

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 431

After hanging up the phone, He Wenhui put it on the table nervously. "We can only wait for news now."

Chen Qing poured him a cup of tea. "I'm sure we will receive good news."

But He Wenhui was not in the mood to drink tea. He had no one else in his pocket now other than that policeman. Besides, there would not be another opportunity to catch her if they failed this time.

"I hope so."

He stared at Chen Qing and reminded, "You can't leave me to die."

Chen Qing pulled a long face. "Don't you trust me?"

"No." He Wenhui poured him a cup of tea again. "I'm only worried..."

Chen Qing looked at him meaningfully before bringing the cup of tea to his lips. *If Lin Xinyan dies, Zong Jinghao will find out that the He family is the mastermind behind her death. But what's that got to do with me? The policeman is not in my pocket anyway. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the He family will be meeting its end soon. He Wenhui should be thankful that I still have use for him now.*

In the hospital.

That policeman returned to the ward. Thanks to the He family, he had managed to join the police force successfully. But he had no chance to return the favor to them after all these years. Hence, he was determinedly not to let them down this time.

The warrant in his hand was wrinkled due to his tight grip.

Zong Jinghao noted the change in the policeman's attitude and suspected that he might attempt to arrest Lin Xinyan forcefully. He glanced at her, who was sitting on the bed quietly.

She clenched the blanket tightly, and her palms were wet with sweat. *The policeman has too many men with him. No matter how powerful Zong Jinghao is, he won't be able to defeat them while ensuring my safety.*

Contrary to her thoughts, her face displayed no hint of fear or anxiety.

I won't be worried if I'm not pregnant because I have absolute faith in him. But now... my pregnancy has added to his worries.

Zong Jinghao asked her, "Are you scared?"

She shook her head. "All my kids are very tough."

When she was carrying Lin Ruixi and Lin Xichen, she had met with a car accident, fell down and even jumped down from a speeding car. But both her children were fine.

The policeman mustered up his courage. "I'm acting in accordance with the law. No one can stop me. Take the suspect away!"

That man ran forward, and the others behind him followed suit.

Zong Jinghao stood still. He had unbuttoned his suit already. With his tall and imposing frame, he emitted an ominous presence as he stood beside the bed. Suddenly, he whipped out a gun and pointed it at the policeman.

At this moment, another group of men barged into the ward and surrounded the policeman and his accomplices. Someone warned, "Be still. Otherwise, I may shoot you accidentally." Shen Peichuan walked forward.

He and his men had arrived just in the nick of time after receiving the news from Zong Jinghao's bodyguards.

"Tell me, who are you working for?" Zong Jinghao pressed the gun firmly against the area between the policeman's brows.

Shen Peichuan heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that Lin Xinyan was alright.

Captain Chen reports to Wen Qing. But he isn't here today. This means that today's incident has nothing to do with Wen Qing. Although Wen Qing's injury isn't life-threatening, he may not have the energy to set this up.

The warrant fell from the policeman's trembling hands onto the ground. He pleaded for his life, "I'm... I'm only acting under orders. I'm given an order to arrest her... I can't defy the order..."

"So you aren't going to tell me?" Zong Jinghao put his finger on the trigger.

Shen Peichuan sucked in a deep breath.

Suddenly, they heard a resounding slam. The policeman had dropped to his knees. After all, everyone was scared of dying, particularly when a gun was pointing at them.

"The He family has made a police report today, asking the police to address their grievances. I have received the warrant and am ordered to take the suspect into custody."

The policeman was trembling in fear. Shen Peichuan grabbed the gun muzzle tightly, worried that Zong Jinghao might pull the trigger in a fit of rage, "He Ruilin died yesterday."

No wonder He Wenhui makes the police report. He Ruilin's death sentence is postponed to a year later. He should not die now.

Zong Jinghao turned to look at Shen Peichuan inquiringly.

"I just learned of it too." *I will inform you if I have known earlier.*

"Hand the person over to me." *After all, this man is a law enforcement officer. Zong Jinghao should not kill him at a whim.* But Shen Peichuan knew how mad Zong Jinghao was with this policeman for barging into the ward. "Don't you trust me?"

Zong Jinghao kept the gun upon hearing Shen Peichuan's words.

Finding He Ruilin's death suspicious, he asked, "How did she die?"

"I'm not sure. I will investigate when I have some time." Shen Peichuan signaled for his man to escort the corrupted policeman out of the ward, and gave the latter a kick, "Scram!"

The policeman scrambled to his feet and ran out of the ward. Zong Jinghao ordered, "Get a man to follow him."

"What are you suspecting?" Shen Peichuan asked.

"Everyone knows that this is part of Wen Qing's ploy. But who will dare to report Lin Xinyan to the police without being ordered by Wen Qing? That man went out to make a call earlier. He must have called the mastermind, who has given him the order. It's impossible that he takes on this case voluntarily."

Shen Peichuan pondered over Zong Jinghao's analysis. *Lin Xinyan's case is a mess. No one will be so foolish to take on this case voluntarily.*

“Then I shall go first.” Shen Peichuan stopped at the doorway, “Shall I assign more men to guard the hospital?”

“Mmm,” replied Zong Jinghao. *This place is no longer safe. Someone wants to get Lin Xinyan.*

Lin Xinyan’s forehead was beaded with sweat. She was too nervous when those men barged in just now. Zong Jinghao walked over to her side and asked, “Are you scared?”

She shook her head. “Why do you have a gun?”

Zong Jinghao kept the gun. “It’s for self-defense.”

Shen Peichuan had gotten him the unregistered gun. Although he had promised Wen Qing to marry Chen Shihan, he and Shen Peichuan were planning to kidnap her on the wedding day. After all, they could not find another opportunity as Chen Qing had sensed danger and forbade her from venturing out of the house. Hence, Shen Peichuan counted on Zong Jinghao to kidnap Chen Shihan and use her as a hostage to threaten Wen Qing and Chen Qing to close Lin Xinyan’s case.

How would I know that the gun will come into use today.

“But I haven’t seen it before.” Lin Xinyan felt uneasy. *Why does he have a gun on him? What is he planning to do? Will he run into danger?*

“Don’t think too much.” Zong Jinghao wiped the sweat off her forehead, “I’ll get the doctor here.”

She definitely can’t stay here anymore.

There’s something more to this matter. Someone other than Wen Qing is out to get her.

That guy claims that the warrant was issued due to the pressure the He family put on the police. Why will the He family approach the police so long after that incident?

his shows that someone is issuing orders on behalf of Wen Qing. As for that person's identity...

Furthermore, Wen Qing has masterminded the entire scheme. It's impossible to obtain that warrant without his authorization.

Zong Jinghao's eyes darkened with rage as he guessed the person's identity.

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The doctor came over to examine Lin Xinyan. Over the last few days in the hospital, she did not suffer any stomachache nor bleeding. Her nausea had also improved significantly, “ You can go home and rest now. But my advice to you is the same. Rest on the bed during the first trimester. You can resume non-tedious activities once your condition stabilizes. But you must be careful and come back for a medical examination bi-monthly.”

News of policemen barging into Lin Xinyan’s ward had spread like wildfire. After all, her video had exploded across the Internet.

Although Zong Jinghao had taken down the video, the problem was not settled yet. Otherwise, those policemen would not dare to barge into the ward today. However, no one dared to gossip about today’s incident openly for fear of incurring Zong Jinghao’s wrath.

Shortly after the doctor left, Aunt Yu arrived in a frantic state. She had arrived late as the car sending her to the hospital had broken down, thus she had to take a cab and was caught in a traffic jam.

“You must be hungry,” said Aunt Yu in an apologetic tone.

She had no idea about the incident just now and only noted that the door was ajar. Before she placed the dishes on the table, Lin Xinyan stopped her, “Aunt Yu, I’m not hungry.”

I have no appetite. She was in a gloomy mood.

“It’s almost afternoon already. How can you not be hungry? You must spare a thought for the baby inside you. Have I come too late?”

Zong Jinghao joined them. "Pack up the stuff. We will discharge from the hospital today."

Aunt Yu asked, astounded, "It hasn't been a week. Can she be discharged from the hospital now?"

"Yes. Please pack up the stuff." Judging from Zong Jinghao's stoic expression, it was apparent that he did not wish to explain his decision. Aunt Yu caught the hint and started packing up Lin Xinyan's toiletries without saying another word.

Zong Jinghao placed the dishes on the table. They were still pleasantly warm as they were contained in a thermal pot. He scooped a spoonful of congee and brought it to his lips. After ensuring that it was not too hot, he put the spoon to Lin Xinyan's lips

But she did not open her mouth and just looked at him instead.

Zong Jinghao leaned forward and pressed the spoon against her lower lip. "Isn't your son hungry even if you aren't?"

Lin Xinyan grabbed his hand. "I want to see Wen Qing."

"Let's discuss after breakfast." Zong Jinghao did not wish for him to meet Wen Qing. *Given her current condition, she may get agitated upon seeing him, and the consequences may be serious. I can't take the risk!*

But she was not convinced and refused to eat the congee. "Can you accede to my request?"

I want to talk to Wen Qing.

"Are you threatening me?"

She did not answer him. *I don't know if today's incident will repeat. I'm not scared, but I'm worried for him.*

“Do you know that I'm feeling terrible now? I don't dare to ask you for updates about that matter for fear of pressuring you. I hate myself for being in this state now. If it's not for this baby...”

Before she could finish her sentence, Zong Jinghao planted his lips onto hers firmly before biting them gently. Lin Xinyan frowned without saying a word.

He placed his hand on her flat belly gingerly. *Although one cannot tell from her flat belly, my baby is growing stronger by the day. I can feel the baby's heartbeat.*

“Don't say that no matter what happens. He will be sad if he hears that. Just rest well and eat proper meals. Don't be bothered about anything else.”

“What about you? Will you be in danger?” She was frightened when he held the gun just now. *I have never imagined that he will have a gun on him. Is he going to carry out any dangerous acts?*

Her thoughts were all in a muddle.

Zong Jinghao wiped away the tears from the corners of her eyes. “No, I will grow old with you. I can't bear to die. Be good, and don't think too much. Eat something. We will leave the hospital after Guan Jing arrives.”

Lin Xinyan wrapped her arms over his neck and buried her head against his neck before saying in a teary voice, “Remember what you have said. If you die, I will remarry, and your son will call another man 'dad'.”

Zong Jinghao bit her ear. She trembled in pain before he let go. But he continued in a vicious tone, “I will kill that man if you dare to do that.”

Lin Xinyan just laughed.

Zong Jinghao rubbed her head indulgently. “My wife is not ugly. She’s pretty when she smiles.”

“Eat something.” Zong Jinghao put his hands around the bowl. *Good, it’s still warm.* Lin Xinyan stretched out her hands, “I will eat it myself.”

But Zong Jinghao continued to scoop a spoonful of congee before putting the spoon against her lips, “I will feed you and serve you well so that you won’t be thinking of finding another man all day long.”

“What the h*ll are you talking about?” Su Zhan overheard Zong Jinghao’s words as he entered the ward.

Zong Jinghao glared at him. Su Zhan pouted but did not say another word.

“Where is Guan Jing?” Zong Jinghao asked.

“He’s at your residence making the necessary arrangements. I’m here to pick you up.” He had gone to the company to find Zong Jinghao and ran into Shen Peichuan, who had just arrived at the company with a bunch of his subordinates. Guan Jing was to deploy them to safeguard Zong Jinghao’s residence.

After learning from Shen Peichuan about today’s incident in the hospital, and given how busy Shen Peichuan and Guan Jing were, he had offered to pick Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan up from the hospital instead. After all, he was rather free now since the video had been taken down from the Internet.

He positioned himself in front of the bed. *This is my first time seeing Zong Jinghao serving someone. I should enjoy this rare sight.*

Zong Jinghao cast a glance at him before asking Aunt Yu, “Anything else that you need to pack?”

Aunt Yu was done with the packing. The toiletries and clothes were packed into boxes of various sizes.

“Let him carry them.”

Su Zhan took the boxes and looked at Lin Xinyan, “My dear sister-in-law, did you see that? He’s a heartless creature.”

Lin Xinyan smiled.

Su Zhan headed down to the car with his hands full of boxes. On the other hand, Aunt Yu stood aside in the ward and waited patiently for Zong Jinghao to finish feeding Lin Xinyan before leaving the hospital together.

Finally, Lin Xinyan finished the congee. But there was some food left, which she really could not finish.

“Are you full now?”

Fearing that he might force her to finish the food, she nodded and said immediately, “I will fall ill if I overeat.”

Zong Jinghao put the bowl down and headed into the bathroom to wash his hands. By the time he came out, Aunt Yu was done clearing the table and was carrying the dirty tableware and the vase in her hands.

He carried Lin Xinyan in his arms. “Let’s go.” It was an easy feat for him as she was slim. She wrapped her arms around his neck, and they walked out of the ward together with Aunt Yu at their heels.

They took the lift to the first level. Su Zhan had stopped the car by the roadside, so he hurried to the car and opened the door for Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan to board the car.

Just when Zong Jinghao was about to put Lin Xinyan into the car, he heard a voice behind him.

“Mr. Zong.”

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Even if he didn't turn around, Zong Jinghao still knew who was there. Despite that, Zong Jinghao didn't want to greet him.

He placed Lin Xinyan on the backseat nonchalantly before closing the door, seemingly keeping her away from Bai Yinning's sight.

He then approached Bai Yinning and held onto the handles of his wheelchair as he looked down on him. Meanwhile, Bai Yinning looked up and met his dagger-like gaze.

With a hawkish gaze, Zong Jinghao's lips twitched as he warned, "Mr. Bai, stop coveting someone else's..."

He then took a meaningful look at Bai Yinning's legs and continued, "My wife doesn't like you. Just forget about it."

Zong Jinghao really despised the fact that Bai Yinning still desired Lin Xinyan even though she was already married.

Is it unconditional love?

Or is he trying to show the world how lovesick he is?

The more he thought about that, the more his lips twisted into a sardonic smirk. "You wouldn't be considered even if my wife wants to find another partner."

Bai Yinning only managed to stifle the changes in his expression by tightly clenching his jaw.

After all, the condition of his legs was his toughest pill to swallow.

He retorted, “Mr. Zong, since when are you so narrow-minded? Are you feeling threatened now?”

Zong Jinghao flashed an ambiguous smile. “Threatened? Possibly. Some people really just don’t know when to give up.”

Bai Yinning tried his best to maintain his composure. “I’m here today because of you. I know that a lot of things happened recently, and you must be very uptight lately as well. Maybe we can let bygones be bygones and work together.”

Zong Jinghao warned him, “Save your worries for someone else, Mr. Bai. Stay away from me too.”

After that, he propped himself somewhat forcefully with the handles of the wheelchair. As a result, the wheelchair slid backward slightly.

Bai Yinning remained unfazed as he watched Zong Jinghao leave. “I know that you’re a man of pride, but this is not the time to be caught up with that. She’s pregnant now, and things aren’t looking good outside, so we should make peace and face the challenges together.”

“Do you think that we are in Baicheng right now?” Su Zhan mocked. *I hate how he said that. Who the hell does he think he is, acting all concerned for Lin Xinyan?*

Why the heck is he so shameless?

“I really don’t know what you can bring to the table.”

Bai Yinning ignored his snide remarks and replied with a confident tone, “I met a gynecologist some time ago, and she said that Zong Qifeng brought a woman in labor there thirty years ago. This isn’t something unusual by itself, but, she isn’t from a major hospital in the city. Instead, she’s from a small clinic in the suburbs.

Besides that, after the woman gave birth, she was immediately taken away. Aren't you curious about who that woman is? Your mother, Wen Xian, probably wouldn't be sent to a small clinic to give birth, right?"

Knowing what happened to Lin Xinyan gave him a chance to take down Wen Qing, but still, he couldn't do it by himself. He needed Zong Jinghao's help as well, so he secretly launched an investigation on what happened thirty years ago.

It was a long time ago, so there weren't many traces of what happened, but fortunately, he was lucky enough to set the direction of his investigation based on an educated guess.

That was – trying to prove that Cheng Yuxiu had given birth before.

If he could do that, he didn't need to continue his investigation any further because the truth would eventually reveal itself.

Even though that B City was large, there were only a limited number of hospitals there. He decided to carry out a blanket search to look for clues, and in the end, he managed to discover something.

If I can prove that Wen Qing isn't Zong Jinghao's biological uncle, would Zong Jinghao still hold back against him?

Once Wen Qing is defeated, Lin Xinyan's troubles would be resolved, and I would be able to avenge my father as well. It's like killing two birds with one stone.

Zong Jinghao suddenly stopped right in his tracks as his entire body tensed up.

Meanwhile, Lin Xinyan started to panic because she never thought that Bai Yinning could actually get some results from his investigation. *Didn't he promise me to stop his investigation?*

Her hands trembled uncontrollably as she wound down the windows and said to Zong Jinghao, "Let's go. I'm tired."

She managed to see Bai Yinning from her peripheral vision, but she quickly averted her gaze.

On the other hand, Su Zhan didn't dare to interrupt Bai Yinning anymore. *What happened back then?*

Did Zong Qifeng really bring a woman in labor to a small clinic thirty years ago?

"Jinghao," Lin Xinyan called out to him softly again.

However, Zong Jinghao turned around and took a look at Bai Yinning. Even though he had a stoic expression, emotions were surging in his heart.

Since a long time ago, he knew that the secret Lin Xinyan was keeping from him was probably related to him. However, when he saw how anxious Lin Xinyan was after hearing what Bai Yinning said, he confirmed his suspicions immediately.

Even though Cheng Yuxiu and Lin Xinyan's relationship might seem complicated at first, it's actually pretty straightforward.

With an unfazed expression concealing his raging emotions, he approached Lin Xinyan and caressed her face.

Lin Xinyan grabbed onto his hands tightly and repeated, "I don't feel well. Let's go home."

Her palms were cold and clammy, so Zong Jinghao stepped inside the car lest her health would be affected.

Lin Xinyan shifted a little to make room for him, and he caressed her tummy gently. "Does it hurt here?" Even though he was feeling very conflicted right now, he never let it show.

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Lin Xinyan snuggled in his embrace and shook her head. "I don't want you to believe Bai Yinning's lies. He just wants to take advantage of us while we are at odds with Wen Qing right now. All because he wants to avenge his stepfather."

Su Zhan started the engine, and he was curious about that conversation. *Who was the woman in labor that Zong Qifeng brought to a small clinic thirty years ago? Does Zong Qifeng have another lady by his side except for Cheng Yuxiu? Maybe Jinghao has a half-brother or half-sister living in secret somewhere else!*

After all, Cheng Yuxiu claimed that she never had a child while she was married to Zong Qifeng, so she is probably not the woman he brought to the clinic.

I should just assume that Bai Yinning is trying to take advantage of them. After all, who am I to question Lin Xinyan?

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao wrapped his arms around her shoulders and caressed her cheeks. "Do you not trust me? Do you think that I can't tell what he's trying to do?"

Lin Xinyan hugged his waist and lay on his chest as she closed her eyes slightly. "I worry too much. Of course, you can see through his little tricks."

No matter what, I can't let Zong Jinghao listen to Bai Yinning any longer. If not, the thirty-year-old secret will be exposed.

If Wen Qing finds out about the secret, things will be disastrous.

He already lost his mind just because he got to know Cheng Yuxiu a little bit better. Imagine what he would do if he found out that Zong Jinghao isn't his nephew, but Cheng Yuxiu's son instead.

What would happen if he found out that he had been protecting and loving Cheng Yuxiu's son all along?

Admittedly, Zong Jinghao might not get the short end of the stick. However, if Wen Qing flies into a rage, everyone will get hurt in the process. There are many other prominent families in the B City trying to take the Zong family's and the Wen family's places. Nothing bad would happen if the two families hold their ground, but if their standing gets damaged in the melee, the other families might swoop in and wreak havoc on them.

Besides that, with my pregnancy right now, I can't possibly share his burden. Instead, I might even cause him trouble and make him lose leverage on the situation.

If there is no other way to keep this a secret, I'd rather let him know at some later time. At least, I should wait until I give birth and become self-sufficient again.

I'm actually more worried about how he would take this news.

What would he do if he finds out that the person he hated for more than twenty years is his mother?

I care about him deeply, so I want to keep this a secret as long as possible.

I know I'm being selfish by hiding his past from him, and I know that it's very cruel of me to do so.

His father concealed the truth from him while his mother lied to him for twenty years. As a result, he is filled with hatred and resentment.

How would he react if I told him that the hatred and resentment he felt was all for naught?

Maybe he would feel remorseful because of his relentless insults over the past few decades, but to be fair, what did he actually do wrong?

Why should he even feel regretful for his actions?

I wish that Zong Jinghao is Zong Qifeng and Wen Xian's son instead.

At least then Cheng Yuxiu would be the only one hurt from this whole ordeal. After all, she would not be able to acknowledge her son as her own even if she were willing to shower him with affection for the rest of his life.

Zong Jinghao is the most innocent person in this whole affair. His identity was decided for him even before he was born, yet he still needs to bear the consequences of their actions.

This is so unfair to him!

A single teardrop dangled on her eyelashes as she leaned towards him and listened to his rhythmic heartbeat. "I used to think that I would never feel butterflies in my stomach or know what loving someone feels like, but that was before I met you. Everything I thought would never happen to me did, but now I fear losing you more than anything instead."

Zong Jinghao could feel how emotional she was, so he hugged her slightly trembling body and kissed her hair. "Stop overthinking. I am yours and yours alone! Didn't you say that you'd break my legs if I ran away from you? What happened to that?"

Lin Xinyan sniffled. "I read a book that says that women are most emotional when they're pregnant, and I think that's what's happening to me right now."

She looked up at him and croaked, "Once my affairs are settled, can we live overseas with our child? We'll live far away from all the troubles of this land and live a simple life. Our house doesn't have to be big, because just having you, me, and our baby under the same roof is enough. I'll be in charge of cooking and taking care of the baby while you'll be in charge of supporting us financially. We'll bring our kids out on weekends to be with nature once in a while, and we'll watch

the sunsets together. We'll then watch as our kids grow up, and we'll grow old together in each other's arms..."

However, unbeknownst to her, they would soon be shackled by their familial ties the moment the truth of their pasts was revealed.

He leaned over and kissed her forehead. "Of course."

She then closed her eyes and enjoyed the peaceful quiet of the moment.

Bai Yinning's appearance frightened her because he threatened the peace she felt right now.

With a bright smile, she was just like the sun – filling his heart with warmth and light.

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The more crowded a place, the harder it was to carry out security measures. Even so, Guan Jing chose to reinforce Zong Jinghao's villa's security because it was their previous residence, and it was easy for him to implement security features.

An anti-theft system was installed around the perimeter of the villa, and its job was to sound an alarm whenever someone passed through the surveilled area. Besides that, the eight guards Shen Peichuan dispatched were skilled in combat, and they stood guard all day round.

"Everything is in order," Guan Jing approached them and said once he saw their car arriving.

Aunt Yu went back first to see if their bedrooms were cleaned sufficiently. Meanwhile, Guan Jing inquired doctors about the environment a pregnant lady should be in. He concluded that Lin Xinyan should improve her mood by being in a quiet, well-ventilated, and cozy environment.

Even though Lin Xinyan was pregnant, she still stayed upstairs in the master bedroom. That was because the room was quiet, and it faced a forest that provided fresh air. The room was very suitable for people who needed to stay in there for long periods of time.

Aunt Yu placed the flowers she brought from the hospital on the headboard before going downstairs and telling Zong Jinghao, "Mr. Guan made sure everything is in order inside."

Upon hearing that, Zong Jinghao carried Lin Xinyan out of the car. Even though Bai Yinning's words unnerved her severely, she tried not to let it show.

That was because she felt that she would ruin the mood if she put on a grumpy face, especially since everyone was trying their best to provide for her.

Thus, she said to Guan Jing and Su Zhan, "Thank you for today. Please stay here tonight for dinner. Oh, and invite Shen Peichuan here too."

She did intend to thank them, but she had another ulterior motive...

Su Zhan and Guan Jing didn't dare to oppose her because she was pregnant, so they gave Zong Jinghao a look of hesitation as if they were asking him for approval.

Noticing that, Lin Xinyan smiled and said, "I was the one who invited you to dinner, so why are you looking at him? Don't tell me you don't intend to show up?"

"It's just that..." Su Zhan wanted to explain himself, but Zong Jinghao interrupted, "Do as she says. Guan Jing, go find a chef to make tonight's dinner."

"Alright." Guan Jing was excited he received an invitation from Lin Xinyan, who was recognized to be Zong Jinghao's wife.

Everyone knew that Zong Jinghao had a female partner even though they didn't organize a wedding ceremony. Only the people in Zong Jinghao's company and his subordinates dared to greet Mrs. Zong because they were scared to get her title wrong. After all, no one knew if they were actually married or not.

Su Zhan placed their stuff in the room and said, "I'll go downstairs and call Shen Peichuan now."

He couldn't offer much assistance to them upstairs, so he decided to just let Aunt Yu take charge.

Zong Jinghao nodded in acknowledgment and placed Lin Xinyan on the bed. The blankets were all brand-new and fresh from the dryer. They were made of silk – soft and cooling, perfect for the weather nowadays.

“Home sweet home,” Lin Xinyan exclaimed. Even though the hospital wasn’t too bad either, it was noisier and less comfortable.

Zong Jinghao propped out two pillows behind her so that she could lie down more comfortably while Aunt Yu unpacked their luggage.

Before Aunt Yu went downstairs with their suitcases, she said, “When the chef arrives, I’ll show him to the kitchen.”

Zong Jinghao instructed, “Bring a glass of warm water here.”

Aunt Yu replied with a “yes” before going downstairs.

The windows of the room were left slightly ajar, so a gentle breeze came inside.

Meanwhile, Lin Xinyan closed her eyes and pretended that she was about to sleep. She wasn’t tired; she just wanted to avoid Zong Jinghao’s gaze lest he realized that her hidden intentions.

“Are you tired?” He sat on the side of the bed and asked.

She replied, “A little.”

“Let’s wait for Aunt Yu to come up with the glass of water first,” Zong Jinghao suggested.

Originally, Zong Jinghao thought that she genuinely wanted to thank his subordinates by inviting them to dinner.

However, he wasn't so sure now that she was deliberately trying to avoid his gaze.

She seemed so helpless when she heard what Bai Yinning said, and she was so concerned and scared when she was talking to me afterward.

What were her real intentions of asking them to stay for dinner?

He had his suspicions, but he never showed it to her.

At that moment, Aunt Yu came back up with a glass of water in her hands and passed it to Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan stared at Zong Jinghao in surprise, "I thought the glass of water was for you?"

"I'll drink it after you do," He replied softly.

"How did you know that I'm thirsty?" She thought that he asked Aunt Yu for a glass of water because he was thirsty.

After Zong Jinghao tucked a lock of her hair behind her ear, he explained gently, "Your lips are dry, and you just cried in the car, so I thought that you should drink some water. You'd be able to sleep better afterward."

Lin Xinyan took a sip of water and smiled. "Did you laugh at me silently?"

Zong Jinghao replied with silence.

"I know that I was a huge embarrassment today. Gosh, being pregnant just makes you so much dumber." She couldn't keep her emotions in check today because she was so anxious that he would discover her secret.

“Well, I’m pretty sure I read somewhere that it’s a very natural occurrence for pregnant women.” Zong Jinghao took the glass of water, but he didn’t take a sip or put it down. Instead, he just held onto it as he asked, “Are you curious where I read that from?”

“Um... I’m tired.” Lin Xinyan replied as she took one of the pillows with her and turned away from him so that he wouldn’t ask her any more questions.

Zong Jinghao remained motionless as he stared at the glass of water in his hands. He then finished the glass of water and realized that Lin Xinyan’s breathing gradually became regular. Soon after that, he tried gently calling out to her for a response to no avail.

She’s probably asleep. He stood up from the bed and headed towards the window. Meanwhile, Lin Xinyan was only pretending to be asleep, so she opened her eyes the moment he left her bed.

She saw that he was facing away from her, so she couldn’t see his expression or guess what he was thinking right now.

Even so, she knew that Zong Jinghao was smart enough to have figured out that something was amiss.

He probably already has his suspicions now, right?

Her resolve to keep the truth under wraps was even stronger now. She took out her phone and texted Shen Peichuan, “Get me a wheelchair and put it in your car. Don’t tell anyone about it and don’t reply to this message. I’ll tell you the reason why at night.”

Among Zong Jinghao’s subordinates, Shen Peichuan was the most trustworthy one, which was why she chose to put her faith in him.

After the message was sent, she put her phone down and closed her eyes. However, unbeknownst to her, Zong Jinghao saw everything that transpired from the reflection in the glass window.

The moment Lin Xinyan closed her eyes, he turned back around and shuffled towards the bed.

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He took a look at the phone beside the pillow, but he didn't pick it up to see who she sent the message to.

Instead, he lay down and hugged her from behind.

Lin Xinyan opened her eyes in surprise, but she remained motionless as she gradually closed them again.

When night arrived, the chef hired by Guan Jing prepared a tableful of scrumptious dishes. Meanwhile, Aunt Yu placed the cutlery and dishes down and arranged them neatly.

It wasn't a celebration, but it sure seemed as festive as one because of how many people arrived.

Shen Peichuan was the taciturn type, so he sat on the couch alone as he tried to decipher Lin Xinyan's message.

Previously, he received Su Zhan's phone call when he came out from the morgue because he was investigating He Ruilin's cause of death.

The official statement was that she committed suicide, but he decided to double-check the statement by asking a coroner who was his friend to undergo some more checks off the record.

There weren't any scars on the body except the bruise on her neck because she hanged herself, but the coroner still managed to discover something fishy.

He discovered some substance resembling human skin embedded in her fingernails, but it would take additional tests to find out what it was.

After Shen Peichuan received Su Zhan's phone call, he went back to take a shower and change into a fresh set of clothes. As he was about to make his way to the villa, he received Lin Xinyan. His first instinct was to call Zong Jinghao to ask him what was going on, but he stopped himself because Lin Xinyan forbade him from telling anyone.

He then placed a wheelchair in the boot of the car just as she had requested before coming to the villa.

"What are you looking at?" Su Zhan sat beside him and asked because Shen Peichuan had been staring at his phone ever since he arrived.

Shen Peichuan calmly turned his phone off, but Su Zhan could still catch a glimpse of what seemed to be a text message. "Who sent you a message? Why do you seem so engrossed?"

Shen Peichuan put his phone in his pocket and glared at him. "Can you mind your own business?"

Su Zhan snorted and sat on another couch. "It's not like I wanna know anyway. I'm not interested in the text messages of an old virgin like you."

Shen Peichuan was rendered speechless.

He really doesn't hold back, huh?

Guan Jing was peeling some oranges as he heard Su Zhan's comment. He then asked Shen Peichuan, "Are you really still a virgin?"

Su Zhan clenched his tummy and stifled his laughter. He didn't want to ridicule Shen Peichuan, but this was too funny to him.

At that moment, Aunt Yu came over and announced, "Dinner's ready. Wash your hands first. I'll go upstairs and ask them to come down."

Meanwhile, both of them were pretending to be asleep, so they pretended to wake up as well when they heard Aunt Yu's voice. However, the difference between them was that Lin Xinyan didn't know that Zong Jinghao was pretending to be asleep while he did.

Even so, he pretended like he didn't know anything as he used a wet towel to wipe her hands. Meanwhile, Lin Xinyan stared at her hands and lamented, "I'm so useless. I need help in everything."

Zong Jinghao didn't look up as he continued his delicate motions. "You're not useless at all. At least you can give me a baby."

After he was done wiping her hands, he placed the wet towel on the table and pinched her cheeks. "Stop looking down on yourself. Come on, give me a hug."

Zong Jinghao wrapped her arms around his neck and carried her up from the bed.

On the other hand, Lin Xinyan was already used to him carrying her ever since she got pregnant.

They were all in the living room when they saw Zong Jinghao carrying Lin Xinyan down. They stood up from the couches as he headed towards the dining room and said, "Let's eat."

He placed Lin Xinyan on the chair and sat beside her. Meanwhile, Shen Peichuan and the other two men sat opposite of them. The dining table could accommodate up to fifteen people, so there was more than enough space because there were only five of them there.

Su Zhan broke the silence. "The food looks delicious. Thank you, Xinyan."

Lin Xinyan smiled and replied, "I should be one thanking you. You all helped me out so much during this period, and I'm remembering all your kind deeds."

“Aunt Yu,” she called out.

“Yeah?” Aunt Yu approached her as she instructed, “Bring two bottles of liquor from the rack.” She then added deliberately, “Chinese spirits please.”

Aunt Yu heeded the order and went off.

Drinking liquor is not an unusual thing for an occasion like this, but why did Lin Xinyan specifically ask for Chinese spirits?

Don't tell me she wants to get us all drunk?

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao remained silent and fell into deep thought.

Aunt Yu came back with two bottles of thirty-year-old Moutai, which were pretty costly according to normal standards.

Lin Xinyan knew that there were a lot of types of liquor on the wine rack, and she knew that there were a few bottles of high-quality Moutai too.

There was a larger variety of red wine than Chinese spirits in stock, so naturally, Aunt Yu brought out the two specific bottles of Moutai under Lin Xinyan's instructions.

She asked Aunt Yu to open the bottles and instructed, “Pour Su Zhan some.”

She then opened another bottle and asked Zong Jinghao, “I'm in a good mood. Can I pour them some?”

Zong Jinghao stared at her with a gaze filled with affection and love as he smiled. “Sure, as long as you want to.”

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When Lin Xinyan smiled, her crystalline eyes seemed to laugh as well. “Should I be paying my respects to them since they helped me so much through such an important situation? I can’t really drink though. Would you be willing to help me?”

As she spoke, she filled Zong Jinghao’s glass to the very brim.

Zong Jinghao glanced at the overflowing glass of alcohol before him and smirked. So this all had been a trap just for him.

He smiled tenderly. “Whatever you say.”

Su Zhan blinked. *What’s going on between these two? Why are they acting all flirty?*

“Jinghao, what’s-”

What’s going on?

“You must have done quite a bit to help out after that little internet incident. This is just my gratitude to you. If you aren’t willing to accept it, you don’t have to.” After she had gotten pregnant, she hadn’t looked at her phone apart from taking calls. She’d only found out because the nurse from her check-up the other day had been stealing glances at her while watching that video.

After that, she managed to direct Aunt Yu away before reading the news for herself on her phone.

Lin Xinyan’s words made it hard for Su Zhan to turn her down. He picked up the glass and eyed Zong Jinghao uneasily. *Am I supposed to drink this or not?*

Without further ado, Lin Xinyan passed a glass toward Jinghao. He looked at her through hooded lids. He knew what was going on, and yet he chose to play along.

This alcohol was strong and definitely burned going down. They hadn't eaten anything yet, which made it even easier to get drunk since they were drinking on an empty stomach.

Meanwhile, Su Zhan only had a small shot glass of alcohol and he downed it in one gulp. He frowned at the spiciness of the liquor and quickly stuffed some food into his mouth in an attempt to cancel out the bitter and raw taste.

Lin Xinyan looked at Zong Jinghao worriedly. However, he was as expressionless as if he were simply drinking water. She picked up some dishes that she knew he would like and placed them on his plate. "Wash it down with this."

Hearing that, Zong Jinghao leaned closer to her and whispered, "Feeling bad for me?"

Lin Xinyan calmed her frenzied heart and whispered back, "As if." To prove that what she said was real, she filled Zong Jinghao's glass once again.

"You and Guan Jing should toast together. While you weren't at the office, he helped a lot."

"Please don't say that. That's what I'm supposed to do." Guan Jing said, taken aback by the sudden kindness.

It was much easier to get drunk on an empty stomach. After downing two glasses of that liquor straight, Jinghao's eyes started to become bloodshot. He looked fine, but Xinyan knew how uncomfortable he must be feeling. After all, it was terribly damaging to drink liquor with such a high alcohol content on an empty stomach.

Despite all that, she knew she couldn't leave without getting Zong Jinghao drunk.

Although her heart ached for him, she filled up his glass once again. “Now, toast to me. I married you when I was 18 years old, and you didn’t have anything to give me. No dowry, no wedding, and even our marriage certificate got signed because someone else dragged me there. Honestly, it’s been pretty rough for me, hasn’t it? Shouldn’t you-”

She hadn’t even finished speaking before Zong Jinghao downed the glass in another gulp.

The veins in his forehead starting pulsating, and his Adam’s apple bobbed up and down as he spoke in a raspy voice, “I used to be an a**hole and did plenty of stupid things.”

As he spoke, he filled his glass again. “I’d like to say something in front of all my close friends today. “I...” He paused for a while and suddenly wrapped Lin Xinyan in his arms. “Really love this woman a lot. I have a lot to thank her for.”

The three men before him nodded quietly. “We know.”

“This one’s also for you. You gave me Ruixi and Xichen.” He downed the fourth glass in one more shot and filled it up again. “I can’t apologize enough with just one glass, nor can I properly express how much heartache I felt all those years or my stupidity that led to all this. Thank you for raising them so well.”

These were all words straight from his heart. He’d never said them out loud before this, but he had never forgotten them.

Six years. It had been much too long. More than three thousand days and nights. It wasn’t just time that had slipped by, but plenty of laughter and growth that he had failed to be there for.

He had never experienced the anxiety and hopefulness of a soon-to-be father waiting nervously outside the delivery room.

Hence, he didn’t know what their children looked like as newborns.

Not only that, but he also didn't know when his children grew their first tooth.

Or when they said their first word, what it was, or if they said "mom" or "dad" first.

He didn't know the feeling of carrying a newborn in his arms.

He might have purposely been trying to let Lin Xinyan's plan succeed, or he might have been drowning in his own depressing thoughts. Either way, he downed the entire bottle of liquor all on his own.

With that, he ended up getting drunk.

Holding on to Lin Xinyan tightly, he did not let her go but also did not say anything.

He just wanted to hold on to her. When he held her in his arms and felt her warm body against him, he finally felt like a whole human being.

"You're drunk." Lin Xinyan patted him on the back.

He buried his head into the crook of her neck. "I'm not drunk. I just feel bad."

Then, he held Xinyan's hand and guided it to his heart. "I feel bad right here."

Lin Xinyan blinked at him and whispered, "I know. We still have a long way to go together, so for now, you just need to sleep."

After that, she turned to the three men before her. "Can you bring him upstairs?"

If they hadn't known before, they definitely knew now. This was all a ruse to get Zong Jinghao drunk.

As for the reason why – well, they still didn't know.

The two of them were enough to carry him up, so Shen Peichuan didn't follow. Instead, he looked at Lin Xinyan. "What exactly are you trying to do?"

Yet, Lin Xinyan ignored his question. "Is his alcohol tolerance any good?"

"Under normal circumstances, he's pretty decent. He's a businessman, after all. It's common for him to go out drinking as part of the job." Even if one had a horrible alcohol tolerance, one could still be trained through drinking often.

"So, is he drunk?" Lin Xinyan asked.

He clearly tried to get himself drunk nearing the end of it. After all, she was pretty obvious about her intentions. He had to have known she wanted to get him drunk.

"He was in a bad mood, so it's even easier for him to get drunk." Shen Peichuan's meaning was clear enough.

After he said that, Lin Xinyan took a deep breath. At this point, there was no going back. She had to follow her plan.

"Aunt Yu, go up and take care of him, please." A drunk person shouldn't be left alone. *What if he needed to throw up or was feeling thirsty?*

Aunt Yu started making some warm honey water, but Lin Xinyan pressed her lips tightly together and said, "Give him some normal warm water instead."

She was scared that he would wake up too early, and she wouldn't have enough time.

"Where's the wheelchair I asked you to get?" She asked Shen Peichuan.

"What exactly are you trying to-?"

“I’m running out of time. I’ll tell you on the way,” Xinyan said, cutting him off.

Aunt Yu stood there, not knowing what to do.

Is she really not even going to let him drink some honey water after he downed so much alcohol?

After hesitating for a while, Aunt Yu went to the kitchen and poured a new glass. She still secretly slipped some honey in, though, managing to hide it from Lin Xinyan.

Shen Peichuan then placed the wheelchair next to Xinyan and helped her into it before pushing her out.

Once they reached the car, he helped her in before folding up the wheelchair and keeping it in the trunk.

After starting the car, he asked, “You can tell me what your plan is now, right? What exactly is this master plan of yours? Who exactly did you have to get Jinghao drunk in order to meet? Or is something else the case?”

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Lin Xinyan knew that she wouldn't have chosen Peichuan to help her out if she didn't have a proper reason. She chose to confide in him because she knew he could be trusted and was smart enough to keep his mouth shut.

"I want to go meet Bai Yinning." She'd been to Bai Yinning's place before and knew which hotel he was staying in.

Hearing that, Shen Peichuan's eye twitched. He knew very clearly how much Zong Jinghao hated Bai Yinning's guts.

"Peichuan, you're Jinghao's closest friend. What do you think I should do?" Lin Xinyan was torn.

She was worried that her selfishness would hurt Zong Jinghao.

After all, Cheng Yuxiu was his mother.

However, Shen Peichuan was confused. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about Cheng Yuxiu. If she really is Jinghao's biological mother, should I tell him?" She stared at Shen Peichuan, hoping for an answer that would soothe her conscience.

"How's can that be? This could never happen. It's impossible!" Shen Peichuan couldn't believe it.

That was way too strange of a scenario.

How could Cheng Yuxiu possibly be Jinghao's mother?

One shouldn't make jokes like that.

“I mean it. If it turned out to be true, should I tell him?” Lin Xinyan’s expression and tone of voice didn’t seem like she was joking. At that moment, Shen Peichuan went silent.

After a long time, he finally started speaking again. “I don’t know. It seems like something that would take a toll on him. How would you feel if you found out that you hated your own mom for so long? How’s he supposed to feel about this?”

Then he turned towards Lin Xinyan. “Anyway, is it even true?”

It just seemed too strange to be true. Cheng Yuxiu as Jinghao’s mother?

“You’ve heard about Wen Xian and Zong Qifeng’s marriage being an arranged one, right?” Xinyan pressed her lips together. Her voice sounded slightly hoarse.

She felt like that was life’s way of playing tricks.

“I’ve heard of it.”

“At the time, Wen Xian already had someone else she loved. She didn’t love Zong Qifeng at all. After they got married, they were simply acquaintances. They never loved each other as a married couple would. After that, Wen Xian felt sorry for Zong Qifeng and started looking for a woman who would be willing to accompany him instead.”

“And that woman happened to be Cheng Yuxiu?” Shen Peichuan felt as if he had gotten struck by lightning. *How could that be?*

Why would someone help their own husband find another woman to love?

Was it really just because she didn’t love him?

“You probably know how powerful the Wen family is. Wen Xian wanted to give this child a proper identity, so she lied to everyone. Not even the other Wen family members knew, only herself.” There were even more details that she didn’t bother getting into.

Peichuan didn’t know what to say.

“But still, that doesn’t explain why you’re going to see Bai Yinning. What does he have to do with all this?” Shen Peichuan felt like this old case involved quite a lot of people.

“You’ve been to Baicheng before, so you’ve probably heard about Bai Yinning’s background. He’s Bai Hongfei’s adopted son, and Bai Hongfei was Cheng Yuxiu’s first love. When Wen Qing found out about Yuxiu and Qifeng’s relationship, he thought Cheng Yuxiu was the homewrecker who ruined his younger sister’s marriage.”

By the time she finished, Shen Peichuan was pretty much all caught up on everything now. *So Cheng Yuwen, the Cheng family, and the tea silk were all connected.*

“Bai Yinning looked for Yuxiu’s midwife. His goal was to work with Jinghao and take Wen Qing down since he’d gotten hurt by her before,” Lin Xinyan explained.

“And you don’t want Jinghao to know?” Despite it being a question, Xinyan could hear the determination in his tone.

Lin Xinyan wrung her hands together. She was feeling indecisive, too. “I don’t think it’s fair to him. Why should he have to suffer the consequences of what happened to the last generation? If Wen Qing also knew the truth, I don’t know how things would turn out.”

“Can’t you tell how much Wen Qing hates Cheng Yuxiu? He’s already become that desperate and insane from just being slightly near her. If he knew the truth...”

She didn't need to say anything explicitly. They were definitely gonna start arguing.

"I don't know. Will he hate me after knowing?" Lin Xinyan was starting to choke up. This was really causing a ton of problems for her.

"Remember what you're feeling right now. You can burn that bridge when you get to it. Jinghao will understand why you're doing such a thing. In fact, this secret will probably get buried after a while." Shen Peichuan stopped by the side of the road. He didn't know how to console Lin Xinyan, so he just passed a piece of tissue to her.

But Lin Xinyan didn't take it. She simply wiped the corners of her eyes with her fingers. "I'm alright."

She wasn't crying for herself; she was crying because she felt horrible for Jinghao.

Shen Peichuan looked at her. She had always been a skinny girl, and her weight never fluctuated much, not even while she was pregnant. She had always looked frail because of that. However, she never did anything that would make anyone think of her as "weak".

That was probably why she was getting closer to Cheng Yuxiu, too, because she knew about this twisted backstory.

Now that Bai Yinning had dug it back up, she was trying her best to settle everything calmly so that it would cause the least amount of damage.

If she thought about it calmly, it was obvious that keeping it a secret would be beneficial to everyone, no matter whose perspective they looked at it from.

If Zong Jinghao's true identity got revealed, he'd be known as a bastard child.

He wouldn't just have to suffer everyone's scrutiny; he'd also have to suffer through the realization of being lied to for so long.

Would he hate himself, or would he hate the people who lied to him?

What good would it do if the truth came out and sent everyone into an uproar? Would it even benefit anybody?

Soon after that, Shen Peichuan started the car again and got back on the road. "I think I get why Jinghao likes you so much now."

His voice was hushed, and Lin Xinyan barely heard him. "What?"

"Nothing." Shen Peichuan went back to focusing on the road.

They arrived at the hotel pretty quickly. After Shen Peichuan parked the car, he went over to help Lin Xinyan down from her seat and into the wheelchair that he had taken out.

Shen Peichuan pushed her into the elevator. Once they reached Bai Yinning's floor, she turned to look at him. "Wait for me here, okay?"

"I'll go inside with you." He felt uneasy about leaving her alone with him. After all, Bai Yinning hadn't always had the best intentions toward her. Besides, he brought her here, so he had to make sure he would be bringing her back in one piece, too.

"Okay." Shen Peichuan knew about everything anyway, so there was no reason to hide anything from him.

When they reached Bai Yinning's unit, Shen Peichuan rang the doorbell. Very quickly, Bai Yinning came to open the door. He didn't seem the least bit surprised at the sight of Lin Xinyan.

It was obvious from the moment that she cut him off at the hospital because she didn't want Zong Jinghao to find out.

Bai Yinning knew that Lin Xinyan would be coming, so he had already asked Gao Yuan to return to his room. He looked at Shen Peichuan and said, "I would like to talk to Ms. Lin alone."

"She's not in the best condition right now. I have to keep an eye on her." Shen Peichuan was determined, not backing down in the slightest.

Bai Yinning chuckled. "Sure, come along. You probably know what's going on. One thing's for sure, though, I'm the boss here. I can always choose to stay silent and not say a word."

Upon hearing that, Shen Peichuan's face soured.

"Peichuan, it's okay. Just wait at the door. I'll call you if anything happens." Lin Xinyan looked at him and shook her head, reminding him to calm down. "He won't do anything to me."

With that, Shen Peichuan glared at Bai Yinning one last time before walking out of the room.

After the room door creaked shut, Bai Yinning turned to look at her. He wasn't trying to hide his feelings in the slightest. "Should I be happy right now, or should I be sad about your visit?"

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He was happy that she was here with him, but he was also sad that she was here for another man.

Lin Xinyan didn't want to waste any more time with him. "Your dishonesty really disappointed me. You probably know exactly why I'm here. Tell me, what will finally stop you from holding onto this? I'm not stopping you from getting your revenge on Wen Qing. I don't care if you live or die.

However, I will never allow you to use Jinghao's identity as leverage in your little war with Wen Qing. Don't you even assume for a minute that I'm helpless simply because I haven't told Jinghao anything. Don't forget, we're in B City. Apart from Zong Jinghao, Zong Qifeng exists, too."

Zong Qifeng hadn't shown himself in a while, but that didn't mean that he had become powerless. He'd have a field day against an outsider like Yinning.

Nonetheless, Lin Xinyan was not about to back down. She could be nice, but there was nothing stopping her from being harsh, either.

Bai Yinning stared at her for a long time before laughing. "You really are willing to do anything for him, huh?"

"He's my husband and the father of my child. For him, I can do anything," Lin Xinyan said honestly, staring right back at him.

She had nothing to hide.

Bai Yinning's smile suddenly fell flat, and his hands gripped onto the handle tightly. "What if I wanted you in return to keep my mouth shut?"

“You won’t go that far. I’m a married woman, and I don’t think I have that much going for me. Tell me, what else do you want?” At his words, Lin Xinyan’s face remained calm, as if he were talking about someone else and not herself.

She was so calm, that Bai Yinning couldn’t believe it.

“Are you even a woman? Even if you don’t like me back, shouldn’t you reply some other way at such a confession? I feel like a failure with a response like that,” Bai Yinning said, not even trying to hide his disappointment.

“Do you think I have three hearts and can just give one away to you? I have just one, and it’s small. Small enough that it can be completely filled by just one person. Can we get back to our actual problem? If you don’t want to name your price or conditions, that’s fine by me. I came here on the last remaining terms of our relationship. From today onward, we are nothing but enemies.”

After that, she called out, “Peichuan!”

“Wait.” Bai Yinning hadn’t expected her to be so stubborn. From the moment she had turned up outside his door, he was still thinking about using this to get her back and take her away from here and back to Baicheng, where they could live a normal life once again.

Who knew she would be so stubborn?

She was likable and yet gave him so much trouble. Throughout it all, he was entirely in the palm of her hand.

There was a black car parked opposite the street. Inside the car, a man, who was supposed to be in a drunk daze inside a mansion, was watching Bai Yinning and Lin Xinyan’s every move.

Ever since Bai Yinning visited Lin Xinyan in the hospital, Zong Jinghao had gotten someone to find out where in B City he was staying. While B City was

huge, there were still only a few high-class hotels that were easy to narrow down on.

He already guessed that it was highly likely for Lin Xinyan to come and find Bai Yinning after getting him drunk, so he got someone to dress up as a hotel cleaning lady so they could hide a camera in Bai Yinning's room.

As a matter of fact, he could hear and see every single thing that was happening in Bai Yinning's hotel room right now.

He leaned in his seat casually. His shirt was completely wrinkled, and his long legs crossed carelessly in tailored slacks. One of his hands tugged at his collar while the other had the elbow on the armrest and the hand against his forehead. He covered most of his face, rendering his expressions unreadable.

Back in the room, Lin Xinyan was patiently waiting for him to come up with the conditions she wanted to hear.

After a long time, Bai Yinning pushed himself to the French window and looked out at the bright, sleepless city skyline. "I've never lived for myself. I grew up in an orphanage, and no matter how bitter or terrible I felt, I always made sure I smiled brighter than all the rest. No one wants a scowling, disgruntled child, anyway. After a while, I got adopted by Bai Hongfei. In order to prove to him that adopting me wasn't a mistake, I tried my best to show myself off. I worked harder than ever so that I could become a capable person. Then, when he passed away, his dying wish was for me to marry Cheng Yuxiu's daughter. I would stop at nothing to grant his dying wish, no matter if I loved her or hated her. Then, I stumbled upon you and saved your life. When I saw that bracelet, I thought you were the one. I started working toward granting Bai Hongfei's dying wish. Then, I started realizing how much of an interesting person you were. It's safe to say that liking you was the one thing that I did for myself, because of myself, not because of anything or anyone else."

He turned around in his wheelchair and looked at her. "I'm happy to see you here. However, you're here because you don't want another man to get hurt. And you know what? I'm so jealous I could scream. Isn't that funny?"

Lin Xinyan looked at him, her eyes betraying the slightest hint of emotion. She was probably resonating with him, having gone through a tough childhood herself.

“I can stop that doctor from going to him.” He pushed his wheelchair forward so he was facing Lin Xinyan while his knees pressed onto hers. “When I knew what my heart truly wanted, I started doing everything and wanting everything so I could exchange it all for a pair of functioning legs. I’d give everything for that just so I could stand before you like a normal, healthy man. I felt extremely self-conscious for the longest time, and I still am. Whenever I toss and turn at night, unable to sleep because of your face still burned in my mind, I started to hate myself.”

His eyes were deep and bloodshot, almost quivering from passion.

Lin Xinyan said quietly, “I’m not worth all of that.”

“Yeah. You’re not.” He turned around and looked at her again. His nose was barely a few inches from her own and would be touching if only one of them made the daring step. “But I can’t control my heart, can I?”

When he said that, Lin Xinyan curled her hands into fists. Her entire body was tensed up. She was emotional not because of his confession but because of his backstory. There was a lot of unfairness in the world. Some people might have been born into less wealthy families but were still clothed and fed and cared for.

Some, however, were thrown away since birth.

“If you met me first, would you-”

“No ifs.” Lin Xinyan cut him off abruptly. That was a hypothetical question, and she did not want to waste time on situations that never happened.

She could see her own reflection in his dark eyes. “I can make that doctor disappear forever if you can grant my one request.”

“What is it?”

Bai Yinning looked at her lips. Despite being completely bare, without even a spot of lipstick on them, they still looked plump and blushing pink.

Lin Xinyan knew what he wanted, and she managed to turn away just in time. But before she could even react further, he had reached a hand out and latched onto the back of her neck, forcing her to stare at him.

In a low, raspy voice, he whispered, “Just one kiss. Is that too much to ask?”

Lin Xinyan nodded.

Bai Yinning’s eyes darkened in disappointment before they crinkled up in a pained smile. “Do you hate me that much?”

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“There’s someone I like...”

“Mm-”

Before she could finish her sentence, Bai Yinning slammed his lips onto hers, instantly shutting her up.

Her eyes widened in shock, and she instinctively wanted to push him away.

“Don’t push me away. Just this once... Just this once,” he pleaded in a low and hoarse voice.

Lin Xinyan’s hands paused midair, and for some reason, her heart clenched. She could feel him choking on his own sorrow and pain from not being able to put them into words.

She could only remain completely still.

After a long time, his lips trailed across her cheek to rest beside her ear. “When Wen Qing set you up, I knew it was my chance to avenge my adoptive father, but I did it more for your sake because I didn’t want you to be affected by such negative things. Zong Jinghao didn’t know about the truth, so he’d always show mercy to Wen Qing. The reason I dug out the truth about this matter was so that he’d have one less thing to worry about and he’d be able to deal with Wen Qing without inhibition. But I underestimated your feelings for him. I’m jealous and envious at the same time. Take care of yourself. From this moment onwards, you’ll only be a woman whom I once loved.”

He abruptly swiveled around and said over his shoulder, "I'll leave, and I won't disappoint you this time. Today is the last day we'll be seeing each other. I won't ever step into B City again. You should go now."

Lin Xinyan gazed at his back and replied, "Thank you."

Thereafter, she called for Shen Peichuan, who was waiting outside.

Shen Peichuan immediately pushed into the room, then shot a fleeting glance towards Bai Yinning.

"Let's go," Lin Xinyan said softly.

Shen Peichuan did not say anything, only taking her away as per her request.

He waited until they were in the elevators to speak, "Did you two come to an agreement?"

"Mm-hmm." Her voice and expression were both indifferent as if she did not want to talk about it.

"Peichuan, I'm tired." She pinched the space between her brows.

Shen Peichuan was no fool. Even though Bai Yinning agreed not to expose the matter without asking anything in return, Shen Peichuan still felt responsible for reminding Lin Xinyan about certain things. "I'm sure you know how Jinghao is like, and it's no secret that Bai Yinning has feelings for you. He wouldn't promise something just like that. There's definitely a catch. If the conditions he proposed involves you, I hope you rejected him directly."

Lin Xinyan raised her head to meet his gaze. "What do you think he did to me?"

Shen Peichuan pressed his lips into a flat line.

Lin Xinyan huffed out a laugh, but the gaze in her eyes was as cold as ice. “Are you suspecting me of selling my body in exchange for his word?”

“No-”

“That’s exactly what you meant!” Lin Xinyan icily cut him off.

Shen Peichuan lowered his head. “I’m sorry.”

“This assumption of yours isn’t just an insult to me.”

The thought had only appeared transiently in Shen Peichuan’s mind, but he had blurted it out on impulse. Now that he thought about it, he realized that it was inappropriate, and he immensely regretted it too.

Soon after that, Shen Peichuan guided her out of the elevator and out of the hotel doors. When they reached the car, he spotted Zong Qifeng walking over.

Shen Peichuan stopped in his tracks, seemingly shocked to see him. After a split second, he seemed to deduce that their appearance here at the same time might not be a coincidence.

The other day after Cheng Yuxiu and Bai Yinning met up, the former went back home to tell Zong Qifeng about it. Later on, they hired some people to watch Bai Yinning for fear that he would do something stupid.

Of course, what happened at the hospital entrance that day reached his ears.

“You met with Bai Yinning?” Zong Qifeng had his hands behind his back.

Lin Xinyan hummed a “yes” and further elaborated, “He’ll leave B City, and that doctor will never appear before us again.”

Zong Qifeng's brows raised in surprise because he never expected this matter to be resolved so quickly.

"He spent so much time and effort to get what he wanted, and now he agrees to leave just like that? And he even promised not to reveal anything?"

Shen Peichuan looked down at Lin Xinyan as the same question gnawed at his mind. *What made Bai Yinning decide to let it go?*

"He never intended to reveal this matter. His main target was Wen Qing because he wanted to avenge Bai Hongfei. However, he knew that dealing with Wen Qing wasn't going to be easy, so he decided to return to Baicheng for the time being," Lin Xinyan explained.

Zong Qifeng was still skeptical about it, but since Lin Xinyan put it that way, there was nothing else he could say. He heaved a sigh, "If it's hard to continue keeping it a secret, just tell him."

Over the years, he had grown old and worn.

Lin Xinyan was surprised. *He kept it a secret for so many years, but he suddenly doesn't care anymore? Then what was the purpose of meeting with Bai Yinning today?*

"I don't want him to hear it from outsiders – unless it's you, me, or Yuxiu."

Lin Xinyan's brows knitted in a frown. She was unable to accept this kind of answer. "Then why did you hide it from him in the first place? Have you ever considered his feelings? Did you want him to kneel before Cheng Yuxiu and apologize for his animosity towards her all these years, or see him fight Wen Qing to the death? You know how much Wen Qing loved Wen Xian, more than anyone else..." she trailed off. "I'm sorry. I got a little too emotional."

Lin Xinyan closed her eyes and held her forehead. Her nerves were strung so tight that she felt as if she was on the verge of breaking down.

Zong Qifeng was not angry in the least because what she said made sense. They were the ones who hid the truth from the beginning. They were the ones who caused Zong Jinghao's heart to be filled with resentment from a young age. And now...

"It's getting late. You should go home." Zong Qifeng was about to turn around when he suddenly remembered something and looked at her. "Xichen and Ruixi miss the two of you. Call me whenever you're free. I'll bring them over for a visit."

Lin Xinyan nodded in response.

After that, Mr. Feng opened the car door for Zong Qifeng to enter. Then, the car zoomed off.

"Should we leave now?" Shen Peichuan asked.

Lin Xinyan shook her head. She needed some time to calm herself down. Thus, she did not want to go home only for Zong Jinghao to see her like this.

She could not tell if it was because of her unstable emotions, but she felt a dull pain in her abdomen.

Shen Peichuan lifted his hand to comfort her, but his hand paused just a few inches away from her shoulder. As though he felt it was inappropriate for him to do that, he quickly withdrew his hand.

In the end, he accompanied her in silence on the side of the road.

Unbeknown to them, they were being watched by someone inside a car that was parked on the opposite side of the road.

After he rolled up the car window, the car sped off and left a plume of smoke in its wake.

When the car passed by Lin Xinyan, she raised her head and coincidentally clashed gazes with the man in the car. However, the car was moving too quickly for her to see who it was.

Only after Lin Xinyan was completely out of sight did the person inside the car finally retract his gaze.

The night sky cracked open, and rain began to pour down.

Embedding himself in a world that thrived on schemes and conspiracies for so many years had trained him to remain cool-headed under whatever circumstances. No one could decipher his true thoughts.

Even under the most dangerous of situations, he maintained a calm exterior and displayed almost no emotion on his face. At this moment, his entire being resembled the rain outside – cold and unfeeling.

“We must carry out the plan in secret. If you find any leads, report them directly to me.”

“Yes.”

The car quickly disappeared into the heavy downpour of the night.

Perhaps it was because of the rain, Lin Xinyan’s complexion did not look too good once she got into the car. Shen Peichuan grew worried and asked, “Do you need to go to the hospital?”

She understood her body best. “I’m fine. Let’s go home.”

Shen Peichuan wanted to say more, but when he saw how exhausted she looked, he shoved the words back down his throat.

The car quickly arrived in front of the villa.