

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 451

Zong Jinghao, who had been silent all the while, finally opened his mouth.

Wen Qing turned to him. "What do you mean?"

Looking and sounding indifferent, he said, "I just wanted to know."

"Come to think of it, I probably have to go to the Chen family today. I was the one who suggested having Chen Shihan marry you in the first place, and I haven't told him about this decision yet. They are not going to be very happy about it this time."

Chen Qing worked hard and had presented his daughter, but in the end, Wen Qing didn't manage to fulfill his promise to his old friend.

"So what you're saying is that this was Chen Qing's idea?" Even though it was a question, Zong Jinghao already had the answer in his heart.

"Yes, I was so desperate to break you and Lin Xinyan up and he came up with this plan. Chen Qing told me that He Ruize had gone in because of Lin Xinyan. The He family hated Lin Xinyan as well so they were willing to help me." Wen Qing said bluntly.

Zong Jinghao was not surprised by that answer. "I think there are still a lot of things that he hasn't told you."

"What do you mean?" Wen Qing raised his voice.

He had always trusted Chen Qing. For him to suddenly find out that Chen Qing had something to hide from him, he could not help but raise his voice.

“A few days ago, someone tried to abduct Lin Xinyan. They were very aggressive and brought quite a few people to break into the hospital...”

“What?” Realization soon dawned upon Wen Qing. “Do you mean that it was all Chen Qing’s doing?”

“Not him personally as he was using the He family. Their daughter had died in jail and he was the mastermind. I have investigated everything thoroughly. I would not have said all these to you if I didn’t have proof.” Zong Jinghao told him all these just to let him know that he was not the only reason why Chen Qing had presented his own daughter and that Chen Qing also probably had his own ulterior motives.

That being said, Zong Jinghao could not figure out what motive Chen Qing had. *Based on his relationship with Wen Qing, he wouldn’t have needed to set up an arranged marriage, no?*

So why would he want to marry off his daughter to me?

What was he trying to do?

What was his objective?

There are still so many questions left unanswered, and it seems like Chen Qing is definitely craftier than Wen Qing.

“Is it because he saw that I was ill and was worried that I would go back on my word, hence he did all these behind my back?” At that very moment, Wen Qing could not ascertain why would Chen Qing did what he did as well.

Based on our relationship, Chen Qing should have a discussion with me and he shouldn’t have made all these decisions on his own.

“If you want to find out whether he was hiding it from you deliberately, all you need to do is to test him.” Zong Jinghao picked up the document from the table but he did not read it.

He understood Wen Qing quite well. Since he had decided to release Lin Xinyan, he will definitely not do anything to harm her again.

He then stood up and said, “I really don’t like Chen Qing.”

Nobody knows what his objectives are, to have him around is a clear and present danger.

Wen Qing frowned, “What do you mean?”

“I should leave now.” Zong Jinghao had already dropped enough hints and reminders, and there was nothing left to say.

Wen Qing stared at Zong Jinghao’s retreating figure as he walked down the steps to leave the pavilion, and he continued to stare until Zong Jinghao was finally out of his sight.

He sighed. *I guess there’s still a barrier between us, after all.*

Our relationship will probably never return to what it used to be.

“I want to let go too but I can’t.”

Apart from death, there was no other way for Wen Qing to get rid of the obsession that had taken root in his heart.

Soon, Wen Qing left Lotus Park and headed straight to the Chen family.

Chen Shihan was incredibly bored at home. She could not stand the life of just being at home all the time.

“Dad, I feel like I’m in jail. When can I go out?”

She grumbled.

Just then, there was a knock on the door, and Mrs. Chen went to open it.

Chen Shihan continued, “I can’t take it anymore. I want to go out. If I continue like this, I will go mad.”

“Just bear it for a little longer...” When he saw that their guest was Wen Qing, Chen Qing changed his tone. “Go back to your room first. I’ll talk to you later.”

Chen Shihan was about to say something but Chen Qing shot her a warning glare that forced her to return to her room reluctantly.

“You’re here.” Chen Qing stood up from the sofa.

“I was so bored at home for those few days when I was ill.” Wen Qing’s tone and mannerism were as usual. Chen Qing smiled, “A couple of days’ rest will do you good. Look at you, you look a lot better now.”

Wen Qing sighed. “I’m getting old, and time and tide wait for no man.”

Chen Qing smiled. “Come on in.”

Mrs. Chen came up to them and asked, “What would you like to drink?”

“I’m not thirsty...” Chen Qing paused and glanced at Wen Qing before he said, “Serve us some tea. Wen Qing likes tea, like the old man that he is.”

“You know me the best.” Wen Qing smiled as he followed his friend into the study.

“You weren’t too worried when I was ill, are you?” Wen Qing asked nonchalantly.

“Take a seat.” Chen Qing gestured and Wen Qing sat down accordingly.

“What was there to be worried about? We still need you for that matter.” Chen Qing sat down. He was worried as He Wenhui did not complete his task successfully. “Now that you are well, Jinghao had already promised...”

“I heard someone had broken into the hospital when I was ill. Did you know about this?” Wen Qing cut him off.

Chen Qing’s heart thumped but he looked unfazed. “I did hear about it. Apparently, He Wenhui got someone to do it. His daughter had died in jail, and it seems that Lin Xinyan had a lot to do with the reason she was in jail in the first place. I heard that she was saddled with two homicide cases.”

Wen Qing closed his eyes. If Zong Jinghao had not reminded him, he would have definitely believed Chen Qing’s words.

Now, all he felt for his friend was doubts.

“Chen Qing, we have known each other for decades, right?”

Chen Qing nodded, “That’s right. From enlisting into the army together until today where we are work partners.”

An unpleasant feeling rose through Wen Qing’s heart. *That’s right, we have been mates for so many years, and you actually have the audacity to lie to me.*

“I heard that you were the mastermind behind the murder of He Wenhui’s daughter and that you used him to force Jinghao?”

Chen Qing was taken aback suddenly. *H-how did he know?*

Mrs. Chen was just about to knock on the door with the tea, but she stopped herself when she heard Wen Qing. She then stood at the door to eavesdrop.

Meanwhile, Chen Shihan wanted to find out whether Chen Qing and Wen Qing were discussing about her marriage with Zong Jinghao. When she came down, she saw Mrs. Chen eavesdropping. She frowned and asked, “Mom, what are you doing?”

“Shh! Come here.” Mrs. Chen whispered to her daughter.

Chen Shihan walked over. “What are they talking about?”

Mrs. Chen made way for her daughter so that she could listen in as well.

With her curiosity piqued, Chen Shihan followed her mother as they stuck themselves to the tiny gap at the door.

“Where did you hear that from?” Chen Qing forced out a calm front.

At the same time, his brain was spinning madly as he tried to come up with a way to lie to Wen Qing.

“I would not be here questioning you if I didn’t have concrete evidence. You could have just told me if you were in a hurry to marry Shihan off. Aren’t we close friends? would I have ignored you if you share with me your concerns? Yes, I started this whole thing and I apologize for not fulfilling my end of the deal. However, should you be doing all these behind my back?”

Chen Qing started to panic. “You have proof?”

This could proof to be my doom.

“We have been friends for so many years, so please be honest with me. Why are you putting in so much effort just for Shihan to marry Jinghao?”

Chen Qing fell silent.

The door to the study was suddenly pushed open. Mrs. Chen stood at the door and said, "I know why he has spent so much effort to have Shihan marry Zong Jinghao."

Everyone's eyes turned towards her, even Chen Shihan who was by her side had a look of surprise on her face.

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Chen Qing immediately stood up and reprimanded his wife, "I'm talking to Wen Qing. Who gave you the permission to come in?"

Mrs. Chen looked at her husband. "I've been married to you for so many years and I've done nothing but take care of you diligently and listen to your instructions obediently. Have I ever said no to you?"

Chen Qing was at a loss for words. Indeed, his wife was really good at taking care of the family, their daughter, and serving him.

"I'm talking to Wen Qing, why did you come in? You're but a woman, so what would you know? Put down the tea and leave." This time, he was not as loud and not as agitated. With Wen Qing here, if he appeared to be too bothered, he would look like he was trying to hide something.

All he could do was to give his wife a look of warning.

Mrs. Chen stared at her husband keenly and said, "I've put you in the center of everything I do since marrying you, but this time, I am not listening to you."

Chen Shihan stood aside as her gaze moved rapidly between her father and her mother. "Mom, what are you doing?"

Mrs. Chen looked at her daughter with slightly reddened eyes. "I want you to know your dad's true intentions."

Chen Qing was a little flustered now. "Get out!"

Back then, Mrs. Chen would have left immediately at the sight of her husband who was about to explode in anger, but now, she could no longer watch her

husband sink deeper into his obsession and pulling their daughter along with him as well.

She walked in and placed the tray onto the table before walking to the shelves at the back of the room. From there, she took out a book with the title, "War Strategies."

While Chen Qing glared at her with a grim face, Wen Qing and Chen Shihan kept their gaze on her as they were curious to know what she would take out next.

In front of everyone, Mrs. Chen took out a photograph from the book.

Chen Shihan had never seen the photo before and she wasn't sure who the young girl in it was. Wen Qing, on the other hand, could recognize clearly that it was his sister, Wen Xian in the photo.

He walked over and took it from Mrs. Chen's hands. In the photo, a fifteen-year-old Wen Xian was standing under a tree, wearing a white dress with her hair down. Her features were not fully developed yet, but her exquisite face could still be seen, especially her beautiful twinkly eyes, which were especially unforgettable.

Under the light, Wen Qing noticed that there were words written at the back of the photo. When he turned it over, Wen Xian's name was written on it together with the date.

The date was when he enlisted into the army.

He turned to look at Chen Qing. "What's going on here?"

Chen Qing turned his head without looking at anybody.

Mrs. Chen wanted to smile but her body was so stiff that she could not bring herself to smile anymore. "I've always known that there was someone else in his

heart and I have never wanted to find out more about it. But now? He has gone mad!”

In the beginning, she did not know that Chen Qing had someone else in his heart. As a husband, he had always been very cold towards her. After they completed their marital duties, he would shut himself in his study.

At first, she assumed that this was just his character and eventually accepted it. However, she discovered the girl’s photo not long after Chen Shihan’s birth. It happened when she came into the study once to look for something and accidentally knocked the book over, only to have the photo in it fall out.

That time, she really wanted to interrogate Chen Qing to find out why he was hiding a girl’s photo. However, she thought of their child and the fact that the girl in the photo looked quite young. She then convinced herself that she was overthinking it.

After that, Chen Qing still retreated to the study after completing their marital duties. As such, she purposely pushed the door open without knocking only to realize that he was looking at that photograph.

When she saw that scene, her heart was broken and all she wanted to do was to interrogate him, but she still held back in the end. She could not bear to let her child live in an incomplete family and she had feelings for Chen Qing as well.

“The reason why you went all out to have Shihan marry Jinghao is so that your daughter would marry the son of the woman that you have been secretly in love with all these years. Am I right?”

The moment she uttered those words, Mrs. Chen covered her mouth. Everything that she had hidden inside her all these years had exploded at that very moment. All her life, she had never uttered a word related to all the pain and suffering that she had gone through.

She couldn’t bring herself to say it either.

What do I say? That there is someone else in my husband's heart? That he calls out another woman's name in his throes of passion?

She could not afford to lose him.

Chen Shihan's eyes widened in disbelief. "Dad, is Mom speaking the truth?"

Chen Qing's body was stiff but he was still trembling slightly.

"Dad, say something!" Chen Shihan could not accept this as her father had always claimed to do things for the collective good of their family.

But at the end of the day, everything he did was for his own selfish wants.

Wen Qing looked at Chen Qing, "I want to know what's happening too."

"Do you remember that year when we enlisted into the army and I went to your house?" Without turning around, Chen Qing said in a somewhat repressed tone.

"Of course." Wen Qing will never forget that day.

"I stood at the living room waiting for you..."

The weather was exceptionally good that day. The early summer rays were not scorching and merely gave off warm vibes.

Dressed in a thin long-sleeved t-shirt, he was standing in the living room when suddenly, someone came from the back and covered his eyes. A soft and sweet voice piped up, "Guess who I am?"

She was next to his ear and her warm breath fell on the skin behind his ears. It was a little ticklish and he could even smell the light fragrance on her body.

The girl was standing so close to him that his heart beat wildly.

“Wen Xian, what are you doing?” Wen Qing changed into a thin shirt and came down to see Wen Xian covering Chen Qing’s eyes. He was confused so he asked her.

Wen Xian froze at the sight of her brother at the staircase and quickly released the man whose eyes she was covering.

She thought that it was Wen Qing standing there. He was enlisting today, hence she had purposely taken a leave from school to see him off.

She had planned to play a trick on him but she didn’t expect to get the wrong person instead.

She scratched her head, “I’m so sorry, I thought you were my brother.”

Wen Xian was very embarrassed then and her little face began to blush.

That was the first time Chen Qing had met her. Her hair was up in a ponytail, displaying her fair and delicate face.

Wen Qing walked over, “His name is Chen Qing and we are enlisting together. I am so much more handsome than he is, so how could you have made that mistake?”

Wen Xian rolled her eyes at her brother. “Such narcissism.”

Besides, she only managed to see his back. Their height was quite similar and there were no other outsiders at home.

“We are going to have some barbecue. Do you want to come along?” They won’t have this kind of chance after enlisting into the army, so they made plans to have some fun first.

“Of course I’m coming along. I took a day off after all.” Wen Xian said.

“Come on then.” Wen Qing took the car keys to Wen Jin’s car.

In the car, Chen Qing took a look at the back. “What’s this, Wen Qing? Are you so afraid that I’d snatch your sister away from you that you didn’t even bother introducing her?”

Wen Qing glanced at him. “Didn’t you meet just now? This is my sister, Wen Xian.”

Wen Xian smiled. “Please watch out for my brother from now on.”

“Do I need someone to watch out for me?” Wen Qing disagreed with his sister. *How could she look down on me like that?*

“You’re so full of yourself. What if you get into trouble? If I am not with you, who is going to plead to Daddy on your behalf?”

Wen Jin loved Wen Xian, and every time Wen Qing got into trouble, Wen Xian would plead on his behalf.

Wen Qing was speechless upon hearing his sister’s words.

Chen Qing smiled and looked at Wen Xian. “Don’t worry, I’ll take care of him for you.”

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Wen Qing snorted. "Why don't you learn how to take care of yourself first?"

Soon, they arrived at the barbecue stall next to Yellow Lake. The best part about the stall was that their patrons could barbecue their own food with the provided ingredients. There was also a little forest next to the lake that was great for hanging out and chatting.

They grilled some meat and vegetables and even got a few cans of beer as they sat on the grass, eating and chatting away.

Wen Qing sighed, "This is probably the last of our relaxing days."

Wen Xian leaned against her brother and shot him a side glance. "How can you be so unambitious. You are supposed to achieve something big."

"What kind of big achievement do you want me to attain?" Wen Qing looked at his sister.

Without any hesitation, she replied, "Well, I want you to attain the title of a General that will protect the country."

"Whoa, ambitious, aren't we? A General?"

Chen Qing was rather quiet that day, and the siblings did most of the talking. All Chen Qing did was looked at Wen Xian when she was talking.

She looked so energetic, innocent and enthusiastic.

"I'll go and get another two cans of beer." Wen Qing got up.

With Wen Qing gone, Chen Qing finally got the chance to talk to Wen Xian. “You and Wen Qing seem to have a great relationship.”

With her hand supporting her chin, Wen Xian said, “Well, he is my brother, after all!” Then, as if she were suddenly reminded of something, a blissful look appeared on her face and she said helplessly, “When I was in primary school, nobody dared to be my friend.”

Chen Qing asked curiously, “Why?”

Wen Xian pouted. “Because I have a fierce older brother. I remember when I was in second grade, one of my classmates accidentally pushed me. I fell down and scraped my knee. There was a little bit of blood. When my brother found out about it, he went to beat him up.”

“Your brother went to beat up a kid?” Chen Qing’s jaw dropped.

Wow! overprotective much?

“Yeah, and from then onwards, everyone knew that I had a violent brother in the upper levels, and nobody dared to touch me for fear of my brother.”

Chen Qing laughed.

Wen Xian inched closer to Chen Qing and whispered, “Let me tell you a secret. The reason I picked a school that was further away from home was that I was afraid that he would beat my schoolmates up again and I wouldn’t be able to make any friends.”

Chen Qing burst out in laughter.

“Don’t tell my brother that!”

Chen Qing teased her, “I’m not keeping this secret.”

Looking unwell, Wen Xian put her hand on her stomach. Chen Qing looked at her and said, "I'm just joking with you, of course I won't tell your brother. Come on, don't fake a stomachache."

However, Wen Xian kept holding onto her stomach silently and her face scrunched up in pain.

"Are you really having a stomachache?" Chen Qing asked her.

Wen Xian nodded.

"Let's go and look for your brother then. Come on." Chen Qing reached out to pull her up before realizing that there was blood on her pants.

He stopped himself right before he was about to speak. Then, he took off his long-sleeved t-shirt. Wen Xian was shocked upon seeing that. Due to the hot weather, all he had was that shirt. Without it, he was bare-chested.

"You... What are you doing?"

He passed her the shirt and avoided looking at her body before reminding her, "Your body..."

"My body?" Wen Xian turned hesitantly and looked down before realizing that there were bloodstains on her pants.

"You are having 'that', aren't you?"

Wen Xian blushed and looked down. It was her first time.

"There are a lot of people here and it won't be good for others to see it. Tie this around your waist. It's not cold anyway."

Wen Xian hesitated before taking the shirt. "Thank you."

“No problem.” Chen Qing smiled.

Just then, Wen Qing returned with a dozen can of beers in hand when he saw that Chen Qing was topless. Thinking that he did something to Wen Xian, he flung the beer to the ground and rushed to beat Chen Qing up.

“Wen Qing, can you stop being so violent?” Wen Xian shouted at him.

Wen Qing held onto Chen Qing’s collar and roared, “What’s going on?”

Chen Qing whispered, “Your sister is having ‘that’ and it stained her clothes...”

Wen Qing turned to see his blushing sister and released Chen Qing before telling her, “Get into the car and go home now.”

When they got home, Madam Wen made her daughter a warm drink and had her take a bath before changing into some fresh clothes.

After Wen Xian freshened up, she went downstairs. In her white dress and her hair down, her skin was fair and her figure was slim. When she smiled, her eyes curved like the crescent moon.

Chen Qing was stunned by the sight and his heart thumped so wildly it threatened to break out of his chest.

Wen Qing nudged him. “I know that my sister is pretty, but you can’t keep staring at her like that.”

Chen Qing quickly looked down. *I must be going nuts, how could I be attracted to an underage girl?*

However, his gaze kept wandering towards her uncontrollably.

She looked especially pretty when she smiled.

Since Wen Qing was about to leave, Madam Wen suggested that they take a picture in the courtyard for remembrance.

When they got into the car, Wen Xian saw them off from the roadside. At only fifteen, she was a sight to behold as she stood by the side of the road, people could barely take their eyes off her.

Chen Qing's heart felt like it had been stung and he could not stop thinking about her. He would even think about how when he left the army, she would be of age and he could pursue her then. He had even deliberately tested Wen Qing and half-jokingly said, "Wen Qing, introduce your sister to me in the future and we can be closer to each other!"

Wen Qing treated it as a joke and replied, "Sure, only when you succeed in your career and become worthy of her."

Even though he was close to Chen Qing, he was not entirely satisfied with his appearance as he felt that it was not good enough for his sister.

In fact, in his mind, no one was worthy of his sister.

While Chen Qing was reminiscing, Wen Qing also recalled that day.

The latter frowned, "She was only fifteen then..."

Wen Qing was displeased, he felt like his sister had been violated.

Chen Qing simply stood there without turning back.

"Dad, you have really disappointed me!" Chen Shihan could not accept this at all. In the name of their family's future, her father had come up with this plan just to fulfill his longing for his secret crush.

His heroic image in her heart collapsed instantly.

She sobbed as she ran out.

Mrs. Chen looked at her husband and said, "Even if you have a million regrets in your heart, you should let it go after all these years."

On her way out of the room, she said as she walked past Wen Qing, "One should never attempt to destroy a marriage. I think you have all gone mad."

Wen Qing turned around. Even though he had decided to let Lin Xinyan off, her relationship with Cheng Yuxiu still irked him. In his eyes, Cheng Yuxiu was the one who had destroyed his sister's marriage.

There was complete silence in the study. Wen Qing did not expect that his old mate had been pining for his sister all these years.

Apart from discomfort, he could not quite describe his feelings.

"You all claim that you loved her, but what have you given her? In the end, you made her marry someone she didn't love, all because of your own benefits." Chen Qing jeered.

"It was for her own good." Wen Qing still felt that they had done the right thing. "Not only is that Zhuang kid a bastard child, but his mother was also a hostess. How could he be worthy of Wen Xian? Zong Qifeng is ten thousand times better than he is!" Even though Zong Qifeng cheated on Wen Xian, he still maintained his stand that it was not his fault and that he was seduced by Cheng Yuxiu.

As a man, Zong Qifeng was the perfect husband for his sister. He was tall, handsome, and was extremely capable. Wen Qing could tell that Zong Qifeng liked Wen Xian then.

Together, they were a match made in heaven.

Chen Qing snorted. "That sure sounds good for something that was done purely out of self-interest."

“If I had known about your intentions twenty years ago, I would have definitely beaten you up!” Wen Qing said aggressively.

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Chen Qing turned to look at Wen Qing, "So what if I like her?"

Wen Qing breathed heavily and huffed, "It seems that our friendship has come to an end."

"Don't I have the right to like someone?" Chen Qing retorted.

Wen Qing said nothing in response.

He didn't say that Chen Qing couldn't fall in love with his sister, it was just that he felt very uncomfortable by that fact. They had been best mates for many years, and he always thought Chen Qing treated Wen Xian as his sister.

He had never once thought that Chen Qing would like her.

"Your avarice knows no bounds," he simply said.

Chen Qing understood what Wen Qing was trying to say. If he couldn't put down his feelings and the longings of his youth, it would turn into an obsession.

He always felt that if the two of them were together, she wouldn't have died early, and they would definitely have been able to live a happy life. At the very least, he would love and care for her.

"Take care not to let your family fall apart at your age. It will only be a joke to others." With that, Wen Qing turned and walked out of the study.

As he sat in the car, Wen Qing felt suffocated. Adjutant asked, "Are you going home?"

“Let’s go to the cemetery,” he replied. He missed Wen Xian and wanted to see her.

Adjutant drove towards the cemetery in the suburbs. When Wen Qing said he wanted to go to the cemetery, the former knew who he wanted to see.

“Wait. Stop by the flower shop first. I want to buy a bouquet of flowers. Otherwise, the tomb will be too deserted, and she will feel lonely,” Wen Qing said.

Adjutant turned the car around at the intersection ahead.

Instead of chrysanthemums, Wen Qing bought a bouquet of little irises, which was Wen Xian’s favorite when she was still alive.

Holding the flowers, Wen Qing got back inside the car. When Adjutant started the car, Wen Qing inadvertently glanced outside and saw Cheng Yuxiu, Lin Xinyan, the kids, and several bodyguards behind them.

“Let’s go back after we buy the cake. With your body condition, we shouldn’t be outside for too long,” Cheng Yuxiu said as she was worried about Lin Xinyan’s body.

Lin Xinyan complied.

The kids had suddenly said that they wanted to eat a mille-crepe mousse cake. As she felt that it would not take too much time to buy it, she brought the kids out, taking the chance to breathe in some fresh air as well.

“I’ll go in and buy it. Wait for me here,” Cheng Yuxiu said and walked into the cake shop.

Wen Qing couldn’t hear what they said, but he saw that they were very happy. He averted his gaze and looked down at the flowers in his arms, gently stroking them with his hand.

He muttered to himself, "Your son worries me so much."

His gaze remained on the flower in his arms as the car slid out and drove away.

Meanwhile, Cheng Yuxiu bought the cake and said, "Let's go."

"Let's go home to eat the cake," Lin Ruixi said excitedly.

Cheng Yuxiu smiled, "Are you sure you can still eat it?"

"Yes, of course," Lin Ruixi nodded vehemently, afraid that she would not be given the cake.

"Come on, let's get in the car," Lin Xinyan opened the car door and said. Lin Ruixi seemed to feel that they were out for too short a time and commented, "Seems like there will be something fun at night too."

Cheng Yuxiu patted her little butt and said, "I will take you kids out to play tomorrow."

"Will Mommy come with us?" Lin Ruixi turned to look at Lin Xinyan with a yearning look as she blinked her eyes.

"Isn't it the same if I take you? Don't you know that your mommy has a baby in her tummy?" Cheng Yuxiu replied.

Lin Ruixi pouted. Although she wanted to go out with mommy, she does have a baby in her tummy. *Daddy said that the baby would leave if we didn't care for it...* In the end, Lin Ruixi decided not to insist on going out with mommy so that the baby would not leave.

When they returned to the villa, Cheng Yuxiu took the cake to the kitchen and cut it. Everyone got a small slice of the cake as Cheng Yuxiu thought that they might feel unwell if they ate too much at night.

Worried that the cake would be too rich, she then poured a glass of juice for each of them and put it on the table in front of them.

“Why is it so small?” Lin Ruixi stared at the cake on the plate, feeling that it was not enough to eat. Lin Xichen simply shook his head and gave half of his cake to his sister.

Lin Ruixi beamed and thanked him.

“If you get chubby, you won’t be able to wear beautiful clothes,” Lin Xichen said deliberately. She would really gain weight if she ate too much cake at night.

Lin Ruixi snorted, “Do you see anyone who’s chubby in our family? Daddy and mommy are both thin. So how can I get chubby? Our family has a thin physique.”

Lin Xichen was at a loss for words.

When did this little girl become so eloquent and learned to retort?

“Then go ahead and eat it,” Lin Xichen said helplessly.

“Of course I would eat it. If I can’t finish it, I will leave it for Daddy.” Lin Ruixi scooped a spoonful of cake into her mouth happily.

Lin Xichen watched his sister lick the spoon and frowned deeply, “Your saliva is all over it now. Who will eat it?”

“Daddy will eat it. He won’t mind,” The little girl said with confidence. After all, her father didn’t mind her saliva when she kissed him.

Cheng Yuxiu shook her head and chuckled as she looked at the adorable Lin Ruixi.

On the sofa, Lin Xinyan was getting a little sleepy. As she watched the kids sitting at the dining table, the corners of her lips rose slightly.

“Go up and rest first. I will take care of them.” Cheng Yuxiu noticed that Lin Xinyan was sleepy.

Lin Xinyan nodded. She didn't feel tired or unwell, but she was a little sleepy. She got up and said, “Then I will go and rest.”

She walked upstairs steadily and turned on the lights. The room was instantly lit up. The bunch of lilies beside the bed was a little withered, but she was reluctant to throw it away since there was still a faint fragrance coming from it. She reached out and touched the petals and made a mental note to buy another bouquet to replace it.

She thought that having some flowers in the room made the room seem more lively.

She laid down on the bed without washing herself as she felt too sleepy to move. As she laid her head on the pillow, she then covered herself with the quilt and went to sleep.

It wasn't until she heard a noise in her daze at night that she opened her eyes groggily. The room was dark except for the moonlight streaming in from the window. She saw a figure standing by the bed.

Having just woken up, her voice was a little hoarse when she said, “You're back.”

The man took off his suit and walked over to her, saying “Did I wake you up?”

Lin Xinyan hummed in response. She did wake up after hearing the noise.

She grabbed the phone and glanced at the time. It was already two o'clock post-midnight. “Why are you back so late?” she asked.

“I needed to do something. I’ll go and take a shower. You should go back to sleep,” he said as he touched her face. Her skin was warm to the touch, and it felt smooth in his hands.

Feeling ticklish, Lin Xinyan turned her head to the side. Zong Jinghao smiled and said, “Go back to sleep.”

With that, he turned and walked towards the bathroom while unbuckling his belt. He went into the bathroom and turned on the light, and she heard a metallic click. After a while, she heard the sound of running water.

Lin Xinyan was very sleepy. Even though there were noises, she eventually fell asleep. However, she soon felt the mattress beneath her sinking and a strong arm entangling her waist. Smelling the faint fragrance of shower gel, she felt a cool sensation as a pair of lips pressed softly against the back of her neck. The lips continued to kiss and nibbled gently at her neck, making her ticklish. Lin Xinyan mumbled, “I’m sleepy.”

“Okay, I’ll let you sleep,” he said. However, his lips did not leave, and instead, he nuzzled her neck.

Lin Xinyan frowned. She couldn’t sleep with him acting like that.

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“I’m really sleepy,” Lin Xinyan emphasized.

Zong Jinghao did not reply.

He pressed his solid chest against her back as he hugged her tightly, he then said, “I won’t disturb you anymore. Go to sleep.”

The sun gradually rose around six in the morning.

Lin Xinyan rolled over on the bed and stretched out her hands, but she did not feel anybody lying beside her. Blocking the sun’s rays with her hands, she slowly opened her eyes and saw that there was indeed no one beside her. Judging from the lack of warmth on the bed, she figured he must have left early.

She frowned and wondered if Zong Jinghao had enough rest since he came back late last night and went out again so early in the morning.

Sitting up, she grabbed the phone with the thought of calling him, but in the end, she changed her mind. She presumed that he must have something important to attend to. Otherwise, he wouldn’t leave so early. She felt it might not be appropriate to call him at that moment.

With that thought, she put down the phone, lifted the quilt, and headed to the bathroom to wash up. Just as she was squeezing the toothpaste, the phone rang from where she left it on the bed. She picked up the phone as she brushed her teeth and saw that Shen Peichuan was calling her. Taking the toothbrush out of her mouth, she answered the phone and heard Shen Peichuan’s voice from the other end, “Xinyan, have you watched the news?”

“What news?” she asked.

“Hurry up and take a look,” he simply said.

Feeling puzzled, Lin Xinyan searched for the news on her phone. The headline was about a murder in a bar. The police reported that a prisoner had escaped from prison, leaving the police no choice but to shoot him dead. The news also stated that the video circulating on the web was maliciously edited and not true.

The police in B City posted the entire case information on social media and warned the public not to believe in or spread rumors to maintain public order.

In just one morning, that headline was spread all over the web. Lin Xinyan lowered her eyes and wondered if the news was why Zong Jinghao came back so late last night and left so early that morning.

“Xinyan, have you seen it?” Shen Peichuan’s voice rang out from the phone.

Lin Xinyan put the phone to her ear again and said, “I saw it.”

“The good part is yet to come. The perpetrator won’t be able to escape,” he said.

“Is it Wen Qing?” she asked.

“No, it’s Chen Qing...” he answered.

“Chen Qing?” Lin Xinyan exclaimed in surprise. *Wen Qing isn’t the mastermind?*

“Chen Qing’s actually the mastermind. He took advantage of Wen Qing’s hatred for you and came out with ideas for him. He Ruize and He Ruilin were his pawns. He used them to get the He family to retaliate against you while staying behind the scenes, waiting to reap the benefits. He thought we were unaware of what he did, but he doesn’t know that we have evidence of his crimes...” Shen Peichuan explained.

Zong Jinghao went to see Wen Qing that night, and after that, he also went to see He Wenhui.

If it were not for Wen Qing, who backed down and took the initiative to withdraw the case, he would also be implicated in this matter.

At that time, Zong Jinghao asked Shen Peichuan to meet with He Wenhui to determine if He Ruize's death was related to Wen Qing and Chen Qing.

It turned out that his death was a deal between Chen Qing and He Ruize. He Ruize knew that he was bound to die, so before he went to the bar, he sent a letter to the He family. In the letter, he stated that Chen Qing went to look for him and said that as long as he was willing to die, Chen Qing would lend his support to the He family and rescue He Ruilin, so he agreed to the deal.

Coincidentally, He Wenhui received that letter just when Shen Peichuan went to find him, and Shen Peichuan informed him of He Ruilin's death and showed him the evidence.

By then, He Wenhui knew that Chen Qing had used him. Naturally, he was unwilling to let Chen Qing off the hook after finding out the truth.

That being said, He Wenhui never trusted Chen Qing wholeheartedly. As such, whenever the two met and talked, he would secretly record their meeting in case Chen Qing ever betrayed him.

Now, those recordings had become evidence of Chen Qing's role in that matter.

Coupled with the death of He Ruilin, Chen Qing's situation became more unfavorable, and it was certain that the police would bring him in for investigation.

Besides, the police were currently putting in a lot of effort into fighting crimes. Chen Qing's situation couldn't possibly end well with him committing a crime at that point.

Lin Xinyan did not expect to hear that. She asked, "But why would he do this?"

Did he have a grudge against me?

Why else would he try so hard to frame me?

"I don't know the specifics, but he must have had a reason. He wouldn't be so desperate otherwise. Anyway, I called to tell you not to worry about Ruize's case anymore. The matter is over," Shen Peichuan replied.

"Where is he?" Lin Xinyan asked, wondering why it was Shen Peichuan who called her instead of Zong Jinghao.

"Zong Qifeng in his office right now. I think he wouldn't have time to call you for the time being, so I called you first," he answered.

"I see. If there's nothing else, I'm hanging up then," Lin Xinyan said. She still had the toothbrush in her hand. Shen Peichuan agreed and ended the call.

After placing her phone on the table, she went back to the bathroom to finish washing up. She felt a little uncomfortable without taking a shower last night, so she took a shower and changed into a set of clean clothes. Probably due to the shower, she felt herself in good spirits.

She headed downstairs, where Aunt Yu had prepared breakfast. Cheng Yuxiu was washing Lin Ruixi's face, and Lin Xichen had already washed up and was sitting at the dining table.

Seeing her, Lin Xichen greeted, "Good morning, mommy."

Lin Xinyan pulled the chair out, sat down, and said, "Good morning, Xichen."

"Mommy, say good morning to me too," Lin Ruixi said as she ran towards her after washing her face and hands. Lin Xinyan had no way of stopping her and

could only ask her to slow down as she wished her daughter a good morning in a loving tone.

Elated with the greeting, the little girl climbed onto the chair and sat down. Aunt Yu placed glasses of fresh milk in front of them and said, "Let's have breakfast."

Cheng Yuxiu arrived at the table after the kids started eating. She sat next to Lin Ruixi, took a sip of milk, and looked at Lin Xinyan, "I'm going out later. Do you have anything you want to buy? I will buy it for you."

"Please let mommy go out with us," Lin Ruixi pleaded again.

Cheng Yuxiu frowned and said, "Did you forget what I said last night? Your mommy has a baby in her tummy. She can't strain herself."

"All right then..." Lin Ruixi said dejectedly. She had wanted to go out and play with her mommy, but it seemed impossible.

Chen Yuxiu sighed, "Kid, you're trying so hard..." She already explained to Lin Ruixi last night that Lin Xinyan had a baby in her tummy and couldn't go out, but the little girl mentioned it again today.

"Why don't I go out with you guys?" Lin Xinyan was in a good mood as the dark clouds that had been hanging over her head finally dissipated. Now, even the sun outside looked to be shining brightly to her.

"But, what about your body?" Cheng Yuxiu was worried.

"I feel good. And I'll go to the hospital tomorrow during my free time," Lin Xinyan said with a smile.

Cheng Yuxiu didn't want to dampen their spirits either and said, "Well, alright then, since Ruixi can't wait to go out with you. We'll have Aunt Yu follow us too so that we would have an extra pair of helping hands."

Lin Xinyan nodded. Lin Ruixi was excited, and she exclaimed, "Let's go to the amusement park! I want to play bumper cars."

"Okay, we'll bring you wherever you want and let you have your fill of fun," Cheng Yuxiu patted her granddaughter's head and replied.

After breakfast, Aunt Yu cleaned up the table. Because the weather was getting warmer, Cheng Yuxiu helped the kids to put on sun-protective clothing and sun hats.

"I'll need to make a stop at the mall later to buy some summer clothes for the kids. After all, summer is coming," Cheng Yuxiu said.

Lin Xinyan was sitting on the sofa. She propped her chin and said, "Okay."

Cheng Yuxiu glanced at her, saying, "You have to buy some clothes too. When your belly gets bigger, you won't be able to wear your usual clothes then."

"Mom, buy them for me then," Lin Xinyan acted sweetly in front of her.

"As you wish," Cheng Yuxiu replied with a smile.

After Aunt Yu packed up, the group of them, followed by their four bodyguards, drove out in three cars.

Cheng Yuxiu, the kids, and Lin Xinyan were sitting in a seven-seater car flanked by two cars in the front and back. The kids were playing in the back seat, and Lin Xinyan was sitting next to Cheng Yuxiu in front of them. Lin Xinyan looked back at the kids and hesitated before saying, "I don't know if Jinghao knows something. I saw him being emotional several times."

Although he was hiding it well, she still felt that there was something he was keeping to himself.

“Mom...” she said.

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Lin Xinyan turned her head and looked at Cheng Yuxiu, saying, "I know I'm selfish, but I don't want him to know about this. I'm afraid he doesn't know how to deal with it. After all, he had his grievances about you."

Cheng Yuxiu held her hand and sniffled, "After so long, I have already let it go. I am satisfied enough to have what I have today. Even without the Wen family, he is considered a public figure. News about him frequently appears on the finance channels. If news about his identity is reported, it will definitely cause an uproar.

After all, Wen Xian and Qifeng were married at that time, and he would only be identified as an illegitimate child. This is not what I want to see, and I don't want to keep seeing him butting heads with Wen Qing.

Besides, there will be a negative impact not only on his personal image but also on the company's reputation. I just want him to live an ordinary life with you," Cheng Yuxiu finished and patted the back of Lin Xinyan's hand.

Looking at Lin Xinyan earnestly, she added, "I don't want him to know at all. I don't want both of you to be involved in the matters of my generation. Living a normal life is bliss. Being able to take my grandchildren to go shopping, to the amusement park, and elementary school after the summer is over; watching them grow up while I grow old, that is bliss."

Since she couldn't take care of her son, she would make it up by taking care of his children.

Lin Xinyan pursed her lips. Somehow, her eyes grew misty.

At that moment, the car suddenly stopped.

Seeing that there was no traffic light ahead, Lin Xinyan asked the driver, "What's the matter?"

"I don't know." the driver replied. He had no idea what was happening either.

Knock knock...

The bodyguard from the car in front walked over to their car and knocked on the window at Lin Xinyan's side. She lowered the window.

"There's a trailer in front which broke down when it was turning, and now it's blocking the way. We can't get past it. Should we change our route?"

"Did you ask how long it would take for it to be repaired?" Cheng Yuxiu asked. If it took a long time, they should change to another route. If it were something that could be repaired in less than ten minutes, it wouldn't matter to wait. After all, their current location was not far from the mall and the amusement park.

"Let me go and ask," The bodyguard hurried to the front and asked the driver who was repairing his trailer.

Just then, another car stopped behind them, blocking the other end of the road. Even if they wanted to change their route now, their cars wouldn't be able to get out.

At that moment, someone knocked on the car's window again. Lin Xinyan thought it was the bodyguard who came back, so she lowered the window. At the same time, there was trouble brewing behind their car.

A group of men had walked towards the car behind Lin Xinyan's which housed the other bodyguards. Sensing that they did not harbor good intentions, the bodyguards tried to block their way, and both parties broke into a fight.

Lin Xinyan sensed that something was amiss and quickly tried to raise the window. However, the person knocking on the window grabbed her arm and pulled her arm out of the car.

“You must be Lin Xinyan. Come with us,” the man said. He was short and had dark skin, and he looked a little hideous when he spoke.

Cheng Yuxiu grabbed Lin Xinyan, fearing that she would be pulled out. She yelled, “Who are you?”

“Don’t mind us. We just want Ms. Lin to come with us,” he answered.

Those men had a good understanding of their security detail and it wasn’t before long that all four of their bodyguards were pinned down by their people leaving only the driver.

The driver had some skills of his own, but he didn’t act rashly and instead waited for the right opportunity to make his move. On the other hand, Aunt Yu could not fight and could only feel anxious over their situation.

The dark-skinned man added, “Follow us obediently, and you’ll suffer less.”

Cheng Yuxiu panicked. She noticed that those people seemed to have come for Lin Xinyan. She pushed the car door open, wanting to go to the opposite side of the car to free Lin Xinyan’s arm from the man’s grip. However, as soon as she got out of the car, two men rushed forward and grabbed her, they then dragged her to the van parked on the side of the road in the opposite lane.

Just then, the driver took the opportunity to punch the man who was grabbing Lin Xinyan’s arm in the face. The man was taken aback by his move. He didn’t expect that the driver could fight. Then, the driver gave the man a kick.

“This is not good. Hurry, stop them! They’re not after me,” Lin Xinyan shouted to the driver.

Seeing that Cheng Yuxiu was dragged to the opposite lane, the driver hurriedly chased after her. At the same time, a bodyguard had also broken away from the person pinning him down and he went forward to stop the men from grabbing Cheng Yuxiu. Another fight ensued between both parties again.

“Yan, don’t get out of the car. They’re after me. You will be safe there. Take care of the kids,” Cheng Yuxiu shouted to Lin Xinyan the moment she realized that she might be the one they wanted instead.

Lin Ruixi was scared and got into the front to hide in Lin Xinyan’s arms. Her eyes were filled with horror as she said, “Mommy, I see blood.”

Lin Xinyan pressed her daughter’s head into her embrace, obscuring her view of the scene unfolding outside.

The bodyguards that Shen Peichuan arranged to protect them were all highly skilled. Although the other party had more people, the bodyguards broke free from their siege and went to rescue Cheng Yuxiu.

Lin Xinyan took out her phone and tried to call for help. After all, the other party had more people, and they seemed to have planned this out by blocking their way with the trailer and then pinning down their bodyguards.

Although the numbers from the other party were not great, they had great combat prowess. The leader from the other party who led the ambush realized that they would not be able to take Cheng Yuxiu away, thus, he ordered his men to grab Lin Ruixi.

The leader’s henchman was more than happy to oblige. “It’s easier to deal with the kid,” he said. He called a few of his men over, and they entered the car, grabbed the phone in Lin Xinyan’s hand, and smashed it to the ground. The phone broke into pieces instantly, and the henchman took the opportunity to snatch Lin Ruixi from Lin Xinyan’s arms.

Lin Ruixi screamed in fright, “Mommy, mommy!”

Lin Xinyan hugged Lin Ruixi tightly to prevent the man from taking her daughter. It was at that moment that Lin Xichen picked up the tablet beside him and slammed it on the henchman's head.

The impact was not strong, but it still hurt. The man was irritated, and he raised his hand to slap Lin Xichen. The leader grabbed his hand and said, "We have only one job. We can't hurt the children."

Their goal was still Cheng Yuxiu, but the bodyguards impeded them. Hence, they could only try catching the kids to distract the bodyguards.

Additionally, they were specifically given instructions not to hurt the two children.

The driver ran over to them and pulled the henchman away from Lin Ruixi. He then dragged the henchman out of the car and the two got into a scuffle.

The leader found an opportunity and opened the door, dragging Lin Xinyan out of the car. He was instructed not to hurt the two children, but he was not instructed not to hurt the woman.

Lin Xinyan didn't dare to struggle too much in fear of hurting the child in her belly.

She stared at the leader with a sharp gaze and asked, "Who are you people?"

The leader took out a folding dagger and put it to Lin Xinyan's neck, threatening the bodyguards, "If you don't stop, I will kill this woman."

The bodyguards stopped when they saw that, and the leader dragged Lin Xinyan to the opposite lane, trying to shove her into the van.

Cheng Yuxiu's eyes widened. Lin Xinyan was pregnant, and she didn't know who the other party was. Seeing that Lin Xinyan was about to be shoved into the car, she bit down hard on the man who was holding her, causing the man to loosen his grip on her from the pain.

She then rushed towards the leader who was holding Lin Xinyan. The bodyguards also took the opportunity to run over. In a fluster, Cheng Yuxiu grabbed the leader's hand and yelled angrily, "If you want to catch me, just catch me and let her go!"

Lin Xinyan shook her head and said, "Run! Their goal is not me. Go and don't worry about me."

It was obvious that their goal was Cheng Yuxiu, and she and her two children were just the bait.

"You have a child in your belly. How can I not worry about you? If something happened to you, how will I explain to Jinghao?" Cheng Yuxiu said anxiously.

The bodyguards surrounded the leader, and the leader grew anxious. He wouldn't be able to hold them off for long, let alone capture anyone. Steeling himself, he snarled, "If you dare rush over, I will kill her now!"

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As he spoke, he pressed the dagger against Lin Xinyan's neck, and blood immediately oozed out from her skin.

Seeing that, the four bodyguards stood still and did not dare to move.

Cheng Yuxiu panicked and pleaded with the leader, "Please, don't do anything to her."

The leader saw that Cheng Yuxiu cared very much about Lin Xinyan. He stared at her fiercely and said, "If you want me to let her go, get in the van by yourself."

"Okay, okay, I can do that, but you must promise not to hurt her..." Cheng Yuxiu said.

The leader became impatient and cursed, "Stop your f*cking nonsense. If you want to save her, go to the car immediately."

"No, don't," Lin Xinyan shook her head and pleaded with Cheng Yuxiu in a hoarse voice. They still had a glimmer of hope here. If Cheng Yuxiu got into the van, it would be difficult for her to escape then.

However, Cheng Yuxiu avoided Lin Xinyan's gaze and got into the van. There was a driver in the van who turned around and glanced at her. Without a word, he started the car.

The leader looked at the four tall bodyguards standing a distance away from him, he smiled and sneered, "No matter how strong you are, it's useless. Now that the person you're meant to protect is in my hands, you're destined to lose."

Their expressions tensed, and all four of them clenched their hands into fists. However, they did not dare to act hastily for fear of Lin Xinyan's safety.

The leader continued to hold Lin Xinyan hostage as he moved towards the van.

Lin Xinyan didn't budge, and the leader pressed the dagger tighter to her neck and threatened her viciously, "If you don't want to die, follow me."

"Didn't you say that if I go with you, you will let her go?" Cheng Yuxiu sat in front of the door to the van and blocked the door with her hand, preventing the leader from getting in with Lin Xinyan.

"If you dare stop me again, I will kill her now. Try me! The only reason I captured her was because I didn't want those annoying flies to pester me. Once we get to a safe place, I will let her go. After all, our goal is you," the leader replied exasperatedly.

With Lin Xinyan's safety threatened, Cheng Yuxiu had no choice but to concede to him again.

Besides, the leader said that she was the target, so she figured Lin Xinyan shouldn't be hurt.

The leader got into the van after pushing Lin Xinyan in and the cramped space made her increasingly uneasy. Lin Xinyan tensed up to the point where she couldn't even feel the pain in her neck.

The next moment, the van sped away.

"The two of you, stay here. Protect the kids and call for help. We'll chase after them," One of the bodyguards calmly and quickly assigned the tasks. He took another bodyguard, hijacked a car that stopped to watch the commotion, and chased after the van.

The driver in the van noticed that the car behind him was giving chase to them with increasing speed, and he immediately stepped on the accelerator.

Afraid that the car behind would catch up to them, he kept his attention on the car and unknowingly drove the van onto the opposite lane. A truck in front of the van repeatedly honked to alert the driver, but the driver did not notice until the truck was too close to them.

Out of instinct, the driver veered the van towards the median strip. On the other hand, the truck had no time to hit the brakes and ended slamming into the rear of the van, where the leader who was holding Lin Xinyan hostage was. The leader instantly lost consciousness, and Lin Xinyan pulled his hand away from her neck during the disorder.

Because the van had been moving at a high speed, with the impact from the truck from the rear, the van ran over a low fence and crashed into a billboard with a loud bang.

The hollow billboard pillars could not withstand the vehicle's impact, and cracks started to appear on the pillars. Losing its support, it swayed and threatened to fall at any time.

The leader who held Lin Xinyan hostage most likely got hit on his head, causing him to pass out in an instant. Bright red blood flowed down from his head, and it wasn't before long before blood covered his face. The van was seriously deformed due to the impact, and the driver in front had already lost all signs of life.

Caught in the middle, Lin Xinyan was unable to move her legs.

"Mom, are you okay?" Lin Xinyan asked weakly.

Cheng Yuxiu didn't know where she was hurt, but her face was pale. She returned to her senses in a daze. Seeing that it was Lin Xinyan who called out to her, she forced her eyes to stay open and answered, "I'm okay. How about you?"

“I can’t move my legs,” Lin Xinyan replied.

Click...

They heard a noise, and Cheng Yuxiu saw that the billboard above them was about to collapse. They would undoubtedly die if it fell on them.

Gathering the last of her strength, she kicked the front seat down with her feet and pressed Lin Xinyan down on it while she protected her with her body.

“Mom...” Lin Xinyan cried out.

With a low hum of the wind, the billboard collapsed and hit the van below.

Cheng Yuxiu’s body suddenly sank and stopped a few centimeters above Lin Xinyan’s abdomen. Blood started dripping down her neck and fell onto Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan opened her eyes wide in horror. Tears filled her eyes, and she choked, “Mom, mom...”

Cheng Yuxiu smiled faintly and said, “Protect yourself and the children.”

“Someone, help!” Lin Xinyan yelled desperately, but she did not have much strength to yell loudly.

She cried, “Mom, you must hold on. You haven’t seen Xichen and Ruixi go to school...”

“I’m afraid I won’t be able see it...” Cheng Yuxiu’s voice was getting fainter.

“No, no, you haven’t heard Jinghao call you mom. Please... Someone, help!” Lin Xinyan voice was hoarse as she continued to yell, “Someone—”

“Yan, listen to me,” Cheng Yuxiu swallowed before continuing, “I have no regrets. Help me take care of him and protect his unborn child...”

“Mom...” Lin Xinyan cried.

At Wanyue Group, the entire office felt like a pool of stagnant water, as the atmosphere was especially depressing.

Zong Qifeng got Cheng Yuwen to bring the person who Zong Jinghao sent to Baicheng into the office and said, “I guess this person belongs to you, am I right?”

That person went to Baicheng to inquire about Cheng Yuxiu’s past and was discovered by Cheng Yuwen, who contacted Zong Qifeng and told him about it.

Zong Jinghao stood in front of the French windows and glanced at the person.

The person immediately lowered his head and started to apologize.

“Get out,” Zong Jinghao ordered.

The man quickly complied and closed the door as he exited the office.

Originally, Zong Qifeng hesitated to come clean to Zong Jinghao. Now that Zong Jinghao had doubts, it was an opportunity for him, and he need not consider how to broach the topic anymore.

“Why don’t you ask me whatever you want to know instead,” Zong Qifeng said as he sat on the sofa and signaled at Cheng Yuwen to sit down with his gaze.

Cheng Yuwen looked at Zong Jinghao. He was about to say something but hesitated.

Judging by the look on Zong Qifeng's face, he probably wanted to tell Zong Jinghao something, so he decided to shut his mouth and sat down instead.

"Since you sent someone to investigate, you probably suspect something, or perhaps you already know some things," Zong Qifeng said. Without waiting for an answer, he continued, "Wen Xian and I are respectful to each other even though we do not love each other as a couple. Her heart belonged to another man, and I didn't want to force her. But she felt sorry for me, so later, she sent Cheng Yuxiu to my side," When he spoke about Cheng Yuxiu, Zong Qifeng's voice quivered as he was reminded of the past.

Zong Jinghao's jaw tightened, and he slowly turned his head and stared at Zong Qifeng coldly.

Zong Qifeng continued, "I know it is unfair to tell you the truth now. After all, we kept the truth from you since the beginning, made you misunderstand, and allowed you to resent..."

Buzz...

The phone on the desk suddenly vibrated, interrupting what Zong Qifeng was about to say.

His phone kept on ringing, but Zong Jinghao stood still and didn't answer it.

Bang!

The door to the office was suddenly pushed open. It was Shen Peichuan. Seeing that they couldn't get through to Zong Jinghao, the bodyguards called Shen Peichuan instead.

Shen Peichuan stood at the door with a solemn expression and said, "Bad news. Something happened."

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All gazes were on him as Shen Peichuan said, "The bodyguard called just now... They had an accident and are being taken to the hospital now..."

As soon as he said that, Zong Jinghao zipped past him in a flash.

After regaining his senses, Shen Peichuan immediately ran out after him.

"Let's go too," Zong Qifeng said to Cheng Yuwen and quickly followed them out.

In the car, Zong Jinghao drove while Shen Peichuan sat beside him. It was peak hour, and Shen Peichuan held tightly onto the safety handle as Zong Jinghao sped through the traffic.

Worried that they would die on the road before reaching the hospital, Shen Peichuan started to say, "It's too dangerous to drive this fast..."

Screech!

Before he could finish his words, the car came to a sudden stop. He even seemed to smell the burning smell of tires rubbing against the tarmac through the window.

Shen Peichuan's heart was pounding, and he didn't dare to look forward. They shuttled in between vehicles and almost bumped into them a few times, causing his soul to almost leave his body.

They had only spent ten minutes on the road, but Shen Peichuan felt that half a century had passed. It was too overwhelming.

As soon as they reached the hospital entrance, Zong Jinghao got out of the car and left. A security guard came over and said, "Sir, you can't park the car at the entrance."

Shen Peichuan simply threw the car key to the security guard and quickly chased after Zong Jinghao.

Lin Xinyan was unconscious when she was rescued, and Cheng Yuxiu was in the emergency room.

The kids were not injured, but Lin Ruixi was frightened. She was trembling as she nestled in Aunt Yu's arms.

Seeing the two men walking towards them, Lin Ruixi, who had been suppressing her anxiety, cried out loudly, and her cries instantly filled the quiet waiting area.

Zong Jinghao hugged her in his arms, patted her head, and soothed her softly, "Don't be afraid. Daddy's here," As he spoke, he looked at the bodyguard standing on the side and asked sharply, "Where is she?"

The bodyguard answered, "She's in the ward. The doctor did a check-up on her, and there is no major problem, but..."

Hearing that, he finally breathed a sigh of relief and hugged Lin Xichen, who was mature and calm beyond his years.

Fortunately, nothing happened to them.

He then spoke in a low voice, "Let's go see your mommy."

Lin Xichen didn't budge. His eyes were red as he said, "Grandma is still inside. I'm waiting for her."

Zong Jinghao frowned. *Cheng Yuxiu was there?*

He looked at the bodyguards standing against the wall with a questioning gaze.

One of the bodyguards lowered his head and said, “Madam Zong and Mrs. Zong took the kids out today. We drove three cars, and their car was in the middle, flanked by the four of us in the other two cars. When we passed by Feixia Road, there was an accident. A group of men came at us, and they pinned the four of us in a planned manner, taking the opportunity to take Madam Zong away. We stopped them in time, but we failed to notice that they captured Mrs. Zong. For the safety of Mrs. Zong, Madam Zong voluntarily followed the men, but they didn’t let go of Mrs. Zong. Then, they drove away from the scene while Jie and I went after them. When we reached them, they’ve already got into an accident, and Mrs. Zong was unconscious, while Madam Zong...” He lowered his head even further as he recalled the scene.

When they rescued Cheng Yuxiu from the car, she was almost covered in blood with her entire back a mess of flesh and blood. She was barely alive at that time...

Zong Jinghao narrowed his eyes and stared at the bodyguard as his face tensed and turned purple with anger. He shot daggers at the man and demanded, “Say it!”

The man trembled, and his body shivered involuntarily.

At that moment, the operating light outside the emergency room suddenly turned red, and the door slid open. A doctor in a blue surgical gown walked out. He took off his mask and bowed to them, saying, “We did our best. The patient was no longer breathing when she was sent here. We did a series of cardiac resuscitation measures, but unfortunately, it was to no avail. The patient was injured too badly. Please accept our condolences.”

Zong Qifeng had just arrived at the emergency room, and his legs wobbled after listening to the doctor’s words. Cheng Yuwen supported him before he could fall to the ground.

Lin Xichen hugged Zong Jinghao's leg and choked softly, his body shaking and his shoulders undulating.

He understood what the doctor said, and he felt grief-stricken.

Zong Jinghao stiffened. He even forgot that Lin Xichen was holding his leg as he rushed to the doctor and grabbed his collar. Glaring at him with bloodshot eyes, he demanded, "Repeat what you just said!"

Shen Peichuan caught hold of Lin Xichen before he fell and handed him to Aunt Yu before he walked over to Zong Jinghao and persuaded him, "Jinghao, calm down."

The doctor's face was pale with fright, but he forced out a calm front. Every time he announced a patient's death, he would always encounter family members whose emotions were out of control.

"We tried our best," The doctor squeezed the words from his throat.

Zong Jinghao did not relax his grip on the doctor's collar and instead tightened it. Veins bulged on his hand, and his eyes turned bloodshot as he demanded again, "Save her! That's an order!"

"Calm down. You will scare Ruixi if you continue to act like this. We should first find out who did this," Shen Peichuan persuaded him as he tried to hold him back.

His gaze turned to him slowly, and Shen Peichuan continued to persuade, "Let go of the doctor."

"Daddy," Lin Ruixi wrapped her hands around his neck tightly and cried, "I'm scared, Daddy. Please don't be angry."

Zong Jinghao closed his eyes and clenched his jaw, looking extremely cold.

“Daddy, I’m scared,” Ruixi repeated softly in a hoarse and trembling voice while rubbing her face against his neck.

Silently, Zong Jinghao slowly loosened his grip on the doctor’s collar and patted his daughter on the back, comforting her, “Don’t be scared.”

Shen Peichuan asked the doctor to leave quickly.

He then tried to take Lin Ruixi out of Zong Jinghao’s arms and said, “Moving forward, we have a lot of things to do. I will have someone to send the kids home first. Aunt Yu and the bodyguards will take care of them.”

However, Lin Ruixi was not willing to leave. She wanted her father.

Looking at Lin Ruixi, Shen Peichuan said, “Ruixi, Daddy still has things to do. He will go back to see you once he has dealt with it.” Lin Ruixi’s eyes and nose were red from crying, and her voice was hoarse. She turned to Zong Jinghao and choked with sobs as she spoke, “Dad, will you come and see me soon?”

Zong Jinghao replied in a hoarse voice, “I will.”

Lin Ruixi let go after she heard his words. Shen Peichuan carried her and handed her to the bodyguard. He then said in a deep voice, “Take care of her.”

The bodyguard, who also blamed himself for the accident, replied solemnly, “Understood.”

The kids were sent back to the villa. Shen Peichuan wasn’t at ease putting them under Aunt Yu’s care, so he called Su Zhan and asked him to go to the villa to take care of them.

He couldn’t explain the situation clearly on the phone and only briefly described the situation before saying, “I’m more relieved with you taking care of the children.”

After Su Zhan assured him that he would be at the villa, Shen Peichuan hung up the phone.

Cheng Yuxiu's body was not sent to the morgue but was temporarily placed in a ward.

A piece of white cloth covered her corpse, and Zong Qifeng was half kneeling on the edge of the bed, holding her cold hand.

He wanted so badly to warm her cold body as his tears fell silently.

"You said you would grow old with me... How can you leave me without even saying goodbye?" he whimpered and sobbed in grief.

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Cheng Yuwen stood by the side as tears streamed down his face.

In between his cries, he said, "She had a tough life."

Zong Jinghao stood by the door and did not go inside. He lowered his head, letting his hair fall to cover his face.

"I remember on her twentieth birthday, our parents passed away and I was arrested. She went around alone, trying to get me out..." Cheng Yuwen choked.

He continued, "I didn't know at the time, but I found out later that she made a deal with a woman to prevent me from going to jail. That woman was Wen Xian. She gave my sister a large sum of money to cover the debts, so I didn't have to go to jail. Then, my sister left Baicheng with Wen Xian. Wen Xian had no love for her husband. Her heart belonged to someone else, but she felt sorry for her husband, so she sent Yuxiu to her husband, hoping they would fall in love with each other instead.

Afterward, Yuxiu got pregnant, and Wen Xian wanted to give the baby a rightful identity, so she falsely announced that she herself was pregnant. As soon as the baby was born, it was brought to Wen Xian, and the baby became hers. Unfortunately, Wen Qing discovered the relationship between Zong Qifeng and Yuxiu. He thought that Yuxiu seduced Zong Qifeng while Wen Xian was pregnant.

At that time, Wen Jin was still in power, and he was very influential, so Wen Qing was fearless. He captured Yuxiu and forced her to call Zong Qifeng to break up with him. Yuxiu refused. He heard about Yuxiu's first love somehow and brought Bai Hongfei in front of her, using him to threaten her. Left with no choice, she

could only call Zong Qifeng and tell him that she still loves Bai Hongfei and decided to leave him.

But in actuality, she did not leave and was locked up by Wen Qing for six years... Later, Wenxian discovered that she did not run away with Bai Hongfei but was locked up by Wen Qing, and she forced Wen Qing to let her go. As six years had passed, Wen Qing thought that Yuxiu's and Zong Qifeng's feelings for each other should be gone.

And since Wen Xian and Zong Qifeng's child had grown up, Wen Qing promised to let her go. Yuxiu was locked up for six years, which was more than two thousand days and nights. She had just given birth when Wen Qing caught her, and that ordeal damaged her body. As a result, she could no longer bear children, and she suffered mentally. She only got better after a year.

Later, Yuxiu married Zong Qifeng to stay with her son, but Wen Qing objected to the marriage unless she agrees to his condition, and that was for her to offer the handicrafts handed down by our family ancestors. As for how Wen Xian died, I have no clue.”

With reddened eyes, Cheng Yuwen raised his head to look at Zong Jinghao, who was standing by the door. He cried as he added, “The woman lying there, covered with a white cloth, is your biological mother.”

He emphasized, “She carried you in her body for ten months, endured severe labor pains during childbirth, and gave birth to you.”

Zong Jinghao kept his head lowered, but his body was slightly trembling.

Just then, Zong Qifeng stood up. his eyes were clouded as he carefully put down Cheng Yuxiu's hand. Although he was reluctant, and his heart ached, he finally let her hand go. He looked at Cheng Yuwen and said, “Let's go out and let him have some time with her and acknowledge her as his... She had waited for a lifetime...”

Cheng Yuwen wiped his face with his hands and walked out of the ward. Shen Peichuan was standing in the corridor outside and he heard Cheng Yuwen's words just now. He was shocked to learn that Cheng Yuxiu was Zong Jinghao's biological mother.

At that moment, he was worried about Zong Jinghao and how he would face that truth.

When Zong Qifeng passed by Zong Jinghao's side, he stopped and rested his hand on his shoulder, saying, "Don't let her go with regrets."

Giving his son's shoulders a hard squeeze, he added, "She waited for a lifetime, and she couldn't get her wish fulfilled when she was alive. Don't let her go with regrets now."

After speaking, Zong Qifeng walked out of the ward and closed the door behind him. The moment the door was closed, it felt like the ward had been cut off from the world, with the door acting as a barrier.

The whole ward was quiet without a single sound.

Zong Jinghao's body was shaking more severely, and he slid down along the wall to sit on the ground.

With his arms across his knees and his head buried between them, no one could see the expression he was hiding nor the tears he was shedding.

However, his tears slid across his cheeks and dripped to the ground.

At that moment, Zong Jinghao didn't have the courage to take a look at her.

When Lin Xinyan woke up, the smell of disinfectant filled her nose, and she saw that she was wearing a medical gown. She remembered that Cheng Yuxiu blocked the falling billboard with her body and saved her. Cheng Yuxiu was injured very badly at the time, and Lin Xinyan wondered how she was now.

She lifted the quilt away and got out of bed when she noticed that her calf was hurting. She pulled up her trousers to check and saw the injury on her leg. She remembered that her leg was stuck, and she could not move in the van.

My leg must have been injured at that time, but the injury seemed to have been dealt with.

She slowly walked out of the ward and saw that there were no ongoing operations. Grabbing hold of a nurse, she asked, "Excuse me, may I know how is the patient who was sent in from a car accident today?"

The nurse glanced at her and pointed to another corridor, saying, "She's in that ward."

"Thank you," Lin Xinyan said and breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that there should be no major issues if Cheng Yuxiu was sent to a ward. Feeling relieved, she walked towards the ward. When she saw Shen Peichuan standing in the corridor. she hastened her pace.

"Peichuan," Lin Xinyan called out.

Shen Peichuan came over to support her and asked, "Are you all right?"

She nodded in response and asked, "Is he here?"

Shen Peichuan replied with a low hum.

Lin Xinyan felt something was amiss in his tone and she looked up at Shen Peichuan.

"You knew, right?" Shen Peichuan asked.

"What?" she asked, puzzled.

“That Cheng Yuxiu is Jinghao’s biological mother,” he muttered.

She immediately had a bad premonition and instinctively grabbed Shen Peichuan’s arm, asking, “Does he know?”

Shen Peichuan nodded.

Lin Xinyan breathed a sigh of relief as she thought it might be good that Zong Jinghao found out the truth. *Although it might be difficult for him to face the truth initially, at the very least, it’s a step forward in Zong Jinghao and Cheng Yuxiu’s relationship.*

Besides, Cheng Yuxiu’s injured now, and she would need someone to take care of her.

“I’ll go in and take a look,” Lin Xinyan said as she walked towards the ward.

Before she could go in, however, Shen Peichuan grabbed her and said in a low voice, “Jinghao is inside. Cheng Yuxiu did not survive. We should give him some space.”

Lin Xinyan’s eyes widened, and she questioned, “W-what did you say?”

Cheng Yuxiu did not survive?

An intense pain hit her in a wave, causing her body to twitch and her stomach to tighten. Lin Xinyan suddenly felt nauseous.

Clutching her chest, she squatted on the ground.

Shen Peichuan was startled and he clasped her shoulders as he asked, “Are you okay? Do you want me to call for a doctor?”

Lin Xinyan shook her head and answered, "It's just that my heart hurts too much... If my heart hurts so much, what about him?"

She looked up at the closed door, and tears started streaming down her cheeks. Choking, she repeated, "Peichuan, what about him?"

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The situation now was different from that in the past. Lin Xinyan could only imagine how miserable Zong Jinghao felt.

She grabbed Shen Peichuan's arm, and unknowingly, her nails pierced into his flesh as she leaned in his arms and choked with sobs.

Shen Peichuan ignored the pain in his arm and tried his best to comfort her, "Don't be too sad. You are pregnant now, and you shouldn't get too emotional."

Lin Xinyan paid no heed to his words. She couldn't control herself, all she could think of was how Cheng Yuxiu used her body to protect her from being crushed by the falling billboard and how blood trickled down her neck drip by drip as if it were Cheng Yuxiu's life slowly dripping out of her...

Lin Xinyan covered her chest with her hands as she sobbed silently.

Shen Peichuan knew that he couldn't persuade her and let her be.

After she cried for a long time, Shen Peichuan took her back to the ward to rest.

She was lying on the bed on her side, and she looked out the window blankly.

Shen Peichuan didn't dare to leave, worried that she would be overly sad and affect the baby. After all, she had a miscarriage before.

"If it weren't for saving me, maybe she wouldn't have died..." Her voice was hoarse and wracked with sobs.

Shen Peichuan merely stood by her and remained silent.

She added, "If I have another chance, I will tell Jinghao about her identity right away. At least then she will have no regrets, and Jinghao will not lose the chance to acknowledge her as his mother in this lifetime."

Cheng Yuxiu always said that she had no regrets, but no mother in the world would not want her child to call herself "Mom."

"Don't blame yourself too much. No one knows that such a thing will happen. Besides, you kept the truth from him for his own good too. Not to mention, this was a grudge from the past generation. It has nothing to do with you. What you have to do now is to take care of him so that he can arrange Cheng Yuxiu's funeral with peace of mind, and let her rest in peace," Shen Peichuan stood by the bed and comforted her in a gentle tone.

He sighed, "Take a good rest, I'll call you if anything happens. You can only help him face the situation with enough rest."

Lin Xinyan understood what he meant. Although the fact that Cheng Yuxiu was Zong Jinghao's biological mother had not been made public, she was still Zong Jinghao's wife and Cheng Yuxiu's daughter-in-law, and overseeing Cheng Yuxiu's funeral procession was her duty.

"I know," She replied hoarsely and slowly closed her eyes. Perhaps it was because she was crying; she felt more comfortable to close them.

Later, when she heard Shen Peichuan leaving the ward, she did not open her eyes, even when tears started to stream down her face again.

At noon, Shen Peichuan brought her food. She didn't have any appetite for it and instead asked him how Zong Jinghao was.

Shen Peichuan avoided answering and said, "Don't worry, he just needs some time. After all, everything happened too suddenly."

Shen Peichuan then urged her to eat, "Even though you don't feel like eating, you have to eat for the child's sake."

With that, Lin Xinyan forced two mouthfuls of food into her mouth. However, the moment she ate them, she felt like vomiting and she threw up all the food she ate. The nausea was worse than any previous time. There was nothing more in her stomach to throw up, so she threw up gastric juice and bile, and she promptly collapsed.

Shen Peichuan asked a nurse to infuse her with vitamins, worried that her body could not hold up.

In the afternoon, Lin Xinyan was too tired physically and mentally, and she fell asleep.

When she woke up, it was already dark outside. As she rubbed her sore eyes in the dark and tried to sit up, she saw a figure sitting by the window in her daze.

Focusing on the figure, she got a clearer view of the person. After a short while, she lifted the quilt, got out of the bed, and walked over. She then hugged him from behind.

They did not exchange any words, but they empathize with each other.

After a long while, he reached out and touched her head as he said, "Let's go home."

"Okay," she replied.

Shen Peichuan drove them home. Lin Xinyan was sitting in the back seat holding Zong Jinghao's arm, while he was quiet and didn't say a word along the way.

After returning home, he went straight to the study room. Lin Xinyan knew that he needed some time alone and did not bother him.

The next day, Zong Qifeng appeared at the villa. He was not there to look into the accident, instead, he was there to make sure that Cheng Yuxiu would be laid to rest.

Having seen to the funeral preparations and having chosen the burial ground, Zong Qifeng chose a good day for her burial and informed them that it would be held three days later.

After speaking, he asked for the whereabouts of Zong Jinghao.

Lin Xinyan informed him that he had shut himself in the study. Hearing that, Zong Qifeng sighed deeply. He seemed to have grown older overnight, and his originally tall posture suddenly seemed hunched.

His eyes were clouded as he said in a low voice, "Pass the information to him."

Lin Xinyan complied.

In the evening, Lin Xinyan brought food to the study. Zong Jinghao was sitting on a chair by the window. There was no light in the room except for the moonlight streaming in from the window. She entered the study and turned on the light. After she put the food on the table, she walked over to him, saying, "Dad came today and said that the burial would be held three days later..."

Zong Jinghao suddenly took her hand, stretched out his arms, and hugged her waist.

"Yan, just let me hug you like this," he said in a low voice and hid his expression by burying his face in Lin Xinyan's stomach.

Lin Xinyan stood still and stretched out her hand to hug him back. She did not say anything nor looked at his face. Instead, she simply stayed with him like that, hoping that they would get through that difficult period. *No matter what happens, I would stand by him...*

Time passed by in a blink, and Zong Jinghao didn't speak much for three days, but he would come out of the study, hold his daughter and take her to sleep.

Nothing was unusual, apart from him being more silent.

On the day of Cheng Yuxiu's burial, the sky was gray, and there was a drizzle.

The cemetery was surrounded by lush pines, cypresses, and dense vegetation. Perhaps it was due to the rain, the wind was exceptionally cold that day, and the atmosphere was filled with sadness.

Because Cheng Yuxiu was seen as a homewrecker and her marriage to Zong Qifeng was not looked positively upon, wealthy wives didn't like to associate with her. Cheng Yuxiu was also quiet in nature and didn't like to attend gatherings, so she didn't have many friends. Those who came to the funeral were only the Zongs and Cheng Yuwen, who was the only one left of the Cheng family.

In addition to them, there were also extended relatives of the Zong family clan who came to show their respects, there were also some business partners, where most of them were public figures.

Someone in the crowd asked, "Why didn't Zong Jinghao come? After all, she was still his stepmother. It is inappropriate for him not to come."

Indeed, Zong Jinghao knew that it was the day of Cheng Yuxiu's burial, and he did not come.

Dressed in a uniform and Li Jing by his side, Wen Qing replied to the person's words, "He is from the Wen family. What does he have to do with the Chengs?"

Lin Xinyan glanced at Wen Qing coldly but said nothing. It was the day of Cheng Yuxiu's burial, and she wanted her to leave in peace.

On behalf of Zong Jinghao, Lin Xinyan held Cheng Yuxiu's portrait. Lin Xichen and Lin Ruixi followed their mother as they wore mourning clothes and carried out their filial duties.

At that moment, Li Jing felt sympathy for Cheng Yuxiu and pulled on Lin Xinyan's cuff, "Call Jinghao here and let him send her off on her last journey. It is sad enough that she didn't have any kids of her own."

"It's fine. He will come by himself if he wants to come," Lin Xinyan replied flatly without even looking at Li Jing.

These people only turned up out of formality. None of them actually felt sad for Cheng Yuxiu...

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Wen Qing pulled Li Jing aside with a long face. He would have yelled at her if they were not in public. "It's a good thing he didn't show up! His mother is Wen Xian, not her. So why should he wear the willow for this woman?"

Lin Xichen blinked as she glanced at the granduncle who used to be kind and gentle towards her. But now, he looked very mean. She instinctively moved over to Lin Xinyan.

Cheng Yuwen could no longer suppress his anger as he walked over, but Lin Xinyan held him back and whispered, "This is not the right time to blame anyone. Let's not cause a commotion and let her rest in peace."

Cheng Yuwen clenched his fists angrily. He was upset that Zong Jinghao did not show up.

This is his last chance to see her face. He was her son; how could he not show up?

Everyone was silent as grief enveloped the room. The priest prayed as Cheng Yuxiu was buried under the drizzling rain.

Lin Xinyan no longer shed tears, instead, she quietly watched on while her children sobbed beside her.

They watched as Lin Xinyan placed Grandmother Zhang's black and white picture against the tombstone, knowing that their grandmother had left them forever and they would never see her again.

Lin Xinyan patted their heads and said, "Go over and pay your respects to grandma."

Everyone bowed deeply before the tombstone thrice and left one after another. Wen Qing walked up to Lin Xinyan and questioned, "Why are you here when Jinghao didn't even come? Are you trying to show how devoted you are? Are you still confused about your identity to this day?"

Lin Xinyan stared straight into his eyes and said coldly, "You have no say in what I do. Besides, I hope my mom's death has nothing to do with you."

Wen Qing blinked as his expression dropped instantly. He did not expect her to speak to him in such a tone.

Li Jing was concerned because Wen Qing had a fierce and stubborn temperament. Hence, she dragged him away before they could start an argument.

Lin Xinyan said no more and went on her way with the kids.

The funeral ended in the afternoon. "Why don't you send the kids back home first?" she said to Su Zhan after bidding the guests farewell.

"Alright, contact me if you need anything." Su Zhan picked up Lin Ruixi and held Lin Xichen's hand as they left the cemetery.

Lin Xinyan watched them leave before turning around to look at the tombstone, which looked cold and lonely on its own.

At that very moment, Cheng Yuxiu's whole life had vanished. There would no longer be such a woman in this world anymore.

Shen Peichuan informed her that Zong Qifeng was sick as he stood beside her. He added, "Cheng Yuwen sent him back."

Lin Xinyan hummed softly.

Her clothes were drenched after standing in the drizzle over time.

Shen Peichuan took off his jacket and placed it on her shoulders as he continued to stand beside her.

“May I pay my respects?” A voice said from behind them.

Lin Xinyan turned and saw Bai Yinning sitting in a wheelchair by the cordierite brick steps. Gao Yuan held a black umbrella single-handedly as he pushed Bai Yinning who was holding a bouquet of white chrysanthemums.

Lin Xinyan stepped aside.

Bai Yinning could not reach the tombstone because he was in a wheelchair and could not go up the steps. Therefore, Gao Yuan placed the bouquet of white chrysanthemums upon the tombstone on his behalf. As Lin Xinyan looked on, she thought that Bai Yinning appeared somewhat tired. In truth, he was occupied with many things that had happened in the company. He immediately rushed over as soon as he heard the news but the funeral was already over when he arrived.

“I am here on behalf of my adoptive father, Bai Hongfei, to say his final goodbye. We hope she rests in peace.”

He sat up straight and bowed solemnly three times with a grim look. Then, he stared at the woman in the black and white photo before the tombstone. The woman looked demure and graceful despite her old age. “Allow me to introduce myself once more. I am Bai Hongfei’s foster son, Bai Yinning. My adoptive father had only loved one woman and remained unwed throughout his entire life. If you meet him on the other side, please give him a chance. I’m worried that he’ll feel lonely.”

He mourned silently after he spoke.

After a moment, he glanced toward Gao Yuan and said, "Let's go."

Not once did he look at Lin Xinyan when he was there.

After all, he did promise that he would no longer bother her. Hence, he would carry out that promise as pledged. The only reason he came to B City was that this dead woman was once the love of his adoptive father.

If it were not for him, he would not have come.

"It was a well-thought plan. Unfortunately, there was no trace of anyone besides the two people who died in the car accident," Shen Peichuan stated plainly.

Lin Xinyan smirked. "Don't you find it strange that Wen Qing let me off so easily? He is a very persistent man, plus Wen Xian is as precious as his life. How could he have let it slide just like that?"

Shen Peichuan understood what she meant, but there was no proof.

"I'm sure that there will be evidence to prove them of their crime. We just have to keep an eye on them," Lin Xinyan stated as she believed in karma.

Besides that, both Zong Jinghao and her were much younger than Wen Qing. She was confident that they would have sufficient time to search for evidence.

"We should go back." The drizzle was slowly becoming a heavy rain.

Lin Xinyan hummed in agreement. She turned and glanced at the tombstone before leaving with Shen Peichuan.

It was a cloudy day as the sky turned dark sooner than expected. They anticipated an incoming heavy rain because the clouds looked heavy.

Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan stayed at the villa for they were concerned about Zong Jinghao, the pregnant Lin Xinyan, and the two children. There were plenty of rooms in the house, hence it was not difficult to accommodate them.

The atmosphere in the house instantly became lighter with their company.

Calmness was restored that night. It was a transition period between spring and summer seasons, thus it rained often. The white curtains flapped open in the wind.

The man sat under the dim yellow light in the study, lost in thoughts. It was as if he was the only person left in the world.

Countless images of Cheng Yuxiu's calm face flashed past his mind. He hardly had any memories of her ever since she was married into the Zong family because he'd avoid her. Later on, he moved into boarding school and lived on his own even after he had graduated.

He did not return during every New Year celebrations too and had only visited home a few times over the years. If it weren't for Lin Xinyan, there would not be any moments of them together at all.

He held a photo that Zong Qifeng gave him in his hands. It was a photo of Cheng Yuxiu in her teenage days.

At this moment, Lin Xinyan gently pushed the study's door and walked in. She instantly saw him looking closely at the picture.

Stopping in her tracks, she was uncertain of what to say to comfort him.

Perhaps words were meaningless at that moment.

The light reflected upon his face as he lowered his gaze. Yet, Lin Xinyan could not see his expression because the light and shadows were playing tricks on his face. She could only hear his voice croak like a toad and sense him trembling

even though he tried very hard to suppress it. “Before I knew her true identity, I blamed her for hiding it. I loathed her for making me hate her all this while. I couldn’t face it; I was unable to forgive... But, why not spare me some time? She left before I could forgive her...”

Lin Xinyan went over and hugged him tightly.

She knew her passing had caused him tremendous pain.

He only needed a bit more time. “I hated her for twenty years. I only needed a few days... Why did she have to be so cruel to make me an unfilial son? Why couldn’t she wait till I forgive her and call her ‘mom’ before leaving like this?”

I spent half of my life in resentment, and now I have to live my remaining life in remorse?

How could she treat me this way?

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The wind outside bellowed loudly as the tree branches rattled. They creaked and formed many shadows against the glass window.

The clock was ticking away on the wall.

After some time, Lin Xinyan's legs felt numb while her body turned slightly hot. Zong Jinghao carried her upstairs and placed her on the bed. She felt groggy as she recalled herself getting drenched in the rain during the day. Actually, she had felt a little chilly after the incident but did not bother about it.

However, she was now feeling cold even when she was lying under the covers.

She vaguely heard someone say, "Go to sleep."

Opening her eyes, she looked at him worriedly. "What about you?"

Lin Xinyan was not well-rested during the past few days; she was very exhausted today. Thus, even though she did not receive a response, she still quickly drifted off.

A loud thunder woke her up in the night.

The room was dark; only a warm yellow light glowed by the bedside. It was pouring heavily in the night. She caught sight of the raindrops against her glass window that was tightly shut.

There was no one beside her as the sheets were neat. Instead, only the side she slept on was wrinkled. It meant Zong Jinghao had not lain down at all. She got up and headed towards the study as she recalled Zong Jinghao's reaction earlier.

When she entered the study downstairs, it was empty. She could only hear the sound of the rain.

Lin Xinyan searched the entire villa but no avail.

In the end, she decided to knock on Shen Peichuan's door in desperation. The man was awakened by the thunder as well and hadn't fallen back asleep.

He opened the door as soon as he heard someone knocking and saw Lin Xinyan standing by his door. "He's gone," she said anxiously.

Shen Peichuan frowned. "What?"

Zong Jinghao has disappeared?

"Give me a second. Let me put something on." Shen Peichuan turned and closed the door.

Lin Xinyan looked out from the living room. It was pitch black outside as it was raining and the sky was dark. She opened the door and a gush of cold wind swept inside. Lin Xinyan shivered in the cold as she stepped into the garage in slippers. She realized a car was missing and found out that Zong Jinghao had gone out.

Shen Peichuan frowned when he saw Lin Xinyan in thin clothing and said, "Although the weather is getting warmer, it does get cold when it rains. You should put on something warmer before we start searching for him."

Lin Xinyan turned to look at him. "I think I know where he went."

That made things easier. Shen Peichuan urged her to wear something warm before they head out. She felt slightly dizzy and assumed it was because her body was feeling feverish. However, she quickly shrugged off the thought as finding Zong Jinghao was the priority at that moment.

She put on a jacket and changed her shoes as Shen Peichuan ushered her into the car with an umbrella.

“Let’s go the Qing garden.”

Shen Peichuan looked sideways at her but said nothing before heading in that direction.

The night of B City was covered with raging rain across the entire city.

A dark figure stood by the cordierite brick steps in Qing Garden. The scent of the chrysanthemums had blended with the rain, evoking a sense of sorrow.

A man stood before the lonely tombstone, silently staring at the picture.

The first time he met her was when Zong Qifeng brought her home. At that time, he believed that she was the reason he had lost his mom. Hence, he smashed the teacup that the maid handed him on the ground. The cup shattered into pieces while hot tea spilled everywhere. But she did not reprimand him for being unreasonable. Instead, she rushed to his side to check if he was injured.

He thought the woman was so pretentious at that moment and that she was so great at pretending to be as nervous and caring as his biological mom.

When he finally realized she was indeed his mother, he did not call her ‘mom’. He could not take the initiative to do so even though she was right before him.

It was because he blamed and resented her for not revealing the truth to him. Because of her decision, he had to live resentment for many years.

After he listened to her words, he suddenly realized that his grievances, hatred, and inability to accept were nothing in comparison to her sacrifices for him.

She was imprisoned for six years; her best years and youth had gone to waste. Moreover, she gave up the family business of the Cheng family only to stay by his side.

She could have left selfishly and found someone else to live a peaceful life together. *Yet, if you desired so much to be with me that you gave up the Cheng family without hesitation, why were you willing to leave me now?*

Cheng Yuxiu, you are cruel to me as always.

He fell to the ground, his knees slamming hard on the rain-drenched ground. There was so much that he wanted to say, yet he could not bring himself to say anything. Instead, he bowed as his forehead touched the cold ground and rain pummeled against his body.

The pouring rain became heavier as if God were too shedding tears at this moment.

Water trickled down his face endlessly. Yet, no one could tell if it was the rain or his tears. A trace of hatred flashed past his cold eyes that were filled with pain.

Lin Xinyan walked over with an umbrella and stood beside him, shielding him from the rain. She stood there without a word and looked down at Cheng Yuxiu's photo as well.

I will stand by his side. I'm determined to get to the bottom of this and punish the person who had murdered this woman!

Mom, I promise you that I will take good care of him and protect our children.

"Jinghao, let's go home." Lin Xinyan bent over and said softly.

She brushed her fingers across his cold and hard face before saying, "We have so much to do next; we have to catch the person who did this."

She understood that the sense of hatred toward the culprit who had harmed Cheng Yuxiu was the only thing that could carry him through this grief. It was the only way for him to overcome this.

He reached out to hug her and hummed softly.

The rain raged all night until the next day. Zong Jinghao had left early; Lin Xinyan knew he had gone off to investigate the car incident.

She took care of the children as they ate breakfast. They had grown to be well-behaved children. Hence, she did not have to do much. They were able to eat, wash hands, and wipe after themselves independently.

She hugged and rubbed their heads before saying, "What obedient children you are! You'll grow up in no time."

When Lin Ruixi spotted her brother, Lin Xichen, hugging Lin Xinyan, she too hugged her mother.

Aunt Yu walked over after she cleared the dining table and said, "It's time to prepare you for elementary school. Let's do some reading and writing, kids."

"Go ahead," Lin Xinyan urged the kids.

Lin Xinyan watched their tiny but straight figures; she remembered the time when they were born. They were so tiny, yet they were all grown up in a blink of an eye. She stroked her belly as she could feel the little one. Lowering her head, she whispered, "You have to be a good baby, alright? Your grandmother gave up her life for yours."

She had felt a little feverish since yesterday, but she kept it to herself because she did not want to worry Zong Jinghao. However, now that he was not home, she decided to visit the hospital with a bodyguard and requested the driver to get the car ready.

Due to her prominent identity, her checkup was through the priority lane. Her comprehensive checkup was done by the doctor who treated her initially. The fetus was in good condition, but Lin Xinyan herself was slightly feverish, which had caused the fetus' heartbeat to increase.

It was not appropriate for her to consume any medication according to her current condition. Therefore, the doctor advised her to apply a physical cooling method to lower her temperature. This method would effectively ease her symptoms.

"I didn't expect you to recover so quickly. Anyways, keep it up. You're doing great," the doctor added.

Lin Xinyan thanked the doctor and left.

When she was about to get in the car, she spotted a familiar figure standing in the hospital park.

She stopped and stared for a couple of seconds before the familiar figure turned and she saw the face.

Her eyes narrowed instantly. *Zong Jinghao mentioned that Zhuang Zijin's report was no big deal and she is still serving her prison sentence. Why would she be here in a hospital gown? What's going on?*

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“Mrs. Zong?” The bodyguard noticed that Lin Xinyan was standing still, so he called out to her softly.

Lin Xinyan waved her hand. Then, she walked towards Zhuang Zijin.

The bodyguard followed her closely.

“Mom?” Lin Xinyan called out to her mother softly from a distance.

Upon hearing Lin Xinyan’s voice, Zhuang Zijin’s body stiffened. “Yan, why are you here?” She turned back to look at Lin Xinyan and forced a smile on her face.

Her complexion was better now, and her face didn’t look as pale as before.

“I should be the one asking you this. Why are you in the hospital? What happened?” Scared of hearing bad news, Lin Xinyan lowered her voice.

Cheng Yuxiu’s death was a huge blow to her.

The kids and Zong Jinghao were at home, so she had to suppress her emotions although she was sad. If anything bad happened to Zhuang Zijin, she might have an emotional breakdown.

Zhuang Zijin walked toward Lin Xinyan while scanning her attire. As Lin Xinyan was wearing loose clothing and a pair of flats, Zhuang Zijin smiled and said, “I heard from Shen Peichuan that you’re pregnant.”

Back then, Zhuang Zijin was reluctant to undergo treatment. She was pessimistic and had lost the desire to live. Shen Peichuan had no choice but to inform her

about Lin Xinyan's pregnancy. She had warned, "Your daughter had suffered a lot for you. If you really don't care about her, then feel free to give up on treatment."

He left right after saying that.

It's true. She followed me to live in places she was unfamiliar with since she was ten. There have been so many hardships in our lives, yet we have always warmed each other up and relied on each other. It really is a mixture of joy and sorrow.

Now she's pregnant. Her relationship with Zong Jinghao must be good. I've finally gotten the chance to see her live her life happily. If I can live longer, aiding her in taking care of her kids isn't a bad idea.

This was why after knowing about Lin Xinyan's pregnancy, Zhuang Zijin started to do her utmost to cooperate with the treatment.

I've seen her suffer. Now, I wish for her happiness.

She took Lin Xinyan's hand and reassured her, "I'm fine, don't worry..."

"Tell me the truth." Lin Xinyan shoved her hand away.

She's obviously hiding something.

Zhuang Zijin knew that she couldn't conceal it anymore. "Follow me to my ward." She heaved a heavy sigh.

It was quiet in her VIP ward, so it would be a better place to talk than the garden as there were too many people out there.

Lin Xinyan acquiesced to Zhuang Zijin's suggestion. She followed Zhuang Zijin all the way from the inpatient department to her VIP ward. After walking into the

room, she pushed open the windows. There was a garden between this building and the building she stayed in last time.

“How long have you been here?” asked Lin Xinyan.

“It’s been a while.” Zhuang Zijin sat on the bed and beckoned her over. “Yan, come here.”

Lin Xinyan walked over and sat beside her. Zhuang Zijin took her hands in hers and said, “I’m happy that you’re pregnant.”

Lin Xinyan lowered her eyes slightly.

“My illness is a hereditary disease, but don’t you worry. The doctor said I can live for a few more years if I partake in the treatment,” continued Zhuang Zijin.

Suddenly, Lin Xinyan hugged her tightly and sobbed. “Why? Why did this happen? This hurts... It hurts so much.”

Zhuang Zijin patted her back and said, “Yan, don’t be sad. I will undergo my treatment and take care of your kids. Shen Peichuan told me if I cooperate during treatment, he will help me in reducing my prison term. When the time comes, I’ll be able to help you take care of your kids just like how I took care of Ruixi and Xichen.”

Distressed, Lin Xinyan didn’t reply to that. Instead, she asked, “Mom, what do you think is the most agonizing in life?”

Zhuang Zijin thought that Lin Xinyan felt miserable recalling her past. She comforted Lin Xinyan and said, “It’s all in the past. You’ll lead a happy life from now on.”

Lin Xinyan shook her head and said, “The most agonizing thing is not recognizing your loved ones when they were close to you, and finally realizing it only when you’ve lost them. That grief will be ingrained in a person forever.”

“Y-You found out?” Zhuang Zijin froze.

All the emotions Lin Xinyan bottled up were released in front of her at this very moment.

She wasn't paying attention to Zhuang Zijin's words as she was thinking about Cheng Yuxiu and Zong Jinghao. They had missed the opportunity to live together as mother and son.

Zhuang Zijin sighed and said, “Yan, I've always seen you as my biological daughter. I didn't have a choice back then. He is my father's son born out of wedlock, and his mother had a shady identity. He is an illegitimate child, so he never shows up in front of other people. Hence, no one knows that he is actually a member of the Zhuang family.”

“Mom, what do you mean?” Lin Xinyan wiped her tears in confusion. She understood nothing of Zhuang Zijin's words. *What's going on? Did Mom's mental disorder relapse?* She reached out and touched Zhuang Zijin's forehead.

Zhuang Zijin pushed her hands away and said, “I'm doing fine. You mentioned that not recognizing your family is the most agonizing thing in the world. Isn't this about knowing your true identity?”

Lin Xinyan did not respond as her mind was a mess. Spacing out, she stared at Zhuang Zijin for a long time. She eventually regained her voice. “My identity? You're my mom and Lin Guoan's my dad.”

“Lin Guoan is not your dad,” replied Zhuang Zijin calmly. *Although Lin Guoan's dead, I still harbor hatred towards him. He is unworthy for Lin Xinyan to call him her dad.*

Zhuang Zijin decided to tell Lin Xinyan the truth as there was no point in concealing anymore. She grabbed Lin Xinyan's hand and said, “Yan, your dad is Zhuang Ziyi. We are half siblings with different mothers. His identity is only known by close family members.”

Lin Xinyan stood up suddenly. “Mom, you’re lying! I’m your daughter. Who’s Zhuang Ziyi? Neither have I heard of him nor seen him.”

She couldn’t accept it.

“Yan.” Zhuang Zijin knew that Lin Xinyan could not take it as it was too sudden. She heaved a sigh. Actually, she thought that Lin Xinyan had found out about her biological father’s identity, so she decided to spill the beans. However, Lin Xinyan knew nothing of this.

“You must be tired. Rest well. I need to go back as Ruixi and Xichen are waiting for me.” Unwilling to hear any more of the truth, Lin Xinyan walked toward the door.

Zhuang Zijin didn’t force her to stay. “When you’re ready to know about this, you can come and find me anytime. The necklace you’re wearing is your biological mother’s memento.”

Lin Xinyan’s hand paused for a brief moment while holding onto the doorknob. Then, she quickly opened the door and strode out.

She was walking very fast. Her bodyguard followed her and advised, “Mrs. Zong, please mind your steps.”

She pretended not to hear his words as she wanted to leave the hospital as soon as possible.

There was no way she was going to listen to what Zhuang Zijin had to say.

When she got into the car, she urged the driver, “Leave here immediately.”

The driver started the engine. “Mrs. Zong, are you alright?” The bodyguard turned to her with a worried expression.

Lin Xinyan snapped out of her daze and shook her head. "I'm fine." After a pause, she continued and said, "Don't tell anyone that I came here today. You hear me?"

Both the driver and bodyguard responded, "Yes."

Throughout the way, she was lost in thought. Everything felt like a dream.

When she got back to the villa, she immediately went upstairs. She soaked a face cloth in water and placed it on her forehead while lying on the sofa.

I must be having a fever and it must be a high one. This must be the reason I was hallucinating.

Zhuang Ziyi is my dad?

Hah I've never seen him, so that's impossible.

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She struggled to calm her mind, but it was all in vain. She couldn't think straight as a storm was forming rapidly in her heart.

Recalling Zhuang Zijin's words, Lin Xinyan touched the necklace she had worn after all this time, gently rubbing the metal.

After a while, she gave in to her curiosity. She sat up, placing the wet face cloth onto the table. Then, she took off the necklace.

The design of the necklace was simple and without a pendant. She placed it against the light, but she couldn't see anything special about it.

The only thing she could see was that the necklace was made of platinum with high purity. It glistened against the light brightly, and it didn't look very old.

When she wanted to put the necklace back on, she noticed small letters on the clasp. However, they were too small to be visible, so she walked over to the window. With the light's aid, she could finally see the carving clearly. It was 'hx.08.ZA0102'.

She frowned. *What is this? I've never seen jewelry of this brand.*

What do these letters and numbers mean?

She looked closely at the necklace over and over again. There weren't any other messages except the one on the clasp. Sighing, she leaned back on the sofa. *If Zhuang Zijin was telling the truth, and this necklace really was from my mother, then there should be something meaningful.*

After all, she must have something to tell me, right?

Lin Xinyan didn't feel any tinge of sadness as she had never met her mother. This whole "real parents" affair just seemed absurd to her.

She couldn't wrap her head around it, so she refused to muddle herself any longer. Walking over to her bed, she searched for a box to keep the necklace. As she opened the drawer on the head of the bed, she saw a contract from Hua Xia Bank. Back then, Zong Qifeng had given her kids some Wanyue shares and a pink diamond her daughter liked. She didn't have a place to keep them, so she stored them in a safe deposit box in Hua Xia Bank. When the kids had grown up, she would hand over those valuables to them.

The first two acronyms of Hua Xia Bank were "HX." *Is this just a coincidence?*

She took out her phone and dialed the service number of Hua Xia Bank.

The call connected instantly. "Hello, this is Hua Xia Bank. How may I help you?" A gentle female voice could be heard coming from the phone.

Lin Xinyan looked at the letters on the necklace and asked, "May I know if there's a safe deposit box with the code ZA0102?"

"Sorry, but no," the bank assistant replied.

Lin Xinyan furrowed her brows. *Did I guess it wrongly?*

"Our safe deposit box all have double digits. There's none with those digits."

Double digits.

Lin Xinyan lowered her head to analyze the letters. In the end, she focused on the two digits between the letters. "How about zero-eight?"

"I'll check." Shortly after, the bank assistant said, "Yes. There is."

Lin Xinyan roughly understood the digits on the necklace. It was the eighth safe deposit box of Hua Xia Bank. *The last digits must be the password.*

“Is there anything else I can be of service?” asked the bank assistant politely.

Lin Xinyan snapped out of her thoughts and pondered. She asked, “Can you help me find out who’s the one that had hired this safe?”

“Sorry, but we can’t. This is the privacy of our customers. It is our policy to keep our customers’ personal information private. I suggest you come here personally for further issues.”

“I understand, thank you.” Sitting on the bed, Lin Xinyan hung up and stared at the necklace.

She was in a daze until Aunt Yu went to her room and called her for lunch.

After recollecting her emotions, she went downstairs. Silence enveloped the huge mansion, making it seem rather empty. Lin Xichen and Lin Ruixi were sitting on the carpet with their legs crossed while stacking toy blocks. The boy was slightly annoyed and it appeared that he was forced to play with his sister.

After all, Lin Ruixi was the only one smiling.

She walked down the stairs and gazed at the children. “Go wash your hands. It’s time to eat.”

As if he had gotten a pardon from a death sentence, Lin Xichen quickly got up and ran all the way toward Lin Xinyan. “Finally. Lunchtime!”

Lin Xinyan pinched his cheeks and said, “You’re her brother. Is accompanying your little sister unfair to you?”

Lin Xichen shook his head and replied, "I'm willing to play with her if it's something fun. Stacking toy blocks is such an immature game. It's too boring."

Lin Ruixi walked toward them slowly. She took a glance at her brother and said, "You can just tell me that you don't like it. I didn't force you to play with me. What's so unfair about it?"

Lin Xichen gazed at his little sister in surprise. *When did she learn to speak like this?*

"Okay, okay. Go wash your hands and eat your lunch." Lin Xinyan held their hands as she led them to the sink. Lin Ruixi twisted the water tap and washed her hands herself, without the help of Lin Xinyan. "Mommy, I will take care of myself from now on. You should focus on taking care of the baby."

Lin Xinyan was stunned for a moment, then she laughed. *Look at her. She's like a different person. I guess she really has grown up.*

She leaned against the door, looking at her daughter washing and drying her hands.

During their meal, Aunt Yu asked, "Should we find them a home tutor?"

Back then, Cheng Yuxiu was the one teaching them, so they didn't need home tutoring. However, now...

Lin Xinyan looked at her kids and asked, "Do you guys want a home tutor?" She chose to respect their opinion.

Both children shook their heads at the same time. "We don't."

As if we would like a stranger to look over us when we read or write. To add to it, we aren't dumb, and we haven't even enrolled in elementary school yet. Why would we need a home tutor?

Aunt Yu smiled and said, "I don't have much knowledge, so I'm not sure what to teach them. Mrs. Zong, you're pregnant, so..."

"Grandma Yu, you don't have to worry about our studies. We are not that dumb, and we haven't enrolled in primary school. It's so unfair to trap us here." Lin Xichen rejected Aunt Yu's idea as he despised home tutors.

Lin Ruixi nodded in agreement.

"Okay." Lin Xinyan urged both of them to eat their lunch. After they finished their food, they returned to their room. They invested time in their own activities respectively as they had no one to play with.

After lunch, Aunt Yu cleared the dining room.

Lin Xinyan was in a dilemma between going to the bank to find out what was in the safe or not.

She believed that Zhuang Zijin's words were true as there was a message on the necklace.

Sooner or later, she would have to face it. There was no way for her to avoid this forever.

In the end, she decided to uncover the mystery.

This time, she only brought one bodyguard to avoid unwanted attention.

She had become a VIP when she opened a safe at Hua Xia Bank last time. The manager who served her this time was the same person as the last.

"Are you here for your valuables in the safe?" The manager was dressed in formal attire with his tag pinned on his right chest. He led Lin Xinyan toward the reception hall.

Lin Xinyan nodded.

“Please follow me, yours is safe deposit box 11, so it’s in Area B,” said the manager.

“I’m here for safe 08,” declared Lin Xinyan.

The manager was stunned, but he recovered his senses quickly and asked, “You opened two safes?”

Lim Xinyan hummed in reply.

“Safe 08 is in Area C. Please follow me.”

The manager led her to Area C. He scanned his face with the scanner and unlocked the thick metal door. There weren’t any windows, so the entire room was lit up by glaring lights. The walls looked very sturdy and firm.

“I will stop here. Please go ahead.” The manager stood beside the entrance. There was another door inside the room, and the safe was kept behind it.

“You wait here for me,” Lin Xinyan ordered her bodyguard to stay put.

“Very well,” replied the bodyguard.

Lin Xinyan walked into the room alone and found Safe 08 in the deepest chamber.

Before keying in the password, she took a deep breath.

When the last digit was keyed in, the safe was unlocked as expected. Lin Xinyan grabbed the handle and pulled opened the safe.

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There was a file in it.

Untangling it, Lin Xinyan found two envelopes inside it. One of them had the words "To Wen Qing" written on it, where the other one did not have an addressee. She had been considerably calm when she opened the safe box, but the moment the letters appeared before her eyes, she instantly knitted her brows, and her body started shaking.

The first letter was clearly written by Wen Xian.

Suppressing her emotions, she took out another document. It was JK's shareholder agreement.

Lin Xinyan had never heard of this corporation, but based on the agreement, she could tell it did not have many major shareholders.

All of a sudden, something dropped out of the folder.

Looking down, there was an exquisite, hollowed pendant lying near her feet, so she squatted down to pick it up. Lin Xinyan noticed a compartment in the pendant, and she stuck her fingernail into the ledge and opened it up. There was a photo inside it. Though it was tiny, she could see the faces of the people very clearly. The woman in the photo had long straight hair and distinctive facial features.

Though Lin Xinyan bore a resemblance to this woman, she actually looked more like the man beside her in the photo.

He was charming and looked like a docile gentleman, yet at the same time, he exuded masculinity. One might be easily tricked into believing he was just a gorgeous, elegant man if he or she did not look closely into his deep, dark eyes.

This was the man who won Wen Xian's heart.

Seeing them in the photo, Lin Xinyan felt a little emotional, but it was not exactly an intense feeling. After all, she had not met them in person before.

At this point, she realized both the pendant and her necklace were of the same material. They were a set of accessories. The pendant was custom-made to fit into the necklace.

Lin Xinyan then put everything into the folder, placed it in the safe box, and opened the unaddressed envelope. Inside the envelope, she took out a beautifully handwritten letter.

Dear Xinyan, I don't know if you'll get a chance to read this letter. A part of me hopes you don't, yet at the same time, another part of me wishes you do.

At least now you know who I am and who your father is. The only reason I don't want you to read this letter is I hope you'll live a happy and normal life and not be bothered by your past.

How I wish I could watch you grow. Would you look like me or him? But more importantly, I want you to lead a safe and healthy life.

The items in the folder are our gifts for you. If you encounter any difficulties, look for the man named Shao Yun. He can help you and will protect you.

You must be going through a hardship at this point in life. Otherwise, Zijin wouldn't have told you about the letter.

You might hear all sorts of rumors about your father, but I want you to know that he's a good man.

I'm your mom, and your father is Zhuang Ziyi, but not many people know about his identity. But I want you to know this, and that's all that matters.

Once again, we're sorry we couldn't stay by your side to take care of you, but this doesn't mean we don't love you. We love you very much.

You're a gift from God to me. Your father and I were overjoyed when you arrived. You're our child, and you represent a part of us in this world.

*May you live a blissful life and be surrounded by happiness wherever you go.
Love, Wen Xian.*

A tear droplet landed on the letter. Lin Xinyan wasn't upset nor angry, and it was also not because she hated them.

Somehow, she just could not control her tears anymore.

"Are you there, Ms. Lin?" The manager asked since she had been in the room for quite some time.

She immediately wiped off the tears on her face and replied, "Yes. I'll come out in a minute."

She put everything back into the folder and locked the safe box. With the folder in her arms, she spoke to the bodyguard in a calm voice, "Let's go."

The manager walked her out of the room. "Do give us a call shall you need any help."

Lin Xinyan turned around and glared at him. "No one should know I'm here today."

"Yes, Ms. Lin. Your privacy is our priority." The manager responded with a grin.

She nodded gently. The bodyguard opened the door for her, and she got into the car.

She rested her chin on the window and gazed at the views outside. "Do you know how should you answer if someone asks you where did I go today?"

The subordinate who was driving, took a glance at her from the rear window. He knew what she meant, but he did not know what to say.

"What should I say?"

"If someone asks about me, tell them I went shopping." Her eyes were still glued to the bright sunny sky even though her thoughts remained as gloomy as yesterday's weather.

She lowered her eyes and looked at the things in her hands. After a moment of hesitation, she instructed the bodyguard to send her to the Wen family.

She wanted to know more about Cheng Yuxiu from Wen Qing personally.

She needed to know what had happened.

The bodyguard was a little worried, "Should we inform Mr. Zong?"

Lin Xinyan raised her brows and acted as if she was mad at him. "Haven't I made myself clear?"

The subordinate immediately defended himself. "I'm just afraid it'll be difficult for me to explain myself if you get into any danger."

"Don't worry. He won't do anything to me." She tried to stay calm, but deep in her heart, she actually felt uneasy.

Her identity as Wen Xian's daughter had caused her a lot of troubles. If Wen Qing was truly the culprit behind Cheng Yuxiu's death, she had no idea how should she face Zong Jinghao in the future.

Very soon, Lin Xinyan arrived at the heavily guarded neighborhood. Since she was not able to enter the residential area, she called Li Zhan to see if he could help.

The man was not at home at this hour as he was having a drinking session with Fatty Long. He intentionally stayed away from home because he could not stand living around Wen Qing after knowing what he had done.

He was surprised to receive Lin Xinyan's call. "Xinyan."

"I'm near your neighborhood. Can you meet me at the entrance?"

Li Zhan pulled himself together. "What are you doing there? Are you with Jinghao?"

"Nope. I'm alone. Please come out. I can't go in."

"I'm not at home now." Li Zhan put his wine glass on the table and walked away. Fatty Long then followed right behind him and asked, "Where are you going? I thought you just promised to get back to work? What's wrong?"

Feeling annoyed, Li Zhan turned around and shot daggers at him. "I'm busy now."

He was worried for Lin Xinyan since she was all alone. *Will Wen Qing make things difficult for her?*

I need to go back now.

“I’ll do what I promised, but I’ve got things to attend to now.” Li Zhan said patiently.

Fatty Long stood still and decided not to catch up anymore. Knowing Li Zhan’s personality, he let out a sigh, walked back to the table, and started drinking alone.

Lin Xinyan lowered her head. “I’ll pass the phone to the guard now. Can you speak to him?”

The man on the other end agreed to do so as he got into his car.

Passing her phone to the security guard, she finally got the green light to visit the Wen family.

The car came to a stop in front of the Wen family’s house. Lin Xinyan put the folder into her bag and opened the car door. “Wait for me here.”

Her bodyguard was hesitant to leave her alone. “But...”

Lin Xinyan assured him, “Don’t worry. I’ll be fine.”

At this point, he could only obey her order. She walked toward the residence alone and pressed the doorbell.

Soon, Li Jing came to answer the door and was taken aback for a moment when she saw Lin Xinyan. She then grinned and greeted, “Come on in.”

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Never in a million years did Li Jing think Lin Xinyan would pay them a visit, but she remained hospitable. After all, the former was Zong Jinghao's wife.

"You're alone?" The older woman asked.

Lin Xinyan hummed in reply.

"Who is it? Of all times..." Wen Qing walked out of his study room, and he was stunned to find out who their guest was.

The man looked around to see if Zong Jinghao was here, but was a little disappointed when he saw no one else.

"What are you doing here?" He asked nonchalantly.

Lin Xinyan stood still like a statue and stared at him quietly.

The man before her eyes was related to her in so many ways. By right, she should be nervous and elated.

Yet now, she felt dejected.

Her eye contact made Wen Qing feel uncomfortable, and he looked away, "Why are you staring at me like this?"

Lin Xinyan still did not turn her attention elsewhere. She pressed her voice and said in a gentle tone, "Can we talk?"

Wen Qing frowned. "Did he ask you to come?"

Did Zong Jinghao ask her to be our mediator?

Wen Qing could not help but feel delighted at the thought of it.

“Nope. He doesn’t know I’m here.”

A line formed between Wen Qing’s brows. He then responded in a cold voice, “What possibly could we talk about?”

“Am I your enemy? Why can’t we talk?” Lin Xinyan got a little agitated all of a sudden. It was not because of how aloof Wen Qing was. It was because of how confused and exhausted she was in trying to make sense of this mess.

Wen Qing pressed his lips and did not utter a word.

Li Jing walked over, put on a smile, and nudged her husband, “Come on. Perhaps she does have some important matters to discuss with you.”

Wen Qing’s expression softened. While Li Jing was dragging him to the study room, she turned around and looked at Lin Xinyan. “Come.”

She made Wen Qing sit on a chair and whispered to his ears, “Think about Zong Jinghao. He’s your sister’s only child. Are you really going to cut ties with him? I know this is not what you want. The more you pull a long face, the more your nephew is going to fall out with you, and the more depressed you’d become.”

The woman understood her husband too well, and what she said was a wake-up call for Wen Qing. He finally calmed down and looked at his wife, “Alright. Give us some space then.”

Let’s see what Lin Xinyan wants to talk about.

Li Jing gave her husband a pat on his shoulder and grinned at Lin Xinyan. “Coffee or tea?”

The guest shook her head, “No, thank you.”

“Have a seat.” Li Jing pulled a chair over for her.

Lin Xinyan thanked her and sat on the chair. Wen Qing sat right opposite her across the other end of a square coffee table. Li Jing then left the room and closed the door.

“What do you want from me?” He asked.

She pressed her lips and looked at Wen Qing seriously, “I’m not your enemy and will never be.”

All of a sudden, their eyes met, and Wen Qing felt a little uneasy.

“I’m here to ask you one question, and I hope you’ll answer me honestly.” Not knowing what to expect from him, she looked at him and was overwhelmed by fear and anxiety.

She was afraid that Wen Qing was the cause of Cheng Yuxiu’s death.

Whatever outcome it might be, she knew she had to face the moment of truth.

Without a choice, she asked in a trembling voice, “Did you kill Cheng Yuxiu?”

Wen Qing squinted and stared at her in silence. “Is this what you want to ask?”

Lin Xinyan nodded with assurance. “Yes.”

...

Wen Qing paused for a moment and answered, “Yes.”

His answer struck her like a bolt of lightning. Lin Xinyan soon realized she was not as strong and steady as she thought she was, and she immediately lowered her head to hide her expression from him.

She bit her lips and tried to control her tears.

Though she had anticipated this answer, she was not ready to accept it.

How should I face Zong Jinghao from now onward? And Cheng Yuxiu too. How should I react to this answer? How?

“I always thought Zong Jinghao and I are destined to be together. But I was wrong. Him being around me is not a blessing but a curse.” *All because of his family.*

My mom and my uncle...

Lin Xinyan slowly lifted her head and stared at Wen Qing but still failed to stop her body from shaking. She grabbed onto the chair tightly as she struggled to breathe properly. Veins began to pop up all over the back of her hands, but she tried to regain her composure. The corner of her mouth quirked up, and she said, “If given a choice, I’ll want nothing to do with the Wen family.”

She took a deep breath and continued, “Not now, not in the future.”

“What do you mean? How are you related to the Wen family?” Wen Qing, too, felt a little uneasy.

Lin Xinyan took out a letter from her bag. Before handing it over to the man, she made it clear, “I don’t know what this letter is about, but I pray that you and I are not related.”

Finished speaking, she then placed the letter on the coffee table.

“I hope this’ll be the last time we meet.”

Lin Xinyan then walked out of the study room. Li Jing, who was busy cooking in the kitchen, wanted her to stay for dinner. The older woman even hoped she could invite Zong Jinghao over, so they could clear up all the misunderstanding they had.

“Give Jinghao a call, will you? Ask him to come for dinner.” Li Jing was still as hospitable as ever.

Lin Xinyan stood still like a mannequin for a bit and did not react to anything she said. She then walked out of the house. *I just want to get out of this place as soon as possible.*

Li Zhan happened to return home when she reached the door. He picked up the pace and went after her, “Why did you come alone?”

Suddenly, Lin Xinyan’s vision turned blurry, and she could no longer stand properly.

Just when she was about to collapse, Li Zhan ran toward her and grabbed hold of her.

I’m so tired. She gradually tilted her head upwards and saw the man who was holding her. Though her vision remained unclear, she recognized him and asked in a hoarse voice, “I thought you’re not at home?”

“I’m worried. What did my dad do to you?” Li Zhan was agitated and was ready to reason it out with Wen Qing.

Lin Xinyan pulled his sleeve gently and shook her head, “Nothing.” It was as if her soul was drawn away from her body. Her legs were so weak. She tried her best to stand on her own, “Please do me a favor.”

“How can I help?” Upon noticing how frail she was, Li Zhan asked, “Do you want to go to the hospital?”

The woman shook her head. “Bring me to my car.”

She needed to rest for a while before heading back. Her husband would suspect if she were to go home in such condition.

Li Zhan could not stand to see her in this miserable state anymore. He placed his hand around her waist, carried her up, and walked toward her car.

The bodyguard who was waiting outside all the while opened the car door right away, and Li Zhan placed her safely on the passenger’s seat.

He was so worried about her that he himself got into the car as well.

Lin Xinyan’s eyes remained shut. She massaged her forehead with one hand and tried to stay awake. “Could you get me some water?”

The subordinate then gave her a bottle of mineral water. She twisted the cap and guzzled down the water. Feeling a little better, she looked at Li Zhan and said, “I’m going home now.”

“Are you sure my dad didn’t do anything to you?” Seeing how frail she looked after leaving the house, the man was skeptical.

Lin Xinyan shook her head and reiterated, “It’s getting late, and I should go home now.”

Li Zhan had no choice but to get out of the car. He couldn’t follow her back to the villa. He was too ashamed to meet Zong Jinghao.

After getting out of the car, he closed the door properly.

“Let’s go.” Lin Xinyan said in a cold voice.

Her bodyguard then started the engine and left the Wen residence.

After they arrived at the villa, Lin Xinyan stayed in the car and gently patted her cheeks to regain her composure. Only when she felt she was ready to face the people around did she step out of the car.

At this time, she noticed the other two cars parked at the courtyard.

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One of them belonged to Shen Peichuan, and the other one was her husband's.

Lin Xinyan turned her attention to the villa. *They're back.*

She lowered her head, stood still for a while and walked toward the villa with the bag in her hands. Once again, she turned around and reminded her bodyguard, "You know what to say, right?"

"You went shopping today." He answered.

Lin Xinyan was satisfied with his reply and nodded. She took a deep breath and walked toward the villa.

Aunt Yu was busy preparing dinner in the kitchen, but the two children were nowhere to be found. *Perhaps they're playing in the room.* Lin Xinyan changed into a new pair of shoes and went upstairs. She then took the file out of the bag and placed it at the bottom of a drawer.

At the bathroom, she noticed how pallid her face was from the mirror's reflection. The best way to restore the radiance on her complexion was to wash her face with warm water repeatedly.

After drying her face with a towel, she went downstairs. Upon noticing the lights in the study room were on, she knew the men must be in there. She went straight to the kitchen, stood before the coffee maker, and poured the ground coffee beans into the machine. Casually, Lin Xinyan asked, "When did they come back?"

"Not long ago." Aunt Yu answered.

“What took you so long at the clothing store?” Aunt Yu took a glance at her tummy. “You’re still weak. Please take good care of yourself.”

Lin Xinyan responded with a grin, “I’ll be careful next time.”

She tipped her toes and tried to reach for the coffee mugs and a tray in the cabinet.

Aunt Yu took a glance at her and said, “I’ll bring these to the study. You should take a rest.”

Lin Xinyan smiled and said, “I’m fine. No worries.”

Once the coffee was ready, she poured it into the mugs, placed them on the tray, and walked toward the study room.

Just when she was about to knock on the door, she heard Su Zhan’s voice.

“How can Wen Xian be so selfish? Why did she agree to the marriage in the first place? Gosh. It’s all about protecting her family interest, isn’t it? She even found her husband a mistress just because she wanted to be with her lover! Only the Wen family can come up with this kind of nonsense.”

Though the door was closed, Lin Xinyan could clearly hear how irritated Su Zhan was.

“Your dad is also one of a kind. Why didn’t he say earlier? Why...”

Before Su Zhan could continue to lambast Zong Jinghao’s father, Shen Peichuan got hold of him and shook his head.

Su Zhan was not ready to stop. “Wen Qing is definitely not innocent here. Once the authorities completes their investigations, they would detain him, and the man would have to pay for the price of all the things he had done!”

Though all the suspects had either escaped or died, it would not be too difficult to track them down since these people had lived in B City for quite some time. Besides, the three of them had all the resources and networks in the city to hunt these people down.

Just today alone, the three of them had received an update about the man who died in a car accident after abducting Lin Xinyan. They found out the man's cousin was also involved in the case and had gone into hiding at his hometown. Upon receiving this information, they immediately sent their men to track him down.

In the meantime, they would continue with their investigations based on the other clues they had in hand.

Clink!

Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan turned their attention to the door upon hearing the crashing sound. Zong Jinghao, who was standing still in front of the French windows, also gradually turned around.

Shen Pei Chuan went up to open the door and saw Lin Xinyan squatting down and picking the broken pieces from the floor. Due to dizziness, she dropped the coffee tray. The coffee spilled all over the floor and had even stained the edge of her skirt.

Lin Xinyan tilted her head downwards. "Aunt Yu told me you're here, so I thought I'd make you all coffee. I guess I screwed up."

A wave of panic swept over her, and she accidentally cut one of her fingers. Blood started trickling down her fingertip.

Just when Shen Peichuan, who stood closest to her, was about to lend her a helping hand, Zong Jinghao stepped forth, wrapped his hand over her shoulders, and helped her up. Droplets of blood were still dripping down from her injured finger.

Lin Xinyan raised her head. "I'm getting more and more useless by the day."

He lowered his eyes, stared at her finger, and said aloofly, "Get me the first aid kit, Aunt Yu."

Upon hearing the instruction, Aunt Yu, who just arrived with a broomstick and dustbin, put down the items and immediately went to look for the first aid kit.

Lin Xinyan turned around and looked at her. "It's okay, Aunt Yu. I'm fine."

It's just a minor injury.

Zong Jinghao gazed into her eyes and did not utter a word.

She reciprocated by giving him a casual smile, "It's just a small wound. Please don't embarrass me in front of..."

Before Lin Xinyan could complete her sentence, the man had put her finger inside his mouth and started sucking the blood out of the wound. Her eyes widened, and she was stunned. "What..."

He pressed his tongue on her fingertip, and the moisture within his oral cavity caused her to shiver uncontrollably.

Lin Xinyan knitted her brows and felt utterly embarrassed as people were watching them, but she tried not to flip out.

Shen Peichuan lowered his head, rubbed his nose awkwardly, and nudged Su Zhan. "Let's wait outside."

Aunt Yu came back with the first aid kit, but she did not know if she should approach them at this point. Shen Peichuan went up to her and patted her shoulder. "They don't need it anymore."

“Well then.” Aunt Yu then turned around and went to put the first aid kit back.

Lin Xinyan looked at him while standing by the entrance of the study room. The firm and steady look on her face almost immediately disappeared the second she broke down in tears. Yet, she still pretended to sound fierce, “The guys must be laughing behind our backs!”

Zong Jinghao did not respond to her remark, and he only let go of her when the cut had finally stopped bleeding. The man in front of her remained silent, pulled her into the study room, and gave her a piece of tissue.

Lin Xinyan struggled to pull herself away from him but to no avail. “Stop moving.”

He lifted his head to look at her and sneered, “It’s not even painful. Why are you crying like a baby?”

“It’s painful!” Tears rolled down her cheeks more uncontrollably. Now that she had known the truth, she did not know how to face Zong Jinghao anymore.

The more caring he was, the more difficult it was for her to distance herself from him.

Even she herself was reluctant to push him away.

All of a sudden, Lin Xinyan tipped her toes, wrapped her hands around his neck, and gave him a peck on his cold and soft lips. She could still smell her blood lingering around his mouth.

The wife was in no way a good kisser, but she tried to make this kiss as memorable as ever.

The scent of their breaths was saturated all over their lips, and she closed her eyes to enjoy the moment. A few droplets of tears were still dangling on her eyelashes.

Zong Jinghao cupped her face with his hands, ran his fingers gently across her cheeks, and wiped away those tears from the corners of her eyes. He then said in a deep but gentle voice, “Are you okay?”

She sniffed and lowered her eyes. “Do I need a reason to kiss you?”

Zong Jinghao hugged her and sat her down. He then wrapped his hands around her waist, “Where did you go today? Did you bump into someone?”

Lin Xinyan leaned against his chest and blinked, “I went shopping today.”

“Is that all?” Zong Jinghao raised his brows. The hospital actually informed him that she went to the hospital for a checkup because she had a mild fever. Nonetheless, he was relieved when he learned that the baby was stable.

Why did she lie though? Did she go to the hospital to meet Zhuang Zijin?

Zong Jinghao sighed. He held Lin Xinyan’s head close to his chest and touched her forehead. Thankfully, her body temperature seemed fine. He then said earnestly, “Take good care of our baby and don’t think of anything else. Certain things are meant to happen, and we have no control over it.”

Zong Jinghao said so because he thought she had broken down because of Zhuang Zijin’s medical condition.

Somehow, she understood what he was trying to imply. She lifted her head and looked at him. “Are you free tomorrow? Let’s go and change the kids’ surname.”

I’m not a Lin, so my kids shouldn’t carry that surname too.

Since Zong Jinghao is their father, they should take his surname instead.

He tilted his head downwards. “Why are you proposing this all of a sudden?” He tightened his grip around her waist. “You’re my wife. We’re one.”

Lin Xinyan was worried that she might lose control once again, so she buried her face in his chest. She suppressed her voice and tried to sound as normal as possible, “It’s our country’s tradition for the kids to take their father’s surname. They’re going to school soon, I don’t want people to talk behind their back.”

That makes sense.

Zong Jinghao thought about it. “But Zong Xichen doesn’t sound nice.”

“Why don’t you give them new names? I’ll bring them to the Registration Department tomorrow.” Lin Xinyan stuck her face to his chest and listened to his heartbeats. She was absolutely obsessed with the scent of his body.

She was afraid that she might not have the chance to do so anymore.

Zong Jinghao picked up a pen from his desk, flicked its cap off with his thumb, and grabbed a piece of paper. He then placed his hand on the paper and mumbled, “Since my surname is Zong...”

He then started scribbling, and with excellent muscle strength and control, he wrote a few words on the paper. “Let’s see. What if I put your name right here...”

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Lin Xinyan leaned over and saw the details on the paper. Her twins' last names had been changed to Zong, and their names were now Zong Yanchen and Zong Yanxi.

She turned her head slightly to look at him. The man had thick lashes and a gentle profile.

Facing downward, Zong Jinghao gently kissed her cheek and said softly, "Do you like it? Now their names take after both of ours."

"Yeah." Lin Xinyan responded.

Hanging on the ceiling, a chandelier exuded a silent but warm atmosphere with its faint yellow light.

The two nestled against each other, saying nothing. Eventually, it was Lin Xinyan who broke the silence. "Are you busy tomorrow?"

"Hmm?" The man lowered his gaze.

Lin Xinyan's nose brushed against his chin as she looked up. "I was hoping you'd keep me company." She remarked coyly. "We haven't been to any date, traveled as a couple or watched a movie together ever since I married you. What a tough life I have."

A rare smile appeared on Zong Jinghao's face. "You have me; is that not enough?" He asked softly.

"Well, if you don't have time for me, I can always find another hunk to keep me com— Ahh!"

Before she could finish, Zong Jinghao bit into her shoulder so hard that teeth marks appeared on her skin. "I'd like to see you try." He warned.

Lin Xinyan frowned in pain. She didn't have to glance at her shoulder to know there were definitely marks on it. "That hurt! Are you trying to bite me to death?" She asked, wrapping her arms around his neck.

"Don't worry. You won't die before I do." He answered dully. "If anything, I'd be the one who goes first. I'll wander until it's time to drag you down with me. It'd be lonely going to hell on my own anyway."

Lin Xinyan was speechless.

"Can you really do that?"

Zong Jinghao wrapped his arms around her slender waist. "Of course. You're my wife in this life and the next."

Lin Xinyan fell silent again.

Knock, knock.

Someone knocked on the door to the study room at this time.

It was Aunt Yu. "Dinner time!"

Lin Xinyan looked up at Zong Jinghao. "I'm hungry."

The man got up while cradling her waist. "Let's go."

With a smile, she walked out of the room while holding onto him. Meanwhile, their daughter were chasing Su Zhan around the house while Shen Peichuan plopped himself on the couch lazily with his arms splayed out, watching the scene. "Can you really outrun her?"

Su Zhan took the time to glance at him. "For a while."

Lin Xichen sighed faintly while seated on the couch, wondering why his Uncle Su was as mischievous as a child.

Shen Peichuan caressed his hair. "Why are you sighing so much at this age? That might make you bald."

The boy looked up at the man. "I'll never be worse off than you, so don't worry about me."

Shen Peichuan was speechless.

How am I doing badly?

"Who says I'm doing bad?" Shen Peichuan sat up.

"I'd surely be married at your age, so it doesn't matter if I turn bald then. Being bald is still better than not having a wife, right?"

Shen Peichuan was speechless again.

What have I done to deserve this?

Why does he have to attack me this way?

Life is hard.

"Daddy!"

Lin Ruixi pounced on Zong Jinghao and buried her head in his arms as the man walked out of the study room. "Uncle Su's picking on me, Daddy." She whined.

Lin Xinyan glanced at her daughter and shook her head helplessly. This child always acted so coquettishly with her father. While wondering if every daughter was more attached to their father, the woman headed into the kitchen to help Aunt Yu.

Zong Jinghao placed an arm around his daughter and tucked a loose strand of hair behind her ear. "What did he do?" He asked softly.

Lin Ruixi's eyes suddenly lit up. "Uncle Su asked if I was smart."

"Mhm? Then?" The man carried his daughter to the dining table, pulled out a chair and sat down.

The girl lowered her head and twiddled her thumbs, refusing to answer.

Lin Xichen walked over and climbed onto a chair before giving an account of how Su Zhan had teased his sister earlier. It was, "Are you smart, Ruixi?"

"Of course." The twin sister proudly answered with a giggle.

"Let me ask you one question. You're a smart girl if you can answer me."

"Okay!" The innocent girl replied confidently. Su Zhan added, "You only need to answer with a yes or no."

"Got it!"

Lin Ruixi seemed rather intrigued and looked forward to hearing Su Zhan's question.

"Do your Mommy and Daddy know you're dumb?"

"No... Y...es..."

No matter how the girl responded, she'd be admitting that she was dumb.

When it finally dawned on Lin Ruixi, she began to chase Su Zhan. That was what led to the scene of the girl running after him in the living room.

The little girl pouted. "Uncle Su said I'm dumb, Daddy."

Su Zhan pulled out a chair and sat down. "I'm just playing around." He said with a sheepish grin.

Lin Ruixi left her father, ran toward Su Zhan and began to crawl into his arms. The man held her while gazing at her cautiously. "What are you trying to do? Are you trying to get back at me?"

The girl shook her head. "I'll just tell Aunt Qin Ya that you're out looking for other girlfriends while she isn't around."

Su Zhan fell silent.

I was wrong, okay?

I'll apologize, okay?

Can you not do this to me?

Su Zhan was now starting to regret stirring up this hornet's nest.

"I'm the one who's dumb, Yanxi. It's me. Don't tell Aunt Qin Ya such things about me, or I'll end up single like Uncle Shen. Look at how miserable he is! So you can't go around spreading nonsense to Aunt Qin Ya, got it?"

Shen Peichuan was at a loss for words.

Why is he dragging me into this? I haven't done anything!

He walked over and heavily placed a hand on Su Zhan's shoulder. "You're such a good friend."

Then, he painfully glanced at the little girl in Su Zhan's arms. *This kid's becoming more like her mother.* He couldn't help but lament, "These two kids are geniuses. You'd better not cross them."

Su Zhan continued to repent. "I was wrong, Yanxi. I'm the dumb one. Promise me you won't say anything to Aunt Qin Ya, okay?"

The girl pinched Su Zhan's cheek. "Well, since you look so earnest, I'll forgive you for now."

A weight was finally lifted off Su Zhan's shoulders. *I'd better not piss this kid off again. She's full of vengeance!*

"Who would marry you when you're older?"

"What?" Lin Ruixi didn't quite catch that.

Zong Jinghao glanced over frostily, causing Su Zhan to shut up immediately. "I didn't say anything! Let's eat." He responded while gently patting the little girl's back.

Aunt Yu served all the dishes before presenting some soup.

After putting all the cutlery in place, Lin Xinyan sat next to her son.

"Let's eat." She said, stroking the boy's head.

Su Zhan, who was sitting across her, hesitated for a moment before asking, "How's Qin Ya doing, Xinyan?"

Qin Ya was recovering well, but her appearance had changed rather drastically. The woman had spoken to Lin Xinyan over the phone before Cheng Yuxiu's passing and said she would come back soon, but she didn't want Su Zhan to know.

Lin Xinyan turned to Su Zhan and answered honestly, "She's doing well. Be patient, she probably needs time."

After all, whatever that had happened previously was a huge blow to Qin Ya. Everyone knew how seriously a woman took her appearance. Besides, she even had a miscarriage.

I don't know how I'd manage if I were in her shoes.

Su Zhan lowered his head in dejection. "Okay."

The atmosphere at the dining table suddenly became rather tense. Except for the two children, no one else seemed to eat much.

In fact, Zong Jinghao didn't even take one mouthful of food, or a sip of water. He left the dining hall with the excuse that he had work to do.

Lin Xinyan knew he still hadn't gotten over the incident.

Of course, it wasn't going to pass quickly, so she never tried to urge him. Only time would heal everything.

The woman didn't have a great appetite herself, but she poured herself a bowl of soup for the sake of the child inside her belly. While feeding herself a mouthful, she said to Shen Peichuan, "I heard you guys talking about Wen Xian earlier at the study."

"Yeah. Zong Qifeng's not feeling well, so Jinghao went to visit him. He took the chance to ask for some details about back then."

“What did they talk about?” Lin Xinyan tried asking. She was curious as to how much Zong Jinghao knew.

Shen Peichuan didn't hide anything from her since he figured she wasn't an outsider. She was Zong Jinghao's wife, and more importantly, Cheng Yuxiu had willingly sacrificed her own life to protect this woman.

Simplifying things, Shen Peichuan said, “They talked about how Zong Qifeng's and Wen Xian's marriage was an arranged one. But Wen Xian was in love with someone else, so he asked for Cheng Yuxiu to remain by his side. You know all of this too.”

“The Wen family is full of weirdos.” Su Zhan couldn't help but cut in.

Lin Xinyan lowered her gaze, eating her soup to conceal the mixed emotions in her eyes.

“Was there no mention of how Wen Xian died?” She asked while keeping her head low. When speaking with Cheng Yuxiu previously, the old woman didn't explain the cause of Wen Xian's death either.

Truthfully, she really wanted to know.

Shen Peichuan shook his head. “No.”

“Then was there any mention of Wen Xian having a child?” She probed.

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This time, Shen Peichuan stared at her instead of answering immediately.

It feels like she's deliberately trying to find out what happened.

But doesn't she know everything already? Why is she still trying to pry into this matter?

Not hearing a response from Shen Peichuan, Lin Xinyan slowly looked up. Her heart thumped as she saw the man gazing at her inquisitively. "Why are you looking at me like that?" She asked, forcing herself to act calm.

"Nothing." Shen Peichuan shook his head. Something doesn't seem right, but come to think of it, it doesn't seem wrong either. She probably wants to know because she cares. After all, Cheng Yuxiu had died to save her. It's understandable for her to be concerned.

He shook his head earnestly. "Zong Qifeng never mentioned anything about that."

Zong Qifeng was aware of the existence of Wen Xian's child, but he never told Cheng Yuxiu about it since the latter woman had just recovered from her mental illness back then. Still, the fact remained that the man knew about the child. Moreover, he knew the child was Lin Xinyan; he just never mentioned it.

Lin Xinyan and Zong Jinghao were now married and already had two children anyway. What else could be done?

Zong Qifeng didn't want them to be burdened by the grievances from the previous generation.

He could tell how well the couple got along, so he deliberately kept the truth hidden.

The old man wanted them to spend the rest of the days together.

“Wen Xian had a child?” Shen Peichuan asked, gazing at her.

Lin Xinyan tensed up for a brief moment before quickly regaining her composure. “No,” She answered, shaking her head. “I was just asking.”

Shen Peichuan nodded without giving her the slightest hint of doubt.

He and Su Zhan left after dinner. Lin Xinyan got ready to give the children a shower, but Aunt Yu called out to her. “I’ll do it after I’m done with the dishes. The bathroom’s wet. It’d be bad news if you were to slip.”

“It’s fine—”

“I’ll bathe them.” Zong Jinghao cut her off as he walked out of the study room. Then, he carried his daughter into the bathroom.

Seeing them walk away, Lin Xichen walked over and tugged the edge of his mother’s shirt. “Be nicer to Daddy, Mommy.”

The woman gazed at her son, frowning.

Don’t I treat him nicely?

“I know Daddy used to not like Grandmother, but I could tell he was really sad after she was gone.” Even the boy noticed his father’s low spirits.

Lin Xinyan pulled the boy into her arms for a hug. “I’ll be super nice to him.” She replied softly.

How she wished she could get rid of all the sadness in his heart. *But once a glass breaks, the cracks will remain no matter how much you try to fix them. The glass will never go back to how it once was.*

The son stroke her belly that was now protruding ever so slightly. He was beginning to look forward to having another younger sibling.

The boy already had a sister, so he yearned more for a brother who could play with him.

“This one’s going to be a boy.” Lin Xichen vowed confidently.

Lin Xinyan raised an eyebrow. “How do you know that?”

Not even an ultrasound would be able to determine the baby’s gender at the moment. They’d have to wait at least three months for that.

Where did that confidence of his come from?

“I feel it.”

Lin Xinyan pinched her son’s cheek. “Take a shower and go to bed.”

With a smile, the boy gave Lin Xinyan’s belly another caress and said to the baby inside it, “Be good. I’ll play with you when you come out.”

Then, he ran off.

Lin Xinyan smiled hopelessly as she gazed at her son before rubbing her temples. Aunt Yu, who had just finished cleaning up, walked out of the kitchen and saw the woman. “Are you feeling uncomfortable?” She asked with concern.

“Ah...” She looked up at Aunt Yu and shook her head. “No. Maybe I’m a little tired. I’ll be heading upstairs.”

Lin Xinyan slowly walked up the stairs while holding onto the railing. Despite intending to lay in bed for only a short while, she ended up falling asleep quickly.

After giving the children a shower, Zong Jinghao pushed the door open to find the room in darkness. The curtains remained open, allowing the moonlight to seep in. As his gaze fell on the woman curled up in bed, he gently closed the door, walked over and touched her forehead. Noticing it felt rather warm, the man soaked a towel in water before wringing it and placing it over her forehead.

Lin Xinyan jumped as her forehead came into contact with something cold. "Is it too cold?" Zong Jinghao hurriedly removed the towel and asked.

She slowly opened her eyes and her voice sounded hoarse right after waking up. "Yeah."

"You're a little warm. This'll help."

Lin Xinyan felt her own forehead. Indeed, it felt slightly warmer than usual. "I'm awake now, so it won't feel cold anymore." She replied, putting her hand down.

Zong Jinghao placed the towel on her forehead once again. He had gotten his hand wet while soaking the towel, so his fingers were icy now. Hence, instead of touching her face, the man pulled up her blanket and tucked the corners. "Sleep. I'll be right here next to you."

Feeling sleepy, the woman shut her eyes.

She didn't know when she had fallen asleep, but she could feel someone holding onto her and placing a large, wandering hand on her belly. The woman shifted into a comfortable position in her husband's arms and continued sleeping.

Perhaps it was because she felt so warm and safe in his arms that it took her only a moment to fall back asleep.

The next day, Lin Xinyan woke up to find Zong Jinghao standing before the window, talking on the phone. From the sounds of it, he was talking to Guan Jing about some company matters. The woman rubbed her eyes and turned, gazing at her husband with half of her face buried into the pillow.

After a while, the man hung up. "Aren't you going out today?" Lin Xinyan immediately asked.

Upon turning around and realizing she had woken up, Zong Jinghao put his phone away, walked toward her and placed both his hands on her shoulders. "I'll be keeping you company today."

Squinting like a cat, she nuzzled against Zong Jinghao's chest. "So you'll do whatever I want?" She asked softly while wrapping her fair arms around his neck.

"Whatever you want." The man replied lovingly, his gaze deepening.

She smiled through her pinkish lips. "In that case, let's get our children's names changed. Then, we'll go to the movies and you'll buy me a flower bouquet. Oh right! You'll take me out for a romantic dinner."

He complied.

Lin Xinyan continued to act coquettishly. "Carry me."

The man lifted the blanket, held her by the waist and carried her, heading into the bathroom.

Lin Xinyan kept her face buried in his neck, with her eyes slightly closed. "I didn't shower last night. Could you help me with that? I want my entire body to smell good, and I want to wear the prettiest clothes. I want to be a woman worthy of you—one who looks fitting standing next to you."

"Okay." He responded, lowering his gaze at her.

Upon reaching the bathroom, Zong Jinghao put her down and began to fill the bath tub with hot water. Lin Xinyan stood outside the glass compartment gazing at his back. The man had a thin waist and no excess flesh. His hips looked tight and sturdy too.

Suddenly, tears began to spill over the sides of Lin Xinyan's eyes uncontrollably.

How she wished to be with this man until the end of time.

To have lots of children together, and to live a normal life.

Yet, living a normal life had become her most extravagant desire.

The moment Zong Jinghao turned around, Lin Xinyan wiped the tears off her face and gently leaned against the countertop. Then, she licked her own lips as though enjoying something tantalizing. "Take my clothes off for me. I want you to serve me." She said to him with an enticing smile.

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The moment Zong Jinghao walked out, she put her arms around his neck, tiptoed and went nearer, deliberately breathing close to his face. With her every breath hurting and her toes quivering slightly, she feigned a frivolous smile. “The world is full of surprises. If I go missing one day, or if something happens to me, will you fall for another woman?”

The man’s gaze darkened as he pursed his lips. His wife suddenly became so passionate without any warning. He never thought she’d behave so seductively. In a moment of shock, Lin Xinyan suddenly gave him a light peck on the lips.

The man frowned. “You—”

“Shh!” Lin Xinyan turned slightly red and spoke between her teeth. “Did I scare you? You didn’t look like you were in a good mood, so I—”

Zong Jinghao grabbed her chin and forced her to look at him as he stared at her deeply. Lin Xinyan clenched her fists to maintain a calm facade, pursing her lips. “Do you not like how I’m behaving—”

Before she could finish speaking, Zong Jinghao forced his lips on hers. His kisses were always domineering and powerful, never allowing the other person to resist or retreat. He was so barbaric that he could swallow her tongue whole. The woman frowned in pain but said nothing.

When he finally stopped, a fine string of saliva hung between their parted lips. “Only you can tempt me.” He enunciated clearly.

It was as though he was telling Lin Xinyan that he’d never fall for any other woman.

Unable to stop her nose from burning and eyes from turning moist, she quickly turned around. “Uhh... You should get out. I’m going to take a shower now.”

Zong Jinghao remained standing there, stretching his arms past her shoulders and placing his hands on the buttons of her dress. “I’ll help you.”

Lin Xinyan froze. Perhaps, she could only remain steady because her back was facing him.

The woman gazed down at his slender and agile fingers. “Are you sure? Will you be turned on after seeing me naked? It’s only been two months. The doctor’s told us that we can’t do anything.”

His fingers stopped moving.

Lin Xinyan took the opportunity to push him away. “Wait for me outside.”

Finished speaking, she walked into the bath area and closed the glass door. She thought she was ready to face him, but in truth, it wasn’t the case at all. The woman felt guilty and ashamed.

After wiping her tears and pulling herself together, she removed her clothes and soaked herself in the tub, washing herself carefully and earnestly. Her previous statement about wearing beautiful clothes to look worthy of standing next to her husband was spoken from her heart.

Even if it were just for one day.

Her skin was as fair and smooth as silk. Sparkling beads of water dripped down her body as she exited the bathtub. She grabbed a bathrobe and covered herself with it, blow-dried her hair and opened the bathroom door. There was no one in the room.

Lin Ruixi had pestered Zong Jinghao to head downstairs, which was honestly a relief for Lin Xinyan. The woman opened her closet, searching for what to wear.

Considering that she was a designer, she certainly knew what clothes suited her best.

She put on a slightly alluring white velvet sling dress that reached just below her knees and contained minimal embellishments. The dress accentuated her slender waist, and although the V-shaped collar wasn't too deep, it was enough to reveal her exquisite collarbone and long neck while at the same time making her look a tad enticing.

She tied her hair loosely and left a few strands hanging in front of her ears. Such a simple hair-do added to her feminine charm nonetheless.

Her skin was clear and naturally gorgeous without any makeup.

Zong Jinghao happened to exit his daughter's room as the woman walked downstairs. He looked up and saw her.

The man's gaze darkened as he glanced at her from head to toe. Then, he walked over and held her hand. "You're all dressed up. Are you going on a blind date?"

Lin Xinyan grinned. "Then do I look good?"

His grip on her hand tightened. "You do. So much that I want to hide you away so that only I can look at you."

The chauffeur was already waiting outside the villa. The husband opened the car door, letting Lin Xinyan in before entering the vehicle himself. "Let's go." He instructed the chauffeur.

Zong Jinghao had arranged everything, so the woman didn't have to worry about anything. All she needed to do was to follow him.

The police station had already been informed prior, so the two could get things done upon arriving there. The children would soon begin elementary school, and

Zong Qifeng had already taken care of this matter previously. Now, all that was needed was to head over and proceed with the name changes.

The process happened quickly without them needing to queue.

Everything was done within ten minutes.

“I still haven’t gotten used to calling them this way.” Lin Xinyan remarked as they returned to their car.

Considering how many years the children had their previous names, it would certainly take her a while to get used to their new ones. Still, it was only normal for them to go by their father’s last name.

Zong Jinghao held her by the shoulder and pulled her into his arms. He frowned slightly upon looking at her exposed shoulder, but Lin Xinyan didn’t notice his gaze. She leaned into his embrace quietly, not questioning what they were going to do next.

Soon, the car stopped in front of a florist, and Zong Jinghao got down with her. Lin Xinyan suddenly felt like laughing. For some reason, the two felt like an old couple despite actually not having spent that much time together. Perhaps it was because their kids had already been around for quite a while.

Buying flowers like a young couple suddenly felt a little embarrassing for Lin Xinyan. “Let’s not go inside.” She said, holding onto her husband.

Yet, Zong Jinghao dragged the woman into the store and demanded a bouquet that signified his love for her.

It was the store owner’s first time bumping into such customers. She gazed at the lady before turning to the man speaking. Zong Jinghao looked tall and charming in a suit, giving out an air of elegance and aloofness whenever he didn’t speak.

The owner was a woman in her forties. She stared at Zong Jinghao for a long while, forgetting to answer.

“Are you not accepting customers, ma’am?” Lin Xinyan asked with a serious look on her face.

The florist quickly retracted her gaze in embarrassment. “Well, there are so many kinds of rose bouquets. They come in different colors and quantities—”

“I’ll take that one.” Lin Xinyan cut her off, pointing to a bouquet of red roses.

She didn’t like how the woman constantly stared at Zong Jinghao, so she wanted to leave as quickly as possible.

“That belongs to another customer—”

“Name your price.” Zong Jinghao took out his wallet. It didn’t matter how much the bouquet cost; if his wife wanted it, he was going to get it.

The florist hesitated for a moment. Seeing how handsome and generous this man was, she relented. “Alright.”

I’ll just get the other customer another bouquet.

She could never turn her back on money. And he’s such a fine lad. I can’t say no to him!

The florist handed the bouquet to Lin Xinyan with a smile. “A man pre-ordered this 99-rose bouquet for his proposal, but I’ll let you have it since your boyfriend is so handsome.”

Lin Xinyan suddenly felt rather uneasy.

It’d be horrible if the guy’s plans ended up ruined because of her.

Seeing Lin Xinyan's hesitant look, the florist shoved the bouquet into her arms. "There's no need to feel bad. I can always wrap another bouquet." She said, beaming.

Lin Xinyan had no choice but to accept it. Walking out of the store, she truly felt like a woman in love, except that her significant other didn't quite understand the whole 'romance' concept. This was clearly a romantic gesture, but the man seemed so rigid nevertheless.

Still, she liked it.

The woman voluntarily held Zong Jinghao's arm. "I love it."

He looked down at her smiling face. "That alone satisfy you?"

Lin Xinyan beamed. In truth, it wasn't hard to please a woman. She would be more than happy as long as his man could give her a sense of security and surprise her occasionally.

The chauffeur opened the door for them, but a voice came from behind just as they were about to enter the car.

"Xinyan!"

Lin Xinyan turned and saw a car parked across them. Li Zhan opened the door and ran across the road. "I thought I was seeing things."

Li Zhan had planned to go find Lin Xinyan at her house but he happened to pass by this road and see the familiar faces in the florist. However, he couldn't be sure as he never perceived the couple to be this 'childish'.

People only bought flowers when they were young and in love.

Lowering his head, Li Zhan paused before speaking. “Uhh... My dad’s not well, Xinyan. He wants to see you.”