

Sweet Love 2431

Chapter 2431: Retribution

Lu Jingtian's mother replied, "The police initially suspected that the crime was committed by someone she knew, so they focused their search on the two girlfriends who were meeting Jingtian for drinks at the bar, but the one thing discovered through repeated comparisons of surveillance footage is that Jingtian and the killer are clearly not familiar with each other or may even be considered as strangers. If it's a stranger, then this becomes tricky."

Yun Shishi could not see the probability of them being strangers, though. "If they're strangers, why did the culprit pick her out of all people?"

The older woman gasped. "Don't tell me the culprit is a sociopath?"

"How could there be so many with antisocial personality disorder around?"

The actress retorted, "I think the possibility is real. I believe this is a homicide rather than a simple case of assault. Perhaps, the criminal wasn't out to get rid of her but only wanted her to suffer."

After listening to Yun Shishi's analysis, Lu Jingtian's mother could not help drawing in a sharp breath and clasping a palm over her lips. Looking at the actress with her eyes full of fear, she shook her head in disbelief. "How could there be such cruel people in the world? How could someone do such a hurtful thing without batting an eyelid?"

The young lady pursed her lips and did not comment further.

Up to this stage, she could guess who was behind all these.

—Yun Na.

If, indeed, the criminal had acted with the intention of inflicting pain on Lu Jingtian, then there must be a very deep and insurmountable grudge between the two.

If she correlated the case of Lu Jingtian with her father's, then she could only think of her adoptive sister. The reason was simple: The series of mishaps were too coincidental to be true.

The reason the police did not suspect Yun Na was, one, she had been listed as a missing person and, two, they did not know that she had a major conflict with Lu Jingtian. Otherwise, they would have surely suspected her sister.

She kept quiet for a long time before coming up with a sudden question. "Can I go in to look at her?"

The mother bit her lower lip before nodding her head. "Yes, you can, but she just woke up and is emotionally unstable, so please don't disturb her. She's easily frightened now... so I'm afraid of her turning hysterical."

Yun Shishi pushed open the door and walked in slowly. Lu Jingtian was lying quietly on the bed. She was unable to close her eyes, and her bulging orbs, which kept compulsively wide open, were especially hideous-looking.

The victim's burned area was so extensive that even the actress could not bear to linger her eyes on the former for too long.

A human life was fragile, and man's only weapon was a superior intellect that transcended all things.

However, the skin that wrapped the human body could be so vulnerable.

She stood quietly on the spot and looked at the victim for a long, long time.

She had a couple of problems with Lu Jingtian in the past; hence, the police had called her a while ago to 'interrogate' her. After providing them an alibi, they presumably erased her name from the list of suspects and did not contact her again.

The Lu missy should have offended a number of people with her character.

The actress was not too sympathetic toward her counterpart on the bed, though she did find the latter somewhat pitiful.

There would be a source of origin for all evils; all hatred stemmed from something and not untraceable.

If Lu Jingtian had not done such a cruel thing to Yun Na at the start, where the former disfigured the latter's face with an eyebrow shaving knife, her adoptive sister would not have harbored a deep-seated hatred for this missy in bed. After all, her adoptive sister's looks were destroyed by this missy personally.

Chapter 2432: The Gong Family (1)

Yun Na's face was disfigured by this missy personally. It was Lu Jingtian who had used an eyebrow shaving knife to cut up the former's face, bit by bit.

What had happened to the young actress was merely retribution. She had sown the seed to a bad ending, though this was too much of a heavy price to pay.

When will my turn be then? Yun Shishi deliberated inwardly.

Her adoptive sister should hate her much, so the girl would come after her sooner or later.

...

Gong Jie got down the plane and straightaway escorted Yun Yecheng to Hurricane Group's medical facilities within the headquarters.

The medical facilities had some of the most advanced apparatuses in the world.

It might not be appropriate to describe their facilities as topnotch. In fact, it was so advanced that it bordered on extremes and had become a formidable force.

The medical facilities were a dream of many health professionals.

The moment the young man got off the plane, he had everything arranged, so by the time he arrived at the base, a group of physicians, draped in white coats, were already waiting at the door to greet him.

These doctors had differing skin colors and of different ages, with no lack of young girls seen among them.

Most of them were technicians from different countries and fields, and quite a lot had been hired at great expense by Gong Shaoying.

The leader among them, a young lady, approached Gong Jie immediately with a smile. "Welcome back."

She was especially young-looking and had a fair complexion, beautiful features, and looked rather like a Central European mix.

The chap saw her and returned a slight smile. "Long time no see, Alice."

The two were close, and whenever they were free at the headquarters, they would ask each other out for drinks and casual chit-chat.

Honestly, the man was not good with women, but he could be on close terms with Alice because, for one, she was rather masculine in her personality and had none of the coyness that characterized the female species.

As for the other reason...

He could still remember, once, when he was in Africa and was accidentally shot during a crossfire. The bullet penetrated his arm and it got badly infected rapidly due to the unhygienic and poor living conditions at the war zone. The accompanying doctors shook their heads and said that they could not save his arm.

After they relayed the message to the headquarters, Alice immediately instructed that no surgery should be performed on the man until he was back at the base.

Back at the medical base, the lady then healed his arm effortlessly by using gene-regeneration technology. There was no sign of injury on his arm now.

To him, the operation had indubitably saved his life, but as for the woman, she merely viewed the whole episode as a game.

She believed that his surgery was a tonic to her dull and boring work life.

"It was quite challenging," was how the female doctor nonchalantly described the surgery she had performed. To her, it was a game that helped bring some balance to her work life.

Yes... In any case, she was a woman who induced fear.

It was said that she had the technical knowledge to, unsurprisingly, clone an ancient creature directly.

An ancient creature and clone-regeneration...

These sounded like fantasy and technology so advanced that no scientists in the world could imagine possessing.

If not for the woman herself not knowing what would turn out from cloning an ancient creature, she might have tried to research it further.

This brought the movie, 'Alien', to his mind.

In any case, she was a formidable and scary woman.

The man reaffirmed this knowledge inwardly.

He had jokingly asked if she would be able to use her skills to clone him in a few years' time, and this was intended merely as a pure joke.

Chapter 2433: The Gong Family (2)

Alice, then, had gone on to comment casually, "Say, for example, you suffer a serious injury or some cancerous cells happen to invade your entire body, I can separate your head from your body to transplant it onto another suitable one."

The man clenched his throat when he heard her spine-chilling description. "Forget it!"

There was no other younger member than Alice in the team. She went up to the man and gave him a gentle hug. "Second master, I heard that you want to entrust someone to our care?"

He nodded.

While on the way to the observation center, Yun Yecheng was given a tranquilizer onboard the plane and was in a drowsy state ever since.

Alice circled the old man on the trolley once and flung the white sheet off him suddenly. After putting on a pair of sterile gloves, she unbuttoned his clothes to study his injuries again.

"Hm... It's concentrated sulfuric acid."

"Yes."

"He was seriously burned on the upper torso."

Gong Jie explained, "The sulfuric acid was splashed on him headlong, so you can say that no skin was left untouched."

The woman retorted casually, "Well, at least, the face is completely destroyed."

"Is there any hope for him?" asked the man nervously.

The lady gave him a glance, shrugged her shoulders, and threw an innocent question back at him, instead. "Isn't he still alive now?"

"The doctor back in my country told us that he's not completely out of danger yet."

The lady smiled graciously and replied offhandedly, "If you're asking if he's still alive, then my answer to you is: As long as there's still a breath left in him, I can keep him alive."

“His larynx and many functional organs have been destroyed; can you do anything about that?” asked the man again.

“Yes! We can try to do something about that.”

“Are you able to recover these functions for him?”

“You mean to let him talk again?”

“That’s right.”

The lady mulled for a while before saying, “If you give me sufficient time, I can heal his damaged organs with gene-regeneration.”

This put the man at ease finally.

However, as he watched the lady examining the old man with extraordinary interest, he could tell, there and then, what was on her mind as glints of serious ambition surfaced in her peepers.

Is she going to use him as a guinea pig?

“I’m thinking of doing a head transplant operation recently.”

The man was struck speechless.

The lady looked past her shoulder and asked, “Can I use him for my experiment?”

“You can’t,” he answered resolutely.

“Why not?” She was puzzled. To her, the old man was unquestionably a wreck.

The crucial point was, she no longer held interest in performing surgeries, which she had long gotten tired of. Reconstructing functional organs was something very simple, and she was sick of it at this point.

Head transplantation, on the other hand, was something she was eager to try.

Although some risks would be involved, look, would this not be a fantastic opportunity being presented to her now?

Gong Jie quickly replied, “He’s... someone very important to me. You can’t use him as a guinea pig!”

“Who is he to you?”

“He’s my...” The young man did not know how to explain their relationship.

Can I tell her upfront that he’s my sister’s adoptive father?

This answer would be too abrupt for Alice.

Thus, the only explanation he could provide was: “No matter what, you aren’t allowed to touch him for your experiments. Cure him, or at the very least, alleviate his suffering. Can you restore his facial features?”

“There’s a fifty percent possibility for that.”

“Fifty percent?”

“It’s simple enough to do a skin transplant, but we aren’t a beauty salon here, so we can’t promise that we can restore his former looks. That’s why I give it fifty percent.”

Chapter 2434: The Gong Family (3)

“Fifty percent is an optimistic outcome.”

“Then, I’ll entrust him to you,” Gong Jie said.

After removing her gloves and throwing them aside, she spun herself around to meet his gaze squarely and asked with a chuckle, “Any reward for me?”

“Reward?”

“Shouldn’t there be a treat for me when you pass me a boring and dull assignment?”

“Nope. There isn’t any,” replied the man heartlessly.

The woman’s face turned bleak instantly. “You aren’t sincere in asking for help at all.”

“I’ll bring you the top wine from Valenti next time.”

“I’m sick of that.”

“Ma’am, you are so hard to please.” After saying that, the man turned to walk away.

The lady gave chase and signaled to him with a look. “Since you’re back here, why don’t we have a drink together?”

“I can’t...”

She thought he was still worried over Yun Yecheng and quickly reassured him. “Don’t worry; I’ll take care of the old man.”

He shook his head. “I have to go home.”

Her face changed instantly. “Oh, right. I forgot that you haven’t been home for a while. Your father must be thinking of you.”

They reached the gate, and the man turned around and indicated, “You can leave me here; I have to go back now.”

“Alright.”

...

The Gongs’ main residence was located on a private island at Atlantis. For the purpose of concealment, the entire island was blanketed with a network shield.

The size of the island was even bigger than some small nations in the world. The island itself had been made into a kingdom by the Gongs, with its security, defense, vacation facilities and entertainment, et cetera... In other words, this place had everything.

There were still some native aborigines staying on this island when the clan first started to develop the place. All of them were extradited to other countries by the family.

In addition, the surrounding seas were manned by ships day and night. The island's emergency functions would be activated the moment something abnormal was detected.

Any transpassers would be mercilessly destroyed with missiles. There were also a number of cargo ships, which lost their way and strayed into their sea territory by mistake; they, too, were chased off without delay.

This island was considered the Gongs' headquarters.

If one was to look at the whole island from a helicopter, one could easily spot an extremely majestic and magnificent castle at the center of the island.

The castle was built during the Saint Louis era, which the Gongs spent an astronomical sum to auction under their name. When the clan developed the island, they went at great lengths to move the entire historic castle over, then they began a series of reconstruction and refurbishment.

When Gong Jie first came to know that the castle, which he had stayed in since young, was in fact moved to this island from a land thousand of miles away, he was astounded for a very long time. He simply could not figure out how his father had managed to perform that feat.

When he reached the castle, and just as he stepped through the front gate, the butler, who seemed to have anticipated his arrival, spotted him. After giving him a formal bow, the butler said respectfully, "Second Master, the old master is waiting for you in his study room."

"Alright."

He then went up to the fourth floor.

He pushed open the spacious study room's door and inside was a middle-aged man sitting in a chair in front of a long study table. The older man was looking out the window behind, with his back toward the door.

The middle-aged man still looked graceful despite his age.

Unlike an average middle-aged man, whose body usually became out of shape, coming along with bloatedness and a flabby belly, his figure was well-maintained. There was an aura of mellow charm in his mannerism, much like aged wine.

Chapter 2435: The Gong Family (4)

The middle-aged man had his back against the door as he held a pipe in his hand. Even when he heard the door opening, he did not turn around to look and just continued to stare quietly outside the window as he greeted his son in his bassy voice, "You're back!"

His deep and low voice was like ripe, mellow wine.

"Father," called the young man respectfully.

"Did you have a good holiday?"

"Yes. I have a good rest during this rare break."

"Now that your vacation time is over, you should concentrate on your career again."

"Understood."

The chap's cocky arrogance was very much tamed before his father. In front of this man, he maintained a humble and respectful attitude.

Gong Shaoying casually laid his pipe next to the windowsill and turned slowly to look at his son. Despite the signs of age on his handsome face, it retained the chiseled features and well-defined contours, which hinted of his youthful vigor.

He was dressed in a British-style, double-breasted suit, and his physique was just the right proportions.

It was hard to imagine that he was already forty-six years old.

One could see that this middle-aged man was exceptionally suave and striking during his prime.

Gong Jie had inherited the well-proportioned eyebrows, eyes, and contours from him.

The older man sized up his son and inquired leisurely, "So what plans do you have in mind for this year?"

"Father..."—his son paused, then hooked his lips into a conceited smile—"The African market is most valued by our group; unfortunately, that market has failed to live up to our expectations in the last three years, which is a pity, so I'm thinking: How about transferring that market to my name? I believe that gold mine can bring us immeasurable rewards."

The older man gazed at him, narrowed his eyes, then burst into a chuckle. "How boastful you can be! You already have the North-American market, and now you're telling me that you want the African market, too! That is very ambitious!" After saying that, he held his silence for a long time before snorting. "In retrospect, this is how I was in my younger days."

Gong Jie smiled only to hear his father continue. "Still, you're too ambitious for your own good. Aren't you worried that you may invite trouble?"

"What's there to be worried about?"

His father studied him for a while before shaking his head resignedly. "It's not a good thing to be arrogant when you're still young!"

He looked squarely into the older man's eyes and gave a charming smile all of a sudden. "Father, my arrogance is the quality which you appreciate in me, isn't it?"

“I do think well of your ambitions and self-confidence, but I have my worries about them, too.”

The young man slowly strode over to his father’s desk, saying, “Worries? This doesn’t sound like you at all, father. Your worries are redundant here; I need to be ambitious.”

The older man slowly got up from his seat and glanced at him, so the two looked straight at each other in this manner.

Despite his age, Gong Shaoying’s commanding presence had not diminished. He bore down on his son with his dignified stance for a long time before agreeing readily, “Alright, I grant you with the African market share if you insist on it, but you’ll have to give up the North-American market in return.”

The lad nodded to indicate his compromise.

“It is true that we’ve lost many opportunities on the African market. I hope that you can recover our losses at the minimum.”

“I understand.”

“Oh, and one more thing...”

His father seemed to recall something but stopped short of completing his statement.

Chapter 2436: Give me a grandchild soon. (1)

“It is true that we’ve lost many opportunities on the African market. I hope that you can recover our losses at the minimum.”

“I understand.”

“Oh, and one more thing...”

The older man suddenly swung around to look at his son. He sized up the chap with narrowed eyes and commented leisurely, “I heard that you went to the Maldives for a holiday and then to Country Z.”

Gong Jie was completely caught off guard. His eyelids jumped for a second as he looked at his father with a feigned composure. “That’s right.”

“You seem... to have been frequenting that place recently.” His father paused suddenly, held his chin up, and gazed at the young man obliquely before curling his lips into a half-jest. “Why? Are you keeping a woman over there?”

The off-handed question sounded like a harmless probe.

“Woman?”

“Other than this possibility, I can’t think of any reason that will make you go there regularly.”

His eyelids violently twitched the moment he heard his father’s words.

It was true that he had been running to Country Z frequently lately.

In the past, he had devoted himself to work entirely and hardly visited Asia even on his vacation. After all, he was responsible for the North-American market and there was no need for him to go to that region except for emergencies.

Did I rouse my father's suspicion as a result?

He could not grasp as to what extent his father knew about his whereabouts in Asia or his sister's affairs.

The thought was enough to make him raise an eyebrow. In the end, he could only give the older man a rueful reply, "Father, I'm sure you're aware that I have no interest in women."

"Yes, I'm very aware of that. I don't know why you seem to be a retard when it comes to women. When will you learn your lesson and bring home a girlfriend for a change?"

As the older man lectured his son, he turned around and sat down again. Leaning back lazily, he lifted his head to look at the young chap teasingly. "If you had half of my youthful vitality, I wouldn't be concerned with you."

Gong Jie furrowed his brows in a daze. "Are you going to share your affairs in your prime? I don't want to listen to the same stories again."

His father laughed and shook his head, commanding him in a half-serious tone, "All I want to tell you is: You'd better get down to the serious business of finding a wife soon."

"Why are you talking about women again?" The young man became impatient and declared frivolously, "There isn't any woman I have an interest in."

"How could that be?! Women attract men's primal instincts, unless..."—the older man squinted his eyes just a little—"you like men."

The lad's face sank as he looked at his father for confirmation gloomily. "Are you serious with that?"

His father rebutted his question mercilessly, "What other possibilities can I think of? You only hang out with your male gang, and I hardly see you with a woman. You claim not to be interested in any woman, but how many have you come in contact with at all? From what I can remember, the number of women you know since you're young is so few that I can count them with my ten fingers."

The chap had nothing to say to that as his eyelids violently twitched again.

What his father said was true, though. Other than Alice, he had barely befriended other ladies since he was a child.

Chapter 2437: Give me a grandchild soon. (2)

What his father said was true, though. Other than Alice, he had barely befriended other ladies since he was young.

It was not because he had no interest in women; rather, all his attention had been poured into the company's matters, so he was unconcerned about the affairs of the heart.

The older man could not figure out his son at this point. Staring at the young man as if he were a block of wood, the middle-aged man asked askance, "Don't you need women?"

Gong Jie snorted. "No."

His father let out a long, meaningful hum of acknowledgment while casting a judging look at him. "Don't you have any biological needs?"

"Cough."

Embarrassment had him turning his body slightly away and tilting his head down to let his fringe hide his deep-set eyes, which were looking elsewhere instead of his father. "I settle it on my own."

That reply, however, amused his father to no end. "You settle it on your own?"

"Cough!"

Feeling more embarrassed now, he tried to offer an explanation. "I don't often have any special needs."

Alas, his explanation only made things worse; his father's imagination ran wild at that.

No special needs?

How's that possible?

Being a man myself, how can I not know?

Is this dumbblock asexual or undeveloped?

That couldn't be, though.

I remember him being well-endowed that time we shared a bath when he was eighteen. He's a fully-developed young chap.

He was worried sick for his son. As he rubbed his fingers on his chin, his gaze roamed across a certain body part of his son.

The young man followed his line of sight, only to be shocked when he realized that his father was staring at his lower abdomen. His countenance swiftly darkened as he blandly said, "I'm taking my leave if you don't have any other orders for me. I have other business to attend to." With that, he turned around and walked toward the door.

It prompted his father into ordering, "Hold on!"

He did not stop, though.

His father proceeded to throw a Phoebe zhennan bead bracelet at him.

"Hold it right there! You hear me?"

Only then did he turn around, but the young chap was clearly feeling somewhat irritated. “What other orders do you have?”

Gong Shaoying suddenly stood up and walked over to his son’s side. While he held his son in scrutiny, he noticed the latter knitting his brows in irk with his eyes closed. His cheeks were stained pink, too.

Fancy that incompetent brat blushing so hard over such matters. How useless!

“Tsk! Why is your face so red?”

“...”

He patted his son’s shoulder sympathetically. “I was already a father when I was your age, yet you haven’t even had your first taste of women yet. Such a pity.”

Who needs your pity?

A long, heavy sigh escaped his throat before he solemnly advised, “Man up, son, and give this old man a grandchild to play with.”

...That’s not something that I can magically make appear.

The younger one blandly retorted, “First, I need someone who’s willing to bear my child in order for you to have a grandchild.”

He spoke curtly to his son with a frown, “There’s no lack of women who are willing to bear your children. The queue is long enough to reach Siberia from here. The problem lies with you.”

After a brief moment of silence, he commented with his eyes narrowed into slits, “I noticed that you’re quite on close terms with Alice. That lassie’s a good choice.”

“Alice?”

Gong Jie could not help but shudder at the thought of that woman’s face. “She’s a terror. The way she cuts her steak is as though she’s dissecting a corpse. No way will I choose her—not even if she’s the last woman on Earth!”

Chapter 2438: I am willing to give up everything. (1)

He had probably developed a trauma of women from the time he accidentally witnessed the scene of her dissecting a body in a lab.

While Alice had a graceful poise when cutting her steak, he somehow found the way she cut it up akin to how she cut up a dead body.

She’s terrifying.

While it’s fine to have a drink or two with the lady, dating her practically screams nightmare.

“Oh.” Upon recalling a certain matter, his father suddenly commented in a rather offhanded way, “I heard from the bodyguards tasked to protect you that you were seen having a great time with a woman.”

Gong Jie’s heart skipped a beat at that.

He turned his face slightly toward his father to peek at his expression. When he did not notice anything out of the ordinary, he felt somewhat settled enough to feign calmness and shoot his father a question. “What did they say?”

“You were spotted on a coffee-and-shopping date with a woman who appeared to be on close terms with you.”

“...”

A frown crossed his face.

Was it that time when I visited the country and my sister brought me to eat mala hotpot as well as play mini games like shooting, throwing the hoop, and fishing...

That’s when I realized that we were being tailed.

*D*mn it! I specifically warned them not to report my whereabouts to my father, but they still went ahead and did just that.*

To what extent have they reported back to him about my sister?

What is dad trying to find out by pretending to be so unconcerned?

He had no idea how much his father knew, but the latter did not look like he was going to probe deeply. In fact, he appeared to be completely unaware of his sister’s existence.

The tension within him ebbed away as he replied, “She’s just a friend of mine and not the reason for my frequent visits.”

“Oh? Then, what was the purpose of your visits?”

“To find someone.”

That reply caused his father’s expression to sink in an instant, though his voice sounded as calm as before. “Looks like you haven’t given up.”

“Dead or alive, I want her found, or else I’ll never end my search,” answered the young man as he feigned calmness and tried to test his father’s reaction.

His father, however, clenched his fists tightly, which got him heaving a sigh of relief inwardly. *It looks like he still doesn’t know that she’s alive.*

Albeit feeling somewhat guilty toward his father, he had to keep his sister’s existence a secret until she agreed to return to the Gong family. That was what he promised her.

A trace of despondency washed over Gong Shaoying’s face. He knew just who exactly his son was searching for.

It was the young chap's twin sister—the daughter he had with Mu Qingcheng. According to his son, his daughter was given a beautiful name, Shishi.

Unexplainable joy and bliss filled him when he first learned that his beloved woman had given birth to twins of both genders for him.

Unfortunately, no matter how fast he tried to rush over to meet them, he ultimately failed to meet his daughter.

Back then, the hospital told him that she had passed away in that fire with her body reduced into ashes.

That piece of news nearly crippled him. If not for the fact that his son managed to survive the accident, he truly did not know what sort of insane things he would do in an act of fury.

Years passed, and he had eventually come to terms about that tragic fact.

This son of his, meanwhile, just could not accept it. He had been searching for his twin sister all this while, refusing to give up on any clues or chances.

The reason that he did not stop or dissuade his son from doing so might be due to him secretly hoping, too, for a miracle to happen.

Chapter 2439: I am willing to give up everything. (2)

The reason that he did not stop or dissuade his son from doing so might be due to him secretly hoping, too, for a miracle to happen.

Rationality, however, told him that he should not be so persistent with something already set in stone.

"It's been years since she passed away. It's about time you give up."

"What if she's still alive?" Gong Jie whispered this question with the intention to sound his father out.

"According to the hospital, your sister passed away in that car accident back then."

"But what if a miracle happened?" He kept his eyes trained on his father.

Gong Shaoying looked up and met his son's persistent yet obstinate gaze straight on with quivering lips, then his facial muscles started twitching. Even to this day, his eyes would involuntarily turn red and moist at the mention of his daughter. "If she's still alive... if a miracle really did happen... I-I'd be willing to give up everything in exchange for her life." *Even if I had to give up my entire fortune.*

Those were not empty words.

Mu Qingcheng was his most beloved woman, and he loved her madly so.

His failure to see her for the last time became his biggest regret in life. Hence, after her demise, be it out of comfort or warmth, he would keep the women who looked the slightest bit like her at his side.

Ever since he lost her, he had fallen in love with women who held resemblance to her.

His son frowned upon hearing that.

Even if you had to give up your hatred?

Gong Jie really wanted to ask his father that question, but it would come across as too abrupt to the latter. Instead, he sighed and said, "I'll take my leave if there's nothing else you want to say."

He then proceeded to leave the study. While doing so, he saw his father slowly walking toward the window, where he placed a hand on the edge and looked out to gaze at a moonflower garden; the middle-aged man looked ever so lonely from the back.

...

Constant whipping sounds and moans of pain could be heard coming from the basement.

Kneeling on the floor of a detention cell in a straight line were several men, who appeared to be in very sorry states with their clothes in tatters while bearing visible bloody marks, which were left behind by whip lashes.

The young chief commander, meanwhile, was sitting in a chair with one leg elegantly crossed over the other.

These men kneeling before him now were the few bodyguards who had been tailing him prior.

"Stop."

His subordinate immediately put away the whip at his order.

Gong Jie swept them with his gaze before parting his lips to ask, "How much have you told my father?"

Amid the silence, dust danced about in the air as a beam of ray shone in from the ceiling window and illuminated the men's faces; they appeared to be all disheveled and could be seen bearing with the pain.

His voice took a harsher tone. "Looks like my words hold no weight to you guys."

"P-Please... simmer down, s-second young master..."

Looking all expressionless, he tossed his burnt-out cigarette on the ground while keeping his eyes fixed on them as he enunciated, "What did I say back then? Not a word about that woman is to reach my father's ears, but what have you done?"

The group of men kept their silence, and that got him sneering. "Very well."

He rose to his feet and approached them while speaking frigidly, "I recall warning you guys that I'll shoot you to death if you reveal anything to my father."

Among the bodyguards, one lifted his head. He showed no fear of death as he calmly said, "You can punish us however you want; we won't betray our master or hide anything from him when he asks! However..."

Chapter 2440: Kickoff Ceremony

“You can punish us however you want; we won’t betray our master or hide anything from him when he asks! However, we didn’t go into the details. On your account, we didn’t reveal anything specific even though we’ve got detailed information about that woman’s background.”

“Oh?” He shot them a look. “And what info is that?”

“That woman is likely to be the long-lost eldest miss of the Gong family. We’ve looked into her background and ascertained her identity.”

His eyes glinted. “How did you manage to get your hands on that information?”

“It’s not hard to check one’s background once we know their facial features.”

Their search was unlike how Gong Jie previously searched aimlessly for his sister sans a clue, which was indubitably akin to searching a needle in a haystack.

It was easy enough for anyone with a bit of connection, let alone a powerful and influential family like the Gongs, to investigate a person based on their target person’s features, especially since Yun Shishi was a public figure with a certain amount of fame.

“...”

He broke the silence after a moment. “So what did you say to my father?”

“The grandmaster asked about your whereabouts, but we only told him that you seem to be on intimate terms with a lady. He thinks that she’s your lover.”

...

“...Achoo!”

Located at the capital, Yun Shishi suddenly let out a sneeze.

Early that morning, she arrived at the venue of the kickoff ceremony as informed by her manager the prior night.

“Shouldn’t it be held a few days later?” The actress voiced out her confusion to her manager, only to hear him say that the staff responsible for organizing the kickoff ceremony had made a blunder and picked the wrong date. Thus, when they realized the mistake, they called everyone at night to inform them that it would be held the next day, instead.

“Tomorrow’s an auspicious day! There are no other better days after this date.”

It was held at a village located next to a mountain pass, where the capital faction’s historic buildings were still being preserved. It had apparently undergone renovation, though. Despite the village retaining its ancient allure, many modern elements had been added, which made the view more unique.

This village would be where they would film the female protagonist growing up.

The moment she arrived there, she noticed Gu Xingze, wearing sunglasses, being surrounded by a horde of reporters, and saw his aloof yet handsome-looking face at a glance.

Her expression relaxed a little.

She heard the news last night; he had been cast as the male lead while Hua Jin would join the production team as the second male lead.

As soon as the superstar's ban was lifted, he posted a tweet on Weibo to announce that he had been cast in a new drama.

Having suspected that he might have silently left the showbiz industry at one point, his fervent fans were moved to tears when they knew of his comeback,

The appeal of the heavenly king was just unstoppable!

In no time, that tweet topped the search rankings, fully displaying his extraordinary popularity, despite him having silently vanished and been banned from the industry for the past few months.

She was sincerely happy for the superstar when she learned about this from her manager last night.

The actress was in a daze when Hua Jin walked up to her and tapped her on the shoulder. "Shishi, you're here!"

"Mm!"

She turned around, only to see him standing right before her with a big, mesmerizing smile on his face.

"Good morning."

To which, the actor retorted, "It's not morning anymore."