

Chapter 451 -

"It's a gunshot!" Someone cried, and Cheng Yu rushed to check on Xiaoshi.

"Call an ambulance!" She shouted at someone, and the onlookers sprung out of their shock to follow her instructions.

Cheng Yu wasn't sure what to do with Xiaoshi who had been shot in the stomach, her mind filled with chaos. "Xiaoshi..."

"I'm okay." The girl smiled weakly, her eyes drooping like they could shut at any instant. She was losing too much blood.

"Please hold on. The ambulance will be here soon." She held her hand tightly, desperate to pass on the warmth from her hand to Xiaoshi's.

"Why did you jump in front of me?" Luna finally spoke after being silent the whole time. Her tone was full of blame. "Why?"

Xiaoshi turned her eyes to look at her boss without tilting her head and didn't know what to say. Luckily, the corridor soon filled with the patter of doctors' footsteps and it cut off the awkwardness.

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At the hospital.

Lanni rushed all the way to the ninth floor and found Luna sitting on a bench outside a bench in the company of Cheng Yu.

"Luna! Are you alright?" She was relieved to see her not lying in the ward but sitting on a bench.

"News does travel fast." Luna smiled, making Lanni frown in displeasure.

"You are still in the mood to joke around? Tell me, what happened?"

"Nothing. I'm alright." Luna didn't want her sister to worry about her, but her words made Lanni want to explode in anger before looking quizzically at Cheng Yu.

"It was premeditated..." Cheng Yu explained the entire situation, still in shock. "I don't know where Xiaoshi was but she shielded Luna at the crucial moment." she sighed.

Although she was relieved that Luna was alright, Xiaoshi was hurt, leaving her with mixed feelings. She was not fond of the girl but she didn't dislike her to the point of wanting her dead.

Lanni let out a breath when she heard the entire story. There wasn't any need to speculate to know who was behind it.

"We have to lock in the news." She said, then asked, "Does her family know?"

"I called Xiehan." Xingyu responded. He didn't know how to face the Yun family yet since Xiaoshi had gotten hurt while saving Luna. He could only hope that her life was out of danger.

Cheng Yu checked on Luna once in a while and held her hand that was turning cold from anxiety. "Luna, it's not your fault."

"I know." She whispered, but her mind was not filled with guilt as Cheng Yu thought. To be exact, she was indeed guilty but not for the reason that Cheng Yu imagined. It was because all along she had thought Xiaoshi secretly hated her and held malicious intentions—considering the fact that they loved the same man. She had never thought about it before but she would have assumed that Xiaoshi would be happy if something happened to her; if she died and left Xingyu's life. Who would have thought that at such a time, the person to jump in and risk their life to save her was that very girl she thought of as a rival?

She had misunderstood her all along...

Lanni understood what her sister was thinking after studying her for a while. She placed a hand on her shoulder. "It's not your fault that you didn't trust her. She did seem too good to be true."

To be honest, Lanni had been somewhat suspicious of her too. It was only after studying her for a while that she started to believe that there was someone as kind as Xiaoshi, whose kindness was not a mask to disguise ill motives. She couldn't blame Luna for not believing her.

Even so, Luna still blamed herself. "I would never forgive myself if anything happened to her."

"Nothing will happen to her. Come here." Xingyu pulled her to rest on his shoulder, understanding that Luna would feel this way no matter who was lying in the ward in her place.

The operation had been going on for over an hour now but there was no sign of the red light above the door dimming. Every second of it brought torturing anxiousness and by the time it was over, the group waiting on the benches was about to collapse from nervousness.

"She is out of danger. She will wake up in a few hours." Announced the doctor, making everyone sigh in relief.

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When Xiaoshi finally regained consciousness, the first person she saw beside her was Xiehan.

"Cousin." She strained out two syllables and saw the man visibly brighten up looking happier.

"You're awake." Xiehan held her hand.

"How is Luna?" The other asked, making Xiehan frown at her.

"No matter whether you are working or playing, you always have a way of making me worry to death, mmh? At this rate, I will age faster because of you."

She managed a slight, weak laugh. "Even if you age, you will still be handsome enough for cousin-in-law to remain smitten."

"You smooth-talker." Xiehan was speechless at her way of trying to sweet-talk her way to avoid his lecture. Even so, he still had something to say. "How could you throw yourself in the path of a bullet?"

"I don't know. Instinct." She made it sound like she would have done it for anyone when in truth, it was because the first thing she thought about when she saw that Luna was on the verge of getting shot was the baby. It didn't matter that the person in front of the gun barrel was a woman she was not in good terms with.

Xiehan frowned down at her, not knowing whether to be happy or sad about what she did. "Don't try to save anyone if you cannot get both of you out of danger. Your life is important too, okay?" He lectured.

"Understood." She nodded obediently, then looked up at him with puppy dog eyes as though she had something to ask him for.

"What is it?" He knew she wasn't acting cute for nothing.

She thought about what she wanted and blushed, then shook her head in embarrassment. Forget it.

Xiehan took in her expression and frowned slightly. What was she thinking about? Massaging his eyebrows, he decided that she would talk when she was ready to. "Ruby is taking care of the discharge procedure."

"I am being discharged?" Her eyes lit up in joy, as though she couldn't wait to leave this place.

"Yes. I know you hate hospitals." He confirmed, much to her relief. He waited for her to finish rambling and brown nosing him for being the best cousin in the whole world before he proceeded to explain. "You will stay at my mansion and my friend will take care of you. Is this alright with you?"

"Your... Friend?" She asked, her eyes growing big.

"Han Xichen. You have met him before." Xiehan explained, and it made the young woman's cheeks stain scarlet. Not only had they met before, they were friends now and they had even kissed once. Trying not to make herself so obvious, she nodded and remained silent.

Xiehan found it strange nonetheless. Not only did his cousin dislike hospitals, she would grumble about having to take any medicine. Having a doctor take care of her was no different—he had expected a hundred excuses and pleas and he had even prepared to counter them. Why did it seem like she was happy about being under medical observation?

Ruby entered the room with a small folder and gave it to Xiehan before smiling at the woman on the bed. "Shishi, how are you feeling?"

She was about to joyously say that she was much better but she frowned before the words left her mouth. If she said that she felt better, her cousin might conclude that she could recuperate without the need of a doctor. That would wreck her chance of being taken care of by the handsome Han Xichen. Hence after thinking about it, she weakly smiled. "A little better."

Xiehan shot a look at her. Was it just him, or was his little cousin acting strange?

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By the time Han Xichen made his way to Xiehan's villa after being informed of what had happened, Xiaoshi's heart was beating fast in anticipation, and she was all impatient from having waited for too long.

In truth, she had not waited for that long—the man had hurried over as soon as Xiehan mentioned that it was about Xiaoshi. She only thought it was long because it had been a while since she last saw him.

Her cheeks flushed when she heard the voices of two men—Xiehan and Han Xichen—followed by their footsteps pattering towards her room. The door opened and the two walked in.

"Check on her. She's awake now." instructed Xiehan, and Han Xichen walked towards her.

"What happened? You were in one piece when I last saw you.." The man made fun of her as he prepared his equipment.

Chapter 452 - What Is Rightfully Shishi's

Han Xichen ran tests on Xiaoshi and when he was done, he reported to Xiehan. "She is doing well. As long as she takes good care of herself, it will not be long before the wound heals completely."

The man went ahead to prescribe medicines to prevent inflammation, decrease pain and kept rambling on about reasons why she shouldn't skip taking any pill. She would usually use all sorts of excuses to not take medicine but since it was him telling her about it, she was actually looking forward to it. When he heard her say that he would check on her often and ensure she was taking care of herself, she was even happier.

He was standing close to her and it gave her the urge to stretch out a hand to touch him. Before she could move an inch, he had already left the room to discuss with Xiehan. She frowned and secretly blamed her cousin.

The men did not come back even after a few minutes and she wondered whether he would be back any time soon. Would Xiehan see him off? If he did without letting her see him a last time, she would bite her cousin to death.

She was still thinking about this when the door opened. Her lips formed a smile which quickly disappeared when she realized that the incomer was not Han Xichen but her father, and behind him were her mother and Lanni.

"Shishi, how are you?" Her father rushed to her side and took her hand.

"My baby, are you feeling better?" Ji Meiling was still recovering from the shock of hearing the news that her daughter had been shot. "What happened? Why would anyone shoot you? Was it an enemy of the Ji family?"

"Mum, dad, I'm fine." She looked up with a smile and even tried to sit up to prove that she was not as weak as she appeared.

"Don't move!" Ji Meiling berated and held her small hand.

"Lanni, you are here to visit me too." Xiaoshi was overjoyed when she noticed the young woman and felt even better.

Lanni walked over and placed the small fruit basket on the table before looking at Xiaoshi. "I don't know how to thank you."

Without a doubt, she knew what Lanni was talking about. "You don't need to thank me. How is Luna? Was she too shocked?"

As they talked, Uncle Yun frowned as he finally understood what was going on. He was wondering who would have a grudge against his daughter. It turned out, no one was targeting Xiaoshi. She was only in this state because she took the bullet to save someone else. His face was full of displeasure. "What do people's lives have to do with you? Why would you risk your life for people who don't even appreciate it? Are they worth it?"

"Dad!" Xiaoshi did not appreciate her father saying such mean things about anyone.

The man was even angrier. "The woman who destroyed your life, is that the woman you saved? Yet she doesn't even care to visit you and show her so-called gratitude. It's her equally brainless sister who comes to pretentiously give a basket of fruits." He turned to glare at Lanni. "Do you think my daughter's life is worth a few pieces of fruit?"

"My sister did not destroy anyone's life." Lanni interjected. She could not blame the man for being upset about what happened to his daughter but that did not mean she had to let him talk trash about Luna. It wasn't Luna's fault either. "And we are not ungrateful. No matter what we offer, it would never compare to two lives. Would you prefer us to insult Xiaoshi by offering monetary benefits to thank her?"

"Have your sister break up with Xingyu and we will call it even." The man spoke like he had finally found the long desired opportunity.

"What did you say?" Not only was Lanni shocked, Xiaoshi and Ji Meiling were flabbergasted too. Who would ask for such a thing?

The middle-aged man smiled down at Lanni. "You say that nothing can repay Shishi but there is something you can do. Instead of owing us a debt of gratitude, why not settle it right away? If you claim that she is grateful, then tell her to let go of my daughter's man."

"Your daughter's man?" Lanni scoffed like she had heard the most baffling kind of nonsense.

"Not only did she take away Shishi's man, she almost took away her life as well. I'm only asking you to give back what is rightfully Shishi's."

Lanni stared at him and almost didn't know what to say. She had seen parents defending their children and getting justice for them but what kind of absurdity was this? "You are the most shallow man I have ever met."

"Call it shallow or whatever, but this is the only gratitude I will accept." The man shamelessly insisted. "Do it fast. It's your sister who pushed my daughter almost to her death after all."

Ji Meiling no longer knew what to say and rubbed her temples, wishing for the man to shut his mouth. She would have a good word with him later. If she did it right now, it would only worsen the argument that was already ongoing.

Lanni frowned when she heard the man blatantly accuse her sister. "Mr. Yun, let me ask you this, did Luna drag Xiaoshi in front of her to shield herself?"

"You bitch!" The man roared and raised a hand to slap the Ungrateful witch but before it landed, his wrist was caught by a delicate hand.

"I do not allow anyone to do that. Not even my father." Lanni glared at him fiercely.

Luckily, Xiehan returned to stop the commotion before it could escalate further.

"Uncle, are you addicted to bullying my girlfriend?" Xiehan asked casually, but the threat in his tone did not go unnoticed.

"Why are you helping outsiders even after seeing how unfairly your cousin is being treated?" The man huffed.

"Lanni is right, dad." Xiaoshi spoke up when a chance presented itself. It was she who had chosen to protect Luna. Even if she died, it would not be Luna's fault.

"Let's have a talk in the living room." Xiehan called his uncle out and the two of them left the room one after another.

Exchanging a glance with Lanni, Ji Meiling wanted to have a word with her as well. "Lanni, I don't blame you and your sister."

She nodded. It was clear that the woman did not have anything against anyone, and merely couldn't speak up against her husband. The man was unreasonable, it was impossible to discuss with him without arguing and that must be the last thing that Ji Meiling wanted to do, especially when her daughter was bedridden.

Ji Meiling was relieved that Lanni did not blame her. "How is your sister? Is she still shocked?" She asked out of concern.

"She's doing better." Luna had wanted to follow her to pay a visit to Xiaoshi but since she was currently being targeted, Lanni had firmly insisted that she should stay at home. Besides, who knew how Xiaoshi's father would react? Lanni had been right about the latter. The old man might have pounced on Luna if he saw her. Seeing as he did not welcome her either, she exchanged a few words with Xiaoshi and took her leave.

Ji Meiling went to get something for Xiaoshi to eat so in an instant, she was on her own with no one to chat with. She didn't have her phone with her either so she was bored. Hence when Han Xichen entered the room to retrieve his phone that he had forgotten, she grabbed his hand before he could leave. "Could you stay longer? I'll be bored to death if you go."

A smile slowly formed on his lips. He had been leaving as fast as he could just in case she didn't want him to stay around. In actual fact, he had deliberately left his phone behind so he would go back to pick it and glance at her for a few more seconds so obviously, he was overjoyed when she asked him to stay. "Of course."

"Help me up." She joyously demanded and he did as she said. Placing two fluffy pillows behind her back for comfort, he asked if she was alright before sitting down beside her.

"Dr. Han, how soon will it take for me to be completely fine?" She asked softly while wondering whether it was alright to take his hand and hold it.

"About a week." He responded, earning a disappointed "Oh" from her.

"You're not happy?" He looked down at her pale little hand that was clutching the duvet.

She shook her head. "I only get to spend time with you for a week."

A chuckle escaped his lips. This was not the first time a patient wished to be unwell for longer so they would continue to stay in his company but for the first time, he was not repulsed. He took her hand and rubbed his thumb against the back of it gently. "Shishi, you know that you can ask me over any time you want."

This is the scene that Xiehan witnessed when he walked in after seeing Lanni off.

Chapter 453 - I Like Shishi

The man's gaze shifted between the two of them and obviously, he had overheard their conversation. He looked shocked by the discovery that there was something starting to bloom between the two of them. Han Xichen could pretty much guess what was going to happen next. Would Xiehan beat him up for taking advantage of the cousin he protected so much? Under Xiehan's gaze, Han Xichen's lips moved. "I'm sorry Xiehan, I like Shishi."

Not just Xiehan, Xiaoshi was shocked too. Did he just admit that he liked her? How could this be? How could Dr. Han like her?

"Let's talk about it some other day." Said Xiehan, his eyes gazing down at the equally shocked Xiaoshi. He then looked back at his friend. "I'll see you later for some drinks."

The man took it as a cue to leave. Since Xiehan already knew about his feelings, he did not hold back and took Xiaoshi's little hand to kiss it before he left.

The girl's cheeks burned in embarrassment when she realized what her cousin had just seen. "Cousin, I..."

"Do you feel the same way for him?" Xiehan interrupted by asking. The girl was too confused to know whether or not she liked him, let alone answer Xiehan's question. Taking note of his, Xiehan added, "He is single, and he is my friend. I would entrust my sister to him. I know his character better than anyone and he is different from that playboy with the surname Lin."

He paused to look at her and added, "No pop-up clingy exes and definitely no hateful family members to make your life stressful. If you like him, you can take your relationship further."

Hearing his reassurance, Xiaoshi was more confident about the credibility of Han Xichen's words from a moment ago. It was surprising to hear such words from him out of the blue. Even so, she knew that the person who cared about her the most was Xiehan. He would not let her be with a man who was not good enough for her.

However, she was at a loss. "But cousin, I already have someone else in my heart."

Xiehan did not comment on her words but he smiled slightly. Silly girl. She still thought that she loved Xingyu, not realizing how long it had been before she last thought about him. She didn't know that somewhere along the way, the cunning psychologist had snuck into her heart and was swiftly replacing the man she thought she would love forever.

Letting her be the one to discover her own feelings, he sunk into thought and wondered how his sister was fairing on. Last he heard, Lin Jian, that playboy was pursuing her-and he hoped it would not lead to heartbreak and a fierce exchange of fists.

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Meanwhile, a certain playboy was on the phone with Lanni.

"Have you thought about my offer?" He asked as he made himself comfortable on the plush couch. He was talking about his employment offer to Lanni, the one she had promised to think about.

"Yes I did and yes, I will sign the contract." Came the woman's soft voice. "However, I would like to discuss some of the terms with you."

He sat up excitedly. "That's okay! Let's meet up when you are free and talk about it."

When he hung up, he joyously gave Ruby a call. "Ruby, I'm so happy, come here, let's celebrate."

"What's your happiness got to do with me?" The girl was snarky as usual. Before he could try to convince her, she added, "I went shopping with my mum and I don't have time to entertain you." She hung up in frustration. Why was the man so adamant to spend time with her even after she had ignored him?

He failed to understand that no matter how much she liked him, her heart was unable to erase all the women from his past and it made her uncomfortable. She couldn't help wondering what would happen if they ever got into a disagreement or had to spend a lot of time away from each other. Would he go to one of those women to seek soothing?

"Is that Lin Jian?" To her chagrin, Wen Lin recognized the voice on the other end and asked about it. When Ruby nodded, she was surprised. "I thought you were dating."

"Nope. We weren't." She said softly, remembering that it had only been part of their plan to make her move into the Ji Mansion.

Wen Lin didn't totally understand why anyone could pretend to be a couple with someone else but she didn't question her daughter's choices. She merely commented. "He isn't that much of a bad guy but his mother is my friend."

"Please don't tell me you approve of him?" Ruby asked in surprise as she transferred one of the shopping bags in her left hand to the right so it would be easier to carry them. There wasn't anyone in the entire nation who didn't know about Lin Jian's debauchery.

Wen Lin who understood her train of thought placed her hand on her shoulder in reassurance. "Lihua is my friend. Don't worry, we will beat him up if he dares to cheat on you. But from my observation of him, he truly loves you."

"Thanks mum." She smiled. She was finding it easier getting used to her new family since she spent a lot of time with her parents lately.

"Don't worry. Ruby, pay a visit to Neil later, okay? He brought you up after all." Wen Lin added. While it was important for her to create a relationship with her daughter, she didn't want to jeopardize the latter's relationship with her foster father.

"I will." Ruby responded. She would have done so earlier but was scared that her biological parents would be uncomfortable. Now that Wen Lin was the one to bring it up, she didn't see why not.

"Go on, have fun with Lin Jian." Wen Lin urged, and Ruby no longer had any excuse to say no. She could only dress up and go on a date with the guy.

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"Thanks for coming, Ruby." Lin Jian happily welcomed her into his house which he had swiftly had the servants decorate when he heard that she would come after all. He had also freshened up and changed into casual black clothes then combed his hair back neatly.

"I only came because my mum told me to." She ignored how handsome she looked and sat down when he pulled a chair for her at the dining table.

"I'm glad you came either way. How is the situation with your family?" He asked to strike a conversation.

She smiled, feeling more at ease. "I feel safe now. Even if I still have to keep looking over my shoulder, I trust my brother." No matter what happened, she felt like she could depend on Xiehan for anything.

Lin Jian noticed this and realized that he wasted so many chances. He had met Ruby long before she reunited with Xiehan. If he had been more persistent back then, he would be the one whom she trusted so much now.

'Soon, you will trust me to keep you safe too.' He made a mental note.

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Meanwhile, Lanni was about to settle down to work when she heard the doorbell rang. She was surprised to see Xiehan when she opened the door. "Aren't you supposed to hold a video conference? What are you doing here?"

"Checking up on my love." He said in all seriousness before pulling her into his arms and kissing her.

"We met a few hours ago." She chuckled, though she couldn't deny that she had missed him too. At the back of her mind, something kept bugging her.

"Is everything okay? Everything normal?" He asked as he sat on the couch.

She shook her head after thinking about it. "I felt like someone trailed me earlier. Maybe it was just me overthinking but I came back home immediately just in case I was really being followed."

It was not sane for her to brush things off after what almost happened to Luna.

"Don't worry, I'll ensure your safety." He promised, considering sending his most capable security details to protect her and Li Yuming. He knew that Li Yuming had many bodyguards already but there was no such thing as too much caution.

She flashed a smile as her hand moved to touch the side of his face, then she noticed his dark circles. "You're not okay." It was not a question but something she had affirmed after observing him closely. Lately, he acted strange and whenever he hugged her, she would hear his heart beating fast as though he was afraid of losing something.

He sighed. He had been avoiding the topic every time he saw her. However, it was only a matter of saying it now or later. He would have to face it either way.. "My love, I need to tell you something."

Chapter 454 - I Have To Leave

"What is it?" Lanni felt knots in her stomach. Considering how strangely Xiehan had been acting lately, it was impossible to not feel nervous about whatever was going on through his mind.

She held her breath for seconds until she heard him say, "I have to leave."

"Leave?" No matter how hard she tried to guess, she would never have come to the conclusion that she would hear such words so she was confused. "What do you mean 'leave'? Why do you want to leave and where do you want to go?"

He held her hand to soothe her emotions and calm her down before he answered her questions. "To an island. I mentioned before that I will have to take over the company, right?"

She nodded, but she still wondered why he had to take it over when he clearly didn't want to. When she thought about it, she concluded that he must be doing it to help decrease his father's work load.

"Every new CEO of Feng Ji International has to go and undergo intense training before taking over the company." He briefly explained. "Since I will take over the company in the near future, it is ideal for me to go as soon as possible."

"How soon?" She asked. From his tone, it sounded like it was rather soon...

"Within three months." He answered, much to her relief. Three months was better than three weeks or even just three days. She would have some time to spend with him before his departure.

"For how long will you be gone?" She asked after a few seconds and when she met his complicated gaze, she knew that it was where the bummer lay. It was probably a long time and she did not dare to try and guess it.

"Two years." He stated with a sigh.

"Two whole years?" Her voice lowered as her eyes widened in shock. "Why so long?"

"It should have been three. I negotiated with my father for a long time before he allowed a year less." He explained, making her understand why the matter had been bugging him for such a long time. He had to go away for such a long time and he didn't even get to decide whether or not he wanted to go, or when he wanted to do it. If only he was given an option, like going for three months every year until he had achieved all the qualifications.

Lanni sighed in defeat. If it was something that all the CEOs before him had done, he couldn't possibly wiggle his way out of it. Without needing to ask, he would not be allowed to bring any friends or family with him. She placed a hand at the side of his face as she asked, "Is it a very far away place?"

"Clauhan Island." He stated a name that made her baffled.

"Clauhan Island exists? I heard of it when I was a kid but it was later said to not exist." She blinked as she recollected the memories.

"That's because it's a privately owned island with almost no ties to the rest of the world. You cannot call or send messages to the inhabitants of the island—communication is one way to ensure the secrecy remains intact. The rumors surrounding it in the past were too deplorable. Despite this, it is a significant place that might have sent a few governments tumbling if it was destroyed." He explained.

"So they decided to term it as nonexistent?" She was baffled. She had searched the place on an online world map before and it was indeed nonexistent. When he nodded, she finally understood why communication was one way.

"I will not be allowed to return before the training period is over and I can only make one phone call every day and send out a single letter every week." He added, making her even more disappointed.

"So I can only hear from you once in a while." Her eyelids drooped. He had very many people to contact but he could only contact one of them every day. It was impossible for everyone who cared about him to gather into one spot to await his phone call every day so she could only hear from him a few times every month.

Who the hell came up with such a rule? That person must be a sadist.

He cupped her face and looked into her eyes. "Hey, don't be so blue, okay? We still have three months together. We can still complete our battles before I leave."

"It's not about the battles." It would still not be alright even if he was supposed to leave two years later. She leaned onto his arm and let out a breath.

"Will you wait for me?" He asked the question that had been bugging him the most. It wasn't that he didn't know how much Lanni loved him, but after Lin Jian constantly joked about him getting dumped for leaving for such a long time, he was no longer at ease and needed reassurance.

"Yes." She was baffled that he would even ask such a question. when she said that one word, she felt his tensed body ease in relief and couldn't help chuckling. Countless thoughts ran through her mind. It was not unfounded for him to ask whether or not she would wait for him. She had heard countless real-life stories of couples who broke up because one of them had to be away for too long for their other half to wait.

Insecurity was common, and if they started thinking of the possibility of her falling for another man while he is away or him having eyes for another woman as she waited for him, it would indeed wreck the trust between them. She took a deep breath before boldly asking, "Would you like us to get married before you leave?"

"What?" Her question caught him off guard and he had to pull away to pay more attention to what she was saying.

She had already said it but under his gaze, she had to gather more courage to repeat her words. "I asked whether you want to get married before you leave. That way, you can be rest assured that we are already husband and wife and that we belong to each other."

He stared at her in disbelief and when he finally processed her words, he pulled her close to him and wrapped an arm around her waist, placing his chin on her shoulder. "Thank you, my love. That's the most reassuring thing I have ever heard."

But I know you are not ready yet so let's not rush it just because I will be away for a long time." He did not want to selfishly push her even though he so badly wanted to make her his wife in the next second if it was possible.

"I thought you would be upset." He confessed.

"I am sad, and I will miss you very much, but I cannot hold you back from what you have to do." She wrapped her arms around his neck.

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Cheng Yu slumped onto the bed in her apartment as soon as she got off work. Even though Luna had returned and was taking care of most of the matters at the company, something unexpected had happened so they had to speed up their plan.

After the attempted murder at Moonlight Studios, they spent quite a lot of effort to ensure the news remained within the company-while the other party vehemently tried to use it as a way to tarnish their reputation in the public eye. It was a good thing that they had Lanni and Lin Jian on their side, who diverted the news even though it was released.

When Cheng Yu learnt about what was really happening with the sisters and their family, she was baffled. Just when she thought she had seen it all.

Rolling onto her side on the bed, she gave Luo Chen a call. "Release the audio that Luna asked you to."

The young man was cooperative and didn't ask any questions before doing as he was told. Relieved, Cheng Yu waited for the public to listen to the voice recordings. She was about to drift to sleep when the doorbell rang. There was only one person who would seek her at such a time and that was Cedric, so she pulled herself out of bed.

Sure enough, the man was standing outside the door with a bouquet of flowers in hand. She let him in with a smile. "You didn't come to work today."

"I had to handle some matters at home." He explained as he sat on the couch. "Yu, how are you holding up?"

"Hanging in there." She yawned. The truth was that she was barely managing to go through with her tasks without messing everything up. If Luna was not there for her to look up to, she would have long had a mental breakdown.

Cedric's heart broke seeing her so exhausted.. "It's almost done. When this matter is settled, let's go on a vacation, okay?"

Chapter 455 - A Good Idea

"Good idea." Cheng Yu agreed that she needed nothing more than a vacation at the moment. She hoped that the matter would be settled soon. From the current progress of things, the decision to ban Moonlight Studios could soon be lifted by the moderators. After all, it had been proven that Luna did not steal Luo Chen's software. All that was left now was for Luna to prove that there wouldn't be any more scandals involving Moonlight Studios that questioned its credibility. The reason why Luo Chen sent a voice recording was to ensure the whole truth was brought to light, so no one would ever bring the matter up to doubt Luna again.

However, since the scandal had been so huge, they might have to create another application to divert the attention of the public.

"I'll help you with the new task. Come on, let's complete it." Cedric stated with no space for negotiation and since she needed the help, she silently took out her laptop and tablet to work with Cedric.

Unexpectedly, the work she thought would take her a few more days was completed in two hours. It turned out, she merely needed more motivation for her brain to stop lagging. As soon as they were done, she felt more refreshed.

"So, do we get to go on a vacation tomorrow?" The guy asked through a grin.

"What? That's such short notice. We may be needed..." She disagreed with him. Although what was left was for the software production department to complete, she and Cedric might be needed in case there were changes to be made.

"If there is any change, we can do it from wherever we will be. Let's carry our equipment with us just in case." He insisted as he leaned over, his face only a few inches from hers.

"Okay." She needed the break and he was right. She would tell Luna about it later.

Cedric grinned happily after finally managing to convince her, and his hand went around her waist. This was not the first time he hugged her but her heart picked up its pace, beating against her chest like it could break out. She knew that what he wanted was more than a hug, and her lips uncontrollably parted when he closed in on her.

He pulled her close to him as he gently kissed her lips, savoring the softness he had so badly missed. He held her waist with one hand while the other wove through her hair to the back of his head. He softly bit her lower lip and licked it with his tongue.

"Yu, I love you." He whispered when he heard her whimper.

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The Old Jiang Mansion.

Xingyu carried a plate of fruit salad and made his way to the balcony where Luna was sitting. She had her back facing him as she stared out at nothing in particular. One look was all it took for him to know that she was still traumatized—guilty that someone else was pulled into the mess that was meant to harm her and that the villain was still lurking.

He placed the white platter on the small table and took a seat beside her. "Don't be scared, my love. I'll be there for you."

"I'm not scared. Just disappointed." She would never be scared. She didn't believe that she would be defenseless if Xia Hanchen attacked her again.

The only thing greater than her disappointment was the possibility that Xia Hanchen would go around hurting the people close to her and Lanni.

"Come here." Xingyu pulled her into his arms. He could not lie and say that Xia Hanchen had given up or that the man would not try to do anything stupid. However, he would be sure to protect her no matter what arose.

It was only much later, when Luna had managed to calm down, that the duo made their way to the living room.

Xinghe was reading the news in the living room and she looked up when she heard the movements from the staircase. She looked up urgently. "Luna, are you feeling better?"

"Yes." Luna stated, sticking to a few words so her tone would not reveal any emotion as she did not want the people around her to keep worrying about her.

Xinghe knew that her soon to be daughter-in-law was still feeling upset and it was understandable. Even so, she wanted to help them uncover the criminal. She looked at Xingyu and then asked, "Do you think

this has anything to do with Xiaoshi? While the girl is not a bad person, I cannot say the same about her father. He does look like someone who would try to hurt his daughter's romantic rival."

Her words were true and when Xingyu first heard the news, he had been certain that Xiaoshi's father had done it. He had found it strange that the person who was close enough to save Luna just happened to be Xiaoshi. He had even suspected that the whole act was staged and Xiaoshi was supposed to push Luna out of the way to 'save' her from a bullet—which he suspected to be fake. If Luna fell too hard from Xiaoshi's push, she might lose the baby, her life or both and it would still look like an accident as no one would ever blame Xiaoshi.

It was only after investigating that he realized that the culprit was not Uncle Yun but Luna's own father, Xia Hanchen.

"He didn't." He answered his mother's question as he helped Luna over to a seat.

"How can you be so sure?" Xinghe was curious.

"I know who did." Xingyu swallowed the rest of his words, not wishing to remind her of the fact that the person she looked up to the most was the very one who now wanted her life.

"It's my dad." She answered her future mother-in-law, making the latter's jaw drop. She had billions of questions. Everything she knew had been turning upside down ever since Ji Feifei died and it turned out that she was not even the real daughter of the Ji family. Mystery after mystery had been forming before them and this time, it was a bomb. That there was someone who would want to hurt their own daughter by killing her.

Having experienced a lot in her own life, it wasn't long before she composed herself and beckoned Luna over. "Come here, child. I won't let anything bad happen to you."

She hugged the girl and patted her back gently, making Luna realize that something good had come out of this predicament. She was already used to Xinghe's kindness and thought of her as her mother. Now that the truth was out in the open, she may have lost her father but she had reunited with her mother. It was as though she had two mothers now. There wasn't much to cry about, was there?

"Do you want to play chess together?" Xinghe asked, and before Luna could answer her, her phone rang.

It was a call from Han Xichen and it spooked the guts out of the three of them.

"You can ignore it." Suggested Xingyu, but Luna was no longer going to hide away. It was time to face the villain.

"Pumpkin," The man's voice was on loudspeaker so the three all heard his voice and it rendered them speechless how perfectly one could put on an act.

"Don't call me that. You pretentious man." Luna snarled.

"Luna, what happened?" The man sounded startled as though he did not expect to be yelled at by the harmless daughter who loved him to the heavens.

"I know you were behind the shooting." Luna snickered to let the words sink in before asking, "Don't tell me you were trying to cover up a wrong by commuting another wrong? Is it because I know the truth about you that you want to get rid of me?"

"Luna! How could you say such things?" The man was yet to drop his act, he sounded like he was hurt by her words.

"Why don't you come home tomorrow? We can discuss everything with clear minds." as if anticipating to hear a 'no' from Luna, he stripped her of the chance by trying to convince her. "You cannot continue to live under distress, pumpkin. You don't just need to take care of your health but of my grandson too. So many things have happened around you and your sister lately."

"Talk over a cup of tea? Sure." the corners of Luna's lips twitched as she snickered the words out. When the call ended, the remaining gentleness in her gray eyes faded to reveal a murderous intent.

"Xia Hanchen, I will bring you down. You and the entire Xia family. Just you wait."

Her chilly voice reverberated in the room, making goosebumps rise on Xinghe's skin as she had never seen Luna like this. However, she could not blame her even for a second. She was merely acting up on what had been forced out of her.

That night, Luna dreamt that she had poisoned Xia Hanchen and it gave her an idea.

Chapter 456 - Dare To Trust

As soon as she woke up, Luna made a call to her sister.

"I know what to do with that traitor." She said through gritted teeth, partially glad that she had not been impulsive to kill him as soon as she found out the truth.

"What do you want us to do?" Lanni asked, and she sounded sleepy on the other end. She must have just woken up because she even yawned.

"I will find the slowest most torturous poison and have him take it. Perhaps he can still trust us if we pretend to be convinced by his explanations. If not, we could use someone close to him."

Luna suddenly regretted wrecking her relationship with him and thought that she should have pretended to know nothing. If the fake father-daughter love still existed, it would be much easier to poison him when the time came and there would be no danger because Xia Hanchen would never guess that she and Lanni knew the truth. She sighed. "Bummer. Anyway, the point is that he will be in so much pain that he will wish to die but he will not. I heard that there is one that can make the victim's insides deteriorate and corrode over a span of one week, before they eventually die of organ failure."

"Don't even think about that. " Lanni rebuked sternly, just when Luna thought that her idea was perfect.

"Why not?" She asked in confusion. Even she knew that her sister so badly wanted for the man to die in pain. It didn't make sense for her to reject the idea that would make the man undergo so much torture.

"That's too little torture considering what he did to us. We should make him suffer much more than that—I'm suddenly glad that Xiehan and Xingyu prevented us from killing Li Xiyan in the past. We can kill them together and make it so painful that they would forever remember it as ghosts." Lanni said sharply, making Luna smile. It turned out they were on the same page.

"I talked to Flynn earlier and he said that he knows how to end him." Lanni added. "He will drop by my apartment later today."

Right, there was Flynn. Luna recalled and was even happier. They had their brother on their side, and he had worked with Xia Hanchen for long enough to know things that she and Lanni may not know. "He better not show him any mercy."

"I don't think he is planning to." Said Lanni, and she was right. Flynn was indeed not intending to show any mercy.

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The man was still seething in rage when he arrived at Lanni's apartment. He tore off the skin mask that he used as disguise and let off a low, evil chuckle. "I had already decided that I would not let him off for using and killing my mother. Now, he has the audacity to try and murder my sister and future nephew or niece? He really is digging his grave too deep."

He sat on the couch and smiled at nothing in particular. "I will not let him get into his grave that easily. I will hang him upside down and let him dangle inside it, swinging him and giving him the hope that there is a chance for survival. I will play with him like a cat plays with a mouse until I have enough fun. Once I'm amused enough, I will tear his head away from his body and let him rot in hell."

Lanni raised her hands to cover Luna's ears. How heartless...

But then again, the son of a murderer wouldn't turn out to be any different. The fact that his father made his mother suffer didn't make the situation any better.

"What do you plan to do?" Luna asked, having heard Flynn's words even though her sister had covered her ears.

"Kidnap Xia Hanchen." He said it like it was the most obvious thing and they were asking a silly question.

"How is that possible?" If it were that easy to kidnap Xia Hanchen, wouldn't they have done it already? While the man had been kidnapped before, it was merely an act to pull Lanni to his side so he would manipulate her.

"I have not been his son for all these years for nothing." Flynn snickered. "Soon, I will turn the acts into a reality and make him wish he never sired me."

"What's your plan?" Luna questioned, ignoring the hatred emanating from Flynn's entire body.

"Obviously, to lure him out of his house. This is where I will need your acting skills." His words were directed at Lanni.

"Me?" Lanni blinked and touched her chest as she questioned.

His gaze trailed between them before he said, "Both of you. And quite possibly your boyfriends too. Of course, you will be the one to pull off the acts, Lanni. The rest of us will handle things behind the scenes and ensure your safety.

"What do you need me to do?" Lanni asked, knowing that there wasn't much time and she would waste a lot of it if she started doubting her capabilities.

"Lure him into the place. Tell him that you are meeting up with the boss of an agency that wants to recruit you." Flynn explained briefly, giving her a piece of paper where he had written all the details. He had come prepared.

"You got it." Said Lanni, and Flynn told Luna what to do before leaving as mysteriously as he always did.

"Lanni, you are going to be so close to that demon." Luna was worried.

"You are usually the most fearless person, Luna. Why are you worried?" Lanni stood up to close the door before sitting back on the couch to practise what to say and how to say it.

"Do you trust Flynn?" Luna asked after considering her words for a while.

Lanni's eyes snapped to look at her sister. This was an unexpected question but she was not entirely shocked that it had been asked. "If you are asking whether I deem him as someone I can be close to and entrust my life to him then no, I don't. However, I believe that he indeed has the same goal as we do this time."

Luna took her sister's hand and held it, rubbing the other hand against her belly as she felt some slight movement. "I know this sounds pessimistic but Lanni, we had similar goals as that man. We all wanted to reunite our family—or so he made us think. And he made us believe he loved us."

Lanni could understand why her sister was troubled; she had been troubled regarding the same matter for some time too. Her lips slowly curled. "Luna, do you remember that in one of Flynn's videos, he asked...that man to spare someone?" She was unable to refer to Xia Hanchen as her father anymore and Luna understood her so she nodded.

"I rewatched the videos countless times until I understood what was going on, and I found out whose life he was pleading for." She continued under her sister's curious gaze. "He was begging for my life."

"You?" Luna was as surprised as Lanni had been when she discovered it.

Lanni nodded. "It was when I curiously walked through a door I was not supposed to go near. I didn't get to see what was in the other room but it was against the rules of Galaxis. He was going to kill me."

Luna took a deep breath and didn't know what to say. Sometimes she wished Lanni didn't remember anything from her training period in Galaxis Academy. Some of it was just too painful to remember.

Luckily Lanni had learnt to be strong and didn't break down no matter what shocking secret came her way.

"I'll give him a call right now." Lanni stated, referring to Xia Hanchen. It would be best to contact him as soon as possible so they knew what to do if their plan did not seem possible.

The man sounded shocked when Lanni called him. They had fallen out pretty horribly after all.

He must have already planned to use the trick of reverse psychology on her, because he was quick to apologize. "Cupcake, I'm so sorry. I was under so much stress and your sister was suspicious of me. I'm sorry I took it out on you and said such mean things."

"Is that really how you think of me?" Lanni asked, feeling repulsed.

"Of course not. You are my precious daughter." If Lanni did not know the truth, she would not catch the mockery in the man's tone and might have believed him. He went ahead almost pleading. "Luna is already so mad at me. If you are angry too, I really won't know what to do."

"Are you behind the shooting?" Lanni asked, making it sound like it was the reason why she had called.

The man paused for a second and let out a slight snicker that almost went unnoticed.. "Why would I do that to my baby? She misunderstood me."

Oh, did she? Lanni mocked him in her heart.

"I told her what I thought of it and she yelled at me. We fell out so badly that I had to call and ask whether what the media revealed is true." She explained the nonsense she had come up with a while ago, which was in line with Flynn's plan.

"It's a lie. You know that I would never hurt my own flesh and blood. Actually, Lanni, there is something I didn't tell you."

"What is it?" Lanni asked.

"That day, I had a bug on me. Someone is trying to investigate me for heaven knows what reason."

Lanni was amused by his ability to push logic. Was he trying to make it seem like he had been forced to say such mean words to save her and Luna? He had even cleverly left it to her imagination so she would be the one to fill in the meaning behind his words. If she exposed him later, he would simply deny having said anything about it.

"I understand." She was too tired to argue with him so she dismissed him.

'Why does this seem too good to be true? It's happening all too easily.' Xia Hanchen questioned mentally on the other end.

Before he could think about it, he heard what he perceived to be the main reason why Lanni had given him a call.

"I got a job offer but it's from a private agency. The owner wants to meet up with me in private." Her voice was a mixture of excitement and nervousness.

"Why would you want to meet up with a stranger in private? The fact that he claims it to be a private agency is suspicious." He warned out of instinct, but he was not trying to look out for her safety. He was only acting as a caring father to once again gain her trust.

He was thrilled when she said, "It is why I called. I don't want to go on my own. Can I borrow some bodyguards?"

"Why do you want to borrow bodyguards? I will go to the place with you." He offered, and the girl was overjoyed.

"When is the meeting?" He asked.

"In two days."

He hung up with a smirk on his lips.

"Stupid girl. You should have worked for me." His tongue ran over his teeth. "But since you want it to end this way, then be my guest."

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Ever since Xiaoshi heard Han Xichen confess his feelings for her, she had been walking on eggshells. She no longer knew how to face the man so she decided to keep her distance and pretend to know nothing until she couldn't pretend anymore. She knew that what she was doing was not solving a problem, she was merely avoiding it—but she was not ready to face it yet.

She knew what would happen if she rejected him; they would not be on good terms anymore. A selfish part of her still wanted to be in contact with him.

She was still thinking about it when he called and she answered the call before she could think of ignoring or rejecting it.

"Shishi, how are you feeling?" He asked with a tone full of concern.

"I'm much better now." She responded and gently poked her belly, near the bullet scar. It was healing much faster than the man had predicted.

"You have been sticking indoors for too long and should take a short walk. Do you want to go out together?" He suggested, rendering her speechless for a while.

It took some seconds to gather her thoughts and the man waited patiently on the other side of the line. Just when she thought he would soon give up and hang up on his own, she heard his gentle call. "Shishi,"

"I'm sorry, I can't." She said in one breath as though she was afraid that she would be unable to do it if she delayed for a second.

The line went silent and she waited for the hang up tone. "Is it because of what I said to Xiehan?" He asked straightforwardly.

While it was indeed the reason, she did not expect him to point it out in the open so for a while she did not know what to say.

Taking her silence for a yes, he sounded helpless. "You can ignore what I said. Can we go for a walk as friends? If you are uncomfortable to be with me on your own, you can bring Xiehan along."

While he made the suggestion, he knew that the girl trusted Xiehan and would definitely agree if her cousin was going along. He also knew from Xiehan's reaction on that day that the man approved of him to be with Xiaoshi. If the three of them went out together, he didn't need any guess work to know that Xiehan would find an excuse to leave the two of them alone. It was just a roundabout way to end up with the same result.

Coincidentally, the doorbell of his condo opened and he was not surprised to see that the guest was Xiehan. He rarely had any guests, and he had been expecting Xiehan since the latter had stated that he would look for him later.

"Come in." He said to his friend who might soon be his in-law as well, and stepped aside to let him in after hanging up the call with Xiaoshi.

"You know what I want to say to you." Xiehan did not mince his words.

Knowing his friend well enough, he indeed knew what the latter was going to say. "You don't need to tell me anything. I will take good care of her."

Xiehan nodded in approval as it was indeed the exact thing he was going to talk about. "You don't need to prove that to me but to her father."

Knowing how unreasonably overprotective his uncle was of Xiaoshi, he did not expect him to approve of Han Xichen that easily.

"I already did. Shishi and I met him." He explained, puzzling Xiehan. Even so, the latter did not probe too much.

Han Xichen grabbed this chance to pull some strings in his favor. "She is scared of taking a walk with me."

Xiehan hummed and took out his phone, dialling Xiaoshi's number immediately. "Come and join me for lunch."

"Where?" Xiaoshi asked in surprise.

"Just get ready. The chauffeur will pick you up and bring you to the venue." Xiehan instructed and hung up.

As expected, Xiaoshi looked confused when she was brought over and when her eyes landed on Han Xichen, she glared daggers at her cousin.

"What's wrong? Are you feeling unwell? Xichen can check on you." Xiehan stated in concern, much to the girl's chagrin. Was there anyone who did this to their own cousin?

In response to her glower that threatened to revenge if a chance presented itself, Xiehan grinned and stood up. "I have other things to do so I will let you two have a talk."

He then bumped shoulders with Han Xichen as he lowered his voice to say, "You know what not to do."

"Of course." Although he liked Xiaoshi, he would never do anything against her wishes.

This was the only reason why Xiehan had no qualms about leaving Xiaoshi in his house. Besides, she was not a toddler. She would have turned to leave if she did not want to be here.

"I knew you would pull off such a stunt." She crossed her arms and snickered at Han Xichen when it was just the two of them left.

The man helped her onto a couch so she would not be too tired, laughing at her words. "Yet you still came."

"A part of me still wanted to prove myself wrong." She sat down since she was starting to feel tired.

"Is it just that?" He knew it wasn't the right time to make fun as this was probably his only chance but he couldn't help teasing her. "Are you sure it's not because you missed me?"

"Don't be ridiculous." She ignored his words, though she felt heat rush up her cheeks.

"Am I?" He laughed and settled down beside her as he studied her expressions carefully. "Why don't you want to consider me? Is it because of Jiang Xingyu?"

Her heart skipped a beat but she wasn't sure what she felt. It was almost as though she was being misunderstood and wanted to explain herself—but she didn't know what the misunderstanding was, much less how to explain herself.

She tilted her head and her eyes met his deep gaze.

"Why, Shishi?" His lips parted to ask, and she swallowed. She thought he was asking why she didn't like him but he continued in a direction she did not expect. "Why do you force yourself to believe that you will love him forever when you don't even have an ounce of feelings for him anymore?"

"Because I do, and I will." She insisted stubbornly, making him laugh at her naivety. Seeing her frown, he brushed a thumb against her scarlet cheek. "Then why do you blush when I get close to you?"

"I..." Her tongue was stuck as her heart picked up its pace.

"I can prove you wrong.." He closed the distance between them.

Chapter 458 - I Thought You Were Smarter Than This

"Huh?" Xiaoshi probed, not understanding what he meant.

Instead of answering her, he pulled her to his side to close the distance between them, then pressed his lips against her soft cheek and it immediately flushed.

His thumb rubbed against the part he had just kissed as his other hand stroked her face before cupping it. He rubbed his finger against her lips which parted as her eyes slowly shut, her tongue itching to lick her lips.

With each passing second, she felt his face inch closer and closer to hers, then it stopped. The kiss she was anticipating did not arrive and when she opened her eyes, a grin surfaced on his face and he pulled away from her.

"You could have stopped me." He raised an eyebrow.

"What?" She was still disoriented from the mixture of incomprehensible feelings in her body, that had surfaced from his proximity. When she finally understood what he meant, her eyes narrowed in a frown. "That's so childish of you."

He chuckled. Was she angry because he had tried to prove a point or because she had not gotten the kiss he had made her want? He didn't need to think to know that it was the latter. "It's so childish of you to keep pining for an engaged man, one that you don't even like anymore."

"You..." She was shocked and annoyed at the same time. It was so unlike him to say anything mean to her, and what did he mean she was childish?

"Why don't you try kissing a random man? Do you want me to get a stranger here and ask him to get that close to you? See if you don't slap the hell out of him in repulsion." His tone was serious. He knew that he was being selfish by doing this to her, but it was unbearable to hear the girl he liked go on and on about another man when they had mutual feelings between them. Besides, the longer it took for Xiaoshi to snap out of it, the harder it would be for her to completely move on.

"Go on," He urged.

"I need to leave." She made to stand, before a whisper befell her ears.

"Sit." It was one word, but she sat back down as though she were under a spell.

He scanned her eyes and found that they were slightly unfocused, only then did he proceed to ask, "What's so bad about me?"

"Nothing." She was still unfocused and he knew that she should be uncontrollably speaking what was truly on her mind, so he prepared for the worst. "My dad thinks the only man who deserves me is Xingyu. He will never acknowledge any other man as my boyfriend or husband."

He was surprised, but not entirely surprised by the revelation. He had somehow expected it but he still asked, "What about the dinner? he said I was good enough."

"He wanted me to be close to you to make Xingyu jealous." Her eyebrows furrowed slightly at her words, before her small hands reached to hold the sides of his face. "Xichen, I don't want to use you that way. You're a great guy."

He winced slightly at the shock that had made his body feel like it was electrocuted.

She looked into his eyes as she continued, "You are everything a woman would ever want in a man. And honestly... I would be lying if I said that I never considered you. But I don't want to be with you as the second best option just because the first was impossible."

Her words were both shocking and touching, she had never expected to hear them from her. At the same time, she knew that he would never get to hear her say such words with her in her natural state. Otherwise, he wouldn't need to hypnotise her before she spoke them out.

He didn't want to mentally exhaust her since she was still injured, so he tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and gently kissed her forehead. "Go to sleep."

Her eyes gradually closed as she lowered herself into his arms, and he eased her into a comfortable position.

Thanks to Wen Lin's constant urging, Ruby had to spend a lot of time with Lin Jian. He accompanied her to pay a visit to Neil and when they returned, he took her out for dinner.

Lin Jian kept stabbing his fork into his steak without eating as his mind was disoriented. It was only the previous night that he complained to his friends about being ignored by Ruby even when they were together, and he learnt from Xingyu that there was a new rumor circulating about him.

He looked at Ruby across the table and spoke up, "Ruby, the article is fabricated. I don't have anything to do with that model."

"You don't think I will blindly trust you, do you?" She paused to look at him, wondering which part of her made her look like a fool in his eyes.

"I really don't." He insisted. "Perhaps her management company wanted to create a headline to boost her fame. It had happened before."

She had heard of such things happening before but that didn't mean she believed him. "Why would her company randomly pick a man to use for hype? Why does it have to be you?"

It was a rhetoric question, and she gave the answer herself. "It's because you have had so many girlfriends that you probably wouldn't realize that it's a lie if some random woman claimed herself as your ex girlfriend."

He knew this, and he was not proud of his past. All his predicaments were related to the jerk he had been. He took her hand from above the table. "Ruby, can we forget about the past, please? I only love you and in future, I will only ever love you."

She gave him a skeptical look and he looked into her eyes deeply.

"You won't know whether or not I'm telling the truth if you don't give me a chance."

That was true, and she knew that dwelling on his past would do nothing but keep wrecking whatever tiny trust might form in between them. "Okay. If any woman pops up and claims to be your girlfriend, don't appear before me anymore."

He was still basking in joy when he heard her "okay" when it instantly dimmed from the rest of his statement. "That's too general. What if the woman is lying?"

"Think about it, Lin Jian. If you had a girlfriend and men kept popping up every other day to claim her as their girlfriend or the ex that they still love, wouldn't you be bothered?" She frowned at him. Whether it was the truth or a lie, she wouldn't be okay with it.

"You are right." Her words made sense and he sunk into thought. "I will make sure no one ever bothers you." He promised and she nodded.

Until they left the restaurant, he was still in disbelief. Did Ruby really give him a chance?

He had to call his friends and brag about it all night!

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As agreed, Xia Hanchen picked Lanni up to take her to the location of the meeting she had lied about having with the president of a secret agency.

As she walked to his parked car, she wondered whether she should move houses. It was not safe for the man to know where she lived, it made things easier for him if he wanted to harm her. On second thought, however, she shrugged the thought off her mind. Why did it matter? He was soon going to be dead and he would no longer have the ability to do anything to her even if he wanted to.

She entered the car and the man was still on a conference call. She studied his face for any trace of malice in case he changed his plans. They were going according to his plans. Xiehan had investigated and found that he was not planning any mischief today, since he would kidnap Luna two days later.

He waved at her as a form of greeting and she offered a smile, then he returned to the conference call he was holding.

She took out her phone to play with, making sure not to disclose anything from her body language. She was glad that he was busy since it saved her from the need to pretend to be a loving daughter.

By the time he shut his laptop, they had almost arrived at the address she gave the chauffeur.

"Are you nervous?" He observed that she had not spoken a single word since she entered the car.

She nodded and took a deep breath. "Do you think I will qualify?"

"Why not? My cupcake is the smartest." He praised, and she was repulsed. You will not pretend for much longer, she thought.

Flynn had arranged to meet in a building that would have them go through an office building so it did not arouse the man's suspicion. Sure enough, Lanni led him smoothly into the building, through the sky bridge that connected it to a different building and into a room in the second building.

As soon as they entered what looked like a conference room, the door shut heavily and a chair by the window swung, then Flynn stepped down from it.

"Oh father, I thought you were smarter than this."

Chapter 459 - The End Of Xia Hanchen (1)

Xia Hanchen took a glance at his son who was currently grinning at him with spite written all over his face, and his own face eased into a smile. "I must say, I saw this coming."

"Yet you still walked into the devil's den. Should I call you naive or stupid?" Flynn taunted, not in a hurry to lock Xia Hanchen down as he knew that the latter couldn't leave even if he wanted to.

"Call yourself overconfident." Xia Hanchen burst into laughter at the naive children in front of him.

He turned to look at Lanni with a raise of his brows. "Lanni, you too? I didn't think it would be so easy for someone to brainwash you and make you go against your own father."

"Cut the crap. We all know the truth." Lanni was on the verge of beating him up. She had stepped away from him and to Flynn's side just in case the former went berserk and tried to harm her or use her as leverage.

The man was unfazed despite being trapped. He even laughed.

"You did not disappoint your father, I must say." He praised through a snicker. "Though you forget that I'm the one who taught you everything you know."

As soon as he finished speaking, he walked towards the large magnetic doors that had been tightly locked and tried to hack the pass code.

Lanni was almost awed when she saw how fast he was doing it. She finally knew where Luna and Flynn got their talent at programming from. Despite his speed and skill, all that happened was his hand feeling like it had been electrocuted.

Flynn snickered. "You also forget that aside from everything you taught me, I have learnt more from the world. The student surpassed his master, to be precise."

Xia Hanchen did not believe that a measly trap of two kids decades younger than him could prevent him from leaving. He kept tapping his phone and the pass code lock on the door and a minute later, the lock on the door clicked open.

"I would have loved to stay and humor you for a little longer but I have to go." He flashed a smile.

The doors slid open but what was revealed was not a passageway but a series of criss-crossed swords waiting to slice through his skin if he made a step to go out. He thought it was an illusion until he touched one of the swords and the sharp tip sliced into his finger, making huge drops of his blood fall onto the ground.

"Let's talk about leaving when I have torn all your limbs." Flynn chortled at the man's failed attempt at leaving.

"You and what army Flynn?" Xia Hanchen brought his bleeding finger to his mouth to stop the bleeding and the pain.

Flynn looked down at him like he was an ant. "Me and the whole of Galaxis."

"Do you think you can really turn the agency against me?" Xia Hanchen laughed like he had heard the most ridiculous joke.

"I mean, I can turn you against you." Flynn laughed. "I was wondering how I would manage to poison you but you saved me the trouble by touching the poisoned swords on your own. You even sped up the process by licking your poisoned blood. Why don't you watch and see whether or not the others are willing to go against their falling tyrant king whom they hate?"

He had destroyed innumerable lives, so it was easy to bring together everyone who wanted him dead.

"You are trying to buy time to let the poison work." He frowned and closed in on Flynn to launch a punch to his head.

Flynn dodged it with ease and laughed. "You are so naive. How did you even manage to stay alive for so long? The poison isn't going to act up right now. It will be slow and tortuous, and you will wish for death to come to you sooner but I will not let that happen too easily."

When he was done speaking, he swung on his heel and kicked Xia Hanchen in the stomach, making Lanni close her eyes when she heard the sound of what she guessed to be ribs cracking.

Xia Hanchen coughed up blood but recovered immediately and punched Flynn's chest, this time using much more force.

The man swayed for a few seconds but soon steadied and retaliated with a succession of punches and kicks, most of which Xia Hanchen dodged. Within a few seconds, Flynn was on the losing end.

"You were holding back." He snickered when Xia Hanchen grabbed his neck and pushed him against the wall.

"You should learn to be filial." Xia Hanchen applied more pressure on his hand that was tightly around his son's neck.

The young man's face was starting to pale from lack of air but he still had a smile on his lips, rendering Xia Hanchen confused. What was so good about dying that he was happy about it?

"You..."

Just as he spoke, he felt a pain in his back, shooting through his whole body. His fingers unconsciously let go of Flynn's neck and he turned to the source of the pain, to find Lanni holding a gun behind him.

"Get your stinky claws off my brother!" She ordered, shooting yet another bullet into his stomach.

His lips pursed as though he was in disbelief, as Lanni shot through both of his legs one at a time. She was deliberately shooting him in parts that would bring him immense pain but at the same time not kill him, because they couldn't let him die so easily after all they had been through because of him.

"Lanni, my cute Lanni. You have grown up better than I thought." He laughed through his bloody mouth. He was losing a lot of blood and thanks to the bullets, his steps were faltering by the second.

Lanni shot through his left arm, looking like she was getting addicted to it. "I have to thank you for that."

"You are just like your stupid mother. I should have killed you when you were little." He laughed, making Lanni frown.

"That slut, she pretended to be in love with me yet spread her legs for the whole city and neighbouring towns."

"How dare you!" Lanni exploded.

Xia Hanchen laughed like a maniac. "That bitch, she was getting fucked by Ji Huifen, yet here you are dating his son. Gross, isn't it?"

Lanni pointed the gun at his chest as her chest heaved. Her finger started to apply pressure on the trigger.

"Lanni, don't! He's trying to make you kill him!" Flynn tried to talk some sense into Lanni, whose eyes were full of bloodthirst.

"He knows that we plan to torture him. He is trying to take the easier route by provoking you to kill him faster." He explained, and Lanni's eyes finally regained some rationality.

She thought he made sense. What she hated most was anyone talking trash about her mother, so Xia Hanchen must have grabbed onto this fact to push her on edge. She pulled the trigger once again but shot his hand so it was nothing but flesh and blood left.

"Sparrow." Flynn called, and a young man appeared from another room.

He rushed to Lanni as soon as he saw her. "Sister!"

"Get lost." Lanni shoed him off, not wanting anything to do with Galaxis.

"Get our guest of honor to the room we prepared specially for him." Flynn instructed, and the young man named Sparrow took Xia Hanchen who was on the verge of fainting from blood loss into the room he had just exited.

"I will take good care of him." Flynn promised Lanni, and the latter nodded.

"Get me a video. I'm certain that mother will enjoy the view." She smiled just thinking about it. Watching the man who had tortured her for most of her life getting tortured to his death, there isn't anything that could make Li Yuming happier than this would.

"She isn't like that." Flynn stated, and Lanni looked at him in confusion.

"What?"

"Your mother." He explained. "I did my research on her long ago. She isn't the kind of woman that old fart was making her out to be."

"I know." She smiled. Of course she trusted her mother.

If Li Yuming was a promiscuous woman, how could she have been alone for all these years with no man in her life? Instead, the promiscuous one was Xia Hanchen. Flynn was much older than her and Luna, which went to say that he had met Flynn's mother long before he met Li Yuming. Even so, he did not marry Flynn's mother, and even after getting together with Li Yuming and having babies together, he still cheated on her with Li Xiyan. The answer was eat as day.

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When Lanni left the building, she felt as though she had left another realm and was finally back into the human world. She felt empty when she thought about how her father was going to be tortured but she did not regret anything.. He deserved it.

When Lanni arrived at Li Yuming's villa, Xiehan, Xingyu, Luna and Li Yuming were waiting for her while on the edge of their seats.

She had given them a call a few minutes ago to report that she had successfully delivered Xia Hanchen into the hands of Flynn and that they no longer needed to protect her. Even so, they were still anxious and waited for her return while sitting on pins and needles.

"Xia Hanchen is dead." She reported the good news, and everyone sighed in relief.

"I must be the only child who is happy to hear about my father's death." Luna blinked as soon as her happy dance ended.

"You are not. I am too and so is Flynn." Lanni reassured her with a pat.

"He deserves it. It's already good enough that he still has a family so he will not die without a burial place. He should be happy about this." Xingyu commented, frustrated by the fact that he had to watch by the sidelines as the man who tried to kill his fiancée got tortured by someone else. Even so, he would still undergo pain and die in an agonizing way so it didn't matter too much.

"Is it too early to celebrate?" Luna asked as she rested her head against Li Yuming's arm.

"Nope," In turn, Li Yuming tapped her nose.

"You have grown quite close in the last few days." Lanni observed, relieved that they were no longer on each other's necks.

Li Yuming looked at her like she was an idiot. "What are you spouting about? Luna is my daughter after all. Besides, we are both mothers so we have a lot to talk about."

"Are you trying to rub in my face that I don't have a baby yet?" Lanni pretended to sulk, making the two women along with Xingyu tease her and Xiehan endlessly.

"I feel it!" Luna exclaimed as her hand flew to her tummy. She rubbed it slowly as though she was waiting for something then sighed in disappointment.

"What is it?" Li Yuming asked, while the others dipped their heads wondering what she was waiting for.

"I thought I felt the baby kick." Luna's voice was a mixture of anticipation and disappointment, and as soon as she spoke, she felt a jab in her stomach.

"There!" she placed a hand on her belly and almost cried from how happy she felt.

It was already a great feeling to be a mother, to know that there was a life growing inside her. But feeling her baby move about and kick, it was so magical that she so badly wished to stop time so she could feel it forever. At the same time, she wanted the days to fly so she would be able to see her little bundle of joy.

Xingyu placed his hand on Luna's tummy, almost losing control of his emotions when he felt the little kick beneath his palm.

He placed his lips on the protruding belly. "Baby, can you hear me? I'm your daddy."

"He can't hear you, Xingyu." Li Yuming facepalmed.

Xiehan laughed at his friend's antics. "Don't blame him. It's his first time being a dad so he knows close to nothing."

Luna didn't want her man to be made fun of so she raised an eyebrow. "How many times have you been a dad, Xiehan?"

"At least I know my facts. Besides, I will in future and I will be the best dad in the world." Xiehan bragged like he was certain about it. With his personality, no one could deny that he would make the best dad. Even so, Luna could not accept defeat. "That's only possible if you go to another world because in this world, the best father is Xingyu."

"Ssh." Lanni suddenly hushed them and they all turned to look at her.

"Is everything alright, my love?" Xiehan asked her.

"How can we be joking around at such a time?" Her gaze ran through all of them as she scolded them in disbelief. "Xia Hanchen is dead. Do you know what that means?"

"Less problems on our plate. Isn't that what it means?" Xingyu raised an eyebrow at her and did not comprehend why the death of the villain seemed to distress her.

"It means more problems on our plate!" Lanni corrected him with a stern glare. It was hard to believe that anyone could be so forgetful. Had all of their brains been eaten by dogs? "Have you all forgotten what lurks in the shadows? That man had a family. There is the Xia family and perhaps, the Guan family might just rise from the ashes along with the Li family. Tell me, how are you even in the mood to joke around?"

Lakeside City.

"I cannot get any news of Hanchen." Xia Yuguang reported to his aunt who was sipping on tea in the living room.

"Then spend more effort looking for him. Why would he suddenly go silent on us?" Asked the old lady. No matter what explanation anyone tried to come up with, she did not believe that Xia Hanchen could have deliberately decided to hide away.

Xia Yuguang continued making phone calls in vain and when all his channels failed to retrieve any significant news, he sat down opposite his mother with a sigh. "The last time there was news about him, he was with that trouble-seeking daughter of his."

"The one who doesn't know how to keep her nose where it belongs even when she is pregnant?" The elderly woman sneered.

Xia Yuguang shook his head. "The other one. Lanni. I don't know where they were going because the car seems to have disappeared off the road at a roundabout. There isn't any trace of it after that but much later, it reappeared and the only occupant was that girl. She returned on her own and looked distressed.

"Everything about that girl is so strange. What did she do to Hanchen?" Old Mrs. Xia had goosebumps just thinking about it.

"She couldn't have done anything." Retorted Xia Yuguang. "If a girl could do anything to Hanchen, then he would be long dead. Don't think too much of a silly girl with barely any ability to keep herself sane."

Old Mrs. Xia didn't know what to think of it.

Xia Yuguang frowned as he thought aloud, "What if he used this opportunity to disappear back to where he belongs? Perhaps he went to find his real family. He isn't a Xia after all."

"Don't say such nonsense in future." Old Mrs. Xia berated her son sternly, but she also wondered if it was possible. No matter what, there was no way she would believe that a frail girl like Lanni could do anything to Xia Hanchen on her own. Even if she possessed some abilities that no one knew about, she couldn't do much and would have needed a lot of help.

"Keep an eye on those two girls and their boyfriends." She instructed.

"Right. Ji Xiehan. How could I forget?" Xia Yuguang looked like he had made a huge discovery.

"What about him?" Asked the elderly madam, twirling the last two small sips of her tea.

"There are things about him that don't quite add up." Xia Yuguang explained while deep in thought. "How come his girlfriend just happens to be Lanni? Is it a coincidence that he happened to fall in love with Xia Hanchen's daughter, whose mother is Li Yuming?"

"What do you think?" She was in thought.

"Do you think it's possible that he already knew who she was?" He speculated.

She thought about it and thought back to the information she had gathered about all of them when they visited. "He knew who she was but not for the reason you're thinking. He was close to Li Yuming when he was a child."

"That makes sense." He felt as though all the information he knew had reset to nothing.

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"I set a trap for the Xias. We can deal with the Guans and the Lis later." Luna laughed out of the blue.

"What do you mean?" Lanni asked with a frown.

"Take a look at this." Luna took the laptop that was on the coffee table onto her lap and turned it on. After entering a series of codes, a video started playing. It looked like it had been taken from a traffic surveillance camera.

Lanni realized that the car she had been in had appeared on the screen but frowned when she saw the routes it took. "We didn't go that way."

She was even more surprised when she saw herself leave Xia Hanchen's car much later while he was nowhere to be found. "I didn't come back in that man's car."

"Of course not." Luna smiled evilly. "I set this trap for the Xias. Say, do you want to accompany me to watch them fall into the ditch like idiots?"

