

Stealing Your Heart Chapter 471

“We don’t have the time.” Lin Xinyan rejected as she held onto Zong Jinghao, getting into the car. Li Zhan quickly caught up with them. “Xinyan...”

“What do you want?” The woman suddenly yell at him.

Li Zhan jumped in surprise as he did not expect her to have such a huge reaction. Yet, he could understand why she was reacting in such a manner and why she almost passed out outside the Wen family’s mansion the last time they met.

That day, after watching Lin Xinyan’s car leave outside of the Wen family’s mansion, Li Zhan did not went to Fatty Long. Instead, he went home. He wanted to know if Wen Qing had done something to Lin Xinyan since she looked dispirited when she left. When he pushed the door open, there was Li Jing standing in the living room, looking completely stunned.

Earlier, Li Jing had asked Lin Xinyan to stay for dinner, but the latter ignored her, leaving her wondering if there was something she’d done wrong. When she saw her son coming in, she quickly regained her wits. “Welcome home. Right on time! Dinner’s ready.”

Li Zhan wasn’t in the mood to eat. All he could think of was confronting his father. “Where’s dad?”

“Why are you looking for him?” The mother frowned. She knew how tense things were between them and was worried, especially when Li Zhan was asking in such a cold tone. She knew she had to keep them separated.

Li Jing pulled her son’s arm as she was scared that he would go look for Wen Qing.

“Was Lin Xinyan here? Did she meet dad?” Li Zhan talked to his mother in a relatively softer tone. Even though he hated his father, he still respected his mother.

Li Jing nodded.

“No wonder she looked so pale.” Li Zhan scorned. “What did he do this time?”

Li Jing froze as she also wondered what happened inside the study room. *Did they fight? Was that why she ignored me?*

“Where is he?” Li Zhan asked once again.

Li Jing still kept her mouth shut as she knew her son was going to have a heated argument with Wen Qing if they met.

“Well, he’s either planning something with Chen Qing or in the study room.” Li Zhan indeed knew his father well. He then walked toward the study room. Instead of knocking on the door, he kicked it so hard that the lock broke.

“Wen Qing! What do...” Li Zhan yelled but froze when he saw his father lying on the floor.

Terrified that her son and husband might fight again, Li Jing also came rushing in only to find her husband on the floor. With an ear-piercing shriek, she quickly ran to his side. “Qing! Are you okay?”

Wen Qing was suffering from a stroke. The man had always lived a healthy life, but he was already in his late fifties and he passed out once some time ago. The news put huge pressure on him and caused his blood pressure to spike. His eyes were wide opened as his limbs were twitching excessively.

“What are you standing there for?! We have to get your father to a hospital! Do you want to watch him die?” Li Jing quickly turned to yell at Li Zhan, who was still standing by the door.

The son finally reacted and ran to carry Wen Qing up. No matter how much he hated his father, they were still blood related. In the midst of it, a letter in the latter's hand fell to the floor. Li Jing noticed it and picked it up, but before she could read its content, Li Zhan shouted at her, "Hurry up!"

The mother quickly shoved the letter into her pocket and ran after the men. With Li Zhan driving, she stayed in the back seat to take care of Wen Qing.

No matter how fast Li Zhan drove, it still took them twenty minutes to reach the nearest hospital. After Wen Qing was sent into the emergency room, the son paced back and forth outside while mumbling, "How did this happen? He's always in good health..."

He always thought of his father as a stern and serious person, someone who would take good care of himself.

"Mom..." He walked over to Li Jing, wanting to ask what really happened in the study, only to find her leaning against a wall and reading a letter.

Li Zhan frowned as he wondered why his mother still had the mood to read a letter. "Mom. About dad and..."

Before he could finish his sentence, the mother handed him the letter. "Read it."

"What's this?"

"I believe this will explain everything."

Even though Li Jing didn't react as dramatic as Wen Qing did when she read the letter, it still took her by surprise. After handing the letter to her son, she walked over to the bench and sat down.

She finally understood why her husband would react in such a way and sighed.

Li Zhan glanced at her and hesitated before he began to read the letter.

Dear brother, if you are reading this, it means that I'm no longer in this world. Don't cry for me, don't weep for me, as this is all my own choice.

I've done a lot of bad things in my life, disappointing a lot of people. The one I'm the sorriest to is Qifeng as I've never done what a good wife should do.

Because of my selfishness, I found him another woman so that I could be with Ziyi. She's another person that I'm sorry to. She lost her loved one and became a mistress that's loathed by society because of me.

I believe you can tell what I'm about to say next. Jinghao is not my son, at least I didn't give birth to him. He's Yuxiu and Qi Feng's son. I didn't want to worry you and dad, so I lied to the whole world, saying he is my child.

I know you and dad wanted to separate me from Ziyi, that's why you insisted me to marry to Qi Feng. But I love him! I love him so much that I'll follow him wherever he goes, be it heaven or hell.

Do you know what I regret the most? Agreeing to the arranged marriage and ruining two people's life. I know you have always been blaming Yuxiu for my failed marriage, but you're wrong. It was all my fault. I'm the sinner here.

There's another thing you should know. I'm pregnant with Ziyi's child, a girl. I told Qifeng that when she grows up, I want her to marry Jinghao. Once again, my selfishness got the better of me. I wanted my daughter to reprimand all the mistakes I've done to the Zongs.

Brother, I've been a failure my entire life. If I could go back in time, I would never agree to the marriage because I don't want my selfishness to cause harm to other people so I would never have to live my whole life in pain and regret.

Love, Wen Xian.

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Li Zhan was completely astonished by what he'd just read. He didn't have much memory of his aunt because she passed away when he was still a little boy. He couldn't believe that when he heard of his aunt again, it would come with something so unimaginable.

Lucky for Wen Qing, his life wasn't in danger after the treatment, but his physical and mental health wasn't good. All he wanted was to see Lin Xinyan.

Back to present time, Li Zhan opened his mouth. "My dad..."

"Li Zhan." Lin Xinyan cut his sentence short. "I hope this is the last time we meet. Okay?"

She was determined to never cross path with the Wen family ever again, no matter the circumstances. That was what she told Wen Qing as well.

Li Zhan was surprised by her determination. He always thought of her as a gentle and friendly person, which was why he couldn't accept her sudden coldness.

He wanted to say something else but Lin Xinyan didn't even give him the chance. She quickly got into the car and told the chauffeur to take them back home.

Zong Jinghao extended his hand to caress her face. His face was calm and expressionless. "You met Wen Qing?"

Lin Xinyan averted from his gaze. "I did. But I don't want to talk about it."

Her husband might have noticed something from what Li Zhan had said earlier. If she lied, it would've deepen his suspicion.

She then rested her head on his shoulder. "I'm tired. Let's go back."

"I thought you wanted to go to the movies?" Zong Jinghao asked as he hid his emotion behind his expressionless face.

"No. Let's just go back." The wife pretended to be worn out.

Zong Jinghao then pulled her closer with one arm while asked Li Zhan to meet him at the office through message with the other.

The man was really curious as to what was the conversation between Lin Xinyan and Wen Qing.

On the other side of the phone, Li Zhan was about to head back to the hospital when he received the text, so he changed his destination to Wanyue.

Arriving at the mansion, Lin Xinyan opened the car door, preparing to get out. It was then when Zong Jinghao grabbed her hand tightly. "There's something that need my attention back at the office."

She turned back to look at him. Initially, she wanted to spend some romantic time with him at home, but judging from the man's expression, she knew she had to call off that plan. She then leaned over and kissed him, a kiss that was filled with emotions. Pulling herself away from his lips, she smiled, "Thank you for the beautiful flowers. I love them. Off you go now."

Lin Xinyan walked out of the car. The further she moved away from him, the more she was reluctant to leave him. She made her way toward the mansion very quickly as she didn't want him to see her tears.

"I'll come back as soon as I can." Zong Jinghao rolled down the window and said.

"Okay." Lin Xinyan replied as she stood by the mansion's door with the bouquet in her hands. Her eyes never left the car until it disappeared from her sight. Only then did she enter the house and called Shen Peichuan.

“Peichuan, It’s me.”

The man was in the middle of an investigation. He wasn’t surprised to get a call from her. “Do you need anything?”

“Can you call Jinghao and tell him my mom wants to see him?”

“Say that again?”

“Just tell him my mom has something to say, and it’s about me.”

“About you?” Shen Peichuan was completely confused.

“Just do as I say.”

Lin Xinyan did not elucidate further. He would understand once she was gone.

She knew Zong Jinghao was lying about heading back to his office. The man should be on his way to find out more details about her meeting with Wen Qing.

He would learn about the truth eventually. If that’s the case, she wanted him to hear from herself.

Hanging up the call, Shen Peichuan immediately called his friend.

As soon as the call went through, the officer said, “Zhuang Zijin wants to see you.”

“Huh?” Zong Jinghao frowned.

“It’s about your wife.”

Zong Jinghao hesitated for a moment before instructing his driver to take him to the hospital. That was why Lin Xinyan asked Shen Peichuan to relay the message that way. She was certain her husband would visit Zhuang Zijin right away when he heard that.

Lin Xinyan had her mind set on leaving, which was why she had everything planned. In the document Wen Xian left her was a company's address and a name who would be of help if she ever thought of leaving.

She had to get that person's help. Or else, Zong Jinghao would've found her in no time.

Lin Xinyan brought only her twins with her so that Aunt Yu would not suspect anything. Even so, the latter still asked, "Where are you taking the children to?"

"The company." Lin Xinyan faked a smile. There wasn't even a hint in her expression that she was leaving. "We're meeting Jinghao for dinner."

Aunt Yu nodded. "Alright. Don't stay out too late. You need to rest as much as possible."

Nodding, the three left in Lin Xinyan's car.

After making sure the children were belted, Lin Ruixi, now Zong Yanxi, asked, "Mommy, is Daddy going to buy us hamburger?"

Not used to her daughter's new name, Lin Xinyan flinched before patting her head. "Ruixi, we're not meeting Daddy. Mommy is bringing you to a new place, and we will spend some time there."

"Where are we going?" The little girl frowned.

"I'll tell you when we get there."

Lin Xinyan then got to the driver's seat and started the engine.

The little girl was going to ask more questions, but her brother grabbed her little hand and comforted her. "Don't worry. Mommy will keep her words."

Thinking about it, Zong Yanxi decided to listen to her brother. Everything would be fine as long as her mother was with them.

On their way, Lin Xinyan parked her car next to a road with heavy traffic and left in a taxi.

JK Group was situated in C City, which was just a few kilometers away from B City. Dumping her car was to prevent Zong Jinghao from tracking it.

In the taxi, Lin Xinyan hugged her children tightly and asked, "We have to leave daddy for a short while, okay?"

Hearing their mother, Zong Yanxi had a bigger reaction than her brother as she was always the clingy one.

"What if I miss daddy?" The little girl asked.

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Lin Xinyan lowered her head and kissed her daughter's head. Her daughter was not the only one who would miss the Zong Jinghao. But she knew she was doing the right thing. If the man knew about the truth, what would he do? Would he stop wreaking vengeance on Wen Qing for her sake; or continue what he was doing, ignoring who she was?

Even though Lin Xinyan couldn't care less about the Wen family, they were still blood related. This fact would create a gulf between the couple eventually.

Instead of putting the man in a difficult situation, she would rather leave his life for the time being and let him do what he wanted. If she were to stay by his side, he would more or less take her feeling into consideration. She didn't want him to make some decision that he would regret for the rest of his life.

Despite having all that in her mind, she didn't know how to answer her daughter. All she could do was hug the little girl tightly.

"Mommy..." Zong Yanxi buried herself in her mother's embrace. "Don't cry, Mommy. Please cheer up, okay?"

"As long as you two are by my side, I'll be fine." Speaking, Lin Xinyan kissed the little girl's forehead.

She then looked out the window, at the crowded street. It was only less than an hour since they left but she couldn't stop missing him.

Seeing that her children had quieted down, she took her phone out. There was a lot of things she wanted to say to Zong Jinghao but she had no idea where to begin with.

She stared blankly at her screen. As it dimmed, she would press the button to bring up the locked screen again.

On the other side, Zong Jinghao finally reached the hospital. Zhuang Zijin was stunned upon his arrival. The man had only visited her once, on the day she was admitted. His friend Shen Peichuan, on the other hand, came quite often.

“How’s Yan?” Zhuang Zijin broke the silence. She was worried about Lin Xinyan’s reaction the other day.

Zong Jinghao immediately felt something was off. He was told that Zhuang Zijin wanted to talk to him about Lin Xinyan, which was why he came to the hospital instead of meeting with Li Zhan at the office.

Judging from the elder woman’s expression, he could tell that that was not the case.

What is Xinyan thinking about? What is this feeling...

Zong Jinghao seemed to have realized Lin Xinyan’s plan. He quickly turned around and was about to leave when Zhuang Zijin stopped him. “When Yan came to visit me last time, she’d already known everything. Please take good care of her, especially when she’s pregnant now. I shouldn’t have told her those things. Can you please tell her that I’ll stop talking about that from now onwards?”

Zong Jinghao turned back to look at the older woman. “What did you say?”

Zhuang Zijin walked to the window and decided to tell him the truth since he was Lin Xinyan’s husband.

After preparing herself, she finally spilled the beans. “Yan is now your wife, so you have the right to know about this. I’m not Yan’s biological mother. Her mother is a woman called Wen Xian.”

As the story continued, Zong Jinghao learned that after Zhuang Zijin married to Lin Guoan, she had been seeking medical help for infertility issue. When she finally got pregnant after months of treatment, the couple were beamed with joy. It was a time when Shen Xiuqing still wasn't part of the equation, and when her husband hadn't shown his true self.

Zhuang Zijin thought that was the beginning of her happiness, but it was the opposite instead.

Seven months into the pregnancy, she accidentally found out that Lin Guoan was seeing another woman, which was Shen Xiuqing. The shocking news came too much of an impact on her, causing her to go into premature labor. Due to that, her baby girl had a heart failure and did not make it in the end.

Just as she was completely devastated, Wen Xian came to her with a baby.

The latter claimed that the baby belonged to Zhuang Ziyi, her stepbrother. She didn't know much about him other than he was the child of her father with his ex, but his identity was never announced to others. Only the closest to their father knew about him.

At that time, Wen Xian believed that Zhuang Zijin was the closest family Zhuang Ziyi had and would be the best choice to entrust her daughter with.

Due to the torment from losing her baby, Zhuang Zijin found solace from the baby in Wen Xian's arms. After all, that was her niece!

She could tell Wen Xian wasn't herself that day. A name and necklace was all the latter left for the baby. The only other request was for her to promise that the baby would marry the Zong's only son in the future, without explaining why.

Zhuang Zijin decided to raise the baby as her own, but she didn't want Lin Guoan to find out about it. She decided to lie to her husband, telling him that their premature baby had survived.

As for the marriage, she told her husband it was arranged because she was close with Madam Zong.

Unsure if it was because of the baby, her husband turned into a new leaf and spent all his time accompanying both of them. He even treated her way better than the old times. Seeing that, she decided to give him another chance, wishing her family of three could live a happy life from thereafter.

Little did she know, Lin Guoan was just putting up an act because he was eyeing after her asset.

She had been living under a false pretense that the man had cut off all ties with the mistress. Only when he finally got his hands on all of her wealth did everything come crumbling down for Zhuang Zijin. The husband finally showed his true color and forced her to sign the divorce paper.

Now that Zhuang Zijin thought about it, she couldn't believe just how idiot she was to have trusted the words of a bast*rd. Not only was she left in a completely devastated state, but she also lost everything.

All that was left in her was her hatred toward her ex-husband.

Tears rolled down Zhuang Zijin's face as she reminisced about her past. "Yan has lived a harsh life in the past. I really hope the both of you can live your life out in happiness. Please forgive my pessimistic thoughts in the past. I will do my best to survive through this, or at least until the baby is born. Even though Yan is not my biological daughter, but after years of struggling together, we've become much more than that."

"Does she know about this?" Zong Jinghao asked in a deep voice with mixed feelings.

"She left before I could finish my story. Perhaps she didn't want to know about the truth. Now that you know about it, I hope you can take good care of her." The

woman begged as Lin Xinyan was the only person left in the world whom she cared about.

Zong Jinghao's expression tightened and he quickly left the hospital.

Since Lin Xinyan had met with Wen Qing, it was no doubt that the truth had been revealed. That explained her abnormal behavior.

Zong Jinghao's chauffeur, who was waiting outside the hospital, opened the car door to the backseat when he noticed him coming out. However, instead of getting into the car, the man asked for the keys and said, "I need the car. Take a cab back."

Finished speaking, he got into the car, started the engine and jammed his feet onto the pedal, speeding as fast as he could toward the mansion.

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Just when he reached his destination and got off his car, Li Zhan happened to arrive just seconds later and chased after him.

“Jinghao...”

Zong Jinghao paused and turned around.

“I was waiting for you at the company but you never showed up. That’s why I come to see if you are here. Here, I know why you want to see me.” Li Zhan said as he took out a letter. “You’ll understand once you read this.”

The older man’s face was expressionless. He knew what was written in the letter. Taking over the note from Li Zhan’s hand, he looked at the latter. “Don’t come here ever again.”

“Why?” Li Zhan only knew the front part of the story. What he didn’t know was that Wen Qing was the one who caused all the tragedy.

He still believed that Lin Xinyan’s identity would bring forth a happy ending as Wen Qing would stop separating them from each other now.

Zong Jinghao did not answer the question. The younger man had nothing to do with Wen Qing’s crime. Yet, that did not mean he wanted to have anything to do with Li Zhan any further. “Just leave.”

“Jinghao...”

Zong Jinghao walked into the door and instructed his bodyguards, “Don’t let anyone in.”

Li Zhan, who was now stopped by the bodyguard, yelled, "Isn't this a good thing? My dad won't separate the both of you now! I just don't understand why are you doing this to me? My father had done a lot of bad things in the past, but he has gotten his retribution now! Does Xinyan not care about who he is to her at all?"

Zong Jinghao didn't even slow down and went on to close the door behind him. Not giving up, Li Zhan tried to pushed past the bodyguards. "Let me in! I just want a word with him!"

"Sir, I'm sorry. But we have our orders." The bodyguards made themselves clear.

Li Zhan stomped his foot out of frustration before leaving.

When Aunt Yu noticed Zong Jinghao's return, her expression changed immediately. "I thought you're having dinner with Mrs. Zong and the children? Where are they?"

The man was now sure that Lin Xinyan was set on leaving from the start and it pained his heart. He tried his best to hide his emotion as he looked at Aunt Yu. "When did she leave?"

She looked at the clock and replied, "Around two or three hours ago."

"I see." Zong Jinghao nodded and went up the stairs. After moments of hesitation, Aunt Yu decided to keep silent.

Zong Jinghao pushed his bedroom's door opened. Nothing had changed since this morning. Lin Xinyan left everything behind. Soon, he finally spotted a minor change. The supposedly empty table in front of the window was now decorated with a bouquet of flower.

Standing in front of the window, he opened the letter Li Zhan gave him. The content did not bring many surprises to him.

Yet, there was one single paragraph that he reacted to.

There's another thing you should know. I'm pregnant with Ziyi's child, a girl. I told Qifeng that when she grows up, I want her to marry Jinghao. Once again, my selfishness got the better of me. I wanted my daughter to reprimand all the mistakes I've done to the Zongs.

Lost in thought, his phone in his pocket suddenly vibrated. He quickly took it out and realized it was a message sent from Lin Xinyan.

His hand was trembling as he opened the message.

I guess you know about everything now by the time this message reaches you. I thought of breaking the news to you at first, but I just don't have the courage to face you.

Funny huh? I'm usually not that weak. But when it comes to things like this, I'm scared.

Please forgive me for leaving without saying goodbye; Forgive me for bringing our babies with me. I wanted to leave them with you, but I can't. I need them. With them staying by my side, I feel better.

If I'm given a chance, I'd hope to grow up in an ordinary family. That way, we could live a quiet yet peaceful life. Unfortunately, life is life. There's no 'ifs' in this world.

I could still recall the day your mother shielded me and the children from the accident. Nights and nights after that I could still see her lying above me and said, "Yan, please take good care of him and the children." I know I'm breaking the promise for not staying by your side, but at the very least, I will watch over the children.

Jinghao, do what you want. Don't let vengeance and regret linger around you.

Don't look for me. It'll make me feel sorry. I hope time can heal everything. One day, if we met, that's when we'll hug each other tightly.

I always thought that I'll never find true love, but I was wrong. It wasn't until now I realize I've completely fallen for you. Even just minutes after I've decided to leave, you can't stop appearing in my head. I love you, Jinghao, I love you so so much...

Let us look forward to the day we meet again. The day where you'll be you and I'll be I. No one and nothing will come between us again.

Finally, I just want to ask, will you miss me?

Zong Jinghao dropped his head as he stood by the window silently. He bent over from the pain in his heart as he hurried to call Lin Xinyan's number.

The taxi she was in had already left B City. Just as she was about to turn off her phone and throw away the sim card, her phone rang. Her heart tightened as she stared at the caller ID.

After moments of hesitation, she answered it just as the call was about to get cut off. Even though they knew who was the other person on the other side of the phone, none of them spoke.

It felt like years had passed when Zong Jinghao's hoarse voice finally sounded. "I'll miss you."

Lin Xinyan rested her head on the window as she bit her lip. The frown on her forehead showed how much pain she was in as tears finally rolled down her cheeks and into her mouth. The woman couldn't control herself any longer and cried silently.

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They kept the call alive but none of them uttered a word. It was as if they were trying to express their pains through silence.

Lin Xinyan was the first to give in as she hung the call up without saying anything. She grabbed the phone tightly in front of her chest, trying to suppress herself from breaking down. However, she failed.

Her miserable sobs woke the two children up. The daughter rubbed her eyes and extended her hands to wipe the tears off Lin Xinyan's face. "Mommy, why are you crying?"

The mother looked at her daughter and forced a smile. "I'm not crying. There's sand in my eyes."

The little girl blinked as she wondered where the sand came from since they were in the car. Even if there were sands, there wasn't any wind that would blow them into her mother's eyes.

"I'll blow them out for mommy." Zong Yanxi leaned forward and blew into Lin Xinyan's eyes.

As for the son, he was acting like an adult. Even though he could guess what her mother was going through, he didn't try to comfort her. Instead, he looked out the window and sighed.

It was already late night when the three finally arrived at C City. After paying the driver, Lin Xinyan and her children checked in at a hotel. Lucky for them, room service was still available, so she quickly ordered some food for themselves. She wasn't feeling hungry, but she still forced herself to eat since she had a baby growing inside of her.

Finished eating, she showered the kids before going to bed. Her children fell asleep in her arms right away as they were tired from the trip, but Lin Xinyan was completely awake.

Through the thin curtain, she could see the myriad twinkling lights from the outside. Just like how everyone else would feel when they first step foot in a new city, she too, was uncertain of how her future would be like. Missing him, she knew it would be a sleepless night for her.

In another city, a person was experiencing the same thing as Lin Xinyan. The master bedroom of a certain mansion was dimly lit by a single lamp. A man was standing in front of the window, staring out the window aimlessly as if he were the only person left in the world.

In a sudden, another source of light appeared inside the room. It was him checking on the phone. The screen was showing the message Lin Xinyan sent earlier and his eyes were glued to a single sentence. *Even just minutes after I've decided to leave, you can't stop appearing in my head. I love you, Jinghao, I love you so so much...*

The light reflected the tears in his eyes as he sobbed, "I miss you too..."

That night, two broken hearts were experiencing the same devastating feeling...

As soon as the sun rose, Lin Xinyan got up and cleaned herself up before she went to the reception to ask about JK Group.

The receptionist was a woman in black jacket with her hair pulled back into a ponytail. When she heard that Lin Xinyan was asking about JK group, she couldn't help but question, "Who are you?"

Everyone in C City knew about JK Group. It was one of the largest groups that had been actively involved in charity works.

“I’m not local. One of my relatives is working there but I’m not quite sure which direction I should go.” Lin Xinyan smiled.

The receptionist sized the woman in front of her. She was still wearing the same dress from last night, but with a jacket this time. It was a weird combination that reflected her miserable state. Her hair was tied into a ponytail as well. There wasn’t any makeup on her face, which only made her look more innocent.

From her appearance, in addition to the two kids she brought along last night, the receptionist assumed that she must be in a difficult situation and was here to seek shelter from that relative of hers.

“You just have to tell the taxi driver that you’re heading to JK Group and they’ll take you there right away. Are the kids who came with you yesterday yours?” The receptionist couldn’t help but ask since Lin Xinyan looked too young to have kids around that age.

“Yes. They’re my babies.”

“They’re beautiful.” The other woman smiled.

Lin Xinyan thanked her with a smile. “Can you send three servings of breakfast to my room?”

“Of course.”

Finished ordering the breakfast, Lin Xinyan hurried back to the room as she was worried that her children would be afraid if they woke up to find their mother gone.

Back to the room, the mother was relieved to find her babies still sleeping soundly. She then gently patted her son and daughter to wake them up. “It’s time to wake up.”

It was almost seven in the morning and they would need at least an hour, or maybe two, to get ready.

Zong Yanchen frowned as if he did not get enough sleep but the little adult rubbed his eyes and sat up anyway.

His sister was a different story. She pulled her blanket over her head and mumbled, "No one's home."

Her cute voice was mixed with a slight hoarse as she still wasn't fully awake.

Lin Xinyan giggled as she patted her daughter's head. "Then, who am I talking to?"

With her eyes closed, Zong Yanxi thought for a second before replying, "No one is talking to mommy."

"Really? Then, who just replied me?"

"Not me."

Lin Xinyan stared at her daughter speechlessly and sighed. "Fine. Well, Mommy ordered some amazing food just now. I thought it might not be enough for the three of us. Looks like your brother and I get to eat your share."

Zong Yanxi threw her eyes wide open upon the mention of food. "What? Food? I want some too. Daddy will be sad if I lose weight."

Lin Xinyan shivered a little when her daughter mentioned Zong Jinghao, but she quickly hid her emotion to herself.

Zong Yanchen had just finished washing up and was standing outside the bathroom studying his sister. He finally let out a deep sigh.

“What’s with the sigh again?” The mother turned to ask as that was the third time she heard her son sigh since last night.

“My dear sister worries me.” The little man explained and sat down on the chair. He wasn’t speaking the truth. In fact, he was worried about his parents. He initially thought that their family of four could finally live together happily. Yet, things didn’t go the way he thought it would.

Even though he had no idea what went wrong, he knew why his mother brought them this far into another city.

Judging from how his mother cried in the car the day before, he knew running away was definitely her last choice. Since he’d been living most of his life with Lin Xinyan, it wouldn’t be hard to live with only her again in the future. But he would still miss his father who had slowly become a part of his life. Zong Yanchen couldn’t help but wonder if time would make things better for all of them.

Zong Yanxi pouted as her sleepiness went away. Lin Xinyan was about to take her into the bathroom to clean her up when she shook her head. “I can wash myself. Mommy should rest.”

The mother was pleased to see her daughter, who used to be clingy, grew as time passed.

Their breakfast arrived shortly after Lin Xinyan dressed her daughter up. Sunlight was shining in through the window. Everything seemed lovely.

The hotel breakfast was plated elegantly and looked appetizing. The daughter couldn’t wait and began to eat first. As they ate, Lin Xinyan looked at her children and said, “Mommy has something to tell you guys.”

“What’s that?” Zong Yanchen asked.

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Lin Xinyan found it necessary to inform them that their names had been changed.

After rehearsing in her mind, she said to the children in a soft voice, "Our country has a long history of five thousand years. Since ancient times, there has been a tradition whereby the children follow their father's last name. I didn't have time to tell you before, but your daddy and I have changed your last names."

Glancing up at her, Lin Xichen chewed his food carefully and swallowed it before saying, "So this is what you wanted to tell us?"

Lin Xinyan nodded. Noticing that he did not seem surprised at all, Lin Xinyan asked, "You knew it already?"

No one's supposed to know about this.

How did he find out?

Lin Xichen took another piece of steamed cake and put it into his mouth. "No, I didn't, but I know that it is just a matter of time before we change our last names. I've also found out that everyone is using their fathers' last names. Only Ruixi and I are the special ones. But now we're not special anymore, and no one will think that Daddy is in a matrilocal marriage."

Lin Xinyan was rendered speechless.

How is he so well-informed that he even knows about matrilocal marriage?

Hearing Lin Xichen's words, Lin Ruixi, who had been eating, blinked her eyes and asked curiously, "What does a matrilocal marriage mean?"

Without the need to think, Lin Xichen answered in a serious manner, “Usually, it’s a woman who marries into a man’s family, as in it’ll only be normal for Mommy to marry into Daddy’s family. But in a matrilineal marriage, it’s the other way around. For example, Daddy married into Mommy’s family, so Daddy is in a matrilineal marriage.”

Lin Ruixi was confused. *What man and woman? Who marries whom?* Shaking her head, she did not bother to make sense of it but just asked, “Does that mean we no longer have ‘Lin’ as our last name now?”

“Of course.” Lin Xichen raised his chin and continued, “You can ask Mommy.”

Lin Xinyan stared at her son in amusement. *Where did he hear all this from?*

“Mommy, we’re using Daddy’s last name from now on, right?” The little girl spoke with her mouth full, making her words garbled.

Lin Xinyan patted her daughter on the head and replied seriously, “Yes, your last name is now ‘Zong,’ and there are some slight changes in your first names. Your name becomes Zong Yanxi, while Xichen’s is now Zong Yanchen. In the future, you will introduce yourselves using your new names, okay?”

“But you still called us by our original names. You didn’t use the new ones,” the little girl said matter-of-factly.

Lin Xinyan sighed. *She has really changed. In the past, she used to be ignorant and knew nothing other than eating. Yet now, she has become so articulate.*

Although she’s still clueless sometimes, she’s much more expressive than before.

As Lin Xinyan stared at her son, she wondered, *Is it true that people get influenced by the company they keep? Is that why she became like him after having spent so much time with him?*

“I’ve been calling both of you by those names for five years, so it has become a habit. But I’ll try my best to adapt to your new names as soon as possible,” she said solemnly to her daughter.

The little girl took a few sips of milk to wash down the food in her mouth. “What would you call me from now on? Yanxi? Or Xi?” She blinked her eyes and remarked earnestly, “It doesn’t sound as nice as my previous name, though.”

“Hurry up and eat. It will sound better after some time. There are even people who are named Ergouzi, but they just get used to it as time goes by.”

The little girl almost spat out the milk in her mouth as she looked at Lin Xinyan in disbelief. “Those parents are quite irresponsible to give their children such a horrendous name.”

“Everyone loves their children. People in the past had traditional beliefs in which they thought that giving their children a lowly name would make it easier to raise them,” Lin Xinyan patiently explained to her daughter to let her know that all parents loved their children. The only difference was the way they showed their love.

After breakfast, Lin Xinyan left with the two children. As she had no luggage, she didn’t need to pack anything. She only came with a coat and a handbag that contained some money and her card, which were essential, especially when she had two children with her. The other thing that she had brought along was the document Wen Xian left her.

After going downstairs in the elevator, she went to the front desk to check out. Seeing her two children, the receptionist couldn’t help but praise, “Your kids are really beautiful.”

Lin Xinyan took the refunded deposit and gave the receptionist a smile. Then, she walked out of the hotel with her kids and stood by the road to flag down a taxi. Fortunately, the hotel was located in a high-traffic area, and there were a lot of taxis passing by, so it did not take long for her to hail a taxi.

“Where are you going?” The taxi driver glanced back at them.

Lin Xinyan got her children to sit properly before answering the driver, “JK Group.”

The car then sped off in the direction of her destination.

As they were in an unfamiliar city, the children fought over the window seat to have a better view of the city. Lin Xinyan tugged at her son and said, “Xichen, let her sit there.”

“Didn’t you say that our names have changed? Why did you still call me Xichen?” Lin Xichen moved to sit in the middle so that his sister could have the window seat.

Lin Xinyan facepalmed when she realized that she had really forgotten about it. It was truly a hard habit to break. “I’ll bear it in mind from now on. I’ll call you Yanchen next time.”

“Call me Chen. It sounds more affectionate.” It was rare for him to be so sentimental in front of Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan wrapped her arm around his son’s head and kissed him on the forehead. “Alright, Chen it is then.”

The taxi driver in front looked at them through the rearview mirror. “This is your first time here, right?”

“Yes,” replied Lin Xinyan.

“You’re so lucky to have two beautiful kids. Your son doesn’t really look like you. Does he resemble his father?”

As Lin Xichen grew up, his face became more similar to that of Zong Jinghao. Sometimes when he spoke with a frown, they looked even more alike. Lin Xinyan reached out to caress his face, through which she seemed to have seen another person.

A sense of melancholy rose in her.

“We’re here.”

While Lin Xinyan was still lost in her thoughts, the taxi driver pulled up in front of a building and said, “We’ve arrived at JK Group.”

Coming back to her senses, Lin Xinyan took out some money from her purse and paid the taxi driver before getting out of the car with her kids.

Standing on the side of the road, one could clearly see that there were two buildings connected by a glass bridge.

Between the rooftops of the two buildings was a huge billboard that displayed the words ‘JK Group’ in a magnificent manner.

Taking a deep breath, she walked into the building with her kids, who couldn’t help sweeping their eyes over their surroundings. They were overwhelmed with curiosity about this unfamiliar place.

As Lin Xinyan led the two children across the lobby to the front desk, she was greeted warmly by the receptionist, “How may I help you?”

“I’m looking for someone named Shao Yun.”

The receptionist was taken aback. She didn’t expect that someone would call Mr. Shao by his full name, so she couldn’t help but take another look at the woman before her and asked, “Do you have an appointment?”

“No.” Lin Xinyan shook her head.

“I’m afraid I can’t let you in.” The receptionist gave her a businesslike smile.

“Then is there a person here named Shao Yun?” Lin Xinyan asked again.

She wanted to find out whether the person named Shao Yun actually existed.

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When Wen Xian died, Zong Jinghao was about seven or eight years old. At that time, she was only a newborn. In other words, the letter might have existed long before that.

It was so long ago. Is this person even alive? Could he have left?

There were too many possibilities, so she wanted to sort things out.

The receptionist scrutinized her. "Who are you?"

She came to the company with two kids and addressed Mr. Shao by his full name. Who exactly is this woman?

"Just tell us if there's such a person here. Why do you have to ask so many questions?" Lin Xichen said impatiently, as the receptionist was obviously keeping the information to herself and distracting them with irrelevant questions.

Lin Xinyan pulled her son's hand. "Mind your manners."

"Daddy once said that we're not supposed to bully others, but we shouldn't get bullied either. We only asked if there is a person named Shao Yun, but instead of answering the question, she asked who you are. Obviously, she wants to know your identity and deliberately kept the information from us. Since there's no point asking her anymore, let's just get out of here. As long as this person isn't dead, we'll be able to find him," Lin Xichen replied. Surprisingly, Lin Ruixi agreed with her brother this time, "Let's go, Mommy." Having said that, the trio headed toward the entrance hand in hand.

The receptionist was a little dumbfounded. It was really unexpected that a child could say such things. *He seems precocious and isn't afraid of strangers.*

“Well, do you want me to make a call and ask?” the receptionist called after them.

Lin Xichen glanced at her and gave it a thought before saying, “Okay then, go ahead.”

He stopped in his tracks and waited for an answer from the receptionist.

The receptionist dialed the extension of the secretary in the president’s office. “Someone’s here looking for Mr. Shao.”

“Does the person have an appointment?”

“No.”

“That means meeting with this person isn’t on Mr. Shao’s schedule. Do you still have to ask?”

“No, but...” The receptionist looked at Lin Xinyan while she spoke, “She’s a beautiful woman with two kids, and she called Mr. Shao by his full name...”

“A woman with kids?” Her words stirred up the secretary’s curiosity. *Coming here with kids? Who could she be?*

The secretary said, “Ask for her name.”

The receptionist looked at Lin Xinyan and asked, “What’s your name?”

Lin Xinyan was about to say her name when it struck her that Shao Yun should be around the same age as Wen Xian, so he might not know who she was. Hence, she replied, “Wen Xian.”

After telling the secretary, the receptionist hung up and asked Lin Xinyan to wait for a while.

“Would you like to sit down and wait?” the receptionist offered.

“No,” Lin Xichen turned her down coldly.

Lin Xinyan looked at her son with a frown. “Xi—” She was about to call him Xichen again when she stopped herself mid-sentence. *It’s so hard to change old habits.*

Right then, the president’s secretary knocked on the door of Mr. Shao’s office.

After a rich baritone voice sounded from the office, the secretary opened the door. In the spacious and brightly lit office, all the office furniture was specially made of Siamese rosewood with dark-colored designs. The conspicuous paintings behind the desk were all masterpieces of famous painters, and the papers of the paintings were slightly yellowish, giving off the impression that they were genuine. But of course, it was only natural that Mr. Shao, the head of JK Group, was able to afford a few art pieces. Just the whole set of Siamese rosewood furniture alone cost him at least a million.

The man looked around the age of fifty, but he seemed to be young at heart with his blue floral shirt, cropped trousers, and white leather shoes, which were now popular among young people. His youthful outfit indicated that he didn’t like dressing according to his age. Perhaps he was reluctant to look like the middle-aged man he was.

He didn’t possess the composure that he was expected to have at this age as he put his legs on the desk and shook them.

The secretary had long been accustomed to it, so she wasn’t the least bit surprised. “Someone is looking for you downstairs.”

Holding a blue folder in his hand, the man asked without looking up, “Is it a business partner?”

“No, it’s a woman. According to the receptionist, she’s quite beautiful and she came with two kids. She also called you by your full name.”

Hearing that, Shao Yun finally put down the file in his hand and took his legs off the table. He then leaned forward slightly. “What did you say? A woman with two kids, calling me by my full name?”

At this moment, Shao Yun began to recall all the women he had known in the past few years. He had been with many women, but he was just fooling around with them, so no one could have actually given birth to his child.

Since this huge family business did not belong to him, he was not allowed to have a child of his own.

To be able to live to this day... Realizing that his thoughts were drifting further away, he snapped back to reality and asked his secretary with interest, “Did she say what her name is?”

“It’s Wen Xian,” replied the secretary.

Shao Yun’s face immediately became solemn. The sudden mention of this name that he had not heard for more than twenty years took him back in time instantly. He abruptly rose to his feet. “Where is she?”

“Downstairs,” answered the secretary.

Tossing the file in his hand, he hurried out of the office and took the elevator to the lobby on the first floor.

As the elevator stopped with a ding, Shao Yun walked out of it. Still standing in the lobby with her children, Lin Xinyan was stroking her daughter’s hair and did not notice the man who was walking up to them.

“Are you looking for me?” Shao Yun stood somewhere not far away from her. When Lin Xinyan turned around, she saw a man in the fanciest clothes despite his age. She was taken aback for a moment before she nodded in response.

“Who is Wen Xian to you? Why do you know her?” Shao Yun went straight to the point. Deep down, he was eager to know Lin Xinyan’s identity.

Lin Xinyan didn’t answer him because she didn’t know who this man was. “I’m looking for someone named Shao Yun.”

“That’s me,” replied Shao Yun firmly.

Lin Xinyan was puzzled because he was so different from how she imagined him to be. She thought that the man whom Wen Xian entrusted would be mature and poised.

But the man in front of her, who was in garish clothes, did not look like a sophisticated and trustworthy person.

Shao Yun seemed to have noticed that Lin Xinyan didn’t trust him, and he couldn’t help but feel a little upset. “Do I not look like the one you’re looking for?”

Lin Xinyan instinctively nodded.

Shao Yun was bereft of speech. *Fine, I give in.*

“This is not the place to talk. Come with me.”

Having said that, he walked forward to lead the way, but Lin Xinyan and the children did not move an inch.

She did not dare to follow the seemingly unreliable man.

Sensing that no one was following him, Shao Yun looked back at Lin Xinyan, who was still standing at the same spot. When he was about to ask her the reason, he noticed her distrust in him. Frowning hard, he pointed at his secretary, the receptionist, and the entire JK Group. "You can ask anyone if I'm Shao Yun."

Having said that, he glanced down at himself. *How do I not look like Shao Yun?*

Why does she not believe me?

"How old are you?" Lin Xichen asked.

Only then did Shao Yun notice that there were two children standing next to Lin Xinyan. As he walked over to take a closer look, his eyes suddenly lit up. "What a pretty little face. Who's your dad?" he could not help but ask, feeling curious.

Lin Xichen stood up straight and tilted his head. "I asked you first, but you haven't answered me yet."

Shao Yun was speechless.

What an unrelenting little guy.

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Shao Yun didn't reveal his age directly. Instead, he looked at the boy and asked, "How old do you think I am?"

While speaking, he straightened his collar and adjusted his facial expression, trying to make himself look younger.

Lin Xichen blinked and deliberately said, "Thirty years old?"

Hahaha!

Pleased by Lin Xichen's reply, Shao Yun let out a hearty laugh.

Next to Lin Xinyan, Lin Ruixi's expression changed upon hearing her brother's words. She then shot her brother an amused look. *Does he not feel a prick of conscience for telling lies like this?*

Thirty years old?

More like sixty, I'd say.

"You witty kid. Thirty is a little too young. Say forty next time. Like people often say, men in their forties blossom like flowers."

Lin Xichen rolled his eyes at him inwardly. *How could there be such a shameless person? Flowers? More like tofu dregs.*

After that, Shao Yun did not continue to joke with Lin Xichen. Instead, he looked at Lin Xinyan with a very serious expression and said, "I'm Shao Yun."

Then, he took out his wallet from his pocket and showed her his identification card. "This is my ID card, my driver's license..."

Lin Xinyan didn't take it and merely took a glance. It did have the words 'Shao Yun' written on it, so she apologized for her skeptical attitude earlier, "I'm so sorry. I have two kids with me, so I was being more careful. Please don't take it to heart."

Shao Yun hurriedly waved his hand. "It's okay. No worries. Let's go upstairs first. This isn't the place to talk."

Nodding in agreement, Lin Xinyan followed him into the elevator with her kids.

After Shao Yun pressed the button for his floor, he looked down at Lin Xichen. "How should I call you?"

"My name is Zong Yanchen." Zong Yanchen pointed at his sister. "This is my younger sister. She's Zong Yanxi."

Their last name is Zong?

I remember that this is the last name of Wen Xian's husband.

"I see." He glanced at Lin Xinyan before adding, "You're from B City, aren't you?"

Although it was a question, his tone was affirmative.

"Yes," replied Lin Xinyan.

Hearing that, the nonchalant side of him was replaced by the serious one all of a sudden. At this moment, the elevator stopped and he walked out first. "This is the office area. Come this way."

Lin Xinyan led the children out of the elevator.

After taking them to his office, Shao Yun asked her directly, "Am I right to assume that you came to me because you need my help?"

Opening an exquisite metal box on the table, he took out a cigar and put it between his lips before lighting it.

"Um, I'm sorry. There's something I want to ask you, but the smell of tobacco makes me sick, so can we talk first?" Lin Xinyan frowned slightly. Because of her pregnancy, she was very sensitive to the smell of tobacco.

Shao Yun looked at her and then at the cigar that was about to be lit. In the end, he took the cigar from his lips and put it out before placing it back into the box. He gestured to Lin Xinyan to have a seat. "Let's sit down and talk."

Nodding, Lin Xinyan patted her son on the shoulder and whispered, "Bring your sister to play at the door. Don't stray too far."

Upon receiving her instruction, Zong Yanchen took his sister's hand understandingly and walked out of the office.

As Shao Yun watched the children leave, he made a guess about Lin Xinyan's identity.

Before Lin Xinyan could speak, he said, "Wen Xian's daughter should be the only one who knows my identity. After she gave birth to Ziyi's child, I originally wanted to help Wen Xian raise her child, but she said she wanted the child to live a normal life, so she didn't bring her to me."

The look on his face became less impetuous and more serious. As the urge to smoke rose in him, he reached out to get a cigar but retracted his hand upon thinking of Lin Xinyan's aversion. "I'm waiting here in hopes that one day she will come. If she doesn't show up, everything here will be donated after I die."

His purpose here was to wait for someone whom he wasn't sure would show up. After more than twenty years of waiting, that person finally appeared in such an unexpected manner.

As he looked at Lin Xinyan's face, his eyes welled up with tears. "You look more like your father."

Perhaps because he was reminded of certain long-lost friends and past events, he got rather emotional. Feeling restless, he stood up as though he felt uncomfortable in every posture.

Lin Xinyan took out the pendant from her bag, opened it, and then put it on the table. "I came to you to find out more about them."

She wanted to know what happened to Wen Xian and her father.

Noticing the object on the table, Shao Yun took a glance at it. After realizing what it was, he bent over and picked it up. A smile appeared on his face while he carefully examined the photo. "Ziyi looks as handsome as always."

The emotions in his eyes were that of admiration and grief.

He looked up at Lin Xinyan. "You only need to know that this man is your father and that he is a good person. As for the past, it was too long ago, and I've forgotten about it."

After that, he put down the pendant. It was obvious that he didn't want to reveal any other information to Lin Xinyan when he deliberately changed the subject, "Have you just arrived in C City?"

His only responsibility was to take care of Zhuang Ziyi's only descendant.

It was also Wen Xian's wish for him not to mention the terrible past. She had told him, "I want our child to live a normal life. I've arranged everything for her, so don't try to find out her whereabouts. If everything goes smoothly, she may never

show up. But if something goes wrong, all she needs to know about her father is that he's a good person."

Wen Xian had thought that, as Zhuang Zijin's daughter, Lin Xinyan would successfully marry into the Zong family when she grew up. Based on her understanding of the Zong family, her daughter would lead a good life after getting married. If everything went smoothly, she would not come here to find Shao Yun.

This was what Wen Xian said to him at the time, which was also the reason he stayed here and never went to B City to find out Lin Xinyan's whereabouts.

Noticing that he didn't want to say it, Lin Xinyan was a little disappointed. She reached out and picked up the pendant to put it in her bag before standing up. "Sorry for taking up your time today."

Shao Yun hurriedly smiled and said, "No, you're not. I assume that you came here because you've encountered some difficulties, right? Just tell me."

Given that Lin Xinyan had just arrived in this city, she was not very familiar with it. She had chosen to come here out of many considerations. On the one hand, she wanted to find out about Wen Xian. On the other hand, she didn't want to be too far away from Zong Jinghao. Besides, she still had one other important thing to do.

Perhaps it was fate that the Wen family caused the Cheng family's downfall while she had obtained the ancestral knowledge of the Cheng family. Hence, she didn't want to be idle in C City.

"I want to live in this city. Those kids are my children. They will be old enough to go to primary school soon. If possible, I'd like to ask you to find a good school for me in this city. I've just arrived here, so I'll have to trouble you."

“It’s no trouble at all. Leave everything to me.” Shao Yun quickly waved his hand, then asked out of concern, “Since you’re here with your kids, where is their father?”

He asked the question tactfully. Although Wen Xian did not directly tell him how she made the arrangement, he could somehow guess it after learning her children’s last names.

Lin Xinyan didn’t want to let him know about this matter. To be precise, she didn’t want to mention it to anyone.

Shao Yun was someone who was good at reading the air. Seeing that Lin Xinyan didn’t want to talk about it, he took the initiative and said, “It’s almost noon. Let’s have lunch first, and then I will arrange the accommodation for you.”

Lin Xinyan agreed to it and asked, “How should I address you?”

She found it rude to call him by his name directly as he seemed a lot older than she was, but she also didn’t dare to address him rashly.

“I’m your father’s best friend, so you can call me Uncle Er.” Shao Yun returned to his casual self.

Having said that, he explained the reason why he wanted her to call him by that name, “My original name was Er Hu. But I changed it to Shao Yun.”

After that incident, he changed his name and lived here in seclusion.

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With the help of Shao Yun, Lin Xinyan settled down in C City. The place she lived was quiet, which was what she wanted.

After she settled down, she called Mrs. William to tell her that she was going to close down the clothing store in B City. As a lot of things had happened since her return, she hardly had the time to manage the store, so it was not doing very well. Moreover, she was not living in B City anymore. Hence, it was only logical that she stopped operating the store.

Having heard about the situation here from Ellen, Mrs. William understood where Lin Xinyan was coming from, so she agreed to her request. After all, Lin Xinyan didn't have a choice back then.

She asked Lin Xinyan if she would go back and continue to work as a designer at LEO, but the latter gave a negative answer.

She had been occupied recently because what she wanted to accomplish was no easy feat, so she could no longer work as a designer at LEO. She had no choice but to let Mrs. William down.

If it weren't for Mrs. William, she would not have advanced so quickly and acquired a certain degree of popularity.

Although she came looking for Shao Yun, she did not use the money Wen Xian left her and even paid for her accommodation herself. Previously, she had saved up a lot of money for her children, but now she may have to use it for another purpose.

However, she did it of her own accord as she wanted to help the Cheng family. Besides, she felt that keeping herself busy would prevent her from overthinking, not to mention that time would pass more quickly too.

In a blink of an eye, she had been living here for a month, while her children had also gotten used to the life here. She enrolled them in a pre-school so that they could quickly adapt to the learning environment of an elementary school in the future.

During that month, something significant happened—Qin Ya had come back. Her appearance was very different from before, but she looked good nonetheless. Strangely, she never asked about Su Zhan, as if he had never appeared in her life.

It was unsure whether she had moved on or was still feeling conflicted, but basically, she had never asked about Su Zhan, while Lin Xinyan also did not bring him up in front of her.

It seemed that there was no time for romance once they were busy with their life.

“Embroidery is really not easy, huh?” Qin Ya looked at the embroiderer who was stitching a phoenix on the Tea Silk, frowning slightly while wondering, *When could the embroidery of this phoenix be done?* It had been two weeks now, but the phoenix was only halfway done. There were still many things that had not been embroidered.

She believed that the production of a piece of ready-to-wear garment would take at least half a year if they were to rely on hand embroidery.

“There’s no other way to go around it. The fabric is too thin to be embroidered by the machine, and hand embroidery also produces more realistic images.” Lin Xinyan was wearing a light green dress, its sleeveless design showing off her fair arm. It was already summer, and the weather was very hot.

In the past month, she had set up her own embroidery studio. But of course, the embroidery studio was not her ultimate goal. What she really wanted was for Tea Silk to see the light of day again and regain its former glory.

Qin Ya understood Lin Xinyan's reasoning, but she was a little anxious. "There are twelve pieces that need a lot of embroideries. This project is too big, and these embroiderers will probably take two years to finish it."

Lin Xinyan looked up at her and said with a smile, "Don't worry. I think it won't be long before we have more embroiderers."

Since it was not easy to find a good embroiderer, she asked Shao Yun to help her recruit from all over the country. Coincidentally, she received a call from Shao Yun this morning and was told that he had found nine embroiderers with excellent craftsmanship, who would arrive in a few days.

A month was not long, nor was it short. Many things could have happened in that period of time. For example, Lin Xinyan had settled down in C City and was already doing what she wanted to do, making steady progress.

Meanwhile, many things had also occurred in B City. The most important one was related to Chen Qing. After investigation, conclusive evidence of him ordering the woman to kill He Ruilin was found.

But the case was not heard publicly. Chen Qing, who had been fired from his job, would have reached the age of retirement in a few years where he could have earned both fame and fortune. Unfortunately, he ended up losing everything with one wrong move, reaping what he had sowed.

Considerable progress had also been made in the car accident investigation with the accomplice who fled back to his hometown caught.

The person was locked up in an abandoned factory in the suburbs.

Shen Peichuan tied the man—no, more like a boy—to a beam of the building. Looking like a minor, he was rather thin but not very tall, and his hair was dyed blond. His eyes were filled with panic when he looked at Shen Peichuan and asked, “Who are you? Why did you capture me?”

Shen Peichuan didn't like to waste his time talking nonsense to people like him, so he showed him a picture of the man who held Lin Xinyan hostage and died after getting hit by a car.

The man was also the boy's cousin.

“You know him?” Shen Peichuan asked calmly.

“In order to catch you, we had to learn everything about you. When you were fifteen years old, you followed your cousin and became a gangster. Although you didn't commit any major crime, you were involved in quite a number of minor ones. Tell me everything, or you'll be beaten to a pulp and sent to the jail.”

Having grown up in the mountains, this boy joined his cousin's gang even before completing primary school. Due to his young age, no factory wanted to hire him, so he followed in his cousin's footsteps. The latter had a dozen lackeys after being in the underworld for some time. They usually made money by stealing from others and carrying out shady orders on behalf of their employers.

“You know how your cousin died, don't you? What I want to know is, who ordered you to do the kidnapping that day?” Shen Peichuan asked again.

“If I tell you everything I know, will you let me go?” The boy was inexperienced and frightened, so he was going to come clean even without Shen Peichuan doing anything.

However, Shen Peichuan didn't want to listen to his confession just yet. “Tell me later.”

He called Zong Jinghao, who would be arriving soon. Since he would have to fill the latter in if the boy confessed now, it was better to wait for Zong Jinghao and let him listen to the boy in person.

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Sounds of engine roaring could be heard outside the door. Shen Peichuan headed outside and saw a black car stopping by the roadside. He noticed that Su Zhan was in the driver's seat through the windshield. The car door was pushed open, and Zong Jinghao got off the car.

He was dressed in an immaculate black suit, an apt combination with his impassive and deadpan expression.

Shen Peichuan had almost gotten used to his apathetic demeanor. Ever since Lin Xinyan left, he had been curt with his words. He would only head outside to deal with Wen Qing's matters. Otherwise, he would be cooped up in the office.

Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan had it better than Guan Jing though. This past month, Zong Jinghao had been burying himself in work. Whether it was for the development of the company, or to keep himself busy was another question altogether. Having said that, he had acquired two major companies in the country in the past month.

Wanyue was shrouded in a tense atmosphere. The last time when Shen Peichuan bumped into Guan Jing, Guan Jing had grievances about how Zong Jinghao had gone cuckoo with work. There was an instance where they had a meeting for six hours straight, starting from nine o'clock in the morning that lasted till three o'clock in the afternoon. There was no lunch break and nobody was allowed to enter the meeting room. Nobody dared to voice out even when they had ran out of water, let alone to leave the meeting room for a toilet break. Hundreds of top management of the company set their back straight, grumbling about the situations to themselves.

Zong Jinghao would reprimand those who were not up to his expectations regardless of the situation.

The workload was mountainous in view of the acquisition of two major companies.

Even though Zong Jinghao was his usual standoffish self in front of Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan, he did not resort to torture the two of them.

Shen Peichuan was ever more grateful for his luck. He came over and reported in a low voice, “Just another bumpkin who has never seen the outside world. Even if he knows something, I believe it might not be significant.”

Zong Jinghao was unfazed by Shen Peichuan’s report. “Has he disclosed anything yet?”

“Not yet. I’ve been waiting for you,” Shen Peichuan lowered his head. He could not seem to bring himself to look at Zong Jinghao’s face. He cast a glance at Shen Peichuan before entering the factory.

Su Zhan, who was trailing behind him followed suit. So Shen Peichuan tugged at his shirt and whispered, “Do you think we should look for them on our own?”

It had been very distressing for Shen Peichuan to work under someone with such erratic mood swings.

Su Zhan glanced at Shen Peichuan and replied hesitantly, “Will he get mad at us if he found out about this?”

He’s not even trying to look around. Will he get mad at us for being busybodies?

“We’re going to do it quietly of course. There’s no way we are going to let him know about this.” Shen Peichuan looked ludicrously at Su Zhan. *It’s something that we’re supposed to do under the table.*

“Sure, we’ll work on the details later tonight.” Su Zhan sighed and said, “Finally someone has it worse than me.”

Shen Peichuan was rendered speechless.

Su Zhan smiled, "Finally, I feel like the balance is tipping over to my side. Did you know how hard it has been for me to put up a strong front when Qin Ya's not around all this while? You wouldn't understand. But I know he would." He proceeded to point at Zong Jinghao who had just entered the factory. Edging closer to Shen Peichuan, he whispered, "He had it worse than me. His wife and children left him."

It was no wonder that he was gloomy all the time.

Shen Peichuan snorted, "Why do I feel that you're gloating?"

Su Zhan immediately put on a serious face. "Nonsense. I am not gloating. I... just feel like he could finally understand my pain."

Shen Peichuan was at a loss for words again.

"Are the two of you done talking?" The words were like a cold winter breeze.

The two of them turned around. Their impeccably dressed boss formed a stark contrast to the messy factory that he stood in.

Shen Peichuan forced himself into a smile and walked over to his boss' side, "I was asking Su Zhan out for a drink tonight. I didn't dare to ask you about it."

Zong Jinghao replied curtly, "Is that so?" There was not a trace of warmth in his voice, nor was there any fluctuation in his tone.

"Yes," Shen Peichuan replied begrudgingly.

Zong Jinghao cast another glance at him and did not comment further. He parted his lips and said impassively, "Get him to start talking."

Shen Peichuan nodded and walked over to the boy. He grimaced, and put on a menacing look as he barked at the boy, "Tell me! Who ordered you guys to kidnap?"

The boy shivered as he looked at him. He did not dare to play any tricks and regurgitated everything that he knew. "We would work for whoever paid the money. My cousin had always received menial jobs to get into a fight for someone. But this time he did not receive the job himself. I heard him saying that a subordinate under someone named Gu came looking for him. He was quite excited to get this job as he said that this was one that would pay well. We just needed to kidnap someone and we would get a handsome pay. Who knew that we weren't even getting paid after almost sacrificing our lives."

He felt quite indignant at this point. After his cousin was dead, he did not dare to stay any longer at B City either. He quickly deferred back to his hometown but was unfortunate to get caught by Zong Jinghao and his people. *Damn it, we didn't even get paid.*

Someone with the surname Gu? Shen Peichuan wondered.

Someone named Gu? Shen Peichuan wondered before asking, "He didn't mention any names?"

The boy shook his head. "I just heard from my cousin that it was someone with the surname Gu. I didn't even know who it was. But my cousin said it was someone quite powerful. I've told you everything. Can you let me go now?"

He cast hopeful glances at Shen Peichuan.

"Why the rush? I would definitely let you go if you had told us everything. Otherwise..." Su Zhan said as he leaned against the door. He pointed at Shen Peichuan's men, "They play rough. I won't be surprised if you'd lose a leg or a hand if they beat you up."

The boy paled at Su Zhan's remark and stuttered, "I... Really, I've told you everything I knew. I'm really a bumpkin who follows my cousin everywhere he goes. I don't know anyone with the surname Gu. Please believe me."

Shen Peichuan crossed his arms before his chest. He stroked his chin and tried to think of someone with the surname Gu. "Could it be Gu Bei?"

Gu Bei was not an unfamiliar name in their circle.

He turned around and looked at Zong Jinghao who stood before the window. "Is this Gu Bei the only son of the Old Master Gu? This Gu Bei is well known for thinking that he could get away with anything with his father backing him up."

"If that were the case then it would explain the reason that Wen Qing did not want to dirty his own hands and contacted him instead. If I were not mistaken, the Old Master Gu was acquainted with Old Master Wen, right?" Su Zhan asked.

Old Master Gu and Wen Qing's father, Wen Jin, were of the same generation. Old Master Gu had a far-reaching influence too. Su Zhan got to know about this when Zong Jinghao were still on good terms with Wen Qing.

Shen Peichuan's face became stern at Su Zhan's remarks. *It would be quite a sticky situation if what Su Zhan said was true.*

Old Master Gu was not someone easy to deal with, and he would not admit to this haphazardly anyway.

Why would he agree to help Wen Qing? What were their terms? Did he help Wen Qing because they were friends, or was it a mere exchange of interests?

It would be an easier situation to handle if were an exchange of interests. Otherwise, it would be a hard nut to crack.

Zong Jinghao's face sank as he had his plans all mapped out in his head. Then, he turned around to leave and stopped in his tracks at the entrance. "I don't want to see this person again."

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Shen Peichuan gestured to his subordinate.

As the boy shuddered in fear, he tried to beg for his life, but words failed him. His body went limp as though his soul had been sucked out.

“I already told you everything. I swear!” The boy burst into tears.

Su Zhan tutted, “You’re a man, so act like one.”

He then placed his arm around Shen Peichuan’s shoulder and whispered, “Don’t tell me you’re going to...”

He then mimed slitting his throat.

Shen Peichuan glared at him. “What are you thinking? I’ll just teach him a lesson, send him home, and make him promise never to set foot in B city again. There’s no need to dirty my hands over such a small fry.”

What’s more, he’s obviously still young and made the mistake of following the wrong crowd. Although he’s despicable, the one who really deserves my hatred is the man behind all this.

Su Zhan chuckled, “I thought he was outraged and wouldn’t mind getting his hands dirty this time.”

Shen Peichuan jabbed him with his elbow.

Rubbing his sore ribs, Su Zhan snapped at Shen Peichuan, “Ouch! Are you trying to kill me?”

Shen Peichuan simply ignored him and opened the car door before inquiring, "How shall we handle this?"

However, Zong Jinghao did not answer his question. "I heard that he owns the nightclub at Central Avenue."

Shen Peichuan replied, "It's the best place there is!"

Only influential figures were allowed to enter the nightclub. It was said that there were all sorts of entertainment there, and many young men from rich families would spend almost every night at the club.

Yet, they would never get bored of going to that nightclub.

Su Zhan opened the car door and glanced at Shen Peichuan, who was sitting in the front seat. Frowning, he grumbled as he recalled that painful jab earlier, "Why are you in my car? Are you going to leave your own car behind?"

Shen Peichuan merely shrugged. "Someone else will drive it back for me."

After all, his subordinates were still here, and he wasn't the one who drove the car here anyway.

Su Zhan snorted in disdain, "No wonder you can't get yourself a girlfriend. You're not caring enough!"

Shen Peichuan was speechless.

With an uncharacteristically serious expression, he glared at Su Zhan and threatened, "I don't want to hear that from you again."

So what if I can't find myself a girl? Is that a crime now? You don't have to roast me about it on a daily basis, right? Even I get angry sometimes!

“My, my, someone sounds frustrated,” Su Zhan stepped on the accelerator and drove off while casting a side glance at Shen Peichuan. “I guess it can’t be helped! What can I expect from a virgin like you?”

Shen Peichuan nearly coughed up blood when he heard that, but he was powerless to fight back.

While rubbing his temples, he felt that he would die from high blood pressure sooner or later if he had to listen to another word from Su Zhan again.

“Where are we headed?” Su Zhan queried.

Shen Peichuan answered plainly, “The nightclub at Central Avenue.”

“What for? Are you going to lose your V-card there?” Su Zhan chuckled. That nightclub was the best one in the entire B City. The clients who visited that place were usually famous and influential men with strong backers. There were all sorts of services provided in the club, and it was rumored that the hostesses there were very attractive too.

Upon hearing Shen Peichuan’s destination, Su Zhan thought he wanted to lose his virginity after getting teased.

Shen Peichuan was about to spew an endless slur of vulgarities at him but changed his mind. Instead, he smirked, “Hm? What’s taking Qin Ya so long? It’s been some time.”

The man sitting at the back crossed his legs and opened his eyes calmly when he heard Shen Peichuan’s question. Back then, when Qin Ya went overseas, Lin Xinyan had pleaded with him for help. He settled all of the procedures with the hospital, so he knew that Qin Ya had recovered and left.

Since she had not returned to B City or Country A, she probably went to look for Lin Xinyan, given their relationship.

He frowned, "Will you two just keep quiet for a moment?"

His head had started to hurt listening to their conversation.

"Shen Peichuan is too much! He keeps rubbing salt on my wound." Su Zhan flared up.

Shen Peichuan sneered, "You're no better."

"I won't stoop to your level," Su Zhan grumbled before he glanced at Zong Jinghao through the rearview mirror and asked cautiously, "How's Qin Ya doing?"

Zong Jinghao's expression darkened as he gave a low grunt of affirmation.

Before Su Zhan could ask where she was, he added, "I don't know."

Su Zhan was clearly disturbed after hearing that and did not appear as relaxed as he was earlier. *Qin Ya must be avoiding me. She's close friends with Lin Xinyan, but now that Lin Xinyan's gone, she has no reason to stay.*

He felt betrayed and abandoned.

Su Zhan glared at Shen Peichuan and demanded, "Are you happy now? I feel heartbroken, alright?"

Shen Peichuan raised an eyebrow. "Not at all. Your face irks me, so I won't be happy until you're out of my sight."

Su Zhan spat, "You call yourself a friend?"

"Not yours."

"I want to break all ties with you," Su Zhan snarled.

Shen Peichuan wanted to retort but quickly fell silent when he noticed that the man sitting at the back was about to fly into a rage.

Then he signaled to Su Zhan to look at the backseat as well. Su Zhan glanced at Zong Jinghao through the rearview mirror and promptly shut his mouth when he felt Zong Jinghao's murderous aura.

Instantly, the two of them stopped arguing, and only the sound of breathing could be heard in the car.

Soon, they arrived at the nightclub.

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If the crisscrossing roads were the network of blood vessels that formed the city, then Central Avenue would be the aorta. As one of the main roads in the city, it was a high-traffic area.

The street was adorned in dazzling lights that highlighted the skyscrapers, and the blinding neon lights flashed brightly in different colors. The shops and the buildings were decorated with colorful signs as well.

This created an ambiance that gave people the urge to seek out thrills.

Su Zhan sighed. "All men are good men, but sometimes, the environment is simply too tempting."

The moment he said this, Shen Peichuan retorted, "Stop being so shameless. Don't blame your surroundings for your lack of discipline."

"What's up with you today, Shen Peichuan? You keep stirring trouble with me today! Do you really think I'm no match for you in a fight?"

If Su Zhan could beat Shen Peichuan in combat, he might have started hitting him already. Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao's ears were ringing. *Are these two annoying flies done?*

While Zong Jinghao stood by the car expressionlessly, he adjusted his collar in a poised manner and instructed, "Exercise some self-discipline, you two."

He then headed into the nightclub. The ambiance in the nightclub often made one lose control and forget one's purpose, so he was worried that they would fall for the charms of this place.

Shen Peichuan and Su Zhan exchanged glances with a solemn expression on their faces. Both of them were responsible men who knew when it was time to joke around and when they had to be serious.

They followed closely behind Zong Jinghao, crossing a lavishly decorated corridor before entering through a glass door. There was a lingering scent of alcohol mixed with cigarette smoke wafting through the air, and the music was blasted at a deafening volume. Men and women were shaking their hips to the beat of the music on the stage. Some skimpily dressed women were mingling with a group of men, seducing them with apt use of suggestive language and ASMR. There were even some of them cuddling with the men, with some kissing and petting involved.

It was as though everyone here had lost control, but no one found it strange at all.

The three men walked past this 'tempting' area and headed to the back room where the real entertainment was going on.

Noticing that the three of them were new to the place, the manager sent a madam over to welcome them before he left to make a call.

Madam was the term for the female version of a pimp.

She did not fit the stereotype of a middle-aged hostess who had seen better days but was a young and gorgeous woman with splendid curves. She welcomed the three of them with a coquettish smile, "Oh my, what rare guests. What kind of fun would you like to have today?"

As she scrutinized the three men before her, she nearly drooled. It wasn't just because they were handsome but also because of their gentlemanly demeanor.

The more decent a man looked, the more she felt like seducing him.

Usually, it was easy to tell why someone was here with one look.

“We offer all sorts of services here. As long as you can name it, we’ll make sure to do our best to satisfy you,” the madam leaned toward Zong Jinghao and placed her small, manicured hand on his chest. However, the moment her fingers came into contact with his collar, she was kicked aside.

Instantly, Zong Jinghao’s expression darkened as he yelled at her to stay away from him.

The madam was confused and lay on the ground in a daze. *I’m Gu Bei’s woman! Everyone here knows who I am and fools around with me, but none of them would dare to touch me!* She was wearing a black sleeveless dress, so her fair legs were revealed when she fell.

The manager helped her up and dismissed her, but the madam felt indignant, and her expression turned livid. She knew she could not afford to lash out at the guests here, so she brought up her backer, “I’m Mr. Gu’s woman! How could you treat me like that?”

To her surprise, Zong Jinghao merely adjusted his sleeve and scoffed in a deep voice, “What a coincidence. I’m here to look for Mr. Gu.”

The madam tried to suppress her rage as she huffed, “Are you saying that I brought this upon myself?”

Zong Jinghao chuckled arrogantly. “Looks like not all of Mr. Gu’s subordinates are fools. Some of them know their place.”

“You...” The madam seethed with rage.

The manager warned her, “Don’t cause any trouble.”

These men are obviously looking for trouble. If we really start a fight with them, we might be the ones on the losing end.

However, the madam refused to back down.

“I’ve already called the boss.”

The manager signaled to the madam not to act rashly. *If the boss had to choose between her and his business interests, he would definitely sacrifice her. After all, women like her were disposable.*

The madam understood this as well, but she had acted high and mighty here, thanks to her relationship with Gu Bei. Hence, she was shocked by the sudden turn of events.

“What a rare guest we have here,” Gu Bei commented as he strolled in from the back door.

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They were both members of high society, so even though they did not have business dealings, they were able to recognize each other.

Naturally, they had to exchange pleasantries upon meeting as well.

Gu Bei noticed the madam's displeased expression and chuckled. "What happened here? Did you not serve Mr. Zong well?"

Before Zong Jinghao could speak, the madam complained, "I treat all the guests here with sincerity, but this man hit me without warning! Even if I have done something to offend him by mistake, he shouldn't have hit me on your account! He's clearly here to make trouble!"

A myriad of expressions flashed across Gu Bei's face, eventually replaced by a calm one. He then slapped the madam across the face.

Taken aback by the sudden turn of events, she held her numb face and stared at Gu Bei in shock. Tears welled up in her eyes, but she did not dare to cry.

"My account? Why should I care about whether he hit you or not? Do you know who this man is? How dare you stir up trouble when you didn't treat him well? It's our greatest honor to have Mr. Zong visit my nightclub! How could you say he's here to make trouble?" *This woman is an idiot! She keeps saying that Zong Jinghao shouldn't have hit her on my account! Does she really want me to make enemies with him? Well, I'm no fool!*

Gu Bei shot the manager a glance and instructed, "Sell her off to the cheapest brothel."

By the cheapest brothel, he meant those shady massage parlors that provided special services such as a full-body massage that included a 'happy ending.' She would have to satisfy many customers in a day.

If they sent her to work there, she would be a goner.

At the moment, the madam's face turned white as a sheet. She could not believe that Gu Bei treated her so heartlessly after she had served him for such a long time. He had given her a sentence worse than death.

She broke free from the manager's grip and held Gu Bei's hand as she apologized, "I was in the wrong. It's all my fault! Please don't send me to such a place! Please! Not after I've worked for you for so long!"

Right then, she was crying in a disheveled state. Panic filled her teary eyes, and her earlier grace was nowhere to be seen.

Placing his hands in his pockets, Gu Bei turned to Zong Jinghao without giving her a glance. "Mr. Zong, how do you think I should deal with her? You were the one she offended, after all."

The madam shifted her gaze to Zong Jinghao with a mixture of spite and regret in them. All the men here had fallen for her charms and only wanted to get her into bed.

She had never expected that she would encounter a troublemaker today. To make matters worse, that man was so revered that even Gu Bei wanted to be in his good books!

She bit her lip and pleaded with Zong Jinghao, "Mr. Zong, I was blind not to have recognized you and offended you. I'm truly sorry."

But Zong Jinghao did not even spare her a second glance and scoffed, "Surely you're joking, Mr. Gu. I have no intention of interfering in your private affairs."

He skillfully deflected responsibility by leaving the decision to Gu Bei.

Gu Bei took this in his stride and decided that it was not worth making Zong Jinghao his enemy for a woman.

It'd be great if we could become friends or even business partners. I'll just punish her to make him happy.

He licked his lips and waved the madam off. "You're dismissed."

She trembled uncontrollably and pleaded, "Please, no! It was my fault. I was in the wrong!" She knelt on the ground and screamed as she latched onto Gu Bei's leg. "I'm truly sorry! Please don't send me there!"

"Damn it, what are you waiting for? Get her!" Gu Bei cursed impatiently.

The manager signaled to his subordinate to take the madam away. Her cries slowly faded out as she was dragged beyond the glass door.

"Mr. Zong, are you here to enjoy yourself today?" Gu Bei smiled and adjusted his collar.

Zong Jinghao glanced at him arrogantly. "I couldn't possibly have come to Mr. Gu's place to talk about the future of the nation, right? Of course, I'm here to have a little fun!"

Each of them had their own plans, but they played along with each other. Gu Bei chuckled softly and approached Zong Jinghao as though everything was under control and pledged, "I'll make sure to entertain you tonight, Mr. Zong. If you don't leave this place satisfied, I'll close this nightclub down tomorrow!"

The fact was, Zong Jinghao simply wanted to know his relationship with Wen Qing and find out how much he was involved in the incident.

On the other hand, Gu Bei wanted to get acquainted with Zong Jinghao. Zong Jinghao always acted all high and mighty, so now that he had made his way here himself, Gu Bei had to make the most of this opportunity.

Zong Jinghao merely smiled at Gu Bei's proclamation. *Well, as the host, he has to treat us well.*

They headed to a quiet and spacious private room on the third floor with a black oval leather sofa in the center. In front of it was a sturdy marble coffee table.

Gu Bei did not go in with them but whispered some instructions to the manager. Although they could not hear what he said, they could vaguely guess it. When Gu Bei entered the room, a waitress brought two bottles of fine wine and placed a platter of fruits on the table.

After taking a seat, Zong Jinghao glanced at Shen Peichuan, who happened to look up. He queried, "Does your phone still have battery?"

Shen Peichuan understood and nodded.

He knew that he was responsible for recording useful information in the conversation later to use as evidence.

Gu Bei dismissed the waitress and uncorked a bottle of wine himself before pouring a glass for himself. As he poured Zong Jinghao a glass of wine, he declared smugly, "The ones I have today are still university students. They're all pure and innocent. I was saving them for myself, but since you're here, I'll let you have them."

The moment he said this, the manager brought four beautiful ladies in.

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The four women did not look experienced. Their expressions were somewhat awkward, and they were not dressed as professionally as those who had spent a long time in the trade. Despite that, two of them seemed especially eager, as though they liked the men before them.

Gu Bei beckoned them over, "Come here! This is a new batch. All of them are still untainted!"

His favorite one was Sang Yu, a petite woman with an adorable face and her black hair tied in a ponytail. She had a pair of dark green eyes that made her look sweet and innocent.

After seeing many coquettish women in thick makeup, such a pure-looking girl was refreshing to the eyes.

The very thought of him savoring this woman was enough to trigger a physiological reaction from him.

If it were not for the fact that he wanted to do business with Zong Jinghao, he would not have given her away.

Then he beckoned Sang Yu over, "Come here."

Sang Yu clutched her dress with sweaty palms and stole glances at Shen Peichuan, who was fiddling with his phone.

After Shen Peichuan was instructed to be on recording duty by Zong Jinghao, he had pretended to be absorbed in his phone. He was not interested in the women here, so he had not looked up at all.

Seeing that Sang Yu stood rooted to the spot, Gu Bei's face fell, and he commanded coldly, "Sit here."

He gestured to the seat next to Zong Jinghao.

Sang Yu did not budge, so one of her friends shoved her and hissed, "Go on! He's the most handsome man in the room! If he likes you, you'll strike it rich! Everyone here is loaded!"

"What do you mean by this? I thought I was hired as a waitress?" Sang Yu muttered with a quivering voice. The hotel where she had worked as a part-time waitress previously had hired a long-term staff to replace her, so she was out of a job.

The demand for jobs such as handing out flyers come and go. Hence, she did not have a stable source of income. She had only come here because her friend recommended her for a job as a waitress, only to realize what kind of a place this was.

She regretted it, especially after seeing Shen Peichuan here. Initially, she had deeply respected this man and felt that he was a morally upright person who went to her school and passed her money from her mother.

However, if he frequented such a place, he probably wasn't the good man he appeared to be.

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao leaned back in his seat. He was in a classic white shirt with a black suit, and his shirt was partially unbuttoned, revealing his slender neck and Adam's Apple. His eyes narrowed as he inquired, "Mr. Gu, what's the meaning of this?"

Gu Bei laughed it off and said, "Er, she's new and doesn't understand our rules here. Give me three minutes."

Having said that, he got up and grabbed Sang Yu by the wrist, growling, "Spare me the act! I called you here because I felt that you had the looks. Now serve these men well and I'll pay you well, or else, I'll make your life a living hell!"

This commotion seemed to pique Shen Peichuan's interest. He pulled his eyes away from the phone screen, and when he saw the trembling girl standing by the door, he was stunned.

Following that, Sang Yu was forcibly dragged over by Gu Bei, who smiled at Zong Jinghao. "I'm sorry you had to see that. Well, I guess that's the charm of someone inexperienced as well." He chuckled wryly. "Why else would we stay unmarried at our age? We just want to be free to fool around, right?"

Since Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan had gotten married in secret, their marriage was not made public. After that, there were rumors that Zong Jinghao had a woman, but they had not held a formal wedding or appeared together in any major events. For a man like Zong Jinghao, it was natural for him to be swarmed by women. As long as he did not announce it publicly, they would assume that he was just toying with her.

The only one the public knew about was his engagement to He Ruilin. However, the engagement was eventually called off. Chen Qing had hoped to marry his daughter to Zong Jinghao, but this plan was kept under wraps. Since the marriage was not solemnized, he did not spread the word. Now that Chen Qing had lost his position and only had a daughter, he was in no position to threaten Zong Jinghao.

His plan to marry his daughter to Zong Jinghao had ended in utter failure as well.

Ever since He Wenhui learned that Chen Qing manipulated him and even killed his children, there was no way he would let Chen Qing off the hook so easily.

Now that Chen Qing was just an ex-government official, he was powerless to deal with the wrath of the He family.

While the He family had lost power, the Chen family had lost its backer since Chen Qing was no longer a government official. It was difficult to tell who would survive till the very end.

Meanwhile, Gu Bei pushed Sang Yu to Zong Jinghao's side. Suddenly, Shen Peichuan got up and asked Zong Jinghao, "Can I have this girl instead?"

Su Zhan's jaw dropped, and his eyes widened in shock. *Has this man finally fallen for a woman? Something's not right, though. He's seen his fair share of women in the past, so why did he suddenly ask Zong Jinghao for the woman at such a timing? Is there something bewitching in this room?*

He took a look around but couldn't find anything out of the ordinary. After that, he touched Shen Peichuan's forehead to check for a fever. "You..."

Shen Peichuan slapped his hand aside and scoffed, "Don't touch me."

Sang Yu did not move as she felt that Shen Peichuan was not a good person either.

At the same time, Zong Jinghao stared at Shen Peichuan in shock for the same reason as Su Zhan. *Why is he acting like he's seeing a woman for the first time? What's up with him? Don't tell me Gu Bei has some wicked scheme in mind...*

"I've met her before, so I..." Shen Peichuan explained awkwardly.

"Looks like I have a good eye for women after all. To think that even Mr. Shen has his eye on her! Well, since there's only one of her, could you pick someone else instead? The other three are all still virgins and have good looks as well." Gu Bei smiled. *Looks like this is all Zong Jinghao's subordinate has got. Just a woman is enough to get him smitten.*

"No, it's rare that Peichuan is interested in someone." In other words, he was willing to give her up to Shen Peichuan.

Gu Bei did not comment on this. *Well, this is between them. Regardless, as long as they're interested in women, I'll be able to find an opening to strike with them.*

She Peichuan pulled Sang Yu over, but she attempted to break free from his grip. This only made Shen Peichuan tighten his grip as he hissed, "Behave!"

Gu Bei smiled. "Mr. Shen, feel free to use the rooms upstairs."

Shen Peichuan queried, "Mr. Gu, may I ask if this lass is one of yours?"

"No," Sang Yu declared before Gu Bei could answer his question.

Gu Bei scorned, "You came looking for a job, so I gave you one. That makes me your employer!"

"We haven't signed a contract and you haven't paid me yet, so legally speaking, I'm not your employee!" Sang Yu retorted. She was not a fool, and if she had not been desperate to find a job, she would not have fallen for this trap. At that time, she had not bothered to ask for more details when her friend recommended this job. But when she found out about it, it was already too late.

"In that case, you won't mind if I take her away, right?"

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Gu Bei glanced at Sang Yu and sneered, “Mr. Shen, you’re not getting serious here, are you? The women here are either short on money or trying to hook up with rich men. They aren’t worth your time.”

He then turned his gaze to Zong Jinghao and continued, “Since you’re friends with Mr. Zong, you’re definitely someone of status yourself. Why marry a prostitute? You’ll be laughed at by society, and Mr. Zong will be implicated as well.”

“Who are you calling a prostitute?” Sang Yu bellowed. *I was tricked here! How dare you call me a prostitute!*

Shen Peichuan placed a hand on her shoulder and gestured for her to stay calm. *If she hadn’t met us today, she’d have been toast!*

Sang Yu knew that she had acted too brashly. After all, she had studied hard to get accepted into a good university and earned her own living. Even when she was at her poorest, she had never intended to resort to prostitution. Thus, she simply could not accept such an insult.

She clenched her fists and glared at Gu Bei.

“Mr. Gu,” Zong Jinghao called out in an icy tone. “Let’s get to the point. If you want anything from me, I’d be more than happy to oblige if it’s something within my means. My friend here rarely shows interest in women, so I’m afraid I’ll have to stand up for him this time.”

Noticing the displeasure on Zong Jinghao’s face, Gu Bei mulled over it. *This woman isn’t mine, after all. Like Sang Yu said, I haven’t paid her, and she hasn’t*

officially started work either. Technically, I have nothing on her. I might as well let Shen Peichuan have her so that Zong Jinghao owes me a favor.

When he finished weighing the situation up, Gu Bei smiled. "Since Mr. Zong has made this request, I can't possibly refuse!"

He pointed to the other three girls at the door. "They are all virgins as well. Shall we get them to entertain us?"

It was the first time these three young women had been to such a place. Seeing that the other men were handsome as well, they were eager to give it a try.

The friend who had nudged Sang Yu earlier, Lu Wanwan, was especially hopeful. In fact, she had set her sights on Zong Jinghao.

She desperately wanted this man to fall in love with her and marry her, allowing her to become a rich housewife. That way, she would not have to study hard or worry about finding a job.

In addition to the fame and status she could attain from being with such a man, she would not have to earn a living as well.

However, Zong Jinghao was uninterested in these women. Earlier, he did not have a good excuse to refuse when Gu Bei called Sang Yu to take a seat next to him. But now, he simply told Gu Bei, "Nah, I'm no longer in the mood."

Gu Bei had not sensed anything amiss and assumed that he merely lost the mood after Sang Yu's matter earlier. Besides, there were other ways to have fun, other than women. He suggested, "Let's go for something thrilling, then!"

"I have something to ask you, Mr. Gu," Zong Jinghao suddenly changed the subject.

Gu Bei had intended to build a connection with him, but he did not want to seem overly eager, so he put on a calm expression. "Oh, what's up?"

Zong Jinghao explained the matter with Cheng Yuxiu's accident and asked, "I heard that Wen Qing came to look for you. Is that true?"

Gu Bei did not know about the complex history between Zong Jinghao and Wen Qing, so he merely assumed they were uncle and nephew.

On the other hand, everyone knew that Cheng Yuxiu was on bad terms with Zong Jinghao.

He did not dwell on it and offered Zong Jinghao a toast, "Let's have a drink, shall we?"

Zong Jinghao drank the wine in one shot. Smacking his lips, Gu Bei filled up the glass again. "Well, now that we're friends, there's no need to hide anything from you. In fact, our families have been acquainted throughout the generations. Your maternal grandfather and my father were especially close."

Gu Bei's father was slightly younger than Wen Jin, but they were from the same generation. However, Gu Bei was born when he was getting old, so he was around Zong Jinghao's age.

He had six older sisters, but most of them had been raised by his relatives because they were illegitimate children. Since he had one elder sister in name, he was the second oldest, although he had six elder sisters in total. However, this was an open secret.

"On account of the relationship between our families, I couldn't possibly refuse him, right?"

Zong Jinghao leaned back and cloaked himself in darkness, leaving only his icy voice. "Let's hear what this is all about, then."

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“You know better than I do that Wen Qing hates your that stepmother of yours to the core. He came to me for a favor to capture that woman since he knew I have a wide network of contacts. However, the person in charge was inadequate in carrying out his task... and things happened. But anyway, it was not a big deal. It’s actually better that way since you and Wen Qing are not very fond of her.”

Gu Bei felt irritated with the atmosphere in the room was kind of tense. He thought perhaps it was because of the three women standing by the door. He called for the manager, “Get them out of here.”

The manager and a few of his subordinates led them out of the room.

Zong Jinghao arched a brow, his eyes were like bottomless whirlpools. “You sure are a remarkable man, Mr. Gu. The higher-ups are keeping a close eye these days as they try to crack down on gangs, but your business is going on as usual for you. You even dared kidnap a woman.”

“This is all done in Wen Qing’s favor. I did it in his place since his social status doesn’t allow him to do so.”

Gu Bei leaned on the sofa and turned to face him. “Are you really here today to have fun or...”

He wouldn’t have spilled the beans if he didn’t know about Zong Jinghao and Wen Qing’s relationship. He had given it much thought before he spoke since he knew things would get ugly.

He was also aware that he would be placed in a difficult position if Zong Jinghao were to find out the truth from Wen Qing.

“What do you think I’m here for?”

At that moment, Gu Bei was caught off guard as their eyes met. He smiled. “Of course you’re here to have some fun.”

“But you’ve disappointed me today.” Zong Jinghao swept his tongue over the front of his teeth. Then, he said in a casual manner, “It’s not like what it used to be these days. You’d better be careful, Mr. Gu. Don’t be duped.”

Gu Bei froze. “What do you mean?”

He felt like Zong Jinghao was implying something else.

Zong Jinghao stood up as Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan followed suit.

He said coldly, “Mr. Gu, it’s really not a big deal to kidnap someone. Do you think he wasn’t able to do it or he didn’t dare do it?”

Gu Bei narrowed his eyes. *What does he mean by that?*

Wen Qing has been using me?

“Mr. Zong, are you joking? He’s your uncle but you’re helping me instead? Do you think I will believe you?”

Is this a test since Wen Qing is his uncle?

At the moment, Gu Bei dared not believe Zong Jinghao’s words so easily. After all, he was on the same boat with Wen Qing, not Zong Jinghao.

“It’s up to you to believe me or not. I just couldn’t bear to see someone else being exploited again and still be in the dark about it.” He was clearly hinting on something else. “Well, thank you for your hospitality today, Mr. Gu.”

“It’s hardly hospitable since Mr. Zong didn’t have fun. Let me know in advance the next time you’re coming so that I can make sure everything is in order. I can promise you won’t be disappointed.”

Gu Bei wasn’t really paying attention as he pondered on Zong Jinghao’s words. It was obvious that he was trying to warn him if his words just now meant something else.

It was also weird to hear him use the word ‘again’. *What does he mean? Is it that Wen Qing had exploited someone else before in the past without their knowledge?*

“Mr. Zong, can you please explain it to me?” Gu Bei suddenly called out to Zong Jinghao, who was already at the door. He stood up and headed in his direction. “What inside information do you have?”

Zong Jinghao gave him a meaningful look. “Have you heard of what happened to Chen Qing?”

“Everyone in our circle knows about it even though they tried to cover it up. Losing everything at this age is just terrible...” However, Gu Bei quickly realized that something was amiss. Why did he mention Chen Qing all of a sudden?

“You mean to say Wen Qing has something to do with Chen Qing’s current predicament?”

Zong Jinghao flicked his collar and gave him a meaningful look. “I never said that. Please don’t cause more trouble for me, Mr. Gu.”

Gu Bei quickly figured out what was going on. He had been hesitant about spilling the truth since Wen Qing was his uncle. How could he put him down in public?

Su Zhan interjected just at the right moment, “Wen Qing is getting old and nosy these days. He even wanted to have a say in somebody else’s marriage. It’s so annoying that he’s abusing his authority as a senior.”

Su Zhan had figured out what was going on after listening in on the lengthy conversation between Zong Jinghao and Gu Bei. Zong Jinghao was trying to turn Gu Bei and Wen Qing against each other so that he could reap the benefits without moving a finger. He would then strike when both of them were worn out.

Zong Jinghao had already baited Gu Bei with Chen Qing, all he had to do now was to give Gu Bei a reason as to why Zong Jinghao would spill the beans lest he grew suspicious.

Zong Jinghao was irritated with Wen Qing for forcing him to marry. That was the reason why he revealed Wen Qing’s true colors to Gu Bei.

Zong Jinghao dissed Su Zhan, pretending to be upset. “No one asked for your opinion.”

Su Zhan lowered his head. “I’m just speaking the truth.”

“I apologize for acting up, Mr. Gu.”

Gu Bei laughed, “It’s okay. It’s pretty normal for you to be pressured to get married at your age. As your uncle, Wen Qing was just concerned about you. He means well. The matter is not worth causing a rift between the two of you.”

However, he didn’t mean what he just said. If what Su Zhan said was true, it was possible that Zong Jinghao was annoyed with Wen Qing for forcing him to marry.

Zong Jinghao had mentioned that Wen Qing was the one who caused Chen Qing’s current predicament. Although his actions were ruthless, it was still a possibility. After all, Zong Jinghao was known for being ruthless in their circle. He would get back on anyone who caused him to lose out.

Presumably, Wen Qing must have gone too far and infuriated him.

Gu Bei had everything figured out. He waited till Zong Jinghao left before he called for the manager.

Of course, he wouldn't simply believe Zong Jinghao's words without actual proof since he was not a three-year-old. He needed to get to the bottom of things himself in order to feel at ease.

"I need you to check out if Wen Qing had forced Zong Jinghao to marry, and also ask around to see if Wen Qing had anything to do with Chen Qing's predicament."

The manager nodded. "I'll get down to it now."

Gu Bei waved his hand impatiently, "Go on then."

He was hoping everything Zong Jinghao said wasn't true. It was...

He pondered about Wen Qing. *Is he using me? Does he think I'm a pushover?*

Zong Jinghao gave Shen Peichuan a look when they were out of the nightclub. "I'll wait for you at the office."

With that, he got into the car. Su Zhan was more of the nosy type as he shouldered Shen Peichuan, raised his chin to point at Sang Yu who was standing beside him and asked, "When did you guys meet? And why did you not tell us about it?"

"Just stop your nonsense. I'm just doing someone a favor," Shen Peichuan glared at Su Zhan. "Are you not leaving?"

Su Zhan smiled. He sized Sang Yu up as he was walking towards his car and smacked his lips. *She's way too young for Shen Peichuan.*

“Peichuan is still an innocent boy at heart even though he might look a little old. Be good to him.” Su Zhan gave Sang Yu a look.

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“What nonsense are you talking about?” Shen Peichuan pushed Su Zhan. This guy was digging a grave for him.

Su Zhan waved his hands at Sang Yu. “I’m leaving now. Get Peichuan to bring you over more often.”

With that, he quickly got into his car and drove off before Shen Peichuan gets angry.

Shen Peichuan placed a hand on his forehead and explained, “Don’t mind him, he likes to spout nonsense.”

Sang Yu stood under the streetlights as she turned to face Shen Peichuan and said calmly, “I won’t take it to heart. I know who my enemies are. If not for you just now, I would’ve... Anyway, thank you. But I don’t want to see you ever again.”

She shrugged, saying, “Goodbye.”

With that, she turned around and left. She had taken a liking towards this matured and upright man. His charismatic personality made her feel at ease.

However, she changed her mind after her second meeting with him at the nightclub today. She felt that he was a hypocrite.

Shen Peichuan frowned. *What have I done to offend her?*

It wasn’t that he couldn’t accept Sang Yu’s attitude towards him, he just wanted to find out why she disliked him. Hence, he quickly caught up to her, “You don’t need to thank me. I wouldn’t have helped you if it weren’t for your mother. There

are tons of people ruining their lives every day, so it's not feasible for me to help everyone. Everyone has a choice on how they want to live life."

Sang Yu stopped in her tracks and turned to face him. "My mother asked for your help?"

Her mother was the one person she held most dearly to her heart. Her heart ached every time her mother was mentioned.

Shen Peichuan saw through her even though she tried to act cool about it.

She thought she was doing a good job pretending to be nonchalant, but her eyes had betrayed her true feelings.

Shen Peichuan said, "Yes, she said you must be having a hard time making a living in the city. That was why she came to me for help. I'm not the type to meddle with other people's business."

He looked at her with a piercing gaze as he spoke, "As a girl, you should be warier of your surroundings. It's not every time you get this lucky." He paused before continuing, "Also, I don't like it when people talk to me in a weird manner."

Sang Yu pursed her lips as she stood there feeling at a loss of what to do next. She wanted to apologize but couldn't bring herself to do so.

"Why did you come here?" Shen Peichuan asked.

He didn't have any hidden agendas for asking. He simply felt responsible for her well-being since he had promised her mother he would look out for her. He was also aware that she must be having a hard time trying to earn a living as a college student.

Sang Yu lowered her head. "No reason."

She had a dignity to maintain even though she had yet to land a job that could provide her with a stable source of income. All she could do at the moment was to work part-time jobs to feed herself.

Shen Peichuan didn't push her for an answer. He knew she wanted to maintain her dignity.

He reached out. "Do you have a phone?"

"What do you want?" Sang Yu put her guard up instinctively. She widened her eyes and stared at him warily.

Shen Peichuan laughed and said, "You wouldn't have been tricked if you had stayed vigilant. I just wanted to save my number on your phone so that you can call me whenever you get into trouble. Don't look too much into it. I don't have any hidden agendas. I just wanted to keep the promise I've made."

Sang Yu hesitated to take her phone out. Shen Peichuan frowned. "You don't believe me?"

He didn't want to force her. "Very well then, be careful out there. I'm leaving now."

With that, he strode towards the opposite side of the road and was about to hail for a taxi. Zong Jinghao was still waiting for him at the office, he must have something important to tell him.

He didn't have time to waste here.

"Hey, wait," Sang Yu suddenly called out to him. Shen Peichuan turned around and saw a fair petite girl with bright eyes standing under the streetlights.

"Just tell me your number, I have a good memory."

It was then that Shen Peichuan realized she might not have a phone. He hesitated for a moment before telling her his number. "It's a wonderful world out there full of temptation. It's up to you how you want to live life, but my advice is think twice before jumping into anything."

He wasn't close to her, Hence, there was not much he could do to help. She still had to make her own choices in the future. All he could do now was to give her some advice of his own.

He hailed for a taxi that was passing by, opened the car door and said to her, "Be careful."

With that, he got into the car.

Sang Yu stood by the curb and watched as the taxi drove away. She shouted, "I've memorized it."

She didn't know whether Shen Peichuan heard her or not, she was just telling him out of courtesy.

Shen Peichuan heard her, but didn't bother for a response. He told his driver to head to Wanyue instead.

The financial district wasn't as busy as it seemed during the day, for even the people here walked faster during the day. The bustling district was only left with colorful neon lights flickering from a distance at night.

Shen Peichuan paid for his fare and got down the car. He walked into the elevator and headed straight to the top floor.

Zong Jinghao's office was the only room with the lights still on. He opened the door and walked into the room.

The light from the opposite buildings shone in on Zong Jinghao as he stood before the floor-to-ceiling windows, whereas Su Zhan was sitting cross legged on the sofa with his eyes closed.

“Gu Bei will definitely get someone to verify what I just said. I need you to get someone to follow his men around and give them some clues from time to time.”

Shen Peichuan understood what he was getting at. He also knew exactly what he should and shouldn't let Gu Bei find out. As long as Gu Bei believed Wen Qing had asked him to kidnap Cheng Yuxiu for his own benefit, everything would be going according to plan.

He also had to make Gu Bei believe that Wen Qing was the one that had caused Chen Qing's current predicament.

Everyone knew Wen Qing and Chen Qing were good friends. If Wen Qing had anything to do with Chen Qing's predicament, Gu Bei will definitely be convinced that Wen Qing was just using him all this while.

It will be interesting to watch their dog-eat-dog affair when the time comes.

“Leave it to me.” Shen Peichuan already had it figured out. He would give Gu Bei's henchmen some fake news.

Zong Jinghao hummed in response. “Be careful. Don't let him find out.”

“Understood,” Shen Peichuan said.

He watched Zong Jinghao's figure from the sofa as he pondered whether he should asked Zong Jinghao to go easy on Wen Qing. After all, he was related to Lin Xinyan. However, he decided against it in the end.

He understood why Lin Xinyan left. She didn't want to place Zong Jinghao in a difficult position because of her relationship with Wen Qing.

He kept his mouth shut since they had already decided on it.

“You guys can leave now,” Zong Jinghao said as he stood before the floor-to-ceiling windows.

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Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan shared a look before they said almost in unison, "Since we won't be able to sleep tonight, why don't we have a drink."

After all, drinking helped with sleeping.

It was all too easy to read their intentions. The moment they said it, Zong Jinghao knew what they were trying to do. However, he agreed, wanting to get drunk anyway.

After leaving the office, they got into one car to a quieter bar.

When they sat down, they ordered a fruit platter and two bottles of wine.

The warm yellow lights enveloped the room as the air conditioner under the ceiling slowly blew out gusts of cool wind.

Su Zhan poured wine into the glasses as he glanced at Shen Peichuan, "You have to drink this."

Shen Peichuan shot him a glare, knowing what the other man wanted.

Before Su Zhan could say anything, Shen Peichuan explained, "Don't let your imaginations run wild. The girl's too young for me. Karma will come for me if I go after someone that young.

As he spoke, he peered at Zong Jinghao and asked, "Isn't that right?"

Zong Jinghao narrowed his eyes, noticing something amiss about his words. After drinking a sip of his wine, he uttered frigidly, "I'm not in a good mood."

It sounded like a warning to Shen Peichuan that he was not in the mood for jokes, let alone listening to mentions of Lin Xinyan.

Now, every time he heard her name, a weight would land on his chest. He missed her so much that he dared not return to the house. He could not sleep when he was by himself. All he could do was numb himself with work so that he would not have the time to think.

Shen Peichuan sighed, "Look at all of you. You look like wilted flowers. Now I'm scared of having a relationship. Say, can't you be a better example for me?"

Seriously. I'm traumatized.

"Your words are just sour grapes." Su Zhan sat closer to hook his neck. With a somber expression, he muttered, "I'll be honest. That girl is pretty. You should appreciate it."

"Stop overthinking it." Shen Peichuan was close to having a heart attack because of Su Zhan. *Stop overthinking whenever a woman appears by my side!*

This is just a task entrusted by someone else.

"She's only in her first year of college. If I... I'll be an animal!" Shen Peichuan pried Su Zhan's arm away from his neck. "Even if I'm looking for one, I'll look for someone my age. She's just a kid, so I'd have to coax her every day. I want to marry a wife, not raise a daughter."

Su Zhan leaned back onto the couch lazily. Beside him, Shen Peichuan looked as though he wanted to crush him so that the former would cease being an annoying man.

"Someone your age? The ones that fit your requirements are all guys. It's rare to see a girl. I can't believe you're still so melodramatic. What's wrong with being young?"

Although Su Zhan was not as old as Zong Jinghao, Qin Ya was not as old as Lin Xinyan either. To sum it up, both Zong Jinghao and he had an age gap of seven to eight years with their wives.

When they were at the age of kissing and knowing what love was, their wives were still in elementary school.

Now that they were near their thirties, their wives were still in their early twenties.

Are we robbing the cradle?

“Su Zhan, where’s your brain-to-mouth filter?” Shen Peichuan frowned. *What Su Zhan needs is a good beating.*

He wished Qin Ya would return to teach Su Zhan a lesson. Otherwise, the man would just keep pushing his luck.

“What about this, Peichuan? Let’s make a bet. If you find a young one, you’ll dance on the table wearing a bra on the day of your marriage. Do you have the guts to put a bet on this?”

Shen Peichuan ignored him, not wanting to make pointless bets with the likes of him.

“You don’t?” Su Zhan poured another glass of wine.

“I can’t be bothered by you.”

“You just don’t have the guts for it.”

“You’re irritating.”

“You’re afraid you’ll fall in love with that college freshman. That’s why you don’t dare to bet with me.”

“NO, I’m not!”

“Then why don’t you dare bet with me?”

Shen Peichuan glared at Su Zhan and huffed, “I don’t want to bet with you because this is pointless.”

Su Zhan leaned toward him. “Then what do you think isn’t pointless?” He shot a suggestive look at Shen Peichuan’s lower body. He knew that this man had a sex drive since puberty. He had sexual desires since long ago.

Su Zhan was curious as to how this man dealt with it.

“I don’t believe that you’ve never had the urge.”

Shen Peichuan sneered, “Do you think everyone’s like you? Have some shame.”

“I’m pretty normal, but you’re not.”

“Bullsh*t. You’re not normal; you’re just horny.”

“Hey, watch your words.” Su Zhan took the glass of wine and poured it into the other man’s mouth. “Wash your mouth so you speak better next time.”

“Su Zhan, you bas*ard! Screw you!” Su Zhan forced the wine into his mouth. The wine that he could not drink had streamed down his neck. Now, he smelled of alcohol all over.

He shoved Su Zhan away and pulled his collar to wipe his neck. Glaring at Su Zhan, he said, “Do you what that’s called? It’s called having no self-control. It’s not normal, okay? How can promiscuity be normal? Su Zhan, have shame. If you never change, Qin Ya will never want you.”

Upon the mention of Qin Ya, Su Zhan's expression turned gloomy. Shen Peichuan was good at hitting where it hurt.

“Can you stop rubbing salt on my wound?”

Even if he was promiscuous, it had been before he was together with Qin Ya. He was in the wrong about Liu Feifei's matter for he had not been honest enough with Qin Ya. That was why they had a misunderstanding, and he hurt her.

During these few months after Qin Ya's passing, he had been living in sorrow and frustration. No matter what he did, the image of Qin Ya disappearing in the fire kept emerging in his mind.

There were so many times he would wake in fright.

After Shen Peichuan mentioned Qin Ya, the room fell silent; without Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan's constant banter, the atmosphere had turned tense.

They had ordered two bottles of wine. Zong Jinghao had finished one by himself, the other was finished by the other two men. One bottle was not enough for Zong Jinghao; so he ordered another two bottles.

Instead of stopping him, Shen Peichuan drank with him instead. The three of them were silent as they only drank wine; they did not order any side dishes to go with it.

Eventually, the two bottles were finished as well. Shen Peichuan drank much lesser than the other two, so he was still sober. However, Su Zhan and Zong Jinghao seemed drunk as they lay on the couch.

Although Shen Peichuan was not drunk, he had drunk a substantial amount. Driving was no longer the plan. Hence, he could only call Guan Jing to pick them up.

When Guan Jing arrived, these two men hefted the other two drunk men into the car and sent them home.

The first to be sent home was Zong Jinghao. The guards outside the house had been removed after Lin Xinyan left, so Aunt Yu was the only one there.

After Guan Jing and Shen Peichuan left, she hastily made him a cup of honey when she realized Zong Jinghao was drunk.

The lights were off, and the room was dim. The windows were not completely closed, and the breeze from outside occasionally billowed the curtains.

Putting the cup of honey down on the bedside table, she muttered, "Drink something."

Before Aunt Yu finished her words, he cut her off, "Out."

The man Shen Peichuan thought was drunk out of his mind had a clear voice.

Aunt Yu sighed before she turned and left the room.

On the large bed was a tall figure sprawled on it. He was lying on his side as he stared at the empty spot beside him. *This is where Lin Xinyan used to sleep at.*

He reached out, seemingly wanting to feel the warmth she used to leave. However, the bed was cold under his fingers.

The coldness of the empty spot seeped into his heart. His hand clenched, and he crumpled the bedsheet in his hand.

Burying his face into the pillow, he hoarsely murmured, "I miss you."

He thought he would not think of her when he was drunk, but the more he drank, the clearer his mind became. Her face was the only image he could conjure up in his mind. *Is she doing well now?*

Are our children doing well?

Meanwhile, at C City.

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Meanwhile, at C City.

In the middle of the night, Lin Xinyan woke from thirst. After drinking a glass of water, she returned to her bed. Yet, she was wide awake. Sitting up, she grabbed a book and started reading it instead.

As the children slept in another room, she did not need to worry that she was disturbing their rest. She was now living in a pleasant neighborhood with many facilities. It was quiet, and there was only a unit on every floor. Although the house was not large, it was not too small either; it was one hundred and sixty square meters, with four bedrooms and two bathrooms.

When Qin Ya came back, she lived in her place. Lin Xinyan had been the one who asked her to stay. Previously, Qin Ya had been injured badly. The house was rather lively with the children around, and it could prevent her from overthinking. After all, four bedrooms were enough for them.

There was a book rack near the window filled with books. They were all about Country Z's history. As a country with five thousand years' worth of history, they had more than a handful of historical heritage.

Several books on the rack were about embroidery.

There were many kinds of traditional embroidery. She knew of their existence, but she never read in-depth about it. Now that she had the time to, she realized the beauty of it, especially the traditional cultures of her country.

Red was a symbolism of prosperity.

In one of her books, she read about traditional weddings. The wedding attire in the book caught her attention.

Many young people chose to wear a white wedding dress nowadays.

The pure white was a sign of the pureness of love.

However, that was not its original meaning; it was given to it later on. The wedding dress originated from Rome. Back then, white was a symbol of prosperity, just like how red was the symbol of prosperity in her country.

Visually, Lin Xinyan felt that red represented the liveliness of prosperity better.

It was a passionate color, fiery and energetic. To her, it was a color that represented the feeling of the bride entering the wedding halls; it was emotional, and it conveyed the hopes of the bride.

This time, she had designed a series of twelve. Ancient wedding attires were the references for each design, and she had added modern elements to them. Each design was of a distinct pattern and different embroidery, but the base fabric was the same.

It was a new style with the combination of Tea Silk and various forms of embroidery into an attire with modern and ancient elements. That was why she named the series “New Chinese.”

Lin Xinyan realized furniture with a combination of traditional and modern elements had been trending recently. In other words, people were nostalgic about the culture left by their ancestors.

Not only did she want Tea Silk to catch the attention of the public, but she also wanted this culture to develop into something mainstream. She had connections, so holding an international fashion show was not a problem. What she needed to do now was to make sure that her series was flawless so it would become in the limelight internationally.

Lin Xinyan had encountered many problems during her creation. For the past few days, she had been researching about it. Although it tired her out, she felt that her time was well-spent. When she was free, she would find herself longing for that person. However, most of her time was spent trying to solve the problems through trial-and-error. Hence, time went by in a blink of an eye.

It was the same for this time. She eventually fell asleep while reading. Her book remained in her hands even after she was deep in her sleep.

She did not wake even when the sun came up.

The two children were getting more and more independent. They barely needed help in getting dressed and washing up.

In the morning, Qin Ya, with her hair in a mess and dressed in house clothing, went to check on Lin Xinyan. After realizing she must have read late into the night, Qin Ya did not wake her. Then, she went to the kitchen to make breakfast. They had subscribed for morning milk deliveries, and the milk came every morning at seven. It was fresh and healthy with no preservatives.

While she fried eggs, she placed the bread into the toaster. The two children who had woken up rushed in, wanting to help her.

Qin Ya frowned. "What can you do?"

"Help you with breakfast?" Zong Yanxi reached out, trying to help fry the eggs. They were enthusiastic about it, and Qin Ya felt bad about rejecting them. However, it was too dangerous for them. Thus, she gave them some chores that they could do. "Yanxi, bring the milk in from outside. Yanchen, you'll be in charge of toasting the bread."

Zong Yanxi enthusiastically rushed outside. On the other hand, Zong Yanchen stood in front of the toaster and looked at Qin Ya's back as she cut fruits. He asked, "Aunt Qin Ya, every time I look at you, I feel like I'm looking at someone else."

Qin Ya's appearance had changed. She was also Qin Ya, but she did not look the same, nor sound the same.

The explosion damaged her vocal cords, and her physical appearance and voice had changed. That was why Zong Yanchen was not used to this Aunt Qin Ya.

Instead of turning around, Qin Ya placed the cut fruits on the plate. She queried, "Am I prettier, or was I prettier back then?"

Zong Yanchen cupped his cheek and wondered. In a serious tone, he answered, "Physically, you're prettier now. But I like your looks back then. You look friendlier."

Now, even Qin Ya's personality seemed dulled; she was no longer as energetic as she used to be. For Zong Yanchen, it felt as though he was calling someone else 'Aunt Qin Ya'.

After putting the eggs on the plate, she turned to look at Zong Yanchen. "Are you praising or insulting me?"

"Of course I'm praising you. It doesn't matter if you're pretty or ugly. Inner beauty is the best. Back then, Aunt Qin Ya was pretty on the outside, but even prettier on the inside."

"Brat, you're getting better and better with words. Cheeky."

Zong Yanchen giggled. "I'm speaking the truth." He then hastily asked, "Aunt Qin Ya, can I suggest something?"

"Hm?"

Qin Ya turned off the stove and leaned on it instead. Looking at Zong Yanchen, she inquired, "What is it?"

“I don’t think the current Aunt Qin Ya is Aunt Qin Ya.”

Qin Ya furrowed her brows. “What do you mean?”

“No. Wait. Don’t get too anxious. Let me finish,” Zong Yanchen anxiously said.

Qin Ya calmed down and folded her arms as she patiently waited for him to speak. She wanted to hear what words this boy had to tell her.

“Aunt Qin Ya, it’s like you’ve reincarnated. Not only have you changed your looks, but you’ve also changed your voice. I think you should change your name too. That way, you’re a whole new person.”

That also meant that his sister and he would not find it weird to call her ‘Aunt Qin Ya’ anymore.

Every time he called her name, he hesitated.

Qin Ya ruminated. *His words are somewhat true. Other than my name, I’m no longer connected to my past.*

It’ll be a new me. I should take his suggestion into consideration.

“I’ll leave this task to you. Help me think of a charming and nice name.” Qin Ya pointed her chin in Zong Yanchen’s direction.

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“What task? What new names?” Zong Yanxi asked, overhearing the end of the conversation as she placed the milk carton onto the dining table. She blinked and inquired, “What secret did you guys share when I was gone?”

Qin Ya pinched her cheeks. “Little girl, why are you so curious about everything?”

“Ouch! It hurts!” The girl widened her mouth, showing her pearly teeth in protest as she creased her brows. It did not hurt, as Qin Ya barely pinched her, but the girl was a good actress.

Qin Ya laughed, “You can be an actress on the television if you keep this up.”

“I’m pretty, so I’ll be popular, right?” Zong Yanxi looked stumped. “What if many people fall in love with me?”

Qin Ya stared at her in silence.

Then, she shifted her gaze to look at the ceiling. *Who did this girl take after? Why is she so narcissistic?*

“All right, let’s eat. You’ll need to go to school later.” Qin Ya served their breakfasts and opened the milk cartons for them before sliding them over. She urged, “Hurry and finish it. I’ll send you there later.”

Zong Yanchen shook his head. “We’ll go there ourselves. It’s quite close. Also, did my Mommy sleep late last night again?”

His school was in the neighborhood, so he did not need to leave the area. He was familiar with the route as it had been nearly a month since he started studying there.

Qin Ya nodded. "Yes. Your mommy's trying to be a superwoman."

"I'll need to talk to her after school tonight. How can she not rest? Even if she doesn't take care of herself, she has to take care of the baby. I can't let my younger sibling disappear before I get to see him or her."

Zong Yanxi mumbled nearly incoherently as he was still chewing on his food. However, Qin Ya heard his words clearly. She could not help but sigh. She knew about Lin Xinyan's matter because the two had a long talk after she came back.

Her identity stunned her, and Qin Ya sighed at how fate worked. Once upon a time, she used to be jealous of Lin Xinyan and Zong Jinghao's relationship. It was difficult for them to get together, but now...

She lowered her eyes, not wanting to show her emotions when the children were still around.

"What about Yanyan?" Zong Yanchen abruptly asked.

Both Qin Ya and Zong Yanxi froze before turning to look at him, confused.

Zong Yanchen sighed and shook his head, thinking, *Adults are getting less and less reliable*. He muttered, "Aunt Qin Ya, have you forgotten about asking me to come up with a name for you?"

Zong Yanxi widened her eyes. "Aunt Qin Ya, you're asking Yanchen to give you a name? Are you serious? He only knows how to eat!"

Qin Ya laughed at the girl's words as she patted the latter's head. "Let's not doubt him first. Let's listen to his reason for picking this name. If you can't tell me why, I won't use it."

"Okay." Zong Yanxi nodded. She was jealous. Her teachers liked her brother better than her, and now Qin Ya was asking him to name her. Thus, she felt rather upset.

“It’s from ‘Nine Changes’ in the poetry collection, The Song of Chu. The line I took the word from was describing the lotus on the surface of the water, beautiful and gentle. That means the bearer of this name is someone like the lotus—to grow out of the mud, unsullied. It’s fitting for someone elegant and sacred. To me, you’re someone like that.”

He knew Aunt Qin Ya had sustained very serious injuries in the past, and that incident had been the reason for her change in appearance. Although she stayed strong in front of him and his sister, he knew she could not have escaped unscathed. It was impossible for someone to not care about their appearance.

Furthermore, she was a woman. Although she was still pretty, she was no longer as lively and friendly as she used to be. Those were things that were permanently taken from her.

After hearing that, Zong Yanxi fell silent and focused on her food instead.

She could not deny that Zong Yanchen was liked for a reason.

I shouldn’t be jealous. Yes. I’ll stick right by Yanchen’s side from now on. He knows too many things.

Qin Ya’s eyes were wide, and so was her mouth. She did not expect the boy to give her such a profound reason. *This boy is a gifted child. Are children this age supposed to be like this now? Do they learn poetry in school?*

“Y-Yanchen, is that what your teacher has been teaching you?”

Zong Yanchen shook his head. “My teacher won’t teach us things like that. They’re only teaching us one plus one. They’re treating us like fools. I don’t want Mommy to worry. That’s why I still go to the classes but it’s really a waste of my time.”

Qin Ya was even more bewildered by his answer. *Does he mean he learned this himself?*

That's shocking.

“We’ll call you Aunt Yanyan, okay?” Zong Yanchen stared at Qin Ya with bright eyes and a serious expression as he anticipated Qin Ya’s response.

Qin Ya had already accepted the new name, sensing the sincerity of the boy. However, she was curious as to how he had thought of the name.

“Can you tell me where you’ve seen the ‘Nine Changes’?”

“In Mommy’s room. She has a lot of books, and I saw this one day. I don’t think Mommy knows what it means because I saw a website about the poem on her tablet. That’s why I know what it means.”

Qin Ya nearly sighed in relief. *Now that’s normal. He’s already gifted in mathematics at this age. If he’s gifted in poetry comprehension too, then he’s no normal kid.*

God must have poured an extra dose of intelligence into his brain.

After the children were done with their breakfast, Qin Ya sent them to school. When she returned, she realized Lin Xinyan was awake. Shrugging off the thin jacket she had worn when she went out, she muttered, “You should be hungry. I’ll make you something to eat.”

“No need. I’ll do it myself.” Lin Xinyan scooped some rice to cook herself porridge. While Qin Ya was cleaning up the table, she said, “Ms. Lin, I’ve changed my name.”

Lin Xinyan glanced at her, baffled. *Changed her name?*

“What’s wrong with your current one?”

“Your son said I’m basically reincarnated. Even my face and voice have changed, so I should change my name too.”

“What nonsense is that boy talking about?”

“Listen to me, Ms. Lin,” Qin Ya interrupted in a solemn tone and serious expression. “I think Yanchen’s right. New times, new me. I like the name he’s given to me.”

Lin Xinyan creased her brows to the point they nearly knitted themselves. *He’s just a boy. What names can he come up with?*

If he ends up calling her something like Goldie or Butter... ”Qin Ya...”

“Does Yanyan sound nice?” Qin Ya interrupted again, knowing what the other woman was about to say. She knew Lin Xinyan was going to say that Zong Yanchen was just a child with no naming sense.

“It sounds good, right? Aren’t you surprised that your son can come up with a name like this?” Qin Ya could see Lin Xinyan stunned for a moment before she collected herself.

“I’ve promised your son, so you have to call me Yanyan from now on.” It was rare for Qin Ya to smile like this. Lin Xinyan hugged her. As long as Qin Ya was happy, Lin Xinyan would let her do anything she wanted.

After all, it was just a name change.

After breakfast, the two changed before leaving the house to head to the embroidery studio. Shao Yun had gotten her an Alphard, one of the best multi-purpose vehicles available on the market, regardless of its appearance or interior. Initially, she wanted to reject it, wanting to purchase one of her own to bring her children out conveniently; she was looking for a spacious car as she had to take her children into consideration.

However, Shao Yun threatened to stop helping her if she rejected his offer.

With no other options, Lin Xinyan accepted it. She still needed Shao Yun's help and ask for favors from him since she had yet to familiarize herself here.

Shao Yun was also the one to look for the embroiderers. If not for him, she would have wasted plenty of time trying to look for skilled embroiderers like the ones she had now.

Qin Ya drove as Lin Xinyan sat at the back by the window. The sun was not as bright as it would be in the afternoon, and the windows were tinted. Hence, she did not need to squint as she stared at the scenery outside. They had been on this route many times, and she was familiar with each passing tree. Leaning on the chair, her hands hovered on her slightly swollen stomach.

When the lights turned red, she watched the people crossing the road. Right then, her eyes flitted past the tallest building, and the news displayed on the large LED screen caught her attention. More accurately, the words "Wanyue Group" were the ones that caught her attention.

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The news was reporting the commotion that took place after a major company in C City had been taken over by B City's Wanyue Group overnight.

As the images changed on the screen, a photo of Zong Jinghao stepping out of his car in front of Wanyue Group's building appeared. It was only his side view, but she could see his distinct profile that radiated a cold aura, stopping anyone from coming near him.

"This is the first time the President of Wanyue Group has appeared in public after taking over the Nanlong Company. As he refuses to accept any interviews, we have no information about what happened behind the scenes."

The photo on the screen was clearly a shot taken without his knowledge; Zong Jinghao refused to accept any interviews, and his full face was not visible.

She had already wound down the window, hoping to hear more news about him. As she stared at the screen, unblinking, her hands gripped tightly onto the car door. However, the image soon went away and was replaced by the face of the person in charge of Nanlong Company. The man looked unkempt; he looked like a man defeated.

Qin Ya had been paying attention to the traffic lights, so she did not realize what Lin Xinyan had been staring at. Once the lights turned green, she drove off.

Seconds later, the screen was covered by other buildings, and Lin Xinyan could no longer see the photos.

She retracted her hand and curled into herself. She bit down on her lower lip hard, digging her teeth into the flesh to the point it nearly bled, but she felt no

pain. All she wanted to do was to contain the longing that threatened to overtake her.

She forced the loneliness that screamed to be let out from her throat, and she forced the disappointment from the lack of comfort into the deep recesses of her mind.

She widened her eyes, forcing away the tears that tried to escape.

Soon, the car came to a stop in front of a building. The embroidery studio was on the third floor.

Beside their car was Shao Yun's car. Qin Ya glanced at it when she got down from the car. While reaching to open the back door, she muttered, "He's really hardworking to come here every day."

By now, Lin Xinyan had regained her calm appearance despite the minor remains of surging emotions in her heart. It had been a month since she had heard of his news, and now, she was experiencing very complicated emotions compared to the time she left.

Who said time can heal everything?

Why do I miss him even more than before?

Time isn't the cure for everything.

"Ms. Lin?" Qin Ya voiced, noticing Lin Xinyan's lack of movement.

Lin Xinyan recollected herself and looked up at her. Squeezing out a smile to the other woman, she replied, "I must be getting old. I'm daydreaming more easily nowadays."

Qin Ya smiled but said nothing; she knew what Lin Xinyan was thinking about.

Once the two women were out of the car, they took the elevator to the third floor. By now, everyone was already at work. There were a total of eleven embroiderers, and they all lived in the building. The building had four floors; the first floor was empty, the second was the textile factory, the third was the embroidery studio, and the fourth was their living quarter.

Shao Yun had been the one to find this building for her. It had a pleasant environment, and the annual rent was something she could afford.

Shao Yun seemed to be fascinated by these. When they entered the studio, they saw him watching an embroiderer embroider a phoenix and peonies with golden threads.

The embroiderer he was watching was unique among the eleven embroiderers. Most of the embroidered were middle-aged women, but this embroidered was a young man in his twenties. He had soft features, and his hands were like a woman's—nimble and slender. It was as though the embroidery needles had a life of their own in his hands. Every stitch he made was precise, and the image he embroidered was flawless.

Shao Yun watched his nimble fingers at work and muttered, "What a pity."

He had not realized their presence.

Qin Ya peeked at him. "Pity what?"

What's there to pity?

Shao Yun had put all his attention fully on the embroiderer and his work, so he was startled upon hearing Qin Ya's voice. He looked up at Qin Ya with widened eyes. "W-When did you come? Why are you silent in your steps?"

Qin Ya scoffed, "You're just deaf. I don't walk without a sound. Also, what do you mean by pity?"

Thinking that a mistake had been made with the embroidery, she hurriedly lowered her head to look at the fabric. The fabric that the peony was embroidered on was meant to go around the chest. If a mistake were made, they would have to redo it.

Not only was money wasted, but also time.

Shao Yun sighed, "What a pity he's a man."

He's so pretty that he should've been a beautiful woman instead.

Qin Ya snapped her head to stare at him, silent.

"You have one last chance. It won't matter how much you pay me anymore. I won't do this for you the next time you say this," Li Xin warned icily, without lifting his head.

Due to his looks and profession, he had heard a fair share of negative comments from others. The most common comment he had heard was that he was feminine. He hated having people who commented without prompting, and he was not good with socializing. Hence, he was quite a lone wolf who did not have many friends.

"Sorry. I won't do that again." Shao Yun was quick to apologize. After all, Lin Xinyan appreciated him, and he was the one in charge of the masterpiece within the twelve items. Shao Yun dared not infuriate the young man or he would chase him away.

Qin Ya glanced at Shao Yun, an amused smile on her lips. Although they were not of the same generation, Shao Yun had a young soul in him. He was cheeky, and he had trendy fashion sense.

"Where's Yan?" Shao Yun asked after seeing no signs of her.

Lin Xinyan was one to come every day; she never skipped a day.

Qin Ya walked toward the table to arrange the drafts on it. She muttered, "Maybe she's on the second floor."

She, too, did not know where Lin Xinyan was.

Usually, she would either be on the third floor or the second floor.

Putting on his glasses, Shao Yun said, "I'll look for her."

Qin Ya turned to tease him, "You're wearing sunglasses indoors? Are you trying to be cool?"

Shao Yun adjusted the glasses as he asked, "Do I look handsome?"

"Without a doubt," Qin Ya replied kindly.

She was right. Lin Xinyan was indeed on the second floor. While the staff had worked in a weaving factory in the past, they had never done fabric like this. Hence, she had to keep a close eye on their progress; she would not allow any mistakes to be made.

In the beginning, there were many scrapped fabrics, but they were getting better nowadays.

Lin Xinyan, who was tall and slim, was wearing a loose yellow dress and a pair of white sneakers. Without a good look, no one would realize that she was three months pregnant.

She stood in front of the textile machine as she bent down to check the fabric. When Shao Yun found her, he said, "Leave this to me. You don't need to supervise everything. Aren't you tired?"

"No." Lin Xinyan's head remained lowered as she unrolled the fabric. Under the light, she checked for imperfections. Right then, she spared a glance for Shao

Yun. “You don’t know anything about this. How can I not worry if I leave this in your hands?”

She was right. Shao Yun did not know much about textiles, and he did not know why Lin Xinyan was obsessed with the tiring work. “I’m sure you know the entire JK Group is yours. As long as you’re willing, you can take over immediately. If you don’t want to manage it, you can hire someone to do so. You don’t need to tire yourself out like this.”

She can’t use up all the money in this lifetime, anyway. Isn’t it better if she spent her time with her kids?

Why is she doing this?

Moreover, she’s pregnant. She’s just making things difficult for herself.

Lin Xinyan gazed at Shao Yun, somber. “I didn’t earn those money, so I won’t use it.”

“But that’s what your parents left for you.”

“I’ve never seen them,” Lin Xinyan interrupted. If she could choose her fate, she would rather have been born into an average family with average wealth. All she wanted was living parents who could give her a good family to grow up in.

Gravely, she continued, “I’m not doing this for the money or for fame. I just want a sense of peace.”

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Cheng Yuxiu was dead, and that was something she could not change. The only thing she could now do was to introduce the Tea Silk of the Cheng family to a greater audience. That way, it would have the glory it used to have. She did not want it to disappear from the world because of that one person.

Perhaps, this was the only thing she could do to make herself feel better about it.

Shao Yun knitted his brows, not understanding her words. However, Lin Xinyan did not plan to explain to him either. The story was too long and complicated to be explained briefly. Hence, she cheekily uttered, "Don't frown. You'll become ugly."

Shao Yun loved to be praised as a young and handsome man, so Lin Xinyan successfully made him laugh. "Why don't we have dinner with everyone here tonight? I'll make arrangements. Does that sound good to you?"

As if fearing Lin Xinyan would reject him, he added, "Both the embroidery studio and the textile factory are running smoothly now despite their small scale. Hence, we should celebrate, shouldn't we?"

Instead of killing his mood, she answered, "Sure. Please make the arrangements."

"Wise decision. Not only should you pay them appropriately, but you should also express your gratitude once in a while. That way, they'll work harder," Shao Yun whispered into Lin Xinyan's ears.

He often seemed goofy, as that was his personality, but he was a capable man.

At five in the evening, the staff got off work. There were eleven staff members on the third floor, and twenty on the second. In total, there were over thirty of them. Shao Yun made arrangements for three tables in a luxurious hotel, and everyone seemed merry.

Lin Xinyan had picked up her children as well, who were both seated beside Qin Ya and her. As for socializing, Lin Xinyan had left it in the good hands of Shao Yun; she did not do well in a social gathering like this.

The ones seated by her table were the ones working on the third floor, and they were mostly women who did not drink. Qin Ya opened a bottle of white wine and placed it in front of Li Xin. "Don't be shy if you can drink. We're all women here, so we can't drink with you. Drink slowly if you're drinking. Don't get drunk because no one can take care of you."

Li Xin was a quiet man, and he was not a lover of wine. He raised his head to look at Qin Ya before returning the bottle to her. "I don't want it to affect my work tomorrow."

Qin Ya lifted a brow but said nothing about it.

On the other hand, the other two tables were lively. With Shao Yun around, the men chatted away.

Zong Yanchen took some food and put it in his mother's bowl. "Mommy, you should eat more."

She was already three months into her pregnancy, but she had yet to gain weight.

The boy was worried.

Lin Xinyan smiled as she patted his head. *I'm glad to have him. It doesn't matter how difficult my life was. He's a gift from God.*

Not wanting to lose out to her brother, Zong Yanxi quickly took some food for Lin Xinyan as well. “Mommy, you should eat more. Let the baby in you grow faster.”

This time, she was not jealous of her brother. After all, she had decided to stick with Zong Yanchen and learn from him.

“If I eat too much, I’ll become fat and ugly. Won’t you dislike me looking like that when I send you to school in the future?”

A while back, she had seen a parenting article in a magazine. She could not remember the name of the magazine anymore, but she remembered an article in it. It was a story of a working mom. While she was not doing physical labor, her job included regular visits to the workshop. Usually, her mother-in-law was the one to pick up the boy. However, one day, something happened, and the mother-in-law could not pick her grandson up from school. With no other options, she took an hour’s leave to pick him up. Her company had a rule—anyone in the workshop had to wear a worker’s uniform. As she was in a rush, she did not change out of the worker’s uniform. Her uniform was not completely stain-free; her company produced machinery, so oil stains were inevitable.

That was what she looked like when she came to pick her son up.

In the car, her son asked his mother, “Can you wear something cleaner when you pick me up next time?”

Some said the child looked down on the poor, but that was not true.

An expert had said that the more a child was concerned about someone, the more the child would expect from that person.

The cleanliness the child had mentioned was not a request for the mother to wear luxurious clothing. All the boy wanted was for her to wear something clean. To a boy who was not even ten, a mother was a symbol of home. If the mother did not have a tidy appearance, that would be an implication that the home was a messy one.

Therefore, a woman who was tidy, clean, and smart at dressing herself up, would not only make herself confident but also her child. That way, her child would be braver in life.

“Mommy’s pretty. You won’t become ugly even if you become fat.” To Zong Yanxi and Zong Yanchen, their mother was the most beautiful woman in the world.

They had never seen a moment when she was fat.

Lin Xinyan smiled and patted their heads.

“Won’t your husband be coming?” one embroiderer abruptly asked.

Lin Xinyan was often seen in the embroidery studio, and she brought her kids along on Sundays. The only person they had yet to see in her family was her husband.

They thought, *She’s working and raising two kids while pregnant. Doesn’t her husband’s heart ache for her?*

Although it was difficult to spot Lin Xinyan’s pregnancy, the few women noticed it with one glance.

Curious piqued, everyone turned toward Lin Xinyan.

Their question stunned her; her mind blanked out, and she was at a loss for words to reply to them.

Qin Ya hurriedly intervened. “Ms. Lin’s husband isn’t in the city. He’s very busy with work, so he can’t come home often.”

“Daddy doesn’t even know we’re here, does he?” A wave of longing for her father crashed into Zong Yanxi’s heart, and she lost her appetite.

Qin Ya had just given them an explanation when Zong Yanxi said her words. Instantly, the atmosphere at the dinner turned tense.

It was evident that someone was lying, and everyone preferred to believe in a child's words.

“Focus on your food. Why are you asking so many questions?” Li Xin questioned sharply. “It seems like it's true that women are busybodies. You can't even have a peaceful meal.”

His words were straightforward, and a woman refuted, “What do you mean? I'm just asking out of concern for her. She's pregnant and raising two kids, but I've never seen her husband. What's wrong with asking? Why am I now a busybody?”

“You're trying to pry into her personal life.” Li Xin directed a cold look at the woman. “Aren't you just curious whether she's divorced or have a husband that's having an affair? Aren't you just gossiping?”

He was right because that was what she was thinking about. For the average family, even if the woman had an independent personality, the husband would still be around her.

Lin Xinyan stood up, fearing that the argument would worsen. After all, they still had to work together after today. The conflict would only affect work, and that was something she did not want to see.

Smiling, she said, “We're colleagues. We shouldn't argue like this. It'll be awkward for our work environment. I'll explain what's going on with my husband. It's true that we're not living together. It's not a relationship problem, but a family one. So, please, calm down. Thank you for the concern and trust you have for me and thank you for your support. I can't drink, so I'll toast with juice instead. Cheers.”

Bai Yinning, who was here for a business meeting, came downstairs. When he passed the hall, he heard Lin Xinyan's voice. At the start, he thought he had misheard someone else's voice, but when he looked in her direction, his eyes told him otherwise.

As usual, Lin Xinyan stood out in the crowd.

Bai Yinning frowned. *She's not at B City. Why is she here?*

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When Mr. Li, who he was having business talks with earlier, noticed Bai Yinning's gaze, he asked, "Do you know her?"

Bai Yinning shook his head. "No."

He was not intentionally drawing a line between him and Lin Xinyan; he did not want Mr. Li to know about his relationship with her. Business was business. Bai Yinning did not want to show any part of his private life to others.

He said to Gao Yuan, "Let's go."

Gao Yuan glanced at Lin Xinyan before lowering his head to look at Bai Yinning. He sighed inwardly. *I've been working for you for a long time. How can I not know what you're thinking about?*

The colder he looked on the outside, the more emotions surged on the inside.

Lin Xinyan had been focused on changing the tense atmosphere; she did not notice Bai Yinning's presence.

After drinking the juice, she looked at the rest. "We're all from different places, but we've met each other here. I think this is fate. I hope we can work harmoniously."

"Of course. I was too rash earlier. I shouldn't have asked you those questions," the woman who had started the heated discussion answered. After all, she had only been curious; she had no intentions of crossing anyone. *Lin Xinyan's right. We're colleagues. It won't be good for us if this dinner end terribly.*

“Come, let’s toast. We’ll toast with tea instead. Let’s put our past behind us. Sometimes, we just say the wrong words. It’s normal. But after drinking this glass, we’ll put this behind us. We’ll still be friendly with each other.” Qin Ya was first to raise her glass to toast with the others. After Lin Xinyan and Qin Ya’s speech, no one dared to continue the topic.

Lin Xinyan and Shao Yun were some of the nicer bosses they had come across. Furthermore, it was not long since they had started work, but they already had a gathering. Everyone was relatively satisfied with the job, and they were more than willing to put effort into their work. After all, no one would say no to the good pay.

When dinner was over, Shao Yun was the one to send the others back. On the other hand, Lin Xinyan and Qin Ya led the kids as they slowly walked out of the restaurant.

It did not seem like a long dinner, but the sky was dark now. Lin Xinyan pulled open the car door to let the two children climb into the car.

“Can I have a word with you?”

Suddenly, a voice came from behind her. It sounded familiar, but she did not dare to jump to conclusions on the identity of its owner. Lin Xinyan slowly turned around to see Bai Yinning in his wheelchair. Baffled, she thought, *Why is he here?*

“Are you free?” Bai Yinning asked again, hearing no response from Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan nodded, coming back to her senses. She then looked at Qin Ya and muttered, “Please send the kids home first.”

Zong Yanchen tugged on the edge of her shirt. “Mommy, come home quickly. Yanxi and I will be waiting for you.”

He did not hate Bai Yinning, but he was afraid of this man stealing his mother away while his father was not here.

If he had to choose, he would naturally pick his biological father. Moreover, his parents did not split because of relationship issues. Therefore, Zong Yanchen had to be wary of Bai Yinning's sudden appearance.

He had to keep his mother safe while his father was away; he could not let someone with such intention steal her away from his father.

Thinking that her son was only concerned about her, Lin Xinyan patted his head and smiled. "All right. I'll go home soon."

Qin Ya peered at the road before she drove off.

It was after the car had left, did Lin Xinyan turned back to face Bai Yinning. She inquired, "Why are you here?"

"For business. There have been many issues with the company, so I have to come to expand my business. I can't let the Bai family's business collapse while I'm in charge. Otherwise, I'll let my adoptive father down." He sounded nonchalant, but he had been busy and exhausted recently. Although the company did not collapse, its issues had hit it hard, and he had to leave the real estate industry.

In the past, Lin Xinyan would not know what his words truly meant. However, after starting up the embroidery studio and textile factory, she realized running a business was no easy task.

Even though she did not have many employees, she had come across many matters.

For example, a fight nearly started during dinner today. *They're right about inevitable conflicts within a group.*

“Shall we walk?” Bai Yinning suggested.

Lin Xinyan nodded. Instead of picking somewhere specific to head to, they strolled at the side of the road.

“I’m afraid I’m breaking my promise again. I said I won’t see you, but I’m doing that again.” He lowered his gaze.

He had made a decision not to go to B City back then. He had mustered all his courage and persistence and told himself it was time to let go.

Yet, fate had made them meet each other again. *What does that mean?*

Is God toying with me? Have I not suffered enough? Do I have to desire for her even though I know it’s fruitless?

Lin Xinyan was quiet as she slowly walked beside him.

“Why are you here?” What he wanted to ask was “Did something happen between Zong Jinghao and you?” but he did not voice it out loud. After all, it did not seem like the right question to ask.

She was not alone here; her two children were with her. That was why Bai Yinning could not help but overthink.

“I have some things to do. That’s why I’m here.” Lin Xinyan did not know how to explain her circumstances. She felt her identity might sound ridiculous.

Upon hearing her answer, Bai Yinning knew she was not telling him the truth; the answer was too vague.

However, he did not voice that out loud too. Instead, he queried, “Does it have something to do with him?”

Both knew he was talking about Zong Jinghao.

Lin Xinyan murmured, "We're fine. Don't think too much about it."

Bai Yinning smiled. "Honestly, I'm gloating a little on the inside. I'm hoping that he'd fall in love with someone else, and that's why you're here. That you've come to patch yourself here, and God has arranged for our fated meeting. That I can take care of you."

"You might want to try out for a screenwriter position."

"I want to. I want to let go of the mess I have right now and spend the rest of my life freely. But I can't be that heartless. I can't just leave everything behind." He stared numbly at the pavement in front of him. Bai Yinning, who always covered up his joy and sorrows with a smile, could not plaster on a smile now.

Hearing his words, Lin Xinyan asked, concerned, "Trouble with the company?"

It was only sympathy for him; no emotion was involved in her question.

Bai Yinning softly hummed in response.

"Is the competition too strong?" Lin Xinyan asked.

"No. It should be someone venting their anger." Bai Group knew it was not as simple as a competition among his peers. Bai Group's three key businesses had suffered a hit at the same time. Clearly, this was premeditated.

Lin Xinyan raised a brow. The business world was a battlefield without gunfire; everyone in it would do anything for profit.

However, it sounded like Bai Yinning's company matters stemmed from a grudge. "What did you do to make them hate you so much?"

Bai Yinning stopped his wheelchair, and Lin Xinyan's footsteps faltered. He looked up and stared at her quietly on the dark road.

Lin Xinyan reached out to touch her face. "Is there something on my face?"

He shook his head. In his eyes was an indescribable emotion. "I was eyeing someone's wife. That's why he retaliated. Don't I deserve it?"

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Lin Xinyan froze for a moment before realizing who he meant.

Does he mean Zong Jinghao was the one who caused this mess?

Why is he so immature?

“Aren’t you going to say anything?” Bai Yinning looked at her earnestly. He was willing to suffer as long as she showed her concern for him.

Deep down, he chastised himself for acting ridiculously.

Am I crazy? Am I a masochist? I’m doing everything I could just so she could show her concern to me!

“Did you get it wrong?” Lin Xinyan didn’t admit at once.

Bai Yinning was rendered speechless by her question.

Is she pretending not to know? Or she simply doesn’t want to admit her man is petty?

“That’s impossible. He’s the only person I’ve offended so far. None of my rivals dare to hurt me recklessly. They would’ve taken action earlier instead of waiting till now. I don’t believe such a coincidence where everyone took action at the same time. Someone must’ve arranged for that to happen.” Bai Yinning didn’t investigate the matter because he was caught off guard, but he was certain Zong Jinghao was the one behind this.

“Do you know if my men weren’t loyal enough, they would’ve been poached by my rivals? If that really happened, Bai Group would’ve gone bankrupt.”

“I’m expressing my concern now,” Lin Xinyan replied in exasperation. She had no idea Zong Jinghao would do that to Bai Yinning.

To be honest, there wasn’t any conflict of interest between them.

Besides, Bai Yinning returned to Baicheng earlier on and rarely showed up in B City. Lin Xinyan couldn’t figure out why Zong Jinghao would force Bai Yinning into a corner ruthlessly.

That’s too much, she decided.

“Mm?” Bai Yinning arched his brows. *What does she mean?*

Lin Xinyan didn’t look at him. Instead, she stared at the tree shadows by the road. “Well, he’s my husband, so I should stick with him no matter what he did. He has my full support. This is my responsibility as his wife.”

She didn’t agree with what Zong Jinghao did, so she felt sorry for Bai Yinning. However, she couldn’t criticize Zong Jinghao because he was her husband. Besides, she knew Bai Yinning harbored feelings for her. If she showed her sympathy and apology, she’d be misleading him.

Hence, she had to defend her husband and banish Bai Yinning’s feelings.

Bai Yinning parted his lips and laughed out loud. “Stick with him no matter what he did? Well, if he hears this, he’ll wake up from his dream laughing.”

After laughing, he lowered his voice. “Indeed, you deserve each other. You’re both ruthless.”

Lin Xinyan pretended not to understand. "It's getting late, so I should head home now. My kids are waiting for me at home, so I can't stay for long."

"I'll give you a ride home," Bai Yinning offered. He was afraid she'd reject, so he added, "It's dangerous to go home alone at night. I was the one who asked you to stay, so it'll be my fault if anything happens to you."

Lin Xinyan couldn't reject his offer, so Bai Yinning immediately called Gao Yuan. The man was nearby, so he arrived shortly after. Bai Yinning's car had been modified with a ramp to push his wheelchair into the car easily.

There was an empty space for the wheelchair with a seat right beside it.

Once they entered the car, Bai Yinning asked, "Your address?"

After Lin Xinyan told him the neighborhood she was staying in, Gao Yuan started driving and sped off.

Throughout the way, they didn't talk to each other at all.

Bai Yinning didn't utter a word as he was still upset by what Lin Xinyan had just said.

He was mad at himself for being a wimp, but he just couldn't control his emotions.

Love has been troubling everyone since ancient times. Otherwise, those poets wouldn't have written those poems which touch one's feelings.

He had once read a poem that could describe his current feelings: *My love for her is like the moon. She is right in front of my eyes, but forever out of my reach.*

After thirty minutes, the car stopped in front of her neighborhood.

Bai Yinning sighed and clamped down on his emotions. He turned to her and uttered gently, "It's late. Rest soon."

Lin Xinyan didn't get off immediately. Instead, she told Gao Yuan, "Can you please give us some space? I need to talk to Mr. Bai in private."

Gao Yuan looked at Bai Yinning who nodded at him. He proceeded to park the car before he got off.

Soon, both of them were left in the car.

After a brief hesitation, Lin Xinyan revealed calmly, "We're facing some problems. Serious problems, in fact."

"Is that why you came here?" Bai Yinning was surprised at her sudden honesty. He had always thought of her as a calm and collected woman.

He was obviously delighted when she finally opened up to him.

"Yes."

"Do I have a chance?" he inquired earnestly.

"No," Lin Xinyan's reply was cruel. "I am being honest because I've just realized how much I love him right after I decided to leave him temporarily. He's the only man I'll ever love."

Bai Yinning's hope was dashed instantly. Right now, all he felt was dejection and humiliation.

Lin Xinyan pushed the door open and got off the car. She stood in front of the car and looked at Bai Yinning. "You're no longer young, so find yourself a partner as soon as possible. You don't want to end up as a lonely old man, do you? Stop wasting time on me. I look forward to receiving your wedding invitation one day."

Bai Yinning smiled bitterly. "You're really heartless. Aren't you afraid I'll die from your harsh words?"

"You won't. You still need to avenge your adoptive father, right? You will live well." Lin Xinyan waved at him and reminded him to be careful before closing the door. She headed back home, her figure illuminated by the streetlights.

Bai Yinning narrowed his gaze at her retreating figure. A bitter smile crept onto his lips.

I love her for being this frank and direct, right?

Indeed, she's clear about her feelings and never does things sloppily. She's more decisive than most men I know.

How I wish I can hate her, but I can't bring myself to do so.

He wound down the window and yelled, "I'll get married!"

Her reaction today was clear enough. He knew he shouldn't be harboring any hope anymore. *I should bury my feelings deep down, he decided. I'll miss her secretly.*

If he couldn't be with her, anyone would do.

Lin Xinyan heard him, but she didn't turn. She just waved her hand in reply.

Bai Yinning summoned Gao Yuan. Instead of returning to his house, he said, "Let's go to B City."

Gao Yuan was confused. *Why does he want to go to B City now? What did Lin Xinyan tell him? Was triggered by something?*

"Right now?"

Bai Yinning nodded.

“But our collaboration with Mr. Li is still in discussion. If we leave now—”

“You won’t listen to my order now?” Bai Yinning cut him off in displeasure.

He was in a foul mood, so he refused to listen to nonsense right now. All he wanted was to be left alone.

Gao Yuan zipped his mouth shut promptly. He started the car quietly and carried out his boss’ orders.

It was dawn when they finally arrived in B City.

The day started off badly for Bai Yinning. He didn’t expect to be greeted with such bombastic news upon his arrival in B City.

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Wen Qing had selfishly kidnapped someone and caused a car accident with three casualties and one injured passenger. It was all over the news.

Everyone knew Wen Qing and Cheng Yuxiu were at odds. He had always thought Cheng Yuxiu was the one who caused his sister to die at a young age indirectly.

Hence, everyone was inclined to believe the shocking news because Cheng Yuxiu had indeed died in a car accident previously. There were four people in the car, and three of them had died. Back then, everyone was curious why Cheng Yuxiu was in a van, so that was why it became a hot topic now.

The Zong family was an influential family. Even their nanny wouldn't ride in a van. In fact, there wasn't any cheap van in their house. However, Cheng Yuxiu died in one. Wasn't that suspicious? There must be something behind this.

Previously, the official statement explained it was merely a rear-end car accident. There might be suspicions, but no one dared to make wild guesses lest they get sued for spreading rumors. But after the news leaked, the netizens started discussing the incident.

Everyone was interested in gossip, especially gossip regarding the rich and powerful.

No one would be interested in a fight between commoners, but a fight between the rich and powerful was different.

The news had gone viral just because the Zong family was influential and wealthy.

Bai Yinning was dumbfounded. Wen Qing was an influential man, after all. Since the news had spread this quickly, something must've happened.

Could it be Zong Qifeng? Did he fall out with Wen Qing because of Cheng Yuxiu's death? Bai Yinning mused silently.

There's nothing else I can think of. Oh, wait a minute! His eyes widened abruptly.

Did Zong Jinghao find out about his real identity? Is he taking revenge on Wen Qing?

That means Wen Qing was indeed the one who caused Cheng Yuxiu's death?

That assumption made sense to him. Zong Qifeng would've fallen out with Wen Qing earlier on if he had that intention. Wen Qing had always been rude to Cheng Yuxiu, so only the latter made sense.

Zong Jinghao found out Cheng Yuxiu's real identity, so he took revenge on Wen Qing because he needed an answer.

Bai Yinning was glad to see Wen Qing slip up this time. *He deserves it for making my adoptive father suffer back then.*

"Where are we going now?" Gao Yuan questioned. He seemed exhausted as he had been driving the entire night.

Bai Yinning looked at him and answered, "Wanyue Group."

Gao Yuan sighed. *He isn't a fool, but why is he so stubborn when it comes to anything concerning her? He knows she's married with kids, but he still loves her. I wonder what Lin Xinyan told him until he had to rush to B City the same night itself. That was an irrational decision.*

He couldn't understand his boss' orders, but he didn't voice his doubts and drove to Wanyue Group as ordered.

Right then, in the President's office in Wanyue Group, the huge screen which had always been used during conference calls or used to observe the stock market trend was used to watch the news instead.

Both Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan were lying on the sofa lazily while watching the news.

Zong Jinghao's plan had worked. The man Gu Bei sent to carry out an investigation had picked up the clue arranged by Shen Peichuan and found out Wen Qing was involved in Chen Qing's downfall.

When something happened to Chen Qing, Gu Bei had suspected Wen Qing would help Chen Qing because of their prior relationship. To his surprise, Wen Qing turned a blind eye. He was utterly disappointed with Wen Qing's actions.

That was why he trusted the investigation report handed to him by his subordinate. Besides, he also found out Wen Qing had indeed forced Zong Jinghao to marry, so he was certain the report was true.

His subordinate reported that Zong Jinghao and Wen Qing were at odds because of a woman. Back then, Zong Jinghao had a lover he adored very much, but Wen Qing hated that woman. So, he did his best to break them up and ended up infuriating Zong Jinghao.

Of course, Shen Peichuan wouldn't allow Gu Bei's subordinate to find out the woman Wen Qing had forced to leave was none other than Chen Qing's daughter.

Gu Bei's subordinate only managed to find out that Wen Qing had forced Zong Jinghao to marry someone, but he couldn't find out who that woman was.

If Gu Bei found out Wen Qing had forced Zong Jinghao to marry Chen Qing's daughter, then it wouldn't make sense for them to frame him for harming Chen Qing.

The results from both investigations were to let Gu Bei believe Wen Qing was behind Chen Qing's downfall. He wanted Gu Bei to think of Wen Qing as a cruel and heartless man. The reason why Zong Jinghao deliberately revealed everything to Gu Bei was because he was at odds with Wen Qing.

That way, everything would make sense, and Gu Bei would immediately take action against Wen Qing.

If they turned against each other, it would be an interesting scene.

"Next, we'll reveal the identities of the two other deceased in the car accident. Wen Qing won't be able to deny his involvement in the matter."

Once they revealed the fact that two other deceased were thugs, it would be obvious that Cheng Yuxiu died in the car accident because she was kidnapped.

He knew Gu Bei had evidence of Wen Qing asking him to kidnap Cheng Yuxiu. Otherwise, he wouldn't have taken action when he knew who Wen Qing was.

He must've come well-prepared.

However, Zong Jinghao wasn't about to let Gu Bei off the hook. Everyone who was involved in Cheng Yuxiu's kidnapping would have to pay the price.

Right now, all they had to do was to wait until Gu Bei played all his cards before taking action.

They had managed to find the person who hired the little boy's cousin. That person was none other than the subordinate of Gu Bei's manager.

Hence, they had arranged for that subordinate to get in touch with Gu Bei's manager. They would take photos secretly once both men met to prove Gu Bei was indeed involved in this matter.

As Wen Qing's involvement was already a hot topic, it would be very entertaining if another bigshot were implicated.

"The sun has come up. Should we have some breakfast?" Shen Peichuan glanced at Zong Jinghao who was buried under a mountain of work on his desk.

The man's shirt was wrinkled while his tie was hanging askew in front of his chest. As he had just acquired two major companies without prior notice, he had to deal with the consequences. First, he had to come up with a strategic plan in order for his investment not to go to waste by taking advantage of the companies and getting the maximum benefits possible.

Shen Peichuan shot Su Zhan a look. "We'll get some takeout for him?"

They couldn't stand by and do nothing when he was torturing himself, right? Their friend was busy dealing with Wen Qing and his company until he had no time to rest.

Su Zhan was really lethargic, too. He wouldn't have stood up if Shen Peichuan hadn't pulled him up.

When they opened the door, they bumped into Guan Jing who was leading someone to the office.

Shen Peichuan was stunned to see Bai Yinning here.

Did he come to interfere after hearing about Wen Qing's matter?

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Even Su Zhan perked up upon seeing this uninvited guest. He was full of disdain for this man who lusted after his friend's wife. "Ah, a rare guest indeed. What are you planning this time?"

Bai Yinning ignored him and looked at Guan Jing. "Please inform him I'm here."

"Stop putting on an act. You're acting like a gentleman even though deep down you harbor ill intentions. How could you be so shameless?"

"I'm shameless?" Bai Yinning snorted. He didn't want to argue with Su Zhan, but the man's words made him furious. "Did your wife cheat on you with me? Why do you hate me so much?"

"You—"

Shen Peichuan immediately stopped Su Zhan lest they really start hitting each other. "You're all famous people. Don't humiliate yourself in public."

Bai Yinning glared at them. "Chief Shen, he provoked me first. I might be a cripple, but that doesn't mean I don't have a temper!"

Shen Peichuan glanced at him and scoffed before leaving with Su Zhan in tow. Su Zhan refused to back down and tried to break free from his grasp.

"Stop it. Do you really want to get into a fight with him here?" Shen Peichuan reminded him and pulled his hand. "Let's go have breakfast."

Su Zhan was disgruntled. "I'm not in the mood to eat."

“You have to eat no matter what. Do you think you can survive just by breathing?” Shen Peichuan demanded. *Why do they like to torture themselves?* He thought in exasperation.

“We don’t have enough men. If it wasn’t for Gu Bei, I would’ve sent someone to find out where Xinyan and Qin Ya were. As soon as this is over, I’ll send our men to find their whereabouts.”

He would’ve sent his men after the girls if they had enough manpower.

“I was mad at Bai Yinning. He’s too harsh.”

“I know. Don’t worry, he’ll end up in our hands later. You can punish him by then.” Shen Peichuan patted his shoulder to comfort him.

Su Zhan grunted in agreement. As there was a store selling breakfast across the street, they made their way there.

The store was on the third floor. On the right side was a glass wall. You could see the splendid view outside no matter where you were seated. After sitting down, Shen Peichuan ordered three bowls of century egg and pork congee with a few other side dishes. When he returned the menu to the server, he said, “Please pack up one serving of the congee.”

“No problem. Your order will be here soon,” the waiter replied and left.

Shen Peichuan picked up the glass of free water and took a sip. When he placed it back on the table, he asked, “You’re acting strangely. What’s wrong?”

Su Zhan sighed. “Don’t you think we’re weirdos?”

“Weirdos? How so?” Shen Peichuan furrowed his brows. *What is he going to say now?*

“We’re no longer young. Besides our career, what else do we have?”

This was the first time Shen Peichuan had ever seen Su Zhan being so pessimistic. He was the most cheerful one among the three of them. Su Zhan might be talkative, but it still felt strange when he became quiet all of a sudden.

He would rather let Su Zhan tease him about him being a virgin than being this quiet.

Shen Peichuan couldn’t enjoy his meal upon seeing a dejected Su Zhan. The food was delicious, but it tasted bland to him.

Crash! Suddenly, the sound of glass shattering on the floor was heard. A new waitress had bumped into a customer. The glass of water she was holding spilled onto the customer’s body before it shattered into pieces on the ground.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” The new waitress hurriedly apologized.

As the server’s voice seemed familiar, Shen Peichuan turned to see who it was. He saw Sang Yu dressed in the store’s uniform—an apron with white flowers embroidered on it. She was bowing and apologizing to the customer.

Actually, the male customer was the one who stood up abruptly and bumped into her. Her manager had told her when she was hired, “Our customers are mostly working nearby, so they are really influential. If a conflict arises, we need to apologize first. The customer is king, get it?”

That was what her manager had told her, so the first thing she did was apologize profusely.

However, this middle-aged man dressed in a professional suit insisted, “Are you blind? I have a meeting with an important client later. How can I meet him in this state?”

Sang Yu continued apologizing. “I’m really sorry.”

“What’s the use of apologizing?” The middle-aged man who wore glasses seemed like an easygoing person, but in reality, he refused to back down.

Right then, the manager came to him. “I’m really sorry for the poor service. This is her first day at work, so she is still getting used to it. Please forgive her this once.”

The middle-aged man scoffed, “Do you know how expensive my suit is? Look at the huge stain. How am I going to meet my client wearing this?”

The manager apologized frantically. “We’re really sorry. I’ll make sure she learns her lesson. Please forgive us.”

“Is saying sorry and asking for forgiveness the right way to solve this problem?” the man demanded.

“Then how do you want them to solve it?” Shen Peichuan strode to them. As this breakfast store was located in the financial district in B City, most of the men were dressed in professional suits. The ladies were clad in formal wear, too. But as Shen Peichuan didn’t work here, he was wearing a casual outfit. He wasn’t even wearing his uniform as he was off duty. Nevertheless, he towered above the middle-aged man. With his icy expression, it was apparent which of the two had the upper hand.

He exuded an oppressive aura because he was used to arresting armed criminals.

The middle-aged man looked up and asked, “Who are you?”

This wasn’t Shen Peichuan’s first time here. He had been here several times with Zong Jinghao, so the manager knew who he was. She immediately greeted him with a smile. “Captain Shen.”

Shen Peichuan didn’t return her smile. Instead, he looked straight at Sang Yu and questioned, “What happened?”

He knew the middle-aged man was after money. If it was Sang Yu's fault, she should compensate him. But if it wasn't her fault, he shouldn't receive any compensation.

The middle-aged man was stunned. The surrounding buildings were all leading corporations, so he didn't know which captain was the manager referring to. He had never heard of that form of address here.

At that thought, he glowered at the manager. "Don't try to scare me."

Sang Yu glanced at the arrogant man and replied honestly, "I was going to serve the customer at that table. He was sitting here." She pointed at the man's seat. "Then, he stood up before walking toward me with his eyes on his phone—"

"What nonsense is that!" The man declared.

Shen Peichuan swept his gaze across the man's phone in his right hand. The man took a step back instinctively. Su Zhan, who had been watching the entire debacle, leaned back against his chair lazily. "Mister, where do you work?" He despised bullies like that middle-aged man.

The man glanced at Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan before realizing they obviously weren't people he should mess with. He snorted and said, "Forget it. What an unlucky day."

With that, he turned and left.

Su Zhan's sarcastic voice rang out, "Hey, don't leave. Why are you leaving? We haven't compensated you for your loss. Do you know Wanyue Group right across the street? We'll be waiting for you there."

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At Su Zhan's words, the man's steps quickened as he hurried away, wiping the cold sweat away from his forehead in fear.

"Captain Shen, do you know her?" the manager asked. As Shen Peichuan had talked to Sang Yu, it was evident they knew each other.

But how did Shen Peichuan know this broke college student? She wondered.

Shen Peichuan answered, "Yes." He knew the manager knew his position and his relationship with Zong Jinghao, so she'd take care of Sang Yu as long as he asked for her help.

"Please take care of her. She's still young and naïve."

The manager grinned. "No problem. I'll do my best since you've asked for my help."

Shen Peichuan chatted with the manager for a while before returning to his seat. Su Zhan had a comical expression on his face. *How could he return after saving the damsel in distress without expressing his concern for the damsel?*

Su Zhan touched his forehead, utterly speechless. *When will this old man come to his senses? When will he get himself a wife? Why didn't he protect the pretty and budding flower? I can't believe he came right back to finish his food!*

As long as he shows off, she'll be moved to tears and fall for him right on the spot! Isn't that a splendid chance to seduce the young girl?

But that fool returned to his seat just like that.

Sang Yu stared at Shen Peichuan's retreating figure before lowering her gaze. She didn't expect to meet him here, let alone knew he'd help her once again.

The manager patted her shoulder. "Do your best. I didn't know you know Shen Peichuan. Do you know who he is?"

Sang Yu nodded. The first time she met him, he had helped her mother to give her some money. Back then, when he introduced himself, he mentioned he was a police captain. She was full of respect for his occupation.

He seems indifferent. I must've misunderstood him back then.

The manager pointed at the building across the street. "He's close to the President of Wanyue Group. Have you ever seen the President?"

Sang Yu recalled seeing three men in the VIP room that night. Two of them were here, so the other one should be Mr. Zong, the President of Wanyue Group, as explained by her manager.

"I think I have," she returned honestly.

The manager cast a thoughtful gaze at the young and pretty girl. "I heard they are all single."

She was insinuating that Sang Yu would be lucky enough to hook up with any of them as they were all hot, powerful and wealthy.

Those men were rare bachelors. If the manager wasn't married with kids, she would've made a move on either one of them.

Alas, her age and looks stopped her from having that thought.

Sang Yu was so innocent she didn't know what her manager was insinuating. She dismissed her words as nonsense.

“Sweep the floor. Next time, be more careful and alert.” The manager glanced at Shen Peichuan and Su Zhan’s table before reminding her.

Sang Yu nodded humbly. “I will work hard. This will never happen again.”

Then, she took a cloth and started cleaning the puddle and shards of glasses on the ground.

Su Zhan gazed at the young girl kneeling on the ground before he asked Shen Peichuan, “Do you not sympathize with her?”

“You’re crazy.” Shen Peichuan didn’t even look at her. Indeed, he wanted a wife, but he wouldn’t consider Sang Yu. She was too young for his liking. He would never be able to live it down because he was so much older than her.

For some reason, he felt it was immoral to date someone as young as her.

Besides, it would be awkward if people thought she was his daughter.

Su Zhan was so frustrated. *Looks like I have to help him get a wife*, he thought. He stood up instantly and glared at Shen Peichuan. “If it isn’t for me, you’ll remain single forever.”

“What are you doing?” Shen Peichuan had a bad feeling that he was about to do something silly.

Strangely, he felt uneasy about it.

Su Zhan shot him a look. “Look at you. I’m going to get you a wife.”

“Su—”

Shen Peichuan was about to stop Su Zhan, but his friend had already made his way to Sang Yu and crouched down in front of her. He helped her pick up the

glass shards while asking, “Do you know who I am? We met in the VIP room that day.”

Sang Yu met his gaze and answered, “Yes.”

“The man who had just helped you is my friend. How did you know each other?”

Sang Yu revealed how she met Shen Peichuan honestly. There was no need for her to lie, anyway.

“Oh, I see.” Su Zhan grinned. “If he does something wrong, please forgive him. You know what his job is, right?”

“Mm,” Sang Yu returned. She was full of admiration for this man. That was because she grew up in a poor family. She saw how hard her mother had to work to support her family. Hence, she instinctively thought police officers were just and righteous.

Su Zhan leaned over and whispered, “Let me tell you, he’s such a plank. He might be old, but he has never been in love. Can you believe it?”

Sang Yu shook her head. *Wow, he’s indeed a plank. I can’t believe he hasn’t been in love at his age.*

“Isn’t he a weirdo?”

“A little,” Sang Yu replied truthfully.

“Don’t look down on him. He’s merely pure and innocent. There aren’t many people like him nowadays.”

Sang Yu felt like giggling. It was strange to describe a man in his thirties as pure and innocent.

Shen Peichuan held his forehead silently. He watched on as Sang Yu laughed at something Su Zhan said, suppressing the urge to give that man a kick. *Has he lost his ability to walk after seeing another woman? He looked like he was about to die for Qin Ya just a while ago. How could he change his mind that fast and find himself a young university student?*

Won't he feel guilty at all?

“You have a lot of friends in university, right? Can you do me a favor and introduce a pretty girl to him? But, don't tell him about it. Otherwise, he'll feel shy.”

The smile on Sang Yu's face faded away. She didn't know why she felt uncomfortable at Su Zhan's idea. “He wants a girlfriend who is in university? Isn't that a big age gap?”

“If it's a senior year student, it wouldn't be a big age gap. Actually, up to nine years of age difference is fine. He's surrounded by male colleagues. I once suspected he's gay,” Su Zhan explained and gave her shoulder a pat. “You have to help me. I can't bear to see him getting old alone.”

Sang Yu lowered her gaze and mumbled in agreement.

“Are you done?” Shen Peichuan had already paid for their breakfast. He came over to them and shot Su Zhan an icy look. *Look at how shameless he is. How dare he flirt with every woman he sees? I must tell Qin Ya to dump this playboy!*

Su Zhan coughed and stood up. He looked at an obviously upset Shen Peichuan and pouted. “Why are you upset? Are you jealous because we were chatting happily?”

Sang Yu stopped in her tracks at Su Zhan's words. Her ears perked up earnestly as she waited for Shen Peichuan's reply.

Shen Peichuan ignored them and left the store without saying a word. Su Zhan ran after him and flung his arm around his neck, "Are you mad at me?"

Shen Peichuan said nothing.

"You don't like her, but I do. You won't stop me from pursuing her, right?"

Shen Peichuan shoved his hand away. "Can you be any more shameless?"

Su Zhan wasn't furious at his comment. Instead, he chuckled and followed him back to the company.

When they bumped into Guan Jing at the elevator, Shen Peichuan questioned, "Has Bai Yinning left yet?"

"No, he's still in Mr. Zong's office," came Guan Jing's reply.

Bai Yinning had entered the President's office some time ago, but Zong Jinghao refused to speak to him and ignored him deliberately.

He sighed before commenting, "I wonder why Yan fell for a petty man like you."

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The man finally looked up from the file he was holding.

Bai Yinning knew what his weakness was, so he hit the mark accurately. He was certain Zong Jinghao wouldn't be able to focus on work and continued ignoring him after he mentioned Lin Xinyan's name.

"If I guess correctly, you must be the one causing me troubles recently," Bai Yinning continued. "You're seriously a petty man. Don't you trust your wife?"

Zong Jinghao flung his pen onto the table nonchalantly, creating a jarring noise in the otherwise silent room. He seemed restless as he tugged his tie off while sweat trickled down his body. "Mr. Bai, you seem to be in good spirits. Looks like you're free enough to poke into other people's businesses!"

Bai Yinning had hidden his exhaustion well. He was busy dealing with the mess, which obviously wasn't going to be resolved soon. He wasn't here to argue with Zong Jinghao.

Originally, he wanted to ask Zong Jinghao why a pregnant Lin Xinyan insisted on leaving him.

After finding out about Wen Qing, he also wanted to know everything about that incident.

"Yan tried her best to keep it from you, but you found out about it in the end. You were the one behind Wen Qing's downfall, right?"

He knew nothing, so he could only guess through the information he had obtained earlier.

After saying that, something occurred to him. *Did Lin Xinyan leave because Zong Jinghao blamed her for hiding the truth from him?*

That's the only reason that makes sense.

He sneered, "She told me she'll stick with you no matter what because you're her husband. Ha! I don't think you're worth her effort."

Zong Jinghao's expression darkened slowly. He said nothing as dark clouds gathered around him.

Bai Yinning knew when to stop before the matter escalated. He broke the silence by saying, "I'm here to thank you, Mr. Zong. I hope Wen Qing can suffer badly so my adoptive father can rest in peace."

Zong Jinghao was on the verge of exploding in anger. "Thank me? Why does that sound like a taunt?"

Bai Yinning replied, "Mr. Zong, don't be mad. To prove my sincerity, I have something to tell you. Yan knew about Cheng Yuxiu's existence, but she didn't tell you for your own good. She was afraid you couldn't accept the fact that you once despised your own mother. She even came to me for help. I believe you must've guessed it some time ago. You're the only one who knows why you refused to reveal it."

The actual reason he came was to clear the air between Lin Xinyan and Zong Jinghao. He didn't want her to raise her child on her own.

However, he had no idea that wasn't the problem between Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan.

Zong Jinghao rose to his feet. His shirt was ruffled, but the man was still dignified. He towered above Bai Yinning and announced, "Mr. Bai, you know a lot. However, you're too full of yourself. You know nothing, and your actions disgust me."

Bai Yinning merely chuckled. “Really?”

“Mr. Bai, your subordinates are indeed loyal. I wonder will they change their minds if I promise more benefits and double the pay? Actually, I’m very interested in your talented men.” He had successfully dealt a debilitating blow on Bai Group, but in the end, he failed to poach Bai Yinning’s men.

Nevertheless, he believed he’d succeed in poaching his men one day. As long as he wanted, he could even dig a hole in a mountain.

Both men stared at each other wordlessly for some time before Zong Jinghao burst out laughing. “It was a joke. Why do you seem so upset, Mr. Bai?”

Bai Yinning narrowed his gaze and said nothing.

After a long silence, he calmed down. “I gave up what I wanted most, so you can take Bai Group if that’s what you want. However, I must say that you’ve lost all my respect. If I were you, I wouldn’t let my wife leave me no matter what had happened. You’re weaker than me in that aspect.”

With that, he pushed himself out of the office. At the door, he stopped and declared, “If not for the fact that I am a cripple, and that she loves you; I would’ve stepped up to fight against you.”

Bai Yinning left Wanyue. He had planned to leave right after meeting Zong Jinghao, but after finding out about Wen Qing, he went to Zong Qifeng instead. He only realized upon arrival that Zong Qifeng wasn’t in B City. The man had departed to Baicheng with Cheng Yuwen.

As Zong Jinghao had found out the truth, he would make sure Wen Qing gets punished. Hence, there was no need for Bai Yinning to remain in B City. He wasn’t able to defeat Wen Qing here, anyway. Therefore, all there was left for him to do was to wait for the news of Wen Qing’s downfall.

However, Bai Yinning delegated the discussion of a collaboration with Mr. Li in C City to a manager in his company.

Gao Yuan was confused. *Why did he rush to B City and return without doing anything? He's even refusing to go to C City now! I really don't get him.*

Doesn't he love Lin Xinyan? Isn't this a great chance?

"Isn't Ms. Lin in C City? Why are we going back to Baicheng?" Gao Yuan realized his boss was getting stranger by the day.

What is going on in his mind?

Back then, Gao Yuan thought he shouldn't be lusting over a married woman. However, Bai Yinning was stubborn. Now that he finally got a chance, he gave it up instead.

Hence, Gao Yuan thought, *This boss of mine is as fickle as April's weather. He's worse than any woman out there.*

Bai Yinning stared out of the window. He had finally realized he was a step too late. Lin Xinyan wasn't meant to be his. He had gotten the wrong person from the very start. Lin Xinyan and Zong Jinghao might not have affection for each other, but their three kids would tie them together.

They would end up together for the sake of their kids.

The only thing I can do now was to give up so she could be happy. I shouldn't persist anymore, since...

He lowered his gaze and stared at his crippled legs.

I can't even make her happy.

I must've been an executioner in my past life who had executed a lot of prisoners, so heaven is punishing me by taking away my legs and making me lose the love of my life.

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Bai Yinning took a short rest after returning to Baicheng and went to see Zong Qifeng. He needed to know urgently what happened while he was busy dealing with the affairs of the company. How did Zong Jinghao find out the truth about Cheng Yuxiu's death and did Lin Xinyan leave because she had concealed the truth from being discovered by Zong Jinghao?

His assumptions were after all only speculations.

He didn't let Gaoyuan come with him and let him rest instead. There were only the driver and Liu with him.

It was easy for him to get any information in his territory. All he needed were a few calls to know where Zong Qifeng was staying after coming to Baicheng.

There were only three of them staying in the huge old manor of the Cheng family, three old men including Cheng Yuwen and Mr. Feng who had come along to take care of Zong Qifeng.

It was a rather peculiar sight, but also desolate at the same time.

As soon as Bai Yinning stepped in, he saw Zong Qifeng lying in a rocking chair in the courtyard, wrapped in a blanket. It was only a few days' time and he seemed to have turned into another person, not the same old spirited him anymore.

After descending from the stairs, he asked Liu to wait for him outside while he pushed his wheelchair forward.

It was already summer. The trees in the courtyard had grown into a profuse, sap-green roof, sheltering an expanse of the ground underneath the trees from the sunlight, where Zong Qifeng's rocking chair lay.

Mr. Feng saw Bai Yinning come in without asking and was afraid he would disturb Zong Qifeng who was resting so he went forward and asked, "May I know who you're looking for?"

Bai Yinning lifted his chin, pointing at Zong Qifeng.

"I'm sorry, Master is not seeing anyone at the moment, please go back." Mr. Feng extended his arm politely into a cue for him to leave.

"I'm crippled. It's inconvenient for me to have come all this way. I have only a few questions to ask and I'm not going to disturb him for long."

Mr. Feng was going to turn him down again but Zong Qifeng who was lying in the rocking chair opened his eyes slowly while turning to Mr. Feng and said, "It's okay. You go ahead with your work. I'll talk to him."

Mr. Feng reminded him, "Don't talk for too long. You need to take care of your health."

The death of Cheng Yuxiu was a huge blow to him and his mental health condition was getting worse by the day.

Zong Qifeng replied, "I'm not dying yet."

Mr. Feng turned around and went into the house in a sigh. Bai Yinning apologized, "I'm sorry for bothering you."

Zong Qifeng knew Bai Yinning's identity and could guess his intention of coming over, so he spoke in a very direct manner, "Just ask about anything you want to know."

Bai Yinning first expressed his grief over Cheng Yuxiu's death, "I didn't expect it would be our last encounter when I saw her in B city earlier. If I had known that, we wouldn't have parted on bad terms."

There was not much emotion on Zong Qifeng's face, as though his sorrow and longing were all buried at the bottom of his heart.

Bai Yinning started to ask directly after expressing his grief. After all, Zong Qifeng had been straightforward so he should restrain himself from beating around the bush and disturbed him for too long.

What happened in B City among Zong Jinghao, Wen Qing and Lin Xinyan, and their entanglements were the things he wanted to figure out. As someone who had been through it, Zong Qifeng must know the details so he asked his questions all at once.

Zong Qifeng turned to look at him nonchalantly and told him everything that happened recently without concealing anything. Bai Yinning's assumption was right. Zong Jinghao found out the identity of Cheng Yuxiu and he had something to do with what happened to Wen Qing.

A father would know his son very well. After discovering the truth, Zong Jinghao would definitely investigate the car accident thoroughly. Whether it was an accident or a conspiracy, time would always tell.

Bai Yinning nodded, thinking that it was almost just as what he had guessed. He asked again, "So did Lin Xinyan leave because Zong Jinghao resented her for keeping him away from the truth?"

"What?" Zong Qifeng looked at him in shock. *Lin Xinyan left?* After the funeral of Cheng Yuxiu, he had come to Baicheng because Cheng Yuwen said staying there would make him think about his sister and feel sad. Everything was all too familiar except she was no longer there. Hence, the emotional blow was just unbearable to him.

"You don't know about it?" It was Bai Yinning's turn to be fuddled. *Could it be that Lin Xinyan was not leaving because of this?*

Sighing, he thought that maybe Lin Xinyan was leaving because she had found out about her own origin.

“There’s no such thing as a forever concealed secret.” No matter how long it would take, the truth would always be truth and no one could conceal it forever.

“She is the daughter of Wen Xian. Maybe she had left after knowing about her real identity. It was this I feared but this day has still come.”

He thought that the divorce between Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan earlier on was good for both of them. After all, if they were together and found out the truth later, they might have some grudge against each other. He had promised Wen Xian back then because he did not have the heart to reject her. Later on, he wanted He Ruilin from the He family to marry Zong Jinghao in order to break the relationship between Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan completely.

In fact, the arranged marriage was not that important. It was mainly because he wanted Zong Jinghao to get married as soon as possible.

No one would have expected that after all the twists and turns, Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan ended up finding their way back into each other’s arms. And later, the incident about Cheng Yuxiu happened.

He was not being honest because he was afraid that conflicts would arise between them when they found out about the truth. But he failed to stop them.

Zong Qifeng sighed again, “I’m getting old and things are getting out of my hand.”

Let them be.

Bai Yinning was astounded by his answer. *Lin Xinyan is Wen Xian’s daughter. Wouldn’t that make Wen Qing her uncle?*

But her uncle killed Zong Jinghao’s biological mother?

So she had no choice but to leave?

“How is this possible?” Bai Yinning couldn’t believe it. *If that were the case, then wouldn’t it be awkward for them to be together?*

He felt as though he had been struck by lightning. *This is unthinkable.*

He was shocked, but at the same time, he felt sorry played out by fate.”

So she left because of this. How distressed it must be for her. She has done nothing but was dragged into this mess because of the previous generation.

Just then, Cheng Yuwen came in from outside. Although he was in Baicheng, he had been paying attention to what was happening in B City. He hated Wen Qing. From Cheng Yuxiu being captivated previously to the kidnapping incident and car accident this time, all these were Wen Qing’s works.

Cheng Yuwen supported Zong Jinghao in everything he did. If he had remained indifferent after knowing the truth, he couldn’t be considered human.

After all, Cheng Yuxiu was his biological mother.

It could only be right to avenge the death of one’s mother.

“He thought he could evade punishment just by coming forward to admit his sin?” Cheng Yuwen asked coldly.

He received the latest news from B City about Wen Qing admitting that he was behind the kidnapping incident which caused the car accident.

Hearing this, Bai Yinning was not as happy as before. He felt conflicted because the person he wanted to revenge on turned out to be Lin Xinyan’s closest relative. What an irony.

If Wen Qing's reputation is destroyed, will I really be happy?

The answer was no. He would find himself to be stuck in confusion.

He would be entangled, thinking whether Lin Xinyan would be upset or finding it hard to deal with.

He would rather not know this news and he regretted coming over to find Zong Qifeng. He regretted finding out about all these incidents.

Without knowing all these, he could readily accept the news of Wen Qing's downfall and could calmly go to Bai Hongfei's tomb to tell him that Wen Qing had paid for what he did.

But now...

Closing his eyes, Bai Yinning felt that he had been given a severe blow.

Meanwhile in B City, because Wen Qing had come forward to admit every one of his wrongdoing, the already hot topics and news were pushed to another level.

After all the days he spent with Zong Jinghao, Wen Qing knew his personality quite well. He was certain Zong Jinghao would make his moves or he wouldn't be Zong Jinghao.

Consequently, not only did Wen Qing admit to kidnapping Cheng Yuxiu, but he had also turned Gu Bei in. This was regarded as his sincerity in conceding his mistakes to Zong Jinghao.

Knowing that he could not escape from everything he had done, his only wish then was to meet Lin Xinyan and ask for her forgiveness.

The most astounded person among them was Gu Bei. He was planning to give Wen Qing a hard time but to his surprise, Wen Qing came forward and even sold him out, causing him the chagrin of shooting himself in the foot.

After the press conference, Wen Qing went to Wanyue Group.

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After hearing from Guan Jing that Wen Qing had come, Su Zhan sneered, “He thought he would be forgiven just like that?”

Zong Jinghao sat at his desk in silence. He did not expect that Wen Qing would take the initiative to admit his faults. This move was clearly trying to please him.

Wen Qing had a staid personality and he valued his reputation. Making advances by retreating was a clever move and he was stumped. It would seem unkind of him to just finish him off.

Shen Peichuan glanced at Su Zhan for he did not agree with Su Zhan. In his opinion, Wen Qing taking the initiative to admit his wrongdoings was clearly a sign of his desire for reconciliation. He looked at Zong Jinghao. “Why don’t you just meet him? After all, he’s Xinyan’s...”

Even if he doesn’t care about others, he should put himself in Lin Xinyan’s shoes.

“She left you in hopes of not putting you in a difficult situation. You should think of her before making a move.”

Regardless of how reluctant he was to admit it, the relationship between them could not be erased. Wen Qing was indeed Lin Xinyan’s uncle.

Zong Jinghao did not raise his head all this while. His voice was also very low. “You all just leave first and let him in.”

It was impossible for him to not have thought about something that even Shen Peichuan knew clearly. But still, he couldn’t overcome the hurdle deep within his heart.

How could the hatred he had toward someone who had killed his mother be so easily dismissed? It was because of Wen Qing he had to regret for life.

This was a dead knot in his heart. The trace would always be there and it would never disappear regardless of time.

Wen Qing walked in wearing casual wear with Li Jing holding him. It wasn't long since they last met but it felt like it had been a century after everything that happened. Too many things had changed, and even the people too.

Li Jing helped Wen Qing to the sofa and said lightly, "When you want to leave, just call out to me. I'll be waiting outside for you."

Wen Qing agreed.

Li Jing lowered her head and went out from the office. In the current situation, she had nothing to say to Zong Jinghao, so she didn't even say hello to him.

When the door was closed, the entire space fell into complete silence. It was Wen Qing who broke the silence first. "Ji has left the entertainment industry and joined the army. I guess he hasn't come to see you yet."

Li Zhan, who knew the ins and outs was ashamed to see anyone.

"I'm not here to make excuses or to plead with you. What I did deserves retribution and punishment and I will never shirk any of it."

Li Zhan joining the army and him coming forward to admit everything was no coincidence. It was what he had planned for himself. His relationship with Li Zhan was never good so others were not clear about his identity. He had been in office for so many years and had a few confidants. It was not difficult to get Li Zhan in. Besides, he did not enter as his son, so it would not affect Li Zhan even if he made a huge mistake.

He did all this because he did not want the Wen family to collapse just because of him.

Li Zhan willingly joined the army because he knew Wen Qing had to be punished accordingly for the incident to be quelled. So he went to the army to strive for the Wen family so that Wen Qing would have no worries to come forward to admit and face everything.

Wen Qing knew that he had no one to blame or chide. Even though it was unknown to him, a mistake was a mistake. He only wanted to capture Cheng Yuxiu but he had no intention of taking her life but Cheng Yuxiu was indeed dead because of him.

It was his unavoidable responsibility.

“I have no complaints even if I have to go to jail or ruin my reputation. I only want to see her.” After saying so much, he didn’t look up. It was only by the end that he raised his head to look at Zong Jinghao.

He hated Cheng Yuxiu but he had never had the intention to kill her. If he really wanted to take her out, it would have been done over twenty years ago when he locked her up. He wouldn’t wait till now.

The only regret he had was he had prevented Wen Xian from being together with the person she liked. He didn’t know that she would be so persistent. After marrying Zong Qifeng, she still didn’t give up. He had no idea that Zong Qifeng would indulge Wen Xian, and even allowed her to find another woman, and absurdly gave birth to an illegitimate child she had with Zhuang Ziyi, hiding the truth from everyone. And neither had he expected that the person he had hated for half his life was the biggest victim in his sister’s plan.

Sorry was a word too light to make up for anything, so he would not say it.

Wen Xian had not only caused harm to others’ life but also his. But what could he say to that? What was he defense?

The cause of the series of problems was Wen Xian. The sister he loved the most since he was a child. He deserved it and he had no one to blame.

Zong Jinghao was facing the French windows with one arm placed on the desk casually, showing only his side profile. No one could see through his expression, his thoughts, and his mind, even his tone was light and without the slightest emotion. "I don't know where she is. She has left more than a month ago."

Stunned, Wen Qing could not believe what he just heard. "And you just let her go? I thought you like her very much?"

How concerned he was about Lin Xinyan previously. That he had even come against me and was not afraid of the plot I've set up together with Chen Qing.

Zong Jinghao turned around slowly. The frosty air wafting from him could make anyone shiver even when there was no emotion shown on his face. "What more do you expect? Do you want her to see how we kill one another?"

Isn't that cruel to her as well?

Wen Qing was suddenly left with nothing to say.

He couldn't make a sound. *That's right. Even if she doesn't admit her origin, my relationship with her was an undeniable fact and Zong Jinghao is her husband. Whose side is she supposed to take?*

Whose death would she want to see?

Pressing against the armrest of the sofa, he stood up slowly. He looked at Zong Jinghao and enunciated each word with a pleading tone, "It's all my fault. Please let her come back."

He then added, "I'll face the consequences of my actions. There's no need for anyone to interfere."

He would now surrender himself to save Zong Jinghao from the trouble of killing him. That way, there would be no killing between him and Zong Jinghao, and Lin Xinyan wouldn't have to feel guilty in front of Zong Jinghao. These were the mistakes he had made and he would have to resolve them personally.

"I know you definitely don't want to see me. This will be the last time we meet." After that, Wen Qing made his way towards the door. He was sent to the hospital in time so there was no major sequela left, but his body was not as good as before and his legs felt weak and not as flexible as they used to be.

He opened the door. Li Jing, upon hearing the noise coming from the door, immediately came over to hold him. "Why don't you just call me?"

"I'm not crippled. I can still walk." Wen Qing had been strong-headed all his life and now he was left with nothing when he was old.

Li Jing sighed, knowing that Wen Qing was blaming himself. She resented Wen Xian. It was her selfishness that had caused misery to the lives of so many around her.

If it weren't for Wen Xian, Wen Qing would not have come this way.

To Li Jing, everything seemed to be Wen Xian's responsibilities. But she dared not mention this in front of her husband because, despite everything that happened, Wen Xian was still his sister. He still cared for her, just like how he cared so much that Lin Xinyan was Wen Xian's child.

If he doesn't care, he would not have come here.

As if to prove what he said to Zong Jinghao was true, Wen Qing surrendered himself after leaving his office, taking Gu Bei along with him. Wen Qing knew Zong Jinghao quite well. Anyone involved in the kidnapping incident would not be easily let go by him.

So he did this for Zong Jinghao, not to please him but it was for Lin Xinyan, in hopes that she would not be guilty when facing him.

Even though Wen Qing had submitted himself, he would not be brought to trial so soon. The result of the judgment had to be supported by evidence from the investigation.

Zong Jinghao did not feel lightened by what Wen Qing told him nor did he feel any satisfaction after seeing how Wen Qing surrendered himself and possibly ruined his reputation. His emotion was complicated and even conflicted.

He wondered whether Lin Xinyan and he could still give each other a hug without having to think of everything that had happened.

He was afraid that he had hurt her.

He was also worried if Wen Qing's surrender would cause her to have spite on him.

This is a huge gap. No matter how things are resolved, there would still be a mark there, separating us from the middle. None of us would dare to bring it up and we could only be meticulous around one another.

During the period when Wen Qing was being investigated, he immersed himself totally in his works. He asked Guan Jing to bring some of his clothes from the villa to the company so he could just rest in the office without the need to go back to the villa when he was tired.

Though a little self-abusive, it was rather fulfilling. He could temporarily forget all the troubles he had and also the person who caused him heartache whenever he thought of her.

Everything was calm until he accidentally saw an invitation card that caused the calm in his heart to ripple. It was not that the card was special nor was it something he was interested in, but the name on it.

