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“What?” said Lin Xinyan as she tensed up. They had just hung out some time ago, so how did Qin Ya suddenly become so sick that she was hospitalized?

“What happened?” asked Lin Xinyan in a worried tone.

“I don’t know the specific either. She’s in the second branch of the People’s Hospital.”

Lin Xinyan started the car and drove over.

Zong Jinghao leaned closer and nonchalantly placed his hand on her thigh. Lin Xinyan was wearing a black shirt, a pair of jeans, and a coat that matched her perfectly. His palm burned as he caressed her and cooed, “Stay calm.”

Lin Xinyan shot a look at his hand before informing, “She’s pregnant, so being hospitalized is not a good thing.”

Zong Jinghao suddenly pinched her leg, and Lin Xinyan frowned as she warned, “I. Am. Driving.”

Zong Jinghao stared intently at Lin Xinyan and claimed, “I want another daughter.”

Lin Xinyan bit her lip. They had never used any protection when they got together, but she still wasn’t pregnant.

When she gave birth to the twins, the doctor informed her that it would be difficult for her to get pregnant again.

At the time, Lin Xinyan thought little of it, because she thought that two kids were enough, but...

“We should get their surnames changed when we’re free,” said Lin Xinyan in a serious tone.

At least one kid had to have the surname of Zong if she and Zong Jinghao got together, but never have another kid.

They couldn’t exactly let Zong Jinghao’s bloodline to end with him.

Zong Jinghao’s hold on Lin Xinyan’s thigh softened, and he caressed her to comfort her instead. He still remembered how Lin Xinyan said that she might never get pregnant again. He thought she was just messing with him.

At that moment, Zong Jinghao realized she was being truthful. They had never used any protection, but she still wasn’t pregnant.

The twins were conceived after a single night of unprotected sex. That proved that Lin Xinyan used to be super fertile. However, the couple had gotten together once more and had been sleeping together for over two months, but they still weren't pregnant.

"I don't want another kid," said Lin Xinyan. She was genuinely terrified, and she still remembered what the labor pain was like.

Even thinking about it got her to tremble.

She might be willing to go through that pain again if their relationship was strong, and her body was healthy and fertile.

Unfortunately, being pregnant was no longer possible, so she might as well give him a definite answer. It was worse if he held out for hope and fantasized about it.

He won't be disappointed if he never held out for hope or fantasized about it.

Lin Xinyan parked the car by the hospital's entrance, and the two lovebirds were in sync when they stopped talking about that particular topic. Still, it felt a little awkward.

Zong Jinghao quietly got out of the car, and Lin Xinyan walked over. To break the awkward silence, she asked, "Did Su Zhan call to tell you about this?"

Zong Jinghao murmured a simple reply.

Lin Xinyan thought, Could it be that Su Zhan and Qin Ya got into an argument because he learned she is pregnant? Is that what got her hospitalized?

That made little sense because Su Zhan definitely won't argue with Qin Ya if he knew she was pregnant.

Lin Xinyan was worried about Qin Ya, so the former walked quickly. Zong Jinghao put his arms around her shoulder and held her without saying a word.

Lin Xinyan's anxious heart slowly settled down, and she followed his pace as they walked to the operating theatre.

Su Zhan was in the corridor. He still had that same wet outfit on, but he had been in the hospital for a while, and the air conditioner had dried it up a little.

He paced around the corridor nervously, and when he saw Lin Xinyan and Zong Jinghao walking over, he paused.

"Xinyan..."

"What's wrong? Why is she hospitalized suddenly?" asked Lin Xinyan.

Su Zhan replied in a guilty tone, "This is all my fault."

If I had made things clear with Liu Feifei none of this would've happened, and Qin Ya wouldn't be...

"I asked you what happened," growled Lin Xinyan sternly.

"Liu Feifei captured her, and an explosion injured her..." explained Su Zhan. He gave everyone a summary of what happened, and that got Lin Xinyan's jaw dropped. She couldn't believe it. An explosion?

Lin Xinyan's legs gave way. Luckily, Zong Jinghao was right beside her, so he held her and supported her.

Lin Xinyan's voice trembled when she asked, "Su Zhan, has she told you that she is pregnant?"

Boom!

Su Zhan felt as if lightning had coursed through his veins. Qin Ya is pregnant?

Then the blood on her...

It felt like someone had just clawed a part of his heart out.

Pain... Immense, unearthly pain consumed him.

"You didn't know?" asked Lin Xinyan as she approached Su Zhan. The man's voice had turned so raspy that it was barely comprehensible when he confessed, "No, I didn't..."

Slap!

Lin Xinyan was so angry that she slapped him across the face. After that, she growled, "Qin Ya couldn't get herself to slap you, so I will do it for her. I thought you are an honorable man who will care for her for the rest of her life. I never realized that you are so hesitant!"

None of this would have happened if Su Zhan hadn't been dragging his feet and being indecisive.

Su Zhan had no complaints. He even slapped himself across the face as he said, "This is my fault. This is all on me!"

He regretted his actions, hated himself, and was furious at himself, but mostly, he was heartbroken. Even at that last moment, Qin Ya had his best interest in mind and pushed him into the water. But what about him?

What had he ever done for her?

He should've known that something bad would happen. He should've learned his lesson the last time he went to the hospital!

"I deserve to die. I should just drop dead," said Su Zhan as he fell onto the floor. Tears rolled endlessly down his cheeks, and he looked like a crazy homeless beggar in the streets.

Su Zhan hugged his own head.

Lin Xinyan, on the other hand, stood at the side and never talked to him or comforted him. He was responsible for everything that had happened. He had no one to blame.

Two hours later, the door to the operating theatre finally opened. Su Zhan jumped up and hurried over as soon as he heard the noise. The doctor hadn't even taken his mask off before Su Zhan grabbed the doctor's arm and asked, "How is she?"

Zong Jinghao put his hands on Su Zhan's shoulder and said, "Calm down. He can't talk with you holding him like that."

Su Zhan knew all that, but he couldn't help it. He was terrified that something might've happened to Qin Ya.

Lin Xinyan walked over and apologized to the doctor, "Sorry, he was too agitated."

The doctor waved his hand and cleared his throat to settle down before saying, "It's fine, it's fine. We deal with nervous family members all the time."

Lin Xinyan clenched her fist and asked, "Is she okay? Is the baby...?"

Su Zhan was standing at the side, and he trembled endlessly.

The doctor sighed and replied sadly, "The baby was gone even before the patient arrived at the hospital. Her injuries are grave, and the right side of her face was burned badly. It may not heal, and she may not look the same way she did, but the technology behind plastic surgeries is advanced, so you don't have to lose hope. The good news is that the patient pulled through and survived the incident."

Lin Xinyan's eyes stung with tears. How did she get so hurt?

"Can I see her?" asked Lin Xinyan in a raspy voice.

The doctor shook his head and replied, "She is being transferred to an isolated room. The surgery was a success. Her life is no longer in danger, but her condition is still bad. We're keeping her isolated to prevent her wound from getting infected. We'll transfer her to the regular ward in twenty-four hours, and you guys can visit then."

"Can I at least see her from outside the room? I won't go in," promised Su Zhan. His eyes were terribly bloodshot at that moment.

The doctor stared. He could sense how Su Zhan's pain. "The door will remain closed, and you can only stay for a moment."

Qin Ya was taken to the isolated room and settled down before the nurse took the others over to visit.

"Only two visitors are allowed," informed the nurse.

Zong Jinghao wanted to go in as well because he wanted to stay by Lin Xinyan's side. He was worried about her being too sad.

Lin Xinyan knew how worried he was, so she shook her head and promised, "I'll be fine."

In the end, Su Zhan and Lin Xinyan were the ones who went in.

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They couldn't get into the isolated room, so they only saw Qin Ya from behind the glass. Qin Ya was still unconscious and her face was bandaged with only her eyes being shown.

The medical devices beeped steadily all around her.

Su Zhan was leaning against the glass window, devastated. He never made a sound, but Lin Xinyan could see his shoulders trembling. She knew he was sobbing quietly.

"I was surprised when I heard what happened. We met up just some time ago, and she told me she wanted to leave this place. She wanted to find somewhere peaceful to give birth to the baby... Who would've thought that something like this would happen?"

Su Zhan's hands were on the glass window and he clenched them tightly. He spoke between sobs, "This is all my fault..."

"What's the point of realizing all that now?" Lin Xinyan knew she shouldn't risk triggering him at that moment, but she felt like it was necessary to make things clear. Before Lin Xinyan turned and left with a broken heart, she told Su Zhan, "I will get in your way and stop the two of you from being together, even if Qin Ya eventually forgives you."

One's appearance was one's mark. Qin Ya could go for plastic surgery, but she would never be the way she used to be again.

There was a time when Qin Ya was cheerful and led an optimistic life, but she hadn't been happy since she got together with Su Zhan.

Her injuries only made things worse. Lin Xinyan was sad for her friend.

Zong Jinghao walked over and reached out to help Lin Xinyan push her hair behind her ear. "Let's go home."

Lin Xinyan nodded. Qin Ya was still unconscious, so there was nothing she could do at that moment.

Before Lin Xinyan left, she asked the doctor, "When will she wake up?"

She wanted to be there for Qin Ya when the latter woke up. She would need Lin Xinyan for moral support, especially if she learned about her disfiguration when she woke up.

"She should come around in about twelve hours," answered the doctor.

Lin Xinyan made a mental note of that. Twelve hours... That should be around five o'clock in the morning tomorrow. Lin Xinyan later thanked the doctor before she left.

She didn't have any dinner after she got home with Zong Jinghao. Instead, she locked herself in her room, so her husband got her a cup of milk.

Zong Jinghao sat by the bedside as Lin Xinyan laid under the blanket with her coat on. Truth was, he didn't like it when his wife was troubled by someone else's issue.

"Are you asleep?"

Lin Xinyan was still awake, but she didn't want to talk.

"I know you're awake. Get up and finish your milk," added Zong Jinghao.

Lin Xinyan turned around and stared at him.

She didn't even know how she felt, but she knew she was in a mess.

Zong Jinghao chuckled and teased, "Why are you staring like that? Is it because I am simply too charming?"

Lin Xinyan scanned him carefully. He was good-looking. His skin was soft, his facial features were amazing, and his dark eyes shone with wisdom. When he smiled, he could drown someone in love.

However, he inspired a completely different emotion when he was grouchy.

The weight on Lin Xinyan's heart was a little lighter when she saw him, so she sat up and accepted the milk that Zong Jinghao brought for her.

She took a sip before she asked, "Su Zhan... had he always been like that?"

Lin Xinyan was referring to Su Zhan's hesitance in deciding.

Zong Jinghao thought about it for a while before replying, "No."

Su Zhan had always known what he wanted, but he was blinded by Liu Feifei.

It hit him hard when Liu Feifei first left. Perhaps that was why he was overwhelmed when she suddenly returned.

Lin Xinyan bit her lip like she was deliberating something. Zong Jinghao had to remind her, "Finish your milk."

Lin Xinyan didn't finish it immediately. Instead, she got her phone and set the alarm because she wanted to get up earlier to go to the hospital.

That night, Lin Xinyan slept in Zong Jinghao's arms. She wasn't sure if it was because he was by her side, but she felt safe and fell asleep soon after.

The alarm rang and woke her up.

Lin Xinyan's mind cleared up quickly when she thought about how Qin Ya was still in the hospital. Zong Jinghao, however, hugged her waist. His voice was groggy. "Where are you going?" asked Zong Jinghao.

"I have to go to the hospital. The doctor said that Qin Ya will be up at around five o'clock. I have to go see how she's doing," replied Lin Xinyan. She actually wanted to head over earlier because she was worried about how Qin Ya would react to seeing Su Zhan there.

"It's still early. Stay in bed with me for a little longer," requested Zong Jinghao as he pulled her back into his embrace. Lin Xinyan pushed him away and reminded him, "Stop messing around. She's disfigured, and I worry that she'd do something stupid because she doesn't have anyone with her. Speaking of, I need you to do me a favor."

Lin Xinyan turned around to face Zong Jinghao and held his face.

"What do I get out of it?" asked Zong Jinghao before Lin Xinyan even said what she wanted.

Lin Xinyan frowned. "I'm being serious."

"Do I sound like I'm not being serious?" refuted Zong Jinghao.

Lin Xinyan was speechless.

She leaned in to kiss his lips. It was early in the morning, so Zong Jinghao had a little beard on his chin. It annoyed her a little, but it didn't hurt.

Zong Jinghao frowned. He narrowed his eyes. It seemed like he wasn't satisfied with that kiss. He inched closer again, but Lin Xinyan pushed his chest away and said, "I'd like you to help me find the perfect plastic surgeon."

Lin Xinyan hadn't spoken to Qin Ya yet, but she knew her friend well. Qin Ya wouldn't want Su Zhan's help, or to be more accurate, she wouldn't want to be anywhere near him, especially with the baby gone.

Zong Jinghao tilted his gaze down and stared at the hand on his chest. "Okay, but put your hand down," said Zong Jinghao.

Lin Xinyan's heart thumped quickly. The lights in the room remained closed, but the lamp on the nightstand was on. That set a romantic mood for the couple.

His chest was burning hot, and she still felt warm even though the silk sheets were between them. Her fingers instinctively moved away. Zong Jinghao tilted his head down and kissed her lips after chuckling. "How are you still so shy?"

They had been together for a while by then, but she still blushed.

Afterward, Zong Jinghao handed Lin Xinyan's clothes to her and drove her to the hospital.

It was almost six o'clock when Lin Xinyan arrived at the hospital. The sun was already in the sky. Lin Xinyan had been wearing turtlenecks almost exclusively after she got together with Zong Jinghao. That man always leaves marks all over me!

She wore a flowery dress and a black windbreaker that day, though. She tied a red ribbon on her neck to hide the kiss marks.

"Don't wait around for me. I'll grab a cab home," said Lin Xinyan.

Zong Jinghao replied, "Okay. Call me if you need anything."

She murmured a reply and watched as he drove away before she went into the hospital.

Su Zhan was already there when Lin Xinyan arrived. He still had that same outfit on.

"You stayed the entire night?" asked Lin Xinyan as she walked over with her purse.

"I went home for a while," replied Su Zhan with his head down.

The two men responsible for taking his grandma back didn't want to get into any unnecessary trouble, so they took her to the hospital. The elderly lady needed some peace to recover, so Su Zhan made the necessary arrangements to settle her down at home. The maids were there at their place. It was also convenient for everyone to take care of Su Zhan's grandma.

Lin Xinyan asked, "Is she up?"

Su Zhan suddenly shifted his gaze up. He stared at Lin Xinyan, and he was so exhausted that his eyes looked like they were spray-painted with red ink. His voice was coarse when he replied, "She doesn't want to see me."

Lin Xinyan wasn't surprised to hear that.

"I'll go see how she's doing," said Lin Xinyan. She saw how horrible Su Zhan was and her kinder self took over. She squeezed his shoulder a little before saying, "You're a man, so it's a more difficult for Qin Ya to face you now."

Losing her baby and being disfigured... Few could handle something like that.

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"Instead of feeling dejected, why don't you think of a way to remedy the situation?" Lin Xinyan encouraged him as she didn't want to see him continue to mope.

Regret is useless because it doesn't change anything. Besides, the hardest emotion to get over is regret itself.

Su Zhan raised his head and looked at Lin Xinyan. "What should I do now?"

He was really confused; he didn't know what else he could do. All he could think of was the image of Qin Ya's face being disfigured. It was seared into his mind – he couldn't escape from it.

"You should go home and clean up first. I'll look after Qin Ya," Lin Xinyan replied.

Su Zhan hesitated. "What will happen if she's willing to see me, but I'm not around?"

"Do you really think she wants to see you now?" She may be willing to do so if she's not disfigured. However, she definitely won't want to as of now.

If the same thing happened to me, I would definitely not want to see Zong Jinghao too. That's how it feels like.

"Behaving like that doesn't make things any better. In fact, you're just torturing yourself. Do you think you will be forgiven just by moping around?"

Su Zhan grabbed onto Lin Xinyan's sleeve in panic. "In that case, what should I do? How will she ever forgive me?"

"Forgive you?" Lin Xinyan sneered. "What would you do if you were in her place?"

Su Zhan was stumped because if their roles were reversed, he would definitely not forgive himself.

Not admonishing him further, Lin Xinyan consoled Su Zhan, "Go home first, I'll talk to Qin Ya about it."

Su Zhan knew how close Lin Xinyan was to Qin Ya. Therefore, he knew he still had a chance if she was willing to put in a good word for him. From the bottom of his heart, he thanked her, "Thanks, Xinyan."

However, Lin Xinyan didn't acknowledge him because she sided with Qin Ya more. If Qin Ya chose not to forgive Su Zhan, she would not persuade her to do so.

After sending Su Zhan away, Lin Xinyan checked with the nurse about seeing Qin Ya. The nurse then asked Qin Ya about it. As someone who had her face disfigured, Qin Ya's emotions would likely be volatile. Therefore, it was imperative to seek her permission before seeing her.

If she agreed, they would arrange it accordingly.

While Lin Xinyan patiently waited, the nurse emerged from the ward. "You can go on in but don't talk to her for too long. Keep it under ten minutes because her body is still weak."

Lin Xinyan nodded. "I understand."

The nurse led Lin Xinyan to a changing room and passed her a medical coverall.

"You will need to wear this inside the ICU," the nurse explained.

Most people didn't know how to put it on the first time. However, with the nurse's help, Lin Xinyan settled into it in no time.

She was soon wrapped snugly within it. The reason she was required to wear it was to prevent germs from contaminating the ICU.

"Follow me, please," the nurse instructed.

As Lin Xinyan followed the nurse into the ICU, all she could hear was the beep of the medical devices, nothing else. It made the atmosphere feel chilly and mechanical.

"Don't talk too long," the nurse reminded before leaving.

Standing by the door of the ward, Lin Xinyan hesitated for a while. A sense of uneasiness fell upon her as she didn't know how to comfort Qin Ya.

If the same tragedy had befallen her, she knew she would be devastated beyond belief.

"Ms. Lin, why aren't you coming in?" Qin Ya's voice was weak. She couldn't see Lin Xinyan standing by the door. Nevertheless, she still knew it was Lin Xinyan as the nurse had informed her of the woman's arrival earlier. Besides, only Su Zhan or Lin Xinyan would come to see her anyway.

After taking a deep breath, Lin Xinyan walked in, pretending to be relaxed. "Hey, you're awake."

Qin Ya murmured softly in acknowledgment.

Lin Xinyan wanted to hold her hand. However, both Qin Ya's hands were intubated, so she didn't know how to do so.

"I want to leave this place," Qin Ya spoke her mind.

Her soul had died together with her child.

Hence, she wanted to leave the wretched place that had caused her so much grief.

However, she understood that she could only rely on Lin Xinyan, given her current circumstance.

"But your current condition..." Lin Xinyan was more than ready to help, but she knew Qin Ya's present condition didn't allow the latter to leave yet.

Qin Ya was firm in her decision. "I can't have peace staying here."

As long as I'm here, Su Zhan will come, and I really don't want to see him.

All she wanted was to leave and run away from it all.

"Ms. Lin, help me, please. There's no one else I can turn to." Qin Ya was desperate as she tried to raise her hand towards Lin Xinyan, who quickly stopped her. Lin Xinyan replied, "I promise you that I'll help you. But, you need to give me some time to make the arrangements."

Qin Ya nodded. "Thank you."

"Silly gal, there's no need for any thanks between us." Lin Xinyan's nose felt a burning sensation. However, she was all covered up and only had her eyes exposed.

As for Qin Ya, despite pretending to be calm, her sadness didn't escape Lin Xinyan's notice.

All Lin Xinyan could do was to agree to all of Qin Ya's requests. With regards to Su Zhan, she would have to let time heal their relationship.

If fate will still allow it and Su Zhan really loves her, they may still have a chance. If not, there's nothing much anyone else can do.

Who hasn't met a passerby in their lives before? It's just that this passerby has done untold damage to her heart.

Despite knowing that she couldn't rush things, Qin Ya's resolve to leave was firm. "I want to leave as soon as possible."

"Give me three days." If Lin Xinyan were to take her away, she had to find a new place to treat Qin Ya and make arrangements with the hospital. All these processes needed time.

Qin Ya replied, "Alright."

She was extremely grateful to Lin Xinyan for agreeing to help her and was happy that she would know where she was going within three days.

Lin Xinyan had earlier requested Zong Jinghao to help her look for a plastic surgeon. But now, she might also need his help in looking for a new hospital. It wasn't just a place where Qin Ya would undergo plastic surgery; it would also be a place for her to recuperate.

"The doctor says that your body is weak and that you shouldn't talk too much. Hence, you should rest for the time being. I will make the necessary arrangements, so don't worry. Anyway, I know you don't want Su Zhan to know, right? I won't tell him about it. All you need to do now is rest. Once I have everything prepared, I'll come for you."

Qin Ya murmured in agreement.

"Everything will be alright," Lin Xinyan comforted her.

At that moment, the nurse came by to remind Lin Xinyan of the time. After which, Lin Xinyan reassured Qin Ya again, "I will make the arrangements as soon as possible. Promise me you will stay strong. Just focus on recuperating and wait for me to pick you up."

"Alright."

After taking off the medical gown and leaving the hospital, Lin Xinyan stood at the hospital entrance, planning to hail a cab to Zong Jinghao's office. Due to her limited network of contacts, she needed to rely on the man to arrange for what Qin Ya had requested.

As the hospital was crowded, there were many taxis available. Therefore, she managed to get a cab easily.

"Where are you headed to?" the driver asked.

Before she could reply, her phone rang, and she saw that it was Cheng Yuxiu calling. "To Wanyue," Lin Xinyan instructed. With that, she picked up the call.

"Are you free right now?" Cheng Yuxiu's voice could be heard from the phone.

Lin Xinyan replied, "Yes, is there anything?"

"I'll meet you at Ro's Dessert Shop." Cheng Yuxiu ended the call without saying what it was about.

Looking at her phone, Lin Xinyan figured that Cheng Yuxiu wouldn't have called her if it weren't something important. Hence, she instructed the driver, "Head for Ro's Dessert Shop instead of Wanyue now."

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The driver proceeded to change directions.

As Lin Xinyan sat quietly in the car, she contemplated Qin Ya's situation. If she sent Qin Ya away, Su Zhan would definitely look for her.

So, she decided to stand firmly on Qin Ya's side. She wouldn't betray her friend no matter what Su Zhan was going to say.

After what just happened, Lin Xinyan saw matters of the heart from a more mature perspective. She knew that both of them needed time to cool down and reevaluate their relationship.

Once she made up her mind, her desire to send Qin Ya away was further reinforced.

At that moment, the driver arrived at Ro's Dessert Shop.

She paid the taxi fee and got off.

Behind the windows, Lin Xinyan saw that Cheng Yuxiu had brought both children – they were sitting by the window eating cake. She pushed open the glass door and entered the shop.

"Mommy," Lin Xichen greeted when he saw her coming in.

Cheng Yuxiu turned and smiled when she saw Lin Xinyan. "The butter cake here is delicious; let me order one for you."

Lin Xinyan sat down and thanked her for the offer.

Cheng Yuxiu smiled. "No thanks needed. You're just making me feel like a stranger."

Lin Xinyan smiled as she scooped a piece of butter cake to try. There was a thick milky fragrance that wasn't overpowering or too sweet. The balance between its milkiness and buttery fragrance made it delicious.

This place was famous for its desserts. Behind the shop, there was also a playground which made it especially suitable for kids.

After finishing their dessert, Lin Ruixi tugged at Lin Xichen. "Xichen, come play with me."

Lin Xichen sighed, acting as if he had no choice in the matter. All he could do was agree. "Fine."

Cheng Yuxiu instructed the driver, "Watch them for me."

The driver nodded and led the kids to the playground.

From the window, it was easy to see them.

Lin Xinyan took a sip of juice and asked, "So what is it you want to talk about?"

"It's nothing. Must I have a reason to ask you out?" Given that it was the weekend and she had the chance to take the kids out, she decided to invite Lin Xinyan to come along as they had not talked in a while.

Lin Xinyan replied with a smile, "No, you don't have to."

Usually, Cheng Yuxiu would only look for her if she needed something, and that was why she asked.

From the window, Cheng Yuxiu couldn't help but break into a smile as she watched the children play happily. "I never dreamed of a day where I'm able to stay with Jinghao and interact with his children. Although I am also a mother, my rights as one were taken away. Therefore, I am really grateful to you."

Cheng Yuxiu held onto Lin Xinyan's hands. "Thank you for letting Jinghao and I live together with the two children."

"It's what you deserve," Lin Xinyan replied in a melancholic tone. "You have missed out on so much. Whatever you have now is just a form of compensation. Is all this enough to make up for what you have lost?"

Cheng Yuxiu shook her head. "I'm very satisfied with what I have now."

She was now very happy with her life as she felt a sense of familial belonging. In fact, she often had the illusion that Zong Jinghao had let go of the past and was living with her in peace.

"Bai Yinning got in some trouble recently," Cheng Yuxiu suddenly said as she turned to look at Lin Xinyan. "Did you tell Jinghao he was responsible for Wen Qing's car accident?"

Lin Xinyan nodded. "I didn't hide it from him."

He is just too sharp.

Lin Xinyan knew that once Zong Jinghao found out that Bai Yinning had harmed Wen Qing, he would definitely not let it slide.

After all, this was B City – Zong Jinghao’s territory. Hence, it was easy for him to deal with Bai Yinning.

Meanwhile, behind both of them sat another woman with her back facing them. It was Li Jing. She had arrived earlier in the dessert shop. When Cheng Yuxiu entered with the children, she was about to leave.

Because of Wen Qing and Cheng Yuxiu’s strained ties, Li Jing didn’t plan on greeting her. Just as she wanted to avoid Cheng Yuxiu and leave, she heard her calling Lin Xinyan on the phone.

Hence, she decided to sit and wait.

I understand the relationship between Zong Jinghao and Cheng Yuxiu. However, why is Lin Xinyan, Zong Jinghao’s wife, so close with Cheng Yuxiu?

Curious, she continued to wait for Lin Xinyan in her seat and finally managed to eavesdrop on what they were talking about.

When she learned that Wen Qing’s accident was sabotage, her heart trembled violently.

Furthermore, Cheng Yuxiu and Lin Xinyan knew about it.

Who is Bai Yinning?

Li Jing was infuriated to find out that the accident had been deliberately caused by someone.

At that time, she was frightened to death, but Wen Qing, fortunately, survived with just an injured arm.

As she turned around to sneak a glance at Cheng Yuxiu, she realized that Cheng Yuxiu would affectionately mention Zong Jinghao, just like a mother would when talking about their own child.

Cheng Yuxiu was able to marry Zong Qifeng because she had agreed to Wen Qing’s conditions. One was to offer the Cheng family’s business in exchange, while the other was that she would not bear any children for Zong Qifeng.

So, is she treating Zong Jinghao as her own child?

I too am a mother. No matter how kind-hearted one is, I still think it’s difficult to treat the children of others as one’s own.

And yet, Cheng Yuxiu is speaking as if Zong Jinghao is her own son.

Thinking back, Cheng Yuxiu must have been really brave to insist on marrying Zong Qifeng even if it meant losing her inheritance.

Love alone isn't enough for one to abandon their family and the chance to be a complete woman.

A woman would feel incomplete if she did not have a child.

However, if Zong Jinghao is her son...

She didn't dare think any further as there were just too many secrets involved.

She continued to listen in by pretending to drink some water.

However, Cheng Yuxiu stopped talking about Zong Jinghao and changed the topic to the kids instead. When Li Jing felt that she wasn't going to hear anything of value anymore, she quietly left through the backdoor.

The moment she got out, she gave Wen Qing a call.

"When are you coming back?" She sounded desperate.

Although the doctor had advised him to rest, Wen Qing couldn't sit idly in the hospital. Hence, he got himself discharged by giving the excuse that he had only hurt his arm and had no problems walking.

Meanwhile, he had just finished watching a drill. The moment he returned to his office, he received Li Jing's call. As Li Jing was someone staid, she seldom called him in such desperation. After unbuttoning his collar, he looked at the time and asked, "Around five. Did your son get into trouble again?"

Whenever Li Jing sounded so frantic, it was usually because of her son. Other than that, there was nothing else that could agitate her so much.

"No, it's not that. We'll talk when you're back. Remember to come home earlier; I'll be waiting for you." With that, Li Jing ended the call and drove home.

Wen Qing furrowed his eyebrows. He was curious as to what else could be so urgent other than her son.

Feeling worried, he left the office before five and saw Li Jing already waiting for him.

When she saw him return, Li Jing helped him out of his jacket. "The doctor told you to rest. And yet, you still can't stay still."

Wen Qing glanced at her and ignored her question. "What was it that you wanted to tell me?"

"Today, I went to Ro's Dessert Shop and bumped into Cheng Yuxiu..."

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Wen Qing was upset to hear the mention of that woman's name as he believed that she had a hand in Wen Xian's death.

When Cheng Yuxiu and Zong Qifeng first got together last time, Wen Xian had just given birth to Zong Jinghao.

If not for the fact that the latter kept Cheng Yuxiu hidden, Wen Xian and Zong Qifeng would have had a few peaceful years together.

It wasn't until Wen Xian found out that he had imprisoned Cheng Yuxiu that she insisted he let her go. Not being able to refuse his kind-hearted sister, he finally freed Cheng Yuxiu.

Hence, after Wen Xian's death and when Cheng Yuxiu was about to marry Zong Qifeng, he set out his conditions which Cheng Yuxiu unexpectedly agreed to.

Until now, he felt that Wen Xian had been cursed by Cheng Yuxiu. Or else, his sister wouldn't have died right after Cheng Yuxiu was set free.

Just thinking about his sister made him feel sad.

He snorted, "Despite living in B City, it's still rare to bump into each other."

Li Jing helped him to the sofa. "She wasn't alone. She was minding two kids and..."

Li Jing was worried that she had read too much into it.

"Who else was there?" Wen Qing stared at her impatiently. Why did she stop mid-sentence?

"Lin Xinyan," Li Jing replied.

"Who?"

"Jinghao's wife."

"She was together with Cheng Yuxiu?" Wen Qing asked as he squinted his eyes.

Li Jing firmly nodded. "Also, they seemed to be on good terms from the way they were talking."

Wen Qing straightened his back and leaned on the sofa. "What did they talk about?"

Li Jing suddenly shot Wen Qing a grim look. "When Cheng Yuxiu agreed to your conditions for marrying Zong Qifeng, did you notice how eager she was to do so? Furthermore, she had to give up her inheritance and not bear any children just for a man."

"What's so strange about that? She and Zong Qifeng were already together for a while. Luckily, I found out about it early, or else Wen Xian's marriage would have been destroyed long ago. Wen Xian was just too kind-hearted. I only freed Cheng Yuxiu because she had insisted I do so."

Li Jing shook her head. "You know nothing about women."

Perhaps Cheng Yuxiu could give up the right to bear a child over a man. However, to exchange her whole inheritance just didn't make sense.

"What did you overhear?" Wen Qing asked.

"The only thing that can make a woman sacrifice everything isn't love or money. It's her maternal bond."

Once a woman becomes a mother, she is willing to give up a lot.

As the saying goes, motherhood makes one stronger.

Wen Qing frowned. "What are you getting at?" He quickly understood what Li Jing was trying to say. "Do you mean that Jinghao is Cheng Yuxiu's biological son? Li Jing, since when did you have such a ridiculous notion?"

Wen Qing grew upset. All this while, he felt Zong Jinghao was such an exceptional person because he was Wen Xian and Zong Qifeng's son.

Hence, he was repulsed by his wife's speculation.

"When I heard how Cheng Yuxiu talked about Jinghao today, it felt as if she was talking about her own son. She even called him Jinghao! Think about it; Wen Xian and Zong Qifeng didn't get together out of love. Although Zong Qifeng didn't love anyone at that time, Wen Xian did. Can it be..."

"No, it can't." Wen Qing obviously didn't believe it.

How is it even possible for Zong Jinghao to be Cheng Yuxiu's son? That's just ridiculous!

"When you found out that the Cheng family's silk fabrics appeared in the market, Jinghao said that he would take care of it. Until now, has he gives you an answer?" Li Jing asked.

"He's busy."

"How do you then explain his wife having a good relationship with Cheng Yuxiu? She is even close to his two children. Given how smart Jinghao is, I'm sure he knows."

Li Jing finally managed to plant a seed of doubt in Wen Qing. Despite still finding it ridiculous, he began to have his doubts.

At that time, Wen Xian had had a boyfriend. She only agreed to marry Zong Qifeng for the sake of the two families' interests.

Wen Qing's hands clenched into fists. "What do you think we should do?"

Li Jing gave it some thought. "I obviously don't hope it's true. Given how exceptional Jinghao is, I too wish for him to be Wen Xian's son. Why don't you ask him to come over?"

Wen Qing looked at his wife. "Are you planning..."

"In this world, there's only one way to confirm if he is Wen Xian's son or not, and that's a DNA test." Li Jing interjected.

Wen Qing wanted to put the matter to rest too. Once Zong Jinghao was determined to be Wen Xian's son, he would then be able to rest easy.

As his arm was injured, he couldn't use the phone, so he got Li Jing to call instead. "Just tell him I want to see him about something."

However, Li Jing didn't take out her phone. Instead, she sat beside him with an even more solemn expression.

She held her husband's hand. "The car accident you were in may have been sabotage..."

Wen Qing frowned. "You're thinking too much. Who else would want to harm me?"

He felt that he had not done anything wrong before other than confining Cheng Yuxiu and Bai Hongfei.

Furthermore, Cheng Yuxiu was at fault for being the third party and destroying someone else's marriage. Hence, she deserved to be punished.

Li Jing shook her head. "It wasn't an accident. Someone by the name of Bai Yinning caused it. In fact, both Cheng Yuxiu and Lin Xinyan know about it. Even Jinghao is aware of it too."

However, Li Jing felt comforted with what she was about to say, "It seems that Jinghao has avenged you. However, who is Bai Hongfei? Did you offend him in anyway?"

"Did you hear them talk about it too?" Wen Qing asked.

Li Jing nodded honestly.

Bai Yinning?

Suddenly, something clicked in Wen Qing's head. Since the man's surname was Bai, is he related to Bai Hongfei? Perhaps he knows what happened in the past and has come to seek revenge.

"I'll get someone to investigate. Also..." Wen Qing didn't speak his thoughts as it related to the Tea Silk. That was another matter he had to get to the bottom of.

"Call Jinghao for me," Wen Qing instructed sternly.

Li Jing held his hand. "Remember not to raise any suspicions. You yourself should know how smart Jinghao is."

"I know," Wen Qing answered in earnest.

Li Jing then called Zong Jinghao.

At Wanyue Group.

After meeting with Cheng Yuxiu, Lin Xinyan arrived at the company to see Zong Jinghao.

She wanted his help in making the arrangements for Qin Ya.

Zong Jinghao made a call to one of his contacts, who found a good hospital easily.

All it took was one phone call.

"Two days." Zong Jinghao stood in front of his desk as Lin Xinyan hugged him from behind and buried her face in his back.

"Don't worry; I have made the arrangements. All you need to do is to send her there."

Zong Jinghao held onto her fingers that were hugging his waist. "Alright, it's my treat next time."

After a bit more small talk, Zong Jinghao ended the call.

He turned to face Lin Xinyan. "Do you know what your son did?"

Lin Xinyan blinked in confusion as she hadn't noticed anything strange when she was with him earlier.

Zong Jinghao grinned. "Didn't you see the news?"

She hadn't had time to check the news as she had been busy with Qin Ya. Given what Zong Jinghao just said, she took out her phone to scroll through.

She soon saw a video that was being shared by everyone on the internet.

It had more than a billion comments and likes – it had obviously gone viral.

Even the video of Lu Yuan's wife being stripped was being overwhelmed.

Everything was being replaced by that one video.

Lin Xinyan widened her eyes in shock. "Isn't this..."

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Lin Xinyan widened her eyes. "Isn't this the little girl's parent from the kindergarten?"

She understood what was going on very quickly and turned to look at Zong Jinghao. "Did he film and upload the video?"

Zong Jinghao retorted, "Don't you understand your own son?"

Lin Xinyan was stumped. Well, he is capable of doing that.

However, she looked at Zong Jinghao with a worried expression. "Will it lead to any trouble? After all, the girl's parents are important people."

Zong Jinghao replied optimistically, "There's no need to be afraid if one's conscience is clear."

If the deputy mayor weren't guilty, he wouldn't be afraid of being investigated. If he had really broken the law and was found to be corrupt, it was then what he deserved.

Whichever way it went, Zong Jinghao felt that his son had done the right thing.

Just by watching how domineering the lady was in the video, he could guess what was going on.

Based on what he knew, the deputy mayor's wife wasn't this young and didn't have a child this little too.

It might be...

Lin Xinyan sighed as she wondered who her son was taking after, causing her to worry so much.

She felt that it was better if her son was more innocent.

At just six years old, he was already scheming like an adult. Hence, she wasn't sure if it was a good sign.

Zong Jinghao pinched her nose. "Are you afraid now?"

Lin Xinyan glared at him as she didn't want her son to get into any trouble.

At that very moment, she suddenly realized who her son resembled.

This man right in front of me!

Both father and son are an exact copy of each other.

"Have you taught Bai Yinning a lesson?" Lin Xinyan asked even though she seemed to already be sure of the answer.

Zong Jinghao's gaze didn't change, but he still emitted a fearsome vibe. "Are you questioning me?"

Lin Xinyan stated slowly, "I'm only asking, not questioning. Despite what he did, it was Uncle who was first at fault..."

"Hence, you're pleading for mercy on his behalf now?" Zong Jinghao interrupted her.

Lin Xinyan kept quiet when she realized that whatever she said would be twisted against her.

"I have nothing to do with him. Why do you need to be so defensive every time you speak?" Lin Xinyan began to feel upset; she didn't like being suspected of anything, let alone being questioned.

His insistence on chasing shadows made her feel uncomfortable.

Zong Jinghao leaned back slightly and pinched her chin. He then brushed it with his fingertips. "You know that I don't like you to have anything to do with him. And yet, you keep bringing him up. Are you trying to test my patience?"

Lin Xinyan was dumbfounded as she pursed her lips tightly.

This man...

Ring! Ring!

At that moment, Zong Jinghao's phone that was on the table rang.

Glancing to check its screen, he saw that it was from the Wen family.

At the same time, Lin Xinyan also saw it.

As their eyes met, Zong Jinghao released his grip on her and answered the call.

Li Jing's voice could be heard over the phone. "Jinghao, are you free now? Your uncle wants to see you."

Raising his gaze to look at Lin Xinyan, Zong Jinghao grunted in acknowledgment.

Given that Wen Qing was still injured from the accident, Zong Jinghao was obliged to visit him.

"Alright, in that case, I'll prepare dinner for you." Li Jing ended the call when she finished.

Putting down his phone, Zong Jinghao looked at Lin Xinyan. "Come with me."

"To the Wen residence?" Lin Xinyan clarified.

Zong Jinghao nodded.

Despite her hesitation, Zong Jinghao didn't give her time to answer. He picked up his suit and pulled her along.

Lin Xinyan struggled. "We're in the office."

Zong Jinghao didn't seem to care. So what if we are in the office? Can't I hold my own wife's hand?

As expected, all the busy employees turned their attention to them when Zong Jinghao walked out of the office with Lin Xinyan in tow.

To their knowledge, Zong Jinghao was still not officially married.

There were only a few people who were aware that he was secretly married to Lin Xinyan. Before that, there was Bai Zhuwei and then He Ruilin of the He family. Everyone thought that things would work out between them, but it had gone nowhere instead.

Other than Bai Zhuwei, no one else ever saw Zong Jinghao hold another lady's hand anymore.

To them, Zong Jinghao was still the most eligible bachelor they knew. Therefore, when he suddenly had a girlfriend, everyone was dying to know who she was.

They were curious to know if she had used her beauty or her talents to captivate him.

Not used to such attention, Lin Xinyan lowered her head. She resented Zong Jinghao for making her feel like she was an endangered animal being watched in a zoo. It made her feel extremely awkward.

Distracted by her thoughts, she didn't realize that Zong Jinghao had stopped in his tracks, and she crashed into his back. It hurts! She looked up while rubbing her forehead while Zong Jinghao turned around.

Blinking her eyes, her thick eyelashes fluttered at the same time. Before she could ask him why he had stopped, he pulled her into his embrace in front of all the company's staff on the senior management floor.

Lin Xinyan felt inexplicably nervous as she looked up at him. In her eyes, the ceiling lights and his body had merged. In a dignified and spontaneous manner, he declared, "She is my wife."

Boom!

Lin Xinyan was shocked to her core.

Audible sighs could be heard throughout the office. Suddenly, a brave voice sounded, "Mr. Zong, when did you get married?"

Why didn't we hear about it?

"That's right; we didn't even get the wedding favors."

"They hid it too well."

Everyone began complaining.

Hugging Lin Xinyan by the waist, Zong Jinghao pulled her in with a tug. "My wife is shy and isn't used to you talking about her. As for the banquet, I'll organize it soon enough."

At that moment, the elevator door opened, and Guan Jing emerged from it. When he saw Zong Jinghao hugging Lin Xinyan, he was stunned. Just as he wanted to greet them, Zong Jinghao walked past him and entered the elevator.

"Mr. Guan." Everyone surrounded him. "Did you know Mr. Zong is married?"

Huh?

When Guan Jing turned to check with Zong Jinghao about what to say, all he saw were the elevator doors.

The lift had already left the level.

"Mr. Guan, say something." Everyone tugged at him, given that he was the closest to Zong Jinghao. Therefore, they all assumed that he must know something.

Guan Jing was at a loss. Can I tell them?

“Mr. Guan, Mr. Zong just declared that girl as his wife. Is it really true?”

Girl?

Guan Jing blinked in surprise. Despite looking young, Lin Xinyan was twenty-five, and her children were already six.

“Mr. Guan, what are you spacing out for? Answer our question. Is Mr. Zong really married?”

Guan Jing nodded. “Yes, he is married. The lady you just saw was his wife.”

Since Zong Jinghao had admitted it himself, Guan Jing no longer had to worry about keeping it a secret.

“Since when did this happen? How come we didn’t hear a thing about it?”

Guan Jing’s eyes narrowed. “Must the boss report to you that he got married?”

“Anyway, back to work, all of you!” Guan Jing ordered at once.

However, some were still persistent to know more. “Which rich family is Mr. Zong’s wife from? Why have we never heard of her before?”

Guan Jing raised his eyebrow. “What about it? Must she be from some rich family before she can marry into the Zong family?”

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One of them asked, “Do you mean that Mr. Zong’s wife is just an ordinary person?”

All of them couldn’t believe it, finding it inconceivable that the lady Zong Jinghao liked was from an ordinary family.

“Does she have any special talents?” He asked, “Does she do anything especially well?”

It was reasonable for them to doubt that Zong Jinghao would marry an ordinary woman.

The man was one of the nation’s youngest tycoons and extremely good-looking. Also, the rich preferred to marry someone of the same social status to expand their family’s influence.

Real-life was different from the movies. Cinderella-like stories of rags to riches seldom occurred unless one was exceptionally talented.

One would never be spotted or noticed otherwise.

It was indeed a very rare occasion for ordinary girls to marry into rich families.

Guan Jing stared at the employee from the corner of his eye. "You will have to ask Mr. Zong himself if she has any exceptional talents. I'm just an outsider. How would I know any of this?"

The man shot Guan Jing an awkward smile. "We don't dare to."

What started as an innocent question about whether Lin Xinyan was capable ended up with Guan Jing making the question sound personal and intimate.

Guan Jing replied indifferently, "In that case, go back to work."

In truth, he was most afraid of all these people as their never-ending questions might cause him to slip his tongue.

After all, the story behind Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan's relationship could be described as a long and arduous journey.

It was obvious that Guan Jing wasn't going to share the details. Hence, most questions were just a waste of time.

There was still a lot of speculation going on as the workers dispersed and got back to work. After all, given how eligible Zong Jinghao was, the man would never choose to be with someone incompetent.

However, Guan Jing stated that the woman wasn't from any of the prominent families. Therefore, she must have really impressed Zong Jinghao for him to declare her status as his wife in front of the whole office.

Even when he was with He Ruilin, he had never announced it in front of everyone like that.

All he did was admit that they were in a relationship.

There was a big difference between admitting and declaring.

For someone of his status and wealth, declaring his relationship with her in public only showed how much he loved her.

"I can't believe Mr. Zong is married. That girl must really be something."

"That's right. She looks ordinary, but she still managed to seduce him. She must have some tricks up her sleeve," someone else added.

"What do you mean she looks ordinary?" A male colleague sneered at his female colleague that just spoke. "Compared to Ms. Bai, she is a lot more gorgeous. On top of that, she has come by the company before. She never threw her weight around despite her status. Hence,

she is more down-to-earth than Ms. Bai. Don't be jealous just because she married the boss. What's so difficult about admitting she is beautiful?"

The unconvinced female colleague was stumped by her male colleague's tirade.

"I don't know how that girl got to know the boss. I wonder how she mesmerized him. And here I was, thinking that I stood a chance."

"Go away; even I don't fancy you."

The female colleague slapped her male colleague in jest. "You? You're the one that's not good enough for me."

By then, Guan Jing was exasperated. "Why are you still talking about this? Do you want me to call the boss and ask him to explain himself to all of you?"

It was as Lin Xinyan expected. Once her status was made public, there would definitely be a lot of speculation.

After all, no one had a clue about anything before this.

By making such a sudden announcement, Zong Jinghao would definitely generate a lot of curiosity.

Furthermore, if they knew about the existence of Lin Xichen and Lin Ruixi, the gossips would unfortunately escalate.

In the company's underground car park, Lin Xinyan glared at Zong Jinghao.

"How could you announce it like that without my permission? Don't you know that I wasn't ready?"

Placing one hand on the car, Zong Jinghao bent forward a little as he looked at Lin Xinyan. "Did I say anything wrong?"

"I didn't say that what you said was wrong. Just that you could have told me beforehand so that I would be mentally prepared. But now, I just feel awkward. Who knows what those people in the company are saying behind my back right now." Lin Xinyan placed her hand on her forehead, feeling helpless.

Zong Jinghao laughed wryly as he pinched her nose. "What are you afraid of? You have me. Besides, after sleeping with me for so long, shouldn't you at least acknowledge my status?"

Lin Xinyan suddenly blushed in response. Why is he saying something so inappropriate in a place like this?

Relenting, Zong Jinghao carried her into the car. "It's time we head on our way."

Lin Xinyan glared at him. Since when did he become so brazen? Only she got to see this side of him, and she hoped that all his employees could see it too.

“Don’t worry; he won’t die. At most, we are returning an eye for an eye,” Zong Jinghao suddenly remarked.

Lin Xinyan didn’t respond. It wasn’t until after a long while had passed before she understood what he meant.

Lin Xinyan stared quietly at him. This scheming man is just like Lin Xichen. Like father, like son.

When she realized that Bai Yinning’s life wasn’t in danger, her mind was put at ease.

At that moment, their car arrived at the Wen family residence.

Once Zong Jinghao stopped the car, Lin Xinyan opened the car door. When he offered his hand to her, she looked up at him and placed her hand in his palms.

Holding onto her hand, he helped her out of the car and closed the car door.

“Let’s go.”

It wasn’t their first time here. Upon knowing that Li Jing was an approachable person, they didn’t feel so uptight either.

Zong Jinghao pressed the doorbell when he arrived.

The door quickly swung open, and Li Jing welcomed them with a smile. “Quick, come in.”

Lin Xinyan took the initiative to greet Li Jing and followed Zong Jinghao in.

As Wen Qing’s arm was still in a sling, he sat on the sofa reading papers with his other arm. These days, very few read newspapers as most people would read from their phones instead.

No one had the patience to read newspapers anymore – Wen Qing was the exception.

When he realized the guests had arrived, he put down his papers and looked at them.

Zong Jinghao asked, “Are you feeling better?”

Wen Qing waved nonchalantly. “It’s not a problem. It’s just a small injury.”

Zong Jinghao sat down on the sofa. “Is there something you want to discuss?”

Other than during festive seasons, Wen Qing would only invite Zong Jinghao over if he had something to tell him.

That was why the latter had asked.

Wen Qing was stumped for a moment before he regained his composure. He pretended to be angry. "Can't I just be missing you? Now that your mother is gone, are you resenting me already?"

Zong Jinghao hurriedly denied that accusation with a smile.

"Alright, let's talk while we eat. Your aunt has prepared dinner." Wen Qing stood up and led them to the dining room.

Zong Jinghao followed him with Lin Xinyan in tow.

Meanwhile, Li Jing emerged from the kitchen with the dishes in hand.

Lin Xinyan stood up. "Let me help you."

Li Jing waved her off. "There's no need; I'll be done shortly. Just have a seat."

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Wen Qing also signaled to her that she didn't need to help. Li Jing could manage alone.

"Today, I just thought about your mother. So, have a drink with me." Wen Qing poured some wine for Zong Jinghao.

Li Jing interjected, "How can you be drinking when you haven't recovered?"

"I'm not in a good mood. Besides, a little wine won't kill me." Li Jing was stumped by Wen Qing's response.

Wen Qing raised his glass, clinking it with Zong Jinghao's. "Just one glass."

Once a while, Wen Qing would invite Zong Jinghao for a drink whenever he missed Wen Xian. Hence, the man wasn't suspicious of anything as he drank.

Today, Wen Qing was really in a bad mood when he thought about Wen Xian. He was afraid that Jinghao wouldn't turn out to be Wen Xian's son.

Although he wanted to find out the truth, he was also afraid that it would prove his worst fears to be true.

Feeling depressed, he remarked, “Jinghao, do you know that I have always regretted letting your mother marry into the Zong family?”

If only I didn’t prioritize the interest of the two families, perhaps Wen Xian wouldn’t have died then.

Every time he thought about how his sister had died at such a young age, he felt heartbroken.

“We knew she didn’t love Zong Qifeng, and yet we forced her to marry him for the sake of the family’s interest. In the end...”

Wen Qing gulped a mouthful of wine.

As for Zong Jinghao, his expression was calm. He didn’t show any emotion. After so many years, he was able to keep his composure whenever this topic was brought up.

“I really regretted it. Your father disappointed me too. I thought he was someone loyal, but in the end... he betrayed their marriage and caused me to lose my only sister.” Wen Qing banged the table with his fist in frustration.

Lin Xinyan looked at him. Despite being at fault, his feelings for his sister are true.

He just wanted the best for her; what’s so wrong with that?

Everyone had their own interests and dilemmas in that situation.

If someone must be blamed, it will have to be fate for making the wrong choices.

“That’s all in the past now. Jinghao doesn’t come often. Why do you have to talk about such depressing matters?” Li Jing took away the wine bottle.

“No matter how much time has passed, it doesn’t change the fact that my sister is dead!” Taking another sip, Wen Qing really felt sad – he wasn’t pretending at all.

“Jinghao, don’t mind your uncle. He is really in a bad mood today. I think you should stop drinking because I’m worried he may get drunk.” Just as she spoke, she took away Zong Jinghao’s wine glass.

Zong Jinghao naturally wouldn’t protest because he knew Wen Qing would easily get drunk given the foul mood he was in.

“Come, let’s tuck in.” Li Jing patted Wen Qing on his shoulder. “We should give the past a rest. Instead, we should focus on living our lives to the best of our abilities. If Wen Xian knew that you still can’t let go, she would be worried about you. Do you want her to feel anxious wherever she is now?”

Wen Qing wiped his face with his hands and looked at Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan. "I'm sorry, I have just embarrassed myself."

A tough guy's gentleness could easily move anyone.

Wen Qing was considered someone hardy. Hence, whenever he showed his true emotions, Lin Xinyan couldn't help but feel melancholic.

She didn't know what had gotten into her. She had never met Wen Xian and had only seen Wen Qing twice. But, for some reason, she felt especially disturbed.

She stood up to excuse herself. "I'm going to the washroom."

Since this wasn't her first time here, she was familiar with the house's layout. Hence, she made her way to the washroom without any directions given to her.

After closing the door behind her in the washroom, she turned on the tap and splashed her face with water.

The water was freezing cold, causing her to shudder and suddenly feel fully alert.

After drying her face, she opened the door. Just as she was about to return to the dining room, she saw Li Jing at the doorway making a call. While the latter was speaking on the phone, she constantly glanced toward the dining room, as if she were worried about being seen or heard.

Li Jing spoke in a very soft voice. "Will a wine glass from which he drank from do?"

Lin Xinyan furrowed her eyebrows and quickly spotted the crucial element of the situation. Li Jing was holding the wine glass Zong Jinghao had just used.

She was suddenly jolted. Do they know about Zong Jinghao's real identity and are trying to verify it? Is that why they invited us over for dinner?

Was the whole point to obtain Zong Jinghao's saliva so that they can send it for a test?

Just the thought of it caused frostiness that had just dissipated to return.

If Wen Qing knows who Zong Jinghao truly is, not only will he break ties with him, but he may also turn into an enemy.

Wen Qing will hate Cheng Yuxiu's son as much as he hates her.

When the time comes, both of them will definitely turn into adversaries.

As for Zong Jinghao, he sees Cheng Yuxiu in a negative light. To suddenly tell him that she is his biological mother, would he be able to accept it or even face it?

Given the current state of affairs, maintaining the status quo seems to be the best option for everyone.

Steadying herself, she called out to Li Jing, "Aunt."

Li Jing frantically ended the call and shot Lin Xinyan an anxious look. "Weren't you just having dinner?"

Lin Xinyan pretended as if nothing had happened. "I just went to the washroom. Why aren't you having dinner?"

"I was just talking over the phone with my son," Li Jing lied.

As Lin Xinyan walked over, Li Jing hid her hands behind her back.

The latter smiled. "Come, let's go back to the table together before the food gets cold."

Li Jing wanted to refuse, but she couldn't think of a reasonable excuse. Hence, she had no choice but to follow Lin Xinyan into the dining room.

She sat down anxiously because Li Jing was still holding onto the wine glass.

Lin Xinyan served her some food on purpose. "Aunt, try this. They are delicious!"

Knowing that it would look awkward to refuse, Li Jing made an excuse, "I'm going to get a glass of water."

Meanwhile, she used the opportunity to put the wine glass on the kitchen top.

Lin Xinyan watched her discreetly. When she saw Li Jing put the wineglass down, she brought hers in and swapped it while Li Jing poured herself a glass of water.

When Li Jing turned around and saw Lin Xinyan, she was caught by surprise. "Why are you in here?"

"I want to have some water too." Lin Xinyan held up her glass.

When she saw Lin Xinyan's glass, she glanced at the kitchen top. She heaved a sigh of relief when she saw that the wine glass remained untouched. She then replied with a smile. "Let me pour some for you."

Lin Xinyan handed her glass over.

When they were done, both of them returned to the dining room.

Meanwhile, Wen Qing was still feeling emotional while talking about Wen Xian.

Lin Xinyan took her seat beside Zong Jinghao. When she looked at Wen Qing, she understood why he was feeling so upset.

He must be afraid to find out that Zong Jinghao is not Wen Xian's son.

From the last time they met, she could feel that his feelings for Zong Jinghao were true.

He really does treasure their familial relationship.

Lin Xinyan sighed in her heart.

She lamented the impermanence of this world and how it played tricks on men.

Luckily, I found out early enough. Nothing will change still.

As Wen Xian had passed away, the only way Wen Qing could verify the truth was to take DNA samples from the living.

Wen Qing had to compare the DNAs between Zong Jinghao and Cheng Yuxiu.

Now that she had switched the glasses, Wen Qing did not have Zong Jinghao's DNA to compare. Instead, he would be using Lin Xinyan's DNA which would not result in a positive match.

After dinner, Lin Xinyan discreetly switched her cutlery with those of Zong Jinghao's when Li Jing was busy clearing the table.

As the cutlery all looked the same, no one could tell that she had made the switch.

Li Jing held onto her hand. "I can manage from here. You should go to the living hall."

Lin Xinyan pretended to be calm. "Let me help you clean up."

"No, you don't have to." Li Jing ushered her to the hall and didn't allow her to touch anything in the dining room.

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Lin Xinyan sat next to Zong Jinghao while Wen Qing continued filling them in about Wen Xian in the past. "Wen Xian initially didn't want to marry your dad. She only agreed to do so for the sake of the Wen family. Zong Qifeng was one fine man with capabilities back then. I thought they would bond with each other after they got married, but I was wrong."

Wen Qing felt himself grow more and more frustrated as endless remorse filled him.

If I have the power to turn back time, I would definitely stop her from marrying him.

On the other hand, Lin Xinyan had her full attention on Li Jing despite her being in the living room.

She saw how the latter separated the utensils used by Zong Jinghao to one side.

I'm glad I changed it beforehand.

After a while, Li Jing came out as Wen Qing was still babbling about Wen Xian. She approached him and held him close. "Are you drunk?"

Wen Qing swatted her hand away. "No. I only had one drink. How can I be drunk?"

"Then why are you so talkative today?"

"Can't I let out all my frustrations?" Wen Qing stared at her.

"You can leave if you're busy. I don't think he'll stop talking," Li Jing said to Zong Jinghao with a smile.

Unlike the latter, who had no idea what Li Jing was up to, Lin Xinyan did.

She must be planning to make a sample of his used utensils. I just so happened to find a chance to change it. We won't be this lucky next time, so I might as well let them get his DNA samples now.

She held Zong Jinghao's arm. "Let's go. I have something to do."

"We won't keep you here then," Li Jing stated.

Zong Jinghao got up and looked at Wen Qing, saying, "I'll get going."

Unfortunately, the latter was too drowned in sadness that he did not hear him. Li Jing had to answer on her husband's behalf instead, "Okay. You can go ahead and leave. I'll take care of him."

Zong Jinghao glanced at her. He had noticed that she had been acting strange today. Normally, whenever they decided to take their leave, she would hold them back.

Now she's asking us to leave?

Lin Xinyan tugged on his sleeves. "Xichen and Ruixi are waiting for us," she uttered with a smile.

Zong Jinghao turned around, still deep in his thoughts.

“I won’t be seeing you off then,” Li Jing commented.

“Yeah, no need for that.” Lin Xinyan waved her hand. “We’ll get going.”

Once they were outside, her tight grip around Zong Jinghao’s arm loosened.

“What is it that you need to do?” Zong Jinghao asked as he stared at her.

She’s also acting strange today.

Lin Xinyan paused for a moment to think of an answer. “I promised Xichen and Ruixi I’ll be home early today.”

“That’s it?” He frowned.

Lin Xinyan raised his head and leaned into his arms like a baby. “Yes. Why? Can’t I do that?”

Zong Jinghao loved when she did this. He reached out a hand to hold her and buried his face in her neck. “Of course you can. You can do anything you want.”

His breath came into contact with her skin, and she gently pushed him away. “Okay. Stop playing around.”

Zong Jinghao pecked her lips and smiled lovingly. “I should head back too.”

With that, he pulled her to his car without giving her a chance to voice out.

When they were in the car, Lin Xinyan fished out her phone to watch the video Lin Xichen had sent her. She found that China Central Television had responded – they had asked relative departments to investigate the incident.

Lin Xinyan turned serious as she looked at Zong Jinghao. “Look at him.”

“Hmm?” He turned to her, and she handed him her phone.

Zong Jinghao had nothing to fear. On the contrary, he thought it would be best if they conducted the investigation.

His son was doing great, after all.

Lin Xinyan took her phone back and inhaled deeply, hoping that no one would find out that Lin Xichen was the one who had uploaded the video.

“Nobody will find out,” Zong Jinghao muttered as he knew what she was thinking about.

He had already erased all traces of Lin Xichen doing the deed as soon as he found out what the latter planned to do.

Lin Xinyan breathed a sigh of relief. At that moment, her phone suddenly rang. The call was from the nurse in charge of Qin Ya. She had left her phone number to the former in case anything happened.

“According to the attending doctor, the patient can be transferred to a general ward, but she’s refusing to do so.”

“Noted, I’m on my way.”

“Please drive me to the hospital,” Lin Xinyan requested after she ended the call.

Hearing that, Zong Jinghao made a turn at the crossroad.

Soon, he parked the car at the hospital’s parking lot. They entered the hospital, crossed the lobby, and rode the elevator to the ICU on the twenty-first floor together.

In the meantime, Su Zhan was persuading the nurse in the corridor, “Please allow me to talk to her. I won’t be long.”

“I have no choice. The patient doesn’t want to see you. She’s in a fragile condition now, so please don’t disturb her. You can talk to her however and whenever you want when she recovers. Don’t make things difficult for me now,” the nurse sighed.

Lin Xinyan finally knew why Qin Ya had refused to be transferred to a general ward upon seeing this scene.

She quickened her steps. “Su Zhan.”

The man turned to see the woman approaching him. He then let go of the nurse. “Xinyan.”

“Don’t you know what this place is?” she questioned sternly.

I know we’re in a hospital... I just want to see Qin Ya...

“I can’t control myself.”

“You want to apologize to her and repent your mistake?” Lin Xinyan mocked. “She’s disfigured and just had a miscarriage. Do you know how hard that is for a woman? If you still care about her, the best thing you can do is not to disturb her. Let her have her peace so she can recover soon. Can you do that?”

“Can I at least catch a glimpse of her?”

“I’m sure she doesn’t want you to see her like this.” Lin Xinyan took a deep breath. “I’ll be honest with you. I’ve found a better hospital, and I’ll be transferring her there. I’ll let you know the address once she gets better. Only then can you discuss things with her. But for the time being, please don’t disturb her anymore.”

Su Zhan instantly panicked upon hearing that piece of news. She's taking Qin Ya away?

"Xinyan-"

"It's what she wants," Lin Xinyan interrupted him.

Su Zhan's eyes helplessly shifted towards the other man. "Jinghao-"

"I can't help you," Zong Jinghao replied, cutting him off.

He also thought that Su Zhan and Qin Ya should take a break from one another. If they met now, things would only get worse.

Su Zhan's heart ached profusely. "I just want to have one look at her. Can't I do at least that?"

"No. Have you ever thought of how she would feel? She's disfigured now. Do you really think she would want to face you in that condition? Don't be selfish. Think of her once in a while."

CHAPTER 360

Her words silenced Su Zhan as he hung his head. It was a pitiful sight, but Lin Xinyan did not give in. Only her tone had softened a bit. "You should focus on your work. Grandma needs you too. I'll take care of Qin Ya. Like I said earlier, I'll tell you where she is when she recovers. Can you promise me not to disturb her for now?"

Su Zhan's voice was hoarse. "Did she ask for this?"

Lin Xinyan sighed. Do I really have to answer this? I won't be this firm if Qin Ya's willing to meet him. Isn't the nurse stopping him enough of an answer?

"I understand," Su Zhan stated before leaving with his head down.

"Give me a call later," Zong Jinghao uttered to his wife.

"Okay," she responded while nodding her head.

With that, the man caught up with Su Zhan, worried that the latter would take things too hard. "He didn't hurt you, did he?" Lin Xinyan asked the nurse when the men left.

The nurse waved her hand. "No, no. I've seen a lot of visitors like him. I can handle it."

"How is she?" Lin Xinyan asked.

"She's getting better. She does not need to stay in the ICU anymore."

"I'll take her to get treatment abroad within two days. Can she stay here until then?" she questioned, fearing that Su Zhan would return.

"Of course, as long as you pay for it."

The ICU would cost tens of thousands a day. That was why many people try to stay in that ward for only a short while. After all, most people could not afford to pay such a huge sum of money.

"Can I go in?"

"Yes," the nurse replied and opened the door.

Lin Xinyan still needed to change out of her clothes even when Qin Ya was no longer in a critical condition.

The latter was lying in bed. She could not move around that much.

Lin Xinyan walked over and lowered her head to look at her friend. When the thought of Su Zhan making a fuss entered her mind, she could not make out the other woman's emotions as her face was covered. Howbeit, the latter did not seem as calm as she appeared to be.

"Do you feel uncomfortable anywhere?" Lin Xinyan asked softly.

"No. I just want to leave this place as fast as I can," Qin Ya replied.

"I know. I've already arranged everything. We'll leave in two days," Lin Xinyan reassured. "Don't worry. Su Zhan won't come here anymore."

Her reply soothed Qin Ya. "I really don't want to see him."

Lin Xinyan understood.

I would feel the same if I were in her shoes.

Unlike the general ward, the ICU did not have any chairs for visitors. The ward was too enclosed and brightly lit; Qin Ya would have no sense of time in there if she did not inquire about it.

"What time is it?"

Lin Xinyan checked the time before replying, "It's almost midnight."

"Then you better head home now," Qin Ya responded a bit apologetically.

“You know, when I get customers in the store, it’s not like I can sleep when I return home. I have to stay up and draw,” Lin Xinyan reminded her friend, trying to make her feel at ease. “I’ll stay here a bit longer. I have to think of the design anyway.”

Qin Ya did not voice anything, but she was secretly grateful to have a friend like Lin Xinyan.

Henceforth, Lin Xinyan stayed until Qin Ya fell asleep.

When the former exited the hospital, she took out her phone to call Zong Jinghao.

In the meantime, the man parked his car at the side of Anchi Bridge. He leaned against the railing with both hands in his pockets as he faced the river while Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan sat on the staircase.

“You need to give her time to let her digest what had happened and accept that she doesn’t want to see you now. Give her some space. At the same time, you should use this opportunity to think of your relationship,” Shen Peichuan advised.

Su Zhan listened silently as he took a sip of beer once in a while.

There were countless unopened and opened cans of beers on the staircase.

Shen Peichuan had been talking all night long, and his voice had turned hoarse. Yet, Su Zhan remained quiet.

“What are you doing, Su Zhan?” the former shouted, snatching the can in his hand. “Are you regretting it now?”

“Yes! I regret it!” Su Zhan suddenly stood up in frustration. He accidentally kicked a can of beer as he stared at the appalled Shen Peichuan. “I had no idea that she was pregnant with my child. I was there. I witnessed how she was covered in blood, and I thought it was because she was injured. I saw, with my own eyes, that she was on the edge of giving up.”

“This.” Su Zhan placed his clenched fist on his chest. “Hurts like hell.”

It was clear to Shen Peichuan how Su Zhan was drowning in miserable pain. It was something he had never go through before. Because of that, he realized that his previous advice did not do much to ease the man.

“I know you’re hurting right now. Here. I’ll drink with you.” He picked up an unopened can and drank a mouthful of beer. After that, he draped his hand around Su Zhan’s neck. “Everything will be alright. Try your best to make it up to her when she recovers. Both of you are still young. You still have a chance.”

Though Su Zhan’s heart was aching, he knew that it was pointless to regret everything now. All he could do was try to win her back.

He lifted his red eyes and stared at Shen Peichuan. “Do I really stand a chance?”

“Yes. You do,” the latter affirmed.

That seemed to relieve Su Zhan. “Keep me company tonight. I don’t want to be alone.”

He was afraid he would lose control over his emotions if he were left alone.

Shen Peichuan agreed to stay with him. Just as he was about to ask Zong Jinghao to join them, the latter’s phone rang.

Zong Jinghao fished out his phone and answered the call, immediately hearing Lin Xinyan’s voice. “Is Su Zhan feeling better?”

His eyes traveled to the men that were on top of the staircase and hummed a disdain reply.

“Good to know. I’m at the hospital’s entrance now. You don’t need to come if you’re busy. I can take a cab.”

“I’m not busy.”

Peichuan’s with Su Zhan anyway.

He straightened up and walked towards the car. “I’ll get going.”

Su Zhan felt that it was unfair of him to leave. He had just lost his child and refused by the woman he loved. Now that he has a wife, does he not care about friends anymore?

“You’re ditching your friends for your relationship!” he shouted.

Zong Jinghao’s hand paused on the car door as he whipped his head around to look at him. “Do you want Qin Ya to get treatment?”

Su Zhan was instantly disheartened. Of course, he wanted Qin Ya to get treatment more than anything. Right now, the woman only had Lin Xinyan by her side. If the latter could not do everything as planned, only Zong Jinghao could do it.

“I didn’t mean that. Please don’t take what I said seriously.” He beamed a sad smile to Zong Jinghao.

“Of course.” I’ll definitely find the best doctor for Qin Ya.

“Thank you,” said Su Zhan chokingly.

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Zong Jinghao said nothing more as he opened the door and got in the car.

When he left the scene, Shen Peichuan patted Su Zhan's shoulder. "Let's have another drink."

"Okay."

Lin Xinyan was feeling sleepy as she waited for Zong Jinghao at the hospital's entrance.

At this hour, even the usually busy hospital, especially at the receptionist desk, was quieter.

Zong Jinghao finally arrived after half an hour. When Lin Xinyan saw his car, she walked over when he stopped right in front of her.

"Where's Su Zhan?" she asked while fastening her seatbelt.

"He's with Shen Peichuan," he replied while keeping his eyes on the road.

Lin Xinyan was glad to know that someone was keeping Su Zhan company.

It was already two in the morning. Lin Xinyan leaned back on the seat, nodding off unknowingly.

Zong Jinghao slowed down and drove steadily. When they arrived at the villa, she was already sound asleep.

He went out and rounded the car to go to the other side. After that, he opened the door before bending down to unfasten her seatbelt and carried her to the house.

Lin Xinyan frowned and mumbled something upon sensing the movement. She quickly adjusted into a comfortable position in his hold as she continued her slumber.

They emerged through the door, and Cheng Yuxiu, who was up, was drinking water.

Her eyes shifted from the couple to the clock, noticing that it was three in the morning.

"You're back this late?" she questioned in a hushed tone, to which the man only hummed a reply out of habit.

Cheng Yuxiu froze as her eyes widened.

Did he just respond to me?

She walked back to Lin Ruixi's room without even finishing the water. As she was about to push the door open, she turned around again to go to Zong Qifeng's room instead.

“Hey, wake up.” She shook the sleeping man slightly.

Zong Qifeng slowly opened his eyes, adjusting his vision under the faint light before the woman’s face came into view.

Isn’t she supposed to be in Ruixi’s room? Why is she here?

“What’s the matter?” he asked while sitting up, staring at Cheng Yuxiu, who seemed all over the place.

“J-Jinghao just talked to me.”

Zong Qifeng turned on the bedside lamp, brightening up the room.

“What did he say?”

“I asked him why he’s back so late, and he replied me with a hum.”

That’s it? She really woke me up for this? The man frowned.

“Don’t you think this is an improvement? Will he slowly accept me?” I’m anticipating for that day to come.

“He will,” Zong Qifeng answered while staring at her happy expression.

Zong Qifeng somewhat understood Zong Jinghao. He knew that it would not be easy to break the latter’s wall.

He has never treated her well, yet she’s this happy just because she received a hum from him?

Cheng Yuxiu’s whole being lit up even more after getting his reassurance. “Then should I talk to him more from now on?”

She really can’t think straight when it comes to Zong Jinghao. We’ve been married for more than twenty years, and he has always shown her the cold shoulder. How can she think he’ll open up to her now?

“Come here,” Zong Qifeng sighed, waving her over.

Cheng Yuxiu sat by the bed, and he stroked her cheek.

“He has been like this for years. Don’t get your hopes too high.”

I don’t want her to be disappointed.

“I understand,” uttered Cheng Yuxiu. However, she was actually already dizzy with excitement.

They had been together for ages now. Zong Qifeng knew her well enough to know that she was not listening to him.

I'll talk to her again when she calms down.

CHAPTER 362

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao carried Lin Xinyan all the way to their room.

She was sleeping deeply, but when he laid her on the bed, she rolled her body to get under the covers when she could feel the mattress. Zong Jinghao furrowed and bent his body over hers to gaze at her.

Her head was tilted, and her small cheeks were as white as porcelain. Her eyelashes were so long that they had their own shadows. Her luscious red lips seemed like they were seducing him.

He lowered his head to capture her lips with his own. The sudden contact stirred Lin Xinyan awake, and she frowned before letting out an irritated grunt.

She slowly fluttered her eyes open, only to see Zong Jinghao mere inches away from her face. "I'm sleepy." She pushed him away, a bit flirtatiously. Her sleepy voice was hoarse and soft, luring him even more.

Zong Jinghao mumbled a response without detaching himself from her lips. Lin Xinyan could feel his hot, uneven breath on her skin.

She could not help but grow nervous. Her sleepiness faded away when she recalled how dominant the man was in bed.

Every time they had a steamy session, she would always be left panting for air.

"Jinghao, I'm really sleepy," she cautiously voiced out.

"What should you call me?"

Lin Xinyan was in a daze. "Jinghao?" she asked questioningly.

Should he be called Zong Jinghao or just Jinghao?

"Mmph!"

Suddenly, she felt a cold breeze brush all over her body as he lifted her skirt. Just as she was about to cover it back, he quickly grabbed her hands and pinned them above her head, hovering over her. "I'll ask you one more time. What should you call me?"

"H-hubby?" she stuttered.

He raised his brows as a wide smile plastered across his face, radiating immense joy.

"I wanna sleep," Lin Xinyan cooed, taking this opportunity to act coquettishly.

Zong Jinghao placed a kiss on each of her eyelids, and she closed her eyes, enjoying the affection.

"Go ahead." He smiled fervently while caressing her hair.

"Okay." She leaned up to kiss his cheek softly, making the man's heart burst with happiness.

Zong Jinghao helped her remove her shoes, revealing her milky white and small feet.

During the process, Lin Xinyan had not fallen asleep yet. She chose not to make any movements, simply enjoying this moment all she could.

Unwittingly, the corners of her lips rose slightly.

After that, she heard the sound of the man taking a shower as she gradually fell asleep. Before she drifted into dreamland, she felt the mattress behind her sink deeply before a strong arm wrapped around her slender waist, pulling her close to him. She could smell his shower gel as she finally slumbered in his comfortable arms.

It was nine in the morning when she woke up.

Typically, Zong Jinghao was already headed to the company at this hour. Surprisingly, he was still at home today. "You're not working today?" she asked while sitting up.

Zong Jinghao stood in front of the mirror while putting on a necktie as he glanced at her. "Everything's been arranged. Qin Ya can go today."

Upon hearing that, Lin Xinyan got out of bed, approached him, and wrapped her arms around him from behind. "Thank you."

"How should you thank me?" he questioned while still fumbling with the necktie.

She rounded him and stopped right in front of him, stretching her arms to grab the necktie. "Next time, let me do this for you."

She was a fashion designer herself – she could handle things like this easily.

When she was done with the necktie, she helped him button up the suit before smoothing out the neckline.

After that, she sighed in satisfaction and took a step back to admire the man and her work. He had a thin waist, and his hips looked sturdy.

The dangling lights on the ceiling illuminated his glowing skin, highlighting all his charming points.

Zong Jinghao smiled. "Like what you see?"

"Just a little bit," Lin Xinyan nodded seriously, pretending to actually mean what she said.

"A little bit?" The man arched a brow, clearly disliking what he was hearing.

Lin Xinyan hooked her arms around his neck, tiptoeing while lifting her head to land a kiss on his chin. "Kidding, I love it."

I can't deny it anymore. I'm falling for him.

Zong Jinghao hugged her small waist with a smile plastered on his lips. "You should change your clothes."

Lin Xinyan nodded and walked over to her wardrobe to take out a new outfit before going to the bathroom for a quick change.

Now that Zong Jinghao had arranged for everything, the only thing left for her to do was fetch Qin Ya to the airport.

Concurrently, Guan Jing took care of everything in the hospital as per Zong Jinghao's order after the latter received a call from the other party.

Some of the medical staff would go along with Qin Ya in case anything happened.

He had arranged everything accordingly. When they arrived, Guan Jing approached them. "Everything's set. We can go to the airport now."

"What time is the flight?" questioned Lin Xinyan.

"It's a chartered flight. We can fly anytime," Guan Jing replied readily.

"Okay, then. We'll leave once everything's ready."

We can't afford to postpone Qin Ya's treatment.

It took half an hour for Lin Xinyan to send Qin Ya to the airport from the hospital.

Qin Ya was lying on the stretcher carried by the medical staff, with a doctor on the side. They stopped at the boarding gate. "I'll visit you soon," Lin Xinyan announced.

Qin Ya only replied with a timid 'okay' and nothing more, for she felt that the words 'thank you' were not enough to describe the gratitude she felt towards her friend.

"Get well soon. Everything will be alright." Lin Xinyan held her hand tight. "I'll wait for your return to help me manage the store."

"Okay," Qin Ya replied as tears welled up in her eyes.

With that, the medical staff carried her into the airplane. Shortly after, Lin Xinyan watched as the plane took off.

Meanwhile, two men were standing in an unobtrusive corner of the airport. One had on a serious expression, while the other looked sorrowful.

Su Zhan would have rushed forward if it weren't for Shen Peichuan holding him back.

He could only helplessly watch Qin Ya take off into the skies, leaving him heartbroken.

Of course, he knew it was best for him not to show up in front of Qin Ya. However, that would fill him with endless contrition.

Ever since Qin Ya was rescued, all he had managed to do was take a glance at the unconscious woman. They never exchanged a single word after she woke up because she had refused to meet him.

Shen Peichuan let go of him after Qin Ya left, and Su Zhan immediately dashed towards Lin Xinyan.

"Su Zhan!" Shen Peichuan shouted, chasing after the other man in fear that the latter would curse Lin Xinyan for making Qin Ya leave.

CHAPTER 363

Instead of confronting them, Su Zhan tried his best to keep himself calm. However, he wanted Lin Xinyan to tell him the details of Qin Ya's whereabouts to get himself ready.

Shen Peichuan had been keeping him company since last night.

Finally, he made up his mind. No matter what he was up to, he would have to put everything on hold until Qin Ya recovered. If he were to approach Qin Ya, he would only bring her more misery, affecting her recovery.

"I'm wide awake." Su Zhan smiled bitterly in return. He looked at Shen Peichuan and placed his hand on the man's shoulder silently.

He deemed it unnecessary to explain himself.

Similarly, Shen Peichuan placed his hand on Su Zhan's shoulder. "I'm glad you have finally sorted things out."

The former felt a sense of relief when he heard that Su Zhan had made up his mind. Truth be told, he was worried about his friend because Su Zhan had been in a foul mood over the past few days.

"Xinyan," Su Zhan greeted Lin Xinyan in a husky voice because he felt guilty deep down.

Judging by Su Zhan's look, Lin Xinyan managed to figure out his motive. She assured him, "Don't worry. Once she recovers, I'll get in touch with you and let you know her whereabouts."

"If that's the case, I'll place her under your care, Xinyan," Su Zhan nodded in return and replied thoughtfully.

"Don't worry. I'll take great care of her. For the time being, you have to take good care of yourself as well," Lin Xinyan instructed in the end.

"Liu Feifei used to be my first love. Hence, I got anxious when she showed up out of nowhere back then. I was the reason she managed to get the better of me and hurt Qin Ya. I will bear the consequences of my actions and beg for her forgiveness once she recovers," Su Zhan asserted.

Lin Xinyan had no intention of meddling with Su Zhan and Qin Ya's relationship.

After all, she was merely an outsider. Hence, she wasn't in the position to make the call on anyone's behalf.

"I'll get her to revert back to you once she's ready," Lin Xinyan told Su Zhan and bade farewell with him.

She wanted to return to the store since Zong Jinghao would have to return to the company soon.

Once they walked out of the airport, Zong Jinghao opened the door of his car and ushered Lin Xinyan into their ride.

After Lin Xinyan got into the car and buckled up, Zong Jinghao asked, "Are you heading over to the company?"

“No. Can you please drop me off at the store?” Initially, she wanted to draw everyone’s attention to Tea Silk. However, she had to put everything to a halt for the time being due to Wen Qing.

She could barely sustain her store’s day-to-day operation. Hence, she was in desperate need of dazzling collections to bring LEO back to the public’s eyes in B City.

Ever since the launching of the store, she had encountered a series of events. In other words, she had accidentally neglected her store’s operation. She needed to establish a proper contingency plan. Otherwise, things would get to the point of no return and adversely impact LEO’s image.

Lin Xinyan walked out of the car once Zong Jinghao pulled over in front of her store. The latter received a call all of a sudden.

Lin Xinyan turned around and instructed, “You should pick up the call. I’ll get going immediately.”

It was a call from the Wen family’s landline. Usually, Wen Qing was the only one who would approach him. Zong Jinghao looked at Lin Xinyan and told her, “I’ll pick you up after you’re done.”

Lin Xinyan nodded in return before walking into her store.

Zong Jinghao picked up the call, but he had his eyes glued to the departing figure of Lin Xinyan.

“Jinghao, can you please do me a favor?” Wen Qing’s voice could be heard.

Zong Jinghao would never turn Wen Qing down because the man had never once asked for a favor from him.

“What is it?”

“Can you please drop by Imperial Hotel and approach someone who has checked into room 808 on my behalf? I need you to retrieve an item for me. She’ll hand over the item to you once you tell her you’re there on my behalf.”

Usually, he would instruct Guan Jing to retrieve items of sorts on his behalf, but he decided to drop by Imperial Hotel since it wasn’t much of a hassle.

As soon as he reached the hotel, he headed over to room 808 as instructed. He pressed the doorbell to notify the person of his arrival.

Soon, someone answered the door.

CHAPTER 364

The person who answered the door was a young and gorgeous woman.

She wasn't shocked the moment she detected Zong Jinghao's presence. In fact, she seemed to be expecting his arrival all along.

In fact, she would be surprised if it weren't Zong Jinghao who had shown up in front of her doorstep.

"Are you here to retrieve an item?" the young woman asked with a smile.

Due to the illumination of the corridor, the woman's flawless facial features could be seen. Her glistering pair of eyes stood out amongst the features she had been blessed with. In short, she was an ethereal beauty.

However, Zong Jinghao behaved casually, as though he couldn't be bothered by the woman's so-called flawless features at all.

He replied nonchalantly with a poker face, "Mm."

"Come on in," the woman replied with a smile and moved away, showing him the way into the room.

Zong Jinghao frowned in confusion. He had his fair share of doubts deep down because he couldn't recall encountering this woman by Wen Qing's side.

Apart from that, he couldn't figure out the rationale behind why Wen Qing had handed over his item to such a young woman.

"My father and Uncle Wen have been close acquaintances for years. My father was the one who has access to the information of the exceptional recruits who have been recruited through the drill. Uncle Wen wanted to peruse the information, but my dad wasn't free. Hence, he sent me on his behalf..." The woman explained the reason behind it and introduced herself, "My name is Chen Shihan. If anything is bothering you, please give Uncle Wen a call."

Since Chen Shihan had introduced herself and told Zong Jinghao everything he had been wondering, he could not bring anything else up anymore.

Once he marched into the room, Chen Shihan closed the door and passed him the folder she had retrieved from the table.

However, when Zong Jinghao tried to take it away from Chen Shihan, she held on to it firmly.

She looked at Zong Jinghao and asked, "Aren't you curious about the reason Uncle Wen has sent you to retrieve the documents? I mean, people like my father and Uncle Wen have

bodyguards around them twenty-four seven. In fact, they have an entire unit at their deployment. Both you and I don't need to meet up for a mere set of documents."

"Oh? Does that mean you know what they're up to?" Zong Jinghao played along because he had been wanting to figure out the reason behind it as well.

"Of course! I heard the conversation between my father and Uncle Wen prior to my departure." Chen Shihan sat on the couch nonchalantly; she was certain Zong Jinghao would be interested in the things she had to share with him.

Zong Jinghao nodded in return. He wasn't interested in the content of the conversation they had, but he wanted to figure out the reason behind Wen Qing's action.

"Do you want me to tell you?" Chen Shihan asked with a bright smile.

It was evident that she had no intention to share it with him unconditionally, but Zong Jinghao had always been a proud man.

He would never allow a woman to overpower him.

Therefore, he cast a skeptical gaze at Chen Shihan before stepping out of the room.

She didn't expect him to leave her behind without any hesitation. Immediately, she got up from the couch and went after Zong Jinghao.

By the time she reached the entrance, Zong Jinghao had already boarded the elevator and made his way downstairs. She chuckled as she stood by the entrance. "Zong Jinghao, you're such an interesting man!"

Zong Jinghao was a young and wealthy man. He possessed countless assets and a flawless look that could easily charm another woman.

Chen Shihan got pumped up because she could not wait to figure out the arrangement Wen Qing and her father had in store to match-make them.

Previously, Chen Shihan had merely heard rumors about Zong Jinghao. She finally had the opportunity to run into him in person. He was a charismatic man. As compared to his peers, he was far more exceptional.

Once Zong Jinghao got into his car with the folder, he made his way back to his company.

He couldn't figure out the meaning behind Chen Shihan's words, and neither could he figure out Wen Qing's intention behind his request.

As soon as he reached his company, Zong Jinghao parked his car in the underground parking lot. The moment he alighted from his car, he noticed the folder and decided to bring it along with him.

He boarded the elevator and made his way upstairs.

“Send Guan Jing to my office immediately,” he instructed after he walked out of the elevator and passed by his secretary’s seat.

He entered his office once he delivered his instructions. Zong Jinghao placed the folder he had brought along with him on the table casually and adjusted his tie.

As soon as Guan Jing walked into his office, Zong Jinghao pointed at the folder on his table and instructed his subordinate to deliver it to Wen Qing.

Guan Jing took note of his instruction and took the folder along with him as he made his way out of his supervisor’s office, but Zong Jinghao stopped him. “Hold on.”

Hence, Guan Jing stopped right where he was before he could make his way out of Zong Jinghao’s office. He turned around and looked at Zong Jinghao, awaiting the next instruction.

Zong Jinghao fell silent for a few seconds before instructing, “I want you to investigate if there’s been anything odd regarding the Wen family lately.”

Guan Jing couldn’t figure out the rationale behind Zong Jinghao’s instruction because he was aware of the sort of relationship Wen Qing and Zong Jinghao had.

Hence, Guan Jing asked carefully, “Am I supposed to investigate Wen Qing?”

“Have I not made myself clear?” Zong Jinghao stretched his arms and removed the cufflinks on his sleeves.

“No. Everything is clear,” Guan Jing replied with a smile and made his way out of Zong Jinghao’s office right away.

He stood in front of Zong Jinghao’s office once he shut the door tight. Guan Jing took a peek at the folder he had with him and darted another glance at the door that had been shut tight.

Although he noticed Zong Jinghao in a foul mood, he shrugged his shoulders helplessly because he was aware that he shouldn’t poke his nose into his supervisor’s business. He made up his mind and decided to focus on the mission that had been assigned to him instead.

He made a call as he walked down the stairs with the folder that Zong Jinghao handed over to him.

On the other hand, Lin Xinyan gathered every staff of her store around once again.

No matter how exceptional the designs of her outfits were, it would not do her any good if no one were aware of their existence.

Therefore, she needed someone influential to put on the outfits she had designed to achieve positive word-of-mouth.

Ellen caressed her chin and suggested, "I think Mr. Zong is the best candidate for the task since he's a renowned figure!"

In return, Lin Xinyan knitted her eyebrows and gave it some thought, but she soon recalled Zong Jinghao had always shown up in front of others in formal wear.

She could not possibly get him to promote his outfits to others either. He would never give in to her request as well.

Hence, she couldn't rationalize the idea her subordinate had suggested because it didn't make any sense to turn Zong Jinghao into her brand's spokesperson.

In fact, she had never once wanted to rely on Zong Jinghao either.

"No," Lin Xinyan turned down the suggestion of her subordinate without any hesitation.

"Are you sure you're not turning me down because you're reluctant to put him under the limelight?" Ellen teased her in return.

Lin Xinyan chuckled because she found Ellen's words hilarious. She wasn't mad since she was satisfied with her current state of living as well as her relationship with Zong Jinghao.

Ellen stated, "The only ones who are able to contribute to our goals are the celebrities."

Actually, Lin Xinyan shared the same idea deep down. However, she didn't want to procure the aid of a female celebrity.

All along, they had focused on designing outfits for females. As a matter of fact, they had rarely launched outfits for males. Hence, Lin Xinyan wanted to penetrate their business segment into the male market.

"What about Li Zhan? He's the most sought-after male celebrity nowadays, but it's going to cost a fortune to procure his service," Ellen explained.

Since Lin Xinyan had never been a fan of the entertainment industry, she was not aware of the ongoing issue. Besides, she might not want to procure the service of the most sought-after male celebrity because the one thing she emphasized the most was compatibility.

"Ellen, each of us will design two outfits. We'll decide on the flagship design once we've come out with our separate designs. I'll deal with the spokesperson on my own."

"Alright, Xinran."

“Everyone, it won’t be easy in the upcoming few weeks, but let’s give our best!” Once the designs were drafted, they would have to produce the outfits based on the designs. They might have to work overtime to achieve the quality desired.

Nevertheless, Lin Xinran’s employees didn’t complain because they would be the beneficiaries of their actions, should the profit the store generated increase. Hence, they were willing to work overtime voluntarily.

Lin Xinyan shut herself in her office once the conference ended. She had a few rough ideas in her mind. Therefore, she started drafting her designs immediately.

Finally, she completed one of her designs. She had to decide on the best candidate for the spokesperson to endorse the outfits she had designed next.

Since she had made up her mind to procure the service of a male celebrity, they would have to pay a higher premium to secure their services.

Although it might cost Lin Xinran a fortune, it would be necessary for a greater cause in the long run because they might achieve positive word-of-mouth and penetrate the male market easily. Apart from that, most of the male celebrity’s fans were female. The fans might be a potential source of customers Lin Xinran could tap into as well.

She surfed the internet to gather the male celebrities’ information. The first one who showed up on the list was Li Zhan, the one Ellen had brought up previously.

The man had delicate facial features that make him seem as though he was the reincarnation of the legendary Narcissus from Greek mythology. He had a pair of abysmal eyes that intrigued Lin Xinyan.

She started collecting Li Zhan’s personal information.

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Immediately, Lin Xinyan perused his biography.

Name: Li Zhan

English Name: Sean Xiao

Gender: Male

Height: 180 CM

Weight: 56 KG

Horoscope: Libra

Li Zhan was born on October 5, 1992, in B City. He’s a professional actor and singer.

In 2015, he participated in Youth With You, an audition variety show. He was the champion of the show and had since debuted as a celebrity.

In March 2016, he took part in the production of a web drama – You Are My Destiny.

In 2017, Li Zhan rose to fame after playing the role of Han Tianyu; the character he played in the drama My Soulmate. On May 28, 2018, My Dearest – the drama Li Zhan had taken part in – was aired. It had garnered five hundred million views globally on the premiere. He had played the role of Yu Chengze; the male protagonist of the drama and won the public over.

Li Zhan has been acknowledged as the most influential male celebrity since he rose to fame due to My Dearest that had garnered fifteen billion views globally.

Lin Xinyan's jaw dropped open when she figured out Li Zhan's background. He wasn't even thirty-year-old, yet he was, undeniably, the most influential male celebrity.

First impressions mattered. Lin Xinyan was impressed by Li Zhan and thought he fulfilled the criteria she had set forth.

Therefore, she made up her mind and decided to procure his service as the spokesperson for her brand new series of outfits.

She reached for her phone and called Guan Jing because she needed his aid to get the exact location of the agency Li Zhan was affiliated with.

Lin Xinyan would strike a deal with Li Zhan and his agency on her own.

On the other hand, Guan Jing had just reached Wen Qing's department. He received a call out of the blue before he could hand the folder over to the latter as instructed.

As soon as he picked up the call, he heard a woman's voice instructing casually, "I need you to investigate someone on my behalf."

Guan Jing was dumbfounded because he had just received the instruction from Zong Jinghao to investigate Wen Qing. On the other hand, Lin Xinyan had gotten in touch with him and wanted him to investigate someone else on her behalf.

He couldn't help but doubt because it seemed too much to be a coincidence.

"May I know who is it?" Guan Jing asked in return.

"I need you to figure out the exact location of Li Zhan's agency," Lin Xinyan told Guan Jing.

Guan Jing was utterly confused because one of them was going after the father while the other was going after the son.

Did they talk about this beforehand? If they hadn't, the chemistry between them both is horrifying!

Li Zhan was Wen Xiaoji's alias. In other words, he was Wen Qing and Li Jing's son. He had gotten himself an entirely unrelated alias since he had debuted as a celebrity.

Thus, only a mere few were aware of his actual identity. Guan Jing was one of them. He aware of Li Zhan's actual identity because Zong Jinghao had once brought it up in front of him.

"He isn't affiliated with any agency. May I know the reason you're looking after him?" Guan Jing asked because he was aware Li Zhan wasn't affiliated with any agency. He had a personal manager that would be in charge of his schedule.

"I want him to be the spokesperson of LEO. Do you know how I can get in touch with him?" Lin Xinyan decided to tell Guan Jing the truth and ask for his aid.

"Yes," Guan Jing assured Lin Xinyan.

Knock! Knock!

Someone knocked on Lin Xinyan's door – the receptionist of the company had shown up. She stood at the entrance and told Lin Xinyan, "Someone is looking for you."

Lin Xinyan nodded and took note of the receptionist's words. She told the person on the other end of the call, "Please text me the methods to get in touch with him once you get your hands on it. I've got to go because I have to tend to something else."

As soon as Lin Xinyan hung up the call, she got up from her seat and asked, "Did the visitor announce his identity?"

"No, but he's shown up in a wheelchair."

Lin Xinyan's eyes widened in shock because only one of her acquaintances would travel around in a wheelchair.

That person was none other than Bai Yinning.

Once she returned to her senses, she instructed the receptionist to bring two glasses of water over to the conference room downstairs as she walked down the stairs.

In the meantime, Bai Yinning, who was in the wheelchair, had his back facing the staircase. He turned the wheelchair around the moment he heard footsteps closing in. Immediately, he saw Lin Xinyan walking down the stairs.

Lin Xinyan saw him as well. She figured out what happened since his head was bandaged and his eyes were bruised.

She walked down the stairs but didn't bother expressing her concerns.

Bai Yinning's face darkened as he looked her in the eyes. "Aren't you going to ask me how I hurt myself?"

He felt dejected deep down because he didn't expect her to tell Zong Jinghao the truth behind Wen Qing's accident.

In actual fact, Bai Yinning was certain that Zong Jinghao wouldn't have figured out that he was the mastermind behind the accident should Lin Xinyan keep her mouth shut.

Nevertheless, they had come to a unanimous agreement of not exposing one another.

Thus, Lin Xinyan pretended as if she had no idea the reason behind his injuries. She asked, "Are you okay?"

"Don't worry. I'm still kicking and alive," Bai Yinning replied nonchalantly.

It was evident that he was enraged; Lin Xinyan was aware of his emotions.

She heaved a long sigh of despair deep down because she had long urged him to leave the place, but he had insisted on staying back.

Lin Xinyan took a seat on the couch and served Bai Yinning the glass of water the receptionist had brought her. "Please have a glass of water and calm yourself down."

Bai Yinning refused to take the glass of water Lin Xinyan offered him. He stared at Lin Xinyan with a serious look and asked, "Can you please tell me if you've brought it up in front of him proactively or if you weren't given a choice because he confronted you after getting his hands on some leads—"

"I brought it up in front of him proactively," Lin Xinyan broke the silence, confessing before Bai Yinning could finish his sentence. She looked at him in the eyes and told him, "He's my husband. I can't and shouldn't lie to him."

She told him the things she had been keeping to herself all this while. Although she had her fair share of conflicts back then, she wanted to be honest with Zong Jinghao.

Lin Xinyan didn't want to keep her husband in the dark, and neither did she want to lie to him because she was a firm believer that honesty was the foundation of a healthy relationship.

After all, she had a special relationship with Zong Jinghao.

Sometimes she couldn't help but recall that Zong Jinghao had returned to her because of their children. However, he would occasionally be affectionate whenever he was around her.

Hence, he had caused her to fall head over heels in love with him. Lin Xinyan was now serious about Zong Jinghao and wished to spend the rest of her life by his side peacefully.

If it were possible, she would love to conceive once more. Nevertheless, her physical condition forbids her to complete her goal.

Bai Yinning's heart skipped a beat. Actually, he had long figured out the truth, but he had been hopeful all this while.

He decided to confront her, yet she had let him down once more.

"Weren't you afraid that I would be killed?" He suppressed his emotions and put on a superficial smile.

"I know him better than anyone else. Hence, I was certain he wouldn't go overboard." Lin Xinyan had been by Zong Jinghao's side. He was a calm and collected man, but he wouldn't allow others to take advantage of him either.

"Hahaha!" Bai Yinning burst into laughter abruptly and queried, "How can you be so sure?"

"I have faith in him." One sentence from Lin Xinyan was all it took to render Bai Yinning speechless.

It's unconditional trust; the most crucial thing to maintain the relationship between a husband and a wife.

In the end, Bai Yinning put on a calm front and remarked sarcastically, "I can't wait to figure out the way he would respond the moment he figures out the person, whom he has been looking up to all this while, is his ultimate foe."

Lin Xinyan's expression changed upon hearing Bai Yinning's words.

Does that mean he's aware of the truth?

It sounded like a blunt lie because only a mere few were aware of the truth ever since the evidence of the incident had been wiped out of existence.

She tried her best to calm herself down, looked at Bai Yinning, and asked, "What do you mean? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Are you sure you're not lying?" Bai Yinning asked rhetorically with a smirk because he had figured out everything, but he had yet to get his hands on the evidence.

Bai Hongfei's dying wish was to get Bai Yinning engaged to Cheng Yuxiu's daughter. In other words, Cheng Yuxiu was a barren woman.

Nevertheless, no one was aware of the whereabouts of Cheng Yuxiu's child.

"Why would I lie to you?" Lin Xinyan put her glass of water aside and raised her head, looking at Bai Yinning in the eyes.

She was determined to play pretend in front of him.

“The truth shall prevail,” Bai Yinning stated.

He was the first to figure out the fact that Wen Qing had dispatched his men to go after the truth behind Tea Silk because Baicheng was, after all, his territory.

Thus, he made use of the opportunity and deceived Wen Qing’s men. He spread rumors saying Cheng Yuxiu was a barren woman when they were going after the truth behind Tea Silk.

Since Wen Qing was involved in the incident, the man would definitely investigate Cheng Yuxiu’s background if he were aware that she was a barren woman.

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Hence, Bai Yinning was certain the truth would prevail.

Lin Xinyan narrowed her eyes and recalled the time she visited the Wen family. Li Jing removed the cutleries Zong Jinghao had made use of once he finished his meal.

Finally, she figured out the things that had gone wrong; Bai Yinning was the mastermind behind the scene all this while.

“You’re the one behind everything!” Lin Xinyan stated in a callous tone, but she had misperceived things for once.

It was Wen Qing. He had his doubts because Li Jing had told him the content of the conversation Lin Xinyan had with Cheng Yuxiu. Hence, he dispatched his men to Baicheng.

Lin Xinyan had misperceived Bai Yinning to be the mastermind, but the man actually had nothing much to do with it.

No matter what, Lin Xinyan would be irritated because Bai Yinning was insisted on unveiling the truth.

“What do you stand to gain?” Lin Xinyan cast a skeptical gaze at Bai Yinning.

In return, Bai Yinning’s pupils constricted because Lin Xinyan had never once stared at him in such a manner.

Although he felt dejected deep down, he put on a calm front – he didn’t want to be vulnerable in front of her.

He replied nonchalantly, "Is it necessary for you to confront me? I'm sure you're aware of what I stand to gain, right?"

If Zong Jinghao was Cheng Yuxiu's son, he would definitely turn his back against Wen Qing once he figured out that Cheng Yuxiu had been taken into custody by Wen Qing back then.

If that were the case, Bai Yinning could get his revenge easily since Zong Jinghao would stop getting in his way. In fact, he might join him to avenge Cheng Yuxiu.

Indeed, Lin Xinyan was aware of Bai Yinning's scheme.

She found Bai Yinning a selfish man.

"If you want to get your revenge, you should achieve it on your own! It's not very wise of you to leverage on someone else's traumatic experience!" Lin Xinyan didn't want the truth to prevail because she enjoyed things as it was as of now.

She clenched her fists with all her might. Since Wen Qing had started going after Zong Jinghao's background after he started having his doubts, she was worried that the cutleries she had swapped out wouldn't be of much help.

The most she could do was to get Bai Yinning to stay out of it. In fact, it would be better if she could win him over and procure his aid since Baicheng was his territory. Even if Wen Qing had dispatched his men to Baicheng, Bai Yinning could easily distract his men as long as he was willing to get in their way.

She looked at Bai Yinning and requested sincerely, "Can you please stay out of this? Wen Qing has sinned against all sorts of parties back in the day. Eventually, he's going to get what he deserves. Is it necessary for you to rush things through?"

"Do you really believe in karma?" Bai Yinning chuckled and probed further.

"Why shouldn't I?" Lin Xinyan asked rhetorically.

Bai Yinning stared at her once again and tightened his grip as he held on to the handles of his wheelchair. His palms were sweating profusely.

"I'll promise you to stay out of this, but it's not because I've decided to stop avenging my father. Instead, you're the sole reason behind my decision; I don't want you to have a hard time because of this."

Once he finished his sentence, he turned his wheelchair around and showed himself out.

In the end, Lin Xinyan was the only one he had in his mind.

Therefore, he didn't want to put her in a tough position, neither did he want her to be in a foul mood because of it.

He would get his revenge. It was merely a matter of time. After all, he was still young. He could easily plot a great scheme to achieve his revenge against Wen Qing in the upcoming decades.

Lin Xinyan wasn't feeling great about it either because she had a hunch that someone would shed light on the incident that had occurred in the past in the near future.

She looked at Bai Yinning's departing figure and muttered, expressing her gratitude, "Thank you."

As long as she could get Bai Yinning to stay out of it, there would be a chance the truth that had occurred back then wouldn't prevail.

Bai Yinning replied with his back facing Lin Xinyan, "You know it takes more than that to thank me, right? With that being said, I know you won't ever grant me the thing I'm seeking. You owe me a favor for that much."

"Sure. If you need me to do you a favor in the future, feel free to approach me. I'll definitely offer my help if it's within my capability," Lin Xinyan agreed.

"If that's the case, it doesn't sound like a bad deal either," Bai Yinning beamed his reply.

Finally, he brought himself out of Lin Xinyan's clothing store and got into his ride with Gao Yuan's aid.

Lin Xinyan sat on the couch statically, losing herself in the process of thought as she stared at the phone on the coffee table.

She thought of getting in touch with Li Jing in an attempt to sound out her views, but she was afraid that Li Jing might get suspicious if she were to approach her out of the blue.

Hence, she felt lost. She couldn't figure out her next best course of action.

She heaved another sigh out of frustration. Suddenly, a figure could be seen walking into the store just as she was about to head upstairs. The person who had shown up was none other than Li Jing.

Lin Xinyan paused and turned around immediately. She sprinted over to welcome Li Jing, who had shown up, with a bright smile. "What brings you here today?"

In return, Li Jing surveyed the surroundings of Lin Xinyan's store. Since Lin Xinyan's store specialized in producing customized outfits, there were a lot of exquisite pieces on display, including evening gowns and wedding gowns. Each and every one of the pieces was one of a kind.

Li Jing had gotten married to Wen Qing – a stick in the mud – at a young age. Hence, she wasn't allowed to put on any wedding gown. Since traditional wedding gowns weren't a thing back then, she had gotten married to him in a typical cheongsam.

It was every woman's dream to get married to the man, whom they loved wholeheartedly, in their favorite dress.

"I'm the only one home; your uncle isn't around. Therefore, I've dropped by because I want someone to keep me company for lunch," Li Jing explained the reason behind her visit.

Without a second thought, Lin Xinyan agreed to join Li Jing for lunch. After all, she had wanted to approach her to sound out her views.

"Please tell me I'm not getting in your way... Am I?" Li Jing asked rhetorically.

"No! I'm glad I'm the one you've approached when you need a companion!" Lin Xinyan assured Li Jing everything was fine.

Lin Xinyan noticed that Li Jing had her eyes glued to the pieces that had been put on display in the store ever since she entered. Her eyes gleamed as though she couldn't wait to put them on.

Therefore, she approached her and offered, "Allow me to show you around!"

"Sure!" Li Jing beamed her reply.

The outfits on display were not for sale. Instead, it served a different purpose as a point of reference for the customers.

The customers would procure the designer's service to produce a custom-made piece based on the ones on display.

Nonetheless, there were a lot of customers who had dropped by to procure the service of a particular designer.

Li Jing ran her fingers across the wedding gown that had been put on display. She detected the velvety touch unique to those of a Tea Silk gown; it was a great sensation.

Li Jing wondered aloud, "What's the material of the gown? It feels great."

The material was the improvised replication of the Tea Silk that had been launched. It was pretty similar to the authentic Tea Silk, but the replicated ones would wrinkle, whereas the authentic Tea Silk would never wrinkle.

"Do you like it? If that's the case, I can make you a dress using this material. What sort of dress do you like? Allow me to suggest this design to you." Lin Xinyan pointed at a one-piece dress.

Since it would get warmer soon, Li Jing, who was a conservative woman, had the option to choose whether she wanted to compliment the dress with outerwear or not.

Li Jing was delighted and felt reluctant to execute the plan she had in store for Lin Xinyan.

Actually, she did not drop by Lin Xinyan's store because she needed her to keep her company for lunch.

She was simply there to execute Wen Qing's plan.

Once again, Lin Xinyan failed to hit the bullseye.

Wen Qing and Li Jing had Zong Jinghao's DNA sample, but they didn't compare it against Cheng Yuxiu's DNA sample. Instead, they compared it against the DNA sample that had been left behind by the late Wen Xian.

Since Lin Xinyan had swapped the DNA sample, her DNA sample was the one that had been compared against Wen Xian's DNA sample.

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The result of the DNA test showed that Lin Xinyan and Wen Xian were 99.99% biologically related. In other words, they were mother and daughter.

Since Wen Qing and Li Jing weren't aware that Lin Xinyan had swapped her set of cutleries with Zong Jinghao's set of cutleries back then, they thought the result of the DNA test belonged to Zong Jinghao and Wen Xian.

In short, Wen Qing misperceived Zong Jinghao as Wen Xian's son and no longer doubted his identity.

His only concerns were Lin Xinyan and Cheng Yuxiu's relationship because Li Jing used to bring it up in front of him some time ago.

Wen Qing was determined to take good care of Zong Jinghao, but he couldn't bear the fact that his wife was closely affiliated with Cheng Yuxiu.

In short, Wen Qing was certain that Wen Xian had given birth to Zong Jinghao because the ones who had collected the samples and carried out the DNA test were his most trusted aides.

Hence, he had faith in the result he had obtained.

Little did he know that Lin Xinyan had swapped the cutleries of Zong Jinghao with her set of cutleries because she had been aware of Wen Qing's plan all along.

Lin Xinyan had decided to swap her set of cutleries with those of Zong Jinghao because she was certain the DNA test would be carried out against someone alive since Wen Xian had passed on.

She thought they had collected Zong Jinghao's sample to compare it against those of Cheng Yuxiu. Since Cheng Yuxiu and Zong Jinghao were biologically related, Wen Qing would figure out their relationship once he got his hands on their DNA samples.

Aware of Wen Qing's plan, Lin Xinyan made up her mind and swapped the cutleries in the nick of time. She didn't want him to figure out Zong Jinghao was Cheng Yuxiu's son.

Lin Xinyan's seemingly flawless plan had deviated because they had compared it against the late Wen Xian's DNA sample. In the end, they thought Zong Jinghao was biologically related to Wen Xian.

Little did they know that they had verified the fact Lin Xinyan and Wen Xian were biologically related to one another instead.

Meanwhile, Lin Xinyan wasn't aware that her collected DNA sample had been compared against the late Wen Xian's DNA sample.

In short, none of them was aware of the mistakes.

Wen Qing was certain Zong Jinghao was Wen Xian's son. Thus, he held a grudge against Lin Xinyan because she was closely affiliated with the mistress who had driven Wen Xian and her husband apart.

He disliked Lin Xinyan because he deemed her ludicrous; he didn't want her to be by Zong Jinghao's side.

Lately, he found another better candidate to be Zong Jinghao's spouse and made up his mind to drive Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan apart from one another.

The candidate he had in mind was his colleague's daughter. He had been by her side ever since she was young. Due to her flawless appearance, personality, and family background, he deemed her worthy of Zong Jinghao.

He had requested Zong Jinghao to retrieve a folder on his behalf because he wanted him to get in touch with the daughter of his colleague.

Zong Jinghao had never once announced his marriage with Lin Xinyan in front of others. Thus, he had always been known as a bachelor.

Apart from his curious staff, no one was aware that he was married since they didn't have a formal wedding ceremony, neither did they announce their relationship beforehand.

All along, the public had considered Zong Jinghao to be the most exceptional bachelor available.

He was the best candidate as the son-in-law of those from the upper echelon.

Although Wen Qing's colleague from the Chen family wasn't from the upper echelon, his family wielded great influences within the hierarchical system.

In fact, the Chen family was superior to the Wen family.

Wen Qing had never once focused on his own benefits. Zong Jinghao was his sole concern. If Zong Jinghao was able to get married to the daughter of the Chen family, he would have a bright future ahead of him.

Everything about his colleague's daughter was great. She was a brilliant and exceptional young woman. Most importantly, she wasn't closely affiliated with Cheng Yuxiu, unlike Lin Xinyan.

Li Jing had dropped by Lin Xinyan's clothing store because of Wen Qing's plan.

When Li Jing dropped by Lin Xinyan's place to bring her out, Wen Qing had asked Zong Jinghao and Chen Shihan to join him for lunch.

Their ultimate goal was to create conflict amongst Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan, driving them apart from one another.

Wen Qing instructed Li Jing to bring Lin Xinyan over to a certain venue. He would bring Zong Jinghao and Chen Shihan over as well. Once Lin Xinyan reached the place, Wen Qing would leave Zong Jinghao and Chen Shihan alone. He was certain he would be able to drive them apart as long as she witnessed and misperceived the sort of relationship Zong Jinghao had with Chen Shihan.

However, Li Jing couldn't make up her mind. She avoided Lin Xinyan's gaze and rebutted, "I'm getting old. I don't think I should put on such an outfit anymore."

"What are you talking about? Don't worry, okay? I'll send the outfit to you once it's ready!" Lin Xinyan assured Li Jing with a bright grin.

Instead of flattering, she had made up her mind to treat Li Jing and Wen Qing courteously, as though they were part of her family because they had been taking great care of Zong Jinghao all along.

After all, she was in no position to judge an incident that had occurred in the past.

Let bygones be bygones. Things are great as it is, right?

Cheng Yuxiu and Zong Qifeng had always been trying their best to keep things as it was.

All of a sudden, an odd expression could be detected on Li Jing's face. She held on to Lin Xinyan's hand and stuttered because she couldn't bring herself to finish her sentence, "Y-You..."

In the end, Li Jing heaved a long sigh and pondered, "Are you aware of Jinghao and Cheng Yuxiu's relationship?"

"Yes." Lin Xinyan tensed up abruptly and nodded.

"If you're aware of their relationship, why are you keeping in touch with her?"

Li Jing had grown fond of Lin Xinyan because – apart from her relationship with Cheng Yuxiu – the young woman had never once let her down.

She would never drive Lin Xinyan and Zong Jinghao apart if it weren't because of the grudge her husband held against Cheng Yuxiu.

In the meantime, Lin Xinyan grew anxious deep down because she thought they had figured out the truth.

She tried her best to put on a calm front and replied, "We're not really close..."

Expressing her frustration, Li Jing heaved a long sigh yet again. If she had not run into Cheng Yuxiu and Lin Xinyan spending time together, she would have bought into her words.

She shared the truth with Lin Xinyan in a serious manner, "Jinghao is Wen Xian's son. He's the sole successor of the Zong family. I believe I don't have to explain the role he plays, right? He's Wen Qing's only nephew and the only son to Wen Qing's biological sister. Hence, we will definitely take good care of him, but it's not the same when it comes to you..."

Lin Xinyan was one of the Lin family. However, the Lin family had been wiped out of existence for quite some time. She was the only one left. Therefore, she couldn't rely on her family in any way.

Wen Qing and Li Jing perceived Lin Xinyan indirectly betraying Zong Jinghao because she insisted on keeping in touch with Cheng Yuxiu.

That was the thing that disappointed Li Jing and Wen Qing the most.

If she's aware of the potential consequences of her actions, she would never have kept in touch with Cheng Yuxiu.

A heavyweight had been lifted off Lin Xinyan's shoulders upon hearing Li Jing's reply. Judging by her words, they seemed to have ascertained the fact Wen Xian was the one who had given birth to Zong Jinghao.

Nothing else seemed to matter as long as she could prevent Wen Qing from figuring out the truth.

“Yes...” Lin Xinyan could vaguely figure out the meaning behind Li Jing’s words.

Li Jing made it clear Zong Jinghao was of a crucial existence, whereas she was but a trivial existence.

Since the Lin family had fallen, Zong Jinghao was the only one Lin Xinyan had. Without Zong Jinghao, she would be a nobody.

Although she had figured out the meaning behind Li Jing’s words, she failed to comprehend the goal of her visit.

“I’m so sorry, but I have to leave because I have to tend to something else. I’ll buy you a meal again in the future, okay?”

She was aware of the potential consequences in store for her if Wen Qing was angry. Nevertheless, Li Jing couldn’t bring herself to deceive Li Xinyan because she didn’t want to drive them apart.

Lin Xinyan could not stop her in time because Li Jing left immediately after she finished her sentence. She felt as though Li Jing had dropped by for something else instead of a simple lunch session together.

All of a sudden, she detected a strong sense of insecurity and had a hard time breathing because she couldn’t figure out if Li Jing had achieved her goal or not.

She held on to her chest and stood by the entrance of her store, staring at the bustling street while recalling the conversation she had with Li Jing.

Everything is fine, right? Our conversation merely lasted a few minutes. She can’t possibly tell something is wrong, right?

Even though everything seemed to be fine, Lin Xinyan felt insecure deep down.

It had not even been a year since she made her way back, but a lot of things had occurred over the past few months.

Most of the incidents, including the good, the bad, and the weird ones, had revolved around her.

Lin Xinyan closed her eyes in an attempt to calm herself down.

In the awfully quiet space, she could hear her heart racing.

Suddenly, she detected a pair of warm hands surrounding her from behind. She opened her eyes and turned around instantly.

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She detected the presence of the man whom she loved wholeheartedly.

Although nothing odd had occurred, she had a strong sense of insecurity deep down, as though she had been drained.

Lin Xinyan turned around and wrapped her arm against the man's wrist, placing herself in between his arms firmly, as if she were in desperate need of something to fill the void she detected.

"What's wrong?" Zong Jinghao lowered his gaze and caressed her hair gently as he asked.

It was evident he knew something was wrong with her because she wasn't her usual sprightly self.

She leaned against his chest and stated, "I'll be fine soon. Please allow me to be in your arms for another few minutes."

All Lin Xinyan needed was some time to collect her thoughts.

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao returned the favor and held her firmly in between his arms silently.

He caressed her back gently with his gigantic and warm palm, providing her a sense of security and pacifying the anxious woman.

"Why are you here?" Lin Xinyan finally returned to her usual calm and collected self.

Zong Jinghao kissed her on the forehead and ran his fingers through her unkempt fringe, stating the reason, "My uncle invited me to join him for lunch. I've dropped by to pick you up and bring you over with me."

Immediately, Lin Xinyan shuddered unwittingly because she knew something was wrong.

Li Jing had dropped by to ask her out for lunch as well, but the woman had changed her mind and departed in a hurry in the end.

Are these two different venues, or has it always been the same?

"Did your aunt call you?" Lin Xinyan decided to probe further.

"No," Zong Jinghao replied and recalled he had received the call from Wen Qing instead.

Lin Xinyan finally figured out the reason Li Jing had changed her mind at the last minute. The so-called lunch might have been a deliberate setup.

If it was a deliberate setup, who's the one Wen Qing's going after?

According to Li Jing, Wen Qing had ascertained Zong Jinghao's identity. Therefore, he wouldn't try to bring upon his misfortune anymore.

If Jinghao isn't the one he's going after...

All of a sudden, Lin Xinyan linked everything together because Li Jing had warned her of the difference between their backgrounds and asked her about the sort of relationship she had with Cheng Yuxiu before her departure.

Is Wen Qing aware of my relationship with Cheng Yuxiu? Am I the target of the deliberate setup?

Lin Xinyan ruled out the possibilities and thought Li Jing must have had left because she couldn't bear to make the call. Perhaps she felt guilty.

Unaware of the things Wen Qing had gotten his hands on, Lin Xinyan behaved like a cat on a hot tin roof.

Did he send Li Jing to divert my attention? Could it be that he has already figured out Jinghao's actual identity?

Her mind was all over the place, yet no one could guide her because she couldn't rely on anyone else.

She tucked her arms and told Zong Jinghao, "I don't want to go. In fact, I don't want you to go either. Can we go home instead?"

Lin Xinyan asked in a husky voice. Involuntarily, her voice quivered.

Without a second thought, Zong Jinghao gave in to her beloved wife's request. "Okay."

Deep down, Lin Xinyan felt her heart warm up and finally regained composure when Zong Jinghao didn't falter.

She could sense the affection he had for her and how much she meant to him.

Lin Xinyan placed her hands on Zong Jinghao's face and queried, "Are you sure you love me? Are you sure you're not in a relationship with me just because I'm Lin Ruixi and Lin Xichen's mother? If I never gave birth to them, would you get married to me?"

Her vision blurred as her eyes brimmed with tears.

Throughout the past two decades, never had she ever confronted another man.

She grew nervous, yet she couldn't wait to figure out his answer.

Lin Xinyan was head over heels in love with Zong Jinghao.

Therefore, she wanted to know if the feelings were mutual.

The more you care about something, the more afraid you are of losing it.

That's a random quote I came across years ago. Does that mean I have reached the stage where I'm afraid of losing him because I care about him that much?

Why isn't Jinghao replying me? Does that mean he isn't serious about me and our relationship?

"P-Please don't take me seriously—" She got anxious and tried to explain herself.

"I don't know." Zong Jinghao broke the silence, interrupting Lin Xinyan before she could finish her sentence.

Zong Jinghao lowered his gaze, casting a shadow over her face and asserting in a serious tone, "I have no idea if I'm serious about you, but I want you to stay by my side. If I don't see you for an extended period, I will start missing you. Sometimes it feels like I've gotten addicted to you. I'm not sure if that's how it feels like to be in love. Even if it's not, I won't allow you to leave my side anymore. I want you to stay by my side forever!"

He was as domineering as always. Even when he had to confess his affection, he did it in an entirely different manner as compared to an ordinary man.

Lin Xinyan's heart started to race furiously. Trembling in fear and excitement due to the unknown that was in store for her, she couldn't pull herself together anymore.

"Have you lost your mind? What are you craving for lunch? Let's grab something to eat, just you and me." Zong Jinghao pinched Lin Xinyan's nose and held her in between his arms.

Lin Xinyan shook her head and counter-offered, "Your uncle wants to treat us lunch, doesn't he? I think we shouldn't let him down."

She would have to take the risk because she needed to figure out the thing Wen Qing was up to.

"Does every woman behave like you? How can you change your mind within a few minutes?" Zong Jinghao asked, frowning in an odd manner.

"Perhaps you're right. Since you're aware of that, you may want to treat me better in the future. Otherwise..." Lin Xinyan nodded earnestly and warned Zong Jinghao.

Zong Jinghao was petrified upon hearing her words.

Lin Xinyan turned around and asked, "Are you angry?"

Putting on a fierce front, he glared at her in the eyes and warned her in return, "Don't you dare! Otherwise, I'll break your legs and render you immobile!"

Lin Xinyan smiled in return and wrapped her arm around Zong Jinghao's arm as they made their way out of her store.

Zong Jinghao's car was at the parking lot across the street. As soon as they got into the car, Zong Jinghao leaned over and buckled the seatbelt on Lin Xinyan's behalf.

Lin Xinyan, who sat upright next to Zong Jinghao, told him, "Aunt had dropped by my store as well."

Click!

Zong Jinghao raised his head and exchanged glances with Lin Xinyan once he finished buckling the seatbelt.

Staring at him in the eyes, she told him, "Initially, she wanted to bring me out for lunch, but she left in a hurry in the end. I wonder if she was going to bring me over for lunch with Uncle?"

Zong Jinghao narrowed his eyes because he was equally confused deep down.

He had suspected something fishy going on behind the scenes since the last time Wen Qing had instructed him to retrieve the folder on his behalf.

"She told me—" Lin Xinyan brought herself to half on purpose.

"What?"

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Lin Xinyan deliberately left out Li Jing's intention. Instead, she said, "She told me you're a golden boy, whereas I'm mediocre at best. She seems to imply that we're not well-matched. After all, my family isn't prominent, nor do I have immense riches. Therefore, we're not equal in social status."

Indeed, I don't have all these. Chances are, I will never own any of it. The only thing I can do is to stand by his side. For better or for worse, we'll face everything together.

Zong Jinghao didn't say a word, merely glancing at her. Then, he took the driver's seat and started the car.

At this, Lin Xinyan turned to stare at him. "Don't you have anything to say?"

At her question, Wen Qing looked straight ahead with a tensed gaze.

I can't confirm that Wen Qing was hiding something from me before, but I got the answer now. He can inform me alone if it were to invite us for a meal. There was no reason for Li Jing to go all the way to her boutique. For as long as I could remember, Li Jing was always the one contacting me. In fact, I hardly even receive calls from him.

Truth be told, it wasn't as if Wen Qing felt reluctant to contact Zong Jinghao. But he preferred Li Jing to do the job in his stead, as it had become a habit.

Yet, he's called me personally not once, but twice already. It goes to show that something is off. Moreover, Li Xinyan's recent mood swings have further reinforced my suspicion. She must have known about this matter. Not that I can tell how much she knows.

"I won't allow anyone to interfere with my life!"

Not even Wen Qing!

He had made himself clear that no one could stop him from getting whatever he liked.

Attempting to change the subject, Lin Xinyan purposely got close to him and leaned against his shoulder. "Do you believe in fate?"

"I don't." His answer was resolute as he believed only in himself.

Immediately, she lifted her head to peer at him and declared in a serious tone, "I believe. Don't you think it was fate that brought us together?"

During that unexpected night, I assumed that we'd never cross paths again. But I'd never imagined him to be the partner of my arranged marriage. What a twist of fate!

In a swift action, Zong Jinghao placed his arm on her shoulder and flashed a smile on his face while revealing his perfect white teeth. "You are right."

Lin Xinyan glared at him. "What's with this half-hearted response?"

To reassure her, Zong Jinghao placed her hands on his chest and smiled. "I'm not lying."

Lin Xinyan lost her will to humor this flippant man. As a matter of fact, she might not win a debate against a garrulous man like him. If he were to become shameless, even the word ruffian was not too far-fetched as a description for him.

After a while, he stopped the car in front of the Chinese restaurant Wen Qing had informed him of.

Wen Qing had a relatively old-fashioned personality. Needless to say, western cuisine was not in his cards. Nevertheless, his suggestions for Chinese eateries were some of the best in B City.

This restaurant was one of them. It was decorated in a one-of-a-kind Chinese-style frame with a modern touch, giving its customers a unique experience. The waiters were in black suits, while the waitresses were dressed in Cheongsam. The sight of them standing together was especially pleasant to the eyes.

As soon as they walked over, the ushers in front of the door opened the door and welcomed them in.

After they entered through the door, a server dressed in a black suit with a bowtie on his collar approached them. "Did you make a reservation?"

Zong Jinghao nodded his head and replied promptly, "We're with Mr. Wen."

"Please follow me." The waiter guided them to the private room politely right after hearing the name.

He stood aside when they arrived in front of the private room. "This one."

Lin Xinyan was a little edgy after it occurred to her that Wen Qing was just one door apart, so she grasped Zong Jinghao's arm.

To comfort her, Zong Jinghao placed his palm on the back of her hand, got hold of it firmly, and said in a low voice, "I'm here with you."

At that, Lin Xinyan pursed her lips and nodded.

Once the door was pushed open, Wen Qing could be seen sitting in the middle of the spacious room with a beautiful woman right beside him.

The two seemed to be exchanging chatter in a great mood, with smiles on their faces.

Both of them looked toward the door at the same time.

The woman fixed her eyes on Zong Jinghao for a while before scrutinizing Lin Xinyan.

The smile on Wen Qing's face faded almost immediately when he caught sight of Lin Xinyan; the look of his face was frigid and grim.

The drastic change in his mood was impossible to be missed by Zong Jinghao.

A hint of vexation flashed across Zong Jinghao's eyes, but he got a grip of himself straight away and walked in with Lin Xinyan.

However, Chen Shihan greeted them passionately, "We were just talking about you two."

When Lin Xinyan glanced at Chen Shihan, her woman's intuition hinted to her that the latter was only putting on an act to get close to them. Specifically, Zong Jinghao.

"What were you talking about?" Lin Xinyan queried with a smile.

"You are Mrs. Zong, am I right?" Chen Shihan ignored her question. Then she added, "You look so young and pretty."

Chen Shihan was good with her words.

Lin Xinyan remained smiling and replied, "You're flattering me. My kid is turning six this year. I'm no longer in the bloom of youth; you're much younger than me."

The corners of Chen Shihan's lips twitched a bit. I thought Wen Qing said that their marriage was a secret? Where did the child come from?"

Wen Qing had planned to inform her about this but hadn't managed to find the right time.

Then he patted her shoulder, and they remained silent for a while. They only exchanged a few glances, which seemed to imply he would fill her in on the details next time.

Wen Qing was frustrated with Li Jing, who had done such a sloppy job. Nonetheless, he couldn't turn the situation in his favor anymore, seeing that they were already here.

He didn't bluntly ask Zong Jinghao to divorce Lin Xinyan as he knew that the man cared a lot for his wife.

If my memory serves me right, he covered for her exhaustively the first time he visited our family. The man doesn't even mind if the children don't take his last name. With my understanding of his character, I can't risk telling him about this. Otherwise, there's nothing I can do if he disagrees. It'd be too late to pull any tricks by then. If I were to make a move after that, he'd know for sure that I was the one pulling strings behind the scene. Now, I can only hope to make her leave discreetly. No, that won't do... When push comes to shove, I have to play the same old trick again. I won't allow her to get any closer to Cheng Yuxiu.

"Let me introduce you to Chen Shihan, the daughter of my colleague." Wen Qing stared at Zong Jinghao and mentioned purposely, "I believe you met each other in the hotel the other day."

Lin Xinyan's heart skipped a beat at his words.

He met with this woman... in a hotel?

"Uncle Wen, there's no need for that. Everyone in B City knows about Zong Jinghao, perhaps even the whole country. Besides, we've already met..."

She intentionally skipped her gaze over Lin Xinyan's face when she spoke.

With that, Lin Xinyan clenched her fists under the table, and her palms became sweaty. Yet, she remained a calm expression on her face. "You're right, Ms. Chen. Many people know about him, so it's not strange for you to know each other."

Chen Shihan was at a loss for words, and the smile on her face became awkward.

Right then, Zong Jinghao turned to look at his wife. I still remember she was sharp-tongued back when we got in our first fight.

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Zong Jinghao narrowed his gaze while a hint of joy hid in his eyes.

Did she get jealous? You'll only feel that way when you really care about someone.

Chen Shihan felt a little embarrassed as she was a daughter of a prominent family. Naturally, most people would try to fawn on her and please her. Even her circle of friends were people who were her cliques. No one had ever dishonored her in her life.

She suppressed her emotions and stated, "Why? Are you upset, Mrs. Zong?"

Lin Xinyan responded eloquently, "I don't know what you mean, Ms. Chen. Why do I have to be upset? Did you do something that might irk me? Considering that you're from a distinguished family, I doubt you'd do anything unscrupulous that might make me unhappy, right?"

After seeing Lin Xinyan's pure and innocent face, Chen Shihan thought the former was like a harmless rabbit that could be easily teased. But by no means, the latter knew she would be retaliated by the first-mentioned.

At last, Chen Shihan's smile vanished. Her face turned ashen at Lin Xinyan's words.

Even Wen Qing looked somewhat surprised, as Lin Xinyan had always carried herself with modesty and was the quintessence of a homemaker.

I thought Chen Shihan was enough to deal with her. But she's way beyond my expectations. It seems like I've underestimated her.

To break the awkward tension, he declared, "Alright, it's my treat today. Let's enjoy ourselves here, okay?"

Without delay, he beckoned to the server to take the order, then passed the menu to Chen Shihan and said, "Order whatever you want."

He then flipped through the menu and ordered a few dishes that were to Zong Jinghao's liking. He was deliberately neglecting Lin Xinyan.

Chen Shihan finally saved her skin, so she glared at Lin Xinyan while raising a smirk on her face. So what if you're good with your words. Hmph!

Wen Qing had never liked her. Furthermore, he had openly expressed his negative feelings about her and wished for her to leave Zong Jinghao.

The other day, Chen Shihan had overheard Wen Qing's conversation through the phone with her father about his desire for Zong Jinghao to get a divorce from Lin Xinyan.

At that time, she was rather shocked to know that Zong Jinghao was married. Her father, however, wasn't taken aback. Her surmise was that Wen Qing had him notified in advance.

Later on, Wen Qing suggested to her father that she should be married to Zong Jinghao. After a momentary contemplation, the latter finally agreed to his proposal.

Since Zong Jinghao's marriage with Lin Xinyan was a secret, Chen Shihan could be married to him in an open and aboveboard manner. Their marriage would fortify the standing of the Wen family as well.

It involved the interests of several notable families. Apart from that, Zong Jinghao was an accomplished young man. It wouldn't be a loss for her father if Chen Shihan were married to that man. It would be a practical choice, no matter how anyone views it.

Even so, she was against the idea in the beginning. The only reason she had agreed to deliver the documents to the hotel was so that she could reassess her decision after meeting him in person.

Yet, after getting to know him personally, she came to realize that he was different from what was portrayed on television.

Before she met him, the only two things she knew about him were his immense wealth and good looks. But she soon noticed that beyond the materials and appearances, he was a matured man who had been through countless hurdles in life – it increased his masculinity.

Thus, she agreed to Wen Qing and her father's arrangement out of curiosity.

She wanted to see if this man could remain unmoving and resist the temptation in the face of a beautiful woman.

Additionally, Chen Shihan was convinced that she was better than Lin Xinyan in every aspect.

Just then, she intentionally raised her voice to order several dishes that were palatable to her, while some were not. Her motive behind all these farces was so she could be deemed as a well-respected person.

“Is that all?” The waiter asked.

Chen Shihan handed over the menu and answered, “Yes, that will be all. Serve the food at the earliest.”

“Okay, sure!” The waiter put the menu away politely. Zong Jinghao called out to him right when he was about to exit the room.

Then, he came to a halt, walked over, stood beside Zong Jinghao, and inquired, “Is there anything you need, Sir?”

Zong Jinghao took a sip of water from his glass without looking up. After putting his cup down, he ordered, “I would like to have a sweet and sour fish, and I want it prepared with a reeves shad.”

The reeves shad was a highly rated ingredient, and it was recognized as the best among the three famous fish species of the Yangtze River. It was also used as a tribute during ancient times. The taste of its meat was said to be savory, full of umami, and succulent.

“A sauteed pumpkin with salted egg and a crispy sweet and sour pork.”

After that, he lifted his eyes to look at the server. “My wife likes sweet stuff. Do you have any sweet specialty?”

As an experienced server in the restaurant, the server knew all the dishes like the back of his hand.

“Yes. We have sweet and sour pork ribs, griddle shredded cabbage, and Cola chicken for the main dishes. As for dessert, we have milk jelly cake with desiccated coconut, candied banana fritters, and Chinese yam with blueberry sauce. These are our sweet specialties which are also a little sour.”

“I would like to have those,” Zong Jinghao stated.

“Sure! Right away, Sir!” After the waiter spoke, he gave a slight bow of his head, then exited the private room.

After living together with Lin Xinyan, he knew more about her preferences and that she had a sweet tooth. On top of that, she had the kind of physique that would make anyone jealous, the one that wouldn't gain weight regardless of how much she ate.

Lin Xinyan turned to glance at him but remained silent. After a while, she shifted her eyes back to her glass.

On the other side of the table, Wen Qing and Chen Shihan had a sullen expression on their faces.

Chen Shihan was feeling infuriated as her plan to humiliate Lin Xinyan had been thwarted. Also, what she least expected was Zong Jinghao's covering for the woman.

Feeling exasperated, she clenched her fists tightly. If it wasn't for her barely sustaining reason, she would've left the restaurant already.

If I leave now, that would basically mean I've admitted my defeat. No, I'm not such a miserable person. I will never back down. With my strong family background and Wen Qing's support, it would be unthinkable that I will lose to a woman with nothing.

When the thought crossed her mind, she lifted her head arrogantly. Her confidence was built on the foundation of her powerful family background.

The private room door was pushed open a while later, and a group of waitresses dressed in cheongsam stood in a row. At once, they took turns placing the dishes in their hands onto the table.

Soon, the huge dining table was filled with assorted delicacies.

Wen Qing's original plan was to wait for Zong Jinghao's arrival, then make up a reason to leave them alone. But Lin Xinyan's presence had thrown him off and disrupted his scheme. He couldn't leave anymore since she was here, as he was afraid that Chen Shihan couldn't handle her and gave herself away in front of her husband.

All of them were distracted by their personal agendas, which caused them to lose appetite for the sumptuous food in front of them.

The sound of chopsticks coming into contact with the plates could be heard from time to time.

Chen Shihan was chewing food in her mouth with her eyes locked on Lin Xinyan.

The person who enjoyed the meal the most among the ones at the table was Lin Xinyan.

All the dishes that Zong Jinghao ordered were placed in front of Lin Xinyan. Yet, he ate only a little, focusing merely on picking up the food for her.

Are we transparent? They don't even care about us!

"I didn't know you both have such a good relationship. I feel like I'm playing gooseberry here. I'm put in a dilemma of deciding if I should leave you alone or not," Chen Shihan remarked in a rather sarcastic tone.

At her remark, Zong Jinghao set his chopsticks down and lifted his head.

Without hesitation, Lin Xinyan clutched his hand from under the table, by which he turned to peer at him. Immediately, she raised a smile to show that she could handle Chen Shihan – he didn't need to speak up for her.

Since I'm his wife, it should be my job to take care of women with ulterior motives.