

Chapter 441 - It Was Me? How Come I Didn't Know?

She couldn't help recalling what had happened at Luna's engagement banquet. She had thought that Li Yuming was so heartless as to want to embarrass her own daughter on such an important day but now that she thought it through carefully, what if the situation wasn't as it appeared?

What if the real culprit had been Xia Hanchen, and he maliciously framed Li Yuming to further alienate her from Luna, and make Lanni disappointed in her at the same time?

She was going crazy just thinking about it. To what lengths had this man gone? What an idiot had she been to never have realized a thing?

She snapped out of her thoughts to realize that he looked distressed. If this was in the past, she would have been worried about him. Although she didn't want to know what was going on in his mind, it would be suspicious if she didn't show her concern so she gently asked, "are you alright?"

The man smiled and tried to hide his feelings—or pretended to try and hide his feelings. "It's alright. Just a little stressed."

She went along with the act. "What happened?"

"I heard Ji Feifei is out of prison." He sighed like he was at a loss.

"Yeah." She responded, inwardly mocking him. He talked to her recently and was now pretending that he didn't know and merely heard a rumor?

She observed him carefully as he swallowed a gulp and looked like he was even more disheartened after hearing the news. In the end, he spoke up again.

"Could you have Xiehan take her back? I'm sure he can do that."

Her eyebrows raised. What a schemer. He had been using Ji Feifei and since the latter was getting out of control, he was trying to use his own daughter to help him get rid of her?

She shook her head. "She is Xiehan's sister and he helped her out. There is no way he would send her back in prison just because of a word I say."

"Lanni, she hurt you before. I'm afraid she would want to do it again." He frowned in pretend worry.

"Under whose orders was she working?" She asked casually, but he didn't get her underlying meaning.

"Li Xiyan's." He gritted his teeth in anger. "That bitch. I treated her so well but she went behind my back to hurt my daughters. If I see her again, I will strangle her to death with my bare hands."

"Talk to Xiehan, okay? If that guy loves you half as much as he claims, he would not compromise your safety for the sake of a criminal."

Lanni was speechless at someone's talented way of twisting the facts in his favor. Now she had seen it all.

Since she had known this man's true colors, she didn't dare to spend the night at his house and made an excuse to leave. She had just arrived at her apartment and was about to call Luna to ask how she was doing when Xiehan called.

"Honey, I may have to be away for longer than I thought." He sounded exhausted.

"It's alright. Do you need help?" She offered.

"Mmh. Take care of yourself. That's the greatest kind of help you can give."

She chuckled, knowing that he understood her but still decided to play with words. "Xiehan, I have good news. We found out the identity of Ji Feifei's supporter."

"The boss of Galaxis?" The man was expectedly shocked.

"Yes."

"It's someone you didn't expect?" He could tell from her tone that she was pained and disappointed.

"Let's talk about it when you come back, okay? Luna and I are going to interrogate him soon."

"You need to be careful, okay? He has the whole of Galaxis behind him. We need to plan this out." He reminded.

She slumped into the couch. "Don't worry. We will be careful."

She hung up and realized that it was a little late, so she sent a message to Luna. She trusted Li Yuming and knew that Luna would be in safe hands.

The next morning, the girls met up with Flynn, who was already in B City since he knew that they would want to talk to him. They met up at a private room of a beverage shop and he threw some metallic cubes at the corners. Seeing their raised eyebrows he explained, "They will make the room temporarily soundproof."

It was a reasonable caution measure so they nodded.

Gaining a half brother out of the blue was so shocking that Lanni and Luna didn't know how to react. They now understood why the man seemed to like minding their business so much.

Ignoring the strange emotions, Luna was the first to speak.

"How did you find out about him?"

It was an expected question. The man reclined in his leather chair as he explained, "I told you he manipulated me before, right? He seduced my mother and used me to pin her down. When I grew up, he acknowledged me and I thought he cared for me, only to realize that I was being used as well."

He took a sip of his hot tea. "Galaxis is not just a news agency. It's a den of criminals in disguise. The worst part is that for every crime you commit, he will secretly record it. I once witnessed a man go against him and try to leave. As a result, the old man sent him to the police under the guise of uncovering a criminal. Worse than that, he has made countless people go through fate worse than death."

Although they had expected it, the news was still earth-shattering.

Flynn focused his gaze on Lanni. "When you came to Galaxis, I so badly wanted to tell you to leave. I wanted to tell you the truth but I couldn't. I could only use indirect means to make you give up."

Lanni finally understood it. "No wonder you hated me. You didn't hate me. You were protecting me."

When the man nodded, she felt as though she could digest it forever so she asked, "Do you know anything regarding him and the Ji family?"

"Only that Ji Feifei is not your boyfriend's sister." He dropped yet another bomb, but they already knew this so they were not shocked.

Lanni and Luna saw the understanding in each other's eyes. He had mentioned it while talking about Xia Hanchen, which meant that he was certain about the man being behind the switching twenty years ago. That confirmed their theory too.

"What is she planning to do?" Luna tried to push their luck since they had found out that Xia Hanchen had given Ji Feifei a task.

The man frowned. "I don't know. Just make sure your parents are safe. I have to go or someone will get suspicious."

His words made sense. He had never gotten along with the sisters as they usually avoided him. It would be odd if he was found having tea with both of them and conversing freely.

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Two days later.

"How dare you!" Ji Feifei's shrill scream resounded throughout the Ji Mansion and woke up those who were still asleep.

"What happened?" Madam Ji dashed downstairs when she heard the commotion, only to find Ji Feifei slapping and hitting a maid. She almost lost her cool. "Feifei, what are you doing?!"

The Ji family treated the servants almost like their family, and they wouldn't hit or scold them for no good reason.

"She was planning to poison us!" Ji Feifei pushed the little maid onto the floor.

Wen Lin frowned when she heard her words. "How is that possible? Manman has been working for this family since she was a teenager and has never done anything wrong. Did you misunderstand something?"

"Madam, I didn't do it." The maid shook her head with tears in her eyes.

"You keep denying it, then what was this doing in your pockets?" Ji Feifei crossed her arms and glared at her, then launched another slap that sent her to the floor.

Wen Lin grabbed the bottle and smelled its content. It was indeed poison. She didn't defend the maid this time. "Speak. Why do you have this bottle?"

"I don't know how it got into my pockets." She sobbed.

Ji Feifei sneered and was about to say more when Ji Huifen appeared at the doorway, having heard the fiasco.

"I remember your son is in hospital." He said unhurriedly.

When the maid heard the threat, she panicked. "I wasn't me. It was that girl with red hair. She gave it to me!"

Wen Lin was even more confused. There was only one girl with red hair living in the Ji Mansion recently. "Are you talking about Ruby?"

"Yes. It was her." The maid affirmed and looked at Wen Lin desperately. "She gave it to me. Madam, I wasn't planning to do anything. I was going to report it to you."

"It was me? How come I didn't know this?" A gentle voice resounded from the hallway.

When Ji Feifei heard Ruby's voice, she froze. Didn't she leave with Lin Jian early in the morning? She had chosen this timing because she thought that Ruby was out, and that the matter would have escalated too much by the time she returned.

Even so, she was not going to let it go. She rushed to Ruby who was close to the entrance and landed a slap on her face. "How could you do this? We took you in! Is this how you repay us?!"

Ruby sneered and landed an even more fierce slap right back on Ji Feifei's face. Before the woman could explode, she slapped her yet again, so hard that the latter almost fell from the impact. How dare she try to frame her?

Luckily, they were prepared for this. They already knew what Ji Feifei was going to do, and it was Xiehan's idea for her to leave the house the previous afternoon, as well as this morning, to create an alibi for herself.

"How dare you!" Ji Feifei wanted to pounce on Ruby and scratch her face but was held back by Ji Huifen.

"It was her, I swear. She said I had to poison the young master. She paid me." The maid spoke up when she received a glare from Ji Feifei.

"Where's the money then?" Ruby asked scornfully. The maid had been loyal to the Ji family for ages. For Ruby to be able to bribe her, she must have used a lot of money. That money should still be present, right?

"I used it to pay my son's hospital bill." She cried. "You threatened to hurt my son if I didn't do it." The maid had a sickly son, which was why Ji Feifei had chosen her.

Wen Lin found it unbelievable. She didn't know why she trusted Ruby so much but she asked, "Ruby, is this true?"

The girl shook her head. "No. I don't know why she would slander me. Besides, why would I ask her to poison Xiehan when he isn't even here?"

Ji Feifei frowned slightly. Wasn't it because Xiehan had promised to return the previous evening? The plan was already set, and she didn't have the chance to secretly tell the maid about the change of plan without being noticed so she decided to go along with it. Things weren't going exactly as planned.

Ruby used this spell of silence to ask the maid, "Let me ask this. When did I tell you to do it?"

"Yesterday in the afternoon. At about 4pm." The maid blurted according to what Ji Feifei had told her. Ruby was away the previous afternoon and so was the maid, who had claimed to have gone to visit her son after finishing her work. It was easy to assume that they were together at the time. Besides, Ji Feifei had a record to prove that the maid did not go to the hospital.

What she didn't expect was that Wen Lin would slap the maid viciously. "You damned liar!"

"I'm not lying." She insisted with tears in her eyes, looking up to Ji Feifei for help even though she knew that she would be ignored.

Wen Lin frowned at her in disgust. "I was with Ruby yesterday in the afternoon."

"What? How could that be? I was with her yesterday in the afternoon and we talked for more than five minutes. Maybe she slipped away from you to meet up with me."

Ji Feifei smiled secretly and praised the young woman for being smart. As long as Ruby left Wen Lin's side even to go to the bathroom, the latter would have doubts.

She didn't expect Wen Lin to laugh and scoff instead. "Ruby was by my side the entire afternoon. Speak. Who asked you to slander her?"

"It was really her!"

"So, I'm lying?" Wen Lin laughed in ridicule, then noticed that the maid was sneaking glances at Ji Feifei and the latter was clenching her fists. "Feifei, what's going on with you? You're acting strange."

"Nothing. I'm just angry that she would do such a thing when she has been treated so well."

"Who asked you to do it?" Ji Huifen asked, losing his patience from this charade. "If you don't want to answer us, you will answer to the police instead."

Hearing the word 'police', she panicked. If she went to jail, who would take care of her ailing son?

"It was the second Miss." She finally said through sobs.

"You're lying! Did someone send you to slander me?" Ji Feifei exploded while glancing at Ruby, indirectly accusing her.

Ruby smiled evilly. "Oh, is she? How unfortunate. I have a particularly entertaining recording... It would have been useful if her words were true."

"What recording?" Ji Huifen asked, as Wen Lin curiously looked over too.

Ruby took out her phone. "I'm sorry Aunty. I was suspicious of her so I installed a secret voice recorder in her room. Then I recorded this."

She played the audio file, and Ji Feifei's voice was clearly heard. "I heard you have a sickly son. Would you like me to help you pay his hospital bill? Not only will I do that, but I will also help you find him a lung donor."

"Stop! It was me. I did it." Ji Feifei rushed to grab Ruby's phone when she heard her own voice.

Ruby paused the recording. "Did you?"

Wen Lin was disappointed while Ji Huifen asked solemnly, "Why would you do such a thing?"

The pretentious girl fell onto her knees. "I just wanted to kick her out. She was taking up too much of everyone's attention. Even my brother wouldn't spare me a glance while he kept giving his attention to her. It was almost as if she is your daughter while I'm not."

"So you decided to poison your parents? Are you really their daughter?" Ruby mocked before the impostor could gain her parents' pity. The last statement was a threat as well.

"I didn't mean to. I'm so sorry. Mom, dad, could you please forgive me?" She bawled her eyes out.

Ruby was about to suggest calling the police when she received a call from Lanni and stepped aside.

"I'm almost done." She whispered into the phone.

"Ruby, we have to change the plan. Jail is where the culprit wants her." Lanni hurriedly said.

"How did you know?" Ruby was confused.

"Don't ask me yet. I'll explain later. Just think of a way."

Ruby glanced at her phone whose screen had turned black soon after the call ended. She didn't know what was going on but she could only follow Lanni's orders. She went back to the crying impostor and her parents and suggested, "How about we let Xiehan handle her? He helped her regain her freedom, after all. He must have anticipated this kind of outcome."

Wen Lin had to agree. Besides, it was Xiehan who brought Ruby to the Ji Mansion.

She shoed Ji Feifei to her room before taking Ruby's hand. "I'm sorry she tried to frame you. This child... Were too lenient with her when she was little so she grew up to be spoiled."

"It's alright." Ruby shrugged.

Meanwhile, in Li Yuming's villa.

Luna woke up to the alluring aroma of breakfast. She had unknowingly fallen asleep on the couch the previous night and was surprised when she woke up in her old bed from when she stayed here.

Her room had been kept clean and her clothes and accessories were unmoved, as though she was still living here. She was hungry, so she quickly freshened up and headed downstairs.

"You're awake. How are you feeling?" Li Yuming poked her head from the kitchen door when she heard her footsteps. She quickly brought the warm breakfast to the dining room and called her over.

Luna sat at the dining table and dug in. "I feel better but I'm not ready to meet him."

"Then don't. You can stay here for as long as you want. If not, the Jiang residence is good too." Li Yuming sounded so protective it was as though Luna was dreaming.

"I thought you hated me." Her brows slightly knitted.

Li Yuming peeled an apple and put it on a clean plate for Luna to eat after finishing her food. "I did hate the fact that you were constantly on his side and driving Lanni away from me. But you were under years of manipulation and the first thing you did after finding out the truth is come to me. How could I send you away?"

"I'll make him pay for what he did to you." Luna declared, and Li Yuming didn't know what to say. She didn't want to dwell on this solemn topic.

"Let's play a round?" She suggested when the latter finished her breakfast.

"Mmh." Luna nodded.

Li Yuming was the first to take out her phone and before she logged into the game, countless insults swamped her phone.

Everyone was scolding Luna for stealing someone else's hard work. While everyone loved the game, thieves were frowned upon so they spammed 1-star ratings on the application store.. This matter was yet to settle down and from the series of events, the game and the entire Moonlight Studios might be shut down thanks to the thousands of complaints the moderators were receiving.

Chapter 443 - The Gray-eyed Boy

Li Yuming took a deep breath and didn't want to dampen Luna's mood. She exited the website and asked, "Have you played Dragon King before? Let's play that this time."

"Okay." Luna didn't think too much of it and launched the game on her phone.

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Tian Yu Media.

Lanni went to the CEO's office as soon as she arrived. The man glanced at her disinterestedly. "Why are you here? You are no longer an employee of Tian Yu Media."

"Did I do something wrong?" Lanni demanded an explanation. "Before you fire me, you have to give me a valid reason."

The man did not spare her a glance. "I'm sorry. The contract termination fees will be sent to your account before this evening."

If Lanni were to ask herself whether the man was avoiding her gaze because he was angry or because he couldn't bear to look at her, the answer would be obvious. He was so satisfied with her performance that he had offered to train her to run a media agency. How could he be mad at her?

"If you are under a threat, we..." She started then paused midway. What help could she possibly offer to a CEO of his calibre? It was so unlike him to give up. Since it had come to this point, it could only mean that there was really no way out. She smiled. "You know what? I'll just pick my stuff."

The man raised his head and looked at the door when Lanni had left. Just like that, he had lost a potential talent. He had been given two options; to fire Lanni or endanger the life of the only relative he had left. This time, he had chosen his family.

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Old Ji Mansion.

"Boss, I failed." Ji Feifei reported on her secret phone.

"What an idiot! Is there anything you can do right? Go to Four Seasons in an hour." The man on the other side ordered. "Zeus will tell you what to do. Don't be a second late. If you fail this time, don't blame me for what I will do."

Ji Feifei sighed in relief. She was being given another chance. However, she knew that this was the last chance for her to redeem herself. Hence, she snuck out of the mansion through a secret exit that she had long created—which no one else knew about—and rushed to the hotel.

She arrived at the rooftop with one minute to spare and the next second, heavy footsteps resounded.

A man in his early thirties made his way to her. He was buff and had tattoos all over his skin, looking too unruly and playful for his age. He took off his black-framed glasses and grinned at the young woman in front of him. "Ji Feifei, long time no see."

Ji Feifei felt her legs tremble. This was not Zeus. It was Skeleton, the most psychotic killer of Galaxis, who had earned himself the title of 'the demon of death'.

Ji Feifei felt her blood run cold. Her mouth trembled as she asked, "W-what are you doing here? Where is Zeus?"

The man frowned at her questions, looking like he didn't want to be questioned. She clammed her mouth shut and waited to hear what he had to say. However, she waited for agonising minutes and the man didn't look like he was going to speak.

When he was done keeping her in suspense, he finally moved his lips. "Follow me."

It was only three days later that Xiehan returned. As soon as he landed at the airport and turned on his phone, he got hundreds of messages and missed calls from his parents. He ignored them for a moment and decided to go to look for his girlfriend first.

Lanni was overjoyed to see him back. She dumped the brochure she was looking at aside and threw herself into his arms.

She took his briefcase and helped him in. "Honey, is everything alright?"

"Yeah. But I might need to take over the company." He slumped into the couch and drank the water that she offered him.

She sighed, thinking about how he had never intended to completely take over Feng Ji International. She did not ask for the reasons, but she ran her soft fingers through his hair gently. "You can do it, my love."

Hearing her trust in his abilities, he pulled her into his arms and inhaled her scent. "Will you stand by my side?"

"Of course." Was that even a question?

His phone rang and he reluctantly answered it, then his eyebrows furrowed deeply at whatever the other party had said.

"Is anything wrong?" She sensed his sudden change of mood.

He pulled her back into his arms, slowly breathing onto her neck as he calmed himself down before saying, "Ji Feifei is dead."

"How could that be?" It was not that Lanni cared about Ji Feifei, but they still needed her to pin down Xia Hanchen.

"I somewhat expected it." He sighed. Lanni had told him about Xia Hanchen over the phone so he knew just who to suspect. The man must have decided to kill her to get rid of anything that could lead their suspicion to him.

"I need to go home." He declared. "Come with me."

She knew that they had missed each other but she shook her head. "Ji Feifei and I...have had grudges in the past."

He nodded when he understood what she meant. She was not the right person to appear before the Ji family at the moment, because it was not impossible to term her as a suspect.

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When Xiehan arrived, Wen Lin was bawling her eyes out in the living room while Ji Huifen held her. They looked like they had aged instantly.

"My baby....how could she be dead?" Wen Lin sobbed. Ji Feifei had gone missing three days ago and they had reported it to the police. The police had searched for two days and it was only this morning that there was some news. Yet who would have thought that it would not be good news, but a report stating that they had found Ji Feifei's head and leg floating on the river? The DNA report further confirmed that they were indeed Feifei's.

The girl must have died a gruesome death and they were not even allowed to see her yet.

Wen Lin sobbed a fresh bout of tears when she thought about it. "Who did my daughter wrong? Who would treat her that way? My poor child..."

It was at this moment that Ruby finally had the confidence to go downstairs, having been too shocked by the news herself.

As soon as Wen Lin saw her, it was as though she understood what had happened. She pointed a finger at Ruby. "It was you, right? You are the one who hated my Feifei so much..."

"I wouldn't do such a thing." Ruby stated firmly, even though she knew that Wen Lin was not the only person who suspected her.

"Linlin , calm down." Ji Huifen pulled her back before she could pounce on Ruby to beat her up.

"Let go of me! I want to call the police!" the woman was raging in pain and anger.

Xiehan walked in through the door, and she finally saw a ray of hope and rushed over to her son. "Xiehan, you have to call the police. She killed your sister."

Xiehan hugged her to calm her down and when she was slightly calm, he glanced at Ruby. "But my sister is right here."

"What nonsense are you saying?" Wen Lin followed his line of sight and expected to see Ji Feifei, but was stunned and thought that her son was so heartbroken that he was hallucinating. No matter how

aggrieved she felt, she didn't want to lose both her children so she patted his shoulder amid her tears. "Xiehan, you have to calm down. You cannot allow yourself to fall into depression, okay? Think about how we would feel if that happened. Lanni would be very sad too..."

"Think about Ji Feifei. Does she look like you?" Xiehan interrupted and showed her the large family photo on the wall.

She didn't know what came over her but she walked over to scan Ji Feifei. Indeed, there was zero resemblance. It wasn't that she had never noticed it. She had always thought that her daughter must possess resemblance to her other relatives like her paternal grandmother or great grandmother. Ji Huifen looked over too, and he was stunned before he glanced at Xiehan. "What are you saying?"

The man held Ruby's hand and brought her over. "Now take a look at her."

Wen Lin once again noticed something she had realized but not taken to heart before. "She looks so much like us. She even has mother-in-law's hair and eyes."

Xiehan's paternal grandmother had vibrant red hair which had been inherited by Xiaoshi and Ruby. In terms of looks, she looked like what the combination of her and Ji Huifen should look like.

She was so shocked that her tears drained. "Xiehan, what's going on?"

"She is your daughter, mother. Ji Feifei was an impostor." Xiehan finally spilled. He knew that it was not the right time to break such shocking news but if he didn't, the relationship between his mother and his sister might be ruined beyond repair.

He sat them down and explained everything he knew in detail. When he was done, Wen Lin still couldn't believe it.

"You're saying my baby was switched? I didn't even realize it? And the person who did it was Xia Hanchen?"

Xiehan nodded. "What does he have against you and father?"

"I don't know. Huifen, do you know? Huifen?" Wen Lin shook her husband who looked stunned beyond words.

"This modus operandi is familiar....and there is only one person who would hate me and my family so much...He is back." His lips trembled.

"Who is back?" Wen Lin asked, and Xiehan and Ruby looked on curiously too.

"The gray-eyed boy."

Chapter 444 - The Whole Story Back Then

"What gray-haired boy?" Everyone was curious about what Ji Huifen had just stated.

The man momentarily forgot about Ji Feifei's demise and the fact that he had just learnt that Ruby was his daughter as he tried to recall the past.

"A boy from the Guan clan. Back then, the Guan clan was close to my family so that boy and I were naturally friends. Everything was peaceful and my grandfather and Old man Guan were especially close. Until one day, my grandfather found out something he shouldn't."

Xiehan and Ruby tensed up. This must be where it all started.

"The Guan family seemed to have a good relationship with the Li family on the surface but in real sense, they were accomplices."

"The Li family?" Xiehan asked curiously. Li Yuming's family?

Ji Huifen must have guessed what he was thinking. He shook his head. Not Li Yuming's family. I investigated her years ago and she came from a different family and merely had the same surname. Anyway, both the Guan and Li families were medicine practitioner families. They had many talents in the field of medical research but they did not use it to save lives; they used it to destroy humans just to earn a quicker buck.

Aside from producing harmful medicines and selling them to governments, they would make deals with parents who delivered unhealthy babies or those whose unborn babies were prone to suffer from long-term illnesses, and switch them out with healthy ones.

Sometimes, the weak babies would be given to poor parents who wouldn't be able to do anything about it even if they had suspicions. Sometimes, they would be killed.

Some of those babies could be nursed into perfect health by the geniuses in those families. However, not only were they not lucky, they were perhaps unluckier than those who were killed because they would be used as lab rats and if they proved to be useful, they would be fed with medicines to forcefully groom them into geniuses, then they would be forced to join the business of those families. It was an ongoing cycle and no one had ever found out. If someone did find out, they would not remain alive.

When my grandpa found out, he was shocked and wanted to flee the country with my grandma, my parents and me. However, Old man Guan was fast enough to catch up to him and tried to kill him.

On that day, the boy with gray eyes and I were playing together and happened to stumble upon their fight. The one who ended up dead was not my grandpa, but Old Guan.

We had seen it all and knew who was on the wrong, but the boy somehow forced himself to believe that my grandfather was at fault. He threatened to return for vengeance.

At the time, we all thought that the boy was speaking out of anger. He was my age after all. What could he do? Besides, we didn't hear anything about the Guan and Li families after that. I thought they had disappeared. Little did I know that he would be back... I don't know how he ended up with the surname Xia but this method of switching babies and using them is too much like them. Besides, he sent a letter to my father to threaten and inform him of his return."

The siblings remained silent as Ji Huifen sunk into thought.

He had noticed that Ji Feifei didn't look like any of their family members ages ago. Sometimes, he would be skeptical about it but he would brush it off since his suspicions didn't make much sense. Just like Wen Lin, he had thought that Ji Feifei might resemble her distant maternal relatives.

The siblings were in shock and so was Wen Lin.

He looked at the girl he had just learnt was his daughter and asked, "Ruby, did anyone try to do anything to you when you were little?"

If Xia Hanchen had switched them, then he must have wanted to use Ruby and kill her as a way to get revenge against the Ji family.

"Someone tried to kidnap me when I was in my early teens. Dad couldn't trace them even with all his connections." Ruby responded, thinking about the same thing.

"What happened to the Guan family?" Xiehan asked. It was strange that they disappeared into thin air.

"I don't know. I don't know how the boy ended up in the Xia family either." Ji Huifen couldn't come up with anything no matter how hard he thought about it.

Xiehan rubbed his brows. "Do you want to go to see Ji Feifei? She was our family for many years, after all."

Wen Lin had not entirely calmed down from the shock and trauma. Although Ji Feifei had been her daughter and they had shared a mother-daughter bond for many years, it would be a lie if she said that

she was not happy to find out that her real daughter was alive. "I will go to see her even though it's not as her mother. She was still a baby when everything happened and did not know what had been planned out for her life, after all."

Ji Huifen was of the same opinion. "Everything she did later was her choice but I loved her before finding out the truth. I'll pay her my last respects."

Xiehan thought so too, so he made plans. Meanwhile, "We have a bigger task. To find out whether Xia Hanchen really is that boy. If he is, we will have to bring him and his family down if they still exist."

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Meanwhile, Han Xichen made his way to Xiaoshi's apartment because he had missed her, having not seen her for the last three days.

She was puzzled when she saw her at the door. "You are here."

She wanted to dig a hole to hide in. How could Han Xichen come over when she was cooped up indoors and was still dressed in her pajamas? Even her hair looked like a messy bunch of red.

"May I come in?"

"Yes. Forgive my manners." She made way for him to get in and poured him a glass of fresh fruit juice.

"How are you?" He asked when he saw that she didn't look as cheerful as she always did. She looked tired and dull.

She sat down opposite him and relaxed herself, feeling happier now that she had company. Although she was nervous about her outlook, the man did not comment about it and that made her relieved since he didn't mind. "Many things have been happening lately. My boss was accused of stealing someone else's work, you must have seen it on the news."

"I did." The news had been so explosive that there was almost no one who didn't know of it.

"So I want to help them uncover the traitor. Boss Yu says it was a set up. Besides, now that the best hacker is unavailable, the software production department is much busier."

"You should have some rest occasionally. If you work throughout without taking a break, you will only drain yourself and lose productivity. Do you want to grab a milkshake together?"

"Sure." She nodded. She had actually wanted to take a break, but she didn't have anyone to go out with since her workmates were just as busy as she was.

Hearing that they were going out, she disappeared into her room and freshened up at record speed, then changed into jeans and a black top and brushed her hair backwards.

When she left her room, she looked very pretty, though he didn't think she looked any less beautiful with her messy outlook a moment ago.

"Let's go." He led the way out. He was planning to make her walk a little so he had specifically told her to wear flat shoes.

As they walked, he stuck a conversation. "You haven't told me much about yourself."

"Haven't I?" She was puzzled.

"No. How come I never heard about you? I don't know what you like or dislike, your hobbies or your dreams."

She smiled slightly, realizing that she might have subconsciously assumed that he would be read into all her interests. "I love travelling around. But I decided to settle down and get a life for myself. What about you?"

He smiled at her way to shove the question back to him. "I don't have any hobbies I particularly like. I usually go along with what my friends want to do."

"You're the most simple yet complex guy I've ever met." She chuckled. He didn't have any favorite foods, was neither mild tempered nor temperamental, and now he didn't have any particular interests and neither disliked what his friends did? Why did it feel like he was too flexible to be true?

"Is it a bad thing?" He grinned.

"No. I wouldn't mind it." If anything, she would love to be around a man like him, since they would rarely clash on interests.

The man gazed at her for a moment, then slid his hand to her side to hold hers. He felt her hands tremble and saw her eyes widen. Ignoring her shock, he gently asked, "Shishi, would you take me along to travel around?"

Chapter 445 - Last Respects

Xiaoshi nodded immediately, heat creeping up her cheeks from the feeling of her hand in his. His palm was warm and covered hers entirely, with his fingers securing the back of her hand and gently rubbing against it. "Uh, yes."

He peeked at her, intrigued by her response. "Did you hear what I said?"

She thought about his question and tried to remember what he had asked after holding her hand. All she knew was that it was a question, but her heart was beating so fast that she didn't catch any of the words. She shook her head in embarrassment. "No."

He chuckled softly. From her reaction, he had already guessed that the question had evaporated into thin air.

He repeated the question, but before she could answer, his fingers gently ran up her wrist and made her heart skip a few more beats.

She once again nodded without knowing whether it made sense. When she heard him laugh, her cheeks that had just calmed back to their usual color flushed yet again. "Are you teasing me?"

He didn't deny the accusation and nodded with a tiny laugh. "You're so cute. I can't help it."

She glared at him but her eyes only appeared adorable due to her blush. Luckily, they reached the milkshake shop where they were going so he stopped teasing her. She didn't tell him anything but he ordered her the vanilla milkshake she preferred. Slotting in a thick straw for her, he put it in her hand and held her free hand.

This was not the first time they were holding hands but her heart still raced as though it was her first time being this close to a man. Well, aside from her cousin and father, she had never been as close to any man as she had been to him, but she didn't expect that her heart would race faster than it had raced in the past when she heard Xingyu's voice through Xiehan's phone.

She stopped her thoughts from running wild but it still baffled her. Why was she spending so much time with Han Xichen? In fact, the closer she was to him, the closer she wanted to get. It felt slightly similar to what she had felt for Xingyu in the past but at the same time, different in a way that gave her the urge to be addicted. Her eyes widened at the thought. Was she starting to like a different man?

Han Xichen didn't know what the girl beside him was thinking but from how furiously she was chewing on her straw, her train of thoughts must be interesting. "What are you thinking about?"

"Your hand feels nice to hold." She blurted, then wondered what had come over her.

The man grinned at her response. "Is that so? Then you can hold it whenever you want." She wanted to shake their hands apart but he only tightened his hold around her little hand. "Do you think I would trust you to watch where you are going? I don't want you falling into ditches and bumping your head into trees."

"I didn't..." She denied his words, but she couldn't deny that he would have done just that if he did not pull her back the last time.

"Do you want to go back home or continue strolling around?" He asked, and she didn't think it through before being honest with her answer.

"Can we walk a little more?"

"Of course." Obviously, he was happy to keep walking with a beauty like her. While they walked, he kept buying her a piece of every street food she looked at longingly, and within a few minutes, she was full. When he placed tacos in her right hand, she glanced at the skewers he was holding and shook her head. "Don't buy me anything else. I'm full."

He nodded and watched her take a bite of the tacos then he took a bite of one of the skewers.

Her eyes subconsciously moved up to his lips. He bit on the meat elegantly and chewed it without much expression but she could tell that he was enjoying it. The tacos suddenly didn't taste as good as it did a second ago. She felt the urge to switch it with the barbecue between his lips.

Before he could catch her staring at him, she averted her gaze and looked at the beautiful scenery. Night had fallen, and the city was dotted with street lights that made it look more alluring than it did during the day. She subconsciously pulled on his hand and led to him walking faster since she had increased her pace. It was only when they arrived at her residential area that she felt bummed. They were back so soon...

"Would you...would you like to walk with me again when you are free?" She asked nervously.

"Of course. Tell me when you want to." He agreed, much to her relief.

...

The next day at work.

Cheng Yu was so busy that she had barely had a few hours of sleep. If one were to wipe her makeup away, they would be faced with huge dark circles and a pair of dull sleepy eyes.

Xiaoshi made her way to her office early in the morning, to report the progress of her work. When she was done, she realized that Cheng Yu was still staring at her so she asked, "Is there anything else?"

Cheng Yu dragged her chair forward and planted her elbows on her desk. "The matter regarding Luna is quite suspicious. First, she meets a young man who wants to sell her a software and she offers him a job, then the man turns around and accuses her of stealing his software, and even submits the video recordings of their meeting. It's definitely premeditated..."

"I thought so too." Everyone who believed in Luna thought that this was something that had been planned out, but Xiaoshi didn't understand why Cheng Yu was explaining it to her anew. "Why are you telling me this?"

"Do you have anything to do with it?" Cheng Yu asked straightforwardly.

Xiaoshi was stumped. So that was it! She bit her lower lips to stop herself from exploding in anger. "No. Why would I? Just because you think there is tension between me and Luna doesn't prove that I would want to hurt her, okay?"

Cheng Yu smiled. "You don't need to get riled up. I'm just wondering who would benefit if Luna's efforts were to go down the ashes. If her reputation were to be damaged beyond repair, who would be happy about it?"

Seeing Xiaoshi's upset expression, she added, "I'm not pointing you out as a suspect. But you know, anyone can be suspicious. Who knows, the culprit might as well be someone close to Luna, someone she trusts. But whoever has a guilty conscience definitely has something to hide, don't you think?"

"Well then. I don't have anything to do with it." Xiaoshi shrugged. She really didn't. She had also been shocked when she heard the news.

Cheng Yu smiled slightly. "You better not."

Although her tone sounded like he was warning her, it no longer held suspicion.

When Xiaoshi left, she reclined in her seat and sighed. The best way to get everyone to do their best searching for the real culprit was to individually make everyone think that they were the prime suspect. She wondered if it would work as fast as she wanted.

Xiaoshi was on her way back to the common office that programmers usually hung around when she received a call from her mother.

"Mom, is there something wrong? I'm at work." She knew that her parents would never call her while she was at work unless something really huge happened.

"Are you able to take the day off? Come to the Ji Mansion if you can." She did not explain the details on the phone but Xiaoshi could tell that it was a serious matter.

The company was much busier than usual but luckily, Cheng Yu approved of her day off nonetheless.

When she arrived at the Ji family mansion, the solemn mood surprised her. She gave her mother a curious glance across the room. What was happening?

"Come here." Ji Meiling called her over and softly explained the entire matter to her.

The Ji family was unable to find out who Ji Feifei's biological parents were, so they paid their last respects to her—as a former member of their family—before sending her body to the crematorium.

Chapter 446 - Under A Spell(1)

Ji Feifei's departure was not the end of the Ji family's nightmare but the onset of it. Ji Huifen spent about a week going through the facts of the past and concluded that the gray-eyed boy from his memories was indeed Xia Hanchen. As for how he ended up in the Xia family, he, Xiehan and Wen Lin guessed that he must have been adopted. Perhaps the Xia family had also collaborated with the Guan family in the past, and they took him in after the demise of his grandfather and the disappearance of his family?

This was merely a speculation, but it made a lot of sense when they thought about the events that surfaced later.

At first, the three of them were worried that Xia Hanchen would make Ji Feifei's biological parents seek trouble with them but they had been, thankfully, wrong.

It had been two weeks since Ji Feifei left the picture. Luna had spent this time tracking down the young man who had tainted her name. As expected, it was not easy to find him since he had the protection of Xia Hanchen. When she finally did, it was only because she had decided to be ruthless and kidnapped the young man's mother.

"Please don't do anything to my mother!" The man pleaded over the phone when Luna gave him a call.

"Then make your way here right away. Don't you even think about calling anyone else—I will track your movements." Luna threatened, and the young man knew better than to brush it off. Luna was an excellent programmer and it was highly possible for her to have hacked into his phone already.

"Where?" He asked with a shaky voice as she had yet to give him an address.

"I will send you a location. Ten minutes. One second later and you will pick up your momma's remains." Luna hung up and tossed her phone aside to look at the frightened middle-aged woman that she had kidnapped.

She had brought her to a hotel room and not blindfolded her—only having tied her up—letting her know that she was not in some repulsive blood-filled place.

What she didn't know was that from the rumors that the woman had heard, kidnappers only let one know where they were if they were going to kill them. After all, the location would be a major lead to the kidnappers' identity if the victims could remember it.

She looked up at Luna with a mixture of hatred and disgust.

Luna had room service bring in some food and placed it in front of the pale, middle aged woman. "Auntie, have some food."

The woman glanced at the food in front of her and her veins protruded in anger, she had no intention to eat it.

"Come on, I'm not planning on starving you. You must be hungry after working all day." Luna coaxed, keeping some distance in case the woman became aggressive.

The woman's eyes glared at her like they could burn holes through Luna's stomach. "As a mother-to-be yourself, how could you do this to someone else?! All I want is to work and provide for my children, yet you rich people are doing everything in your power to make that difficult for me!"

"Trust me, I do not wish to make the life of anyone difficult." Luna sat on the comfortable couch and picked up the glass of milk that had been brought to her along with the woman's dinner. She took a small sip from it gently. "If your son did not decide to ruin my life, do you think I would have resorted to doing this?"

"You liar! My son would never destroy anyone's life!" The woman pulled at the ropes around her hands and wanted to give Luna a slap for trying to speak ill of her darling son.

Her actions and words earned a scoff from Luna. "Obviously, no one can commit a crime until they do it. Have you not read or heard of the news? Or do you really think that the software your baby darling claims to have been stolen from him was really his?" She knew the woman would not say anything kind in response so she chuckled and added on her own, "No it wasn't. That was my and my friend's blood, sweat and tears."

Before the woman could talk, she added, "No one understands how difficult it is for two young women to survive on their own without their families. Sometimes, their families don't support their dreams and aspirations so the young girls have no choice but to plunge into the cruel business world in the hopes of finding something that would place a slice of bread on their tables."

She sighed after bringing up Cheng Yu's experience. "Do you know, my friend once fainted because she worked continuously for two days without a wink of sleep nor a grain of food. It was all because we were trying to complete the game and release it at the right time—fame in this line of work doesn't last that long, after all.

Yet, after all these weeks of hard work, all it took was a few pictures and a statement from a young man I met recently, for all our hard work to go sliding down the drain."

"Are you telling the truth?" After hearing what Luna had said, the middle-aged woman was perplexed. She had once been a young woman herself—and she had also been once abandoned by her family and left to fend for herself. She knew how difficult it was. If it was really as Luna had stated...

Luna took in a deep breath after successfully guilt-tripping the woman. "Would anyone lie about their life?"

"Sure, I can go back to my family if everything I worked for is taken away from me—but she has nowhere to go. What will become of her?"

Knowing that she had managed to calm the woman down and get her thinking, she suggested with an innocent smile, "Aunty, I could untie you. But can you promise not to hurt me?"

"I would never hurt an unborn baby." The woman looked aside, finally realizing the absurdity of it all. How could a pregnant woman risk it all to kidnap someone else? It seemed like this young woman's words were true. She really had no choice. She was doing it for her friend.

For some reason, she felt her heart soften even though she knew that a kidnapper should never be trusted.

Luna untied her, knowing that the woman would not try to hurt her. She had made sure of it. "Auntie, could you eat your food now? It's awful to see you starve—It makes me feel as though my own mother were starving."

As though she was under a spell, the woman scared down all the food on her plate, and it made her question her son even more. This young woman was so kind. Was she really capable of stealing?

She didn't want to believe that her son was in the wrong, but what if that was the case?

"I believe that Luo Chen did not do it out of his own will. When we met, I had the impression that he was an honest young man who would not want to deliberately harm anyone. He must have been forced." Luna said to further emotionally blackmail his mother.

She smiled and bought time, telling random little tales until the young man arrived.

As soon as he walked in through the door, the first thing to greet him was a slap from his mother. "Punk! What did you do?"

"Mother, what are you talking about?"

The woman seemed to think of something. "Tell me about the money you received three weeks ago. Did you really get it from a company who offered to work with you, or did you get bribed to do something wrong?"

"Mother, what do you mean?" The young man named Luo Chen looked slightly guilty like he was trying to hide something.

When his mother saw this, she slapped him even harder. "Speak! Who was it?"

Luo Chen, I have worked hard all these years trying to educate you, yet you repay me by doing something so shameless? Did all my teachings go down the drain?"

Luna tapped the woman—who looked disappointed—on her shoulder. "Aunty, please don't be too fierce with him. Let's talk it out."

Since the young woman had spoken, Luo Chen's mother moved aside to let her son in.

Luna sat down at the table in a position that would have the mother and son duo sit opposite her, so Luo Chen was facing the door of the site's bedroom.

She secretly tapped her phone screen and waited for about three seconds until Luo Chen calmed down. She then asked, "Did I really steal your work? Tell the truth."

"No." The young man blurted, then placed a hand over his mouth.. Why did he just blurt out the truth? When he saw his mother, he was planning to worm his way out of the mess. Why did it feel like there was a strange force that came over him and forced him to tell the truth?

Chapter 447 - Under A Spell (2)

The middle-aged woman looked at her son in disbelief. She was already swayed when she heard Luna's words, and all it took was that simple word for all the trust she had in her son to come crumbling down.

She glared at him, her eyes full of disappointment. "Why did you do it? Why would you do such a thing?"

The young man knew that there might be cameras in the room and that he might be in trouble if he said the wrong thing. Even so, his lips once again moved against his will. "My girlfriend's life would be in danger if I didn't. She would have been killed."

Not only was Luo Chen's mother in shock, Luna was surprised too. She knew that there was a young woman who was kidnapped to force him into submission but she had thought that it was his sister. Who would have thought that the lass was his girlfriend?

Luo Chen's mother furrowed her brows. "Because of a girl, you are willing to destroy other people's lives and destroy yours while at it?" She didn't know what to tell her son that would accurately display all the anger and disappointment she felt.

"I love her, mother. How could I let any harm befall her?"

Luna knew that the young man had done the wrong thing but she did not entirely blame him. She didn't have a limit for what she could do if it involved the lives of those she loved either. As one who had once been forced to plead guilty for murder, she knew how it felt like to feel helpless.

She thought about it for a moment before saying, "Your girlfriend will be safe. I will make sure of it."

"She will, you will?" The young man felt useless that he was not able to save his own girlfriend and needed the help of another girl to do that.

"Yes. As long as you tell me who had you do it."

The young man showed a hint of hesitation as though she didn't trust Luna, making the latter glance at him with mockery in her eyes. "He had you frame me and even after you did as you were told, he did not keep his promise of letting her go. Do you still hope that he will release her?"

She had hit the nail on the head, and it made Luo Chen look at her in disbelief. She knew that the mastermind was a man. Could it be that she already had suspicion and merely wanted to confirm it?

He was suddenly awed. From the first time he met her, he knew that Luna was not an ordinary young woman. Her intelligence had baffled her every time he encountered it and this time was no different. She was still waiting for an answer and he wanted to evade the question in fear that she would not keep her promise. However, once again, it was as though he was under a spell as he obediently gave all the details he knew.

"I don't know his identity. We conversed on the phone but when it was time for him to give the software to me, as well as the money, it was a woman who showed up. She had long, brown hair that was slightly wavy and looked to be in her thirties or early forties. She had brown eyes and was smoking."

Luna almost cursed from the description. The said woman had many features that were similar to Li Yuming, and it was easy to misunderstand. It was not hard to guess who had sent the woman, and the purpose. "Is this her?" Luna showed him a picture of Li Xiyan's new get up.

"Yes, it is her." Confirmed, Luo Chen, and it made her wonder whether Li Xiyan had made her disguise look like Li Yuming on purpose.

She had gotten her answer, and she could confirm that the culprit was indeed Xia Hanchen-her 'beloved' father who had offered her immense comfort when he heard about what was happening to her company.

If there was such a thing as a devil in disguise, then that would be Xia Hanchen. To destroy someone yet offer them comfort for their loss so naturally, the Oscars owed him a trophy.

Her phone chimed and she picked it up before calmly saying, "Bring her in."

Hanging up, she looked at the young man. "This meeting did not happen. Do you understand?"

"Yes." He responded like a robot with no brain of his own.

"Good." As she spoke, the door opened and an innocent-looking girl came in with Xingyu behind her.

"Lanlan!" Luo Chen stood up and emotionally pulled her into his arms before checking if she was alright.

"I'm fine." The girl cried. "This gentleman saved me."

Xingyu sat beside Luna and was impressed that she had indeed taken care of everything on this end. Well, almost everything.

"Luo Chen," She called out, and the young man turned to look at her respectfully. "I hope you will follow my arrangement from now on. If I can save your girlfriend, then I have the ability to get her locked up again."

"Yes." The young man did not need to be reminded. He had already decided to follow Luna's instructions. The young woman could have made him do her bidding and only leave her with a promise to save his girlfriend once he was done, but she didn't. She was more kind than the man who had contacted him.

"I will get the three of you a place to temporarily live with guards to keep you safe. Don't move around too much and if he asks you about it, tell him you used the money he gave you to buy back your old house from a relative." Luna instructed. "I will tell you what to do next once you are settled in."

She realized how demanding she sounded when she was done so she added. "You are willing to be on my side, I believe."

"Yes, of course." The man nodded. "I will call you elder sister from now on."

"Uh... No thanks." She laughed. She had enough siblings already, and was having a headache adjusting to the fact that she had a half brother. She didn't want to add sworn brothers on the list.

The young man knew that she meant no harm so he chuckled too. "Then allow me to call you my master."

A certain jealous man frowned at the sight of the young man laughing so happily with his fiancée. Young man, are you asking for death?

Luna dismissed the trio as she had more things to do, so she let someone secretly lead them to the house she had already prepared beforehand. When they were all out of earshot, she glanced at the bedroom door. "They are gone."

At her words, Han Xichen walked out to the living area and had a smile on his lips. "Did you get what you need?"

Luna nodded at the man who had sat opposite them to catch up with Xingyu. "Yes. All thanks to your hypnotism skill, they were under control without even knowing what hit them. They didn't even suspect it."

Of course they would not suspect a thing, they had been hypnotised. Han Xichen grinned to himself. He had made the woman believe in everything that Luna told her and after that, made Luo Chen spill the truth. If they overdid it, it would be suspicious so Luna had decided not to ask too much.

Han Xichen offered her a kind smile. "Don't mention it. I did it for Shishi, it was for selfish reasons.

Two days ago, Xiaoshi had cried to him about not being of help in investigating the matter, and feeling horrible about it because she was under suspicion too. He had offered her to help her in this way and luckily he had succeeded.

"I'll take my leave now." He announced.

"Of course, and thank you." Luna thanked him before getting down to finding ways to trap Xia Hanchen.

Han Xichen gave Xiaoshi a call as soon as he left the hotel room. The girl was anxiously waiting for his response, so he went over to her apartment so he would explain everything in detail.

Scratch that. Explaining was an excuse, and he was going to her apartment solely because he had missed her.

The girl excitedly showed him in and hugged him. It was not usual for her to do that out of her own accord. He was happy, but he noticed the underlying gloom in her eyes.

"What's wrong?" He asked as his thumb ran down her cheek.

It was useless to hide things from a man who would figure it out either way so she did not even try to do so. She sighed as she explained, "My parents prolonged their stay because of this matter. They are worried about me."

"Isn't that a good thing?" He questioned, only for her to look sadder.

"Once it is settled, they will go back to Australia." She hugged her arms.. "I'm suddenly not sure that I did the right thing by deciding to settle down here, so far away from them. Maybe I should go back with them?"

Chapter 448 - Under A Spell(3)

"Do you have any good reason to keep staying?" Han Xichen asked her after a long pause.

She thought about it for a while before listing her reasons out. "Yeah, I already found a job, which was something I had been dreaming of for a while. I met some new friends too. Besides, I think I like it here more than in Australia. I grew up there anyways, a little change wouldn't hurt."

Most importantly, I met you. She concluded in a soft voice in her mind, not daring to directly voice her thoughts that she believed would make him find her strange. He did not say anything but he had a

feeling that there was something that she left unsaid. When she was ready to say it, she would talk about it. Until then, he decided that he would not probe.

He studied her expression that looked excited when she talked about the comparison between B City and the City where she had grown up. Although she would miss her parents if she did not follow them, she would miss Xiehan and Lanni if she went back with her parents. Aside from missing her parents, there didn't seem to be anything else that made her want to go back.

It was clear where the young lady's heart really was.

"Have you ever thought about your future?" He asked out of the blue.

"The future?" She was baffled at the sudden change of topic. They were talking about her urge and reluctance to follow her parents. When did the topic morph to her future?

He resisted the urge to tap her forehead as she looked cute with her eyes widened in surprise. "Yes. When you get married and have kids."

He talked about the matter of marriage and kids so casually that it made her cheeks burn up. It was a normal topic, why was her reaction so exaggerated?

The man chuckled, having taken in her reaction. He must have done it on purpose because his lips curled upwards. "I'm talking about something that most women go through. You will meet someone you love enough to settle down with, then you will have a family. Your in-laws will not want to be distant from you and will expect you to pay attention to them once in a while.

You will have a husband with whom you will want to spend most of your time and when you have kids, they will need your attention. Not to mention, you have a job too. You don't seem like one to stay at home without working, from my observation of you."

She nodded to his last words. If she could simply stay at home, she would have long quit working at Moonlight Studios where she felt unwelcome sometimes.

"Tell me, how often will you stay beside your parents?" He dropped his main question.

His words got her thinking. Indeed, when she was younger, she liked to stick to her parents and would watch the door for their return every time they left for work. With time, however, things slowly changed. She grew to have different interests but that did not mean that she no longer loved her parents.

"Do you get my point now?" He asked, and she nodded.

"Then follow your heart." He smiled at her. "You are a grown up woman now and can travel on your own. If you miss them so much, you can always go over for a visit and stay for a few days or weeks. I think you like it here"

"I will take you along!" She blurted as though her brain had gone offline, it always did in his presence. Sometimes she wondered whether he had a superpower that helped him switch people's brains off when they were with him.

"What?" It took a second for him to realize that she was talking about how he had mentioned wanting her to take him along to her trips around the world. A smile laced over his thin lips at the fact that she had remembered it. "I would be glad to go."

"Thank you. I feel much better now." She sighed in relief as though she had solved the most difficult puzzle. Her big eyes blinked with her words, draining away all the self-control that had been keeping him sane all along. He swallowed as he stared down at her face.

She was not the most beautiful girl he had met but she was the most charming. A brilliant pair of eyes that were like a pair of vortices out to charm whoever was looking at them into drawing closer and closer, until they sank into their allure.

He didn't realize how close his face had moved to hers until his lips landed on her small, red ones.

She was startled and reflexively moved away from him while staring at him with her widened eyes and trying to catch her breath. Her heart raced wildly from the shock and it took a while to successfully calm

it. When she finally registered what had happened, she averted her gaze as she felt heat creep up her ears. Did Han Xichen just kiss her?

"I'm sorry, that shouldn't have happened." He massaged the space between his brows. He was not just saying it to appear like a gentleman. He was truly apologetic. One should only kiss a girl if she was okay with it, and she might be offended if he caught her off guard like he had just done. How could he be such a j-

"It's okay. I don't dislike it." Her shaky voice shocked the crap out of him. What did she just say?

When she realized the words that had just left her mouth, Xiaoshi wanted to drown herself in the juice inside the half-filled glass on the table. While it was true that she didn't find the kiss annoying or repulsive, how could she say such a thing to a man?

It was still possible to control himself before he stole her kiss but now that he did, it was harder than his most mind-wrecking test in medical school. Although it had happened for a second, he had felt the warmth and softness of her lips and they only enticed him into wanting more of it. If he continued staying here, he would do something that he might regret.

"I have to go finish up on some work." He said as he stood up to leave.

Her expression fell, as though she was displeased about his departure. He had the urge to pat her head but fought it.

After gauging his expression and being convinced that she had not done anything to upset him, she felt happier. "See you when you're free?"

"Yes." He agreed before scolding himself. He had just decided to create some distance so he would stop the mistake he was making. What was wrong with him? It was too late to take back his words so he could only let her see him off.

—

The following day, in Moonlight Studios.

Luna had ensured that the security of the entire building was foolproof, having modified it herself. She secretly led Luo Chen into the building and into a meeting room that only she and Cheng Yu knew about.

The young man was not surprised to be brought here since he knew that Luna was planning to give him instructions after all. He sat on his chair and obediently waited for her instructions.

"I'll offer you a job." She had other things to handle after this meeting with him so she went straight to the point to save time.

"What? Why would you do that?" He was shocked. Who would offer a job to the person who almost destroyed their future?

"Are you willing to take it or not? I don't want to waste such a brilliant brain as yours. I believe you have other works?" Before he could respond, she strictly added, "Those that belong to you."

"I have another software." The young man nodded, touched by Luna's ability to be able to tell.

It was just within her expectations. Her father could not have found a random boy on the street and had him frame her. He must have found a genius who lacked enough exposure to showcase his talent and share his ideas with the world—one who had probably been robbed of his blood and sweat a few times before. She had investigated him and was pleased with his talent.

"Thank you, boss. I will do my best."

She smiled and said nothing of it. It was a win-win situation. "I will check out your softwares, then I will send a contract to you and you can start working after this matter is sorted. For now, you just have to pretend that I still haven't met you."

"That's a piece of cake. But what about Lanlan?" He asked. The girl had been kidnapped and the man would probably soon find out that she was no longer in his custody.

Luna smiled evilly, "Don't worry. That man is a psychopath and his henchmen are scared of him. They will probably hide her escape from them and try to find her on their own.. They will fall into our trap as well as buy me some time."

Chapter 449 - Brainless

When Luna was done talking to Luo Chen, she let Cheng Yu tell him what he would need to do as she gave Lanni a call.

"Ready?" The latter had been waiting for her signal with her finger over her mouse.

"Yes. Release the news." Luna had a sinister smile as she prepared to start this dad versus daughters game. Did Xia Hanchen really think that he would be able to fool everyone forever?

"Say no more." Lanni tapped the mouse and the news article that she had written was immediately aired for the whole world to see. Tian Yu Media had fired her, but CEO Qian forgot to revoke her access to the online media websites.

Even if Xia Hanchen realized that it was her who leaked the news, there was nothing he could do about it yet as he was still dreaming of gaining control over her. If he did try to do something, they were prepared to counterattack. It was a battle of two versus twelve; the result was almost predictable.[1]

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"It was you!" Luna yelled as soon as she got to Xia Hanchen's house, and the man seemed to be expecting her. He must have read the news that Lanni had released. Thanks to the hard work of Luna's

and Xiehan's fingers, the news took over all the websites, including those that had nothing to do with Tian Yu Media. It was like a virus that had spread over the entire Internet, making sure everyone got hold of the news behind what really happened in Moonlight Studios.

"Dad, how could you do this?" She asked heartbrokenly. Initially, she was planning to act this out but now that she was facing him, she didn't need to act.

She felt cheated, betrayed... How could he turn out to be that kind of person? How could he cheat them all these years?

He didn't need to ask to know what she was talking about. He must have spent the entire day coming up with a suitable lie because it effortlessly left his lips. "It's for your own good."

Luna laughed mockingly, not believing that she had once been stupid enough to be controlled by this monster. "You sabotaged my hard work and claim to have done it for my own good? What language are you speaking?"

He turned to face her, hiding the disgust in his eyes as he always had. This time, she caught his little action and her blood almost boiled out of proportion. She would have strangled him if he wasn't stronger than her.

The man spoke out his practised excuse. "You need to study. Girls your age are finishing up their college education and planning to further their studies, not rushing into matters that they cannot handle."

"Matters that they cannot handle," She repeated his words with a playful smile. "Are you talking about me starting my company?"

"Drop that dumb start-up and go to school. It didn't have a future, I was helping you get rid of something that would have broken your heart later." He said unflinchingly.

She had never heard such unconcerned words from him. But then again, she had never questioned him about anything so she never got to know how he would react to being challenged. Still, she pretended to not have noticed it.

"I can study part time like Lanni did. Didn't she get her diploma already? She didn't need to go to school. Surely, you don't expect me to parade my baby bump in school, right?" She laughed then pretended to notice something. "Wait. Is this also why you had Lanni fired from her job? are you behind it as well?"

The man regarded her with a scoff, not caring to be pretentiously hospitable by offering her a drink like he had always done. "Why would I waste my time on her? How can you compare yourself to that little piece of trash?"

Luna gasped. She had already heard him talk ill of Lanni in the videos but it was still baffling to witness it first-hand. It was almost unbelievable.

He frowned when he realized what he had just said. However, he was not apologetic. "It is time for you to get a brain, Luna. I let you get close to her but not to be swayed by her! Do you know who brought her up?"

"Yes. Our mother. My biological mother." She answered unflinchingly.

The man almost exploded but he hid it behind his 'at-a-loss' farce. "I don't trust her. Even though she gave birth to you, why hasn't she tried to reunite with you? All she does is try to sabotage you. Have you ever wondered why?" He didn't wait for her to answer before he continued, "Because she cannot brainwash you. She has already fooled your brainless sister but it is hard to do the same for you so all she can do is try to separate you from her and both of you from me."

"Really?" Lanni spoke from the entrance, making the man turn and glance at her in surprise. When did she get in here?

Lanni sighed and smiled like she was hurt. "Brainless, useless fool...so that's how you see me."

"Lanni..." He started.

"No need. I thought you had our best interests in mind but turns out..." Her statement trailed off before she glanced at her sister. "Luna, I'm going shopping. Are you coming?"

Luna knew that they were going to Li Yuming's villa so she nodded and promised to visit her father and settle the matter some other time. Their appearance today was merely meant to create doubt and panic in Xia Hanchen's mind and they had already done that. It might backfire if they overdid it so they decided to leave it at that for now.

Li Yuming was watching the door for their return and she looked relieved when she finally saw them, both of them in one piece. "I would never have let you go there if it wasn't part of the plan."

"Don't worry about us, mom. We are always careful." Lanni chimed and Luna seconded, as they both took their places to hug her arms.

It was just like when they were little, Li Yuming smiled. They would both cling to her from both sides just like they were doing now. She had so badly missed this feeling. Even without that man, her life felt complete now that her daughters were both by her side.

"How did you end up with dad anyway?" Luna asked when she remembered Xiehan's recount of the past. Besides, if Xia Hanchen did not like Li Yuming a tiny bit, why would he be with her?

"I will tell you everything you need to know." Li Yuming promised, knowing that they would need to know as many facts as possible as some of them might help in their quest to bring the man down.

"At the time, I was close to the Ji family and he naturally assumed that I was there to seek revenge. It turned out, he sought me because he thought I was from the Li family that was close to the Guan family."

"No wonder." Lanni came to a realization. So Xingyu's wild speculation was right. Her meeting with Xia Hanchen was not a coincidence.

"He seemed to be under pressure from someone or something and we got married soon. I thought he loved me, he treated me quite well despite the rush. It was my brother who found out that he had mistaken me for another woman, and that he was having an affair with the woman he had mistaken me for."

Luna cringed at the audacity of that man. Just how disgusting could he get?" What about grandma drugging him and putting Li Xiyan in his bed?" Wasn't that what happened?

"That's only half true." Li Yuming was finding it hard explaining such personal matters to her daughters.

"What's the truth?" Lanni asked gently, hoping they were not probing too much.

"It was a facade. The Xia family is involved in the dark business too. That was the only way for the old woman to get Li Xiyan into the family without raising too many eyebrows. Melodramatic clichés are usually more acceptable in the eyes of the curious public. No one would speculate a thing."

The old lady had been right, since in these two decades, only a handful of people knew the truth.

"So that's the only way to get to the Guans." Lanni thought aloud. It seemed that while the other two families disappeared, the Xia family remained intact. Xia Hanchen and Li Xiyan were proof that those two families could still be in existence and merely hiding somewhere. If they followed this lead, perhaps they would find them.

"I don't think we need to worry about them for now. Should we get rid of that two faced man first? He is a worse threat." Suggested Luna.

"That's not a good idea." Li Yuming shook her head. "We need to plan this first. Besides, Luna, stay away from this."

"Why?" Luna was baffled.

Li Yuming narrowed her eyes at her. "Are you forgetting something? You cannot let your emotions keep fluctuating."

Chapter 450 - Paranoid

"I will take care of myself." Luna promised. She was not a child and she knew that she was not just taking care of herself but of her baby too. Of course she would be careful when doing what had to be done. She knew not to let herself be in sticky situations.

However, Li Yuming wasn't having any of it. "I still don't want you to be involved. Let your sister and I handle it."

"Mother..."

"Luna, I said no." Li Yuming's tone was strict, not allowing for further negotiation. She could only give in reluctantly.

"Luna, mum is right. We can't involve you and you know the reason better than anyone. If a physical battle broke out, what would happen? We don't want that monster using you as leverage against us." Lanni added as she patted her sister's head from behind Li Yuming.

She earned a smack from their mother. "Don't be mean."

Luna smiled, not thinking that Lanni's words were mean. Besides, it was true that Xia Hanchen might view her as the weakest among them and decide to use her to pin them down.

"Okay. I'll stay away. But you won't have anything to say against me helping out behind the scenes, right?" Asked Luna, rendering Li Yuming speechless.

"You stubborn girls. What will I do with you?"

The girls laughed and snuggled close to her, looking nothing like the devils they could become when they decided to torment their enemies.

Lanni's phone vibrated with a call from Lin Jian.

"What would he want from me?" She frowned quizzically, knowing that the blabbermouth would never seek her unless he had something to bug her about.

"Young master Lin." She said politely into the phone while pulling away from her mother to sit upright.

"Friend-in-law, how can you be so distant?" The latter sounded like her words had wounded his poor soul.

"What should I call you then? Friend-in-law?" Not everyone used such absurd honorifics, okay?

"You can call me brother-in-law." He said, sounding much happier.

"Okay. What do you need?"

"Are you implying that I only call you when I need something?" Came a grumble from the other end, and Lanni had the urge to roll her eyes.

"If you have nothing to say, then should I hang up?"

"No don't! Friend-in-law, are you free to meet up for a talk? Just drinks and a talk."

She knew that he had something to tell her but he probably couldn't say it over the phone, so she agreed. "Send me an address not too far away from my home."

When the call ended, Lanni stood up from the couch. "I'm meeting Lin Jian."

"I'm coming with you." Li Yuming looked at her worriedly, but Lanni shook her head. "You can't. It's a private matter or he would have said it over the phone."

"But it is no longer safe for you to go anywhere on your own." Li Yuming looked troubled. "What if he comes here instead? You can talk in the study or in the gazebo."

Thinking it a good idea, Lanni called him over. If not, Li Yuming would be worried for every second that she would be away.

The man arrived within ten minutes and the butler showed him to the gazebo in the backyard, before Lanni made her way over.

"What do you want to talk about?" She asked as soon as she saw him. For the sake of his own safety, she had told him to make sure no one stalked him.

The guy looked like he had just woken up, his hair was messy even though his clothes were neat. The getup baffled her but she ignored it. When he saw that he was being rushed even though he had hurried over, he looked pitiful. "You didn't even ask how I am."

"How are you?" She asked, massaging her temples at the antics of this insane man.

"I'm not fine. I'm hungry." He complained.

Lanni called a maid over and had her bring some food over. The man joyously dug in and Lanni was relieved. "Is it okay now?"

"No." He shook his head. "Ruby is ignoring me again."

Lanni wanted to beat the crap out of him. "She just reunited with her family. Give her some time before you start bugging her, will you? Is this the only reason why you wanted to speak to me?"

Lin Jian knew that it was impossible to make her help him get closer to Ruby so he gave up on the thought. "I wanted to talk about something else too."

"Spill."

"Now that you are no longer an employee of Tian Yu Media, can you come over to Lin Media Group?" He suggested in all seriousness.

Lanni chuckled. She should have expected it. She had thought that the guy would have long given up on the idea when she mentioned wanting to start her own media agency. Who would have thought that he was still clinging onto the idea?

"I know that you need the experience and CEO Qian is no longer willing to teach you since she fired you after all." He frowned at his own words, realizing that it was the other way round. It was Lanni who no longer wanted a mentor who had chosen to fire her since they would be making things difficult for each other the whole time. Either way, "You will get all the experience you need at Lin Media Group. Why don't you give it a try?" He tried to convince her.

She shook her head and knew that if she told him no, he would merely find more opportunities to bug her. "Okay. I will think about it. But no promises, okay?"

Lin Jian was overjoyed. At this point, it would be easier to convince her since she had already considered it. "I will send you the employment contract, then. You can sign it when you are ready."

"There you are." A voice said from behind Lanni and she turned with a smile when she recognized it.

"Xiehan, you are here." She ran over to him.

The man gave his friend a long, curious look as though questioning his presence at Lanni's home.

"I'm merely scouting an employee. I will be on my way soon." Lin Jian was intimidated by his friend's scary gaze. How would they interact with each other when they became in-laws?

He scurried away at the thought of it, leaving the couple to catch up.

"Honey, how are you feeling? How is everything?" Lanni asked when they were alone. A lot had been happening to the Ji family within such a short time that it was enough to make one go crazy.

The man pulled her into his arms. "Much better. I have things in control now."

"I'm sorry my dad did all those things." She sighed, and he tousled her hair.

"You don't have to be sorry. It's not your fault." Although Xia Hanchen was her father, he was responsible for his own actions and that had nothing to do with Lanni. He did not blame her or her family for it.

"Are you alright?" She asked when she heard him sigh repeatedly, his emotions seemed to be out of place.

"Mmh. Just tired." As he spoke, he made his way to the fluffed bench in the gazebo with her in his arms. He held her as he sat down to rest.

"Do you want to rest in my room instead?" She offered.

"I'm afraid I will not be able to sleep there." He chuckled. When she understood what he meant, she blushed slightly and moved a few inches away. "Just rest here."

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Moonlight Studios, the following day.

Luna held a meeting with the software production department in the conference room. She swept a glance through the entire table and was baffled to see that everyone had heavy eye bags under their eyes from lack of sleep. Even those who had makeup on were unable to completely mask their fatigue.

"Why don't you all go home early today? We can resume the project in the morning." She decided. It would be useless if they stayed since they were too tired to be productive,

After the meeting, Luna stood up to make her way out of the conference room but within just a few steps, she stopped with a frown on her face.

"Luna, are you okay?" Cheng Yu noticed her frown and asked in concern.

"Yes." She shook her head to stop overthinking. She thought she had felt someone's malicious eyes on her but the room was only occupied by her employees. She must be overthinking things.

"Xiao Yu, could you arrange for a meeting with the marketing department?" She instructed the girl beside her, and Cheng Yu stepped aside first so she would make a call to notify them.

She had just made a step to continue walking towards her office when a bang resounded at the same time as someone suddenly tugged her.

"Luna!" Cheng Yu's scream brought her out of her shock, letting her know what had just happened.

Someone had shot her... but when she looked down at herself, she was not bleeding. Instead, someone else was in front of her and was now clutching her stomach as she slowly lowered to her knees.. It was Xiaoshi.