

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 241

Inside the box was a life-like doll. Its eyes had been gouged out, leaving only the white part. There was a long opening in its belly, stitched up with hemp. It was covered with blood and its fingers had long pointed nails.

The doll looked real. Lin Xichen might be intelligent and brave but he was still a child.

Seeing the doll, he screamed in fright.

“What’s the matter?” Hearing her son’s scream, Lin Xinyan ran out and saw what was on the bed. She herself was shocked. She quickly pulled her son into her arms, covered his eyes and soothed him, “Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid. Mommy is here.”

“Mommy, what?” Lin Ruixi had showered, her hair was blown dry and she wore clean clothes. She was curious what had made her brother scream so loudly.

Lin Xinyan reacted quickly. Before her daughter saw what was on the bed, she pulled her into her arms and shielded her eyes.

Lin Ruixi was timid. If Lin Xichen was frightened on seeing it, she would be scared out of her mind.

Lin Xinyan could not figure out who would send such an object. All she wanted to do was to get rid of it as quickly as possible lest the kids were traumatized.

She patted her son, “Don’t be afraid, Mommy is here. You hold your sister. Mommy will close the box.”

Lin Xichen was scared stiff. He was still trembling a little. Nestled in his mother's arms, he held her tight, saying, "Mommy, I'm scared."

He did not dare to leave her side.

Lin Xinyan did not dare to look directly at the doll. It was not only a visual impact but also a psychological one. She had given birth to children. This was an abused doll and so it had a strong impact on her.

"Mommy." Lin Xichen shivered, clutching Lin Xinyan's clothes tight and not daring to move.

Lin Xinyan held the two children and backed slowly towards the door. She pressed the two children's heads tightly against her body.

Zong Jinghao seemingly heard the commotion coming from the room. He came over while still putting on his clothes. He arrived at the door and his hands that was buttoning his shirt paused momentarily. Hurriedly he entered, gathered the kids in his arms and rushed out of the room.

Shen Peichuan came up to their rooms intending to ask them to lunch in the afternoon. Zong Jinghao handed the two children to him with instructions, "Watch them personally."

"Is something the matter?" Shen Peichuan asked worriedly as the expression on Zong Jinghao's face was troubling.

Zong Jinghao himself was uncertain who could have done this. He patted Shen Peichuan on the shoulder.

Then he returned to the room.

Lin Xinyan was standing there motionless like a statue, staring at the horror on the bed.

Zong Jinghao put his arms around her and buried her face in his chest. "Don't look anymore."

Lin Xinyan closed her eyes, trembling slightly, "Who could have done that?"

She was scared by the doll and at the same time, afraid of the person who would do this.

Apparently the culprit knew she had two children and the purpose was to frighten them.

"I'll find out." Zong Jinghao glanced at the foul object on the bed, his expression solemn and silent.

His arms were long enough to reach the bedding by just leaning over a little. He held the blanket and jerked hard. The blanket folded over the box, covering it.

He patted Lin Xinyan on the back with his palms which were wide and warm. Then he rubbed her spine and spoke soothingly, "It's a toy, don't be afraid."

Lin Xinyan grunted in reply but she did not give the bed a second glance.

From Lin Xichen, Shen Peichuan knew what had happened. He looked solemn like Zong Jinghao and speculated, "Could it be He Ruize?"

This man seemed to have disappeared into thin air. None of the men he sent out could find any trace of him, not even a lead.

He had gone into hiding. When would he suddenly reappear?

It had been said that we could protect ourselves better in an open fight than in an ambushed position.

“Bring the staff who sent the box.” Furthermore, there are surveillance cameras in the hotel. There has got to be some lead.

“Mummy.” Lin Xichen was really frightened this time. His face was a little pale. He ran over and laid in Lin Xinyan’s arms. Lin Xinyan hugged him tightly, soothing him, “Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid.”

Lin Ruixi did not see it. She sat in a chair by herself, looking around, not understanding what was happening to everybody. Suddenly they are behaving so oddly. Everyone is so serious.

The afternoon sun lit up the hall. Perhaps it was the crowd or the bright sunlight, Lin Xichen felt better.

After a short while, Shen Peichuan and Su Zhan brought the hotel manager and the staff who delivered the box.

Shen Peichuan shook his head at Zong Jinghao. The perpetrator seemed to have figured out the surveillance layout in the hotel. He had avoided the surveillance cameras. Even when he was seen, there was only a back view. His face was completely out of view, and he wore clothing that covered himself up very well, making it impossible to distinguish his gender.

The only lead now was the staff member. It was not known yet if he could provide any clue.

“You have probably heard who we are. Even if your director, Mr. Bai is here, he will show us due respect. Tell us everything you know. We don’t like to use brutal force but when necessary we will and people get crippled. Think carefully before you speak.” Shen Peichuan’s hand rested heavily on the staff member’s shoulder.

The waiter was so scared that he almost fell on his knees. He was shaking and his voice trembled.

“That person, the one in the surveillance tape... He wore a black mask and a black cap. He wore the brim of the cap very low. I could not see his face clearly. He just gave me the box and gave to me... 500 and asked me to deliver the box to the room. I don't know what was inside and I don't know the person. Really, what I say is true.” The waiter was trembling and every word was honest.

“Really?” Su Zhan scrutinized him, asking demandingly.

“Yes, yes.” The waiter shakily took out the five hundred from his pocket. They were stacked together and crumpled. “This, this is what he gave me.”

He was just a junior hotel staff. His salary was not high. If someone gave a tip of 500, which is equal to his salary for a few days, most certainly he would be tempted.

Furthermore, it was just for delivering a gift. The box was decorated so beautifully. Delivering a gift was a good deed.

In addition, he was paid to do it. Definitely he would agree.

Who could predict that it would bring so much trouble?

The staff member was full of regret.

“It's true. What I say is true. Please believe me.” The staff member collapsed onto the floor, sitting there. “If I have known, I would not have accepted this 500.”

Su Zhan was displeased. How could such a big grown up man be so scared?

Apparently he would not be able to provide any useful leads.

“Let him go.” Lin Xinyan massaged her brows, saying, “Obviously the culprit has been planning this for a long time and must have made careful arrangements. We will definitely not find anything immediately.”

Su Zhan felt that Lin Xinyan's words made sense and Shen Peichuan agreed. The staff was just a coward and he did not look like an accomplice.

Suddenly, Lin Xinyan remembered something. She lifted her head suddenly, "Could it be someone from the Wen family?"

Nonetheless she had not been back to B City yet. Other than these group of people with her now, nobody knew she learnt to make the 'xiang yun sha' silk.

Very quickly, she ruled out the Wen family. And so, only the untraceable He Ruize was left.

Other than him, there was no one she could think of who could do something like this!

"This happened in our hotel, I'll do everything in my ability to find out who did it. I've already called Mr. Bai. He'll be here soon." The manager was a careful man. He knew that this was beyond his ability to handle.

He could not afford to offend these people and so it was best that he informed Bai Yinning at once.

Bai Yinning had just arrived home. Before he could take a rest, he received the hotel manager's phone call.

Immediately, he rushed over.

"Any leads?" He came over on his wheelchair, looking at Lin Xinyan, apparently very concerned and asked, "You are okay, aren't you?"

Lin Xinyan replied, "I'm fine. It's Xi who's scared out of his wits."

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“This happened in my territory. I should be held accountable. I will certainly give you an explanation.”

On one hand, he and Zong Jinghao were partners. On the other, anyone doing this in his territory was challenging him.

He could not tolerate anyone doing something so outrageous in his hotel. How could he remain in control of the business if this was allowed to go unpunished?

As a leader, there were some things that he must overlook and be generous about. Similarly, there were other things that must never be condoned.

The hotel manager who seemed to have found someone to take over this responsibility, walked over and said, “I have checked the monitoring recordings. The perpetrator seems to be very familiar with the surveillance layout of our hotel. He has avoided many cameras that can take pictures of the face. We just questioned the staff who delivered the gift box. He is not able to provide any leads...”

Bai Yinning lifted his gaze to Zong Jinghao who had been silent so far. Behind the sofa were French windows. It was a bright and sunny day. He was leaning with his back against the window and Bai Yinning could not see his facial expression under the contrast. After some thought, Bai Yinning said, “Obviously, the culprit has targeted Ms. Lin. Mr. Zong, do you have any suspects?”

When Shen Peichuan and Su Zhan were questioning the staff member, he had thought over the details of the incident. The result of sending such a doll was to give Lin Xinyan and the children a fright, at most. It was unlikely He Ruize would take this risk.

Doing such a thing did not benefit him much. If he was still obsessed with Lin Xinyan, he would wait for an opportunity to abduct her again, or abduct the children to threaten him.

It was obvious that this act would not benefit him at all.

In fact, it could very well leave clues for them to find and capture him.

“Mr. Bai, this is your territory. You should give me an account of what happened. In two days’ time, can you give me a satisfactory answer?”

Bai Yinning frowned, he had not expected Zong Jinghao to give him the responsibility. Was it not characteristic of Zong Jinghao to personally go after and punish any culprit who dared to harm his family?

Zong Jinghao smiled, “Mr. Bai, I believe you can get to the bottom of this. After all, since arriving here, we have not crossed roads with anyone. If there was anyone we might have offended, it has to be the woman who was with you.”

Zong Jinghao had pointed out something he overlooked. Does he suspect Yao Qingqing?

Nevertheless, in that incident, it was apparent Yao Qingqing did not hold Lin Xinyan responsible. It was her cousin who started the misunderstanding. Furthermore, he believed Yao Qingqing would never have done such a thing.

“Mr. Bai could investigate to find out the truth.”

Zong Jinghao did not want to discuss further with him. He picked up Lin Xichen from Lin Xinyan’s arms. This was the first time he held his son. The boy was robust, a bit heavier than his sister and even though they were about the same size, the boy was also a bit taller.

Lin Xichen just wanted to be held by someone. It did not matter whom. He did not want to be alone because his mind would drift away and the doll would appear in his thoughts. Every time he thought about it, he would tremble.

“Of course, if you cannot bear to do it, I would investigate on my own. Nevertheless, Mr. Bai, you might not like my methods and you might be offended.” Zong Jinghao finished speaking and gazed sharply at the stunned face of Bai Yinning. His gaze moved away immediately as he left with his son in his arms.

Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan looked at each other. Had Zong Jinghao already gotten a suspect in mind?

“If it is really her, I shall give you an explanation.” Solemnly, Bai Yinning addressed Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan said nothing as she was feeling a little tired. She hugged her daughter and asked everyone to eat something. They had been through a long, tiring journey only to experience something so unpleasant immediately upon arriving at the hotel. No one had eaten yet. Solving the matter was urgent but food must come first now.

“Peichuan, you go ahead with the others. I’ll go and get Jinghao.” Lin Xinyan stood up.

“Ms. Lin, let me hold Ruixi. She must be hungry. It’s already two o’clock.”

Lin Xinyan caressed her daughter’s forehead and passed her to Qin Ya.

Obediently, the little girl climbed into Qin Ya’s arms.

Zong Jinghao did not return to the room with Lin Xichen in his arms, nor was he in the hotel. Lin Xinyan looked everywhere in the hotel but he was nowhere in sight. Finally, she saw Zong Jinghao in the backyard.

He was sitting beside Lin Xichen on the steps. Two silhouettes, a huge one and a tiny one. Lin Xinyan slowed down her pace. They seemed to be talking.

“Xi, when you grow up, what type of person do you want to be?”

Lin Xichen sat with his legs closed together and his arms hugging his own body.

Without thinking, he blurted out, “When I grow up, I want to be someone who can protect mommy.”

“How can you protect her if you are frightened of a dummy?”

Lin Xichen blinked and the image of the doll appeared in his mind again. “But that dummy was so horrifying...”

Zong Jinghao interrupted him, “It’s not real.”

Lin Xichen could not argue with that. It’s true. The doll is not a real human. It is lifelike, that’s all. In reality, it is just a lump of plastic.

He clenched his little hands tightly, saying “I... I am not afraid.”

Nevertheless, in his mind, he was still fearful.

He was only pretending to be unafraid.

He didn’t want to lose his dignity in front of Zong Jinghao.

“So, do you dare to go with me and look again?”

Lin Xichen was silent.

Lin Xinyan nearly lost her footing when she heard Zong Jinghao saying that. Lin Xichen was already frightened out of his wits. Letting him see it again would surely leave a mark in his mind. How traumatized would he be?

“Xiao Xi.” Lin Xinyan ran over quickly, hugging her son. She glared at Zong Jinghao, speaking sternly, “You know he is frightened, why do you want him to see it again? He will be scared out of his mind!”

Zong Jinghao did not reply Lin Xinyan’s question. Instead, he looked at the boy in her arms, and asked again, “Do you dare?”

“Zong Jinghao!” In her fury and anxiety, Lin Xinyan yelled out his name.

Zong Jinghao ignored her. He continued speaking to Lin Xichen, “How long can you remain in your mommy’s arms? How long can she protect you?”

Lin Xichen opened his eyes wide. His long eyelashes fluttered. One day he would grow up and face many unknown challenges. If he could not overcome this, how could he withstand any pressure in the future?

He mustered all his courage, looked at Zong Jinghao and declared, “I dare.”

Even though at this moment he felt afraid, he wanted to challenge himself to make the attempt.

“Xi,” Lin Xinyan was worried.

“Mommy, don’t you worry, you can only protect me for a moment, not for a lifetime. When I become big and strong, I shall protect you,” Lin Xichen spoke firmly.

Lin Xinyan was silent.

Zong Jinghao’s method was cruel but she could not say that he was wrong.

She was afraid. She was afraid that Lin Xichen could not withstand the shock.

He was so young. If something bad happened to him because of this scare, she would regret it for the rest of her life.

“He’s my son.” Zong Jinghao did not give any other explanation. Holding Lin Xichen’s hand, he walked towards the hotel.

They did not use the elevator but took the stairs instead.

Thump, thump...

Only the thumping of footsteps on the stairs echoed in the empty stairwell, adding to it a sense of loneliness and suspense.

“In this world, there are no ghosts or gods, we are the ones who frighten ourselves.” Zong Jinghao deliberately took the deserted staircase instead of the elevator.

Lin Xichen understood his intentions.

The higher up the staircase they went, the more anxious he felt. Instinctively, he held Zong Jinghao’s hand tight.

Zong Jinghao did nothing. He let him hold his hand.

At the doorway, Zong Jinghao pushed open the door, “If you change your mind, you can turn back.”

Lin Xichen held Zong Jinghao’s hand. Shaking his head, he said, “I don’t regret.”

He must not be afraid of a dummy.

Zong Jinghao turned to look at his face. Being able to do this, he had already succeeded.

He had overcome the fear in his mind.

Or else, he would not have the courage to come into this room.

Zong Jinghao was not going to let him look again. All he wanted was that he overcome the fear in his mind. Otherwise, this would truly be a darkness in his heart and might even affect his personality in the future.

He was consoled. Of course, he knew that his son was only five years old.

Lin Xichen let go of Zong Jinghao's hand and walked into the room by himself.

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In his mind, he told himself over and over again. That is not real. If I am afraid, I'm being tricked.

He must not be afraid.

Steadily he walked towards the bed, then he held the blanket and jerked hard to remove it. However, there was nothing under the covers. He turned around, looked at Zong Jinghao who was standing at the doorway and asked, "Where's that doll?"

When Zong Jinghao was bringing him up here, someone was sent to get rid of it.

He was proud of Lin Xichen's bravery and he felt comforted as well.

He walked in and his huge palm caressed Lin Xichen's head affectionately. "You are a brave boy!"

"Of course," Lin Xichen lifted his head in pride. He looked a little arrogant. "I am mummy's son. Of course I'm brave. I promised her that when I grow up, I'll protect her, but..."

Just now when we arrived, mummy seemed upset.

What should I do?

"Mummy seemed upset." Lin Xichen blinked his eyes.

Zong Jinghao noticed that. "Let's go," he said.

He took Lin Xichen downstairs and sent him to the private room to have dinner with Shen Peichuan and the others. Then, he went to find Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan was still standing on the steps. She was struggling with herself and felt deeply troubled.

She was rather regretful that she did not stop them just now.

Seeing Lin Xinyan, Zong Jinghao stopped. Then he walked steadily towards her, "You have to trust our son."

Lin Xinyan turned and looked at him standing not far away from her. Of course she believed in her son, but he was only five!

"Zong Jinghao, are you insane?" She rushed over, punching and kicking him. He stood unmoving like a mountain, letting her vent her anger.

Lin Xinyan was too emotional. She flung her hands about and Zong Jinghao was worried that she would hurt herself. He grabbed her hands, and held her in his arms tightly, saying, "Calm down."

"If you let him look, it means that he will get hurt for a second time? How can I keep calm? If he is frightened out of his mind, I'll hate myself for the rest of my life!"

Zong Jinghao rubbed her back again and again, speaking softly to her, "Good girl, he won't be scared out of his mind."

His hand and his voice seemed to have some type of power. In his embrace, Lin Xinyan gradually calmed down.

She raised her head and looked at him. So close to him, Lin Xinyan could see every hair on his face. His skin was very smooth. No, she was getting carried away. She willed her thoughts back to her son, "How is he?"

“He’s fine,” Zong Jinghao sighed softly, “In future, please trust me. I know what I am doing.”

Lin Xinyan lowered her eyes as she explained, “It’s not that I do not believe in you. It’s just ...”

“You have no faith in your son?” Zong Jinghao interrupted her.

Zong Jinghao knew that she was worried. She was worried her son would be hurt.

“He is a boy. He needs to grow up. In future, he will have to face real blood-and-flesh humans. Sometimes, the human heart is more horrifying than that doll. He has to learn to face and overcome. Being overprotective might not be good for him.”

She understood what Zong Jinghao meant but her heart ached for her child.

“In future, whatever you want to do, can you possibly ask for my permission first?” Lin Xinyan was not as tough as Zong Jinghao.

As if aware of the incorrectness of her words, she quickly explained, “I mean things concerning our son- discuss with me first.”

She did not want Zong Jinghao to misunderstand her and think that she was trying to interfere with his work.

Zong Jinghao put on a smile that lit up his face. Teasingly, he said, “And if I do not discuss with you?”

Lin Xinyan lifted her hand, pretending to hit him, “I’ll beat you...”

Zong Jinghao caught her hand and planted a kiss on her palm, “Hit me here.”

Holding her hand, he placed it on his face.

Lin Xinyan was only kidding. Hitting a man on the face was no laughing matter.

She snatched back her hand, "Stop playing."

Zong Jinghao did not continue teasing her. The disagreement over the doll incident had more or less been resolved and the atmosphere had cleared much. He held her shoulders, saying, "You must be hungry. Let's go and eat something."

Lin Xinyan was hungry. Indeed, she had gone without food for nearly a day.

After Yao Qingqing's clothing store was destroyed, she took care of the aftermath. Then she stayed at home without looking for a job during this time.

Alas, Bai Yinning went to her house and found her there.

She seemed like she had just come back from shopping. Seeing Bai Yinning, she was surprised at first and then quickly ran over to him, asking, "What are you doing here?"

Bai Yinning smiled calmly, "I just came to see you, how have you been?"

Yao Qingqing smiled, "Very good."

The air was still.

What they most dreaded of came true- they ran out of topics to chat about.

The atmosphere was embarrassing.

Bai Yinning spoke first, looking at the food in Yao Qingqing's hands, "Eating so late?"

“Yes,” Yao Qingqing lowered her head.

“Aren’t you inviting me inside?” Bai Yinning asked smilingly.

Yao Qingqing hurried in front to lead the way, saying, “I hoped you would come.”

“Do you live alone?” Bai Yinning asked while they were entering the lift.

Yao Qingqing nodded her head, “Yes, after I reached adolescence, I hardly go back to see my adoptive parents. They don’t treat me very well. I don’t really like going back. When I still had my clothing store, I did save some money. I’ll be looking for a job soon.”

“That’s good.” Bai Yinning regretted coming to see her. When she was in the orphanage, she was a very simple girl and she had the best relationship with him. After being adopted, she had a bad life until they met again. He helped her a bit and her life took a turn for the better.

How could she do something like that?

“Are you here to see me for something?” Yao Qingqing held tight to the plastic bag in her hands as she asked.

“No. I can just come to visit you, can’t I?” Bai Yinning was still smiling.

Yao Qingqing smiled, saying, “You can, of course, I’ll be glad. If there is anything you need, please tell me honestly.”

As she spoke, the elevator stopped.

Gao Yuan pushed Bai Yinning out of the elevator, while Yao Qingqing walked ahead of them and opened the door.

The studio apartment she lived in was small but had all the necessities. Furthermore, it was kept tidy and neat.

“It’s just a small place.” Yao Qingqing put down the things she was holding on the table. She served Bai Yinning a cup of water.

“Thank you.” Bai Yinning reached out and took it, holding it in his hand without drinking. Instead, he looked around the room and finally fixed his eyes on a photo frame on the bedside table.

It was a photo of him and her posing together when they were children.

He recalled that it was taken on the day he was adopted by Bai Hongfei.

Yao Qingqing came over, picked up the photo frame and looked at the children in the picture. She laughed, saying, “At that time, you were so young and so was I. How I wish we had not been separated.”

Bai Yinning’s was moved, not by Yao Qingqing, but by his past memories.

“I never thought you would still keep it.”

Bai Yinning was quite surprised that he could still see a photo of himself taken at the time he was living in the orphanage.

Yao Qingqing’s finger pointed gently on the boy’s face in the photo. She spoke, “After I was adopted, my life was really sad. Each time I find it too unbearable, I would look at him and I eventually found the courage to go on living.”

Obviously, there was a deeper meaning behind her words but Bai Yinning pretended not to understand. “I have something to do, so I’ve got to go. If there is any help you need, you can contact me.”

“I’m sorry. I...” Only then did Yao Qingqing realize what had accidentally slipped her tongue.

She was a little upset.

“It’s alright.” Bai Yinning did not mind at all. He could not reply and so he pretended not to understand.

To him, she was just a friend or a family member.

There was nothing else.

“I’ll walk you out,” Yao Qingqing put down the photo frame, feeling a little flustered.

Bai Yinning glanced at the children in the frame. It was obvious that the photo was reprinted. At that time, photos were not laminated and could not be kept for that long.

“Don’t put such a photo by your bedside.”

Yao Qingqing looked at him, as if to say something but stopped herself. “Okay,” she just replied.

“Let’s go.”

Gao Yuan pushed him out of the room and Yao Qingqing walked with them to the elevator. Bai Yinning waved to her, “It’s alright, you may go back.”

Yao Qingqing did not go back. She stood in front of the elevator.

Soon, the elevator door closed slowly, blocking her view. Gao Yuan spoke his mind, “Ms. Yao looks very kind, I don’t think she did it.”

But Bai Yinning's expression showed he had doubts.

He believed that Zong Jinghao would not make presumptions without proof. Yet, he doubted Yao Qingqing was the type who could do such things.

"You send someone to watch her. See what she does at home everyday."

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Gao Yuan was mystified. Since they believed it was not Yao Qingqing, what was the purpose in observing her?

“Do as I say,” Bai Yinning did not explain. He did not believe she had done it but he still wanted her to be monitored.

Zong Jinghao would not say such things without some form of evidence. He must have discovered something. The person who kidnaped Lin Xinyan would not be this despicable. This would only alert those involved. Furthermore it gave the perpetrator neither advantage nor benefit.

Lin Xinyan had only been here for a short while. She had offended no one. The only person she could have said to have a conflict with was Yao Qingqing. Though it was resolved at the time, Yao Qingqing’s clothing store had indeed been closed down.

If she had held a grudge, it could be possible.

Ding...

The elevator sounded and the door slid open slowly. A man in a leather jacket stood at the door with a cigarette hanging from his mouth. Seeing Bai Yinning in the wheelchair inside the elevator, he snorted coldly and muttered to himself, “Damn cripple.”

Immediately, Gao Yuan was infuriated. He was about to strike when Bai Yinning stopped him. This man was not worth teaching a lesson. From his appearance and dressing, it was obvious that he was a common lowlife.

There is a Chinese saying, “Rather offend a gentleman than a scoundrel.”

Gao Yuan glared at the man in the leather jacket and then pushed Bai Yinning away from the community area.

“Seriously, all types of people exist in this world. This one’s character is rotten.” Gao Yuan muttered furiously.

Bai Yinning lifted his head and glanced at him, “Is it worthwhile getting so upset over something so small?”

“No, I don’t even know him,” Gao Yuan replied.

“Then why are you angry?”

“I’m angry over what he mumbled...”

“Since he’s not important, there is no reason to take his words to heart. If I were to get angry every time I hear something like that, I’m afraid I would have died of anger a long time ago.”

At the beginning, it was difficult for him to accept it. With the passage of time, he encouraged himself. Words that did not benefit him, he would just ignore.

Gao Yuan knew that he should not carry on with this conversation since Bai Yinning was obviously a little unhappy. He wisely changed the topic and said, “I’ll make a call and get someone to come and observe Miss Yao.”

Gao Yuan had been with Bai Yinning for a long time. Bai Yinning understood what he was trying to do but he did not point it out.

“I’ll send you home to get some rest,” Gao Yuan said.

Bai Yinning nodded his head. He was really feeling tired.

At the hotel.

After lunch, Zong Jinghao took Shen Peichuan and Su Zhan out for a chat. Lin Xinyan did not know what they discussed.

She played with the two kids downstairs. She too had been traumatized and did not want to go upstairs.

It was a fear buried deep within the heart.

Qin Ya sat down next to her, and spoke with a deep emotion, "The year is ending soon."

Lin Xinyan laughed and said, "You want to go back?"

Qin Ya clasped her hands together and shook her head, answering, "No, I feel that time is passing fast. It has been half a year since we returned to China."

Lin Xinyan felt the same way. The past six months had not been peaceful at all. A lot of things had happened and she was able to see some people and some things much clearer.

"Yea, come on, let's go and watch a movie." Su Zhan held his car keys in his hand, twirling them around as he made his way towards them.

As soon as she saw him, Qin Ya tried to hide. She whispered to Lin Xinyan, "I'm going upstairs first."

Chasing her all the way upstairs, Su Zhan yelled, "Hey, where do you think you are hiding?"

Lin Xinyan looked at them, always squabbling and playing like a happy couple. She shook her head and laughed helplessly.

“Mummy, what are you laughing at?” Lin Ruixi rushed into her arms and hugged her neck the way a child would. “I just heard Uncle Su say they are going to the movies, I want to go too.”

Lin Xinyan pinched her little nose, saying, “You have sharp ears. Why didn’t I hear that?”

The little girl laughed gleefully. She replied, “My ears and my mouth are all great.”

Lin Xinyan hugged her, knowing that it was just a whim. She would be complaining anxiously all through the hour or two sitting in the cinema.

It was just impossible for her to sit still. Lin Xinyan took her to the cinema once. During the whole movie, she was picking her fingers and eating popcorn. At regular intervals, she asked, “When can I leave?”

She didn’t even know what the movie was about.

There was just no way she would bring her again.

“Papa, papa.” Suddenly Lin Ruixi saw Zong Jinghao walking towards them. She tore herself from Lin Xinyan’s arms and ran towards him, calling to him as she ran.

“Don’t run so fast,” he said as he bent down to pick her up lest she stumbled.

“Papa, papa, mummy is so unkind. I want to watch a movie but she won’t take me.” The moment she was in Zong Jinghao’s arms, she started to complain.

Lin Xinyan was speechless.

It was the same for Lin Xichen.

“Really?” Zong Jinghao laughed, speaking to his daughter in a pampering way. He glanced at Lin Xinyan and whispered in his daughter’s ear, “Tell me, how shall we punish her?”

The little girl blinked and tilted her head to one side, thinking hard. “How about kissing her?”

Lin Xinyan was again rendered speechless.

Zong Jinghao kept mum too.

Lin Xichen was also silent.

“Zong Jinghao!” Lin Xinyan snatched the child from his arms, “What have you been teaching her?”

Where did she learn how to say such a thing?

Zong Jinghao stared at the little girl silently, he was surprised to hear Lin Ruixi say such words all of a sudden.

He wanted to yell at Lin Xinyan telling her it was not him and that she should not suspect him without a reason.

He would never teach their daughter such nonsense!

His tone turned solemn and he looked directly at their daughter, and asked, “Ruixi, tell papa honestly, why do you think kissing is a punishment?”

“This is shown on TV. If the lady is disobedient, her husband will kiss her. Then she becomes obedient.”

Lin Xinyan was stunned.

Zong Jinghao smiled and stroked his daughter's head, "In future, let's stop watching those unhealthy TV shows, okay?"

Lin Ruixi blinked and asked, "What's unhealthy?"

Zong Jinghao was again at a loss for words.

Lin Xichen could not stand it any longer. So, he interrupted and said "Come over and I will tell you."

The little girl was overjoyed. Skipping and jumping, she went over to him. Leaning on the table, Lin Xichen was playing the Super Brain Game. He pressed the pause button and then talked to his sister about what unhealthy meant.

"Xiao Rui, let me tell you what unhealthy is. The TV show you watched is like plain water. It contains no nutrients. It is not as healthy as eating eggs and pudding."

Lin Ruixi had only a vague idea of what he meant.

Lin Xichen had no intention of explaining clearly. Even if he did, she would not understand. He rubbed his little sister's head, and sneered, "What is contained in here?"

Lin Ruixi slapped his hand, complaining, "Don't touch my hair."

"I just did..." Lin Xichen touched her again on purpose. The little girl was annoyed and she came after him, trying to beat him.

The two of them were chasing each other around the table.

Lin Xinyan was afraid they would fall and get injured. She instructed them, "You two, slow down a little."

“Little sister wants to beat me,” Lin Xichen paused long enough to reply Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan sighed. These two kids are two extremes.

One was too grown up, the other too innocent.

“Just now, you suspected it was me?”

Zong Jinghao was stretched out on the sofa. His long elegant legs were crossed and his arms were stretched out behind Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan coughed. Just now, she really had thought that it was Zong Jinghao who taught Lin Ruixi to say those words.

“I’m sorry. I misjudged you.” Lin Xinyan believed that she was wrong and she should admit that it was her mistake.

He leapt down and looked into her eyes, “Is that all you are going to do?”

I have already apologized. What else is there to do?

“Give me a kiss and I will forgive you.” His face came closer and as he breathed in and out, his breath lingered on the tip of her nose. It alternated between warmth and coolness which gave her goose bumps. She couldn’t help rubbing her arm, uttering, “Can you be more serious?”

Zong Jinghao did not know how to reply.

Am I not serious?

Asking you to kiss me is defined as not being serious?

“Just now, what did you call Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan out for?” Lin Xinyan tried to divert the subject.

“Give them instructions.”

There seemed to be haloes around his deep dark eyes as he smiled knowingly. Lifting her chin, he told her, “Don’t change the subject.”

Lin Xinyan went silent.

She made a decision. Instead of being seduced and romanced by him, she would take the initiative. She curled her lips into a smile and her eye became crescents. It was a beautiful smile.

Her gaze was brilliant, revealing dazzling white teeth. She was mischievous-looking and yet desirable.

She rarely smiled at Zong Jinghao in this manner. For a moment, he felt shaken.

While he was still stunned, Lin Xinyan planted a kiss on his face. Her action was so swift that by the time Zong Jinghao realized it, she was gone.

Zong Jinghao was still star struck.

Is this supposed to be a kiss? Her lips was in contact with my skin for barely one second or even less?

Anyway, who wants a kiss on the cheek?

He wanted to be kissed on his lips.

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 245

In the middle of the night, Lin Xinyan was sleeping soundly. Something touched her face and she nudged. Between sleep and consciousness, she felt someone kissing her from her cheeks to her mouth...

She opened her eyes and gazed directly into a pair of clear bright eyes looking back at her.

“Why don’t you go to sleep?” Her voice was raspy as she was just waking up.

Zong Jinghao laughed, “You awake?”

Lin Xinyan stroked her hair. Aren’t I awake?

This is an unusual way of waking someone up.

Zong Jinghao put a coat in her hands, “Let’s go. I’m going to show you something.”

Lin Xinyan looked at the two children beside her. They were sleeping soundly, their cheeks pinkish and ruddy. How sweet their sleep!

“What about them?” Lin Xinyan did not want to leave them alone.

“It’s just in the next room.”

Zong Jinghao had arranged everything.

Even their rooms had been changed. It was because Lin Xinyan had been traumatized and the doll incident still haunted her.

He put the coat on Lin Xinyan and pulled it close around her. She got out of bed. Zong Jinghao put his arm around her shoulders and they left the room.

When he closed the door, he glanced at the two children in bed, making sure they were not waken up. Then he closed the door softly.

In the room next door, Shen Peichuan was also awake. He was on the sofa having Chinese tea. On the tea table in front of him was a complete tea set: a teapot and six small blue and white porcelain teacups. The whole room was filled with the fragrance of tea.

“You’re here.” Shen Peichuan put down the cup and stood up to greet her.

Lin Xinyan smiled, “You’re still up.”

“I can’t sleep.” Shen Peichuan’s eyes flashed with anger, “If anyone plays tricks under my watch, I cannot sleep until I’ve caught the culprit.”

Instantly, Lin Xinyan understood why she was asked to come. Could there be new discoveries?

Otherwise they wouldn’t ask me to come.

“You’ve found something so fast?” Lin Xinyan was a little surprised.

“Not for certain, but it shouldn’t be long till we affirm it.” There was another group who had not reported back yet- those sent by Shen Peichuan to Yao Qingqing’s old home.

Zong Jinghao held her as they sat down. He took the remote control from the table and turned on the screen on the wall.

In a short moment, the screen flashed, “Who is Mr. Bai?”

On the screen, a man wearing a leather jacket was looking at Yao Qingqing in a sinister way.

Shen Peichuan was afraid that Lin Xinyan would be confused. So, he explained to her, "Jinghao suspected this woman and he informed Bai Yinning about her. It was actually just an excuse to use Bai Yinning. Because of his special relationship with Yao Qingqing, to find out where she lives is not a difficult task. Sure enough, after Bai Yinning left the hotel, he went to find Yao Qingqing."

The man sent by Shen Peichuan tailed them and discovered Yao Qingqing's residential address.

After Bai Yinning had left, the man took out some money and knocked on Yao Qingqing's door. He gave her the money, saying that it was from Bai Yinning. At that time, the man in the leather jacket came to snatch the money from Yao Qingqing. As they struggled, Shen Peichuan's man attached a surveillance camera on the TV.

From that camera was obtained this video of the man in the leather jacket asking Yao Qingqing who Mr. Bai was.

Lin Xinyan raised her eyes and stared at Shen Peichuan, "How do you know what Zong Jinghao wants?"

She remembered that Zong Jinghao had carried Lin Xichen away after speaking.

He had not interacted with Shen Peichuan at all.

It was after their meal that he called them out.

"I received his text message after Jinghao left." It was also at that moment that he knew Zong Jinghao's intentions.

When he left at that time, it was to implicate that since he had given the task to Bai Yinning, he would no longer interfere. In fact, it was just a ruse.

Presumably, Bai Yinning was still unaware that he had been used.

Lin Xinyan glanced at Zong Jinghao quietly. This man's mind is too deep.

It was so deep that it frightened her. How could anyone's thoughts be so complicated and also always ahead of things?

He had indeed used someone while that person had no knowledge whatsoever that he had been taken advantage of.

"Is it possible that one day, you would sell me off while I was still counting the money you received for selling me?" Lin Xinyan felt that this was a possibility. She felt that her own IQ was way below Zong Jinghao's.

Zong Jinghao held her in his arms, and replied, "No."

He could not bear to part with her. He did not even have enough time for loving her.

In the video, Yao Qingqing was so angry that her face was red and she was trembling all over. "You don't have to bother who he is. You've got the money. Just get lost!"

The man in the leather jacket was not satisfied. He did not let go of Yao Qingqing, "Sister, although this little money is enough for me to spend a while, you should know my appetite."

"I have no more money!" Yao Qingqing shouted at him.

Slap!

A palm landed on Yao Qingqing's face. The man in the leather jacket grabbed Yao Qingqing's collar and threw her to the ground, sat atop her body and

squeezed her throat, “You’d better be honest with me. Otherwise I will publicize your scandal until you feel too ashamed to continue living.”

“Your father forced me,” Yao Qingqing’s muffled shout could be heard. She did not fight back but the hands on the ground were clenched tight into fists.

She knew that she could not beat this man and fighting back would only make him attack more viciously.

“Huh, bitch!” The man in the leather jacket let go of Yao Qingqing and stuffed the money into his pocket. Then he glared at her as she tried to get up from the floor and threatened, “You’d better be honest with me. Go and get more money. It was a good clothing store and you had it closed down. Now you don’t even have any income. I tell you, Yao Qingqing, I don’t care whether you sell your body or rob a bank. Every month, give me 20,000. If there is one cent less, I will kill you!”

After threatening her with those cruel words, the man in the leather jacket left the room and closed the door with a loud bang.

Yao Qingqing sat on the floor and wept.

Lin Xinyan looked anxious, “What does this mean?” What she did not understand was why Zong Jinghao suspected her.

“It means that Yao Qingqing is not as innocent as she seems on the surface. No one can live in circumstances of constantly being threatened and deprived and still maintain a pure heart. Do you know? The person I sent to give money to her, pretending it is from Bai Yinning, well, she paid him too.”

Lin Xinyan did not understand. “Why did she pay him?”

“She did not want Bai Yinning to know about the man in the leather jacket and that they were related.”

It was obvious she was hiding something from Bai Yinning.

“Do you want to ask me why I suspect her?” Zong Jinghao picked up a strand of her hair, twirled it between his fingers and started playing with it.

Lin Xinyan nodded her head honestly.

Zong Jinghao explained to her, “I am not sure of her motives, but she has an ability.”

“What ability?”

She had the ability which made him rule out He Ruize as a suspect. At this point, He Ruize did not dare to appear in public. He could not get in or out of the hotel openly. How could he find out more about the monitoring layout in the hotel?

However, Yao Qingqing had a good relationship with Bai Yinning. Thus, she would not arouse suspicion when entering or leaving the hotel.

He had already verified this by checking the surveillance tapes from the hotel manager. During the time they left Baicheng, Yao Qingqing had frequented the hotel.

The purpose was obvious.

Lin Xinyan found it unbelievable, in fact, it was simply impossible. How could it be Yao Qingqing?

“Why would she do that?” Lin Xinyan could not figure it out.

Shen Peichuan narrowed his eyes and snorted coldly, “Maybe her personality is warped, but I think I can find out the truth soon.”

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 246

Buzz! Buzz!

Just slightly past dawn, Lin Xinyan's phone vibrated on her bedside table.

Under the dim light, a woman was curled up in a man's arms in the king-sized bed. She was sleeping sideways with her head on his arm as her silky black hair fell like a waterfall on the pillow.

Zong Jinghao was a light-sleeper, hence he opened his eyes the moment he heard the buzzing sound. Looking around for its source, the man finally fixated his gaze on the vibrating phone on the table.

Lin Xinyan seemed to be awoken by the buzz too. Her body moved in his arms as she let out a hum, seemingly displeased by the disturbance as her brows scrunched together.

Trying not to wake her, Zong Jinghao answered the call.

Since no caller ID was shown, the man had no idea who was calling.

Once the call went through, a man's voice was heard from the other end.

"I remember you told me you want to treat me to a meal. Does that still count?"

Zong Jinghao grabbed his watch and checked the time. It was just 5.10 in the morning. What was with Bai Yinning for calling Lin Xinyan so early in the morning?

And even asked her to treat him to a meal?

As desperate as he was, shouldn't he check the time before calling?

Zong Jinghao lowered his voice and replied intimidatingly, "I see you're in good spirits, Mr. Bai."

Bai Yinning froze, not expecting that it would be Zong Jinghao who picked up the call. But he recovered his composure swift enough and smiled politely, "Oh, I thought of asking Ms. Lin to have breakfast together. Could you let Ms. Lin answer the phone?"

Just the night before, Lin Xinyan had her sleep interrupted by Zong Jinghao to witness Yao Qingqing's end. She had a hard time going back to sleep after that, and only managed to close her eyes after God knows how long. In her blurry state, the woman heard the man beside her talking and buried herself further in his warm arms. Not completely awake yet, Lin Xinyan asked in her soft and husky morning voice, "It's so early... Who's that..."

Zong Jinghao wanted to reject the invitation on her behalf.

On the other side, Bai Yinning's features twitched upon hearing her soft moans. All these while, he had thought that Lin Xinyan and Zong Jinghao's relationship was never good. But now... they were sleeping together, just like any other married couple.

Bai Yinning felt a hint of disappointment at the fact.

Zong Jinghao patted the woman's back as he coaxed her back to sleep, "Hey, it's just 10086 who called. Nothing important. Just sleep."

Bai Yinning was rendered speechless by the customer service line reference.

What 10086? I'm no customer service line!

"Beep... Beep... Beep..." He was about to speak when the phone hung up on him.

Bai Yinning stared at the hung-up sign on his phone screen, completely stunned by the sudden cut off.

Zong Jinghao actually hung up the call on him? What a jealous man!

In the room, Zong Jinghao held the woman in his arms, his palm stroking her back coaxingly.

Lin Xinyan was never fully awake in the first place. Plus, she slept late on the night before, hence she soon returned to dreamland.

Zong Jinghao lowered his head, studying her sleeping form closely. Last night after the woman slept on the couch, he had carried her back to his room instead of bringing her to the kids' room.

She was too tired for him to do anything with her, but at least he could hug her to sleep.

The man landed a kiss on her forehead.

As much as he wished to bed her, Zong Jinghao still wished to take her only when she was awake. He wanted Lin Xinyan to feel him clearly; to feel his heat, his love, his happiness and his waves of excitement as he took her.

Closing his eyes satisfyingly, the man tightened his hug, preparing to sleep a little while longer...

Knock! Knock!

Someone was knocking on the door untimely.

Speechless, Zong Jinghao turned to the door in displeasure.

Now he couldn't do anything and just wanted to hug his wife to bed. Must he still be disturbed at this moment?

"Mummy! Mummy! Are you inside?"

Lin Ruixi woke up to find there was no one in her room, hence she came to knock on Zong Jinghao's door.

"Daddy! Daddy! Mummy is missing!"

Knock! Knock!

"Is that Ruixi?" Lin Xinyan opened her sleepy eyes and turned to the door, only to realize this was not the same room she had slept in last night. Finally awake, the woman kicked away her blanket and went to open the door.

Once again, Zong Jinghao could only look on wordlessly.

Did she even notice him? She just walked out like that?

Lin Xinyan opened the door to find the little girl in her pajamas. Hugging her plushy, the messy-haired girl blinked her eyes as she asked, "Mummy, why are you sleeping here now?"

Lin Ruixi clearly remembered that her mother had hugged her to sleep the night before. But now, just after a night's sleep, her mother was in her father's room.

Lin Xinyan scratched her head awkwardly and knelt to the same level as her daughter. "Err... last night..."

How should she explain this to her daughter?

Lin Ruixi was confused as her face scrunched together in deep thought. So her mother did not sleep with her last night? Was it all just a dream?

With a frown, Lin Ruixi dragged her mother away. “You’re supposed to sleep with me. Let’s go! Let’s go!”

Poor Lin Xinyan was dragged away by her daughter in a daze before she could close the door behind her.

At that moment, the two ran into Su Zhan, who just woke up as well. Rubbing his eyes, the man glanced at the half-opened door. Wasn’t that Zong Jinghao’s room?

Just the night before, the two kids insisted on sleeping together with Lin Xinyan. The woman had chased Zong Jinghao out of their room, saying there was not enough room for him. And now, did she just come out of his room?

So last night... With a knowing smile, Su Zhan greeted Lin Xinyan with a teasing smile, “Good morning, little sis-in-law!”

The woman’s mind went astray upon seeing him. Her scalp tingled at the ‘little sis-in-law’ address.

Lin Ruixi greeted back happily, “Good morning, Uncle Su!”

Su Zhan came over and was about to stroke her cheeks when the image of a livid Zong Jinghao flashed across his mind. His hands retracted slightly in fright before changing to stroke her hair. “Good morning, Ruixi.”

Zong Jinghao forbade anyone from touching his daughter’s face.

After greeting the little girl, the man turned to the mother with a knowing smile.

The woman tried to remain calm and ignored his teasing smile while carrying her daughter back to her room.

Su Zhan approached Zong Jinghao's room and looked through the half-opened slit. Leaning against the door frame without widening the slit, the man could see his friend lying on his bed while hugging the blanket. Smilingly, Su Zhan asked, "Last night... you've succeeded?"

Succeeded?

Does hugging count?

"I just saw little sis-in-law come out of your room." Su Zhan grinned. "Don't tell me you did nothing on bed."

Zong Jinghao's eyelids twitched at his words. Did he just call Lin Xinyan 'little sis-in-law'?

Sitting up abruptly, the man glared at Su Zhan, who was smiling wickedly, with narrowed eyes. "What did you just call her?"

"Little sis-in-law," Su Zhan answered without hesitation. "She's so young looking, like a university student. As for you, you're already in your thirties, of course I've to address her as my little sis-in-law."

Zong Jinghao's frown deepened. Was Su Zhan implying that he looked old?

"Next time, don't call her that." The man was definitely not admitting that he was old.

But he had to admit that Lin Xinyan indeed looked much younger than himself.

Smacking his lips, Su Zhan commented, "Well, an 8 years age gap is not that big anyway. When she was 10, you're already an adult. By the time she was an adult by law, you're... still not too old..."

The moment Zong Jinghao flashed him a spring-like smile, Su Zhan immediately changed his words from 'already old' to 'still not too old'. He was afraid that his friend's mood would turn from a spring breeze into a tornado that would spin him around like a top.

"I'm going to make breakfast now." After he was done roasting, Su Zhan disappeared like a gust of wind.

Now that he couldn't sleep, Zong Jinghao decided to get up as well.

As he washed up, the man couldn't help but examine his face in the mirror. He looked left, and then right, and a question mark appeared in his mind. Did he actually look old?

Would Lin Xinyan think he was old too?

The man couldn't help but feel unsettled by his age.

"What are you looking at?" Lin Xinyan thought her eyes were playing tricks on her. The woman had returned to ask why didn't he send her back to the children's room, causing her daughter to wake up so early and even caused Su Zhan to misunderstand her.

Never did she expect to see the man actually checking himself out in the mirror! Well, as good-looking as he was, there was no need to be that vain, right?

Was that narcissistic man really Zong Jinghao?

The man paused in his actions wordlessly.

Since when did this woman enter his room? Why didn't she make a sound when she walked?

“Sorry for disturbing you. You may continue...” Lin Xinyan turned to leave, only to be grabbed on her wrist. Turning back again, the woman was about to interrogate him when she crashed into a firm chest. Trapping her in his embrace, she could feel the man’s heartbeat against her, which burnt her skin with every beat. His gaze burnt with the same warmth as he asked sincerely, “Am I old?”

Now Lin Xinyan was speechless at his question.

“No. Not old at all...” The woman answered reluctantly. This man must be out of his mind! What was with him doing all sorts of embarrassing stuff early in the morning?

Hearing her words, Zong Jinghao’s frowns finally vanished and a smile appeared on his face. Lowering his head, the man bit her lips in a forceful kiss before declaring wickedly, “Even if I’m old, you can only belong to me.”

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 247

By the time Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan came downstairs, the other occupants were already waiting at the dining table. Qin Ya was taking care of Lin Ruixi while Lin Xichen was eating his breakfast on his own, as he was independent enough to feed himself.

“Seems like I’m not too late. Just in time for breakfast.” Bai Yinning rolled himself in through the entrance.

He then turned to Lin Xinyan with a smile. “You’re the one who said you want to treat me to a meal, yet I have to chase you around. In this case, I think the bill should be on me and not you.”

Lin Xinyan had her mind occupied by the prank doll incident, hence she had totally forgotten about her promise. Feeling embarrassed, she replied, “I’m sorry. I’ve forgotten about it.”

“Oh, not a problem. I’m here to ask you out now.” Bai Yinning glanced at Zong Jinghao as he spoke, “Why not treat me for breakfast today?”

The man’s hands on Lin Xinyan’s shoulder slid down to her waist. Exerting some force, the woman was dragged closer to him and her figure was pressed tightly against his body. Zong Jinghao put on a fake smile as he eyed Bai Yinning. “Mr. Bai, don’t tell me you’re too poor to even afford your own meal?”

With a flicker in his eyes, the wheelchair-bound man ignored the other man’s hands on Lin Xinyan’s waist and replied with a faint smile, “No food tastes as good if it’s not treated by Ms. Lin. Even the most exquisite ones.”

Lin Xinyan’s gaze wavered between Bai Yinning and Zong Jinghao as they talked. Why did she have a feeling that these two were secretly fighting?

Were those sparks flying between them?

Since she was the one who promised to treat Bai Yinning in the first place, she shouldn't go back on her words now. "Fine, then let's eat together."

Taking a look at their table, the man noticed that half of the seats were occupied by their gang. However, he still smiled politely. "Since you're treating me, I don't think it's appropriate to eat with so many people. Shouldn't you ask me what I want to eat?"

"I'm sorry. I'm being careless. Where do you want to eat then? Anything you're craving for now?" Lin Xinyan's face twitched at his words. She didn't expect him to be so picky today.

She had always thought he was pretty easy going.

"After turning right from the hotel, there's a very famous dumpling restaurant nearby. The breakfast set is pretty delicious and their crystal dumpling is my personal favorite. Mind to treat me that?"

With her smile still plastered on her face, she agreed, "Ok."

Until then, Lin Xinyan still didn't notice that Bai Yinning only wanted her to treat him alone. The man confirmed with her slyly, "You're only treating me, right?"

The woman nodded without further doubt, "Yes."

The man returned a bright smile. "Then wouldn't it be inappropriate for Mr. Zong to tag along?"

This man is pushing his luck! The words rang in Zong Jinghao's mind and were twirling on his tongue, threatening to slip out of his mouth. He was about to say it out loud when he felt a tug on his arm.

Lin Ruixi had come over to him and was tugging on his sleeves. “Daddy, come and eat with me. I’ve just peeled you an egg.”

Lin Xinyan stroked her daughter’s hair. “Behave well, Ruixi.” She then turned to Zong Jinghao. “Please take good care of Ruixi.”

“Daddy! Come and have a look at my peeled egg...” Just like how she dragged her mother this morning, Lin Ruixi dragged her father towards the dining table.

Once the two sat down, Lin Xinyan approached Bai Yinning, ready to go. “Let’s go.”

The man rolled his wheelchair out and took the lead.

Since the restaurant was not far, the two did not drive there. Gao Yuan did not tag along as well.

“You’re not mad at me, right?” Bai Yinning asked once they were out of the hotel.

Lin Xinyan smiled. “I’m the one who offered to treat you and I’ve forgotten about it. Sorry about that.”

“I mean, you’re not mad at me for asking only you out, right?”

Lin Xinyan was indeed surprised when he insisted on asking her out alone.

“Actually, I need your help. I cannot say it with so many people around, that’s why I asked you out alone,” Bai Yinning answered honestly.

That was the reason he called the woman so early in the morning to ask her about the treat. It was all because he wanted to talk about his problems in private.

“If it’s within my abilities,” Lin Xinyan replied sincerely. No matter what, this man had saved her life. Although Zong Jinghao had returned the favor to him forcefully, she still felt indebted to him. Since fate let them meet, they could be considered as friends now. Plus, Bai Yinning had never harmed her ever since they knew each other.

“I’m glad to hear that.” Bai Yinning smiled and nudged with his chin. “It’s right in front.”

“Don’t you have something to say?” Lin Xinyan was confused.

“Yes, I do. But breakfast is more important. I can’t let you starve.”

Bai Yinning seemed to be a regular customer here. The moment he arrived, a waiter opened the door for him and led them to a private room without waiting for his orders. Then, the waiters served them their signature breakfast set. Amongst the dish was the crystal dumpling mentioned just now.

Bai Yinning took a piece of dumpling with his chopsticks and placed it on the woman’s plate. “Try this.”

Lowering her head, Lin Xinyan observed the dumpling. It was named as crystal dumpling because of its crystal clear skin. The fillings inside could be clearly seen. Before she took a bite, the man across her reminded, “Eat it in one mouthful. There’s gravy in it, so it’ll spill if you bite.”

Hearing that, Lin Xinyan stuffed the whole dumpling into her mouth. It was slightly bigger than the usual soup dumplings. Immediately, the thick seafood aroma of the fillings, gravy and its thin skin filled her mouth. The taste wasn’t uncomfortably fishy. Instead, she felt very satisfied to eat such a delicious dumpling in one mouthful. Covering her mouth to stop the gravy from dripping out, the woman knew she must have looked ugly with poor table manners.

Bai Yinning passed her a napkin. “Don’t feel embarrassed. This is how you should eat it. It tastes the best this way.”

Lin Xinyan accepted his napkin and wiped her mouth. After swallowing her food, the woman sipped a mouthful of porridge. It was just plain porridge and there was no special taste to it at the first sip. But when she swallowed it, a faint yet pleasant smell of boiled bone marrow filled her cavity.

“This is marrow bone porridge. The pork flesh is removed from the ribs, leaving behind the bones to boil into a soup. After that, the rice is washed and poured in a porcelain pot. Lastly, the pork soup is poured into the porcelain pot and it is boiled for an hour. It looks just like any other plain porridge, but its nutritional value and taste is way beyond any normal porridge.”

Lin Xinyan turned to Bai Yinning in surprise, as if she had just discovered a new continent. “You study about food?”

The man took a gulp of water and rested his gaze on the swaying water in his glass. A while later, he lifted his gaze. “I didn’t really study. Will you believe me if I say that I studied this overnight for you?”

The poor woman choked on her porridge after hearing his words. She felt her mouthful of porridge stuck in her throat and began coughing. Cough! Cough!

Bai Yinning passed her a cup of water. “Wash it down with some water.”

Lin Xinyan gulped a big mouthful of water, which did the trick as he said. Putting down her cup, the woman wiped her mouth with her napkin. “Mr. Bai, this joke of yours is not funny.”

Lin Xinyan pretended she didn’t get the underlying meaning of his words and played it off as a joke.

Bai Yinning smiled in response. “Fine, if you say so.”

When they were almost done with their meal, Lin Xinyan asked directly, “Alright. What do you need my help for?”

The man thought for a moment before speaking, "It's regarding the prank doll incident."

Lin Xinyan tried to hold herself as she thought. He too has a clue? That's fast!

"Mr. Zong suspected that a friend of mine did it." His usual smile slowly vanished when he mentioned about Yao Qingqing.

Yao Qingqing was not just any other person. She was a part of his memory; his memory in the orphanage.

She was like family to him. Like himself, Yao Qingqing was also an orphan.

Both of them were raised in the orphanage. That was why he had to help her once he found out that Yao Qingqing was his childhood companion in the orphanage.

"She's been a very timid and kind-hearted person since young. I remember there was a time when some kids at the same orphanage as I caught a puppy and wanted to barbeque it for dinner." He could see the shock on Lin Xinyan's face and smiled at her look. "Surprising, right?"

The horrified woman nodded honestly.

"The daily expenses of the orphanage relied mainly on the donations by the public and subsidies by the government. However, how much money actually reached the hands of the children?" His tone turned sarcastic as he continued. "Most of the time, we were grateful enough to have a filling meal, let alone having meat. There was hardly any oil in our dishes and absolutely no meat to go with our meal."

"The few kids who caught the puppy were slightly older than the two of us, hence they dared to do anything just to fill their stomachs, and even said that barbequed dog meat is nutritious and tastes good. Qingqing saw them doing that

and let go of that puppy. We were stuck in the orphanage, so once the puppy escaped, there was no way to catch it back.

The older kids knew she was the one who had helped the puppy escape, hence they beat her up badly. I only managed to save her by calling the principal over. Qingqing was bedridden for a week after that. I asked her whether or not she regretted her actions, and she said she did not. So, will a kind-hearted soul like her resort to such horrifying means to frighten a child?"

Lin Xinyan dared not make any comments for now. Who knows? People might change.

"Then do you know everything about the current Yao Qingqing?" Lin Xinyan asked.

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Bai Yinning shook his head. "Not everything. She never told me anything about herself. She only told me briefly that her adopted parents were bad to her."

The man looked out to the rising sun as he sighed. "Not many orphans will find themselves in good families."

He was lucky to be adopted by Bai Hongfei, who had never married for life. Although he was not as caring like a mother, at least he had provided him with the fatherly love he lacked.

"So you're calling me here to tell me that Yao Qingqing was not the culprit behind that incident?" Lin Xinyan asked cautiously.

"Yes." Bai Yinning believed that Yao Qingqing was still the same innocent child as she was.

Plus, Zong Jinghao only guessed that she was the one who did it. Whatever happened to her boutique shop was not enough to drive her to commit such a horrible act.

"I called you out today to let her explain to you- face to face."

The woman turned to him in surprise. What did he mean by that? Did he want her to meet with Yao Qingqing?

Not that she was heartless or refused to let go of the woman, but after watching that video footage, even she herself couldn't have a grip on Yao Qingqing's personality.

If she hadn't seen that video, Lin Xinyan would definitely believe Bai Yinning without a doubt. But now, she was bugged by all sorts of unsolved mysteries surrounding the woman.

Zong Jinghao was not a 3-year-old kid. Even if he simply guessed it, there must be some sort of proof.

The results of their investigation also showed that Yao Qingqing indeed hid something from Bai Yinning.

“Actually...”

Lin Xinyan was about to tell him what she saw when the door of the private room was opened suddenly. It was Yao Qingqing, standing at the door awkwardly with her head lowered down. “Am I disturbing you?”

Lin Xinyan swallowed her words and forced a smile. “Not at all.”

Bai Yinning gestured for her to come in. “Ms. Lin is not a petty person. No need to be so tense.”

Lin Xinyan eyed Bai Yinning wordlessly.

“I asked you here to inquire a few things. In these last few days, have you been to any hotels?” Bai Yinning asked directly.

Yao Qingqing's hands balled into fists under the table. She never expected Bai Yinning would suspect her and even call her here to help with Lin Xinyan's investigation.

The woman turned to Lin Xinyan instead. “Did anything happen to you for you to suspect it's my doings?”

“No...”

“No one is suspecting you. I’m calling you here to explain yourself and prevent further misunderstandings.” Bai Yinning made it clear.

However, in the eyes of Yao Qingqing, this was his gesture of protection towards the other woman.

A hint of sadness flashed across her eyes as she shook her head. “No, I didn’t go to any hotels.”

As for her boutique shop, she had intended to close it anyway. Even if Lin Xinyan didn’t patronize the shop, Yao Qingqing would still close it on that day. It was just that she hadn’t found a proper reason to close it down, hence she had been dragging this matter.

Yao Qingqing was adopted because her adoptive mother was unable to conceive. At first, they were really nice to her. But after a year, her initially sterile mother suddenly got pregnant. Ever since then, her parents’ attitude towards her had been very bad. After her adoptive mother gave birth to a son, their treatments were harsher than ever.

That son was the leather-jacket man who came to ask her for money.

He was spoiled by his parents and had left school before adulthood. He had spent most of his time mingling around with gangsters and delinquents while asking his adoptive sister for money.

Ever since she reunited with Bai Yinning, Yao Qingqing finally had the chance to start her own business. She had wanted to earn a better living with that boutique shop, however, her useless adoptive brother started to ask for more money from her!

Now, that boutique shop did not help in improving her life, instead, it had turned into her brother’s cash cow.

Annoyed by his constant bugs, she had decided to pass her shop to her cousin, who had happened to be job hunting. By doing so, she had repaid her adoptive parent's favor and also prevented her brother from asking for money from her since he couldn't find her.

The only thing Yao Qingqing regretted most was letting her cousin discover her relationship with Bai Yinning. She was afraid that Bai Yinning would discover the existence of her brother, and was also afraid that her cousin would tell Bai Yinning of her life with her adoptive parents.

Hence, she conveniently made use of the incident that day and closed her shop.

By doing so, she succeeded in blocking Bai Yinning from her secrets.

Yao Qingqing had always loved Bai Yinning. She was jealous and also envious when she saw the man getting mad over Lin Xinyan.

That woman was already married with children. Why was Bai Yinning still so nice to her?

Just like how he was helping the woman explain herself now.

Yao Qingqing continued balling her fists, her veins protruding on her skinny arms.

Bai Yinning let out a sigh of relief. He didn't want to see his childhood companion changing into someone that he no longer knew.

Obviously, Yao Qingqing was lying. Zong Jinghao's investigations showed that the woman had appeared often at the hotel they stayed in when she left Baicheng.

Lin Xinyan continued stirring her unfinished porridge. She did not expose Yao Qingqing and merely smiled. "It's nothing important anyway. Maybe it's all a misunderstanding. My children are waiting for me at home. Allow me to take my leave first."

She then called for the waiter. "Bill, please."

Taking out her purse, the woman was about to pay when the waiter turned to Bai Yinning awkwardly. "Err... Mr. Bai..."

The man closed her purse instead. "I'll pay for the meal this time."

Lin Xinyan insisted, "No, I've promised to treat you! How can I let you pay?"

"This is my place and I'm the host. I can't take the money of my guest." Bai Yinning grinned.

Surprised, Lin Xinyan darted her gaze between him and the waiter. Only then did she realize he was the owner of this restaurant. "If by any chance you visit B City, I'll treat you for real."

"Sure. We'll definitely have the chance," Bai Yinning replied affirmatively. Since he was now business partners with Zong Jinghao, he would definitely have the chance to visit B City.

Lin Xinyan got up from her seat. "Thank you for the excellent meal. I have matters to settle, so I should leave now."

"Let me send you out." Bai Yinning rolled his wheelchair.

Seeing that the man wanted to leave with Lin Xinyan, Yao Qingqing got up as well. "Yinning, moving around is inconvenient for you. Let me send Ms. Lin off on your behalf."

"No need. You may leave now." Bai Yinning waved his hand, refusing to take her offer.

"I called you this morning. The person who answered was not you." The man brought up this morning's incident voluntarily.

Lin Xinyan remembered she had heard Zong Jinghao answering a phone call when she was half asleep. He had said it was from the customer service line. Turned out the caller was not 10086, but was actually Bai Yinning?

“Oh, I slept very late the night before and was not fully awake in the morning,” she explained.

Now Bai Yinning felt more dejected after listening to her explanation.

What had she done for her to sleep so late?

What else could be done in the night between a married couple?

Bai Yinning smiled bitterly in response. “Ahh, okay. My fault for making myself unhappy.”

Lin Xinyan was unaware that the man had misunderstood her words and returned a faint smile.

Inside the private room, Yao Qingqing looked out of the door at Bai Yinning and Lin Xinyan.

She had never seen Bai Yinning stoop so low for a woman, especially one who was married with children. How could such a woman be worthy of his attention?

Her hands were clenched into fists as a bitter thought occurred to her. Lin Xinyan was such a slut for seducing Bai Yinning despite being married with children.

Bai Yinning even asked his childhood friend here to help her investigate the prank doll incident!

Was he trying to seek justice for that woman?

Yao Qingqing’s figure trembled violently out of excessive rage.

The weather was pretty good today. The temperature was warm and the sun colored the streets with its golden rays. Under the warm sunlight, Lin Xinyan and Bai Yinning continued their journey back to the hotel wordlessly.

The woman had her mind occupied with various thoughts. She had no idea whether should she tell him about Yao Qingqing's story after she left the orphanage.

"What are you thinking?" Bai Yinning could see there was something weighing on her mind.

"Oh, nothing." The woman hadn't managed to come up with an idea on how to tell him about his friend's past.

Obviously, he deeply treasured his memories and relationship with the woman at the orphanage.

To orphans, they considered playmates of their childhood days as families as they had no one else they could depend on.

Bai Yinning was not wrong to believe in Yao Qingqing. She could understand that.

Just that...

Lin Xinyan heaved a heavy sigh.

"About Yao Qingqing, I think you should spend more time understanding her life after her adoption." The woman decided to remind him anyway.

Bai Yinning didn't expect her to bring up Yao Qingqing out of the blue. He knew that Lin Xinyan was never the gossipy type to spread baseless rumors.

"Did you find out something about her?"

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Looking up at the bright rising sun, Lin Xinyan somehow didn't wish to ruin such a beautiful day with such a dark piece of news. She knew she shouldn't be so wary and think that everyone was evil. Maybe she was traumatized by He Ruize, hence she was pessimistic when it came to dealing with people.

"Nothing, I'm just suggesting. I've reached my destination." Lin Xinyan pointed to the hotel and paused her footsteps. "You?"

Bai Yinning gasped, "I thought you'll invite me in!"

"That's your territory. You can enter anytime you want. Even if you decide to move out of your house and stay in your hotel, I don't have the right to interfere." Lin Xinyan shrugged. This was not her place, so she was not in the position to comment on anything.

The man's eyes lit up in delight at her suggestion.

"Oh yes! Why hadn't I thought of that?" Bai Yinning knitted his brows in consideration. "Right, I'm going to spend the night in the hotel then."

Lin Xinyan turned to the man in bewilderment.

This man. Is he crazy? Staying in the hotel when he has his own house to go back to?

However, Bai Yinning did not explain his actions. He purposely did so only to annoy Zong Jinghao. Who asked him to hang up his call and even said he was from the customer service line!

The more Zong Jinghao was annoyed with him and disliked him for being close with his wife, the more he would bug him with his appearance and closeness with Lin Xinyan.

At least he got to get on the other man's nerves.

Despite being bewildered, Lin Xinyan decided to stay quiet and not make any comments.

"I'll go in first."

"Okay."

The woman departed from his side. By the time she returned to the restaurant, her family had left, hence she returned to her room. There were bodyguards guarding by the lift, not allowing anyone to reach their floor. Ever since the prank doll incident, even the waiters whom they knew personally were not allowed up the floor. The moment they saw Lin Xinyan, the guards nodded respectfully at her. The woman was not the type to put on airs and graces, hence she smiled back cordially.

Since this floor consisted only of their gang and no one else, Qin Ya did not close her room door. Lin Xinyan could see her daughter drawing under her friend's guidance. This was one of the rare times the little girl was so quiet, hence she did not enter to disrupt the peace. Lin Xichen was lying on his stomach while engrossed in solving his tough quizzes. There was no need to worry about him at all.

Qin Ya noticed her at the door. Patting Lin Ruixi's shoulder, Qin Ya instructed, "I'm getting a cup of water. You can continue your art."

"Ok." The little girl did not look up at all. She was engrossed in her work.

Qin Ya approached Lin Xinyan. "You're back?"

The woman nodded. "Where are the others?"

"They're in Shen's room. They asked me to tell you to go there once you're back."

Lin Xinyan nodded with a grin. "Then I have to trouble you with Ruixi then."

"Oh, not a trouble at all. That's what friends are for!" Qin Ya closed the door with a grin. "Go now."

"Ok."

Lin Xinyan reached Shen Peichuan's room and knocked on his door. Su Zhan opened the door immediately. This time, he greeted seriously without teasing her, "Sis."

Now the woman was not used to his formal greetings.

What had happened for such a wild and impertinent man to turn so serious all of a sudden?

Without a word, Su Zhan made way for her to enter.

The curtains of the room were up and the sunlight splashed through the window, brightening up the room significantly. However, Zong Jinghao's tall figure was slouching on the sofa, while beside the window, Shen Peichuan stood still in deep thought.

The atmosphere was contrastingly down compared to the bright weather.

The woman sat beside her husband and asked, "What happened? You guys look serious."

Zong Jinghao turned to her slowly and stared at her, still not uttering a word.

Lin Xinyan held on to his arms instinctively. She never liked it when Zong Jinghao was silent. It somehow meant that something bad was about to happen.

A while later, only then did her husband asked flatly, "What did you eat just now?"

The woman's breath hitched at his words. So he was mad at her for eating out with Bai Yinning?

Oh my God. This man is so jealous! It's just a meal!

Despite thinking so, the woman dared not say it out loud.

"Just some dumplings and a bowl of porridge." Lin Xinyan dared not reveal too much, especially the part where Bai Yinning shared his past at the orphanage with her.

His anger would've flared up at that.

To prevent Zong Jinghao from pestering about her meal with Bai Yinning, Lin Xinyan voluntarily told him of Bai Yinning's motive in asking her out, "He purposely asked me out to talk about Yao Qingqing. Seems like he really believes in Yao Qingqing's character and doesn't think she was the culprit behind the prank doll incident."

Zong Jinghao snorted at her words.

This was the first time she saw him snorting so sarcastically, hence her heart plunged at his expression.

"It might not be a prank at all." Shen Peichuan straightened himself.

Lin Xinyan turned to him instead. "What do you mean by that?"

Wasn't it all a prank?

Shen Peichuan turned around to face her. "I mean, the doll might be real."

The woman still couldn't understand.

"My men have returned from investigating Yao Qingqing." Shen Peichuan took a deep breath. "She was pregnant when she was 16. The baby was born but died a tragic death later on. The child was thrown into a well alive."

So it was no surprise that she could think of such a horrifying way to frighten Lin Xinyan.

Probably because she was also a mother, Lin Xinyan could feel her heart constrict in extreme pain. Who could be so cruel to end the life of an infant like that?

Lin Xinyan covered her hands over her chest. She could feel a nauseating lump of pain blocking her throat.

Zong Jinghao hugged his wife in concern. "What's wrong?"

The woman shook her head. Suddenly, she felt the nauseating lump surging up her throat into her mouth cavity. Her throat itched at the sensation and she began to cough violently. Then, she pushed her husband away and dashed to the toilet as she retched uncontrollably.

It was just the cough that made her retch so violently.

Zong Jinghao followed in and patted her back worriedly. What was wrong with her now? Was it food poisoning?

"Su Zhan, get a cup of water," he ordered solemnly.

What did Bai Yinning feed her just now for her to vomit so terribly?

Su Zhan poured a cup of water and passed it to him.

Zong Jinghao took the cup and closed the door behind him. "Feeling better now?"

Lin Xinyan remained sprawled on the sink until she no longer felt the urge to vomit and raised her head. Zong Jinghao passed her the cup of water. "Rinse your mouth."

The woman took the cup and rinsed her mouth, feeling much better after that.

Her husband reached out to wipe away the stains on her mouth. Lin Xinyan stiffened at the feeling of his fingers on her lips and stared at him blankly. Seeing how soft and careful he was to her, strong inexplicable feelings suddenly surged in her heart.

The woman turned to Zong Jinghao and buried her head in his chest. "I feel pained by the information because I'm also a mother. I could imagine, if this happened to my kids... I'll be in so much pain and horror. I've too experienced so much torture and hardships while bearing the twins. Many advised me to give up on them, but I thought that since they found their way to my tummy, that means we're fated to be mother and child. I couldn't give them up like that. I'm relieved that I made the right choice. They were born underweight and Ruixi was only 2kg. Both of them looked so small and fragile that I dared not touch them myself, afraid that they would break in my hands. Although they looked so weak at first, luckily they have grown up healthily since then. Thinking back on what I've gone through, I've got to say I'm a pretty lucky woman."

What emotional beings we humankind were! Be it emotions of heartache or delight, it was always the ones we loved and cared who triggered an array of different emotions whenever we were around them.

Just like Zong Jinghao now. He too was wrapped in a mixture of emotions like his wife; being pained by his wife's discomfort, but also washed over by waves of relief.

Relieved that it was her he had slept with on that fateful night and also relieved that she went against all odds to give birth to their children.

The man was deeply thankful that this woman in his arms had entered his life and splashed his bleak and dull life with vibrant colors.

Never had he thought that he would change so much from his previous self, all because of one woman.

Just like how he was now.

All Zong Jinghao wanted to do now was to hug her, kiss her, comfort her and repay her. He just wanted to give her the best things in the world.

Including himself.

Lovingly, the man lowered his head and kissed his wife's hair...

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After some time, Lin Xinyan managed to calm her raging emotions. She pulled herself away from Zong Jinghao's embrace and wiped the corners of her eyes awkwardly. "Ah, I've embarrassed myself."

How embarrassing of her to lose control of her emotions like that!

This was precisely what Zong Jinghao liked about her. She was real; a human with flesh and blood and also complex emotions.

Without hiding his love, the man's wide grin tugged on the sides of his lips. "I like it."

He liked how she outright displayed all her emotions and everything about herself, hiding nothing in front of him.

Lin Xinyan hung her head lower, unable to respond to him at all.

The room suddenly felt too small for her. She could feel the air thinning and her breath hitching. She could feel the temperature on her cheeks going up in embarrassment.

"Are you blushing?"

Lin Xinyan pushed him away from her, stubbornly refusing to admit she was indeed blushing, "You're the one who is blushing."

Zong Jinghao was not ready for the push and staggered back, only to slip right on a puddle of water behind him. Lin Xinyan grabbed hold of him the moment he slipped, but she was not strong enough to stop his fall and ended up crashing on the floor with him...

“Ahh!” Lin Xinyan yelled in shock, followed by the loud sounds of the impact from the fall.

Bang!

Zong Jinghao let out a low grunt. The washroom was not big to begin with, hence he ended up banging his head on the wall. But that was not the fatal part of his fall. What made him almost die in pain was his wife’s elbow that had pressed on his...

He couldn’t help but think, would his manhood malfunction after this?

“Are, are you ok?” Lin Xinyan was not the least bit aware of where had she crashed herself on. All she heard was her husband’s grunts of pain.

“Can you get off me first?”

Zong Jinghao turned to her in pain. “You’re murdering your husband.”

Lin Xinyan was speechless at his words.

In an effort to get up, the woman had to use her arms to support herself, only then did she realize her elbow seemed to be at the wrong place...

Lowering her gaze... the woman now realized in horror that her elbows were exerting most of her force on his...

Outside the toilet, Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan turned to each other at the crashing voice.

Then, like a pair of clones sharing the same brain cell, the two dashed towards the washroom at the same time and pushed the door open...

The world went silent after that.

The two were greeted by the sight of Zong Jinghao sitting on the floor while Lin Xinyan was sprawled on his body, her eyes looking down at his...

Cough! Cough!

“What are you two doing?” Su Zhan gasped exaggeratingly. Since it was such a rare occurrence to find Zong Jinghao in such an embarrassing position, his friend had to grab hold of the opportunity to tease him relentlessly.

“Get lost!”

Zong Jinghao shot an icy glare towards his friend, just like a frightening avalanche on an iceberg.

However, Su Zhan merely shrugged without closing the door. He wanted to take another look at the embarrassing scene.

Shen Peichuan glared at him and closed the door. “Aren’t you afraid of Jinghao’s ruthless revenge later?”

Knowing that his friend wouldn’t do anything to him, Su Zhan grinned wider instead. “Hey, guess what were they doing just now?”

With a serious face, Shen Peichuan rubbed his chin in deep thought. “Oh my, is he being horny now?”

Pfft!

Su Zhan laughed out loud at his unexpected words. With that serious face of his, he thought Shen Peichuan was going to reprimand him for being gossipy, only to be blurting out gossips himself!

“Do you think that Jinghao ever managed to sleep with her?” Su Zhan moved closer to Shen Peichuan.

The man eyed Su Zhan with a knowing smile. "I think not as fast as you and Ms. Qin."

This time it was Su Zhan's turn to be speechless.

Weren't they talking about Zong Jinghao just now? Why was the focus of gossip on him now?

"Shen Peichuan!" Su Zhan faked his anger and hooked his arms around his friend's neck in a headlock. "Plead to me and say you won't do that again."

"You sure you're not letting go of me?" The man was not threatening at all. He was merely stating a fact.

Shen Peichuan was not boasting. When it came to fighting skills, Su Zhan was no match to him.

Su Zhan refused to acknowledge the truth, but he had to admit that he couldn't beat his friend with this skinny figure of his, hence he released him.

In the restroom, Lin Xinyan had the urge to hide herself in a hole. That was so embarrassing!

"Are, are you ok?" she asked in concern. However, she dared not spare a glance to Zong Jinghao.

"Help me up." The man reached out to her.

Shifting her eyes elsewhere, the woman took his hands and tried to pull him up. Maybe because he was too heavy for her, Lin Xinyan realized in despair that she couldn't pull him up at all. Not even an inch.

After trying for a few times but to no avail, the woman finally shifted her gaze back on him.

Zong Jinghao was staring at her with his crystal clear orbs, his eyes curved into a half-moon smile. With a dashing smile and a slight pull on her arms, Lin Xinyan fell back onto his body again. The woman tried to get up, only to be trapped in her husband's arms, refusing to let her move.

Lin Xinyan whispered discreetly, "What are you doing?"

She dared not ask it aloud, as she was afraid of being heard by the two guys outside. Who knew what type of wild thoughts were running through Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan's minds now.

Zong Jinghao grinned wordlessly. Taking her hands, he pressed them on his chest and teased with a straight face. "If I cannot be active in bed, who is going to pleasure you then?"

Lin Xinyan was rendered speechless by his flirty words.

Following his words, the man rubbed her hands around his chest suggestively. "I want to fulfill my role as the only man who can give you all the pleasure in bed for the rest of your life. What should we do if I cannot provide that service to you?"

Lin Xinyan's face flushed beet red at his suggestive words. This pervert. He has just freaking crashed on the floor, and he's still being such a tease! Can't he be serious for once?

"Stop that." She struggled.

Her husband refused to budge, still pressing her hands to his chest stubbornly.

This time, Lin Xinyan glared at him. "I'm getting mad if you don't stop that."

Poor Zong Jinghao had to let her go wordlessly.

Well, some people were like this. If you were nice to them, they would take advantage of you. When you lose your temper, only then they would be obedient.

And that was when the term 'shameless' came into play. Maybe the term was specially created for describing such people.

Lin Xinyan put his arms over her shoulders and helped her husband up.

She was the one who caused his slip, hence it was only right for her to help him up.

Throughout the process, Zong Jinghao's gaze was constantly on her. He had long recovered from the pain and was able to get up himself, but he wanted to enjoy having his wife sticking so near to him.

His body pressed closer to her as he got up.

Lin Xinyan opened the door to see Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan enjoying their tea on the sofa, perfectly missing out their gossiping session. The woman relaxed at the sight and spoke first to avoid the incoming awkwardness. "What happened? How did Yao Qingqing actually get pregnant?"

And at the age of 16? She was not even an adult yet!

Shen Peichuan put down his tea. "Rumors from the villagers claimed that Yao Qingqing was not mindful of her actions and had slept around with several guys in school. Her adopted family despised her for that and refused to provide for her, so they let her..."

"Really?" Lin Xinyan didn't think that Yao Qingqing was such a reckless woman. At the age of 16, although she was still an immature teenager, she should have enough knowledge to protect herself from sex. How was it possible for her to just sleep with a man with no protection and give birth to a child?

“Of course, I believe there must be some hidden agenda behind this. After all, my men were not there for long and this incident happened a long time ago. The Yao family members are also hiding this on purpose, hence it is impossible for my men to investigate further.” Shen Peichuan analyzed from his experience. He had a feeling that things were not as simple as that. Where did Yao Qingqing’s hatred towards Lin Xinyan stem from?

So much so that she would expose her own scar and frighten the woman with an abused prank doll?

Lin Xinyan had a hunch on why Yao Qingqing hated her though. “I guess she loves Bai Yinning and is jealous of my closeness with him?”

She helped Zong Jinghao to the sofa and sat beside him. “Although there’s no direct evidence, she’s still a strong suspect. She visited the hotel before, but she denied it.”

“How do you know that?” Shen Peichuan asked.

“She said so herself. Bai Yinning tried to prove to me that Yao Qingqing was not the one who threatened me, hence he invited her over to meet with me face-to-face just now. It was then she told me she has not come to the hotel before.”

Now Su Zhan was interested. “What’s her relationship with Bai Yinning for him to be so protective of her?”