewards would have been hers.

Moreover, by saving the emperor's oldest grandson, she would have garnered the Emperor's attention, increasing her chances of being selected as a consort in the palace.

How could such a great opportunity have fallen on a lame girl!

Jiang Yuan instantly thought that Jiang Ning's chance to save the prince was entirely her own doing.

If it hadn't been for her tripping Jiang Ning, how could she have had the luck to save the emperor's eldest grandson?

It was infuriating.

Jiang Yuan was angry for a whole day and had no interest in learning palace manners from the nanny.

She made several mistakes and was severely scolded by the nanny.

This nanny was a serving lady from the palace, who had served the Ladies of the palace. If not for the upcoming selection event, even the Jiang family wouldn't have been able to hire her as a servant.

The scolding from the nanny made Jiang Yuan even more upset, and she left in a huff.

The nanny paid no attention to her, continuing to teach Jiang Yan palace manners calmly.

With the palace selection happening the next day, Jiang Ning was extremely anxious.

She went to find Jiang Ruobai: "Father, I have a very serious matter to discuss with you."

"Seventh Sister, you should be resting well in bed."

"This matter concerns my life as well as the entire Jiang family!"

"What kind of matter is so serious?" Jiang Ruobai looked at his daughter's pink face and couldn't help but smile.

"I am really pregnant!"

"Child, please don't deceive your father, okay? Even if you don't want to enter the palace, don't use such an excuse. The reputation of a girl is still important." Jiang Ruobai stroked his chin, "Although I don't know the importance of such reputation."

"Father, why don't you believe me?"

“Several doctors have taken your pulse, and you have no issues.” Jiang Ruobai thought she was just too worried and anxious, so he comforted her, “My dear girl, don’t be afraid. You are entering the palace to be selected as the Main Consort of Prince of Yu, not a concubine. You won’t be staying in the palace as a servant.”

“I don’t want to be the Princess Consort of Prince of Yu. Besides, with my lame leg, others wouldn’t want me. Isn’t it embarrassing for you to send me to the palace?”

“Nonsense. How could my legitimate daughter be an embarrassment?” Jiang Ruobai caressed her hair, “Seventh Sister, you are the only legitimate daughter of your mother and me, but due to my negligence, you were lost for twelve years. I owe you so much and must give you the best.”

Jiang Ning was touched but still couldn’t accept it: “If father wants to treat me well, how about letting me enjoy a good life at home instead?”

“My daughter deserves the best man. The Prince of Yu is your best choice.”

“Father, the Prince of Yu is so good, he really won’t look twice at me.”

“We’ll see about that.” Jiang Ruobai chuckled meaningfully, “You should go to sleep and rest. Tomorrow, I will personally send you to the palace.”

Jiang Ning wanted to struggle more: “If father doesn’t believe me, you can go to the Apricot Grove Medical Clinic and ask about it. There is a young doctor there who checked my pulse and told me I am pregnant..”

Chapter 34: Terrifying Makeup

“Alright, alright, I will ask. You go back and rest properly, alright? Chunlai, why aren’t you pushing Seventh Miss to rest? Take good care of her!”

“Father, you must definitely ask. Believe me!” Jiang Ning turned around in her wheelchair, “This matter is of great importance. If it’s found out tomorrow, the Jiang family will be finished!”

Jiang Ruobai shook his head, “Does this child really not want to marry the Prince of Yu?”

Although entering the palace was like entering a deep sea, the Prince of Yu had already received eighteen seals and would be moving out of the palace to live independently soon.

Wouldn’t it be better to become the mistress of the prince’s mansion after moving there?

However, Jiang Ruobai paid attention to every word of his legitimate daughter. He called his son over to ask about it, and then sent the housekeeper to call the doctor from Apricot Grove Medical Clinic to get clarification.

Both the grandfather and the grandson came.

Jiang Ruobai let the others go out and asked them alone, “What was the result of the examination you did on my daughter before?”

The old doctor hurriedly said, “To answer your question, your daughter has no serious problems. She just caught a slight chill after falling into the water.”

Jiang Ruobai looked at the young doctor beside him, “What did you say to my daughter?”

The young doctor lowered his head and said softly, “My skills are not yet proficient, and I misdiagnosed. Please forgive me, sir.”

The old doctor snorted heavily, “This boy has not yet mastered his skills and dares to casually diagnose others. I have already punished him severely, and I hope you will forgive him.”

Jiang Ruobai said coldly, “This matter concerns my daughter’s reputation, and it can’t be covered up with a single word of forgiveness. However, for my daughter’s sake, I will let you off this time. If you

dare to talk nonsense and ruin people's reputation again, don't blame me for being impolite.
Housekeeper, see them out!"

The grandfather and grandson hurriedly left.

Jiang Ning went back to bed and slept until the sky was slightly bright, when Chunlai gently shook her awake, "Miss, it's time to get up and freshen up. The carriages and horses are waiting at the door."

Jiang Ning was still feeling sleepy, and with a tired face, she sat up, "Go find Jiang Ruobai, tell him I won't enter the palace. Let him send someone else."

Chunlai smiled, ignoring the childish words, and with the help of a few other maids, they helped her get up, wash her face, brush her teeth, put on makeup, comb her hair, and change her clothes.

A dragonfly pattern light-green spring silk robe, a tulip-patterned satin skirt underneath, and a spring-water-green silk shawl.

The clothes were elegant and fresh, exuding an ethereal and refined air.

However, the makeup on her face was something Jiang Ning couldn't accept.

Her eyebrows were darkened, her lips were only half-red, and her cheeks had two patches of blush, causing her to look like a monkey's butt.

She looked like a ghost.

Jiang Ning looked in the mirror, and her sleepiness was scared away by more than half.

Chunlai even praised, "So beautiful."

Jiang Ning: "...There's really no need for commercial mutual flattery."

Immediately, she realized it, “Good girl, you know my thoughts too well. You know I don’t want to enter the palace, so you deliberately turned me into a ghost.”

Chunlai laughed, “Miss is talking nonsense again. The ladies in the palace all dress like this, and they look so beautiful. If you weren’t entering the palace, you wouldn’t be able to dress like this.”

Jiang Ning:

Well, let it be ugly.

After getting dressed, she sat in her wheelchair and left the room. Jiang Yuan and Jiang Yan had also gotten into the carriage.

As expected, their makeup was the same as hers.

Chunlai really hadn’t fooled her.

Jiang Ruobai and Jiang Yi were both standing next to the carriage, looking at her coming with some reluctance.

Jiang Ning said, “Father, have you asked the young doctor yet?”

“I asked.”

“Then why are you still letting me enter the palace?”

“You are perfectly fine, so why shouldn’t you enter the palace?”

“What?” Jiang Ning was stunned.

“That boy said that he misdiagnosed. My good girl, just go with peace of mind!” Jiang Ruobai personally put her into the carriage, “When you come back, I’ll give you a feast to celebrate..”

Chapter 35: Entered

Jiang Ning never expected that the seemingly honest young doctor would change his mind!

She struggled with all her might: “Third Brother, did you overhear my conversation with that doctor yesterday?”

Jiang Yi’s handsome face had an air of integrity: “I am a gentleman, I would never eavesdrop on other people’s conversations.”

Jiang Ning: “...I really wouldn’t mind if you eavesdropped.”

But in the end, she was still put into the carriage.

She sat in the carriage in a daze, watching the Jiang family gate getting farther and farther away, with a blank expression, muttering to herself, “I really regret it, really.”

Jiang Yan, who was sharing the same carriage with her, curiously asked, “What does Seventh Sister regret?”

“I really regret not letting you all listen to what the young doctor said yesterday.”

“The doctor said that Seventh Sister’s body is unharmed, so don’t worry.”

“...I really regret it, really.”

She kept repeating these words all the way until they reached the outer gates of the Imperial City and changed from carriage to a palanquin to enter the Immortal-view Gate. They went through the side doors and passed through Enlightenment Gate, Wisdom Gate, and Clarity Gate before eventually reaching the Cloudview Pavilion.

Cloudview Pavilion was a temporary residence for the women being selected.

There weren't too many of them, after all, this wasn't a selection for the Emperor, but specifically for the Prince of Yu's Main Consort. All of the candidates were from prominent families and noble ladies in Chang'an City.

After getting off the palanquin, Jiang Ning's legs made it difficult for her to move, and she didn't have her crutch or a maid. As she was wondering how to get out, she saw a delicate wheelchair beside her.

A palace maid with a round face spoke gently, "Miss, please get off the palanquin. This is specially prepared for you."

Swipe!

All eyes turned to Jiang Ning.

Who was this, to be treated so specially?

Even the palace had prepared a chair for her, which was simply unheard of.

The girls were puzzled, and then they saw a girl in a green skirt clumsily getting out of the palanquin and moving onto the wheelchair.

As soon as the girl appeared, she amazed everyone around her.

She was very beautiful.

But her legs were clearly disabled.

No wonder she needed a wheelchair.

There were whispers among the women.

A lame girl even dared to enter the palace to be selected?

Wasn't she afraid of being laughed at?

Someone with insider information whispered, "That's the legitimate daughter of the Jiang family who was just found, the one who was missing for twelve years."

"It's her, how did she become a cripple?"

"Who knows, maybe it was the kidnappers who crippled her..."

"She looks good, but how can a cripple come to be selected? Does the Jiang family not have any daughters left, or are they just crazy to climb up the social ladder?"

Jiang Yuan was initially embarrassed and tried to keep her distance from Jiang Ning after getting off the palanquin. However, after hearing these comments, she suddenly became enraged and slapped the girl who spoke last.

The girl was stunned.

Jiang Yuan pointed at her, "Take a good look, the Jiang family not only has daughters, but more than one! If you dare to insult the Jiang family again, I will pull out your teeth!"

Jiang Ning saw all this and laughed, "Sixth Sister, our Fifth Sister is not only domineering at home, but also quite aggressive outside."

Jiang Yan pushed the wheelchair and saw Jiang Yuan making a scene, which made her feel a little worried, but she still replied with a smile, "Yes, Fifth Sister has always been like this, never willing to suffer the slightest bit of grievance."

"Quite good, quite good."

Jiang Ning comfortably leaned back in her chair, surveying their surroundings.

The Imperial Palace was indeed magnificent, but she couldn't help thinking about how to escape.

She had heard on the way there that they would have to undergo a physical examination upon entering the palace.

They would be stripped naked for the Nannies to check their bodies for any flaws, their growth, etc. Then they would also be examined to verify whether they were still virgins or not..

Chapter 36: Fainting on the Spot

These are the basic required conditions for being chosen. Only those who meet these criteria can move on to the next round.

Those who come are all the favored girls from rich families. They've been pampered since childhood. Delicate fingers that have never touched spring water, not even a scrape on their skin, so there wouldn't be any blemishes on their bodies.

Nevertheless, they still must be checked. How good their waists are, the shape of their buttocks, whether they are capable of bearing children, and so on.

Whether they are virgins is, of course, not even up for debate.

Though the emperor and the princes are surrounded by countless women, they require these women to be pure and flawless.

Jiang Ning finds this absurd, but it is a fact that no one can dispute.

She doesn't want to be scrutinized every inch by any woman.

Especially she doesn't want to be examined for virginity.

Who knows what kind of bizarre methods they'll use.

When a housekeeping nanny came over to gather all the girls together for instruction, Jiang Ning sat in a wheelchair in the corner.

"Ahem." Just as the nanny cleared her throat to speak, a loud retching sound erupted from the corner.

Everyone turned to look and saw Jiang Ning hunched over the armrest of her wheelchair, violently throwing up.

The nanny was taken aback, went over and asked, "What's the matter with you?"

Jiang Ning raised her pale, helpless-faced: "Actually, I'm ill."

"Ill?"

"Very, very severely ill, the kind that won't let me live for a few more years," Jiang Ning weakly explained. "Nanny, please order someone to take me out of the palace. I suppose I'm not fortunate enough to participate in the selection."

The nanny's face remained expressionless: "This isn't up to me. You wait here, I need to consult."

She left and returned shortly after with an imperial physician in tow.

Jiang Ning looked up and her vision blacked out:

Holy shit.

Isn't this royal physician the same one Aunt Hua hired for her last time?

The one who told blatant lies.

The Imperial Physician obviously recognized Jiang Ning too, came over with a big grin to take her pulse, his attitude was quite professional: "The young lady is in no harm."

To hell with your 'no harm'!

Jiang Ning pointed at herself: "I just threw up, what do you say to that?"

The Imperial Physician was unfazed: "Perhaps the young lady ate too much greasy food for breakfast, causing a bit of gastric discomfort. It's fine, just drink some water and take a rest."

Jiang Ning: "Doctor, you really don't have a guilty conscience."

The physician remained unflustered: "I'll take my leave."

The other girls waiting to be chosen all sneered: "This is how the Jiang family's daughter behaves...Not only is she disabled, she's also so delicate. She's going to any length to draw attention to herself, even pretending to be sick, pah!"

God, Jiang Ning was so angry she really wanted to faint on the spot.

What kind of quack doctors are these!

Regardless, because of her “feigned illness,” Jiang Ning did garner some special treatment. She was allowed to go to a cool place for some tea and rest.

The remaining girls continued to wait to be lectured, to learn the palace rules from the nanny.

Cloudview Pavilion was not large, there were few servants, even if there were, no one cared about a cripple.

So Jiang Ning pushed her wheelchair and wandered around.

After one round, there was nothing interesting to see.

She even got a bit lost.

In the distance, two figures stood behind a tree.

“Your Highness, that’s the legitimate daughter of Jiang family’s second branch, Jiang Ning.” One of them spoke to a slender young man in a brocade robe.

The brocade-robed young man grunted, “Does she indeed resemble the second madam of the Jiang family?”

“Your Highness, here is a portrait of the second madam of the Jiang family from when she was young.” The subordinate produced a small portrait of a woman.

The brocade-robed young man glanced at it, then swept his eyes towards the girl in the wheelchair in the distance.

The girl was leisurely and curious, looking more like a sightseer than a participant..

Chapter 37: That Beautiful Young Man

The young girl looked very casual, quite different from the dignified and noble air of the beauty in the painting.

However, their facial features were indeed about eighty or ninety percent similar.

The man in the brocade robe threw the small portrait back to his subordinate and said indifferently: "Burn the painting."

The subordinate responded, stuffed the portrait into his chest, hesitated for a while, and whispered: "Master, although Miss Jiang Seventh resembles the second wife of the Jiang Family, she is, after all, disabled... Do you really want to choose her as the Main Consort? It seems too unfair for you."

The man said coldly: "What do you think is more important, the imperial throne or a woman?"

"Of course, the imperial throne is more important."

"As long as this woman can bring me a slight chance of inheriting the imperial throne, I don't care if she is just a cripple; even if she is bedridden and unable to move, I can carry her in the sedan chair."

The subordinate hastily replied, "Master is right, it was my stupidity."

There could be many choices for the Main Consort; if it doesn't work out, another one can always be chosen later.

There won't be a shortage of women in the future of his residence.

However, there is only one imperial throne that is high above all others.

It would be worth marrying a crippled woman as the main consort for the sake of the throne; after all, it is only a minor grievance.

"By the way, I just heard that the girl is not well."

"I don't care about her health, as long as she can make it through to the final selection and not die."

The man in the brocade robe finished speaking coldly and turned around to leave.

He had been standing with his back against the large tree before, and when he turned around, a glimpse of his handsome face flashed like an orchid and jade tree, which captivated people's attention.

Jiang Ning was unintentionally wandering around when she caught a glimpse of him and was immediately struck by his beauty.

There was such a handsome and elegant young man in the palace. With just his back to the onlooker, his broad shoulders and narrow waist made a tall and straight figure. His eyebrows and eyes were exquisitely beautiful with just a glimpse.

This was a rare beauty.

And his back looked somehow familiar.

After a moment of thought, she remembered.

Wasn't he the young man who took away Xiaoqian on the boat that day?

The cape must also have belonged to him.

Since Xiaoqian was the emperor's eldest grandson, this young man must also be a royal nobleman, most likely one of the princes.

As for which one, it would be inappropriate to guess wildly.

The present emperor had five sons in total, the eldest son died young, leaving behind a young heir. The remaining four sons were all crowned princes, and except for the youngest, the Fifth Prince – Prince of Yu, unmarried, the other princes had moved out of the palace after getting married.

Jiang Ning got these rough messages from Jiang Yan, who had been babbling about them during their carriage ride.

She didn't listen that carefully.

However, if that handsome young man was really Old Man Li's son, it would be hard to believe.

Could Old Man Li, with that face of a butcher, give birth to such a handsome son?

On second thought, it must be because Old Man Li's wife was a stunning beauty.

Jiang Ning's mind was filled with gossip, nearly forgetting her own situation until the round-faced palace maid who brought her wheelchair came and pushed her back to Cloudview Pavilion.

"This is a forbidden area inside the palace, and the inner court of the harem. Miss should not walk around at will. If you offend any lady, it would be a serious matter." The round-faced palace maid whispered.

Jiang Ning looked at her and smiled: "You seem to take good care of me."

The round-faced palace maid replied, "This servant is called Huang Ying. My parents were both servants of the Jiang family. Later, they received great kindness from the second madam and were released from their servitude. I was born a free citizen, and our family is grateful to the second madam. So, when I saw you, miss, I felt close and familiar."

So that was the reason.

"How long have you been in the palace?"

"Five years." Huang Ying replied with a smile on her lips, "In another three years, I will turn twenty-five and will be allowed to leave the palace. Then, I can reunite with my family."

Jiang Ning nodded and asked, "What are the other girls doing over there?"

"After the nanny finishes talking about the rules, the next step is to examine their bodies. I was ordered by the nanny to ask you to come over.."

Chapter Thirty-Eight: Body Examination

Jiang Ning paused for a moment, asking, "Huang Ying, can I skip the physical examination?"

"You can't, it's a palace regulation," Huang Ying chuckled, "Don't be scared, Miss. I'll accompany you in and ask the Nanny in charge of the examination to be gentle."

Jiang Ning trembled slightly, "Is it brutal?"

"Not exactly, but it can be somewhat embarrassing."

Jiang Ning glanced around. This deep in the palace gardens, with many winding paths, there's no doubt she'd quickly be caught if she attempted to escape.

It seemed she was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

She touched her left leg.

Huang Ying noticed and said softly, "Don't worry, Miss. I'll act as your leg and assist you."

Jiang Ning just nodded, without saying anything else.

Huang Ying was a good girl who appreciated kindness; Jiang Ning couldn't take any rash actions that might get her in trouble.

It was just an examination after all. If they want to check, then let them check.

Even if the Imperial Physician stated that she wasn't pregnant, the Nannies surely wouldn't discover otherwise.

Worst case scenario, they'd discover her body was not that of a virgin's.

At most, she'd be despised, lose her eligibility for the selection, and be sent home from the preliminary examination.

She didn't have anything to lose.

With these thoughts in mind, Jiang Ning was much calmer.

By the time she returned to Cloudview Pavilion, dozens of maidens had already lined up to enter the examination room.

When Jiang Ning arrived, Jiang Yuan had just come out after her examination, dressed in a turquoise-colored palace gown, as were several other maidens.

Huang Ying whispered, "The fact they have changed into this attire means they passed the physical examination. They are now able to advance to the next round."

Jiang Ning nodded. No wonder Jiang Yuan was beaming from ear to ear.

She looked around, not spotting Jiang Yan, so she asked Huang Ying about her.

"She probably didn't make it and got sent back home," replied Huang Ying.

Jiang Ning was taken aback.

Jiang Yan, who was obedient and clever, despite not being as beautiful as Jiang Yuan, was quite pretty. She couldn't believe she was already eliminated.

Huang Ying chuckled, "They are looking for girls with good bearing and growth potential."

A voice was heard, "Next, from the Jiang Family, Seventh Miss, Jiang Ning!"

Jiang Ning didn't move. Seeing this, Huang Ying abandoned all formalities and pushed Jiang Ning's wheelchair towards the examination room.

The rest of the maidens had amused expressions on their faces.

The examination was a physical evaluation after all. A girl with a limp actually had the courage to get in there. She certainly was not afraid of embarrassing herself.

Jiang Ning took in the examination room.

It was dimly lit with a small room divided by wooden boards. It reminded her of...the restroom design in a modern shopping mall.

Besides a door, there were no windows at all.

A dark-faced Nanny stood near, giving them a glance from time to time.

It was quite frightening.

Huang Ying helped Jiang Ning off the wheelchair to undress.

Jiang Ning pushed her hand away, addressing the Nanny, "My leg is a disadvantage you can obviously see. I'm just here to complete the numbers. You might as well not examine me. Just give me my ticket, and I'll be on my way home."

Even a bodily-healthy girl like Jiang Yan had been eliminated. She might as well save herself the trouble.

The dark-faced Nanny didn't say anything in response, but stepped in front of her, gave her a once-over, and coldly commanded, "Go behind the screen over there and change your clothes."

Change clothes?

Jiang Ning looked down at herself.

Huang Ying was overjoyed and whispered, "Congratulations, Miss! Having changed into the palace dress signifies that you have passed this round. Now you may go to the Stewardess for selection."

Jiang Ning was astonished, "Nanny, you haven't examined me yet."

The dark-faced Nanny was stern, “Miss, you better hurry and change your clothes. I’m very busy. I still have to examine the next maiden.”

Jiang Ning was bewildered.

So, is this how they conduct the examination?

However, Huang Ying was elated and quickly helped her towards the changing area.

After switching into a lightweight cyan palace gown, she crossed paths with the next maiden in line.

On spotting Jiang Ning’s attire, the maiden looked so shocked it appeared her eyes might pop out of her head..

Chapter 39: Because I’m Good-looking

Beauty was suspicious of her own eyes and involuntarily raised a hand to rub them.

She was not mistaken.

It was the blue palace dress.

Even the Yinglei ribbon on the collar was exactly the same.

How is this possible?

Beauty couldn’t help but look back to the ones she had already passed.

A few of them were still standing in their original places, waiting to see Jiang Ning make a fool of herself.

It wasn't personal, but her appearance was too eye-catching compared to the others, and she happened to be a disabled girl in a wheelchair.

It was too attention-grabbing.

For someone extraordinary around them, the Beauties couldn't help but be curious.

Seeing Jiang Ning sitting in her wheelchair, wearing a refreshing blue palace dress, they were all incredibly shocked.

Did she pass?

???

Putting other things aside, she is disabled!

Did the nannies in there lose their eyes or were they just being malicious, actually allowing a disabled girl to pass the examination?

Did they expect Prince of Yu to marry a disabled girl?

It was simply a preposterous joke!

Beauties whispered and exchanged surprised looks with each other, not stopping from observing Jiang Ning.

Jiang Yuan was especially curious.

She thought Jiang Ning would definitely not pass, and just like Jiang Yan, be sent back home with a card.

But surprisingly, she passed.

It was incredible; one couldn't understand it.

Jiang Yuan couldn't help but confront her, "Jiang Ning, why are you wearing this dress?"

"Nanny gave it to me."

"Why?"

"Probably because ... I'm pretty." Jiang Ning touched her face, "Don't you think so?"

Jiang Yuan:

She indeed was beautiful.

Lin Zizi's reputation as the number one beauty in Chang'an City was not unearned.

Jiang Ning perfectly inherited Lin Zizi's beauty, and compared to Lin Zizi's grace, she had an even more lively spirit—an unparalleled beauty. Even as a woman, one would find it hard to deny the fact.

"But you're disabled!"

"I'm pretty."

“Even if you pass now, when you meet the various masters of the harem tomorrow, you’ll be dismissed!”

“I don’t care.”

Jiang Yuan held back the anger in her heart and walked away sulkily.

That night, the selected Beauties stayed at Cloudview Pavilion. With only fifteen or sixteen people left, it wasn’t too crowded and was quite comfortable. However, they ate together.

And a few nannies were also present.

A group of young girls, all from prestigious families used to a pampered life, were displeased with this, but as this was the palace, no one dared to complain. The evening meal was also simple.

Jiang Ning didn’t have much appetite and nibbled on a steamed bun. Yet, she couldn’t help but smell the aroma of meat dishes on the table beside her.

She endured it for a while, but eventually she couldn’t help but vomit.

The Beauties nearby eating looked at her and couldn’t help but sneer, “Still pretending.”

“This isn’t the time for selection. Don’t put on an act.”

Several Beauties showed their dissatisfaction.

Jiang Ning said, “I’m pregnant. This is morning sickness. Do you understand?” As soon as she said this, the surrounding nannies had no reaction, but several Beauties almost died from laughter.

“Jiang Seventh, are you suffering from delusions?”

“You’re pregnant? Do you think yesterday’s examination nannies were blind?” “You haven’t even entered the harem of Princess Consort of Yu and you’re already thinking of using your belly to gain favor. You’re thinking too much.” “A pure and innocent girl like you isn’t ashamed to say such things.” “Aren’t you embarrassed?”

The Beauties laughed and teased her.

Jiang Yuan felt humiliated, her face flushed red.. She whispered, “Can you stop being crazy and talking nonsense? Want to be pregnant? You’re still too early for that! Even if you’re not afraid of losing face, don’t drag me and the Jiang family down with you!”

Chapter 40: Your Highnesses

Jiang Ning sighed, “Why does nobody believe me when I tell the truth?”

“Quiet down, everyone!” the Stewardess Nanny scolded with a cold face, “Aren’t you all ladies from respectable families? Don’t you even understand the rules of not talking while eating and not speaking when lying down? Don’t think you’re just here for a meal. Everything that happens here is known by the ladies and masters in the palace!”

The women fell silent.

So gathering everyone for a meal together was actually a test of their proper manners.

Regrettable indeed.

Only Jiang Ning seemed unaffected, finishing her steamed bun and pushing her wheelchair to her room to sleep.

Nobody paid attention to the nannies around her.

The nannies didn't pay attention to her either.

However, another talented lady tried to follow, but was scolded by the Nanny, "The Empress Your Highness and other ladies have always advocated cherishing food. Leaving half uneaten like this will not please them."

The talented lady was a noblewoman from a count's family and took pride in her status. Upon hearing this, she retorted, "Jiang Seventh didn't finish her food either. Why is she allowed to leave?"

The Nanny calmly replied, "If you don't care about being chosen like her, then go ahead."

This promptly silenced the talented lady, who obediently sat down and finished her meal.

Perhaps Jiang Family's crippled girl was just lucky to pass the physical examination with her beautiful face.

But when she meets the Empress and the Noble Consort, things will not be easy.

The Prince of Yu is the son of the Noble Consort, who would never choose a cripple as a daughter-in-law for her son.

Nothing happened that night, and everyone went to rest.

Before dawn, they were called to dress and have their hair styled. After a bowl of porridge in the morning, they had to line up to go to the Hall of Ceremony to meet the Empress and other noble ladies.

It was said that the Prince of Yu would also attend and personally select the woman who pleased him the most.

This news thrilled and excited all the talented ladies.

However, just his name, the Prince of Yu, was enough to make their cheeks flush.

It was said that the Prince of Yu had an ethereal appearance and was exceptionally gentle and polite to others. Moreover, as the son of the Noble Consort, he had the highest status among all the princes.

Empress Your Highness had no sons and only one daughter, the Princess. The four princes were born from concubines, so it didn't matter to her which of them would ascend to the throne.

The Fourth Prince, although his birth mother was only a Lady, had been raised by the Empress since childhood, naturally making his status higher than the others.

The birth mothers of the other two princes were both concubines, unable to compete for glory with them.

As the youngest among the princes, the Prince of Yu's marriage was attracting much attention.

The talented ladies dressed up beautifully and followed the Stewardess Nanny to the Hall of Ceremony.

The Hall of Ceremony was originally a place for holding small banquets in the harem. The talented ladies were temporarily placed in a side hall, which was quite spacious.

After a long wait, the news came that the Empress and the Noble Consort had arrived.

The women got excited.

Only Jiang Ning was lazily leaning in her wheelchair, dozing off.

She was already sleepy, and with the early waking today, her eyelids continuously fought each other.

There were a total of sixteen talented ladies, who didn't need to split up and lined up neatly to enter.

As for Jiang Ning, Huang Ying pushed her along, following the end of the line, yawning from time to time.

The Hall of Ceremony, not being a residential palace, wasn't gorgeous but spacious and bright. In the slightly hot early summer season, it was comfortable with the breeze.

Jiang Ning sat in a corner, and although blocked by the talented ladies, she could still see the legendary appearance of the Empress and the Noble Consort.

They didn't appear as magnificent and luxurious as she had imagined.

The Empress looked to be in her fifties or sixties, with a cicada hairstyle, a green skirt, and a yellow cloak with red patterns of branches and flowers on her shoulders. She was quite tall and somewhat thin. Although not beautiful due to her age, her noble grace and excellent temperament were outstanding.

The Noble Consort sitting on her left hand looked to be in her forties, clearly exquisitely beautiful, with picturesque eyes and eyebrows.

She wore a double-ring immortal bun, and the four thin, long hairpins on her head were remarkably dazzling.

Just by looking at the Noble Consort's grace, one could tell that her son, the Prince of Yu, must have an exceptionally handsome appearance..