

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 521

Lin Xinyan blushed at the woman's words, not knowing how to respond. She did not expect the woman to talk about something so intimate in public.

Seeing Lin Xinyan's reddened face reddened, the woman could not help but smile. "We're all married women, there is nothing to be embarrassed about," she said.

Lin Xinyan simply smiled at her and remained silent.

But the woman continued saying, "You're still young, there are still a lot of things you need to learn."

Zong Jinghao came closer trying to eavesdrop.

He never thought much about childbearing. To him, everything was just a natural process.

Even the book he bought only talked about the process of pregnancy. It said nothing about the effects of pregnancy on mothers.

"Let me tell you about what happened to my friend. When she was giving birth to her son, he was so big that the doctor had to do a deep cut. They didn't even anesthetize her when they stitch the wound! This has never happened to me, but just the thought of it sends chills down my spine!" the woman narrated with a contorted face.

Although Lin Xinyan had heard about similar stories, she had never experienced something like that. After all, the twins that she had were smaller than usual.

It was probably because her health had always been bad.

“If you think about it, a woman’s vagina is only this big. If it has to open up for such a huge baby to come out, it’s impossible for it to revert back to its original size. That’s why I say, you shouldn’t go for natural birth. You need to think of your husband,” the woman advised kindly.

Lin Xinyan was still not comfortable talking about this. But she knew the woman had good intentions, so she smiled at her politely.

“Don’t just keep quiet. What I say is true. Men and women are different—men don’t need to give birth. To be brutally honest, their genitals don’t change much over the years. But it’s totally different for women. Our vaginas won’t be the same after we get married, not to mention what will happen after we give birth to children. A woman’s life is just difficult. If you meet a good man, good for you; but if you meet a bad one, you’re simply risking your life for someone who will eventually divorce you,” the woman shared. She seemed to have a lot to say about this. But Lin Xinyan understood what she meant. Besides, pregnant women were usually more sensitive.

Her husband probably overlooked her need for emotional support, which explained why her thinking was rather pessimistic.

“Don’t think too much about it,” Lin Xinyan comforted her.

The woman looked at her and could not understand why Lin Xinyan did not see the gravity of the issue. “You should really think about it seriously. Don’t wait till you lose both your husband and your body. I’ve seen so many real-life examples. Remember the friend I told you about? She is getting a divorce from her husband,” the woman continued, trying to persuade her.

Lin Xinyan looked at her, wondering if the woman got this negativity from her circle of friends.

Lin Xinyan sighed as she thought about what the woman said. *If a man really loves a woman, he will stay by her side no matter what. Even if their sex life has changed, he should be able to understand that it’s all because of him.*

But if you marry a jerk, he will still leave you no matter how hard you try to maintain the relationship.

Lin Xinyan came to the hospital in a bright mood today, but the conversation with the woman made her feel miserable.

She felt sad not because she was afraid of any biological changes, nor was it because she was worried that her husband would mind those changes. It was because she realized a woman's life was never easy. If she met a good man, everything would be worth it; but if she met the wrong person, not only would her life be hard, but their marriage would also not end well as well.

She patted the woman on the hand and said, "It's better to think about happy things when you're pregnant. It'll be good for your baby too."

Lin Xinyan recalled what an old woman told her once—in the olden days, women would look at their own shoes before they went into labor—it gave them the courage to believe that they could still wear those shoes after they survived childbirth.

But healthcare had gotten better these days, and the number of women dying from childbirth and the chances of birth defects had reduced drastically.

Lin Xinyan thought a mother's love was the greatest in the world. Once a mother has her own baby, she would love the baby no matter what happened between her and her husband.

There was a saying that a child was a part of their mother. They were connected by flesh and blood for nine months, therefore their bond was inseparable.

Just then, the woman's turn came and she stood up. She looked at Lin Xinyan and said, "Thank you. I will try to be happier."

Lin Xinyan smiled at her and watched her walked alone towards the phlebotomist to get her blood drawn.

Things must have been difficult for her.

Lin Xinyan retracted her gaze and looked at her own baby bump tenderly. The bump was getting bigger day after day, and the baby had been moving these days.

Hello there, my dear little baby. I wonder if your daddy thinks about you? To be honest, mommy has no idea where he is and what he's doing. I hope he has not forgotten about us...

Lin Xinyan caught herself thinking negatively and let off a laugh. *I must have been affected by that woman.*

She was so deep in her thoughts that she did not realize Zong Jinghao had his gaze locked on her.

At that moment, he really wanted to hold her and touch their child.

A few minutes later, the nurse called her number and Lin Xinyan walked towards the counter.

She sat down and rolled up her sleeves, getting ready for the nurse to draw her blood. Her skin was fair and it did not take much time for the nurse to find a vein without applying much pressure. The nurse swabbed the spot with some alcohol and took up the syringe.

Zong Jinghao was afraid she might be in pain. As such, he stepped forward so he could have a better view of her face. To his surprise, Lin Xinyan looked calm. But he quickly realized her idle hand was all clenched up in a tight fist. Evidently, she was nervous.

Zong Jinghao reached for her hand without thinking any further. He just wanted to be there for her when she was in pain.

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The doctor pierced the needle through her skin at the exact same moment when the trainee doctor held onto her hand. Instantaneously, Lin Xinyan forgot about the pain.

After a brief moment, she recollected herself and pulled her hand away from the trainee doctor without hesitation. Glaring at him with her eyes, she chided, "What do you think you are doing?"

She did not hold herself back. Perhaps she was truly angry. Her voice immediately caught the attention of those around them.

The trainee doctor stared at Lin Xinyan, not knowing how to react. Should he be happy because she was angered by another man's touch? However, he was not just any other man.

"Go away. I don't need your help. I can find my way," Lin Xinyan said as she turned her head away with her brows deeply furrowed. She was confused as to whether she was upset with the trainee doctor or herself.

Earlier, when he held her hand, she felt her heart palpating so quickly.

Zong Jinghao just stood there as he dared not explain himself. He stayed in position until the doctor was done drawing her blood. Then, Lin Xinyan stood up, snatched the hospital form from his hands, and left without another word.

Her footsteps were unusually quick. Maybe she was desperate to escape from this trainee doctor.

The latter looked on as she disappeared down the corridor. Letting out a sigh in resignation, he began to follow her from afar. He dared not get too close to her.

The hospital was a large building but there were many signages directing visitors to any department or lab. So, one would definitely not get lost despite being unfamiliar with the place.

4D ultrasound belonged to the Department of Radiology which was on the first floor. As there was a queue, Lin Xinyan passed her form to the nurse in charge and sat down at an empty spot.

Zong Jinghao stood a few steps away from her.

While she was aware that he was following her, she chose to keep quiet and feign ignorance. Not once did she even glance at him.

“Lin Xinyan, room number two.” Her name was called shortly after.

She stood up and walked towards the second room with her medical records in hand.

She only walked into the room after the previous patient exited. At that moment, she turned around and realized that the trainee doctor did not follow her in.

Upon this, she breathed a sigh of relief. *This trainee doctor is over-doing it. But, surely he would become a good doctor in the future.*

This was not her first time doing a checkup. She had been here before during her previous pregnancy. Once she entered the room, she naturally lay down on the bed.

Just as she was about to lift her shirt, she spotted the trainee doctor in the room. *Didn't he leave earlier?*

“I thought you don't allow outsiders here,” Lin Xinyan remarked. She was in a dilemma. There was a man standing next to her and she was in a dress. Surely she would need to lift her dress if she were here for an ultrasound.

The female doctor-in-charge seemed to sense Lin Xinyan's discomfort with strangers. She stood there and told the latter with a smile, "He is a trainee doctor. Don't mind him. Let's get your dress up so that we can proceed with the ultrasound."

Afraid that she would still feel uncomfortable, the doctor added, "Please don't discriminate against male gynecologists."

Lin Xinyan turned speechless at this and bit on her lips.

It's not that I discriminate against them. It's just... We had physical contact earlier and I feel rather awkward. However, she was left without a choice but to shut her eyes and lifted her dress. As her legs became exposed, the cold air from the air-conditioner brushed against her legs. Her hands clenched into two fists. Nobody knew whether it was due to the cold or the presence of Zong Jinghao.

After spreading the ultrasound gel, the female doctor picked up the transducer and placed it on her belly. Very quickly, an image appeared on the screen and the trainee doctor looked extremely nervous and excited.

He could not contain his exhilaration because it was his first time viewing a real-life ultrasound.

The 4D ultrasound image was very clear. The doctor indirectly informed Zong Jinghao of the results by speaking to Lin Xinyan, "The fetus is at four months now. Overall fetus length is at 16 centimeters. The eyes, ears, and nose can be clearly seen too. It would weigh about 110 grams which is the weight of about two eggs. Fetus development looks good and healthy and nothing seems out of the ordinary. However..."

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The trainee doctor was about to inquire more, but Lin Xinyan acted faster and stole his line. "But what?" she asked.

Normally, this would mean that something was wrong.

She was very afraid of bad news.

Her face turned pale as she became anxious. At that point, she failed to notice that Zong Jinghao looked even more nervous than her.

The doctor quickly comforted her, "Don't worry too much. Even though the pregnancy should be stable after three months, but your body is naturally weak. You still have to be careful. Furthermore, you are very thin. Did you have a difficult labor in your previous pregnancy?"

A doctor would never ask such questions under normal circumstances. Perhaps she knew that the trainee doctor who stood behind her was likely the baby's father. Hence, she wanted to let him know that bearing a child was tough work and he should shower her with more affection and concern.

"Mm..." Lin Xinyan nodded without elaborating further. Nonetheless, she would never forget the excruciating pain when giving birth. No matter how much time passed, the memory was forever etched in her mind.

The doctor casually glanced behind and then turned back to Lin Xinyan. With a gentle smile, she continued, "Your uterus lining is slightly thinner than average. As the fetus continues to grow, the amount of amniotic fluid will increase too. Your body will be strained, so you have to make sure that you get enough rest and stay in a good mood."

“I will,” Lin Xinyan replied.

She knew her body well. Previously, the doctor told her that it would be difficult to get pregnant again. When this child came to her, she was utterly shocked, and it was truly by luck that she could keep the child. Furthermore, it was growing so well inside of her.

After the checkup was completed, she retrieved her medical report and returned to the outpatient clinic. The doctor took a brief look at the report, gave her some reminders, and told her to come back two weeks later for the test results on Down’s syndrome.

It would take some time before the test results could be produced.

As Lin Xinyan stepped out of the clinic, she called Qin Ya and asked, “Where are you right now?”

The trainee doctor stood inside the clinic. He could not follow her out but only observed her from afar.

“I’m at the entrance.” Qin Ya had been waiting at the door since the trainee doctor would accompany Lin Xinyan. She did not want to be a third wheel.

However, he could not send Lin Xinyan home.

Hence, Qin Ya waited for her at the entrance instead.

As she walked out, Qin Ya opened the car door for her and probed, “How did the checkup go?”

Lin Xinyan nodded. “It went well. Everything is fine.”

“What do you feel like eating now then? Any cravings?”

“Qin Ya.” Lin Xinyan did not get in the car and stared at her friend instead.
“Something seems off with you today.”

Based on Qin Ya’s personality, she would not leave her to a trainee doctor even if she detested hospitals. Something was definitely amiss.

“Why are you getting suspicious now? Didn’t I explain myself already? Do you want me to start all over again and open up those wounds once more?” Qin Ya acted as though she was very sad. Her words struck Lin Xinyan’s vulnerable spots and instantly, the latter was lost for words. In fact, she started to feel guilty because she thought that it was her who caused Qin Ya to recall those painful events in her life.

Qin Ya was pregnant too. She could have been a mother, but...

“Ya, I’m sorry.” Lin Xinyan was extremely upset at herself for bringing this up again.

“Alright, let me know what you want to eat. I will bring you there,” said Qin Ya nonchalantly.

Even though she had moved on from what happened with Su Zhan and no longer have feelings for him, she would never forget the baby she had with him.

Lin Xinyan did not have breakfast before the checkup and it was already past ten. After getting into the car, she said to Qin Ya, “Let’s have crab casseroles.”

It was Qin Ya’s favorite dish as it was rather spicy. The restaurant also offered seafood congee and fried buns. The buns were crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. They were simply delicious!

Qin Ya patronized the restaurant several times before and knew the menu well. There were a few other dishes she enjoyed too.

“Alright.” Happily, she started the car and drove towards their destination.

She did not ask Lin Xinyan about her interaction with the trainee doctor, for fear that she would suspect something.

However, unbeknownst to her, the trainee doctor walked out of the hospital shortly after they left. He had removed his white lab coat and his equipment, revealing his true self.

His hair was slightly messy from wearing a cap and a few strands of hair fell atop his forehead. He stood at the steps and watched as the car drove away before glancing at the time. *It is close to noon now.* He walked down the steps, got into a car, and drove towards Lin Xinyan's neighborhood.

With Qin Ya around, he would know Lin Xinyan's whereabouts well. Their house would be empty by now and he could come and go as he wanted. Furthermore, he could even spend some time with the kids.

Since it was close to noon but still rather early for lunch, he decided to take a look at Lin Xinyan's place first. Previously, he could not discern the interior because he came at night and the place was dark.

Since Lin Xinyan would not be around, he could spend some time at her place.

The school would normally cater lunch for the children, just like in kindergarten. They would head to school in the morning and return in the evening.

However, family members could always pick them up anytime.

When Zong Jinghao arrived at the school, the kids' teacher was extremely shocked by his presence. It had been two months since the kids attended school, but she had never met their father. She always thought that Lin Xinyan was divorced and a single mother.

The teacher continued to observe this man dressed in a white shirt and tapered pants which accentuated his slender legs. He stood tall and straight, and his

rolled-up sleeves exposed his toned arms. On his right wrist was a simple business watch, but one could tell that it cost a bomb.

An average man could not compare with his striking aura. His manliness and charisma were extremely attractive and eye-catching.

A man with such aura would already be charming without good looks. However, this man in front of her had the perfect facial features.

His jawline was sharp, his nose was tall and his eyes were deep-set. When he was silent, he looked cold and mysterious. Indeed, anyone would be captivated by him.

Zong Jinghao frowned as he did not like it when others stared at him.

“Daddy!” Zong Yanxi dashed towards her father from her seat. Her voice quickly jolted the female teacher back to reality as she shook her head in embarrassment.

Zong Yanxi was elated as she did not expect her father to turn up here. She wrapped her hands around his legs in disbelief as she looked up to him, and asked, “Daddy, are you here to see me?”

Zong Jinghao pinched her cheeks gently and nodded. He then shifted his gaze to the teacher and said, “I’m here to pick them up for lunch. I will send them back here later.”

The teacher responded with a smile. “Sure.” She asked to make sure, “Are you really their father? How come I’ve never seen you around before?”

“Of course he is my father.” Zong Yanxi hugged her father’s legs as though she was afraid someone would snatch him away anytime.

The teacher merely smiled and kept quiet. However, she would steal glances at him once in a while.

Zong Yanchen walked over and looked at his teacher before turning to his sister. He pouted and said, “Daddy, please don’t flirt with others. Otherwise, I will tell Mom!”

He walked out after saying that without giving his father an opportunity to explain himself.

Needless to say, Zong Jinghao was speechless at his son’s behavior.

Who was I flirting with?

Don’t wrong me!

After getting into the car, Zong Jinghao looked at the children from the rear-view mirror and asked, “What do you two want to eat?”

“Crab casseroles!” Zong Yanxi exclaimed. She enjoyed the crabs from the same restaurant too, especially the spiciness.

Chili was definitely an addiction.

“Where at?” He would always satisfy his daughter’s needs. It was just that he was not familiar with the neighborhood and did not know where the restaurant was.

“I know where it is! It’s opposite the cafe where you met us last time,” Zong Yanxi told him excitedly.

Zong Jinghao flashed a gentle smile at his daughter and drove in that direction.

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The cafe was near Lin Xinyan's neighborhood. After they arrived, Zong Jinghao realized that the street was lined with restaurants. Turning behind, he asked his daughter, "Which restaurant is it?"

Zong Yanxi leaned against the window as she checked out the street.

At that moment, Zong Jinghao saw a restaurant carrying a huge signage which displayed "Crab Casseroles". However, he also spotted the car which was parked in front of the store. It was the same car that Qin Ya drove, and he guessed that Lin Xinyan and Qin Ya were at this restaurant too.

Just as he wondered how to persuade his daughter on a change of restaurants, he saw the two ladies exiting the place.

They had arrived earlier and were done with their meal by then. This was the time when it would start to get crowded.

Zong Yanxi yelled for her mother when she spotted her. Fortunately, the car windows were wound up and the car was soundproof too, and hence, Lin Xinyan could not hear her.

Zong Yanchen quickly nudged his sister, "Did you forget what Daddy said? We came here secretly. Mom can't know about this."

She suddenly widened her eyes in realization and looked at her brother. "I forgot about that!"

Meanwhile, Zong Yanchen seemed rather used to his daughter's unorthodox behavior and remained silent.

Lin Xinyan got into the car and shortly after, they drove out of the parking spot.

At the same time, Zong Yanxi glued herself against the car window as she watched her mother's car drive past them. Pouting her lips, she muttered, "If only we could let Mom know about this. We can then have a meal as a family!"

Zong Yanchen truly acted like the elder brother as he pulled his sister into an embrace. *We will definitely live together happily ever after.*

This was definitely not a good subject to bring up. Zong Jinghao did not want to talk about it when he was with his children. After all, he felt really bad about the situation.

He parked the car in front of the restaurant and opened the back door. As he carried his daughter out of the car, he could feel how big and tall she had gotten.

Zong Yanchen did not need much babysitting and got down the car on his own. In fact, it was the same for his sister. However, she was used to being coquettish in front of her father and enjoyed clinging to him. She liked that he would hug her, even though she was considered a big kid by now.

The restaurant was not a large place but the ambiance was wonderful. It was slightly crowded at lunch hour and they had some difficulties getting a seat. Luckily, there was still an empty spot in the corner and the trio settled down there. Zong Yanxi started to order off the menu. Naturally, she got the crab casserole and congee. She turned to tell Zong Jinghao, "Mom likes the congee here."

Lin Xinyan's palette was similar to Zong Jinghao's, and they liked food with a mild taste. Initially, the kids followed suit but after a few trips with Qin Ya, they gradually grew to love spicy food too.

Zong Yanxi almost teared from the spice during their first time.

However, the dishes served here were not especially spicy. Only first-time patronizes would find it so, and one would slowly get numb to the spice.

Zong Jinghao stroked his daughter's head and said, "Order whatever you want."

The young girl flashed him a smile and asked obediently, "Can I get an ice cream after this?"

Normally, Lin Xinyan would not allow her to do so, especially since too much cold food would be bad for the stomach. In autumn, one might even get diarrhea from having too much ice cream. But it was summer now, which was the perfect time for ice cream.

A summer without ice cream would be meaningless, wouldn't it?

Zong Jinghao lifted his daughter's chin as he observed her features. She resembled Lin Xinyan more and more, especially in the eyes. They were sparkling and turned into an almond shape when she smiled. However, her nose and lips resembled his.

Zong Jinghao tried to reason with her, "Mom doesn't allow you to eat too much ice cream because it's for your own good. You have to be a good girl, alright? Let's not have ice cream. We should stay healthy."

Immediately, Zong Yanxi pulled a long face and she pouted her lips. "I only want a little bit of ice cream. Mom is already so strict with us. Are you going to take away that little happiness and joy left in us, Daddy?"

"You will be happy when you have ice cream?" Zong Jinghao frowned.

"Yes. It's joy when you eat what you like!" Zong Yanxi jumped down from her seat and lay her upper body on his lap. Her chubby cheeks rested on his thighs and her small arms wrapped around his waist. Even though Zong Jinghao had no belly, her short arms still could not go around his body and she could only tug on his shirt and begged, "Daddy, please just satisfy us. Just a little bit of ice cream, please?"

There was no way he could resist his daughter, as long as she acted cute in front of him. He could not bear to see her pouted lips and sat her on his lap. In a helpless manner, he told her, "Well, alright then. But just a little bit alright." He was definitely going to spoil her.

"Alright!" Zong Yanxi agreed immediately. It did not matter how much ice cream she could eat, as long as she could have some.

Very quickly, the dishes were served. Zong Yanxi ordered about five to six specialties and the waitress informed them, "We offer rice here. Would you like to order some?"

"We don't need rice." Zong Yanxi waved her hands dismissively.

She never liked to pair these dishes with rice, but immediately after she said that, she looked towards her brother and father and asked, "Do you guys want rice?" Of course, she had to take care of their needs too.

Her brother shook his head. *I don't even know whether we can finish all this food. The crab casserole is filling enough. What more, Yanxi ordered the largest serving.*

The crab casserole was offered in three sizes and could be chosen based on the number of patrons. The small serving was sufficient for one adult and two kids, but Zong Yanxi ordered the biggest serving available.

Similarly, Zong Jinghao did not want rice. He wanted to try the congee that his daughter claimed Lin Xinyan liked a lot. Furthermore, there were other dishes too and there was just not enough stomach for rice.

During mealtime, Zong Jinghao tried a bowl of the congee which melted right into his mouth. The grains were extremely well-cooked and the prawns were fresh too. It was indeed a delicious dish.

After a bowl of congee, he noticed his daughter's face getting oily. With a slight frown, he pulled out a piece of napkin and wiped her face with it. "I will peel the crab for you."

Meanwhile, Zong Yanchen was in a similar predicament. There were food bits all over his mouth as he told his father, "This is only good if you do it yourself!"

The crab casserole was served with the shell in it. Apart from the crab roe, there was also flesh in the legs.

"No, I want Daddy to peel it for me." In front of Zong Jinghao, she wanted to be a needy baby.

Zong Yanchen glanced at his sister and twisted his lips. He remembered that it was her who said that it was best eaten when one peeled the crab on one's own! Now, she changed her mind. *I hope that Mom is pregnant with another sister. Otherwise, Yanxi is going to be spoilt so badly and she will never grow up!*

If Mom has another daughter, Daddy will have to share some of his love with my new sister!

Yanxi won't be this spoilt then.

Zong Yanchen continued to pray for his dreams to come true. This was the only way for his sister to grow up. Otherwise, she would always act like an immature child in front of Zong Jinghao.

After the meal, Zong Jinghao got them each a serving of ice cream. When they were done, there was not much time left and he quickly sent the children back to school. Before they stepped back in, Zong Yanxi asked him, "Are you coming again tomorrow?"

Zong Jinghao nodded. He would be around the neighborhood for a few days anyway.

Naturally, Zong Yanxi was ecstatic. She planted a huge kiss on his cheeks before entering the school with her brother. Her mood was obviously elevated as she just had a sumptuous meal with her father and even some ice cream!

Zong Jinghao only headed for the car after he made sure the children entered their classroom with their teacher. As he started the engine, the phone in his pocket rang. It was a call from Su Zhan. He had missed the latter's call earlier since his phone was switched off on the plane.

After arriving in C City, he switched on his phone because Guan Jing needed to contact him regarding work and he could not go off the grid.

That day, Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan stayed at the office for a long time before bumping into Guan Jing in the evening. It was only then did they know that Zong Jinghao was not in B City.

Zong Jinghao did not hide this fact intentionally. When he picked up the call in Country Y, the two buddies heard "C City". Guan Jing knew about this too since he was the one that purchased the plane ticket.

"Where are you?" Su Zhan asked.

Shen Peichuan was busy with work and he had to perform well this time. Since there was no time for him to travel, Su Zhan got bored and decided to look for Zong Jinghao instead.

After all, there was not much to do at his law firm and he had time on his hands. He wanted to find out more, especially to get an answer on whether Zong Jinghao really found Lin Xinyan.

Coincidentally, he wanted to ask Lin Xinyan about Qin Ya too, and hence, here he was at C City.

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He had yet to figure out his next destination since he had just alighted from the plane.

The man wasn't familiar with C City because he had merely been there a few times.

Su Zhan got in touch with Zong Jinghao and told him, "I'm at C City. Can you pick me up at the airport?"

He was all alone in C City. Therefore, Zong Jinghao was the only one he could turn to.

Zong Jinghao, who was on the other end of the call, stretched his arms and assured after checking the time, "I'll be there in ten minutes."

He hung up the call and departed immediately.

As soon as he reached the airport, he called Su Zhan and instructed his friend to search for him instead. He had no intention to leave the car because it was such a warm day.

Soon, Su Zhan walked out of the airport and found Zong Jinghao's car. He got into the car and asked right away, "Have you found Xinyan?"

Lately, Zong Jinghao had been visiting C City frequently. Su Zhan was certain Lin Xinyan was the reason for his countless visits.

"Is that the reason you have dropped by C City? That's the only question you have in store for me?" Zong Jinghao had his eyes on the road as he asked casually.

“No, of course not. Shen Peichuan is pretty occupied lately. Since there isn’t anyone else to keep me company, I have decided to drop by and visit you.” Su Zhan explained the reason for his visit immediately.

“Really?” It was evident that Zong Jinghao had his fair share of doubts. They had been friends for years. Naturally, he could see right through his plan the moment his friend walked into his car.

Nevertheless, he could not tell Su Zhan because he had a deal with Qin Ya to keep him in the dark. Apart from that, there were a few things he was concerned about.

Lin Xinyan was a close acquaintance of Qin Ya. Su Zhan used to hurt Qin Ya back in the day. Hence, if he were to tell his friend the truth, Zong Jinghao would be dragged to hell if Su Zhan decided to be a douchebag again.

If Su Zhan were aware of the idea Zong Jinghao had in his mind, he would definitely yell at his friend and insisted on terminating their friendship.

Zong Jinghao would definitely prioritize his wife over his friends.

After all, the one whom he would spend the rest of his life with was none other than his spouse. Hence, he was confident Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan would prioritize their spouses over their friends once they found their respective soulmate.

“Hey! Have you found Xinyan?” Su Zhan asked in a serious manner once again.

Zong Jinghao grunted in return to assure his friend he had found his beloved wife.

Even though it was within Su Zhan’s expectation, he couldn’t help but express his shock, asking in return, “Have you patched things up with her?”

No matter what, Wen Qing is her uncle. His trial hasn't come to an end yet. Is she going to be affected if she makes her way back to B City and figures out the news?

Zong Jinghao's expression turned grim as he replied in a callous tone, "Currently, she isn't aware I'm in C City."

Su Zhan was at a loss for words because he couldn't grasp the situation.

If Xinyan isn't aware Jinghao is around, then what is he doing in C City? Is he trying to stalk his wife? Wait! He's being a stalker in C City?

"Don't you think it's about time for you to take the leap of faith? You can't behave as such and hide in the dark forever, can you?"

Zong Jinghao shared a similar thought, but it wasn't time for him to show up in front of her just yet. He would have to wait until Wen Qing's trial come to an end. Right then, he was grateful he had the chance to stay by his beloved children and wife's sides.

"I have to put it on hold for the time being."

Su Zhan nodded, but he stumbled upon another problem because he couldn't possibly approach Lin Xinyan to inquire Qin Ya's condition if Zong Jinghao wasn't in touch with her. It had been a long time since he last heard from Lin Xinyan. He knew Qin Ya had recovered, but was unsure if she had been discharged.

"W-Well... Is it fine if I drop by and visit Xinyan?" Su Zhan asked cautiously.

Due to Su Zhan's relationship with Zong Jinghao, it would be evident that the latter was aware of their whereabouts should Su Zhan approached them.

Otherwise, how could Su Zhan explain the fact that he could figure out their exact location.

It would be way too suspicious if he were to show up in front of them out of nowhere.

Zong Jinghao cast a skeptical gaze at his friend because he was aware of the objective of his trip as well.

Su Zhan actually came for Qin Ya, but he had to approach Zong Jinghao first because he wasn't aware of their whereabouts.

"Qin Ya has been discharged." Zong Jinghao told Su Zhan the thing he was concerned about the most.

He had to remind Su Zhan to behave himself for a greater cause and hope the latter would restrict himself for the time being.

"Where is she? Has she returned? She can't possibly return to B City because they have terminated the operation of the clothing store in B City, right?" Su Zhan got pumped up.

Zong Jinghao remained silent and ignored his friend's question in hopes that he would link the missing pieces of the puzzle together himself.

"Does that mean she's back in Country A?" Su Zhan queried because Qin Ya was from Country A.

Oh, God! Has he always been such a fool? I wonder what's inside his pea-brain?

"Maybe she's here with Xinyan? I don't get it. Since Xinyan has terminated the operation of her clothing store, is there anything else Qin Ya is capable of?" Su Zhan turned the possibility in his mind for some time, trying to figure out Qin Ya's next best course of action after she reunited with Lin Xinyan.

That would affect her whereabouts because she couldn't possibly stay by Lin Xinyan's side since the latter was pregnant with two children. It would make

sense if Qin Ya were taking some time off to relax, but she had never once indulged herself in activities of sorts.

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao paid no heed to Su Zhan because he wouldn't stop overthinking things.

"Do you know where they are? How can I locate them?" Su Zhan got increasingly frustrated.

Suddenly, Su Zhan turned around and glared at his friend because he was certain his friend was aware of Qin Ya's whereabouts. After all, he was the one who had checked her into the hospital.

He got excited all of a sudden and asked with a pair of glistening eyes, "I'm sure you know where she is, right?"

Zong Jinghao had an odd expression on his face. He couldn't bear to lie to his best friend.

Seeing Zong Jinghao hesitation, Su Zhan was certain he was aware of Qin Ya's whereabouts. "Talk to me! Hey! Please tell me where she is, so I can reach her and beg for her forgiveness! I promise I won't be a douchebag anymore!"

"Su Zhan..." Zong Jinghao hesitated for some time but decided to keep his friend in the dark for the time being. After all, he had a deal with Qin Ya. It wouldn't be wise for him to go against his promise. However, it would be an entirely different case if Su Zhan managed to figure it out on his own.

"Since she has been discharged, do you think she would tell me where she would be next?" Zong Jinghao replied with a poker face. He can't possibly allow such a trivial matter to get the better of him when he had always been a calm and collected man.

Su Zhan heaved a long sigh of despair and leaned against the seat petulantly.

“Let’s head over to the hotel. Dinner is on me tonight.” Zong Jinghao had been staying in the hotel all this while. He couldn’t bear to forsake Su Zhan. Hence, Zong Jinghao decided to set them up and get Qin Ya to bring the kids to meet him in the evening.

Qin Ya may have changed in terms of looks and voice, but Su Zhan should have no problem recognizing her. After all, she was the one he had in his mind all along.

If Su Zhan couldn’t figure out the woman was Qin Ya, there wasn’t anything Zong Jinghao could do about it either.

That was the most he could offer.

“Fine,” Su Zhan replied petulantly.

In the evening, Qin Ya and Lin Xinyan walked out of the store after their successful exhibition. They managed to draw the public’s attention to Tea Silk that had once been forgotten.

In conjunction with the exhibition, she had set up Cloud Corporation in C City.

They received a lot of orders during the exhibition. There had been great demand towards Tea Silk and the gowns that were made using Tea Silk.

New Chinese had taken over the city by storm, but the attires weren’t meant to be sold. It would, however, be put on display in the store.

The attires that had been put on display served two purposes. Firstly, it was to attract customers into the store. Secondly, Lin Xinyan would gain the upper hand and assert dominance over others who tried to replicate her design. It would be better if the customers couldn’t get their hands on the attires because they would have a strong desire for them.

The twelve wedding attires would never be put on sale. However, they would accept orders from the customers to produce custom made version of them.

After she picked her children up and returned home, Lin Xinyan was exhausted. She wanted to take a break and headed into her bedroom, but she knitted her eyebrows, staring at the messed-up bed as she stood beside it.

She recalled making her bed in the morning before leaving the house, yet it seemed as though someone had spent quite some time on her bed prior to her return.

In the morning, she had dropped by the hospital. In the afternoon, Qin Ya returned to the store along with her, whereas both of her children were at the school. Since there wasn't anyone home in the morning, she couldn't figure out the reason behind the messed-up bed.

What on earth happened?

Qin Ya removed the set of contaminated clothes because she was about to take a bath. Suddenly, she received a text from Zong Jinghao, asking her to bring the children out to meet him in the evening.

She muttered to herself and complained about the trouble he had caused her. In the end, she sympathized with the man and found him pitiable because he couldn't even spend quality time with his children. Qin Ya decided to put her agenda on hold for the time being because she would take her bath once she returned home.

"Hey, I'll bring the kids out with me for dinner! What do you want for dinner? I'll buy you something on our way back! Let's not cook tonight!" Qin Ya stood outside of Lin Xinyan's room and yelled to notify the latter she would be bringing her children out with her.

Since Qin Ya would occasionally bring Lin Xinyan's children out for meals, Lin Xinyan did not notice anything amiss and agreed.

However, she asked, “Ya, did you return home in the morning or in the afternoon?”

Qin Ya opened the door and stared at her while shaking her head. “What are you talking about? I’m pretty sure I’m by your side throughout the day, right?”

“Hmm... I remember I have made my bed prior to our departure in the morning, but it’s completely messed-up now.”

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Qin Ya, who was leaning against the wall, marched into Lin Xinyan's room immediately and detected the mess on her bed. She turned around in guilt, avoiding Lin Xinyan's gaze because she once told Zong Jinghao the password of their place.

He must have dropped by when we were out for work, but what the hell is wrong with him? Did he drop by because he wanted to sleep on Xinyan's bed? Fine! Even if that's the case, he should at least make the bed prior to his departure, right?

Look at the mess you have caused me, Zong Jinghao! How am I supposed to cover this up on your behalf?

"Are you sure? Maybe you have forgotten to make your bed in the morning?" Qin Ya ruled out the possibility and asked, "A pregnant woman tends to forget things easily, right? I'm pretty sure that's the case. I'll bring the kids out with me right now. See ya."

Qin Ya turned around and was about to depart immediately after she finished her sentence, but Lin Xinyan rebuked, "That's impossible because I'm pretty sure I have made my bed in the morning. It has always been a habit of mine to make the bed. I don't like to leave my bed messy."

"Since the kids are away for school in the morning, while I have been by your side throughout the day, Shao Yun's the only one who has access to the place apart from us. It couldn't have been him, right? I'm pretty sure you're the one who has forgotten to make your bed in the morning." Qin Ya assured righteously as though that was the case.

Lin Xinyan, who was by the bed, started doubting herself and thought she might have misperceived things.

Qin Ya is right because we're the only ones who have access. Although Shao Yun seems like a playful man, he's a detail-oriented gentleman. He would never barge into our place without notifying us in advance. Most importantly, he wouldn't have slept on my bed.

"It's not a big deal, isn't it? What do you crave for dinner? It's time for you to take a break. I'll buy you something on our way back."

"I want some radish."

Lin Xinyan wasn't sure what had gone into her head, but she had a strong craving for radish all of a sudden. When she first conceived, she didn't have any particular craving, yet out of the blue, she craved for radish now.

"I want fresh preserved radish," Lin Xinyan remarked.

Qin Ya was rendered speechless and caressed her head in return because she thought her friend must have lost her mind.

"Are you sure you're going to have just preserved radish for dinner?"

"That's the only thing I want for now, but I wonder if you can get it at such an odd season." Lin Xinyan sat on her bed and turned the possibility of her not making her bed in the morning repetitively.

"Why not? I mean, do you really think seasonal vegetables are still a thing nowadays?" Qin Ya asked rhetorically, suggesting otherwise.

Hello? We're living in the twenty-first century! We can get everything we crave for easily! After all, what she's craving isn't a rare item!

“I’ll drop by the supermarket on our way back. I’ll bring them out with me, okay?”
Qin Ya walked out of Lin Xinyan’s room once she finished her sentence.

“Ya, why didn’t you ask me if I wanted to tag along or not? Usually, you’re going to ask me prior to departing, right? What’s wrong with you today?”

Qin Ya was at a loss for words.

Oh, God! Stop giving me a hard time!

“You’ve had a long day, right? Since you’re completely worn out, I’ll bring you your meal when we’re on our way back and save you the trouble of heading out once again. You really need to take a break.” Qin Ya cracked her brain and thought of a great excuse.

Indeed, Lin Xinyan hadn’t had a good rest since their store launched. There were a lot of things she had to deal with. She got up from the bed and held Qin Ya in between her arms, expressing her gratitude, “Ya, thank you so much. If it weren’t for you, I don’t think I can make it through.”

She had been rushing here and there over the past two months; preparing for the exhibition, and procuring the required materials. Although Shao Yun had been pretty helpful, he wasn’t an expert in the field. Qin Ya would have to make the trip because she could tell the difference between the materials.

“Huh? Where is this coming from? Why are you being so sentimental all of a sudden? Do you want me to cry in front of you?” Qin Ya caressed Lin Xinyan’s back and instructed, “Take good care of yourself and give birth to a healthy son, okay?”

“What if it’s a she?” Lin Xinyan teased her friend.

“Nope! I’m pretty sure it’s a he!” Qin Ya reassured her friend as though she was aware of the child’s gender.

“How can you be so sure? Do you have some kind of super eyesight?”

“Look at how pointy your bump is. The saying goes you’re going to give birth to a boy if you have a point baby bump. If it’s a blunt baby bump, you’re going to give birth to a girl.”

The theory was an urban legend that had been going around since ages ago. It wasn’t backed with scientific research. Hence, there wasn’t a standardized definition to differentiate between a pointed and a blunt baby bump.

“Can you please tell me how did my bump look like back when I was heavily pregnant with Yanxi and Yanchen?” Lin Xinyan decided to play along with her friend because she knew Qin Ya was trying to lighten the mood.

“It’s squarish.” Qin Ya burst into laughter because she found her own words hilarious once she finished her sentence.

Meanwhile, Lin Xinyan was at a loss for words because if it were a squarish as Qin Ya said, that would indicate that she had given birth to freaks.

Suddenly, Qin Ya phone beeped. She reached for her phone and noticed it was a text from Zong Jinghao, asking her estimated time of arrival.

He had appended the address of the eatery as well.

“Who is it?” Lin Xinyan asked casually because she had no intention to poke her nose into her friend’s business.

“Oh, it’s a spam message. Alright, I’m starving. I’ll bring the kids out with me now. See you!” Qin Ya shrugged her shoulders and put on a calm front as she replied.

“Alright, take care on your way there.” Lin Xinyan bade farewell to Qin Ya and asked her to return home as soon as possible. After all, the latter had also been pretty exhausted lately.

Qin Ya gestured in return and walked out of Lin Xinyan's room.

Zong Yanxi was watching cartoon in the living room while Zong Yanchen was in the bedroom. Qin Ya urged, "Come on kids! It's time for dinner."

The children rushed over and put on their respective pair of shoes.

"What are we having for dinner?" Zong Yanxi, the picky eater, asked.

"I have no idea," Qin Ya stated.

Zong Yanxi looked at Qin Ya in the eyes, feeling speechless.

"Since someone is going to foot the bill, feel free to name all kinds of food you have been craving for all this while." Qin Ya notified casually since she wasn't the one who would have to foot the bill.

Zong Yanchen figured out Qin Ya's words were a double entendre, but he kept it to himself and followed Qin Ya as they made their way downstairs.

"Does that mean you're aware as well?" The moment they reached downstairs, Zong Yanchen asked.

"What is it about that I should be aware of?" Qin Ya asked in return because she was utterly confused.

"Dad is the one who wants to treat us to a meal, right? It means you know he's in C City, right?"

Qin Ya was dumbstruck for a few seconds before she returned to her senses. The children must have figured it out because Zong Jinghao had visited them before.

She nodded and assured, "Yes, I'm aware he's in C City."

Zong Yanxi heaved a long sigh.

As soon as Qin Ya buckled her up, she asked, "What is this about?"

"Mommy is the only one who's kept in the dark because we're all aware of Daddy's presence." She felt dejected due to her parent's odd relationship.

"As a child, you should stop poking your nose into the adults' matters, okay?" Qin Ya pinched Zong Yanxi's nose and instructed, "Sit tight, kids! We're about to head out."

"Yes, Aunt Yanyan! We have heard that for more than a hundred times thus far!"

Qin Ya started the car and replied as she departed from the parking lot, "Well. Nothing comes before the safety of both of you."

Along the journey, the children behaved themselves. Before long, Qin Ya reached the place Zong Jinghao told her to take them over to.

It was a high-end Western restaurant. Once Qin Ya parked her car, she opened the door and brought the children out of the car. She exclaimed, "Kids, it seems like we're going to have a feast tonight!"

Zong Jinghao had set up the dinner on behalf of Su Zhan and Qin Ya. Although his wife was his priority in life, he couldn't bear to forsake his best friend.

Qin Ya brought the kids along with her and found the private dining hall Zong Jinghao had reserved.

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As soon as she knocked on the door, someone from within answered the door. Zong Yanxi sprinted over and wrapped her arms around Zong Jinghao's leg the moment she saw him. "Daddy!" She greeted her father lovingly.

Zong Jinghao was overjoyed. He had always enjoyed her daughter's presence and the feeling of being needed by her.

He leaned over and lifted his daughter, inviting Qin Ya to join them, "Come on in. It's my treat tonight. Feel free to order anything you want."

"If that's the case, I definitely won't..." She couldn't bring herself to finish her sentence the moment she saw the other figure that was present in the dining hall.

She darted a glance at Zong Jinghao as though she wanted him to explain himself and the reason the other man was present in the room.

Why is Su Zhan here?

"He's here on his own," Zong Jinghao explained. He wasn't lying either because he wasn't the one who had asked Su Zhan over.

Nevertheless, Qin Ya didn't seem to be convinced at all.

Su Zhan, who had been in a foul mood throughout the day, lifted his head and looked in their direction. The moment he detected Qin Ya's presence, he thought to himself for a few seconds before greeting, "Hey, aren't you the one who's in the exhibition?"

Meanwhile, Qin Ya tried to calm herself down and put on a nonchalant front as she entered the dining hall. She pretended as though she didn't hear him and took a seat at the table.

She picked up the menu and asked, "Shall we place our orders?"

"Aunt Yanyan, feel free to order whatever you want! It's Daddy's treat tonight!" Zong Yanxi broke the silence and got ahead of everyone before others could respond.

Zong Jinghao pinched her daughter's cheek in return once they took a seat together. She grinned, baring her flawless teeth as she asked, "Is it fine, Daddy?"

"Sure!" Zong Jinghao assured her daughter.

He had always given in to the request of his daughter. Hence, he wouldn't turn down such a trivial request of hers.

"If that's the case, I definitely won't hold back!" Qin Ya flipped through the menu casually.

Zong Yanxi did Qin Ya's heart good by praising her, "Please suit yourself, Aunt Yanyan! You deserve it because, all this while, you have been taking good care of us!"

In the dining hall, things were odd. Su Zhan leaned against the chair and couldn't stop staring at Qin Ya and Zong Yanxi because he had never once encountered a woman by the name of Qin Yanyan.

Ellen was the one who had always been by Lin Xinyan's side back in the day, but she had since made her way back to country A after the operation of the clothing store was terminated.

Upon seeing the attires made out of Tea Silk, Su Zhan immediately thought of Lin Xinyan. However, he had no solid evidence to confirm the latter's involvement in the exhibition.

Finally, he could affirm his thought. Lin Xinyan was the mastermind behind the exhibition, and she had been pulling the strings behind the scenes.

Nonetheless, he couldn't figure out the identity of the woman in front of him.

Qin Yanyan? Qin Ya? Qin? Is it a coincidence?

Actually, it sounds too much to be a coincidence! It sounds like Qin Ya has changed her name instead!

Since Qin Yanyan is a close acquaintance of Lin Xinyan and the kids, it's obvious she's Qin Ya!

Meanwhile, Zong Yanchen was an observant little boy. He managed to grasp the situation almost instantly. Apart from Su Zhan, everyone was aware of Qin Ya's identity.

Whenever he recalled the misery Su Zhan had brought upon Qin Ya and caused her to undergo such a major facial reconstruction surgery, he felt reluctant to tell him the truth.

If he's serious about Aunt Yanyan, he has to prove himself worthy!

Su Zhan knitted his eyebrows because he noticed the so-called dinner wasn't a causal dinner. Zong Jinghao seemed to be up to something.

No matter how much of a fool he was, he could at least rule out the relationship amongst the parties present.

He suppressed his emotions and put on an ordinary front. In an attempt to figure out the truth, he engaged in an ordinary conversation with Zong Yanxi because she was the only innocent one in the hall.

“Ruixi, do you still remember me? It has been quite some time since we last met. Do you miss me?”

Zong Jinghao didn't bring up the fact that the kids had changed their name. Therefore, Su Zhan wasn't aware they addressed themselves differently nowadays.

Zong Yanxi wasn't against the way Su Zhan addressed her as Ruixi because she had gotten used to it as well.

Zong Yanxi wrapped her arms around Zong Jinghao's neck and brought herself up. She turned around, staring at Su Zhan as she beamed her reply, “Of course!”

“Do you miss me?” Su Zhan leaned over in another attempt to win the little girl over.

“I miss Daddy!” Zong Yanxi shook her head and asserted.

Occasionally, she would kiss Zong Jinghao. Since she had grown up, she finally learned the proper way to kiss and stopped drooling everywhere.

Zong Jinghao had gotten used to wiping her daughter's lips clean because she would drool whenever she tried to kiss back in the day. Thus, it had become one of his habits.

In the meantime, Su Zhan was rendered speechless because he had run out of ideas to continue the conversation.

“How could you say that? Have you forgotten that Aunt Qin Ya and I were the ones who had taken care of you back when you were in Baicheng?” Su Zhan

took a peek at Qin Ya as he finished his sentence, but Qin Ya had a poker face as though she couldn't relate herself to the incident he had brought up.

In fact, Su Zhan brought up the incident on purpose because he was certain if the woman in front of him was Qin Ya, she would at least flinch.

After all, they had shared a lot of memories in Baicheng back in the day.

Having said that, he was disappointed once again because Qin Ya didn't even flinch.

"I didn't forget," Zong Yanxi replied in a serious manner.

Su Zhan wasn't discouraged at all. He decided to give it another try.

Suddenly, Zong Yanchen broke the silence, interrupting Su Zhan and Zong Yanxi's conversation. "Uncle Su, you're trying to figure out Aunt Qin Ya's whereabouts, right?"

Everyone turned around and had their eyes glued to the little boy. Some were delighted, some were anxious, and some couldn't wait to figure out the outcome of the session.

Su Zhan was the delighted one because he felt as though he was one step away from his ultimate goal. "Yes! Do you know where she is?"

"I do." Zong Yanchen decided to interrupt their conversation because he was afraid his sister would accidentally spill the beans. She had always been an innocent girl. Perhaps she would tell Su Zhan the one he had been looking for was right in front of him.

Meanwhile, Qin Ya, who was beside Zong Yanchen, couldn't keep her composure anymore. She started behaving differently as their conversation took place.

Deep down, she struggled because she had been granted a brand new identity. She didn't want Su Zhan to barge into her brand new world anymore. Qin Ya had long moved on from him.

She held Zong Yanchen's hand firmly under the table, gesturing him to keep Su Zhan in the dark.

In return, Zong Yanchen tapped on Qin Ya's hand to assure her he had everything under control while staring at Su Zhan. "You used to hurt Aunt Qin Ya and brought upon her misery. Do you think she'll forgive you? What good will it do even if I tell you her whereabouts?"

"I have reflected upon my actions! As long as she's willing to see me, I'm willing to do anything to beg for her forgiveness!" Su Zhan, whose bloodshot eyes had widened, replied in a hoarse voice.

Although he avoided Qin Ya's gaze as he finished his sentence, it was evident that he had directed his reply to her.

"Are you going to prove your sincerity?" Zong Yanchen probed once more.

"Of course!" Su Zhan replied without a second thought.

He would surrender his life to Qin Ya if that were what she sought.

In short, he would do whatever it would take to earn himself the opportunity to return to her side.

If Zong Yanchen was aware of Su Zhan's plan, he would definitely ridicule him for the absurdity of his plan.

Suddenly, the waiter knocked on the door and served them the dishes. Qin Ya didn't order a lot of dishes, but the dishes she ordered were the premium ones. It would easily cost over tens of thousands.

Since Qin Ya figured out Zong Yanchen wouldn't expose her identity in front of Su Zhan, she heaved a sigh of relief and returned to her usual calm and collected self.

She looked at Zong Jinghao and asked, "What do you think of the dishes I have ordered?"

Your son is much more reliable as compared to you! Although you haven't exposed me in front of him, it doesn't make any difference, does it?

"As long as you're able to finish the dishes, feel free to order as much as you like," Zong Jinghao beamed his reply.

He was aware he had offended Qin Ya. Hence, tens of thousands was a small price to pay to patch things up with her.

"Can you please pass me that pot?" Zong Yanchen pointed at the lavish-looking pot with a golden touch at its side and asked the waiter because he found the design of the said pot interesting.

"Yanchen, why do you want a pot?" Zong Yanxi looked at her brother in confusion.

"Look at the handle of the pot. Don't you think it looks like the ears of an animal?" Zong Yanchen replied casually.

Actually, it was a premium pot. However, Zong Yanchen managed to change everyone's opinion regarding the pot through his description.

"Can you please get us one?" Qin Ya turned around and asked the waiter. Unaware of Zong Yanchen's actual plan, she thought the little boy was merely curious about the design of the said pot.

"Sure. I'll go get it immediately."

Before long, the waiter returned with another similar pot. He walked out of the dining hall after he handed it over to Qin Ya.

Zong Jinghao took a peek at Su Zhan silently because he managed to see right through his son's evil scheme. He was certain his son was up to no good and would pull Su Zhan's leg soon.

Nevertheless, he thought it was a brilliant idea. As long as Qin Ya got to vent her anger, she might forgive him.

"What's so great about this pot? Shall we get one as well?" Qin Ya asked as she passed the pot over to Zong Yanchen.

"Sure! It has such a special design!" Zong Yanchen nodded.

"Uncle Su, are you serious when you say you're willing to do anything it takes to figure out Aunt Qin Ya's whereabouts?" Zong Yanchen turned around and looked in Su Zhan's direction.

"Yes!" Su Zhan nodded vigorously.

"As long as you prove your words, I'll tell you," Zong Yanchen told Su Zhan.

"How should I prove my words?" Su Zhan stared at the pot Zong Yanchen had in front of him. He had a bad feeling about it.

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“This is for you.” Zong Yanchen handed over the pot to Su Zhan.

“What should I do with this pot?” Su Zhan asked as he was confused.

“I’ll tell you Aunt Qin Ya’s whereabouts once you finish singing a song while standing on the pot.” Zong Yanchen stated.

Su Zhan was rendered speechless by the little boy’s evil scheme.

“What? It’s so fragile. I think it’s going to shatter into pieces once I step on it.” Zong Yanxi interrupted their conversation once again because the pot was a porcelain pot.

“See! Your sister is also aware you’re asking for the impossible!” Su Zhan looked at Zong Yanxi in the eyes.

He was grateful because there was someone on his side.

“Yanchen, why don’t you get Uncle Su to put it on instead? Let’s get him to sing Rolling In The Deep in front of the crowd. If he’s able to finish the song with no one laughing at him, we’ll tell him Aunt Qin Ya’s whereabouts.”

Su Zhan’s expression turned gloomy when he heard Zong Yanxi’s suggestion because he was certain others would perceive he had lost his mind if he were to sing in front of others with a pot on his head.

It would be impossible for others to keep their faces straight as well when he had such a lavish-looking pot on his head.

That ain't better than your brother's suggestion, Ruixi!

“Hey, Ruixi! Whose side are you on?” Su Zhan raised his volume and asked.

Immediately, Zong Yanxi nestled in Zong Jinghao's embrace and replied timidly, “Have you forgotten how you called me a fool some time ago?”

Upon hearing the little girl's reply, he was at a loss for words because Zong Yanxi seemed to be holding a grudge against him for what he had done previously.

Lin Xinyan is such a kind woman! How the heck did she give birth to two miniature demons? I can't even imagine the sort of things they're capable of when they grow up!

Zong Yanchen gave his sister a thumbs-up because it was a brilliant idea that would allow him to achieve his goal.

In fact, his seemingly flawless plan wasn't half as exceptional as his sister's plan.

The little boy looked at Su Zhan and asked in a serious manner. “Uncle Su, do you remember what we have warned you back when you married Aunt Qin Ya? If you dare to bully Aunt Qin Ya, we'll teach you a lesson on her behalf!”

Is it possible for such a young kid to possess such a great memory? In fact, he was just a toddler when we got married to one another back then!

“If you're not willing to do it, it's fine because it only shows you're not that serious about Aunt Qin Ya. Since she's not worth your time and effort, you should stay away from her. Please send her your regards if she gets into another relationship with others in the future.” Zong Yanchen blurted out everything he had been keeping to himself all this while.

They had been staying together since they had moved from Country A two months ago. The kids had long considered Qin Ya to be part of their family.

Since Qin Ya didn't have others whom she could turn to, Zong Yanchen was determined to protect this beloved aunt of his since she had been taking great care of him and his sister all this while.

He was determined to teach Su Zhan a lesson on Qin Ya's behalf.

Su Zhan's jaw dropped open because he realized he couldn't rebuke Zong Yanchen's statement.

He's right. I used to be a jerk back in the day.

Immediately, he turned around and stared at Qin Ya who was sitting beside Zong Yanchen. She didn't seem to be bothered at all and behaved as though she couldn't wait for the great show.

Apart from Qin Ya, no one could possess the autonomy to bring Lin Xinyan's kids out without the latter's consent.

He could fathom the reason behind her brand new appearance, but he couldn't rule out the reason behind her entirely different voice.

Did she hurt her larynx? I thought she had merely sustained serious external burn injuries?

Truth be told, he had affirmed the identity of the woman. She was definitely Qin Ya. Otherwise, Zong Jinghao wouldn't have set them up for dinner. Usually, Zong Jinghao would visit his kids on his own. He wouldn't go through the troubles to gather them around.

Qin Ya must have gone through hell and high water back in the day to be able to put on such an indifferent front, neglecting my presence as if I don't matter at all.

It hurts, Qin Ya. Nothing in this world can possibly hurt me more than your words. Please don't give up on me!

“Do you really want to see me embarrassing myself in front of others?” He disguised his emotions with a superficial smile and asked Zong Yanchen.

“No. That has never been part of my goal. I want you to remember how it feels to be ridiculed in front of others. Have you forgotten the misery you have brought upon Aunt Qin Ya? She got married to you because she loved you wholeheartedly, yet you had let her down over and over again, hurting her in the process. Can you imagine how tough it must have been for her back in the day? Do you have any idea how it had traumatized her and would haunt her for the rest of her life?”

Qin Ya struggled to maintain a straight face, but she couldn't leave the scene as her departure would imply she was Qin Ya. Therefore, she had to resist the urge to cry even though she was touched by Zong Yanchen's words.

Feeling a strong urge to hold the little boy between her arms, she looked at Zong Yanchen intimately because he had stood up for her.

“You're right! If that's the case, I'll fulfill your wish!” Su Zhan noticed he wasn't even half as matured as the little boy.

He brought himself up from the seat and put on the pot as though it was a hat.

It was a funny scene. Consequently, Zong Yanxi burst into laughter because she found Su Zhan hilarious.

The initially dreadful mood in the room had been alleviated. Su Zhan looked at Zong Yanxi with a smile, asking in an attempt to lighten the mood, “How do I look? Great?”

“Of course! Uncle is such a handsome guy!” Zong Yanxi chuckled.

Hahaha!

“Can I sing another song? I’m not familiar with the lyrics of Rolling In The Deep,” Su Zhan requested.

Zong Yanxi tilted her head because she couldn’t think of another substitute all of a sudden.

“What about Love Story?” Su Zhan counter offered with a smile.

It was evident that he felt dejected deep down because he had figured out the woman whom he loved wholeheartedly was right in front of her, yet he couldn’t expose her. Otherwise, she might run away again.

She has gone through a series of facial reconstruction surgery and changed her name because she wants to stay away from me, right?

Su Zhan reached for the spoon and pretended as though it was a mic. He stared at Qin Ya and asked in a playful manner, “Ms., Qin, right? Is it fine for me to stare at you when I’m singing?”

Qin Ya glanced at the pot on his head and detected the colorful lace doily, which seemed like a wig. As compared to the domineering Zong Jinghao, Su Zhan had always been the gentler figure. He had been blessed with great facial features but wasn’t half as outstanding as Zong Jinghao’s. All along, he would show up in front of others with a gentle smile, complementing his pair of glistening eyes. The way he stared at Qin Ya seemed to be part of his plan to entertain her.

“Why do you want to stare at me?” She darted a skeptical glance at him and asked in a callous tone.

“Ms. Qin, you’re the only woman in the hall. I can’t possibly dedicate a love song to another man or the kids, right? I’m sure you’re a generous woman, aren’t you, Ms. Qin? Don’t worry! I’m not interested in you because there’s someone else in my mind. You do resemble her, though. Can you please do me a favor and allow me to express the affection I have for her?”

“Are you crazy?” Qin Ya’s heart skipped a beat, yet she tried her best to pull herself together.

“Feel free to call me a maniac if it makes you feel better. Allow me to apologize beforehand because I may offend you in an attempt to entertain the kids.” Su Zhan had been staring at Qin Ya intimately since he started his speech, but she refused to look at him in the eyes.

She seemed like a complete stranger he wasn’t familiar with due to her brand new appearance.

Su Zhan was the only one who would sing whenever they dropped by the karaoke. Usually, Zong Jinghao and Shen Peichuan would indulge themselves in countless rounds of drinking sessions. They didn’t bother to complain about his singing because it wasn’t awful.

Since Su Zhan had something else in his mind, his voice quivered the moment he started singing. It was a sorrowful voice that could bring others to tears.

Romeo, take me somewhere we can be alone

I’ll be waiting, all there’s left to do is run

You’ll be the prince and I’ll be the princess

It’s a love story, baby, just say, “Yes”

Romeo, save me, they’re trying to tell me how to feel

This love is difficult, but it’s real

Don’t be afraid, we’ll make it out of this mess

It’s a love story, baby, just say, “Yes”

Oh, oh

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Su Zhan couldn't finish the song because his voice cracked halfway through the chorus of the song.

Meanwhile, Qin Ya was on the verge of letting loose of her emotions. If Su Zhan were to finish the song, she would definitely leave before he could complete the entire song.

She served Zong Yanxi the dishes and took a peek at Su Zhan, asking in a sarcastic manner, "Sir, pardon me, but you're not a great singer either. Apart from that, it's such an old song. I almost puke because of how awful it is. Perhaps you're able to get your hands on an innocent young woman, but what about the one you're talking about? How did you manage to deceive her into a relationship with you?"

Su Zhan's eyes reddened, and he asked in return with a smile, "Do I look like such an unfaithful man?"

Qin Ya chewed the serving of rare steak she served herself. A few seconds later, she spat it out with a disgusted look, smiling contemptuously. "I'm so sorry."

She messed around with the steak on her plate and stated, "Look at this steak. Judging by its appearance, it seems like a scrumptious steak. However, I got overly excited previously and consumed it without a second thought. Once I chew on the steak, the stench of blood permeated my mouth. It's disgusting! I shouldn't have judged the book by its cover."

She served Su Zhan a serving of the steak and asked with a grin, "What sort of woman enjoy eating steak of this sort?"

Su Zhan stared at the serving of steak in silence.

“Perhaps the only creature that’s capable of consuming this is a fly. After all, they literally consume everything. I definitely won’t return for a second serving because I’m afraid I’ll pass out due to disquisition and be rushed to the hospital.” She removed the regurgitated serving of steak and added with a smile, “I want to live my life, and enjoy the wonderful parts of the world!”

“Do you really perceive me as such a despicable man?” Su Zhan clenched his fists because he felt demotivated.

Qin Yan’s words morphed into countless sharp blades and pierced through his impregnable heart.

She considers me as a disgusting man? Does that mean things have gotten to the point of no return for us?

He used to be a jerk, but he had never intended to lie to her.

Previously, Su Zhan had gotten married to Qin Ya because he wanted to spend the rest of his life by her side.

“What are you talking about? What does this have to do with you when I’m talking about the meat?” Qin Ya served Zong Yanxi the dishes and urged, “Hurry up and finish your meal. We have to drop by the supermarket and get your mother some preserved radish on our way back. We might not make it if we are late.”

Zong Yanchen lowered his head and helped himself to the dishes that had been served. He couldn’t possibly interfere with their conversation anymore because it had turned into the adults’ affairs. As a minor, he had served his roles.

On the other hand, Zong Jinghao decided to stay out of it and observed the progress of the session. It was evident that the truth had prevailed, turning into an elephant in the room.

“What sort of dishes are you going to prepare?” Zong Jinghao got intrigued by Qin Ya and his son’s conversation.

Does that mean Xinyan is craving for radish related dishes?

“No, we’re not going to prepare any dish. Your wife is the one who’s craving for some preserved radish.” Qin Ya couldn’t figure out what had gotten into her friend’s brain either.

“I’ll head over to the supermarket with you once we’re done,” Zong Jinghao suggested.

Although it sounded like an odd request, he was determined to fulfill his wife’s craving.

Similarly, Qin Ya agreed to allow him to tag along with them to the supermarket because Lin Xinyan was, after all, his wife.

He should play his role as a good husband and fulfill her cravings whenever possible.

Suddenly, she raised her head the moment she recalled the mess on Lin Xinyan’s bed. “Can you please make sure you conceal the traces of your visit when you drop by in the future?”

What sort of traces have I left behind? Although I have entered her bedroom and moved her things, I have returned the things to their respective locations prior to my departure. Hold on! Initially, I sat on her bed to take a break, but I got extremely sleepy the moment I detected the familiar scent. In the end, I fell asleep on her bed!

All this while, he didn’t have the opportunity to take a break. Hence, the fatigued man fell asleep for a few hours in his wife’s bedroom. As compared to the nights he spent tossing and turning in bed, he finally got some quality sleep, even though it merely lasted for two hours.

“Did she notice?” Zong Jinghao wiped his daughter’s stained lips clean and looked at Qin Ya in the eyes.

“No. Thankfully, she had been deceived by another absurd made-up reason of mine.” Qin Ya told Zong Jinghao.

“I’ll take note of this in the future.” He decided to drop by their place to have some quality sleep whenever Lin Xinyan was away in the morning.

“In the future? Does that mean it’s going to last forever?” Qin Ya gulped down her glass of drink.

Trying to avoid the topic, Zong Jinghao replied in a sulky manner, “No, but I need some time to get everything sorted out.”

Since Guan Jing hadn’t gotten in touch with him, the trial of Wen Qing must still be proceeding.

As a matter of fact, Wen Qing was a pre-eminent figure. No matter what, the authorities would have to put everything on hold until the incident faded out of the public’s attention.

Qin Ya stopped poking her nose into their business. Perhaps it wasn’t time for them to patch things up yet.

After they finished their meal, Su Zhan, who couldn’t bring himself to savor any of the dishes served, brought himself up and walked out of the dining hall, leaving everyone else behind.

Qin Ya’s eyes flickered, but she returned to her usual self soon and pretended she couldn’t be bothered by his reaction. She held Zong Yanchen’s hand and asserted with a smile, “Let’s go!”

Zong Yanchen stared at Su Zhan’s departing figure. Suddenly, he found Su Zhan pitiable.

Sigh... What's wrong with these adults? I shall stay single forever!

He raised his head and stared at Qin Ya, fastening his grip as he blurted, "Aunt Yanyan, you're not alone, okay? You still have me."

Qin Ya turned around and pinched the little boy's cheek. *What's wrong with this little boy today? He's being such a sweetheart! It feels better than being in love!*

Qin Ya was afraid she would shed tears of joy in front of others. Hence, she pretended to reprimand Zong Yanchen, "Excuse me? Can you please stop saying things of sorts? What's wrong with you and your mother today?"

Once they made their way out of the restaurant, Qin Ya looked at Zong Jinghao and told him, "Why don't you bring them to the supermarket with you? I'll wait for you at the entrance of the neighborhood, but you have to hurry up. Otherwise, your wife will starve."

Qin Ya needed some time alone to collect her thoughts.

Zong Jinghao nodded and brought Zong Yanxi into the car with him.

Meanwhile, the observant Zong Yanchen was aware Qin Ya wasn't in the mood. "Please drive safe when you're on your way back."

Qin Ya squatted down and placed her hands on his cheeks, kissing him on the forehead as she assured him, "I'll wait for you guys at home!"

Zong Yanchen waved at Qin Ya with a bright grin before rushing over to his father's side. Zong Jinghao buckled up the seatbelt on his daughter's behalf, whereas Zong Yanchen had to buckle himself up once he jumped into the car.

He took a peek at his sister and thought others would definitely think he had been adopted if they were aware of the differences between their treatments.

He's so biased! It's like Yanxi is the only one he cares about!

Zong Jinghao raised his head and exchanged glances with his son. Zong Yanchen turned away immediately, avoiding his father's gaze.

"Is there anything you want?" Zong Jinghao asked.

Zong Yanchen was way matured as compared to Zong Yanxi.

Although Zong Jinghao loved them both equally, the way he manifested his love for his son and daughter was different.

"I want a complete family. Can you grant me that?" Zong Yanchen asked, staring at the scene outside of the car.

"Yes," Zong Jinghao replied determinedly.

"Hopefully, you can have everything sorted out prior to mom's labor. You weren't by her side when she gave birth to us. I hope we can welcome the arrival of the family's additional member together."

Zong Yanchen had his eyes glued to the window. He refused to turn around.

Moonlight brought a comforting beauty to the graphite night.

Zong Jinghao stared at his son for some time. In the end, he returned to the driver's seat silently.

He was aware the most valuable thing he could ever grant them was a complete and heartwarming family, but he needed some time to get everything sorted out.

Nevertheless, Zong Jinghao was certain he could achieve the future they had all been longing soon.

The kids had always tagged along with Lin Xinyan and Qin Ya whenever they visited the neighborhood's supermarket to purchase the daily necessities. Hence, Zong Yanxi and Zong Yanchen were familiar with the supermarket's landscape.

They reached the fresh ingredients area before long under Zong Yanchen's guidance. Thankfully, all sorts of seasonal vegetables could be found, but the prices for each vegetable varied according to its scarcity.

The vegetables that were in season would be placed at the high foot traffic areas, whereas those that weren't in season and came with a higher premium would be placed elsewhere.

They went around for a few rounds before they found the radish that were beside the many packs of lettuce. It seemed to be relatively stale as its leaves had withered.

It seemed to have been placed on the rack for quite some time. There were relatively few customers who would purchase radish at such an odd time of the year. Usually, they would purchase it during winter because it would come at a larger volume at a relatively cheaper price.

Zong Jinghao hesitated because he couldn't bring himself to purchase such second-grade food for his beloved wife.

"Let's buy one," Zong Yanchen suggested and picked one of the best-looking radish amongst the stale radishes. Since they had made the trip, they couldn't possibly return empty-handed.

Perhaps it was merely a one-off craving of Lin Xinyan. She might not crave for it anymore in the future.

Zong Jinghao thought his son's suggestion made sense and made up his mind, but he found it odd because they were merely there for a radish.

In the end, he asked his children if they wanted anything else.

Obviously, Zong Yanxi wasn't going to hold back. She brought them to the third floor and bought all sorts of snacks. Zong Yanchen bought himself a brand new toy.

Most of the customers had dropped by in the evening. Hence, there were a lot of people checking out at the counter.

Zong Yanxi got increasingly impatient. She started exploring the stuff that was available near the counter.

Finally, it was their turn to check out the items they had selected. Zong Jinghao placed the items on the checkout counter while the cashier proceeded to check out the items.

Soon, he noticed something was wrong as an odd item had been placed into the shopping cart. By the time he returned to his senses, he turned around and stared at his children.

Zong Yanchen took a peek at the said item and turned around immediately because he wasn't responsible for putting that item into the cart.

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Zong Yanchen knew what that box was and he had pledged never to touch stuff like that in the future because he had been severely admonished by Mommy the last time he took it.

However, his sister had no clue about the nature of the pretty box. She was mesmerized by the attractive packaging of the box that was placed on the shelf just next to the checkout counter. She wanted to buy it many times but was stopped by Mommy. This time, however, she was sure Daddy would buy it for her because he doted on her a lot.

Therefore, she decided to take a few of the pretty boxes and put them into the shopping trolley.

When she noticed the way her father was staring at her, she asked him curiously, "Is there anything wrong?"

At that juncture, the cashier pushed his spectacles upward on his nose and glanced at the boxes of condoms Zong Jinghao was holding. "Sir, would you please hurry up? There's a long line behind you."

The cashier secretly complained in his mind, wondering why Zong Jinghao hesitated about paying for them after having already put them into his trolley.

Ignoring the cashier's reminder and his impatient glance, Zong Jinghao put the boxes of condoms back onto the shelf.

All this while, the little girl had always been given everything she desired by her father, who had never rejected her requests.

“Daddy, I want this.” Zong Yanxi pointed at the boxes of condoms placed on the shelf.

It was the first time Zong Jinghao did not respond to his daughter’s coquettish act with a smile and a hug. Silently, he took out all the remaining stuff in the trolley and placed them on the counter. After making payment, he put everything back into the trolley. Carrying the little girl with one arm, he pushed the trolley with the other. They then took the elevator to the parking lot on the top floor.

All this while, Zong Yanchen followed them obediently.

Zong Yanxi felt restless and apprehensive. Her bright and sparkling eyes were now covered with a sheen of moisture but she dared not shed a tear.

Deep down inside she was seized by an intense fear; it was the first time her father ever showed her such a cold expression.

She was worried he might start hating her.

When they arrived at the parking lot, Zong Jinghao carried his daughter into his car and loaded all the groceries into the trunk. Zong Yanchen got into the car and glanced at his sister, letting out a barely audible sigh.

Why doesn’t she learn from her mistakes? The little girl’s hands had been smacked by Lin Xinyan several times before, as she tried to take those pretty boxes from the shelf. From then on, she was deterred from touching them.

Why did she make the same mistakes when she’s supposed to know better than to do it?

After pushing the trolley back to the designated place, Zong Jinghao stood beside his car for a while, trying to figure out a proper way to deal with the matter.

His daughter was too young to be given sex education.

He had never felt so challenged in his life before. Only then did he realize it was one of the issues he would have to face while raising a child.

In his opinion, it was slightly easier to talk about stuff like that with a boy, but when it came to a girl, he couldn't come up with a suitable way to explain the purpose of condoms.

At the same time, he thought it was about time he started reading up on child education because he really lacked the knowledge in that area.

"Daddy," Zong Yanxi spoke timidly, not daring to put on her usual coquettish act again. "I'd like to go home."

As children were able to gauge the moods of adults from their expressions, Zong Yanxi knew her father was in a foul mood.

In fact, Zong Jinghao was not angry at his daughter. He knew it was perfectly normal for her to be curious at her age. He was actually mad at himself because he didn't have a clue as to how to deal with matters like this.

"I won't take the pretty boxes anymore in the future. Daddy, please don't be angry." Her father's reaction taught the little girl a better lesson than all the times she was punished by her mother.

Since even her father, who had always doted on her and indulged in her, was angry, she realized that that pretty box must be something she was not supposed to have.

Therefore, she made up her mind not to take it anymore in the future.

After a while of staring at the little girl through the car window, Zong Jinghao pulled open the door and took the driver's seat.

In a collected voice, he said to his daughter, "I'm not mad at you but myself."

Zong Yanxi blinked her eyes in confusion; she couldn't understand what her father said.

However, she had finally learned her lesson because the last thing she wanted to see was the cold expression on her father's face.

"It's getting late. Let's send the two of you back home." He revved up the engine.

Halfway through the journey, his phone rang. It was from an unknown caller. He pulled up by the road to answer it and found it was from Cheng Yuwen. "Your father was sent to the hospital because he's been feeling unwell."

Ever since Zong Qifeng went to Baicheng, the father and son had never met.

Zong Qifeng's health had deteriorated from the day Cheng Yuxiu died. The discomfort he had been experiencing was mostly of a mental nature: there were no major issues with his body. In fact, Cheng Yuwen only made this call to Zong Jinghao because Zong Qifeng missed him.

"Which hospital is he at?" Zong Jinghao asked.

He supposed his father was admitted into one of the hospitals in Baicheng.

Baicheng was a small town with a small population, and it did not have an airport. Hence, Zong Jinghao reckoned he would have to drive his way there.

He could set off once he had the address of the hospital.

"I'll send you the location of the hospital."

Zong Jinghao mumbled a response before ending the call.

Even though he knew Cheng Yuwen was his uncle, he did not feel any closeness with the man because they had never spent much time together.

Therefore, the way they spoke to each other was cold and distant.

“Is Grandpa sick?” asked Zong Yanchen. The little boy had lived with his grandparents for a period of time before and grieved over his grandmother’s death for quite some time. Now that his grandfather was sick, Zong Yanchen wanted to pay him a visit.

“I miss Grandpa. I’d like to visit him.”

Before Zong Jinghao could answer his son, his daughter chimed in, “Daddy, can Yanchen and I go visit Grandpa with you?”

He would, of course, love to bring the kids with him, but he was not sure whether Lin Xinyan would find it a good idea.

He was sure his father would be delighted to see the kids because he had been lacking company for quite some time. Perhaps his health could even be improved by the kids’ company.

After a moment of contemplation, he agreed, “Okay.”

The two kids grinned joyfully. It had been a long time since they last visited their grandfather and Uncle Shen. They couldn’t wait to visit the house they used to stay at for some time because they had made many friends in that area.

When the car arrived at the neighborhood where the kids were staying, he instructed, “Go home first. I’ll ask Su Zhan to pick you two up later.”

The kids accepted his instruction obediently.

When he pulled up his car by the road, Qin Ya made her way over to them. She had just enjoyed a relaxing time at the park and felt serene.

With a smile, she went on to carry Zong Yanxi out of the car.

In the meantime, Zong Jinghao also stepped out of his car. "I'm going to take the kids on a trip. I'll ask Su Zhan to pick them up later."

Qin Ya was stunned; she was taken aback by what he said.

Does it mean he's going to meet Lin Xinyan?

"You may go inside now," she responded.

Zong Jinghao heaved out all the shopping bags from the trunk and handed them to Qin Ya. "When Su Zhan comes to pick up the kids, he will tell her that he's fetching the kids to me because I miss them."

He would then tell Lin Xinyan that he only tracked her down because he missed the kids.

That would explain why Su Zhan knew where she stayed.

Seeing that he already had a plan, Qin Ya did not comment any further. She held the shopping bags in one hand and Zong Yanxi's hand in the other when she said, "Well, I'm bringing them back to the house now."

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When Qin Ya went back to the house together with the two kids, Lin Xinyan was asleep in her room, probably because she had been too worn out by work lately. However, since Zong Jinghao told her that Su Zhan would be here to pick up the kids later, Qin Ya had no choice but to wake her up.

Lin Xinyan opened her eyes and stared groggily at Qin Ya, who was standing next to her bed. She sat upright and rubbed her eyes. "You guys are back home."

Qin Ya responded, "I've bought you some carrots."

As Lin Xinyan just woke up, her eyes were glassy and her mind was still fuzzy.

Qin Ya poured her a glass of water. She drank half of it to clear up her mind. After putting down the glass on the bedside cabinet, she got out of bed and put on a pair of slippers. "What did you guys have for lunch?" she asked.

While speaking, she cast a glance at the clock and then back at Qin Ya. "I'm surprised it's so late already."

Qin Ya had taken the kids out for three hours.

What did they eat that took them so long?

"We had baked fish just now." Qin Ya made it up, knowing that it was quite normal to wait quite a long time for a plate of baked fish to be served. The dish was made with fresh fish, which had to be gutted on the spot, and it would take at least another half an hour to bake it in the oven. The meal and the visit to the supermarket would make up the three hours' time.

“You must be hungry now. Let me order some takeaway for you.” The two women then walked together to the living room where the two kids were watching TV on the sofa.

When the kids visited the bakery section of the supermarket just now, they shared the fact with their father that the red bean puffs sold there was Lin Xinyan’s favorite. It was a dessert made from puff pastry stuffed with delicious red bean fillings.

Lin Xinyan had bought it several times before, so the kids knew she loved it.

Because of that, Zong Jinghao decided to buy two boxes of red bean puffs as well as some other desserts, thinking that it would not be nutritious enough if she only had carrots for dinner.

Stretching her body, Qin Ya said, “I’m going to take a shower.”

In fact, she only said so to avoid seeing Su Zhan. Even if he were to die in front of her right now, she would not cave in or forgive him. It was not because she was unable to move on from him. She simply found him to be an eyesore.

The sight of him would remind her of all the ugly memories of her past.

She could change her looks and her voice, but she could not wipe out her memories.

Lin Xinyan nodded at her in acknowledgment before pouring herself a glass of milk from the fridge and putting it down on the dining table.

It was sweet of Zong Yanchen to bring all the desserts over to his mother. “Mommy, we’ve bought red bean puffs and pineapple buns for you.”

“And this, too.” Zong Yanxi brought the carrots over and offered them to her mother.

Sitting on the chair at the dining hall, Lin Xinyan grinned at the two kids, feeling pleased to know that they were now big kids who knew how to take care of their mother.

She caressed her daughter's head. "Could you do me a favor by washing the carrots?"

"Sure."

Zong Yanxi was overjoyed; she felt proud to be able to help her mother.

Lin Xinyan took a bite of the red bean puff her son offered her and relished its marvelous taste. Casually, she chatted with her son, "What delicious food did you guys have just now?"

"We had steak," Zong Yanchen answered.

The little boy had no clue that Qin Ya had told his mother that they had baked fish to make their story sound reasonable.

The hand which Lin Xinyan used to hold the glass of milk froze in midair. She looked up at her son, wondering whether she had heard him wrongly.

Why did he say they had steak while Qin Ya said they ate baked fish for lunch?

Once again, she asked, "What did you guys have for lunch again?"

"Steak." The little boy blinked in puzzlement as he asked, "Mommy, would you like to have some, too?"

Lin Xinyan shook her head at the little boy but at the same time, she couldn't help but knit her brows together. The stories from the two parties just didn't add up.

On top of that, she did not know of any nearby restaurants that served baked fish.

Why did Qin Ya lie?

Smiling, she continued to chat with his son as though she didn't detect anything amiss. "Where did you guys have the steak?"

"We ate at Mumbassi's Kitchen, the place where Mr. Shao treated us to a meal last time," Zong Yanchen said truthfully.

"Oh, I see." Lin Xinyan lowered her gaze in contemplation as she thought about the restaurant. It was a high-end venue with minimum spending of eight thousand per table. On top of that, it was located some distance away from home.

Why did Qin Ya bring the kids there? And why did she lie to me just now?

At that moment, Zong Yanxi returned with the washed carrots. "Mommy, here you go. You don't have to worry because I've cleaned them very thoroughly."

Lin Xinyan took the carrots but she had no more appetite. Looking at the two kids, she felt a little uneasy.

Why did Qin Ya lie?

Did she do something which she didn't want me to know about?

Ding-dong!

Her train of thought was disrupted by the sudden ringing of the doorbell. Just as she was about to answer the door, Zong Yanxi volunteered. "Let me do it."

She had dashed toward the door in no time.

Lin Xinyan returned to her seat and glanced in the direction of the door. She normally would not expect visitors at this hour; Shao Yun also seldom visited them at night.

Soon, the door opened. Su Zhan was standing outside. The moment Lin Xinyan saw him, she went wide-eyed and gaped. Her entire body went numb. She was in so much shock that she suddenly lost her senses.

Why is he here?

Clenching her fists tightly, she was surprised to see him there. At the same time, she felt a flurry of anticipation as she strained her eyes, trying to see if there was anyone standing behind him.

“Uncle Su,” Zong Yanxi greeted him with a smile and invited him in.

There was not a trace of surprise in the little girl’s voice given she had just met the man not too long ago.

Su Zhan walked into the house and greeted Lin Xinyan.

“H-How do you know I stay here?” she tried her best to sound composed and calm.

“I’ve been trying to track you down for Jinghao because he misses the kids too much. In fact, I just discovered this place not too long ago,” Su Zhan tried to explain the reason for his appearance at her house at this hour.

Lin Xinyan was clenching her fists so tightly that her palms started sweating. The truth was that she had intended to let Zong Jinghao have the kids back then because she knew he needed their company.

However, she later found herself unable to be separated from the kids. It was hard enough to handle his departure. She was worried she might not be able to pull through without the kids.

“May I bring the kids to B City for a few days?” Su Zhan went straight to the point.

Slowly, Lin Xinyan looked up at him. She had the urge to ask about Zong Jinghao but didn't manage to say anything in the end. At last, she muttered, “Yes, you may.”

The kids were his, too.

She stood up to excuse herself. “I'm going to pack some clothes for them. In the meantime, please make yourself comfortable.”

“Sure.”

Su Zhan sat down on the sofa.

“Would you like anything to drink?” Lin Xinyan asked.

“Just a glass of water will do.”

“I'm on it,” Zong Yanxi volunteered gleefully.

Lin Xinyan supposed her daughter was in such a buoyant mood because she knew she was about to meet her father.

She then made her way to her bedroom where the kids' clothes were stored.

The moment she opened the wardrobe, she suddenly recalled the dream she had. Everything in the dream felt so realistic, including the sweaty smell of his body and his husky voice telling her how much he missed her.

Was that merely a dream?

Did Su Zhan really come here just by himself?

She started having doubts about this trip he proposed. At the same time, her body started to move on its own will toward the bedroom window with a feeling of anticipation. Gently, she drew the curtains apart to take a look at the street outside.

There was a car parked by the quiet street which looked familiar to her. She couldn't remember whether she had seen it at the parking lot of the hospital or of a restaurant.

Soon, she spotted a familiar figure next to the car.

Under the dim light of the lamp post, Zong Jinghao was seen leaning against his car. At this time he was on a call with Guan Jing discussing work. As Zong Jinghao would not be in office for the next few days, he would have to complete his work online.

He seemed to be able to sense Lin Xinyan's gaze on him—he looked up at her bedroom window at the same time.

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All he saw was the faint light that filtered through the white curtains. Pursing his lips tightly, he wondered whether he was seeing things just now.

He supposed Lin Xinyan was still in a state of shock due to Su Zhan's sudden appearance.

Meanwhile, Lin Xinyan was leaning against the wall next to the window, trembling as she placed both hands on her chest. A strange sense of heaviness in her heart made it tough for her to breathe.

Even though she gasped for fresh air to prevent suffocation, she could not stop the complicated emotions from overwhelming her.

The moment she saw him, she was filled with both delight and apprehension.

With her eyes closed, she took a long time to regain her composure.

She guessed he decided not to visit her himself because he was still dealing with Wen Qing's matter.

After some time, she opened her eyes, wanting to lift the curtain to take one more peek at him. For some reason, her hand suddenly froze.

It stopped in midair right before the curtain.

She had no idea what was holding her back. Was she afraid that the feelings she used to have for him would come flooding back once she laid her eyes on him again?

Slowly, she put her hand down.

Taking a deep breath, she pulled herself together and walked back to the wardrobe to pack some clothing for the kids.

They didn't have any suitcases because she had never brought the kids on a trip since they moved to C City. As a result, she had to stuff all their clothes into a duffel bag. Fortunately, it was summer and their clothes did not occupy much space.

When the packing was done, she walked out of her room and saw Su Zhan chatting with the kids.

He stood up when he saw her.

She then passed the duffel bag to him.

"I'll bring them back a few days later," reassured Su Zhan. Zong Jinghao needed him to take the kids immediately so that he could set off to visit his father in Baicheng right away.

He had specially instructed Su Zhan to tell her for how long the kids would be away.

It was because he knew she needed the kids' company more than he. Her insistence on giving birth to the kids even though she had no idea who had fathered them showed how much she loved them. On top of that, she had never been separated from them ever since they were born.

All in all, she was more attached to the kids than he was.

"I'm fine with them staying there for a longer time because I'm sure the kids miss him a lot," Lin Xinyan said with a smile, "Are you setting off today?"

Su Zhan nodded. "Yup."

She looked at the two kids and beckoned them over. "Come here."

"Yes, Mommy." The children threw themselves into her arms and clung to her lap.

She caressed their heads as she asked, "Didn't the two of you say you miss Daddy very much? Are you guys excited to meet him?"

"Yes!" Zong Yanxi nodded vigorously.

"But I feel sad to leave Mommy behind." Zong Yanchen nuzzled his cheeks against her body.

Seeing how hard it was for the kids to leave their mother, Su Zhan said soothingly, "I'll bring back you two a few days later. We have to go today because I'm sure your Daddy can't wait to see you both."

"Mommy..." Zong Yanchen was reluctant to be separated from his mother. If it weren't because he had to visit Grandpa, he wouldn't leave his mother alone at home.

"Well, go on now. It's not like the two of you won't be coming back anymore." Lin Xinyan entrusted the kids to Su Zhan. "Please take care of them."

"I will." Holding Zong Yanxi's hand, he looked at Lin Xinyan and said, "See you in a few days."

She mumbled her response in return. When the trio reached the door, she called out to Su Zhan at the thought of Qin Ya, who was still inside her room.

"Anything else that I should take note of?" He spun around and asked.

She quickly shook her head and said, "Nothing else. Please drive carefully."

At first, she intended to talk about Qin Ya with him but she soon dismissed the idea as inappropriate.

After acknowledging her advice, Su Zhan hesitated for several seconds before deciding to inform her, "Wen Qing turned himself in..."

"I'm sorry but I don't feel like knowing anything about him." Lin Xinyan cut him off directly before he could even finish his sentence.

At the moment, she only wanted to live a serene life in C City and try to do the things she wanted to do.

She had chosen to go to C City back then in order to free herself from all the trouble and disputes.

How everyone else fared did not matter to her.

People might deem her heartless for doing so, but she really didn't have much of a bond with her kins. After all, they never spent time together.

She couldn't and didn't want to care about too many things. She was tired, and all she wanted was a simple life.

Pursing his lips, Su Zhan did not go on. He only brought that up to make sure she knew that no matter what sort of sentence Wen Qing would receive in the end, it would have nothing to do with Zong Jinghao because he had turned himself in.

That must be the only correct thing Wen Qing did in his life.

With that, the relationship between Zong Jinghao with Lin Xinyan would still be salvageable.

Although Wen Qing had indirectly caused Cheng Yuxiu's death, he already atoned for his sin by turning himself in.

Su Zhan did not continue the topic with Lin Xinyan, knowing she did not want to dwell on it. He then left the house with the kids.

"Mommy, we'll be back soon." The children turned around and waved her goodbye.

Instead of walking them to Su Zhan's car, she waved back at them at the door. "Okay, I'll wait for you to be back."

Soon, the elevator arrived.

"See you," Su Zhan said.

Maintaining a smile on her face, Lin Xinyan replied, "Bye." She fixed her gaze on the trio from the time they walked into the elevator to the moment the elevator doors closed.

She stood there observing the decreasing numbers on the screen atop the elevator door.

Six, five, four, three, two, one.

She tried to estimate when her kids would walk out of the elevator, walk out of the building and finally meet their father.

She slowly returned to the living room. She could have watched them leave the main entrance of her building from her balcony, but she didn't do that.

Not only was she worried that she might feel bitter being separated from her kids, but she was also afraid he might notice her presence.

Hence, she walked to the dining table instead. On the table were the washed carrots and red bean puffs. Unfortunately, she had no appetite for any food.

Feeling dispirited, she sat down in silence.

In the meantime, the clock on the wall ticked away.

At that moment, Qin Ya walked out of her room. Seeing Lin Xinyan sitting silently at the dining table, she took a bottle of water from the fridge and sat down opposite her.

Qin Ya reckoned Lin Xinyan might have already realized that Zong Jinghao knew where she stayed, given Su Zhan's appearance.

"Are you feeling down because the kids aren't around?" Qin Ya asked.

"Yes, because I've never been separated from them before. This trip is good for the kids because after all, they are still his kids. It's selfish of me to bring them away with him."

At a time when he really needed someone by his side, she didn't even let him have the kids.

"The kids will be back soon. What's more, you aren't all by yourself now." Qin Ya cast a meaningful glance at her belly.

Lin Xinyan, too, looked down at her abdomen and said with a bitter smile, "You're right. I'm not alone; I still have him."

As her mind was preoccupied and she was not in the mood to chat, she went back to her room. She sat down at the edge of her bed and stared out of the window.

In her perception, whatever that had happened that night in her room probably took place for real instead of being just a dream.

She lay down on her messy bed but could not fall asleep.

As the sky turned dark, she was overwhelmed by a sense of loneliness which she had never felt before.

Not having to take care of the kids, she had enough time to focus on her career. Orders for Tea Silk were piling up and the old factory could no longer handle the high demand. Hence, she expanded the production scale with Shao Yun's help.

At noon, Qin Ya visited Lin Xinyan's office, bringing her a parcel.

Qin Ya was designing a traditional wedding costume for a client at the moment but she left the drawing at home. When she went home to fetch it, she was handed a parcel by the security officer. Seeing that the parcel was addressed to Lin Xinyan, she decided to bring it to her.

"I haven't bought anything online recently." *Who could be the sender of this parcel?*

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“I don’t know what it is. The guard said that there is an express parcel for you. I saw your name on it so I brought it here.”

Qin Ya checked and found no sender’s name or address. The content was contained in a folder. “Is it a document?”

“It’s better you open it and take a look,” Qin Ya handed the parcel to her.

Lin Xinyan tore open the seal. It was not a document, but a stack of photos.

Her curiosity was piqued and she took them out. All the photos were obscene.

That was not the point. What made it a serious matter was the people in the photographs.

Her face turned pale and her hands shook, but she managed to look at each photo. They were all equally explicit.

Sensing from her expression that something was wrong, Qin Ya leaned over to peep at them. “What is it...”

Before Qin Ya could make out what it was, Lin Xinyan quickly put the photos back into the folder and resealed it, looking like she was afraid someone would see the content within. She then pretended as if nothing had happened. “It’s nothing much.”

Qin Ya frowned. “But I saw something was wrong in your expression.”

Again, Lin Xinyan said it was nothing, but her face told a different story. Obviously, it was something.

Qin Ya stared at the envelope in Lin Xinyan's hands wondering what was inside that could change the look on her face in an instant.

"I am just too tired, Qin Ya, leave me alone for a while." Lin Xinyan then turned around with her back facing Qin Ya.

I need to be calm.

Qin Ya obliged. *She's not talking. Perhaps she doesn't want to tell me about it. I just hope that if there is something wrong, she won't bear it alone and will let me share her burden after she has calmed down.*

After all, two heads are better than one.

After Qin Ya left, Lin Xinyan sat down on a chair. After calming herself down, she took out the photographs again. This time, while she was prepared, she still felt a psychological impact. After all, the subject in the photos was someone she cared about.

They were many explicit photos of Zong Jinghao and a woman together in bed; their faces in every photo were clearly shown.

No matter how hard she tried, she could not see any flaws to show the photos had been doctored.

Deep inside, she told herself that they must be fakes and must have been sent to her on purpose.

Nevertheless, there was a dull and painful feeling in her heart.

She forced herself to be calm, since being emotional would not help to solve problems.

The express mail sent to her had no signature and no return address; it was obvious that the sender wanted to remain anonymous. This also meant that the sender must have a motive.

But she was uncertain of the sender's intention.

Maybe someone was upset with Zong Jinghao? *Does the sender know about my relationship with Zong Jinghao? Is that why he or she gave me these photos?*

She really could not figure it out.

This was not a problem she could solve. After thinking it over, she took out a new document holder, placed the photos inside, and sealed it.

When she came out of her office she did not bother Qin Ya, who was busy serving a customer.

Shao Yun came in carrying a basket of grapes and said to Lin Xinyan with a smile, "This is what I picked from the vineyard when I passed by Tang Xian. It's fresh. Let me give you some to try."

Lin Xinyan was preoccupied and did not feel like eating anything at all. Still, seeing Shao Yun's kind gesture, she smiled and replied, "Thank you."

"Don't mention it. I'll get them washed." Shao Yun brought the basket inside. It was not long before he came out with a plate of washed green grapes. They were not very big but looked fresh and clear. He passed them to her saying, "Try it."

Lin Xinyan took one. It was tasteless in her mouth, especially since her mind was preoccupied with the photos.

She looked at Shao Yun and asked, "Tell me, is it possible for two totally unrelated people to appear together in one photograph?"

Shao Yun spat out the skin of a grape from his mouth, glanced at her, and queried, "Why do you ask this out of the blue?"

Deep inside her, Lin Xinyan trusted Zong Jinghao but there was some doubt. Seeing Shao Yun, she wanted to hear some words to console herself that the images could be superimposed.

She could then convince herself that the photographs she saw were fake, which would make her feel better.

She curled her lips in reply, "Just a random question."

"Of course it's possible. Today's technology is so advanced, anything can be faked! Even humans can be altered, not to mention photographs." People nowadays can change their faces with surgery, and those who are not wealthy can use their mobile phones to edit their pictures before sharing with friends.

Unbelievably fake.

Then he pointed at the grapes and asked, "These are such sweet grapes. Why don't you have some?"

"I just had a meal. I can't eat anything now." She just made an excuse because she really did not feel like eating at all. Nevertheless, Shao Yun's words made her feel much better.

Shao Yun did not insist. "That's okay. When you feel like eating, go ahead and try them. If you find that they are good, tell me and I'll get some more for you."

"Alright. How is the factory doing?" she changed the topic.

“We are already trying out the equipment. If there are no problems, we can start the production. However, I can’t take orders for the time being. The backlog of orders would last me a while. I didn’t expect you would know so much given your young age. Is this kind of fabric really so good? There is a huge demand for it.”

Qin Ya came over after she finished meeting with her customer, “You won’t know how good it is. Only those in the industry can appreciate its qualities.”

Shao Yun would get upset whenever Qin Ya said he did not belong to the industry.

“Sure, sure. You know it all.” He shoved another grape into his mouth.

Today Shao Yun wore a white T-shirt with yellow trimming on the neckline and cuffs, pair with a yellow SpongeBob SquarePants pants.

Qin Ya looked at him from top to toe and curled her lips.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Shao Yun took a look at his own clothing but did not see anything wrong.

“Nothing. I just thought you are well-dressed.” Qin Ya knew he loved to be praised. He loved fancy clothes, and that was his taste.

The moment he heard Qin Ya’s praise, he stood upright in pride.

“Uncle Er, how about you let me design some for you?” Qin Ya did not know him too well but since Lin Xinyan was close to him, Qin Ya addressed him as Uncle Er just like Lin Xinyan did. Despite the fact that he dressed fancifully, he was obviously older and it was not appropriate for Qin Ya to call him by name.

Nonetheless, after working together for two months now, their relationship grew closer.

He looked playful, but where work was concerned, he was reliable. Other than wanting to be praised for being handsome and youthful-looking, he had no other faults.

Well, actually, he had another fault, which was to dress fancifully. He felt that these clothes made him look young but his choice of fashion sometimes just rendered others speechless.

“Great! You should be able to tell which styles I like so you can design accordingly.” Shao Yun came closer and asked, “Tell me, don’t you think I have good taste?”

Qin Ya was speechless.

Not far away from them, Lin Xinyan found their exchange rather unbearable. *Can this even be considered as taste?*

Qin Ya corrected him, “I wouldn’t call it good taste; it’s just your preference.”

If this were considered good taste, the sun would rise in the west and everyone would be wearing gaudy colors.

“Preference is good, too.” *What really matters is that it pleases him.*

“Alright, I’ve some business to attend to. I’ve got to go.” Shao Yun was always busy looking after the company and helping Lin Xinyan on the side.

After Shao Yun left, Qin Ya had the opportunity to ask, “What was in the parcel just now? You seemed a little...”

“Ya,” before she could finish, Lin Xinyan spoke, “Please pass this to Zong Jinghao for me.”

Qin Ya stared at her for a moment before taking the holder, feeling surprised at the sudden mention of Zong Jinghao.

“You do keep in contact with him, don’t you?” Lin Xinyan deduced that was the case when she saw Zong Jinghao the night before.

Qin Ya had lied about taking the two kids out for baked fish yesterday when they actually had steak. So it was most probable that she met him at that time.

Otherwise, she would not have lied about the food.

Zong Jinghao likely did not want to show up, so he instructed Qin Ya to bring the kids to meet him in secret.

She just could not figure out why he asked Su Zhan to approach her. *Perhaps those secret meetings with the children are not enough and he really wants to bring the kids away for a short stay in B City.*

Qin Ya took a deep breath before taking the folder from Lin Xinyan. Since Su Zhan had already shown up, she must have noticed something.

“Did he give these to you?” Qin Ya asked out of curiosity. After all, the look on Lin Xinyan’s face was dreadful when she saw the items.

“No. You just pass it to him. If he asks, you may tell him some anonymous person has sent it to me with no return address. He should know who that person is.” After all, that person was targeting him.

Qin Ya replied, “I’ll contact him, then.”

“I want to leave office early today.” Lin Xinyan felt like getting away as if she were fearful of hearing news about him.

At this moment, she wanted to be alone. She was in no mood to work and her mind was troubled. Even if the photos were faked, her emotions were impacted.

Qin Ya agreed; she could see that Lin Xinyan's feelings had been affected by some incident.

She looked down at the folder in her hand and took out her mobile phone to call Zong Jinghao.

At that time, Zong Jinghao had just arrived in Baicheng with his two children. When he saw that it was Qin Ya's call, he answered it.

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“I have a document for you. Shall I send it to your office or do you want to come and get it?” Qin Ya’s voice came over.

In fact, until now, Qin Ya did not know why he had suddenly asked Su Zhan to come and take the children.

Nor did she know that he had gone to Baicheng.

“What is it?” Zong Jinghao looked out of the window. According to the location sent by Cheng Yuwen, the direction he was heading looked less and less like a place with a hospital.

“It’s an express parcel. The recipient is Lin Xinyan but there is no sender’s name or return address. After Ms. Lin read it, she asked me to pass it to you. I don’t know what it is.” Then she immediately explained, “She must have noticed something was amiss when you suddenly asked Su Zhan to come for the children.”

Zong Jinghao knew Lin Xinyan would definitely be alert when Su Zhan appeared at her home. He thought of Shen Peichuan, who had sent him a message saying Wen Qing’s case would conclude in a few days.

He estimated that on his return from Baicheng, Wen Qing would have been sentenced.

“Keep it at your place. Pass it to me when I come over.”

He would be in Baicheng only for a while and he still had to go back after meeting Zong Qifeng. Since he was not in B City now, it was pointless for the document to be sent to his office.

“That is great. Just contact me when you are back here.”

“Is there a hospital in the area?” Su Zhan was driving. He then glanced at the back. “This place seems familiar.”

On the phone, Qin Ya heard Su Zhan’s voice in the background and so she quickly said, “If that’s all, I’m hanging up.”

Zong Jinghao kept his mobile phone. Much earlier, he had already realized that this place seemed to be where Lin Xinyan had learned to produce Tea Silk.

“Go according to the location we were given.” Seemingly, Zong Qifeng was not in a hospital.

After driving along the paved road for a while, they soon saw a huge house constructed with unique architecture inside a magnificent courtyard.

“What place is this?” Su Zhan was puzzled.

“This is Grandma’s home.” Zong Yanchen said. Lin Xinyan had brought him and his sister here, so he recognized the place.

Su Zhan glanced back at him then shifted his gaze to Zong Jinghao. It was obvious that the Grandma mentioned by Zong Yanchen was Cheng Yuxiu. So, this was the Cheng family home?

There was not much change in Zong Jinghao’s facial expression. If he felt anything, he must have hidden it quite well.

The car stopped in front of the yard. He pushed open the car door and got down. He had been here before. The two children could not help being overjoyed at revisiting this old place as they got out of the car.

“Is Grandpa here?” Zong Yanxi asked.

“He should be.” When Zong Qifeng came to Baicheng, he probably stayed at the Cheng family home.

Cheng Yuwen came out of the house and saw the children. Immediately, he quickened his pace. “Hey, you two are also here.”

“We are here to see Grandpa,” the kids replied in unison.

“Great, great, great!” It was obvious that Cheng Yuwen was overjoyed as he said “great” three times.

Now that the truth was out and Zong Jinghao could bring the kids into the Cheng family home, he was very emotional.

Feeling extremely happy, he raised his head to look at Zong Jinghao but saw that the latter did not feel the same way he did. Zong Jinghao still looked as aloof as usual.

He felt his smile fading away but when he looked at the two kids, the smile returned to his face. “Come on in, everybody.”

Going up the steps, crossing over the threshold and entering the courtyard, Su Zhan looked around and let out a sigh.

Just by looking at this building, one could conclude that the Cheng family was well-to-do and had a lot of power in its heyday. This kind of building was more like an ancestral home with a rich history. Nowadays, few families could preserve such a huge building so well.

“Wow, my big goose swing is still there.” Entering the yard, Zong Yanxi let go of her father’s hand and ran towards the swing under the tree.

Zong Jinghao looked at his daughter. *The last time we came to Baicheng, Lin Xinyan took them out under some pretext. She must have come here and found out about all the secrets.*

“Your dad is in that room and he is waiting for you inside. He wants to see you but he is afraid that you will not come, so he asked me to tell you he’s sick and hospitalized,” Cheng Yuwen explained.

When Zong Jinghao realized that the road was not leading to a hospital, he had already guessed the truth. Softly, he said, “Su Zhan, you keep an eye on these two.”

“Don’t worry, I’m here,” Cheng Yuwen quickly replied. This was the Cheng family home. Now that the kids were here, he was responsible for their safety.

It was not that Zong Jinghao did not trust him. They had not spent time together and they did not develop a close relationship. Subconsciously, he preferred Su Zhan.

Su Zhan nodded at him. “You go on in.”

Zong Jinghao grunted in reply.

Cheng Yuwen felt a little disappointed; he let out a soft sigh. Su Zhan made an excuse for Zong Jinghao, “Don’t mind him. That’s his character.”

“Sit down.” Cheng Yuwen avoided the topic. Under the tree were wicker chairs and a table with a kettle and cups. He poured a cup of water for Su Zhan. “You must be tired driving such a long way.”

Su Zhan told him it was not that bad a drive.

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao walked into the room. The furnishings in the house looked like a girl’s boudoir. In front of the window, Zong Qifeng sat on a rocking chair with a thin blanket covering his legs. His hair, which was black when he was young, now looked like the first snow in the winter. The snowy-white hair covered his head as wrinkles on his face told the stories of his past.

“You’re here.” Zong Qifeng said without turning around.

Zong Jinghao did not reply but walked quietly up to him. *Since he asked for me, he must have something to say.*

At this moment, he would rather be a listener.

Zong Jinghao stood in front of the window looking at the woods outside. The area was full of different hues of green trees with lush foliage, which provided large areas of shade, creating mottled patterns of light and shadow on the ground.

“You should know what this place is.” Zong Qifeng never lifted his eyes and his eyelids drooped slightly. Then, he sighed deeply, “I have a lot of regrets in my life. I hope you won’t repeat my mistakes and regret too late after losing what is most precious to you.”

His voice was low and sounded of endless desolation.

His life, when he examined it carefully in retrospect, was like a joke. It seemed like he had not wronged anyone but due to his indecisiveness, many things happened which should not have.

He knew early on that Wen Xian was in love with someone. If he had decisively rejected the marriage, things would not have happened the way they turned out.

“She married me because of you. All these years, we looked like a happily married couple but I never knew if she ever loved me.”

After all, she and Bai Hongfei were in love before and they were each other’s first love. For this reason, Bai Hongfei did not marry for life. This was a rare kind of love. If not for a third party who came in, perhaps they would have married and grown old together like an ordinary couple.

He had always minded that Bai Hongfei was her first love. Even as he came to understand his own feelings later, he never expressed his love for Cheng Yuxiu.

It was only after she had left that he regretted his actions.

He did not want his son to do anything regretful because of the wrongs of the previous generation.

He said earnestly, "I think, with her love for you, she must hope that you are happy. What she did was not for revenge or to hurt the person she loves. You are not a child; you must understand your own heart."

"I wanted to prevent it. I wanted you to marry the girl from the He family to prevent you from uncovering the truth in the future. I never thought that after going around in a big circle that you would be back to square one. There was no escape. Maybe it's just fate."

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Perhaps their ill-fated romance had been ordained by the gods. No matter what, they were humans after all, and nothing they did could've prevented the untimely end of their relationship.

"Xichen and Ruixi will be heading off to primary school soon, right? It's time to bring her back and live out the rest of our lives together."

Their children weren't to blame for the grudges they harbored towards each other in the past. Naturally, the blame wasn't their children's to shoulder.

Ever since he found out from Bai Yinning that Lin Xinyan had left, Zong Qifeng had constantly been on edge. He was afraid that his son would do something he would regret in the future.

Zong Qifeng had tasted bitter regret before, and he didn't want Zong Jinghao to follow him down the same slippery path.

Zong Jinghao continued, his voice quavering a little, "I wonder if she hates me. She's been gone for so long, but she has never visited me in my dreams."

The older man didn't reply. Instead, he continued standing silently and listening to him.

A gust of wind blew through the garden, sending the trees rustling noisily as their branches danced in the breeze.

Time had simply flown by. The sun, which had been high up in the sky the entire day, had disappeared behind a mountain in the west. The mountain blocked out the rays of the sun, finally allowing dusk to settle over the city.

The father and son stayed in the room for a long time, with nobody coming in to disturb them. When it was dinnertime, however, Zong Jinghao finally exited the room by himself.

Cheng Yuwen had prepared dinner and set the dishes down on the round table in the courtyard. Zong Yanxi ran over to Zong Jinghao and tugged at his hand. "Daddy."

Zong Jinghao caressed her hair lightly.

"Come and have dinner with us," Zong Yanxi said, dragging him over to the table.

Buzz—

At that moment, Zong Jinghao's phone started vibrating, signaling that he had an incoming call. Telling his daughter to sit down first, he walked to a corner and took out his phone. Shen Peichuan was calling him. Zong Jinghao accepted his call and brought the phone to his ear.

From the other end of the line, Shen Peichuan said, "Wen Qing's sentence is out."

Wen Qing's car accident had caused three people to die on the spot. For such a serious case, it was only right for him to be punished according to the law. When the judicial court launched its own investigation, they quickly realized that the car accident had been caused by a kidnapping case gone wrong. Wen Qing then turned himself in and confessed all his wrongdoings, even offering a public apology for his actions. He had sounded so sincere that the court decided to lighten his sentence.

"He got a two-year suspended sentence," said Shen Peichuan.

When the judge announced his sentence, this was what he said exactly, "Wen Qing, you should have known better as a civil servant. Your crimes have severely tainted the image of the civil service in the eyes of the public, not to mention the

damage caused to its reputation. For that, you deserve to be punished severely. However, considering that you surrendered yourself to the police, confessed your wrongdoings, apologized to the public and showed a willingness to turn over a new leaf, we have opted to lighten your sentence. You are hereby sentenced to a two-year suspended sentence, and you will not be able to take up a job in the civil service for the rest of your life.”

Zong Jinghao didn't seem affected by this news at all. Showing no desire for revenge, he replied blandly, “I understand.”

“Other relevant authorities have meted out similar penalties to Wen Qing, but... Gu Bei managed to get away scot-free.”

Wen Qing had sought out Gu Bei first, and as such, he was the mastermind behind the crimes. Besides, Gu Bei wasn't the one who had hired the gangsters to hijack the car. He had let his assistant manager do it instead.

In order to implicate Gu Bei, Zong Jinghao had taken a video of the clandestine meeting between the assistant manager and the gangsters. He had even managed to get a recording of the assistant manager saying that Gu Bei had sent him there. However, when the assistant manager got arrested, he had sworn up and down that he had orchestrated everything by himself, and that Gu Bei had nothing to do with it.

Besides, Mr. Gu had made use of his connections with the higher-ups to ensure that Gu Bei would escape imprisonment.

Anyone who was able to open a highly-publicized nightclub had to be a person of great influence.

“After this, Gu Bei will definitely know that we tricked him and took advantage of him. Will he come after us for revenge?” After all, Gu Bei wasn't exactly a nice person.

He had nearly fallen into their trap this time. Knowing Gu Bei, there was no way he would let it go so easily.

Zong Jinghao said, "Keep an eye on his movements. We'll make further plans when I get back."

"Okay."

When he hung up the phone, Zong Jinghao turned and looked at his two children. Under the moonlight, they bent their heads over their bowls and ate quietly. Zong Qifeng's words had struck a chord in him. Even while Zong Jinghao was seeking revenge on behalf of Cheng Yuxiu, he had never once thought of giving up on Lin Yanxin or the family.

He walked over to them. Seeing him approach, Cheng Yuwen pulled out his chair for him. "It's already so late. Sit down and have dinner with us."

Zong Jinghao looked at him before sitting down on the chair. "Thanks."

"There's no need for that. I'm an outsider, after all. You don't have to be so polite in your own house." Cheng Yuwen passed him a pair of chopsticks.

"If you need anything in the future, just let me know." Zong Jinghao took the pair of chopsticks from him. "From now on, my father will be living here with us. Please help us take good care of him."

Zong Qifeng had asked to stay with them for the time being. His body was in good shape, but his mental health was getting worse by the day.

Cheng Yuwen replied, "Of course I will! I've never treated your father like an outsider. Even if there's no real love between him and my sister, they've been married for over twenty years now. I've always treated him like my brother-in-law."

As he spoke, Cheng Yuwen felt a lump in his throat. Twenty years wasn't a long time, but it certainly wasn't a short time either.

Cheng Yuwen poured him a glass of wine. "Actually, there's something I need to thank you for."

He filled his own glass too. Although he was holed up in this tiny town of Baicheng, Cheng Yuwen kept perfect tabs on what was going on in the outside world.

"As you already know, this house was left to us by my ancestors. My ancestors sustained themselves by weaving, and Tea Silk was finally invented around my grandfather's time. By the time the trade was passed on to my father, Tea Silk had gained quite a reputation for itself. During my father's time, the standard of living in the country was getting higher, and people were becoming more concerned about their clothing. Tea Silk was held in high regard by many in the fabrics business." Here, Cheng Yuwen's expression turned rather sad. "We thought that it would eventually fade into obscurity as time went on, but it has been revived again."

Ever since Lin Xinyan's successful Tea Silk exhibition, more people had gained awareness of this beautiful, idiosyncratic fabric. Within the industry, it had started to gain widespread popularity again.

As one of the original experts of Tea Silk, Cheng Yuwen had gained a large following overnight.

"I knew you were behind this somehow. Without you, who would care so much about the Cheng family's business?" Cheng Yuwen wiped his face with a towel before raising his glass in a toast. "Thanks, Jinghao."

Zong Jinghao pursed his lips. He understood what Cheng Yuwen was saying, but he had gotten it wrong—Zong Jinghao had nothing to do with it.

Initially, Zong Jinghao wondered if Lin Xinyan had carried out the exhibition because she wanted to make amends for Cheng Yuxiu's incident. Now, he finally understood that she simply wanted Tea Silk to gain widespread attention among the public again.

She wasn't doing it to make amends, but to help the Cheng family continue their ancestral tradition. Perhaps this had been her destiny all along.

She had become the successor of the Tea Silk production method, and taken the Cheng family's business to greater heights.

At that moment, Zong Jinghao suddenly wanted to thank her.

He wanted to thank her for all she had done for him and the entire Cheng family.

Zong Jinghao and Cheng Yuwen finished the entire bottle of wine. After that, Cheng Yuwen continued rambling on about things that had happened in the past.

Su Zhan refused to drink. He had to drive tomorrow. They were going to stay here tonight, before setting off for C City the next morning.

In C City, Lin Xinyan walked out from the store and stood by the side of the road, trying to hail a taxi. She had lent her car to Qin Ya.

Inside a black car that had been parked nearby, a man was surveilling her carefully. After observing her for a while, he turned to the person next to him and said, "Are you sure it's that woman?"

Number Four replied, "Mr. Gu, don't worry. I carried out my investigation very thoroughly. Zong Jinghao showed up at this city because of her."

"But why does she look so unbothered?" Gu Bei had purposely sent those pictures to her in order to see what her reaction would be.

However, she looked so calm that it seemed as though nothing had happened to her.

Usually, girls who found out that their boyfriends were cheating on them reacted in very predictable ways. They either threw a fit or threatened to commit suicide by hanging themselves.

“I’m quite sure that Zong Jinghao broke off his engagement to the He family’s daughter back then in order to marry this woman. If I remember correctly, she was also the cause of Zong Jinghao’s dispute with Wen Qing.”

Hearing this, Gu Bei’s interest was piqued. “Oh, is that so?”

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How much charm did this woman possess that she was able to start a feud between Zong Jinghao and his uncle?

“Mr. Gu, what do you plan to do?” Number Four asked.

Number Four was Gu Bei’s subordinate, second only to the assistant manager, who had been his right-hand man. Now that the assistant manager was in jail, Number Four was next in line to be Gu Bei’s right-hand man.

Gu Bei knew that he had been taken advantage of by Zong Jinghao and his cronies, and had nearly been arrested as a result. Thus, he had ordered Number Four to investigate and keep tabs on Zong Jinghao.

Although he still didn’t know why Zong Jinghao and Wen Qing held a grudge against each other, Number Four’s investigations had alerted him to Lin Xinyan’s existence.

“I was sincere about working together with him, but Zong Jinghao cheated me and used me. He nearly caused me to be arrested, and I got scolded by my grandfather for being a complete loser.” As he spoke, Gu Bei removed his suit jacket and shot a look at Number Four. “I’d like to meet Zong Jinghao’s woman. I want to see how beautiful she is that she managed to cause a rift between Zong Jinghao and his own uncle.”

Number Four bowed his head. “What would you like to do?”

A menacing smile spread across Gu Bei’s face. “Let’s say there’s a damsel in distress. Shouldn’t I play the role of the valiant knight, then?”

Number Four understood him immediately. If he couldn't read Gu Bei's mind so well, he would never have risen up the ranks so easily.

After running through the plan in his mind, Number Four hopped off the car and walked to stand right next to Lin Xinyan.

He was standing way too close to her. Instinctively, Lin Xinyan shuffled away from him, but Number Four got even closer to her. When she wasn't looking, he suddenly grabbed her arm and said leeringly, "Hey, Miss, where are you going? Do you want me to send you there?"

Lin Xinyan was so frightened that her face grew white as a sheet. Struggling to free herself from his grip, she hollered, "Let go of me!"

"Don't be so scared! Why don't I accompany you since you're alone?" Number Four smiled before trying to throw his arms around her.

Lin Xinyan moved away from him and managed to avoid his piggish hands. She forced herself to remain calm. She was pregnant now, and it wouldn't do for her to fight him physically. After all, he was bound to be much stronger than her. If she moved too violently, she might hurt her unborn child. "Let go of me right now, or I'm going to shout for help!"

"It's your honor to have gotten my attention at all! Come on, come with me..." Just as Number Four was about to drag her away, Gu Bei suddenly appeared and delivered a kick to his shin. In order to make his act seem real, Gu Bei had kicked him with all his might.

Number Four flew through the air and landed on the ground a few feet away. Looking extremely self-righteous, Gu Bei gazed at Number Four with contempt and pulled him up from the ground. Throwing another punch across his face, Gu Bei yelled, "It's because of people like you that our city has become so disgraceful!"

Gu Bei's punch was real. Number Four was in so much pain that he could barely speak, but he managed to yell, "Do you know who I am? How dare you stick your nose into my business?"

"I don't care who you are! I won't let you off for trying to harm this poor girl in front of me!" As he spoke, he punched Number Four across the face again. However, this time, he didn't use as much force.

Gu Bei shot him a look. *Hit me back.*

He had to get injured too so that Lin Xinyan would feel sorry for him. If he managed to make her feel thankful towards him, he would be able to get closer to her easily.

Zong Jinghao's woman?

Gu Bei was determined to see what sort of male-bewitching charms this woman had. How had she managed to take down that poker-faced man?

If he succeeded in sleeping with Zong Jinghao's woman, Gu Bei thought, that would be even better.

After all, he had never slept with a pregnant woman before.

However, Number Four hesitated, afraid to punch Gu Bei across the face.

Gu Bei shot him a look to hurry him up. *Stop wasting time!* his eyes seemed to say. Number Four swallowed nervously before shutting his eyes and throwing a punch at Gu Bei's face.

Gu Bei stumbled backwards at the impact of his fist. Number Four turned around to escape, thinking that the plot had thickened enough for Gu Bei to engage Lin Xinyan in conversation. If they continued with the fight, they would blow the situation way out of proportion and get themselves into a hot mess.

As soon as he turned around, however, someone aimed a kick at his chest. Number Four flew backwards and landed on the ground on his bottom, dazed.

Shao Yun took off his sunglasses and said angrily, "Young man, do you have a death wish?"

Number Four could only gawk at him in confusion. His chest still hurt from the kick, and he gritted his teeth in pain, unable to reply.

Gu Bei was stunned. He didn't expect someone else to butt in halfway and spoil his plans.

"Send them to the police station," said Lin Xinyan.

While Gu Bei and Number Four were engaged in a tussle with each other, she had called Shao Yun on the phone and told him to call the police.

Number Four struggled up from the floor and hurried over to Gu Bei. Their plan seemed to have gone astray. Where did this man come from? Also, why were the police suddenly involved?

In a flash, Shao Yun came up to him and kicked him again in a fury. Number Four was in so much pain that he lay on the floor and couldn't get up. Shao Yun was evidently much stronger than Gu Bei, who had grown up in an overly sheltered environment.

Gu Bei didn't beg for mercy on his behalf. It was no big deal for one of his henchmen to go into jail, anyway. At most, Number Four would simply spend some time being re-educated in prison, and Gu Bei would go and get him out later.

He had to keep up this charade, or risk foiling his own plans completely.

Gu Bei walked up to Lin Xinyan and asked obsequiously, "Are you alright, Miss?"

Lin Xinyan bowed slightly. "Thanks for your help just now."

"Trash like him don't deserve to live." Gu Bei tried to smile, but he felt pain shoot through a cut on the corner of his lip and winced.

Concerned, Lin Xinyan asked, "Are you alright?"

Gu Bei shook his head and touched his lip gingerly. "I'm fine. It's no big deal."

At that moment, a white police car pulled up to them. Two policemen jumped out from the car and walked up to them to investigate the situation. "What's going on? Who called the police?"

Shao Yun stepped forward. "That would be me."

It was up to him to resolve matters like this. Lin Xinyan wasn't familiar with the city, but Shao Yun had lived in C City for a long time, and he had many contacts here. Pointing at Number Four, who was lying perfectly still on the floor, he announced to the police, "This person tried to commit daylight robbery."

Hearing this, Number Four was speechless.

Since when had he tried to rob anyone?

"That's rubbish! I never tried to rob anyone. What did I steal from you?" Number Four wondered if there was anyone on earth who was more shameless than this man.

Shao Yun had kicked him numerous times and put him in so much pain. Was he going to accuse him wrongfully, too?

Shao Yun ignored him. Pulling the two policemen aside, he whispered something into their ears. The two policemen nodded.

Number Four got up silently. Seeing that the others were distracted, he turned around and tried to flee the scene. However, the two policemen noticed him immediately, and darted over to stop him before he could escape. "You committed daylight robbery, and now you're trying to run away? We already have the evidence, so don't try to argue your way out of this. Come back with us to the station first."

Number Four was aghast.

"But I really didn't try to rob anyone!"

"Come back with us to the station first."

The two policemen stuffed him roughly into the car. "You can defend yourself when we get back."

Gu Bei shot a look at Shao Yun. Although he couldn't hear his conversation with the policemen, it was evident that Shao Yun had important connections in the city. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to clear up the situation so quickly.

Shao Yun walked over to Lin Xinyan and asked her if she was injured. She shook her head. "Nope."

However, her heart was still racing with fear.

"There are all kinds of people on the streets these days," Gu Bei said airily.

Shao Yun looked at him and disliked him immediately. He turned to Lin Xinyan said, "Let's go. I'll send you home."

Lin Xinyan agreed immediately. She was too afraid to venture anywhere in the city by herself now.

Gu Bei was speechless.

He had just saved her from an attack. Was she just going to thank him and go on her merry way?

Besides, he was so handsome. Shouldn't she consider him, at the very least?

"I..." He wanted to stop Lin Xinyan and ask if she felt anything towards him at all.

After all, he had just saved her!

Shao Yun turned around and looked at him. "How can I help you?"

Gu Bei smiled awkwardly. "Oh, nothing! It's just that I..."

Before Gu Bei could finish speaking, Shao Yun took out his wallet and fished out a few red-colored bills. Handing them to a shell-shocked Gu Bei, he said, "Thanks for helping my friend out just now. Please take this money as a gesture of our appreciation."

Gu Bei looked at him, outraged.

He didn't lack for money!

Did he look like someone who did?

This man was crazy for trying to get rid of him using money!

Gu Bei gritted his teeth in anger.

Where did this man come from? He had spoiled his plans completely.

Unfortunately, he couldn't lash out at Shao Yun right now. Forcing down his rising anger, he said, "When there's injustice in this world, nobody will stand by idly and let it happen."

As he spoke, he shot a glance at Lin Xinyan, trying to get her attention.

Lin Xinyan didn't say anything. She had already thanked him before. Besides, as he said, everyone was bound to stand up for victims of injustice anyway.

She didn't have much to say in response.

As he watched Gu Bei's futile attempts to get Lin Xinyan's attention, Shao Yun stepped in front of her to block her from his view. Looking Gu Bei up and down, he said coldly, "If you don't want the money, I'll retract my offer."

Gu Bei had the sudden urge to snatch those bills from him and throw it right back at Shao Yun's face.

He had ruined everything for him!

Shao Yun pretended not to see the furious expression on his face. Tucking the bills back into his wallet, he escorted Lin Xinyan back to his car and opened the door for her. "Get in."

Lin Xinyan got into the car quickly. When Shao Yun got into the car himself, she asked him, "You didn't like that guy, did you?"

If he did, Shao Yun wouldn't have tried to get rid of him with money.

He would have thanked him humbly to show his sincerity.

Shao Yun didn't try to hide his dislike at all. "No, I didn't. Did you see the way he was dressed?"

Lin Xinyan shook her head. She had been scared of out her wits. How would she have noticed what he was wearing?

Shao Yun turned around and looked at her. “He was dressed in brand-name clothing from head to toe. The whole ensemble must have cost tens of thousands. The watch on his wrist alone already cost more than five million! Do you think he was a normal passerby?”

Lin Xinyan hadn’t noticed any of that. However, she didn’t believe that rich people were all bad.

“You have great observational skills,” she told Shao Yun, slightly amused.

“He didn’t have good intentions,” Shao Yun insisted. “Didn’t you see him trying to get all chummy with you?”

Lin Xinyan looked at him, speechless.

“You’re over-thinking this.” Who would want to get close to a pregnant woman like her? If Gu Bei were really as rich as Shao Yun said, he would have seen all sorts of beauties before.

“You’re just too naïve! Listen to me, the richer those guys are, the more sexually deviant they are. Oftentimes, they like to pretend to come to a beautiful girl’s rescue in order to get close to her and get into her bed...”

Lin Xinyan forced herself to keep a straight face. Shao Yun’s imagination was running wild.

Besides, why did he keep insisting that Gu Bei was putting on an act and coming to a beautiful girl’s rescue?

Lin Xinyan wasn’t a narcissist, and she had never once thought that she was beautiful. She lowered her head and touched her stomach gently. In a few months, she would become a mother to her third child.

“Hey, I’m being serious, alright? You need to be more careful in the future. If not, I’m going to hire a bodyguard and make him follow you around so you won’t get

yourself into this kind of trouble again.” Shao Yun said with a solemn expression on his face.

Lin Xinyan mirrored his serious expression. Knowing that Shao Yun was just being concerned about her, she promised, “I’ll be more careful.”

“I know all the rich people in C City, but I’ve never met that guy before. I wonder which nouveau riche family he hails from,” Shao Yun said thoughtfully.

“Isn’t he a local?” Lin Xinyan frowned, her expression suddenly stern. This had happened to her right after she received those pictures. Was it really a coincidence?

If Shao Yun hadn’t told her that Gu Bei wasn’t from C City, she wouldn’t have thought so much about the incident. However, when she heard that he wasn’t a local, Lin Xinyan started wondering if there was more to the situation than it met the eye.

Did Gu Bei harbor a grudge against Zong Jinghao? Had he discovered my existence and arrived in C City to stir up trouble for me?

Shao Yun replied, “I’m not sure about that, but I’m certain I know everyone of importance in this city. Do you think I’ve been fooling around during my time here? JK Group is a huge company, and as far as I’m concerned, I’m still its official CEO. I know who holds the wealth and power here.”

Lin Xinyan was in no mood to joke around with him. After seeing those video clips, she kept fearing that Zong Jinghao had met with some sort of trouble. Besides, her two young children were still with him.

She turned to Shao Yun. “Uncle, I need you to help me with something.”

“If you need anything, just let me know. There’s nothing I can’t help you with! Why else would you need your me for?” Shao Yun pretended to get mad. He didn’t like the idea of Lin Xinyan being too polite with him. *She had already*

refused to join JK Group or spend a single cent of the company's money. It was evident that she held a grudge against Wen Xian and Zhuang Ziyi.

Actually, Lin Xinyan had no grudge against them at all. She simply wanted to rely on herself in this new city.

She had grown up tough, and she found it extremely difficult to depend on others for help. No matter how difficult things got for her, she had to fight it out by herself.

Besides, her situation now was way better than it had been back then.

She turned to Shao Yun and said, "Yanxi and Yanchen's father is in B City. You must have heard of Wanyue Group before."

Shao Yun's face brightened at the sound of the familiar name. Immediately, he replied, "Yes, I've heard of it. Just let me know what you want me to help you with."

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“I’d like you to help me check if something has happened to them,” said Lin Xinyan.

She was getting more worried by the day, especially now that she knew Gu Bei was trying to get close to her.

Shao Yun had the outer appearance of someone unreliable, but he was in fact a very responsible person who routinely helped to put her mind at ease. Lin Xinyan had only known him for a short while, but he had never let her down before. Wen Xian and Zhuang Ziyi had probably chosen him back then because of his exemplary character.

Lin Xinyan thanked her lucky stars that she had called Shao Yun just now. Otherwise, she would have gotten herself into huge trouble.

Her mind was spinning. Feeling a headache coming on, Lin Xinyan massaged her temples and sighed.

“Are you still worried about him?” Shao Yun asked.

Actually, he was itching to tell Lin Xinyan that he had spotted Zong Jinghao below her apartment block the other day.

However, he didn’t know that Lin Xinyan already knew about that.

“Yes, I’m worried. After all, two of my children are with him,” Lin Xinyan said, resting her forehead on her hand.

“Did you meet up with him?” Shao Yun asked, shocked. “Did the two kids follow him to B City, too?”

In a low voice, Lin Xinyan replied, "He didn't show up personally. His friend came and picked up the children for him."

"Don't worry any more, your face looks a little pale. Have a good rest. I'll help you investigate everything," Shao Yun said confidently.

"Alright." Lin Xinyan felt extremely tired.

A short while later, the car turned into her neighborhood. Lin Xinyan unbuckled her seat belt and pushed open the door. As she stepped out of the car, she turned to Shao Yun and said, "Drive safely, Uncle."

Shao Yun nodded. "Take good care of yourself!"

Lin Xinyan smiled at him before walking back to her apartment block. When she finally got home, she flew into her bedroom and tossed herself onto the bed.

She was very tired, but try as she might, she couldn't fall asleep. She grabbed her phone and opened her contacts list. Gazing at Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan's numbers, she realized that she had changed her number, but the others still remained the same.

She wanted to give them a call to ask about the situation back home. However, as her finger hovered over the 'call' button, she found herself hesitating.

In the end, she decided not to give them a call.

Just as she put down her phone, its screen lit up with a notification from the daily news app. Lin Xinyan reached out to dismiss the notification. After all, there were all sorts of news everyday, and she was used to these notifications. However, her fingers slipped as she tried to swipe it away, and she ended up tapping on the news article instead. Coincidentally, the article was about Wen Qing's sentence.

Instantly, her grip around the phone tightened, and her arms began to tremble.

She had tried so hard to avoid reading any news about him. When she left the city, she had hoped to put her past behind her, too.

Despite her misgivings, however, she continued reading the article.

Lines upon lines of words filled the entire article. There wasn't a picture to be seen.

Wen Qing had been sentenced to a two-year suspended sentence. Actually, that wasn't a heavy punishment at all. He had been given a reprieve, which meant that a criminal who had been sentenced to the death penalty under the law would have his punishment postponed or cancelled entirely. The court had announced his sentence, but added that they would not carry out the punishment immediately.

During Wen Qing's probation period, the legal team would assess his behavior. Based on his performance, the legal team would recommend if another form of penalty were more suitable for him.

For criminals who had been granted a reprieve, they were expected to behave themselves and demonstrate the right attitude during the probation period. If they did, the court would cancel their original sentence after their probation and mete out a more appropriate punishment.

The Wen family had always enjoyed a great reputation among the public. Although they hadn't collapsed completely after Wen Qing's incident, their reputation had gone down the drain entirely, with the news travelling far and wide and even reaching neighboring cities.

This outcome was worse than death for Wen Qing. It had wrought great damage to his mental health.

Lin Xinyan put down her phone and stared at her ceiling. She had never felt great love towards the Wen family, but hearing about this made her feel a little sorry for them.

She wasn't deeply sorry, however. It would be more accurate to describe her emotions as melancholic.

Lin Xinyan felt even more sorry about Cheng Yuxiu's death.

Wen Qing had caused Lin Xinyan's lover to lose his mother, and her children to lose their grandmother. She would never stop feeling guilty towards the people she loved.

Ding dong!

The doorbell suddenly rang, startling Lin Xinyan out of her reverie. She jumped out of bed immediately, startled. The only other person living in the apartment was Qin Ya, and she knew the passcode to the front door. She didn't need to ring the doorbell.

Ding dong!

The doorbell rang again. Frowning, Lin Xinyan put on her slippers and ran to open the front door.

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Lin Xinyan opened the door and found a delivery man standing outside in his helmet. There was a large parcel in his hands. "Excuse me, are you Ms. Lin?"

Lin Xinyan nodded. "Yes, that's me."

The delivery man handed her the parcel. "Here's your delivery. Please sign to acknowledge that you've received it."

Lin Xinyan remained rooted to her spot. She hadn't bought anything. The last time she received something like this, it had turned out to be those disgusting photos. What could it be this time?

And what a huge box it was!

Afraid that there was something sinister in the parcel, Lin Xinyan refused to sign the acknowledgement slip. "Put it down on the floor first. I want to check if the items inside have been damaged."

The delivery man looked rather nonplussed. It wasn't the first time a customer had asked to check if the items were in good condition. He set the parcel down and yanked the tape away, opening a box to reveal a Styrofoam box. The delivery man removed the lid of the box. Inside it was an ice pack, and beneath that, they found a neat row of fresh radishes.

Lin Xinyan gawked at the radishes in shock, as though she was wondering why she had received them.

"Take a look and see if they've been damaged," The delivery man told her.

Lin Xinyan snapped out of her daze and quickly signed the acknowledgement slip. “Could you help me move this into my house?”

It was a little too heavy for her to move it by herself.

The delivery man said, “Alright.”

Lin Xinyan wasn't trying to make things difficult for him. She was truly afraid that there was something dangerous hidden within that box of radishes. It was very hot outside, so she took out a bottle of iced water from her fridge and handed it to him. “Thanks for your help.”

The delivery man smiled and accepted her bottle of water. “No problem. It's my job, anyway.”

When the delivery man left, Lin Xinyan shut the door and walked over to gaze down at the box of radishes on the coffee table. She reached out and grabbed one of them. The radishes were so fresh that they still had leaves attached to them. She walked into the kitchen and sliced it into half, noting that its insides were red and crispy. The skin was so tender that she found it easier to peel it away by hand than to use a peeler. Lin Xinyan bit into a slice and found that the radish wasn't spicy at all—in fact, it tasted a little like carrots. Because of the ice packs in the box, the radish was a little cold, and it made for a great snack in the middle of the afternoon.

At that moment, she heard the front door click open. Lin Xinyan looked over and saw Qin Ya walk into the house. Qin Ya frowned when she saw Lin Xinyan gnawing on a radish in the living room. *Is this girl addicted to radishes?*

Changing into her slippers, she walked over to the box and peered down at the neat row of radishes. Stunned, she looked up at Lin Xinyan and asked, “Did you really buy so many of them? Can you even finish this?”

Lin Xinyan continued chewing. Shaking her head, she said, “I didn't buy this.”

The radish was very crispy, and a loud crunching sound reverberated around the room as Lin Xinyan chewed. Qin Ya couldn't help but wonder if raw radish was really as good as Lin Xinyan made it out to be.

She went to the kitchen and took a bite out of the other half of the radish. It wasn't as spicy as most radishes. Although it didn't taste very good, it didn't taste awful either. Qin Ya walked back to the living room and asked, "If you didn't buy it, who did?"

A sudden realization dawned on Lin Xinyan. Gazing up at Qin Ya, she said, "You were the only person I told about my radish craving. Who else did you tell, I wonder?"

Qin Ya looked a little sheepish.

Pulling a chair towards her and sitting down in it, Qin Ya smiled awkwardly and said, "I guess your husband is really caring towards you, huh."

Zong Jinghao was the only person she told about Lin Xinyan's wild desire for radish. He must have sent this box of radishes over.

The man's gesture was heartwarming.

He treated his wife really well.

"Although he isn't here with you, he's obviously still thinking of you," Qin Ya said, smiling.

Lin Xinyan couldn't find it in herself to be happy. It wasn't because she was upset that Zong Jinghao had sent her the radishes, but because of everything that had happened earlier that day.

"Have you passed the thing to him?" she asked.

Qin Ya shook her head. “Nope. He said he’ll be coming over. I don’t think he’s in B City at all.”

She would’ve mailed it over to him if he had been in B City. However, he told her to keep it at her place until he came over to collect it himself.

Lin Xinyan frowned. Where were Zong Jinghao and the kids, if they weren’t in B City? Were they in some sort of danger?

Logically speaking, Wen Qing’s incident had resolved itself very quickly. Nothing should have happened to them.

“Is something wrong?” Qin Ya asked worriedly. “You’ve been looking pretty bad since you got that delivery this afternoon. What was in that envelope?”

Although Lin Xinyan had handed the envelope to her, Qin Ya didn’t dare to peek at its contents without her permission.

“You can look at it for yourself.” Lin Xinyan couldn’t help but feel depressed whenever she thought about those photographs. Although she knew they could be fake, those photos looked way too real to be photoshopped. It was as though those things had really happened.

She was a woman, after all. Those pictures had unnerve her immensely.

If they didn’t, it would mean that she didn’t really love Zong Jinghao. Which woman could remain perfectly calm after seeing explicit pictures of her husband going to bed with another woman?

She was a woman, after all. A normal woman.

Lin Xinyan felt very tired. She stood up and said, “I’m going to take a walk outside.”

Qin Ya said, "Come back earlier. And don't go beyond our neighborhood."

After promising her, Lin Xinyan changed into her shoes and prepared to go out. Just then, her phone started to ring. Instead of a name, the caller ID was a string of numbers.

She had changed her number soon after arriving in C City. There were only a few people who knew her number, and she had saved all of them as contacts in her phone. Sometimes, she received calls from an unknown caller, but they had all turned out to be telemarketers. She stuffed her phone back into her pocket, but it started to ring again. She was already in a bad mood to begin with, so her tone was rather unpleasant as she spoke into the phone.

"What do you want?"

"It's me."

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As Lin Xinyan was in a bad mood, she was too distracted to discern whose voice it was. She snapped moodily, "Who are you?"

Bai Yinning glanced at his phone, wondering if he had dialed the wrong number. After all, it was rare to see Lin Xinyan so fired up like that. *Who angered her this time?*

He placed the phone back to his ear and said, "I'm Bai Yinning."

This time, it was Lin Xinyan's turn to glance at her phone. She was surprised to see that he had called her. "How did you know my phone number?"

"I even know your whereabouts. It's a piece of cake for me to find out your phone number." Bai Yinning smiled bitterly. "Are you unhappy that I'm contacting you?"

Sitting on the tiny bench on the porch, Lin Xinyan explained, "No. I'm just in a bad mood."

"Do you want to share with me why you're in a bad mood?" asked Bai Yinning.

"Why did you call me? Did something happen?" She did not want to explain her feelings to anyone.

I'm not going to spread Zong Jinghao's indecent photos around, am I?

I'd be crazy if I did that.

"Yeah, something happened. If I called you for no good reason, you'll probably hang up, right?" said Bai Yinning as he chuckled.

Lin Xinyan pursed her lips and remained silent.

Bai Yinning's voice sounded from the phone again. "Come to Baicheng."

"I'm afraid that I won't have time to do that," rejected Lin Xinyan unhesitatingly.

It was true that she did not have a lot of time on her hands. In addition to managing the store and the factory, she had to worry about the matter regarding Zong Jinghao too.

Bai Yinning smiled bitterly. Despite expecting such a response, he could not help but feel disappointed.

"We're still friends, right?" Suppressing the bitterness he was feeling, he chuckled. "Will you still refuse even if I passed you an invitation for my wedding?"

What?

Did I hear him wrongly?

Bai Yinning is getting married?

"You mean that?" asked Lin Xinyan suspiciously.

"Of course. How can I joke about that? Are you reluctant to see me marry another woman?" He joked, feigning a laugh.

"No, I'm just really surprised." There was not even the slightest news of his marriage spreading around. Yet, he so abruptly announced his wedding now.

"So, will you accept my wedding invitation? We're still friends, right?"

Before Lin Xinyan could reply, Bai Yinning continued, "As it's probably inconvenient for you, I've already instructed Gao Yuan to pick you up."

Lin Xinyan held onto her forehead. *He isn't giving me a chance to refuse at all.*

However, since this is his wedding, it's inappropriate to reject his invitation.

After contemplating for a while, she agreed. She decided that she would treat it as an opportunity for her to destress. Hopefully, after she came back from Baicheng, Zong Jinghao would have settled everything regarding the photos.

“When is Gao Yuan coming over?” asked Lin Xinyan.

“He’s probably already there.”

Lin Xinyan was at a loss for words.

“You’ve arranged for everything.”

“When it concerns you, I must naturally arrange everything carefully,” said Bai Yinning with a hint of a smile.

As Bai Yinning’s wedding would be held tomorrow, Lin Xinyan had to leave today and reach just in time for it.

She told Qin Ya about it. As it was summer, she brought two outfits and an evening gown. After all, since she was attending someone’s wedding, she had to dress more formally.

Qin Ya knew that Bai Yinning sent someone over, so she did not feel worried. Similar to Lin Xinyan, she merely expressed shock at his sudden marriage.

He’s acting so quickly.

I wonder how his wife-to-be is like.

Gao Yuan drove an MPV car over, which was spacious enough for her to rest.

After entering the car, Lin Xinyan asked, “Is Mr. Bai really getting married?”

She felt that everything happened so quickly as if it was all a dream.

“Yeah, he can’t possibly joke about this,” replied Gao Yuan as he started the engine.

“What’s the girl like?” asked Lin Xinyan out of sheer curiosity.

Although Bai Yinning couldn’t walk, she could tell that he was an extremely proud man.

Since he was getting married, the girl was definitely an exceptional person too.

“You should personally ask Mr. Bai about this.” Gao Yuan was not trying to keep it a secret; he simply felt that Bai Yinning should tell it to her himself.

After all, Bai Yinning had had a crush on Lin Xinyan—perhaps even till now. He merely decided to give up on her after understanding the situation.

“You can lie down and rest at the back. There are some snacks and drinks in the mini-fridge,” Gao Yuan informed.

The car was quite comfortable, with the air conditioner blowing at just the right temperature. When the back seats were fully reclined, it acted as a massive bed. In fact, it was no different from her bed at home.

Most importantly, there were snacks prepared for her. Lin Xinyan glanced at Gao Yuan. “No wonder you’re Mr. Bai’s right-hand man.”

He was really meticulous when taking care of others.

Having understood what Lin Xinyan meant, Gao Yuan explained, "Mr. Bai instructed me to do this. He was afraid that you'll feel tired during the long car ride."

Lin Xinyan was at a loss for words. After a long while, she uttered, "I should thank him when I manage to see him."

Gao Yuan shot a glance at her and remained silent. Bai Yinning's feelings for her were made blatantly clear. He had everything so well thought out only because he still liked her.

"Rest well. We'll reach by tomorrow morning," said Gao Yuan.

Lin Xinyan mumbled a word of acknowledgment in response before lying down to rest. Perhaps due to the slight shaking of the car, she fell asleep quickly.

It was already dawn when she woke up. She asked, "Are we there already?"

"Yes. We're already in Baicheng," replied Gao Yuan.

"Thank you. It must've been tiring for you." It was an exhausting task to drive through the night.

"Someone else drove me to your place. I'm only responsible for driving you to the city," explained Gao Yuan.

Afraid that Gao Yuan would be too exhausted, Bai Yinning had asked a chauffeur to drive him there. Hence, he had been resting in the car on the journey to Lin Xinyan's place. As he only drove on the way back, he was not too exhausted.

"Help me find a hotel to stay in. I'll wash up for a bit," instructed Lin Xinyan.

As Baicheng was part of Bai Yinning's turf, it was more convenient for Gao Yuan to settle things.

He quickly arranged for Lin Xinyan to stay in a hotel.

When Lin Xinyan reached the hotel, she rested for a while, washed up, and changed into a neat set of clothes. By then, it was already 6 in the morning.

Gao Yuan went to pick her up, saying that Bai Yinning wanted to meet her.

Lin Xinyan frowned. "It's his wedding today. We'll still eventually meet at the wedding."

Hence, there was no need to meet now.

Smiling politely, Gao Yuan said, "I'm just responsible for conveying the message. Please, meet Mr. Bai and don't put me in a difficult position."

Before Lin Xinyan could respond, Gao Yuan continued, "Don't be too worried, Ms. Lin. Since Mr. Bai has already decided to get married, he will not put you in a tight spot."

Lin Xinyan nodded in agreement. Since Gao Yuan said that, it would be unreasonable of her to keep refusing.

The man drove her to a relatively remote field in the countryside. The morning sun had just risen, so it was not scorching hot.

After alighting the car, Lin Xinyan spotted Bai Yinning's figure beside the river. Early in the morning, the place was extremely tranquil.

She stepped on the river bank that was filled with tall weeds and tiny pebbles all strewn across the ground. Without turning around, Bai Yinning seemed to know that she had arrived.

"Are you surprised?" he asked.

“Not really. After all, you’re already at the age to marry,” replied Lin Xinyan nonchalantly.

Standing beside him, she took in a deep breath of the fresh air and felt her body relax.

Bai Yinning turned his head around and gazed at her. “Aren’t you curious about who I’m marrying?”

Meeting his gaze, Lin Xinyan asked, “Who is she?”

Bai Yinning’s gaze moved to the river. “She’s from a powerful family, which will aid my career significantly. You know, the Bai Group was badly hit because of your petty husband. Hence, I had to marry a woman with a strong family background.”

Behind them, Gao Yuan’s car was nowhere to be seen on the muddy road – he had driven away. However, another car was heading towards them.

When Zong Qifeng learned that the two children had followed Zong Jinghao over, he wished to bond with the kids. Zong Qifeng did not need to return to B City anytime soon, and they did not know when they would visit again. So, they agreed to stay for a day more so the kids could accompany him. Hence, their return to C City was delayed by one day.

They were supposed to return yesterday morning, but they only ended up leaving this morning.

As they had slept late last night, the kids were very tired and unenergetic upon entering the car. Hugging his daughter, Zong Jinghao glanced out of the window when they reached this particular stretch of the road.

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Zong Yanxi wriggled around in Zong Jinghao's arms and asked, "Daddy, when can we see Mommy?"

Lowering his head, he looked at his daughter, patted her back, and coaxed, "Sleep for a while. You'll see her when you wake up."

If they set off now, they would reach C City before sunset.

Two figures standing by the river quickly flashed past the car window.

When Zong Jinghao glanced at the window, he had already passed that stretch of the road and missed Lin Xinyan.

On the other hand, Lin Xinyan, who was standing beside the river, was unaware that her children and Zong Jinghao had just passed by.

She was still astounded at the fact that Bai Yinning was only marrying for his business' sake.

This was something she disagreed with.

"You're going to marry a woman who'll accompany you for the rest of your life. You shouldn't just focus on how powerful her family is!"

"Then, what should I aim for?" Bai Yinning raised his head and looked at her.

"At the very least, you must like the person. Otherwise, the girl who married you might hate you if she discovers that you only married her for your career."

Marriage was akin to the second beginning of a woman's life. Previously, she had no choice over which family to be born in or who her parents were.

However, she had the autonomy to choose her husband. She could decide on the person who would accompany her for the rest of her life.

Yet, Bai Yinning was blatantly exploiting the poor girl.

"I want to like her too. But, how can I control my feelings?" asked Bai Yinning with a bitter smile. "Do you have a way to do that? Can you teach me?"

Lin Xinyan averted her eyes, dodging his passionate gaze. "I don't know what you're talking about.

Actually, Bai Yinning wished to say that as long as she was not his bride, it made no difference who he ended up marrying.

"You're really pretty today." His gaze landed on Lin Xinyan's dress – a pink evening gown with a plunging V-neck. It fitted snugly on her petite body. The silky dress reached all the way to her knees, revealing her thin legs. Small flowers that were decorated with pearls were embroidered all over the dress. Her slightly protruding stomach further added a gentle beauty to the elegant and luxurious evening gown.

Perhaps only a mother could exude such a gentle and tender aura.

Lin Xinyan did not respond, simply smiling politely.

She thought that regardless of what she said, Bai Yinning would reply with something that would render her speechless again.

Hence, she decided to stay silent.

Neither of them spoke. They stood there silently as the sun ascended above the clouds, slowly shifting their shadows on the riverbank.

Lin Xinyan broke the silence. "It's a joyous occasion for you today. You probably have a lot of things to settle, so you should head back earlier."

Bai Yinning grunted a reply and summoned Gao Yuan. They then left the river together.

On the other side, Zong Jinghao, who had just entered the highway, received a message from Qin Ya. Instead of texts, the message consisted of pictures after pictures.

With Lin Xinyan's permission, Qin Ya looked at the items in the folder and was utterly shocked. She now understood why Lin Xinyan's expression had looked so ugly back then.

She did not know if it was a conspiracy, nor did she have as many considerations as Lin Xinyan did. All she wanted was to inform Zong Jinghao about this and ask him whether it was real.

She feared that Lin Xinyan would get hurt.

Having experienced betrayal in the past, she knew how it felt like.

Zong Jinghao was equally shocked. He had never even seen the woman in the photos. Why were there so many of them?

Where did Qin Ya get those?

He quickly called Qin Ya, who picked up the call almost instantly.

Her anxious voice sounded, "What happened? Are the photos real?"

“Where did you get those photos from?” Zong Jinghao shot her another question coldly. *Who took those photos? Even Qin Ya knows about it. In that case, has Lin Xinyan seen them before?*

Has there been a misunderstanding?

“Didn’t I mention to you the previous time that an anonymous person sent something over? Ms. Lin told me to pass it to you, and you told me to keep it first.”

“She knows about it? Has she seen the photos?” Zong Jinghao was starting to lose his composure. He was afraid that Lin Xinyan would believe it and misunderstand. If she got angry, it might harm her body—she was a pregnant lady, after all.

Rationally speaking, if such photos of Lin Xinyan appeared in front of him, he would go mad too.

“Of course she’s seen it! She was completely shaken up after. That’s why I’m curious to know if the photos are real!”

“Of course not! Look after her for me. I’ll return immediately.” Just as Zong Jinghao was about to end the call, Qin Ya’s voice sounded again. “She’s not here. She went to Baicheng.”

“What?”

“She went to Baicheng. She was invited to attend Bai Yinning’s wedding.”

“Okay.” He hung up the call and instructed Su Zhan, who was driving the car. “Turn around. We’re going back to Baicheng.”

Confused, Su Zhan asked, “Why? Who did you call just now? Did something happen?”

Zong Jinghao snapped sternly, "I told you to turn around! What's with all these questions?"

He was starting to feel anxious. *Lin Xinyan going to Bai Yinning at such a coincident timing. Who knows what tricks he has up his sleeve?*

Now that Lin Xinyan's resolve is wavering, will he try to take advantage of the situation?

A wedding?

Who is he marrying? He's marrying so quickly? Is this a deliberate plot to trick Lin Xinyan?

He knew Bai Yinning's feelings for Lin Xinyan, so he felt extremely frustrated.

When Su Zhan glanced towards the back, he noticed Zong Jinghao's ghastly pale face. Hence, he did not dare utter a single word. After exiting the highway, he turned around and drove in the opposite direction.

Zong Jinghao closed his eyes, wondering if he was being too impulsive. He tried to calm himself down and think about it again. *How did those photos appear in front of Lin Xinyan?*

It's obvious that the person is targeting me while knowing about my relationship with Lin Xinyan.

After calming himself down, he called Shen Peichuan, who quickly picked up the call.

Before he could say anything, Shen Peichuan's voice sounded, "I was about to call you."

"What happened?" Shen Peichuan would not call him if nothing happened.

“Didn’t you tell me to keep an eye on Gu Bei? I didn’t manage to find him. He’s not in B City.” Shen Peichuan found the situation quite fishy.

Zong Jinghao instantly understood. Gu Bei was probably the culprit behind those photos.

If he’s not in B City, is he in C City?

He asked, “Have you been busy recently?”

Shen Peichuan’s superior, who had high hopes for him, was planning to promote him at work. Hence, Shen Peichuan was inundated with work recently.

However, he still told Zong Jinghao that he was not busy.

Since Zong Jinghao asked him that, it meant that the man had a favor to ask.

“Go to C City. If I’m not wrong, he’s probably over there. See what he’s up to.”

Shen Peichuan was shocked. “Is he trying to stir up trouble with sister-in-law?”

“Investigate him first. I’ll fill you in on the details when I get back.”

Shen Peichuan wanted to ask Zong Jinghao if he was at C City.

However, he stopped short before the words left his mouth. Instead, he said, “Okay. I’ll head over today.”

If Zong Jinghao was in C City, he would not ask Shen Peichuan to make a trip there.

Su Zhan drove silently, not daring to say a single word.

After an hour, they returned to Baicheng.

As the wedding was probably going to be held in Baicheng's largest hotel, Zong Jinghao instructed Su Zhan to drive there.

Nearing the hotel, they could already tell that someone was hosting a joyous occasion there. Fresh flowers were scattered on the ground while rows of cars were parked by the roads. There was even a huge crowd on the streets, eager to witness the event.

Zong Jinghao frowned. *Is Bai Yinning really getting married?*

At that moment, the car stopped at the hotel entrance. The kids, who were initially asleep, jolted awake. "Are we home already?"

Zong Jinghao patted them. "Not yet. Go back with Uncle Su first. I have something to settle."

He did not know what was happening inside, so he instructed Su Zhan to bring the kids back to the Cheng family while he entered the hotel alone.

Although Zong Yanxi was a bit reluctant, she still nodded.

Zong Jinghao pushed the car door open and alighted from the car. After watching Su Zhan drive away with the kids, he strode into the hotel.

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The hotel was filled with a joyous atmosphere, with lavish decorations decking the lobby. It was not a modern wedding, but a traditional Chinese one. A festive-looking red color scheme was chosen to highlight its strong Chinese influence. The wedding hall – the focal feature of the entire place – was similarly decorated.

The venue was very crowded. Although Bai Yinning did not have a lot of relatives, many of his business partners attended the wedding. There were also the company's upper management and the bride's friends. The entire hall was packed with people.

As everyone's eyes were glued to the hall, no one would notice anyone entering. It was the most exciting part of the wedding now. In a traditional Chinese wedding, there was no exchange of vows. Instead, they bowed to their ancestors.

The bride wore a Chinese-style Qun Kwa, which was elaborately adorned with embroidered flowers. A phoenix coronet was perched on her head, with a red veil covering her face. She looked demure and beautiful.

On the other hand, Bai Yinning did not wear a Chinese-style Tang suit. Instead, he wore a formal Western suit. He was smiling, looking very satisfied with this wedding.

Zong Jinghao was in no mood to appreciate the wedding. All he wanted to do was to find Lin Xinyan as soon as possible. However, he could not spot her immediately as there were many people present.

The bride's parents were pretty powerful people. They went onto the stage and gave a speech, expressing their satisfaction with their son-in-law.

Except for being crippled, Bai Yinning was capable, good-looking, and exceptional.

The only flaw he had was the inability to walk like normal people.

Although the wedding was very grand, it omitted a lot of details, such as the bride's speech and the toasts.

Standing under the red banners at the right side of the hall, Lin Xinyan watched the scene silently. As she was quite close to the stage, she could see the bride's face clearly. Although her facial features were pretty, there was nothing exceptional about her, nor was she breathtakingly beautiful. Still, there was beauty in her unassuming and gentle look.

Her eyes were as clear as a lake, devoid of any corruption.

After the wedding rituals, Bai Yinning exited the stage with the bride and headed towards Lin Xinyan.

"Where are you bringing me?" asked Zhou Chunchun curiously as she followed him obediently.

Bai Yinning smiled. "I'm bringing you to meet someone."

Soon, they reached Lin Xinyan. Bai Yinning introduced her to Lin Xinyan with a smile, "This is my wife, Zhou Chunchun."

Lin Xinyan greeted her politely, "Hello."

Blinking her innocent eyes, Zhou Chunchun said, "I've seen her before."

Still smiling, Bai Yinning asked, "Oh, really? Where have you seen her?"

Lin Xinyan also searched through her memories, but she could not recall anyone who resembled Zhou Chunchun.

Indifferently and calmly, Zhou Chunchun explained, "I met her when I was ordering a tailor-made wedding dress at Cloud Corporation. Another designer welcomed mother and I, so she didn't notice us."

Lin Xinyan had a sudden revelation. *No wonder her wedding dress looked so familiar!* She remembered seeing the design on Qin Ya's design drafts. It was Qin Ya's first design task after the opening of Cloud Corporation.

She only remembered after Zhou Chunchun mentioned that.

My memory is getting worse. Could it be that my memory will regress when I'm pregnant?

But this didn't happen when I was pregnant with Yanxi and Yanchen. Is it because I'm too exhausted? Although I really want to go back, rest, and return to C City, this is Bai Yinning's wedding. I can only leave after it ends.

"As I came too hurriedly, I didn't prepare any special wedding gifts for you. That's why I gave you a huge red packet. Have a great wedding," said Lin Xinyan with a grin.

Feigning anger, Bai Yinning exclaimed, "You're so insincere! Do you think I'll be satisfied just by a red packet?"

"It's because you didn't tell me beforehand, not because I didn't prepare any gifts for you. If I knew this lady was going to be your bride, I would've told Qin Ya to not accept any fees and gift the wedding dress to your wife instead. Do you want me to refund the fees for the wedding dress?"

Bai Yinning was speechless.

Am I that poor?

“Now that I’m married, are you still wary? Why are you speaking in such a distant manner?” asked Bai Yinning.

Lin Xinyan frowned. *Isn't he being too inconsiderate of his wife's feelings? How can he say that in such a scenario?*

She could not help but sneak a glance at Zhou Chunchun. However, no strange expression appeared on her face after hearing Bai Yinning’s words. Instead, she looked calm, blinking her wide eyes.

“She...”

Lin Xinyan sensed that something was amiss.

Bai Yinning raised his head, gazed at Zhou Chunchun, and reached his hand out to her. Squatting down, she obediently placed her hand over his palm and called happily, “Yinning.”

“Do you like me?” asked Bai Yinning.

Zhou Chunchun nodded honestly. “I do.”

“Isn’t she so innocent? You can tell it from her face.” Bai Yinning’s gaze then landed on Lin Xinyan.

Pursing her lips, Lin Xinyan remained silent.

Bai Yinning stroked Zhou Chunchun’s forehead. Whenever he talked to her, she would obediently squat beside him. “She’s 23 this year, but she has the intelligence of a 13-year-old. Such an innocent girl. She doesn’t know the workings of the world, nor has she witnessed the dark side of humanity. She’s the simplest-minded girl I’ve ever met.”

Lin Xinyan did not know what to say.

What is Bai Yinning intending to do?

“Aren’t we so compatible? A crippled man with a fool,” lamented Bai Yinning self-deprecatingly.

Lin Xinyan did not seem to find it amusing at all. She asked softly, “Why did you make such a choice?”

“What’s wrong with it? As the apple of the Zhou family’s eye, she can aid my career significantly. She’s just an innocent girl. I’ve experienced too many malicious schemes and vicious lies. If I marry such an innocent woman, I can at least fall asleep peacefully without worrying about someone backstabbing me while I’m asleep. Isn’t that great?”

Immediately, he spotted a man walking towards them from the crowd. His grin widened as he asked, “Yan, since it’s my wedding, why don’t you give me a present?”

“What gift?” Lin Xinyan was completely oblivious to the person approaching her from behind.

She was still shocked by Bai Yinning’s marriage with Zhou Chunchun. If the bride were just a normal girl, she could be nonchalant about it. But now...

Bai Yinning stared at her stomach, a complex emotion brewing in his eyes. However, keeping a smile on his face, he asked, “Can I touch your baby? I probably won’t ever have a kid. This is my only wish...”

Lin Xinyan remained silent, her frown deepening.

“If you don’t say anything, I’ll just take that as a yes.” As he spoke, he stretched his hand out.

Lin Xinyan knew she should refuse. Regardless of anything, that was the necessary action to take. However, when Bai Yinning placed his palm on her stomach, she did not dodge instantly.

For some reason, she found him to be an extremely pitiable person. There was no other way to describe him.

Similarly, if a pitiful beggar asked her for money, she would unhesitatingly empty her wallet for him.

“If your petty husband sees this, will he be mad with fury?” joked Bai Yinning with a smirk.

Lin Xinyan lowered her gaze. When she thought of that man, the memories of those indecent photos would surface in her mind. Her heart sank, a wave of sadness came over her.

Instead of replying to Bai Yinning, she said, “I think I should go back now.”

“Okay. I probably won’t need to send someone to drive you back,” agreed Bai Yinning coolly as his smile widened.

When he saw the man’s sullen expression, he felt happier. The corners of his lips lifted upwards into a bright grin.

“Why?” Looking at his smile, Lin Xinyan thought that he was up to no good again.

Holding Zhou Chunchun’s hand, Bai Yinning quietly glanced over her shoulder, still smiling.

Only then did Lin Xinyan notice that someone was standing behind her. She turned around slowly.

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He was standing right behind her. His handsome face was expressionless as he stared at Bai Yinning with a cold gaze.

The moment Lin Xinyan saw him, she was stunned as she did not expect him to show up here.

For a brief moment, she stood frozen on the spot.

She had envisioned meeting him in B City or C City. Never in her wildest dreams would she expect them to meet in Baicheng—and even at Bai Yinning’s wedding. *Why did he show up here?*

If he’s here, where are the kids?

“Mr. Zong, did you rush over to attend my wedding?” asked Bai Yinning with a smirk.

Zong Jinghao strode over solemnly. Briefly shooting a cold glare at Bai Yinning, he snapped, “Have we ever befriended each other, Mr. Bai?”

When Bai Yinning saw how furious Zong Jinghao was, his mood improved considerably. An annoying smirk played on his lips. “We’re not friends, but I am acquainted with your wife. Don’t couples share everything? Or are you saying that you and Yan don’t share secrets?”

Every time Zong Jinghao heard Bai Yinning intimately call Lin Xinyan by her nickname, he had an urge to strangle the man to death.

“Don’t be riled up, Mr. Zong. To prevent you from feeling jealous, I even married someone. You should thank me instead.” Smiling, Bai Yinning continued, “I wish

to be on good terms with you, Mr. Zong. However, it seems like you have a grudge against me as if I'm the biggest villain in the world.”

“You overestimate yourself. You're not a villain—you're a despicable and shameless man.” Standing beside Lin Xinyan, Zong Jinghao held her hand and mocked calmly, “Compared to evil villains, people who hide their true shameless nature under a genteel facade are more irritating.”

With that, he dragged Lin Xinyan away and left.

As Bai Yinning watched them weave through the crowd, a faint smile played on his lips.

“Yinning, what are you laughing at?” Zhou Chunchun thought they were arguing. However, she was confused over the reason why.

“I'm laughing at that immature man. When he's angry, I feel very happy.” At the very least, he had managed to get his revenge by getting on that man's nerves. Turning around to look at Zhou Chunchun, he asked, “Did you think the woman earlier is pretty?”

Zhou Chunchun nodded. “Yeah. Is there a baby in her stomach?”

“Yeah.” Bai Yinning's smile faded, leaving behind a bitter, melancholy expression on his face.

“Are they a couple?” asked Zhou Chunchun.

Bai Yinning nodded.

“Then, are we a couple?” asked Zhou Chunchun again.

Patently, Bai Yinning replied, “Yeah. Let's go.”

He did not want to dwell on that topic.

Grabbing the handles of his wheelchair, Zhou Chunchun offered, "I'll push you. Let's go to my father."

Bai Yinning replied, "Okay, I'll follow what you do."

Zhou Chunchun flashed him a smile that was as innocent and naive as a child's.

As Bai Yinning gazed at her smile, a grin spread across his cheeks.

Outside the hotel, Zong Jinghao continued dragging Lin Xinyan forward as if he wanted her to be as far away from Bai Yinning as possible. Forgetting that she was pregnant, he strode briskly without stopping at all. Lin Xinyan, having returned to her senses, yelled, "Slow down!"

Only then did Zong Jinghao stop in his tracks and turn around to look at her.

When his eyes met hers, he surprisingly found himself at a loss for words.

After a long while, he broke the silence.

"Hug me. I'm afraid that I won't be able to control my temper."

When he remembered how Bai Yinning had touched her stomach, fury surged through him. He wished to ask her why she did not push Bai Yinning away and reject him. After all, as the baby was not Bai Yinning's, he had no right to touch her stomach.

However, Lin Xinyan got even angrier when he mentioned it.

When he was not around, all she could do was sulk silently. Now that he was in front of her, it made her feel even angrier as if flames of fury were raging within her body.

“Are you more upset than I am? If I slept with another man and you saw those pictures, how would you feel?”

Zong Jinghao was rendered speechless.

“Those are fake. I don’t even recognize the women there!” He explained urgently.

“Really? Then, tell me what happened! Also, why are you here? Where’s Yanxi and Yanchen?” Lin Xinyan shot the questions at him.

For the past two days, she was extremely concerned about them, afraid that something bad would happen to them. Hence, she was constantly in a gloomy mood, with worry always clouding her mind.

“Someone sabotaged me. It’s a long story. I’ll explain it to you when we go back. Yanxi and Yancheng are at the old manor. Yan...”

Zong Jinghao’s voice became softer when he called her nickname, his agitation slowly diminishing. He stared at her with a gaze so passionate that it would even trump the heat of the scorching sun.

Lin Xinyan felt like the air around them had stopped moving. Almost forgetting how to breathe, she stood there motionlessly. All the thoughts disappeared from her mind, leaving nothing but a blank slate behind.

Reaching his arms out, he hugged her and whispered hoarsely, “I missed you so much.”

Initially frozen to the spot, Lin Xinyan finally returned to her senses. She felt like she could breathe again, yet nothing could describe the complex emotions that were coursing through her right now.

She raised her arms mechanically, wrapping them around his waist. Burrowing her face into his chest, she tried to hold her tears back to no avail.

She was not heartbroken, upset, nor overwhelmed with emotions at their reunion. For some reason, tears just gushed out of her eyes without any warning. The tears came so abruptly that she could not hide them in time.

“I’m sorry. I wanted to let the kids stay by your side. I know you need them more than I do.” He had never blamed or chastised her for that. As their mother, she needed them by her side more than he did.

The previous days had been torturous. Yet, as he hugged her now, it seemed like those days of suffering were no longer so horrendous.

No one mentioned what had happened in the past.

They simply hugged each other in silence. The embrace was so passionate that even the scorching sun paled in comparison.

It was only until Lin Xinyan’s phone rang that their long hug ended. She whipped out the phone and saw the words “Uncle Er” displayed on the screen. It was Shao Yun.

She accepted the call. Zong Jinghao held her hand as they stood under the Chinese parasol tree. The dense leaves shielded them from the unrelenting sun.

He wiped the sweat away from her forehead and tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ears.

Lifting her head up, she gazed at him.

Shao Yun’s voice sounded from the phone. “I’ve already investigated what you told me. He’s not at B City. It looks like nothing had happened. However, I heard something else.”

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Lin Xinyan looked away from Zong Jinghao and kept her eyes downcast as she answered the call. “What’s the matter? What do you want to tell me?”

“It’s about your uncle, Wen Qing,” Shao Yun replied.

He knew something about Lin Xinyan’s mother, Wen Xian because she was Zhuang Ziyi’s wife. In the beginning, he had only agreed to help Lin Xinyan find out who might harm Zong Jinghao, but he had found out something about Wen Qing in the process.

He only knew about what had happened to Wen Qing, not his feud with Zong Jinghao.

As Wen Xian’s daughter and Wen Qing’s niece, he supposed that Lin Xinyan had the right to know what happened to her uncle so that she could offer him some help.

Zong Jinghao, who was standing nearby when Lin Xinyan was having the phone call, heard Shao Yun’s voice coming from the speaker. In the meantime, he lay his eyes on her face to see whether she would be irritated to hear about Wen Qing. However, Lin Xinyan held her head too low for him to observe her expression.

However, Lin Xinyan was not that emotional because she had already learned about what had happened to Wen Qing through the news. Even if she felt anything, she wouldn’t show it around Zong Jinghao.

She shifted her body toward the pedestrian lane to maintain some distance from him so that he wouldn’t be able to hear what Shao Yun told her over the phone.

Still keeping her head low, she stared at her feet as she responded, "I've got it. I hope you stay away from this matter. Don't ever tell me anything about it in the future. Since I'm not in C City right now, please help me to look after my factory."

"But, he's your uncle..."

"Uncle Er," Lin Xinyan cut him off, making it obvious that she was not comfortable with the topic of their conversation.

Shao Yun paused; he could sense the repulsion in her voice.

Hence, he steered their conversation away from Wen Qing by asking her, "Where've you gone if you aren't in C City?"

"I went to attend my friend's wedding ceremony, but I'll be back soon."

"Great. Don't worry about the factory. I can take care of it."

Lin Xinyan mumbled a response, "I'm hanging up then." She ended the call after making sure that Shao Yun had heard her. Then, she stuffed her phone back into her bag and looked up to find herself staring straight into Zong Jinghao's brooding eyes.

There was a trace of inquisition beneath the facade of calmness.

She was standing very close to him during the phone call, so she was sure that he must have heard what Shao Yun told her.

Worried that he might get the wrong idea out of it, she explained, "I asked Uncle Er to do some investigations when I received those offensive photos because I was worried someone might harm you."

That was how she learned about what had happened to Wen Qing. She didn't tell him that because the mere mention of Wen Qing's name was capable of making

her uncomfortable. The existence of the man was a massive hurdle that came between them.

Pursing his lips, Zong Jinghao knew what was bothering her. Therefore, he decided not to broach the subject. The great atmosphere they were having at the moment would not be ruined then.

With a crooked smile playing on his lips, he asked, "So, did you say you were worried about me? Were you scared that I would be in danger?"

She glanced at him and explained, "I was worried about the two kids because they were staying with you."

He draped an arm around her shoulder and teased, "Is it so hard to admit that you care about me?"

Feeling shy, she looked away, but he quickly turned her head back to face him. "Tell me. Did you miss me?"

"I didn't," she denied it on purpose.

If she was honest, she had missed him terribly.

She couldn't wait to see him every single day.

"Are you telling the truth?" Pursing his lips, he appeared unconvinced because how she had behaved that night told him the contrary.

"It's not the truth." All of a sudden, she turned her body sideways to wrap her arms around his skinny waist. She had been feeling worn out both physically and mentally lately. "I'm feeling so tired."

He patted her back soothingly, knowing well that she was bearing a heavier burden than him at the moment. "Let's settle down in C City in the future. When

we get back to the city, I'll buy a bigger house so that all of us can stay together. How does that sound?"

"Is it true?" Indeed, she had no intention of going back to B City where they would be inevitably reminded of all those unpleasant stuff and people even though they tried hard to forget about them.

After all, it was where everything had happened. It was hard to stop the people from talking about it.

Lin Xinyan had some reservations about the decision considering that B City was where his career was based. "How about your company?" she asked.

"I'll hire someone to manage it for me." He grinned and said, "As for me, I'll do nothing else but keep you and the kids company. If my company ever goes bust, you will have to provide me a living. I'm sure you can afford me."

Lin Xinyan shot him a supercilious glance and snapped, "I can't afford you."

"I'll start eating less for my meals. Also, you don't have to prepare a room for me because I'll be sharing your room and bed. That way, I won't take much space, and you won't have to fork out too much money to support me."

Lin Xinyan was rendered speechless.

"The weather is so hot right now. Why don't we go back and pick up the kids?" Putting his arm around her, Zong Jinghao tried to hail a cab but found none in sight. "Are you feeling tired? Should we stay for the night and head back to the city tomorrow?"

"I think we should head back as soon as possible. Do you have any clue who's behind the photos?" Lin Xinyan looked up at him.

She felt uneasy leaving the problem unsolved.

Drawing her closer to him, Zong Jinghao replied, "I have some ideas but not a sure answer yet. However, I've already asked Shen Peichuan to get to the bottom of it." Staring at her solemnly, he emphasized, "You have to know that I didn't do it."

She pretended to look puzzled, although she could understand what he meant. "You didn't do what?"

Zong Jinghao fell silent.

"You know what I mean." *Do I really have to spell it out for her?*

"I don't."

Even though the photos were edited to look that way, they had still left her traumatized. The photos had shown her how it would be like if he really were unfaithful to her one day.

"I have never slept with any other woman but you," Zong Jinghao assured, emphasizing each and every word of his sentence. He then lifted his hand to catch the attention of a cab that was coming their way.

"I won't be able to verify that." In fact, she believed in him but still felt quite bothered and annoyed because of the photos for some reason.

Zong Jinghao was speechless.

When the cab pulled up beside them, he opened the door and placed his hand on top of her to protect her head. After she slid into the backseat, he followed suit.

They kept mum along the journey because of the presence of the cab driver. After paying the driver and getting out of the cab when they reached their destination, he held her hands and suggested, "Why don't you do a check on it?"

“Do a check on what?” Lin Xinyan was confused.

In a serious tone, he answered, “To check whether I’ve ever been unfaithful to you.”

“H-How do I go about it?” she stammered. Other than catching him in the act and getting some concrete evidence of it, what else could she do to verify it?

Zong Jinghao tugged on his collar. The swelteringly hot weather had his skin covered with a thin sheen of sweat. With a roguish smile, he said, “Of course, you’ll have to do it in bed.”

She was left stumped.

It was only after a while did she make a comeback, “You’re so shameless.”

Unperturbed by her remark, he reached out to stroke her belly. Through her blouse, he could feel the warmth of her body. “Please stay away from that Bai guy in the future.”

“Are you jealous?” She stared at him curiously.

“I wished I could chop off his hands.” At the thought of that sly smile on Bai Yinning’s face, Zong Jinghao couldn’t wait to slash his face so that he could no longer smile like that.

Lin Xinyan knew she should have kept her distance from Bai Yinning back then. After all, they were of opposite genders, and both of them were married. It was especially inappropriate of Bai Yinning to do so. Regardless of his wife’s mental state, he was not supposed to do something like that in her presence.

“You know what? The girl Bai Yinning married is a very naive and innocent lady.” Although Lin Xinyan put it in a very tactful manner, Zong Jinghao could understand what she meant.

Bai Yinning had actually been audacious enough to flirt with another woman in front of his newlywed wife. If it weren't because his wife was intellectually challenged, she wouldn't have been able to accept his behavior.

"Do you sympathize with him?" Zong Jinghao knew what was in her mind at one glance.

Before she could answer him, he added, "He pushed his luck once you started being nice with him. So, you shouldn't sympathize with him."

In a domineering way, he held her hands tightly to make sure she listened. "Got it?" he asked solemnly.

Not wanting to make him mad, she nodded obediently. "Got it."

He pinched her nose, looking pleased. "That's my girl. Now, let's go inside because Xichen and Ruixi are waiting for us."

"They've changed their names, you know?" she reminded him, assuming that he had forgotten about that.

Zong Jinghao twisted his head to face her with a serious expression.

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Lin Xinyan felt puzzled upon seeing how serious he looked.

“What’s gotten into you? Have you forgotten that they’ve changed their names?” she asked.

Zong Jinghao shook his head as he explained, “I’m just so used to calling them their old names that I don’t feel like changing them.” While speaking, his vision lingered on her belly. “We’ll let this baby carry your surname regardless of his or her gender.”

Gazing at her, he said in a gentle voice, “As you’re the only child of your father, we should let one of our children be the descendant of your family.”

He was serious about that decision. Since Lin Xinyan had always been so considerate of him, he thought that it was about time he started doing the same time to her too.

It went without saying that she was touched by his gesture. Glaring at him, she chided, “Why are you telling me something so emotional? Are you trying to make me cry?”

He laughed out loud and wrapped his arms around her. Planting a kiss on her forehead, he muttered, “It pains me to see you cry.”

Tsk, tsk. “What wrong have I done to deserve this scene of public display of affection? Can you guys give me a break?”

Su Zhan, who was leaning against the door frame with his arms crossed in front of his chest, watched the two of them with amusement.

The affection in Zong Jinghao's eyes disappeared as coldness took its place immediately following Su Zhan's appearance.

Slowly, he looked up at Su Zhan and spoke in a level voice, "You're just jealous."

Then, he ignored him and walked into the house with Li Xinyan.

Su Zhan was left speechless.

Am I jealous of them?

Indeed, I am.

Is my life not miserable and lonely enough? Why did he have to remind me of that fact?

Is it because I look like a pushover?

He began cursing Zong Jinghao for his cold-heartedness and how he had been neglecting him ever since he reunited with Lin Xinyan. At the moment, he felt like a pitiful and lonely soul who was abandoned by everyone else in his life.

Qin Ya refused to forgive him, and now, even his buddy distanced him for the sake of his own wife.

"What a heartless man!" he muttered under his breath. However, it was loud enough to be heard by Zong Jinghao, who spun around and confronted him, "What did you say?"

Su Zhan was left stumped immediately. He turned into a scaredy-cat in an instant, and he racked his brain, trying to churn out an excuse. "Uhm... Your two kids demanded to have some ice cream just now, so I'm going out to buy some for them. Do you guys need something from the store?"

“Is there anything you crave for?” Zong Jinghao asked Lin Xinyan.”

“I want some cakes with cream.”

As she had never eaten since morning, she had a sudden craving for fresh cream.

“What flavor would you like it to be?” Zong Jinghao asked again.

Lin Xinyan thought for a while before answering, “I’d like to have a mango cake.”

“I’ve got it. I’ll get some fruits too,” Su Zhan responded.

Zong Jinghao mumbled back a response. He reckoned they could only return to the city tomorrow. As the area they were staying in was quite remote, it was not convenient to get the stuff they wanted because the shops were not within walking distance.

The best thing about that place was how quiet and secluded it was.

They entered the living room to escape the unbearable heat from the sun in the courtyard. The house had been built with logs, so the thermal insulation was great. The inside of the house stayed cool as though the air-conditioner was operating despite it being summertime. In the middle of the living room was a square table where Zong Qifeng and Zong Yanchen sat opposite each other, playing chess. It seemed like Zong Yanchen was stuck. He was staring at the chessboard intently, trying to come up with a way to turn the tables against his grandfather.

He was so focused that he didn’t even notice his parents walking in.

As Zong Qifeng intended to train the little boy to be patient and detail-oriented, he waited quietly for the little boy to discover the weak point of his game.

In the meantime, Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan started walking on tiptoe as to not disturb them. Treading forward along the wall, they spotted Zong Yanxi crouching next to a window at a corner of the living room. A huge Samoyed was lying prone on the floor next to the little girl. The dog looked like a fluffy snowball; its whole body was covered with white fur.

Zong Yanxi, who was stroking and caressing its head gently, seemed mesmerized by the dog. "How can you look so adorable?" she muttered under her breath.

Lin Xinyan squatted down and tousled her daughter's hair. "Do you fancy the dog a lot?"

The moment the little girl saw that it was Lin Xinyan, she threw herself into her arms delightfully. "Mommy!"

Twining her arms around her neck affectionately, the little girl asked, "How come you're here?"

Lin Xinyan combed the little girl's hair with her hands and said, "I'm here because I miss you."

Resting her chin on her mother's shoulder, Zong Yanxi turned to face Zong Jinghao. "Daddy, have you patched things up with Mommy?"

"When did we ever fight?" He took the little girl from Lin Xinyan and pinched her chubby cheeks. "Your Mommy and I were forced to be separated from each other temporarily, but it was not because of a fight, got it?"

Zong Yanxi pouted her lips. She did not care why they had separated from each other. She just wanted them to never separate from each other again so that all of them could live together as a family forever.

"Daddy, can I keep this dog? I love it so much!" She pointed at the Samoyed lying on the floor.

Zong Jinghao did not sanction her request right away. Although the dog was cute, he was worried that she might get hurt by the big-sized dog.

“Pretty please...” She tugged at his collar and pleaded coquettishly.

“The dog is very docile. It won’t bite, and it’s been trained before,” said Cheng Yuwen, who approached them. At the sight of Lin Xinyan, he greeted her, “You’re here too.”

He supposed she was the reason why Zong Jinghao had come back after leaving the city.

He had heard about Lin Xinyan’s departure to C City from Zong Qifeng, and he reckoned she was here in Baicheng to attend Bai Yinning’s wedding ceremony.

Lin Xinyan nodded back at him.

Meanwhile, it was another game that ended in defeat for Zong Yanchen. Feeling indignant, he demanded, “Let’s play another one.”

Zong Qifeng caressed the little boy’s head and said, “It’s good to have such fighting spirit, but I think we should take a break and continue the game later tonight.”

He rose to his feet and looked to where his son and Lin Xinyan were standing. As for Zong Yanchen, he looked listless and dispirited because he had yet to win a game with his grandfather. It was the first time he was experiencing the frustration of being the loser.

Zong Qifeng had not gone easy on him on purpose. As the bright kid had never been defeated before, he thought that it was not a good thing for his development.

As the saying went, no pain no gain.

He harbored high expectations of his grandson, even higher than what he used to have of his son back then.

Hence, he was determined to train and nurture the little boy to become a tough and resilient person. The kid was slightly arrogant now because he was wise beyond his years.

Some setbacks and challenges would help his growth.

When Zong Qitian saw Lin Xinyan, he suddenly understood why his son had come back.

“Please come with me,” he said to Lin Xinyan.

She agreed and left the living room together with him. She had expected that he would want to talk.

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Zong Jinghao watched the two of them leave the living room without stopping them.

It was because he already had a rough idea of what his father was going to tell Lin Xinyan.

Meanwhile, Zong Yanxi twisted her head back to him. “Daddy, please say yes... I’d really love to keep this dog.”

“I’ll get another smaller one for you.” He was worried that the bulk of the dog might hurt the little girl.

Although dogs were generally tame around humans, there was still a possibility that an accident might happen.

“I don’t want any other dog but this one,” Zong Yanxi pleaded, grazing her head against his neck coquettishly.

“I’m the current owner of this dog. It’s been trained before, so it won’t bite for no reason. Let Ruixi take the dog since she fancies her so much,” Cheng Yuwen emphasized again.

He understood that Zong Jinghao was holding back because of safety issues.

Dogs of this species were generally tame, and they were not aggressive despite their large size.

After undergoing training, the dog knew the proper place to poop and pee so the house could be kept clean. Hence, they did not have to do much other than building a doghouse and prepare some food for the dog every day.

It was not too big a trouble since they must have maids who could help them take care of the chores.

“Can I have the dog, please? See, Great-uncle has agreed to let me have it.” Pouting her lips, the little girl implored relentlessly and was close to tears.

Zong Jinghao always had a soft spot for his daughter, so he finally caved in and agreed to let her keep the dog.

Immediately, the little girl broke into a wide grin as she planted a light kiss on his cheeks. “Thanks, Daddy!”

Excitedly, she got down from him and dashed toward the Samoyed. When she caressed its head, the dog nuzzled against her palm meekly, putting a broad grin on the little girl’s face.

She looked up at Cheng Yuwen and said, “Great-uncle, now that you’ve gifted the dog to me, it means I have the right to give her a new name as her new owner.”

Cheng Yuwen had named the dog ‘Dolly’ before as the dog looked as cute as a doll.

Crouching down next to the Zong Yanxi, Cheng Yuwen stroked Dolly’s head and said, “As the dog is meant as a gift for Ruixi, of course, Ruixi can do that.”

Although the kids had adopted a new name, everyone still preferred to call them by their old names as they sounded more endearing.

So, they used their old names as their nicknames.

Hugging Dolly’s head blissfully, Zong Yanxi combed through its fur with her hands. “I’m gonna call her ‘Baymax’ since she’s huge and white in color!”

Chuckling, Cheng Yuwen commented in an affectionate tone, “Ruixi, you’re such a clever girl. The name you gave her sounds much better than mine.”

Zong Yanxi started calling the dog by her new name while caressing its head, feeling quite proud of the name she created.

As for Zong Yanchen, he was still sitting in silence at the table with his eyes glued to the chessboard, trying to figure out the reason that led to his defeat.

Su Zhan happened to make it back with a huge shopping bag at that time. Not only did he get fruits and ice cream, but he also bought some snacks for the kids.

He put the bag down and shouted for their attention. “Come over here to eat the ice cream before it melts.”

Zong Yanxi reacted the fastest by dashing toward him. “Where’s mine? I’m having it now.”

He handed her an ice cream cone and then another to Zong Yanchen, who was still not uttering a word. “Hey, how come you’re looking so down? Do you still want your ice cream?”

The boy answered without looking up at him, “I don’t.”

He looked like he was going to starve himself until he figured out the game.

Su Zhan remarked, “That boy treats the game too seriously. Seems like he just suffered another defeat, did he?”

Zong Jinghao sat down opposite his son and suggested, “Let’s play a game.”

After looking around the house to see no sight of Lin Xinyan, Su Zhan asked, “Where’s Xinyan? I’ve bought the cake she wanted.”

Ignoring his question, Zong Jinghao put the cake down on one side of the table before putting all the chess pieces back to their designated places. "You may make your first move," he invited.

His son looked up at him. "You may do it first."

Zong Jinghao raised his brow at him and remarked, "It's not a good thing to act tough." Despite the comment, he still moved one of his chess pieces.

"I'm not acting tough. I just want to make sure you don't go easy on me. I want to know where I stand in terms of my skills." Zong Yanchen stared at the chessboard intently, carefully calculating every move in his mind.

Licking on the ice cream that had been abandoned by Zong Yanchen, Su Zhan pulled a chair over, watching the game between Zong Yanchen and his father with an amused expression.

Soon, half of Zong Yanchen's chess pieces were taken, and it seemed like he was about to suffer yet another defeat. This time, he was not able to pull himself together to deal with the blow. He felt too frustrated to continue the game.

Without uttering a word, he jumped to his feet and stormed away at what seemed to be a furious pace.

Su Zhan smacked his lips and commented, "Why are you being so serious with your son? Can't you let him win one game to make him happy? He's been a loser for almost the entire day."

However, Zong Jinghao supposed his son wouldn't be happy even if he deliberately let him win, judging from how headstrong and how big his ego was.

"He needs this to grow and become better. I might be able to let him win, but can other people out there do the same to him?" With that, Zong Jinghao walked out of the living room with the cake.

Pursing his lips in annoyance, Su Zhan murmured under his breath, “What a jerk.”

All in all, Zong Jinghao was an outright jerk who did not treat either his buddy or his son nicely.

In the meantime, Zong Qifeng took Lin Xinyan to a quiet area in the courtyard of the house instead of taking her to one of the rooms inside. Rows of camphor trees had been planted there, providing dense foliage that blocked out almost the sun. Along with the soothing breeze that blew past them intermittently, it was a cool and comfortable place to be.

“I’ve heard about what happened between the two of you.” Standing beneath the trees with his back facing Lin Xinyan, he broke the silence first.

Lin Xinyan stared at his back, noticing that he had shredded quite a considerable amount of weight, and his eyes had lost their sparkle over the past two months.

If it wasn’t because the kids were here, she bet that he might not even look as good as how he appeared at the moment.

“You should know how important Jinghao is to his mother, do you? I’m sure she would want her son to have a happy life in the future instead of having everything ruined because of her death,” Zong Qifeng spoke in a deep and sonorous voice. He had asked Lin Xinyan to come out so that he could have a chance at persuading her not to be bothered by things that had happened in the past. She was not to be blamed for any of those things.

She was not at fault as she did not have the right to choose what kind of family she was born into, nor could she decide who were the people that made up her family. In short, she was a victim who was implicated by the dispute of the previous generations.

“I’m sure she would want you to take good care of her son, instead of distancing him because of her death. If you feel like you owe him something, stay by his

side and look after him and the kids as compensation. My heart goes out to the kids... They've never got to enjoy many peaceful days."

The kids would bear the brunt of their separation.

Turning around to face Lin Xinyan, Zong Qifeng continued, "More often than not, people never cherish what they have until it's gone. Little do they know that some things can't be salvaged once they're lost. So, please promise me that you will go back home with him this time."

Keeping her eyes downcast, she responded, "I promise you, and I understand what you're trying to say."

He nodded at her, looking pleased. "I'll spend a few more months here, but I'll drop by time and time again to visit the kids."

He seemed to be trying to indicate that he would check out on them from time to time to see whether they were getting along well.

Knowing well that he was doing this for their own good, Lin Xinyan felt touched. "Dad, thank you."

She was feeling grateful for his forgiveness because she was more or less related to his wife's death.

He sighed, "What a silly girl you are. You don't have to thank me because we're a family."

Waving his hands dismissively at her, he urged, "It's time you head back inside. It's very hot here."

Lin Xinyan did as he said without making another comment, but deep inside, she was feeling emotional because of his words. When he told her how people never cherished what they had until it was gone, she had a feeling that he was referring to himself and his deceased wife, Cheng Yuxiu.

He felt remorseful because there were things he should have done for her earlier.

She understood his advice well, and she would cherish everything she owed now, including her husband and her kids.

It was only after going through what happened this time did she realize how deeply she loved Zong Jinghao.

As soon as she walked past the threshold of the door to the living room, her wrist was seized by someone all of a sudden. Seeing that it was Zong Jinghao, she followed him inside without saying anything.

He took her to the east wing of the house, where he had slept the previous night. The room was clean and spacious, and it was designed in a modern way to provide a convenient stay, although the house was made of logs.

He dragged her and made her sit down at the edge of his bed. Without posing her any question, he drew her toward his arms and claimed her lips immediately. Instead of indulging her with his usual deep and passionate kiss, he pecked on her lips lightly and repeatedly.

Gazing into his brooding eyes, she knew he was testing the waters with her.

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Perhaps, he was waiting for her to make the first move.

She felt a real, burning desire to respond to him by wrapping her arms tightly around him.

However, she did not do so. She was not allowed to indulge herself like that when she was pregnant.

Feeling slightly deflated because of her lackadaisical attitude, Zong Jinghao knitted his brows together and mumbled, "Am I not attractive enough for you?"

"You are," Lin Xinyan muttered.

The crease on his forehead smoothed as his eyes glowed with delight. Wearing a crafty smile, he asked, "Why don't you make your move then?"

She sighed, "I don't dare to do so."

Zong Jinghao was left speechless.

He leaned toward her, close enough to send strands of her hair flying with his warm breath. In a husky voice, he whispered, "Mind you, I'm a very easy prey."

She pushed his face away and looked down at her belly. "Your son doesn't allow me to do it."

He was stumped.

That comment of hers was such a turn-off for him. It smothered the raging desire in him, leaving not even a spark as he threw himself onto the bed.

At the same time, she cast him a glance. "I'm hungry."

Her stomach was rumbling with hunger – she had not eaten anything since morning.

He sat upright and took the cake Su Zhan bought over to her. "This is the cake you're craving for. Have a taste to see whether it's to your liking."

She took it over and opened the box. As the mouthwatering smell of fresh cream filled up her nostrils, she felt like she could finish the whole cake on her own.

It was obvious even to herself that she had adopted an entirely new preference in food lately. She would crave for something at one time, and then the other at another time. On top of that, she could not afford to skip meals or have them later than usual. She would soon be punished by spasms of hunger pangs if that happened.

Using the spoon that had been placed inside the box, she scooped a mouthful of the spongy cake, stuffing it into her mouth. In an instant, her mouth was filled with the heavenly sweet taste of fresh cream that she used to loathe before she was pregnant.

Thinking that she might be thirsty after having the cake, Zong Jinghao went out to fetch her a carton of milk and offered it together with a straw. "Take your time. No one is fighting with you for a slice."

She sucked in the milk with the straw without taking it from him to wash away the cream in her mouth. "I'm famished because I've not eaten anything since morning."

"Why didn't you eat anything?" He frowned at her, wondering why she had done something so insensible.

“I was driven here by Gao Yuan last night. I went to meet Bai Yinning the next morning and went on to spend the rest of the day attending his wedding ceremony. So, I didn’t have time for food,” Lin Xinyan answered, totally neglecting the fact that Bai Yinning and he were arch-rivals.

It was only after she finished saying everything did she remember how much Zong Jinghao resented Bai Yinning. Quickly, she looked up at him, eager to explain herself, but she couldn’t come up with anything.

It was because she was telling the truth.

As expected, his face fell at the mention of Bai Yinning. Seeing that, she quickly buttered him up by offering a piece of cake to him. “This cake is superbly tasty. You should have a bite.”

He stared at her in silence, not buying her gesture.

“I promise I’d stay away from him and never talk to him anymore in the future. So, please don’t be mad.” She made another attempt at pleasing him by edging the piece of cake closer to him. Yet, he refused to budge.

She frowned. *What more does he want me to do to forgive me?*

Since she was invited to attend Bai Yinning’s wedding ceremony, it was inappropriate of her to skip it.

Furthermore, she wanted to have a getaway trip here too.

“Your apology wasn’t sincere at all,” Zong Jinghao croaked, sounding aggrieved.

Lin Xinyan was rendered speechless.

I wasn’t sincere?

She had admitted her mistake and taken the initiative to make it up for him. *Was my gesture not sincere enough?*

What else should I do? Should I kneel and beg for his forgiveness?

Using the last bit of patience in her, she asked, “What should I do to be more sincere?”

He leaned closer and said suggestively, “You have to feed me the cake with your mouth.”

She fell silent.

Why is he so shameless!

Why?

“You’re being ridiculous.” She stuffed the piece of cake into her mouth before she shoved his face away. “You should know when to be grateful. Stop being cheeky.”

“What’s that supposed to mean? I don’t understand it because all I want is you.” Before he finished his sentence, he pressed lips onto hers again to lick off the lingering cream at the corners of her lips.

She tried to wiggle away from him, but she couldn’t do much with one hand holding the cake. Yet, Zong Jinghao didn’t push his luck, worried that he might anger her. At last, he licked the cream from his lips and swallowed it with relish.

Grinning, he reached out to stroke her hair. “What else do you feel like eating? I can go out and buy it for you.”

She was full after having the cake. Lowering her head, she asked, “Did you ask somebody to send me the carrots?”

“Yes,” he confessed, not seeing the need to keep her in the dark of it. He had instructed one of his men to get her the carrots from a farm quite a distance away. Although carrots were not some rare or exotic item, they were out of season at the moment, so those sold at supermarkets were not fresh. “Are the carrots delicious?” he asked.

After washing down the cake with several mouthfuls of milk, she replied, “They are. It’s a shame that I’ve forgotten to bring some over here.”

Zong Jinghao went silent for a while. He had failed to appreciate the taste of carrots as well as her.

However, he didn’t mind supplying it to her as long as she liked it.

Lying on the bed, he extended one arm toward her, signaling her to lie down next to him. “Come over here.”

She lay down and rested her head on his arm. Thinking about his suggestion of letting the baby carry her surname, she looked up at him and asked, “Are you sure you want the baby to carry my surname?”

He twisted his body to wrap his arms around her as he confirmed, “Yes.”

She squirmed around in his arms, adjusting to a more comfortable posture. In fact, she was having reservations about the idea. Firstly, since she was not supposed to have the surname ‘Lin’ because she was not Lin Guoan’s daughter, to begin with, she thought it was not right to let her kids carry the surname too. Secondly, she had intended to let her kids carry Zong Jinghao’s surname.

It was only natural for the kids to carry the surname of their father.

However, she had never thought of changing her own surname because she had yet to fully embrace the idea in her subconscious.

She knew nothing about her birth parents. All she had was fragments of information she heard from the grapevine. Also, learning about their existence did not particularly cheer her up either.

If she were given a right to choose, she would rather be Lin Guoan's daughter. In that way, at least she knew how she should feel about him as they had spent time together before.

What about now?

"I'm stuck in a dilemma. What do you think I should do?"

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Zong Jinghao was confused by her sudden remark.

He lowered his head and gazed at her. "Huh?"

She looked up at his face that was so close to hers. She could feel their warm breath mingling together. At the same time, she reached out to his jaw and rubbed the stubbles on it. Surprisingly, it did not feel as prickly as expected.

"Do you think I should change my surname?" In fact, she did not feel like doing it.

Having listened to Zong Qifeng's advice, she decided to forget all about Wen Qing, Wen Xian, and even Zhuang Ziyi.

She made up her mind to focus on leading a peaceful life with Zong Jinghao in the future.

Snuggling up to him, she pressed her cheeks against his chest to listen to his strong heartbeats.

"What's inside you will remain the same no matter which surname you use." He knew she would have already changed her surname long ago if she had the actual intention of doing so.

She was the biological child of Wen Xian and Zhuang Ziyi. No matter what surname she carried, it could not change the blood that ran in her.

Zong Jinghao drew her into a tight embrace. He didn't want her to be bothered by all the disputes and dramas that had happened in the past.

Lin Xinyan understood what he meant. Indeed, she was still the same person no matter what surname she used. All of a sudden, she was freed from the quandary and was enlightened because of his advice.

Twining her slender arm around his waist, she confessed, "I was so sad when I had to leave you back then. I missed you terribly during our separation. I've been feeling guilty toward you, but I don't want our relationship to be tainted by feelings other than love. So, I'll get rid of the guilt from now on and focus on giving you all my love."

They would lead a simple life free from all the grudges and feuds.

He lowered his head and planted a kiss on her forehead. Grazing his lips against her skin, he mumbled a response in agreement.

"Do you have a dream holiday destination?" His voice was barely audible.

However, it was loud enough to be heard by Lin Xinyan. "Why?"

"I'm thinking of going on a honeymoon trip after you give birth to the baby." He fixed her a long gaze with his brooding eyes sparkling with charm. In a mellow voice, he whispered next to her ears, "I can't wait to see you in a bridal gown because I know how stunning you will look in one."

Tugging the collar of his shirt, she grumbled, "You didn't take me to the Registry of Marriage, nor did you bring me to take a wedding photo."

In fact, they did have a marriage certificate. Zong Jinghao somehow managed to get it by pulling some strings, but it was Guan Jing who had taken her to collect the certificate. The certificate did not look official because their wedding photo was not attached to it.

Zong Jinghao was left stumped.

If he could have foreseen the future at that time, he would not have hesitated to hold the grandest wedding ceremony of all time to make her his wife.

Just as he wanted to promise her that he would make it up to her, he was forced to swallow back his words when her phone rang.

She reached out for her bag, but her wrist was caught by him. “You aren’t going anywhere. You’re all mine today.”

She chuckled, thinking that he was acting like a child.

However, that was exactly why she could not make herself say no to him.

She let her phone ring all the way until it finally stopped. With a smile, she asked, “Are you happy now?”

Looking aloof, he wrapped the silk blanket around their entangled bodies without uttering a word. Meanwhile, he slipped his hand upward along her thighs beneath the dress she was wearing. Biting her lips, she muttered breathlessly, “It’s daytime now.”

“Yup.”

He was well aware of that, but he couldn’t help it. After all, it was perfectly normal for him to feel that way – he was a guy with a healthy body, after all.

He grabbed her hand and placed it on his belt buckle. “Help me remove the belt.”

With her cheeks burning and her breathing ragged, she gingerly fumbled with his belt. With a *clack*, the belt buckle opened. That simple movement instantly unleashed the unbridled passion in them.

Both of them desperately yearned for each other. Just as they were engaging in a passionate kiss, her phone rang again. The two paused for a second but quickly carried on their business.

However, the ringtone didn't just stop on its own like how it did earlier. It kept on blaring out from the speaker of the phone. It was as if it was determined to get someone to pick up the call.

The romantic ambiance between them was completely ruined by the offending sound. Zong Jinghao got out of bed and reached out for her phone, intending to switch it off. However, when Lin Xinyan caught sight of Qin Ya's name on the screen, she snatched it from him. "I'm sure there must be some emergency."

"Just call her back later." He stretched out his hand, trying to grab the phone away, but she dodged him just in time. "Stop fooling around."

She picked up the call and placed the phone next to her ear. "Qin Ya?"

What she heard was not Qin Ya's voice but a crazed cackle that belonged to a man.

Feeling uptight, she tried again, "Qin Ya, is that you?"

"Do you want to talk to her?" A man's voice that sounded familiar to Lin Xinyan came from the other end, but she couldn't pinpoint where she had heard it before. Furrowing her brows together, she asked, "Who are you? Why do you have her phone?"

"I have it because she's with me at my place."

Sensing something fishy with the man's tone, Lin Xinyan turned to Zong Jinghao, who knew something was not right upon seeing the alarm in her eyes. Taking her phone from her, he confronted the person on the other end in a cold voice, "Who are you?"

The man paused for a second because of the different voices he heard. Then, he chuckled, “Hey, President Zong. It’s been a long time. Are you interested to meet me?”

“What are you trying to do?”

“Nothing. I just want an explanation from you, President Zong. Have I offended you before? I don’t care about your feud with Wen Qing, but you lied to me. You then made use of me and nearly got me implicated because of what you did to Wen Qing. Don’t you think you should do something to make it up to me?”

“Since this is a matter between you and I, you should come at me alone. Don’t you think it’s not right for you to kidnap Qin Ya?”

“I’ve always wanted to talk it out with you, but you’re regrettably always so busy. Let’s see... Why don’t we meet each other at the usual place? We can have a chat there. By the way, is the woman I kidnapped someone important to you? She’s quite a looker though...”

Zong Jinghao seethed, “Gu Bei!”

Gu Bei chortled, “Fine, I’ll wait for you at the usual place.” With that, he hung up his phone.

Lin Xinyan stared at him nervously. “Who’s Gu Bei? Why did he kidnap Qin Ya?”

Zong Jinghao gave her a succinct explanation on how the matter was related to Cheng Yuxiu’s car accident. Realizing how serious the matter was, Lin Xinyan said, “In that case, we have to go back to town right now.”

Zong Jinghao responded in agreement.

Knowing how unpredictable Gu Bei was, he had no idea what sort of horrid stuff he might do to Qin Ya if they delayed their return. At the same time, he kept Lin Xinyan’s phone in his trouser pocket just in case Gu Bei decided to call again.

He then put his belt back on and adjusted its buckle. "You pack up the luggage. I'll go and inform Su Zhan about this," he said to Lin Xinyan.

In an uptight voice, she asked, "Will anything bad happen to her?"

"I think she's safe for the time being." He reached out to adjust her collar and smooth the crease on her shirt. "Don't worry."

She mumbled her acknowledgment, but her worry was not a bit alleviated deep down inside.

She wondered why Qin Ya was kidnapped when it was a matter concerning Zong Jinghao.

In the meantime, Su Zhan was sitting on a chair in the living room. He was staring at the screen of his phone when he sensed movement from the door. Seeing that it was Zong Jinghao, he teased, "I understand how absence makes the heart grow fonder. Surprisingly, you're tired of spending time with her so fast."

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Zong Jinghao didn't bother with his childish antics. Instead, he said coldly, "We're leaving now."

At that, he walked in to get his daughter. Su Zhan was left confused by the situation. *Aren't we supposed to stay for a night before leaving?*

"Now?" Su Zhan asked, thinking that he must've had misheard it.

Zong Jinghao turned to look at him and said in a serious tone, "Yes, now."

Su Zhan must've realized that something had happened as he quickly turned off his phone and replied, "Then I'll go pack up."

"I want to bring Baymax home," Zong Yanxi said as she held the dog's leash in her hands.

"Alright," Zong Jinghao answered.

Cheng Yuwen asked, "Why are you leaving in such a hurry? Just stay here tonight and leave tomorrow."

"Something's happened." Zong Jinghao quickly gave them a brief explanation on why they needed to leave.

After the explanation, Cheng Yuwen didn't try to persuade them to stay anymore and helped to pack up instead.

They talked about spending the night here previously. It must be an emergency if they have to leave in such a hurry.

Zong Jinghao went to look for Zong Yanchen with his daughter in his arms. The latter wasn't sleeping in his own room, nor was he in the other rooms. He was in Zong Qifeng's room instead.

He found the latter talking to Zong Qifeng but noticed that the negativity from earlier was gone.

Zong Jinghao informed them that they needed to leave.

"Are you going back to B City?" Zong Qifeng asked.

"Yes."

Zong Qifeng didn't try to persuade him to stay or nag him. He had said all that was needed to be said, and he believed that his son and Lin Xinyan understood him.

Zong Yanchen held Zong Qifeng's hand and said, "Grandpa, what do I do if I miss you?"

Zong Qifeng patted his head. "Grandpa will visit you."

"Okay," Zong Yanchen replied as he let go of Zong Qifeng's hand reluctantly.

Zong Jinghao took his son's hand and told his father, "Take care of yourself. Call me if anything happens."

Zong Qifeng waved a hand as he said, "Tell Su Zhan to drive safely."

Zong Jinghao nodded in agreement and led the kids out. Su Zhan was already done packing up and arranging their stuff in the car outside. He strapped the kids into their seats while Cheng Yuwen lifted Baymax into the car. The good thing was that the inside of the car was quite spacious.

Lin Xinyan went to say her goodbyes to Zong Qifeng and told him that she would take good care of the kids and Zong Jinghao – he didn't have to worry.

Zong Qifeng was relieved and told her to take care in response.

By the time Lin Xinyan came out, she saw that everything had been packed up. They were ready to go. She said to Cheng Yuwen, "We're leaving now."

The man replied with a nod, "Be careful on the way."

"We will. You guys should take care too." Cheng Yuwen wasn't young anymore. He used to be a healthy man, but after the incident, his body wasn't the same as it once had been.

Lin Xinyan had plans to ask them to live with her family in the future so that she could take care of them. Humans tended to overthink when it was too peaceful. They also wouldn't feel as lonely if Zong Yanxi and Zong Yanchen were by their side.

Cheng Yuwen's eyes welled up with tears. He quickly turned around so that Lin Xinyan wouldn't be able to see his teary eyes. With a wave of his hand, he said, "You should get going soon. It's hard to see when driving at night. Leave now while the sky is still bright."

Zong Jinghao opened the car door for Lin Xinyan, and she took a glance at Cheng Yuwen before getting in.

When he heard the sound of the engine, Cheng Yuwen couldn't help but turn and look at them. It was obvious that he didn't want them to leave.

But he knew that they had to.

The kids leaned on the car window and waved at him while Lin Xinyan rolled down the window. "Great-uncle, we're going now."

Cheng Yuwen waved back. “Don’t forget to visit your Great-uncle when you’re free. I’ll miss you.”

“We will. And we’ll miss you too,” Zong Yanxi said, leaning on the window. Even though she was reluctant to part with her Grandpa and Great-uncle, she still wanted to be with her parents.

Cheng Yuwen smiled. “I’m glad. Great-uncle is satisfied with just your words. Now stop wasting time. Go.”

After bidding farewell, Su Zhan finally drove off.

They had brought along the snacks Su Zhan had bought for the kids. So the kids ate when they got bored. However, Lin Xinyan wasn’t in a great mood as she was worried about Qin Ya. Her friend had already suffered so much previously. She didn’t even dare to think much of it now. *If something happens to her...*

“Mommy, what are you thinking about?” Zong Yanchen asked when he sensed his mother’s gloominess.

Lin Xinyan plastered on a smile, reaching out to caress his face. She didn’t want to affect the kids with her own emotions, so she pulled herself together. “I was thinking about when the two of you will finally grow up.”

“We’ll grow up when you’re old,” Zong Yanxi replied.

“Then, will you hate Mommy when I’m old and ugly?” Lin Xinyan asked with a smile.

“No.” Zong Yanxi immediately ditched Baymax and threw herself into her mother’s embrace. “You’re the world’s most beautiful Mommy.”

Zong Yanchen quickly moved away to make space for his sister.

Lin Xinyan petted Baymax as she asked, “You wanted to bring it home?”

Zong Yanxi nodded her head vigorously before looking up at her mother. “Don’t you think it’s cute?”

“Yes. It’s much cuter than you,” Lin Xinyan said while pinching her daughter’s cheeks.

“No, I’m the cutest.” Zong Yanxi started to stroke the woman’s belly. “When will the baby be born? I’m so excited.”

Lin Xinyan told her that the baby was due soon as she patted the latter’s head.

The sky was getting darker and darker outside, and the lights of houses along the road began to light up. Both of the kids were tired and had fallen asleep after they ate their snacks.

Su Zhan asked when the kids were sound asleep, “What happened? Why are we in such a rush to leave?”

Zong Jinghao glanced behind from the passenger seat and found Lin Xinyan also looking at him. The moment their eyes met, they knew what each other was thinking even when they didn’t speak.

“Am I not pitiful?” Su Zhan asked, his eyes still on the road.

He didn’t have to look to know that the couple was looking at each other. *I’m still in the car, yet they’re showing off their affection so shamelessly. Aren’t they just trying to provoke me?*

“Qin Ya still isn’t forgiving me, but both of you are always acting all lovey-dovey in front of me. Are your hearts made of stone? Don’t you think I’m pitiful? Can’t you both be kind to me?” Su Zhan complained.

He was heartbroken because Qin Ya wasn't forgiving him. He didn't know what he should do in the days ahead. Su Zhan sighed and switched back to the original topic. "Can you guys say something? What on earth happened? Why are we in such a rush to leave? Also, are we going to B City or C City?"

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“We’re going to B City. There’s been an emergency at the company.” Zong Jinghao didn’t tell him about Qin Ya’s incident. He was afraid that Su Zhan would get emotionally unstable when he found out. It would be too dangerous as the man was still driving.

Su Zhan clicked his tongue and replied, “Are things really that urgent at the company? Isn’t Guan Jing overlooking things there? Is the company going to go bankrupt just because you didn’t go today?”

Soon, a knowing smile appeared on his face, and he asked, “Is it because you’re worried that Xinyan would leave again? Is that why you have to bring her home immediately?”

Zong Jinghao glared at him and said coldly, “Stop at the next rest stop. Let me drive.”

“I’m not tired yet.” He had driven the whole way there, yet he didn’t feel too tired from it.

“You talk too much. I’m afraid it’s going to be dangerous.”

Zong Jinghao lowered his head to send a text message to Shen Peichuan. He had sent the latter to C City to investigate Gu Bei. He was now wondering if the man had gotten any leads.

After he sent the text, he looked at the backseat and saw the kids sleeping peacefully. Lin Xinyan was looking out the window, but the expression on her face wasn’t a good one. *She’s probably worried about Qin Ya.*

He didn't dare talk about the matter in front of Su Zhan, so he consoled her tactfully, "I'll handle it. Just try not to think too much and sleep now."

How can I not worry? Qin Ya's been through too much previously. She just came back but is immediately met with another incident like this. How can I calm down or stop worrying about her?

However, she didn't want to cause Zong Jinghao any more trouble, so she mumbled an agreement before closing her eyes and fake sleeping.

Zong Jinghao sighed and looked back to the front. He knew she was only faking, but there wasn't anything else he could say or do to lessen her worries.

Looking down at his phone, he saw that there was still no response from Shen Peichuan. He then leaned back on his seat and massaged his temples.

"Are you hiding something from me?" Su Zhan asked. *Why do I feel like Zong Jinghao is in such a rush to get back because something's happened?*

Zong Jinghao didn't look at him when he replied flatly, "Just focus on driving."

Su Zhan was rendered speechless.

"I'm acting as your personal chauffeur here, but you're still treating me like this? Can't you be more polite to me?" *It's like he's not taking me seriously!*

Zong Jinghao opened his eyes and slowly cast his gaze at the latter in a nonchalant manner. "Su Zhan, don't you want to win Qin Ya back?"

"Of course I do," Su Zhan answered almost immediately.

Of course, he wanted to win her back. But he knew that Qin Ya wouldn't look back anymore.

The chances of him succeeding was extremely slim.

Lin Xinyan couldn't help but tense up when she heard them talking about Qin Ya. She was afraid that Zong Jinghao would tell Su Zhan about Qin Ya's kidnapping.

Since the journey to B City was a few hours long, she was also afraid that once Su Zhan found out, he would get anxious and rush back.

Instead of making him worried, Lin Xinyan would rather tell him about it when they arrived. Then, they could also come up with a strategy together.

"Do you have any ideas on what I should do?" Su Zhan asked excitedly.

"Yes."

Su Zhan asked impatiently, "What is it?"

"Shut up. No woman likes a man who's so naggy."

Su Zhan was silenced instantly.

That's such an insult! How am I naggy?

"Hey, can you explain how I'm naggy-"

Right at that moment, a phone's ringtone interrupted Su Zhan.

Zong Jinghao thought it was a phone call from Shen Peichuan, but when he pulled out his phone, he realized it wasn't his phone ringing. It was Lin Xinyan's phone that he had pocketed earlier. The caller ID 'Uncle Er' was written on the screen.

He knew very well what kind of people Lin Xinyan had around her.

Uncle Er must be the man I saw in C City.

Lin Xinyan was very familiar with her phone's ringtone, and her eyes flew open the moment she heard it. "Who is it?" she asked anxiously.

She assumed it was a call from Gu Bei.

Zong Jinghao handed her the phone. "Take a look yourself."

She answered the call when she saw Uncle Er's name on the screen. Immediately after, Shao Yun's voice was heard coming on the other end.

"Are you able to contact Qin Ya? She hasn't been to the shop all day, and I couldn't reach her."

Lin Xinyan calmed herself down and said quietly, "I know where she is. Don't worry. We can't go back for some time, so I'll have to trouble you to watch the place."

"Oh, good that you know. I was quite worried since she vanished suddenly and I wasn't able to reach her. When will you be back?" Shao Yun asked.

Lin Xinyan wasn't sure herself. "I'm not sure. I'll give you a call in a few days."

"Alright. You don't have to worry about what's happening here. I'll look after it for you. You should take good care of yourself and the kids too," Shao Yun gently reminded her.

"Okay," Lin Xinyan replied.

"Then I'll hang up now."

Lin Xinyan responded with an 'Okay' and hung up.

She was about to pocket the phone when Zong Jinghao reached out his hand and said, "Give me your phone."

Lin Xinyan glanced at him. "It'll be a bother to me if my phone's with you. If Gu Bei calls, I'll let you answer it."

She knew what Zong Jinghao was worried about.

He was worried that Gu Bei would call her again. She had never met the latter, and she didn't want to have anything to do with him.

She couldn't handle whatever was happening to Qin Ya, so she had to rely on Zong Jinghao.

Zong Jinghao didn't say anything else when Lin Xinyan made her point and turned back to the front instead.

"Xinyan, you know Gu Bei? How do you know him?" Su Zhan asked.

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Lin Xinyan hadn't thought it through when she spoke earlier. The more she panicked, the more she couldn't get the words out. She didn't know how she should explain to Su Zhan how she knew Gu Bei.

She had only heard about him from Zong Jinghao and had never met him in her life.

"Gu Bei went to C City to look for her previously," Zong Jinghao suddenly said.

Su Zhan was dumbstruck at his words. "Why was he looking for Xinyan? Is it because..."

Su Zhan didn't finish his sentence, wary of Lin Xinyan's presence.

Gu Bei's matter happened due to Wen Qing. If he talked about Gu Bei, he would have to talk about Wen Qing.

At that moment, they saw a rest stop up ahead, and Zong Jinghao told Su Zhan to make a stop there. The latter then pulled over and parked the car in the car park. Lin Xinyan quickly woke the kids to head out for a breath of fresh air.

Zong Yanxi rubbed her eyes groggily and told Lin Xinyan, "Mommy, I need to use the restroom."

Her mother wiped her face with a wet tissue, and she was soon awake. "I'll bring you there."

There weren't many people at the rest stop at night. Lin Xinyan held onto her daughter's hand, and they made their way to the restroom. Back at the car, Zong Yanchen was only half-awake; he was still laying in the backseat. Zong Jinghao

saw him and opened up the car door on his side, asking if he wanted to use the restroom.

The boy slowly opened his eyes and shook his head. "I'm feeling a little hungry."

"Get down. I'll bring you in to buy some food," Zong Jinghao said.

The little boy got down from the car and grabbed hold of his father's hand. He looked up and asked, "When are we arriving home?"

"Soon," Zong Jinghao replied after taking a look at the time.

There weren't any proper meals sold at this hour, only snacks. Zong Yanchen was craving some oden, so he grabbed some and said, "Let's get some for Yanxi and Mommy. Daddy, are you hungry? We should get some for Uncle Su too. He must be tired from driving."

Zong Jinghao patted his head, happy to know that his son was someone who would think of others.

They also bought some corn, rice dumplings, and some drinks.

There wasn't much they could buy at the rest stop.

After Su Zhan came out from the restroom, he let the dog out to let it have a breather. Then, he began to do some stretches by the car. His body was feeling quite stiff after such a long time in the car.

"Uncle Su," Zong Yanchen called out as he gave the snacks he bought to the former. "Eat these to curb your hunger. You haven't eaten dinner, so you must be hungry."

Su Zhan reached out for it. "You're so much more humane than your dad."

Upon hearing that, Zong Jinghao shot a glance at him. Su Zhan's mouth twitched, and he immediately shut up.

Zong Yanchen was eating some chewy fish balls. He instantly gave one to Zong Jinghao when he found it delicious. "Daddy, have one of these. It's really nice."

The latter bent down and bit the fish ball from his son's hand. Su Zhan was about to ask him if the reason Gu Bei went looking for Lin Xinyan was revenge when Zong Jinghao's phone rang. He pulled his phone out and saw Shen Peichuan's number. *He only replies to me now. I sent him that text almost an hour ago.*

He answered the call while walking away.

"What's wrong?"

Shen Peichuan was in a difficult position when he spoke. "Sorry, I didn't go to C City. I was caught up with some affairs in the office, and I left my phone in the car. I only saw your message a few minutes ago."

Zong Jinghao let out a hum but had no intentions of blaming him. *He has a job after all. It would be impossible for him to constantly spare time for other things.* He looked over at Su Zhan before saying to Shen Peichuan, "Gu Bei has kidnapped Qin Ya."

"What?" Shen Peichuan didn't expect that piece of information at all, nor did he understand how Gu Bei knew Qin Ya. *Even if he knew her from the past, she has changed her appearance. So, how did he manage to find her?*

"How did this happen? Was she kidnapped in C City? Why did he kidnap her?" Shen Peichuan asked.

Zong Jinghao didn't know the specifics, but it wasn't hard for him to guess. Gu Bei definitely knew about Lin Xinyan when he chose to kidnap Qin Ya. He was surely the one behind the photos. He probably wanted to sabotage Zong Jinghao's relationship with Lin Xinyan or perhaps he had plans to kidnap Lin

Xinyan but didn't have the chance to do so. It could also be because he couldn't find Lin Xinyan when she came to Baicheng so he chose to kidnap Qin Ya when he knew about her connection to the former.

He had gotten most of the parts correctly. But what he didn't know was that Gu Bei had changed his plans to lure her out when his plan to sabotage their relationship failed. However, this plan of his was ruined by Shao Yun. He had no other choice in the end and resorted to kidnapping. His sending the photos to Lin Xinyan meant that he had discovered her address.

He had brought along Number Four when he tried to kidnap Lin Xinyan, but she wasn't around. That was why they kidnapped Qin Ya – they thought that their relationship was definitely not an ordinary one since they were living together.

When they were investigating Lin Xinyan, they found that she knew of someone named Qin Ya. But the latter had a different appearance now, so Number Four thought she was another friend of Lin Xinyan.

“What can I do now?” Shen Peichuan felt a bit vexed. *If only I had gone to C City. Gu Bei might not have gotten his way then.*

He felt that he had let Su Zhan down.

“Wait for me at the villa at six o'clock.” We might arrive at the villa around that time.

“Alright.”

After hanging up, Zong Jinghao walked over to the car and found them still eating. The car's bonnet had turned into their table.

When he got closer, he noticed that there seemed to be more food compared to earlier.

“Mommy bought us more,” Zong Yanchen said when he saw his father’s puzzled look.

Lin Xinyan didn’t know that Zong Jinghao had already bought food as she was feeling hungry. Maybe it was because she was pregnant but felt very hungry if she didn’t eat anything.

She had bought almost everything he had gotten earlier. Lin Xinyan handed him a piece of dried tofu and said, “You should eat some too. There’s too much. It’ll be a waste if we don’t finish it.”

Zong Jinghao kept silent.

Here I thought she was worried that I’ll be hungry. In reality, she just didn’t want to waste the food.

Lin Xinyan wasn’t aware of his thoughts when she shoved the dried tofu to his lips. She ordered, “Eat it.”

Zong Jinghao parted his lips and ate it, but before he swallowed it, Lin Xinyan ordered again while holding some crab meatballs, “Open up.”

Zong Jinghao was rendered speechless.

I haven’t even swallowed.

“Hurry up. We’ve stayed here for too long. You have to eat faster,” Lin Xinyan urged.

I still have to chew before swallowing no matter how fast I do it. You can’t be telling me to just swallow it, right? However, the moment he opened his mouth to say his piece, Lin Xinyan shoved a few more meatballs into his mouth.

Zong Jinghao couldn’t utter a word at all.

Lin Xinyan realized that she had been too anxious, so she quickly handed him a bottle of water. He took it but only took a sip of it to wash down the aftertaste when he finally swallowed the food in his mouth. He asked, "Are you trying to choke me to death?"

"No." Lin Xinyan was just worried that the food wasn't to his liking.

It wasn't that decent after all. But they couldn't ask for more here. It was fine as long as they were able to fill their stomachs.

She tugged on his sleeves as she whispered, "Don't be angry."

Zong Jinghao wasn't angry at all. *I have to eat whatever my wife feeds me, even if I'm choked to death. Look at how she's admitting her mistakes now. How can I bear to criticize her?*

He pretended to look pissed when he replied, "I'll punish you when we're home."

Lin Xinyan went silent instantly.

They fed the leftover food they couldn't finish to Baymax. They had already wasted more than half an hour resting there.

It was already dawn by the time they arrived at B City.

Zong Jinghao immediately drove to the villa. The kids didn't get to sleep well, nor did they get to have a proper meal during the journey back. With Aunt Yu taking good care of them at the villa, he would be able to handle Qin Ya's matter without having to worry about them.

Aunt Yu was grinning ear to ear when she saw the group of people arrive. She hugged the kids and talked about how fast time had passed when she saw Lin Xinyan's belly.

Zong Jinghao told Aunt Yu to shower the kids and change them into clean clothes while he and Lin Xinyan headed upstairs.

Since he was going to meet with Gu Bei, he needed to tidy himself up and change into a clean set of clothes.

Lin Xinyan sat by the bed as she waited for him.

After a moment, the sounds of water flowing in the bathroom stopped, and he came out with a white towel wrapped around his body. He glanced at Lin Xinyan and said, "You haven't slept all night. Just get a good rest now. Have Aunt Yu cook whatever you feel like eating."

At that, he went to his wardrobe to get changed.

Lin Xinyan sat around for a moment more before making her way to the wardrobe. Zong Jinghao had put on a shirt and pants and was now buckling his belt. She chose one of his suits and helped him put it on before taking a tie that matched the suit from the shelf. Then, she gently did his tie for him. As a fashion designer, she had a great understanding of both women's and men's fashion.

Zong Jinghao raised his brows as she rarely 'served' him so gently.

"Is there something wrong?"

Lin Xinyan straightened up his attire and buttons as she said softly, "Promise me, no matter what, you have to bring Qin Ya back unharmed."