

Bigoted 421

Chapter 421: seeing that you have an appetite, go find Gu Yan and check his pulse

Ye Luo had been taking care of President Ba in the days following his return.

Since his trip to the capital, President Ba had become much more mischievous.

He got into as much trouble as he made around Sheng Garden.

Ye Luo had caught President Ba on several occasions. He tried locking him up but every time he did, President Ba would act as if he were about to die. The pitiful appearance he wore was too painful to ignore and so Ye Luo would always free him a short while after.

Shi Yan reached out to stop him and asked curiously, "What's wrong with President Ba?"

Ye Luo replied, "It took something of mine."

Shi Yan thought that President Ba had been up to mischief in the kitchen again but apparently not. It looked like President Ba was simply snacking on a piece of paper. "It's just a piece of paper."

Ye Luo ignored Shi Yan and continued to chase President Ba.

Shi Yan turned to look at Ye Luo who was hot on his heels after President Ba. What was so important about that piece of paper?

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Two hours later...

Qin Shu walked out of the cloakroom wearing a loose orange dress of Korean design. It had a white doll collar that lent her a refreshingly youthful look.

She looked even younger now in the dress she wore.

Though the skirt of her dress reached her knees, it was neither too long nor too short. It was perfectly proportioned to showcase her long, slender legs.

Fu Tingyu followed closely behind. He wore a well-tailored suit that complimented his suave figure. It was a rich velvety black that flowed like silk. It was a classic look that had not changed for thousands of years. It enhanced his noble bearing.

Holding her hand in his, Fu Tingyu led Qin Shu to the dining room. He walked slowly, matching her short strides with one of his own.

It was almost time for lunch and the chef had already prepared the dishes.

Shi Yan and Ning Meng waited in the living room.

Hearing the rhythmic patter of footsteps, they looked towards the stairs and were caught flat-footed when they discovered a lovely couple walking down the burnished steps.

Ning Meng spoke under his breath, asking, "When did the young madam return? Why didn't anyone tell us?"

"I didn't know she had returned either." Shi Yan muttered wistfully as he watched the fourth young master lead his wife to the ground floor. It dawned on him then what the fourth young master had been doing earlier.

Anyone in the young master's position would have felt anger for having been disturbed.

Qin Shu followed the man dutifully to the dining table.

A full course was laid out on the table. All of them were dishes Qin Shu enjoyed. Despite her absence, Fu Tingyu continued to have the chef prepare his meals according to her tastes.

He pulled out her chair and tucked her in before seating himself opposite her.

Hunger had been gnawing at her from the moment she woke. Tortured by the long wait, Qin Shu was so hungry that she could eat a horse. Her hunger only worsened when she realized that the dishes the chef had prepared were all her favourites.

Picking up her chopsticks, Qin Shu dug into the feast with ravenous abandon. She skewered her favourite pork tenderloins, marinated in sweet and sour sauce, between her chopsticks and took a bite. Its crispy skin paired well with the slightly tangy sauce and brought out an intense burst of flavours. Perhaps it was her hunger, but she felt that the pork tasted more delicious than usual.

Unlike his wife, Fu Tingyu was in no hurry to eat. Instead, he watched Qin Shu devour piece after piece of the succulent pork tenderloins, relishing in her delight. She was a feast for his eyes and her joy was reflected in the mirth dancing in them.

Qin Shu's enthusiastic display managed to whet his own appetite and soon he was chewing on a few vegetables he had plucked from a dish.

He did not enjoy eating alone. Meals were supposed to be enjoyed in the company of friends and family. With Qin Shu in the capital, he had been eating alone and the solitude weighed heavily on his shoulders.

He ate to live. He did not live to eat. Eating was a chore, a mechanical motion meant to serve his bodily needs. It was not something he usually enjoyed.

Now, however, with the love of his life eating with him, the food in his mouth gradually gained texture, taste and a whole multitude of sensations that were otherwise denied to him.

They ate in companionable silence. Fu Tingyu was not the type to make small talk at the dining table. She knew that, and so eating together with him was enough. It left her feeling content.

When she had just about eaten her fill, Fu Tingyu wiped his mouth with a napkin and said, "I'll be going into the office later."

The office had been extremely busy as of late. As he had not gone in the morning, he would have to go later that afternoon.

Smiling, Qin Shu assured him, "Alright, I'll wait for you to come back for dinner."

She wiped away the oil stains around her mouth having reassured him.

"Let's go to the old mansion for dinner tonight," Fu Tingyu decided.

Qin Shu nodded her assent. "Sure. I haven't seen Grandma in a long time. It would be good for us to visit her. I hope she is well. She must be bored out of her mind without Xiao Yan by her side."

Fu Tingyu eyed her teasingly. "She won't be bored if you give her a great-grandson."

Qin Shu looked away hurriedly, a scarlet blush tinting her cheeks. Softly, she said, "It won't be so soon."

Seeing her head bowed in embarrassment, Fu Tingyu marched around the table and stood at her side.

Qin Shu noted the way he rested a palm on the table and another against the back of her chair. Curiosity flashed in her eyes.

"You..."

Before she could finish her sentence, Fu Tingyu leaned forward and planted a kiss on her lips.

Qin Shu was too startled to react.

A fan-shaped screen separated the living room from the dining room. Its frame was made of mahogany, while its screen was made of silk. The screen was embroidered in threads that wove a scenic forest across its surface.

From the living room, Shi Yan and Ning Meng could see their vague silhouettes through the silkscreen.

Qin Shu was awoken from her reverie by a deep and powerful voice, "Then I'll be going now."

Fu Tingyu stared at her for a long time as if he was trying to commit every line, every contour of her being into his memory. It took great effort for him to tear his eyes off her but eventually, he did.

Qin Shu followed him with her eyes until he disappeared around the corner. She could still feel the warmth of his kiss on her lips.

Ning Meng rushed to her young madam's side as soon as she was sure that the fourth young master had departed. Excitedly, she asked, "Young Madam, when did you come back? Why didn't you call ahead of your return?"

Qin Shu laughed as fervourous excitement was channelled through Ning Meng's form. "I arrived last night. You were probably sound asleep by then."

Realization dawned on Ning Meng's face. "No wonder not even Butler Shi knew of your return."

Almost a month had passed since they last met. Ning Meng surveyed Qin Shu's emaciated figure and frowned, "Young Madam, you seem to have lost weight. Is the food in your school's cafeteria not to your liking?"

"It's not bad. The food in the cafeteria is actually pretty good. Of course, it can't be compared to the food cooked here."

Qin Shu rubbed her face self-consciously. She did not feel like she had lost any weight.

She still had to make a trip to Gu Yan's place. Gu Yan had instructed her to pay him a visit today so that he could check her pulse and see what was wrong with her.

Qin Shu recalled her close encounter with that brilliant green snake. Back then, she had made the grievous error of trying to extract the venom from the wound it had inflicted and in doing so, had poisoned herself. Even now, the numbing taste of the poison lingered on her tongue. Did the snake bite do more damage than she had thought?

It was at this moment that President Ba crashed into her.

In a single leap, President Ba was safely perched on her lap meowing unhappily, “Meow!”

Qin Shu looked at President Ba who had suddenly jumped onto her lap. She raised her hand and rubbed his furry head affectionately, a gentle smile blooming on her lips. “Did you miss me? she asked with felicity colouring her voice.

“Meow!” President Ba’s two front paws were propped on her lap. He raised his feline head and stared at her with his haughty green eyes.

Qin Shu giggled as she took in the sight of President Ba’s cavalier demeanour. “I know, how about I take you out for a walk? Would you like to get some fresh air with me?”

Chapter 422: Qin Shu was Worried

Qin Shu could not help but laugh at President Ba’s silly display of haughty pride. “Shall we go out for a walk together? I think getting some fresh air would be good for us both.”

“Meow” President Ba bobbed happily on her lap. He seemed a little less resentful now that he had secured Qin Shu’s attention.

Lifting President Ba off her lap, she padded out the door with him.

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Imperial City, the previous night...

By the time Han Xiao returned to campus, it was eight o’clock. He allowed Gu Yan’s bodyguards to escort him to the school gates but no further.

Seeing as they had accomplished their assignment, they left him to his own devices and drove through the night back to Jiang City.

Han Xiao hobbled towards his dormitory unsteadily. His injuries were quite severe but he soldiered on, grim determination in his gait. When he finally entered his dorm room, he found Hua Wuyan typing away on a laptop. Hearing the door open behind him, Hua Wuyan turned around to greet his unexpected guest; quirking a smile that froze just as soon as he noticed Han Xiao’s wounded form stumbling in.

His smile warped into concern. He rushed to Han Xiao’s side, hooking an arm around his uninjured shoulder to support him.

“What happened? How did you get injured?”

"It was an accident." Han Xiao shrugged off his camping pack with some difficulty and hung his coat on a clothes rack nearby.

"Have you been to A&E?" Qin Shu's figure popped into his mind at this time. "Where's Qin Shu? Is she hurt?"

"Not yet." Han Xiao was peeling off his stained and soiled clothes when Hua Wuyan mentioned Qin Shu. He paused briefly, pondering over where he should begin, but eventually said, "She was bitten by a venomous snake."

Hua Wuyan paled, his complexion taking on a sickly hue. Hurriedly, he asked, "Then where is she? Is she in the hospital? Venomous snake bites are no laughing matter. How were you both so careless?"

"I met an acquaintance of hers on the way back. He is a doctor practising traditional Chinese medicine. He injected her with an antidote. She should be fine now."

"Where is she, then? Honestly, why did she have to scale those mountains?"

"She has gone back to Jiang City." Han Xiao stripped himself of the final dregs of his clothes and rummaged in his wardrobe for a fresh set. He really needed a shower.

Hua Wuyan was surprised to hear that Qin Shu had gone back to Jiang City but he quickly brushed it aside in favour of his injured friend. "Okay. That's one thing we don't need to worry about, then. Hurry up and get yourself in the shower. We're going to the hospital once you've cleaned up. Your wounds need to be treated."

Grabbing his clothes, Han Xiao trudged towards the showers. Before he entered, however, he fixed Hua Wuyan an implacable look and said, "Qin Shu reminds me of her. She shares the same pair of eyes and brows as my Xiao Budian."

Having said his piece, Han Xiao walked into the bathroom and shut the door.

Hua Wuyan stood rooted to the spot, dazed by Han Xiao's sudden revelation. Was Qin Shu really Xiao Budian?

Rapping the bathroom door with his knuckles, Hua Wuyan hollered, "You have seen Qin Shu without her make-up on, haven't you? Do you really believe she is your Xiao Budian?"

He waited for a reply but none came. His only answer was the sound of rushing water.

Hua Wuyan huffed in response. Crossing his arms against his chest, he leaned against the frame of the bathroom door to wait for Han Xiao.

Half an hour later, the bathroom door swung open. Han Xiao had changed into a clean set of clothes and was in the midst of drying his hair.

His face was cold and stern.

Correcting his posture, Hua Wuyan asked, "Are you sure she is your Xiao Budian?"

Han Xiao stared at Hua Wuyan wordlessly.

Hua Wuyan: “???”

He stared at Hua Wuyan for a long while before finally saying, “She doesn’t know me.”

“... What?” Hua Wuyan blinked owlshly.

Looking away, Han Xiao ambled to his wardrobe, picked out a pair of black jeans and wore them.

“Brother Han, what do you mean she doesn’t know you?”

Han Xiao remained silent.

Hua Wuyan was a little anxious, “Out with it already!”

Once again, his good friend never failed to frustrate him.

Outside of speaking to his Xiao Budian, Han Xiao was aggravatingly silent – almost pitifully so – despite having known each other since they were children.

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Hua Wuyan, “...”

Han Xiao clothed himself mutely. In what felt like an exasperating aeon of silence, he finally said, “I think she’s my Xiao Budian but when I confronted her, she said she was not.”

“So... is that a yes or a no?”

Han Xiao went mum again.

“Never mind. Let’s get your wounds treated first. We’ll talk later.”

Having been friends for so long, Hua Wuyan could tell how confused Han Xiao was. His silence was simply an outward expression of his inner disquiet. Fishing out his car keys, he led the way out of their dorm room and to his car.

Han Xiao followed him out quietly.

Half an hour later, they arrived at the hospital.

The doctor stitched his head up and attached an IV drip to his arm.

“Be mindful of that head injury. It is quite sensitive at the moment but it should get better with time. The injury you sustained on your arm, on the other hand, is much more serious. How on earth did you get bitten by a dog? You’re lucky the dog did not have rabies or you would have died a most painful death considering the fact that you never received shots for it. Be careful with that arm of yours or you’ll end up a cripple for the rest of your life.” the doctor rebuked sternly.

An awkward expression rippled over Hua Wuyan’s features for a second before smoothing itself. Han Xiao had said that he had been mauled by a pack of wolves. How did those wolves become a dog?

Han Xiao listened to the doctor expressionlessly.

It was around midnight when they reached their dorm. It had taken them a while to get to the hospital and back again. Insisting that he needed to rest, Hua Wuyan chose not to indulge him in idle chatter. Instead, he ushered Han Xiao into the room and ordered him to bed.

Lying on his back, Han Xiao felt his eyes droop. The medicine prescribed by the doctor probably had sleep-inducing properties... Soon his eyes closed and he was pulled into a deep sleep.

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Jiang City, in a private villa...

Qin Shu carried President Ba out of the car and walked with graceful steps to the villa's entrance.

It was President Ba's first time here. His dark green eyes darted about curiously.

Ji Fei stood at the entrance waiting for her. "The Young Master is in the pharmacy." Ji Fei motioned as he invited her in.

Qin Shu acknowledged Ji Fei's words with a nod of her head and crossed the villa's threshold.

Closing the ornate doors behind them, Ji Fei caught up with Qin Shu barely a second after.

Qin Shu had been to the pharmacy before. It was the third room on the second floor.

She hugged President Ba against her chest, walking up the stairs slowly. Upon reaching the second floor, she made a beeline for a room tucked in the corner.

Gu Yan usually had the door to the pharmacy closed to prevent the villa from smelling like a Chinese medicine shop.

Ji Fei pushed open the door leading to the pharmacy.

Immediately, the pungent aroma of Chinese herbs assailed them. Qin Shu frowned in mild discomfort. The smell of so many herbs, stored in one place, was simply nauseating. It took great effort on her part to push past the smell and enter the room with President Ba.

Gu Yan was seated in a mahogany chair when he heard the pharmacy's door being pushed open. Turning around to see who it was, he discovered Qin Shu standing at the doorway. He offered her the chair opposite him and began brewing a pot of tea.

Qin Shu sat in the proffered chair, watching quietly as Gu Yan prepared his tea. Tea drinking was a hobby of his. Whenever he had time to spare, Gu Yan would enjoy a cup of tea while reading his books on pharmacology.

As he waited for the tea to steep, Gu Yan spoke, "I'm afraid it will be a while more before the medicine is ready. It seems my estimates were a little off."

"That's fine. He doesn't know that you've returned to Jiang City yet." Qin Shu pursed her lips. "How confident are you this time?"

“I’m confident that the medicine will work. As to how effective it will be, that is something we will only know once he has ingested it. Don’t worry. The herbs you found are a close match and their medicinal properties are not in any way inferior to those herbs we need. They should yield similar effects.”

Pouring her a cup of tea, Gu Yan invited Qin Shu to have a sip. “Have some of this tea. I think you’ll like it.”

He poured himself a cup and savoured its mellow flavour. It tasted sublime.

Though she had received Gu Yan’s guarantee, worry still wormed its way into her heart. Unless Fu Tingyu’s ailment was cured, she would never feel at ease.

Chapter 423: Gu Yan’s Doubts

Gu Yan sipped at his tea happily, enjoying its mellow taste.

There was something wrong with Qin Shu’s pulse. He did not think it was anything serious but one could never be too careful.

Pulling out a prescription pad from his medicine box, he prompted her to extend her arm.

“Give me your hand. Let me take a look.”

“Okay.” Qin Shu moved President Ba to an empty chair beside her. She then extended her arm as instructed and offered Gu Yan her hand.

Gu Yan glanced at President Ba. Qin Shu’s cat had evergreen eyes and they sparkled with keen, human-like intelligence. Its fur was a glossy black. He did not need to feel its fur to know that it carried a soft and smooth texture.

Feeling a pair of eyes on him, President Ba fixed Gu Yan with a pointed stare. It felt as if the very fabric of his being was laid bare. It was more than a little unnerving.

Chuckling nervously, Gu Yan said, “Your cat sure is interesting.”

Rather than meet President Ba’s soul-scouring gaze, Gu Yan looked away and began taking Qin Shu’s pulse.

Qin Shu peeked in President Ba’s direction. The eyes of her cat stared unblinkingly at Gu Yan. It reminded her of their first encounter. President Ba had stared at her in the same way he was doing with Gu Yan. A ghost of a smile tugged at her lips. Things were becoming more interesting.

All was silent for a time.

Frowning, Gu Yan looked up at Qin Shu; doubt flashing in his eyes. He must have made a mistake in his diagnosis. Repeating his previous action, he took Qin Shu’s pulse again.

Fear gripped her heart. Was there something wrong with her body?

She was scared. No. She was terrified of what he might say and so she did not ask for his diagnosis. She would wait for him to give her his thoughts.

A while later, Gu Yan released her arm. He picked up his teapot and refilled his cup. He also poured some for Qin Shu. Setting his teapot down, Gu Yan sipped at the scalding tea seemingly lost in thought.

The longer the silence stretched, the more anxious she became. Was it bad? Was he keeping silent because her condition was serious?

“Gu Yan, please say something. Is there anything wrong with my body?” Qin Shu asked cautiously.

Gu Yan nursed his cup of tea between his two hands. “I’m not sure. It is too soon to tell. I’ll need to examine your condition more thoroughly to say for certain.”

A bleak sense of foreboding crashed into her with Gu Yan’s vague words. “What do you mean?”

Gu Yan refused to disclose more than he needed to – not without confirming that his diagnosis was accurate. He pondered for a moment and said, “Prepare for the worst but hope for the best. Don’t overthink your situation. It might not be as bad as you think. We’ll only know after we’ve run you through several more tests.”

Qin Shu groaned in anguish. How could he ask her not to think too much with words as ominous as those he’d spoken?

“How long will it take for you to give me an answer?”

Scratching his chin in thought, Gu Yan said, “I think a week should do. Yes... I’ll examine your condition again in a week’s time.”

“Alright.” Seeing as Gu Yan was not going to tell her anything else of use, Qin Shu did not pursue the matter. She could only wait for him to give her his diagnosis in a week’s time.

“By the way, not all of the snake’s poison has been expelled from your system. I’ll prescribe some medicine for you to take. Soak this bag in warm water before drinking. It’s a mild antidote. Drink it for a week or so and you should be fine.”

Gu Yan reached into his medicine box and gave her seven small bags of medicine. They looked a little like teabags except they were not stuffed with tea leaves but various herbs.

Qin Shu accepted the medicine gratefully.

She did not want to impose on him further and so she bade farewell a short while after.

Glowering at his cold tea, Gu Yan mulled over what he had felt in taking Qin Shu’s pulse and could not stop the wave of sadness that swallowed him whole. Time really was too short.

He got up and opened his medicine cabinet. He needed to get the dosage right. Too little or too much could prove fatal. It was a very time-consuming process.

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Later that evening...

Fu Tingyu got off work and picked up Qin Shu who was waiting for him in Sheng Garden.

Calling ahead of him, he informed his grandmother that Qin Shu would be accompanying him to dinner.

The old dowager had not seen Fu Tingyu in a long time. When she heard that he would be paying her visit at dinner, she instructed the kitchen to prepare extra servings for her grandson and his wife.

Xu Wei often phoned to chat with her.

In their conversation earlier, the old lady mentioned that Xiao Yu would be joining her for dinner.

When Xu Wei heard that, her eyes lit up in excitement. She had not seen Fu Tingyu since their last get together.

“Grandma, I’ve recently learned how to bake some small pastries. I’ll swing by later to give you a few samples. I’ll make more if you like them.”

Xu Wei had taken the time to chat with an old fossil like her and their conversations did wonders to relieve her boredom. The least she could do was try the girl’s pastries. Without putting much thought into her decision, she agreed. “Sure, sure. Come on over. I’m sure they will be delicious. You’ve got good hands, after all.”

“Grandma hasn’t eaten them yet. How do you know they’ll be delicious?” Xu Wei laughed to hide the smugness in her tone.

“I’ve tried your cooking before. It was wonderful. I’m sure your sweets will not fall short of my expectations.” judged the elderly matron.

“Then I’ll bring some over now.”

“By all means! Stay for dinner while you’re at it.”

Xu Wei ended the call, feeling pleased with herself for coming up with an excuse to be at the old woman’s house for dinner. Picking out which pastries she would bring with her only took a short while. She then wrapped them up in a beautiful box just for the old dame.

Smiling happily, Xu Wei held onto the box and left for the Fu family’s old mansion.

Meanwhile, at Chateau Fu...

Butler Fu had been waiting at the mansion’s entrance since the word was spread that morning of the fourth young master’s imminent visit.

Shi Yan parked the car by the entrance of the old mansion. Butler Fu took a few steps towards them and opened the door. “Fourth young master, the old madam is waiting inside.”

Fu Tingyu stepped out of the car looking as tall and handsome as ever. He held out his hand to help Qin Shu out of the car. Qin Shu nodded at Butler Fu in greeting.

Butler Fu returned it with a small bow of his own.

Only after the ritual niceties were performed did Fu Tingyu lead her to the house.

Butler Fu followed a step behind them.

At this time, the sky was already completely dark. The lights in the old house had already been lit up.

Already the sky was taking on the pall of night and soon it would be dark out. Ahead, the mansion was outlined in a glow of warm light. It was almost as if a swarm of fireflies had descended upon it.

Lamps lined the path leading to the mansion on either side. Each being placed three metres from its predecessor.

Chateau Fu was as large as it was old. It had corridors and courtyards in abundance. Some might have even described it as a maze. After taking a few turns around winding passages, they passed through the Moon Cave Door and finally arrived at the living room.

Chateau Fu, in the living room...

The old madam was chatting with Xu Wei in high spirits but their conversation died just as the young couple entered.

Leading Qin Shu into the living room with their hands entwined, he greeted his grandmother.

“Grandma.”

“Grandma.”

The couple paid their respects to the old woman at the same time.

When the old woman saw that her grandson had arrived, she happily received his greeting and bade him sit.

“Come, come, take a seat first. You must be hungry.”

Instructing Butler Fu, she said, “Prepare the dishes.”

“Yes, Old Madam.” Butler Fu turned around and left.

Under Fu Tingyu’s lead, Qin Shu sat in a mahogany chair.

Xu Wei was flabbergasted by the sight of Fu Tingyu entering with Qin Shu.

Never in her wildest dreams had she thought Fu Tingyu would have a woman accompany him to dinner.

There was something about this woman that seemed familiar.

Alarm bells rang in her head when she noticed that Grandma actually knew her.

She suddenly recalled the fondant figurine he had shown her a while back. The fondant figurine bore a strong resemblance to the woman sitting next to Fu Tingyu.

The woman beside him was a ravishing beauty. She didn’t expect the real person to look even better than the fondant figurine she had seen. Moreover, she looked rather young. Was she still a high school student?

What was going on?

The old madam was unperturbed by Qin Shu's sudden return from the capital. As husband and wife, it was normal for her to spend some time with him whenever she could.

"Little Shu, how is the capital's university? Have you gotten used to it?"

Chapter 424: Overflowing With Jealousy

Xu Wei went numb. Was she hearing things? Did Grandma actually call her Little Shu?

Disbelief coloured her face in a pallid shade.

"Grandma, life at university has been wonderful. The food served at the cafeteria is not bad either. However," Qin Shu paused, swivelling around to face Fu Tingyu, a sunny smile adorning her cute lips, "It still can't compare to the food prepared at home."

Fu Tingyu listened intently as Qin Shu spoke. Basking in the warmth of her smile, his frigid eyes took on a gentler air.

The old dowager nodded in agreement. "That's good, that's good. The world is a cruel place. It certainly can't compare to the joys of home. I worry for your wellbeing every time you venture out alone."

Xu Wei gave the woman beside Fu Tingyu a once-over. If Grandma referred to her as Little Shu... Could she be Qin Shu?

Recalling the words Fu Tingyu had spoken then, that fondant figurine he had with him was a gift from his wife.

Was... Was she really Qin Shu?

How'd she transformed into a vision of Venus just by tying her hair up? It did not make sense.

Qin Shu's eyes swept over and caught the expression of disbelief etched on Xu Wei's face.

Not having the chance to school her expression into a mask of neutrality, Xu Wei looked around awkwardly.

Qin Shu surveyed the pastries Xu Wei had gifted Grandma with. They were buns of some sort – topped in a generous coat of meat floss. At its centre was a knob of butter. "Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to chat with Grandma, Miss Xu. Please accept our belated thanks for relieving her boredom," Qin Shu complimented kindly.

Xu Wei had been gaping at her like a fish ever since she and Fu Tingyu arrived. Qin Shu brushed off her impolite behaviour as an unfortunate reaction to seeing her without makeup on.

Xu Wei looked at Qin Shu and then back at the old woman. Plastering on an obsequious smile she said, "I enjoy chatting with Grandma. She is a joy to speak to."

The old madam beamed happily and offered, "Indeed. Xiao Wei has been nothing but good company to an old woman like me. She's even brought over some pastries that she made herself."

So caught up in their chatter she was that she had yet to sample the delightful pastries Xu Wei had brought.

“Miss Xu really is quite thoughtful. She knows that Grandma is old and likes eating soft foods. She even added more butter to soften the bread.”

The old madam’s expression changed upon hearing that butter had been added to them.

Xu Wei did not notice how the elderly matron paled and she continued speaking with a note of pride in her voice. “My grandfather enjoys eating pastries like these. He finds it easier to eat things that aren’t too hard. I thought Grandma would be the same and so I brought some of the pastries he liked for her to try.”

Qin Shu nodded thoughtfully. “Grandpa Xu and Grandma are around the same age. He would know what kinds of food are easier to eat.”

At this moment, Fu Tingyu, who had been silently listening, interrupted, “Grandma was hospitalized two years ago because of an allergic reaction she had after eating a butter-filled pastry. Have you forgotten, Miss Xu?”

Fu Tingyu glared at Xu Wei with a chilling gaze that threatened to freeze her where she sat.

A memory of the incident that had taken place two years ago was called to mind. It had happened during the old woman’s birthday banquet. After eating a pastry stuffed with butter, she collapsed from what was later identified as a serious allergic reaction. She had nearly lost her life in that unfortunate debacle

Xu Wei had forgotten about it completely. Originally, the pastries were meant for her grandfather. It was only out of convenience that she used them as an excuse to see Fu Tingyu.

Noticing the old woman’s expression for the first time that evening, Xu Wei hurriedly thought of some explanation she could give to address the situation she had landed herself in.

However, before she could explain herself, Qin Shu came to her rescue. “Miss Xu must have forgotten that Grandma is allergic to butter. She wouldn’t have brought her something so lethal, otherwise.”

Unconvinced, Fu Tingyu argued, “I remember both old man Xu and Miss Xu being there at the hospital.” The words he left unsaid, hung like the doom of Damocles in the air.

The old woman’s face darkened in displeasure.

Xu Wei’s was as white as sheet. Fumbling for a response, she said, “Grandma, although I made this pastry, it was the maid who added the butter. She was helped me make the pastry, thinking it was meant for my grandfather. I would never offer you something I knew you were allergic to.”

Taking a closer look at the pastry box, Qin Shu noted, “Miss Xu, there seems to be a layer of butter coating the box. It seems rather hard to believe that you had no knowledge of there being butter in the pastry.” The elderly matron adjusted her reading glasses perched on the bridge of her nose. She hadn’t noticed it earlier and it came as a surprise when she discovered the coating of butter lining the inside of the box.

Xu Wei turned her attention to the box she had prepared. What she saw stole her breath away. She was in the old woman’s good books and she couldn’t allow the favourable impression, she had painstakingly built, crumble because of this one mistake of hers.

She opened her mouth to explain but was stopped short.

The old madam waved her hand, dispensing any need of hers to vindicate herself. "People make mistakes. No harm was done. Let's have dinner."

The old lady thought of how Xu Wei had accompanied her these few days and decided to let it go. Xu Wei must have forgotten that she was allergic to butter and that was that. She did not wish to dwell on the matter any longer.

Xu Wei quickly thanked the old matriarch for her magnanimity and apologised profusely for her mistake. Although the old lady had decided against pursuing the issue, Xu Wei knew that she was the type to bear grudges. "Thank You, Grandma. I'll commit this lesson to memory. I won't make the same mistake again."

Qin Shu didn't expect the old dame to move on just like that. It simply showed how much she liked Xu Wei.

The old woman was the first to stand up and toddle towards the dining room.

Fu Tingyu stood up and offered Qin Shu his hand.

Qin Shu grasped his hand in hers, following him to the dining room.

Xu Wei wanted nothing more than to incinerate Qin Shu where she stood. Even at home, the pair of lovebirds paraded themselves in each others company as if they were joined at the hip. Gritting her teeth in frustration, she stood and walked after them.

In the dining room...

Laid out on the table was a sprawling feast. It was a luxurious spread consisting of Fu Tingyu's favourite food.

The quartet sat around the table. Try as she might, Xu Wei was not able to coax the old woman into speaking. The atmosphere at the dining table was sombre.

Xu Wei fell silent, picking at her food half-heartedly.

Meeting Qin Shu's eyes the old dowager asked, "How is Little Yan? Has he gotten used to living on campus? He's been thoroughly spoiled from young and I can't help but worry for him."

Qin Shu put down her chopsticks and replied, "Little Yan is doing quite well in school. He's still adapting, though. I think he'll return over the long holiday that is coming up. You'll be able to inspect whether he has grown taller or put on more weight, then."

It had only been a month since Little Yan had left home for school and already she missed him. She really was getting old...

Lifting his chopsticks, Fu Tingyu picked out several food items he knew Qin Shu enjoyed eating and placed them in her bowl.

Qin Shu arched a delicate brow but did not comment. Picking up her chopsticks, she nibbled on the food in her bowl.

Having made sure that his wife was eating properly, he helped himself to the dishes on the table.

Xu Wei watched the intimate display with jealousy burning in her heart. She had met Fu Tingyu first, not Qin Shu. How could Fu Tingyu care for t-this... this woman. It was not fair.

Was it because she had a pretty face?

Sure, she did not look bad but there were many other women who were just as beautiful – if all he cared about were appearances, anyway.

Other than her looks, what else did she have?

Xu Wei believed that she was in no way inferior to Qin Shu. After all, she was a woman of status and wealth few could compare to.

Throughout the whole meal, Xu Wei felt like she was chewing on wax; every bite harder than the last. It reached a point whereby it became increasingly difficult for her to swallow the food in her mouth.

Chapter 425: There was a Girl That a Man Liked in The Past

After dinner.

Fu Tingyu accompanied his grandmother on a walk around the garden.

Qin Shu strode by his side.

To the old matriarch's left was Xu Wei.

The lamps in the garden were brighter than those in Sheng Yuan. Each lamp was only a few metres apart from the last. This was to reduce the risk of the old woman falling because of poor lighting.

Turning towards a pavilion nearby, the old lady said, "Little Yu, walk with me for a bit. We haven't had a good chat in a long time."

"Okay." Fu Tingyu responded. Seeing that Grandma wanted some time alone with Fu Tingyu, Qin Shu offered her husband a brief smile, indicating that she would be fine by herself. Nodding to his wife, Fu Tingyu helped the old woman to the pavilion not a distance away.

Quietly, Qin Shu slowed her steps and made for an adjacent garden.

Xu Wei followed her.

"Qin Shu."

Qin Shu heard Xu Wei call out to her. She turned back and saw Xu Wei stalking over on her seven-inch heels.

The path cutting through the garden was paved with cobblestone. It was not as easy or as comfortable to walk on as an ordinary cement road.

Xu Wei stopped in front of Qin Shu and asked, "When did you meet Fu Tingyu? Why hasn't he ever mentioned you before?"

"I met him two years ago" Qin Shu laughed. "All of Tingyu's friends know me. Aren't you a friend of Tingyu's, Miss Xu? I'm not sure why you wouldn't have heard of me before."

Xu Wei felt stifled by Qin Shu's words. Chewing on her lips, she fought to regain her composure. "Tingyu and I have known each other for many years. I know everything about him. I also know that he used to have someone he liked."

Fu Tingyu used to have someone he liked? Qin Shu stopped in her tracks. Was Xu Wei saying this to sow discord between them?

Playing along, Qin Shu replied tepidly, "Even if he used to have someone he liked, that's in the past. The person he loves now is me."

"I didn't realize that you were so magnanimous. Aren't you bothered that he used to have someone he liked?" Smirking, Xu Wei murmured, "I've heard that Fu Tingyu has been cultivating ginkgo trees for that special girl for at least six years. I wonder how many he's managed to cultivate already..."

Under the light of the moon, Xu Wei peered at Qin Shu hoping to glean some sort of response in her expression.

No sooner had Xu Wei mentioned ginkgo trees than the image of Fu Tingyu presenting her with one came to mind. Fu Tingyu had cultivated it for several years before giving it to her as a present.

She had not known Fu Tingyu some six or seven years ago.

Was the ginkgo tree he had given her meant for someone else?

Qin Shu sent Xu Wei a questioning look. How did she know these things?

"The ginkgo tree you mentioned... Does it have golden leaves all year round? If so, then the one you saw in Sheng Yuan was it."

"Was it now? I didn't expect it to be the one I was thinking of. Indeed, it's very beautiful."

Xu Wei feigned surprise.

Curling her lips into a sweet smile she agreed. "Yes, it is very beautiful. I like it very much."

A figure approached them from the direction of the gazebo. Catching sight of who it was, Xu Wei needed Qin Shu deliberately. "I have heard that you once had a boyfriend – a boyfriend whom you loved so much that you did anything and everything he asked of you. Did you ever... kiss him?"

Xu Wei heaved a long, dramatic sigh. "It is said that one's first love is unforgettable. I've never had a boyfriend before so I don't know how true the saying is."

"I was young and ignorant, then. I thought he was different... He always spoke to me kindly, knowing just the right words to comfort me whenever I felt down. I thought he liked me, in the same way, I liked him but I was wrong. What we shared was not love. It was just my selfish belief that he would reciprocate my feelings for him. When he rejected me, I understood – I understood that he never thought of me in that way. It made me rethink my love for him, and I realized I never really loved him in the way I thought I did..." Qin Shu whispered faintly, her words weighing heavily in the cool night air.

Hearing Qin Shu's answer, Xu Wei frowned and probed further, "Then, didn't the two of you hold hands, hug or kiss? It's something lovers do all the time."

She had investigated Shen Yaohui. On the surface, he might have appeared gentle but that was just a cleverly constructed facade meant to reel in unsuspecting women. Even if he had not been privy to Qin Shu's true beauty, he would not have left a meek woman like her untouched. Hugging and kissing were nothing to him.

Being a germaphobe, Fu Tingyu would never tolerate a woman touched by another man.

Qin Shu sneered in her heart. "Miss Xu, you probably never saw how I looked back then."

Xu Wei was perplexed. She did not understand the meaning behind Qin Shu's words.

"... I used to be disfigured. Everyone avoided me. Shen Yaohui was the only person willing to talk to me. I thought he actually loved me." Qin Shu paused, reliving those memories were never easy. "But he didn't. I was only lying to myself. When he finally got a good look at my face, you should have seen how he recoiled in horror. He was no different from everyone else. He stopped talking to me afterwards, avoiding me as if I carried the plague."

Her voice rose in a steady crescendo as she spoke but died down into a whisper just as quickly. It was as if the wind was taken from her sails. Staring Xu Wei in the eyes, she asked quietly, "Do you think a person like him would actually date me? Would he treat me the way lovers do?"

Xu Wei stood where she was, bowled over by Qin Shu's revelation. She never knew that Qin Shu had been disfigured in the past. No wonder she had always kept her hair down. It must have been so she could hide her disfigurement.

Disfigured. No one would want to look upon an abomination. A freak. Who would even think of touching someone so hideous?

Qin Shu surveyed Xu Wei sadly. "You've done your homework, Miss Xu."

"I-I just..."

Before Xu Wei could finish, Fu Tingyu cut in from the side. "Let's return."

Fu Tingyu strode past Xu Wei, without batting so much as an eye, and clasped Qin Shu's dainty hand, escorting her away.

Qin Shu did not resist. She allowed him to lead her away obediently. Fu Tingyu was always considerate of her and matched his pace with hers so that she would not be left behind.

Xu Wei spun on her heels and glared venomously as Qin Shu departed with Fu Tingyu, her hand in his. She stomped angrily at the sight. Her heels, unwilling to bear further insult, snapped and she fell onto the cobblestoned path in a tangled heap.

Her face flickered between several shades of green and white. Crying out viciously she howled, "Even my heels are against me. Qin Shu. Just. You. Wait. Fu Tingyu is mine. No one else may have him!"

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On the way back...

A car sped down the highway late into the night.

Qin Shu glanced at Fu Tingyu. In the dim light of the car, she could make out his sculpted figure, his high nose bridge and tightly pursed lips. Even now, she could not perceive his thoughts.

At Chateau Fu, she knew from the very beginning that Xu Wei was there to stir up trouble. Not a single word of hers was truly genuine. They were traps, veiled with the malicious intention of stoking the embers of Fu Tingyu's anger.

Despite the time they had spent together, she knew that Fu Tingyu still doubted her love for him.

She loved him. She always would. He was the only man residing within her heart. For him, she would do anything.

As long as she still drew breath, she would remain by his side – to reciprocate the love and attention he showered her with.

She had committed countless mistakes and his trust in her had long been worn thin.

So when Xu Wei had tried to trap her, she played along. She turned the situation in her favour and used it as a convenient opportunity to convince him that she hadn't been dating Shen Yaohui. It was simply a beautiful lie Shen Yaohui had crafted. Nothing more.

Shen Yaohui had used Fu Tingyu's anger against him, drawing her deeper into his subterfuge. He had strung them along like puppets and they were the fools who gave him the chance to do so.

Chapter 426: Very Flirtatious

Qin Shu had conversed with Xu Wei for a considerable length of time and she was sure that Fu Tingyu had heard a good portion of their conversation. Yet, she did not know if it was enough to dispel the doubts in his heart.

Biting her lips, she reached out and held his hand. His fingers were long and wiry, and his nails were cut short. His large palm was big enough to engulf her own.

She traced the palm of his hand, gently exploring the nooks and crannies that comprised its whole. His fingers twitched with the feather-light caress dancing over his skin but she could evoke little else by way of a response.

Fu Tingyu stubbornly stared out the window, refusing to look at her. Unperturbed, Qin Shu redoubled her efforts and increased the frequency of her ministrations. A hint of impatience bled into his form. Gripping the offending hand firmly, he stopped her.

Qin Shu edged closer to him and asked, "What was I writing in your palm just now?"

Fu Tingyu did not look at her. He merely squeezed her hand a little tighter.

Seeing how unmoved he was, she leaned towards him and whispered plaintively in his ear, "Baby Yu."

Finally, he moved. Turning away from the window, he fixed his dark eyes on hers.

They faced each other in a hungry contest of wills. So close were they that either one of them could feel the breath of the other brushing against their cheeks.

Fu Tingyu's obsidian eyes seemed to swallow the surrounding light and within its depths lurked a beast tethered to the fraying cords of reason.

Qin Shu blinked, planting a kiss on his lips before pulling back.

Fu Tingyu's hooded eyes darkened like a pair of black diamonds. He reached out, grabbing her by the back of her head, and finished what she started.

He only broke the kiss when the car came to a halt. He was the first out of the vehicle.

Qin Shu patted her cheeks, breathless. A raging inferno colouring her cheeks in a vivid shade of burgundy. She breathed in and breathed out, repeating the process twice over to calm herself.

Stepping out of the car, she felt the chill in the air. It was a cold night but not unbearably so – it was only a little cooler than the car's air-conditioning. Up above, the moon shone brightly and its pale light illuminated the surroundings.

She breathed in the fresh air and immediately felt a difference. She did not feel as muddle-headed as she had been in the car.

Fu Tingyu slipped to her side in a heartbeat, tracking her every move in the way a hunter stalks prey. He smirked, recalling the events that had transpired in the car. "Tsk. How long have we been together? Your lung capacity has yet to improve."

Qin Shu blushed. She had worked so hard to compose herself but, with a single sentence of his, it had all been undone.

Kisses made her dizzy... Especially ones as long as those Fu Tingyu seemed to enjoy!

Rather than say she was bad at kissing, wouldn't it have sufficed to say he was just very good at it?

Fu Tingyu stared at Qin Shu's cheeks. They resembled freshly plucked cherries and he could not help but pinch them. Her skin was smooth and supple, carrying with it a milk-like consistency. It was exceedingly pleasant to the touch.

It reminded him of a child's. Though she was already an adult, she still looked child-like with her plump, rosy cheeks and the baby fat around her limpid eyes. She was cute even while angry. It was impossible for anyone to tire of her.

So much so that he was reluctant to let go.

Peering up at him, Qin Shu could see how his expression had turned limp – seemingly enthralled by the act of pinching her cheeks.

No sooner had she looked at him than he retracted his hands from her cheeks and led her towards the house.

Qin Shu accompanied Fu Tingyu to the house. Absently, she rubbed her flaming cheeks. Did he really have to pinch her so hard?

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At 10:00 p.m., just as they were about to head off to bed...

Dressed in a light robe, Qin Shu stood on the balcony, letting the evening air blow dry her hair in the persistent breeze.

When Fu Tingyu returned to their bedroom, he saw Qin Shu's slim figure standing on the balcony. He opened their closet and picked out a robe that matched her and made for the showers.

It did not take him long to wash up. A few minutes later, he arrived by Qin Shu's side with his hair still wet, hanging in a mess of tangled strands.

It was late September and the days were growing colder as autumnal winds signalled the end of summer.

The wind gusted with the force of a fresh breeze, throwing his water-logged hair into disarray.

Qin Shu brushed the stray locks of her hair behind her ear. Her hair had mostly dried by then. As she was about to head back into the bedroom, Fu Tingyu's tall silhouette sidled up beside her. He sported a robe identical to hers save for the fact that it had been fitted for a man instead of a woman.

Fu Tingyu leaned against the balcony's railing. The railing was made of ironwood and was extraordinarily hard.

With his back against the railing, his long legs were obvious for the world to see.

Qin Shu regarded his casual appearance with a smile. Touseled by the wind, his water-logged hair sent droplets of water dancing in the air, scattering it in all directions.

His pitch-black eyes captured her within their dark orbs. "Come here."

Qin Shu took two steps to her right and stood before him. Before she could do anything else, she was swept into his strong arms. He pulled her deeper into their embrace such that faces touched. Cold droplets of water fluttered against the skin of her face.

She tried to put some distance between them, using her arm to push herself off him. She studied his handsome figure that was but a few inches away from her. His suave looks were not marred by the water framing him. Gently, she wiped the water on his face away with a dainty hand.

Fu Tingyu leaned into her tender caress. His eyes never strayed from her form, quietly watching, scrutinizing her every action in silence.

Behind him stood a magnificent ginkgo tree, proud and tall. Faerie lights flickered with a multitude of colours amidst its golden leaves. It was a breath-taking sight she never grew weary of.

Under the ever-changing lights, her elegant eyelashes fluttered like the wings of a butterfly.

Her pursed lips formed a meek line.

She felt nervous under Fu Tingyu's heated gaze. In the end, she wound her arms around his neck and rested her chin in the crook of his shoulder.

Fu Tingyu had broad shoulders that lent her a sense of security while she snuggled in his embrace.

She could smell the floral scent of his shampoo in his hair. It was the same shampoo she used for her own. Together, their scent mixed as one.

Staring at the ginkgo tree he had gifted her with, the lambent lights frolicked in her eyes.

She remembered the words Xu Wei had said to her earlier – how Fu Tingyu had been cultivating ginkgo trees for over six years.

Yet... Six or seven years ago was a time whereby she did not know Fu Tingyu at all.

Back then, Fu Tingyu would have been a handsome young man of eighteen years.

Did he really have a girl he liked at that time?

Qin Shu told herself not to dwell on the past. Even if he did, it was of no consequence to the present.

They hugged, locked quietly in each other's arms.

Tired of standing the way they were, Fu Tingyu swept her off her feet and whispered into her ear, "Bao'er, say something nice."

Nice?

Qin Shu thought for a while. "Shall I sing for you?"

"Okay." Fu Tingyu chuckled, mildly interested in what she would sing. Qin Shu hadn't ever sung for him before.

Clearing her throat with a few light coughs, she sang:

She sang of solitude and strength.

Of the times she was hurt, but her tears never flowed.

Calling on wings unseen.

Begged them to carry her through despair.

Not thinking of the beautiful sun,

The inconstant sun.

Calling on wings unseen.

To give her hope beyond her fears,

To see her dreams come to life.

In the loud chorus of youth.

Soaring beyond her fears.

With the wind beneath her wings, she flew for as long as the wind showed.

...

Fu Tingyu listened to Qin Shu's hypnotic voice. Unconsciously, his arms tightened around her, an indescribable feeling stirring in the depths of his soul.

"What is the name of this song?"

Chapter 427: Because You are Unwilling, You can Only Use Force

"Invisible wings." Qin Shu cupped Fu Tingyu's face with her dainty hands. "You are my invisible wings. Never have you failed to come to my aid in times of need."

He listened, utterly gobsmacked by her words.

Resting her chin on his shoulder, she whispered languidly, "I remember when we first met. The first thought that crossed my mind was: how could anyone look so good in this world?"

In his presence, the sun dimmed and grew pale, becoming a shadow against his august beauty. He was an adonis made flesh, a man of perfect masculinity that shone brighter than any star in the sky.

Fu Tingyu immersed himself in his memories, seemingly lost in the fragments of his past. There were a pitiful number of instances he could truly call beautiful. He could not comprehend how Qin Shu viewed him with such ardour.

"Am I really so handsome in your eyes?" he asked hesitantly, doubt lacing his voice.

Qin Shu ignored his apprehension and continued, "I remember asking myself why a man with your looks would use force to haul me back to Sheng Yuan, how a man of your bearing could behave as a ruffian would."

Back then, she was shocked beyond belief by his callous use of force – no different from the way a kidnapper would abduct someone.

"Force was the only option I had."

"..." Only someone like Fu Tingyu would have the confidence necessary to pull off such a stunt.

"You kissed me where my scar was and even said it was pretty. I almost believed you." Qin Shu said.

Anyone in her situation would have been stunned, perhaps doubly so with a man as handsome as Fu Tingyu kissing them.

She almost believed him. For the first time in her life, she thought maybe – just maybe – she was not as ugly as she believed herself to be.

"I'm serious. It's pretty. I like it." Fu Tingyu retorted heatedly.

"..."

“We got married as soon as you reached your majority. I still remember asking myself if you’d been kicked in the head by a donkey. No one in their right minds would marry an ugly tramp like me.”

She had thought she was but a passing fancy, a temporary novelty to be discarded the moment he tired of her. It was only after they got married that she realized he had been serious all along.

On the day of their marriage, Fu Tingyu drank to his heart’s content. His joy was an explosive expression of happiness.

“My Bao’er is the best in the world. I’m the luckiest man alive to have you as my wife,” crowed Fu Tingyu seriously.

His words were a torch that shone a light in her life. Smiling bashfully, Qin Shu murmured, “I really don’t possess any redeeming qualities. I honestly have no idea what it is you saw in me back then.”

Fu Tingyu’s eyes flashed with a faint light. “My Bao’er has many good points.”

“Hmm?”

Suddenly drawing close to her, he whispered in her ear.

Qin Shu blushed and ignored him to the best of her abilities.

Fu Tingyu knew she was shy, but he enjoyed teasing her just so that he could bask in her demure vulnerability.

The two of them fell into a companionable silence, enjoying a moment of piece together in each others company.

A wave of drowsiness crept up on her and it was not long before she was resting on Fu Tingyu’s broad shoulders, sleeping soundly.

Hearing her steady breaths, Fu Tingyu knew his wife had fallen asleep.

“Bao’er, do you hate me?”

He spoke quietly, in a voice inaudible to anyone but himself.

No answer came forthwith.

Naturally, she hated him. Bao’er had said so herself.

After his hair was blown dry, Fu Tingyu walked into their bedroom with Qin Shu in his arms. He laid her sleeping form on the bed before switching the lights off and snuggling in beside her.

He hugged her close, breathing in the sweet scent of her soft hair.

He wanted to have a child with her.

However, seeing how tired she was, he did not wake her. Perhaps it was a matter best left for another time.

Closing his eyes, he drifted off to sleep.

Early the next day...

Qin Shu had a good night's sleep. When she woke up, she felt refreshed and ready for the new day ahead.

When she opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was Fu Tingyu's languid form eyeing her as if she were a delectable piece of meat.

Fu Tingyu had woken up a long time ago. He had been waiting for her to wake up.

Qin Shu sent an inquisitive look his way. "What's wrong? Why are you staring at me like that?"

"Since you're awake..." Fu Tingyu cooed playfully, "Let's have a baby!"

Qin Shu peeked over his shoulder. Light streamed through the window. Uncertainly, she asked, "Now?"

"Yes," Fu Tingyu replied. He wanted to have a child before he died. He wanted to experience the joys of fatherhood.

Qin Shu thought of the promise she had made to him and nodded.

Two hours later...

Fu Tingyu got out of bed to wash up.

Qin Shu laid on the bed for a while, recovering from their tiring session of love-making. She waited for him to wash up before shuffling to the bathroom to do the same.

Stepping into the cloakroom, they each picked out a set of clean clothes for themselves.

Fu Tingyu ruffled through the closet and selected a dress for her to wear. "Try this."

Qin Shu gave the dress in his hands a once over. It was a black dress that narrowed at the waist. Clearly, it was a dress tailor-made to suit her.

"Alright. I'll try it on."

Qin Shu accepted the dress and slipped it on.

Fu Tingyu sent her an approving nod and changed into a suit he had chosen earlier.

While Fu Tingyu was still buttoning his shirt, Qin Shu had already changed into the clothes he had given her. Pausing, he admired the way in which the dress complimented her figure. She looked stunning.

Most of the clothes he had prepared for her were tailor-made in soft, pastel colours.

It was his first time seeing her in a black dress.

Its minimalistic design worked well with her natural features to accentuate her beauty. It hung above her knees, showcasing her long and elegant legs.

Other than a small platinum broach pinned to the dress, it was plain.

Black was a colour of introspective calm. It suited her.

Qin Shu had never worn a black dress before and felt a little nervous. It was made worse when she noticed Fu Tingyu sizing her up. She asked, “How is it?”

Fu Tingyu circled her slowly, examining every inch of her. Stopping behind her, he zipped her zipper into place. “It looks good.”

Catching sight of her reflection in the mirror, she could not help but agree. She liked how she looked in black.

Qin Shu noticed his shirt undone and reached out to button it up for him. They snapped into place, one by one.

Fu Tingyu fixed his eyes on her unblinkingly.

Pressured under Fu Tingyu’s hawk-like gaze, Qin Shu heaved a sigh of relief when she finally buttoned the last button.

Suddenly, Fu Tingyu bent down and kissed her.

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...

After breakfast, Fu Tingyu left for the office.

Carrying President Ba in her arms, Qin Shu decided to go out for a bit. Ye Luo followed her out. “Young Madam, where are you going?”

Qin Shu offered him a polite smile and said, “It’s been a long time since I’ve returned to the Qin family. I would like to go and see how they’re doing.”

Almost a month had passed. She wondered how they were fairing with all the suspicion being thrown around at one another.

Qin Ya had also taken the Imperial College Entrance Exam. Yet, she had not gone to Imperial College even after the semester had started. There had to be a reason for her absence.

Chapter 428: Mother and Daughter Carefully Designed a Photo of Their Mother

“Would you like someone to accompany you?” Their last encounter with Qin Hai had not been pleasant. Ye Luo thought it best if Qin Shu did not meet up with her father unaccompanied.

Qin Shu was not privy to Ye Luo’s thoughts. His face was a blank mask, giving most people the impression that he did not enjoy speaking. However, no one would think him dangerous – just anti-social.

She stifled a laugh. “There’s no need for anyone to accompany me this time.”

Though she had not said it in so many words, Ye Luo perceived its underlying meaning. Perhaps she did not need someone to escort her this time but what of the next?

Qin Villa, thirty minutes later...

Mu Lan was dressed impeccably, her clothes accentuating her natural beauty. Despite being middle-aged, she looked no older than a woman in her thirties. A strict diet and a good dose of healthy living helped.

Qin Ya noticed her mother's unusual apparel and asked curiously, "Mom, what is the occasion? Why are you all dolled up?"

Mu Lan was checking herself in a compact mirror when she heard Qin Ya's question as she walked down the stairs. "Why haven't you gone to work? This is a critical period of time for us. You're jeopardizing our plans."

Ever since Shen Yaohui kidnapped her, Qin Ya's mind was mired in constant flux. If only she owned shares in the company then nothing would have happened to her.

In order to persuade Qin Hai against leaving the company to Qin Shu, Mu Lan sent Qin Ya to a local university so that she could entrap the hearts of Qin Hai's employees over time; with her scheme culminating in Qin Hai's transfer of the company's shares from him to them.

Qin Ya felt aggrieved. "I'll head to the company later. Where are you going, Mom?"

Displeased with her daughter's response, Mu Lan bit out a reply, "It's none of your concern. You would do well to mind your own business. I'm going out for a while. I expect you to be at the company by the time I come back."

Seeming as if she had thought of something, she continued, "By the way, how is the manager of the finance department doing?"

The manager of the finance department was a man in his forties. He was a painfully average man, whether it was his looks or temperament. Nonetheless, Qin Ya had spared no effort roping him in. There was only so much she could do by herself and he was a necessary addition to their plan.

Albeit, she felt nothing but disgust for him.

"He said he needs another two days. He's worried that he'll be discovered if he is not discreet."

"Tell him to exercise caution. We can't let the cat out of the bag. Not now when we're so close to our objective." Mu Lan instructed sternly.

"Madam, E-eldest... Eldest Miss has returned!" Aunt Rong exclaimed as she hurried into the living room.

At the mention of Qin Shu, Qin Ya shouted angrily, "What Eldest Miss? I'm the only daughter of the Qin family."

"You're just my father's step-daughter."

Qin Shu strolled in unhurriedly, carrying President Ba in her arms.

Qin Ya hated it the most when people reminded her that she was only Qin Hai's step-daughter. That, coupled with her hatred for Qin Shu, fanned the flames of her anger to new heights. "Who are you calling a step-daughter? I'm the eldest daughter of this family."

Before she could embarrass herself further, Mu Lan clamped onto her daughter's arm in warning. Giving Qin Shu a frosty look, she asked, "What are you doing here?"

Ignoring Qin Ya who was on the verge of assaulting her, Qin Shu gave Mu Lan a once over. She looked much better now than she was before. The clothes she wore suited her and brought out her feminine charms.

"Father wanted to see me so I decided to pay him a visit since I'm on semester break. Nothing seems to have changed in the time I've been away."

"You can't honestly be thinking of moving back now, can you?" Mu Lan had a bad premonition. What was Qin Hai up to?

Qin Shu did not respond. She simply climbed up the stairs as if she had not heard Mu Lan speaking.

Ye Luo followed closely behind.

"Qin Shu, this is my house. How dare you trespass on private property!"

Qin Ya never thought of Qin Shu as her elder sister. Watching Qin Shu traipse around her home, like she owned the place, left her feeling angry and violated. Rushing towards Qin Shu, Qin Ya tried to stop her.

Mu Lan shared her daughter's sentiments and hoped to rid herself of the menace that was Qin Hai's daughter.

Hearing the commotion being made in the living room, Ye Luo stopped in his tracks and blocked the stairs. He was not about to let either Qin Ya or Mu Lan pursue Qin Shu. If they wanted to harass the young madam, they would have to get through him first.

Ye Luo's figure resembled a mountain, tall and unyielding. A thick cloud of killing intent emanated in the air as he cracked his knuckles menacingly.

The pair of mother and daughter stood rooted on the spot, not daring to take a step further.

Upon a closer inspection of Ye Luo's features, Qin Ya noted how handsome he looked. Decrying indignantly, she shouted, "Qin Shu, you are already married! You should have no eyes for others."

Mu Lan glared at Qin Ya, willing her into silence. Now was not the time for them to shed all pretence of cordiality.

Disgruntled, Qin Ya snorted.

Qin Shu swept an arm from one end of the villa to the other as she stared down at the two miscreants below. "Half of this villa belongs to my mother. The two of you are merely parasites. One is my father's mistress while the other is the daughter of that said mistress."

Mu Lan's expression warped into an ugly grimace. Retorting with as much venom as she could muster, she growled, "Qin Hai and I are in love. We're married and protected by the law."

"The fact of the matter won't change. You're an ugly parasite whose only achievement is the destruction of yet another family." Glancing at Qin Ya, she added, "Otherwise, where would this so-called 'step-daughter' have come from?"

Qin Shu sneered openly and handed President Ba over to Ye Luo who received him without a word.

Only then did Qin Shu make her way upstairs.

Ye Luo stood at the foot of the stairs, guarding it against Mu Lan and her daughter.

Qin Ya was infuriated by Qin Shu's arrogance. "Mom, Qin Shu is climbing on top of your head!"

Mu Lan didn't look any better.

"Mom, I'm calling dad. I'm going to demand an explanation from him!"

Just as Qin Ya was about to call Qin Hai, Mu Lan stopped her. "What are you thinking, calling your father at this time?" Mu Lan pulled her daughter away.

"Mom, you can't allow Qin Shu to get away with this!" Qin Ya could not understand how her mother tolerated Qin Shu's insolence.

When they were far enough from the stairs, Mu Lan turned on her daughter and reprimanded, "You're playing into her hands! At such an important point in time as this, don't you think she'd want you to call your father? Use your head for once!"

Realizing Qin Shu's words were a trap meant to corral her into calling their father, Qin Ya blushed furiously.

"I can't stand watching her strut around the house so pretentiously... It's a slap in our faces and she knows it. That cat of hers is just as abominable. It scratched my face!"

Qin Ya wanted nothing more than to peel off the cat's skin and dig out its tendons.

Meanwhile...

Qin Shu did not stop on the second floor. She climbed up to the third and passed several rooms that were empty. After her mother passed away, Qin Hai stowed all her belongings in one room. It was a room no one was allowed in.

It did not take long for her to locate which room it was. Grabbing a dagger from her bag, she slipped it around the lock and pried it open.

The door swung open easily. She braced herself for what she believed would be a musty room covered in dust. Her expectations were dashed, however, when no such cloud blew into her face. Taking a tentative breath, she found that the air was clean and free of any strange smells.

The room was in pristine condition. In a corner sat a table. On it was a photo framing the likeness of a beautiful woman.

It was her mother.

Her mother was not one for photos and practically never took any while she was alive. She had not left any photos of herself behind, that is, as far as she was aware.

This photo...

Qin Shu walked up to the table and traced the figure of her mother captured in the photo, losing herself in memories of the past.

She was a charming woman. Many would have claimed love at first sight upon meeting her for the first time.

She had a pair of limpid eyes that shone like the waters of a clear lake. The only puzzling feature being the colour of her mother's eyes. Why were they blue?

Chapter 429: Ye Luo was Aso very Black-Bellied and Had an Affair

Her mother's eyes were black.

Qin Shu studied the photo again, inspecting it more closely. Here, her mother's eyes were as blue as the cloudless sky.

It was then she realised that what she was looking at was not a photo but a painting.

Judging from the empty space in the upper right corner, the painter had yet to complete it. It was an unfinished piece.

She only knew of a handful of people in the world who could paint such life-like portraits.

It must have been the painter who deliberately changed the colour of her mother's eyes from a rich black to a boundless blue.

Qin Hai married this mistress of his years ago and still, he kept a portrait of her mother around. Was he trying to show his love for her mother? Who was he trying to fool?

It was disgusting.

Qin Shu opened her backpack and stuffed the painting into it. She did not want to look at it any longer than she needed to.

Scanning the room, she noticed a wardrobe. There were no clothes in it. What sat in the wardrobe, on the other hand, was a safe secured by a password. Lifting the safe out of the wardrobe, she tried opening it. To her surprise, it swung open without a fuss.

Nothing of value resided within. She only found a set of old clothes that looked like what might have been in style some twenty years ago. Though its colours were muted with age, she could tell that they were distinctly feminine in make. Perhaps a woman in her twenties would have worn clothes like them in the past.

Doubt flashed in Qin Shu's eyes. She was not sure what to think of her discovery. Closing the safe, she stowed it away in the closet where she had found it in.

Her mother hadn't left anything behind upon her death. Other than the clothes she wore and the things she used on a daily basis, she had left nothing.

Qin Shu surveyed the room a final time before exiting the room and closing the door behind her.

As she filed down the stairs, Qin Shu caught sight of Mu Lan and Qin Ya on the sofa. Walking over to them, she said, "Send father my regards."

Qin Shu strode off, not waiting for a reply from either of them. She knew Mu Lan well enough to know that she definitely wouldn't do as she had asked. Still, she tried anyway.

Ye Luo inclined his head in farewell. He carried President Ba in his arms and followed his young madam out the door.

As soon as Qin Shu left, Qin Ya held her mother's hand and asked, "Mom, why does father want her to come over?"

"Your father probably wants her to move back in." Mu Lan responded after some thought. "When you head to the office later, don't let your father know that Qin Shu came to pay him a visit. Just pretend like she never came. Are we clear?"

Qin Ya didn't want Qin Shu to move back in. Nodding quickly, she assured her mother, "I hear you, Mom."

When Mu Lan saw Qin Shu leave, she remembered that she still had an appointment to keep. "I'm going out. You should get going too."

Mu Lan stepped out of the house carrying her designer handbag and wearing her favourite seven-inch heels.

Watching her mother leave, Qin Ya could not help but grit her teeth in frustration as her thoughts wandered over to the finance manager but knowing that things were out of her hands, she simply readied herself for work.

Under a tree at the corner of the road...

Qin Shu sat in the car with President Ba curled up in her arms. A wine-red car, screaming of wealth, rolled out of the villa's gates a little ways away from the intersection where Qin Shu sat.

It was Mu Lan's car. She hadn't changed the model in years. Mu Lan was a spendthrift who lost more money than most were comfortable losing so it was a surprise that she hadn't changed it in a while. Her status in Qin Hai's heart probably wasn't what it once was, not to mention how tight the company's finances were.

"Follow her." Qin Shu instructed Ye Luo.

Ye Luo complied. Stepping on the accelerator, the car whizzed into motion, tailing Mu Lan's car stealthily.

President Ba hopped out of her arms and played on the seat beside her. After a while, he seemed to grow bored so he decided to ride shotgun.

Perhaps President Ba thought it was time for a promotion but he was extraordinarily restless, jumping on and off the front passenger seat. Narrowing his feline eyes at Ye Luo, who sat in the driver's seat, he sent the man a look of disdain.

Ye Luo spared President Ba an unamused glance and continued driving. "... no one asked you to come over."

Qin Shu recognised the look in President Ba's eyes – anyone familiar with him would recognise that look of haughty condescension. Interesting.

Failing to stifle her laugh, Qin Shu chided her cat teasingly, "President Ba, aren't the two of you the best of friends? Why do you treat Ye Luo with such contempt?"

In reality, President Ba despised Ye Luo and would rather walk than be carried by him.

President Ba sniffed derisively at Ye Luo with his head upturned. Turning to look at his mistress, he offered her a cute "Meow".

Ye Luo glared at President Ba. "... I'm not carrying you ever again."

"Meow" President Ba responded unfazed. He sat in a half-squat, glancing at Ye Luo lazily. He didn't bother taking Ye Luo's threat to heart.

Mu Lan's car parked by a cafe. Stepping out of the car, she hurried inside.

Qin Shu remained seated. She had no intention of following Mu Lan in. Instead, she looked at her watch and noted the time.

Neither she nor Ye Luo spoke in the silence of the car. Did she still hold a grudge over Mu Lan? She wasn't sure. Absently, she scooped up President Ba and laid him on her lap.

"Meow!" President Ba cried out in surprise, his fur standing on end.

Ye Luo ignored President Ba's enraged cry. He opened a compartment beside him and pulled out a bag of dried fish. He tore the bag open a little more viciously than he needed to.

Immediately, a strong fishy odour wafted out from the gap he had opened in the packaging.

President Ba's nose twitched. His dark green eyes stared unblinkingly at the bag of dried fish in Ye Luo's hand, licking his lips in anticipation.

Ye Luo fished out a small piece of dried fish and waved it around with no intention of giving it to President Ba.

Fish was the food of the gods and, like any cat worth its salt, President Ba coveted it hungrily. Edging his way closer to the dried fish in Ye Luo's hands, he tried prying it out with his claws and even pulling it by its tail. Yet, despite his best efforts, he could not swipe the precious piece of fish out of Ye Luo's evil clutches.

Qin Shu sat in the passenger seat behind Ye Luo. She was not paying attention to the duo in front of her. Otherwise, she would have seen the aggrieved look on President Ba's face as he tried and failed to seize the piece of dried fish in Ye Luo's hands.

Ten minutes later, Mu Lan strolled out of the cafe with a man beside her. The man was young – probably in his mid-twenties – and had decent looks.

They got into Mu Lan's wine-red car and drove off.

They waited for Mu Lan to pull out of the parking lot, giving her some time to distance herself, before pursuing her.

Meanwhile, President Ba was still desperately clawing at the dried fish in Ye Luo's hands.

When Ye Luo judged that he had given Mu Lan sufficient time to leave, he stuck the piece of dried fish back into its bag and dropped it into the compartment beside him. With his other hand, he picked up President Ba by the scruff of his neck and hurled the poor cat to the passenger seat next to him. President Ba landed in a roll, breaking his fall in the process.

Expressionlessly, Ye Luo started the engine and shadowed Mu Lan's car.

"Meow" President Ba huffed in dissatisfaction. Sticking his butt out at Ye Luo, President Ba curled up in the seat beside him and growled indignantly.

Qin Shu was oblivious to the pair's antics. Her mind was occupied with questions of the relationship between Mu Lan and the man she had seen leaving with her.

The car suddenly jerked to a stop. Shaken from her thoughts, Qin Shu spotted Mu Lan's car parked in a lot owned by the hotel they were visiting.

Mu Lan and the young man got out of the car and headed towards the hotel.

It became clear, then, what it was they were doing. They were getting a room.

When she had seen Mu Lan earlier that day, she wondered how she seemed... younger. Whether it was her clothes or her demeanour, it spoke to a kind of passionate youth she had not displayed a month ago.

Now she knew what had sparked the change in her. She was having an affair.

Coldly, she addressed Ye Luo, "Find out who he is and how long they have been together."

Ye Luo whipped out his phone and called Ye Qing. He provided Ye Qing with a simple explanation and directed him to the hotel Mu Lan had entered.

The fourth young master had instructed him to do anything Qin Shu asked, unconditionally.

Outside of getting him to leave her side, there were only two other exceptions.

Chapter 430: The Antidote was prepared, Giving Him a Surprise

Sheng Yuan.

Qin Shu stepped out of the car the moment Ye Luo parked.

Just as Ye Luo opened the passenger door, President Ba lunged out without giving him so much as an opportunity to pick him up.

Such an action was a first for President Ba. The fact that he would rather walk than allow Ye Luo to carry him into the house, spoke volumes of the resentment he bore for the man who withheld his precious dried fish.

Ye Luo: "..."

Slinging her bag over her shoulder, Qin Shu saw President Ba running to the house. She did a double-take to ensure she was not dreaming. Had the sun risen from the west that morning? Why hadn't she been alerted? President Ba's willingness to walk, on his four cute paws, was unheard of.

By the time she reached the living room, President Ba had already scampered off somewhere and not even his shadow remained.

Two hours later...

Qin Shu sat in the living room, drinking a cup of tea.

Ye Luo walked in, followed by Ye Qing.

Ye Qing arrived at her side and reported, "The results of the investigation have come in. The man's name is Wei Ge, and he's her sugar baby. They've been together for a little more than twenty days. According to the information we were able to gather, it seems Mu Lan has promised him a villa. Interestingly, Wei Ge claims that Mu Lan will soon have her own company."

As part of his investigation, Ye Qing even struck up a conversation with Wei Ge. Wheedling information out of him was easy. Wei Ge was an extremely vain man. A few words of praise and he was just about ready to spill his entire life's story. Ye Qing had not needed to expend much effort buttering him up at all.

Qin Shu was not surprised. She had expected as much for a while now. If Qin Hai learnt of how his wife was taking advantage of him, what expression would he wear?

Looking up at Ye Qing, Qin Shu demanded, "I want evidence of their relationship."

"That's easy. As long as they meet up, I'll be able to get proof." Ye Qing replied with confidence. Obtaining evidence of Mu Lan's infidelity would not be hard at all.

Two days later, Fu Corporation...

Fu Tingyu sat at his lacquered mahogany desk, going about business for the day.

Suddenly, his cell phone rang. The screen lit up showing the caller's ID. It was Gu Yan.

Gu Yan had called him five days ago before he ventured deep into the mountainous forests.

If he was calling, it meant that he had returned.

He picked up his cell phone, pressed the answer button, and brought it to his ear. The baritone of his voice rumbled into the receiver, "You're back?"

"Yes, I'm back! I have got good news for you. I've managed to find a few suitable herbs. Come over to my place tomorrow. The medicine should be ready for you to try it, then."

Gu Yan's laughed cheerfully. His tone was vastly different from what it had been before leaving on his search.

Hope was a frail platitude he rarely indulged in but upon hearing the exuberance in Gu Yan's voice, the dying embers of hope rekindled in his heart. "I'll be there."

"What on earth happened between you and your wife on your last visit to the capital?"

Gu Yan seldom meddled in the affairs of love but seeing Qin Shu's selfless dedication, he was moved and the question simply slipped out of his mouth.

Fu Tingyu paused. "Nothing much. She's back."

Naturally, Gu Yan knew Qin Shu was in town. After all, he had been the one to send her home. "How is your relationship with her now?" Gu Yan asked softly.

Fu Tingyu knew that Gu Yan was not one for gossip – gossip was something closer to Mo Chengyu's own inclinations.

Puzzled by Gu Yan's unusual forwardness, he traded a question of his own, "Why are you suddenly so interested in the matters between us?"

"Oh, it is nothing. I was just thinking that you should talk with her more – settle your differences more calmly, you know? Try and reign in your temper a little more."

Gu Yan knew his friend well. Fu Tingyu was the perfect gentleman in all aspects except his temper. Thinking of past events, Gu Yan shuddered. It would be best if Fu Tingyu learned to communicate with people more peaceably.

Fu Tingyu was silent for a long time.

"En."

He hung up a short while later. Staring at his phone, Fu Tingyu decided to dial Qin Shu's number.

Qin Shu was waiting at home for Gu Yan's message when she heard her phone ring. At first, she thought it was Gu Yan calling but later realized that it was her husband.

Answering the call, Fu Tingyu's magnetic voice rolled out from the other end, "Bao'er."

"Baby Yu, have you had lunch?"

Qin Shu had just eaten lunch. She didn't know if Fu Tingyu had eaten his yet.

"Shi Yan's gone to order lunch." Fu Tingyu gripped his phone tightly, at a loss for what else he could say to her.

Repeating himself mechanically, he asked, "Have you eaten?"

"I just finished." Qin Shu leaned back against the sofa, reliving the kiss they had shared earlier that morning. "Do you miss me already?"

"En."

Just then, Shi Yan pushed open the office door and walked in with a boxed lunch in his hand. Seeing that the fourth young master was on the phone, he tiptoed to the coffee table and set the lunch out on it.

Qin Shu peered at her watch. "Shi Yan has ordered it, hasn't he?"

"Yes, he has." Fu Tingyu made his over to the coffee table and sat down. Laid out on the table were a few dishes and a bowl of soup. It all looked rather unappealing. He really did not feel very hungry eating by himself.

"Then you should start eating. You can take a nap after lunch. You'll feel better that way."

"Okay."

Fu Tingyu hung up the phone, picked up his chopsticks, and trawled the food towards his open mouth in slow, agonizing bites. It all tasted the same, anyway.

Putting away her phone, Qin Shu strolled out of the living room.

She saw Ye Luo standing by the courtyard wall as she passed the Moon Cave Door. He was eyeing something perched on top of the wall. Following his gaze, she caught sight of President Ba nibbling on a small piece of dried fish; his eyes glinting with smug satisfaction.

Noticing Qin Shu standing by the door, he asked politely, "Young Madam, are you going out?"

Qin Shu nodded. "Yes, I'd like to go to the office."

No sooner had she expressed her desire than Ye Luo rushed to get the car; ignoring President Ba who still sat atop the wall.

President Ba watched Ye Luo leave in satisfaction. Now that no one was around to steal what was rightfully his, he jumped down with the piece of dried fish hanging in its mouth. Landing by Qin Shu's feet, President Ba rubbed himself against her legs affectionately. "Meow!"

Qin Shu lowered herself into a crouch and whispered conspiratorially, "I'm going out for a while. Would you like to come with me?"

"Meow!" President Ba cried out excitedly.

President Ba's excited cry was all the confirmation she needed to know that he wanted to tag along. Gently, she picked him up, rubbing his furry head in small circles. "Let's go out together, then. It'll be our little excursion."

At this moment, Ye Luo pulled over with the car. He got out of the driver's seat and opened the backseat door for her.

Qin Shu hugged President Ba close to her chest and slipped in.

Closing the door behind them, Ye Luo sat in the driver's seat and drove off in the direction of the office."

This time, President Ba did not ride shotgun. The grudge he nursed was palpable.

While on the way, Gu Yan called.

Qin Shu answered the phone as soon as she identified who was calling.

"Is the medicine ready?"

“Yes, I’ve already called Tingyu and asked him to come over tomorrow to try it out.”

Qin Shu vibrated in both excitement and nervousness. She wanted to be there with him tomorrow.

“Are you nervous?” Gu Yan asked.

“Yes, I am.”

“Don’t worry. The remedy I prepared will definitely work.”

Before he hung up, Gu Yan added impishly, “Actually, I’m feeling quite nervous myself.”

Qin Shu gawked at her phone incredulously. Gu Yan’s words were less than reassuring.

Half an hour later...

Ye Luo parked at the company’s entrance.

Qin Shu, cradling President Ba in her arms, climbed out of the car and headed towards the foyer.

Ye Luo shadowed her diligently.

Taking the private elevator required her to scan her thumb but it was more convenient in that it travelled all the way to the top floor.

The doors slid open with a “ding” and Qin Shu strode out. Knowing how jealous Fu Tingyu could often be, she handed President Ba to Ye Luo.

“Hold on to President Ba for me, please.”

President Ba: “...”

Ye Luo: “...”

Despite President Ba’s reluctance, Ye Luo managed to coax the haughty cat into his arms. Sighting the stairs that led up to the rooftop, Ye Luo trudged in its direction dejectedly.

Qin Shu watched them go before entering the office.

She did not call in advance because she wanted to give FU Tingyu a surprise.